



Welcome to the new interview of '[Digital Coffee Break in Arbitration](#)' by [Svenja Wachtel](#). I am an attorney and arbitrator in the field of international arbitration and the founder of Digital Coffee Break in Arbitration, an initiative creating a debate around digital transformation in international arbitration. In this series, I discuss the latest trends in the field, covering topics such as the use of technology, digital transformation, and digitalization. Digital Coffee Break in Arbitration invites you to grab a drink, sit back and enjoy first-hand insights from General Counsel, arbitrators, legal scholars and other practitioners from all over the world of international arbitration.

Today, I am talking to [Dr. Ramona Schardt](#). Ramona is the Secretary General of the [German Arbitration Institute \(DIS\)](#). The DIS is the leading Arbitration Institute in Germany and one of the largest institutions in Europe. It administers around 280 arbitration proceedings and other out-of-court dispute resolution proceedings between German and foreign parties every year.

Ramona has more than 20 years of experience in arbitration as well as in judicial and extrajudicial dispute resolution. Prior to her position as Secretary General, she worked as Division Litigation Counsel at Siemens AG and Siemens Energy Global GmbH & Co. KG in Munich for thirteen years. She was responsible for international arbitration, litigation and other alternative dispute resolution proceedings. Before joining Siemens, Ramona worked as a lawyer in the Dispute Resolution practice group at Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer LLP in Frankfurt am Main for six years.



Ramona studied at the London School of Economics and Political Science and at the Friedrich Schiller University in Jena where she received her doctorate. As Fulbright scholar she also completed the Master of Laws at the University of Virginia and the University of Georgetown.

**D**ear Ramona, thanks for joining me for this interview about how technology is shaping up the developments at the German Arbitration Institute (DIS). The last few years have brought some challenges and changes especially with respect to the use of technology in arbitration. How is the DIS embracing technology in their daily course of work?

At DIS, integrating technology is not just a trend, it is an important part of our daily operations. Digitalization is one of my top priorities. In recent years, we have proactively incorporated technology into our case management to improve efficiency and security. We work almost completely paperless utilizing a fully digital case management system, both internally and externally.

In recent months, we have also completely overhauled our IT infrastructure. We adopted Microsoft 365 including features such as Teams, which supports virtual team meetings. We also replaced traditional phone systems with softphones enabling us to work remotely. Additionally, both our offices are now equipped with video conferencing systems allowing us to host hybrid events seamlessly. I can say with confidence that the DIS now has a modern state-of-the-art IT infrastructure.

In terms of rules and regulations, the DIS Arbitration Rules specifically address the use of technology. They require the arbitral tribunal to discuss the use of information technology with the parties during the case management conference. We support this with a detailed practice note and checklist to facilitate the effective use of technology in arbitration. We also offer

a cost calculator on our website, that enables our users to calculate the estimated costs of a DIS Arbitration.

To keep our arbitration rules cutting-edge, the DIS established a Technology Practice Group to evaluate how the 2018 DIS Arbitration Rules align with current technological advances. The group recently completed their report with numerous valuable recommendations that we are currently reviewing for potential implementation.

Additionally, to stay up-to-date with the latest technological trends, we have entered into a cooperation agreement with the German Legal Tech Association and the Bucerius Center on the Legal Profession. This underscores our commitment to remain at the forefront of legal and technological developments.

You have already touched upon what the DIS's website states. That is that the 2018 DIS Arbitration Rules have "converted the internal administration of arbitration proceedings into a purely digital system." How was the digital system fared so far?

The digital system introduced by the 2018 DIS Arbitration Rules, called enaio, has significantly improved the way we internally handle the administration of arbitration proceedings. This comprehensive platform was widely customized for our needs. It centralizes all submissions, communications, and essential administrative details - including accounting and compliance - into a single hub. This integration not only streamlines our workflow, but also makes it easier for our team to access and update case details quickly and efficiently.

This move to a digital system has greatly improved our internal case management making it more organized and efficient.

Out of all the innovation that's driven by technology at the DIS, is there something that you feel stands out/ or has the potential to stand out?

Absolutely. Among the technological advancements at the DIS, the introduction of the DIS eFile platform in September 2023 truly stands out. This cloud-based file-sharing and collaboration tool supports external users such as parties, their representatives, and the arbitral tribunal across all types of DIS proceedings.

Powered by HighQ from Thomson Reuters, we are proud to be one of the few arbitration institutions globally to manage proceedings digitally, both internally and externally. This dual capability sets us apart from many institutions that typically use digital tools only internally or externally.

And how exactly does DIS eFile work?

DIS eFile allows for the comprehensive management of all documents related to arbitral proceedings, enabling arbitrators and parties to better oversee the process through various functions. At the outset of the proceedings, we establish a digital case file, granting access to parties, arbitrators, and other involved individuals with their consent. Key procedural steps up to the constitution of the arbitral tribunal are entered for all authorized users. The standard folder structure can, of course, be customized to suit the parties' preferences.

