

CURRENT CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES AND GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES OF CRIMINAL LAW; MILESTONES OF LAW IN CENTRAL EUROPE (ČASTÁ, 10 – 12 APRIL 2025)

prof. JUDr. Jozef Čentéš, DrSc.
Professor
Comenius University Bratislava
Faculty of Law
Department of Criminal Law,
Criminology and Criminalistics
Šafárikovo nám. 6
810 00 Bratislava, Slovakia
jozef.centesh@flaw.uniba.sk
ORCID: 0000-0003-3397-746X

Mgr. Sára Zsemlyová
PhD. Student
Comenius University Bratislava
Faculty of Law,
Department of Criminal Law,
Criminology and Criminalistics
Šafárikovo nám. 6
810 00 Bratislava, Slovakia
sara.zsemlyova@uniba.sk
ORCID: 0009-0009-5794-5631

Mgr. Roland Hochmann
PhD. Student
Comenius University Bratislava
Faculty of Law,
Department of Criminal Law,
Criminology and Criminalistics
Šafárikovo nám. 6
818 00 Bratislava, Slovakia
Roland.hochmann@flaw.uniba.sk
ORCID: 0009-0006-2014-4118

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From April 10 to 12, 2025, the 19th edition of the international scientific conference ***Milestones of Law in the Central European Area 2025*** took place in Častá – Papiernička. The event was held under the auspices of the Dean of the Faculty of Law of Comenius University Bratislava, prof. JUDr. Eduard Burda, PhD.

On April 10, 2025, the conference was attended by a team from the Department for Scientific and University Cooperation of the French Embassy in Slovakia, led by Dr. Thomas Perin, Attaché for Scientific and University Cooperation. The participants were welcomed by prof. JUDr. Jozef Čentéš, DrSc., Head of the Department of Criminal Law, Criminology, and Criminalistics at the Faculty of Law of Comenius University Bratislava,

who received a word of thanks from the French diplomats for the invitation. Dr. Perrin particularly praised the importance of the conference focused on young researchers and highlighted the event's contribution to strengthening scientific and academic relations between France and the Slovak Republic.

The Criminal Law Section focused on the latest trends and challenges in criminal law in a global context. The section emphasised knowledge exchange on the application of criminal law institutions, practical challenges in enforcement, and legislative changes. Global developments influencing the future of criminal law were also discussed. The section was professionally supervised by prof. JUDr. Jozef Čentěš, DrSc., and prof. JUDr. Margita Prokeínová, PhD. On the second day, a practical workshop led by JUDr. Daniel Petričko, PhD., was held to present the Electronic Monitoring System (ESMO). Various types of electronic monitoring were introduced, including house arrest monitoring, restraining orders, alcohol bans, voice monitoring, and discreet surveillance.

A total of 43 active contributions were presented within the Criminal Law Section, making it the most extensive part of the entire conference. The diversity and academic quality of the presentations offered a thorough insight into contemporary issues in criminal law from both national and international perspectives. To provide a clearer structure, the presented topics have been grouped into the following thematic areas, which capture the core directions and professional priorities of the section:

- I. **Legislative Changes and Reforms:** Several contributions addressed the impact of the amendment to the Criminal Code No. 40/2024 Coll., which fundamentally changed approaches to the evaluation of damage, the statute of limitations, sentencing, and protective measures. There was significant discussion about the need to humanise penalties, support restorative justice and its legal framework, and emphasise individualised sanctions. Questions were raised regarding the proportionality of penalties for legal entities and tools for ensuring alignment between criminal policy and the principle of justice. New rules sparked debate about the boundaries of state interference with personal freedom and property. Participants stressed the need for continuous assessment of the amendment's effectiveness in light of judicial decisions and practical application.
- II. **Criminal Policy and Enforcement Practice:** Numerous presentations focused on problems identified in applying the amended Criminal Code in daily practice. Topics included the importance of damage amount as a key criterion for criminal liability, asset seizure, and jurisdiction of criminal justice authorities. Issues of evidence collection were addressed, including specifics of tax evasion and public procurement fraud. Several legislative shortcomings were highlighted for their impact on legal certainty and the effectiveness of crime prosecution. The presentations demonstrated that practical enforcement is a living laboratory that tests the limits and potential of legal norms.
- III. **Technology and Criminal Law:** A highly relevant theme was the interaction between modern technologies and criminal law. Presentations focused on the use of artificial intelligence in evidence gathering, credibility assessment of testimonies, and digital evidence analysis. Speakers warned of ethical, procedural, and evidentiary risks arising from increasing digitalisation of forensic tools. Constitutional limits on surveillance and electronic communication monitoring were also examined. Participants emphasised the urgent need for legal adaptation to technological developments while maintaining fundamental rights and freedoms. It was noted that Slovak

criminal legislation does not yet reflect the need for legal regulation in areas such as cybersecurity.

- IV. **Protection of Fundamental Rights and International Dimension:** Several contributions addressed criminal law challenges in the context of human rights protection and international law. Topics included criminal liability for social media speech, the interpretation of freedom of expression, and the impact of European Court of Human Rights case law on domestic rulings. Special attention was given to the protection of children from sexual abuse and the significance of upcoming European directives in this area. Hybrid threats, armed conflicts, and their implications under international criminal law were also discussed. These contributions highlighted the deepening interconnection between national and transnational legal frameworks in criminal law.
- V. **Ethical and Criminological Reflections:** Some authors focused on deeper value and philosophical questions in criminal law. Their contributions addressed offender resocialisation, possibilities for rehabilitation, and the role of punishment as a societal tool. Discussions explored the phenomenon of "victim blaming" and its effect on court decisions, particularly in sexual crime cases. Reflections on the development of criminology as a scientific discipline and the need to maintain ethical balance when introducing new tools into criminal proceedings enriched the section with a crucial humanising perspective and supported debate on long-term criminal policy trends.

Throughout the presentations, space was created for constructive discussion, which served as a stimulus for developing new perspectives on current challenges in criminal law.

The Criminal Law Section confirmed its prominent role within the conference, not only in terms of the number of contributions but especially through their high academic quality and thematic diversity. By reflecting on practical problems stemming from the amended Criminal Code and offering solutions, the section contributed significantly to seeking answers to challenges in legal practice. In this sense, the section can be considered an important contribution not only to the systematic development of criminal law science but also to the academic dialogue on the direction of modern criminal justice in a dynamically changing legal and social environment.

