

Justice Ministers' Council Meeting: Democracy and Rule of Law in COVID-19 Crisis



News

Thomas Wahl

At the first (informal) Council meeting of the EU ministers of justice under Germany's Presidency on 6 July 2020, the management of the COVID-19 crisis guided the agenda. [The ministers discussed](#) how to manage the Corona pandemic in liberal democracies governed by the rule of law and how disinformation and hate speech could be countered.

Ministers discussed, *inter alia*, the question of how policymakers have reacted to criticism, scientific findings, and decisions by the judiciary. The goal is to better equip democracies and states governed by the rule of law to cope with crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

There was agreement that the right balance between health protection and fundamental rights is important and that restricted fundamental freedoms such as freedom of movement and assembly, freedom of religion, and entrepreneurial freedom must be restored as soon as circumstances permit. Federal Minister of Justice *Christine Lambrecht* stressed the importance of the rule of law, which is the focus of the German Council Presidency.

On the subject of disinformation and hate speech, Commission Vice-President *Věra Jourová* and Justice Commissioner *Didier Reynders* explained that a voluntary code of conduct and cooperation with Internet platforms are important. This will be addressed in the framework of the Action Plan for Democracy planned for the end of 2020 and in corresponding legislative proposals pertaining to the Digital Services Act. The strengthening of victim protection is to be taken up and further developed during the German Council Presidency in accordance with the strategy for victims' rights, which has already been adopted ([see news in the section "Victim Protection"](#)).

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