



European Commission - Speech [Check Against Delivery]



Remarks by Commissioner McGuinness at the press conference on the Anti-money laundering package

Brussels, 20 July 2021

Good afternoon, thanks for joining us and thank you Valdis for running through the detail of what we believe is a game changer when it comes to tackling the crime of money laundering.

And I think Valdis has stressed and I want to do it again – that behind the story of dirty money are terrible crimes which are awful for citizens, society, families and communities and therefore tackling money laundering is tackling crime at its very heart.

In essence we have looked at where the gaps are in our regulatory framework and we've said enough is enough.

So today's package is a response to very, very prominent cases, scandals if you like, of money laundering in the financial system and we believe that the package will plug those gaps in our current framework.

It's about consistency, it's about harmonisation, and it's about supervision and enforcement.

Valdis has talked about this new Authority, which is now regarded as essential by Member States and indeed the European Parliament in order for us as a European Union to tackle money laundering at the very heart.

Because this Authority will not just be coordinating at EU level – it will also work with the Financial Intelligence Units within each Member State and have better coordination and harmonisation.

One of the issues that has certainly been raised with me by the financial system is that if they work across borders, there are different rules in different Member States on money laundering. So that isn't effective, it can be costly, and it certainly doesn't work.

We believe this package will end that fragmentation we have across the single market and therefore improve our work in addressing money laundering.

So for example we are also setting up a system to connect national registers for bank accounts, and this will provide faster access for Financial Intelligence Units and other authorities to get access to key information.

We will give law enforcement authorities access to this system, speeding up financial investigations and therefore the recovery of criminal assets.

And that will of course be subject to strict rules for access to financial information.

And as I've said we are introducing an EU mechanism for coordinating national Financial Intelligence Units, which will strengthen the very backbone of our system.

Cash remains really important for citizens and for the Commission. However, we want cash to be clean. We don't want dirty cash in the system so we have proposed a limit of €10,000 across the European Union as being an appropriate level.

Many Member States already have much lower levels and that will stay, that will not change under the system. Others have no limits and I'm sure there will be a conversation around that.

But I'd hope that our citizens would understand the reason behind our concerns with cash because large amounts of cash can be washed through the system where there are not controls on the limit value, so €10,000 is our proposal.

And equally the whole financial world is changing. Crypto-assets are now common currency, if you like, but they're anonymous. And I would refer you perhaps to the Financial Action Task Force website for a very simple graphic of how criminals corrupt the crypto-asset marketplace, and we are tackling that, and I think that is just timely that we are doing that.

So we shouldn't have different rules for the financial system – they should apply across digital currencies as well.

In relation to the third countries, of course we'll stay in line with the Financial Action Task Force and we will continue to mirror their approach to a very great extent.

But the consequences of listing will be tailored to each specific country in accordance with the threat it poses to the EU financial system.

So we will have an EU grey list for cooperative countries outside the EU which have deficiencies in the system, and where the Commission will decide which enhanced due diligence procedures should apply.

And we will have a black-list for non-cooperative countries, which will face not only the full set of enhanced due diligence measures, but also countermeasures decided by the Commission.

In addition to mirroring the FATF lists, the Commission will also be able to list countries outside the EU autonomously and decide whether to include them on the grey or the black list.

So with this new package, the Commission is going after dirty money, we're fighting financial crime.

We are counting on the support of the European Parliament and our Member States, who will now work on our proposal.

And with the very keen concern across the European Union about the crime of money laundering and the many crimes it allows, I believe that there will be, both in Parliament and in the Member States, a great desire to get this job done.

And we are certainly as a Commission looking forward to getting involved in those discussions and making sure that our financial system does not facilitate crime, and does not allow dirty money to get washed through. Because as I've said at the outset, the crime behind the dirty money are appalling and therefore I think in tackling money laundering, we tackle crime at its very heart.

Thank you.

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