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THE EU AND GLOBAL CHALLENGES 28 IDEAS FROM THE ERASMUS GENERATION

School of Political Science,
MA in International relations and European Studies,
University of Florence
3 – 5 may 2017

EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP AND THE NEED FOR A STRONGER SOCIAL DIMENSION

Position Paper by
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INTRODUCTION

European integration has been a six-decade long project throughout which there has been a consolidation of many European values: promotion of democracy, human dignity, equality and freedom, respect for human rights and upholding the rule of law. The creation of a Single European Market (SEM) and European Monetary Union (EMU) have been landmarks in the evolution of the EU as an economic-political undertaking. Yet, economic developments have rendered European integration a largely liberal and market-driven project, one which, because of its mercantilist proclivity, spurred rapid economic integration while neglecting an equivalent progress concerning social policies. Tellingly, the most diversified and comprehensive rights enjoyed by EU citizens are economic rights (in their roles as consumers, workers, entrepreneurs), with inferior rights enjoyed by those outside the labour market.¹ Whereas 'Social Europe' has been on the agenda for decades, it is assumed that such an ideal is either underdeveloped or sclerotic.² Within the current European state of affairs, this idea is particularly relevant.

The EU is currently under strain. The recent economic crisis, the Greek conundrum, the rise of populist and Eurosceptic parties (e.g. in France, the Netherlands and Austria), the Brexit process and the failure in tackling the current humanitarian crisis are only some of the events which endanger the already lowered levels of public support. The continuing democratic deficit, allied to the chasms between the institutions and its citizens, as well as the low voter turnout in the European Parliament elections, further contribute to the problem. In order for the EU to consolidate popular support, it is imperative that it bridges the gap between itself and its citizens. This is where the idea of a European identity emerges, both as a response to the above-mentioned crises and to the geo-political enlargement which has driven forward debates on national and supranational identity.³ Expected to foment tighter relationships between the EU and its citizens, EU citizenship is an attempt at creating the basis for European identity. The construction of this 'imagined community', as Benedict Anderson would claim, is inevitable if the EU is not to be reduced to a mere economic project. Moreover, in order to persist in the long-term, the EU needs to address the gap between itself and its citizens, e.g. through the increase of output legitimacy.⁴ There are no easy solutions for the EU's legitimacy problem.

¹ Dwyer, 2001: 31.

² Faist, 2001: 38-39

³ Tsiliki, 2007: 157.

⁴ The concepts of output and input legitimacy derive from the work of Fritz Scharpf (1970; 1997; 1999). Vivian Schmidt summarizes the main propositions effectively: "[I]nput legitimacy refers to the participatory quality of the process leading to laws and rules as ensured by the 'majoritarian' institutions of electoral representation. Output legitimacy is instead concerned with the problem-solving quality of the laws and rules, and has a range of institutional

Nevertheless, institutional reform, better education and more targeted policies could be key factors. In particular, the struggle to strengthen the social domain of the EU's internal market, an endeavour that also ties into the ideal of a social citizenship, should not be abandoned.

THE IDEAL OF SOCIAL CITIZENSHIP

The 2016 Eurobarometer on European citizenship provides valuable insights into the feelings Europeans have towards the idea of a common citizenship. The report states that the most positive results as perceived by EU citizens are, respectively, *'the free movement of people, goods and services within the EU'* (56%) and *'peace among the Member States of the EU'*

(55%; see Annex 1.1).⁵ Curiously, the level of social welfare is perceived as being most positive in the non-Euro area (21%) than in the Eurozone (15%; see Annex 1.2).⁶ Most importantly, those who perceive the EU as having no positive result are those who have most difficulties paying their bills (18% compared to a European average of 9%) and those who left school at the age of 15 or earlier (16%; see Annex 1.3).⁷

When addressing the issue of citizenship, 66% of respondents feel a sense of European citizenship, with 28% feeling that they are 'definitely European'. Critically, this number has only improved 4% since spring 2010 and the percentage of people who do not identify with being European represent 33% (a third of the entire European population; see Annexes 1.4 and 1.5).⁸ The sense of being European is shared more among members of generation Y (73%

