



## Conference on the **Future** of **Europe**



## Conference on the Future of Europe

### *'Advancing the Rule of Law in the European Union (and Beyond)'*

### Student Workshops (with MEPs)

MSA Belval, 3 December 2021

13:00 – 17:00

While the 'rule of law' may seem like an abstract concept, it is at the core of our democratic societies. It is through the rule of law that our fundamental rights are protected, including those freely to express our opinions and to create groups that allow us to advance our shared goals. It is also the rule of law that provides for a basic equality of treatment in formal legal proceedings, and which further may provide the tools for advancing towards a more inclusive society.

Worryingly, in recent years, this foundation of our democratic systems of governance has increasingly come under attack. Both in Europe and in other global regions, a generalised trend of 'democratic backsliding' may be seen, as governments seek to undermine the existence of independent courts, erode fundamental rights, and more generally stifle dissenting opinions. Yet, at the same time, robust civil societies are finding new means of expression to reaffirm the central importance of fundamental rights. Widescale national protests have often met those governments whose actions seek to undermine democratic governance, while the global reach of the 'Black Lives Matter', 'Me Too', and other similar movements attests to a continuing commitment to build more inclusive societies.

Within the framework of [the Conference on the Future of Europe](#) (COFE), [the UNESCO Chair in Human Rights](#) and [the Robert Schuman Initiative for European Affairs](#) at the University of Luxembourg, together with [the European Parliament Liaison Office in Luxembourg](#), are pleased to invite you to this half-day workshop in which you will have the opportunity to discuss these important issues. In our workshop sessions, we will bring together small groups of (10-15) interested students with a Member of the European Parliament from Luxembourg and an expert moderator for an in-depth discussion of issues surrounding the rule of law both in the European Union and as regards its relations with the wider world. The groups will report back to a plenary session at the end of the afternoon, on the basis of which we will submit a report on our collective findings and recommendations to the COFE.

Our workshops will be focused around three broad questions:

*Does the European Union have a coherent human rights policy?*

This workshop will examine whether the EU effectively protects and promotes fundamental rights both within the Union itself and as regards third countries in its external actions (relative to other possible priorities), asking whether Treaty changes or other reforms might be desirable or necessary where shortcomings exist.

*Is there an East/West divide in Europe as regards questions of fundamental rights and fundamental values?*

This workshop will examine the particular challenges to the rule of law that have arisen in a number of Central and East European member states, asking whether this reflects a fundamental difference of values or finds other political explanations – and, in light of that discussion, how the issues arising should be handled and its possible implications for future enlargements.

*Do EU policies effectively promote the creation of more inclusive societies?*

This workshop will examine existing EU policies that seek to promote the creation of more inclusive societies relative to such areas as gender equality, LGBTIQ+ rights, and anti-discrimination policies, asking how we understand social inclusion and how this can best be fostered through measures at the European, national, and local levels.

**If you are interested in participating, please e-mail Daniela Janeva ([daniela.janeva@uni.lu](mailto:daniela.janeva@uni.lu)) no later than 22 November 2021 to express your interest.** Please also indicate if you would have a preference to participate in a particular workshop group, though we cannot guarantee that all preferences can be met.

We will confirm your registration and give you further details of the event by e-mail after the deadline. As numbers are limited, priority will be given to students who have completed previous studies or are currently taking courses on the European Union and/or human rights, including students on the Master in European Governance and those taking relevant courses on the Bachelor in European Cultures. The working languages for our discussions will be English and French.

The event will be held under CovidCheck rules.

