

Traditionally, the key concepts of EU economic law – the internal market, competition law, the common commercial policy, as well as the related areas, e.g. EU public procurement law – were believed to prop up European economies through efficiency gains achieved by economic liberalisation and more open markets.

This project's main research problem is **the fundamental ideational, normative and practical shift of this original paradigm**. The European Commission expressed it neatly among others in its 2021 Communication: 'in order for the EU to continue reaping the benefits of international opportunities, it must assertively defend its interests, protect the EU's economy from unfair trade practices, and ensure a level playing field'. Accordingly, the overarching research thesis of this project is that EU economic law has gained more protectionist overtones towards third countries, especially in the sectors and the policy areas primarily driving EU's competitiveness. This shift – the emergence of EU law of strategic economic autonomy – can be explained in terms of economic security and levelling the playing field. It dovetails with a new generation of industrial policy championed by the EU.

This project assumes that the emergence of EU law of strategic economic autonomy has taken place in a very short period of time, without a Treaty change and in response to a confluence of global factors: US tariff wars, the paralysis of the WTO's dispute resolution system and the demise of the WTO as a platform of multilateral rule-making, the advances of China's state capitalism and the assertiveness of this country's industrial policy, disruptions of global value chains during the COVID-19 pandemic and the energy crisis following the Russian aggression on Ukraine.

Arguably, the paradigm shift resulting from this set of factors has manifested itself in two dimensions:

- 1) the non-unilateral dimension: the EU, while still spearheading attempts to reform and to reinvigorate the multilateral WTO system, has prioritised plurilateralist instruments, in particular new Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with selected third parties;
- 2) the unilateral dimension: the EU has started developing an extensive set of secondary law instruments with extraterritorial consequences, aimed at promoting EU's interests and values. The unilateral measures can be divided in the following groups:
 - Type A measures: trade in goods countermeasures;
 - Type B measures: regulatory instruments targeting third countries and multinational companies, intended to align their policies and behaviour either with European industrial interests (a new generation of EU's industrial policy aimed at reinforcing competitiveness, attracting foreign investments in critical sectors and dissuading relocation of production to third countries – Type B.a measures), or with European values (advancing environmental protection and human rights – Type B.b measures).

This project will analyse individual legal instruments comprising the abovementioned groups. It will also develop comprehensive, systemic arguments and conclusions, aimed at determining the impact of the studied phenomena on the foundations of EU constitutional law, international economic law and European integration in particular.