

A way out of the crisis – The EU and the art of political improvisation

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Lecture and discussion with Luuk van Middelaar

After spending decades working to construct a common market and developing a system of regulatory politics, member states have been forced to take on a new role since the financial and geopolitical drama of 2008: they are now also practicing a “politics of events.” “They have saved a currency, engaged Russia in a battle of wills, taken on hundreds of thousands of refugees and now, they must wrestle with the demons of Brexit,” writes Luuk van Middelaar in the foreword to a much belated German edition of his monumental history of the European Union. He argues that the Union is increasingly forced to improvise in the face of crises that do not figure in any treaty or code. However, by living up to this necessity the Union also risks undercutting its own roots which lie in politics of rules and stem from a belief that following the letter of codes and treaties can save the continent from repeating its own past marked by carnage and conflicts. Is there a way out of this paradox? Can the EU find a solution in its own history? How could it reform itself, reconnect with its disillusioned citizens and remain faithful to its core values?

Luuk van Middelaar is Professor of Foundations and Practice of the European Union and its Institutions at the Europa Institute of Leiden University. He was a speechwriter and an advisor to the first permanent President of the European Council, H.A. Van Rompuy (2010-2014) and Political Secretary for the VVD Party (People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy) in the Dutch Lower House under J.J. van Aartsen (2004-2006). He also worked for the office of the European Commissioner for the Internal Market F. Bolkestein (2002-2004). Since 2015 Van Middelaar writes a column for the Dutch newspaper *NRC Handelsblad* and publishes in other newspapers, including *Die Zeit* and *Le Monde*.
Discussant: Pawel Marczewski (Head of Publications, IWM)

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Further information
