
Note by the editors

It is exactly 20 years since Beniamino Caravita and his closest collaborators decided to focus on the European Parliament elections, dedicating a specific volume to this subject and bringing forward the contributions in the journal *federalismi.it*.

On the occasion of the 2004 European elections, the journal devoted an entire issue (no. 13 of 18 June 2004) to an unprecedented celebration of democracy in Europe, which brought together the continent «from the Atlantic to the Baltic»¹, in the first electoral round following the great enlargement to the east.

What Caravita had in mind was an in-depth scientific study in which constitutional, comparative and European law profiles were intertwined with the political-institutional dynamics of the internal and EU order.

The aim, however, was not only scientific: the operation had a broader cultural significance and, in some respects, a real political intent, in the highest and broadest sense of the term. In fact, it started from the assumption that the European Parliament should assume a central role in the construction of the enlarged Europe. Firstly, as a nerve centre of institutional activity and as a possible hub of a renewed form of government; secondly, as a guarantor of the rights of European citizens and as – as we read in the 2004 editorial presentation – «an agora where we can discuss how to build the new European identity»².

¹B. CARAVITA, *Il ruolo del Parlamento europeo nella costruzione della nuova Europa*, in *federalismi.it*, no. 13, 2004, p. 1.

²Ibid., p. 4.

The European Parliament, therefore, as a true common house of the citizens of the Member States, who expected to find in it forms of representation that were increasingly effective and increasingly capable of providing joint answers to common problems.

The structure chosen for the scientific study is itself indicative of the cultural and political aims of the original idea. On the one hand, distinguished commentators were asked to make an overall assessment of the elections on a macro level: general political impact, developments in terms of institutional dynamics, consequences for the functioning of the Union's form of government, common perspectives. On the other hand, younger researchers were given the opportunity to go into the details of what was happening within each Member State, in order to concretely measure that level of interdependence and dialectic between States and the Union, which is the real driving force of the integration process.

This pattern was repeated in the 2009 and 2014 elections, and most recently in the one of 2019. In this regard, the titles of the opening contributions to the first and last editions of these studies – both signed by Caravita – bear witness to the approach from which they started: in 2004, the work began with «The role of the European Parliament in the construction of the new Europe», while the last edition presented an even more explicit «Putting the new European Parliament at the centre of political choices».

After all, as Nicola Lupo and Andrea Manzella - authors who have also participated in the various editions of this work - have effectively argued, the European Parliament is the true distinguishing element that transforms the Union from a mere international organisation into a supranational order³, and the valorisation of this peculiarity remains decisive for real integration and for a concrete advancement of the federalising process.

For these reasons, the group of researchers that has grown up around the journal *federalismi.it* decided to give continuity to the project begun by its founder, organising a work that would be in the wake of tradition albeit with some elements of innovation, as was typical of Caravita's spirit.

³ N. LUPO-A. MANZELLA, *Il Parlamento europeo*, Rome, 2024, referred to in this volume in the contribution of F. FABRIZZI, *Abstentionism and absence of a European political offer. About the "democratic deficit" of the European Union*, p. 58.

This publication therefore presents a general section, opening with an introduction by Annamaria Poggi, director of the journal, which includes wide-ranging contributions by Adriana Ciancio and Nicola Lupo, as well as some analyses of specific aspects conducted by Massimo Rubechi, on the electoral system, Federica Fabrizzi, on the meaning and dynamics of electoral abstentionism, Alessandro Sterpa and Claudia Capasso, on the role of the media and electoral campaigns; the section closes with a contribution by Tanja Cerruti who reads the electoral event in the light of the European Union's external relations.

The second part has been conducted by younger scholars who have analysed the European elections in each Member State, following the same pattern: description of the political-institutional framework; analysis of the functioning of the form of government and the local electoral system in detail; report on the previous European elections; presentation of the 2024 results and an early commentary on these results.

It is important to underline that all contributions are updated to July 2024 and, therefore, cannot take into account any subsequent development.

This traditional scheme, however, has been accompanied by some new features: firstly, the group of participants has been further rejuvenated, giving space to doctoral and post-doctoral students from both the Department of Political Science of the Sapienza University of Rome, which constitutes the hard core, and from various schools throughout Italy, testifying to the scientific pluralism that has always been the guide for our activities. Secondly, we decided to use the English language, in an attempt to broaden the informed audience that can be reached and, above all, to make these reflections available to the entire scientific community of the Union.

A work of authentic European constitutional law, designed for a European audience and written by aspiring European scholars, as the person who launched this work twenty years ago liked to think himself.

Dutifully but with conviction, this book is dedicated to him.

Tanja Cerruti and Federico Savastano

