Legal proceedings in the area of protection of financial interests

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Protecting the EU's financial interests against the activities of international organised crime (e.g. fraud, corruption and money-laundering) requires closer cooperation between the judicial authorities of the Member States. However, efforts to achieve such cooperation often lead to conflicts of jurisdiction between national authorities. To ensure that there is an efficient, coherent criminal law system throughout the EU, the Union needs to take subsidiary measures. This was the thrust of the own-initiative report by Diemut THEATO (EPP, D), which was adopted. The report says that in the short term greater cooperation is needed between national authorities responsible for criminal justice. A specialist body, i.e. UCLAF (the Commission's anti-fraud unit), should be empowered, under EU regulations, to centralise information, coordinate the activities of the investigating authorities and help improve the training of national criminal justice officials. In the long term, a European Public Prosecutor's office should be set up, as proposed in the 'Corpus Juris', to establish an embryonic European legal area to provide swift and effective protection for the Union's finances. (The 'Corpus Juris' is to be found in a study produced by the Commission at Parliament's request, and puts forward basic texts for criminal law and procedure at EU level.) The committee also asks the Commission to submit to Parliament by June 1998 a report on the obstacles to be overcome with regard to harmonisation of criminal law, in order to resolve any problems which might be raised by the establishment of a European Public Prosecutor's office.