

We welcome you to the European Criminal Bar Association conference. It is an honour to make a welcoming speech to this important conference, which will analyse current issues and recent developments in criminal law in Europe.

Some important topics that will be analysed in this conference include the rights of suspects, rights of lawyers, difference in practices as well as money laundering and recent developments affecting the legal profession in the European Union.

I would like to add some thought regarding recent developments and criticism over European criminal legislation. Current issue in criminal law include the European Arrest Warrant, which has proven to be very helpful in some cases but also caused serious case of injustice. Defects in the system mean that extradition to European countries that do not have strong tradition of respecting human rights or conduction fair trails cannot be denied.

Another important issue in EU criminal law is the discrepancy in the law and rules regarding detention and pre-trial detention. Furthermore, some countries have inhumane conditions of their prison estates and there are bad detention practices. Excessive detention is also widely criticized by defence lawyers when alternatives are also available but no piece of legislation has been proposed on EU level to promote uniformity in this respect.

There are also major developments in European Criminal Law such as the European Investigation Order, which is a proposed EU law, which would transform how evidence is gathered and shared across Europe. This will leave EU countries with limited power to refuse orders from other EU countries requiring the gathering and sharing of evidence and information. Safeguards should be adopted to protect rights to a fair trial and privacy of individuals.

Moreover, as long as our EU membership requires constant legal training and also demands high levels of knowledge in order to allow us to correspond, both, within the Cypriot territory and internationally, we feel highly grateful for having the opportunity to attend this conference. I would like to give special thanks to all the speakers, who came from Cyprus and abroad to share their knowledge and experience with us.

I believe that this conference will be of interest for all of us and I look forward to the discussions between the participants at the end of each session. As I do not want to prolong my welcoming speech, I would like once again welcome you all, both personally and on behalf of the Nicosia Bar Association and which we all have a productive time. I hope you enjoy your stay in our island and thank you for your attendance.

Georgios Papantoniou, President of the Nicosia Bar Association