PUBLIC LAW IN CHALLENGING TIMES: GOVERNANCE, RESILIENCE, AND EUROPEANIZATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY

10–11 October 2026

Union University Law School Belgrade

The ICON•S Balkan Chapter Inaugural Conference 2026

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CONFERENCE VENUE

Bulevar maršala Tolbuhina 36
(Novi Beograd),
View on Google Maps
[https://maps.app.goo.gl/oduPXcbv4hgWjMVt8]

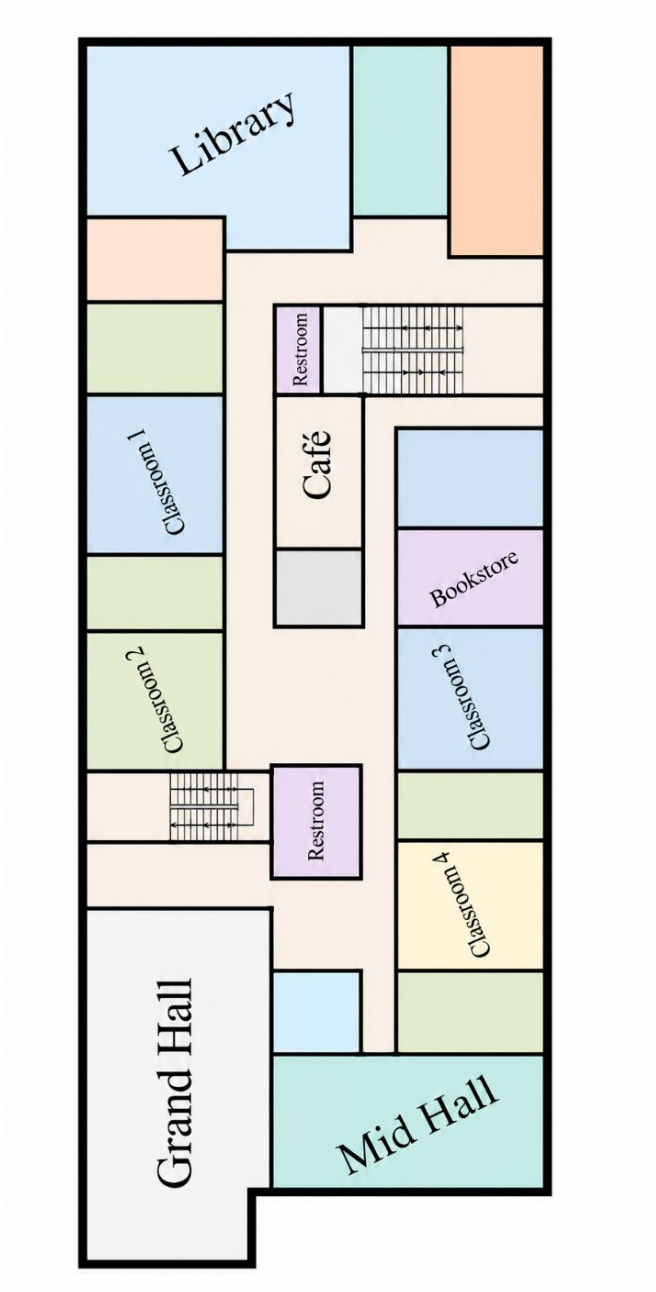


The entrance to the Law School building is on the side facing Bulevar maršala Tolbuhina.

Wi-Fi Network Access:
Username: PFUUB
Password: @Union2025!

ROOM LAYOUT

I Floor



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Welcome to the Inaugural Conference of the ICON•S Balkans Chapter, entitled "Public Law in Challenging Times: Governance, Resilience, and Europeanization in the 21st Century". We are delighted to welcome you to Belgrade!

The ICON•S Balkans Chapter did not emerge overnight. It is the product of many conversations, collaborations, ideas, and perhaps a few more emails and Zoom meetings than anyone would care to count. Because building a regional scholarly community is not unlike constitutional reform: It requires patience, compromise, persistence, and a willingness to keep showing up. Fortunately, creating an academic network is usually less controversial than constitutional reform, although, as academics, we are perfectly capable of turning even a conference panel into a constitutional crisis.

This conference marks an important milestone in that journey. It brings together scholars from across Southeast Europe and beyond to begin building a lasting regional community dedicated to the study of public law. Few regions offer a richer laboratory for examining questions of governance, constitutionalism, democracy, institutional resilience, and legal transformation. Our legal systems, constitutional traditions, and political experiences are remarkably diverse, but they also resist simple explanations. If there is one lesson our region teaches particularly well, it is that reality has a stubborn tendency to ignore neat theoretical models. Yet despite our differences, we often find ourselves asking remarkably similar questions about institutions and processes.

Over the next two days, we hope this conference will reflect the spirit of ICON•S: Intellectual curiosity, methodological openness, and genuine engagement across disciplines and jurisdictions. We are especially pleased to welcome early-career scholars and students. Every academic community depends on fresh ideas and new voices courageous enough to ask the questions that more senior scholars have not (dared to) ask.

Most importantly, we hope this gathering is only the beginning of the collaborations we build, the friendships we form, and the community we create together.

Welcome to Belgrade, welcome to the inaugural conference of the ICON•S Balkans Chapter!

Maja Sahadžić
Utrecht University

Martin Belov
Sofia University 'St. Kliment Ohridski'

Co-Chairs, ICON•S Balkans Chapter

It is a great privilege and honor for our School of Law at Union University to host the ICON· S Balkans Chapter Inaugural Conference and to mark the beginning of the celebration of our 25th Anniversary.

Founded in 2001 by several of the most distinguished Serbian law professors and judges who faced political persecution during the 1990s, our Law School has established a two-and-a-half-decade tradition of university-level legal education. Despite its relatively recent founding and specific location in Belgrade's business district, Union University Law School Belgrade has rapidly become one of Serbia's most distinguished higher education institutions, educating generations of graduates who now serve as judges, lawyers, legal scholars, in-house counsel, and other legal professionals. Our faculty members, past and present, have led the way in various legal fields in Serbia, earning international recognition for their academic achievements. Our Law Review stands as the highest-ranked in Serbia and is featured in major international databases such as Web of Science and SCOPUS.

We invite conference participants to immerse themselves in the vibrant and dynamic spirit of our Law School – a place where passionate thinkers gather because they believe ideas truly shape the world. Here, curiosity thrives among those eager to explore how law intersects with public policy, business, technology, and the complexities of human needs and perceptions. Our community is captivated by the strength of the rule of law, attentive to the ripple effects of policy changes, and dedicated to advancing the legal profession in the service of Serbian society.

The theme "Public Law in Challenging Times: Governance, Resilience, and Europeanization in the 21st Century" was selected for this Conference in recognition of the pervasive influence of political crises on constitutional democracy at global, regional, and local levels, whether originating in war, populism, or authoritarian resurgence. It is anticipated that the exchange of experience, knowledge, and insights at this Conference will facilitate the development of practical solutions to the challenges currently confronting constitutional democracies.

We wish you a productive exchange of knowledge, valuable networking, and an enjoyable stay in Belgrade. We look forward to a successful conference!

Violeta Beširević
Union University Law School Belgrade
Member of the Organizing Committee

KONRAD ADENAUER STIFTUNG
RULE OF LAW ▪ SOUTH EAST EUROPE

At KAS, our foundational mission in this region has always been the consolidation of democracy, the protection of fundamental rights, and the unwavering promotion of the rule of law. When we look at the central theme of this conference—Public Law in Challenging Times: Governance, Resilience, and Europeanization in the 21st Century—we see a direct reflection of the most pressing realities and structural challenges we encounter in our daily work across Southeast Europe. The structural pressures facing our legal systems are immense. We are no longer dealing with isolated episodes of crisis, but rather a complex, overlapping landscape of financial, political, and institutional stress. In this context, the role of public law cannot be overstated. It is the vital anchor that ensures the exercise of public power remains accountable, even when emergency governance and executive discretion threaten to become the norm rather than the exception.

As an organization deeply committed to the European integration of the Balkans, KAS views the themes of this conference as critical pillars for the region's future. We are particularly invested in exploring these developments alongside the participants: The panel on Governance in Times of Crisis is examining how legal frameworks can prevent the normalization of exceptional powers and protect the fundamental checks and balances required in a functioning democracy. To ensure (constitutional) resilience, we have to move beyond mere institutional survival to foster a robust legal culture where judicial independence and societal trust are fiercely defended against democratic backsliding. And not to forget the nuances of Europeanization: It is necessary to understand European integration not merely as a mechanical alignment of laws, but as a dynamic structural test for domestic legal systems, requiring both adaptation and the safeguarding of constitutional identity. True constitutional resilience is not found in the concentration of authority during a crisis, but in a system's ability to endure profound stress while remaining uncompromising rule of law principles.

Dr. Pavel Usvatov
Director of KAS Rule of Law
Programme Southeast Europe
Supporter of the Conference

SATURDAY 10 OCTOBER 2026

9:00-10:00	ICON-s Balkans Chapter Advisory Board Meeting Hybrid Meeting *Moot Court Room/Online*
10:00-10:30	Registration *Foyer Outside the Grand Hall*
10:30-11:00	Welcome and Opening Remarks *The Grand Hall*
11:00-12:30	**Plenary Session I:** *From Constitutionalism to Militant Constitutionalism: Can Judges Change the Rules of the Game?* *The Grand Hall*
12:30-13:30	Lunch Break *Foyer Outside the Grand Hall*
13:30-15:00	**Parallel Panel Sessions I** Sessions nos. 1-8
15:00-15:30	Coffee break *Foyer Outside the Grand Hall*
15:30-17:00	**Parallel Panel Sessions II** Sessions nos. 9-16
17:00-18:30	Reception *Foyer Outside the Grand Hall*

SUNDAY 11 OCTOBER 2026

9:00-10:00	Early Career Scholar Reception *Foyer Outside the Grand Hall*
10:00-11:30	**Plenary Session II:** Governance in Times of Crisis *The Grand Hall*
11:30-12:00	Coffee Break *Foyer Outside the Grand Hall*
12:30-14:00	**Parallel Panel Sessions III** Sessions nos. 17-24
14:00-15:00	Lunch Break *Foyer Outside the Grand Hall*
15:00-15:15	Closing Remarks *The Grand Hall*

Plenary Session I: Saturday, 11:00-12:30

From Constitutionalism to Militant Constitutionalism: Can Judges Change the Rules of the Game?

PANELISTS



András Sajó

András Sajó is a professor emeritus and Founding Dean of Legal Studies at the Central European University, a former Judge and Vice President of the European Court of Human Rights, and a member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. He served as legal advisor to the first freely elected President of Hungary and has published extensively in the area of comparative constitutional law. He also participated as an advisor in drafting the Ukrainian, Georgian, and South African (interim) constitutions. He was a recurrent visiting law professor at the University of Chicago, Cardozo and NYU, and taught courses at Harvard, Columbia, University of New South Wales and other law schools. Professor Sajó holds Honorary Doctorates from the European University Institute, University of Bucharest, and Ilia State University (Tbilisi).



Joseph Marko

Joseph Marko is a professor emeritus of Comparative Public Law and Political Sciences, University of Graz. He served as an international judge at the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina (1997–2002) and politico-legal advisor of the UN Special Representative for the negotiations on the re-unification of Cyprus (2015–2017). He was visiting professor at the law schools of Rutgers University/Camden and Trento/Italy. Professor Marko was also Director of the Research Department for Autonomies and Minorities at the European Academy Bozen-Bolzano/Italy (1998-2020) and a Dean of the Faculty of Law of the University of Graz (2011-2015). His research focused on human rights, minority protection and territorial and cultural diversity governance in post-conflict societies. He is the author of 4 monographs and more than 140 scholarly articles.

Plenary Session I: Saturday, 11:00-12:30



Bojan Bugarič

Bojan Bugarič is a Professor of Law at the Sheffield University, Department of Law. Before going to Sheffield, he lectured at the University of Ljubljana. He has held visiting positions at the University of Trento, the University of California School of Law in Los Angeles, and at the Center for European Studies, Harvard University. He teaches and researches in the fields of constitutional law, comparative constitutional law, public law, EU law, law and democracy and law and development, broadly conceived. Professor Bugarič served as Deputy Minister at the Ministry of the Interior in the Slovenian government from 2000-2004. He has published *Power to the People: Constitutionalism in the Age of Populism* (Oxford, 2021), and *Constitutionalism and Its Discontents* (Chicago, 2026), with Mark Tushnet.



Daniel Smilov

Daniel Smilov is an Associate Professor of Political Theory at the Department of Political Science at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" and Program Director of the Center for Liberal Strategies, Sofia. He is a political scientist and scholar of comparative constitutional law. Daniel Smilov holds doctorates from the Central European University in Budapest (SJD,1999) and the University of Oxford (DPhil, 2003). He has specialized at the University of California, Berkeley, Boalt Hall School of Law and the European University Institute, Florence. He is the author of publications in the field of comparative constitutional law, financing of political parties, and anti-corruption policy. He is also columnist for the Bulgarian section of DW and regular contributor to Bulgarian and international media.

Plenary Session I: Saturday, 11:00-12:30



Boško Tripković

Boško Tripković is a Senior Lecturer in Legal Theory and the Philosophy of Law at the University of Glasgow. He has previously held positions at the University of Birmingham and the European University Institute, as well as visiting appointments at New York University and the China University of Political Science and Law. His research explores the philosophical foundations of public law, with particular emphasis on constitutional adjudication, constitutional identity, and human rights. Tripković has published widely across both philosophy and law, with work appearing in leading journals including the Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy, Oxford Journal of Legal Studies, Legal Theory, and ICON. He is the author of The Metaethics of Constitutional Adjudication (Oxford University Press, 2017).



Violeta Beširević

Violeta Beširević is a Professor of Law at Union University Law School Belgrade, a Research Affiliate at Central European University (CEU), and a recurrent visiting professor at the University of Milano-Bicocca Law School. Previously, she served as Dean of Union University Law School. She is a member of the Board of Directors of the European Public Law Organization and Editor-in-Chief of the Union University Law School Review, indexed in WoS and SCOPUS. She holds an L.LM. and S.J.D. in Comparative Constitutional Law from CEU, was a Fulbright Scholar and Global Research Fellow at NYU School of Law, and has completed specialization at George Washington University Law School, Brigham Young University Law School, University of Cagliari Law School, and the ASSER Institute in The Hague.

Plenary Session I: Saturday, 11:00-12:30

CHAIR



Miodrag Jovanović

Miodrag Jovanović is a Professor of Jurisprudence at the Faculty of Law, University of Belgrade, where he also serves as the Head of the Institute for Legal and Social Sciences. He is a permanent visiting lecturer at the Legal Methods module of the European Master in Legal Theory, at Goethe University, Frankfurt. His areas of interest are general jurisprudence, philosophy of international law, and political philosophy. Jovanović is a fellow of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. He was the 2016 Brandon Fellow of the Lauterpacht Centre for International Law (University of Cambridge). He is one of the section editors of the IVR Encyclopedia of the Philosophy of Law and Social Philosophy (Springer) and serves as the president of the Judicial Research Center, a leading Serbian NGO focusing on the judiciary.

Plenary Session II: Sunday, 10:00-11:30

Governance in Times of Crisis

PANELISTS



Jo Shaw

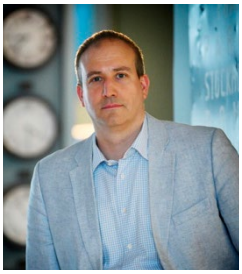
Jo Shaw holds the Salvesen Chair of European Institutions (since 2005), has been Head of Edinburgh Law School (since 2021) and is the General Secretary of the Royal Society of Edinburgh (2025-2029). Previously, she was Principal Investigator on a Leverhulme Major Research Fellowship project on Citizenship and citizenship regimes: a global remapping for the 21st century (2017-2021) and on a European Research Council Advanced Grant on The Europeanisation of Citizenship in the Successor States of the Former Yugoslavia (CITSEE) (2009-2014). She is a co-director of the Global Citizenship Academy, based within the Global Governance Programme of the European University Institute. Her most recent book (2020) was *The People in Question* (Bristol University Press).

Ivana Jelić



Ivana Jelić is a Vice-President of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). She has been a Judge at the ECtHR since 2018. Prior to joining the Court, she was a professor of public international law and human rights at the University of Montenegro. She studied law in Montenegro, Serbia and the US, specializing in international law. In 2015, she became a member of the Legal Sciences of Montenegrin Academy of Sciences and Arts. Previously, she held a series of positions in international organizations, such as a member and Vice-President of the UN Human Rights Committee, and a Gender Equality Rapporteur and Second Vice Chair at the Council of Europe's Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

Plenary Session II: Sunday, 10:00-11:30



Marko Milanović

Marko Milanović is Professor of Public International Law at the University of Reading School of Law and Director of the Global Law at Reading (GLAR) research group, as well as the Raoul Wallenberg Visiting Chair of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, University of Lund. He is co-general editor of the ongoing Tallinn Manual 3.0 project on the application of international law in cyberspace. Professor Milanović is the Special Adviser on Cyber-Enabled Crimes to the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court. He is an Academic Expert at Doughty Street Chambers. Professor Milanović obtained his first degree in law from the University of Belgrade, Faculty of Law, his LL.M from the University of Michigan Law School, and his PhD in international law from the University of Cambridge.



Igor Štiks

Igor Štiks is a Professor at the Faculty of Media and Communications in Belgrade. He previously worked and taught at the universities in Edinburgh, Ljubljana, Sarajevo, and Graz. Earning his PhD at the Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris and Northwestern University, Štiks later published a monograph, *Nations and Citizens in Yugoslavia and the Post-Yugoslav States: One Hundred Years of Citizenship* (Bloomsbury). Together with Jo Shaw he edited the collections *Citizenship after Yugoslavia* (Routledge) and *Citizenship Rights* (Ashgate). His novels, *A Castle in Romagna, The Judgment of Richard Richter* (originally published as *Elijah's Chair*) and *W* have been translated into 15 languages.

Plenary Session II: Sunday, 10:00-11:30



Matej Avbelj

Matej Avbelj is a Professor of European Law and Director of the Center for Constitutionalism and AI in Slovenia. He graduated from the University of Ljubljana Faculty of Law, obtained an LL.M at NYU School of Law and defended his PhD at the European University Institute. Dr. Avbelj has been awarded several prestigious international fellowships and research grants and has acted as a guest lecturer at many universities in Europe and the USA. He held a Jean Monnet Chair at the New University dedicated to pluralism in the European Union. He has written extensively in the fields of EU law, constitutional law, legal theory, and human rights protection. As an editor in chief of the Commentary of the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia, he is a leading expert in Slovenian constitutional law.



Ruzha Smilova

Ruzha Smilova teaches contemporary political philosophy and history of political ideas at the Political Science Department of Sofia University and is also a program director at the Centre for Liberal Strategies in Sofia, Bulgaria. She holds a PhD in Political Science from the Central European University in Budapest. Ruzha Smilova specialized political philosophy at Oxford. Her academic research is focused on such issues as the authority of democracy, normative and positive theories of democracy and the relation media-democracy. At the CLS she is involved in research and policy-related projects on quality of representative institutions in Central and Eastern Europe, on the rise of illiberal populism, the relation media and democracy, voting behavior, participation in politics, among others.

