



IMUNA
איגוד מודל האו"ם בישראל
THE ISRAELI MODEL UN ASSOCIATION
متحفظة نموذج الأمم المتحدة في إسرائيل



JLMUN 2021 IMUNA Online International Conference

Study Guide: ECOSOC



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Welcome letter

Dear Delegates,

On behalf of IMUNA and the Secretariat of JLMUN 2021, we would like to warmly welcome you to this simulation of the ECOSOC committee. We would like to thank you for choosing to take part in our committee and will do our best to ensure that the experience will be stimulating, enriching, and rewarding.

We are meeting at a time in history when the mandate of our committee - the economic and social wellbeing of our global community - has perhaps never been of more importance or in greater jeopardy since the founding of the UN itself in 1945. The year 2020 marked a devastating pandemic, economic recession, and increasing political and racial tensions that have left humanity facing an uncertain future heading into 2021.

And yet, there is still much room for optimism. The eagerness and willingness of a new, younger generation such as yourselves to step into the shoes of global leadership and to tackle the challenges that face our society is a source of hope and inspiration. We hope that the debates and the discussions you engage in over the next few days will be only the first step of a long journey of activism, critical thinking, and personal development.

To that end, we have chosen to debate two topics which will both be of great importance during the course of the next few years and will require global cooperation and solutions. Our first topic, counteracting the global recession caused by COVID-19, is one that directly impacts the life of almost every person on our planet. In today's interconnected economy, no one country can solve this alone - reaching a viable solution will require you to work together. Our second topic, regulating the spread of misinformation on social media, is also global in its scope and has significant implications for the future of democracies worldwide. Like COVID-19, social media is not limited by national borders and any regulation or agreement will have to be the result of robust multilateral debate.

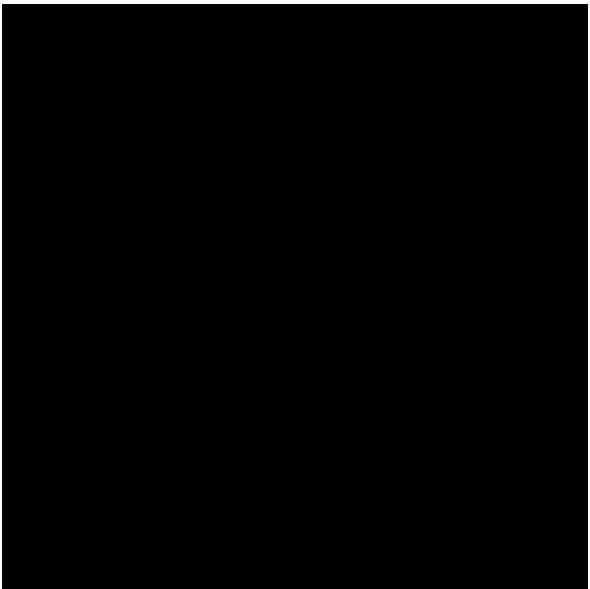
In the following pages, you will find a brief introduction to our committee and topics, important background information, and questions to consider when forming your policy. This guide is by no means exhaustive, and you are highly encouraged to conduct your own independent research as well.

We are greatly looking forward to having you in our committee and to serving as your chairs. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions or concerns that arise. Good luck and see you soon!

Yours sincerely, Rahel Schwarz, Benevolence Mbano and Ori Livneh

Meet the Chairs

Chair – Rahel Schwarz



Rahel is a law student and research assistant completing her major in EU- and Public International Law at the University of Hamburg. She is currently also coaching her faculty's Philip C. Jessup International Law Moot Court Competition-Team.

When asked to describe MUN, Rahel, who looks back on over 10 university-level conferences across Europe and Israel, will tell you that it is a unique learning experience with an unmatched sense of community and purpose.

Having served as Chair of the Press Corps at JLMUN 2019, she can guarantee that JLMUN is no exception in that regard; she is therefore delighted to return for this edition of JLMUN.

In the wake of the pandemic, ECOSOC will address issues that one would have either not discussed before or that have taken on a new magnitude. These issues inform our reality, they concern each and every one of us.

Thus, now more than ever, it is vital to take advantage of the opportunities JLMUN offers and to come with an open heart and mind. It is Rahel's sincere hope that this will enable us to carry out into the world what we will have learned throughout JLMUN and that we will therefore actively create a better tomorrow.

Together with her esteemed Vice-Chairs, Benevolence and Ori, Rahel will do everything in her power to turn this hope into a reality.

Rahel cannot wait for you to join us this March – here is to a memorable conference!



Vice-Chair- Benevolence Mbano

Benevolence Mbano is a 26-year-old Zimbabwean woman, who holds a bachelor's degree of Arts in Law and Politics and International studies from Rhodes university, Grahamstown, South Africa. She is presently pursuing a Bachelor of Laws (LLB) degree at the University of South Africa, while actively taking part in community engagement. With over 7 years of MUN experience, having first participated as a delegate and eventually serving as a Secretary-General for Rhodes

University MUN, Benny has chaired in various national and international conferences.

Benny as she is fondly called, hopes that by the end of the JLMUN conference, delegates will have gained valuable skills such as public speaking, debating, critical thinking and or dispute resolution. Most of all that they will benefit from an experience in international relations which will enable delegates to view important issues through a new perspective.

She currently serves as the International Partnerships and Public Relations Director at Thrive Opportunities; an organization that disseminates scholarships and opportunities alike to youth across Africa. Benny is very passionate about International relations and her goal is to encourage young people to actively take part in matters involving international relations and to always be aware of the pressing issues affecting the youth.



Vice-Chair Ori Livneh

Hello, my name is Ori Livneh, I am the Head of Logistics at OpenMUN, this is my fourth year in MUN. I have a bachelor's degree in political science and international relations from the open university, I am a professional photographer, and I am volunteering in several places.

It's a great honor to have the opportunity this committee.

Introduction to the Committee

ECOSOC was established by the UN in 1945 and celebrated its 70th anniversary in 2016¹; it is one of six main organs of the UN², through articles 7 and 8 of chapter 3 of the UN Charter.

Generally put, “[t]he [ECOSOC] is at the heart of the [UN] United Nations system to advance the three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental.”³

Member-States – From the Establishment of the UN to today

Geographical representation determines ECOSOC’s structure with regards to membership::

- 14 seats for Africa.
- 11 seats for Asia.
- 10 seats for Latin America / Caribbean States.
- 6 seats for Eastern Europe.
- 13 seats for Western Europe and other areas.⁴

The ECOSOC we know today accordingly consists of 54 member states. However, when it was founded there were only 18 members. In the years following the committee’s establishment, the number of member States was then increased to 27 (1965) and once more to 54 members (1973). As enshrined in rule 83 of the rules of procedure, to become a member state of ECOSOC, a State must be voted in by a two-thirds majority by the UNGA.⁵ Once voted in, each country is a member State for the duration of three years.⁶

¹ ECOSOC, ECOSOC-70: Taking Action to Improve Lives, available at <https://www.un.org/ecosoc/en/events/2016/经社理事会成立 70 周年纪念活动>, 2016 年 1 月, last accessed: 23.1.2021.

² Britannica, Economic and Social Council, available at <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Economic-and-Social-Council>, last accessed: 24.1.2021.

³ ECOSOC, About Us, available at <https://www.un.org/ecosoc/en/about-us>, last accessed: 23.1.2021.

⁴ ECOSOC, FAQ – Where can I find the current membership?, available at <https://www.un.org/ecosoc/en/FAQ>, last accessed: 24.1.2021.

⁵ General Assembly to the United Nations, Election of eighteen members of the Economic and Social Council, available at https://www.un.org/en/ga/62/plenary/election_ecosoc/bkg.shtml, last accessed 24.1.2021.

⁶ Britannica, Economic and Social Council, available at <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Economic-and-Social-Council>, last accessed: 24.1.2021.

ECOSOC is not only large but also a complex committee: It collaborates with the UN itself as it operates under the overarching control of the UN General Assembly. It also has subsidiary bodies.⁷ Additionally, ECOSOC works with NGOs and private actors from all over the world.⁸

The Mandate of ECOSOC

The responsibilities of ECOSOC are direction and coordination of the economic, social, humanitarian, and cultural activities which are carried out by the UN.⁹ In these areas, the committee makes policy recommendations addressed to Member States and the United Nations system. To make such policy recommendations and to coordinate the work of the UN whenever there is an overlap between the different committees / bodies of the UN, is the primary activity of ECOSOC.¹⁰

The mandate of the committee is rather wide. In the following, we will provide and specify the main areas of responsibility. ECOSOC must

- foster a higher quality of living and ensure complete employment.
- make out global challenges in areas ranging from the economy, over the society to health – and to find solutions for them.
- enable international cultural and educational collaboration.
- encourage all-around implementation of and adherence to human rights as well as fundamental freedoms.¹¹

Consequently, JLMUN 2021 will see the simulation of a major committee that is the central platform for taking action towards a better and more innovative world.

⁷ For a list of these subsidiary bodies see here: ECOSOC, Subsidiary Bodies of ECOSOC, available at <https://www.un.org/ecosoc/en/content/subsidiary-bodies-ecosoc>, last accessed: 23.1.2021.

⁸ Baylis & Smith, The Globalization of World Politics: Introduction to International Relations, 2005, p.410.

