WORKSHOP

Bringing EU Law Back Down to Earth

Why, How and What for?

5–6 November 2026
Aix-Marseille University – LTD / CERIC / JustiCité

Organised by
Vincent Réveillère & Antoine Vauchez

Over the past decade, a growing body of scholarship has called for bringing EU law "back down to earth": examining how it is experienced in different places, how it is interpreted and constructed locally, what its distributive effects are, and how it becomes embedded in a variety of social settings. This workshop brings together scholars engaged in these approaches to reflect collectively on their assumptions, methods and normative ambitions. The first day explores the relationship between EU law and European society; the second turns to the methods through which EU law can be rethought from below.

Format. Participants circulate a short paper in advance. Each speaker presents briefly, leaving most of each session for collective discussion.

Venue. Salle du Conseil
110–114 La Canebière
13001 Marseille (TBC)

Registration. Everyone is welcome; please register at
vincent.reveillere@univ-amu.fr

DAY 1 — THURSDAY 5 NOVEMBER

14:00–14:30 **Opening**
Vincent Réveillère
University of Aix-Marseille
Antoine Vauchez
CNRS, University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne

Connected or Disconnected? EU Law and European Society

14:30–16:15
Loïc Azoulai
European University Institute
Leticia Díez Sánchez
University of Maastricht
Giacomo Tagiuri
University of Amsterdam

16:15–16:45 *Coffee break*

16:45–18:00
Ivana Isailovic
University of Amsterdam
Iyiola Solanke
University of Oxford

DAY 2 — FRIDAY 6 NOVEMBER

EU Law on the Ground: Methods and Sites for Studying EU Law in Practice

09:00–10:30
Afroditi Marketou
University of Paris-Est Créteil
Joana Mendes
University of Luxembourg
Charlotte O'Brien
University of York

10:30–11:00 *Coffee break*

11:00–12:15
Virginia Passalacqua
University of Turin
Floris de Witte
London School of Economics

12:15–13:00 **Concluding discussion**

13:00 *Lunch*

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ABOUT THE WORKSHOP

Bringing EU Law Back Down to Earth. The call to bring EU law back down to earth stems from a variety of assumptions and pursues a range of epistemological, methodological, and normative aims: it raises questions about the relationship between law and the social, and more specifically whether EU law functions as a force of inclusion or, conversely, as a source of inequalities, if not alienation. It also raises more or less explicitly normative and forward-looking questions about whether and how EU law can be transformed, reconnected to European societies or rebalanced, in particular by better reflecting Europe's social and cultural diversity.

By many standards, this call to bring EU law back down to earth, together with the combination of empirical and normative perspectives, represents a distinctive and innovative development in legal scholarship. Anchored in a particular moment in the evolution of EU legal studies — at once reflexive, critical, and normative — it differs from traditional doctrinal scholarship as well as from most social science analyses of EU law. Likewise, it cannot be found in the same way in other fields of legal scholarship for reasons that are still to be identified. This makes EU legal scholarship a particularly lively and innovative intellectual scene.

This workshop aims to bring into dialogue these emerging approaches that analyse and critically assess how EU law operates in European societies and beyond. We seek to encourage proponents of these approaches to reflect on their underlying assumptions, methodological choices, and normative ambitions with a view to better identifying their distinctiveness in the field of EU legal scholarship, as well as within socio-legal studies, critical legal studies, and normative theory, and to clarifying their internal diversity and interrelations.

Participants will be invited to engage in a collective and reflexive discussion on the theoretical foundations, methodological tools, and normative implications of their own way of "bringing EU law back down to earth" and reconnecting it with European society. Rather than offering a survey of existing approaches, the workshop is structured around a common set of guiding questions, organised around three overarching and sometimes overlapping dimensions: why EU law should be brought back down to earth, how this can be done, and what it is ultimately for.

Why is it necessary to bring both the study and the practice of EU law back down to earth? What underlies the observation that EU law may be disconnected from European societies or that it has a deficit of reality? To what extent is this concern specific to EU law in comparison to other legal systems (international law, constitutional law, etc.)? What are the assumptions and the implications underpinning such an expectation vis-à-vis the legal system? What is the "EU law" that is disconnected (CJEU case law? EU law scholarship? EU law founding paradigms? broader normative output of the EU?). How do these different dimensions shape our understanding of EU law's relationship to the social? What are the epistemological and possibly normative stakes of such a move?

How can the study of EU law be brought back down to earth? How should the social realities of EU law be apprehended, and through which concepts? What kinds of methods could be used? What does it mean, in practice, to study EU law in action? Which methods and empirical sites should be prioritised? Where should we look for EU law, and which actors and practices should be examined? How should we study the ways in which EU law shapes social hierarchies, inequalities, and access to rights? How can descriptive analysis and normative critique be productively articulated in EU legal scholarship? How does one move from socio-legal or law-in-context methodologies to normative stances?

What for? What would it mean for EU law to better reflect social realities or to be reconnected to European societies? How can EU law better reflect Europe's social and cultural diversity? How can different social groups mobilise EU law to claim and defend their rights? How might EU law and its institutions be transformed to better empower marginalised or disadvantaged groups? To what extent can EU law legitimately claim to articulate or represent the "truth" of European societies and their orientations? If it can, which orientations are at stake, and how are they defined? Is law an adequate tool for engaging with social realities and pursuing particular social or political orientations? Or should other forms of action, beyond or outside the law, also be considered? What are the limits of EU law as an instrument of social transformation?

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