

Introduction

Since the first UN IGF Summit held in Athens in 2006, the IGF Summit has functioned as a discussion platform allowing different individuals and groups of stakeholders to participate in the exchange of information, sharing of good policies or practices around the surrounding technology, Internet and related services. Since then the Summit has become a place of inspiration for people (politicians, scientists, entrepreneurs, social organisations) who make decisions (including legal and political ones) on the use of new technologies. It is also a place of exchange of knowledge and information, including the directions of changes of the Internet and the increasingly serious threats related to it, not only in terms of cyber security, but importantly also in terms of fiscal, social, cultural and digital exclusion aspects.

The digital world operates on different levels. From a very advanced level, using Artificial Intelligence (AI), through states, organisations at a medium and low level of digitisation and digital competence, to the level of the completely excluded. The disparities between actors are very large and the consequences of this inequality for global governance and security very serious. The IGF is a place where actors (researchers, non-profit organisations, politicians, ordinary citizens, the wider Internet community, entrepreneurs and, from 2020, young people) from all over the world work together. Different perspectives (technological on the one hand, but also social or cultural on the other) contribute to a more sustainable development of the Internet, or at least an attempt at regulations favouring a democratised Internet governance. It is important to involve representatives of various countries, from those highly digitised, with full access to Internet resources, to those with lower levels of opportunities or practice, i.e. to countries where “ordinary” citizens cannot use the benefits of the Internet (e.g. due to lack of infrastructure and access to the network, or due to content censorship). Discussions, panels, meetings, etc. allow for the involvement of all parties, be they developed countries, developing countries, social organisations or churches, to civil society and the network society.

The IGF does not adopt resolutions or create any binding treaties. Its importance lies in its unique ability to facilitate discussions between governments, intergovernmental organisations, private companies, the technical community and civil society organisations that are concerned or

interested in public policy issues related to Internet governance. The IGF serves as a laboratory, a neutral space where all participants can present an issue for informed discussion among stakeholders. However, the IGF is not just about technologies and how they are framed in the context of the sciences. The IGF is also, and perhaps primarily, about the social sciences. In fact, from the very beginning it has been a platform for the exchange of views in this area. It is also of particular importance for legal studies, which, as a science following the summit, looks at, analyses and develops some of the concepts that appear there. There is no doubt that technological space cannot exist without legal space, or in isolation from it. Various social behaviours, including those “rooted” in the world of new technologies, form the basis for the functioning of the legal system, which in turn must determine, among others, the admissibility of certain actions, or the responsibility associated with them. This is the reason why law and technology, the Internet and law, cannot exist without each other.

There is no doubt that the study of law in many important branches has made a considerable contribution. The core disciplines of legal studies, which are primarily concerned with the development of the law in force, touch on important issues in a number of serious treatises and discussions, which after a while become the order of the day for scientific discourse. Although the main legal disciplines generally function well in analysing positive law, in the context of the technological changes taking place in society, there are often areas where scientific analysis has not yet reached, or has reached only to a small extent. However, this type of analysis is essential and sometimes of paramount importance. The explanation of the technological phenomena taking place and the consideration of the legal framework of the application of the benefits of new technologies is nowadays an indispensable element of legal science. Civil law, administrative law or criminal law, as well as individual procedures, need to be looked at from the point of view of the needs of society, which are often deeply rooted in various technological solutions. In this respect, however, scientific analysis is not yet far advanced, nor can it stop developing, just as new technologies are constantly developing and emerging. There is therefore a further need to develop the science of law, to pave the way for the technological solutions that emerge in everyday life, which can and do have an increasing impact on everyday life. It is therefore necessary to constantly explore the area of new technologies, to make generalisations about the social operation of law in this area, to show as far as possible that the need for research can and does also develop technology.

Thinking about the above, there is no doubt that the IGF Summit brings new challenges, also for legal studies. In December 2021 Poland is

hosting the UN IGF Summit 2021. The theme of the summit - Internet United - is the Internet connecting all its users into one community responsible for its shape and functioning. During the COVID-19 crisis, for example, the Internet proved to be helpful in organising human life to a degree that had not yet been anticipated at the previous IGF Summits. This confirmed its immense value for all. Society operates in a digital world and needs both freedom and openness and security within it. These, in turn, are new problems for legal studies and scientific analysis is needed in this area. Hence this book, in which scholars from around the world address the challenges involved.

It is the result of a scientific research project “*The Future of the Law of Internet and New Technologies*”, funded by the Polish government, which we have the honour to lead. The aim of the project is primarily joint international research indicating the latest trends of necessary legal changes in the field of Internet governance (primarily from the perspective of legal sciences) and discussion in various circles on the desired shape of the legal framework for the Internet and new technologies. We realise that it is impossible to address all the important issues of the Internet and new technologies in a single publication. Moreover, we realise that we can only address selected issues. This is precisely the case with this publication, where the authors primarily address four areas that link the Internet and new technologies. These areas are: society, justice system, sustainable development and privacy. In our opinion, there is no doubt that there are many more research issues surrounding the law and the Internet and emerging technology. However, these four outlined areas are only the basic issues that the authors have addressed in their research. This was done in an international dimension, where authors from many countries and five continents were primarily tasked with raising questions and starting a discussion that could perhaps form the basis for broader discussions during the UN IGF Summit.

We would like to add that the research carried out falls within the core objectives of the IGF:- to facilitate understanding and agreement on international public internet policies and their impacts; - better understanding and agreement on Internet governance and new technologies; - to strengthen cooperation and collaboration between key organisations and stakeholders working on various issues related to Internet governance and technologies; - enhanced capacity to support the sustainability, robustness, security, stability and growth of the Internet; - strengthened capacity of all countries, especially developing countries and their stakeholders, to participate effectively in Internet governance arrangements; - enhanced

multilingualism and multiculturalism on the Internet; - mapping of multi-lateral and plurilateral public policy efforts related to the Internet.

The need for discussion in the areas discussed is, in our view, welcome. Drawing attention to issues that we believe are of significant practical importance, where solutions have not yet been developed to the satisfaction of all, where a number of controversies arise, is excellent material for scientific analysis, especially in the direction outlined by the social sciences. As we know, the essence of social sciences is the study of the structure and function of society, its culture, laws and regularities of development. The scope of research of social sciences includes, among others, the observation and analysis of the influence of such factors as the system of legal norms, political power or technology on the way society functions. From this perspective, and especially in view of the needs noted by legal studies, a broader approach to the areas indicated may have important implications for the further functioning of the Internet society and issues related to its governance. We therefore invite you to join the discussion.

UN activities as well as the Internet are global in nature. That is why researchers from many continents, many countries and academic centres were invited to the “*The Future of the Law of Internet and New Technologies*” project. Representing various legal systems together we want to point to the problems of legal and social space in terms of the future of the Internet. Interestingly, despite the differences in systems and views, scientists from all over the world pointed quite consistently to the problems of the Internet, providing interesting material for further not only scientific discussions and contributions to the work of the UN.

We would also like to point out that our work, although carried out as part of a single academic project, contains the views of many authors who do not always agree with each other. However, we consider the fact that there is pluralism in our team as well an additional value of the publication, although we must state that each author is responsible for his/her own views.

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