



DEFENDING DEMOCRACY IN THE EUROPEAN UNION:

A SOCIO-LEGAL APPROACH TO THE EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS

Researchers

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Additional information

Timeline: 2023-27

Funding organisation: Swiss National
Science Foundation, Division of Social
Sciences and Humanities

Keywords: European Union, democracy, rule
of law, sanctions, conditionality

Description

In the European Union (EU), this question has become a pressing issue after some governing parties in its Member States have been accused of dismantling the rule of law at home and threatening the proper functioning of European institutions. This project will investigate how the EU institutions have approached threats to its proper functioning coming from such political parties after the latter entered the Council of the EU or after their representatives were directly elected to the European Parliament. Taking a socio-legal approach to legal interpretation and institutional practice, it asks: to what extent and through which practices do the European Union institutions construct internal political outsiders and defend themselves against them?

The project will focus on the criteria European institutions use to identify threats to its existence posed by these political parties; which formal and informal rules they use to sanction them or to keep them at a distance, and lastly, how political parties and governments in EU member states who fear being sanctioned try to convince the EU not to impose sanctions on them. The project will be based on a multi-methods approach that combines interview-based methods, non-participant observation, and archival research in the key EU institutions. Qualitative interviews will be conducted with politicians, high-level bureaucrats and diplomats, and experts in the European Union institutions in the European Commission, the Council of the EU, the European Council, the European Court of Justice, and the European Parliament. Adopting a socio-legal approach to European institutions, this project falls within the scope of European studies, the sociology of law, and governmental practices. The results will enrich political debates on the defense of the rule of law in Europe, as well as on the future of democracies in the twenty-first century.

