Should Wealth and Income Inequality Be a Competition Law Concern?

University of Amsterdam, Netherlands

20-21 May 2021

CALL FOR PAPERS

Economic inequality is on the rise around the world. The gap between rich and poor has been widening steadily, with the covid-19 pandemic further reinforcing the trend. Differences in how much people own and earn have become so pronounced that they are causing serious economic, political and moral concern. As a result, academics, policy makers and politicians have been asking what generates these differences and how they could be curbed.

A major source of wealth and income inequality appears to be the immense economic power enjoyed by large multinational corporations. Against this backdrop, prominent scholars have argued that a more equal society could be ensured through enforcement of competition rules, not least in labour markets. Yet, the precise extent to which competition law can and should be concerned with distributive issues remains unclear. The questions to be considered include for instance the following:

- To what degree does market power actually contribute to inequality?
- Which market characteristics (e.g. monopsony power) may contribute to more, and which to less inequality?
- Which market practices (e.g. price discrimination) may bring about inequality and under which conditions?
- Would more active competition law enforcement lead to more equality?
- Should competition law be enforced more vigorously in labour markets?
- Are other policies such as fiscal policy not better suited to address inequality?
- If competition law is an appropriate tool to address inequality, how could concerns of inequality be integrated into the current paradigm, especially with respect to its emphasis on efficiency?
- Is the promotion of efficiency itself not enough to enable more equality?
- Do abrupt surges in inequality, such as the one caused by covid-19, necessitate temporary modifications to competition rules or/and their enforcement?
- How does inequality interact with other public interest concerns in competition law such as sustainability?
- What institutional obstacles exist to the integration of inequality into competition law enforcement?
- Would this integration require a revision of competition law's deeper foundation and its economic constitutional embedding?
- Are there differences in any of these respects between the European Union, its individual Member States, and the United States?

These and related points will be discussed by a conference convened jointly by the Amsterdam Centre for European Law and Governance and the Amsterdam Center for Law and Economics. The conference is organised under the aegis of the research project Sustainable Global Economic Law.

Confirmed speakers include:

- Eleanor Fox (NYU, United States)
- Ioannis Lianos (Hellenic Competition Commission, Greece)
- Martijn Snoep (Authority for Consumers and Markets, Netherlands)

The conference scientific committee consists of:

- Jan Broulík – j.broulik@uva.nl
- Kati Cseres – k.j.cseres@uva.nl
- Maarten Pieter Schinkel – m.p.schinkel@uva.nl

Submission of Papers

We invite paper submissions in the fields of law, economics, political science or other disciplines that are related to the conference topic.

Please submit a draft paper or extended abstract (minimum of 1500 words) to j.broulik@uva.nl no later than **31 January 2021**. Accepted speakers will be asked to provide their full drafts by 14 May 2021 to be circulated among conference participants. The speakers may be invited to submit their papers to an edited volume or special journal issue.

Conference Format

The conference will take place on 20 and 21 May 2021 either as a hybrid event at the University of Amsterdam or entirely online, depending on the covid-19 situation in Amsterdam. The organisers will in any case try to accommodate speakers' requests to present their papers online.

Costs

There is no conference fee. If the conference is not taking place entirely online, accepted speakers without access to conference budgets at their institutions may apply for partial reimbursement of travel and accommodation costs. More information about how to apply will be provided together with the acceptance decisions.