PUBLIC LAW IN CHALLENGING TIMES: GOVERNANCE, RESILIENCE, AND EUROPEANIZATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY

10–11 October 2026

Union University Law School Belgrade

The ICON•S Balkan Chapter Inaugural Conference 2026

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Welcome to the Inaugural Conference of the ICON•S Balkans Chapter, entitled "Public Law in Challenging Times: Governance, Resilience, and Europeanization in the 21st Century". We are delighted to welcome you to Belgrade!

The ICON•S Balkans Chapter did not emerge overnight. It is the product of many conversations, collaborations, ideas, and perhaps a few more emails and Zoom meetings than anyone would care to count. Because building a regional scholarly community is not unlike constitutional reform: It requires patience, compromise, persistence, and a willingness to keep showing up. Fortunately, creating an academic network is usually less controversial than constitutional reform, although, as academics, we are perfectly capable of turning even a conference panel into a constitutional crisis.

This conference marks an important milestone in that journey. It brings together scholars from across Southeast Europe and beyond to begin building a lasting regional community dedicated to the study of public law. Few regions offer a richer laboratory for examining questions of governance, constitutionalism, democracy, institutional resilience, and legal transformation. Our legal systems, constitutional traditions, and political experiences are remarkably diverse, but they also resist simple explanations. If there is one lesson our region teaches particularly well, it is that reality has a stubborn tendency to ignore neat theoretical models. Yet despite our differences, we often find ourselves asking remarkably similar questions about institutions and processes.

Over the next two days, we hope this conference will reflect the spirit of ICON•S: Intellectual curiosity, methodological openness, and genuine engagement across disciplines and jurisdictions. We are especially pleased to welcome early-career scholars and students. Every academic community depends on fresh ideas and new voices courageous enough to ask the questions that more senior scholars have not (dared to) ask.

Most importantly, we hope this gathering is only the beginning of the collaborations we build, the friendships we form, and the community we create together.

Welcome to Belgrade, welcome to the inaugural conference of the ICON•S Balkans Chapter!

Maja Sahadžić
Utrecht University

Martin Belov
Sofia University 'St. Kliment Ohridski'

Co-Chairs, ICON•S Balkans Chapter

It is a great privilege and honor for our School of Law at Union University to host the ICON·S Balkans Chapter Inaugural Conference and to mark the beginning of the celebration of our 25th Anniversary.

Founded in 2001 by several of the most distinguished Serbian law professors and judges who faced political persecution during the 1990s, our Law School has established a two-and-a-half-decade tradition of university-level legal education. Despite its relatively recent founding and specific location in Belgrade's business district, Union University Law School Belgrade has rapidly become one of Serbia's most distinguished higher education institutions, educating generations of graduates who now serve as judges, lawyers, legal scholars, in-house counsel, and other legal professionals. Our faculty members, past and present, have led the way in various legal fields in Serbia, earning international recognition for their academic achievements. Our Law Review stands as the highest-ranked in Serbia and is featured in major international databases such as Web of Science and SCOPUS.

We invite conference participants to immerse themselves in the vibrant and dynamic spirit of our Law School – a place where passionate thinkers gather because they believe ideas truly shape the world. Here, curiosity thrives among those eager to explore how law intersects with public policy, business, technology, and the complexities of human needs and perceptions. Our community is captivated by the strength of the rule of law, attentive to the ripple effects of policy changes, and dedicated to advancing the legal profession in the service of Serbian society.

The theme "Public Law in Challenging Times: Governance, Resilience, and Europeanization in the 21st Century" was selected for this Conference in recognition of the pervasive influence of political crises on constitutional democracy at global, regional, and local levels, whether originating in war, populism, or authoritarian resurgence. It is anticipated that the exchange of experience, knowledge, and insights at this Conference will facilitate the development of practical solutions to the challenges currently confronting constitutional democracies.

We wish you a productive exchange of knowledge, valuable networking, and an enjoyable stay in Belgrade. We look forward to a successful conference!

Violeta Beširević
Union University Law School Belgrade
Member of the Organizing Committee

KONRAD ADENAUER STIFTUNG
RULE OF LAW ▪ SOUTH EAST EUROPE

At KAS, our foundational mission in this region has always been the consolidation of democracy, the protection of fundamental rights, and the unwavering promotion of the rule of law. When we look at the central theme of this conference—Public Law in Challenging Times: Governance, Resilience, and Europeanization in the 21st Century—we see a direct reflection of the most pressing realities and structural challenges we encounter in our daily work across Southeast Europe. The structural pressures facing our legal systems are immense. We are no longer dealing with isolated episodes of crisis, but rather a complex, overlapping landscape of financial, political, and institutional stress. In this context, the role of public law cannot be overstated. It is the vital anchor that ensures the exercise of public power remains accountable, even when emergency governance and executive discretion threaten to become the norm rather than the exception.

