

"Rest in .net" - Inheritance law and content left on-line

Description for the general public

Along with the development of digital technologies and common access to the Internet, communication and gathering of various types of content has moved to a major extent to the virtual world. Through the Internet we use various on-line services, make shopping, download music, share photos and communicate with others on social networking sites, or subscribe various paid contents. Technology in that regard gives us many opportunities, which are more and more boldly used by the society. On many occasions, the virtual world is the only carrier of the contents we create, which refers particularly to e-mail correspondence, photos, or extremely popular posts on social networking sites or blogs.

Problems originating on that background may touch the area of interest of several types of science. Interesting for us are legal problems, among other things. This may refer not only to everyday life of the user but also to death of the user of the respective Internet services. In the latter regard, there are many doubts as to the determination whether someone else may continue the presence of the deceased person in the Internet and, thus, acquire the resources of the virtual accounts of the deceased. This means, for example, access to the content processed on social networking sites, virtual clouds for storage of various data, electronic mailboxes or various subscribed Internet services. The task of the legal regulation should be to provide a reply to the question: who, if any, or if so – on what principles – should have access to the content after the death of the user of Internet services.

Meanwhile, the legal regulations binding in Poland in that regard do not comprise any clear structure to directly explain the appearing dilemmas. Such statutory structure may prove to be essential in near future. Therefore, within the project, an optimal model of legal succession of the content left in the Internet on the occasion of death of the user will be searched for, such as to cover not only the needs of the legal successors of the deceased but also the interest of the latter.