

ProSEPS WG1 meeting. Unitelma La Sapienza, Rome (Italy), October 2017

After a word of welcome and a round of presentation, the aims of the meeting are reminded. While the directory of European political scientists is being prepared, other working groups have worked on the questionnaire to be sent to European political scientists.

Questionnaire

WG leaders propose to include a limited number of questions to be added in the current version of the questionnaire. The discussion of the proposed questions have concluded in the following results:

A general agreement evolved that the questionnaire include a question about the academic “self identification” of the respondent which can be best formed by proposing a list of disciplines from which scholars in the final section of the questionnaire can choose from (like political scientist, public policy analyst, philosopher, management studies person, economist, etc.). The discussion tackled some aspects of that final section, presented in a work-in-progress version, including the gender identification section.

A general agreement evolved that one or two questions should cover on the respondent’s dominant feature of his/her academic work in terms of ontology/epistemology (positivist, variable-oriented vs. interpretivism, case-oriented research)/methodology (quantitative/qualitative) /territorial coverage (national/international-comparative).

At the same it has been raised that these questions should be carefully formulated as some of the categories are not as clear-cut as they may seem (e.g. comparative vs. national, as national cases are frequently integrated into a broader framework). It has also been raised that these above questions might serve the general evaluation of the state of the discipline in the countries – and these can be done with the help of expert interviews. Expert surveys (just a few per country) might also provide opportunities for comparison: how experts perceive their countries’ performance in these regards and how does this relate to the respondents’ “self-perception”. Who could be the ideal “experts” to be interviewed remains inconclusive and decisions should be made on this aspect at the next core group meeting.

Career patterns and institutionalization

Studying career patterns seem to exceed the scope of WG1. Institutionalization is much more at stake.

After reminding elements of discussion that started in WG1’s Malta meeting in January 2017 and with no privileged definition at hand, an inductive approach to the institutionalization process led WG1 members to shed light on a two-fold dynamics. On the one hand, an identity component seems to be important. This would involve aspects that show how political science has acquired its identity as an independent discipline. It seems clear for comparability a careful selection of indicators has to be pursued. On the other hand, a resource component is present as the

institutionalisation of the discipline depends on the resources while at the same time it creates resources to stabilise and develop its own existence. Some examples have been mentioned like the presence of National journals, including a flagship journal linked to the national political science association (different aspects per journal: number of issues, circulation, changes in the past two decades, number of authors with the distribution of frequency (this can be connected to the performance of National academic communities); the power and resources of national associations; the resources coming from national foundations (research resources as compared to the entire national research budget, or number of research applications to the national science foundations as compared to other disciplines); budget and mobility and publication resources (translation cost, particular supports); libraries, public foundation supports and teaching structures.

As a third aspect it has been emphasized that while the institutionalization process has been tackled at least partly in previous scholarship in national or comparative studies run at the European level, a potentially innovative contribution could be given with a focus on the des-institutionalization process under the pressure of a) legal reforms, b) financial cuts and c) political pressure, the latter being seemingly a feature more characteristic of contemporary Central and Eastern Europe. This raises a lot of discussion. While in line with the previous collective contribution in Malta, there is no clear conceptual development on the notion of institutionalization (nor des-institutionalization) based on previous scholarship. The dimension of identity and resource in institutionalization might be ill-conceived when related to the dynamics of a discipline. The time frame taken in consideration is not clearly identified. As for the next step to develop a theory driven and comparatively relevant institutionalisation framework former scholarship has to be more systematically included. In addition to the “classic’ political science country based comparative books (discussed in Malta) the INTERCO-SHS project deserves attention as they have put forward a handbook of indicators for the institutionalization of social science disciplines. Nevertheless as that project had a different scope: was more all-encompassing in terms of discipline, which implies that its categories may not equally well-suited for the study of political science, and much more restrictive in terms of territorial coverage, all this leaves us a lot of space to offer new stocks of knowledge thanks to the expertise of WG1.

Possibly the institutionalisation framework can contain a set of 3 categories: organization (dealing with particular institutions such as universities, faculties, departments, research centres and so on), teaching (e.g. BA, MA, PhD programs) and research outputs (journals, publishing houses and so on).

To conclude some organisational matters were discussed:

- institutionalization framework to be developed by WG1 for December 2017
- country reports for early March 2018 on that basis
- the principle of 2 STSM to be advertised for the coming period with respect to the theoretical and empirical aspects institutionalisation