The Loop
ECPR's Political Science Blog

ecpr

Report for the ECPR Publications Subcommittee

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Contents

This report analyses data on blog pieces published on The Loop
between 1 January and 31 December 2023

A note on our photos: all imagery that appears in this report accompanied a Loop blog piece at some point during 2023

The year in review

Volume and source of published output

Over the calendar year 2023, The Loop published **287** blog pieces, easily exceeding the target stated in last year's PSC report to produce 250 by 31 December.

In 2021, only 38% of published blog pieces had been pitched to us direct; however, in 2022 this figure leapt to **75%** as our reputation grew, and more and more content arrived through the editors of our various series threads. **In 2023, the proportion of pitched blogs jumped again, to a resounding 94%.**

Happily, this enabled The Loop to meet our ambitious output target while significantly reducing the burden on Martin and Johanne to commission new content via email and Twitter. Though this is of course a welcome development, there is, unfortunately, a downside for our gender balance statistics.

Author gender balance

In 2022, 37% of our total output was by female authors; a 1% drop on the previous year's figures. The trend was driven largely by the steep rise in the proportion of pitched content: we have evidence that men are more likely than women to submit a cold pitch.

To counteract the tendency, we needed to take affirmative action! In March 2023, Johanne and Martin thus committed us

> **" Last year, the proportion of pitched published content jumped to a resounding 94% – that's a rise of 56% since 2021**

to take up the '50:50 challenge' to achieve gender parity by the end of the year. Our primary strategy for achieving this is (of course) to commission more women than men. However, when we approach a female author who is unable to take up the commission, we do also suggest they recommend another female scholar who may be willing to write for us.

One challenge to meeting our target is the input from series editors (some of whom are very prolific), over whose commissioning we have little control. We have thus worked hard to impress on our third-party editors the importance of reaching out to more women than men in the hope of achieving gender parity in the subsequent body of output.

Although we have not yet succeeded in achieving equal representation, our efforts have still made a significant positive change. **In 2023, we managed to push our proportion of published female authors up by 7%, to 44%.**
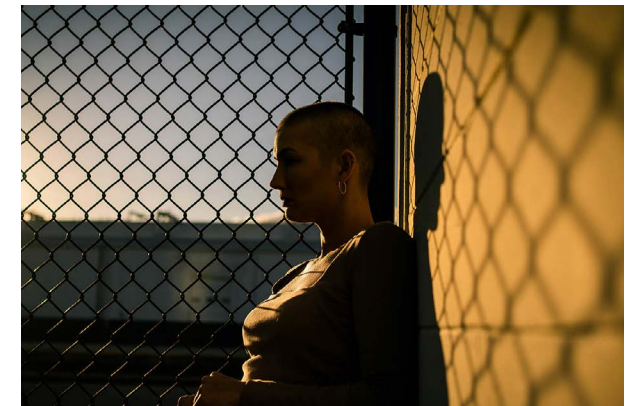
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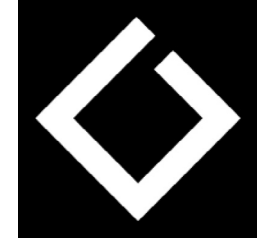
Geographic distribution of writers

As Table 2 on page 7 shows, the worldwide distribution of Loop authors has remained strikingly similar year on year. The only noteworthy change in 2023 was that the UK and Ireland contribution saw a 7.5% drop, from 25.5% to 18%.

New national entries for 2023 are Mexico, Sri Lanka, Uganda, Ukraine and Vietnam. Also in the 'Rest of the Word' category, we published authors based in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, China, Ghana, India, Japan, Nigeria, Peru, and South Africa. There was one sole French contributor – that country's lowest-ever representation!

This year, we published authors based in 43 countries, and since our October 2020 launch, we have published authors from a total of 61 countries worldwide.

Career stage and membership status

As with Loop authors' geographical distribution, the spread of authors at different stages of their career has remained reasonably steady (Table 5), though last year saw a fall in the number of PhD and postdocs (early career scholars) and a rise in the proportion of more senior scholars at Lecturer and Professor stage. Last year also saw a 9% drop in contributors from Non-Member institutions, while those from Full or Associate Member institutions rose by 9%.

> "
> **Since our October 2020 launch, we have published authors based in 61 countries worldwide**

In 2023, 122 Loop authors were also members of at least one ECPR Standing Group or Network – and many, of course, belong to several. That's almost a third of the total number of authors (duplicates removed), and, a considerable rise on last year's figure of 79. See page 11 for a breakdown of how many authors belonged to which specific interest group.

Loop digest e-shots

Using ECPR's email software package, Brevo, we build two-weekly digest emails, each of which contains synopses, images and links to around 12–15 blog pieces published during that time period, along with a general call to action for submissions.

Digest emails are sent to more than 11,500 subscribers on ECPR's 'Publications' mailing list. Since March, the open rate has remained reliably above 30%, and click-throughs around 3%. These mailshots consistently result in the submission of new pitches to our online form – typically 2–3 per broadcast

The year in review

– so in addition to boosting readership figures, they remain a valuable source of fresh content, as borne out by our Author Feedback (see Q4 pie chart on page 19).

Twitter-X followers

Our year-end target was 5,000 followers (we stood at 3,517 at 31 December 2022). However, since Elon Musk's acquisition of the platform in late 2022, there has been dramatic slowdown

in follower numbers, and an exodus to other platforms. Sadly, therefore, @ECPR_TheLoop didn't quite manage to meet its stated target – though in challenging conditions we did gain more than 1,300 followers, bringing our year-end total to 4,822. In contrast with earlier Twitter-X-challengers Mastodon and Threads, it appears that BlueSky is here to stay, and that academic Twitter is relocating in increasing numbers. Though it is disappointing and daunting to pick up afresh on a new platform, 2024 is the year we do so.

Loop presence on ecpr.eu

The Loop slide on ECPR's home page carousel continues to be refreshed each week by Kate with a header image and standfirst of a broad-appeal blog piece.

The Loop at ECPR's General Conference

At the 2022 Conference in Innsbruck, Kate presented a guide to key techniques in academic blogging, including in-house writing style and SEO tips, subsequently shared on ECPR's

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> We offered General Conference 'Bootcamps' in which participants experimented in real time with non-academic writing style

YouTube channel. Building on that initiative, in 2023 we advertised in-person 'Blog Bootcamp' sessions at the General Conference in Prague, via the marketing department's know-before-you-go e-campaigns and on Twitter-X. Kate created a dedicated sub-page on theloop.ecpr.eu (since taken down).

First-time bloggers were invited to book in for sessions with the Academic Editors and with Kate. The concept was that Martin and Johanne began by offering broad-brush advice on how to approach the task of crafting a blog piece. Participants were then invited to 'peek behind the curtain' at The Loop's WordPress editing software, with guidance and supervision from Kate. We urged those taking part to bring along some raw copy of their own for editing according to Loop House style, so they could get a realistic sense of how heavy an edit they

The year in review
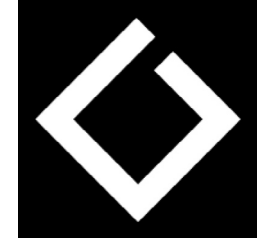
might receive if they were to submit. Alternatively, impromptu participants were given some 'real' unedited (anonymised) copy from The Loop archive with which to carry out the exercise.

We had five formal book-ins and many more unscheduled 'walk-in' customers. Unsurprisingly, none of the participants had English as a first language, and found working with the readability plug-in, Yoast, quite the challenge. It was hugely rewarding to work with these young scholars to identify easy wins that would make their pieces more accessible to a non-academic readership, and more generally, to push them out of their scholarly comfort zone. Bootcamps were also a great outreach exercise for attracting younger non-English-language scholars who may otherwise have felt daunted by the prospect of submitting to an English-language blogsite.

