

## Introduction

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**Abstract:** The distribution of the first funds of the European recovery plan, the progressive lifting of Covid restrictions, the work of the Conference on the Future of Europe and the geopolitical tension caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine have marked European news in the first months of 2022. In this uncertain and worrying context, the European Union (EU) is striving to address the important challenges it confronts, such as the climate transition, digitalisation, security at its external borders and strategic autonomy, among others. The response given to these challenges will determine not only the position of the EU on the world stage, but also the sustainability of the European project itself in the coming years.

**Keywords:** German-Spanish relations, European Parliament, Structural Funds impact, Directive on restructuring and insolvency, electronic contracting and documentation.

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**José Manuel Sáenz Rotko**, Associate Professor of International Relations at the Comillas Pontificia University, provides a detailed analysis of the German-Spanish relations in the negotiation context of the Spain's accession to the European Communities. Under the title «*Hispania ante Portas*: change and continuity in the Federal Republic of Germany position towards Spain's accession to the European Communities (1977-1985)», the author highlights how the Bonn government and, in particular, Chancellor Helmut Kohl always supported the negotiation process decisively, a process that turned out to be long and difficult at a time of political transition in Spain. In contrast to France's procrastinating attitude, which led to a certain stagnation in the negotiations if pending issues from the previous enlargement were not resolved previously, the Federal Republic of Germany always adopted a proactive and firm role in supporting Spain's European aspirations. Thanks to German activism, the author points out, Spain signed the Accession Treaty in Madrid on June 12, 1985, becoming a full member state, along with Portugal.

**Cristina Ares Castro-Conde**, Doctor Lecturer and **Alicia Mangana Ríos**, PhD Candidate, both at the Political Science and Sociology Department of the Santiago de Compostela University, delve into the analysis of the last

two European elections of 2014 and 2019, examining the evolution of the political forces within the European Parliament and assessing their impact on the shaping of EU policies. With the title «Elections to the European Parliament and national parties' manifestos: exploratory study of Spain (1987-2019)», the study analyzes this incidence, specifically through the role of the national parties, the «Europarties »(parties at European level) and the political groups of the European Parliament (EP), with special attention to the case of Spain. Providing numerous graphs and data, the exploratory study shows that since the first European elections held in Spain, both the parties and the coalitions that obtained representation in the EP paid attention and focused their interest on defining preferences and choices on EU issues. Regardless of other considerations, this fact should be underlined, according to the authors, as an indicator of democratic strength.

**Diego Sande Veiga**, Lecturer of Applied Economics at the Santiago de Compostela University, evaluates the implementation of the FEDER-Innterconecta programme in Galicia, assessing its impact on the business sector of the region in terms of growth and business innovation. Based on the indicators provided, his study «Is there an impact of the European Regional Innovation Policies on enterprises? An analysis of the ERDF-Innterconecta programme of the Technological Fund 2007-2013 in Galicia» reveals a lack of efficiency in the use of available resources to promote employment and improve business results in a context of deep economic crisis in the region. Taking into account the experience observed so far, the author puts forward some recommendations aimed at improving the formulation and implementation of R&D&i policies in the future. Among others, the precision of more specific objectives in business innovation programs, which would in turn facilitate the evaluation of these policies in the different phases of their application, and the greater alignment of these policies with the priority thematic areas defined in the regional Smart Specialization Strategy.

**Miguel Martínez Muñoz**, Lecturer of Commercial Law at the Comillas Pontificia University, provides a study on «Creditor cram-down in EU Directive 2019/1023 on preventive restructuring frameworks and its transposition into Spanish pre-bankruptcy law». The author argues that the creditor cram-down constitutes an effective mechanism to achieve the forced restructuring of the debt and avoid bankruptcy. The analysis focuses on the scope of this instrument governed by the EU Directive 2019/1023. The ultimate objective of this legal act is to provide a framework where operationally viable companies with financial difficulties can have the opportunity to restructure and adopt a plan that allows preserving the value of the business and guaranteeing its future viability. The article also focuses on the measures introduced by the Directive and their impact on the Spanish pre-bankruptcy law, both in the norms already in force and those in

proposal draft. The author concludes that the relevant Spanish law, including the Bankruptcy Law Reform Bill that incorporates some of the Directive's novelties, is in accordance with EU legislation.

**José Luis Iriarte Ángel**, Professor of Private International Law at the Public University of Navarra, **Eduardo Andrés Calderón Marengo**, Doctor Lecturer of Private International Law at the Cooperative University of Colombia, **Jaime Elías Torres Buelvas**, Lecturer of Private International Law at the Cooperative University of Colombia, **Tatiana Vanessa González Rivera**, Doctor Lecturer of Private International Law at the National Autonomous University of Mexico, and **Unai Belintxon Martín**, Doctor Lecturer of Private International Law at the Public University of Navarra, sign the joint article «Electronic contracting and documentation in international transport: special mention to the consignment note. An analysis from Private International Law». The study essentially analyzes the evolution of EU law on contracting and electronic documentation in the transport sector, with special attention to the Rome I Regulation. The authors point out that this legal instrument offers predictable and safe responses to the regulatory specification difficulties deriving from both traditional contracting modalities and multiple electronic contracting ways. Likewise, in a broader international legal context, the article also deals with the Geneva Convention on the Contract for the International Carriage of Goods by Road, concluded within the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe in 1956. This legal framework expressly regulates the so-called Consignment Note in physical and electronic format as well, following the incorporation of the Additional Protocol in 2008. For the authors, this Convention also constitutes a valuable legal tool since it provides a safe and uniform standardized framework for the international contracting of transport services.

## About the autor

**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 (France), 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 *Deusto Journal of European Studies* and Main Researcher of the «Integración Europea y Derecho Patrimonial» research team. She is author of various books and articles on European legal issues. As of September 2019, she is the Coordinator of the Jean Monnet Project «European Union-Asia Pacific Dialogue: promoting European Integration and mutual Knowledge across Continents» (EUNAP).

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