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The European Union is failing in its task to combat major corruption cases in Kosovo, one senior MEP has said.

Speaking to New Europe following the sending of a written question to the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, concerning 11 ongoing corruption dossiers, Pino Arlacchi MEP (Italy, S&D), a former Under-Secretary General of the United Nations, has said that the EU's civilian mission in Kosovo continues to refuse to give details about the progress of investigations into the cases.

He says that the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) should have handed over the files to local judges. However, the EU's Rule of Law Mission (EULEX) refuses to confirm whether or not this has taken place, or the status of investigations. "After the Kosovo independence declaration according to the UN-EU agreements on the handover from UNMIK to EULEX, the 11 files were transferred from UNMIK to the Kosovo local judges", says Arlacchi, "but according to local sources, EULEX has never officially stated whether or not it sent these files to the local judges and if the investigations left over from UNMIK are being carried out".

The 11 dossiers were eventually unearthed by a special investigation unit, set-up after money pumped into Kosovo for reconstruction projects was, seemingly, not yielding visible results. "If we talk about figures and the context, between 1999 and 2008, the EU injected a big amount of aid, more than €2 billion, in the post war recovery and state-building operation led by the United Nations Mission in Kosovo", says Arlacchi. "The lack of visible results led the establishment of an Investigation Task Force by the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services, the Financial Investigation Unit, consisting of agents of the Italian Guardia di Finanza and of [The EU's anti-fraud unit] OL AF. This task force found out that the vague legal architecture set up in Kosovo by the EU and UNMIK resulted in a lack of accountability as to how donor money was spent.

"In fact from 2003 to 2008 the same task force coordinated 50 investigations into the UNMIK managed money flows most of which had no result. Eventually, the investigation task force shortlisted 11 cases containing criminal conduct, and involving more than €60 million. All of them were submitted to the head of UNMIK for further referral to the Department of Justice of

the UN Mission.”

According to Arlacchi, the dossiers cover a period when EU financing in Kosovo was not managed appropriately. “I know for sure that they cover a large period in which the EU financed in a unclear way in Kosovo a certain number of projects”, he says. “This ambiguous attitude by UNMIK and EULEX is the proof that they have something to hide”.

“These 11 dossiers were passed to EULEX when UNMIK was closed”, he continues. If we follow a normal procedure EULEX should have take over these cases or conduct their own investigations , because they had the numbers and the mandate to operative follow the cases. Until now I received only vague and sometimes untrue answers to my questions about these dossiers, so I’m very sceptical. But I hope that this episode reported by the international press could help reach the truth”.

“The main problem, in my opinion, is that in order to help the independence of the country, a big part the international community closed their eyes to the variety of corruption, violence and fraud cases”.

Arlacchi says that the 11 cases relate to the privatisation of electricity services. In 2008, when the MEP was in Kosovo, the Guardia di Finanza was already conducting an investigation into the electricity company, and other suspect privatisation schemes. “The incredible thing is that I continue, with no result, to send my questions to the European Commission about EULEX”, he says.

“I’m conducting a frustrating battle. EULEX costs €150m per year, and in more than 3 years has not accomplished any mandate, the results are zero. About corruption, which in Kosovo is very strong, there are zero results, like with these 11 dossiers. The EULEX mission is composed of around 2000 people and it is a very significant force. In Italy, with around 60 millions people, the DIA ( anti-mafia investigative unit ), which counts around 1000 highly skilled resources, costs less and with remarkable results, like for example the various billions of euros confiscated from the criminals or the hundreds of arrests. On the other hand, Kosovo has a population of only 2 million. Anyone can make their conclusions about the proportion of this scandal”.