BELGIUM: THE STATE OF THE FEDERATION
Brussels, 14 October 2011

Vrije Universiteit Brussel
Karel Van Miert Building
Pleinlaan 5
Brussels

The Belgian federation seems to be at a crossroad. Its piecemeal and peaceful transformation from a unitary to a federal state to pacify the relations between its language groups has often been cited as a model. Yet the Belgian federation continues to face a number of recurrent problems. These are related to economic and fiscal policies, to identity politics and internal boundaries, to procedures and rules for the organization of the shared rule and joint decision-making at the federal level, to the organization and functioning of the parties and the party system.

On October 14 2011 the Flemish and the Francophone associations of political science in Belgium organize a conference on ‘The state of the federation’. The aim is to take stock of results of scientific research on the different aspects of the Belgian federation, and at the same time reflect about its institutional future.

On the occasion of this conference the two associations launch a call among political scientists for proposals for a blueprint for a better Belgium. We look forward to receiving creative suggestions for the governing of a divided society and its apparently stalled federal system. An international jury will select the best proposal and the winning blueprint will be presented at the conference on October 14. Proposals – with a maximum length of four pages – should be sent to Kris.Deschouwer@vub.ac.be by September 15 2011 the latest.
CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

9:00-9:30: Registration and coffee

9:30-10:00: Keynote opening speech, Jan Erk (Universiteit Leiden)

10:00-13:30: panels I and II

Panel I: The working of the federation

Federalism and sister parties in Belgium, Jean-Benoit Pilet (ULB) and Emilie van Haute (ULB)

Organizing regulation in a multi-actor setting, Jan Rommel (KUL)

Multinational Federations: Belgium and Canada between disintegration and accommodation, Bettina Petersohn (Technische Universität Darmstadt)

Representing a minority group in multinational federal systems: A comparative study of Scotland and Wallonia, Jérémy Dodeigne (F.R.S.-FNRS/ULg)

Representation in federal polities: what can Belgium and the EU learn from each other?, Matthias Vileyn (UA), Peter Bursens (UA) and Dave Sinardet (UA/VUB)

Panel II: The paradox of the federation

Contamination or containment? Federalisation and ethno-political positions and discourse of political parties in Belgium, Dave Sinardet (UA/VUB) and Niels Morsink (UA)

Federalism and party positions in Belgium, Régis Dandoy (ULB)

Are Belgian elites more ethno-regionalist than their Voters?, Pierre Baudewyns (UCL) and Lieven De Winter (UCL)

The Belgian consociational paradox. Preferences of voters and political elites on constitutional reform, Kris Deschouwer (VUB) and Dave Sinardet (UA/VUB)

13:30-14:30: lunch
14:30-17:00: panels III and IV

**Panel III: The citizens of the federation**

*België getekend – La Belgique dessinée: Belgian students draw Belgium*, Kris Deschouwer (VUB), Dimokritos Kavadias (VUB) and Min Reuchamps (F.R.S.-FNRS/ULg)

*The issue of ‘territorial salience’: Women’s and sexual minorities’ advocacy in the Belgian federation*, Karen Celis (Hogeschool Gent) and Petra Meier (UA)

*Identities or good governance: What shape citizens’ attitudes towards federalism in Belgium?*, Marc Hooghe (KUL) and Min Reuchamps (F.R.S.-FNRS/ULg)

*Exporting Ethnic Divisions? The Political Participation of Belgian Citizens Residing Abroad*, Jean-Michel Lafleur (F.R.S.-FNRS/ULg)

**Panel IV: The end of the federation?**

*Is Belgian federalism digging its own grave?*, Didier Caluwaerts (VUB)

*Explaining Belgium National Crisis: The Difficult Task of Creating Unity in Multinational Societies*, Jean-François Caron (ULB)

*Possibilities of a split of the Belgian Federation*, Vincent Laborde (UCL)

*Requiem or hymn? Commemorating confederalism and reinventing confederations*, Marie-Hélène Schrobiltgen (ULB) and Sean Mueller (University of Kent)

17:00-17:30: Prize “Blueprint for Belgium” and concluding remarks, Kris Deschouwer (VUB) and Min Reuchamps (F.R.S.-FNRS/ULg)

17:30: cocktail

**Registration**

All participants have to register online ([click here](http://www.politicologie.be/) or go to the website of one of the two organizing political science associations. Registration is free for the members of the Vereniging voor Politieke Wetenschappen (VPW) and/or the Association belge de science politique-Communauté française (ABSP-CF). Participation fee for non-members is 15 € (students 5 €).


Contacts: Kris.Deschouwer@vub.ac.be or Min.Reuchamps@ulg.ac.be