EUREQUAL researchers finds connection between Social Conflict and Social Inequality in CEE  
07/11/2009

A new report finds citizens in less equal societies expect free markets to generate social conflict. The University of Oxford’s Professor Stephen Whitefield and Dr Matthew Loveless conclude that perceptions of social inequality are related to expectations that free markets and democracy will result in negative social interaction, which is social conflict. The results indicate that citizens in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) who consider themselves in less equal societies expect social conflict to be the result of free markets.

While the researchers find no relationship between income inequality and views of democracy, they do find that citizens in less equal societies view markets as the source of social conflict. In their analysis, perceptions of social inequality have the strongest influence on expectations of market-based social conflict, and these perceptions are stronger than normative views of the market. When considering views on democracy, perceptions of social inequality do not shape citizen attitudes, but social inequality plays a large role in shaping perceptions about the market. In addition, citizens who prefer anti-democratic leadership generally do not believe in the principles of democracy, but in comparison, those who prefer government intervention in the market tend to be same people who see excessive social inequality in their society.

The results for the report came from mass public surveys conducted in the new member states of the European Union in 2007.

EUREQUAL was the acronym for ‘Social Inequality and Why it Matters for the Economic and Democratic Development of Europe and its Citizens: Post-Communist Central and Eastern Europe in Comparative Perspective’. The fundamental aim of the EUREQUAL project was to create and disseminate knowledge that will facilitate the achievement of greater social equality between individuals, social cohesiveness in societies, democratic and market development, and the broader integration of Europe. EUREQUAL was funded by the EU Commission’s 6th Framework Programme and was based at the University of Oxford, under the direction of Professors Stephen Whitefield and Geoffrey Evans and involvement from a consortium of 11 European universities and research institutes.

EUREQUAL reaches end of project  
04/11/2009

EUREQUAL has reached the end of its funding period, although the dissemination of knowledge is ongoing. The mass and expert survey codebooks will be available on this website. Please contact Professor Stephen Whitefield if you have enquires about the datasets.

Oxford University Study connects Social Inequality to EU Support in Central and Eastern Europe  
04/11/2009

A new report reveals citizens in new EU member states are less likely to support the EU if they perceive or experience unfair societal access and market opportunities. In a forthcoming publication at the Journal of Common Market Studies, Dr Matthew Loveless, a postdoctoral researcher for the EUREQUAL project at the University of Oxford, analyses support for the EU in the new member states of Central and Eastern Europe. The findings show that underlying political and
economic values, positive experiences with democracy and market economy, and perceptions of social inequality correlate with support for the EU.

Citizens who held strong preferences for democracy and market economy were more likely to perceive the EU as having been helpful and supportive of their country. In addition, citizens reporting positive experiences with democracy and market economy were more likely to state positive views of membership. The most noteworthy finding, according to Dr Loveless, is that perceptions of social inequality, such as access to healthcare, also may influence EU support. Citizens who perceive a great deal of social inequality were less likely to support the EU, even if they have strong underlying values and positive experiences with democracy and market economy.

The results for the report came from mass public surveys conducted in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia in 2007.

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**EUREQUAL partners to meet in Prague**

07/09/2009

Representatives from the EUREQUAL partner institutes and universities will meet for a final project meeting at Charles University, Prague, from 25-26 September. The partners will discuss their present and future plans for the data collected via the project in addition to reflecting upon what was learned about the nature of social inequality in Central and Eastern Europe.

**EUREQUAL Represented at Toronto Conference**

05/08/2009

*Professors Stephen Whitefield and Robert Rohrschneider* will present a paper, entitled "Party Divisions in Europe: Theory and Evidence from an Expert Survey in 27 European Democracies," and *Professor Geoffrey Evans and Dr Matthew Loveless* will present "Social Structured Inequality and Ideological Polarization in Post-Communist Societies" at the American Political Science Association's annual meeting in Toronto, Canada (3-6 September 2009). The data for these papers are derived from surveys on the stances of political parties and elites and mass surveys conducted in 13 Central and Eastern European countries. The elite and mass surveys were conducted as part of the EUREQUAL project.
The EUREQUAL partners hosted a round table at the Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Oxford from 26-27 June 2009. The round table brought together EUREQUAL partners to disseminate knowledge regarding the potential impact and policy implications of the EUREQUAL-gathered data. There is considerable evidence of potential links between social inequality and democratisation, democratic consolidation and political conflict. The panellists discussed how social inequality may have a powerful impact on the political life of undemocratic, marginally democratic, democratising as well as other states in the process of democratic consolidation.

