

# **The Contestation of Expertise in the European Union**

## **EU policy-making between evidence-based Decision-making and post-truth politics**

Second Annual Conference of  
CERiM

the Centre for European Research in Maastricht  
Maastricht, 20 April 2017

Expertise increasingly faces a contested role in decision-making and public debate. On the one hand, hardly any policy can be conceived today without expert consultation, yet on the other hand, expertise seems too readily to be disqualified in public debate even in most important national or European decisions. This contested position of experts has become apparent in the context of a number of recent referenda campaigns, such as in the Netherlands, Hungary and the United Kingdom, and has also played a role in debates on many high profile issues such as the regulation of genetically modified organisms or the negotiations on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership.

Socio-economic developments, technological advances and globalisation have confronted EU regulators with the challenge of how to address, regulate or control potentially adverse effects on the general public. EU authorities increasingly turn to expert advice as a basis for their regulatory responses. Seemingly paradoxically, however, expert advice is at the same time increasingly questioned by public authorities, stakeholders and the general public. Hence, the EU's legal frameworks prescribe science as the basis of any action of the EU institutions so that a 'scientification' of various policy areas can be observed, whereas at the same time science and expertise are instrumentalised to achieve specific policy goals or political aims. Yet, in today's information society, a wealth of (often contradictory) information leads many to question expert advice and indeed the very notion of expertise and expert advice is increasingly losing authority. Instead, a new political culture is on the rise that disregards, or even dismisses expertise as a basis for decision-making, as the case of the UK Brexit referendum has demonstrated. This new political culture, coined as 'post-factual' or 'post-truth' politics risks undermining liberal values and the foundations of representative democracy.

This Second Annual CERiM Conference addresses the role and position of expertise and experts in the EU context of law and policy-making. We will critically examine the current state of the art and discuss how the role of experts can be reconciled with conflicting demands. The conference offers different disciplinary perspectives on these issues, drawn from a variety of national and international experiences.

Related to this Annual CERiM Conference, an international workshop on 'Scientific knowledge in environmental litigation: National Solutions, EU Requirements and Current Challenges' takes place at Maastricht University for researchers and judges convened jointly by Dr. Mariolina Eliantonio (Maastricht University) and Tiina Paloniitty (University of Helsinki).

**Contestation of Expertise in the European Union:  
Policy-making between evidence-based decision-making and post-truth politics**

**CONFERENCE PROGRAMME**

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Venue: Crowne Plaza Hotel, Maastricht

**09.00-09.30 Registration & coffee**

**09.30-09.45 Welcome and Opening of the Conference**

Thomas Christiansen & Ellen Vos

Maastricht University, CERiM co-directors

**09.45-11.00 Panel I: EPISTEMIC AND PUBLIC CONTESTATION OF EXPERTISE**

Chair: Anna Herranz-Surralles (Maastricht University)

Speakers

- Marija Bartl (University of Amsterdam) *Governing Through Knowledge: An Institutional Account*
- Johan Christensen (Leiden University) & Catherine Holst (University of Oslo: ARENA): *Advisory Commission, Academic Expertise and Democratic Legitimacy: The Case of Norway*

Discussant: Johan Adriaensen (Maastricht University)

**11.00-11.30 Coffee break**

**11.30-13.00 Panel II: POLITICAL CONTESTATION OF EXPERTISE**

Chair: Aneta Spendzharova (Maastricht University)

Speakers

- Tannelie Blom & Sophie Vanhoonacker (Maastricht University) *Ambiguities in the Functioning and Role of Experts and Expertise in EU Policy-Making: The Case of the EEAS*
- Michelle Everson (Birkbeck University of London) and Ellen Vos (Maastricht University): *Beyond scientification of EU risk regulation: bringing politics back in*

Discussant: Esther Versluis (Maastricht University)

**13.00-14.15 Lunch**



### **14.15-15.45 Panel III: LEGAL CONTESTATION OF EXPERTISE**

Chair: Vigjilence Abazi (Maastricht University)

Speakers

- Mariolina Eliantonio (Maastricht University): *Scientific knowledge in environmental litigation: national solutions, EU requirements and current challenges*
- Lukasz Gruszczynsk (Polish Academy of Sciences): *Judicial review of science-based measures under WTO Law*
- Alessandra Arcurri (Rotterdam Erasmus University) *Glyphosate as an object of re-politicization of international law*
- Marjan Peeters (Maastricht University) *Science, scientific advice, and national courts: the case of climate change*

Discussant: Arjen Meij (Former Judge in the General Court of the EU, Honorary Professor at the University of Luxembourg)

### **15.45-16.00 Coffee break**

### **16.00-17.30 Roundtable: The Role of Expertise in EU Policy-making**

Chair: Ellen Vos (Maastricht University, CERiM co-director)

Speakers:

- Luc Soete (Maastricht University )
- Tannelie Blom (Maastricht University)
- Anthony Teasdale (Director-General of the EP Research Service)
- Arjen Meij (Former Judge in the General Court of the EU, Honorary Professor at the University of Luxembourg)

### **17.30-17.45 Final Remarks and Closing of the Conference**

Thomas Christiansen (Maastricht University, CERiM co-director)

### **17.45-19.00 Reception**

#### About CERiM:

The Centre for European Research in Maastricht (CERiM) is a Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence bringing together researchers from the fields of European law, politics and history to conduct interdisciplinary research, facilitate joint projects and organise public and academic events.. It brings together more than one hundred researchers from the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and the Faculty of Law of Maastricht University. Under the umbrella of the overall theme Reshaping Europe in a Globalising World, CERiM's research agenda focuses on four main research themes: Differentiation and Flexible Integration, Constitutionalising Europe, European Governance and Market Integration, and Europe and the World.

See more about CERiM: <https://cerim.maastrichtuniversity.nl/>

