



# Press release

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Page 1 of 3

## **Online conference: Strengthening Access to Justice through Digitalisation**

As part of Germany's EU Council Presidency, the Federal Ministry of Justice and Consumer Protection hosted a high-profile online Conference on July 16th, 2020, on the topic "Access to Justice in the Digital Age – Perspectives and Challenges."

Federal Minister **Christine Lambrecht** explains:

*"We are striving to take advantage of the opportunities provided by digitalisation to strengthen the justice system and respect for the rule of law. For that reason, we have made digitalisation a central topic of our German Council Presidency.*

*Today, we exchanged views on how digitalisation is making very practical changes to the working world of legal professionals. And we also discussed the use of algorithms and artificial intelligence in the legal world.*

*Legal tech can provide an enormous amount of support to the courts and the bar, leaving them with more time to devote to their core business: engaging in judicial deliberation and legal analysis which no technology can replace.*

*The possibilities presented by digitalisation can also serve to simplify access to the judicial system by citizens on a very practical level. Some proceedings will be able to be conducted online in their entirety. And we can also facilitate access to justice for people who otherwise would not have turned to a court or to an attorney.*

*Online access to justice for all citizens can also make comprehensive access to the judicial system easier, for example in rural areas where*

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*the nearest court is sometimes quite far away. At the same time, we must assure that the non-digital possibilities for access to justice are maintained.*

*Trust among the citizens remains indispensable for the rule of law. This is why we must agree at an early stage on the framework conditions for the use of algorithms and artificial intelligence in the justice system.*

*Today's exchanges on these topics were extremely valuable; they provide us with an important orientation for the continued development of digitalisation in the field of justice."*

European Commissioner **Didier Reynders** explains:

*"We are continuing our common way towards developing an ambitious strategy on digitalising justice in the EU. By digitalising our court systems we are taking a big step towards improving access to justice. And by making documents available online, justice systems will be more transparent, helping citizens and businesses to understand their rights and contributing to consistency in case-law.*

*Public bodies that use Artificial Intelligence must be able to explain how the application works and it must be auditable by the competent bodies. The actors in the justice system who use Artificial Intelligence applications, must have the expertise to assess the capacities and the limits of the application. They must understand and control any system that they use. Clearly only judges should deliver judgments."*

After a welcome address by the Federal Minister of Justice and Consumer Protection, Christine Lambrecht, the European Commissioner for Justice, Didier Reynders, gave the opening speech. In addition to Minister Lambrecht, the justice ministers of the Netherlands, Portugal and Slovenia participated in the subsequent policy panel. The further panels featured discussions by outstanding representatives of policy, practice and academia.

You will find the complete programme of the conference on the conference website:

**[www.eu2020-bmjv-access-to-justice.de](http://www.eu2020-bmjv-access-to-justice.de)**

On the conference website you will also find information on the participants of the conference, video clips on the conference topics, as well as a variety of further supplemental information.

*About the conference:*

How is digitalisation changing the legal services industry and the judicial system? What are the implications of the digital transformation in terms of access to justice? How can digital technologies and applications be employed to safeguard and enforce basic judicial rights and procedural principles? What opportunities does the use of artificial intelligence offer in conflict resolution? What limits must be observed in this regard?

These and other issues are already being discussed at European level. As part of Germany's EU Council Presidency, we are hosting a high-profile online Conference on July 16th, 2020 which will address issues arising in the context of Digitalization and Justice through an exchange of ideas with the Member States. We are delighted that – despite the pandemic situation – we will be joined by high-ranking representatives of the judiciary, as well as excellent experts for a joint exchange.

The current challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic have demonstrated very clearly how important it is to talk about Digitalization in connection with the rule of law and to approach Justice from this perspective as we go forward.