Also at the General Conference, we compared the participant list with our author database, and discovered that a significant 89 existing Loop contributors were attending the event in person. We created a segmented e-campaign for this group, thanking them for their contribution, encouraging them to submit more blog ideas in future, and inviting them to join us for a drink at the evening reception.

Thematic series strands

By the end of 2022, we had launched four thriving series strands: 🦋 Science of Democracy, 🌊 Illiberal Wave, Autocracies with Adjectives, and 📐 Measuring Human Rights. In 2023, these were joined by 🔮 Future of Populism, ⛓ Constraints on Academic Freedom, 🛟 Rescuing Democracy, 🌈 Gendering Democracy, and 🦋 Democratic Transformations, bringing the series total to nine. At the time of writing (February), two further series are set to launch in 2024, though the figure will likely be higher when we reach year end.

We are working with series editors to redress the unequal gender balance among contributors. More on this on page 10.

Inaugural Loop Best Blog Prize

In 2022, ECPR's Publications Subcommittee green-lighted our 2021 proposal to bring well-deserved recognition to early-career work, and to help publicise The Loop's highest-quality articles. The PSC endowed this new prize with a £500 fund.

In January 2022, Loop eds began keeping track of which pieces truly impressed us, assessing each article for its originality, readability and significance / relevance. Twelve blogs made the longlist, selected for their ability to communicate scholarly concepts to an audience outside academe's 'ivory tower'.

Our jurors were Albrecht Sonntag, Université de Nantes, who runs a strand on EU!RADIO, and manages *The European Notepad*. Joining him were EJ Graff of Brandeis University, an award-winning journalist and speaker, and former Managing Editor of the *Monkey Cage* blog; and Alexandra Segerberg of Uppsala University, a former editor of ECPR Press, and outgoing editor of ECPR's *Political Research Exchange* journal.

In spring 2023, our jurors scored each longlisted piece against the three key qualities, to leave a shortlist of the top three highest-scoring articles. Interestingly, each juror displayed a preference for a different one of the three shortlisted pieces. Jurors deliberated among themselves to settle up on a winner.

In the event, Reginald Oduor's blog piece for our Science of Democracy series emerged victorious. Reginald writes on African philosophy, philosophy of technology, ethics, and disability rights. He is the first person with total visual disability to be appointed to a substantive teaching position in a public university in Kenya. He will join the 2023 Jury panel.

Read the full story in Kate's blog piece for The Loop.

Author profiling

Regions	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	Total	%
United Kingdom & Ireland	1	3	11	8	8	7	4	6	7	12	5	3	**75**	**18**
Germany, Austria & Switzerland	2	6	5	9	5	4	14	13	2	3	7	6	**76**	**18.25**
France				1									**1**	**0.25**
Italy	1	1	3	2	2	1	9	1	1	2	7	5	**35**	**8.5**
Spain, Portugal & Greece	1	2	2			4	3	5	1	3	4	1	**26**	**6.25**
Benelux	1	2	5	2	6	3	1	1	4	6	1	2	**34**	**8**
Nordics	1		7	4		4	3	3		11	5	3	**41**	**10**
Central and Eastern Europe	1	1	2	5	3	1	1				3	3	**20**	**5**
United States & Canada	1	5	13	3	7	6	2	9		1	3	4	**54**	**13**
Rest of World	2	2	6	4	10	4	8	1	1	3	7	5	**53**	**12.75**
Total	**11**	**22**	**54**	**38**	**41**	**34**	**45**	**39**	**16**	**41**	**42**	**32**	**415**	

2023 authors, by country

Argentina 1
Australia 11
Austria 5
Belgium 13
Brazil 10
Bulgaria 2
Canada 6
Chile 3
China 1
Cyprus 1
Czechia 4
Denmark 7
Estonia 2
Finland 6
France 1
Germany 62
Ghana 1
Greece 5
Hong Kong 4
Hungary 6
India 4
Ireland 4
Israel 3
Italy 35
Japan 2
Mexico 1
Netherlands 21
Nigeria 1
Norway 13
Peru 1
Poland 5
Portugal 9
South Africa 1
Spain 12
Sri Lanka 1
Sweden 15
Switzerland 9
Turkey 4
Uganda 2
UK 71
Ukraine 1
USA 48
Vietnam 1

Table 2: Published authors, by region; year-on-year comparison

Year	UK & Ireland	Germany, Austria & Switzerland	France	Italy	Spain, Greece & Portugal	Benelux	Nordic countries	CEE countries	USA & Canada	Rest of the World
2021	23.5%	19%	1%	9.5%	3%	7%	10.5%	5%	8%	13.5%
2022	25.5%	16%	1%	5%	5%	7.5%	5%	6%	13%	16%
2023	18%	18.25%	0.25%	8.5%	6.25%	8%	10%	5%	13%	12.75%

Author profiling

Loop authors, by career stage

The Loop aims to publish pieces by scholars at every stage of their career, and we have continued to maintain a consistent spread of contributions from doctoral candidates to senior professors. Analysis shows no correlation between the seniority of the author and the popularity (readership figures) of a piece; some of our most-viewed blogs have been by the youngest scholars, so we aim to continue this balanced approach rather than trying to attract particularly senior or junior contributors.

Authors' institutional membership

The Loop is a benefit for scholars at ECPR Member institutions, and an outlet for those outside our membership community.

By the end of 2023, 64% of our contributions had come from scholars at Full or Associate Member institutions; a 9% rise on the previous year. But the 36% of contributions from authors at non-member universities demonstrates how we also reach out to scholars from less affluent countries who may not have the resources to take part in (eg) ECPR academic events.

Table 3: Published authors 2023, by career stage

Month	Pre-doc, PhD or not affiliated	Postdoc	Lecturer	Senior / Prof	Total
January	5	1	2	2	11
February	6	4	7	5	22
March	11	8	19	16	54
April	8	6	13	11	38
May	8	7	16	10	41
June	11	4	15	4	34
July	7	10	16	12	45
August	17	8	7	7	39
September	4	2	7	3	16
October	4	14	10	13	41
November	15	7	12	8	42
December	7	11	5	9	32
Total	**103**	**82**	**129**	**101**	**415**
%	**25**	**20**	**31**	**24**	

Table 4: Published authors 2023, by institutional membership

Month	Non-Member	Full Member	Associate Member	Total
January	4	7		11
February	9	12	1	22
March	23	29	2	54
April	11	26	1	38
May	19	20	2	41
June	11	22	1	34
July	14	27	4	45
August	15	24		39
September	4	11	1	16
October	12	28	1	41
November	17	24	1	42
December	10	21	1	32
Total	**149**	**251**	**15**	**415**
%	**36**	**60**	**4**	

Table 5: Published authors, by career stage; year-on-year comparison

Year	Pre-doc, PhD or not affiliated		Postdoc		Lecturer		Senior or Professor		Total
2021	65	22%	63	21%	107	36%	63	21%	**298**
2022	93	30%	67	22%	93	30%	57	18%	**310**
2023	103	25%	82	20%	129	31%	101	24%	**415**

Table 6: Published authors, by institutional membership; year-on-year comparison

Year	Non-member		Full member		Associate member		Total
2021	88	30%	203	68%	7	2%	**298**
2022	139	45%	162	52%	9	3%	**310**
2023	149	36%	251	60%	15	4%	**415**

Pitches vs commissions

Table 7: Published authors 2023, by gender

Month	Male	Female	Total authors	% Female
January	7	4	11	36
February	12	10	22	45
March	28	26	54	48
April	21	17	38	45
May	27	14	41	34
June	15	19	34	56
July	31	14	45	31
August	26	13	39	33
September	10	6	16	37.5
October	23	18	41	44
November	19	23	42	55
December	13	19	32	59
Total	**232**	**183**	**415**	
%	**56**	**44**		

