


Continuous Construction of resilient social Contracts through societal transformations

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D 3.1. Report of country case methodology

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	3
LIST OF PROJECT PARTNERS	3
1. Introduction	5
1.1. WP3 – constructions and frictions of social contracts	5
Longitudinal and horizontal approach	6
1.2. The CO3 empirical approach: Methodological pluralism	7
1.3. Practical questions	8
2. Methodological summary	10
3. Country cases	13
3.1. Bulgaria	14
3.2. Croatia	19
3.3. Finland	23
3.4. France	34
3.5. Germany	38
3.6. Hungary	43
3.7. Portugal	48
3.8. Sweden	53
3.9. Türkiye	57
3.10. Ukraine	63
3.11. Conclusion	67
3. WP4: a cross-European study of the European elections	68

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

GA Grant Agreement
 EU European Union
 EUP European Union Parliament
 SC Social Contract
 WP Working Package
 WPL Working Package Leader

LIST OF PROJECT PARTNERS

No	Role	Short name	Legal Name	Country
1	COO/ BEN	UH	HELSINGIN YLIOPISTO	FI
2	BEN	UU	UPPSALA UNIVERSITET	SE
3	BEN	CES	CENTRO DE ESTUDOS SOCIAIS	PT
4	BEN	CLS	FONDATSIYA TSENTAR ZA LIBERALNI STRATEGII	BG
5	BEN/ COO	DRI	DEMOS HELSINKI OY	FI
6	BEN	HFD	HOCHSCHULE FULDA-UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES	DE
7	BEN	IBU	ISTANBUL BILGI UNIVERSITESI	TR
8	BEN	UNIZG	SVEUCILISTE U ZAGREBU FAKULTET POLITICKIH	HR
9	BEN	AUP	THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF PARIS	FR
10	BEN	UCU	HIGHER EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENT UKRAINIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY	UA



1. Introduction

The CO3 consortium consists of research teams from eight universities and two research institutes. Our research has been designed to proceed in three different phases. The first phase results in the formation of the CO3 framework for empirical research on medium- and short-term dimensions of social contracts in Europe (D2.2). Phase two focuses on why and when do citizens feel increasingly left out of social contracts, and phase three promotes the resilience of social contracts through citizen involvement and democratic governance. This report is published at the early stage of phase two, which is the locus of work packages WP3, WP4, and WP5. The report introduces CO3's methodological approach and the summarised plans for the country cases in phase two. Since the report functions as a documentation for the project's methodological starting points and diversity, it first introduces the main objectives of WP3 as a whole. Then it proceeds to the initial research plans for each country case and their links to the project's theoretical work in WP2. Finally, there is an overview of WP4, which runs parallel to the theoretical analysis (see chapter 3). The implementation of the plans happens mainly during the second year of the project. The successes and challenges of the methodological approach will be evaluated in connection with the publication of the WP3 country reports in M24.

1.1. WP3 – constructions and frictions of social contracts

In our research plan, the task of WP3 was “to analyse different types of societal and social non-cohesion at different national levels in the case countries”. The objectives of WP3 are as follows:

- 1) To ensure methodological transparency across country cases in support of explaining distinctiveness and points of comparisons. (This objective, T3.1, leads to D3.1.)
- 2) To analyse how contemporary challenges to social contracts have been understood differently in different countries, and how they unfold in different ways on different levels of national contexts and moral communities. (This objective T3.1, also leads to D3.1.)
- 3) To generate new knowledge of the surface-level manifestations and undercurrents of frictions and strengthening elements to the social contracts in different contexts (contributes to T3.2: Social and societal non-cohesions: minorities and majorities; affective polarization; segregation and desegregation, leads to D3.2).
- 4) To develop an understanding of social contracts in contexts through transitions, e.g. from the communist to post-communist era (T3.3 Transitions: post-authoritarian, post-civil war, post-socialist, post-welfare-state social contract, leads to D3.3).

- 5) To analyse the historical legacies and material aspects contributing to the frictions of social contracts (T 3.4 European Borders and colonialism, contributes to D3.3).

This report (D3.1), focuses on the above points 1 and 2. Ensuing reports (which will be published on M24) will tackle points 3, 4, and 5, while benefiting from the theoretical and empirical approaches presented in this report. Although every country case will not be addressed in deliverables D3.2 and D3.3, they will all be addressed in this one, where we examine the contemporary challenges to social contracts, taking into account the general history of the ideas of the social contract in each country case.

All the research teams are guided by the theoretical and historical developments and ideas presented in WP2, in the context of which each team has initiated its research on the deep roots of social contracts.

This document (D3.1) presents the research design and methodological choices used in the empirical case studies of eleven CO3 countries in the ten country case reports¹. The principles and the division of labour that shaped the design of these cases are explained in part 2. of this report.

Our case studies account for key challenges and crises that put pressure on contemporary social contracts in the chosen countries. The cases include EU candidate, member and non-member states, former colonial powers, types of welfare states, post-socialist, post-authoritarian, post-civil war, and post-welfare states, and countries with histories rooted as colonial powers and parts of empires. Our **longitudinal approach** included taking into account the historical legacies and different transitions of the originary social contracts, that can shed light on the foundations and continuous constructions of social contracts.

Longitudinal and horizontal approach

The longitudinal approach is an important point of departure for each team. Examining these different European countries requires careful coordination, which helps us to avoid fragmentation, and ensure a fruitful co-production of knowledge also at the future stages of the project. This task T3.1 is thus aimed at ensuring transparency across country cases and the methods employed, and to find joint points of reflection.

This is why we apply some joint, contemporary perspectives to the development of social contracts in our country cases by constructing **horizontal** research instances. To date, the most important of these horizontal moments has been the WP4, a comprehensive experimental effort, which every team worked on simultaneously during May-June 2024. In practice - and preceding the more in-depth work on country reports - all the teams gathered social media data for four weeks at the eve of and during the 2024 European Election. Once

¹ For a map and overview of the country cases, see the following website:
<https://www.co3socialcontract.eu/about>.

the data from WP4 is linked with other empirical parts of the project, the vast amounts of data collected will bring significant empirical material to the understanding of the state of social contracts in each country under study. Thus, our country reports for WP4 form a basis for analysing the social contract at a particular point in time. WP4 is discussed in more detail below, in points 3.11 and 4.

To sum: in the second phase of CO3 progression, D3.1 is the first of three reports to be generated in the work package WP3, while also contributing to WP4. In the country case studies of this report, we examine challenges to the social contract using a variety of methods, while applying a joint theoretical framework, and studying our topic both longitudinally and horizontally across country cases. Empirically, all our case studies manifest a commitment to methodological pluralism.

1.2. The CO3 empirical approach: Methodological pluralism

In order to study the contemporary challenges to social contracts, we depart from the idea of allowing each team to work from their strengths. What do the participating teams of academics - all prominent experts in their areas and topics² - find it most important to study these challenges to social contracts in their countries? As it is of paramount importance that each team can work from its particular point of departure, we decided to approach the question of which methods to choose organically, which brought us to the idea of methodological pluralism.

Methodological pluralism refers to a theoretical and practical research approach combining theoretical and empirical methods, in which data collection and analysis are conducted from diverse epistemological and ontological communities. This approach adopts diverse methodologies and perspectives to investigate and analyse complex phenomena, such as social contracts (Feyerabend 1975; Roth 1987), acknowledging that different methods often offer complementary and occasionally overlapping insights.

By promoting openness, adaptability, and the integration of approaches across disciplines and contexts, methodological pluralism enables a richer, more nuanced understanding of the multifaceted and dynamic nature of the social contract (Hantrais 2014). The deficiencies and benefits of this approach have been debated (Payne et al. 2004; Hantrais 2013; Morse & Chung 2003). The potential downside of this selected strategy is the weakening of the comparability of social contracts between countries. However, in a large project such as this, methodological pluralism will add to the complexity of our arguments and help to tease out

² CO3 researchers have expertise in numerous disciplines and fields of research, e.g. ethics, social sciences (international relations, political science, European studies, peace studies, security studies, social-environmental studies, human rights, democracy theory, political theory, legal theory, post-colonialism, neo-imperialism, cosmopolitanism), policy, gender, innovation, discourse analysis, conceptual history, social and cultural anthropology, parliamentarism, and citizenship studies.

important analytical points. We have also worked to pre-empt these problems with our longitudinal and horizontal approach.

In practice, methodological pluralism means that each team of experts was given a broad interdisciplinary methodological scope to use the methods they considered best suited to studying their country cases, thus making space for them to lean on their individual methodological strengths (Hantrais 2009; Hantrais 2005).

While the CO3 projects include a broad range of disciplines across social sciences and humanities, the consortium was built to cover expertise on both theoretical and empirical research methodology in social sciences and humanities. It reaches out to manifold epistemic communities, incorporating both historical and contemporary frames of reference from diverse socio-political contexts. Our assumption is that methodological pluralism enables meaningful and in-depth synthesising of findings evading falling into analytical and epistemological bias and fragmentation. The strengths and weaknesses of this approach will be revisited after the WP3 country cases have been completed.

1.3. Practical questions

The purpose of this deliverable is to describe the main research tasks of each team. It also chronicles the baseline and issues we are anticipating in the early stages, and during the second phase of our research. During the M1 to M12, separate CO3 country teams have become a more united team, which shares the project objectives and works towards finding points of synthesis in lively discussions. This ensures that despite the many different perspectives and general broadness of the topic, the project consortium has identified, and works towards, shared goals. These are also regularly discussed in our frequent online gatherings and consortium meetings, as well as shared conferences, such as the Helsinki Hub on Emotions, Populism and Polarisation (HEPPSinki) conferences in Helsinki, and European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) conferences.

This deliverable is thus the first empirical step in the goal already mentioned in the internal document D1.2, Quality Assurance and Risk Assessment Plan, where the WPs 2 to 6 are designed to accumulate knowledge and results along the way, with tasks enabling project synthesis at interim phases. The assurance of the quality of methodology and research design in WP3 has been discussed in D1.2, (especially under title 3.3, where the importance of careful planning, flexible collaboration and clear leadership are emphasized). Risks have been considered for the whole project in the risk mitigation plan, also in deliverable D1.2.

The ethical guidelines for the researchers of CO3 are addressed in our Internal Ethics Plan D1.3. These guidelines are relevant for every team of researchers and for every country case. Since the guidelines for ethical research within the EU (and outside of it) are varying between countries, each team has also, when needed, applied ethical permissions in the countries they work on, and describe this in their country cases below. The project data management

practices follow the guidelines stipulated in D1.4, Data Management Plan, such as complying with the FAIR data management principles and GDPR legislation.

From M1 to M12 the progress of designing the country cases was followed and aided by the Work Package Leaders. In addition to our monthly project meetings, there were three meetings where the progress of each research design and task T3.1 were discussed, and knowledge was shared and exchanged. In addition, the WPL had several guiding discussions with the coordinators from UH and Demos.



2. Methodological summary

Deliverable D3.1 brings to fore the different ways of gathering and discussing the project data. Here, we have established a basis for each team to create their own point of reference. D3.1 is also a window to what the other teams are studying, and the matters they have deemed important. This process has added to the transparency of the project, as well as contributed to the commitment of all teams who are now well aware of what, and how, the other teams are working on.

An important aim of this task has been to encourage cooperation between the CO3 teams. As a result, several new connections and ideas have already been developed by M12 of the project. The methodological approaches are collected in Table 1. below. The table constitutes another practical tool for communication, which helps the researchers exchange experiences, as well as provides examples and inspiration on how to develop each team's chosen methods.

Country	Focus	Method(s)	Data
Bulgaria	Deep roots of the SC; recent adaptations of SC in post-communist BG	Process tracing; focus groups and semi-structured interviews; surveys	Audiovisual material; historical data; data from interviews/focus groups; discourse analytical data; longitudinal data
Croatia	Legacies of historical breaks in the Croatian SCs; impact of EU membership; articulations of post-modern SCs	Discourse analysis; quantitative and qualitative content analysis	Secondary quantitative data; original qualitative data
Finland [A]	Institutional dimension of the SC; formation of political institutions and the shaping of the welfare state, and the politics of care	Literary review and document analysis; interviews; Causal Layered Analysis (CLA)	Corpus of literature; corpus of documents; secondary and original data from interviews
Finland [B]	Integration and inclusion in the SC in Finland; discourses of the Ukrainian community; the interplay between integration and inclusion, and diversity	Discourse studies (discourse theory and analysis); online ethnography	Social Media posts and comments

France	Rising polarization and crisis of representation in France; democratic innovations and their potential for renewal of SCs	Literary reviews; interviews	Secondary data from interviews and surveys; original interview data; corpus of literature
Germany	Current challenges to representative democracy and their influence on citizens' perceptions of democracy and SCs.	Expert interviews; focus groups; typological analysis of transformations of democracy.	Qualitative interview and focus group data
Hungary	Key historical moments related to SC in Hungary, the elements and layers of the current SC	Online ethnography; discourse analysis	Social media posts; media content
Portugal	The interplay between Portugal's transition to democracy, decolonization, European integration and the development of a European eco-social contract, with migratory movements	Literature review and document analysis; expert interviews; online ethnography; focus groups; semi structured interviews; critical discourse analysis	Qualitative interview and focus group data
Sweden	Ethnic minorities and the state of the SC in the transition from post-war welfare state to market-oriented society	Ethnographic fieldwork and participant observation; interviews; media studies; archival studies	Qualitative ethnographic data; qualitative interview data
Türkiye	Short-, medium- and long-term evolution of Türkiye's SC in relation to key historical moments and in response to current overlap-ping crises	Literary review; Quantitative and qualitative social media analysis; qualitative media content analysis; interviews and focus groups	Social media posts; media content; survey data; interview and focus group data
Ukraine	Ukraine's post-soviet transition and the search for a new SC	Literary review; interviews and focus groups;	Corpus of literature; qualitative interview and focus group data

Table 1.

To sum: D3.1 is a key deliverable for WP3 but also for the entire CO3 project. It contains the research designs and methodological plans, which define what, when and how the empirical data is gathered and analysed. The deliverable makes the content of the whole project understandable in a concrete way and provides a valuable collection of information and tools that each project member can use to their benefit. It facilitates methodological reflections,

collaborative opportunities and internal debate throughout the project. Additionally, it presents the methodological contribution of WP4 to the project's data collection.

Despite our various methodological approaches to country cases, the constant internal discussions that we uphold in workshops, seminars and conferences gives us an opportunity to work on them together, and dwell in methodological reflections, which has already created organic collaborations between many of the sub-projects. While at this point (M12) the CO3 is still a work in progress, we have already observed that our approach is leading to fresh and innovative empirical and theoretical insights.

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3. Country cases

The country cases include EU candidates, member and non-member states, former colonial powers, types of welfare states, post-socialist, post-authoritarian, post-civil war, and post-welfare states, and countries with histories rooted as colonial powers and parts of empires. Historical legacies and different transitions in social contract shed light on foundations and continuous constructions of social contracts. The European Union is applied as a case from selected angles, depending on the focus of research in each phase and work package.

