

OPENING SPEECH

Distinguished Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a special honor and pleasure for me to open this international conference on behalf of the Croatian Association of European Criminal Law, and to host you in Dubrovnik and Croatia. I am pleased to welcome representatives of OLAF, the European Commission, the Supreme Court of the Republic of Croatia, the State Attorney Office of the Republic of Croatia, the Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Croatia, as well as representatives of the national Associations for European Criminal Law and all other distinguished European guests and colleagues, to this international conference entitled “European criminal procedural law in the service of protection of European Union financial interests: State of Play and Challenges.” Thank you for the interest that you have shown in this important scientific and professional event, and for your active participation in our discussions over the next two days.

The Croatian Association is grateful to the European Commission and particularly OLAF for its support, which has not only been financial, but also organizational and personal. The friendship and cooperation between the Croatian Association and OLAF has existed for almost two decades, since we were invited to enter into the European family of Associations, long before Croatian membership of the European Union. The Croatian Association for European Criminal Law (*Hrvatska udruga za europsko kazneno pravo*) was founded in 1999 by the academician and constitutional judge Davor Krapac. Under the presidency of Petar Novoselec, professor of criminal law at the University of Zagreb, the Croatian Association, in cooperation with the Austrian Association for European Criminal Law, organised, from 12-14 May 2005, therefore exactly 10 years ago, an international scientific conference entitled *Current Issues in European Criminal Law and the Protection of EU Financial Interests*. Remembering the success of that conference, it is clear that we have chosen the same place, and even the same date, superstitiously hoping for the reincarnation of the intellectual spirit, the working energy and the exchange of knowledge created here precisely a decade ago.

In this conference dedicated to European criminal procedural law we will work on three subjects, the first dealing with a sword of criminal procedural law: Financial investigations - mechanisms to enhance exchange of information and mutual cooperation in asset recovery; the second session will deal with a shield of criminal procedural law: Procedural rights of defence – strengthening the rights of suspects in criminal proceedings; and the third session will deal with recent developments and an outlook of the future of some European institutions (OLAF, EUROJUST, EPPO). Although at first sight it may seem that the topics are unrelated and detached, their mutual features are that they all serve the common goal of the protection of European values,

individual rights and the financial interests of the EU, and that they all are all currently issues at the European level in the field of human rights and justice.

Dear Guests, I hope that we all will use this conference as another opportunity to allow national and European experts to exchange and enhance knowledge, and build the mutual confidence and trust necessary to cooperate effectively within the European area of freedom, security and justice. And also that, despite the demanding programme, you will find time to visit Dubrovnik, a pearl of Croatian, European and world cultural heritage.

I wish you all a pleasant, exciting and valuable stay in Dubrovnik.

Zlata Đurđević
Professor, President of Croatian Association
of European Criminal Law