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Political Citizenship and Political Participation in the European Union

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Introduction

The European Union (EU) represents the most complex laboratory of transnational democracy. Since the Schuman Declaration (1950), twenty-eight European states with different languages, cultures and origins have gradually agreed to renounce to a part of their sovereignty in order to live “United in Diversity” in the international organization that the EU has developed into and become promoters of democracy, civil liberties, human rights and the rule of law. Its 508 million inhabitants enjoy today a double privilege - they are citizens of their own Member State and of the EU.

The concepts of “European political citizenship” and “European political participation” are new and in continuous evolution. The citizens of the EU vote for their national representatives in the European Parliament and have the rights to submit petitions regarding issues that affect them and conduct campaigns on an European level, that contribute to the development of the EU. However, the 2017 EU Citizenship Report highlights several issues that the inhabitants of the EU encounter, including the lack of information about their rights, the promotion of EU values, the participation to the democratic life of the EU, free movement procedures, strengthening the organization’s security and promoting equality.¹

The present position paper aims to study the current situation of EU citizenship and political participation. The paper is divided in two parts. Firstly, it will discuss what the current understanding of the two concepts is in the scholarly literature. Then it will identify several relevant issues that the EU is facing that have affected political citizenship and political participation. The second part will suggest a number of responses that the EU could implement in order to mend the current issues.

¹ 2017 EU Citizenship Report: *Commission Promotes Rights, Values and Democracy*, European Commission, Press Release, Brussels, 24 January 2017, available online at http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-118_en.htm, accessed on 12.04.2017.

I. What do political participation and political citizenship represent today?

Political participation is a complex and dynamic concept. In the vast literature on this subject, the attempts at devising its definition employ both teleological and praxialist arguments, mostly distinguishing between conventional and unconventional political activities. Some define political participation through analyzing traditional or direct mechanisms of participation, including voting and membership in a political party, while others see the concept in a broader and contextualized perspective, including in the definition of political participation not only voting, but also the involvement into activities which impact the political decision-making process. The dynamicity of political participation is a result of both the social makeup of the political participants and of the emerging alternatives to conventional political participation that are linked to technological advancements.² Therefore, we will further refer to political participation as *the act of engaging in activities which affect directly and indirectly the actors and the process of decision-making in administration at local, regional, national and supranational levels*. Given the subject of our paper, we will limit our analysis to subjects pertaining to EU politics.

Political citizenship is a notion ascribed to individuals and carries a geographical component. Citizens are traditionally considered as the residents of the country in which they permanently live. Citizenship is characterized by status – legal matters of citizenship, rights and obligations – and practice – the social and political interactions made by the individual.³ The status of the citizens of the EU is defined in Article 20 of Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) and in Article 9 of Treaty on European Union (TEU). Both characterize the European citizen as the individual who holds the citizenship of a current Member State. EU citizenship is complementary to national citizenship and each individual is entitled to the protection of the EU institutions, in addition to that of national institutions.⁴ Thus, European citizenship represents a form of post-national citizenship⁵, which is often connected to

² Iasonas LAMPRIANOU, *Contemporary Political Participation Research: A Critical Assessment*, in Kyriakos N. DEMETRIOU, *Democracy in Transition. Political Participation in the European Union*, Springer, London, 2013, pp. 21-42.

³ Sanja IVIC, *European Identity and Citizenship. Between Modernity and Postmodernity*, Palgrave MacMillan, London, 2016, p. 67.

⁴ Article 9, *Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union*.

⁵ See D. Tambini, *Post-national Citizenship*. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 24 (2), 2001, pp. 195-217.

postmodern political communities,⁶ groups that act for a single cause that exceeds national borders. Examples include the anti-GMOs campaign, the REACH campaign and the anti-ACTA campaign, which the paper will discuss later in this chapter.

