

XIV AIDP Symposium for Young Penalists

CRIMINAL LAW IN THE AGE OF TRANSITIONS

BETWEEN SACRED COWS* AND CORE VALUES OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEMS

CALL FOR PAPERS
Utrecht, 9-10 April 2026



* someone or something that has been accepted or respected for a long time and that people are afraid or unwilling to criticize or question

STICHTING TER BEVORDERING VAN STRAFRECHTELIJK ONDERZOEK UTRECHT - **BESOU**

**CRIMINAL LAW IN THE AGE OF TRANSITIONS
BETWEEN SACRED COWS AND CORE VALUES OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEMS**

Call for Papers

International Association of Penal Law (AIDP)

XIV AIDP Symposium for Young Penalists
Collaboration between Utrecht University and Maastricht University
Location: Johanna Hudig-building, Utrecht, the Netherlands

9-10 April 2026

Abstracts deadline: 28 November 2025

In recent years, the world has been marked by profound disruptions, crisis, and transformations. The COVID-19 pandemic, geopolitical tensions, the rise of extreme-right political movements, and the escalating effects of climate change have tested the resilience of legal systems across the globe. Simultaneously, the rapid advancement of artificial intelligence and other technologies is reshaping society and the law in unprecedented ways. In light of these developments, it has become increasingly clear that the world is facing an era of transitions, one in which long-standing assumptions about the law, justice, and governance are being re-evaluated. Criminal law and criminal justice systems, as a reflection of societal values and an instrument of control, are inevitably affected by these transitions.

Living through a period of transitions forces us to critically review what we once viewed as the “sacred cows” of criminal law—those long-established principles and practices that were considered beyond reproach.¹ While this reassessment does not necessarily mean abandoning these values, it calls for a reflection on if, and how, they need to evolve to remain applicable in our rapidly changing world. How should criminal law respond to technological developments that blur the lines of criminal responsibility? What role should it play in addressing transnational crises, from climate-related crime to new forms of political violence? And to what extent do traditional punitive approaches remain effective in ensuring justice in increasingly complex and interconnected societies?

The Symposium seeks to explore these pressing questions, fostering a debate on the evolving role of criminal law at national, supranational, and international levels. Contributions from diverse legal traditions and interdisciplinary perspectives—including criminology, psychology, and political studies—are encouraged to shed light on how criminal law is adapting (or resisting adaptation) to the transformations of our time.

¹ A. Klip, Core Values for Criminal Justice Systems, [AIDP-IAPL XXIIth International Congress of Penal Law concept paper](#), 2.

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We invite the submission of abstracts that may address one of the following **non-exhaustive** topics and sub-topics:

1. Constitutional and legal foundations in transition

As criminal law adapts to new realities, constitutional principles and traditional legal frameworks are being tested. Topic of interest may include: (i) the shift towards preventive criminal law and the growing role of prevention in sentencing, and its implications for the protection of individual rights; (ii) the place for restorative justice; (iii) the underlying symbolism in European substantive criminal law; (iv) the pressure on fundamental principles such as the protection of the rule of law, the ultima ratio principle; (v) critical analysis of the theoretical foundations in light of the expansion of criminal law and the increase in punishment across various legal systems around the world, etc.

2. Social and political challenges to criminal justice

Criminal justice systems do not operate in a vacuum but are deeply affected by the social and political contexts in which they function. We invite papers that discuss: (i) the increasing cultural and political sensitivity in criminal justice, including the role of race, gender, and cultural differences in criminal proceedings, as well as the challenges of crimmigration and the criminalization of violence and discrimination against marginalized communities such as women, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and minorities; (ii) the impact of a polarized, post-truth society on criminal justice, particularly in relation to diminishing trust in judicial institutions, the role of political influence on justice, and the erosion of human rights protections.

3. The evolving role of actors in criminal justice

The roles of key actors in criminal justice are changing in response to societal shifts. We seek papers that explore the growing influence of victims in criminal procedures, the transformation of the prosecutor's role, particularly as a "public crimefighter", and the shifting dynamics of state versus private authority in enforcement and regulation.

4. Technological transformations in criminal justice

Advancements in digitalisation and artificial intelligence are reshaping criminal law. We welcome papers that address: (i) the increasing reliance on digital evidence and AI in criminal investigations and court proceedings, as well as the implications for privacy and fairness; (ii) the use of AI in crime prevention, the role of digital platforms in legal processes, and the risks associated with the growing dependence on AI in criminal justice systems.

5. Environment and sustainability in criminal justice systems

The intersection of law and climate change protection is a complex and evolving domain. It involves holding industries and governments accountable for climate change damage and addressing the role of international criminal law in preventing large-scale degradation. Effective enforcement across

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borders remains challenging due to jurisdictional complexities. Additionally, the sustainability of criminal justice systems is crucial, balancing punitive measures with rehabilitation and deterrence. Defining jurisdiction in climate change cases is contentious, as the damage often transcends national borders, necessitating international cooperation and intricate legal principles.

Call for papers

PhD students, postdoctoral researchers, early-career academics and professionals are invited to submit an abstract (length: max. 500 words) on these and related questions. Abstracts must be in English and submitted by **28 November 2025** to this email: youngpenalistsnl@gmail.com along with contact and affiliation information, and a short CV (max. 1 page).

Please note that selected participants will be expected to send a draft version of their paper by **23 March 2026**. This will allow a more fruitful discussion amongst the panellists.

About the XIV YPC Symposium

This symposium is the 14th symposium organised by the International Association of Penal Law ([AIDP](#)) and by the AIDP Young Penalists Committee ([YPC](#)). It aligns with the scientific agenda of the AIDP for the 2024-2029 period, centred around “[Core Values for Criminal Justice Systems](#)”. The symposium aims to gather contributions from young scholars across the 4 sections of the XIIth International Congress of Penal Law: Section 1 - The Place of Criminal Law in Our Times; Section 2 - Gender and Sexual Identity in Criminal Law; Section 3 - Rule of Law and the Independence of the Criminal Justice System; Section 4-Climate Change and Criminal Law.

The Symposium will be jointly hosted by the Netherlands National Group of the International Association of Penal Law (*Gezelschap voor Internationaal Strafrecht - GIS*), the young section of the GIS ([YOUNGIS](#)), the University of Maastricht and three research centres from Utrecht University (RENFORCE, UCall and Montaigne). The Symposium will be held on 9 and 10 April 2026 in Utrecht, the Netherlands (in the [Johanna Hudig](#)-building). The Symposium will mainly take place in person, but some presentations can be hybrid.

Selected papers presented at the Symposium will be published as a special volume of the [RIDP Libri series](#).

The scientific committee of the Symposium is composed of Isabelle Gibson, Dawid Marko, Gaetano Ancona, Alice Giannini, Roos Klomberg, and Domenico Rosani. The main purpose of this symposium series is to foster a community of young criminal law scholars from around the world.

Participation in the Symposium is free. Unfortunately, the speakers’ travel expenses and accommodation costs cannot be covered by the organiser.

For any information, questions, or doubts please email us at: youngpenalistsnl@gmail.com.