

Report on existing datasets Cost Action CA17132 APPLY

Editors: Sara Greco and Barbara De Cock

On behalf of: Members of Working Group 1 (https://publicpolicyargument.eu/working-groups/wg1)¹

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1.1 Introduction

COST Action CA17132, European Network for Argumentation and Public Policy Analysis (henceforth: APPLY) sets out to "improve the way European citizens understand, evaluate and contribute to public decision-making on such matters of common concern as climate change or energy policies" (see Memorandum of Understanding, henceforth: MoU).² It does so by addressing potential discursive *gaps* that exist between policymakers, citizens and scholars on matters of public policy from a perspective of argumentation, which permits a descriptive and evaluative approach. The task of working group 1 (henceforth: WG1) within APPLY is collecting and annotating existing datasets concerning argumentation and policymaking, organizing them in a pan-European database, which is currently under construction. Members of WG1 are concerned with a discursive and argumentative empirical analysis of EU policy documents and procedures, the media and citizens' discourse. The present report is a state-of-the-art discussion of existing datasets on argumentative discourse and policy making available within APPLY at an initial stage of the project; the collection of datasets upon which this report is based has been launched in December 2018 and updated several times until April 2019.³

The empirical work of WG1 (collection, annotation and analysis of data) is complemented by "a critical study of concepts and methods to measure the quality of arguments in public policies" (working group 2), which will result in a unified theoretical and methodological framework to analyse and evaluate public policy argument. Finally, but not less importantly, APPLY will move to recommendations to policymakers and other stakeholders, mainly through the coordination work done by working group 3. Working group 3 has a prescriptive aim, namely the development of tools by which policymakers, citizens and various stakeholders engage in well-informed argumentative discussions.

The focus on "discursive gaps" between argumentative discourse of policymakers, citizens and scholars gives an important suggestion about *what it means* to analyse argumentation within APPLY. This project takes a broad perspective on argumentation as a resource to understand the manifold

³ Because COST project are open for new participants and because participants are collecting new datasets over the course of the project, the collection of datasets will change over time. These changes will be incorporated in the public database that members of WG1 are preparing.



¹ A complete and constantly updated list of members of Working Group 1 is available on the APPLY website here: https://publicpolicyargument.eu/working-groups/wg1/ (last visited: October 2019). Working Group 1 (Empirical Working Group) is an interdisciplinary group of scholars who are working on discourse, argumentation and policymaking in different areas and with different methodologies. At the moment of writing this report, there are around fifty members in the group. Besides the members of our Working Group 1, we are equally grateful to Dima Mohammed (from Working Group 2) and Elena Musi (from Working Group 3), as well as Alan Cienki, for their participation in the discussion on this document at a Working Group 1 workshop held in October 2019 at the University of Belgrade, Serbia).

² The MoU is available at this address: https://publicpolicyargument.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/CA17132-e.pdf (last visited: September 2019).



communication flows that concern public policies. In other words, members of WG1 within APPLY do not simply focus on the analysis of only particular forms of arguing in one specific circumstance (e.g. a single type of document related to policy making). Instead, we aim at a *systemic* approach, able to take into account not only what single individuals or single institutions and stakeholders say and how they support that, but also to what extent the different argumentation practices regarding European policies are in line with each other or are divergent. This produces a much more complex picture of argumentation in policy making; taking into account such complexity is one of the challenges of APPLY. Following Mansbridge et al. (2012: 2), we consider that "it should not be surprising that a political system requires a division of labour. Political judgments are complex, and the system in which they are made should also be complex". APPLY sets out to understand and improve argumentation in such a complex multi-agent system. From the point of view of argumentation studies, the analysis and evaluation of empirical data that WG1 intends to accomplish is in line with a perspective of the *design of argumentation* (cf. for example Aakhus 2007; Jackson 2015a), which draws attention "to what can be done to make individuals and societies more or less reasonable" (Jackson 2015b: 242).

