

# NEXT GENERATION EU-RESEARCH LECTURE SERIES: NEW INSIGHTS INTO THE POLITY, POLITICS AND POLICIES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Mondays, 5:15 to 6:45 p.m., online

The lecture series assembles cutting-edge research on the European Union. Early career researchers from across Europe are presenting their research during the winter semester. The series is organised by the Jean Monnet Chair on Interactive Multi-level Democracy in Europe (IMUDE) at the Otto-von-Guericke University (<https://www.eurostud.ovgu.de>).

The lecture series addresses students from the OVGU and beyond, scholars and interested public. To register from outside the OVGU, please sign up providing your name, affiliation and e-mail at: [eus-hilfskraefte@ovgu.de](mailto:eus-hilfskraefte@ovgu.de). For OVGU members, please enroll as usually via LSF. Enrolled participants will be provided with the link to attend the lectures.

## LECTURE PROGRAMME

09 October 2023

### Understanding the complexity of EU crises – moving forward in a dialogue between EU studies and critical constructivist norm research

Johanna Speyer, PhD Candidate, Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz & Nils Stockmann, PhD Candidate, Osnabrück University

In this lecture, we will challenge the traditional view of crises as either promoting further EU integration or leading to the Union's demise. Instead, we will delve into the shades of grey that populate the continuum between these extremes, shedding light on the normative and institutional dynamics at play during crises. Drawing on the insights from our PhD projects, we will explore the critical-constructivist norm contestation approach from International Relations (IR) scholarship as a valuable framework for understanding EU crises. By examining the Rule of Law crisis and the Climate Crisis as two highly salient and normatively contested issue areas in European governance, we will analyze the causes, actors, and processes of crisis. Through the case studies, we will uncover the intertwined relationship between norm contestation, institutional challenges, and the complexities of EU governance. The lecture will highlight the importance of and the way to equipping EU governance structures to effectively manage crises and address norm complexity and contestation. By bridging the gap between IR norm research and EU studies, we will offer fresh insights into the multifaceted consequences of EU crises, touching upon the polity, politics, and policies of the EU. Thereby, we aim to promote an innovative and more differentiated understanding of EU crises through the lens of norm contestation.



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## LECTURE PROGRAMME

16 October 2023

### **Bottom-up approaches to climate change – strategic litigation as a tool of the European civil society to push for stronger climate action?**

Dr. Manuela Niehaus, Deutsche Universität für Verwaltungswissenschaften Speyer

Although climate scientists worldwide urge policymakers to address climate change in a more aggressive way before it is too late, climate action so far has been hesitant and way beyond what governments have promised to do. Global climate constitutionalism is one of the possible legal responses that scholars have identified to tackle the ongoing climate crisis. Accordingly, certain norms could (and should) gradually develop a certain constitutional quality. This would make it more difficult for states to ignore their climate obligations under European and international law, as they would feel bound by these obligations as much as their domestic constitutional obligations. However, the development of European and international constitutional climate law does not depend on states alone. Non-state actors such as individuals, non-governmental organisations and citizens' initiatives seek to introduce their own interpretations of climate obligations and human rights into law through strategic climate litigation. Based on approaches of deliberative democracy and by comparing different European and national climate cases, this lecture will shed light on the legal and democratic potential of litigation as a "bottom-up" approach for non-state actors to make their arguments on the climate crisis heard and institutionalised, thus contributing to European (constitutional) climate law-making.