These cases were written on a template, where all the teams placed their individual research plans. As the task T3.1 leading to D3.1 is primarily a methodical exercise, a heavy emphasis was put on the methods and their operationalisation. Teams were given a limit of 1500 words as well as word limits for individual tasks within the research plan. To support the writing process, we met online three times during 2024. The benefits of this approach were that the teams committed to certain research and a certain way of carrying it out, and possible problems could be rooted out early on. This way they also presented the other teams the research they were conducting. Everyone was encouraged to familiarise themselves with the other teams' plans. The ten research designs below are not completely evenly distributed between countries so that one country team always works on just one country case report, as there are, for example, two country reports on Finland but none on Bosnia-Herzegovina. This is due to the project design, where two teams (UH and DRI) are jointly working on the Finnish case by covering different questions, and the CES team works on Bosnia-Herzegovina as part of their overall analysis. Eight of these eleven countries are EU member states, while three non-EU countries are relevant to the social contract in the EU. The case of Bosnia-Herzegovina is significant for our aims to understand the social contract in Europe, since it is a part of a broader approach to the enlargement process of the European Union. The enlargement process also incorporates Ukraine and Türkiye, which are also not member states of the EU, yet what is happening in them tells us about the present situation of the social contract in the EU.

In sum, all teams produce empirical data in different forms depending on their research plan. Some teams use surveys, some carry out large literature reviews and others focus more on the collection of interview data. The joint reflection points on the frictions of social contracts such as affective polarisation, segregation, minorities and majorities, and inclusivity and gender equality. These issues will be covered as a result of the chosen methodology and research questions in each case. The empirical analyses following the research of WP3 will be further complemented and developed by the subsequent work on the impact of crises and resilience factors in social contracts (covered by WP5). Finally, the theoretically and empirically informed research in WP2-5 will be synthesized and refocused on future key questions on e.g. the rule of law in the EU and the emerging social contracts in the face of future scenarios.

3.1. Bulgaria

Team CLS:

Ruzha Smilova; Kaloyan Velchev; Daniel Smilov; Milla Mineva

1. General

Having been part of the Ottoman Empire for five centuries, and of Soviet Union-controlled socialist countries in CEE for almost half a century, in November 1989 Bulgaria held Roundtable talks to transform the socialist state into market democracy and in 1991 adopted its new Constitution. The two events marked the compromise on the country's transition to democracy. Yet the type of social contract (SC) these embodied events are shaped by longer-term processes of nation-building (19th century), state-building (late 19 - early 20th century) and socialist transformations (1945 - 1989).

Within **Phase 1**, Theory and History of the originary social contract, we study: (1) the deep roots of the social contract in BG: the adoption of the constitution in 1879 at the founding moment, the nation-state-building processes that unfolded at the turn of 20th century; (2) the more recent adaptations of SC in post-communist BG: the Roundtable talks for transition to market democracy and the adoption of the new constitution in 1991; and the signing of the EU treaty in 2005 and the EU accession of the country in 2007.

The questions to be addressed include how was the social contract - reflected in the respective constitution - negotiated? Were there excluded interests and groups, and which ones? How were they excluded? Further questions: was the SC building accompanied by growing polarization (political, social, affective), or, rather, did wider societal consensus mark these constitutional moments?

Within **Phase 2** (Open-ended social contracts in empirical cases: WP3-5) we study why and when do citizens feel increasingly left out of the social contract in Bulgaria. Turning to (1) the medium-term analysis of **societal and social non-cohesions (T3.2)** our team explores the minorities/majority dynamics by studying a) whether the social contract in post-communist Bulgaria is ethnically defined, and b) if it excludes members of sexual minorities. The research question is whether the ethnic Turks and the Roma, as well as members of LGBTQ minorities, feel integrated within the SC in BG, or, rather, feel left out. (2) With regard to **T3.3 Transitions**, we analyse the social transformation in Bulgaria from the perspective of the post-socialist SC. The research question here is whether the societal consensus that marked both the constitutional moment in 1991 and the EU accession in 2007 survived the joint turbulence of growing inequality, consecutive crises and dysfunctional governments prompting major protest mobilizations. The growing sense of justice deficit in post-accession BG society may

prove the major driver of SC erosion in Bulgaria. (3) With regard to T4.2 (Online ethnographic data gathering /iterative analysis of the state of social contract and alternatives in EP2024) our team studied the discourses and contestations of social contracts during EP elections with ethnographic methods - audio-visual data gathering on two social media platforms.

The research aims at identifying SC bases in contemporary Europe, through the analysis of audio-visual data from the 2024 EP elections campaign in Bulgarian social media. How is the growing sense of injustice among Bulgarians exploited to spur Euroscepticism and undermine the existing SC both in BG and the EU, is the main question explored.

Research ethics

The work within phase 1 does not raise any ethics issues as it involves exclusively archival research and desk-top research on secondary sources. Within phase 2, focus groups and semi-structured interviews will be carried out with members of ethnic (Roma and Turkish) and LGBTQ minorities, as well as elite interviews with leaders and influentials from these communities, which will require ethics clearance. An application for such ethics clearance will be submitted to the ethics committee of the Bulgarian Sociological Association.

Contribution to CO3

The research for the case study of the SC in Bulgaria closely follows the approach of CO3 as laid out in the project description. Based on the premise that “social contracts need to be understood as historically and politically constructed, open-ended processes, which can be studied both as theoretical entities of great importance in social thought and empirically as sets of practices, discourses and expectations” (GA, p. 6), Bulgaria’s case focuses both on the question of the ‘demos’ – who is in and who is left out (SC and majorities/minorities, T3.2 societal and social non-cohesions), and on the question of whether the societal consensus behind Bulgaria’s current SC (1991 Constitution and the EU accession) is unravelling in the face of major shocks – such as growing inequality, polycrises, and dysfunctional governments. The analysis of the European Parliament election campaign will provide a comparative lens, through which to evaluate how Bulgaria fits the larger picture of challenges to the SC in Europe.

2. Theoretical approach(es)

Justice principles are key elements of SC. Studying the beliefs among Europeans about justice - and their frustrations - may explain the erosion of existing SCs in Europe. Research shows the equity principle (‘a society is fair when hard-working people earn more than others’) enjoys overwhelming support among Europeans - between 70 and 90% agree with it (ESS round 9, 2018). In our contribution to T 2.1 (Mapping and developing the key theories of SC) we hypothesized that the observed weakness of SC in many countries in Europe is due to a mismatch between normative beliefs (preferences) and perceptions about justice in society. For example, in Bulgaria an acute mismatch is observed between the widespread preference

to live in a just society, where the equity principle is observed (90% of Bulgarians), and the equally widespread perception that they do not in fact live in such a society. In the empirical case study on the SC in Bulgaria, we will explore the hypothesis that the mismatch between normative beliefs (preferences) and perceptions is particularly pronounced not only in Bulgaria but in other CEE – and possibly other, non-CEE - countries with low and further declining ‘state of democracy’ scores.

3. Operationalisation and methodology

The research has already commenced (audio-visual data and analysis of EP elections campaign on social media in Bulgaria, WP4) - Ruzha Smilova, Kaloyan Velchev and Daniel Smilov have finalized the report on Bulgaria. Research for WP2 on the deep roots of the social contract (T2.4) is underway, with both Daniel Smilov and Kaloyan Velchev contributing. Work for WP3 - societal non-cohesions (T3.2) and transitions (T3.3.) has also commenced (M 6). Preliminary research and methodology approaches (R. Smilova and Mineva). K. Velchev will conduct the interviews, and he and Milla Mineva - the focus groups. Data analysis - the whole team. Quantitative data (from values and other surveys), discourse analysis of speeches/media appearances of PPR politicians - Ruzha Smilova and Kaloyan Velchev.

Within **Phase 1** (deep roots of SC), the main methodological approach is process tracing. The methods include study and analysis of historic records (minutes from debates within the Grand National Assemblies (GNA) in 1879 and 1991, and from the round table talks in 1990); media coverage of the proceedings; analysis of legal texts (1879 and 1991 Constitutions). For this, we will carry out archival research (minutes of discussions at GNAs in 1879 and 1991, newspaper articles, memoirs of ‘founding fathers’, etc.) and desk research, study other secondary sources, academic publications. Within **Phase 2** (Open-ended SC in empirical cases: CO3 model applied - WP3-5), the methodological approaches are pluralistic: qualitative research (data gathered through focus groups and semi-structured interviews), analysis of quantitative data (value and other surveys); discourse analysis of speeches and media presence of key politicians from the populist radical right (RRP) in Bulgaria will also be employed.

We will conduct semi-structured interviews with teachers within such communities, who teach Bulgarian language and literature (and maybe also history of Bulgaria) to children whose mother tongue is not Bulgarian. The topics to be discussed are how is the national ‘cannon’ (curriculum) perceived within the respective communities and does it contribute to the members of the respective communities feeling part of the SC in BG. The conclusions will be extended through focus groups with members of ethnic minorities, focusing on the same issues. We will ask whether the ban on electoral campaigning in other (than Bulgarian) languages negatively affects inclusion in the political process and contributes to political apathy.

Focus groups with members of LGBT community and/or CSOs will aim to find out whether these minorities feel left out of the SC - especially amid recent mobilizations against the alleged spread of so-called 'gender ideology'.

The longitudinal data from value (and other) surveys will help us study the main determinants behind societal consensuses, pro-democracy in the early 1990s and pro-EU in the early 2000s. More recent data from surveys will help demonstrate how these have been unravelling after EU accession, leading to waves of discontent (protest waves in 2012/2014 and 2020), leading to prolonged political crises (from 2021 on). Divisions in BG society between those nostalgic for socialist past and those seeking faster EU integration deepened and intensified in the wake of Russia's war against Ukraine.

Analysis of speeches/media appearances of key figures of RRP in BG will ask whether political entrepreneurs have magnified polarization to reach intractable levels of affective polarization. The methods include desk research, analysis of data from longitudinal value surveys.

Expected data gathered

- Audiovisual material and its analysis as part of the EP 2024 data collection.
- Historical data on constitutional processes in Bulgaria (post-1878 and post 1989).
- Data from interviews/focus groups with members of minorities.
- Discourse analytical data from political discourse of RRP politicians.
- Longitudinal data - support for democratization, EU accession, deeper EU integration, support for minority and LGBT rights.
- Published research materials as secondary sources (both as secondary sources and sites where references to relevant primary sources can be found).

4. Conclusion

Firstly, analysing the weakness of SC in some European societies - with high levels of distrust in political elites, low electoral turnout, low levels of democratic engagement, and an overall high degree of political instability - as resulting from a mismatch between normative beliefs and perceptions of social justice. This analysis will contribute to D2.1, Report of the theoretical mapping. Secondly, focusing on Bulgaria, will trace the effects of long dure and more short-term processes, to better understand both the 'originary' SC in Bulgaria, and the social and political transformations in the last couple decades. These shaped the pro-European consensus and steered the country on the path towards European integration (1997-2007). These results will contribute to D2.2, Report on the deep roots of social contract. Thirdly, the crises that hit the country after its 2007 EU accession can be read as having been triggered by discontent and frustrations of a newly consolidated democracy. The case studies will allow to map these frustrations of large parts of BG citizens, incl. members of ethnic and sexual minorities. Adequately diagnosing their sources will allow us to thematize the political crisis in the country as an opportune moment to reestablish a more resilient SC. The case studies will contribute to D3.2 Report on social/societal non-cohesions and D3.3 on transitions and post-

colonialism. Fourthly, the online ethnographic data gathering on the EP election campaign on social media in Bulgaria will contribute to D4.2 EP2024 country reports.



3.2. Croatia

Team FPZG:

Leon Cvrtila, Goran Čular, Tonči Kursar, Ana Matan

1. General

Since 1991, Croatia has been an independent country. It gained its independence from the Socialist Yugoslav federation in the post-Yugoslav wars of the 1990's. It has been a member of the EU since 2013 after a long accession process that started in 2001. In the national history of Croatia, there have been several historic breaking points where social contracts have been created and dissolved, the most salient of which is the establishment of a constitution and state-making of the 1990's. Since Croatia has been part of a multinational empire, a multinational state, a socialist federation and now of the EU, its social contracts have, from a long-term perspective, been twofold: one social contract that defines the relations of the Croatian nation with other nations in a wider common state, and another contract that pertains to subjects and citizens of each common polity. Naturally, the twofold nature of the social contract has been intertwined with issues of societal cohesion and non-cohesion, inclusion and exclusion and the definition of the majority-minority relations.

The long-term perspective on the Croatian social contract(s) opens a venue of research into deep seated divisions and lines of contestation, which are relevant for the present-day challenges to the social contract. The research will further address the relevance of these deep-seated conflicts for the ways in which the recent crises have disrupted social contract(s). The Croatian team has identified several points of making (and breaking) of social contracts in Croatia. In the 19th century a nation-building social contract emerged within the Austro-Hungarian Empire that connected the process of national emancipation to a common national emancipation of the South Slavs in the common Empire. It encompassed The Illyrian Movement (1835-1870) and consequent elite cooperation between the South Slavs in the Empire. Regarding the subjects/citizens (the governed) and the central state, this social contract can be identified as modernist transformation. After the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the formation of the first common Yugoslav state (1918) established another social contract in the first part of the 20th century. This contract was soon contested on grounds of national identity exclusion (through attempts to create a singular Yugoslav nation), democratic exclusion (through restriction of political action and banning of political parties), and social exclusion (through restrictions on worker's and peasant's rights). The socialist social contract in the 20th century (1945-1990) was a result of World War 2 struggles and victory for the Communist Party and its allies. The socialist social contract was revised with a new constitution in 1974. It was challenged both on grounds of national discrimination, struggles around wealth (re)distribution and market reforms as well as lack of individual rights and democracy. Regarding the contract between the socialist state and its subject, the

socialist social contract can be also seen as one of socialist modernization and a socialist variation of a welfare state. The social contract formed after the wars in the 1990's had two dimensions. The first dimension was a break from a common multinational state of the Southern Slavs in favor of independent statehood with prospects of EU integration. The second dimension was a break with socialism in favor of a transition to liberal democracy and capitalist market economy. The contract has been challenged on grounds of discrimination of minorities (especially the Serbian minority) and concentration of wealth in the hands of the political elite and destruction of the socialist welfare system.

Our research team will seek to identify whether the legacies of historical breaks in the Croatian social contracts are reflected in today's polarization lines that divide Croatian society. It will also examine whether the process of EU accession and EU membership has intensified or lessened contestation along those historically formed lines. And finally, the research will investigate the ways that both historical legacy and contemporary crises lead to articulations of post-modern social contracts and new political subjects (political parties, protest and social movements).

Research ethics

We will be following the highest research ethical standards in line with the demands of the Horizon Europe Framework Programme and respect for EU values, such as respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and human rights, including the rights of minorities.

Contribution to CO3

The research of the Croatian social contracts and their legacy fits with the project's objective to create a knowledge base of the deep roots of the social contract. It also aligns with the empirical goal to investigate the ways in which the legacies of historic social contracts have influenced present contestations. It also contributes to context specific insights about the mechanisms of polarization, hegemonic shifts and attempts at creating new political subjects and redefining existing ones – subjects that aspire to be the bearers of alternative social contracts. Research on the social contract of the multinational and federal Yugoslav state and its crisis will be used to explore the specificities of legitimacy crises in the multinational EU polity.

