

## ANALYSIS OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S AUTHORITY IN CRIMINAL ECONOMIC LAW POLICY IN INDONESIA

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### Abstract

The Public Prosecutor's Office's authority to investigate economic crimes in Indonesia remains limited, both normatively and institutionally. Yet the complexity and magnitude of losses resulting from economic offenses demand an institution with adequate juridical and technical capabilities. To address issues concerning the legal basis for these limitations, their impact on law enforcement, and an ideal legal-policy model for the Public Prosecutor's Office, a normative legal approach was employed, incorporating statutory, case-law, historical, comparative, and conceptual analyses. The discussion examines the grounds for such limitations under positive law, the prevailing legal-policy direction, and the design of criminal institutions, according to which the Public Prosecutor's Office may exercise investigative functions only where governed by a *lex specialis* provision. Moreover, the normative and practical effects of these limitations on enforcement effectiveness are analyzed, particularly in relation to inter-agency coordination, legal certainty, and public confidence. In light of the Public Prosecutor's Office's success in handling major corruption cases, which are part of the broader category of economic crimes, there is a pressing need to formulate a legal-policy model to expand and strengthen the institution's role. As a solution, a criminal-law reform model is proposed that positions the Public Prosecutor's Office as the principal investigative body through centralized authority, accountable procedures, and integrated cross-agency governance. This model is intended to establish a more centralized, efficient, and credible system for enforcing economic criminal law while reinforcing the direction of national criminal-law reform.

**Keywords:** *Economic Crime, Investigative Authority, Prosecutor's Office*

### INTRODUCTION

The development of economic crimes in Indonesia shows very complex dynamics, both in terms of form, perpetrators, and their impact on the national economy. Economic crimes such as corruption, money laundering, market manipulation, and cartels are included in the category of systemic crimes that not only harm the state financially but also worsen social inequality and damage the economic integrity and reputation of the country in the international arena.

Economic crimes are acts that violate the law in the economic sector and are subject to criminal penalties, which in the narrow sense only include violations of Emergency Law Number 7 of 1955 concerning the Investigation, Prosecution, and Trial of Economic Crimes (hereinafter abbreviated as the TPE Law), while in the broad sense include all crimes in the economic sector regulated in various laws such as banking, taxation, and customs. However, the criminal law system in Indonesia has not been fully able to respond to the complexity and dynamics of contemporary economic crimes. This type of crime is not only cross-sectoral, but also transnational and adaptive to technological developments. Therefore, an adequate legal framework is needed as well as law enforcement institutions that are responsive to these challenges.

One important aspect in strengthening the legal response to economic crimes is the reform of Law Number 8 of 1981 concerning the Criminal Procedure Code (hereinafter abbreviated as KUHAP), which has long been part of the discourse on reforming the criminal justice system in Indonesia. However, national legal literature is still limited in examining the economic criminal law policy model that explicitly places the Prosecutor's Office as a central actor in the investigation and prosecution system. Most of the literature only discusses the sectoral aspects of economic crimes such as corruption or money laundering without building a comprehensive and integrated legal policy framework in strengthening the authority of the Prosecutor's Office. For example, Agusman and Herlina examine the investigative authority of prosecutors in handling banking bad debt cases related to corruption; Yanto Musa et al., who highlight the technical and institutional obstacles in investigating money laundering crimes; and

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Handrawan who revealed the conflict of norms between Law Number 16 of 2004 concerning the Attorney General's Office of the Republic of Indonesia as amended by Law Number 11 of 2021 concerning Amendments to Law Number 16 of 2004 concerning the Attorney General's Office of the Republic of Indonesia (hereinafter abbreviated as the Attorney General's Law) which permits a settlement fine for economic crimes, and Law Number 31 of 1999 concerning the Eradication of Criminal Acts of Corruption as amended by Law Number 20 of 2001 concerning Amendments to Law Number 31 of 1999 concerning the Eradication of Criminal Acts of Corruption (hereinafter abbreviated as the PTPK Law) which emphasizes that the return of state losses does not eliminate criminal penalties.

