

A pre-Annual Conference workshop jointly organized by the Interest Group on International Environmental Law and Interest Group on European and International Rule of Law in the context of the 2024 ESIL Annual Conference taking place at Vilnius University, Law School (Lithuania), 4-6 September 2024, themed ‘Technological Change and International Law?’.

Pre-Annual Conference Workshop on

TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE, ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND GOVERNANCE: A FOCUS ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL (SDG) 16 “PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS”

DATES ESIL ANNUAL CONFERENCE

4-6 SEPTEMBER 2024

DATE IG ENVIRONMENTAL LAW AND RULE OF LAW

PRE-ANNUAL CONFERENCE WORKSHOP

4 SEPTEMBER 2024

VENUE

VILNIUS, LITHUANIA



INTEREST GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL LAW

INTEREST GROUP ON EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL RULE OF LAW

Technological Change, Artificial Intelligence and Governance: A Focus on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 “Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions”

Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG16) aims at the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development; the provision of access to justice for all and building effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels. Peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable societies are dependent upon effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels, as well as citizens having access to justice to be able to protect their rights. Injustice can otherwise destabilize peace. Consequently, the international community decided to provide a holistic approach by involving these elements in this goal given their interconnected nature and measuring progress through specific indicators mainly good governance, rule of law, and institutions at all levels of governance. In that sense, SDG16 is about governance more than anything else given the poor governance practices of states over the years despite their continuous commitments to realizing various goals agreed upon by the international community. In fact, SDG16 covers various elements and topics that must be addressed holistically in the general framework of the 2030 agenda as this goal highlights the interplay between sustaining peace and the agenda. Given the importance of this SDG, an increasing number of countries are seeking to implement it in practice, where the role of local and regional authorities is of utmost importance to such implementation. Other stakeholders that play an equally important role are civil society, youth, and the private sector. The importance of this SDG led to considering its implementation as an accelerator for the entire 2030 agenda given its existing challenges. These include the lack of available data; absence in many cases of accountable and inclusive institutions; the need to ensure the localization of SDGs and the creation of multi-stakeholder partnerships. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights highlighted the need to achieve the commitments under SDG16 and called for an SDG16 plus – a concept that captures the interlinkages between SDG16 and all other SDGs. Unlike the rest of the SDG16 that address specific elements, the existence of a holistic approach for adopting and implementing this goal instead of a fragmented one allows solving various challenges at once. So far this SDG has not been examined in the context of emerging technologies and prospects of using these technologies for facilitating its implementation.

Technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI) have emerged where current discussions are focusing on how AI can support SDGs. Indeed, numerous studies and articles have been written on the interplay between AI and SDGs from different angles. Studies differ in terms of the ability of AI to address the various SDGs with the end goal of achieving a sustainable economy. It is currently being used for addressing traffic management, enhancing the efficiency of renewable energies, in improving efficiencies in criminal justice and law enforcement, and the efficiency

of irrigation and fertilization among many other things. Hence, the power of AI and digital technologies in this context is in their innovative nature allowing its rapid evolution and adaptation. Still, for now, very few studies assessed systematically the impact of AI on the realization of SDGs and their targets, despite the great role AI and digital technologies are expected to play in the realization of the 2030 agenda. The need for such studies led to the establishment of new groups and organizations addressing solely the interplay between AI and SDGs such as AI for Sustainable Development Goals (AI4SDGs) Think Tank and the UN-driven initiative AI4Good. In the context of SDG16, AI is expected to have a great impact. For instance, AI can be used to monitor illicit financial transactions and crack down on Money Laundering but can also be used to enable Money Laundering. AI can also be used to promote the rule of law by addressing the various crimes occurring at the national level through face recognition and so on. AI is also being used for building strong institutions and enhancing peace globally, even though these attempts are still at a nascent stage and problems exist in the immature nature of the technology. AI can reduce discrimination, corruption and provide access to e-government, personalized, and responsive intelligent services; nevertheless, studies have shown it can lead to flawed and discriminatory automated decision-making. AI does offer significant advantages to this goal; it can be used to solve the existing challenges facing the implementation of SDG16, mainly providing the ability to track progress through machine learning and to measure impact of changes in the context of different SDG16 indicators. This will further enhance the understanding of the various governance issues facing countries, the improvements needed and provide a better support to the countries seeking to implement this SDG. The hope is that AI can revolutionize all these areas, especially in developing and least developing countries that are facing great challenges requiring the use of all available means. Yet, so far there is a shortage of legal literature addressing the interplay between SDGs and AI, addressing the interplay between the problematic nature of AI and the advantages it offers. This joint event between the ESIL IG on European and International Rule of law and the ESIL IG on International Environmental Law is seeking to fill this gap by focusing on a specific SDG and its connection with emerging technologies, given the constant incorporation of AI and digital technologies in everyday life, where it is no longer possible to ignore the need to acknowledge its impact on development in general and SDGs in this context, but also considering that unexpected new challenges may emerge as a result of the use AI.

