Call for Expressions of Interest

IVR World Congress 2026 – Istanbul

Conceptualising the Demise of Law

Law today faces increasing challenges: it can be disfigured from within — used by abusive regimes to entrench power while eroding rights — and undermined from without by actors seeking to replace one legal order with another. Yet while the demise of democracy or states has been theorised, the demise of law itself remains curiously underexplored. Focus on concepts like the identity or continuity of legal systems, and essential properties of law have become overshadowed by discussions concerning law's defective functioning — such as rule of law backsliding. This is so despite historical examples where law has clearly failed: Roman law, feudal law, and Nazi law all once existed and no longer do. What, then, does it mean for law to die, and at what point can we call the time of death? Are we right to focus on the rule of law rather than the existence of law *per se*?

This workshop invites contributions examining the possibility and dimensions of law's demise, or of existential threats to law. Possible areas of focus include (but are not limited to):

- Conceptualising the death of law: momentary legal systems versus law as a broader social ordering;
- Legitimacy and authority of law;
- The bearing of the rule of law and separation of powers on the existence of law;
- Whether law's existence is valuable in itself or only insofar as it satisfies substantive conditions;
- Breakdown of written and unwritten norms and conventions;
- The relation between law and state: does the state's demise entail law's demise, or can law die independently?
- Comparative and historical perspectives on failed or extinguished legal orders;
- The role of conceptual jurisprudence in evaluating the demise of law: can legal theory accurately capture this, or must empirical analysis play a greater role?

We welcome papers from any relevant discipline or methodological approach.

Successful contributors will be invited to join the proposed panel at IVR in Istanbul, *contingent on its acceptance*. In addition, there may be the opportunity to participate in a follow-up symposium exploring the demise of law as part of a larger collaborative project.

Submission: Please submit a provisional paper title and abstract (max. 300 words), along with your name, institutional affiliation, and contact email address via the following **Google Form link** by **Friday 28th November 2025**. You can expect responses in early December 2025.

For any questions or clarifications please contact: oskar.polanski@eui.eu