Plenary Session II: Sunday, 10:00-11:30

CO-CHAIRS



Maja Sahadžić

Maja Sahadžić is Assistant Professor of Constitutional Law (Utrecht University), Visiting Professor (University of Antwerp), Fellow (Netherlands Institute of Human Rights), and Affiliated Scholar (CUHK). She holds a PhD in Law from the University of Antwerp. She has been a visiting researcher at the University of Toronto, the Max Planck Institute for Comparative Public Law and International Law in Heidelberg, The University of Hong Kong, MGIMO University, and Victoria University of Wellington. Her book "Asymmetry, Multinationalism and Constitutional Law" (Routledge) was nominated for the 2020 Book of the Year in Constitutionalism by the IFFC. In 2018 she received the Ronald Watts Award for the best article on constitutional asymmetries and the Middle East peace process.



Denis Preshova

Denis Preshova is an Associate Professor of Constitutional Law and Political System at the "Iustinianus Primus" Faculty of Law, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje. He holds a PhD in Comparative Constitutional Law and EU Law from the University of Cologne, an LL.M. in Comparative and International Law from the University of Pittsburgh School of Law, and a Master of European Studies from the Center for European Integration Studies (ZEI) at the University of Bonn. He currently serves as a member of the Governing Board of the Macedonian Helsinki Committee and a member of the Justice Administration Research Association. His research interests include comparative constitutional adjudication, European integration and the rule of law, constitutional pluralism and EU law, and minority rights.

PANEL SESSIONS I (1-8) October 10, 2026

13:30–15:00

Panel 1: The Day After Authoritarianism
Grand Hall

Chair: **Bojan Spaić**

Miodrag Jovanović

No Rule of Law for Enemies of Rule of Law?

Victoria Kristan

After Illiberalism: From Diagnosis to Jailbreaking

Denis Preshova

From Judicial Capture to Judicial Re-Capture: The Missed Opportunities for Sustainable Rule of Law Reforms in North Macedonia

Panel 2: Contemporary Trends in Constitutional Law and Practice
Mid Hall

Chair: **Dragoljub Popović**

Tanasije Marinković

Trends in Constitutional Law Studies: Substance, Methodology, Deontology

Arta Vorpsi

The Rule of Law under Structural Stress: From Normative Ideal to Operational Practice in Transitional Constitutionalism

Đorđe Gardašević

Separating Normalcy and Emergency: Classical and Contemporary Perspectives

Maja Nastić

Digitalization of Justice in Times of Crises: Between Resilience, Human Rights, and Democratic Governance in the Balkans

Darko Simović

Between Standards and Illusions: The Venice Commission and its Limited Impact on Serbia's Constitutional Reform

PANEL SESSIONS I (1-8) October 10, 2026

13:30–15:00

Panel 3: **Book Panel: *Europeanisation of Access to Justice in Environmental Matters: The Aarhus Convention in the Balkans***, edited by Bojana Todorović and Roberto Caranta
Classroom 1

Chair: **Bojana Todorović**

Discussants: **Roberto Caranta**
Mirjana Drenovak Ivanović
Ana Knežević Bojović
Hristina Vojvodić

Panel 4: **Internal and External Influence on State Tax Politics**
Classroom 2

Chair: Márton Varjú

Antonio Marinello

Tax Sovereignty in Times of Crisis

Svetislav Kostić

Reliance on Modern Technologies for the Purpose of Limiting the Potential for Abuse of Authority by the Executive Branch of the Government

Vladimir Tiutiuriukov, Lidija Živković

EU's Global Minimum Tax Reform (Pillar Two): its Influence and Challenges for the States of Western Balkans

Emma Niewald

Russian Political Financial Influence in the Western Balkans

Jelena Račić

The Right to Appeal in Public Procurement – The Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Role of a "Positive Legislator"

PANEL SESSIONS I (1-8) October 10, 2026

13:30–15:00

Panel 5: Imposed Consociationalism under Systemic Stress: Crisis, Resilience, and the Limits of Europeanization in Bosnia and Herzegovina
Classroom 3

Chair: **Mahir Muharemović**

Tahir Herenda

Consociational Deadlock vs. Multi-Level Integration: The State-Level House of Peoples as a Structural Stress Test for Europeanization

Filip Novaković

Can Courts Europeanize a Blocked Constitution? Constitutional Adjudication and the Limits of Judicial Transformation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Benjamin Nurkić

Militant Democracy in a Politically Divided Society : Evidence from Bosnia and Herzegovina

Panel 6: Book Panel: *The Rise of Constitutionalism: A Global Perspective*, by Kostas Chrysogonos
Classroom 4

Chair: **Kostas Chrysogonos**

Discussants: **Jens Woelk**
Maja Sahadžić
Antonios Kouroutakis

PANEL SESSIONS I (1-8) October 10, 2026

13:30–15:00

Panel 7: Reimagining Accountability in Sustainable Development: Governance through the Universal Periodic Review
Moot Court Room

Chair: **Milica V. Matijević**

Bhanu Pratap
Universalism and Pluralism in Sustainable Development Governance: A Critical Assessment of the UPR-SDG Nexus

Vesna Ćorić
Human Rights, Sustainable Development, and the Fragmentation of International Law: Can the Universal Periodic Review Foster Normative Integration?

Federico Falorni
The Global Diffusion of Proportionality and its Relevance for SDG Accountability Mechanisms

Alessia Preti
The Universal Periodic Review as an Accountability Mechanism for the 2030 Agenda: Bridging Global and Subnational Governance

Panel 8: Europeanisation and the Transformation of Public Law Institutions
Library

Chair: **Ivan Jokanović**

Weronika Pietras
Constitutional Courts and the Limits of Europeanisation: The Relationship Between EU Law and National Constitutional Orders

Gellért Nagy
Navigating International Waters with a Broad(ening) Scope – An Examination of the European Union's Exclusive External Competence in the Case Law of the Court of Justice of the European Union

Zuzanna Żurawska
Constitutional Identity as a Political Argument in Response to Europeanization: Between Justified Pluralism and Strategic Resistance

PANEL SESSIONS II (9-16) October 10, 2026

15:30–17:00

Panel 9: How Authoritarianism and Corruption Killed the Rule of Law
Grand Hall

Chair: **Miodrag Jovanović**

Luka Glušac, Gazela Pudar Draško

Holdover and Handover: Authoritarian Appointments in Serbia

Dejan Pavlović

The Barrage Fire on the Autonomy of Universities in Serbia

Marjan Kos

Anti-corruption Authorities and Rule of Law Resilience: Lessons from Slovenia

Türker Ertaş

Constitutional Design and Executive Dominance: Comparative Lessons from Russia, Poland and Turkey

Panel 10: Contemporary Challenges to Public Administration
Mid Hall

Chair: **Tamás Korhecz**

Jelena Jerinić

Remedying Populist Influences on Local Autonomy: Is There Room for a Legal Approach?

Vasilije Marković

Procedural Guarantees of Citizenship Deprivation: Between National Security and Human Rights Protection

Mădălina Voican

Digital Crisis and Democratic Accountability: Transparency Failures and Reform Pathways in Romanian Local Public Administration

Batuhan Ustabulut

Normalized Exception in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Executive Discretion of the OHR and the Rule of Law

PANEL SESSIONS II (9-16) October 10, 2026

15:30–17:00

Panel 11: The Fight for Judicial Independence
Classroom 1

Chair: **Đorđe Gardašević**

János Fazekas

The Hungarian Regime Change of 2026 and the Judiciary

Samo Bardutzky

Judicial Independence through Merit in the Selection of Judges (Through Empirical Research)

Mohammadreza Dolatkhah

When Courts Hold the Line: Constitutional Resilience and the Rule of Law in South-east Europe

Fran Marko Stojković

Adjudicating Judicial Independence Beyond Backsliding

Nazarii Stetsyk

Judicial Dialogues and European Integration in the Balkans

Panel 12: The New Clothes of Authoritarianism from Liberal Perspective
Classroom 2

Chair: **Srđan Milošević**

Niko Jarak

"That's (Not) How We Do It Here": Assessing Authoritarian Legacy in Post-Socialist States at the National and EU Levels – The Case of Internal Judicial Independence in Croatia

Sava Vojnović

Mini-Publics in the Republic of Serbia – An Application of Deliberative Democracy

Ana Vladisavljević

Populism and its (Anti-)Democratic Potential: The New Form of Old Anxiety?

Petar Mitrović

Gender-Sensitive Language in Serbia: A Minimalist Liberal Perspective

Maraia Tzvetkova

Resilience in the Western Balkans: Between Constitutional Governance and Patronal Rule

PANEL SESSIONS II (9-16) October 10, 2026

15:30–17:00

Panel 13: Vulnerability, Resilience and the Rule of Law: Conceptual Links Across Criminal Law, Environmental Jurisprudence and Cultural Heritage Law

Classroom 3

Chair: **Dalida Rittossa**

Darko Vinketa

The Fragile Subject: Vulnerability as Critique of the Liberal Legal Imagination

Sanja Barić

From Environmental Protection to Rights of Nature: Vulnerability as an Argument for a Shift in Constitutional Approach

Petra Perišić

Climate-Induced Vulnerability and the Protection of Cultural Heritage: Strengthening Preventive Obligations of States for Enhanced Resilience

Dalida Rittossa

Vulnerability Theory and Criminal Law: A Move Toward Strengthening Resilience through Victim Protection?

PANEL SESSIONS II (9-16) October 10, 2026

15:30–17:00

Panel 14: Militant Democracy: New and Old Dilemmas
Library

Chair: **Violeta Beširević**

Anita Blagojević, Ivana Tucak

Rethinking Militant Democracy through the Lens of Gender Equality Backsliding

Sarah Lattanzi

Online Free Speech and Democratic Turn: Philosophical Foundations and Legal Challenges in the EU and the Western Balkans

Anna Tsiftsoglou

Political Party Ban in Greece – Thoughts after Supreme Special Court Decisions 9 and 10/2025

Christos Papastylianos

Who is the Guardian of Democracy in Greek Constitutional Order? The Review of the Legislation Regarding the Ban of Electoral Lists by Greek Courts Since the Enactment of the Constitution of 1975

Aleksa Nikolić

External Militant Democracy: The Case of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Panel 15: Book Panel: ***The Dilemma of Constitutional Reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Governance, Citizenship, and European Integration***, edited by Maja Sahadžić, Tatjana Sekulić, Nevenko Vranješ, Jens Woelk
Moot Court Room

Chair: **Jens Woelk**

Discussants: **Joseph Marko**
Maja Sahadžić
Tatjana Sekulić

PANEL SESSIONS II (9-16) October 10, 2026

15:30–17:00

Panel 16: External and Internal Dimensions of Constitutional Identity
Classroom 4

Chair: **Denis Preshova**

Bilyana Manova, Moritz Baumgärtel

Checking Blank Checks: The Incomplete Transformation of National Security Expulsion Regimes in Bulgaria

Goran Bašić

The Return of Ethnicity: The Limits of the Civic State after Multiculturalism

Petar Antić

Constitutional Identity Beyond Ethnic and Civic Dichotomies: A Minority Rights Perspective

Aleksa Damnjanović

Direct Democracy and Constitutional Identity – Is There a Connection in Central and Southeast European Post-Communist Democracies?

PANEL SESSIONS III (17-24) October 11, 2026

12:30–14:00

Panel 17: The Authority of Constitutional Courts in Time of Change
Grand Hall

Chair: Jelena Jerinić

Tamás Korhecz

The Open-Ended European Accession Process of Serbia and the Independence of Judiciary – Legislative Efforts and their Obstruction

Samir Forić

Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a Semiotic Authority: Applying Constitutional Semiotics Approach to Bosnia and Herzegovina's Constitutional Conundrum

Boyan Kamenov

From Constitutional Arbiter to Constitutional Actor? The Expanding Role of the Bulgarian Constitutional Court

Matija Stojanović

The Problem of Constitutional Authority in Montenegro and the Role of the Constitutional Court

Kaja Stelmaszewska

Rule of Law Defense Beyond High Politics: Lessons from the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina's History Curriculum Decision

Nazarii Stetsyk

Constitutional Resilience between Wartime Challenges and European Integration: Lessons from the Constitutional Court of Ukraine

PANEL SESSIONS III (17-24) October 11, 2026

12:30–14:00

Panel 18: Book Panel: *Turning off the Suicidal Nature of Democracy: Reflecting on András Sajó's book "Militant Rule of Law"*
Library

Chair: **Tahir Herenda**

Discussants: **András Sajó**
Daniel Smilov
Dragoljub Popović
Violeta Beširević

Panel 19: Two Decades of the 2006 Constitution of Serbia: Interpretations, Consequences, and Challenges
Classroom 1

Chair: Sanja Barić

Đorđe Marković

Who Deals with Justice in Serbia? Two Decades of (Un)interrupted Judicial Reform

Aleksa Nikolić

Who Governs Serbia? Constitutional Architecture and the Transformation of the System of Government

Aleksandar Cvetković

Who Holds Constituent Power in Serbia? Reconsidering the Role of the People

PANEL SESSIONS III (17-24) October 11, 2026

12:30–14:00

Panel 20: 21st Century Challenges to Constitutionalism
Classroom 2

Chair: **Luka Glušac**

Giacomo Amato

The Mountains Legislation During the Era of Transitions: Comparative Aspects

Carolina Fabara

Governing Chinese FDI in the Western Balkans' Green Transition: Aligning EU Accession Law, Environmental Standards, and Global South Connectivity (with Lessons from Latin America)

Igor Milinković

Artificial Intelligence, the Rule of Law, and Democratic Resilience: Governing Algorithmic Power

Zulfiye Yilmaz-Yamac

When Trust is Dismantled: Mental Health Politics as a Challenge to Constitutional Resilience

Panel 21: Book Panel: *Gender Perspectives in Law – the Springer Book Series*
Classroom 3

Chair: **Dragica Vujadinović**

Discussants: **Ivana Krstić**
Ljubinka Kovačević
Marko Davinić
Bojan Spaić

PANEL SESSIONS III (17-24) October 11, 2026

12:30–14:00

Panel 22: EU and Europeanization: Old and New Dilemmas
Classroom 4

Chair: **Ana Knežević Bojović**

Darinka Piqani

The Architecture of a Resilient Judiciary: Any Role for EU Conditionality?

Ilaria Baisi

Strategic Autonomy and the Accountability Gap: EU Joint Procurement Between Crisis Governance, Resilience, and Differentiated Europeanization

Dan-Adrian Cărămidariu

Europeanization Through Private Law: EU Consumer Law Beyond the Contract Paradigm

Alessandro Rosanò

Can Mutual Trust Survive Europeanization? Fundamental Rights and Rule of Law Challenges in the European Arrest Warrant System

Márton Varjú

Old Rules for New Markets? Assessing the CJEU's New Case Law in Contemporary Public Service Markets

Panel 23: Book Panel: *Rotation of Power: A Theory of Democratic Competition*, by Antonios Kouroutakis
Moot Court Room

Chair: **Antonios Kouroutakis**

Discussants: **Martin Belov**
Kostas Chrysogonos
Constantinos Stratilatis

PANEL SESSIONS III (17-24) October 11, 2026

12:30–14:00

Panel 24: Values, Principles and Public Trust: Global and Local Perspectives

Mid Hall

Chair: **Maja Sahadžić**

Damir Banović

The Judiciary's Role in Protecting Democratic Values, Principles, and Rights: The Context of the Western Balkans

Matija Miloš

Vantage Points of Value-based Constitutionalism

Alina Gentimir

Guardians of Trust: Judicial Independence and Public Confidence in Legal Systems

Srđan Milošević

European Values and the Serbian Constitution: Origins, Meaning, and Constitutional Significance

Attila Nagy

The Transformation of Public Law with Soft Law Agreements

Panel 1 The Day After Authoritarianism

Bojan Spaić, Miodrag Jovanović, Victoria Kristan, Denis Preshova

Authoritarian regimes rarely leave behind a legal vacuum. They leave behind constitutions, statutes, courts, judgments, appointments, administrative practices, institutional habits, and legal actors whose roles may be difficult to assess. The problem of restoring the rule of law after authoritarianism is the hard problem of rebuilding a legal order when legality may have been used as an instrument of domination, exclusion, political loyalty, and institutional capture.

This panel examines the legal, institutional, and moral dilemmas of post-authoritarian reconstruction. How should a democratic order deal with compromised laws, captured courts, politicized prosecutors, unjust judgments, and officials who served or enabled the previous regime? Can judicial independence be restored without merely replacing one form of political control with another? How should societies distinguish accountability from revenge, legal continuity from complicity, and reform from arbitrary institutional purge?

Bringing together constitutional theory, comparative public law, legal philosophy, and regional experience from the Balkans and Southeast Europe, the panel explores "the day after authoritarianism" as a decisive moment for democratic resilience. It asks whether the restoration of the rule of law requires ordinary legal reform, transitional-justice mechanisms, constitutional reconstruction, or a more militant conception of the rule of law. Its central claim is that after authoritarianism, law must not simply return; it must be repaired, re-legitimized, and rescued from what it had become.

Panel 2 Contemporary Trends in Constitutional Law and Practice

Tanasije Marinković, **Trends in Constitutional Law Studies: Substance, Methodology, Deontology**

Human polity has witnessed fundamental political and legal changes since the end of the Cold War both on the national and international level. The 'third wave of democratization' (Huntington) on the national level was coupled with the New World Order (Bush) on the international level. Globalization, triggered by the different waves of migrants, technological developments and geopolitical reconfigurations contributed to the gradual forfeiture of state sovereignty to the global market. The trends in 'piercing

the territorial veil of the state' (Bobbitt), which were present already in the UN Charter (1945), were particularly progressive in Europe.

The sense of 'the end of history' was so strong that many thought that the NATO, the Cold War survivor, was losing its raison d'être. This is why the political shock across the globe could not have been stronger when Putin aggressed Ukraine in 2022, or when Netanyahu's campaign of destruction of Gaza became clear in 2024-2025, and even more when Trump and Netanyahu launched a series of attacks on Iran in 2025 and 2026, without forgetting Trump's seizure of Maduro in 2026.

The emerging Trump-Putin-Netahyahu's manner of doing international politics seems to be putting in question the traditional understanding of multilateralism. The idea of long-term international alliances is rapidly being devalued at the cost of short-term bilateral striking deals (Bertrand Badie). From the system of collective security, human polity is descending to the Westphalian world of insecurities.

The rising feeling of international insecurity is coupled with the equally worrying tendencies of de-democratization and rule of law erosion on national level. The liberal democracies are progressively becoming illiberal, and it is an earthquake shaking not only new democracies, but also well-established ones. Another specificity of our age is that "since the end of the Cold War, most democracies breakdowns have been caused not by generals and soldiers but by elected governments themselves". In other words, "democratic backsliding begins at the ballot box" (Levitsky and Ziblatt). What is common to all afore-mentioned leaders – Donald Trump, Vladimir Putin and Benjamin Netanyahu – is a specific technology of coming to power and perpetuating in power by an antagonizing rhetoric and anti-institutional practice. The two dimensions – verbal and non-verbal – converge in a particular type of identity politics which revolves around the vox populi.

