

Leiden University Europe Hub

Mission statement

Leiden University's new 'Europe Hub' is a multidisciplinary platform that promotes and profiles the university's research and teaching expertise and capacities on Europe with a focus on European approaches to societal challenges.¹ To this end, it draws upon scholars employed in various faculties and links especially to the university's engagement with the Una Europa alliance and with European institutions, policymakers and NGOs in The Hague, Brussels and beyond.

The Hub approaches Europe from a broad and inclusive perspective. Europe means the entire continent, its history, peoples, culture, and its political and legal systems, its past and present, its internal developments and global position. Within this larger context, we focus on the European Union—the defining ordering mechanism in Europe and the dominant theme of the research and teaching on Europe at Leiden University.

Motivation

The citizens, governments and regional institutions of Europe face a wide range of complex societal and governance challenges over the coming decades. These include, among others, reconciling economic growth and social welfare, mitigating the effects of climate change while enabling a transition to green energy, ensuring that artificial intelligence serves human needs without escaping human control, ensuring that democratic institutions are both resilient and responsive, protecting Europe from external threats, and shaping the transition to a multipolar world consistent with Europe's interests and values.

Russia's ongoing invasion of Ukraine and intimidation of other states on its periphery, as well as the related consequences in a number of policy areas highlights the urgency and complexity of these issues for Europe.

To address these challenges in an effective and sustainable manner, national governments and European institutions, as well as Europe's citizens and civil society organisations, will have to make difficult choices. Cutting-edge scientific research and innovative teaching can inform these choices.

Leiden University already has significant research expertise on these issues spread across all faculties - in particular the Faculty of Governance and Global Affairs (FGGA), Faculty of Humanities (FGW), Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences (FSW), and the Leiden Law School (FdR). In addition to their fundamental research, many members of these faculties and their institutes are experienced in engaging with governmental, inter-governmental and non-governmental bodies across Europe. Leiden University's new 'Europe Hub' aims to integrate, stimulate, and profile the university's expertise on European approaches to societal challenges, including through engagement with external stakeholders and partners.

¹ See also the initial document on the Hub which was used to apply for *Sectorplannen 2022 Social Sciences and Humanities* funding: https://sshraad.nl/wp-content/uploads/sites/361/2023/02/Bijlagen_SSH_SECTORPLAN_NOV2022_003.pdf, pp. 297-307.

Part of the underlying research related to the topics covered by the hub is (and will be) carried out within the traditional academic disciplines but much of it requires cross-disciplinary collaboration. This research concerns institutions and processes at local, national and supranational levels across Europe, including but not limited to the European Union and its member states. It also encompasses Europe's relationships with neighbouring states, other regions, states both weak and strong, the United Nations system and other (emerging) institutions of global governance. The Europe Hub will also promote research-led teaching and professional training on these themes.

As such, the Europe Hub will contribute directly to the university's aim (see Strategic Plan) to promote interdisciplinary research and teaching on issues of high societal relevance. It will contribute to the university's growing profile with policymakers, NGOs and alumni in The Hague and Brussels, and to its engagement with other European universities through Una Europa, LERU and other alliances. Finally, the hub will boost the university's local and global profile as a go-to partner for research and teaching projects on Europe.

Research agenda

In its initial phase, the Europe Hub's research agenda will prioritise four general themes or pillars: (1) Europe in the world; (2) Markets, trade, and digitalisation; (3) Energy, environment and health; and (4) The foundations of European integration. Each of these themes is closely related to Europe's and the European Union's ambition to achieve greater strategic autonomy by reducing its dependence on foreign actors and increasing its ability to act coherently and effectively in pursuit of its goals while exploring the limits of its own normative boundaries. Each of these themes will be analysed as fundamental issues and in the context of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

1. Europe in the world

The place of European states and institutions in world politics is the core focus of this pillar. Research on this theme concerns European actors' ability to promote peace, security and justice in their neighbourhood and to shape the future of global governance by translating its economic size into the resources and decision-making capacity necessary to be an effective player in an increasingly multipolar world. This includes Europe's effort to support Ukraine's response to Russian aggression and to counter Russia's intimidation and interference in other former Soviet states, as well as the implications of these conflicts for (fragile) states and societies elsewhere in the world. It also includes questions about membership in Europe's key international organisations. This includes the future of EU enlargement, as well as European actors' relations with neighbouring states which do not have membership prospects.

