

Speech Jan van den Bos, Chairman of The Netherlands Inspection Council

Enforcement in a Europe without borders, Amsterdam

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Good morning, I welcome you all on behalf of myself and my colleagues of the Dutch Inspection Council.

We all remember the horsemeat scandal in 2013. Instead of 100% beef, TV dinners also contained horsemeat. This meat came from 4 different countries. These countries bought the meat in other countries and it was almost impossible to trace all the ingredients. The current food chain from farmer to our own kitchen is too complex....

Let me give you another example to illustrate the importance of our discussion today. Recently the Dutch Authority for Nuclear Safety and Radiation Protection had a joint inspection with their Belgian colleagues at a nuclear power plant in Belgium near our border.

The idea of this conference started in 2013 when we were on a working visit in Paris at the OECD. There we found out that the cooperation between countries and inspectorates still can be improved. During our working visits in Brussels and Bonn the last two years we explored and developed our ideas for this conference, certainly because of the EU-presidency.

First of all, let me introduce ourselves. The Dutch Inspection Council consists of 10 members. We meet on a monthly basis. In the last ten years we built a solid base for cooperation at the highest level in the Netherlands. Of course we're aware of the world around us.

Ensuring our public interests increasingly takes place at the European level and in legislation. Legislation is a commitment on paper, but with paper alone it is toothless. We, citizens, companies and the governments must act on it. Unfortunately this will not work automatically. We also need enforcement. Legislation and enforcement work hand in hand to ensure our public interests. The one can't function without the other.

Yet, enforcement has not been harmonized to the same degree as legislation. The title of today's conference is 'A Europe without Borders'. However, legislation is generally regulated within the borders of a country. This doesn't match most sectors anymore. Consumers order through the internet from all over the world, patients go abroad for their health care, our food production chain is beyond borders and the airspace, by definition, doesn't have any physical boundaries.

What does this mean for us as Inspectorates? What is our answer to these developments in society, of which we are a part ourselves?

The goal of this conference is to develop a platform which enables a dialogue about enforcement without borders, within and beyond the EU. Which forms of cooperation between inspectorates have the potential to overcome the challenges of today and tomorrow? Is there any need for more international cooperation? And how do we achieve this in the different countries with their own legislation, cultures and ways of doing business together? What is the effect of policy in daily life?

We can't answer all those questions by ourselves. We need an open mind to stay in touch with our environment. We need to enforce and continue the dialogue, not only within the inspectorates, but also with the political sector, the business world and society at large. This is the only way to keep our promise to secure public interest as a key-issue.

I'm proud to be able to host you here in Amsterdam. Why? I'll show you: the way you've been invited was an expedition in itself.

We started with our own networks. And asked them to forward the invitation.

There are so many different networks on enforcement. There are national and international networks, but also different types of networks, each with diverse members. We found 70 networks. Can you imagine how much effort is put into cooperation and how much knowledge there is? I doubt, however, that we use all this knowledge in a meaningful way. I think we should make it work better, much better.

There are a lot of inspectorates: for example (and I make a low estimation): 10 inspectorates per country already make 280 inspectorates in the EU.

And I am sure we don't know all the networks of all of those inspectorates. I see a lot of opportunities to enlarge enforcement across borders and countries.

Ladies and gentlemen. Today we share our knowledge about enforcement, and look to what is in front of us. The European presidency gives us a chance to exchange experiences, explore best practises and discuss common themes.

I asked Edmond Wellenstein to accompany us and to listen carefully to all that will be discussed. At the end of the day he will summarize the outcome for everyone to take home and to continue our dialogue.

Let us start today by making relevant relationships between inspectorates and our networks, conform a Europe without borders.

Last but not least I wish you all an inspiring conference.

Thank you.