'yes')⁹ than respondents born before 1946 (54% 'yes'). Moreover, respondents who have undertaken education until they are 20 or older are more prone to feel European (76% replied 'yes' to whether they felt European), while those who left school at 15 or prior are equally divided (49% 'yes' to 49% 'no'). Lastly, the social class to which respondents belong highlights another factor: 84% of those who see themselves as upper middle class feel that they are EU citizens, contrasting with only 56% of those who see themselves as working class.¹⁰ Most of the 'total no's' concerning European citizenship come from people who are part of the working class, who have difficulties paying bills *most of the time* and who are 'house persons', unemployed or retired. 51% of respondents state that they have a 'combined sense of European citizenship', identifying as 'nationality and European', whereas only 6% identify as

mechanisms to ensure it. Although Scharpf finds both input and output necessary for democratic legitimization, he concludes that, for the EU, one needs to focus on the problem-solving logics of institutional output because the EU lacks not only the majoritarian institutional inputs (direct elections for a government) but also its constructive preconditions (input as support), consisting of thick collective identity and a European demos." (2013: 4).

⁵ Eurobarometer, 2016: 4.

⁶ *id.* 5.

⁷ *id.* 10-11.

⁸ *id.* 14-15.

⁹ Generation Y refers to those born after 1980 and before the turn of the millennium, or the so called Millennium Generation.

¹⁰ Eurobarometer, 2016: 17.

'European and nationality'. The sense of a national citizenship exists in 89% of cases, with only 2% of respondents identifying as 'European only'.¹¹ Lastly, concerning knowledge of rights, half of the population (52%) affirms that they know their rights as Europeans, while two thirds (65%) state that they would like to know more about them.¹²

The previous statistics indicate that respondents are more prone to identify with having a European citizenship when they are in better socio-economic situations, when they have more years of education, when they are still active workers and mostly if they are younger. In fact, mobility seems to be the key factor. The free movement is not only perceived as the best result of the EU, but it is also an opportunity among older teenagers and young adults/professionals (often benefitting from exchange programs – Comenius¹³, Erasmus – or better job opportunities abroad), but also adults who have the socio-economic means to travel within the Union. Indeed, the sense of citizenship decreases with the lack of education and the lack of socio-economic capabilities. This leads to the hypothesis that those who are left out are often those who cannot afford to benefit from free movement and, in not being able to, do not perceive benefits as directly as those who can enjoy that privilege. Interestingly, as Walter Hallstein claims, labour mobility was never a mere pre-requisite of the market, but in fact the foundation of the

'European Economic and Social Community'.¹⁴ Reforms at the turn of the 1970s to the 1980s saw the introduction of a uniform passport (1981), abolition of internal frontiers (1979) and the proposal to grant electoral rights to Community nationals residing elsewhere in the host Member States. The Maastricht Treaty (1992) established for the first time an EU citizenship, whereby every person holding the nationality of a Member State would be a citizen of the Union.

Nevertheless, Commission proposals such as a 'duty of solidarity on the part of every Union citizen with other Union citizens and with long-term resident third-country nationals in the EU'¹⁵ did not figure in the final text. The result was a narrowly conceived market citizenship which is highly based on mobility. Even newer developments such as the Citizen's Rights Directive¹⁶ continue to make the enjoyment of some rights such as that of residency conditional on not becoming an unreasonable burden on the social assistance system of the host state.

Since culture is seen as the basis for identity, a number of attempts have been undertaken by the Commission (e.g. creating a flag, an anthem, or the European Capitals of Culture¹⁷). Yet, it seems to be expected that a European identity is created as the result of increased mobility within the Union alone. Whereas this can work for a part of the population, it lacks a comprehensive scope, given that a large percentage of Europeans do not have the

¹¹ *id.* 20.

¹² *id.* 27-28.

¹³ Comenius was part of the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP), which ran from 2007-2013. The activities of LLP continue under the new Erasmus+ programme of 2014-2020 (European Commission - Education and Training).

¹⁴ European Commission - Research and Innovation, 2013: 20.

¹⁵ *id.* 24.

¹⁶ Directive 2004/38/EC, Article 14.

¹⁷ Tsaliki, 2007: 158.

privilege to and/or cannot afford to and/or have no interest in moving within the Union. Critically, it is for these people that a European citizenship seems to be lacking most, since they perceive no concrete benefits from being part of the Union. Percy Lehning argues that what seems to be missing is a common identity and a common purpose.¹⁸ Building on Lehning, we suggest that the issue is not necessarily a lack of common purpose, but the misguided notion of what that purpose is. Indeed, what kind of European citizenship is being created?

