

IRDTCONFERENCE



Politicians as targets

Harmful online speech and its impact upon democratic discourse

Annual Conference

Digital Law Institute Trier, Trier University

10th and 11th September 2026 Trier

■ Harmful Online Speech – Impacts upon the democratic discourse and politicians as targets

While online platforms create new opportunities for participation, pluralism and political expression, they also become fertile ground for hostility, disinformation and digitally coordinated harassment campaigns – phenomena that particularly affect politicians and public figures. Moreover, these online spheres pose significant risks to the quality and integrity of democratic debate. Addressing harmful online speech against politicians thus becomes a test case for the resilience of democratic values in the digital age. From a comparative European perspective, this conference explores diverse legal and policy approaches aimed at safeguarding democratic debate while preserving openness in the digital sphere.

Registration is now open free of charge! For more information and registration details, visit <https://irdt.uni-trier.de> or contact irdt@uni-trier.de.

Organisers:

Antje von Ungern-Sternberg, Benjamin Raue, Lea Kumkar, Thomas R fner, Claudia Ritzi

Programme

Place:

Kurf rstliches Palais (Willy-Brandt-Platz 3, Trier), Entrance Palastgarten

Thursday, 10 September 2026

12.00 pm **Lunch and registration**

1.00 pm **Welcome**
Prof. Dr. Antje von Ungern-Sternberg (IRD T)
Prof. Dr. Eva Martha Eckkrammer

I. Harm caused by harmful speech

1.30 pm *Chair: Prof. Dr. Andrew Kenyon, The University of Melbourne*
Impact of harmful speech upon individuals
JProf. Dr. Marlene Altenm ller, ZPID

Impact of harmful speech upon democracy

PD Dr. habil. Jasmin Fitzpatrick, Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz

Harmful online speech – the individual perspective

Dr. Katarina Barley, Vice-President of the European Parliament

3.30 pm

Coffee break

II. Comparison: Freedom of online speech targeting politicians and its limits

4.00 pm –
6.00 pm

Chair: Prof. Dr. Mark D. Cole, University of Luxembourg

The Nordics perspective

Prof. Dr. Riku Neuvonen, Tampere University

The Polish perspective

Prof. Dr. Anna Demenko, Adam Mickiewicz University, Pozna 

The Italian perspective

Prof. Dr. Camilla Crea, University of Sannio, Italy

The German perspective

Prof. Dr. Andreas Paulus, University of G ttingen, former judge at the Federal Constitutional Court

8.00 pm

Dinner

Friday, 11 September 2026

III. Freedom of online speech - Legal approaches in the EU

Chair: Prof. Dr. Fran ois-Xavier Millet, University of the French Antilles (UA)

9.00 am

Which Law Governs Free Speech on the Internet?

Prof. Dr. Tobias Lutzi, University of Augsburg

10.00 am

Free speech targeting politicians in the European Convention on Human Rights

PD Dr. Bj rnstjern Baade, University of Bremen

11.00 am

Coffee break

11.30 am

Chair: Prof. Dr. Paolo Passaglia, University of Pisa
Legal approaches addressing online harms for democratic discourse under the DSA

Prof. Dr. Anine Kierulf, University of Oslo

12.30 pm

Concluding remarks and lunch