

From Editor-in-Chief

Dear Readers!

The European Union is entering the third decade of the 21st century amid profound and multidimensional transformations. The shifting geopolitical landscape, dynamic socio-economic processes, technological advancement, challenges to the rule of law, and growing social and cultural diversity – all of these factors are redefining the boundaries of law, public policy, and European integration. In this context, what becomes essential is not only the updating of policies and institutional frameworks but also a deeper academic reflection on the nature and direction of these changes.

We are pleased to present to our Readers an issue entitled “*The European Union in the 21st Century: Economic, Legal and Social Challenges*”, which offers an analysis of the current and future challenges facing the European Union. The publication is structured into thematic areas that highlight various dimensions of the transformational processes.

The first part of the volume focuses on issues related to social policy, the labour market, and demographics. The analyses cover, among other topics, the new EU regulations on platform work, challenges in the transposition of directives concerning the protection of foreign nationals, as well as demographic challenges that shape the structure of social security systems in the Member States.

The section devoted to law and public administration presents studies on the impact of new technologies – such as artificial intelligence and robotics – on the labour market, the evolving concepts in public procurement law, and new models of applying administrative law in the context of European integration. These contributions underscore the need for public institutions to adapt to increasing regulatory complexity and ongoing civilizational transformations.

In the section analysing the future structure of the European Union, the authors address fundamental questions concerning its constitutional identity – whether it is evolving toward a federation, a confederation, or constitutes a distinct model of integration. The volume also examines mechanisms employed by EU institutions in practice that go beyond the formal provisions of the treaties, as well as issues related to abuses within the VAT system.

The section devoted to the relationship between religion and society explores how increasing cultural diversity and shifts in secularization influence State–Church relations as well as the jurisprudence of European courts in matters concerning religious freedom. This highlights the need to develop new, more coherent frameworks for protecting individual rights in a Europe characterized by axiological diversity.

The conclusion also outlines the main challenges facing the community of European Union Member States.

I believe that this issue represents a significant contribution to the debate on the future of the European Union and serves as an inspiration for further research on its development – not only from the perspective of law but also economics, social policy, and the social sciences.

Prof. Gertruda Uścińska