

Vlaamse
overheid

7th Young Legal Researchers Conference 2026

Law under Pressure: Resilience, Resistance, and Reinvention in Challenging Times

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

The Faculty of Law of Hasselt University is pleased to announce the 7th edition of the Young Legal Researchers Conference (YLRC), which will take place on **Friday 4 December 2026**. The conference will take place in person at the city campus of **Hasselt University** (Martelarenlaan 42, 3500 Hasselt, Belgium). The aim of the conference is to bring together young researchers to share, discuss and exchange ideas on their research with one another.

Priority will be given to PhD candidates, while postdoctoral researchers are also welcome to participate.

Across the world, legal systems are increasingly placed under pressure. Democratic institutions face erosion, deregulation waves reshape legal systems, courts are politicised, migration systems are strained, and armed conflicts and geopolitical tensions challenge international legal orders and humanitarian protections. Environmental emergencies demand urgent responses, while technological surveillance challenges civil liberties, and economic instability and social inequality test the capacity of legal frameworks to protect the most vulnerable.

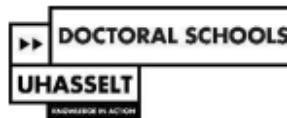
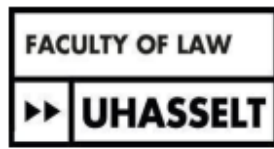
Pressure can expose weaknesses within legal systems, but it can also catalyse reform, innovation, and resistance. This conference invites early-career scholars to critically examine how law functions when tested by crisis, conflict, and contestation.

We invite researchers to submit an abstract from **all areas of law**, including **interdisciplinary** legal research, to present their findings, critiques, ideas and solutions related to the following theme: **“Law under Pressure: Resilience, Resistance, and Reinvention in Challenging Times”**.

Topics **may include but are not limited to:**

Monodisciplinary topics:

- Law of persons and family law: the resilience of equality frameworks under political backlash; LGBTQIA+ rights and the threat of legislative reversal; reproductive autonomy under pressure (abortion restrictions, surrogacy regulation); disability rights; family law in conflict, displacement and separation contexts.
- Environmental and climate change law: the Paris Agreement and the crisis of implementation; the EU Nature Restoration Regulation (2024) between ambition and resistance; the Sustainability Omnibus and the ‘simplification’ regulatory wave; climate and environmental litigation as a tool of last resort; pollution crises and industry pushback; environmental crime and institutional enforcement failures, environmental emergencies and ecological tipping points.



Vlaamse
overheid

- Constitutional and human rights law: democratic backsliding and the resistance of safeguards; judicial independence and the politicisation of courts; states of emergency and the suspension of civil liberties; geopolitical conflict; sanctions, and their constitutional dimensions; the weaponisation of law in confrontation.
- Labour and social security law: structural wage inequality, social protection and the status of migrant workers; trade union resilience and collective resistance to the erosion of welfare state guarantees; the reinvention of worker protection frameworks.
- Data, technology and AI: surveillance, civil liberties, and the resilience of privacy rights; the EU AI Act (2024) and the governance of high-risk systems; GDPR enforcement in an era of data flows; intellectual property and liability in GenAI; algorithmic decision-making in public administration and justice.
- Corporate and financial law: corporate governance and corporate social responsibility; ESG frameworks under deregulatory pressure; corporate accountability in times of economic instability; trade law and sanctions; economic coercion and legal responses.

Interdisciplinary topics:

- Law and criminology: international criminal justice under political strain; terrorism, national security law and the erosion of due process; the expansion of restorative justice as a reinvention mechanism.
- Law and economics: the law and economics of the climate transition; competition and the resilience of regulatory frameworks; law and economics of innovation.
- Law and ethics: ethical dimensions of emergency legislation; the role of legal professionals in upholding integrity; privacy, dignity, and the ethics of surveillance.
- Law and social sciences: democracy, social exclusion, rule of law, transnational legal activism and civil society under pressure.

All topics that lie within the overarching theme will be considered, regardless of the field of law. **Participants are welcome to submit topics outside the examples listed.**

Young researchers are invited to submit an abstract in **English** by **30 September 2026**:

- The abstract (max. 400 words, excluding the title) should contain the aim of the presentation, the main points of the argument and a brief conclusion.
- Please also include a short biography of the researcher (max. 150 words).
- Acceptance of the abstract will be communicated at the latest on **12 October 2026**.
- Abstracts should be uploaded through the **abstract submission form**, which can be found on the website <https://www.uhasselt.be/ylrc>.
- It is possible to attend the conference without presenting.

Participation in the conference is free, but **registration is necessary** for all participants, both presenters and attendees. Registration will open on **12 October 2026** and close on **2 November 2026**. Registration must be completed via the **conference registration form**, which can also be found on the website.

For any inquiries, please contact ylrc@uhasselt.be. For more information on the programme, please consult our university website <https://www.uhasselt.be/ylrc>.