



JAR-Association Inaugural Second Conference

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The Justice Administration Research Association¹ (JAR-Association) was established at the end of 2019 to promote multidisciplinary research and exchanges of experience in the field of justice administration from a variety of perspectives (institutional, legal, political science, economics, organizational, managerial, etc.). Among our other activities, including monthly e-Seminars, project and paper discussions on topics of current interest in the field, and international colloquia, JAR-Association organises a biennial 'face-to-face' conference.

In this special edition we present selected papers from the association's second such conference, held at the University of Limoges, France on 11–13 June 2025. This conference's theme 'Judicial Systems in Transition: Reforms, Innovations and Justice' reflects on the challenges faced by present day judicial systems, the difficulties encountered in the implementation of reforms and, through a longer lens, an



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1 <https://jar-association.eu/>.

exploration of the legacy of introduced innovations.² It successfully continues the focus initiated at the first edition of our conference in Rome in 2023.

The papers presented at the conference examined a diverse range of topics related to this theme.³ For this special issue we have selected four that take up the challenge of evaluating and assessing the legacy of reforms designed to address particular challenges in the justice system. Two further contributions focus on two specific contemporary challenges; one for the judicial role and the other for the judiciary as an institution.

The first paper, by Hammergren, an expert professional contribution from an experienced practitioner in judicial reform, focusses on donor-instigated reform in the justice sector. Her assessment of the outcomes of a lengthy history of such reforms and perspective on the road ahead, highlight both the challenges for achieving reform and also the potential for unintended consequences of introduced innovations.

Moving from a macro approach to an examination of a specific reform mechanism, the paper by Cavallini, Ferrari and Vinceti takes an in-depth look at the Italian system for evaluating the performance of judges and prosecutors; a system which they suggest fails to achieve its objective. Here they suggest the real challenge for any such system is to redefine the purpose of evaluation, to make it a genuine tool for responsibility and professional development to enhance public trust in the justice system.

Bulica examines another specific reform designed to enhance accountability; Albania's judicial vetting program. Her empirical investigation and analysis reveal the challenge to be one of achieving sustained improvement, rather than short-term transformation.

Turning to contemporary challenges in judicial administration, Piqtek examines the question of 'who speaks for the courts' in his analysis of the mechanisms for enabling institutional court communication in the European context. His examination raises interesting questions as to the extent to which such mechanisms should be formalised and regulated, and how this should be done, and the competencies required for those who undertake the communication roles.

Olshanowski's paper then considers the increasing tendency for judges to also engage in extra-judicial roles, appearing increasingly visible in a variety of academic, educational, advisory, and civic contexts, including social media. He examines the benefits and risks associated with these additional activities, their implications for both open justice and judicial independence, and how best a healthy balance may be struck between these two objectives.

We close this special issue with a contribution by Ontanu, Tsvetkova, and Velicogna exploring the notion of a European Judicial Data Space. Their thoughtful analysis identifies the limitations of focussing solely on digital reforms as technical or regulatory tasks, highlighting the importance of approaches to governance that sustain a focus on trust, procedural fairness, and public value. This important point, we suggest, has resonance for all aspects of justice system reform, making the piece a valuable final anchoring point for this special edition.

2 The call for proposals is available on the association's website: <https://jar-association.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Call-for-Proposals-JAR-A-Conference-2025.pdf>.

3 See the conference programme: https://jar-association.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/3JuneJAR-Association_Limoges_Conference_ProgrammeDraft.pdf.

This selection is, of necessity, representative only of some aspects of the Conference; we had much debate and discussion on a variety of important and interesting topics in the formal and less formal conference sessions. We hope to continue and advance these at JAR-Association's next conference to be held in Madrid in 2027.

We would like to take the opportunity of this editorial to thank the International Journal for Court Administration. We sincerely appreciate its support in publishing this special issue.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Elena Alina Ontanu is a Managing Editor of the journal. Caroline Expert-Foulquier, Marco Fabri, Gar Yein Ng and Anne Wallace are members of the journal's Editorial Team. The other authors have no competing interests to declare.

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