



NEWSLETTER 03 24

**Dear EPAC/EACN members and observers,
Dear colleagues and friends,**

With great pleasure, the EPAC/EACN Secretariat is delighted to present you with the 3rd edition of EPAC/EACN Newsletter, showcasing valuable information from EPAC/EACN network as well as featuring news from other international sources.

As always, we would appreciate your contributions about future or past events, conferences, seminars, training courses, studies, project findings, so that we can include them in the next newsletter.

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**Wishing you
a joyful holiday season
and a prosperous 2025!**

Your EPAC/EACN Secretariat

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II PUBLICATIONS & EVENTS



EPAC/EACN BOARD NEWS

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 23RD EPAC/EACN CONFERENCE IN BUCHAREST

The 23rd Annual Professional Conference and General Assembly of the European Partners Against Corruption (EPAC) and the European Contact Point Network Against Corruption (EACN) took place on November 26–27, 2023, in Bucharest, Romania. The event convened 170 participants representing nearly 100 institutions from over 30 countries, under the inspiring theme "Together for Integrity."

The event in Bucharest was attended by 170 participants representing nearly 100 institutions from over 30 countries. Presentations were given by representatives of the UNODC, Council of Europe, European Commission, European Public Prosecutor's Office, Europol, the U.S. Department of Justice, and anti-corruption bodies from other countries.

As stated by **Ovidiu-Ciprian Antohe, Director of the General Anticorruption Directorate (DGA)** within the Romanian Ministry of Internal Affairs: "Corruption is a complex issue that transcends national borders, a worldwide plague that affects all societies and all aspects of social life, making it challenging for any single institution or country to effectively address it alone. Our almost 20 year experience with national and international partners has shown that sharing best practices, knowledge and resources is the best way to achieve tangible results in this field. This Conference provides an exceptional opportunity to enhance international cooperation in the field of integrity and to strengthen our shared efforts to prevent and combat corruption. Through open dialogue and exchange of experiences among experts from various countries, we actively contribute to developing more effective responses to corruption".





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“The topic of the Conference perfectly reflects the essence of our mission: integrity and transparency are the foundation of trust in our societies. This is a core principle of our work. However, achieving integrity is only possible through unity – when representatives from different countries, institutions, and sectors join forces to combat corruption,” said **Linas Pervanas, EPAC/EACN President and Director of the Special Investigation Service**, during his opening speech.

The Conference primarily focused on the challenges of investigating international corruption crimes, with significant attention given to innovative tools and methods for investigating financial crimes, high-level corruption cases, and international bribery investigations, as well as asset recovery procedures related to proceeds from corruption-related criminal activities. Breakout sessions explored the growing importance of big data analytics, its proactive use in uncovering corruption-related crimes, identifying potential corruption risks, contributing to the initiation of investigations, and successful case resolution.



DAY 1: DRIVING STRATEGIC DIALOGUE AND OPERATIONAL COLLABORATION

The conference opened with a warm welcome from Mihai Bârlîci, EPAC/EACN Deputy Vice-President and Director of the Prevention Directorate, Romania's Anti-Corruption General Directorate (DGA). Dignitaries Marian-Cătălin Predoiu, Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Internal Affairs of Romania; Linas Parnavas, EPAC/EACN President and Director of Lithuania's Special Investigation Service (STT); and Ovidiu-Ciprian Antohe, General Director of the hosting institution, set the stage by emphasizing the need for robust cooperation to counter corruption's global challenges.



The keynote speech by Laura Codruța Kövesi, European Chief Prosecutor, underscored the European Union's steadfast commitment to combatting corruption and safeguarding financial interests.

The first session featured insights from esteemed experts like Brigitte Strobil-Shaw (UNODC), Livia Stoica Becht (GRECO), Jeroen Blomsma (European Commission) and Marius Ionuț Voineag (Romania). They shared updates on the strategic frameworks for preventing corruption and fostering international collaboration.

