

Use of Special Knowledge in Investigations Into Criminal Offences Involving Provision of Professional Legal Aid

Kristina Romanauskas *

* Doctor of Philosophy in Law, Doctoral Candidate at NSC «Hon. Prof. M. S. Bokarius FSI», Kharkiv, Ukraine, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-9545-9755>, e-mail: kristina.r7@ukr.net

DOI: [10.32353/khrife.2.2026.08](https://doi.org/10.32353/khrife.2.2026.08)

UDC 343.985(477)

Received: 14.05.2026 / Reviewed: 28.05.2026 / Accepted for print: 25.06.2026 / Available online: 30.06.2026



The research paper explores theoretical and practical aspects of utilising special knowledge during investigations into criminal offences involving professional legal aid. The Article Purpose is to clarify specific features of the use of special knowledge during investigations into this category of crime, to identify the most common forms of its application, and to develop specific forensic guidelines for enhancing efficiency of pre-trial investigations. The methodological basis of the research includes general scientific methods of analysis, synthesis, induction, deduction and generalisation, as well as dialectical, formal-legal, systemic-structural, comparative-legal and formal-logical methods. The study analyses and summarises academic views on the use of special knowledge in investigations into criminal offences against justice and determines the specifics of how such expertise is used in professional legal practice. It is substantiated that common procedural forms of the application of special knowledge in such criminal proceedings are the participation of specialists during investigative (search) actions, the conduct of forensic examinations, and the interrogation of forensic experts in court. It has been demonstrated that the most relevant one is the use of special medical knowledge, since attacks on the life and health

This article is translation of the original Ukrainian content, which source is available at the link: <https://khrife-journal.org/index.php/journal> (translated by Daryna Dukhnenko). The authors acknowledge translation as corresponding to the original.

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of lawyers are quite common these days. Typical issues of utilising special knowledge have been singled out. A system of forensic guidelines intended for improving the ordering/conduct of forensic examinations and enhancing the use of special knowledge during the investigation of criminal offenses involving professional legal aid has been proposed. The authors concluded that the application of special knowledge serves as a foundational component of the proof procedure and is an essential element of forensic support for investigations into this category of criminal offenses.

Keywords: criminal offense; pre-trial investigation; special knowledge; forensic examination; specialist; forensic expert; specialist's opinion; expert's opinion.

Research Problem Formulation

Today's state of social relations development, more sophisticated criminal schemes, and the growing role of professional legal aid in safeguarding constitutional human rights and freedoms call for a proper criminal law and forensic response when it comes to criminal offences committed in the field of professional legal aid. A distinctive feature of this crime category is the specific nature of subject composition and complexity of unlawful conduct, both of which hinder investigative activities.

Against this backdrop, traditional investigative (search) activities for evidence collection and examination may not always yield exhaustive and objective information about the nature of a criminal offence. There is therefore a need to actively utilise special knowledge in various forms (by engaging specialists, ordering forensic analyses, seeking expert advice, and utilising cutting-edge forensic tools).

This issue becomes even more relevant given that criminal offences involving provision of professional legal aid

may combine elements of misconduct in public office, corruption and other unlawful conduct. Moreover, investigations into such offences are often met with active attempts to obstruct the truth-finding process in criminal proceedings. At the same time, the issue of utilising special knowledge in investigations into these criminal offences remains understudied in the academic literature, and existing academic approaches predominately address common aspects, overlooking the forensic specifics inherent to this field.

This underscores the need for a comprehensive study of specific ways to use special knowledge during investigations into criminal offences involving provision of professional legal aid, for identification of the most efficient forms of using special knowledge, and for development of relevant forensic guidelines aimed at enhancing efficiency of pre-trial investigations.

Article Purpose

Clarify specific aspects of applying special knowledge in investigations into criminal offences involving provision of professional legal aid.

Research Methods

To fulfil this goal, numerous general and special scientific inquiry methods were employed. Dialectical method helped to reveal the essence and patterns of special knowledge use in investigations into criminal offences involving provision of professional legal aid, and to trace the relationship between distinctive features of crime patterns, specifics of the subject matter of proof, and needs for special knowledge to be applied in various procedural and extra-procedural forms. This has also contributed to research into the evolving nature of digital crimes, and helped to trace the shifting role of special knowledge in the criminal justice system.

System-structural method proved valuable in defining the place of special knowledge within the framework of forensic support for investigations into criminal offences involving these crimes, as well as in systematising procedural and extra-procedural forms of expertise application. This method helped to streamline individual types of criminal offences pertaining to professional legal aid, single out their criminalistics-relevant features, and trace the link between a crime's nature and any involvement of specialists, forensic experts and technical equipment.

Formal legal method facilitated the analysis of provisions of criminal and criminal procedure legislation governing the application of special knowledge in criminal proceedings, including provisions of the Criminal Code of Ukraine, the Criminal Procedure Code of Ukraine, and legal regulations providing legal grounds for the conduct of forensic examinations, for the participation of forensic experts in investigative (search) activities, and for the use of expert opinions in the proof procedure. This enabled the identification

of distinctive features in the regulatory framework for the use of special knowledge during investigations into criminal offences involving provision of professional legal aid.

