

This book outlines and analyses some of the most significant features of the European Monetary Union (EMU) and the Euro in the light of the new challenges that the European Union will be called upon to carry out after the renewal of the European Parliament, in an era dominated by a great uncertainty and political, economic and social transformation. With the historical, economic and legal perspectives in mind, the intention of this book is to speculate on the possible futures of the Euro, and to provide not only students, but also a broader general public, with a handful tools of basic information to better understand the function of one of the most relevant results of the European integration process, the Euro.



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WHICH FUTURE FOR THE EURO AND THE ECONOMIC AND MONETARY UNION AFTER THE EUROPEAN ELECTIONS?

GIULIO PERONI
Editor

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**Contributions of the Lecturers at the European Monetary
and Economic Law (EMEL) - Jean Monnet Conference,
held on 24th May 2019 at the University of Milan, Italy**

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«Les institutions peuvent, si elles sont bien construites, accumuler et transmettre la sagesse des générations successives»

Mémoires (1976) de Jean Monnet

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Introduction: Can the European Union Survive the Eurocrisis?

Giulio Peroni*

This is the clairvoyant question that has inspired the research and didactic project of the Jean Monnet Module (2016-2019) bearing the title ‘European Monetary and Economic Law (EMEL): Towards a New Shape of European Union’ financed by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)¹.

The module, following an interdisciplinary approach with which a relevant space has been given to the historical, economic and above all legal aspects characterizing the European integration process, aimed at focusing its didactic and scientific activities with reference to the financial crisis that has massively affected the Eurozone countries since the 2008. It started in United States with the scandal of sub-prime mortgages and exploded with the well-known default of Lehmann brothers² and the instability of the European

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¹ See the Acknowledgements.

² The failure of Lehman Brothers in the midst of the global financial crisis was the largest catastrophe to hit the financial industry in the United States with a massive impact on the world of finance. See Dossdall, Henrik and Nichelmann, Rolf (2018) “The Risk of Financial Risk Management: The Case of Lehman Brothers”, in Gephart, Robert P. et al. (Eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Risk, Crisis and Emergency Management*, London, Routledge, pp. 312-324; De Grauwe, Paul (2014) “Ideology and Economics in The Failure of Lehman Brothers”, in Sanchis I Marco, Manuel (Eds.), *Economics of the Monetary Union and The Eurozone Crisis*, Berlin, Springer, pp. 105-109; Chorafas, Dimitri N. (2014), *Banks, Bankruptcies under Crisis. Understanding Failures and Mergers during the Great Recession*, New York, Palgrave, pp. 87-108; Mc Donald, Lawrence G. and Robinson, Patrik (2009), *A Colossal Failure of Common Sense: The Inside Story of the Collapse of Lehman Brothers*, New York, Crown Business.

Monetary Union (EMU) determined by the crisis of the sovereign debt in particular of the so-called PIGS states³.

The said financial turmoil has had a significant impact on the economic and social cohesion of the European Union (EU) and its members so that has deeply transformed the architecture of the EMU while determining at the same time the introduction of new legal bodies and mechanisms⁴ finalized to determine within the 'Old Continent' the conditions for a renewed economic stability. This last point is commonly considered as a global public good because of the properties that characterize it and the positive externalities it is able to produce. It is in the common interest of all states of the world, and particularly (seen the current circumstances) of the EU members, institutions and economic actors to commit themselves to its pursuit and supply, thus ensuring its widespread enjoyment for the benefit of all European citizens, while at the same time preventing dangerous opportunistic phenomena of 'free riding' and 'moral hazard'⁵, which are at the root of many of the situations of economic instability occurred in last years in Europe⁶.