Lehning states that there is a democratic deficit, a legitimization gap within the Union with the growing of institutional power and the decreasing of citizen power. He proposes that a transnational federalism based on overlapping consensus would mitigate this and create a 'shared citizenship identity'. Nevertheless, whereas the motto 'united in diversity' is all-too-often stated, it is true that considerable amounts of the population often have their interests unrepresented or unacknowledged. Arguably, this legitimises claims of the motto being pervaded by 'European triumphalism'.¹⁹ Because a 'shared European citizenship identity' is founded not upon a common language and ethnic origins, but on heterogeneity and pluralism, it makes sense that multilateral interests must be acknowledged while attempting to construct a truly encompassing European citizenship. As Meehan suggests, the latter cannot be just an attempt to camouflage the lack of developments in the social field.²⁰ As it currently stands, *solidarity* and *mutual recognition among Europeans* have become some of the most pressing issues in the EU and the '*social malaise of Europe*', as Leonardi & Scalise mention, is brought to the fore with the realisation that solidarity, social justice and social rights (e.g. tax benefits and social security) are still under the remit of the nation-state.²¹

Gerard Delanty argues that "the subjective dimension of citizenship involves the capacity to take on the point of view of the Other",²² and Bryan Turner claims that citizenship is the result of social mechanisms and practices, apart from civil and political rights.²³ Citizenship then codes a state of belonging, one which instates its own limits by marking areas of (in)equality. This translates into the definition of who is and who is not a citizen. At this point, it is fair to ask whether Europeanisation also detaches social citizenship from the national context, or if that can only be granted to the very particular notion of a (European) market-based citizenship. As Leonardi & Scalise propose, can a 'cosmopolitan European social citizenship' be created?²⁴

¹⁸ Lehning *apud* Tsaliki, 2007: 165.

¹⁹ Sassatelli *apud* Tsaliki, 2007: 175.

²⁰ Meehan *apud* Tsaliki, 2007: 166.

²¹ Leonardi and Scalise, 2015: 644.

²² Delanty *apud* Leonardi & Scalise, 2015: 644.

²³ Turner *apud* Leonardi & Scalise, 2015: 644.

²⁴ Leonardi and Scalise, 2015: 645.

THE 'SOCIAL DEFICIT'

The EU has consolidated around a mode of economic governance, with a focus on liberalisation, competitiveness and deregulation.²⁵ As previously noted, this has been apparent through the formation of a 'market-based citizenship'. In the same way, economic governance has put the emphasis on market creation rather than corrective market measures. As a result, policies have been geared towards increasing competitiveness in the market, while protection for citizens against markets failures has not been ensured. Due to the erosion of social policies across the member states,²⁶ as a result of the paradigm of economic governance, the EU is not always seen as acting in its citizens' best interest. It has therefore been argued that the EU does not only face a 'democratic deficit' but also a 'social deficit'.²⁷ This has been exacerbated by the Eurozone crisis of 2009. To increase the level of support, it is essential that citizens see their interests represented by the EU, most importantly in terms of the policies that the legislature puts forward. This can be linked back to the discussion of the 2016 Eurobarometer results on European citizenship. Namely, given that the sense of citizenship seems to decrease with the lack of education and the lack of socio-economic capabilities and/or for those who lose out on the free movement of people, it is imperative for the EU to mitigate this through more active social policies.

If the paradigm of mere market-driven integration is not abandoned, it will be increasingly difficult to regain the 'pre-crisis' levels of public support.²⁸ In order to increase the apparent value of the EU in the eyes of its citizens, it is necessary to address output legitimacy, meaning that the legislature should produce policies that can be seen to represent the interests of the citizens more effectively. Addressing the so-called 'social deficit' could be one of the ways to improve output legitimacy. Tellingly, when asked about the elements that would strengthen their sense of European citizenship, respondents of a 2014 Eurobarometer survey were inclined "to give preference to social aspects and those affecting their everyday lives."²⁹ The most referenced element was: "[a] European social welfare system harmonised between the Member States (healthcare, education, pensions, etc.)" (see Annex 1.6).³⁰ However, increasing output legitimacy through social policies is contentious, given that the EU has a weak competence in this policy domain. Nevertheless, there is a clear need to expand the social dimension of the internal market.³¹ The market-driven policies that are in place should be supplemented by active social policies, for instance in the field of employment. Likewise, there is a need for real

²⁵ Copeland, 2015: 94.

