



**Modern Bigness and Law & Tech network Utrecht University School of Law &
Centre for Antitrust and Regulatory Studies Warsaw University Faculty of Management**

Power, media pluralism, and democracy

Regulatory, legal, or extra-legal responses

Warsaw, 16 and 17 November 2023

Organising team: Maciej Bernatt, Anna Gerbrandy, Malgorzata Kozak, Pauline Phoa, Dominka Bychawska, Marta Sznajder, Joanna Mazur

Call for papers & contributions

The EU Media Pluralism Monitor for 2022¹ indicates a deterioration in the media landscape, particularly concerning market diversity and political independence. Economic difficulties faced by media outlets have contributed to this decline, while the need for stronger measures to protect editorial autonomy has become evident. The new power of platforms and other tools in the digital age influences public discourse at different layers. On the one hand, they provide unprecedented opportunities for individuals to express themselves and access information; on the other, their influence raises concerns about the concentration of power and the potential for manipulation. On top of that, the media's dependence on these platforms and tools risks distorting citizens' right to be informed. Thus, it becomes essential to safeguard media pluralism in democratic societies as it allows for diverse perspectives, encourages critical thinking, thereby promoting a healthy democratic discourse.

This conference will focus on legal or regulatory responses to these challenges, including why the (current) legal regime may fall short and whether solutions should also be found outside the law. Thus, non-legal scholars, for example, from platform studies or media studies, are welcomed. The focal point is the European Union and its member states, and the aim is to contribute to robust and open democracies based on the rule of law. Comparative perspectives are welcome too.

We specifically welcome contributions on:

1. Media and markets:

- a. competition law and media pluralism: how does competition law influence the structure of media markets?
- b. is media pluralism a value that can be protected by competition law?
- c. comparing the status quo: how do EU Member States differ in assessing media concentrations (public interest tests, cooperation with media agencies, media pluralism tests)?

¹ [Media Pluralism Monitor](#) 2022.

- d. Digital Markets Act and media: will the DMA tackle Big Tech's position regarding their power to shape the conditions for producing, spreading, and consuming content? How could the DMA impact the position of traditional media?

2. Media and democracy:

- a. democracies under threat: democratic backsliding as a challenge for media and media pluralism (global trends and regional perspectives; issues related to the capture of public broadcasters, media concentration and abusing competition authorities, editorial influence or abuse of legal proceedings)
- b. bottom-up initiatives: a tool to counter the power of big social media platforms in media or a threat to high-quality journalism?
- c. European Media Freedom Act: how can EU law support media pluralism?
- d. media consumption and the impact of media market changes on consumer-citizen welfare (issues related to (the shortcomings of) media pluralism's impact on democracy through the lens of consumers, 'welfare' of media consumers/citizens, media economics, news consumption through traditional vs new media, goals of competition assessment on media markets or regulatory solutions in the media)

3. Media and digitalization:

- a. power of big-tech platforms over media: private censorship, access, discursive power, content moderation and their impact on media
- b. opinion power and platform concentration
- c. Digital Services Act and media: will the DSA tackle the position of big platforms regarding shaping the conditions for producing, spreading, and consuming content? Regulatory responses to the question of the responsibility of very large online platforms
- d. directive on copyrights in digital markets and its transposition: adequate response to challenges of digitalisation?

Interested researchers should submit an abstract (max. 500 words) to m.w.kozak@uu.nl by **2 July 2023**.

In order to foster in-depth discussions of the presentations, once you are accepted and invited to speak during the conference, you are requested to submit a longer abstract or draft paper of a minimum of 10 pages by **1 November 2023** that will be circulated among the attendees of the conference two weeks before the conference.

After the conference, the organisers will go through an additional review process to select papers for publication. Authors will be informed of additional deadlines and further details in due time.