

CCBEInfo

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#87

SPECIAL FOCUS: *Impact of COVID-19 on Justice*

CONTENTS

SPECIAL FOCUS:
Impact of COVID-19 on Justice

2

CCBE IN ACTION

6

EUROPEAN NEWS

12

BAR & LAW SOCIETIES ACTIVITIES

14

UPCOMING EVENT

19

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a considerable impact on the functioning of Justice systems in Europe, on the European legal profession and on Access to Justice.

The CCBE has undertaken a number of initiatives to alert the EU institutions on the implications of the COVID-19 crisis on justice and to request support for the justice sector (see below).

The CCBE also conducted surveys on the situation at national level based on information provided by the national delegations, i.e.

- ▷ an overview of measures taken in response of COVID-19 challenges
- ▷ an overview of exit strategy
- ▷ an overview of restrictions on court working

All this information is available on the new CCBE web page specifically devoted to the impact of the pandemic – which gathers information at the international, European and national level. For more information, visit the CCBE webpage: <https://www.ccbe.eu/actions/covid-19/>

New CCBE Task Force “Access to Justice - Current challenges, modern solutions”

In some countries, the confinement and lockdown measures resulted in some developments regarding traditional court hearings as well as changed attitudes about the involvement of lawyers in proceedings. Some of these developments are worrying, while others can be seen as interesting opportunities. Therefore, in May, the CCBE Presidency decided to create a new CCBE Task Force “Access to Justice - Current challenges, modern solutions” to discuss and anticipate the implications of the COVID-19 crisis on the legal profession and the justice sector in general. During its first meeting on 22 May 2020, the Task Force identified urgent issues and long-terms issues to be looked into. The first ones (court proceedings and case backlogs, definition of “key workers”, legal aid, VAT and possible financial support for lawyers/ law firms) are considered as issues to which the CCBE should react as soon as possible. A questionnaire on these urgent issues has already been circulated, the responses to which will be used as a basis for a future CCBE statement in this regard.

As for the long-terms issues – in particular, the question of how the legal profession and the justice sector should adapt and change to be better prepared next time – input from different CCBE committees will be needed. These issues will be discussed within the Task Force at a later stage.



CCBE Statement on the reactivation of justice in Europe

The social distancing and confinement measures taken in several European countries have impacted heavily on the access to justice for individuals and entities, and to their right to have their case stated within reasonable delays. Furthermore, by cancelling and postponing cases, the resulting backlog would potentially create more problems. Finally, due to the economic consequences of the COVID-19 crisis, the demand for legal aid might increase significantly. The CCBE has therefore voted a [statement calling for the urgent and complete reactivation of Justice systems](#), while respecting health and safety measures, of course.

The CCBE calls to invest in Justice and to foresee the necessary resources to cope with the increased backlog and demand for judicial decisions. Finally, the CCBE urges the European institutions and member states to provide financial support to those lawyers who have been particularly hit by the crisis.



CCBE Statement about systemic risks for the Rule of Law in times of the pandemic

Responding to the COVID-19 threats, many countries have understandably taken emergency measures and legislation to contain the risk of mass infections, to safeguard the medical capacity to deal with infections and to address the economic consequences of the crisis. In its [statement](#) adopted on 15 May, the CCBE expresses its concerns about those measures, in the light of the de facto absence of Parliamentary monitoring and judicial review.

The CCBE calls therefore member states not to abuse such “State of Emergency” provisions or “Special Powers” granted to the Executive. The CCBE pleads for adequate sunset clauses for such measures and legislation as foreseen in the constitutional and fundamental laws of most European countries. The reactivation of Justice systems in member states will further contribute to a more regular Judicial review of measures taken under such regimes.

CCBE Statement on COVID-19 contact tracing apps

In its [statement on COVID-19 contact tracing apps](#) adopted on 15 May, the CCBE voices its concerns and sets out a number of principles that need to be upheld when governments and private actors turn towards using contact tracing apps as a

component in a wider programme of infection limitation and control of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The CCBE acknowledges the imperative upon national governments to protect the health of their citizens and urgently limit the spread of infection. It notes that national governments throughout Europe are introducing or proposing to introduce contact-tracing apps as a means of doing so, but also notes that the use of such apps is likely to constitute an infringement of fundamental rights, including the right to privacy and the right to restriction of processing of personal data. Such infringements can be acceptable only if justified on the basis of proportionality.