Table 8: Published blog pieces 2023, pitch vs commission

Month	Pitches	Commissions	Total	% Pitches
January	10	1	11	91
February	13	3	16	81
March	33	4	37	89
April	30		30	100
May	31	1	32	97
June	22	4	26	85
July	27	1	28	96
August	22	1	23	96
September	11		11	100
October	24	1	25	96
November	31		31	100
December	16	1	17	94
Total	**270**	**17**	**287**	
%	**94**	**6**		

Table 9: All published pitched blog pieces, 2023

Month	Total	Female or F-led	Male or M-led	% Female or F-led
January	10	3	7	30
February	13	5	8	38
March	33	14	19	42
April	30	14	16	47
May	31	9	22	29
June	22	11	11	50
July	27	7	20	26
August	22	11	11	50
September	11	4	7	36
October	24	12	12	50
November	31	17	14	55
December	16	11	5	69
Total	**270**	**118**	**152**	**43.5**

Table 10: Published authors, by gender; year-on-year comparison

Year	Male	Female	Total	% Female
2021	186	112	298	38
2022	196	114	310	37
2023	232	183	415	44

Table 11: Published blog pieces, pitches vs commissions; year-on-year comparison

Year	Pitches	Commissions	Total	% Pitches
2021	82	136	218	38
2022	182	62	244	75
2023	270	17	287	94

Table 12: All pitches (including those rejected*), male vs female; year-on-year comparison

Year	Male or M-led	Female or F-led	Didn't say	Total	% Female
2021	63	31	2	96	32
2022	137	51		188	27
2023	162	125		287	44

*In 2023, we received 17 online pitches that were rejected by our Academic Editors; 10 from men and 7 from women

Pitches vs commissions

Gender targets for published pieces

When The Loop launched in October 2020, a key aims was for half of published pieces to come from female authors. We also aim to publish authors of diverse nationalities and university affiliations, and at all levels of academic seniority. Achieving gender balance, however, has been our toughest challenge.

Loop contributors can pitch their idea spontaneously using our simple online form, or an Editor may reach by email or on Twitter, to commission a piece on a timely topic. As our series threads have gained traction, pieces commissioned by third-party editors also represent a considerable proportion of our output. Indeed, **of the 287 blog pieces we published in 2023, 145, or 50.5%, were attached to one of our series threads**, 59 of those to The Future of Populism series alone.

As tables 9, 11 and 12 on the previous page show, the spontaneous pitches we receive are more likely to come from

men than from women, although the gap has narrowed considerably this year. In 2021, 32% of pitched published content came from a woman or a female-led team. In 2022, that figure had, sadly, dropped to 27%. It is encouraging, therefore, that in 2023, **the proportion of pitched published content from a woman or a female-led team had leapt to 44%; a rise of 17% on the previous year**. It is clear that our gender-positive initiatives are beginning to bear fruit!

Strategies to maintain gender balance

One means of tackling the gender disparity is to commission more blogs from women. In 2023, 82% of commissions were of women (see Table 13), an impressive 15% rise on the previous year. However, given the dwindling number of commissions we need to make in the happy circumstance of booming copy flow, this positive statistic has little influence on the overall gender balance of our published output. At times when we have commissioned more, we have achieved a better gender balance in published pieces. However, not all authors are available to write for us when we contact them – and this, too,

often runs along gendered lines. Back in 2022, for example, 53% of successful commissions were of women. But when we look at *attempts* it's 63% women, 27% men and 10% mixed teams, suggesting women are more likely than men to decline commission attempts. We also let contributors know we are flexible on timing, and work with the author to find a deadline that suits their timetable. We hope this helps contributors with responsibilities at home, whether childcare or other matters, to find the time to write for us. Read our blog post on the topic.

We have been impressing on our series editors the importance of reaching out to more women than men in order to achieve balance in published output. Clearly, we need to work harder.

Gender parity in readership stats

Of our 20 most-read 2023 blog posts (page 14), eight are by a single male or male group, eight by a single woman or female group. And four are mixed-gender groups, so bang on 50:50.

Table 13: All commissions, including published pieces and those not accepted or delivered, male vs female; year-on-year comparison						
Year	Male	Female	Multi-author, led by male	Multi-author, led by female	Total	% female or female-led
2021	93	69	19	5	186	**40**
2022	14	37	5	2	58	**67**
2023	3	19	2	8	33	**82**

Standing Group members

Correlation of authors published on The Loop during 2023 with membership of ECPR Standing Groups and Research Networks

Standing Group or Research Network	No. of authors
(Anti-)Corruption and Integrity	6
Affective Polarization	5
Analytical Politics and Public Choice	5
Central and East European Politics	14
Citizenship	4
Comparative Political Institutions	12
Critical Peace and Conflict Studies	5
Democratic Innovations	15
Differentiated Integration in the EU	6
Elites and Political Leadership	9
Energy Politics, Policy, and Governance	1
Environmental Politics	3
European Union	34
Extremism and Democracy	35
Federalism and Regionalism	5
Food Policy and Governance	1
Gender and Politics	23
Human Rights and Transitional Justice	5
Identity	11
Interest Groups	10
International Political Theory	5
International Relations	12

Standing Group or Research Network	No. of authors
Internet and Politics	6
Kantian Political Thought	1
Knowledge and Governance	5
Knowledge Politics and Policies	2
Latin American Politics	7
Law and Courts	5
Local Government and Politics	3
Mediterranean Politics and Society	3
Methods of Normative Political Theory	3
Migration and Ethnicity	13
Organised Crime	2
Parliaments	11
Participation and Mobilisation	16
Political Anticipation	0
Political Communication	12
Political Concepts	9
Political Culture	2
Political Economy and Welfare State Politics	5
Political Methodology	16
Political Networks	1
Political Parties	27

| Standing Group or Research Network	No. of authors
Political Psychology	12
Political Representation	12
Political Sociology	9
Political Theory	7
Political Violence	7
Politics and Technology	4
Politics and the Arts	1
Presidential Politics	1
Public Opinion and Voting Behaviour in a Comparative Perspective	20
Public Policy	4
Regulatory Governance	4
Religion and Politics	7
Southern European Politics	19
Statehood, Sovereignty and Conflict	4
Teaching and Learning Politics	3
The Sciences of the Democracies	11
Theoretical Perspectives in Policy Analysis	4
Voting Advice Applications	3
Young ECPR Network on Europeanisation (YEN)	2

Published blogs, by category

Category	Number of blogs
Democracy	123
Populism	77
🪅 Future of Populism	59
European Union	49
Political theory	35
Radical right-wing politics	34
🦋 Science of Democracy	31
Gender and politics	28
Elections	27
International relations	24
Political participation, Political representation	23
Political parties	19
Democratic innovations, Western European politics	17
Autocracy	15
Latin American politics, Public policy, Political communication, Illiberalism	14
🌈 Gendering Democracy, Eastern European politics	13

Category	Number of blogs
Security, Migration	12
Feminism, Political science profession, Africa, 🎨 Rescuing Democracy, 🎭 Democratic Transformations	10
LGBTI, Parliaments, Italy, ♟ Autocracies with Adjectives, Protest movements, Human Rights, Presidential politics	9
EU Foreign Policy, International organisations, Germany, Turkey, Ukraine, Warfare, Politics and religion	8
Social media, Politics and the media, India, China, Russia, Foreign Policy, Terrorism, Political violence	7
Political concepts, 🔗 Constraints on Academic Freedom	6
Refugees, Political science methodology, Asian Politics, 🌊 Illiberal Wave, Social movements	5

