



Let's talk Europe – DEBATING THE EU WITH CITIZENS

International conference, May 20/21, 2021

Kick-Off conference, Jean Monnet Network “Debating Europe”

www.debating-europe.de

Despite the activities of the EU and national institutions as well as intermediate institutions and actors, research as well as opinion surveys diagnose a growing gap between what has been termed “EU elites” and EU citizens¹. The EU has a legitimacy problem², support rates have been decreasing during the peak of the financial crisis³ (see also the respective Eurobarometer data)⁴ and despite the economic situation improving, votes for populist, extremist, anti-EU and anti-democrat parties and movements are on the rise throughout the EU⁵. At the same time, the Europeanisation of politics and decision making continues to impact and transform the national democratic systems of the member states⁶.

Our network takes stock of this situation. The primary aim is to open debate and get into a dialogue on the EU with citizens that are neither engaged in EU-oriented civil-society organisations, nor in political parties, in order to bridge the gap between the EU and its citizens. The core of the network consists in citizen focus group discussions that the network members will organise in their home countries – three focus group discussions per country and 18 altogether in three years, with minimum ten citizen participants. The country selection is particularly adequate for our task. We include network members from Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, and Slovenia, and hence, we will reach citizens in Eastern, Northern, Central and Southern EU member states, founding member states and nearly all of the following enlargements rounds, small, medium and large member states. Accordingly, the network will enhance an open debate on the EU with around 200 citizens so far not engaged with the EU in six member states. The network's results will deliver well-based findings about the sources of contemporary EU-criticism and the character of the oft-cited gap between EU elites and average citizens that can be considered as representative for the EU altogether as they come from a representative selection of EU countries.

The international kick-off conference of the Jean Monnet Network brings together numerous international academics with an expertise in citizen's views on the EU, debate, policy dialogue, and citizen focus groups; as well as one Member of the European Parliament.

¹ Offe, Claus (2015), *Europe entrapped*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

² Mair, Peter (2013), *Ruling the void. The hollowing of Western democracy*, London/New York: Verso.

³ Armingeon, Klaus/Kai Guthmann (2014), Democracy in crisis? The declining support for national democracy, In European countries, 2007-2011, *European Journal of Political Research*, 353, 3, 423–442.

⁴ Eurobarometer: <http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/publicopinion/index.cfm>

⁵ Macchiarelli, Corrado; Monti, Mara; Wiesner, Claudia; Diessner, Sebastian: The European Central Bank between Financial Crisis and Populisms, Palgrave macmillan; Vries, Catherine E. de (2018), *Euroscepticism and the future of European integration*. First Edition. Oxford, United Kingdom, New York: Oxford University Press.

⁶ Wiesner, Claudia (2019), *Inventing the EU as a democratic polity. Concepts, Actors, and Controversies*. London: Palgrave Macmillan

SPONSORED BY THE



Federal Ministry
of Education
and Research



Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst
German Academic Exchange Service

CINTEUS★
Centre for Intercultural
and European Studies



Programme:

First day / May 20th

14.00-14.45 Introduction and overall project presentation, **Claudia Wiesner**, Fulda University of Applied Sciences

14.45-15.45 *Jean Monnet project EuroScope*, **Céline Belot**, CNRS, Chair: Cécile Robert, Sciences Po Lyon

15.45. – 16.00 Break

16.00 – 17.00 *Debating Europe critically: approaches, potential and limits with evidence from the Future of Europe debate*, **Luis Bouza Garcia**, University of Madrid, Chair: Meta Novak, University of Ljubljana

17.00 – 17.15 Break

17.15. – 18.15 *Making people talk about Europe*, **Marine de Lassalle**, University of Strasbourg, Chair: Niilo Kauppi, University of Helsinki and CNRS

Second day / May 21st

9.00 – 10.00 *Citizens Talking About Europe: Focus groups, From Qualitative Data Generation to Analysis*, **Virginie van Ingelgom**, Catholic University of Louvain; Chair Willy Beauvallet, Université Lyon2

10.00 – 10.15 Break

10.15 – 11.15 *How taxi-drivers talk about Europe*, **Jonathan White**, London School of Economics; Chair Meike Schmidt-Gleim, Fulda UAS

11.15 – 11.30 Break

11.30 – 12.30 *Citizens Talking About Europe: Focus groups, From Qualitative Data Generation to Analysis*, **Adrian Favell**, University of Leeds; Chair: Laura Landorff, Aalborg University

12.30-14.00 Lunch break

14.00 – 15.00 **Damian Boeselager**, MEP (Volt); Chair Thomas Berger, inter.research

Organisation: Jean Monnet Netzwerk „Debating Europe“ and Jean-Monnet-Chair „Bridging the Gap“ (Fulda University of Applied Sciences), <https://www.hs-fulda.de/en/studies/departments/social-and-cultural-sciences/about-us/jean-monnet-chair-1>

Direction: Prof. Dr. Claudia Wiesner (Fulda University of Applied Sciences)

Dates: Thursday, May 20th, 2021, 14h-18h and Friday, May 21st, 2021, 9h-15h

Venue: Online, please register

No fee, Registration: <https://www.debating-europe.de/registration/>

Co-sponsored by the Fulda Centre of Transnational Governance and the Centre for Intercultural and European Studies (CINTEUS)

SPONSORED BY THE



Federal Ministry
of Education
and Research



Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst
German Academic Exchange Service

CINTEUS
Centre for Intercultural
and European Studies