The role of the Services of General Economic Interest (SGEI) in EU law has changed significantly over time. While initially they were considered as a barrier to the aim of reaching a true internal market, in more recent years they are seen as ‘one of the pillars of the European model of society’. According to the Commission, SGEI services, and their universal access and continuity, are, an essential component of European citizenship. Crucially, various SGEI play a vital role in the life of EU citizens. When considering the current state of play of SGEI, three major societal changes have a clear impact.

Firstly, the European Green Deal marks a new era in the EU’s commitment to environmental protection. Essentially, the general approach adopted by the Green Deal aims for a change of European society, thus moving well beyond addressing specific issues, such as recycling bottles or reducing waste. Environmental protection and specifically carbon neutrality are now overarching goals which will profoundly transform EU policies, including in relation to the SGEI and the wider internal market. Indeed, many policy areas where new initiatives have been announced by the Commission concern SGEIs, including in the area of energy, transport, taxation, investment, etc. Moreover, the war in Ukraine has also shown a necessity to become less dependent of fossil fuels from third countries, hence showing another need for the EU to become carbon neutral.

Secondly, the corona crisis has had an enormous effect. The Member States have taken a lot of measures to deal with this crisis. However, also the EU intervened, although in the initial days the criticism was that more coordination at the European level was needed. In the aftermath of the corona crisis, the EU health Union is being developed. This initiative is the response of the Commission to the challenges revealed by the corona crisis. How will the EU health Union impact the national health competences? Another important question is whether the SGEI provided in the healthcare sector will be transformed by the EU health Union. Will, for example, particular health services/SG(E)I be guaranteed or even supplied at the EU level?

Thirdly, just like services in general, SGEI are greatly affected by digitalization. Services and manufacturing industries are undergoing rapid changes as digital technology advances. Access to particular digital services is essential for citizens. Moreover, labour may be replaced by digital technology. Software is now able to perform analytical and interpretative tasks which potentially challenges the traditional understanding of employment, working time and place and health and safety hazards, to name but a few.

Against this background, various questions arise in relation to the reaction of international (economic) law and EU law on these societal changes and their effect on SGEI. In 2008 a conference held in Potsdam dealt with the state of play of SG(E)I, which resulted in the book ‘The Changing Legal Framework for Services of General Interest in Europe’, edited by Markus Krajewski, Ulla Neergaard and Johan van de Gronden. This book was followed up by other volumes of the Asser Press/Springer series on SG(E)I. Now, it is time again to take again the temperature of the SGEI given the major developments outlined above.

The 6th Radboud Economic Law Conference aims to provide a forum where scholars, law enforcers, judges, students, practitioners and legal experts can debate these important issues. This one-day conference will feature keynote speeches by:

- **Anna Gerbrandy**, professor of Competition law, Utrecht University
- **Mary Guy**, lecturer in law, Lancaster University
- **Esther van Zimmeren**, associate professor of IP law and governance and member of the Jean Monet Center of Excellence ACTORE, University of Antwerp

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We invite interested parties, practitioners, or members of the academic community to submit proposals for papers for this International Conference. Contributions accepted for this conference are to be published in the Asser Press/Springer Series on SG(E)I.

For more information regarding the conference, including the call for papers, the programme, the NOVA points awarded, and the registration procedure, please check: [www.ru.nl/law/relec](http://www.ru.nl/law/relec).