2. Theoretical approach(es)

Considering the variety of Croatian social contracts, this research will seek to connect to the conceptual analysis of social contract and their interest, rights and justice as well as public utility dimension. Furthermore, the multiple lines of contestation and debate around the historic social contracts will be connected to the processes of democratization of those contracts by including previously excluded identities and social groups. The non-democratic character of the socialist social contract notwithstanding, there are general lessons to be learned from a deep legitimacy crisis of a social contract in a federal state, lessons that might prove relevant

for the crises in the EU, especially the financial crisis and the grievances narratives that it has produced. Finally, social contracts embody values and rest on assumptions that are not always explicit, so the long-term view of the Croatian social contracts will serve to bring those values to the fore and to illuminate some blind spots of the theoretical approaches. Usually, social contract theories have been applied to nation-states and sometimes to the international society of states. They are rarely applied to polities to multinational federations and to the EU as a polity *sui generis*.

3. Operationalisation and methodology

Our team members (Ana Matan, Tonči Kursar and Goran Čular) as well as associated team members (Leon Cvrtila and Matej Mikašinović-Komšo) will carry out desk research, interpretation of the literature on historical breaks and contemporary challenges to SC and theoretical framework and definitions as well as official statistics and secondary statistical analysis. Our research will contribute to T3.2 subtask *Minorities and majorities*; to T3.3 transformation of the welfare state, and to T3.4, focus on gender issues. It will also contribute to task 4.2, on-line data gathering on EP elections 2024. We will carry out a qualitative analysis/quasi-experiment of social networks during electoral campaign for the 2024 EUP elections, qualitative and discursive content analysis of party platforms of the main Croatian political parties and qualitative content and discursive analysis of minutes of the National Board for monitoring of the accession of the Republic of Croatia to the European Union.

To address the research topics outlined under 1a, the team plans research which applies the following methodological approaches: 1) Political theory literature review with a task to arrive at social contract conceptualizations applicable to the Croatian social contracts, that at the same time corresponds to the common task of the CO3 project (Ana Matan, Tonči Kursar). 2) Review of historical, social and political science works covering the main historical moments and breaks that have shaped the contemporary nature of the SC in Croatia (Tonči Kursar). Also, we will conduct a literature review of scientific accounts and explanations of the recent economic, social and political crises, political developments and social movements that redefine the SC, in the sense of both its strengthening and/or challenging (Ana Matan, Tonči Kursar). 3) Official statistics that refer both to historical period and contemporary processes, particularly aimed at detecting the size of social and political groups that are consistently in/outside SC (Goran Čular). 4) Secondary quantitative analysis of the CRONes data (face-to-face survey research on national representative samples conducted at 12 time-points between 1990 and 2024) (Goran Čular), in order to determine the level to which symbolic and discursive features of SC are reflected in attitudes and values of citizens (validated through WVS, EVS and ESS data on Croatia), with a special concern for attitudes towards the EU. This also includes examining attitudes of different social and political groups towards the existing SC as well the mode of their political mobilization.

5) Secondary quantitative analysis of data on electoral platforms of the main Croatian parties 1990-2024 (conducted within MRP) (Goran Čular), with aim to screen basic longitudinal trends in elitist structure, continuities and shifts in social and political values and their linkages to SC.

6) Original qualitative analysis/quasi-experiment of social networks during the electoral campaign for the 2024 EUP elections to reveal symbolic and discursive patterns that mark political processes towards the EU (Ana Matan, Leon Cvrtila, Matej Mikašinović-Komšo). 7) Original qualitative and discursive content analysis of party platforms of the main Croatian political parties (Ana Matan, Leon Cvrtila), to detect basic symbolic and discursive patterns through which the Croatian political elite understand SC (or challenges to SC), with a special concern for the role of the EU. 8) Original qualitative content and discursive analysis of meeting minutes of the National Board for monitoring of accession of Republic of Croatia to European Union 2005-2011 (Ana Matan, Leon Cvrtila), to grasp how the Croatian political elite understood the EU accession process in terms of maintaining and/or challenging the existing SC. 9) Online ethnographic data gathering /iterative analysis of the state of the social contract and alternatives in EP2024. We participated in the gathering of the audio-visual data on two social media platforms on the eve and during the EU elections of 2024.

Expected data gathered

- detailed literature reviews, bibliographies and interpretations on SC evolution, development and oppositions, suitable for further examination
- results of longitudinal secondary analysis of surveys and quantitative content analysis of electoral platforms of parties
- reports on original qualitative content analyses (see methods 6, 7 and 8 above).

4. Conclusion

We expect that our post-electoral survey data of voter preferences will show the relevance of the deep-seated lines of struggle around the various Croatian previous social contracts. The key result of the research is expected to be the definition of the logic of renewing Croatia as a political community, regardless of the general political/ideological framework in which it is located. It seems that it is possible to call it permanent democratisation such as the limited electoral democratisation within Austria-Hungary, economic democratisation in socialist Yugoslavia. We assume that EU membership partially transformed this contestation because its main lines have shifted significantly in the postmodern direction, such as gender politics, self-actualization, ecology, and the migrants' issues. It could mean that the crisis of the current social contract is a consequence of the fact that our ruling class is trapped in an obsolete ideological framework (from the time of joining the EU). Our research will contribute to D3.2. and D3.3.

3.3. Finland

As a deviation to other country cases, there are two research teams working together on Finland. While working on complementary angles to the case, The DRI and UH cases will work together to form a single report on Finland. Below, the two approaches are presented as individual plans to better illustrate the division of labour and covered questions.

Finland (a)

Team Demos Helsinki:

Anna Björk and Maria Malho

1. General

In WP3, DRI's work focuses on building on the theoretical foundations from WP2. In the case of Finland, we focus on looking at the institutional dimension of the social contract and address the question of political institutions and their formation (Finland as a sovereign state), the shaping of the welfare state, and the politics of care. The research will address several key questions, including, the gradual expansion and reshaping of the concepts of gender equality, equity and citizenship, the shaping of political institutions and language, as well as the case of Finland in relation to the 'Nordic welfare state model' and its erosion. Furthermore, the aim is to address the critical moments of Finland as a sovereign state: gaining independence and the aftermath with the Civil War, the Winter and Continuation Wars, the Cold War and the dissolving of the Soviet Union, Finland's role in the UN and becoming an EU member state. Against this backdrop, the conceptual development from natural rights to legal rights to human rights in Finland over time will also be addressed.

This approach contributes to analysing the four key dimensions of WP3: the formation of majorities and minorities, affective polarisation, segregation and desegregation and inclusions and exclusions. In this narrative, it is possible to emphasise either the inward-looking process of nation state formation, the expansion of political rights and inclusion, and the processes of urbanisation and economic growth based on the strongly contractual labour market in Finland. At the same time, it is possible to analyse the development of the social contract in Finland as an outward-looking process (or: a set of processes and political choices), where the narrative is rather linked to the way the social contract has been built up through a search of a positioning and recognition in the global order.

Research ethics

We are relying on open sources and openly available documents, academic literature, or datasets which are available for research (e.g. Oral History Archive of Finnish Parliament). At later stages of work (WP6), we will conduct expert interviews. Our ethical reference points are

guidelines of The Finnish National Board on Research Integrity TENK, appointed by the Ministry of Education and Culture¹; and Ethics in Social Science and Humanities².

Contribution to CO3

The research in WP3 is part of the Finnish country case (together with UH, who focus on minorities and majorities). In addition to building up the case, it feeds into the whole project's data and analysis on the role of political institutions (formal and informal) and institutional norms in shaping social contracts. Further, the Finnish case is an example of welfare state politics from the Nordic perspective combined with questions of inclusivity and the democratisation of the social contract in a multilateral setting, where different governance levels are intertwined through soft and hard regulatory measures and representative structures.

2. Theoretical approach(es)

We will focus on the institutional dimension of the social contract theory. It provides a perspective to a cluster of key questions, which are decisive for analysing the resilience and construction of social contracts in Finland. Our work will take on especially the questions of democratisation, continuous construction of social contracts, and empirical sensitivity as its starting points. We will emphasise the theoretical approaches of conceptual history (esp. temporalisation of concepts), feminist institutionalism, and future studies.

3. Operationalisation and methodology

The literature review-based research and document analysis will initially take place in Finland by the DRI team between January 2025 and September 2025 (T3.1, T3.2). This will be complemented by research across WP5 (T5.1-T5.4; M14-M26), which contributes to the contemporary analysis of social contract challenges from the perspective of crises. The interview materials (secondary analysis; n=4-5) will be coded and analysed during June–August 2025. Access to all materials is secured by December 2024. Expert interviews are part of WP6 (T6.1).

The main method of data collection is creating a corpus of academic literature on the key questions mentioned above. We will use Scopus, Web of Science and Google Scholar for the main searches for academic literature entries. Policy documents from the Finnish Library of Parliament and the main databases of Finnish academic libraries will provide additional documents and entries for sources. For the Oral History Archive of Finnish Parliament, we will choose up to 5 interviews of key individuals for complementary sourcing, based on our initial literature review and choice of key political events. From the interview materials, we analyse key concepts and arguments linked to the formation of the social contract in Finland. Further, we will address the temporal dimension of these key concepts and arguments by analysing e.g. the temporal orientation (past, present, future) or the temporal-spatial perspectives³ of the perceived social contract. We will consult the Parliament's experts on the availability of the interviews in different formats and, based on the availability, rely on either coding the material

on Atlas.ti based on key concepts or arguments, or conduct a close reading of transcribed materials based on which concepts occur most frequently.

In WP6, we will utilise the methods of Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) and futures scenarios. CLA is a critical futures studies method created by Sohail Inayatullah⁴ for analysing and challenging current assumptions or premises. CLA consists of four layers: 1) litany, which is the official or “mainstream” description of the problem; 2) systemic causes, which is the short-term historical analysis of the variables behind the problem; 3) worldview, which gives space for understanding the deeper assumptions behind the problem; and 4) myth/metaphor, which refers to the unconscious dimension of the problem, deep stories or sociocultural myths.⁵ We will use the CLA method to critically assess and challenge the key concepts and arguments on the formation of the social contract in Finland collected through the literature review and analysis of interview materials. To strengthen the analysis and ensure an up to date engagement with contemporary and foreseen policy developments, we conduct 5-6 expert interviews with policymakers and experts (interviewees to be identified during the first stage of the analysis). The aim is to create new ideas and new knowledge about the possibilities for resilient and continuously constructed social contract in Finland. We will circulate the empirical materials through the CLA vertical layers, which gives us access to the level of myths and metaphors behind the key concepts and arguments, and the opportunity to perceive the inner needs for transformation and emerging new narratives and solutions.

We will benefit from these re-formed key concepts and arguments to form the basis for the scenario work for Europe. For building the futures scenarios for resilient social contracts, we will utilise the futures table method based on the method of morphological analysis originally developed by Fritz Zwicky⁶. It starts with creating a futures table presenting 5–10 most important drivers (variables) of resilient social contracts. These variables will be given 2–5 values that describe their different plausible or desirable future options. We will conduct Field Anomaly Relaxation (FAR) analysis to rule out impossible combinations of values, and form futures states for different futures scenarios out of the possible value combinations. These futures states and their different features will be written out as narratives. Finally, we will create development pathways to the futures states using the backcasting method⁷. The outcome of this scenario work will be 3–5 futures scenarios on resilient social contracts for the CO3 model development and following policy work.

Expected data gathered

The collected data will include: 1) a corpus of key literature on the institutional formation of the Finnish independent state and its relation to the Nordic welfare state model, 2) a corpus of openly available documents on arguments and decisions for Finland joining the EU and NATO (the latter to be assessed for recent literature; research outputs due to proximity of the case), 3) a coded set of complementary interviews from the Oral History Archive of Finnish Parliament, and 4) transcriptions of expert interviews. Furthermore, regarding T4.2 (online ethnographic data gathering and iterative analysis of the state of social contract and

alternatives in EP2024), we participated in the gathering of audio-visual data on two social media platforms on the eve and during the EU elections of 2024.

4. Conclusion

The Finnish case will unfold over WP2–WP6 from complementary angles. The research and methodology described above highlights the institutional dimension of social contract formation, with reference to both formal and informal institutions. It also considers the case from the point of view of Finland's fluctuating cultural, political and formal state boundaries especially after 1906. The research is complemented by findings from WP4 social media analysis, WP2 theoretical analysis, WP5 policy analyses on eco-social contracts and WP6 synthesis. Our work especially focuses on deliverables D2.3, D3.1, D3.2, D4.1, D4.2, D5.1, D5.2, D5.3, D6.1, D6.2, D6.3, D7.2, and D7.3.

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Finland (b):**Team University of Helsinki:**

Emilia Palonen, Alexander Alekseev

1. General

The research deals with the continuous construction of a resilient social contract in Finland. Professor Emilia Palonen and the researcher Alexander Alekseev explore democratic integration and inclusion in the social contract in light of the restructuring of the welfare state and welfare retrenchment in Finland. Focusing on communities with migrant backgrounds in Finland, in particular, in the case of Ukrainians, we explore the limitations of democratic integration and inclusion of minorities with migrant backgrounds in transforming Finnish society.

Finnish politics has been experiencing attempts to renegotiate or reinstate the social contract since 2015. Leading an austerity government, the Centre Party's then chairman Juha Sipilä explicitly called for a new social contract in 2015-2019. After a PM change for a centre-left government led by the Social Democrats, PM Sanna Marin faced both the pandemic and the eruption of a crisis as the neighbouring country of Finland to East, Russia, launched a full-scale attack on Ukraine. In 2023 a new right-wing government of Petteri Orpo from the National Coalition Party was put in place, and its aim again is to cut down on welfare services. This is interesting for Finland, as the Finnish Social Contract has been reliant on the balance of high taxes and good welfare services. With an aging population a budget balance is difficult to keep. At the same time there has been welfare chauvinist argumentation in Finland by the Finns Party (Keskinen; Kuisma) which has been participating in both the Sipilä and Orpo governments. This leads us to consider migrants as a key issue in the renewing of the social contract, and particularly the role of Ukrainian migrants, who have been received with a lot of solidarity to Finland. The affinity to Russia's neighbouring country's displaced populations arises from a similarity of national experiences with Russian imperialism and evoke memories of previously displaced migrants, the Karelians after WWII. The whole complex story leads the team to consider populist discourses from the history of the Finns Party's predecessor, the Finnish Rural Party, to the present neo-Thatcherist stances of Riikka Purra's Finns Party.

After the beginning of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, many Ukrainians fled their homes, with at least 3,555,000 becoming internally displaced persons (as of October 2024) ('Ukraine Internal Displacement Report' 2024) and 6,785,900 refugees (as of November 2024) ('Ukraine Situation Flash Update' 2024). 76,625 refugees from Ukraine applied for Asylum, Temporary Protection or similar national protection schemes in Finland ('Ukraine Refugee Situation' 2024). They have mostly applied for Temporary Protection, a

status specifically introduced for Ukrainian refugees (Council of the European Union 2022), which, in many ways, is more favourable than the refugee status that other asylum seekers must apply for (Ministry of the Interior 2024).