At the practical level, in terms of how WG1 members work, this means considering how different documents, discussions, and other interactions regarding public policy are interconnected. It also means that, by "public policy argumentation", APPLY considers not only what policymakers write in official documents, but also the debates preceding and following decisions, how the media report on such decisions, how citizens respond to them, how European and national institutions react, *etcetera*. Some of these data are available *online* as public documents; other data virtually do not exist until a researcher goes and collects them, giving voice, for example, to citizens who otherwise would not be represented in public debate; this requires, among other things, time and knowledge of the languages used by citizens in their communication (see section 1.3.5 on multilingualism). These considerations invite reflection on the responsibility of researchers within APPLY who, through the collection of citizens' discourse, can construct a broader spectrum of data to identify gaps in discussions about policies at different levels.

During the course of APPLY, we will look in particular at those areas in which different stakeholders' argumentation is non overlapping in order to identify gaps: so far, members of WG1 have proposed to look at conflicting frames, contrasting positions, contrasting arguments and different argument schemes. Through these and other measures of "gaps", which will be defined during the course of the project, we will be able to identify problematic aspects in public policy argumentation and provide tools for policymakers, citizens and other stakeholders to improve their argumentation, also on the basis of the normative account provided by working group 2.

The present report is an integral part of WG1 efforts to provide a comprehensive overview of existing data on argumentation and policymaking in Europe. In the following sections, we present an overview of the main findings obtained through a multi-stage survey, in which all APPLY participated (section 1.2). We then move on to discussing the main strengths as well as emerging critical aspects on the current situation of data that are available for the purposes of APPLY (section 1.3). Finally, we list scientific references from the work done by WG1 members in relation to existing datasets and their research done so far (Annex 1). The reference list presented in Annex 1 is an important complement to understand why existing datasets have been collected (i.e in what theoretical framework and with what research questions), in what context and with what purposes.

Before we move on to discussing the details of our overview, two observations are necessary. First, an overview of existing datasets is inevitably a static picture of a naturally dynamic environment. Members of WG1 and, more in general, members of APPLY are still collecting datasets for their research; since the beginning of APPLY in October 2018, several members of the project have started new collaborations in line with the APPLY scope and objectives. In this sense, our report is a starting point for a research process that is ongoing and will be enriched during the months and years to come. For





this reason, the COST database, which WG1 will be publishing in 2020, will be constantly updated during the course of the APPLY project, in order to allow for new datasets to be introduced.

Second, policies regarding energy and climate are seen as the core interest of APPLY because of their topical relevance nowadays (see for example the special issue of the *Journal of Argumentation in Context* edited by Lewiński and Üzelgün, 2019). However, in conformity with the MoU, the scope of APPLY is broader and includes other areas of policy making. As a consequence, the present report is also broader and our survey and investigation includes several policy areas. Some of these, such as for example international migration, might be directly related to climate and energy - think of climate changes and migration flows generated from it. Other areas are less directly related to climate but are nevertheless important for a full and nuanced understanding (and, on the longer run, improvement) of public policy argumentation.

1.2 Overview of existing datasets

This report presents the datasets that were collected by members of this COST action. We asked members of all Working Groups within APPLY to respond to an online survey concerning the datasets they had collected or were collecting in relation to the scope and objectives of this COST Action. In order for the survey to include the maximum number of participants, also taking into account new participants who were progressively added to APPLY, we launched the survey more than once, sending calls to all the participants in December 2018, January 2019 and again in March-April 2019 (after the kick-off event in Lisbon). The initiative of launching a survey was very important for a networking project such as COST Action APPLY; sharing knowledge among different members, who often do not know each other directly, is a first step to promote collaboration in research. This overview can also be considered as preparatory work for the creation of a database on corpora created by members of the COST action. Such database is one of the future aims of the COST action. As such, this overview is a snapshot of a specific moment, leading to the preparation of the larger database.

All in all, thanks to this survey, details concerning 66 datasets were communicated to us by April 2019. These include 8 datasets that are planned to be collected during the remainder of the COST action (viz. till 2022). For 19 datasets the data collection is on-going, whereas data collection is completed for 39. Almost all datasets concern data from the 2010s onwards. In what follows, we will give a broad overview of the datasets; more specific details concerning each one of them will be given in the public database that WG1 will deliver by April 2020.

