

Danuta Hübner
Chair of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs, European Parliament

"The future of supranational democracy 5 years after the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty: What role for European institutions and national Parliaments?"

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Allow me to start with two personal comments that come from my heart. One is a rhetoric matter concerning supranational democracy. More specifically, I have doubts whether this is the language to be chosen.

"Supranational" would be a red flag for many and I do not believe we can get citizens on board if this is a default word of choice for describing the nature of European democracy.

And my second comment comes from the conviction that democratic legitimacy would not be a political and institutional challenge for Europe, if we were willing to give Europe a real political identity. But, as we all know, this is not the case today.

I would also like to comment on Article 11 of the TEU, which states that the institutions shall provide citizens and representative associations with the opportunity to participate in decision making in all areas of Union action and that the institutions shall maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with representative associations and civil society. The democratic legitimacy challenge would be less daunting if this article of the Treaty were indeed about how we do our job today.

Moreover, most of us would agree also that what the Treaty introduced as a new form of citizens' participation, namely the European Citizens' Initiative, constitutes today an example of a largely unused potential of the Treaty.

Using more generously the potential of the entire Article 11 would strengthen the Union's democratic legitimacy.

Moving towards ultimate democratization of European institutions and of European decision making cannot be chosen as a remote target. It must be the way we, as institutions, do our day to day work. Democracy is not only a political system, it is a whole tool kit allowing to achieve political and social peace.

When we europeanize a growing number of policies, democratic legitimacy must come hand in hand with it, it is the process of democratic legitimization that matters. You do not get a democratic outcome as a result of a political process that ignores democratic legitimacy.

Quite soon, Europe will be in the hands of generations with no link, neither factual nor emotional, to the historic origins of European integration.

They can fly in any directions and they will have a whole new sense of the possible. It would be far better if they could take forward a Europe with as few deficiencies in democratic legitimation as possible.

But today we are far too often confronted with deficiencies in legitimation.

This is to a certain extent explained by the national scope of democratic mandates of governments.

In this context, the European Parliament is the only institution, democratically elected by citizens, where political decision making takes place on the basis of European interests generalized across national borders.

Every time we meet, we admit that the European Parliament's role and its legitimacy has been considerably boosted by the Treaty of Lisbon. Every time we meet we admit that the Treaty broadened the possibilities for the national parliaments to participate alongside the European institutions in the work of the Union. Indeed, we have the Treaty foundation on which we can build and we can see that the Treaty still leaves some space to better exploit its potential on that matter.

But we must also admit that there are new democratic challenges posed by the crisis. It brought about a greater centralization, a shift of competences and powers towards the European level and to the institutions without direct democratic legitimacy, such as the ECB. We also live in a situation where borders have largely disappeared from the internal market architecture, all its freedoms, but democracy remains confined to national frontiers and this comes as we could see recently not without a consequence.

Also, universal technological changes, particularly ICT related, also the emergence of social media bring along with them a different society, citizens with unlimited access to information, wishing to become more involved in the decision making process.

Parliaments at all levels can play a crucial role in facilitating new ways to involve citizens and boost the role civil society can play in debating and participating in decisions.

Both, the growing europeanization of domestic policies, embracing also areas traditionally linked to national sovereignty, as well as the dual citizenship concept single out dual legitimacy as the foundation for a genuine European democracy. These two factors directly point to the imperative of close cooperation between the two layers of parliaments.

In the Lisbon Treaty, along with the responsibility for subsidiarity, national parliaments have become European players. They have shifted from an observer to a participatory status. But we know that unfortunately, the mechanism to implement

this principle suffers from a number of shortcomings. Vicepresident Frans Timmermans spoke about that.

As a consequence, its potential is not fully used. Platforms of inter-parliamentary cooperation, such as the one that has brought us here today, serve as a tool for communication, better understanding of common challenges and the enhancement of the involvement of national parliaments in EU affairs. But we are learning by doing here and again, there is scope for improvement.

But democratic legitimacy depends also on the popular accountability of institutions.

This is enhanced by changes in procedures such as the Spitzenkandidaten. Democratic legitimacy could be further enhanced by a potentially increased transparency of the European Council, it could be enhanced by a higher turnout in the European elections or through the transparency of the decision making process. Over the last years, changes have been introduced into the euro governance system taking us in this direction.

But it is a continuous challenge, not a one off action. It is also worth mentioning that the crisis generated novel layers of differentiation or, if you wish, fragmentation in the Union. A euro/non-euro dividing lines, reinforced by reforms is just one example of those, where democratic legitimacy of the decision making is often questioned. The argument is raised that the position of the European Parliament as a guarantor of democratic legitimacy is undermined by the fact that some MEPs are elected in Member States outside of the euro area. But one can also argue that decisions concerning the euro zone also impact, through interdependencies, spill overs and externalities, European citizens living outside the common currency area. Potential euro zone members should therefore participate in those decisions.

In general, the Union faces difficulties in dealing with its heterogeneity. European and national institutions have to cope with this challenge in such a way that the cohesion, solidarity and integrity of the European Union are not called into question.

What makes the challenge of democratic legitimacy even more acute is the fact that European citizens see European integration predominantly as an executive power project. They see their governments as their representatives, less so parliaments, and the European Commission as decision maker and less the European Parliament as the main actor in Brussels. This makes the architecture for democratic legitimacy even more complicated. But this also points to the need of multilevel or multitier democracy, based on inter-institutional cooperation.

The Treaty made national parliaments European players. But are citizens aware of that? There are certainly many possible avenues for action at national level that could alter this perception of the role of national parliaments in the European context. An example could be the increased weight of national chambers in designating candidates for important European positions. This could reinforce the democratic legitimacy of various European institutions.

Over the years to come, inter-institutional relations will acquire new levels of intricacy. An example is the growing salience of the European Council whose

decision making power has not been matched by an added dose of democratic legitimacy. Are we going to see a change there?

With all that comes also a growing need to better orchestrate common efforts leading to improvements in the practice of European democratic legitimation. The challenge today is to look into the future and jointly reflect on concrete actions that would boost the democratic legitimacy of Europe.

There are certainly many ideas on how to improve the functioning of the Early Warning System. Here, we expect more openness on the Commission side and more involvement on the national parliaments' side. The inter-parliamentary cooperation platforms can become also fora where national parliaments engage more with one another and use the meetings as encouragement to promote debates on EU affairs at national level.

The EP would like to see Commissioners more often participating in national parliaments hearings, especially in the context of the legislative road map. Policy choices for European legislation could certainly benefit from early parliamentary scrutiny. Subsidiarity checks could also be taken on board impact assessments.

Policies are increasingly made at EU level, while politics remains national, created often under the control of anti-European forces. It is up to national parliaments to see that risks are mitigated and opportunities exploited.

Today, as the anti-systemic, anti-democratic forces add the anti-europeanisation to their political narrative and action, it is also up to national parliaments, as democratically elected representative institutions, to make, through their involvement, EU political choices acceptable for those who deplore procedures by which European decisions are made. As national institutions, their participation could make EU policies legitimate for those who look for legitimacy at national level.

We all recognize the leading role of national parliaments in the evolution of the EU. They ratify the Treaties, participate in transposing European directives in many areas. But the EU is not a nation state organism and the legitimacy of its decisions derives from the interplay between different levels of democratic governance and it needs inter parliamentary cooperation.