This submission is intended to help understand better how the ongoing developments on the national and international level affect the studies of constitutional law and work of constitutional scholars. It calls for the reconceptualization of constitutional law studies with a bigger focus on the pathologies of liberal democracies, as well as on the different models of transition from non-democratic to democratic regimes and democratic consolidation. It also pledges a methodological shift from a doctrinal constructivism to a more political science-oriented constitutional law. Finally, it opens the question of scholactivism: to what extent the constitutional scholars are expected not only to produce knowledge but also to materially change the world.

Arta Vorpsi, **The Rule of Law under Structural Stress: From Normative Ideal to Operational Practice in Transitional Constitutionalism**

This paper examines the rule of law in the context of structural and overlapping pressures that increasingly characterize contemporary public law. Rather than treating crisis as an exceptional disruption, it argues that in transitional constitutional systems, crisis functions primarily as a diagnostic moment, revealing whether the rule of law has been internalized as an operational practice rather than merely incorporated as a normative ideal.

Focusing on post-authoritarian contexts, with particular reference to Albania, the paper develops a distinction between normative incorporation and operational internalization. While constitutional texts and institutional reforms reflect a high degree of alignment with European and international standards, their effective realization depends on the development of a legal culture capable of translating abstract norms into consistent and reasoned judicial practice. Structural stress, arising from crisis governance, political pressure, or institutional fragility, does not create dysfunction, but amplifies pre-existing weaknesses, including executive expansion, judicial formalism, and fragmentation of jurisprudence.

Within this framework, particular attention is paid to the role of the highest courts. The Constitutional Court articulates the normative standards of the rule of law, especially in the domain of fundamental rights and institutional balance. However, the consistency with which these standards are reflected in its own engagement with ordinary court jurisprudence remains uneven, creating a degree of asymmetry within the system. The Supreme Court, in turn, plays a decisive role in the operationalization of these standards. Its jurisprudence reveals both a persistence of formalistic approaches and emerging efforts to adopt more substantive and structured reasoning, particularly in cases involving equality and non-discrimination.

Taken together, the interaction between the two courts illustrates a central tension: while the rule of law is normatively well-established, its practical realization depends on the development of a coherent culture of justification across judicial levels. The paper argues that the resilience of the rule of law depends less on institutional design than on judicial methods, in particular the capacity of courts to provide consistent, reasoned, and substantively grounded decisions.

Finally, the paper addresses the role of Europeanization as a transformative but incomplete process. While it has significantly contributed to institutional reform, it does not, in itself, ensure the

internalization of rule of law principles within domestic legal systems.

The paper concludes that the principal challenge for contemporary public law lies not in preserving the rule of law in moments of crisis, but in consolidating it as a stable and consistent practice in ordinary times. Crisis does not suspend the rule of law; it reveals whether it truly operates.

Đorđe Gardašević, **Separating Normalcy and Emergency: Classical and Contemporary Perspectives**

Historical records have long shown that crises tend to have a prolonged impact on both the distribution and exercise of public power. For that purpose, one may point out numerous examples. Thus, for example, O. Gross concludes that Israel has been in a state of emergency since its establishment in 1948; that emergency powers introduced through special legislation for Northern Ireland in the 1920s and 1970s were repeatedly extended until they became a permanent part of the legal system; and that the United States, until the 1970s, had effectively been in some form of emergency situation for a total duration of forty years. To this, one should certainly add the classic example of the application of Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution.

Constitutional theory has also long shown an interest in this issue and has offered its relevant views on the issue of „separation "(O. Gross and F. Ní Aoláin), „new normalcy "(S. Levinson), „transformed normalcy "(A. Arato) and the like.

In its normative aspect, the problem of separation of crises and normalcy is directly connected to the requirement of restoring the pre-crisis constitutional order (which, in normative terms, entails a return to the conditions of ordinary constitutional governance or the reactivation of the "normal constitution"), as well as to demands that emergency measures be strictly limited in duration and temporally circumscribed (Roman institution of dictatorship; modern constitutions; C. L. Rossiter *etc.*).

Furthermore, the problem of the "separation" between emergency and ordinary constitution is visible in specific constitutional design. In this sense, there appear three models (M. Tushnet, J. Lobel): the constitution applies equally to both emergency and ordinary situations; the constitution contains distinct sets of rules for emergency and ordinary situations; or the constitution does not provide specific provisions for states of emergency but instead allows for an extra or even contra constitutional action.

In this contribution I will explore how different, classical, and contemporary authors detect and address the aforementioned issues and which particular solutions to them they propose.

Maja Nastić, **Digitalization of Justice in Times of Crises: Between Resilience, Human Rights, and Democratic Governance in the Balkans**

Recent crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, geopolitical instability, and rapid technological advancements, have accelerated the digitalization of courts across Europe and beyond. Judicial systems now rely on online hearings, electronic communication, digital evidence management, automated case allocation, and AI-based tools to ensure justice continues during disruptions. Although digitalization enhances resilience and efficiency, it simultaneously introduces significant public law and constitutional challenges related to access to justice, fairness, transparency, and democratic accountability.

This paper examines digital justice from constitutional, human rights, and governance perspectives, with particular focus on the Balkans and Serbia. It investigates whether e-justice represents a temporary response to crisis or a permanent transformation of judicial processes. Central issues addressed include the right to a fair trial, equality before the law, privacy, transparency, and the availability of effective remedies.

Utilizing European standards and the case law of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), this paper analyses the tensions between efficiency-oriented digital governance and constitutional safeguards. It reviews recent European initiatives, like the Digital Justice Package 2030, and regional developments in e-filing, electronic document services, and videoconferencing in Western Balkan courts.

Digitalization has the potential to both expand and restrict access to justice. Although digital tools may enhance efficiency and participation, challenges such as digital literacy, unequal access, cyber security vulnerabilities, and dependence on algorithms at risk exacerbating inequalities and undermining legal safeguards. The paper advocates for a rights-based, rule-of-law approach to digital justice, emphasizing that technological change must be grounded in constitutional principles and due process to protect democracy and human rights.

Darko Simović, **Between Standards and Illusions: The Venice Commission and its Limited Impact on Serbia's Constitutional Reform**

Following the referendum of January 16, 2022, in which most citizens voted in favor of constitutional amendments, the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia proclaimed the amendments on February 9. Although not a generally accepted view, some emphasize that these changes improved the constitutional framework of the judiciary. Reforms included the elimination of the

three-year probationary mandate for judges, the transfer of judicial appointments to the exclusive jurisdiction of the High Judicial Council, and the depoliticization of the election process for its members. The constitutional guarantee of judicial independence was reinforced by securing permanency of tenure, constitutionalizing grounds for removal, and more precise guarantees of irremovability. Despite this, most scholars remain critical or reserved regarding the effects of these changes. Concerns include the democratic legitimacy of the Assembly that adopted the amendments, and the fact that guarantees of independence were only partially improved, leaving hidden channels for political influence. Thus, contextual analysis suggests the reform cannot advance the rule of law in Serbia.

The Constitution was amended primarily due to demands of European integration, reflecting the limited capacity of Serbian legal culture to initiate reform independently. Multiple versions of the amendments submitted to the Venice Commission confirm the government's intent to outsmart this body by implementing only the mandatory, minimal level of European standards. The reform has highlighted the limited scope of the Commission, which was influenced by government representatives. In its report, the Commission emphasized the inclusiveness of the process, even though public consultations appeared theatrical, with the draft praised without genuine consideration of critical remarks.

Panel 3 **Book Panel: Europeanisation of Access to Justice in Environmental Matters: The Aarhus Convention in the Balkans**, edited by Bojana Todorović and Roberto Caranta

Bojana Todorović, Roberto Caranta, Mirjana Drenovak Ivanović, Ana Knežević Bojović, Hristina Vojvodić

This book analyses how Article 9 of the Aarhus Convention enables environmental access to justice in the Balkans, a region at the epicenter of extreme climate change events. Adopting a law-in-context approach, the chapters explore national cultures and driving forces shaping the implementation of Aarhus standards in Albania, Croatia, North Macedonia, Romania, Slovenia, and Serbia, paving the way for their comparative assessment. The book combines EU law and the case law of the European Court of Human Rights with the bottom-up Europeanisation brought about by rising environmental protests and the activism of civil society organizations in the region. In doing

so, it explores the extent to which these Balkan countries comply with requirements stemming from Article 9 of the Aarhus Convention, and whether, despite national differences, it is possible to talk about Europeanisation of access to justice in environmental matters.

The panel aims is to introduce the audience with the book's overarching ideas and its relevance for both academics and practitioners, as well as for the civil society sector and policy makers grappling with the normative and practical challenges around environmental access to justice – both in and beyond Europe. The duration of the panel is envisaged to last approximately an hour and a half. We will open with a few introductory words on the book, followed by the editors' portrayal of the process leading up to the book, including the reasons for embarking on this academic journey, the aims of the book, the methodological approach and some of the principal conclusions. To ensure that the panel is dynamic and interactive, we would then open the floor for reactions/comments (10-15 mins). In the second part of the panel, our panelists will present their impressions of the book and focus on particular aspects of the book topic, depending on their expertise (the exact order of presentations and topics are to be determined). Then we would open the floor for discussion and comments from the audience, where we expect some of our other contributors as well. We will contact the Publisher to try to obtain advance copies of the book, as well as pdf flyers with a 20% discount on purchases.

Panel 4 Internal and External Influence on State Tax Politics

Antonio Marinello, **Tax Sovereignty in Times of Crisis**

Over the past few decades, two closely linked factors have significantly reduced the State's fiscal sovereignty regarding direct taxation. On the one hand, the a-territorial nature of the global economy has fueled aggressive tax planning, especially by multinational enterprises. On the other hand, States have also entered this arena, engaging in a real "tax competition". A crucial question: is tax competition between States a manifestation of State sovereignty?

The "race-to-the-bottom" in rates, the treatment of "tax-as-a-commodity" and the "international tax market" have become obligatory paths, necessary choices that struggle to guarantee effective benefits or positive externalities for States.

As a result, tax competition has negative effects on fical and redistributive policies of the States and, of course, on their welfare systems, on sustainable development of their economies and societies.

Svetislav Kostić, **Reliance on Modern Technologies for the Purpose of Limiting the Potential for Abuse of Authority by the Executive Branch of the Government**

At this point in time, it is widely recognized that modern technologies and artificial intelligence can speed up administrative procedure, ensure more efficient work of authorities, reduce the costs of harmonizing operations with the requirements of the legislator, but also open up space for far more successful protection of their rights and legal certainty in general. In this contribution we would like to show how modern technology may serve the purpose of restoring trust in institutions and public authorities, particularly when, as is the case in an increasing number of jurisdictions, it has been shaken by suspicions that they are being abused for the purpose of political pressure on dissenters. Reliance on artificial intelligence for the purposes of risk assessment and selection of audit or inspection subjects by public authorities can actually enable a higher level of legal certainty, that is, that with appropriate changes to the regulations, it is possible to greatly increase the level of legal certainty of taxpayers. Namely, in many areas of administrative work, the choice of audit/inspection subjects will be performed by algorithms based on predetermined criteria. In other words, we are now in the position to show the subject of administrative oversight, as well as all interested parties, on what basis they were chosen for audit/inspection. If the authority channels its resources differently from the guidance provided by the risk assessment based on impartial criterion, then additional reporting justification as well as oversight mechanisms must be introduced to ensure that these resources are not being abused. While the primary field of research on which this contribution is based has been tax law, more precisely tax procedure, its findings can be applied to most fields of application of public authority and administrative work.

Vladimir Tiutiuriukov, Lidija Živković, **EU's Global Minimum Tax Reform (Pillar Two): its Influence and Challenges for the States of Western Balkans**

Since the comprehensive tax reform of the early 2000-s, Serbia's economic development strategy has been focused on attracting foreign direct investment by offering a variety of fiscal incentives, among which the most notable example is the 10-year corporate profits tax holiday. On the other hand, following the 2021 OECD's Pillar 2 proposal, the EU endeavors to limit harmful tax competition by ensuring fairer taxation of large multinational enterprise (MNE) groups. To achieve this, in 2022 it adopted Council Directive (EU) 2022/2523 on ensuring a global minimum level of taxation for multinational

enterprise groups and large-scale domestic groups in the Union. This Directive aims at increasing the effective tax rate of large in-scope MNE groups to at least 15% in each jurisdiction in which they operate by imposing a top up tax. It thus calls into question fiscal policy reliant on low effective taxation, such is the one endorsed in Serbia.

Since the EU is a major economic partner of Serbia, these measures may render Serbia's fiscal incentives ineffective for the subsidiaries of EU groups, thus suggesting the necessity of the revision of the current tax policy. Moreover, Serbia and other Western Balkan countries under Stabilization and Association Agreements have to harmonize their regulations with the EU acquis, which includes tax and state aid legislation.

The authors firstly explain the mechanism through which the EU's global minimum tax (GMT) rules contribute to the Europeanization of the tax legislation of non-EU countries. They then analyze the existing tax incentives within the Serbian tax system in order to assess their vulnerability against the backdrop of the EU GMT Directive. On the basis of a comparative analysis of approaches undertaken so far vis-à-vis this directive in other Western Balkan countries, the authors discuss the potential reform pathways taking into account legal, political, and administrative implications of the GMT rules.

Emma Niewald, **Russian Political Financial Influence in the Western Balkans**

Russia employs the policy of "miakgaia sila" or soft coercion to project its power and increase its "near sphere" influence in Southwest Europe. "Russia is not in a position to roll back Western influence" in the Balkans Dimitri Bechev explains in his book, *Rival Power: Russia's Influence in Southeast Europe*, "What it is capable of, however, is to project influence, cultivate allies, and profit from opportunities as they arise…. Or indeed, stir trouble." This "soft coercion" is Russia's most strategic option to combat the rise of the European Union. In the words of Ivan Krastev in the Financial Times, "This is the place to apply pressure, if Moscow wants to make Europeans feel uncomfortable." Russia has been attempting to influence elections with "disruptive tactics in the Balkans for decades, "taking advantage of indigenous problems to score points against the Europeans and Americans and thwart their efforts to steer events on the ground."

This paper compares political financial frameworks and oversight mechanisms in North Macedonia, Serbia, and Slovenia to explore potential vulnerabilities and make policy recommendations to prevent foreign influence in politics.

Jelena Račić, **The Right to Appeal in Public Procurement – The Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Role of a "Positive Legislator"**

The legal protection procedure in public procurement represents a mechanism that enables authorized persons to review the legality of decisions made by contracting authorities in public procurement procedures. Unlike the public procurement legal frameworks of the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Croatia, which recognize the possibility for certain state authorities to lodge appeals, the legislation of Bosnia and Herzegovina does not provide for such a possibility, and the right to appeal is reserved exclusively for bidders, provided that they cumulatively fulfill the prescribed conditions of legal standing.

Nevertheless, at the end of 2025, the Court of BiH rendered a judgment recognizing the right to appeal in public procurement legal protection procedures to the Attorney General's Office of BiH. By acting in this manner, the Court of BiH assumed the role of a "positive legislator," rendering a creative decision that altered the political and legal determination of the legislator that only bidders may lodge appeals within the public procurement system of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

This paper provides a critical review of the aforementioned Judgment, observed through the prism of Kelsen's concept of the positive and negative legislator and the role of the judiciary within the legal system. It raises the question of the impact such a judgment may have on the system of legal protection in public procurement. The paper analyzes the *de lege lata* legal framework governing the right to appeal in public procurement procedures in BiH and the position of the Attorney General's Office of BiH within these procedures, while also examining the compatibility of this legal framework with that of the European Union. The aim of the paper is, *de lege ferenda*, to reconsider the existing legislative framework and the potential regulation of the right to appeal for other authorities in BiH.

Panel 5 Imposed Consociationalism under Systemic Stress: Crisis, Resilience, and the Limits of Europeanization in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Tahir Herenda, **Consociational Deadlock vs. Multi-Level Integration: The State-Level House of Peoples as a Structural Stress Test for Europeanization**

The process of Europeanization inherently presupposes a functional, multi-level constitutional architecture capable of efficiently adopting the *acquis communautaire* and executing complex structural reforms. In

post-conflict divided societies, however, this transformative supranational pressure runs directly into the rigid institutional barriers of domestic power-sharing arrangements. This paper examines the House of Peoples of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) as the primary institutional manifestation of an 'ethnic veto bottleneck'; that serves as a permanent structural stress test for European integration. Originally designed under Annex 4 of the Dayton Peace Agreement to preserve peace by guaranteeing ethnic parity among the three constituent peoples, the state-level House of Peoples grants sweeping block powers through Vital National Interest (VNI) vetoes and stringent quorum requirements. Rather than operating as a narrow protective shield, these mechanisms have morphed into structural instruments of systemic legislative paralysis. This paper analyzes how the composition and functioning of this second chamber resist the homogenizing, democratic demands of European law, particularly in light of the protracted failure to implement the European Court of Human Rights' Sejdić-Finci line of jurisprudence. Using a combination of doctrinal legal analysis and constitutional theory, the study explores the specific procedural mechanics governing how delegates are selected and how internal ethnic filters complicate state-level decision-making and supranational integration. Ultimately, the paper argues that the state-level legislative framework in BiH exposes a fundamental normative paradox in public law: the unyielding, peace-preserving rigidity of an engineered consociational chamber cannot easily co-exist with the fluid, rights-based logic of EU integration. By analyzing these localized dynamics, this contribution offers theoretical insights into the limits of external legal conditionality when confronted with an entrenched veto architecture, suggesting wider implications for multi-level constitutionalism under stress.

Filip Novaković, **Can Courts Europeanize a Blocked Constitution? Constitutional Adjudication and the Limits of Judicial Transformation in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

This paper examines whether constitutional courts can serve as effective agents of Europeanization within a constitutionally blocked post-conflict system. Focusing on Bosnia and Herzegovina, the paper analyzes the role of constitutional adjudication in a political order shaped by imposed consociationalism, ethno-territorial power-sharing, veto mechanisms and persistent institutional contestation. The central question is whether courts can transform a constitutional system whose basic logic often rewards blockage rather than reform.

The paper argues that constitutional adjudication in Bosnia and Herzegovina operates under a structural paradox. On the one hand, the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, together with the normative authority of the European Convention on Human Rights and the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights, has contributed to the protection of constitutional legality, human rights and the principle of democratic equality. On the other hand, judicial decisions have repeatedly revealed the limits of legal correction in a system where constitutional transformation depends on political actors who benefit from the existing consociational bargain. Particular attention is given to the interaction between domestic constitutional review, the European Convention on Human Rights, European Court of Human Rights judgments concerning discriminatory electoral arrangements and the broader process of EU conditionality. The paper suggests that Bosnia and Herzegovina illustrates a wider theoretical problem: courts may articulate European constitutional standards and expose democratic dysfunction, but they cannot fully Europeanize a blocked constitution without a credible political process of constitutional reimagination.

