The crises the EU and its Member states have been facing over the last few years have unleashed in the system of political representation and accountability of the Union unprecedented tensions. What is radically new in the present situation is the multiple and overlapping nature of the crises and the strong waves of popular discontent they have triggered. The EU is facing today three crises at the same time. An economic one, following after 2008 the collapse of American financial markets. A security crisis, at its Eastern and Southern borders, as a consequence of processes well beyond the EU control but that still affect it first-hand. Last, an immigration crisis, partly related to the security crisis, with huge numbers of migrants from North Africa and the Middle East moving toward Europe and its borders. Not surprisingly, these multiple and contemporaneous challenges have raised irksome problems for the European multi-level polity and its working.

The EUENGAGE research project, conducted by a team of scholars from the University of Siena, the London School of Economics, the Free University of Amsterdam, the University of Mannheim, Unitelma Sapienza-University of Rome, the Media Center of Bucarest and the survey firm TNS Opinion, proposes to look at how national politicians, parties, media, and public opinion are reacting to these crises. With two survey waves of public opinion and national politicians in ten EU countries, an innovative online experiment in deliberative democracy bringing together citizens and politicians, an analysis of social networks and online media, the study of party manifestos and an expert survey on party positions, the project will enable to explore systematically in the three crisis fields the distance between public opinion and political representatives, the internal fissures in the political establishment of the Union, the diverging preferences separating member states, the uncertainties about future policies and the difficult mobilization of transnational solidarity. It will also explore how these difficulties can be overcome with innovative ideas and a more active dialogue between citizens and politicians.
The EUENGAGE Project:
a brief overview

The goal of the EUENGAGE Project is to inquire into the current tensions between supranational EU governance and popular mobilisation at the national level critically questioning EU driven policies and EU legitimacy, and to propose remedial actions based on sound empirical research on the relationship between public opinion, national and supranational political elites.

The medium-long term evolutionary trend of the EU system of supranational governance had already shown in the past the manifestation of problems. It has become clear that the pace of integration proposed from the top and some side-effects of integration — austerity, transnational redistribution, economic insecurity, immigration — are difficult to accept for large parts of Europe’s citizens. This misalignment is obviously a crucial question for any system of governance which aims to be inspired by democratic principles.

The EUENGAGE project identifies in the conflicting messages emanating from the functioning of political representation a critical and urgent problem for the future of the EU. In this perspective it proposes to set up an interactive, dynamic, multilevel and replicable quasi-experimental research design that, using a variety of instruments and techniques, will allow not only to study the process of representation in vivo, but also to experiment how innovative and efficient interactions between citizens and politicians can increase the awareness of citizens of the common problems of the Union, and the ability of the European leadership to respond innovatively to the discontent of public opinion.

Structure and data

EUENGAGE is a project distributed over 11 work packages with an interactive, dynamic, multilevel research design. We consider EUENGAGE as an empirical primer both in theoretical terms and methodological scope.

We not only study mass and elites interactively and over time, but also, simultaneously, we study how they interact using social media analysis.

To analyze this complex set of interactions we dissected the following elements:
1. Public opinion and elite attitudes
2. The social media
3. Electronic media
4. Parties

We conduct a 2-wave panel of public opinion and elite, “feeding” into each of the two sides the views of the other side, and then analyzing the reactions produced and the resilience of attitudes over time via a deliberative experiment that brings together (via an e-forum platform) groups of citizens and politicians that interact to discuss institutional solutions and their consequences.

We analyze the social media (Twitter), documenting the exchanges between politicians and the public.

We collect a corpus of news articles related to European affairs from the most widely used on-line news media.