Whereas most datasets concern a specific genre (e.g. media interviews), some datasets are constructed around a specific topic and contain all productions on that matter, regardless of the genre (e.g. press articles, public policy documents, citizen panels, etc. on a specific matter). Data obtained from media (such as articles, interviews, etc.) are most represented (Figure 1). This may be due to their ready availability, especially since the rise of online (versions of) newspapers and/or the keen interest taken in media. Taking into account the focus of this COST action on the gaps that exist between citizens, experts and public policy, it is crucial to point out that especially expert discourse is virtually absent from the datasets for which we have gathered information. While there are some datasets concerning citizen discourses (e.g. through focus groups) and public policy discourse (e.g. official documents), these also remain underrepresented compared to media discourses.

⁴ See https://publicpolicyargument.eu/events/cost-action-17132-apply-kick-off-event/ (last visited: October 2019).





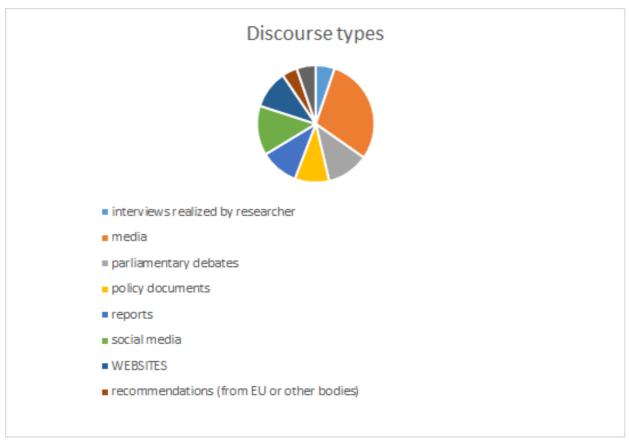


Figure 1: Discourse types, as they appear in the current overview of datasets within APPLY.

Some datasets focus on a specific country, possibly linking to the European public policy discourse as regards a specific issue, while others compare various countries or focus on a European policy topic without specifying a country.

The analysis of the languages included in the datasets (taking into account that one dataset may contain data in various languages) shows a dominance of English (Figure 2). Overall, there is no direct correlation between the number of speakers of a language and the number of datasets available. Crucially for this project, some official EU languages are not represented at all at this stage (Czech, Danish, Latvian, Lithuanian, Slovenian, Swedish and Gaelic). In addition, only for 10 datasets are (partial) translations available (generally to English). This shows the added value of an international research work where the collective intelligence allows for analyzing data in a variety of languages.



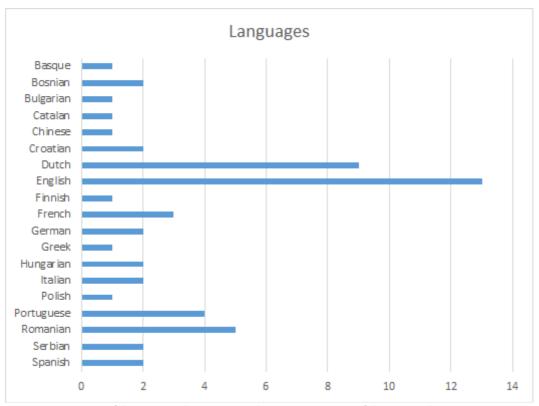


Figure 2: Languages of datasets, as they appear in the current overview of datasets within APPLY.

Only 16 of the 66 datasets were fully annotated (with some more partly) and the annotation systems used are very diverse, for example in terms of argumentation models, concepts identified, etc. Thus, annotation may have been done from the perspectives of, among others, content analysis, argument schemes (defined according to different theoretical models), inference relations (e.g. inference anchoring theory), or others. Other annotation schemes applied concern very specific elements of public discourse, such as appeals to the people. By consequence, no direct comparison of annotated data is possible. As we will discuss in section 1.3.4, the rich variety of annotation methods is a strength at the disposal of APPLY. At the same time, however, this urges WG1 members to discuss and find complementarities and similarities to allow comparison of similar datasets and generate new research.

The data are available in the form of text files in various extensions (.txt, .pdf, word), audio and video files (occasionally with transcripts) and image files, leaving technical challenges for a potential (automatized) analysis of the datasets (e.g. in collaboration with WG3).