CCBE interview with Didier Reynders, European Commissioner for Justice

In a video interview published on 4 June, Didier Reynders, European Commissioner for Justice, addresses European lawyers on the impact of COVID-19 on Justice and the actions taken by the European Commission to promote the effective functioning of justice systems.

The video is available [here](#).



Didier Reynders
Commissaire européen à la Justice

The 2020 edition of European Lawyers' Day, to be held on 25 October, will focus on the theme: **"Continuity of justice and respect of human rights in times of pandemic"**. The measures taken to fight the pandemic have affected access to justice, legal services, lawyers and human rights more generally. Such a crisis could happen again in the future. European Lawyers' Day 2020 will be an opportunity to highlight the different challenges raised in the event of a pandemic, such as the digitalisation of justice, access to justice, procedural safeguards, surveillance issues, etc.



CCBE Standing Committee

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the CCBE organised its first Standing Committee through videoconferencing with its member Bars and Law Societies on 15 May 2020.

The meeting was particularly focused on the impact of the pandemic on the rule of law, justice and fundamental rights and resulted, inter alia, in the adoption of several declarations mentioned in the following section.



RULE OF LAW: CCBE CONTRIBUTION FOR THE ANNUAL RULE OF LAW REPORT

The first annual Rule of Law Report is one of the major initiatives of the Commission Work Programme for 2020. It is a part of the comprehensive European rule of law mechanism announced in the Political Guidelines of the European Commission. The annual Rule of Law Report will monitor significant developments relating to the rule of law in the EU Member States and is expected in the third quarter of 2020, during the German Presidency of the Council.

In the preparation of this Report, the Commission decided to rely on a diversity of relevant sources. In particular, the Commission invited different stakeholders to provide written contributions to the Report through a targeted consultation. In a letter addressed to the CCBE, Commissioner for Justice Didier Reynders acknowledged the important role played by the CCBE for the upholding of the rule of law in the EU and invited the CCBE to take part in this targeted consultation.

Responding to this request, the contribution covering the horizontal developments in the areas identified by the European Commission was prepared by the CCBE, including information regarding the most relevant and important activities of the CCBE in the area of the rule of law. In this contribution, the CCBE highlighted that it places great emphasis on respect for the rule of law, democratic principles and fundamental rights, and welcomed the commitment and efforts of the European Commission to strengthen the rule of law in the EU, including by putting this priority high on its political agenda. The CCBE also acknowledged the importance of strengthening the rule of law for the future of democracy in Europe and therefore affirmed its readiness further to cooperate with the European Commission and to provide its support in strengthening the rule of law in the EU.

The [CCBE contribution for the annual Rule of Law report](#) was approved mid-May. The CCBE, with the support of its CCBE Rule of Law Adviser, will monitor and review the annual Rule of Law report when it is published.



CCBE response to the European Commission Consultation on the European Data Strategy

On 28 May 2020, the [CCBE response to the European Commission Consultation on the European Data Strategy](#) was submitted. The CCBE contribution focuses on potential fundamental rights implications and the use of data in the field of so-called legal tech as implied in the Data Strategy. According to the CCBE, the European Commission should work on

questions of fundamental rights when further developing its data strategy. Also, actions supporting innovative 'legal tech' applications should only be taken in close cooperation with bars and law societies as they have a very important expertise in this field, particularly in respect of possible negative effects of certain technical tools.

AI for lawyers (AI4L)

The AI4Lawyers project, run by the CCBE and the European Lawyers' Foundation (ELF), started its work on 1 April and had its first kick-off meeting in May. This project, which is financed by the European Commission (under the Justice Programme), has a duration of 24 months and should therefore be concluded by 31 March 2022.

Among the three major needs identified by the CCBE, and which are the main deliverables of this project, we will be offering :

1. a detailed overview of "average state of the art" IT capabilities of lawyers and law firms in the European Union and a gap analysis using comparisons with other non-EU countries;
2. an assessment of the opportunities and barriers in the use of natural language processing tools in small and medium sized law practices;
3. guidance for EU lawyers and law firms on the use of AI in legal practice.

Overall, this project will be important for providing help to lawyers, particularly small and medium-sized structures, in understanding the issues and impact of artificial intelligence and other novel technologies in their daily practice. Taking into account that lawyers and law firms in the EU do not have the same level of preparedness for information technology (IT), the guide which is to be elaborated (as a third component of this project) will be a key element in changing the behaviour of lawyers and firms who may see more risks and dangers than benefits in the use of new technologies



in their legal practice. This evolution may contribute to a faster and cheaper justice that could be translated into better access to justice for citizens in various Member States of the European Union.

