

Investigating the Emotions of Protective Policies: New EU-Funded Project 'PROTEMO' Starts Activities

The newly launched research project aims to analyse the emotional roots, responses, and consequences of policies that promise security and safety to individuals. The results of the endeavour hold the potential to illuminate the future of representative democracy.

22 January 2024 – Emotions such as pride, fear, anxiety, hope, anger, contentment, and disgust wield a significant influence on current politics in democracies. This holds true when it comes to policies communicated by political actors as providing safety and security to citizens—referred to as 'protective policies.' The role played by emotions in this context is vast, yet remains largely understudied. While there is a solid knowledge of the political dynamics influencing the adoption of protective policies set in motion by party competition and vote-seeking related to law and order or migration policies, an examination of the emotional roots and consequences of such policies for individuals and democratic systems is still lacking.

The new EU-funded research project 'PROTEMO' sets out to fill this gap and enhance our understanding of how emotions matter for policy-making in an age of misinformation and insecurity. Coordinated by Saarland University, Germany, the project brings together eight international institutions and scholars from different academic backgrounds (political science, political and social psychology, public administration, sociology) to conduct in-depth and comparative research.

Looking at the Emotional Dynamics of Protective Policies from Three Angles

Emotional needs such as feeling valued, secure, successful, or connected to a community are inherent to individuals and extend beyond the confines of the political sphere. Nevertheless, political actors can also influence and elicit these needs. By conceptualising non-material needs within a political framework, PROTEMO will delve into the emotional dynamics of protective policies from three perspectives embedded in the policy-making process.

The research team will first examine how policy-makers perceive and influence emotional needs and how these perceptions, along with the emotions of policy-makers themselves, manifest in the policy process. Secondly, PROTEMO will explore the emotional reactions that protective policies provoke among individuals and the broader public. Finally, the consortium will analyse how citizens' emotional reactions provide feedback on the policy process and, in turn, how they are responded to with additional policies.

Towards an Enhanced Understanding of the Future of Representative Democracy

The PROTEMO team will examine various policies across 11 countries and focus on several policy areas, including pandemic responses, climate change mitigation, migration, housing, and penal welfare policies. By mapping emotions, values, identities, and beliefs that influence individuals' preferences and decision-making for protective policies, the consortium will analyse which emotions and needs come into play in forming ties, senses of belonging and exclusion, responsibilities, and rights between individuals, communities, and the state.

“Through a multi-tiered approach, we aim to investigate which and whose emotional needs are given priority in the political agenda setting, whose emotional needs are disavowed and silenced, and by whom,” asserts Dr. Beatriz Carbone, Consortium Scientific Manager at Saarland University. The coordinator of PROTEMO, Georg Wenzelburger, Professor for Comparative European Politics at



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Saarland University, adds that “by looking at how citizenship, emotions and political communication mutually influence each other, we can ultimately gain insights into how policy-making in representative democracies could look in the future.”

On January 22, 2024, PROTEMO officially starts its activities with a two-day kick-off meeting in Coimbra, Portugal. Over the next three years, PROTEMO will be funded with over EUR 2.8 million from the European Union’s Horizon Europe Framework Programme for Research and Innovation.

Key Facts

Full Name: PROTEMO – Emotional dynamics of protective policies in an age of insecurity

Start Date: 1 January 2024

Duration: 36 months

Budget: EUR 2.8 Mil.

Coordinator: Saarland University

Website: www.protemo.eu

Project Partners

Denmark

- University of Southern Denmark, PI: Peter Starke

Germany

- Saarland University, Coordinator, PIs: Georg Wenzelburger & Beatriz Carbone
- Eurice – European Research and Project Office GmbH, Sandra Türk

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- Reichman University, PI: Moshe Maor

Poland

- Institute of Psychology of the Polish Academy of Sciences, PI: Katarzyna Hamer

Portugal

- University of Coimbra, PI: Lisete Mónico, Ph.D.
- Centre for Social Studies of the University of Coimbra, PI: Cristiano Gianolla, Ph.D.

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Funded by
the European Union