

# FOREWORD

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A few years ago, the general expectation was that the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) would not have much to do. It was designed small to deal with what was commonly considered a 'niche' criminality. After more than three years of activity, uncovering a new continent of crime, the EPPO's capacity needs to be adapted to reality.

First, because there have always been more crimes affecting the financial interests of the European Union than publicly admitted. I still remember the instinctive denial among key stakeholders in reaction to our first workload statistics, in essence: the EPPO numbers cannot be true!

By the end of 2024, we had **2 666 active investigations**, for a total **estimated damage over €24.8 billion**. As you can see in this report, our workload continues to increase, and so do the expectations of EU citizens.

Second, because EU fraud has become highly attractive to very dangerous criminals, partly due to a historical uneven judicial response in this field. More than half of the estimated damage currently under the EPPO's investigation concerns cross-border VAT fraud. This means the almost systematic involvement of organised crime groups and it represents a major security issue.

Any serious reflection on the so-called 'EU antifraud architecture' should start by acknowledging that it is and has always been primarily about the work of police, tax and customs administrations, prosecutors and judges.

Any earnest discussion about the 'EU antifraud architecture' should not hide uncomfortable facts. For instance, in 2024, the EPPO processed **6 547 crime reports**. Over 70% came from private parties, close to 27% from national authorities, and less than 1% from OLAF. Obviously, institutions, bodies, offices and agencies of the EU need to step up the detection and reporting of suspicions of fraud to the EPPO.

Any proposal to improve the 'EU antifraud architecture' should therefore answer difficult yet very important questions. For example, how is it possible that organised crime groups were able to develop VAT fraud to an industrial level, despite all the antifraud strategies, auditing and reporting?

We all have to face our responsibilities. For us, at the EPPO, these are the key questions: is EPPO well equipped? Is Europol well equipped? Are there dedicated and specialised investigators from police, tax administrations and customs assigned to support EPPO's investigations in all the participating Member States?

Currently, the answer to each of these questions is 'no'. If we want the 'EU antifraud architecture' to improve, we need each of the answers to be 'yes'.