Thematic panels explored innovative tools and strategies for tackling high-level corruption and fraud. During the panel "Investigating and prosecuting corruption and fraud", led by Simona Mihaela Prescorniță (Romania), featuring Dana-Manuela Ana (European Delegated Prosecutor) on cross-border cooperation, Burkhard Mühl (Europol) on financial investigation advancements, Radu Florin Ionescu (Romania) on high-level case investigations and prosecutions, and Peter Halpern (USA) on combating corruption, created a robust operational plan for stakeholders.



The conference significantly focused on investigating and preventing corruption. Panels focused on the crucial aspects of financial investigations, showcasing new tools and developments, including advanced digital solutions that play a significant role in tracing illicit activities.

Break-out sessions provided platforms for more focused discussions. Topics ranged from the use of technology in corruption investigations to the best practices in asset recovery and the challenges of transnational corruption prevention.

The breakout sessions allowed participants to delve deeper into specialized topics:



- **Best practices in investigating transnational corruption.** Highlighted by Alexis Durand (France), Semen Kryvonos (Ukraine), Neil Walsh (GlobE), Romulus Nicolae Ungur (Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre) the session explored best practices and operational platforms for international collaboration. The session's moderator was Burkhard MÜHL, Head of the European Financial and Economic Crime Centre at EUROPOL.
- **Contemporary challenges and opportunities in investigating corruption and fraud.** Panellists Maris Urbans (OECD), Mădălina Tița (Romania), Ziya Hajiyeve and Isfandiyar Hajiyeve (Azerbaijan), and Tomas Verpečinskas (Lithuania), along with moderator Cosmin Daniel Hălălaș (Romania), discussed their experience in investigating corruption cases.

- **Challenges associated with identifying and recovering criminal assets.** Moderator Cornel-Virgiliu Călinescu (Romania), alongside experts Marjolijn Van Der Hart (Netherlands), Peter Halpern (US), and Jurgita Stefanovičienė (Lithuania), presented innovative approaches to recovering illicit assets.
- **Risk based approaches in preventing corruption and fraud.** Moderator Ernst Schmid (Austria) led a session on customized anti-corruption strategies, featuring Viktor Pavlushchik (Ukraine), Manuel García Bernárdez (Spain), Louise-Marie Petrovic (Austria), and Mihai Bârlici (Romania).

Lucile Roland (France), EPAC/EAC vice-president, moderated the segment "Preventing Corruption and Integrity Building in Law Enforcement." exploring integrity-boosting mechanisms and strategies for European law enforcement.



Livia Stoica Becht (GRECO) shared findings from GRECO's 5th round of evaluations, which assess the effectiveness of measures in place to prevent and combat corruption in member states.

Following GRECO's insightful presentation, Romania's DGPI representatives facilitated a focused discussion on their internal security measures, particularly pre-employment vetting and background checks for classified information access.

The plenary discussions set the stage for more focused break-out sessions where experts from across Europe shared insights into the challenges and innovations in their fields.



- **Emerging issues in corruption prevention, integrity training and police oversight.** Moderators Lucile Rolland (France) and Mihai Bărbulescu (Romania) steered a discussion on corruption prevention and police oversight, with panelists including Hellen Hall (Ireland), Johan De Volder (Belgium), and Dalia Lombardero Chartuni (Lithuania). The session highlighted innovations in integrity training and the importance of cross-country collaboration in oversight practices.



- **Challenges and new developments on combating corruption and improving resilience of police profession.** Manuela Popescu (Romania) moderated a session with insights from Willem Jan de Koning and Simone Zwaan (The Netherlands), Adrian Radu (Romania), and Carlos Agudo (Spain). Discussions focused on leveraging technology to combat corruption and enhancing internal monitoring to maintain law enforcement integrity.



- **Insights from Situational Reports on Corruption.** Moderated by Ernst Schmid (Austria), this panel featured Ana-Lorena Sava (Romania), Louise-Marie Petrovic (Austria), and Valentin Gabriel Topoloiu (Romania), who shared updates on national anti-corruption strategies and the impact of data-driven approaches on policy-making.





