

PrAVri

Pravni fakultet u Rijeci



Coding Justice: The Rise of Legal Tech in Croatia's Courts

Ivana Kunda

CICL 2026: 16th Conference on Innovation and Communications
Local, Regional and Global Interests in Innovation, Communications
and Intellectual Property Law
May 21-22, 2026, Szeged, Hungary



**Funded by the
European Union**

NextGenerationEU



Sveučilište u Rijeci
University of Rijeka

From Reluctance to Rollout

How AI quietly entered Croatian courtrooms, and who is steering it?

01

The cautious court

Why legal institutions resist new technology, and what is changing

02

Guardrails first

Fair-trial rights and the EU AI Act define what AI may and may not do

03

Tools on the ground

ANON, the Land-Registry Assistant, and a decision-prediction project

04

Rules vs. risk

Why Croatia regulated before deploying, and what comes next

Courts Are Built to Resist

Legal professions cultivate a conservative stance toward new technology, and courts most of all.

○ Dignity & trust

Justice rests on direct, human contact with the parties.

○ Heavy regulation

Courts uphold the rule of law and individual rights, so the rules bind tightly.

○ Europe's posture

The EU lags the US and China in AI investment, but is far more rights-oriented.

THE OPENING TENSION

“AI systems are slowly making their way into the courtroom.”

In Croatia, that movement begins not in the courts, but in government.

Kunda & Baghrizabehi (2026)

Who Holds the Wheel?

The same shared legal heritage, yet AI in the judiciary is initiated very differently.

CROATIA

Driven by the government

- Ministry of Justice leads, in cooperation with the courts
- Initiatives funded under the National Recovery & Resilience Plan
- Rules drafted alongside the technology (ANON)

SLOVENIA

Driven by the courts

- Supreme Court launches initiatives itself
- Strong adoption, but no governing rules or policy
- Solutions derived from general legal principles

Takeaway: In Croatia, the executive branch is the engine of judicial AI, which is why regulation arrives early.

The Guardrails: AI-in-the-Court

✗ 'AI-as-the-court'

Forbidden.

An AI system cannot replace the judge and render decisions on its own. It cannot guarantee independence, impartiality or transparent reasoning.

✓ 'AI-in-the-court'

Allowed.

AI may assist the court (transcribing, anonymising, searching, summarising) while the human judge keeps every core function.

WHERE THE LINE COMES FROM

Art. 6 ECHR & Art. 47 CFR

The right to a fair trial and an effective remedy, binding in Croatia.

The 'natural judge'

Core judicial functions cannot be outsourced; by analogy, not to AI.

EU AI Act

Recital 61 bars AI for 'final decision-making'; Annex III(8) flags high-risk court AI.

Policy: Cautious by Design

The national strategy sets a deliberately measured tone:

watch best practice abroad first, then adapt it at home, and amend the law to enable digitalisation of public-law procedures.

Announced, not yet seen

A 'National Plan for the Development of AI', promised for 2024, was still unpublished.

A shifting mood

The Minister of Justice (in office since late 2023) voices concern about EU over-regulation and lost competitiveness vs. the US and China, hinting the cautious stance may relax.

THE RESULT

Recent & few

AI initiatives in Croatian courts are few and new, all implemented and funded by the Ministry of Justice, in cooperation with the courts.

Three Tools, Three Stages

All language-based. All bespoke. From live deployment to the drawing board.

OPERATIONAL

ANON

Anonymising & publishing court decisions

STATUS

LIVE since 1 Jan 2025

TYPE

LLM-based

OPERATIONAL

Virtualni asistent

Land-registry & cadastre chatbot for citizens

STATUS

LIVE since Feb 2025

TYPE

LLM chatbot

PLANNED

Predicting decisions

Forecasting case outcomes for citizens & judges

STATUS

Preparatory stage

TYPE

AI / ML

ANON: Opening the Courts

An LLM-based system that anonymises judicial decisions and publishes them on a single public portal, searchable by rich metadata.

WHY IT MATTERS

Publicity and transparency · continuous access to case law · rebuilding public trust in a judiciary long reported as low-trust.

GROUNDING IN LAW

2024 Amendments to the Courts Act + a Ministry bylaw (Nov 2024) set the method of anonymisation, publication and search.

HOW IT WORKS

- 1 Pull**
Downloads decisions from eSpis, 15 days after dispatch
- 2 Anonymise**
Recognises named entities via a built-in 'anonymisation scheme'
- 3 Index**
Recommends indexes & thematic classification
- 4 Publish**
First-instance auto-published; higher courts checked by staff

ANON: Scale & Status

≈ 340,000

decisions from the old SupraNova database, once anonymised entirely by hand, migrated into ANON.

WHAT CHANGED

Before

Court staff anonymised every decision manually.



Now

Automatic & semi-automatic processing frees staff hours.

TESTED IN STAGES

Project team → focus groups at the Supreme Court and municipal courts → pre-production machine-learning on real decisions → full rollout, with courts able to check and correct.

