

The Antwerp World Diamond Centre (AWDC), the representative body for Belgium's diamond industry, strongly condemns the doubts raised in De Tijd regarding the sector's commitment to combating fraudulent money-laundering practices. The article's insinuations about alleged connections between Antwerp's diamond industry and a fraud case involving food deliveries to Ukraine's Defense Ministry are speculative, lack factual basis, and are solely based on the fact that the implicated company—a jewelry business without the required license to operate as a diamond company—rents an office in the Antwerp Diamond Club. This unfairly casts the diamond sector in an unjustifiably negative light.

The doubts expressed about the “will of Antwerp's diamond sector to combat money laundering” are outright shocking. Antwerp's diamond industry is one of the most heavily regulated sectors in Belgium, adhering to the strictest anti-money laundering (AML) regulations. Non-compliance results in the immediate revocation of the government-issued license necessary to operate, effectively making it impossible to continue as a diamond business in Belgium.

AWDC, which represents diamond traders (not jewelry companies), makes significant efforts to support the sector in meeting these legal obligations. These efforts include regular AML seminars and certification programs, an AML helpdesk for diamond companies, free access to the Know Your Customer (KYC) database for all registered diamond companies and extensive collaborations with federal government departments, including the Ministries of Economy and Finance (Customs). These and other initiatives ensure the highest standards of transparency and compliance within the industry.

The claims that the diamond sector has only reported two suspicious financial transactions to the anti-money laundering cell are grossly exaggerated and paint an incomplete and misleading picture of reality. As anonymous experts cited in the article confirm, Antwerp's controls are far stricter than those of other diamond trading centers, firmly establishing Antwerp as the most reliable diamond hub in the world.

Moreover, Antwerp's diamond industry operates as a close-knit and transparent ecosystem, with minimal entry by new players. This structure makes it nearly impossible for unusual or suspicious activities to go unnoticed. Additionally, other official actors, including the sector federation, government bodies, and financial institutions, actively monitor suspicious transactions and fulfill their reporting obligations, playing a vital role in combating money laundering.

We urge responsible journalism based on verified facts and call for recognition of the Antwerp diamond sector's efforts to fight fraudulent practices.