ECPR Blog: Full Proposal

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Origins and Development of the Proposal to Date

The concept of an ECPR blog had been discussed, in largely generic terms, for some time during Rudy Andeweg's EC (2015-2018) to provide a platform for more informal academic content and debate, reflecting the diverse community of scholars working under the ECPR's auspices.

Discussions became more focused during the 2+ year development of the proposal to launch an Open Access journal, *Political Research Exchange* (*PRX*). A unique aspect of PRX was envisaged to be its link to a blog which could summarise the research and highlight its real-world relevance, so increasing its appeal to a broader community beyond academe.

This idea was reinforced at our 2018 Publications Retreat when the editorial teams of *European Political Science*, *European Journal of Political Research* and *European Political Science Review* all (independently of each other) suggested that ECPR should develop a blog, and that content from their journals could provide the basis for much of the output. Indeed, there was great enthusiasm for sharing content beyond the journals' traditional readerships, via abridged and revised versions of journal articles.

Since blog pieces would link back to the original journal content, all editorial teams and publishers felt this would help grow readership and the profile of their journals. It was felt that, with the academic publishing landscape changing, and the move to open scholarship an inevitability, providing alternative and complementary publishing opportunities to its membership should be an organisational priority for ECPR.

The proposal was formally approved by the EC at its virtual meeting in March 2020.

The Full Proposal

Context

Over the past decade, blogs such as *The Conversation*, *Monkey Cage* and those under the LSE umbrella have created popular, powerful platforms for sharing scholarly thought beyond traditional academic boundaries. Distinct from academic journal articles, the shorter-form pieces are either direct products of academic research designed to appeal to a wider audience, thus making research more impactful, or newly created products which use academic subject expertise to provide insightful analysis of topical issues. And quite distinct from online news sites or newspapers, blog authors are academics, not journalists (although some blogs provide journalistic support/expertise to help those authors reshape their products, and some news sites, of course, publish pieces by academics).

The 'Nature' and Purpose of the ECPR Blog

The blog will publish 600 – 1,200 word articles by academics on politics, policy programmes, societal and political issues which display the work of the discipline at its best to its fellow practitioners and to a more general audience including policy-makers, journalists, business people and the general public. Articles might summarise a piece of research presented in full form in a political science journal or might be analyses of topical political news stories from the perspective of a political scientist who can provide insights which might escape journalists. A below-the-line comments area will promote lively debate and encourage sharing on social media.

ECPR membership extends to thousands of affiliates, in addition to those with MyECPR accounts at non-member institutions and members of Standing Groups, all of whom are potential contributors (as well as readers). Building on journal article content, this network would provide the Blog with high-quality articles on a range of subjects covering all aspects of the discipline.

Prioritising articles by member affiliates, the Blog would also constitute a new membership benefit, especially as blog publishing raises an author's profile, giving them greater visibility for their research. The Blog would also reach out to scholars beyond the membership, as contributors and readers. Published pieces should be just as accessible to academics working in a different field as they would be to an informed member of the general public. Using clear branding and links back to ecpr.eu, the blog would aim expand the reach of ECPR within and outside academe.

Name of the ECPR Blog

Rather than follow the LSE model of a blog name that includes the name of the organisation plus the word 'blog', we propose something abstract and catchy in the same vein as the *Monkey Cage* or *The Conversation*. We aim to bring together potentially complex threads of ideas, research and content from all reaches of political science, and process them into accessible and engaging (almost) bitesize chunks that can inform, educate and entertain. The name should reflect this process of bringing people and ideas together, unravelling or translating complex themes.

Blog Content: Sources

We envisage content being generated via three separate streams:

Content from published or accepted content from across the ECPR portfolio

Each year around 170 peer reviewed articles and 20+ books are published under the ECPR's publishing programme – with PRX this is set to grow. Inviting each author to produce a short, impactful blog piece based on their published article/book could yield a regular stream of content as a backbone to the blog; in some cases (such as the PDY country narratives) this could even be a requirement for authors when submitting to journals.

Original content from Standing Groups and Research Networks

Standing Groups and Research Networks are formally embedded in the structure of PRX, providing a platform for OA research articles. A blog would enhance the benefits we offer these groups.

Original content generated from 'key people'

From 2020 we will enhance the funding opportunities for students and early-career researchers and the value of grants awarded. Successful applicants will be invited to contribute a blog piece; for some prizes (such as the new Rising Star) this may also be a requirement. Plenary lecturers at events, Roundtable Chairs, Methods School Instructors, editors and even publishers may also be invited to contribute, potentially opening up the content to include professional topics, too.

Original content generated within and beyond the ECPR community

Some 20,000 scholars regularly engage with ECPR; every year some 3,500 take part in events. This represents a large community of potential authors, particularly younger scholars and ECRs keen to raise their profile and explore alternatives beyond the traditional journal article. While we will always prioritise submissions from members, offering opportunities to non-members can also grow participation beyond traditional boundaries.

Blog Content: Editorial and Production Workflows

See Editorial and Production Workflow diagrams on pages 5 & 6 – over time we aim to build output to 6-7 articles per week.

