

Europeanisation of Public Spheres? Political Mobilisation, Public Communication, and the European Union

International Conference
Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung (WZB)
June 20-22, 2003

Call for Papers

The – real or alleged – discrepancy between an increasing Europeanisation of governance structures in the context of the European integration process, on the one hand, and the lagging behind of the development of a European public sphere, on the other, has recently inspired a large number of international research projects, some of them actively sponsored by the European Commission. In the public sphere, citizens, interest groups, and decision-makers observe each others' behaviour and preferences, and debate and contest issues of public interest. As such, the public sphere is a vital aspect of the democratic process, being both a channel for citizen participation, and an arena in which policies and institutions can be held accountable and where their legitimacy is at stake. Many scholars contend that in the absence of a Europeanised public sphere, European policies and institutions face an increasing crisis of legitimacy that threatens to block the European Union's further institutional development. Others are more optimistic and claim that a European public sphere that can form the basis for a democratically viable EU is already in existence. Others still, see the causality running in the other direction and view the Europeanisation of public spheres as a logical consequence rather than as a necessary precondition for a Europeanisation and democratisation of governance structures.

The aim of this conference is to bring together representatives of the key ongoing research projects on this thematic in order to exchange theoretical ideas and empirical results. Selected contributions from the conference will be published in a volume that aims to be a key reference for students of the European integration process in general, and the role of political mobilisation and public communication, in particular. We invite paper proposals on a variety of aspects of the public sphere, including:

- mass media coverage, journalism, and public discourse;
- political communication strategies and campaigns of collective actors, including interest groups, political parties, (national, regional, local) governments, and European institutions;
- social movements, protests, NGO's, and other forms of citizens' political participation;
- the role of new communications technologies such as the Internet in transforming European public spheres.

Our notion of Europeanisation includes political communication and mobilisation that refer to European institutions, policies, interests, or norms, as well as communicative and organisational network linkages between the different (prospective) member states. We welcome studies situated at the European level or investigating connections between the national and the European level, as well as cross-national comparisons among (prospective) EU member states. Since Europeanisation processes are embedded in wider processes of transnationalisation, we are also interested to see proposals that address political mobilisation and public communication related to the EU's role in wider transnational and supranational contexts, such as the WTO, GATT, NATO, or UN.

The conference is organised within the context of the project "The Transformation of Political Mobilisation and Communication in European Public Spheres" (Europub.com) and is sponsored by the European Commission in the context of its Fifth Framework Programme. For more information on the project, please consult our website at: <http://europub.wz-berlin.de/>

Organizing Committee:

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If you are interested in participating in the conference, please send a title and a one-page abstract of your proposed paper to all three organisers, as well as to the conference secretary, Janice Cornwall (cornwall@wz-berlin.de). The deadline for submissions is 15 April 2003. We will soon afterward let you know if your proposal has been accepted.