

## SHORT TERM SCIENTIFIC MISSION (STSM) – SCIENTIFIC REPORT

The STSM applicant submits this report for approval to the STSM coordinator

**Action number: IS 1308**

**STSM title: Factors encouraging populism in the media**

**STSM start and end date: 13/02/2018 to 17/02/2018**

**Grantee name: Dr. Peter Maurer**

### PURPOSE OF THE STSM/

(max.500 words)

The first aim was to present the project and the planned analyses to Professor Barbara Pfetsch and to engage in an exchange. Professor Pfetsch has recently conducted a multi-national comparative project examining political communication cultures in Europe and I was hoping to share insights with her. In particular, I hoped to be able to use insights from her project, especially about the relevance of contextual factors for modeling country differences. I also aimed at discussing how European countries could be meaningfully clustered, and how political communication culture can be useful in order to formulate expectations about regional differences in the journalistic coverage of populism. I also wanted to explore which of the variables of political communication culture could be potentially used as explanatory factors for our study.

The second aim was to discuss and prepare the design of the study of populism in view of the upcoming book publication of the Action (Working title: *Communicating populism. Comparing interactions between politicians, media, and citizens across Europe*, Editors: C. Reinemann, J. Stanyer, T. Aalberg, F. Esser, C. De Vreese) with colleagues from my working group. I am part of the core team of the working group on populism in the media and will be (lead-)author of several chapters in the publication.

We wanted to discuss the collection of contextual data, the hypotheses, and the statistical procedures for the analysis of media content data. Therefore, I had arranged a workshop with WG members Sina Blassnig (MA), Prof. Frank Esser (both University of Zurich), Prof. Sven Enggesser (TU Dresden), and Prof. Agnieszka Stepinska (University of Poznan). As I am collaborating with Prof. Esser for one chapter in particular, we planned to use my stay for an intensive feedback on a preliminary draft and the hypotheses.

The meeting should also serve to bring everybody on the same page concerning the structure, the milestones, and the timetable for the book and to distribute tasks for the next COST workshop in Madrid (19-21 March, 2018) which is dedicated to the book project. For this purpose, it was necessary to meet with the WG team.

The third aim was to use archives and libraries at FU Berlin, which offer a great selection of relevant literature, and to discuss practical issues of data analysis.

## **DESCRIPTION OF WORK CARRIED OUT DURING THE STSMS**

(max.500 words)

1) Meeting with Professor Pfetsch, presentation of our comparative CA on populism in the media, discussion of design and sharing of insights

2) Creation and distribution of updated data sets including all twelve countries participating to the COST study.

Sina Blassnig (University of Zurich) who had coordinated the data collection of media content, made me and the core group familiar with the datasets; then we discussed meaningful measures of populism and finally agreed on variables that can serve as dependent variables in the cross-country analyses. Together with A. Stepinska, I presented and discussed a survey for collecting additional contextual data that should be sent out to the COST team

We also discussed issues of reliability in this cross-national study involving more than 20 coders.

2) Collection of relevant contextual data for twelve countries for the year 2016 was planned.

2.1) Political trust data for the population (trust in government, parties, politicians) for the following countries was collected: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Israel, Italy, Norway, Poland, Serbia, Switzerland, United Kingdom.

2.2) Data from Journalism Culture and Political Communication Culture projects were also gathered. I secured data on 1) Journalists' perceived influence: organizational, economic, editorial; 2) J.'s role perceptions: adversary role, "provide news that attracts large audience", "let people express their views", "promote tolerance and cultural diversity"; 3) Journalistic Trust in parliament, government, parties, politicians. I cleaned and prepared these data before adding them to our content data.

3) Correlational analyses between the contextual variables and different measures of populism in media content was carried out. Significant results were discussed in the group of researchers to determine the relevance and quality of the contextual data and which other data are still needed.

4) Three chapter drafts were discussed during the mission in great detail:

1) Methodological Approach & Descriptive Comparative Results, 2) Factors encouraging populism (cross-sectional approach), 3) Change in populism between 2016 and 2017 (longitudinal approach).

I implemented suggestions that emerged during the discussion in the drafts.

5) I presented results of preliminary data analysis on factors encouraging populism and discussed them with the core group of researchers. Subsequently, the following problems related to data analysis were solved: ordinal and sometimes binary level of measurement – how to deal with that in statistical analysis; skewed distribution of some variables; applicability of multi-level models given that we are at the lower bound for the number of aggregate units

6) Rationales for hypotheses were discussed and it was decided which hypotheses must be kept and which must be dropped before final analysis

7) Questions of coordination, timeline, presentations at the next COST Workshop were discussed in the working group.

## **DESCRIPTION OF THE MAIN RESULTS OBTAINED**

The mission was very productive.

1) I included comments and suggestions from Prof. Pfetsch and Prof. Esser into the chapters for which I am the lead author

2) I agreed with the core members of my working group on content and structure of each chapter to avoid overlap and a good flow of arguments in the book.

3) I decided on a set of contextual variables to be used as independent variables in the analysis of media populism in cross-national perspective. These variables could be secured for all countries during the mission. First analysis were carried out and discussed.

4) I will send Prof. Pfetsch final chapter drafts for comments. The mission has strengthened considerably the expertise involved in the project. Prof. Dr. Pfetsch is a key multiplier as she is very renowned in the field of comparative political communication research. This can very beneficial for later dissemination and the impact of our results in the scientific community of political communication researchers.

5) I incorporated the feedback from the working group. It helped me to revise my hypotheses and produce a more advanced chapter draft. The mission also helped me to solve open questions with data analysis and the linkage of the different levels of analysis.

6) The mission strengthened the team spirit of the working group, fostered personal relationships among us, mutual trust and the flow of information. This will help greatly during the subsequent process of writing.

#### **FUTURE COLLABORATIONS (if applicable)**

(max.500 words)

*Invitation by Professor Pfetsch to meet again in Berlin.*