



# MINISTÈRE DE LA JUSTICE

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## COMMUNIQUÉ DE PRESSE

Paris, le 12 juillet 2021

### Meeting of European Justice Ministers in the "Vendôme Group"

On July 12, 2021, Minister of Justice Eric Dupond-Moretti hosted in Paris a meeting of the "Vendôme Group" and welcomed his German, Belgian, Italian, and Luxembourg counterparts, and Didier Reynders, European Commissioner for Justice. The Ministers of Justice of Netherlands and Spain excused their assistance. This group had met for the first time on November 7, 2018 in Paris, and has met seven times since then.

Before the beginning of the working sessions, all ministers and the Commissioner expressed their support to the Dutch journalist Peter de Vries, victim of an unacceptable assault in Amsterdam on July 6, and to his family. Once again, they reaffirmed their fundamental attachment and commitment to the protection of the rule of law and of the freedom of press, which is essential to our democracies and societies. They expressed their full solidarity with the Dutch people.

The ministers first addressed access to e-evidence, highlighting that such an issue is now crucial for the vast majority of criminal investigations. Thus, they emphasized the need to bring the discussions on the European legislative proposals presented in April 2018 with the aim of facilitating access to this type of evidence to a successful conclusion, in order to provide magistrates and investigators with efficient tools.

The ministers expressed their full support for the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union to continue these negotiations by holding an intensive and constructive dialogue with the Parliament to reach compromise. Together with the Slovenian Presidency the ministers will continue to defend the operational need for simplified and proportionate processes to access e-evidence while guaranteeing respect of fundamental rights.

The discussions then focused on the fight against discrimination and hate speech within the Union. Raising their deep attachment to the values of the Union, the Ministers of Justice and the European Commissioner regretted the recent legislative developments in Hungary that stigmatize LGBTQIA persons. The ministers expressed their support for the Commission's efforts to ensure full compliance with EU law. They also raised their concern regarding the questioning of the Istanbul Convention by the Polish and Hungarian authorities. With equal concern, they deplored the rise of crimes and hate speech, especially committed on social networks, in the pandemic background against other vulnerable categories: disabled, minors, women, religious minorities, victims of racism.

After sharing their analysis on the situation, the participants stressed the need for a common action against this worrying context. They discussed the Commission's plan to propose an initiative to extend the list of serious cross-border crimes defined in the treaties to hate crimes, as well as on the ongoing

negotiations on the Digital Services Act. The Ministers agreed on the need to pursue high-level dialogue on all these matters.