

**ERC Consolidator Grant 2020**

## **Pamphlets and Patrons**

**How courtiers shaped the public sphere  
in Ancien Régime France**

### **PAPA**

**Principal Investigator (PI):** Prof. Dr. Damien Tricoire (Trier University, Germany)

**Host institution:** Trier University, Germany

**Project duration:** 60 months

**Budget:** 1.960.000 €

#### **Proposal summary**

PAPA will rewrite significantly the story of the emergence of modern politics, re-evaluate Ancien Régime society, and re-assess the origins of the French Revolution. To do so, it will develop a new way to look at the rise of the public sphere in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The focus is on the study of political pamphlets: 1) the PI and his team will establish a new paradigm in the research on illegally published writings, and 2) develop a database that will open tremendous new possibilities for future research in intellectual and political history.

1) According to the dominant narrative, early modern France experienced a growth of state authority, and a decline of aristocratic power. While earlier royal authority was allegedly sacral, the Enlightenment era is presented as an epoch that witnessed the rise of the bourgeoisie and gave birth to a new criticism of both aristocracy and absolutism. The French Revolution is supposedly the result of these long-term processual changes. PAPA will question major theses of 17<sup>th</sup>- and 18<sup>th</sup>-century studies supporting this narrative, and develop new venues of research in these fields. PAPA's main hypotheses are that a) courtiers shaped the 18<sup>th</sup>-century public sphere in a crucial way, b) 18<sup>th</sup>-century society and politics show more continuities than ruptures to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and c) the French Revolution had at its inception much more in common with 17<sup>th</sup>-century princely uprisings than has been hitherto recognised.

2) The PAPA research team will create the first database devoted to Ancien Régime pamphlets. As several humanities and social sciences have a keen interest in these sources, the significance of PAPA goes largely beyond historical studies. The PAPA database will enable ongoing analyses of the content of these sources. This will greatly facilitate future research on Ancien Régime France and make scholarly results accessible within and outside academia.