⁹ Britannica, Economic and Social Council, available at <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Economic-and-Social-Council>, last accessed: 24.1.2021.

¹⁰ New World Encyclopedia, United Nations Economic and Social Council, available at https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/United_Nations_Economic_and_Social_Council, last accessed: 24.1.2021.

¹¹UN NGO Branch, About ECOSOC and its Subsidiary Bodies, available at <https://csonet.org/?menu=123>, last accessed: 24.1.2021.

Introduction to Topic 1: Measures to counteract the global recession caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic

This committee is tasked with debating on and finding measures to counteract the global economic recession caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Phrasing it like that creates the illusion that there is just one recession. However, there is not just one recession; in reality, recessions differ / will differ across countries as they are/ will be characterized by an array of different factors.¹²

The practical definition to recession is the decline in the country's real gross domestic product for two consecutive quarters¹³. It can also be referred to as the significant decline in economic product activity, spread across the economy lasting more than a few months resulting in an impact on employment, production, and real income¹⁴.

Recession can be triggered by monetary policies or a shift in the global financial climate which has an impact on the financial market such as COVID-19. The effects of recession further can impact globalization which refers to a process in which production and financial structures of countries can be linked through cross border transactions such as movement of goods, people, and services¹⁵. In a recession political, economic, or cultural integration does not thrive which in turn can lead to the economy plunging further.¹⁶

Notwithstanding, there is one common phenomenon when it comes to COVID-19-recessions: The current health crises has elevated pre-existing financial challenges.¹⁷

And further, putting specifics aside for the moment, it can already be said that the current pandemic will have a considerable effect on the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of all States across the world.¹⁸

¹² Jomo and Chowdhury, COVID-19 Pandemic Recessions and Recovery, Development 2020 (63), 226, 226.

¹³ Claessens, S., Kose A., (2009) What Is a Recession? *Finance & Development* <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2009/03/pdf/basics.pdf> 52-53. (Accessed on 21 January 21, 2021)

¹⁴ Claessens, S., What is Recession? p52.

¹⁵ Mir U.R, Hassan, S.M, Qadri, M.M., (2014) Understanding Globalization and its Future: An Analysis, *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences* (Accessed on 21 January 21, 2021)

¹⁶ Mir, Understanding Globalization, p610.

¹⁷ Ibid, 226, 227.

¹⁸ MacDonald, Piazza, Sher, A Simple Guide to Estimating the Impact of COVID-19 on Travel and Hospitality Activity, International Monetary Fund – Research, p. 9.

The World Bank predicted in June 2019 that the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences have the power to bring upon us the “deepest recession since the Second World War.”¹⁹

This pandemic will have long-and short-term economic consequences.²⁰

In the short-term, the public debt is predicted to immediately grow as States are accumulating trillions for programs meant to assist the struggling economies.²¹ Moreover, States are also confronted with the challenge of protecting and fulfilling their obligations under the right to health as enshrined *inter alia* in Art. 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) as well as other economic and social human rights.²² This too leads to significant spending of public funds which can only be realized through borrowing money.²³

In addition, States will have to consider the main international legal instruments that address the impacts an international health crisis can have on the economy, specifically traffic and trade. These instruments which will be looked at in greater detail below are called the 2005 International Health Regulations and the WTO Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (1995). To take them into account is important as e.g., in the current pandemic economic interests will have to be reconciled with the protection of public health. Both the 2005 International Health Regulation and the aforementioned WTO agreement establish the legal framework for that.

In the long run, countries will have to face the fall-out of all that – in addition to the debt they may still have from the financial crisis of the early 2000s.²⁴ Furthermore, International Organizations will suffer the consequences as well – States will likely focus on recovering their own economies before giving funding to these Organizations. Keeping in mind that they are already underfunded as it is, they will have to carry out their mandate with even less funds at their disposal.²⁵

¹⁹ The World Bank, COVID-19 to Plunge Global Economy into Worst Recession since World War II, available at <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/06/08/covid-19-to-plunge-global-economy-into-worst-recession-since-world-war-ii>, last accessed: 21.1.2020.

²⁰ Cf. Jomo and Chowdhury, COVID-19 Pandemic Recessions and Recovery, Development 2020 (63), 226, 227.

²¹ Kirsch, COVID, Crisis and Change in Global Governance, Verfassungsblog (17.4.2020), available at <https://verfassungsblog.de/covid-crisis-and-change-in-global-governance/>, last accessed: 21.1.2021.

²² Scali, Sovereign (over)borrowing during the COVID-19 pandemic: Do creditors have a responsibility to prevent unsustainable debt situations, available at <https://www.ejiltalk.org/sovereign-overborrowing-during-the-covid-19-pandemic-do-creditors-have-a-responsibility-to-prevent-unsustainable-debt-situations/>, last accessed: 21.1.2021.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Kirsch, COVID, Crisis and Change in Global Governance, Verfassungsblog (17.4.2020), available at <https://verfassungsblog.de/covid-crisis-and-change-in-global-governance/>, last accessed: 21.1.2021.

²⁵ Ibid.

When combating the recession, we are bound to face, one could argue that a uniform approach, i.e., using one and the same approach for all countries, is not adequate, precisely as the recessions and economic realities of the afflicted countries largely differ from one another.²⁶

Countries may turn to protectionists measures. Such measures will affect how countries will – or rather will *not* – cooperate on the international plane. An organization like the World Trade Organization might be impacted the most and that in turn has the potential to affect international trade.²⁷

²⁶ Jomo and Chowdhury, COVID-19 Pandemic Recession and Recovery, Development 2020 (63), 226, 232.

Ibid, 226, 227.

²⁷ Kirsch, COVID, Crisis and Change in Global Governance, Verfassungsblog (17.4.2020), available at <https://verfassungsblog.de/covid-crisis-and-change-in-global-governance/>, last accessed: 21.1.2021.

History of the Topic

The COVID-19 pandemic was first identified in December of 2019 in Wuhan, China. As of January 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a public health emergency, and eventually a full pandemic by March of that same year. As of February, COVID-19 has more than 104 million confirmed cases, with more than 2.28 million attributable deaths.²⁸ Of particular relevance to the ECOSOC committee is the impact the pandemic has had on the global economy. Following the outbreak, the FTSE and Dow Jones Industrial Average plummeted. Since the release of the vaccine, American and Asian stock markets have gradually recovered, although the FTSE remains in the negative.²⁹ Central banks have been slashing interest rates in order to make borrowing cheaper and to encourage spending, an action which has in part contributed to the recovery. However, a healthy stock market is not the sole indicator of the economic situation. After decades of job expansion, people without work in the United States recently hit 8.9% according to the IMF, a phenomenon mirrored globally. Worldwide, industries such as tourism have come to a standstill with the majority of countries now being considered to be in a recession, with a 4.4% global economic decline.³⁰

This is the deepest recession since WWII they say and also causing a dramatic increase in world extreme poverty. The COVID-19 has also caused a huge supply shock worldwide causing many businesses and industries to shut down permanently or semi-permanently and many people had lost their jobs and for example the tourism industry that the salary is not high, caused people to be out of job and confused about whether they will have another job or return to their workplace.³¹

COVID-19 is not the only pandemic / international health crisis in recent years. Especially from a comparison to the SARS (2003) pandemic and the Ebola virus disease we can learn lessons for navigating the current pandemic and its economic consequences.

²⁸ WHO coronavirus disease (COVID-19) dashboard. Geneva: World Health Organization, 2020. Available online: <https://covid19.who.int/> last accessed: 6.2.2021.

²⁹ Lora Jones, Daniele Palumbo & David Brown, Coronavirus: How the pandemic has changed the world economy <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-51706225> last accessed: 6.2.2021.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ UNDP Eurasia/Karen Cirillo, Coronavirus: World Bank confirms deepest recession since World War Two, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/06/1065902> last accessed: 6.2.2021.

History of the Topic

SARS (2003)

Between 2002 and 2003, a Coronavirus emerged.³² The outbreak originated in China, subsequently spreading to four more countries.³³

Just like with COVID-19, many patients suffered from severe acute respiratory syndrome (short: SARS).³⁴ Measures to counteract the virus for instance were quarantine or checks at both air-and seaports prior to departure.³⁵

This epidemic resulted in 8098 cases and 774 deaths.³⁶

When looking at the economic outfall of this pandemic, the Australian government at the time assessed that “SARS represent[ed] a crisis of confidence and a demand shock that hit East Asia, especially China, hard.”³⁷ with GDP growth tremendously slowing down across East Asia in the first three months of 2003³⁸. Naturally, the 2003 SARS-outbreak affected the stock market negatively and domestic trade also plummeted.³⁹

³² BMBF, SARS und MERS: Relevanz für die Covid-19-Pandemie, available at <https://www.gesundheitsforschung-bmbf.de/de/sars-und-mers-relevanz-fur-die-covid-19-pandemie-11152.php>, last accessed: 17.1.2021.

³³ WHO, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), available at https://www.who.int/health-topics/severe-acute-respiratory-syndrome#tab=tab_1, last accessed: 17.1.2021.

³⁴ BMBF, SARS und MERS: Relevanz für die Covid-19-Pandemie, available at <https://www.gesundheitsforschung-bmbf.de/de/sars-und-mers-relevanz-fur-die-covid-19-pandemie-11152.php>, last accessed: 17.1.2021.