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DAY 2: BUILDING RESILIENCE AND FOSTERING COOPERATION



The second day emphasized resilience in anti-corruption frameworks. Ana Revuelta Alonso (UNCAC Coalition) provided insights on civil society engagement, Florin Moise (Romania) discussed integrity IT tools, Agnieszka Kwiatkowska-Gurdak (Poland) highlighted the CBA's initiative, and Egidijus Radzevičius (Lithuania) presented a comprehensive strategy for Lithuania's STT; these contributions, discussed at length, collectively demonstrated a firm resolve to align preventative measures, enforcement actions, and public awareness campaigns.

Cornel-Virgiliu Călinescu (Romania) presented proposals for a new international cooperation instrument focused on criminal asset recovery, underscoring the need for global coordination.



A special breakout session, moderated by Andrei Furdui (Romania), celebrated the 25th anniversary of the OECD Anti-Bribery Convention. Panellists discussed its transformative impact and highlighted ongoing reforms across partner nations, showcasing successful case studies from France, Latvia, and other countries. Among the speakers at the session are Anca Jurma (OECD Anti-Corruption Network for Eastern Europe and Central Asia), Hendrik Bosshammer (OECD South East Europe Division), Angélique Ivanciuc (France), and Andrejs Lisenko (Latvia).

The second breakout session, moderated by Silviu Ioan Popa (Romania), examined how automated tools maintain integrity in public offices. Among the speaker were Bruno González Valdelièvre (Spain), Laura Valli (Italy), Jeanne Ollivier (France), Viktor Pavlushchuk (Ukraine).

This session will provided a platform to explore the transformative potential of these tools, including their usage for various purposes, such as online disclosure of financial interests, automated verification of assets declaration, prevention of conflicts of interest, or raising awareness towards integrity incidents.



EPAC/EACN AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN ANTI-CORRUPTION INITIATIVES

The announcement of the EPAC/EACN Award for the most innovative anti-corruption project was another highlight, recognizing outstanding achievements in advancing integrity and oversight.

Five nominations for the EPAC/ EACN Award were presented:

- Anti-Corruption Collective Action Impact Centre initiated by International Anti-Corruption Academy (IACA)
- Innovative awareness raising activities to support integrity development processes in the society initiated by National Protective Service of Hungary
- FIDIAS OBSERVATORY (Enhancing integrity through the social research and analysis) initiated by Andalusian Anti-Fraud Office (OAAF)
- Monitoring system of public contracts ("Mo.Co.P.") initiated by Guardia di Finanza
- Strengthening the bounds and the visibility of the anti-corruption Law enforcement European community through the EMPACT framework initiated by Central Office for the Fight against Corruption and Financial and Fiscal Offenses (OCLCIFI).



This year's award went to the **National Protective Service of Hungary** for their initiative on Innovative Awareness-Raising Activities to Support Integrity Development Processes in Society. Their program includes educational initiatives aimed at inspiring value-based behaviours in younger generations and promoting integrity through positive, value-driven communication. Their initiatives involves an ethics and integrity educational program for teachers to inspire Generation Alpha and Z with value-based behaviours, and a flexible educational package for law enforcement students (Generation Z) to enhance responsibility and awareness in combating corruption.

Congratulations to the winners!

THE BEST PRACTICE EXCHANGE IN FIGHTING CORRUPTION AND FRAUD PROJECT

During the EPAC/EACN conference, Aušrida Rinkevičienė, representative of the Special Investigation Service of Lithuania (STT) and the EPAC/EACN Secretariat, had the honour of presenting the results of the Best Anti-Corruption Practice Exchange (BACPE) project. This ongoing initiative, financed by the Union Anti-Fraud Programme and implemented by the Lithuanian STT for the benefit of all EPAC/EACN members, is supporting 42 best practice exchange visits.



Best Anti-Corruption Practice Exchange - a project under Union Anti-Fraud Programme

IDEA

- Set up a platform for exchanging knowledge and best practice in fighting corruption and fraud EPAC/EACN

MAIN OBJECTIVES

- Enhance a network of anti-corruption experts and practitioners
- Exchange of anti-corruption knowledge and practices between EPAC/EACN members

LIST OF TOPICS

- Whistleblower protection
- Asset recovery
- Corruption risk assessment and management
- Anti-Corruption awareness raising
- Criminal investigation of corruption and fraud
- Big Data analysis

Participating institutions may send up to three employees, each with over five years of relevant experience, to another member institution. Travel and accommodation costs for these exchange visits are covered by the project's funding. For the widest possible spread of best practices, participation is limited to one institution per country per topic, and each institution can only visit twice.

