

Scenarios for the Future of the Legal Profession in the Age of Artificial Intelligence?

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Abstract

The present study aims to address, succinctly, aspects that concern the future. The changes that this period will bring to all professions represent a general concern. It is obvious, however, that the effects to be produced are not similar either as content, nor quantitatively. If they are professions 'prone' to be replaced, in completeness, computers, equally are professions whose content will be modified, without; however, they can be fully transferred from human to computers. Among these, we appreciate that there are also legal professions. Some of the ways in which they are exercised, it will be possible to move into the 'competence' of the computer, but man cannot ever disappear, entirely, from their exercise.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, legal professions, digitization, evolution, future, computers, professional competence, categories, reports.

JEL Classification: K10, K24

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.62768/ADJURIS/2024/1/07>

Please cite this article as:

Vedinaș, Verginia & Ioan Laurențiu Vedinaș, „Scenarios for the Future of the Legal Profession in the Age of Artificial Intelligence?”, in Pajuste, Tiina, Heliona Bellani (Miço) & Sejla Maslo Cerkić (eds.), *Legal Perspectives in the Modern Era of Technological Transformations*, ADJURIS – International Academic Publisher, Bucharest, Paris, Calgary, 2024, p. 115-125.

1. Introduction

The issue of the impact of artificial intelligence on law and the legal professions has always been a concern of ours. We are referring to those exercising judicial or executive power, but also to the liberal professions, such as lawyers, notaries and bailiffs³.

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The fruit of our concerns has resulted in papers with a mixed title, in which, in addition to the academic component, there is also a metaphorical one, such as ‘from chemical pencil to computers’ or ‘from perceiver to computer programs’⁴.

Professionally, our destiny reverberates in the sphere of an essential public service to society, namely education in general and academic education in particular.

Over it lies an interest in public life in general and in administration in particular, but above all, like a comforting and protective cloak, never resting for the good of the country to which we belong⁵.

The world is not standing still, and technology is evolving at a dizzying pace. We have to cope with it both as individuals, in the privacy of our private selves, and in the professional environment in which we work.

2. The role of strategies

The Romanian State itself is concerned about its own development, the activity of its authorities and all the services through which the needs of its citizens are met, and this is the context in which the ‘national strategic framework in the field of artificial intelligence’ was developed, with financial support provided by the ‘Operational Programme for Administrative Capacity’, known by its abbreviated name of POCA.⁶

We would like to make a clarification, and we ask for your forgiveness if

procedure, Juridical Tribune - Tribuna Juridica, Volume 13, Issue 3, October 2023, pp. 346-426 and Oleksandr Shevchuk, Ihor Kompaniets, Olena Volianska, Oleksandra Shovkopljas, Vasył Baranchuk, *Electronic Administrative Judicial Procedure of Ukraine and the Right to Judicial Protection: Problems of Legal Regulation and Practical Issues*, Juridical Tribune - Review of Comparative and International Law, Volume, 14, no. 1, March 2024, p. 98-115.

⁴ See Verginia Vedinaș, *Odiseea funcției publice în România sau de la perceptor la programe pe calculator*, in Constantin Brătianu, Doina Banciu, Nicolae Dănilă (coord.), *Economia și societatea în era digitalizării*, Publishing House of the Romanian Academy of Scientists, Bucharest, 2023, p. 223-240 and Cătălin-Silviu Săraru, *Provocări contemporane în administrația publică și în dreptul administrativ* in Constantin Brătianu, Doina Banciu, Nicolae Dănilă (coord.), *op. cit.*, p. 241-260.

⁵ Lucica Tudoran, Anis Benabed, *The Informatics Integrated System for the Romanian Civil Status Documents – Practical Considerations and Applicability to the Consular Offices of Romania*, Perspectives of Law and Public Administration, Volume 11, Issue 2, June 2022, pp. 313-322. For a comparative view see Laura Hoti Statovci, *The Impact of Digitalization in Public Administration in Kosovo*, Perspectives of Law and Public Administration, Volume 10, Issue 2, June 2021, pp. 81-84 or Cristina-Elena Popa Tache, *Administrative Review and Reform Movements from the Perspective of International Investment Law*, in Julien Cazala, Velimir Zivkovic (eds.), *Administrative Law and Public Administration in the Global Social System*, ADJURIS - International Academic Publisher, Bucharest, Paris, Calgary, 2021, pp. 212-218.

