

An open event titled: “**Crisis Management and Democracy in EU and Latin America: Lessons Learned**” organized by ELIAMEP Crisis Observatory on Thursday, June 27th.

You may find the Press Release of the event below:

The complex connection between the European and Latin American economic crises and their impact not only on the political systems of the countries affected but also on the quality of democracy itself was at the core of the conference “Crisis Management in EU and Latin America: Lessons Learned” held on June 27th by the Crisis Observatory of the Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP).

How were the Greek political system and the EU’s legitimacy impacted during the Memoranda? What is the future of democracy in Europe after the crisis and which mechanisms turned the economic crises to political ones in the states of Latin America? How should the results of the recent European elections be “translated” regarding European integration?



These critical questions were addressed by distinguished Greek and foreign speakers who participated in the conference organised in the framework of the research programme Jean Monnet Network “Crisis-Equity-Democracy for Europe and Latin America”, in which the Crisis Observatory of ELIAMEP participates since 2016.

“The EU’s debt crisis is a matter that greatly concerns us. It was not only a political and economic crisis but a crisis of legitimacy and the democracy” noted the keynote speaker **Vivien Schmidt**, Professor of Political Science at Boston University, highlighting the change observed in the characteristics of the EU’s political system, after the crisis. According to her: “the question for the future of democracy in Europe is double-fold: 1) How will the Eurozone be governed in ways that will lead to the resolution of the economic problems and 2) How will that be feasible in a manner that will enhance democratic legitimacy at both the European and national levels”.

During the first session on the “Management of the European Crisis and Democracy: European and National Aspects”, **Eleonora Poli** of the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) described the economic and political problems that lead to the prevalence of Euroscepticism and populism in the Italian political system, while George Andreou of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH) discussed the transformations of the Greek political and party system in the time of the crisis.

André Freire, of the ISCTE-IUL-Lisbon University Institute, focused on the state of the Portuguese democracy before and after the Troika intervention stating that “in contrast to the rest of Southern European countries, in Portugal the levels of electoral volatility and the party system format hardly changed”.



“The Eurozone was not ready to face a crisis of this magnitude” said Assistant Professor and Head of the Crisis Observatory, **Dimitris Katsikas**. He added: “The way in which the crisis was managed reduced the legitimacy of the Eurozone/EU, especially in the countries of the Eurozone’s periphery, mainly because the Memoranda undermined the democratic legitimacy of the institutional framework as well as of the terms of the agreements and the content of the imposed policies”.

Insightful observations were made during the second session on the subject: “From Economic to Political Crises in Latin America: Implications for the Democracy”. **Kai Lehman** of the University of São Paulo noted that at present, Venezuela stands before three, interconnected crises: an economic one, a social and humanitarian one (collapse of public health and immigration), and a political one. However, he

pointed out that the priority of the international community should be the humanitarian crisis since, at the moment, a class conflict seems inevitable for the country.

Specifically, for Brazil, **Bettina Guilherme** from IRELAC said: “The crisis in Brazil is due to the greediness, the corruption, the imbalances of the political forces and the power abuse of the judicial system”. Andrea Hoffmann from the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro described the series of political and social overthrows during the last years in Brazil that led to the ascending of Temer’s and Bolsonaro’s governments.

Olivier Dabène from the Institut d’ Etudes Politiques, Science Po, referring to the challenges that democracy faces in modern Latin America, argued that the region may be going through the most democratic period in its history but it still needs to work on safeguarding more effectively the representative and participatory democracy.



Opening the roundtable discussion on: “Assessing the results of the European Elections: The way forward for European Integration and Democracy”, **Stephany Griffith Jones** from Columbia University and IRELAC, focused on the EU’s need to build a new vision that will not only gather all the democratic forces but will also create new institutions and policies. In this context, Professor. Jones noted that we should all reconsider and rethink the fiscal and development policies as well as the “tools” regulating the global financial system.

From his side, **Christian Ghymers**, president of IRELAC, noted that neo-liberal policies should be redefined alongside with the way that problems are being encountered, suggesting first that market prices miss important external effects making inefficient the whole system, second, necessary corrections for internalizing spillovers require international consent and cooperation, and third, the international monetary system based upon the international use of a dominant national currency makes asymmetric and unstable the financial markets, creating costly variations in the global liquidity. Evaluating the results of the European elections, **George Pagoulatos**, Vice President of ELIAMEP and Professor at the Athens University of Economics and Business, estimated that “the result of the European elections was not so much in favor of the Eurosceptic forces after all, as many assumed”. He also stressed out that the EU is governed by grand coalitions, something that favors wider consent but makes the decision taking process and the faster promotion of policies more difficult.

Commenting on the EU’s political scenery, **Loukas Tsoukalis**, President of ELIAMEP and Professor at SciencePo, noted that despite the Cassandras, the EU survived from both the economic and the migration crisis while Brexit and the policies adopted by the Trump administration had a unifying effect for the EU.

Analysing the results of the recent European elections- which he identified as the most “European elections” of the last 20 years in the EU- Professor. Tsoukalis evaluated as positive the limited increase in the populists’ and far right’s vote share as well as the concurrent increase of the vote share of the “Greens” a tendency that according to his estimations will continue. Nevertheless, he warned that in order to halt the populist wave it is necessary to deal with the real problems that populists bring forward in their agenda and for which they usually propose easy, non-realistic solutions.

Tags: [EU](#), [Crisis Observatory](#), [Latin America](#)

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