

Introduction

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Abstract: *Deusto Journal of European Studies* has been contributing for 30 years to the critical analysis and knowledge transfer of the European integration process from a multidisciplinary approach. While commemorating this anniversary, this special issue aims to provide a look ahead, a bid for the continuity of the European project and its re-launch as the only possible choice of future. From this perspective, ten experts offer their visions on some of the most relevant challenges that the EU is currently facing. The short-term evolution of such challenges will shape the political, institutional, economic and social outlines of the European integration process in the coming years.

Keywords: European Parliament, democratic governance, federalism and regionalism, citizenship of the Union, common foreign and security policy, solidarity and human development. Social model, energy security and climate change.

Deusto Journal of European Studies (DJES) was first edited in 1988. Its first three issues were published as separate editions of *Estudios de Deusto* journal, one of the oldest publications of the University of Deusto. In 1990, DJES became an independent journal. Two annual issues have been published ever since.

Thanks to the enthusiasm and the joint work of the editorial team members, DJES has progressively gaining greater recognition and increasingly visible space in the rankings of scientific journals. This achievement would not have been possible without the institutional and financial support provided by the *Diputación Foral de Bizkaia* (regional government of Biscay) since 1989.

Throughout its 30 years, DJSE has sought to contribute to the critical analysis and knowledge transfer of the European integration process under a multidisciplinary approach. Successive Treaty reforms, new accessions of Member States, profound changes in the international geopolitical environment and numerous crises have determined the evolution of the European political project during this time until the current European Union (EU).

This special issue aims to provide a look ahead, a bid for the continuity of the European project and its re-launch as the only possible choice of future. From this perspective, ten experts offer their visions on some of the most relevant challenges that the EU is currently facing. The short-term evolution of such challenges will shape the political, institutional, economic and social outlines of the European integration process in the coming years.

Jaume Duch Guillot, Spokesperson and Director General for Communication of the European Parliament, offers us a retrospective on the 40 years of European elections. Drawing on his deep and direct knowledge of the parliamentary institution, the author analyzes the contexts and results of each of the eight European electoral calls celebrated up to now, from the first elections in 1979 to the last ones in 2014. This overview of the European elections through time is accompanied with the evocation of the profound changes befallen simultaneously in the European integration process, most of which derive from the successive reforms of the Treaties, the numerous accessions of new Member States and the significant increase in the European Parliament's powers. The author finally looks at the elections of May 2019. He highlights some of the novelties brought by the new call, the most significant of which is undoubtedly the non-participation of the United Kingdom. Finally, it underlines that factors such as the refugee crisis, emerging populisms and fake news will determine the vote trends. Face to this, it advocates for the communication, broad and direct, to citizens, encouraging them to participate and vote for the Union and its democratic values.

Juan José Alvarez Rubio, Professor of Private International Law at the University of the Basque Country (UBC), analyzes the current crisis situation the EU is immersed in. He argues that such a situation is due to multiple factors that political leaders and European policies have not been able to manage. Among these factors, the breaking off of the welfare state due to the preponderance of markets, citizen disaffection and the lack of a strategic future vision. The author advocates for revitalizing the European project by retrieving its initial ideal of building a politically united Europe, a «federation of nations around a shared future project». The promotion of an active citizenship, the encouragement of cultural and linguistic diversity, institutional improvements to reduce the complexity of decision-making processes and the enhancement of citizens' rights and social protection are some of the key pieces that the author proposes for a new, more democratic governance model in the EU.

