



## 2023 ESIL Research Forum, Tartu 27-28 April 2023

### Call for Papers

#### **Regional Developments of International Law in Eastern Europe and Post-Soviet Eurasia**

The 2023 ESIL Research Forum will take place **on Thursday 27 and Friday 28 April 2023** and will be hosted by the School of Law of the University of Tartu in Estonia.

The ESIL Research Forum is a scholarly conference that promotes engagement with research in progress by members of the Society. It has a small and intensive format. The Forum targets scholars at an early stage of their careers. Approximately 20-25 paper submissions will be selected. During the Forum, selected speakers will receive comments on their presentations from members of the ESIL Board and invited experts.

The 2023 Research Forum addresses the topic:

#### **“Regional Developments of International Law in Eastern Europe and Post-Soviet Eurasia”**

The co-existence of universality and regionalism in international law is not always easy or self-evident. Nowadays, international law is universal but regional and national differences in its perception and application can nevertheless be considerable. In 2012, at its conference in Valencia, ESIL already explored the theme of regionalism and international law. This time, we will return to the theme of regionalism and international law but more specifically in the context of Eastern Europe and post-Soviet Eurasia where international law is currently highly relevant but also heavily contested.

Eastern Europe and post-Soviet Eurasia are partly overlapping as regions. Post-Soviet Eurasia is itself smaller than the whole continent of Eurasia and we use the term ‘post-Soviet’ merely to narrow the geographic scope of the conference. Following the end of the Cold War, several East European countries became members of the Council of Europe and some of them also joined the European Union. However, where ‘Europe’ would end in Eastern Europe in political terms remained a contested issue, including in the context of the EU’s Eastern Partnership policy. For example, Belarus never joined the Council of Europe and the Russian Federation heavily criticized NATO’s enlargement to East European countries.

In 2015, the Eurasian Economic Union came into being – with Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia as founding members. They were later joined by Armenia and Kyrgyzstan. Several post-Soviet Eurasian countries are also members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The Russian Federation is the dominant country in these efforts at regional integration in post-Soviet Eurasia. In turn, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization symbolizes cooperation between Russia and post-Soviet Eurasia on the one hand and China on the other hand.

Russia's aggression against Ukraine in 2022 is a fundamental challenge to international law in the region. The Russian Federation is no longer a member of the Council of Europe and, as of September 2022, the European Convention on Human Rights will stop applying to Russia. The year 2022 has been a serious rupture but even several earlier events had indicated that the delimitation of geopolitical regions is ridden with conflicts: for example, the 2008 Russian-Georgian war, the 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea, the 2020 war between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh, and the Russian-Ukrainian war in Donbas.

The main question for international law is whether the newly deepened geopolitical divisions in Eastern Europe have also brought (or been expressions of) different, competing understandings of international law in the region. These concepts may be primarily regional but may also be of universal and global relevance, especially concerning the UN. They may pertain to fundamental questions of international law such as the interrelationship between state sovereignty and human rights, 'great powers' and smaller states, historical rights and civilization(s), or modes of dispute resolution.

The 2023 ESIL Research Forum aims to engage with these competing dimensions of international law as reflected in Eastern Europe and post-Soviet Eurasia. Can universal norms of international law still be of guidance in Eastern Europe – in particular, in war-torn Ukraine – or have they fallen victim to geopolitical divisions and Russia's use of force? Another aim of the Research Forum is to consolidate knowledge about regional organizations in post-Soviet Eurasia bordering on the European Union. Has a Russian-led Eurasian regional space of international law emerged? What are the norms and values on which integration in post-Soviet Eurasia is built? Do we see evidence of the reincarnation of Soviet international law? How wide is the support for this vision of international law?

**The organizers of the 2023 ESIL Research Forum invite the submission of papers on aspects of 'Regional Developments of International Law in Eastern Europe and Post-Soviet Eurasia', including on the following themes:**

1. The role of regionalism in the context of contemporary international law, especially in the context of Eastern Europe and post-Soviet Eurasia, focussing on the question of whether international law is sometimes understood differently in the European Union and in post-Soviet Eurasia.
2. The historical roots of Russian and Eurasian approaches to international law and human rights and their possible differences from Western Europe – is it about religion, Empire, civilization or culture? Or have such differences been overstated?
3. The history of the period leading up to, during and immediately following World War II as a continued source of contestation in Eastern Europe, and its implications for international law.
4. International legal issues emanating from the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, including the Russian Federation's succession to the Soviet Union's permanent seat on the UN Security Council and the border settlement under the Alma-Ata and Minsk agreements.
5. The implications for international law of Russia's aggression against Ukraine since 2014 and 2022.
6. The implications of Russia's 2022 exit from the Council of Europe and from under the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights.
7. Integration in post-Soviet Eurasia as neighbouring, overlapping or competing space with the European Union. Regional institutions and instruments in Russian-led Eurasia such as the Eurasian Economic Union and the Collective Security Treaty Organization – how to order these organizations analytically in the context of international law and international legal developments, as well as universality and regionalism?
8. The role and contestation of sanctions in contemporary international law and practice.

9. International litigation and lawfare emanating from Eastern Europe and post-Soviet Eurasia, including before the International Court of Justice, the European Court of Human Rights, investment tribunals and in international law-related cases in various domestic courts.
10. The implications of regional developments and possible differences of approach in sub-fields of international law in Eastern Europe and Eurasia, especially human rights, international humanitarian law, international criminal law, international economic law, and others.

To apply, please submit an abstract of not more than 750 words to [esilforum2023@ut.ee](mailto:esilforum2023@ut.ee) by **Friday 14 October 2022**. Please include the following information with your abstract: your name, affiliation, email address, whether you are an ESIL member, plus a one-page curriculum vitae. Successful applicants will be notified by email by Monday **28 November 2022**.

The organizers particularly encourage applications from under-represented groups within ESIL. In selecting abstracts, relevant factors will include the academic merit of the individual abstract and its fit with the theme of the Research Forum. The final decision will also be guided by our commitment to diversity and inclusion; candidates who identify with under-represented groups within the Society are encouraged to apply.

Complete paper drafts will be required by **Monday 20 March 2023**. Papers may in due course be published in the ESIL Conference Paper Series.

The 2023 Research Forum will be held in Tartu, Estonia, as an in-person event. Speakers whose abstracts have been selected will be expected to attend the Research Forum in Tartu, even though online participation will also remain a possibility in exceptional cases. They will be expected to bear the costs of their own travel and accommodation. Some ESIL [travel grants](#) and [carers' grants](#) will be available to offer partial financial support to speakers who have exhausted other potential sources of funding; new members who submit grant applications must have joined ESIL for the first time before the deadline for the Call for Papers. Further information on financial support will be distributed to speakers in due course.

All those who take part in the Forum are expected to be [ESIL members](#) at the time of their participation.

Speakers will be informed of hotels that offer preferential rates to Research Forum participants. Lunch will be provided on both days and a dinner (buffet reception) for conference participants will be hosted on the evening of Thursday 27 April 2023.