



MAX PLANCK LAW



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CALL FOR PAPERS

Fairness as a Principle of European Law

Fourth Max Planck Law Conference for Early Career Scholars 2025

The Max Planck European Law Group invites abstract submissions for the Fourth Max Planck Conference for Early Career European Scholars on **4 and 5 September 2025** in Munich. The conference will bring together researchers interested in European law and policy for an exchange of ideas on longstanding and developing issues of fairness as a guiding principle of European law.

Fairness is increasingly invoked not only by the European Court of Justice and the European Court of Human Rights, but also in various European legislative initiatives. Today, references to this versatile principle can be found in diverse areas of European law: the rules on free movement, equality law, collective bargaining, competition law, asylum law, IP law, sports law, tax law and the regulation of digital platforms, to name a few. Fairness has become an overarching theme. While its specific functions vary across these different fields, it generally serves to recognize and balance competing interests of autonomous actors. As such, European legal scholarship strives for a holistic understanding of fairness in European law.

At the same time, the concept of fairness is subject to constant socio-economic change. While this contributes to contouring it as a guiding principle in European law, it also poses challenges in terms of legal certainty and predictability. For example, the Digital Markets Act refers to the creation of “contestable and fair markets”, the Data Governance Act to the requirement of “fair data access”, the Data Act to “fair access to and use of data” and the AI Act to the “fair use of artificial intelligence”. Further, several landmark CJEU judgments on European competition and internal market law underscore the importance of fairness as a legal principle. For instance, sports federations that simultaneously act as organizers and regulators are required to establish “transparent, fair, and non-discriminatory” conditions in their rulebooks. Similarly, EU IP law and competition law often requires FRAND (fair, reasonable and non-discriminatory) licensing. In the context of tax law, fairness remains a critical issue, especially when addressing the distribution of tax burdens across different socio-economic groups and the allocation of taxing rights between Member States.

Due to the open-endedness of fairness as a concept, the planned conference aims to identify overarching metrics for its application in the European legal and economic order. In this way, the conference will provide a venue to discuss methodological questions of pertinent case law and the diversity of approaches to understanding fairness. The conference will concentrate on European Union law, but will also be open to approaches originating from the ECHR and, in a comparative perspective, from the legal orders of the Member States.

Abstract Submission

The conference is addressed to Assistant Professors, Postdocs, PhD Candidates, advanced students with academic aspirations, and early career professionals (within 5 years after commencing a professional activity). The call is open to all such researchers, including, but not limited to, affiliates of Max Planck Institutes. The conference language is English. Co-authorship is allowed. We invite to submit **(1) an anonymised abstract** of no more than **500 words** and **(2) a short CV**, both in separate PDF documents, to europe@law.mpg.de by **1 April 2025**. We aim to communicate selections by May 2025.

Selected participants are expected to send a **draft paper due on 1 September 2025**. Reimbursement of travel costs is conditional on the submission of draft papers. We have partnered with *European Law Open* to provide for a publication possibility, subject to a successful review process. Some funding will be available to cover the costs of travel and accommodation (max. 2 nights), with the total amount of funding per participant to be announced after the selection process.

Organisers: The Max Planck European Law Group (<https://law.mpg.de/initiatives/european-law-group/>)