

Workpackage 1	Defining, identifying, and measuring crises
Workpackage leader	University of Geneva – Marco Giugni

Objectives

This workpackage has a two-fold objective. Firstly, it aims to define the criteria for identifying economic crises. This will involve a conceptual and theoretical work in order to reach an operational definition of crises through the formulation of an exhaustive list of indicators. This list will contain not only indicators of input of crisis, such as usual macro-level indicators of unemployment, inflation, GDP, “misery index”, etc., but also indicators of output of crisis, including micro-level self-reporting of subjective happiness and life satisfaction. Secondly, it aims to define the criteria for assessing cross-national variations in terms of legal and institutional systems so as to appraise availability and substantial meaning of political opportunities and legal rights that are available for European citizens as individuals and collective entities (civil society organizations, movements, etc.). In so doing, this workpackage aims to provide contextual background knowledge on the nature and extent of the crisis on the social, political, and economic level which is systematically comparative across the nine countries included in the project.

What do we mean by crisis? How can we define economic crises? What are their potential negative consequences on the citizenry? What is the extent of the crises in economic, social, and political terms in the countries included in the research? How did indicators develop over time in each country? Did the social and political attitudes of the citizenries of these countries change before and during the current economic crisis or remain stable? Did their family and social relations change or remain stable?

Description of work

The theoretical task of definition and identification of the crisis will involve all the beneficiaries. This will start with a discussion at the kick-off meeting. On that basis, the leading beneficiary will draft a document to be circulated within the consortium for comments and refinements. This document has a two-fold purpose. On one hand, it will give an operational definition of crisis that will allow for identifying specific variations of crisis in each country. On the other hand, it will provide an initial list of indicators to be used in following workpackages. The empirical part of the workpackage will consist in collecting systematic comparative data. Secondary aggregate-level data of this workpackage will then be related to the primary data generated by the project in following workpackages. In particular, contextual data will allow to relating citizens’ resilience to the crisis according to specific variations in the scope of the crisis itself and to differences in the political context.

Task 1.1: Definition and identification of crises

This task corresponds to the theoretical objective of this workpackage. It will involve a conceptual and theoretical work aimed at providing an operational definition of crises and defining the criteria for identifying economic crises.

Task 1.2: Definition of list of contextual indicators

On the basis of the conceptual and theoretical work done in the first task, we will provide a list of

contextual indicators. The list will include economic, social, and political indicators.

Task 1.3: Data collection on economic indicators

We will gather systematic comparative data on economic indicators (e.g. economic growth, inflation, unemployment) using existing sources such as the OECD.

Task 1.4: Data collection on social welfare indicators

We will gather data on social welfare indicators (e.g. state expenditures for social security, health, pensions) using existing sources such as the European System of Welfare State Indicators at the University of Mannheim.

Task 1.5: Data collection on political indicators

We will gather data on institutional and legal indicators (e.g. configuration of power, party polarization, level of unionization, trade unions' rights, anti-discrimination rights, court action, etc.) using existing sources such as the Comparative Political Data Set at the University of Bern.

Task 1.6: Analysis of existing surveys

We will gather data on citizens (e.g. social and political attitudes, social and political behaviors, family and social life) using existing comparative surveys such as the European Social Survey, the European Value Survey, and the Eurobarometers.

Task 1.7: Creation of comparative dataset

The data collected in previous tasks will be standardized and assembled in such a way as to be used as contextual background knowledge on the nature and extent of the crisis on the social, political, and economic level. To do so, we will create a comparative dataset that include all these data. The latter will cover the period from 2005 to 2014.

Task 1.8: Drafting of report on definition and identification of crises

This document has a two-fold purpose. On one hand, it will give an operational definition of crisis that will allow for identifying specific features of the crisis in each country. On the other hand, it will provide an initial list of indicators to be used in following workpackages.

Deliverables

1.1: Comparative dataset on economic, social, and political indicators: standardized comparative dataset comprising economic, social, and political indicators covering the period from 2005 to 2014.

1.2: Working paper on definition and identification of crises: working paper providing a state-of-the-art discussion of the literature, an operational definition of crisis that will allow for identifying specific features of the crisis in each country, and an initial list of indicators to be used in following workpackages.