

ABSTRACTS

Rudolf Hrbek

European elections 2009: more than the sum of second-order national elections?

The article analyses the European elections 2009 under the question, if they were only 'second-order national elections'. It points to framework conditions for the elections, summarizes briefly the electoral platforms/manifestos of the parties at European level, and the campaign which was done at member state level. It then explains aspects of the result and the consequences of the elections: turnout (with national differences), political composition and structure of the European Parliament (with the establishment of new party groups and with some changes in groups' strength); and it discusses possible future alliances/'coalitions' between party groups with respect to the ambition of the European Parliament, to exploiting the weight of the European Parliament vis-à-vis the Council. It concludes that parties at European level have the potential and may contribute to strengthen the European character of future elections.

Heinrich Schneider

Between 'policy determination' and 'empty ritual'. Comments on European electoral campaigns and their results in Austria

Elections to the European Parliament are not just 'second-order national elections', but also not simply a decision of the course of action of a representative body, which increasingly determines EU-policies. It is worthwhile to analyse the 'teaching function' (Walter Bagehot, 1867) of the electoral campaigns from the perspective of a theory of the symbolic function of institutions. In the case of Austria such an analysis comes to frightening conclusions. The information presented to the electorate was sometimes quite bizarre. But finally the expectations (or fears) were confuted. For the reputable European policy it was a blessing in disguise – the turnout increased compared to the former elections. The future prospects, though, are dreary. The German Federal Constitutional Court regards 'policy determination' by the European Parliament as being unconstitutional. This debases European elections considerably and gives new meaning to the ideas of a notable German political scientist that appeals to vote are coming close to 'political cynicism'.

Oskar Niedermayer

Public opinion on the European Parliament – prominent but hardly relevant

Analysing the long-term orientations citizens have towards the European Parliament shows that among both Germans and Europeans, the parliament is the most prominent European institution. Compared to the European Commission and the Council of the European Union citizens are most confident in the European Parliament and perceive it as the most important of the three institutions. But instead of being based on reliable information, a considerable proportion of the population bases these orientations on stereotypes. Furthermore, many citizens do not recognise the relevance the decisions of the parliament have for their everyday life.

Franz C. Mayer

The European Court of Justice as the enemy? The debate on social Europe within the case-law of the ECJ

Since the rulings 'Viking', 'Laval', 'Rüffert' and 'Commission against Luxembourg', the European Court of Justice (ECJ) has been faced by a formerly unknown range of criticism – way beyond the usual debate on European law and way beyond the concerned member states. One central accusation is that the ECJ does not contribute to removing the 'social deficit' of the integration project. Besides the criticism of the decisions, objections are voiced against the Treaty of Lisbon, which is accused of market radicalism. More rational analyses of the legal basis and the case-law show, however, that such objections are not really justified. What would be needed for a more social Europe are further developments of the legal basis which, of course, would require corresponding majorities. Excessive attacks on the ECJ, on the other hand, bear considerable risks for the concept of a community of law (*Rechtsgemeinschaft*), insofar as the ECJ could suffer lasting damages.

Joachim Schild and Martin Koopmann

The 'Sarkozy-moment' – leadership inside the EU exemplified by the French presidency

This article analyses the French presidency of the European Union during the second half of 2008 with regard to its capacity to provide leadership inside the Union. The authors examine the resources and methods for providing leadership as well as the tensions which arose with partners, especially with the Federal Republic of Germany during the French six-month stint as EU presidency. Overall, this presidency is seen as an exceptional moment, due to the triple crises of ratification, of the international financial markets and the crisis in Georgia which provided opportunities for a strong leadership by the presidency but which leaves entirely open the problem of leadership inside the enlarged EU.

Timm Beichelt and Anja Thomas

National politics matter! – The quest for a European constitution and the strengthening of national channels of legitimacy for the EU

The treaty reform process of the EU, which has come to a temporary and uncertain end with the Treaty of Lisbon, was aimed at two things: On the one hand, the process strived for feasible changes within the multi-level polity of the EU. On the other hand, there was the hope – raised by political discussions about neo-federal ideas – to strengthen and open new channels of supranational legitimacy for the EU through a European constitution. This article analyses the Lisbon Treaty with regard to central dimensions of legitimacy provided for European governance and highlights former steps of the constitutional process. The authors argue that national channels of legitimacy have proved to be especially resilient and interpret this as an indication of the current character of the European polity.

Frank-Walter Steinmeier

Speech by Federal Foreign Minister Dr Frank-Walter Steinmeier to the German-Italian Discussion Forum „Designing Global Governance: German and Italian Views and Perspectives“

From the excellent relations between Germany and Italy, from their shared past and their responsibility as founding members of the European Union, Frank-Walter Steinmeier draws the conclusion that Germany and Italy must in future do even more to bring their combined weight to bear in tackling the major challenges of the future, both within Europe and on the world stage. For around the world the interconnections between countries, regions, economies and cultures will multiply ever further. The old analytical models and political panaceas won't work in this changing world. We therefore need an effective global community of responsibility.

Günter Gloser and Glenys Kinnock

Balancing EU enlargement policy: a German-British perspective

Great Britain and Germany will continue to advocate balancing the EU's enlargement policy. In this article, the authors explain what is meant by 'balancing EU enlargement policy' and show that nothing less than the future security, welfare and stability of Europe is at stake.

Eckart D. Stratenschulte

‘You reap what you sow’ – some proposals for a reaction to the turnout in European elections

The low turnout in the European elections in 2009 has not affected the function of the European institutions. But this wake-up call should be taken seriously, as the European Union might lose its credit. Thus a number of initiatives are necessary to increase the attractiveness of the elections – and in consequence tighten the citizens' attachment to the European Union. This article proposes several initiatives which increase citizens' influence, transparency, representativeness, and emphasise the importance of 'European education'. Many of these initiatives can be realised on the national level.

Übersetzungen aus dem Deutschen von Tanja Leppik-Bork und Julian Plottka.