



Environmental policies research group

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Research team:



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EMPOWERING CONSUMERS FOR THE ECOLOGICAL TRANSITION IN EUROPE AND THE ASEAN REGIONS

This project examines the way in which rulemaking with respect to demand-side aspects of green transition is occurring at the regional level in Europe (EU) and in Southeast Asia (ASEAN) and the lessons that may be learned to promote better rulemaking in the future.

The role of demand-side adjustments to the green transition has come into focus for policymakers in Europe and Southeast Asia (ASEAN), especially with respect to consumer behaviour. In both regions, policymakers have begun looking at new regulations to support demand-side solutions by:

- Providing consumers with accurate information regarding the climate impact of goods and services*
- Protecting consumers from misleading information regarding the same.*

While the policymaking process in Europe is already quite advanced, developments in ASEAN remain at a nascent state. As governments in ASEAN consider how to harness consumer spending to support climate change mitigation and the green economy transition, they need to consider how to address these issues through updating and/or enacting new rules on consumer protection and climate change, while paying attention to the developmental and institutional capacity limitations in individual countries. In this respect, the European experience may provide insights for policymakers in Southeast Asia.

Main hypothesis : Consumer protection policies as a tool

This project accepts the premise that **legal regulation directed toward consumers can serve as a tool to help harness consumer behaviour in support of demand-side solutions to the green economy transition.**

This has several implications:

- The area of law implicated by this regulatory development is that of consumer protection.** Consumer protection laws broadly serve to regulate interactions between consumers, producers, and traders.
- Among the issues that come within the purview of consumer protection law are:
 - The protection of consumers from being misled by material information that is false or that in any way deceives or is likely to deceive, as well as by misleading omissions of material information. **Concerns about “greenwashing” fall under this heading.**
 - The possibility to address the more fundamental issue of whether advertising or marketing of certain products and services should be permitted or restricted as a matter of public safety. **Marketing and advertising bans and restrictions on products like tobacco and alcohol provide examples.**

Examining the relationship between such policy choices and non-governmental actors’ advocacy strategies contributes to the understanding of the demand-side aspects of green transition and to the broader understanding of climate rulemaking.

Interdisciplinary Team

Drawing on the public policy, economic sociology and legal literature, the project will undertake a comparative analysis of regulatory approaches to shaping consumer attitudes and protecting consumers at the regional level in Europe (EU) and Southeast Asia (ASEAN) and at the national level in member countries of those regional bodies.

Why compare two regions, Europe and ASEAN ?

The project sheds light into rulemaking processes in Europe that have resulted in policymakers both at the EU level and at the national level (e.g., France) to take concrete steps aimed at empowering consumers to make green choices and protecting them from greenwashing claims.

Drawing on comparative policy research, it will provide an assessment of the design and implementation dynamics associated with the development of policies in these jurisdictions to promote changes in consumer demand-side behaviour in support of climate change mitigation.

Objectives

1. Identify the empirical bases upon which policymakers publicly rest their rulemaking choices with respect to aligning consumer behaviour with green economy transition at the regional and national level in Europe and Southeast Asia.
2. Trace the role of guidance from international (e.g., IPCC, UNCTAD) and regional organizations (e.g., ASEAN, EU) in developing legal rules.
3. Assess the role of advocacy by non-governmental actors in shaping rules addressing demand-side aspects of green transition.
4. Examine the role of institutional capacities in adopting rules and selecting policy instruments regarding consumer protection at the regional and domestic levels in Europe and Southeast Asia.
5. Carry out this research in an interdisciplinary research framework comparing Asian and European approaches, to account for main differences and similarities in rules and rulemaking and contribute to current debates about policy approaches at the regional and national level.

Workplan

- January – July 2025 Stakeholders analysis EU case
- March 2025 : 1st workshop ASEAN in Singapore
- May 2025 : 1st draft paper EU case
- June 2025 : 1st policy brief
- July 2025 : ICPP 7 Conference with 1st draft comparative paper + Revised paper EU case
- Fall 2025: 1st workshop Europe in Paris / Brussels

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