



Justice Beyond Borders: Human-Centred Innovation, Institutional Resilience and the Future of Court Administration



EDITORIALS

LUIS MARÍA PALMA 

The administration of justice in the twenty-first century finds itself standing at an extraordinary historical crossroads. Besides of having to comply with its traditional task of adjudicating disputes, courts throughout the world are increasingly confronted with the far broader and more demanding responsibility of preserving legitimacy, protecting human dignity, ensuring institutional resilience and adapting prudently to technological and social transformation on an unprecedented scale in modern legal history.

Across jurisdictions, legal traditions and institutional cultures, judicial systems are being challenged simultaneously by phenomena that transcend national boundaries, digitalisation, artificial intelligence, growing demands for transparency, rising social vulnerability, geopolitical instability, information asymmetry, economic disruption, pressure upon judicial independence, and rising public expectations concerning accessibility, efficiency and accountability.

The present issue of the *International Journal for Court Administration* offers a particularly timely and intellectually rich reflection upon these global challenges. Although the contributions originate from diverse legal systems and methodological traditions, they reveal a remarkably coherent underlying theme: the future of justice depends increasingly upon the quality of judicial administration, institutional design, ethical leadership, interdisciplinary thinking, and the capacity of courts to remain profoundly human institutions amidst accelerating technological and organisational transformation.

Indeed, perhaps the most important unifying thread across the contributions gathered in this issue is the rising recognition that court administration can no longer be viewed as merely technical or bureaucratic: it occupies today a central constitutional function. Therefore, questions concerning access to jurisprudence, procedural efficiency, digital transformation, judicial independence, institutional accountability, criminal justice reform and organisational resilience lie at the very heart of rule of law itself.



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KEYWORDS:

Court Administration;
Judicial Innovation;
Artificial Intelligence;
Judicial Independence;
Institutional Resilience;
Digital Transformation;
Judicial Governance

TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Luis María Palma, 'Justice Beyond Borders: Human-Centred Innovation, Institutional Resilience and the Future of Court Administration' (2026) 17(1) *International Journal for Court Administration* 1. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36745/ijca.864>

This broader understanding of court administration reflects one of the defining developments of contemporary constitutional democracies: the deepening interdependence between judicial legitimacy and constitutional governance. Courts are now also evaluated by their accessibility, transparency, adaptability, communication practices, technological competence, procedural fairness and capacity to respond effectively to rapidly evolving societal realities.

The issue opens with Simon Chvojka's timely and sophisticated contribution, "Case Law Matters, and So Should Access: A Call for Greater Public Availability of Case Law". The article examines a critical yet often overlooked dimension of access to justice: meaningful public access to jurisprudence.

As judicial decisions steadily shape the practical content of legal systems, access to case law becomes essential for transparency but also for legal certainty, equality before the law, and legitimacy. The author persuasively demonstrates that many jurisdictions still lack coherent frameworks for the structured and durable publication of judicial decisions.

Particularly compelling is the distinction between the individual dimension of publication, linked to transparency and accountability, and the general dimension, connected with precedential value and legal certainty. The article highlights one of the central challenges of contemporary judicial governance: ensuring that judicial information is not merely available, but genuinely accessible.

Its emphasis on structured metadata, authoritative repositories, and intelligent organisation of jurisprudence is especially relevant in an era of artificial intelligence and judicial innovation. As courts progressively rely on AI-assisted research and digital tools, the quality and accessibility of judicial data become matters of constitutional significance. In this respect, Chvojka's contribution extends beyond publication policy to engage broader questions of judicial transparency, digital constitutionalism, and access to legal knowledge.

Paolo D'Anselmi's article, "Explaining Different Conviction Rules Across Different Legal Systems: A Comparative Exercise", offers a highly original and methodologically sophisticated reflection on comparative judicial analysis.

Rather than accepting conviction-rate statistics at face-value, the article examines the hidden assumptions behind comparative measurements and proves how indicators, when isolated from broader institutional and procedural contents, can produce misleading conclusions.

The contribution serves as an important reminder that quantitative evaluation acquires meaning only when accompanied by qualitative institutional understanding. As courts progressively adopt performance indicators and managerial tools, D'Anselmi highlights the need for methodological caution and contextual analysis.

Particularly valuable is the work's focus on planning policies and organisational structures, showing how administrative design influences judicial outcomes. Courts are more than legal institutions: they are complex organisations whose structures and incentives shape decision-making processes.

In this respect, the article makes a significant contribution to contemporary debates on judicial governance, performance measurement, and institutional reform, reminding us that sustainable development requires not only procedural change but also thoughtful leadership, strategic planning, and organisational coherence.

Aminu Gheni's "Digital Transformation in the Algerian Administrative Justice System" explores one of the defining challenges of contemporary court administration: the digitalisation of judicial systems.

A remarkable strength of the article lies in its recognition that digital transformation is more than a technological process, being also an institutional and cultural one. Whilst digitalisation can improve efficiency and accessibility, it also raises important concerns regarding procedural fairness, cybersecurity, data protection, judicial training, and organisational adaptation.

