

**Opening Remarks of International Telecommunications Society (ITS) Chair, Stephen Schmidt, for ITS webinar, *Big Digital Tech and the International Application of Competition Law*, 20 October 2022.**

Welcome!

Thank you for being with us today.

We are joined by members of the ITS family spanning more than 35 countries and almost every time zone, including places where it may be dark outside – either because it is before breakfast time or because it is after dinner time (in Asia, in particular).

The *International Telecommunications Society* (ITS) is a neutral forum and meeting place where scholars, policy practitioners, and members of industry come together to discuss and explore the most timely and pressing issues in communications policy

Today's webinar considers the global experience in using competition law to address concerns about Big Tech.

Today's webinar is the fourth ITS webinar of 2022 and our 15th webinar since the onset of the pandemic.

It is the first of a trio of upcoming ITS webinars comparing key policies that underpin the digital economy including spectrum policy (November 15) and AI regulation (early 2023).

**Today's webinar:**

Over the past decade, Amazon, Apple, Facebook, Google, and Microsoft have become amongst the biggest and most valuable companies on the planet.

These platforms have profoundly transformed the way we live, work, communicate, learn, and more.

Some, however, fear that Big Tech has become *too big* and *too powerful*:

- controlling vast amounts of sensitive personal data;
- Impacting democratic processes; and

- having the potential to stifle competition and innovation, as gatekeepers to the digital economy.

**A question that arises, then, is: with so few companies holding so much power over society and the economy, what should be done, and what can be done, to keep them in check?**

Against this backdrop of concerns, many countries are considering regulatory and legislative responses, including a re-imagined and re-invigorated competition law. New policy proposals in the European Union and United States challenge long-standing assumptions about the role and the reach of competition law.

**A further question that arises is around feasibility: whether competition law can be re-imagined to protect privacy, defend democracy, and foster economy-wide innovation when applied to Big Tech?**

**Today's speaker:**

We have an outstanding speaker today who is uniquely situated to speak to these issues:

**Dr. Robert G. Picard is:**

- a senior fellow at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, at Oxford University;
- a fellow of the Information Society Project at Yale Law School; and
- a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts.

He is often described as the “Father of Media Economics” and is a world-leading specialist on media and communications policy economics, working regularly with companies and governments across the world.

**For organizing this webinar, I would like to thank:**

- **Our speaker**, Dr. Picard;
- **Our academic host**, the Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUE) Business School and their Dean, Dr. Tim Schenecker;
- **Dr. Sandy Levin**, Professor Emeritus at SIUE and an ITS Board member;

- **Our corporate host**, TELUS Communications and our ITS corporate members who make these important conversations possible; and
- **And all of you who have joined today, especially students (our next generation)**. We look forward to your questions, comments and insights and we will leave a healthy amount of time for discussion.

Enjoy!

Stephen Schmidt  
ITS Chair