

Europe's Future from a Regional Perspective: Expert Discussion with REGIOPARL in the Bavarian Parliament

On 5 November 2019 REGIOPARL hosted an expert discussion on the future of the EU in the Bavarian Parliament. REGIOPARL analyses the role of regional parliaments in the EU and discusses the future development of Europe with regional deputies to capture their perspective on the topic. The expert discussion with deputies from the committee for European Affairs of the Bavarian Parliament is part of the larger REGIOPARL event series that is organized by the project team at Danube University Krems and the European Democracy Lab in Berlin in numerous regional parliaments in the EU.

“With these events in regional parliaments we aim at creating an open space for innovation, where deputies can develop and share their personal ideas for the future of Europe,” explains Dr. Sarah Meyer, Political Scientist at Danube University Krems and head of the research project REGIOPARL. She adds that since the Brexit referendum in 2016, the debate on the EU’s future often ignores the regional perspective. Yet, regional parliaments and their deputies link citizens’ needs and EU politics, which is why their voice should be heard in the debate on the EU’s future.

The deputies of the Bavarian Parliament presented their perspectives on the future of the EU. “Beyond the animosities of EU Member States, the regions make constructive contributions,” said Tobias Gotthardt, Chair of the Committee on European Affairs in the Bavarian Parliament. That is why the voice of the regions should be strengthened.

During the debate, the deputies agreed that there is a need for stronger collaboration between EU Member states. This, for example, is already given in the constructive and efficient work of the Committee of the Regions. Yet, the discussants presented different ideas on how to realize stronger collaboration and further harmonization. Their ideas ranged from removing the principle of unanimity, over a renewed distribution of competences, to a new institutional architecture for Europe. They also identified a need to adapt the distribution of competences between the different political levels. Here, the suggestion of a clear Europeanization in EU foreign politics received support.

The project team was delighted to have gained such deep insights during the expert discussion in the Bavarian Parliament. “We managed to gather personal opinions and objectives on European politics beyond realpolitik and party-political limitations,” noted Prof. Dr. Ulrike Guérot, Head of the Department for European Policy and the Study of Democracy at Danube University Krems and initiator of the research project, which is realized in collaboration with Forum Morgen. With the coming events in Galicia and Andalusia, in December the REGIOPARL team aims at capturing further contributions to the debate on the EU’s future from regional actors. In sum, the innovative research project will visit 15 regional parliaments in seven EU Member States.