Protecting human rights, democracy and the rule of law in the digital environment

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

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Vilnius **2024**

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19 June 10:00 EEST Auditorium

Keynote address on
AI and Human Rights

Marija Pejčinović Burić

Secretary General of the Council of Europe

After several years of negotiation, the **Council of Europe Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law** was adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 17 May 2024.

This is **the first international legally binding treaty** in this area. It is designed specifically to allow Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology to flourish, but to do so in a way that protect individuals' rights and does not undermine them.

The Framework Convention applies principles that are technology neutral and therefore future proof. These include human dignity and individual autonomy, equality and non-discrimination, protection of privacy and personal data, accountability and responsibility, protection, transparency and oversight, and safe innovation and reliability.

The Framework Convention also sets out governments' obligations to provide accessible procedural safeguards and remedies to help prevent AI systems from "going off the rails".

This treaty has the potential to ensure safer, more secure Artificial Intelligence - not just in Europe, but around the world. The Framework Convention will be opened for signature on 5 September 2024, in Vilnius. I hope that many countries will move swiftly to sign and ratify it, and to bring it into force.

17 June 14:00 - 15:30 EEST

Building 4, Event Hall

Launch Event for the Joint Report on the
Metaverse and its Impact on Human Rights, Rule of Law, and Democracy

Speaker: Irena Guidikova

The event will show case the result of the successful cooperation between an intergovernmental human rights Organisation and the private sector through a joint project, which is a report on the **Metaverse and its impact on human rights, rule of law and democracy**.

The session will explore the profound implications of the Metaverse on human rights, the rule of law, and democracy. Discussions will focus on the need for adaptive regulatory frameworks to manage privacy, data protection, and intellectual property rights within these immersive environments. Ethical considerations will also be examined, particularly how these technologies affect individual autonomy, identity, and societal values. Furthermore, the event will highlight the importance of inclusive design to ensure equitable access for all users, especially vulnerable populations, and address the critical issue of protecting children's rights and well-being in virtual spaces. This comprehensive dialogue aims to foster a nuanced understanding of the Metaverse and its impact, paving the way for a more inclusive and rights-respecting digital future.

Keynote speech on **European policies and strategies on safety and inclusion**

Speaker: Irena Guidikova

Discourses about online safety have fundamentally changed the way we perceive online spaces and digital technologies. The narrative of the free internet is often replaced by one of the dangerous internet. Sexual exploitation of children, hate speech, gender violence and stereotypes, disinformation bots, deepfakes, terrorist recruitment online, online addictions, access to gambling and pornography, and the promotion of self-harm. This list of possible online harms is short and far from exhaustive, yet it represents the wide diversity of issues that online safety covers.

Initiatives to regulate online safety are flourishing worldwide, facing the challenge of striking a delicate balance between protecting human rights in the digital world and preserving the open nature of the internet and freedom of expression online.

The keynote speech will distil the essence of a distinctive European human rights-based approach to tackling online safety, as shaped by the Council of Europe through treaty instruments, the work of monitoring mechanisms, and standards set by the Committee of Ministers and its subordinate bodies, along with ongoing research and efforts.

This policy framework is rooted in international and multistakeholder dialogue. It promotes international cooperation against various forms of cybercrime, especially those targeting the most vulnerable.

It also involves developing standards for effective, human rights-compliant internet and platform governance, regulation, and design to foster safety and freedom online. Finally, it aims to empower all users and content creators to shape the safety of their online spaces and develop resilience to online risks.

18 June 11:30 – 12:15 EEST Auditorium

Workshop on **European policies on Cyber resilience**

Co-organiser: Alexandra Slave

In the current global context, offences involving computer systems and electronic evidence are evolving rapidly, both in number and in sophistication. Facilitating the detection, investigation and prosecution of such offences should be counterbalanced by the protection of fundamental human rights and freedoms.

