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Report from the conference “EU Legitimacy in Time of Crisis: How to Overcome the Legitimacy and Democracy Deficit of the EU?”, 20–21 June 2016¹

On 20–21 June 2016, the international conference *EU Legitimacy in Time of Crisis: How to Overcome the Legitimacy and Democracy Deficit of the EU?* was held at the Institute of European Studies, University of Warsaw. The conference was organised within the Jean Monnet Network *MoreEU: More Europe to Overcome the Crisis*, consisting of Scuola Superiore Sant’Anna; the University of Warsaw; CEU San Pablo University; Nova Universidad de Lisboa; and Notre Europe – Jacques Delors Institute. *EU Legitimacy in Time of Crisis* was organized in partnership with: the Research Committee 14: Ethnicity and Politics, IPSA; the Collaborative Research Network on Euroscepticism, UACES; and the Polish Association of European Studies (PTSE).

The aim of the conference was to critically analyse the roots of the present legitimacy crisis of the European Union and, more broadly, of the European integration as a process. Scholars were invited to discuss a wide range of topics, including:

- sources, scope and mechanisms of the EU’s legitimacy and democracy deficit,
- forms of political legitimacy in the EU,
- measures to be taken to strengthen the legitimacy of the EU and the European integration,

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- relations between national/member-state, union and external narratives criticising the EU, as well as their impact on the rise in hard Euroscepticism,
- impact of the centrifugal movements on the EU’s legitimacy: on the national level, both within member states and within neighbouring states, as well as on the EU level,
- impact of the financial and humanitarian crises within and without the Union on the understanding of the principle of solidarity and its impact on the EU’s legitimacy,
- delegitimizing the EU by democratic means: use of referenda by the Eurosceptic and centrifugal movements in the EU,
- perspectives of voluntary and enforced exits from the EU.

Establishing a dialogue between academics, experts, stake-holders and policy-makers was a secondary aim of the conference.

The conference gathered scholars from all over the Europe. Apart from seven panels, three lectures were delivered by keynote speakers. During the opening statement, Professor Konstanty Adam Wojtaszczyk (the Director of the Institute of European Studies, University of Warsaw) welcomed the conference participants and expressed his firm conviction that *EU Legitimacy in Time of Crisis* conference would deepen the knowledge on key issues of the contemporary Europe. After his speech, representatives of partner universities delivered short speeches, in which they expressed their belief in fruitful scientific discussion during the conference.

During the first plenary session chaired by Dr Przemyslaw Biskup (Institute of European Studies, University of Warsaw), Professor Simon Bulmer (Department of Politics, University of Sheffield) delivered a keynote speech entitled: *The Politicization of European policy in the UK and Germany: Solving the legitimacy crisis*. Professor Bulmer spoke of the similarities and differences in institutional and political setup of the European policy-making, which takes place in both countries.

The deficit of democracy is a widely discussed issue concerning the institutional process of the European integration. Concerns and solutions to various aspects thereof were the major theme of the panel *Democratic Procedures and EU legitimacy* chaired by Dr Jaroslaw Szczepański (Institute of European Studies, University of Warsaw). Professor Francisco Pereira Coutinho (Professor at Faculdade de Direito da Universidade Nova de Lisboa) in his presentation *Tackling European democratic deficit: The Case of the Portuguese Parliament* looked at the way that the Portuguese Constitution amendments from 1992 and 1997 aimed at mitigating the so-called European demo-

cratic deficit proved to be successful and to what extent they increased the influence of Portugal's national parliament in relations with the EU institutions. Joanna Ziółkowska (PhD student, College of Europe, Natolin Campus and the Institute of Political Studies, Polish Academy of Science) in her presentation *The role of national parliaments in strengthening democratic legitimacy of the EU* focused on the relations between the European Parliament's role in overcoming the democracy deficit within the EU at the expense of national parliaments the capacity of which seems to diminish in the dual democratic legitimacy model favoured in the Lisbon Treaty.