Formal-logical methods were employed to delineate common and distinguishing features in the use of special knowledge and to determine their forensic significance. Analysis made it possible to examine the nature of a specialist's involvement and special aspects pertaining to the conduct of forensic examinations, advisory work, and interrogation of the expert in court; synthesis allowed us to incorporate all these elements into a consolidated system of forensic support for investigation; induction — to draw up general conclusions by analysing specific examples from law application practice; deduction — to scrutinise obtained insights by comparing them with normative provisions and criminalistics patterns.

Comparative legal method aided in comparing academic approaches to defining the nature of special knowledge, forms of its application, and significance thereof in criminal proceedings, as well as in analysing up-to-date approaches to the use of special knowledge in investigations into criminal offences against administration of justice and legal practice. This facilitated the identification of distinctive features in the use of special knowledge, specifically in the field of professional legal aid, and the delineation of viable avenues for the development of relevant forensic recommendations.

Generalisation method proved effective in formulating conclusions on the significance of special knowledge in investigations into criminal offences involving provision of professional legal aid, in singling out common challenges in its application, and in developing practical

guidelines aimed at enhancing efficiency of pre-trial investigations and streamlining forensic support in this category of criminal proceedings.

Analysis of Essential Researches and Publications

Researchers who explored the issue of forensic classification in criminal offences

and viewed it as a cornerstone of investigative methodologies heavily influenced the development of theoretical fundamentals for investigating crimes against justice. The following researchers elaborated on this issue: V. Husieva¹, V. Drozd², M. Yefimov and I. Pyrih³, V. Zhuravel⁴, O. Kolesnichenko⁵, V. Konovalova⁶, O. Pchelina and V. Pchelin⁷, E. Simakova-Yefremian⁸, R. Stepaniuk⁹, V. Tishchenko¹⁰, K. Chaplynskyi¹¹,

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- 2 Дрозд В. Ю. Аспекти побудови криміналістичної методики розслідування корупційних кримінальних правопорушень, вчинених працівниками правоохоронних органів. *Актуальні питання криміналістики та судової експертизи* : мат-ли міжвідом. наук.-практ. кругл. столу. До 60-річ. каф. криміналіст. та суд. мед. (Київ, 21.11.2024). Київ, 2024. С. 151–155. URL: <https://elar.navs.edu.ua/server/api/core/bitstreams/391cf240-7521-483f-a4cf-2dae18d8f49d/content#page=152> (date accessed: 11.04.2026).
- 3 Єфімов М. М., Пиріг І. В. Методика розслідування окремих видів кримінальних правопорушень : підручник. Дніпро, 2022. 272 с. URL: <https://surl.li/rtwadj> (date accessed: 11.04.2026).
- 4 Журавель В. А. Криміналістичні методики: сучасні наукові концепції : монографія. Харків, 2012. 302 с. ; Шепітько В. Ю., Коновалова В. О., Журавель В. А. та ін. Криміналістика : підручник / за ред. проф. В. Ю. Шепітька. 4-ге вид., перероб. і допов. Харків, 2008. 464 с. URL: <https://law.sspu.edu.ua/files/documents/books/library/17/shepitko.pdf> (date accessed: 11.04.2026).
- 5 Колесніченко А. Н. Общие положения методики расследования отдельных видов преступлений : текст лекц. Харьков, 1976. 28 с.
- 6 Шепітько В. Ю., Коновалова В. О., Журавель В. А. та ін. Значч. твір. URL: <https://law.sspu.edu.ua/files/documents/books/library/17/shepitko.pdf> (date accessed: 11.04.2026).
- 7 Пчеліна О. В. Криміналістична класифікація злочинів. *Право і суспільство*. 2014. № 6-1. Ч. 2. С. 304–309. URL: <https://dspace.univd.edu.ua/entities/publication/39e0d8c2-439f-4153-b777-e2b942279b29> (date accessed: 11.04.2026) ; Пчеліна О. В., Пчелін В. Б. Криміналістична класифікація воєнних злочинів. *Сучасні тенденції розвитку криміналістики та кримінального процесу в умовах воєнного стану* : тези доп. Міжнар. наук.-практ. конф. (Харків, 25.11.2022). Харків, 2022. С. 334–338. URL: <https://files.znu.edu.ua/files/Bibliobooks/Inshi71/0052090.pdf> (date accessed: 11.04.2026).
- 8 Сімакова-Єфремян Е. Б. Теорія і методологія комплексної експертизи контактної-слідової взаємодії об'єктів : монографія. Харків, 2004. 176 с.
- 9 Степанюк Р. Л. Криміналістична класифікація злочинів, що вчиняються в бюджетній сфері України. *Вісник Харківського національного університету внутрішніх справ*. 2010. № 4 (51). Ч. 1. С. 175–180. URL: http://nbuv.gov.ua/UJRN/VKhnusv_2010_4%281%29_24 (date accessed: 11.04.2026).
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- 11 Чаплинський К. О. Наукові підходи до визначення і побудови криміналістичної характеристики кримінальних правопорушень проти громадського порядку та громадської безпеки. *Пропілеї права та безпеки*. 2022. № 1 (1). С. 52–58. DOI: [10.32620/pls.2022.1.07](https://doi.org/10.32620/pls.2022.1.07) (date accessed: 11.04.2026).

