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Press kit

Informal Ministerial Meeting Justice and Home Affairs

Lille

3-4 February 2022

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What is the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union?

What does the presidency of the Council of the European Union involve?

A rotating presidency

Each Member State holds the presidency of the Council of the European Union for six months on a rotating basis. **From 1 January to 30 June 2022, France holds the presidency of the Council of the European Union.** The presidency of the Council organises meetings, brokers compromise, submits conclusions and ensures the coherency as well as the continuity of the decision-making process. It ensures proper cooperation between all the Member States and acts as a liaison between the Council and the European institutions, in particular the Commission and the European Parliament.

What is the Council of the European Union?

Also called the “Council of Ministers”, or simply “the Council”, the Council of the European Union brings together the ministers of the EU Member States who meet in configurations by sector of activity. Together with the European Parliament, it serves as the co-legislator of the European Union.

Concretely, ministers will chair **nine configurations of the Council of the EU**: general affairs / economic and financial affairs / justice and home affairs / employment, social policy, health and consumer protection policy / competitiveness / transport, telecommunications and energy / agriculture and fisheries / environment / education, youth, culture and sport.

Each presidency of the Council also organises informal meetings, which correspond with a configuration of the Council in Brussels.

The informal justice and home affairs meeting will be held in Lille on 3 and 4 February 2022. The home affairs ministers will meet on 3 February while the justice ministers will meet on 4 February.

Informal Meeting of the Home Affairs Ministers

Thursday, 3 February - Lille

The informal meeting of justice and home affairs ministers will be held in Lille on 3 and 4 February 2022. The ministers for home affairs will meet on 3 February, along with the European Commission, representatives from Frontex, Europol and the Agency for Asylum. The justice ministers will meet on 4 February.

Welcome speech by **Gérald Darmanin**, Minister of the Interior

The French Presidency of the Council of the European Union's motto is "recovery, strength and a sense of belonging". As elaborated on by the President of the Republic during his press conference on 9 December, we want our presidency to contribute to the rise of a European Union that is fully free to make its own choices and choose its own destiny.

This is why I have suggested to the ministers responsible for home affairs that our discussions focus on responding to the most significant challenges to the security of our fellow citizens.

We will begin by speaking about the security of our borders. Be it the Belarus crisis, migratory pressure in the Mediterranean and the Channel, or the fight against cross-border crime, we need strong political guidance to strengthen the Schengen area and protect our shared space of freedom. Given the challenges surrounding climate change, we will then address the future of civil protection in Europe from a research and operational and capacity planning standpoint, but also in terms of the contribution of civil society and citizen engagement.

During a working lunch, we will speak about the fight against terrorism and radicalisation. Faced with those who undermine our values and try to destabilise our societies, we must fight uncompromisingly, be aware of our shortcomings and come up with real responses to them.

Lastly, we will discuss the Pact on Migration and Asylum. One and a half years after the Commission submitted a proposal for it, and given that the previous reforms failed, we must achieve real progress. The French Presidency proposes moving forward based on a phased approach that preserves the same level of ambition and attention to balance between solidarity and responsibility, while taking into account the constraints and concerns expressed by all. We must regain confidence in our ability to together define a truly effective European migration policy.

The home affairs ministers will meet on 3 February. Discussions will focus on four subjects:

The Schengen reform

The Schengen area is one of the primary achievements of the European Union. The challenges faced over the last few years (migration crises, terrorist attacks, the pandemic, etc.) have demonstrated the need to reinforce the means of protecting our external borders.

Several current reforms, presented by the European Commission as part of its "Schengen Strategy" last June, contribute to strengthening Schengen cooperation in terms of:

- **evaluating** the proper application of the acquis by the Member States;
- **clarifying** the framework for reintroducing internal border controls, responding to the instrumentalisation of migration by third countries, and lessons from the pandemic; and
- **introducing** exhaustive checks on irregular arrivals at the external border.

The French Presidency is encouraging the Member States to move these negotiations forward quickly and to provide more political and responsive governance to the Schengen area, in order to effectively bring about a reform of all of Schengen.

The future of civil protection in Europe

European civil protection policy has been broadly strengthened in recent years. At its core is the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, an instrument for mutual assistance and solidarity created in 2001 and strengthened in 2019 and 2021.

In light of climate change and the new risks confronting Europe, the ministers will discuss the best use of these reinforced resources, drawing on the expertise of each Member State as well as the resources offered by citizen engagement, such as volunteers and organisations.

