

## **OLAF and Europol join forces to strengthen the fight against sanctions circumvention**

**The European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) and Europol have intensified their cooperation to address the growing threat of sanctions circumvention linked to Russia and Belarus. To this end, the two organisations held a dedicated meeting on 17-18 November 2025, marking a significant step toward examining new trends and strengthening coordinated action.**

Since the introduction of EU sanctions, Member States have reported a substantial rise in exports of vehicles, particularly those which could be used to build up military capacities, to third countries. These exports are accompanied by strong indications of organised and commercially driven attempts to bypass restrictive measures. Numerous investigations in Member States have also uncovered an increase in related criminal activity - including money laundering, and document forgery – which highlights the complexity and scale of the challenge.

### **“Project Transporter”**

A key outcome of the meeting has been the exploration of closer operational cooperation between Europol’s Target Group Sanctions (EFEC) and OLAF. The aim of this new initiative, called “Project Transporter”, is to jointly support Member States currently investigating potential breaches of EU sanctions, as well as to bring together expert investigators from the law enforcement community, especially customs, police and financial crimes investigation services for enforcing EU sanctions in relation to vehicle exports to Russia and Belarus.

During the event, participants shared insights into successful investigative approaches, common challenges, and best practices. The discussions also facilitated the exchange of operational information and enhanced awareness of emerging threats, obstacles, and possible solutions.

This deepened cooperation underscores the added value of the OLAF–Europol partnership. By combining their expertise and capabilities, both organisations aim to strengthen coordinated

support to Member States and reinforce the EU's collective response to sanctions circumvention.

**OLAF mission, mandate and competences:**

OLAF's mission is to detect, investigate and stop wrongdoings related to EU funds.

OLAF fulfils its mission by:

- carrying out independent investigations into fraud, corruption and irregularities involving EU funds, so as to ensure that all EU taxpayers' money reaches projects that can create jobs and growth in Europe;
- contributing to strengthening citizens' trust in the EU Institutions by investigating serious misconduct by EU staff and members of the EU Institutions;
- developing a sound EU anti-fraud policy.

In its independent investigative function, OLAF can investigate matters relating to fraud, corruption and irregularities affecting the EU financial interests concerning:

- all EU expenditure: the main spending categories are Structural Funds, agricultural policy and rural development funds, direct expenditure and external aid;
- some areas of EU revenue, mainly customs duties;
- suspicions of serious misconduct by EU staff and members of the EU institutions.

Once OLAF has completed its investigation, it is for the competent EU and national authorities to examine and decide on the follow-up of OLAF's recommendations. All persons concerned are presumed to be innocent until proven guilty in a competent national or EU court of law.

**For further details:**

Pierluigi CATERINO

Spokesperson

European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF)

Phone: +32 2 29 52335

E-mail: [olaf-media@ec.europa.eu](mailto:olaf-media@ec.europa.eu)

<https://anti-fraud.ec.europa.eu>

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