Category	Number of blogs
Political economy, Coalitions, Islam, Comparative politics, International development, Environmental politics, British politics, Public accountability, Middle East	4
Education policy, Democratisation, American politics, EU Economic policy, Brazil, 📐 Measuring Human Rights, Globalisation, Energy policy, Local politics, European Integration, Constitutions, MENA	3
Independence movements, Scottish independence, Political sociology, Green politics, Law and courts, Brexit, Corruption, Health policy, Citizenship, Climate change, Welfare, Covid-19, Teaching and learning, Deliberative democracy, East Asian politics, Political campaigns	2
Disability, Minority governments, United Nations, Balkans, Socialism, Judicial politics, Organised crime, Referendums, Political trust, Blogging, Trade policy	1
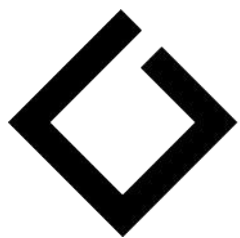
Key themes of 2023
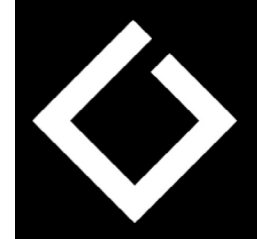
Continuing rise of the radical right

There was no let-up in 2023 of Loop authors' interest in Italian PM Giorgia Meloni. Laura Montecchio, Marianna Griffini, and Alessia Donà considered the implications of Meloni's election for gender rights and equality. Leonardo Puleo and Gianluca Piccolino, meanwhile, examined the 'illiberal challenge' posed by Meloni's party, *Fratelli d'Italia.*

Fascination with Hungary's Viktor Orbán, too, shows no sign of slowing. Kinga Koranyi speculated on Orbán's attitude to EU funding withdrawal, Andrea Pető, along with Gábor Halmai and colleagues, lamented the consequences of Orbán's illiberalism on academic freedom in higher education. And Barbara Pisciotta and Daniela Verena Huber explained how Orbán's illiberal agenda is fuelling democratic backsliding.

Georgios Samaras noted how Kyriakos Mitsotakis' government in Greece is echoing the normalisation in Italy and Hungary of far-right practices, such as ultra-nationalism.

Ivo Kesler and Sorina Soare focused on the dangers to democracy posed by far-right party Alliance of the Union of Romanians. Erdoğan Altun speculated how Turkey's right-wing authoritarian President Erdoğan managed to secure a third term, despite the country's dire economic situation.

Iris B. Segers deplored the mainstreaming in the Netherlands of Geert Wilders' far-right views. Miku Matsunaga and Werner Krause looked at the worrying acceptance of right-wing violence by *Alternative für Deutschland* supporters. Nils Steiner and colleagues, meanwhile, showed how Germans who felt they were globalisation 'losers' were more likely to vote AfD.

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> **Established and newly elected far-right leaders including Giorgia Meloni and Javier Milei have proved fertile subject matter for Loop authors through 2023**

Argentina's new president Javier Milei was the far-right populist poster boy of 2023. Massimo D'Angelo, Demian Iglesias Seifert and Somsubhra Banerjee wrote about how Milei was elected on an anti-establishment backlash. However, Camilla Reuterswärd and Cora Fernandez Anderson speculated how Milei would lose the battle over abortion rights in Argentina.

Proma Raychaudhury examined the leadership strategies of India's 'strongman' Narendra Modi; Soumi Banerjee and Amit Singh focus on the fervent – and violent – Hindutva nationalism Modi inspires. Tejendra Pratap Gautam countered with hope that India's democratic backsliding may be on the wane.

War in Ukraine

Significant interest remained on the Russia-Ukraine war. Indeed, The Loop's most popular read of 2023 was analysis by Benjamin J. Radford and colleagues estimating troop losses. Noteworthy contributions on the war also came from Albrecht Rothacher, Olga Vlasova, and Aleksandra Spalińksa.

Key themes of 2023

Israel-Gaza conflict

Since the terrorist atrocities on 7 October 2023 sparked renewed violence in the Middle East, we have been disappointed to receive only one blog piece relating to the Israel-Gaza war: Jonathan Klüser on how Instagram influencers are shaping conflict.

Elections around the world

Ana Mar Fernández Pasarín and Asbel Bohigues, Sebastian Contin Trillo-Figueroa and James F. Downes, and Sonia Alonso Sáenz de Oger and Bonnie N. Field all covered elections in Spain. Susannah Verney explored how the Greek elections in May unexpectedly destabilised the party system. And Erdoğan Altun, Massimo D'Angelo and Senem Aydın-Düzgit focused on the outcome of the Turkish elections for Erdoğan's ruling AKP.

In Eastern Europe, Piotr Marczyński and Kaja Kaźmierska focused on the conflict between Jarosław Kaczyński and Donald Tusk. The seemingly endless elections in Bulgaria were the subject of blog pieces by George Kordas and Ildiko Otova.

Further afield, Lisa Janssen focused on losers in elections, with particular reference to the US (Capitol insurrection), while Valentin Clavé-Mercier analysed New Zealand's missed opportunity to secure indigenous rights. On the African continent, tech innovation is having a significant impact on democratic elections. Gift Mwonzora and Muhammad Edita examined the Zimbabwean and Nigerian cases, respectively.

Focus on the European Union

Franziskus von Lucke and Thomas Diez argued that the EU must become more 'positively anxious' in order to withstand future challenges. Helene Sjursen and colleagues argued that the Union must work on promoting a bottom-up liberal order. Thijs De Cuyper warned the EU should be cautious in shifting away from economic liberalism. Finally, Francesco Spera speculated on the role of collective memory in the context of the EU's eastern enlargement.

> "
> **Since the Hamas atrocities on 7 October, we have received only one submission explicitly referencing the ensuing conflict**

Latin America

Early in 2023, Jonathan Powell and Salah Ben Hammou compared Brazil's 8 January coup attempt with the Capitol riots two years previously. Flávia Biroli and Luciana Tatagiba examined how Brazil's new government is turning the tide on Bolsonaro's anti-gender reforms. João Urt and Tchella Maso recognised the diplomatic roles of Brazil's indigenous leaders.

Alicia del Aguila explored the role of the political crisis in Peru. Lisa Zanotti and Gonzalo Espinoza-Bianchini considered the rise of Chile's populist radical right, while Shauna N. Gillooly warned of new forms of imported gang violence in the country. Angie K. González and Carme Ferré-Pavia focused on how social media acts as a political equaliser for Colombia's female politicians. Carlos Vázquez-Ferrel worried for Mexico's 'weak and disillusioned' legislative opposition. And Juan Cruz Díaz and Carlos José Cruz Infante speculated on how prospects for an EU-Mercosur agreement are growing ever more dim.
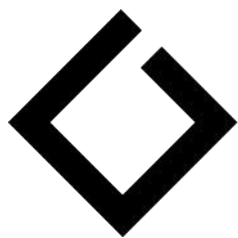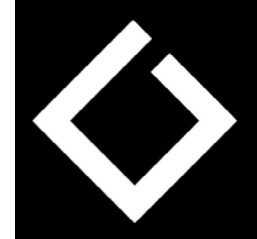
Top 20 most-read of 2023
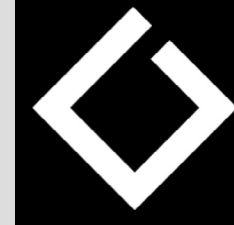
Figures captured 2 January 2024

Blog title	Author/s and publication date	Page views
Estimating troop losses on both sides in the Russia-Ukraine war	Benjamin J. Radford, Yaoyao Dai, Niklas Stoehr, Aaron Schein, Mya Fernandez, Hanif Sajid **24 August**	61,524
👾 The British Conservative Party's journey towards the populist radical right	Tim Bale **14 April**	2,188
👾 Three die-hard myths about populism	Mattia Zulianello, Petra Guasti **21 March**	1,861
Why the political left rejects Ukraine, and how to change it	Aleksandra Spalińska **6 April**	1,822
The 2023 Bulgarian elections: back to stagnation – but for how long?	Dragomir Stoyanov **14 April**	1,502
The roots of political conflict in Peru	Alicia del Aguila **20 January**	1,349
👾 Narendra Modi: India's 'vulnerable' strongman populist leader	Proma Raychaudhury **19 April**	1,283
Landslide victory for Geert Wilders – but can he form a government?	Iris B. Segers **1 December**	1,167
'Active Clubs': a new collaborative phenomenon on the far-right scene	Jack Wippell **2 May**	1,131
Has the Hindu majority developed a 'Nazi conscience' in India?	Amit Singh **7 August**	1,039