The topics dealt with in the collected datasets are manifold. While some datasets were collected with a view on studying a specific topic, others took the perspective of a certain institution, or timeframe (e.g. electoral period), the latter not necessarily focusing on one specific topic. There is a clear focus on environmental issues in a very broad sense (including energy, climate change, transport, protection of specific ecosystems), which is not surprising given the orientation of this COST Action. However, other policies are also addressed, such as immigration policies, LGBTIQ+ issues, legal reforms and socio-economical policies.

The considerable variety in terms of topics, languages, genres, technical formats and annotation schemes is a major challenge for reaching overarching conclusions and for making a comprehensive analysis. The nature of the COST-action program, however, also offers opportunities to overcome some





of these hurdles relying on complementary skills of participants in the action. This overview also shows that some genres, languages and stakeholders are better represented than others, offering avenues for reflection and future data collection.

1.3 Emergent areas of reflection

In this section, we discuss some of the findings that emerge from our comprehensive review of existing datasets.

1.3.1 Implementing a systematic design approach to datasets

In section 1.1, we wrote that WG1 within APPLY assumes a *systemic* approach to argumentation in public policy, looking at how the positions of different stakeholders (institutions, citizens, scholars, media, private companies...) are interrelated in policy-making. This ample systemic approach requires a longitudinal view of policy-making, which does not only focus on the moment a decision is made, but also on the preceding and following process of discussion in different arenas. To start making sense of the different data, WG1 proposed to categorize data into the following conceptual steps in the process of policy making:

- 1. Agenda setting/policy proposals
- 2. Pre-decision consultation
- 3. Official discussion
- 4. Communication of a decision
- 5. Post-decision discussion

These categories have been inspired by Mansbridge et al. (2012) and by the document "EU Stakeholder Consultation Guidelines" 2014, p. 5). Although they are not exhaustive of the process of policymaking, they were adopted as a working hypothesis in a first phase of examination and discussion of the available datasets. Looking at the different datasets through the lenses of these categories, WG1 was able to discuss existing datasets, considering for example what type of data are abundant in APPLY and what other data are more scarcely available as empirical materials for this project (see section 1.3.2 below). It was observed that some of the datasets actually contain data from different phases: for example, a dataset may include media coverage of an event starting from agenda setting and pre-decision consultation to post-decision discussion. It was also observed that some of the phases might be covered more broadly in terms of existing data than others. Finally, looking at the process in a longitudinal way made it clear that discussions over policies happen in a variety of formal and informal situations; in order to capture them, APPLY researchers need to use a variety of methods and be open to multilingualism, as neglecting multilingualism means neglecting citizens' voices (see section 1.3.5).

1.3.2 Types of available data: representation of stakeholders

As a result of the survey and our analysis described in section 1.3.1, we observed that available data are predominantly based on written media. There might be a variety of reasons for this, including data availability and research interests of APPLY members. Political discussions and policy documents are also available to APPLY; furthermore, some datasets concern citizens' discussions on policies, for example through focus groups or interviews or social media discussion data (see some examples in Annex 1), while we do not have abundant data on the scholars' perspective in the present collection of

⁵ This discussion happened at the APPLY kick-off meeting in Lisbon, in which several members of WG1 had the opportunity to discuss their respective datasets and methodological perspectives in face-to-face meetings.





datasets. In order to achieve the objectives of APPLY, the different datasets will have to be balanced, taking into account as many stakeholders as possible.

1.3.3 Types of EU policies

As anticipated in section 1.1, policies regarding energy and environment are at the center of APPLY but they are not an exclusive object of interest. The examination of existing datasets confirmed that energy policies are often present in datasets that also contain other types of policy. Several datasets are multi-policy. Keeping a broader focus on policies has two advantages. First, as anticipated in section 1.1, there are clear correlations between different policy areas - such as for example, climate and migration. Second, analysing other policies might suggest similarities between argumentation strategies and argumentative gaps.

