

Rediscovering Europe

Mark Leonard

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Mark Leonard, June 1998

Introduction: a tale of two Europes

On the eve of its most ambitious projects to date – Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) and enlargement – the European Union (EU) is less popular than it has been for a generation. Despite its many successes, it often appears to the public to be a secretive bureaucracy that spends its time laying down impenetrable regulations, operating behind closed doors.

The paradox is that in other ways Europe is stronger than ever. It is more integrated in its concerns, more visible and present in our everyday lives, in the new jobs we do, the companies we deal with, the food we eat, the places we travel to, the values, cultures and priorities we share.

Yet the EU has not succeeded in turning this latent ‘Europeanism’ into popular support for European integration. The problem is that the EU’s leaders have tended to think about the issue of legitimacy in the wrong way and to look for it in the wrong places. In the past, there were two general ways of thinking about the EU’s legitimacy problems. One approach saw the EU’s unpopularity as a product of either having ‘too much’ or ‘too little’ integration. The Eurosceptic response was to argue for ‘less EU’ by repatriating powers to member states. The pro-European response was to make Europe more like a nation state, by building federal institutions like the European Parliament, establishing European citizenship or creating symbols and an identity on the national model. The other approach has been to pin Europe’s legitimacy problems on an information deficit. Many have argued that if

the public were only made more aware of what the EU is doing – and if the Commission had a better information strategy – the EU would become more popular.

‘Progress in the EU has been brought about by great leaders from Adenauer onwards. Today we still have great leaders, but the people are not willing to follow’.

Professor William Wallace, London School of Economics

This pamphlet calls for a new approach to the question of legitimacy. It argues that those who believe that the project of integration in Europe is inherently unpopular and doomed to fail are wrong; there is in fact strong latent support across the member states and beyond for further European integration. But it also rejects the conventional solutions to Europe’s legitimacy problems. The view that Europe can be made more popular through institutional innovations alone – or recreating the nation state at a higher level – has over the years proved ineffectual. And those who believe that Europe’s key problem is simply one of communication, one that could be solved by bigger information campaigns, a new flag or better advertising, are equally wrong.

In fact, the EU is unpopular not because we have the wrong ‘amount’ of European integration, or because people aren’t informed about the project of ever closer union in the right way, but because we have the wrong kind of European Union. In short, the EU is unpopular because its institutions and preoccupations have become detached from its people.

There are four core elements to this. First, the EU has become detached from people’s everyday experience of Europe. As a result of greater mobility and convergence of consumption, people have a growing sense of Europe as a continent and an emerging ‘European’ identity.¹ But, as yet, most Europeans do not identify the EU with their idea of Europe, and the EU has failed to embody it.

Secondly, the EU’s institutional priorities do not fit well with the priorities of its people. While Europe’s voters are primarily concerned

with key dimensions of quality of life – the availability and quality of jobs, fear of crime and the state of the natural and built environment – Europe’s leaders devote most of their time and money to EMU and the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).²

Thirdly, the EU has not succeeded in spreading the benefits of EU membership. From early on most of the direct benefits have gone to minority groups and areas – farmers, declining industries and under-developed regions. Since the single market most of the indirect benefits have been felt by the better educated and more mobile. The result is that many people don’t feel they have benefited – the EU is seen as ‘Club-class’.³

‘What Europe needs is a new narrative that describes a new reality. But instead it has a jungle of decision-making that people don’t understand. It has become clear that simply reforming institutions is not enough to produce legitimacy.’

Rudolf Scharping, SPD

Finally, the EU has lost its sense of mission and is not fully geared up to meet the major challenges of the future. Its core mission, priorities and purpose have not been reinvented since the end of the Cold War, which shaped so many of the old Community’s priorities. Each of the original missions of peace, prosperity and democracy has lost force. In their place there is nothing capable of inspiring European citizens – even historic moves towards enlargement and EMU have become embroiled in technical wrangles. European leaders appear to lack a compelling vision for the future beyond vague aspirations to create a Union which has superpower status in the global economy and political order.⁴

This situation is largely a product of success. What seemed half a century ago to be an improbable vision has been achieved: war in western Europe is unthinkable, prosperity has spread throughout the EU states to a degree unimaginable in the 1950s, and the Union has established a set of institutions for collaboration and consensus-building

between interdependent states that is unique.⁵ But today we need to recognise that the European order has changed fundamentally since the 1950s – especially since 1989.

The challenge is to rediscover what it means to be European and to think afresh about the next phase of European integration – for the next 40 years. That is what this pamphlet is about: building a Europe that is based on the priorities, values and lifestyles of European citizens and is ready to deal with the economic, environmental and social challenges we all face.

Over the past six months we have conducted expert seminars, focus group discussions, in-depth interviews and opinion surveys across Europe to find out what people from all over the continent think being European is about, and what they want from the project of European integration in the future. The result is this report. We have distilled the data and analysis to develop seven ‘narratives’ which could be used to help form the basis of a new European identity and provide a sense of direction for the next phase of European integration. Each one is about rediscovering what Europe is for and what it means to its citizens. They are positive and bold aims for the future – mission statements for a real people’s Europe.

‘There is a real crisis of expectations – Europe has been transformed from panacea into all-purpose scapegoat in just 10 years’.

Rafael Delgado, Fundación Pablo Iglesias

Detached institutions: why the European project is unpopular

‘The EU was set up to meet specific historic challenges for which it was the best – probably the only – structure available. The reconstruction of the European family and the re-introduction of Germany established peace and prosperity. But that is all water under the bridge. We now need a new story to show that people can still trust the EU institutions to face a new set of challenges.’

John Fitzmaurice, European Commission

Four decades after its inception, the EU’s very right to exist is still being debated in many European countries. Fewer than half of Europeans think their country’s membership of the EU is a good thing, and only four out of ten think that their country benefits from EU membership.⁶ These results make dismal reading for supporters of European integration, on the eve of Europe’s most ambitious developments yet. But they are not altogether surprising.

In order to understand where we are today, we must understand how we got here. In a very real sense, the legitimacy problems of today are the direct result of the past 40 years of European integration.

European integration was about performing seemingly impossible tasks: regenerating the European economy, bringing peace to a continent more used to the ravages of war and establishing democracy in

countries with authoritarian traditions and recent experience of vicious totalitarianism. In many ways, the EU was about saving European publics and politicians from themselves. It was born in an era when public approval mattered relatively little and when the wider geo-political agenda was utterly dominated by the Cold War. Its concerns were technocratic and so were its means – the more depoliticised it could be, the better. Claude Cheysson, a former French foreign minister and European commissioner, is on record as saying that ‘Europe could only be created in the absence of democracy’.

‘Europe began as an elitist project in which it was believed that all was required was to convince the decision-makers. That phase of benign despotism is over.’

Jacques Delors

While the memory and fear of war were strong, and while economic recovery dominated popular concerns, it was possible for the European project to be an elite enterprise, a benign technocratic conspiracy designed to bring about irreversible integration. A ‘permissive consensus’ allowed national governments to take decisions about European integration without any real popular mandate. Even today, throughout the EU, the public sees European integration as ‘inevitable’ – even when they disagree with it. So although across Europe only 53 per cent say they support the introduction of the single currency, and more than half ‘fear’ its introduction, three out of four people expect it to happen regardless.⁷

When the EU was only concerned with providing common standards for tomato paste composition or lawn-mower sound emissions, this model of technocratic ‘integration for your own good’ was sustainable. But today, with the end of the Cold War and the rise of an EU that is responsible for half of all domestic legislation and 80 per cent of economic and social legislation, the situation has changed utterly.⁸ Now that most of the technical issues (product standards, mutual recognition of education certificates and so on) have been settled, the European

agenda is increasingly dominated by more contentious and salient issues. The decisions taken over convergence criteria laid down at Maastricht and over working conditions have direct a impact on people's lives and welfare. What is more, the twin projects of EMU and enlargement will transform the nature of the EU and place new burdens on EU citizens and budgets.

The main reason that the EU often inspires suspicion, fear or cynicism among many citizens across the member states is that during the course of 40 years of technocratic integration, it has become accustomed to being detached from its citizens. This poses four major problems for the legitimacy of the EU project. Firstly, the EU does not embody the things that most people associate with the continent of Europe, or foster a positive sense of identification with its goals and structures; secondly, its priorities do not appear to reflect citizens' key concerns and aspirations for the future; thirdly, it has been unable to demonstrably shed its 'club-class' image and spread tangible benefits to a majority, rather than concentrating on farmers, underdeveloped regions, and those with high skills, and high incomes who benefit most from the single market; finally, it has no convincing vision of where it is going and how it is planning to meet the strategic challenges facing Europe over the longer term.

'The key to being European is a sense of innovation and creativity. The problem with European institutions is that they don't have a clear defining mission. They have no big ideas and creativity – they are just grey and dull.'

Adam Lury, Howell, Henry, Chaldcott and Lury

People feel part of Europe but not the EU

The first problem is that although many people increasingly feel 'European' as well as a member of a nation or region or other grouping, they do not identify positively with the EU.

Exactly half of EU citizens feel that they will develop a European component to their identity 'in the near future'⁹. One in ten see their

European identity as stronger than their national identity.¹⁰ And, if you separate European identity from national identity more explicitly and ask ‘in addition to your own sense of nationality, how European do you feel?’, respondents give replies that are even more positive. Two thirds of UK citizens claim to feel ‘European’, with this formulation.¹¹

Yet when pollsters ask those who claim to feel ‘European’ what this means to them, they tend not to mention the EU. Focus group research work has indicated that people find it difficult to give a definite meaning to ‘being European’ – they might associate it with culture, history, a shared geographical space, travelling, food and a set of values. Above all, they say that it is something they might feel if confronted with, say, Japanese or American people. But they are unlikely to link a feeling of belonging to Europe to their nation’s membership of the EU. Ironically, people are more likely to identify with Europe if they come from countries outside the EU. In a recent survey, 59 per cent of Poles and 42 per cent of Czechs claimed that their European identity was as strong as their national identity – a far higher proportion than any of the EU countries covered in the same poll.¹²

‘The invasion of European football players is seen by most people as a good thing. Ordinary kids in Britain will follow their favourite players around Europe and say ‘my team is Juventus.’

Martin Jacques

‘Greeks and Italians experience Europe through their diaspora. They have become the caterers of Europe – every European city has their restaurants.’

