

Institute of European and Global Studies - Alliance Europa

PRIORITY AREAS OF RESEARCH 2018-2020

a) Issue 1 - Governance and democracy in Europe

In Europe, representative democracy is facing a crisis at all levels, whether European, national or local. Nationalist claims, the rise of populism, and new radical assertions raise questions about the future of our democratic model, our governance methods, citizens' participation in the political debate, as well as the legitimacy of our institutions. Debates on the future of the European institutions and the ways to relaunch Europe have intensified in the context of Brexit, as well as Catalan and Scottish separatism. Differentiated integration models and the invention of a genuinely transnational democracy relying on interconnected public spheres are being discussed.

b) Issue 2 - Globalisation and sovereignty

Contemporary globalisation streams are characterised by the intensification of all kinds of exchanges (be they economic, political or cultural). These accelerate interdependencies worldwide and the emergence of a transnational society beyond traditional borders. The European Union may be considered representative of this development, as the symbol of free movement, supranationality and open trade. At the same time, the current economic, political and social crisis may lead to various form of resistance against this process and to an increasing demand for protection at the local and national level. Europe in the future will have to deal with the coexistence of globalisation – often presented as being inevitable – and the perception of a need to reinforce sovereignty at different levels. What competences and policies does the European Union need to address this challenge?

c) Issue 3 - Environmental protection and the governance of sustainable development

Environmental protection has imposed itself on the global agenda. A variety of actions, national, international and transnational mobilisations are addressing this major challenge and its consequences (e.g. the preservation of biodiversity, food security, the fight against climate change, socio-economic and spatial inequalities). The European Union, its member-states and NGOs were important stakeholders and often even leaders from the Rio Summit to COP21. Changes for a transition towards a more environmental-friendly society, however, encounter economic, social and cultural resistances. What forms of transnational and

European cooperation are most appropriate for addressing these issues? What are the consequences for governance at the local and regional level?

d) Issue 4 - Movements, borders and peripheries

Europe has developed on the basis of its relationship to the rest of the world, its capacity for global impact and the accommodation of external influences. Following the decolonisation process, European States have kept an important but unequal economic, strategic and cultural influence on the world stage. At a time of globalisation, this influence is an asset to remain a major actor worldwide. Europe includes outermost and ultramarine regions, huge maritime areas, but also a large variety of borders, which serves as passageways but also checkpoints for the flow of humans and goods. The conditions in which movement between Europe and the world takes place, most notably the competitive and cooperative tensions that arise in these maritime and border areas, are essential criteria for measuring the European Union's influence and attractiveness.

e) Issue 5 - Digital Europe

The European Union has been rather late in tackling the “digital revolution” and its challenges. Only recently, a fight against the tax practices of major tech companies has been launched by the EU. Above all, there is an attempt to build a single European digital market in order to grant access for all Europeans to digital goods and services. Infrastructure and innovation are being developed in support of strengthening European economy in terms of industrial development and employment. The project of an “inclusive digital society” strengthening trust towards digital services and generalising their use must however be questioned at a time where resistances towards a digital world emerge. This field can be studied from various angles: economic (the constitution of big European digital players), legal (widening access, harmonising property rights, free movement), political (governance of the digital), as well as social (reducing the digital divide in Europe).