

EDITORIAL

Editorial

*Constantin Stefanou**

I am particularly proud of this special issue on *Law Reform* for two reasons; first, because of my direct involvement in the IALS Law Reform Project, which is based at the Sir William Dale Centre, of which I am the director, and, second, because it is a special issue on a topic that touches upon the legislative ‘needs’ of most states. We are now well into the twenty-first century, and it is becoming increasingly clear to most governments that there is a problem with legislation. In the past, most legal practitioners would say that the biggest problem with legislation was that we had too many laws. This is now changing as we are slowly moving from quantity to quality and to the realization that the main problem is the quality of legislation. The obvious way to tackle the problem is through better drafting of normative acts (primary and secondary legislation, regulations, ministerial decisions, etc.). Although some of the states are taking steps in this area, the time and cost required to train the drafters of normative acts make this a long-term goal. An additional issue concerns the practical side of reforming the law. So far, most studies on the wider topic of law reform examine aspects of law reform in single jurisdictions. There are precious few attempts to do comparative studies on law reform for two reasons. First, the size of such a project is quite daunting and ‘expensive’. Second, we lack the tools for such comparative studies because we still do not have a specific list of criteria to test in different jurisdictions. The great strength of the IALS Law Reform Project is that it attempts to establish basic general criteria for law reform by looking at a statistically significant number of jurisdictions (30+). The long-term aim is to test different jurisdictions against the criteria established by the study of individual jurisdictions.

So far, the IALS Law Reform Project has completed the first phase of the work with very little money, relying on the good wishes and on individual time and effort devoted to the study by academics, in different parts of the world, who thought that the project was worthwhile enough to merit their involvement. I would like to offer the academics involved my gratitude for their unpaid work. The least we can do is offer them full and unrestricted access to the whole set of data generated by the project. In the future, we aim to apply for research funding to complete the next two phases of the project. During times of austerity this is not easy, but we are hoping that the project can become a pilot comparative study on law reform. This special issue aims to inform and offer tasters of the type of research that the project has generated.

* Dr Constantin Stefanou is Managing Editor of *EJLR* and Director of the Sir William Dale Centre for Legislative Studies at the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies (University of London).

Finally, the project also places on record its gratitude for the efforts of Enrico Albanesi and Jonathan Teasdale. Both are Fellows at the Sir William Dale Centre for Legislative Studies and have committed their time and efforts to coordinating the work of around 80 academics.

The IALS Law Reform Project is worth your attention not because it is ‘old research’, *i.e.* non-funded, but because of its great and yet unfulfilled attention.