Blog title	Author/s and publication date	Page views
🌈 Left-wing populism, democratic erosion, and patriarchy	Jennifer Piscopo **23 March**	1,004
EU-China relations: a growing global rivalry	James F. Downes, Mathew Wong, Man Hoo So **5 June**	985
Is the Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index little more than a joke indicator?	Nicolás Palomo Hernández **5 January**	979
Feminist governance – here to stay, or gone tomorrow?	Marian Sawer **13 April**	955
👾 Peronism in Argentina exemplifies the chamaeleonic nature of populism	Wolfgang Muno, Christian Pfeiffer **28 July**	932
👾 Social media: populists' partners in crime	Laura Jacobs **29 March**	890
Britain's post-Brexit illusion of sovereignty and the lessons it can learn from Norway	Johanne Døhlie Saltnes, Merethe Dotterud Leiren, Arild Aurvåg Farsund, Jarle Trondal, John Erik Fossum, Christopher Lord **17 October**	875
The radical left today is not radical, and why that matters	Vladimir Bortun **3 August**	854
Islamo-leftism in French universities: a dangerous chimera	Nonna Mayer **28 April**	830
Why the 'Kosovo precedent' was a gateway for Russia's abuse of international law	Lena Surzhko-Harned, Jiří Nykodým **20 February**	802

Google analytics

	Page impressions	Top-growing pages compared to previous month		Top-performing pages, by clicks		How people find The Loop, by clicks		Top-performing search queries, by clicks		Devices, by clicks		Top countries, by clicks	
January	364,000	Singh	+215	Batool	492	foreign policy of pakistan	+50	angela merkel leadership style	69	Desktop	4.59K	USA	1.17K
		Qazi	+158	Patil	360	fascism in india	+24	foreign policy of pakistan	61	Mobile	2.92K	UK	1.02K
		Patil	+128	Singh	354	pakistan's foreign policy	+25	the loop ecpr	56	Tablet	102	Pakistan	788
February	342,000	Haugevik	+160	van Esch	340	angela merkel leadership style	+28	angela merkel leadership style	97	Desktop	4.2K	USA	1.28K
		van Esch	+60	Singh	326	norway child protection	+13	the loop ecpr	48	Mobile	2.38K	UK	804
		del Aguila	+57	Patil	234	barnevernet norway	+12	electoral autocracy meaning	38	Tablet	81	India	588
March	513,000	Singh	+162	Singh	488	the loop ecpr	+83	the loop ecpr	131	Desktop	6.48K	USA	1.8K
		Batool	+157	van Esch	432	according to hager ali - why did the us armed forces fail to train the afghan army?	+32	angela merkel leadership style	106	Mobile	3.39K	UK	1.29K
		Homepage	+142	Batool	381	ecpr the loop	+30	suwalki gap	58	Tablet	116	India	678
April	646,000	Stoyanov	+297	Singh	527	ecpr loop	+59	the loop ecpr	113	Desktop	6.94K	USA	2.22K
		Palonen	+155	Homepage	415	digital playground	+54	angela merkel leadership style	82	Mobile	3.77K	UK	1.37K
		Homepage	+110	Batool	387	why does catalonia want indepencence	+69	why does catalonia want indepencence	69	Tablet	139	India	756
May	853,000	Haugevik	+642	Haugevik	725	barnevernet norway	+39	angela merkel leadership style	92	Desktop	7.74K	USA	2.21K
		Batool	+182	Batool	569	norway child welfare	+38	why does catalonia want indepencence	69	Mobile	4.7K	UK	1.64K
		Santana	+97	Singh	552	ecpr the loop	+35	the loop ecpr	66	Tablet	152	Pakistan	850
June	689,000	Wippell	+99	Singh	471	lex tusk	+25	the loop ecpr	83	Desktop	5.33K	USA	1.63K
		Downes	+80	Batool	439	rose city nationalists	+21	angela merkel leadership style	70	Mobile	3.84K	UK	907
		Hoeksma	+48	Qazi	271	the loop ecpr	+17	foreign policy of pakistan	51	Tablet	145	India	692

Google analytics

	Page impres-sions	Top-growing pages compared to previous month		Top-performing pages, by clicks		How people find The Loop, by clicks		Top-performing search queries, by clicks		Devices, by clicks		Top countries, by clicks	
July	925,000	Regnier	+5.3K	Regnier	5.57K	suwalki corridor	+1.07K	suwalki corridor	1.09K	Desktop	6.86K	USA	3.18K
		Elias	+91	Singh	534	suwalki gap	+1.03K	suwalki gap	1.08K	Mobile	7.07K	UK	1.96K
		Santana	+64	Batool	318	suwałki gap	+192	suwałki gap	197	Tablet	344	India	1.02K
August	945,000	Radford	+7.11K	Radford	7.11K	russian losses in ukraine	+534	suwalki gap	623	Desktop	7.93K	USA	4.66K
		Singh	+257	Regnier	2.42K	russian losses	+393	russian losses in ukraine	534	Mobile	9.96K	UK	1.96K
		Jahanbegloo	+90	Singh	791	ukraine war casualties	+252	russian losses	393	Tablet	402	India	1.3K
September	1.18m	Radford	+21.1K	Radford	28.2K	ukraine war casualties	+1.05K	ukraine war casualties	1.3K	Desktop	13.9K	USA	12.3K
		Singh	+128	Singh	919	ukraine war losses tracker	+542	russian losses in ukraine	888	Mobile	23.3K	UK	4.03K
		Singh	+107	Batool	367	russian losses in ukraine	+354	ukraine war losses tracker	755	Tablet	869	Canada	2.44
October	1.46m	Jensehaugen	+1.17	Radford	24.1K	ukraine losses vs russia losses	+280	ukraine war casualties	968	Desktop	14K	USA	11.7K
		Muno	+138	Jensehaugen	1.18K	russia ukraine war death toll	+154	ukraine war losses tracker	537	Mobile	21.8K	UK	3.78K
		Singh	+124	Singh	681	when was the last palestinian election	+106	ukraine losses vs russia losses	526	Tablet	698	Canada	2.09K
November	1.05m	Elias	+163	Radford	13.3	why does catalonia want independence	+81	ukraine war losses tracker	599	Desktop	11.4K	USA	6.87K
		D'Angelo	+138	Jensehaugen	595	javier milei wef	+75	ukraine losses vs russia losses	513	Mobile	13K	UK	2.92K
		Stoyanov	+136	Singh	413	ukraine war losses tracker	+62	ukraine war casualties	453	Tablet	443	Canada	1.33K
December	811,000	Segers	+743	Radford	8.77K	ukraine casualties vs russian casualties	+190	ukraine war losses tracker	477	Desktop	8.88K	USA	4.51K
		Reuterswärd	+219	Segers	743	milei abortion	+45	ukraine losses vs russia losses	336	Mobile	9.73K	UK	2.3K
		Klüser	+189	Singh	408	dutch government formation	+28	ukraine casualties vs russian casualties	238	Tablet	345	Canada	949

Google analytics

Clicks and page impressions

Our top-performing months were September (38,100 across 11 blog pieces), and October (36,500 across 25 blog pieces). The former figure is more than five times the number of clicks in September 2022, and a jump of almost 20,000 on the previous month. Also in September, monthly page impressions topped


the million mark for the first time, and remained above a million for three consecutive months. Since July 2023, our click-rate has remained comfortably above 14,000. Despite July and August 2023 being very prolific months in publication terms, these stats suggest, once again, that The Loop is a term-time read.

