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National constitutional review of European law and its democratic legitimacy

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Judging European Democracy

National Constitutional Review of European Law and Its Democratic Legitimacy



In a large and growing body of case law, constitutional courts from the EU Member States have reviewed EU treaties and related legal instruments, as well as secondary EU law and decisions by EU institutions, on their compatibility with national constitutional law. These EU-related judgments deal with issues of major importance such as the EU's democratic legitimacy, the protection of persons' fundamental rights and freedoms, the division of competences between the EU and its Member States, as well as the place of national sovereignty within the EU. Yet are constitutional courts the institutions that should decide such issues of major constitutional importance for the EU? Or is it more democratic to leave these matters to political institutions that represent Europe's citizens and that are supposedly politically accountable to them?

This book explores these questions and offers a new perspective on the national constitutional courts' EU-related case law. In the current literature, the national constitutional courts' EU-related case law is often evaluated in a positive light: it can help ensure respect for the Member States' national constitutional identities, function as a check on the EU's powers, open up a space for contestation and dialogue, or serve as a justified response to pressing concerns about the democratic quality of the EU's decision-making process. By contrast this book argues that the courts impose constitutional limits on the EU in a way that is often difficult to justify democratically. The book builds on key insights from political philosophy and constitutional theory to better understand the democratic legitimacy of the national constitutional courts' role in the EU. Through in-depth case studies of the German Constitutional Court and its political impact, as well as a comparison with the Netherlands where such review is absent, the book details how the German Court risks debilitating political debate on the future of Europe. The book argues that national courts should instead exercise their review powers in such a way that it promotes political contestation.

Judging European Democracy

Nik de Boer

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JUDGING EUROPEAN DEMOCRACY
NATIONAL CONSTITUTIONAL REVIEW OF EUROPEAN LAW AND ITS DEMOCRATIC
LEGITIMACY

NIK DE BOER



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JUDGING EUROPEAN DEMOCRACY
NATIONAL CONSTITUTIONAL REVIEW OF EUROPEAN LAW AND ITS DEMOCRATIC
LEGITIMACY

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ABSTRACT

In a large and growing body of case law, constitutional courts from the EU Member States have reviewed EU treaties and related legal instruments, as well as secondary EU law and decisions by EU institutions, on their compatibility with national constitutional law. These EU-related judgments deal with issues of major importance such as the EU's democratic legitimacy, the protection of persons' fundamental rights and freedoms, the division of competences between the EU and its Member States, as well as the place of national sovereignty within the EU. Yet are constitutional courts the institutions that should decide such issues of major constitutional importance for the EU? Or is it more democratic to leave these matters to political institutions that represent Europe's citizens and that are supposedly politically accountable to them?

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