We identify, in a comprehensive manner, the problem emphases and issue positions of political parties as well as their vision for the future, using a variety of data:
- Party Euromanifestos,
- Expert survey of party positions,
- Leaders’ discourses to document changes in the attention, sentiment and position on the EU.
Where we currently are: the state of the Project work packages

WP1 Political elite attitudes toward Europe and new EU institutional agenda. During the first year of the project, under coordination of the research team at University of Siena (UNISI, guided by L. Verzichelli) the questionnaire for the first wave of the survey has been designed. To be able to compare the attitudes of leaders and public opinion, this questionnaire mirrors the one designed for the public opinion survey (WP6). By including some specific indicators it ensures, at the same time, continuity with previous elites surveys and allows researchers to explore changes in leaders’ attitudes over time. The questionnaire focuses on three policy areas – economy, immigration and international security – where the most serious challenges for European integration have arisen. It specifically explores the dimensions of transnational solidarity, representation, policy preferences, and scope of governance. A special attention is devoted to the “Brexit” issue. The questionnaire has been translated in all the languages of the countries covered by the survey (Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom, Poland and Portugal). The survey has been scripted and is hosted and centrally managed by the Laboratory for Political and Social Analyses (LAPS) of the University of Siena (http://www.laps.unisi.it).

WP2 What are they Talking About? Leaders’ Attention to and Position on the Economic Crisis and the EU. This package provides an analysis of national and European leaders’ speeches through a map of expressed opinions and through explanation of why leaders adjust their speeches, in order to understand how democratic representation functions in a multi-layered institutional context. The team of G. Schumacher, at University of Amsterdam (Stichting VU/VUmc), collected 18,612 speeches from the main European institutions plus the IMF and the speeches of prime ministers of EU countries for the period after 1/1/2007. The country selection is the same as in the other work packages. The dataset with links to and metadata from (title, date, speaker, institution, etc.) speeches is available for download from the EUENGAGE website.

We have cleaned the scraped speeches (which were in different format depending on the website they were collected from) so that it is possible to extract measures of attention (topic models), position (scaling models) and sentiment (sentiment models) from them. In essence, we have turned each speech into a bag-of-words, discarding sentence structure and punctuation. This allows for systematic comparison across speeches, and application of well-established statistical models to generate measures of expressed opinion by key politicians. A first paper with descriptive statistics of these speeches was presented at the MPSA Annual Conference in Chicago.

WP3 The content of election manifestos of political parties at the occasion of the European Parliament elections of 2014. The research team at University of Mannheim (UMA, directed by H. Schmitt) has collected all the relevant parties’ manifestos issued before the European Parliamentary elections of 2014, and has stored them in an archive. The research team has also reviewed and revised the Euromanifestos’ coding platform and built a new version of the Euromanifesto Codebook.

WP4 Political parties and cueing: data, experimentation, and comparative study. The University of Amsterdam based team guided by L. Hooghe and G. Marks has released the 2014 version of the CHES (Chapel Hill expert survey on political parties). The survey includes all EU member states, plus parties in Norway, Switzerland, and Turkey. Separate surveys were conducted in the Balkan candidate countries. The survey includes questions on political parties’ general position on European integration, several EU policies, general left/right, economic left/right, and social left/right, as well as questions on non-EU policy issues, such as immigration, redistribution, decentralization, environmental policy, populism. Early 2016, the team released a much revised Trend file which combines data points since 1999 on where political parties stand on European integration and a number of policy issues; the trend file has data points for 1999, 2002, 2006, 2010, and 2014. The datasets are publicly available on http://chesdata.eu.

What is the State of the Union today after more than sixty years of predominantly incremental development of the process of European integration and the sudden explosion of a major, unexpectedly long and multifaceted economic crisis?
WP5 Measuring Popular Opinion on Europe Using Social Media. Under the leadership of the research team at London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE, guided by K. Benoit), we prepared and delivered a dataset of all tweets from, to, and mentioning the candidates for the European Parliament elections of 2014. This involved a total of 3.8 million tweets from the 2,750 out of 15,353 MEP candidates (17.9%) that we identified as having a presence on Twitter.

WP6 Multi-country Panel Survey of Elite and General Public. The research team at University of Siena - responsible for the implementation of the survey - has focused in particular on designing the questionnaire (under the guidance of P. Isernia). Most of the work has been conducted in close coordination with the research team of the elite survey at UNISI (WP1). Since the Project aims to compare elite and mass opinions, the two surveys replicate the same questions with the exception of some questions tailored on each specific segment of respondents (general public, interest groups, political elites). The public opinion and elite questionnaires combine both traditional and new questions, to ensure continuity with past studies and comparability of data over time and among actors. The questionnaire designed for public opinion also includes an experimental section, where treatment and control are randomly assigned to the respondents to assess factors that affect public support for the EU. The questionnaire has been then translated in the languages of the countries covered by the survey (Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom, Poland and Portugal). The survey has been scripted, hosted and centrally managed by the TNS Opinion.