Figures show an interesting development from July 2023: people who read The Loop on a mobile begin, for the first time since we launched, to outnumber those who read us on desktop computers – a trend that looks set to continue.

Clicks

How often someone clicked a link from Google to theloop.ecpr.eu

— 2021   — 2022   — 2023

■ 18
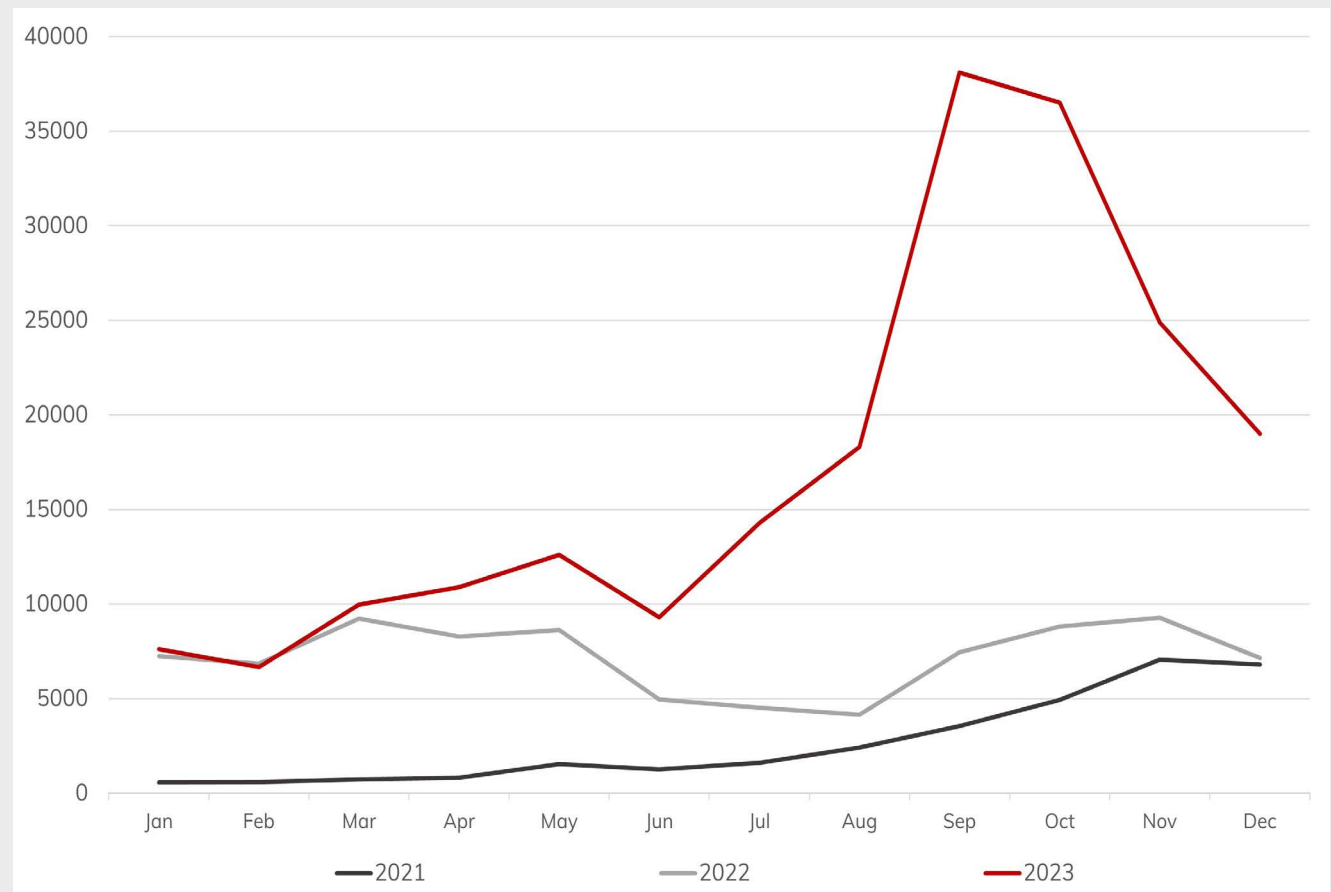
Google analytics

Search term analysis

In the first half of 2023, blog pieces from the latter half of 2022, including those on Angela Merkel's leadership style, Catalan independence, and Pakistan's foreign policy continued to attract a high click-rate – though we still see many generic home-page searches. In the latter half of the year, the hugely successful piece by Benjamin Radford and colleagues began to dominate search terms, with phrases such as 'Ukraine war casualties', 'Russian losses in Ukraine' and 'Ukraine war losses tracker'.

From January to August, either India or Pakistan appears in the list of top three countries, by clicks, buoyed by the popularity of authors such as Amit Singh, Fizza Batool, who write on matters of interest to readers in the Indian subcontinent. From September onwards, the top three remains consistently USA in top position, followed by the UK and Canada.

Page impressions

How often someone saw a link to theloop.ecpr.eu on Google
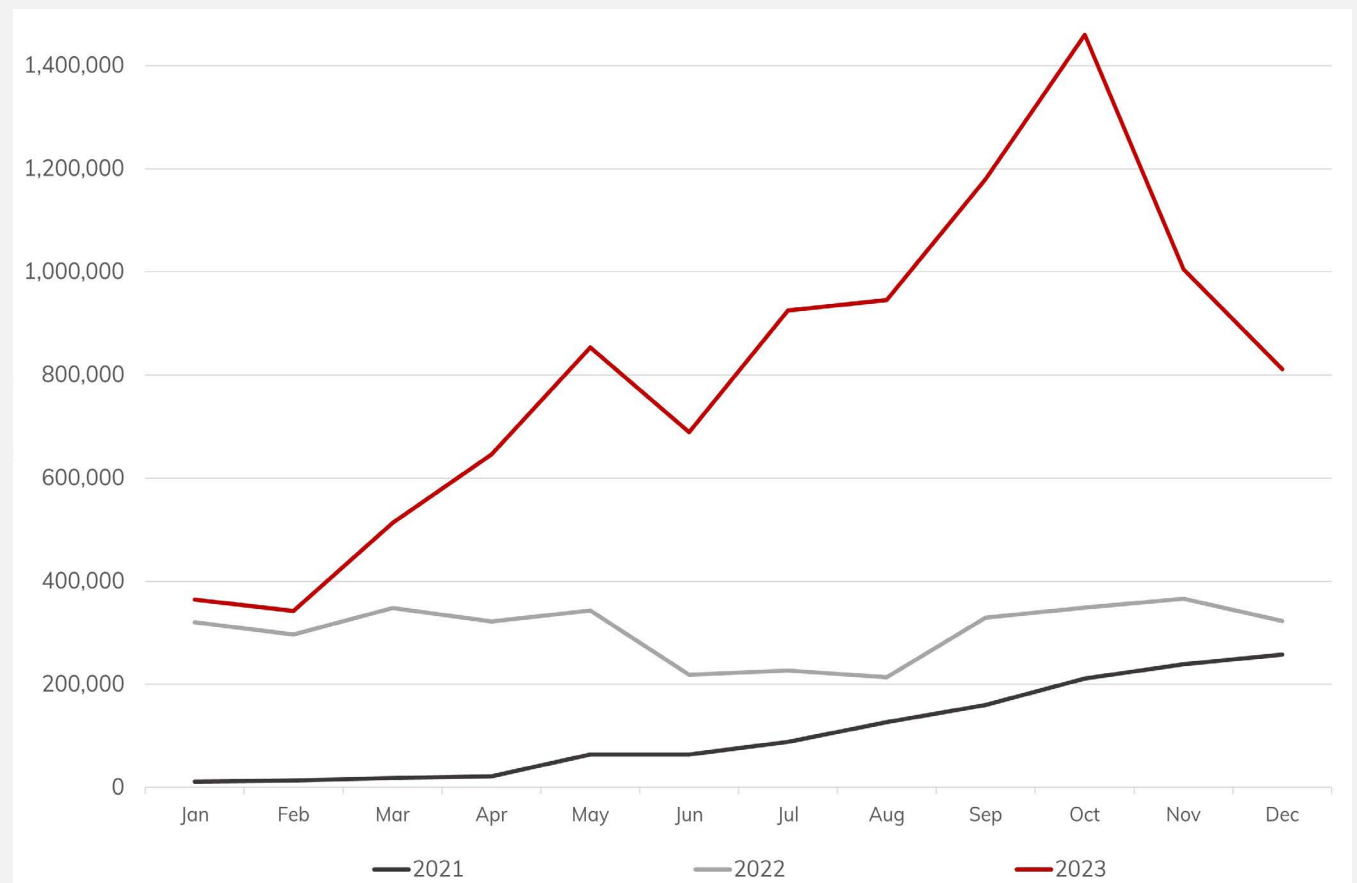
Author survey feedback

