

# RED SPINEL

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## Table of Contents

Foreword.....	3
What is RED-SPINEL.....	4
What is dissensus.....	6
Governance structure.....	7
-RED-SPINEL Partners.....	7
-RED-SPINEL Supervisory Board.....	8
-RED-SPINEL International Advisory Board..	8
RED-SPINEL Early-Stage Researchers.....	9
Key achievements 2022/23.....	10
-Specific outputs and deliverables.....	11
-Some important milestones.....	12
Available resources.....	13
Looking ahead 2024.....	14
-Upcoming Milestones and deliverables.....	14
-Internal Calls.....	15



Welcome to the first edition of the RED-SPINEL Newsletter. With this edition, we would like to introduce the project to a wider audience, provide you with an overview of some of the achievements of the first year, and give a snapshot of what is being planned and programmed for 2024. In 2024, the RED-SPINEL Newsletter will appear bi-monthly to provide regular updates on the progress made with the implementation of the project. 2024 will be an important year for safeguarding our values with scheduled elections in Europe and the USA. I wish you a relaxing and pleasant Festive Season and a prosperous 2024.



**Ramona COMAN**

Professor in Political Science

Université libre de Bruxelles | Faculty of Philosophy and Social Sciences  
Institut d'études européennes | Centre d'Étude de La Vie Politique

Academic coordinator: Horizon Europe RED-SPINEL project (2022-2025)

Academic coordinator: Joint Doctorate Network Marie Skłodowska-Curie  
GEM-DIAMOND (2022-2025)



The Respond to Emerging Dissensus: SuPranational Instruments and Norms of European Liberal Democracy" (RED-SPINEL) Project is funded by the European Union through Horizon Europe and is executed under the authority of the European Research Executive Agency (REA) of the European Commission. The 36-month long, 3.2 million euro, interdisciplinary, international, and intersectoral project started in October 2022 and the expected completion is foreseen during the first half of 2025.

RED-SPINEL seeks to shed light on the growing dissensus surrounding liberal democracy and the rule of law within and beyond the European Union. It examines how policy instruments and legal mechanisms at the EU level have evolved in response to dissensus surrounding liberal democracy and its constitutive dimensions.

RED-SPINEL aims to produce theoretically innovative understandings of the nature and implication of the present-day dissensus; examine innovative empirical findings on how the EU's supranational instruments have fared in an environment shaped by increasing dissensus; and develop recommendations and toolkits that aim to restore the legitimacy and effectiveness of European multi-level liberal democracy.

RED-SPINEL addresses the following key transversal questions:

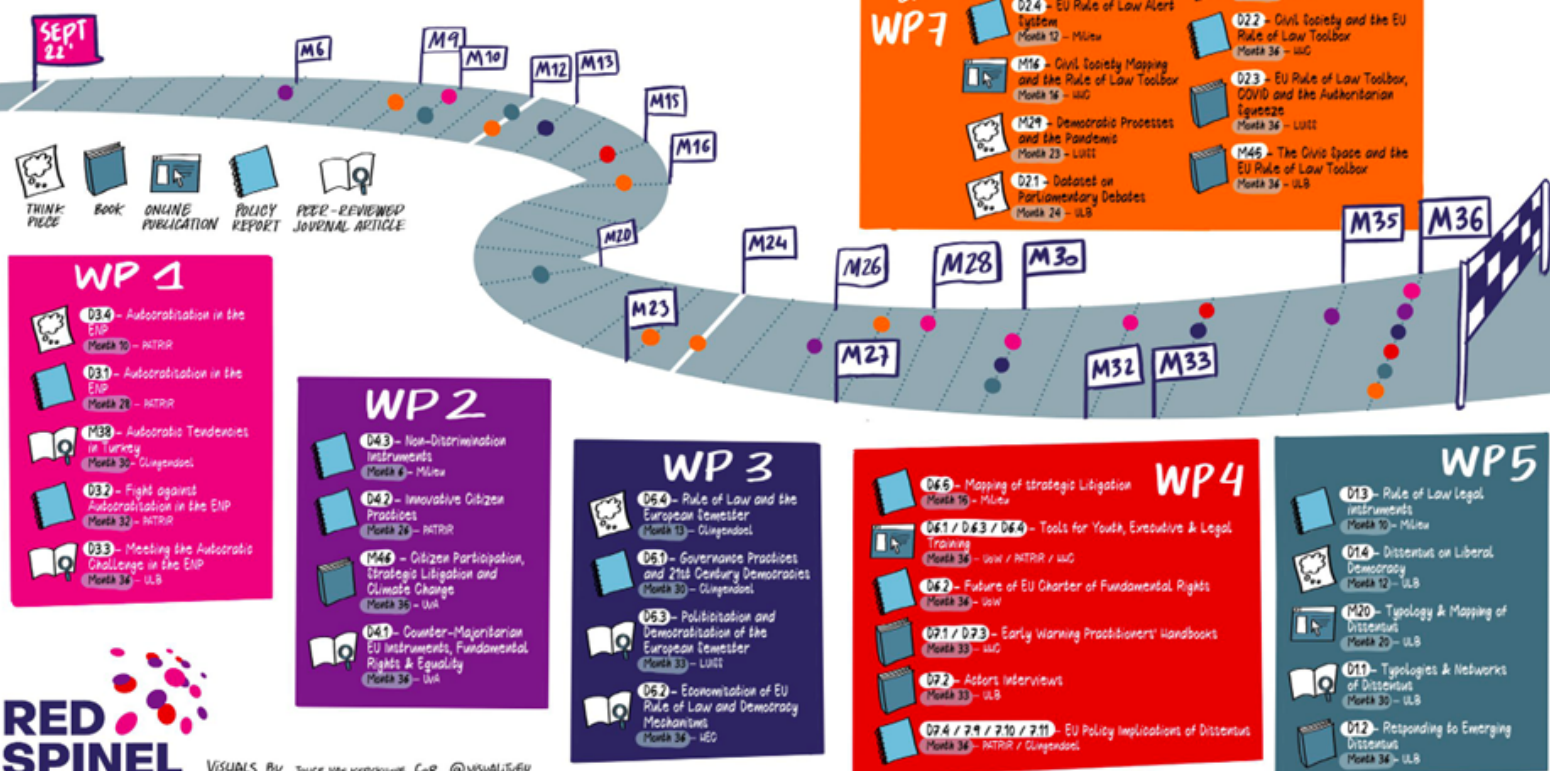
- What is the nature of the current dissensus and how disruptive is it to the EU?
- How have EU institutional actors and instruments contributed and responded to this increased dissensus?
- What are the implications of this dissensus for policy instruments at EU and Member State levels?



