

The Kooijmans Institute, the Research Group *Boundaries of Law* and the VU Interdisciplinary Centre for European Studies of the Vrije Universiteit cordially invite you to a seminar on

**The Nature and Identity of the European Union**

**8 March, 14-16h, Room ‘Aurora’, main Building VU (room 00C29)**

The European Union is faced with multiple and fundamental challenges, such as rising populism and nationalism, democratic backsliding, new geopolitical configurations, socio-economic inequality and ecological degradation. These challenges call for renewed reflection on the direction of European integration and the identity of the Union.

Our seminar takes up these foundational questions. The starting point of our discussion is a text and introduction by Jaap Hoeksma, philosopher of law and author of the book *The Democratisation of the European Union*. Hoeksma argues that we need to leave behind well-established notions of statehood in order to make sense of the European Union in the 21st century. Moving beyond nostalgia for a world long gone and utopian leaps forward, Hoe ksma argues that we should treat the EU as transnational polity of states and citizens. This polity has a dual character. While it may be described from within as a democratic Union of democratic States, it can be identified in terms of global governance as a democratic international organization. This then raises questions about the specific legal order of the EU, the model of democracy in EU governance and the (im)possibility of making sense of the EU in these terms more generally.

These questions are not just of interest to academics. They structure debates about current and concrete problems of European integration. Therefore, our seminar is meant for a broad audience, including policy-makers, students, academics, human rights campaigners, civil servants and anyone else interested in the current position of the EU. Former Minister Dr L.J. Brinkhorst will open the seminar, Dr. Pola Cebulak (EU law, Vrije Universteit) will act as discussant.

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