

## **New Perspectives on Populist Political Communication**

Workshop and Launch Event of the COST Early Stage Researchers Think Tank

26 to 30 January, Zurich, Switzerland

- Travel Grant Included -

While populist politics is a well-known feature of many European democracies the communicative aspects of this phenomenon have been underexplored or even ignored. However, the study of populist political communication has never been more important, not only against the background of the current social, political, and economic tumult, but also in light of recent populist backlashes against governments and the changing media environment.

The newly initiated COST Action on “Populist Political Communication in Europe” ([http://www.cost.eu/domains\\_actions/isch/Actions/IS1308](http://www.cost.eu/domains_actions/isch/Actions/IS1308)) includes 26 countries and brings together scholars from different countries to generate state of the art knowledge about the presence and challenge of populist political communication in different democracies. This event is part of the broader COST Action but focuses specifically on young researchers.

### **Areas of Research**

The Action focuses on three areas. *Area 1* identifies and defines populist political actors and their communication, determining the contexts of communication success. It is dedicated to the following research questions:

- Is there a specific and unique style(s) of communication that can be defined as populist?
- Are there unique communication strategies or issues that distinguish populist parties from mainstream parties?
- Are there systematic differences in the style of language used by mainstream parties and by right-wing and left-wing populist parties?
- Do leaders of parties identified as populist differ in terms of charisma and particularly their communication skills from leaders of other parties?

*Area 2* concentrates on the role of the media in populist activities and discourses, establishing their role in the promotion of populist politics. It raises the following questions:

- How do populist actors and their communicative strategies resonate with European journalistic media?
- What are the reasons for differences between European countries, types of journalistic media, and individual media outlets?
- What are the reasons for differences in the resonance of populist communications in citizen online discourses?
- Is there a decoupling of online vs. offline and journalistic vs. citizen discourse as indicated by the varying presence of populist actors and communications?

*Area 3* focuses on the effects populist messages have on citizens and how citizens engage with populist political communication by addressing the following questions:

- How do European citizens inform themselves about politics, including populist politics?
- What effects of media use can be found?
- Which citizens are affected by populist political communication?
- What are the reasons for differences between European countries in terms of political news usage and effects?

### **Aims of the Event**

A core element of the Action is the Early Stage Researchers (ESR) Think Tank which gathers and connects young European scholars from various backgrounds. The launch event for this Think Tank will take place from 26 to 30 January 2015. It will be hosted by the Institute of Mass Communication and Media Research and the National Center of Competence in Research (NCCR) "Democracy" at the University of Zurich. The event will take the shape of an intensive workshop where the participants will have the opportunity to thoroughly present and discuss their ongoing projects. They will also get insights into NCCR Democracy's Module 2 which analyzes populism in the context of globalization and mediatization.

### **Application and Travel Grant**

Eligible for application are all ESR who have received their PhD not more than eight years ago and who are based in a COST country ([http://www.cost.eu/about\\_cost/cost\\_countries](http://www.cost.eu/about_cost/cost_countries)) or at an approved institution. Participants of the event can apply for a Short Term Scientific Mission (STSM) which allows a scholar to visit a research institution in another COST country. The STSM covers the expenses for the travel to the event in Zurich (max. EUR 500) and includes a daily reimbursement rate of EUR 160 for accommodation and meals (for five days). To benefit from a STSM grant a minimum stay of 5 days is required.

An application includes an extended abstract (800-1200 words), a letter of motivation (500-800 words), and an academic CV. The abstract describes a research project being situated within one of the three areas mentioned above. It will, if accepted, be the basis for a presentation (15 min) followed by a response (10 min) and a discussion (20 min). While we prefer studies that explicitly focus on populist communication we also encourage submissions that investigate populist communication tangentially or implicitly. The letter of motivation should specify why the applicant is suited and motivated to participate in the ESR Think Tank.

Please send your complete application before **1 October 2014** as integral PDF to the STSM coordinator Peter van Aelst ([peter.vanaelst@uantwerpen.be](mailto:peter.vanaelst@uantwerpen.be)). The event is restricted to a maximum of 20 participants. Besides the quality of the application, geographical and gender balances will be taken into account. Successful applicants will be invited to apply for the STSM via the COST website (<https://e-services.cost.eu/stsm>). To receive the funding, a short scientific report (1200-1800 words) needs to be submitted within 30 days after the event.

If you have any questions, please feel free to approach the organizers represented by Sven Engesser ([s.engesser@ipmz.uzh.ch](mailto:s.engesser@ipmz.uzh.ch)) and Nayla Fawzi ([nayla.fawzi@ifkw.lmu.de](mailto:nayla.fawzi@ifkw.lmu.de)).