

Call For Applications

DEMOCRATIC FRONTIERS

*Charting Pathways for Trust and
Participation in European Governance*

**Academic coordinator: Prof Dr Daniela Braun
(Saarland University, ActEU Conceptual Leader)**

The ActEU project (Activating European Citizens' Trust in Times of Crises and Polarization), funded within the Horizon Europe programme, aims to conceptualize and empirically measure political trust and legitimacy beyond conventional methods, addressing how policy-makers and civil society can effectively respond to these challenges to sustain democratic governance. Join us in **February 2025** at the **ActEU Doctoral School** to delve into these vital issues and contribute to advancing our understanding and solutions!

ActEU



Funded by
the European Union

THE HEADLINES

WHO?



15 PhD researchers; you could be one of them!

WHAT?



4-day doctoral school; deepen your understanding of political trust and legitimacy in a polarised EU multi-level system!

WHEN?



10-13 Feb. 2025; make room in your schedule!

WHERE?



Brussels, Belgium; join us in the EU's capital!

WHY APPLY?



Benefit from the expertise of renowned researchers in their field through theoretical and methodological presentations.

Collaborate with other participants to enhance your research work.



Meet and engage with **relevant practitioners**, including political actors and civil society representatives.

Participate in a **hands-on workshop** to develop your hard professional skills useful for your future career.



WHAT IS OUR FOCUS?

Objectives and key questions

The ActEU Doctoral School aims to deepen PhD researchers' understanding of **political trust and legitimacy within the polarised EU multi-level system of governance**. PhD researchers will delve into a comprehensive conceptual framework, exploring critical questions related to trust, legitimacy, and democratic resilience in Europe.

The programme seeks to **foster connections** between PhD researchers and practitioners, including EU policy-makers and civil society representatives, across various fields relevant to ActEU (i.e. EU democracy and legitimacy, local and regional democratic issues, polarised policy fields, political participation, and representation). Through a **multi-method approach**, participants will gain insights into the "**ActEU triangle**" - the interrelationship between political attitudes, political behaviour and (feelings of) political representation - enhancing their analytical skills and research methodologies. You can find a **draft agenda** [here](#).

The Doctoral School will also encourage **collaborative efforts**, enabling young researchers to present their research in **peer-review exercises** and opening opportunities to **co-author publications**, with the goal of continuing these academic partnerships beyond the seminar. Among others, the Doctoral School will address the following key questions:

- *How can political trust and legitimacy be effectively conceptualised and measured in the context of a multi-level European Union?*
- *What impact does societal polarisation on issues such as immigration, climate change, and gender policy have on the trust and legitimacy of democratic institutions?*
- *What roles do political actors, administrative officials, and civil society representatives play in restoring trust and legitimacy in European multi-layered systems?*
- *What are the most relevant factors to make European political institutions trustworthy (again)? Should we develop target group-specific measures (e.g., for young vs. older citizens; for well-informed vs. less informed citizens; for engaged vs. disengaged citizens; for poorer vs. richer citizens)?*
- *How can collaborative efforts between various stakeholders (political and administrative actors as well as the citizenry) contribute to overcoming the challenges of political trust and legitimacy in European democracies?*



HOW TO APPLY?

The ActEU Doctoral School is open for 15 PhD researchers who develop their research in the following areas:



Representative democracy in Europe

e.g. electoral systems, voting behaviours, political parties, party systems



The empirical investigation of citizen politics

e.g. public opinion, political attitudes, citizens' participation in Europe, (feelings) of representation



Polarisation in European societies

e.g. socio-political divides, identity politics, media influence, social stratification



The investigation of (EU) multi-level systems

e.g. inter-governmental relations, governance, policy coordination, accountability



... or any other related topics

To apply, please send the following documents in a single file in PDF format to TEPSA's Project Manager **Eva Ribera** (eva.ribera@tepsa.eu) by **24 November 2024 (midnight)** at the latest:



A brief **curriculum vitae** (one to two pages); and brief **motivation letter** (one page) explaining why you and your thesis would benefit from the Doctoral School;



A presentation of their **doctoral research** in a maximum of 1500 words (references not included), which cover the following four sections:

- **Abstract** presenting their doctoral research and the social issue their thesis aims to answer (maximum 300 words);
- **Research questions and theoretical framework;**
- **Methodological approach;**
- **Current state of advancement of their research.**

Candidates will be personally notified of the acceptance of their participation on **4 December 2024**.

TERMS & CONDITIONS

Participation in the ActEU Doctoral School is **free of charge**. However, in order to secure their seats the selected applicants are required to transfer a **deposit of €100**, which will be **fully refunded upon participation** in the seminar.

Failure to transfer the deposit in time will result in exclusion from the seminar. In case of non-participation, the deposit cannot be refunded.

Participants in the seminar will receive a **reimbursement for their travel and accommodation costs up to €450** upon presentation of the original receipts and tickets. They will also receive a **€15 per diem** for each day when lunch is not provided.

DON'T MISS THIS OPPORTUNITY AND APPLY NOW! JOIN US IN BRUSSELS FOR AN UNFORGETTABLE EXPERIENCE!

APPLY NOW!

ABOUT / ActEU

Learn more on
our website

How can we conceptualize and empirically measure political trust and legitimacy beyond the usual survey question "How much trust do you have in the parliament?"? Does the multi-level nature of European representative democracies require an identical level of citizen support at the regional, national and EU level? ActEU aims at findings answers to these questions and more by pursuing two overarching goals: First, in phase 1, we map and investigate persistent problems of declining trust, legitimacy and representation in Europe with a particular attention to the polarization of societies and the EU's multi-level structure. Knowledge gained from phase 1 will flow directly into the development of a toolbox of remedial actions characterizing phase 2, which will craft tailor-made toolkits for political and civil society actors, school teachers and university lecturers to deal with issues of declining political trust in representative democracies in flux and counteract a further decrease. We develop context-sensitive solutions for all polity levels and type of polarizing policy field (migration, environment, gender).