John Lloyd, The New Statesman

It is important not to overstate this reported sense of identity. As many as 45 per cent of EU citizens say that they do not feel any kind of European identity, and there are structural barriers to its development.¹³ The linguistic diversity of the Union is the major block to any

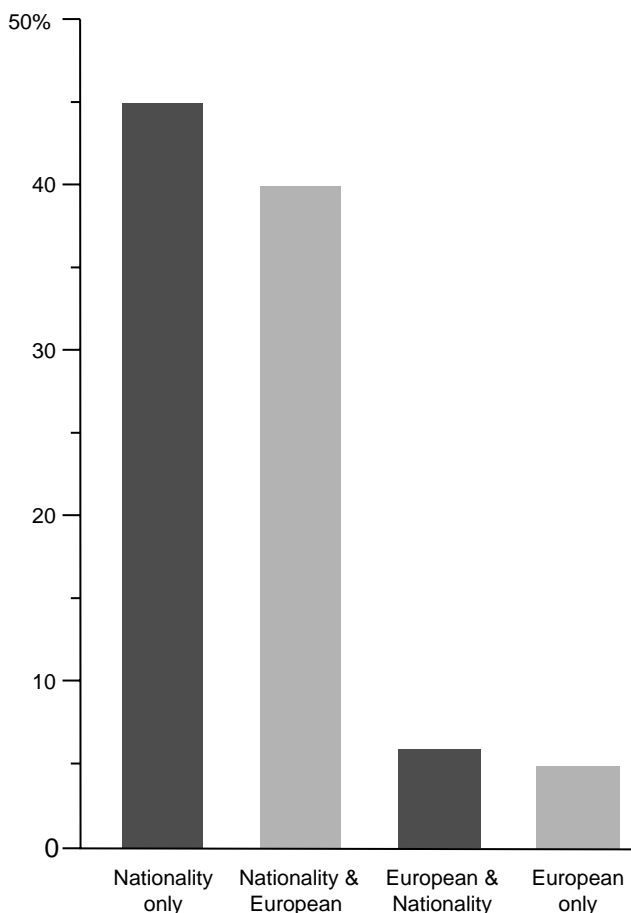


Figure In the near future do you see yourself as?

notion of integration on the lines of the USA. The fact that over half of Europeans are incapable of having a conversation in a second language has made the development of a common media and cultural life impossible so far.¹⁴ It has also seriously hampered labour mobility. Fewer than one in 50 (1.6 per cent) EU citizens is resident in another EU country.¹⁵ Even Belgium, the only country with a significant

number of EU nationals from different countries living in it, has only 5 per cent.¹⁶

‘Europeans will start identifying with the EU when the EU delivers outcomes that they want’.

John Fitzmaurice, European Commission

Despite this, there is evidence of a gradual emergence of a common culture. There is increasing convergence at the micro-social level in Europe: as affluence grows, so consumers develop tastes, priorities and concerns in common, and more people become accustomed to travelling around the continent for business or leisure.¹⁷ Household structures and family patterns are becoming similar, albeit slowly, with Mediterranean trends beginning to follow North European developments.¹⁸ Economic integration exposes more people across the Union to similar working practices, problems and opportunities.

‘When the Euro-rail generation think Europe they see ‘Europe espace’ not ‘Europe puissance’. They don’t see it as a project and they don’t know about national history’.

Professor William Wallace, London School of Economics

The fragments of this emerging European cultural identity and lifestyle are stored away in holiday snapshots and memories of art, literature, music, buildings and landscape. It is a product of people’s ability to experience Europe directly – unmediated by national governments and European institutions. The process has been accelerated by things that have brought about everyday Europeanism: cheaper travel, Inter-rail, the Channel Tunnel, the growth of European restaurants, and European food on supermarket shelves, the Eurovision Song Contest, the ERASMUS exchange programme, the relaxation of border of controls, European sporting contests, Euronews, etc. The international make-up of football teams is another of the many forces acclimatising

people to a sense of 'being European' which overlaps with, rather than takes over from, other identities at national, regional or local level. Footballers such as Ruud Gullit and Jürgen Klinsmann (and other French, Dutch, Italian or German players in the English Premiership) embody an attractive mingling of local, national and Euro-identities whose influences is far-reaching. As the social theorist Manuel Castells points out: 'It is through this kind of basic life mechanisms that the real Europe is coming into existence – by sharing experience on the basis of meaningful palpable identity'.¹⁹ For all the linguistic and cultural barriers to integration, this nascent 'European identity' is real.

'The European idea is empty ... it was created by intellectuals, and that fact accounts for its genuine appeal to the mind and its feeble appeal to the heart.'

Raymond Aron, 'The Century of Total War'

So why don't people associate it with the EU? The first reason that people don't feel part of the EU is that they have not been part of its construction. It was brought about behind closed doors in chancelleries and conference centres by policy elites. The other reason is that the EU has failed to embody many of the things people associate with 'being European' and has not harnessed the forces for micro-social integration.

'The permissive consensus only worked in the absence of Europe, but when Europe starts permeating everyday life the permissive consensus disappears.'

Karlheinz Reif, European Commission

This matters because political systems cannot just rely on support for day-to-day activities in the good times, they need to be given the benefit of the doubt in the bad times as well. This means fostering a sense of identity which allows governments to take 'tough decisions' or bring about major change without the existence of the whole political

system being called into question. As the EU embarks on the potentially disruptive and high-risk experiment of EMU and faces the challenges of enlargement, it needs more than a new version of the 'permissive consensus' of the earlier phases of integration. It needs people to feel part of it.

Disconnected: the mismatch between EU priorities and citizens' concerns

The second problem is that the EU has not based European integration on the ambitions and aspirations of its citizens. It is ironic that, at a time when other political systems are putting increasing resources into monitoring shifts in the priorities and values of their citizens, the EU's operational priorities should be so far removed from the priorities of its citizens.

'How can we justify monetary union in Europe to our citizens if we are not even capable of dealing with the outbreak of a war in the middle of Europe?'

Wolfgang Schauble, CDU

Although EU citizens know little about the EU's structures and processes, they have no such doubts about what it should be doing. Opinion surveys have consistently shown their priorities. Ninety two per cent see 'fighting unemployment' as a priority; 89 per cent say the same about 'fighting poverty and social exclusion'; 88 per cent about 'maintaining peace and security' in Europe; and 85 per cent about 'protecting the environment'.²⁰

The EU, by contrast, devotes most of its time and budget to issues that are not seen as priorities. Only one in ten (9 per cent) Europeans see 'ensuring an adequate income for farmers' as important, but half the EU budget and one fifth of ministerial meetings are devoted to the Common Agricultural Policy. The same small percentage sees EMU as a priority, yet more time is spent on this than any other policy area. Only 46 per cent see 'reforming the institutions of the EU and the way

they work' as a priority, yet these activities play a large part in the EU's public communications.²¹

There is a gulf developing between European decision-makers and European citizens. A recent survey in the UK showed that only 15 per cent thought that the EU was 'in touch with people'.²² Another poll has revealed the difference between the attitudes to Europe of 'top decision-makers' (politicians, high level civil servants, business and labour leaders, the media and leading players in academic, cultural and religious life) and 'ordinary' citizens. Ninety four per cent of decision-makers thought their country's membership of the EU was a good thing – compared to 48 per cent of ordinary citizens.²³ Nine out of ten thought their country benefited from EU membership, compared to 42 per cent of ordinary people.²⁴ Eighty five per cent were in favour of EMU compared to 51 per cent of the general public.²⁵

'The development of the EU was only possible in the absence of democracy. The idea that there is a 'democratic deficit' is absurd as it assumes that democracy was part of the original equation. The EU was never intended to be democratic.'

Professor Eric Hobsbawm, Birbeck College, London

One of the clearest indicators of this is the difference in the public's reactions to the Amsterdam Treaty and the Luxembourg employment summit. Although the Amsterdam Treaty marked the end of the Inter-Governmental Conference (IGC) and signified major institutional change – including a large extension of the European Parliament's power – only one third of EU citizens (34 per cent) said that they knew about it.²⁶ Yet the employment summit, which took place a few months later and made no real substantive decisions, was noticed by 55 per cent of European citizens.²⁷ There is no question that more energy was put into Amsterdam by European decision-makers, but the fact that the Luxembourg summit was seen to be dealing with issues that related to most people's priorities rather than the vagaries of institutional reform made it far more memorable.

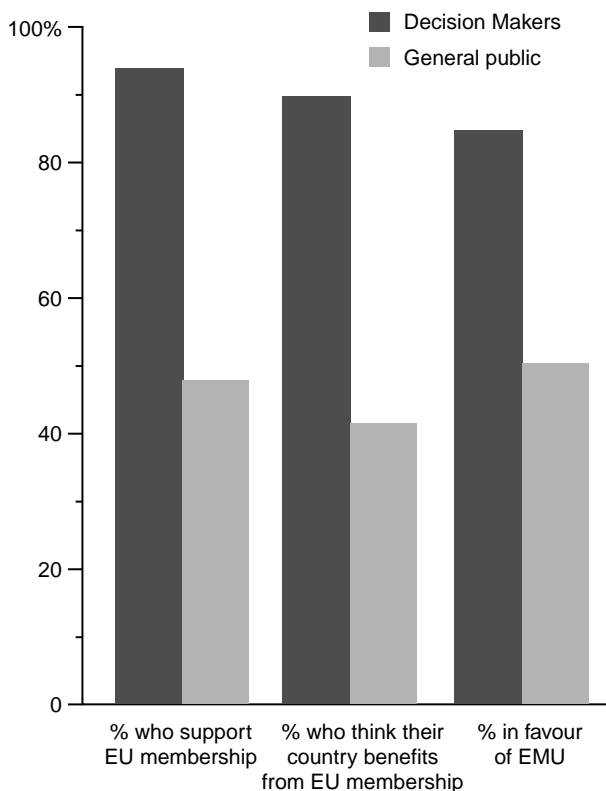


Figure The gulf between decision-makers and the public.

‘For people over 35 the fundamental idea of Europe is democracy, intertwined with a vague idea of common culture. For under 35s there is no clear idea at all!’

Jose-Felix Tezano, Fundación Sistema

The public’s response to the inability of European Union institutions and activities to make a genuine priority of their concerns has been apathy on a grand scale. Turnout in European parliamentary elections has consistently been lower than in national elections in all member

states and has fallen with each succeeding election (in the UK it hit an unimpressive glass ceiling of 36.5 per cent). There are a variety of explanations for the low turnout in the Europe elections, but this gap between what the public wants from Europe and what it gets must be a major part of any diagnosis.

Club-class Europe: the failure to spread the benefits of EU membership

The third problem is the EU's failure to deliver tangible benefits to a majority of its citizens.

One problem is that, people rarely experience 'the EU' directly as most of its actions are mediated by national or local government. In fact, 97 per cent of Europeans say that they have never had any direct contact with the EU.²⁸ This is coupled with the fact that national and local governments are happy to take credit for popular measures and, conversely, have no qualms about letting the EU take the blame for unpopular ones.