³ A clearly depreciatory term indicating states who are unable to respect the fiscal constraints established both the Maastricht Treaty and the Stability Growth Pact (SGP): the ceilings of 3% of Gross Domestic Production (GDP) on budget deficits and of 60% of GDP on government debt: probably the best-known elements of the European Monetary Union (EMU) framework. On the sovereign debt crisis *ex multis* see Contaldi, Gianluca (2019), *Diritto europeo dell'economia*, Torino, Giappichelli, pp. 279-284; Viterbo, Annamaria and Cisotta, Roberto (2012) "La crisi del debito sovrano e gli interventi dell'Ue: dai primi strumenti finanziari al 'fiscal compact'", in *Il Diritto dell'Unione Europea*, Vol. 2/2012, pp. 323-366; Peroni, Giulio (2012), *La crisi dell'euro: limiti e rimedi dell'unione economica e monetaria*, Milano, Giuffrè; Viterbo, Annamaria and Cisotta, Roberto (2010) "La crisi della Grecia, l'attacco speculativo all'euro e le risposte dell'Unione Europea", in *Il Diritto dell'Unione europea*, Vol. 4/2010, pp. 961-994.

⁴ Peroni, Giulio (2012), *La crisi dell'euro*, cit., pp. 171-185; Baratta, Roberto (2014) "I vincoli imposti dal 'fiscal compact' ai bilanci nazionali", in *federalismi.it*, Vol. 17, pp. 2-10; Id. (2012) "Legal Issues of The Fiscal Compact. Searching for a Mature Democratic Governance of the Euro", in De Witte, Bruno et al. (Eds.), *The Euro Crisis and the State of European Democracy*, Firenze, European University Institute, pp. 647-681; Rossi, Lucia Serena (2012) "Fiscal compact e trattato sul meccanismo di stabilità: aspetti istituzionali e conseguenze dell'integrazione differenziata", in *Il Diritto dell'Unione Europea*, Vol.1/2012, pp. 293-307.

⁵ The problem of free riding was studied analytically by the American political economist Olson, Mancur (1965) in *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, for whom 'free riding', means benefiting from a collective good without having incurred the costs of participating in its production. On the contrary, 'moral hazard' is a situation in which one party gets involved in a risky event knowing that it is protected against the risk and the other party will incur the cost. It arises when both the parties have incomplete information about each other.

⁶ On economic stability as a global public good see Peroni, Giulio (2020), *Stabilità*

Moreover, economic stability is an essential good for giving impulse those values repeatedly emphasized in the European treaties⁷ such as solidarity, subsidiarity, responsibility, sustainable development, justice and social protection – ‘pillars’ of the European social market economy⁸ envisaged in the EU Treaty (see art. 3 par. 3) – which must be strengthened for supporting a new profitable phase of the integration process between its members and in perspective a new role for the European Union in a global scenario made even more complex by the dramatic impact (firstly in terms of human lives and then in terms of economic and social costs) of the current health crisis due to the Coronavirus emergency⁹.

Within the context here briefly described, the criticisms about the role and future of the EU are getting stronger and stronger. But, it should be remembered that the EU is the result of an extraordinary project that necessarily implies limits on national sovereignty and the attribution of effective powers to supranational institutions for the pursuit of common and shared objectives. A bold and complex project that requires a continuous commitment to its implementation¹⁰, as Jean Monnet¹¹ taught us.

economica e sostenibilità nel diritto internazionale, Milano, Giuffrè, in particular pp. 64-99.

⁷ See art. 2 and 3 TEU; for solidarity (artt. 67 par. 2, 80, 122, 194, 222 TFEU); for subsidiarity (artt. 69, 355 TFEU); for responsibility (artt. 73, 80, 88 par. 3, 165, 166, 207 par. 4 lett. c, 240 par. 2, 317 par.1, 322 par. 2, lett b TFEU); for sustainable development (art. 11); for social protection (art. 9, 21, 151, 153, 160); for justice v. Title V TFEU.

