



Dear Colleague,

On behalf of the European Criminal Bar Association I am delighted to welcome you to Potsdam for the ECBA Spring Conference. As you know in addition to this being one of our regular events, this conference marks our 10th Anniversary. I am delighted that so many familiar faces, long-time supporters and new colleagues are joining us to celebrate this occasion. We are also honoured that the ECBA “founding fathers” have returned to mark this significant date in our history.

The ECBA has come a long way in the last ten years and it appears the influence of Europe will only increase in the future. However, we would not even be in existence were it not for a small group of committed defence practitioners - shall we say the intrepid few - who set out to collaborate together, across Europe. Their goal was to promote the rights of the defence and advocate minimum standards for all persons suspected, accused or convicted of a criminal offence. It was due to their foresight and commitment that in the Spring of 1997 a momentous decision was made to establish the organisation. In doing so they sought to fill a significant void in the way European decision making was developing.

While there might never be a time when the views of defence lawyers are popularly received, there can be little doubt that the extraordinary events of the last 10 years posed exceptional challenges. During this time we have seen the development of EU Justice and Home Affairs policy, the launch of Eurojust, the expansion of the Europol, enhanced co-operation between judges, prosecutors, investigators, and police forces, not to mention the focus on a war against terror and fight against organised crime. Yet all this has taken place with little institutional regard, respect or support for the voice of the defence. It is with this in mind that the ECBA continues to work hard to defend the rights of the individual, to extend the network of defence practitioners across Europe and actively make representation to the EU decision makers to bring the perspective of the individual and the defence practitioner to the attention of the legislators.

The ECBA is now viewed as a significant stakeholder in the debate and discussion in relation to criminal measures at European level. Testimony to that is the fact that the current holders of the EU Presidency, Germany, are supporting our conference and we are delighted to welcome the

Federal Minister for Justice, Birgitte Zypries, to the event as well as a number of her team from the Ministry of Justice. The efforts of the German Presidency in prioritising the adoption of the procedural rights proposal have been welcomed by the ECBA.

Moreover, for 2006-2007 the ECBA received funding from the European Commission to support us in our work. With this financial support we have increased our lobbying and representational capacity, improved our website and external communications policy and expanded the functions of our secretariat.

We are continuously seeking to expand our membership both in numbers and in geographical scope and for this we need help from you - the membership. We welcome your ideas, your views and would encourage you to promote the ECBA and encourage your colleagues, friends and contacts to join.

I do hope that this ECBA conference proves interesting, useful and of course enjoyable. It is an honour to bring together people from so many different jurisdictions and nationalities to share in the aims of the ECBA. Whilst we must look to the future I nonetheless feel that this conference will be an excellent opportunity to reflect on the past and acknowledge the foresight and wisdom of those who first set up our Association.

Yours faithfully,

Han Jahae
Chairman of the European Criminal Bar Association.