



**2019 Report**  
**Working Group 3**

***Social visibility and Impact  
of European Political Scientists***

## ***Introduction***

This report<sup>1</sup> focuses on the issues at the core of the WG3 elaboration: public (social) visibility and impact of European political scientists. A broad literature has been already produced over the years on the overall question of impact of Political Science [John 2013; Stocker et al. 2015]. However, a systematic effort of empirical and comparative assessment of the phenomenon is still missing at the global level and, to a large extent, even in the European context. The work of Proseps WG3 has been mainly devoted to fill this gap.

During the first two years of the Action, most of the work of WG3 has been devoted to the preparation of the Proseps Survey of European Political Scientists and to the consequent elaboration of the data gathered thanks to this survey. In parallel, the WG3 has developed a qualitative assessment of different forms of social visibility and impact, working in team with the other WGs of this Action. In particular, together with WG1 we have gathered a common set of data on the state of Political Science in the European countries, while we have discussed with WGs 2 and 4 the implication of internationalization and policy advocacy in terms of social visibility and impact. The main outcomes of the WG3 work, so far, have been the following:

1. an in-depth technical analysis of the Survey results, including reliability tests, analysis of weighted and non-weighted data, analysis of standard deviation and variance; discussion of indexes and proxies about relevance and degree of social penetration of political science in Europe;
2. a discussion on individuating and analysing a few “country case studies” about the state of Political Science’s visibility in Europe.

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<sup>1</sup>This report is one of the deliverables of the COST ACTION (CA15207) *Professionalization and Social Impact of European Political Science*. COST ACTIONS are a Horizon 2020 scheme geared towards developing collaboration and knowledge exchange between scholars across Europe and beyond. As such, the COST scheme is not a primarily research-related scheme and does not provide any funding for conducting research. The present report has been possible thanks the collaboration between the members of the Working Group 3 *Public Visibility and Impact of European Political Scientists*. The group has been coordinated by Prof. Luca Verzichelli (University of Siena) and José Real Dato (University of Almeria). Giulia Vicentini (University of Bologna) has collaborated with the two coordinators in the drafting of the report. The list of WG3 participants include the following experts: IoannisAndreadis, YannisTsirbas (Greece); TomaBurean (Romania); Dario Cepo (Croatia); NemanjaDžuverović (Serbia); OlafurHardason (Iceland); Gabriella Ilonsky (Hungary); JānisIkstens (Latvia); Petri Koikkalainen (Finland); Christophe Lesschaeve (Luxembourg); Olga Malinova (Russian Federation); Marius Precupetu (Romania); José Real-Dato, Juan Rodriguez Teruel (Spain); Christophe Roux (France); Anna Sroka, Agnieszka Turska-Kawa, (Poland); Luca Verzichelli, Giulia Vicentini (Italy); Simona Guerra (UK).

3. A discussion about the first draft of a special issue proposal to be finalised in the meeting of September 2019 in the Hague, titles *The role of Political Science in Times of Crisis*.

Our Report is organized as follows: in the next section we analyse the themes at the core of WG reflection, both reporting the descriptive data from the Proseps Survey – focussing in particular on the questions connected to the issues of social visibility and impact – and shortly reporting the state of the art on the qualitative assessment we have developed. The final section of this report will be devoted to the main implications for the future studies.

## ***Themes***

### *1. Background data from the 2018 Proseps Survey*

We start with the analysis of social visibility of Political Scientists, showing a first table (Table 1) reporting the distribution of the answers to one of the questions included in the Proseps 2018 Survey: ‘Overall, how do you evaluate the visibility in public debates/discussions of the research produced by political scientists in your country?’.

As we will do for other descriptive analyses (see below) we proceed by producing a number of cross-tabulations, looking to four different control variables: type of occupational status, gender, age, and level of institutionalization and spread of the discipline. As concerning the occupational status, we employ the binary variable (permanent contract vs. non-permanent contract) we have introduced in the Survey. The age is also measure by means of a dichotomous variable separating the Political Scientists born from 1980 onward. Finally, the level of PS institutionalization has been measured by a index of Political Science density (the ratio between the number of university “units” of Political Science indicated by our expert and the overall n. of HEIs in the same country).

As the table shows, the absolute majority of European political scientists believe that PS is quite or enough visible in their countries, but there is a significant percentage (39%) still declaring that very rarely PS research makes it into the public debate. Moreover, more than the half of early-career scholars (namely young people and/or non-tenured, which are significantly

correlated variables) are convinced that PS research is scarcely visible or even not visible at all. Female scholars appear, overall, more optimistic than males on PS public visibility, contrary to respondents from countries where the discipline is assumed to be less developed according to our ratio of PS density in the country. In these countries<sup>2</sup>, the answer “not at all visible” seems to be, in particular, overrepresented.

Tab.1 Overall, how do you evaluate the visibility in public debates/discussions of the research produced by political scientists in your country?