In this context, this study analyzes the limitations of the Attorney General's authority normatively and institutionally, and examines the possibility of reformulating economic criminal law policies in Indonesia to strengthen the institutional role of the Attorney General's Office systematically. The concept of dominant litigant or dominus litis, namely the prosecutor as the controller of the case from the investigation stage to prosecution, has been adopted in various countries as part of an effective, coordinated, and accountable law enforcement strategy. Thus, research is still needed that can fill the research gap by formulating an innovative economic criminal policy model and explicitly strengthening the role of prosecutors, both in terms of legal norms and institutions.

Strengthening the role of the Prosecutor's Office in handling economic crimes, although it has obtained a normative basis, is still faced with a number of strategic legal issues in its implementation. One of the main issues is the limited investigative authority by the Prosecutor's Office, which fully applies only to corruption crimes as regulated in the PTPK Law, as well as to money laundering crimes based on Law Number 8 of 2010 concerning the Prevention and Eradication of Money Laundering Crimes. Outside of these two categories, in the context of other economic crimes, the Prosecutor's Office's authority is generally only active at the post-investigation prosecution stage by sectoral agencies. The investigation stage of these cases is still normatively the domain of sectoral institutions, such as certain Polri officials and PPNS within the Directorate General of Taxes, the Directorate General of Customs and Excise, and the Financial Services Authority.

Based on the above description, it becomes clear that the limitation of the Attorney General's authority in investigating economic crimes is not merely a normative issue, but is also related to the institutional design and direction of criminal law policy that has not been fully integrated. This situation has important implications for the effectiveness of law enforcement, including in terms of coordination between institutions, legal certainty, and public trust. Therefore, this study is designed to answer three key questions: first, why is the Attorney General's authority in investigating economic crimes currently still limited to certain crimes; second, what are the normative and practical impacts of these restrictions on the effectiveness of economic criminal law enforcement; and third, what is the ideal legal policy model to comprehensively expand and strengthen the Attorney General's authority in handling economic crimes. These three problem formulations are the foundation of analysis in the study, in order to encourage the reformulation of a more responsive and adaptive national economic criminal law policy.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research method used in this study is the normative legal method, namely research that is based on literature studies and analysis of relevant laws and regulations, doctrines, and court decisions. This study aims to systematically examine the authority of the Prosecutor's Office in investigating economic crimes in Indonesia, both from a formal legal perspective and from an institutional construction perspective. With a normative approach, this study not only looks at how the law should apply (*das sollen*), but also examines the gap with actual practices in the field (*das sein*).

This study uses several approaches in answering the problem formulation, including a legislative approach to analyze legal norms governing the authority of the Prosecutor's Office; a conceptual approach to explore the theory of authority and institutional design; a historical approach to understand the background of the limitation of such authority; and a comparative approach to examine practices in other countries such as Japan, South Korea, the Netherlands, and the European Union. In addition, a case approach is also used to evaluate the effectiveness of the Prosecutor's Office's role in handling economic cases, especially major corruption cases as part of economic crimes.

The legal materials used consist of primary legal materials (laws and court decisions), secondary (books and journals), and tertiary (internet). All legal materials were collected through literature studies and analyzed qualitatively through systematic, grammatical, and teleological interpretations. With this method, the research is expected to be able to formulate answers to the problem formulation comprehensively while compiling an ideal legal policy model in strengthening the authority of the Prosecutor's Office as a central actor in handling economic crimes in Indonesia.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. Reasons Why the Prosecutor's Authority in Investigating Economic Crimes in Indonesia is Currently Still Limited to Certain Crimes**

The Indonesian criminal procedure system according to the Criminal Procedure Code which came into effect on December 31, 1981, does not include prosecutors in the definition of investigators. Article 1 number 1 of the Criminal Procedure Code states that investigators are officers of the Republic of Indonesia state police (hereinafter abbreviated as Polri officers) or certain civil servant officers (hereinafter abbreviated as PPNS) who are given special authority by law to conduct investigations. Meanwhile, Article 1 number 6 letter a of the Criminal Procedure Code stipulates that prosecutors are officials who are given authority by this law to act as public prosecutors and to implement court decisions that have permanent legal force. Thus, normatively, the Criminal Procedure Code separates the functions of investigation from prosecution. Even so, Article 284 paragraph (2) of the Criminal Procedure Code stipulates that the provisions of criminal procedure in certain laws remain in effect temporarily, until there are changes and/or are declared no longer applicable.

