



NEWSLETTER



Dear ladies and gentlemen,
colleagues and friends,

Before the year is drawing to an end, we would like to share the December 2018 issue of the EPAC/EACN Newsletter with you, containing the latest news from the EPAC/EACN networks and information on the events that took place over the last few months.

As always, we would appreciate your input regarding future or past events, conferences, seminars, training courses, studies, project findings, etc., to include in the next newsletter.

We wish you and your loved ones a wonderful Christmas time and all the best for 2019!

Your EPAC/EACN Secretariat

EPAC/EACN EVENTS AND LATEST NEWS

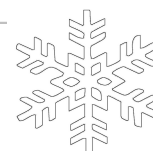
18th EPAC/EACN ANNUAL PROFESSIONAL CONFERENCE AND GENERAL ASSEMBLY “Multiple challenges require sustainable and interactive solutions”

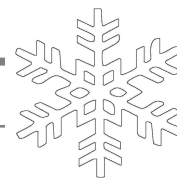


More than 100 delegates representing 30 member countries as well as international organizations attended the 18th EPAC/EACN Annual Professional Conference, which

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was hosted by the Austrian Federal Bureau of Anti-Corruption (BAK) and took place from 22 to 24 October 2018 in Rust, Austria.

Under the theme “Multiple challenges require sustainable and interactive solutions”, the conference focused on the identification of innovative solutions contributing to the successful prevention of and fight against corruption. The event also provided a valuable networking opportunity and set the stage for further cooperation between the member organizations of EPAC (European Partners against Corruption) and EACN (European contact-point network against corruption).

The conference was opened by Mr. Andreas Wieselthaler, President of EPAC/EACN and Director of BAK. This was followed by a speech of Ms. Karoline Edtstadler, State Secretary at the Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior, who emphasized that the presence of so many organizations at this year’s conference was “...a clear sign of the importance we all attach to enhancing the fight against corruption”.

The conference continued with interactive panel discussions and presentations on topics such as compliance and integrity in the context of preventing and combating corruption and developments at international level. Among the speakers were high-ranking representatives of Europol, Interpol, OLAF (European Anti-Fraud Office), GRECO (Group of States against Corruption of the Council of Europe), TI (Transparency International), OMV, International IDEA, and the BAK.

On the second day, representatives of member organizations gave various interesting presentations on national and regional projects. Following these presentations, participants were asked to vote for the most innovative project complying with the networks’ mission. Furthermore, in parallel workshop sessions on the subjects “Human rights in the context of anti-corruption investigations”, “EU Integrity project”, “Corruption in health care systems” and “Complaints systems”, participants had the opportunity to exchange experiences with their peers from anti-corruption authorities (ACAs) and police oversight bodies (POBs). Between the workshops, a World Café session took place with the objective to meet the EPAC/EACN Board Members as well as delegates of other member organizations and to discuss views regarding the future role of EPAC/EACN.

On the last day of the conference, the results of the EPAC/EACN Working Groups (WGs) were dealt with. The WG “Analysis of big data, related legal aspects, and the use of databases”, chaired by the Lithuanian STT and co-chaired by the Romanian DNA, presented the interim outcome to the audience. The second WG (working title: „How can POB organizations monitor the authorities of police forces in respect of the balance between collective security and individual rights during mass meetings/ events?”) is headed by the Belgian Standing Police Monitoring Committee. Its first meeting was held in April 2018. Both working groups will continue their work in 2019. At the conference in Rust, the new WG “EU Integrity” was set up. It had been initiated by the BAK and will be co-chaired by Germany, France, Romania and Austria.

