Dear EPAC/EACN members, colleagues, and friends,

With great pleasure, the EPAC/EACN Secretariat presents this newsletter summarising the key discussions and outcomes of the 24th EPAC/EACN Annual Professional Conference and General Assembly, held on 24–25 November 2025 at Eurojust in The Hague, together with highlights from the High-Level Meeting of Police Oversight and Anti-Corruption Authorities, convened on the margins of the conference.

This edition also reflects EPAC/EACN's continued engagement at global level through a high-level side event organised together with the OECD during UNCAC COSP11. The structure and tone follow EPAC/EACN newsletter practice.

Season's Greetings

As the year draws to a close, we would like to sincerely thank all EPAC/EACN members and observers for your active engagement, openness and continued commitment to strengthening integrity and combating corruption across Europe and beyond. We wish you and your teams a peaceful holiday season and a healthy, successful and inspiring New Year, and we look forward to continuing our cooperation in the year ahead.

And as always, we warmly encourage you to share information about your recent or upcoming activities—events, conferences, seminars, training initiatives, studies, project results, and more—for inclusion in future issues. Your continued engagement strengthens our community and supports the exchange of knowledge.

Your EPAC/EACN Secretariat

EPAC/EACN SECRETARIAT NEWS

The 24th EPAC/EACN Annual Conference and General Assembly

The 24th EPAC/EACN Annual Conference and General Assembly took place 24-25 November, 2025 in The Hague, the Netherlands at a moment when corruption risks are increasingly shaped by cross-border crime, geopolitical tensions, hybrid threats and rapid digital transformation. Throughout the two days, discussions repeatedly returned to a shared message – corruption cannot be addressed effectively through isolated actions or single-institution approaches.

Participants stressed that prevention, investigation, prosecution and oversight must be combined in practice, supported by trusted cooperation channels, strong financial intelligence and modern tools for asset tracing and recovery. The conference provided a platform where prevention experts, investigators, prosecutors and oversight bodies could exchange concrete experience, build trust and take forward practical solutions.

The conference was officially opened by Michael Schmid, President of Eurojust, and Linas Pernavas, President of EPAC/EACN and Director of the Lithuanian Special Investigation Service. Both speakers highlighted that corruption increasingly operates across borders and institutional mandates, and that effective responses require closer cooperation between judicial authorities, anti-corruption bodies and oversight institutions. They emphasised EPAC/EACN as a space that connects prevention, enforcement and policy perspectives, and as a platform that supports practical cooperation based on trust and professional exchange.

Plenary Session I

Plenary Session I, moderated by **Paweł Wąsik**, Chair of the Economic Crimes Team at Eurojust, focused on strategic support in the field of corruption prevention and integrity.

A central contribution came from **David Meyer**, President of GRECO at the Council of Europe, who framed corruption as a symptom of systemic weaknesses rather than isolated misconduct. He stressed that investigations and prosecutions remain essential but are inherently retrospective, while prevention is the approach that addresses the conditions that allow corruption to emerge.

GRECO's model was presented as a thematic peer-review system that does not investigate individual cases, but evaluates whether states have effective integrity frameworks in place, supported by detailed questionnaires, country visits, tailored recommendations and compliance checks. The discussion highlighted that GRECO's evaluations commonly focus on issues that reappear across jurisdictions, including conflicts of interest, codes of conduct, lobbying rules, transparency systems and whistleblower protection. Meyer underlined that GRECO's impact is tangible when political will exists: across many states, GRECO recommendations have contributed to major legislative and institutional changes, including constitutional amendments. He encouraged members to actively use findings from GRECO's fifth and sixth evaluation rounds, particularly those dealing with top executive functions of government and sub-national level governance, as practical case studies for strengthening preventive systems, and invited authorities to work closely with GRECO and draw on its expertise.

From the enforcement perspective, **José António Lopes Ranito**, European Prosecutor at the European Public Prosecutor's Office, described the evolution of EPPO since it became operational on 1 June 2021 and the sharp increase in workload as EU fraud and corruption threats expanded. He highlighted vulnerabilities that recur in practice, including insufficient conflict-of-interest regulation in procurement procedures, collusive practices among bidders, and systemic corruption risks linked to customs duties and VAT. He emphasised that modern corruption cases often involve organised criminal networks supported by professional intermediaries and strong legal defence, which makes early detection and robust financial investigations decisive both for case construction and for asset recovery.

A key practical challenge identified during the discussion was the uneven ability of Member States to detect risks early and the lack of interoperability between detection systems, which can weaken risk-parameter tools and slow down investigations. The speaker referred to the importance of structured cooperation in cross-border settings, including rapid mutual legal assistance and clear operational protocols with national prosecution offices. Training and exchanges were highlighted as practical solutions, including internships and targeted programmes to support national experts, as well as shared learning and networking based on real operational experience. The discussion also underlined the

growing importance of handling digital evidence effectively and the value of coordinated support in forensic work and cross-border evidence gathering.