The explanation of Article 284 paragraph (2) of the Criminal Procedure Code explicitly states that the provision includes the application of the TPE Law and Law Number 3 of 1971 concerning the Eradication of Criminal Acts of Corruption. Both laws expressly grant investigative authority to prosecutors. Thus, although according to the Criminal Procedure Code prosecutors are not included in the investigative organs, the investigative authority can still be exercised by prosecutors in a limited manner, as long as it is based on a special law whose validity is still explicitly recognized through the transitional provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code.

The Prosecutor's Office Law provides a legal basis for the prosecutor's office to carry out various tasks and authorities in the criminal field. One important provision is contained in Article 30 paragraph (1) letter d of the Prosecutor's Office Law, which states that the prosecutor's office has the duty and authority to "conduct investigations into certain criminal acts based on the law." This provision does not specifically mention the type of criminal act in question, but rather refers to the authority derived from other laws.

Based on the explanation of Article 30 paragraph (1) letter d of the Prosecutor's Office Law, it is emphasized that the authority to conduct this investigation includes, among other things, that regulated in Law Number 26 of 2000 concerning the Human Rights Court and the PTPK Law in conjunction with Law Number 30 of 2002 concerning the Corruption Eradication Commission as amended several times, most recently by Law Number 19 of 2019 concerning the Second Amendment to Law Number 30 of 2002 concerning the Corruption Eradication Commission. Thus, the scope of "certain criminal acts" is open, as long as it is emphasized in other laws.

Although Article 30 paragraph (1) letter d of the Attorney General's Law does not explicitly mention the term "economic crime", its scope allows the prosecutor's office to conduct investigations into such crimes if regulated in other laws and regulations that specifically grant such authority to the prosecutor's office.

In this regard, other important provisions that expand and reaffirm the authority of the prosecutor's office, including in terms of handling economic crimes, appear explicitly in Article 35 paragraph (1) letter k of the Attorney General's Law, which states that the Attorney General has the duty and authority to handle crimes that cause losses to the state economy and can use peace fines in economic crimes based on statutory regulations.

This affirmation is reinforced in the Explanation of Article 35 letter k, which explains that economic crimes include, among others, tax crimes, customs crimes, or other economic crimes regulated by law. The peace fine in question is a form of termination of the case outside the court approved by the Attorney General, as an implementation of the principle of opportunity in prosecution. Thus, this amendment not only recognizes the existence of economic crimes as one of the objects of the Attorney General's authority, but also provides an alternative resolution mechanism outside the conventional judicial process. In other words, in addition to carrying out the retributive function conventionally, prosecutors are also expected to be able to balance the functions of prosecution and economic/restorative justice, especially in handling economic cases that have an impact on state losses.

This change marks a concrete step in providing legal certainty regarding the prosecutor's authority in handling economic cases, while also confirming that "certain criminal acts" as referred to in Article 30 paragraph (1) letter d of the Attorney General's Law now clearly includes economic crimes, in accordance with the applicable statutory regulatory framework.

Historically, before 1981, the Prosecutor's Office had indeed played a role as the controller of investigations into economic crimes and corruption. However, after the 1981 Criminal Procedure Code reform committee and the issuance of the Criminal Procedure Code, criminal investigations have been separated as police duties, so that the role of prosecutors is limited to prosecution (except for special criminal cases such as corruption, smuggling, or subversion). This condition is the background to the need for a study of the effectiveness of these restrictions at the present time and the ideal policy direction for enforcing economic criminal law in the future.

