



Think2030 Conference Cyprus
Fifty Years of the Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP)

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Science4Policy session 3

Green Trade Network panel

Trading within the limits

A balanced EU trade policy that delivers both for strategic autonomy and environmental sustainability

The 2020s have been marked by unprecedented disruptions to global trade, driven by multiple shocks—from the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine to the renewed protectionist turn associated with Donald Trump’s return to the White House. Yet global trade flows have proven remarkably resilient, underscoring the continued centrality of international trade to the world economy. In pursuit of diversification and a more predictable trade environment, the EU has recently concluded two major additional free trade agreements (FTAs) with India and the Mercosur countries.

For EU policymakers, a central question now is how international trade can be governed in a way that strengthens Europe’s economic resilience while remaining firmly aligned with environmental limits and climate objectives. As carbon pricing expands globally and the green transition accelerates demand for critical raw materials (CRMs), the environmental impacts embedded in trade—material use, resource depletion and embodied emissions—remain insufficiently reflected in trade terms.

While the EU increasingly deploys trade-related instruments to support climate and strategic objectives, these often focus on territorial emissions, overlooking consumption-based impacts and global resource pressures. This expert panel will explore how EU trade policy can better align with planetary boundaries, integrate footprint-based approaches, and support sustainable resource management across value chains. The discussion will examine policy innovations that enhance coherence between trade, climate and industrial strategies, while contributing to a resilient, circular and more sustainable European economy.

About Think2030

Launched by IEEP and its partners in 2018, Think2030 is an evidence-based, non-partisan platform of leading policy experts from European think tanks, civil society, the private sector and local authorities.

By focusing on producing relevant, timely and concrete policy recommendations, Think2030’s key objective is to identify science-policy solutions for a more sustainable Europe.

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