Foreword by the European Chief Prosecutor

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A strong European Public Prosecutor's Office

There are not so many instances in which we, as Europeans, are in a position to actually exercise power which, in our traditions, pertains to the States. The European Public Prosecutor's Office is a European institution which allows precisely that: a European exercise of the judicial power.

With several groundbreaking investigations after only four years of activity, the European Public Prosecutor's Office has surprised many, especially the criminals involved. In investigation Admiral, a VAT fraud scheme having caused almost 3 billion euro of damage to the national and European budgets, we already have the first convictions in court. In the investigation 'Calypso', a customs fraud having caused at least 800 million euro of damage to the European and national budgets, the European Public Prosecutor's Office managed to seize thousands of containers worth at least 250 million euro, the largest seizure of its kind to date. I could go on.

In short, an independent and efficient European Public Prosecutor's Office is the best weapon available to the European Union when it comes to fighting dangerous criminal organised groups which, over the years, were allowed to transform fraud against the financial interests of the EU into an industry, causing massive damages to our finances, economies and undermining our security.

Despite numerous successes, very quickly, the College of the European Public Prosecutor's Office identified a whole series of shortcomings in the founding regulation and called for necessary improvements to be made without delay. When it comes to fighting crime, when it comes to justice, the European citizens should not be asked to wait decades for improvements to be made. There is no time to waste in a situation of clear and present danger. There is no reason to delay a more efficient administration of justice, in the interest of European citizens.

In the upcoming revision of the Regulation establishing the European Public Prosecutor's Office, we should resist any temptations to weaken its independence. This is the cornerstone of its efficiency and trustworthiness in the eyes of European citizens, which is what matters most, eventually.

If there is one aspect where the European Public Prosecutor's Office should be strengthened, especially if we are considering how to fight cross-border organised crime more efficiently, then it is in its capacity to operate

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as a single office, without borders within the EPPO zone, and as a fully recognised judicial authority outside the EPPO zone.

In a democratic society, the accuracy of the analysis that political leaders make of the contemporary challenges and opportunities that we face and that must be addressed serves little without the trust of the people. If you lie, cheat and steal without consequences, you instil despair and fear. If you inspire hope and then disappoint, if you say one thing to get elected but do something else once you are in power, if you abuse power, you open the gates for barbarity.

This is why I wish the European Public Prosecutor's Office to remain a truly independent, efficient and strong institution, an institution that the citizens will be able to trust. Together with the European Court of Justice, the European Public Prosecutor's Office will continue to protect the European values, citizens and financial interests.

Laura Kövesi

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