



Prof. dr. Miguel De Jonckheere, Dean of the faculty Law and Criminology, kindly invites you to the public defence to obtain the academic degree of

## DOCTOR OF LAWS

of Ms. *Seyedeh Sajedeh Salehi*

which will take place on

Monday 30 September 2024 at 4:30 pm

In Auditorium I.0.03

At the VUB main campus, Pleinlaan 2 - 1050 Etterbeek and [online](#)

## ACCESS TO JUSTICE PATHWAYS FOR SMALL CONSUMER CLAIMS IN THE DIGITAL AGE: THE EUROPEAN UNION APPROACH

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Are you not able to come in person? You can watch the livestream [here](#).  
A map of the campus and directions to reach the VUB can be found [here](#). If you are coming by car, please register your numberplate [here](#) in advance for easy parking access.



## Abstract

The exponential growth of e-commerce in the EU has transformed both consumer interactions and market participation. While e-commerce provides numerous advantages to consumers, it also leads to disputes arising from market malpractices by traders, which jeopardize consumer interests. These disputes have become more complex due to the increasing use of artificial intelligence (AI) by traders, often aimed at delivering higher-quality goods and services. As AI technology advances, the nature of these disputes evolves, becoming more sophisticated and technical. Consequently, despite the presence of substantive laws designed to protect consumer interests, traditional judicial pathways and current alternative dispute resolution methods have proven inadequate, particularly for disputes originating from digital marketplaces with cross-border elements and low monetary thresholds. As a result, consumers are often discouraged from pursuing justice for their rights. These inefficiencies threaten consumer interests, undermine confidence in civil justice systems, and challenge the overall effectiveness of consumer protection laws within the EU. From an economic perspective, diminished consumer trust and reduced participation in the EU internal digital market are detrimental to the EU's economic growth.

In response to these challenges, adopting a need-based approach, this PhD thesis investigates the potential of AI-driven online dispute resolution (ODR) models as a remedy for the current inefficiencies in resolving small consumer claims from e-commerce transactions. By exploring the integration of AI within ODR frameworks, this research aims to assess whether these models can provide expedited, cost-effective, simplified, and accessible pathways to justice. This study will involve a comprehensive analysis of the EU's legal landscape and technological advancements, alongside an examination of successful AI-driven ODR systems in non-EU jurisdictions. The objective is to determine the extent to which AI-supported ODR can effectively address the complexities of modern e-commerce disputes and ultimately improve access to civil justice for consumers in the EU.