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News

People in poorer countries show higher tolerance for risk

Lotteries were the focus of an extraordinary experiment conducted by Ferdinand Vieider at the WZB. For the first time, the economist systematically studied risk acceptance in 30 countries from Australia to Vietnam with surprising results: People in poor countries were found to be more willing to take risks than inhabitants of richer nations like Germany. The study reveals a paradox: Until now, analyses within individual countries came to the conclusion that people with a higher income are more willing to take risks.

[To the press release](#)

Married women have lower pensions

For many older women, marriage is still considered a retirement plan, because these women can barely rely on their own pensions. This is particularly the case for women who have been married for a long time, according to a study by WZB researcher Anette Fasang. Together with Silke Aisenbrey (New York) and Klaus Schömann (Bremen), she examined retirement income of (West) German and British women who were born between 1930 and 1940. The researchers calculated that in Germany every year of marriage means averaged 15.40 euros less per month of pension income, compared with women of the same age who never married. In Great Britain, the difference between married and unmarried women is only around five euros.

[To the press release](#)

How party politics, professional and national background shape the EU Commission

Over the last few decades, the composition of the EU Commission has greatly changed. Today, there are more liberal and left-wing oriented Commissioners, many of whom held

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high ranking party positions at the national level before. The number of Commissioners with no party affiliation, in turn, is declining. For the first time, a new data base sheds light on the link between personal characteristics of high ranking EU representatives (party political affiliation, professional and national background), internal competencies and responsibilities as well as policy decisions of the different portfolios. Information covers Commissioners, Directors-General and the administrative structure of the European Commission from 1958 to 2010. It has been compiled and developed by the independent junior research group Position Formation in the EU Commission at the WZB.

[Further information](#)
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Understanding the financial crisis: Lecture by Neil Fligstein on video

With his analysis of the spread of worldwide financial crisis Professor Neil Fligstein (UC Berkeley) kicked off the newly established WZB Distinguished Lectures in Social Sciences. In his talk he concluded that European banks went down because they were pursuing the exact same profit-making strategies as American banks, in the exact same markets. This in turn caused the effect of the subprime market collapse to resonate globally. Neil Fligstein suggested that it is crucial for future studies of global finance and financial markets to explore the identities and strategies of the individual banks that structure the main markets of the financial system. The video of his lecture is now available.

[To the video](#)

College for Interdisciplinary Educational Research has started

Education is complex and formed by many influences like origin, school system, or economic preconditions. To research educational processes better, cooperation between different disciplines is called for, something that does not happen often enough. A newly founded College for Interdisciplinary Educational Research will close this gap and has begun its work under the coordination of the WZB.

[Further information](#)

Democracy: Myths, Facts, Challenges

Is democracy in a crisis? In the March issue of the *WZB Mitteilungen*, democracy researchers provide answers and differ in their opinions. Though there are indications of skepticism (weakening of political parties, less support for parliaments and governments, greater respect for non-elected bodies and organizations), high expectations and the possibilities of political participation and dissatisfaction with the quality of democracy does not mean that a crisis is looming for democracy itself. On the contrary, approval ratings remain high.

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Events

April 8, 2013, 5 pm

Migration, Citizenship, and Transnational Politics: Comparative Perspectives of Western Europe and North America

Discussion on the international dimension of population movements across borders with Roger Waldinger (University of California, Los Angeles), Ruud Koopmans (WZB), Adrian Favell (Sciences Po, Paris) and Gökçe Yurdakul (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin).
Venue: HU-BGSS Festsaal, Luisenstr. 56, 10115, Berlin

[Further information](#)

April 8, 2013, 6 pm

Understanding Pakistan:
Pakistan Elections 2013 -

April 25, 2013, 11.30 am

Work, Family, and Health:
Australian Agendas

Problems and Prospects

What actually constitutes Pakistani society and which powers define its politics? Lecture with Najam Sethi (Friday Times, Pakistan). Venue: Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, Berlin.

[Further information](#)

Lyndall Strazdins (Australian National University) on the most challenging points of the Australian agenda. Venue: WZB.

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Publications

Challenging the State: Devolution and the Battle for Partisan Credibility

How do state parties react to the challenge of peripheral parties demanding political power to be devolved to their culturally distinct territories? Is devolution the best response to these demands? Why do national governments implement devolution given the high risk that devolution will encourage peripheral parties to demand ever more devolved powers? The aim of Sonia Alonso's book is to answer these questions through a comparative analysis of devolution in four European countries.

[Further information](#)

Overview of publications

Our [publication list \(PDF\)](#) includes the latest WZB publications.

New discussion papers

A current list of discussion papers can be found [here](#).

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People

Professorship for Hella von Unger

As of April 1st, Hella von Unger will be named professor of sociology at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich. Her focus will be on the qualitative methods of empirical social research. The sociologist researches health care and HIV prevention. She pursues a participatory approach to research in order to involve socially and medically disadvantaged groups that are "difficult to access" by conventional research. She is currently turning to classical qualitative methods to examine the discourse on health care in national comparison.

[To Hella von Unger's website](#)



Jutta Allmendinger receives the Schader Prize 2013

WZB president Jutta Allmendinger has been honored with this year's Schader Prize. With the award the Schader Foundation honors researchers who have made important contributions to solving social problems through scientific work and public service.

[Further information](#)



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Nieman Journalism Lab, February 17, 2013

Julian Assange, from leaker to senator?

John Keane on WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange

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