

Building a more democratic Union – political and institutional issues at hand: How to support further democratisation of the EU by stronger public involvement and institutional reforms?

LOTHAR HEYMANS
Researcher (Master Student)
Gent University

“There can be no daily democracy without daily citizenship.”

Ralph Nader

“It has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all the others that have been tried.”

Winston Churchill

Introduction

Looking at the democratic legitimacy of the European Union, there is a lot of negativism to be found. Not only scholars or national leaders but also the better part of the European citizens do not have the feeling that the European Union as a whole can be described as democratic. There are several reasons to be found for this which will be handled in the first part of this essay. The main terms used as a criticism towards the EU are ‘democratic deficit’ and ‘elitism’. Explaining these terms can help us finding ways to improve the democratic legitimacy of the Union. On the other hand, it needs to be said that the European Union made some changes throughout the years towards more democratic legitimacy but there is still a long way to go.

The main goal of this essay is to explain in which ways the European Union can continue its democratization process. This essay will analyse two different paths the EU can choose. Firstly, there is the possibility for the EU to enhance the public involvement when creating or updating policies. Knowing that the public opinion regarding the democratic legitimacy of the EU is not very good, this could be an important step towards a more positive view towards the Union. Secondly, the EU can choose to reform some institutions in order to give them a more democratic legitimacy so the citizens of the Union do not have the feeling that everything is decided for them by some unknown bureaucrats in Brussels.

Obviously, this democratization process will not be something that happens overnight without any problems down the road. The Union faces several challenges that can occur on both democratization paths. What these challenges are and how they can be defeated will be treated in the last part of this essay.

What is democratization?

Democracy is an ancient word invented by the Greeks and has since then known a lot of different shapes and forms, not all of them were like the Greeks envisioned it. The word democracy is derived from two Greek words: ‘demos’ (= people) and ‘kratein’ (= to rule). Abraham Lincoln, the famous American president, explained democracy in the following way: “Government of the people, by the people and for the people.” In both explanations of the word democracy, the word ‘people’ is crucial especially in the case of the European Union when it tries to find a way to become a more democratic organization.

Now that the word democracy is explained, it is time to go a step further to look at democratization. Needless to say, both words have the same basic meaning but there is an important difference. Democratization is a process, which means that democracy is not yet present or that its situation can be improved. It is this process within the European Union this essay will analyse. A political scientist, named Amin Saikal, wrote some interesting theories about the process of democratization when he was studying the events during the Arab Spring in 2011-12. For example, according to him sustainable pro-democratic changes, or democratization, cannot be initiated and implemented effectively unless first the right social and economic conditions are generated (Saikal, 2017).

This characteristic of democratization can be challenging in the case of the European Union. The EU is a combination of many different countries with all their own culture and economic capacity. Not every member state has the same social build-up in its society and certainly not the same economic situation. This is why it will

be challenging for the European Union to reach a moment where the right social and economic conditions are met to continue the democratization process in a positive way (Hamulak, 2016).

Another important element needed in the democratization process, is the fact that it cannot be imposed from outside as long as the conditions in the subjected society are not favorable. Saikal (2017) said the following about this element: *“Democratization in general needs to grow from within a society, based on first achieving favorable civil-society changes, with a necessary level of political and social maturation whereby a majority of the citizens can grasp and adopt democratic ideas, values and practices as not threatening but complementing their traditional referents of cultural identity and beliefs as to what might constitute the ‘common good’. Without such level of development, any effort from within or outside may produce little more than a form of manipulable or unsustainable procedural democracy.”*

The last thing, and equally important as the previous ones, is that democratization as a process cannot be expected to immediately result in a perfect democracy without flaws. It is a process and it probably needs to go through certain phases of development, for example: from pro-democratic civil society changes to procedural or working democracy to substantive democracy. *“The accomplishment of each stage ensures the sustainability and effectiveness of the next stage”* (Saikal, 2017).

Now that is clear what a good and effective democratization process needs, let us take a look at the current democratic situation of the European Union. Firstly, it is necessary to decide whether the EU is ready to be called a democracy. After this, it will be possible to look into the possibilities for a democratization process that fits best in the current organizational structure of the European Union (Ballesteros, 2017).

