ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN COURT PROCEEDINGS: CURRENT TRENDS AND LEGAL CHALLENGES

Tegza Oleksandr

DOI: https://doi.org/10.61345/1339-7915.2026.1.23

Annotation. The integration of artificial intelligence into court proceedings represents a pivotal transformation in the organization of judicial systems, promising significant gains in procedural efficiency while simultaneously generating fundamental legal and institutional challenges. This article examines the current state and prospects of AI implementation in Ukrainian court document management, analysing both the opportunities offered by intelligent automation and the legal tensions arising from the coexistence of paper and electronic document circulation under the Unified Judicial Information and Telecommunication System (UJITS). Drawing on the experience of Palm Beach County, Florida – where AI-powered robotic process automation classifies and files nearly a third of all electronic submissions — the article demonstrates that technologies such as optical character recognition, automated document classification, and intelligent case management systems are capable of substantially reducing the workload of court staff, accelerating procedural timelines, and enhancing access to justice. At the same time, the article documents the practical dysfunctions of Ukraine's transitional model, in which the simultaneous maintenance of parallel paper and electronic workflows has increased, rather than reduced, the burden on court personnel and created structural obstacles to the realization of the constitutional right of unhindered access to justice under Article 55 of the Constitution of Ukraine and Article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

The article further analyses the normative framework governing AI in the Ukrainian judicial system, including the Concept for the Development of Artificial Intelligence in Ukraine (2020) and the CEPEJ European Ethical Charter on the Use of Artificial Intelligence in Judicial Systems (2018), and identifies five priority domains for AI implementation: document workflow automation, judicial decision support, enhancement of access to justice, systemic transparency and anti-corruption monitoring, and process robotization. The study argues that the introduction of AI into Ukrainian court proceedings must be guided by the principles of non-discrimination, transparency, human oversight, and data security, and that full automation of judicial decision-making remains both technically premature and institutionally undesirable at the present stage. The article concludes that AI should be integrated as an organic complement to the existing judicial model rather than as a substitute for human judgment, with continuous monitoring and optimization as mandatory conditions of responsible deployment.

Key words: artificial intelligence, court proceedings, judicial document management, electronic justice, algorithmic bias, access to justice, legal regulation.

1. Problem statement.

The integration of artificial intelligence into judicial systems represents one of the most profound transformations in the history of legal institutions. Courts worldwide are increasingly adopting AI-powered tools for document management, case scheduling, legal research, risk assessment, and even decision-support in adjudication. These developments promise significant gains in procedural efficiency, consistency of outcomes, and access to justice – yet they simultaneously raise fundamental questions about the compatibility of algorithmic governance with the core principles of the rule of law: judicial independence, impartiality, transparency, the right to a fair trial, and the accountability of public power.

The tension between efficiency and fairness is not new to procedural law, but artificial intelligence introduces qualitatively new dimensions to this tension. Unlike human decision-makers, AI systems operate through processes that are frequently opaque, difficult to audit, and impossible to challenge through conventional legal mechanisms. The so-called "black box" problem, the inability of affected parties to understand, contest, or obtain a reasoned explanation for algorithmically generated outcomes, strikes at the heart of due process guarantees enshrined in Article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights, Article 47 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, and equivalent provisions in national constitutional systems. When an AI tool influences the scheduling of hearings, the assessment of procedural risks, or the flagging of documents for judicial attention, the question of who bears legal responsibility for errors, biases, or discriminatory outcomes becomes acutely difficult to answer within existing frameworks of judicial accountability.

The problem is further compounded by the systemic risks of algorithmic bias. AI systems trained on historical judicial data inevitably encode the patterns, including the discriminatory patterns, embedded in that data. The widely documented case of the COMPAS recidivism prediction tool in the United States, which was found to produce racially disparate risk scores, illustrated in stark terms the potential for AI to systematically disadvantage vulnerable groups within the justice system. Similar concerns have arisen in the European context, where predictive justice tools have been deployed in France, Estonia, and the Netherlands, prompting legislative and regulatory responses whose adequacy remains contested. For Ukraine, which is simultaneously undertaking a comprehensive digitalization of its judicial system under the e-Court programme and aligning its regulatory framework with EU standards as part of its accession process, the legal challenges posed by AI in court proceedings are both practically urgent and strategically consequential.