Benjamin Nurkić, **Militant Democracy in a Politically Divided Society : Evidence from Bosnia and Herzegovina**

This paper examines the application and efficacy of 'militant democracy' within the highly polarized and post-conflict landscape of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, militant democracy operates through a unique, layered architecture split between external international authority and domestic judicial review. This paper evaluates how this defensive framework is operationalized through three primary vectors: the Office of the High Representative (OHR), the Constitutional Court, and domestic political actors. First, it analyzes the OHR and its 'Bonn Powers' as an extraordinary form of external militant democracy, exploring the paradox of enforcing democratic stability through undemocratic executive decrees. Second, it investigates the Constitutional Court as the domestic guardian of the rule of law and its measures in the protection of its position. Finally, the paper examines how domestic politics utilize militant democracy measures in crises. By analyzing the interplay between these three actors, this paper argues that militant democracy measures can protect higher values in politically divided societies when they are precise and grounded in the protection of higher values.

Panel 6 **Book Panel: The Rise of Constitutionalism: A Global Perspective**, by Kostas Chrysogonos

Kostas Chrysogonos, Jens Woelk, Maja Sahadžić, Antonios Kouroutakis

This book explores the historical, comparative, and global dimensions of the constitutional phenomenon. From the origins of constitutionalism to the diverse trajectories of North American and European constitutionalism, the book considers pivotal moments in the emergence and evolution of formal Constitutions as the main structure of constitutional governance.

It presents a critical inquiry into the realities that lie beneath the surface of formal constitutional documents. From the struggles for democratic governance in Latin America to Asia's delicate balance between tradition and modernity and Africa's post-colonial arrangements, the book poses a critical query: amidst the promises of democratic ideals, do formal Constitutions always translate into effective governance? What are the lessons of 'facade' Constitutions on the tension between formal documents and the realities of governance?

The book explores the past and present of constitutional governance in the first quarter of the 21st century and offers insights on the future of constitutionalism. By assessing the normative quality of Constitutions and exploring the intrinsic link between them and representation, it offers an understanding of the essence and trajectories of constitutional thought and practice. *The Rise of Constitutionalism* is a must-read for anyone fascinated by the enduring legacy and evolving nature of the constitutional phenomenon.

Panel 7 **Reimagining Accountability in Sustainable Development: Governance through the Universal Periodic Review**

Milica V. Matijević, Bhanu Pratap, Vesna Ćorić, Federico Falorni, Alessia Preti

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development introduced an ambitious framework for global governance linking economic, social, environmental issues, majority of which can be translated into human rights objectives. At the same time, concerns regarding feeble accountability mechanisms for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda have persisted since its adoption. Existing follow-up and review mechanisms remain largely voluntary and politically driven, leading many scholars to characterize ac-

countability as one of the major weaknesses of the SDG framework.

Against this background, growing attention has been devoted to the potential role of the existing international human rights mechanisms in supporting monitoring sustainable development commitments. In particular, the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the UN Human Rights Council has increasingly been recognized as a mechanism capable of complementing the SDG review structures currently in place. The universality of state participation, periodic peer review, reliance on international human rights obligations, and established follow-up procedures make the UPR particularly relevant for research on accountability-oriented approaches to sustainable development.

This panel examines the potential of the UPR to function as a complementary accountability mechanism for the SDGs both within and beyond the 2030 Agenda framework. It explores the evolving normative and institutional interaction between international human rights law and sustainable development governance. The research topics that would be covered by the panel would include the increasing overlap between UPR recommendations and SDG targets, the integration of SDG indicators into human rights monitoring processes, and the procedural and institutional mechanisms through which this human rights monitoring may contribute to accountability for sustainable development commitments.

The panel further addresses broader public law questions concerning the role of peer-review mechanisms, soft law, participation, and institutional coordination in contemporary global governance. Particular attention will be devoted to the question of whether the UPR may contribute to a more integrated human-rights-based accountability architecture for sustainable development after 2030.

Panel 8 **Europeanisation and the Transformation of Public Law Institutions**

Ivan Jokanović, Weronika Pietras, Gellért Nagy, Zuzanna Żurawska

The process of Europeanisation has significantly transformed the functioning of public law institutions across Europe, challenging traditional understandings of sovereignty, constitutional authority and the distribution of competences between national and supranational institutions. This panel examines how legal and constitutional institutions respond to the growing influence of European integration and participate in defining its limits.

The first contribution analyses the development of the European Union's exclusive external competences through the jurisprudence of the Court of Justice of the European Union, highlighting the Court's role in shaping the scope of EU powers beyond the explicit provisions of the Treaties. The second paper focuses on constitutional courts and their evolving position within the European legal order, exploring the tension between constitutional supremacy and the primacy of EU law through selected judgments of constitutional courts, with particular attention to the Polish Constitutional Tribunal. The third presentation examines constitutional identity as both a legal doctrine and a political argument employed by public authorities in response to Europeanisation, especially in Central and Eastern Europe

Taken together, the contributions demonstrate that contemporary debates concerning European integration increasingly extend beyond technical questions of competence allocation. They reveal broader constitutional and political disputes regarding the authority to define the foundations of the state, the limits of Europeanisation, and the future relationship between national constitutional orders and the European Union. The panel therefore offers a comprehensive perspective on the transformation of public law institutions in Europe and the constitutional challenges arising from the continuing process of integration.

Panel 9 How Authoritarianism and Corruption Killed the Rule of Law

Luka Glušac, Gazela Pudar Draško, **Holdover and Handover: Authoritarian Appointments in Serbia**

This paper argues that authoritarian governance can be sustained not only through durable institutional entrenchment but also through the systematic suspension of permanence itself. Rather than relying exclusively on long-term appointments that outlast regime change, governments may exercise control by governing through temporariness: keeping key institutional positions formally open, provisional, and easily reversible.

The paper develops this argument through an analysis of Serbia, asking whether and how the country fits the patterns of authoritarian holdover appointments identified in the democratic backsliding literature. An authoritarian holdover appointment is understood as a person appointed by an authoritarian government, or one acting in an authoritarian manner, to an institutionally embedded office whose term extends beyond the life of the appointing government and who is expected to, and

does, uphold authoritarian policies in office. We show that Serbia exhibits not only classical authoritarian holdover appointments in constitutionally entrenched institutions but also relies extensively on handover appointments, a distinct authoritarian strategy that operates through managed instability rather than continuity across regimes. Handover appointments are most visible in the prolonged use of temporary (acting) appointments in senior public administration.

The paper makes a twofold contribution. Conceptually, it distinguishes between holdover and handover mechanisms, broadening the analytical framework for understanding contemporary authoritarian governance. Empirically, it demonstrates how the governance of temporariness has become a normalized and systematized practice in Serbia. By highlighting the coexistence of durability and managed reversibility as modes of institutional capture, the paper shows how authoritarian control can persist through both entrenched officeholders and the destabilization of institutional tenure.

Dejan Pavlović, **The Barrage Fire on the Autonomy of Universities in Serbia**

While there is widespread consensus that universities represent key generators of societal development, the Serbian case presents a textbook example of systematic attacks on universities and the academic community. Serbian public universities are experiencing their most severe challenges since the late 20th century. Unlike the Orbán regime's direct confrontation with public universities and Central European University, the Vučić government has deployed a more diffused strategy employing multiple "poisoning measures" that target university governance, financing, and teaching. This paper assesses at least seven controversial measures—some unconstitutional on their face—that are designed to exercise political control over universities. Through examining these mechanisms, the paper demonstrates how incremental regulatory changes can systematically undermine institutional autonomy while avoiding the international backlash associated with more overt authoritarian approaches.

Marjan Kos, **Anti-corruption Authorities and Rule of Law Resilience: Lessons from Slovenia**

The contribution will explore the role that anti-corruption authorities may play in the protection and preservation of the rule of law. It will focus on the model of independent multi-purpose agencies, such as the Commission for the Prevention of Corruption (CPC) in Slovenia. The latter is afforded

relatively wide competence regarding the protection of integrity within the public sector. It will discuss the somewhat erratic relationship between the (publicly perceived) role of these types of bodies, especially in Slovenia, which is stretched between prevention and sanctioning of violations of integrity and/or corrupt behavior. This uncomplete understanding of the role of the CPC makes it prone to attacks on its authority from political institutions, hindering its ability to deliver on its important mandate to protect the rule of law. The contribution will elaborate on the relationship between the CPC and other public bodies in terms of its own independence and with a view to the newly adopted EU Anti-Corruption Directive (EU) 2026/1021. It will also discuss the role of judicial oversight of decisions, rendered by the CPC. The contribution is particularly relevant for the topic of the conference for two reasons: (1) It addresses the ongoing rule of law challenges, present in many of the states in the region, from the perspective of independent public authorities in the field of corruption prevention, and (2) it brings into the picture the EU perspective, especially with the adaptation of new EU rules on the prevention of corruption, including demands for institutional independence.

Türker Ertaş, **Constitutional Design and Executive Dominance: Comparative Lessons from Russia, Poland and Turkey**

The relationship between constitutional design and the distribution of political power remains one of the defining questions of contemporary constitutionalism. While many constitutions formally embrace the principles of limited government and the separation of powers, constitutional practice often reveals a gradual concentration of executive authority, raising broader questions about constitutional resilience, democratic accountability, and the effectiveness of institutional checks and balances. These developments have become particularly visible in several Central and Eastern European states and provide an important comparative perspective for broader debates on constitutionalism in the region.

Against this background, this paper examines the constitutional structures and constitutional practice of Russia, Poland, and Turkey from the perspective of the balance of powers between the executive and legislative branches. Although these constitutional systems differ significantly in their institutional design and political context, each illustrates how constitutional arrangements governing executive-legislative relations may contribute to the strengthening of executive authority and the weakening of parliamentary oversight.

Russia represents an example of an executive-oriented constitutional framework, further reinforced by the 2020 constitutional amendments. Poland demonstrates how presidential powers, particularly during periods of cohabitation, may significantly affect the legislative process despite the country's parliamentary system. Turkey, following the 2017 constitutional amendments introducing a presidential system, provides an example of a constitutional model in which extensive presidential powers have substantially altered the institutional balance between the executive and legislature.

The paper employs a doctrinal methodology, analyzing constitutional provisions governing presidential decree powers, legislative vetoes, dissolution powers, appointments, and divided government through the lens of the theories of limited government and the separation of powers. It argues that constitutional design has profound implications not only for institutional balance but also for democratic accountability, the rule of law, the protection of fundamental rights, and compliance with international and European legal obligations.

By placing these constitutional models in comparative perspective, the paper contributes to broader debates on executive dominance and constitutional resilience in Central and Eastern Europe. It complements discussions concerning the evolution of constitutionalism in the Balkans by examining the extent to which constitutional frameworks are capable of effectively constraining political power in practice, particularly in the face of democratic backsliding, populism, and the growing gap between constitutional text and constitutional reality.

Panel 10 **Contemporary Challenges to Public Administration**

Jelena Jerinić, **Remedying Populist Influences on Local Autonomy: Is There Room for a Legal Approach?**

A tremendous volume of literature on populism and populist parties and movements has been developed during the last couple of decades, primarily in political science. The relationship between populism and democracy is most often analyzed as a national level phenomenon, and very often in the context of democratic backsliding. However, in recent years a growing body of research on populism's local dimensions is emerging. Even though centralization and top-down command and control by the central government has been identified as one of the effects of populism to public administration, not enough attention has been paid to how populism, once

in power, affects local democracy and decentralized governance, and even less from a constitutional law or administrative law perspective. In that respect, this contribution asks: do populist governments, once in power, legally restructure local self-government, and with what consequences for local autonomy? While recent research has shown that decentralization can facilitate populist electoral success, as populist parties often secure subnational representation (on local and regional levels) before expanding to the national arena, this contribution seeks to reverse the analytical lens. It will investigate whether, and through which legal mechanisms, populist governments subsequently seek to centralize authority, weaken local autonomy, or redefine the relationship between the centre and subnational units. It is looking to map structural changes in vertical separation of powers, *i.e.* the organization and competences of local government which influence local autonomy during the last decade. Legal mechanisms to that end can have a form of constitutional amendments, central-level or delegated legislation, or administrative practices carrying novel interpretation or application of existing rules. Particular attention will be paid to informal strategies of "rule-bending" and the selective application of existing legal frameworks, particularly from the especially of democratic backsliding. A second research question addresses possible reactions from the local level: what legal remedies are available to local authorities (as well as to the wider circle of public actors) to counter centralizing populist reforms, and how effective are they in practice? The submission assesses constitutional review, administrative litigation, and communal constitutional complaints as well as similar remedies for the protection of local self-government, where they exist. By foregrounding law as both a tool and a constraint of populist governance, the contribution argues that a legalistic approach can prove essential to understanding populism's local consequences and to identifying viable responses to the erosion of local autonomy.

Vasilije Marković, **Procedural Guarantees of Citizenship Deprivation: Between National Security and Human Rights Protection**

Citizenship has undergone a profound transformation, evolving from a matter traditionally reserved to State sovereignty into a status increasingly protected under international human rights law. In an era marked by complex migration flows, security challenges, and expanding human rights standards, citizenship deprivation has become one of the most controversial issues in contemporary public law. A significant contribution to

this debate is provided by Damache v. Minister for Justice, in which the Supreme Court of Ireland held that the procedure governing citizenship deprivation under the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956 failed to provide adequate procedural safeguards. The Court found that the Minister's combined role in initiating proceedings, appointing the investigative body, and making the final decision was incompatible with the requirements of natural justice and procedural fairness. As a result, the relevant statutory provisions were declared unconstitutional. The Damache judgment reflects a broader European trend towards strengthening procedural guarantees in denationalization proceedings. It demonstrates that protection against arbitrary deprivation of citizenship depends not only on the legitimacy of the public interest pursued, including national security, but also on the existence of effective judicial review, the right to be heard, and independent decision-making procedures. The paper therefore examines the procedural standards governing citizenship deprivation as developed in the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights. It also undertakes a comparative analysis of selected European legal systems and judicial practices in order to assess the extent to which national approaches comply with contemporary human rights requirements and the rule of law.

Mădălina Voican, **Digital Crisis and Democratic Accountability: Transparency Failures and Reform Pathways in Romanian Local Public Administration**

The digital transformation of local public administration represents one of the most pressing governance challenges of our time. In Romania, despite a clear legislative framework — anchored in the Administrative Code (G.O. No. 57/2019) and its Annex 1 on the Electronic Local Official Gazette (MOLE) — implementation by local authorities remains deeply uneven. This article examines the structural, institutional and technological barriers that produce what we term a "digital crisis" in Romanian local governance: a systemic gap between legal mandates and digital reality across the country's 320 cities. Drawing on a comprehensive monitoring study covering all eight development regions, the article identifies recurring patterns of non-compliance, transparency deficits and governance dysfunctions. It further proposes concrete reform pathways, including national minimum digitalization standards, targeted capacity-building and a dedicated digital platform for local administration. The article contributes to the academic and policy debate on e-democracy, digital governance and the role of institutional accountability in overcoming administrative inertia.

Batuhan Ustabulut, **Normalized Exception in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Executive Discretion of the OHR and the Rule of Law**

The Dayton Agreement, which was signed in 1995, established the Office of the High Representative (OHR) within the state structure of Bosnia and Herzegovina, enabling it to oversee the implementation of the agreement, ensure coordination among the parties, and intervene when necessary. The OHR was elevated to a highly significant position following the decisions made by the Peace Implementation Council (PIC) in Bonn in 1997. The resulting "Bonn Powers" authorize the OHR to enact or amend laws, remove elected or appointed officials, and resolve constitutional crises. Consequently, although the OHR is not formally an executive body, it is positioned as a functional and de facto executive organ, exercising broad—and arguably unlimited—executive discretion. These extensive powers granted to the OHR have transformed its role from a temporary intervention into a structural feature, effectively creating a "normalized exception." Factors such as the lack of accountability of the High Representative (HR) as an appointed authority, the binding nature of OHR decisions, and the exemption of these decisions from constitutional judicial review by the Constitutional Court necessitate an examination of the OHR's role, influence, and position within the framework of "constraints on government powers," which constitutes the first factor of the Rule of Law Index. This study will examine how the Constitutional Court has become structurally dependent on an exceptional power (the OHR) to safeguard its own authority and the rule of law, and will highlight how this situation negatively impacts Bosnia and Herzegovina's EU integration process (Europeanization). Ultimately, considering the recent developments, particularly in Republika Srpska, this study aims to analyze the OHR through the lens of its exercise of executive authority and its complex relationship with the Constitutional Court.

Panel 11 **The Fight for Judicial Independence**

János Fazekas, **The Hungarian Regime Change of 2026 and the Judiciary**

Hungary has long been a favorite point of reference in comparative public law and political science research, particularly since the authoritarian turn implemented by Viktor Orbán in 2010. However, Viktor Orbán suffered a defeat in the April 2026 elections, and one of the most important program points of the newly formed government led by Péter

Magyar and the Tisza Party are the restoration of the rule of law, the reinstatement of the independence of the courts—including the Constitutional Court—, the adoption of a new constitution, and the strengthening of the system of checks and balances. In this context, the new government is planning measures that fundamentally affect the independence of the judiciary and the success of rebuilding the rule of law, such as terminating the terms of office of the President of the Constitutional Court and the President of the Curia. In addition, the newly elected Prime Minister has called for the resignation of the President of the Republic and the heads of several independent agencies —all of whom were appointed to their positions by the previous governing majority. Other planned restrictions of constitutional significance include limiting the prime minister's term of office to eight years. It is thus evident that, based on the above, what is taking place in Hungary is not merely a change of government but likely a regime change, one that fundamentally affects the judicial system, not to mention the system of government and the separation of powers. The aim of my study is to examine two issues:

1. How do the planned changes affect the independence of the judiciary and rule of law in Hungary? Are potential *ad hoc* legislation, constitutional amendments, and potential retroactive legislation a necessary consequence of rebuilding the rule of law and the transition to democracy, or a violation of the rule of law? This question arises particularly sharply because the new government is seeking to secure EU financial resources that were blocked in the EU conditionality mechanism; in return, the EU expects the restoration of the rule of law. Will the EU tolerate anti-rule of law measures to restore rule of law?

2. What role can the Hungarian judiciary, including the Constitutional Court, play in these processes, while it itself is undergoing transformation? Under the Orbán regime, applying a Central European style "political question doctrine," it has generally refrained from adjudicating politically sensitive cases, or if it did, it often ruled in favor of the government. Will it, or can it, abandon this approach?

The research methodology is fundamentally jurisprudential: it relies primarily on relevant statutes, as well as the case law of Hungarian and European Union courts, while comparing these with international examples and the legal and political science context. Based on the above, taking stock of Hungarian experiences can be an important contribution to examining how rule of law can be re-established in illiberal, authoritarian systems.

Samo Bardutzky, **Judicial Independence through Merit in the Selection of Judges (Through Empirical Research)**

The requirement that judges be selected on the basis of their merit has found its firm place in soft law and case law establishing the guarantees of judicial independence. Even if the ratio behind this requirement is not explicitly articulated, we can generally read it between the lines: to choose judges based on merit is expected to protect the ranks of the judiciary from politicization. But even if the rationale behind this requirement is acknowledged, the idea of merit lives a life of its own. It is by definition an open concept, destined to find a number of expressions and understandings. It also opens up a host of relatively practical dilemmas that reveal themselves in the concrete decisions of the actors selecting future judges. The paper purports to identify some of those dilemmas and offer some answers and possible approaches. These are sourced from empirical work undertaken 2020-2025 when selection procedures in Slovenia were studied through elite interviews and with the help of a conjoint survey experiment.

