

Editorial

We are honoured to present this special edition of the European Journal of Legal Education, reflecting the active and influential work of the European Law Faculties Association (ELFA) over the thirty years since its foundation. As editors, we have valued the experience, patience and determination of our colleagues: Konstantin Tanev and Boyka Cherneva of the University of National and World Economy in Bulgaria; Greta Bosch as editor in chief and other members of the editorial team who provided much moral and practical support, our patient and thoughtful authors and a group of dedicated peer reviewers from a number of institutions across Europe.

Many of the contributions focus, as might be expected, on the history and achievements of ELFA. The tone is set in Andreas Ziegler's article on 'Cooperation in legal education in Europe - the role of the European Law Faculties Association (ELFA) in its first thirty years of existence and the challenges for the future'. Laurence Gormley adds to this in his comprehensive tabulation of ELFA thesis awards from 2013, demonstrating a phenomenal range, both geographically and in content, as well as the enduring influence of winners and those considered *proxime accessit* in universities and institutions across the region.

We then move to the pan-European significance of legal education at both conceptual and practical levels. Both the keynote speech from the 2025 ELFA conference, by European Court of Human Rights judge Diana Kovatcheva, and an article by British researchers Jade Brailsford and Simon Sneddon ('Embedding freedom of expression in legal education: rights-based pedagogy and participatory practice') emphasise the significance of the European Convention on Human Rights for our communities and demonstrate its place in legal education.

Legal education, both in its current regulatory and practical form, and as we look towards an increasingly digitised future, requires us to consider, and share, our own perspectives on initiatives, challenges and solutions. In the regulatory and practical context, two authors discuss challenges for legal education in countries 5000 kilometres apart. Ibidun Olude and her colleagues, in 'The

impact of legal literacy in enhancing access to legal aid for vulnerable groups: an innovation for law clinics in Nigeria's criminal justice system' explore the challenges, but also the benefits of legal clinics in Nigeria. In 'European pathways and methodological foundations in legal education: the need for Georgian legal reform, digitalisation, and pedagogical innovations' Mikheil Bichia proposes reforms to legal education in Georgia. Key amongst these is the need to address increasing use of technology, and to prepare our students better for it. This theme is pursued – further afield again – by Soukaina Abdallah-Ou-Moussa and Jivko Draganov in their investigation of 'University approaches to the use of AI in Bulgaria and in Morocco'.

A common European symbol for a thirtieth anniversary is a pearl: pearl wedding, *parelhuwelijk*. The symbolism of the pearl is different in different cultures, but we like to think that the connotations of sincerity, patience, endurance and perhaps even strength through hardship, represent ELFA now, and will continue to do so in the future.

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