

# Mapping regional involvement in EU affairs

## Academic conference

The last decades have witnessed growing attention to the involvement of the so-called 'third level' of governance: the subnational or regional level, in EU affairs (cf. Keating et al. 2015; Abels/Battke 2019). Research focused, for example, on the emergence and activities of regional offices in Brussels (e.g. Marks et al. 2002; Tatham 2017), on the institutionalisation of regional involvement in domestic EU policy-shaping (e.g. Tatham 2011), the role of the Committee of the Regions (e.g. Hönnige/Panke 2013; Piattoni/Schönlau 2015; Tatham 2018), or, more recently, regional parliaments' involvement in the Early Warning System (EWS) of subsidiarity control (Högenauer 2017; Borońska-Hryniewiecka 2017).

This increasing regional focus on the interplay of the EU and its member states is not surprising. The most recent EU treaty reform led to a strengthening of the sub-national dimension in multi-level EU governance – although not uniformly so (cf. Tatham 2014). Many exciting questions about regional involvement in EU affairs, however, remain to be addressed: how and why do regional level political actors actually engage in EU affairs? Are they currently just bystanders or do they actively get involved in shaping European policy? What form of participation would they like to see in a newly constituted Europe? And could they act as a link between EU citizens and institutions within the multi-level polity?

The aim of our conference is to study these and related questions concerning the participation of regional authorities in EU decision-making, whether via domestic or European structures and processes. The conference organisers are particularly interested in contributions that:

- broaden the geographical scope of empirical analysis to include the rarely studied and less powerful regions of non-federal, centralist member state, esp. in Central and Eastern Europe,
- consider not only institutional rights and opportunities but focus on actual behaviour and activities of regional level political actors and institutions,
- study various types of regional political actors, including governments, parliaments, and administrations, both at the collective (institutions) and individual level,
- review potential implications of political calls for stronger regional EU involvement, and/or
- examine the supposed closeness of regional actors to EU citizens in the multi-level context.

## Program overview

The conference program features an opening session with a short introduction of the *European Regional Democracy Map* ([ERDM](#)), a novel online portal for information and data on regional democracy in Europe. The keynote lecture "Regional voices in the European multilevel polity: towards a multilevel democracy?" is presented by Professor Simona Piattoni (University of Trento). Three academic panels will present up to five papers respectively. Both conference days will conclude with interactive sessions: an expert roundtable on day 1 and an informal scholarly workshop on day 2.

### --- DAY 1 ---

- 13.00\*      **Registration**
- 13.30      Opening & introduction of the web portal *European Regional Democracy Map*
- 14.30      **Keynote lecture** | Simona Piattoni: Regional voices in the European multilevel polity: towards a multilevel democracy?
- 16.00      **Panel 1:** Regional actors engaging in EU affairs?
- 17.30      **Expert roundtable:** The role of regions in the EU: Sharing expertise between politics and science
- 18.30      **Get together & dinner**

### --- DAY 2 ---

- 10.00      **Panel 2:** What role for regions in the multi-level EU polity?
- 11.30      **Panel 3:** Regional actors connecting EU citizens and institutions?
- 13.00      Lunch
- 14.00      **Scholarly workshop:** Challenges and prospects in the comparative study of regions & the EU
- 15.00      **End of conference**

\*All times are CET (Central European Time)

## Key information

**When:** 20 – 21 October 2022

Day 1: Thursday, 20 October, 13.00 – 18.30 (followed by get together & dinner)

Day 2: Friday, 21 October, 10.00 – 15.00 (including lunch)

**Where:** Krems an der Donau, Austria (one and a half hours from Vienna by train or one hour by car/cab).

**Conference organizers:** The conference is organized by the research project REGIOPARL | Regional Parliaments Lab at Danube University Krems, Austria.

**Costs:** There are no conference fees for participants. Travel and accommodation cost will be covered by the conference organiser for all speakers/presenters.

## About the organizers

*REGIOPARL (Regional Parliaments Lab) is a multi-annual international research project on the role of regional parliaments in the EU multilevel system of governance. REGIOPARL is hosted at Danube University Krems and funded by Forum Morgen (Austria). It cooperates with the following partner organizations: the European School of Governance in Berlin, the Jagiellonian University Kraków, the University of Tübingen, and the WZB Berlin Social Science Centre.*



## Program details

### Introduction of the European Regional Democracy Map (ERDM)

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The ERDM is an innovative web portal that addresses policymakers, academic and other experts, analysts, as well as interested citizens who want to learn more about regional democracy in Europe and about regional involvement in EU policymaking. Assembling information on the full range of legislative and governmental institutions at the regional level across the EU, the ERDM visualises the constitutional diversity of European regional democracy. In doing so, it also covers those regions often considered less powerful and puts special emphasis on the often-neglected subnational parliaments.

Speakers: Dr. Sarah Meyer, Danube University Krems & Prof. Arjan Schakel, University of Bergen

### KEYNOTE LECTURE

#### **Prof. Simona Piattoni | Regional voices in the European multilevel polity: towards a multilevel democracy?**

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Simona Piattoni is Professor of Political Science at the University of Trento, Italy, where she teaches comparative politics, European politics, and local government. She holds a PhD in *Political Science* from MIT and a BA/MA in *Economics and Social Sciences* from Bocconi. Her main research interests concern clientelism (*Clientelism, Interests and Democratic Representation*, Cambridge University Press, 2001), multilevel governance (*The Theory of Multi-Level Governance*, Oxford University Press, 2010) and European/EU democracy (*The European Union. Democratic Principles and Institutional Architectures in Times of Crisis*, Oxford University Press, 2015).