Democratic deficit in the European Union

When analysing the democratic situation of the European Union, many scholars as well as many European citizens will say that there is a democratic deficit. Even on the website of Eur-Lex there is an article about this term, the following is stated on this website: *“Democratic deficit is a term used by people who argue that the EU institutions and their decision-making procedures suffer from a lack of democracy and seem inaccessible to the ordinary citizen due to their complexity. The real EU democratic deficit seems to be the absence of European politics. EU voters do not feel that they have an effective way to reject a ‘government’, they do not like, and to change, in some ways, the course of politics and policy”* (Eur-Lex, 2017).

This definition is showing that the main characteristic of the democratic deficit is that there is no real link between the people, the European citizens in this case, and the government. Obviously, this creates a problematic relationship between the government and its citizens (Morawa, 2016). Without the trust of the citizens, the government has no reason of existence, at least in theory. Today in the European Union, the government, i.e. European Commission, is not chosen in a democratic way and because the European Commission is also a legislator and the sole manager of the EU budget, a situation of democratic deficit is created.

A major problem regarding the democratic deficit is there is only one institution within the European Union that can be seen as democratic, the European Parliament. Critics of the European Union will state that the European Parliament does not have enough power in comparison to other institutions such as the European Commission. Therefore, the democratic legitimacy of the whole Union can be questioned. In addition, elections for the Parliament should bring the European voters closer to the European project but to many this has to be judged as a failure. In most of the member states, the national parliaments exert a certain control over the governments, this should be the situation in the EU as well. Nevertheless, the European Parliament today does not really frighten the Commission as it aims to do (The Economist, 2017).

The elections for the European Parliament are currently not really helping the Union to reduce the democratic deficit, on the contrary they are enforcing it. To start, the turnout in the European elections is low and falling (Nyman-Metcalf, 2010). Secondly, many member states try to organize the European elections on the same date as the national elections. Because of this, voters tend to decide their vote based on the national issues instead of the European issues. Another problem with these elections is the absence of European political parties. The political parties in the European Union are the same as in the member states, so their loyalty to the European Union can be called questionable. When voting for the European Parliament, the European citizens vote for the same parties as when they have to vote for their national parliaments. Because of this, voters will mainly see national issues during the campaign as the political parties’ main focus is on the national level and not the supranational. So, a possible solution to reduce the EU’s democratic deficit is the creation of European political parties (Troitiño, 2013).

Of course, the European Union has to improve its democratic legitimacy but regarding the democratic deficit the Union is not the only one to blame. The citizens’ loyalty to the national parliaments and the indifference for the European Union contribute to the deficit (Bonde, 2011). The first quote in the beginning of this essay describes this situation in a good way: *“There can be no daily democracy without daily citizenship.”* It

is easy for the European citizens to accuse the European Union of being undemocratic but without the willingness to change something about it, these words mean nothing. Indifference towards the EU is something that will be difficult for the EU to solve in the coming years. The loyalty to the national governments on the other hand can be changed into loyalty towards the Union (Fischer, 2011).

The main issue that causes the democratic deficit, is the fact that the bigger part of the European citizens does not accept that the European Union is more and more involved in national and local legislation. Add the fact that only the European Parliament is elected in a democratic way and a toxic situation is created. Citizens throughout the EU have the feeling that everything is decided for them without knowing who is making these decisions and why (Bonde, 2011).

It does not help the bureaucrats in Brussels that they are making important decisions which affect the daily life of 500 million people spread over 28 different countries who all have their own specific interests.

For the European Union, to tackle this democratic deficit in the near future will be a tremendous challenge but necessary to improve its own democratic legitimacy. There are several opportunities for the EU to do this and later this essay will look at two options in detail. The first one, as mentioned, will be related to the European citizens and their indifference towards the European project (Kerikmae, 1997). Secondly, there is also room for self-reflection in the European Union. Which institutions can be more democratic and thus need to be restructured in order to win the faith and trust of the European citizens. But first, there is another important issue that endangers the democratization process of the European Union: elitism.

Elitism in the EU

It is often said that the European Union is ruled by the elite of the European politics. There is a lot of truth to be found in this critique when we take a closer look at the different European institutions. For example, the real power of the European Union is not exercised by the European Parliament, as it should be, but by two institutions characterized by *elitism*. Elitism in combination with the democratic deficit are the main obstacles for a more democratic European project. As mentioned, elitism can be found in two institutions which are the main rulers of the European Union. For this reason, in this essay the focus will be on these two institutions: the European Council and the European Commission.