WP7 On-line media Analysis. The objective of the first task of the team guided by M. Popescu and G. Toka, was to review existing studies of EU-related news coverage and of the different topics that we were interested in, to use as input for our research design. The task was done in preparation for the data collection and it included documentation regarding automatic text analysis methodology, and compiling keyword analysis lists that have been found useful in other studies for the topics under study. The key result was an initial research design for the collection of textual data from the news media of the ten countries of the EUENGAGE project. A database on news media outlets in the same countries was developed to assist the sampling of newspapers with respect to audience size, journalistic style, information quality, and political outlook from the European Audiovisual Observatory Yearbook, Zenith Optimedia, World Press Trends Database, the European Media Systems Surveys, and online traffic monitors.

WP8 Mass-Elite deliberative experiment. University of Siena will set up an online deliberation, where 450 citizens from 10 EU member states will interact, both among them and with politicians for two weeks through an online platform. The actual online deliberation is scheduled at a more advanced stage of the project in year two. However, given the scope and complexity of the experimental exercise, the research team at UNISI started the preparatory work in the first year of the project. The team has made significant advancements in the definition of the research design and of the organisational aspects of the event and a number of “games” for the participants in the experiment have been designed.

WP9 Survey Setup, questionnaire translation, data collection, aggregation and delivery. Since the beginning of the project, TNS opinion (directed by P. Chelala) has been active on three main dimensions of the EUENGAGE project: 1. Setting up an online social media monitoring platform: the main objective of WP5 is to capture and measure public attention and sentiment about Europe through the lens of social media. In order to do so, we have set up an online platform which collects, analyses and presents in a clear way all the Twitter messages exchanged on the topics and political leaders under scrutiny. A first dataset of millions of messages has already been extracted and analysed. 2. Setting up the first wave of the quantitative survey: the first wave of the survey targets both general public (masses) and business leaders (business elites). These two surveys were developed hand in hand with the Siena team, who are also working on the Political elite survey. The questionnaire has been finalized in English and translated in the languages of the countries covered by the project. The online surveys.

WP10 Dissemination. This working package (guided by N. Conti) concerns the dissemination of the project contents, activities and findings. We created a website with a clear layout and an appealing style with videos explaining the project to the wider public. The website contains updates on the project activities and results, downloadable publications and access to the available data.
Ongoing activity and forthcoming outputs

WP1 Politicians have been invited to complete the questionnaire online. To this purpose, they have been e-mailed a unique web-link to access the questionnaire. Once the survey-based dataset is completed, the research team at UNISI will conduct an in-depth analysis of leaders’ attitudes to better understand the extent of change in elites’ views about the EU and how they respond to the challenges associated with the critical economic and social conjuncture. In this perspective, WP1 will pay particular attention to the theme of sustainability of the EU in future institutional scenarios.

WP2 Stichting VU/VUmc team continues a work of getting the texts in optimal shape for estimating measures of preferences. This is a trial-and-error process, since different statistical methods require the speeches to be in different format. It has recently organized a workshop about methods of text analysis (21-22 June 2016, Amsterdam) bringing together EUENGAGE members and other prominent scholars to discuss best practices in the field of text analysis. Around 60 scholars from both Europe and the United States have participated in 13 panels around various aspects of using automated text analysis to studying representation in the European Union.

Furthermore, it currently works on writing two research papers. The descriptive statistics paper, which was presented at Midwest Political Science Association (MPSA) in Chicago, has been updated for presentation at the European Political Science Association (EPSA) Annual Conference in Brussels in June 2016. In addition, the team is preparing another paper for EPSA, in which we study how economic hardship affects what prime minister talk about in their speeches. In particular, it explores whether governments try to avoid blame for bad economic conditions by talking about another topic (or other topics).

WP3 The complete 2014 Euromannifesto dataset was internally released to all members of the EUENGAGE project by the end of April 2016 and will be made publicly available by the end of July 2016. By the end of August 2016, the dataset of the current study will merge with the integrated 1979-2009 Euromannifesto Dataset. This integrated dataset spanning all European Parliament elections between 1979 and 2014 will be internally released to all members of the project and will be made publicly available by the end of 2016.

