INSTITUTE OF COMPARATIVE LAW FACULTY OF LAW, JOSIP JURAJ STROSSMAYER UNIVERSITY OF OSIJEK

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS FROM THE INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE

20 YEARS OF THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES 25-26 September 2025

Editors:

Aleksandra Rabrenović Helga Špadina

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ACCESSIBILITY AS THE KEY TO THE ENJOYMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS BY PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Accessibility constitutes a fundamental prerequisite to the enjoyment of human rights of persons with disabilities and their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. In view of the data provided by the World Health Organization and the World Bank, indicating that over one billion people worldwide live with some form of disability, the issue of accessibility has acquired increasing significance in legal, political, and societal discourse. This paper seeks to explore the multidimensional nature of accessibility—not merely as a technical requirement concerning the adaptation of physical environments and technologies, but as an essential human right and a precondition for the effective enjoyment of a range of other rights, including the rights to education, employment, healthcare, and political participation.

The first part will seek to define the legal nature of accessibility, analyzing whether accessibility constitutes a standalone human right, a guiding principle, or merely a means for the realization of human rights. It will highlight the connection between accessibility and other rights guaranteed by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and highlights its role in advancing broader societal objectives such as equality, inclusion, and social justice. The second part focuses on the analysis of accessibility regulation in key international legal instruments adopted under the auspices of the United Nations, the Council of Europe, and the European Union. Special emphasis is placed on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the European Union's Web Accessibility Directive.

Furthermore, the paper identifies major challenges in the effective implementation of this right, including normative fragmentation, institutional inefficiencies, insufficient political commitment, technological constraints, and persistent societal prejudices. Drawing on comparative legal analysis, the paper presents examples of promising practices across different jurisdictions, demonstrating how innovative policy approaches can lead to tangible improvements in the lives of persons with disabilities. Particular attention is devoted to the issue of digital accessibility in the context of accelerated digital transformation. The analysis considers both the opportunities and risks posed by emerging technologies. In this regard,

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special focus is placed on the role of artificial intelligence as a potentially transformative tool for enabling personalized accessibility, while also emphasizing the need for robust ethical and legal safeguards to ensure that digital innovation does not exacerbate existing inequalities.

A separate section of the article summarizes the problem of accessibility in Serbia and assesses the country's progress in addressing it. The research uses conceptual analysis and comparative legal methodology to identify normative patterns and policy frameworks that support the effective realization of accessibility as a human right.

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