

TRUEDEM: Trust in European Democracies (2023-2025)

Quarterly Project Newsletter - Issue 1 (March 2023)

Welcome from the Project Director

Dear colleagues,

This is the first Newsletter of our new EU Research Project within the Framework of the HORIZON Research Programme of the European Union. The title of this new research project is 'Trust in European Democracies' and the acronym is 'TRUEDEM'. This European flagship project started in January 2023 and will be implemented until December 2025 over a period of 3 years. The project has top-level partners in Austria, Czechia, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, and Ukraine. The TRUEDEM Consortium consists of leading 12 European Universities and Research Institutes.



Project Director and
Principal Investigator
Prof. Dr. Christian
Haerpfer

This ambitious international research project is directed and coordinated by the Austrian Institute for Comparative Survey Research (ICSR), which is also hosting the International Secretariat of the World Values Survey Association (WVSA) on the one hand and Eurasia Barometer (EAB) on the other. The Principal Investigator and Project Coordinator is Professor Christian W. Haerpfer from the University of Vienna (Austria), the Co-Principal Investigator is Professor Pippa Norris from Harvard University (USA). The Project Manager is Dr Kseniya Kizilova. TRUEDEM is an international and interdisciplinary research project with top scholars from the academic disciplines of Political Science, Sociology, Political Sociology, Economic Sociology, Public Policy, Law, Science of Mass Communication and Media, and Psychology.

Political trust has long been regarded as an important element of regime support and factor of regime stability; it is widely associated with a number of positive outcomes in representative democracies. Political trust drives citizens' interest and engagement in politics, increases voting turnout and makes law-abiding behaviour more common. Political trust is frequently equated to diffuse regime support and thus linked to the effective functioning and stability of the political system. The proposed research effort will monitor the structural (long-term) drivers of political trust but also emphasize the strategies which can be employed by diverse actors and agencies to strengthen accurate and informed judgments of agency trustworthiness.

The objective of this ambitious project is twofold. First, we aim to design and implement a complex research effort to collect comprehensive evidence on the judgments of trustworthiness in a range of European states. Second, the project will develop a comprehensive and transparent toolbox of short-term and long-term policy interventions including recommendations, and methodologies for enhancing trust in political institutions, boosting transparency, and inclusiveness of representative systems in Europe. While there is a growing concern about the crisis of democracy and democratic backsliding, this research effort will provide an innovative theoretical perspective on the sources of regime support and strategies for trust building in the public domain.

The project looks at the different drivers of 'positive high trust in democracy' and 'negative high trust in autocracy'. The project will facilitate the development of a new paradigm of political trust and trust-building and will inspire the emergence of new insights on the multi-facet origins of political trust and multi-factor nature of trustworthiness.

In my capacity as the Director of this new exciting and important project, I invite you to get engaged with the Project team in any suitable for your way: follow us on social media, join us for conferences and webinars or reach out to plan joint publications. The TRUEDEM Consortium is very much looking forward to establishing new partnerships and joining efforts with other scholars in this field to advance the Political Sciences research on public trust.

Sincerely,
Professor Dr Christian W Haerpfer MSc
Project Director and Principal Investigator of TRUEDEM
Director of the Institute for Comparative Survey Research (ICSR)
Associate Professor of Political Science, University of Vienna, Austria

TRUEDEM Kick Off Meeting

TRUEDEM kick off project meeting took place on March 27-28, 2023 in Bratislava, Slovakia at the Comenius University. The event comprised a public project presentation, two key-note addresses and two panel discussions on various aspects of public trust as well as the internal project meeting on day 2. The event attracted close to 100 guests on site and over 40 joining online via Zoom. The kick off meeting was attended by over 30 members of the TRUEDEM consortium from 11 countries, with the team of France joining virtually. Video of the presentations from the public project presentation is available below.



Presentations at the TRUEDEM Kick Off Meeting



Christian Haerpfer introduced the project which received EUR 2.97 m financing from the Horizon program of the European Commission; it comprises 12 work packages, 12 project partners from 12 European countries (11 EU member-states and Ukraine) represented by over 60 individual researchers participating in the project. In total 44 deliverables and at least 38 academic publications are planned [...]



Pippa Norris presented a key-note address on trust and trustworthiness. Since the *Civic Culture*, political trust has long been regarded as vital for the stability of liberal democracies. Regime legitimacy relies on the consent of the governed. But such compliance should be earned, not blindly given. Citizens should trust authorities which have proved competent, honest and impartial in the past and thus are likely to be trustworthy in future [...]