After the General Assembly the conference concluded with a speech given by Mr. Hermann Feiner, Director General at the Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior, who conveyed his gratitude to all participants, panellists, speakers and organizers for their contribution and commitment. Mr. Andreas Wieselthaler moderated the award ceremony for the project that the day before had been voted the most innovative. The 2018 EPAC/EACN award went to the Belgian Standing Police Monitoring Committee for the project “Policing the Police – A European Benchmark. Findings of the Belgian Standing Police Monitoring Committee in Search of Good Practices”.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

During the General Assembly, the membership applications of five new authorities were accepted: the Bulgarian Commission for Anti-Corruption and Illegal Assets (CACIAF), the Prevention and Fight Against Corruption Office of the Balearic Islands as well as the Valencian Anti-Fraud Agency, both from Spain, the Policing Authority of Ireland, and the Agency for the Prevention of Corruption and the Coordination of the Fight against Corruption (Bosnia and Herzegovina). This proves that EPAC/EACN continues to be an attractive European platform to share practical anti-corruption knowledge and experiences.

The General Assembly also re-elected the President of EPAC/EACN, Mr. Andreas Wieselthaler, as well as the Deputy Vice Presidents, Ms. Monique Stirn (Inspector General of Luxembourg Police) for the POB strand and Ms. Ruta Kaziliunaite (Deputy Head of the Administration Department of the Lithuanian STT) for the ACA strand. Finally, the Pannonia Declaration 2018 was adopted; its text is available at <http://www.epac-eacn.org/downloads/declarations>.



THIRD BOARD MEETING



The third board meeting in 2018 was held during the 18th Annual Professional Conference and General Assembly in Rust on 22 October. Present were the President of EPAC/EACN, Andreas Wieselthaler, the ACA’s Vice President, Mati Ombler, the

POB's Vice President, Jack Vissers, the Deputy Vice Presidents Ruta Kaziliunaite and Monique Stirn, as well as the secretariat of EPAC/EACN and representatives of the Austrian Federal Bureau of Anti-Corruption.

Topics discussed were the Pannonia Declaration, new memberships, the election of the President and the Deputy Vice Presidents at the General Assembly and a possible venue for the Annual Conference 2019. Furthermore, Jack Vissers gave an update on the working group: "How can POB organisations monitor the authorities of police forces in respect of the balance between collective security and individual rights during mass meetings/events". The second meeting of the WG will take place in the first quarter of 2019 and the final results will be presented during the 19th EPAC/EACN Annual Conference. The Austrian Federal Bureau of Anti-Corruption made the suggestion for a new working group, with the working title: "EU Integrity".



INTERNATIONAL ANTI-CORRUPTION DAY

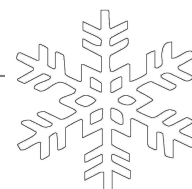
"We must never lower our guard in fighting corruption", said Marin Mrcela, President of the Group of States against Corruption of the Council of Europe (GRECO), ahead of the International Anti-Corruption Day on 9 December.

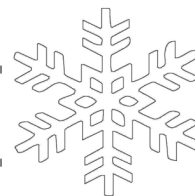
"Perception of low levels of corruption must not lead to complacency. No country is immune to corruption. All countries, irrespective of their position in perception indexes, are required to take concrete measures to prevent and counter corruption", he underlined.

"I call on all 49 GRECO member states to re-double their efforts to fully implement our recommendations. This is not only part of their commitment to GRECO's process, but it is essential to mitigate the negative impact of corruption on our societies. A corruption-free society is a precondition to peace, stability and security", President Mrcela concluded.

From 3-7 December in Strasbourg, GRECO held its 81st plenary meeting, where it adopted three 5th round evaluation reports focusing on corruption prevention in central governments, including top executive functions, and law enforcement in respect of Estonia, the Netherlands and Poland. It also adopted eight compliance reports (Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Hungary, Italy, Republic of Moldova and Sweden) and its 2019 Programme of Activity. GRECO also discussed preparations for its 20th anniversary in 2019.

[See: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/greco/-/international-anti-corruption-d-2>]





IACA UPDATE: GRADUATION AND HIGH-LEVEL COLLOQUIUM

The International Anti-Corruption Academy (IACA) recently celebrated the graduation of its fourth Master in Anti-Corruption Studies (MACS) class and held a high-level colloquium with the Ban Ki-moon Centre for Global Citizens on “The Global Fight against Corruption and the Notion of Global Citizenship”.