Overcoming the democracy deficit by as wide as possible usage of new instruments of the social and political debate was the main theme of *EU Legitimacy and the New Instruments of Democratic Debate* panel chaired by Dr Wojciech Lewandowski (Institute of European Studies, University of Warsaw). Dr Jan Labitzke (University of Giessen) in his paper *Online consultations and the European Citizen's Initiative: The contribution of new participations tools to overcome the EU's lacking legitimacy* considered on-line consultations as one of the sources of democratization of the European institutions. He also presented his evaluation of the European Citizen's Initiative. The role of social media in political campaigns was the subject of the paper of Michal Rydz (PhD student, Faculty of Journalism and Political Science, University of Warsaw) entitled *Negation 2.0: How Eurosceptics are managing social media? Comparing the cases of Britain and Greece*. He analysed the use of social media e.g. You Tube, Facebook and Twitter by Eurosceptics (Syriza in Greece and United Kingdom Independence Party in Britain), the way they reach their electorate via modern technologies and the way such channels can increase democratic participation of Europeans. Finally, Maria Penarrubia Banon (PhD student, CEU San Pablo University) analysed successes and failures of the ECI in the paper *The European Citizens' Initiative: New direct democracy tool to reduce the political disaffection of the EU or a simple unsuccessful attempt?*.

Plenary Session 2 chaired by Dr Łukasz Zamecki (Institute of European Studies, University of Warsaw) consisted of the presentation by Professor Gergely Egedy from the National University of Public Service in Budapest on *EU's legitimacy and the challenges to national sovereignty and migration: The Case of Hungary*. In his presentation, Professor Egedy tackled on explaining the complicated approach of the conservative Hungarian government formed by the FIDESZ party to the issues of European integration: pragmatic, cooperative and highly critical at the same time. He paid particular attention to the problem of mass-scale migration flows from the Middle East, through the Balkans, via Hungarian territory, to the EU, and the political impact of this

phenomenon on the Hungarian society. Changing reactions of the EU and particular EU member states to the events in Hungary were discussed, as well as their resonance in the politics of the Hungarian government and opposition.

Different contexts of *EU's Legitimacy* were examined during the panel chaired by Professor Jacek Wojnicki (Institute of European Studies, University of Warsaw). Dr Andrius Švarplys, lecturer at Vytautas Magnus University (Kaunas, Lithuania) spoke about *The other face of EU legitimacy crisis: What the newest challenges revealed about the European Union?* Dr Alberto Pirni, Aggregate Professor of Public Ethics and Political Philosophy at the Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna in Pisa elaborated on the issue of: *Reshaping an European public sphere? New challenges for an ancient and unfinished project.* Then, Dr Anna Skolimowska (Institute of Political Science, CSWU Warsaw) commented upon the issue of: *Legitimacy of the European Union's normative identity in the neighbouring countries in the time of crisis.*

The issue of the United Kingdom European Union membership referendum held on 23 June 2016 was discussed during the panel *The Brexit Debate in the UK and the EU's Legitimacy Crisis* chaired by Dr Małgorzata Kułakowska (Jagiellonian University in Cracow). Speakers presented varying points of view on possible outcomes of such a popular vote from both the national and the European perspective. Dr Wojciech Lewandowski (Institute of European Studies, University of Warsaw) in his paper *England and EU legitimacy: English perspective on UK's Brexit* focused on the English perspective on Brexit. He also underlined that, taking into consideration social and political factors, Brexit seems to be very important for English people. However, it might have devastating impact on the UK's unity. The Welsh perspective on Brexit was presented by Dr Krzysztof Winkler (British Socio-Political Studies Research Group Britannia) in his paper *EU's legitimacy crisis in the light of the Welsh devolution.* Dr Winkler underlined economic difficulties that Wales might face in case of potential Brexit due to its small and EU linked economy. Professor Jerónimo Maillo Gonzalez-Orus (Institute for European Studies, CEU San Pablo University) examined the most difficult aspects of Brexit negotiations in his paper *Social benefits and free movement within the Brexit negotiations.*