	<i>Non- permanent contract</i>	<i>Young scholars (1980s onwards)</i>	<i>Female Scholar</i>	<i>Low PS density Country</i>	<i>Total</i>
Not visible at all. No political science research ever makes it into the public debate.	37.1%	34.3%	27.8%	43.2%	1.6%
Scarcely visible. Very rarely does some political science research make it into the public debate.	34.2%	33.1%	30.3%	30.5%	39.0%
Quite visible. Occasionally, some political science research makes it into the public debate.	24.6%	24.1%	33.2%	25.1%	45.7%
Very visible. Very frequently political science research makes it into the public debate.	15.8%	15.8%	38.6%	23.7%	12.6%
<i>Total</i>	<i>27.5%</i>	<i>26.9%</i>	<i>32.8%</i>	<i>30.3%</i>	<i>(2257)</i>

A general perception about visibility of the discipline is not necessarily correlated to a similar perception about positive and stable impact on the social and cultural processes. Indeed, while the majority of our respondents is convinced that PS is quite or very visible, 74% of them argue that political scientists have a little impact on the general public in comparison to other academics or public intellectuals (table 2). What has been just said about the skepticism of early-career scholars regarding PS visibility is even more confirmed when we look at perceived impact of political scientists. Non-tenured declaring that political scientists have no impact at all in their

<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of this exploratory analysis, we have considered a “low density” of PS a measure of the ratio (total N of PS Units / Total N HEIs) lower than 0.30. Countries falling into this category are: Malta, Portugal, Romania, Germany, Bulgaria, Croatia, Albania, Czech Republic, Finland, Israel, Russia, Poland, Bosnia, Lithuania, Greece. The measure is clearly a very weak proxy. However, other analyses we run based on alternative measures of low institutionalization (for instance the number of HEIs affiliated to the European Consortium for Political Research by country) gave very similar results.

respective countries are 7 percentage points above the average, while young scholars arguing that political scientists have a considerable impact are largely under-represented.

Tab.2 *Regarding the impact of political scientists in comparison to other academics or public intellectuals, would you say that in your country*

	<i>Non-permanent contract</i>	<i>Young scholars</i>	<i>Female Scholar</i>	<i>Low density PS countries</i>	<i>Total %</i>
Political scientists have no impact at all	34.3	30.3	27.5	31.4	4.8
Political scientists have a little impact on the general public	28.3	28.5	32.5	35.0	73.6
Political scientists have a considerable impact on the general public	22.4	20.0	35.9	33.3	18.6
<i>Total %</i>	27.5	26.9	32.8	30.2	<i>(2257)</i>

Once again, female scholars confirm their greater optimism comparison to the attitude of male political scientists on the impact of the discipline, compared to other academics. Finally, respondents from those countries with a moderate or low density of academic Political Science are much more skeptical on PS impact compared to respondents from countries where the discipline is more established.

The most interesting findings here concerns the analysis by country, as we can notice huge variations across nations, but also important differences between visibility and impact that deserve to be further scrutinized.<sup>3</sup> According to our respondents, PS is particularly visible in Nordic countries, wherein about 90% of political scientists agree that the research they produce is quite or very visible in the public debate. Respondents are also quite optimistic concerning PS visibility in some Western European countries such as UK, Switzerland and Belgium, but also in the Baltic States. On the contrary, Italian respondents are largely the most skeptical on the capacity of PS research to make it into the national public debate, followed by most Central-Eastern Europeans. German and Spanish respondents are also relatively skeptical.

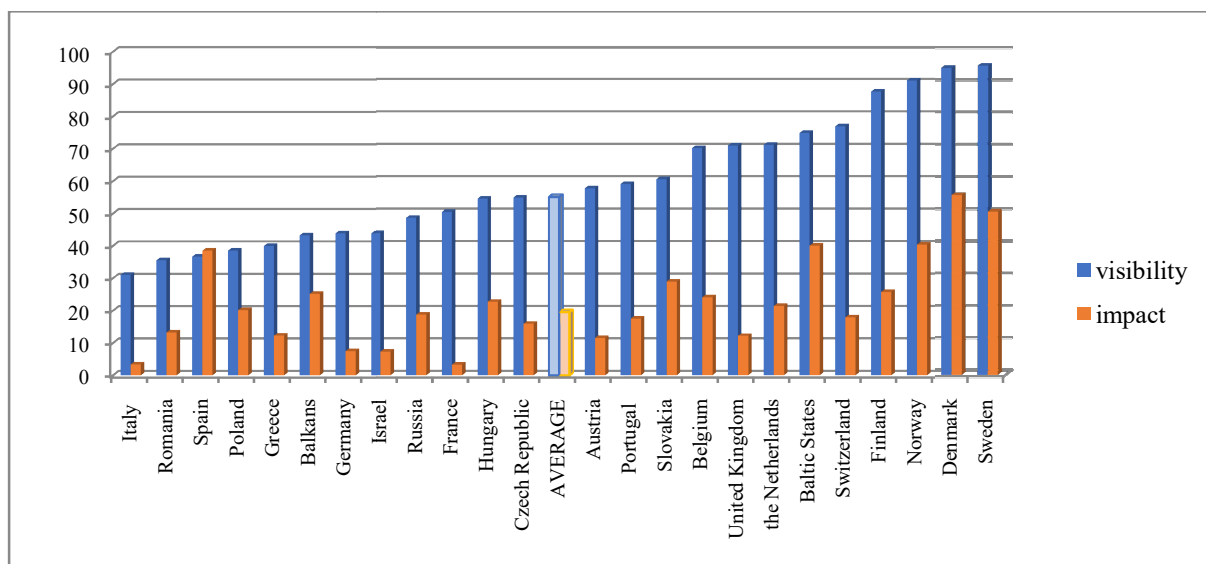
As far as social impact is concerned, Danish and Swedish respondents remains the most optimistic, followed by Norwegian respondents and people from the Baltic States. Also Spanish political scientists are quite optimistic on PS impact. However, respondents from UK,

<sup>3</sup> According to what agreed within the Core-Group of the Action, the analysis by country is based on non-weighted data. However, some aggregated figures we give in the text are calculated after weighting the country size (in terms of population) in order to have a more realistic picture. The weighted analysis has been also chosen for the illustrative data to be produced in the special issue about European Political Science in times of crisis (see below).

Switzerland, the Netherlands and Belgium, who were among the most convinced about PS visibility, appear much more skeptical once we look at PS impact in comparison to other academics. Finally, while 50% of French respondents declare that PS is visible in their country, only 3.3% think that political scientists have a considerable impact compared to other public intellectuals, which is the lowest percentage of all, even worse than Italians who anyway confirm to be most skeptical on PS social relevance, intended as both visibility and impact of the discipline.

Overall, these first analyses demonstrate that visibility and impact are not overlapping concepts: indeed, according to many respondents, the fact of being visible does not mean to be “listened” by a large audience. The relation between visibility and impact seems to be, therefore, somehow complicated. Moreover, the data in Figure 1 also suggest that even if political scientists are present in the public debate, they are much less considered than other academic figures or other people coming from the cultural sector.

Fig.1 *Percentage of respondents considering quite or very visible in the public debates/discussions the research produced by political scientists in their country and percentage of respondents stating that in their country political scientists have a considerable impact on the general public in comparison to other academics or public intellectuals*



Having said that, it may be of some interest to notice that according to half of our respondents the social impact of the work of political scientists has not changed after the 2009 crisis. Yet, 23% think that PS impact has actually increased. Among the latter, the largest share is

represented by Spanish political scientists, as 75% of them declare that the impact of their work on public debate/discussions has increased since 2009, followed (far apart) by Greek respondents. Thus, the impact of PS has been perceived to increase mainly in those countries wherein the negative effects of the economic crisis were stronger.

Fig.2 Percentage of respondents thinking that, since the 2009 crisis and compared with the former situation, the impact of the work of political scientists on public debate/discussions has increased

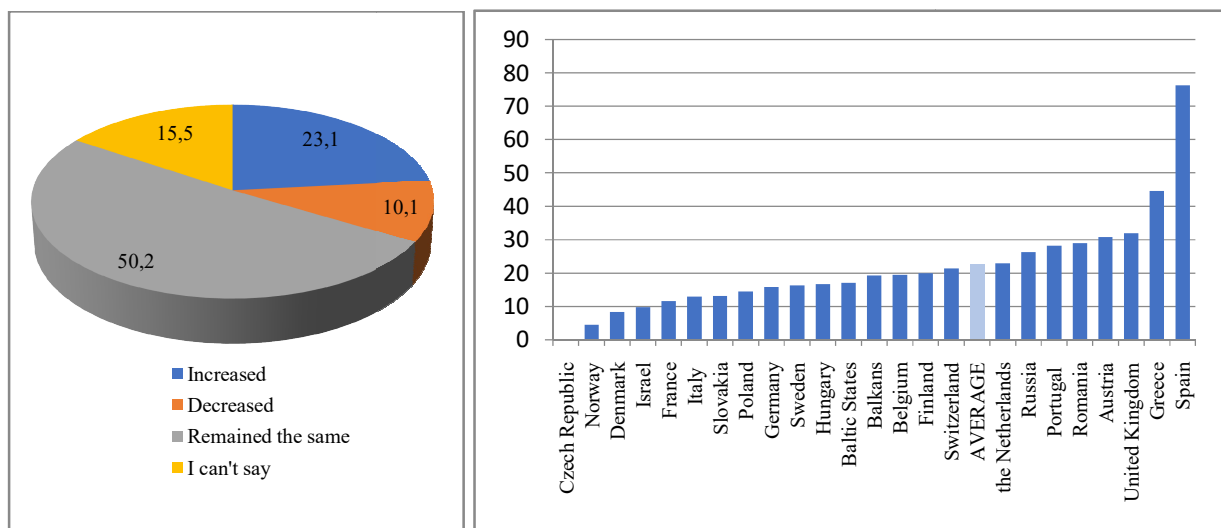


Fig.3 Percentage of respondents who has taken part in public debates in the media over the last 3 years

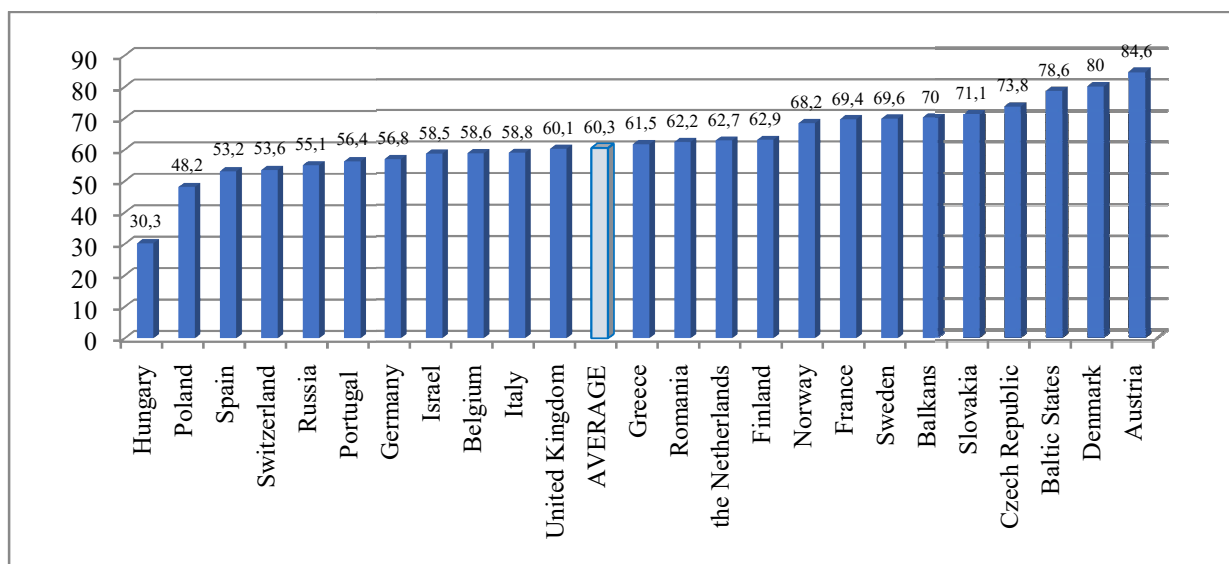


Figure 3 above confirms that in most European countries political scientists are actually visible on public media. In fact, 60% of our respondents declare that they have taken part in public debates on the media over the last three years. The country showing the largest number of political scientists who has participated to public debates on the media is Austria, but even in all the other countries there is an absolute majority of respondents declaring they have done the same. Yet, 70% of Hungarian respondents argue that they did not take part to public debate on the media. Although this cannot be taken as a proxy of the presence of a problem of academic freedom in the country, such a clearly deviant evaluation should be discussed in depth. In fact, we can suspect that this low percentage in comparison with the other countries means that only scholars “aligned” with the current government are allowed to intervene on the national media.<sup>4</sup>

Among the 60% respondents who declare to have somehow taken part in public debates over the last three years, we can see a rather scattered distribution by type of media (table 3). 51% of respondents intervened on newspapers/magazines, while 43% participated to radio programs, while only one third of European political scientists use to participate in TV programs or contribute by online media.

As expected, the interventions of early-career scholars is much lower compared to their more experienced colleagues, especially in terms of contributions to TV and radio programs. Yet, non-tenured and young scholars are (slightly) below average even for what concerns contributions to online media such as Twitter, Facebook and blogs. It may appear quite surprising, as young people are assumed to be much more familiar with these kind of instruments compared to older people, but probably most early-career scholars prefer to use the social networks for entertainment rather than to promote public debates, perhaps because they do not feel enough authoritative compared to more experienced colleagues.

While the under-representation of early-career scholars was largely expected, as TV, radio and newspapers are much more likely to look for more experienced political scientists, the gender unbalance was partly a predictable finding but still a sign of discrimination. In fact, female scholars who took part in public debates on traditional media are about 5 percentage

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<sup>4</sup> Of course, here we are dealing with very small absolute number so it would be inappropriate to try to assert inferences concerning the real population of political scientists in the country, and also we have to consider that Hungarian respondents are younger than the average in our sample, which may indicate that they are not invited in the media because they are still inexperienced and not because of “political reasons”. Nonetheless the evident inconsistency compared to the other countries has to be stressed.