2. Analysis of recent research and publications.

The scholarly literature on artificial intelligence in judicial proceedings has expanded rapidly over the past decade, reflecting both the acceleration of technological deployment and the growing recognition among legal scholars that existing doctrinal frameworks are inadequate to address the novel challenges posed by algorithmic governance. The field is inherently interdisciplinary, drawing on procedural law, constitutional law, legal theory, computer science, and ethics, and the literature accordingly spans a wide range of methodological approaches.

The foundational legal-theoretical contribution to the field was made by Richard Susskind, whose *Tomorrow's Lawyers* (2013) and *Online Courts and the Future of Justice* (2019) established the conceptual framework within which much subsequent scholarship operates. Susskind argued that the digitalization of justice is not merely a question of procedural reform but a transformation of the very concept of access to justice, and that AI-powered systems have the potential to democratize legal services by reducing the cost and complexity of legal proceedings for ordinary citizens. This optimistic assessment has been subjected to sustained critical scrutiny by scholars who emphasize the risks of algorithmic bias, the erosion of procedural guarantees, and the democratic deficit inherent in delegating public power to privately developed technological systems.

The problem of algorithmic bias and its implications for judicial fairness has been examined most influentially in the context of the COMPAS tool. Julia Angwin and colleagues, in their 2016 investigative analysis published by ProPublica (*Machine Bias*), documented statistically significant racial disparities in COMPAS risk scores, triggering a wave of legal and scholarly responses. The subsequent decision of the Wisconsin Supreme Court in *State v. Loomis* (2016), which upheld the use of COMPAS scores in sentencing while acknowledging the defendant's inability to challenge the proprietary algorithm, crystallized the due process tension at the heart of AI-assisted adjudication and has since become one of the most cited cases in the comparative literature on AI and justice.

The European dimension of the problem has been examined in depth by a number of scholars. Antoine Garapon and Jean Lassègue, in *Justice Digitale* (2018), provided a comprehensive analysis of the implications of predictive justice for the French legal system, arguing that algorithmic decision-support fundamentally alters the epistemic foundations of judicial reasoning and risks reducing the individualized assessment of

cases to statistical aggregation. The ethical and legal framework for AI in the judiciary was subsequently developed at the institutional level by the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ), whose *European Ethical Charter on the Use of Artificial Intelligence in Judicial Systems* (2018) established five principles – respect for fundamental rights, non-discrimination, quality and security, transparency, and user control – that have become the principal normative reference point for European comparative scholarship.

The relationship between AI and the right to a fair trial under Article 6 ECHR has been examined by Nathalie Smuha and others in the context of the EU's regulatory approach to AI, including the AI Act (Regulation (EU) 2024/1689), which classifies AI systems used in the administration of justice as high-risk and subjects them to stringent requirements of transparency, human oversight, and conformity assessment. The implications of the AI Act for judicial systems across EU Member States and candidate countries have been analysed by Deeks, Ashley, and others, who identify the principal implementation challenges: the difficulty of defining the boundary between AI decision-support and AI decision-making in judicial contexts; the tension between transparency requirements and the protection of proprietary algorithmic systems; and the institutional capacity deficits that limit the ability of courts and litigants to exercise meaningful oversight.

The specific domain of AI-assisted document management in court proceedings, including automated document classification, extraction of legally relevant information, scheduling optimization, and electronic case file management, has received comparatively less attention in the legal literature than predictive justice, despite its more immediate practical relevance. Notable contributions include the work of Kevin Ashley on AI and legal reasoning, and studies conducted under the auspices of the European e-Justice initiative, which has documented the diverse approaches to court document automation across EU Member States. The Estonian experience with AI-assisted small claims adjudication, which generated significant international attention following its announcement in 2019, has been examined by Kaidi Künnapas and others as a test case for the limits of automated decision-making in judicial contexts.

