Political and social polarisation in Europe: How to strengthen cohesion in European societies?

3 December 2019 in Krakow (Poland)

Brief concept and questions

Most EU Member States have seen increasing political polarisation in recent years. Fundamentally different concepts (global vs. national, liberal vs. illiberal, culturally diverse vs. culturally homogeneous) are confronted with one another. These rising political divisions in the political landscapes of Europe make it increasingly more difficult to find common ground for constructive compromises.

Political polarisation in Europe is closely linked to increasing social and cultural polarisation in EU states. The widening gap between rich and poor and, above all, the identity conflicts triggered by the so-called "refugee crisis" have led to increasing dissatisfaction among certain social groups with the current political situation and weakened social cohesion in many European societies.

The debate should focus on the following key questions:

- Which themes/dividing lines can be identified that define polarisations in Germany, France and Poland?
- What are the differences between the debates and what do they have in common?
- How do political and social polarisation relate to each other?
- How can political polarisation be defused?
- How can social cohesion be maintained or strengthened in Germany, France and Poland?
- What role does the European Union play in respective polarisations?
- What is the European dimension in national, often strongly emotionalised conflicts?
- Can the European dimension be used to relax or overcome national polarisations?

Conference partner: Centre for European Studies, Jagiellonian University, Krakow