Monika Mosshammer, Deputy Head of Unit at the European Commission (DG JUST), linked corruption to the rule of law, public trust and the business environment, framing it as a challenge that undermines both democratic legitimacy and economic competitiveness. She referred to recent survey findings discussed during the session, showing high public concern about corruption and comparatively low confidence in the effectiveness of national government action. From a legislative perspective, she explained ongoing work on EU-level standards through a proposed directive designed to harmonise the definition of corruption-related offences and penalties, strengthen investigative tools and support more consistent enforcement across the EU.

The annual Rule of Law Report was highlighted as a key monitoring tool that helps identify risks and gaps at national level. While progress has been observed across many Member States, the discussion also emphasised persistent challenges, including gaps in the investigation, prosecution and conviction of high-level corruption. The Commission's preparations for a broader EU anti-corruption strategy were also presented, with a focus on resilience, security, competitiveness and the need for more reliable data. Authorities and practitioners were encouraged to engage actively and contribute to upcoming public consultations so that EU-level action reflects practical needs on the ground.

Jean-Philippe Lecouffe, Deputy Executive Director of Europol, described corruption as a key enabler of organised crime and a structural threat that undermines institutions and the rule of law. The discussion highlighted the practical reality that corruption is used to access information, influence decisions and protect illegal activities, affecting sectors as diverse as ports, logistics, real estate, finance, law enforcement and judicial systems.

Europol's operational value was presented through its support for secure information exchange, analytical work that turns data into intelligence and a focus on asset tracing and recovery, including capabilities relevant to crypto-assets. Special attention was given to the importance of confidentiality and trust, and to the growing relevance of public–private partnerships where key information is held by financial institutions and technology providers. Participants were encouraged to make active use of Europol tools and specialist expertise to strengthen cross-border casework and disrupt criminal networks by depriving them of illicit proceeds.

Salla Saastamoinen, Acting Director-General of OLAF, highlighted the strong overlap between anti-fraud and anti-corruption work and the need to treat them as mutually reinforcing challenges. The session addressed how fraud can enable corruption and vice versa, and why coherent multi-level strategies matter. The discussion referenced the importance of national anti-fraud strategies and the evolving EU anti-fraud architecture, including ongoing reviews aimed at strengthening the overall framework from prevention to detection, investigation and recovery.

OLAF's practical support was presented in terms of strategic analytical work, forensic and digital forensic expertise and training opportunities. The Union Anti-Fraud Programme was discussed as a concrete avenue for capacity-building through equipment, training and cooperation projects, including examples of successful use by national authorities. Participants were encouraged to deepen cooperation and to make strategic use of available EU funding opportunities that strengthen tools, skills and inter-institutional collaboration.

Kolbrún Benediktsdóttir presented Eurojust's operational role in supporting complex cross-border corruption cases through coordination meetings, joint investigation teams and specialised judicial cooperation tools. The discussion highlighted how these mechanisms help resolve legal and practical obstacles, especially when multiple jurisdictions and third countries are involved. Eurojust's ability to support coordination meetings in person or by video link, with interpretation and structured facilitation, was emphasised as a practical tool for aligning investigative steps and preventing evidence loss.

Participants also discussed the growing importance of specialised cooperation on money laundering and asset recovery, and the increasing use of joint investigation teams in corruption-related cases. The session highlighted that third-country involvement is a rising feature in corruption investigations, and that early and structured coordination often determines whether investigations progress efficiently.

Plenary Session II

Plenary Session II, moderated by **Ernst Schmid**, EPAC/EACN Vice-President, brought theory into practice through concrete case presentations showing how international cooperation works under pressure.

Hilde Vandevoorde from Eurojust presented a corruption case linked to procurement within NATO's NSPA structures, describing how the investigation grew from initial mutual legal assistance requests into a complex multi-country cooperation effort. The presentation illustrated how Eurojust supported coordination between jurisdictions through structured meetings, guidance on financial and bank verifications, asset identification and advice on legal questions around immunities, seizures, freezing measures and arrests. The case demonstrated the operational value of "getting everyone around the table early," especially when the legal environment includes immunities and cross-border evidence chains.

Desirée T.T.M. van der Hoorn presented the work of the International Anti-Corruption Coordination Centre (IACCC) as an operational support mechanism for grand corruption investigations involving high-level public officials. The discussion highlighted the complexity of such cases, the role of politically exposed persons and international corporate structures, and the importance of pooling intelligence to trace assets across borders. Examples referenced in the session illustrated how international cooperation can accelerate investigations that might otherwise take many years and can support the recovery of significant stolen public funds.

Alexis Durand presented a complex French case involving fugitives who obtained asylum and were removed from international alert systems through corrupt practices and forged documents. The presentation highlighted the importance of persistence, trust-building and using multiple channels in parallel, including Interpol and Europol support, judicial cooperation and asset-focused tools.