The fight against radicalisation

During a working lunch, the ministers will address how to curb the development of ecosystems within our societies that run counter to our values. Gilles Kepel, a specialist in Islam and the contemporary Arab world, and professor at the Paris Sciences et Lettres University and Sciences Po, will launch these discussions, which will cover the issue of the financing of radical entities.

The Pact on Migration and Asylum

The European Union continues to face major challenges in terms of migration and protecting its external borders. These challenges call for a European response to improve our collective control over migratory phenomena and to strengthen our area of free movement.

With this aim, the European Commission presented a Pact on Migration and Asylum on 23 September 2020. The French Presidency believes that given its complexity, this series of reforms calls for a process of gradual negotiation, while maintaining a high level of ambition.

The ministers will thus discuss the content of a first phase of negotiation, capable of leading to rapid results on both a legislative and operational level, in terms of partnerships with third countries, border control, support for the most affected Member States and controlling inflows of secondary movements.

The principle of balance between solidarity and responsibility remains central to this initial phase, as well as those that follow.

Agenda

Thursday, 3 February 2022

- 9:30 a.m.** **Working session for Member States**
- Discussions on European border security
 - The future of civil security in Europe in the face of climate change

12:30 p.m. **Family photo**

- 1 p.m.** **Working lunch on the pact against terrorism and radicalisation**

2:45 p.m. **Working session on the Pact on Migration and Asylum**

- 4:30 p.m.** **Joint press conference with Gérald Darmanin, Minister of the Interior, and Ylva Johansson, European Commissioner for Home Affairs**

Participants

In addition to the 27 Member States of the European Union, the non-EU Member States part of the Schengen area (Switzerland, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein) are welcome at the discussion on European border security.

European Commission Vice-President Margaritis Schinas, and Ylva Johansson, European Commissioner for Home Affairs, will be attending these talks on Schengen. Commissioner Johansson will also participate in the working lunch on radicalisation and in the afternoon discussions on the Pact on Migration and Asylum. Janez Lenarčič, the Commissioner for Crisis Management, will take part in the discussions on the future of civil security in Europe.

The Chair of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs of the European Parliament will be present throughout the day.

The Executive Director of Frontex, the Executive Director of the European Union Agency for Asylum, and the Counter-Terrorism Coordinator will participate in the discussions that concern them.

Informal Meeting of Defence Ministers

Friday 4 February – Lille

The informal meeting of justice and home affairs ministers will be held in Lille on 3 and 4 February 2022. The ministers for home affairs will meet on 3 February, along with the European Commission, representatives from Frontex, Europol and the Agency for Asylum. The justice ministers will meet on 4 February.

Welcome speech by Eric Dupond-Moretti, Keeper of the Seals, Minister of Justice

The Europe of Justice is a Europe of values, founded on the shared ideals of liberty, tolerance and respect for diversity. It is also a Europe that is operational and keen on ensuring the effectiveness of legal action across borders by meeting the concrete needs of its citizens and remaining present in their everyday lives. These two aspects, essential to the creation of the European legal area, will be at the heart of the informal meeting of ministers of justice. The first priority of the French Presidency in the area of justice is the fight against all forms of hate and discrimination, both in the real and virtual worlds.

Combatting hate first means strongly asserting the prohibition of certain types of behaviour. This is the reason why the French Presidency wishes to hold discussions with the ministers of justice on the proposal to include hate crimes and hate speech among the Eurocrimes listed in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, which we aim to combat together. Such an amendment to the most fundamental piece of EU legislation would not only have a strong symbolic value but would also allow for a common standard at European level that defines these crimes, taking into account our commitment to freedom of expression. Fighting against hate then requires better efficiency in the rise of this phenomenon on the Internet and on social networks. Beyond the ongoing work on the DSA which concerns regulation, it is necessary to strengthen the conditions under which judicial authorities cooperate with digital stakeholders. The rise of online hate speech is largely tied to a widespread feeling of impunity. It is therefore crucial to be able to identify the perpetrators of online hate speech and prosecute them. This is why representatives of the major worldwide platforms (Google, Meta, Twitter) were invited to participate in these discussions together with the Paris public prosecutor. The discussions will notably cover the importance of a European legal framework for the obtention of electronic evidence. This essential framework is being set up with the participation of the European Parliament and it is time for it to become an operational and efficient tool.

