



ASSER
INSTITUTE

Centre for International & European Law

**International & European law as a Source of
Trust in a Hyper-connected World**
*Contours of the Asser Strategic Research Agenda
2016-2020*

Introduction

The T.M.C. Asser Instituut was founded in 1965 as an interuniversity institute for international law in The Hague. During the past 50 years, the institute has developed into an internationally renowned centre of expertise in the fields of public international law, private international law and European law.

Located in The Hague, the 'International City of Peace and Justice', the Asser Institute is the established location where critical and constructive reflection on international and European legal developments takes place. In the vicinity of the many Hague international (legal) institutions, diplomatic missions, and government ministries, the institute exercises strong convening power and attracts legal scholars from around the world to present and test cutting-edge ideas in their respective fields of expertise.

The Asser Institute has a strong tradition in pursuing independent research. The coming years will see the institute build on this research expertise and further strengthen its academic profile whilst fostering its orientation towards fundamental and independent policy-oriented research.

In doing so, the Asser Institute will continue to fulfil the following roles:

- A facilitator for all Dutch Law Schools that wish to collaborate with Asser in research networks and projects and/or in knowledge disseminating activities.
- A vanguard institute for the University of Amsterdam (UvA) in The Hague (for the UvA Law School in general and the Amsterdam Center for International Law (ACIL) in particular).

Mission

The T.M.C. Asser Instituut aims to further the development of international and European law in such a way that it serves a cultivation of trust and respect in the global, regional, national and local societies in which the law operates.

Contours of the Asser Strategic Research Agenda 2016-2020

Pursuant to the institute's mission, the Asser Strategic Research Agenda (ASRA) '*International & European law as a source of trust in a hyper-connected world*' aims to examine how law as one of the social institutions can contribute to the construction and cultivation of trust and trusting relations needed for cooperation in this large and hyper-connected world.

It will guide the further development of the institute's research capacity and it will contribute to further strengthening Asser's intellectual identity and its position at the interface of the world of legal academia and legal practice.

In the ASRA, the Asser Institute's research is structured along three research strands and an architrave. The latter deals with more general conceptual questions about trust, trustworthiness, and trust-building effects of international and European law fostering the overarching, more abstract and loosely defined normative framework. The three strands are separate but mutually interlinked:

- Human Dignity and Human Security in International and European Law
- Advancing Public Interests in International and European Law
- Adequate Dispute Settlement and Adjudication in International and European Law

Human Dignity and Human Security in International and European Law

If law cannot provide a sense of human dignity and security, it sells short of cultivating trust. Upholding the Rule of Law and a generally high level of human rights protection contributes to the development of trust (and, arguably, vice versa). The research strand *Human Dignity and Human Security in International and European Law* adopts as its normative framework a human rights approach to contemporary global challenges, inter alia in the field of counter-terrorism, international criminal law, international humanitarian law, international trade, environmental protection, European private international law, and the law of EU external relations. It examines what it means to safeguard human dignity – also in relation to human security – in these areas.

Advancing Public Interests in International and European law

Both at the European and international level, the dual impact of globalisation and fragmentation has complicated the use of legislation and regulation in safeguarding public interests. *Advancing Public Interests in International and European law* aims to critically examine how international and European law may further protection of public interests in different areas, ranging from the governance of sports and media in Europe to natural resources, trade, and environmental protection at the international level. Research within this strand will engage with a large set of questions centred on the potential synergies and trade-offs between different public interests and private interests. Possible normative frameworks for reconciling conflicting values are, for example, the principle of proportionality and variants of the constitutional approach.

Adequate Dispute Settlement and Adjudication in International and European Law

By effectuating the law – and thus upholding the Rule of Law –, courts, tribunals and other dispute settlement mechanisms provide fairness, security, stability and predictability. All of these values are conducive to trust. Courts, tribunals and other dispute settlement mechanisms can perform this function adequately only if they, in turn, are perceived as trustworthy in speaking and enforcing the law. The research strand *Adequate Dispute Settlement and Adjudication in International and European Law* examines the adequacy of dispute settlement and adjudication in various areas, as diverse as foreign investment and transnational civil and commercial disputes, doping and sports more generally, cross-border civil disputes, international crimes, and classic inter-state relations.

Looking ahead

Over the period of this research agenda, the Institute will:

- Conduct high-quality independent research – both fundamental research and policy-oriented research –, in order to contribute to current academic and policy debates within the scope of the aforementioned research strands.
- Increase its research capacity, especially through the promotion and fostering of PhD research in international and European law.
- Deliver research-based, cutting-edge, high-level policy-oriented meetings, (professional) education modules and public events of knowledge dissemination.
- Intensify – in areas where the institute's research expertise can be brought to bear – its cooperation and engagement in European and international academic networks, as well as in the national, European and international arenas of policy formation and legal practice.

More information about Asser's research & activities can be found on our website: www.asser.nl