Cosmin-Daniel Hălălău from Romania's National Anticorruption Directorate presented a NATO-related bribery case involving several jurisdictions, describing how joint investigation teams and mutual legal assistance were used to overcome legal and technical obstacles such as differences in surveillance rules and jurisdictional constraints. Across all cases, one lesson stood out consistently: early coordination and clear cooperation channels save time and reduce the risk of evidence being lost or fragmented across systems.

Break-out Sessions

The second day of the Conference was structured around two rounds of parallel break-out sessions, allowing participants to engage in more focused, practice-oriented discussions. These sessions brought together senior practitioners, analysts, investigators and educators to exchange concrete experience across five core areas of anti-corruption and integrity work.

Parallel Break-Out Sessions I

The first round of parallel Break-out Sessions allowed participants to explore three distinct but closely connected areas of anti-corruption practice: integrity challenges in law enforcement, measuring corruption, and corruption risks in public procurement and infrastructure projects.

Session A – Integrity Challenges in Law Enforcement Oversight

Session A focused on integrity risks within law enforcement and the role of oversight and internal control mechanisms in identifying and addressing systemic weaknesses. The session was moderated by **Hugh Hume**, Deputy Vice-President of EPAC/EACN and CEO of the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland (United Kingdom). In his opening presentation, "Improving Policing Through Insights – Shifting the Focus from Individual Failings to the Identification of Systemic Weakness", Hugh Hume highlighted the need for oversight bodies to move beyond case-by-case responses and towards identifying patterns, organisational vulnerabilities and root causes of misconduct.

This was followed by **Lucile Rolland**, Deputy Director of the Inspectorate General of the National Police (IGPN), France, and EPAC/EACN Vice-President, who presented "Preventing and tackling the illegitimate use of the police databases". Her contribution focused on risks related to unauthorised access to police databases and the importance of preventive controls, monitoring mechanisms and accountability frameworks. **Carlos Eduardo Agudo Capon** of the Spanish National Police shared operational experience in "Lessons learned from Operation Augur: International cooperation in internal investigations", illustrating how cross-border cooperation can support complex internal investigations involving multiple jurisdictions. The Romanian perspective was provided by **Cristina Neagu**, Head of Department at the General Directorate of Internal Protection (Romania), in her presentation "Extensions of integrity concept in the Ministry of Internal Affairs". She emphasised integrity as a broader organisational culture encompassing prevention, leadership responsibility and internal communication, rather than solely disciplinary action.

The session concluded with **Eurico Silva**, Inspector at the Inspectorate General of Internal Affairs (IGAI), Portugal, who presented "Monitoring of Forced Return Police Operations and Scheduled Police Operations at Major Events", demonstrating how independent monitoring of sensitive operations contributes to transparency, accountability and public trust.

Session B – Measuring Corruption

Session B addressed the challenge of measuring corruption in ways that support prevention, policy-making and institutional reform. The session was moderated by **Mihai Bârlici,** Deputy Vice-President of EPAC/EACN and Head of the Prevention Directorate at the Anti-Corruption General Directorate (DGA), Romania.

Ernst Schmid, EPAC/EACN Vice-President and Head of Department 1 at the Federal Bureau of Anti-Corruption, Federal Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Austria, opened the session with "Situational Reports on Corruption – main findings and way forward". He presented the rationale and methodology behind structured corruption situation reports and their value for strategic planning and early warning. **Mathieu Kahn**, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the French Anti-Corruption Agency, followed with "Capturing corruption through data: the Observatory of Probity Breaches", illustrating how data-driven observatories can identify trends, risks and integrity breaches across sectors. The academic perspective was introduced by **Samuel De Jaegere**, Head of the Global Programme on Measuring Corruption (GPMC) at the International Anti-Corruption Academy, in "Measuring the Effectiveness of Anti-Corruption Agencies: Work in Progress", focusing on challenges and methodologies for assessing institutional performance. **Manuel García Bernárdez**, Institutional Relations and Analysis, Andalusian Anti-Fraud Office (Spain), presented "Findings on Citizens' Perceptions of Corruption", highlighting how perception surveys can complement administrative and enforcement data.

The session concluded with **Valentin Topoloiu**, Head of the Anticorruption Studies and Prognosis Unit at the Anti-Corruption General Directorate (DGA), Romania, who presented "Project INTOBE: Tailoring preventive intervention using Integrity Assessment Tools", demonstrating how integrity assessment tools can support targeted preventive action.

Session C – Combatting Corruption in Public Procurement and Infrastructure Projects

Session C focused on corruption risks in public procurement and infrastructure projects, including politically sensitive and post-crisis contexts. The session was moderated by **Benas Aldakauskas**, Head of the Anti-Corruption Education Division at the Special Investigation Service (STT), Lithuania.