The guide will also be very useful for lawyers and law firms whose level of expertise in the use of IT tools is more advanced than the average, since the guide will also cover best practice functionalities in the United Kingdom, United States and Canada.

As part of this project, the CCBE will also call upon an expert in "Natural Language Processing", taking into account the most advanced developments of this technology in the legal sector.

For more information, we invite you to regularly consult the dedicated CCBE page for possible updates: <https://www.ccbe.eu/actions/projects/>

CCBE RESPONSE TO THE COMMISSION CONSULTATION ON THE EFFECTIVE APPLICATION OF THE CHARTER OF FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS IN THE EU

In May, the CCBE responded to a Commission Consultation on the effective application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights in the EU. The Consultation took place on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the proclamation of the Charter and the 10th anniversary of the Charter becoming an instrument of EU primary law.

The CCBE believes the Charter is of great value to practitioners, and could be even more so. However, there are a number of possible reasons to explain why, despite being legally binding since 2009, there are still suitable cases where lawyers have not regarded the Charter as an instrument of reference, including the possibility that there may be a misconception that the Charter can only be invoked when all domestic remedies have been exhausted, as

is the case with the European Convention on Human Rights. In addition, practitioners may not be aware of how the Charter is a modern instrument which applies in a number of areas, including Justice (the Charter also includes 'third generation' fundamental rights, such as data protection).

The CCBE believes the Charter is an excellent instrument with substantial added value. The CCBE is fully supportive of any measures which promote the practical use of the Charter. In this regard, the [CCBE response](#) comments on the need for greater awareness and refers to specific measures that may assist legal practitioners. The response also lists specific areas of training for practitioners which would be beneficial.

EUROPEAN JUDICIAL TRAINING

In 2011, the European Commission adopted a [long-term strategy on European judicial training](#) setting specific objectives which were reached by 2020. Therefore, the European Commission is currently working on the new policy document on European judicial training.

In this regard, based on the recommendations and work of the Training committee, in the end of April 2020, the CCBE adopted its [contribution](#) for the next EU policy on judicial training.

The CCBE welcomes the efforts of the European Commission to further develop the EU policy on judicial training for justice professionals, especially for lawyers, and strongly supported the need for such policy document to ensure the continuation and building on the principles defined in the long-term strategy on European judicial training adopted in 2011. Such policy document is also crucial to guarantee the political commitment and to draw the attention of the relevant institutions at a national and EU level to the importance of a regular professional development and continuing legal education, as well as the needs of lawyers and other justice professionals.

The CCBE contributed over the years to the implementation of the European Judicial strategy, including

by coordinating and motivating its members to submit data for the annual Judicial Training reports.

In 2018, the CCBE participated in the [public consultation](#) launched by the European Commission on the Training of justice professionals on EU law.

The CCBE advocated for the regular and high-quality professional development of knowledge and skills of lawyers and other legal professionals to ensure the quality of justice across Europe.

Nowadays, while evident threats to the rule of law have been identified on several occasions and strengthening the rule of law is one of the main priorities of the EU, it is important to ensure equal treatment for all justice professionals and to ensure adequate EU funding for professional development and training needs of lawyers and other justice professionals.

The CCBE highlighted that the training of justice professionals, including lawyers, on EU law and cross-border issues is essential to ensure the coherent application of EU law and smooth cross-border judicial proceedings.

The new policy document on the European Judicial Training is expected in the second semester of 2020. When published, the Training committee will monitor and review this document.



INTERNATIONAL LEGAL SERVICES

The International Legal Services (ILS) Committee is working on an information package for the CCBE delegations which is currently being prepared by the ILS Committee. This information pack will have four papers:

- (a) Foreign Legal Consultant: An overview table on the Foreign Legal Consultant rules in each EU Member State.
- (b) Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA): a paper on a Model MRA for general purposes
- (c) Exchange of information: A paper on the International exchange of information among Bars and Law Societies according to GDPR rules.
- (d) A draft analysis of the EU-UK Partnership Agreement

The ILS Committee has also created a number of sub-groups to follow developments taking place at UNCITRAL, namely [Working Group II](#) (Arbitration), [Working Group III](#) (Investor-State Dispute Settlement Reform) and [Working Group IV](#) (e-commerce). These Working Groups have been created following a very interesting meeting with the UNCITRAL Secretariat in February 2020.