Yu. Chornous¹², V. Shevchuk¹³, V. Shepitko¹⁴, B. Shchur¹⁵, M. Shcherbakovskiy¹⁶, et al. They have shaped conceptual approaches to the development of individual forensic methodologies.

Recently, issues pertaining to the development of forensic methodologies

have become the focus of research by A. Antoshchuk¹⁷, O. Vashchuk¹⁸, M. Yefimov¹⁹, O. Zhovtiuk²⁰, V. Zhuravel et al.²¹, V. Popov²², V. Filashkin²³, Yu. Chornous and I. Chechotka²⁴, and others.

Subsequent development of this issue is associated with research contri-

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- 13 Шевчук В. Криміналістична характеристика злочинів: «криміналістичний пережиток» чи реально діюча категорія криміналістики. *Правничий часопис Донецького університету*. 2003. № 1 (9). С. 62—66. URL: https://dspace.nlu.edu.ua/bitstream/123456789/17704/1/Shevchuk_62-66.pdf (date accessed: 11.04.2026).
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- 18 Вашук О. Структура окремих методик розслідування кримінальних правопорушень. *Юридичний вісник*. 2024. № 3 (33). С. 30—36. DOI: [10.32782/yuvv3.2024.4](https://doi.org/10.32782/yuvv3.2024.4) (date accessed: 11.04.2026).
- 19 Єфімов М. М. Криміналістичне забезпечення розслідування кримінальних правопорушень проти моральності. *Підприємництво, господарство і право*. 2020. № 9. С. 224—228. DOI: [10.32849/2663-5313/2020.9.39](https://doi.org/10.32849/2663-5313/2020.9.39) (date accessed: 11.04.2026).
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- 23 Філашкін В. С. Концептуальні основи формування криміналістичної методики розслідування кримінальних правопорушень проти волі, честі та гідності особи. *Успіхи і досягнення у науці*. 2025. № 12. С. 572—581. DOI: [10.52058/3041-1254-2025-12\(22\)-572-581](https://doi.org/10.52058/3041-1254-2025-12(22)-572-581) (date accessed: 11.04.2026).
- 24 Чорноус Ю., Чечотка І. Сучасний стан і напрями розвитку криміналістичного забезпечення кримінального провадження. *Наука і правоохорона*. 2026. Вип. 1 (71). С. 80—88. DOI: [10.33270/05267101.8](https://doi.org/10.33270/05267101.8) (date accessed: 11.04.2026).

butions of V. Hrytsenko. The scholar focused on the challenges surrounding the use of special knowledge in criminal proceedings. He argued that application of special knowledge cannot be regarded merely as a matter of forensic science, as it is complex and multifaceted in nature and encompasses both procedural and extra-procedural forms. The outcome of this research was the classification of special knowledge forms developed by the author, which had been refined according to several criteria: procedural regulation, target group (subjects affected by the practical implementation of research findings), stages of criminal proceedings, relevance of research findings, their role in the proof procedure, type of procedural measure, and procedural status of a person utilising special knowledge. V. Hrytsenko's approach was instrumental in systematising various ways of engaging forensic experts and in paving the way for the development of algorithms enabling the use of special knowledge in activities of investigators ²⁵.

The researcher places special emphasis on extra-procedural forms of applying special knowledge; a topic that has traditionally been less well-researched in the academic literature. V. Hrytsenko points out that these include conducting checks against forensic databases, making use of information and analytical systems, carrying out preliminary criminalistics examinations, and rationally applying

polygraph testing. He has concluded that the most frequently observed practice in criminal offences against administration of justice is the involvement of a specialist during interrogations, inspections and sample collection for the purposes of forensic analysis. The scientist notes that engagement of a specialist not only provides technical assistance but also enables the performance of tactical tasks, such as identification, documentation and interpretation of forensically relevant information. The researcher believes that this category of offences is commonly associated with handwriting analysis, forensic psychiatric, psychological and technical examinations of documents, examinations of video and sound recordings, as well as semantic and textual analyses. He also emphasises how forensic analyses in these cases are predominantly retrospective and focus not on identifying an unidentified offender, but on executing criminal intent, uncovering evidence of interference with administration of justice, or on substantiating circumstances to be proved ²⁶.

Having analysed contemporary research, it can be concluded that numerous scientific papers are devoted to the classification and general forensic characterisation of crimes against justice ²⁷, whilst the issues pertaining to investigations into such crimes (specifics of the initial stage, typical investigative situations, algorithms for procedural actions, tactical opera-

25 Гриценко В. В. Використання спеціальних знань під час розслідування кримінальних правопорушень проти правосуддя : дис. ... д-ра філос. в галузі права. Харків, 2025. 250 с. URL: https://uacademic.info/ua/document/0825U000642#google_vignette (date accessed: 11.04.2026).

26 Там само.

