

Working Group of the Legal Profession Meeting 2026, 22-23 June, Rotterdam.

Lawyers and the Rule of Law Under Pressure Notice of Meeting

In an era marked by global crises, shifting societal expectations, and rapid technological change, the legal profession and the nature of lawyering are under unprecedented pressure. Lawyers are navigating shifting conceptions of lawyer behaviour and involvement, with complex ethical dilemmas, increasing workloads, a growing demand for faster, more accessible justice and the benefit or pressure of an uncertain digital intrusion. As a result, what it means to be a lawyer must be continually reexamined and redefined.

Our next working group meeting will be in Rotterdam at Erasmus University **from 22nd to 23rd June 2026** (please put these dates in your calendar), thanks to Nina Holvast, who will co-host the Meeting.

As an **Organising theme**, we aim to discuss what it means to be a lawyer under crisis and pressure:

- What do these developments tell us about the nature of lawyering itself?
- How do lawyers uphold the rule of law when the systems that support it are strained?
- What reforms are needed to sustain the profession without compromising its core values?
- Can lawyers continue to serve justice while also protecting their own well-being?
- How have lawyers managed with crises in the past?
- Can we educate Lawyers for turmoil and change?

As usual, these themes are not intended to be prescriptive and all issues, themes and approaches are welcome. Sub-group leaders will wish to develop their own group themes and interests. A list of sub-groups and leaders with emails is included below.

The Working Group Meeting will open with a **Plenary session** based around Rick Abel's five books on "*Defending American Democracy- Resistance to Trump and Trumpism*": How Autocrats are held Accountable; How Autocrats Subvert Elections, How Autocrats Seek Power , How Autocrats Abuse Power and; How Autocrats Attack Expertise (all Routledge, 2023-5). The author will present the series in the context of the Working Group interests. Rick asks for comments on autocracy from other countries.

The **Working Group sessions** will be divided as usual into sub-group sessions and sub-group leaders will organise how many sessions their group needs depending on the number of papers.

We will be asking for Abstracts together with an indication of attendance by 31st January 2026. Registration will be by 28th March 2026.

Further information will be provided on travel, accommodation and Meeting venue Closer to the time as well as opportunities for local areas of interest.

Sub- Groups and Leaders

Sub-group 1: Ethics and Deontology Chair Tamara Butter: <t.t.butter@uva.nl>

Sub-group 2: Family, Policy and the Law. Chairs Benoit Bastard and Mavis

Maclean: benoit.bastard1@gmail.com, mavis.maclean@spi.ox.ac.uk

Sub-group 4: Judiciary. Chairs Nina Holvast and Luca Verzelloni: holvast@law.eur.nl,

luca.verzelloni@unimib.it

Sub-group 6: Access to Justice and Legal Aid. Chair Alan

Paterson: prof.alan.paterson@strath.ac.uk

Sub-group 7: Legal Education. Chair Avrom Sherr: Avrom.Sherr@gmail.com

Sub-group 8: Legal Professional Values and Identities. Chair Hilary Sommerlad :

h.a.k.sommerlad@leeds.ac.uk

Sub-group 10: Women/Gender in the Legal Profession Chair Ulrike Schultz:

ulrike.schultz@fernuni-hagen.de

Sub-group 12: Histories of the Legal Professions Chair Eyal

Katvan: drkatvan@gmail.com

Sub-group 13 Lawyers and Imperialism Chair Sara Dezalay: sara.dezalay@gmail.com

Gender in Customary and Indigenous Law and Proceedings IRC: