



“Smart and lean integration: finding regional solutions to global challenges”

The Hague, The Netherlands, 31 August and 1 September 2023

Call for papers:

Our world is facing unprecedented challenges which demand a joint response. Climate change cannot be solved by any country alone, no matter how strategically autonomous it is. Migration is a global phenomenon, which cares little about sovereignty. And a modern (digital) economy is inherently interconnected. Even if dependence on some global value chains might be reduced, full autarky is therefore a myth, certainly if climate goals are to be actually realized, standards of living are to be retained, and some form of market mechanism is to remain.

To make matters worse, these shared challenges have to be addressed in a rapidly renationalizing world. Multilateral institutions like the UN and the WTO are challenged, torn by the economic and geopolitical strife that accompanies the shift to a multipolar global order. Major powers are racing to protect their own strategic autonomy, leading to nationalistic agenda's that threaten effective and efficient collaboration. Instead of more global collaboration, we may be headed for more fragmentation and conflict.

Regional integration may be one part of the solution, in collaboration with other vital actors at the international and national level. To begin with, regions may be large enough to effectively tackle some of the major challenges, but small and coherent enough to enable effective collaboration. In addition, for all but the largest nations, regional integration might offer the safety and collective clout countries need to defend their interests in a renationalizing and less stable multipolar reality where major powers are primarily pursuing their own interest. And though it faces some of the same challenges as multilateral collaboration, including nationalistic reflexes, regional collaboration may be more realistically and quickly achieved in some areas than global collaboration. This is vital considering the clock is ticking on key challenges such as climate change. Even if it always needs to connect to and align with larger international initiatives, regional integration may, therefore, help ensure sufficient collaboration, and at a sufficient level, especially where regions manage to collaborate between themselves as well.

For regional integration to play this role, however, we need to find better ways for countries to collaborate than the mechanisms that exist today. Ways that better fit the very different challenges and realities in Africa, Asia, Latin-America, the Middle East, and Europe. This also means finding alternatives to the EU model. For even though the EU remains the most advanced form of regional integration so far, and offers vital successes and failures for other regions to learn from, its approach may often not form the best model for other regions. This is already the case because of the high legal and sovereignty 'overhead' of the EU model, which is too high for many other regions to bear. But it is equally imperative in light of the fundamental differences between regions and their constituent states,

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and the subsequent need to respect the voice, knowledge and culture of all relevant actors, including non-governmental ones, and to avoid the pitfall of imposing European constructs.

For these reasons, this conference explores the potential of regional collaboration for meeting some of the key challenges facing our world today, and to do so in a smarter and leaner way than 'just' copying the EU model. It does so in the context of CompaRe, the Leiden Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence on comparative regional integration, and in collaboration with UNU-CRIS, the United Nations University Institute on Comparative Regional Integration Studies.

Substantively, the conference focuses on three core challenges: climate change, migration and economic collaboration in a digital, renationalizing reality. In addition, it focuses on two key underlying academic challenges: the methodology of comparative legal integration and the challenges raised by overlap between regional initiatives and between regional and even larger, global initiatives. Consequently, papers are invited on the following five topics:

1. Addressing the methodological challenges of comparing regional integration, including the n=1 challenge, the challenge of critical comparative theory, including postcolonialism, the problem of legal transplants and diffusion, deep contextualization, and the societal and economic preconditions for certain forms of legal integration.
2. Regional approaches to tackling climate change, including inter-regional collaboration, the transition to renewables, deforestation, plastics and mitigation efforts. Contributions can focus on one region, or already take a comparative approach between different regions;
3. Regional approaches to managing migration, including collaborative efforts on tackling root causes and inter-regional collaboration. Contributions can focus on one region, or already take a comparative approach between different regions;
4. Lean economic integration, including contributions on integration in digital markets and (financial) services, effective competition law for developing regions, lean and less supranational forms of economic integration including value chain based integration, alternative forms of dispute resolution including arbitration and use of international fora in economic integration, creating a joint production base and the role of SME's. Contributions can focus on one region, or already take a comparative approach between different regions.
5. Overlap and inter-regional collaboration: In many regions, multiple regional organizations pursue overlapping and interacting objectives. In addition, global and continental initiatives, such as the Paris accords or the African Continental Free Trade Area overlap with regional initiatives, or require regions to collaborate with each other. As this overlap and interaction is only expected to increase, the question of overlap will only become more important in the future, for all three substantive challenges identified. Papers are to address the challenges, and possible solutions, to overlap, either in a specific region, comparatively, or at a more abstract, legal level.

Part of the conference will be dedicated to a round table for authors to ensure cross-fertilization between the different contributions.



Please submit an abstract in English of a maximum of 500 words detailing the core research question, the region(s) studied and the approach taken. The submission should also include a short biography of no more than 200 words. The submissions should be sent to Prof. Dr Armin Cuyvers before **7 July 2023** on the following email address: a.cuyvers@law.leidenuniv.nl

Based on the abstracts submitted, a selection will be made of authors invited to present during the conference. Decisions on the selected abstracts will be communicated by **14 July 2023**. Several grants are available to cover travel and accommodation, and these will be awarded inter alia based on the financial capacity of authors and their home institution and the aim of ensuring a balanced representation, also from the global south. In addition, even though the default option is to present in person, online participation can be an option.

Authors selected to present their paper will also be invited to submit their contribution for an edited volume on the theme of the conference. The final decision on publication of any contribution lies with the editors of the volume, and will be inter alia based on comments received from peer reviewers.

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Armin Cuyvers

Professor of European Law, Director of *CompaRe*: the Leiden Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence on Comparative Regional Integration and associate research fellow at UNU-CRIS.

For more information on CompaRe please visit <https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/compare>

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