Rolling back sustainability in Europe

Call for Papers

Date: October 15-16, 2026

Convenor: EU*Asia Institute at ESSCA School of Management, France and University of Warsaw

Venue: University of Warsaw, Main Campus, Collegium Politicum/Faculty of Political Science and International Studies

AIMS AND RATIONALE

'Rolling back sustainability in Europe' is the subject for the next Sustainability Workshop co-organised by the EU*Asia Institute at ESSCA and the University of Warsaw. This workshop reflects the concerns on recent observations of the EU deregulating processes. As a result of significant and rapid global geopolitical changes, the Union has launched a number of initiatives aimed at adapting its internal policies to the expected increase of the competitiveness of its economy. On this occasion, it was considered necessary to adjust the existing requirements, for example in the European Green Deal.

In recent years, sustainability has shaped the public expectations and regulatory frameworks worldwide. Sustainability rule-making was supposed to align business activities with broader societal objectives. Concurrently, a trend toward deregulation characterised by a relaxation of governmental oversight was viewed as a path to stimulate economic growth in order to reduce compliance burdens. The aim of the workshop is to critically discuss whether these approaches can coexist or whether contradictions inevitably lead to profound consequences. The proposed discussion on 'Rolling back sustainability in Europe' requires critical reflection on the current EU policy and regulatory changes in the area of sustainability. Therefore, the workshop aims to discuss the expectations and rationales of this unexpected deregulatory process but also possible far-reaching disadvantages. The discussion will focus on the interaction between policies, policymakers, businesses, political actors, opinion-makers and activists within the three pillars of sustainable development, namely, economic, social and environmental sustainability.

Papers should address one of the following themes:

- The effects of sustainability policy and regulatory changes
- The role of multiple stakeholders in sustainability transformations
- Interrelations between sustainability and innovation
- Global position of the EU in the context of sustainability
- New and needed green competences in the digital age

We welcome papers reflecting on these issues, including best practices across all (social science) disciplines. We are open to all methodological approaches and research designs (i.e., qualitative and quantitative). We especially encourage contributions that explore the following research questions:

- Does the EU have a long-term sustainability vision of its own development?
- Is Europe still a leader in sustainability?
- Can innovation and competition go together with sustainability?
- Is the regulatory process of the withdrawal from sustainability challenging the values upon which the EU has been built?
- What are the challenges that organizations will have to deal with as a consequence of the implementation of the EU deregulations?
- How do organizations prepare for / adapt to / implementing this new approach to sustainability?
- What is the role of multiple stakeholders in the process of shaping the sustainability transformation (passive actors, policy influencers, etc)?

All papers selected for the workshop will be considered for publication in the upcoming edited book in the Routledge book series 'Governance of Sustainability in Europe'.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Send an abstract of 150-200 words by email to the editorial team:

- Dr Tomasz Braun - Tomasz.BRAUN@essca.eu
- Dr Dominika Harasimiuk - d.harasimiuk@uw.edu.pl
- Prof Vadym Zheltovskyy - v.zheltovskyy@uw.edu.pl
- Prof. Thomas Hoerber - Thomas.HOERBER@essca.fr

Deadline for paper proposals: Monday 1 June 2026

You will be notified if your application has been successful by 15 June.

There are no registration fees for this workshop. Venue, lunch and coffee breaks will be covered by organisers.

REFERENCES:

D'Adamo, I., Gastaldi, M., & Morone, P. (2022). Economic sustainable development goals: Assessments and perspectives in Europe. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, *354*, 131730.
D'Amato, A., Pronti, A., Paleari, S., Romaldi, G., Speck, S., Tagliapietra, S., & Zoboli, R. (2024). Investment needs and gaps for the sustainability transition in Europe: Rethinking the European Green Deal as an EU industrial strategy. *ETC CE Report*, *8*, 1-117.
De Jong, M., & Rocco, S. (2022). ESG and impact investing. *Journal of Asset Management*, *23*(7), 547-549.
De Sadeleer, N. (2020). *Environmental principles: from political slogans to legal rules*. Oxford University Press.
Sjåfjell, B. (2025). Conceptualising Corporate Sustainability Law. *Transnational Legal Theory*, *16*(3), 281-326.