A Return to Considering Citizens as the Cornerstone of Democracy

A Sixth Scenario for the Future of Europe

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# List of Abbreviations

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<td>CAP</td>
<td>Common Agricultural Policy</td>
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<td>ECB</td>
<td>European Central Bank</td>
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<td>EDIS</td>
<td>European Deposit Insurance Scheme</td>
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<td>EEC</td>
<td>European Economic Community</td>
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<td>EMU</td>
<td>European Monetary Union</td>
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<td>EP</td>
<td>European Parliament</td>
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<td>EU</td>
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<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organization on Economic Co-Operation and Development</td>
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<td>PESCO</td>
<td>Permanent Structured Cooperation</td>
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<td>TEU</td>
<td>Treaty on the European Union</td>
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<td>TFEU</td>
<td>Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union</td>
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Introduction

We are witnessing difficult times in the European Union (EU): Brexit, migration crisis, debt crisis, Ukraine crisis, demographic concerns, youth unemployment in the Mediterranean countries, all adding up to the EU being faced with a “multi-crisis”. Due to this challenging context and the difficulty to react adequately and in time, the EU loses its credibility from within, but also from the outside. The Eurobarometer results on the attachment of EU citizens to the European Union show a splitted picture: respondents are placed on both ends of the spectrum, see Figure 1 (Commission, 2017a). This widening gap is alerting on the level of civil society, EU policy-makers and politicians. How can the EU realign itself to its citizen and how does the future of the EU look like? The concern is that this detachment will lead to polarisation of a European population that will try to drive EU integration which is not supported at the bottom level. So the question raises: how can we bring all on the same page again?

![Graph showing attachment to the European Union](image)

Figure 1: Eurobarometer 2017 on the attachment to the European Union (source: Commission, 2017a).

The EU stretches upon many generations of EU citizens; some have experienced the post-war evolution when the European Coal and Steel Community was formed, some have witnessed their country’s transition to EU membership and others have been born with an EU
passport. We are a group of students from Maastricht University who were born after the Maastricht Treaty and we identify as European Citizens. Thanks to the EU, we have always travelled through a border-free Europe and this mobility has given us the chance to study abroad, make new connections and be part of a broader European community. It is a critical moment also for us, because we want the EU to be preserved and enable it to overcome the deadlocks it faces right now.

The EU stands for peace, democracy, equal rights, freedom of speech and the rule of law. However, these political values are currently in a state of internal and external pressure. If Europe faces so many external challenges, it needs a strong internal core, a backup by its citizens. Here, civil society comes into play. It is seen as a “political force central to the development of a wider community of values and societal goals [ and] to have a modernising and democratizing function within state-society relations” (Scott and Liinake, 2010, p.424). A pro-European civic movement, called “Pulse of Europe” was launched exactly for such purposes: starting off in 2016, “Pulse of Europe” has brought together ten thousands of Europeans expressing their solidarity with the EU in 130 different European cities. What were the effects of such a pro-European grass root movement?

The wide participation has made Pulse of Europe to become a locus of expressing European solidarity: First, it shows that the European Union and its preservation is an important stake for civil society. Second, it displays that the EU glues together people from different backgrounds. And third, it reflects that Europeans are not apathetic to Brussels, but that this initiative provides a platform for open dialogue in which EU citizens express their support of the EU and which ultimately strengthens political emancipation across European society. Such a civil society movement is at the core of an open discussion about the Future of Europe. It demands the involvement of all EU citizens: from the grassroots level to the institutions in Brussels.

Let’s take another example that shows that more civic participation in the EU is needed: Brexit. When 52% voted to leave the Union, the voice of 75% of students, aged 18 to 24, was overruled (Cresci, 2016). The results caused despair among the younger generations as it was a momentous decision that will impact their future most. Brexiteers voted to leave the EU, amongst others, because they feared immigration, they felt being overruled by Brussels and were led by newspapers, some of which published fake news (Bulman, 2017). Now, however, post-referendum polls show that first, there has been a great misconception
about the EU and its benefits for the UK, and second, that a second-referendum is wanted, in which forecasts show that Brexiteers are the minority (Dan, 2018; Peck, 2016). *How can we constructively bring the people closer to the EU and how can this inter-generational disparity be reconciled?*

Europe was built to stabilise a continent in peace and to form cohesion among its peoples. The multi-crisis, however, shows rather reverse developments, separating people along various lines: protectionist vs liberal, supranational vs national, hard vs soft Brexit and so on. If we are indeed witnessing such reverse redevelopments in the preference formation within the EU, how can we draw the future of the EU **together**? This situation demands a broader societal debate based on open dialogue, constructive ideas and progressive thinking. This goes not without respecting other Europeans’ opinions and acknowledging the different ambitions of integration. But overall, it needs impetus from **all** about how to envision the future of the EU and improve those parts that need reform.

