

## **Don't shoot the messenger! Experimental evidence on delegation of communication**

*(Orsola Garofalo and Christina Rott)*

In organizations and institutions, decision-makers frequently let a spokesperson communicate their (unfair or harsh) decisions to those affected. How do individuals affected by a negative decision react if the decision maker does not communicate the decision herself but delegates the communication to another person? We conduct a lab experiment with a modified dictator game, in which the decision-maker or a spokesperson communicates the unfair allocation to the receivers, who then decide whether to punish or not. Two main questions are addressed: First, does it matter *who* communicates? Second, does it matter *how* the negative decision is communicated? If there is room for shifting blame, receivers punish the decision-maker and the spokesperson more often and more heavily when the latter communicates the unfair allocation decision. This is not because of *who* communicates but because of *how* the unfair allocation is communicated: compared to decision-makers, spokespersons express more often *emotional regret* than *rational need*. Receivers seem to perceive this as an attempt of shifting blame. The conditions under which communication delegation and communication take place are thus important.