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Commissioner Johansson's speech at the Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group on Europol

We met last in September.

I told you then about my plans for a new Europol mandate.

In December, I presented a proposal for this new mandate.

A proposal that will give Europol necessary tools. To fight crime and terror in a digital age.

I also said when we last met:

Along with more responsibilities for Europol.

Also come more responsibilities for oversight.

More responsibilities for you – in the Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group.

And that's why it's essential for me to discuss this proposal here with you today.

So, what are the main changes that I propose in the changing mandate?

To begin with, we answer a long-standing wish of the European Parliament.

Europol must be able to propose to initiate investigations in one single Member State. When our shared interests are at stake – the common interest of the Union.

Some crimes are so fundamental, that they damage our common values even if they don't cross national borders.

That's why this is part of the new mandate that I propose.

Second. I want Europol to be able to work directly with private companies. That's essential, especially to counter child sexual abuse.

Sex offenders rape children and share pictures and videos online. They stream rape live to the other side of the world. Predators hide behind national borders. In a patchwork of jurisdictions.

The big Internet companies help us to take down these videos. In one year, companies sent law enforcement in Europe 100,000 newly produced videos.

Now this is not part of the discussion, but right now we have an urgent need to find an adoption of the temporary legislation that I have proposed. To make sure that these companies can continue with their voluntary detection and taking down and reporting of these terrible crimes of child sexual abuse.

But Internet companies they can often not see in a video where a rape is taking place. They can't see, to which national law enforcement agency they must file a report.

My proposal allows private companies to refer child sexual abuse material directly to Europol.

And Europol will analyse this information and identify which Member States are responsible to investigate.

And Europol will support these investigations to rescue children.

Europol also needs to cooperate with private companies to effectively support Member States in fighting terrorism.

Terrorists post propaganda online, they recruit online, they stream their attacks online. In the last five years, Europol referred almost 130,000 pieces of terrorist content for removal.

That's means people are not radicalised. Bombs not made. Attacks not carried out. Tragedies avoided. Lives not lost.

The new mandate will allow companies and Europol to share information. So Europol can act faster to help take down terrorist content.

Third.

Non-EU countries and international organisations give Europol valuable information on terror suspects and criminals. I want Europol to be able to put this information into the Schengen Information System.

Europol can't it right now.

As a result, criminals and terrorists cross our borders undetected.

Just one example. One of our allies gave Europol information on 2,700 foreign terrorist fighters, based on battlefield intelligence. All of those were third country nationals, potential security threats.

Member States put 1,700 of these names in the Schengen Information System.

But 1,000 names were not put in there

Member States were not able to put in the remaining 1,000.

If these dangerous people try to enter Europe, border guards might not detect them.

Police might not spot them, if they run checks against the system.

I want to close this security gap. Europol should be able to create its own special security alerts. Certainly if Member States can't, or won't.

So that when border guards and police officers run a check.

They will get a hit, telling them – watch out – this person is known to Europol.

Four.

I also want Europol to support the European Public Prosecutor's Office.

The European Public Prosecutor's Office will investigate and prosecute crimes such as fraud, corruption and money laundering. Soon, it will be fully operational.

The EPPO will need information, cooperation and support from Europol. That is not yet reflected in Europol's mandate. I want to make this support explicit in the Europol Regulation.

That's important.

Without support from Europol, it will be more difficult for the EPPO to conduct criminal investigations into fraud and corruption.

Five.

Europol plays an important role in crime-fighting innovation. Encryption today is powerful, cheap and essential for all of us – to shop online, to bank online, to communicate online.

But criminals use encryption to conspire, to commit and hide their crimes.

Europol can already today help with decryption. When police captures an encrypted computer or phone with a lawful warrant.

In the new mandate, I want Europol also to be able to develop artificial intelligence. Needed by law enforcement to analyse large and complex sets of data. And to fight modern crime.

In one investigation, police captured a mobile phone with 130,000 pictures and 1,300 videos. That's one hundred days of full time work, for one police officer to investigate.

Technology such as artificial intelligence can help to investigate these kind of volumes, much more quickly.

And speaking of big data.

In my proposal, I've made sure that Europol will continue to be able to process big data sets.

Without this ability, Europol could not have helped to solve the biggest criminal cases in recent years.

Including last year's success story, the Encrochat case.

In the Encrochat case, police listened live to encrypted calls. To criminals plotting drug deals, violent crimes and murders. Leading to over a thousand arrests.

You will remember our discussion last September.

The European Data Protection Supervisor's Decision.

That Europol's processing of large datasets was not foreseen in the Europol Regulation.

And that's why I acted immediately.

Doing nothing, would have completely undermined Europol's ability to fight crime and terror.

I said in September that I would clear up any ambiguities.

And that's exactly what we have done

My services have worked closely with the European Data Protection Supervisor. And with Europol.

To make sure that in the new mandate Europol can continue, to analyse large datasets.

All these updates are essential for Europol to continue to play its role.

As Europe's leading crime fighters.

I repeat now what I said to you in September: there is no contradiction between privacy and security.

Security and freedom go hand in hand.

Freedom without security is the law of the strongest

Security without freedom is a dictatorship.

We have updated Europol's data protection framework.

To bring it in line with the most recent EU legislation.

So that Europol can continue to live by the strongest possible rules on data protection.

And fully respect fundamental rights.

And I know you in this group will make sure of that.

As I said at the start of my speech:

More responsibility for Europol, also means more responsibility for you,

In the Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group.

I've made sure that in the new mandate, Europol will have additional reporting obligations to this group.

Finally,

Europol needs the means to carry out this new, stronger role.

I've proposed to increase Europol's budget by 178 million euro and add 160 additional staff.

And Member States should also be able to contribute directly to Europol's budget.

I want Europol to be able to put this new mandate in practice as soon as possible.

In December the Council called for a rapid adoption of the new mandate.

The Portuguese Presidency has made it a priority.

Last week this was discussed between Home Affairs ministers in the Informal Council.

And now I want to discuss this with you