

AI-based recommender systems in media: (how) does the EU legislation address the societal challenges?

Abstract: The ways in which information is prioritized and presented on online platforms had become an essential part of online platforms business models but also public concern. Such recommender systems can have a significant impact on the users' ability to receive and interact with information, and in particular, news content, online. They also play an important role in the amplification of certain messages, the viral dissemination of dis- and mis-information and can significantly affect users' fundamental rights (i.e. freedom of expression, freedom of thought).

Recently, the EU policy-makers have increasingly looked at the regulation of various forms of automation and the use of algorithms. When it comes to the recommender systems specifically, two recent legislative proposals by the European Commission are particularly relevant: the Digital Services Act (DSA) and the Artificial Intelligence Act (AIA). Moreover, the Digital Markets Act (DMA) and, potentially, the upcoming European Media Freedom Act (EMFA) are other pieces of the puzzle.

This panel will first take a societal perspective on the current challenges in designing and evaluating recommender systems. Further, it will examine how negative effects of recommender systems can be avoided in the media practice. Finally, the panelists will try to critically examine the current approaches to regulation in the EU legislative proposals. Will they be a game-changer for the use of recommender systems? And do they adequately address the societal challenges that recommender systems pose?