The European Council is perhaps the most important institution within the European Union, as it is the place where the different heads of state of the member states meet. Together they decide the general political agenda for the Union and what the priorities will be. They meet quarterly in Brussels. Also, members of this council are the European Commission president, i.e. Jean-Claude Juncker, and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs & Security Policy, i.e. Federica Mogherini (European Union, 2017). This institution can be seen as a gathering of the political elite of Europe but at the same time there is an important distinction with the European Commission (Chochia, 2015). Two members of this council are a clear example of elitism in the EU, the president of the European Commission and the High Representative. Both are not elected but appointed as a result of the *Spitzenkandidaten* process (The Economist, 2017). On the other hand, the different heads of state are elected in their home countries. This characteristic gives the European Council a dual dimension with being democratic and elitist at the same time. One of three legislators and sole spender of the complete EU budget, the European Commission, is a different story than the previous EU institution. The executive body of the European Union is not elected, or at least not elected by the European citizens. The EC has a dual task as it can propose legislation and execute this legislation at the same time (European Commission, 2017). From a democratic point of view this raises some questions for many people.

As mentioned before, the president of the European Commission is appointed after a so called *Spitzenkandidaten* process. How does this work? The Economist (2017) explained the appointment in the following way: "*The commission president is now indirectly elected under a process called Spitzenkandidaten (tellingly, a German word), introduced in 2014. Egged on by certain MEPs, the main cross-border political groups designated their preferred candidates for the job ahead of that year's European elections. Most national governments ignored their suggestions, but when the centre-right European People's Party (EPP) emerged as the biggest political group, the European Council felt obliged to choose the EPP candidate, Mr Juncker, even though EU heads of government, including Angela Merkel and David Cameron, had serious reservations. Leaders dissatisfied with the outcome in 2014 say they are determined to ditch the Spitzenkandidaten process for the next election in 2019, but they may find it hard to put a stop to it.*" The 28 Commissioners of the EC are appointed by their national governments but are subject to the approval by the European Parliament (The Economist, 2017).

As elitist and undemocratic as the above may seem, the European Commission made *democratic change* one of its top priorities. On the website of the European Commission the following statement on democratic change as a priority can be found:

“For the first time, in 2014, EU countries had to take the results of the elections into account when proposing a candidate for European Commission President. Albeit an important step, this is only the first of many in making the European Union more democratic and bringing it closer to its citizens. Europeans have the right to know who Commissioners and Commission staff, Members of the European Parliament and representatives of the Council meet in the context of the legislative process. The Commission is committed to bringing a new lease of life to the relationship with the European Parliament, as well as to working more closely with national parliaments.”

This statement on democratic change brings us to the core of this essay: how to make the European Union more democratic? As stated before, there are two options to achieve this: through enhancing the public involvement and through reforming the EU institutions.

Democratization through enhancing public involvement

Statement by the European Commission on one of its priorities for this legislature: *“Albeit an important step, this is only the first of many in making the European Union more democratic and bringing it closer to its citizens.”*¹

By publishing a statement like this on its website the European Commission, makes a big commitment towards a more democratic European Union. This statement introduces the first possibility for the EU for its democratization process: enhancing the public involvement (Kerikmae, 2001). The EC wants to bring the European Project closer to the citizens and one way to do this is creating legislation that allows the citizens to get involved in the decision-making process of the EU.

Special advisor to the EC President, Luc Van den Brande, prepared a report on outreach towards citizens. The report takes stock of the Commission's communication outreach and includes concrete communication guidelines and recommendations. It looks at synergies with other European and national actors around promoting dialogue with the public and sets out a framework for a more citizen-focused Europe. The report also looks at the role of communication technologies and highlights the importance of engaging with Europe's youth (Van den Brande, 2017).

In case the European Union decides to enhance the public involvement in order to make the European Union more democratic, there are two ways to achieve this. Firstly, the EU has the possibility to choose for a closer cooperation with already existing citizen initiatives. This is perhaps the easiest way from the standpoint of the European Union, as it does not require a change in the organizational structure. Secondly, the EU institutions could opt to provide a more direct public participation to the citizens of the EU. For example, in complex cases with a big impact on the daily life of the whole European population, this approach can be desirable. This chapter on the democratization through enhancing public involvement will be divided into these two possibilities the EU has.

