

Executive Summary

RECON is an Integrated Project supported by the European Commission's Sixth Framework Programme for Research. The project started on 1 January 2007 and will last for five years.

Key objectives of the project

RECON seeks to clarify whether democracy is possible under conditions of pluralism, diversity and complex multilevel governance. This includes taking proper heed of the challenges to democracy at EU and national levels. RECON spells out three different models for democratic reconstitution: (a) democracy can be reconstituted at the *national level* with a concomitant reframing of the EU as a functional regulatory regime; (b) democracy can be reconstituted through establishing the EU as a *federal state* based on a collective identity; and (c) democracy can be reconstituted through developing a *post-national Union* with an explicit cosmopolitan imprint. RECON assesses which approach to democratic reconstitution is most viable, in empirical and normative terms, through analyzing the EU's constitutionalisation process; the institutional complex at the EU and member state levels; the role and status of gender within the enlarged Europe; the democratic quality and governing capacity of the Union within tax/fiscal and foreign/security policy; and the multilevel configuration of civil society/public sphere. It examines the effects of external transnationalisation on the EU and discerns democratic lessons from comparison with non-European complex multilevel entities. RECON enhances knowledge of the enlargement process – the transition and consolidation of democracy in the new member states; and of the overall challenges posed by globalization to established democracies. It identifies strategies through which democracy can be strengthened and participation of citizens increased, and provides a set of policy recommendations in line with these. It analyses measures to rectify institutional and constitutional defects, gendered and social inequality, and measures to rectify democratic deficits in different policy areas.

Major scientific achievements in the first year

The substantive focus of RECON is to study the processes of reconstituting democracy in a multi-levelled Europe. This research requires theoretical knowledge of democracy combined with detailed empirical research in a range of critical policy fields and issue areas. RECON integrates institutional and constitutional research with civil-society and opinion-formation research on the one hand and policy-area studies on gender, tax, social and foreign and security policy on the other as important ingredients in the overall assessment of the quality of democracy in Europe.

In the first project year, RECON has elaborated and further developed the theoretical perspective of the project. Special focus has been on the delineation of the three models, their underpinnings and ramifications as well as on their applications to the different research fields of the project. Common indicators and criteria of the models have been developed in cooperative settings as well as indicators of democratic performance. Work has been undertaken to clarify the notion of legitimacy in transnational contexts and in a post-nation-state configuration. The relationship between statehood and democracy, between rights and popular sovereignty, between deliberation and democratic legitimacy have been addressed in several publications

and will continue to be on the agenda as they constitute vital parts of an assessment of the putative democratic legitimacy of the European multi-level constellation.

Research within the *constitutional realm* has focused on the assessment of the democratic quality of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, the development of the relevant key indicators for the EU's nature and legitimacy basis for that purpose, and the collection and organization of empirical material. A preliminary analysis of the democratic quality of the emerging EU constitutional framework has been made, and a web page on the Europeanisation of national constitutions was successfully launched in the autumn of 2007.

The research on *representation and institutional make-up* has completed the design of the conceptual framework of two subprojects: the democratic audit and the parliamentary field. The audit has used the RECON models to adapt indicators of democratic performance to the case of the EU, and to develop a detailed empirical research design which will add a new data set and allow existing data sets to be interrogated using the indicators. The second subproject has operationalised the RECON models as an inventory of 3 modes of interparliamentary co-operation available to the Union. Both projects have been helpfully complemented by work on the comparability of indicators of democratic and parliamentary performance when applied to new member states on the one hand and established member states on the other.

The main objective of the study on *gender justice and democracy* is to explore the status of gender equality within the enlarged EU. Work in the first year has consisted in contributing and responding to the development of the models of democracy from a gender justice perspective, with a parallel consideration and elaboration of the gender justice models in normative terms. Moreover, it consisted in work towards providing an analytical framework to empirically assess the quality of gender democracy in the European Union.

