

Must the EU become a state?

Workshop • Oslo, Norway

March 12–13, 2026

*“[...] the further political integration at least of the core of the European Union has never been as vital for our survival as it is today. And never so improbable.”
(Habermas)*

The COMPLEX project (ARENA, University of Oslo) convenes a workshop on the quest for European statehood.

Location: Professorboligen, Karl Johans gate 47, 0162 Oslo.

Read about ARENA and our
Complex-Project here or scan
the code:
<https://www.sv.uio.no/arena/english/research/projects/complex/>



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Background

Prominent voices – such as to former prime minister and ECB governor Mario Draghi – claim that it is now necessary for the Union to “become a state”. Arguably, state-like structures may be required not only for economic and security reasons but also for reasons of justice and legitimacy. Both equality before the law and democratic self-rule require the ability to sanction. The dire situation of non-compliance that the internal rule-of-law crisis testifies to, the rise to power of right-wing populists several places, the Russian attack on Ukraine and now Trump’s economic and political warfare, can be seen as triggers for centralized coercive powers to ensure European interests and the rule of law. In addition, there is the global agenda, with transnational challenges pertaining to refugees, poverty, climate change, Big Tech, and AI, the handling of which depend upon the ability to act in concert across borders. But to what extent and in what sense does the handling of these challenges require state-like structures? Can the challenges be dealt with through the established depoliticized governance structures, that is, via muddling through governance?

Or perhaps we should see things differently; given the powers of the Union, the way it deals with exigencies, sets hard borders, and conducts external affairs, one may ask, has it already become a state?

DAY 1

Thursday March 12 : 09.00 – 17.30

09.30-10.00: Coffee, registration: Welcome by COMPLEX project leader Erik O. Eriksen, ARENA Center for European Studies, University of Oslo

Presentations

10.00-11.00: *Groping through the constitutional borderlands.* Peter Lindseth.
Prepared comment by Christopher J. Lord

11.00 -12.00: *The Asymmetrical Agencification of the Common European Asylum System.*

Trym Nohr Fjørtoft and Hallvard Sandven
Prepared comment by Christian Freudlsperger

12.00 – 13.00: *Force and democracy. The EU and the organized capacity to act.*

Erik O. Eriksen
Prepared comment by Marco Dani

13.00 -14.15: Lunch

14.15-15.15: *Beyond bellicism? The forces driving European polity formation.*

Christian Freudlsperger and Frank Schimmelfennig

Prepared comment by Adina Akbik

15.15-15.30: Break

15.30-16.30: *Must the EU be Just to be a State?*

Andreas Eriksen

Prepared comment by Peter Lindseth

16. 30-17.30: *Coping with the defense challenge: is the EU pursuing a third best option?*

Marco Dani and Agustín José Menéndez

Prepared comment Mark Dawson

19.00: Dinner at Brasserie France, Øvre Slottsgate 16, 0157 Oslo

DAY 2

Friday, March 13 · 09.00 – 16.00

Presentations

09.00-10.00: *Is the EU Becoming Ungovernable? Problems of Overload in the EU of the 2020s*

Adina Akbik and Mark Dawson

Prepared comment by Agustín José Menéndez (or Erik O. Eriksen)

10.00-11.00: *Equal Sovereignty and the Limits of Mixed Constituent Power in the European Union*

Kjartan K. Mikalsen

prepared comment by Jan Philipp Huth

11.00-11.15: Break

11.15-12.15: *The EU's quest for strategic autonomy*

Helene Sjursen and Erik O. Eriksen

Prepared comment by Kjartan K. Mikalsen

12.15 – 13.45: Lunch

13.45 -14.45: *Re-examining the Representative Ideal in EU Administration: Hinder or Highway to Compliance?*

Karin Nanna Charlotta Hjorthen Zelano

Prepared comment by Helene Sjursen

14.45 – 15.45: *How to ensure the future-proofing of EU decision-making: The case for supranational deliberative democracy*

Jan Philipp Huth

Prepared comment by Andreas Eriksen

15.45 –16.00: Concluding remarks