Mohammadreza Dolatkhah, **When Courts Hold the Line: Constitutional Resilience and the Rule of Law in Southeast Europe**

This paper looks at the role constitutional courts play when political and institutional pressure starts to test the rule of law in Southeast Europe. Rather than treating courts as passive referees, I argue that they often become one of the few places where democratic limits are defended, negotiated, or sometimes blurred. Using a comparative doctrinal approach, the paper focuses on how courts respond to crisis-driven governance, executive overreach, and constitutional stress. It also asks a harder question: when courts speak the language of resilience, are they protecting democracy, or helping normalize exceptional powers? By looking at selected Balkan cases, the paper shows that constitutional resilience is not just about survival; it is about how legal institutions keep democratic standards meaningful under pressure. In that sense, the Balkans offer a useful lens for understanding how public law adapts when crisis stops being temporary and becomes part of ordinary governance.

Fran Marko Stojković, **Adjudicating Judicial Independence Beyond Backsliding**

Following the landmark Portuguese Judges (C-64/16) ruling of the CJEU on Article 19(1) TEU, the EU principle of judicial independence has emerged as a central concept for expressing and adjudicating claims about the quality of CEE judiciaries at the supranational level. Due to developments in Poland

and Hungary, this principle has primarily been relied on to shield judges from 'backsliding' – changes to or violations of the formal institutional framework done to increase the executive's influence over the judiciary. However, concerns about the independence of the CEE judiciary extend beyond backsliding. In relation to several CEE apex courts, claims are increasingly being raised – both in legal scholarship and before the CJEU (*e.g.*, AFJR, C-83/19) – about their (over) dependence on governing majorities, despite no changes to or violations of long-standing formal guarantees of their independence taking place. Such claims are often formulated either in rational-choice terms of 'silent capture' of these courts by the executive, or in cultural terms of the issue of judges' dependence stemming from internalization of elements of socialist legal culture.

Although the CJEU holds that under EU law, the respect for judicial independence cannot vary between Member States (*e.g.*, Commission v. Hungary, C-769/22, para. 559), it remains an open question of whether the adjudication of judicial independence under Article 19(1) TEU can play any meaningful role in ensuring such 'value alignment' in the absence of open attacks on the judiciary. This contribution engages with this question. It argues that there are significant hurdles to any attempt to advance lack-of-independence claims of national courts under Article 19(1) TEU beyond the backsliding scenario. These hurdles stem from the nature of existing case law on Article 19(1) TEU, the dominant understanding of that case law in legal scholarship, the nature of the principle of judicial independence, and the nature of the described 'non-backsliding' claims regarding lack of judicial independence. Engaging with both existing 'rational-choice' and 'cultural' claims about the lack of independence of the CEE judiciary, the contribution argues how some of the identified hurdles could be alleviated or bypassed to facilitate, through reliance on EU law, a more even level of judicial independence across the CEE region.

Nazarii Stetsyk, **Judicial Dialogues and European Integration in the Balkans**

This paper examines how judicial dialogues have shaped constitutional adaptation to European integration in the Balkans and asks whether the experience of Balkan EU member states (Croatia, Bulgaria, Romania, and Slovenia) can offer meaningful lessons for current candidate countries, both in the Balkans (Serbia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Albania, and Bosnia and Herzegovina) and in Eastern Europe (Ukraine and Moldova). It focuses on two interconnected dimensions.

First, the paper explores how constitutional courts in Balkan EU member states have responded to the constitutional and political pressures of European integration, including the supremacy of EU law, constitutional identity, rule of law conditionality, judicial independence, and the transformation of constitutional doctrines. Rather than viewing Europeanization as a purely political or legislative process, the paper argues that constitutional courts have acted as important mediators between domestic constitutional traditions and the legal requirements of EU integration.

Second, the paper analyses the use, reluctance, or strategic avoidance of the preliminary ruling procedure by constitutional courts in the Balkan region. Preliminary references to the Court of Justice of the European Union represent not only a procedural mechanism, but also a form of judicial dialogue through which constitutional courts may negotiate the boundaries between constitutional autonomy and supranational legal obligations.

The paper argues that these experiences are particularly informative for current candidate countries navigating constitutional reforms in the context of EU accession. The comparative practice of Balkan EU member states demonstrates both the opportunities and tensions inherent in judicial engagement with European integration: judicial dialogue may strengthen constitutional resilience, legal certainty, and rights protection, while simultaneously generating conflicts concerning sovereignty, constitutional identity, and the limits of supranational authority.

Panel 12 **The New Clothes of Authoritarianism from Liberal Perspective**

Niko Jarak, **“That’s (Not) How We Do It Here”: Assessing Authoritarian Legacy in Post-Socialist States at the National and EU Levels – The Case of Internal Judicial Independence in Croatia**

Building upon theories of post-socialist constitutionalism, this contribution discusses the elements of authoritarian legal culture embedded in post-socialist EU Member States in light of CJEU’s expanding case law on rule of law standards that should permeate national legal orders. The analysis focuses on diverging interpretive methodologies at national and EU levels to show how these differences hinder disruption of inherited authoritarian patterns.

In doing so, the argument centres on Croatia’s mechanism for ensuring the uniformity of case law outside ordinary judicial procedures via judicial administration that was used to control the

judiciary under the principle of the unity of state power in the previous system. In 2024, the CJEU in C-554/21, C-622/21 and C-727/21 Hann-Invest, held that this mechanism is incompatible with EU law. Prior to this ruling, the Croatian Constitutional Court (CCC) failed to strike it down on narrow technical grounds which ignored the value dimension of the case that cuts to the heart of the separation of powers in a liberal democracy.

By contrasting the functional and value-oriented interpretive approach of the CJEU, which bolstered the concept of internal judicial independence, with the CCC's (hyper)formalistic approach, two interrelated hindrances to a true integration of post-socialist Member States into the EU community of values emerge – the methodological and the conceptual issue. The methodological issue concerns an underdeveloped culture of legal argumentation and interpretation, while the conceptual issue relates to constitutional theory, *i.e.*, to (mis)understanding contemporary meaning of liberal democratic values adopted both at national and EU levels. In that aspect, having in mind the reformist efforts in Croatia prompted by Hann-Invest, national actors should abandon the approach of (mechanical) "implementation" and instead focus on genuine "transformation".

Sava Vojnović, **Mini-Publics in the Republic of Serbia – An Application of Deliberative Democracy**

This paper examines the role of deliberative mini-publics in fostering democratization within Serbia's competitive authoritarian regime. Focusing on a citizens' assembly in Belgrade addressing traffic regulation, it evaluates three aspects: the nature of democratic innovations, their participatory mechanisms, and their potential impact on democratization. Data from pre- and post-event questionnaires reveal mixed outcomes. While participants reported increased knowledge and appreciation of the deliberative process, satisfaction with local democracy declined due to perceived disengagement by decision-makers. Despite these limitations, mini-publics demonstrated the potential to enhance political efficacy, civic engagement, and dialogue among diverse participants.

Ana Vladisavljević, **Populism and its (Anti-)Democratic Potential: The New Form of an Old Anxiety?**

Since the emergence of democracy, concerns have been raised about the full operation of its constitutive principles. For Polybius, democracy represented a good form of majority government that inevitably degenerat-

ed into ochlocracy, which arises when the people turn into a mob and, misled by demagoguery, begin to make reckless decisions. Unlike Polybius, who left his theoretical observations to the natural course of events in which, after ochlocracy, everything returns to the beginning - namely, the rule of one, albeit a bad one - modern theorists aim to preserve declining democracies from the consequences of populism.

Populism is often regarded as a phenomenon that undermines constitutional/liberal democracy. It can be argued that populism does not threaten democracy itself, but rather the values that democracy protects. Yet, does populism, beyond its anti-constitutional and anti-liberal dimension, also have an anti-democratic potential; in other words, does populism undermine the core democratic principles, namely the majority principle and the principle of popular sovereignty? If populism merely radicalizes principles already inherent in democracy, it becomes difficult to explain why it is perceived as a threat to democracy. Democracy would then appear to be a self-undermining form of government, creating conditions for its own erosion.

This paper reconceptualizes the analytical framework of the constitutive principles of democracy - what these principles represent for democracy and what they represent for populism. It approaches the problem by treating "the people" as a political construct rather than a pre-political reality, and by conceptualizing populism as transgressing the constitutive boundary of democracy. Instead of focusing on empirical manifestations, this analysis proceeds at the conceptual level in order to identify a possible theoretical blind spot. If populism is shown to be inherently anti-democratic, then democracy may be defended on grounds that do not depend on commitment to its liberal elements.

Petar Mitrović, **Gender-Sensitive Language in Serbia: A Minimalist Liberal Perspective**

Defining liberalism is a thorny issue. The same applies to attempts to define (il)liberal democracy. As with any ideology or political theory, its central concepts are inherently ambiguous and give rise to seemingly endless debates, even among its most ardent proponents.

The situation is hardly better in constitutional law and political theory. There, "liberal" in "liberal democracy" is generally understood as entailing, at a minimum, a commitment to respecting individual rights. Although this traditional characterization may appear to resolve the ambiguities that haunt its philosophical counterpart, the impression is largely misleading. While the commitment to respecting individual rights can plausibly be attributed to

liberalism, the idea is far from being free of controversy. On the other hand, appeal to individual rights is nowadays hardly a distinctive feature of liberal arguments. The public controversy in Serbia over gender equality, and particularly over the mandatory use of gender-sensitive language (GSL), provides a clear contemporary example. Both proponents and opponents of GSL invoke the language of rights, albeit to advance opposing aims.

This paper advances a minimalist definition of liberalism that any liberal should arguably be able to accept. According to this definition, at least one necessary feature of liberalism lies in its commitment to (1) safeguarding individual freedom (2) against unreasonable limitations. Although minimal, this definition captures what liberals of different stripes can plausibly be said to agree on: we should refrain from and be wary of attempts to restrict individual freedom without good reasons. I then turn to the public debate on mandatory GSL use in Serbia, particularly the arguments made by its liberal-leaning proponents. My main conclusion is that the proponents of GSL have failed to act in the spirit of (minimalist) liberalism.

Maraia Tzvetkova**, Resilience in the Western Balkans: Between Constitutional Governance and Patronal Rule**

This paper argues that intersecting and prolonged crises can transform governance structures in ways that allow political patronage to function as an alternative constitutional ordering principle, particularly where formal rule-of-law guarantees are already fragile. Crisis is therefore treated not as a temporary deviation but as a chronic condition of institutional stress that erodes legal constraints, weakens checks and balances, and expands discretionary authority, including over the allocation of public resources through clientelist and patronage networks.

In such contexts, patronage becomes an operative logic of governance, structuring authority, access to state resources, and political loyalty, rather than merely accompanying governance as a by-product. This dynamic contributes to the blurring of distinctions between public office and party-based or oligarchic interests, while maintaining a facade of constitutional normality and democratic procedure.

Conceptually, the paper draws on the theoretical and empirical literature on patronage and clientelism, democratic backsliding, rule-of-law decay, and emergency or crisis governance to demonstrate how repeated or "perpetual" emergencies facilitate the institutionalization of informal modes of rule.

Focusing on the Western Balkans, the paper contributes to debates on re-

silience by asking whether resilience denotes the durability of liberal-constitutional constraints or, alternatively, the adaptive capacity of informal power structures - such as patronage networks and state capture - to survive and even deepen under conditions of crisis. The working hypothesis is that crisis governance is becoming increasingly entrenched as a regular, and potentially enduring, mode of constitutional practice rather than a limited exception.

Panel 13 Vulnerability, Resilience and the Rule of Law: Conceptual Links Across Criminal Law, Environmental Jurisprudence and Cultural Heritage Law

Darko Vinketa, Sanja Barić, Petra Perišić, Dalida Rittossa

Vulnerability theory challenges the liberal legal tradition by rejecting the fiction of the autonomous rights-holder as law's normative baseline. Instead, it posits vulnerability as a universal condition that demands institutional responsiveness. This premise has reshaped three seemingly distinct fields: criminal law, environmental jurisprudence, and cultural heritage protection.

In criminal law, vulnerability is codified as a qualifying circumstance in violent offences, strengthening both individual and societal resilience to crime. The rule of law is tested here: courts must articulate vulnerability with the precision demanded by *lex certa*, or risk reducing it to a rhetorical concept without transformative force.

In environmental jurisprudence, vulnerability scales from the individual to the ecosystem. Rights-of-nature frameworks treat ecological degradation *i.e.* a loss of systemic resilience, as a legally cognizable harm, as illustrated by the Mar Menor case upheld by Spain's Constitutional Court in 2024.

Cultural heritage adds a further, temporally distinct dimension. Climate-induced vulnerability unfolds gradually, remaining legally under-recognized until its effects become irreversible. This challenges reactive legal frameworks and demands a shift toward preventive and anticipatory state obligations. It is about a transformation in which vulnerability functions as a unifying legal concept for resilience-oriented models of state responsibility.

Across all three fields, the rule of law functions as both constraint and vehicle: demanding clear legal articulation of vulnerability while structurally guaranteeing resilience of victims, ecosystems, and communities alike, as a foundational test of law's credibility in an era of converging global crises.

In an era defined by converging global crises (climate breakdown, democratic backsliding, and the erosion of legal certainty) the moral imperative to take vulnerability seriously is no longer a theoretical proposition but a foundational test of whether law can remain a credible instrument of justice at all.

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Panel 14 **Militant Democracy: New and Old Dilemmas**

Anita Blagojević, Ivana Tucak, **Rethinking Militant Democracy through the Lens of Gender Equality Backsliding**

Much has been written about democratic backsliding as a global phenomenon, as well as about the rise (and global interconnection) of anti-gender movements and anti-gender policies. Yet so much still needs to be written and done about the gendered aspects of democratic backsliding. The gendered nature of democratic backsliding is affecting constitutional democracies globally. Europe is not an exception. And without understanding gender as one of the central categories and vital issues in democratic backsliding and the rule-of-law crisis, we risk missing the opportunity to conceptualize one of its central pillars. However, in order to defend democracy and gender equality, it seems that democracy appears not properly armed, especially when it comes to the area of prevention of anti-democratic and anti-gender attacks. In this paper, we address the question of whether militant democracy can serve as a tool against gender equality backsliding. The concept of militant democracy was introduced by Karl Loewenstein through a series of papers in the 1930s and 1940s and, until recently, was considered a 20th-century concept aimed at preventing fascist leaders and movements from undermining democracy. However, since interest in militant democracy has surged after decades of neglect and now appears across the constitutional landscape, it seems that the time has come to consider the concept in the context of protecting gender equality. The aim of this paper is to seek the limits of militant democracy in protecting gender equality and fighting anti-gender policies, and to analyze possible constitutional solutions to effectively defend gender equality.

Sarah Lattanzi, **Online Free Speech and Democratic Turn: Philosophical Foundations and Legal Challenges in the EU and the Western Balkans**

The present project aims to critically examine the theoretical foundations of freedom of expression as articulated by John Stuart Mill and Jürgen Habermas, and to evaluate their internalization within the legal and policy frameworks of the European Union and the Western Balkans. By focusing on the transition from the "marketplace of ideas" to the "digital public sphere", the study seeks to assess how these foundational theories have been interpreted and eventually applied in response to the challenges posed by online freedom of speech. Through a comparative analysis of legislation, jurisprudence, and policies, the project will explore how courts and policymakers in these regions navigate the tensions between theoretical ideals and the practical realities of digital communication. Indeed, the scope of the project is to evaluate the "internalization" of these theories in the legal orders of the EU and of the Western Balkans (WB).

The inquiry begins with the philosophical nexus linking freedom of expression and democracy (instrumental relationship) and particular attention is devoted to the conceptual polarities (frictions) represented by Mill's classical liberal tradition (where the concepts of truth and falsity play a central role) and Habermas' deliberative conception of democracy (where what matters is not the truth-value of a particular opinion but the communicative process through which it emerges).

The project inquires whether regulators and Courts in Europe have internalized these philosophical assumptions. It analyses regulatory and judicial developments in the EU and Serbia—a candidate country also member of the ECHR—where different legal positions on freedom of expression emerges. The scope of the inquiry is to assess whether philosophy can bring different legal positions closer together by rooting them in a single—albeit multifaceted—cultural tradition. Furthermore, by reconnecting contemporary regulatory choices with their philosophical foundations, the project aims to clarify which model of democracy the EU seeks to protect and whether a shared understanding of freedom of expression can support democratic development in the WB and particularly in Serbia, a country where this freedom is nowadays under pression.

Anna Tsiftsoglou, **Political Party Ban in Greece – Thoughts after Supreme Special Court Decisions 9 and 10/2025**

The rise of the far-right in Greece during the recent financial crisis has challenged the liberal scope and interpretations of the Hellenic Consti-

tution. A rather neglected provision, that of article 29.1 of the Greek Constitution, concerning the right to found and join political parties, has been in vogue during the past decade in Greece. The original cause of such revival was the infamous case of the far-right Golden Dawn party and its various successors, like the Hellenes and the Spartans parties, members of which attempted, following the first-instance criminal conviction of the Golden Dawn leadership, to run for the 2023 parliamentary elections in the country. Following two recent Supreme Special Court Decisions 9 and 10/2025 with which three MPs of the Spartans party were removed from parliamentary office, we review both the Court's position on such a crucial democratic affair as well as the rationality of the recent legislative choices made to treat the rise of the far-right. Finally, we attempt to articulate an alternative take on the logic of 'militant democracy'. This paper supports the view that, given the present constitutional structure which does not allow for party bans, the legislative party ban -in the form of electoral ban- in Greece is unconstitutional and erroneous for the rule of law. Moreover, its judicial application proves to be also institutionally problematic, leading the political life of the country to dangerous pathways in the future. An alternative takes on militant democracy, which involves either a constitutional revision or trust on existing criminal law mechanisms, is proposed, that would place both institutional guarantees and proportional limitations of political rights in extreme situations that call for defensive democracy measures.

Christos Papastylianos, **Who is the Guardian of Democracy in Greek Constitutional Order? The Review of the Legislation Regarding the Ban of Electoral Lists by Greek Courts Since the Enactment of the Constitution of 1975**

In the contemporary constitutional history of Greece, restrictions on the activities of political parties date back to 1929. Initially, they took the form of a ban on ideas that undermine the political regime guaranteed by the constitution and later, during the civil war, they took the form of the ban on the communist party, which lasted from 1947 to 1974. Faced with this legacy, the 1975 constitutional legislator chose an ambiguous wording for the provision concerning the operation of political parties (art. 29). "Parties must serve the democratic system with their action". The interpretation of the Greek courts regarding the meaning of this provision until 2010 was that it is a provision that does not impose positive obligations on the state to regulate the limits of the parties' action. However, the activation of the Golden Age, a party with neo-Nazi characteristics in its ideology and its mode of action, changed the facts. The legislator enacted laws that essentially allowed its exclusion from

the elections but not the dissolution of the party. All these laws were deemed to be in accordance with the Constitution in a shift in the jurisprudence of the Greek courts. The subject of my presentation will be a critical presentation of this shift from a doctrinal and methodological perspective and the highlighting of the limits of the courts' involvement in issues that concern the quality of democracy within the framework of the Greek constitutional order.

