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By Andrew Rettman

Pino Arlacchi: *"Eulex' €150-million-a-year budget is comparable to the DIA's, which has scalped several mafia bosses in a country of 60 million people and one of the worst organised crime problems in the world".*

BRUSSELS - Four years after the EU's biggest-ever police mission came to Kosovo it has not indicted any top suspects on organised crime, posing questions about its work and the integrity of Kosovo's leaders.

Eulex itself is proud of its record. Its training of Kosovo police and customs is a success story. When the EU completes its Eulex review in the next few weeks, it is expected to reduce personnel to let local officers take over many day-to-day functions.

Eulex' spokesman in Pristina, Nicholas Hawton, told EUobserver it also has "clear results" in chasing criminals in its war-scarred and politically complex theatre of operations.

He added it has 350 ongoing criminal investigations and that its judges have handed down 220 verdicts - 15 on organised crime and 20 on war crimes. One of the investigations concerns accusations that Kosovo Prime Minister Hashim Thaci used to run an organ trafficking gang. On the shocking case of Enver Zymberi - a Kosovar Albanian policeman murdered by a Serb sniper last year - its investigation has led Interpol to issue six arrest warrants.

A draft European Parliament report endorsed by the foreign affairs committee on Tuesday (24 January) urged it to "increase its efforts" in the Kosovar Serb enclave in north Kosovo and to "step up" its work on organised crime.

But it blamed EU member states for shortfalls: it noted EU countries are reluctant to send their best judges to Kosovo and it asked France, Italy and Romania to "reconsider"; pulling home its so-called Formed Police Units - specialists in riot control.

The author of the report - Austrian Green MEP Ulrike Lunacek - was a bit sharper in remarks to this website.

"They should have been quicker. It would have helped the way they are seen in the country to already have indictments on high level corruption cases," she said.

But another EU deputy - Italian Socialist Pino Arlacchi, who in his time helped create Italy's Direzione Investigativa Antimafia (DIA) - was scathing.

He noted that Eulex' €150-million-a-year budget is comparable to the DIA's, which has scalped several mafia bosses in a country of 60 million people and one of the worst organised crime problems in the world.

He called Eulex "amateurish" and highlighted that its first supergrass - Agim Zogay - was found hung in Germany last year.

For his part, Eulex' Hawthorn said Zogay "tragically took his own life" in something which "no witness protection programme in the world [could] prevent."

Arlacchi noted: "Witness protection is the cornerstone of every organised crime operation ... the fact they were not able to give him a basic level of protection - and it doesn't matter whether it was suicide or homicide, this person was badly assisted - what more do you want [as proof of Eulex' failure]?"

With big fish like Fatmir Limaj, a former transport minister accused of corruption, threatening to bring down Thaci - a US darling - if he goes to jail, Arlacchi also accused Eulex of sheltering suspects for political reasons.

He said he has seen classified papers held by Eulex containing "clear intelligence" about crimes by "top leaders." He added: "They don't want to alter the political landscape ... Everyone who knows Kosovo shares this opinion, but I am one of the few who is willing to say that this is the truth."

The more circumspect Austrian MEP Lunacek said: "There is an interest by some in the international community to keep Thaci because he is the one they know. He is the one who gives a certain stability."

The International Steering Group - a body of 25 Kosovo-recognising countries - also on Tuesday in Vienna said the "young state" has made such progress that it plans to end political supervision of Thaci's government by the end of 2012.

"[This] means that Kosovo has been completely successful ... that Kosovo will function like any other independent state, with a clear European perspective," Thaci said.