Serhii Hupiak, Deputy Head of the National Agency on Corruption Prevention (NACP) of Ukraine, presented "Ensuring Procurement Transparency in the Reconstruction of Ukraine", outlining safeguards, risk management tools and transparency mechanisms applied to large-scale reconstruction funding. Lithuania's experience was shared by **Juozas**

Gailius, Head of the Monitoring and Coordination Division, Investigation Coordination Department at STT, in "Lessons from a political corruption case", focusing on systemic vulnerabilities in political decision-making and procurement oversight.

The session concluded with **František Kučera**, Anti-Corruption Unit, Conflict of Interests and Anti-Corruption Department, Ministry of Justice of the Czech Republic, who presented "Corruption in Selected Sectors of the Czech Republic and Possibilities of its Reduction", highlighting sector-specific risks and mitigation measures.

Parallel Break-Out Sessions II – education, innovation and resilience

The second round of Break-out Sessions shifted the focus to education and awareness, technological innovation, and integrity-building in post-conflict and transitional environments.

Session A – Modern Approaches to Anti-Corruption Education and Awareness-Raising

This session explored how education, communication and behavioural approaches can reduce tolerance for corruption. It was moderated by **Mihai Bârlici** (DGA Romania). In "Preventing Corruption Through Awareness: Lessons Learned from the National Campaign 'It's Time to Stop Giving Just a Little Something'", **Mihai Bârlici** presented Romania's experience with nationwide awareness campaigns.

Otto Kerbl, Director of the Federal Bureau of Anti-Corruption, Federal Ministry of the Interior (Austria), followed with "Today's youth, tomorrow's integrity: awareness raising as a foundation for societal integrity", focusing on youth engagement. **Eliot Reffait**, European and International Affairs Officer, High Authority for Transparency in Public Life (France), speaking on behalf of the European Network of Public Ethics (ENPE), presented "Building a Corruption-Free Society Through Strong Awareness Initiatives: a comparative European approach". Local-level experience was shared by **Tom Gedden**, Team Coordinator at Rijksrecherche (Netherlands), in "Anti-corruption awareness-raising and capacity building in municipalities". **Ed Fenne**, Senior Policy Officer, Knowledge and Prevention Department, Dutch Whistleblowers Authority, reflected on regulatory limits in "When strict enforcement of rules does not work".

The session concluded with **Benas Aldakauskas** (STT Lithuania) presenting "From limited resources to unlimited reach: foundations of effective anti-corruption education".

Session B – Innovations in Practice

Moderated by **Darius Mickevičius**, Head of the EPAC/EACN Secretariat and Head of the International Cooperation Division at STT Lithuania, this session showcased technological innovation in anti-corruption work. **José António Mouraz Lopes,** Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Portuguese National Anti-Corruption Mechanism (MENAC), presented "A new Paradigm in Anti-Corruption Excellence: the case study of MENAC's Artificial Intelligence Module for Document Validation". **Daniel Leon**, DSU Cryptocurrency Team, Europol, followed with "Cryptocurrency tracing challenges and opportunities", focusing on

financial investigations in the digital economy. **David Hasman**, Head of the Evidence Discovery Management Unit (EDMU) at the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, presented "Practical Uses of AI in International Criminal Investigations".

The session concluded with **Isfandiyar Hajiyev**, Colonel and Head of Department at the Anti-Corruption Directorate of the Prosecutor General's Office of the Republic of Azerbaijan, who delivered "Advancing Innovation through Technology: The Azerbaijani Experience".

Session C – Building Integrity and Resilient Institutions in Post-Conflict and Transitional Contexts

Session C addressed integrity challenges in post-conflict and transitional settings and was moderated by **Hugh Hume** (OPONI, United Kingdom). He opened with "Transforming Policing Oversight as an Enabler for Peace – the Northern Irish Experience", sharing lessons from Northern Ireland. **Oleksandr Tomieiev**, Head of the International Legal Cooperation Unit at the National Anti-Corruption Bureau (NABU) of Ukraine, followed with "Strengthening Anti-Corruption Institutions in Wartime: Lessons from Ukraine". The session concluded with **Valeriu**

Cupcea, Head of the International Cooperation Directorate of the National Anti-Corruption Centre of Moldova, who presented "Electoral corruption and illegal financing of political parties: Challenges and Consequences".

EPAC/EACN Awards

The conference also highlighted innovation in anti-corruption practice through the EPAC/EACN Awards session. The nominated initiatives developed in 2025 illustrated a broad spectrum of approaches, including the use of advanced technologies for structured data analysis and compliance checks, integrity guidance tools for senior decision-makers, youth engagement and awareness initiatives, and digitalisation of investigative and administrative workflows. Several examples discussed during the nominations demonstrated how AI-based models can reduce document review time dramatically, how integrity education can be integrated into school systems through practical exercises and digital tools, and how public-sector digitalisation can increase transparency, accountability and internal control.