27 Книженко С. О. Криміналістична класифікація злочинів проти правосуддя. *Право і Безпека*. 2013. № 1 (48). С. 113—118. URL: <https://surl.li/mb1rhk> (date accessed: 11.04.2026) ; Суп Є. Підходи до криміналістичної класифікації кримінальних правопорушень проти правосуддя. *Архів кримінології та судових наук*. 2024. № 2 (10). С. 138—145. DOI: [10.32353/acfs.10.2024.11](https://doi.org/10.32353/acfs.10.2024.11) (date accessed: 11.04.2026).

tions, application of special knowledge, and forensic technical support) remain underexplored. This points to a need for ongoing development and refinement of specific forensic methodologies for investigating crimes against administration of justice, with an emphasis on the application of special knowledge.

Main Content Presentation

Professional legal aid is a special category of activity involving the protection of a person's right to defence, representation of interests, provision of legal advice and other legal services. Yet, the specific nature of this field sets the stage for criminal offences to be committed by and against professional legal aid providers. Accordingly, these offences are inextricably linked to their professional duties.

The first category comprises criminal offences committed by persons offering professional legal aid by exploiting their professional status, official standing, or special knowledge. These are: fraudulent acts involving misappropriation of clients' funds; forgery or misuse of forged documents; legalisation (laundering) of criminal proceeds; disclosure of information constituting legal professional privilege; obstruction of justice and abuse of office. Such individuals may also be accused of certain corruption-related and official criminal offences, and of actions aimed at obstructing criminal proceedings via obscuring evidence and tampering with persons to give false testimony or fabricate evidence.

The second group covers offences related to the use of certain mechanisms for providing professional legal aid in complex criminal schemes. In these cases, legal instruments may be used to conceal

unlawful activities, launder assets, introduce fictitious legal constructions, illegally divert assets, or tamper with parties to criminal proceedings. Similar criminal offences tend to be highly complex in terms of how they are executed and are often cross-sectoral in nature.

The third group encompasses criminal offences committed against persons engaged in professional legal practice. Accordingly, these offences are inextricably linked to professional duties of such individuals. Such acts shall include threats, violence, attempts on life and health, damage to property, interference with lawful activities of a defence counsel or a person's representative, unlawful interference in professional activities, as well as other instances of unlawful influence obstructing the provision of legal aid. It is through this category of criminal offences that we will explore challenges of utilising special knowledge within the scope of our research.

The specific nature of these crimes exerts a direct influence on the proof procedure and calls for the use of special knowledge. Much of the information that is the subject of proof in these proceedings is recorded in digital traces or stored as physical objects, and therefore requires the involvement of experts from various backgrounds: experts in computer and information technology, forensic experts, trace evidence experts, and specialists in psychology, polygraphology, etc. Furthermore, special knowledge acquires special relevance in the analysis of documents (e.g., detection of signs of forgery), examination of financial transactions, email correspondence, mobile devices, cloud services and other data sources associated with a criminal offence.

On such occasions, it is worth observing that traditional procedural

methods of evidence collection are not always adequate for a thorough investigation of circumstances of a crime. This underscores the need for both procedural and extra-procedural forms of special knowledge to be integrated. Here we are referring not only to the conduct of forensic examinations but also to the involvement of specialists during specific investigative (search) activities, advisory activities. Also, use of information and analytical technologies along with technical and forensic tools is crucial in this aspect.

One of the prevailing approaches to applying special knowledge is by bringing in an expert during investigative (search) activities. When it comes to criminal proceedings of this category, their engagement is especially important during the examination of computer equipment, mobile phones, electronic media, email and cloud storage. Considering the specific nature of digital evidence, importance is attached to both the collection of information and the assurance of its integrity and consistency. Errors during the seizure or copying of digital data may result in the relevant information losing its evidentiary value.

Use of special forensics knowledge is pivotal. Depending on circumstances surrounding criminal proceedings, handwriting analysis, technical document examinations, forensic computer examinations, audio and video recording analyses, psychological examinations and others may be ordered. Whether such forensic analyses are required depends entirely on the manner in which a criminal offence has been committed, on the nature of evidence and the mechanism of unlawful conduct.

Analysis of law application practice for investigating criminal offences involving professional legal practice reveals that the most prevalent offenses are attempts on the life and health of lawyers, manifested as threats, bodily injuries of varying degrees of severity, acts of violence, attempted murder or murder. Driven by this trend, there is an urgent need to properly document consequences of unlawful intent, identify the mechanism of injury, its severity, cause-and-effect relationships and other circumstances of evidentiary value. In this regard, application of special medical knowledge in criminal proceedings is becoming increasingly relevant. This applies, primarily, to special knowledge of medical examiners and specialists in medicine. Results of their work provide objective information necessary for a complete, comprehensive and unbiased investigation of these criminal offences. Furthermore, the need for these forensic examinations stems not only from practical considerations but also from regulatory requirements. As set forth in Art. 242 of the Criminal Procedure Code of Ukraine, ordering of a forensic examination is mandatory in cases where the cause of death or nature/ severity of bodily injuries is to be established. This further underscores the significance of special medical knowledge during investigations into such offenses²⁸.

