

Highlights 2020

Public Online Talk and Debate at iCourts by Robert Spano, President of the ECtHR

In May 2020, iCourt organized a large public event open to a global online audience, featuring Judge Robert Spano, who gave his first public talk as new president of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). Originally the event had been planned as a regular conference at iCourts but due to the outbreak of Covid-19 it was turned digital. The talk was followed by a Q & A session with the online audience (sending in questions via Twitter), chaired by the iCourts PI as moderator. The event was co-sponsored by the German Verfassungsblog.de, a journalistic and academic forum for debate on current events and developments in public law and politics. Later in 2020, the conversation between the PI and Judge Spano was published in an academic journal.¹

International Courts in Latin America and the Caribbean: Major Book by iCourts Postdoc

Former iCourts PhD and now assistant professor at the centre, Salvatore Caserta, published in 2020 his book *International Courts in Latin America and the Caribbean: Foundations and Authority* with Oxford University Press' prestigious International Courts and Tribunals Series. The book provides the first in-depth and empirically grounded analysis of the foundations and evolution of the four Latin American and Caribbean regional economic courts: the Central American Court of Justice (CACJ), the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ), the Andean Tribunal of Justice (ATJ), and the Mercosur Permanent Review Court (MPRC). The book demonstrates how these courts' operational path is not necessarily a function of their formally delegated competences or the will of the Member States as scholarship has typically assumed. Rather, it argues, local socio-political contextual factors play a far more decisive role in influencing the direction of regional economic courts during and after their establishment.

LEGALESE: Optimizing Information Search and Strengthen the Rule of Law: New Project

In 2020, Henrik Palmer Olsen from iCourts was awarded a grant of 7.500.000 DKK from the Innovation Fund Denmark's Grand Solutions Programme to explore and optimize case handling by using Natural Language Processing (NLP) for legal information retrieval. By developing NLP specifically tuned to Danish legal language, LEGALESE will develop models that will form the basis for innovative functionalities in new software to make legal information retrieval more efficient and robust. The project builds from state of the art NLP (BERT) and uses a multilingual approach to model generation, with subsequent iterations trained on general Danish legal texts and finally on more specialised text corpora made available by IT company Schultz and the National Social Appeals Board (both partners in the project). The project seeks to develop relevant technology for language processing and de-biasing techniques in law with a view to provide semi-automated assistance tools to both the public and the private sector.

¹ See Publication list no. 17. See also <https://jura.ku.dk/icourts/calendar/2020/judicial-independence-online-public-talk-by-robert-spano/>