Christian Welzel presented a key-note address on the vicious and virtuous dimensions of public trust. The concerns about falling public trust in institutions derive from the assumption that public trust is a form of social capital that institutions need to function properly. Despite a huge literature that engages in crisis talk about declining public trust, systematic evidence for public trust's supposed relevance to democratic stability and the quality of government is literally inexistent [...]



Moderated panel. Multiple crises (pandemic, security & energy/economic crisis) hit Slovakia during the last electoral cycle. The crises' effects and political responses to them might hampered political trust of citizens. The panel will look at actual trends in political trust in selected EU countries and will discuss the effects of such trends in the context of parliamentary elections and electoral support for political extremists. The panel will draw the comparison among countries like Italy, Czech Republic and Slovakia.



Moderated panel. In the last decades, various transformative social phenomena (pandemic, security crisis) hit the European democracies and put into question the capacity of national and supranational (EU) institutions to react in prompt and adequate manner. The panel discussed the consequences of such transformative processes on representative democracies in Europe and their influence on political trust.

TRUEDEM Welcomes Gender Equality and Ethical Issues Officers



TRUEDEM GENDER EQUALITY OFFICER

ZUZANA LISONOVA (SLOVAKIA)

Researcher at the Department of Political Science, Comenius University in Bratislava. Her research interests include Comparative Politics and European Integration.



TRUEDEM ETHICAL ISSUES OFFICER

BI PURANEN (SWEDEN)

Associate Professor of Economics, Founding Director of Bikupan Research Institute. Her research interests include social and political values and beliefs, migration, and security.

TRUEDEM Welcomes New Members to our Advisory Boards



Bobby Duffy joins the International Policy Advisory Board of TRUEDEM. Bobby Duffy is Professor of Public Policy and Director of the Policy Institute. He has worked across most public policy areas in his career of 30 years in policy research and evaluation, including being seconded to the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit. Bobby sits on several advisory boards including Chairing both the Campaign for Social Science and the CLOSER Advisory Board, is a member of the Executive of the Academy of Social Sciences, a trustee of British Future and the Centre for Transforming Access and Student

Outcomes in Higher Education (TASO) and a Senior Fellow of the Munk School of Global Affairs & Public Policy, University of Toronto.



Elina Kestilä-Kekkonen joins the International Scientific Advisory Board. Elina is Acting Professor of Political Science at University of Tampere, Finland. In the years 2015-2019, she led the research project Consortium of Trust Research - Pathways to Political Trust (Contre). During the years 2019-2023, she led the research project Education, Political Efficacy and Informed Citizenship (EPIC) funded by the Academy of Finland. Her main research interests are political trust, electoral behaviour, and radical rights. She has published extensively of these topics for instance in European Journal of

Political Research, West European Politics, Scandinavian Political Studies, and the European Political Science Review.

Call for Papers: WAPOR 2023 Conference

WAPOR
WORLD ASSOCIATION FOR PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH



WAPOR 76th Annual Conference
19-22 September 2023 • Salzburg, Austria

We invite conference paper proposals dedicated to the study of trust in public opinion research for participation in TRUEDEM panels at the WAPOR 2023 conference (September 19-22, 2023 in Salzburg, Austria). Both papers addressing the methodological aspects (measuring public trust, harmonization of data on

public trust) and substantive results (public opinion research on trust in Europe or beyond) are welcome. Submit your expressions of interest by email by April 20 at the latest.

TRUEDEM EUROPEAN OBSERVATORY ON TRUST RESEARCH

TRUEDEM Consortium announces call for members for a project partnership network, the European Observatory on Trust Research. Membership is open to individual scholars in Political Science, Political Sociology, and Legal Studies specializing on scientific analysis and public policy related to public trust to political institutions working in European countries and beyond. The Observatory shall serve as a “hub” for data and resources concerning political trust and as a communication and cooperation platform for researchers working in this domain. The members of the Observatory will obtain a possibility to submit their news and publications for the TRUEDEM newsletter, to use a separate page of the TRUEDEM website to exchange messages (live blog format) and considerations on the issues of political trust and democracy in Europe, to share announcement about the new data release, to engage into the live discussion of TRUEDEM project findings. Members of the Observatory will be invited to share their own research and to help disseminate findings of TRUEDEM and other studies on political trust in the EU (and beyond) at major European and international conferences (ECPR, IPSA, APSA etc.). Should you be interested in joining the Observatory, please, contact us at office@truedem.eu.

TRUEDEM Trust in European Democracies

Cross-country comparative comprehensive investigation of public perceptions of trust and trustworthiness (2023-2025)

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