

**EU3D**

Differentiation  
Dominance  
Democracy



# Reform proposals for the future European Union (2015- 2022)

Magdalena Góra  
Tiziano Zgaga  
(eds.)

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With contributions from Magdalena Góra, Tiziano Zgaga, Raquel Ugarte Díez, Cécile Pelaudeix, Sabine Saurugger, Fabien Terpan, Max Heermann, Kris Inga Mewes, Max Steuer, Silva Hoffmann, Birthe Einen, Kinga Sekerdej, Monica García Quesada, Natasza Styczyńska and Marcin Zubek

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**ARENA Centre for European Studies** at the University of Oslo promotes theoretically oriented, empirically informed studies analysing the dynamics of the evolving European political order. The research is multidisciplinary and organized along four key dimensions: A European democratic order; the EU's executive order; expertise and knowledge in the EU; and European foreign and security policy.

## **Preface**

The EU has expanded in depth and breadth across a range of member states with greatly different makeups, making the European integration process more differentiated. *EU Differentiation, Dominance and Democracy* (EU3D) is a research project that specifies the conditions under which differentiation is politically acceptable, institutionally sustainable, and democratically legitimate; and singles out those forms of differentiation that engender dominance.

EU3D brings together around 50 researchers in 10 European countries and is coordinated by ARENA Centre for European Studies at the University of Oslo. The project is funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme, Societal Challenges 6: Europe in a changing world – Inclusive, innovative and reflective societies (2019-2023).

The present report is part of the project's work on Future of Europe reforms (work package 5), where researchers analyse proposals for the future of Europe. The authors of the chapters in this report conducted case studies analysing the EU3D database of EU reform proposals. The contributions provide valuable insights into the national proposals for reform and the debate on the future of Europe across European countries.

John Erik Fossum

*EU3D Scientific Coordinator*

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# Chapter 1

Debate on future of Europe and its actors and reforms. An Introduction to the EU3D database on reform proposals.

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## Introduction

The debate on the future of Europe (FoE) was launched in 2015 with the Five Presidents' Report (European Commission 2015) and gained momentum after the European Commission published the White Paper on the future of Europe (European Commission 2017). The debate was initially intended to push the European Union (EU) out of reactive crisis management mode into a renewed and proactive integration process. The debate was further reinvigorated by the Conference on the Future of Europe, initiated by French President Emmanuel Macron and endorsed by Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission (Schimmelfennig 2020; Fabbrini et al. 2021).

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The public searchable EU3D database of reform proposals includes almost 950 reform proposals on the future of the European Union (EU) that a broad range of actors (national and European, political and non-political) presented between 2015 and 2022. It does a specific in-depth focus on several key member states – Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Poland, Sweden, Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia – as well as Norway. The EU3D database also includes a wide range of civil society actors active at both national and European level (Czerska-Shaw and Warat 2023; Czerska-Shaw et al. 2022). This database is the result of broad cooperation between members of the EU3D project. The goal of the database is to systematically analyse the proposals for reforming the EU, the impact that they proposals can have on the EU, and the interaction between these proposals. As such, the database is a fundamental tool to systematically map the debate on the future of Europe. In connection with the research of [debates in national parliaments](#) and [public opinion about differentiation](#), it allows researchers to make sense of the variety of actors and their proposals for reforming the EU.

## Research aims

The database is a key constituent of WP5, whose main aims are to establish:

- a. the prevailing dividing lines among EU reform proposals;
- b. how these proposals seek to deal with the problematic forms of differentiation;
- c. what alternative EU governance models the proposals defend.

Researchers were particularly interested in which type of differentiation the proposals suggest, which patterns of dominance (if any) they identify, and which rectifying measures for democracy in the EU they envisage.

In the report, 14 EU3D researchers from partner institutions have analysed the database and conducted case studies to provide an overview of the reform proposals sent by a variety of actors in their respective member states. In addition, even more scholars were engaged in in-depth studies



of specific actors presented in other WP5 research outputs (Czerska-Shaw et al. 2022; Czerska-Shaw et al. 2023).

The researchers have asked the following questions:

- What actors have been active in the debate on the Future of Europe?
- What have they proposed?
- What policies are mentioned in proposals in the context of FoE and why?
- What EU polity reforms were proposed in national debates? Specifically, which types of differentiation (lawmaking (horizontal), functional (competence-based) and vertical) do the proposal mention?
- Is territorial differentiation proposed and how is it evaluated?
- Do the reform proposals indicate how to finance the proposal's objectives and the means to reach them?
- What reforms are proposed by political actors in order to improve functioning of democracy within the EU?
- Who and why refers to dominance in proposals on FoE?
- What are the overall expectations for the reform of the EU?
- Which key constitutional narratives for future of Europe are visible in the proposals and how coherent are they?

## Methodology

To gain a broad perspective on the reform proposals, we use the definition of a political claim (Koopmans 2007). Ruud Koopmans defines a claim as “the purposive and public articulation of political demands, calls to action, proposals, criticisms or physical attacks, which, actually or potentially, affect the interests or integrity of the claimants and/or other collective actors” (Koopmans 2007, 189). It is therefore a unit of strategic action in the public sphere, which consists of the expression of political opinion (ibid.). Political claims are therefore articulations of the positions of political actors expressed in intentional, public acts of speech (Statham and Koopmans 2009, 437). Proposals can take various forms, and the

EU3D database covers a variety of forms and actors engaged in the debate on the future of Europe. Paraphrasing Koopmans (2002), we define a reform proposal as a distinctive statement made in the public sphere which consists of the expression of a political opinion on the future of the EU or the European integration process or an aspect thereof (such as a selected policy, policy instruments, institutions and politics) and refers to the polity dimension of the EU (i.e. its institutional shape) (Czerska-Shaw et al. 2023, 12).

Proposals may therefore address the future of the EU through different dimensions: polity (i.e. the EU's formal, institutional setting), policies (and policy instruments) and politics (the practice of policy-making) – a division allowing us to further problematise the debates on the future of Europe.

EU3D researchers from Jagiellonian University and Luiss University first developed a comprehensive database codebook (see annex 1) in order to provide guidance on how to gather and examine EU reform proposals. Then, under the coordination of Luiss University, the questions of the codebook were inserted into the programme Survey Monkey. From September 2020 until September 2022, researchers (coders) from all EU3D partner institutions gathered proposals and hand-coded them across 87 variables through Survey Monkey. Regular meetings between coders took place in order to check the progress of the work and the intercoder reliability. After September 2022, an Excel file containing all coded proposals was exported from Survey Monkey and subject to in-depth validation. Eventually, coders were requested to check the content of proposals gathered in their respective case study and correct any mistakes.

This report builds upon the systematic content analysis (Mayring, 2014) undertaken after the coding process. By relying on descriptive statistics provided by ARENA, researchers present the main findings that emerge from the analysis of reform proposals in their countries and in the EU.