Enhancing cooperation with existing citizen initiatives

Luc Van den Brande, special adviser to Jean-Claude Juncker, in his report ‘Reaching out to EU citizens’ (2017): *“The Lisbon Treaty’s preamble calls for enhancing the legitimacy of the Union. New instruments, such as the citizens’ initiative (15), were created to enhance participative democracy at European level. But despite the Treaties’ clear commitment, as underlined in Article 11 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) on participatory democracy and Article 15 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) on civil dialogues, the Union’s institutions appear to be slow in fully embracing these opportunities (16). One area where they have done so effectively is in the regular citizens’ dialogues organised throughout the EU by the European Commission.”*

A good example of an existing cooperation between the European Union and its citizens is the *Europe for Citizens programme*. It is an initiative by the European Commission but the goal is to unite the European citizens in a programme where they can learn about the EU and take an active role in the daily citizenship as encouraged by the Juncker administration (Färber, 2017). On the website of the European Commission there is a page about the programme where the following is written (European Commission, 2017):

“The aim of this programme is to:

- *Contribute to citizens' understanding of the EU, its history and diversity.*
- *Foster European citizenship and improve conditions for civic and democratic participation at EU level.*

The financed projects will:

- *Raise awareness of remembrance, the common history and values of the EU and the EU's aim - namely to promote peace, the values of the EU and the well-being of its peoples.*

¹ See previous page for the full statement by the European Commission on democratic change.

• *Encourage the democratic and civic participation of citizens at EU level, by developing their understanding of the EU policy making-process, and stimulate interest and involvement in EU policy making.*”

Basically, the European Commission wants to enhance the cooperation with its citizens by creating a European identity and improving their understanding of the European Union and its decision-making and policy making. The EC hopes to develop or awake an interest in the functioning of the EU by doing this. To achieve its goal, the EC has several projects that should help create this European spirit and allow the citizens to actively participate at the same time.

Democratic engagement & civic participation- getting citizens involved (European Commission, 2017):

1. Town twinning

Projects will bring together citizens from twinned towns to debate issues from the European political agenda. They will develop opportunities for societal engagement and volunteering at EU level.

- **Project duration:** maximum 21 days
- **Grant amount:** maximum €25 000 per project

2. Networks of towns

Towns are encouraged to cooperate with other towns on a long-term basis to explore particular topics or themes, share resources or interests, gain influence or face common challenges.

- **Project duration:** maximum 24 months per project & maximum 21 days per event
- **Grant amount:** between €10 000 & €150 000.

3. Civil society projects

These projects give citizens an opportunity to participate concretely in the EU policy-making process. They stimulate debates to propose practical solutions through cooperation at European level.

- **Project duration:** maximum 18 months
- **Grant amount:** maximum €150 000

Priorities for 2017:

1. Challenging Euroscepticism and fostering informed debate
2. Solidarity in times of crisis
3. Combatting stigmatisation of "migrants" and building counter narratives to foster intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding
4. Debate on the future of Europe

Looking at the grants these projects are probably insufficient to really improve the public involvement. The idea behind the programme and its projects is commendable but it will need to expand financially to make a difference in the democratization process of the European Union.

Another cooperation between the European Union and its citizens is through the European Institute for Public Participation (EIPP) and is part of the Citizens for Europe organization (Ramiro, 2013). This last organization is made up of civil society actors that support each other to create a participatory and democratic Europe. The European Institute for Public Participation (EIPP) is a not-for-profit organization launched in 2009. Its mission is to promote better decision-making through public participation (Citizens for Europe, 2017). The EIPP is in fact a think-tank and on its website the following objectives and activities can be found:

Objectives

- Develop a better and deeper understanding of the factors which make participation activities effective – or ineffective
- Build capability and capacity of those charged with fostering the participation of the public in decision-making, based on the evidence from research and evaluation
- Develop networks of researchers and practitioners in public participation across Europe and linking with similar networks in other continents
- Promote the benefits of public participation through changing the attitudes and behaviors of the politicians and public officials involved.

Main Activities

- Research into what works when in terms of engaging the public in the decision-making processes which affect their lives and society and the environment at large
- Evaluation of specific participation activities in order to learn from experiences
- Build networks of researchers across Europe
- organization of conferences
- Promotion of public participation through media interviews, newspaper articles, TV appearances, conferences and workshops in various European countries and the USA

This think-tank as well as the programme launched by the European Commission are excellent examples of how the EU can work together with its citizens to build a more democratic Europe. For the future, the EU has to stimulate initiatives like this or expand the programme. But, if it wants to see these initiatives succeeding, the funding by the EU has to grow, certainly because the EC made democratization of the institution one of its priorities for this legislature.

