

REPORT Young European Law Scholars Conference 2022

On 3 June 2022, the 5th Young European Law Scholars Conference (YELS Conference) took place at the University of Innsbruck. This Conference is particularly noteworthy because it brings together young European law researchers across the EU to share and develop their ideas and approaches in English.

After the 4th YELS Conference 2021 – organized by the University of Zurich – had to switch to an online format due to COVID-19, young researchers and professors from various EU Member States as well as the United Kingdom (UK) and Switzerland met again in person in Innsbruck this year. For the first time, the Conference was co-organized by two universities, namely the University of Innsbruck and King's College London. Against the background of Brexit, the continuous and active involvement of researchers from the UK in discussions about EU law constitutes an important sign. Intensive exchange was already promoted on the evening before the Conference where all participants were invited to meet for drinks at the Paninothek Innsbruck.



The Conference took place in the spacious auditorium of the main university building. It started with a welcome by the organizers Clara Rauchegger (University of Innsbruck) and Darren Harvey (King's College London). Madlen Karg, Janine Prantl and Bernadette Zelger (University of Innsbruck) are also part of the organizing committee. With his keynote speech "Normative Drift - Why Primary Law Really Matters", Professor Kenneth A. Armstrong (University of Cambridge) aptly introduced the Conference, which was dedicated to "Reforming the EU Treaties". The thought-provoking keynote speech stimulated lively discussions among the participants and ran through the whole Conference like a red thread.

Thereupon, nine young researchers presented their innovative ideas and received valuable feedback through comments from experienced professors, as well as input from the audience. They succeeded with their proposals in the selection process out of over 50 submitted abstracts. The topics of the presentations included (1) Differentiation and Deeper Integration, (2) Sustainable Development, (3) EU Values, Judicial Protection and the Rule of Law, and (4) External Relations. The panels were organized according to these themes, and each consisted of two speakers and one commentator.

In the first panel (Differentiation and Deeper Integration), Marjan Kos (University of Ljubljana) addressed the question "Differentiation in EU Law: Do We Really Need a Treaty Reform to Proceed with Deeper Integration?". Robert Böttner (University of Erfurt) then shared his vision on the European Commission as a European government. The two speakers received feedback from Professor Andreas Th. Müller (University of Innsbruck). The second panel, dedicated to Sustainable Development, started with Laia Guardiola and Laura Ablondi (University of Zurich). Against the background of the European Green Deal, they elaborated on the question whether the EU needs a Climate Charter. Following the two ladies, Patrick Abel introduced his ideas on "Sustainable Legislation", namely whether new legislative institutions and procedures in reformed EU Treaties could become a building block for sustainable development. After the presentations, Ioanna Hadjiyianni (University of Cyprus) shared her inputs for the speakers.

After the lunch break, the afternoon started with the third panel 'EU Values, Judicial Protection and the Rule of Law'. Sejla Imamovic (Maastricht University) presented her findings on the question: "Revision of the EU Charter as a Way Forward?" and thereby addressed the issue of continued ambivalence in the relationship between EU law and the ECHR. Pavlina Hubkova (University of Luxembourg) proposed to "get rid of historic relics" and modify Article 263 TFEU. Oana Stefan (King's College London) provided comments.



The fourth and final panel focused on EU External Relations. "Is the EU an Effective International Player?" – Mariasole Forlani (King's College London) reflected on whether there is a need for reform in EU foreign policy. Mark Konstantinidis (King's College London) then shed light on the principle of autonomy as the "elephant in the room", suggesting that this principle should be implemented in Article 21 TEU. Professor Paul Cardwell (King's College London) followed up on the two presentations with his comments.

The enriching day full of reform efforts ended with drinks and a dinner for speakers and commentators at the restaurant Weißes Roessl.

In the coming weeks, the organizing team will still be busy with the organizational follow-up processing and above all with the editing of the conference proceedings, which will be published as a cooperation project with Nomos and Hart Publishing.

The next YELS Conference is expected to take place at Maastricht University in June 2023.

