

OLAF-Assisted Operation Dismantles Organisation Smuggling Refrigerant Gases



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News

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Within the framework of the biggest operation against trafficking of refrigerant gases (*Operation Verbena*), Spanish authorities were able to dismantle a criminal organisation that illicitly traded and smuggled the gases. The business is lucrative since the import of refrigerant gases (also called F-gases or hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs)) is subject to strict quotas and regulations in the EU. Operation Verbena was supported by OLAF which delivered intelligence to Spanish law enforcement authorities. The operation led to the arrest of five persons and the seizure of 27 tonnes of illicit refrigerant gases. According to estimates, the criminal group is responsible for the emission of over 234.000 tonnes of carbon dioxide into the environment – that is roughly equivalent to a car driving all the way around the globe almost 9,000 times. The criminal organisation smuggled the gases from China to Spain by falsifying customs declarations and then sold HFCs to companies in Spain, Germany, France, Portugal, and Senegal.

OLAF's Director-General *Ville Itälä* praised the excellent cooperation between OLAF and the Spanish police and tax authorities. He pointed out that OLAF is increasingly involved in smuggling activities that damage the environment.

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