Direct public participation

The European Union cannot get the public also more involved through direct public participation. Luckily for the EU, it does not have to look too far to find an example on how this could work. Switzerland is known around the world for its unique way of governing the country. The government model used in Switzerland, is described as a *direct democracy* and contains several elements which can be useful for the European Union in their mission to become more democratic (Troitiño, 2008). Also, the political division of powers in Switzerland is interesting to look at for the European Union as the central government does not hold complete power. In this way, the situation is similar to the European Union and the interaction with the different national governments.

The fundamental principle of direct democracy is that all citizens take part in decision-making and there's a strong respect for minorities (World Economic Forum, 2017). In Switzerland citizens can decide on important decisions through referenda. But it is not on every topic the citizens get to vote. Popular votes can be held up to four times a year. The Federal Council decides a couple of months in advance which proposals will be voted on and releases the dates of the votes even earlier. Currently all the dates have been fixed from now until 2034 (World Economic Forum, 2017).

There are three types of referenda which are used within the system of direct democracy: mandatory, popular initiative and optional. A vote must be held on any amendment to the constitution resulting in a mandatory referendum. A double majority, meaning the consent of a majority of the people and of the cantons is required to amend the country's constitution. Citizens can launch a popular initiative to demand a change to the constitution. Any Swiss citizen who is eligible to vote can sign a popular initiative and a group of at least seven citizens (the initiative committee) can launch their own popular initiative. Before a vote is held on a popular initiative, the initiative committee must collect 100,000 valid signatures in favor of the proposal within a period of 18 months (World Economic Forum, 2017).

The system has some high-powered admirers. France's newly elected President Emmanuel Macron has said he wants a similar system of referendums in place for French voters. But it can also produce unexpected results (World Economic Forum, 2017). The fact that the current French president turns out to be a strong supporter of this concept, offers positive prospects for maybe future implementation in the European Union. The way direct democracy works in Switzerland holds some interesting elements for the European Union but at the same time some challenges as well. Maybe it is impossible to copy the whole system of Switzerland, but as it is the country with the most direct form of democracy, it should be worth looking at when you want to make your organization more democratic. Maybe with France as a driving force, something is possible. Because without approval from France or Germany, nothing really happens in the European Union.

Democratization through reforming the EU institutions

Reforming the EU institutions is another possibility for the EU to become a more democratic organization. Completely different from the previous one and probably a lot harder to achieve real progress in this case. Existing organizations tend to be conservative and do not like change too much. Bureaucrats are afraid of change because they want to hold on to their current tasks and all the power that comes with it (Weber, 1978). Democratization of these institutions will most certainly implement that the public has a say in how these institutions operate, to the frustration of their employees. Still, in order to have a successful democratization process, it will not be an 'or-story' but it has to be 'and' (Troitiño, 2014). Meaning, the combination of more public involvement and changes in two crucial EU institutions will have the biggest chance of success. In this chapter, the focus will be on these two crucial EU institutions: the European Parliament and the European Commission.

European Parliament

On the website of the European Parliament is explained what it does (European Parliament, 2017): “*The Parliament acts as a co-legislator, sharing with the Council the power to adopt and amend legislative proposals and to decide on the EU budget. It also supervises the work of the Commission and other EU bodies and cooperates with national parliaments of EU countries to get their input.*”

As it is the only institution within the EU that is elected for a European purpose, unlike the European Council, the Parliament should be the example for a democratic European Union. Being co-legislator and having the power to supervise the work of the main executive body of the EU, the Parliament has a lot of power. The only problem with this power is that it is merely theoretical and not always as it was meant to be. On the other hand, truth be told that many MEPs are impressively well qualified and do an excellent job, often better than their national counterparts, in improving legislation and in questioning commissioners. Moreover, unlike other EU institutions, the parliament has room for anti-EU politicians, which is a good example of a real democracy with freedom of speech and thinking (The Economist, 2017).

Yet as stated before, the Parliament should bring the voters closer to the European Project but it does not really do a good job achieving this aim. For example, one of its core tasks is to supervise the Commission, yet today the EU Commissioners do not really feel the pressure of the MEP’s, at least not in the same way as their national counterparts (The Economist, 2017). In this failure lies a big opportunity to democratize the European Parliament in the near future. The interaction between the MEP’s and Commissioners should be more direct and not optional as it is now.