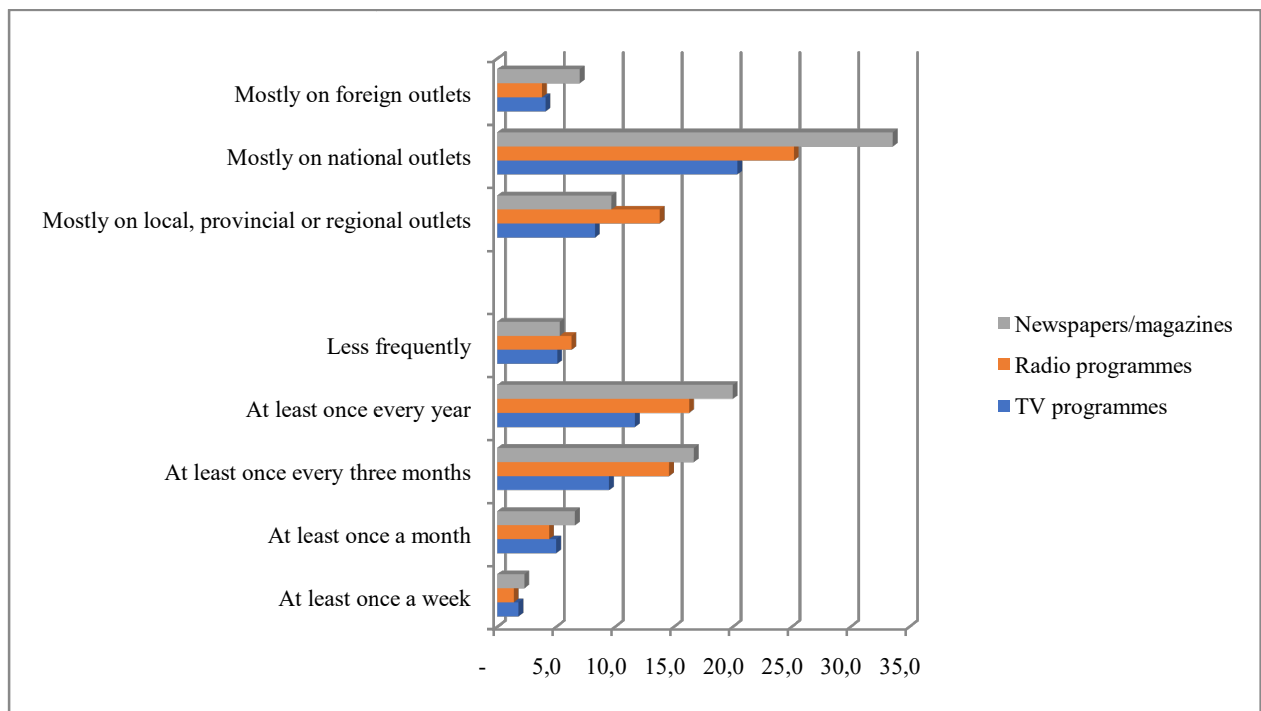


points below their male colleagues, suggesting that TV, radio and newspapers may still consider male scholars more “authoritative” than the female ones. Yet, we have to observe that female respondents are underrepresented also in terms of contributions to social media, which may suggest that the decision to avoid public discussions is also voluntary, not just a consequence of discrimination by media operators, although the two things are likely to reinforce each other.

Tab.3 *In the last three years, did you take part in public debates in the media?*

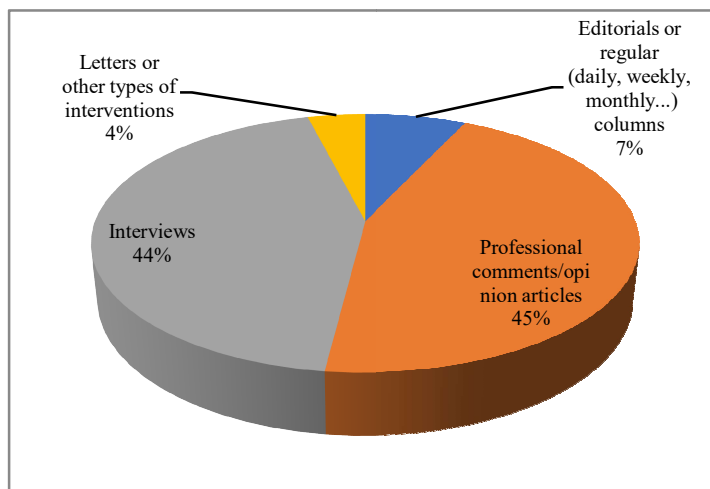
	<i>Non-permanent contract</i>	<i>Young scholars</i>	<i>Female Scholar</i>	<i>Low PS Density countries</i>	<i>Total %</i>
Contributions to TV programs	17.6	17.1	27.2	36.0	33.0
Radio programmes	18.3	19.1	29.3	33.8	43.2
Newspapers/magazines (including outline outlets)	21.2	21.4	27.3	40.3	51.1
Contributions to other online media (twitter. Facebook. blogs. video-blogs. Youtube channels. etc.)	23.0	25.2	27.4	26.8	34.6
<i>Total %</i>	27.5	28.0	32.8	36.8	<i>(2257)</i>

Fig.4 *Average frequency (%) of respondents’ contributions on TV programs, radio broadcasts and newspapers/magazines related to political issues during the last three years and territorial level where these contributions have taken place*



As far as the frequency of media interventions is concerned, figure 4 below shows that most European political scientists use to participate in public debate on the media every three months or once per year. Moreover, national outlets are largely the preferred channel, with a third of respondents declaring that they have intervened on national newspapers over the last three years, while contributions on TV or radio programmes at the national level are somehow

*Fig.5 Types of contribution made to newspapers or mega-zines during the last three years*



less frequent. At the local level, interventions on the radio overcome those on TV or newspapers, while foreign media are largely under-represented. Yet, the few political scientists involved in foreign/international outlets favour newspapers over TV or radio programmes. For what concern the contribution of European political scientists to newspapers or magazines (including online ones and

news portals), the most preferred type of interventions is by opinion articles or interviews (see figure 5). Only 7% of our respondents have regular columns on newspapers, and even a smaller percentage recur to letters or other types of interventions.

