



## BUNDESRECHTSANWALTSKAMMER

Dear Colleagues,  
dear friends,

I am delighted to welcome you here today to the ECBA autumn conference in Berlin, where we are going to discuss the European Public Prosecutor in detail.

In fact, the Vice-President of the German Federal Bar (Bundesrechtsanwaltskammer/BRAK), Ms. Ulrike Paul was due to be standing here today, but unfortunately, she is unwell and unable to attend. She was really looking forward to welcoming you all here in person. She sends her warm greetings and wishes us a successful conference.

So instead, I have the great honour to welcome you on behalf of the German Federal Bar, which has organized this reception together with Deutscher Anwaltsverein.

The German Federal Bar is the umbrella organization for the self-regulated bodies of all German lawyers. It represents the interests of the 28 German regional Bars and therefore of the entire legal profession in the Federal Republic of Germany in relation to national, European and international authorities, courts and organisations.

I myself work as a legal expert on two committees of BRAK, where we respond to legislative initiatives in European and German criminal law.

Even though it may have seemed like it, working life did not stop during the pandemic: the most urgent proceedings continued with in-person court hearings, particularly those where the accused was in custody.

The situation of the pre-trial detainees was unbearable during this time. In one of my cases, my client had to be quarantined for a total of 8 days before and after each court hearing. This basically meant solitary confinement for several months. My client was locked away for 23 hours a day and had virtually no chance of human contact in the prison. In addition, there were numerous delays in the trial, due to Covid restrictions.

It was very frustrating for me as his defence lawyer, too, because I could do nothing to help my client despite my best intentions.



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This has shown me once more that there are still many areas where we need to stand up for the rights of the accused at both a national and international level.

Lawyers play a vital role in a functioning state governed by the rule of law and this is particularly true for criminal defence lawyers. For example, during the pandemic, BRAK fought on national level for its members to be able to continue to represent the interests of their clients effectively, to gain access to state aid, as well as to have access to the services of certain professions.

But as we all know, Europe is becoming more and more important for our work. Even in the field of criminal law, we are taking giant steps towards a common system. Nothing demonstrates this more than the start of the work of the European Public Prosecutor's Office in June of this year. My colleague Jes Meyer-Lohkamp is going to say more about this shortly.

The ECBA offers a great opportunity for us to make our concerns as defence lawyers heard on European level. This is why BRAK decided to become a collective member of the ECBA and has given me the honour to represent BRAK in this association.

I am thrilled that BRAK's first task was to successfully organise this evening alongside DAV and that so many of you made it here to this very special location. I'm especially pleased that so many of our British friends and colleagues have come, despite having left the European legal system with Brexit.

I am also very delighted that we have been able to realise our idea of a holding a great conference about the very topical EPPO, with so many highly qualified experts, including lawyers, European prosecutors, European Delegated prosecutors and a representative of OLAF.

The EPPO will play a decisive role in the fight for the rule of law within the EU. At times like these, where the rule of law is seriously at stake, especially in certain EU Member States, we cannot value an institution like the EPPO enough.

I wish you all a great time here in Berlin, I hope we all make interesting connections and have fruitful discussions. I cannot wait to finally catch up with all of you in person!

Stefanie Schott