⁶ See Adrian Groza, George Bara, Cristian Bella, Aurelian Ionescu, Marian Iulian, Camelia Lemnaru, Luciana Moogan, Eugen Popescu, *Elaborarea cadrului strategic național în domeniul inteligenței artificiale*, 21 December 2021, <https://www.adr.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Analiza-reglementarilor-pentru-domeniul-inteligenței-artificiale.pdf>, consulted on 18 March 2024.

it is a little bitter, about the role of strategies, in general, and we refer specifically to the case of our country.

The first is that strategies, in our view, should be adopted by Parliament, not by the Government. Governments are essentially made up of politicians, and the so-called technocrats in them turn out to be – and they cannot possibly be – politicians, or people who put into practice the political commands dictated by the government.

Parliament is, as the Constitution says,⁷ the supreme representative body of the Romanian people. In Parliament we have both power and opposition, while in the Government we have only power. It is therefore possible – and this has often been proven – that in the opposition there are still some brave people who, through their voice and reactions, can stop or at least temper some of the impulses of the cowardly rulers. That is why, if we are considering drawing up a strategy that outlines the future of the country in one area and, in this way, of all of us, we believe that they should be approved by Parliament. We want to send this message because we see that the strategies that are being drawn up, in all areas, as a rule lies dusty in the drawers of the governments, who remember them when ‘the end is near’ and they have to replace them with others.

Returning to the strategies as they are currently being developed, we note that, in the meantime, a national artificial intelligence strategy has been developed covering the period 2024–2027.⁸

The adoption of this strategy has several objectives. A *first objective* is the need for Romania to develop digital technologies in the economy and society, in line with respect for human rights and the promotion of excellence and trust in artificial intelligence.

A *second objective* is the need to develop and capitalise on its positive effects, in conjunction with managing the risks posed by the evolution of artificial intelligence.

Thirdly, this national strategy proposes that Romania harmonises and integrates itself in the strategic and regulatory actions undertaken at European level in the field of digital services, as well as in the efforts to establish European and international standards in the field of management of technologies based on artificial intelligence.

Last but not least, it is important that the strategy thus developed and implemented should represent a framework for central and local public authorities in Romania to adopt measures and organise their activities in line with the accelerated development of digital infrastructure on a global scale.

⁷ The Constitution of Romania was published in the Official Gazette No. 233/21 November 1991. It was revised by Law No. 429/2003, published in the Official Gazette No. 758/29 October 2003 and republished in the Official Gazette No. 767/31 October 2003.

⁸ <https://www.mcid.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Strategie-Inteligenta-Artificiala-22012024.pdf>, accessed 18 March 2024.

Underpinning the development of this strategy was the thesis that artificial intelligence must meet seven fundamental requirements, which have been summarised as: a) human oversight; b) technical robustness and security; c) privacy and data governance; d) transparency; e) diversity, non-discrimination and fairness; f) environmental and societal well-being; and g) accountability. With the exception of the first two requirements, which are specific to the field of artificial intelligence, the other five are requirements that characterise public life in general and are applicable at both national and EU level. As regards *privacy and data governance*, it is well known that with the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty,⁹ data protection has acquired a different framework in EU law, both through the regulation of EU competences and through its enshrinement as a fundamental right.¹⁰ I mention this aspect because it poses particular problems with regard to artificial intelligence.

In this context, we refer to Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016¹¹, which has been implemented in Romania, as in all EU Member States,¹² by Law no. 190/2018, as well as by Law no. 129/2018 amending and supplementing Law no. 102/2005 on the establishment, organization and functioning of the National Authority for the Supervision of Personal Data Processing.¹³

Confidentiality is analysed in the doctrine as a component of security in information systems, alongside integrity and availability.¹⁴

Complementary to these general guidelines, a series of principles underlying the development of technologies based on artificial intelligence and the adoption of these solutions in society have also been taken into account, the protection of which is carried out, to a substantial extent and determined for their destiny, by the legal professions.

A first principle is respect for human rights and democratic values.

It should be mentioned, in order to argue this principle, that the Romanian State, according to the first article para. (3) of the Constitution is proclaimed to

⁹ Treaty of Lisbon amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community, published in OJ C-306 of 17 December 2007.