Even with that caveat, it is clear that the EU has not succeeded in spreading the benefits of membership as widely as it might. From early on, most of the direct benefits of EU membership have been enjoyed by minority groups and areas – farmers, heavy industry and residents of underdeveloped regions. Some of these measures played a part in fostering social inclusion across member states and mitigating the worst effects of industrial decline, but there is a colossal lack of proportion. Though today almost half of EU citizens live in areas that are entitled to money from the European Union structural funds, the amounts involved pale into insignificance when compared with the 48 per cent of the budget that is devoted to farmers. They represent only 6.5 per cent of EU citizens, and generate less than 3 per cent of EU GDP, half the EU budget is devoted to farm subsidies, and many of these payments go to support activities of low social value with undersirable impacts on the environment.

'Legitimacy comes not only from democracy and a sense of belonging, but from problem-solving and efficiency.'

Wolfgang Schäuble, CDU

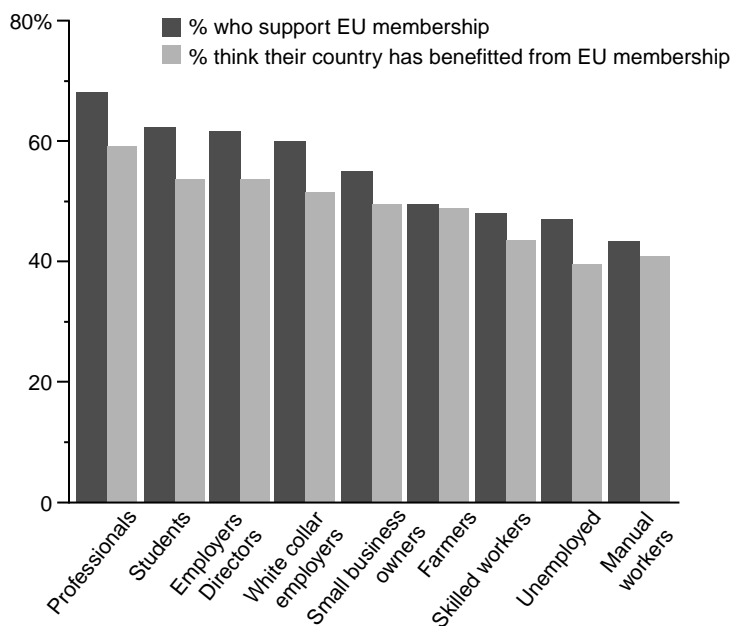


Figure Support for integration by social group.

Most of the economic benefits that flow from EU membership – particularly since the creation of the single market – are indirect. But these are also unevenly spread. They are most likely to be felt by those in managerial and professional areas with high skills and high incomes, or such as students who are more mobile. Research shows that these people are much more likely to support European Integration, and to think that their country has benefited from EU membership.

In fact, each occupational group – other than manual workers – reported feelings of having gained benefits from the EU rise with income. Increasingly, there is a division between the affluent and successful and the less secure employees and traders, between the Europe of the powerful and the powerless. And in Britain, only one in the four thinks that the EU has a good record at ‘raising the standard of living

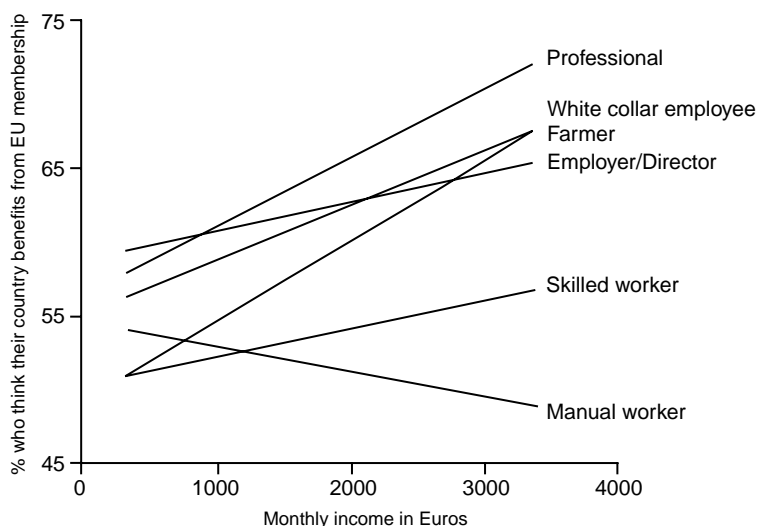


Figure Feelings of benefit from EU according to income and social group.

for ordinary people', compared to 38 per cent who think it has a poor record.

'Legitimacy does not come from legislation alone. One of the key problems with Europe is speed. Its institutions are not seen as a response to globalisation, but as institutions' sake. They key to making Europe popular is to make Europeans feel that Europe is an organic response to their needs, rather than something imposed on them.'

Shaun Woodward, MP

The link between economic insecurity and wider problems of legitimacy for the EU is evident from the data on support for integration. Many commentators interpret the current legitimacy problems as a consequence of Maastricht, but in fact positive responses to survey

questions about support for the EU peaked by the autumn of 1990. Karlheinz Reif argues that ‘as sectoral discussions about the specific issues of “1992” became visible, general approval, and even more clearly, hope in the single market, began to decline. People no longer felt they were being asked to react to the European project in the abstract, but were now responding to specific issues as they affected their everyday lives and were ranking their priorities accordingly.’²⁹ The economic turbulence of the 1990s and the uneven consequences for quality of life that have flowed from recession, the single market, deregulation and the wave of mergers and acquisitions across the EU have had an important impact on popular perceptions of what the Union can do for the average citizen, and how far its concerns are those of the general public.³⁰

‘If the EU is to create a shared sense of purpose amongst European citizens it needs to develop compelling narratives which give people clarity about the present and a positive feeling for the future.’

John Sorrell, Interbrand Newell and Sorrell

The EU in search of a mission: facing up to the strategic challenges to Europe

The most serious problem for the Union, however, is that EU leaders have failed to develop a convincing vision for the future of Europe – one that deals with the strategic challenges ahead and offers a compelling ‘narrative’ of what further integration is actually *for*.

Today, Europe is in the midst of a profound change. The impact of the external pressures of globalisation and the end of the Cold War have changed the geo-political and economic environment. There are external security pressures from the east and south – migration, military and environmental. Economic competition from Asia in particular has intensified and requires faster restructuring by European industries. At the same time, the twin projects of EMU and enlargement will transform the nature of the EU, as well as placing new burdens

of EU citizens and budgets. What is more, they come hot on the heels of changes to the EU which have made it responsible for half of all domestic legislation and 80 per cent of economic and social legislation across the member states.

Many people will support a regime that has a clear sense of direction, even if they disagree with specific policy decisions. But without one there is always a danger of being buffeted by events.

A continent in search of a mission

Faced with these challenges, EU leaders have been unsure and unconvincing. They have, in the eyes of their citizens, lost this clear sense of mission. Peace, prosperity and democracy – the compelling clarion calls which motivated the foundation of what is now the Union – have each lost much of their resonance. They are still the key reasons why the countries of central and eastern Europe want to join – but within the EU they have lost their purchase.

‘European leaders could have made enlargement into an exciting common project – instead they have reduced it to a series of technical wrangles. The same has happened with foreign and security policy.’

Professor William Wallace, London School of Economics

Peace is taken for granted by a generation in western Europe that has never known war. In a recent survey fewer than one in four fifteen to 24 year olds cited ‘peace’ when asked what the EU meant to them personally.³¹ Despite various attempts by Helmut Kohl and other politicians to claim that further integration is ‘a matter of peace or war’, many people feel the opposite, particularly in view of the EU’s inability to prevent the bloody fiasco of Yugoslavia’s break-up. The guarantee of prosperity has been tarnished by burgeoning unemployment and economic insecurity. In fact, many people have come to blame the EU and the Maastricht convergence criteria for their economic difficulties.

And the EU's role as guardian and promoter of democracy has been constrained and damaged by its complex and opaque decision-making system. In fact, many people – particularly in the UK – even see the EU leeching away national democracy, without creating a credible supra-national substitute.

These elements of the European mission need to be updated, enriched and supplemented by new narratives of what integration is intended to do for Europeans. At present, European leaders have little to offer beyond vague aspirations of building a European superpower or super-state. Even the historic enlargement to the east and the project of Economic and Monetary Union have become embroiled in technical wranglings, and there is no longer a clear sense of what the EU is embarking on these grandiose projects for. Part of the problem is that for years the sole mission of European integration has been 'ever-closer Union', which begs the question 'for what?'. Europe's leaders have failed to realise that if the debate continues to be conducted solely in terms of 'more Europe versus less Europe', they are in danger of ending up with a substantial proportion of the public seeing no purpose for 'Europe' at all.

Because there is no sense of direction on the strategic issues, many Europeans have lost faith in the ability of European institutions to deliver. The high profile given to fraud and waste and the costs of the Common Agricultural Policy, coupled with the visible failure of important EU initiatives such as its attempts to intervene in the former Yugoslavia, have dealt serious blows to the EU's image – making Europeans increasingly sceptical about the efficacy of European institutions.

'A European identity should not be based on politics or history, but on common values and ethics. When Europe has been struck by tragedies such as Chernobyl and Yugoslavia, citizens were light years ahead of their governments. Europe has to be an ethical project, promoting peace, diversity and human rights. The problem is not an absence of flags, but an absence of capabilities.'

Esteban Ibarra, Jóvenes Contra la Intolerancia

Only one in three (36 per cent) think that they can 'rely on' European institutions – a drop of 6 per cent in the last two years.³² They are even sceptical about the EU's performance at its foundations roles. For example, only half of UK citizens think the EU has a good record at 'bringing peace to Europe since the second world war', while as many as 22 percent think it has a bad one.³³

This matters because when there is no sense of an attractive 'Big picture', support for the process of European integration becomes closely linked to the fate of particular policies. Whereas a national political system does not usually run into trouble when a government policy is disliked (it will at most result in the election of a new government), the EU as a whole comes under fire and is at risk of legitimacy crises if a particular policy is perceived to be ineffective or wasteful. This underlines the risk that is being run in the establishment of EMU when public opinion has evidently not been sufficiently prepared or won over to the project. It also shows the need for individual policies to be linked to a bigger picture, if they are going to attract the interest and support of EU citizens.

Things can get better

The good news is that survey data and qualitative evidence show that levels of both support and opposition to the EU are very shallow.³⁴ As Karlheinz Reif, a former head of the EU's polling wing, points out: 'the EU has neither attracted enthusiastic support nor explicit opposition'. In fact, even in the 1997 general election in Britain, when Europe had dominated the campaign, it was never one of the top issues for voters.³⁵

'Continents that play together stay together. It's time for a European football team!'

