

Reminder: Conference Pathways to Civil Justice

On 19-20 November 2018, the conference: Challenge Accepted! Exploring Pathways to Civil Justice in Europe funded by the European Research Council takes place at Erasmus University Rotterdam. It focuses on artificial intelligence, ADR and ODR, self-representation, and court specialization in the context of improving access to and the quality of civil justice. Keynote speakers include Judith Resnik (Yale University) and Ruth de Bock (Advocate-General Dutch Supreme Court).

Further information on the program and registration is available [here](#).

Find the description of the panels below.

Panel 1: The computer as the court

Artificial Intelligence (AI) research is fast advancing on new frontiers, which promise to make computers replicate traits of human intelligence. In the near future, we might see robots or machines that handle legal cases and might even replace humans as judges. We might see the computer as the court. However, AI is a term that encompasses many technologies with as many applications. This panel aims at providing an overview of the different AI technologies and their benefits. Furthermore, it explores what ethical issues are raised by replacing judges with AI units. It will try to map near?future AI innovations in the court system.

Panel 2: Consumer ADR/ODR: Justice behind closed doors? ADR (and its digital incarnation, ODR) are commonly presented as tools facilitating informal, accessible, fast and cost?effective access to justice for consumers while preserving public resources. However, such new forms of privatised Justice have raised a number of questions relating, among others, to their transparency, effects on due process or accountability. Representatives of ADR providers from several Member States and academics will critically discuss the role and potential of ADR/ODR in 21st century justice systems.

Panel 3: Access to civil justice: Taking lawyers out of the equation?

Richard Susskind's 'The End of Lawyers?' underscored the existential need of the legal profession to adapt to an ever-changing landscape of legal services under the influence of the increased use of information technology, commoditisation, outsourcing, and so on. Not only are lawyers subject to change in the way they work, lately we see that, in attempts at making the administration of justice cheaper, faster and accessible, lawyers may not be part of the equation at all. Increasing possibility for self-representation in the Netherlands and the drastic cuts to legal aid in the UK provide the backdrop for a discussion about the changing landscape of civil justice and representation. This panel focuses the discussion on the relevance of legal assistance for effective dispute resolution and critically assesses the impact of the diminishing role of lawyers on the administration of justice.

Panel 4: Court specialization: Turning the tide of the 'vanishing trial'?

Court specialization may enhance the efficiency of civil justice, provide expertise and, as a result, improve the quality and uniformity of court decisions. However, one cannot turn a deaf ear to the concerns expressed. Specialized courts may impair the geographical proximity of justice, put in question the independence and impartiality of the judiciary, establish stereotype procedures and lastly lead to a proliferation of forums resulting in a judicial labyrinth. Although specialized courts have long existed, recent legislative initiatives signal a shift towards an even greater court specialization. Courts specializing in international commercial cases, patent or company matters are only some to mention. By mapping the risks and benefits of specialized courts this panel assesses the impact court specialization has on access to justice on a European level.