

Welcome Statement

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Abstract

Key words:

Welcome to the *Interdisciplinary Review of ValEUs*, a platform dedicated to critical dialogue on Europe's evolving values and policies. This journal grows directly out of the ValEUs Network, a research initiative funded by the Erasmus+ program of the European Union. ValEUs is more than just a clever acronym. The 27-member transnational union came together under principles enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights: including human dignity, freedom, equality, and solidarity. Bound together by these values, the EU seeks to uphold them in its foreign policy mission as well.

While the post-Cold War era promised unity, subsequent crises—such as the Great Recession and Brexit—have tested this vision. The end of the Cold War transformed the world. For many, it was a triumph of the liberal world order to be celebrated; for others, it was a period of instability and civil conflict, especially in the Balkans. The moment of EU expansion eastward seemed to usher in a hopeful era for the Union and its values-based policy. However, the sense of unity was short lived. The Great Recession, the migration wave of 2015, Brexit, the pandemic: These incited contestations to the EU internally as well as externally. The rise of populism and illiberal governments and the collapse of diplomatic unity with the wars in Ukraine and Gaza have brought many to question the EU's effectiveness in fostering peace and prosperity domestically and internationally.

Europe is not a stable object; rather, it is a shifting pattern, a continually reforming arrangement, and a set of contestations. European union—the political, cultural, and economic relations that form the material of Europe—have transformed transnational, national, regional,



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and local relations and identifications, intensifying some while destabilizing others. Crises like “Brexit,” the influx of refugees and migrants, or the rise of ultra-nationalist movements now take place on a European scale, and reactions to the EU affirm that Europe continues to redefine itself and its values.

Critical intellectual labor like that of the *IRV* allows us to shape the policy of Europe, cut the material of the European project anew. The *IRV* serves as a venue to explore the challenges the European project faces: rising inequalities, populist movements, struggles to develop common policy on migration, climate, energy, and peace. As a publication, it welcomes submissions from all academics and civil society actors who share in a commitment to globally responsible, socially invested, and democratically committed research. In the face of evolving global dynamics, the *IRV* supports critical analysis and forward-thinking that strives to fortify the European Union’s commitment to its foundational values on the international stage. The editorial team recognizes the urgent need to reevaluate European foreign policy, emphasizing the need for a renewed focus on democracy and human rights.

The initial publications of the journal grow out of the intellectual labor of the ValeUs Network ([ValeUs.eu](https://valeus.eu)). The editorial team is proud of the high quality of research and the provocations to critical thinking shared at conferences and workshops. Publishing that work here allows us to invite a broader audience into the conversation. We thank the authors of this, our first issue, and all those interested in contributing further to the interdisciplinary review of ValeUs. We invite scholars and practitioners to join us in shaping critical conversations that advance Europe’s commitment to its core values.