In this respect, Article 15 of the Convention on Cybercrime (the Budapest Convention), guarantees the right to private and family life, home and correspondence, by mandating that each party to the Convention establishes, in its domestic law, conditions and safeguards in relation to the procedural powers used for cybercrime investigations.

CyberEast+ a joint project of the Council of Europe and of the European Union, will support the participation of 15 law enforcement and civil society actors from the Eastern Partnership region. **The discussions will explore cyber resilience, including matters related to cybersecurity and action against cybercrime, in the context of human rights safeguards, with a focus on civil society oversight on criminal justice in cyberspace.**

18 June 16:00 - 16:45 EEST Auditorium

Session on **European approach on data governance**

Organiser: Moritz Taylor

In today's digital era, the landscape of data protection and governance is becoming increasingly complex. Balancing the need for access to data for research, innovation, and transparency with the imperative to protect individual privacy rights poses a significant challenge. **Convention 108+ is designed to lead the charge in addressing these problems at an international level.**

In this session, we will explore the nuances of European data protection issues and governance through diverse perspectives. We'll delve into the importance of sharing data across borders, such as for research in sustainable development, and the ethical considerations that come with it. The Croatian Data Protection Authority will provide insights into regulatory frameworks and the enforcement challenges in safeguarding personal data. Finally, we will see how Lithuania's greatest producer of data – the public sector – addresses the protection of personal data.

Our panellists will answer key questions such as: How can we ensure that data access and privacy protection coexist harmoniously? What are the best practices for managing data governance in a way that fosters innovation while upholding data protection principles? How do different stakeholders – researchers, regulators, and IT professionals – navigate the evolving landscape of data governance?

18 June 15:00 - 16:00 EEST WS room 1

Workshop on **Managing Change in Media Space: Social Media, Information Disorder, and Voting Dynamics**

Speaker: Irena Guidikova

In the digital era, disinformation and misinformation erode trust in the media and undermine human rights and democratic processes. Responses are imperative. The Council of Europe's standards, based on Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights, devise strategies to counter disinformation while upholding human rights, democracy, and the rule of law.

The **Guidance Note on countering the spread of online mis- and disinformation through fact-checking and platform design solutions in a human rights compliant manner** offers practical recommendations for policymakers and stakeholders across three pillars: fact-checking, platform-design solutions, and user empowerment.

Fact-checking is essential. Independence and transparency of fact-checking organisations must be fostered, with support from states and digital platforms to ensure financial sustainability.

Platform design requirements should involve 'human rights by design' and 'safety by design' features, including human rights impact assessments. Focus should be on the processes through which content is ranked, moderated, and removed.

User empowerment involves building resilience to disinformation through collective action within communities and integrating dedicated tools into platforms. This societal challenge demands long-term investments, comprehensive media literacy, and education reforms to foster critical

thinking. States should support these initiatives through funding, evidence-based assessments, and international cooperation.

The Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law

Co-organiser: Louise Riondel

The aim of the session is to gather a diverse group of stakeholders who took an active role in the elaboration and negotiation of the Council of Europe Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law. It will provide participants a unique **insight into the making of this treaty** and its key provisions.

The Council of Europe AI Convention is the first-ever international legally binding treaty aimed at ensuring the respect of human rights, the rule of law and democracy standards throughout the lifecycles of AI systems.

Its negotiation within the Committee on Artificial Intelligence (CAI) involved the 46 Council of Europe member states, the European Union and 11 non-member states (Argentina, Australia, Canada, Costa Rica, the Holy See, Israel, Japan, Mexico, Peru, the United States of America, and Uruguay). Representatives of the private sector, civil society and academia, also participated as observers. The Framework Convention is open to non-member States

The internet

provides a space of freedom, facilitating the exercise and enjoyment of fundamental rights, participatory and democratic processes, and social and commercial activities.

In order to ensure a sustainable, people-centred and rights-based approach to the internet, the Council of Europe has engaged in setting and promoting standards, building partnerships and fostering multi-stakeholder dialogue.

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