



**GEDECO**  
Grupo de estudios sobre Democracia  
y Constitucionalismo



# Populism and Contemporary Democracy in Europe. Between Old Problems and New Challenges

**25-26 February 2021**  
**(Online conference)**

## Keynote speakers

Nikos Alivizatos, University of Athens - Venice Commission Member

Paloma Biglino Campos, University of Valladolid - Venice Commission Member

Josep Maria Castellà, University of Barcelona - Venice Commission Member

Fruzsina Gardos Orosz, Institute of Legal Studies, Budapest

Mirosław Granat, University of Warsaw - Former Judge at the Polish Constitutional Court

Simona Granata Menghini, Acting Director, Secretary of the Venice Commission (a.i)

Tania Groppi, University of Siena

António Henriques Gaspar, Venice Commission Member -Former President of the Portuguese Supreme Court

Helle Krunke, University of Copenhagen - IACL representative in the Venice Commission

Kim Lane Scheppele, Princeton University

Cesare Pinelli, University of Rome La Sapienza - Venice Commission Member

Rafael Rubio Núñez, Complutense University - Venice Commission Member

José Tudela Aranda, Secretario General de la Fundación M. Giménez Abad, Zaragoza

Teresa Violante, MPI for Comparative Public Law and International Law, Heidelberg

Zoltán Zsente, Research Chair of the Institute of Legal Studies, Budapest



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## PRESENTATION

The conference is one of the core activities of the Horizon 2020 Project 'DEMOS. Democratic efficacy and varieties of populism in Europe' and will be the occasion to present the scientific results of the first two years of the project. Organised in partnership with the Venice Commission for Democracy through Law, the advisory body of the Council of Europe in constitutional matters, and the Grupo de Estudio sobre Democracia y Constitucionalismo (GEDECO) of the University of Barcelona (Project "Counter Majoritarian Instruments in the Constitutional State (PID2019-104414GB-C32, Minister of Science and Innovation)) of the University of Barcelona, the conference aims to reflect upon the challenges posed by populism to constitutional democracy and the institutions of the rule of state, in particular on the counter-majoritarian ones, and how these challenges should be dealt with. The conference will provide a forum for DEMOS scholars to engage in a debate with the wider academic community about the impact of the populist phenomenon on European democracies. Moreover, the presence of the Venice Commission experts will provide an insight on the way populism is affecting constitutional law making and how European standards are adapting to it.

The conference works will be organised along two days.

During the first day the focus will be on how populism impacted on the different components and institutions of European democracies.

In the first panel, the relationship between populism and the representative dimension of democracy will be examined. The core claim of populism is indeed that the transmission mechanisms of the popular sovereign will are not working. Speakers will be thus invited to assess the legitimacy of the populist proposals for a more extensive use of direct and participative democracy instruments and how the rise of populism has altered the equilibrium between political powers.

The second panel aims to provide some insights on the stance of populists *vis-à-vis* judges, be they ordinary or constitutional. It is a commonplace that, once in power, populist parties begin a systematic attack on the judiciary and constitutional courts, i.e. on the institutions ensuring the government's subjection to the law. Besides, when they have the majority to do so, populist parties seek to amend the Constitution in order to tight their grip on power. Interveners in this panel will present their views on the causes of this *malaise* for the judicial power and how the least dangerous branch should be equipped to face the populist threat.

The third panel will assess the troublesome relationship between populism and the European Union. The European Union is often regarded with suspicion by populist parties, which consider the EU as an elite-driven project deprived of any democratic legitimacy. On the other hand, there is an ongoing debate on whether the EU institutions should be con-

cerned by the reforms implemented in its Member States by populist parties. Along these lines, the panel will discuss what can be done to redress the EU structural lack of democratic legitimacy and how and if the EU institutions should react to the erosion of democracy in its Member States.

The second day of the conference will be entirely dedicated to discuss the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on constitutional democracy. The way national governments are using emergency powers, the relationship between politics and technocratic governance, the awake of the European solidarity are elements susceptible to have a profound impact on the future of populism. In this light, the first panel of the day aims to discuss the threats put forward by the Covid-19 to constitutional democracy but also the opportunities this crisis is bringing forward. A second panel will instead provide an insight on Spain. In particular, it will be analysed the degree of involvement of the Parliament in the crisis management, that of courts, and of Autonomous Communities and whether populist parties are seizing the opportunity to bolster their case.

## Call for papers

We invite young scholars interested in contributing to the conference to join the debate by presenting a communication. The communication should be related to one of the five main thematic areas of the conference. Within each thematic area, interventions can address any aspect of the topic, from an institutional, normative or doctrinal perspective. Papers may adopt an approach focusing on single national experiences as well as a comparative one, also looking beyond the European context.

## Working Language

The languages of the conference are English and Spanish. Authors intending to participate in Day 1 shall prepare their intervention in English. The working language of Day 2 will instead be Spanish. The text of the communication however may indistinctly be in English or Spanish.

## Deadlines

Young scholars interested in presenting papers must submit before the 20th December an abstract (max. 500 words) in English, together with a CV, at the following e-mail address: [m.a.simonelli@ub.edu](mailto:m.a.simonelli@ub.edu) Proposals will be selected by the Scientific Committee of the workshop. Selection's results will be notified before the 30th of December. Before the 15th of February the selected authors will have to send the full paper. Papers shall have a maximum length of 7,000 words including footnotes.

## **Papers' presentation and publishing**

The selected papers will be presented during the workshop. Publication of papers is envisaged either in the form of a monographic issue of a law journal, either as an edited book with an international publisher.

## **Scientific Committee**

Prof. Josep Maria Castellà Andreu, Full Professor of Constitutional Law, University of Barcelona

Prof. Tania Groppi, Full Professor of Public Law, University of Siena

Prof. Helle Krunke, Full Professor of Constitutional Law, University of Copenhagen

Prof. Zoltán Szente, Research Chair of the Institute of Legal Studies, Budapest

## **Organising Committee**

Dr. Marco Antonio Simonelli

Dr. Nuria Gonzalez Campaña

Juan Tello Mendoza

Contact Marco Antonio Simonelli at [m.a.simonelli@ub.edu](mailto:m.a.simonelli@ub.edu) for any further information

