# DIGITAL RIGHTS FOR A DIGITALLY LITERATE CITIZEN

## IMPACTS AND AFTER-EFFECTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC CRISIS ON DIGITAL RIGHTS

Contribution to the Conference: "Intercultural Perspectives on Information Literacy and Metaliteracy"

Group 2
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# Presentation Outline

# 1. INTRODUCTION: DEFINITION OF DIGITAL RIGHTS

# 1. Introduction: Definiton of Digital Rights

- Digital Rights ⟶ human rights and legal rights
    - Allowing individuals to access, use, create and publish digital media
    - Allowing individuals to access and use electronic devices, and telecommunication networks

- Basically human rights in the Internet era
    - Rights to online privacy and freedom of expression are extensions of the equal and inalienable rights laid out in the United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights

- Several countries have adopted laws that require the state to work to ensure that:
    - Internet access is broadly available and/or
    - Preventing the state from unreasonably restricting an individual's access to information and the Internet

*cf. The Digital Economy 2015*

# 2. DIGITAL RIGHTS IN TIMES OF COVID-19

# 2. Digital Rights in times of COVID-19

- Global attempt to effectively cope with COVID-19 through the use of diverse digital technologies

⟶ includes development of contact tracing apps and use of big data to analyze citizen's movements

- **Dilemma**: fine line between hurried implementation of new technologies in times of crisis and negative long-term impact on digital rights

- **Elemental question**: How to adequately balance values of privacy and autonomy with values of safety and security?

- **Potential risk**: If certain regulations are passed it might be used for purposes more nefarious than battling a global pandemic

# 2. Digital Rights in times of COVID-19: Ideal Scenario

***Uphold fundamental rights while supporting local communities***
- The right to a private life must be upheld
  - Meaning that any use of personal health data, geo-location data or other personal forms of data must be limited, supervised and temporary

***Human Communication and Transparency***
- Identifying transparency and human communication as a success factor to navigate these challenging times to ensure public support

***Data-driven prediction and Citizen Engagement Techniques***
- Stressing the value of effective preparation, data driven tracking and citizen engagement techniques
  - Ideal model should have a task force divided into different areas for making predictive analysis. The need for having the right data is also a key factor.

*cf. Cities Coalition Of Digital Rights*

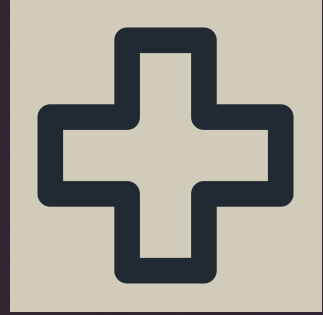# 3. DIGITAL RIGTHS DURING COVID-19: BEST- AND POOR COUNTRY PRACTICES
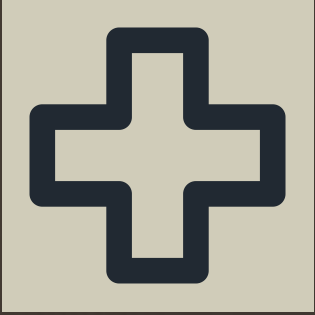
HEALTH

CIVIL RIGHTS

EDUCATION

# Best-practice in the area of Health: Denmark

- Accessing health service via digital solutions during the pandemic

  → Threat of digital divide

- Focus on people who were less digital-literate (eg., older people)

- Implemention of power-of-attorney function for COVID-19 test result

  → Feature allows citizens to delegate access to their health data to relatives

DENMARK'S E-HEALTH PORTAL



*https://stenodiabetescenter.rn.dk/vidensbank/digitale-vaerktoejer/sundhed-dk*

# Poor-practice in the area of Health: India

- Contact tracing, surveillance, and technological tools damaged individuals' **right to privacy and data protection**

**Health data breaches:**

- **H**ealth authorities uploaded health data of citizens on their websites
- Embassy officers shared a list of  positive pilgrims in a WhatsApp group

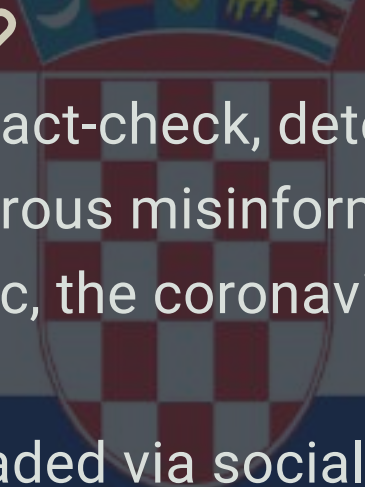COVID-19 data theft from government servers