1.3.4 Purposes and uses of existing datasets

Our survey showed that datasets have been collected by scholars for answering specific research questions and in association with different theoretical and methodological paradigms, and that, as a consequence, they apply different annotation schemes. In other words, every dataset "comes with strings attached", because it has been collected for a specific purpose and within one paradigm. On the one hand, this is an advantage for the project, because it shows that APPLY members are familiar with different analytical methods and different annotation styles; the interdisciplinary and multi-method approach to data might be seen as one of the assets of the empirical work within APPLY. WG1 is currently working on the integration of different methods of annotation. For example, the Fall 2019 workshop (University of Belgrade, 17-18 October 2019) has been the occasion to launch initiatives for some joint data collection and publications, which we consider as initiatives testing possible collaborations and integrations of analyses and annotations.

On the other hand, the variety of methods also poses a challenge. In fact, different datasets are not always comparable as such, because of the different purposes and types of annotation. In order to enable comparative research that includes different datasets, it is necessary for WG1 members to collaborate and find commonalities. This critical challenge invites further collaboration and discussion, which results as an added value of APPLY.

1.3.5 Multilingualism as a resource

The data addressed in the empirical part represent a wide diversity of languages. This enriches the analysis from a scientific perspective since it allows for cross-linguistic comparison of public policy discourse and their possible language-specificity. Indeed, contrastive research has shown that important differences between languages exist as far as stance-taking and thanking in public policy discourse is concerned (see among others Fetzer and Johansson 2010, Goethals and Blancke 2013, De Cock and Nogué Serrano 2017, De Cock and Lefer forthc.; see also the work on language indicators in argumentation, for example van Eemeren, Houtlosser and Snoeck-Henkemans 2007; Oswald, Herman and Jacquin 2018).

For an action focusing on public policy argumentation and the gap between policy makers, experts and citizens, multilingualism is crucial. Indeed, the multilingualism of public policy making is linked to democratic decision-making processes in countries with various (official) languages and in some international organizations, such as the EU. Indeed, the possibility to express oneself and/or to obtain





information in one's L1 (first language) is linked to the need to ensure the access of citizens to the policy making procedures. In addition to its importance for the citizens' role in decision-making processes, multilingualism also ties in to more general human rights considerations, such as the right to a fair trial and its consequences for the need to be able to address the state in a language in which citizens are (sufficiently) proficient (De Cock 2006: 393-394).

Of course, not all languages can rely on the same resources in terms of available funding, researchers, corpora and tools for the automatization of certain searches or processes. Moreover, even those EU documents that are officially translated might present slight differences, which might be significant to explore. The documentation of available datasets for different languages can then also serve as a starting point for compensating for these differences and for further developing the research on some languages.

1.3.6 Reflections on confidentiality, legal restrictions and FAIR data

Existing datasets within APPLY have been mainly collected during the last decade and in different countries. This means that the legal framework and type of informed consent that APPLY members have followed for the collection and archiving of their data might vary significantly; most of the datasets have been collected before GDPR regulations were enforced on 25 May 2018.⁶ Members of WG1 are attentively complying to the new regulations in their currently ongoing data collection initiatives, but most of the existing data have been collected previously to this new legal framework.

While GDPR offers a unified framework for all APPLY members, WG1 has consulted ethical committees in different institutions and legal scholars in order to establish how to treat data that have been collected before GDPR. In some cases, informed consents explicitly prohibit to share the data publicly, even in an anonymized form; in other cases, scholars have the possibility to make these datasets available to the COST members and to the broader public, notably through the annotated pan-European database that WG1 is constructing (see MoU). This is in line with the current objectives of reusing data and open data in research, which, it has been argued, may generate a "reframing of science, social science and humanities" (Kitchin 2014: 128), which includes open access to data and publications. This has particularly strong effects at the level of empirical research and, therefore, is important for the work that WG1 is accomplishing within APPLY. We are aware of the FAIR principle supported by the European Union, which suggests to make data *Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable* (European Commission 2018: 19-20).

All these aspects are being carefully considered for the publication of our pan-European database of empirical data (and members of APPLY will take full responsibility for the data they make public). Notably, legal and ethical concerns about confidentiality are taken into account; members of WG1 are discussing standards, anonymization of data (when not available) and other aspects relevant to the construction of the database. For the APPLY database, a crucial aspect will be the creation of shared categories at the level of metadata, which will facilitate the application of the FAIR principles.

Acknowledgements

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⁶ For further information on GDPR regulations, see https://eugdpr.org/ (last visited: October 2019).





