

ECPR GENERAL CONFERENCE 2022
University of Innsbruck, 22-26 August 2022



**Standing Group
on Southern
European Politics**

Conference Section

CONFLICT AND COHESION IN SOUTHERN EUROPE

CALL FOR PANELS AND PAPERS

The Section has been proposed on behalf of the ECPR Standing Group in Southern European Politics and welcomes proposals for panels and papers from members and non-members of the Group. **Deadline for Paper and Panel Proposals: 16 February 2022.**

- *Guidelines for proposing panels and individual papers* are available here
<https://ecpr.eu/Events/Event/Content?ID=1039&EventID=185>
- To *submit your paper proposals* visit the link here
<https://ecpr.eu/MyEcpr/Forms/PaperProposalForm.aspx?EventID=185>
- To *submit your panel proposals* visit the link here
<https://ecpr.eu/MyEcpr/Forms/PanelProposalForm.aspx?EventID=185>
- To create a **MyECPR account** (if you don't already have one):
 - <https://ecpr.eu/Login.aspx>
- For further information:
 - Bonnie Field (BField@bentley.edu)
 - Stavroula Chrona (s.chrona@qub.ac.uk)
 - Susannah Verney (deplan@otenet.gr)

A DECADE OF CRISIS AND RESILIENCE IN SOUTHERN EUROPE

Two years into a global pandemic, there are clear signs of conflict and division across Southern Europe. This manifests in numerous debates including over the right mix of economic and social activity versus restrictions to protect public health, and the desirable degree of state control over what society and individuals can or cannot do. Meanwhile, a section of society denies the pandemic even exists, rejecting vaccination with the social solidarity it implies. The pandemic-era divisions have added to the existing fissures from earlier traumas such as the economic and refugee/migrant crises. They coexist and interact with other manifestations of political conflict, such as political fragmentation, dissatisfaction, distrust and polarisation, which challenge the sustainability of the democratic model. While conflict and division grab the headlines, cohesion tends to receive less attention. But the pandemic's first phase often saw a significant 'rally-round-the-flag' effect while Portugal's vaccination rates, among the highest worldwide, are an indication of social unity. Meanwhile, recent years have seen some resurgence of institutional trust and democratic satisfaction after the dramatic decline during the eurozone crisis.

The Section aims to explore the multiple dimensions of conflict and cohesion in the socio-political arena of Southern Europe, as well as the varying patterns across the region. The theme may be explored in ways that intersect with the pandemic or are unrelated to it. Geographically, the section covers Italy, Greece, Spain, Portugal, Turkey, Cyprus and Malta. Panels and papers may investigate conflict and cohesion across the region and/or in specific national contexts. The section welcomes contributions employing a range of disciplinary (political science, sociology, social policy, political economy, ethnography, IR, psychology) as well as interdisciplinary perspectives and methodological approaches.

A non-exclusive list of possible areas for investigation might include:

Pandemic Politics

To what degree has the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing social and political conflict in Southern Europe by creating new divisions or deepening existing ones? In what ways has it generated greater cohesion? What kinds of social and political mobilisation has the pandemic given rise to? How have government-opposition dynamics developed with regard to pandemic management and what has been the impact on state-citizen relations? Has the picture changed during different waves of the pandemic? What explains the variations within countries and cross-nationally within Southern Europe?

Environmental Politics

How have environmental mobilisations in Southern Europe (e.g. against goldmining or dam projects) been received in their local communities and by the relevant political authorities? To what extent are the visible consequences of climate change (e.g. forest fires) already revising political and societal priorities? In what ways are 'Green Transition' policies (e.g. the Greek plan to phase out lignite) changing patterns of winners and losers? Is the climate crisis debate generating intergenerational and interregional conflict? Alternatively, are there dynamics that can potentially generate cohesion and foster collaboration among citizens and states to tackle climate change?

Political Institutions and Political Actors

To what degree are Southern Europe's political institutions able to channel conflict through inclusive, democratic practices? How have political institutions adapted to include new political and social actors? What has been the role of key political actors, both inside and outside political institutions, in fostering conflict and cohesion? What kinds of actions have they taken and with what degree of success? Which new political actors (from challenger parties to ad hoc anti-vaccine groups) have emerged and how have established players adapted? Who benefits from polarisation? Can we identify any common trends across Southern Europe?

Public Policy

To what degree have public policies at the local, national or European Union levels - including environmental, social, economic, refugee integration and other policies—fostered social cohesion or conflict in Southern Europe? Have policymaking processes been inclusive or exclusive, consensual or conflictual? Which policy outputs have met with broad social acceptance or widespread popular rejection? Have there been common patterns in Southern Europe and how can we explain them?

Social Cohesion

To what degree have historically excluded, disadvantaged or minority groups—such as women, ethnic, religious or national minorities, migrants and refugees, the LGBTQ community—been included in the politics or societies of Southern Europe on an equal footing? Have steps toward inclusion generated conflict or cohesion? To what degree has conflict prevented inclusion? How have issues of social cohesion affected the broader political sphere (e.g. through the rise of anti-immigrant parties or solidarity movements)?

Mass Attitudes, Public Debate and Political Communication

How have political trust and confidence evolved in South European societies in recent years? To what extent are political attitudes really polarised and if so, around what issues? Is public opinion following or leading elites in driving new divisions? Has public debate become more inclusive or exclusive? Are political and societal discourses becoming more confrontational? How have practices of political communication sponsored conflict or cohesion (e.g. how successful were governmental communication strategies in maintaining social unity during the pandemic?) Are social media as detrimental to social and political cohesion as often suggested or do they also promote social solidarity?

Economic Transformations

What has been the societal and political impact of recent economic change in Southern Europe? Which new patterns of economic winners and losers have emerged? Has there been a deepening or mitigation of economic inequality? Are current economic policies generating conflict or promoting cohesion? Have economic reforms been conflictual or consensual? What kind of social divisions have been revealed by the pandemic-era debate on economy versus public health?

International Dimensions

How do Southern European states engage in international affairs? In what ways have they fostered or attenuated conflict? To what extent do they contribute to international cohesion? To what degree do they conflict or coalesce with one another in the international or EU arenas? In the international-domestic policy nexus, how far have foreign policy issues fuelled internal political confrontation? conflict? Alternatively, have there been instances when conflictual stances in external relations have promoted greater cohesion at home?