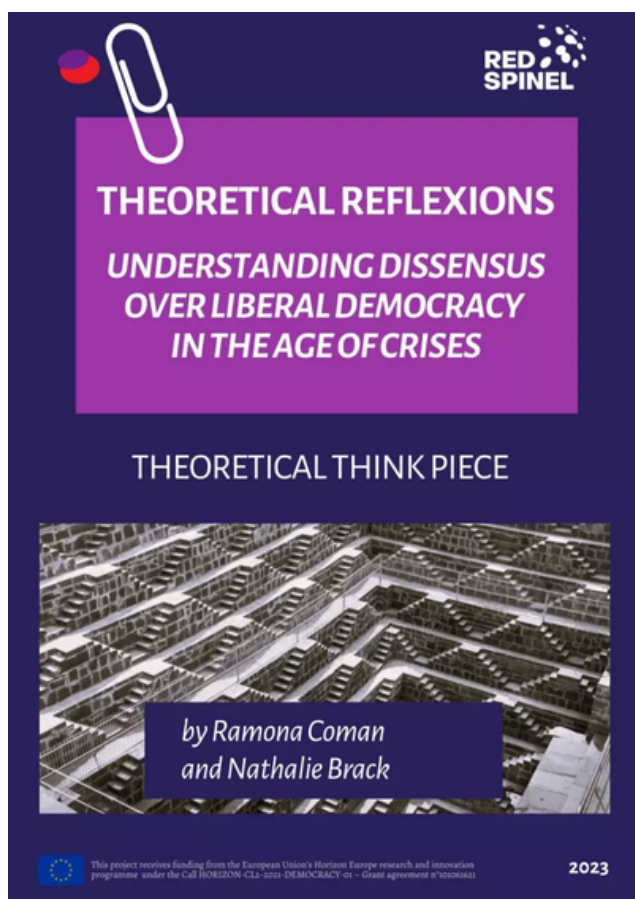
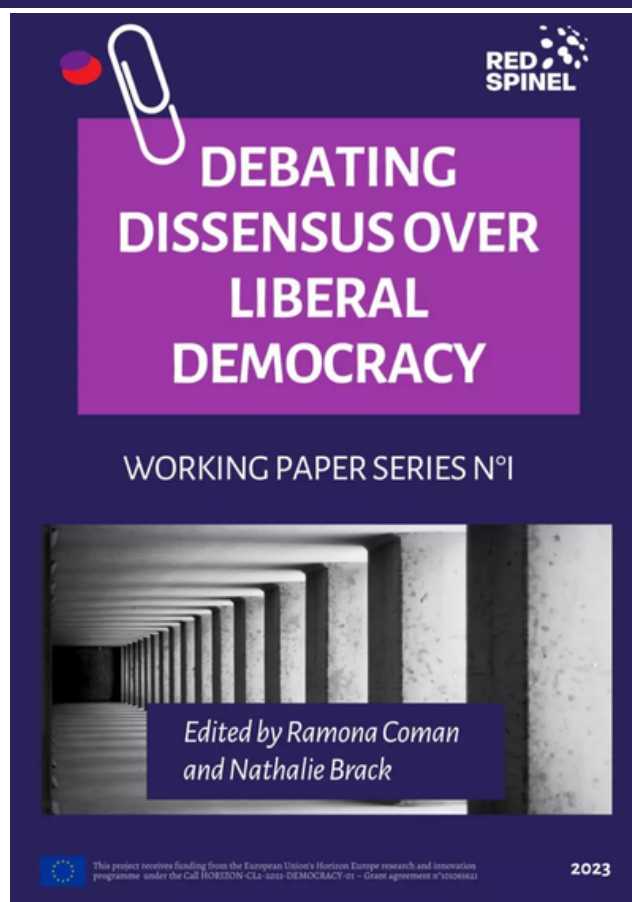
These main questions will also be explored empirically, and the work of the project is organized as follows in corresponding Work Packages:

- Conceptualizing changes to EU policy instruments in the face of mounting dissensus (Work Package 1);
- Instruments relating to the promotion of democracy and the rule of law within the EU (Work Package 2);
- Instruments relating to the promotion of democracy and the rule of law within the EU's Neighbourhood (Work Package 3);
- Legal mechanisms and technocratic instruments fostering citizen participation, defending fundamental rights, and promoting climate justice (Work Package 4);
- Instruments relating to EU economic governance, notably the European Semester (Work Package 5);
- Capacity building for the promotion of democratic deliberation and problem-solving (Work Package 6); and
- Communication and outreach (Work Package 7).

## ROADMAP RED-SPINEL



In a collection of papers captured in the first of RED-SPINEL's Working Paper Series entitled "**Debating Dissensus over Liberal Democracy**", the evolution of dissensus in different fields of research – from political theory to political science and EU studies and law – is traced and it appears that the most advanced reflections have been anchored in political theory, while the empirical dimensions of dissensus have remained fluid. Yet, the question begs whether dissensus is different from other concepts such as contestation, opposition, resistances/Euroscepticism and politicisation?













