

What is the Sentencing Forum?

A space where researchers working on sentencing and criminal justice decision-making can discuss new ideas, and follow ongoing developments across jurisdictions and disciplines.

The Sentencing Forum is a new **online meeting space** designed to complement the existing academic structures in the sentencing field. We have conferences, workshops, working groups, and project-based collaborations, but we rarely have meetings that keep conversations going between major events. The Forum aims to fill precisely that gap: a recurring space where researchers working on sentencing and criminal justice decision-making can stay connected, discuss new ideas, and follow ongoing developments across jurisdictions and disciplines.



Jointly **organised by the ERC projects Sentrix and Reconstructing sentencing**, the Forum offers short, focused sessions centred on a single theme: methodological, conceptual, empirical, or comparative. The intention is not to create a new organisation or compete with existing networks, but to add an **extra layer of continuity to the discussions already happening in the field**. Our hope is to build a **community that meets more frequently, in a format that is informal** enough to encourage open conversation but structured enough to be genuinely useful.

The Forum will meet online on Wednesdays, with each session lasting approximately 90 minutes.

The first term will cover:

4 February 2026 at 16:00 CET

Innovation in sentencing research

4 March 2026 at 15:00 CET

Sentencing Guidelines in Comparative Perspective

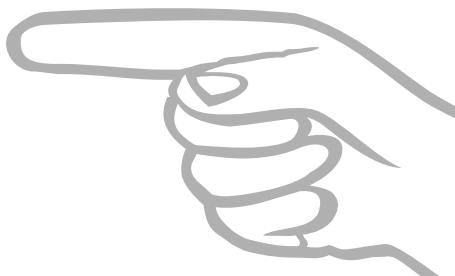
15 April 2026 at 15:00 CET

Talking to judges

27 May 2026 at 15:00 CET

Shadowing judges

To receive Zoom links for individual meetings and to receive news about future Sentencing Forum meetings, please subscribe to the mailing list [HERE](#).





Detailed information about sessions:

Info

- **Innovation in sentencing research**

- This session introduces innovative approaches to sentencing research, including new conceptual, methodological, and visual tools for studying sentencing as a complex decision-making process shaped by law, institutions, and practice.
- **Jakub Drapal (Re-Con-Sent), Dean Lipovac and Miha Marčenko (Sentrix)**

**4 February
2026**

**16:00
CET**

**4 March
2026**

**15:00
CET**

- **Sentencing Guidelines in Comparative Perspective**

- This session explores sentencing guidelines across jurisdictions, focusing on their design, use, and effects on judicial discretion, consistency, and legitimacy from a comparative perspective.
- **Julian Roberts, Johannes Kaspar, Sigrid van Wingerden**

- **Talking to judges**

- This session examines interviews and focus groups as methods for studying sentencing through judges' and prosecutors' accounts, addressing access, power dynamics, and the analytical value of judicial narratives.
- **Nicole Boegelein, Mojca Plesničar**

**15 April
2026**

**15:00
CET**

**27 May
2026**

**15:00
CET**

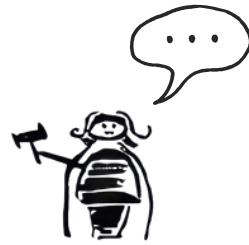
- **Shadowing judges**

- This session focuses on shadowing and courtroom observation as ways of analysing sentencing as an enacted practice, highlighting routines, interactions, and institutional constraints that shape decision-making.
- **Cyrus Tata, Irene van Oorschot**

These sessions are designed as introductory, theme-driven meetings to establish the rhythm and identity of the Forum. As the initiative develops, we will actively invite suggestions from participants who wish to present their own research or propose future topics. Later terms will increasingly incorporate work-in-progress presentations, idea-testing sessions, and contribution-led discussions.

We hope the Sentencing Forum will become a long-term, intellectually generous meeting point that strengthens connections across the sentencing research community and supports ongoing dialogue in a flexible, accessible way.

Projects behind the Sentencing Forum:



Sentrix (ERC Starting Grant, PI: Mojca Plesničar)

Sentrix explores the architecture of sentencing, investigating how legal rules, institutional environments, professional cultures, and decision-making dynamics shape sentencing outcomes. Combining doctrinal analysis, empirical research, and innovative visualisation tools, the project seeks to map sentencing as a complex, multi-layered system.



Reconstructing Sentencing (ERC Starting Grant, PI: Jakub Drapal)

Reconstructing Sentencing examines how sentencing systems operate across Europe, focusing on the interplay between legal frameworks, judicial discretion, and real-world practice. Using comparative legal analysis, large-scale empirical data, and experimental work with practitioners, the project seeks to understand the mechanisms that structure sentencing decisions and drive variation across jurisdictions, contributing to a clearer picture of sentencing as a dynamic, evolving process.