universität innsbruck
Digital Science Center (DiSC)

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Department of Legal Theory and Future of Law

DiSCourse Seminar

The Digital Science Center and the Department of Legal Theory and Future of Law would like to invite you to the following talk:

Melanie Fink
Universiteit Leiden

The Right to a Human Explanation of Algorithmic Decision-Making

The state increasingly relies on algorithms to make decisions that profoundly affect people's lives. Those affected have a right to an explanation: if an algorithm suggests to the sentencing judge that someone might be dangerous, tells the border guard they might be untrustworthy, or flags to the tax administration that they might have cheated, they are entitled to know why. While much has been debated about what exactly must be explained and how, one question has gone largely unasked: does it matter whether that explanation comes from a human or a machine? I argue that it does. Explanations are not just about conveying information: they are also acts of recognition, moments where the state acknowledges a person rather than processes a case file. And while AI systems can communicate reasons efficiently, they cannot replicate the human encounter that makes explanation truly meaningful. For that, a human must be involved.

About the speaker

Dr. Melanie Fink is Associate Professor of European Law at Leiden University. Her research explores the intersection of digital public administration and EU law from an individual rights perspective. She is particularly interested in administrative justice in the automated state, accountability and access to justice, especially in EU border management, and the interplay between EU constitutional law and the regulation of digital technologies. With a three-year NWO-Veni grant (2025-2028), Melanie currently works on the role of explanation rights and 'human-in-the-loop' mechanisms to safeguard human dignity when public authorities deploy AI systems.

Date, Time, Place:

Monday, 23 March 2026, 15:00 (CET)

Participants are invited to join the event at the Digital Science Center, Innrain 15, Open Space Area (1st floor).

Universität Innsbruck – Digital Science Center
Phone: +43 512 507 39750
E-mail: disc@uibk.ac.at