In this Think Piece entitled "**Understanding Dissensus over Liberal Democracy in the Age of Crises**" co-authors **Ramona Coman** and **Nathalie Brack** argue that dissensus over liberal democracy is no longer restricted to the fringes of society. Liberal democracy has always been contested by anti-system parties. What is distinctive is that the stances and claims against liberal democracy are no longer located at the extremes of the political spectrum but have become mainstream. Not only populist radical right parties in many countries are large enough to play a governing role or to put pressure on governing parties, there are also forms of contestation that have flourished targeting the core principles of the political game, which have long been taken for granted. On the other hand, in addition to the attacks on liberal democracy coming from populists, we are also witnessing a crisis of conviction in the centre, with a wider range of actors which contend that liberal democracy has become an "empty shell" and needs to be reinvented. This paper provides an empirical definition and a typology of dissensus to guide RED-SPINEL empirical research.

RED-SPINEL is coordinated by the Institut d'études européennes of the Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB) in close collaboration with its partners. The governance structure consists of a Supervisory Board, an International Advisory Board, and the IEE-ULB central project management team.

## Partners

The RED-SPINEL consortium consists of 11 partners (7 academic institutions and 4 non-academic organisations) across 8 European countries.

	<p><b><u>Institut d'études européennes - Université libre de Bruxelles</u></b></p>	<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Academic Partners</p>
	<p><b><u>Università Luiss Guido Carli</u></b></p>	
	<p><b><u>Universiteit van Amsterdam</u></b></p>	
	<p><b><u>Universitatea Babeş-Bolyai</u></b></p>	
	<p><b><u>HEC Paris</u></b></p>	
	<p><b><u>University of Warwick</u></b></p>	
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Non-Academic Partners</p>	<p><b><u>MILIEU</u></b> </p> <p><b><u>Clingendael</u></b> </p> <p><b><u>Magyar Helsinki Bizottság</u></b> </p> <p><b><u>PATRIR</u></b> </p>	

## RED-SPINEL Supervisory Board

### Principal Investigator



**Ramona Coman**

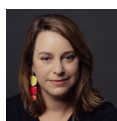
### Institutional representatives



**Sergiu Miscoiu**



**George Christou**



**Marta Pardavi**



**Maciej Serowaniec**



**Cristina Fasone**



**Christina Eckes**



**Arnaud  
Van Waeyenberge**



**Kai Brand  
Jacobsen**



**Marta Ballesteros**



**Nienke van Heukelingen**

## RED-SPINEL International Advisory Board



**Prof. Gabor Halmai**  
(European University Institute)

**Prof. Iulia Motoc**  
(University of Bucharest)



**Dr. Laszlo Andor**  
(Secretary-General – Foundation for European Progressive Studies)

**Prof. Tanja A. Borzel**  
(Freie Universitat Berlin)



**Prof. Vivien A. Schmidt**  
(University of Boston)



Besides the involvement of academics and experts from across RED-SPINEL's partner institutions, the project's work plan also includes the involvement of several early-stage researchers - both Post-Doc and Ph.D. - whose help is invaluable when it comes to the implementation of the scheduled research and training.

RED-SPINEL's early-stage researchers' community already includes 7 full-time colleagues across 4 European countries, with several additional full-time members set to join in 2024.

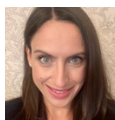
## RED-SPINEL Post-Doctoral Researchers - 2023



**CLAUDIA BADULESCU** (ULB - WP 3)



**LORENZO CECCHETTI** (LUISS - WP 2)



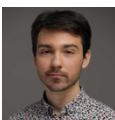
**IOANNA CHRISTODOULAKI** (ULB - WP 1)



**ADRIANO DIRRI** (LUISS - WP 2)



**YLENIA GUERRA** (LUISS - WP 2)

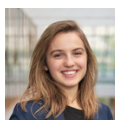


**VIKTOR KAZAI** (ULB - WP 6)



**YLENIA MARIA CITINO** (LUISS - WP 2)

## RED-SPINEL PhD Researcher - 2023



**IRTHE DE JONG** (UVA / ULB - WP 4)

## Some RED-SPINEL Post-Doctoral Researchers scheduled to join in 2024



**LOUISE FROMONT** (HEC - WP 5)



**DIMITRIOS ARGYROULIS** (ULB - WP 5)

## Key achievements for 2022/2023

Since its inception, RED-SPINEL focussed on the following overarching pillars of the work programme during 2022/23:

- **Refining the research agenda:** Refine the collective research agenda of the project and to strengthen the collaboration between academic and non-academic partners of the project.
- **Unpacking “dissensus”:** As theoretical innovation is one of the main aims of the project, the kick-off meeting of the project in October 2022 focussed on unpacking the concept, of “dissensus”, being the conceptual tool for empirical investigation.
- **Defining work areas:** Focusing on the selection of cases, instruments, and policy areas that will be scrutinized in the different project Work Packages to coin the concept of dissensus.
- **Establishing dialogue:** Dialogue with key social, political, and legal actors, as well as academics was equally important for the start of the project. Theoretical and empirical workshops, seminars, and an agora forum have been organized. In addition, contacts and collaboration were established with the sister Horizon Europe projects, “Neo-Authoritarianism in Europe and the Liberal Democratic Response” – [AUTHLIB](#), and “Reclaiming Liberal Democracy in Europe” – [RECLAIM](#)
- **Promoting visibility:** The project has also received visibility in different conferences and on social media to ensure engagement in a broader dialogue with scholars and practitioners.



  
 University - Rome



Respond to Emerging Dissensus:  
SuPranational Instruments and  
Norms of European democracy

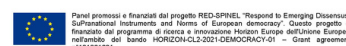
**October 20-21, 2022**

Institut d'études européennes  
 de l'Université libre de Bruxelles  
 39 Avenue Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1050, Brussels



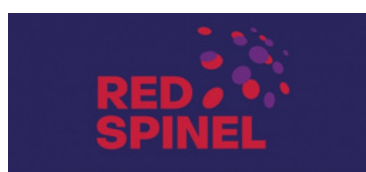
## Specific outputs and deliverables

- Theoretical Think Piece by R. Coman & N. Brack on "Understanding Dissensus over Liberal Democracy in the Age of Crises"
- Working Paper WP1: 'Dissensus on Liberal Democracy' (forthcoming - Jan. '24)
- Working Paper WP2: 'Established EU Rule of Law Instruments'
- Country Report on 'Rule of Law legal instruments existing at the EU and EU MS-levels' (forthcoming - Jan. '24)
- Report on 'Use and potential use of the threat since the launch of the EU-level Rule of Law alert system' ((forthcoming - Jan. '24).
- Working Paper WP3: 'The State of Autocratisation in the ENP & Case-Selection' (forthcoming - Jan. '24)
- Country Report report on 'Non-discrimination instruments' (forthcoming - Jan. '24)
- Working Paper WP5: 'Rule of Law and the European Semester' (forthcoming - March. '24)
- Mapping of strategic litigation based on the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (CFEU) (publication - January 2024).
- RED-SPINEL Mid-term Report (draft submitted to evaluators, and forthcoming - Jan. '24)
- Launch of the RED-SPINEL Website, Twitter, Newsletter & Podcast.
- RED-SPINEL Dissemination & Exploitation Plan.
- RED-SPINEL Communication Plan.
- RED-SPINEL Impact Indicators & Measures Report.
- RED-SPINEL Ethics Guidelines.
- RED-SPINEL Gender Action Plan.
- RED-SPINEL Data Management Plan.



## Some Important Milestones

- The RED-SPINEL project participated and organized various conferences, seminars, workshops agora fora, and meetings over the last 12 months. To note are the following events:
- Participation in the Council for European Studies 2023 Conference on 'Europe's Past, Present and Future: Utopias and Dystopias' in Iceland.
- RED-SPINEL seminar on 'The Compatibility of EU Law with the Rule of Law and Democratic Principles' in Toruń, Poland.
- RED-SPINEL workshop on 'Conceptualising changes to EU policy instruments in the face of mounting dissensus', in Brussels.
- RED-SPINEL Agora Forum on Agora Forum on 'Parliaments coping with dissensus: The challenge of citizens' participation in European Democracy' in Rome, Italy.
- The first lecture of the RED-SPINEL seminar series on 'Counter-majoritarian instruments & liberal democracy in Europe' in Amsterdam, Netherlands.
- RED-SPINEL Mid-Term Review with the participation of a representative of the European Commission, the project's external evaluators, Prof. Laurent Pech (University College Dublin) and Prof. John Loughlin (University of Oxford), and representatives of all partners in Brussels on 29 November 2023.



