

Laudation

For the Mattei Dogan Foundation Prize 2026

The Jury has this year chosen to award the prize to Alfio Mastropaolo.

The jury had the following to say:

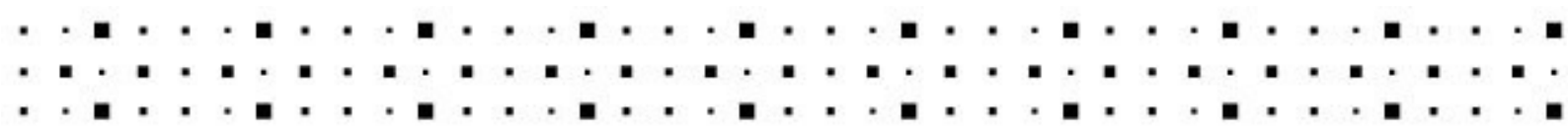
The 2026 Mattei Dogan Foundation Prize in European Political Sociology is awarded to Professor Alfio Mastropaolo, Emeritus Professor of Political Science at the University of Turin, in recognition of a distinguished career situated at the intersection of political science and political sociology, and of a body of scholarship that has shaped the contemporary European debate on democracy, representation and the political class. Across more than five decades of research, Professor Mastropaolo has produced a coherent and influential body of work on the transformation of European democracies, the sociology of political elites and the political class, the dynamics of representation, and the rise of anti-political and populist phenomena.

His monographs — including *Antipolitica. Alle origini della crisi italiana* (2000), *La mucca pazza della democrazia* (2005), *Is Democracy a Lost Cause? Paradoxes of an Imperfect Invention* (ECPR Press, 2012) and, most recently, *Fare la guerra con altri mezzi. Sociologia storica del*

governo democratico (2023) — together constitute one of the most sustained and theoretically ambitious accounts of contemporary democratic transformation produced in European political sociology.

His early formulation of anti-politics as a discourse generated from within the political class itself, rather than as a purely bottom-up phenomenon, has become a standard reference in the comparative literature on populism, where his work is regularly cited alongside that of Cas Mudde, Hanspeter Kriesi and Pierre-André Taguieff.

Professor Mastropaolo's career exemplifies the interdisciplinary vocation that the Mattei Dogan Foundation Prize was created to celebrate. Trained in an era in which the boundaries between history, sociology and political science were still porous, he has consistently refused to confine his inquiry within any single disciplinary boundary, drawing instead on the *longue durée* of state formation, the structural sociology of party organisations and the classical Italian tradition of elite theory to illuminate fundamental questions about power, representation and democratic legitimacy in European societies.



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His standing as a leading European political sociologist is reflected in an exceptional record of international recognition: visiting positions at Sciences Po Paris, Bordeaux and Aix-en-Provence, the Université Paris I-Sorbonne and Birkbeck College London; sustained publication in the leading French, Italian and Anglophone journals of the discipline; co-editorship of the Oxford University Press/ECPR Comparative Politics series; service on the ECPR Executive Committee from 1998 to 2003; two terms as Chair of the Stein Rokkan Prize jury and membership of the Skytte Prize jury at Uppsala University; and membership of the French Premier Jury d'agrégation in political science, an honour rarely conferred on a foreign scholar.

Equally distinctive is Professor Mastropaolo's role in building a European scholarly community. As Italian Secretary General of the Franco-Italian University, and through decades of sustained collaboration with French, Italian and Anglophone colleagues, he has done much to support the cross-national circulation of ideas, concepts and

younger scholars that the Mattei Dogan tradition was founded to encourage. His career stands as a model of how political science and political sociology can be pursued together as complementary lenses on the same fundamental questions about how power is organised, legitimated and contested in modern European societies.

For these contributions to scholarship, to the European political science community and to the interdisciplinary tradition the Mattei Dogan Foundation Prize was created to honour, the jury is delighted to award the 2026 Prize to Professor Alfio Mastropaolo.

Anne Rasmussen

**On behalf of the Mattei Dogan
Foundation Prize Jury**