In Ukrainian legal science, scholarly engagement with AI in court proceedings remains at an early stage, reflecting both the recency of significant AI deployment in the Ukrainian judicial system and the broader underdevelopment of legal informatics as a distinct field of academic inquiry. Contributions by O. Uhrynovska, V. Prymak, and colleagues have addressed the general framework of judicial digitalization, while the specific legal challenges of AI integration have been touched upon in the context of the e-Court reform programme launched under the Strategy for the Development of the Justice System of Ukraine for 2021–2023. A comprehensive legal-theoretical analysis of AI in Ukrainian court proceedings — one that systematically addresses the compatibility of existing procedural law with algorithmic tools, the constitutional dimensions of automated judicial processes, and the alignment with EU regulatory standards under the AI Act – remains absent from the scholarly record, constituting the principal gap that the present study seeks to address.

3. The purpose of the study is to study individual opportunities and advantages of using artificial intelligence in judicial document management (using the example of Ukraine), as well as to analyze the challenges and issues associated with the implementation of this new technology.

4. Presentation of the main material.

Judicial document flow in Ukraine, as of today, includes both paper and electronic formats, which is implemented through the Unified Information and Telecommunication Judicial System [2]. The purpose of implementing the Concept of the Program for the Informatization of Local and Appeal Courts and the Project for Building a Unified Judicial Information and Telecommunication System (hereinafter referred to as the Unified Judicial Information and Telecommunication System) is:

– to form a single information space for courts, bodies and institutions in the justice system;

– to improve and optimize the information and communication infrastructure of courts, bodies and institutions in the justice system, while significantly reducing budget costs for its maintenance;

– to ensure the availability of information for participants in the judicial process and maximum transparency and openness of the justice system for society [3].

On August 17, 2021, the High Council of Justice approved the Regulation on the Unified Judicial Information and Telecommunications System, which defines the Unified Judicial Information and Telecommunications System as a set of information and telecommunication subsystems (modules) that ensure the automation of the processes of the activities of courts, bodies and institutions in the justice system specified by law, including document flow, automated case distribution, exchange of documents between the court and participants in the trial, recording of the trial and participation of participants in the trial in the court session via video conference, preparation of operational and analytical reporting, provision of information assistance to judges, as well as automation of processes that ensure the financial, property, organizational, personnel, information and telecommunication and other needs of users of the Unified Judicial Information and Telecommunications System.

Paragraph 120 of Section V. Transitional Provisions, the Regulation "On the Procedure for the Functioning of Certain Subsystems of the Unified Judicial Information and Telecommunications System" approved by the High Council of Justice No. 1845/0/15-21 dated August 17, 2021, states that before the start of the operation of the electronic document management subsystem as part of the Unified Judicial Information and Telecommunications System, the registration of documents received at the court's address (including procedural documents that may be the subject of judicial review) is carried out in the ASDS in accordance with the Regulation on the Automated Court Document Management System, approved by the decision of the Council of Judges of Ukraine dated November 26, 2010 No. 30 (as amended), and the instructions on office management. Registration of documents in other bodies and institutions of the justice system is carried out according to the rules stipulated by the relevant documents and instructions on office management, in force prior to the approval of the above-mentioned Regulation. According to paragraph 122 of the Regulation on the ESITS, until the start of the functioning of all subsystems (modules) of the ESITS, cases are considered (formed and stored) in paper form. Documents received by the court in electronic form are printed out if such an opportunity is available in the court and attached to the materials of the paper case [2].

At the same time, this means that court employees spend time and resources (paper, office equipment, etc.) to produce and form a court case in paper form.

That is, at the moment, the phased implementation does not bring the expected results from the ESITS, rather, on the contrary, the simultaneous presence of both paper and electronic circulation complicates the situation, placing an even greater burden on judges and court staff, which in turn violates the fundamental right of a person and a citizen enshrined in Article 55 of the Constitution of Ukraine [4], which regulates unhindered access to justice. According to the catalog of legal positions of the Constitutional Court of Ukraine 4.3.9.1 "The right to judicial protection, guaranteed by Article 55 of the Constitution of Ukraine, and all components of this right, in particular those that ensure access to court and determine the scope and content of the procedural rights of participants in procedural relations, must be practical and effective, and not theoretical and illusory" [5].

As practice shows, access to court is not really practical and efficient enough. Processing both paper and electronic documents requires time and resources. This means that judges and court staff spend more time processing and coordinating documents, which can lead to delays in resolving cases.

