



## **EU Commission wants to set priorities in professional law and digitalisation in 2021**

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The EU Commission has adopted its 2021 work programme, entitled "A vital Union in a fragile world". It is based on the six political guidelines of Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. After the 2020 Work Programme and the coronavirus-related update in May 2020, this is now the Commission's third work programme. A look at the withdrawn initiatives shows that a cautious sigh of relief is permitted, especially from a lawyer's perspective. In addition to the two proposals on the European services e-card, the proposal on the notification procedure was also formally withdrawn by the Commission. The DAV had always criticised this procedure because the notification mechanism laid down there would set service-related authorisation requirements for, among others, the legal profession. This would have been contrary to the competencies conferred by EU law, as it would have made it possible to amend and repeal national regulations in the area of professional services.

However, the Commission has already announced that it will publish a new edition of its reform recommendations for regulation in professional services in the first half of 2021. It will then deal with the Council's conclusions on regulatory "sandboxes" and experimentation clauses as instruments for an innovation-friendly, future-proof and resilient legal framework in the digital age.

Under the title "An Economy that works for People", legislative proposals on Anti-Money laundering and so-called "sustainable corporate governance" are the focus of efforts. There is no doubt that the legal profession is in the service of people, and this must also be taken into account when drafting these dossiers, in order to achieve a careful balance.

The acceleration of the digital transformation has received a significant boost with Covid-19, which is why one of the focal points for the next decade will be entitled "Europe's digital decade: 2030 digital targets". In the area of digitalisation, the Commission will adopt legislation on liability, fundamental rights and data aspects related to artificial intelligence. It also plans to publish a proposal for a new European digital identity, which will be of particular interest to lawyer-notaries. The Commission will also deal with the topic of asylum and migration and further measures to reform the current framework. This could give renewed momentum to the long-standing DAV demand for legal advice and access to justice as part of humanitarian aid.

In criminal law, not only will the new European Public Prosecutor's Office take up its full duties in 2021, but it will also be followed, among other things, by initiatives on cross-border police cooperation, an EU Agenda to tackle organised crime (2021-2025) and a proposal for a Directive on Asset Recovery Offices. The planned digitalisation of cross-border judicial cooperation could lead to the introduction of further minimum standards in criminal procedure rights. In addition, an initiative

against abuse of legal action directed against journalists and legal defence lawyers is planned. So an intense and exciting 2021 awaits us.