**Contact tracing app:**

- App failed to disclose the existing minimal data rights
- Communities were not involved in the understanding of the app functions

*cf. Dar/Wani 2022, pp. 2*
*cf. Iyer/Kuriakose 2022, p. 11*

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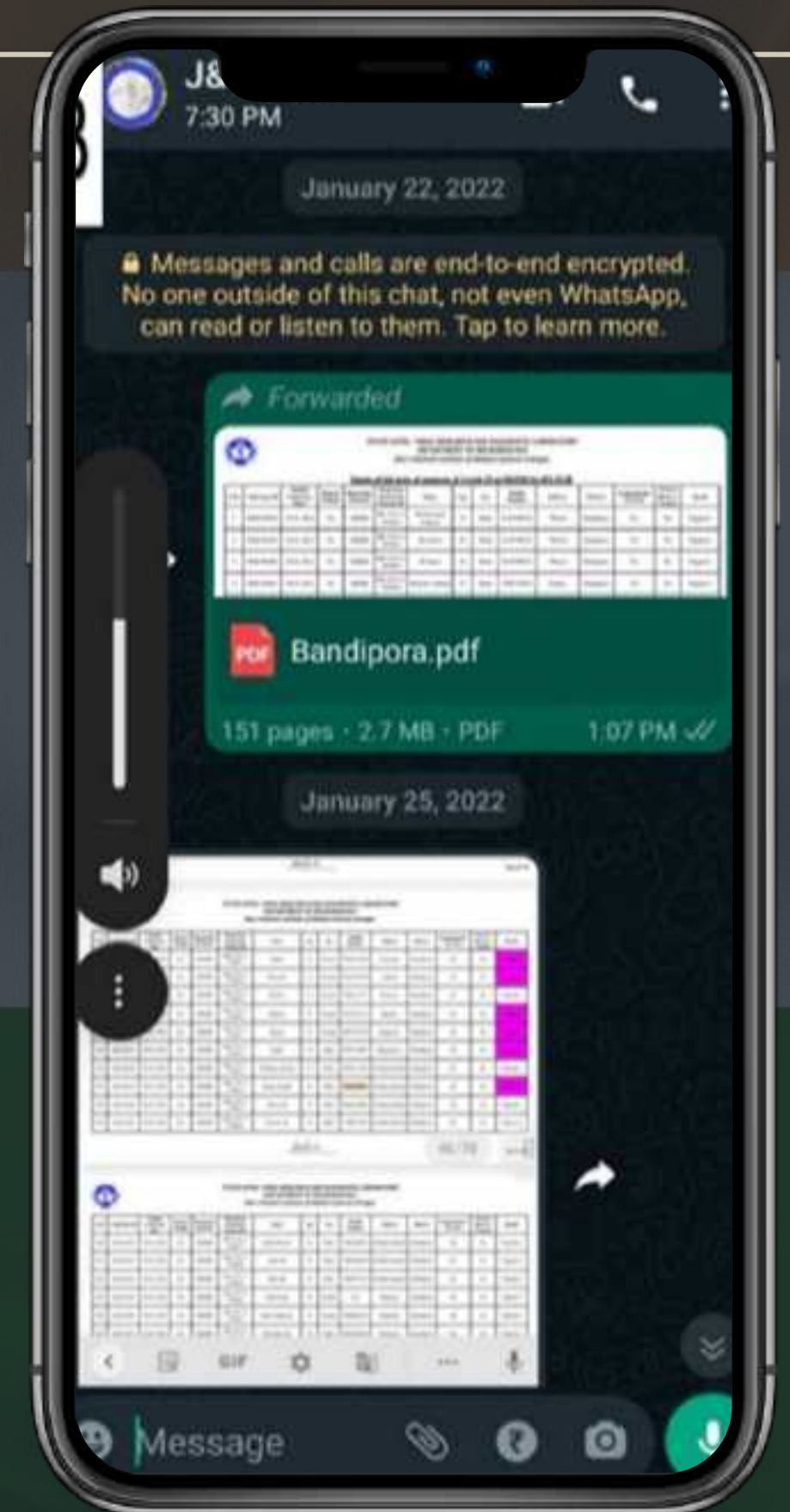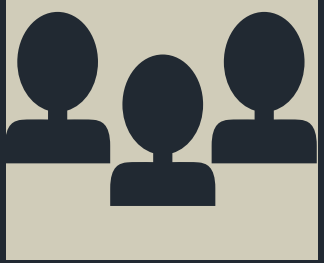
# Best-practice regarding Civil Rights: Croatia and North Macedonia