Specific topics of research in this pillar include:

- the EU's growing role in security affairs and thus its relationship to NATO, the OSCE and the United Nations;
- Europe's contribution to international criminal justice;

- the evolving dynamics of Europe's longstanding alliance with the United States, its cooperation and competition with China, and its relations with Africa, Asia and Latin America;
- the dynamics of EU enlargement and membership conditionality in the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe;
- Europe's cooperation on trade, development, environmental protection and migration with governments in the Southern and Eastern neighbourhoods;
- the functionality of the EU's foreign policy machinery at intergovernmental and supranational levels and how it relates to the capacities and preferences of the various member states.

2. Markets, trade, and digitalisation

Research on this theme concerns Europe's position in global markets and its response to the emergence of new international trade and financial actors that challenge institutions where Europe has long had considerable influence, such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization (WTO). It also concerns the EU's long-standing effort to condition access to the single market on other states' adoption of political and economic reforms and social and environmental regulations based on European norms as well as new issues of data privacy and foreign manipulation of public debate and elections. It also concerns Europe's growing interest in critical resources and emerging technologies such as rare metals, semi-conductors and artificial intelligence and the implications this has elsewhere in the world.

Specific topics of research in this pillar include:

- the EU's single market and its evolution in the new geopolitical reality;
- the role of the EU and of European states in the rules-based-international order as it relates to the WTO and other bilateral, multilateral and regional trade and investment agreements;
- the relationship between trade, development and migration in the EU's wider neighbourhood;
- the EU's and European states' activity in promoting and regulating emerging fields of economic activity, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI);
- the EU's quest for greater autonomy through unilateral measures such as foreign subsidies regulation, investment screening, the carbon border adjustment mechanism, and a proposed anti-coercion instrument;
- the complementarities and trade-offs between enhanced strategic autonomy and successful international climate diplomacy.

3. Energy, environment, and health

Research on this theme addresses the systemic risks faced by European societies and affecting the quality of life of its citizens. It primarily concerns the urgent necessity for Europe to mitigate the severity and prepare for the consequences of climate change while reducing its dependence on foreign energy supplies, especially those that involve fossil fuels, are unreliable in geopolitical terms or impact the environment elsewhere in the world. The EU's Green Deal and Energy Union are still to be given a concrete policy dimension in the member

states, but the green transition is far from uncontroversial and will be the subject of further politicization in Europe. The question is how Europe and the EU can achieve greater strategic autonomy on energy, climate and environmental protection whilst respecting national and European legal limits, democratic processes and keeping the citizens on board? The Covid-19 pandemic has also reminded us of the cross-border nature of today's health risks and diseases, and the necessity for greater cooperation among governments. This does not only apply to infectious diseases, but also to chronic non-communicable ones, such as cancer, which directly result from the globalisation of trade in unhealthy commodities and the uniformisation of lifestyle practices. What should be the role of the European institutions in this regard, and what are the prospects for a European Health Union?

Specific topics of research in this pillar include:

- the design and effectiveness of policies that incentivize domestic renewable energy production and supply chain diversification of core inputs of the green transition;
- politicization, debates and tensions generated by the asymmetric effects of the energy transition and green transition, at the EU level, in the member states and neighbouring European countries as well as countries elsewhere that supply the raw materials facilitating the energy transition;
- European countries' and the EU's approaches to improving climate resilience and adapting to increased climate risks, including threats to public health;
- the role of sub- and transnational national actors such as local communities, civil society groups and companies in contributing to climate solutions;
- the role of behaviourally inspired policies in fostering healthier and more sustainable lifestyles, as regards food in particular;
- the evolution of EU's powers and policies on health, the European Health Union in particular;
- the EU's role in the global health architecture and in responding to cross-border health emergencies.