We would like to strengthen the willingness of people to participate in this dialogue and take a common approach to re-align with the EU and its core values. Evidentially, it must be acknowledged that there are diverse opinions on the EU, but ultimately the EU has deeply transformed Europe into a more united place, a place of mutual understanding and solidarity. So, for us, the discussion’s starting point is not *if* but *where* we want to stand together in the future as EU citizens. To answer this question, we have written this article to show our thoughts and proposals, which shall invite everyone to a broader discussion. Hereby, we focus on fostering cohesion among EU citizens, setting out EU priorities that correspond to their preferences and last, to complete the European Monetary Union (EMU).

Based on the White Paper on the Future of Europe that the Commission has presented at the occasion of the EU’s 60th anniversary, this article joins the debate on the future of the EU by sketching the five scenarios developed by the European Commission and then presenting our own vision of connecting the EU and its citizens in a better way.

**The Commission’s White Paper on the future on Europe**

Last year saw the 60th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, responsible for the creation of the European Economic Community (EEC). To celebrate the occasion, the European Commission, led by Jean-Claude Juncker, published a White Paper on the future of the
European Union on 1 March 2017. This paper presented five scenarios meant as "a series of glimpses into the potential state of the Union by 2025". The scenarios themselves were not to be considered detailed blueprints nor policy prescriptions; according to the Commission, they are primarily aimed at steering a debate on the future of the EU. Let us examine their main claims.

The first scenario, explicitly named "Carrying On", envisaged a Union going on in its present state, "implementing and upgrading its current reform agenda." By 2025, the EU27 would manage to "positively shape the global agenda in a number of fields such as climate, financial stability and sustainable development." Progress would additionally be made regarding unity on foreign affairs. Although the positive agenda was speculated to yield concrete results, the Commission warned that decision making could remain complex, and that the capacity to deliver may fail to match the expectations.

The second scenario, "Nothing but the Single Market", imagined the single market as main focus of the European Union. The latter would consequently step down its work in most policy domains. This scenario would enable a strengthening of the single market for goods and capital. Yet, due to reductions in regulations at the EU level, it could entail a deepening of differences between Member States in areas such as consumer, social and environmental standards. Overall, it may stir growing divergences and limited cooperation.

In the third scenario, "Those Who Want More Do More", the EU would proceed as presently, yet one or more "coalition(s) of the willing" would emerge to cooperate on certain policy areas, such as defence or taxation. Concretely, new groups of Member States would agree on budgetary and legal arrangements to deepen their cooperation in chosen areas. The countries remaining outside the alliances would simply carry on with the present state of the Union. This multi-speed Europe would logically entail variances, although the Commission expressed the hope that all the Member States would eventually join the coalitions.

The fourth scenario envisaged by the Commission, "Doing Less More Efficiently", would see the EU focus on a reduced number of policy areas, amongst which for instance innovation, trade, security, and migration. Consequently, the EU would act less - or stop acting altogether - in domains where it is perceived as less necessary, or less productive. Such domains might involve regional development or public health, as well as parts of the employment and social policy. In selecting its new priorities, the Union "seeks to better align
promises, expectations and delivery." However, agreeing upon the areas to prioritise might prove challenging.

Finally, the last scenario, "Doing Much More Together", reflects an ideal of further integration. The Member States would agree to share more power, resources and decision-making. In other terms, "cooperation between all Member States goes further than ever before in all domains." Eventually, this scenario might lead to faster decision-making, yet creates a risk of alienating a part of the population that does not believe in EU legitimacy.

Table 1: Overview of the Commission’s scenarios (source: Juncker, 2017)
In addition to the White Paper, the European Commission authored five reflection papers aimed at the deeper examination of chosen policy areas. Valdis Dombrovskis and Marianne Thyssen signed the reflection paper on the EU's social dimension. They encourage Member States to learn from each other, and empower their citizens to create strong societies. Echoing the White Paper, they present three scenarios for the future of the EU's social dimension: limiting the social dimension, encouraging the willing Member States to do more in the social dimension, and encouraging all twenty-seven member states to do more in the social dimension.

The following reflection paper, signed Frans Timmermans and Jyrki Katainen, was concerned with harnessing globalization. As globalisation is growing and driving for change, they argue that the European Union should adapt accordingly. Europe should thus become a more competitive and innovative economy, and establish partnerships with more empowered regions. Additionally, robust social and educational policies are presented as key to the harnessing of globalisation in the Union, as citizens should feel protected.

Valdis Dombrovskis and Pierre Moscovici authored the third reflection paper, discussing the Economic and Monetary Union. They argue in favour of an increasingly transparent and integrated EMU. The latter should remain focused on jobs, growth, social fairness, economic convergence and financial stability, and both the EMU and its completion must remain open to all Member States. The latter should additionally work together in reducing risks.