## Beyond the usual suspects. Actors and the Future of Europe debate

The debate on European integration is not a new exercise. However, as integration deepened and the political system became increasingly differentiated, more and more civil society actors as well as citizens were engaged in this debate in the period under analysis. In the database we therefore gathered proposals from a variety of actors from governmental to individual citizens and examined the dynamics and specificities of FoE in several national contexts. The typology of actors is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Types of actors mapped in the EU3D database.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| National government                          | Official government proposals presented by the prime minister or, in the case of a sectoral policy proposal, by the relevant minister or a government's spokesperson (i.e. referring to a particular policy or area of European integration such as the Eurozone or foreign policy), including the position expressed in national parliaments, the European Parliament and international fora. |
| National political parties and their leaders | Proposals from both the governing and opposition political parties' spokespersons and their leaders.   |
| National parliament                          | Proposals and resolutions (not debates) by the parliament.<br>The specific selected debates were analysed systematically in (Góra, Thevenin, and Zielińska 2023b).   |
| National central bank                        | Proposals by central banks.  |
| Regional and local authorities               | In unitary, federal or regional states, official proposals by the relevant political subnational authority, including proposals by local authorities' representatives.   |
| National think tanks                         | Proposals and country-specific debates by think tanks on the future of Europe –  |

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
|                            | both original proposals and their analyses.  |
| Public intellectuals       | Distinctive proposals by public figures who are attributed cultural authority and leadership and recognised as such by at least two actors. Focus on the most substantial and influential intellectuals' proposals and commentaries on other proposals.  |
| Civil society actors (CSA) | Proposals by civil society organisations (CSO). Special attention to CSOs that are indicative of specific actors prone to antagonistic politics (identitarian groups, (non-confessional groups, Eurosceptic, Euroreject movements with both left-wing and right-wing leanings, pro-European organisations, women/feminist CSA etc.). |
| Economic actors            | Proposals and commentaries by important economic actors representing both trade unions and corporate interest organisations, employers' organisations, trade chambers, and even single companies' representatives, especially if concerning sectoral proposals.  |

Source: own compilation.

Overall, the EU3D database includes proposals by all actors, but political parties, national governments and think tanks are the most visible at the national level, while at the European level it is mostly EU institutions and CSOs (see Figure 1). These are just illustrative values, since the EU3D database does not include an exhaustive list of proposals but, as the authors argue in this report – regarding the German, Italian, Spanish, Polish, Swedish, Czech, Hungarian and Slovak national case studies (chapters in this report) – the numbers reflect the dynamic of debates in a national setting driven mostly by political actors. This is also confirmed in a comparative study of political actors in national parliaments (Góra, Thevenin, and Zielińska 2023b).

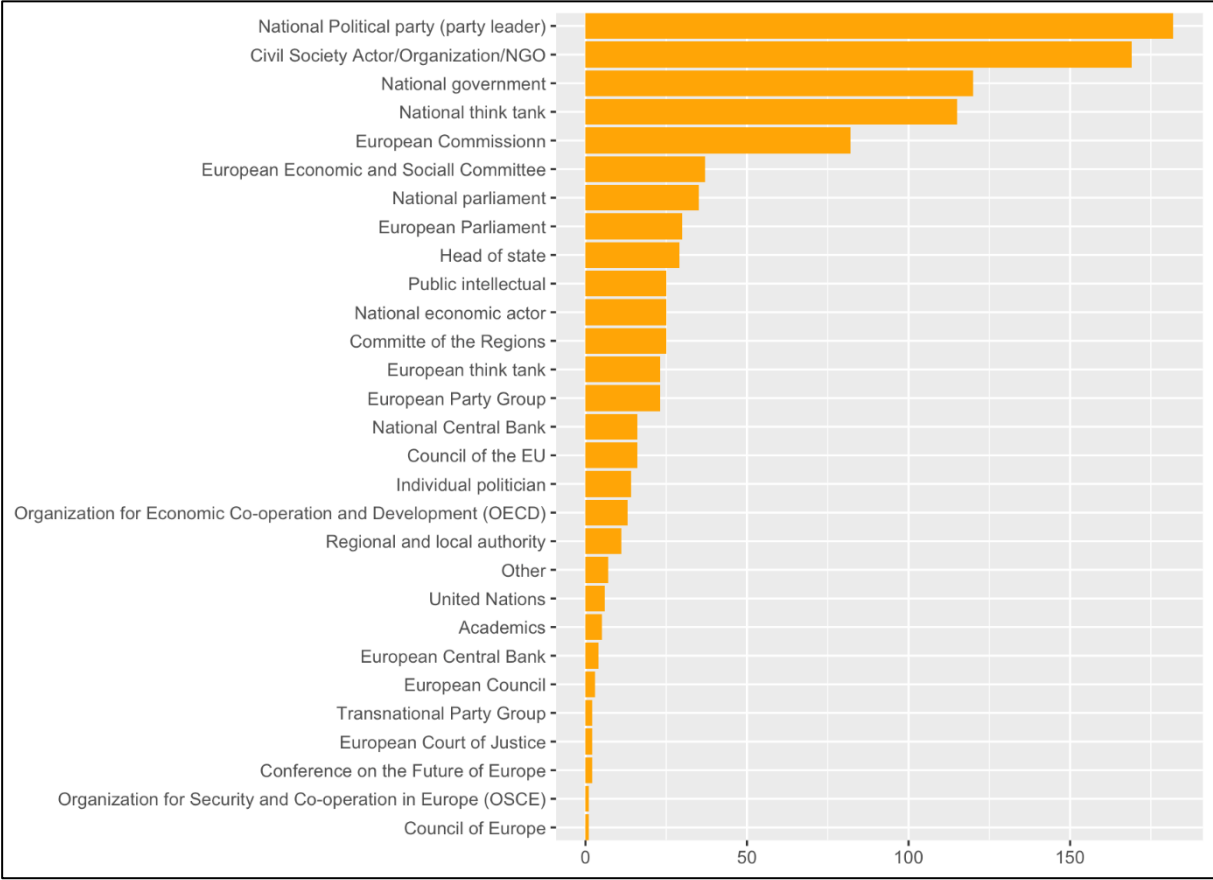


Figure 1. Distribution of proposals in the EU3D database by type of actor

The EU3D database also offers an insight into the CSOs’ interest in the debate. The in-depth case studies cover how FoE is narrated by gender equality organisations (Warat 2023), CSOs engaged in migration issues (Czerska-Shaw 2023), as well as anti-gender movements (Zielińska 2023), and a diverse set of actors in the fringes of the public sphere (Sekerdej 2023). A specific active type of actors in the debates is the national and European think tanks analysed by Styczyńska and Zubek (in this volume).

### What aspects of differentiation drive the reform proposals?

The EU3D database includes references to how the reform proposals referred to the key aspects of the project, namely how various aspects of

differentiation allow us to make sense of the functioning of democracy in the EU and if that differentiation produces instances of dominance within the EU.

Table 2. Key concepts of differentiation, democracy and dominance

| Key concepts   | Research questions (RQ) & focus  |
|--|--|
| Lawmaking (horizontal) differentiation   | RQ: Does the proposal mention interinstitutional relations within the EU political system?<br>Focus: change in the relation between the executive, legislature and judiciary at a given level of government (EU level, member state level, regional level); functional organisation of power at a given level of governing (horizontally). |
| Functional (competence-based) differentiation  | RQ: Does the proposal mention the EU's capacity to act?<br>Focus: development of new policies and/ or policy instruments   |
| Vertical differentiation (levels of competence)  | RQ: Does the proposal mention changes in competences between the EU and member states?<br>Focus: allocation of powers and competencies across levels of governing (EU and member states)   |
| Territorial (vertical) differentiation   | RQ: Does the proposal mention territorial differentiation?<br>Focus: a set-up in which not all EU member states take part in a common policy or institution (e.g. core Europe, Europe à la carte)  |
| Persons' differentiated access and incorporation (citizens' differentiation of rights) | RQ: Does the proposal mention citizens' rights and seek to alter citizens' rights and status in the EU, including changes to EU citizenship?<br>Focus: rights derived from holding (or not holding) EU citizenship; transformation of political parties  |
| Democratic malfunctioning  | RQ: Does the proposal aim to improve the democratic malfunctioning of the current EU?<br>Focus: democratic malfunctioning and rectifying measures  |
| Dominance  | RQ: Does the proposal diagnose any form of dominance in the EU? What type?<br>Focus: whether an actor (be that a member state, an organization, a collective or a person) can arbitrary interfere with and/ or manipulate another actor; forms of dominance and remedies   |

Source: Own compilation (elaborated in (Fossum 2021; Czerska-Shaw et al. 2023; Góra, Thevenin, and Zielińska 2023b).

