



Group of the Progressive Alliance of
Socialists & Democrats
in the European Parliament



Mrs Ursula von der Leyen,
President of the European Commission
European Commission
Rue de la Loi/Wetstraat 200
1049 Brussels

Brussels, 12 March 2020

Dear President,

The European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) was set up in order to improve the protection of the financial interests of the EU. It has the competence to investigate and prosecute infringements of the EU budget, such as fraud, corruption or serious cross-border VAT fraud.

The European Parliament has always strongly advocated for the EPPO because we cannot allow any form of misuse of European funds. The European Commission set the objective for the EPPO to start operations in November 2020. We are concerned that this objective will not be achieved if the Commission fails resolve the current lack of funding.

Considering that up to €60 billion is lost each year to cross-border VAT fraud and €390.7 million in fraud in EU spending was detected in 2017 alone, it is essential to have a fully functioning EPPO as soon as possible. It is clear that the EPPO can only function properly if it has the necessary funds. We were very alarmed to hear the European Chief Prosecutor tell LIBE and CONT committees on 6 February 2020 that the current budgetary framework of the EPPO is obsolete and insufficient. The total budget of €8.2 million allocated to EPPO for 2020 still falls short of what is needed. Apart from the technical mistake concerning the salaries of European Prosecutors, which has been corrected during the budgetary conciliation, it appears that other basic costs that must be covered for the EPPO to start have not been anticipated or have been underestimated. This includes not only the security costs of the EPPO premises - including the installation of a highly secured data centre to house the case management system but also translation costs, removal costs from the temporary premises to the new building, one-off staff recruitment costs and even the basic salaries of staff.

The workload of the EPPO in the first year of operations will be much higher than anticipated so therefore its resources have to be substantially increased to allow for this.

We expect the Commission to make a proposal for a draft amending budget 2020 to allow the EPPO to start its operations in November 2020. This proposal should include all the costs that have not been anticipated up until now and correct all the costs that have been underestimated. It is vital that the EPPO can start operations on a solid basis with enough European Delegated Prosecutors and other staff to ensure that the EPPO can get to work immediately. The draft budget 2021 should then be adjusted accordingly.

We also call on the Commission to urge the Member States to appoint 'delegated prosecutors' that can work full-time on European cases only. The current appointment of part-time prosecutors in multiple Member States will not contribute to an effectively functioning EPPO.

We cannot allow for a false start or not accord the EPPO the importance it deserves. The fact that we will need to have a new MFF in place soon only adds to our sense of urgency. We all should feel the responsibility to do our utmost to ensure that EU funding is spent properly. The EPPO has a vital role to play in this regard and therefore has to be fully equipped to meet this task.

We rely on your swift action.

Yours,

Manfred Weber
President of the European People's Party Group

Iratxe García Pérez
President of the Socialists and Democrats Group

Dacian Cioloş
President of the Renew Europe Group