

Aleksander Jevšek, M. A., Director of the Criminal Police Directorate:

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In as early as 1764, in his famous work 'On Crimes and Punishments', Cesare Beccaria wrote that smuggling is a real offence against the sovereign ruler and the nation. This crime is owing to the laws themselves; for the higher the duties the greater is the temptation to smuggle. In his opinion, the sympathies that people are supposed to have for smugglers are wrong because their actions do not harm only the sovereign ruler.

Economic crime has been an accompanying phenomenon of the development of civilisation, which has a harmful impact on its economic gains and achievements. It represents the dark side of humanity's cultural and technological development, lately in particular of globalisation. It is also a reflection of the stability or instability of a society's political and economic structure. Thus, this negative phenomenon, which endangers the social security of people and the economic foundations of the community, is particularly in full swing in the period of fundamental economic changes or reforms when individuals, their companies and society in general are especially vulnerable and at risk.

The transitional period from the previous to the new period of political and economic life of a social community, when the institutions and mechanisms of social control and the persecution of criminal offences are just being introduced and implemented, is particularly favourable for the expansion of economic crime. Therefore, the extent of illicit economic activity in transitional periods increases even more rapidly. The development of professional ethics and changing of the evaluation of particular economic conduct also falls behind. All this increases the significance of finding solutions and more efficient measures of law enforcement authorities in managing crime and the development of a culture of control in the economic field.

In 2008, the discussion on establishing a financial police force in Slovenia was reawakened. In the professional circles of law enforcement institutions for economic crime, the advantages and disadvantages of the proposed solution were carefully examined. We discussed this matter with our peers from the countries which had a financial police force but abolished it and from those which still have it. Nevertheless, we have to give credit to the idea of a financial police force because it once again and very intensively initiated the process of finding a right answer to the question of "how to detect and prosecute economic crime and corruption".

The establishment of a National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) at a national level within a single national police force is an organisational trend of developed European police forces. In many regards, the Slovenian NBI is "sui generis" and "one step ahead". It changes the cooperation philosophy of law enforcement institutions in pre-trial criminal procedures. It also combines knowledge and experience to create specialised investigation groups directed by the State Prosecutor's Office. With unchanged police powers, legality, objectivity, proportionality, substantive truth, and the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms remain the fundamental principles of the NBI's work.

The quality of work in a pre-trial criminal procedure is the key condition for an effective criminal procedure, while an independent judiciary guarantees the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms and, consequently, democracy in a country. I am convinced that quality work in the pre-trial criminal procedure of law enforcement authorities significantly strengthens the rule of law.

However, the NBI is not the only project with which the criminal police force is entering the new decade.

The investigation of high-technology crime has been tackled with organisational, personnel and technological solutions. The filling of workplaces at the four regional computer crime divisions and the Centre for Computer Forensics, which obtained its premises in the building in front of which we are now standing, is in its final stage.

The knowledge of investigators and forensic experts will be upgraded in cooperation with renowned computer technology manufacturers in Slovenia and abroad.

The concept of criminal intelligence activity and strategic and operational analysis of criminal information has been designed to enable a proactive approach in detecting and investigating crime. It will provide for the circulation of information between the local, regional and national levels including the NBI, thus preventing the division of crime to “ours” and “yours” since we all are together responsible for the safety of our citizens. With the project, we were also able to acquire European funds to purchase the analytical tools, proving that we do not just stand around and wait to be granted funds from the budget.

Additional European funds for the criminal police force’s work will also be sought through membership of the European Network of Living Labs. Faculties, scientific institutions, manufacturers and the private sector will be invited to cooperate as well. Modern crime investigation offers a lot of room to “the living lab of ideas and knowledge”, which we definitely have in abundance in Slovenia but which have not yet been fully utilised. Doors have been thrown wide open to science and development, and we have found partners in the Scandinavian countries.

While focused on the future, we will not turn our backs on the past and the tradition on which the development of a criminal police force has been based thus far. During its rich history, the criminal police force has survived the storms intent on bending the principled attitude of the service to the needs of everyday political and other interests. The criminal police force can weather these storms only with the experts’ support. Afterwards, it is even stronger and more principled. The same will be true in the future. Legality, the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, a high level of professional competence and equality before the law are the key principles which will provide for the principled attitude of the criminal police force also in the future.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, I would like to thank all the people who participated in the NBI project and those who believe in it. We are aware of the great responsibility assumed but we also expect responsible work from everyone who will be part of the more efficient and effective detection and prosecution of the most severe criminal offences.

Many thanks also to all the people who contributed their knowledge, positive energy and, most importantly, their hard work to relocating the NBI and the criminal police force to their new premises, because we worked under extremely difficult conditions at the old location. There will be no time for celebration, we just have to roll up our sleeves and start working.