²⁶ EU internal market policies have (indirectly) led to a downward pressure in Member States on wages, employment and welfare policy, since it is one of the few macro-economic tools that Member States can still employ to improve their economic performance (Copeland, 2015: 99).

²⁷ Hatzopoulos, 2005: 1601; Copeland, 2015: 94.

²⁸ Copeland, 2015: 103.

²⁹ Eurobarometer, 2014: 42.

³⁰ *id.* 43.

³¹ Hatzopoulos, 2005: 1601.

development in field of social rights, since mere rhetoric around the idea of European citizenship is not sufficient.³²

In March 2016, the Commission published a communication on a European Pillar of Social Rights. Although at first glance this may seem promising, the rhetoric behind the social pillar is based on economic rationale and concerned with “the completion of the EMU and the internal market.”³³ Rather than a guiding principle or ideal, the social dimension of the EMU in this initiative represents a mere by-product of market policies. In addition, the link between the social pillar and the Better Regulation Agenda of the Juncker Commission is concerning, given that the Better Regulation Agenda has shown to have a deregulatory objective.³⁴ Lörcher and Schömann propose two ways forward in dealing with the proposed pillar; “to perceive the Commission’s initiative (...) as a questionable endeavour and rather a risk to workers’ protection” or “to use the momentum (...) as a possible avenue, possibly giving it the benefit of the doubt, for strengthening the social dimension of the new EU (economic) governance and shape the social part of the EMU.” Although concerns about the proposed social pillar are arguably well-grounded, one can hope that the truth is somewhat more in the middle. Interestingly, there is a small, but existing, belief that the building blocks for a so-called Social Union have already been created. Ilaria Maselli argues that there may in fact already be a Social Pillar.³⁵ This idea is based on a number of (policy) initiatives from the 1990s until recently, including: the European Employment Strategy (1997), the EU2020 strategy (2010), the Youth Guarantee (2013) and, potentially the last addition, the Pillar of Social Rights. More generally, the EU’s Cohesion Funds can also be placed in this list. In these initiatives, Maselli sees the first foundation for a Social Union. She therefore maintains that the glass could already be seen as half full, in terms of strengthening the social domain of the EMU, especially given the momentum that the Pillar of Social Rights may have generated.³⁶

CONCLUSION

In order for a European identity to develop among the people of Europe, it is imperative that an underlying European citizenship is created. Importantly, this citizenship must be one that works for all citizens by acknowledging their plural interests. Therefore, it must not only be focused on market-oriented rights that Europeans can benefit from as consumers and workers, but also encompass the social rights that can be enjoyed by them as members of a European *Union*. Whereas mobility is highly valued within the EU and creates several possibilities to its progression as an economic project, it is something that not all its citizens can enjoy. There is a need to address the ongoing ‘social deficit’, so that its citizens perceive the benefits of

³² Meehan *apud* Tsaliki, 2007: 166.

³³ Lörcher and Schömann, 2016: 6.

³⁴ *id.* 11.

³⁵ Maselli, 2016: 1

³⁶ *id.* 4.

European integration in their daily lives in factors other than mobility. Additionally, for this purpose, solidarity must be better incorporated into the realm of the EU, instead of being solely confined to the nation-state.

This paper has debated the idea of social citizenship and the need to address the 'social deficit' in relation to the underlying problems that the EU currently faces. If indeed the initiative for the creation of a European Pillar of Social Rights has led to a momentum for strengthening the social domain, then the Union and its Member States should seize this opportunity to explore ways in which a stronger social dimension to the internal market and the EU as a whole can be developed. In so doing, the priorities of the citizens should be acknowledged and acted upon. This can relate more generally to a European unemployment or social welfare scheme, or more particularly to consumer protection, climate change, environmental degradation and other issues that preoccupy the citizens, as evidenced by, for instance, Eurobarometer surveys and other opinion polls.