During the Awards ceremony, participants voted to award the EPAC/EACN Award 2025 to the Special Investigation Service of the Republic of Lithuania for its initiative "Strategic Anti-Corruption Guidelines for the Cabinet of Ministers", recognised for its practical and tailored approach to strengthening prevention at the highest level of government and supporting ministers in integrating anti-corruption considerations into decision-making and policy planning.

High-Level Meeting of Police Oversight and Anti-Corruption Authorities under the title "Upholding Integrity: Urgent Challenges in a Changing World."

On 24 November, on the margins of the 24th EPAC/EACN Annual Professional Conference and General Assembly, a group of high-level representatives from national police oversight bodies, anti-corruption authorities, and judicial institutions gathered at Eurojust in The Hague for the High-Level Meeting of Police Oversight and Anti-Corruption Authorities (HLM). The event brought together more than thirty senior officials from across Europe, along with representatives of EU bodies, including the European Commission, Europol, the European Public Prosecutor's Office, and the European Anti-Fraud Office.

The meeting was convened at a time of rapidly evolving corruption risks, marked by geopolitical tensions, hybrid threats, digital vulnerabilities, and increasing pressure on law enforcement and oversight systems. Participants engaged in a strategic, closed-door dialogue focusing on corruption's impact on security, democratic governance, public trust, and the rule of law. They explored how institutional integrity can be strengthened across Europe, what capacities are needed to detect and address sophisticated corruption schemes, and how national and EU-level actors can improve cooperation to counter threats that cross borders and sectors.

The discussion acknowledged corruption as a multidimensional challenge that undermines development, human rights, institutional resilience, economic stability, and democratic legitimacy. Participants underlined the growing interconnectedness between corruption, organised crime, foreign influence, cyber-enabled crime, and illicit financial flows. Against this backdrop, the HLM aimed to clarify what skills, resources, and strategies are required to identify hidden corruption mechanisms, protect public institutions from internal and external vulnerabilities, and ensure accountability for both public officials and private-sector actors involved in wrongdoing.

Throughout the exchanges, special attention was given to persistent difficulties in bringing high-level and cross-border corruption cases to justice, including legislative gaps, limited access to financial intelligence,

insufficient asset recovery tools, and the increasing technological sophistication of criminal networks. The meeting also emphasised the importance of strengthening preventive measures, cultivating integrity in public institutions, ensuring the independence of oversight and anti-corruption bodies, and enhancing cooperation between law enforcement, administrative authorities, civil society, and private-sector partners.

The High-Level Meeting provided an opportunity to reflect on four overarching questions shaping today's anti-corruption landscape:

- how corruption affects current global and regional developments;
- what skills and resources authorities need to uncover complex and concealed corruption schemes;
- what barriers impede the prosecution of high-level corrupt actors;
- and how combined efforts across sectors can create a more resilient, transparent, and accountable system of governance.

Against this backdrop, participants exchanged national experiences and presented concrete proposals for strengthening cross-border cooperation, improving analytical and investigative capacities, and reinforcing the role of EPAC/EACN as a platform for peer learning, coordination, and collective action.

General Assembly

The General Assembly of the European Partners Against Corruption/European Contact-Point Network Against Corruption (EPAC/EACN) was convened in accordance with Article 8 of the EPAC Constitution. The General Assembly represents the body of supreme authority within the EPAC/EACN network and is responsible for determining its general policies and strategic direction. In the exercise of its mandate, the General Assembly is entrusted, *inter alia*, with the acceptance of new Members and Observers, the election and appointment of office holders, the establishment of Working Groups on specific issues or projects, the adoption of declarations following conferences, and the consideration of other matters essential to the functioning and integrity of the network.

In accordance with the Constitution, the General Assembly convenes at least once per year and may also be convened extraordinarily upon the decision of the President, Vice-Presidents, or Deputy Vice-Presidents, or at the request of at least one third of the Members.

The present session was held as part of the 24th EPAC/EACN Annual Professional Conference and was duly convened to enable Members to exercise their constitutional responsibilities, including the consideration of reports on activities and Working Group outcomes, the election of the EPAC/EACN Board, the admission of new Members and Observers, and the adoption of the Hague Declaration.

This session of the General Assembly was conducted as Plenary Session III of the Conference and was moderated by Mr Darius Mickevičius, Head of the EPAC/EACN Secretariat.

Acceptance of New Members

Under the agenda item concerning the acceptance of new members, the Moderator informed the General Assembly that, following the current session, seven new institutions had joined the EPAC/EACN network, bringing the total membership to 126 European institutions from 40 countries.

In accordance with Article 8 of the EPAC Constitution, the General Assembly approved the admission of new members and observers. The National Financial Prosecutor's Office (PNF) of the French Ministry of

Justice, Økokrim of Norway, the Office of the Attorney General of Switzerland, and the Prosecutor General's Office of Ukraine were formally accepted as new members of EPAC.

