



**University of Pisa - Department of Law**  
**Research Center *Diritto e Tecnologie di Frontiera* (DeTect)**

## **Call for papers**

*A Contract Law for the Age of Digital Platforms?*

International Doctoral Workshop

University of Pisa, Department of Law, 18 September 2020

The Law Department of the University of Pisa is delighted to share this call for papers for an intensive one-day international doctoral workshop taking place on 18 September 2020.

The growth of digital platforms is challenging traditional market structures across the whole economic spectrum, from retail commerce to finance, from housing to transport. So far, the EU regulatory answers to the platform economy has been mainly aimed at reinforcing the protection of users through the rebalancing of rights and duties that suppliers, customers and platform operators hold *vis à vis* each other. However, this framework was recently criticized as fragmentary and incomplete (ELI, Report on Model Rules on Online Platforms), scattered as it is throughout different sectors (consumer law, data protection, competition law and intellectual property law) and unable to grasp the many facets of these transactions.

The challenges posed to the protection of users stem from the inherent structure and functioning of platforms. Indeed, digital platforms redesign the transactional environment, assuming a position at once commanding and liquid in their relations with counterparts. These circumstances raise concerns of asymmetry, dependence, and uncertainty that affect all users, regardless whether they are consumers or suppliers. This new environment along with its new weaknesses require private lawyers to push to the limits legal concepts and regulatory tools.

On the other hand, each platform operates with its own rules and practices in quite diverse economic sectors. In this respect, the study of the platform-user transaction should not disregard sector-specific issues of legal qualification and regulation.

Based on this assumptions, young researchers are invited to submit their original works concerning the protective issues that the transactions between platforms and users raise for private law. Works shall focus on, albeit not be limited to, the following sectors:

- E-commerce
- Access to digital contents
- Housing
- Lending

- Insurance
- Energy market
- Mobility and transport
- Travels
- Streaming services

Applicants are asked to reflect upon the peculiarly asymmetric nature of the platform-user relationship. Indeed, both sectoral legislation and transversal regulatory regimes somehow assume that this transaction should be regarded as an asymmetric contract. However, in view of the power of the platform to shape both the terms of the relationship and the infrastructure in which it takes place, it is open to discussion whether the asymmetry between the parties can be adequately tackled by contract law. Exploring the potential and limits of a contract law of digital platforms is a major challenge for future scholars.

Since the private law perspective on digital platforms interweaves with other perspectives, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches are welcomed.

PhD candidates of Post-doc researchers who have been awarded their PhD not earlier than 3 years from the call are invited to present their research.

To apply, please send an abstract of approx. 4000 characters and your CV to [SeptemberWorkshop@unipi.it](mailto:SeptemberWorkshop@unipi.it) by 18 July 2020.

Selected participants shall submit a short paper of maximum 6000 words by 30 August 2020. The paper may be a partial draft of the final paper. The failure to share a short paper with the organizers may result in exclusion from the workshop. All participants will receive the papers in advance and will be expected to have read them prior to the start of the workshop.

Please take note of the following timeline:

18 July: deadline for submission of abstracts

30 July: applicants will be informed of the results of the selection process

30 August: deadline for submission of short papers

18 September: workshop

Confirmed participants: Francesca Episcopo (Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna), Fabrizio Esposito (Université Louvain La Neuve), Przemyslaw Palka (Yale Law School)

Organizers: [elisa.stracqualursi@phd.unipi.it](mailto:elisa.stracqualursi@phd.unipi.it), [andrea.cioni@phd.unipi.it](mailto:andrea.cioni@phd.unipi.it) (PhD researchers at the Department of Law of the University of Pisa).

The best papers presented in the workshop will be published on an international peer-reviewed Journal.

**Please note that due to the Covid pandemic it might not be possible to welcome you in Pisa in September.** Should that be the case, the workshop will take place via videoconference ... on a digital platform!