As nearly 25% of Ukrainian refugees in Europe plan to permanently settle outside of Ukraine (Adema et al. 2024), Ukrainians in Finland are treated here as something that Bent Flyvbjerg calls “a critical case” in relation to the migrant population in Finland (Flyvbjerg 2006). Flyvbjerg notes that such cases allow researchers to “achieve information that permits logical deductions of the type ‘If this is (not) valid for this case, then it applies to all (no) cases’” (Flyvbjerg 2006, 230). In other words, we see Ukrainians in Finland as the case of a migrant group that has enjoyed the most favourable treatment. Hence, if integration and inclusion policies (e.g. language education, professional training, access to social and health services) do not work in the case of Ukrainians, we expect these policies not to work in the cases of other migrant groups either. Ukrainians are seen as culturally close to ethnic Finns and are not typically considered a visible racialised minority in Finland. Ukrainians have also had a relatively successful integration record in Europe in comparison with other non-EU migrant groups (cf. Čief and Boháč 2024).

At the same time, Ukrainians in Finland do not constitute a homogeneous group. Borders between different cultural, linguistic and ethnic identities of Ukrainians in Finland can be blurry. Many Ukrainian refugees come from eastern and southern regions of Ukraine and speak Russian or a mixed Ukrainian Russian language (Surzhyk) in their day-to-day lives. If they identify Russian as their first language, the Finnish statistic counts them as Russian speakers who are commonly (and simplistically) perceived as representatives of Russia — a powerful, threatening neighbouring country with which Finland shares a traumatic history (Lähteenmäki and Pöyhönen 2014; Viimaranta, Protassova, and Mustajoki 2018). In other words, Russian-speaking Ukrainians face prejudice against Russian speakers deeply rooted in Finnish society.

This research engages with research on as well as discourses of the Ukrainian community in Finland to explore how the restructuring of the welfare state and welfare retrenchment in Finland affect democratic integration and inclusion of minorities in the social contract.

The research showcases the limits of the social contract, and the positions afforded to Ukrainians there.

Research ethics

We conduct desk research building upon a) publicly available data from online forums (on Telegram and Facebook) of the Ukrainian community living in Finland; b) background interviews with selected Ukrainians residing in Finland. The research strives to comply with the fundamental principles of research integrity outlined in the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (ALLEA 2023): reliability, honesty, respect, and accountability at all stages of research. These principles underlie good research practices applied in Finland (Finnish National Board on Research Integrity TENK 2023).

Contribution to CO3

The research done by the University of Helsinki team contributes to the study of the continuous construction of a resilient social contract in Finland in collaboration with Demos Helsinki. The research on societal institutions enabling or hampering democratic integration and inclusion of minorities (cf. Bauböck 2010) in Finland as an example of the (waning) Nordic welfare state model provides insights into how social contracts are being renegotiated in the European Union.

2. Theoretical approach(es)

The research draws on discourse theory as a tool for understanding logics in political articulation (Laclau 2005). The research treats the social contract as “an interpretative resource that impacts the lived experience of state-society relations, and contractarian thinking as a powerful and pervasive mindset that shapes both governments’ approaches to society, and how people experience their wider political community” (Burnyeat and Sheild Johansson 2022). From this perspective, the social contract is seen as a heuristic device that allows for identifying the failures of democratic integration and inclusion: a dysfunctional democracy undermines the sense of belonging and contributes to the emergence of discourses on breaking the social contract (and the need to repair, revise or re-establish it).

The Finnish social contract as a heuristic device allowing the researcher to explore the Finnish national identity and its limits is strongly connected to the idea of the welfare state. Historically, the understanding of society in Finland was closely linked to the state, even to the extent that these two were treated as the same (Kettunen 2011, 82–83). The establishment of the welfare model was not only an economic and social process but also contributed to the constitution of national identities. Debates on the future of the welfare state, who is entitled to welfare provisions, and who is counted in the national community are ultimately intertwined (Keskinen 2016). Hence, exploring the effects of social welfare retrenchment on migrant communities ultimately contributes to learning more about *social inclusion*, *bordering practices*, and *social exclusion* (cf. Guentner et al. 2016).

3. Operationalisation and methodology

The collection of publicly available data on Finnish Ukrainian online forums on Telegram and Facebook as well as background interviews with selected Ukrainians residing in Finland will be carried out by Alexander Alekseev and Olena Siden (PLEDGE), based at the University of Helsinki, in January-March 2025 (T3.2). Desk research and analysis of the collected data will be carried out by Alexander Alekseev in April-May 2025 (T3.2, T3.3). We operationalise discourse theoretical tools to study community building and grievance communication (Alekseev & Palonen 2025). The publicly available data is to be sourced from the two biggest online communities of Ukrainians in Finland on Facebook and Telegram. Facebook and Telegram are seen as the two most popular social media platforms that structure major online forums with the well-documented presence of communities of Ukrainians living in Finland. The

background interviews are to be conducted with pre-selected Ukrainians residing in Finland. The gathered data is manually processed to identify key topics of concern to Ukrainians in Finland. The manual data analysis is conditioned by the specificity of day-to-day communication of Ukrainians online: the dataset will combine posts and comments not only in Ukrainian and Russian but also in Surzhyk, a mixed language whose phonetic, lexical, semantic and orthographical structures defy a systematic description in dictionaries which, in turn, creates significant challenges for the use of computational methods in research (cf. Sira, Nunzio, and Nosilia 2020; Korchynskyi and Vynogradov 2024).

Our methodological approach draws on discourse studies conceived as a combination of discourse theory and discourse analysis (Angermüller, Maingueneau, and Wodak 2014). Discourse *theory* is used to approach the symbolic constitution of society through discourse from a more macro-sociological standpoint. In addition, we apply discourse *analysis* to approach discourses as situated practices from a more micro-sociological perspective.

Even if the external validity of findings in such a research design remains limited due to the specificity of the case of Ukrainians in Finland, the growing importance of online fora as virtual spaces - where personal experiences, expectations, and grievances are shared, articulated, and frequently framed as problems to be solved, where communities emerge to be co-performed - cannot be underestimated.

Expected data gathered

The dataset will be composed of 200 posts and comments in Ukrainian, Russian, and Surzhyk (Ukrainian-Russian mixed language) gathered on the two biggest publicly available communities of Ukrainians in Finland on Telegram and Facebook as well as up to five face-to-face background interviews with Ukrainians living in Finland. We also have some videos by Ukrainians in Europe in our EP2024. Regarding T4.2 (Online ethnographic data gathering /iterative analysis of the state of social contract and alternatives in EP2024), we participated in the gathering of the audio-visual data on two social media platforms at the eve and during the EU elections of 2024.

4. Conclusion

The research will allow for identifying how the restructuring of the welfare state affects democratic integration and the inclusion of the Ukrainian community in Finland in the social contract. In this way, it will highlight the gaps in key integration and inclusion policies of migrant populations in Finland (e.g. language education, professional training, and access to social and health services). Further analysis of these policies and the evolution of these institutions in collaboration with Demos Helsinki will allow us to produce practical policy recommendations as part of WP6. This research contributes to Deliverables 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 5.4, 6.6.

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3.4. France

Team American University of Paris (AUP):

Stephen Sawyer, Roman Zinigrad, Nathanaël Colin-Jaeger

1. General

France is nowadays characterized, like other Western countries, by a growing dissatisfaction with institutional politics. Among Western countries, it is even one of the countries with the lowest confidence in political institutions (CEVIPOF, 2024), and one of the countries with the most important rise of populist movements recently. The Rassemblement National, the party of Marine le Pen and Reconquête, the party of Eric Zemmour, scored more than 40% in the last European Elections and just a little less for the following legislative elections after the dissolution, exemplifying the rise of far-right populism. On the left, the France Insoumise – the party of Jean-Luc Mélenchon – explicitly endorses left-wing populism rhetoric and is the strongest party of the left alliance. Political polarization and institutional distrust express themselves through multiple channels: a growing abstention (especially outside of presidential elections and very specific elections such as the last legislative), and contestation movements (such as the yellow vest), fueled by a general feeling of misrepresentation. Hence, France faces a multi-dimensional democratic crisis, characterized by a plurality of topics: identity (immigration being one important topic), cities vs countryside, wealth inequalities, etc.

At the same time, France is experimenting with other forms of democracy (at the local and national level) to overcome these issues, making the country a stimulating case study for our research. Of course, the deliberative trend is not by any means specific to France – it has been a growing tide from the late 1990s onwards in Western countries – but France is an interesting case study because of at least three factors : (a) The situation is particularly dire with low levels of trust and the rise of populism, expressing rising polarization; (b) France is a very centralized country, with a vertical constitution in the Fifth Republic, and little possibility for democratic participation outside of traditional elections and party competition; (c) France has experimented large-scale deliberative events. In particular, the French Government called twice for *Conventions Citoyennes* (Citizens Conventions) in 2019 and 2022, the first on Climate Policies, and the second on the End of Life, i.e., assisted suicide. This sparked important debates, relative to the role of these conventions and their complementarity with other political processes.

In the context of a well-documented crisis of democracy, such as a crisis of representation, crisis of trust in the institutions, and rising polarization (Van der Meer, 2017), there is a hope that such experiments in democracy constitute a way out – or at least a potential solution – to this crisis. Citizens assemblies would foster public participation, increase the legitimacy of the decision-making process, and benefit from a diversity of perspectives usually ill-represented

by traditional political professionals (Landemore, 2020). Therefore, we ask: to what extent can democratic innovations such as Citizens Conventions participate in the required renewal of social contracts through revamped democratization of the democratic processes?

Research ethics

The research will primarily consist of literature surveys, and, additionally, of an interview with members of the *Conseil économique social et environnemental* (CESE). The interviews will be recorded and transcribed, with the agreement of the interviewed individuals (mostly the head of civic participation at the CESE). The literature survey covers recent publications on rising polarization and the crisis of representation in France, as well as recent social contestation (yellow vest), and the burgeoning literature on democratic innovations. This does not pose particular ethics issues.

Contribution to CO3

The CO3 project seeks to develop continuous and democratic social contracts. Democracy may entail different things – from elections, party competition, popular sovereignty, and fundamental rights to citizen participation, and deliberation. Traditional social contract theories put great emphasis on counterfactual and hypothetical agreements which cannot be modified, introducing a tense connection with potential renegotiation and democracy. Democratic experiments, such as citizens' conventions – for specific topics such as climate policies, or fundamental constitutional matters, like constituent conventions – represent a possibility to have a democratic renegotiation of fundamental features of our social contract. They consist of a promising way to democratize the social contract. Our contribution will show how these hopes can be vindicated while facing the shortcomings of this approach, requiring that the links with the broader public sphere are being constructed.

2. Theoretical approach(es)

WP2 will establish the need for the democratization of public decision-making, which is particularly lacking in social contract theories – besides some exceptions, e.g., Barry and Scanlon's theories. Democratic experiments introduce continuity, democratization, and inclusiveness in public decision-making, allowing for the modification of the parameters of the social contract. The theoretical approaches adopted for this study consist of a focus on the theme of the crisis of democracy, characterized by multidimensional features. Our research dives into empirical works on trust and polarization, as well as the rise of economic inequalities and cultural insecurities. Nevertheless, we still hold on to normative theorization, studying whether democratic experiments can generate legitimacy, solve the problem of representation, and promote better policies. Our theoretical commitments are therefore both empirical and normative, drawing on comprehensive surveys and the works in democratic political theory, using, for instance, the work of Lafont (2015).

Consequently, we hope this project will help to explore one unexplored road on the map in the social contract theories presented within WP2 (especially T2.1, in D2.1).

3. Operationalisation and methodology

The research is conducted between November 2024 and March 2025, in Paris. It will primarily be conducted by one researcher – Nathanaël Colin-Jaeger – with the punctual participation of other researchers from AUP's Center for Critical Democracy Studies (CCDS). Roman Zinigrad will contribute with his expertise on French political conflicts, especially within the far-right. The work will also benefit from the help of a research assistant in AUP working on polarization, Lucie Reed.

The research is divided into three steps. *The first step* of the research consists of a twofold literature review: (a) a review of the democratic crisis encountered by France and other Western countries, with a specific focus on France, which has encountered important democratic contestations in the past decades, such as the yellow vests, the continuous rise of the far-right and populist movements, and the plummeting distrust for representative institutions; (b) a review of the literature on democratic experiments and what they aim to achieve. This builds on the expertise of the researcher, who already works on the topic (Colin-Jaeger, 2024; Colin-Jaeger and Dold, 2024). The particular challenge is to produce a common framing for these two fields which are at the intersection of political philosophy, political sciences, and sociology. The goal is to show how democratic experiments might be an answer to the problems encountered within French society. This first step is already partly achieved (research finished and writing in the making).

The second step consists of qualitative research, with interviews conducted at the CESE (Conseil Economique, Social et Environnemental – Economic, Social and Environmental Council), which organized the Citizen's Convention for Climate and the End of Life. The head of the civic participation direction agreed to meet for interviews in December 2024, which will be conducted by Nathanaël Colin-Jaeger and Lucie Reed. The interview covered the motivation and aims of these democratic experiments, as well as the methodology put in place to dispel polarization and distrust. One of the main concerns with such experiments is that they are often only consultative – at least in France. One important issue is to think of the connection between these deliberative arenas and other democratic institutions in terms of decision-making. Consequently, the interview discussed with the organizers how these devices could be linked with democratic decision-making. The interview has already been conducted, and we are looking for additional interviews with participants.

The third step will consist of a critical analysis of the interviews and the literature review. It will develop how deliberative experiments may alleviate some of the concerns underscoring the crisis of democracy in France, especially in terms of civic participation, the acceptability of the decisions, and the inclusion of different views which are usually not considered. However, it will also address the current shortcomings of such approaches - including the lack of a systematic link with decision-making and the remaining problem of legitimacy and representation - and suggest how these concerns could be alleviated. The document is soon to be written.

Expected data gathered

The data gathered will be data from existing surveys, polls, and interviews. We expect to gather novel data from the head of the participation at the CESE and to compare these findings with the existing literature on democratic experiments. We will also use the data collected in T4.2 (**Online ethnographic data gathering /iterative analysis of the state of social contract and alternatives in EP2024**), for the first step of the research described above. Indeed, we participated in the gathering of the audio-visual data on two social media platforms on the eve and during the EU elections of 2024.

4. Conclusion

The main expected result is a general framework, which will clarify to what extent and under which conditions deliberative experiments can alleviate the crisis of democracy. This will enrich our understanding of what a democratic theory of the social contract may entail in terms of participation and decision-making. However, we expect the results to be mixed, since we cannot expect an institutional reform to solve every democratic and institutional problem the country faces. Moreover, deliberative experiments may well exacerbate some issues (such as the problem of the representativeness of a mini-public). One important task will be to develop an empirically informed conceptual toolbox to specify when such experiments are vital, and how these should be linked with other democratic institutions. We expect this project to contribute both to **D3.1** (as a country case analysis) and **D3.2**. (With the literature survey of polarization, the rise of distrust, and populism informing our understanding of social cohesion or non-cohesion), while perpetuating the theoretical insights of **D2.1** and **D2.3**.