Aleksa Nikolić, **External Militant Democracy: The Case of Bosnia and Herzegovina**

The author examines whether the so-called Bonn Powers of the High Representative constitute a functional equivalent of the instruments of militant democracy within the post-Dayton constitutional order of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Proceeding from the classical theoretical framework of militant democracy as formulated by Karl Loewenstein, the author explores the concept of constitutional self-defense as a normative justification for restricting democratic actors who act against the very foundations of the constitutional order. Within this framework, the analysis focuses on the legal nature and scope of the powers conferred in 1997 upon the High Representative, including the authority to impose legislation and to remove democratically elected officials from office. The central thesis of the article is that the Bonn Powers functionally correspond to the logic of militant democracy, insofar as they serve to protect the constitutional order established by the Dayton Peace Agreement from political actors who challenge or undermine it.

However, unlike classical models – where mechanisms of constitutional self-defense are implemented through internal, constitutionally regulated procedures under the control of domestic institutions (such as the prohibition of political parties) – the Dayton model introduces an external, internationally supervised decision-making authority. In this way, the protection of the constitution is detached from immediate democratic legitimation and relocated to the sphere of international tutelage. The article therefore introduces the concept of *external militant democracy* – a distinct form of constitutional self-defense characteristic of post-conflict and deeply divided societies, in which the protective function is exercised by an international actor outside the domestic democratic process.

The author concludes that the Bonn Powers do not represent a classical form of militant democracy, nor constitutionally grounded emergency powers, but rather a specific, externalized variant of constitutional self-defense. Such an arrangement simultaneously contributes to the preservation of institutional stability and generates persistent tension between the principle of democracy and the principle of international peace guarantees. In doing

so, the author also raises the question of whether this mechanism is merely a temporary instrument of stabilization or a lasting transformation of sovereignty and constitutionalism in contemporary complex states, particularly in light of the fact that the Bonn Powers lack an explicit legal basis in Annex X of the Dayton Agreement, deriving instead from subsequent international practice.

Panel 15 **Book Panel: The Dilemma of Constitutional Reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Governance, Citizenship, and European Integration,** edited by Maja Sahadžić, Tatjana Sekulić, Nevenko Vranješ, Jens Woelk

Jens Woelk, Joseph Marko, Maja Sahadžić, Tatjana Sekulić

This panel explores the enduring dilemma of constitutional reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) nearly three decades after the Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA) established its complex multilevel constitutional order. The prospect of European Union accession has introduced new pressures for constitutional reform, raising fundamental questions about institutional functionality, democratic representation, and territorial governance.

By analyzing the tensions between power-sharing mechanisms, citizenship models, judicial reform, and multi-level governance, the panel highlights both structural constraints and reform possibilities. The case of BiH offers broader insights into constitutional engineering, peacebuilding, and governance in deeply divided societies. More broadly, the panel contributes to ongoing debates on how constitutional reform can promote sustainable democratic development while accommodating diversity and advancing European integration objectives.

Panel 16 **External and Internal Dimensions of Constitutional Identity**

Bilyana Manova, Moritz Baumgärtel, **Checking Blank Checks: The Incomplete Transformation of National Security Expulsion Regimes in Bulgaria**

This paper analyses the transformation of the legal regime concerning coercive measures (notably the expulsion or return of third-country nationals) on national security grounds in Bulgaria. Over the past two decades, safeguards protecting foreign nationals have been signifi-

cantly strengthened in response to a series of judgments by the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). These reforms included, inter alia, judicial review of security-based expulsion orders, automatic suspensive effects of appeals, and stricter time limits on immigration detention. However, this process of Europeanization remains incomplete. Crucial issues remain unresolved, most notably the continued lack of meaningful judicial review over executive assertions of national security risks, and the lack of public access to judicial reasoning in classified cases. In direct contradiction to the ECtHR, which requires states to make public at least the essence of judicial reasoning, the Bulgarian Supreme Administrative Court ruled in 2025 that such decisions should be published only insofar as they do not contain classified information. This paper argues that this ruling raises serious questions regarding the willingness of the Bulgarian judiciary to challenge national security as a blank check that justifies the continued normalization of crisis narratives and states of exception. By persistently prioritizing collective security over individual human rights, the Supreme Administrative Court has also aligned itself with a paradigm reasserted by the Committee of Ministers in the Chișinău Declaration in May 2026, signaling a potential long-term reversal of rights-affirming transformations not just in Bulgaria, but across Europe.

Goran Bašić, **The Return of Ethnicity: The Limits of the Civic State after Multiculturalism**

From the 1970s to the beginning of the new millennium, multiculturalist theory and practice were shaped by the prevailing belief that the civic state, in which ethnic identities primarily belonged to the private sphere and had a limited influence on public life, would contribute to reducing ethnic distance and discrimination. Such policies were also expected to encourage the gradual deethnicisation of the public sphere in Central and Eastern European states, particularly during their democratic transitions.

After 2010, the political retreat from multiculturalism and the strengthening of national identity politics revealed that the expected results had not materialized. Ethnic identities retained a prominent place in people's lives, while ethnic communities continued to provide important spaces of belonging, solidarity, cultural reproduction, social recognition, and political mobilization. When political and constitutional categories do not reflect the actual character of multicultural societies, tensions arise between the normatively defined political community and the social identities of its citizens. During peaceful and stable periods, these tensions may remain subdued and institutionally contained.

In periods of social, economic, and political upheaval, they manifest themselves through discrimination, ethnic mobilization, the weakening of social cohesion, and, at times, open conflict.

The experience of a civic state founded on the exclusion of ethnicity from the constitutional and civic order has left unresolved the fundamental dilemma posed by Will Kymlicka in Multicultural Citizenship: how to reconcile the universal rights of citizens with the recognition of minority communities' identities and rights. The contemporary state must therefore develop a political community in which ethnic affiliation is constitutionally recognized, minority rights are effectively exercised, and equal citizenship is accepted as a shared framework. This approach raises the question of whether the constitutional recognition of ethnic identities contributes to reducing ethnic distance and strengthening social cohesion or, under the influence of ethnonationalist politics, becomes a source of new social divisions.

Petar Antić, **Constitutional Identity Beyond Ethnic and Civic Dichotomies: A Minority Rights Perspective**

This presentation challenges the traditional dichotomy between civic and ethnic models of the state by examining how contemporary constitutional systems address minority rights, social cohesion, and constitutional identity. While public and academic debates often portray civic and ethnic statehood as mutually exclusive alternatives, constitutional practice demonstrates a much more complex reality.

Drawing on comparative constitutional experiences from Europe, the presentation explores how different constitutional arrangements accommodate diversity, protect minority rights, and foster political integration. Particular attention will be devoted to the relationship between constitutional identity and minority protection, the role of international and European legal standards, and the capacity of constitutional systems to maintain social cohesion in increasingly pluralistic societies. I will discuss whether constitutional identity should be understood as a mechanism of democratic inclusion or as a tool for reinforcing majority dominance, as well as the risks of populist and ethnopolitical instrumentalization of identity-related constitutional concepts. By combining theoretical and empirical perspectives, the presentation seeks to move beyond the conventional civic-versus-ethnic framework and develop a more nuanced understanding of constitutional resilience in divided and diverse societies. The discussion is particularly relevant for the Balkans and Southeast Europe, where constitutional systems continue to face chal-

lenges related to minority protection, democratic legitimacy, European integration, and competing conceptions of political community.

Aleksa Damnjanović, **Direct Democracy and Constitutional Identity – Is There a Connection in Central and Southeast European Post-Communist Democracies?**

The collapse of communism has led to democratic transformation in all communist countries. This process was based on creating a new constitutional framework to shift from one-party to multi-party-political system, establish democratic separation of powers and strengthen the rule of law. This included implementation of institutions of direct democracy as well. There are theoretical statements that many new democracies in Central and East Europe included mechanisms of direct democracy in their constitutions. This made us wonder if direct democracy became part of the constitutional identity of post-communist countries in Central and Southeast Europe. This research question on direct democracy and constitutional identity will be examined. The scope of the research should cover Central and Southeast European countries from their post-communist perspective. The research will be focused on referendum and initiative as the most common direct democracy mechanisms, but it could also include other forms of direct democracy such as citizens' assemblies and recall, where these institutions exist. The research is going to cover not only the normative constitutional framework of available instruments of direct democracy in Central and Southeast Europe, but also practical examples and frequency of their usage.

Panel 17 The Authority of Constitutional Courts in Time of Change

Tamás Korhecz, **The Open-Ended European Accession Process of Serbia and the Independence of Judiciary - Legislative Efforts and their Obstruction**

The paper explores how the European integration of Serbia influenced the development of the principle of the separation of powers and the independence of the judiciary. We focus on the normative power of Europeanization and its influence on the relevant constitutional and legislative framework, such as legal and political practice. The hypothesis is that the European accession process furnished the constitutional and legislative framework substantially; however, these measures only moderately contributed to the development of the actual legal and political practice, the constitutional and legal culture, such as the self-estimation of judges and

prosecutors in Serbia. We analyze to which extent the normative power of the European accession process was applied properly, focusing on merits. There are indications that the normative force of the European integration was mainly vested in the formal amendment of the constitutional and legal framework, rather than in the social and political practices and traditions nourishing political opposition against the independent judiciary and the separation of powers. Behind current obstacles, one can identify the extra-constitutional power of ruling political parties and their leaders in Serbia. To a large extent the mechanisms of the party-state survived in Serbia despite fourteen years of candidate status for Serbia.

Samir Forić, **Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a Semiotic Authority: Applying Constitutional Semiotics Approach to Bosnia and Herzegovina's Constitutional Conundrum**

The contribution aims to introduce a new perspective on the complex constitutional order in Bosnia and Herzegovina ('BiH'), namely a socio-legal perspective that focuses on the production of meaning in relation to the central constitutional concepts present in the constitutional text (organization of the state, constituent peoples, power-sharing institutions, human rights) and to the constitutional principles articulated in constitutional jurisprudence (principle of constitutionality, multi-ethnicity, non-discrimination), in the wider semiotic context inhabited by competing semiotic regimes. The approach that anchors said perspective is informed by Martin Belov's body of work on constitutional imaginaries, transitory constitutionalism and dark constitutionalism, that can be labelled as the constitutional semiotics approach. The first part of the contribution argues why such approach is plausible in understanding the constitutional order in BiH and its internal conundrums that are usually reduced to technical ambiguity problem (in legal science perspective) or to pure dysfunction (political science perspective). The second part briefly outlines the contents (symbols, narratives and visual signs) and actors (interpretant communities) behind competing semiotic regimes in BiH, and analyses how and why this competition becomes constitutionally relevant. The third part analyses the Constitutional Court of BiH ('CCBiH') as a semiotic authority in the cases related to national symbols of the entities (U-4/04) and national holiday of the Republika Srpska Entity (U-3/13 and U-2/18). Finally, the contribution ends with remarks on the CCBiH's limits to achieve full semiotic dominance (and through that a normative dominance) and concludes that feature of the constitutional order is both the source of dysfunctionality as well as the condition of its endurance.

Boyan Kamenov, **From Constitutional Arbiter to Constitutional Actor? The Expanding Role of the Bulgarian Constitutional Court**

This paper examines the expanding role of the Bulgarian Constitutional Court in the context of prolonged political fragmentation, parliamentary instability, and intensified institutional conflict. Against the background of recurrent early elections, difficulties in forming stable parliamentary majorities, and the increasing political significance of caretaker governments, the Constitutional Court has gradually emerged not merely as an arbiter of constitutionality, but also as an active participant in the constitutional dynamics of the state.

The paper addresses the question whether this transformation should be understood as a legitimate form of constitutional guardianship aimed at preserving democratic stability, or rather as an expression of judicial activism leading to an expansion of judicial power beyond the traditional boundaries of adjudication. It argues that contemporary judicial activism cannot be sufficiently explained through the classical opposition between judicial restraint and judicial activism but should instead be understood as a functional consequence of the crisis of representative democracy and the broader process of judicialization of politics.

From a theoretical perspective, the analysis draws upon Hans Kelsen's positivist tradition and the conception of constitutional adjudication as a form of normative concretization of constitutional principles. On this basis, the paper argues that the Bulgarian Constitutional Court exercises function whose political significance often exceeds the classical model of the "negative legislator," particularly in the context of authoritative constitutional interpretation and constitutional review of acts adopted by the political branches.

Matija Stojanović, **The Problem of Constitutional Authority in Montenegro and the Role of the Constitutional Court**

The political and institutional processes of Montenegro have entered a dynamic period after the 2020 change of government, one characterized by institutional clashes between different bodies, numbering but not limited to: clashes between the parliament and the government, the parliament and the president, the president and the government, the parliament and the Constitutional Court, *etc*. During these clashes, it became apparent that the Constitution of Montenegro lacks effective anti-deadlock mechanisms which would enable the political processes to proceed even in light of

such disagreements and clashes. Because of such a state of affairs, political actors resorted to numerous *ad hoc* measures, often without a clear basis in the constitutional text, in order to overcome such deadlocks. These measures, despite being politically justified, also came at the cost of undermining the authority of the constitutional text and constitutional authority in general. In our presentation, we will highlight a number of such cases, also highlight how the Constitutional Court chose to position itself towards them.

Kaja Stelmaszewska, **Rule of Law Defense Beyond High Politics: Lessons from the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina's History Curriculum Decision**

This submission explores how constitutional courts may defend the rule of law beyond the most visible confrontations over institutional power. It takes as its point of departure Decision U-20/24 of the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in which the Court invalidated provisions of the Republika Srpska primary-school history curriculum that presented a one-sided and ethnocentric account of the 1992–1995 war. The submission focuses on the judicial choices that made the decision an example of rule of law defense. The Court adopted a functional approach to its jurisdiction and framed the dispute not merely as a matter of educational policy or discrimination, but as one concerning constitutional fidelity, pluralism, and compliance with binding state-level standards. It also recognized that ethnocentric education and the portrayal of the Constitutional Court as acting against Republika Srpska may undermine both pupils' rights and trust in the constitutional order. Decision U-20/24 demonstrates that constitutional resilience is shaped not only through high-profile political conflicts, but also through cases concerning ordinary institutions such as schools, where attitudes towards statehood, pluralism, and constitutional authority are formed. It also invites broader reflection on education as a field in which constitutional standards are shaped and contested.

Nazarii Stetsyk, **Constitutional Resilience between Wartime Challenges and European Integration: Lessons from the Constitutional Court of Ukraine**

This paper examines the resilience of constitutional justice in Ukraine under the conditions of Russia's full-scale war of aggression and the simultaneous process of European integration. It argues that constitutional resilience should be understood not merely as institutional survival during crisis, but as the capacity of constitutional institutions to preserve demo-

cratic integrity, judicial independence, constitutional accountability, and public trust under conditions of continuous existential pressure.

The paper focuses on the operation of the Constitutional Court of Ukraine during martial law and analyses how constitutional adjudication adapted to wartime governance. Despite the unprecedented security challenges caused by Russian aggression, the Court continued its activities and adopted 51 decisions during martial law. These included judgments concerning social protection of military personnel and defenders of Ukraine, constitutional guarantees during judicial reforms, and the constitutionality of legislation related to religious organizations connected to the aggressor state. The paper argues that these cases demonstrate how constitutional justice became closely connected with the protection of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and democratic constitutional order during wartime.

Particular attention is devoted to institutional challenges affecting the Court's resilience. The Constitutional Court has operated with an incomplete composition during the war, raising broader questions concerning judicial continuity, effectiveness, and institutional legitimacy under emergency conditions. The paper also analyses reforms of the procedure for selecting judges of the Constitutional Court introduced within the framework of Ukraine's EU accession process. The involvement of the Advisory Group of Experts and international actors supported by the Venice Commission reflects the growing influence of European standards on constitutional justice reform. The Ukrainian experience demonstrates that constitutional resilience during wartime increasingly depends not only on institutional endurance, but also on maintaining democratic legitimacy and rule of law reforms in the context of European integration.

Panel 18 **Book Panel: Turning off the Suicidal Nature of Democracy: Reflecting on András Sajó's book "Militant Rule of Law"**

András Sajó, Daniel Smilov, Dragoljub Popović, Violeta Beširević, Tahir Herenda

Could legality become a suicide pact for democracy? Could making the rule of law more robust and militant prevent the suicidal scenario and combat democratic backsliding? In his book, *Militant Rule of Law*, András Sajó, emeritus professor at Central European University and a former judge and

Vice President of the European Court of Human Rights, argues that prevention of an erosion of the rule of law is of utmost importance for democracy and suggests a means of protecting the rule of law and counteracting its misuse for illiberal purposes. It analyses inherent anomalies that occur in so-called consolidated democracies and the responses where the rule of law is seriously undermined. The book goes back to the traditional debate about the Rechtsstaat and the Rule of Law, identifies the imperfections of the rule of law, and discusses the legal validity of deficient law and cases of pathologically imperfect legal systems. It sheds light on the strengths of the preventive rule of law and argues that unorthodox legal solutions can satisfy rule-of-law's expectations. This book panel will offer insights into the core issues addressed in the book and highlight its importance for the current theoretical debates on democratic regression and rule-of-law backsliding in liberal democracies.

Panel 19 **Two Decades of the 2006 Constitution of Serbia: Interpretations, Consequences, and Challenges**

Sanja Barić, Đorđe Marković, Aleksa Nikolić, Aleksandar Cvetković

Twenty years after the 2006 Constitution of Serbia entered into force, a key question remains whether this act has achieved the political and legal objectives for which it was adopted. The proposed panel is based on the premise that the Constitution was designed to establish a stable democratic framework and affirm Serbia's constitutional identity yet has remained marked by enduring controversies.

The panel will examine the system of government and the relationship between constitutional design and practice. Although the Constitution formally embraces the separation of powers, debates persist regarding the concentration of political authority and the effectiveness of constitutional mechanisms to limit it. The panel will also examine the position of the judiciary following the 2022 constitutional amendments, asking whether these reforms have genuinely strengthened judicial independence.

The separate question will concern the citizen's place within the constitutional order. Participants will consider whether citizens exercise their role as holders of sovereignty or whether political power has become concentrated within party structures and some institutional actors. Particular attention will be paid to direct democracy and

constituent power, and the capacity of citizens to influence political decision-making.

Finally, the panel will address the relationship between the Constitution, European integration, and transformations of international legal order. It will explore whether the constitutional framework is sufficiently flexible to respond to changing understandings of sovereignty, contemporary political and legal challenges, and the rise of populist and illiberal tendencies. The discussion will place the Serbian Constitution in a regional perspective, comparing it with the constitutional models of neighboring EU states and assessing whether it remains tied to post-transitional constitutionalism or can adapt to contemporary European developments.

Panel 20 **21st Century Challenges to Constitutionalism**

Giacomo Amato, **The Mountains Legislation During the Era of Transitions: Comparative Aspects**

The era of transitions, particularly demographic and environmental ones, is increasingly highlighting the critical challenges that certain regions, which are inherently vulnerable by their very nature, are forced to confront. Mountainous regions offer prime examples of territorial fragility, precisely due to the presence of specific geomorphological conditions, socio-economic marginalization, demographic decline, and a scarcity of services. Taken together, these factors make these regions particularly exposed to both environmental and socio-economic vulnerabilities, raising questions about the adequacy of the legal instruments used to govern the territory.