In addition, the Internal Affairs Unit of the Spanish National Police Internal Criminal Investigations Network was accepted as an observer to EPAC/EACN.

Furthermore, recognising the active and constructive participation of the Mecanismo Nacional Anticorrupção (MENAC) in the work of the EACN, the General Assembly formally approved MENAC as a full member of EPAC/EACN.

Activity Report

The General Assembly took note of the activity report presented by Mr. Darius Mickevičius, Head of the EPAC/EACN Secretariat.

The Secretariat reported that EPAC/EACN prepared and submitted its contribution to the European Commission's EU Rule of Law Report, reflecting key issues related to corruption prevention, institutional independence, and integrity frameworks across Europe. The main messages of this contribution were communicated to members through the EPAC/EACN Newsletter.

It was further reported that EPAC/EACN expressed concern regarding legislative developments in Ukraine that may affect the independence of specialised anti-corruption institutions. EPAC/EACN encouraged reforms to remain aligned with international standards and reaffirmed its readiness to provide support through dialogue and expert assistance.

The General Assembly was informed of EPAC/EACN's active engagement with the EU Network against Corruption. In this context, EPAC/EACN was represented at a thematic workshop of the EU Network against Corruption dedicated to corruption risk-mitigating measures in areas at high risk of corruption, thereby contributing the network's expertise and experience to EU-level discussions.

The Secretariat reported on the successful completion of the Best Anti-Corruption and Prevention Experiences (BACPE) project. The project facilitated extensive exchanges of best practices among EPAC/EACN members through thematic study visits, high-level conferences, and expert discussions, resulting in strengthened cooperation, enhanced professional capacities, and the publication of the e-publication "Best Anti-Corruption Practices and Approaches in Europe," which ensures the long-term availability of the project's results.

In addition, the Secretariat informed the General Assembly of ongoing capacity-building and knowledge-sharing activities undertaken within the network. EPAC/EACN organised thematic webinars bringing together experts from member institutions to exchange best practices and discuss modern tools for anti-corruption and integrity, with wide participation from across the network.

Further activities were also undertaken to strengthen the sustainability and visibility of EPAC/EACN's work, including the continued development of online communication tools, dissemination of information through newsletters, and regular updating of the EPAC/EACN contact catalogue.

Report of the Working Group

The General Assembly took note of the report of the Working Group on Effective Approaches to Developing Situational Reports on Corruption (Corruption SITREP), led by the Austrian Federal Bureau of Anti-Corruption. The Working Group, comprising more than twenty-five member organisations and partners, was supported by external expert input, a survey among participating organisations, and case studies of best practices.

The resulting publication, entitled "Effective Approaches to Developing Situation Reports on Corruption," provides comprehensive guidance for anti-corruption authorities on developing standardised, structured, and data-driven situational reporting frameworks. The report highlights the importance of collaboration and information sharing, outlines key methodologies and reporting standards, and is intended to support institutional reform, policy development, and corruption prevention strategies at national and international levels.

EPAC/EACN Board Elections

Mr Linas Pernavas, Director of the Special Investigation Service of the Republic of Lithuania, was elected for a second term as President of EPAC/EACN.

The General Assembly further confirmed the composition of the Board

Anti-corruption strand (ACA):

- Vice-president Mr Ernst Schmid, Acting Head of Department at the Austrian Federal Bureau of Anti-Corruption;
- Deputy Vice-president Mr Traian Mihăiţă Bârlici, Head of the Prevention Directorate of the Romanian Anti-Corruption General Directorate;

Police oversight strand (POB):

- Vice-president Ms Marion Hidrio, Head of the French National Police General Inspectorate in Rennes.
- Deputy Vice-president Mr Pedro Nuno de Carvalho Figueiredo, Inspector-General of the Inspectorate-General of Internal Administration of Portugal.

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Adoption of the Hague Declaration

A key outcome was the adoption of the **Hague Declaration**, reflecting shared commitments of EPAC/EACN members to fight corruption and strengthen integrity across institutions. The Declaration calls for:

- stronger institutional independence of anti-corruption and oversight bodies,
- enhanced cooperation among national authorities, EU institutions and international partners,
- renewed efforts to prevent and combat corruption through practical measures,
- improved exchange of best practices and professional development,
- adequate resources, open data transparency and protection for prosecutors and investigators.

