

ECREA SECTION REPORT 2006-7

Communications Law and Policy

In 2006 the Communication Law and Policy section of ECREA was launched, on the initiative of its current chair Katharine Sarikakis. It seeks to provide a forum for the debate and analysis of past and current policy directions in the field of media and communication. Its aim is twofold. First, to provide a forum for academic debate and research collaboration on the broadly defined field of communication law and policy, including questions of media, information, telecoms, and cultural policy. Second, to provide informed and critical policy analysis and recommendations; to collaborate with policy makers and NGOs and civil society; and to provide opinions on most important themes, while drawing attention to others. Currently the section chair is Katharine Sarikakis, Senior Lecturer in Communications Policy and Director of the Centre for International Communications Research at the Institute of Communications Studies, the University of Leeds, UK. The section has two vice chairs: Caroline Pauwels, Professor of Communication and Director of the centre for Studies of Media, Information and Telecommunication (SMIT) at the Free University of Brussels; and Peter Humphreys, Professor of Politics at the University of Manchester.

Surrounding the launch of the section a number of activities have taken place:-

- In May 2006, section chair Katharine Sarikakis organized a panel on Media Policy in the EU, International Conference on Media in the Enlarged Europe, Research Institute for Media, Art and Design, University of Luton, 5-6 May 2006. Section vice chair Peter Humphreys contributed a presentation on “The EU, Communications Liberalisation, and the Future of Public Service Broadcasting”.
- In January 2007, the CLP section’s inaugural conference took place at the University of Leeds, UK. Organized by section chair Katharine Sarikakis, it was devoted to the theme of “European Communications Policy: Objects, Directions, Questions”, and attracted around forty participants. It opened with a welcome session, introducing the aims of the ECREA Communication Law and Policy section. Then, Carole Tongue, former MEP and member of the EP Culture Committee, gave a keynote address on “EU broadcasting policies and cultural diversity”. This was followed by a Round Table, with the following presentations. Section chair Katharine Sarikakis spoke to the theme of “Putting the Social back into EU Media Policy”. Juliet Lodge, Professor of European Studies and Director of the Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence at the University of Leeds, spoke about “Communicating Europe”. Section vice chair Peter Humphreys, director of a current ESRC project on trends in audiovisual regulation, discussed “the Implications of Globalization, Convergence, Concentration and Marketization for Public Service Broadcasting and the Cultural Policy Toolkit”. Section vice chair Caroline Pauwels spoke about “Old Research for a New World: Challenges for Media Policy in the Converging Environment”. Granville Williams, lecturer at the University of Huddersfield, member of the National Council of the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom, and editor Free Press from 1993-2005, spoke on “Democratic Participation in Media Policy Making”. After lunch, Richard Corbett MEP gave a second keynote address on the “EU at Fifty: The End of a Federal Dream?”. This was followed by a second round of presentations and discussions.

Jane Arthurs, Head of the School of Cultural Studies at University of West of England, spoke to the theme of “The Role of Self Regulation and Media Literacy in the Formation of Citizen-Consumers for the Digital Era”. Hannu Nieminen, Director of the Communication Research Centre, University of Helsinki, spoke to the theme of “Towards a Democratic Regulatory Framework for European Media and Communication: A Value Chain Perspective”. Jackie Harrison, Professor of Law at the University of Sheffield, discussed “EU Public Communication, Democracy and Social Justice: Limits and Possibilities”. Carmen Crusafon, of the Universitat Internacional de Catalunya, discussed “Challenges for Media and Cultural Policy: Digital Convergence, a New Concept of Public Service, and the Promotion of Cultural Content”.

- During 2007 a book was published, edited by section chair Katharine Sarikakis, with contributions from the two section vice chairs Peter Humphreys and Caroline Pauwels, namely: Katharine Sarikakis (ed.) Media and Cultural Policy in the European Union, Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi, European Studies Series 24.
- In May 2007, section members Peter Humphreys (vice chair) and Seamus Simpson, presented a paper ‘Globalization, the Competition State and the Rise of the Regulatory State in European Telecommunications’ at the International Communication Association (ICA) Annual Conference, San Francisco, USA, 24-28 May 2007.
- In October 2007, section vice chairs Peter Humphreys and Caroline Pauwels both gave presentations at the International Conference ‘Press and Press Support in the Digital Age’ organised by the Netherlands Press Fund, The Hague, 3-4 October, 2007. This conference brought together academics and policy practitioners to discuss this important theme.
- As for imminent activities, a workshop on the theme of “Globalization, Regulatory Competition and Audiovisual Regulation”, scheduled for May 2008 at the University of Manchester and involving a number of ECREA CLP section members, is currently being organized by section vice-chair Peter Humphreys. The section also expects to be well represented at the forthcoming ECREA conference in Barcelona, and proposals are currently being prepared.