23 October 2023

### **The Europeanization of post-communist administrations: The Commission as a driver? A case-study of the European Commission's efforts to support administrative reform in Romania, Serbia and Moldova between 2000-2020**

Dr. Claudia Badulescu, European University Institute

Following the collapse of communism in Europe, the European Commission started supporting domestic administrative reforms in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and the Western Balkans in a bid to assist the transition to democratic governance and to promote the development of market economies in the region. Through this thesis, I assess the leverage of the European Commission in driving the Europeanization of public administrations both within and outside of the EU. By undertaking in-depth analyses of the Commission's reform programmes that have been implemented over a period of 20 years in three post-communist countries (i.e. Romania, Serbia and Moldova), this research project provides insights into the driving forces and barriers that shape the Commission's ability to 'Europeanize' public administrations from the EU member states, candidate states or neighbourhood states. Building on extensive desk research, quantitative text analysis and elite interviews undertaken in Romania, Serbia, Moldova, the European Commission and the OECD, this thesis traces the genesis and gradual institutionalisation of the European Commission's instruments for supporting administrative reform, and evaluates their implementation over a 20-year period in each case-study country. This thesis ultimately provides a snapshot of how the EU can wield power today and achieve institutional change in subtle, but far-reaching ways, and of the very real impact that the bloc can have on the lives of millions of EU and non-EU citizens.

## LECTURE PROGRAMME

30 October 2023

### **Governing between discipline and discretion in Europe's economic governance**

Dr. David Bokhorst, European University Institute & Dr. Francesco Corti, European University Institute

This lecture will focus on the governance and governing of Europe's post-pandemic recovery fund: the Recovery and Resilience Facility. The lecture will start with some background on the historical evolution of EU economic governance since the euro crisis and policymakers' search to harden conditionality requirements. Second, I will give an overview of how the RRF came about and how it works in practice. In the remainder of the lecture, we'll discuss collectively some of the dilemmas policymakers face in governing the fund. For example, how to balance between giving sufficient freedom and discretion to member states to make their own choices and respond to inherent insecurity, whilst at the same time ensuring that member states stick to their promises. We will discuss what are the pros and cons of this approach also from a democratic perspective. We will close the session with a discussion on what the future of this type of financing arrangement should be.

13 November 2023

### **The use of EU soft law in national courts: Evidence from France and Germany**

Adam Eick, PhD Candidate, Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich

In the Grimaldi case, the European Court of Justice declared that national judges should not only apply binding EU law, but also take non-binding instruments ("soft law") into account in their decision-making. This may seem surprising given that the basic role of courts is to give binding decisions based on "hard" law. The lecture raises the question of how national courts use EU soft law. How often do they invoke such instruments? Do they merely cite it in passing or do they apply it in a way that influences the outcome of the case? Another question is why judges use such instruments at all, given their non-binding nature. Do judges feel compelled to invoke them because of their authoritative nature, or do they voluntarily apply them when they appear to be a useful aid? To discuss these questions, the lecture will present data from a collection of judgments and a survey of French and German judges. Finally, the lecture will illustrate the relevance of such instruments, based on two case studies in the policy areas of state aid and pharmaceutical regulation. They illustrate that under certain circumstances soft law can significantly influence the interpretation of law and shape policy options in the administration. On the one hand, this implies that the effectiveness of the EU at the national level is not only a result of integration through hard law. On the other hand, it raises questions of legitimacy as soft law is typically adopted with little checks and balances.

## LECTURE PROGRAMME

20 November 2023

### **The Rule of Law Crisis in the Member States of Hungary and Poland and the European Response to it**

Niels Kirst, PhD Candidate, Dublin City University

This lecture will focus on one of the major challenges to the EU today, namely the rise of authoritarian governments threatening the rule of law and democracy in several member states of the EU. The current Next Generation EU budget and the Recovery and Resilience Facility, contained in this multiannual budget, include a new conditionality dimension, which requires member states to meet milestones that reflect the EU's strategic priorities in areas such as green transition, digital transformation, social inclusion, and the rule of law. The rule of law conditionality requirements under the Recovery and Resilience Facility complements the EU's existing rule of law instruments. This lecture will focus on the interaction between Recovery and Resilience Facility milestones and targets system and Regulation 2020/2092, both geared to ensure rule of law compliance by the members.

