Competing, conquering or correlating? The interplay of concepts on diversity in European legal frameworks, policies and codes of ethical conduct

Paper presented at the 2024 conference of the European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA) in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

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Diversity in media refers to the representation and reflection of various cultural, social and political perspectives on the level of access, contents, genres, outlets, and ownership. In normative media theory, diversity is attached to the democratic role and social responsibility of the media to protect norms and values and enable the exercise of the fundamental human right to freedom of expression. Furthermore, media diversity often serves as the normative justification for policies (Karppinen, 2013), such as the provision of "internal pluralism" and the requirements for diversified and balanced contents and programs.

However, the question of how to achieve media diversity is challenging. Several notions encapsulate source- and content diversity (Napoli, 1999), while the era of digital content abundance raised major questions about exposure diversity (Napoli, 2011); (Helberger et al., 2018), specifically in regard to news content (Bernstein et al., 2021). On the policy level, the concepts of the diversity of sources and content became obsolete (Valcke, 2011) and called for more attention to the media users' perspective (European Commission et al., 2022). Traditionally, from the journalistic perspective, diversity has been defined by professional norms and values in ethical codes (Loecherbach et al., 2020). However, since the participatory turn in ethics (Eberwein, 2022), along with the

efforts to redefine the foundations, scholars have urgently called for the recognition of diversity as a key guiding principle of communication (Fourie, 2022).

Driven by the ambition to respond to this call, our work within an ongoing Horizon Europe project aims to explore the interplay of concepts of diversity embedded in European policies, legal standards and a variety of codes of ethical conduct found in eight European countries (Austria, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Slovenia, and Switzerland) and on an international level with European relevance. In this study, we first conducted a qualitative content analysis of codes of ethics and guidelines for all kinds of public communication (370 in total on the country level and 80 on the international level) covering journalism, public relations, advertising, corporate communications, public institutions, and guidelines for media users, such as those using social media. We specifically searched for the formulation, the scope and the interpretation of diversity displayed in specific sections of the codes. Next, we linked our empirical results to the normative concepts of diversity provided in the national legal contexts and Europe-relevant legislation, such as the European Convention on Human Rights, the Fundamental Rights Charter, the Audiovisual Media Services Directive and the European Media Freedom Act, after a policy-oriented legal analysis (Milosavljević & Poler, 2019).

The preliminary findings show that broad, dialogic and participatory public communication ethics, addressing all types of journalistic communicators, both professional and non-professional, offer valuable possibilities for new concepts of media diversity, which in turn could inform future European policy-making on resilient standards and norms. Thus, we make recommendations for developing the Principles of Good Communication Conduct, an inclusive and new media accountability instrument that can be applied in a broad spectrum of different public communication settings.