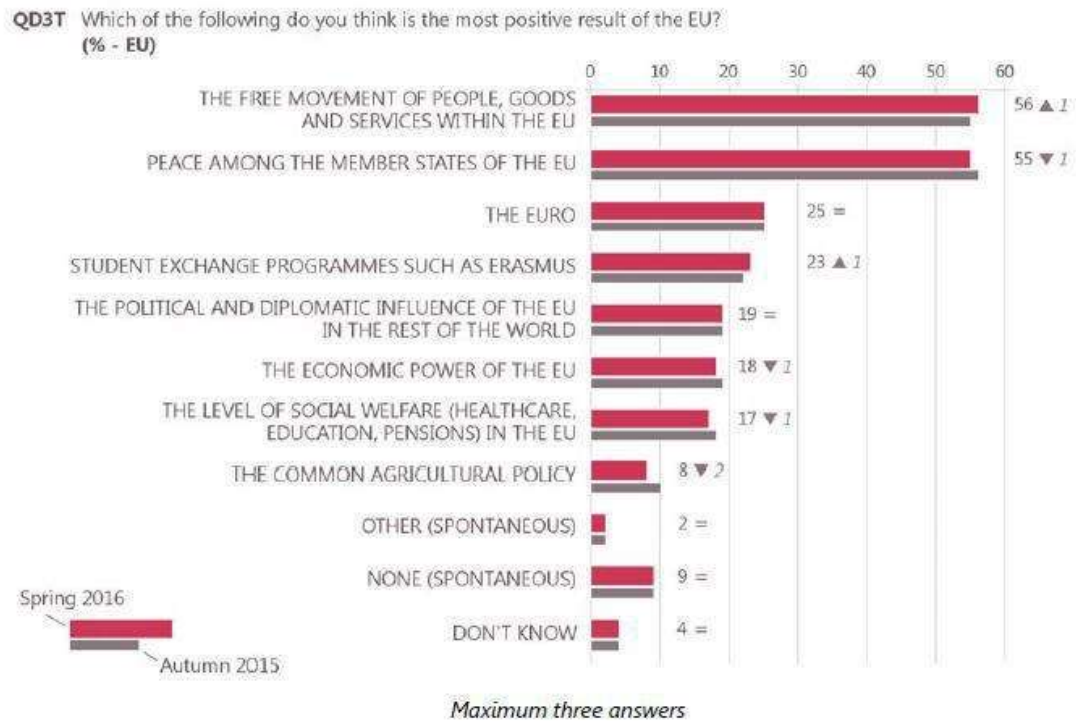
Rather than focusing on the shortcomings, we believe that they constitute opportunities to debate the future of social policy in the EU and advance European integration. In this turbulent period of rising Euroscepticism and fears of disintegration, the focus should be on decreasing the gap between the institutions and the European peoples, as well as enhancing output legitimacy through an expansion of the social domain. In the same way that events like Brexit constitute a critical juncture, they can also signify a point of departure for a re-evaluation of the Union's priorities and future.

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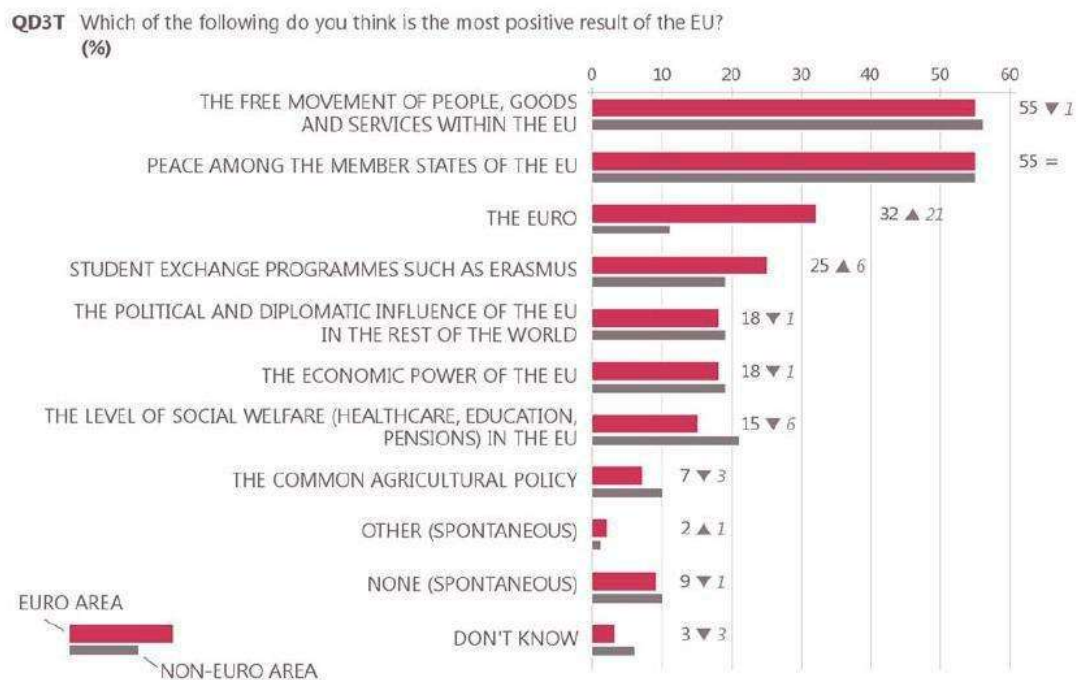
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ANNEXES

