



Universiteit Utrecht

CENTRE FOR  
ACCOUNTABILITY  
AND LIABILITY LAW

## **Ucall Conference Announcement & Call for Papers: Corporate Responsibility and Liability in relation to Climate Change**

On the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of May 2022 the Utrecht Centre for Accountability and Liability Law will host an international conference on the responsibility and liability of corporate actors in relation to climate change. In this conference we aim to 1) address developments in specific areas of the law within the context of corporate responsibility and liability related to climate change, 2) analyse the possibilities and boundaries of these corporate responsibilities and liabilities and 3) explore potential further developments in the relevant areas of law.

Responsibilities and liabilities of corporate actors in the context of climate change are drawing more and more attention, both in legal scholarship and legal practice. Advances in climate sciences make it increasingly possible to specify the contribution(s) of corporations to climate change, and to identify specific mitigation and/or adaptation measures corporations can take. There is also growing awareness amongst practitioners and scholars that corporate actors have an important role to play in dealing with climate change, and that they have legal obligations in that regards. A failure to respect such obligations could lead to civil law, criminal law, administrative law or corporate law sanctions. Conversely, the effects of climate change might also negatively impact business practices and shareholder interests, and corporations might thus have legal obligations to prevent such negative impacts too. Yet, it is unclear when, how and to what extent these climate change related responsibilities and liabilities do exist and can actually be enforced. In other words: there are many questions about the content, scope, nature, purpose and enforcement of corporate responsibilities and liabilities, which to a great extent remain unanswered.

For example, questions arise in relation to corporate obligations to cut greenhouse gas emissions, implement adaptation strategies, invest responsibly, warn the public about climate risks posed by products and services, and mitigate financial risks that climate change poses to a business. Other questions concern the legal enforcement of soft law, standards from international climate agreements and human rights treaties. Further, one could think of issues relating to the contribution of domestic courts to global governance issues like climate change and cross-border enforcement of judicial rulings on climate change. In terms of accountability and liability, one can furthermore look at the liabilities of directors, the possibilities of shareholders to force a company towards a more sustainable course, financial law and criminal obligations to prevent greenwashing, the role of criminal law more generally in addressing pollution and climate change, potential civil liabilities for climate change related harms, the possibility to insure such liabilities and the commodification of climate-related risks. Such questions can lastly arise in relation to a wide range of sectors and companies, such as energy companies, aviation, travel companies, insurers, financial institutions,

investments funds, pension funds, oil companies, construction companies and the chemical industry.

We hereby cordially invite paper proposals dealing with corporate responsibility and liability for climate change from a wide variety of areas of law, such as tort law, contract law, international law, arbitration law, European law, corporate law, criminal law, human rights law, energy law, and soft law. Papers dealing with a regulation, governance or foundational perspectives are also welcome.

Please send your paper proposal, with a maximum of 500 words, before **the 17<sup>th</sup> of June** to [e.r.dejong@uu.nl](mailto:e.r.dejong@uu.nl) and [UCALL-Studentassistent@uu.nl](mailto:UCALL-Studentassistent@uu.nl). The conference will be hosted in Utrecht, The Netherlands, but participants and viewers will also be able to follow the conference online. For more information please send an e-mail to the listed addresses.

The **Utrecht Centre for Accountability and Liability Law (UCALL)** is a group of academic researchers within Utrecht University's School of Law, who have together set out to conduct multidisciplinary research on the boundaries and impossibilities of (own) accountability and liability in the Netherlands, in Europe, and beyond. Read more about [UCALL here](#).

**Funding:** In keeping with the conference's theme, we expect participants to travel using the most sustainable option, preferably by train. We do however realize that this may sometimes be the more expensive option compared to air travel. Therefore, there is funding available for participants whose travel costs are not covered by their institutions, or whose institutions do not cover the full extent of the travel costs. This funding is limited, and will therefore be made available in case of financial hardship only. If needed, we will make a selection of beneficiaries.