John Lloyd, New Statesman

So, in the absence of major policy triumphs or disasters, most people do not feel strongly either way about EU membership and are

willing to be swayed by positive experience. Even in the UK, survey evidence indicates that a majority would be prepared to trade a loss in economic sovereignty in return for higher living standards.³⁶ This suggests that if the EU is seen to relate to people's priorities and values and is seen to deliver tangible benefits to its citizens, as well as having a clear sense of direction, it could go a long way to solving its legitimacy problems.

Why the existing attempts to build legitimacy will not work

‘There is not much evidence that increasing the power of the European Parliament either increases the awareness of the EU outside the Brussels square mile, and no evidence that it has helped give people a sense of European identity’.

European Commission Official

There have been many attempts by supporters of European integration to tackle the EU’s legitimacy problems. First, they have tried to use the techniques that originally legitimised nation states in order to make the EU more popular. The second approach has been to treat the EU’s unpopularity as a lack of information and to look for communication strategies to fill this deficit.

Replicating the national model

Many have argued that to become popular, the EU must simply push integration deeper and adopt the techniques that were used to build and legitimate the nation state. In doing this, they have focused on three areas: reforming institutions to make them more democratic, creating a notion of European citizenship and building a political identity for Europeans.

Institution-building

First, many have argued for building ‘federalist’ institutions to reduce the ‘democratic deficit’. The most commonly proposed solution is giving greater powers to the European Parliament. But given the lack of enthusiasm for voting in Euro-elections, this strategy is problematic. A recent qualitative survey by MORI found that ‘familiarity with institutions such as the European Parliament is almost non-existent.’³⁷ In any case, European elections are at present more likely to serve as a protest against national governments than as a genuine expression of opinion on common European issues. Furthermore, as European parliamentary elections will lead to the formation of neither a government nor a coherent programme of public policy – the two key functions of democratic elections – they are even less likely to give the EU greater legitimacy.

‘We need to create a new kind of citizenship. A European social contract that confers real rights and responsibilities that don’t already exist at a national level. People will need to have European duties and voluntary service, and be willing to pay taxes.’

Jose Maria de Arielza Carvajal, Gabinete de la Presidencia del Gobierno

Other innovations which have been mooted include televising parts of the European Council and Council of Ministers’ meetings, giving national parliaments a bigger role in European decision-making, and even holding direct elections for the president of the Commission.

While all of these measures might be positive in their own right, they are unlikely, on their own, to make the European project more popular. There is no reason to suppose that enhanced access to the transcripts of a meeting on food standards, or the chance to watch fisheries ministers battling it out over mesh sizes on television, or for that matter more grandstanding by leading politicians, would increase public satisfaction with the EU. In fact it is quite possible that it would result in even greater public apathy. And in practice they are not likely

to happen in the near future; most of these ideas have been discussed for some time without being implemented.

Above all, if turnout continues to fall in many national and local elections and the key source of people's identity continues to shift from the level of political institutions and principles to that of more localised associational practices, lifestyles and emotional ties with family and friends, it seems unlikely that political institution-building will greatly affect the EU's standing with its citizens.³⁸

Citizenship

Many have argued that one of the main sources of legitimacy for the nation state is the citizenship rights that it affords to its residents. Attempts have therefore been made to shift these benefits to a European level. The introduction of citizenship of the Union in the Maastricht treaty gives naturalised citizens in any member states the right to move and reside freely within the territory of the Community; to vote and be eligible to stand in local and Euro-elections; to formulate a petition to the European Parliament; to apply to a Union ombudsman; and to have consular representation in non-member states where one's own country does not have a consulate.

'The European Parliament has been the main beneficiary of every IGC. The Commission and the Council are far more aware of it than ever before. Yet people still don't vote in Euro-elections and Europe is less, not more popular than before. It is time to re-examine the idea that giving more power to the European parliament can solve the democratic deficit.'

European Commission Official

But this approach misunderstands the role of citizenship in nation states. Citizenship played a powerful role in creating national identity and legitimating the state at a national level because it offered definite

and concrete benefits to the people to whom it was extended: greater freedoms, material security and access to new institutions. People were given protection and rights that they badly wanted: human and civil rights (which are safeguarded by the European Council, not the EU); political rights (which on the EU level simply lack a meaningful forum – that is, a European government); and social rights embodied in the welfare state (which are not part of the EU treaties and are not on the integrationist agenda for the foreseeable future). This severely limits the scope for possible benefits attached to ‘EU citizenship’.

As a result, much of the European integration debate is not so much about affording new rights to individuals as repackaging existing rights with a European gloss (the relevant article in the Maastricht treaty even makes it clear that EU citizenship is tied to national citizenship and does not have a basis of its own). Moreover, although the new rights that are guaranteed by European citizenship, (such as voting in other countries or joint recognition of qualifications), are vital to promote labour market mobility, they only offer concrete benefits to the 1.6 per cent of EU citizens who live in other countries. And, in fact, only one in four Europeans is interested in being able ‘to vote or stand as a candidate in local elections or European elections’ if they are resident in another country, while 63 per cent say that they are not interested.³⁹

‘The added benefits of citizenship are predicated on people moving around. But most people don’t move around, they need to develop an identity where they are now.’

John Fitzmaurice, European Commission

But even if one ignores these problems, the very word ‘citizenship’ has its limitations as it has very different meanings in different EU countries. In English it is a neutral word, without the power to enthuse. In France it has revolutionary connotations, allying it very firmly with the past, rather than the future. In eastern Europe, it has very negative associations, linked to the jargon used by police and other authorities in the communist era. Only in Italy is it seen as a positive word that people like

to use to describe themselves and the roles they play. But even in Italy, polling evidence suggests that people are more likely to describe themselves as ‘citizens of the world’ than ‘citizens of the European Union.’⁴⁰

If European citizenship is going to work, it has to prove that it is giving the majority of people something they need and something they cannot get at a national level. Citizenship will only acquire meaning when it translates into real entitlements.

Building an identity

Finally, they have sought to build an identity on the nation state model. This became a focus of Euro-negotiations in 1973 with the Copenhagen Declaration on European Identity, which formally defined it as a concept based on the principles of representative democracy, the rule of law, social justice and respect for human rights.⁴¹ This abstract and heavily political conception of European identity has changed very little over the years. It was reaffirmed in the Reflection Group Report for the last Inter-Governmental Conference, which saw the EU as a ‘unique design based on common values: the principles of democracy, human rights and social justice.’ This way of thinking about European identity is often fused in the literature of integration with elements of European history. Thus, Roman law, political democracy, parliamentary institutions, Judaeo-Christian ethics, the Renaissance, humanism, rationalism, empiricism, romanticism and classicism are mixed together with key personalities from Descartes to Beethoven to construct a European cultural heritage.⁴²

‘Tell the story of any European city and you give its citizens a European identity. Take the city of Breslau. It used to be 100% German. It was evacuated by the Nazis, then bombed and repopulated after the war with Silesians. Look at the text books, you find a German history or a Polish history. But look at the facts and you find a multi-national history: Polish, Jewish, Bohemian, Austrian, Prussian, German.’

Professor Norman Davies, Wolfson College, Oxford

At various times, the EU has sought to develop a concrete manifestation of this hoped-for common identity. The most impressive attempt followed the European summit at Fontainebleau in 1984, where a committee chaired by the Italian MEP Pietro Adonino was charged with making recommendations to enhance the public sense of European identity. The Adonino Committee suggested a host of concrete measures: a common television area with more co-production between member states' networks; a Euro-lottery; youth exchanges; an increased European dimension in education policy; the twinning of towns across the Community; the formation of European sports teams; the establishment of a European Academy of Science, Technology and Art; reductions for admission to museums and cultural events; better dissemination of information on EU matters; an EU programme of voluntary work camps for young people; greater cooperation and mobility in higher education; the introduction in all member states of stamps which highlight the EU; and, finally, the adoption of the circle of gold stars with a blue background as the Community's emblem and flag, and the theme of the fourth movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony as the Community's anthem. In 1987, the Commission proposed additional measures including the celebration of Europe Day on the ninth of May, organising European weeks, the introduction of a Community driving licence and the development of European 'journeys of awareness'.

The implementation of these measures has been patchy. Although some, such as Erasmus (a scheme for student exchanges between European universities which facilitates the mutual recognition of course credits and provides grants for students), Comett and Lingua, (which offer grants to take language courses in other European countries), have been successful, the overall record has been unimpressive. Too often attempts at cooperation have tried to create an 'Esperanto' identity of the lowest common denominator. Thus European co-productions have mixed actors and directors from different member states and hollowed out all local references to create films so bland and alien that they appealed to nobody. The creation of European symbols has succeeded in making the European project more visible. Indeed, as many as 80 per cent of EU citizens recognise the flag, but it has failed to build

an identity.⁴³ What was missing was an over-arching narrative that linked the symbols to European integration and gave the identity a content.

'In the 1980s they tried to build a European identity around humanism. But this identity was badly received – partly because there was nothing unique about it, but also because much of Europe was not in the EU.'

Anna Mellich, European Commission

The narrative of cultural highlights and political identity has failed to grip the popular imagination. While most people respect the political values it enshrines, they are values which have become universal and do not say something distinctive about Europe. They are also values which most people are more likely to associate with the nation state (a more visible and familiar guardian) than the EU. Above all, these values are so abstract and general that they say very little about our everyday lives. The cultural narrative is not only abstract but elitist as well. It offers a heritage that is recognisable only to a tiny class of intellectuals and is largely meaningless to the majority of Europeans.

In any case, there are real problems with trying to construct a European identity on the nation state model. Above all, the main impetus for the development of national identity was war – the need to collect taxes to raise armies. If the past 50 years of European history have taught us anything, it is the danger of searching for an identity against the 'other', either within or outside European territory. Another problem with the EU's identity projects is that they have failed to recognise that many of the cultural associations that people from Charlemagne to Jean Monnet have chosen in the past to invoke a European identity are no longer available. Christianity cannot occupy an exclusive place at the heart of a European identity both because large numbers of Europeans are not Christian, and because more than half of all Europeans think that formal religion no longer plays an important role in society.⁴⁴ Democracy, as argued above, is a value and

a practice that is shared around the world, and – in the late 1990s – is more likely to be associated with Washington DC than Athens. Basing identity on ethnicity is also a dangerous strategy; and Europe is becoming ever more ethnically diverse, with its traditional Caucasian self-image and being challenged in all member states. Finally, despite the single market, Europe cannot develop a rigid economic identity because its core economic activities are becoming more and more globalised. Many member states now depend heavily on internationalised production net-works.