The Declaration will be transmitted to relevant EU institutions and international organisations, including the European Commission, European Parliament, GRECO, OECD Working Group on Bribery and UNODC, among others.
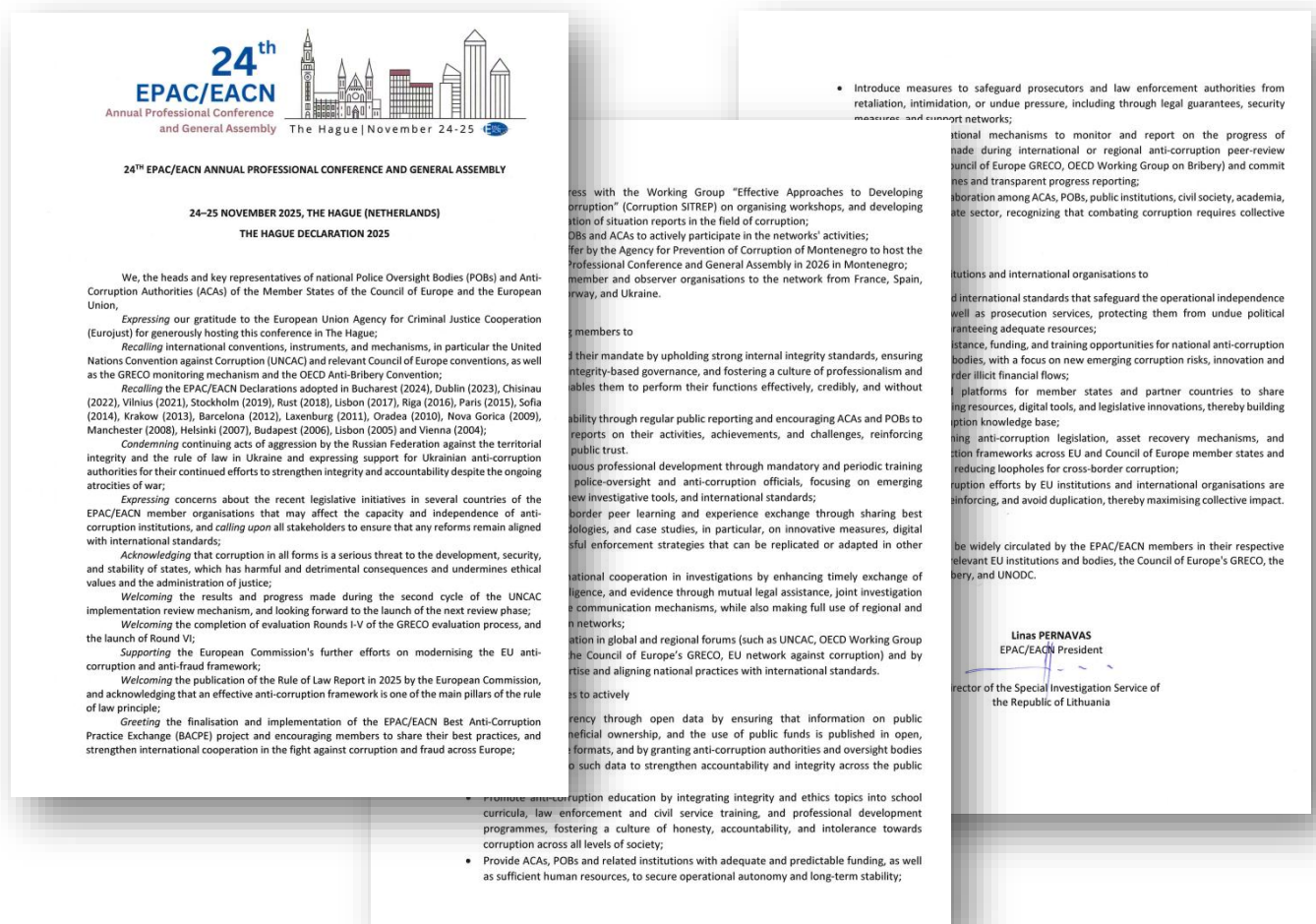
The 25th EPAC/EACN Annual Professional Conference and General Assembly

The 25th EPAC/EACN Annual Professional Conference and General Assembly will be organised in Montenegro. Members welcomed the information and expressed appreciation to the host country for its willingness to organise and host the forthcoming annual meeting of the network.

EPAC/EACN and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) convened a high-level side event titled "Harnessing Emerging Technologies to Combat Corruption"

The United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) is the only universal, legally binding anti-corruption treaty, and its Conference of the States Parties (COSP) is the main global forum where States review implementation, agree on priorities, and exchange solutions with international organisations, practitioners, and civil society. The eleventh session (COSP11) brought together government delegations and stakeholders to discuss practical responses to evolving corruption risks, including those driven by digitalisation and rapidly developing technologies.

Within this broader setting, EPAC/EACN and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) convened a high-level side event titled **"Harnessing Emerging Technologies to Combat Corruption"**, aligned with the COSP11 focus on how emerging technologies are reshaping integrity systems and enforcement.

The side event gathered anti-corruption practitioners and partners to move beyond "technology as a trend" and focus on what works in real systems – how data, analytics, and AI can strengthen prevention, detection, investigations, and cross-border cooperation—while staying compliant with legal safeguards, human rights, and due process requirements. The discussion followed a panel format with short interventions, a moderated exchange, and audience Q&A.