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3.5. Germany

Team HFD:

Claudia Wiesner, Zhylien Kaja, Muriel Pluschke, Jessica Schmidt.

1. General

The research focuses on the continuous construction of democracy and social contracts in Germany. Representative democracies and their social contracts are changing all over the world with regards to nine fields (see in detail Wiesner 2023): democratic deconsolidation, populism, democratic backsliding, technocracy, new movements, democratic innovations, tendency towards a two-thirds society, digitalisation, and the globalisation trilemma. The changes have implications for social contracts, institutions, rights and actors in representative democracies i.e. citizens, civil society, political parties, and representatives in politics and government.

Against this backdrop, the project aims to study how the current challenges to representative democracy influence citizens' perceptions of democracy and social contracts. We also examine if and how they manifest in democratic practice, or how democracy is shaped and understood. In addition, we inquire what the future of democracy and social contract might look like, and to what extent practices and understandings of democracy eventually differ (or not) in Eastern and Western Germany.

To examine this, we will “zoom in” empirically by studying citizens' and political actors' views on democracy and social contracts via expert interviews and focus groups with different citizens and political actors. We will study “on the ground” in two neighbouring German Bundestag constituencies, which are situated in two different federal states and on two sides of the former intra-German border: one in the West (Hesse, 174, Fulda), and one in the East (Thuringia, 190, Wartburgkreis). The research thus will draw on the historical, economic, and cultural backgrounds in both East and West Germany. We will work on three related research questions:

- 1) How are democracy and social contracts interpreted, criticized and practiced?
- 2) How does the change of democracy affect social contracts?
- 3) How do citizens perceive and shape the change?

Research ethics

Participation in focus group discussions and interviews will be voluntary. Participants and interview partners will receive detailed information about the study's objective, methods and data usage. We will obtain written consent from all participants, and they will be informed that they can withdraw consent at any time without facing consequences. All relevant ethical and data protection regulations will be complied with. The ethical commission of the University of Applied Sciences Fulda has already given its approval. Both interviews and focus group

discussions will be recorded and transcribed. Transcripts will be anonymized. The project results will be published in anonymous form.

Contribution to CO3

Our study aligns with the CO3 project goals as it explores how citizens and political actors view and practice democracy and social contracts. Our study is grounded in the thesis (Wiesner 2024, see below) that democracy relies on democratic practice which is connected to the CO3 approach to social contracts (see D 2.1.) that emphasizes participatory practices and social cohesion (see D2.3). We will analyse the micro-level perceptions and practices that shape democracy and social contracts. Our study provides a nuanced analysis of how different historical, social, and political backgrounds shape citizens' expectations of democracy which can contribute to broader social contract theories.

2. Theoretical approach(es)

The approach is based on the normative theoretical thesis (Wiesner 2024: 23) that democracy not only consists of rights but also of democratic practice. Democratic institutions and procedures must be supported by a democratic subject, a demos, which also identifies itself as such. This self-definition of the demos is understood as democratic identity which we consider as one basis of a social contract [to be concretised in relation to WP2 results]. Representative democracies and their social contracts are currently changing in the nine fields named above (Wiesner 2023). We will study how citizens perceive democracy, social contracts and these changes.

3. Operationalisation and methodology

The project will rely on expert interviews and focus groups discussions with citizens and political actors, carried out in both constituencies. Both interview partners and focus group participants will be recruited with the help of local academic cooperation partners, local research or advertising agencies and advertisements. The PIs role as a) Research Director in the Point Alpha Research Institute (PARI) (www.pari-geisa.org) in Wartburgkreis and b) member of the Fulda roundtable on democracy will enable direct access to the local civil society, politics, and citizens in both case regions. After a planning and trial run period in December 2024 and January 2025, the interviews and focus group discussion will be conducted by Zhylien Kaja, Jessica Schmidt and Muriel Pluschke throughout spring and summer 2025 followed by a coding period in autumn 2025. We expect to have prepared an analysis of the results by the end of 2025 with a final round of revisions and finalization by the end of January 2026. The research will contribute to T2.4, T3.2 as well as T5.2.

Expert interviews will be conducted with various citizens and political actors. The qualitative methods are structured around a topical guide, focusing on the specialized knowledge that the expert possesses within a particular domain (Meuser and Nagel 2009), with "experts" referring to individuals who have special knowledge about a social phenomenon that interests

the interviewer, and expert interviews being a specific method for collecting data related to that phenomenon (Gläser and Laudel 2009, Kaiser 2014).

Focus groups are guided discussions in a group that retrieve data through group interaction. (Kitzinger 1995) which allows valuable insights into participants' thoughts, beliefs, experiences, and perspectives (Morgan 1996, 1997). Both interview and focus group discussion partners will be selected regarding their theoretical relevance. Groups of actors we intend to include are local politicians, civil society actors, members of clubs, associations, and churches, activists, and citizens. The aims are to discuss with them 1) their personal reasons for being critical or supportive of democracy and social contracts, 2) why more and more people are critical of democratic institutions, 3) their ideas about the democratic changes in the nine fields mentioned above and 4) how they see the future perspectives of democracy and social contracts.

For our focus groups and interviews, we will carry out an interpretative analysis (Wiesner 2022). The transcripts of focus group discussions and interviews will be read, general impressions will be noted, and team members will start coding the transcripts. Coding will be done with the assistance of MAXQDA, a computer assisted qualitative data analysis software. We will select the inductive coding method, meaning that the codes are generated from the data. Therefore, transcripts will be read and analysed by going through them line by line. Descriptive codes that capture the essence of the content will be assigned. Afterwards, the identified codes will be grouped into categories based on similarity, patterns and relationships among them. Subcategories will be established, when necessary, to represent specific nuances of the data.

After this step the integrative phase starts: The team will develop common criteria for defining, summing up and establishing a detailed framework around categories and subcategories. This involves defining each category and subcategory, specifying the relationship to each-other to clarify the purpose of each category. This step will help us to build a crucial structure that will guide our analysis and interpretation of the data. The categories of the coding framework will serve as a basis for writing up the findings. In the synthesis phase, based on the findings, we will develop typologies of democratic practice, erosion and resilience, and understandings of democracy and social contracts.

Expected data gathered

We plan to carry out between four to eight expert interviews and six to eight focus group discussions. We expect a corpus of 250-400 pages of transcripts. Regarding T4.2 (Online ethnographic data gathering /iterative analysis of the state of social contract and alternatives in EP2024), we participated in the gathering of the audio-visual data on two social media platforms on the eve and during the EU elections of 2024.

4. Conclusion

In the project we thus expect to retrieve central narratives and personal convictions relating to democracy and the social contract, as well as information about practices that strengthen and destabilise both. This will be crucial for understanding how to revitalise democracy and social contracts. For example, we will deliver substantial findings about the motivations behind criticism of representative democracy (D5.1. and D5.2.) and current social contracts as well as stabilizing motives and practices (D6.1. and D6.4.).

The research will offer a nuanced understanding of how democracy and social contracts are perceived, understood and ultimately practiced in Eastern and Western Germany, and provide valuable ideas for shaping their future (D6.1. and D6.4.). The exploratory approach of the project allows for the discovery of new explanatory factors that will also provide empirical context for evaluating the impact of crises on contemporary social contracts (D5.2) and will help further substantiate and contextualise findings from the social media analysis (WP4). We expect to see differences between East and West Germany, and thus our study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of how social contracts are regionally and historically specific. This can contribute to CO3's broader work on developing adaptable social contract models that account for diverse socio-political contexts across Europe. Based on these findings, the results will be useful for WP6 in the preparation of the CO3 Model (D 6.4.).

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3.6. Hungary

University of Helsinki:

Szilvia Horváth

1. General

Hungary is a post-socialist country in Central Europe, with 9.6 million inhabitants. The country's history goes back a millennium, with Habsburg and Turkish occupations (or cohabitation), which induced a number of freedom fights. After WWI, the country lost 2/3 of its territory alongside millions of native Hungarians, which influenced national identity for the next century. In the second half of the 20th century, the country became part of the Soviet bloc, with an uprising in 1956 against the totalitarian regime and Soviet occupation. This, later in the democratic period, reinforced revolutions as foundational myths for the national social contract. After 1956, the new compromise between communist leaders and the people rested upon a moderate, consumption-based welfare state as an authoritarian social contract. After 1989, the country went through a democratization/de-democratization trajectory: In 1989-90, it transformed into a democracy, and from 2010, a severe democratic backsliding happened when Viktor Orbán came to power. The consumption-based moderate welfare state that provided foundations for state socialism (or named after its leader, Kádárism), seems to have outlived itself and is part of a deep layer of the post-democratic social contract the Orbán regime aims to provide.

This research aims to find the crucial moments and explore the elements of the layers of the current social contract. From the long-term social contract perspective, national myths at the core of national identity are important to explicate. The Trianon (Versailles Treaty after WWI) myth is the most crucial foundation of the modern, 20th-century social contract (cf. Feischmidt 2020) as it is the starting point in defining who is excluded and included in the polity in terms of nationality. Its effect spans through the century. Besides oppression, state socialism, after the lost revolution of 1956, provided a compromise for society in the form of a consumption-based social contract, and, in turn, required the acceptance of the less repressive but still authoritarian and Soviet-backed regime (cf. Valuch 2013, 2021). The state socialism's social contract had a depoliticizing and demobilizing effect, while offering a compromise between the state and society; an authoritarian social contract not uncommon in socialist, illiberal or loosely integrated states.

The Orbán regime's legitimacy rests on how it defines the social contract, and our research addresses what the elements of this social contract are, treating it as a continuation of the authoritarian social contract of the Kádár-regime. This is, thus, both a mid-term (spanning through decades) and a short-term (reinvigorated and modified between 2010-2024) social

contract that, most importantly, affects exclusion and inclusion (minorities, migrants, women), the (lack of) welfare state, and the country's relationship with and self-positioning to the EU. The process of constructing an illiberal social contract also induces harsh critiques. These critiques explicate that there are fissures in the social contract. However, at the same time, the opposition is able to form alternatives against the existing illiberal social contract. These fissures became visible, most importantly, in the strong disagreement among the populace aggregated by Tisza, a newly risen challenger party after February 2024. This brought to the fore the health care crisis as a huge concern and the difference between the visions on the country's geopolitical and cultural orientation either belonging to the "West" or the "East". The differences became extremely accentuated after this new party set the bar to become an EP party and consequently won 30% of the votes at the EP elections.

The most important questions this research addresses are thus (1) the foundational myths of the social contract that define who are included in and excluded from the political community; (2) the authoritarian social contract during state socialism; (3) the authoritarian social contract of Orbánism in the face of the previous, democratic social contract, (4) the challenge(r)s to the authoritarian social contract and the reformulations of a new one.

Research ethics

For audiovisual data collection, the rules set in the project apply. In general, deliverable *D1.3 Internal ethics plan* (submitted on 31 July 2024) summarizes the ethical rules that apply to the Hungarian case (especially section 3. *Key ethical issues* and subsection 3.3. *Personal data*). Besides data available from literature review, most of the data to be collected are resources intended to be public to convince the populace, form policies, and intentionally made public by politicians. Data related to well-known living politicians will be connected to those politicians. These types of announcements are treated as aggregated data for describing discourse and, therefore, anonymized by nature.

Contribution to CO3

The Hungarian case study aims to find similarities and ensure comparability among researched countries by addressing the questions of the long-term social contract (e.g., national myths, inclusion of ethnic Hungarians but exclusion of the Roma), the challenges to the authoritarian social contract and the fissures in it. The fissures are manifesting in the crises of the healthcare system and public services, as well as in real-life migration, and the Orbán regime's anti-migration discourse. These fissures are alternatives to the embryonic, yet democratic social contract(s), which could be preserved and enhanced in resilience. Hungary stands out among the democratic European countries researched in the CO3 project. The fact that it underwent an autocratisation process at the heart of the EU presents a theoretical challenge. Our research wishes to accept the uniqueness of the situation by addressing an authoritarian or illiberal social contract on its own, thus adding a valuable perspective on the project.

2. Theoretical approach(es)

The research operationalizes the SC theories that make the research comparable. Besides, it builds on the autocratic theoretical variation of SCs that were applied to the communist regimes and are popular today in MENA countries' research (cf. Loewe – Zintl – Houdret 2021). This is the theoretical specificity of the country case, which understands SC as a hierarchical tacit agreement between the state/the prince and the population, where the state offers certain deliverables to society (i.e., maintaining order or some kind of welfare/goods) and expects the acceptance of the regime in return.

3. Operationalisation and methodology

The research started in February 2024 and spans through the country case-related tasks in the project. It is carried out in Finland. The researchers working on the country case are Szilvia Horváth from 1 February 2024 until 31 July 2025 (expected end-date). As part of WP4, audiovisual material on the EP elections was collected by Katinka Linnamäki (FI), Gabriella Szabó (HU) and Szilvia Horváth (FI) in May – June 2024. This included data collection on TikTok and Instagram by using three ideological profiles. Our research will contribute to tasks T2.3., T3.2., T3.3., T4.1., T4.2., T4.7., and T5.2.

The Hungarian country case is studied by CO3's University of Helsinki team, following the interpretive and discourse analytical methods applied to the Finnish country case. The research comprises a literature review (desk research) on the authoritarian social contract, both historically before 1990 and in the present since 2010. A fair number of contemporary sources come from the data collection around the EP 2024 election campaign, carried out as part of WP4 of CO3. The audiovisual data was collected by three data gatherers (one residing in Hungary, two in Helsinki). Audiovisual materials were collected on TikTok and Instagram for four weeks: three weeks before and one week after the EP elections. We used three profiles covering the political-ideological orientations of the country. These were: far-right, this followed materials that were related to Fidesz (the governing party) and a minor far-right party (Mi Hazánk); red-green, these materials came from the “old” opposition covering some 6-7 minor parties (the bigger ones are Demokratikus Koalíció and Momentum Mozgalom); the center-right videos related to the Tisza Párt. The country-wise summaries were prepared in WP4 during the Summer 2024. Based on this, the social contract related topics were the following: the far-right and the center-right data focuses on the country's relation to Europe (or the EU); the far-right's focus is on the war in Ukraine alongside a pro-Russian stance; the red-green profiles seem to cover the classical social contract topics like the elements of a welfare state.

The discourse analysis of the EP 2024 data enables the research to focus on the perspectives of the existing and the alternative visions of the social contracts, especially from the perspective of the country's relationship with Europe. The research employs discourse analysis on the Orbánist social contract, combining the interpretive understanding of social

contract elements already studied by political scientists and sociologists with analysis of primary sources. These are mainly political speeches and symbols.

Expected data gathered

The primary sources include the audiovisual materials as part of the EP 2024 data collection, which are pre-analyzed in WP4. Both the primary sources and the pre-analysed data will be used in further research related to Hungary. The country-wise summary and reflections of ethnographic social media research serves itself as a source (as they comprise of three researchers' experiences) (cf. WP4 T4.2). The following data comes from desk research: A set of primary data comes from political discourse, which is planned to be used closely with secondary resources like historical and discourse analysis. Historical data and discourse analytical data are used when mapping the ideational content of political discourse on the social contract. Most of the historical data fits with the historical constructions of the social contract (WP3, esp. T3.3). Political discourse and audiovisual data are important bases for understanding polarisation contesting social contracts (WP2, T2.3). In general, published research materials as secondary sources are a crucial set of sources, both as secondary sources and sites where references to relevant primary sources can be found (besides the above-mentioned tasks, see especially crises of the social contract, WP5 T5.2).