For instance, to demonstrate the practical value of using special knowledge in investigations into criminal offences committed against professional legal aid providers, it is expedient to cite a case from judicial practice in which a lawyer was deliberately injured whilst carrying out his professional duties, an offence classi-

28 Кримінальний процесуальний кодекс України від 13.04.2012 р. № 4651-VI (зі змін. та допов.). URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/4651-17#Text> (date accessed: 11.04.2026).

fied under Pt. 2 of Art. 398 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine ²⁹.

Pursuant to Case File No. 357/8569/19, during a dispute, a group of persons used physical violence against a lawyer who represented the interests of a legal person and attempted to record the unlawful conduct on his mobile phone ³⁰. Offenders were fully aware of the victim's professional standing, as earlier he had stated that he was acting as a lawyer and was representing a client. Offenders' actions interfered with the lawyer's lawful professional practice, which, consequently, served as grounds for classifying their actions under Pt. 2 of Art. 398 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine ³¹.

Having analysed this scenario, it follows that use of special knowledge in various forms is of paramount importance when investigating criminal offences of this category. The ordering of a forensic medical examination was instrumental in the case in question; its findings determined the nature, location, mechanism of formation and severity of the victim's bodily injuries. The expert's opinion enabled the establishment of cause-and-effect relationships between actions of each participant in the assault and their consequences, in addition to distinguishing between minor and moderate bodily harm. The forensic analysis results also helped to accurately qualify the offence under criminal law.

In addition, technical recording equipment was used in the proceedings, including CCTV footage. All this evidence was at-

tached to the opinion as physical evidence. Use of such digital information sources requires special knowledge in computer technology and digital forensics, given the need to test authenticity of video recordings, establish timeline of events, identify persons and analyse the course of their actions.

Application of special knowledge through forensic examination, in addition to its procedural role, is of value in the conduct of certain investigative (search) procedures. In particular, a forensic professional was called in to provide technical assistance to the investigator in documenting the sequence of events and the actions of each participant in the investigative experiment ³².

Situations in which the defence counsel challenges the findings of a forensic examination or questions admissibility or research, relevance or reliability holds significant theoretical and practical value in the context of special knowledge use. Similar cases clearly reflect the principle of adversarial proceedings and the right to defence; they also provide an opportunity to evaluate the soundness of applying special knowledge in criminal proceedings. An expert's opinion may be challenged on the grounds of breaching the procedure for ordering or conducting a forensic analysis, insufficient initial materials, reasonable doubts about an expert's qualifications, inadequate research, or discrepancies between the expert's opinion and other pieces of evidence. These factors

29 Кримінальний кодекс України від 05.04.2001 р. № 2341-III (зі змін. та допов.). URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2341-14#Text> (date accessed: 11.04.2026).

30 Вирок Білоцерків. міськрайсуду Київ. обл. від 25.03.2020 р. Справа № 357/8569/19. Провадж. № 1-кп/357/568/20/ЄДРСР: вебсайт. URL: <https://reyestr.court.gov.ua/Review/88408633> (date accessed: 11.04.2026).

31 Там само ; Кримінальний кодекс України URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2341-14#Text> (date accessed: 11.04.2026).

32 Вирок Білоцерків. міськрайсуду URL: <https://reyestr.court.gov.ua/Review/88408633> (дата звернення: 11.04.2026)

show that special knowledge becomes not just a means of proof but also a separate matter of procedural scrutiny and evaluation.

To illustrate this point, it is worth referring to case files documenting criminal proceedings in which a lawyer was deliberately injured whilst carrying out his professional duties, qualified under Pt. 2 of Art. 398 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine³³. In this case, the defence counsel attempted to cast doubt on certain pieces of evidence, specifically on medical examination findings and circumstances surrounding the victim's injuries. The defendant partly disputed the mechanism of an event, claiming that the victim was the first to resort to physical violence and that he could have sustained some injuries as a result of other circumstances.

The court scrutinized the lawfulness of obtaining a medical examiner's opinion and its use. Specifically, it determined that the forensic medical examination had been carried out by an authorized institution, that an expert had been appointed in accordance with due process of law, that he had been well aware of his rights and duties, and that he had been warned of the criminal liability for providing a knowingly false opinion. Furthermore, the court separately emphasised that there had been no procedural irregularities in the ordering and conduct of the forensic examination that might have led to this evidence being deemed inadmissible or invalid.

In addition, the expert's opinion had not been evaluated independently of other evidence. Its content had been compared

with victims' and witnesses' testimonies, with results of investigative experiments, with the recording of a telephone conversation, and with other case materials. The expert concluded that the victim had bruises and abrasions caused by blunt objects, which could have occurred at a time specified by the victim. These conclusions aligned with the rest of the evidence, confirming their reliability³⁴.

The above example clearly shows that challenging forensic examination findings does not mean that they will be either inadmissible or unreliable. A meticulous scrutiny of all pieces of evidence, along with verifying compliance with procedural rules for the use of special knowledge, is crucial. Therefore, it is obvious that application of special knowledge in criminal proceedings is an inherently fast-paced process: expert research findings may function both as a source of valuable evidentiary information, and a topic for a vigorous procedural debate between parties. For this reason, proper organisation of forensic activities, which largely depends on the investigator and on adherence to procedural safeguards at the stages of approving the ordering of a forensic analysis and preparing for its ordering, takes on extra importance in investigations into criminal offences involving provision of professional legal aid.

