

INTRODUCTION

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In the past decade, the study of federalism has come to enjoy significant theoretical and empirical prominence. It has been argued that federalism is somewhat of a "growth industry" within political science.¹ International organisations such as the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme have increasingly prescribed federalism and decentralisation as the most promising tools to foster accountability, democratisation and economic growth. Concurrently, federalism has emerged as an important tool for conflict resolution. Federalism has come to be seen as an instrument to accommodate territorially based ethnic, cultural and linguistic differences in divided societies, while maintaining the territorial integrity of existing states. These developments have facilitated the emergence of comparative studies on how federations and federal-like forms of governance work in practice. To what extent and how federalism and federally organised states contribute to conflict management and resolution has become one of the central questions of such studies.

Against this background, the International Munich Federalism Days 2017, organised by Hanns Seidel Foundation and EURAC Research, decided to focus on different aspects of federalism and conflict management. The international symposium examined the following questions:

- How does federalism as a pragmatic and adaptable tool of governance contribute to the management and resolution of conflicts?

- What are the promises of federalism as a tool for conflict management? What are its pitfalls?
- What influence do constitutional designs, power sharing arrangements and litigation procedures have in federal systems and emerging federations?

In order to discuss these overarching questions, the International Munich Federalism Days 2017 brought together participants from 22 countries with various backgrounds. Academics, Members of Parliaments, government representatives, civil servants, representatives from civil society and private sector organisations as well as ethnic minorities from countries as diverse as Morocco, Libya, Bosnia and Herzegovina, India, Myanmar and the Philippines participated in the conference. Such a geographical range of countries ensured a rich diversity of perspectives and experiences of the topic under study. Each of the 22 countries represented at the conference currently encounter the same critical task: the effective management of conflicts resulting from the accommodation of various kinds and levels of diversities. In most of these countries, federal or quasi-federal arrangements are discussed or have been introduced as peace-making and state-building devices, aiming either to keep the state intact and / or to settle conflicts by accommodating minority groups in an inclusive system of government.

The goal of the International Munich Federalism Days 2017 was therefore threefold: Firstly, the conference aimed to contribute to the examination and analysis of how conflicts have been managed and resolved in federal and federal-alike systems. Secondly, it provided comparative analyses on how mechanisms and procedures in cooperation and coordination of governmental levels and between governmental levels and the different actors are functioning. Finally, the Federalism Days provided a networking and discussion forum in order to advance dialogue between scholars and practitioners on the effectiveness of federalism as a tool of conflict resolution.

Scholars of political science, law and economics provided input at the conference analysing current trends and dynamics in constitutional design, power-sharing arrangements and litigation mechanisms. In this context, particular attention was drawn to intergovernmental relations, the distribution of competences as well as fiscal arrangements and financial relations. These topics were dealt with in in-depth workshops involving both experts and participants.

The contributions in this publication represent a summary of the workshop results and provide a brief overview of the topics discussed during each of the workshops. The publication is intended to be a concise and result-oriented document useful not only for the participants of the conference as a reference but for practitioners in the field of federalism and conflict management in general. The publication begins with a generic overview of federalism, constitutionalism and conflict management and discusses some of the main challenges in the ongoing debates on federalism in the twenty first century. This is followed by the summaries of the contents of the three workshops mentioned above. In a concluding chapter the results are discussed in a broader context, focusing on the "toolbox character" of federalism in regards to conflict management.

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NOTE

¹ see Erk, Jan: Comparative Federalism as a Growth Industry, in: *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 2/2007, pp. 262–278.

