

EU Trade and Sustainable Development Governance in the Global South

Thursday 4 June 2026 09:00 (1h 30m)

Under the geoeconomic turn, the European Union (EU)'s Trade and Sustainable Development (TSD) governance has evolved into a new hybrid framework comprising both bilateral and unilateral mechanisms. Traditionally, the EU's bilateral approach has incorporated TSD provisions on labour rights and environmental sustainability into trade agreements. In recent years, however, the EU has increasingly shifted toward unilateral instruments—such as the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) and the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)—which together constitute a new phase of hybridised TSD governance.

Yet, within the broader global geoeconomic context, the EU's TSD governance is increasingly being contested, reframed, and deconstructed by its trading partners in the Global South. Far from being passive recipients, state and non-state actors in the South actively engage with and shape EU TSD governance—through discourses and practices of compliance, resistance, and strategic leverage. The legitimacy of the EU's TSD governance, and of the EU as a normative power, depends on its capacity to accommodate the preferences, agendas, and autonomy of partners in the Global South.

This panel brings together papers that explore the evolving trade–sustainability nexus in EU–Global South interactions, including:

Trade and sustainable-development governance (human rights, labour rights, and environmental sustainability) EU green-deal instruments and unilateral regulations (EUDR, CBAM, RED II, CSDDD)

Bilateral trade agreements and preferential trade frameworks Multilateral cooperation settings such as the Paris Agreement

*Discourses and practices of state and non-state actors in TSD

Track Classification: International Political Economy Working Group