

APPLICATION FORM FOR PROSPECTIVE WORKSHOP DIRECTORS

If you wish to apply to direct a workshop at the Joint Sessions in Münster, Germany during 22-27 March 2010, please first see the explanatory notes, then complete this form, which will serve as the **cover sheet** for your workshop proposal. This form should be sent with your **workshop proposal** to the ECPR Central Services. You can do this by emailing both documents as an attached file (in word format .doc or rich text format .rtf) to the ECPR Central Services at ecpr@essex.ac.uk. Alternatively, you can print up the information and send it as a fax to the Central Services, fax: +44 1206 872500. **The deadline for applications is Sunday, 01 February 2009.**

Title of proposed workshop:

The Interrelationship between Institutional Performance and Political Support in Europe: Discussing Causes and Consequences

Subject area:

Comparative Politics, Political Attitudes, Political Culture, Political Support

Abstract of proposed workshop. Maximum of 250 words (suitable for publication in the academic programme leaflet and on the ECPR web site):

The main objective of this workshop is to examine the interrelationship between institutional performance and political support in Europe and to discuss its consequences with a particular focus on European integration. The evidence shows that citizens in post-communist and southern European countries alike tend to place significantly less trust in their politicians and have less confidence in central government and regulative institutions such as the judicial system or the police than citizens from countries with long established democracies. At the same time, these countries are dealing with comparatively high levels of corruption as disclosed by the Corruption Perception Index which could be one of the causes. Therefore, scrutinizing the very nature of the interrelationship between institutional performance and political support will be at the center of this workshop. This approach draws primarily on theoretical as well as empirical studies on the origins of political support which are mainly politics-centred. They focus on the performance of government and the economy, and often take a top-down approach by arguing that the behaviour, image and policies of political leaders, and the way in which political institutions operate in daily life lie at the heart of the formation of political support.

1. What are the origins of effective or ineffective institutional performance (corruption, democratic development, government performance) and to which extent does it determine political support?
2. Are there any signs of eroding political support in countries where low levels of political confidence have been prevailing over a long period of time?
3. If any, what are the consequences of distinctly diverging levels of political confidence amongst European populations for the integration of the European Union?

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Please note that the information above is VERY important, as it will be used in all future correspondence and, if the proposal is successful, printed in the academic programme.

The proposal should be typed with 1.5 line spacing on three/four A4 pages using this sheet as the first page, and should cover the points outlined in the explanatory notes/guidelines available on the ECPR website at www.ecprnet.org.

For further information, please contact:

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WORKSPHOP PROPOSAL FOR THE ECPR JOINT SESSIONS, 2010, MÜNSTER

Workshop title:

The Interrelationship between Institutional Performance and Political Support in Europe: Discussing Causes and Consequences

Workshop directors:

Marc Hooghe, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium

Sonja Zmerli, University of Technology Darmstadt, Germany

The main objective of this workshop is to examine the interrelationship between institutional performance and political support in Europe and to discuss its consequences with a particular focus on European integration. The evidence shows that citizens in post-communist and southern European countries alike tend to place significantly less trust in their politicians and have less confidence in central government and regulative institutions such as the judicial system or the police than citizens from countries with long established democracies. At the same time, these countries are dealing with comparatively high levels of corruption as disclosed by the Corruption Perception Index which could be one of the causes.

In its broadest sense, political confidence refers to citizens' assessments of the core institutions of the polity (Lipset and Schneider 1983). To paraphrase Levi and Stoker (2000, 484-485), political confidence entails a positive evaluation of the most relevant attributes that makes each political institution trustworthy, such as credibility, fairness, competence, transparency in its policy-making, and openness to competing views. It also entails the belief that institutions will not act in an arbitrary or discriminatory manner that is harmful to citizens' interests or the nation's, but will treat all citizens reasonably equally, fairly, and justly. As a conceptual device, political confidence has been designed as a middle-range indicator of support between the specific political actors in charge of every institution and the

overarching principles of democracy in which specific institutions are embedded in a given polity (Listhaug and Wiberg 1995, 299-302).

Although there exists a general pattern all across Europe that citizens are increasingly unlikely to identify with political parties, increasingly disinclined to vote in elections, more likely to believe that government is run for the benefit of a few big interests, and more dissatisfied with the way democracy works in their country, particularly citizens from post-communist countries show an increasingly pronounced disenchantment with the performance of their institutional setting (Newton 2006, Zmerli, Newton 2008, Zmerli, Newton, Montero 2007). The consequences of these developments can be manifold. On the one hand, ever weakening confidence in political and regulative institutions destabilizes state authority, hampers economic growth and puts social cohesion at risk, factors which eventually can result in a decline of support of malfunctioning democratic systems. On the other, diverging experiences with and orientations towards political institutions amongst the populations of the European Union member states might constrain the process of European integration as a whole. Where citizens experience national, regional or local political actors and institutions as unresponsive or incompetent a broad support of a transfer of national competences to a complex and for many intransparent supranational institution is even less likely. Moreover, if the emergence of a European demos is based on broadly shared belief systems, values and orientations, the observed distinct differences in political confidence could seriously impede the realization of this ambitious project.