The new MACS graduates received their diplomas in a festive ceremony at IACA’s Laxenburg campus on 7 December, two days before International Anti-Corruption Day. They come from 17 countries around the world: Afghanistan, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Brazil, Denmark, Egypt, Ghana, India, Malawi, Netherlands, Nigeria, Oman, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda, and the United States of America. As working professionals, they serve government ministries, anti-corruption commissions, international organizations, private companies, law enforcement bodies, NGOs, and academia.

IACA launched the MACS in 2012 as the world’s first postgraduate programme in anti-corruption and compliance. It consists of seven modules, combining in-class and distance learning, and a master’s thesis.

At the joint colloquium on 15 November, the speakers were Ban Ki-moon, former United Nations Secretary-General and Co-chair of the Ban Ki-moon Centre, Heinz Fischer, former Federal President of Austria and Co-chair of the Centre, and Martin Kreutner, IACA’s Dean and Executive Secretary. Discussion focused on the state of anti-corruption efforts in the current global context, especially in connection with the UN’s 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

The colloquium was the first joint activity between IACA and the Ban Ki-moon Centre under a memorandum of understanding that the two organizations signed in August 2018.



THE 18th INTERNATIONAL ANTI-CORRUPTION CONFERENCE: ACT NOW FOR DEVELOPMENT, PEACE AND SECURITY

The 18th International Anti-Corruption Conference (IACC), with the theme *Together for development, peace and security: now is the time to act*, concluded in Copenhagen with a rallying cry from the anti-corruption movement: We are a global force and we will not be silenced. At a time when the rise of authoritarianism, in the guise of populist regimes, threatens all those who defend social justice regardless of the country, region or continent, the conference called on governments to protect civil society and its role in exposing and confronting corruption and engaging citizens.

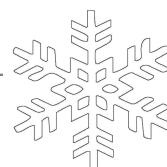
Speaking at the closing plenary, Delia Ferreira Rubio, Chair of Transparency International, said: "We are facing increasing threats to civil society space, freedom of speech, right to association, and increasing violence against activists and journalists. This has to stop. It is crucial for the sake for democracy and anti-corruption to defend the space for civil society".

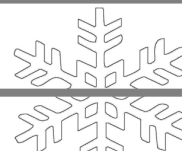
The Copenhagen declaration proclaims: "We are unanimous in our commitment to collaborate, build coalitions and unite so we can act together to end impunity for the corrupt. We recognise that the policies, the laws and conventions to stop corruption exist. Countries and the business community must effectively implement their existing anticorruption obligations, and must provide the resources needed to enforce anti-corruption laws and allow institutions to operate independently. Now is the time to act." Following the money-laundering scandal which saw €200 billion in suspicious transactions pass through the Estonian branch of Danske Bank, Denmark's biggest lender, the activists gathered in Copenhagen called for cross-border action to prevent the laundering of the proceeds of corruption and stem the flow of dirty money.

The conference also saw more than 45 governments, businesses and organisations sign a joint commitment to renewed anti-corruption efforts. Eighteen national governments and nine international and multilateral organisations issued their own commitments to advancing anti-corruption efforts. Huguette Labelle, Chair of the IACC Council, said: "This conference has brought a renewed commitment from all of us to tackle one of the most critical challenges of our time. However, fighting corruption is not an end in itself. It is the fight for social justice, for peace and for security. We need to mobilise citizens and communities at a much higher scale and speed than we have previously. Young people must not fall prey to terrorism and populist authoritarianism. They must be empowered and constructively engaged in the anti-corruption movement."

The 19th International Anti-Corruption Conference will be held in 2020 in Seoul, South Korea. The conference will explore the crucial contribution of the fight against corruption to ensuring peace and security.

