

Dear Rector Borhy, Dear Ambassador Vergeylen, Dear President Varga, Dear Minister Bóka, Dear Members of the Constitutional Court, Dear Ambassadors, Dear Friends and Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a distinct honour and pleasure to welcome you at the conference “Crises and Development – The Impact of Multiple Crises on the Evolution of EU Law.” This conference was convened by ELTE Law School and the Embassy of Belgium to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the accession of Hungary to the European Union. By this, we wanted to express our continued commitment to European integration. Indeed, on 1st May 2004 Hungary rejoined the family of European nations led by the conviction that the long-term freedom, safety and prosperity of our country can only be safeguarded within the European Union. This conviction has only become stronger in the past two decades.

The purpose of this conference is to analytically reflect on the evolution of EU law under the influence of multiple crises. The underlying assumption of the conference is that the EU has been confronted with crises that affected very different aspects of its operation but had at least two common features. First, the magnitude of the crises had the potential to rattle the very foundations of European integration. Second, at the beginning of each crises the EU did not seem to have clear cut competences to meet the challenges. It is submitted that in each of the different situations proper competences could be identified or a variety of creative legal solutions were applied within the confines of the constitutional structure of the Union. In other words, even if certain measures could not be foreseen fifteen-twenty years ago, the inherent capacity to take these measures was provided for by the founding treaties. As a result, the operation of the EU may have changed in several areas quite significantly. What is more, the change in the perception of certain fields may have been even more significant. But the constitutional fabric on which this operation is based stayed as it was. This allows us to be optimistic about the resilience of the European Union and its capacity to react to crises in the future.

In the following the plenary sessions of the conference will address four crises of the many the EU has been confronted with: the financial crises, the rule of law and democracy backsliding, the effect of the pandemic on the operation of the internal market as well as the aggression of Russia against Ukraine. We are humbled and proud that the best scholars of European Union law accepted our invitation and join us today and tomorrow as speakers or commentators. We are particularly honoured by the participation of President Koen Lenaerts who agreed to give a keynote address this afternoon, as we are thrilled to welcome the Head of the Legal Service of the European Commission, Daniel Calleja Crespo who will conclude the plenary part of the conference tomorrow.

Last but not least, the plenary sessions will be followed by ten various workshops which explore the delicate interplay between EU law and national law in various fields, from the internal market to criminal law and from public law to private law.

In this spirit I wish us all a successful conference and fruitful discussions.

Thank you for your attention.