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The Global Rule of Law Conference in Cascais

The International Conference on “The Rule of Law and the Administration of Justice” brought together distinguished judges, university professors and legal scholars to discuss the challenges to judicial independence and governance in contemporary democracies. It was held on 18-19 January 2025 at Casa de Santa Maria in Cascais, on the premises of the EPLO Regional Branch in Portugal, and was organized by the EPLO Institute for the Global Rule of Law, in close cooperation with the EPLO Regional Branch in Portugal and with the valuable support of the Municipality of Cascais. This Conference took place right after the 6th Session of the EPLO Global Rule of Law Commission (GRoLC), hosted at the Municipality of Cascais on 17-18 January 2025.

Professor Spyridon Flogaitis, President of the EPLO Board of Directors and EPLO Director, and Ms. Margarida Lima Rego, Dean of the NOVA School of Law, delivered the opening remarks of the Conference. Professor Flogaitis highlighted the crucial role of international organizations in supporting judicial independence and strengthening the Rule of Law globally. Dean Lima Rego stressed that legal education plays a vital role in preparing future judges and legal professionals, ensuring they are dedicated to upholding the constitutional principles.

Ms. Maria Lúcia Amaral, Ombudsperson of the Republic of Portugal, through her keynote speech emphasized the fundamental role of judicial independence in upholding democracy and human rights.

The Conference featured four thematic sessions, during which the rapporteurs underscored the need for international legal cooperation and cross-border dialogue to protect judicial independence in an era of rising global challenges:

- “Rule of Law and the Administration of Justice”: Eminent judges and professors emphasized the necessity of strong legal and institutional safeguards to maintain judicial independence. The discussions also included the risks and implications of court-packing strategies as well as the growing impact of social media and artificial intelligence on the judiciary.
- “Map of Contemporary Attacks on the Judiciary”: Political interference, court underfunding and threats to judicial autonomy were addressed referring especially to case law by the European Court of Human Rights and the European Court of Justice and case studies from Brazil and Chile.
- “Social and Cultural Conditions of Judicial Independence”: The discussions focused on the role of legal traditions, public trust and the balance between judicial authority and democratic accountability.
- The “General Conclusions” session was chaired by Professor David Feldman, Emeritus Professor from University of Cambridge, and Ms. Teresa Violante, Director of the EPLO Institute for the Global Rule of Law, presented a comprehensive overview of the Conference’s main insights.

The Conference included perspectives from different legal traditions and governance models, leading to a truly global discussion on judicial independence. It hosted 52 participants from 21 nationalities, including judges, legal scholars, diplomats, government officials and civil society representatives. Among them, 66% were from Europe (41% from Portugal, 25% from the rest of Europe), 20% from Africa and 14% from the Americas and Asia. At the same time, the presence of the students from the EPLO ELGS MA program on



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“Global Rule of Law and Democracy”, now implemented on-site at the EPLO ELGS campus in Portugal, highlighted the importance of engaging future specialized legal professionals.

This International Conference reaffirmed EPLO’s commitment to strengthening the Rule of Law globally through institutional cooperation, legal education and policy initiatives.

Find more details about the Conference's program [here](#).