



PFAS contamination and tort law challenges – mapping a developing field of damages

28 March 2025, 09:00 to 11:30 (EET), hybrid (Porthania P 668 and Zoom: please see zoom details below)

On 28 March 2025, the PREST research group (Private Enforcement, Sustainability & Technology) at the Faculty of Law is organizing a morning seminar on so-called 'forever chemicals' (PFAS - per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) and damages liability.

We have the pleasure to welcome Johanna Chamberlain as a speaker, Associate Professor and Senior Lecturer in Private Law, Faculty of Law at Uppsala University, Sweden.

Abstract

Contamination harms have always raised special difficulties, both in the environmental law and tort law context. With multiple potential tortfeasors typically being the case and widely spread harm that is often realised decades after pollution has occurred, issues of for instance adequate causality, limitation and compensable harms become particularly complex. This is the case not least when it comes to a type of contamination that has been gaining increasing attention recently, namely damages pertaining to PFAS or "forever chemicals".

The seminar will focus on the tort law issues sparked by PFAS contamination and how these can be handled in primarily Swedish law today, building on ongoing case law developments. The discussion will touch both on possible routes to compensation for injured parties and what challenges come with different bases for liability, as well as the confrontation between traditional tort law principles and prerequisites and the special features of contamination harms. Does the nature of these damage claims demand adaptation and nuancing of our classic understanding of tort law, if the compensatory and preventative purposes of tort law are to be fulfilled also when it comes to victims of PFAS harms?

Chair: Katri Havu, Associate Professor, University of Helsinki

Discussants:

Timo Havu, retired Chief Justice of the Finnish Insurance Court
Stephanie Nitsch, Assistant Professor, University of Vienna, Austria (online)
Béatrice Schütte, postdoctoral researcher, University of Lapland

Tentative schedule:

9:00-9:10: Welcome (Katri Havu, University of Helsinki)
9:10-9:50: Presentation on PFAS and damages liability (Johanna Chamberlain, Uppsala University)
9:50-10:00: Break
10:00-10:45: Discussants' comments
10:45-11:15: Q&A and Discussion
11:15-11:30: Closing of the event

The participation in the event is free of charge and no registration is required.

Please feel free to share this invitation across your network.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://helsinki.zoom.us/j/67207061027?pwd=4Du3XkBdyKtIRLanyD9P2CHKmT0bbS.1>

Meeting ID: 672 0706 1027

Passcode: 565688

Join by SIP

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