Economic crimes in Indonesia basically have a legal basis through the TPE Law. However, this law provides space for the birth of other laws and regulations that more specifically regulate economic crimes in line with the development of the times and the legal needs of society. In practice, various forms of crime that have a direct impact on the economy and state losses are now regulated through a number of sectoral laws. Among them are the Law on the Eradication of Corruption, taxation, customs, banking, prohibition of monopoly, money laundering, and intellectual property rights. All of these regulations form a more comprehensive economic law system to protect national economic stability. However, the law enforcement system still faces challenges. One of them is the limitation of the authority of the Prosecutor's Office in investigations, as regulated in the Criminal Procedure Code which separates the functions of investigation and prosecution. This limits the role of the Prosecutor's Office in handling complex and cross-border economic crimes. Thus, the limitationThe authority of the Prosecutor's Office in investigating economic crimes in Indonesia todayderived from the legal basis of the Criminal Procedure Code which aims to separate the functions of investigation and prosecution.

The limited authority of the Prosecutor's Office in conducting investigations has hampered the effectiveness and credibility of law enforcement against economic crimes. To address this challenge, legal reform is needed that includes expanding the investigative function for the Prosecutor's Office, drafting more integrated regulations, and strengthening institutions and utilizing technology. In addition to the repressive approach, prevention strategies also need to be strengthened through integration between institutions and increasing public awareness of the importance of legal certainty in the economic sector.

However, the current criminal policy is still too focused on a formal approach through criminalization and law enforcement by officers in the Criminal Justice System (CJS). The role of the community and actors outside the CJS has not been optimized, especially in terms of prevention. Therefore, a more inclusive criminal policy update is needed that is able to integrate social, economic, political, and cultural forces in society. This kind of approach is expected to make efforts to combat economic crimes more effective, comprehensive, and sustainable.

## **2. Normative and Practical Impact of the Restriction of the Attorney General's Authority to Investigate Economic Crimes on the Effectiveness of Economic Criminal Law Enforcement in Indonesia**

The limitation of the Attorney General's authority has resulted in low effectiveness and efficiency of law enforcement in strategic economic cases. In fact, Indonesian law enforcement agencies do not yet have adequate whistleblower protection regulations, leaving those reporting economic crimes in a vulnerable position. The predominantly reactive investigative approach has also proven ineffective in dismantling digital crime networks, such as the use of money mules in cybercrime cases. In this context, prosecutors who are not involved from the start actually prolong the process and increase the potential for prosecution failure.

Law enforcement is also hampered by the absence of a Deferred Prosecution Agreement (DPA) regulation, even though this model has proven effective in other countries to resolve corporate cases quickly and efficiently. This is important considering that corporate crimes tend to be more dangerous, because they can harm consumers on a large scale and damage healthy business competition. On the other hand, corporations in Indonesia can be held criminally responsible for economic crimes based on the TPE Law. This reflects the acceptance of the concept of corporate crime, including the application of administrative sanctions and rules of procedure. However, criminalization of corporations needs to be carried out carefully so as not to disrupt the business climate.

One example is the irregularities in the distribution of subsidized fertilizers. Although it has been regulated through various regulations, practices in the field show that there are still many legal loopholes that are exploited to commit abuse. Not only carried out by individuals, but also by corporate entities through organized and systematic distribution networks. The impact is very detrimental to farmers as the main target group, and creates distortions in the agricultural sector which is vital for national food security. Because of its complex and broad-based mode, irregularities in subsidized fertilizers should be treated as economic crimes that require an adaptive, comprehensive, and progressive legal approach.

Another example that illustrates the importance of a sharper economic law approach is the case of losses in State-Owned Enterprises (BUMN). The losses experienced by BUMN must be understood as part of the state's losses, especially because BUMN has a dual role: as a business entity and as an instrument of state policy. Therefore, criminal acts that cause losses to BUMN should be treated as economic crimes against the interests of the state.

The ineffectiveness of the criminal law system is also seen from the weak deterrent effect of the main sanctions such as imprisonment and fines against perpetrators of economic crimes who have calculated the legal risks. In fact, the concept of economic sanctions such as restitution and confiscation still faces obstacles in their implementation due to the weak supervision and execution system.



