



Annual Conference of the  
European Forum of the Legal Professions

# The Need for Constant Vigilance

## The Role of the Legal Professions in Maintaining Democratic Values

Brussels & Online, 14 November 2025  
(9:00-17:00 CET)



## ABOUT THE STAKEHOLDERS:

The **European Network of Councils for the Judiciary (ENCJ)** unites the national institutions in the Member States of the European Union which are independent of the executive and legislature, and which are responsible for the support of the Judiciaries in the independent delivery of justice.

The **Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE)**, founded in 1960, is an international non-profit association which has been, since its creation, at the forefront of advancing the views of European lawyers and defending the legal principles upon which democracy and the rule of law are based.

The **European Association of Judges (EAJ)** is one of the four regional groups of the International Association of Judges. The IAJ was founded in Salzburg (Austria) in 1953. It is a professional, non-political, international organisation, bringing together national associations of judges, not individual judges, approved by the Central Council for admission to the Association.

The **Association of European Administrative Judges (AEAJ)** is an organisation founded in the year 2000. Its membership comprises national associations, representing administrative judges from Member States of the European Union and the Council of Europe and individual members, being administrative judges from those countries in which such associations do not exist.

**ACA-Europe** is a European association composed of the Court of Justice of the European Union as well as the Councils of State and the supreme administrative jurisdictions of each of the members of the European Union.

The **Network of the Presidents of the Supreme Judicial Courts of the Member States** was formed in 2004. It provides a forum through which European institutions are given an opportunity to request the opinions of Supreme Courts and to bring them closer by encouraging discussion and the exchange of ideas.

The **European Union of Judicial Officers (UEHJ)** is an international association created in 2016 in close coordination with the International Union of Judicial Officers. UEHJ aims to represent, promote and ensure the interests of the judicial officers within the (candidate) member states of the European Union. The association includes 22 member and 2 observer member countries.

The **European Union of Rechtspfleger (EUR)** is an association of 14 professional organisations from 13 states of the European Union. The objective is to improve the effectiveness and proximity of justice and to harmonise legal systems. For this purpose, the EUR has developed a model of a European profession, which is based on the professions of Rechtspfleger that were originally created in Germany and Austria.

## CONTENT

The European Forum of the Legal Professions is an initiative that aims to launch a structured dialogue among the representations of legal professions in Europe, where common challenges and concerns can be addressed and analysed, and a joint position can be formulated. This is an inter-professional platform of exchange, a collaborative and evolving project among the legal professions, where ERA plays the role of a facilitator. We aim to organise an event every year, where the latest trends and most relevant issues of common interest can be discussed by the members of the Forum.

This fourth annual conference brings together distinguished figures from the judiciary, legal professions, and European institutions to discuss ways in which the rule of law and democratic values can be upheld in today's increasingly polarised societies. We will evaluate the strengths of existing legal frameworks and explore the role of key institutions, such as the European Courts, the Venice Commission, and various legal associations, in defending judicial independence and fostering public trust. Given the increasing difficulties like political pressure, loss of trust in democratic institutions, and threats to the independence of legal professions, participants will hear important talks about ethics, accountability, public involvement, and practical ways to improve the legal system. Join us in reaffirming the essential role of judges, lawyers, and judicial officers in safeguarding democracy through vigilance, integrity, and collective responsibility.

Onsite participation in Brussels is available for a fee of €150, which includes catering provided during the event. Institutional members of the European Forum for the Legal Professions (ACA-Europe, AEAJ, CCBE, EAJ, ENCJ, E.U.R., Network of the Presidents of the Supreme Judicial Courts of the EU, UIHJ) may nominate participants free of charge. Online participation is free of charge.



[www.euflp.eu](http://www.euflp.eu)



# Programme

Friday, 14 November 2025



09:00 Registration

09:30 **Opening**

**Jean-Philippe Rageade**, Director of ERA  
Representative of the Belgian Council of State

09:45 **Keynote**

**Ana Gallego Torres**, Director-General for European Commission Directorate-General Justice and Consumers (to be confirmed)

10:15 Discussion

10:30 Coffee break

11:00 **Roundtable discussion : "Our Strength"**

- The role of European institutions in safeguarding the rule of law (such as the European Courts, CCJE, Venice Commission, ERA, ENCJ, and legal associations)
- The importance of the independence of the legal professions
- The importance of public trust in the democratic institutions and the legal order

**Gabriele Juodkaite-Granskiene**, Judge of the Supreme Court of Lithuania

**Patrick Gielen**, Secretary General of UIHJ

**Simone Cuomo**, Secretary general of CCBE

*Further speakers to be nominated*

12:15 **Giving voice to judges: the ENCJ survey among judges on the independence of the judiciary**

**Frans van Dijk**, emeritus professor of empirical analysis of legal systems at Utrecht University and advisor ENCJ

12:45 Discussion

13:00 Lunch break



Times indicated are CET  
(Central European Time)

14:10 **Short presentations: challenges and (re)actions**

**The decreasing public trust: the legal professions in a polarised (sometimes violent) society**

**Barbara Porta**, Italian lawyer, Chair of the CCBE Human Rights Committee

**How legal professions can help maintain the resilience of our institutions – the Italian example**

**Monica Mastrandrea**, Judge, Turin Court of Appeal

**Ethics and accountability: how to increase public trust**

**Marc Schmitz**, President of UEHJ

**Public awareness and education: do the legal professions have a role in this?**

**Eva Wendler**, Vice-President of AEAJ

15:20 Coffee break

15:40 **Roundtable discussion: Independence of the Legal Professions**

- What are the threats to the independence of the legal professions?
- How can legal actors respond to external and internal pressure?
- The resources of the judicial system (incl. remuneration)
- What can you do as a judge, a lawyer, or a judicial officer to protect democratic values?

**Maria Gkana**, Associate Councilor, Council of State, Greece

**Sabine Matejka**, Vice-President of EAJ

**Walter Szöky**, President of E.U.R.

**Alex Tallon**, Belgian lawyer, Vice-President of CCBE

16:55 **Closing remarks**

**Viktor Vadász**, Deputy Director and Director of Programmes of ERA

17:00 End of the Conference

## PARTNERS



AEAJ



European Network of Councils  
for the Judiciary (ENCJ)  
Réseau européen des Conseils  
de la Justice (RECJ)



UEHJ

### Who should attend

Judges, prosecutors, court staff, judicial officers, private lawyers, EU officials, journalists

### Fee

Participation onsite: 150 EUR (incl. Catering)  
Participation online: 0 EUR

### Venue

88 Aarlenstraat, Brussels

### Language

English

### Event Number

025D51

### Hybrid format

Online participants can take the floor or address written questions to the panel through a live chat in Zoom. The link will be provided after registration.

### Contact



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### Registration



[www.era.int/?133772&en](http://www.era.int/?133772&en)