4. The foundations of European integration

Research on this theme concerns the legitimacy and effectiveness of Europe's institutional order in the face of public alienation and normative contestation. It is anchored in the consideration of long-term processes, including the history of European integration. While European institutions are likely to require new legal competences to address the various challenges facing Europe, the integration process itself is increasingly controversial and at risk of deadlock due to enlargement, concerns about democratic accountability, non-compliance with EU rules by the member states, and enduring commitments to distinctive cultures and identities. As a result, the integration project and its policy-making process have been threatened by Euroscepticism and rule-of-law backsliding.

Specific topics of research in this pillar include:

- the developments that have shaped contemporary Europe, especially the interaction between individual (member) states and the process of European integration;
- the ideational dimension of European integration and the complex interplay between national and European identities;

- the sources and dynamics of populism and its impact on public support for European institutions and approaches to societal challenges;
- the willingness and capacity of European countries to pursue collective and uniform solutions to various problems or, at least, coordinate national policies, within or outside of the framework of the European Union;
- the efficiency and effectiveness of decision-making in a Union of 27 or more member states facing common challenges;
- the challenges of policy implementation and rule enforcement in a complex multi-level governance system;
- the dynamics within and between EU institutions, their transparency and democratic accountability, and their linkage to national authorities;
- the resilience of democracy, the rule of law, solidarity, and respect for human rights at the national level, and the promotion of these values both within and beyond the EU.

Teaching

The hub will allow us to develop a better and more complete overview of the range of relevant education on Europe and European integration at Leiden University. Where possible and useful, the hub will facilitate cooperation and coordination at all educational levels, from the undergraduate to the PhD one.

Building on the success of existing programmes, the hub will explore opportunities to develop undergraduate teaching on Europe and play a role in Leiden's contribution to Una Europa's joint BA in European Studies and the Europaeum.

For the benefit of professional education, the hub will work closely with the initiatives that are currently being undertaken in this area, including at The Hague campus, and it will initiate its own activities.

Communications and outreach

The hub aims to reach both an internal and an external audience. Internally, it will bring together Leiden University's community working on European approaches to societal challenges across the different faculties by establishing a joint platform through which relevant colleagues can be identified and through which relevant events and activities can be communicated and coordinated. This will be facilitated by regular hub events, such as a joint lecture series inviting high-profile speakers. Externally, the hub will serve as a point of entry to access the rich resources and expertise on Europe available at the university, as well as by communicating this through various formats, such as its web presence and newsletters, or public-facing events in places such as The Hague or Brussels.

Governance

The hub is an open initiative. Any employee of Leiden University involved in research, teaching or administrative matters concerning Europe and the European Union is welcome to

participate. An initial inventory shows that dozens of colleagues across the university are already conducting research and teaching on Europe.

As a first step to achieving the Hub's aims, the four participating faculties have each appointed a new assistant professor (see * below) to anchor their collaboration and develop joint activities. In addition, the faculties have appointed other representatives to a joint steering committee that will ensure overall strategic leadership and interdisciplinary coordination. The committee is chaired on a biannual rotating basis by the participating faculties.

As of March 2023, the Europe Hub's steering committee includes the following members:

- Prof. Antoaneta Dimitrova (FGGA)
- Prof. Joachim Koops (FGGA)
- Dr. Dimiter Toshkov (FGGA)
- Dr. Seda Gürkan (FGGA)*

- Prof. Stefaan van den Bogaert (FdR)
- Prof. Armin Cuyvers (FdR)
- Prof. Jorrit Rijpma (FdR)
- Dr. Vincent Delhomme (FdR)*

- Prof. Andre Gerrits (FGW)
- Dr. Maxine David (FGW)
- Dr. Daniel Schade (FGW)*

- Prof. Daniel Thomas (FSW)
- Dr. Nikoleta Yordanova (FSW)
- Dr. Christina Toenshoff (FSW)*

List of initial activities

The hub will initially focus on the following activities:

- Exploring and establishing a network of scholars working on European issues at Leiden University;
- Organizing an introductory meeting for the hub inviting the community of scholars working on European issues at Leiden University;
- Presenting Leiden University's existing research expertise to external parties such as the media, external colleagues, as well as stakeholders;
- Aligning and connecting the Hub's activities with Una Europa and other relevant networks;
- Developing an inventory of existing teaching and resources related to the hub's theme(s);
- Organizing guest lectures;

Planning research workshops.