### **3. The Ideal Legal Policy Model to Expand and Strengthen the Authority of the Prosecutor's Office in Indonesia in Handling Economic Crimes Comprehensively**

Legally, the authority of the Prosecutor's Office to conduct investigations into economic crimes is only given in certain crimes such as corruption. Meanwhile, investigations into other economic crimes are still the authority of certain Polri and PPNS officials.

The TPE Law is indeed the initial foundation for economic crimes, but the law has not accommodated various forms of contemporary economic crimes. Even in the renewal of the Criminal Code, the regulation of economic crimes is not carried out comprehensively and synchronously, resulting in duplication of norms and legal ambiguity. This reflects a political legal approach that is still sectoral and has not placed economic crimes as a priority national legal issue.

Furthermore, there is inconsistency in corporate criminal liability due to different definitions, scopes, and legal subjects between regulations, creating a grey area in law enforcement. For example, in cases of customer fund embezzlement, the investigative approach often does not refer to the principle of sectoral specificity as it should. Likewise, criminal acts such as issuing bad checks often cause confusion between the civil and criminal realms.

As a solution, the economic criminal law model in Indonesia must be oriented towards integration and centralization of investigations that place the Prosecutor's Office as the main actor with the support of modern technology and governance. This reform must include strengthening the competence of prosecutors in investigating digital-based economic crimes such as carding and e-commerce fraud which can be categorized as economic crimes because they harm the financial sector of society and have the potential to disrupt national economic stability.

Furthermore, it is also necessary to establish special regulations regarding asset confiscation through the Non-Conviction-Based Asset Forfeiture mechanism, namely a legal mechanism to confiscate assets resulting from crime without requiring a prior criminal verdict against the owner, so that recovery of state losses can be carried out optimally without waiting for a criminal verdict. In international practice, the establishment of the European Public Prosecutor's Office by the European Union can be an institutional reference in dealing with cross-border economic crimes. Domestically, Indonesia must also strengthen the implementation of the principles of Good Corporate Governance so that the business world is not only legally subject, but also ethically. Another alternative is the application of restorative justice for limited economic crimes.

The policy model needs to consider the complexity of economic criminal law which includes regulations spread across various sectors such as taxation, customs, and banking. In the framework of international comparison, the Macao legal system which makes the Prosecutor's Office part of the judicial institution shows an interesting model of independence to be studied further. On the other hand, global bibliometric research shows that the issue of economic and financial crime is increasingly connected to technological developments, sustainable development goals, and developing countries. From the perspective of Islamic criminal law, modern economic crimes such as corruption, bribery, money laundering, gratification, and environmental pollution are classified as *ta'zir*, the punishment of which is determined by the ruler based on the public interest. This shows the flexibility of Islamic law in responding to the development of contemporary economic crimes, without ignoring the principles of justice and protection of society.

Economic crimes are even directly correlated with environmental damage such as deforestation in countries with high levels of corruption, indicating its cross-sectoral impact. The digitalization of public services has also proven to be an instrument for reducing economic crimes in developed countries, but its effectiveness in developing countries depends on the quality of institutions. Therefore, Indonesia needs to utilize an interdisciplinary approach to understand economic crimes and not be fixated on one narrow conventional criminological approach. One crucial aspect in strengthening institutions is to review the role and authority of law enforcement institutions, especially the Prosecutor's Office, which plays a strategic role in ensuring legal certainty and effective enforcement.

The authority of prosecutors as investigators of economic crimes shows significant variation in the criminal justice systems of different countries. In Japan, based on the Japan Criminal Procedure Code, prosecutors have full authority to investigate and prosecute, including deciding whether or not to prosecute a case, giving orders to the police, and taking over or directing investigations, especially in cases of economic crimes such as corruption. In South Korea, prosecutors even play a dominant role in the criminal justice system; the Criminal Procedure Act gives them the authority to directly investigate serious crimes such as corruption, financial crimes, and violations involving high-ranking officials, while still directing and supervising other investigative agencies. Meanwhile, in the Netherlands, although the investigation involves the police, the direction and policy of the investigation are under the authority of the Supreme Prosecutor's Council which determines the priority of cases, including for economic crimes. These three models show that prosecutors in these countries are not only prosecutors, but also key actors in the investigation process, especially in complex and wide-ranging economic cases, which require professionalism, independence, and strong control. This model shows the importance of integration between

investigation and prosecution functions in one institution to ensure accountability, efficiency and legal certainty in handling economic crimes.

