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## BOOK REVIEW: CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IN THE SUSTAINABLE AND DIGITAL ENVIRONMENTS: EXPLORING OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES\*

“Children’s Rights in the Sustainable and Digital Environments: Exploring Opportunities and Challenges” is a scientific monograph, published on the 16<sup>th</sup> of October 2025. The monograph was edited by Suzana Kraljić, Ph.D., and Cocou Marius Mensah, Ph.D., and published by the University of Maribor, University of Maribor Press. It addresses current and carefully selected topics in the field of children’s rights, focusing on the specific aspects and challenges of sustainable and digital environments, as well as procedural and substantive law, at both the national and international levels, and other matters related to children and their fundamental rights. The contributors range from established professors and academics to researchers and law students from different continents and eight countries, namely Austria, Bulgaria, France, India, Poland, Turkey, Serbia and Slovenia. Since the authors specialise in different fields of law, this interdisciplinarity adds significant value to the monograph, enhancing its scope and enabling children’s rights to be examined in relation to a wide array of legal issues.

Throughout the volume, the authors clearly identify inconsistencies, shortcomings, and challenges faced by children’s rights in the context of sustainable development and digitalisation. In their work, they emphasise the importance of protecting children’s rights in various environments, especially in court proceedings, highlight the overarching role of national and international actors in the field of protecting children’s rights, and illustrate selected forms of children’s vulnerability and violations of children’s rights.



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The latter is especially evident in the cases of children in armed conflicts, crisis areas, children with disabilities, and within the risks of the internet. Because of its broad scope, the monograph may be of interest to various groups of people, namely academics, researchers, teachers, judges, lawyers, social workers and professionals whose work involves children.

Authors address different aspects of digitalisation and illustrated challenges which nowadays children face daily. In the context of the latter, authors Sandra Samardžić, Ph.D., and Gordana Kovaček Stanić, Ph.D., discussed the development of the child's right to development ("The Child's Right to Development in the Digital Age"), and Yordanka Noneva-Zlatkova, Ph.D., Suzana Rangelova and Petya Hadzhieva pointed out the recently enhanced children's data protection rights ("Data Protection Rights of the Child in the Digital Environment"). Suzana Kraljić, Ph.D., and Ema Turnšek presented legal gaps, risks arising from insufficient regulation of health apps and the resulting threats to children's privacy ("Children's Right to Privacy in the Virtual World of Apps"). Mojca Tancer Verboten, Ph.D., extends the discussion to digital challenges in labour law, connecting digitalisation, children's rights and labour law at the same time ("Labour Law Aspects of Child Labour in the Information Age").

In contrast, authors also addressed children's rights from the point of sustainability – Cocou Marius Mensah, Ph.D., and Zorica Brajović Mensah connected the field to the emerging right to healthy environment ("35 Years of Child Rights and the Emerging Right to a Healthy Environment"), and Mariame Viviane Nakoulm, Ph.D., analysed the issues relating to sustainable development in cases of armed conflicts in Africa ("Challenges and Perspectives of Sustainable Development for Children Affected by Armed Conflicts in Africa: A Case Study from the Democratic Republic of the Congo"). Together, these contributions provide the reader with a broad and detailed understanding of the topical challenges, risks and dangers brought on children merely by the digital development and technical progress. At the same time, the reader will be introduced with the seriousness of sustainability issues and violations of children's rights, emerging worldwide.

Additionally, some of the authors critically research, dispute and analyse children's rights in both substantive and procedural law, in some cases within the walls of different national legal systems and in others, they delve into the international legal perspective. In consideration of procedural law, Katja Drnovšek, Ph.D., presented interests of the child in judicial proceedings ("Safeguarding the Child's Best Interests in Judicial Proceedings Through Digital Technology") and Paweł Sobczyk, Ph.D., addresses ongoing legal questions regarding the rights of stillborn children under Polish law ("The Rights of the Stillborn Child in Poland – Status de lege lata and Postulates de lege ferenda"). Mr. Yacouba Cissé, on the other hand, approaches the child's protection from a law enforcement standpoint ("On the Protection of Children's Rights in Côte d'Ivoire: From

a Theoretical Perspective to an Effective Law Enforcement”). The contribution of these authors shall greatly enhance the reader’s understanding of the child in procedural-legal matters.

Miha Šepec, Ph.D., and Maša Kočivnik discusses an issue regarding the minimum age of a child to be criminally liable (“Minimum Age of Criminal Liability of Children”). While Sangeeta Taak’s, Ph.D., delves into the topic of children’s rights during armed conflicts under the Geneva Convention (“75th Anniversary of the Geneva Conventions, 1949 and the Rights of the Children During Armed Conflict: An Analysis”), Yener Ünver, Ph.D., focuses primarily on the Turkish national criminal law and explained it in the context of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (“Evaluation of Turkish Juvenile Criminal Law in the Context of the Convention on the Rights of the Child”). In a similar sense, Jasna Murgel’s, Ph.D., article (“Rights of Children with Disabilities in Slovene Law in the Light of Contemporary International Law on Children’s Rights”) primarily deals with Slovenian national law, which was then assessed on the basis of international children’s rights law, however, on the topic of children with disabilities instead of criminal law.

Another important dimension explored in the monograph concerns children within their family and social environments. Jana Goriup, Ph.D., addresses the aspect of family life and intergenerational relations (“Families and Some Aspects of Intergenerational Integration in Contemporary Postmodern Society”), whereas Marek Bielecki, Ph.D., focuses on the relation between the children’s and parental rights, as regulated under Polish law (“The Implementation of Children’s Rights in Correlation with Parental Rights in the Upbringing Process: the Polish Perspective”). On the other hand, Jaroslaw Szymanek, Ph.D., presents a completely different aspect of children’s rights, not only in the sense of family relations, but also from a historical point of view and by defining a child’s position and rights through historical inspirations (“Axiology of Children’s Rights”). The latter provides the scientific monograph with another dimension of children’s rights and enables it to deliver a wholesome assessment of the topic, from the challenges introduced by the digitalisation and sustainability, to historical analysis on how the child even came to a point where he or she is considered human and a subject of fundamental human rights, not merely an object.

Finally, the monograph represents a valuable scientific contribution to the field of children’s rights law with high-quality contributions, introducing the reader to various national as well as international questions, issues and aspects. The protection of children is of paramount importance, particularly in the context of rapid technological advancements that give rise to new threats, such as those emerging in the digital environment, the development of advanced weapon technologies, and the ongoing sustainability crisis. The authors address both longstanding and contemporary issues, as well as emerging risks and dilemmas related to the protection of children’s rights. In doing so, they em-

phasise that children must always be provided appropriate and effective protection, not due to a lack of normative guidance, but because of their vulnerability. As the weaker party, children are often unable to adequately safeguard their own interests, which emphasises the necessity for the law to act on their behalf. This monograph compellingly reflects and reinforces that imperative.