‘If you want to make people feel European, you need to make them behave like Europeans more often: by voting for the European Parliament, paying European taxes, watching European sports teams and doing European voluntary service. By taking part in European rituals, people will start to feel European.’

Thomas Jansen, European Commission

Even more worryingly, European leaders have often seen European identity in conflict with national identity, which runs counter to most Europeans’ aspirations. If there is to be a true Euro-identity, it will be a supplement to national identity and other regional, local and associational allegiances, not a replacement for them. If people are to accept a European identity, it must treat Europe’s cultural pluralism as an asset, not as a hindrance.

Trying to make Europe popular through more information

The other approach is to enhance Europe’s popular appeal by providing more information to citizens about the EU’s structures, aims and activities. An underlying assumption here is that the substance of the EU project is sound and that it is merely the presentation which is faulty.

EU what? People don't know about the EU

It is true that most people have a very low level of knowledge about the EU. Eight out of ten Europeans admit in survey responses to being 'not very well informed' or 'not informed at all' about the EU, while only one in 50 claims to be 'very well informed'.⁴⁵ And the things that people think they know tend to be wildly at variance with the facts. For example, two thirds of UK citizens think that over 5 per cent of UK taxes go to the EU (almost ten times the real net contribution of the 0.6 per cent).⁴⁶ Many others believe the numerous 'Euro-myths' that have been propagated in the tabloid press. For example, 34 per cent of UK citizens

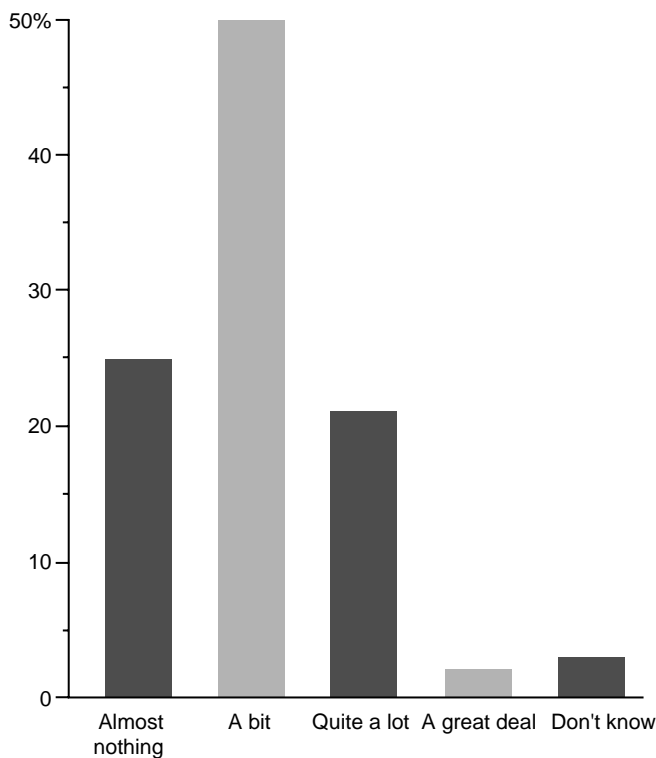


Figure How much do you know about the EU?

believe that the EU is banning curved cucumbers, and one in five think the EU is forcing fishermen to wear hairnets.⁴⁷

Selling the wrong product

It is also true that the EU has not been good at claiming credit for its successes. In fact, a 1993 report by a 'group of experts on information and communication policy' for the Commission made the point that the EU has often been its own worst enemy in making people aware of its achievements. They accuse the Commission and some of the member states of 'selling the wrong product', highlighting technical procedures such as the Treaty of Rome, the Single European Act and the Treaty of Maastricht, rather than the benefits that flow from them: 'Treaty texts are far too technical and remote from daily life for people to understand or even want to understand them. It is a mistake to try to "sell Maastricht" instead of the beneficial effects for me that will result from the European Union.'⁴⁸

'We have a straight choice. Either we see Europe as a tourist destination, a large hotel with a great history where Japanese and Americans go on holiday, enjoy our history and eat our food. The alternative is to go forward and work out an identity that is relevant to people's lives.'

Rafael Delgado, Fundación Pablo Iglesias

There is a danger of these mistakes being repeated in the future. The EU plans to spend millions of ECU on 'information campaigns' educating the business community and citizens about the consequences of a European single currency. While such preparations will be vital to ensuring a successful transition to a single currency, it is important that these campaigns are not the only face that the EU presents to the European public. Polling evidence suggests that the campaigns conducted around the 1992 programme in the run-up to the single market failed to enhance the EU's reputation. Instead they actually damaged

it by drawing attention to the reams of regulations that were being forced through the Council of Ministers, reinforcing the Commission's undeserved reputation as an outsize bureaucracy.⁴⁹ The EU should therefore be wary of high profile campaigns for a single currency which are unsupported by communications which pay attention to public concerns and priorities. Rather than increasing support for EMU, they are more likely to attract attention to those elements of integration which people support the least.

The key problem, as the group of experts reported, is that there is no central body in charge of communicating with the outside world. Instead of a single, clear message, the press are inundated with 'jargon-filled messages that are not relevant to peoples' lives'. One senior official explained: 'each DG [Directorate General] has an information consultant with their own agenda to promote. The result is total chaos. DG14 sends a fish lorry around Europe to persuade people to "eat more sardines". Another DG sends a train to Waterloo to promote Parma ham and Wensleydale. DG15 gets bored of the single market and decides to do rights. So they organise the "Citizens First" campaign, but don't involve any of the DGs who are in charge with the citizenship agenda – DG5 (in charge of rights), DG7 (transport) or DG24 (consumer affairs).'

'Europe is the home of monsters. We've invented the nightmares of the world: Frankenstein, Vampires, Goya's great black monsters, Hitler and Stalin. But we've also invented the world's utopias.'

Phillip Dodd, Institute for Contemporary Arts

This lack of coordination in Brussels also sends out confusing messages to the network of offices in member states. As a Commission official commented: 'Different offices have radically different agendas. We spend a lot of time rebutting Eurosceptic scare stories, but the Italian climate is so different that the Rome office unbelievably sees its role more as promoting scepticism.'

Missing the point

Finally, it is true that the EU has done many things which are positive and failed to get credit for them. It is clearly important for it to professionalise its communications strategies. But people who put their faith in an information strategy alone are missing the real root of the problems – the fact that the EU is not addressing people’s core concerns and priorities. As any marketing expert knows, it does not matter how good your information or advertising campaign is: if the product is wrong, it will not sell. The key issue for the EU is that it needs to reconsider what it is for and listen to the messages – confused and ill-informed though they may be – from the citizens of the Union, rather than bombarding them with more information. The problem with information campaigns has been that the flow of information has all been going in one direction – from the institutions to the people. In future, information policy must also focus on developing more dialogue and mechanisms for feedback. In fact, if EU leaders stopped and listened to what people wanted – and actually delivered it – they might find that their information campaigns were more successful.

‘If you want Europe to be popular, don’t overplay your hand. All the elites said that Europe would create jobs. But when unemployment rose, Europe got it in the neck. That is what happens with unfulfillable promises.’

Paul Jaeger, Sources d’Europe

Reconnecting the EU: aims and aspirations for a revitalised European project

To thrive in the next century, the EU needs to close the gulf between itself and its citizens. It needs to embody the qualities people already associate with the continent of Europe, reflect the aspirations of its citizens, deliver tangible benefits to the majority of its citizens, and develop a response to the strategic challenges it is facing. To do this it needs a much clearer sense of direction and identity. It needs new missions that are as compelling as those that have carried it, with astonishing success, through its first half century.

What it has already achieved at one time seemed impossible. In the 1940s and 1950s, few realists believed that 55 years after the second world war western Europe would still be at peace, prosperous and democratic. Few predicted that Europe would end the century arguing about currencies rather than fighting over borders. Now once again Europe needs to marry idealism and practical common sense. It needs to stretch its citizens' sense of what is possible while also delivering successful outcomes in relation to the practical issues that matter to people – job prospects and safer environments above all.

These new missions cannot be constructed out of thin air. They need to build on the things that Europeans value. They need to make sense of the past and point clearly towards the future. They have to offer Europeans things they really want, rather than the political classes' visions of 'ever closer union' into a super-state or superpower.

This is far from impossible. The project of integration in Europe is not inherently unpopular. In fact, there is strong latent support for further integration. Part of the reason is that 'Europe' is no longer experienced just by the elites. Not long ago, few Europeans had much sense of the continent they lived in. Holidays in other countries were expensive, other European cuisines were available only in exclusive restaurants or delicatessen stores and second languages were spoken only by a small minority. Today, anyone can share in Europe, whether through food in the supermarkets, drinks in pubs and bars, cheap holidays or travel. This everyday internationalism means that most people no longer see other Europeans as aliens or enemies. Instead the experience of more open borders, more communication, better education and the lasting peace has made them more at ease with their neighbours. Traditional national identities no longer have the pull they once had. But equally, there is little enthusiasm for a monolithic European identity.

In what follows I set out seven 'narratives' which are about rediscovering both what Europe is, and what it can be in the future. Each narrative begins with what people's sense of Europe is, reflects the ambitions of European citizens suggests how benefits can be spread to the many as well as the few, and deals with the strategic challenges that Europe is facing. The narratives are 'mission statements' for EU leaders. They are interconnected and can provide the basis for new programmes of EU activity to reconnect the project of integration with citizens and communities across Europe. They can also form the basis for communications strategies that will give people a sense of what the EU is for, and what it can achieve in the future.

1. Solutions united

Europe's first task is to rediscover the fundamental source of European integration: the fact that risks that cross borders need solutions that cross borders. This generates a 'story' for the future about nations and peoples coming together to reduce and prevent threats to the good life, forging common institutions instead of conflict.

'At the heart of all European narratives is the fact that Europe is a continent of small countries facing big problems. It is only by clubbing together that we can over-come them.'

Professor Irène Heidelberger, Université Libre de Bruxelles

In the recent past, the EU's greatest success has been its achievement of common security. Europe has had a bitter and often catastrophic history. It has experienced two world wars and a cold war this century. It is now experiencing a succession of small civil wars on its borders.

Peace, and the commitment to peace, has become part of Europe's lifeblood. Although there are differences between those countries with long martial traditions and the smaller nations for which military prowess has been less important, support for peacekeeping strategies is widespread. Eight out of ten Europeans think that peacekeeping missions should be a priority of the EU.⁵⁰

While war has receded to the margins of the EU, preventing war and helping to end wars when they arise has to be a central role for the EU in the future, probably with common armed forces. The failure to respond effectively to Bosnia did enormous damage to Europe's self-confidence. It should not happen again.