APPLICATIONS & ELIGIBILITY

This call is open to academics, as well as practitioners of international organizations and NGOs working in these areas. The objective is to optimize research impact of our participants by engaging the different communities of practice in law, political science, climate, or environmental science in this interdisciplinary field of sustainability, trade, investment, energy, and environment. The following must be submitted to paolofarah@yahoo.com by **28 April 2024**:

- The author's name and affiliation;
- A 500-700-word abstract [Word file or PDF];
- The author's CV, including a list of relevant publications, if applicable;
- The author's contact details, including e-mail address and phone number;
- Whether the author is an ESIL member (Being an ESIL Member is not a requirement to submit an abstract)
- Interdisciplinary and co-authored papers are also welcomed

Multiple abstracts from the same authors will be considered, but only one can be selected. Co-authored multidisciplinary papers are also welcomed. Applicants will be informed of the selection committee's decision no later than **30 April 2024**. The Organizers are unable to provide funding for any cost related to participation to the conference.

The Interest Group is unable to provide funding for travel and accommodation. Selected speakers will be expected to bear the costs of their own travel and accommodation. Some [ESIL travel grants](#) and [ESIL careers' grants](#) will be available to offer partial financial support to speakers who have exhausted other potential sources of funding. Please see the [ESIL website](#) for all relevant information about the conference.

All participants at ESIL Interest Group workshops are required to register for the Annual Conference. There will be an option to register just to attend the IG workshops; however, all participants are warmly invited to attend the entire event.

Selected speakers should indicate their interest in being considered for the [ESIL Early-Career Scholar Prize](#), if they meet the **eligibility conditions** as stated on the [ESIL website](#). The ESIL Secretariat must be informed of all selected speakers who wish to be considered for the Prize before 30 April.

All Members of the ESIL Interest Group on International Environmental Law, the members of the ESIL Interest Group on European and International Rule of Law,

the members of other ESIL IGs and also the non -ESIL members (ESIL membership might be required if the abstract is selected) are invited to submit abstracts.

VENUE AND DATES

A pre-Annual Conference workshop on **Technological Change, Artificial Intelligence and Governance: A Focus on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 “Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions”** in the context of the 2023 ESIL Annual Conference. The ESIL Annual conference will take place in Vilnius, Lithuania, 4-6 September 2024 and the pre-Annual Conference workshop jointly organized by the Interest Group on International Environmental Law and the Interest Group on European and International Rule of Law on 4 September 2024.

PUBLICATION OPPORTUNITIES

The organizers have publication plans for the presented papers. The precise format of the publication will be discussed during the conference.

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

Chair of the Pre-Annual ESIL Conference Workshop: Paolo Davide Farah (West Virginia University & gLAWcal – Global Law Initiatives for Sustainable Development).

Scientific Committee: Chamu Kuppuswamy (University of Hertfordshire), Daria Boklan (HSE), Martin Svec (Masaryk University & gLAWcal – Global Law Initiatives for Sustainable Development, UK), and Otto Spijkers (Faculty of Governance and Global Affairs of Leiden University College); Till Patrik Holterhus (Leuphana Law School), Denise Wohlwend (Kellerhals Carrard & Université de Fribourg - Universität Freiburg) and Velimir Zivkovic (University of Warwick), Imad Antoine Ibrahim (University of Twente), Jon Truby (Newcastle University and University of Oxford)