Unfortunately, the World Bank representative did not participate in the final panel (as noted by the organisers/participants during the event) due to unforeseen circumstances.

Linas Pernavas, President of EPAC/EACN and Director of the Special Investigation Service of the Republic of Lithuania (STT), framed the discussion around a practical shift that many authorities are trying to make: moving from single cases to *system-level visibility* – seeing patterns, mapping risk concentrations, and detecting early warning signals before corruption hardens into entrenched schemes. He stressed that technology is not a replacement for leadership or professional judgment, but an enabler

that can help institutions act earlier and more precisely—provided that trust, transparency, and human responsibility remain central.

Drawing on Lithuania's experience, he gave concrete examples of how a "data-driven anti-corruption" approach can be built in practice:

- an AI-supported tool to review legislation at scale and flag potential risk or conflict-of-interest areas for expert follow-up
- a machine-learning procurement risk model being developed with the OECD under an EU Technical Support Instrument project, planned for completion by March 2026 and intended to become an operational tool;
- the value of "small but smart" digital link-analysis and data-connection tools that help analysts understand relationships between people, companies, and transactions. Across these examples, his recurring point was that technology helps professionals focus their time where expertise matters most—while humans remain accountable for decisions.

He concluded with a recommendation that later echoed through the panel – start practical, start small, but start now – do not wait for perfect data or perfect systems, and actively "**break the anti-corruption expert bubble**" by inviting innovation from universities, entrepreneurs, civil society, and the private sector.

Julia Fromholz, Head of the OECD Anti-Corruption Division (OECD Directorate for Financial and Enterprise Affairs)**,** set out why emerging technologies can be transformative specifically in anti-corruption work. They can combine datasets that are traditionally fragmented, accelerate triage of allegations and alerts, and dramatically reduce review time in complex investigations – when used responsibly and backed by quality data. Her key caution was that analytic outputs are only as reliable as the underlying data – incomplete, inaccurate, or biased datasets can distort risk scoring and weaken both prevention and enforcement; opaque AI outputs also raise legitimate due-process concerns when used in high-stakes contexts.

She extracted three priorities that countries and agencies should treat as foundational: building trustworthy and interoperable data ecosystems (across public and private sources where lawful), investing in people (skills, specialisms, and the capacity to interpret outputs critically), and ensuring ethical and legal frameworks keep pace so that technology strengthens—rather than undermines—public trust in rule-of-law systems.

She also pointed to the OECD's ongoing work on analytical functions and the practical challenge many institutions face: even when information exists in reports and assessments, it is often not structured for easy extraction, comparison, and trend analysis—exactly the kind of problem that modern analytics can help solve, but only with deliberate investment in data governance and usability.

From the operational threat perspective, **Edvardas Šileris**, Head of Europol's European Cybercrime Centre (EC3), addressed the reality that criminal networks adapt rapidly, using emerging technologies (including AI-enabled methods) and exploiting digital footprints at scale. He highlighted how modern investigations increasingly depend on the ability to identify and interpret traces in the digital domain – open-source material, social media, and online infrastructure – while also recognising the tension between investigative needs and legal constraints around access to data.

A forward-looking theme in his contribution was that the next wave of technological change – he explicitly raised AI and also referenced quantum-related developments – may alter both the capabilities of investigators and the capabilities of offenders. The practical takeaway was not "more tech for its own sake", but the need to continuously update procedures, train specialists, and embed verification so that automated support does not become automated error.

Ketakandriana Rafitoson, Vice President of Transparency International, explained how civil society organisations increasingly use technology to collect and analyse large volumes of qualitative inputs (including victim testimonies) and to connect "dots" across datasets – procurement, political finance, beneficial ownership, and budget portals—to identify patterns that individual disclosures do not reveal on their own.

A central point from the TI perspective was that technology can lower barriers to participation and expand the scale of monitoring and campaigning, but that progress is uneven – some governments publish data as a compliance exercise in formats that are hard to access, interpret, or reuse, which limits prevention and meaningful oversight. The TI intervention also emphasised that AI governance questions are not abstract: the crucial issues include who designs systems, who oversees them, and how bias, accountability, transparency, and safeguards are handled when tools influence decisions about risk, prioritisation, or enforcement.

The closing recommendations converged on a shared "stack" of priorities. EPAC/EACN's message was to begin immediately with what institutions already have – data, people, and cooperation – and to widen the innovation circle beyond the traditional expert community.

OECD's recommendation emphasised investing in people so agencies can both harness modern tools and protect against their weaknesses, while pushing legal and ethical frameworks to keep pace.

Europol's operational lens reinforced continuous adaptation: criminals learn fast, and institutional capability must evolve at least as quickly—especially in areas linked to digital evidence, crypto-asset tracing, and the next generation of technology.