The ILS Committee will also be having an exchange of views with the Commission to discuss the Multi-Party Interim Appeal Arbitration Arrangement (MPIA) which was proposed by the Commission to overcome the current difficulties with the WTO Appellate Body. The CCBE had sent letters to the EU Commissioner for Trade, Phil Hogan, and to Roberto Azevêdo, Director General of the WTO, emphasising that the Appellate Body is crucial for the WTO system, in particular in view of confirming its legitimacy based on the principle of the Rule of Law. The CCBE believes that the Rule of Law can be defended through the proper organisation of Justice. In this respect, the CCBE expressed its concern about the potential silent attack on this principle which would be done through a dilatory tactic which aims to paralyse the WTO dispute resolution mechanism by systematically blocking the appointment of its Judges.



PLATFORM FOR EXCHANGE, COOPERATION AND OUTREACH (PECO): SUPPORT TO THE GEORGIAN BAR ASSOCIATION

The CCBE is in favour of strong Bars to guarantee a strong and professional representation of the rights of the clients. Therefore, the CCBE opposes any attempts and intentions to undermine the Rule of Law and the position of lawyers in general.

The CCBE received information from its observer member, the Georgian Bar Association, about a lawsuit submitted to the Constitutional Court of Georgia requesting the abolition of several provisions of the Law on Advocates of Georgia (constitutional case Lasha Janibegashvili vs. the Parliament of Georgia).

The case concerns the question whether lawyers' activity could be considered as

entrepreneurial activity and, therefore, whether the Georgian Bar Association realises a prohibited monopolistic activity, thereby violating the freedom of enterprise which is guaranteed by the Constitution of Georgia.

Based on the assessment and recommendation of the PECO, the proposal to intervene in the constitutional case Lasha Janibegashvili vs. the Parliament of Georgia was approved by the CCBE Standing committee on 15 May.

The CCBE filed an [amicus curiae brief](#) proposing to the Constitutional Court of Georgia to dismiss the claim of Lasha Janibegashvili as ungrounded, and to preserve the strong and independent legal profession in Georgia as guaranteed by the Georgian Bar Association.

HUMAN RIGHTS: DEFENCE OF THE DEFENDERS

The CCBE continues to support persecuted lawyers around the world. Since March, the CCBE has sent letters in support of threatened lawyers in the following countries: China, Colombia, Egypt, Guatemala, Iraq, Iran, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Nigeria, Russia, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Turkey, and Zambia. All CCBE letters are available on the [CCBE Human Rights portal "Defence of the defenders"](#).



COMPANY LAW

The CCBE wrote to the European Commission in April for an extension of the deadline for holding the general meeting of European companies until 31 December 2020.

With the COVID-19 pandemic, the measures of social containment and distancing made it difficult in practice, if not impossible, to organise the general meeting of a European company or a European Cooperative Society, which are normally required to do so within six months of the end of their financial year, either in May or June.

At national level, some Member States had already introduced derogations in company law to extend the six-month period for holding general meetings in 2020. This was even more necessary in the case of cross-border companies such as European companies and European Cooperative Societies.

The CCBE Company Law Committee took up the issue and alerted the European Commission. As European companies and European Cooperative Societies are governed by European regulations, only the European legislator (Council and Parliament) could intervene on the basis of a Commission proposal, which was done within a very short period of time and via Article 352 TFEU.

Regulation 2020/699 of 25 May 2020 thus authorises the general meeting to be held in 2020 to be held within twelve months of the end of the financial year, and no later than 31 December 2020. Although the regulation entered into force on 28 May, this derogation allows European companies and European Cooperative Societies that were unable to hold their general meeting before May to also be able to regularise their situation by the end of the year.

[The Regulation can be consulted here in all EU languages.](#)

More information on the Commission [website](#).

EUROPEAN CONVENTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

On 5 May 2020, the Chair of the CCBE Permanent Delegation to the European Court of Human Rights, Piers Gardner, participated in the online conference celebrating the 70th anniversary of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and hosted by the Norwegian city of Kristiansand.

The address given by the (former) President of the European Court of Human Rights, Linos-Alexandre Sicilianos can be found [here](#).

More information about this conference can be found [here](#).

On 5 March 2020, representatives of the CCBE, the CNB, the DAV and European Lawyers in Lesbos (ELIL) met with three different MEPs, namely LIBE Vice-Chair Maite Pagazaurtundúa, MEP Domenec Ruiz Devesa and MEP Dietmar Köster. These three meetings were the occasion to share about CCBE activities in the field of migration and the positions the CCBE has adopted in this regard. A specific focus was given to the work undertaken by ELIL and the fundamental need for a properly funded asylum legal service in Greece at both the first instance and appeal levels to ensure the rule of law is given practical effect. The CCBE also particularly insisted on the need for a comprehensive EU asylum system which provides for an effective access to legal assistance for asylum seekers by qualified lawyers.

