

## **Abstracts workshop: Understanding Responsiveness in European Union Politics**

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Based on work co-authored with Bart Joachim Bes (Lund University) and Martijn Schoonvelde (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam)

Supranational decision-making is confronted with an increasingly attentive and often also rather sceptic and mobilized public. How do key European executives cue their constituencies on European integration in the context of this public politicization? Extant scenarios imply diverging and rather static predictions. Politicization is seen to induce political executives to either only undermine, obfuscate, or to defend European integration in their public communication.

This paper aims at integrating these perspectives by specifying varying actor motivations under different configurations of Euroscepticism in public opinion and partisan competition. We test our expectations with an automated text analysis that extracts the sentiment and the complexity attached to European integration in almost 9,000 executive speeches during the onset of the Eurocrisis 2007-15.

We initially find that national leaders undermine European integration more strongly when public opinion turns more sceptical, while European Commissioners defend it more strongly. Yet, this intensifies disproportionately with a growing share of Eurosceptics in the domestic electorate, implying possibly self-reinforcing dynamics. Responses to public Euroscepticism are furthermore moderated by the strength of decidedly Eurosceptic parties, but in surprising ways. Where such parties absorb the Eurosceptic potential in public opinion, the communication of national leaders turns less negative again. Both Commissioners and national leaders, finally, obfuscate European integration more strongly when they face strong Eurosceptic parties at home. These preliminary findings add considerable nuance to extant scenarios of the long-term consequences of EU politicization.