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The thematic conference proceedings “Expert Evidence in Criminal Proceedings” include 17 original scientific and review papers as part of the national scientific conference of the same title, held on 12–13 June 2025 in Palić. The conference was organised by the Institute of Criminological and Sociological Research, with the support of the Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation of the Republic of Serbia and the Judicial Academy in Belgrade.

As emphasised in the foreword, the selection of the conference theme and the topics addressed in the proceedings are based on the understanding that expert evidence constitutes one of the key evidentiary actions in criminal proceedings. The quality, lawfulness and efficiency of expert assessments significantly impact judicial decision-making. Accordingly, the papers aim to critically present the existing statutory framework, expose the challenges experienced by expert witnesses, public prosecutors and judges in practice and formulate specific recommendations for improving the normative and institutional framework in the field of expert evidence.

Although the papers in the proceedings are not formally divided into thematic chapters, their content allows a preliminary classification. The first section of the publication focuses on the challenges arising from the application of digital and financial forensics in expert evidence, especially in the context of rapid technological development and increasingly complex forms of crime. Through a multidisciplinary approach by the representatives of the professional and academic community, expert witnesses and professors of law and economics, the papers discuss: the role of artificial intelligence in expert evidence; the importance of forensic analysis of financial statements in detecting and prosecuting fraud; the use of digital forensics in financial investigations and the specific challenges of acoustic expert assessments in criminal proceedings. Across all papers, authors underline the need for legislative reform, institutional strengthening, continuous professional development and the establishment of effective intersectoral cooperation as a precondition for lawful and efficient proceedings.

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A significant part of the thematic proceedings consists of papers that address the increasing importance of psychosocial expert evidence in criminal proceedings, particularly in the context of victim protection and the right to a fair trial. In both original scientific and review papers authored by judges, attorneys and professors of law, the following topics are analysed: the importance of psychological assessments of victims in light of the new concept of the criminal offense of rape, with emphasis on victim-specific responses and the issue of consent; the role of expert advisers in criminal proceedings; the victim's right to request psychiatric expertise for the purpose of ensuring special protection during testimony and compensation claims within criminal proceedings and the weight of evidence and legal nature of expert reports provided by the Center for Human Trafficking Victims' Protection. All authors share the view that psychosocial expert evidence is not only essential for factual accuracy, but also for ensuring the consistent application of the principle of fairness and protection of procedural rights in criminal justice systems.

One of the central sections of the proceedings addresses the complexity and significance of medical expert testimony, especially in cases requiring the interpretation of specific clinical and forensic findings. The authors, specialists in forensic medicine, gynaecology and obstetrics, toxicology and related medical fields, analyse a range of issues, including: the use of medical expertise in homicide cases; the role of forensic medicine in clarifying the fate of missing persons; the distinction between medical error and clinical complications in gynaecological and obstetric practice; toxicological challenges in cases of driving under the influence of psychoactive substances and the complexity of assessing whiplash injuries. The papers set out recommendations for standardising methodological approaches and advancing forensic practices as essential conditions for effective protection of procedural rights and safeguarding trust in the healthcare and judicial systems.

The final thematic section provides an overview of contentious issues in the field of traffic-technical expert evidence in misdemeanour proceedings, with particular reference to case law related to negligent driving, excessive speed and overtaking. Additionally, readers are introduced to papers addressing: the importance of vehicle inspections for the reliability of expert findings; the potential of modern software tools in the reconstruction and analysis of traffic accidents and specific aspects of technical inspections relevant for the precise assessment of such incidents. The authors underscore the need for continuous professional development of expert witnesses in digital technologies, as well as specialised training for public prosecutors and judges to ensure accurate evidentiary assessment in cases involving modern vehicles. All contributions reaffirm that technically precise, methodologically sound and legally relevant traffic-technical expert evidence serves as a foundation for reliable fact-finding and lawful decision-making in criminal and misdemeanour proceedings.

In view of the above, the collected papers "Expert Evidence in Criminal Proceedings" provide a comprehensive and critical overview of the theoretical, normative and institutional aspects of one of the most important evidentiary mechanisms in contemporary

criminal justice. Through a multidisciplinary perspective, with contributions from professionals in law, medicine, economics and traffic engineering, the volume formulates concrete recommendations for improving financial, medical, psychosocial and traffic-technical expertise in criminal proceedings. Consequently, this publication serves as a valuable resource not only for legal professionals, but also for a wider audience seeking a deeper understanding of the current state and future development of expert evidence.

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