³⁵ Australian Government –The Treasury, The economic impact of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), available at <https://treasury.gov.au/publication/economic-roundup-winter-2003/the-economic-impact-of-severe-acute-respiratory-syndrome-sars>, last accessed: 20.1.2021.

³⁶ Wilder-Smith, Chiew and Lee, Can we contain the COVID-19 outbreak with the same measures as for SARS?, The Lancet Infectious Diseases, Volume 20, Issue 5, available at [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/laninf/article/PIIS1473-3099\(20\)30129-8/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/laninf/article/PIIS1473-3099(20)30129-8/fulltext), last accessed: 17.1.2021.

³⁷ Australian Government –The Treasury, The economic impact of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), available at <https://treasury.gov.au/publication/economic-roundup-winter-2003/the-economic-impact-of-severe-acute-respiratory-syndrome-sars>, last accessed: 20.1.2021.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ DW, How will the coronavirus affect the world economy?, available at <https://www.dw.com/en/coronavirus-outbreak-china-and-the-world-economy-worse-than-sars/a-52253833>, last accessed: 20.1.2021.

The tourism industry was also severely impacted from airlines to hotels⁴⁰ and across the board, there was a rise in business costs which can be attributed to less in working hours – employees were unable to work due to SARS-infections or their implications⁴¹.

Ebola Virus Disease (EVD)

EVD is a hemorrhagic fever with possibly deadly consequences.⁴² In 2014, the West Africa Ebola epidemic broke out and was eventually declared as a PHEIC (public health emergency of international concern) by the WHO.⁴³

This then led to the implementation of the aforementioned IHR.⁴⁴

The outbreak illustrated that in our globalized world distance in the geographic sense no longer serves as a shield from such health crises.⁴⁵

Measures taken to fight the consequences of the outbreak included closing borders throughout West Africa, trade restrictions as well as resections on the freedom of movement.⁴⁶

In general, it can be said that wealthy countries are less likely to suffer severe economic consequences in terms of economic growth in comparison to poorer countries.⁴⁷ Back in 2018, a study was published which concluded that the EVD-outbreak generated costs of around 53 billion dollars.⁴⁸

⁴⁰ Cf. Australian Government –The Treasury, The economic impact of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), available at <https://treasury.gov.au/publication/economic-roundup-winter-2003/the-economic-impact-of-severe-acute-respiratory-syndrome-sars>, last accessed: 20.1.2021.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Tejpar and Hoffman, Canada's violation of International Law during the 2014-16 Outbreak, The Canadian Yearbook of International Law, Vol. 54 [2016], p. 366, 366.

⁴⁵ Kostova, Cassell, Redd et al., Long-distance effects of epidemics: Assessing the link between the 2014 West Ebola outbreak and U.S. exports and employment, Health Economics, Volume 28, Issue 11 (2019), available at <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/hec.3938>, last accessed: 24.1.2021.

⁴⁶ Games and Vickers, The Ebola Crisis in West Africa: Implications for Trade and Regional Integration, in: The Commonwealth, Issue 119, 2015, available at <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/5js4t73pl5mt-en.pdf?Expires=1611169548&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=37B3E083EB97CA665E343A60DE7FBA01>, last accessed: 20.1.2021.

⁴⁷ Abban, The Effect of Ebola Virus Disease on intra-regional trade in West Africa, 9 May 2020, available at https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/102192/10/MPRA_paper_102192.pdf, p. 13, last accessed: 20.1.2021.

⁴⁸ Huber, Finelli and Stevens, The Economic and Social Burden of the 2014 Outbreak in West Africa, The Journal of Infectious Diseases, Volume 218, Issue Supplement_5, 15 December 2018, page S698.

Current Situation – COVID-19 and the global recession

In June 2020, the World Bank forecasted the global economy to shrink by 5.2% thus plummeting the world into the deepest recession since the Second World War⁴⁹. Economic activity was anticipated to shrink at 7%. Due to trade, finance and domestic demand and supply being severely disrupted. Emerging markets and developing countries were expected to shrink by at least 2.5% whilst per capita income was forecasted to decline by 3.6%⁵⁰, resulting in the millions of people plunging into extreme poverty.

The recession has hit the hardest in countries where the pandemic has been the most severe and where there is heavy reliance on tourism, global trade, and external financing commodity exports. Such regions include Latin America and the Caribbean where the COVID-19 outbreak spread rampantly and caused business closures and mobility restrictions⁵¹. Reasons include that these regions depend heavily on tourism and trade. The economic shutdown has therefore disrupted supply chains and travelling. Economies such as Brazil have shrunk by at least 8% due to lockdowns and plunging investments, whilst In Mexico shrunk by 7.5% due to halt in tourism, mobility restriction and a plunge in prices⁵².

However there have been efforts to help countries in need to avoid the risk of about 60 million people plunging into extreme poverty as an aftermath of COVID -19⁵³ due to lockdown and shutdowns. The World Bank is one of the institutions which have acted promptly to establish emergency response operations in about 100 countries which are home to at least 70% of the world's populations- in attempt to fight Covid-19⁵⁴. In May 2020, the World Bank pledged \$160 billion in grants and financial support over a period of 15 months to help developing countries respond to social, health and economic impact of the virus⁵⁵, whilst further targeting economic shutdown in advanced

⁴⁹ The World Bank, (2020), COVID-19 to Plunge Global Economy into Worst Recession since World War II <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/06/08/covid-19-to-plunge-global-economy-into-worst-recession-since-world-war-ii> (Accessed on 23 January, 2021)

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ The World Bank, (2020), Global Economic Prospects, <http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/876791588788341170/Global-Economic-Prospects-June-2020-Regional-Overview-LAC.pdf> (Accessed on 23 January, 2021).

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵Ibid.

countries. Of these 100 countries, 39 are in Africa⁵⁶ and most of the countries selected are in conflict and had existing fragile economies such as Niger, Chad, Haiti, and Afghanistan⁵⁷.

The World Bank's investment has created supportive conditions to maintain livelihoods, supported poor households and ensured continuity of essential services such as education, strengthened health systems whilst saving economies from a hard recession⁵⁸. COVID-19 has left many countries in a financial crisis with many short term and long-term effects, especially on globalization. These include how most people have lost jobs, shut down businesses or exhausted their savings due to inconsistent cash flows and pay cuts. Jobs have further been affected as many have lost breadwinners⁵⁹. Low and irregular income has led many to expose themselves to negative coping strategies such predatory loans, child labor, unsafe working conditions, and sale of assets⁶⁰. The food system has been affected as border closures, trade restrictions and confinement measures in most farmers losing access to markets⁶¹ leading to disrupted domestic and international food chains. Small scale farmers especially in marginalized countries have been affected the most⁶².

Despite technology development, in close contact settings and crowded spaces are essential to globalization. COVID-19 has affected this as movement of goods, information and people has been restricted. Higher education, social gatherings, live performances, and tourism etc. – fields which boost economies and promote globalization have shifted to the online spectrum⁶³.

By April 2020 at least 3 in 4 countries had imposed a complete border closure to slow down the spread of the virus- in turn affecting migration. Limitation of movement has made it difficult for those fleeing war zones or facing persecution to access protection⁶⁴. As a result, some countries have taken advantage of COVID-19 to close themselves off and further their own migration policy interests which cannot be justified by public health concerns and which could possibly remain in

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹ World Health Organization, (2020), Impact of COVID-19 on people's livelihoods, their health and our food systems <https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/13-10-2020-impact-of-covid-19-on-people-s-livelihoods-their-health-and-our-food-systems> (Accessed on 23 January, 2021).

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³ Fujita, M, Hamaguchi, N., (2020), Globalisation and the COVID-19 pandemic: A spatial economics perspective, <https://voxeu.org/article/globalisation-and-covid-19-pandemic> (Accessed on 23 January, 2021).

⁶⁴ Reidy, E., (2020), The COVID-19 excuse? How migration policies are hardening around the globe, The New Humanitarian, <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2020/04/17/coronavirus-global-migration-policies-exploited> (Accessed on 23 January, 2021).

place long after the outbreak subsides⁶⁵. Examples include how asylum seekers and migrants from Libya where a civil war is escalating are being turned away from European countries which have shut ports citing COVID-19 regulations⁶⁶. In Asia dozens of refugees from Bangladesh have died from hunger after the Malaysian government refused them entry because of border closures⁶⁷. In countries such as the US, Cyprus, Mexico, and Canada, many have been barred from seeking asylum or have been deported based on maintaining the spread of the virus⁶⁸. Blanket restrictions have further limited humanitarian organizations from delivering urgent services and assistance to vulnerable populations which are made up of mostly internally displaced persons and refugees⁶⁹. Whilst limiting mobility is important, the right to asylum cannot be completely suspended.⁷⁰

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Ibid.

Past Actions

Since the WHO organization made its declaration in March that COVID-19 had reached pandemic levels, ECOSOC has been focused on helping coordinate policies which would contribute to recovery. Firstly, ECOSOC has emphasized a multilateral response promoting global solidarity, aiming to return to the trend of working towards achieving the sustainable development goals in the long term, while mitigating the effects of future disasters⁷¹. In the ECOSOC “Financing for Development Forum”, a recommendation was issued that resources should be mobilized from all sources to invest in a stable recovery to COVID-19.