As far as social media are concerned, we have already said that only one third of the respondents declare that they took part in public debates by Facebook, Twitter or personal/professional blogs during the last three years. However, most of the respondents who recurred to social media to discuss about political issues do it quite frequently (daily or weekly, or at least once per month), especially Twitter users. Instead, as expected, professional/personal blog users are less assiduous, as the majority of their interventions occur less than once every three months. Overall, the media portray of European political scientists emerging from this section of our survey is the following: political scientists remain by far a “purely academic” professional group, although their media engagement seems to be progressively more compound: relevant variations can be indeed noticed in terms of type of media, type of personal media engagement, as well as by national and cultural origins and by generation.

Fig.6 How frequently have you participated during the last three years in discussions about political issues through Twitter, Facebook, or professional/personal blogs?

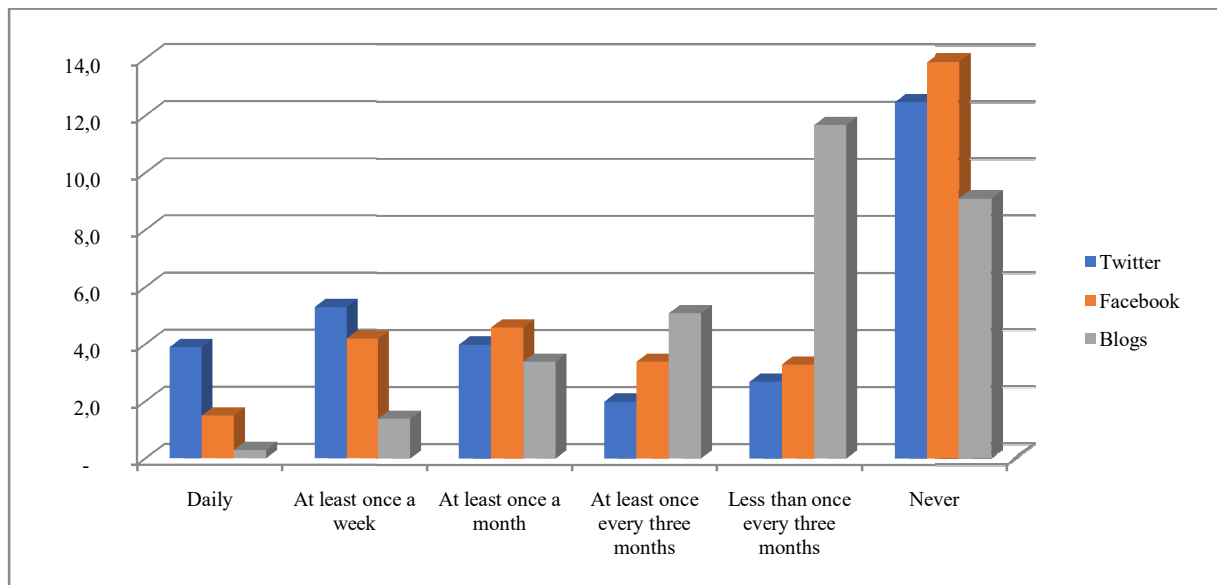
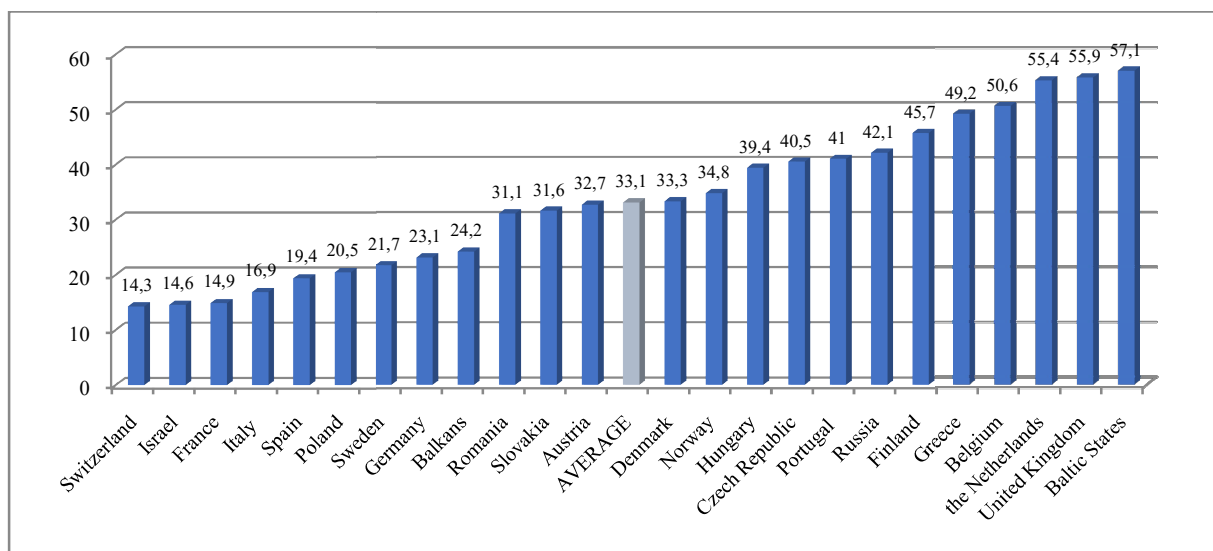


