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# Politics of European Integration 2023-24

**B026821 – 6 CFU**

1<sup>a</sup> Semester 2023/2024

**Class Hours:**

Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays 12:00-14:00 in Building D5, classroom 0.11

**Main instructor:**

Enrico Borghetto ([enrico.borghetto@unifi.it](mailto:enrico.borghetto@unifi.it))

**I. Course content:**

The course “Politics of European Integration” coincides with the Jean Monnet module REPLAN-EU “Implementing Resilience and Recovery Plans in Italy and beyond” ([link to the website](#)). The module focuses on the formulation and implementation of National Recovery and Resilience Plans (NRRPs) promoted within the Next Generation EU program (NGEU). The reforms and investments identified in these plans are expected to trigger a profound transformation of EU member states’ societies and economies for the next decades and, if successful, their implementation will undoubtedly have positive ripple effects for EU legitimacy. Yet, to our knowledge, there is still little systematic teaching on this subject in EU studies curricula in Italy and Europe.

The module fills this gap by renovating the program of the master’s course “Politics of European Integration” at the University of Florence. The new curriculum will address a) the structure, funding, and governance mechanisms of the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) in general and b) key issues in the implementation of reforms in three policy pillars of NRRPs, namely: the green transition, the digital transformation and social & territorial cohesion. National reforms and investments in these areas are having and will have a significant impact on work, education and, more in general, on the way Europeans live in the next decade. While the main study case will be the Italian recovery plan “Italia Domani”, being Italy the biggest recipient of RRF funding (191,5 billion Euros), the overall approach will include systematic comparisons with other national cases.



## II. Learning objectives:

Provide students with the theoretical, methodological, and empirical instruments to understand EU and domestic political processes associated with the RRF and the national plans.

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Master the main theoretical concepts and analytical tools for analyzing the formulation and the implementation of NRRPs
- Understand the institutions and governance of NRRPs
- Get insights into the three main policy pillars of NRRPs: green transition, digital transition, and social and territorial cohesion
- Find the relevant information concerning the politics and policies of NRRPs based on a plurality of reliable sources

## III. Prerequisites

Students should have a solid knowledge of the functioning of EU institutions and policies and have advanced reading, oral and writing skills in English.

## IV. Teaching methods:

Classes will incorporate both lectures and seminar-like discussions, so it is crucial that attending students keep up with the readings and be prepared to discuss them in class. Participation in class discussions is strongly encouraged and will be awarded extra points. Additional guest seminars and lectures are included in the schedule.

## IV. Suggested Readings:

The readings will be made available on the Moodle webpage of the course.

## V. Type of assessment:

- Attending students will be assessed based on a group project (25%), a blog (25%), and a written exam (50%).
- Non-attending students (attending less than 80% of the classes) will be assessed based on a final 3500-word research essay (50%) and a final written exam (50%). A detailed outline of the research paper should be discussed with the instructors.



## VI. Course program:

### FIRST SECTION (Weeks 1-2-3):

A section devoted to a presentation of the structure, funding, and governance mechanisms of the Recovery and Resilience Facility RRF, as well as the main theoretical approaches and findings to be found in the EU studies and comparative politics literature. The main topics include:

- The RRF in a historical perspective and the political dynamics underlying its negotiation
- The governance of the RRF (with special attention to the European semester within which the RRF is legally and operationally embedded)
- EU and national factors that are likely to shape the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of NRRPs
- Comparing NRRPs

#### Week 1

- **How new is NGEU?**
- **The path to NGEU: From the Eurocrisis to the pandemic emergency**

#### Readings:

- Fabbrini, S. (2023). Going beyond the pandemic: ‘Next generation eu’ and the politics of sub-regional coalitions. *Comparative European Politics*, 21(1), 64–81. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41295-022-00302-8>
- Fabbrini, F. (2022). The Legal Architecture of the Economic Responses to COVID-19: EMU beyond the Pandemic. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 60(1), 186–203. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.13271>