Participants must submit detailed visit reports to support the network's learning and best-practice sharing.

Additional information:
<https://www.epac-eacn.org/practice-exchange>

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT!

As BACPE project continues to unfold, EPAC/EACN Secretariat is happy to announce the availability of 6 additional visits that promise to deepen our understanding and enhance our capabilities in crucial areas of anti-corruption efforts.

The upcoming visits will focus on a variety of essential topics, each tailored to address specific challenges and opportunities within the realm of corruption prevention and control:



- **Whistle-blower Protection.** Strengthening the safeguards for those who courageously report wrongdoing.
- **Asset Recovery.** Enhancing techniques to recover stolen assets and disrupt the financial incentives for engaging in corrupt practices.
- **Corruption Risk Assessment and Management.** Implementing robust mechanisms to identify and mitigate corruption risks.
- **Anti-Corruption Awareness Raising.** Increasing the awareness of corruption issues among the public and within organizations.
- **Criminal Investigation of Corruption and Fraud.** Sharpening investigative strategies to effectively tackle corruption and fraud.
- **Big Data Analysis.** Utilizing advanced data analysis techniques to uncover and predict corruption patterns.

These thematic visits are not just meetings; they are a platform for exchanging best practices, gaining new insights, and collaboratively forging paths toward a more transparent society. Each visit is an opportunity to foster an environment of learning and mutual support, where participants can share experiences and develop new strategies to enhance their anti-corruption initiatives.

We invite all EPAC/EACN members to apply for the support of best-practice exchange visit.

Please note that the deadline for applications is **January 17, 2025**. For more details on how to apply and what to expect, please refer to the comments section below.



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WELCOMING NEW MEMBERS TO EPAC

EPAC/EACN have once again demonstrated the pivotal role in uniting anti-corruption authorities and police oversight bodies across Europe. This year's EPAC/EACN conference marked a significant milestone, as the General Assembly welcomed five new organisations to the EPAC network. The inclusion of these organizations expands EPAC's reach to 119 anti-corruption and police oversight bodies across 39 European countries.

The new members and observers include:

**National Agency
on Corruption
Prevention (NACP)**

UKRAINE



**National Integrity
Authority (ANI)**

MOLDOVA



**National Agency
for the
Management of
Seized Assets
(ANABI)**

ROMANIA



**State Commission
for Prevention of
Corruption (SCPC)**

**NORTH
MACEDONIA**



**Agency for
Prevention of
Corruption**

KOSOVO¹



The continued growth and collaboration within EPAC/EACN underscore the importance of collective action in tackling corruption. As more institutions join this network, Europe takes a step closer to realizing a unified approach to governance and ethical standards, ensuring that anti-corruption efforts resonate across borders and sectors.

UPDATING CONTACT INFORMATION FOR EPAC/EACN CONTACT CATALOGUE

The EPAC/EACN Secretariat is conducting its annual update of the contact data for all members and observers within our networks. To ensure the accuracy and relevance of our contact catalogue, we kindly request your cooperation in verifying your organization's information.

Please take the following steps to support this important process:

- **Verify Your Organization's Information.** Check your organization's contact details on our website to ensure they are up-to-date.
- **Review Other Organizations in Your Country.** Help us maintain accuracy by checking the details of other organizations in your country. If you notice changes, such as a name update, a new email address, or if an organization no longer exists, please inform us so we can make the necessary adjustments.
- **Provide Updates or Confirm No Changes.** Please, email any updates or corrections to dovile.baroli@stt.lt or secretariat@epac-eacn.org. Please submit all updates or confirmations by **31 January, 2025**.

We deeply appreciate your assistance in ensuring the accuracy of our records. By working together, we continue to strengthen the collaborative efforts of EPAC/EACN networks.

¹ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.



