

Editorial

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS:  
EVOLVING LEGAL LANDSCAPES  
IN THE AGE OF DIGITALIZATION  
AND GLOBAL TRANSITION

*Iryna Izarova*

ABSTRACT

*This issue of Access to Justice in Eastern Europe presents a collection of research from a diverse international cohort of scholars representing Bulgaria, Jordan, Kazakhstan, the Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, Slovenia, the United Arab Emirates, Ukraine, and Vietnam. This issue explores the evolving landscape of contemporary justice through four primary lenses: the intersection of law and emerging digital technologies (including AI and predictive policing); the reinforcement of criminal justice, anti-corruption, and procedural safeguards; the evolution of alternative dispute resolution and mediation; and the pursuit of social justice within family, property, and environmental law. By bridging historical perspectives with future-oriented legal analysis, this issue underscores the journal's commitment to advancing the rule of law and fostering global scholarly dialogue amidst a shifting legal paradigm.*

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This issue of Access to Justice in Eastern Europe exemplifies our commitment to international scholarly exchange, bringing together diverse perspectives from across the globe. We are proud to feature contributions from esteemed researchers based in Bulgaria, Jordan, Kazakhstan, the Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, Slovenia, the United Arab Emirates, Ukraine, and Vietnam. This geographical breadth ensures a rich, comparative dialogue on the most pressing legal challenges facing our regions today.

The variety of topics is broad but clearly addresses the fundamental challenges of humanity. Our contributors navigate the complexities of modern governance by exploring the intersection of law and emerging technologies, from the ethical integration of artificial intelligence to the regulation of digital transformation and predictive policing. Furthermore, the issue delves into the intricacies of specialized legal regimes, examining alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, procedural safeguards in criminal law, and the nuances of international and property law. Together, these studies provide a critical lens through which we can better understand the ongoing transformation of legal systems in a world characterized by both rapid innovation and persistent conflict.

As always in my introductory remarks, I would like to highlight the specific contributions that define the scholarly depth of this issue and have particularly caught the attention of the editorial team and invited experts during our work. I would like to specifically recommend them in my opening words.

In the article “Strengthening Environmental Protection Through Criminal Law in Europe: Normative Shifts and Enforcement Implications,” **Libor Klimek** provides a comprehensive look at how environmental protection is increasingly reliant on robust criminal justice mechanisms. The author analyzes the normative shifts within European frameworks, offering a vital perspective on how legal systems must adapt to enforce environmental standards effectively and hold violators accountable.

The practical challenges of alternative dispute resolution are further explored in “Building a Compulsory Mediation Pathway: Bulgaria as a Live Experiment in Dispute System Design?” by **Yuliya Radanova**. By examining Bulgaria’s implementation of mandatory mediation, the study offers valuable insights into the delicate balance between compulsory procedural requirements and the fundamental right to access justice, serving as a live experiment for future dispute system designs globally.

Addressing the human rights implications of technological advancement, **Phuc G. Dao** presents “The Right to Remain Offline in the Digital Transformation Era: A Comparative Study of Vietnam and the European Union.” This timely research tackles the blurred boundaries between professional and personal life in an increasingly hyper-connected world. Through a comparative lens, the author advocates for deeper integration and a systematised framework to bridge the gap between digital progression and the effective protection of individuals' well-being and privacy.

Special attention in this issue is given to a topic that serves as a logical continuation of our Special Issue "AI and Law 2025," published at the end of last year. I am referring to the Afterword and Guest Editorial by **Costas Popotas**, "*AI and Judicial Independence: A Critical Analysis*." This contribution acts as an intellectual bridge between our previous work and the current discourse, offering a profound reflection on how the rapid integration of intelligent systems correlates with the fundamental principles of justice. The author provides a critical analysis of the risks and opportunities that artificial intelligence presents to the autonomy of the judicial branch, emphasizing that digital transformation must unfold without compromising judicial independence, which remains the unshakable foundation of the rule of law.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to our editorial team and our reviewers for their exceptional professionalism and objective assessment. In an era where the complexity of legal scholarship continues to evolve, their rigorous peer review remains the cornerstone of our publication's quality. I am confident that our authors trust our opinion and recognize that every critique is offered as a collaborative effort to refine their work and elevate the legal discourse. Together, we strive to ensure that the findings presented in these pages—ranging from institutional integrity to the transformation of legal culture—serve as reliable foundations for both theoretical advancement and practice-oriented solutions. It is through this shared commitment to excellence that we continue to foster a deeper understanding of justice in an increasingly interconnected world.

## АНОТАЦІЯ УКРАЇНСЬКОЮ МОВОЮ

Слово редактора

### ВСТУПНІ ЗАУВАЖЕННЯ:

### ЕВОЛЮЦІЯ ПРАВОВИХ ЛАНДШАФТІВ В ЕПОХУ ЦИФРОВІЗАЦІЇ ТА ГЛОБАЛЬНИХ ТРАНСФОРМАЦІЙ

**Ірина Ізарова**

#### АНОТАЦІЯ

У цьому випуску журналу «Access to Justice in Eastern Europe» представлено результати напрацювань міжнародної когорти науковців із Болгарії, В'єтнаму, Йорданії, Казахстану, Нідерландів, Об'єднаних Арабських Еміратів, Саудівської Аравії, Словенії та України. Матеріали номера аналізують мінливий ландшафт сучасного правосуддя

*крізь чотири основні призми: вплив цифровізації, штучного інтелекту та предиктивної поліцейської діяльності на правові системи; посилення кримінального правосуддя, антикорупційних механізмів та процесуальних гарантій; розвиток альтернативного вирішення спорів і медіації; а також питання соціальної справедливості в межах сімейного, майнового та екологічного права.*

*Окрему увагу у вступному слові приділено дослідженням **Лібора Клімека** щодо посилення охорони довкілля через кримінальне право в Європі, **Юлії Раданової**, яка аналізує запровадження обов'язкової медіації в Болгарії як експеримент у дизайні систем вирішення спорів, та **Фука Г. Дао** щодо права залишатися офлайн в епоху цифрових трансформацій. Поєднуючи історичні перспективи з футуристичним правовим аналізом, в дослідженнях підкреслюється важливість дотримання концепції верховенства права та сприяння глобальному науковому діалогу в умовах зміни правових парадигм.*

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**Corresponding author**, solely responsible for preparing the Editorial. I thank my colleagues, the Managing Editors of AJEE, for their help, thoughts, and comments on my piece, which helped me to improve it.

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