Key Roles

Editorial Oversight: [Academic] Editor (AE)

The ECPR will appoint an Academic Editor (AE) who will have final approval of all content published. This AE will, where appropriate, liaise with the journal editorial teams and Chairs of Standing Group and Research Network Steering Committees to solicit material. They will also review all content submitted from outside these channels and liaise with authors over potential revisions. They will undertake any 'academic' copy-editing considered necessary. With the blog up and running, and growing, the AE will likely need a small team of other academic editors representing different areas of the discipline. The size of the team would depend on the submission of material and would have to be adjusted as the blog grew. The Job Description for this position is currently being drafted.

Production and Publicising Content: Production Editor (PE)

A full-time Production Editor (PE) will be appointed from ECPR's Communications Department. While the PE will help the AE identify contributions, their main purpose will be to work closely with the AE and all other parties to oversee the production process from submission to publication. The PE will undertake language editing to conform with ECPR house style, liaise with authors, source images, and publish content to the platform. They will publicise the content, and generate social media. Job Description for this role is currently being drafted.

Editorial Policies

These will be drafted in consultation with the Founding Academic and Production Editorial Team. The range of these policies, however, has been scoped out and will include:

Who We Are / Purpose of Blog / Statement of Principle or Charter This will refer to ownership of the Blog, the Editorial & Production Team, the Blog's aims and purpose, the general principles which inspire it, as well as broader principles of integrity and good practice. The principles will be in broad keeping with, and refer back to, the ECPR's mission as a CIO.

Editorial Policy formal statement on terms and conditions; the Creative Commons and sharing policy; conflicts of interest; plagiarism, defamatory and offensive language; expectations in terms of evaluation and turnaround times; the Editor's role as final decision-maker; how to contact the Editorial Office; privacy policy; corrections and complaints; republishing guidelines.

Guidance for Contributors This will include advice on length, house style, referencing, tables & graphs, titles and crossheads, as well as generic advice on how to write a blog piece (compared with an academic journal article).

Platform

The blog will use WordPress. We propose a collaborative system such as SharePoint or Teams to manage copy flow from submission to publication. Such systems allow for multiple parties to work on the same document, sharing edits and comments.

Timeline to launch

March 2020	Proposal approval by EC
	Call for Academic Editor published
April 2020	Development of platform with creative agency
	Editorial teams, Standing Group/Research Network Chairs and ORs contacted to begin to think about identifying and soliciting content
	Deadline for applications for Academic Editor
May 2020	Academic Editor appointed
	AE reviews proposed content and contacts authors to begin developing first submissions
	Development of platform with creative agency and creation of non-blog content (editorial guidelines etc)
July 2020	Platform finalised and PE begins uploading content that is ready
August 2020	Launch of Blog to coincide with the GC

Editorial workflow

Publications	SGs and RNs	'Key people'	Polsci Community
Article/book proposal is accepted for publication.

On acceptance the editorial assistant of that publication issues an invitation to the author to prepare a blog piece – via a standard form which notes the publication and acceptance date.

Authors are given a timeframe within which to submit to the PE from acceptance of their piece article/book. | Content is commissioned via general calls to SC Chairs and targeted commissioning on specific subjects by the **AE** directly. | Content is commissioned from funded participants, prize winners, roundtable chairs, editors of publications etc on key themes (academic and professional) | Content commissioned via general calls to all members of the community and more targeted calls to participants at the JS, GC, FL and MS |

Potential authors are directed to guidelines for authors etc on the website

Author submits article to the PE as a Word file with any accompanying images/photos plus permissions and author bio and selected keywords for tagging in a completed form [via email or online – TBC]

AE reviews and decides whether to accept, request revise and resubmit or reject. The PE communicates this back to the author and works with them to re-submit if necessary. [Re-submissions to go back to the AE for approval before acceptance]

PE logs submission in the tracking system and gives initial check of copy for suitability and language, checks photo permissions, references/credits/citations and that all author info included. If it passes first checks PE sends to the AE for review, if not piece is rejected or resubmission is suggested with required edits.
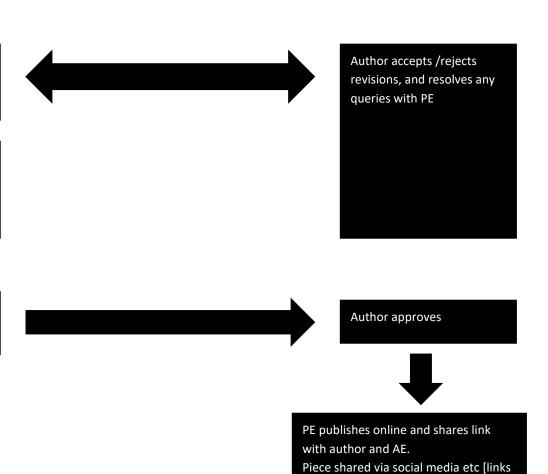
Production workflow

Submission accepted

PE sub-edits copy for house style and length, adds a title and shares with the author for approval, making further edits as required

PE sources images and pictures to accompany piece (if not supplied by author or if those supplied not suitable) securing permissions if necessary and builds web page with approved copy and author bio/info

PE sends link to proof of copy and images and seeks permission

Author accepts /rejects revisions, and resolves any queries with PE

Author approves

PE publishes online and shares link with author and AE.
Piece shared via social media etc [links added to fortnightly bulletin and other suitable comms]