[See: https://www.transparency.org/news/pressrelease/the_18th_international_anti_corruption_conference_act_now_for_development_p]





IMPROVING CO-OPERATION BETWEEN TAX AUTHORITIES AND ANTI-CORRUPTION AUTHORITIES IN COMBATING TAX CRIME

On 22 October 2018 during the 18th International Anti-Corruption Conference (IACC) in Copenhagen the OECD and World Bank launched a report on how tax and anti-corruption authorities can effectively co-operate in the fight against tax evasion, bribery, and other forms of corruption. The World Bank and OECD estimate the annual losses of revenues from tax evasion of billions; therefore, they consider it to be very important that countries enhance co-operation. Countries must ensure that tax and anti-corruption authorities can effectively co-operate in the fight against tax evasion, bribery, and other forms of corruption.

The report focuses on the legal, strategic, operational, and cultural aspects of co-operation between tax and anti-corruption authorities of 67 different countries. The aim of the report is to enable countries to review and evaluate their own approaches for co-operation and identify opportunities for improvements based on practices that have proved successful elsewhere. Furthermore, the report will be part of the OECD's and World Bank's capacity building work.

(See: <http://www.oecd.org/corruption/crime/oecd-and-world-bank-call-for-whole-of-government-approach-to-combating-tax-evasion-and-corruption.htm>)

COMBATING CORRUPTION Šibenik International Conference

The Croatian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) of the Council of Europe and the Ministry of Justice of Croatia organised an international conference on 15 and 16 October in Šibenik (Croatia) to discuss ways to strengthen transparency and accountability in the public and private sectors in order to combat corruption.

Held under the theme "Strengthening transparency and accountability to ensure integrity: united against corruption", the conference also aimed to promote national anti-corruption mechanisms and public transparency. Other topics on the agenda were the role of free media to promote transparency and integrity, and to fight corruption; the ethical responsibilities of journalists; and the risk that states may face when captured by corruption.

The conference brought together over 250 senior policy makers and experts from different regions of the world – including some 15 ministers of Justice and several Attorney and Prosecutor Generals. Speakers at the opening included Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Dražen Bošnjakovic, Minister of Justice of Croatia, and Marin Mrcela, President of GRECO and Vice-President of the



On the second day of the conference, a Declaration launching an international network of national anti-corruption bodies opened for signature. This network, sponsored by the Croatian, French and Italian anti-corruption authorities, is intended to promote the systematic collection, management and exchange of information, intelligence and good practices between national authorities tasked with preventing and fighting corruption.

(See: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/-/combating-corruption-sibenik-international-conference>)



OLAF AND PARTNERS TARGET VAT CAROUSEL FRAUD IN CROSS-BORDER OPERATION

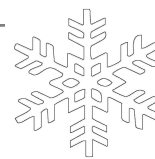
On 2-3 October, the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), the Romanian National Anticorruption Directorate (DNA) and the Italian Guardia di Finanza searched the homes and offices of several individuals in Romania, in a joint operation. Eight persons suspected of being part of a transnational organised criminal group are being interviewed by law enforcement officials.

Through efforts supported by OLAF at European level, the Prosecutor's Office of Ferrara (Italy) opened an investigation into suspected cross-border VAT fraud, spread over several EU Member States. The amount of evaded VAT is estimated at around EUR 30 million. It is alleged that a complex carousel fraud scheme was set up to evade VAT duties on the sale of high-value electronic devices. Fraudsters would avoid paying VAT to Italian authorities using shell companies throughout Europe and foreign bank accounts to hide their identity.

OLAF supported the Italian Prosecutor by liaising with the Romanian authorities and alerting them to the fact that the fraudsters were using Romanian front men and companies. A European Investigative Order was addressed by the Italian Prosecutor to the Romanian judicial authorities. Romanian magistrates consequently allowed Italian Guardia di Finanza officers to carry out joint searches in Romania, together with the DNA. OLAF investigators participated in the operation on the ground. To read about the operation in detail, see the [Guardia di Finanza press release](#).

