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"Governing values, governing through values, governed by values? The European Union as a risk polity"

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Abstract

Values at the core of European integration have been widely discussed in recent years due to major evolutions in EU governance. Claims to define common references likely to hold European countries and citizens together and to justify public action have coexisted with divergences in the interpretation of these values.

ValEUR analyses three main occurrences of "European values". Firstly, it may be a call to identity, memory and communicative resources in a quest for legitimization (**governing through values**). Secondly, it may come from the necessity to deal with ethical issues calling for normative policy choices (**governing values**). Thirdly, values may cause legal and political conflicts and challenge established balances of powers and regulation (**governed by values**). The EU has encountered the three scenarios. In each configuration, "European values" are invoked with different meanings and purposes. The hypothesis is that common patterns can still be found, turning the EU into a "**risk polity**", a political system where values become a usual part of European politics either as an answer to or a factor creating uncertainties.

The project aims at a better understanding of the reasons and modalities of the emergence of "European values" on the EU agenda; of the way they create unity or division, circulate and frame different models of political community for Europe.