OLAF
OFFICE EUROPÉEN DE LUTTE ANTI-FRAUDE — EUROPEAN COMMISSION EUROPEAN ANTI-FRAUD OFFICE

EC Anti-Fraud Unit OLAF realizes huge ROI by using ZyLAB

The mission of OLAF is to protect the financial interests of the EU, to fight fraud, corruption and any other irregular activity affecting the EU budget, including misconduct within the European Institutions. OLAF achieves its mission by conducting, in full independence, internal and external investigations. OLAF has been using ZyLAB since its founding in 1999. OLAF's predecessor UCLAF started using ZyLAB already in 1998.

The challenges of Fraud Investigations

Fraudsters and criminals do not want to be at the top of the search results but try to hide what they are doing. There are many different ways to hide information. Encryption is not always the first choice as this immediately attracts attention of auditors and investigators. Fraudsters use different techniques to hide their actions: they use code words, deliberate misspellings, non-searchable data objects, hidden information and communication in embedded objects, etc.

To complicate matters, OLAF's workload is enormous. In 2015 alone, OLAF opened 219 new investigations and concluded 304 investigations. The average duration of an investigation, is 21 months. As every regulatory agency, OLAF has limited resources and employees, and needs to deal with these problems within the existing budget and within reasonable time lines for investigations. Strict data protection regulations and cooperation with law enforcement organization in all EU member states and many countries outside of the EU, only add to this problem.

Finding what you did not know you were looking for

OLAF uses a large on-premises installation of ZyLAB's eDiscovery software, including ZyLAB's Processing, Professional Text-Mining, Review and Production. With ZyLAB OLAF can find entities and facts, without knowing they existed before the start of an investigation.

OLAF can easily find hidden patterns and code words by using the ZyLAB' advanced search and text mining technology. Hidden fraudulent information can be uncovered by automatically attacking data in containers such as ZIP's, non-searchable PDF. TIFF or other bitmaps, deeply embedded objects in email attachments, etc.

This way digital information and code-names that otherwise would have remained unknown, are discovered, and essential evidence to solve a case is identified.

Fully compliant with all data protection regulations

The solution is fully compliant with all data protection regulations of all EU member states. It includes advanced redaction and pseudomization functionalities, required under the upcoming new GDPR regulations for 2018.

ZyLAB easy integrates with other OLAF systems and tools (EnCase, FTK, Analyst Notebook, Oracle Case System, Documentum, etc.). OLAF can share data (searchable) with prosecutors and investigators in other countries. The installations runs on a large cluster, allowing OLAF to add CPU's dynamically to scale up the data processing capacity of the system without the need to reinstall the software or re-deploy the data.

"Already in 2009, OLAF confiscated over 1 Tb of email data. Without ZyLAB's professional text mining tools, it would have been impossible to analyze this data in-depth and on-time. ZyLAB uncovered digital information and code names that would otherwise have been hidden and the suspects would have walked away. Because of ZyLAB, suspects could have been identified and prosecuted."

Eric Yperman, Team Leader Operational Intelligence

Recovering 901 million

In 2014 alone, OLAF reported the **recovery of EUR 901 million**, which has been returned to the EU budget and help fund other projects. The results reported for 2014 confirm that OLAF has become increasingly efficient over the last years, bringing tangible results for EU taxpayers. Looking at OLAF's total budget for 2015 was 58 million, recovering 901 million yields an enormous return of investment for the agency.

The Future

ZyLAB continues to invest in ongoing research and product development to assist regulators and investigators to deal with the data explosion and the multitude of new electronic formats and data locations they have to deal with.

Recently, ZyLAB's Machine Learning and Topic Modeling technology was installed at OLAF as part of a revolutionary new way of searching. This will make it even easier to find relevant documents in very large data sets by teaching a computer program what to look for, even if you do not know exactly what to look for, or if you do not master all aspects of advanced search query language.

Results show repeatedly that with these search techniques more relevant document are found in less time. In addition, with machine learning it is possible to measure exactly how what percentage of relevant document has been found, making it easier for investigators to determine when they investigated enough data.