The analyses based on the EU3D database demonstrate that overall, for all the proposals differentiation is often mentioned, but the most common are references to issues of EU’s capacity to act (functional differentiation) as well as issues connected with the competences between member states and EU institutions (vertical differentiation) . Even though the debate on FoE aimed specifically at institutional reforms of the EU and the status and future of differentiated integration understood as formats of cooperation allowing likeminded states to deepen integration (without the need to include all EU member states), the EU3D dataset demonstrates that these aspects of differentiation (lawmaking differentiation and territorial differentiation) were raised less often (see Figure 2). The least debated was the area of citizens’ rights, even if very relevant reforms were raised for instance concerning status of migrants (Czerska-Shaw 2023).

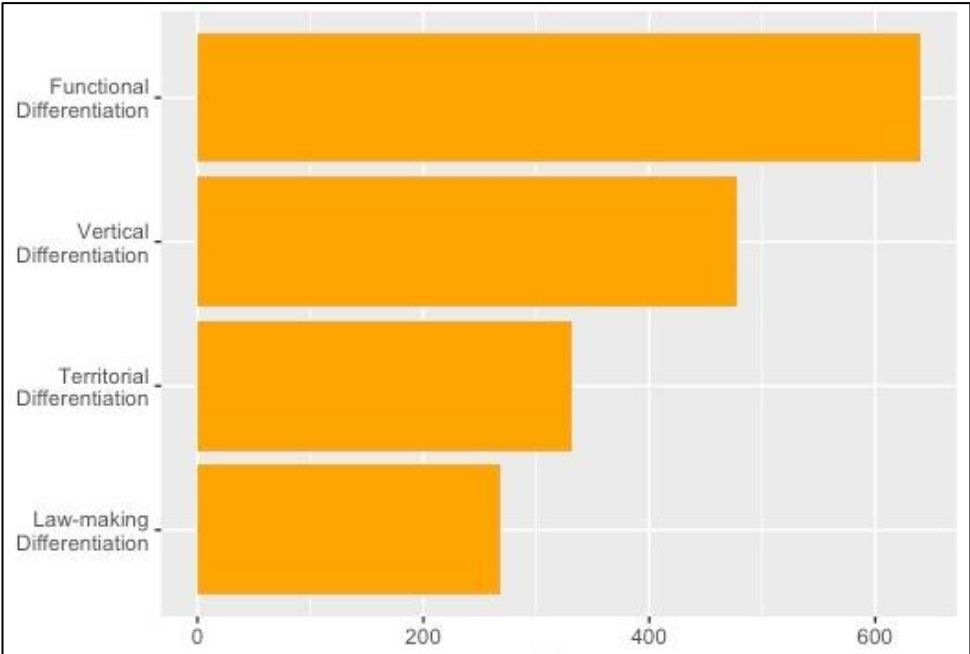


Figure 2. Distribution of differentiation in proposals in the EU3D database

The second interesting aspect is that the proposals were very often policy driven. This is consistent with other findings within the project (Góra,

Thevenin, and Zielińska 2023b). As demonstrated in Figure 3, the most debated policies in the reform proposals were migration policy, climate and environmental policy as well as issues concerning democracy. In addition, the local debates are driven by the policies relevant for specific national constituencies as visible in national cases in this report. In several cases, crises affected the policy-oriented proposals emerged in different member states. For instance, the euro crisis (ca. 2009-2012) and the COVID-19 pandemic (especially 2020) triggered a debate on the reform of fiscal integration (policies and institutional governance). Similarly, following the 2015 migration crisis, actors in some member states pushed for a shared, European approach to migration policy, such as a mechanism of redistributing migrants, while others in other member states stressed the need for unilateral, national solutions, such as border protection. At the level of parliamentary actors, notable differences between parties in government and in opposition also emerged.

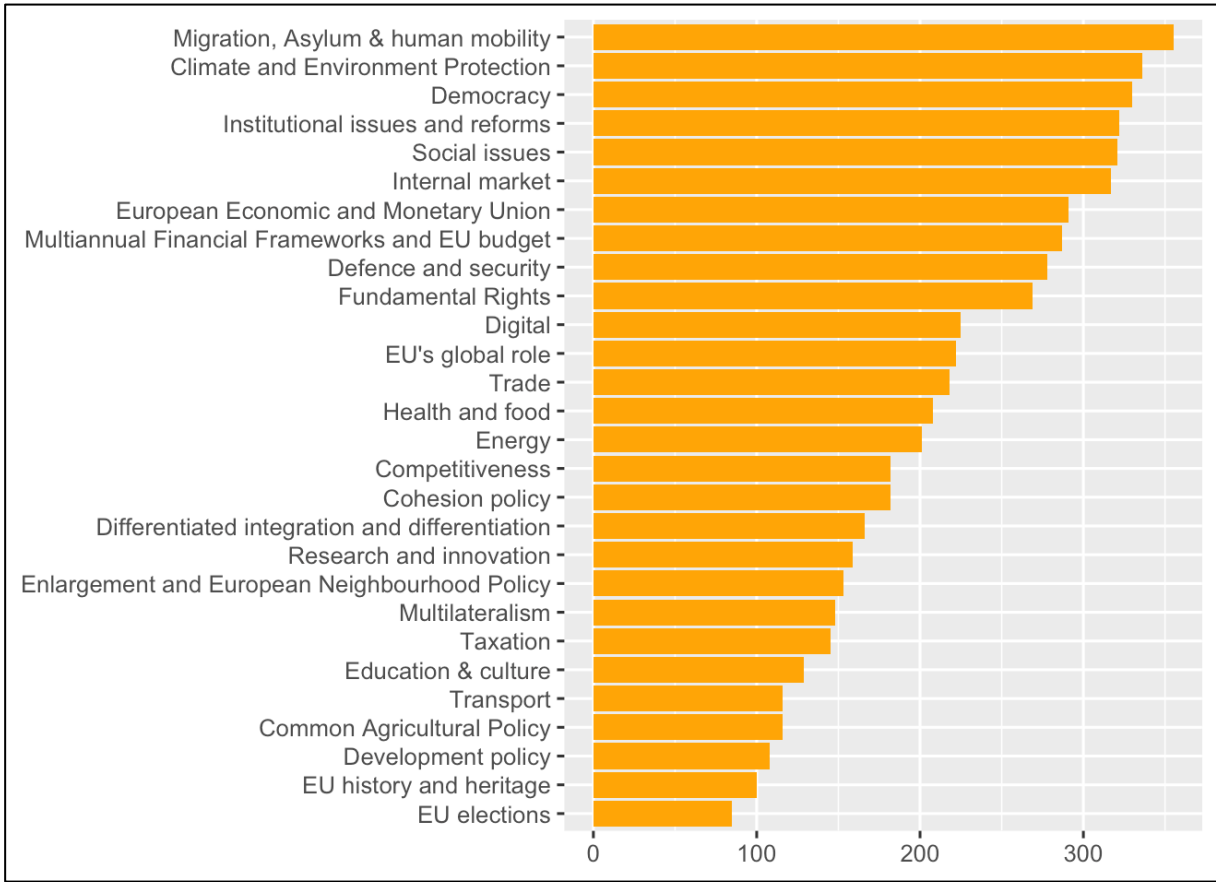


Figure 3. Distribution of policies mentioned in proposals in the EU3D database



The relevant aspect of analysis was what specific reforms – as part of lawmaking differentiation – were proposed in the gathered contributions. The most prominent reforms were those concerning the relations between law-making institutions and courts, position of executive institutions (especially the European Commission and the Council of the EU) and the stronger role of the European Parliament (see Figure 4). As regards the latter, many actors favour granting stronger powers to the European Parliament, specifically the power of legislative initiative and an extension of policies managed through co-decision.