⁸ The European social market economy pursues economic and social objectives. On the one hand, the European Union aims to fundamentally to fulfil its economic objectives through the construction of the internal market and the prevention of unfair competition on this market. On the other hand, its social objectives aspire more broadly to promote peace, values and the well-being of the peoples in the EU, in these terms it is important the reference to a social market economy that aims to achieve full employment and social progress, and a high level of protection and improvement of the quality of the environment. For Gerbrandy, Anna et al. (2019) “Shaping the Social Market Economy After the Lisbon Treaty: How ‘Social’ is Public Economic Law?”, in *Utrecht Law Review*, Vol. 15, n. 2, p. 32: “*This mixture of opposing, yet sometimes also overlapping, objectives poses a challenge for legal sub-systems to accommodate all these objectives in a suitable manner*”. See also Ferri, Delia and Cortese, Fulvio (2019), *The EU social market economy and the law: theoretical perspectives and practical challenges for the EU*, London-New York, Routledge.

⁹ For a first exam of the legal and economic impact due to coronavirus epidemic on the European Union, see the contributions published on the forum <http://www.sidiblog.org/2020/03/24/forum-covid-19-diritto-internazionale-e-diritto-dellunione-europea/>

¹⁰ See Roth, François (2005), *L'invention de l'Europe*, Paris, Armand Colin, p. 1: “*son originalité [de l'Europe unie, nda] est de avoir déjà une histoire et de demeurer un projet*”.

¹¹ Jean Monnet (1888 – 1979) was the main inspiration behind the famous ‘Schuman Declaration’ of 9 May 1950, which led to the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community and, as such, is considered to be the birth of the European Union. He is also

The numerous activities realized during the Project's life (lectures, workshops, seminars and case studies)¹² have involved academics of different European universities and experts of European and international institutions obtaining a positive outcome with a large attendance of students of law, political science, economics and also professionals, such as civil servants and also general public¹³. Particularly, on 24th May 2019 at the University of

considered the founding father of European functionalism. In other words, Jean Monnet's approach to integration aimed at individual sectors in hopes of achieving spillover effects to further the process of integration it is also said to be followed by the early neo functional steps.

¹² With the teaching and research activities carried out, it was proposed to help fill what has been defined as "*a regrettable knowledge gap*" [see Dinan, Desmond (Ed.) (2006), *Origins and Evolution of the European Union*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 12 ss.] and to contribute to the debate and to the construction of a set of shared knowledge, indispensable for strengthening the European identity.

¹³ In thanking the Authors of the papers of this Volume a special thanks also go to all experts who made the 'European Monetary and Economic Law' (EMEL) Jean Monnet research project possible. It is nice to remind the highly successful meeting held in 2017 with Prof. Carlo Cottarelli (Osservatorio sui Conti Pubblici Italiani, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore di Milano), former Executive Director of the International Monetary Fund, on the role of the IMF in the management of the sovereign debt crisis in Europe and also to point out the interesting round table that took place in 2018, on the future of the Euro area, which analyzed the range of the Commission's reform proposals contained in the well-known 'Reflection paper' drawn up by the European Commission towards the end of 2017. On that occasion, it was possible to talk with Gabriele Giudice, Head of the Directorate-General for Economic and Monetary Affairs of the Commission, with the contribution of Anna Gardella of the European Banking Association and of prof. Giovanna Adinolfi (University of Milan). Other distinguished colleagues and experts in European studies, such as Susanna Cafaro, Francesca Martines, Lorenzo Pace, Paolo Tedeschi, Francesco Velo, explored in their talks and speeches other key issues that were useful for better understanding the reform of economic governance and the protection of economic and social rights threatened by the austerity measures adopted to save public accounts. Important have been the technical contributions of Giuseppe Napoletano (Bank of Italy - Legal Department) on bank reform in the EU, as well as the of Michael Ioannidis (Senior researcher at the ECB and the Max Planck Institute), on the sustainability of European sovereign debt. The workshops organized and held by prof. Jacopo Alberti and our Phd Niccolò Onesti, Federico Lenci, Filippo Croci, devoted to analysing the most significant legal cases concerning the functioning of the EMU (the well knowns Pringle, Gauweiler, Accorinti cases) were also well attended. The initiative managed by Tiziano Bussani relating to the EMEL newsletter was interesting, too. It is aimed at disseminating in a simple way - especially to the students attending the course and general public - news about the economic and monetary policy of the European Union. Then, thanks to Jean Monnet's Project, exchanges such as seminars, joint conferences with the University of Geneva, the University of Siena, the Technical University of Berlin, the University of Eastern Piedmont, and the University of Cambridge, as well as with Ause (University Association of

Milan in room Malliani, the final conference of the Project was held. On that occasion, distinguished guests partook in an intense debate about the possible futures of the Euro and the EMU after the European elections for the renewal of the Parliament¹⁴.

