

# Understanding Responsiveness in European Union Politics

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The key ingredient of the democratic legitimacy of political decision-making is whether political actors respond to the demands and preferences of the public. The study of political representation in the national arena has offered a large literature on whether and how governments and political parties are responsive to changes in public opinion. Yet, how does this work in the European Union (EU)? Whether and how EU actors and EU policy can be responsive to citizens' demands is a nascent research agenda. Yet, a lot of questions are hitherto unanswered. For instance, the responsiveness of which actors should be studied (EU Commission, EU Council, European Parliament or national governments?) And to which public(s) are these actors responding: EU public at large or national constituencies?

Answering these questions are crucial for the research agenda on EU responsiveness. The workshop took up this challenge and approached these questions from multiple perspectives. The organizers specifically chose to invite scholars working on different aspects of politics and policy-making in the EU. As a result, the workshop was an in-depth conversation between scholars rooted in comparative politics, international relations, political communication and public administration.

The format of the workshop was centered around a few presentations in combination with discussion groups. Contrary to a regular political science conference or workshop setting, the main aim of the presentations was to fire upon broader discussions relevant to different aspects of the responsiveness of a wide variety of actors in EU politics. This worked really well. The fact that presenters had a lot of time to share their ideas and that there was ample time for discussion allowed the debate to transcend the very specific debates regarding research design which usually dominate conferences.

The working group format, which seems to be an integral part of the Lorentz Center approach, also produced relevant and thought-provoking discussions among the scholars. Although this format is rather unusual from a social science point of view, participants generally felt the working groups achieved their aim.

All in all, the workshop stimulated the formation of a growing consensus on what EU responsiveness is and how it can be studied. That said, there was also disagreement on how to approach political responsiveness in the EU setting – both theoretically and empirically. Currently, we explore the opportunities to crystallize our workshop discussions through the publication of a number of contributions in a journal's debate section.

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