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Carmelo Abela attends 18th Meeting of the Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group on Europol in Nicosia

The 18th Meeting of the Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group (JPSG) on Europol, which took place on 4 and 5 February 2026 at the Filoxenia Conference Centre in Nicosia, Cyprus brought together Members of the European Parliament and representatives of national parliaments to exercise democratic scrutiny over Europol's activities, in line with Article 88 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. The Maltese House of Representatives was represented by Carmelo Abela at this meeting.

The meeting focused on strengthening Europol's capabilities and oversight in the context of the new Europol Regulation, against the backdrop of increasingly complex cross border security threats, including organised crime, hybrid threats, terrorism and cyber enabled criminal activity. Participants examined how Europol's mandate and resources could be further developed to enhance operational support to Member States, while preserving national competences and ensuring robust accountability mechanisms.

Discussions addressed Europol's evolving operational role, including its capacity to support investigations through advanced data analysis, digital forensics and the use of new technologies. Particular attention was given to cooperation with other EU agencies and bodies, such as Eurojust, the European Public Prosecutor's Office, Frontex, OLAF and AMLA, as well as to partnerships with third countries and the private sector. The meeting also reflected on recent legislative developments, including the regulation strengthening Europol's role in preventing and combating migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings.

A key element of the meeting concerned oversight and fundamental rights safeguards. Members discussed the role of the European Data Protection Supervisor and the Fundamental Rights Officer in monitoring Europol's activities, especially in relation to expanded data processing powers and the use of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and biometric analysis. The importance of maintaining transparency, proportionality and effective parliamentary scrutiny alongside any future mandate expansion was repeatedly underlined.

During Scrutiny Session I on Europol's role in preventing and countering migrant smuggling, Abela underlined Malta's full commitment to the implementation of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum, noting that national efforts were progressing in close coordination with all relevant stakeholders. He stressed that effective cooperation between Member States and European agencies was essential, highlighting the need to strengthen coordination and information sharing between Europol and Frontex. In this context, he emphasised that any remaining operational or legal obstacles to information exchange should be addressed, while also underlining the importance of building trust between national services and confidence in existing tools to encourage more systematic sharing of information.



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Abela also referred to the external dimension of migration management, stating that cooperation with third countries of origin and transit remained crucial. He called for clarity on Europol's engagement with partners in the Mediterranean region, North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in light of the significant financial investment made by the EU in these regions, and stressed that addressing migrant smuggling required a coordinated, whole of Europe approach. Finally, he touched upon the role of non-governmental organisations, acknowledging Europol's mandate to support investigations into criminal networks, while raising questions about instances where certain NGOs might act as pull factors. He therefore asked whether and how Europol coordinated or engaged in dialogue with such organisations within the scope of its mandate.

The meeting concluded with an exchange of views on the future direction of Europol within the broader framework of the EU's Internal Security Strategy, highlighting the need for a balanced approach that strengthens Europol's operational effectiveness while ensuring democratic accountability and respect for fundamental rights.