Fig.7 Percentage of respondents placing themselves in positions 6-10 on a scale where 0 means that 'Participation of political scientists to public debate is not recognised at all for career advancement' and 10 means that this is 'very much recognised and relevant'



Almost all the respondents seem to agree (fully or somewhat) that political scientists should engage in public debate since this is part of their role as social scientists. Instead, only 41% of them think that engaging in public debate helps to expand their career options. Finally, the absolute majority of respondents seem to give priority to an “academic” approach to public

visibility and policy advice, declaring that political scientists should engage in media or political advisory activities only after testing their ideas in academic outlets.

The data show a very scattered distribution by country concerning the statement 'participation of political scientists to public debate is recognised and relevant in the country where you work'. The absolute majority of Belgian, Dutch and English respondents (plus respondents from the Baltic States) agree on this statement, while French, Israeli, Italian and Swiss respondents are the most skeptical about it.

## *2. Visibility and Impact of European Political Scientists in Times of Crisis*

As said already, a more specific topic explored by WG3 was the role and the impact of European Political Scientist during a difficult historical phase of crisis. This topic is also connected to the previous analyses on the *relevance gap* of Political Science [Flinders 2018]. However, after an accurate discussion, we have argued that in most of the European countries there is no clear hint about the effective visibility of Political Scientists and even less evident is the perception of the general public opinion about their competences. This has persuaded the WG leaders to deserve more attention to the issue of the engagement of political scientists with specific critical issues related to the broader phenomena that we use to call “crises”.

A first analysis of the Proseps 2018 Survey (tab.3, fig.4) focusing on the personal engagement of respondents –traditional media and social/digital media– reveals that our population is rather broadly distributed, with a good third of European Political Scientists who declare to be substantially inactive in all type of media, while the rest is somehow scattered. Clustering the multitude of variations we can get from the cross-tabulation, we have extracted four general types (table 4) that we call:

1. *Occasional participants* to public debate (this would represent the relative majority of the group).
2. Socially focused Political Scientists (a minority of about 8% dealing mainly with social media).
3. *Traditionally Focused* Political Scientists (a minority of about 5% using mainly the classical mean of participation to the debate, for instance columns or radio/tv interview).

4. *Elite participants* to the debate (a tiny minority of about 5% who command and often use both traditional and digital media).

This allow us to say that, vis-à-vis the emerging challenges and the complexity of policy making, European Political Scientists do not show a coherent attitude. In this context, the WG members have tried to carry on a more in-depth study of what Political Scientists do when a crisis emerge. The discussion during the meeting of Sarajevo (September 2018) and Athens (March 2019) has started from this general point. A typology of “crises” has been developed in a way to capture very different contexts where the competence and the visibility of Political Scientists could be differently noticed. Such a typology has been summarized in Table 5.

Table 4. *European political scientists’ participation in public debate (cell percentages)*

		Participation in digital media (Twitter, Facebook, blogs)						
		Extremely active (once a week, in all media types)	Very active (once a week, at least in one media type)	Moderately active (once a month, at least one media type)	Occasionally (less frequently, in at least one media type)	Inactive	Missing	Total (row)
Participant in traditional media (TV, radio, newspapers)	Extremely active (once a month, in all media types)	0.04%	0.98%	0.40%	0.22%	1.11%		2.75%
	Very active (once a month, at least in one media type)	0.00%	3.15%	1.15%	1.37%	4.26%		9.93%
	Moderately active (once every three months, at least one media type)	0.31%	4.43%	2.39%	4.43%	8.87%		20.43%
	Occasionally (less frequently, in at least one media type)	0.04%	3.15%	1.99%	5.41%	15.43%		26.02%
	Inactive	0.04%	0.53%	0.00%	0.00%	36.84%		36.84%
	Missing	0.00%	0.00%	0.53%	0.80%	0.27%	1.86%	4.03%
	Total (column)	0.44%	12.23%	6.47%	12.23%	66.76%	1.86%	100.00%

