

Citizens' Europe? Process of Political Communication in the European Union

INTRODUCTION

The study explores the political communication process in the European Union. Taking an interdisciplinary approach, it aims to contribute to discussion and provide a new perspective on European citizenship and the problem of communication in the EU.

HYPOTHESES

The work concentrates on analysing the dynamics of the process. It answers the question concerning the relationship between the process of political communication in the EU and the process of European integration (changes in quality of communication are associated with important events in the European Union's history) and examines the links between the political communication process in the EU and the development of European citizenship institution (EU citizenship – introduced by the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 – constitutes a basis for political communication in the European Union).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study also presents the complexity of the analysed process and the variety of forms of EU citizens' participation in political communication and evaluates the actions taken by citizens and the European Commission (EC). The process of political communication is analysed in the context of a legitimacy deficit in the European Union, as well as the mediatization of politics and globalisation. Additionally, the issues discussed include the efficiency of communication strategies in the EU, the quality of dialogue between the EC and citizens, as well as the implementation of openness and transparency regulations.

METHODOLOGY

The research questions are examined in various contexts (European, national as well as local one) and in a comparative perspective (comparison of data from different EU Member States or – when analyzing texts – of different language versions). Multiple data sources such as legal acts, administrative documents, statements and official speeches are used. The study refers to results of diverse public opinion surveys, reports and statistical data.

A content analysis is the main research technique applied in this work. The *Europa* portal – an official website of the European Union – and the *Debate Europe* internet discussion forum are analysed. The content analysis is complemented by a set of interviews with experts: EU officials, journalists and representatives of non-governmental organisations.

CONTENTS

The dissertation is divided into five chapters. They are preceded by an introduction outlining the current state of the art in academic discipline and information about the methodology used in the research. Chapter 1 considers the specifics of the EU and is structured into sections such as theory, history and institutions. Chapter 2 raises the questions of European citizenship and the role of citizens in contemporary societies. Chapter 3 focuses on information and communication policies in the European Union. Chapter 4 is devoted to describing and assessing the different forms of EU citizens' activity. The last chapter details the research findings on the *Debate Europe* internet discussion forum.



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