1.1 Image Eurobarometer (2016), page 4



1.2 Image Eurobarometer (2016), page 5

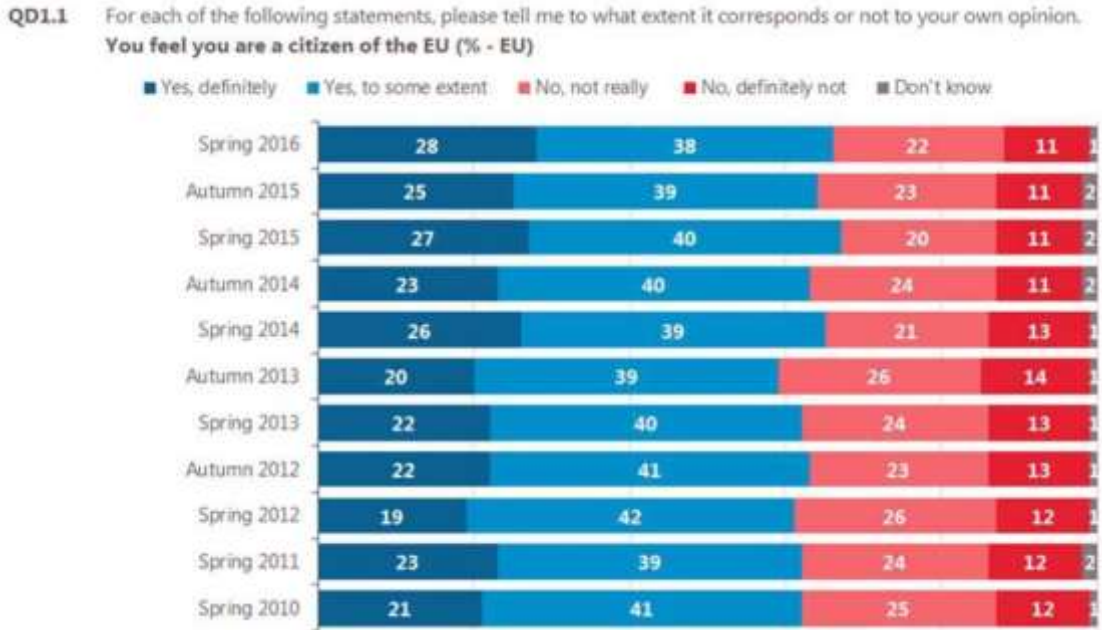


1.3 Image Eurobarometer (2016), page 11

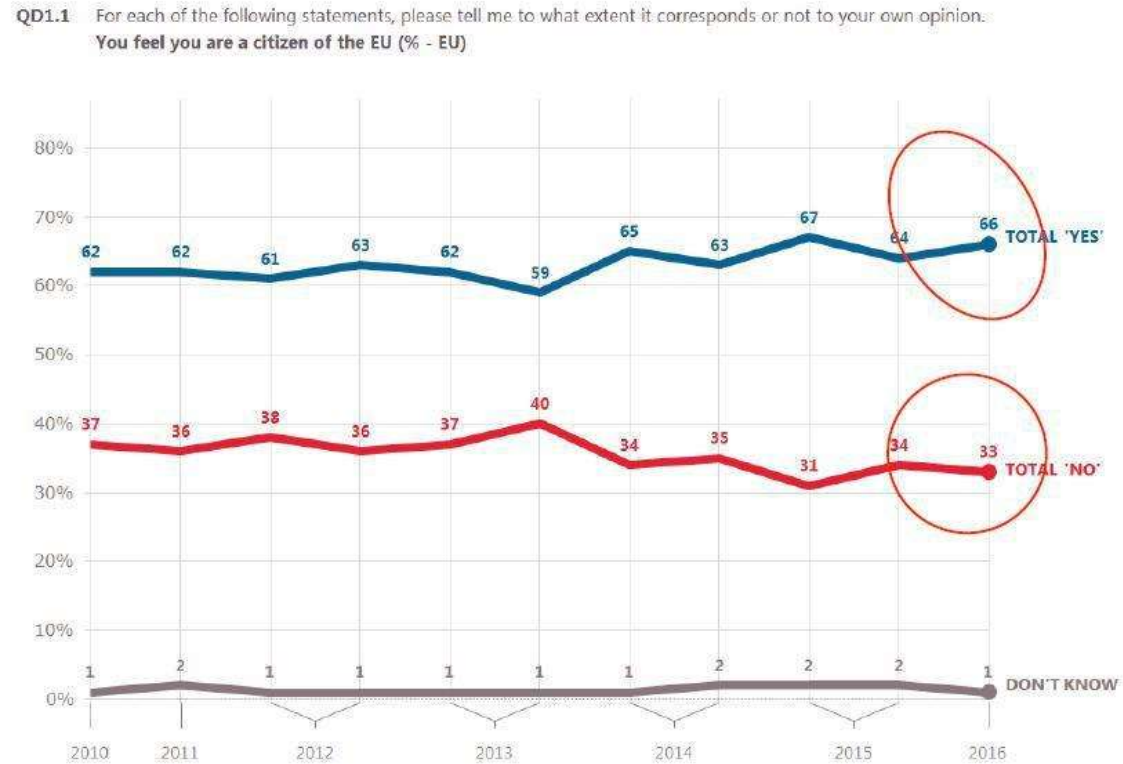
QD3T Which of the following do you think is the most positive result of the EU?
(% - EU)

	The free movement of people, goods and services within the EU	Peace among the Member States of the EU	The euro	Student exchange programmes such as ERASMUS	The political and diplomatic influence of the EU in the rest of the world	The economic power of the EU	The level of social welfare (healthcare, education, pensions) in the EU	The Common Agricultural Policy	Other (SPONTANEOUS)	None (SPONTANEOUS)	Don't know
EU28	56	55	25	23	19	18	17	8	2	9	4
 Gender											
Man	58	55	27	20	19	20	16	9	2	9	3
Woman	53	55	23	26	18	16	18	7	2	10	5
 Age											
15-24	55	53	24	35	17	18	22	6	2	7	4
25-39	61	50	24	25	20	20	20	7	2	7	3
40-54	58	54	25	22	22	19	15	8	2	10	3
55 +	51	59	26	18	16	16	15	8	2	11	5
 Generation											
