

Call for Papers

Understanding EU legitimacy: cross-disciplinary approaches to studies of the European Union

September 8th and 9th 2021

Frankfurt (Oder) Germany, Stübice Poland

The European Union is currently facing one of the most serious legitimacy crises in its history. Support for populist parties has surged, fomenting nationalist, anti-European discourses while often depicting “elites” as detached from “ordinary people”. The popularity of these parties has been interpreted as a response to the complexity of political procedures aiming to mitigate and “resolve” ongoing “crises” (e.g., economic crises, the migration “crisis” and the COVID-19 pandemic) in contemporary Europe. The potential solutions developed by EU institutions often seem unclear to the general public, and the continual rise in the feeling that European and national politics lack transparency, that the competence of political actors is questionable, and that there is unclear accountability only add fuel to the fire of the crisis of EU governance legitimacy.

While the crisis of legitimation is one of the main challenges faced by the European Union, there remains little cross-disciplinary reflection among scholars on the methods and concepts best suited to understanding, explaining and tackling this problem.

The aim of this workshop is to explore interdisciplinary approaches to the legitimation deficit in EU governance. It will create a space for discussion that brings together quantitative, model-based political science and sociological research with research applying ethnographic methods. The innovative dialogue and cross-disciplinary exchange between various approaches to the study of EU governance, specifically EU institutions and policies, will shed more light on the problem of the legitimation of EU institutions and policies.

The workshop seeks to engage with the following questions: how can a cross-disciplinary approach contribute to the understanding and knowledge of the gap left by the complex political processes involved in EU governance and the European public, or that between the “culture” of EU institutions on the one hand and the broader political processes and public within the EU? How can we better understand the entanglements between the “culture” of EU institutions and wider EU politics and thus shed light on the EU’s lack of legitimacy? Can a large-scale problem be explained with a small-scale focus? Which methods are being employed to understand this legitimacy? Which specific methods can contribute to a better understanding of the issue of the legitimacy of the EU in terms of its institutions and governance?

We suggest that a cross-disciplinary perspective can reveal the gaps among the meanings circulating within the so-called “Brussels bubble”, EU political processes, the wider EU, and the national public of member states with greater coherence and continuity, which, in turn,

2

will contribute to knowledge about processes and discourses of legitimation, both within the EU's bureaucracy and its political surroundings and among EU citizens.

Abstracts:

We ask participants to address these questions from the viewpoint of their respective disciplines, including their methodological/theoretical, interdisciplinary and empirical perspectives. Please send us your abstract (up to 500 words) and a short bio by February 28th 2021 to lewicki@europa-uni.de and alexandra.schwell@aau.at. Final papers are to be sent by August 1st. They should not exceed the scope of 10 pages (approximately 6000 words) and will be circulated in advance of the workshop. We plan to publish selected papers in an edited volume.

Planning and schedule:

The workshop will take place September 8th and 9th at the European University Viadrina in Frankfurt (Oder)/Germany and Collegium Polonicum in Słubice/Poland. With COVID-19 measures most likely still in place, we are happy to offer the possibility for participants to join us either online or on-site, provided that COVID measures and travel restrictions allow for a face-to-face event. As we need to plan ahead, please let us know when submitting the abstract which option you are most likely to choose.

The workshop is hosted by the European University Viadrina in Frankfurt (Oder) - Institute for European Studies, funded by the Fritz-Thyssen-Stiftung and co-organised by Alpen-Adria-University in Klagenfurt. The workshop venue will be the Logenhaus in Frankfurt (Oder) and Collegium Polonicum in Słubice in Poland (on the opposite side of the Oder River). We will cover the travel expenses of all participants, their accommodation in a hotel and their meals (breakfast at the hotel, lunch and dinner on each day).

The European University Viadrina is located on both sides of the Odra/Oder River, which divides Poland and Germany. It was re-established in 1991 and is renowned for its interdisciplinary and international profile, with the largest share of international students in Germany. Its research is focused on Central and Eastern Europe and processes of Europeanization from a multidisciplinary perspective. It cooperates closely with Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań/Poland by running a joint academic institution, the Collegium Polonicum in Słubice.

Frankfurt (Oder)/Germany and Słubice/Poland are a 1-hour train ride from Berlin's city centre. Regional trains depart every 30 min from stations located along the main rail line (stations: Zoologischer Garten, Hauptbahnhof, Friedrichstr., Alexanderplatz, Ostkreuz), and Eurocity

3

trains towards Warsaw depart currently only 3 times a day. We will distribute more specific travel information at a later stage.

www.europa-uni.de

www.cp.edu.pl

This workshop is organised by Dr. Paweł Lewicki (European University Viadrina Frankfurt/Oder) and Prof. Dr. Alexandra Schwell (University of Klagenfurt), financed by Fritz-Thyssen-Foundation and Viadrina Institute for European Studies