The body of the European Union which represents the citizens is the European Parliament (EP). Today, 750 Members of the Parliament (MPs), directly elected, proportionally represent the 508 million citizens of the Member States of the EU. Additionally, 26 committees prepare the work for the plenary sessions. The EP has legislative, budgetary and supervisory powers, its most recent increase of privileges taking place after the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty (2009) that enabled the EP to initiate treaty revisions and to approve the convention that addresses the amendment of the said treaty.⁷

The decision of increasing the powers of the EP is linked to the raising claims regarding the lack of *input legitimacy*⁸ of the EU and of its disconnection with the citizens it governs. Although the question of legitimacy has existed from the establishment of the international organization, the accusations have sharply increased since the 2008 economic crisis that signaled the need for stronger economic policies and made the citizens of the EU more aware of the implications of their state's membership. The legitimacy of the democratic regimes of the Member States became insufficient to create a spillover effect on the legitimacy of the EU. Thus, 2008 represented a shift from the elitist rhetoric of integration to a conversation based on the direct effects that the EU policies have on its citizens.⁹ Also, the issue of legitimacy is connected to the rise of Euroscepticism and political radicalism and populism.

The democratic paradox of the EU, thus, seems to be that, in spite of the continuous increase in the legitimacy of the EP, Euroscepticism is today at a historical high.¹⁰ At the same

⁶ Sanja IVIC, *European Identity and Citizenship. Between Modernity and Postmodernity*, Palgrave MacMillan, London, 2016, p. 132.

⁷ *The European Parliament. Powers*, available online at http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ftu/pdf/en/FTU_1.3.2.pdf, consulted on 14.04.2017.

⁸ Discussing legitimacy, we consider the distinction made by Fritz W. Scharpf (2003) between *input legitimacy* (the efficiency of the EU policies and the benefits that they create for the EU citizens) and *output legitimacy* (the proactive participation of the citizens as part of the EU society). Fritz W. SCHARPF, *Problem-Solving Effectiveness and Democratic Accountability in the EU*, Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies, Working Paper 03/1, February 2003.

⁹ *Declaration of Florence. The World Won't Wait for Europe*, 6 May 2011, available online at http://www.rise.unifi.it/upload/sub/florence_declaration-final-version.pdf, consulted on 13.04.2017.

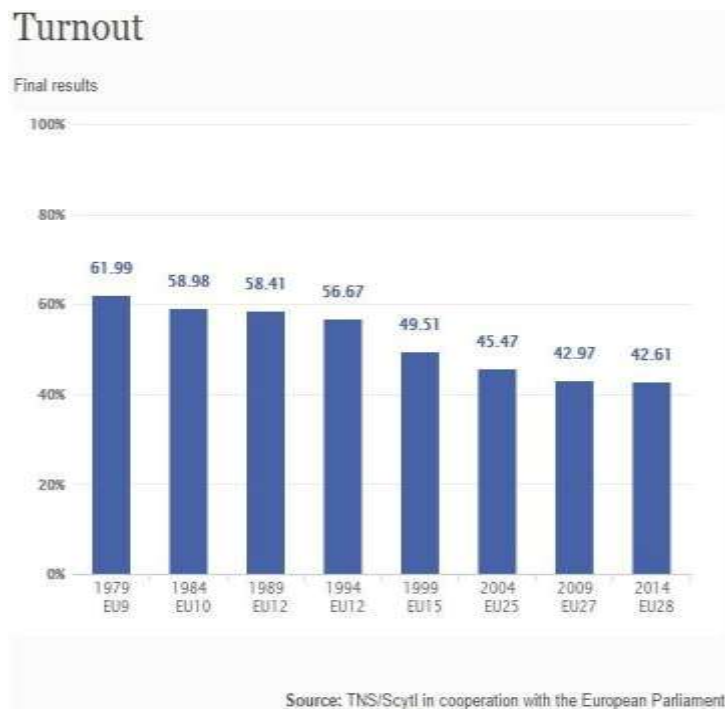
¹⁰ Mario TELO, *The Conceptual Challenge of Transnational Democracy in the European Union*, in Aylin UNVER NOI and Sasha TOPERICH, *Challenges of Democracy in the European Union and Its Neighbors*, Center for Transatlantic Relations, Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies Johns Hopkins University, 2016, p.8.

time, the issue becomes even more pregnant should we observe the “governance dilemma”¹¹ of the EU, which highlights the increased demand made by the citizens for transnational democracy.