#### Only non-attending students:

- European Court of Auditors. (2023). *EU financing through cohesion policy and the Recovery and Resilience Facility: A comparative analysis*. ECA (9-62) [https://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/RW23\\_01/RW\\_RFF\\_and\\_Cohesion\\_funds\\_EN.pdf](https://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/RW23_01/RW_RFF_and_Cohesion_funds_EN.pdf)

#### Week 2

- **Comparing and assessing recovery and resilience plans**
- **The Italian recovery plan**

#### Readings:

- Di Mascio, F., & Natalini, A. (2023). Implementing the NRRP from the Draghi government to the government of Giorgia Meloni: Italian public administration under the pressure of too large a volume of resources. *Contemporary Italian Politics*, 15(2), 237–251. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23248823.2023.2190642>

#### Only non-attending students:

- Zeitlin, J., Bokhorst, D., & Eihmanis, E. (2023). *Governing the RRF* (Recovery Watch Series). FEPS Foundation for Progressive European Studies Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. <https://fepeurope.eu/publication/governing-the-rrf/> (p. 9-41)



### Week 3

- **Implementing NRRPs: from the supranational to the national level of government**
- **The governance of NRRPs**

#### Readings:

- Bokhorst, D., & Corti, F. (2023). Governing Europe's Recovery and Resilience Facility: Between Discipline and Discretion. *Government and Opposition*, 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2023.14>

#### Only non-attending students:

- Zeitlin, J., Bokhorst, D., & Eihmanis, E. (2023). *Governing the RRF* (Recovery Watch Series). FEPS Foundation for Progressive European Studies Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. <https://feps-europe.eu/publication/governing-the-rrf/> (p. 42-65)

## SECOND SECTION (Weeks 4-5-6):

3 subsections, each focusing on one fundamental policy pillar of the RRF:

- The digital transformation and RRF
- Social & territorial cohesion and RRF
- The green transition and RRF

Each subsection will be presented by one or more scholars/practitioners working on the topic. The goal is to provide students with background theoretical and substantive insights into the content of the RRF and NRRPs in these specific fields. They will also learn how the interaction between member states' governments and EU institutions, as well as societal actors like interest groups and political parties, affect NRRPs and the impact of such dynamics in politics and society.

### Week 4

- **The digital transition**

#### Readings:

- Mayer, M., & Gabrielli, F. (2022). Next generation Eu: The digital transition's policy dilemmas. *Rivista Di Digital Politics*, 2022(3), 485–506.

#### Only non-attending students:

- Lulyanova, V. (2022). The digital dimension of the National Recovery and Resilience Plans. EPRS | European Parliamentary Research Service, PE 733.606, 17.

### Week 5

- **Social and territorial cohesion**

#### Readings:

- Corti, F., & Vesan, P. (2023). From austerity-conditionality towards a new investment-led growth strategy: Social Europe after the Recovery and Resilience Facility. *Social Policy & Administration*, 57(4), 513–548. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spol.12906>

#### Only non-attending students:



- Corti, F., Morabito, C., Ruiz, T., & Luongo, P. (2022). *The role of recovery and resilience facility in strengthening childcare policies*. FEPS Foundation for Progressive European Studies Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.

#### Week 6

- **The green transition**

##### Readings:

- Geels, F. W., Pereira, G. I., & Pinkse, J. (2022). Moving beyond opportunity narratives in COVID-19 green recoveries: A comparative analysis of public investment plans in France, Germany, and the United Kingdom. *Energy Research & Social Science*, 84, 102368. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2021.102368>

##### Only non-attending students:

- Sabato, S., & Theodoropoulou, S. (2023). The socio-ecological dimension of the EU's recovery: Further traction for the European Green Deal? In B. Vanhercke, S. Sabato, & S. Spasova (Eds.), *Social policy in the European Union: State of play 2022* (pp. 43–61). ETUI. <https://www.etui.org/publications/social-policy-european-union-state-play-2022>

### THIRD SECTION (Weeks 7-8):

In this last section, groups of students will present their team project on a NRRP

#### Week 7 and 8

##### Readings:

- Buti, M., & Fabbrini, S. (2023). Next generation EU and the future of economic governance: Towards a paradigm change or just a big one-off? *Journal of European Public Policy*, 30(4), 676–695. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2022.2141303>