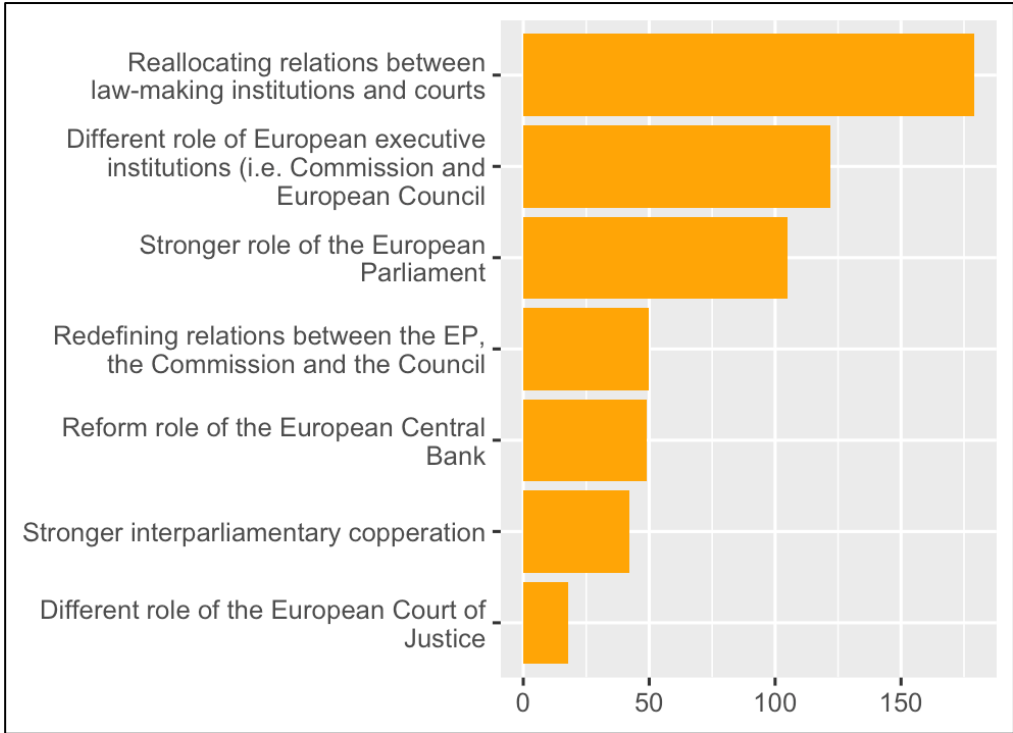


Figure 4. Distribution of reforms in proposals in the EU3D database

The analysis also focused on how to finance the proposal’s objectives and the means of reaching them. An in-depth analysis of the case studies suggests that the proposals tend to particularly support two new types of resources for the EU to better meet its tasks: resources from the EU budget and from new ad hoc funds managed by the member states (MS). This mirrors that many national and European actors would welcome new spending powers for the EU. Yet, if they accept new resources for the EU,

overall member states often still want to control these resources in decision-making bodies subject to unanimity – as occurred, for instance, with the new own resources decision approved to finance the post-pandemic recovery fund Next Generation EU. Granting the EU new taxing powers is favoured only by “extremely” Europeanist, federally-oriented actors. The proposals also epitomize the opening towards the EU directly spending its resources on European public goods – rather than distributing them to the member states.

## **Key issues in FoE debates: democracy and dominance**

The key dimension that drives the analysis was a reflection on the reforms actors propose to improve the functioning of democracy within the EU. Analysis of the overarching trends in the EU3D database demonstrates that actors voice concerns regarding the functioning of European democracy. A significant proportion of the proposals (319 proposals) indicate this as a relevant aspect. In terms of the remedies they propose, however, several proposals prefer the existing institutional structure as they tend to focus on improving efficiency of specific policies rather than significant institutional reforms.

The second core concept analysed was whether the actors experienced and perceived dominance in the context of the EU. We claim that dominance not only denotes an objective set of rules and practices, but is also perceived subjectively. Because of this subjectivity, the same structures and practices might be evaluated differently, either as equal relations, or as just or unjust dominance relations. Whether they are seen as legitimate or not depends not only on certain objective characteristics of those relations, but also on the ways they are subjectively perceived. It is “a specific felt experience to which [...] speakers attempt to refer by using the word ‘domination’ [...]” (Czerska-Shaw et al. 2022, 8).

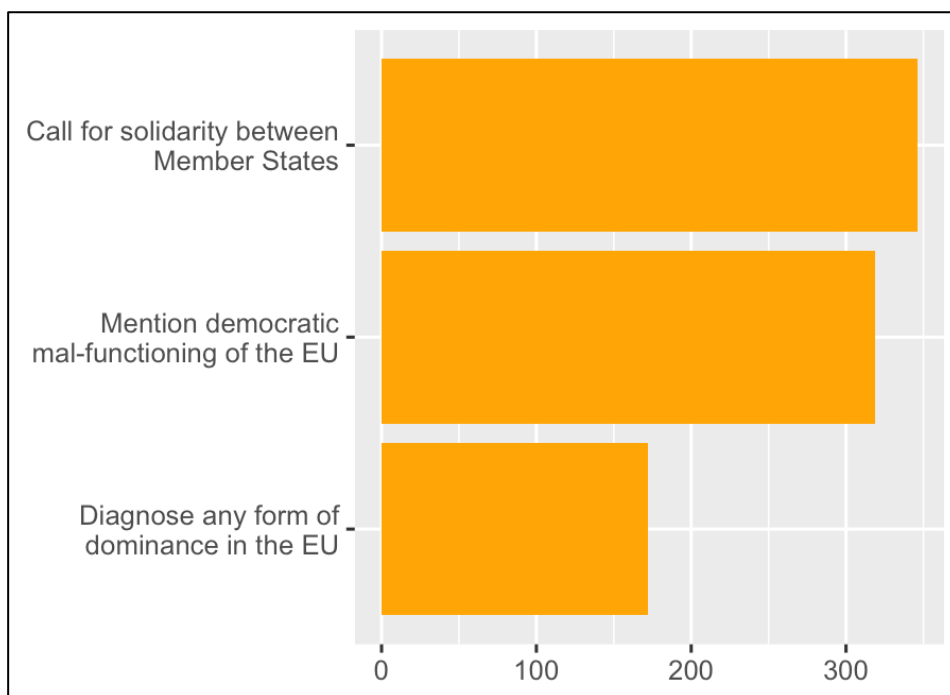


Figure 5. Distribution of key concepts of solidarity, democratic mal-functioning and dominance in proposals in the EU3D database

As visible in Figure 5, a significant proportion of proposals actually raised the issue of dominance within the EU political system. An in-depth analysis of dominance perception by CSOs demonstrates that “Eurosceptic populist actors utilise the references to dominance by the EU and its institutions to more convincingly present the EU’s threatening position toward the nation state and national sovereignty. Since at the same time they also present the EU as weak and incapable of dealing with crises as well as managing daily affairs, dominance becomes a useful construction because it focuses on abuse by EU institutions (and the EC in particular) of their competences rather than on who is more powerful” (Czerska-Shaw et al. 2022, 25). For more pro-European actors, reference to dominance is a narrative construction aiming to force the EU and its institutions (in particular the European Commission) to advance some specific policies (ibid.).

## Are there coherent narratives on the future of the EU?

Within the EU3D project, three key constitutional narratives are offered for the future of Europe: intergovernmental, federal and cosmopolitan-

regional (Fossum 2021). The EU3D dataset in itself does not display any of these narratives. However, a combination of indicators linked with aspects of differentiation, dominance and democracy allows us to assess the narratives.