From left to right: David Conlan Smyth, Chair of the CCBE Migration committee, Maite Pagazaurtundúa, Vice-Chair of the LIBE committee of the European Parliament, Béatrice Voss, CNB, Philip Worthington, Managing Director of ELIL, Dorothee Wildt, DAV



From left to right: Dorothee Wildt, DAV, Philip Worthington, Managing Director of ELIL, David Conlan Smyth, Chair of the CCBE Migration committee, MEP Domenec Ruiz Devesa, Béatrice Voss, CNB



From left to right: Philip Worthington, Managing Director of ELIL, MEP Dietmar Köster, Dorothee Wildt, DAV, Béatrice Voss, CNB, David Conlan Smyth, Chair of the CCBE Migration committee

REFORM OF THE GENERAL COURT

In recent years, the number of judges at the General Court has doubled following a reform of the General Court. Following this reform, the Court of Justice shall, by 26 December 2020, draw up a report, using an external consultant, for the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on the functioning of the General Court. The

CCBE Permanent delegation to the Court of Justice, General Court and EFTA Court believes it is important to express its views on the reform, and in order to contribute to this exercise the PD Lux will prepare a paper which will focus on a number of issues related to the reform of the General Court.

Commission Action Plan to further strengthen the EU's fight against money laundering and terrorist financing

On 7 May 2020, the Commission published an [Action Plan](#) to further strengthen the EU's fight against money laundering and terrorist financing. The Action Plan sets out measures that the Commission will take over the next 12 months to better enforce, supervise and coordinate the EU rules on combating money laundering and terrorist financing. The measures and the timetable are set-out in a table at the end of the Action Plan. The Commission believes this new, comprehensive approach can shut down any remaining loopholes and remove any weak links in the EU rules.

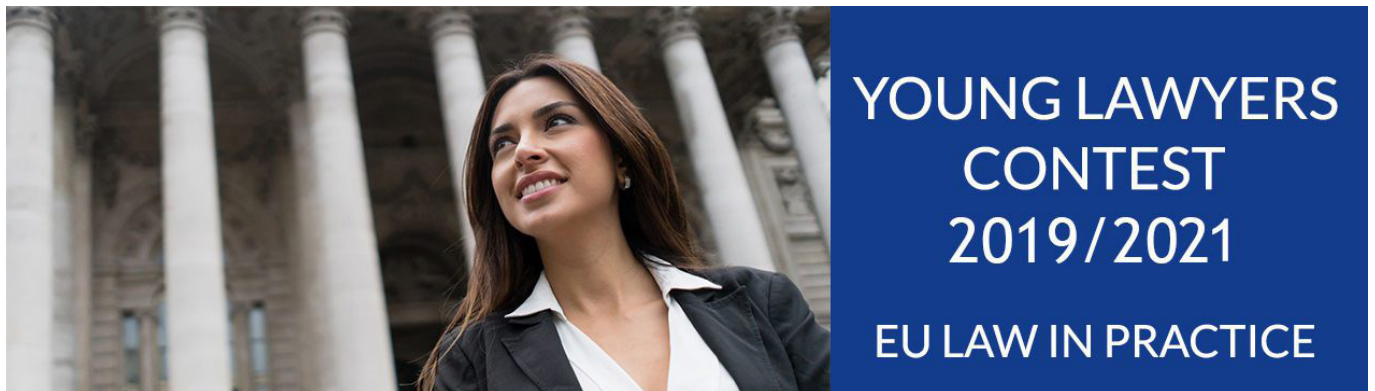
The Action Plan is built on 6 Pillars, each of which is aimed at improving the EU's overall fight against money laundering and terrorist financing, as well as strengthening the EU's global role in this area. The Pillars concern effective application of EU rules, a single EU rulebook, EU-level supervision, support for Financial Intelligence Units, the EU's global role and enforcing EU-level criminal law provisions and information exchange.

The CCBE Anti-Money Laundering Committee has had a number of meetings to prepare a response to the [Commission Public Consultation](#) on the Action Plan which is open until 29 July.

