

Special Websites: Impact of COVID-19 on the Justice Field

Thomas Wahl



News

The European Commission has established a [dedicated website](#) within the European e-Justice portal, which informs judicial authorities, legal practitioners, businesses, and citizens of the measures taken within the European Union in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on European justice. The page is regularly updated to reflect new, rapidly changing developments.

The Council of Europe has also created a [webpage](#) on national measures in the justice area in view of the COVID-19 pandemic. It compiles comments provided by the various CoE Member States. Some Member States have also transmitted government decrees or other official documents that display the measures taken by their countries to maintain the administration of justice.

The EU website includes information on:

- The handling of the European Arrest Warrant;
- The exercise of the procedural rights of suspects and accused persons;
- Support to and protection of victims of crime during the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Special victim situations caused by the coronavirus crisis (victims of domestic violence, victims of cybercrime, and victims of hate speech);
- Situation in prisons;
- Probation.

A table also provides information on the digital tools used by the judiciary in the various Member States. As regards the European Arrest Warrant, the Commission set up an EAW coordination group. Its task is to deal with practical problems that occurred in application of the EAW instrument during the pandemic (see also the compilation of information by Eurojust and the EJM in this context as reported in a [separate news item](#)). The Commission stresses that the group may also be useful in other situations when a fast exchange between Member States is required, for example in reaction to judgments of the CJEU that have a direct impact on the smooth functioning of the EAW.

COVID-19 also determined the agenda of the [discussion in the JHA Council](#). The representatives of the Member States agreed that any extraordinary measures should be taken in line with the fundamental values of the Union. Member State authorities are advised that, even in times of COVID-19, the procedural rights of suspects and accused persons need to be respected in order to ensure fair proceedings. Limited derogations, which are provided for by the EU's procedural rights directives, should be interpreted restrictively by the competent authorities and not be employed on a large scale.

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