



## European Commission - Speech [Check Against Delivery]



### Speech by Commissioner Reynders for the visit to the European Public Prosecutor's Office

Luxembourg, 8 October 2020

Madame la Chef du Parquet européen, mesdames et messieurs les procureurs, c'est un plaisir et un honneur d'être ici aujourd'hui avec vous, avec le **premier collège** du Parquet européen.

- Au nom de la Commission européenne, je vous félicite pour cette mission prestigieuse et je vous souhaite chaleureusement un bon commencement de vos activités.
- Let me first stress that your tasks are truly historical.
- As you know, the first discussions on the European Public Prosecutor's Office took place in 1995 and led to the *Corpus Juris*.
- In the explanatory memorandum which introduced the first edition of this project, Professor Delmas-Marty wrote: "**The budget is the supreme instrument of European policy**. To say this emphasises the extreme seriousness of any crime which undermines this patrimony".
- Twenty-five years later, we can only agree with these statements. They are still extremely relevant.
- According to the last report of OLAF, the European Union has been defrauded of a total of around 500 million EUR in 2019; but the damage to the European budget is certainly far greater.
- Fraud is a hidden crime which requires considerable expertise and resources to be tackled effectively.
- Economic crime, especially when cross-border, poses difficult challenges for national judicial authorities; hence the need to create a strong, single, European Public Prosecutor's office.
- I am delighted to see that the European Public Prosecutor's Office is starting to take its first steps and I invite you to never forget the importance of your mission: European citizens, who are also European taxpayers, count on you for the **protection of our common budget**.
- And precisely because the Union's budget is a common good, we must defend it collectively, as required by the Treaty (Article 325).
- From this collective obligation stems our common objective of **making the European Public Prosecutor's Office operational as quickly as possible**.
- I remain very determined to ensure that the European Public Prosecutor's Office can be as efficient as possible.
- The Commission will do everything in its power to ensure that the European Public Prosecutor's Office receives the resources it needs to start its activities as planned, and in this perspective we have already proposed **a significant increase in the budget for the year 2021**.
- It is also of the utmost importance that the national **selection procedures for European Delegated Prosecutors** are finalized as quickly as possible and that **highly qualified prosecutors** are selected for this post.
- While respecting the choices of Member States which do not participate in enhanced cooperation, **I will do all it takes to make sure all Member States will be part of the European Public Prosecutor's Office**. Until then, **I hope that they will cooperate with EPPO in a loyal and efficient manner**.
- The protection of the Union budget should not be a concern of the participating Member States only but it requires a **common effort of all EU Member States**.
- Even more, the protection of the Union's financial interests **does not and cannot stop at the borders** of the EU.
- Fraud and money laundering do not stop at our borders and the trail often leads to jurisdictions in our immediate vicinity or even far away.
- It will be therefore paramount for the Office to establish and maintain **close relations** not only

with the competent authorities of the participating Member States, but also with those of the non-participating Member States and third countries.

- We are working on that in the Council with the Member States and more will follow.
- But let me add one final thought.
- It should be clear to all that the effective functioning of the EPPO is **not only a matter of budget**, especially in light of the upcoming EU measures to contrast the consequences of the COVID19 outbreak.
- Like any other place of the world, the Union has been plagued by the pandemic.
- The recent news show that this state of affairs will unfortunately continue for some time.
- In this difficult moment, however, the Union has found the necessary **strength and courage to take European integration one step further**.
- As you all know, the recovery of our economies and societies will largely depend on the measures that will be adopted with the groundbreaking **Next Generation EU**.
- The **protection of the Union budget** will therefore be **more important than ever**: every euro of the Next Generation EU should be spent on getting Europe out of this crisis and our economies back on their feet.
- The EPPO will play a key role in putting these difficult times behind us and therefore strengthen its own legitimacy in the eyes of European citizens.
- The success of EPPO will also enhance the **trust of our citizens** in the Union, which is much needed in times when winds of populism and illiberal claims loom over the European project.
- This is a challenge we cannot lose.
- And I am confident that, thanks to your commitment and extraordinary experience, we will not lose it.
- All of you have probably heard at least once the story of the Potsdam miller and his quest for justice, which is epitomised by the famous sentence: "there are still judges in Berlin!"
- My hope is that, in the years to come, the European citizens will likewise be reassured by the fact that "there are still prosecutors in Luxembourg".
- Bon courage!

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