

FROM THE EDITORS

In the aftermath of the Charlie Hebdo attacks, the mechanisms of freedom of expression rose to the public's attention. Fear damages our thinking. When we try really hard to suppress an idea, all thinking becomes conditional. Within legal scholarship, the same mechanism applies to another type of fear – the fear of critical thinking.

For a student, critical thinking often feels frightening. Maybe you don't feel that you understand the legal phenomenon well enough, or feel that you haven't gained the authority to question the substance of the legal question. It is essential to work through these feelings and challenge your way of reading legal articles. One of the biggest challenges for student writers is critical thinking. Most of the works Helsinki Law Review decides not to publish are technically impeccable, but lack the analysis that would make them academically relevant. A seminar instructor might not expect the same degree of critical analysis, but it is always expected from an academic article.

Legal science is peculiar. Law does not smoothly fall into the categories of either human or natural science, and instead is in a very special category of its own. The extraction of relevant academic results from legal research requires an understanding of the legal method, which develops when you read and write. Law is interpretation, and subjective views have value when they are well based. To strengthen your line of reasoning, the argumentation must be subjected to scrutiny – ideally both by yourself and by a distinguished reviewer.

If you publish an article in Helsinki Law Review, our editors will subject your text to numerous thorough readings. We give you constructive comments and support the development of your argumentation. Our referees are always experienced academic professionals who have agreed to review your text. The referee process is anonymous to guarantee honest, impartial feedback. If, as a writer, you feel that your analysis needs a more rounded review, you can request two referees for it. The purpose of the referee process is to control the quality and credibility of the published content. This is why, in addition to academic articles, also case commentary written by students is peer reviewed in Helsinki Law Review. In addition to that, our editors consult the Academic Council (see the inner cover of this issue) in all questions related to the control of academic quality.

As a writer, you also need to review the content yourself. It is important that you understand the methods you are using, and that you follow the academic form, which legitimizes your results and exposes them to scientific evaluation. Be critical of your sources. Predatory open access journals are problematic and prevalent in law as well as in other sciences. Their names sometimes sound very convincing. On the Internet, a lot of expert commentary is commercially motivated, and needs critical assessment before you cite the content. If you don't recognize the writer or the journal, research the background before citing in your work. In academic publishing, paywalls cannot be trusted as indicators of quality, as publications of different academic

reliability are bundled together in online databases. Helsinki Law Review will always be available for free, to serve students and independent researchers not backed by affluent institutions. On our website you will find tips on verifying the credibility of your sources and building your argumentation throughout your article.

The pressure to graduate quickly and accomplish a lot encourages students to develop an ability to write pseudo-academically – to use phrases that give an intelligent impression but lack actual substance. This kind of writing optimizes ECTS points – but it does not have any academic value. It undermines the legitimate conclusions of your research, and frustrates the reader. In comparison, genuine attempts at analysis are valuable even when they are not perfect. Many less developed arguments evolve in the editing process. It may feel safe to hide behind the empty phrases, but there’s a reward in challenging yourself, finding critical angles, and trying to view your topic independently. Our editors are always happy to meet with writers during the editing process and discuss the article. Helsinki Law Review is a publication that welcomes critical commentary and strives to become a platform for lively intellectual exchange. That is why we invite you to question the views presented on our pages as well.

Even the most established views benefit from analysis and dialogue through academic channels, and even the highest-quality research must be questioned. Public discourse and scientific courage have intrinsic value. Trust your thinking, dare to question, and send us your articles, case comments, or opinion at submissions@helsinkilawreview.fi. Most importantly, never give up independent thinking.

On behalf of the Board of Editors,

Sonja Heiskala & Elisa Suokko

Editors-in-Chief