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## Call for papers

for the international, multidisciplinary conference

### **"The European Union and international fora: Does the European Union serve multilateralism?"**

University of Rennes

**3-4 October 2024**

As an integrated and autonomous legal order, the European Union (EU) differs from other international organisations. It also differs from other regional economic integration organisations, a legal category to which it belongs from the strict point of view of international law. The EU has its own specific characteristics. In the international context, they enable it to pursue its objectives, defend its interests and promote its values within the framework laid down by the treaties on which it is founded. According to them, the EU is assigned the task of contributing "to the strict observance and development of international law"<sup>1</sup> and of "promoting multilateral solutions to common problems, in particular within the framework of the United Nations"<sup>2</sup>.

The aim of the conference is to assess the EU's contribution to the search for multilateral solutions to common problems through its action in and with international fora, whether these fora are embodied (international organisations) or not, and whether they are universal or regional. The aim is thus to assess the Union's capacity to work, within or with these frameworks, to develop and implement multilateral political and legal solutions, preferably in line with its values and interests.

*The aim of this event will be to assess the extent to which, and the conditions under which, international fora constitute a relevant framework/place/vector of international action for the European Union. Through the study of a variety of situations, the aim will be to understand what the Union's international action via international fora says about the Union as an international player. In this context, one of the aims of the conference is to study the perception and understanding that international or regional bodies have of the European Union and its law. In principle, proposals should fall under one of the following three headings:*

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<sup>1</sup> Article 3(5) of the Treaty on European Union.

<sup>2</sup> Article 21(1) of the Treaty on European Union.

### **Axis 1. The determinants of the EU's participation in international fora: legal, political, strategic, financial and other issues.**

In the international arena, the European Union coexists and interacts with sovereign States (both its own Member States and third countries) and international organisations that perceive and approach it with their own legal and political analytical grids. Its ability to participate in the work of international fora thus depends on a number of factors including:

- the way in which the fora in which it claims to work operate,
- the presence of its Member States,
- the powers it is able to exercise under the Treaties.

While the legal implications of the European Union's participation in the work of international organisations have already been examined by legal scholars, new questions are likely to arise. **In particular, a study of the question from the point of view of international organisations and fora deserves to be carried out** in order to assess, for example, the impact of the European Union's presence on the functioning of the fora concerned, the conduct of their work, the placing on the agenda of the subjects discussed, etc. **In this respect, the testimonies of agents of these fora and international organisations will be particularly welcome.**

The papers may also examine the **determinants of the Union's international action via international bodies**. The European Union's international action via international fora is one mode of action among others, particularly in the light of the reality of contemporary international relations marked by the return of forms of unilateralism and the weakening of certain international organisations as a forum for the production of global law.

Beyond the treaties' affirmation of the European Union's commitment to multilateralism, is it possible to identify one or more strategies behind the deployment of the Union's external action in and via international bodies? What are the possible implications for multilateralism?

Finally, it may be interesting to consider **the European Union's possible contribution to the development of multilateralism**. The European Commission, for example, promotes the need to adapt multilateralism to make it more inclusive and networked (*2021 Strategic Foresight Report. The EU's capacity and freedom to Act*). Does the European Union defend a specific conception of multilateralism and global governance? What would be its characteristics?

### **Axis 2. Interactions between EU law and the normative production of international fora: complementarity, competition, subsidiarity?**

Is the European Union at the service of multilateral law or multilateral law at the service of the Union?

Under this axis, papers may question complementarity, competition and subsidiarity, as well as influence and appropriation. In this context, the aim will be to assess the European Union's influence (positive or negative) on the production of standards in international fora. The reception of these standards in the EU legal order, their possible re-use, particularly in the EU's external agreements may be questioned as well as the impact that such re-use is likely to have on the interpretation of multilateral standards. More broadly, it will be interesting to study the way in which the EU relies on the work of international bodies as a tool for decision-making and legitimisation of its international action (use of the work of ILO experts, ECHR and ICJ rulings, UNSC resolutions, etc).

### **Axis 3. The European Union and regional bodies: does the Union serve regionalism?**

The search for multilateral solutions to common problems also has a regional dimension. It would seem useful to consider how, in its external relations, the European Union takes account of regional bodies, whether they are regional cooperation organisations or economic integration organisations. Several of the European Union's legal instruments show a willingness to take account of the existence of regional economic integration or the mobilisation of regional security organisations. However, the European Union's external action, particularly in the area of trade, has sometimes been seen as likely to slow down the process of economic integration.

It therefore seems interesting to consider the European Union's interactions with regional organisations, whether this involves considering the European Union's relations with certain geographical regional organisations (African Union, MERCOSUR, CARICOM, ASEAN, etc.) or the Union's action via certain sectoral regional organisations (regional fisheries organisations, OTIF, NATO, etc.).

## **Practical information**

**Profile of contributors:** This call for papers is aimed in particular at researchers and young researchers in law, political science and international relations, as well as diplomats and officials from international and European institutions.

**Working languages:** English, French

**Hybrid mode:** the conference can be attended face-to-face or remotely

The papers will be published.

A budget has been set aside to cover all or part of the participants' travel and accommodation expenses.

### **Timetable and submission procedures :**

- **31 May 2024:** submission of a project of approximately 1000 words in French or English. Authors are invited to state their full name(s), title(s) and position(s), as well as the institution(s) to which they belong. It is also possible to indicate to which axis their contribution would be linked.
- Proposals can be sent by e-mail to the following address: [cecile.rapoport@univ-rennes.fr](mailto:cecile.rapoport@univ-rennes.fr)
- **mid-June 2024:** transmission of responses.
- **Early September 2024:** Participants will be invited to submit a summary or draft version of their contribution.

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