A **Survey Monkey questionnaire captures contributors' experiences.** The anonymous 1–2 minute survey comprises five questions, followed by a free-text box for additional comments, a selection of which are reproduced overleaf. A weblink to complete the survey appears in the message authors receive when their blog is published. Between 1 January and 31 December we received **115 responses**, one more than during the previous two years, each of which elicited 114 responses.

Response analysis

96% of contributors were either satisfied or very satisfied with the editing of their blog; this 3% lower than the previous year's figure of 99% but not cause for concern.

A similar proportion of authors – 94% – were satisfied or very satisfied with the speed of the editorial process, and 97% satisfied or very satisfied with their overall experience, which represents a 1% rise on 2022, and a 2% rise from 2021.

Q1: How satisfied were you with the editing of your blog piece?	2021	%	2022	%	2023	%
Very satisfied	92	**81**	96	**84**	97	**84**
Satisfied	16	**14**	17	**15**	14	**12**
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied			1	**1**	1	**1**
Dissatisfied	5	**4**			3	**3**
Very dissatisfied	1	**1**				
Total		114		114		115

Contributors find their ways to us via a number of routes. ECPR communications such as the fortnightly Loop Digest remain the most common, and Twitter-X remains an important vehicle, despite its waning popularity as a platform. At 25%, the proportion of word-of-mouth recommendations from colleagues in academe is an impressive 10% up on 2022. Once more, we are delighted that 100% of respondents would publish with us again.
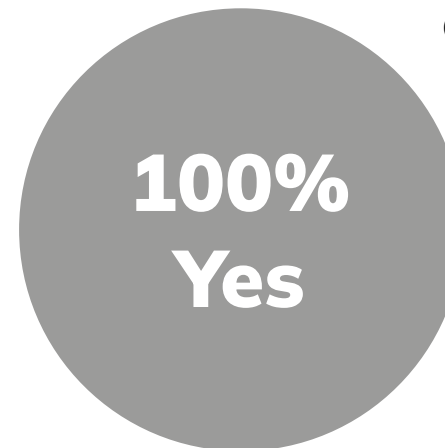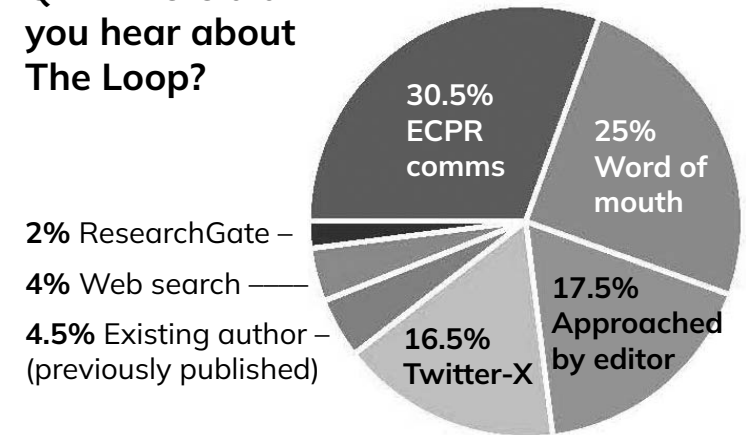
Q2: How satisfied were you with the speed of the editorial and production process?	2021	%	2022	%	2023	%
Very satisfied	91	**80**	94	**83**	91	**79**
Satisfied	20	**18**	17	**15**	17	**15**
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	2	**2**	2	**2**	6	**5**
Dissatisfied	1	**1**	1	**1**	1	**1**
Very dissatisfied						
Total		114		114		115

Q3: How would you rate your overall experience?	2021	%	2022	%	2023	%
Very satisfied	96	**84**	96	**84**	97	**84**
Satisfied	12	**11**	14	**12**	15	**13**
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	4	**4**	4	**4**	2	**2**
Dissatisfied	1	**1**			1	**1**
Very dissatisfied	1	**1**				
Total		114		114		115

Q4: Where did you hear about The Loop?

30.5% ECPR comms
25% Word of mouth
17.5% Approached by editor
16.5% Twitter-X
4.5% Existing author (previously published)
4% Web search
2% ResearchGate

Q5: Would you publish with The Loop again?

100% Yes

> **They are always responsive to my inquiries, and their team is very knowledgeable and helpful**
>
> *24 March*

> **I like how meticulous they are, especially in fact-checking**
>
> *9 May*

> **Everything was excellent and efficient**
>
> *13 June*

> **As the author of a blog, I have learned a lot about blogging!**
>
> *24 February*

> **"**
>
> **Really smooth collaboration and very helpful guidelines for drafting**
>
> *12 July*

> **"**
>
> **The Loop enables researchers to publish complex and interesting topical issues in a plain and easier to read format... good for policy and for easy leisure reads**
>
> *27 October*

> **"**
>
> # Thanks for the great collaboration and such detailed instructions
>
> *23 August*

> **"**
>
> **Appreciate the excellent service given, and highly satisfied with the entire process**
>
> *21 December*

Email feedback from authors

Łukasz Wordliczek 16 January

■ Many thanks for everything! I really appreciate your approach and your responsiveness!

Niels Keijzer 7 February

■ Thanks a lot for the edits, it reads much better now, and the main points come out more.

Ilona Lahdelma 18 February

■ Thank you so much for having such a thorough look. I think the text has improved a lot with your comments and corrections.
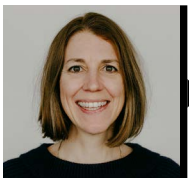
Christina Zuber 20 February

■ Your guidelines are excellent to help authors from academia write in a clear and readable fashion and your team is so responsive and appreciative.
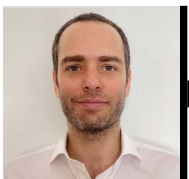
Carlos Cruz Infante 21 March

■ Thank you so much for improving my article, looking for the photo, and for the seamless process.

Bartek Pytlas 28 March

■ Thanks so much for the terrific edits. The text reads really well.

Sorina Soare 24 April

■ I am honestly so grateful and all I can say is A HUGE THANK YOU!

Luke Martell 24 April

■ Many thanks for your great editing... Thanks for having me and for a nice process!

Davide Vittori 2 May

■ You summed up better than I would do the main argument of the post, thank you.

Erin O'Brien 24 May

■ Many thanks for the terrific edits.

James F. Downes 3 June

■ Thank you so much for the excellent edits – it really reads much better and more fluently now.

Stella Gerani 29 June

■ Without people like you who show how to amend text and teach juniors how to do it, the pain we newcomers face would be much more unbearable.

