Strengthening the Protection of EU's Financial Interests via Criminal Law

A comprehensive study on fraud prevention, anti-corruption and anti-money laundering measures, and corporate crime

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Report

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The research project, led by *Prof. Anna Maria Maugeri* at the University of Catania, aims to strenghten the consolidation of the protection of the EU's financial interests through a systematic analysis of the legislation on fraud, corruption, money laundering, and the liability of legal persons. The uneven implementation of EU regulatory tools creates different levels of protection for the EU's financial interests, which puts the Union's budget and the credibility of its institutions at risk. Therefore, the study will assess the effectiveness and level of implementation of legal instruments, such as Directive (EU) 2017/1371 on the fight against fraud to the Union's financial interests by means of criminal law (the "PIF Directive") as well as Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 2988/95 covering checks in EU countries and the imposition of penalties in the event of irregularities. Other instruments to be assessed include Directive (EU) 2026/1021 on combatting corruption; the EU legislation on anti-money laundering; and Directive (EU) 2024/1260 on asset recovery and confiscation. Additionally, the research covers the activities of the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) in prosecuting PIF crimes.

The project consists of the following main steps:

- Assessment of the EU legal instruments designed to protect the financial interests of the EU, focusing on selected Member States and the EPPO's material competence (March–August 2025);
- Evaluation of the EU legal tools to combat corruption involving harm to the EU's financial interests (September 2025–February 2026);
- Analysis of anti-money laundering (AML) measures at the EU and national levels to protect the EU's financial interests (March–August 2026);
- Evaluation of corporate liability frameworks in the fight against fraud, corruption, and money laundering across selected Member States and the need to protect the EU's financial interests (September 2026–February 2027);
- Mutual learning, policy recommendations and dissemination of project outputs (August 2025–February 2027).

The research team at the University of Catania, with the collaboration of the Centro di Diritto Penale Europeo, has already achieved some significant results, including scientific publications in high-ranking law journals and an online workshop entitled “Protecting EU Financial Interests: EU Legal Instruments and their National Implementation in Selected Member States”, as well as an international conference in Catania entitled

“Strengthening the Protection of the EU's Financial Interests via Criminal Law: Fraud Prevention and Anti-Corruption Measures”.

This project is co-funded by the European Union Anti-Fraud Programme (EUAFP, [GA no. 101193934]).

To find out more about the project and its results, visit: https://pifitalia.lex.unict.it/

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