

EDITORIAL

Foreword

*Mart Susi**

The 4th edition of the East European Yearbook on Human Rights is a special edition dedicated to the output from the Global Digital Human Rights network from its first year of operation in 2020/2021. The network was established through the European Union COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology) framework and will systematically explore the theoretical and practical challenges posed by the online context to the protection of human rights. The network will address whether international human rights law is sufficiently detailed to enable governments and private online companies to understand their respective obligations vis-à-vis human rights protection online. It will evaluate how national governments have responded to the task of providing a regulatory framework for online companies and how these companies have transposed the obligation to protect human rights and combat hate speech online into their community standards. Matters of transparency and accountability will be explored through the lens of corporate social responsibility. It unites individual scholars from the majority of EU countries.

The first two articles are from the members of the network: ‘Artificial Intelligence and Customer Relationship Management: The Case of Chatbots and Their Legality Framework’, by Konstantinos Kouroupis, Dimitrios Vagianos and Aikaterini Totka, and ‘European Standards of Judicial Independence in Lithuania’ by Vygantė Milašiūtė and Skirgailė Žalimienė.

The special edition will thereafter include an introductory theoretical article by Mart Susi about the fundamental challenges to digital human rights research and practice analysis, leading to the presentation of three eye-opening reports. The respective comparative studies were undertaken by network members in 2020/2021 and are the following:

- Matthias C. Kettemann and Martin Fertmann – ‘Viral Information. How States and Platforms Deal With Covid-19-Related Disinformation: An Exploratory Study of 20 Countries’
- Mart Susi and Tiina Pajuste – ‘Covid-19 “Vaccine Passport” Discourses: An Exploratory Study of 23 Countries’
- Martin Fertmann and Matthias C. Kettemann – ‘Can Platforms Cancel Politicians? How States and Platforms Deal With Private Power Over Public and Political Actors: An Exploratory Study of 15 Countries’.

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The reports serve a twofold purpose. First, they provide excellent comparative material for scholars and practitioners to understand the magnitude of social network's growing influence in today's societies. And, secondly, the reports present a generalized 'collective' reflection by prominent human rights scholars on matters of safeguarding human rights in the digital and non-digital domains. On behalf of the network and the editorial team I invite you to enjoy reading as much as we did preparing this special edition!

Cordially,

Mart Susi

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Editor-in-Chief
Action Chair of Global Digital Human Rights Network