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DigiRights Project Final Conference

The Digitalisation of Defence Rights: Time for New Perspectives... And Directives?

30–31 January 2025

KU Leuven, Belgium

CALL FOR PAPERS

The **KU Leuven—Leuven Institute of Criminology (LINC)**, together with **Tartu University (Tartu Ülikool)**, the **University of Genoa (Università degli Studi di Genova)**, the **University of Göttingen (Georg-August-Universität Göttingen)**, the **University of Luxembourg (Université du Luxembourg)**, the **University of Zagreb (Sveučilišta u Zagrebu)** and the **Hungarian Helsinki Committee (Magyar Helsinki Bizottság)** are pleased to announce the **DigiRights (Digitalisation of Defence Rights in Criminal Proceedings) Conference**.

The DigiRights Conference will take place on **30–31 January 2025** at the **KU Leuven**.

The Conference represents the concluding event of the **DigiRights Project**, an Action Grant funded by the **Justice Programme (JUST) of the European Union**.

The Conference will offer a platform for the partners of the DigiRights Project to present their project findings, as well as provide the opportunity for engagement with





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other scholars and stakeholders in discussions and exchanges on the concept and question of “digital defence rights”.

To foster this dialogue, we **invite scholars to present their research ideas** on these issues at the Conference. Contributions which critically assess perspectives of defence rights, and their intersection with digital developments in criminal justice, are especially sought.

Prospective applicants are invited to **contribute to two panels**, covering the topics of: **(1)** supranational approaches to the digitalisation of defence rights perspectives; and **(2)** perspectives on the safeguarding of defence rights in digital proceedings.

In the attachment are brief descriptions and some keywords for each panel to help identify the relevant areas and domains around which each panel discussion is intended to centre.

Interested researchers are **invited to submit an abstract**.

Abstracts (max. 300 words) should be sent to michele.panzavolta@kuleuven.be, anna.mosna@kuleuven.be and ashlee.beazley@kuleuven.be **no later than 13 October 2024**.

Applicants will be informed of the selection made by **31 October 2024**.

Accepted and presented papers will be published in a conference proceedings.

Selected researchers will present their papers in person.

Unfortunately, while travel and accommodation costs cannot be reimbursed, full catering (including a conference dinner) will be provided to accepted speakers.





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Panel Descriptions

Panel I – National approaches to the digitalisation of defence rights

This panel will involve the DigiRights project partners, who will each discuss their national approaches to the safeguarding of defence rights in digital proceedings, from the perspective of their jurisdiction, as covered by the DigiRights Project (being Belgium, Croatia, Estonia, Germany, Hungary and Italy).

Panel II – Supranational approaches to the digitalisation of defence rights

This panel will delve into supranational approaches to the safeguarding of defence rights in digital proceedings, particularly (but not exclusively) at European level, both from the legislative perspective (supranational legal instruments, e.g. European directives), as well as from the viewpoint of supranational jurisprudence (case law).

Keywords: defence rights, fair trial rights, right to interpretation and translation, right to access case file, right to legal assistance and legal aid, right to be present, European Criminal Law, European Union Law, European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), procedural rights directives, minimum standards, harmonization of rights, cross-border proceedings, digital presence, digital equivalence, digital rights, online/offline equivalency, digital justice, virtual justice, remote justice.

Panel III – Perspectives on the safeguarding of defence rights in digital proceedings

This panel will be split into four sub-panels, each focussing on one of the defence rights considered by the DigiRights project, namely the rights to: interpretation and translation, access the case file, legal assistance and legal aid, and presence.





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1. **Sub-Panel A: Right to interpretation and translation**
2. **Sub-Panel B: Right to access the case file**
3. **Sub-Panel C: Right to legal assistance and legal aid**
4. **Sub-Panel D: Right to be present.**

For each sub-panel, perspectives on the safeguarding of the specific defence right in question (and its corollary rights), from the view of digital proceedings, are welcome. Such perspectives may be national, comparative, interdisciplinary or legal-empirical.

Accordingly, this panel and its sub-panels encourages assessments of the conditions that are (or should be) required in order to ensure the chosen defence right remains protected outside the usual in-person structures of criminal proceedings. Critical appraisals of both the risks posed, and the opportunities offered, by digital technologies regarding the defence right under discussion are also welcome.

Panel IV – Roundtable: the DigiRights proposed guidelines

This panel will be a roundtable discussion between invited high-level stakeholders and the DigiRights partners on the Project's proposed guidelines.

More details will follow in due course.





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The DigiRights Project

The COVID-19 pandemic saw the transition to digitalisation occur at startling speed across many domains, including criminal justice proceedings. Here, however, this transition is often without necessary reflection on the legal and practical preconditions required to assure equivalence between offline and online procedural rights.

Digitalisation is going to change the dynamics of criminal justice beyond the pandemic. This is, therefore, the moment to assess how technology can best serve the needs of both the prosecution and the defence. Focussing on the procedural rights which are susceptible to digitalisation—namely the rights to interpretation, translation, access to the case file, legal assistance and legal aid, and to be present at trial—the DigiRights project maps and assesses the existing practices of digitalisation of these rights with a view to proposing a set of European guidelines for their digital application.

The ultimate goal is to promote a digitalisation of procedural rights that ensures a uniform and adequate standard of protection across the EU. Through national legal and empirical research—considering Belgium, Croatia, Estonia, Germany, Hungary and Italy—and a European and comparative study, the project evaluates the degree to which digitalisation of procedural rights is equivalent to their classic recognition. In directing its guidelines towards national and EU authorities, and law and policy makers, DigiRights aspires to guide current interpretations and future adaptations of EU criminal law on the rights of accused persons, to contribute to the effective and coherent application of such rights, and to aid mutual trust and recognition across Member States.

