



EUROPEAN CONCEPTS ONLINE

International Workshop and constituent meeting

House of European History, Brussels, 27.09.2021

*“There are truths on this side of the Pyrenees
which are falsehoods on the other” (Pascal)*

One of the oldest, deepest, and most persistent challenges facing Europe is unchanged: it is a multiple and multilingual area. Problems of intercultural misunderstanding, be they obvious or subjacent, arise daily between European states and European citizens. Do Spaniards, Poles, Germans, Greeks, Dutch, Romanians, and the French mean the same thing when speaking of *sovereignty*, *power*, *leadership*, and even *European identity*? How may a current word like *populism* resonate in Italy, France, and Central Europe? As we leave a decade marked by the eurocrisis and the United Kingdom’s departure from the EU, we urgently need to clarify the usages of words such as *belonging*, *membership*, and *exit*. We equally need to appreciate the semantic baggage of vocabulary relating to debt (*dette*, *δημόσιο χρέος*, *Schuld-Schulden*). There is no need to insist on the chronic difficulties the French have in explaining (including to themselves) how their concept of *laïcité* differs from *secularism* and *Laizität*, or on the reputed untranslatability of the German word *Heimat* (*little homeland? terroir? mala ojczyzna?*), a classic object of German studies. As Confucius said, “if the names are not correct, if they do not match the realities, language has no object. If language is without an object, action becomes impossible, and therefore all human affairs disintegrate.” Hence Europe and Europeans are forever confronted with a dual need: to *understand* everyone else’s monolingualism, while also *explaining*—including to themselves—their own idiosyncrasy.

ECO, the acronym of “EUROPEAN CONCEPTS ONLINE / LES MOTS DE L’EUROPE EN LIGNE” is a European project seeking to develop a *genuinely multilingual* transnational repertory of key concepts in Europe today. Symbolically named in tribute to Umberto Eco who famously claimed that “the language of Europe is translation”, the project

takes the maxim of this great European figure in its broadest sense: not simply the literal translation (though the hundreds of translators in Brussels show how important this is on a daily basis); but in the sense of a hermeneutic confrontation with the fundamental alterity at the heart of the European experience. By enquiring into the most significant *words* in the European political and social vocabulary, it will reveal the preconditions for the emergence of a European space by casting light on barriers impeding its advent.

These *words of Europe* will not be limited to the EU's institutional vocabulary. From the lexicon of public action (*governance, neighbourhood policy, convergence criteria, new security paradigm*) to the most ethical domains (*gender, family, conjugality, social/societal*), without forgetting the difficulties apparent in all European vocabularies when talking about diversity (*postcolonial, post-migratory*), and a whole variety of themes (*borders, memories, heritage, etc.*), the ECO project will act as a laboratory at the intersection between disciplines: historians, political scientists, geographers, jurists, philosophers, and linguists will together examine conceptual differences and contemporary changes characterising a heterogenous European coexistence undergoing perpetually reconfiguration.

Our objectives

- **A transnational and truly multilingual repertory** of key notions in contemporary Europe (both inside and outside the EU). An open-access, reliable, repertory with recognised, identifiable international contributors.
- **Clarifying key notions** for understanding Europe today via representations specific to the various countries and various languages, focusing both on persistent misunderstandings and on travelling concepts.
- **Contrasting and comparing diverse languages** via a repertory presented in the most widely read bridge languages but built around contributions from other spaces.
- **Comprehensive summaries of the knowledge** thus generated via a) translation into the bridge languages, and b) an overview written on the basis of the contributions.
- **Sharing** resources and research tools (bibliography and online resources, database).
- Up-to-date evolving and **expanding content**.
- **A tree structure** to navigate from one theme to another and to jump to new content.
- A deliberately **multimedia approach** including texts, images, statistics, audio-visuals
- Lastly, a **social media presence** to publicise the website's content but also to relate it back to current affairs in Europe and its various member states.

Why a constituent assembly?

The ECO project is currently in its design phase. It is supported in the form of a small temporary funding by International Studies Lille Research Cluster (I-SITE Lille) under the working title “Les Mots de l’Europe. Vocabulaire de la difference” and receives further (non-material) support by the House of European History in Brussels where the project’s constituent meeting will be held on 27.09.2021.

The ECO workshop at HEH will be devoted to:

- defining the editorial line and the form of the website and database.
- expanding the initial core in order to build up a transnational network of researchers, universities, and personalities, destined to work together on the basis of calls for proposals relating the various entries.
- defining the role and functioning of the boards.
- Discussing the fundraising issue.
- Discussing first prototypical entries.

Scientific organization

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Supported by : « Les mots de l’Europe » - I.Site UL.NE

CNRS, Univ.Lille, UMR8529 – Institut de Recherches historiques du Septentrion

Hosted by: House of European History, Brussels

Venue: House of European History - Rue Belliard 135 · 1000 Brussels.

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Program

9:00 Reception of the participants (attached list)

9:30 -10:00 Welcome

Constanze Itzel
Thomas Serrier + N.N.
Rodolfos Maslias, Head of Unit tbc
Natalie Nougayrede, The Guardian tbc

10:00 Plenary 1: Editorial line and multimedia output

Chair : Valérie Rosoux
Inputs : Mathilde Harel (; Montserrat Vincente Rangel, Eric Sangar ; Mike Plitt
Discussion

11:30 Coffee break

11:45 Plenary 2: Team and support

Chair: **Xosé Manoel Núñez Seixas / tbc or Sylvie Aprile**
Input : Thomas Serrier (fund raising); Governance and boards (**Michonneau/Krakovsky**)

11:45-14:00 Lunch and coffee

14 :00-14:30 free short individual visits of HEH

14:30-16:00 Roundtable: **Secularism, laïcité (working title)**

Chair: Emile Chabal
Participants: Tim Peace, Özgür Turesay tbc, N.N, N.N.

16 :00 Coffee Break

16:30-17:30 Organizational plenary

Chair: **Krakovsky/Michonneau**

17:30 Conclusion. **Michonneau-Serrier?**



