

# OLAF Operational Work: First Half of 2026

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European Law Forum: Prevention • Investigation • Prosecution

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News

This news item highlights key cases that demonstrate OLAF's operational work between 15 January and 30 June 2026. It follows on from the report in [eu crim 4/2025, 266](#). The overview is in reverse chronological order.

- **25 June 2026:** OLAF reports that it successfully supported the Italian and Turkish authorities in [identifying tons of illegally shipped textile waste](#). These shipments, which were intended to circumvent strict and expensive EU recycling rules concerning textiles with non-biodegradable substances, were sent from Italy to Turkey. OLAF inspectors, alongside their Italian counterparts, also took part in on-the-spot inspections organised by the Turkish authorities. These inspections revealed additional textile waste stored in Turkish warehouses. For more information on OLAF's role in combatting illegal waste trafficking, see below.
- **5 June 2026:** OLAF informs about its support of an [operation targeting counterfeit truck parts](#). After having provided analyses and information, and coordinating with national authorities and brand owners in several EU countries, the operation led to the seizure of 14,629 counterfeit items worth more than €600,000 in Portugal. The parts had been manufactured in Türkiye and illegally imported into the EU. They pose serious risks to road safety.
- **26 May 2026:** OLAF and Eurojust report on the successful conclusion of the operation "Coals of the Alps" that [dismantled a criminal network involved in illegal waste trading](#). Since 2022, Italian authorities have been investigating several companies and officials who established an illegal scheme that transformed ash containing highly toxic materials into supposedly environmentally friendly charcoal for use in barbecue briquettes, fertilisers and concrete additives. This not only circumvented bans but also harmed consumers and the environment. OLAF provided analyses of the scale of the illegal traffic and supported information-sharing. [Eurojust coordinated](#) the execution of European Investigation Orders and European Arrest Warrants.
- **6 May 2026:** A joint operation between Polish and Spanish customs reveals an [illegal textile diversion scheme](#). OLAF supported and coordinated this operation. The Office analysed trade flows and found that consignments of textile products from China had been falsely declared as being in transit despite not having left the EU. This scheme circumvented high customs duties payable on textile products entering the EU. Following controls initiated by OLAF, the Polish customs authorities seized three containers loaded with almost 70,000 kilograms of textiles.
- **28 April 2026:** Thanks to OLAF's support, a [complex VAT and customs fraud scheme is dismantled](#). Through false confirmations and misdeclarations, a criminal network simulated intra-Community movements of goods that were imported from China via the Polish-Belarusian border. In reality, the goods (textiles, footwear, electric bicycles, etc.) were removed from transit and remained in Poland.

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This resulted in the evasion of approximately €118 million in customs duties and €79 million in VAT, representing a significant loss to the EU budget. The operation involved several EU Member States, including Belgium, Slovenia, Germany, Hungary and Poland. The [EPPO in Poland continued](#) a criminal investigation into the criminal network, while OLAF further conducts complementary investigations.

- **17 April 2026:** OLAF announces the results of [Joint Customs Operation \(JCO\) VAPE](#), which resulted in the seizure of over 94 million pieces and over 2,500 kg/l of tobacco products, e-cigarettes, and devices. This was the first international JCO to focus on the illicit trade in e-cigarettes and heated tobacco products. The JCO was carried out between 14 November to 15 December 2025, involving 23 EU Member States and seven partner countries outside the EU. OLAF stresses that the findings of JCO VAPE would contribute to mapping new trafficking patterns, identifying key routes and modus operandi, and strengthening the basis for future enforcement actions and risk analysis.
- **13 February 2026:** Albanian authorities uncover and [stop illegal shipments of hazardous waste from Albania to Thailand](#) following support by OLAF. As early as 2024, OLAF had alerted Albanian customs authorities to a shipment suspected of containing large quantities of misdeclared hazardous waste. It was found that companies had declared a toxic by-product of steel production as non-hazardous "iron oxide", which can be legitimately used in the EU for several industrial applications. OLAF is becoming increasingly involved in the fight against illegal waste trafficking. OLAF's support in Member State investigations into waste trafficking is reinforced by the [Waste Shipment Regulation](#) (→ L. I. Garruto and S. Grassin, "Fighting Waste Trafficking in the EU: A Stronger Role for the European Anti-Fraud Office", [eucrim 2/2024, 143-145](#)). Due to the complex and transnational nature of illegal waste shipments, OLAF's involvement helps ensure that customs, environmental and judicial authorities can act swiftly and in a coordinated manner to prevent environmental damage and protect public health.
- **28 January 2026:** An international investigation, coordinated and supported by OLAF, reveals a large-scale criminal [scheme that was circumventing restrictive measures against Russia](#) in relation to the export of vehicles. Through extensive data analysis and cross-checking of customs, trade, and transport information and by tracking vehicles and reconstructing the logistics chain, OLAF discovered that more than 760 used vehicles from various EU Member States had been declared as destined for third countries such as Türkiye, when in fact their final destination was Russia. OLAF's findings led to criminal investigations in three EU Member States. In addition, information shared by OLAF prompted the relevant EU authorities to strengthen the monitoring and risk profiling of future shipments.

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