¹⁰ Irina Alexe, Daniel-Mihail Șandru, *Appointment of a single data protection officer by several public authorities or bodies*, in „Revista de Drept Public” no. 2/2019, p. 46.

¹¹ Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation), published in OJ L 119 of 4 May 2016, pp. 1–88.

¹² In Romania, the Regulation was implemented by Law No. 190/2018 on measures implementing Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data and repealing Directive 05/46 EC (General Data Protection Regulation), published in the Official Gazette No. 651 of 26 July 2018.

¹³ Published in the Official Gazette No. 503/19 June 2019. Law No. 102/2005 was republished in the Official Gazette No. 947 of 9 November 2018.

¹⁴ Ioana VasIU, Lucian VasIU, *Crime in cyberspace*, Ed. Universul Juridic, Bucharest, 2011, p. 68.

be a *democratic and social state based on the rule of law*, in which the second supreme and guaranteed value, after human dignity, is *fundamental rights and freedoms*. And in this text, the term democratic/democratic is used twice.

These principled values must be respected both by those who create artificial intelligence and those who apply it through their work.

A *second principle* requires AI to be human-centred, inclusive, non-discriminatory and impartial. This implies and requires at the same time that the exercise of AI is under the control of human action, which is the determining factor in decision-making.

The *third principle* is that of responsibility in the management of artificial intelligence, so as to ensure respect for all fundamental rights and the principles governing their exercise, including non-discrimination in the way artificial intelligence is applied.

A *fourth principle*, which is closely linked to the previous one, is respect for diversity or otherness, as it is also called, in conjunction with gender and equal opportunities. This means that IT services must ensure that everyone has access to the use of artificial intelligence products or services.

The next principle is that of *transparency and trust*, which refers to knowledge of IT processes and their use

The principle reveals that both the data and the processes for processing it is sufficiently known so that their source can be traced and their use is correct.

At the EU level, regulation in the field of Artificial Intelligence is based, among other things, on a European strategy developed in April 2018 (COM – 2018 – 237), a White Paper on Artificial Intelligence – a European approach to excellence and trust developed in 2020, and action plans dating from 2021 with a timeframe of 2027.¹⁵

3. The effects of artificial intelligence

The effects of artificial intelligence are being felt in the legal professions. By attempting a synthesis of them, the aim is to identify the extent to which artificial intelligence could be part of the legal system. Is it possible that the human judge or prosecutor could be replaced by the robot judge or prosecutor? Another question is whether or not there will still be a need for courts in the material, objective sense, as there are at present, or will computer software lead to their disappearance?

We already know that artificial intelligence has penetrated the organisation of justice, and we need only refer to the random distribution of cases, which removes any suspicion of certain interests in their distribution.¹⁶ Or the *electronic*

¹⁵ <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/coordinated-plan-artificial-intelligence-2021-review>, accessed 18 March 2024.

¹⁶ Ciutacu Ioana, *The effects of the implementation of artificial intelligence in justice on fundamen-*

file, where all the documents making up the case file are published and can be accessed in the same way.

However, it should be noted that the use of artificial intelligence in judicial decision-making processes, by allowing for programmable and often predictable judicial outcomes, presents risks and vulnerabilities in terms of affecting the right to a fair and timely trial.

Moreover, European regulations also recognise certain vulnerabilities and risks that should be brought to the attention of European and world states.

Thus, the new EU Regulation on Artificial Intelligence states (recital/paragraph 40) that ‘*certain AI systems for the administration of justice and democratic processes should be classified as high risk in view of their potentially significant impact on democracy, the rule of law and individual freedoms, as well as on the right to an effective remedy and to a fair trial*’.¹⁷

In the amendment that has been made to this text, the content has been developed in a way that we consider important and interesting for our study, as follows: ‘(40) *Certain AI systems intended for the administration of justice and democratic processes should be classified as high risk, given their potentially significant impact on democracy, the rule of law and individual freedoms, as well as on the right to an effective remedy and a fair trial. In particular, in order to address potential risks of bias, errors and opacity, it is appropriate to classify as high-risk systems AI systems intended to be used by or on behalf of a judicial authority or administrative body to assist judicial authorities or administrative bodies in investigating and interpreting facts and the law and in applying the law to a particular set of facts, or used in a similar way in alternative dispute resolution. The use of artificial intelligence tools can support, but should not replace, the decision-making power of judges or the independence of the judiciary, as the final decision-making process must remain a human activity and decision. (...)*’.¹⁸

The European Parliament report was drafted by two MEPs, one of whom is Romanian, Dragoş Tudorache, who in a press release gave assurances that ‘*artificial intelligence systems are supervised by humans, are safe and non-discriminatory*’.¹⁹

tal and procedural rights available on https://www.unbr.ro/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/4_Ciutacu-Ioana_Efectele-implementarii-inteligentei-artificiale-in-justitie.pdf, accessed 18 March 2024.

