

Bucharest, Romania



23rd Annual Conference 26 – 27 nov 2024



**23rd EPAC/EACN ANNUAL PROFESSIONAL CONFERENCE AND GENERAL ASSEMBLY
26-27 NOVEMBER 2024, BUCHAREST (ROMANIA)**

BUCHAREST DECLARATION 2024

We, the heads and key representatives of the national Police Oversight Bodies (POBs) and Anti-Corruption Authorities (ACAs) of the Member States of the Council of Europe and the European Union,

Expressing our sincere gratitude to the Anti-corruption General Directorate (DGA) and other Romanian authorities for having taken the initiative to generously host this Conference and *commending* the organisers for the warm hospitality and excellent planning that has made the Conference a resounding success;

Extending our gratitude also to the Union Anti-Fraud Programme (UAFP) for its financial support, which has significantly contributed to the successful organization and realization of this event, as well as to the best practice exchange visits between EPAC/EACN member organisations;

Recalling international conventions, instruments and protocols, in particular the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), relevant Council of Europe conventions and the OECD Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions;

Celebrating and recalling the 20th anniversary of the European Partners Against Corruption network;

Celebrating the 25th anniversary of GRECO and the 25th anniversary of the OECD Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions among the main pillars of anticorruption work;

Stressing the importance of effective implementation of recommendations formulated under the relevant international evaluation and monitoring mechanisms such as the Council of Europe's GRECO, OECD Working Group on Bribery, UNCAC review mechanism and the EU Rule of Law Report and *acknowledging* that an effective anti-corruption framework is one of the main pillars of democracy, human rights and of the rule of law principle;

Condemning acts of aggression by the Russian Federation against territorial integrity and rule of law in Ukraine and *expressing* support to the Ukrainian anti-corruption authorities for their efforts in curbing corruption despite ongoing atrocities of war;

Welcoming the recent decisive steps taken by the European Commission to fight corruption in the EU and worldwide and *endorsing* discussions within the EU Council and European Parliament on the proposed new instruments to curb corruption, in particular, the Proposal for a Directive on combatting corruption;

Appreciating the results and progress made during the second cycle of the UNCAC implementation review mechanism and looking forward to the conclusions of the Implementation Review Group on the mechanism's performance as well as to the scope, thematic sequence and details of the next review phase;

Greeting the finalisation of evaluation Rounds I-V of the GRECO evaluation process and looking forward to the upcoming Round VI;



Bucharest, Romania



23rd Annual Conference 26 - 27 nov 2024



Welcoming achievements and progress of the Member States in respect of implementation and enforcement of the OECD Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions;

Recalling the EPAC/EACN Declarations adopted in Dublin (2023), Chişinău (2022), Vilnius (2021), Stockholm (2019), Rust (2018), Lisbon (2017), Riga (2016), Paris (2015), Sofia (2014), Krakow (2013), Barcelona (2012), Laxenburg (2011), Oradea (2010), Nova Gorica (2009), Manchester (2008), Helsinki (2007), Budapest (2006), Lisbon (2005) and Vienna (2004);

Acknowledging that corruption in all forms is a serious threat to the development, security and stability of states, which has harmful and detrimental consequences and undermines ethical and democratic values and the administration of justice and the rule of law;

Highlighting the important steps taken and the resolutions and decisions adopted by the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption at its tenth session;

Welcoming the establishment of the Anti-Corruption Partnership Forum, launched at the 10th Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention Against Corruption in December 2023;

Acknowledging the importance of joint efforts to combat effectively high-level corruption and the significance of international cooperation in addressing the transnational dimension of corruption crimes;

Recognising that asset-recovery is fundamental to successfully addressing and curbing corruption;

Calling on all stakeholders to base the fight against corruption on a holistic and comprehensive approach, which includes, inter alia, prevention, education, law enforcement and cooperation;

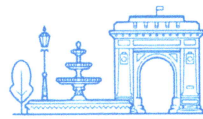
Continuing to support the development of common standards and best practices for POBs and ACAs, and thus to strengthen the exchange of best practices between POBs and ACAs and promote cross-sector cooperation;

Welcoming new member organisations from Kosovo¹, Moldova, North Macedonia, Romania, Ukraine and *encouraging* further POBs and ACAs to actively participate in the networks' activities;