The fourth reflection paper was concerned with defence, and signed Federica Mogherini and Jyrki Katainen. They argue towards a security and defence union, reflecting more cooperation within the EU and further integration of the defence area, including joint decision-making and actions. In that sense, they recommend to increase the scope and efficiency of defence spending and encourage a true single market for defence. Echoing the White Paper, they present three scenarios for the future of European defence: increasing cooperation on security and defence, shared security and defence, or common security and defence.

Finally, the last and fifth reflection paper, signed Günther Oettinger and Corina Creţu, explored the future of the EU Finances. They argue in favour of an alignment of the EU budget with clearly-defined priorities, and a determination to invest in areas that will enable
the securement of economic strength, sustainability, solidarity and security. The budget should be reformed to guarantee accountability, flexibility, stability and clarity.

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<td>Europe should become a more competitive and innovative economy, and establish partnerships with more empowered regions. Robust social and educational policies are also key to harnessing globalisation.</td>
<td>EMU should be rendered more transparent, accountable, democratic and integrated. Its focus should be put on jobs, growth, social fairness, economic convergence and financial stability.</td>
<td>Argue towards a security and defence union, reflecting more cooperation within the Union and further integration of the defence area.</td>
<td>EU should invest in areas that will secure economic strength, sustainability, solidarity and security. The budget should be reformed to guarantee accountability, flexibility, stability and clarity.</td>
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Table 2: Overview of the Commission’s Reflection Papers (source: own compilation based upon different authors).

**The follow-up on the White Paper**

As previously stated, the prime ambition of Juncker's White Paper was said to be the steering wheel for a debate on the future of the European Union. Yet, it failed to stimulate a real, profound and long-term societal reaction.

On the days following its publication, the White Paper was discussed by numerous newspapers from across the European Union. Such direct coverage acknowledged the effort of the Commission, and often criticised it. Opinions diverged widely: some attacked the Commission for its lack of courage and ambition in refusing to select one scenario (Frassoni, 2017), whilst others pointed to the lack of new information brought about by the Paper
(Stavrou, 2017). Some supported the effort of the Commission (Cuyvers, 2017), others advanced that the message came from the wrong place (Bartholomeusz, 2017). Certain scenarios were additionally judged unrealisable, such as "Nothing but the Single Market" (Janning, 2017). Overall, depending on the political and national position of the newspapers, many divergent criticisms were expressed.

Yet, more than one year after its publication, the White Paper has failed to achieve its main aim: it did not create a wide public debate on the future of the EU. The press coverage proved short-lived, and the societal debate is yet to follow. As Bartholomeusz (2017) pointed out, the European ideal lacks a mass social movement. If the EU must have any saviours, they will be normal citizens. However, Bartholomeusz does not propose concrete solutions; nor do the other newspaper articles concerning the White Paper. Although we do agree with Bartholomeuz’ expressed criticism, we wish to constructively contribute to this debate, as only constructive criticism will make improvement possible. We must take control of our future, and together help preserve and improve our Union. To this aim, we are proposing a sixth scenario for the future of the European Union.

**Our vision: a sixth scenario - From a Europe of bureaucrats to a Europe of citizens**

Building upon the ideas brought forward by the Commission, this article aims to set out a vision, in which more attention is paid towards the basis upon which the EU is built in the first place: the European citizens. In a democracy, citizens matter in the sense that a decision is lawful (‘legitimate’) if it is taken on behalf of the people. This can be done in two major ways: first, the decision reflects the will of the people (input legitimacy) and second, the decision is taken to the benefit of the people (output legitimacy). In any case, the citizens matter; their wishes must be listened to and their concerns addressed.

When applying this to the European Union, it follows that the EU should focus on those issues that are legitimised by public support. This means that citizens should be the primary determinants of the topics the EU focusses on and the beneficiaries of the policies the EU pursues. Naturally, in a modern-day mass democracy, not all citizens can have a direct influence on every policy issue, and with globalisation, there are also many wider obligations to consider that go beyond the opinions of the domestic population. However, the broader streams of public opinion should be respected.
Against this background, it is deemed absolutely essential for the EU’s continued existence and legitimization that it aligns its priorities better with those of its constituents. This is a twofold challenge: on the one hand, the citizens must be better aware of what the EU does; on the other hand, the EU must strive to become more relevant to the people. In this regard, a scenario has been developed at whose core precisely these issues stand. How can Europe connect better with its citizens? Following the permissive consensus of the early years of European integration, how can the EU be turned from a bureaucrats’ into a people’s project?

Establishing a relation between Brussels and the citizens is at the centre when considering any future scenario for the EU; precisely this, however, has been missing in the Commission’s proposals. The White Paper focuses very much on the Member States and agreement amongst them, but rather ignores the citizens. While account has been taken of the fact that some Member States want to pursue deeper integration than others (‘Multi-speed Europe’), the scenario presented in this paper aims to ensure that all citizens are kept on board. A compromise should not be found among high-ranking politicians and bureaucrats, but among citizens and their individual preferences.