Seminar  
The Compatibility of EU Law with  
the Rule of Law and Democratic  
Principles

March 30th-31st, 2023  
Faculty of Law and Administration  
Nicolaus Copernicus University  
Toruń, Poland



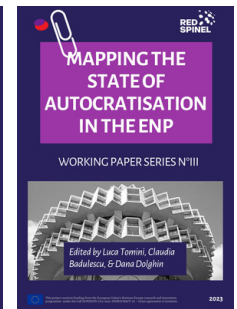
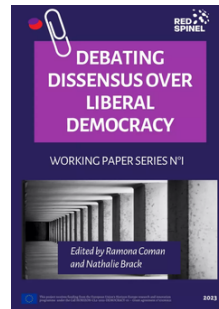
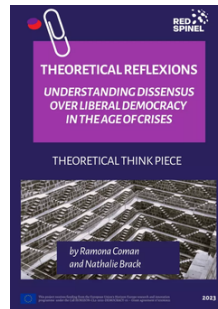
Debating dissensus: some theoretical reflections



## RED-SPINEL Working Papers Series

Ongoing series of **Open Access publications** covering initial findings of research accessible via the project's website.

Three papers were published in 2023, and two are scheduled for 2024



Forthcoming

## RED-SPINEL Podcast



As part of RED-SPINEL's communication efforts, a **podcast series** was launched on the challenges liberal democracy is facing in the European Union. So far 4 episodes were published with more scheduled in the first half of 2024.

- [Is liberal democracy in danger? A new EU research project looks for answers!](#)
- [Making sense of EU economic governance in a context of dissensus](#)
- [Making Sense of Dissensus Over Liberal Democracy: Conceptualization in Research](#)
- [Making sense of conditionality and its use in EU governance](#)

Although only in its' infancy, the Podcast series was already recognized as it was awarded the [2023 ULB Scientific Dissemination Prize](#)

## RED-SPINEL Blog

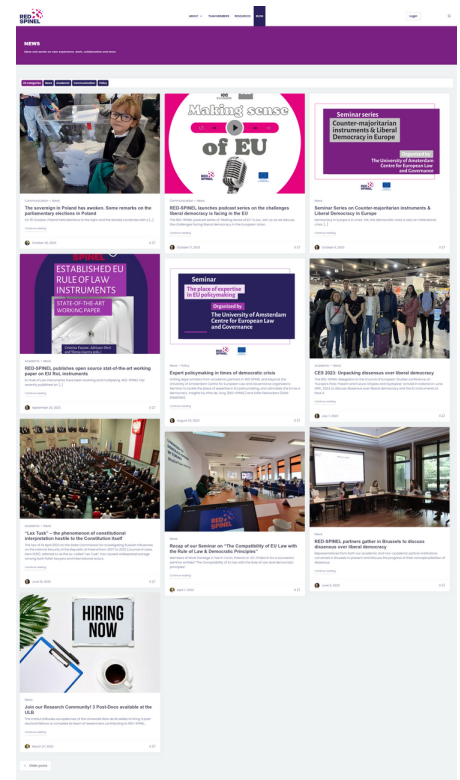
The Blog provides updates on the implementation of the project, activities of the partners, and any relevant news related to RED-SPINEL.

## RED-SPINEL on Social Media

RED-SPINEL is active on social media via its' own X (Twitter) account. The project's handle is [@redspinel\\_EU](#)



The project also disseminates via the IEE-ULB webpage, Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn accounts.