Table 3. Conceptualisation of democracy, differentiation and dominance in three constitutional narratives

| <i>Constitutional narrative</i>                  | <i>Intergovernmentalism – Europe of sovereign states</i>                           | <i>Federal union</i>  | <i>EU as non-state, cosmopolitan-regional government</i>                            |
|--|--|---|---|
| <i>Democracy (inter-institutional relations)</i> | Nationally based – key role: national parliaments involve themselves in EU affairs | EU-level: checks and balances                                   | EU: community method and EU parliamentarism   |
| <i>Capacity/competence</i>                       | EU has a limited range of competencies   | EU has competencies and capacities similar to a (limited) state | EU level has limited own resources and competence in a few specified sets of issues |
| <i>Vertical differentiation</i>                  | Member states determine EU competences; constrain EU resources                     | Division of powers between levels (EU and member states)        | Pyramidal structure: few distinct EU competences, much more at the national level   |
| <i>Territorial differentiation (DI)</i>          | Differentiated integration and opt-outs/opt-ins                                    | Main pattern: between states                                    | Functional and territorial – far more limited than in a state                       |
| <i>Perceived dominance</i>                       | Perceived as supranational technocracy: imposing and unaccountable                 | Exclusion: states in more peripheral location feel excluded     | Minorities, including member states   |

Source: (Góra, Thevenin, and Zielińska 2023b, 21) based on Fossum 2021.

Based on this proposed conceptualisation, the researchers in the national case studies in this report as well as in a comparative analysis of political actors in national parliaments (Góra, Thevenin, and Zielińska 2023b) and an analysis of proposals by CSOs (Czerska-Shaw and Warat 2023) demonstrate important developments concerning how various actors envisage the future shape of the EU.

Firstly, the intergovernmental and federal imaginaries are visible in the narratives. As regards politicians in national parliaments, “the intergovernmental and federal narratives demonstrate that political actors nuanced the visions they promoted and distinctive subversions emerged recently. This was mostly in response to domestic triggers and demands” (Góra, Thevenin, and Zielińska 2023b, 46). Hence, variants of the three constitutional narratives emerged in different member states. Secondly, a new, distinctive narrative can be observed – a sovereigntist one specifically characterising right-wing and conservative actors (Góra and Zielińska 2023; Góra, Thevenin, and Zielińska 2023a; Fabbrini and Zgaga 2023). When nationalist leaders acknowledged the negative implications of Brexit, they started to criticize the EU from within but did no longer demand to leave it. These nationalist leaders aimed to bring some EU policies back under national control and criticized the EU’s supranational and centralized political system. This new, sovereigntist narrative became prominent especially among right-wing parties both in government and in opposition in selected Western (e.g. France and Italy) and Eastern (e.g. Hungary and Poland) member states. As Fabbrini and Zgaga (2023: 13) put it, “if the right-wing sovereigntist approach would lead to the nationally differentiated disintegration of the EU, the polity form that the EU should acquire to accommodate the latter remains an unresolved puzzle (for them)”.

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# Chapter 2

## French debate on the future of Europe.

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### Introduction

As a founding member of the European Community, France's role and implication in European integration is crucial and yet ambiguous. The European Communities founding fathers - Robert Schumann and Jean Monnet - have been highly important figures in the French political sphere. The Franco-German partnership, also called Franco-German couple, is considered to be one of the main motors of European integration until today. But the relationship was not without its ups and downs. Former French president Charles de Gaulle's empty chair politics, in opposition to a decision he deemed unacceptable to the French state,

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triggered a several months long crisis at the beginning of the 1960, and was only broken through the Luxembourg compromise introducing strong intergovernmental elements through the member states' veto powers. President Pompidou's stance to European integration was more pragmatic. As President Giscard after him, he favoured British accession. Giscard was also more supportive of liberal economic policies in line with the EEC and paved the way for the socialist Mitterrand's - astonishing - acceptance of the Single European Act's 1992 "Single Market". The Franco-German couple remained an important element throughout the changing French governments, but it stayed for a long time a laggard in compliance with EU directives, to which French administration continued to prove relatively resistant (Parsons, 2016).

Overall, France's relationship with the European Union (EU) has been characterised as 'policies without politics' referring to the fact that while the EU has indeed impacted French domestic public policies it has not had much influence on its political life (Rozenberg 2020). This has changed during the 2000 when public criticism started to grow, and, at the same time, a new openly pro-EU French President - Emmanuel Macron - was elected in 2017. He developed the idea that in order to play an active role in the EU, France should be an example in implementing EU rules, and complying with budgetary requirements, especially limiting budgetary deficits. EU issues were no longer ignored and blame for domestic politics was no longer shifted to the European level. His two presidencies, however, while remaining exceptionally pro-European are also characterised by hesitations and a longstanding French ambition to conceive European integration on a French model. Hence his strong willingness to upload a new understanding of French sovereignty to that of the EU. However, in his address to the European Parliament in May 2022 and in agreement with his EU partners, President Macron launched the European Political Community. Its aim is to offer a perspective of association to neighbouring countries without necessarily propose accession to the European Union.

While the French public opinion has not become Eurosceptic, it has not remained indifferent. Eurobarometer surveys indicate that support for French membership still dominates despite a long-term erosion since the mid 1980s. As in other member states, French support for European

integration increases with the level of wealth and education. Overall French MPs tend to be more pro-European than citizens, but there is a strong left-right division, the right still comparatively more critical of European integration than the moderate left. Both the extreme right (Rassemblement national (RN)) and the extreme left (La France Insoumise (LFI)) remain extremely critical of European integration and openly call for “civil disobedience” with regard to European rules.

## The Future of Europe debate in France since 2015

The main actors of the debate on the Future of Europe are clearly at the elite level. Only a limited echo can be found in the public debate or in the media. The main initiatives originate from the government or the EU level. This is consistent with the way debate on the EU is organised: while we observe, as stressed in the introduction, an increase in Eurosceptic views amongst the public, the tempo on European issues is given by the government.

The main actors in the collected proposals for the national government are the President of the Republic Emmanuel Macron (in power since 2017), the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Jean-Yves Le Drian and the Secretary of State for European Affairs Clement Beaune (from 2027-2022), and since 2022 Catherine Colonna and Laurence Boone respectively. Their statements mostly come either in the form of an official declaration on the occasion of summits or conferences or are extracted from interviews. Additionally, the European Affairs Commission is quite active both in the Senate and the National Assembly hearing (more on debate on FoE in French parliament see Thevenin 2023). Few opposition leaders, on the left or the right, engage in a debate on the forms that the European integration should take in the future, with the exception of a demand for a more protectionist European integration and of an anti-liberal discourse that we find in both left and right wing party leaders. EU debates, in particular when they concern issues of more global character, such as the future of Europe and not specific policy debates, are of limited salience in the French public debate. This has not changed through the COVID pandemic.

In 2020, three recurrent ideas were present in the proposals of the French national government, namely, defence and security, the Schengen zone and measures concerning the sanitary crisis. At the beginning of 2020, Emmanuel Macron presented a policy direction for a “Europe of defence” at the annual Munich Conference on security, in which he proposed a “Sovereign Europe” with a stronger common defence, an idea he also defended during his visit in China in 2022, triggering criticism from European but also US partners. Since 2015, defence and security issues have been on the top of the French agenda and the COVID-19 pandemic has not decreased its importance in French politics. One might even say that the discourse about the necessity of a stronger defence has been more salient after the terrorist attack in Nice on the 29th of November 2020, and the 2022 invasion of Ukraine. In the aftermath, Emmanuel Macron proposed a deep reform of the Schengen area including a common European police. Considering this French context, the narrative still focused on defence and security, however, the COVID pandemic has become equally dominant in the French narrative. The Senate and the National Assembly regularly discussed health-related policies and Clement Beaune, the Secretary of State for European Affairs frequently addressed issues like recovery fund or a health union, for which European sovereignty is perceived as absolutely crucial. It is here that we observe a slight change: while the negotiations during the economic and financial crisis did not trigger clear references to a European strategic autonomy, the COVID19 opens the path to a more assertive French policy both with regard to a necessary European sovereignty and strategic autonomy (Góra, Thevenin, Zielińska 2023). During President Macron’s intervention in Den Haag in April 2022, he enlarged the idea on defence and included economic sovereignty in the debate, with a direct reference to his 2017 Sorbonne speech.

