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PRESS RELEASE

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**PRESS RELEASE BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

***Maltese Parliamentary Delegation participates in 19th Meeting of the Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group on Europol in Brussels***

MP Francesca Zarb and MP Conrad Borg Manche participated in the 19th Meeting of the Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group (JPSG) on Europol, held on 9 and 10 November 2026 at the European Parliament in Brussels. The meeting brought together Members of the European Parliament and national parliamentarians to examine Europol's activities, operational priorities and accountability in combating serious and organised crime across the European Union.

The meeting was co-chaired by Mr Javier Zarzalejos, Chair of the European Parliament's Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE), and Mr Matt Carthy, Chair of the Irish Parliament's Committee on Justice, Home Affairs and Migration. Discussions covered Europol's activities between February and November 2026, its draft Multiannual Programming Document for 2027–2029, the protection of fundamental rights and personal data, and the European Commission's proposal to revise the Europol Regulation. Two dedicated scrutiny sessions examined cooperation with third countries in combating organised crime and hybrid threats, and Europol's role in tackling financial and economic crime.

During the discussions on Europol's activities and future priorities, MP Zarb expressed support for a stronger Europol while emphasising that Member States must remain central to decisions affecting their national competences. She highlighted Malta's geographical position in the Mediterranean and its exposure to transnational criminal activities, including migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings. MP Zarb questioned Europol representatives about recent arrests of traffickers, cooperation with the Libyan authorities and the agency's operational presence in third countries, stressing the importance of strengthening international cooperation against criminal networks operating along Mediterranean migration routes.

In a separate intervention, MP Zarb addressed the relationship between security and fundamental rights. She emphasised that fundamental rights should not be regarded as obstacles to criminal investigations, but as essential safeguards ensuring that law enforcement activities are conducted properly. She called for fundamental rights considerations to be incorporated at an early stage of decision-making and for stronger mechanisms to protect individuals affected by Europol's operations. MP Zarb also underlined the importance of solidarity and cooperation between Member States, while acknowledging the work of the Malta Police Force and the Government's continued investment in national security.

Addressing the scrutiny session on financial and economic crime, MP Borg Manche stressed the importance of closer cooperation between Europol and national police forces in investigating complex cross-border offences.

He argued that combining the knowledge and expertise of law enforcement authorities across Member States could significantly strengthen Europol's operational effectiveness. He also raised questions concerning the training provided by Europol to national authorities and the additional support required from Member States to improve the investigation and prosecution of financial crimes. MP Borg Manche further highlighted the scale of illicit financial activities across the EU and the difficulties authorities face in recovering criminal proceeds. Referring to estimates of substantial criminal revenues and the limited proportion of assets confiscated, he warned that proceeds from organised crime are frequently laundered through legitimate businesses and subsequently reinvested in further criminal activities. He called for stronger cooperation, improved investigative capabilities and greater support for Europol's efforts to disrupt criminal financial networks.

The participation of the Maltese delegation formed part of the House of Representatives' continued engagement in the parliamentary scrutiny of Europol. The meeting provided an opportunity to address the operational challenges facing European law enforcement authorities while reaffirming the importance of national competences, fundamental rights and effective cooperation in combating cross-border crime. The JPSG serves as an important mechanism for strengthening democratic accountability and ensuring that Europol's activities remain subject to scrutiny by the European Parliament and national parliaments.