



Politicising Commodification

European Governance and Labour Politics
from the Financial Crisis to the
Covid Emergency

Roland Erne, Sabina Stan, Darragh Golden,
Imre Szabó and Vincenzo Maccarrone



ERC EUROPEAN UNIONS

ERC Research Project *Labour Politics and the EU's New Economic Governance Regime*

EU Governance Interventions & Healthcare: Working Conditions & Staff Shortages

EU Competences, EU Crisis Interventions
and Future Developments

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<https://www.erc-europeanunions.eu/>



European Research Council

#WorldHealthDay Conference
European Parliament, 7 April 2025



EU competencies in labour and healthcare policy

‘Nominal’

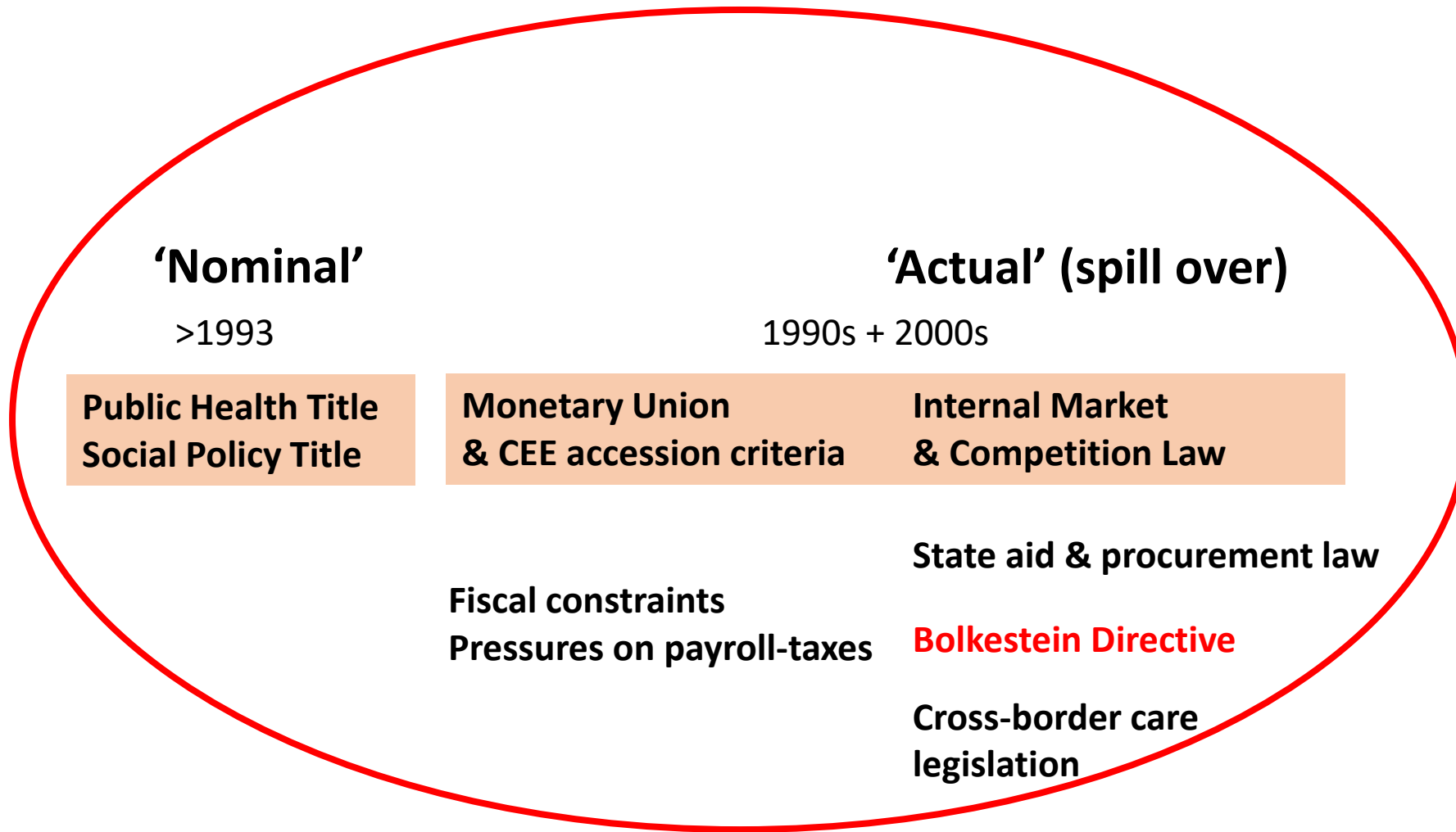
>1993

Public Health Title

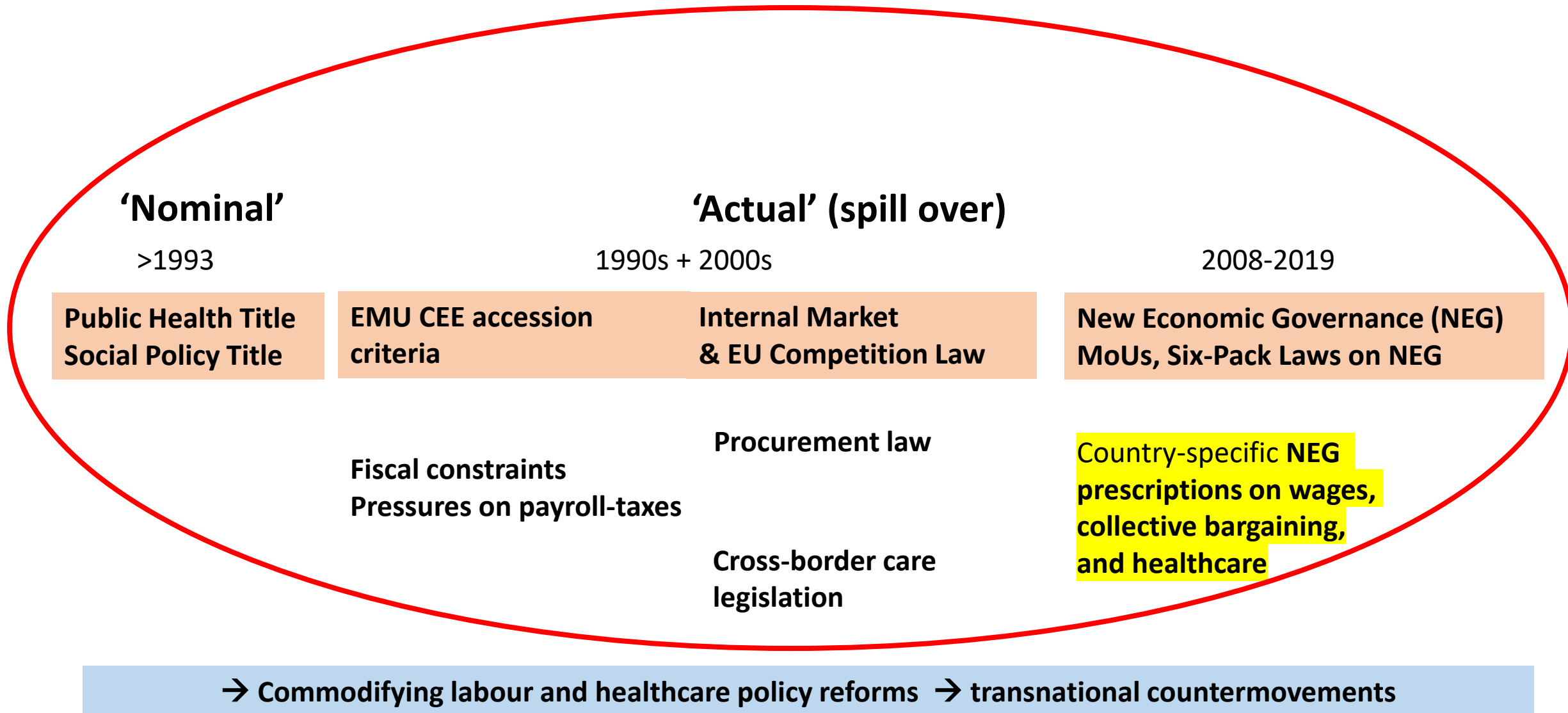
Social Policy Title

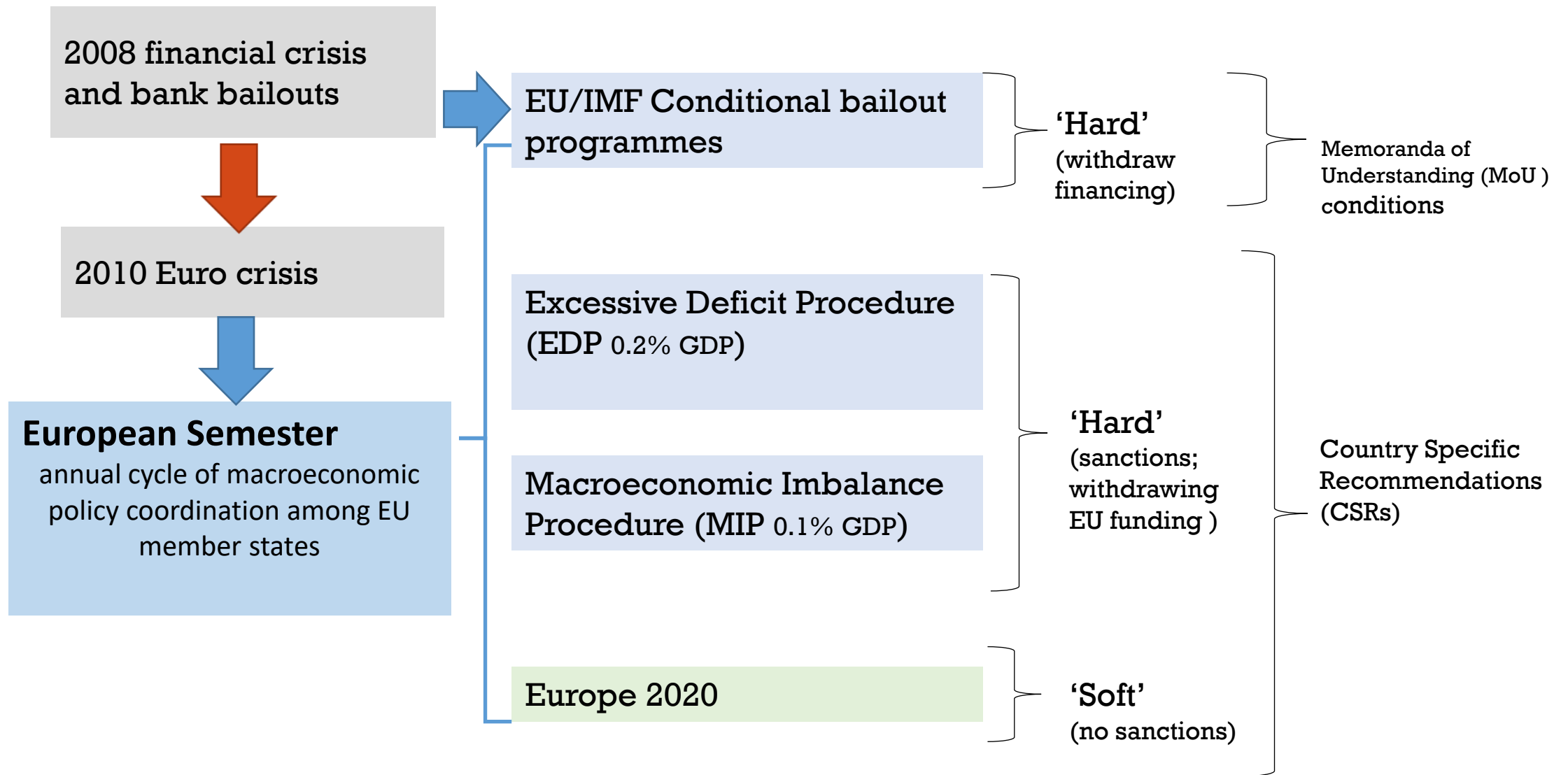
of the Treaty on the
Functioning of the
European Union

Does the EU have competencies in healthcare?