4. Conclusion

The planned research offers a concise view on the layers of the long-term social contract, and on the mid- and short-term authoritarian social contract, which has its roots back in state socialism and was renewed and complemented since 2010. It will produce an account, which will be comparable with other democratic countries. It also aims to map the possibilities to challenge the autocratic social contract in political practice (i.e., the current surge of the oppositional Tisza Party) and in theory (i.e., the revolutionary tradition in Hungarian political discourse as a source of theorizing). Our research will contribute to deliverables 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 4.1, 4.2, and 5.2.

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3.7. Portugal

Team CES:

Cristiano Gianolla, Vanda Amaro Dias, André Caiado, Daniela Nascimento, Gustavo García-López

1. General

The CES research team will explore the (re)construction of the democratic social contract in Portugal over the past 50 years, examining its intersection with European integration and the development of a European eco-social contract. This interdisciplinary research, involving collaboration with partners in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Turkey, and Ukraine, focuses on Portugal's transition from dictatorship and colonial empire to democracy and European integration, marked by radical political, social, and economic shifts.

Portugal's decolonization and democratization were revolutionary, following a 14-year colonial war and an abrupt end to authoritarian rule. The period was characterized by collective power experiments, such as worker occupations, industrial self-management, and participatory practices like literacy campaigns. It also saw the establishment of Welfare State pillars, including the National Health Service, public social security, and expanded public education.

The research adopts a critical, post- and de-colonial lens to understand the interplay between Portugal's transition to democracy, decolonization, and migratory movements, including the challenges faced by former settlers, colonized populations, and migrants from former colonies. These dynamics reveal significant questions about integration, social equity, and democratic participation within the evolving social contract.

By situating Portugal's experience within the broader context of European integration and enlargement, the study aims to provide insights into the resilience of democratic social contracts. Portugal's unique historical and political background as a Southern European country with colonial legacies offers valuable perspectives on the social contract, its inclusivity, and its capacity to address inequalities rooted in imperial and colonial histories. Furthermore, research on European enlargement will allow the team to find and explore similarities and disjunction points between countries sharing a pattern of transition from authoritarianism, colonialism and/or imperialism to democracy and European integration. The cases of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Turkey and Ukraine will offer valuable insights here. Bosnia-Herzegovina, for instance, is relevant due to the construction of its social contract in articulation with its imperial past, conflictual transition to independence and democracy, and interconnection of the latter with European integration. In bringing together different experiences of processes of social contract constitution in relation to the EU, the research will open new avenues into the understanding of the EU as a promotor of manifold forms of inclusion and exclusion in the

social contracts of member states and candidate countries alike, and both the features, challenges and opportunities for the future of the EU social contract. This aligns with CES's mission to democratize knowledge and address societal challenges through transformative research.

Research ethics

Research participants are involved in interviews and the focus groups method for which a process for ethical approval needs to be processed with CES' Ethics Committee. The main ethical provision foreseen is the signature of an informed consent form where participants in the research agree to participate voluntarily after receiving detailed information on the research framework and scope. Participants are informed that they can withdraw their consent during the data collection and for a defined period thereafter. In all tasks, collected data will be subject to a critical discourse analysis, which is one of the CES core methodological strengths.

Contribution to CO3

Qualitative data generated by CES will be mainly analyzed through critical discourse analysis. This will generate critical knowledge that is very relevant in the investigation of the role of colonial empires and trajectories of decolonization migrants (Eldridge et al., 2023), as well as inherited political processes on society, including processes of inclusion and exclusion based on ethnicity, identity, gender and socioeconomic background. Data are handled in conformity with international standards and research methods are mastered by CES research team constituting a great fit with the project consortium and in conformity with the CO3 proposal.

2. Theoretical approach(es)

Critical post and de-colonial perspective, grounded in empirical evidence, highlight how social contract mythologies shape imperial, colonial, and postcolonial subjectivities, often constraining democratic aspirations. This perspective examines three key myths: the EU expansion myth, which limits liberalizing societies' democratic goals in both member states and candidate countries (e.g., Bosnia-Herzegovina, Turkey and Ukraine); the EU green transition myth, where neoliberal and colonial legacies hinder eco-social democratic progress while perpetuating social and political inequalities; and the migration myth, rooted in imperial-colonial histories, influencing state-level dynamics involving migrants, refugees, and *retornados*. Together, these myths reveal how hierarchical and exclusionary patterns persist within empire, state, and EU contexts, obstructing critical democratic development.

3. Operationalisation and methodology

The fieldwork in Portugal is expected to begin in February 2025. The CES team plans to work with *Retornados* (white Portuguese formerly living in ex-colonies), migrants (people who were born under the Portuguese empire but excluded from the Portuguese democratic social contract, and those who were born after the independence of their own countries and

emigrated to Portugal), (climate) refugees and groups of social activists committed to climate justice. We will build on contacts established within previous research which we plan to expand in accordance with the research ahead. The sample of interviews will apply the “snowball method”. CES team will also contribute to collective activities, as those included in the WP4. Interviews in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Turkey and Ukraine will be conducted in articulation with local consortium and non-consortium partners to facilitate access to and communication with participants. Fieldwork is planned to start in September 2025.

The CES team leads five tasks: T2.4 Uncover the deep roots of the CO3 social contracts: empires to nation-states to the EU; T3.4 European borders and colonialism; T4.2 Online ethnographic data gathering; T5.3 Environmental crisis social contract challenge: a new ecosocial contract; T6.3 Focus EU Enlargement: the future of the European social contract from the outside; and T7.4 Discussing the social contract scenarios with young people.

CES research includes five main stages.

- 1) Literature review and document analysis on the Portuguese case-study and on European Enlargement.** This includes, legislation, political/parliamentary speeches, press review and statistical indicators or data from studies that surveyed citizens’ opinions (on government, citizenship, national identity, and belonging; sources: PORDATA; INE; Migration Observatory; Emigration Observatory; International Social Survey Programme). This contributes directly to T2.4, T3.4. and T6.3.
- 2) Exploratory interviews with experts (epistemic community) on Portuguese colonialism and transition to democracy, comparative imperialism, eco-social contract and ‘Natural Social Contract’ (Huntjens, 2021) or European integration and enlargement.** This contributes to T2.4, T3.4, T5.3 and T6.3.
- 3) Digital ethnography on blogs, social media and webpages of political parties, social movements and grassroots associations (including anti-racist, afrodescendant, *retornados*, refugees, immigrants, climate activists).** This will complement the analysis of narratives and social representations about the national history, colonial past, nation-state formation and citizenship profiles that might have raised exclusions/inclusions during the process of identity-formation (contributes to T.3.4, T4.2 and T5.3).
- 4) Ethnographic methods (observation and focus groups), including the attendance of *retornados* meetings and festivals of migrant communities.** This contributes to T.3.4 and T.5.3.
- 5) Semi-structured interviews to map processes of inclusion/exclusion in the context of decolonization, transition to democracy, ecosocial contract, Portugal’s European integration and European enlargement.** We will study a) *Retornados* (three groups): white people (former settlers) and non-white people who came with the returnees. b) Black Africans (living temporarily or permanently in Portugal) who served in the Portuguese Armed Forces during the Colonial War and who lost Portuguese citizenship with the decolonization. c) Citizens originally from Goa, Damão and Diu who kept Portuguese citizenship contrary to what happened with the black people from the African colonies. d) migrants from the former

colonies. e) Members of social movements and grassroots associations (all contributing to T.3.4 and T.5.3), f) civil society actors, political groups in government and in opposition, stakeholder and/or academics from Ukraine, Turkey and Bosnia-Herzegovina connected with the EU accession process, following a gamified interaction method, as developed by IBU (T.6.3).

The sample's size should not be less than 20 interviews total. The sample should include people from diverse backgrounds, taking into consideration factors such as territory of origin, religion, class, age, gender, mother tongue, or ethnic group. The list of potential interviews should be as diverse as possible, enabling us to analyze different life experiences and migration trajectories through an intersectional approach providing insights relevant to all tasks led by CES. All collected data will be subject to critical discourse analysis.

Expected data gathered

Regarding T4.2 (Online ethnographic data gathering /iterative analysis of the state of social contract and alternatives in EP2024): We participated in the gathering of the audio-visual data on two social media platforms at the eve and during the EU elections of 2024. We plan to collect a minimum of 20 interviews and 2 focus groups. Moreover, we will archive several documents, media content and collect fieldnotes during the ethnographic work. Based on specific cases, we will apply a crosscutting analysis that considers the interactions among different focus (e.g., EU integration, EU expansion, EU green transition, migration or reconfiguration of personal, collective and national identities), levels of analysis (empire, state, EU and CPLP - The Community of Portuguese Language Countries) and categories of inclusion/exclusion (based on gender, 'race'/ethnicity, religion, culture, class, citizenship, birthplace, among others).

4. Conclusion

Processes of identity-formation constitute the root causes of several social problems in contemporary Portugal, including the marginalisation of migrants, gender discrimination and climate justice. Results should dig into the relationship between political mythologies and social inequalities in the legacy of colonial empires. This research disentangles the relationship between democratic theory in three different dimensions, (the Portuguese) colonial-empire, nation state (Portugal and EU candidate countries – Bosnia-Herzegovina, Turkey and Ukraine) and the EU as an international organization/actor. The EU faces multiple democratic challenges, while the green transition raises national and supranational governance issues in relation to social justice, migration discourse and management outline the impact of colonial empires in the post-colonial mainland. Another democratic challenge faced by Portugal and several European countries concerns the rise of radical and extreme rights parties. Together with nationalist movements they are mobilizing the citizens' discontent based on emotions, narratives (Gianolla et al., 2024) and populist discourses that present immigration as a cultural, security and economic threat. Lastly, EU expansion highlights the creation of supranational myths and their influence on national narratives. Central to this is the

EU's portrayal as a unique political project fostering integration, liberal democracy, and progress beyond historic conflicts. However, this narrative is marked by inclusion and exclusion, dividing a "civilized" center from an "inferior" periphery needing transformation, especially under the Enlargement framework. This dichotomy reflects in both internal dynamics and external relations.

Scientific outputs: three presentations at conferences and three articles on international peer-review journals covering different topics (European borders and colonialism, environmental crisis, social contract challenge, Europe enlargement) and levels of analysis. Deliverables: D2.2 (Report on the deep roots of social contract), D5.3 (Report on resilience of social contracts with examples).

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3.8. Sweden

Team UU (Uppsala University):

Annika Teppo and Mats Hyvönen

1. General

Our country case in the CO3-project focuses on Sweden. At present, the Nordic countries are going through a period of transition from post-war welfare states to market-oriented societies, a process also mirrored in the position of ethnic minorities. After the 2015 refugee crisis and recent wave of armed violence in cities across Sweden, public discussions and controversies surrounding ethnic minorities have been dominated by concerns with security and migration. Suburbs with a high concentration of immigrants have been at the heart of these spatial concerns, and the high urban segregation rate has been suggested to be at the crux of the problem.

These concerns and discussions reflect the state of the social contract(s), which we examine by studying at how members of the Finnish-originating minority in Sweden (Sweden Finns or *sverigefinnar*) spatially establish and mediate the boundaries of the social contract of their ethnic group in Upplands Väsby, a municipality of Stockholm. The migration from Finland, which had suffered much during the war, to wealthy Sweden in the 1960s and the 1970s was for a long time one of the biggest migrations in the world after the second world war. Many of the Finns in Sweden maintained their own language and culture, although at times with difficulty.

Our primary research questions consider, how Sweden Finns mediate and establish their communities at the intersections of class, gender, and ethnicity? How do they navigate the divide between public and private, between civic and domestic? How have their daily lives been affected by the transforming – and, according to some, crumbling – social contract of the Swedish welfare state?

Research ethics

For our work in Sweden, we acquired a research permission from the ethical board of Sweden in November 2023. Importantly, we assured the ethical board that the names of the participants will be anonymised in the transcribed material, as well as in the publications. We will remove any personal information, characteristics or circumstances that can lead to an identification of an individual person. The only exception with the pseudonymization will be made for persons holding a public office, or with information that is publicly available.

When we carry out interviews or fieldwork, we will explain the purpose of our research clearly in talk or in writing. The voluntary participants then give their consent in written or oral form, which will be recorded. They can choose to withdraw their participation at any time.

Contribution to CO3

In our view, there is not just one state-society contract but also myriad negotiations between the state statutes and the minorities, all of them with a different relation to power, and for different purposes. These contracts can be minuscule and fragmentary, and their practices in daily life can dramatically contradict the official state language of equality. Our research in Sweden will show hierarchies and power dynamics, which are related to the state-maintained social contract but that form a myriad of intimate, transforming social contracts that are seldom perceptible to those outside the local communities.

The tradition of studying social contract has often been most visible in the examination of macro-level societal events, while the anthropological approach generally focuses on the grass-root events and issues. Recently, there have been several suggestions on how to apply this concept on ethnographically produced material. In this vein, our contribution to CO3 will study the *intimate social contracts* in the transforming social spheres and spatial practices in the daily life of Upplands Väsby. This will provide a comparative perspective to the study of social contracts in other EU-countries.

We also participated in the gathering of audio-visual material for the WP4 tasks.

2. Theoretical approach(es)

Burnyeat and Sheild Johansson point out how “Interrogating the social contract ethnographically is not about exploring the ways in which society may or may not be contractual, but rather analysing how people conceive of, appropriate and reinvent these models of sociopolitical life that circulate so widely; essentially, how people live with ideas” (2022).

Intimate social contract means understanding how social contracts are experienced at a familiar, intimate scale and at the grassroots level. They emerge(s) in the intersection in which “informal local relationships interact with a multi-scaled infrastructure of formal state governance” (Siddiqi and Blackburn 2022, 325). This concept renders the theories of social contract useful in the study of micro-level events and helps us to integrate theory with our ethnographic method. Siddiqi and Blackburn further suggest that this approach helps us to move “beyond a view of social contracts as dualistic relations between distinct entities at discrete scales”.

3. Operationalisation and methodology

The two researchers in our team have already negotiated access to the field, and entered the first research phase, where we learn about the places and events that are important for the community. We have initiated the empirical part of the research by attending events with local *sverigefinne* associations, where one researcher participates in their activities. We have also attended the first ever Finnish festival (Finnfestival) in Härnosand, and we will continue to participate in the events that are important for the *sverigefinnar*.

The team has also carried out background research in the Swedish Finnish archives in Eskilstuna and initiated the second phase where we carry out interviews and participant observation. The research will contribute to tasks T2.1; T2.4; T2.5; T3.2.; T3.3; T3.4; T4.1; T4.2; T4.4; T5.2 and T7.2. of the CO3 project.