This in part involved targeting the Central Emergency Response Fund and the WHO COID-19 solidarity response fund with funding from international organizations and regional development banks, with an emphasis on reestablishing consistent and reliable financial flow. In addition, the forum called for the IMF to deploy its emergency finance instruments, for example providing over \$10 billion in assistance to low-income countries struggling with the situation. Finally, among many other proposed policies, there was an emphasis on the importance of debt relief and cancelation, including middle-income countries in this calculation. In order to make sure such measures were sustainable, the forum called for steps to be taken to counter tax avoidance and evasion.⁷²

Similar to this forum, ECOSOC has been encouraging dialogue in order to better coordinate policy between key staff and organizations, such as the ECOSOC high-level briefing on COVID-19 between the executive heads of the most relevant UN agencies, in order to coordinate a multilateral response while supporting national responses on the smaller scale. ECOSOC has been working towards establishing a platform to better integrate policies across the UN system to respond to COVID-19 and other crises. This in part involves reviewing progress of implementing the General Assembly

⁷¹ ECOSOC's response to COVID-19, <https://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/2020doc/ECOSOC-and-COVID-19-compilation-of-actions.pdf> last accessed: 6.2.2021.

⁷² Summary by the President of the Economic and Social Council of the forum on financing for development follow-up https://www.un.org/development/desa/financing/sites/www.un.org.development.desa.financing/files/2020-07/A_75_93_E.pdf last accessed: 6.2.2021.

resolution 72/279, involving reposition in the UN development system.⁷³ Overall, many ECOSOC initiatives had to be scaled down due to the situation, however through encouraging such international cross-organizational solidarity initiatives ECOSOC hopes to return towards achieving its 2030 agenda on sustainable development, such as the eradication of poverty.⁷⁴

Role of Public International Law

The following section will provide a brief overview of the two main Public International Law instruments that address traffic and trade of both people and goods in times of disease outbreak.

We hope this will add another layer to the discussion in illustrating that economic interests and other considerations, like ensuring the health of the population, always have to be reconciled with one another. Further, this should aid you in understanding why certain measures that affect the economy are (legally) disputed. In turn, this could then enable you to see how the law may be used in a way to further protectionist interests that could potentially be harmful for the international community.

2005 International Health Regulations⁷⁵

The 2005 International Health Regulations are legally binding for the member States of the WHO and the WHO itself.⁷⁶ This set of rules concerns itself with the worldwide spread of disease and with how to prevent unnecessarily restrictive measures on global traffic and trade in the wake of that.⁷⁷

Note has to especially be taken of Art. 43 IHR. This provision allows States to adopt measures which exceeds those recommended by the WHO under certain conditions set out in the provision. For instance, one condition is that States have to be able to justify these measures with *inter alia* scientific evidence according to Art. 43 (2) lit. a.

⁷³ ECOSOC response to COVID-19, [https://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/2020doc/ECOSOC-and-COVID-19-compilation-of-actions.pdf](https://www.un.org/ecosoc/en/content/2020-operational-activities-development-segmenthttps://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/2020doc/ECOSOC-and-COVID-19-compilation-of-actions.pdf) last accessed: 6.2.2021.

⁷⁴ 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development/ECOSOC https://www.unodc.org/documents/postungass2016/contributions/UN/UNODC_Ch._6_ECOSOC.pdf last accessed: 6.2.2021.

⁷⁵ Hereinafter: IHR.

⁷⁶ Habibi et al., Do not violate the International Health Regulations during the COVID-19 outbreak, *The Lancet*, Vol. 395, No. 10225 (2020), p. 664, 664.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

When States adopt measures under the IHR that can have an economic impact – for example the consequences of restricting the freedom of movement through travel restrictions can be seen across all sorts of industries, such as the airline or transportation industry.⁷⁸

Travel restrictions / border closures also affect the trade of services and cost associated with that.⁷⁹ It is disputed whether the travel restrictions adopted by countries during the current pandemic are lawful under Art. 43 IHR.⁸⁰

WTO Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (1995)⁸¹

Under the SPS-Agreement, States are in general permitted to restrict the trade, e.g., of food, in order to safeguard the health and ultimately the life of their population⁸²; such measures may also be applied to protect plant and animal life or health⁸³.

Nevertheless, “these measures are not [to be] applied in a manner which would constitute a [...] disguised restriction on international trade.”⁸⁴

Accordingly, all measures must generally be rooted in scientific principles and there must be “sufficient scientific evidence” to support it, Art. 2 (2) SPS-Agreement. China’s measures – especially with regards to stopping the imports of poultry products by Tyson Foods Inc. – have been deemed to not be in compliance with the Agreement.⁸⁵

⁷⁸ Sobieralski, COVID-19 and airline employment: Insights from historical uncertainty shocks to the industry, *Transportation Research Interdisciplinary Perspectives* 5 (2020) 100123, 1, 1.

⁷⁹ Benz, Gonzales and Mourougane, The Impact of COVID-19 international travel restrictions on services-trade costs, *OECD Trade Policy Papers* No. 237, p.4.

⁸⁰ Disputing the lawfulness: Habibi et al., Do not violate the International Health Regulations during the COVID-19 outbreak, *The Lancet*, Vol. 395, No. 10225 (2020), p. 664, 664; arguing that these restrictions are lawful: Foster, Justified Border Closures do not violate the International Health Regulations of 2005, available at <https://www.ejiltalk.org/justified-border-closures-do-not-violate-the-international-health-regulations-2005/>, last accessed: 21.1.2021.

⁸¹ Hereinafter: SPS-Agreement or Agreement.

⁸² Giegling, China’s restrictions on Trade and the SPS Agreement, <https://www.ejiltalk.org/chinas-recent-restrictions-on-trade-and-the-sps-agreement/>, last accessed: 21.1.2021.

⁸³ Foster, Justified Border Closures do not violate the International Health Regulations of 2005, available at <https://www.ejiltalk.org/justified-border-closures-do-not-violate-the-international-health-regulations-2005/>, last accessed: 21.1.2021.

⁸⁴ Preamble of the SPS-Agreement, 1867 UNTS 493; see also Art. 2 (3) SPS-Agreement.

⁸⁵ Giegling, China’s restrictions on Trade and the SPS Agreement, <https://www.ejiltalk.org/chinas-recent-restrictions-on-trade-and-the-sps-agreement/>, last accessed: 21.1.2021.

Summary

Due to the global world being affected by COVID-19, various institutions such as the World Bank, the World Health Organization and International Monetary fund have stepped forward to assist emerging and advanced economies from plunging further into recession which could ultimately leave at least 70% of the world in extreme poverty. In most countries with existing fragile economies such as Niger, Chad, Haiti, and Afghanistan, most people have lost jobs, shut down businesses or exhausted their savings due to inconsistent cash flows or loss of breadwinners. COVID-19 has affected many countries due to border closures, trade restrictions and confinement measures.

States, and by extension this committee, will have to take into account any measures taken to counteract the global recession caused by COVID-19 as per their respective country policies and will then have to evaluate them in order to develop policies on a global scale. Particularly, States / Delegates of this committee will also have to decide if they favor proposed approaches to the regulation of mobility which have an effect on migration and trade.

Guiding Questions

1. Are specific sectors within the economy of the country you are representing particularly affected by COVID-19, e.g., because the economy is reliant on tourism?
2. What efforts has your country made, if any, to stabilize its economy / to support struggling sectors / businesses?
3. Is your country in a position to contribute to any international or regional relief funds? How much would your country be willing to contribute and under which conditions?
4. Assuming your country is in such a position, are there any policies / protectionists interests precluding it from doing so?
5. Has your country been plunged into a recession due to a global health crisis before?
6. If so, what countermeasures did it adopt back then and what lessons has the country learned from that?
7. What are any economic challenges that your country has to face in addition to those caused by the pandemic?
8. What is the price your country is willing to pay / is able to pay to ensure that its citizens' health is protected and how far are you able / willing to let your economy suffer for that?

Further Reading

1. BBC, Coronavirus: What is a recession and how could it affect me?,
<https://www.bbc.com/news/business-52986863>
2. UN Migration, COVID-19 Analytical Snapshot #3: Travel restrictions & mobility: Understanding the migration & mobility implications of COVID-19
https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/our_work/ICP/MPR/covid-19_analytical_snapshot_3_-_travel_restrictions_and_mobility.pdf
3. Jonathan Masters, Coronavirus: How Are Countries Responding to the Economic Crisis?,
<https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/coronavirus-how-are-countries-responding-economic-crisis>
4. Tabea Lakemann et al., Africa after the Covid-19 Lockdowns: Economic Impacts and Prospects, <https://www.giga-hamburg.de/en/publications/21606562-africa-after-covid-19-lockdowns-economic-impacts-prospects/>
5. European Commission, Jobs and economy during the coronavirus pandemic,
https://ec.europa.eu/info/live-work-travel-eu/coronavirus-response/jobs-and-economy-during-coronavirus-pandemic_en
6. McKinsey and Company, Lessons from the past on how to revive the US economy after COVID-19, <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/lessons-from-the-past-on-how-to-revive-the-us-economy-after-covid-19>
7. Pedro Villarreal, COVID-19 Symposium: “Can they really do that?” States’ Obligations Under the International Health Regulations in Light of COVID-19 (Part I),
<http://opiniojuris.org/2020/03/31/covid-19-symposium-can-they-really-do-that-states-obligations-under-the-international-health-regulations-in-light-of-covid-19-part-i/>
8. Leonie Vierck et al., The governance of disease outbreaks in international health law – From Ebola to COVID-19 (Part I), <https://voelkerrechtsblog.org/de/the-governance-of-disease-outbreaks-in-international-health-law/>

Introduction to Topic 2: Regulating the spread of misinformation on social media

*“Social media platforms can be places where honest cultural and political debates occur. However, because of the presence of misinformation [...], many such conversations are derailed, warped, or otherwise “polluted.”*⁸⁶

This “pollution” can be attributed to the Social Media Companies themselves, according to actor and comedian Sacha Baron Cohen: In 2019, Cohen delivered a keynote address at the *Never Is Now*-Summit hosted by the Anti-Defamation League. He famously accused certain internet companies, including but not limited to Facebook, YouTube, Google and Twitter, of being “[t]he greatest propaganda machine in history.”⁸⁷ Cohen pointed out that the respective algorithms promote and spread content that causes fear as well as outrage, that allow fake news to become more relevant than actual news⁸⁸ and that keeps conspiracy theories alive and well.⁸⁹ He goes on to recall a headline saying “Just Think What Goebbels Could Have Done with Facebook.”⁹⁰

Terminology – What we talk about when we talk about misinformation

In the wake of these developments, this committee is tasked with discussing how misinformation on social media can be regulated.