The move to electronic document circulation can also create additional difficulties for people who do not have access to the internet or do not have digital skills. This can complicate their ability to access justice, as they may have problems submitting or receiving electronic documents.

On October 18, 2023, Law of Ukraine 3200-NX entered into force in terms of amendments to the Code of Civil Procedure, the Code of Civil Procedure, and the Code of Administrative Offenses and provides that the following categories of persons must register their electronic offices in the Electronic Court: [6] lawyers, notaries, state and private executors, arbitration managers, judicial experts, state authorities, other state bodies, local governments, other legal entities (of all forms of ownership). Other persons register their electronic offices voluntarily.

Documents are received by the court through the "Electronic Court" service and procedural documents are sent from the court to the user's electronic office automatically. However, the responsible employee of the court's office must first review the submitted statement of claim and other documents, in particular, check whether all files are opened properly, whether attachments are scanned qualitatively, etc., and in case of improper registration, reject it with an indication of the reason.

This, in turn, creates an unclear and uncertain algorithm of actions for a court employee in the event of detecting a damaged electronic document, i.e. whether to refuse registration or leave it to the court's discretion in the event of, for example, the absence of a certain appendix or evidence.

The authenticity of an electronic document is certified in accordance with the Law of Ukraine "On Electronic Documents and Electronic Document Management". [7] For judges, the "Electronic Court" provides the "Judge's Office" service, with the help of which judges can review documents in the case, form court decisions, and perform other necessary actions provided for by procedural legislation.

Paper documents provided by the participants in the case during the court session and attached by the court to the case materials are entered by the responsible person into the "Electronic Recordkeeping" module in the general procedure immediately after the end of the court session or the announcement of a break in it. That is, the responsible court employee must scan the document, process it and perform actions to transfer it to the electronic office, that is, the court employee has full access to the case materials even at the stage of applying to the court. It should be noted that the regulatory acts do not properly regulate the procedural status of such an employee. [8]

So as a result, we get a partial implementation of electronic justice where judges are additionally obliged to distinguish at the stage of considering the issue of opening proceedings, whether a person is a public or private form of ownership, to separate private and public law persons and the corresponding consequences of the lack of registration of such persons in the ESITS subsystem. In one case, to leave without action, and in others, to open proceedings. (CPC of Ukraine, CAS of Ukraine, CPC of Ukraine).

It should be noted that the staff must analyze incoming documents through the ESITS, distinguishing the type of procedural document, that is, actually process the content and attribute the document to a particular type and subsequently transfer it to the court for consideration.

In addition, one should not forget about the official electronic mailbox of the court, which, in accordance with the Regulations on the Procedure for Using Local Computer Network Resources in the State Judicial Administration of Ukraine, Territorial Departments of the State Judicial Administration of Ukraine, Local and Appeal Courts of General Jurisdiction [9] is also processed by the relevant employee of the court staff.

As for individuals, the right to send and receive documents in paper form remains possible. Again, with further processing by the relevant court employee.

It is worth saying that the implementation date of the "Electronic Archive" module remains unknown, that is, everything that is added to the electronic case will eventually have to be printed and transferred to the paper archive for storage in accordance with the current instructions on court records [10].

That is, the task in the long term is to maximally transfer the court's document flow to an electronic format, but in practice it still looks like the existence of electronic and paper document flow in parallel, which accordingly increases the workload on court employees, and the terms when the electronic format will be used have not been determined. In addition, court employees also process incoming correspondence that arrives at the court, that is, the above-mentioned work requires a huge amount of human resources and time, even taking into account the fact that some of the documents are in electronic format.

However, it is worth noting certain elements of automation, such as automatic generation of court summonses in accordance with the scheduled date of the court session. Automatic sending of procedural documents to the parties, if there is an electronic office and SMS messages. Construction of statistical reporting based on cases in the court database.

