



PUBLIC LECTURE

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Thursday September 18, 2014, 6:00 pm
IHS, Stumpergasse 56
1060 Vienna, Lecture Room SZ6 N601

How Europeans view and evaluate democracy

ABSTRACT

'What has gone wrong with democracy?', the Economist has asked in one of his more recent issues (March 1st-7th, 2014). Is democracy no longer the only game in town? How about support for democracy in Europe today? Based on the European Social Survey Round 6, which has been in the field in fall 2012 and which has just become available for the research community in May of this year, I shall try to show how Europeans view and evaluate democracy today. These exceptionally rich data, which are based on a multidimensional conception of democracy, allow for a differentiated answer to these questions.

As will be shown, Europeans share the basic model of liberal democracy, but they also have visions of democracy - social democracy and direct democracy - that go beyond the basic model. Their expectations vary from one country to the other as a function of the quality of their country's democracy. The Europeans evaluations of how democracy works in their own country vary across visions. They are fairly positive in terms of liberal democracy, but quite negative about social justice. Moreover, even in the best of European democracies, there is room for improvement. Finally, we find a rather complex reciprocal relationship between expectations (the way Europeans view democracy) and evaluations (the extent to which they are satisfied with what they get).

Hanspeter Kriesi holds the Stein Rokkan Chair in Comparative Politics at the European University Institute in Florence. Previously, he has been teaching at the universities of Amsterdam, Geneva and Zurich. He was the director of a Swiss national research program on the "Challenges to democracy in the 21st century" from 2005-2012. Currently he directs an ERC-program that studies the political consequences of the Great Recession (POLCON).