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Dear Readers,

20 years ago, the European Council gave Justice and Home Affairs policy an unprecedented boost by setting out an ambitious agenda to simplify judicial cooperation and to enhance criminal justice across the Union. The Tampere Programme has led to many successful initiatives. I intend to continue this work.

In her Mission letter the President *von der Leyen* has assigned me an immensely stimulating task: "to focus on the pursuit of social justice in its broadest sense, from the rule of law to crime prevention, judicial cooperation and consumer protection."

I want first to ensure that new ground-breaking legal projects are becoming a reality on the ground. The new European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) or the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) are two flagship projects that require commitment to bear fruit. The **EPPO** is currently in its setting-up phase and remains my highest priority. To protect effectively EU financial interests, it needs to be provided with the necessary resources and to start operating by the end of this year. The **GDPR**'s full implementation should be evaluated in the first Commission report in May. Moreover, I will ensure the **promotion of consumer right**, through the adoption of the **Representative Actions Directive** and other initiatives under the **Consumer Agenda**.

Nevertheless, further progress is needed to make the EU a genuine area of freedom, security and justice. The 2020 Work Programme of the European Commission has already provided a clear view of the **two main directions** our action will take in the years to come.

First, the Commission will continue fostering the core **values** that forged the Union's strength and identity. "A new push for European democracy" implies defending the rule of law and the respect of fundamental rights in the most effective ways. President *von der Leyen* entrusted me to lead the new **Rule of Law Mechanism** and design ways to better monitoring the respect of EU values in member states. In this regard, I will always seek to prevent issues before they occur, or resolve them at an early stage. Respect for the Rule of Law is crucial for the effective application of EU law, as it guarantees the **protection of all other values** and is essential for **mutual trust** between Member States. In concrete terms, the Commission developed a **toolbox** and decided to establish an annual **review cycle**. To support this comprehensive mechanism, I will prepare an **annual Rule of Law report**.

Second, the Commission will promote an **EU Security Union Strategy** to face the increasingly complex threats that emerged in recent years. To better fight cross-border crime (terrorism, money laundering, environmental crimes) at EU level, **judicial cooperation** must complement and follow-up to police efforts to bring perpetrators to justice. I want EUROJUST to become an even more proactive facilitator in cross-border proceedings. Moreover, we must keep pace with digitalisation to improve constantly the efficiency of our justice systems. Enabling the secure **exchange of evidence**, including electronic evidence, within the Union and with international partners, is another key priority for going forward. I am particularly attached to enhancing cooperation between judicial practitioners through new initiatives that facilitate the **mutual recognition** of judicial decisions. Our efforts will aim at increasing **mutual trust** among judges and prosecutors so that our instruments based on mutual recognition such as the **European Arrest Warrant**, are **implemented in a correct manner in all EU Member States**, at further developing **judicial training** and improving **information exchange**.

Providing a high degree of security, offering protection from crime, and at the same time guaranteeing rights and freedoms is truly a challenging mission. Yet it is a mission that matches EU citizens' demand for more protection of their fundamental rights.

I hope you will enjoy reading this eucrim issue dedicated to various anniversary events related to European criminal law in 2019.

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eucrim is the leading journal serving as a European forum for insight and debate on criminal and “criministrative” law. For over 20 years, it has brought together practitioners, academics, and policymakers to exchange ideas and shape the future of European justice. From its inception, eucrim has placed focus on the protection of the EU’s financial interests – a key driver of European integration in “criministrative” justice policy.

Editorially reviewed articles published in English, French, or German, are complemented by timely news and analysis of legal and policy developments across Europe.

All content is freely accessible at <https://eucrim.eu>, with four online and print issues published annually.

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