The research on *civil society and the public sphere* explores the dynamics of democratisation from below by studying the scope of media communication and debates and the mobilisation of citizens' support and resistance to evolving forms of European governance, in particular the EU's constitutionalisation process. In the first year, research training and activities were successful in constructing, analysing and evaluating a comparative data set on public debates about EU constitution making in major print media of fourteen EU member and candidate states. The activities include the development of a software-based methodology and the operationalisation of the RECON models for comparative media discourse analysis. Comparative research aims at mapping the conditions and constraints for civil society mobilisation in the member states.

With regard to the analyses of specific policy areas, the group studying the *foreign and security dimension* clarified core concepts and translated the three RECON models to the field of foreign and security policy. First steps were under-taken to assess the empirical salience of the three ideal-typical models of RECON in European foreign and security policy, including the examination of the role of parliaments in security policy. Furthermore, preparatory work for analyzing media debates was carried out to investigate the degree to which a European public sphere exists in the field of foreign and security policy. The group studying the *political economy of the EU* investigated the relationship between solidarity, justice and democracy. Institutional designs and policy options with regard to the system of funding European public goods, the allocation of tax powers to the EU and the governance of budgetary policy for each of the three democratising strategies were spelled out.

Within the study of *identity formation and enlargement* the formation of collective identities with regard to past, present and future enlargement processes were analysed. The specific aim was to assess the impact of the EU enlargement on the dynamics of two interconnected processes: political representation (parliaments, civil society) and symbolic representation (construction of collective identity). Trust in democratic institutions as well as opinions on the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe in Poland has been studied. Furthermore, an empirical study on European identity in three groups in Polish society has been carried out.

Finally, research on *global transnationalisation and democratisation* examines how globalization and transnationalisation processes shape the conditions for democracy within and beyond Europe, and compares the European case with certain particularly relevant non-European instances of democracy and democratization. In the first year, one subproject has investigated how democratic structures in the EU interact with international market-driven structures in the WTO, and the role that constitutional processes and principles play in that interaction. Three workshops have dealt with these issues. A second subproject has worked on spelling out the indicators for cosmopolitanisation of a state.

Dissemination and expected results

RECON's research brings forth knowledge of great relevance for the ongoing process of reforming European and national institutions. RECON propounds its research-based knowledge through a wide range of means, some of which will have direct impact on policy development and much of which will have a more indirect but nevertheless potentially important effect through the way in which it helps frame the public debate and the very manner in which problems and solutions are understood, publicly talked about, and eventually handled in policy making and implementing agencies. RECON's combined theoretical and empirical analysis will be useful to citizens as well as to policy makers and analysts. It allows spelling out the alternatives; systematize the options available; aid in the prioritization of choice opportunities; and helps to clarify the normative quality of policy choices. RECON provides such knowledge to policy makers by systematically exploring the different strategies for the democratic reconstitution of Europe: analysing their empirical viability, their legitimacy implications, and the possible costs and benefits associated with each option.

RECON aims to contribute to enhancing the state-of-the-art of research within fields of great importance to the European Community, and the project is dedicated to the idea of transforming the research findings and scientific knowledge into policy advice. RECON's dissemination strategy recognizes that dissemination must extend well beyond the academic community and must be based on more than scientific publications. Studying the EU's democratic challenges attracts interest from informed citizens, interest groups and policy makers throughout Europe. RECON aims to disseminate project-generated knowledge and research findings to the community of users and stakeholders, such as policy makers at national and European levels, civil society actors, non-RECON academics, as well as the wider public.

In the first year, RECON's preliminary research findings and scientific knowledge have been spread through a wide range of dissemination strategies. First and foremost, the research has resulted in numerous scientific publications in the form of articles in peer-reviewed journals, book chapters, working papers and reports. RECON has established an online working paper series for the publication of pre-print manuscripts on democracy and the democratisation of the political order in Europe. A total of 19 papers were published in the series in 2007, and

with numerous papers in the pipeline there will be considerable publication also in the coming years. The papers are widely circulated to a project mailing list with approx. 1,600 recipients, and are also part of the European Research Papers Archive (ERPA), a database for online working papers in the field of European integration research. RECON working papers are available at: <http://www.reconproject.eu/projectweb/portalproject/RECONWorkingPapers.html>.

