

## Agenda European Election Day Exploratory workshop

**Monday September 25, 2017**

- First day**      Arrival of participants and dinner on Sunday, September 24, 2017
- 19:30              Diner with workshop participants (venue TBC)
- Second day**    **European Election Day Exploratory workshop** (September 25, 2017)
- 9:00-9:30        **Welcome and Introduction/s to the workshop**  
**Villa Barton, 132 Rue de Lausanne, Amphithéâtre Jacques Freymond**  
Philippe Burrin (Graduate Institute), Shalini Randeria (Director of the Albert Hirschman Center on Democracy, Graduate Institute, Rector of the Institute for Human Science, Vienna), Thomas Biersteker (Director of the Program on the Study of International Governance, Graduate Institute), Grégoire Mallard (Graduate Institute), Miguel Maduro (European University Institute)
- 9:30-10:45       **First Panel: European Election Day: The End of an Aberration in a Normalized Federalist Regime?**  
Christophe Möllers (Professor of Law, Humboldt University), Dominique Rousseau (Professor of Law, University La Sorbonne), Daniel Halberstam (Professor of Law, University of Michigan), Maya Hertig (Professor of Law, University of Geneva)
- How do federalist regimes (either US, or Swiss, or German ones) organize the elections at the federal and state level? Can democracy survive in a federal union without uniting around the one-time expression of the popular will?
- 10:45-11:00     Coffee
- 11:00-12:30     **Second panel: European Election Day: Danger or Solution to the Good Functioning of European Institutions?**  
Mercedes Bresso (Member of European Parliament), Antoine Vauchez (Professor of Political Science, University La Sorbonne), Annabelle Littoz-Monnet (Associate professor of IR/Political Science, Graduate Institute), Fabian Breuer (Fellow of the Global Public Policy Institute and Head of Unit at the European Investment Bank), Nico Krisch (Professor of Law, Graduate Institute)
- What would be the expected effects of a European Election Day (or European Election Month) on European institutions? How would such a synchronization affect the decision-making process at the EU level? Would it reinforce inter-governmentalism? Could it also reinforce the

European Parliament and Commission? Should a new assembly of the Euro-Zone be created, would it be even more desirable to synchronize national parliamentary elections? Should these elections be held at various times in order to renew various segments of EU-level institutions (for instance, a third of the members of the European Council or future Euro-Zone assembly)? Could complete or partial synchronization of national elections create chaos in the European Council or in a future Euro-zone assembly?

12:30-13:30 Lunch

13:30-14:45 **Third Panel: European Election Day: A Condition for Setting a European Agenda?**

Gilles Grin (Director of the Jean Monnet Foundation), Daphne Büllsbach (European Alternatives), Carlos Juan Closa Montero (Professor of Political Science, Instituto de Políticas y Bienes Públicos) Stéphanie Hofmann (Professor of IR/political science, Graduate Institute), Monica Frassoni (European Green Party Co-Chair), Pascal Durand (Member of the European Parliament),

How could political parties benefit from the synchronization of national legislative or presidential elections? How would the ideological/political landscape change as a result of such synchronization? Would political parties be forced to Europeanize their agenda? What other alternatives may exist for developing a European Agenda?

14:45-15:00 Coffee

15:00-16:15 **Fourth Panel: European Election Day: An Unrealistic Pathway in the Constitutional Landscape of Europe?**

Kim Lane Scheppele (Professor of International Affairs, Princeton University), Renaud Dehousse (President of the European University Institute, and professor of political science, Sciences-Po, Paris, France), Rui Tavares (Associate Researcher, Center for International Studies, ISCTE Instituto Universitário de Lisboa), Eléonore Lépinard (Associate professor, Social Sciences, University of Lausanne),

What are the main constitutional blockages and challenges that would prevent the synchronization of national elections? Is the existence of parliamentary and presidential regimes in Europe a threat to such synchronization? Would such a reform be necessarily a constitutional reform or could it be just a reform of electoral laws? Should it be adopted in the context of the ratification of a new Treaty to Democratize the European Union?

