

OLAF Supports Detection of Money Laundering Scheme in Romania and Belgium



News

Thomas Wahl

On 2 July 2020, OLAF reported on the successful conclusion of investigations into a complex money laundering scheme in Romania and Belgium. Criminal investigations were initially opened by the Belgian judicial authorities in 2016 and by the Direcția Națională Anticorupție (DNA) in Romania in 2017. A joint investigation team (JIT), which was established in 2019 and supported by OLAF and Eurojust, brought together the Romanian and Belgian authorities and leveraged the investigations. As a result, simultaneous operations were carried out by the JIT members in Belgium and Romania in April 2019. They resulted in the seizure of a substantial amount of evidence, and several persons came under judicial control for corruption and money laundering offences.

Investigations revealed that a counsellor for the Romanian Ministry of Transport and her Italian husband had set up a complex scheme whereby – with the help of others – they received a total of €2 million for an EU-funded railway infrastructure project in Romania. By establishing fictitious contracts, part of the money flowed into the bank accounts of two Belgian companies that were *de facto* controlled by the offenders. Some money was used to pay for political advertising during the campaign for the Romanian national parliamentary elections in 2012, and more than €600,000 was transferred to private bank accounts.

Following the closure of the investigation, OLAF recommended that Romania and Belgium initiate judicial proceedings for corruption and money laundering. In July 2020, the Romanian DNA indicted five individuals and companies.

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