Consequently, the paper will further consider in the discussion about contemporary political participation and political citizenship several factors and trends that illustrate the current situation, namely the turnout in the elections for the European Parliament, the Eurosceptic vote manifested particularly in the 2014 elections and the European citizens’ initiative. The turnout in the 2014 elections has been at its lowest since the introduction in 1979 of

the vote for the EP representatives. If in 1979 the turnout was at an average of 61.99%, in 2014 it decreased to 42.61%.¹² This signals that the result of the elections for the EP are perceived as

second-order elections and less relevant than the national elections in which voters decide on who will form the central administration of the state. Therefore, lower turnout rates are expected as compared to national elections and voters are likely to use the EP elections as an opportunity to express their discontent with government performance.¹³ Since Eurosceptic MEPs don’t have the capacity to influence the policies of national governments and aren’t



involved in the government’s policy making, they are regarded as an alternative to the parties which are in power at a national level. Looking for a change of the national situation, voters are expected to give an anti-establishment vote, favoring Eurosceptic parties. The effects of this trend are unprecedented: hard and soft Eurosceptic parties won 212 of 751 seats in 2014, which

¹¹ Robert O. KEOHANE, *Governance in a Partially Globalized World*, American Political Science Review, 95 (1), 2001, pp. 1-13.

¹² *Results of the 2014 European Elections*, European Parliament, available online at <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/elections2014-results/en/turnout.html>, accessed on 15.04.2017.

¹³ Treib OLIVER, *The voter says no, but nobody listens: causes and consequences of the Eurosceptic vote in the 2014 European elections*, Journal of European Public Policy, Taylor & Francis, 2014, pp. 1541-1554.

indicates the need for redesigning the democratic project of the EU. It's noteworthy that a discrepancy exists between the turnout at the EP elections in Western states and Eastern states, especially in those states which joined the EU in 2004 and later. For instance, Luxembourg and Belgium have maintained a turnout of over 85% since 1979. Additionally, Germany, France, Austria, Spain, Italy, Greece, had a turnout of over 60% when the first elections for the EP were held. However, the percentage has gradually decreased in time therefore, during the 2014 elections, for the before mentioned states, the turnout was at a maximum of 60%, with an average of around 40-45%. If we move to Eastern Europe, the EP elections were unpopular from the very beginning and the turnouts would rarely stretch over 40% with an average of 30-35%. The leading cause for this phenomenon could be that the EP elections are regarded as less important comparing to the national elections. This represents also a part of the image of the peripheralization syndrome in the Eastern Countries caused by the idea of a two-speed Europe.¹⁴

Transnational political participation in the EU has manifested in the form of the involvement in technical and political¹⁵ campaigns of the European citizens and NGOs. In technical campaigns, citizens protest against decisions which affect the EU legislation, such as the anti-GMOs campaign (1990 - 2006) the and the REACH campaign (2001 - 2003), while political campaigns seek to influence decision-makers regarding social matters, for instance the Lisbon Agenda campaign (2000) or the Anti-ACTA campaign (2011 - 2012). Those involved used strategies that included lobbying, street protests, letters, websites, conferences and declaring global days dedicated to their cause.¹⁶ However, the enforcement of the European Citizens Initiative Reform (2011) prevented a considerable number of campaigns from developing, only three initiatives being accepted in six years by the European Commission. Until 2017, other 32 initiatives were closed due to the lack of support or because the submitters retired them. Other 6 are still open and can still be signed.¹⁷

¹⁴Radu MAGDIN, Radu GEORGESCU, *Two-or multi-speed Europe: Can it actually work?*, Strategikon, 2016, p. 10.

