



## Informal Meeting of Justice Ministers 6 July 2020 (virtual format)

The German Council Presidency will be guided by the motto “Together for Europe’s Recovery”. With these words in mind, the Justice Ministers of the 27 EU Member States will address the following challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic:

### **Strengthening democracy in the age of COVID-19 – countering disinformation and hate speech**

The pandemic is also having a significant impact in the online world. We are seeing a rise in disinformation and impacts on our culture of debate.

The ministers will exchange views on possible measures against online hate speech at national level as well as jointly in the areas of EU competence. They will also discuss what experiences Member States have had with online disinformation and what instruments Member States and the EU should use to respond to this.

### **Managing the Corona pandemic in liberal democracies governed by the rule of law**

Respect for civil liberties, fundamental rights and citizens’ rights, together with a functioning judiciary, are essential components of a state governed by the rule of law. This is especially true in times of crisis. The COVID-19/SARS-CoV 2 pandemic has forced the EU Member States to take far-reaching, restrictive measures to slow down the spread of the virus. In particular, the government measures have led to major restrictions to citizens’ freedoms.

An exchange is therefore planned on how citizens have dealt with these restrictions to rights, on how politicians have responded to criticism, on new findings during the pandemic, and on decisions by the judiciary on the restrictions imposed. In addition, the ministers will discuss how the rule of law can be made more resilient in times of crisis, and what insights have been gained for the future with regard to safeguarding the principles of the rule of law and ensuring the proportionality of restrictions.