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POLICY CRISIS AND CRISIS POLITICS
Sovereignty, Solidarity and identity
in the EU post 2008



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A ROAD TO EUROPE

How crises have reshaped the politics of the Union



UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI
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POLITICAL SCIENCE



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A ROAD TO EUROPE

How crises have reshaped the politics of the Union

2-3 December 2025

**Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli
Milan, Viale Pasubio 5**

Over the past fifteen years, the European Union has experienced an **unprecedented series of crises**: from the debt crisis to the migration crisis, from Brexit to the pandemic, to war, energy challenges, and climate change. Each of these trials has called into question not only Europe's ability to act collectively, but its very existence as a shared political project, threatened by the rise of populism and growing mistrust among citizens. At the same time, however, it has opened up spaces for **new forms of cooperation, leadership, and political legitimacy**.

The **final conference of the SOLID project - *Policy Crisis and Crisis Politics, Sovereignty, Solidarity and Identity in the Eu post 2008*** proposes a collective reflection on how Europe, in living with uncertainty, has redefined its way of governing, building consensus, and doing politics. It is an opportunity to look back at the transformations that the crises have wrought on the European project - and to ask ourselves what their legacy will be for the future of the Union.

After **six years of research**, on December 2nd and 3rd at the Giangiacomo Feltrinelli Foundation, the project will conclude with a series of closed-door working groups over the two days and an event open to the public.

During its development, SOLID - whose partners include the **European University Institute**, the **London School of Economics**, the **University of Milan** and the **Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli** - has produced a vast body of scientific contributions, including monographs, peer-reviewed papers, comparative analyses, and original surveys at the European level. Together, these outputs provide a detailed mapping of public expectations and the institutional and political dynamics that have shaped the EU's ability to respond to the various crises currently underway.

Coordinated by Principal Investigators Maurizio Ferrera, Waltraud Schelkle, and Hanspeter Kriesi, SOLID has analyzed the political and institutional mechanisms that have enabled the European Union not only to navigate the era of polycrisis, but in some cases, to strengthen its capacity to intervene, consolidating innovative tools and new forms of democratic legitimacy.

Agenda

DAY 1 | 2nd of December

12:30 – 14:00

Lunch

14:00 – 15:30 **SESSION 1**

From European integration to EU polity formation

The first session explores how the European Union has evolved from a project of economic integration into a political system – a *polity* – with its own forms of authority, boundaries, and shared bonds. Building on state-building and political sociology approaches, it highlights how the EU has navigated successive crises, balancing national structures with common rules, and gradually consolidating a multi-level political order that remains fragile yet increasingly coherent

SOLID discussants

Kate Alexander-Shaw London School of Economics

Maurizio Ferrera University of Milan

Hanspeter Kriesi European University Institute

Waltraud Schelkle European University Institute

External discussants

Stefano Bartolini European University Institute

Adrienne Héritier European University Institute

15:30 – 16:00

Coffee break



Agenda

DAY 1 | 2nd of December

16:00 – 17:30 SESSION 2

Governing with a weak centre in a crisis-prone Union

This session examines how the EU's unusual and dispersed authority structure has operated under the pressure of major crises. Despite lacking a strong central executive, the EU often proved more effective and cohesive than expected, sometimes even turning its institutional weaknesses into sources of flexibility and coordination. By comparing crisis responses across domains - from the Euro Area crisis to Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic - the session shows how governing with a “weak centre” can both expose vulnerabilities and enable the Union to maintain cooperation, adapt its rules, and preserve the balance of a multi-level polity.

SOLID discussants

Beatrice Carella University of Vienna

Niccolò Donati University of Milan

Joe Ganderson Cambridge University Press

Zbigniew Truchlewski Université de Genève

Convening Principal Investigator

Waltraud Schelkle European University Institute

External discussants

Markus Jachtenfuchs Hertie School

Stella Ladi Queen Mary University of London



Agenda

DAY 1 | 2nd of December

18:30 – 20:00 | PUBLIC EVENT



Global (dis)order: can Europe resist itself?

Over the past fifteen years, the EU has gone through a turbulent phase marked by multiple, overlapping crises: from the euro crisis to migration, from COVID-19 to the war in Ukraine, as well as latent crises that have just as profoundly shaped the relationship between European institutions and citizens.