It is argued that the EU must connect better with its citizens by focussing on issues, which are deemed important on an EU level by the citizens. To this end, public opinion polls serve as a useful tool: on the one hand, there are issue areas where the citizens want the EU to assume responsibility and take action; on the other hand, there are competences that the EU currently has but that the citizens do not see as an EU priority. Emphasis must be laid on rendering these core policy areas, that are demanded by European citizens, fully functional, even in a situation of crisis, as well as democratically accountable. In this way, an overload of the Union is prevented and the EU can focus on delivering results in areas which are important to its citizens.

An example of such a core policy area is the financial and monetary domain; it is a cornerstone of the EU, where further integration is both legitimized by public support as well as required to ensure democratic accountability. Here, the completion of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) could ensure higher output legitimacy, for example in the form of preventing a renewed financial crisis. This focus on core policy areas does suggest a certain proximity to one of the Commission’s proposals (‘Doing less more efficiently’). However, while the scenario presented in this paper aims equally at efficiency, it includes further
suggestions concerning democratic input legitimacy; therefore, the rationale in the focus on selected areas does not only stem from the belief that this is where the EU can perform best, but rather from the fact that this is where the citizens legitimate EU governance.

While more integration is necessary in those core areas in order for the EU to be able to deliver good policy, the cultural-emotional relation between the EU and its citizens must be strengthened at the same time. The Euro is a milestone in European integration and 74% of the citizens think it is beneficial for the EU, but only 27% feel more European because of it (European Commission, 2017b). Thus, technical policy integration alone, even if it follows the citizens’ preferences, does not form European citizens. Instead, the EU must invest in the formation of a European identity amongst its citizens. Each of those measures briefly mentioned will be addressed in the following, pointing out how these would contribute to a Union both more relevant and more legitimate to Europe’s citizens.

Figure 2: Overview of the sixth scenario (source: own compilation).
Listening to public opinion: Aligning EU priorities with citizen preferences

Why we need reform: Detachment of priorities

Respect for the broader public opinion is essential in any democracy; on a European level, however, considerable doubt exists in this regard. The EU is often described as an elite-driven project, advanced under the influence of the public’s permissive consensus. It is a technocratic body without much political contestation, in which decisions are often taken without the wider public discussing the respective issues. In this sense, the EU is very detached from its citizens.

Indeed, when taking a closer look at the responsiveness of EU policies to public opinion, the result is very moderate. According to Arnold, Franklin and Wlezien (2011, pp.23-24), “though EU policymakers respond, if only sluggishly, to changes in the general level of support for more unification, this responsiveness is largely absent in particular policy domains.” For example, while the EU spends close to 40% of its budget on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), the policy domain of agriculture and fisheries is not perceived among citizens as one of the most urgent ones in which EU action is absolutely required. Indeed, it has been a highly divisive one for the last decades, with around half of the citizens thinking it should be managed by the EU and the other half believing national decision-making to be much more appropriate in this area (e.g. European Commission, 1995, 2000, 2006, 2011). This reflects the very controversial debate about the CAP on a more substantive level: while some emphasize the importance of the policy area for the European integration process (Knudsen, 2014), others accentuate the high consumer prices, the unintended distributive consequences and the disruptive effect on trade (Nello, 2012). Moreover, despite the fact that the CAP accounts for such a large share of the EU’s activities and resources, one third of the citizens has never even heard of it, while a further 57% has heard about it but does not know any detailed information (European Commission, 2018c). This is also reflected in the fact that only a very small share of the citizens seems to be aware of the costs involved, with only 9% thinking that agriculture is the EU’s largest matter of expense, while 44% preferring the budget to be spent on social affairs, including, employment and education (European Commission, 2017d).

Coming back to the idea of input and output legitimacy, the CAP is thus problematic on both sides from a citizen perspective. On the one hand, concerning the responsiveness to public opinion, the prioritization of agriculture is not reflected in citizens’ preferences,
neither in terms of competences that are best delegated to the EU level, nor in terms of areas of expenditure where the EU budget should be spent on. On the other hand, concerning the beneficial nature for citizens of the decisions taken, the CAP’s performance is also questionable, especially due to the costs involved and the high burden to be born by consumers. Although integration processes are very complex and many spillover effects are involved linking various policy areas seemingly inextricably, from a legitimacy perspective, the European Union must nevertheless shift its priorities, aligning them better with its citizens’ preferences when it comes to both activities and resources.

