

Honorable Ms. Popova,

Honored Members of the European Parliament,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Distinguished participants,

Dear colleagues and friends,

I would like to welcome you to this PH on behalf of the co-organisers - Bulgarian NGO CSD, Association DaD, based in Brussels, AMU of Poznan, as well as our colleagues from EPLO.

We are very glad and thankful that you have accepted our invitation and will take part in the discussion on the introduction of information and communication technologies (e-tools) and performance indicators for improving the Criminal Justice in the EU Member States, on existing practices, challenges and perspectives.

Thanks to Ms. Mariya Nedelcheva it became possible to organise this high representative and professional forum in the European Parliament. This is a great opportunity for us to present the results of the study conducted by an international team in the frame of a joint initiative of the enumerated organisations called *Tracking Progress in strengthening criminal justice indicators for integrated case management*, supported by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Justice and to debate the use of modern electronic technologies, to benefit from the interventions of high ranking politicians and senior officials from Member States and EU institutions as well as of prominent experts and practitioners in the area.

Our joint study is aimed to approximate and enhance the application of e-tools and indicators for case management and access to justice in EU Member States through transferring best practices from countries where the state of the art is more advanced to newer Member States, to help for developing new instruments which allow to improve the quality, efficiency and transparency of the criminal justice systems of all Member States as well as better and more efficient management of trans-border or transnational criminal proceedings and better interaction between national criminal justice systems.

We provided you with the final report *Justice Sector Institutional Indicators for Criminal Case Management* published in English and in process of publication in Bulgarian, Polish and French. You can see that the report contains the main findings and recommendations of our joint study. I will not go into details most important of which will be presented by my colleagues during the PH. I just want to mention that the initiative started in 2010 with a comparative analysis of current practices of justice recordkeeping and electronic tools for measuring the judicial system performance in selected European countries as well as with needs assessment and overview of the introduction of ICT in the justice systems of Bulgaria and Poland. The results of these initial studies were published in a multilingual CD which was distributed among the stakeholders on a national and EU level. It is available also in the e-tools multilingual web site. The discussions held in Bulgaria and Poland helped us to gain additional information and to take into consideration the position of the representatives of Judiciary and other authorities.

We are convinced that an adequate response to the development of the information and communication technologies and to the challenges before the legislation and administration of justice requires joint efforts of national governments, EU institutions and experts and NGOs community in national and international level.

All partner institutions – NGOs, academic and international organisations, have a significant track record in the area of improving both Judiciary and legislation. For instance the organization I am representing, the Center for the Study of Democracy, contributed to the development of the legal framework of new technologies through drafting important pieces of legislation such as the *Law on Registered Pledges* by the end of 90-s, *Law on the Electronic Document and Electronic Signature* in the beginning of 2000, followed by a concept paper for business registration reform and for establishment of the Electronic Commercial Registry, etc. Part of our activities are the increased introduction and use of ICT in the work of the judiciary and law enforcement as well as the legal aspects of cyber security, in particular the legal regulation of cybercrime.

The aim of this Public Hearing is to inspire a broader dialogue on the further development of e-justice between all stakeholders and I do hope that there is political will and expert knowledge to achieve this goal.