

**Together we are stronger?
Harmonising the fight against fraud and corruption in Europe**

**Best practice strategies: Combating fraud and corruption in Europe.
Examples from Belgium**

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Abstract:

Under the subtitle “Fraud ... Who and why?”, the speaker will give a general introduction to the reasons why fraud is committed and will explain what kind of people commit it or are able to commit it.

Furthermore, the speaker will try to elucidate how a ‘close co-operation’ can give rise to corruption in both the public and the private sector. Corruption is everywhere: at regional or national level or even internationally organized, mostly by individuals but sometimes by criminal organizations. Some examples will lead to an exposé on the ‘thin line’ between one’s ‘sense of values’ and ‘possible incidents’, and on how ‘law enforcement agencies or private investigators’ can and must react. A preventive link is most certainly to be explored by law enforcement agencies, which must develop control measures, integrity instruments. But there is also a repressive link: investigation followed by rectification and final settlement is, without a doubt, a must to tackle corruption successfully. Finally, the speaker will emphasize the importance and inevitability of correct and well-structured collaboration between the public and the private sector.

Next, the speaker will focus on the ‘law enforcement’ reaction, more specifically with regard to fraud against the ‘financial interests of the EU’. Under the subtitle “Establishing and optimizing operational co-operation in anti-corruption investigations”, the speaker will explain how the Belgian Federal Police is organized in the new police structure. The speaker will place his directorate economic and financial crime in the new police scenery and communicate its mission statement. He will then focus more closely on the Belgian ‘central office against corruption’, the office in charge of the fight against corruption, and on how it tackles that phenomenon.

The way in which the Belgian anti-corruption unit collaborates with OLAF will be a next issue. This collaboration with OLAF is not always evident: objectives, competences, techniques and methods are quite different. The speaker will explore these issues in depth and compare OLAF’s functioning and competences to those of the Belgian ‘central office against corruption’. OLAF, an administrative body, will very often be confronted with these issues when co-operating with the EU member states, certainly when its partner in the member state is a police service. The challenge is to find a solution to strengthen the co-operation between OLAF and Belgian law enforcement agencies or law enforcement agencies from other EU member states. The speaker will then focus on the Belgian point of view regarding co-operation with OLAF: forms of co-operation, difficulties connected with it and ways to optimise co-operation between OLAF and the EU member states.

In his last part, the speaker will continue (as an example to all persons present at the conference) by looking in the mirror: are we really that successful in Belgium in the fight against corruption? Figures, perception, sentiments, etc. Does an efficient fight against corruption improve the facts and figures gathered by Transparency International in its ‘Corruption Perceptions Index’? Or do we have to live with the fact that temporary facts and figures will worsen, until the fruits of the efficient fight against corruption are more visible and more comprehensive?

The speaker will conclude by emphasizing the absolute necessity for law enforcement agencies to invest in the fight against corruption, before ending with the keynote question: "Do we really know what is going on?".