



EUReACT

REpresentation in the EU: ACTing Multilevel Democracy



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Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

Experiencing multilevel democracy

Political discourse, MEPs behavior, public opinion and the EU: evidence and issues from Lab activities and students' research

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<http://eureact.unisi.it>

Aim of the Workshop

- Thematic working groups are organized to **ask political leaders and policy experts questions** about the **scope of EU governance** and the state of **multilevel democracy in Europe** (MORNING SESSION).
- The discussion between participants in Siena and privileged witnesses will be developed **through LIVE CHAT** (AFTERNOON SESSION).

Being present foreign students, Erasmus too,
English is the working language (but Italian can be used on necessity).

- Last, not least, for **dissemination** purposes and institutional goals, discussions in the WGs and questioning with politicians and experts will be recorded with computer equipments in audio and video modality.
- Contents will be accessible from EUREACT and Unisi websites.
- We thank the *U-Siena integra* project which makes this possible.

The Project

EUREACT focuses on actors and processes of **multilevel democratic representation**.

*The topic of EU democratic **legitimacy** and **accountability** in the interplay amongst supranational integration, national sovereignty and local autonomy is in particular examined.*

Thematic areas of the teaching programme:

- 1) **Modes of democratic representation in the EU**
- 2) **Elites' attitudes towards the EU and multilevel career patterns**
- 3) **EU policy frames in parliamentary debates**
- 4) **Mass publics' conceptions of the EU and European citizenship**

Teaching activities

Together with **lectures**, a number of **seminars** and research **LAB** sessions (intensive courses) have been organized:

- **Laboratory on NPs and the EU**
- **Laboratory on elites' attitudes and behavior**
- **Laboratory on public opinion's survey data**

- **Tutorial seminar**

Representation through the social media: Multilevel democracy *via* Twitter?

Challenges to the European project

- a) Increased citizen dissatisfaction with the European Union;
- b) Greater distance between the mainstream European political leadership and large sectors of public opinion;
- c) More significant centrifugal drives in the Union stemming from asymmetric economic conditions and austerity policies.

Insights for discussion

Public debate and informed deliberation can 'alleviate' the anxieties of public opinion:

- The availability and accessibility of correct information may reduce the perception of vulnerability and uncertainty.
- Strong but stereotypical attitudes can be challenged by open and informed discussion.
- Public opinion can be an important input in the policy process, providing that the debate is fair and reasonable.

(continued in small group sessions)

Mass public's conceptions of the EU and European citizenship

- Conceptualization of public opinion and its role in the political sphere
- Europeanization of public opinion research
- Measuring European public opinion
- Public opinion and the EU: trends and insights
- Laboratory on public opinion:
 - Data archives consultation
 - Using PO data in a report

Laboratory on Elites' attitudes and behaviour

What we did

- The objective of the laboratory: to measure MEPs activities
- The European Parliament and MEPs: overview
- MEPs activities: plenary and committees
- Research experiences: *Antenna Europarlamentare*
- Dataset and web tools
- Practical exercises: data gathering
- Index(es) building process
- Presentation of works and discussion

Students' works overview

- 8 papers

Who we have observed

- 100+ MEPs
- 10 EU Countries
- 8 EU Political Groups

What we have observed

- Recorded Parliamentary activities

Research questions

1. What kind of activity/commitment each MEP is expected to carry out, in addition to those recorded in plenary and committee? How to measure it?
2. To be part of a new (young) generation of MEPs, might be determinant for a good activism, or experiences/age do not matter?
3. Do euro-scepticism or pro-EU attitude of national parties, affect MEPs activism?

Purposes of the **Tutorial seminar:** *“going public in the EU”*

- Describe **political debates** about Europe
- Focusing on WHO & WHAT, i.e. **actors & policy-issues**
- What about **crises?**...
- Formulate ideas about **the democracy-politicization nexus** (*explorative perspective*)
- Investigate the role of **new media**
- ...

Mapping multilevel political debates

- **Our “sample”**

- WHO:

- Supranational:** EU institutions, Presidents of EU institutions, Presidents/Chairmen of EP party groups

- National:** Leaders of government and opposition

- WHAT: EU-related issues (particular attention to immigration, security and EU cohesion – Grexit/Brexit)

- TIME: January 2015 – May 2016

- **How to deal with the field of analysis**

- [Twitters feeds](#)

- Facebook posts (?)

Final Reports are now available

- For a number of MSs (11)

AUSTRIA, BELGIUM, FRANCE, GERMANY, IRELAND,
ITALY, MALTA, THE NETHERLANDS, PORTUGAL,
SPAIN, UK

- for EU actors

THE PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL, THE
PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION
AND SOME COMMISSIONERS, THE PRESIDENT OF
THE EP AND THE CHAIRMEN OF SOME POLITICAL
GROUPS

h 11.45-13

WORKING GROUPS

**Questioning political leaders and policy experts
about the scope of EU governance and the
state of multilevel democracy in Europe**

- **WG1: CITIZENS AND THE EUROPEAN POLITY**
- **WG2: POLITICAL ELITES AND MULTILEVEL CAREERS**
- **WG3: DEMOCRATIC CONTROL OVER EU POLICY MAKING**
- **WG4: IMPACT OF CRISES AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT IN THE EU**

Rules of the game

- Duration 90 minutes
- Size max 10-12 participants per WG
- Each WG has a FACILITATOR
- You may participate at least 20 minutes in each WG. If you think you can contribute to more than 1 WG you can, after the first 20 minutes, circulate among other WGs.
- A number of key-questions are suggested as starting point for discussion.
- **Result** of the WG (after 90 minutes): **2-3 written questions to be asked to politicians & experts in the afternoon session**
- Each WG needs a SPEAKER

Please, help us to video record WGs' discussions!

WORKING GROUP 1

Questions to start with...

- Why democracy in the EU is not delivering what people want?
- May popular disaffection undermine democratic legitimacy of the EU?
- Is it healthy for voters to hold a certain amount of scepticism of political elites?
- How would you in case reinforce public trust in EU polity?

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WORKING GROUP 2

Questions to start with...

- Are European politicians interested in EU-related issues?
- Do you think that “positions” at EU level are important for political careers?
- How to incentive politicians’ activism in the supranational arenas?
- Is it “good” for democracy in the EU?
- What else?...

WORKING GROUP 3

Questions to start with...

- It has been largely said that European integration has proceeded at the expense of traditional mechanisms of parliamentary accountability, both at the national and EU level. Do you agree?
- Has this process made transparency, hence accountability of EU policy making less evident?
- Are there tools to counterbalance the risk of decreasing EU legitimacy?
- Do you think that “direct participation” of citizens to EU policy making can be helpful?

WORKING GROUP 4

Questions to start with...

- Is the EU losing support because EU policies are unable to solve the challenges of a globalized world?
- Is the renationalization of policy – from foreign, security, and defense issues to economic and migration questions – a solution?
- What evidence have you found from the political discourse of MSs' and EU institutions' leaders?
- May it be possible to take advantage of EU crises ?
- To what extent can EU crises and crisis management at the EU level be considered as opportunities?

Ready to start!

