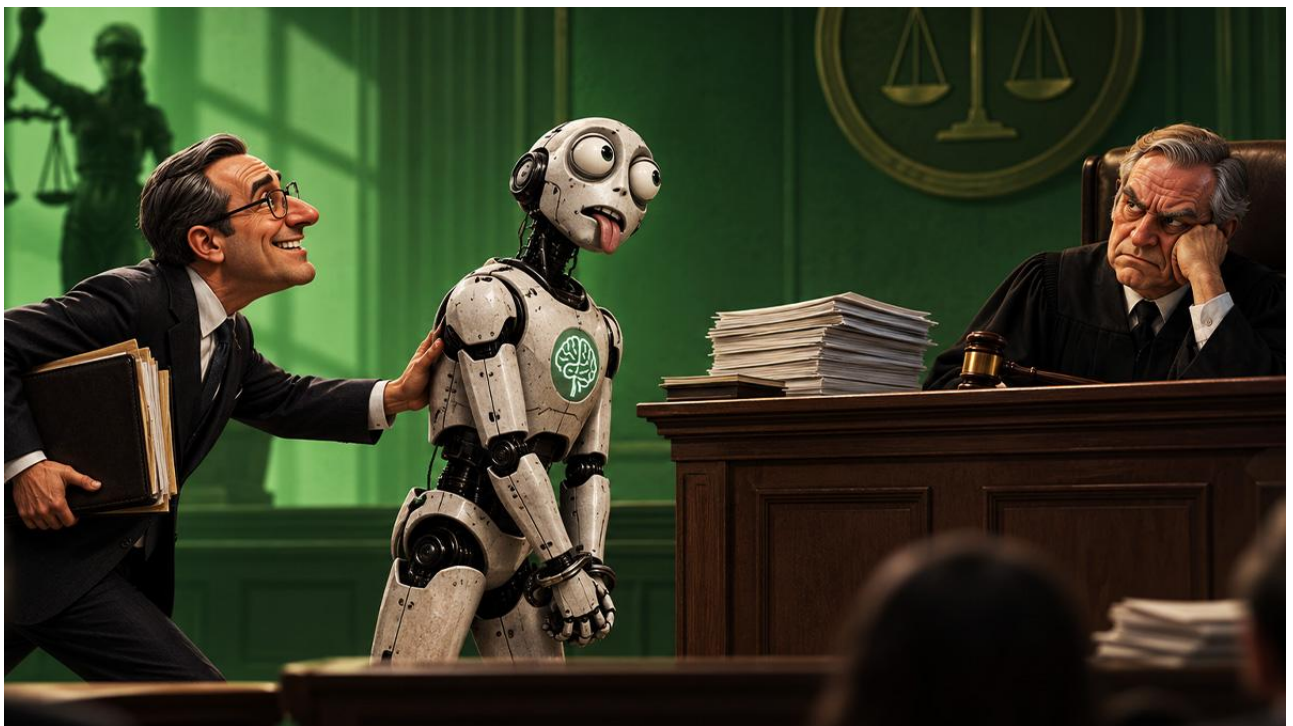


Artificial Intelligence's Hallucinations in Court: Lawyers Cite Rulings That Don't Exist

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Symbolic image: AI

Lawyers aren't exactly the cheapest service providers. Nevertheless, some want to make their work as easy as possible with the help of artificial intelligence. It's just unfortunate when the AI invents court rulings – and the lawyer adopts them unchecked into their legal brief. AI hallucinations in court are no longer an isolated incident: The first penalties for these lazy lawyers are already being handed out.

In the Netherlands, a lawyer in a corporate dispute cited a supposed ruling by the Dutch Supreme Court. The problem: the ruling didn't exist. The opposing side accused him of using AI for his legal brief. The lawyer denied this but couldn't prove the source of the citation.

The court imposed a fine of €2,300, as Dutch media [reported at the end of August](#): "The court considers the inclusion of a non-existent precedent reprehensible," the judge ruled. "Because this cost both the plaintiff and the court unnecessary additional time and attention."

Not an isolated case: Also [in August](#), lawyers from a Los Angeles law firm representing the insurer State Farm in a legal dispute had to apologize in court for flawed pleadings created with the help of artificial intelligence.

The opposing side found cases that never existed, quotations that had never been uttered, and alleged judicial findings that also did not exist. One of the lawyers involved finally admitted that seven out of eight written submissions contained completely fabricated case quotations. In addition, there were incorrect case titles and quotations that could not be found in the cited decisions.

She had used an AI tool for her work and, according to her own statement, mistakenly assumed that it was connected to the legal research service Westlaw and would internally verify the findings. The responsible senior lawyer apologized to the court and the plaintiff and accepted responsibility.

German lawyers are also sending AI ahead

The problem is already known in German-speaking countries. [In 2025, the Cologne District Court caught a](#) family law specialist with a legal document whose references, according to the court, were "apparently generated using artificial intelligence and completely fabricated." The document cited non-existent judgments, fictitious monographs, articles, as well as incorrect commentators and marginal notes.

The AI had even invented a completely new and incorrect legal rule. The specialist lawyer apparently hadn't noticed that it was legal nonsense (or simply hadn't read the AI output).

The court sharply reprimanded the lawyer. Such conduct hinders the administration of justice, misleads uninformed readers, and damages the reputation of the legal profession and the rule of law. The German Federal Bar Association and the German Bar Association now explicitly warn against adopting AI publications without verification.

Even Austria's highest judge has been confronted with an "AI lawyer".

[Last November, officials at the Austrian Supreme Court](#) were also taken aback. In a criminal case, an appeal for annulment—apparently generated largely by AI—had been filed.

Here, too, the machine had been busy fabricating information. The complaint referred, among other things, to alleged supreme court rulings that didn't even exist. In addition, there were numerous incorrect citations.

The Supreme Court found that the submission, apparently prepared "without professional review," did not even remotely meet the required level of argumentation. The court refrained from offering a substantive response.

The phenomenon has now gone international. A [database](#) maintained by French legal scholar Damien Charlotin already records 1,922 cases of legal AI hallucinations worldwide, with the majority originating in the United States. There, in 2025, a Californian lawyer was hit

particularly hard: 21 of the 23 quotations used in his legal brief were fabricated. The court imposed a fine of \$10,000.

Both clients and opposing parties should be able to expect highly paid lawyers to deliver sound work. If they are going to rely on AI, they should at least verify whether the judgments and citations they cite actually exist and are accurate. But that often seems to be asking too much.