

Conference Programme

Equal Access to Justice Between Normativity and Reality

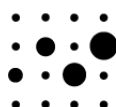
25th to 27th March 2026

Equal access to justice is a central prerequisite for democratic societies. Yet, empirical evidence from around the world shows that the gap between normative aspirations and real experience remains wide. Legal aid systems are under pressure, digital innovations open up new opportunities but also create new barriers, and social inequalities have a profound impact on legal consciousness and the use of law. In times of growing social and economic polarisation, the question of how to implement equitable access to justice becomes ever more pressing. The conference brings together international and German perspectives to discuss these challenges in an interdisciplinary setting and to identify empirically grounded paths for future research on access to justice.

WZB Berlin Social Science Centre, Room A300
Reichpietschufer 50, 10785 Berlin



Universität Regensburg



Volkswagen**Stiftung**



Wednesday, 25 March 2026

Please note that the evening keynote is separately ticketed.

17:15 – 17:30 Welcome

17:30 – 18:30 *Keynote: Access to justice in the 21st century*
Rebecca Sandefur, Arizona State University

19:00 Speaker's dinner

Thursday, 26 March 2026

09:00 – 09:30 Arrival – coffee and conversation

09:30 – 09:45 *Opening remarks*
Michael Wrase, WZB; Alexander Graser, University Regensburg

09:45 – 11:15 Who gets justice? Access to justice research in the context of social inequality

Access to justice and the public health analogy: Rethinking law's social role
Emily Taylor Poppe, University of California

A theoretical and empirical framework on legal empowerment to support inclusive access to justice research and initiatives
Julieta Marotta, Maastricht University

What's next for the 'Dispute Pyramid'?
Axel Pohn-Weidinger, University of Strasbourg

11:15 – 11:30 Coffee break

11:30 – 13:00 Access to justice in the age of digitalisation

The future of access to justice (research) in an age of digitalisation
Naomi Creutzfeldt, University of Kent

Pros and cons of online hearings for litigants
Marijke ter Voert, Radboud University

What's wrong with public services in the digital era? Users' perspectives from different world regions
Julia Dahlvik, Hochschule Campus Wien

13:00 – 14:00 Lunch Break



14:00 – 15:30 Access to Justice in the Realm of International Law

Access to justice and international organisations: Reality or rhetoric?

Rishi Gulati, University of East Anglia

AI and access to justice before international courts

Dana Burchardt, WZB

Un/Equal Access to the BBNJ treaty mechanisms – outline to a socio-legal investigation

Tobias Eule, University of Bern

15:30 – 15:45 Coffee break

15:45 – 17:45 Alienation and the reimagining of law

Nobody's Law: legal consciousness, legal alienation, and access to justice

Marc Hertogh, University of Groningen

Prefiguring legalities, enacting reproductive justice: abortion accompaniment practices in Latin America

Mariana Prandini Assis, Federal University of Goiás

'In court and at sea, you are in God's hands.' 'Pseudolaw' and legal alienation

Anna Löbbert, WZB

Access to justice: From remedial to preventive

Hualing Fu, University of Hong Kong

17:45 – 18:15 Coffee break

18:15 – 19:00 Proposal for a Research Committee on Sociology of Law working group

19:00 Speaker's dinner

Friday, 27 March 2026

08:45 – 09:00 Arrival – coffee and conversation

09:00 – 11:00 Access to justice for vulnerable groups

Access to justice for precarious workers in Serbia

Mila Đorđević, University of Belgrade

No legal advice, no justice? The role of legal advice in refugees' access to justice

Annalena Mayr, Europa Universität Frankfurt

The role of civil society in addressing structural inequalities in access to justice for victims of arbitrary detention

Sabina Garahan, University of Essex

'People need legal help.' The value of legal representation in compensation schemes for state harms

Jo Wilding, University of Sussex

11:00 – 11:15 Coffee break

11:15 – 12:45 The Role of civil society actors

'Nothing about us without us?' – How civil society transforms individual disputes into collective legal struggles

Lisa Hahn, University of Hildesheim

Navigation austerity and hostility: the role of civil society in access to justice in the UK

Lindsey Poole, Director of the Advice Services Alliance, London

An unlikely rights revolution: Civil society legal mobilisation in Scandinavia

Johan Karlsson Schaffer, University of Gothenburg

12:45 – 13:30 Lunch break

13:30 – 15:30 Collective legal mobilisation

Strategic litigation or judicial activism? LGBT+ movement and legal mobilisation in support of the equal marriage law in Chile (2012–2024)

Jeanne Hersant, Catholic University of Chile

Right-wing legal mobilisation in contemporary India

Thibault Weigelt, Jindal Global University

Legal mobilisation, Environmental Disputes, and the Making of Political Citizens in Turkey

Elif Can Çalıcı, Üsküdar Üniversitesi

From the Courtroom to Parliament? Strategic Litigation for Environmental Protection in Germany and Canada

Canan Pour-Norouz, WZB

15:30 – 16:00 Coffee break

16:00 – 17:15 Workshop

17:15 – 17:30 Concluding remarks and farewell