The field, Upplands Väsby is a suburb of Stockholm, established in the 1960s, and one of the most densely populated areas of *sverigefinnar* in Sweden. A suburb of almost 50,000 inhabitants, it is accommodating people from all walks of life, social classes, and multiple ethnicities. Previously a predominantly working-class area, some parts of it have been classified as vulnerable areas (*utsatt område*). At the same time, parts of it are very middle-class. It is particularly noteworthy as a place where, in the 1970s, early research of Finnish immigrants was carried out.

There is a lot of archive material in the area, which is held at the Swedish Finns archives in Eskilstuna. We carry out archival studies there as well as in other archives in Sweden and Finland. This work will provide background material but also reflect the changing social contract in Sweden. Our ethnographic fieldwork will gain perspectives on sociospatial practices by studying them through participant observation, mapping, interviews, and thematic text analysis. We approach the *sverigefinnar* of Upplands Väsby by looking at spaces, places, and the movements between these, as well as the temporalities and mediations the residents establish. In addition, we will gather biographical interviews in Finnish and Swedish, compile visual data, and carry out media analysis.

We will examine the following spaces:

First, the public spaces can be important to *sverigefinnar*'s sociality. **Second**, we will look into the juridical spaces for various *sverigefinnar* associations and groups with social or political agendas. **Third**, there are the social spaces such as sport and singing clubs, saunas and societies. **Fourth**, there are private spaces such as homes, to which we will gain access after meeting people in the more public spaces listed above. We will carry out participant observation and interviews in these spaces. The purpose is to gain a wide picture of the sociospatial forms that the *sverigefinne* minority in Upplands Väsby has established – their spaces of mediation, their movements, the traces they have left on the urban landscape, and how they themselves have engaged in dialogue with mainstream Swedish society and social contract, and how it has transformed their social lives and community. We will carry on with the ethnographic fieldwork until we are convinced that there is sufficient data to answer the research questions on social contract.

Expected data gathered

Regarding T4.2 (Online ethnographic data gathering /iterative analysis of the state of social contract and alternatives in EP2024). We participated in the gathering of the audio-visual data on two social media platforms at the eve and during the EU elections of 2024.

For this, our basic team (Hyvönen and Teppo) was strengthened with a third researcher, Viljami Vaarala, who carried out the data gathering from Helsinki.

For our country case, we will first gather data through ethnographic fieldwork and participant observation, of which we produce field notes. Once we have identified the places and issues important for our research and found people who are willing to participate in the interviews with the so-called snowball method. We will collect approximately 50 interviews. This data will be complemented with data from media, and archival data. When needed, we will follow these up with complementary interviews even after the participant observation is mainly finished.

4. Conclusion

Our fieldwork focuses on the spatial forms bound to the intimate social contracts that the Finnish-originating minority has established in the suburb – public, social, juridical, and personal spaces of homes. We study their spaces for mediation, movements, the traces they have left on the urban landscape, and how they themselves have transformed these in dialogue with mainstream society and the official idea(l)s social contract(s).

Our research will provide ethnographic knowledge and analytical insights that will lead to new understandings on their transforming social spheres and spatial practices. These practices have two sides: while they might lead to increased segregation, they can also lead to processes of mediation, de-segregation, and increased societal solidarity – in other words, to a stronger and better adjusted social contract(s). This research will contribute to project deliverables D3.2; D3.3; D4.1; D4.2, D5.2 and D7.2.

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3.9. Türkiye

Team IBU:

Pınar Uyan Semerci; Emre Erdoğan & Tuğçe Erçetin

1. General

The concept of the social contract has evolved significantly, particularly in societies undergoing rapid political and social changes. Türkiye presents a compelling case study due to its complicated historical path and ongoing societal shifts, since different moments surface democratic failures, economic alienation, cultural transformations and policies, and political turbulence.

The Early Republican era (1923-1950) focused on creating a national identity with the aim of homogenizing society for the establishment of a nation-state. This period involved various policies and actions, including legal regulations targeting non-Muslim minorities, economic and commercial policies, language standardization, population exchanges, and settlement laws. After the challenging times of the Second World War, the transition from single-party rule to multiparty governance marked a new phase for the young republic. Over the decades, democracy in Türkiye has been challenged by the military coup d'états. Historical divides contribute to polarization along various lines—left and right, secular and conservative, Turkish and Kurdish, as well as centre and periphery. Meanwhile, the growth of civil society, including movements for women's rights, environmental advocacy, and the Kurdish question, alongside the aspiration for European Union membership, has enriched the country's narrative, illuminating critical issues concerning democracy and inclusive participation.

Exploring significant moments in the development of the Republic since 1923, our study will focus on both inclusive and exclusive policies that have influenced its evolution in terms of citizenship. These critical transformative moments illustrate how the Republic has shifted between pluralistic and exclusionary approaches.

Our study will employ the CO3 model, which classifies the evolution of Türkiye's social contracts into three distinct time frames: 1) Long-term (original social contract), 2) Medium-term (open social contract), and 3) Short-term (resilient social contract). It aims to analyze the evolution of Türkiye's social contract considering significant changes over time, as well as its response to current overlapping crises—including economic challenges, health issues, migration, climate-related concerns, earthquake disasters, and the rapid technological transformations following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Research ethics

No ethical review is required for social media analytics, traditional media analysis, and the use of secondary data from sources such as the World Values Survey (2022), the International Social Survey Program, Eurobarometer, and TikTok hashtags. Istanbul Bilgi University Ethics Committee will carry out the ethical review of the upcoming surveys, focus groups, and in-depth interviews. Previous polarization surveys (2015, 2017, 2020) have already been approved by the IBU Ethics Committee.

Contribution to CO3

This research fits with the broader project, which seeks to provide comparative knowledge with respect to the origins and developments of social contracts by focusing on the case of the Turkish Republic in building a new social contract. This research seeks to investigate the challenges to inclusive citizenship and democracy in the context of Turkish history. By referring to the Turkish case as an example, it also explores how the current overlapping crises necessitate a re-evaluation of social contracts globally. The research team will contribute to the following tasks; T2.3 , T2.4, T2.5 (Work package 2 – Theory and CO3 Model and Development); T3.1,T3.2, T.3.3, T3.4 (Work package 3 – Constructions and Frictions of Social Contracts); T4.2, T4.6, T4.7 (Work package 4 – Contemporary debates, bases and Challenges of the Social Contract); T5.2 (Work package 5 – Crises and Reconstruction); T6.1, T6.3, T6.6 (Work package 6 – Scenarios for Resilient Social Contracts for Sustainable and Democratic Futures); T7.2, T.7.3,T7.4(Work package 7 – Impact Coordination)

2. Theoretical approach(es)

Rethinking social contracts is essential to tackle the multifaceted challenges posed by polycrisis. Polycrisis refers to interconnected crises in which climate change, wars, migration, economy, and political instability affect one another, creating an uncertain and complex environment. The traditional understanding of the social contract—rooted in the relationship between the state and its citizens—is increasingly strained in the face of poly-crisis, particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to further economic instability and inequality. Thus, in the age of post-truth, the new media ecosystem, particularly social media, contributes to polarization, and further challenges social cohesion. Furthermore, a critical examination of who is included in the “social” and who is excluded from the "social" highlights the limitations of the traditional understanding of social contract and the current citizenship framework. The growing diversity of those experiencing poverty and exclusion—shaped by class, gender, ethnicity, migration status, age, and sexual orientation—calls for a tailored, inclusive approach.

3. Operationalisation and methodology

The study will focus on political dynamics and societal needs during key moments in the history of the Turkish Republic, as well as current crises. It aims to explore how the social contract is constructed and reconstructed by employing multi-method analysis.

Our team members (Pınar Uyan-Semerci, Emre Erdoğan and Tuğçe Erçetin) will carry out desk research to work on the literature review on historical analysis in scrutinizing key events and dimensions that influence social contract. We will conduct a media analysis considering traditional and social media platforms, focusing on the local electoral period of 2024 through the candidates' official accounts and coverage of campaign-based hashtags. To examine how Turkish media covered and framed the EP elections that occurred in 2024, columns of the printed press, and news coverages in digital platforms will be analysed, conducting a content analysis. We will also carry out a survey with 2400 individuals targeting Turkish citizens aged 18-24 years regarding experiences, perceptions, emotions, vulnerabilities, and migration. As a part of secondary data, surveys (2015, 2017, 2020) on polarization and othering will be analysed to discuss affective polarization. The survey conducted in 2015 targeted 1024 individuals representing urban and rural areas of 16 provinces in Turkey. In 2017, 2004 individuals participated, and in 2020, 4006 participants were included, considering 29 provinces.

Historical Analysis and Literature Review:

Literature Review: An extensive review of academic and historical literature to trace the key events and policies that have defined Türkiye's social fabric from the establishment of the Republic to contemporary times. **Long-term Perspective:** Detailed examination of the foundational periods, such as the establishment of the Republic in 1923, analyzing the initial policies of inclusion and exclusion, their evolution, and their long-lasting impacts on Turkish society. We will also focus on critical junctures such as the transition to democracy (1950), the 1964 expulsion of minorities, the ruling period of Erdoğan (2002), and immigrant inflow (2010s). Additionally, crises such as economic downturns, pandemics, and natural disasters will be included in the study. **Medium-term Perspective:** Analysis of critical transitional events such as the multi-party transitions, significant social and political upheavals, and pivotal elections that have shaped the medium-term social contract dynamics. **Short-term Perspective:** Analysis of the social contract to address the multifaceted challenges of polycrisis.

Media and Social Media Dynamics:

Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis of Social Media:

Utilization of social media analytics to assess the impact of digital platforms on political discourse and public sentiment, with a particular focus on recent electoral campaigns in major urban centers such as Istanbul. We chose certain TikTok hashtags, which the local leading candidates use during the local elections in Istanbul. TikTok data is a part of social media analysis covering hashtags and accounts during the electoral campaign. The data will cover posts that were shared between 10 March and 7 April 2024. This period represents the campaign and the short-term period after the campaign in the observation. To analyze TikTok data, both the ruling party and opposition candidates' personal TikTok accounts, campaign hashtags, and campaign-based accounts were selected.

For the opposition candidates, specific hashtags were visible, and those hashtags were followed: #istanbulBaşardı #seçim2024, #secim2024, #imamoğlu, #ekremimamoglu. The

candidate's account was also considered to receive data on TikTok: @ekrem.imamoglu. In addition, the party used a direct account to conduct a campaign for the local elections; it was thus important to follow and observe the given contents: @istanbulbasardi. Similarly, the official account of the ruling party's candidate was used, @murat_kurum. The ruling party's campaign hashtags were observed: #SadeceIstanbul, #YaptıkYineYaparız. Apart from accounts of political parties and candidates, general hashtags were observed in local elections on TikTok: #istanbulseçimleri, #istanbulseçim, #secim2024.

Media analysis in the consideration of EP elections: For EP elections, we analyse media through printed press (columns), social media news outlets, and positions of political parties to see and understand how the EP elections were framed and reproduced/reconstructed in Türkiye. Interpretative writings and the production of news-based storytelling illustrate positions and articulations toward the EP elections in Türkiye.

Survey and Empirical Data Collection:

Youth Survey: With the intersecting crises and rapidly changing technologies, we focus on the youth. A survey will be undertaken to gather the perceptions and assessments of the young. The survey will be administered within the context of our ongoing project entitled "An Investigation into the Well-being Perspectives and Policy Development Study of NEET (Not in Education, Employment and Training) Youth in Türkiye." The target population is Turkish Republic citizens aged 18 to 24 years (a representative sample) in Türkiye. We aim to understand the capability sets of youngsters and how different vulnerabilities and their intersections create inequality. The inquiry at hand pertains to the observation of the co-existence of very different youth experiences, including the emigration of young individuals as a potential breach of the social contract. From this perspective, we will create a module on "social contract," in which we operationalize the following points for understanding youth's perceptions on fundamental pillars/values of the society/community, social inclusion and exclusion (among citizens and towards immigrants/refugees), current and future challenges of social contract. We will also gather data on current experiences and future expectations of the youth, and perceptions and emotions of young individuals toward Euroscepticism.

Focus Groups and/or in-depth Interviews: Focus groups and/or interviews will complement the survey by gathering qualitative data on the social and political challenges affecting different segments of society. This will provide a more nuanced understanding of how various groups experience the social contract.

Secondary Data Analysis: Analysis of Polarization and Othering Surveys: Our data, conducted through surveys on polarization and othering (2015, 2017, 2020, and 2024 (unclear due to financial constraints)) will be analysed to examine affective polarization. The data on polarization includes three different periods conducted in 2015¹, 2017², and 2020.³ Those studies are part of the "Dimensions of Polarization in Türkiye" project. Comparative Data Analysis: We will also analyze secondary data collected by international survey organizations such as the World Values Survey (2022), the International Social Survey Program, and

Eurobarometer Datasets. We plan to uncover the intersectionality of gender, ethnicity, education, and other factors by conducting multivariate analyses.

Expected Data Gathered

We plan to use the secondary data considering our surveys (2015, 2017, 2020) on polarization and othering. The survey conducted in 2015 targeted 1024 individuals representing urban and rural areas of 16 provinces in Turkey. In 2017, 2004 individuals participated, and in 2020, 4006 participants were included, considering 29 provinces. To uncover youth's perceptions on fundamental pillars/values of the society, social inclusion, and exclusion, current and future challenges of social contract, a survey will be carried out with 2400 individuals aged 18 to 24 years. We will also conduct 12 in-depth interviews and 2 focus groups to scrutinize how different groups experience the social contract. Through the World Values Survey (2022), the International Social Survey Program and Eurobarometer datasets, we aim to explore the intersectionality of gender, ethnicity, education and various factors with multivariate analyses. News coverages considering printed press (columns), social media outlets, and political party perspectives will be covered to display narratives and positions regarding the EP elections. We also plan to include TikTok data with certain hashtags and campaign-based accounts, and candidates' personal accounts, covering the period between 10 March and 7 April 2024 that refers to local election campaigns.

4. Conclusion

The review of historical literature analyses key events like the Republic's founding, the 1950 democratic transition, and the Erdoğan era since 2002, in order to explore how inclusionary and exclusionary policies have shaped Türkiye's long-term social contract. The media and social media components will utilize platforms like TikTok to assess political discourse and its impact on public opinion, helping to understand the role of digital platforms in polarization. A Youth Survey will gather insights from young people regarding the social contract. Focus groups and/or in-depth interviews will provide qualitative data on the social challenges faced by various groups, while secondary data analysis will compare international datasets to uncover intersections of gender, ethnicity, and class in social exclusion. Together, these efforts will contribute to understanding social contract to address current crises and societal divides. The research team will contribute to D3.2 (Report on social and societal non-cohesions), and D4.3 (multi-method framework for the analysis of contemporary visions of social contract).

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3.10. Ukraine

Team UCU:

Yuriy Pidlisnyy and Petro Baykovskyy

1. General

In 1991, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and regaining of independence by Ukraine the new social contract became a necessity. The Soviet social order ceased to be relevant for the new political and geopolitical reality. Heavy social crisis pushed social and political actors to search for new values and principles for a new country.