A total of nine consortium workshops and one summer school were organised in the first year, in addition to several smaller seminars and the kick-off conference. The latter was held in Oslo in January, and aimed to integrate the consortium and attract general attention to the project. Some 160 researchers and practitioners, representing research institutions, other FP6 projects, political institutions, NGOs and journalists attended the conference. Among the other events that attracted external participants were a workshop on gender justice and democracy in Europe organised in September, which promoted a fruitful dialogue and exchange with representatives of women's civil society organisations, European Commission officials and Members of the European Parliament, while a workshop on parliamentary control in European foreign and security policy in December linked RECON scholars to external experts and practitioners in the field. In addition to attracting attention to the project's research and promoting dialogue with policy makers and civil society, RECON's workshops also served to strengthen integration of the research across work packages and research teams.

Moreover, research findings and project-generated knowledge were presented at close to 80 conferences, workshops, seminars and lectures in 2007, including important international academic conferences such as those organised by the European Union Studies Association (EUSA), the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR), the International Studies Association (ISA), the Northeast Political Science Association (NPSA) and the Advanced Thematic Network in European Women's Studies (ATHENA). Policy makers and the wider community were addressed at a number of other events, a small sample of which were conferences organised by the Parliamentary Assembly of the WEU, the World Trade Institute and the Norwegian Foreign Ministry. Finally, teaching and training activities at partner institutions and beyond have ensured dissemination of RECON's research to students and academics across Europe.

The primary tool for information on the research conducted in the project is the RECON website: www.reconproject.eu. With its successful launch on day five of the project, high visibility has been ensured from the very project start. The website reaches out to a broad audience, and there were close to 36,000 visitors in 2007. The amount of visitors increased steadily from 1,986 in January to 3,836 in December, with a monthly average of around 3,000 visitors. Moreover, three issues of the [RECON Newsletter](#) were published in 2007, containing information on research activities, reports on past events and new publications, information on upcoming events and other news, such as a call for new partners, vacant positions and new appointments. The mailing list of the newsletter currently includes more than 1,600 addressees, with the number of subscribers steadily increasing, and it is also available electronically on RECON's website. In addition, a [RECON leaflet](#) was designed and printed in May 2007 and distributed widely by each partner institution. This brochure contains basic information including a list of partners and contact details, and presents the main research questions of the project in a comprehensible manner.

RECON partner institutions

	University of Oslo (coordinator) ARENA – Centre for European Studies	ARENA
	Center of Political and Constitutional Studies, Madrid	CEPC
	Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest Institute of Sociology	ELTE
	European University Institute Department of Law	EUI
	Freie Universität Berlin Otto-Suhr-Institute for Political Science	FUB
	Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic Institute of Sociology	ASCR
	Jagiellonian University, Krakow Centre for European Studies	JUK
	Johann Wolfgang Goethe University Frankfurt Institute of Political Science	JWGU
	London School of Economics and Political Science Department of International Relations	LSE
	Queen's University Belfast Centre for Advancement of Women in Politics (CAWP)	QUB
	Riga Graduate School of Law	RGSL
	Sabanci University, Istanbul Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences	SABU
	Université Libre de Bruxelles Institute for European Studies	ULB
	University of Bremen Jean Monnet Centre for European Studies (CEuS) Centre for European Law and Politics (ZERP)	UniHB
	University of León	ULEON
	University of Reading School of Sociology, Politics and International Relations	UoR
	Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam Department of Political Science	VUA
	Peace Research Institute Frankfurt	PRIF
	University of Bath Department of European Studies and Modern Languages	BATH

RECON coordinator

Prof. Erik Oddvar Eriksen

ARENA – Centre for European Studies

University of Oslo

P.O.Box 1143 Blindern, N-0317 Oslo, Norway

E-mail: e.o.eriksen@reconproject.eu