



COMMISSION EUROPÉENNE
OFFICE EUROPÉEN DE LUTTE ANTIFRAUDE (OLAF)

Direction D : Affaires Générales
Unité D.1: " Porte-parole, Communication, Relations publiques"

Le Chef d'Unité

Bruxelles, le 23/2/2009

AB/sq/

SPEECH OF

Mr. ALESSANDRO BUTTICÈ

Head of

Spokesman, Communication and Public Relation Unit
and Spokesman of the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF)

TRAINING SEMINAR OLAF-THE EURO FUNDS WATCHDOG BULGARIAN CLUB OF JOURNALISTS AGAINST CORRUPTION SOFIA 23-24 February 2009

Mrs. Vice-Prime Minister,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure and an honour for me to be here with you today. First of all I would like to convey to you apologies from Mr. Bruener, OLAF Director General, who is unable to be here today. He has asked me to express his best wishes for the success of this event which he has personally been delighted to support.

We are convinced, in OLAF, that the fight against fraud and corruption is not only an enforcement issue but is also one of preventative and educational measures.

Deterring fraud by informing the public has been now our "motto" since the OLAF (European Anti-Fraud Office) was created.

Fraud and corruption have often been seen as victimless crimes.

One of the first of OLAF's objectives has been to explain to the public that European citizens are themselves the victims of these kinds of crimes.

So, when we hear on TV and the radio that this kind of crime is being done by everyone and that everyone is corrupt, the result is that society condones this crimes.

Mass media, notably television has a key role to play as a watchdog in this area provided it doesn't infer or imply guiltlessness on the part of the perpetrators.

This can be avoided by program makers carrying out proper research on the subject.

In other words, in an ideal world, the investigations of journalists and law-enforcers should give the same results.

Both are searching for the truth.

Unfortunately, the reality is different. This means that while there are very good investigative journalists, not all, achieve this standard, along with law investigators also.

The purpose of the Olaf Anti-Fraud Communicators Network (OAFCN), which is also represented here today by my colleague and friend David Jones, spokesman of the UK Serious Fraud Office, working in cooperation with the fight against corruption, is to achieve as far as possible, this seeming unattainable goal.

How are we trying to achieve this?

First of all, in keeping with our stated aims as signed in the Memorandum of Understanding between the OAFCN and the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), by training and support for journalists notably for the Press Association, we provide them with the necessary skills to be the guardians of the ethical standards of the journalists' profession.

In this framework, I'm very pleased to tell you about the good cooperation we receive from the Club of Journalists against Corruption (BCJ).

I'm deeply appreciative of the work of the Club and their professionalism and the vision, courage and enthusiasm of its chairlady, Mrs Reneta Nikolova.

It is now a very sensitive time for Bulgaria.

Bulgaria must explain to international public opinion that the fight against corruption is being taken seriously by the country.

This means that International public opinion needs to be reassured by judicial decisions and investigative activities that consistently protect the financial interests of the EU. In this context, the information provided regularly by the BCJ is very useful.

The idea of the Club to produce along with Bulgarian TV a documentary of ten years activity by OLAF has been of great importance.

First of all, it informs the public about the European co-operation that goes on against crimes of fraud and corruption. It also has the merit of stressing the limit of OLAF's powers in its investigations.

The prime organisation responsible for the fight against fraud and corruption is not OLAF but the Bulgarian Authorities.

Overestimating the power of OLAF to investigate crime in Bulgaria would be a mistake and wouldn't help the fight against the kind of crimes we are speaking about.

Bulgarian citizens must realise that the fight against fraud and corruption in Bulgaria is the moral obligation of all its

citizens according to their level of responsibility, e.g. prosecutors must prosecute, judges must judge fairly and ordinary citizens must inform the authorities, when they know such crimes are being committed and say "NO" to fraud and corruption.

In conclusion, it is clear that only with the general involvement and support of the population at large can Bulgaria move out of the international spotlight.

For this reason I would like to congratulate the Bulgarian Club of Journalists against Corruption, the Prosecutor General and the Bulgarian National Television station once again for their initiative for which OLAF has given all its possible support.