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*OLAF press release* Berlin, 2 December 2011 11th OAFCN seminar in Berlin 30 November-2 December

OLAF Director-General Giovanni Kessler met with the President of the German Zollkriminalamt Dr. Paul Wamers within the context of the 11th OLAF Anti-Fraud Communicators' Network's (OAFCN) seminar in Berlin. At a joint press conference at the Federal Press Centre in Berlin, they presented their common goal of increasing co-operation in customs matters to reduce smuggling which causes huge financial damage to both the EU and the Member States. "With one common border and 27 different border guards, the Member States of the European Union must co-operate closely to stop smuggled goods from entering our territory. We could save billions of euros by protecting our borders more efficiently. Cigarette smuggling alone costs the EU and its Member States €10 billion euro per year. Fighting smuggling requires joint efforts. OLAF will put more resources into joint customs operations to make the 27 border guards work together," said OLAF Director-General Giovanni Kessler.

"International operations are extremely important to fight efficiently against organized criminal structures," said Dr. Paul Wamers, President of the German Zollkriminalamt (ZKA).

"Close cooperation is the basis for detecting these criminal structures, and the closer, the better" he added. "We are fighting an extensive field of crime. It concerns of course not only cigarette smuggling but also the fight against the illegal production and trade of counterfeit pharmaceuticals and precursor products - a very profitable business for criminals. In fighting this, we are also showing concern for public health."

OLAF has 27 active investigations in Germany and co-operates closely with German law enforcement authorities and in particular the German customs office. 14 of OLAF's ongoing investigations concern customs matters, of which 11 are related to cigarette smuggling. Smuggled and counterfeit cigarettes make up a significant part of OLAF's activities but in the future more focus will be given to other smuggled and counterfeit products.

The importance of close co-operation between national authorities and OLAF can be highlighted by recent successful operations carried out jointly by customs offices in Germany and other Member States. In 2010, 27 Member States and 13 Asian countries participated in the joint customs operation DIABOLO II ([http://ec.europa.eu/anti\\_fraud/Diablo-II/i\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/anti_fraud/Diablo-II/i_en.html)) which led to the seizure of more than 65 million counterfeit cigarettes. In the Spring of 2011, an illegal cigarette factory was raided in Poland. 32 persons were arrested in Poland and four in Germany. In Lithuania, 70 tonnes of tobacco was seized. This was the result of an investigation coordinated by OLAF and involving Polish police and the customs authorities in Germany and Lithuania. ([http://ec.europa.eu/anti\\_fraud/press\\_room/pr/2011/03\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/anti_fraud/press_room/pr/2011/03_en.html))

During the OAFCN training seminar in Berlin, press officers and spokespersons from anti-fraud organisations in the EU Member States discussed proactive media activities and communication strategies, with the purpose of communicating efficiently on the fight against fraud in Europe.

### OLAF

The mission of the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) is threefold: it protects the financial interests of the European Union by combating fraud, corruption and any other illegal activities; it protects the reputation of the European Institutions by investigating serious misconduct by their staff that could result in disciplinary proceedings; and it supports the European Commission in the development and implementation of fraud prevention and detection policies.

### ZKA

The Zollkriminalamt is the central authority for German customs investigation. Its main task is

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the prosecution and combatting of serious and organized customs crime. It coordinates and directs the criminal investigations of eight regional customs investigation offices in Germany, located in Berlin, Dresden, Essen, Frankfurt, Hannover, Hamburg, Munich and Stuttgart. For cases of federal or considerable international importance, it conducts its own criminal proceedings.

### **OAFCN**

The OLAF Anti-Fraud Communicators' Network (OAFCN) was established in 2001 and consists mainly of spokespersons and press officers in anti-fraud organisations across Europe, notably police, customs and judicial authorities. This Network communicates on the efforts made by national and European investigative authorities to combat fraud affecting EU financial interests.