A way to enhance the democratic legitimacy of the Parliament is the creation of European political parties. Today the European Parliament is made up of national parties who decide to form a fraction within the European Parliament. The problem with this is that voters do not really get the chance to vote for parties who have strong European visions and desires. Citizens will mainly vote based on national issues, rather than European issues (Troitiño, 2013). The Economist (2017) gives another interesting example on how to remedy this problem:

“This would be to increase the role of national parliaments. Many experienced EU officials regret the switch from a European Parliament made up of nominated national MPs to a directly elected institution, breaking the link between national and EU-level politics. National politicians in many countries remain shamefully ignorant of the EU and its rules, and too few MEPs see it as part of their role to help educate them.”

The only problem with this solution is that the European Parliament should go back in time and give back some parts of its obtained powers, this is very unlikely to happen. Moving in the other direction, giving more power to an elected EU body, will be easier and more desirable. Some scholars have also opted the idea of reconstituting the European Parliament to a parliament only for the euro zone. Such innovations would confer greater legitimacy on the European Parliament and give it a role, but only in the central core, not the wider EU. For countries thinking of joining or quitting the euro, a euro-zone parliament might also bring home to them how momentous a step that would be (The Economist, 2017).

Taking more power away from the undemocratic bodies and transfer them to the European Parliament, which would be elected through one unified election system with the presence of European political parties. This is what the EU should strive to do in the near future.

European Commission

The European Commission has two main problems in relation with its democratic legitimacy. Firstly, as stated before, the 28 Commissioners are not elected but appointed by the national governments. Their president, Jean-Claude Juncker, is also not elected but appointed by the so called *Spitzenkandidaten* process which was already explained earlier in this essay. In theory, this should not be a real problem as long as the Commission would only act as the executive body of the EU. However, in reality the Commission is not only carrying out the legislation created by the Council or the Parliament, it can propose legislation as well. This leads immediately to the second problem of the Commission, they are legislator and executor at the same time. It creates a conflict with the *separation of powers*-theory² that should be one of the fundamentals of a democracy, according to Charles de Montesquieu.

This situation forms an undeniably conflict of interest for the European Commission which leads to distrust with the European citizens, although the administration of Juncker is very transparent or at least it tries to be. So, to solve the conflict of interest problem and the undemocratic appointing of the whole Commission, the legislative power should be transferred elsewhere. In this way, the *trias politica* could be restored. The obvious EU institution to receive the legislative power of the Commission would be the European Parliament. The new balance of powers would ensure that the Parliament can now really supervise the Commission which is

² Charles de Montesquieu, *The Spirits of the Laws*. 1748.

only charged with the execution of the new EU laws and spending the EU budget (Troitiño, 2017). Of course, in theory this may seem a simple and quick solution but the opposite is true. As mentioned before, bureaucrats tend to hold on to their power and giving up legislative power to the body that supervises them will not be a scenario that they were waiting for.

Conclusions for the EU democratization process

This essay looked into two possible paths for the EU towards more democratic legitimacy. For both paths there were several possibilities, each with their own strengths and weaknesses. The most important conclusion this essay tried to establish is that the European Union need to act, because a democratization process will not be successful if it comes from outside. In addition, the change from within has to be dual. It will not be sufficient for the European Union to only rely on more public involvement. The public involvement can only grow if the EU institutions are modified in a way that it earns the trust of the citizens and awakens the European identity along with the decrease of indifference towards the European Project.

Two issues are at hand related to the proposed efforts the EU has to undertake in order to achieve its goals. In relation to the promotion of more public involvement the main issue could be financially. How much will it cost the European Union to create initiatives/programmes or to support more initiatives created by the citizens of the EU? This will be an important question with possibly a considerable influence on the decision. Nevertheless, an organization like the EU has the financial means to do more than it is doing now. This is not a bold statement since the European Commission made democratization one of its priorities.

Regarding the reforming of the existing EU institutions, in this case the European Parliament and the European Commission, there is another issue that cannot be ignored: is Europe politically ready to change? Changing the European Commission and the European Parliament will not be achieved by investing some extra euros, there is political support needed from all the member countries, but France and Germany in particular. This issue will be the most challenging obstacle for the EU on its path to more democratic legitimacy.

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