

# Opening Speech at the Policy Forum Monitoring Anti-Corruption Enforcement

12 June 2015, 11.00-11.20, Thon Hotel EU, Belgium III Hall

Ladies and gentlemen,

- I would like to **thank** the *Centre for the Study of Democracy* for organising this Policy Forum and for presenting the results of the project *Monitoring Anti-Corruption Policy Implementation*, financed by the European Commission.
- Indeed, the European Commission also contributes to a more secure environment for citizens through financial support to a variety of projects and initiatives. This was the case under the **Programme on Prevention and Fight against Crime** for the period 2007–13, and now through the **Internal Security Fund / Police** for the period 2014 – 2020.
- The newly adopted **European Agenda on Security** identifies as one of the three pillars of the EU action to be strengthened, (...) **funding, research and innovation**, next to better exchange of information and increased operational cooperation.
- It is clear that the work of non-governmental organisations and research institutions active in the area of the fight against organised crime and corruption is essential for the pursuit of **informed and evidence-based policies**. And the development of **methods of evaluating policy effectiveness** like MACPI are extremely important in this respect.

A few words on the Commission's ongoing work on anti-corruption.

- The first **EU Anti-Corruption Report**, which the Commission published in February last year, provides an **EU-wide** overview, identifies trends and best practice, and analyses the situation in each EU Member State, aiming to support governments, civil society and other stakeholders in preventing and fighting corruption.
- One of its main conclusions is that whilst laws and policies against corruption are largely in place throughout Europe, **their implementation is uneven**.
- Corruption varies across countries and sectors of the economy, but affects **all** countries in the European Union.
- The Commission is now in a dialogue with national authorities on the **follow-up** to the EU Anti-Corruption Report – in writing and through meetings and visits to the MS.
- **Experience-sharing** workshops are bringing experts together to explore solutions to common challenges identified in the report. The first workshop, on asset disclosure and declarations, took place in Budapest in April. It was a very operational and successful event. The second one, on whistleblowing protection, is planned for July in The Hague.
- The **next** EU Anti-Corruption Report in 2016 will take stock of developments.
- The EU Anti-Corruption Report is **only one** of our tools against corruption.
- Preventing corruption is also a priority in the **European Semester** of economic governance, where most affected Member States receive relevant recommendations each year. The Commission proposed the latest package of Country-Specific Recommendations in May; and they

are on the agenda of the EU Heads of State and Government at the **European Council meeting of 25-26 June**.

- In the meantime, revised EU rules on **public procurement** came into force in April 2014. They contain stronger provisions on preventing, detecting and punishing corruption. The reform makes procurement rules more transparent (in particular with *e-procurement* mandatory from 2018), introduces a "red-flags" system to detect corruption at an early stage, and requires effective recovery and sanctions.
- The Commission also includes corruption prevention in the programming of **Structural & Investment Funds**, where these funds should support relevant initiatives as part of institutional and administrative capacity-building in the Member States.
- In addition, EU legislation was recently adopted on **money laundering**, the **freezing, confiscation and recovery of criminal assets**, the disclosure of relevant information by large **companies** and statute & **funding of European political parties & foundations**.
- The Commission has also strengthened **its own transparency standards**, requiring senior officials to publically report about whom they meet, and making the lobbyist register mandatory.
- Finally, two ground-breaking Commission legislative proposals are currently discussed by the co-legislators, EP and Council, as regards the **fight against fraud to the EU budget**: the 2013 proposal for a *Regulation on the establishment of the European Public Prosecutor's Office* and the 2012 proposal for a *Directive on Protecting EU financial interests through criminal law* that aims at establishing minimum penalties and common definitions for crimes against the EU budget in all EU countries.

Let me **conclude**.

- The area of the fight against corruption is a particularly **important** one, given the negative impact of corruption on our institutions and democracies, but also on public finances and economies.
- Having **practical instruments to measure progress** in this area and the **effectiveness of our policies**, namely as the proposed MACPI, can certainly help adjust public policy and thus deliver **better results**.
- A particular feature of the MACPI I note is that it can be **adapted to different conditions** – different countries and public organisations.
- **Measurement is not a one-off exercise**, but a continuous cycle, and I hope that the entities that have already participated in the project will continue to use this instrument and be able to ensure its sustainability.

Thank you for your attention.