Another panel was devoted to *Migration Crisis as a Challenge to EU's Legitimacy.* There were three speakers on this panel chaired by Professor Nuno Piçarra (Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Lisbon Nova Law School). Thierry Fortin (Senior Fellow at the Institute des Études Politiques de Lyon) spoke about *The EU's military response to the migrant crisis: Credibility at stake,* while Iwona Miedzińska (PhD student, Faculty of

Journalism and Political Science, University of Warsaw) elaborated on *EU foreign policy in time of crisis: Discrete but tenacious, or strong and assertive?*

Various facets of the EU legitimacy and problems it faces were the topics of the panel *EU Legitimacy Deficit* chaired by Professor José María Beneyto (the Director of the Institute for European Studies, CEU San Pablo University). The aim of Professor Tomasz Grzegorz Grosse's (Institute of European Studies, University of Warsaw) paper *Between the renaissance of national democracy and EU democratic deficit in time of crisis* was to compare the state of democracy in the European countries before and after the series of social and political crises. In his speech, Professor Grosse focused on the increasing democratic tendency in member states as the solution to the crises and the rise of Eurosceptic forces. Professor Jacek Czaputowicz (Institute of European Studies, University of Warsaw) and Dr Marcin Kleinowski (Mikołaj Kopernik University) in their paper *Comparative analysis of voting systems in the EU Council and in the German Bundesrat in respect to democratic principles* tried to determine if the voting systems in the Council of the European Union is democratic and fair. By comparing it to the voting system in the German Bundesrat, Professor Czaputowicz aimed at understanding why EU Council system, often seen as similar to the German one, is not perceived as democratic.

Plenary Session 3 chaired by Dr Przemysław Biskup opened the second conference day. During the session, Dr Lee McGowan (senior lecturer at the School of Politics, International Studies and Philosophy, Queens University Belfast) made a presentation on *The United Kingdom and European Integration: Political Unions in Crisis*.

The final panel of the *EU Legitimacy in Time of Crisis* conference was devoted to various theoretical as well as practical issues concerning the EU's legitimacy. Papers delivered during the *Challenges in conceptualising EU legitimacy* panel chaired by Professor Paweł Borkowski (Institute of European Studies, University of Warsaw) focused on the basic social and political mechanisms of the EU's legitimacy and democracy deficit. Dr Kamil Ławniczak (Faculty of Journalism and Political Science, University of Warsaw) in his paper *Socialisation mechanisms and legitimacy intermediation in the Council of the European Union* tried to present social mechanisms and decision-making processes within the Council of the European Union in the wider perspective of the European legitimacy. Dr Francesco Nicoli (University of Trento) focused in his paper *Functional legitimacy in post-functional times: The challenge of fiscal integration* on the EU's transition from the functional to the post-functional model of integration that will provoke changes in the understanding of the concept of

legitimacy. The question of fiscal integration was discussed in details in the context of crises and transformations that the European politics is constantly facing. Dr Giovanna Pugno Vanoni (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milano) in her paper *Mechanisms of EU's legitimacy and democratic deficit* presented a wide range of concepts related to the EU's legitimacy and democracy deficit trying to understand the member states' model of reaction to constantly repeating European crises.

Each panel and plenary session was followed by an animated discussion that enabled the panellists and keynote speakers to elaborate in a more detailed way on the issues raised in their papers. The extent of such an exchange of thoughts underlines the significance of the subject of EU's legitimacy and the importance of deepening scientific research in this area.

During the conference conclusions, Dr Łukasz Zamęcki (Institute of European Studies, University of Warsaw) underlined the value and necessity of in-depth analysis of the major contemporary crises and problems that the European integration is facing. He also thanked the participants as well as organizers of the *EU Legitimacy in Time of Crisis: How to Overcome the Legitimacy and Democracy Deficit of the EU?* conference for their contributions.