By understanding that criminals act rationally based on profit and loss calculations, the handling of economic crimes is not sufficient to rely only on the severity of the punishment. In fact, the certainty of law enforcement, namely the probability of the perpetrator being caught, prosecuted, and sentenced, is a more determining factor in creating a deterrent effect. In this context, the effectiveness of the legal system is highly dependent on the central role of law enforcement institutions, including the Prosecutor's Office. Therefore, strengthening and expanding the authority of the Prosecutor's Office in handling economic crimes comprehensively is an integral part of an efficient and rational policy strategy, both from a legal and economic perspective. A legal system that is able to increase "expected punishment" by increasing the capacity of the prosecution institution will be better able to suppress economic crimes that are increasingly complex and detrimental to the state.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion conducted, several conclusions were drawn:

1. The authority of the Prosecutor's Office in investigating economic crimes in Indonesia is currently still limited because the legal system of procedure clearly separates the functions of investigation and prosecution. The fragmentation of authority and the reliance of investigations on *lex specialis*, such as in corruption cases, has narrowed the Prosecutor's room for maneuver in handling complex and cross-sector economic cases. This limitation of authority hinders the effectiveness of law enforcement and shows that the current legal design has not adapted to the needs of handling modern economic crimes and weakening the state's response to crimes that have a major impact on the national economy.
2. The limited authority of the Prosecutor's Office in investigating economic crimes has significant normative and practical impacts. Technically, this triggers the back and forth of case files (P-19), weak coordination between law enforcement agencies, and a low deterrent effect. In addition, the limited role of the Prosecutor's Office hinders the development of case resolution innovations, such as the Deferred Prosecution Agreement (DPA) and Non-Conviction Based Asset Forfeiture (NCBAF). As a result, economic crimes are not handled thoroughly, which in turn reduces public trust in the criminal justice system in general and the role of the Prosecutor's Office as a criminal law enforcement agency in particular.
3. The ideal model of economic criminal law policy should integrate the expansion of investigative authority by the Prosecutor's Office as part of systemic reforms such as the European Public Prosecutor's Office in the European Union which demonstrates the effectiveness of integrating investigative and prosecution functions in handling cross-jurisdictional economic crimes. Similar things are implemented in Japan, South Korea, and the Netherlands, where prosecutors not only act as prosecutors, but also as directors or main implementers of investigations in economic cases. This model emphasizes the importance of integration between investigative and prosecution functions to ensure efficiency, accountability, and legal certainty.

Based on these conclusions, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. The government and the DPR need to draft regulatory updates that explicitly provide a legal basis for the Prosecutor's Office to investigate all forms of economic crimes, not just those regulated sectorally. This reform must include harmonization between the Criminal Procedure Code, the Criminal Code, and various sectoral laws to avoid overlapping authorities and create an integrated and effective legal system.
2. To overcome fragmentation in economic law enforcement, it is necessary to establish a cross-institutional coordination mechanism between the Police, Prosecutor's Office, PPATK, OJK, and other related institutions. The involvement of prosecutors from the investigation stage is crucial in order to accelerate the case handling process, prevent technical obstacles such as back and forth case files, and strengthen the accountability of the legal process.
3. In the future, Indonesia needs to build a model of economic criminal policy that emphasizes the centralization of the role of the Prosecutor's Office, procedural transparency, and innovation in handling cases. The use of digital technology, protection of whistleblowers, and a promotive and preventive approach must be part of an institutional strategy that encourages the effectiveness of law enforcement while maintaining the integrity of the national economic system.

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## ANALYSIS OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S AUTHORITY IN CRIMINAL ECONOMIC LAW POLICY IN INDONESIA

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