But war is not the only risk that demands a common response. Today crime is no longer solely national in scope. An offence taking place on a street corner in Britain may have its roots thousands of miles away; criminal gangs operate across national boundaries so that the proceeds of a crime in one country will be invested in another country; and the drugs trade relies on international networks of criminals. Europe needs to respond in kind, acting transnationally to fight against organised crime.

But it is in relation to the degradation of the environment that the new European agenda is clearest. Europe's ecosystems are common resources. When Chernobyl exploded the fall-out was felt all the way from Scandinavia to Scotland. Factory emissions cross frontiers to wreak damage on forests and rivers. The seas of Europe all suffer from what many different nations dump into them.

‘Historically the great icon of Europe was the warrior, from Odysseus onwards – today it is the European tourist’
Phillip Dodd, Institute for Contemporary Arts

Yet for all the talk, Europe remains reluctant to accept the implications of how the physical world is organised. Environmental policy remains weak and piecemeal in execution. And while it is right that many environmental issues are dealt with at a national or local level, issues concerning the air, the seas, genetically modified organisms or toxic wastes can no longer be dealt with as if they respected national boundaries.

Europeans already understand the need for new responses to common risks. Seventyone per cent see the fight against drugs as a policy area for European decision-making, 68 per cent favour a European approach to foreign policy, 64 per cent favour European action on the environment and 50 per cent on defence.⁵¹

This does not mean that Europeans want every issue in this general area to be decided by ‘diktats’ from Brussels. Indeed, 60 per cent of EU citizens would like the ‘EU to be responsible only for matters which national governments cannot deal with.’⁵² But Europe’s citizens do want ‘problems without frontiers’ to be dealt with at a European level, and the EU has a clear license to operate in this domain. Measures in support of stronger environmental standards, peacekeeping and prevention and control of international crime could include the development of a pan-European equivalent of the FBI designed to tackle the growth of organised transnational crime on the ground; the establishment of a permanent EU peacekeeping corps drawn from all of the

‘Europe’s most effective export is the ideas that were generated here. The common theme in Western thought is the desire to shape and contract the world, rather than go with the flow.’

Adam Lury, Howell Henry Chaldcott and Lury

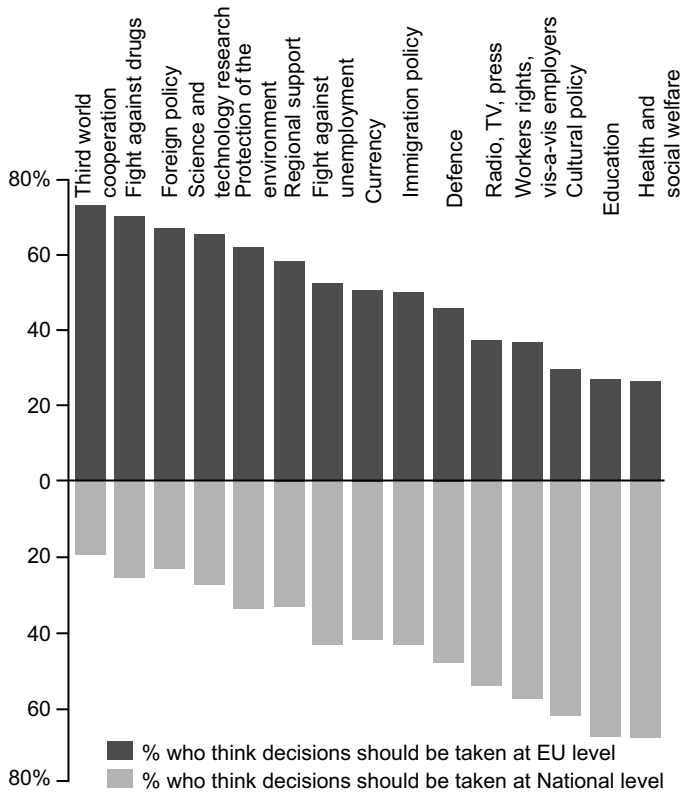


Figure People’s natural sense of subsidiarity.

national armed services; or the development of the European Environment Agency into a centre for training in the implementation and evaluation of environmental policies and the enforcement of EU directives across the Union and among applicant states.

2. Community of knowledge

In the next century Europe needs to rediscover its role as a creator and disseminator of knowledge, as it enters an era where the economy will primarily be founded on information and knowledge.

'The adjective 'European' means the spiritual identity that was born with ancient Greek philosophy ... the passion to know'

Milan Kundera, 'The Art of the Novel'

Between 1500 and 1950, it led the world as a generator of knowledge, learning and creativity. The great movements of ideas in the renaissance and the enlightenment brought together not only different disciplines – arts, science, philosophy – but also people from different countries. It has also been a leader in democratising access through the printing press and mass education.

Today, knowledge creation, high culture, innovation, creativity, fashion, design, and craftsmanship still play an important part in European economies. 79 per cent of European business leaders believe that the European business environment has 'a high level of human capital', 63 per cent that it is 'innovative and enterprising', and 55 per cent that it 'is known for its creative approach in industry'.⁵³ But although Europe continues to be ahead in many traditional knowledge-based industries (for example, the number of books published per 100,000 in Europe is 108 – over five times as many as in the US), there are fears that at a time when knowledge and human capital are more crucial to Europe's economic future than ever before, Europe is falling behind.

'Europe is a fount of achievements that can lead to more achievements. It must be dynamic and tangible, driven by discovery and innovation. But too many people succumb to the 'myth of the golden age'.

Professor Anthony D Smith, London School of Economics

It is falling behind in research and development, spending only \$343 per capita a year compared to \$604 in Japan and \$681 in the USA.⁵⁴ It is also falling behind on education and training. Fewer than half of

Europeans (46 per cent) think that school prepares children well ‘for the rapid changes taking place in our society’.⁵⁵ Enrolment and spending on higher education are also behind: only 30 per cent of Europeans enroll in full-time tertiary education compared 66 per cent in the US and 39 per cent in Japan, and spending levels are less than a third of the US and half as much Japan as a percentage of GDP.⁵⁶ Europe also feels unprepared for the age of new digital technologies. Only half of Europeans (52 per cent) think that ‘schools prepare children well to use the new technologies and the tools of the information society’, and four

‘The novel is Europe’s creation; it’s discoveries though made in various languages, belong to the whole of Europe.’

Milan Kundera, The Art of the Novel

and a half times as many people are connected to the internet in the US as in Europe.⁵⁷

These are all areas of concern to the mass of European citizens. A large majority (72 per cent) think that ‘pooling European research efforts’ is a priority.⁵⁸ In fact, majorities in all fifteen countries think that decisions over science and technology research should be taken at a European rather than a national level (67 per cent Europe-wide agree, 26 per cent disagree).⁵⁹ And specific projects such as fighting cancer and AIDS are considered a priority for the EU by 86 per cent of Europeans.⁶⁰ Education and training are also central to Europeans’ interests: seven out of ten claim that they would like to continue learning or training throughout their lives – both to improve their qualifications and their general knowledge. And though two thirds see education policy as a national rather than a European area, they see a role for the EU in encouraging a culture of learning and organising cross-border exchanges and co-operation.⁶¹

So what does this mean for the EU? At the moment not enough of the EU’s resources and efforts go into knowledge and its dissemination. Of its 88 billion ECU annual budget, only 4 per cent currently

‘In all European countries we can observe today a deep crisis in education ... Even mass education seems unable to transmit basic cultural skills to the children of the less privileged. Inequality, uncertainty and inadaptability are the experience of thousands of families at a much higher, but therefore even more frustrating, level than in the past.’

Professor Robert Picht

goes to R&D and less than 0.4 per cent to education.⁶² Nor is enough done to encourage educational and research links across borders. The Framework programmes have had some success in encouraging more collaboration, particularly in recent years around practical applications, but far too much money was captured by a handful of large companies. The Socrates programme of school and university exchanges has been popular, as is the Erasmus programme that sends 85,000 student across Europe every year. But much more could be done to encourage transnational work placements, educational exchanges and community exchanges, and to expand opportunities to ‘experience Europe’ beyond the ranks of the most highly qualified. Perhaps more than anything, a common commitment to one or two major projects in relation to learning, such as a Europe-wide Open University or a common research project around major diseases such as cancer or AIDS, would signify that Europe was rediscovering that knowledge has been the foundation of its progress in the past and will be in the future.

3. The travelling continent

For much of its recent history, European policy has concentrated on bringing money and jobs to where people happen to live. By doing so it has reinforced labour immobility. In the future, if the single market and the single currency are really going to work, Europe will need to rediscover its identity as a ‘travelling continent’.

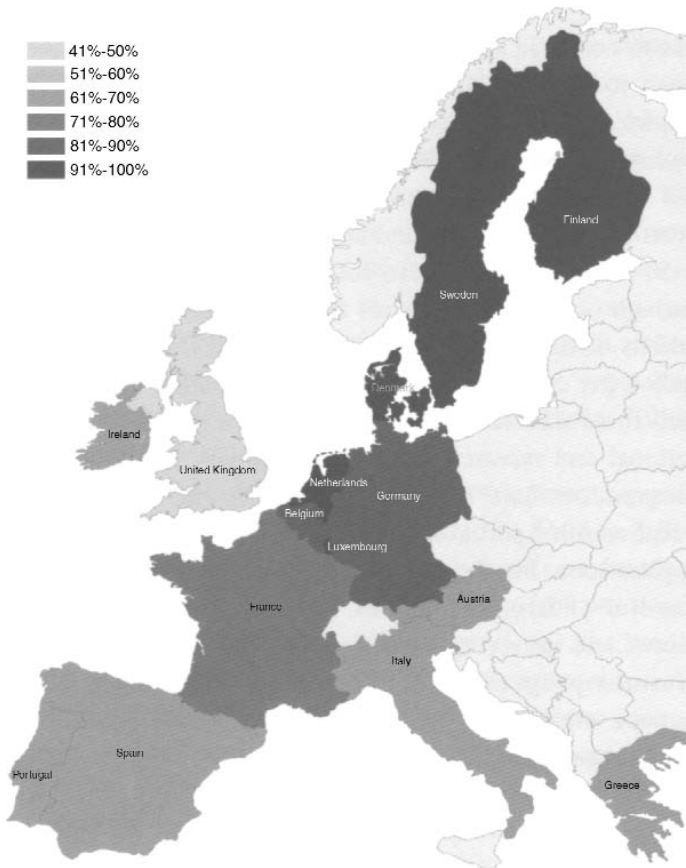


Figure Percentage of young Europeans who speak a second language well enough to have a conversation.

‘Colonialism lies at the heart of Europeanism. The visibility and membership of diaspora communities dates back to the 18th century. The Blacks in the Dutch world. The tropical museum in Copenhagen or Rotterdam.’

