

SYMPOSIUM

Committee on Constitutional Affairs



European Parliament

THE QUEST FOR THE RULE OF LAW

Towards a common understanding

10 November - House of European History (by invitation only)

11 November - SPINELLI 3G-2 (public)

Opening

Roberta Metsola

President of the European Parliament

Key Note

Koen Lenaerts

President of the European Court of Justice



Organised by

Sven SIMON, Chair of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs (AFCD)

Javier ZARZALEJOS, Chair of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE)



Symposium on “The Quest for the Rule of Law Towards a common understanding”

10 November 2025 — House of European History, Rue Belliard 135 (by invitation only)

11 November 2025 — European Parliament, Rue Wiertz 60, room SPINELLI 3G2 (public)

PROGRAMME

Monday, 10 November 2025

17:30	Admission of Guests (by personal invitation only)
18:00	Opening of the Symposium Opening remarks by Sven Simon <i>Chair of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs (AFCO)</i> Welcoming speech by Roberta Metsola <i>President of the European Parliament</i> Javier Zarzalejos <i>Chair of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE)</i> Keynote speech by Koen Lenaerts <i>President of the Court of Justice of the EU</i>

Tuesday, 11 November 2025

08:30	Admission to the European Parliament entrance Altiero Spinelli (ASP) building (public event)
9:00 – 10:00	PANEL 1: The Rule of Law: A Well-Established and Defined Principle Witnesses Professor Laurent Pech (FR/IE) <i>Professor of Law at the UCD Sutherland School of Law (Dublin)</i> Professor Matthias Storme (BE) <i>Full Professor of International Law, EU Law and Comparative Law at KU Leuven and an Extraordinary Professor at the University of Antwerp</i> Dr Jan van Zyl Smit (UK) <i>Director at Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law</i> Professor Jeff King (UK) <i>Professor of Law at University College London</i> Examination of witnesses

10:15 – 11:15

PANEL 2:

Rechtsstaat, Rule of Law, l'État de droit: Member States' Constitutional Identities and Primacy of the Rule of Law

Witnesses

Professor Peter M. Huber (DE)

Emeritus Professor of Public Law and Philosophy of State, Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich, former Justice of the Federal Constitutional Court

Professor Lucia Serena Rossi (IT)

Professor of EU Law at the University of Bologna and former Judge of the Court of Justice of the European Union

Professor Monika Polzin (AT)

Professor of Public and Public International Law at the Vienna University of Economics and Business (WU), Austria

Professor Andrzej Bryk (PL)

Professor of Constitutional Law and Legal History, Director of Institute of American Studies at Jagiellonian University, Kraków

Examination of witnesses

11:30 – 12:30

Panel 3:

The Legislative Process and Principles of the Rule of Law

Witnesses

Luis María López Guerra (ES)

former Vice President of the European Court of Human Rights; as well as members of the Venice Commission on behalf of Spain and of other Ibero-American countries

Professor Juha Raitio (FI)

Professor of European Law at the University of Helsinki, Member of the Helsinki Rule of Law Forum

Professor Jan Wintr (CZ)

Professor at the Faculty of Law, Charles University, Prague, and Judge of the Constitutional Court of the Czech Republic

Examination of witnesses

12:30 – 14:00

Break

14:00 – 15:00

PANEL 4:

Rule of Law Backsliding in Europe

Witnesses

Professor Petra Bárd (HU)

Professor at Radboud University, Research Centre for State and Law (SteR), Nijmegen



Professor Tomasz Tadeusz Koncewicz (PL)
Professor of Law and Director of the Department of European and Comparative Law at the Faculty of Law and Administration, University of Gdańsk

Professor Jan Wouters (BE)
Professor of International Law and International Organizations at KU Leuven

Examination of witnesses

15:15 - 16:15

**PANEL 5:
Methodology of the Rule of Law Reports**

Witnesses

Professor Paweł Czubik, PhD (PL)
Professor at the Cracow University of Economics, Head of the Department of International and European Law, and Judge of the Supreme Court of Poland

Mr Florian Geyer (DE)
Head of the Rule of Law Unit, Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, European Commission

**The European Commission for Democracy through Law
(Venice Commission)**

Examination of witnesses

16:30 - 17:30

**PANEL 6:
The Council's Rule of Law Dialogue
Panel discussion with Politicians**

Witnesses

Professor János Bóka (HU)
Hungarian Minister for European Union Affairs, previously Professor at the National University of Public Service

Ana Palacio (ES)
Former JURI chair and former Foreign Affairs Minister of Spain

Examination of witnesses

17:45 - 18:00

Closing of the Symposium

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CONCEPT

For the European Union, law is the basis of its existence. The idea of the integrating power of law has always been believed in European unification. In the preamble to the Treaty on EU, the Parties reaffirm their commitment to the principles of freedom, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law. Article 2 of the Treaty on the EU mentions the rule of law as one of the values on which the Union is founded. Since 2020, the European Commission has published an annual Rule of Law Report in the Member States and in 2021, the EU Rule of Law Mechanism entered into force with Regulation (EU) 2020/2092. However, the concept of the rule of law is not only legally significant, but also a central political argument, which is interpreted and used differently depending on the context.

The terms 'Rechtsstaatsprinzip', 'rule of law' and 'État de droit' are used synonymously. On closer inspection, however, the terms are already in Germany, France and Great Britain concepts with very different meanings. There are significant differences in both the procedures and the competent courts. Even today, there are substantial differences between the Member States in the design of the catalogue of fundamental rights, as well as in the understanding of individual fundamental rights. There are also large differences in the organisation of national constitutional and higher courts in the Member States. The training of lawyers differs greatly from one another on the European continent. Even in harmonized areas of law, serious problems can be found. Due to the different legal-cultural approaches, the same rule produces a wide variety of practical effects in the legal life of different Member States.

These examples show that the content of legal regulations differs not only in detail, but in principle. Legal thinking in Europe is strongly culturally conditioned. The relativism of legal orders and juridical thinking has far-reaching consequences for European integration, it even has the potential to jeopardise 'unity in diversity'. Because as soon as the acceptance of the right is no longer based on a consistent inner affirmation, its integrative power dwindles.

Recent policy debates have focused on individual cases of Member States. The European Commission's annual rule of law reports include assessments of judicial independence, media pluralism and institutional balance, but rarely address the deeper conceptual differences. However, broader discussions about the basic nature of the concept remain rare.

Against this background, the symposium will explore which mechanisms and strategies need to be researched, developed and applied in order to overcome legal cultural differences in Europe – in the search for a uniform understanding of the rule of law.