

Brussels, 15 April 2020

Dear Commissioner, dear Mr Reynders,

Last 6 April, you took part in an informal meeting with the ministers of justice of the Member States to discuss the repercussions of the COVID-19 health emergency on the judiciary. Specifically, you addressed the effects that the measures taken to prevent the spread of the virus may have on the functioning of the administration of justice and on citizens' rights to effective judicial protection.

The justice systems of the Member States are critical infrastructures and must be protected as a matter of priority, both now and when they resume its normal activity after the crisis. The trust of European citizens in the system will not be guaranteed if justice ceases to be effective and their access to it limited, deficient and frustrating.

The activities of the courts in some Member States have been reduced to extraordinarily low levels and teleworking has been facilitated for a minority part of the justice system, making it impossible for the machinery to function effectively. In practice, there are no ongoing cases, nor are there any demands or complaints that citizens are making in different areas as a result of this pandemic.

The reality in each Member State is different, but it seems that one of the common problems that will aggravate the risks of bottlenecks when confinement ends is that the new digital technologies, in particular teleworking tools, are not developed to the level required to deal with a crisis such as this.

The confinement of justice officials, without adequate or safe tools for teleworking may be putting at risk the citizens' right to effective judicial protection in the short and medium term, as well as the right to privacy.

I would be grateful if you could inform me of two issues:

1. What is the situation in the Member States regarding the development of digital technologies and teleworking tools in the field of justice administrations and what is the level of security they offer against potential cyber-attacks?
2. Do you plan to carry out pilot emergency plans in the Member States in order to obtain data and improve the response of the justice administrations in the same or similar situations to the one that we are experiencing, as well as to improve the level of security of these administrations given that they are critical infrastructures?

Yours sincerely,



Maite Pagazaurtundúa
Member of the European Parliament