A significantly higher number of forensic examinations are ordered in separate criminal proceedings. As part of the pre-trial investigation into a criminal offence under Pt. 2 of Art. 389 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine, a forensic medical

33 Кримінальний кодекс України ... URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2341-14#Text> (date accessed: 11.04.2026).

34 Вирок Залізнич. райсуду м. Львова від 03.12.2021 р. Справа № 462/1594/21. Провадж. № 1-кп/462/395/21 / ЄДРСР : вебсайт. URL: <https://reyestr.court.gov.ua/Review/101614653> (date accessed: 11.04.2026).

examination of a victim is initially conducted³⁵. The expert's opinion reveals that the injured lawyer sustained bruising injuries on his left forearm and left thigh, which resulted from traumatic contact with a blunt object and fall under the category of minor bodily injury. The forensic expert further determined that the injuries might have been sustained around a time corresponding to circumstances outlined in the criminal case file.

Ordering of an additional forensic examination is of interest from both a scientific and practical perspective. Such research is aimed at both establishing the presence of bodily injuries and analysing the mechanism of their occurrence. Investigative experiment materials concerning a victim and a witness have served as valuable resources during the research. Following the findings of the research, the expert concluded that the discovered injuries could have been sustained specifically under the circumstances revealed during the investigative experiments³⁶.

The given example showcases an essential forensic aspect of special knowledge: currently expert examinations frequently serve the purpose not only of identification, but also of scenario modelling and scrutiny of investigative hypotheses. Special knowledge is, in fact, used to reconstruct the mechanism of a criminal wrongdoing by comparing trace evidence with testimonies of those involved in criminal proceedings.

Also, the findings of the forensic examinations proved to be pivotal due to the defence's position, which denied that the

bodily harm had been inflicted intentionally and claimed that the defendant had acted in self-defence. The findings of the forensic medical examinations (along with the victim's and witnesses' testimonies and the results of investigative experiments), however, allowed the court to scrutinize the defendant's account and dismiss it as groundless. The court explicitly stated that the defendant's testimony had refuted a body of evidence (expert opinion)³⁷.

This case serves as proof that forensic examination is not just a procedural means of utilising special knowledge in investigations into criminal offences involving provision of professional legal aid. It is a valuable resource for verifying evidence, reconstructing the mechanism of events, and evaluating credibility of testimonies of those involved in criminal proceedings. Research results help elucidate cause-and-effect relationships between a person's actions/inaction and resulting consequences, and also provide a sound evidentiary basis.

Analysis of some criminal case files reveals a number of challenges that take place in the ordering and conduct of forensic examinations in cases of subjecting lawyers to unlawful pressure in the course of their professional duties. A distinctive feature in the provided case is that forensic examinations were conducted against the backdrop of an adversarial investigative situation: the parties put forward mutually exclusive scenarios of how the incident unfolded, and some of the witnesses gave conflicting testimonies.

35 Вирок Кіров. райсуду м. Кіровограда від 29.04.2022 р. Справа № 404/6273/20. Провадж. № 1-кп/404/407/20 / ЄДПСР : вебсайт. URL: <https://reyestr.court.gov.ua/Review/104143084> (date accessed: 11.04.2026) ; Кримінальний кодекс України ... URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2341-14#Text> (date accessed: 11.04.2026).

36 Вирок Кіров. райсуду ... URL: <https://reyestr.court.gov.ua/Review/104143084> (date accessed: 11.04.2026).

37 Там само.

First, an expert is provided with insufficient initial data. An analysis of the case file shows that certain circumstances relating to the mechanism behind the injuries were not included in the victim's initial statements; the description of the incident was not expanded and amended until the investigative experiment itself. As a result, the expert was forced to independently assess the possibility of injury in accordance with various scenarios of the incident. Some of the injuries reported by the victim found no objective confirmation in the medical records. The expert further specified that some of the injuries reported by the victim were not identified during the forensic examination.

An additional concern (second one) comes to light in this context: discrepancies between the subjective testimonies of those involved and the objective (unbiased) findings of the forensic medical examination. The victim reported a vast number of blows and injuries, whereas some of these were not backed up by the research findings. Such cases always carry an inherent risk of drawing hasty expert opinions based solely on the parties' statements, without proper expert verification of such opinions.

Another acute issue (third one) lies in the limited use of situational and multidisciplinary forensic analyses. In this case, the investigative experiment was performed with the participation of the victim alone, whilst the defendant explicitly stated that he had not been involved in this procedural action and had not been offered the opportunity to present his own narrative of events. This heightens the risk that the expert's establishment of an incomplete database could interfere with integrity of an opinion.

The time element poses a distinct challenge. Some medical records, X-ray exam-

inations and other materials were submitted at a later date, and certain forensic examinations were carried out some time after the incident. The loss of trace evidence, changes in the clinical picture, and complications in establishing the mechanism of injury are deeply correlated with delays in forensic examinations in bodily injury cases.

This case further illustrates that experts fail to utilise digital media in forensic analyses. Despite the availability of CCTV footage and recordings from the victim's mobile phone, such sources were in fact used primarily as stand-alone evidence. At the same time, their potential for conducting multidisciplinary forensic analyses, video analysis, and carrying out scenario-based tasks was not exploited to the full extent.

