Sociology

Democracy in Question

BY SEBASTIÁN ESCALÓN

→ **Far from being a universal concept, the word "democracy" covers multiple realities** depending on the country. The aim of the European Associated Laboratory "Comparing Democracies in Europe" (LEA Code) is to analyze the differences and similarities that make up the structure of an array of democratic systems. Established in 2005 and renewed in 2009, this LEA has enabled its two partners—the Bordeaux laboratory Spirit[1] and the Institute of Social Sciences of the University of Stuttgart (ISSUS)—to develop ambitious international research programs on this theme and increase exchanges between students and researchers from France and Germany.

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→ The Franco-German laboratory Code launched an extensive survey aimed at comparing the work of MPs in both countries, and assessing how the general public viewed their mandates.

In February 2010, the LEA launched a major study entitled "Citizens and Representatives in France and Germany" (Citrep). "The idea is to compare how politicians and citizens perceive the political process in France and Germany," explains Éric Kerrouche, head of the laboratory's French contingent. The study will begin with a survey to find out what the French and Germans know—or think they know—about the work carried out by their members of parliament (MPs). Next, researchers will follow 120 MPs for one week in both countries during their constituency visits. "It is virtually an ethnographic study on the work of parliamentarians in the field," Kerrouche adds.

Other themes covered by this Franco-German laboratory include euroscepticism, citizen participation at the local level, and people's perception of the concept of democracy itself. "Democracy is not understood in the same way in both countries. For example, violent action is considered as a possible, even legitimate form of participation in France, which is far from being the case in Germany," Kerrouche explains.

The creation of this LEA has institutionalized a 20-year-old collaboration between the two laboratories. This project will come to an end in late 2012, but researchers hope to keep investigating and comparing the perception of politics in their respective countries in the future.

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NuPNET

The Future of European Nuclear Physics

BY MARIE LESCROART

→ **On October 15, 2010, the members of NuPNET, a joint European network for nuclear physics coordinated by CNRS,** defined strategic goals for the financing of European research in the discipline.

Representatives of 18 research-funding institutions across 14 EU countries gathered at CNRS headquarters in Paris to draw up a list of priority research themes in nuclear physics. These were divided into three major areas: technological R&D for new generation detectors; R&D for the infrastructures of the "Eurisol" new generation accelerator; and nuclear theory related to structure and reactions.

"Europe needs joint initiatives, as technologies are becoming increasingly complex, and the infrastructures necessary to expand our research programs and remain competitive are ever more expensive. This prompted us to set up NuPNET," explains Sydney Galès, deputy scientific director of CNRS's National Institute of Nuclear and Particle Physics (IN2P3),[1] director of the National Large Heavy Ion Accelerator (GANIL),[2] and NuPNET coordinator.

Launched in 2008 for a three-year trial period, NuPNET was allocated a budget of €1.3 million by the European Commission. The program enables EU research financing agencies to pool resources for projects and installations that benefit all member countries. "A call for tender on the selected priorities will now be issued to European research laboratories," says Galès. "The first projects co-financed by NuPNET members should begin in the fall of 2011."

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