

Call for Papers

The European Elections, 40 years after. Assessment, Issues and Prospects.

Conference Bordeaux, 9th and 10th May 2019.

The Centre for European and International Research and Documentation (CRDEI) at Bordeaux University, in partnership with Utrecht University and the CEDECE association (Commission pour l'Étude des Communautés Européennes) shall organise a conference on the 9th and 10th May 2019 for the 2019 European elections. 40 years after the first election of the Members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage, we wish to assess the outcomes of this major breakthrough, to analyse what is at stake in this particular election and to contemplate the prospects of this unprecedented, unmatched experiment of a supra-national institution elected by universal direct suffrage.

This conference is open to both legal and political science experts and academics. Papers must be in English or in French.

Assessment

From the institutional point of view, the democratic legitimization of the European Parliament through direct election led to major institutional developments. The European Parliament, now composed of directly elected members, demanded – and progressively obtained – a more important role in the institutional architecture and the decision-making process of the European Union. Yet, the European Union is still frequently accused of being undemocratic, despite its best efforts and despite the Lisbon Treaty explicitly proclaiming democracy as a founding principle. Against this background, the papers can provide a critical assessment of the growing importance of the European Parliament in the EU institutional system and/or explanations for the lingering feeling of a democratic deficit in the EU (e.g. lack of transparency in the decision-making process, notably with the “trilogues”; insufficient regulation of lobbying; lack of a real transnational public space/political culture, etc.).

From the substantive point of view, the growing role of the European Parliament means that it is now deeply involved in the decision-making process, both for internal EU

legislation and for international agreements. Did it have an impact on the content of EU legislation? Is it possible to pinpoint the precise aspects of EU legislation over which the Parliament had a decisive influence? Are there areas of EU Law where this influence is more significant than in others? What is the tangible legal outcome of the interplay between the Commission, the Council and the European Parliament?

From the individuals' point of view, the possibility for individuals to elect Members of the European Parliament directly was a major step towards the emergence of European Citizenship because it added a vertical political component to the status of Member States nationals, on the top of pre-existing horizontal and transnational rights (i.e. free movement and right to national treatment). This was later confirmed by the Maastricht Treaty, which made the right to vote and to run as a candidate in the European elections one of the rights of the Union Citizens. Yet, EU political citizenship is still rather underdeveloped, both from a legal point of view (legislation and case-law are rather scarce) and from a practical point of view (the turnout for European elections has been consistently low for several decades). Proposed papers could address this paradox an aspect of it.

Issues at Stake

The proposed papers could address issues that specifically relate to the 2019 European elections.

For example, the outcome of the 2019 European elections will decide on the fate of the “Spitzenkandidat” system. Introduced in 2014, it means that the President of the European Commission should be the candidate designated by the political group that won the largest number of seats in the European elections. There is a deep inter-institutional disagreement about this system. It is strongly supported by the European Parliament, whereas the Heads of States and of Governments believe that they should not be constrained in their ability to chose a candidate for President of the European Commission.

The rising tide of populist, xenophobic, anti-immigration and/or Eurosceptic political forces is also an important aspect of the next elections. The triggering of Art. 7 against Poland first and then against Hungary could signal a clear divide and lead to a re-organisation of competing political forces within the EU. Should we fear that the next majority in the European Parliament will be hostile to the European construction? Or should we rejoice in the fact that the alliance between the three dominant political groups in the European Parliament is being disputed?

Proposed papers could address these questions and others.

Prospects

As we are at the crossroad of a Europe in crisis, the papers may contemplate prospects and make proposals as regards the future of European democracy.

Can the European Parliament remain the focus of EU democracy? Should it? For some years now, and in particular since the Lisbon Treaty, national parliaments have become important players in the EU decision-making system. In addition, there are some proposals for alternative supra-national parliamentary institutions – see for example the idea of a Parliamentary Assembly for the Eurozone, which is being pushed by several academics.

If the European Parliament is to stay the main democratic institution within the European Union, what kind of reforms does it need to implement in order to have a bigger democratic legitimacy? Do we need transnational lists for European elections, as put forward (with no success) by Emmanuel Macron? Should we have proper European Political parties? Should we have, at last, a unified European legislation for European elections?

Please note that this conference is open to both legal and political science experts and academics. Papers must be in English or French.

Individual papers are most welcome. However, priority may be given to full panels (3/4 persons + chair).

Your abstract must be 3000-character long maximum. It must be sent to the following address before the 1st December 2018: sebastien.platon@u-bordeaux.fr