

THE ECREA'S POLITICAL COMMUNICATION SECTION INTERIM CONFERENCE "NAVIGATING THE NOISE: EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION FOR SOLVING POLITICAL PROBLEMS", BERLIN (GERMANY), AUGUST 31 – SEPTEMBER 1, 2023

The Political Communication Section of the European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA) invited scholars from throughout Europe and beyond to the interim conference focused on solution-based political communication research. Being hosted at the Weizenbaum Institute for the Networked Society in Berlin — one of the largest institutions for digitalization research in Germany — the conference examined what studies in political communication can do for the societies facing numerous contemporary challenges. In particular, possible topics for submission included (but were not limited to): digital platforms, political campaigns and advocacy efforts; traditional and new media influence on political attitudes and behavior; strategic communication shaping public policy and decision-making processes; political communication, civic engagement and democratic participation; the intersection of political communication and data analytics; and the role of communication infrastructures in fostering social cohesion.

The ECREA Political Communication Section conference received 152 individual and 1 joint panel submissions. In total, 122 submissions were accepted, and 116 papers were presented by scholars from 23 countries in Europe, Australia, Asia, and America. The conference opened with the keynote lecture on "Communicating the Future: Solutions for Environment, Economy and Democracy" by W. Lance Bennett (University of Washington, Seattle).

Overall, researchers from Poland presented their findings in several panels, including a session on 'Threats and Solutions' organized by a research group conducting a project on "THREATPIE: The Threats and Potentials of a Changing Political Information Environment". Agnieszka Stępińska and Denis Halagiera from the Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań have been participating in that project since 2020. The European research team shared findings on: "Public perceptions of disinformation and platforms' affordances: The role of media use and previous knowledge", "The Perception of Social Cohesion and Media Use in Society: A Comparative Study", "Third person perceptions about detecting misinformation and fact-checking habits. Evidence from an 18-country survey", "Does selective exposure reduce belief accuracy? Evidence from survey and passive meter data across five Western democracies", and "Combating misinformation

with Media literacy. An experimental study on the framing effects of media literacy messages”.

The THREATPIE team organized a roundtable with representatives of the main stakeholders (journalists, politicians, and NGOs): Tabea Rößner (German Member of Parliament, Bündnis 90/Die Grünen; Chair Committee on Digital Affairs), Michał Chlebowski, (Programming Standards Manager at Polish TVN Grupa Discovery), Jan Nicola Beyer (Digital Democracy Research Coordinator at Democracy Reporting International), and Isabelle Wirth (European Media Project Manager at AFP).

Scholars affiliated to Polish universities were also either presenters or co-authors of papers on crisis communication (“Populism and government crisis communication during the COVID-19 pandemic: A comparison of four countries” by Beata Klimkiewicz and Katarzyna Vanevska from the Jagiellonian University) and populist communication (“From the ideological underdog to communication mainstream: The impact of the populist style on social media campaigning” by Yunis Mir, University of Warsaw).

The conference was accompanied by the business meeting of the ECREA Political Communication Section. In 2023 there are as many as 400 members of this section, including scholars representing Central and Eastern European countries: Ukraine (17), Poland (14), Serbia (14), Czechia (12), Romania (12), Lithuania (5), Bulgaria (4), Slovenia (4), Albania (3), Croatia (3), Latvia (3), Hungary (2), Russia (2), and Slovakia (1).

The ECREA Political Section conference was preceded by a one-day workshop “Communicating through the Noise: Science Communication for Early-Career Scholars”. It was a hands-on opportunity for early-career researchers to learn how to effectively communicate their research to diverse audiences. The workshop covered both traditional media (i.e., journalists) and new media (e.g., YouTube) with a focus on why science communication is important, when it is appropriate, and how to reach target audiences effectively. As many as 27 PhD candidates from 16 universities in 12 countries (Austria, Czechia, Germany, Israel, Italy, Norway, Poland, Romania, Switzerland, Spain, Sweden, and Turkey) participated in the event. The workshop was organized by YECREA Political Communication Section representatives: Emilija Gagrčin and Cristina Monzer.

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