



Press Release

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Maltese parliamentary delegation participates in the third meeting of the JPSG on Europol

A Maltese parliamentary delegation, comprising of Etienne Grech and David Agius, participated in the third meeting of the Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group on the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol), held in the European Parliament in Brussels on 24-25 September 2018.

The main aim of the JPSG is to politically monitor Europol's activities in fulfilling its mission, including the impact of those activities on the fundamental rights and freedoms of European citizens. In accordance with EU legislation, the JPSG has the right to question the Chairperson of the Management Board of Europol, the Executive Director of Europol, as well as the European Data Protection Supervisor. It also has the right to be consulted in relation to Europol's multiannual programming.

The meeting consisted in the presentation of Europol's draft Multiannual Programming Document 2019-2021, followed by Europol's Management Board activities in March-September 2018. Parliamentarians then discussed the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms of natural persons, especially the protection of personal data, as regards Europol's activities, followed by a presentation and an exchange of views on Europol's contribution to the fight against financial crime, asset recovery, and money laundering. European Commissioner for Security Union Julian King closed the meeting with a key note speech focussing on the EU's priorities and actions in the area of security.

Etienne Grech intervened in the session on Europol's contribution to the fight against financial crime, asset recovery, and money laundering. He argued that the world is witnessing rapid advancements in the development of IT capabilities and AI, as well as the use of internet banking and social media, putting pressure on policy-makers and legislators to address cyber-criminality which has become rampant and is causing substantial economic losses across the globe. He also referred to instability and terrorism in Northern Africa, which, among many consequences, also lead to human smuggling and trafficking, a very lucrative business. This "dirty" money is being laundered into Europe's financial systems highlighting the responsibility of both politicians and agencies such as Europol to cooperate with one another to address common threats and challenges.

In her presentation, Europol's new Executive Director Catherine de Bolle mentioned *inter alia* how Europol is supporting the investigations on the murders of investigative journalists in Malta and Slovakia. Among many issues discussed, some of which were highlighted by parliamentarians in the various debates, there was the special case of Brexit which could leave a gap in the EU's security; cooperation with Turkey, including exchange of data, on which parliamentarians voiced their

Attachments: photo

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concerns owing to lower data protection standards in the country; and Europol's future budget which, according to the Executive Director, is too weak to meet all the needs and priorities identified.