## **Key issues in FoE debates: democracy, differentiation and dominance**

During the period under scrutiny, three *policy reform issues* are most prevalent in France: the “Europe of defence”, the Schengen zone and the pandemic crisis. As mentioned before, in February Emmanuel Macron

presented a comprehensive policy direction for the area of defence at the Munich Conference. The proposal argued for a “sovereign Europe” with a much stronger defence union that would have an independent strategic autonomy from other countries. As the EU’s defence is largely dependent on NATO and thus on the US, having different interests than those of the US can be problematic. Simultaneously, he emphasized the importance of NATO and claimed that the European defence goes hand in hand with it, reassuring Atlanticists leaders who had been very critical in November 2019 when Macron spoke a “braindead” NATO in the context of Trump’s nationalist politics. In Munich, Macron explained that the European collective security should rely on two pillars: NATO and the European defence. He proposed a differentiated idea of a common defence policy: on the one hand European integration should deepen in this area and unanimity voting should, on certain occasions, be bypassed in order to form a common strategy; on the other hand, a European common defence should allow the inclusion of third countries, in particular the UK since Brexit. He also referred to the contribution of the European Intervention Initiative, which aim is to build a common strategic culture, an idea he already developed in his 2017 speech at the Sorbonne.

After the terrorist attack in Nice (October 2020), Emmanuel Macron made another proposal related to security issues, and including a reform of the Schengen zone. He proposed the creation of a “genuine” European common police body, which would secure the external borders. This proposal had been evoked several times since 2015 by the French government. The president also proposed further integration and harmonization of policies related to security in the European Union and the collaboration of the Ministries of interior and defence in these matters. It is believed that deeper cooperation in this area will lead to a more united response to terrorism.

The third proposal, presented by French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian, captures the main priorities of the French presidency of the Council. The proposal encompasses many themes such as fight against climate change, external action and European sovereignty, but the main focus was on solidarity and the actions needed to mitigate and prevent the effects of future health crises. The Minister called for a “Europe of Health” and suggested two proposals related to the EU. The first consisted of

increasing the competencies of the European Center for Disease Prevention and Control to epidemiological monitoring and the prevention of future pandemics. The second proposal supported the establishment of an agency similar to the American Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA). The objective was to support innovation and research in order to simplify the production of vaccines and treatment in the future.

In addition to the strengthening of EU health policy, the French government has strongly supported the idea of a recovery fund to deal with the crisis generated by the pandemic. In April 2020, the Secretary of State for European Affairs Clement Beaune stated that for a sustainable future, the recovery fund should be doubled. In July, he took note of the improvements brought to the project since April 2020. On his side, the Minister of Europe and Foreign Affairs, Jean-Yves Le Drian, in a joint press release with his Italian counterpart, publicly supported the Next Generation EU instrument and agreed that special attention should be given to this issue.

It should be noted that both the government and the members of the opposition considered solidarity as one of the main ideas in dealing with the COVID-19 crisis. Jean-Yves Le Drian emphasized that during the pandemic the need for solidarity had become more vivid: had we not pooled all the European resources, it would have been impossible to create a coordinated strategy. The Commission for European Affairs also emphasized the need for a recovery package that targets the countries most affected by the pandemic.

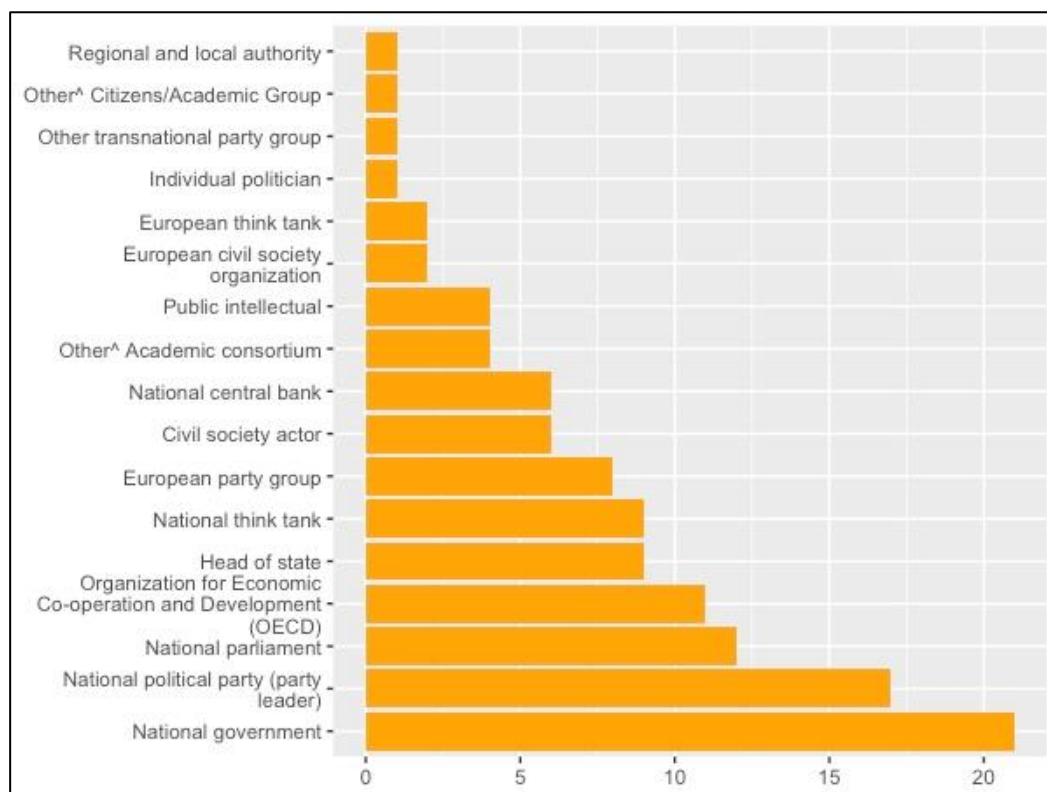


Figure 1. Distribution of French proposals by type of actor

Most *Policy proposals* from France have been made by the French president through public statements. While proposals presented in those declarations unsurprisingly lack precision and present a general course of action, those formulated in resolutions and debates of the Senate or the National Assembly are more elaborated. For instance, while President Macron's proposal to reform the Schengen zone lacked operational elements and a descriptive part on how Schengen would look like, reports presented by the European Affairs Commission were characterized by a high level of detail, accompanied by precise recommendations and changes. Hence, these reforms proposals in the French debate focused on the asymmetrical effect of the pandemic was not apparent. However, in the national debates and interviews, these themes have been frequently exposed. Clement Beaune, French European Affairs Minister has expressed his concerns and disappointment concerning the economic response of the European Union. He considered that the recovery plan was insufficient and should be doubled.

On the 14th of October, he presented in front of the Commission for European Affairs and suggested that funds for the recovery package were

largely lowered due to Hungary and Poland's efforts to veto the negotiations. Clement Beaune emphasized France's efforts to have a common European response and argues that only with a common action the EU will be able to put this crisis behind. Additionally, Clement Beaune expressed his views in an interview with LCI television on the 11th of April 2021. In his opinion, the EU should not make the same mistakes as it did after the global financial crisis. He did not give any specifics about the mistakes though. The recovery stimulus should be accompanied by investment in 5G wireless networks, green and digital technologies.

The question of *financing* both policy and polity reforms was also discussed by opposition leaders. While no specific links between the 2008 and COVID-19 crises were identified in the proposals of the national government, the leader of the extreme left populist party *La France Insoumise*, Jean-Luc Melenchon proposed in the National Assembly to cancel all the debts related to the pandemic. In this proposal, he made a clear comparison between the crises. He argued that in 2008 there was a 3% decline in the capital, and it took the EU four years to get back on its feet, and that nowadays the decline is already up to 12% which accounts for a twelve-year recession period. Based on this argument he considers it necessary to increase the stimulus package in combination with cancelling the debts.