European justice that is effective in citizens' everyday lives should notably protect children. I intend to work with my counterparts on the means of coordinating national measures regarding child abduction warning systems. These systems are widespread in Europe and usually very efficient at finding missing children within the first few hours, but they should not be limited by borders. They should also be sounded rapidly in neighbour States. This could be life-saving. Protecting children also means respecting the diversity of families. Today, families can take different forms. We respect the legal and cultural contexts that are particular to each Member State in recognising parenthood. However, when families move within the EU, the parentage links established in accordance with applicable law in one country should not be subject to dispute in another. The commission is currently preparing proposals on this issue. In my view, it was paramount for the EU ministers to be able to discuss all this together.

The ministers responsible for justice will meet on 4 February.
The discussions will focus on three themes.

Protecting European citizens against hate crimes and speech

The fight against hate speech and crime is one of the priorities of the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union. In a context where serious incidences of online hate is growing, the European Union is considering new means of action in close connection with digital platforms, to fight against these direct threats to its founding values.

The discussion will include the European Commission's proposal reminding Member States of their commitment to upholding the values of the EU by adding "hate speech and hate crime" to the list of European crimes defined in Article 83(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

The meeting will also be an opportunity for discussion with representatives of major internet companies (Google, Meta and Twitter) who will be participating. The discussions will focus on the relationships of these operators with judicial authorities, the difficulties identified and the areas for potential improvement, especially through strengthening the European legal framework on obtaining digital evidence. Laure Beccuau, Paris public prosecutor, will also speak about her experience.

The director of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights will also participate in the morning's working session.

Strengthening the efficiency of abduction alert systems

Discussions will then turn to alert systems for warning the public in the case of child abduction. Currently, there is no European alert system for abduction and not all Member States are equipped. And yet, child abductors are not limited by borders where more than 35% of Europeans live in border areas and where everyone can move freely.

The ministers responsible for justice will discuss the issue of extending the alerts across borders and coordinating national systems with a view to strengthening their effectiveness.

Considering the procedures for recognition of parenthood between Member States

Lastly, the discussions will focus on the recognition of parenthood between Member States. While extensive cooperation exists regarding family matters, be it for divorce, separation, parental responsibility or succession, there is currently no EU legislation for applicable law or recognition of documents and decisions regarding links of parentage, as these are governed by the national laws of each Member State. However, the lack of recognition by a Member State of a link of parentage established in another Member State can have significant consequences for children.

EU-wide recognition of links of parentage established within a Member State and upholding the rights of children vis-à-vis their parents within the European Union must therefore be safeguarded as matters of major importance, while respecting the legitimate differences between legislation on the establishment of parentage links.

A legislative initiative on the recognition of parenthood between Member States may be proposed by the European Commission. The ministers responsible for justice will be invited to jointly discuss this opportunity and the shape that such an initiative could take.

Agenda

Friday, 4 February 2022

9 a.m. Working session between Member States on the topic of combatting hate

11 a.m. Meeting with the digital technology companies Google, Meta and Twitter on the topic of online hate

12:30 p.m. Family photo

1 p.m. Working lunch on alert systems for warning the public in the case of child abduction

14:45 p.m. Working session on recognition between Member States of links of parentage established within the European Union

16:45 p.m. Joint press conference with Eric Dupond-Moretti, the Minister of Justice, and Didier Reynders, the European Commissioner for Justice

Participants

The European Commissioner for Justice, the ministers responsible for justice of the EU Member States and the Chair of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs at the European Parliament will be taking part in the informal meeting of ministers responsible for justice on 4 February 2022.

The director of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, the Public Prosecutor at the Judicial Court of Paris and representatives of Google, Meta and Twitter are invited to take part in some of the work on combatting hate on the morning of 4 February 2022.

The city of Lille

A stone's throw from Belgium, [Lille](#), the well-known capital of French Flanders, also nicknamed the "Beauty of Flanders", is the cultural and gastronomic crossroads of the Hauts-de-France region.

As a city that was Flemish, Burgundian and Spanish before becoming French, Lille possesses a truly remarkable architectural heritage. A merchant city in the Middle Ages, fortified with a citadel by Louis XIV, Lille became an industrial hub in the 19th century and a city brimming with ambition in the 20th century. Lille wears its past on its sleeve, while also embracing the future by establishing itself as a student-friendly university city. Culture is the beating heart of the city.

Its [Palais des Beaux-Arts](#) is one of the largest museums in France and the excitement of the [lille3000](#) festival, with its numerous exhibitions and performances, pulses through the city's veins every three years. [The Grande Braderie](#), which sees Lille become home to Europe's biggest flea market, takes place every September. [Lille Grand Palais](#) has over 45,000 m² of modular spaces for events.

[Visit Lille](#)



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