The "Case File" module is at the heart of each eFile, containing the parties' pleadings and annexes, along with witness statements and expert reports where relevant. All authorized DIS eFile users can securely upload documents directly into this case file. These documents are instantly accessible to the authorized users, who also receive automatic notifications about any updates or activities within the case file.

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## "INTEGRATING TECHNOLOGY IS NOT JUST A TREND, IT IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF OUR DAILY OPERATIONS"

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A dashboard provides a snapshot of the most important information about the proceeding, including details on the parties, current deadlines, and recent uploads. DIS eFile also features an integrated case calendar and task management system, allowing authorized users and us to effectively track deadlines and tasks.

**How technology-savvy does DIS eFile require the parties to be? How easy is it for the parties to navigate through it?**

You don't need to be a "technical wizard" to use DIS eFile! It is simple and intuitive, with a clean interface that only displays relevant case information. Its design is similar to those offered by some institutions like the SCC or VIAC, which also use HighQ from Thomson Reuters as the basis for their digital case file systems. Therefore, the system should be familiar to many users.

We provide an easy-to-understand user manual on our website in both English and German. This manual includes helpful screenshots and detailed step-by-step instructions to guide users through the system.

Additionally, the DIS held three training sessions on using the software, and a recording of the event is available for those who could not attend.

**I noticed that the DIS eFile can only be used if the parties consent to it. Given that parties may be hesitant to use technology, or just one of the parties agrees to use it, how does the DIS handle these instances?**

We have indeed noticed that some parties are hesitant to use DIS eFile, or sometimes only one party agrees to use it. Currently, DIS eFile is only implemented if all parties to the arbitration agree. We respect the parties' choices and do not require the use of technology with which they may not feel comfortable.

To address concerns and encourage the use of DIS eFile, our Case Management Team offers support. Our team is well-versed in the technical aspects of DIS eFile and is available to answer any questions or uncertainties, helping to build confidence in the system. If you encounter any difficulties or have suggestions for improving DIS eFile, please let us know. Your feedback is valuable to us, and we encourage you to share your thoughts. We are here to assist and support you in making the most of DIS eFile.

**What would you say are the other benefits of DIS eFile besides the fact that it can be used intuitively and flexibly?**

Additional advantages of the DIS eFile system include the rapid and direct exchange of data and an automated notification system integrated into each case file, enhancing procedural efficiency. When DIS eFile is not used, parties must rely on email for submissions or a specific link to upload their files. DIS eFile offers ample storage capacity, allowing easy upload and download of large submissions via zip folders.

Additionally, the system's automated notifications keep all users updated on the latest submissions whenever there is activity on a case. This feature removes the need for confirmation emails just to acknowledge receipt. It thereby simplifies communication and reduces the chances of oversight or error in the arbitration process.

**In one of my previous interviews it was said that "100% digital security or sufficient protection does not exist." The DIS eFile offers secure access to digital case file and secure data transfer among some of the secure features. How secure would you say it is? Is the system equipped to handle ransomware attacks or data breaches?**

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DIS eFile is powered by a software from Thomson Reuters, a leader in digital legal applications worldwide. The company is known for its experience, reliability, and high security standards.

It is certified according to the SOC2 standard, prevalent in the US, and the internationally recognized ISO27001 standard. These certifications require strict compliance and must be renewed periodically, requiring the company to prove to an external auditor that its security standards remain upheld to receive a new certificate.

A key factor for us is that DIS eFile data is stored and managed on secure servers in Germany, which is advantageous given the strict GDPR requirements.

**DIS's website also states that the eFile feature is the next step towards a digital future for arbitration in Germany. Do you plan to include more features in the eFile or implement the use of other technology?**

Absolutely! The DIS is an innovative institution that does not stand still. We are attentive to the needs and concerns of our users and always strive to improve our tools.

We are always evaluating and implementing upgrades to DIS eFile.

In addition to DIS eFile, we are planning to implement further technological solutions. We are currently developing a comprehensive database of arbitrators to assist parties and the Case Management Team in selecting the most suitable arbitrator based on specific qualifications, such as expertise and language skills.

Also, we are exploring the potential to upgrade our current internal case management system, enaio, to an even more advanced and automated solution to meet our growing needs. I am also glad to announce that we have recently hired a legal operations manager to leverage technology, streamline our processes, and enhance overall efficiency in our arbitration services..

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## "THE DIS IS AN INNOVATIVE INSTITUTION THAT DOES NOT STAND STILL"

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Finally, let's talk about artificial intelligence (AI). I am convinced that AI will greatly assist our case management processes and increase efficiency for both our institution and our users. The potential is huge. We are closely

monitoring AI developments to strategically adopt new technologies at the right time. Several team members have taken the 'AI for Lawyers' course from the German Legal Tech Association and the Bucerius Center on the Legal Profession to understand the various aspects of AI. We are also in the process of establishing an AI working group to stay current with the latest technological trends and to explore viable technologies for our services.

These are exciting times. Stay tuned!

**Thanks for joining me Ramona!**