



## Editorial

Coinciding with the release of this issue, the European Union has launched, in Portugal, the Conference on the Future of Europe, with a different configuration, so civil society participation could be further assured and to collect its inputs in the final political referrals for the future of the European Union. In this sense, there was a clear calling to the mobilization of all in this context, so European Union fundamental values and objectives can be once more underlined and revisited. The well-known *acquis communautaire* must be revived, not only as a requirement to the Union's accession but, and most of all, a common ground for those that will continue to be a part of the integration process. In this sense, this Conference bet on fostering citizens' participation through a digital platform, delivering into practice the digital transition the Union is aiming to accomplish. But it also minds the present and the recent past, with eyes set on collective future: by understanding how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted on the way we see ourselves and how it delivered, to the European Institutions, an historic opportunity to *sail new seas* on European integration, which can only be possible if the environment were all we inhabit is sufficiently protected and climate changes' effects are diminished in the future.

In this sense, the first contribution of this issue, by Rui Vieira, entitled "The European response to the COVID-19 crisis at the regional level and its effects on the shaping of the new European Cohesion Policy", tackles the effects the pandemic had on the EU's Cohesion Policy, departing from an historic standpoint until the author is able to reflect new approaches on conditionality and how the current pandemic scenario can impact on the Cohesion Policy governance model.

The following work, authored by Felipe Debasa and entitled "Digitalisation, pandemics and current world 2019-2021", focuses on how a sequence of different crisis and the confluence of new technologies (which determined the emergence of the Forth Industrial Revolution) drove the world to the way it is today, being particularly attentive on how the COVID-19 pandemic was a "driver of great digital transformation".

Susana Navas Navarro, with the text "Health and Artificial Intelligence in the context of COVID-19 and beyond", addresses the topic of eHealth (or digital health), departing from the need to conceptualize health on a legal domain, focusing the importance of technology as a mean to provide preventive and personalized medicine and how technological lack of access can determine discriminatory situations. The

contribution ends with some conclusive remarks on the new expression “Internet of Bodies” and how personal data protection can play an important role on regulating the phenomenon.

“Personal data protection and access to information: interfaces of civil society role in Brazilian legislative process” is a text co-authored by Ana Claudia Farranha Santana, Murilo Borsio Bataglia and Amanda Espiñeira Lemos. In this contribution, the authors, focusing on transparency demands under Brazilian personal data protection legislation (inspired by the European Union’s GDPR), understand the dynamic tension between access to information and personal data protection and aim at understanding the role of civil society to reassure both these principles, particularly focusing on its intervention in the legislative procedure.

This issue continues its discursive alignment with two contributions authored by students of the Master in European Union Law of the University of Minho, in order to foster young researchers’ engagement in academic discourse. Miguel Pereira is the author of the following contribution, under the theme “Instant democracy: a look forward to the EU’s digital future”, which tries to understand how and why democracy is being tested by the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with globalisation and digitalisation playing an important role. In fact, departing from three participative democracy instruments, the author underlines their potential and fragilities, making incursions on the threats resulting from information security issues and social media reconfiguration.

In the following contribution, Bruno Miguel de Lima Saraiva addresses the theme “Local and regional power: its role in European integration and the protection of the rule of law”. Departing from the ideal that administrative approximation – as it is perceived by the Treaties – has been failing, the author understands its impact on the maintenance of the organizational scheme that delays European integration, by making it harder to be fully perceptible on rural areas. On the other hand, it also impacts on the perception that there are more centralised Member States, creating an asymmetric economic development, which leads to anti-EU arises with direct reflection on the vote. The author advances the possibility of expanding principles ruling Member States’ interactions to a subnational level, so European integration and democracy as a fundamental value can assume a pivotal part.

Next, Flávia Piovesan and Melina Girardi Fachin present the following reflection: “Implementation of the recommendations of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in the Brazilian constitutionalism: proposals and perspectives”. From a multilevel constitutionalism perspective, the authors present some “proposals to overcome common Latin-American challenges in the implementation of international recommendations”, as they understand the need to redesign the role of the Inter-American Commission under a dialogical triad (International system, the States constitutionalism and organized public society).

Our eight contribution is from Marina Barata, under the subject “A consensus solution for the taxation of the digital economy”, where the author addresses the challenges of fairly taxing companies in a digital environment in the EU’s role in this effort.

This issue ends with the contribution of Carlos Abreu Amorim and Ana Cardoso, under the theme “European Climate Law – real changes or postponed future?”. This co-authorship also underlines the engagement of senior scholars and junior researchers within the scope of this publication. From the indispensable premise that the “deterioration of the planet’s environmental quality and the global

climate emergency” are undeniably scientific evidence, the authors explore the strategy behind the European Green Deal and stress some concerns relating to the misuse of its financial structure to overcome the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, in an analytic approach, they underline how the Recovery Plan also takes Green Deal steps and objectives into account, understanding the path must be by strengthening the European Climate Law as “a key tool in the implementation of the European Union’s environmental and policy strategy”.

**The editorial team**