Press release | 13.12.2011

Criminal rights

Greater cross-border rights during criminal proceedings, as MEPs endorse EU letter of rights

New EU rules strengthening the right to information of accused persons and suspects in criminal proceedings were today adopted by the European Parliament (1). The Greens welcomed the new rules, which will ensure suspects and accused persons are given information on their rights in a language they understand prior to any interview, as well as access to materials relating to the case. After the vote, Green home affairs spokesperson **Jan Philipp Albrecht** said:

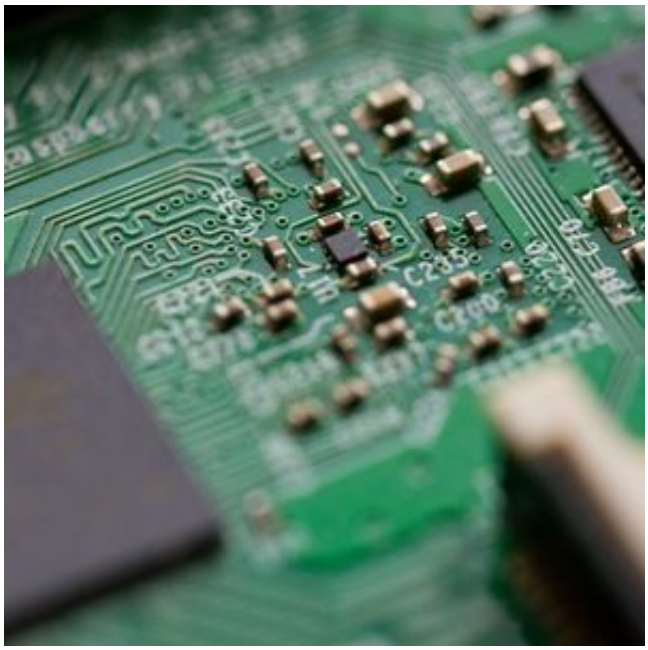
"The adoption of the EU letter of rights closes an important loophole in terms of the protection of fundamental rights across Europe. In future, all European citizens accused or suspected of a crime will be informed about their rights in a language they can understand. Ensuring accused persons and suspects have access to information they can understand at the outset of criminal proceedings is crucial to their ability to defend their basic rights.

"While this is an important step towards minimum standards in criminal proceedings, the Commission has taken the second step before the first: it would have made much more sense to substantially harmonise these rights first before dealing with applicable information. The content of the new letter of rights will now be clarified in forthcoming EU legislation on access to a lawyer. Member states must now clear the path towards harmonised rights in the EU."

(1) MEPs endorsed a legislative agreement on the directive on the right to information in criminal proceedings. The directive is the so called 'B measure' of the 'roadmap for strengthening procedural rights of suspected or accused persons in criminal proceedings', which the Council presented in November 2009. The right to interpretation and translation, the right to communication with relatives and the right to access to a lawyer also belong to the roadmap, which is aimed at setting common minimum standards for criminal proceedings.

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Jan Philipp Albrecht

Member

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