With regard to salience, considering that the Head of State Emmanuel Macron is extremely dedicated to having a strong European budget and even injected the concept of "Sovereign Europe", the debate on the Future of Europe for the national government appears to be crucial. In this context the specific debate on the recovery fund is particularly salient. Members of government regularly gave interviews and published substantial information on the development of the negotiation process. While defence and security remained a prominent issue for the French government even in the context of the pandemic, the narrative and debates about EU health policy and economic / social issues related to the Covid-19 crisis have become increasingly important.

Both far-right and left-wing populist opposition parties have been particularly critical of the EU recovery fund achieved in July 2020. Marine Le Pen, the leader of Le Rassemblement National considered it as the worst agreement in the history of France. She stated that the frugal states



achieved their goal and managed to decrease the recovery funds. Additionally, she criticized the Fund for sacrificing the independence of France and abandoning agriculture. On the other side of the political spectrum the left-populist party, La France Insoumise also criticized the Fund for the same reasons.

On the 4th of June 2020, the leader of La France Insoumise, Jean-Luc Melenchon proposed to the National Assembly to cancel European debts, especially the ones resulting from the pandemic. His main argument was based on the fact that it took the EU four years to come back on its feet after the Euro crisis. In the current situation, so Melenchon, when the crisis is four times worse than before, significantly more investment would be needed, and the member states do not have the resources to pay their debts back. Additionally, he argued that the autonomy and the independence of the European Central Bank should be taken away and the economic decisions should be made primarily by the member states.

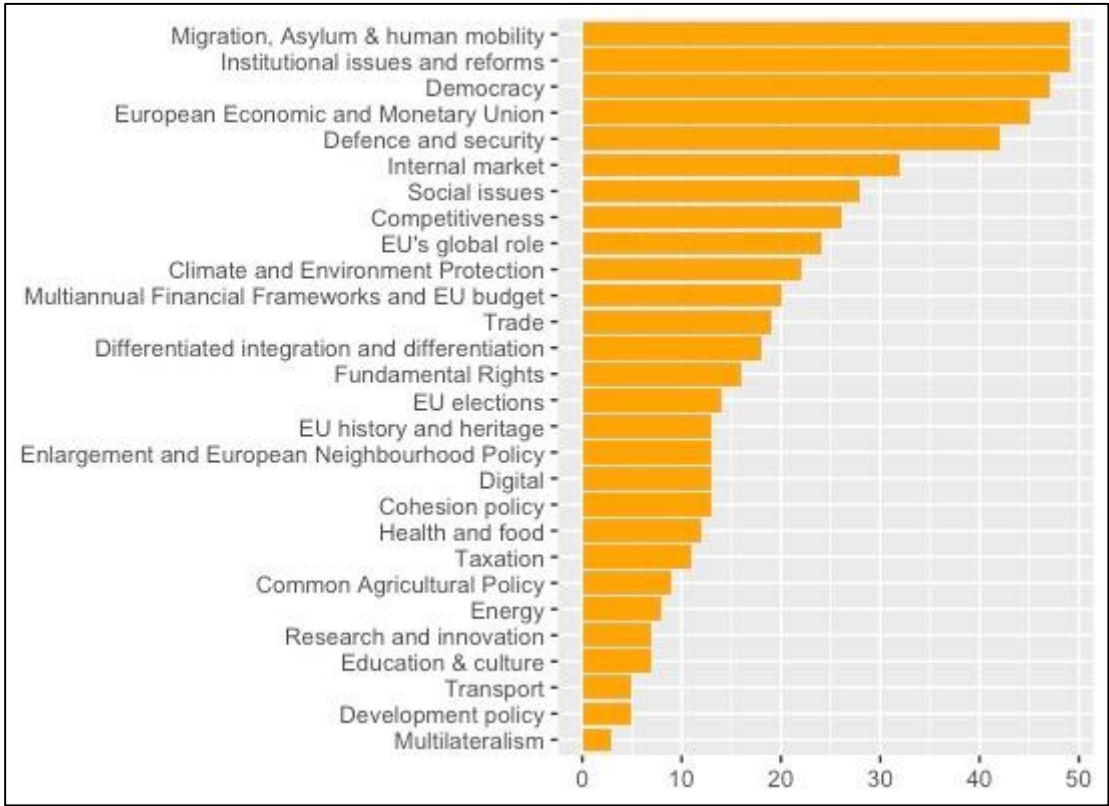


Figure 2. Distribution of policies mentioned in French proposals.

The *assessment of the policy reform* proposal of the Foreign Minister to create an agency in charge of research and innovation, similar to BARDA, has gained significant support from the Commission for European Affairs. On its hearing on the 12th of October, several members showed their support for the proposal. The same position has been shared by Senators Veronique Guillotin and Didier Marie, a member of the European Democratic and Social Rally group and a member of the Socialist party, respectively. They argue that a Health Union is necessary to deal with the current crisis and to prevent future pandemics, a Union which should be build on Next Generation EU instruments.

In the French context, the overall expectation is to reform the EU and particularly its defence policies. With regard to the Schengen area, the creation of a common policy body is expected. The main objective to reform Schengen is to tackle future terrorist attacks by harmonizing regulations in the member states. With his idea of a “sovereign Europe”, President Macron expect that in the future, the EU will become more independent from the United States and will be able to have more strategic autonomy.

Related to possible solutions to the pandemic, and with regard to *polity reforms* the creation of an authority similar to BARDA has gained significant support. On the 31st of August, the then Minister of defence, Jean-Yves Le Drian declared that the far-reaching reform of the EU in this is not necessary.

He stated that the government did not aim to either change treaties or transform institutions. In his opinion, the change should be more pragmatic, and the Union must reply to the current challenges. More precisely, the competencies of the EU should increase by incorporating health as a major component. About the Conference on the FoE, he argues that rather than having an institutional discourse on this Conference, it should serve as a true platform for citizens initiatives.

It is interesting to note, though, that no French proposal on the future of Europe referred to *territorial differentiation* in the European Union. While these debates occur at the European level, in France they remain confined to the academic realm as far as we could see. A change occurred in May 2022, with president Macron’s statement at the European

Parliament, where differentiation is presented as a development we should not fear.

The question of *dominance* in the European Union has become more salient in the official governmental discourse. While it is not used by governmental actors with regard to other EU member states, it has been identified in President Macron's official discourses as stemming from China and, implicitly from the US, which lead to the concept of the European strategic autonomy used in Macron's Munich address in 2020, as well as the President's speeches in Beijing and Den Haag in 2023. The discourse by opposition parties identifies Germany as the dominant European actor.

## Conclusions

The debate on the future of Europe is an implicit one in France. No reference to Treaty changes or profound institutional transformation proposal have been made in official speeches before May 2022. While they were analysed by think tanks such as the Foundation Robert Schuman or the Delors Foundation, they were not fostered as such and only policy adjustments are part of the references that can be found. On the whole 2015-2022 period, criticism with regard to the functioning of the EU refer to policy areas more than constitutional design as such. No explicit references to maintaining of the status quo are found after the speech President Macron gave at the Sorbonne in 2017, but implicit arguments are made about improving security and defence, as well as health policies and criticisms with regard to the rule of law in the EU (and the specific situation in Hungary and Poland).

In May 2022, on the contrary, president Macron has for the first time in many years opened the door to a Treaty revision, based on the work of a Convention. His discourse clearly contrasted with that of LFI and RN. Eurosceptic parties, while not calling for any leave campaign, develop explicit criticisms. Hence the populist extreme left party, LFI, has called for explicit disobedience of European law and European rules in the 2022 presidential campaign. This position has created dissensions within NUPES, a movement created after Macron's re-election in order to unite

left wing parties for the legislative election: overall LFI's Eurosceptic position is not shared by the socialist party and the Greens.

