

OLAF: Fraud Detected in Environmental Research

Thomas Wahl



News

OLAF investigations dismantled a [fraud scheme by a consortium that had received EU money to carry out environmental research](#). After a tip-off by the European Commission's Research Executive Agency (REA), which had discovered irregularities in claims for personal costs, OLAF carried out on-the-spot checks and digital forensic operations, assisted by the competent national authorities. Apparently, the beneficiaries (a consortium of five small and medium-sized companies in France, Ireland, Romania, and Spain) had neither the capacity nor the intention to carry out the environmental research project. Instead, the major share of the EU grant (€400,000) was pumped into a casino/hotel in Cyprus. The investigation was already concluded in November 2019 but only reported on 17 April 2020. OLAF recommended that the REA recover €410,000 from the consortium. The national judicial authorities recommended initiating judicial proceedings against the individuals involved.

OLAF Director General *Ville Itälä* stressed that OLAF's work is becoming increasingly important in the area of environmental research, because a great deal of EU money was spent after the new Commission set its ambitious goal of the European Green Deal.

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