The electronic justice system as a way of organizing state power using information networks is designed to ensure the functioning of government bodies in real time and make daily communication with them as simple and accessible as possible for citizens, legal entities, and non-governmental organizations. That is, to ensure unhindered access to justice guaranteed by Article 55 of the Constitution of Ukraine and Article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

Summing up the real state of affairs, we can conclude that the proposed Unified Information and Telecommunications System actually has the functions of document digitization, and limited automation and no analytical capabilities that would facilitate the work of court staff, and the partial introduction and constant postponement of the start of work of the listed modules, on the contrary, greatly complicated it, which in turn led not to improvement, but, in some cases, to deterioration in the implementation of the human and citizen's right to access justice. Since a significant part of the judicial process has not yet been "digitized" and it is impossible to remotely access the entire case of some categories. At the same time, it is worth emphasizing that the lack of access to computer technology and the Internet for a significant part of the population generally makes it impossible to use the concept of "court in a smartphone."

With the development of computational linguistics and computer science, the rapid development of intelligent machines began, which are capable of performing tasks that usually require human intelligence [15]. Legal regulation of AI in Ukraine is quite limited, currently, in particular, there is a concept for the development of artificial intelligence in Ukraine, approved by the Cabinet of Ministers Resolution No. 1556-r dated 02.12.2020. [1] In which the definition of artificial intelligence was first proposed as an organized set of information technologies, with the use of which it is possible to perform complex complex tasks by using a system of scientific research methods and algorithms for processing information obtained or independently created during work, as well as create and use your own knowledge bases, decision-making models, algorithms for working with information and determine ways to achieve the set tasks.

The concept also identifies priority areas in which the tasks of the state policy for the development of the field of artificial intelligence are implemented, namely: education and vocational training, science, economy, cybersecurity, information security, defense, public administration, legal regulation and ethics, justice.

To achieve the goal of the Concept in the field of justice, the following tasks should be ensured: further development of existing technologies in the field of justice (Single Judicial Information and Telecommunications System, Electronic Court, Single Register of Pre-trial Investigations, etc.);

– implementation of advisory programs based on artificial intelligence, which will open access to legal advice to wide segments of the population;

– prevention of socially dangerous phenomena by analyzing available data using artificial intelligence;

– determination of necessary measures for the resocialization of convicts by analyzing available data using artificial intelligence technologies;

– rendering court decisions in cases of minor complexity (by mutual consent of the parties) based on the results of the analysis carried out using artificial intelligence technologies, the state of compliance with the law and judicial practice. Provided that the procedure for rendering a decision (or a draft decision, or variants of draft decisions) using AI is legally enshrined.

The development and implementation of artificial intelligence technologies in the judicial systems of leading countries in the world contributed to the need to develop uniform principles and rules for their use. In December 2018, the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice adopted the "Ethical Charter" on the use of artificial intelligence in judicial systems and their environment [11], which was the first step of the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice to promote the responsible use of AI in the European judicial system in accordance with the values of the Council of Europe, such as:

– registers in the process of administering justice;

– non-discrimination, namely the prevention of any discrimination between individuals or groups of individuals;

– quality and security, concerning the processing of judicial decisions and data in a secure technological environment;

– the principle of "under user control";

– transparency, impartiality and fairness [11].

The potential for AI in the field of judicial document management promises to change the paradigm of the work of courts and the court. Kicking off the widespread use of artificial intelligence in the legal field.

One of the oldest AI technologies that can and should be implemented into an existing system, in our opinion, is optical character recognition (OCR), an electronic process used to capture information from printed, handwritten, or typed text. Its origins date back to the early 20th century in "reading machines" for the blind and devices used to encode telegraph messages. The United States Postal Service has been using OCR, rather than humans, to sort mail for at least a decade. Smartphone apps use the same basic technology to capture information from paper checks that are deposited digitally. With increasingly advanced OCR, it is now possible to decipher handwriting to identify the payee and amount, as well as the bank information, routing code, and account number encoded at the bottom of paper checks—the few that are still written. Of course, OCR is one of those AI technologies that has become so widespread that many experts no longer consider it AI. In Palm Beach County, Florida, OCR is used to scan incoming electronic documents for automatic filing. The system checks the case number and extracts and collates the document title along with other relevant information, which is then automatically fed into the court's case management system. [12] In Palm Beach County, Florida, AI-powered software classifies and files electronic documents that are received electronically. The court started with three types of low-risk, high-volume cases, gradually expanding the variety and complexity of cases as it gained experience using robotic process automation (RPA or Bot) technology. The bots, each with a name and username, classify incoming electronic filings, extract information from marked fields, and log them into the court's case management system. Today, 68 types of cases are automatically logged, representing nearly a third of all electronic filings in Palm Beach County. When the court first launched the system, humans reviewed 100% of the bots' work to confirm its accuracy (human "in the loop"). This turned out to be more about reassuring people than quality assurance: bots make fewer mistakes than human clerks, and bot errors are ultimately an indicator of a human programming or setup error. Once errors are caught and corrected (human "in the loop"), the bot never repeats that error (which most humans would not be able to say for themselves). Humans now review 15% of all filings that were logged by either a bot or a human. As bot handlers became more proficient in using the software, the bots were given increasingly complex tasks. Using "learning by example," the bots learned to recognize and process certain types of submissions that have additional requirements. The bots find information about the judge assigned to these cases and automatically send the appropriate documents (a human "out of the loop"). [12]

