

Foreword

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This volume is the result of scientific research conducted by a consortium of four partner universities – Aberdeen, Milan, Osijek, and the University of Zagreb Computing Centre – within the framework of the *Time to Become Digital in Law* (DIGinLaw) Project. The Project, fully funded by the European Union under the Erasmus+ programme, was carried out from 1 April 2021 to 30 September 2023.

Taking advantage of the pervasive digital transformations that shape every aspect of our society and lives, the DIGinLaw Project aimed to address the digital demands in higher education and legal research by enhancing the creation and development of digital literacy and competencies that are greatly needed in the legal labour market. The Project aspired to create an open and inclusive society of digital legal knowledge and literacy to benefit lecturers, students, academics, and stakeholders in the legal labour market. To achieve this ambitious goal, the team members participating in the consortium committed themselves to providing high-quality training on digital competencies to students from partner universities and ensuring open access to the results of their joint scientific research on the effects of digitalization on law and legal education.

As part of these efforts, fostered through the continued collaboration and exchange among partners, this volume retraces the scientific research conducted during the Project on the overall theme of the impact of digitalization on law and legal education. It provides opportunities for further discussions on related cross-cutting themes. To do so, it gathers contributions from scholars and researchers from universities worldwide who are experts in various fields within the broader area of legal research.

The pervasiveness and ubiquity of digital technologies and the advent of information society entail multiple transformations and social changes. As digital technologies continue to evolve and permeate countless aspects of social interactions, work relations, political participation, and business and financial transactions, the need to discuss their private, public, cross-border, and international implications becomes urgent. The transformations fostered by digitalization generate new needs, interests, and conflicts that require harmonization and regulation to improve their economic and societal benefits and, most importantly,

limit the risks and negative consequences they might entail for individuals and society at large.

Among the topics addressed in the volume, new legal realities such as collaborative economic platforms, crowdworking, and banking and financial digital platforms raise significant questions about the need for increased transparency, consumer protection, and the protection of human rights. Regarding the new technologies discussed by the featured contributions, Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based systems present some of the most complex legal issues. Facial recognition technologies, automation, eHealth services, and machine-learning each raise specific questions regarding the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, especially privacy and personal data, as well as other legal issues such as civil liability and system security. Similarly, transfers in Distributed Ledger Technologies (DLT) are challenging the existing legal framework and introducing new legal phenomena such as smart contracts, prompting wider research and discussions on their regulation, legislation, and the demand for guidance.

The volume acknowledges the need for additional clarity in response to these digital transformations and offers a perspective on a variety of substantive and procedural legal issues. Part 1 focuses on the conduct of states in the so-called cyberspace and touches upon a few selected legal considerations, noting the technical difficulties in applying the existing international legal framework to states' cyber activities, both during peacetime and in times of armed conflict. Part 2 of the volume shifts to the private sphere of digitalization and covers four distinct fields of study. Section 1 addresses cross-border financial transactions, discussing topics such as automation, electronic evidence, and digital platforms from a private international law and European perspective. Section 2 focusses on specific issues arising from digitalization relating to personal rights and family matters, including cross-border eHealth, the circulation of public documents, and the regulation of digital services in light of the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Section 3 explores criminal matters and discusses the integration of AI into criminal proceedings from the perspectives of the right of defense and procedural fairness. Section 4 revisits one of the project's objectives; namely, the impact of digitalization on legal training, and discusses a practical case.

Having outlined the structure of this volume, its rationale, and the objectives of the Project from which the research originated, the editors wish to express their sincere gratitude to the European Commission for the financial support that made the Project possible. Special thanks also go to each team member of the participating universities in the consortium: Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek (Croatia), University of Milan (Italy), University of Aberdeen (United Kingdom), and the University of Zagreb Computing Centre (Croatia). Lastly, the editors wish to extend their heartfelt gratitude to the

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