

**Blogging :
From online diaries to online “unmonitored” media (?)**

Smyrnaki Evgenia, Lawyer

Blogging is a social phenomenon and has emerged to a powerful commercial and political tool, characterised by a lot as a new means of independent media warmly embraced by the public, who gives great credibility even to *non*-verified facts, comments and news (of, in most cases, anonymous writers) posted thereon. This paper focuses on the conflicting interests and rights related to blogging community, the legal implications and the appropriate balance to be achieved. The right to anonymity, freedom of expression exercised by bloggers online, conflicts with the right to one’s person and reputation as many cases of libelous postings have already shown. At first a comparison between blogs and traditional media is attempted. The differences and similarities as to their organisational and financial structure, the existence and role of publishers, (*professional*) reporters, the implication and responsibility of ISPs, the methods of editorial control, the obligation to abide by the reporters’ code of practice etc. are drawn. Next, it is analysed whether the defamed parties – often powerful *public figures*- can effectively rely on traditional press laws (e.g. Greek Law n.1178/1981) or common libel/defamation law before a court in order to seek compensation. In addition, the justification and legality of the disclosure of the identity of anonymous ‘*John Doe*’ defendants is questioned and examined. References to different jurisdictions and different case law approaches (to the above issues) from Greece, US and Europe are made. In any case, the attempt to apply the traditional laws to the ‘younger’, of diverse nature and of limited economic means blogs may have a *chilling effect* on online free speech. Self-regulation by means of effective online retractions, interactive speech, counter speech, adoption of an ethical code etc., can *at an initial level* strike the requested balance in the blogosphere, between bloggers’ privacy and freedom of speech rights on one hand, and the right to reputation and personality of potential future plaintiffs on the other.