

International Economic Conference

COMPETITION AND REGIONAL ECONOMIC INTEGRATION - CHALLENGES FOR SMALL ISLAND ECONOMIES

27-29th august 2025, Nouméa New Caledonia

Context

This conference on Competition and Regional Economic Integration is being held in a threefold context :

- The challenges in concluding free trade agreements on an international scale.
- The rise of protectionist policies and economic sovereignty initiatives.
- Ongoing discussions on the overhaul of New Caledonia's economic model, to which the New Caledonian Competition Authority (ACNC) has contributed through its advisory role, notably by publishing an economic note dedicated to the local protectionist system.

Key issues

Regional economic integration refers to the harmonization and economic cooperation among multiple countries within a given region, with the aim of facilitating trade, investment, and the movement of goods and services. It can take different forms, ranging from free trade zones (e.g., NAFTA) to economic and monetary unions (e.g., the EU).

However, regional economic integration often faces challenges related to competition policy. Indeed, competition policies aim to maintain a free and open market by reducing barriers to entry while preventing anti-competitive practices such as cartels or abuses of dominant positions. These policies might sometimes be at odds with the objectives of regional integration, which may require arrangements that restrict competition, such as inter-company agreements or sectoral protections.

One of the main challenges lies in balancing economic freedom and regional cooperation, particularly when it comes to granting state subsidies or facilitating agreements between companies within a regional framework while adhering to competition rules.

The conference will explore various aspects of this issue through economic and legal perspectives specific to small island economies, which are often characterized by narrow markets, increased dependence on foreign trade and natural resources, as well as heightened vulnerability to external shocks.

Furthermore, it will contribute to ongoing discussions regarding New Caledonia's economic integration within its regional economic environment while also advancing economic and legal research on global issues such as the complex interactions between trade, industrial, and competition policies.

More fundamentally, the event will encourage practical and operational exchanges between economic, academic, and administrative stakeholders from island territories, fostering debate on these critical issues.

Format

The conference will be structured around:

1. Interactive round tables featuring high-level experts in competition law and economics, international trade law and economics, as well as regional entrepreneurs.
2. Substantial audience engagement, allowing for the dissemination and simplification of key concepts, methods, and processes.
3. A networking event, providing an opportunity for informal exchanges between speakers, while fostering future professional and institutional collaborations.
4. The publication of the colloquium proceedings in an academic format to ensure wider dissemination of the discussions and findings.