¹⁵Louisa PARKS, *Social Movement Campaigns on EU Policy. In the Corridors and in the Streets*, Palgrave MacMillan, 2015, p. 36.

¹⁶*Idem*, pp. 36-120.

¹⁷ *The European Citizens' Initiative*, available at <http://ec.europa.eu/citizens-initiative/public/welcome> consulted on 10.04.2017.

II. Factors for current issues.

Following the perspective of political citizenship and political participation in the EU, there are several factors which could affect the current state of affairs.

1. The economy

An overwhelming percent of the EU citizens believe that the EU is addressing wrongly the economic matters. The highest percentages of disagreement are among the citizens of Greece, Italy, Spain, France, Sweden, UK and the Netherlands.¹⁸ The contemporary discontent over the economy of the EU is rooted in the 2008 economic crisis, which caught the EU unprepared. More specifically, it affected the actual and potential growth of the economy, the labor market, the budgetary positions and it affected global imbalances.¹⁹ For instance, unemployment rates rose from an average of 7.3% in the Euro area to 12.0% in 2013, the most affected countries being Greece - where unemployment rose to 27% - and Spain - 26% of the population unemployed.²⁰ The economic crisis of 2008 was one of the contributing factors to the surge in the popularity of far-right parties and became one of their main discussion points. In spite of their questionable economic expertise,²¹ far-right parties address economic issues using a paternalistic and anti-corruption discourse, the latter being particularly constant for far-right parties from Eastern Europe, in spite of being unrealistic and opposite to the capabilities of the EU. Far-right parties become even more influent after passing the electoral threshold to enter national parliaments. The influences of these movements extend to the point where they test the normative limits of the system, as well as its ideologies and symbols. Thus, they change the traditional patterns for political competition and influence the policies of moderate parties as a consequence of the awareness that they raise and the nativist narrative that they formulate to

¹⁸ Bruce STOKES, *Euroskepticism Beyond Brexit. Significant Opposition in Key European Countries to an Even Closer EU*, Pew Research Center 7 June 2016, available online at <http://www.pewglobal.org/files/2016/06/Pew-Research-Center-Brexit-Report-FINAL-June-7-2016.pdf>, consulted on 12.04.2017.

¹⁹ See *Economic Crisis in Europe: Causes, Consequences and Responses*, Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs, European Commission, 7/2009.

²⁰ *The Impact Of The Economic Crisis On Euro Area Labour Markets*, ECB, Monthly Bulletin, October 2014, available online at https://www.ecb.europa.eu/pub/pdf/other/art1_mb201410_pp49-68.en.pdf, consulted on 13.04.2017, pp. 49-50.

²¹ Andrea L. P. PIRRO, *The Populist Radical Right in Central and Eastern Europe, Ideology, Impact, And Electoral Performance*, Routledge, 2016, pp. 135-136.

frame specific issues,²² which attracts voters. Research studies show, additionally, that far-right parties show distinct features according to their location, either in Western or Eastern Europe.²³

2. The refugee crisis

The increasing number of refugees that have settled in the EU in the last years has generated the widespread discontent of its citizens, fueling Euroscepticism. From the surveyed Europeans, over 70% of Greeks, Swedes, Italians, Spanish, Hungarian and Polish agree that the EU doesn't efficiently manage the refugee crisis. The highest percentage of support for this subject is shown by the population of the Netherlands, but only by 31% of the respondents.²⁴ The refugee crisis stimulated the anti-immigrant rhetoric of far-right parties in countries including France, Hungary and England. Mostly, the phenomenon is also a consequence of the increasing number of terrorist attacks in some of the most powerful states of the EU.