✓ RISK VERDICT

Not a high-risk system under the EU AI Act; a purely ancillary administrative task that does not decide cases.

Virtualni Asistent

An LLM-based chatbot on the OSS *Uređena zemlja* portal, combining cadastral (administrative) and land-registry (judicial) data, trained on a limited domain.

1

Track applications

See the status of land-registry and cadastral filings

2

Generate docs

Produce excerpts and possession listings on demand

3

Explain the basics

Clarify land-registry and cadastral terms in plain language

4

Point the way

Direct users to the right institution or person

5

Forgiving search

Works from partial or even incorrect data; knows local place names

6

Report & resolve

Raise issues through an integrated Helpdesk

A citizen-facing tool: AI brings the justice system closer to the public, without touching how cases are decided.

Predicting Court Decisions

A Ministry project to forecast outcomes by analysing large volumes of decisions to estimate likely cost, duration and result.

For citizens

- Understand the prospects of a case
- Estimate procedural cost & duration
- Bring justice closer, incl. vulnerable groups

For judges

- An additional decision-support tool
- Reference to similar past judgments
- Promote efficiency & uniform case law

THE RULE-OF-LAW RATIONALE

Equal treatment, legal certainty, predictability and harmonised practice: a uniformity Croatia has found notably hard to achieve. Reliance on the EU's Technical Support Instrument 2025 is intended to help.

THE RISKS

Self-reinforcing decisions instead of independently reasoned, institutionalised historical bias, predicted decision may pressure judges (automation bias to follow algorithmic outcome), obligations under the AI Act.

Efficiency vs. Fundamental Rights

AUTOMATION BIAS

Humans over-rely on machines.

Even with a tool as administrative as Slovenia's Tipko, some reviewers 'auto-confirmed' outputs without checking. Overworked judges could one day accept AI drafts as final.

THE RISKS

Self-reinforcing decisions instead of independently reasoned, institutionalised historical bias, predicted decision may pressure judges (automation bias to institutional pressure to follow algorithmic outcome), obligations under the AI Act.

TWO ROADS TO RISK CONTROL

✓ **Croatia: regulated first**

ANON was prepared at the regulatory level, through amendments to core legislation and a detailed bylaw, before going live.

▪ **Slovenia: rules still missing**

Successful tools, but no governing rules and, more worryingly, no resolute policy. Partakers must improvise from general legal principles.

On the upside:

the slow, gradual introduction of AI is itself a safeguard: it leaves room to identify risks and craft bespoke rules before tools mature.

Coding Justice, Carefully

1

Government-led

In Croatia, judicial AI is initiated and funded by the executive, not the courts.

2

Ancillary, not adjudicative

ANON and the Land-Registry Assistant are live because they serve administration, not decision-making, so they fall outside the AI Act's high-risk tier.

3

Rules before reach

Croatia's instinct is to legislate as it deploys; the harder tools (decision prediction) must be designed so efficiency never erodes fair-trial rights.

4

Slow is a feature

Gradual adoption buys time for risk identification and bespoke regulation: the balance to strike between efficiency and fundamental rights.

BASED ON THE PUBLISHED CHAPTER

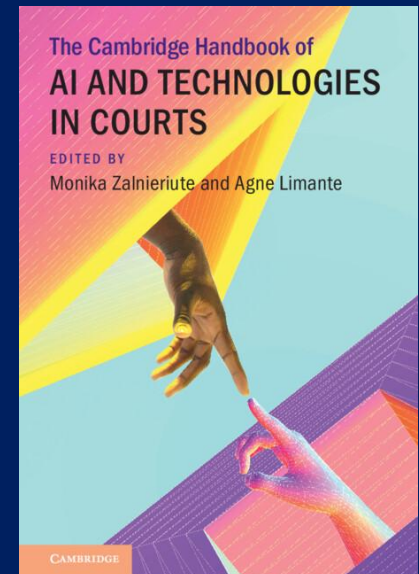
AI and Courts in Central Europe: Croatia and Slovenia

Ivana Kunda & Denis Baghrizabehi

in Agnė Limantė and Monika Zalnieriute (eds.),

The Cambridge Handbook of AI and Technologies in Courts, CUP, 2026

[cambridge.org/core/books/cambridge-handbook-of-ai-and-technologies-in-courts](https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/cambridge-handbook-of-ai-and-technologies-in-courts)



Thank you for the attention!

Legal disclaimer:

This paper has been written and presented within the scope of the project „TECHNO-IUS: Legal and Ethical Implications of the Dehumanisation of the Justice and Public Administration through Legal Technology” (uniri-mzi-25-31), funded by European Union – NextGenerationEU via the Croatian National Recovery and Resilience Plan 2021-2026, in conjunction with the University of Rijeka, Faculty of Law Programme Financing. The views and opinions expressed are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the European Union or the European Commission. Neither the European Union nor the European Commission can be held responsible for them.



**Funded by the
European Union**
NextGenerationEU