To adequately address this topic and the challenges associated with it, one must first define “misinformation”, a term that has not yet been coherently / uniformly defined.⁹¹

⁸⁶ Babock, Villa-Cox and Carley, “Pretending Positive, Pushing False: Comparing Captain Marvel Misinformation Campaigns”, in: Shu, Wang, Lee, Liu (eds.), Disinformation, Misinformation, and Fake News in Social Media, p. 83, 84.

⁸⁷ Cohen, Sacha Baron Cohen’s Keynote Address at ADL’s 2019 Never Is Now Summit on Anti-Semitism and Hate, available at <https://www.adl.org/news/article/sacha-baron-cohens-keynote-address-at-adls-2019-never-is-now-summit-on-anti-semitism>, last accessed: 17.1.2021.

⁸⁸ To this end see also Baron and Crootof, Fighting Fake News – Workshop Report, available at https://law.yale.edu/sites/default/files/area/center/isp/documents/fighting_fake_news_-_workshop_report.pdf, p. 3, last accessed: 24.1.2021.

⁸⁹ Cohen, Sacha Baron Cohen’s Keynote Address at ADL’s 2019 Never Is Now Summit on Anti-Semitism and Hate, available at <https://www.adl.org/news/article/sacha-baron-cohens-keynote-address-at-adls-2019-never-is-now-summit-on-anti-semitism>, last accessed: 17.1.2021.

⁹⁰ Ibid., referring to Shani, Just Think What Goebbels Could Have Done With Facebook, available at <https://www.haaretz.com/world-news/premium.MAGAZINE-just-think-what-goebbels-could-have-done-with-facebook-1.7308812>, last accessed 17.1.2021.

⁹¹ Baron and Crootof, Fighting Fake News – Workshop Report, available at https://law.yale.edu/sites/default/files/area/center/isp/documents/fighting_fake_news_-_workshop_report.pdf, p. 4, last accessed: 24.1.2021.

In defining this term, it is also vital to distinguish it from disinformation and mal information. UNESCO defines the terms as follows:

Disinformation⁹²	Misinformation⁹³	Mal information⁹⁴
“Information that is false and deliberately created to harm a person, social group, organization or a country.”	“Information that is false but not created with the intention of causing harm.”	“Information that is based on reality, used to inflict harm on a person, social group, organization or a country.”

Misinformation can be spread by different actors and thus misinformation can originate from different kind of sources⁹⁵ – individual persons, organized non-State actors and also the States themselves.⁹⁶

The actor spreading the information can genuinely believe the information to be true, but the actor can also know for certain that it is false. Between these two extremes, there is a third category. Actors falling into that category do not care whether or not the information is true or false.⁹⁷

Different kinds of actors can also either willingly or unwillingly work together in spreading misinformation.⁹⁸

One can also distinguish based on the intention with which the information is distributed. The actor could spread it with the intention of partaking in a discussion or aiding others. They could also aim at manipulating those that are exposed to the information.⁹⁹

⁹² UNESCO, Journalism, ‘Fake News’ and Disinformation: A Handbook for Journalism Education and Training, available at <https://en.unesco.org/fightfakenews>, last accessed: 17.1.2021.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Milanovic, Viral Misinformation and the Freedom of Expression: Part II, available at <https://www.ejiltalk.org/viral-misinformation-and-the-freedom-of-expression-part-ii/>, last accessed: 17.1.2021.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Cf. Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

Torn Between the Obligation to Protect Freedom of Expression & the Quest to Regulate the Spread of Misinformation in the Age of Social Media

There are two main clashes or dilemmas when it comes to regulating the spread of misinformation on Social Media. Firstly, democratic societies see and guarantee freedom of expression, albeit not as an absolute right, as a cornerstone of their respective societies. However, in seeking to regulate Social Media they most likely at least infringe on that right even if that infringement could potentially be justified. What complicates matters is that States will have to adhere to international as well as national legal provisions in addition to facing the challenge that every Social Media platform has their own idea of freedom of speech. To this end, the platforms have their own respective community guidelines.

States and private entities therefore find themselves having to reconcile the fight against misinformation with the highly valued right to freely express oneself.

Secondly, the internet is, unlike States, not confined by borders. Quite to the contrary, it is of global nature. So, while a legal framework for freedom of speech exists in general, this begs the question if this legal framework that was envisioned to apply to States can even be applied to Social Media Platforms. If that is the case, then the next question that needs to be tackled is if that legal framework, keeping in mind the global nature of the internet, can be enforced with regards to Social Media.

At a later point in this Study Guide, we will examine these clashes more closely: You will be introduced to the relevant provisions in the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Moreover, you will learn about the issues stemming from the fact that the internet may very well not only be a place without borders but also without order.

We will then zoom in on these aspects by highlighting current developments with regards to Facebook, Twitter and TikTok. All three platforms, but also comparable ones like Parler¹⁰⁰, present unique challenges to any policymaker because of their different target groups, algorithms and other functionalities and community guidelines.

Especially with the Black Lives Matter-protests in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated rise in antisemitism as well as the internet shutdown in Uganda at the beginning of this year, the outlined clashes become tangible.

¹⁰⁰ While we will not address Parler in this Study Guide, we recommend reading the following: Simon Wiesenthal Center, Parler: An Unbiased Social Platform?, available at https://www.wiesenthal.com/assets/pdf/parler_report_final-2020.pdf, last accessed: 7.2.2021.

History of the Topic

Freedom of Speech – From ancient Greek to today

Free speech as a democratic principle was powered by the ancient Greek around the fifth century BC.¹⁰¹ Operating based on the term “parrhesia” meaning to speak candidly or to have free speech¹⁰², many playwrights, philosophers, leaders, and citizens were freely open to engage in politics and even criticize the government without fear. In 1948, the United Nations recognized free speech as a human right¹⁰³ however as per the 2020 World¹⁰⁴ press freedom index about only 14 countries had the best access to freedom of speech.

The emergence of Social Media and its Impact on the Spread of Misinformation

As humans we have always relied on interaction and communication to strengthen relationships. Communicating with loved or those we have an interest in has always been a concern for many years¹⁰⁵. Before social media as we know it – Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Skype etc. – technology had been in motion to develop communication through computers. This is seen in the earliest forms of internet such as CompuServe from the 1960s¹⁰⁶, emails and UseNet which allowed users to communicate through a virtual newsletter.¹⁰⁷

With access to home computers increasing, the first social media site Six Degrees was launched in 1997¹⁰⁸. It enabled users to upload their profile online and to interact with other users. This led to

¹⁰¹ UNESCO, (2013) Freedom Of Expression Toolkit: A Guide Students <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002186/218618e.pdf> (Accessed on 21 January 21, 2021)

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ United Nations, (1948) Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Article 19 <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/> (Accessed on 21 January 21, 2021).

¹⁰⁴ World Press Freedom Index, (2020) Data of press freedom ranking 2020 https://rsf.org/en/ranking_table (Accessed on 21 January 21, 2021).

¹⁰⁵ Hendricks D., (2013) Complete History of Social Media: Then And Now <https://smallbiztrends.com/2013/05/the-complete-history-of-social-media-infographic.html> (Accessed on 23 January 2021).

¹⁰⁶Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

blogging sites emerging which led to social media popularity¹⁰⁹. Social media sites such as LinkedIn and Myspace would gain prominence, and sites like Flickr and Photobucket would introduce sharing of images¹¹⁰. By the mid-2000s Facebook and Twitter¹¹¹ would be available to millions of users worldwide making a way for a variety of sites such as WhatsApp, Telegram, Instagram, and Pinterest, catering to specific social networking niches whilst connecting families, friends, businesses and the world one click at a time.

The emergence of social media has not just revolutionized our social lives. It has also altered global discourse, especially compared to traditional journalism and media, creating enormous challenges for newsrooms and even politicians¹¹².