When Ukraine started transition from post-communist, post-soviet, post-colonial (anti-imperialist) search for a new social contract within a highly fractured and deeply wounded nation. This search, from the transitional stage since 1991 (but in reality, since the late 1980s) until the ongoing Russian aggression against Ukraine revolved around the below listed issues that could be named non-cohesion and friction issues dividing/reconciling different fragmented social groups. 1) Independence and sovereign state vs. part of the Russian empire (tsarist, communist, post-soviet); 2) security and recognition by international community vs. owning nuclear arsenals; 3) national identity as back to historic roots (history, tradition, heroes etc.) vs. post-soviet hybrid national identity inheriting soviet national policies (including mono- vs pluri-lingual Ukraine); 4) market economy vs planned economy; 5) yes or no to the social welfare state; 6) legacy of the new Ukraine Ukrainian People's Republic or Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic; 7) westward vs eastward geopolitical integration (with it long centennial legacy back to Europe i.e. back from Moscow vs forever with Moscow); 8) democracy with free elections vs authoritarian regime with controlled elections; 9) freedom and dignity vs tyranny; 10) freedom and sovereignty vs security exchanged for Russian domination (related to p.7); 11) free entrepreneurship and liberal economic policies vs oligarchy; 12) EU +NATO integration vs neutrality (i.e. facing Russian threats); 13) social and judicial justice vs corrupt state, with a related question about the size of the state apparatus; 14) just war/defense and just peace in context of peace, security, national sovereignty and territorial integrity, international security warranty, hypothetic deal and search for the post-war social contract within more broader international security architecture.

Research ethics

The use of all collected data during the research will fit the ethical framework of the project. Most of the data collected are/will be from open sources. If any data is obtained from private persons (this relates to interviews and focus groups needed for the research), no personal data will be spread except by the clear consent of the person concerned. Interviews and focus groups sessions will be recorded with the clear consent of the participants of the interviews and focus groups.

Contribution to CO3

Our research is oriented toward finding, which are the factors that might contribute to better social cohesion, and how. We will take into consideration previous experiences of citizens in different macro-regions, social groups, and state institutions. We will look for factors that allow social contract to remain alive, and adapt to rapidly changing circumstances and find those inclusive factors that will promote social cohesion and viability of social order in view of the Russian aggression and Ukrainian aspirations to enter EU and NATO. Our research will contribute to the whole CO3 project by means of disclosing how Ukrainian experience of different social contracts in the past and Ukraine's European and Euro-Atlantic integration can enrich the search for resilient and continuous social contract building. One of the contributing factors will be the analysis done by the UCU team of the EP elections 24 where we were analyzing Ukraine (war and integration in the EU process) as a factor during EU elections.

2. Theoretical approach(es)

The issues of inclusion and exclusion of the colonial, post-colonial, traditional, and new identities of Ukraine and their respective narratives that influence building and rebuilding of social contracts became main factors in mapping literature that was dealing with Ukrainian social contracts during the last four decencies (WP2). The focus of the theoretical approach is how to balance national identity, justice, freedom, and security issues in this research. The selection of respective literature and materials of different think tanks was done in view of this focus. Also, we will constantly refer to weak and strong aspects of previous social contracts in view of the need to build a new one, taking into consideration the requests of main stakeholders. As an example, we can mention the request of different stakeholders for judicial justice, equal opportunities, freedom-security balance, national identity and integration process balances.

3. Operationalisation and methodology

The research involves the permanent work of two main researchers, Yuriy Pidlisnyy and Petro Baykovskyy, as well as the temporary involvement of experts in the required fields of expertise. The work is divided into three general stages.

At the first stage, we will examine how various historical factors influenced the formation of the social contract (Tasks 2.4, 2.5, 3.3, 3.4, and 4.2). At the second stage, through interaction with the actors involved in creating a new social contract, we will identify the main demands for this new social contract (Task 5.2). At the third stage, based on historical preconditions, current challenges (such as the war and security issues), and opportunities (such as European integration), we will develop scenarios for the establishment of a sustainable social contract in Ukraine (Tasks 6.1, 6.3, and 6.4) and propose relevant policy recommendations (Task 6.6). Our team will use theoretical insights based on historical experience, described in the sources indicated in mapped literature on social contract since 1991, and interviews with social actors

and social contract stakeholders in the form of focus groups and round tables and on the analysis of the open data on the social processes.

An initial expert discussion or series of discussions (roundtables) should formulate key research points around which an in-depth literature and theoretical review should be conducted (with a special emphasis on postcolonial and post-totalitarian studies). This stage of the research should result in the elaboration of key questions for organizing focus groups.

Based on the presented theoretical framework and literature review, a framework for conducting focus groups with the main stakeholders of the existing and future social contract will be formulated. These stakeholders will include representatives of the public sector, business, political parties, and religious structures. Focus groups will be convened in the largest cities of Ukraine (like Kyiv, Lviv, Odessa), considering macro-regions. After formulation of our hypothesis, we will contact our focus group in order to present and critically discuss the hypothesis formulated on the basis of the gathered data. Given that Ukraine has begun an active process of European integration, a genuine discussion of the social contract in Ukraine is impossible without considering the positions of the EU and various actors in its member states. Therefore, it is planned to study the positions of the parties-candidates in the European Parliament elections on Ukraine's membership in the EU both through content analysis of election programs (European parties and national parties from key member states) and collected data from social networks (contribution to D.4.2). We will also include in our research positions of the Ukrainian NGOs representing Ukrainian diaspora and refugees in the EU countries with the quantitatively largest communities.

Finally, one of the crucial points in our research will be the analysis of how the Russian aggression has impacted the discussion and prospective proposals for the elaboration of the new and enduring social contract.

Expected data gathered

We expect to gather maximum of different literature and analytical texts published in Ukrainian and other languages since late 80ies of the XX century, interviews and different materials from seminars and focus groups in Ukraine and countries that host Ukrainian diaspora and nowadays refugees that will provide us with answers to the main research question about factors that can promote and favor (re)building of inclusive continuous and lasting social contract that includes postwar challenges and EU and NATO integration challenges and opportunities.

4. Conclusion

We will identify, how the social contract existed in Ukraine under colonial influence and how different colonial entities influenced the formation and perception of the social contract in Ukraine, and how those influences brought forth instability and crisis of the respective social contracts (contribution to the Deliverables D2.1, D2.2, D3.3). We will also identify the interests and visions of the social contract held by various contemporary institutions and actors of

Ukrainian society. These institutions exist in modern Ukraine due to the conditions of the historical past, Russian aggression and the desire for integration into the EU and NATO (contribution to the Deliverables 4.2, 5.2). We will gather maximum data from Ukraine and foreign countries hosting Ukrainian diaspora and refugees. This data will enable us to formulate main aspirations of different stakeholders in (re)building social contract, which would be as maximally as possible long standing one without “social earthquakes” (contribution to Deliverables 6.1, 6.2, 6.3).



3.11. Conclusion

This section on country cases has presented our methodological points of departures, which will be applied in the coming research, and reflected in the country reports, policy briefs, and any other academic publications these studies will generate. The next part presents the methods for the research carried out for the WP4. While the data carrying for this WP has already been completed, the analysis of the data continues as this is being written in January 2025.



3. WP4: a cross-European study of the European elections

Authors: Emilia Palonen, Kleber Carrilho and Alexander Alekseev

In 2024, each team was participating in the gathering of the data for this WP. The work has been carried out in 10 EU countries, and two adjacent countries, and in collaboration with several other research consortia. The gathered data provides important input for the CO3, as the gathering was done simultaneously with the researchers from the CO teams across Europe. This approach yielded input for a diversity of research activities also for WP3. We describe the comparative research method and data-gathering effort here, following loosely the structure of the country case reports under the main title 3.

1. General

WP4 studies the social contract in the European Parliamentary Elections in the EU member states. The study is done in collaboration with other research consortia, so we have been able to extend the number of countries, number of political profiles and themes to cover. This is a lateral analysis across the consortium, practically. This data also feeds to country cases. The first study from the UH team on the previous European Elections (EP2019) was dealing with Twitter data, then the most commonly used platform for political communication (Herkman & Palonen 2024). This time the idea was to extend the analysis to audiovisual data and short videos that circulate the political communication landscape in 2024. We made two pilot studies, one for the Finnish presidential elections and the other for the Portuguese general elections.

CO3 researchers' crucial contribution to science was to study the EP elections in May-June 2024. The collaboration was made with several research consortia where 30 researchers across 10 countries are challenged to explore how short video platforms shape politics and political discourse during the European Parliament elections. The background team of a dozen people at the University of Helsinki were supporting the data gathering and forming a dataset of the collection effort. This extraordinary journey through methodological innovation, technical challenges, and unexpected discoveries is worth telling as a story of how we study TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube to uncover the dynamics of political communication in a digital age.

Social media platforms are not static. They are algorithm-driven ecosystems in constant flux. Capturing their essence during a politically charged moment, like the European Parliament elections, requires an ambitious approach. Our team is investigating how politics circulates on

short-video platforms, focusing on the intersection of audiovisual communication, algorithms and discourse.

Research ethics

The ethics report for WP4 has been submitted and approved by the Ethics Board of the UH. The data is gathered under the European copyright Act which considers Very Large Online Platforms' open data as open for research use, including a securely stored dataset. We keep campaign-relevant data only.

Contribution to CO3

The research data is comparative across the EU member states (Bulgaria, Croatia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Portugal, Sweden) in addition through the other horizon consortia PLEDGE and MORES we have more data gatherers and were able to process Poland and Spain. We also cover in WP4 Ukrainian and Turkish perspectives through media coverage. The presence of Turkey and Ukraine is findable in the data gathered.

2. Theoretical approach(es)

Our hypothesis is that if there is a social contract in operation in Europe, this would be findable in the election engagement and arguments for or against Europe and arguments for voting. We have operationalised the social contract also into the analysis of the data through LLM, which indicates social contract arguments or bases.

3. Operationalisation and methodology

The research design was to a large part a background from the UH's existing projects [ENDURE](#) and the PROFI funded [Datafication Research](#) Programme at the Helsinki Institute for Social Sciences and Humanities (HSSH). This experimental research developed a particular methodology. Data gathering from social media was done by a team of circa 10 people in the UH management team and 30 people across the 10 countries gathering data. Each data gatherer had an organic and a political profile in Instagram and TikTok, which allowed us to gather three political orientations per country. Daily office hours and weekly meetings were held by the UH office, and they provided support all through the process. The processing and analysis of the data also used AI for further the use of the large dataset and to unveil comparative data.

A three-layered methodology was adopted:

1. Scraped accounts data: The research teams collected data from official accounts of political parties, leaders, candidates, and key media outlets in each of the 10 countries.
2. Scrolling recordings: Using synthetic profiles mimicking different political leanings (far-right, centre-right, and left-green), the researchers recorded interactions with content

to analyse what algorithms recommended and how content was distributed. As a control, each one of the researchers also used an organic account.

3. Researchers' daily notes: These ethnographic observations captured the researchers' impressions, memories and interpretations, adding a crucial human perspective to the dataset. After the period, they also answered a final survey, and each country team wrote a report.

Building a Research Infrastructure

The project's groundwork was meticulous and demanding. We created 30 synthetic profiles, complete with names, photos, and email accounts, to represent supporters of different political ideologies in each country. Researchers were trained to use specially configured devices (Google Pixel 7a phones running Graphene OS) to ensure security and data integrity.

The setup process involved:

- Configuring devices with a secure operating system.
- Installing necessary applications, including VPNs and social media platforms.
- Teaching researchers how to create and manage synthetic and organic profiles, interact with content according to protocols, and record screen activity.

This foundational work was critical but fraught with challenges. The built-in screen recorder failed early, forcing us to switch to an alternative app, AZ Screen Recorder. VPN usage also encountered issues, with shared subscriptions being flagged as suspicious. These hurdles required rapid problem-solving and creative thinking from the entire team.

Moments of discovery and frustration

As data collection started, the journey revealed interesting insights and frustrating obstacles. The scrolling recordings exposed how algorithms could blur ideological boundaries, sometimes recommending far-right content to left-green profiles or (much more rarely) vice versa. This highlighted the unpredictable nature of algorithmic curation and its potential to influence political perceptions. Researchers' daily notes added a human dimension to the data. They captured emotional reactions to polarising content and reflected on platform differences. For instance, TikTok's algorithm amplified trending audio and visual memes, while Instagram often leaned on more polished, campaign-driven content. There were also moments of tension. The sheer volume of content (5TB of data across all countries) required rigorous organisation and cleaning. Ethical considerations were omnipresent, from ensuring compliance with the GDPR to mitigating researchers' exposure to distressing material.

Expected data gathered

The data consists of a dataset (excel sheets) and videos from the scraped data (video data is forthcoming as well as the combination of these datasets). We also have processed country reports of the ten countries. These will be published first in the HEPP website as working papers.

4. Conclusion

The results will be analysed in spring 2025, after the pre-processing and cleaning has been completed and the initial country reports that indicate what the recorded data was about have been published. We learned lessons from this methodological enterprise. This project was more than an academic exercise. It was a vivid demonstration of the complexities of studying digital phenomena. The methodological innovation of using synthetic and organic profiles alongside qualitative observations allowed us to capture both the mechanics of algorithmic curation and the lived experience of interacting with these platforms.

The power of algorithms: Algorithms do not just reflect user preferences. They actively shape them, creating feedback loops that can amplify political narratives.

- The role of platforms: Each platform has unique dynamics influencing how content is produced, shared, and consumed.
- The value of collaboration: Bringing together 30 researchers with diverse expertise created a rich, multidisciplinary approach to the study.

When working with scrolling in digital media, such as TikTok videos and Instagram Reels, it is essential to understand how a user performing a character can bring valuable elements to our research. For this reason, we analyze scrolling recordings, which provide insights into the distribution of content by the networks' algorithms. In contrast, researchers' notes offer complementary information, as they reflect the perception and memory of individuals interacting with digital platforms. These two data types do not necessarily need to align. This observation highlights that the users often lack awareness or recollection of all the accounts or political figures they encounter in their daily interactions on social networks.

Certain situations, such as the hijacking of a far-right sympathizer's profile from a European country by content linked to the United States and Donald Trump or the continuous appearance of far-right content in the feed of a centre-right or left-wing profile, do not indicate data inaccuracies. Instead, they reveal that these phenomena can occur and are part of network dynamics, potentially undermining the strategies of some observed political groups.

Implications for the future include some reflections. Our findings can have profound implications for understanding political communication in the digital age. They tend to reveal how social media platforms are not neutral spaces but active participants in shaping political discourse. For policymakers, these insights underscore the need for greater transparency in how algorithms operate. For researchers, the project serves as a blueprint for tackling the methodological challenges of studying dynamic digital environments.

Embarking on this research was an adventure in every sense of the word. It required creativity, resilience, and a willingness to navigate uncharted territory. In the end, the joint effort of these over thirty academics paid off, yielding a dataset that illuminates the role of social media in European elections and sets the stage for future investigations into the evolving dynamics of digital politics. This research has shown that exploring the unknown can lead to insights as

impactful as unexpected. The deliverables we contribute to are D4.1 Social media dataset of the EP 2024, and D4.2 EP2024 Country reports.

5. References and sources

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