

Guest Editorial eucrim 3/2013



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Editorial

EDITORIAL

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Dear Readers,

At the present time, the topics of fraud and tax evasion and, in general, the integrity of the single market are at the heart of the political agenda. Many of the issues under discussion concern my portfolio in one way or another.

Firstly, I wish to mention the fight against fraud and tax evasion. This debate is not new. We can all recall the G20 meeting in London in 2009, where an ambitious political agenda was launched for the fight against tax havens and tax evasion in a broader sense. Recent reports have shown that the phenomenon is still present in Europe, undermining public finances and citizens' trust in our single market. According to the most up-to-date estimates, the Union loses the equivalent of €1,000 billion in revenues every year due to fraud and tax evasion, which is six times the annual budget of the Union.

This subject was at the heart of the discussions at the European Council on 22 May 2013 and at G8 and G20 meetings in recent months. It is indispensable that political will is maintained at the European level as well as in the Member States, with the aim of achieving the objectives announced. In this respect, I welcome the work of the European Parliament on the matter, particularly the reports of Ms. Kleva and Ms. Gall-Pelcz, which were adopted recently.

Since 2011, the Commission has presented a series of initiatives aimed at preserving the integrity of the single market by fighting all forms of crime and especially financial crime. One of these key initiatives is the fight against money laundering.

According to an estimate by the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime, profits of close to €2,000 billion are to be gained from criminal activities on a yearly basis, of which €1,500 billion is laundered. These figures show how immense the task is and how necessary it is to take action. Like the fight against tax evasion and tax fraud, this issue has come to the attention of heads of state and government. I am pleased that the European Parliament is also acknowledging this phenomenon. I am thinking in particular of the report by Mr. Iacolino, which the Special Committee for Organised Crime, Corruption and Money Laundering has adopted, and the forthcoming report on the proposed review of the anti-money laundering directive that was tabled by the Commission in February 2013.

It is essential that the work on the directive be completed under this legislature. The international standards were modified more than a year ago, and it is our aim to make them effective and binding in the EU as soon as possible. We want to equip the EU with a robust and modern anti-money laundering framework that ensures the integrity of our financial system and the good functioning of the single market.

In order for our actions to be as effective as possible, it is essential that we stand together and assume joint political leadership. Tax fraud, money laundering, corruption, counterfeiting, and piracy represent scourges to the integrity of the single market and the trust of our citizens.

I have no doubt that all the actors at the European level, in particular the European Parliament and the Council, can and will make a decisive contribution to the fight against these crimes. I will stand by their side in this fight.

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