

Press Release

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OLAF has a growing worldwide reputation after ten years of its foundation. Inge Gräßle MEP

Commission, however, denies revision of OLAF's legal basis

"Over the last decade of its existence, the work of the European Office for the Fight against Fraud - OLAF - has continuously improved. Nowadays, OLAF is recognised on a global scale as a European institution for the fight against fraud and corruption", said Inge Gräßle, EPP Coordinator in the Committee on Budgetary Control and Rapporteur on the fight against fraud, commenting on the latest annual report of the Office, the ninth since its establishment.

The evolution of the Office's operations reflects the changing significance of the EU and its increasing global commitment. At present, external aid is one of the areas with the highest number of investigation cases, in particular due to efforts made with regard to prevention. The most recent EU Member States, Romania and Bulgaria, are the countries with the highest number of OLAF cases. Taken together with Italy, Belgium, the UK and Germany, they represent more than half the number of cases reported last year. "On an international scale, OLAF is particularly active in establishing fraud prevention mechanisms in cooperation with the United Nations and the World Bank. The office has proven its high level of experience in its operations", the German MEP continued.

Unfortunately, however, improved working conditions for the office within the EU are still lagging behind. In November 2008, the Commission was notified about the European Parliament's Opinion, as well as concrete reform proposals for OLAF but continuously refuses to proceed with the revision of OLAF's 10 year-old legal basis, thus adjusting the Office to the EU-27 and the ever-increasing number of global operations. "Less than 7% of all OLAF cases end in a verdict by the national courts. This is unacceptable. The Commission tolerates areas outside EU law due to Member States' lack of cooperation in taking over and proceeding with OLAF's cases by the national law enforcement services", criticised Gräßle. Parliament will therefore no longer tolerate the Commission's refusal to act, which results in a profitable situation only for criminals and organised crime.

Translation from the original German