The analysis follows three main lines of inquiry. First, the European regulatory framework on territorial cohesion will be examined, with particular attention to the role of the European union's cohesion policies in promoting the sustainable development of the most vulnerable regions with the aim of reducing territorial disparities. Second, at the level of Italian domestic law, particular attention will be paid to the most recent Law No. 131 of September 13, 2025, containing provisions for the recognition and promotion of mountain areas, the rationale for which lies in the implementation of art. 44, c. 2, of the Constitution. Finally, we will examine foreign legislation pertaining to mountain regions.

Lastly, this contribution aims to demonstrate how the protection and promotion of the specificity of these regions represent a fundamental challenge in addressing the significant changes that define this era of transitions.

Carolina Fabara, **Governing Chinese FDI in the Western Balkans' Green Transition: Aligning EU Accession Law, Environmental Standards, and Global South Connectivity (with Lessons from Latin America)**

The Western Balkans have become a critical laboratory for testing how public law can govern foreign direct investment in "challenging times" marked by geopolitical rivalry, green transition imperatives, and fragmented economic orders. This paper examines how Chinese FDI in energy and infrastructure is reshaping governance in the region, and asks whether EU driven Europeanization can transform this capital into a vehicle for a just green transition rather than a source of regulatory backsliding and carbon lock-in. Focusing on candidate and potential candidate countries, the paper argues that the intersection of EU accession conditionality, investment law, and environmental regulation offers under used tools to steer Chinese investment towards higher standards of transparency, sustainability, and social accountability.

Doctrinally, the paper analyzes the interplay between national investment frameworks, bilateral treaties, public procurement regimes, and environmental impact assessment obligations in selected Western Balkan jurisdictions. It shows how these regimes interact with EU state aid control, climate law, and emerging carbon related trade measures to create both constraints and opportunities for host states when negotiating and implementing Chinese backed projects. Drawing on comparative insights from Latin America–China relations, the paper highlights recurrent governance risks—opaque contract design, weak environmental enforcement, and asymmetrical negotiating power—but also innovative practices where domestic institutions have leveraged international norms to renegotiate terms, strengthen community participation, or align projects with climate commitments.

Building on this doctrinal and comparative analysis, the paper proposes a public law toolkit for Western Balkan governments and EU institutions. It identifies concrete avenues to: (i) embed green and social conditionality into investment screening and procurement; (ii) safeguard regulatory space in treaty drafting and dispute settlement; and (iii) use EU accession and green transition frameworks to construct the Western Balkans as a normative bridge between the EU, China, and the wider Global South, including Latin America. In so doing, the paper recasts Chinese FDI not merely as a challenge, but as a catalyst for more resilient, Europeanized, and globally connected models of investment governance in the 21st century.

Igor Milinković, **Artificial Intelligence, the Rule of Law, and Democratic Resilience: Governing Algorithmic Power**

The growing integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into public decision-making is transforming the exercise of public power. AI systems increasingly assist administrative authorities, courts, and other public institutions, offering greater efficiency and consistency while facilitating new forms of algorithmic power capable of influencing legal outcomes and the exercise of fundamental rights. At the same time, digital platforms and large technology companies have become influential actors shaping the development, implementation, and governance of AI systems increasingly relied upon by public authorities. These developments raise important questions concerning transparency, explainability, accountability, democratic oversight, and the legitimacy of public decision-making, requiring reconsideration of whether traditional understandings of the Rule of Law remain adequate for governing algorithmic power.

The paper examines the relationship between AI, the Rule of Law, and democratic resilience. Although AI offers new opportunities for democratic governance, its growing integration into public decision-making also raises important questions concerning the exercise and governance of algorithmic power. It argues that democratic resilience depends on the ability of constitutional democracies to adapt to technological change without compromising the Rule of Law, democratic accountability, or the protection of fundamental rights. The paper explores how algorithmic opacity, automation bias, diminished human oversight, the diffusion of responsibility, and increasing dependence on AI systems developed by powerful technological actors challenge the Rule of Law by weakening transparency, accountability, legal justification, and effective judicial review, while eroding public trust and institutional legitimacy. It argues that preserving democratic resilience requires a legal and institutional framework ensuring that AI-assisted decision-making remains transparent, contestable, accountable, and subject to meaningful human oversight, and examines whether emerging regulatory frameworks provide adequate safeguards for governing algorithmic power consistently with the Rule of Law and the principles of democratic governance.

Zulfiye Yilmaz-Yamac, **When Trust is Dismantled: Mental Health Politics as a Challenge to Constitutional Resilience**

The deterioration of mental health on a global scale is one of the increasingly pressing issues of the present century. According to the World Health Organization, nearly 1 in 7 people in the world live with a men-

tal health disorder. Anxiety, which includes symptoms of excessive fear, worry, and depression, which entails hopelessness about the future, poor concentration, and loss of self-esteem, are the most prevalent mental health disorders. Mental health is not merely the absence of illness; rather, it denotes a state of well-being in which an individual recognizes their own capabilities and is able to participate fully and equally in society.

The 21st century, in which democracies have declined in the shadow of authoritarian regimes, is simultaneously a period of constitutional crises in which the stability, trust and safety promised by the ideas of the social contract have been shattered. The methods of authoritarian regimes precipitate the deterioration of mental health, whereas the deterioration of mental health contributes to the consolidation of these regimes. Thus, there is a reciprocal relationship between authoritarian control of mental well-being and constitutional resilience against authoritarian capture.

This presentation aims to examine this vicious cycle from a constitutional law perspective. Responsiveness to emerging issues is a requirement of living constitutionalism. Given that constitutionalism's global crises have merged with the crisis in mental health, there is an obvious need to rebuild the foundations of the social contract within the constitutional sphere and to draw up a roadmap that recognizes the social-political dimension of mental health beyond individual pathologies.

Panel 21 **Book Panel: Gender Perspectives in Law – the Springer Book Series**

Dragica Vujadinović, Ivana Krstić, Ljubinka Kovačević, Marko Davinić, Bojan Spaić

This series Gender Perspectives in Law aims to stimulate the authors as well as other experts and academics from the fields of law, the humanities and social sciences, to re-construct their legal and multidisciplinary knowledge based on the cross-cutting notions of substantive gender equality, intersectionality and diversity. The series discusses all-encompassing gender-competent legal, political, philosophical questions.

The series is the first systematic attempt to offer gender-competent legal knowledge in all fields of law and politics, including practices like judging, policymaking, feminist movements and their legal and political initiatives, *etc*. The necessity of a gender-sensitive approach in legal education emerges from the values and normative standards of today´s international, European and national law. Raising awareness about substantive gender equality is-

sues means investing in the creation, interpretation, and implementation of the legislation that is more fair, just, and equitable. It will also contribute to a comprehensive understanding of social reality, as well as to gender-competent political, legal and economic decision-making and public policies.

Educating law students (who will eventually become future lawyers, judges, prosecutors, civil servants, members of governments and parliaments), as well as students of the humanities and the social sciences, in a gender-sensitive and gender-competent manner means investing in a legal and political future of better quality. It also means investing in a more just legal system by sensitizing judges and other legal professionals in all fields of legal practice, including public administration and policymaking.

Public presentation of the relevant topics of manifold books published in this series would be important not only for the promotion of the series, but also for the professional public of this ICONs conference.

Panel 22 EU and Europeanization: Old and New Dilemmas

Darinka Piqani, **The Architecture of a Resilient Judiciary: Any Role for EU Conditionality?**

The rule of law crisis in the EU might seem a thing of the past now that governing majorities in Poland and Hungary are talking about restoration of the rule of law. However, it is undeniable that the crisis challenged the very foundation of the Union. Elected majorities in Hungary and Poland used law to undermine the independence of the judiciary, other state institutions and civil society. Strategies included the lowering of retirement age of judges, the setting up of disciplinary chambers, and the use of judicial councils as a tool for designing a new judiciary through controlled appointments and disciplinary measures. The crisis was a test for the resilience of courts in the affected Member States.

At the same time, the rule of law backsliding provides fertile ground for better understanding what made possible the disintegration of the rule of law parameters related to the judiciary, considering the presumably strict pre-accession conditionality that preceded the accession of Central and Eastern European countries to the EU. How was it possible for governing majorities in some Member States to capture the judiciary and the judicial self-governing organs?

Employing observations from the rule of law crisis in some of the EU member states, this contribution will investigate the following question: To what extent can EU's conditionality frame-

work contribute to building resilient judiciaries in pre-accession countries in the Western Balkans? Can EU pre-accession conditionality, as it is crafted and applied, produce a long-lasting and sustainable transformation and a resilient judiciary?

The contribution will first identify 'resilience indicators' – mainly through observations from systemic attacks on the judiciary as exposed during the rule of law crisis in specific EU Member States. Afterwards, it will examine EU pre-accession conditionality on the judiciary as applied to (selected case studies in) the Western Balkans in order to identify whether and to extent this policy addresses these resilience indicators.

Ilaria Baisi, **Strategic Autonomy and the Accountability Gap: EU Joint Procurement Between Crisis Governance, Resilience, and Differentiated Europeanization**

The European Union's response to the contemporary polycrisis – encompassing the pandemic, the invasion of Ukraine, and the energy crisis – has accelerated its transformation from a regulatory entity into a collective strategic actor. In critical sectors such as defense, energy, and digital infrastructure, this shift has produced new instruments of joint procurement governed by what the Draghi and Letta Reports define as a performance-linked, executive-driven governance model. This paper argues that such a model generates a structural accountability gap: strategic decision-making systematically outpaces available mechanisms of democratic oversight and judicial review, testing the foundations of institutional trust and rule-of-law compliance.

The analysis engages with all three conference themes. First, it examines joint procurement as a paradigmatic case of normalized crisis governance, questioning whether emergency-driven regulatory choices are becoming a structural mode of public authority. Second, it interrogates resilience as a contested legal concept: EU procurement frameworks may strengthen institutional durability, but their executive concentration risks undermining the democratic integrity they purport to serve. Third, the paper addresses Europeanization as an uneven and asymmetric process. Strategic procurement does not operate uniformly across the European legal space: it shapes Member States, accession candidates, and neighborhood countries through differentiated mechanisms of conditionality and normative convergence – making the Balkan region a structurally revealing test case.

The paper concludes by proposing two public law benchmarks – an integrated conditionality standard and a constitutional ceiling on functional supranationalisation – to assess whether EU strategic autonomy can remain democratically sustainable.

Dan-Adrian Cărămidariu, **Europeanization Through Private Law: EU Consumer Law Beyond the Contract Paradigm**

This paper explores how EU consumer law has emerged as a major vehicle for the Europeanization of private law. Through the case law of the Court of Justice of the European Union and its reception by national courts, consumer law has contributed to a profound reorientation of domestic private law, moving it beyond formal conceptions of contractual autonomy towards substantive standards of fairness, transparency, and effective protection.

The paper argues, however, that the digital economy calls for a reconsideration of this transformative model. The traditional logic of EU consumer law was largely developed in response to contractual asymmetries and standard terms. In contemporary digital markets, by contrast, imbalances are increasingly shaped by platform design, personalization, data-driven commercial practices, and forms of behavioral influence that do not fit neatly within classical contractual categories.

Against this background, the paper examines whether the Europeanization of private law through EU consumer law is entering a new phase. While the existing framework continues to shape national legal orders, its application to digital environments reveals both its resilience and its limits. The question is no longer simply how EU consumer law transforms private law, but whether private law, in its current doctrinal form, remains fully capable of structuring consumer protection in digitally mediated markets.

The paper suggests that the future development of European private law may depend on its ability to move beyond a purely contract-centred model and to engage more directly with the legal implications of digital market architecture.

Alessandro Rosanò, **Can Mutual Trust Survive Europeanization? Fundamental Rights and Rule of Law Challenges in the European Arrest Warrant System**

The European Arrest Warrant (EAW) is widely regarded as one of the most advanced instruments of integration within the European Union's Area of Freedom, Security and Justice. Built upon the principle of mutual trust, the system assumes that the EU Member States share comparable standards of fundamental rights protection. Over the past decade, however, this assumption has been increasingly challenged. Concerns about judicial independence, prison conditions, and broader rule of law deficiencies have revealed structural tensions within the EAW framework.

The Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), most notably in Aranyosi

and Căldăraru, has responded to these tensions by requiring national courts to assess whether surrender under an EAW would expose individuals to a real risk of fundamental rights violations. Through this jurisprudence, mutual trust has evolved from an almost automatic presumption into a conditional principle mediated through judicial scrutiny and fundamental rights protection.

While these developments have mainly been discussed with regard to EU Member States, they also raise important questions for the process of Europeanization in the Western Balkans. Participation in a system based on mutual recognition presupposes a high level of institutional reliability, including effective judicial independence, adequate detention conditions, and robust safeguards for fundamental rights. Yet several Balkan countries still face structural challenges in these areas.

Against this background, the paper argues that the future extension of the EAW framework to candidate countries will depend not only on formal legal alignment with the acquis, but also on the effective internalization of the constitutional conditions that make mutual trust possible.

Márton Varjú, **Old Rules for New Markets? Assessing the CJEU's New Case Law in Contemporary Public Service Markets**

This paper examines the CJEU's recent case law on Article 106(2) TFEU and asks whether the interpretive framework developed over decades remains adequate for the realities of contemporary public service markets. Article 106(2) TFEU permits Member States to exempt Services of General Economic Interest from EU internal market and competition rules — including state aid prohibitions — to the extent necessary for the performance of public service tasks. Originally conceived against the backdrop of welfare-state monopolies, the provision gained practical significance with the privatization and liberalization reforms of the 1990s and 2000s, which drew national public service activities into the orbit of EU economic law.

The paper traces the development of the CJEU's interpretive doctrine, focusing on its core requirements: a genuine and specific general economic interest, a transparent and precise act of entrustment, and a proportionality test. It then interrogates the adequacy of this framework for contemporary public service markets, which are increasingly characterized by mixed public-private arrangements, environmental and regulatory objectives, and complex national policy choices. Drawing especially on the Interzero judgment (C-254/23), the paper argues that the Court is exhibiting a pragmatic flexibil-

ity — accommodating environmental policy priorities and broadening Member State discretion — while leaving unresolved the foundational question of whether the economic nature of a given activity genuinely justifies the monopolized public service model. The paper concludes by reflecting on the challenges this poses for national courts tasked with applying Article 106(2) in the absence of clear analytical guidance from Luxembourg.

Panel 23 **Book Panel: Rotation of Power: A Theory of Democratic Competition,** by Antonios Kouroutakis

Antonios Kouroutakis, Martin Belov, Kostas Chrysogonos, Constantinos Stratilatis

This book explores the often-overlooked democratic principle of 'rotation of power'. It considers two key questions: what happens when power stops changing hands in a democracy, and when incumbents manipulate the system to entrench themselves in office, can democracy survive?

Democracies are often celebrated for their ability to ensure accountability and renewal through the peaceful and unhindered alternation of power. Yet, they are not immune to a dangerous phenomenon: political self-entrenchment. This phenomenon occurs when incumbents, unilaterally or collectively, exploit the power of office to dominate the political arena, tilt the playing field, and distort democratic competition. Contributing to scholarly and judicial debates, this book offers a fresh perspective on this issue by focusing on the cornerstone value of democracy: the rotation of power.

Through sharp analysis and case studies from multiple jurisdictions, this book tackles the following critical questions: why is the rotation of power fundamental to democracy? How do incumbents undermine it? And, crucially, how can we protect democratic competition from those who seek to monopolize power?

Panel 24 **Values, Principles and Public Trust: Global and Local Perspectives**

Damir Banović, **The Judiciary's Role in Protecting Democratic Values, Principles, and Rights: The Context of the Western Balkans**

In a modern democratic system, the constitution has been a barrier and a safeguard of democracy, democratic principles, and political rights. Modern European constitutions proclaim that democracy is the nature of their re-

spective political system. Even as part of the political sphere, democracy can be perceived as a legal principle implemented through different political rights, such as freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, free elections, independent judiciary, the right to participate in political life, *etc*. Democracy has ways of protecting itself, whether through political activism, political pressures, protests, *etc*. However, judicature can and does play a significant role in preserving democratic values, principles, and rights. Populists and other anti-democratic movements tend to change the established rules of democracy, test its limits, and possibly degrade it. The article has a more modest aim and analyses how the judiciary can keep the limits, elements, and structure of a democratic political system and, consequently, its role in modern democratic systems. Moreover, I would like to show how courts act when democracy is in decline, focusing primarily on the selected case law of constitutional courts (*e.g.*, the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina) and the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR).

Matija Miloš, **Vantage Points of Value-based Constitutionalism**

The recent decision of the European Court of Justice in Commission v. Hungary is momentous less for its key contribution, defining Article 2 TEU as the basis for the violation of EU law, and more for the questions it left open. Among the most important ones are the meaning of the facile and arguably unnecessary invocation of "constitutional identity", as well as issues associated with defining and developing the content of the values defined as lodestars of European society. The most recent scholarly work on these issues has already pointed to a common theme, namely the effort to define the societal through the abstract, flattening vision of value-based constitutionalism. In response, several scholars have called for seeing society from different points of view, rather than presupposing the priority of a narrow, institution-based perspective. In this presentation, I will explore this suggestion further. Instead of taking Article 2 as a normative standard that may be violated, I take it as encapsulating different vantage points within a broader imagined structure. In doing so, I draw on literature on legality and affect, asking what it takes to see the values enshrined in EU primary law as a place of political vision and action, rather than a device of institutional disciplining. In doing so, I provide a different theoretical account of values, a core segment of contemporary constitutional orders often associated with the very identity (and thus resilience) of these orders, and one of the normative thresholds of Europeanization.

Alina Gentimir, **Guardians of Trust: Judicial Independence and Public Confidence in Legal Systems**

Judicial independence constitutes the cornerstone of a credible legal system, safeguarding both the rule of law and societal trust in justice. It shields judicial decision-making from transient political, social, and economic. Public confidence in the judiciary is equally vital, as legitimacy derives as much from perception as from institutional design. Citizens must see courts as impartial arbiters for judicial authority to translate into societal trust and compliance with the law.

Using qualitative and quantitative research methods, this paper explores the dynamic interplay between institutional autonomy and public perception, asking: How does the structural independence of the judiciary shape collective trust in legal systems? It argues that judicial independence functions not only as a procedural safeguard but as a normative signal, signaling fairness, impartiality, and adherence to the rule of law.

The study is structured in three conceptual layers: first, a theoretical discussion situates independence within frameworks of legitimacy, accountability, and social contract theory; second, an analytical exploration identifies factors that enhance or undermine public confidence, including transparency, ethical standards, and political insulation; third, implications are considered for policy and institutional design, emphasizing that even technically independent courts may fail to inspire trust without visible integrity and procedural clarity.

By focusing on the normative and societal dimensions of judicial autonomy, this paper highlights that independence is meaningful only when it is recognized, understood, and trusted by the public – a dual requirement critical for the resilience of democratic legal systems.

