

CMCS Research Summary and grant awards Academic Year 2012-2013

About the Center for Media and Communication Studies (CMCS)

The Center for Media and Communication Studies (CMCS) is a research center of Central European University dedicated to advancing media and communication scholarship and policy action. The Center produces scholarly and practice-oriented research addressing academic, policy and civil society needs and the complexities of media, technology and communication transformations. CMCS research and activities promote pluralism, participation, and the democratic potential of the media.

CMCS supports an international and interdisciplinary platform that educates future decision makers not only about how media, information and communications affects societies and their public policy goals, but also how public policies, including law, can affect the way information and communications takes place within their respective society. CMCS research addresses the demand within Europe for more communications policy research from a broader European perspective inclusive of Central and Eastern Europe; and globally for new research perspectives and voices that can provide insights on emerging and global questions in a new media environment. CMCS research and events are grounded in one of the pillars of an open society - that of free speech and expression, and the enabling environment necessary for both to prevail. CMCS connects these values with other pillars such as justice, security, political and economic freedom (especially work on open government), censorship, privacy, and community media.

Based in Budapest, CMCS was established in 2004 through the joint efforts of CEU and the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania. The Center serves as a focal point for an international network of acclaimed scholars and academic institutions; offers innovative courses across several CEU departments; provides training and consultancy; and organizes scholarly exchanges through workshops, lectures and conferences on current developments in the field. In its short history, the CMCS has developed core competencies and taken on a range of activities, working with CEU departments and centers, European institutions, and with a growing international network.

Major, multi-year research grants awarded

Virtual Center of Excellence for Research in Violent Online Political Extremism (VOX-Pol)

Funded by the European Commission's 7th Framework Programme Network of Excellence.

CMCS is a consortium member of a successful FP7 programme awarded in 2012, to commence January 2014. Leading work packages for CMCS are Kate Coyer and Eva Bogнар.

VOX-Pol is a 5.1 million Euro, 60-month project that integrates the world's leading researchers and research groups in Violent Online Political Extremism (VOPE) with security practitioners in order to create a sustainable critical mass of innovative activity among what is currently a burgeoning, but fragmented group of researchers and end users across Europe and globally. The overall aim of the project is to raise awareness of the challenges for research and policy-making in this area by exploring the interplay of e-research ethics, privacy, surveillance, freedom of speech, and practices of and responses to VOPE. Across the duration of the project, there will be workshops, training academies, summer courses and two major conferences, in addition to support for publications and network development.

CMCS research focus within the project is focused on assessing the role of internet intermediaries in responding to VOPE; to evaluate policy responses at the EU and global level, and to consider the complexities of the relationship between technology, free expression, and policy that lie at the heart of the relationship between global security and human rights, and are necessary for an approach to address extreme and violent content online. CMCS is also responsible for organizing project summer courses and training academies and will host the 2015 VOX-Pol Training Academy at CEU.

Project partners: Centre for International Studies, Dublin City University (project leader); Internet Institute, University of Oxford; Indraprastha Institute of Information Technology - Delhi; International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation, Kings College London; University of Amsterdam; TNO (Nederlandse Organisatie voor Toegepast Natuurwetenschappelijk); Institute for Peace Research & Security Policy at the University of Hamburg (IFSH)

Creative Approaches to Living Cultural Archives (CAPTCHA)

Funded by the European Union D.G. Education and Culture, Culture Programme.

CMCS was also awarded an EU grant as part of a team led by Radio Corax in Halle, Germany. Other partners include Radio Fro, Linz, Austria; and Near Media Co-op, Dublin, Ireland. The project runs September 2013-August 2015, and is led by Kate Coyer and Joost van Beek. Total project budget is 300,000 Euro.

The project aims to promote European collaboration between community media organizations and to promote the concept of “open content” and innovative digital exchange and distribution. The project’s objectives stem from the wider role which community media play in lowering the threshold for citizens to produce and share stories and news of local import, accessing public information, sharing cultural heritage, and maintaining community dialogue. Project partners will produce content and develop a web-based open content platform; CMCS will produce a study of best practices of innovative and effective digital tools and technologies for open access multi-media exchange platforms; evaluate examples of existing cross-border projects among grassroots media; and provide an analytic overview on the relevant legal questions of copyright, fair use and open content, with particular attention to the variations in legislation from country to country within the European Union.