To this development there are two sides: On the one hand, social media has established a platform where people can freely exercise their freedom of speech. Through that social media helps us to discover the truth, contributes to an informed public, and helps minority and marginalized issues to be heard.¹¹³ On the other hand, the right to freedom of speech does not necessarily mean the information being relayed is true due to most readers being incapable of identifying who provided the information, thus making fact checking difficult¹¹⁴.

Of course, misinformation and distorted information was already spread by the media industry before social media even existed.¹¹⁵ Examples include how in the 1800s, the US would publish false stories about African Americans' supposed deficiencies and crimes¹¹⁶ to instigate racism and how rival newspaper publishers Joseph Pulitzer and William Hearst would compete over audiences by reporting false news and rumors as facts¹¹⁷ leading to what is now known as "yellow journalism".

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Thomas Q., (2015) Social Media's Influence On Public Discourse in the Pacific Northwest https://www.quinnthomas.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/QUINN-THOMAS_SocialMedia-Insights_Final.pdf (Accessed on 21 January 21, 2021)

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Cf. Wendling, The (almost) complete history of 'fake news', BBC News, available at <https://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-trending-42724320>, last accessed: 24.1.2021.

¹¹⁶ Center for Information Technology & Society, A Brief History of Fake News, <https://www.cits.ucsb.edu/fake-news/brief-history> (Accessed on 21 January 21, 2021).

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

However, social media has amplified this: Anyone with access to a device with internet may publish information they deem fit. News or information being conveyed online through sites and being easily shared by people we follow makes it easier for us to accept information we receive online. With misinformation thriving on popularity tags and numbers of views and likes, news can easily gain momentum if it has high insights ratings irrespective of its truthfulness or potentially harmful implications. It is therefore easier to shape public attitudes and perceptions through misinformation.¹¹⁸

Harmful misinformation, for instance in the form of radical ideas, can therefore require a limitation of free speech to avert the risks associated with it.

¹¹⁸Thomas, Social Media Influence, p25.

Current Situation

How do societies in the age of social media protect freedom of expression while also protecting their citizens from misinformation? What role do platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and TikTok play in this and to this end, what are recent examples of misinformation being spread on there? To assist you in answering these questions, we will now take a more detailed look at the central clashes and current developments.

The First Central Dilemma – Freedom of Expression vs. Regulation

A central dilemma this committee will have to face is that, at least in democratic societies, freedom of expression must be reconciled / balanced with any effort to regulate the spread of misinformation on social media by law.¹¹⁹

Generally put, Freedom of speech refers to the right of someone to express their thoughts and opinions without fear of restraint from others, particularly those in power such as the government.¹²⁰

This freedom is guaranteed in several international and regional¹²¹ human rights instruments, three of which will be presented more closely hereafter. Any national legislation on freedom of speech in general or the combatting of misinformation specifically, must be in line with these instruments if the respective State is a party thereto.

1. Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)

The UDHR sets out universally applicable rights.¹²² Whether the UDHR is legally binding is subject to debate. For the purposes of this committee, it will suffice to note that it has had a decisive influence on subsequent conventions, including the ICCPR and the European Convention on Human Rights

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ UNESCO, (2013) Freedom Of Expression Toolkit: A Guide Students <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002186/218618e.pdf> (Accessed on 21 January 21, 2021).

¹²¹ Seeing that this is a UN committee, we chose not to put emphasis on the ECHR and the relevant provision, Art. 10 ECHR, therein. However, delegates representing an EU-country are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the provision.

¹²² Sangsuvan, Balancing Freedom of Speech on the Internet Under International Law, N.C.J. Int'l L. & Com. Reg. (2014), 701, 709.

(ECHR).¹²³ It is therefore sometimes argued that it reflects Customary International Law.¹²⁴ Article 19 of the UDHR provides, among other things, for the right to freedom of expression.

2. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)

Art. 19 II ICCPR encompasses not only everyone's right to articulate their own opinion, but also the formation of that opinion. This must be possible regardless of State borders and the type media used for that purpose. Under Art. 19 II, protection is afforded to *inter alia* every individual opinion, idea and information that can be expressed to other persons as long as what is expressed is in conformity with Art. 20 ICCPR.¹²⁵

Art. 19 III ICCPR allows restrictions of Art. 19 II ICCPR under certain conditions or for the protection of certain interests.¹²⁶ Restrictions may only be made in compliance thereof.¹²⁷ Consequently, any restriction must be provided for by law, must be based only on the reasons stipulated in Art. 19 III (a) and (b) ICCPR and must be subject to a strict proportionality test.¹²⁸

The Second Central Dilemma: The Internet – a place without borders and law and order?

As we have seen above, a legal framework to regulate freedom of speech exists and with that at least the possibility to regulate misinformation. And yet, one dilemma is closely followed by another: Is this framework enforceable online?

No entity can claim to have been formally tasked, like a government, with overseeing adherence to the law on the Internet.¹²⁹ Rather, the internet is global in nature¹³⁰ and not confined by State borders¹³¹. Similarly, the outlined human rights system cannot achieve (legal) uniformity; what one

¹²³ Charlesworth, Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), MPEPIL (2008), available at <https://opil-1ouplaw-1com-100b98f5o37f6.emedien3.sub.uni-hamburg.de/view/10.1093/law:epil/9780199231690/law-9780199231690-e887?rskey=LKZJ30&result=1&prd=MPIL>, para. 13, last accessed: 25.1.2021.

¹²⁴ Ibid, para. 16.

¹²⁵ UNHRC, Ballantyne et al., CCPR/C/47/D/359/1989, para. 11.3.

¹²⁶ UNHRC, General Comment No. 34, CCPR/C/GC/34, para. 21.

¹²⁷ Ibid., para. 22..

¹²⁸ UNHRC, Velichkin v. Belarus, CCPR/C/85/D/1022/2001, Rn. 7.3; UNHRC, General Comment No. 34, CCPR/C/GC/34, Rn. 22.

¹²⁹ Council of Europe – Commissioner for Human Rights, The rule of law on the Internet and the wider digital world, available at <https://rm.coe.int/16806da51c>, p. 36.

¹³⁰ Benedek/Kettemann, Freedom of Speech on the Internet (2013), 46.

¹³¹ Johnson/Post, Law and Borders: The Rise of Law in Cyberspace, SLR (1996), 1367, 1370.

state permits or prohibits by law and prosecutes accordingly does not have to correspond to the regulations of another country.¹³² Through the Internet, users can therefore access content that is forbidden in one place but legal elsewhere, without the paths of information and their exchange being transparent.¹³³ The overarching issue, therefore, can be seen in the multitude of different rules.

Narrowing it down: Taking a closer look at Social Media

Now, that the challenges that come with trying to regulate content on the internet have been examined from a general perspective, the next section will break this down and look at social media in particular. As a user, you are most likely familiar with these platforms but probably not as a policymaker. The following section is meant to enable you to assess these platforms from this angle.

On an introductory note, we would like to mention that we will also address antisemitism, including Holocaust denial, on these platforms. As evidenced from the definitions presented above, antisemitism is not considered misinformation, but rather disinformation / hate speech. Notwithstanding, we chose to shine some light on this because from the approach these platforms take in that regard, lessons can be learned for the regulation of misinformation.

Facebook¹³⁴

In 2018, Mark Zuckerberg, founder of Facebook, gave an interview during which he stated that he believed that Holocaust denial should not be taken down from the platform.¹³⁵ Apparently this position has undergone a development: On October 12, 2020 Facebook announced that it will update its hate speech policy so that “any content that either denies or distorts the Holocaust”¹³⁶ will be prohibited.¹³⁷ Furthermore, should users search on Facebook for keywords linked to the Holocaust or the denial thereof, Facebook will now redirect them to credible information on this topic.¹³⁸ However, Facebook was quick to note that this change in policy will not be implemented from one

¹³² Cf. Benedek/Kettemann, Freedom of Expression on the Internet (2013), 46.

¹³³ Puddephatt, Cuadernos de Discusión de Comunicación e Información 6 (2016), 21.

¹³⁴ Sakin, Facebook Said It Would Ban Holocaust Deniers. Instead, Its Algorithm Provided a Network for them, November 24, 2020, available at: <https://themarkup.org/news/2020/11/24/facebook-ban-holocaust-deniers-antisemitism>

¹³⁵ Swisher, Mark Zuckerberg clarifies: ‘I personally find Holocaust denial deeply offensive, and I absolutely didn’t intend to defend the intent of people who deny that.’, available at <https://www.vox.com/2018/7/18/17588116/mark-zuckerberg-clarifies-holocaust-denial-offensive>, last accessed: 23.1.2021.

¹³⁶ Bickert, Removing Holocaust Denial Content, available at <https://about.fb.com/news/2020/10/removing-holocaust-denial-content/>, last accessed 24.1.2021.

