



Opening Address

(via video message)

Dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

I'm very pleased to open this important conference on digital cross-border cooperation in criminal justice.

Your conference is very timely. Our day-to-day life is more and more determined by digital tools of all kinds: instant messages, geo-localisation services, digital signatures, electronic financial transactions, and the list goes on. These are making our life easier. This is, unfortunately, equally true for the wrongdoers. Therefore, it is of critical importance that judicial proceedings in the European Union keep pace with the digital transformation. We cannot afford that all courts, prosecutors, and legal practitioners still work in a 20th-century environment while the world has moved ahead. Our joint ambition is to bring perpetrators to justice, to ease access to evidence in criminal proceedings and, more generally, to assure our citizens of the benefits of the European area of justice.

I'm therefore very grateful for your work to develop technological solutions for the electronic exchange of information in criminal proceedings. The e-Evidence Digital Exchange System that is at the centre of your conference sets an excellent standard for cooperative development. It represents a technological blueprint for digital cross-border cooperation. It is a concrete deliverable of the digital-by-default principle entrenched in the Ministerial Declaration on eGovernment of October 2017.

Today's event brings together diverse experts from different roles and backgrounds - judges, prosecutors, legal experts, academics and IT experts. What unites us in this endeavour is a shared objective to ensure that all judiciaries, prosecutors, and legal practitioners are equipped with a tool that enables secure, swift and efficient cross-border communication with full respect of the highest standard of data protection.

In closing, I would like to acknowledge the valuable contributions by those of you involved in the different projects that support the exchange of electronic evidence. I'm pleased that these projects can be funded by the EU's Justice Program and the Connecting Europe Facility under the coordination of DG Justice and Consumers.

Looking ahead, I see a good potential that the e-Evidence Digital Exchange System for European Investigation Orders should be gradually enriched and extended to all the instruments in the civil and criminal law areas. I wish you productive discussions during these next two days and I am looking forward to the e-Evidence Digital Exchange System going live across Europe in all Member States by the end of 2020.

Didier Reynders, *European Commissioner for Justice*