At least in its current shape, the Common Agricultural Policy of the EU does thus not seem to withstand such scrutiny in the light of input and output legitimacy. However, the CAP, despite being a popular target of EU criticism, should not be made a scapegoat but can only serve to exemplify the EU’s detachment from its citizens. Another example thereof could be the Enlargement Policy: whereas the current Bulgarian Presidency (2018) has made the EU’s enlargement efforts to the Western Balkans a priority, only 42% of the citizens support the further enlargement of the EU in the latest Eurobarometer (European Commission, 2018d). On the contrary, there are many other issue areas where citizens have repeatedly expressed their wish for the EU to take more action but progress, if any, has been slow. For example, issues related to immigration and terrorism have for decades scored very high among the issues that citizens consider a priority for the EU (e.g. European Commission, 1985, 1990, 1995, 2000, 2006, 2011); yet, these areas are currently not among the EU’s priorities, accounting for less than 2% of the EU budget (European Commission, 2018b). Similarly, 75% of the citizens support the Common Security and Defence Policy in the latest Eurobarometer; the second highest support for any EU policy after the free movement of citizens (European Commission, 2018d). Furthermore, in economic terms, 67% of the citizens think that there should be more economic policy coordination among eurozone countries (European Commission, 2017b). Although by no means an exhaustive list, these numbers already imply that there are many issue areas where European citizens would like to see more supranational action.

What we suggest: Reconsideration of priorities

The current misalignment of priorities does not mean that present EU policies have no role to fulfill and should be abolished immediately, in exchange for new competences to accrued to
Union level by solely considering citizens’ preferences. However, the present mismatch indicates that the time has come that the division of competences and the prioritization of specific issue areas over others in the EU must be reconsidered. Cutting back on current EU policies might seem radical, but is actually not too unusual (Schwalger, 2017), though admittedly not in such a drastic way. However, any democratic polity cannot survive without the support of its citizens - and the same is true for the EU, all the more in an atmosphere of crisis and Euroscepticism. The EU seems to be slowly coming to the same conclusion: comparatively, a lot has happened in the area of defence cooperation in the last years, a major step being the launch of the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) in December 2017 (EEAS, 2018). Moreover, in the first outlines of the new Multiannual Financial Framework (2021-2027), the Commission proposed to decrease the share of the money spent on the Agricultural and Cohesion policies, while increasing the money spent on external border management, migration and asylum for example (European Commission, 2018a). While this is a positive sign towards the right direction, this is only a first draft and it needs to be critically assessed what eventually comes out of it; it can only be a first step.

Times change and this paper argues that the EU’s competences should change accordingly; the permissive consensus has ended, citizens have started demanding their share and priorities change. The EU needs to focus its energy wisely and investing in the relation with its citizens should feature very high on the agenda: connect better with the citizens, concentrate on the issues legitimized by public support, and work hard to deliver good, fully functional policy that is beneficial to its constituents. In this way, it would get much easier for the public to recognize and, consequently, appreciate the EU and its added value, thereby reinforcing the link between the Brussels bubble and the citizens in their everyday life.

The financial and monetary realms
Why we need reform: EMU lacks functional policy results and democratic accountability
As already indicated in the introduction to the 6th scenario, a core policy area of the EU which this paper addresses is the financial and monetary realm. It has been a cornerstone in the history of European Integration. However, the financial and monetary realm which is predominantly defined by the currency union of the Eurozone is also a central element of the European ‘multi-crisis’. During the financial crisis and the European reactions to it, flaws in the construction of the Eurozone became very visible. Effective action was taken only with
large delays, as there were no mechanisms in place to deal with looming state bankruptcy. Only limited policy options were available to the policy makers within the Treaty Framework, leading to a long enduring period of economic recession. And, most prominently, the measures which were finally adopted lacked democratic legitimacy, as the European Stability Mechanism that was put into place during the height of the crisis in 2012 (Treaty Establishing the ESM, 2012).

Therefore, reforms are absolutely necessary in this financial and monetary realm when aiming to improve the EU’s relation with its citizens: First, to enable the EU to deliver functional policy that prevents another financial crisis and second, to strengthen the democratic accountability of the EU’s economic and monetary governance. In the following, the focus is thus laid on proposals to reform the EMU.

*What we suggest: Finalizing, formalizing and improving financial integration*

Given the vast criticisms of the Euro, one might consider the option to abolish the Euro and to go back to national currencies. However, this is not a feasible option, as it would hurt the integrated and interconnected European economies in a way which would not be accepted by the electorates. This is displayed by the continuously big majority of citizens in the Eurozone member-states who report to be in favour of keeping the common currency (Commission, 2015). Hence, the Eurozone has to be reformed to prevent another crisis, especially because Europe might well not survive another such crisis, given the recent electoral success of Eurosceptic populist parties in many Member States.

While there has been a lot of reluctance between European decision makers and member-state governments to consolidate the Eurozone after the height of the crisis had passed, the time might be right to push for a completion of the EMU today with the French President Macron pushing for it. However, it appears impossible to achieve a EU treaty change to push for the consolidation of the Eurozone, especially in light of the Eurosceptic governments of the Visegrad States, which would have to consent the treaty change. Accordingly, measures would have to be implemented via the enhanced cooperation procedure.

