

[Call for papers] Utrecht-Groningen- T. M. C. Asser, CLEER EU external relations PhD and early-career workshop

Theme: Reviving multilateralism: what role for the EU?

Dates: 4-5 December 2025 **Location:** T.M.C. Asser Instituut

The T.M.C. Asser Instituut, the Centre for the Law of EU External Relations (CLEER), Utrecht University, and the University of Groningen are pleased to announce a two-day workshop for PhD and early-career scholars on the theme of the legal dimensions of the EU's role in reviving multilateralism. The workshop will be held at the T.M.C. Asser Instituut in The Hague on 4-5 December 2025.

Workshop theme: The rules-based international order appears to be crumbling, marked by fragmentation in both trade and defence. The US-China trade war and the imposition by the US administration of "reciprocal" tariffs on allies and adversaries alike have disrupted global trade. In defence, the US commitment to NATO has waned, prompting Europe to rearm, and putting strain on existing multilateral institutions, including the UN. A shift from multilateral solutions is also evident in the European Union's adoption of unilateral trade instruments to defend its interests in an international trading system where the WTO appellate body no longer functions, and trade policy increasingly serves national security interests.

This situation poses a significant challenge to the EU, an international organisation of 27 sovereign states, whose founding treaties require it to 'promote multilateral solutions to common problems, particularly in the framework of the United Nations'. In a world with fewer like-minded partners, can the EU play a role in reviving or reconstructing multilateralism without US leadership? Can the EU's embrace of a 'strategic autonomy' agenda be reconciled with a principled commitment to multilateralism? Could the EU's bilateral and plurilateral agenda lay the foundations for a new multilateral system, potentially with a diminished US role? What would the EU's role be in such a system, and how can it ensure alignment with its founding values of rule of law and democracy? Likewise, how can the EU avoid centralized, executive-led decision-making that sidelines courts and parliaments while constructing this new order?

Topics of interest: We welcome abstracts that address, but are not limited to, the following topics:

- The effects of the US-China trade conflict on global trade and multilateralism and the EU's responses to it.
- The EU's unilateral trade instruments and their implications for multilateralism.
- The role of the EU in a fragmented international security landscape, including institutional proposals for a new or reformed security architecture in Europe.
- Strategies for the EU to revive multilateralism, including but not limited to the UN, without US leadership.
- The EU's bilateral and plurilateral trade agreements as foundations for a new multilateral trading system.
- Strategies to ensure alignment of a new multilateral system with the EU's founding values.
- Strategies to avoid centralised, executive-led decision-making in the EU's multilateral efforts and safeguard compliance with the EU's founding values of the rule of law and democracy.
- The future of the WTO and the EU's role in its potential reform.
- The future of investment protection and the role of a multilateral investment court.
- The international role of the euro and the EU's role in and cooperation with international monetary institutions.
- The EU's approach to integrating national security interests within the international rules-based order.
- Comparative analysis of the EU's multilateral strategies with other global actors.

Abstract submission and process

- **Eligibility:** Current PhD scholars and early career researchers (defined as those awarded their PhD in 2020 or later) are invited to submit abstracts and a short CV (max 1 page)
- **Abstract submission:** Abstracts of no more than 500 words should be submitted by 30 June 2025. The abstract (and final paper) can be based on the applicant's current PhD or post-doc research.
- **Notification:** Successful applicants will be notified by 30 July 2025.
- **Draft paper submission:** Successful candidates will be invited to submit a draft paper (8,000-12,000 words) by 30 October 2025.
- **Workshop presentation:** Selected candidates will present their work in a closed workshop and receive feedback and guidance from senior scholars in the field.
- **Publication:** The organisers aim to publish the papers stemming from the workshop either as part of a working paper series or as a special issue in a peer-reviewed journal. Upon applying, participants should indicate their interest in part
- **Scholarships:** A limited number of scholarships to facilitate participation in the event will be provided. A motivated application for such scholarships (max. 300 words) should be submitted separately.

Organizing committee: E. Kassoti, G. Kübek, T. Verellen.

Contact information: You can send your abstract and short CV to E.Kassoti@asser.nl



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We look forward to your contributions and to another successful workshop!