In the face of the current unprecedented global economic crisis political actors and institutions are urged to offer solutions but also held responsible for severe market failures as the recent demission of the Icelandic government demonstrates. However, even though these global challenges are affecting each and every European Union member state they might seriously derogate system support where levels of political confidence were already low before this crisis set in.

Therefore, scrutinizing the very nature of the interrelationship between institutional performance and political support will be at the center of this workshop meeting. This approach draws primarily on theoretical as well as empirical studies on the origins of political support which are politics-centred. They focus on the performance of government and the economy, and often take a top-down approach by arguing that the behaviour, image and policies of political leaders, and the way in which political institutions (welfare state, cabinet, parliament, parties, etc.) operate in daily life lie at the heart of the formation of political

support (Barbera, Albano forthcoming; Kumlin 2004; Mishler, Rose 2001; Andersen, Guillory 1997; Newton 2006; Rothstein, Stolle 2003).

Another theory, however, is society-centred but ultimately depicts the origins of institutional performance and its interrelatedness with political support. It is focusing on the idea that citizens in a well established and social homogeneous civil society with well developed norms of citizenship, high levels of social trust and an extensive array of formal and informal social networks are often supportive of democratic political systems (Putnam 1993, 2000; Zmerli, Newton, Montero 2007; Keele 2007; Meulemann 2008). Recent theory built around the concept of social capital argues that social trust is an important and central element in a complex set of attitudes and behaviour that provide the foundations for both social integration and harmony, and stable and effective democratic government. Democracy and good government may then reinforce the conditions in which social and political trust can flourish by enabling citizens to co-operate effectively in community and public affairs (see among many others Muller and Seligson 1994).

Whereas the first school directly focuses on the performance of politicians, public institutions, corruption, economic competition, and income inequality as the prime sources of political support the second takes on a bottom-up perspective and concentrates on individual citizen attributes such as membership of formal and informal networks, class, income and education as determinants of the well-functioning of institutions and political confidence.

These theories are not necessarily incompatible, and the workshop participants are invited to put them to an empirical test in order to understand the very nature of interrelationship between institutional performance and political support. More specifically, the accepted papers should address at least one of the three subsequent questions:

1. What are the origins of effective or ineffective institutional performance (corruption, democratic development, government performance, for example) and to which extent does it determine political support?
2. Are there any signs of eroding political support in countries where low levels of political confidence have been prevailing over a long period of time?
3. If any, what are the consequences of distinctly diverging levels of political confidence amongst European populations for the integration of the European Union?

Workshop applicants are invited to submit proposals addressing the research questions outlined above. In accordance with the ECPR guidelines, the workshop participants will be composed of senior researchers and phd students alike. In addition, we will particularly invite committed PhD students who are working on this topic and who would wish to exchange ideas and engage into discussions with senior researchers.

This workshop builds on the experience of a number of previous workshops, e.g. at the Joint Sessions of Helsinki, and Copenhagen, conducted by e.g. Bo Rothstein, Dietlind Stolle and Marc Hooghe. It has to be noted here that most of these workshops indeed resulted in a number of academic publications since there is a lively academic interest in the topic of trust. We propose to build on these previous sessions by:

1. explicitly making the connection between institutional performance and political support. It should be clear that the main focus of this workshop is political trust, which is traditionally seen a core element in political research.
2. accommodating for the first time research based on new comparative data, most notably the ESS and CID dataset. The fact that these broad comparative data are now available (which was not yet the case in the earlier workshops we mentioned) allows us to set a solid comparative research effort and this should lead to a better understanding of the relationship between institutional performance and political support. Case studies, illustrating mechanisms as well as links between institutional performance and political confidence, are also highly welcome.

Papers for this workshop can be both empirical and theoretical. We are aware that the issue of political trust is being addressed by various European research networks at the moment, so we do believe there will be no shortage with regard to participants for this workshop, ensuring a high quality input. Certainly in Sweden, Germany, UK, the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain and Italy research projects on this topic are now under way, so we are quite confident that we will be able to attract a number of interesting scholars.

We, furthermore, intend to publish the outcome of this workshop either as an edited volume in the Routledge ECPR book series or as a special issue of a peer reviewed journal. In this regard, we would specifically aim at publishing innovative theoretical and empirical approaches to the analysis of political support which could result in a broadening of future research perspectives.

Additional funding for this workshop can be obtained by the Flemish Research Council (Belgium), currently sponsoring a Leuven-led research network on the evolution of political trust.

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Some recent publications:

Marc Hooghe, Ann Trappers, Bart Meuleman & Tim Reeskens (2008). Migration to European Countries. A Structural Explanation of Patterns, 1980-2004. *International Migration Review*, 42(2), in press.

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