ERA Young Lawyers Contest: registration opened until 1 July 2020

The Young Lawyers Contest is organised for the third time by the Academy of European Law (ERA) in partnership with the Warsaw Bar Association and support from the CCBE. This contest is addressed to trainees or, in jurisdictions in which initial training does not include a period of legal practice, newly qualified lawyers. The participation fee per contestant is €236. The participation in this contest is reserved to young lawyers from countries eligible under the Justice programme 2014-2020 i.e. EU Member States (except Denmark), Albania and Montenegro. Candidates from these countries benefit from the reimbursement of their travel and accommodation costs. The final of the contest will take place on 4-5 February 2021 in Trier, Germany.

The registration form and additional information is available here: <https://younglawyerscontest.eu/>



European Court of Human Rights: new President

On 18 May 2020, Robert Spano (Iceland) took office as the new elected President of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). More information can be found on the [webpage of the ECtHR Presidency](#).



Council of Europe: Anniversary of the Venice Commission

7 May 2020 marked the [30th Anniversary of the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe](#). This Commission is composed of independent experts in the field of constitutional law. Its work is essential for the development of international standards on the Rule of Law, democracy and respect for Human Rights.

Migration: Commission guidance on EU rules on asylum

The European Commission has adopted guidance on the implementing of EU rules on asylum and return procedures and on resettlement during coronavirus pandemic conditions, which it will present to Member States. The [guidance](#) was prepared with the support of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), and in cooperation with national authorities. It touches upon asylum procedures (Dublin regulation, reception conditions, ...), resettlement and returns.

Court of Justice of the European Union – Commission v Poland

In an [order](#) delivered on 8 April 2020, the ECJ held that Poland must immediately suspend the application of the national provisions on the powers of the Disciplinary Chamber of the Supreme Court with regard to its disciplinary cases concerning judges. The European Commission had asked the Court of Justice in January 2020 to consider the Disciplinary Chamber on the basis that it was not up to EU standards of judicial independence. Since judges chosen by the National Council (whose members are picked by the Parliament) of the Judiciary sit on that disciplinary chamber, the ECJ held that the fact judges could be subject to such discipline from the chamber “is likely to affect their own independence”.

Czech Republic

The Czech Bar Association organised a two-day seminar from 9 to 10 March 2020 in cooperation with the Academy of European Law (ERA). The seminar entitled "Computer

forensics in legal proceedings" took place in Prague and attracted more than 40 participants from 10 different EU countries.



Estonia

During the emergency situation, the Estonian Bar Association supported the fight against COVID-19 and accepted all necessary and reasonable measures in this situation. The Bar stressed to its members that clients also need legal assistance in an emergency, and it is the duty and mission of the lawyer to ensure that the client is not left

without legal assistance due to the constraints of the emergency.

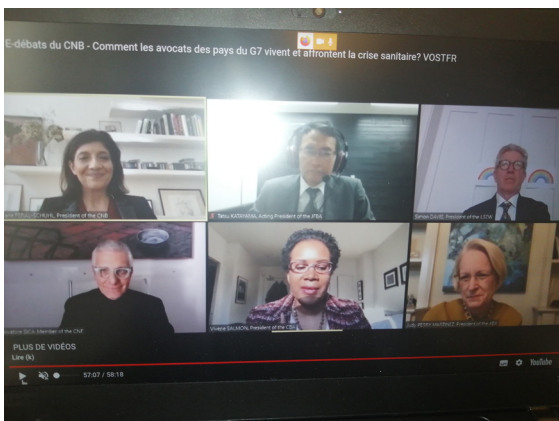
The General Assembly of the Bar was absent this year and decisions had to be made by electronic voting. Continuing the tradition, the yearbook of the Bar Association was published this year as well, which reflects the many activities and editions of the Bar's jubilee year.

France

During the period of confinement, the Conseil national des barreaux implemented a series of live e-discussions in which its members and experts discussed various current topics: the issue of domestic violence during the confinement, tracing and respect for fundamental freedoms, the rights of patients and carers... At the opening of this cycle, the floor was given to the Presidents of the national organisations representing the profession in

the G7 countries who exchanged views on the main actions deployed by their governments and on their mobilisation in the service of their colleagues.

The Paris Bar organised an online training course entitled "Sentinels of Liberties: What Liberties in a Digital World" on 20 May 2020. The video is available on its Facebook page (Link to watch the video). On the occasion of World Refugee Day on 20 June 2020, the Paris Bar Association also organised several webinars: Environmental Refugees: Link to register; Health Crisis and Refugees: What Responses from the European Union? What common policy is possible on the eve of the adoption of the Pact for Migration and Asylum?: Link to register; Access to law and health for refugees in France: what kind of care during the crisis? The videos of these webinars are accessible in replay via the following [link](#).