16:15-17:00 **Round-up**

Miguel Maduro (Professor of Law, European University Institute), Grégoire Mallard (Associate professor of Anthropology and Sociology, Graduate Institute)

17:00-18:30 Break

18:30-20:00 **Plenary Session (Amphithéâtre Ivan Pictet, Maison de la Paix) :  
European Election Day: A Good Idea for Europe ?**  
*Public event organized with the Director's Office of the Graduate Institute  
(expected target: 300 attendants)*  
Welcome Message : Philippe Burrin (Director of the Graduate Institute), Shalini Randeria (Director of the Albert Hirschman Center on Democracy, Graduate Institute, Rector of the Institute for Human Science, Vienna), Thomas Biersteker (Director of Policy Research, Graduate Institute)

Chair : Grégoire Mallard (Graduate Institute)

Participants: Mercedes Bresso (European Parliament), Renaud Dehousse (European University Institute), Kim Lane Scheppele (Princeton University), Miguel Maduro (European University Institute), Antoine Vauchez (University La Sorbonne)

20:30 Dinner with workshop participants, Le Restaurant, Maison de la Paix

**Third day** Departure of workshop participants, September 26, 2017

### Workshop Presenters:

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8. Frassoni, Monica. European Green Party Co-Chair. [monica.frassoni@europeangreens.eu](mailto:monica.frassoni@europeangreens.eu)
9. Grin, Gilles (Director of the Jean Monnet Foundation, Senior Lecturer in Law, University of Lausanne) [Gilles.Grin@unil.ch](mailto:Gilles.Grin@unil.ch)

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22. Tavares, Rui (former Member of European Parliament, Associate Researcher, Center for International Studies, ISCTE Instituto Universitário de Lisboa) [rui\\_tavares@mac.com](mailto:rui_tavares@mac.com)

### **Scientific Justification of the Conference:**

The last two decades have been marked by debates about the “democratic deficit” in international organizations in charge of regulating but also furthering economic globalization. The European Union (EU) is a case in point. After the Second World War, European integration has helped newly established democracies strengthen democratic values in Europe, in large part thanks to the increasing role of supranational judicial institutions in charge of defending individual rights (Halberstam 2008), and by offering national executives the opportunity to search for compromises between their national interests (Moravcsik 1998). But constitutional scholars have remarked that the process of EU integration has recently meant an increase in executive power (with Ministers being represented in the EU Council, and government delegates being appointed in the Commission) and a decrease in national parliamentary control over policy formation and implementation (Scheppele 2006; Halberstam 2010). This lack of national parliamentary oversight has encouraged the proliferation of opaque forms of governance, which do not respect constitutional law standards of clarity and formality (Mallard 2014).

A few political scientists inspired by rational choice theories of representation deny the existence of such a “democratic deficit” (Majone 1998; Moravcsik 2002), as they argue

that the EU should do no more than offer an intergovernmental forum for the expression of conflicting national interests in search of issue-specific compromises. But most scholars, media commentators, policymakers and concerned citizens have argued that the current EU governance framework is in dire need of reform to allow more democratic expression of “voice” (Dehousse 1995; Follesdal and Hix 2006; Habermas 2009; Maduro 2013). Political theorists in particular have criticized the functioning of the EU institutions for failing to generate wide public deliberation over the direction of policy (Habermas 2009) -- something that is seen as an essential condition of democratic life (Manin 1986). Political sociologists have underlined that the EU increasingly operates through opaque forms of governance sharing between EU institutions (Council and Commission) and a wide net of informal networks of consultants and lobbies, which capture the agenda-setting and policy decisions. This tendency has increased with the advent of the Eurozone, whose informal structure (containing 19 out of the now 27 members of the EU), operates in the shadow of EU institutions (European Central Bank, networks of Eurozone Finance Ministers, etc.), which try to shield their authority from the disrupting power of national electoral cycles (Maduro 2013; Vauchez 2014).