Regardless of what was then the final election result¹⁵, during the conference which was conducted by the chairmen of the three panels¹⁶, it was possible to point out how the introduction of the single currency has had a transformative impact on the European integration process affecting not only on the various political economic social and legal profiles that this historical event inevitably entailed but also from a properly cultural point of view. After all, the currency is usually considered as a symbol that expresses within the international community, the economic and political power of the State that adopts it and in which its own citizens identify¹⁷.

Hence the idea of an historical, economic and legal analysis for better understanding the current situation and the next events that can affect the

European Studies) and the Max Planck Institute of Heidelberg have taken place. A significant number of publications have also been drawn up on different issues relating to withdrawal from the Eurozone, the relationship between democracy and technocracy, transparency and accountability of ECB action - publications that are partly available in open access on the Ariel website dedicated to the course that we recommend you to visit: <https://gperoniemel.ariel.ctu.unimi.it/v5/home/Default.aspx>.

¹⁴ In particular, with regard to how to strengthen the single currency so that in the face of new financial crises, the risks of its dissolution are completely excluded.

¹⁵ The election results were strongly influenced by the European citizens' fear of having to face a future dominated by uncertainty and political and social economic instability. Fear that in previous years caused a political turmoil in Europe. First of all British voters decided to throw themselves into the 'void' of Brexit, and then US citizens chose a questionable businessman as their President. The French, on the other hand, when they elected Macron in 2017, decided to reject the entire political class of their country, placing their faith in a person that became head of a party created for the occasion and practically out of nothing. Germany, too, in trusting in Angela Merkel for the fourth time, witnessed something that had not happened since the end of the Second World War, namely the entry of an extreme right-wing party into parliament with a number of representatives, which at the same time became the strongest opposition party. And lastly, in March 2018, Italian voters got rid of the old center-left and center-right parties, creating what some have defined as the 'Third Republic'.

¹⁶ Prof. Sara Parini (University of Milan) chaired the first session, that was the historical session, which will be followed by the economic, chaired by prof. Roberto Tamborini (University of Trento) and, lastly, the legal session, chaired by Professor Alessia Di Pascale (University of Milan).

¹⁷ See Moro, Giovanni et al. (2012), *La moneta della discordia. L'euro e i cittadini dieci anni dopo*, Roma, Cooper; Kaelberer, Matthias (2004) "The Euro and European Identity: Symbols, Power and the Politics of European Monetary Union", in *Review of International Studies*, vol. 30, pp. 161-178.

Euro and the EMU, promoting an intense, open and transversal debate with the awareness that the diversity of opinions favour not only richness of contents but also represent the way for identifying feasible solutions to the crisis that due to the sanitary and health emergency risks worsening.

During the conference, the common opinion clearly arose that it was necessary to continue in the path of European integration process for providing the EU and in particular the Eurozone with effective tools for facing and absorbing new possible economic shocks as recently occurred with the coronavirus emergency¹⁸. Especially, the need to reform the economic and monetary union for realizing a more harmonized EU fiscal policy has emerged jointly with the need to find an alternative solution to the economic austerity model implemented till now in order to preserve the budgetary balance and satisfying the quantitative macroeconomic criteria and parameters fixed in the Treaties and especially in the Stability Growth Pact (SGP).

