

## EU Competence and Member State Autonomy: Causality, Consequence and Legitimacy

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**The IEL Annual Lecture 2010: Professor Paul Craig QC, Professor at the University of Oxford and Fellow of St John's College Oxford.**



There has been much concern about the scope and exercise of European Union competence, which is often premised on the assumption that some 'reified entity' called the European Union has increasingly arrogated power, with a consequent diminution of national autonomy that the Member States have been unable to resist.

The European Court of Justice is frequently regarded as bearing primary responsibility in this respect. It was however be argued that the story is more complex and interesting: the Community courts were but one factor out of four responsible for the expansion of European Union power over time, and the Member States themselves were equally responsible for the current disposition of power. This in turn raises interesting questions as to why Member States accepted and contributed to the expansion of European Union competence, the answer to which sheds light on issues of legitimacy in the European Union.

The lecture, coincidentally delivered one day before the entering into force of the Lisbon Treaty, was attended by over 200 students, staff and guests.