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**The European Union:
Institutional Design, Democratic Deficit and Options of Reform**

The European Union (EU)'s political decisions affect the life of citizens in its 28 member states more than ever. Not only the number of its members, but also the Union's competencies have been growing steadily since its original foundation more than sixty years ago. Furthermore, the EU has been "deepened" by introducing the majority vote to decisions in a growing number of policy areas leading to a loss of national sovereignty, a development which – some argue – the democratization of the Union has not kept pace with. The Treaty of Lisbon, ratified in 2009 as an alternative to the failed Constitution, promised to bring both more efficiency and more democracy to the EU-27+, however, it still needs to prove its problem solving capacities.

The seminar will give an introduction to the main institutions (esp. European Parliament, European Commission, European Council and Council of Ministers), competencies and legislative procedures of the European Union, provide an understanding of the much-discussed problem of the EU's so-called "democratic deficit" and discuss options of institutional reform, taking a critical look at those brought about by the Treaty of Lisbon.

Literature:

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- <http://europa.eu> (official site of the European Union)

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