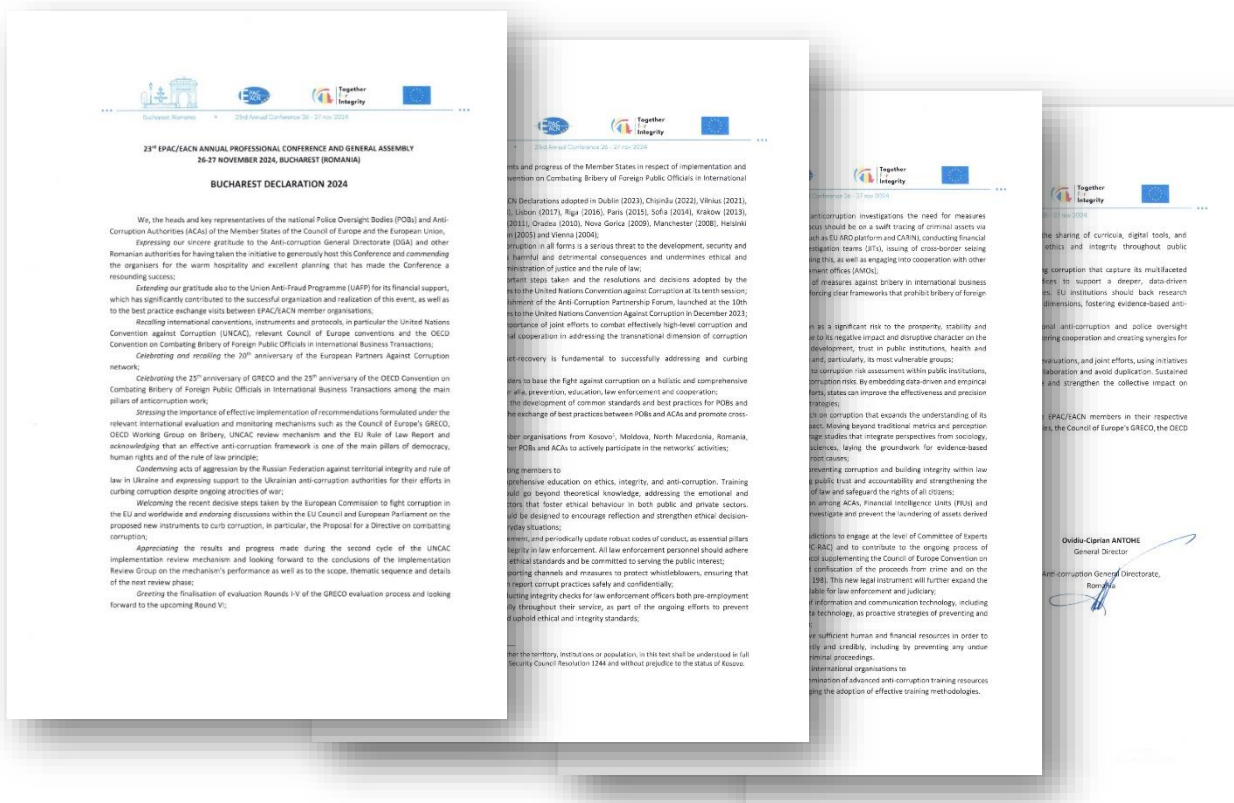
ADOPTION OF THE BUCHAREST DECLARATION

The conference was a momentous occasion marked by the adoption of the **Bucharest Declaration**, a resolution affirming the shared commitment of nations to intensify efforts in combating corruption and fostering integrity. This declaration emphasizes the collective role of governments, institutions, and societies in building transparency and trust.

The EPAC/EACN Bucharest Declaration has been officially sent to high-ranking officials and entities deeply engaged in the fight against corruption on an international scale. The recipients of the declaration include Eurojust, the European Commission, the European Committee of the Regions, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), the European Parliament, the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) of the Council of Europe, the OECD Working Group on Bribery in International Business Transactions, the OECD Anti-Corruption Division, Directorate for Financial and Enterprise Affairs (DAF), and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

The EPAC/EACN Secretariat is actively encouraging its members to disseminate the message about the adoption of the Bucharest Declaration within their respective countries and to undertake further necessary actions to implement the suggestions outlined in the declaration. By promoting the principles and actions stipulated in the Bucharest Declaration, EPAC/EACN seeks to reinforce the collective efforts in combating corruption and promoting integrity among public institutions, thereby contributing to the creation of a more just and ethical society.