Recommend participating members to

- Prioritize comprehensive education on ethics, integrity, and anti-corruption. Training initiatives should go beyond theoretical knowledge, addressing the emotional and attitudinal factors that foster ethical behaviour in both public and private sectors. Programs should be designed to encourage reflection and strengthen ethical decision-making in everyday situations;
- Develop, implement, and periodically update robust codes of conduct, as essential pillars for building integrity in law enforcement. All law enforcement personnel should adhere to the highest ethical standards and be committed to serving the public interest;
- Foster safe reporting channels and measures to protect whistleblowers, ensuring that individuals can report corrupt practices safely and confidentially;
- Consider conducting integrity checks for law enforcement officers both pre-employment and periodically throughout their service, as part of the ongoing efforts to prevent corruption and uphold ethical and integrity standards;

¹ *All references to Kosovo, whether the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nation's Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.



Bucharest, Romania

23rd Annual Conference 26 – 27 nov 2024

- Assess in the early stages of anticorruption investigations the need for measures targeting criminal assets. The focus should be on a swift tracing of criminal assets via formal and informal networks (such as EU ARO platform and CARIN), conducting financial investigations, use of joint investigation teams (JITs), issuing of cross-border seizing orders, use of pre-planning in doing this, as well as engaging into cooperation with other agencies including asset management offices (AMOs);
- Encourage the implementation of measures against bribery in international business transactions by adopting and enforcing clear frameworks that prohibit bribery of foreign public officials.

Furthermore, call on states to actively

- Continue considering corruption as a significant risk to the prosperity, stability and national security of a country due to its negative impact and disruptive character on the social environment, economic development, trust in public institutions, health and safety of the general population and, particularly, its most vulnerable groups;
- Establish a systematic approach to corruption risk assessment within public institutions, adapting responses to evolving corruption risks. By embedding data-driven and empirical methods into anti-corruption efforts, states can improve the effectiveness and precision of their integrity management strategies;
- Support interdisciplinary research on corruption that expands the understanding of its causes, effects, and broader impact. Moving beyond traditional metrics and perception indicators, states should encourage studies that integrate perspectives from sociology, criminology, and behavioural sciences, laying the groundwork for evidence-based policies that tackle corruption's root causes;
- Emphasise the importance of preventing corruption and building integrity within law enforcement agencies, fostering public trust and accountability and strengthening the commitment to uphold the rule of law and safeguard the rights of all citizens;
- Strengthen practical cooperation among ACAs, Financial Intelligence Units (FIUs) and financial institutions to detect, investigate and prevent the laundering of assets derived from corruption offences;
- Urge the Council of Europe jurisdictions to engage at the level of Committee of Experts on Criminal Asset Recovery (PC-RAC) and to contribute to the ongoing process of negotiating the additional protocol supplementing the Council of Europe Convention on laundering, search, seizure and confiscation of the proceeds from crime and on the financing of terrorism (CETS no. 198). This new legal instrument will further expand the asset recovery instruments available for law enforcement and judiciary;
- Promote the innovative usage of information and communication technology, including artificial intelligence and big data technology, as proactive strategies of preventing and combating fraud and corruption;
- Ensure that POBs and ACAs have sufficient human and financial resources in order to fulfil their mission independently and credibly, including by preventing any undue influence on the course of the criminal proceedings.

Furthermore, call on EU institutions and international organisations to

- Promote the exchange and dissemination of advanced anti-corruption training resources across member states, encouraging the adoption of effective training methodologies.



Bucharest, Romania

23rd Annual Conference 26 – 27 nov 2024

Collaborative platforms should facilitate the sharing of curricula, digital tools, and educational resources that strengthen ethics and integrity throughout public institutions;

- Advance new methodologies for measuring corruption that capture its multifaceted impact, moving beyond perception indices to support a deeper, data-driven understanding of corruption's complexities. EU institutions should back research initiatives that provide insights into these dimensions, fostering evidence-based anti-corruption policies;
- Facilitate and support activities of national anti-corruption and police oversight authorities of the EU Member States by fostering cooperation and creating synergies for sharing expertise and best practices.

Continue to improve coordination of our activities, evaluations, and joint efforts, using initiatives like the Anti-Corruption Partnership Forum, to enhance collaboration and avoid duplication. Sustained commitment to these efforts will optimise resource use and strengthen the collective impact on transnational corruption challenges.

This Declaration will be widely circulated by the EPAC/EACN members in their respective countries and submitted to relevant EU institutions and bodies, the Council of Europe's GRECO, the OECD Working Group on Bribery, and UNODC.

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