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## **Statement on the 2024 Article of the Year: Cybergrooming – An Inventory and Two Conclusions**

by Tom Kattenberg

There is no secret recipe for a successful academic article, but – based on experience – there are a few ingredients that will contribute to its success: a current and interesting topic; clear and understandable language; an instructive review of the state of knowledge from the perspective of various disciplines; and – particularly important – new (including practical) approaches and ideas that encourage readers to think and perhaps even inspire other researchers to address the same topic. Tom Kattenberg's text contains all of this and has therefore rightly been chosen as the article of the year for 2024.

The topic of cybergrooming, roughly defined as initiating sexual abuse through online contact, has been around for many years, but it remains topical, urgent and – as the author shows – little researched. Tom Kattenberg first provides readers with an overview by defining cybergrooming and highlighting the legal background of the issue. He describes existing empirical findings that point to the widespread prevalence and increasing trend of the phenomenon. Of particular interest is his reference to what he calls “poly-cyber victimisation”, which is the fact that victims of cybergrooming appear to be disproportionately affected by other offences such as (cyber)bullying. It is absolutely correct that such findings, as the author writes, are important for fully understanding the phenomenon and developing appropriate preventive approaches. In addition, findings from the German police crime statistics (Polizeiliche Kriminalstatistik, PKS) are also presented, which show an under-representation of female perpetrators and an interesting age demographic: 59 % of perpetrators are under 21 years of age. This demonstrates that the phenomenon must be viewed in a unique and nuanced way, as Kattenberg elaborates below. The author then draws an initial conclusion that the likelihood of such acts being detected must increase. According to the author the internet is largely a “law-enforcement-free zone” and must be better “policed”, including through appropriate training measures within the police force (own translation, p. 117 f.).

Subsequently, typologies of perpetrators and victims, as well as relevant risk factors, are presented in an instructive way to promote a more informed discussion of appropriate preventive measures (p. 120 ff.). Kattenberg demonstrates that little is known about the consequences of cybergrooming and that further research is needed in this area. His second key conclusion is that “digital resilience” must be promoted among potential victims, and he distinguishes between two forms. First, “reflexive resilience” refers to non-criminal prevention through conscious and risk-sensitive online behaviour, so the dangers of cybergrooming are minimised from the outset. And second, according to Kattenberg, there is “reactive resilience”, which involves dealing competently with specific experiences of cybergrooming. This also (but not exclusively) involves criminal law as a response, which the author (in good criminological tradition) deliberately does not present as a panacea or the main solution.

Although the article focuses on cybergrooming, it also provides an excellent insight into the multitude of research questions that arise in the field of “cybercriminology”, which is still in its infancy. The article not only provides high-quality information but also inspires. What more could you ask from a scientific text?

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