Foreword

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Context. – Since the early 1970’s, the environment has increasingly become a major concern of our modern societies. Even the news media or mainstream political discourses have pictured environmental protection as an essential priority. Environmental law has followed this trend and currently represents a significant body of law, covering a wide range of areas (waste, biodiversity, climate change, air and noise pollution, …).

The protection of the environment is also integrated in other areas of the law such as e.g. health and safety at work, land-use planning and consumer law which all have substantial implications. 2

In fact, the relation between environmental protection and consumer protection has often been described as various and complex, 3 even if they are both recognised as European goals.

Aim of this special issue. – This special issue of the European Journal of Consumer Law addresses the relation between the environmental protection and the consumer protection, focusing on their converging interests.

Three main aspects of this relation will be investigated: (i) the relations between consumers and the environment; (ii) the protection of consumers by rules which fall within the scope of environmental regulation; (iii) liability regimes promoting consumer protection.

The relation between consumers and the environment. – This first part of this special issue will focus on the interaction between consumers and the environ-

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ment. Firstly, Klaus Tonner will assess whether consumers could contribute to protect the environment through the specific approach of «sustainable consumption».

Secondly, the right to the environment which has strong link with fundamental rights will be developed by Nicolas de Sadeleer.

Thirdly, the Arhus Convention offers consumer a way to have an active part to the environment protection. An analysis of this specific instrument by Esther Pozo-Vera will conclude this first part of this special issue.

**The protection of consumers through environmental regulation.** – In 1993, Ludwig Krämer stated that there was «an almost complete lack of interrelation between consumer and environmental policies (and law) at [European] level». 4

This statement refers to consumer policy when it aims at giving consumers the possibility to consume as much as they want, whereas sustainability sometimes requires, *a contrario*, reduction of consumption. 5

Does this statement still apply? Three specific environmental contexts have been scrutinised to provide an answer to that question: nanotechnologies by Geert Van Calster, Joel D’Silva and Diana Bowman; water law by Marleen van Rijswick; and climate change by Javier de Cendra de Larragán.

**Environmental Liability Regimes.** – Finally, liability regimes aim at preventing and providing remedies to environmental damages, which may also have consequences on consumers. A stringent liability regime may guarantee that undertakings could be held accountable and ensure the transformation of sustainable consumption into a reality with beneficial consequences for consumers.

Existing environmental liability regimes will be assessed: civil liability, by Sandra Cassotta; criminal liability, by Michaël Faure; and ship pollution, by Gwendoline Gonsaeles.

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This special issue has investigated a field of research which was largely «unexplored».

It provides a detailed picture of the relations between environmental protection and consumer protection, which will certainly pave the way for further research projects.

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