3. Low connection between MEPs and national electorate

Holding elections for the EP once in five years increases the stability of the institution. However, the frequency contributes to the diminishment of the prestige of the EP. Additionally, the list system, one of the two common principles of the elections organized for the EP,²⁵ creates a weak link between voters and candidates. Often, national electoral campaigns don't emphasize the candidate, in favor of the party, and only previously known political figures are recognized by the public.

Mass-media coverage also determines the perception by the electorate of the EP. A study published in the European Journal of Political Research at the beginning of the current legislature, which evaluated the presence in national mass-media of the MEPs from England, France, the Netherlands, Germany and Italy, found that only 20% of the MEPs were mentioned regularly by national news outlets. Media coverage was influenced by determinants including

²² Andrea L. P. PIRRO, *The Populist Radical Right in Central and Eastern Europe, Ideology, Impact, And Electoral Performance*, Routledge, 2016, p. 119.

²³ Robert ROHRSCHEIDER, Stephen WHITEFIELD, *Responding To Growing European Union-Skepticism? The Stances Of Political Parties Toward European Integration In Western And Eastern Europe Following The Financial Crisis*, European Union Politics, Vol. 17(1) 138–161, Sage Publications, 2016, pp.156-158.

²⁴ Bruce STOKES, *Euroscepticism Beyond Brexit. Significant Opposition in Key European Countries to an Even Closer EU*, Pew Research Center 7 June 2016, available online at <http://www.pewglobal.org/files/2016/06/Pew-Research-Center-Brexit-Report-FINAL-June-7-2016.pdf>, consulted on 12.04.2017.

²⁵ *The European Parliament: Electoral Procedures*, Fact Sheets on the European Union, The European Parliament, available at http://www.europarl.europa.eu/atyourservice/en/displayFtu.html?ftuId=FTU_1.3.4.html, consulted on 11.04.2017.

seniority in the office, the importance of the seat that the MEP occupies, age, the prestige held in the national party, if they are independents or members of a political party and the number of parliamentary questions. Conversely, the routine activity of the MEPs inside the European legislature is unlikely to receive news coverage.²⁶ These findings help in understanding the democratic deficit of EU, considering that low media coverage results in the low ability of Member State's citizens to recognize a MEP. Additionally, politicians whose ambitions are to play a significant role in the national politics after the conclusion of their mandate may have fewer incentives to engage in the activities of the EP.

4. Discontinuity between national parties and European political groups

After the 2014 EP elections for the eighth parliamentary term, eight political groups have formed, without counting the group of non-attached members: The Group of the European People's Party (PPE), the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists & Democrats (S&D), the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE), the European Free Alliance Greens (Vers/ALE), the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR), the European United Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL), the Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFD).²⁷ However, the current system of political organization of the EP poses several problems that contest its activity and legitimacy. Firstly, the electorate of the political groups is practically inexistent since, at national levels, voters distribute their ballot towards national parties' representatives who, in turn, chose to enter in a political group. Secondly, their internal organization doesn't address leadership policies. Thirdly, the unity of their alliances is more unstable comparing to national parties.²⁸ These factors create circumstances that prompt MEPs to choose their affiliation to a European party after weighting factors such as the alliance's influence and its projects, instead of following the ideological line of their national party. Additionally, given this organization, an MEP has to simultaneously develop three distinct activities: their EP mandate, being part of their European

²⁶ Katjana GATTERMANN, Sofia VASILOPOULOU, *Absent Yet Popular? Explaining News Visibility of Members of the European Parliament*, European Journal of Political Research, volume 24, Issue 1, February 2015, pp. 121-140.

²⁷ *Seats, MEPs, The European Parliament*, available online at <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/hemicycle.html> consulted on 10.04.2017.

