TC TransCrisis

Enhancing the EU's Transboundary
Crisis Management Capacities

TransCrisis Newsletter

The EU in an existential crisis? Backsliding as an underlying trend across the EU

The current crisis of the EU has been called 'existential'. One dimension of this crisis has been identified as member state backsliding – the intentional deviation from the norms and formal provisions of the acquis that have initially been agreed. Beyond the headlines about 'illiberal democracy', is there evidence of such backsliding in the EU? One TransCrisis WP (WP5) at the Central European University has explored the patterns that have emerged over the last decade. Preliminary findings in the areas of rule of law, corruption and equality provide for a troubling picture. First, it is indeed the case that the 'usual suspects' Hungary, Poland, Romania and Bulgaria represent the most serious 'backsliders' in the EU. However, the evidence of backsliding is far more varied – there is considerable evidence that backsliding goes much further than these countries – it is occurring in old and new member states alike. Furthermore, some countries backslide in some dimensions, such as human rights, more than others. Overall, the preliminary findings suggest that while the eye-catching headlines about 'illiberal democracy' may be somewhat exaggerated, the evidence of a widespread patchwork of backsliding points to a far more serious issue: what should the European Union do when ever more member states seek to circumvent or hollow out the rules they have agreed to?

Key tasks for effective transboundary crisis management

TransCrisis develops a better understanding of the existing transboundary crisis management capacities in the multi-level governance context of the EU. Different Work Packages (WPs) focus on distinct types of crises and problem constellations. A uniting theme across the different WPs has been provided by the Crisisplan team from the Netherlands (WP1). Accordingly, transboundary crisis management needs to fulfil a set of seven key tasks:

- Detection: the timely recognition of an emerging threat.
- Sense-making: the collecting, analysing and sharing of information to generate a shared picture of the situation.
- Coordination: the identification of stakeholders and the collaboration among these actors.
- Meaning-Making: the formulation of a key message that offers an explanation of the threat to provide a sense that leaders are in control of the situation.
- Communication: the delivery of a core message to select audiences.
- Accountability: the account-giving in front of relevant public fora.

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The TransCrisis newsletter is also published on the project's website: www.transcrisis.eu.

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TransCrisis Work Package Update

TransCrisis explores different dimensions of European transboundary crisis management, which are studied under a number of Work Packages (WP), progress on WPs is summarised here:

WP1 Understanding Transboundary Crisis Management
WP1 developed a framework for crisis leadership in the context of the European Union. This framework informs all TransCrisis themes. Within WP1, we have produced an Analytical Framework and a Codebook. We have drawn on extensive theoretical and empirical work done by project team members to arrive at an authoritative and functional definition of effective and legitimate transboundary crisis management.

WP2 Studying Political Leaders in the Financial Crisis
WP2 utilises computer-based analysis to assess European political leaders' speeches during the financial crisis and how these speeches respond to changing public moods. As part of WP2, Cognitive Mapping Guidelines and a Cognitive Mapping Coding Manual have been produced and can be found on the TransCrisis website.

WP3 Political leadership, EU institutions and Transboundary Crisis Management Capacity
WP3 consists of 3 sub-WPs that focus on the crisis management capacities of EU institutions:
WP3.1. Crisis Management Capacity in the European Commission, Council of Ministers, and Council of the European Union
This sub-WP considers the institutional resources that are available to these institutions in order to provide political leadership in the context of transboundary crises. Progress on WP3.1 includes building an analytical framework for measuring legitimacy for EU transboundary crisis management. A comprehensive inventory of the three institutions' crisis management capacities has been produced.
WP3.2. Crisis Leadership in the European Parliament
Sub-WP3.2 focuses in particular on the informal agenda-setting power of the European Parliament as the only directly elected body in the EU in crisis management. The team have conducted a literature review on the European Parliament's role in EU economic governance. They have also created a database, including all the EU's economic and financial files (directives/regulations and decisions) between 2008-2014, where all dossiers have been coded according to the type of national and European parliamentary accountability structures in place. These were complemented with qualitative interviews in Brussels earlier this year, and are continuing throughout 2016.
WP3.3. Political Leadership in EU agencies
Through a survey and case studies, this sub-WP explores the role of non-majoritarian EU agencies in transboundary crisis management. The first part of this sub-WP included implementation of a database on the agencies' management board, a literature review of EU agencies and the creation of a survey. The database will be used for sending a survey on the crisis management capacities of the boards.

WP4 Interaction between EU-national administrations in times of crisis
This set of WPs investigate the interaction of EU and national political and administrative systems in transboundary crisis management:
WP4.1. Political Leadership and Crisis Management Regimes
Sub-WP4.1 looks at different domains to explore the interaction between EU and national institutions and how diverse national settings may influence transboundary crisis management responses. The work has concentrated on the key methodological choices on the different crisis management regimes in the four chosen policy domains: youth unemployment, energy infrastructures, invasive species and banking regulation. In November 2016, we will hold a workshop on crisis management regimes with practitioners and project members to consider the emerging findings and discuss crisis management regime in identified policy domains.
WP4.2. Managing the Immigration Crisis
This sub-WP focuses on one particularly salient aspect, immigration, to consider how the EU interacts with an increasingly volatile 'near abroad'. This theme started with an analysis of the EU's management of the migration crisis, focusing on the 'crisis scenario' unit. The succession of four scenarios has been worked up as *best fitting* to the analysis of the migration crisis management in the time period 2011-2015.

WP5: Political Leadership, National Politics, and Transboundary Crisis Management
WP5 explores political leadership at the national level in response to transboundary crises. It investigates the causal links between transboundary crisis management and 'backsliding', as well as the policy options and tools for managing backsliding. As part of WP5, a workshop on 'backsliding' in terms of corruption control, and human rights, equality and social justice in the EU was held in June 2016, a report on this workshop can be found on the TransCrisis website along with a policy paper on mapping backsliding.

Publications

Batory, Agnes (2016) Defying the Commission *Public Administration*, doi: 10.1111/padm.12254

Van Esch, FAWJ (2016) The nature of the European leadership crisis and how to solve it *European Political Science*, doi:10.1057/eps.2015.114

Boin, A and Lodge, M (2016) Designing resilient institutions for transboundary crisis management *Public Administration*, doi: 10.1111/padm.12264

Cabane, L (2016) States of crisis *Risk&Regulation*, summer 2016

Paterok, BP (2016) The refugee crisis and the limits of administration *Risk&Regulation*, summer 2016

Blogs

'On the road to a traumatic Brexit?'
Martin Lodge and Nick Sitter

'Yellow Card to Hungary's Backsliding PM, EU Trans-boundary Crisis on Hold'
Nick Sitter

'Between Norway and a Hard Place - or Singapore ain't Clacton on Sea'
Martin Lodge and Nick Sitter

'UK votes leave, transboundary problems remain'
Martin Lodge and Nick Sitter

'From Rolls Royce to handcart? The future of Whitehall in a Brexit world' Martin Lodge

'More than re-arranging the deckchairs?'
Martin Lodge

'The Unbearable Lightness of Bargaining: the EU, Turkey and the REFUGEES'
Daniela Irrera

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