27 November 2023

### **Who cares about democracy? Exploring the role of public pressure behind the EU's changing policy on democratic backsliding and the Rule of Law**

Kata Moravec, PhD Candidate, Central European University

The EU has not been very active and effective when it comes to dealing with democratic backsliding in its member states. Many scholars of the EU would suggest that part of the union's inaction is simply explainable by the lack of public accountability on anti-backsliding policies. Contradictory to this idea, the EU increasingly produced and applied anti-backsliding policy since 2017. I argue that increasing public attention being dedicated to backsliding and the so-called politicization of the matter can explain the changing policy environment. Yet, so far it is unmeasured how EU citizens react to democratic backsliding in the EU, and therefore, if they can have strong-enough attitudes on the matter to create public pressure. We know that the EU public has a broad preference for preserving democracy, but the extent to which these attitudes can create meaningful reactions remains unclear, given the EU's complicated policy process. Using a survey experiment in Germany the lecture will present data on whether citizens react to differential scenarios concerning democracy and the rule of law, as well as whether EU policy trade-offs in the way that existing academic literature suggests. The goal is to find out in how far citizens in Germany can exert public pressure about democratic backsliding, especially if decision-makers have to agree to certain trade-offs and have find compromises with backsliders. A prominent example for such a trade-off is Germany not receiving EU funds or a favourable policy decision, such as EU aid to Ukraine becoming unfeasible due to a veto.

## LECTURE PROGRAMME

04 December 2023

### **From Changing Times to Changing Communities: Communities of Practices in Cultural Diplomacy in the South Caucasus Region**

Szilvia Nagy, PhD Candidate, Central European University

Culture has increasingly become mainstreamed in the EU's international cooperation agendas related to socio-economic development and external relations. This manifested in a new narrative of cultural diplomacy under the label of International Cultural Relations (ICR) that provided a seemingly depoliticised framework for culture in the EU's wider foreign strategy as well as an opportunity to introduce new (cultural) intermediaries to translate the strategy's visions into action. This lecture examines the role of international cultural organisations (intermediaries) in foreign policy and neighbourhood policy in the Eastern Partnership initiative of the EU. It explores how communities of practices (CoPs) are created and situated through and for the implementation of the EU's foreign policies. Through multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork based on semi-structured interviews, observation and discourse analysis, it analyses the situated and relational practices emerging between international cultural organisations and civil society. Building on methodological triangulation between practice theory, policy translation and organisational ethnography, the research aims to offer theoretical and empirical contributions to the understanding of relational exchanges in the policy field between the various policy actors, and it aims to offer insights into how Russia's war against Ukraine and the current geopolitical changes polarised the role of culture.

11 December 2023

### **Accelerating the green transition: Governance through funding and the RePowerEU instrument**

Dr. Lucas Schramm, Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich & Chiara Terranova, PhD Candidate, Europa-University Flensburg

EU budget politics is considered a relatively stable domain of EU policymaking. Yet, a closer look at recent events and developments reveals a more interesting story. First, the creation of the pandemic recovery plan "NextGenerationEU" (NGEU) marked a pathbreaking innovation. Then, in the face of the war in Ukraine and an EU energy crisis, member states adopted "REPowerEU" to finance and accelerate the Union's green transition. Putting forward a historical institutionalist perspective, we theorize the reasons and driving forces behind these new budgetary instruments. We see a double-dynamic at work: on the one hand, sudden exogenous shocks, like a pandemic or war, create momentum for rather radical institutional and policy innovation. NGEU, with the Recovery and Resilience Facility at its heart, is a case in point. On the other hand, the new instruments build upon, and further stimulate, established patterns of EU budget politics. They are thus embedded into longer-term transitions. Empirically, we document that the concepts of 'layering' and 'conversion' help to understand the EU's reaction to the current energy crisis, notably the amendment of the Common Foreign and Security Policy Recovery and Resilience Facility via RepowerEU. Together, the EU's new budgetary tools suggest gradual, though decisive steps towards more supranational forms of governance through funding.

