

With the support of the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Union

Project no. 177316-LLP-1-2010-DE-ERASMUS-ENWA

LISBOAN

Linking Interdisciplinary Integration Studies by Broadening the European Academic Network

Third Guest Lecture

ARENA, University of Oslo, Norway (Partner no. 40)
University College London, United Kingdom (Partner no. 59)

Deliverable No. D29

April 2012, Project month 19

Dissemination level: Public

Funding Disclaimer: This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Fifth LISBOAN Guest Lecture, 30 April 2012, University of Cologne

Christopher Lord, ARENA

Date: 30 April 2012

Venue: Belgian Embassy, London

Hosts: University College London, European Institute

This half-day event, hosted by Ambassador of Belgium to the UK in London, focused on the consequences, which the Eurozone crisis and its management holds in stock for the EU's democratic standards and legitimacy. It comprised a closed workshop with 15 academics, policy analysts, MEPs and former European Parliament officials. Co-organised by UCL's European Institute, the Centre for European Reform and the Policy Network in London, the workshop was then followed by a well-attended public panel discussion, also held at the Ambassador's residence.

The debate took its point of departure from the assumption that the sovereign debt crisis in the Eurozone is not having only a devastating economic effect on the EU Member States, but that it has also begun to have ramifications for the very basis on which they, and the Union, found their democratic and constitutional principles. Obviously, the debate about the Union's deficiencies in democratic accountability and legitimacy is far from new. Yet in the current circumstances, it has arguably reached a new, qualitatively different, stage. On the one hand, current crisis management impinges on democratic standards across Europe and impacts popular attitudes vis-à-vis EU politics. On the other hand, the debate about the "democratic deficit" has gained a new urgency in face of a strong pressure towards further EU integration as the only solution out of the crisis. As these two elements are interrelated, they need to be addressed in terms of the way each influences the other.

Paralleling the debate on democracy in and of the EU, participants discussed its effects on national sovereignty. One claim has been that transfers of national sovereignty to the EU offer a way of overcoming the erosion of sovereignty by markets. Yet, if the use of this power is simply to enforce strict budgetary discipline by the ECB and the Commission, then little is gained by way of enhanced democratic accountability – indeed much may have been lost. A second issue for debate, therefore, was whether greater economic integration could be achieved without not only undermining democracy at the national level but also failing to replace it at the EU level. Several reform proposals were touched upon during the discussion.

Christopher Lord contributed to the debate specifically from an angle of democratic political theory, taking into account how the institutional reforms introduced by the Lisbon Treaty could affect the questions at issue. His position was that while a collectivisation of risk and concomitant centralisation is indeed needed, this should not necessarily imply a transfer of further powers. More public control and political equality, he argued, is needed wherever there is coercion of any kind. In this context, he highlighted the role of national parliaments (NPs), and specifically the capacities introduced in the Lisbon Treaty to enhance their power of scrutiny. He noted that despite these novel powers, NPs are still insufficiently equipped to democratically control EMU

on their own. This is due, he argued, to a variety of factors. Among them, he singled out the capacity of individual member states to impose negative externalities on others or free-ride; the existing inequality between the capacity and influence of different Member States' national parliaments in EU negotiations; and the fact that all NPs, in order to make an impact with European institutions, need to cultivate more expertise to rival the European Parliament's in this case.