

In an era of the growing importance of sustainable development, digitalization, and stronger consumer protection, the issue of greenwashing is gaining particular relevance in the legal debate. Greenwashing – understood as misleading consumers through unsubstantiated claims that exaggerate or falsify alleged environmental benefits of goods and services – undermines public trust and violates the principles of fair competition. This phenomenon is systemic, occurring both in traditional and digital markets, and ultimately threatens the coherence of environmental transformation policies.

High-profile legal cases, such as those concerning the marketing campaigns of KLM and Ryanair, illustrate the scale and impact of greenwashing on market practices. A 2022 European Commission study revealed that as many as 56% of consumers encountered misleading environmental claims. In times of economic uncertainty and rapid digital transformation, consumers are increasingly vulnerable to manipulative narratives related to sustainability.

Despite ongoing legislative work at the EU level – including the draft directive on green claims and the adopted amendments to the directives on unfair commercial practices and consumer rights – the existing regulations remain fragmented and insufficiently adapted to the complexity of the issue. A particular challenge lies in addressing greenwashing in the digital environment, where targeted algorithms and social media influencers are increasingly used in commercial practices.

The GRETA project adopts doctrinal, comparative, and empirical legal analysis with a focus on enforcement. Its goal is to conduct an in-depth study of the implementation and interpretation of EU regulations on greenwashing in Poland and the Czech Republic – two member states with developing regulatory systems. Special attention will be paid to identifying barriers to enforcement and issues arising from the dispersion of rules.

This topic was chosen due to market pressure to portray products as sustainable without solid verification. There is still a lack of comprehensive analysis combining consumer protection, marketing, and climate goals. Digital greenwashing remains underexplored, especially in Central and Eastern Europe, where enforcement systems are still developing.

Greenwashing will serve as a case study for a broader assessment of the effectiveness of consumer protection systems in the face of the twin transitions: environmental and digital. The project aims to identify best practices and formulate recommendations to improve regulatory coherence and increase the effectiveness of enforcement mechanisms. The ultimate goal is to strengthen consumer trust and support effective governance of sustainable development at the EU level by providing in-depth analysis and forward-looking recommendations on the future of consumer law in the digital age.

The project's findings are expected to be useful not only in shaping public policies but also in market practice – as a tool to support honest entrepreneurs and consumer organizations. GRETA contributes to building a transparent marketplace where environmental communication is not abused but becomes an authentic element of sustainability strategies. The research will result in publications in leading legal journals – both Polish and international – as well as a joint monograph prepared by the Polish and Czech research teams. These publications will help disseminate knowledge about greenwashing mechanisms and possible ways to counteract them in the context of digital and environmental transitions.