
Commission nominates Franz-Hermann Bruener as Director of OLAF

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The European Commission has nominated Franz-Hermann Bruener as Director of the independent European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF). "The appointment of a permanent Director is good news for OLAF and good news for the fight against fraud," said Vice-President Neil Kinnock and Budget Commissioner Michaele Schreyer. "OLAF's staff is also set to double to a total of 300 by 2001, ensuring the further intensification of action to safeguard the interests of the European taxpayer", they added. Mr. Bruener's five-year mandate will start from 1 March 2000

Mr. Bruener currently heads the anti-fraud unit of the Office of the High Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina where he developed the international community's anti-fraud and anti-corruption strategy. Born in 1945 in Germany, he has had a long and distinguished career in the field of the fight against fraud and corruption, notably heading one of Germany's first specialised departments in this field in Munich, Bavaria. He is also a specialist in criminal law and has held various posts in different regions of Germany between 1979 and 1998, at which point he moved to his present position in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Mr Bruener emerged as the preferred candidate of all three Institutions concerned during the course of the appointment procedure laid down in the OLAF regulation. "We are glad that there is total consensus between the European Commission, the Parliament and the Council on the nomination of Mr Bruener and that the appointment procedure could be finalised this year. We would also like to thank Mr. Knudsen for his excellent work in ensuring a smooth transition between UCLAF and OLAF," said Kinnock and Schreyer.

The main task of OLAF is the fight against fraud, corruption and any other illegal activity affecting the financial interests of the European Community. When it was established on 28 April 1999 and became operational on 1 June 1999, it took over all the tasks handled by the Commission's former Task Force for Coordination of the Fight against Fraud (UCLAF) originally created in 1988.

OLAF supports Member States in the fight against fraud and coordinates their specialised anti-fraud services and the relevant services of the Commission. It also carries out its own external and internal investigations into suspected fraud cases. It determines the sums to be recovered, prepares a case suitable for submission to public prosecutors in the Member States and establishes any relevant facts to be presented to the disciplinary authorities of the European institutions. OLAF has no independent power of criminal investigation or prosecution. This remains the domain of the Member States which are obliged to take the same measures to counter fraud affecting EU financial interests as they do for their own national

budgets.

Currently, some 130 officials and national experts are working in the eight units in OLAF, the vast majority of whom are experienced in investigation work.