One solution to address the lack of parliamentary control over EU policymaking has been to strengthen the role of the European Parliament: in the designation of the top appointees to the European Commission; in the approval of EU budgetary decisions; and the co-decision procedures associating the Council (Follesdal and Hix 2006). But this rebalancing of power has been limited in scope, and it has largely failed to extend to the decisions taken by the more opaque Eurozone institutions. Furthermore, these reforms have not helped national parliaments get back the authority and oversight they have lost. Constitutional law scholars and political scientists have thus started to collectively imagine treaty solutions to redress some of the most blatant problems created by the governance of the Eurozone (Maduro 2013), by asking governments to buttress the legitimacy and authority of national parliaments against that of central European institutions, by creating for instance an assembly of the Eurozone, constituted of representatives of national parliaments (Hennette, Piketty, Sacriste, Vauchez 2017). Still, the policy discussion is only starting and is far from having generated a consensus over the most desirable policy options.

This conference thus takes this question of the EU democratic deficit seriously by mobilizing the expertise of key constitutional law scholars, political scientists and sociologists involved in the debate over the necessary EU democratization. It builds upon the reflections of past scholars who see in the discrepancy between national and European processes of decisionmaking the main source of concern for the democratic life of Europe, by addressing a little-mentioned aspect of this complex question: Does the temporality of national electoral cycles in general (and their lack of synchronization at the national level in particular) participate in emptying national democratic institutions of their legitimacy and power to voice and implement credible alternative European political agendas? If so, would some form of re-synchronization between national electoral cycles help generate new opportunities for European peoples to “voice” their concerns, elect credible alternative majorities in the EU institutions, and redress some of the issues pointed by past scholarship on the EU democratic deficit?

This attention to the temporality of national electoral cycles (rather than to the formal competencies of institutions) represents a new way to address the problem. If political scientists have long noticed that parties collude to keep the European agenda off the domestic agenda during election cycles (Hix 1999), they have failed to relate it to the lack of synchrony in electoral cycles at the national level. They have also failed to link the latter to other negative effects that might affect the functioning of EU institutions, and European citizens' affective relationship to the European project: for instance, the perceived (and most often real) inability of newly elected governments to challenge the dominant policy paradigms and majorities in EU decision-making bodies. Indeed, in the present state of a-synchronized national (legislative) electoral cycles, it is predicted that a new government elected at the national level with a mandate to change policy directions at the European level will fail to turn its electoral promises into reality, as it will face, respectively 26, and 18, other national governments, in the European Council, and in the Eurozone institutions, whose mandate has not been renewed, and whose attitude toward policy change may be at best skeptic and at worst openly dismissive. If European peoples had the opportunity to vote on national legislative elections on the same day, and therefore renew the European Council (and the future, if improbable, assembly of the Eurozone currently under discussion) at once, then, we could hypothesize that dynamics of policy change would play out quite differently at the EU level.

Thus, we hypothesize that the lack of synchronization between European national elections leaves European peoples with formal elections, but little possibility to initiate change as far as the direction of the most important (EU) economic policies affecting their welfare is concerned. The only opportunity for European peoples to vote on the same day and after a shared period of campaigning occurs during European Parliamentary elections; but the paradox is that European voters know that the European Parliament largely lacks the formal authority to challenge and change policies decided by the EU Council and Eurozone institutions. Elections in Europe thus no longer offer a choice between different alternatives other than "exit" (as proposed by extreme right and some extreme left parties) or "loyalty" (proposed by the rest of center parties); and the option of "voice," in the language of Albert Hirschman (1970), seems to have vanished. This may explain the widely experienced disaffiliation of European citizens toward the EU project, as they lack a temporal cycle during which to express their shared democratic passions -- e.g. those passions stirred by the prospect of winning an election that matters. The lack of a comprehensive understanding of how electoral temporalities at the national level influence the political parties' ability to produce new common European agendas, as well as to form new stable majorities in European institutions, is thus not only problematic for social scientific research, as it continues to leave the question of temporality of political action unaddressed, but also for policymaking.

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