To have also a European Central Bank that is no longer obliged to make recourse to debated unconventional (or non-standard) measures¹⁹ and that in the future may act as a lender of last resort, as usually done by other monetary authorities around the World (e.g. US Federal Reserve, Bank of England and Bank of Japan) is another aspect to take seriously into account for better stabilizing the Euro Area. A theme, that relating to the ECB's role as a lender of last resort²⁰, that is inevitably connected to the possibility of providing for forms of mutualisation of public debts²¹: something which, seems now

¹⁸ According to Camous, Antoine and Claeys, Gregory (2020) "The evolution of European economic institutions during the Covid-19 crisis", in *European Policy Analysis*, Vol. 6, n. 2, pp. 328-341 the incomplete economic and institutional integration of the Euro area has exposed the monetary union to increasing economic divergence, which could be deepened by the Coronavirus crisis.

¹⁹ On this topic see Daniele, Luigi et al. (2017), *Democracy in the EMU in the Aftermath of the Crisis*, Springer, Giappichelli, pp. 217-264.

²⁰ Buiter Willem H. and Rahbari, Ebrahim (2012), in "The ECB as Lender of Last Resort for Sovereigns in the Euro Area", in CEPR Discussion paper series, n. 8974, p. 1 ss, argue that the ECB "has been acting as lender of last resort for the sovereigns of the euro system since it started its outright purchases of euro area periphery sovereign debt under the securities market programme (SMP) in May 2010. The scale of its interventions as LoLR for sovereigns has grown steadily since then and its range of instruments has expanded. We interpret the longer-term refinancing operations (LTROs) of December 2011 and February 2012 as being as much about acting, indirectly, as LoLR for the Spanish and Italian sovereigns by facilitating the purchase of their debt by domestic banks in the primary issue market as about dealing with a liquidity crunch for euro area banks".

²¹ In these terms see the 'no bailout clause', art. 125 of TFEU: "A Member State shall not be liable for or assume the commitments of central governments, regional, local or other public

partially to be happening with the recent launch of the well-known ‘Recovery Fund’²², as a European answer to the economic crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Hence, the conference has been structured to reproduce the didactic and scientific format that has characterized the module ever since its origins. An interdisciplinary approach that considers the historical, economic and legal aspects of one of the most significant events - if not the most important – of the history of European integration process towards the construction of the ‘United States of Europe’²³, the adoption of the single currency.

The essays collected in this Volume, with the historical, economic and legal perspectives in mind, aim, as observed before, to speculate on the possible futures of the Euro, to investigate some of the most significant features of the EMU and offer the academic debate (and not only) a useful tool for better understanding the impact that the future economic and political decisions taken by EU and its members may have on the social cohesion²⁴ of the ‘Old

authorities, ... of another Member State’. Article 125 solely states that Member States cannot take on the debts of another Member State. It does not rule out Member States ‘bailing out’ other countries by lending to them. Neither is there any prohibition on loans being restructured. Moreover, the European Court of Justice in its Pringle decision (C370/12) established that the European Stabilization Mechanism (ESM) bailout fund was consistent with Article 125.

²² See Contaldi, Gianluca (2020) “Il Recovery fund”, in *Studi sull’integrazione europea*, Vol. 3/2020, p. 587 ss. To repair the economic and social damage caused by the coronavirus pandemic, the European Commission, the European Parliament and EU leaders have agreed on a recovery plan that will lead the way out of the crisis and lay the foundations for a modern and more sustainable Europe. The EU’s long-term budget, coupled with Next Generation EU, the temporary instrument designed to boost the recovery, represent the largest stimulus package ever financed through the EU budget: a total of €1.8 trillion for rebuilding a post-COVID-19 Europe. The last step of the adoption of the next long-term EU budget was reached on 17 December 2020.

²³ Winston Churchill was one of the first to call for the creation of a ‘United States of Europe’. Following the Second World War, he was convinced that only a united Europe could guarantee peace. His aim was to eliminate the European ills of nationalism and war-mongering once and for all. He formulated his conclusions drawn from the lessons of history in his famous “Speech to the academic youth” held at the University of Zurich in 1946: “*There is a remedy which ... would in a few years make all Europe ... free and ... happy. It is to re-create the European family, or as much of it as we can, and to provide it with a structure under which it can dwell in peace, in safety and in freedom. We must build a kind of United States of Europe.*”

²⁴ In a historical phase dominated by an increasing Euroscepticism, European Commission is looking for ways to foster integration by promoting European identity among citizens in EU regions. In these terms, EU cohesion policy is thought to have potential to be instrumental in achieving this goal. Zimakov, A.V. and Popov, E.V. (2021) “EU Cohesion

Continent' but also on the economic-social rights²⁵ of the individuals, that is essential to European citizenship²⁶.

