

1. Publication date

ASAP

2. Closing date

15 May 2016

3. Organisational Unit

Faculty of Law – Institute for Information Law (IViR)

4. Level of Education

University

5. Scope of work

30-38 hours per week

6. Salary indication

2174-2779 EUR gross per month, based on 38 hours per week

7. Title

Phd researcher in Law

8. Vacancy type

Research & Education

9. Introduction

The Institute for Information Law (IViR) is part of the Law Faculty of the University of Amsterdam, and for the past 25 years one of the leading centers in Europe and worldwide in research in Information Law. IViR is host to an international team of more than 35 researchers that conduct research for national and European funding organizations (NWO, DFG, ERC), European institutions (European Commission, European Parliament, Council of Europe), international organisations and national governments and regulatory authorities.

The PhD will work as part of a multidisciplinary team of 3 communication scientists and 2 PhD legal students, led by Prof. Natali Helberger. The research will be part of a European ERC project **“Profiling and targeting news readers – implications for the democratic role of the digital media, user rights and public information policy”**. The team will operate within the larger structure of a research collaboration between the Institute for Information Law and the Amsterdam School of Communication Research (ASCoR) to conduct research into the shift from public to personalised communication in the areas of politics, commerce and health (*“Personalised Communication”*).

The datafication of news production signals a fundamental shift in the way the news media operate and interact with their audiences. The traditional news media create, curate and distribute content for a relatively general and unspecified audience. Their activities are guided by a mix of broadly acknowledged journalistic ideals of integrity, editorial responsibility and the societal role of the media, but also by technological opportunities and financing strategies. Technological advances allow the media to adjust media presentation and content to individual preferences and to actively guide and influence user’s reading behaviour. In so doing, the news media are joined by a host of old and new players (advertisement networks, third party websites, web-browsers, search engines, social networks, telecommunications operators and hardware producers), each with their own vested interest in which types of content users ought to see, and why. The objective of this research project is it to study the following questions: What is the meaning of established values and concepts such as editorial integrity and control in the light of news media personalisation and the growing pressure of external forces on editorial decision making? What new forms of advertising and fusing editorial and commercial content are emerging? And, most importantly for this PhD project: is the existing regulatory framework concerning editorial integrity and media advertising up to the new challenges from data-driven media distribution?

10. Job / Overall project Description

In the digital media environment, user attention is scarce and competition for 'eyeballs' is fierce. Big Data analysis, algorithmic profiling and targeting readers with customised news and advertisements that match their individual interests are widely seen as potential solutions. The personalisation of news media content enables new financing strategies and means to capture the audience's attention. But personalisation is also part of a more fundamental paradigm shift in the media's role from public interest intermediary to personal information coach. This research will answer critical questions about the implications for individual users and contribute to a new normative theory of the role of personalised media in a democratic society.

To do so, the PersoNews project integrates legal research, communication sciences and political sciences, undertakes comparative, normative and evidence-based research, and carries out experiments, interviews and surveys. The team will perform quantitative and qualitative research to identify the user advantages, concerns and conditions of acceptability, as well as the drivers behind and the obstacles to news media personalisation, how they affect journalistic practices and whether they translate into new algorithmic journalistic ethics and self-regulation.

These insights will feed into the legal-normative analysis, which will critically re-examine the existing regulatory and normative framework, identify gaps and make suggestions for future legal design. More concretely, the PhD research will critically examine the legal framework that protects the editorial integrity of the media and ensures a fair balance between commercial pressures and the democratic mission of the media to inform. Advertising has always been one of the primary means of financing media content, and concerns about the integrity of editorial content vis-à-vis external influences are not new. Accordingly, media laws, e-commerce laws and unfair commercial practice laws in Europe have a long tradition of scrutinising the blurred lines between editorial content and advertising. An unanswered question that this PhD project will help to answer is to what extent the existing provisions are able to address new dynamics in the media value chain, the growing influence of digital advertisers and ad networks, new forms of advertising in the media, and new challenges to media integrity.

Tasks

To conduct comparative legal research (Netherlands, Germany and the UK) into the legal provisions on advertising and editorial integrity in media law and unfair commercial practice law.

- To closely interact with the other researchers in the team in defining research questions, setting up and interpreting the results and translating them into the legal/normative context.
- Interact with, and contribute to joint research initiatives with the team from Personalised Communication.
- Supervise master students and perhaps taking on a light teaching task.

11. Requirements

The candidates should have:

- An interest in the following fields: (European) media law, unfair commercial practice law, press regulation and fundamental rights law.
- Good knowledge of current developments in information markets and technology.
- Excel academically, as shown in the grade transcripts and curriculum vitae.
- A creative mind and analytical intelligence.
- An interest in working in a multidisciplinary team.
- Strong communication skills.
- Excellent written and spoken command of English, and ideally knowledge of the Dutch and German language.
- A master degree in law, or equivalent degree.
- Preferably hold a Research Master's degree in law or equivalent qualifications or experience with

project research. Candidates who are due to graduate before September 2016 are also welcome to apply. A Research Master is a 2-year Master program with 30 EC of methodological coursework.

12. Further Information

Questions about the project content should be addressed to Professor Natali Helberger (n.helberger@uva.nl). Questions about the application procedure and other general questions should be addressed to Ms. Anja Dobbelsteen (a.g.j.m.dobbelsteen@uva.nl)

You may find the following websites useful:

- Universiteit van Amsterdam www.uva.nl
- IViR, the Institute for Information Law www.ivir.nl
- ASCoR, the Amsterdam School of Communication Research www.ascor.uva.nl

13. Appointment

The positions ideally start 1 September 2016, and is for 3 years. Depending on your knowledge and experience, your monthly gross salary will range between 2.125 to max. 2.717 EUR scale P according to the Collective Employment Agreement of the Dutch Universities) based on a full-time appointment.

We offer a pension scheme, a holiday allowance of 8% per year and flexible employment conditions. Conditions are based on the Collective Labour Agreement of the Dutch Universities.

14. Job Application

The deadline for applications is **15 May at 24:00 PM CET**. Please state the vacancy number in the subject line of your application. To apply for this position, please send at least the following documents **in English** by e-mail to n.helberger@uva.nl:

- Motivation letter. Please clearly indicate the position you apply for.
- Curriculum vitae and publication list.
- An academic writing sample in English (e.g., journal article, PhD dissertation).

Please send all your documents in PDF or doc(x) format. Only complete applications will be considered.