

## **Objectives of the ECREA Temporary Working Group “Communication and the European Public Sphere”**

The academic inquiry about the European public sphere is situated at the crossroad of political sciences and communication studies. The concept started to be heavily investigated in the last two decades, mainly focusing on two perspectives prominent in the public debate: the institutional one (structures, officials, treaties, norms, etc.) and the citizens' union. Investigating the European public sphere has proven to be a very challenging endeavor, both theoretically and empirically. The academic literature opens three main paradigms of interpretation of the European sphere: the homogeneous European public sphere, the Europeanized national public spheres, and the *ad-hoc*, fluid public sphere, created as aggregates of opinions around issues and common concerns at the European level. At this point, several other actors become particularly important in the matter: media, civil society, and political actors. What are their roles in the construction (or deconstruction) of a European public sphere, and how did the global crisis affect the credibility and legitimacy of the European project itself?

The Temporary Working Group “Communication and the European Public Sphere” seeks to promote theoretical and empirical interdisciplinary work on how various communication practices impact upon the emergence of a European public sphere and, also, on the creation and/or consolidation of the European identity. The TWG also aims to significantly add to the scholarly debates and policy-making related to the development of a European public sphere. The constructive discussions and the collaborative work promoted by the TWG will:

- contribute to the literature in the field by opening up new research directions and by exploring new theoretical frameworks that explain the existence and functioning of a European public sphere;
- examine the relationship between communication practices - as carried out by both mainstream and new media, political parties, EU officials, European institutions, groups of interests, etc. - and conceptualizations of European citizenship, identity, and solidarity;
- investigate how engaged citizenry impacts upon the process of articulating a European collective identity;
- explore various models of collective identity (i.e. civic, cultural, instrumental) that extend beyond citizenship and nationality;
- analyze the EU communication phenomena in the context of the crisis (i.e. the emergence of Eurosceptic attitudes, the EU's crisis of legitimacy);
- design new empirical investigations of both mainstream and new media visibility and framing of EU-related topics;

- stimulate interdisciplinary approaches to the topic by encouraging dialogue between communication and media studies, sociology, political science, etc.;
- establish and consolidate an international community of scholars interested in this topic;
- involve and encourage doctoral candidates and junior researchers to pursue their scientific interests in this field;
- disseminate the work resulting from the activities of the TWG (conferences, workshops, etc.) to the academic community and the public at large.