Does the EU have competencies in healthcare?





The EU new economic governance (NEG) regime



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2008-19: Commodifying EU interventions
on wages, working conditions and public
healthcare services in many (but not all)
countries

→ Labour Euroscepticism

→ Transnational Protests

After 2020:
Important EU policy changes

2020-24



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CAMBRIDGE

Decommodifying EU policy changes:

Temporary suspension of EU fiscal pact

EU funds for healthcare infrastructure (not staff)

EU Directives: pay transparency, adequate
minimum wages, sustainability, platform work

Commodifying EU interventions:

Country-specific EU prescriptions: marketisation
of public services (including healthcare)

EU Regulation: promoting e-health for the
creation of an EU healthcare market

May 2025: Ruling on Minimum wage directive

What's next?



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CAMBRIDGE

Decommodifying EU policy changes:

New suspension of EU fiscal pact (for re-arming Europe; not social infrastructure & staff?)

EU laws on “just transition”, “stress at work”, “minimum staffing levels in hospitals”?

Commodifying EU interventions:

Curtailing social cohesion and healthcare funding

Promoting EU healthcare “market”

Forthcoming EU Court judgment on Minimum Wage Directive:

“Workers will not understand why *business-friendly* EU governance prescriptions on wage cuts are legal while a *labour-friendly* directive on adequate minimum wages is not”

Transnational Social Protest does matters

But let's also be aware the
EU Competence Trap

“Politicizing Commodification”
not “Politicizing Europe”



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POLITICISING EUROPE

Integration and Mass Politics

Edited by Swen Hutter,
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