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Annex 1: Publications of members of the COST action related to the described databases

This Annex reports a list of the publications that members of APPLY have written, and which concern the collected datasets. The list has been compiled by members of APPLY (and specifically, members of WG1) and has been updated until the end of October 2019. This list of publications is important to show how existing datasets have been analysed so far from a viewpoint of argumentation, discourse and other language based approaches to the study of public policy. Entries are listed in alphabetical order.

Andone, C. and J. A. Lomelí Hernández. (Accepted). Scientific arguments in policy-making. *Journal of Argumentation in Context*, 8(2), pages not yet available.

Andone, C. and F. Coman-Kund. (Submitted). The expression of obligation in European Union law-making: blurring the line between hard and soft law? In Lawmaking in multi-level settings, Popelier, P (Ed.). Hart Publishing.

Andone, C. and S. Greco. (2018). Evading the burden of proof in European Union soft law: the case of Commission recommendations. *International Journal for the Semiotics of Law*, *31*(1), 79-99.

Andone, C. and F. Coman-Kund. (2017). Argumentative patterns in the European Union's directives: an effective tool to foster compliance by the Member States? *Journal of Argumentation in Context*. *6*(1), 76-96.

Bertoldo, R. & Castro, P. (2018). From legal to normative: A combined social representations and sociocognitive approach to diagnosing cultural change triggered by new environmental laws. *Culture & Psychology*, 1-21. DOI: 10.1177/1354067X18790730.

Bijnen, E., van, and Greco, S. (2018). Divide to unite: Making disagreement explicit in dispute mediation. *Journal of Argumentation in Context*, 7(3), 285-315.

Castro, P. (2012). Legal Innovation for Social Change: Exploring Change and Resistance to Different Types of Sustainability Laws. *Political Psychology*, *33*, 89-106.

Castro, P. & Mouro, C. (2016). 'Imagining ourselves' as participating publics: An example from biodiversity conservation. *Public Understanding of Science*, *25*(7), 858-872.

Castro, P., Seixas, E., Neca, P., & Bettencourt, L. (2018). Successfully contesting the policy sphere: Examining through the press a case of local protests changing new ecological laws. *Political Psychology*, *39*, 107-123. doi: 10.1111/pops.12388

Castro, P. & Santos, T. (submitted). Dialogues with the absent other: how artisanal fishers in protected sites mobilize reported speech and the vocabulary of citizenship for contesting their institutions.

Coesemans, Roel, and De Cock. (2017). Self-reference by politicians on Twitter: Strategies to adapt to 140 characters. *Journal of Pragmatics*, *116*, 37-50. doi:10.1016/j.pragma.2016.12.005.

Castro, P., Santos, T. R. & Mouro, C. (2018, July, presentation). Doing disempowerment and empowerment under ecological governance: a contribution to recognize them in discourse and communication. Paper presented at the 25 International Conference of the International Association People-Environment Studies (IAPS), Rome, Italy, 10-13 July.

Coman-Kund and C. Andone, C. (2019). European Commission's soft law instruments: in between legally binding and non-binding norms. In Popelier, P. (Ed.). *Lawmaking in Multi-level Settings*, Popelier, P. (Ed.) (Chapter 10). Oxford: Hart Publishing.

Dalyot, K., Sharon, A.J, Barel Ben-David, Y., Orr, D., & Baram-Tsabari, A. (First online, 2019). Public engagement with science in everyday life: Perceptions of Wi-Fi radiation risks in schools. *Research in Science Education*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11165-019-09894-w.





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De Cock, B. (2010). La funcionalidad discursiva del esquema construccional: Los españoles hemos hecho historia en Europa. *Lingüística Española Actual*, *32*(2), 173-195.

De Cock, B. (2012). El debate parlamentario frente al lenguaje coloquial y al debate televisivo: una caracterización lingüística basada en el uso de la referencia de persona. In *Retórica y política. Los discursos de la construcción de la sociedad (Colección Quintiliano de Retórica y Comunicación)*, ed. by Emilio del Río Sanz, María del Carmen Ruiz de la Cierva, and Tomás Albaladejo, 729-743. Logroño: Instituto de Estudios Riojanos.

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