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CONFERENCE REPORT**ECPR GENERAL CONFERENCE IN HAMBURG, 22–25
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The European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) is a scholarly association which was established in 1970. The ECPR gathers 350 institutional members of leading universities from 50 countries. The ECPR supports the training, research and international co-operation of political scientists through its conferences and method schools, as well as offers a range of prizes, providing funding opportunities for ECPR members. It also publishes book series and three leading journals in the ECPR Press.

The ECPR General Conferences have been held every other year in different European cities since 2001. From 2014 it has been an annual event. The ECPR remains Europe's largest annual gathering of political scientists, attracting more than 2,000 scholars from around the world and at all stages of their careers. The academic programme every year covers a wide range of political science subjects, creating a platform for lively discussions, the exchange of ideas and the best thinkers in the discipline.

The 2018 General Conference was held at the Universität Hamburg in northern Germany. There were 78 research sections this year, and each included between one and 40 panels. There were 515 panels in total. The ECPR featured four panels on *Open Scholarship*; *Gender and Diversity in Political Science*; *EPS Debate: Teaching Populism in the Era of Trump*; and *Political Values and Norms Shaping Political Behaviour: Evidence from Comparative Social Research*.

The plenary lecture was given by Reiner Forst, professor of Political Theory and Philosophy in the Department of Political Science and the Department of Philosophy at Johann Wolfgang Goethe University, Frankfurt am Main. His lecture was titled *Normativity and Reality: Thinking Politically About Politics*. During the lecture, Prof. Forst asked a crucial research question: if social and political reality is a reality of justifications, what distinguishes better justifications from worse ones – and what distinguishes different forms of exercising power?

The tradition of the ECPR General Conference is the organization of four roundtable discussions, two of which are the works of the local organisers. One of this year's roundtables was titled *Cosmopolitan Metropolis and Parochial Hinterlands: A New Social Cleavage* was an attempt to answer the questions: What explains the push towards populism

and the phenomena of “democratic regression”? Are these explanations all the same for Poland, France, Great Britain, Germany, the Netherlands, Scandinavia, the United States and Turkey?

The roundtable on *Multilateralism in Crisis: The Re-Nationalisation of Governance and the Emergence of a Neo-Westphalian Order* dealt with the consequences of moving away from multilateralism and putting emphasis on the role of the nation-state as the principal unit of decision-making.

The roundtable titled *When Does Teaching Matter in Academic (Career) Development?* discussed the increasing trend to distinguish between research and teaching job profiles, and the issue of higher education systems, which on one hand emphasise the importance of teaching, and on the other hire according to publication records.

During the roundtable titled *Political Communication in a Post-truth Era: Much Ado About Nothing?*, researchers of political communication and journalism discussed the latest developments with respect to post-truth politics, dissected its effects and analysed implications for future research.

The exhibition of books and software is a popular feature of the General Conference, providing a natural meeting place for participants between sessions and an ideal opportunity for them to browse through recently published work. Due to the size of the General Conference, with some 2,500 political scientists coming together from across the world, this is also the perfect opportunity for publishers to speak to potential authors about book proposals and journal articles. There was also an opportunity to meet editors from *European Political Science* (EPS), published in partnership with Palgrave Macmillan; the *European Political Science Review* (EPSR), published in partnership with Cambridge University Press; the *Political Research Exchange* (PRX), published in partnership with Routledge, Taylor & Francis; the *Political Data Yearbook* (PDY) published in partnership with Wiley; and the Comparative Politics book series, published in partnership with Oxford University Press.

During the conference, there were also 28 Standing Groups meetings organised. The ECPR Standing Groups organise significant subdisciplines or broad research themes over a longer time period. They have a sizeable membership base and offer a wide range of activities, such as summer schools, presenting awards and publishing newsletters and journals.

The Hamburg ECPR General Conference was attended by four participants from the Institute of Political Science of the University of Wrocław.

Karol Chwedczuk-Szulc presented a paper titled *Pax American Meets Pax Europaea – Comparative Study of Compound Politics in Crisis: United States and European Union* as a part of the panel on *Contending Approaches to European Integration*. Chwedczuk-Szulc's main argument was that, in the middle of the 19th century, the American project found itself in a predicament broadly comparable to the European predicament of today. In the American case, it took the Civil War to provide a forceful resolution of the growing tensions. Chwedczuk-Szulc describes the USA as a superpower in terms of hard-power, mostly in the military and economic spheres, and the EU is as a “soft-power/normative empire” based on culture, values and good governance [Del Sarto, 2015]. The conclusion from this comparative research is that the analysed polities are in some aspects similar and in some other aspects different.

Michał Kuś, in the panel titled *Patterns of Political Participation and Legitimacy*, analysed the current situation of Polish media and journalism, which have undergone significant changes caused by the reforms conducted by the conservative Law and Justice government. According to Kuś, growing divisions and conflicts between political parties and society groups have been recently supported by external media pluralism and reflected with polarisation and radicalisation of journalistic communities. In his paper *Media Accountability Meets Media Polarisation: A Case Study from Poland*, he argued that weakness of media accountability might be seen as critical when explaining the low level of journalistic professionalization, leading to the undermining of standards, values and practices of professional media-making alongside polarisation of Polish society.

Agnieszka Makarewicz-Marcinkiewicz took part in the panel titled *The Challenges of LGBT Politics*. In her presentation on *Gender Recognition in Poland as a Process of Social Exclusion*, Makarewicz-Marcinkiewicz pointed to the one of the social issues taking place in so-called democratic state's law emphasizing the rule of law and equality under the law. The author demonstrated that transgender citizens in Poland experience legal social exclusion. In Polish law, the issue of normative gender discrepancies with the actual biological sex or mental gender – defined in the project as gender identity – has never been explicitly regulated. The paper explored the draft Act on Gender Recognition that was vetoed by the President of Poland and the controversy associated with this fact. It attempted to demonstrate the indispensability of legislation in the field of gender recognition for the dignified, equitable social functioning of people with mental and biological gender incompatibility.

Piotr Sula participated in the panel on *The Study of Party Entry and Exit in Old and New Democracies* and presented his paper titled *Small Parties in Central and Eastern Europe*. His speech presented small parties that have existed in Central and Eastern Europe over more than two decades. Sula claimed that although the concept of a small party seems to be blurred, it is still possible, using quantitative measures, to select a sample of the most influential ones in last three decades. Some of these parties managed to enter their respective coalition cabinets. However, the majority of small parties in the region were not able to survive and many of them could take part only in one electoral race. The presentation was focused on 26 cases of parties that lasted throughout the analysed period.

The next ECPR General Conference will take place in Wrocław on 4–7 September 2019. There is a two-stage process for submitting proposals to the academic programme. The first stage is a call for sections, which starts on 17 September and will last until 19 November, 2018. The following criteria are used to evaluate sections: the quality of the proposal, the experience and competence of section chairs and the participation potential. The second stage, from 5 December, 2018 to 18 February, 2019 is a call for full panels and individual papers. Section chairs will evaluate all panel and individual paper proposals in their section. They will also allocate individual paper proposals to panels as well as chairs and discussants for the panels. The local organiser, the Institute of Political Science of the University of Wrocław, hopes to contribute to the opportunity for ECPR members to present research to peers with common scientific interests and to benefit from the discussions.