

DynamInt Doctoral Forum 2026

Universidade Católica Portuguesa Lisbon
31 August - 1 September 2026

EU LAW IN AN AGE OF GEOPOLITICAL DISRUPTION

Institutional Design, Fundamental Rights &
Regulatory Power

Call for papers until 31 May 2026
<https://hu.berlin/doctoralforum2026>

Call for Papers: DynamInt Doctoral Forum 2026

EU Law in an Age of Geopolitical Disruption: Institutional Design, Fundamental Rights, and Regulatory Power

Universidade Católica Portuguesa Lisbon, 31 August – 1 September 2026

The DFG Research Training Group Dynamic Integration (DynamInt) invites early career researchers (PhD candidates and post-docs) to the DynamInt Doctoral Forum 2026 on the topic of EU Law in an Age of Geopolitical Disruption: Institutional Design, Fundamental Rights, and Regulatory Power.

The Doctoral Forum provides a platform for early career researchers in the field of European Law to present their research, debate current issues, exchange ideas and receive feedback in an international environment. The DynamInt Doctoral Forum 2026 will take place at the Universidade Católica Portuguesa Lisbon on 31 August from 9 a.m. and is expected to conclude at approximately 11 a.m. on 1 September 2026.

About DynamInt

The Doctoral Forum is organised by the Research Training Group Dynamic Integration (DynamInt) funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG), whose research agenda addresses the interplay between harmonisation and plurality across different areas of EU law, including fundamental rights, migration law, private law, criminal law, intellectual property, and economic and digital regulation. For more information visit <https://hu.berlin/dynamint>.

EU Law in an Age of Geopolitical Disruption: Institutional Design, Fundamental Rights, and Regulatory Power

The development of the single market has long been a central driver of European integration. It has shaped EU regulatory activity across an expanding range of policy areas, including migration, public health, environmental protection, agriculture, finance, and digital governance. Over time, EU law has become more than a framework for internal coordination. It has also emerged as a model of governance with significant external reach: European regulatory frameworks increasingly shape global norms and reinforce the EU's image as a distinct legal and political actor.

Yet the conditions under which these frameworks were built are changing. The EU now faces a more unstable and contested geopolitical and economic environment, alongside growing challenges to the rule of law within and beyond the Union. These developments place increasing pressure on existing legal instruments and institutional structures.

The Doctoral Forum invites doctoral researchers working in different fields of EU law to reflect on the relationship between EU law and geopolitical disruption. It asks whether the Union's legal and institutional architecture remains capable of delivering on its foundational objectives, and how those objectives are being reinterpreted under conditions of uncertainty and pressure.

The Doctoral Forum is organised around three themes and panels. Together, they address the EU's institutional capacity to act, the role of fundamental rights in times of crisis and contestation, and the uses and limits of regulation in an era of geopolitical disruption.

Theme 1: The Capacity of the EU's Institutional Architecture to Confront Geopolitical Disruption

The EU's geopolitical ambitions to defend its interests, project its values, and respond coherently to external shocks sit within an institutional architecture that remains marked by tensions between supranational and intergovernmental logics. In some of the Union's most politically sensitive domains, decision-making still depends on consensus, unanimity, and complex forms of coordination between EU institutions and Member States.

We invite contributions that explore the tension between the EU's aspiration to strategic agency and its legal and institutional structures. This includes contributions on how geopolitical crises are translated into legal and institutional questions including competence, efficient decision-making, solidarity, enforcement, constitutional balance, and democratic legitimacy.

Relevant topics include the Common Foreign and Security Policy, the unanimity requirement and debates on a possible move to qualified majority voting, the relationship between the EU and NATO, defence, sanctions, and enlargement. Contributions may also address the role and possible adaptation of EU institutions in this context, including the evolving function of the Commission, the political leadership of the European Council, and the scope of review exercised by the Court of Justice.

Theme 2: Fundamental Rights as Shield, Sword, or Symbol?

Fundamental rights occupy a central place in the Union's constitutional self-image. They are presented as limits on public power, expressions of shared values, and markers of the EU's distinctiveness both internally and externally. At the same time, recent crises have shown that rights can also become sites of tension, contestation, instrumentalisation, and selective deployment. In an increasingly securitised and polarised environment, fundamental rights may function as safeguards against overreach, but they may also be invoked strategically to justify intervention, discipline Member States, legitimise external action, or reorder competing priorities.

We invite contributions that examine how rights are invoked, interpreted, expanded, or restricted under EU law, especially in the context of geopolitical disruption. Relevant topics include fundamental rights in the EU's external relations, global value chains, migration and border control, anti-discrimination, media freedom, privacy, and social rights. Contributions are also welcome from regulatory contexts in which fundamental rights questions arise, including digital governance, competition law, and financial regulation.

Theme 3: (De)Regulation and Enforcement in a Shifting Geopolitical Order

One of the defining features of the EU has been its tendency to govern through consensus and to translate political commitments into legal frameworks. The extension of this model beyond EU borders, a phenomenon coined by Anu Bradford as the Brussels Effect, has resulted in the adoption of European regulatory frameworks at a global level, driven both by market dynamics that incentivise compliance and by the deliberate alignment of third countries with EU standards.

However, this regulatory influence is now under pressure: international conflicts, economic disruptions, and demands for strategic autonomy are testing the EU's legislative capacity, while "stop-the-clock" measures reveal the limits of both regulation and deregulation as responses to external crises. The distance between what these frameworks once promised and what they deliver in practice is growing, as compliance strategies, institutional constraints, and geopolitical pressure increasingly call their effectiveness into question.

We invite contributions that examine regulation, deregulation, and enforcement as responses to geopolitical disruption, and ask how legal frameworks are being reshaped to address new geopolitical realities and whether the EU's regulatory model is being adapted, instrumentalised, or transformed in the process. Relevant topics include all forms of regulation and enforcement through public and private law instruments, including but not limited to digital governance, competition law, financial regulation, sanctions, and trade law. This theme is particularly relevant for researchers whose work engages with the gap between the EU's regulatory ambitions and their practical realisation.

Call for papers

We welcome submissions from all fields of European Law in the form of an **abstract (max. 500 words) by 31 May 2026**. The issues and questions touched upon in the descriptions of the topics are intended to serve as thematic guidance but are by no means meant to be exhaustive.

Please send your submissions via the following form: <https://hu.berlin/doctoralforum2026>.

Successful participants will be contacted by mid-June 2026 at the latest. Presenters are encouraged to submit a full paper by 5 August 2026. While the submission of a full paper is not compulsory, it is strongly recommended, as submitted papers will be shared with other presenters and panel chairs ahead of the conference to facilitate informed discussion. Full papers may be submitted in English, German, French and Spanish, however the abstract and a summary should be provided in English as the panel presentations and discussion will take place in English.

Logistics and funding

The DynamInt Doctoral Forum will be held as an on-site event only and is free of charge. It will take place within the context of this year's European Law School Summer School on "Action and Reaction - The new geopolitical world order and the EU". Participants in the Doctoral Forum may also attend the events of the summer school taking place outside of the panels.

The Doctoral Forum will be scheduled so as not to conflict with the European Law Unbound conference, which begins on 1 September.

Panellists may apply for the reimbursement of accommodation and travel costs in accordance with the German Travel Expenses Act if these will not otherwise be reimbursed by another institution. However, as funds are limited, accommodation and travel costs may not be covered in full. Further information will be offered at a later stage to the selected panellists.

Information on the possibility for registration without participating in a panel will be published in July 2026.

Questions may be directed to dynamint-doctoral-forum-2026@lists.hu-berlin.de.