



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

PRESS RELEASE

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Fighting Fraud: Hercule III Work Programme adopted

Today the European Commission adopted the first annual work programme for the new anti-fraud programme Hercule III. In 2014, € 13.7 million will be made available to support Member States in fighting fraud, corruption and other illegal activities. The Programme will also help finance specific projects x-ray scanners and other technical equipment bought by national authorities to stamp out smuggling and other criminal activities affecting the EU's financial interests.

Algirdas Šemeta, EU Commissioner for Taxation, Customs and Anti-Fraud, said "Fighting fraud and corruption in the EU must really be a partnership. Hercule III means that Member States will have significant financial support in catching fraudsters and protecting tax-payers' money. Thanks to the Work Programme adopted today, many useful anti-fraud projects can now start to be put into practice".

A major novelty under the new Hercule III Programme is that Member States can apply for more funding. Potential beneficiaries are now allowed to submit an application for funding even when only minimal national co-funding can be made available. In fact, Member States can apply for funding of up to 80% of the overall costs for actions to strengthen the technical and operational capacity of customs and law enforcement agencies. In exceptional and duly justified cases, the funding can even be increased to 90%. This is all the more important in the current economic climate, where many national budgets are under pressure.

The budget for technical assistance actions in 2014 amounts to € 10.3 million and will be used to help national authorities to buy, for example, investigation tools, x-rays scanners and computers for Automated Number Plate Recognition Systems (ANPRS). The Commission will also pay for access to specialised databases for anonymous use by Member States' customs and tax authorities. This support is particularly important in the context of the fight against tobacco smuggling, which causes annual losses of about € 10 billion to the EU and its Members States.

A further € 3.4 million from the Hercule III programme will be spent on training activities, seminars and conferences. Training will, for instance, be organised for operational staff in Member States' customs or police forces, to improve their skills in digital forensics and to allow them to share best practice in this field. Seminars, studies and conferences will facilitate the exchange of information between legal experts and academics related to legal practices in fighting fraud and corruption.

Next Steps

The Commission will publish notices for “Calls for Proposals” to invite customs, tax authorities, universities and legal experts in the Member States to apply for funding.

Useful links

OLAF website: http://ec.europa.eu/anti_fraud/media-corner/press-releases/press-releases/2014/20140321_01_en.htm

Homepage of Commissioner Šemeta: http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/semeta/index_en.htm

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