Professor Paul Gillroy, Goldsmith’s College London

In the past Europe was rarely static. Migration for the poor and tourism for the rich have coloured much of its recent history. The legacy of mobility can be seen in the 'Promenade des Anglais' in Nice, the plaques commemorating the lives of such great European migrants as Marx, Freud and Picasso, or the strong remaining links between the French and the Quebecois, the British and the Australians, the Italians and the Italian-Americans. Europe's explorers mapped the world to an extent unmatched by their Arabic and Chinese predecessors. Marco Polo and Magellan, Cook and Livingstone, were in their own times proof against the idea of an insular, inward looking Europe.

'To understand our history as Europeans is to think back to the "Vanished Kingdoms". Aragon included Sicily, Sardinia, Athens, Naples, and Barcelona. Poland-Lithuania stretched from the Black Sea to the Baltic. 15th century Burgundy was the heart of the original EC. These have almost totally disappeared from the history books. By filling in the blanks not filled by the great powers we can really understand our history as Europeans.'

Professor Norman Davies, Wolfson College, Oxford

Today Europe remains a surprisingly restless continent. The Grand Tours of the eighteenth century have been replaced by the Interrail and the package tour, and royal marriages by holiday romances (5 per cent of young Europeans went to another EU country in 1996/97 to visit a boyfriend or girlfriend).⁶³ Although half of Europeans still holiday in their own country, 39 per cent went to another EU country – 20 per cent more than in 1985.⁶⁴ The figures for fifteen to 24 year olds are even more impressive: 57 per cent of them had been to another EU country in 1996/97.⁶⁵

This idea of mobility has a powerful resonance for European citizens – especially the younger ones. Asked what the EU meant to them, the single most popular answer among fifteen to 24 year olds was 'the ability to go wherever I want in Europe' – more popular than both 'a means of improving the economic situation in Europe' and 'guaranteed lasting peace in Europe'.⁶⁶



Figure The traveling continent: the top three tourist destinations for young Europeans in each country.

However, in some respects Europe has failed to become more mobile. Only 1.6 per cent of EU citizens are permanent residents in another EU country, and only a third say they would consider taking a good job in another EU country.⁶⁷ While this willingness to move rises to 78 per cent among business leaders, most Europeans still do not see the EU as a single market or a single labour market.⁶⁸

The problem is that it is still very difficult for people to be mobile. So far, only the most irritating barriers have been removed. Border controls have been reduced to a minimum, moving of one's personal possessions has been made easier, rights of settlement and right for professionals to practice in other countries were introduced and later extended by rulings by the European Court of Justice (most notably the Bosman ruling that ensured free movement for football players). All these were important measures, but they did not provide Europeans with the tools to be mobile, only a negative freedom by removing artificial barriers. They left intact two serious obstacles to mobility.

'The strongest European unifier has been the rise of the au pair girl moving around Europe in temporary jobs, picking up languages and culture wherever they go.'

Professor Eric Hobsbawm, Birbeck College, London

The most serious one is language. Half of all Europeans, and as many as three out of ten young Europeans, don't speak a second language well enough to have a conversation, while the only language which a considerable proportion do speak is English. As a result, almost 40 per cent of young people in Europe cite a lack of confidence with the language as the main anticipated problem in working or studying abroad.⁶⁹ The importance of dealing with this is underlined by the fact that 70 per cent of business leaders think that it is important or very important for their staff to be skilled in other EU languages.⁷⁰

The other obstacle is the continued lack of an integrated and cheap transport system for Europe – even though it was promised in the Treaty of Rome. Moreover, air travel costs remain high relative to the rest of the world, despite some efforts by the European Commission.

To achieve the goal of a truly mobile continent the EU needs to remove the last few technical barriers to mobility, such as the remaining barriers to recognition of professional qualifications. It needs to improve language skills and to integrate access to these more clearly into its labour market policies. And it needs to deregulate air travel and to push forward on trans-European public transport networks.

There may be even be scope for measures such as a European Tourist board to celebrate the culture of mobility. Together these steps will help to make Europeans more at ease with mobility. But perhaps the fundamental change will be to devote as much energy to helping people move to new jobs, or new relationships, as in the past has been devoted to keeping people where they were.

4. Urban Hymns

Although eight out of ten Europeans live in cities, most of the EU's budget is spent on the countryside, primarily through farm subsidies. In the future Europe will need to rediscover its urbanity.

'If Europe is a network, its nodes are cities. The source of its ideas, its culture, its revolutions. The future of the continent has to be as a Europe of the cities'

Richard Rogers, Richard Rogers Partnership

Cities have been the lifeblood of the European continent. They have been the places where people 'lived their ideas, needs, aspirations, dreams, projects, conflicts, memories, anxieties, loves, passions, obsessions and fears.'⁷¹ They have been the cosmopolitan heartlands of new ideas, progress and revolution, new industries and new technologies.

At times Europe's political structures have been organised around its cities: from ancient Greece to medieval Italy, and from the Hanseatic league to the numerous twinning arrangements and networks of cities that are in operation today.

But many European cities are now in crisis. Most have seen a sharp increase in levels of crime and fear of crime. Many people are frequently



Figure European cities by night.

'As we approach the end of the century our cities are becoming the focus of a host of pressing social, economic and environmental problems. Social exclusion threatens the very basis of our society.'

Monika Wulf Mathies, European Commission

afraid to go out at night or allow their children to walk to school. They have suffered from persistent environmental problems, in particular poor air quality and traffic congestion. And in recent years they have borne the brunt of deindustrialisation, so that most of the areas of acute social exclusion are in and around the EU's major cities.

Yet in practice the EU sometimes seems to have forgotten that it presides over a largely urbanised continent. It continues to be run more in the interests of the 6.5 per cent of farmers, than the 80 per cent of city dwellers. The most obvious manifestation of this is the fact that 48 per cent of the EU budget is spent on the Common Agricultural Policy. But there are also subtler ways that the EU has failed to take its urban nature seriously. The region, rather than the city, has been promoted through the application of the subsidiarity principle in EU economic and social programmes under the structural funds. The institutionalisation of regions in the decision-making process has produced a consistent bias against city-driven solutions, and a failure to give adequate backing to the political and administrative leaders of Europe's cities.

Yet, in the future, there are strong signs that cities will become even more important as economic powerhouses. As nation states become

'All European cities share a common background. From Cork to Gdansk, communist to capitalist, north to south, they have instantly recognisable features that are totally distinct from Asia and Africa: a street pattern, public squares, the relationship of buildings to pavements.'

Professor Peter Hall, Bartlett School of Architecture and Planning, University College London

less important, cities look set to recapture their confidence; to develop more independent industrial and economic policies; to pursue their competitive advantages; and to deal with the problems of environmental quality and social division that national and regional governments have often failed to tackle.

The European Union should welcome and encourage an urban renaissance. It should clearly signal steps to shift resources from the countryside to cities, while targeting rural support much more intelligently, as well as to rethink the balance between regional and urban support in the structural funds. And it should give a higher profile and status to the many existing, and often very imaginative, programmes to celebrate Europe's cities and share their best ideas. It could also look at providing a voice for city leaders, maybe through a 'Forum of Mayors' to complement the Committee of the Regions.

5. Solidarity

Europe has led the world in showing how societies can reach accommodations between different classes. While other societies rested on dictatorship or hierarchy, or suffered wide inequalities, Europe has succeeded in achieving both economic growth and social solidarity. It now needs to redefine what that means in a new environment, that of globalisation of economic competition, in which solidarity and policies for mitigating the effect of market forces on labour, communities and the environment have to spread beyond the confines of the nation.

The values that lead to the formation of welfare states are still central to the way Europe sees itself. 65 per cent of Europeans agree that the 'Government should be making sure that the tax system redistributes income from the better-off to the less well-off', while only 16 per cent disagree.⁷² And 80 per cent of business leaders think that one of the distinctive things about the European business environment is that it is 'concerned about the social welfare of its workers'.⁷³ On the surface at least, these powerful feeling of solidarity are not restricted to the national level. As far as the public are concerned the two top priorities

for the EU are fighting unemployment and tackling poverty and social exclusion.⁷⁴

‘Europe has created the most comprehensive network of state support in education, health care and social security that exists. Provision varies from country to country, but even people in the poorer parts of western Europe have a vastly better system of welfare care than exists anywhere else in the world, with the possible exception of Japan.’

Hamish Macrae, ‘The World of 2020’

However these latent feelings of cross-border solidarity have not been nurtured. Many people in countries that are net contributors to the EU are becoming increasingly restless about the extent of their contributions. Forty per cent of Europeans fear that rich member states will have to pay more for poor ones, and this figure rises to 55 per cent in net contributor countries such as Germany and the Netherlands.⁷⁵ There is also only lukewarm support for enlargement – partly because of higher costs and fears of losing regional aid. There are small majorities in favour of widening the EU to include Poland (43 per cent for, 34 per cent against), Hungary (41 per cent for, 33 per cent against), the Czech Republic (41 per cent for, 33 per cent against) and Cyprus (40 per cent for, 33 per cent against), and small majorities against granting membership to the other applicant countries.⁷⁶

These limits to cross-border solidarity are in part a symptom of the EU’s broader problems. People resent making contributions because they believe that the money will simply be ‘wasted’ on farmers and fishermen. Resentment also feeds off exaggerated views of how much is spent: two thirds of UK citizens think that over 5 per cent of UK taxes go to the EU – almost ten times the real net contribution of 0.6 per cent.⁷⁷

So how can the EU build on this latent solidarity? The most important step will be to relate spending priorities more clearly to public concerns in relation to jobs, the common risks outlined earlier and quality of life, and then to ensure that money spent is tied to clear goals

and targets. Redistribution will always be more legitimate if it is efficient and dynamic, rather than creating relations of dependency between poorer and richer areas. Getting this right is a matter of politics and language as well as of specific policy measures. In the longer run, European leaders will need to start talking about their fellow Europeans not as supplicants but as citizens deserving investment and opportunities to bring the prospects of poorer communities more closely into line with those of the rich ones.

6. The good life

When people think of European institutions they think of bureaucracy, red-tape and grey officials. But when they think of Europe they think of the good life – sun, sea, olive oil, wine, chocolates, beer, and holidays.

While some parts of east Asia and America might be more prosperous in purely financial terms, there is arguably a much better balance between work and leisure, better public services and a richer culture in Europe. Large minorities may not be sharing in much of that good life, but for centuries, even millennia, Europeans have been actively pursuing better ways of living. Today, Europe remains the only area of the world where even the unemployed can maintain a decent standard of living.

