



POLITICALLY.EU

"KNOW TO DECIDE"

REPORT

DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION IN THE EU

European University Institute | Fiesole, Florence, Italy

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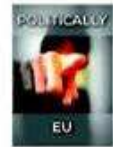
POLITICALLY.EU concept and project manager

IN COLLABORATION WITH:



FACILITATION AND MODERATION:





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I. **POLITICALLY.EU, "KNOW TO DECIDE"**

The European Commission is aware that it doesn't have all the answers to the big issues concerning the future of European integration. It is also aware of the complexity that embodies the current scenario and of the unsustainable distance perceived by European citizens with regard to the decision-making mechanisms of the European Institutions. Therefore, the European Commission has decided to **launch and stimulate a democratic debate** with the European Parliament, with governments and national parliaments, with the academic world, and of course with the citizens of the Union.



A fully accomplished European Union requires a long-lasting open and sound democratic debate. That's even more true nowadays, because the crisis forces to take difficult and sometimes unpopular decisions, that need to be explained and motivated. **"Know to decide"**, said Luigi Einaudi, recalling an essential aspect of democracy.



With this aim, the **Representation of the European Commission in Italy** has been implementing the **POLITICALLY.EU** (www.politically.eu) path of national participatory debates on the next steps towards a true and genuine political dimension of the EU

II. THE METHODOLOGY OF THE DELIBERATION WORKSHOP

The *dinestorming* workshop on **Democratic participation in the EU**, promoted by the **Representation of the European Commission in Italy** in collaboration with the EUDO (*European Union Democratic Observatory*), was held on the 29th of November in Fiesole, Florence (for more details see www.politically.eu).

It involved a **selected group** of key experts on democratic participation from all over the world (for the full list see Annex A) and has offered a powerful occasion for **reflection and debate on the way towards a genuine democratic participation to a true European political dimension**.

As usual in the framework of the **POLITICALLY.EU** path, we focused the discussion around some key-questions by the mean of a mix of innovative and participatory methodologies. In this case the key-question was: **“How can we improve democratic participation in Europe?”**.



III. BACKGROUND

The euro crisis has prompted one of the most intense debates about the viability of the European project in its history, but many of the contributions to that debate have amounted to little more than immediate crisis management.

But the European Union is facing financial, economic, political and social challenges in a globalized world going far beyond the current crisis and **what we need now is a much more ambitious debate in and between Member States and their citizens, which is inspired by fresh thinking and new ideas about how to shape the future EU.**



We need a genuine reconnection between the EU, policy-makers and the public, not only to heal the wounds of the crisis but to deliver effective responses to these different challenges, and to foster the EU's clout in international affairs.

The ***POLITICALLY.EU***¹ initiative's ultimate **goal is to develop realistic reform proposals** to shore up an EU suffering from socioeconomic and political turbulence and the growing threat of global marginalisation, **and feed these ideas into the work of the new EU leadership** which will take office in 2014.



¹ For more information www.politically.eu.

IV. DINESTORMING ON "HOW TO IMPROVE DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION?"

1.1 Introduction



This **final synthesis report** is drawn up on the basis of all the contributions received and will be brought to the attention of the relevant decision-makers at European and national level; moreover, it **will be included in the final recommendations which *Politically.eu* intends to deliver to the next European Commission**, as the body responsible for legislative initiative in the EU.

1.2 Main findings

- General agreement on the **lack of public support** for the EU; **leadership crises** at national and European level; and **growing challenges** to traditional concepts of **political representation**;
- Someone said **focusing on effective policies to deliver concrete results will do more to boost the EU's legitimacy** than attempting overambitious and risky institutional reforms.
- Someone argued that without **more radical reforms to enhance democratic legitimacy and accountability**, the public may not accept more financial, fiscal and economic coordination at EU level: **the growing perception that citizens cannot influence the Union's complex decision making machinery needs to be addressed**, as do the limits on the EU's capacity to deliver effective responses to key challenges.

- General consensus on **moving ahead ambitiously: strengthening the EU's political-institutional setting will result in much deeper integration.** It would enhance the Union's legitimacy in the public's eyes and increase interest in European elections and policy-making, boosting support for the EU and countering challenges to traditional concepts of political representation. **"Personalising" and "politicising" the EU would strengthen European democracy.** In particular by:
 

1. Electing a limited number of (extra) MEPs in a single constituency on the basis of a **transnational EU-wide list of candidates**, which could also generate candidates for top EU jobs.
 2. Establishing a **clearer, more direct link between European election results and (s)electing the Commission president**; reducing the number of Commissioners, and giving the president more leverage in choosing them.
 3. **Extending MEPs' powers**, especially in areas where the EU now has more authority.
 4. **Involving national parliaments more closely in EU policy-making** at both national and European level. (doing more and doing it better)
 5. **Changing the rules for amending EU treaties** to allow them to enter into force even if some Member States have not ratified them.
 6. **Holding a European Convention to debate the EU's future**, involving government and Commission representatives, plus national parliamentarians and MEPs.
 7. **Introducing a more coherent representation of the EU in international financial institutions** such as the IMF, World Bank and G20.
- But someone insist EU history shows this does not work in practice (with more power for the European Parliament matched by falling turnout at European elections) and **could backfire if the EU lacks the tools to deliver concrete results, fuelling public disillusionment.** And it is very unlikely to get such powers in the current climate.

