

**Italian Politics Specialist Group & Greek Politics Specialist Group**

**PSA 65<sup>th</sup> Annual International Conference  
Sheffield, 30<sup>th</sup> March – 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015**

**JOINT PANEL TITLE:**

*“Continuity and Change in Italy and Greece in the aftermath of the EU elections”*

**CALL FOR PAPERS:**

The consequences of the 2008 financial and economic crisis are still felt sharply by EU citizens across the continent, and have given rise to a pronounced polarisation of political, economic and social attitudes, both within and across national polities. Within this context, Italy and Greece provide clear examples of European countries whose economies have long been (and are still) struggling to emerge from stagnation. In both countries, this has hugely impacted on the stability, credibility and strength of their respective political systems. Anti-politics feelings, and a general sense of disillusionment towards ‘mainstream politics’, have spread very fast within the Italian and Greek societies, often at the benefit of radical/extremist anti-EU parties such as the 5Star Movement in Italy or the Golden Dawn in Greece.

Against this background, the March 2014 European elections were expected to provide a significant test for the ‘health’ of democracy in Italy and Greece. Many political commentators and pundits saw the election of the EU Parliament as a perfect platform for anti-establishment and protest vote – predicting the rise of euro-sceptical forces in the two countries.

In both Italy and Greece the results of the elections offered a number of surprises. In Italy, it was the Democratic Party (a mainstream, pro-EU party) that gained a large majority of the vote (40%), fending off Berlusconi’s Forza Italia (17%) and, to some extent, managing to contain the recent rise of Beppe Grillo’s anti-EU and anti-establishment 5Star Movement (20%). On the other hand, in Greece, the results of the EU elections backed the EU wide trend. The Golden Dawn elected its first MEPs, while SYRIZA, the Radical Left party, managed to win the elections. This has been the first time that such a party has won elections in Post-War Greece. In the meantime, the share of the votes of the so-called mainstream parties (ND and PASOK) continued to fall.

Hence, interestingly, despite the fact that Greece and Italy have experienced, to a certain extent, similar conditions stemming from the economic and social crisis and the austerity measures imposed on the two countries, there has been a degree of political divergence. The political system in Italy has, perhaps unexpectedly, shown signs of resilience and a certain degree of continuity, whereas the deeply traumatised Greek political system is on the verge of remarkable change. Nevertheless, beyond the first reading of the recent electoral results, one needs to note that conflicting signs have emerged from both countries with potentially unforeseen consequences.

**The aim of this panel is to provide a timely discussion on the developments in the political landscape of Italy and Greece in the aftermath of the EU elections, focussing in particular on how they have impacted/affected parties and party systems; policies and reforms; the relationship between the two national governments and the EU institutions; and, more in general, the state of democracy. To this end, we invite papers that explore one or more of the aforementioned themes focussing on Italy and Greece in comparative perspective.**

Your paper proposal (paper title, 250-word abstract, institutional affiliation and full contact details) should be e-mailed **by 6 October** to: Dr Vasilis Leontitsis ([v.leontitsis@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:v.leontitsis@sheffield.ac.uk)) and Dr Arianna Giovannini ([ariannagiovannini@gmail.com](mailto:ariannagiovannini@gmail.com)).