

This European Chair Jean Monnet seeks to merge academic research and public objectives in a changing Europe.

There are two reasons for this. *Firstly*, today's Europe is trying to overcome the crucial consequences of two ongoing crises that have undoubtedly marked the last decade and the beginning of the current decade. These are the socio-economic crisis that has affected almost all Member States, especially those in the eurozone. To this crisis has been added another. This is the coronavirus pandemic that has swept across the world and, more particularly, Europe in several successive waves. Its impact on health, the economy and daily life has been life in all of its European partners. Indeed, Europe has been through a decade of almost continuous crisis since 2009: the banking crisis, the euro crisis and the national debt crisis, the austerity crisis, the refugee crisis, the populist crisis, the crisis of the rule of law and the crisis of its own legitimacy.

But these two major tests for the process of European integration have been transformed into challenges for the renewal and strengthening of *European solidarity*. According to Jacques Delors, a lack of solidarity is a mortal danger for Europe. Our conclusion is that instead of only talking about a "debt community", we should prefer that the time for a stable and lasting community of responsibility is ante portas. It is necessary to emphasise the importance of genuine European sovereignty, an element which has often been lacking in the EU and which is still lacking today, in the health crisis.

European sovereignty would make it possible to establish genuine solidarity.

What Europe has lost is not solidarity, but rather an institutional dynamic and political will - to learn from bad experiences and gradually institutionalise solidarity in Europe - so that it does not become a haphazard construct or a purely symbolic policy.

We are witnessing a turbulent situation, as Member States have more than once preferred to retreat behind their national borders, which are often hermetically sealed, while the Community institutions' capacity for coordination appears limited and undefined.

We are therefore at a stage where we need precise and detailed answers about the future of Europe by clarifying the notion of European solidarity in the light of the lessons learned from the aforementioned crises. Will the Europe of this post-crisis period still be capable - and under what conditions - to devise a form of democracy on a continental scale, under the impetus of the new European governance, in which the role of the European institutions is substantially balanced with the active participation of the European citizen?

The ambition of our European Chair is to provide convincing answers to the following questions: is European citizenship a thing of the past, as nationalist spectres have relegated it to a secondary interest?

Or could European democracy and a sense of common European identity be taken for granted in the current phase of European integration?

The means we propose to achieve the objectives of our European Chair are the most effective and above all relevant. The design of the subject "Citizen Europe" for a Jean Monnet Chair in a European University located in a peripheral border region of the Union. For this reason, it is felt that the proposed activities could help to link the academic environment with civil society and, indeed, to promote the priorities of the European Union through academic research and the active participation of citizens, based on the common priorities, such as the management of the specific characteristics of regional societies. From this perspective

Our model is the North Aegean region, where our actions are taking place. Our proposals serve this logic. Courses, face-to-face and distance seminars, a data and educational material platform educational material, a summer university and publications will all be geared to supporting the issue that the European Chair is invited to address.

In addition, all our academic work justifies not only the maturity of our objectives but also the capacity of the means and instruments proposed by this Chair.

We refer to our previous Jean Monnet Chairs Jean Monnet Chairs on the enlargement of the Union to south-east Europe (2002-2009) and the relationship between European societies and the process of European integration (2010-2013), but also the Jean Monnet Network on the subject of "Governance, Pluralism and Trans-nationalisation in Europe" (2016-2019), for which we were the leaders.

We work to increase the qualitative impact of the European Chair actions and guarantee equal opportunities, the programme aims more and better at people of different ages and from different cultural, social and economic backgrounds.

It is at the heart of the programme to reach out to those who have fewer opportunities, in particular people with disabilities and migrants, as well as EU citizens living in remote or isolated areas facing socio-economic difficulties. By the programme will also encourage its participants, particularly young people, to get involved and learn to participate in civil society, by raising their awareness of the common values of the European Union.

The Jean Monnet European Chair functions in a department (Sociology) and a University (Aegean) that have no specific and direct links with European studies. In addition, the University of the Aegean has no faculties linked to legal or political studies.

Only some courses at the Department of Sociology offer a direct approach of the European Integration. This approach supports a specialised subject in European political sociology focusing on four areas:

European governance, human rights, European citizenship and identity, and Europe in an international, globalized society.

The functioning of this European Chair supports our efforts to create a new pedagogical dynamic in Greece within the framework of the social sciences which will constitute a new

trend in Sociology. This trend contributes to the creation of a new competitive approach, expressed by a Department that operates in a border University, in a less developed region, and which can play a key role in the development of a new approach to European Studies in Greece, in partnership with Aegean civil society, which has a strong Aegean civil society, which has a strong desire to know its future and its social and economic stability through the construction of united Europe.