

Social Media and Teaching the Law, especially European Law – Some Thoughts¹

The use of social media has become a part of our lives today. This is true, of course, for people of all ages, including young people. The question arises whether the use of social media can have any impact on the education system: Because social media platforms can be used not only privately, but ideally also to share academic information and to promote its understanding. In addition to communication among professors, social media also allows students to contact their professors with questions of an academic nature.

However, social media also potentially presents some disadvantages in this context: One problem is that the use of these media offers opportunities for distraction – for example, passing the time with online interactions instead of concentrating on studies. Cases of cyberbullying on social networks are also now regularly reported in the news.

¹ This contribution is dedicated to all my students, especially those following creatively my social media accounts through which I share knowledge of EU Law. Cf. in the following also *Zimmer, S., Social Media as a Teaching and Learning Tool (2024)*, accessed through <https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/education/social-media-teaching-and-learning-tool> (last access on 10 February 2026).

Noor, A.-D. H. S., & Hendricks, J. A., Social Media: Usage and Impact, Lanham, MD, 2012 (*passim*); *Joosten, T., Social Media for Educators: D´Strategies and Best Practices*, San Francisco, CA, 2012 (*passim*);

Ciampa, M., Thrasher, E. H., & Revel, M. A., Social media use in academics: Undergraduate perceptions and practices, in: *Journal of Educational Technology*, Vol. 12 (4) (2016), pp. 10 et seqq.

Nevertheless, these problems are more the exception than the rule. Most social media users behave appropriately, and as society has become accustomed to the availability of social media as a form of communication, professors have also begun to find innovative ways to use online networks effectively.

Since education, especially in the area of law (moreover in the dynamically evolving field of EU Law), also includes the development of critical thinking skills, enabling students to evaluate media rather than consume it unreflectively, instructors should dedicate at least part of their courses to social media. Just as students need to be able to listen to the news and read newspapers and magazines in order to extract, evaluate, and to process information useful for the legal knowledge, they need to be shown how to apply this critical thinking approach also when using social networks.

Professors who are comfortable using social media can not only use it as a professional tool but also integrate it into their lessons (through presenting and emphasising normative as well as case law elements), helping their students reflect on the significance of social media in their lives. This often takes the form of (cognitively stimulating) portions of a taught subject's curriculum or additional subject-specific information.

The appropriate use of social media in the lecture room requires that the professor is proficient in the chosen platform and understands its functionality, limitations, and strengths. In some respects, using social media to support content learning in this way is not fundamentally different from a teacher taking their class on a field trip—the teacher guides the group (in this case, the followers) through the scientific content. In this context it is important to also teach students how important it is to pay attention to their online presence: Content published online remains permanently on the internet in some form.

Some in the education sector resist the integration of social media into the lecture room. Technology in general can be something that largely isolates people from one another; however, this does not have to be the norm. In any case, social media offers a different form of communication than many people are accustomed to.

Every user can send information to everyone in their network, and every recipient can reply or forward the message to their own network. This can create a large, ever-expanding dialogue. Instead of merely receiving information, social media members are actively involved in creating and disseminating it. Fake news is also a growing problem. Many educators therefore find this type of online environment too chaotic and stressful and often struggle to navigate social media, let alone use it for teaching the law.

Once students become accustomed to the freedom of actively participating in their own learning process though, this can increase their motivation to actively participate in class and broaden their horizons. Students who might tend to avoid lectures are sometimes more engaged when given the opportunity to access further information on a topic through the professor's teaching channel. An attentive lecturer can leverage this by inspiring such reluctant students with the appeal of technology and social media for classroom learning.