Hungarian Media Monitor (mediamonitor.ceu.hu)

CMCS was awarded a grant from the Central Eastern Europe Trust of 50,000 Euro to contribute to and inform the current debates among policy makers, advocacy groups, and journalists over how to safeguard media freedom and pluralism at the domestic, regional, and European-wide levels. Amy Brouillette leads the project. Specifically, the aim of the Monitor is to track, document and assess the impacts of Hungary’s new media laws on the country’s media environment. Through the Monitor, independent experts and scholars will provide policy relevant data, news and analyses relating to changes in media ownership and other market developments by providing ongoing monitoring and analysis of the implementation of the 2010 legislation and its impacts on media ownership and media pluralism in Hungary. The project includes research and analyses of key developments and trends, a media monitoring blog (in English) and a digital archive of materials in English.

CMCS partners in the project are the media-monitoring NGO Standards Media Monitor (Mérték Médiaelemző Műhely - MEM) and investigative reporting and pro-transparency NGO Átlátszó.

Additional ongoing research

Ranking Digital Rights: Developing a methodology to rank ICT companies on respect for free expression and privacy

Led by Rebecca MacKinnon, Senior Research Fellow at the New America Foundation, The Ranking Digital Rights project brings together a group of international researchers and advocates to develop a methodology to evaluate and rank the world’s major Information and Communication Technology (ICT) companies on policies and practices related to free expression and privacy in the context of international human rights law. Internet and telecommunications companies, along with mobile device and networking equipment manufacturers, exert growing influence over the political and civil lives of people all over the world. These companies share a responsibility to respect human rights. The project also includes institutional partners such as Humboldt Institute for Internet and Society, Berlin; Centre for Internet and Society, Bangalore; Hu Yong, Peking University School of Journalism and Communication; Instituto de Tecnologia

e Sociedade, Brazil; Johns-Hopkins University Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies; Center for the Study of New Media & Society, Moscow; Center for Global Communications Studies at the Annenberg School, University of Pennsylvania; Access; and the World Wide Web Foundation.

CMCS is contributing to the overall development of the project and leading case studies on European mobile phone providers and social media platforms for a UNESCO report and towards the pilot project, as well as recent participation in a series of roundtable discussion with senior representatives from Facebook, Twitter, Google, British Telecom and others at the Human Rights in Silicon Valley conference. A funding application has been submitted to the Knight News Challenge Grant. CMCS' work in this area is lead by Betty Ferrari, Rian Wanstreet, and Kate Coyer.

Research report publications

Online Personal Data Processing and EU Data Protection Reform

In April 2013, Kristina Irion published and presented a report authored with Giacomo Luchetta. The report is published by the Center for European Policy Studies (CEPS) and sheds light on the fundamental questions and underlying tensions between current policy objectives, compliance strategies and global trends in online personal data processing, assessing the existing and future framework in terms of effective regulation and public policy.

Facing Boundaries, Finding Freedom: An In-Depth Report on Iranian Journalists Working in Iran

CMCS Research Fellow Amy Brouillette, together with Magdalena Wojcieszak and Briar Smith, is the author of a report published by the Iran Media Program, a project of the Center for Global Communication Studies, Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania. The aim of the report is to generate a deeper understanding of how Iranian journalists operate both within and despite an environment of heavy state oversight and restrictions, as well as to broaden our perspective of the complexities of media censorship in Iran.

Development of functional media institutions in Western Balkans - a comparative study

In 2012/2013 CMCS Kristina Irion was advisor to the research project "Development of functional media institutions in Western Balkans - a comparative study". The project analyzes the development of independent and functional media institutions in the Western Balkan countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, and Serbia), focusing on media institutions that have emerged through the involvement of international actors. The project aims at contributing to the understanding of the conditions and factors that influence the creation of sustainable, functional media institutions in democratizing countries.