Tackling global challenges: Trade, climate change and sustainable energy in the context of the Wise GRID project

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The novelty of this paper is that it explains the paradigm shift in the governance of sustainable development: the 20th century was characterized by a top-down approach to the governance of climate action. The 21st century, however, offers a bottom-up approach, marking one of the mega-trends of the 21st century: in climate action, the implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change is done from the bottom up via citizens, NGOs, mayors, governors, businesses, or smart cities; in energy governance, we are observing energy democratization by decentralizing the governance of energy security and creating new energy actors, namely prosumers and renewable energy cooperatives. How about the governance of international trade? How can it be governed from the bottom up so that there is an open trading system in political, legal, and economic terms? How can we have greater involvement of civil society? How can we empower citizens in trade diplomacy? Traditionally, trade policy has been conducted by trade diplomats. Should we not listen to citizens’ concerns and those of small and medium enterprises?

This paper offers a paradigm shift in thinking about international trade. Traditionally, trade has been understood as a stumbling block to sustainable energy. I argue that trade is a building block and that the international community should capitalize on the proliferation of regional trade agreements (RTAs) to enhance energy security via renewable energy (RE) and achieve clean energy. Both can be achieved with the inclusion of strong chapters on trade in goods and services related to sustainable development and renewable energy in RTAs.

Biography
Rafael Leal-Arcas is Professor of European and International Economic Law, a Jean Monnet Chair holder (awarded by the European Commission), and Director of Research at the Centre for Commercial Law Studies of Queen Mary University of London. His research is funded by the EU Commission’s Horizon 2020 program, most notably a grant of EUR14 million as part of a consortium of 21 institutions to work on renewable energy and smart grids. He is the author of more than 160 scholarly publications on international trade and WTO law, climate change law, energy governance, EU law, international investment law and the interaction among them in American and European law reviews.

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