Tariq Modood 2 July

■ I am impressed with the way you have edited and shortened it.

Kinga Koranyi 8 August

■ Thank you for the wonderful edits and the images chosen!

Flora Baumgartner 13 November

■ Thank you, dear Loop team, for your fantastic edits which really helped the piece.

> "
> I want to thank the editorial team @ECPR_TheLoop for help and support.
>
> *@AnneNygaardJed, 15 March*

> "
> What an interesting way to kick off a new series! Highly recommended.
>
> *@DrAlbertazziUK, 21 March*

> "
> Very happy this went so smoothly – thanks, @ECPR_TheLoop.
>
> *@reinhardheinis1, 31 March*

> "
> A thousand thanks to the wonderful @ECPR_TheLoop editors for this opportunity, and for all their work on the series.
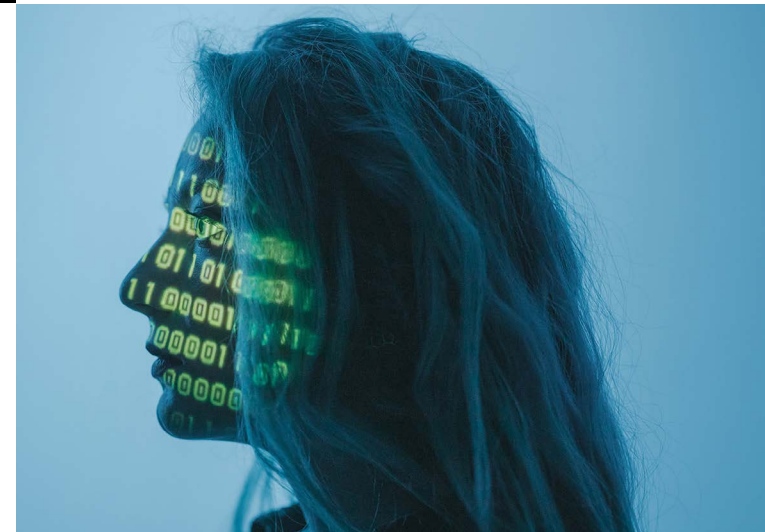>
> *@Hans_Asenbaum, 1 November*

> A big thank you to @ECPR_TheLoop for their editorial support and choice of image!
>
> *@JoanaHofstetter, 31 October*

> "
> It was a pleasure to work with your editorial team.
>
> *@fresejoris, 2 February*
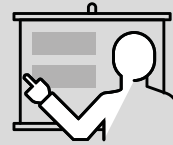
Headline statistics, 2023

100%

authors would publish with The Loop again
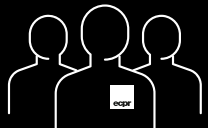
287

published articles

45%
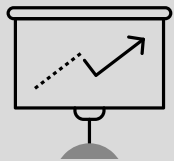
authors are early career scholars

43

authors based in 43 countries worldwide

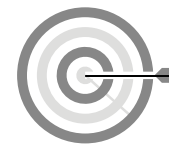**415**

published authors

9.78 million

page impressions
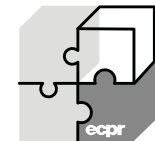
4,822

followers on Twitter-X at 31 December 2023

44%

female authors

61,524

page views of our most-read 2023 blog piece at 2 January 2024

64%

authors from ECPR member institutions

Looking ahead

A nice problem to have...

Since its launch in October 2020, The Loop has consistently outstripped even the most optimistic of predictions. At the time of writing, in March 2024, the site has published 870 articles and has 986 authors on its books. In 2023 alone, The Loop published 287 blog pieces. There were 251 working days in the calendar year, so the blog site is now publishing at a typical rate of more than one per day.

With only one member of ECPR secretariat staff handling every aspect of production – from author liaison and profile creation, to sub-editing, formatting, metadata generation, workflow management, production scheduling, picture research, publication, social media, statistical data management / reporting, the writing, designing and publication of an annual report, presentations / training sessions at the General Conference and numerous other matters arising, this has become unsustainable in the long term.

We are extremely proud of the body of work generated. We also acknowledge the value of The Loop to the ECPR brand, and to its scholarly reputation. However, we feel, too, that we have reached a point in our evolution at which we can afford to be more discerning about what we choose to publish.

We therefore propose to reduce the number of published blogs to around 15 per month, or 3–4 per working week. Across a calendar year, we are looking to cap the number of blogs around the 180 mark – a drop of around 100 on the previous year. We are confident that's still more than enough to showcase a broad variety of authorship across all subdisciplines of the profession, and to keep our readership and social media followers engaged.

Pitching and acceptance process

We also propose fundamental changes to the way we receive copy and process authors. Proposals *should* arrive with us via the **online pitch form**. However, most series editors, and even some independent authors, bypass this system, emailing copy direct. Given that through 2023, 50.5% of Loop content was generated by a third-party series editor, this generates a huge

> "
> **We have reached a point in our evolution at which we can afford to be more discerning about what we publish on The Loop**

administrative burden for production. We therefore propose to route all blog proposals, including those commissioned by third-party editors, through a new, improved pitch form.

In 2024 we will commission web development work to fully overhaul the current form, which captures only limited data and is beginning to become unfit for purpose. This new form will link to a drop-down membership menu for verifying MyECPR account status and institutional membership, including for co-authors. It will also capture whether a piece is intended for a particular series thread. We will restrict the character count for the pitch yet further, forcing contributors to hone their ideas.

Finally, Martin and Johanne are working together to establish new, more robust criteria for acceptance. This will favour timely, relevant pieces, those that fill a thematic gap in our output, and those submitted by scholars at ECPR member affiliate institutions. This approach will also allow us to maintain a healthy gender balance and diverse geographic representation.

Looking ahead

Thematic goals

In addition to our nine existing series, 2024 will see the launch of at least two new topical threads.

Inga Ulnicane, Steering Committee member of our Standing Group on Knowledge Politics and Policies has proposed a series on 🤖 Artificial Intelligence and Power (*exact title tbc),* a topic on which Inga organised an ECPR Seminar in late 2023. This timely series will explore the role of ideas, power asymmetries, continuity and change in Artificial Intelligence. It will look at emerging governance initiatives for generative AI, and at forthcoming AI regulations around the world. Also in development is a series from existing contributor Mahmoud Javadi on ☢️ Nuclear Politics.

Most recently, we have reached out to the Steering Committee of ECPR's Standing Group on the European Union with a view to curating a series on an EU-related topic.

House Series

The Loop's thematic strands continue to serve as a rich source for the House Series. Committed for 2024 are events led by Conny Roggeband and Andrea Kriszán (Gendering Democracy), Hana Kubátová (Constraints on Academic Freedom), and Petra Guasti (Future of Populism). In line with our vision to realise influence beyond academe, Autocracies with Adjectives leader Hager Ali is planning an event involving practitioners from NGOs and think tanks.

> ❝
> The Loop's thematic strands continue to serve as a rich source of content for ECPR's House Series of talks and roundtables

2024 and beyond

Farewell to X? Disillusioned with the deteriorating state of Twitter-X, The Loop has newly branched out into BlueSkySocial. It will be interesting to monitor the ongoing 'PoliSky' migration as the quality of Elon Musk's X platform continues to erode.

Amazon Affiliates Any book hyperlinked on The Loop (such as in an author biography) now takes the user to an Amazon web page from which ECPR earns a small commission if the user buys that book (or, indeed, makes any other purchase on Amazon thereafter while logged in via that hyperlink).

Five-year plan A colleague's return from maternity leave in June will free up Charlie Brown to take over production on The Loop, enabling Kate to take on a role with greater oversight. By year end, Kate will have drawn up a five-year plan setting targets for editorial direction, including associated activities such as developing training, podcasting, and exploring potential for advertising as our Google stats continue to impress.