All Resources can be readily found on the RED-SPINEL website

<https://redspinel.iee-ulb.eu/>

## Some Important Upcoming Milestones

In 2024, the RED-SPINEL project will focus on the continuation of data collection, consolidating theory, publishing, defining strategies for dissemination, commencing with the training agenda, and engaging with policymakers. Some key events, activities, and deliverables are the following:

- **RED-SPINEL Annual Conference:** The RED-SPINEL Annual Conference with the central theme of, 'Facing Dissensus: From Initial Research Findings to Ongoing Policy Discussions', is scheduled to take place at the IEE-ULB in Brussels during the period 19-20 February 2024. During the Conference, Prof. Daniel Kelemen of the McCourt School of Public Policy at Georgetown University (USA) will deliver the keynote address, and a Roundtable with policymakers on 'The end of the permissive consensus and the EU's response to dissensus over liberal democracy' is programmed for the 19th of February 2024.
- **International Advisory Board:** Within the margins of the RED-SPINEL Annual Conference, a meeting of the International Advisory Board will take place on 19 February 2024.
- **Publications:** Online visualizations of the typology of dissensus and mapping of networks of actors of dissensus; edited volume manuscript on 'Mounting Dissensus and the Prospects of Liberal Democracy in the 21st Century' (publication 2025); country-level narrative reports on 'Autocratisation in the European Neighbourhood'; and a report on 'Innovative Citizen Participation Practices in 21st Century Liberal Democracies'.
- **Conferences, seminars & fora:** Citizen Forum on 'Innovative Practices & the Fight against Autocratisation in the ENP'; consolidation Citizen Forum on 'Citizen Participation Practices in 21st Century'; Seminar on 'Economisation of EU Rule of Law and Democracy Mechanisms'; Seminar on 'Politicisation and Democratisation'; and Consolidation Citizen Forum on 'Innovative Economic Governance Practices and 21st Century Liberal Democracies'.
- **Tools:** Mapping of civil society actors involved in the EU Rule of Law Toolbox; and database on European and national parliamentary debates surrounding the EU Rule of Law Toolbox.
- **Capacity building and policy innovation labs:** Various subjects - equality litigation, values in the EU Liberal Democracy, and rule of law litigation - will be covered.



## Internal Call for Interest in Coordinated Applications for Ongoing Calls

The 2024 ICON-S conference organized by the International Society of Public Law will take place in Madrid on July 8-10, and the call for papers is already out. We believe that this prestigious event would serve as an excellent forum for members of RED-SPINEL to present their research in front of a large and diverse academic audience.

### Types of submission

Four types of submission are possible: individual, fully formed panels, book roundtables, and interest groups.

We particularly encourage you to propose fully formed panels or book roundtables. Proposals should include three to five participants and a chair. Panels not formed by the Society's commitment to gender balance will be rejected. Proposals should include the (i) title and a 250-word description of the panel, (ii) the title of each presenter's contribution, and (iii) the name and email address of all panel participants

### Applicants

The organizers welcome proposals not only from public lawyers but also from scholars in the humanities and the social sciences. In addition, ICON-S is open to both established and junior scholars (including doctoral students), and to practitioners as well.

Those who submit a proposal (either individually or on behalf of the panel members) must have an active ICON-S membership. Other individuals involved in the panel need not be members at the submission stage but are required to become members to attend and speak at the Conference.

### Topic

Please note that the organizers accept submissions in all areas of public law, even if they are not (directly) related to the main topic of the conference. This creates a space for possible RED-SPINEL-themed and -backed applications.

### Submission

If you are interested in presenting your research directly related to RED-SPINEL, **please send either a proposal for a fully formed panel or (if you have not found a sufficient number of people people to form a panel) an individual submission by 10 January 2024 to Viktor Kazai**

([viktor.zoltan.kazai@ulb.be](mailto:viktor.zoltan.kazai@ulb.be)).

Upon receipt, we will revise the initial proposals, organize panels (if necessary), and coordinate the submission process that will close on 11 February.



**RED  
SPINEL**



Co-funded by  
the European Union

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