

**Justifications and critique in the European Union:  
a study of legitimacy in practice**

Mgr. Ing. Olga Gheorghiev

**ABSTRACT**

Inspired by the pragmatic sociology of critique developed by Luc Boltanski and his collaborators, this thesis examines how legitimacy is produced in public debates at the EU level through the craft of justification and critique among competent actors. In doing so, this research takes aim at three specific episodes in the history of the European integration that share in common the qualities of uncertainty of outcome, controversy in public debate and the urgency to reach a form of consensus and thus to resolve the created uncertainty. The examined events are the following: the Eastern enlargement of the European Union, the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty, and the adoption of specific measures in reaction to the European sovereign debt crisis. The theoretical part of this thesis situates the potential of the sociology of critical capacities for the study of the EU among other theoretical traditions, pointing out directions in which this particular theoretical framework could cover some of the limitations of other approaches. This is followed by the empirical part, which is divided in three chapters for each of the examined historical episodes. While structured somewhat symmetrically, each of the three analysed situations illustrate different crucial elements and individually contribute to a better understanding of the mechanism through which legitimacy claims are tested, contested, rejected or accepted based on specific rules of acceptability.