At the end of February 2020, the DAV Section of International Business Law introduced a new interactive conference format on “Legal Project Management” in

Frankfurt. Trainer Marion Ehmann joined the workshop from Sweden to give the mostly younger participants ideas for professional strategies and techniques for a more efficient & successful law firm practice.

Ireland

Throughout COVID-19, The Bar of Ireland’s focus on promoting the importance of the rule of law continued; in mid-May was released our latest [Policy Newsletter](#), focusing on activities of the Bar in recent months that also highlights the work of the CCBE within. The important work of the Human Rights Committee was also highlighted, including its appeal to Mrs. Carrie Lam, Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) and to the embassy of the People’s Republic of China in Ireland, condemning the recent arrests of lawyers and democracy activists Martin Lee QC and Dr. Margaret Ng, whose peaceful and legitimate protection of human rights in accordance with domestic and international legal frameworks, causes grave concerns for access to justice and the rule of law. The Bar continues to monitor and highlight matters, in conjunction with the Hong Kong Bar Association.

The Bar of Ireland has also been bringing educational and professional development offering online; ensuring that members maintain contact with each other as well as keep focussed on continuous learning and education. Key events have included:

- ▷ Advanced Advocacy – conduct and best practice in remote hearings
- ▷ Remote Commercial Arbitration
- ▷ Specialist Bar events, including Construction Law, Sports Law and Employment Law
- ▷ Building Blocks of a Career in EU Law

In Ireland, the Law Society substantially altered and enhanced its services in order to support practitioners throughout the Covid-19 emergency.

Initiatives included daily President’s eBulletins to the profession, the online delivery of legal education for trainees, free Continuing Professional Development for practitioners, new support services both for practice owners and individuals, and the introduction of mental health and wellbeing supports for practitioners and their dependents.





On March 2020 Mrs Maria Masi became the first woman assuming the Presidency of Consiglio Nazionale Forense. Specialised in family law, she has been the President of the Nola Bar for several years before being elected at Consiglio Nazionale Forense on 2015 and confirmed on 2019 when she was nominated vice President of the CNF."

During the emergency situation, the CNF is constantly monitoring the respect of the principles of the Rule of Law and of the Access to Justice by submitting proposals and suggestions to the government aimed at supporting the reactivation of the Judicial system and granting access to justice to all citizens. At the same time, in view of supporting the fundamental role of lawyers, particularly in this emergency situation, the CNF has adopted some measures to support the colleagues. As a way of example, recently the CNF offered two licenses for videoconferencing platforms to each of the 140 local Bars, to help them organise meetings, training, school of law with distance learning; moreover, the CNF has signed protocols with the Highest Italian Courts providing the procedures for trials by videoconferencing. Finally, the Cassa Nazionale Forense (Lawyers' National Social Security System) has donated important amounts for recovery projects in favour of Bars and Lawyers located in ten districts most affected by the emergency (1.500.000,00 €), and invested 4.000.000,00 € for the purchase of IT tools and to compensate for major losses in turnover suffered by Lawyers.

Lithuania



Lithuanian Bar Association: "a presumption of arrest" settles in Lithuania. In response to the arrest of heads of well-known associations and private individuals in Lithuania, the Lithuanian Bar Association declares that pre-trial investigation officers must justify why measures with a physical and psychological impact being used, namely the two-day arrest of individuals, is becoming an increasingly typical standard in pre-trial investigations. It is the opinion of the Lithuanian Bar Association that the arrest of the heads of important Lithuanian organizations, whose operations are founded on their transparency and reputation, is excessive. It is a measure, which breaches human rights and is intended to potentially intimidate, demean and pre-emptively judge an individual.

The Lithuanian Bar Association gives a special attention to human rights in the magazine "Lawyer" published by the Lithuanian Bar Association. This magazine is prepared in co-operation with the magazine IQ and dedicated not just to the lawyers community, but also to the whole Lithuanian society.

Webinar Robot Lawyers & Virtual Law Firms – held on 16/06/2020.

The National Bar of Attorneys-at-Law in Poland and two Regional Bar Associations of Attorneys-at-Law in Opole and Wrocław organised a webinar about the issues of legal tech and AI in lawyers' work. The speakers tried to answer the questions whether robot lawyers and virtual law firms are actually the future of the legal business in Poland and internationally.