To ensure that Europe will not be threatened by another financial crisis in the future, the Commission’s reflection paper proposed a number of genuine reforms which allow for closer monitoring and increased stability of the European financial markets. In this regard, he
Commission’s reflection paper on the “Deepening of the economic and monetary union” contains a number of relevant proposals that can be carried out in the mentioned legislative procedures. These are the ideas of a Banking Union, of a European Deposit Insurance Scheme (EDIS) and of a Capital Markets Union. We include these proposals as they are crucial to consolidate the EMU, and to prevent another crisis which would threaten the very existence of the European project. In addition, one bold proposal is included which the Commission has only superficially touched upon in its proposals: introducing true democratic accountability to the governance of the Euro.

The EDIS is designed to prevent a run on banks in countries hit by severe recessions, as customers would be ensured to receive their money from the Europe-wide deposit scheme. In case of bank bankruptcy, each customer would still receive up to 100,000€ of his deposits from the central fund. Preventing a run on banks prevents a further withdrawal of money from already struggling financial markets. EDIS can be seen as stabilizing measure which works through moderate risk-sharing between the countries, as the size of the joint European Fund is considerably bigger than the currently existing national insurance schemes, which might possibly not cover in the worst case scenario.

Another reform measure which would help to prevent another crisis, would be to finalize the Banking Union, accruing more competences to monitor and control the European Banks at the European Central Bank (ECB). The centralization of competence on European level would allow for a stronger policy maker facing the influential banking sector. Thereby, further risk-reducing regulations could be forced upon the banking sector, limiting the risk of bank bankruptcy in the future and hence also limiting the need to save private banks with public money.

Another solid proposal of the Commission is their call for a Capital Market Union. While such a Union might appear difficult to reconcile with the population’s interests at first sight, it would exert its influence indirectly. It can be expected to increase investment throughout the Eurozone by harmonizing the rules of financial markets in the Eurozone countries. Thereby, output legitimacy by economic growth can be achieved. While installing a capital Market Union will take a vast negotiation effort, it is possible to achieve without treaty change (Commission, 2017c).

The most substantial of the criticisms to the Euro, however, is the lack of democratic accountability and legitimacy in Eurozone governance. In response to the crisis, many
decisions were made by the so-called “Eurogroup”, which is an informal body consisting of the financial ministers of the Eurozone countries. Even though its decisions are not legally binding, they were of enormous importance during the crisis, and the Eurozone governments took their joint decisions in this body. While being informal, the group still possesses a chair and a secretariat, that hold positions of substantial power. As it is not embedded into the formal processes of the EU, there are no rules of transparency and accountability applying to the Eurogroup. Hence, the decision-making remains intransparent and it does not undergo any parliamentary scrutiny. Consequently, its democratic legitimacy is questionable.

To tackle this problem, the Eurogroup should be first made an official European organ, for which rules of transparency apply. Furthermore, it should become controlled by the European Parliament (EP). This could be done in a way that a special configuration of the EP comprised of the Members of European Parliament from the Eurozone countries receives formal control functions over the Eurogroup. As this does not concern the entire EP, this reform could be carried out without a treaty change of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), but rather under the enhanced cooperation procedure between the Eurozone countries as laid out in TFEU Articles 326-334. Via the EP’s scrutiny, the Eurozone governance would be closer connected to the European population again. This might be the first step into the direction of a European financial minister, which could be installed by combining the position of the Eurogroup chair and the Commissioner of economic and financial affairs at a later point.

In summary, our two proposals are: firstly to increase output legitimacy by preventing another crisis through the shaping of the European Insurance Deposit EDIS, finalizing the Banking Union and constructing a Capital Markets Union. With these ideas, we mostly follow the suggestions which the Commission proposed in its Reflection Paper (Commission 2017c). Secondly, and further than the Commission’s proposals, the governance of the Eurozone shall be equipped with input legitimacy and its accountability shall be increased by formalizing the Eurogroup and placing it under the scrutiny of the EP.

**Cultural integration and the formation of a European identity**

*Why we need reform: Lack of an identity-based legitimacy in the EU*

Those suggestions for a sixth scenario addressed in the previous parts of this article imply enhanced integration in several sectors which are supported by the public and where further
cooperation would benefit the citizens in the form of better policy results. However, any further integration seems very problematic considering current Eurosceptic movements across the continent. At the moment, the EU clearly lacks legitimacy in order to go any further step towards integration. But why does the EU lack grounds for legitimacy?