²⁸ Mogens N. PEDERSEN, *Euro-Parties And European Parties: New Arenas, New Challenges And New Strategies*, in Kjell A. ELIASSEN, Svein S. ANDERSEN, *The European Union: How Democratic Is It?*, Sage, London, 1996, p. 16.

party's activities and working to maintain the connection to their constituency and to the national party in order to prepare their reelection.²⁹

III. How should the EU respond to its contemporary challenges?

1. Building a stronger European Union

On one hand, in response to the popular feeling of misrepresentation in the EP and acknowledging the provisions of the Maastricht Treaty and the Lisbon Treaty, we suggest that the EP should have its legislative right extended so that it would become able to pass legislation. On the other hand, the EU and its Member States should continue to focus its attention on economic stability, rule of law, fight against corruption and unemployment. Addressing the aftermath of the economic crisis in 2008, we consider that the application of the ten policy points included in the 2014-2019 plan of the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, will result in a stronger and more unified EU.³⁰ The red lights of the European economy in 2017 include the unemployment rates, which spanned from 2.9% in Ireland up to 23% in Greece with an average rate for the 28 member states of 8%.³¹ The difference in economic performance could be one of the reasons for which the idea of a two-speed Europe emerged. The economic development of the Member States of the EU, evaluated on a case by case procedure, is important for the future unity of the organization. However, in order to pursue economic development, the fight against corruption and the applicability of the rule of law must be pursued, in order to avoid further discrepancies between the EU Member States.

2. E-democracy and enhancing communication

As we speak, 99.8% of the households in the EU have access to a broadband connection, excluding satellite. Should we add satellite, all EU households have access to a broadband

²⁹ *Idem*, pp. 23-24.

³⁰ See Setting EU Priorities, 2014-2019. The Ten Priorities of Jean-Claude Juncker's Political Guidelines, Briefing, October 2014, available online at <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/EPRS/EPRS-Briefing-538963-Setting-EU-Priorities-2014-19-FINAL.pdf>, accessed on 17.04.2017.

³¹ *Unemployment statistics*, Eurostat, February 2017, available online at http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Unemployment_statistics, accessed on 13.04.2017.

connection.³² Additionally, each day, 71% of the population of the EU who has an internet connection uses it at least once and only 14% of the European citizens have never used the internet.³³

E-democracy in the EU is defined by three channels of communication: e-information, e-consultation and e-decision-making.³⁴ The European institutions have made efforts in order to communicate better via social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) and using websites. Additionally, the EU conducts public online consultations and accepts online submissions of citizens' initiatives and petitions. In spite of the fact that the internet is the second source of information after TV³⁵, the current pace of the process of digitalization signals that the EU institutions should continue to expand the digital communication and consultation processes. Therefore, all MEPs should be advised to use all digital communication channels available in order to communicate with their national electors and should be required to answer to every request or information request received from the citizens of the EU. New communication technologies have enormous potential for fostering citizen participation in the democratic system and, as a way of building a more transparent and participatory democracy, should be regarded as a public good. Their transformative power should not be restricted to electoral processes, but should be extended to all aspects of civic participation in political processes. As the process of governance becomes more and more complex, citizens might not be able to keep track and might not understand all information. Thus, the trust in the authorities could decrease, endangering the social and political unity.³⁶ Also, regarding the European Citizens Initiative, we believe that in the current form it is relatively easy to understand, but it lacks popularity and trust from the EU citizens. Furthermore, one of the other reasons for which citizens lack trust in EU would be the apparent lack of balance of power. Even if the number of seats in the EP is assigned

³² *Broadband Coverage in Europe 2015. Mapping Progress Towards the coverage objectives of the Digital Agenda*, Final Report, the European Commission, available online at <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/broadband-coverage-europe-2015>, consulted on 15.04.2017, p.19.

³³ *Internet Access and Use Statistics - Households and Individuals*, December 2016, Eurostat, available online at http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Internet_access_and_use_statistics_-_households_and_individuals, consulted on 18.04.2017.