¹³⁷ Cf. Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

day to the next. This is not possible as content reviewers and systems will have to be trained or adjusted accordingly.¹³⁹

In a Markup-report released towards the end of November 2020, it was revealed that after the policy change was announced, several well-established Holocaust denial-groups had remained active. The same was true for pages referencing antisemitic or white nationalist memes. Markup also found that the Facebook-algorithm continued to recommend such pages and groups to users if they had come across them before. The report concluded that Facebook created an antisemitic web in which users could get tangled up in either willingly or unwillingly.¹⁴⁰ In December 2020, Markup published that Facebook had removed the pages that had been updated in the report.¹⁴¹

Just as recently, Facebook sought to fight misinformation relating to the recent US-election. Prior to the vote in November, users therefore may have noticed that posts were labeled. These labels then redirected users to credible sources on the election. Similarly, an information-pool addressing COVID-19 has been created.¹⁴²

TikTok

TikTok is currently the fastest-growing platform on the market – having “spread like a wildfire”¹⁴³ – and is one of the most downloaded apps of the previous decade¹⁴⁴. In 2016, TikTok launched in China and was made globally available in 2017.¹⁴⁵ The app focuses and is designed for teenagers and young adults.¹⁴⁶ The 15 to 60 seconds long video format that is offered to users corresponds well with the short attention span of today’s youth.¹⁴⁷ The app also fosters creative potential for instance through the filters at the user’s disposal. TikTok’s algorithm also makes it easier to go viral in comparison to

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Sankin, Facebook Said It Would Ban Holocaust Deniers. Instead, Its Algorithm Provided a Network for Them, The Markup, available at <https://themarkup.org/news/2020/11/24/facebook-ban-holocaust-deniers-antisemitism>, last accessed: 24.1.2021.

¹⁴¹ Sankin, Facebook Removes Holocaust Denial Pages Following The Markup’s Report, 10.12.2020, available at: <https://themarkup.org/news/2020/12/10/facebook-removes-holocaust-denial-pages>

¹⁴² DW, Facebook steps up fight against US election misinformation, available at <https://www.dw.com/en/facebook-steps-up-fight-against-us-election-misinformation/a-54558160>, last accessed: 17.1.2021.

¹⁴³ Weimann and Masri (2020), Research Note on TikTok, Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, p. 1, 10.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 1,1.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 1, 4.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

similar platforms.¹⁴⁸ The so-called “For you”-page uses such an algorithm to recommend videos. This algorithm is content based which means that one does not need a large following to go viral. This page is the first one that users are exposed to when opening the app, it auto-plays and users can watch an unlimited number of videos.¹⁴⁹

TikTok too was used to spread misinformation on the US election.¹⁵⁰ Media matters assessed in that regard “the platform appears to be struggling to control the overall spread of election and voting conspiracy theories at a critical time when ballots are still being counted and the American people need clarity.”¹⁵¹ Media Matters also noted that far-right groups are strengthened in their position and actions through the app.¹⁵² However, according to a study by the Institute for Counter Terrorism in Herzliya, Israel, the majority of far-right postings on the app are linked to Anti-Semitism, including Holocaust Denial.¹⁵³

Twitter

Twitter seeks to counteract the spread of misinformation in relation to the current pandemic with labels and warnings.¹⁵⁴ Through that the platform offers users clarifying information on COVID-19.¹⁵⁵ These labels and warnings respond to conspiracy theories, rumors and rhetoric not supported by trustworthy news coverage or scientific research.¹⁵⁶

A study by Harvard University on COVID-19 misinformation spread on Twitter found that “[i]t took seven days for debunking tweets to equal the quantity of misinformation tweets, a delay that provided

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 1, 10.

¹⁵⁰ Paul, TikTok: false posts about US election reach hundreds of thousands, The Guardian, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2020/nov/05/tiktok-us-election-misinformation>, last accessed: 23.1.2021.

¹⁵¹ Little, It’s time for TikTok to take the next step in moderating its content for election misinformation, available at <https://www.mediamatters.org/tiktok/its-time-tiktok-take-next-step-moderating-its-content-election-misinformation>, last accessed: 23.1.2021.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid, p. 1, 6.

¹⁵⁴ Roth and Pickels, Updating our approach to misleading information, available at https://blog.twitter.com/en_us/topics/product/2020/updating-our-approach-to-misleading-information.html, last accessed: 17.1.2021.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Twitter Help Center, COVID-19 misleading information policy, available at <https://help.twitter.com/en/rules-and-policies/medical-misinformation-policy>, last accessed: 17.1.2021.

opportunity for misinformation to spread on social networks.”¹⁵⁷ Tweets that spread such misinformation often reference “non-specific authority sources”¹⁵⁸, for instance naming “health experts” or researches from Taiwan without providing further detail or identification.¹⁵⁹ The study concluded that the lack of specificity should serve as a warning sign to Twitter users.¹⁶⁰

Case Studies – Recent Examples of Misinformation:

1. Black Lives Matter / George Floyd & Breonna Taylor-protests

Following the killing of George Floyd, there was a new wave of Black Lives Matter-protests around the globe. However, people did not just take to the streets but also to social media.

Users on Twitter and Facebook claimed that George Floyd is, in fact, not deceased. According to these users, the killing of Floyd was staged.¹⁶¹

However, social Media in this context was also used for good: Many users also took to social media to critique the police and justice department after the wrongful shooting of Breonna Taylor by the police whilst she was sleeping. Outrage over social media¹⁶² later led to nationwide protests and eventually ended in the officers in question being arrested and the Senator introducing the Justice for Breonna Taylor Act¹⁶³, which prohibits federal law enforcement from carrying out a warrant until after the officer provides notice of his or her authority and purpose under section 2¹⁶⁴.

¹⁵⁷ Shorenstein Center for Media, Politics, and Public Policy, Misinformation more likely to use non-specific authority references: Twitter analysis of two COVID-19 myths, The Harvard Kennedy School of Misinformation Review (September 2020), Volume 1 Special Issue on COVID-19 and Misinformation, p. 1, last accessed: 24.1.2021.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Alba, Misinformation About George Floyd Protests Surges on Social Media, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/01/technology/george-floyd-misinformation-online.html>, last accessed: 17.1.2021.

¹⁶² Somvichian-Clausen, A., (2020) Social media users fight for the arrest of the police officer who shot Breonna Taylor <https://thehill.com/changing-america/respect/equality/504364-social-media-users-fight-for-the-arrest-of-the-police> (Accessed on 21 January 21, 2021)

¹⁶³ US Congress S3955, Justice for Breonna Taylor Act <https://trackbill.com/bill/us-congress-senate-bill-3955-justice-for-breonna-taylor-act/1927382/> (Accessed on 21 January 21, 2021)

¹⁶⁴ Justice for Breonna Taylor Act <https://trackbill.com/bill/us-congress-senate-bill-3955-justice-for-breonna-taylor-act/1927382/> (Accessed on 21 January 21, 2021)

2. COVID-19

The misinformation surrounding the current pandemic and the virus itself, is said to possibly result in a tremendously high number of deaths.¹⁶⁵ For instance, in Iran people died from methanol poisoning as the consequence of false claims on social Media that drinking alcohol or rinsing out one's mouth with it would make an infection with COVID-19 impossible.¹⁶⁶

3. COVID & Antisemitism

The UK-based CST has recently published a Research Briefing on COVID-19 and what they dubbed the “Plague of Antisemitism”.¹⁶⁷

In this Research Briefing CST identifies that there are several antisemitic COVID-19 conspiracy theories.¹⁶⁸

They reach from claiming that the virus does not exist but is instead a Jewish / Israeli ploy meant to mislead the public and was constructed to start WWIII which would then be blamed on China,¹⁶⁹ to alleging that Jews are primarily responsible for spreading COVID-19¹⁷⁰.

4. Internet shutdown in Uganda

In January 2021, during the national elections, the President of Uganda ordered that the internet be shut down on the eve of elections to block access to social media after numerous posts calling for his removal trended under the hashtag #WeAreRemovingAdictator.¹⁷¹ Access to social media was restored only after the President had been declared a winner for the sixth consecutive term. This is a case of misconstruing freedom of speech for misinformation on social media leading to the limitation of the right. The effects of such a case are usually negative as a power imbalance is created.

¹⁶⁵ Milanovic, Viral Misinformation and the Freedom of Expression: Part I, available at <https://www.ejiltalk.org/viral-misinformation-and-the-freedom-of-expression-part-i/>, last accessed: 17.1.2021.

¹⁶⁶ Delirrad and Mohammadi, New Methanol Poisoning Outbreaks in Iran Following COVID- 19 Pandemic, *Alcohol and Alcoholism*, Volume 55, Issue 4, July 2020, p. 347, 347.

¹⁶⁷ CST, Research Briefing – Coronavirus And The Plague Of Antisemitism, available at <https://cst.org.uk/data/file/d/9/Coronavirus%20and%20the%20plague%20of%20antisemitism.1586276450.pdf>, last accessed: 17.1.2021.

¹⁶⁸ Cf. Ibid, p. 1, 5-9.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, p. 1, 5 seq.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 7.

¹⁷¹ We are removing a Dictator trends ahead of Uganda election <https://iafrica.com/weareremovingadictator-trends-ahead-of-uganda-election/> (Accessed on 21 January 21, 2021).

Past Actions

Firstly, the United Nations, through the UN department of global communications and in affiliation with ECOSOC, fights misinformation through a practice involving mobilizing civil society. This decision involves providing NGO's with access to opportunities to participate, share, and contribute to the decision making and information distribution processes. This involves collecting information from reputable organizations, allowing them to share their stories of their respective responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, and how they use UN guidelines to support this undertaking. Said information is distributed in a newsletter that reaches approximately 1,900 organizations across the world, counteracting misinformation on the pandemic situation through shared experiences and consistent adoption of UN guidelines.