WP4 Over the next six to ten months, the team based at the University of Amsterdam will work on substantive working papers using the CHES data. These will be presented at international conferences and submitted to journals. Here are a few examples: a) the CHES group has written a working paper on the reliability and validity of the CHES data which is currently under review at a journal; b) team leaders Hooghe and Marks are writing a foundational paper that evaluates how Europe’s multiple crises have affected theorizing of European integration; c) members of the CHES group are writing several substantive and methodological papers using the CHES data; d) team members Stoeckel and Kuhn are planning to write a paper on how attitudes on EU redistribution are shaped by identity and ideology, using the forthcoming mass survey data. Drafts of these papers will be presented at conferences in the US and Europe before submission to peer-reviewed journals.

WP5 LSE ongoing activities are centered around collecting Twitter data about the UK’s “Brexit” referendum on EU membership. Since collection and monitoring began from 2 January 2016, we have collected nearly 4 million Tweets on this topic, by monitoring Brexit-related hashtags, user accounts, and keywords. Our plan is to analyse this data to examine sentiment, topic, and opinion trends from the period preceding the referendum’s announcement, to the conclusion of the referendum. Other current activities include monitoring the Twitter accounts and usernames of a long list of key EU opinion “influencers” across the countries of the European Union, to supplement analysis from the broader project.

WP6 After translation of the questionnaire in the different languages, before the fieldwork TNS Opinion has carried out the pilot test of the survey. After data have been collected and cleaned, the UNISI team will release an integrated dataset with a codebook (deliverable D6.2). Based on survey data, the UNISI team will then proceed with the study of the attitudes of public opinion and their comparison with the attitudes of the elites.
The data collection regarding the newspaper coverage of three topical issues concerning the EU (Brexit, immigration, conflict in Syria and Libya) is currently ongoing. This data collection aims at collecting our main EUENGAGE deliverable, the relevant corpus of articles from three leading national newspapers in each of the 10 European countries selected for the EUENGAGE surveys in the January-July 2016 period. This time period is longer than previously anticipated because we want to cover the Brexit topic all way up to the aftermath of the UK referendum and to synchronize with the fieldwork periods for EUENGAGE deliberative experiments (WP8), mass and elite surveys (WP1) and social media analysis (WP7). Sampling criteria and outlets were chosen drawing on the findings and database compiled in Task 1. We identified relevant newspapers archives, consulted computer programmers, and assessed feasible access routes for the data collection from each of the 30 outlets. We compiled lists of keywords for the three topics that guide the downloading of a corpus of potentially relevant newspaper articles, as well as more specific lists that will assist the purging of the final dataset from irrelevant articles. The downloading of articles has started and we expect to complete it by early August 2016.

For the remainder of the project we plan to write scholarly papers on the interactions between media content and public opinion using automated text analysis of the corpus in conjunction with survey and social media data from EUENGAGE and other sources.

The following months will see UNISI and TNS Opinion working in close cooperation to finalise the technical and scientific aspects of the experiment, also through preliminary tests, before the launch of the online deliberative experiment.

The TNS opinion team that leads this work package has mainly worked in three directions:

1. Social media monitoring platform: the data collection is ongoing and we are constantly adapting the scope covered, to make sure we stay in line with the political and social events taking place in Europe (elections, crisis, Brexit etc.). Subsequent datasets of millions of messages have been extracted and analysed, in collaboration with the LSE team.

2. First wave of the mass and business elite survey: all questionnaires have been scripted and tested using a panel partner. Fieldwork started in May 2016, for the general public and the business elite surveys. The data will be thoroughly checked, weighted and delivered in a SPSS data file.

3. Online deliberative experiment: the TNS team has worked in close cooperation with the Siena team to fine-tune the design of this exercise, taking into account the challenges of running multiple groups in several countries at the same time.