Europe's economy reflects this connection to the good life. European industries are famous for it: fashion, design, food and wine from Italy; perfume, haute couture, food and wine from France; chocolates and beer from Belgium; luxury cars from Germany; whisky, films, fashion and fiction from the UK; high quality modern consumer products from Scandinavia; holidays in Spain and Portugal.

But people are coming to have a broader idea of what makes life good. Getting the balance right between work and leisure is extremely important for Europeans. They work less hours a week than their counterparts in the US and Japan: 33 compared to 35 and 43 respectively.⁷⁸ And one in four worry regularly about not having enough free time (rising to 31 per cent among 16–24 year olds).⁷⁹ They also see their local environment as part of their quality of life and are willing

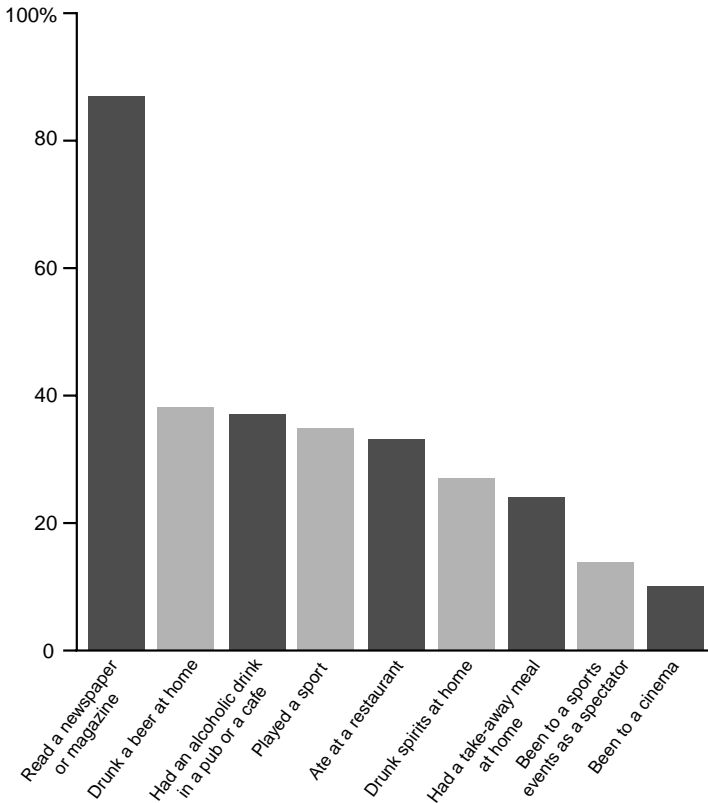


Figure Activities Europeans will undertake in a week.

‘Europe is rich in quality of life. It has managed to create a lifestyle, or rather, a variety of lifestyles, which the rest of the world finds deeply enviable. Out of the five largest tourist destinations, three are in western Europe: France, Spain and Italy. Between them, they attract more foreign visitors than the whole of North America.’

Hamish Macrae, ‘The World in 2020’

to make a concerted effort to improve it. Two thirds of Europeans claim that they recycle many of the products they buy, and 62 per cent claim to buy products made of recycled material whenever possible.⁸⁰ These claims are borne out by the facts – Europeans recycle 46 per cent of the paper and cardboard they consume and 49 per cent of glass, compared with 34 and 22 per cent in the US.⁸¹

But the same people do not associate the institutions of the EU with their quality of life. When asked what the EU will have brought about in ten years time, only one in four (23 per cent) of young Europeans said ‘a better quality of life for most people.’⁸² Europe’s leaders have failed to project a compelling vision of what the good life might mean for Europe’s citizens – that mix of prosperity, a sustainable environment and a balance between the demands of economic life and social bonds that is so attractive to citizens from Finland to Portugal.

‘The US created a big market by standardising and universalising beliefs, allegiances and value systems. It paid a high price in conformity. The EU’s big chance is to create a dialogue out of the Kaleidoscope of cultures and polyglot identities that make it up.’

*Charles Hampden Turner, Judge Institute of Management,
Cambridge*

In the future, the EU will need to direct its attentions more closely to what it can do to improve people’s quality of life. That may mean more measures on working hours and time off. It may mean more efforts to support nations and regions in developing areas of natural beauty (maybe through protected European Parks), and it may mean extending research and development programmes to recognise that ways of living are as much sources of economic advantage as technology and patents. But it will mean above all projecting an attainable vision of how life could be better.

7. The European mosaic

Europe is a patchwork of different cultures, religions, languages and views. But too many of its leaders have wanted to give Europe the homogeneity of a classic nation state, with a common (usually high) culture, common currency, common firms and a common constitution. Yet Europe's future lies in being something very different from a nation state writ large. Its strength lies in creating a common space in which diversity can flourish.

The first site of diversity is Europe's people or, more accurately, peoples. By and large, Europeans are tolerant of diversity: eight out of ten (81 per cent) claim not to be disturbed at all by people of another race, while 83 per cent claim not to be disturbed by people of different nationalities.⁸³ For young people, this tolerance is even more pronounced – only 3 per cent feel uneasy with people from another nationality, culture or religion, while just 5 per cent say that they feel uneasy with people of different races.⁸⁴ One in five young people even felt that their nationality's population 'has always consisted of people of foreign descent', while one in four thought that foreigners should have the same rights as nationals.⁸⁵

'The only historical moment of European identity was the Roman Empire other attempts have simply been to rebuild it. This empire was multi-ethnic and multinational and no-one tampered with local identities.'

César Vidal

Europeans recognise and value this diversity. Fifty four per cent of Europeans agree with the statement 'Europe will never be one country because of the differences between us and other Europeans', while only 20 per cent disagree.⁸⁶ This is a warning against the rhetoric often deployed by European governments and officials. Every time a European leader makes a speech about constructing a 'European nation', or a 'federalist Europe', or the commission issues a car sticker proclaiming 'mon pays – l'Europe', unwarranted fears of homogeneity are fuelled.

‘European identity is not univocal, it is a complex of multiple identities.’

Alberto Elordi, Fundación Alternativas

The second site of diversity is the economy. In consumer electronics, Phillips provides the main competition to Japan and East Asia. In civil aviation, Airbus is Boeing’s main competitor in airframes and Rolls Royce challenges General Electric for engines. The three largest chemical companies in the world are German and the fourth is British. Seven out of the top ten pharmaceutical companies are European. Europe also has the largest motor industry in the world. And France and the UK are the biggest exporters of conventional arms after Russia and the USA.

The development of the EU economy has not come about as a result of a central plan. The process of specialisation has happened naturally as a result of competition between countries, historical accidents and the effects of everything from climate to geography. Although the Commission and national governments have often tried to encourage mergers and joint ventures to exploit economies of scale, its efforts to go against the pluralist grain have rarely been successful and Europe’s most successful industries have developed organically.

‘Businesses in Europe are increasingly multi-cultural and multinational. Their identities need to reflect this to work in a European context as well as locally, nationally and globally.’

Frances Newell, Interbrand Newell and Sorrell

The third site of diversity is culture. Over a third of Europeans fear losing their national identity and culture as a result of European integration. When the EU has not respected national idiosyncrasies in devising regulations, it has fuelled hostility to the EU. In the UK, for example, perceived threats to double decker buses, the ‘British loaf’ and British chocolate have done damage to the EU’s reputation. The result

is that 54 per cent of people in the UK say they are afraid of losing their national identity and culture as a result of European integration.

The EU now needs to shed its image as a homogenising force. It needs to end the 'one size fits all' approach to policy-making, not least because as the EU grows, it will become increasingly difficult to devise policies which suit all countries at all times. It needs to be more careful about respecting national idiosyncrasies when devising regulations. And it needs to project an image of Europe that not only encompasses Dutch farmers and Swedish office workers, Orthodox Greeks and Protestant Scots, but also the new Europeans: the Turks of Germany, Algerians of France, Pakistanis of Britain, as well as the future immigrants who will become a hugely important force in providing new energy for a 'greying' continent whose population is now stable and even falling.



Figure Seven missions for the future of Europe.

Each of these stories is based on the lifestyle, values and priorities of Europeans. They build on Europe's past, but they provide a clear agenda for the future. Together they can be the basis for a new sense of direction to European integration, and they can help EU leaders show what might lie at the heart of a rediscovered European identity.

Conclusion

We are only a few years away from the fiftieth anniversary of the Treaty of Rome. By almost any criteria this ranks as one of the most successful treaties ever signed. It has delivered steadily rising prosperity and a civic underpinning for peace in a continent used to war. And it has done so without the conspiracies against democracy of earlier orders, like the post-Napoleonic settlement.

Yet it is now far harder to imagine where the EU is going, or what might be done to celebrate that anniversary, than it has been for some time. Even the historic enlargement to the East and the establishment of EMU Union have become embroiled in technical wranglings, and there is no longer a clear sense of what the EU is integrating *for*. Certainly, we associate it with free markets, democratic elections, the rule of law and a common heritage of high culture, but where does this leave everything from its military policies to its approach to Hollywood movies or Internet pornography, its stance on drugs or unemployment?

The technocratic vision of Europe as a set of neutral rules governing competition, harmonisation, money and budgets is no longer enough to generate legitimacy. It is too thin, austere and distant from people's lives and priorities. It cannot inspire European citizens like the earlier promises of peace and prosperity. In its next phase Europe needs to break from this pattern of integration 'from above'. It needs to become a people's Europe based on the priorities and values of its citizens rather than seeing them as an after-thought, and it needs to harness

their aspirations in meeting the massive challenges – economic, ecological and social – of the new century.

‘There is a myth that British people have stronger links with the US than with Europe. In fact we only share language, films and McDonalds. The list of things we don’t share is much longer: values, cars, heritage, tastes, sports, leisure and the environment. These are all things which Europe has in common.’

Chris Haskins, Northern Foods

In practical terms, that means reorienting its agenda much more clearly to the borderless problems, hopes and solutions that matter to its citizens. In presentational terms, it means tapping into the strong strata of potential support that ‘Europe’ does command. The two need to be seen as different sides of the same coin. In the modern world presentation and content have to be integrated.

The narratives set out in this report show that there is an attractive and sophisticated agenda waiting to be defined. They deal with the challenges to Europe’s prosperity, its environment and its sense of solidarity. Together they are as bold as the missions that Europe embarked on after 1945. Europe’s citizens want to believe that they can work. They want to rediscover a Europe that they can believe in. It’s up to policy makers to deliver it.

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- 76 see note 6
- 77 see note 11
- 78 see note 56
- 79 see note 67
- 80 see note 67
- 81 see note 56
- 82 see note 31
- 83 see note 6
- 84 see note 31
- 85 see note 31
- 86 see note 67