

Guest Editorial eucrim 3/2020



Alexandra Jour-Schröder *

Editorial

EDITORIAL

AUTHOR

Alexandra Jour-Schröder

Director Criminal Justice
European Commission

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Dear Readers,

As we approach the end of 2020, we cannot but acknowledge the importance of dialogue with experts.

In the field of EU criminal justice, the Commission has always relied strongly on exchanges with experts. The prominent *Corpus Juris* project of just such a group of experts led by Prof. Delmas-Marty at the end of the 1990s was devoted to the protection of the financial interests of the European Community and included a proposal for a European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO). This groundwork bore fruit. – A true European Prosecution Office, which should soon start its activities in Luxembourg, was finally created. Especially in light of the ambitious financial support under *Next Generation EU* that will be necessary to exit from the COVID-19 crisis, the protection of the European budget will be a key priority for the Union. The EPPO will play a crucial role in this respect. It will fulfil this role together with OLAF, which has been strengthened by the recently adopted revision of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 883/2013. In 2021, the Commission will take the necessary measures to ensure that the EPPO, as well as Eurojust, will be able to successfully cooperate with the competent authorities of third countries in their respective areas of competence.

The past months have brought to light the urgency of transitioning to digital solutions in the administration of justice. Commission President *Ursula von der Leyen* made making Europe fit for the digital age a priority. On 2 December 2020, the Commission set out its [vision and approach towards an accelerated digital transition in the justice area](#) (Communication COM(2020) 710 final). Many of the planned initiatives have been inspired by the Commission's Expert Group on EU Criminal Policy. This Communication, together with the new [European judicial training strategy](#) (Communication COM(2020) 713 final), also presented on 2 December 2020, will contribute to further strengthening the common European judicial culture.

This year has also witnessed the adoption by the Commission of the first ever [Strategy on Victims' Rights \(2020–2025\)](#), which aims to ensure that all victims of all crimes can enjoy their rights, irrespective of where the crime was committed and its circumstances (Communication of 24 June 2020, COM(2020) 258 final). The Strategy pays special attention to the protection of the most vulnerable victims, such as victims of hate crime and terrorism and child victims, and was followed by the appointment of the first Victims' Rights Coordinator in September 2020.

Further initiatives will take place in 2021. Building on the recently published evaluation of the Environmental Crime Directive, the Commission will propose its revision to strengthen the Union's criminal law measures for the protection of the environment, which is another area where the Union is committed to becoming a leader and an example on the international scene. The Commission will also examine the appropriate avenues to step up the Union's efforts against hate crime and hate speech and will continue to negotiate the e-evidence proposals in order to conclude the legislative procedure as soon as possible, since this package is urgently needed to provide the competent national authorities with the necessary tools to prosecute crime more efficiently. This legislation should also allow the Union to resume negotiations with the United States on e-evidence.

Against this background, the Commission is determined to keep up a lively dialogue with experts in order to develop future-proof policies. The experts of the Commission's EU Criminal Policy Group recently issued a number of reflection papers identifying the areas in which further EU action could be necessary. We are delighted to share these contributions with you as readers of *eucrim*. We are confident that they will provide you with new ideas and insights into the ever-changing realm of EU criminal law.

* Author statement

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eucrim is the leading journal serving as a European forum for insight and debate on criminal and “criministrative” law. For over 20 years, it has brought together practitioners, academics, and policymakers to exchange ideas and shape the future of European justice. From its inception, eucrim has placed focus on the protection of the EU’s financial interests – a key driver of European integration in “criministrative” justice policy.

Editorially reviewed articles published in English, French, or German, are complemented by timely news and analysis of legal and policy developments across Europe.

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