Srđan Milošević, **European Values and the Serbian Constitution: Origins, Meaning, and Constitutional Significance**

"European values and principles" contained in the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia of 2006. The introduction of this formulation coincided with increasingly intensive debates concerning Serbia's prospective membership in the European Union, as well as with the gradual emergence of Eurosceptic tendencies within Serbian political discourse. In such a context, the constitutional incorporation of "European values and principles" may be interpreted as an attempt to provide constitutional affirmation of Serbia's orientation toward European integration. The presentation further argues that this constitutional provision was shaped by the broader process of European constitutionalization, particularly by the influence of the Treaty

establishing a Constitution for Europe, whose political and normative relevance had not yet been exhausted at the time of the adoption of the Serbian Constitution. Although the European Constitution never entered into force, a substantial part of its normative content was subsequently incorporated into the Treaty on the European Union, most notably through Article 2, which defines the foundational values of the Union. Accordingly, the paper contends that the notion of "European values and principles" within the Serbian constitutional framework should be interpreted in light of the values codified in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union. Through constitutional and historical analysis, the presentation seeks to elucidate both the normative meaning and the broader political symbolism of this constitutional clause.

Attila Nagy, **The Transformation of Public Law with Soft Law Agreements**

This research is comparing the long-standing standpoint of all the UNSC permanent member states regarding their correlation to the previously established UN standards and understandings. Such legal notions like security, sovereignty, human and minority rights have been recently challenged by many countries where the use of force became a common ground for solving conflicts. While initially there were only some agreements in a soft law shape, recently we have witnessed a turning point with the establishment of the Board of Peace by the USA President. This 'institution' has permanently challenged the UN and its system by making some new realities in the international legal order. We are not just facing the inefficiency of the UN and the EU but also the inapplicability of their institutions and overall, their mandates. Therefore, it is necessary, for the sake of the EU, to see what theories international legal order can change and who and how is able to establish it and enforce its prescribed solutions in various legal forms. Our main aim will be to see how and why the norms of international public law are being written in a soft law form and why, if at all, the previously established hard norms, together with their relevant enforcement mechanism, fail to comply. While the EU has been a long-time user of various soft law norms in aiming at shaping various policy fields, such norms are now having a tendency to dominate. The EU and in particular its foreign policy is being seriously challenged of how they can influence various countries in the neighborhood. This 'inability' has threatened its borders and in particular on the present-day sharp lines of division such as we have in Ukraine, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Accordingly, we will also research the most relevant norms in a soft law form concerning important rules of law and sovereignty aspects of public law.

ICON-S Balkans Chapter

https://icon-society.org/balkan-chapter/

The ICON•S Balkans Chapter serves as a vibrant platform for legal scholars and practitioners across the Balkans and Southeast European (SEE) region to engage in interdisciplinary debates on public law. As a regional chapter of the ICON•S, it connects local scholarships with the wider global academic community, fostering the exchange of ideas across jurisdictions, disciplines, and legal traditions.

The Chapter brings the mission of ICON•S to Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, and Serbia. By strengthening regional cooperation and facilitating international engagement, it seeks to enhance the visibility and impact of public law scholarship originating from the Balkans and SEE.

The Chapter is committed to fostering meaningful dialogue among scholars from diverse legal traditions and academic disciplines. It promotes collaboration between the Balkan academic community and the broader international network of ICON•S, creating opportunities for joint research, academic exchange, and sustained institutional cooperation. Particular emphasis is placed on supporting early-career scholars and students through mentorship, professional development, training opportunities, and active participation in ICON•S conferences and initiatives. The Chapter also works to increase awareness of ICON•S activities and to encourage broader participation in its global programs throughout the region.

Open, inclusive, and interdisciplinary in character, the ICON•S Balkan Chapter welcomes scholars and practitioners from law and the social sciences who share an interest in the study of public law. It provides a forum for exchanging ideas, exploring new perspectives, and building lasting academic connections while contributing to the continued development of public law scholarship at the local, regional, and international levels.

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https://en.pravnifakultet.edu.rs/

Founded in 2001, Union University Law School Belgrade (UULSB) has a two and a half decade long successful track record in university-degree education in the field of law. The School's mission is to work towards preparing its students to become responsible and accountable professionals and leaders in dealing with legal affairs in the judiciary, business and corporate settings, and public administration, facilitating and participating in the development of law in society and its legal institutions.

Transferring legal knowledge and skills to prepare students to engage in the legal profession, UULSB activities strive to promote the core values of a democratic political culture – above all, a culture of tolerance, argument-based dialogue, and ethical conduct. UULSB is dedicated to cultivating academic freedom. In its everyday work, it instigates the exchange of opinion, ideas, and scholarly research among its staff and students. It fosters students' creativity and innovation by being open to and supportive of their ideas and initiatives.

The UULSB offers Undergraduate Studies of Law, Master Studies of Law, and Doctoral Studies of Law. It also offers a master's study program in English in Contemporary Legal Studies. UULSB is known for its contemporary way of studying legal disciplines by incorporating both theory and practice in teaching. Study programs have been designed to correlate with corresponding curricula of other European universities.

The UULSB has an intensive international cooperation with academic institutions abroad within the framework of its undergraduate and postgraduate studies programmes, international projects and conferences, as well as the Erasmus + student and teacher mobility programs. It is currently involved in several COST projects and recently joined the joint doctoral studies programme SUPAR – Supporting Parents to Protect Children – under the European Commission's Horizon programme.

Pravni zapisi, Union University Law School Review, is ranked as the top law journal in Serbia for 2025 by the Serbian Ministry of Science, Technological Development, and Innovation. The Journal is indexed in WoS and SCOPUS, and it is among top ranking law journals from the countries of the Balkans and SEE region.

KONRAD ADENAUER STIFTUNG
RULE OF LAW ▪ SOUTH EAST EUROPE

Str. Frantelarilor 5, Sector 2, RO-020785, Bucharest

www.kas.de/rlpsee

The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) is one of Germany's largest foundations for international cooperation, with more than 100 offices in over 80 countries. Guided by the principles of freedom, justice, and solidarity, KAS has been promoting democratic governance, the rule of law, and human rights across the globe since the 1960s. In 1990, the Foundation established its transnational Global Rule of Law Programme, recognizing that sustainable development and security are inconceivable without stable democracies, and that stable democracies, in turn, are not possible without the rule of law. Today, six regional rule of law programmes operate from Bogotá, Singapore, Nairobi, Dakar, Beirut, and Bucharest, each tailored to the legal and institutional realities of its region.

The **Rule of Law Programme South-east Europe (RLPSEE)**, headquartered in Bucharest, has been operational since 2006. It covers ten countries in the SEE region. What these countries share is a common trajectory: more than three decades after the change of system, they remain in an ongoing process of transformation toward democratic constitutional statehood, a process that continues to shape the role and self-image of their judiciaries, their public administrations, and their citizens' relationship with the law. The Programme's central mission is the sustainable rule of law across all target countries. A functioning legal order, as the Programme sees it, is not merely a desirable attribute of modern governance but a core precondition for EU accession and for the long-term stability of the region.

In practice, the Programme concentrates on five interconnected areas. It supports the development of modern constitutions that enshrine the separation of powers, judicial independence, equality before the law, and fundamental rights. It works on procedural law reform, particularly in constitutional, criminal, and administrative procedures, to ensure that legal processes effectively protect individual rights. It strengthens human and minority rights protection, both at the national level and through international mechanisms, and promotes the professional integrity and ethical standards of judges, prosecutors, and attorneys, with a view to building transparent, efficient judicial systems aligned with European standards. Finally, the Programme assists the countries of the region in addressing their authoritarian, totalitarian, and wartime pasts through legal

instruments, recognizing that sustainable rule of law cannot take root where the legacies of past injustice remain unresolved.

To achieve these objectives, the Programme organizes regional and national seminars, advanced professional training courses, international conferences, and publishes specialized legal materials. It cooperates closely with local partner organizations in every target country, ensuring that activities are grounded in the specific institutional and legal realities on the ground. The transnational approach is deliberate: it creates incentives for cross-border cooperation among legal professionals and builds durable networks between Southeast Europe and EU Member States. The Programme's primary interlocutors are constitutional court judges, supreme and ordinary court judges, prosecutors, attorneys, judicial councils, ombudsperson institutions, university law faculties, parliamentary legal committees, government officials, and civil society organizations active in the field of rule of law, with a particular emphasis on young jurists and early-career legal professionals who will shape the region's legal future.

ICON-S Balkans Chapter Inaugural Conference Belgrade 2026

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Maja Sahadžić

Maja Sahadžić is Assistant Professor of Constitutional Law (Utrecht University), Visiting Professor (University of Antwerp), Fellow (Netherlands Institute of Human Rights), and Affiliated Scholar (CUHK). She holds a PhD in Law from the University of Antwerp. She has been a visiting researcher at the University of Toronto, the Max Planck Institute for Comparative Public Law and International Law in Heidelberg, The University of Hong Kong, MGIMO University, and Victoria University of Wellington. Her book "Asymmetry, Multinationalism and Constitutional Law" (Routledge) was nominated for the 2020 Book of the Year in Constitutionalism by the IFFC. In 2018 she received the Ronald Watts Award for the best article on constitutional asymmetries and the Middle East peace process.



Martin Belov

Martin Belov is a Professor in Constitutional and Comparative Constitutional Law at the Sofia University 'St. Kliment Ohridski'. He is Vice Dean of the Sofia University 'St. Kliment Ohridski', Faculty of Law. Martin Belov has been a visiting professor in many European universities. He is a member of the European Group of Public Law, the International Association of Legislation, the Advisory Board of the Central and Eastern European Forum of Young Legal, Political and Social Theorists, and other scientific and academic organizations. Martin Belov is a member of the scientific boards of many academic journals and book series. He has participated in numerous international research projects (including Horizon 2020 and Recovery Fund projects, the German Cluster of Excellence projects, COST, *etc.*). He has published 27 books (some of which are edited volumes) and 120 scientific papers and book chapters.

The Convenors



Violeta Beširević

Violeta Beširević is a Professor of Law at Union University Law School Belgrade, a Research Affiliate at Central European University (CEU), and a recurrent visiting professor at the University of Milano-Bicocca Law School. Previously, she served as Dean of Union University Law School. She is a member of the Board of Directors of the European Public Law Organization and Editor-in-Chief of the Union University Law School Review, indexed in WoS and SCOPUS. She holds an L.L.M. and S.J.D. in Comparative Constitutional Law from CEU, was a Fulbright Scholar and Global Research Fellow at NYU School of Law, and has completed specialization at George Washington University Law School, Brigham Young University Law School, University of Cagliari Law School, and the ASSER Institute in The Hague.



SERVICE INFORMATION

Time Zone

Serbia (Belgrade) is in the Central European Time Zone, operating on GMT+1 but switches to GMT+2 during daylight saving time, from the last Sunday of March until the last Sunday of October.

Belgrade Weather in October

In October, Belgrade has pleasant autumn weather, with many sunny days. Daytime temperatures typically range from 15°C to 20°C, with moderate rainfall.

Water

Tap water in Belgrade is safe for consumption.

Electricity

Belgrade operates on a standard 230V voltage with European Type C & F sockets.

Currency

The official currency of Serbia is the Serbian dinar (RSD). The exchange rate is approximately 1 euro = 118 RSD. The latest exchange rates are available on the website of the National Bank of Serbia [https://www.nbs.rs].

Payment

Shops, restaurants, hotels, and other businesses generally accept both cash and payment cards.

Opening hours

Most restaurants, shopping malls, and other venues are also open on weekends.

Emergency Contacts

Police: **192**
Emergency Medical Service: **194**
Fire Department: **193**

BELGRADE PUBLIC TRANSPORT INFORMATION

Regular public transport

In Belgrade regular public transport (trams, buses, and trolleybuses) **is free of charge**. However, certain minibus (A1) and express bus services (E2, E6, E9) are exempt from this policy, and tickets for these services must be purchased directly from the driver.

From Belgrade Nikola Tesla Airport

Several public transport options are available, including bus lines **72** (route: Airport NT-Zeleni Venac), **600** (route: Airport NT–Train station "Beograd centar"), and **607** (route: Airport NT–Banovo Brdo). The three options above **are free of charge**.

You can also use a minibus service A1 (route: Airport Slavija Square). This service **is not free of charge.** Tickets can be purchased directly from the driver. Payment is accepted in cash only (RSD).

Taxi

Taxis are widely available in Belgrade. You can order a taxi by phone, through a mobile application, or find one at designated taxi stands throughout the city. It is recommended to use official taxi services. More information can be found in the 'INFO' section of the official Tourist Organization of Belgrade website [https://www.tob.rs/en].

Passengers traveling by taxi from Belgrade Nikola Tesla Airport can use a fixed fare system, with prices deter-

mined by one of the six destination city zones. Before approaching the taxi stand, you can obtain a fixed fare voucher from one of four e-kiosks (three located in the baggage claim area and one in the passenger lounge). Once you have obtained your voucher, proceed to the designated taxi stand in front of the Arrivals Terminal and take the first available taxi in the queue. At the end of your journey, the taxi driver must charge only the fixed fare indicated on the voucher. The fixed fare applies to a maximum of four (4) passengers. It also includes luggage that can be accommodated within the vehicle's boot capacity.

For more information, go to the 'Transport' section and select 'Taxi Service' on the official Belgrade Airport website [https://beg.aero/eng].

Parking

Information about parking options can be found in the 'INFO' section of the official Tourist Organization of Belgrade website [https://www.tob.rs/en].

EXPLORE BELGRADE

Beogradska tvrđava i park Kalemegdan (Belgrade Fortress & Kalemegdan Park)

View on Google Maps

The Belgrade Fortress rises above the confluence of the Sava and Danube rivers. Built and expanded between the 1st and 18th centuries as a strategic defensive stronghold, it now stands as the historical core of Belgrade and a monumental open-air museum. The complex consists of the Upper and Lower Town, Kalemegdan Park, and the iconic Pobednik (The Victor) monument, a symbol of Belgrade. The Great Kalemegdan Staircase leads to one of the city's most impressive viewpoints, offering panoramic views of the confluence of the Sava and Danube rivers, as well as Novi Beograd and Zemun.

Knez Mihailova Street

View on Google Maps

Knez Mihailova Street lies on the site of the ancient Roman city of Singidunum and today runs between Terazije Square and Kalemegdan Park, where the Belgrade Fortress is located. It is known for its historic buildings, monuments, and cultural institutions, including the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, the Gallery of the Belgrade Cultural Centre, and the Belgrade City Library. The library's basement houses the Roman Hall, where the remains of a Roman gate and aqueduct have

been preserved. Today, Knez Mihailova Street is Belgrade's main pedestrian zone, lined with numerous shops, cafés, and restaurants, making it the heart of Belgrade's urban life.

Muzej Nikole Tesle (Nikola Tesla Museum)

View on Google Maps

The Museum is located in the former residence of politician and industrialist Đorđe Genčić, built in 1927. It is dedicated to Nikola Tesla, one of the greatest inventors and scientists. The permanent exhibition presents Tesla's work through photographs, notes, and documents. Visitors can also see his personal belongings, laboratory instruments, and demonstrations of some of his inventions.

Narodni muzej (National Museum)

View on Google Maps

Founded in 1844, the National Museum of Serbia is the country's oldest museum. It is situated in the heart of Belgrade, on Trg Republike (Republic Square).

Kosančićev venac

View on Google Maps

Kosančićev venac, set among modern buildings, has retained much of its 19th-century charm with its cobbled streets, gardens, and historic architecture. The neighborhood is dotted with cafés overlooking the river and intimate wine bars, creating a relaxed and authentic atmosphere. The area features the historic Konak kneginje Ljubice (the Residence of Princess Ljubica) as well as Belgrade's oldest tavern, Kafana Znak pitanja (The Question Mark).

Skadarlija - Bohemian Quarter

View on Google Maps

At the turn of the 20th century, Skadarlija developed into Belgrade's bohemian quarter, becoming home to writers, actors, and painters. Its traditional taverns soon became gathering places for many of the leading figures of the city's cultural and artistic life. Today, Skadarlija is known for its numerous traditional taverns and vibrant atmosphere. It attracts both locals and visitors eager to experience the spirit of old Belgrade.

Muzej savremene umetnost (Museum of Contemporary Art)

View on Google Maps

Established in 1958, the Museum of Contemporary Art is located in Novi Beograd, close to the confluence of the Sava and Danube rivers. The building's unique crystal-like design gives the museum its distinctive appearance. Its collection includes a vast

number of works by Yugoslav sculptors, painters, and graphic artists from the 20th century.

Kula Gardoš (Gardoš Tower)

View on Google Maps

The Gardoš Tower is one of the last traces of the once-powerful Austro-Hungarian presence in present-day Serbia. Built in 1896 by order of the Hungarian authorities, it was one of seven monuments constructed in different architectural styles to commemorate one thousand years of Hungarian statehood. Its official name is the Millennium Tower, reflecting the occasion for which it was built.

Ada Ciganlija

View on Google Maps

With its lake, beaches, and recreational facilities, Ada Ciganlija serves as Belgrade's premier hub for outdoor activities. Known as the "Belgrade Sea", this green oasis near the city center is surrounded by forests, restaurants, cafés, cycling paths, and sports grounds.

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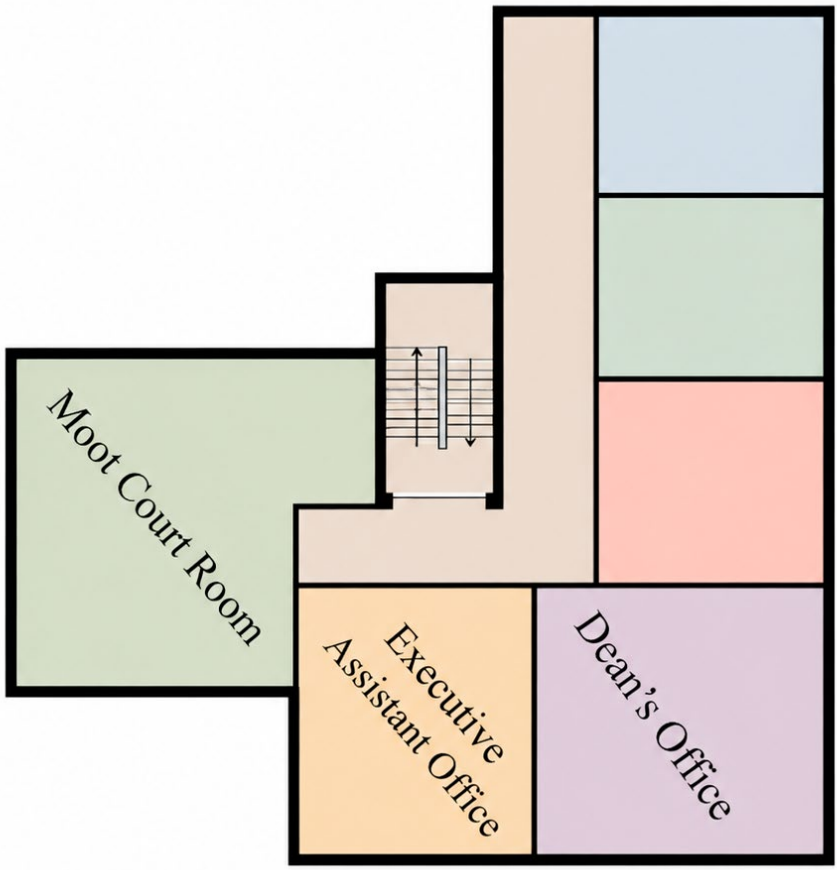


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