³⁴ *Potential and Challenges of E-Participation in the European Union, Citizen's Rights and Constitutional Affairs*, Policy Department C, Directorate-General for Internal Policies, 2016, available online at [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/556949/IPOL_STU\(2016\)556949_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/556949/IPOL_STU(2016)556949_EN.pdf), accessed on 18.04.2017, p. 14.

³⁵ Raphael Kies, *Promises And Limits Of Web-Deliberation*, Palgrave MacMillan, New York, 2010, pp.66-94.

³⁶ *Global Trends to 2030: Can the EU meet the challenges ahead?*, European Strategy and Policy Analysis System, 2015, p.9.

proportionally to the population of each state, there is a perception that mainly France and Germany are conducting the politics of the EU. This can be solved by reducing the opacity of the decision-making process at the European level and also by a better communication between the MEP's and those who voted for them.³⁷ In order to enhance the awareness of the citizens of the the EU regarding the organization's activity, the EU should aim at conventional channels of communication as well. More precisely, all Member States should be advised to include in the program of national television and radio an hour daily of news and informative programs regarding the activity of the EU.

3. Reconsidering the enlargement plans and responding to the refugee crisis

One of the main problems of the EU could lie in its enlargement strategy. Euroscepticism started to manifest in Europe after the biggest enlargement wave in 2004 and when the EU has started to expand to the East and to address the subject of the Moldavian and Ukrainian membership. The enlargement was indeed made for the mutual benefit of the EU and for the Member States, however some factors make continuing enlargement difficult. Firstly, the enlargement process introduces a new examination of the content and meaning of EU citizenship. The question of whether there are core and some auxiliary rights is raised when the key right of EU citizenship—the right to move and take up residence—is denied to at least one important category of individuals: migrant workers from accession countries. EU citizenship is not a fixed category. Its meaning is contested by the various EU institutions, national governments, groups, and individuals, and this contestation is a key to understanding European integration.³⁸ This particular point has been considered as one of the main reasons for the anti-EU vote during the referendum organized in the UK in June 2016.

The EU institutions and its Member States should continue the process of integrating into national societies the refugees. At the same time, the EU border regulation should be further evaluated in addition to the humanitarian help that the EU should use to support the countries affected by conflicts.

³⁷Jean DE RUYT, *Who is leading the European Union?*, *European Policy Brief*, No. 33 March 2014, p.3.

³⁸Willem MAAS, *Citizenship, Free Movement, and EU Enlargement*, *Jean Monnet/Robert Schuman Paper Series*, Miami, 2005, p. 9.

Conclusion

Because of its dimension and complexity, periodical crisis in the EU could be seen as somehow normal.³⁹ The success of the fifth enlargement of the EU is still an indicator of good practice by the EU institutions and cooperation between Member States.⁴⁰ However, the EU has to address its internal crisis as soon as possible since a continuous series of internal clashes endangers the organization's position on the international markets and, consequently, the welfare of its citizens. One of the reasons for these clashes stems from the political culture of the Member States and can be solved by treating each state as a separate case. This would also help in creating a common tool for political participation and civic engagement at the EU level and decreasing the discrepancies between the member states.

In the next years, the EU authorities should focus mainly on reducing the gap between them and the citizens; the lack of communication between the two has faded the legitimacy of the former in the eyes of the latter. Without a clear strategy of making the population acknowledge the successes of the EU and without taking accountability for the failures, it would be harder for the EU to stabilize its internal situation. Also, if the refugee flux is to continue, the EU must implement a border control system that wouldn't allow the situation from the last years to repeat and to focus more on the process of integrating the refugees.

The EU has achieved great progress in the past couple of years. The challenges that it's currently coping with, if tackled correctly, will contribute to the development of the organization.

³⁹George ROSS, *The European Union and Its Crises: Through the Eyes of the Brussels' Elite*, Palgrave MacMillan, 2011, p. 29.

⁴⁰Idem,p.30.

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