- **Far-reaching political-institutional reforms** of the type outlined above would close the democratic deficit and strengthen Europe's problem-solving capacity, thus helping to restore confidence in the ability of decision-makers to provide adequate policy responses to pressing problems and boosting public support for the EU. More personalised, parliamentarised and politicised policy-making would also stir public interest in European elections and policy-making.



- Someone has gone further **beyond the "more/less Europe" logic**, identifying as key potential measures:

1. Increased citizens' participation in EU policy-making via **new instruments encouraging active involvement in decision-making.**
2. **Strengthening the EU's capacity to ensure respect for civil rights and fundamental freedoms** when they are encroached upon at national level.



3. **A greater focus on long-term policies of direct benefit to citizens**, from safeguarding minimum social rights to guaranteed access to education and health services and delivering sustainable economic growth **beyond a simple GDP orientation.**
4. Establishing a "Charter of European Citizenship", setting out people's individual and collective rights, to **strengthen their sense of what it means to be an EU citizen.**
5. **Setting up new consultation groups** including NGOs, regional and local bodies, and experts in particular areas to consider long-term policy options and inform decision-making at EU level **on issues such as migration, mobility and the economy.**

- EU fortunes will improve when citizens feel fully engaged, with **more direct involvement** in (and influence over) European policy-making and **a greater sense** that the **Union is working for their best interests**. In addition to the (already included in the EU structures) consultation with citizen groups and other democratic checks and balances, it should be pursued the **focus on strengthening national governments and parliaments as key sources of EU legitimacy**.



1.3 Conclusions

- Recent experience has provided ample proof that the **EU is insufficiently equipped to face current and future challenges**, and that it needs to take a **major qualitative leap towards a fully-fledged economic, fiscal, financial, social and political union**, with a strong European executive (European government) and legislature (parliament) **able to take autonomous decisions reflecting genuine European interests**.
- European integration must overcome the basic contradiction between having a common post-national currency and Member States defending 'national interests'. Potential opposition from some countries should not prevent the "willing and able" from making a major leap forward, even if this leads to a **"core Europe"** including only those countries **ready to deepen integration significantly**.
- Going beyond the traditional debate about European integration along the lines of more or less Europe, the experience of the last six decades has shown that a **further transfer of national political and democratic concepts to the European level would not work in the absence of truly European transnational political debates and is not really desirable taking into account the already visible deficits of national democratic systems**. The state of the Union and complexity of current and future challenges require a more fundamental rethink of European cooperation and a longer-term approach aimed at **strengthening the EU's ability to respond to the challenges that lie ahead, making it more accountable to the public for its actions, finding new ways to involve the public in policy-making, and boosting the EU's capacity to safeguard the fundamental rights of its citizens and guarantee their basic social rights by strengthening the Union's caring dimension**.





V. ANNEXES

Annex A: Participants

Annex B: Photo-album

Annex A: Participants

Luciano	Bardi	University of Pisa and European University Institute
Lucio	Battistotti	European Commission Representation in Italy
Rainer	Bauböck	European University Institute
Enrico	Calossi	European University Institute
Elias	Dinas	University of Nottingham
Mark	Franklin	Massachusetts Institute of Technology and European University Institute
Wojciech	Gagatek	University of Warsaw
Diego	Garzia	European University Institute
Adrienne	Héritier	European University Institute
Hanspeter	Kriesi	European University Institute
Brigid	Laffan	European University Institute
Zoe	Lefkofridi	European University Institute
Marcello	Messori	LUISS Guido Carli
Stefano	Micossi	Assonime
Thomas	Poguntke	University of Düsseldorf
Cesidia	Ramaccioni	European Commission Representation in Italy
Pedro	Riera	University of Strathclyde
Roberta	Talarico	European Commission Representation in Italy
Alexander	Trechsel	European University Institute
Maria Laura	Sudulich	Free University of Brussels
Antonia	Carparelli	DG Ecofin e EUI
Gerald	Haefner	European Parliament
Georgia	Mavrodi	European University Institute

Annex B: Photo album

To view the photo album of the *Dinestorming on democratic participation in the EU*:

<http://goo.gl/lowvi5>