Further information available on: https://ec.europa.eu/anti-fraud/media-corner/news/03-10-2018/olaf-and-partners-target-vat-carousel-fraud-cross-border-operation_en





COMMISSION ADOPTS ANNUAL REPORT ON THE PROTECTION OF THE EU'S FINANCIAL INTERESTS

On 3 September 2018, the European Commission adopted its Annual Report on the Protection of the EU's financial interests, covering the year 2017.

The Report finds that in 2017, the EU and its Member States made progress in tackling the cross-border challenges of fraud and irregularities against the EU financial interests. Both national and EU bodies showed increased awareness of the threats posed by fraudsters, as well as growing willingness to share information and best practices, and renewed political commitment to address these challenges.

In particular, two major legislative initiatives were adopted which will enhance the effectiveness and uniformity across the EU of the fight against cross-border fraud: the directive on the fight against fraud by means of criminal law, and the regulation establishing the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) by enhanced cooperation.

Alongside these flagship initiatives, other measures were adopted in 2017 to boost the protection of the EU financial interests. Member States reinforced their national systems and procedures focusing on prevention and detection, for instance on public opinion campaigns, on reorganisation of national anti-fraud services, on the deployment of dedicated IT tools, focused trainings and joint operations.

Further information available on: https://ec.europa.eu/anti-fraud/media-corner/news/03-10-2018/olaf-and-partners-target-vat-carousel-fraud-cross-border-operation_en



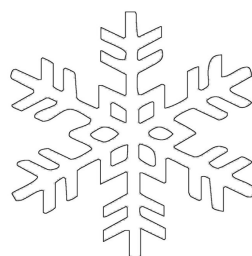
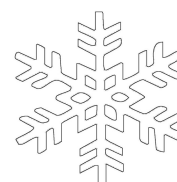
ANTI-CORRUPTION EXPERIENCE SHARING PROGRAMME

Experience-Sharing Workshop - The Role of Prosecution in the Fight against high-level Corruption

The 10th Experience Sharing Workshop, organised by the Directorate-General Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME) of the European Commission brought together senior prosecutors and law enforcement officials from Member States, law professionals, civil society, private sector as well as investigative journalists and representatives of international organisations and bodies involved in the fight against corruption (Europol, GRECO) and Commission experts.

The 2014 EU Anti-corruption report showed that many Member States place a high burden on law enforcement and prosecution bodies or on anti-corruption agencies which are perceived to be solely responsible for addressing corruption in the country. Corruption cannot be tackled without a comprehensive approach aiming to also effectively enhance prevention and control mechanisms throughout the public administration, at central and local levels. However, prosecution remains the critical element in fighting corruption. In the absence of effective and successful prosecutions, impunity will prevail. It is essential that prosecution services are independent, have adequate capacity and resources and benefit from the necessary support.

Further information available on: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/organized-crime-and-human-trafficking/corruption/experience-sharing-programme_en



OVERVIEW OF UPCOMING EVENTS AND CONFERENCES

22 to 24 January 2019:	10 th IAACA Annual Conference and General Meeting
18 to 22 March 2019:	82 nd Plenary Meeting (GRECO), Strasbourg
20 to 21 March 2019:	OECD Global Anti-Corruption & Integrity Forum
First quarter of 2019:	Second Meeting of the EPAC POB Working Group
24 May 2019:	Intersessional Meeting UNCAC - Drawing of Lots, Vienna
27 to 29 May 2019:	Meeting UNCAC Implementation Review Group, Vienna
29 to 30 May 2019:	Meeting UNCAC Working Group on Asset Recovery, Vienna
30 to 31 May 2019:	Expert Meeting on International Cooperation, Vienna
17 to 21 June 2019:	83 rd Plenary Meeting (GRECO), Strasbourg
First half of 2019:	First Meeting of the EPAC/EACN WG "EU Integrity"