Loveless presents EUREQUAL results at Beijing Conference
18/05/2009

Dr Matthew Loveless presented a paper utilising EUREQUAL data at a conference in Beijing, organised by the International Sociological Association's Research Committee on Social Stratification and Mobility and held from 14-16 May 2009. Dr Loveless discussed "Agreeing in Principle: Support for the European Union in Central and Eastern Europe," which concludes that individuals' perception of the distribution of economic and social goods directly influences their attitudes toward EU membership. Additional information about the conference may be found at: http://www.rc28-2009.org/.
Qualitative Data Meeting  
02/04/2009

A group of the EUREQUAL project partners held a working meeting at the London office of Russian Research Ltd. from 20th - 21st March 2009 to make cross-country comparisons of the qualitative data. The following topics were the focus of the comparative analysis:

1. Is social inequality a salient issue in the countries of the former Soviet Union (Russia, Ukraine and Belarus)?
2. What are lay people’s conceptions of social inequality?
3. What are the causes and manifestations of social inequality?
4. What can be done about social inequality (i.e., what are the roles of institutions and people in tackling social inequality)?

One of the unexpected findings that emerged from the qualitative analysis is the relationships between ordinary people and people of political power/authority (national governments and parliaments, government officials and local authorities) and social inequality. It is perceived that the principle cause of social inequality in three former Soviet Republics is the decisions and actions of political bodies and institutions.

From the right to left: Evgenia Poretskina, Galina Eremicheva, Svetlana Ignatova, Stephen Whitefield, Yuri Saenko, Igor Galin, Darina Shchur, Olesya Trofymenko, Elena Avetova, and Jill Wittrock.

Data Analysis Meeting  
13/03/2009

EUREQUAL project partners will be meeting at the London office of Russian Research, Ltd from 20-21 March 2009 to make cross-country comparisons of the qualitative data and to compile a first draft of the academic report.

Jill Wittrock joins EUREQUAL  
13/03/2009

Dr Jill Wittrock was hired in February 2009 as the project's dissemination and administrative officer. Please contact her for press releases, interview queries, and activities related to the dissemination of the project's key findings.
Analytical Phase
21/09/2007

With the completion of data collection and the construction the integrated data set, the analytical phase of the Project is now in full swing. Over the next year, the Project will concentrate its research efforts on the concrete issues outlined in its objectives and will produce both comparative and country-specific working papers and analysis. Some of the working papers can already be seen here.

EUREQUAL starts data collection
01/04/2007

The project is in the data collection stage now. In early November 2006 the focus group guide was piloted in Riga, Latvia. Afterwards 54 focus groups distinguished by income (low and average) were conducted in urban and rural areas of 12 post-Communist Eastern European countries. The focus group respondents were asked about manifestations and perceived causes of social inequality, about their views of how and whether inequality can be justified, about how it has changed, and about what can be done about it (if anything) and by whom. The recorded material has been transcribed and translated and we have now started the preliminary analysis. The preparations had been made and two surveys started in May 2007. First, we have conducted surveys of citizens in 13 post-Communist Eastern European countries, regarding their experience of, and attitudes toward, social inequality, including how such experiences and attitudes are reflected in their choice of political parties and other political behaviour. Second, we have started surveying experts on the region regarding the stances (if any) adopted by political parties toward social inequality issues and the salience they may attach to them.

EUREQUAL Inception Meeting
10/07/2006

The EUREQUAL inception meeting was held at the Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Oxford on 30th June and 1st July 2006. The representatives of all 11 partners attended the meeting. The participants discussed the project research agenda and management and financial issues.

Meeting Agenda

- Welcome and introduction
- Project overview
- Work packages and deliverables
- Desk research
- Generating qualitative data
- National surveys
- Expert surveys
- Managing EUREQUAL
- Dissemination activities and publications
- Ethical issues
- Budget and finance: eligible and ineligible costs, cost statements and audit certificates
- Consortium agreement