



LMU - Geschwister-Scholl-Institut für Politikwissenschaft
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Joint IR Speaker Series

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Executive Responses to EU Politicization

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The European Union is increasingly contested in public debates and partisan competition which challenges the often technocratic approach to political cooperation in Europe. Politicization thus makes it highly relevant to ask how key European executive actors – most notably national leaders and European Commissioners – cue their constituencies on European integration. Extant arguments predict widely different responses to politicization: executives are expected to either undermine, defuse, or defend European integration in public. In contrast, the research presented in this talk unpacks executives' incentives under different configurations of public and partisan Euroscepticism in their home countries. The arguments are then evaluated with an automated text analysis that retrieves the sentiment and the complexity that executives attached to European integration in almost 9,000 public speeches during the onset of the Eurocrisis (2007-2015). We find that national leaders faced with a skeptical public opinion rhetorically undermine integration, whereas European Commissioners faced with similar conditions are prone to defend it. These polarizing responses intensify disproportionately with growing public Euroscepticism but they are also moderated by the strength of Eurosceptic parties in surprising ways. In particular, national leaders seem to return to more positive but also less clear signals on European integration once Eurosceptic challenger parties come closer to absorbing their electoral potential. These findings imply that the consequences of politicization for future European integration might not be as simple and uniform as extant arguments suggest.



Dr. Christian Rauh is a senior researcher in the Global Governance Research Group of the Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin (WZB/Berlin Social Science Center). His research focuses on decision-making in the European Commission and the societal politicization of institutions beyond the nation state. His publications include *A Responsive Technocracy? EU Politicisation and the Consumer Policies of the European Commission* (ECPR Press, 2016), *Which Policy for Europe? Power and Conflict Inside the European Commission* (Oxford University Press, 2014; co-authored with Miriam Hartlapp and Julia Metz), as well as articles, inter alia, in the *Journal of European Public Policy*, the *Journal of Common Market Studies*, the *European Journal of Political Research*, and *West European Politics*. Christian Rauh holds a PhD from the Free University, Berlin.

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