Legitimacy of democratic governments derives from active participation and consent of its citizens. Even though elections of the EP take place every five years, many academic scholars as well as journalists and politicians claim that the EU has a democratic deficit. Even though some critics also deem the process through which EU institutions decide upon laws as undemocratic, most emphasize a lack of citizen involvement in the decision-making process of the European Union. And indeed, low turnouts at the elections of the EP display the indifference of EU citizens towards EU politics.

This indifference of EU citizens originates in our view from the lack of development towards cultural and social integration in the EU. In the introduction to their collection of articles in *Die kulturelle Integration Europas*, Johannes Wienand and Christine Wienand assert that while European countries became politically and economically interwoven very quickly, the construction of a European public sphere as well as the formation of European identity and memory stagnated (Wienand & Wienand, 2010, p.7). Thus, solely economic integration did not enable European citizen to feel any belonging to the European Union. Only 27% of the citizens, for example, say that the euro has made them feel more European (European Commission, Oct 2017). Even though young European elites may already identify as Europeans, the majority of the European electorate does not.

Hence, the origin for the European Union's problem of legitimacy can certainly in parts be found in the underdevelopment of a European identity. Accordingly, building Europe as a stable object of identification for each and every European citizen should be central to all efforts of European integration. Thus, when establishing a sixth scenario, it is crucial to also suggest measures concerning identity formation, because further policy integration can only be pursued when it goes hand in hand with cultural integration.

*What we suggest: Identity formation through political participation, information, language and memory*

Identity formation involves a complex interplay between different societal factors. In this article, however, we will especially focus on the following four domains. Jürgen Habermas
(1991) claims that collective identity can also form through political participation. Political participation presupposes that citizen are well informed. Thus, circulation of information is an additional factors which needs to be considered in the formation of identity. Furthermore, Wienand and Wienand assert that processes of collective identity formation are especially knitted to language and memory (Wienand & Wienand, 2010, p.14) Thus, the following suggestions for EU policies and supportive action concern all four points mentioned: political participation, information, language and memory.

A very influential idea in constructing a European identity is the “Verfassungspatriotismus” articulated by Jürgen Habermas. According to Habermas (1991), feelings of belonging to a nation rest on shared political values such as democracy and freedom of opinion instead of ethical, linguistic or historical communities. Accordingly, political participation, meaning including citizens directly in the process of decision making enhances processes of identification.

Considering Habermas’ reasoning, the following suggestions could compromise more active involvement of citizens. First, it can be suggested to extend the European election to the president of the Commission as a way of involving citizens more actively with European politics. If the president of the Commision would be elected by all European citizens, he or she would contribute to a higher degree of political contestation in the EU and could function as a symbol of active democratic participation, thereby enabling identification with Europe. Additionally, referenda concerning important decisions on the European level could be implemented to enable citizens to identify with the EU on the basis of their democratic rights. However, such referenda should also be complemented by Europe-related debates in the public sphere. Concretely, this would, for example, imply educational initiatives at community level. Some measures to make the EU more democratic already exist. The European Citizens Initiative is an example. However, even though it is already a step in the right direction, its practical implementation is complicated by many procedural hurdles. In order to ensure active involvement of citizen, the EU should focus to improve such projects which can add democratic value to the institutions.

However, the formation and funding of such projects aiming at increased citizen involvement is pointless when the majority of European citizens do not know how they can have a democratic impact. Hence, another important factor to consider concerning the formation of a European identity is the problem of communication and circulation of
information to EU citizen. Even though the EU already invested in establishing a European news channel in nine different languages, this news channel is publicly not very well known. In addition, national media channels cover very little information when it comes to the EU and most high school students do not learn about the political system of the EU. Accordingly, the European public is currently ill-informed about ongoing debates within the EU and their own possibilities to have an impact.

In order to become more accessible and transparent to its citizens, the EU needs to tackle this information-related problem. In particular, the European Union needs to become more present in the media sphere. A possible measure towards a better informed European public could, for example, include a recurring awareness campaign in all 24 languages floating social media and national TV channels. Contentwise such a campaign would need to contain all important information on the working of the EU as well as all possible ways in which each individual European citizen can democratically influence European decision making. If European citizens are better informed about their democratic rights within the EU, they might make more frequent use of it and, if we follow Habermas, this might establish a sense of belonging towards the EU as an institution.

Another realm which is directly connected to the problem of information and communication is language. The Member States of the EU have 24 different official languages. Thus, language constitutes a communication barrier within the European Union. At first, with the creation of the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), both English and French were set as official languages of the European Community (Wienand & Wienand, 2010, p.15). However, in the 1950s, a decision was taken to respect all official languages of the Member States (Wienand & Wienand, 2010, p.15). By taking this decision, the EU made sure to respect cultural diversity. Although it is extremely important to cherish the diversity of languages and cultures within the EU, all citizens across the EU should be able to communicate with each other. Better communication among EU citizen would allow more in-depth understanding of each others’ cultures and forster cultural integration.