Table 5. *Types of «political crises» from the past decades*

	<i>Main Focus</i>	<i>Examples</i>
<i>System in crisis</i>	<i>Constitutive principles and structural fundamentals of national or supranational polities</i>	<i>UK Brexit</i>  <i>Catalonia crisis in Spain</i>
<i>Institutional crisis</i>	<i>Major reforms in key domestic political institutions and/or State structures</i>	<i>Constitutional Reforms</i>  <i>Welfare reforms</i>  <i>Debate on Unitary-decentralised administrative systems</i>
<i>Policy-related critical changes motivated by exogenous factors</i>	<i>Specific policy making</i>  <i>International treaties</i>	<i>Migration Crisis</i>  <i>Security-issue Crises</i>  <i>Ireland-UK relations after Brexit</i>

In short, this rough taxonomy has allowed us to discuss the changing (or unchanged) impact of Political Science in a variety of context: systemic crises with immediate effects on the fundamentals of the “res public”, institutional crises with strong demands for new “policy paradigms”; critical changes due to the impact of exogenous factors, like the migration crisis, or the consequences of Brexit in different European realities. During the Athens meeting (March 2019) a few reports have been discussed. On this basis, an introductory article has been drafted by José Real Dato and Luca Verzichelli, who launched a call for papers within the Proseps community. After a few months, the special issue proposal titled “Out of the Ivory Tower? Political scientists’ role in times of crisis” was ready. It will be sent out for submission to a professional journal after the discussion in the Hague (September 2019). The collection of papers has been already started and at the moment we draft this report the following submission have been gathered:

- ***Down from the “Ivory Tower”? Yes, But... Italian political scientists and the constitutional referendum campaign*** (Andrea Pritoni and Giulia Vicentini)
- ***Tackling the challenge of liberal democracy in Israel: The role of Political scientists*** (Michal Neubauer-Shani)
- ***Forced out of the ivory tower: Finnish political scientists in the 2010s*** (Petri Kokkalainen)
- ***Spanish political scientists and the political crisis in Catalonia*** (Esther Martínez-Pastor, José Real-Dato, Juan Rodríguez-Teruel)

- ***Scholars and the British referendum: The case for Brexit*** (Simona Guerra and Oliver Daddow)
- ***Political Science Researchers' Visibility in the Public Debate in the Time of Crisis: the Case of Poland*** (Agnieszka Turska-Kawa and Anna Sroka )

## ***Conclusions with recommendations***

On the basis of the data gathered and of the discussion developed until now within WG3, we can now delineate three main general reflections.

At first, the idea of «public visibility» of Political Science is still rather vague and somehow differentiated across European countries. This seems to be due mainly to a number of historical and country-specific factors. Among these, long-term institutionalization of the discipline should be surely indicated as the most relevant factor of variability. However, a more general picture of fragmentation emerges from the Proseps 2018 Survey data. In some countries, the idea of social and public visibility of the discipline varies among generations and across different groups of scholars. Further in-depth analyses will have to be produced to better explore these specific factors, that have to be connected to the reputation of social sciences, to the widespread perception of professional «duties» and probably to the social status of the profession of academic [Kwiek 2018].

A second reflection concerns the different perceptions of «social visibility» and «impact». As argued above, this difference has to be connected to the different values assumed by national and generational cohorts of respondents: the majority of European Political Scientists think that the discipline is still quite visible. However, most of these scholars also think that the overall impact of political science remains rather modest across Europe. Our analysis reveals that early-career scholars show to be rather skeptical about the impact of the discipline. This, once again, brings the problem of the sustainable perception of the social and professional status of political scientist back on the debate.

Our last reflection is about the distribution of the preferences of European political scientists concerning the investment of their time in creating condition for strengthening the visibility and the impact of discipline. Our analysis started from an overall picture of the survey results. In particular, we have observed the high percentage of «inactive scholars» who probably invest

most of their time in the most typical «Ivory Tower» activities – mainly teaching and organizing research. However, some first cross-tabulations and descriptive analyses show that significant minorities of political scientists tend to move to different form of proactivity – that we have called «traditionally focused» or «socially focused» media activity. These two attitudes probably reflect the very different approaches followed by European political scientists. The first approach, in particular, should be connected to a public intellectual rather active in the debate but relatively uninterested to the daily media manipulation and to the evolution of political agenda using the «sound bytes» approach. The second approach is rather connected to new-media people who want to flank other actors – and particularly professional journalists and opinion makers – in the continuous manipulation of the political agenda.

The analysis we have done on a number of case studies concerning the role of political science in «times of crisis» confirms the great deal of variability across country. Once again, this variability should be explained in terms of country-specific factors and even looking to the self-perceptions of different generational cohorts. Scholars seem more or less prone to take the field during different moment of crisis – systemic crises, institutional crises, policy-related crises. However, a general problem of impact seems to emerge in most of the case studies we are exploring. If the «publish or perish dilemma» seems to be the most relevant factor of isolation for the younger cohorts of scholars, a broader cultural bias against a common perspective of pro-activism of political scientists remains evident in the European community. This has still to be connected, on the one hand, to the traditional multitude of distinct senses of identity within the discipline [Almond 1996]. On the other hand, the limited time devoted to civic engagement and «third mission», as well as the limited sense of eclecticism of the scholars in many European realities [Capano and Verzichelli 2016] surely represents another crucial element of inertia.



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