



“Easing Tensions and Balancing Power: Multidimensional Governance in the EU”

Speaker: Adrienne Héritier (EUI), Arthur Benz (Technical University Darmstadt.)

Chair: Sergio Fabbrini (Luiss)

Date and Time: February 16th, 2022, 13:00 – 14:45hrs

Aula 205AB - Viale Romania

Abstract

“Building a more resilient Europe”. This is how the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission invited citizens of Europe to participate in a discussion on the future of Europe (EU 2021). Resilience matters when a political system is out of balance. In view of recent developments, it seems an appropriate goal for shaping the future of the EU.

During the last two decades, the Union has gone through turbulent, even contradictory developments. Scholars have analyzed these developments in the predominating framework of integration or disintegration. We suggest a different analytical approach which complements existing theories of European integration. This approach derives from comparative federalism and theories of institutional change. In federalism studies, multilevel polities are characterized by a division of power which is contested, difficult to balance, and continuously changing. Therefore, federal systems require institutional “safeguards” that allow to revise imbalances although they never achieve a final balance. It is the process of balancing, mostly by using informal adjustments of institutional distribution of power, but also institutional reform, that makes such polities work. We propose a conceptualization of safeguard mechanisms and strategies used in the EU, illustrate them empirically and ask what a continuous process of rebalancing of power implies for the overall structure of the EU.

About the Speaker

Adrienne Héritier is professor emerita of political science at the European University Institute in Florence. She has extensively done research and published on institutional change in the European Union and European processes of policy making.

Luiss
Libera Università Internazionale
degli Studi Sociali Guido Carli

Viale Romania 32, 00197 Roma
T +39 06 85 22 52 90-57 00-57 02
scienzepolitiche@luiss.it

www.luiss.it

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Arthur Benz is professor emeritus of political science at the Institute of Political Science at the Technical University Darmstadt. His research and publications have focused in comparative federalism and multilevel governance.

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