

Brussels, 2 June 2010

European lawyers welcome the new structure for Justice at the Commission

The Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE) welcomes the announcement today by the European Commission that its current Directorate-General for Justice, Freedom and Security (DG JLS) will be split in two as of 2 July, with a new DG to correspond to the portfolio of the Commissioner for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship, Viviane Reding.

The CCBE is the representative organisation of around 1 million European lawyers through its member bars and law societies from 31 full member countries, and 11 further associate and observer countries.

The CCBE President, José-María Davó-Fernández, said today: "We congratulate the President of the Commission for this important decision, which completes the re-organisation started with the split of the portfolios in the renewed Commission."

Ever since 2003, the CCBE has been calling for a separate DG Justice at the European Commission, arguing that the present structure was not conducive to handling justice issues appropriately and in the way that they are dealt with by most Member State governments. Two main reasons were invoked by the CCBE:

- the need for separation of powers and avoidance of conflicts of interest between justice and security issues; and
- the need to co-ordinate legislation where it affects the justice sector.

José-María Davó-Fernández added: "We believe that a DG Justice will lead to more focus and purpose in the area of justice at the European level, will ensure better justice for citizens, and will enable the relevant provisions of the Lisbon Treaty to be introduced more effectively."

Background note

In a manifesto published in 2009 for the European Parliament elections and in the perspective of the renewal of the Commission, the CCBE stressed that the introduction of the Lisbon Treaty would offer greater impetus for judicial cooperation in criminal and civil matters, and warned that the current arrangements in the European Commission may lead to a justice deficit, and to a failure properly to serve the needs of European citizens. In January 2010, the CCBE welcomed the creation of separate portfolios in the 'Barroso II' Commission, i.e. a Commissioner for justice, fundamental rights and citizenship and a Commissioner for home affairs, as "a step in the right direction", which still called for further re-organisation within DG JLS.

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