Organisers:

- ▷ [International Affairs Committee of the Regional Bar Association of Attorneys-at-Law in Opole, Poland,](#)
- ▷ [International Affairs Committee of the Regional Bar Association of Attorneys-at-Law in Wrocław, Poland,](#)
- ▷ [International Affairs Committee of the National Bar Council of Attorneys-at-Law in Poland.](#)

Robot Lawyers & Virtual Law Firms

WEBINAR

Date: 16/06/2020 • Time: 4.30 PM (CEST) • Platform: Zoom

SPEAKERS

- Marta Jesús González-España García
Managing partner at the Instituto de Innovación Legal
- Bartosz Pruski
Co-Founder of StohEye
- Guy Stahn
CEO and Founder of Legal Connection
- Dr Konrad Szacki
Assistant Professor of Philosophy at the University of Information and Technology Management in Rzeszów
- Kamil Kulewski
Founder of Taskio.co

MODERATORS

- Isabella Kozłowska
President of the FBE New Technology Committee
- Joanna Włoch-Płotka
President of Foreign Affairs Committee of the National Bar Council of Attorneys-at-Law
- Maria Dymitruk
Research Centre on Legal and Economic Issues of Electronic Communication

Registration: email us at szkolenia@oinp.opole.pl or join at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89899925874>

Portugal

Considering the COVID-19 circumstances, the Ordem dos Advogados has submitted a complete survey to lawyers in March to ensure assessment of what were the field difficulties members faced, either in their professional practice as in other legal matters. These were the conclusions, you may access in this [link](#).

Following up on the results to the survey, the Ordem dos Advogados has prepared a Guide for Lawyers where they could find information regarding the ongoing Bar services during lockdown, practical information for current daily practice, all legislation during the state of emergency, etc. Courts remained open for urgent hearings, but were mainly closed, deadlines were suspended between 9 March and 3 June for all pending procedures. You may also access this Guide (Dossier) through the [link](#).

Every year Lawyers' Day is celebrated on 19 May, dedicated to Saint Yves (13th century bishop and law practitioner). It is a special day for the Ordem dos Advogados and it is a special day for practising lawyers nationwide. This year however, due to unseen historical circumstances, we were subject to social distancing and we had to adapt festivities, reaching out through digital ways, with President Luis Menezes Leitão delivering a discreet and generational debate amongst lawyers celebrating their 50th Registry Anniversary. They all gave very interesting contributions and professional input in such peculiar times for mankind and the rule of law. You may access the links here:

- ▷ <https://portal.oa.pt/comunicacao/noticias/2020/05/encontro-dos-advogados-que-comemoram-50-anos-de-profissao-com-o-bastonario/>
- ▷ <https://portal.oa.pt/comunicacao/noticias/2020/05/dia-do-advogado-19-de-maio-de-2020-mensagem-do-bastonario/>

Slovak lawyers provided „Legal Aid in Quarantine“

The COVID-19 outbreak made the organisation of the traditional annual Legal Aid Day at the Slovak

Bar Association impossible. However, a new project was immediately put in place and for two weeks 305 lawyers have been providing free legal aid related to COVID-19 consequences for citizens. Legal aid was provided in relation to 1,300 legal issues.

Spain



The President of the General Council of Spanish Lawyers, Victoria Ortega, held a telephone audience with HM King Philip VI of Spain.

Victoria Ortega informed the monarch of the urgent need to restore full normality of judicial activity as soon as possible. During the pandemic, the greatest concern of the legal profession has been the economic situation of lawyers, as well as the provision of both human and economic resources for the administration of justice, with the primary objective of guaranteeing the right to defence in a safe and effective manner.

The President told the King that the situation of lawyers providing the legal aid service has been the subject of constant concern. The Bar Association has insisted that these lawyers should have protective equipment at their disposal and that a sufficient safety distance should be guaranteed, prohibiting any attention in cells.

From an economic perspective, Spanish lawyers have demanded urgent equality of lawyers with the rest of independent professionals in terms of aid and subsidies.

UPCOMING EVENTS

26 JUNE 2020

Standing Committee (online meeting)

6 JULY 2020

L5 meeting (online meeting)

29 JULY TO 4 AUGUST 2020

ABA Virtual Annual Meeting - Convening for Justice

4 SEPTEMBER 2020

Plenary Session (Trogir)

9-11 SEPTEMBER 2020

ELI's Annual Conference (online meeting)

2 OCTOBER 2020

Standing Committee (Brussels) - TBC

28-30 OCTOBER 2020

Convention nationale des avocats (Paris)

28 OCTOBER TO 1 NOVEMBER 2020

UIA Annual Congress (online meeting)