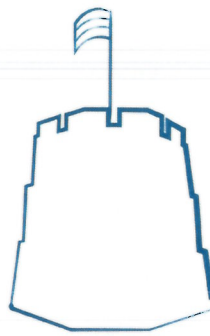


VILNIUS  
2021



SPECIAL INVESTIGATION SERVICE  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA

20th EPAC/EACN ANNUAL PROFESSIONAL CONFERENCE AND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

## 20<sup>TH</sup> EPAC/EACN ANNUAL PROFESSIONAL CONFERENCE AND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

1-2 DECEMBER 2021, VILNIUS (LITHUANIA)

### VILNIUS DECLARATION 2021

We, the heads and key representatives of the national Police Oversight Bodies (POBs) and Anti-Corruption Authorities (ACAs) of the Member States of the Council of Europe and the European Union,

*Expressing* our gratitude to the Special Investigation Service of the Republic of Lithuania (STT) for generously hosting and efficiently and successfully organising this conference;

*Recalling* international conventions, instruments and mechanisms, in particular the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) and relevant Council of Europe conventions, as well as the GRECO monitoring mechanism and the OECD Anti-Bribery Convention;

*Welcoming* the adoption of the Rule of Law Reports in 2020 and 2021 by the European Commission, and *acknowledging* that an effective anti-corruption framework is one of the main pillars of the rule of law principle;

*Expressing* our appreciation of the "EACN" grant in the amount of € 60,000 received by the European Commission in support of our work;

*Welcoming* the establishment of the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO), operational since 1 June 2021, and the Europol Financial and Economic Crime Centre (EFECC);

*Welcoming* the United Nations Special session of the General Assembly against corruption (UNGASS 2021) held from 2 to 4 June 2021 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York and its political declaration "Our common commitment to effectively addressing challenges and implementing measures to prevent and combat corruption and strengthen international cooperation";

*Recalling* the EPAC/EACN Declarations adopted in Stockholm (2019), Rust (2018), Lisbon (2017), Riga (2016), Paris (2015), Sofia (2014), Krakow (2013), Barcelona (2012), Laxenburg (2011), Oradea (2010), Nova Gorica (2009), Manchester (2008), Helsinki (2007), Budapest (2006), Lisbon (2005) and Vienna (2004);

*Acknowledging* that corruption in all forms is a serious threat to the development, security and stability of states, which has harmful and detrimental consequences and undermines ethical values and the administration of justice, particularly in times of crisis such as the actual COVID-19 pandemic;

*Continuing* to support the development of common standards and best practices for POBs and ACAs, and thus to strengthen the exchange of best practices between POBs and ACAs and promote cross-sector cooperation;

*Encouraging* further POBs and ACAs to actively participate in the networks' activities;

Recommend participating members to actively

- exchange best practices with other POBs and ACAs in order to develop general guidelines including the following topics: corruption within government agencies, prevention of abuse of office, electoral fraud, promoting anti-corruption compliance in the business sector, providing efficient police oversight to high professional standards, strengthening and guarding the independence and quality of POBs and ACAs;
- guarantee strong standards in the protection of whistleblowers in line with current international legislation
- develop and implement codes of conduct, integrity management systems and guidelines regarding positions within government agencies, in particular law enforcement agencies, in their respective countries;
- make use of handbooks and guidelines developed by EPAC/EACN working groups, such as the newly developed "Manual on Preventing Corruption and Promoting Integrity" of the "EU Integrity" working group, but also the Handbook for evaluating the effectiveness/efficiency of police oversight bodies;
- strengthen existing and develop new ways of international cooperation and exchange of information and to intensify knowledge transfer by using already existing tools, such as the Europol Secure Information Exchange Network Application (SIENA), the Europol Platform for Experts (EPE), the Europol Financial and Economic Crime Centre (EFECC), the EPAC/EACN Contact Catalogue and the EPAC/EACN Newsletter,
- vigorously pursue anti-corruption efforts as a key component of comprehensive national security agendas,
- ensure that POBs and ACAs develop high integrity standards in order to strengthen trust in the respective authority and thereby take on a pioneering role in public administration.

*Furthermore*, call on states to actively

- consider corruption as a significant risk to the prosperity, stability and national security of a country due to its negative impact and disruptive character on the social environment, economic development, trust in public institutions, health and safety of the general population and, particularly, its most vulnerable groups;
  - avoid any inappropriate or unreasonable bureaucratic or procedural obstacles in order to prevent any undue influence on the course of the criminal proceedings and thus ensure the independence and credibility of ACAs and POBs;
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- work on a strong whistleblowing protection system, accessible to all, highly protective and backed by sufficient resources;
- promote the usage of information and communication technology, such as big data technology, in the fight against corruption in order to allow for the rapid analysis of large tracts of data to identify potential instances of corruption in areas such as public procurement, asset disclosure, tax records, and financial allocations; smarter and more proactive investigative strategies may save resources and reduce costs of traditional ways of detecting, investigating and analysing corruption;
- when implementing EU or international legislation on personal data protection, consider facilitating access to personal data required for the detection, investigation and analysis of corruption by developing handbooks and guidelines for the use of big data analysis methods;
- encourage greater cooperation between ACAs and POBs and other public as well as private and non-governmental organizations in pursuit of more effective corruption prevention and anti-corruption awareness-raising;
- promote greater availability and openness of good governance and anti-corruption data to ensure a targeted and effective prevention of corruption;
- develop and implement mechanisms for tracing, seizing, freezing and confiscating assets of corruption offences, as well as for the effective management of frozen and confiscated assets;
- strengthen practical cooperation among ACAs, Financial Intelligence Units (FIUs) and financial institutions to detect, investigate and prevent the laundering of assets derived from corruption offences;
- ensure that POBs and ACAs have sufficient human and financial resources in order to fulfill their mission independently, to prevent corruption, share their expertise with other relevant agencies, and support them in developing corruption risk mitigation measures.

*Furthermore*, call on EU institutions and international organizations to

- promote effective digital governance as well as open data, information and communication technology to ensure not only a rapid response to the COVID-19 crisis, but also a higher level of general transparency and accountability of government institutions;
- promote the usage of information and communication technology, such as big data technology, in preventing and combating fraud and corruption;
- facilitate access to personal data required for the detection, investigation, and analysis of corruption, in accordance with applicable data protection regulations, by developing handbooks and guidelines for the use of big data analysis methods;
- promote and protect the freedom to seek, receive, disseminate and publish information on corruption, and ensure that the public has easy access to such information, in accordance with domestic law and as set out in the political declaration of the UNGASS 2021.

The Declaration will be widely circulated by the members in their respective countries and submitted to relevant EU institutions and bodies, the Council of Europe's GRECO, the OECD WGB, and UNODC.

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**Žydrūnas BARTKUS,**  
Director of the Special Investigation Service  
of the Republic of Lithuania



**Monique STIRN,**  
Acting President of EPAC/EACN