The contributions here consist of ideas presented at the Conference and all the papers (in some cases prepared with other well distinguished scholars and experts in the EMU area) underwent an accurate updating and extension in view of their publication²⁷.

More specifically, colleagues Lara Piccardo e Lucio Valent reconstruct from the historical point of view, the main steps that have characterized the European process of monetary cooperation and integration at European level, since the European Payments Union (1950) "*a specific solution to the economic problems that emerged in the immediate post-war period, when the financing of trade deficits was hampered by the extremely low level of European central banks' dollar reserves and the inconvertibility of their currencies troubled payments to the point of a return to barter forms*", up to the European Monetary System (EMS - 1979) which governed, for over a decade, the exchange system among the European members limiting dangerous phenomenon of currency manipulation²⁸. A system which under the attacks of financial speculation in the early 90s came to its dissolution and that began to become "*obsolete after 1989 (with the fall of Berlin's wall - n.d.a), when the international system began to change rapidly with the European leadership's inability to conceive any new and more 'revolutionary' solution to overcome the Union's standstill*".

The end of the EMS represented a turning point in the history of monetary and economic relations giving decisive impulse to the implementation of Delors Plan²⁹ that deeply inspired the Maastricht Treaty (7 February 1992)

Policy 2021–2027: New Tools to Foster European Integration?", in Lecture Notes in Networks and Systems, Vol. 160, pp. 148-156.

²⁵ The EU has transformed from a purely economic organization to a multi-faceted entity with political, social and human rights dimensions. This has inevitably determined an environment in which the idea of solidarity is gaining a more substantial role in shaping the EU legal order. See Biondi, Andrea et al. (Eds.) (2018), *Solidarity in EU law: Legal principle in the making*, Cheltenham, Edward Elgar.

²⁶ Condinanzi, Massimo et al. (2006), *Cittadinanza dell'Unione e libera circolazione delle persone*, Milano, Giuffrè.

²⁷ The rise of the COVID-19 emergency inevitably influenced the timing of this publication, delaying its work. However, in the face of the difficulties encountered, it was possible to update most of contributions also with regard to this tragic event.

²⁸ On the impact of currency manipulation or monetary dumping within the world trade economy see Santa Maria, Alberto (2003) "Cina: regole internazionali e dumping sociale e monetario", in *Diritto del Commercio Internazionale*, 2003, p. 667 ss.

²⁹ "A plan for closer European Union", originated by Jacques Delors, President of the European Commission (1985–94).

with which began the political, economic and legal path that would later lead to the adoption of the Single Currency.

The papers by Giorgio La Malfa and Giuseppe Ferrero (this last together with Alessandro Ferrari) focus on the political and economic profiles that led to the Euro. In particular, La Malfa after having analyzed the reasons that have justified to the adoption of the single currency, highlights how *“the euro is still incomplete and seems destined to remain so, generating growing dualisms and imbalances among the economies that use it”*; while Ferrero with Ferrari helps us to understand the critical issues connected to a monetary area based on an evident asymmetric: a single monetary policy, that constitutes an exclusive competence of the Eurozone, and a fiscal policy that remains firmly in the hands of the states. The authors then focus on the crucial role played, up to now, by the ECB, making recourse to a significant set of conventional and no-standard monetary measures thanks to which it was possible to save the Euro and the Economic Monetary Union from the international financial instability that has upset the World economy since 2008, with the yet unmentioned default of Lehmann Brothers and the successive sovereign debt crisis.

