

# Tisková zpráva

## Press Release

## Communiqué de presse

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## Prague Hosted Informal Meeting of Ministers for Justice and Home Affairs

**On Friday 16 January, the Ministers for Justice of the EU Member States met at the Prague Congress Centre. The Informal Meeting was chaired by Czech Justice Minister Jiří Pospíšil.**

The ministers started with a debate on the principle of mutual recognition of judicial decisions in criminal matters, considered a cornerstone of judicial cooperation in the European Union. Czech Justice Minister Jiří Pospíšil believes that there is a consensus among the EU Member States in this area: 'Today we have agreed that the most efficient instrument in this area is the Framework Decision on the European Arrest Warrant. There are a number of instruments, however, which have not been implemented yet.'

'The Dutch delegation put forward a proposal to create a mechanism helping to evaluate and compare legal systems of the Member States. I very much appreciate the fact that the Czech Presidency has opened up space for this discussion,' said European Commissioner for Justice, Freedom and Security Jacques Barrot.

As far as civil law is concerned, the delegates discussed the future of judicial cooperation in family and succession law. They tried to reach agreement, among others, on the possibility of strengthening cooperation in amending conflict-of-law rules that govern divorce proceedings of 'international families'. 'We thank the Czech Presidency for putting the issue of the strengthening of cooperation on the agenda. France has joined the group of countries that call for a stronger cooperation in this area,' said Jérôme Deroulez, advisor to the French Minister of Justice. Swedish Justice Minister Beatrice Ask also expressed her position concerning this issue: 'We are one of the countries which, in the

past, prevented a decision on the regulation on divorce. Nevertheless, we will not oppose the decision of other countries to cooperate in this area, should they wish to.'

Most Member States have a similar attitude towards judicial cooperation in the law of succession. The ministers believe that a balanced piece of legislation regulating the issues of jurisdiction, conflict-of law rules as well as the recognition and execution of decisions in succession proceedings may help bring about efficient enforcement of cross-border succession claims.

There were lively discussions and reactions concerning e-Justice, an area where the Czech Presidency seeks to promote and facilitate cross-border video-conferencing. Most states agreed that video-conferencing is a very efficient instrument to speed up cross-border judicial proceedings while lowering their costs. 'During the Czech Presidency, a manual should be produced containing a list of countries and concrete locations where video-conferencing may take place. We plan to provide it to all Member States of the European Union,' said Czech Minister of Justice Jiří Pospíšil.

'The European Commission expects Member States to submit requests for disbursement of funds,' said Jonathan Faull, Director General of the European Commission's Justice, Freedom and Security department. 'We will soon submit the official request on behalf of the EU Presidency,' replied Jiří Pospíšil. All countries already using video-conferencing are satisfied and European funding would therefore help significantly towards building a cross-border video-conferencing system.

Jiří Pospíšil summed up the Friday ministerial meeting: 'Today the Council discussed conceptual issues. The debate helped clarify positions and viewpoints of individual Member States within the EU. It made possible the clarification of reflections on possible future directions of justice and opened up a space for subsequent debates aimed to improve cooperation in the field of justice.'