Total 'Before 1946'	47	60	24	15	15	14	15	8	2	13	7
1946 - 1964 "BB"	54	58	26	21	18	18	15	9	2	11	3
1965 - 1980 "X"	60	52	25	23	22	20	16	8	2	8	3
After 1980 "Y"	58	52	24	30	18	19	22	6	2	7	3
 Education (End of)											
15-	45	52	23	16	14	15	15	7	2	16	7
16-19	55	55	24	20	19	19	17	9	2	10	4
20+	64	58	27	26	22	19	17	7	2	6	1
Still studying	58	55	23	43	17	18	21	5	1	4	2
 Socio-professional category											
Self-employed	59	50	24	22	20	18	18	8	2	10	2
Managers	64	60	28	24	23	22	16	7	1	6	1
Other white collars	62	54	28	26	23	20	15	10	2	6	2
Manual workers	56	52	24	21	19	20	19	7	2	10	4
House persons	47	49	23	23	16	17	14	6	3	14	7
Unemployed	53	47	21	21	17	15	17	8	1	15	5
Retired	50	61	25	18	16	15	16	9	2	11	5
Students	58	55	23	43	17	18	21	5	1	4	2
 Difficulties paying bills											
Most of the time	48	45	20	23	15	14	16	7	2	18	6
From time to time	54	49	23	24	19	19	18	8	2	9	5
Almost never/ Never	58	60	26	22	19	19	17	8	2	8	3

1.4 Image Eurobarometer (2016), page 14



1.5 Image Eurobarometer Report (2016), page 15



1.6 Image Eurobarometer (2014), page 43