In addition, the mobilizing civil society effort involves the distribution of a global civil society survey about COVID-19 in order to better understand exactly what misinformation and myths were becoming prevalent, allowing preemptive refutations to be implemented by relevant experts. NGO's are also encouraged by this movement to have solidarity with one another across borders in this time of crisis.¹⁷²

Secondly, one of the main actions the UN is taking in order to prevent misleading information from spreading around the globe is to send a message that says: pause, think before you send. This action is supposed to help people understand that it is very important to first think before doing an action resulting in less damage as a consequence. In order to avoid the spread of misleading information globally information must be checked before distribution. Most UN country members are in support of this proposed action, making people reevaluate their information before dissemination is especially relevant in the context of the current pandemic crisis.

Instead of misleading information and accusations of blame that are being spread all over the globe, the UN is trying very hard to fight this phenomenon with messages of hope and solidarity instead.

¹⁷²<https://www.un.org/en/un-coronavirus-communications-team/five-ways-united-nations-fighting-%E2%80%98infodemic%E2%80%99-misinformation>

These actions are global in their undertaking and are performed in coordination with the WHO which provide authorized health messages to counteract the fake information that is being distributed.

You can also see the partnership with the WHO through businesses such as Facebook or WhatsApp, who are conducting a campaign of spreading accurate, pandemic-related information in several languages in order to reach as many people as possible. The ECOSOC committee may utilize current efforts addressed by committees such as the WHO to expand on efforts to address this issue within the context of their committee mandate. For further information specifically regarding the campaign to combat misinformation related to the pandemic, please reference the following policy brief.¹⁷³

Ultimately, there is a lot of room for growth in international decision making in order to address this dilemma. A lot of international progress in adopting new strategies to combat international problems take their grassroots origins from domestic policies passed to address these issues on a smaller scale. Through looking at three countries in particular, this Study Guide seeks to illustrate how the understanding of freedom of speech differs and accordingly how countries have sought to legally regulate or not regulate freedom of speech.

1. Germany

As of October 2017, social media platforms are under an obligation to delete unlawful content that has been reported to the platform by other users according to “Network Enforcement Act”. The intention of the lawmakers was to fight both misinformation and hate speech.¹⁷⁴

Furthermore, there is a law called “Law to combat Far-right Extremism and Hate Crime”. The law stipulates that law enforcement authorities have to be informed about content potentially liable to criminal prosecution.¹⁷⁵ It is currently debated if this law is unconstitutional.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³ <https://www.article19.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Coronavirus-briefing.pdf>

¹⁷⁴ Frevert and Daum, “Online Hate Speech” und Platformregulierung: Update zum NetzDG, available at <https://www.noerr.com/de/newsroom/news/online-hate-speech-und-plattformregulierung-update-zum-netzdg>, last accessed: 17.1.2021.

¹⁷⁵ Die Bundesregierung, Gesetzespaket gegen Hasskriminalität – Entschieden gegen Hetze im Netz, available at: <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/aktuelles/gesetz-gegen-hasskriminalitaet-1722896>, last accessed: 17.1.2021.

¹⁷⁶ Kaufmann, Gesetz gegen Hasskriminalität verfassungswidrig? – Aufwendige Reparatur nötig, LTO, available at <https://www.lto.de/recht/hintergruende/h/gesetz-hasskriminalitaet-netzdg-meldepflicht-verfassungswidrig-gutachten-bmjv-bundespraesident/>, last accessed 17.1.2021.

2. USA

If we look at the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, it becomes evident that the scope of freedom of expression is much broader than in the European understanding.¹⁷⁷ Moreover, the U.S. has also declared a reservation with respect to Art. 20 ICCPR¹⁷⁸, and Art. 19 ICCPR does not apply there¹⁷⁹.

3. Israel

This past summer, Twitter made headlines following a virtual hearing in the Knesset, Israel's parliament, on antisemitism. During said hearing the Twitter representative was asked why Twitter has not been actively going up against Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, seeing that Khamenei Tweets constitute incitement of genocide and call for the destruction of Israel¹⁸⁰. This inactiveness was compared to Twitter flagging a Tweet by Donald Trump addressing protests against police brutality. That Twitter does that but does not take action against Khamenei, was characterized as an antisemitic double standard by a member of the Knesset.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁷ Benedek/Kettemann, Freedom of Expression and the Internet, 46.

¹⁷⁸ UNHRC, Reservations, Declarations, Notifications and Objections Relating to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Optional Protocols Thereto, CCPR/C/2/Rev.4 (1994), 40.

¹⁷⁹ Möller, Der Grundrechtliche Schutzbereich der Meinungsfreiheit in Deutschland, England und den USA (2016), 164.

¹⁸⁰ Ahren, Twitter to MKs: Unlike Trump tweets, Khamanei's 'eliminate Israel' posts are ok, available at <https://www.timesofisrael.com/twitter-tells-mks-khameneis-eliminate-israel-posts-dont-violate-its-rules/>, last accessed: 17.1.2021.

¹⁸¹ Kerstein, Top Twitter Exec Declines to tell Knesset Why Ayatollah's Calls for Genocide Are Not Banned, available at <https://www.algemeiner.com/2020/07/29/top-twitter-exec-declines-to-tell-knesset-why-ayatollahs-calls-for-genocide-are-not-banned/>, last accessed: 17.1.2021.

Summary

Social media and the spread of misinformation have altered public discourse as well as the exercise and restriction of freedom of speech. In the world of popular hashtags trends, numbers of views and likes, news can be easily peddled without checking its authenticity and solely based on high insights ratings. It is therefore easier to shape public attitudes and perceptions through misinformation.

Any effort to regulate the spread of misinformation on social media is a complex undertaking: States, and by extension this committee, will have to take into account competing legal and social interests in a global environment that is not restricted by State borders or governed by one universal authority. The route that misinformation takes on the internet is therefore hard to trace and the law close to not enforceable.

Furthermore, States will have to consider different actors, i.e., not just the users / consumers of social media but also the social media companies behind these platforms. Through their respective community guidelines, they also have an influential say in how to regulate or not to regulate misinformation, even if that regulatory standard is below the one envisioned by legal instruments or social norms. Through their algorithms they also contribute to creating an environment in which misinformation is not just posted but also reproduced – and once something is posted online, it never completely vanishes even when deleted. Delegates will have to evaluate what kind of consequences that has for the protection of freedom of speech and from misinformation.

Accordingly, States / Delegates of this committee will also have to decide if they favor a governmental, non-governmental or hybrid approach to regulating misinformation on social media and further, how this approach can be filled with live through concrete / actionable policy-recommendations.

Guiding Questions

We hope that the following guiding questions will aid you in your research, in developing your stance and policy recommendation and will give impulses for the debate during JLMUN 2021:

1. Seen from the perspective of the country you represent: Is the internet / social media a space not just without borders but also without (enforceable) law and order?
2. Shouldn't democracies be enablers of free speech and therefore not restrict it?
3. Seen from the opposite perspective: If freedom of speech is not restricted, does that not bear the risk that a democracy abolishes itself?
4. If one chooses to restrict freedom of speech: Where does one draw the line to censorship?
5. Is legally restricting freedom of speech or for instance criminally sanctioning misinformation really effective, or should States choose education over such regulation?
6. Should States agree on a universal definition of freedom of speech / misinformation? If so, what should that definition look like?
7. Does the country you represent have a narrow or wide understanding of freedom of speech? Accordingly, how is freedom of speech and especially the spread of misinformation regulated by law?
8. Has your country undertaken any efforts to regulate the power of social media, either by law or through hearings in legislative bodies for example?
9. Regarding the power of social media Companies: How could their financial means / duty to pay or not pay taxes play a role here?
10. How many people currently use social media in your country and in what manner, i.e., creators vs. consumers, and what are the demographics?
11. Is the youth of your country being educated on the advantages and disadvantages of social Media and are they taught how to identify misinformation?
12. If States were to regulate the spread of misinformation on social media, what role would the social media companies play in this? Would it be up to them to define what misinformation is? Would it just be deleted or would law enforcement authorities be alerted? Would a e.g., a tweet be “flagged” as misinformation?

Further Reading

1. Tim Hwang, Digital Misinformation – A Primer, available at:
https://www.kas.de/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=6bbab22d-64a9-5a14-55f8-06ef0bfded8a&groupId=252038
2. The Social Dilemma – Available at <https://www.netflix.com/za/title/81254224>
3. CITS, A Brief History of Fake News, available at <https://www.cits.ucsb.edu/fake-news/brief-history>
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<https://www.un.org/en/un-coronavirus-communications-team/five-ways-united-nations-fighting-%E2%80%98infodemic%E2%80%99-misinformation>
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<https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/UN%20Strategy%20and%20Plan%20of%20Action%20on%20Hate%20Speech%2018%20June%20SYNOPSIS.pdf>
6. Viral Lies: Misinformation and the Coronavirus
<https://www.un.org/en/un-coronavirus-communications-team/five-ways-united-nations-fighting-%E2%80%98infodemic%E2%80%99-misinformation>
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Country List

Angola	Australia
Bangladesh	Brazil
Canada	China
Colombia	Congo
Egypt	El Salvador
Ethiopia	France
Germany	Ghana
India	Japan
Mexico	Netherlands
Pakistan	Republic of Korea
Russian Federation	Saudi Arabia
Spain	Sudan
Switzerland	Thailand
Togo	Turkmenistan
Ukraine	United States of America
Uruguay	Venezuela