

Expression of Interest to Join a Horizon Europe Consortium

Call: HORIZON CL2 2026 01 DEMOCRACY 10

Research partner

Sarah Eskens, LL.M, PhD.

Department of Transnational Legal Studies, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU Amsterdam).

Expertise: EU laws and regulations on online platforms, disinformation, media, recommender systems, privacy, data protection, political advertising; human rights to freedom of expression and privacy.

Expertise and contribution to the call

I research the EU legal framework against disinformation. This framework includes the Digital Services Act, European Media Freedom Act, Regulation on the transparency and targeting of political advertising, AI Act, and soon maybe also the Audiovisual Media Services Directive, once it's been renewed. I study the interactions between these laws, their gaps, and how they are embedded within the EU's wider strategy against disinformation, laid down in, among others, the Action Plan against Disinformation and European Democracy Shield, and also including the Code of Conduct on Disinformation. Most of these laws address online platforms; therefore, the legal obligations of online platforms in combatting disinformation are an important focus of my research. I look at how platforms implement their obligations, and how this affects freedom of expression, specifically in the context of systemic risk management by platforms. I have a decade of experience in interdisciplinary research, during which I have worked with communication scientists, media scholars, and computer scientists.

Based on my expertise, I can contribute the following to the call:

- Situate current EU efforts to improve democratic resilience within a decade of EU policy to combat disinformation, to which recent EU laws against disinformation are a relatively novel addition.
- Discuss the EU legal framework around media literacy.
- Translate empirical findings into proposals to improve EU laws and regulations around disinformation and media literacy.

Possible roles within the consortium

Work package leader on:

- EU Platform regulation and legal frameworks around disinformation and media literacy.
- EU audiovisual media regulation regarding video-sharing platforms, television, and streaming services and their role in combatting disinformation and improving democratic resilience.

Contribute to work packages on:

- The role of online platforms and recommender systems in the spread of disinformation.
- The role of audiovisual media services in increasing media literacy and democratic resilience among citizens.
- Translating empirical findings to policy proposals and recommendations to improve current laws and regulations.