## Croatia

- **"Faktorgraf"**: 🔗
  - Initiative to fact-check, detect and debunk
  - Found numerous misinformation related to the pandemic, the coronavirus itself and vaccination
  - Mostly spreaded via social media and popular chat applications (e.g. Whatsapp)

## North Macedonia

- Government has developed an app called "**StopKorona**!" 🔗
- App is in line with standards that are provided by the European Commission
- Voluntary and deletes all collected data after two weeks

*cf. Krivokapic/Perkov/Marko 2020, pp. 6-10*

# Poor-practice regarding Civil Rights: Serbia

## SERIOUS BREACHES OF PRIVACY AND HEALTH DATA

- Already low level of privacy culture in the Western Balkans
- Personal data protection almost completely disregarded by authorities



Poštovani,

Korisničko uputstvo za web aplikaciju Evidencija Covid-19 možete naći ovde.

Svako ko je dežuran u Covid ambulanti se može ulogovati.

Korisničko ime:

Lozinka:

*cf. Krivokapic/Perkov/Marko 2020, p. 5*

## COVID-19 INFORMATION SYSTEM

- Serbian national system for processing and storing data regarding the spread of the coronavirus
- Login credentials available in plaintext on a website of a health institution

## REACTION

- Webpage was live for eight whole days
- Usually enough time to be indexed by Google

*cf. Krivokapic/Perkov/Marko 2020, pp. 3-11*

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# Poor-practice regarding Civil Rights: China and Ghana

## Ghana

- Identification of 65 positive examples of what the African Digital Rights Network calls "digital openings"
- States and corporations are using digital tools for authoritarian ends, to close online spaces for debate and dissent
- The Evidence of this worrying trend: Identifcation of 115 "digital closings" of civic space, including through state surveillance, online disinformation and Internet shutdowns

## China

- Social, economic and political life increasingly takes place on digital platforms owned by private monopolies formed in China

*Tolbert/Mossberger/McNeal 2020*

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# Best-practice in the area of Education: Scandinavia

## DIGITAL PREPAREDNESS

- Conditions for remote learning in the northern countries are rated among the best in the world

- Already in 2018: even in disadvantaged schools, over 90% of students claimed to have access to a computer and internet

### SWEDEN

- 90% of upper secondary schools provided their students with their own tablet or laptop by 2018
- In the use of internet in education, Sweden ranked third, Finland fourth

### NORWAY

- By 2019, almost 100% of students in 'upper secondary school' had access to a laptop provided by the school
- Internet access at home: 98% of the population

### FINLAND

- 2016-2020: Government allocated 100 million Euro for educational improvements regarding digital competences
- Schools loaned Laptops to students who did not have access to one at home

cf. Blikstad-Balas/Roe/Pedersen Dalland 2021, pp. 176-184
cf. Hall/Hardoy/Lundin 2022, pp. 9
cf. Lavonen/Salmela-Aro 2022, pp. 106

# Poor-practice in the area of Education: Germany and Ukraine

## Germany

- Not well prepared for teaching in the digital world: "No mangerial strategies, no teacher training, no debates on technological design or politics"

→ Inconsistent interpretations of European data privacy laws generating reluctance to use tools because of fear of legal repercussions

- Concerns regarding data privacy:
→ May 2020: Lower Saxony's learning management system was found to have significant data privacy concerns and was thus temporarily shut down