As an organization deeply committed to the European integration of the Balkans, KAS views the themes of this conference as critical pillars for the region's future. We are particularly invested in exploring these developments alongside the participants: The panel on Governance in Times of Crisis is examining how legal frameworks can prevent the normalization of exceptional powers and protect the fundamental checks and balances required in a functioning democracy. To ensure (constitutional) resilience, we have to move beyond mere institutional survival to foster a robust legal culture where judicial independence and societal trust are fiercely defended against democratic backsliding. And not to forget the nuances of Europeanization: It is necessary to understand European integration not merely as a mechanical alignment of laws, but as a dynamic structural test for domestic legal systems, requiring both adaptation and the safeguarding of constitutional identity. True constitutional resilience is not found in the concentration of authority during a crisis, but in a system's ability to endure profound stress while remaining uncompromising rule of law principles.

Dr. Pavel Usvatov
Director of KAS Rule of Law
Programme Southeast Europe
Supporter of the Conference

PANEL SESSIONS I (1-8) October 10, 2026

13:30–15:00

Panel 3: Book Panel: *Europeanisation of Access to Justice in Environmental Matters: The Aarhus Convention in the Balkans*, edited by Bojana Todorović and Roberto Caranta

Classroom 1

Chair: **Bojana Todorović**

Discussants: **Roberto Caranta**
Mirjana Drenovak Ivanović
Ana Knežević Bojović
Hristina Vojvodić

Panel 4: Internal and External Influence on State Tax Politics

Classroom 2

Chair: Márton Varjú

Antonio Marinello

Tax Sovereignty in Times of Crisis

Svetislav Kostić

Reliance on Modern Technologies for the Purpose of Limiting the Potential for Abuse of Authority by the Executive Branch of the Government

Vladimir Tiutiuriukov, Lidija Živković

EU's Global Minimum Tax Reform (Pillar Two): its Influence and Challenges for the States of Western Balkans

Emma Niewald

Russian Political Financial Influence in the Western Balkans

Jelena Račić

The Right to Appeal in Public Procurement – The Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Role of a "Positive Legislator"

so, it explores the extent to which these Balkan countries comply with requirements stemming from Article 9 of the Aarhus Convention, and whether, despite national differences, it is possible to talk about Europeanisation of access to justice in environmental matters.

The panel aims is to introduce the audience with the book's overarching ideas and its relevance for both academics and practitioners, as well as for the civil society sector and policy makers grappling with the normative and practical challenges around environmental access to justice – both in and beyond Europe. The duration of the panel is envisaged to last approximately an hour and a half. We will open with a few introductory words on the book, followed by the editors' portrayal of the process leading up to the book, including the reasons for embarking on this academic journey, the aims of the book, the methodological approach and some of the principal conclusions. To ensure that the panel is dynamic and interactive, we would then open the floor for reactions/comments (10-15 mins). In the second part of the panel, our panelists will present their impressions of the book and focus on particular aspects of the book topic, depending on their expertise (the exact order of presentations and topics are to be determined). Then we would open the floor for discussion and comments from the audience, where we expect some of our other contributors as well. We will contact the Publisher to try to obtain advance copies of the book, as well as pdf flyers with a 20% discount on purchases.

Panel 4 Internal and External Influence on State Tax Politics

Antonio Marinello, **Tax Sovereignty in Times of Crisis**

Over the past few decades, two closely linked factors have significantly reduced the State's fiscal sovereignty regarding direct taxation. On the one hand, the a-territorial nature of the global economy has fueled aggressive tax planning, especially by multinational enterprises. On the other hand, States have also entered this arena, engaging in a real "tax competition". A crucial question: is tax competition between States a manifestation of State sovereignty?

The "race-to-the-bottom" in rates, the treatment of "tax-as-a-commodity" and the "international tax market" have become obligatory paths, necessary choices that struggle to guarantee effective benefits or positive externalities for States.

As a result, tax competition has negative effects on fical and redistributive policies of the States and, of course, on their welfare systems, on sustainable development of their economies and societies.