

High Level Conference

For a people-centered e-Justice

April 26 and 27, 2021

e-Justice: Increasing effectiveness, transparency and accessibility

OBJECTIVE

Justice and the rule of law are inseparable in when it comes to guarantee democratic societies where Access to Justice is one of its cornerstones.

Always aware that Digital Transformation is more than the word “digitalization”, the path taken in the European Union for the last 20 years, has aimed at bringing technology closer to the real needs of citizens, helping to develop greater efficiency, simplification and speed in responding to these needs.

The EU e-Justice 2019-2023 Strategy and Action Plan, keeping the focus on efficiency and transparency, adds the digital component in order achieve the vision of a more interoperable Justice, wide spreading the application of principles such as ‘digital by default’ and ‘only once’.

Aligned with the same objectives, the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the European Union identified the digitalization of Justice as one of the priorities of its program, promoting the continuity and the deepening of the digital transition in Justice. The outlined actions follow the ones identified during the German Presidency in the last half of 2020, intending to create bridges with the Slovenian Presidency, which takes over the presidency of the council in the last semester of 2021.

The high-level conference “For a people-centered e-Justice” aims to promote the reflection among governments, international organizations, academia, business and civil society on the path already taken and the challenges that we will have to overcome, in an evolving Europe, where the pandemic COVID 19, cannot fail to be part of the equation in this future readjustment.

How are governments responding to citizens' expectations and needs? What are the challenges and successes of the digital transformation in the Courts? How can emerging technologies be an accelerator for the Access to Justice, both at national and European level? How to anticipate and prevent social exclusion due to lack of digital skills? How to prevent and ensure cybersecurity of information and guarantee individual privacy?

The Conference, which will take place on the 26th and 27th of April, will bring together speakers from various countries, who will share their knowledge and experience, in the service of a more efficient, close and digital Justice.

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION OF JUSTICE: TODAY AND TOMORROW

Over the past 15 years, digital by default has gained fundamental importance as a guarantor of timely and uninterrupted access to justice and in increasing the robustness and resilience of national information systems. In many cases, the changes followed the logic of making procedures electronic, gaining efficiency; an intermediate moment that may precede the capacity to make radical innovation.

Either with already tested technologies or with the introduction of emerging technologies - as are the cases of artificial intelligence, augmented reality, blockchain or the internet of things - Justice, national and European, is committed to continue walking the path of digital transformation, pursuing the principles of equity, transparency and protection of human rights.

What are the technological, functional, cultural, regulatory challenges that the judicial system faces in the digitalization process? What is the importance of the human factor in the judicial decision?

How does digital by default apply to the registration affairs? What are the repercussions of digital on the legal security of acts and documents? What prospects for evolution can be designed so that efficiency also lies in the proximity between services and citizens?

During the pandemic period, the action of Justice was marked by the exponential resource of communication through video. This a new paradigm, is it here to stay? What are the implications for the functioning of organizations?

ACCESS TO JUSTICE: A MULTIDIMENSIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Access to justice requires a multidimensional approach anchored in the very diversity of human existence and experience (resources, needs, geography, etc.) that evolves and transforms in a plastic way, in interaction with the social and natural environment, not always in a predictable way.

The pandemic caused by COVID-19 is an example of this, having posed serious challenges to the justice systems due to the economic and social deterioration of the conditions of existence of citizens and companies.

What new legal needs do European justice systems have to be able to respond, in an integrative and sustainable way? How to respond to the new needs of companies? What impacts are there for groups with a more vulnerable position, especially women, with regard to access to justice, and what responses can be given?

WOMEN IN JUSTICE AND JUSTICE FOR WOMEN

The feminine world of Justice. A conversation between women whose path has passed (or still passes) through government functions in international organizations and civil society. Their experiences and their vision for the future on how to bring justice closer to women.

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN JUSTICE: EUROPEAN VISION

It is a given fact that society has changed. The 'Electronic' has become the current procedure, the zeitgeist. And for that reason, the Commission's Communication on the digitalisation of justice, *A toolbox of opportunities*, of 2 December 2020, sets out a new approach to the digitalization of justice based on a comprehensive set of financial and IT legal instruments to be used by various actors in the judicial systems.

E-justice is a central element of the European strategy and cooperation, and e-CODEX is established as a reference project for the digitalization of cross-border judicial cooperation.

How to remove barriers and obstacles for citizens, businesses and legal professionals in Europe? What are the advantages of the e-CODEX platform for the judicial universe? What European challenges must interoperability between systems have to address?

TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION FOR BETTER JUSTICE

Technology at the service of Justice offers a new take on things, sometimes radical, but always capable of bringing added value to the technological systems of Justice.

The companies' vision, many of which are part of the 'Legal Tech ecosystem', embodied in products that use cutting-edge technologies, are the starting point for reflecting on Industry 4.0 and its impact on justice.

How can technology support the achievement of people-centred justice? What innovations can be introduced to improve the citizen's relationship with Justice and respond to their legal needs? What is the environment (political, social, financial) that favours the development and dissemination of innovative products in Justice?

DIGITAL ETHICS, CYBERSECURITY AND DIGITAL IDENTITY

The digital society raises ethical and privacy control issues in the cybersecurity world. Today's global presence of technology in the lives of citizens, companies, States (*latu sensu*), entails risks that must be identified, prevented and controlled. Fundamental rights, information security and, ultimately, democracy and the rule of law, can be called into question.

Is digitalisation a loss of privacy? How is digital ethics built? How does one guarantee fundamental rights in the digital world? How to prevent cybercrime?

What justice do we want in the future?

The High-Level Conference "For a people-centred e-Justice" proves that the relevant stakeholders are all committed to a Europe that is resilient and capable of responding to the goal of a fair access to Justice to all. A Justice capable of resolving issues, and closer to the user. Technology must be the propeller of this process.

The world is at a turning point where the technological maturity allows justice to produce the most efficient systems in terms of cost and resource optimization. Nevertheless, this evolution relates to the needs generated by the system's operational experience. For a real cultural change when it comes to digital transition, justice systems and e-justice need to be developed around people's legal needs as they experience them, from their perspective.

Only by placing people at the centre of the reforms and transformations of the justice system, developing services more suited to their needs and capacities, can a holistic vision for the justice ecosystem be realized - with the joint commitment of politicians, professional classes, legal tech companies, and all the relevant stakeholders.