

The remote meeting of FBE New Technologies Commission

Video-meeting of April 3rd

The following members were present on MTeams videochat:

Izabela Konopacka

Francesco Tregnaghi

Francesco Spina

Ludmilla Glembotzky

Christof Muntz

Michał Skrzywanek

Maria Dymitruk

Agnieszka Poteralska

1. The meeting begins with the Italian members explaining the situation of the courts and lawyer's performance of their profession during this quarantine time, with hearings basically delayed and suspended apart very few urgent matters. There are many problems: many rights are restricted of those in jails (e.g. ability to meet relatives, etc.). There are noticeable differences between the access rules and protocols of different courts. The situation of suspension of hearings has been discussed. Both lawyers and courts communicate on-line.
2. Christof Munz speaks for Germany, underlining that in Germany, there are also differences among different courts. German lawyers are questioning the legality of personal representation before courts located in distant town or city. Some lawyers even argue that they must not be forced to take trains, planes etc in this situation. There has not been introduced yet a project regarding remote hearings unlike in the UK where any means of communication, even the simple telephone, is allowed in principle for the judges and litigants to proceed with cases.
As a rule lawyers are allowed to work and meet clients, but in fact only a few of them are visiting law firms as usual i.e. in person.
3. As the next point on the agenda the Commission discussed the activities of the local and national Bars aimed at assistance for the benefit of their members in the times of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The assistance of the Bars includes inter alia:

- hotlines to provide answers to lawyers' questions regarding performance of profession as well as the operation of the courts,
- websites dedicated to the COVID-19 issues,
- webinars on new regulations regarding the pandemic
- reduction or suspension of the membership fees
- financial support to those lawyers who have ceased their activities significantly (BILBAO BAR, WROCŁAW BAR)

4. Ludmilla Glembotzky (Bilbao) reports about allowed hearings in Spain for urgent matters and on-line communication with courts. The state of alarm has been declared for the exceptional situation, videoconferences are allowed in courts, lawyers can visit courts just showing their lawyer ID.
The specially dedicated fund was decided from the Bilbao Bar to help lawyers in difficulty. An AI-based system is being planned to track movements in people (GDPR compliance being a big issue)
5. In Poland court terms have been suspended (excluding civil cases) Michał Skrzywanek reports about special problems faced with regard to IT cybersecurity. The pro-bono work is offered to doctors and nurses by the members of the Regional Bars in Poland. Maria Dymitruk speaks about imposed distances and applications to check if distance is correctly held. An AI company from Wrocław (Tooploox) has designed an AI application named Visual Crowd Detector. The aim is to join the #stopthespread movement and to support security measures during the COVID-19 pandemic (by checking whether people in public places keep safe distances between them - in Poland few days ago further restrictions were imposed to slow down the spread of the coronavirus. The new rules include keeping 2-meter distance in public places). The application also shows areas that need a frequent disinfection (places that have contact with the largest number of people over time). The application consists of an AI object detection model. For example, if a city would be responsible for the disinfection of public benches, the system could be used to identify the benches that were used the most and should be disinfected more frequently. The tool that supports street monitoring systems was recently implemented by one of the biggest Polish seaside cities - Gdynia, obviously in order to help prevent the spread of coronavirus. Drones are also used to check gatherings.
6. Christof Munz has also discussed a bluetooth application to check proximity, on voluntary basis. Michał has noticed that in Poland such application should be mandatory for infected persons.
7. The meeting was closed and the members of the Commission agreed to meet on-line in May to discuss any new issues regarding the current situation of lawyers and Bar Associations.