

## **“What drives support for the European Union?”**

*Interview with Ronja Szczepanski (CEE)*

Hello, My name is Ronja Szczepanski, I am a new Assistant Professor in political science at the Centre for European Studies and Comparative Politics.

### **Can you tell us about your career so far?**

I studied social science and European culture and economy at the Ruhr university Bochum in Germany. Then I moved on to ETH Zurich in Switzerland to do my PhD there. I wrote my thesis on European identities and how people develop European identities, so how they become the most loyal supporters of the European Union. But I also worked on a project on differentiated integration, that is when member states do not have to implement certain aspects of a legal act. Afterwards, I have been a postdoc also at ETH Zürich working on the rebordering of the European Union, so how the European Union has to differentiate itself from other political geographies, to actually push European integration further.

### **What is your current research about?**

My current research is still on a lot of identity development. Because we know from political science that identities are so much like the fundament of a lot of political attitudes, for example whether you go to the voting booth or whether you support the European Union as a whole. And I look at how these identities actually work together. In this project I look for example at how European identifiers actually react to a little bit of an anti-cosmopolitan turn of the European Union, with the current reform of the asylum system. And how do these European identifiers, that have often more pro-immigration attitudes, react to these kinds of suggestions by the European Union.

But there are also other focuses: for example, how farmers, people from working class backgrounds, but also how people who go to university feel represented by the European Union, or even not represented by the European Union. That is the focus I'm looking at and how this actually leads to the erosion of the European Union, or the strengthening of it.

### **Why did you choose to join Sciences Po and the CEE?**

I came to Sciences Po because already as a bachelor student and then a master student, I already got to know the very great research that comes from Sciences Po, from political scientists, but also from sociologists and other disciplines. And here I would love to collaborate with a lot of people who do amazing research. This is the institution in France that can actually provide this opportunity to do amazing research that is internationally well regarded. And also I would love to help this institution to further internationalise and further modernise.

*Interview by Véronique Etienne*