Just, the analysis of ECB’s reactions to the international financial crisis and the economic crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic with its extraordinary measures, opens the section of the book devoted to the legal profiles of the Euro phenomenon. More precisely, in his paper, Contaldi after describing the different mechanisms devised and adopted by the ECB to deal with the Crisis (OMT, QE and PEPP programs) highlights how they raise more than one problem concerning their compatibility with the EU primary provisions as *“it seems clear that it intervened beyond the tasks conferred by the founding Treaty”*. But Contaldi effectively points out that *“the fundamental point is that, despite such measures creating various consequences on the economy of private individuals, the control tools available to the Court of Justice to control the work of the Institute appear to be rather incomplete”* as *“these are eminently resolved in procedural mechanisms, consisting of imposing the burden of proof on one or the other subject”*.

The contribution of Daniele Gallo (written together with Elena Pauri) analyses the ‘legal reaction’ of the EU to the financial crisis from the standpoint of its impact on fundamental social rights. To that end, the paper provides a brief but complete overview on the normative and institutional background *“that made the deminutio in the protection of social and economic rights under euro crisis law possible”* and then focuses *“on the critical analysis of judgments rendered by the CJEU”* and distinguishes *“trends in its first jurisprudence from its most*

recent revirement". The study in particular highlights that, notwithstanding efforts made to restore a fair balance between social protection and budget constraint objectives, the latest judicial breakthroughs are not conclusive on the said fundamental and crucial point for the European integration process.

The paper by Roberto Cisotta reconstructs the external relations dimension of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) - a field that usually does not attract the same attention as the relative internal framework. But, it represents a fundamental aspect for better understanding the future of the Euro and the Eurozone in a context such as that of international currencies system deeply influenced by the globalization and economic interdependence among States. Particularly, Cisotta points out "*the evolution of the EMU as stimulated by the financial crisis erupted in 2008 have entailed a process of expansion and consolidation of the EU competences – and such consolidation is likely to go further following the Coronavirus crisis – with particular reference to the Euro Area, which still not completely mirrors on the external plane. Reconstructing the competences of the EU as regards Economic policy is particularly problematic, both on the internal and on the external plane. Various criteria have been elaborated by the case-law of the Court of Justice of the EU for the reconstruction of external competences*". On the basis of said criteria, Cisotta offers us an interesting reconstruction of the EU's external competences "*in particular as regards Economic policy and especially in the ambit of the action to be undertaken within other International Organizations*".

This collection of papers, as a whole, do not have only the common denominator of belonging to the wide area of European studies, but are also linked together by a dense web of thematic references that turn around the idea that the Euro represents the highest example of European integration, an ideal *fil rouge* that connects its historical, economic and legal profiles. Thanks to the essays here, the idea arises of a Europe that over the years, despite contradictions and setbacks, has been able to develop new projects, face great challenges, reach difficult compromises extend its borders as well as its competences and functions.

At this moment, the pressures, on the one hand, due to global economic and health emergencies and, on the other hand, due to the internal socio-political conflicts within each European country, can lead us to think that the European project is in decline, but the history of the last seventy years, since the Schumann Declaration (9 May 1950)³⁰ clearly shows that the

³⁰ The Declaration is believed to be the founding text of European integration (see previous note 11). Delivered by Robert Schuman, the French Foreign Minister, in the Salon de l'Horloge at the Quai d'Orsay in Paris, this Declaration, inspired by Jean Monnet,

Community first, and the Union after that, lived and is still living moments of crisis³¹ and both have been able to overcome difficulties and to face crucial turning points.

For these reasons Europe and its Economic Monetary Union firmly remain Our Project.

defined the basis for a European organization (the European Coal and Steel Community - ECSC) responsible for pooling the French and German production of coal and steel creating a common market among its member states which served to neutralize competition between European nations over natural resources, particularly in the Ruhr. For the text of the Declaration visit <https://www.robert-schuman.eu/en/declaration-of-9-may-1950>.

³¹ “*Europa lebt von Krisen*” said the German finance minister Helmut Schmidt in a conference held on 29th of January 1974 at the Royal Institute of International Affairs. Schmidt, Helmut (1975), *Bundestagsreden und Zeitdokumente*, Bonn, Bertelsmann Verlag, p. 249.