Asier Errasti, Researcher at the Institute of Democratic Governance (Globernance), delves into the causes that explain the democratic crisis

in Europe, especially notorious since the 2008 economic recession. The author points out that, unlike other regions of the world, the crisis in Europe is multidimensional, beyond economic and political realms. In this context, the increase in economic inequalities permits to understand the citizen reaction to the different fronts of the ongoing crisis (Brexit and the appeal to exclusive national sovereignty, protectionist drifts in Italy, the rise of populisms and the far right to the refugee reception policy, etc). However, the author argues that the decisive factor that explains the crisis of democracy in Europe is the capacity for exclusion deriving from the increasing economic inequality, which leads to a political precariat. The answer to this democratic deterioration, the author holds, is to recover the fundamental principles of democracy: political equality and democratic inclusion. In order to achieve this, it advocates for the *démocratique* option, so that citizenship in Europe may take a central place, exercising sovereignty in the different areas of politicization.

Igor Filibi, Lecturer of International Relations at the UBC, goes into the «peripheralization» processes observed in Europe since the First World War, stopping at those developed within the EU, especially notorious after the 5th enlargement to Eastern Europe. As responses to these processes, the author analyzes dynamics such as federalism and its evolution in Europe, highlighting the new emerging dimensions, such as intergovernmental federalism, experimental federalism or the federalist proposal designed by the European Parliament itself in 2017. Another trend towards peripheralization, observed at the global level, is the creation of sub-regional groups. The Baltic Sea State Council, the European Center Initiative or the Visegrad Group are some examples of these cooperation frameworks emerging in Europe. Regionalism and regional autonomy, as a way to address regionalist or nationalist claims and increase the State's legitimacy is another of the dynamics analyzed. Professor Filibi underlines how the process of European integration has affected the exercise and power distribution of regions with political autonomy. Such an impact explains the recent impulses for regions to reorganize and articulate formulas that ensure a more active and visible participation in the multilevel governance system of the EU.

Carlos Espaliú Berdud, Principal Investigator of the Research Group on Security, Risk and Conflict Management at the Nebrija University (Madrid), offers a critical overview of some instruments currently available to promote citizen involvement in European policies and strengthen the EU's democratic legitimacy. Among these tools of participation, the author highlights the European citizens' initiative as a key instrument of

participatory democracy. However, this mechanism has had poor results since its implementation in 2011, which, along with the complex formalities required, has even triggered complaints to the European Ombudsman and the proposal for its modification. The possibility of electing the President of the European Commission through the *Spitzenkandidaten* system also represents, according to the author, a relevant element of citizen approach to the EU institutional framework while providing also direct democratic legitimacy to the President of the European Executive. Tested for the first time in the European elections of 2014, the procedure will be repeated at the 2019 elections, but its continuity is uncertain as it is not expressly provided by the EU Treaties. Finally, Professor Espaliú reflects on the old ideal of introducing a single European constituency in European elections as an element of citizens' identification with the EU. However, this proposal, which would allow European people to choose transnational candidates on the same election day, was once again rejected by the European Parliament and the Council itself in the first months of 2018, albeit for different reasons. Other initiatives are waiting to be accepted, such as that of French President Macron about the creation of popular democratic conventions, in which citizens can reflect on European priorities and propose ideas to boost the EU.

José Luis de Castro Ruano, Associate Professor of International Relations at the UBC, and **Diego Borrajo Valiña**, Postdoctoral Researcher at the UBC, analyze the new developments in the field of European security and defense. They highlight how the need to respond to the new threats posed by the geopolitical environment, along with the current USA Administration's rethinking of its alliance with Europe are behind this process of relaunching. In this context, the authors delve into the examination of some of the new impulses, such as the European Action Plan for Defense, the European Defense Fund, the Permanent Structured Cooperation or the European Intervention Initiative, among others. The analysis also weighs up the impact that the United Kingdom exit will have in this area where this country has traditionally been opposing to any progress of Europeanization. It remains to be determined the scope of the future relationship with the United Kingdom, once it leaves the EU, but the authors hold that the initiatives adopted and those that are underway point to a qualitative leap towards the integration of this sector, in line with the third and most ambitious scenario envisaged by the European Commission in the Reflection Paper on the future of European Defence (2017).