## LECTURE PROGRAMME

18 December 2023

### European Administrative Networks in-between audiences: accountability dilemmas in multi-level EU governance

Ana Carolina Soares, PhD Candidate, University of Copenhagen

The EU has been confronted by a long-standing governance dilemma. On the one hand, there is increasing demand for more coordinated implementation and enforcement of EU policy to ensure its' efficiency. On the other hand, member states are still rather reluctant to delegate further competences to supranational actors and keep implementation and enforcement tasks mainly at their hands. In order to bridge this gap, an institutional architecture has gradually emerged where European Administrative Networks (EANs) have assumed a key role. By fostering the exchange of knowledge and best practices, and pooling of resources, EANs have been presented as important governance tools to improve administrative coordination and the implementation of EU policy. Yet, despite their expansion over time and across several policy areas, EANs come with considerable accountability problems. Despite previous literature identifying their main shortcomings - namely, their insulated work mode, selective membership, informal and opaque nature -, we do not know how wide-spread these accountability issues actually are and whether they have any ramifications to the functioning of EANs. In this lecture, we will uncover and discuss the multi-level accountability webs EAN members may be embedded in. First, we look at which instruments may be incorporated into EANs' structures in order to enhance accountability. Then, through the application of social network analysis, the underlying structure of a selected network is unveiled and assessed on whether it reflects predominantly horizontal collaboration or hierarchical control. Finally, we discuss the implications of these findings for understanding EU accountability more broadly.

08 January 2024

### Walking the line: Conflict and Consensus in the Committees of the European Parliament

Moritz Wiesenthal, PhD Candidate, Europa Universität Viadrina

The committee system is one of the most developed features of the European Parliament (EP) and is widely regarded to be the "legislative backbone" of the chamber. Along with the rising influence of the EP, scholarly debate on the composition and organization of its committees has proliferated. However, research on committee internal conflict dynamics and their relevance for the EU legislative process remains limited. This article seeks to fill this gap by providing a differentiated picture of conflict dynamics and dimensions in the EP committees: when and under which conditions does conflict arise in the committee system? To address this question, the article draws on a new and original data set of committee-level roll-call votes during the 2014-2019 legislative term to (1) explain current developments in the EP committee system, (2) shed light on the relevant consensus building incentives for EP committees and (3) discuss partisan, procedural and sociological effects on consensus. Preliminary results imply that despite incentives to forge consensus, the conflict dimensions that dominate European politics have hit the EP committee system and substantiate a nuanced "normalization" hypothesis of politics in the EP.

## LECTURE PROGRAMME

15 January 2024

### The European Union Facing Hard Politics: The Origins of EU Strategic Autonomy (1993-2016)

Dr. Enrico Ciappi, LUISS Guido Carli University of Rome

Since the end of the Cold War, the EU has been struggling to develop an awareness of itself as a global actor. The concept of EU strategic autonomy has recently revitalised the debate on the Union as a geopolitical power, capable of running ambitious economic, political and even military policies. This lecture is aimed at reconstructing the historical roots and geopolitical features of this concept from the Maastricht Treaty to the first invasion of Ukraine. New archival findings demonstrate that the current notion of EU autonomy harks back to the strategic debate of the early 1990s. After the launch of Common Foreign and Security Policy, supranational agencies formed a policy network with think tanks and other NGOs claiming a more ambitious EU international agenda. While reforming the pillars system, the Commission received advice from these organisations on key IR topics like globalisation, NATO and EU enlargement, migrations or peacekeeping in the Middle East. After the reforms of Amsterdam, Laeken and Lisbon, the notion of strategic autonomy entered a more mature stage and went beyond the distinction between soft and hard power. Geoeconomics, digitalisation, climate change and terrorism enriched the debate while the EU attested, quite impotent, the outbreak of war in Syria and Ukraine. Overall, this study describes the EU quest for self-rule as a long-term discursive reaction toward the challenges of the post-Cold War era. The exchanges between the Commission and think tanks contributed to shaping the idea of Europe as a (potential) global power with specific interests, values and priorities.

22 January 2024

### Exam preparation – Online Meeting

Alba Maria Kugelmeier López