It is within this context that *SOLID - Policy Crisis and Crisis Politics. Sovereignty, Solidarity and Identity in the EU post-2008* took shape.

Today, after six years of research and an extensive body of analyses and surveys, the project presents its main findings at the final conference on 2–3 December, combining closed-door sessions with a public event.

The meeting offers an opportunity to reflect on the future trajectories of the European project together with some of the most authoritative voices in the international debate.

Opening remarks

Maurizio Ferrera University of Milan, Solid Principal Investigator

Keynote speakers

Sylvie Goulard Economist, former Member of the European Parliament from 2009 to 2017 and Deputy Governor of the Banque de France from 2018 to 2022

Erik Jones Director of the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies at the European University Institute

Giovanni Capoccia Professor of Comparative Politics and Fellow, Corpus Christi College, Oxford University

Chair

Angela Mauro HuffPost correspondent in Brussels

The conference is also [streamed in English on the website](#) and on the [Facebook page](#) of Fondazione Feltrinelli.

20:30

Dinner



Agenda

DAY 2 | 3rd of December

09:00 – 10:30 – SESSION 3

Solidarity against the odds of identity politics and EU politicization

This session examines how crises reshaped the EU's "bonding" dimension - the patterns of solidarity, identity, and loyalty that hold together a compound polity made of national welfare democracies. It explores how crises intensified social needs and politicised questions of social sharing, fuelling both class and identity conflicts across Europe. Yet the discussion also shows how, after the euro crisis, the EU developed new instruments and incentives to strengthen solidarity - from the Social Pillar to SURE and the Recovery and Resilience Facility - giving rise to a significant "social turn." Drawing on survey evidence, the session highlights the emergence of "bounded solidarity": a circumscribed but meaningful sense of cross-national solidarity among EU citizens, which can act as a buffer for national welfare states even amid politicisation and identity-based contestation.

SOLID discussants

Ioana Elena Oana European University Institute

Daniel Kovarek European University Institute

Mathilde van Ditmars University of Milan

Marcello Natili University of Milan

Robin Huguenot-Noël Freie Universität Berlin

Convening Principal Investigator

Maurizio Ferrera University of Milan

External discussants

Martin Rhodes University of Denver

Paul Copeland Queen Mary University of London

10:30 – 11:00

Coffee break



Agenda

DAY 2 | 3rd of December

11:00 – 12:30 – SESSION 4

Sources of vulnerability and resilience in a hostile future

The fourth session explores why the EU is simultaneously innovative and crisis-prone. Its core features - dispersed authority, porous boundaries, and thin political loyalty - make it vulnerable to conflicts among member states, challenger-party mobilization, and the risk that policy disputes escalate into deeper polity crises. Crises that are asymmetric or fall in areas of limited EU competence, such as migration or energy dependence, heighten these vulnerabilities even further. Yet the same institutional configuration also generates strong incentives for “polity maintenance”: deliberate efforts by EU and national leaders to prevent crises from tearing the Union apart. Through political accommodation, symbolic leadership, cross-level coordination, and temporary capacity-building measures such as SURE or the Recovery and Resilience Facility, the EU has repeatedly managed to de-escalate conflicts and turn fragility into resilience. The session discusses how elite strategies, public attitudes, and the sequencing of crises shape this balance between vulnerability and resilience - and asks how the EU can adapt as geopolitical pressures grow and the integration–demarcation divide continues to structure European politics.

SOLID discussants

Argyrios Altiparmakis Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences

Alexandru Moise European University Institute

Alessandro Pellegata University of Milan

Anna Kyriazi University of Milan

Convening Principal Investigator

Hanspeter Kriesi European University Institute

External discussants

Philipp Genschel European University Institute

Edoardo Bressanelli Scuola Superiore Sant’Anna

12:30 – 14:00

Lunch

14:00 – 16:00

Internal session

16:00

End of conference



This final conference was organised in the framework of Project **SOLID, Policy Crisis and Crisis Politics. Sovereignty, Solidarity and Identity in the Eu post 2008**, financed with a Synergy Grant by the European Research Council under Grant Agreement n. 810356.



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