



Co-funded by
the European Union

Miami Florida Jean Monnet Center of Excellence 2024 FACULTY EU RESEARCH GRANT Interview with grantee Dr. Steven D. Roper



Dr. Steven D. Roper is a Professor of Political Science at Florida Atlantic University. This year, he received the Miami-Florida Jean Monnet Center of Excellence Faculty EU Research grant for the development of his project. His proposal is entitled: “The Spitzenkandidaten Process in 2024: Does the Lead Candidate Process Promote European Union Democratic Legitimacy?”

He was kind enough to answer a few questions about his research.

MFJMCE: Can you tell us a little bit about yourself?

I am Professor of Political Science at Florida Atlantic University. My comparative work has focused on constitutional design, parliamentary development and elections. My initial country work in the 1990s centered on Romania and Moldova, but over the past two decades, I have worked in several countries in Europe, Southeast Asia and the Middle East.

MFJMCE: In a few words, can you tell us what the focus of the research project for which you received this grant is?

This research project focuses on the democratic value of the *Spitzenkandidaten* process. A recent change in the way European parliamentary elections (EP) has occurred involved major political groups nominating a lead candidate or *Spitzenkandidaten* for Commission President. For some, the *Spitzenkandidaten* process transforms EP elections from second-order to primary election while for others, this process is still deeply embedded in elite party politics far removed from



voters. My research project explores whether the *Spitzenkandidaten* process influences voter perceptions of candidates and the European Union (EU), and whether the process influences the mode of governing of the Commission President?

MFJMCE: How did the idea for this research come up?

I have always been interested in the so-called “democratic deficit” of the EU and attempts to democratize the EU electoral processes and institutions.

MFJMCE: Why do you think your research focus on the EU is of particular interest to American students?

Elections to the EP represent an interesting counter-balance to the elite-led process within EU institutions and provide American students a different way to view elections, candidates and institutions.

MFJMCE: Where will your research take you in the future? Do you plan to continue developing this project, or do you have others in mind?

Ideally, I would like to travel to Brussels to interview members of the EP to understand how the political class views the *Spitzenkandidaten* process as well as the role of the EP within EU policy-making as well as within EU efforts to democratize the institution.

MFJMCE: Do you have any last thoughts to share?

I want to thank the Miami-Florida Jean Monnet Center of Excellence for providing me a grant to assist in my research efforts and look forward to future collaboration with the Center. Issues such as representation and electoral politics facing the EU and member-states are incredibly relevant and important to south Florida.

By Christine I. Caly-Sanchez

► For Dr. Steven D. Roper's Bio, [click here](#)