

Independent EU body promises common approach to fight fraud

European Public Prosecutor's Office

The European Parliament has today voted with a large majority in favour of establishing a European Public Prosecutor's Office. The new EU public prosecutor will be an independent body with the power to investigate and prosecute fraud in the EU, particularly VAT fraud. The EU Commission estimates that the EU loses up to 50 billion euros each year to VAT fraud.

Greens/EFA spokesperson on civil liberties, justice and home affairs, **Jan Philipp Albrecht**, welcomes today's outcome:

"The EPPO will make headway in the fight against the fraudulent use of EU funds and cross border VAT fraud. It will enable the EU to invest more money where it belongs, to nurture projects on the energy transition and digital infrastructure, and crucially, help to build public trust.

"Macron and Juncker are both looking ahead and have shown their support for broadening the remit of the EPPO to include the fight against terrorism and organised crime. The governments of the Member States should also throw their weight behind such proposals.

"The EPPO has the potential to become a major European project and the doors are open to all EU countries to engage with it. The EU Commission must focus on ensuring EU-wide investigations with strong safeguards for suspects, and submit a proposal for high standards for pre-trial custody across the EU. The EU Parliament's report on living conditions and radicalisation in prisons (1) sets out a good approach that the Commission would be wise to follow."

Background

The EPPO was first proposed in 2013, but negotiations were delayed due to opposition from some Member States. Due to unanimity requirements, the Council opted for enhanced cooperation with 20 Member States on board in February 2017. At present, 8 countries have decided not to participate: UK, Ireland, Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands, Poland, Hungary, and Malta.

(1) EU Parliament report on living conditions and radicalisation in prisons:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=REPORT&reference=A8-2017-0251&language=EN>

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