In view of the foregoing, we deem it expedient to provide the following forensic recommendations when investigating such criminal proceedings:

- 1) Ensure that forensic medical examinations are scheduled at the earliest possible stage, immediately following the discovery of bodily injuries, and that a full set of medical records is attached;
- 2) Prepare an exhaustive list of initial materials to be provided to the expert (interrogation records, results of investigative experiments, video recordings, photographic evidence, medical records, results of scene inspection);
- 3) Conduct investigative experiments involving not only victims, but also suspects, witnesses and other parties to proceedings, in order to evaluate alternative scenarios of an incident;
- 4) Make extensive use of multidisciplinary forensic medical and video

analyses to establish whether the mechanism of bodily injury corresponds to the actual sequence of events, provided video footage is available;

- 5) Avoid posing legal questions to the forensic expert, one must formulate questions strictly within the expert's area of expertise, such as the mechanism behind injuries, their age, manner in which they were caused, and their relevance to specific circumstances;
- 6) Order additional or repeated forensic examinations where there are significant discrepancies between testimonies of those involved and expert opinions;
- 7) Take steps to ensure that proceedings are recorded to the fullest extent possible using technical means, as it is these that often make it possible to ensure the objectivity of the expert's opinion in proceedings involving disputes where the parties have a long-standing hostile relationship.

Therefore, efficiency and expediency of the use of special knowledge depend both on the quality of forensic examinations and the proper organisation of the entire system for collecting initial data. These factors constitute the basis for forensic analyses. From a forensic perspective, it is precisely the proper integration of forensic examinations and evidence-gathering that enables a complete and unbiased reconstruction of an event.

A distinct procedural mechanism for incorporating special knowledge into criminal proceedings is interrogation of an expert during proceedings. Contrary

to a forensic examination, which is aimed at obtaining a new source of evidence through an expert's opinion, interrogation of experts serves a different purpose and unfolds at the stage of judicial proceedings. Its procedural relevance stems from clarifying and substantiating the expert's opinion, detailing the research methods employed, defining the degree of certainty in opinions drawn, and resolving any ambiguities or contradictions that may arise in evaluation of evidence. At this point, the expert does not introduce new evidence, but rather relies on his/her special knowledge to provide explanations on research carried out and results obtained, thereby contributing to a full, comprehensive and objective judicial proceedings.

To illustrate the significance of expert testimony in court for examination of evidence in criminal proceedings involving criminal offences against legal professionals, it would be appropriate to cite case law from a case involving the infliction of bodily harm on a lawyer in the course of his/her professional duties relating to provision of legal aid, classified under Part 2 of Art. 398 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine³⁸.

The forensic medical examiner was interrogated during the trial; he provided details about how the forensic examination was conducted and clarified the research findings. While being interrogated, the expert stated that there were no visible bodily injuries at the time of the victim's initial examination. He also stressed the forensic examination had been carried out on the basis of medical records provided. Forensic experts also noted that, as of the time of the forensic examination, more than fifteen days had passed since

38 Кримінальний кодекс України ... URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2341-14#Text> (date accessed: 11.04.2026).

the injuries had been sustained, and that they had been caused by a blunt-force object (it could have been a chair); however, he did not rule out the possible use of other objects.

The above-mentioned case points to the fact that interrogation of an expert at the court hearing is not limited to the official confirmation of a previously drawn-up opinion. Its purpose is to elaborate on the mechanism by which bodily injuries were inflicted, to clarify the degree of confidence in the expert's opinion, to shed light on the research methodology, and to address any inconsistencies pertaining to other pieces of evidence in criminal proceedings.

Interrogation of a forensic expert is of heightened significance where forensic analysis is conducted not as a direct examination of a person or object, but as the research which is grounded in secondary sources (medical records, photographic and video material, extracts and other case-file materials). It is precisely in such circumstances that interrogation can serve to establish limits of an expert opinion's reliability, sufficiency of evidence examined, and plausibility of alternative hypotheses on how injuries were sustained.

A review of the example given above demonstrates that, in criminal proceedings involving attacks on lawyers and other providers of professional legal aid, interrogation of a forensic expert carries significant evidential weight. Such interrogation serves as a basis for guaranteeing that special knowledge is duly evaluated and facilitates the scrutiny of evidence in court. Interrogating an expert makes it possible not only to validate the accuracy

of opinions reached in the course of a forensic examination, but also to disclose additional circumstances that are relevant to reconstructing the mechanism of a criminal offence and to properly classifying the act under criminal law. These findings once again prove that special knowledge, provided through conscientious and diligent work of an expert and subsequent interrogation of the expert in court, is a vital element of proof in criminal proceedings of this category³⁹.

Special psychological knowledge assumes a pivotal role in the present-day context. In criminal proceedings of this nature, forms of active obstruction of investigation are widespread and frequently observed: giving misleading testimony, withholding information, manipulative behaviour on the part of those involved in proceedings, and tampering with witnesses/victims. Where this is the case, special psychological knowledge will prove useful when preparing for and conducting interrogations, analysing behaviour of those involved in criminal proceedings, defining a person's psychological features, and determining factors that affect his/her behaviour.

