

The logo for Europol, featuring the word "EUROPOL" in blue capital letters. The letters are arranged in a slightly curved line. Behind the letters is a stylized graphic of a blue sphere with several yellow lightning bolts striking it from the top right.

The Hague, 10 April 2007

File n° 233078v4

PUBLIC HEARING ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPOL

European Parliament, Brussels, 10 April 2007

Max-Peter Ratzel
Director of Europol

Opening

Let me start by thanking Mr Jean-Marie Cavada, Chairman of the LIBE Committee and Mr Diaz de Mera Garcia Consuegra for organising today's public hearing devoted to the future of Europol. This hearing is an important indicator for the developing role of the European Police Office.

Europol, since its establishment in 1999 until the present day, has been developing fast and undergoing many changes. The Europol Convention dates back to the

situation and threat of organised crime and terrorism of the early 1990s when there was a willingness of the EU to transfer responsibilities and tasks to the European level. In so far, evolutionary development of the legal framework is obviously needed to achieve appropriate progress.

The changes to Europol have mirrored the fast developments in the area of Justice and Home Affairs. The Treaty of Amsterdam came into force on 01 May 1999. Since then, Justice and Home Affairs has been said to be one of the most dynamic policy domains in the European Union. The reason for this is the dedication and engagement of the Member States to live up to their commitment to create an area of Freedom, Security and Justice in the EU to serve their citizens as much as possible.

Ensuring security to EU citizens takes a lot of effort in view of the changeable threats to security that we are facing. Just recently Europol has presented the European Parliament with the EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2007 (TE-SAT). TE-SAT illustrates very well the changeable and continuous threat posed by one concrete criminal area – terrorism. In this area alone, almost 500 attacks were carried out in 11 Member States in 2006. The vast majority of them resulted in limited material damage and were not intended to cause losses in human lives. However, the failed attack in Germany and the foiled London plot demonstrate that Islamist terrorists also still aim at mass casualties. More than 700 individuals suspected of terrorism offences were arrested in 15 Member States in 2006.

The TE-SAT was established as a reporting mechanism to the political decision makers, particularly to the European Parliament, in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks in 2001.

This edition of 2007 for the first time has been based on the updated methodology as proposed by Europol. The new methodology of the report was developed in consultation with the Finnish and German Presidencies, Eurojust and SITCEN. In this respect the TE-SAT 2007 has been a joint effort and a good example of excellent cooperation in the field of Counter Terrorism at EU level.

TE-SAT together with the Organised Crime Threat Assessment are two Europol products which assist the EU institutions and Member States in the decision making process as regards the prevention and combating organised crime and terrorism.

When preparing these two main products Europol takes advantage of its own resources, databases and intelligence. Europol also relies on other EU agencies and on the

Member States competent services. Eurojust and SITCEN should get special attention in this context. From our perspective, an integrated horizontal approach is vital. Europol would like to support the changes as advocated by the MS and EU institutions which would make horizontal cooperation even easier and more effective.

Europol also follows the discussions on the appropriateness of the Europol Convention as a legal instrument. Such a change, if incorporated, will touch upon the nature of Europol. We must remember however, that Europol is at the service of the Member States and their respective competent authorities. We strictly follow the guidelines as set by the Council. Thus, we also rely on the Council's decision as concerns our future role and position in the EU architecture.

So far the decisions were made and implemented to expand the mandate and role of Europol. Just recently Europol welcomed the information on coming into force of the three protocols. Two of these came into force on 29 March:

- The protocol concerning the new expanded mandate of Europol in the area of combating Money Laundering
- the protocol on Joint Investigation Teams

The protocol on Joint Investigation Teams will further strengthen Europol's operational capabilities. This process is in line with what I see as the future for Europol: to support the Member States' operations in order to fulfil its mission, written down in Article 2 of the Europol Convention.

The third protocol, the so called Danish protocol, will come into force next week – on 18 April 2007. This third protocol to the Europol Convention will inter alia explicitly allow that *“the Presidency of the Council or its representative be assisted*

by the Director of Europol when appearing before the European Parliament for discussing general questions relating to Europol". This is a clear improvement of cooperation and communication between the various institutions at the EU level.

For the time being, I would like to end on that note and give the floor to the German Presidency. Later in the day you will be able to hear more details on Europol's position with regard to data protection and legal issues on behalf of Europol. I look forward to hearing your opinions and possibly some questions during the latter part of this meeting. Thank you very much for your attention.