¹⁷ This is the Proposal for a Regulation on Artificial Intelligence, adopted on 14.06.2023 in Strasbourg, on which the European Parliament adopted amendments. The proposal for a Regulation is from the European Parliament and the Council and concerns harmonised rules on artificial intelligence and amending certain Union legislation (COM – 2021 – 0206-09-01461/2021-2021/0106 – COD). See https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2023-0236_RO.html, accessed 17 March 2024.

¹⁸ Cautiously, the text went on to state: ‘*However, such qualification should not extend to AI systems intended for purely ancillary administrative activities that do not affect the effective administration of justice in individual cases, such as anonymisation or pseudonymisation of court decisions, documents or data, communication between staff members, administrative tasks or resource allocation.*

¹⁹ See <https://www.starupcafe.ro>, accessed 19.11.2023.

This is an important point that artificial intelligence can support the act of justice, but it should not replace the decision-making power of judges or the independence of the judiciary, as the final decision-making process must remain a human activity and decision. We say this because it is in line with our view that there are certain areas in which man will never be replaced in the true sense of the word.

We appreciate that, in terms of the future of professions in general under the impact of artificial intelligence, we are dealing with two broad categories:

A) professions in which humans are replaced by artificial intelligence, but continue to find themselves as supervisors and performers of actions and acts that cannot be performed by them;

B) professions in which man will continue to be the main actor, but will be supported in the exercise of his role by artificial intelligence, which will take over many of the actions that he used to do, simplifying his work and increasing its quality, including by reducing the time it takes. Simply put, either man will assist the computer, or the computer will assist man. It is in this latter category, in which the human remains the principal, that we believe the legal professions fall, and the prospect of the human being totally replaced by artificial intelligence in the legal professions is, in our view, out of the question.

One idea reflected in the European Regulation is that high-risk systems are those concerned with the administration of justice and democratic processes.

The EU Regulation 2021/694 of the European Parliament and of the Council,²⁰ which establishes the Digital Europe Programme, mentions the following related challenges:

- improving access to justice for citizens, lawyers, members of the whole judicial system, through the use of interconnections, having interoperability with databases;

- facilitating an out-of-court dispute resolution²¹.

All this gives us the perspective to understand that there is an awareness among European decision-makers, who also influence national decision-makers, that legal professions have their own specificity, and that the role of artificial intelligence is to help them become more efficient, supporting the holder of such a profession, not pushing him aside. Because in law, in every case, every file has its own specificity, even if the subject matter is apparently common. It has always been said that the judge judges according to the law and his own conscience.

The Constitution states in Art. 124, para. (3) that judges are independent

²⁰ Regulation of 29 April 2021 establishing the Digital Europe Programme and repealing Decision (EU) 2015/224, published in OJEU of 11 05 2021, No. L 166.

²¹ See Maria João Mimoso, *Artificial Intelligence in International Commercial and Investment Arbitration*, *International Investment Law Journal*, Volume 3, Issue 2, July 2023, pp. 156-166; Cristina Elena Popa Tache, *About the Human Rights and Consumer Protection in the Digital Age of Digital Services Act 2022 or What Aspects Interested Investors Should Pay Attention To*, *International Investment Law Journal*, Volume 3, Issue 2, July 2023, 121-132.

and subject only to the law. Independence is total and it means that no one can impose or dictate a solution to the judge, not even intelligence other than his own.

4. A few thoughts on the legal profession

The Council of European Bars and Law Societies has produced a document²² which addresses issues of interest such as:

- A) artificial intelligence and human rights;
- B) the need for an ethical framework for the use of artificial intelligence in legal practice;
- C) artificial intelligence tools for use by lawyers.