Dolores Bollo Arocena, Associate Professor of Public International Law at the UBC, examines two EU legislative proposals geared to facilitate

the legal arrival to the European territory to people in need of international protection. In the current context of migratory pressure and refugee crisis, the author highlights the legal vacuum in the EU, which lacks specific procedures for the reception of people seeking for international protection in the European territory. To address this gap, one of the proposals, promoted by the European Parliament itself, points to the introduction of a European humanitarian visa, as a procedure that would enable a third-country national to access the EU territory and submit an application for international protection in the country of destination. The other proposal is aimed at establishing a Union resettlement framework for the admission of third-country nationals and stateless persons to the Member States' territory with the purpose of granting them international protection. The author holds that the approval of both legislative proposals would allow to manage migration and refugee flows in a more consistent way with the respect for dignity and human rights, as fundamental values of the EU itself.

Ainhoa Lasa López, Lecturer of Constitutional Law at the University of Alicante, provides a detailed analysis of the recent developments in the EU social dimension over the last three years. She argues that these impulses are largely due to the need to make up for the democratic deficits evidenced during the management of the euro-zone crisis and the resulting increase in social imbalances. After reviewing the most relevant legal and institutional milestones for the European social integration since its inception, the author stops at the new initiatives that seem to pretend the reactivation of the European social model. The study thus delves into the thorough assessment of the measures provided by the labor mobility package included in the European Commission's Work Program for 2016. It also goes in depth into the scenarios and options contained in the European Commission's Reflection Paper on the Social Dimension of Europe (2017), the scope of the European Pillar of Social Rights (2017) and the social equity package incorporated to the European Commission's Work Program for 2018. The author concludes that, despite their relevance, the initiatives adopted by the Juncker Commission do not represent a qualitative leap towards greater social integration in the EU, but merely reaffirm the structural, original principles of the European social model.

Asier García Lupiola, Lecturer at the UB, provides an overview of the EU actions to address two of the most important global challenges, to wit, climate change and energy security. The author underlines how sustainable development, as a cross-cutting objective of all EU policies, now presides over the adoption of measures and instruments to address both challenges more consistently. Likewise, the analysis highlights the role played by the

EU in global climate diplomacy, chiefly its contribution to the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement. Instead, the author points out that EU's international projection in the energy sector is not so developed due to the Member States' reluctance to lose their energy sovereignty. However, the new impulses adopted in this field place the EU on the right track to also respond to the energy dependence challenge and, consequently, to the objective of sustainable development.

About the Author

Beatriz Pérez de las Heras is Professor of European Union Law and Jean Monnet Chair on European Integration at the University of Deusto (UD). PhD in Law (UD), she accomplished post-graduate studies at the Centre Européen Universitaire de Nancy, where she obtained the DESS and DEA en Droit Communautaire. She was Director of the European Studies Institute at UD from 1996 to 2009, and Academic Coordinator of the Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence on European Union Law and International Relations from 2013 to 2016. She also served as Vice-Dean for Research and International Relations at Deusto Faculty of Law from 2013 to 2015. She has been a visiting scholar at the Universities of Oregon (2009), Georgetown (2012), Fordham (2013), Boston College (2014) and Florida International University (2016). She is currently Editor-in-Chief of *Cuadernos Europeos de Deusto Journal* (indexed in SCOPUS as of 2017, <http://ced.revistas.deusto.es/>) and Main Researcher of the Integración Europea y Derecho Patrimonial en un contexto global research team. She is author of several books on European legal issues, such as *Hacia un Derecho Común en la Unión Europea* (Dykinson, 2003) and *El Mercado Interior Europeo* (Universidad de Deusto, 2008). She is also editor of the book *Democratic Legitimacy in the European Union and Global Governance. Building a European Demos* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017). She has published numerous papers in scientific journals too. Her current research interests are chiefly focused on the European Union (EU)'s climate change and energy policy, democracy and citizenship in the EU, and the role of the EU as an international actor.

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