Therefore, use of special knowledge during investigations into criminal offences involving professional legal aid is not complementary, but rather a system-forming element in the organisation of the proof procedure. The value of this expertise is attributable not only to special methods of examining evidence. Such knowledge provides grounds for accurately interpreting information obtained, determining the mechanism of a criminal offence and developing a proper evidentiary basis in criminal proceedings.

39 Вирок Тячів. райсуду Закарпат. обл. від 21.09.2021 р. Справа № 307/2348/19. Провадж. № 1-кп/307/343/20 / ЄДРСР : вебсайт. URL: <https://reyestr.court.gov.ua/Review/99768717> (date accessed: 11.04.2026).

Conclusions

Applying special knowledge in investigations into criminal offences involving provision of professional legal aid is a complex and multifaceted process and constitutes one of the key elements in the organisation of the proof procedure. The specific nature of this category of crimes is due to specific features of the composition of subjects involved in criminal proceedings, the complicated nature of unlawful conduct, and the active obstruction of investigation; this objectively necessitates the engagement of cross-disciplinary experts and the use of various forms of special knowledge.

Among criminal offences committed against legal actors, the most widespread ones are those that involve an attack on life and health, requiring the use of special medical knowledge. As set out in Art. 242 of the Code of Criminal Procedure of Ukraine, it is highly important to perform relevant forensic examinations in order to determine the cause of death and the nature and severity of bodily harm. Hence, use of specialist knowledge gains relevance not only for practical reasons but also as a matter of normatively regulated nature.

Commonly recognized procedural forms for the use of special knowledge in criminal proceedings of the category in question include participation of a forensic expert in investigative (search) activities, conduct of forensic examinations, and interrogation of an expert in court as a separate procedural form. The significance of these procedural forms lies not only in obtaining new evidentiary information, but also in verifying evidence, reconstructing the mechanism of an event, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, and assessing reliability of specific details.

Analysis of case law has revealed a number of challenging aspects associated with the use of special knowledge, such as: insufficient initial data provided to a forensic expert; inconsistencies between testimonies of those involved and research findings; inadequate use of multidisciplinary and situational forensic examinations; delays in ordering forensic examinations; and failure to fully utilise the potential of digital media. In this regard, a system of forensic recommendations has been proposed aimed at improving the organisation of expert activities and enhancing the effectiveness of pre-trial investigations.

Efficient use of special knowledge depends on the quality of individual forensic examinations as well as on the proper organisation of the whole system for collecting, documenting and analysing evidentiary information. It is exactly the incorporation of special knowledge into the broader structure of proving a case that ensures the sufficiency of evidence and enhances the effectiveness of investigations into criminal offences involving provision of professional legal aid.

Застосування спеціальних знань під час розслідування кримінальних правопорушень у сфері надання професійної правничої допомоги

Крістіна Романюскас

Розкрито теоретичні та прикладні аспекти застосування спеціальних знань під час розслідування кримінальних правопорушень у сфері надання професійної правничої допомоги. Метою роботи є з'ясування особливостей використання спеціальних знань під час розслідування зазначеної категорії кримінальних правопорушень, визначення найпоширеніших форм їх застосування, а також розроблення

окремих криміналістичних рекомендацій з підвищення ефективності досудового розслідування. Методологічне підґрунтя дослідження становлять загальнонаукові методи аналізу, синтезу, індукції, дедукції й узагальнення, а також діалектичний, формально-юридичний, системно-структурний, порівняльно-правовий і формально-логічний методи. Проаналізовано й узагальнено наукові позиції щодо застосування спеціальних знань під час розслідування кримінальних правопорушень проти правосуддя та визначено особливості їх реалізації у сфері професійної правничої діяльності. Обґрунтовано, що поширеними процесуальними формами застосування спеціальних знань у таких кримінальних провадженнях є участь спеціаліста під час проведення слідчих (розшукових) дій, проведення судових експертиз і допит експерта в суді. З'ясовано, що найбільш актуальним є застосування спеціальних медичних знань, оскільки посягання на життя та здоров'я правників доволі поширені. Виявлено типові проблеми застосування спеціальних знань. Запропоновано систему криміналістичних рекомендацій, спрямованих на вдосконалення практики призначення та проведення судових експертиз і підвищення ефективності застосування спеціальних знань під час розслідування кримінальних правопорушень у сфері надання професійної правничої допомоги. Зроблено висновок, що застосування спеціальних знань має системоутворювальне значення для процесу доказування та є важливим елементом криміналістичного забезпечення розслідування цієї категорії кримінальних правопорушень.

Ключові слова: кримінальне правопорушення; досудове розслідування; спеціальні знання; судова експертиза; спеціаліст; експерт; висновок спеціаліста; висновок експерта.

Financing

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding institutions in the public, commercial or non-commercial sectors.

Disclaimer

Founders had no role in the research design, data collection and analysis, decision to publish or manuscript preparation.

Participants

The author has contributed solely to intellectual discussion underlying this document, case law research, writing and editing, and assumes responsibility for its content and interpretation.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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