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# Challenges of European Integration

## Democratic Backsliding and Fragmentation in the European Union

*Trinational summer school at Leipzig University, 11 – 14 September 2023*

*This event is part of the research project “Germany and Poland in a Differentiated European Union”*

Accommodation: B&B Hotel Leipzig-City

In recent years, European integration has been confronted with a series of crises and enduring challenges. Brexit signalled that EU membership is not in all EU member states attractive to a majority of its citizens. It has also set a precedence of the EU not expanding but shrinking.

On the one hand, increasing Euroscepticism is accompanied in some member states by tendencies of democratic backsliding. These two trends – Euroscepticism and democratic backsliding – undermine the previous mode of European integration in at least two respects. First, further integration is not necessarily regarded the preferred mode of coping with common challenges within the EU. Second, the EU’s self-image as a union of liberal democracies is about to lose credibility.

On the other hand, European integration has increasingly become fragmented due to various forms of differentiated integration. They prove to be no temporary deviations from the standard mode of uniform integration. Rather, differentiation appears to be the standard integration mode in key policies, such as European Monetary Union, Schengen Area or European Security and Defence Policy. Even though differentiation might produce short-term solutions in urgent crises, it tends to lead to an increasingly fragmented constitutional order of the European Union.

Therefore, the summer school aims at addressing contemporary challenges of European integration. First, it provides the participants from Germany, Hungary and Poland with insights into ongoing research projects at Leipzig University on democratic backsliding and differentiated integration. In addition, we visit the Contemporary History Forum and the Europe House in Leipzig. Second, each participant presents a research project (master or PhD thesis). Finally, we develop scenarios on the future of European integration. Not only do we reflect on the long-term ramifications of current challenges. The participants will also learn how to apply a useful analytical tool of strategic foresight in order to systematically deal with the uncertainties of an open future.

This summer school will be held in English and will be moderated by Prof. Dr. Karolewski and Dr. Thomas Mehlhausen (Leipzig University). Participation is free of charge. Travel costs, accommodation, breakfast and lunch will be provided.

**Please send your application by 31 August 2023 to Dr. Thomas Mehlhausen  
([mehlhausen@uni-leipzig.de](mailto:mehlhausen@uni-leipzig.de)).**



## Programme

### 11 September 2023 – Input: Challenges of European integration

- 10:00 – 10:30 Meet and greet  
10:30 – 12:00 Dr. Thomas Mehlhausen (Leipzig University) / Adrian Wagstyl (University of Warsaw): The contested legitimacy of differentiated integration in the European Union  
12:00 – 13:00 Lunch break  
13:00 – 14:30 Dr. Sonja Priebus (Europa Universität Viadrina): Democratic backsliding. The erosion of the EU's liberal identity?  
15:30 – 16:30 Excursion 1: Europe House, Augustplatz, 04109 Leipzig

### 12 September 2023 – Exchange: Presentation of research proposals on European integration

Moderation of Group 1: Prof. Dr. Ireneusz P. Karolewski (with M. K. Heß, M. Kuna, M. Sznajder, A. Wislawska)  
Moderation of Group 2: Dr. Thomas Mehlhausen (with A. Wagstyl, F. Spera, M. Hartmann, P. Zavershinskaia)

- 10:00 – 11:00 Discussion of research proposal 1  
11:15 – 12:15 Discussion of research proposal 2  
12:15 – 13:00 Lunch  
13:00 – 14:00 Discussion of research proposal 3  
14:15 – 15:15 Discussion of research proposal 4  
15:15 – 15:45 Coffee break  
16:15 – 17:15 Excursion 2: Contemporary History Forum, Grimmaische Str. 6, 04109 Leipzig

### 13 September 2023 – Outlook: The Futures of European Integration

- 10:00 – 11:00 Methodological introduction: What are scenarios? Why create scenario? How to construct scenarios?  
*Dr. Thomas Mehlhausen, Leipzig University (workshop facilitator)*  
11:15 – 12:00 Our future compass: key impact factors of European integration  
12:00 – 13:00 *Lunch break*  
13:00 – 13:45 Our future compass: key impact factors of European integration (continuation)  
13:45 – 14:00 Coffee break  
14:00 – 16:00 The futures of European integration: drafting preliminary scenarios

### 14 September 2023 – Outlook: The Futures of European Integration

- 10:00 – 10:45 Refining our scenarios: TELL IT procedure  
10:45 – 11:00 Coffee break  
11:00 – 12:15 Presentation and discussion of scenarios  
12:15 – 12:45 *Lunch break*  
12:45 – 13:30 Discussion: Coping with the challenges of European integration