The EUENGAGE website will continue to provide updated information about the project activities. We are planning to build up new sections of the website including a forum presenting comments on the findings by specialists in the field and social scientists. After the first wave of the survey, the dissemination activity will strongly implement the presence of the project on social media. We will release a newsletter periodically and different brief informative videos on the main findings of the project. Follow us on Twitter for updated information and visit our website to know more about our data and recent publications.
A plurality (37 percent!) of the British electorate have voted to leave the European Union. From any rational standpoint, the result appears disastrous and self-harming, but given the popular sense that a small elite has gained from transnationalism at the expense of the rest, we are not at all surprised. Support for Leave was strongest in communities that have had the least benefit from transnationalism – the Midlands, the North-East, and the North-West of England. Less educated people in these regions voiced their anger with an elite that was regarded as out-of-touch with the cultural and economic insecurities that have intensified over the past decade or more. Support for Remain, by contrast, was strongest in Scotland, Northern Ireland, and the urban regions of England.

This is consistent with a recent paper that we co-authored on how the economic and refugee crisis have shaped political conflict in Europe (available at www.euengage.eu/publications).

Gary Marks and Liesbet Hooghe
University of Amsterdam

It was to me somewhat disconcerting to discover, once the results of the British referendum became clear in the morning of June 24, that nobody had really figured out what to do next in the case of a yes to Brexit. The possibility of a yes vote had seemed so unlikely. No-one really imagined that a majority of voters in the UK really wanted to leave. So there is considerable interest in this incoming first wave of a survey of the general public and of business leaders, which may help to shed some light on what happened and why.

We were able to straddle our initial sample over the British referendum period, surveying 1000 citizens in each country before and 1000 after the referendum results. We hope to use this unique opportunity to study the short-term effects of Brexit on a cross-section of the European population in order to see how fears around immigration and also worries about the economic cost of leaving Europe played out across the British population during the Brexit campaign and the way in which the outcome of the referendum has eventually impacted on attitudes toward Europe, both in the UK and in the other nine European countries we have been studying in the EUENGAGE project.

Kenneth Benoit
London School of Economics

Pierangelo Isernia
University of Siena
## PROJECT EVENTS

### YEAR 2015/2016

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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| **7 MARCH 2015** | **TECHNICAL MEETING**  
TNS, Square François Riga 30  
Schaerbeek, 1030 Belgium  
Technical meeting of WP leaders to discuss practical issues and plan the timing of WPs 1, 6 and 8. |  |
| **8/9 MAY 2015** | **PROJECT KICK-OFF MEETING**,  
University of Siena, Siena, Italy  
Meeting with all the partners to validate all the activities for the starting of the EUENGAGE project. |  |
| **19 NOVEMBER 2015** | **COORDINATORS’ DAY**,  
European Commission,  
Place Madou, Saint-Josse-Ten-Noode, 1210 Belgium  
Event hosted within the conference “Changing Europe - what the research in social sciences and humanities tell us about changing Europe”. |  |
| **26 FEBRUARY 2016** | **GENERAL ASSEMBLY**,  
University of Siena, Siena, Italy  
Coordination meeting among all the partners of the Project. |  |
| **13 MAY 2016** | **REVIEW MEETING 1**,  
RESEARCH EXECUTIVE AGENCY,  
16 Place Rogier, 1210 Brussels  
First Review Meeting of the EUENGAGE Project. |  |
| **21 JUNE 2016** | **TEXT ANALYSIS WORKSHOP**,  
University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, Netherlands  
A 2-day conference at which best practices in applied work, new methodologies and findings from text analysis are exchanged and discussed. |  |
The EUENGAGE project has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme with the goal to inquire into the current tensions between supranational EU governance and popular mobilisation at the national level, critically questioning EU driven policies and EU legitimacy, and to propose remedial actions based on sound empirical research on the relationship between public opinion, national and supranational political elites.

“The EUENGAGE project identifies in the conflicting messages emanating from the functioning of political representation a critical and urgent problem for the future of the EU”.

In this perspective it proposes to set up an interactive, dynamic, multilevel and replicable quasi-experimental research design. Using a variety of instruments and techniques, it will allow not only to study the process of representation in vivo, but also to experiment how innovative and efficient interactions between citizens and politicians can increase the awareness of citizens of the common problems of the Union, and the ability of the European leadership to respond innovatively to the discontent of public opinion.

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