



Brigitte Zypries
Federal Ministry of Justice
The Minister of Justice

Speech:

**“Harmonisation of Judicial Systems within the
European Union“**

Tuesday, January 29th, 09:30-10:00

Curriculum vitae

Brigitte Zypries has been Federal Minister of Justice since 22 October 2002. The 52-year old lawyer was born and grew up in the town of Kassel in North Hesse. After completing her studies and pursuing subsequent academic work at the University of Giessen, she commenced her professional career at the State Chancellery of Hesse. The experience she gained during her three years as an academic assistant at the Federal Constitutional Court in Karlsruhe meant that she had the appropriate qualifications to move in 1991 into the position of Head of Division for Constitutional Law at the State Chancellery of Lower Saxony. Since this point in time her career has been closely connected to that of Gerhard Schröder. Under the then state premier of Lower Saxony, she quickly progressed to the position of Head of Directorate-General within the State Chancellery and, in 1997, became State Secretary of the Lower Saxony Ministry for Women, Labour and Social Affairs.

Following the electoral victory of the SPD in 1998 she was made State Secretary of the Federal Ministry of the Interior. As the person responsible for managing administrative matters under Otto Schily, she rapidly established a reputation for dealing with matters in a goal-oriented way. In this capacity she was responsible among other things for representing the state employer in collective wage agreement negotiations for the employees of the public service, as well as for chairing the Committee of State Secretaries “Modern State – Modern Administration” and setting up the e-government initiative “BundOnline2005”.

Brigitte Zypries was the Federal Government’s “Y2K person”. Under her direction, the necessary steps were taken to prepare computers for the changeover from 1999 to 2000, and as a result all mainframe computers at infrastructure facilities, banks and public authorities coped with the change of year without any disruption. With a team of expert employees at her side, she spent New Year’s Eve in 1999 at the Federal Ministry of the Interior on tenterhooks before learning that all the preparatory work had indeed paid off.

In the summer of 2002, when, after heavy rainfall, central parts of Germany had to cope with flooding on a scale never seen before, Federal Chancellor Gerhard Schröder asked the State Secretary for the Interior to coordinate the Federal Government’s provision of assistance to the areas hit by the disaster. She ensured, for example, that only two days after the Federal Cabinet’s decision, € 78.5 million was already available to the local authorities of the affected areas to be distributed to the local population as emergency aid.

Following the re-election of the red-green coalition in autumn 2002, Federal Chancellor Gerhard Schröder appointed Brigitte Zypries as Federal Minister of Justice and thus a member of his Cabinet. Brigitte Zypries has been a Member of the German Bundestag (Federal Parliament) since 18 October 2005. Since 22 November 2005 she has been a member of the Cabinet of Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel.

One of her first projects as Minister of Justice was to amend the law governing sexual offences. It was a matter of particular importance to Brigitte Zypries to ensure that the range of penalties which can be imposed for the rape of mentally handicapped women was brought into line with that for rape of women who are not handicapped. It is also intended that with this Act to Amend the Law on Sexual Offences, the range of penalties for serious sexual abuse of children be increased, and that offences involving child pornography on the internet incur much more severe penalties in future.

With the Act to Modernise the Judicial System, she introduced an instrument which “removes the grit which was clogging up the machinery of the judicial system and, instead, adds oil to keep it running smoothly”. Under her direction, copyright law has been brought up-to-date for the information society and is now being further developed with the goal of ensuring an enduring and fair balance between owners and users of intellectual property in the digital age.