For those interested in the full text of the Bucharest Declaration, please visit <https://www.epac-eacn.org/documents>





KEY TAKEAWAYS AND MOVING FORWARD

1. **Enhanced Collaboration.** The conference reinforced the importance of cross-border partnerships and joint operations to dismantle corruption networks effectively.
2. **Technological Integration.** Discussions highlighted the growing role of digital tools and artificial intelligence in strengthening transparency and oversight mechanisms.
3. **Institutional Integrity.** From law enforcement vetting to integrity training, the conference showcased innovative practices for building resilient institutions.

The 23rd EPAC/EACN Conference served as a vital platform for dialogue, collaboration, and innovation in the fight against corruption. As **Ovidiu-Ciprian Antohe**, Director of the General Anticorruption Directorate of Romania, noted: *"This conference provides an exceptional opportunity to enhance international cooperation in the field of integrity and to strengthen our shared efforts to prevent and combat corruption. By sharing best practices and resources, we achieve tangible results in this critical area."*

The EPAC/EACN Secretariat thanks all participants and contributors and is already looking forward to the next annual conference in 2025.





INVITATION TO EUROPOL CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

As EPAC/EACN member, Europol, are delighted to invite members of the network to the forthcoming **Conference on Human Rights and Law Enforcement**, scheduled for **February 20-21, 2025** at Europol headquarters.

Dear Colleagues,

Next year, Europol will host a conference that puts fundamental rights at the heart of policing. We are gathering law enforcement leaders to examine if and how violations of fundamental rights occur within policing, as well as how they are caused and what initiatives are underway to prevent such infringements.

We will ask: how does law enforcement implement new technologies in a fundamental rights-compliant way? Many good practices exist already, and this conference is the opportunity to learn from colleagues, national and European organisations, and the private sector.

I invite you to save the date in your diaries for the conference, which will take place:

Date: 20 February 2025 13:00 to 21 February 2025 13:00

Venue: Europol Headquarters

Audience: Law enforcement, the JHA network, and EU bodies, governmental organizations

On invitation for non-governmental organizations

Why is Europol hosting this event?

Law enforcement have a monopoly on force, but are legally bound to respect fundamental rights in all police actions and activities. These actions and activities, as well as the mentality of law enforcement staff, are often criticised by civil society and the press. Studies such as a recent publication of the FRA mention the discrimination and racism still present in police forces. Others highlight the difficulties in respecting fundamental rights at borders. Meanwhile today's police grapple with criticism stemming from the use of technology, with some fearing fundamental rights are at risk. Furthermore, the community of law enforcement is not immune to tendencies emerging all over the world, such as political polarisation.

Nonetheless, law enforcement's mission is to protect people from violations of human rights. As a result, police forces across Europe go to incredible lengths to ensure fundamental rights are protected and respected. Community policing initiatives emerge, and fundamental rights trainings are growing - from academic courses to more focussed trainings. At the same time, law enforcement bodies are developing methodologies to assess the fundamental rights compliance of new police techniques.

At this conference, Europol will bring together a wide array of people and perspectives to delve deep into one of the biggest challenges facing law enforcement today. I hope that you can attend and be part of this event, which I believe offers benefits across policing and beyond.

With my best regards,

Dirk Allaerts

Fundamental Rights Officer, Europol

This conference seeks to gather senior management, human resources professionals, training units, strategy development teams, and inspectorates from law enforcement agencies.

The aim of the Conference is to foster a robust dialogue on the critical intersection of human rights and law enforcement practices, ensuring alignment and excellence in our daily operations and organizational mandates.

Should you have any questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact Fundamental Rights Officer at Europol, **Dirk Allaerts**, via email at dirk.allaerts@europol.europa.eu.