

ECPR General Conference, September 7-10, 2016, Prague

Section Title: What Europe? Researching Consequences of a Diverse Europeanization of National Public Spheres

Section chair: Dr. Wieger Bakker, University of Utrecht, Netherlands

Section co-chair: Dr. Alina Bârgăoanu, National University of Political Studies and Public Administration, Romania

Call for Papers

Panel 1: Making sense of Europeanization in Central and Eastern Europe

Chair: Diego Varela, 'Alexandru Ioan Cuza' University of Iași, Romania

Co-chair: Elena Negrea-Busuioac, National University of Political Studies and Public Administration, Romania

The European Union is at a crossroads and the integration project is currently shaken at so many levels that talks about its imminent disintegration, or at least the dissolution of the Eurozone (e.g. Grexit, Brexit, Frexit), occupy more and more space in the public sphere. European citizens, political leaders, EU pundits, mass media, and even European officials, are becoming less supportive of the EU, and thus less willing to place further trust in EU policies and the EU decision-making process. Numerous overlapping crises that the EU has been faced (the economic crisis, the Ukraine crisis, and the recent migration crisis, to name only the most prominent) have contributed to an increase of distrust and a rise of EU contestation among people. Given this context, many scholars and experts have focused primarily on the reaction of Western countries, the old member states where a return to narratives of individual progress and recognition within the Union has led to a confirmation of national stereotypes of economic superiority. The new member states from Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), on the other hand, have been usually perceived as spirited supporters of the European Union, eager to complete their 'return to Europe' and to catch up with the West in terms of economy, democracy and administration. Their eagerness to break with their Communist past and to embark on a democratic track has determined these states to push for EU membership in order to ensure social and political stability, security, and to build democracy and a market economy.

Overall, by means of Eastern enlargement, both the West and the East have aspired to reduce the disparities between old and new members. In reality, instead of resolving these gaps, enlargement has brought them to the fore and put them into the spotlight. Progress has been made in the economic sphere and EU membership has been wealth-enhancing for many of the CEE countries. How do the media in CEE countries cover the EU and EU-related topics? Has the coverage of the EU intensified during crises? To what extent are public spheres in these countries Europeanized? To what extent has the Europeanization of public spheres led to polarization and contestation of the EU in CEE countries? These are but a few questions that we seek to provide answers for in this panel, which is included in the section What Europe? Researching Consequences of a Diverse Europeanization of National Public Spheres of the 2016 ECPR General Conference in Prague. The panel can provide an invaluable opportunity for interdisciplinary dialogue and welcomes papers that address the impact of recent EU crises on the Europeanization of societies and public spheres in CEE countries.

Keywords: Europeanization, Central and Eastern European countries, EU crises, polarization, public opinion, Euroscepticism.

Paper submission

Paper proposals should contain abstract (max 500 words) and 3-8 keywords and should be sent to elena.negrea@comunicare.ro by **February 10, 2016**.

Panel 2: Populism and the Europeanization of political competition

Chair: Nicoleta Corbu, National University of Political Studies and Public Administration, Romania

The recent success of the left-wing and right-wing populist parties in the regional, national and European elections should not be too surprising given the rise of populism in Europe, especially in Western Europe, during the last two decades. The growth of populist parties and ideologies could be explained by numerous and various factors, such as disappointment with mainstream politics, deterioration of people's socio-economic situation, perceived crises that their respective countries undergo, Islamophobia, increasing fear of immigration, etc. As far as the European Union is concerned, populism in many member states has also been fueled by the criticism surrounding the processes of European enlargement and integration. Undoubtedly, the 2008 financial and economic crisis and the current (still unsolved) migration crisis have contributed to the spread and consolidation, in many European countries, of popular sympathy towards populist ideologies.

In addition to populist politicians' rhetorically sophisticated discourse, increased media attention and coverage of populists may have also positively impacted on the degree of Europeans' attachment and resonance with populism and populist themes. This is a very brief outline of the context in which populism has gradually thrived and gained ground, up to the point of scoring well in many electoral races, whether these are local, regional, national or European elections. What makes populism appealing to Europeans and why? How are populist themes covered by the media? Do media support or hinder populism? Why have some of Europe's most renowned populist parties been more successful than others? These are but a few questions that we seek to provide answers for in this panel, which is included in the section *What Europe? Researching Consequences of a Diverse Europeanization of National Public Spheres* of the 2016 ECPR General Conference in Prague. The Panel aims to provide an invaluable opportunity for interdisciplinary dialogue and welcomes papers that address the consolidation and diversification of populist discourse and ideologies across the European Union and their performance in political competitions.

Keywords: populism, European Union, elections, media coverage

Paper submission

Paper proposals should contain abstract (max 500 words) and 3-8 keywords and should be sent to nicoleta.corbu@comunicare.ro by **February 10, 2016**.

Panel 3: Effects of Europeanization: Media, Identity, and Citizenship

Chair: Matej Makarovic, School of Advanced Social Studies, Slovenia

Co-chair: Corina Daba-Buzoianu, National University of Political Studies and Public Administration, Romania

In the context of European integration, concepts as European identity, European public sphere or Europeanization become more frequent in everyday speech, especially regarding media's role in spreading the feeling of affiliation to a European family. The process of Europeanization suggests a "top-down diffusion of common political rules, norms and practices in Europe" (Hughes, Sasse & Gordon, 2005). Considering the level of Europeanization (Brüggemann & Kleinen-von Königslöw, 2009), we can then refer to a European public sphere, to Europeanized national public spheres or simply to national public spheres (de Vreese, 2007, Risse, 2003).

Communication plays a key role in the Europeanization of the national public spheres. The Europeanization process can develop by an increase in reporting and broadcasting European topics in national media and some indicators of the process can be that EU official protagonists enter in debate with protagonists from other places, different actors from EU member states take part in debates on common issues and agree upon solutions, similar topics are discussed simultaneously in the media of several EU states, EU protagonists

from different states interact through national media inquiries, Brussels' policies are present on news agenda from EU member states (Machill, Beiler & Fischer, 2006).

This panel seeks contributions that may include, but are not restricted to:

- Mediated communication and the Europeanization processes (top-down and bottom-up)
- Mass media and Europeanization of national public spheres
- The democratic deficit of the EU and the European public sphere
- The European public sphere – a utopia or an ideal in the making?
- Media effects on EU-related attitudes in the context of the crisis
- Key actors and key frames in EU-related media news and debates
- Mediated debates in the European public sphere in the context of major crises affecting the EU (i.e. Ukrainian crisis, the Arab Spring, the Refugees Crisis)
- The European media – characteristics and perspectives.

Keywords: European identity, Europeanization, European public sphere

Paper submission

Paper proposals should contain abstract (max 500 words) and 3-8 keywords and should be sent to corina.buzoianu@comunicare.ro by **February 10, 2016**.