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Call for Papers

THINK BIG: Questioning the Role of Competition Law in the 21st Century

Young Competition Law Scholars Conference

5-6 September 2024 at the University of Vienna, Austria

Competition law has become quite popular over the years. Taking a global perspective, competition law has long left academic circles, arrived in the midst of society and been awarded much attention in the media as a jack-of-all-trades. Take, e.g., the various proceedings against big tech giants in different jurisdictions around the globe (prominently EU, US, but also on a smaller scale the German Bundeskartellamt's case against *Facebook*) and the accompanying discussion concerning digital competition-akin regulation (e.g., DMA, DSA, Data Act, AI Act, etc.). The global competition law landscape is, thus, undergoing unparalleled shifts due to several influences, such as fluctuating geopolitical and economic situations, recent impactful legal precedents, and the evolving dynamics of digital platforms. The current political and economic context, as well as the challenge of digitalisation, increase the pressure on competition policy and raises its demands. The discussion is happening in a 21st century that has been characterised by consecutive crises so far. Be it the financial crisis, the so-called refugee and migration crisis, the Covid-19 pandemic, the Russian full-scale invasion in Ukraine as well as the economic crises of the latter's aftermath (be it, e.g., inflation or the energy crisis in Europe). Adding to that, society is faced with combatting climate change and the increasing and arguably entrenched social gap in our societies, e.g., in terms of income distribution or gender balance. Moreover, all those challenges are accompanied by a fundamental transformation of our economy and society by means of an ongoing process of digitisation and technological progress (i.e., the digital economy and the public digital sphere).

The potential suspect that has continuously been brought to the forefront in dealing with the mapped-out challenges is – as mentioned – competition law. So, it is competition law that shall deal with the Big Tech companies, their market power, the green transformation, the increase of power related to data in the digital economy, inflation, energy supply, distributive injustice, etc.? Should competition law also have a broader geopolitical dimension (the Foreign Subsidies Regulation might serve as an example to this effect)? Moreover, it has been claimed that Europe is lagging behind when it comes to innovation and does not seem to be an attractive breeding ground for innovative start-ups. In other words, and (admittedly) put provocatively: The market-leading tech giants are either based in the US (e.g., *Google, Meta, Amazon, Apple, Microsoft*) or in China (e.g., *Baidu, Alibaba, Tencent, Xiaomi*). The role of the EU, however, is limited to regulating the companies. So again – is it competition law that should provide for workable solutions?

Against this backdrop, with this year's Young Competition Law Scholar Conference we ask you to THINK BIG. What is the role competition law plays, should play or, respectively, what we should understand it to play in order to preserve or shape the functioning of our economy and competitive markets, but also our society and democracy as such, as arguably, a market economy serves as counterpart to a political democracy? Are our current competition laws old but gold, or should they be subject to revision and a re-thinking of the law? What are the issues competition law can or should address? What are the fundamental goals of competition law? Where and how to define its boundaries as regards scope and when to leave it up to other laws or regulation? What is competition law and what is regulation? What about Adam Smith and the idea of the capacity of a market to regulate itself by means of its invisible hand in this debate?

For a lively discussion, we invite PhD candidates, Postdoctoral Students, Assistant Professors, as well as Advanced Students wishing to pursue a PhD, and Young Professionals (within 5 years after commencing a professional activity) to submit their ideas for potential conference contributions. Proposals are not limited to the questions above, which are to be understood as stimulators, but not however as conclusive regarding the potential scope of the submissions. The format is designed to address young competition law scholars and will be held in English. Co-authorship is allowed. We invite all researchers interested in presenting at the conference to submit **(1) an anonymised abstract** of no more than **500 words** and **(2) a short CV**, in separate PDF documents, to youngcomplaw.europarecht@univie.ac.at by **29 February 2024**. The selection will be communicated by mid-March 2024. Selected participants are expected to send a **draft paper due 20 August 2024**. Papers will be published in a conference volume conditional upon a positive result of the peer review.

Subject to available funding, we will cover part of the costs of travel and accommodation. Reimbursement of travel costs is conditional on the submission of the draft paper by the indicated deadline.

More information on the conference and on registration here: <https://eur-int-comp-law.univie.ac.at/team/hornkohl-lena/konferenzen/young-competition-law-2024/>.

We are looking forward to your submissions!

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Eva Fischer, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München
Lena Hornkohl, Universität Wien
Bernadette Zelger, Universität Innsbruck