

# 1. Managing conflict and instability in public-private supervisory networks

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## Introduction

Nowadays, government authorities share responsibilities for monitoring and oversight of business conduct with business itself, civil society organizations and consumers. For example, companies and industries self-regulate by implementing codes of conduct or outsourcing supervisory responsibilities to certification organizations or auditors. Civil society organizations act as watchdog or develop, monitor and assure private standards either alone or in collaboration with other stakeholders. In many cases, the activities of private actors and public supervisory organizations are coordinated in so-called public-private supervisory networks.

While the cooperation between public and private actors in supervisory networks can increase the legitimacy and effectiveness of supervision, it is not self-evident that the division of responsibilities and the coordination of tasks in these public-private supervisory networks run harmoniously and uninterrupted. For example, differences in working practices and objectives can cause conflict between network partners and lead to instability of the network. Moreover, differences in rules and procedures might hamper the exchange of knowledge and information. In some cases, network partners might curb these tensions by developing strategies to deal with conflict. Yet, partners will still have the tendency to steer networks in the direction they prefer. Previous research has shown that the (in)stability of networks depends on three factors: (dis)agreement about shared working practices, (dis)agreement about network boundaries and the presence of internal and or external parties capable of breaking through the status quo.

The current research project aims to contribute to a detailed understanding of conflict and instability in public-private supervisory networks.

## Research design

This project will be based on a comparative case study focusing for instance on specific locations where industrial activity and a high population density come together, on specific markets or industries that are monitored by a variety of supervisory authorities and inspectorates (taxes, environment, occupational safety, etc.) at different levels (international, national, regional, local) and on different types of supervisory networks (public & business; public & civil society; public, business & civil society). The candidate is expected to conduct a theoretically driven empirical study. We are therefore looking for candidates who can demonstrate experience in conducting empirical (legal) research.

Questions about the suitability of the research proposal that a job applicant has in mind can be posed to professor Mascini ([mascini@essb.eur.nl](mailto:mascini@essb.eur.nl)).