

Consortium for European Research with Election Studies (CERES)

Report from the Chair of the Executive Board by Mark Franklin (inaugural and out-going chair)

CERES was founded at the time of the ECPR General Conference in Reykjavik, August 2011, at an open meeting attended by 48 individuals representing election studies throughout Europe. At that meeting the draft statutes were adopted. Those statutes set out that “The CERES Association provides technical and methodological support for research on electoral democracy and a platform for collaboration of national election studies with each other and with the European Election Studies (EES)”. Not stated in the Statutes is a hope that CERES will facilitate the creation of a European Research Infrastructure Consortium (ERIC) under the auspices of the EU's DG Research, providing security of funding for research on electoral democracy in the member countries of the EU and at the EU level. The statutes call for there to be a “General Meeting ... held at the fringes of the bi-annual General Conference of the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) held in odd calendar years.” This report is written in preparation for the meeting to be held in Bordeaux in September 2013.

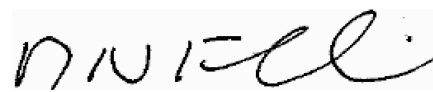
CERES currently has no funding and hence no support staff. Thus, among many other deficiencies, it has no permanent website – merely a web page associated with the Chair's personal website (www.eui.eu/Personal/Franklin/CERES.html). Yet CERES did undertake a variety of activities over the two-year period between General Meetings, of which the most important are detailed below.

We responded to a call for “Consultation on possible topics for future activities for integrating and opening existing national research infrastructures” put out by the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI). That committee had been responsible for the establishment of a number of research infrastructures in Europe (most notably, for political scientists and sociologists, the European Social Survey, which provides a model for the sort of research infrastructure whose creation CERES hopes to facilitate). In our Response, submitted at the end of October 2012, CERES was able to set out the case for a Europe-wide Research Infrastructure for studying electoral democracy, building on the results of the Infrastructure Design Study that the EU's DG Research had funded at the time of the 2009 European Parliament elections. That design study, Providing an Infrastructure for Research on Electoral Democracy in the European Union (PIREDEU) is better known among academic researchers as the 2009 European Election Study but, formally, that election study was funded as a feasibility study for a Europe-wide ERIC that would oversee funding for the study of national as well as European Parliament elections. Consequently it was of the greatest importance that a representative body was in existence that was able, on behalf of election studies throughout Europe, to respond to the ESFRI Call.

Indeed the fact that CERES was able to respond to the Call is probably of far greater importance than the content of our response. We hope that the fact that we responded will ensure that we retain a place “at the table” when discussions are opened, at some time in the future, for the creation of additional infrastructures – a process that was interrupted by the economic crisis that began in 2008.

A workshop was held in February 2013 at the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences, funded by that institution and by the Robert Schumann Centre for Advanced Studies at the European University Institute. Entitled “Studying spillover at national and European Parliament elections in Europe: A collaborative project between EP and national election studies”, this three-day workshop was attended by the PIs of the Austrian, British, Danish, French, German, Hungarian, Italian, Netherlands, Portugese, Polish, Slovak, Swedish and Spanish natiional election studies and also by PIs of the European Election Study. Representatives from the Estonian and Irish election studies were unfor-tunately unable to attend. The purpose of the workshop was the crafting of a research programme that, over the course of forthcoming national and European elections, will assemble systematic evidence to support conjectures relating to the consequences of EP elections for national politics in the EU’s member states, along with effects in the other direction – by-products of elections at each level that we refer to as “spillover”. In practice the workshop went further and planned a variety of activities that may ultimately be helpful to election studies throughout Europe. Most importantly it set in motion the planning of a module of questions that could be fielded at the time of future national and European elections, questions designed to study the evolution of representative processes at a “critical juncture” in European politics marked by the continuing economic crisis of the Euro Zone and its ultimate effects on national political and electoral processes in EU member countries.

The NIAS workshop also provided the opportunity for a meeting of the CERES Board, which, among other things, set in motion the planning of the Bordeaux General Meeting. That meeting will, it is hoped, include presentations of the various activities begun at the time of the NIAS workshop.



(Signed)

Mark N. Franklin

Inaugural (and outgoing) Chair of the CERES Board

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