

THINK-TANK TASK FORCE 4

EUROPEAN GOVERNANCE AND DEMOCRACY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

ANALYSIS

- ◆ After the historical enlargement of the EU with ten new member states in May 2004, the present structures of European governance no longer seem appropriate to delivering results regarding the three goals of a 'magic triangle': (a) further integration, (b) further enlargement, and (c) sustained, ideally increased, governability. By 'governability', we mean not only policy-making procedures that deliver results efficiently (output perspective), but also procedures that effectively ensure democratic participation, accountability and transparency (input perspective).
- ◆ There are two main areas of attention: democracy and workability. The former refers to the task of increasing citizens' awareness of and participation in European decision-making. The second implies a need for greater flexible integration due to the increased heterogeneity of EU members.

PROPOSALS

- ◆ The European Union has deficits in democratic accountability and legitimacy and suffers from a lack of transparency. To deal with these, better communication between citizens, national parliaments, and EU institutions, and more openness of EU decision-making is necessary. Members of Task Force 4 recommend the following institutional reforms:
 - National parliaments should play a more prominent role as mediators between the citizen and the EU. There should be more incentives for national parliaments to take part in the EU decision-making process, for example by extending the 'early warning system' for any draft EU legislative act to be scrutinised, if a sufficient number of member-state parliaments raise serious doubts about its necessity.
 - Transparency should be further increased by making meetings of the Council of the EU public when it acts as co-legislator.

- Citizens' initiatives to get the Commission to consider new legal acts should be institutionalised and encouraged. Under clearly-stated, strict rules, initiatives aimed at repealing specific legal acts of the EU should also be made possible.
 - As a way of illustrating the transnational aspiration of the European party system, there could be an (informal) rule that at least one representative of the same political family from another country should be on the list of his sister party. For the same purpose, it could be made mandatory that parties use the logos not only of their member state of origin, but that of their European political parties as well, for any activity during EP electoral campaigns.
 - There should be a comprehensive and mandatory Register of Lobbyists to inform the European Parliament and the Commission of the activities and funding of those lobbyist groups who officially comment on Commission proposals. There should also be a strict code of conduct for lobby groups. The European Parliament and the Commission should maintain the right to reprimand and expel anyone who does not act according to this code.
 - A more detailed publication of the funds and subsidies of the EU should make the use of the EU budget more transparent to the European citizen-taxpayers.
- ◆ An enlarged EU needs to rethink its strategy concerning the integration process. With increased heterogeneity within the Union, the workability and adequacy of unified encompassing legislation become more difficult to achieve. The main stress should now be on "enhanced cooperation" – not as a means of last resort that can only be employed if strict conditions are met. Many restrictions to the use of this tool of flexible integration - such as the requirement that one third of all EU member states need to be involved - are to be modified or eliminated, as they are barriers to further cooperation amongst those willing and capable. 'Flexibility' should not be an excuse for 'enhanced protectionism'. The fundamental aspects of the *acquis communautaire*, above all the rights of all European citizens to make use of their basic freedoms within the single market, have to remain common to all EU Member States. If these issues are solved, enhanced cooperation will result in several positive consequences:
- Member states will have the freedom and flexibility to choose their 'level' of integration, as it allows different intensities of membership.
 - More integration occurs as the costs of both integration and enlargement are reduced. This reduction is due to facilitated agreement: lower decision-making costs and lower costs of having to accept an inadequate common policy.
 - 'Enhanced cooperation' should be allowed in any policy field, without the possibility of individual outsider countries using the veto.
 - Allowing numerous enhanced cooperation arrangements among subsets of countries or even sub-national units (regions, communes) by easing the conditions required for such cooperation could make flexible forms of integration possible and help overcome the challenges that a larger and more diverse Union poses.