

AJA

ACCESS TO JUSTICE
FOR ANIMALS

MAX PLANCK INSTITUTE
for comparative and international
PRIVATE LAW HAMBURG



ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR ANIMALS IN EUROPE:

TOWARDS AN 'AARHUS CONVENTION' FOR ANIMALS?

1 – 2 July 2025



Day 1 – Tuesday, 1 July 2025

09:30–10:15 | Registration and Coffee

10:15–10:30 | Welcome Address

Dr. Felix Aiwanger (Senior Research Fellow, Max Planck Institute for Comparative and International Private Law, Hamburg)

10:30–10:45 | Opening Remarks & Introduction

Dr. Elien Verniers (Ghent University) & Victoria Kühborth (University of Freiburg)

Session 1: Contextualisation: the Status Quo

10:45–12:00 | Roundtable 1 – Current Challenges to the Legal Representation of Animal Interests in Europe

Moderator: Dr. Eva Bernet Kempers (Postdoctoral Researcher, University of Antwerp)

Panellists:

- Dr. Nina Kerstensteiner (Postdoctoral Fellow, University of Regensburg)
- Alice Di Concetto (Executive Director, The European Institute for Animal Law & Policy)
- Edie Bowles (Managing Director, Advocates for Animals)
- Dr. Gieri Bolliger (Director, Tier im Recht)

Expert Respondents: Joren Vuylsteke (Belgium); Lola Garcia (Spain); Priscila Gulič Pirnat (Slovenia); Jamie Gardiner (UK); Dr. Zorana Todorovic (Serbia)

12:00–13:00 | Lunch

13:00–14:15 | Roundtable 2 – Case Studies: Representing Animal Interests in the Contexts of Administrative, Criminal, and Civil Law

Moderator: Dr. Felix Aiwanger (Senior Research Fellow, Max Planck Institute for Comparative and International Private Law, Hamburg)

Panellists:

- Ines Schnur (Ombuds Office for Animal Protection, City of Vienna)
- Dr. Małgorzata Lubelska-Sazanów (Assistant Professor, University of Silesia)
- Dr. Ulrich Wollenteit (Lawyer, Rechtsanwälte Günther, Hamburg)

Expert Respondents: Alessandro Ricciuti (Italy); Vasileia Papastefanaki (Greece); Marisa dos Reis (Portugal); Dr. Szilvia Vetter (Hungary); Cindy Van de Ven (The Netherlands)

14:15–14:45 | Coffee Break

Session 2: Prospects for Reform: Feasibility of an 'Aarhus Convention for Animals'

14:45–15:15 | Introduction: 'Access to Justice for Animals: What Can We Learn from the Aarhus Convention?'

Prof. Dr. Thomas Schomerus (Professor of Public Law at the Leuphana University Lüneburg & Member of the Aarhus Convention Compliance Committee)

15:15–16:15 | Roundtable 3 – Political and Legal Feasibility of a Convention on Animal Access to Justice in Europe

Moderator: Dr. Søren Stig Andersen (University of Copenhagen)

Panellists:

- Prof. Dr. Thomas Schomerus (Professor of Public Law at the University Lüneburg & Member of the Aarhus Convention Compliance Committee)
- Saba Pipia, Ph.D. (Legal Advisor, Diakonia IHL Centre)
- Prof. Dr. Hendrik Schoukens (Professor of Environmental Law, Ghent University)
- Dr. Antoine Goetschel (Founder and President, Global Animal Law GAL Association & former Animal Prosecutor in Criminal Law matters for Animals for the Canton of Zürich)

Expert respondents: Dr. Tarja Koskela (Finland); Eva Diesen (Sweden); Dr. Maria Baideldinova (Kazakhstan); Elif Naz Nemec (Turkey); Dr. Tomislav Nedic (Croatia)

16:15–16:45 | Coffee Break

16:45–18:00 | Roundtable 4 – Stakeholders' Perspectives: Barriers and Opportunities

Moderator: Marine Lercier (International Centre for Animal Rights and Ethics (ICARE) & Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain)

Panellists:

- Niels Fuglsang (MEP, President of the EU Intergroup on the Welfare and Conservation of Animals)
- Prof. Dr. Ingrid Visseren-Hamakers (Professor of Environmental Governance, Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen)
- Stephanie Ghislain (Head of Advocacy, Eurogroup for Animals)
- Dr. James Yeates (Chief Executive Officer, World Federation for Animals)

Expert Respondents: Rebeka Chomátová (Czech Republic); Lavinia Bejan (Romania); Annichen Kongsvik Saeteren (Norway); Sibel Konyo (Switzerland)

Day 2 – Wednesday, 2 July 2025

Expert Workshop – ‘What are the Main Legal Gaps at National Level that an “Aarhus Convention for Animals” Should Address?’

Closed session – AJA members and invited experts only

How can animals’ interests be meaningfully represented in legal systems across Europe? What would it take to ensure access to justice for animals at the regional level?

This international conference brings together legal scholars, practitioners, and advocates to examine how animals’ interests are—or could be—legally represented in European jurisdictions. Organised by the **Access to Justice for Animals (AJA)** network and hosted by the Max Planck Institute for Comparative and International Private Law, Hamburg, this academic event explores both the current landscape and the future potential for a European legal instrument that ensures animals meaningful access to justice.

Divided into two main sessions—‘Contextualisation: the Status Quo’ and ‘Prospects for Reform: Feasibility of an ‘Aarhus Convention for Animals’ ’—the programme features four thematic roundtables and a presentation on the Aarhus Convention as a possible model.

Participants will discuss practical challenges, comparative legal frameworks, institutional pathways, and stakeholder perspectives, with a view to assessing the viability of a European initiative akin to the Aarhus Convention—but for animals.

Lectures, symposia and other events may be filmed or photographed for the Institute’s own purposes.

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The institute is 20 minutes by taxi from the airport and five minutes walking distance from the railway station Hamburg-Dammtor, where most long-distance trains stop.