Today we observe a trend in the communication among ordinary citizens as well as among civil servants in EU institutions: English becomes slowly but surely the lingua franca of Europe. Thus, changing policies towards a single lingua franca in the EU is not needed. Instead, however, the EU should focus on supporting its citizens as much as possible to
obtain a sufficient command of the English language. With Great Britain as a member state of the EU the promotion of the English language could have been seen as imposed by one powerful country on all others. But since Britain is most likely leaving the EU after the Brexit, a promotion of the English language will not be connected to such thinking in power structures anymore. However, the EU is not able to intervene in national education systems, thus, it will have to find other ways of supporting this aim.

Erasmus as well as many other exchange programs already promote to learn the English language. In addition, EU budget could also be used for providing free English classes in, for example, community centers. This support for free English classes should especially focus on rural and poor areas. By providing those classes, citizens with lower social status and less education will not be excluded from political discussions as well as cultural happenings in the EU anymore. In addition, the EU could provide funds for complementary English lessons at high schools.

Common reference points for collective memory among all Europeans could also enhance the process of identity formation in Europe. Brigit Swelling (2010) asserts in her contribution to Wienand’s and Wienand’s book, that in regard to the Holocaust common reference points for collective memory can be revealed transnationally. However, there is no possibility for coherence among all European countries. East and West Europe differ significantly in prioritizing reference points for collective memory (Wienand & Wienand, 2010, p.16). The East European countries, for instance, focus much more on stalinist terror than the western countries (Wienand & Wienand, 2010, p.16). But Schwelling illustrates that unified European collective memory is possible concerning the history of European integration after the fall of the Soviet regime itself (Wienand & Wienand, 2010, p.17).

Considering Schwelling’s observation, our article suggests that the EU should provide possibilities for collective memory of the integration process. Especially aspects in European integration processes which are commonly perceived as very positive should be highlighted. Those are, for example, the achievements of the Schengen agreement, 70 years of peace in Europe or the Erasmus and other valuable exchange programs initiated by the EU. Concrete measures for establishing collective memory are already considered. The EU plans to build Museums of European history focusing on the process of integration in some Member States (Wienand & Wienand, 2010, p.17). Additional initiatives towards a positive remembrance of European Integration in cultural sphere can, for instance, include agreement among the
Member States on a European holiday. The existing Europe Day on the 9th of May is already a good initiative; however, without making it a holiday, most people will not know about it. Having a day off because of an important and common reference point concerning European integration might help in establishing a European Identity. Another possible suggestion might also be to create more EU funds for artistic expressions concerning the process of EU integration across the continent.

As we have demonstrated, a European Identity is extremely important to legitimize the EU in taking any further steps towards integration. In the realms of political participation and information, language, and memory, possibilities exist to facilitate the formation of a European Identity. It is absolutely essential that the European Union shifts its focus towards cultural integration in order to make Europe an entity for identification in the future and, subsequently, generate renewed public support for the EU and all its achievements.

Conclusion

To sum up, how should the future of the European Union look like? Our conclusion is that it must be centred around the European citizens. Any democratic polity can only be legitimized by public support - and the same is true on a European level. The citizens must be listened to when accruing competences to the EU, and the citizens must be the main beneficiaries of the policies pursued. Therefore, a Europe-wide societal debate is necessary, in which each and every citizen is given the chance to influence the path that the EU is taking in the future. The sixth scenario presented in this paper is to be understood as a contribution towards this goal and lays down our vision on the EU’s future.

Being born with a European passport and having spent our whole lives in a European Union without borders that allows us to study abroad, we want to preserve this European project and believe in the benefits it provides to all of us. Nevertheless, we also see its flaws, the current situation of crisis and that an ever growing share of citizens is disillusioned by it. The future of the EU must therefore be one in which the EU’s priorities are much better aligned with the preferences of its citizens. The EU should have competences in key areas, in which the EU brings a visible added value for citizens; in those key areas, it should be equipped with all the authorities necessary to deliver good policy results and provide the European citizens with good governance. In other areas, however, the EU should also be
prepared to cut back some of its activities in order to prevent an ‘overload’ and invest its energy efficiently in its core activities, thereby strengthening its relevance to the citizens.

Legitimacy is key in politics; this cannot be stressed enough. For the EU, this means that, next to reshuffling some of the competences and aligning its priorities with those of its citizens, the Union must develop more into an emotional point of identification. Even more than 60 years after its foundation, citizens primarily identify with their nation-state and not with Europe. Europe has started as an economic project but with ever more policy areas being added to the EU’s competences, it has become much more than that. In order to legitimize this among the citizens, it must be invested in cultural integration and in citizens’ European identity. Having experienced the benefits of the European Union ourselves by studying abroad, we believe in the European project - but many others do not. And precisely this relation between Brussels and the citizens all over Europe is a key issue that the EU needs to tackle if it wants to survive the next 60 years and beyond.
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