

CONSTITUTIONAL LAW OF 15 EU MEMBER STATES

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Foreword

This book was first published in Dutch in 1981. It was called "*Het staatsrecht van de landen der Europese Gemeenschappen*" (Constitutional Law of the EC Member States) and covered the then nine Member States of the European Communities.

Since that time, new editions have come to include new Member States. The fifth edition, which appeared in 1998, dealt with all fifteen countries which belonged to the European Union before the recent accession of ten new ones. An updated sixth edition, containing chapters on the same fifteen countries, was published in the spring of 2004. It is this sixth edition which now appears in an English translation for the first time.

The work describes in depth, though not in detail, the constitutional systems of the countries concerned. Each chapter starts with a sketch of the constitutional history as an indispensable background to a proper understanding of the relevant constitution as it operates today. The outline of the constitutional system which follows deals with the sources of constitutional law, the federal or unitary character of the state (or something in between!), the head of state, government, parliament, executive-legislative relationships, the legislative process, parliamentary scrutiny of government activity, electoral system, political parties, post-World War II election results and governments, the judiciary, regional and local government, and fundamental rights. The chapters conclude with a short bibliography.

This book has been a successful teaching and research tool in the Netherlands for almost 25 years. We are delighted that it is now appearing in an English version and we hope it will fulfil the same function for a wider audience.

We are grateful to the organizations, listed elsewhere, whose generous financial support has made the translation possible.

We value highly the contribution of the translators Harold Alexander, Alison McDonnell, Louise Punt-Heyning, Hugh Quigley, Kath Starsmore and Pete Thomas, whose skill and dedication have resulted in translations that are even better than we hoped they would be.

Finally, we wish to thank Kluwer Legal Publishers, who were prepared to follow us into uncharted waters.

Lucas Prakke
Constantijn Kortmann

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