As we can see, AI can help automate and facilitate many processes related to the processing of court documents, from searching and analyzing legal information to automatically classifying and archiving documents. That is, a huge part of the work currently performed by court staff, including paper work, can be completely automated and accelerated thanks to the ability to analyze and read documents. In a matter of seconds, an incoming document can be qualified and attached to an electronic file, immediately notifying the presiding judge of the case.

In our opinion, the use of AI in the document flow system of the public sector, the court and the functioning of judicial institutions in general in Ukrainian conditions will be able to improve and simplify the work of employees, namely in the system:

1. Document flow automation: automatic generation of documents; document analysis; document translation; text recognition; electronic archive.

2. Support for judges and other participants in the judicial process: forecasting the outcomes of cases; selection of precedents; preparation for court hearings; text-based speech evaluation; data visualization.

3. Increasing the accessibility of justice: creating online services; automated translation; creating chatbots.

4. Increasing the efficiency and transparency of the judicial system: analysis of case law; monitoring of court cases; assessment of corruption risks; increasing public reporting.

5. Other opportunities: using robots for routine tasks; using virtual reality.

It is important to note that the implementation of AI in Ukrainian courts will require careful planning, coordination and resource provision in order to take into account the ethical aspects and risks associated with the use of AI in the judicial system.

Given the above, it is worth noting that in Ukraine today there are numerous legal and practical prerequisites for the implementation of elements of artificial intelligence (AI) in justice. In parallel, the implementation of AI in Ukrainian justice should adhere to the basic principles laid down in the Ethical Charter for the Use of AI in the Judicial System and its Environment, as well as in the White Paper [13] on Artificial Intelligence, which regulates the framework that can be used to ensure that the development and application of AI takes place in a way that promotes the public good, protects the rights and freedoms of citizens, and encourages innovation and economic development.

It is important to note that the introduction of AI into the judicial process is possible only if its technical level guarantees: strict observance of fundamental human rights; prevents any form of discrimination between individuals or groups of individuals; ensures transparency, impartiality and fairness in the consideration of cases; protects the confidentiality of electronic communications and the processing of personal data; guarantees technical and software reliability and security, both for individuals and for society as a whole.

5. Conclusions.

Based on the above, the following can be summarized:

The use of artificial intelligence in the judicial process at the present stage should not be the creation of a new model of relations based on granting workers the authority to apply the law, but the organic inclusion of digital technologies into the existing model of judicial proceedings.

The introduction of artificial intelligence into judicial activity is a matter of time, and the issue of theoretical development of the use of such an innovation remains open. This could be the first step towards building a legal model for using a "robot" as a judge in cases with a simple plot of the dispute.

Using artificial intelligence to identify and analyze patterns in existing decisions, predict future "patterns" of decisions, and create innovative tools to achieve ambitious improvements in fair trial.

It is important to consider that it is currently completely impossible (and even undesirable) to completely exclude humans from the judicial decision-making system. Artificial intelligence systems must be constantly monitored, trained, and optimized - just like human processes - to ensure appropriate results.

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Oleksandr Tegza,
Postgraduate Student, Department of Constitutional Law and Comparative Law,
Faculty of Law,
Uzhhorod National University
ORCID: 0009-0004-9501-1606