Particularly insightful is the author's emphasis on the role of judges themselves in this change. Judicial transformation ultimately depends on human capacity, professional culture, and institutional leadership.

This perspective resonates with broader international debates surrounding artificial intelligence and the future of adjudication, where questions of transparency, accountability, and human oversight are becoming progressively more significant. Gheni's contribution wisely reminds us that technological progress within the courts must remain anchored in access to justice, procedural fairness, and the fundamental values that sustain judicial legitimacy.

The longitudinal study by Pedro Miguel Alves Ribeiro Correia, Susana Antas Videira and Sandra Marques Pereira, "*Critical Junctures, Reform Sustainability, and Judicial Performance in Portugal: A Longitudinal Study of Civil Enforcement Actions*", makes a significant contribution to one of the most complex dimensions of judicial reform: sustaining improvement over time.

Drawing upon more than four-hundred months of civil enforcement data, the authors provide a rare long-term perspective on institutional reform and post-pandemic judicial performance. Particularly noteworthy is their finding that the post-COVID period may expose vulnerabilities not immediately visible during the crisis itself, highlighting the growing importance of institutional resilience.

The article contributes meaningfully to international discussions on strategic judicial management, organisational learning, and sustainable reform. It also reminds us that judicial performance cannot be understood through isolated indicators alone but must be assessed within wider institutional and societal contexts.

Its broader lesson is clear: successful judicial systems combine innovation with stability, maintaining reform gains through effective leadership, institutional coordination, teamwork, and administrative continuity. Besides of regulatory change, sustainable improvement increasingly depends on the capacity of institutions to adapt without sacrificing legitimacy or coherence.

Olha Maletova, Maryna Utkina, Kateryna Yanishevskaya and Natalia Savitska's article, "Judicial Internal Independence Through the Lens of Legal Responsibility", examines one of the most important challenges facing constitutional democracies: balancing judicial independence and accountability.

Against the backdrop of contemporary geopolitical uncertainty, the authors offer a nuanced analysis of disciplinary responsibility, criminal liability, and the safeguards necessary to protect internal judicial independence. Particularly valuable is their focus on integrity indicators and evaluative mechanisms within the Ukrainian judiciary, demonstrating that independence requires not just protection from external

interference but also internal structures that preserve impartiality and institutional legitimacy.

The work's engagement with European standards highlights the rising transnational nature of judicial governance and rule-of-law protections. Its broader significance extends beyond Ukraine, addressing concerns shared by many jurisdictions confronting political pressure, public scrutiny, and institutional contestation.

Ultimately, the contribution reminds us that judicial legitimacy depends not only on formal guarantees of independence, but also on professional integrity, transparent accountability mechanisms, and a sustained commitment to public service.

Finally, Peter C. Kiefer's review essay, "Can We Reimagine Criminal Justice? A Book Review of *Incognito: Rethinking Criminal Justice Through Neuroscience*" introduces a thought-provoking and deeply human dimension to this issue.

Drawing upon David Eagleman's work, the review explores how advances in neuroscience may reshape our understanding of punishment, rehabilitation, and public safety. In doing so, it engages broader international discussions concerning behavioural science, restorative justice, therapeutic jurisprudence, and evidence-based criminal policy.

The contribution invites reflection upon the fundamental purposes of criminal justice and whether traditional punitive models remain adequate in light of evolving knowledge about human behaviour, trauma, and cognitive development.

Its significance extends beyond criminal law to questions of court administration, public policy, and institutional design. Above all, the work reminds us that judicial innovation is not solely technological. Some of the most transformative changes may emerge from a deeper reconsideration of the human assumptions that underpin our legal systems and our understanding of justice itself.

Taken together, the contributions in this issue illustrate the increasingly international and interdisciplinary character of contemporary judicial challenges. Questions such as artificial intelligence, digitalisation, transparency, judicial independence, institutional resilience, access to justice, accountability, and human rights now transcend national boundaries and require sustained international dialogue.

At the same time, these articles remind us that no technological innovation or managerial reform can replace the fundamentally human dimensions of justice. Ethical leadership, professional integrity, collegial cooperation, careful reasoning, and commitment to public service remain essential foundations of legitimate judicial systems.

As courts enter an era shaped by artificial intelligence and automation, the central challenge is not choosing between technology and humanity but ensuring that innovation remains guided by fundamental legal values, constitutional guarantees, and human dignity. This requires leaders and institutions capable of combining efficiency with fairness, digitalisation with accessibility, and modernisation with an unwavering commitment to the rule of law.

The *International Journal for Court Administration* remains committed to fostering this international and interdisciplinary conversation. It is our sincere hope that the contributions gathered in this issue will advance the ongoing pursuit of more effective, resilient, and humane systems of justice.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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*International Journal
for Court Administration*
DOI: 10.36745/ijca.864

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Luis María Palma, 'Justice Beyond Borders: Human-Centred Innovation, Institutional Resilience and the Future of Court Administration' (2026) 17(1) *International Journal for Court Administration*
1. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36745/ijca.864>

Published: 12 June 2026

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