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Dear President Igreja Matos,

I would like to thank you again for your valuable contribution to the preparation of the first annual Rule of Law Report. Your input has been very helpful and has informed the assessment of the Commission in preparing the Report.

The first annual Rule of Law Report was published¹ on 30 September 2020. It is at the centre of the new European rule of law mechanism, which acts as a preventive tool, deepening multilateral dialogue and joint awareness of rule of law issues.

For the preparation of the 2021 Rule of Law Report, the Commission will continue to rely on a diversity of relevant sources, including from Member States, country visits, and stakeholders' contributions collected through a targeted stakeholder consultation².

Considering the important role played by the European Association of Judges for upholding rule of law in the European Union, and building on the positive experience in the preparatory process for the first Rule of Law Report, I would like to invite your association to take part to the targeted consultation again this year.

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/upholding-rule-law/rule-law/rule-law-mechanism/2020-rule-law-report_en

² https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/2020-rule-law-report-targeted-stakeholder-consultation_en

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Your contribution would be important to acquire a genuine understanding of the situation of the rule of law on the ground. As a European association, you are well-placed to provide comparable information on the situation in individual Member States and/or horizontally at European level (concerning several or all EU Member States), which is key to ensure the objectivity and fairness of the Report.

The contributions to be provided should contain factual information addressing (1) feedback and developments with regard to the points raised in the country chapters of the 2020 Rule of Law Report and (2) any other significant developments since January 2020 falling under the 'type of information' outlined in the questionnaire. This would also include significant rule of law developments in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic falling under the scope of the four pillars covered by the report. The input should be inserted in the template for contribution on the following website: <https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/RuleofLawReportStakeholderConsultation2021>.

I would be grateful if you could send us your contribution by 8 March. I am fully aware that the current circumstances of the COVID-19 crisis continue to be a challenge for all of us and I very much appreciate your efforts to contribute. Any additional information that you may wish to provide later on in the process will of course also be welcome and taken into account to the extent possible.

In case you have any questions, you can contact DG JUST at the following email address: rule-of-law-network@ec.europa.eu or you can directly contact Jože Štrus (joze.strus@ec.europa.eu) or Annegret Kempf (annegret.kempf@ec.europa.eu) from Unit C.1 Justice Policy and Rule of Law of DG Justice and Consumers.

I am looking forward to a close and continued cooperation on strengthening the rule of law in the Union.

Yours sincerely,

(e-signed)

Didier REYNDERS

Cc: Vice-President Jourová