Today, lawyers are challenged by the increasing amount of data they manage, which requires the use of artificial intelligence for the following purposes:

- a) in the analysis of legislation, case law and doctrine;
- b) in the highlighting of how contracts and all documents are carried out;
- c) the use of automated solutions in drafting documents.

The same document draws attention to the following disadvantages:

- a) the use of data and elements which have not been the subject of an adversarial debate or of conclusions which have not been reached by the judge's reasoning, which leads to the transfer of part of the decision-making power;
- b) lack of transparency of the process and a level playing field (equality of arms);
- c) violation of the principle of impartiality and reasoning, due to the existence of outcomes that are beyond human reasoning and cannot be traced, which could also lead to poorly justified and reasoned decisions.

Certain effects are likely to occur in terms of limiting the right of defence.

A first aspect is that the legal profession is usually practised in small forms of practice, as a rule, practices, which do not have the resources to record data and there are no universally accessible tools to do so.

Other issues relate to the lack of a European or global market for lawyers and the lack of sufficient data and training models in the field of artificial intelligence.

Possible ways of overcoming the above-mentioned difficulties are envisaged and can be systematised as follows:

- A) A first way is considered to be the duty of competence of lawyers. This means continuous training and further training for lawyers, enabling them to keep abreast of the legislation adopted in their own country, but also of that

²² Information has been extracted from the CCBE DRAFT Considerations on the legal aspects of Artificial Intelligence, available at https://www.unbr.ro/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/RO_07a_Draft-CCBE-considerations-on-legal-aspects-of-AI.pdf, accessed November 2023 and 18 March 2024.

adopted at supranational level, and we refer in particular to that adopted at European Union level.

They must also be constantly informed about the case law, and we have in mind both the case law of the courts and the case law of the Constitutional Court.

Last but not least, the duty of competence on lawyers requires them to have skills in using the various IT tools.

B) A second obligation is to inform the client. The profession of lawyers involves a partnership with the client, who must be informed of how his case is being conducted,

C) maintaining the independence of lawyers;

D) the obligation of professional secrecy and data protection, which is specific to lawyers, is a *legal professional privilege*, must be ensured when using specific artificial intelligence tools.

5. Conclusions

We are aware that the topic is complex and cannot be ‘covered’ in a single study. What we wanted to do was to raise questions, generate concerns, launch questions and try possible answers. We believe that, from what has been presented above, we can draw some conclusions of interest for the topic we have addressed.

The first of these is that AI-specific tools will bring changes to legal services.

We should also bear in mind that their use also poses threats to the quality of our justice systems, the protection of fundamental rights and the rule of law.

Thirdly, we stress that in order to manage this change effectively, concrete principles and rules need to be established and the appropriate place and role for artificial intelligence systems in the judiciary, and the professions that underpin it, identified.

Within these principles and rules, transparency, fairness, accountability and ethical rules should be the cardinal points.

Society in general, and the legal profession in particular, need to take safeguards to ensure that AI tools work properly.

In all legal professions, including the legal profession, continuous training must be an essential condition for entering and remaining in the profession. The paper presented²³ even discusses *the setting up of IT/IA law labs or workshops in law faculties*, which may also be eligible for EU funding and could lead to the creation of new specialisations for lawyers or even the emergence of new professions.

Fundamental rights and respect for ethical rules cannot be subordinated

²³ We refer to the CCBE DRAFT, Considerations on the legal aspects of Artificial Intelligence, available at https://www.unbr.ro/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/RO_07a_Draft-CCBE-considerations-on-legal-aspects-of-AI.pdf, accessed November 2023 and 18 March 2024.

to mere efficiency gains or cost-saving benefits whether for court users or judicial authorities²⁴. Increasing access to justice by reducing the costs of court proceedings may seem a desirable outcome, but it is less important to improve access to justice when the quality of justice is compromised in the process. Justice is one of the most important activities in a society, and its quality cannot be compromised by claiming savings for the state or for the litigants.

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²⁴ See Cătălin-Silviu Săraru, *Drept administrativ. Curs universitar*, vol. II, Ed. Universul Juridic, Bucharest, 2024, p. 194; Cătălin-Silviu Săraru, *Tratat de contencios administrativ*, Ed. Universul Juridic, Bucharest, 2022, p. 40-50.

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