## Ukraine

- Higher threat for students data privacy due to the usage of random freeware
- Many core subjects broadcasted through YouTube and TV Channels; still Challenges in guaranteeing equal access to education
- 19% of all students: no or limited access to a computer
- Stable internet connection: 85% in urban area, less than 60% in rural areas

cf. Mîrza 2021, pp. 197-199
cf. Blume 2020, p. 888
cf. Kerres 2020, p. 1

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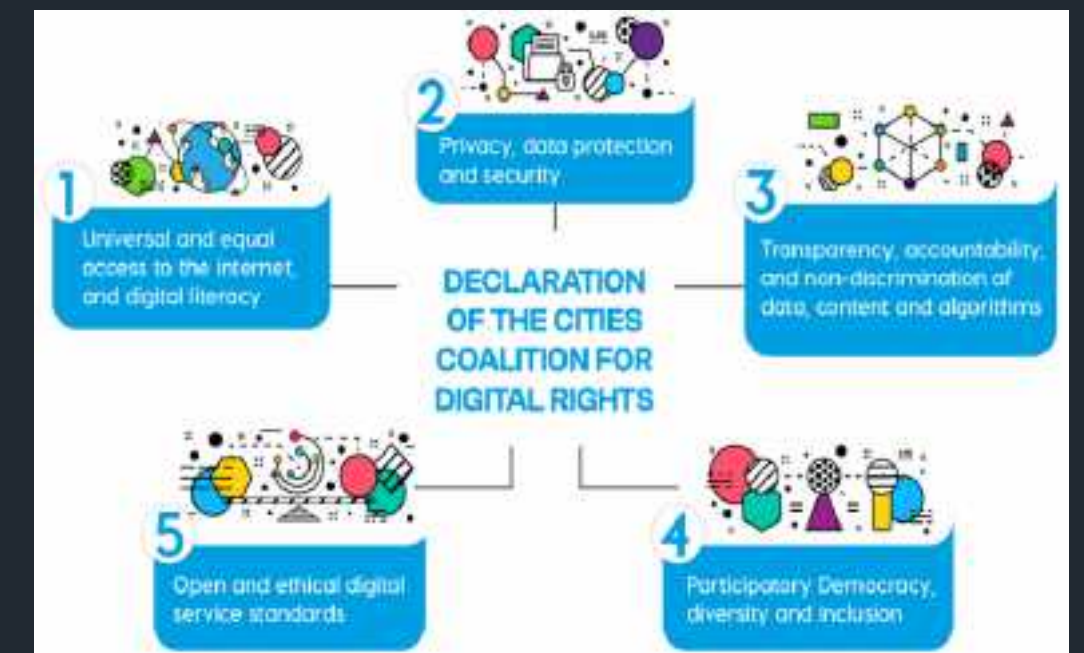
# 4. INITIATIVES TO ENSURE DIGITAL RIGHTS

# 4. Initatives to ensure Digital Rights



- Aims to avoid private companies or authorities processing more data than necessary and minimizing the risk of data leakage and other privacy breaches
- Participating Countries: Bulgaria, Belgium, Croatia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Ireland, Lithuania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Poland



- Aims to promote and defending digital rights in urban context, resolving common digital challenges, working towards legal, ethical and operational frameworks to advance human rights in a digital world
- Participating Cities: eg. Amman, Amsterdam, Curitiba, Guadalajara, Los Angeles, San Antonio

A listing of other digital rights organizations can be found at the following link:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Digital_rights_organizations

*cf. Digital Freedom Fund 2022*
*cf. Cities Coaliation for Digital Rights*

# 5. LESSONS LEARNED

# 5. Lessons Learned

- COVID-19 forms a more digital society

⟶ Governmental task to promote digital literacy to build a sustainable digital society

| Poor-practice examples highlighted: | Governmental Task and necessary digital competences post-COVID-19 |
|---|---|
| - Inequalties in access to Internet and ICTs | - Public policies need to minimize technological disparities and divisions to create a greater digital participation *(possible solution: see best-practice Scandinavia)* |
| - Technology provision without direction or instruction | - Ensuring that digital goods can be interpreted and used correctly by all users *(possible solution: see best-practice: Finnland)* |
| - Spread of misinformation | - Promotion of critical thinking and digital media literacy competence through introduction of cross-border projects (e.g. European project "Media Literacy for all" 🔗)<br>- Need to integrate digital citizenship education in curricula with topics such as Internet safety, privacy and security, information literacy *(possible solution: see best-practice Croatia and North Macedonia)* |

*cf. Sá et al. 2021, p. 8-10*
*cf. Milenkova/Lendzhova 2021, p. 2 and 11*

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