### PANEL 1

#### **Regional actors engaging in EU affairs?**

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The first conference panel will discuss questions related to regional political actors' involvement in EU policymaking. The panel asks why and how regional actors seek to engage in EU affairs and to what extent institutional actors at the regional level have "Europeanized" their activities. The focus here is on actual behaviour rather than institutional rights. Activities may include participation in the Early Warning System (EWS) on subsidiarity control, lobbying

activities towards Brussels' institutions, participation in domestic EU policy-shaping, and other mobilisation efforts.

Chair: Prof. Dr. Arjan Schakel, University of Bergen

Discussant: Prof. Dr. Anna-Lena Högenauer, University of Luxembourg

Paper presentations:

- *From prerogatives to practices. Explaining EU-related activities of German regional parliaments*

Ass. Prof. Dr. Aron Buzogány, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences (BOKU) Vienna & Dipl.-Pol. Jens Häsing, Freie Universität Berlin

- *Understanding regional engagement in today's EU: Whatever happened to the German Länder?*

Prof. Dr. Annegret Eppler, University of Applied Sciences, Kehl; Dr. Martin Große Hüttmann, University of Tübingen & Carolyn Rowe, PhD, Aston University

- *Leaders and laggards vis-à-vis the subsidiarity scrutiny among the parliamentary assemblies of the Spanish Autonomous Communities: a framework for comparative analysis*

Ass. Prof. Dr. Cristina Ares Castro-Conde, University of Santiago de Compostela

- *Getting involved in EU affairs? Regional parliaments' participation in the EWS*

Dr. Sarah Meyer, Danube University Krems; Mario Wolf, BA, REGIOPARL Berlin & Paul Reimers, BA, REGIOPARL Berlin

## **PANEL 2**

### **What role for regions in the multi-level EU polity?**

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The second panel will address the broader political context of regions in the EU polity. It will focus on institutional and normative claims regarding the involvement of regional actors in the EU multi-level polity. Such claims may refer to specific functions that regional-level political institutions perform and whether/how these could contribute to the strengthening of EU multi-level democracy. The panel will also discuss regional political actors' involvement in EU regional policy as an important cornerstone not only for socioeconomic convergence in the EU but also in terms of regional EU involvement.

Chair: Dr. Katrin Auel, Institute for Advanced Studies (IHS)

Discussant: Prof. Dr. Eric Miklin, University of Salzburg

Paper presentations:

- *Reconsidering the role of the CoR after CoFoE: the missing piece for a European transnational democracy?*  
Sandrina Antunes, PhD, Universidade do Minho & Prof. John Loughlin, University of Oxford
- *Regional MPs' perspectives on the Committee of the Regions*  
Simon Lenhart, MA, Danube University Krems
- *Regional Governments and their Position-Taking on and Emphasis of EU Issues in Coalition Agreements: Empirical Evidence from Germany*  
Dr. Martin Gross, LMU Munich
- *European Cohesion Policy in Times of Fiscal Consolidation: A Comparison of Four Regions in Germany and Portugal*  
Moritz Neujeffski, Berlin Social Science Center

**PANEL 3**

**Regional actors connecting EU citizens and institutions?**

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Calls for a better EU involvement of regions are often based on the (explicit or implicit) assumption that regional political actors are “closer to citizens” – compared to EU but also national actors and institutions. Whereas regional representatives may use this as a strategic argument, such assessments can also be found in the academic literature. Systematic empirical analyses of that question, however, remain scarce. The third panel will therefore take a closer look at the supposed linkage function of regional actors in the EU context. In doing so, it also discusses questions related to collective identity and elections in the EU multi-level context.

Chair: Dr. Katrin Praprotnik, University of Graz & Head of the Austrian Democracy Lab (ADL)

Discussant: Prof. Dr. Elisabeth Donat, Danube University Krems

Paper presentations:

- *Second-order effects in European elections and the European multilevel electoral system*  
Alexander Verdoes, MA, University of Bergen & Prof. Arjan Schakel, University of Bergen
- *The public value of Cohesion policy: A citizen perspective*  
Ass. Prof. Andreja Pegan, University of Primorska

- *Regional identity, radical right support, and Euroscepticism in Central and Eastern Europe*  
Ass. Prof. Anna Brigevich, Norwegian University of Science and Technology
- *'Closeness to citizens' as a multilevel and multidimensional concept. Empirical evidence from 12 European regions*  
Ass. Prof. Dr. Elisabeth Donath, Danube University Krems & Gunnar Placzek, MA, REGIOPARL Berlin

## EXPERT ROUNDTABLE

### **The role of regions in the EU: Sharing expertise between politics and science**

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Like other fields of research, the study of regional involvement in EU affairs strongly benefits from expert information provided by political representatives, public officials, and other practitioners. Such information is readily accessible on certain issues whereas it is more difficult to obtain on others. Conversely, political representatives and institutions often lack tailored summaries providing them with an outline of most recent academic research and its findings. The aim of this roundtable is to foster interaction between academic scholars and political representatives/administrative experts to further the study of regions and the EU.

Moderation: Prof. Dr. Gabriele Abels, University of Tübingen

## SCHOLARLY WORKSHOP

### **Challenges and prospects in the comparative study of regions & the EU**

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Comparative research on regions and their EU involvement is confronted with many conceptual, methodical, empirical, but also practical challenges. Participating scholars are invited to share experiences from their own research with colleagues from the field, present best practices for dealing with such challenges, and discuss avenues for future collaboration regarding data access and data sharing. The aim of this workshop is to provide an informal forum for debate, facilitating fruitful exchange of researchers working on regions and/in the EU.