The constitutional narratives of Macron and the French government is of a hybrid nature. It is a combination of intergovernmentalism (France playing a leading role in European integration), cosmopolitan (free movement still seen as central, except for temporary suspensions in times of crisis) and even federalism although in an ambiguous way (plead for more competences exerted at EU level, idea of a European sovereignty). While the socialist party and Europe Ecologie Les Verts (EELV) develop similar narratives, LFI and Rassemblement national clearly favour intergovernmentalism (when negotiation at EU level is seen as a possibility) and sovereigntism (when the French interest prevails and prevent any possible negotiation at EU level).

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# Chapter 3

## The Future of Europe Debate in Germany: EU Reform Proposals by Political Parties and the Federal Government (2017-2021)

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### Introduction

This country report summarises the state of the Future of Europe (FoE) debate in Germany, focusing on the period from 2017 to 2021. Conceptually, the report structures its analysis of the FoE debate around three analytical concepts: *democracy*, *dominance*, and *differentiation* (cf. Fossum 2021). How do German actors evaluate the state of *democracy* in the European Union (EU)? Do they perceive patterns of *dominance* in the relationship between member states and between the European and the member state levels? And what role do they attribute to *differentiated*

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*integration* (i.e., territorial differentiation) as a mechanism to reconcile a heterogeneous union of 27 member states?

Empirically, the report is based on the 'EU3D Database on the FoE', which provides a comprehensive collection of proposals for the reform of the EU published by state and non-state, national and EU-level actors. We focus mostly on *polity* reform proposals rather than on *policy* reform proposals. *Polity* reform proposals address the institutional set-up and vertical and horizontal distribution of competence between member states and the EU and between EU institutions. By contrast, *policy* reform proposals address specific policy problems; in this report, we focus specifically on policy proposals related to fiscal integration and common debt. Together, polity reform and fiscal policy proposals provide important insights into the constitutional visions and narratives offered by actors involved in the debate on the FoE, which we will discuss in the conclusion of the report.

The FoE debate in Germany takes place mainly among institutional actors (e.g., government ministries, parliament), political parties, political foundations and think tanks (see Figure 1). The Database shows that the German political parties dedicate substantial parts of their election manifestos to questions of European integration and EU policies. Moreover, various party-affiliated foundations (e.g., Friedrich Ebert Foundation; Konrad Adenauer Foundation) and independent think tanks (e.g., Bertelsmann Foundation, German Institute for International and Security Affairs, Jacques Delors Centre) regularly publish policy proposals and analyses of current challenges facing the EU. Economic interest groups and civil society groups usually concentrate on concrete policy issues rather than outlining broader visions for European integration. The 'Pulse of Europe movement', the most prominent and sizeable citizen initiative addressing European integration in recent years, voiced its support for a 'united and democratic EU' which secures peace, freedom, and the rule of law (Pulse of Europe, 2023). While it calls for EU reforms, its main intention was to signal public support for European integration in the wake of the Brexit referendum.

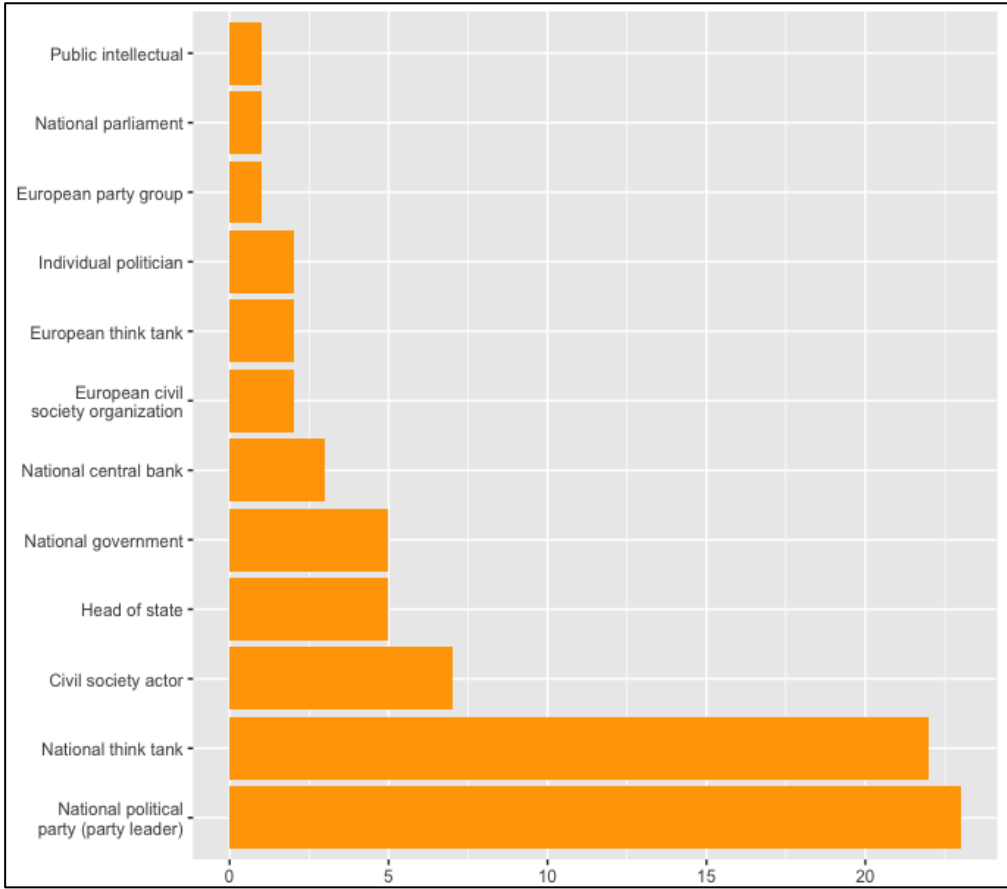


Figure 1. Distribution of German proposals by type of actor

Given these varying patterns of involvement – and to secure comprehensiveness among a clearly circumscribed set of actors, this report focuses on the positions and proposals of formal political actors, namely the federal government and political parties represented in the German Bundestag. This selection is unproblematic given political parties’ function of aggregating and voicing societal interests and preferences in the political processes in democracies. Currently, six party groups are represented on the federal level – the highest number since the founding of the German Federal Republic – ensuring a broad representation of German opinions in the report’s sample, including more conservative and more social democratic voices within the pro-European party spectrum as well as right-wing and left-wing Eurosceptic actors.



## **Background: Germany in the EU<sup>9</sup>**

A founding member, Germany is the largest member state of the European Union (EU) both in terms of the size of its population and its economy, as well as the largest net contributor to the EU budget. For Germany, European integration is a political project that secures peace and stability in Europe. Historically, the country pursued European integration (and NATO membership) as a strategy of integrating itself into the Western bloc of the Cold War era. In the post-war years, European integration enabled Germany's reconciliation with its European neighbours, most importantly France (Bulmer and Paterson 2013). Similarly, after the end of the Cold War and German reunification in 1990, Germany was a strong proponent of Eastern enlargement as a way to reunite the torn continent and secure stability and liberal democracy in Central and Eastern Europe (Schimmelfennig 2001). From Konrad Adenauer, the first Chancellor of the Federal Republic, to Chancellors Helmut Kohl and Gerhard Schröder, German leaders have supported both a widening and deepening of European integration. Against this backdrop, Chancellor Angela Merkel took a more 'conservational' approach, which sought to hold the EU together and prevent disintegration in a decade of multiple crises (Heermann et al. 2023). From the Eurozone to the migration crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic, Merkel attempted to prevent or bridge rifts between the Northern and Southern as well as between the Western and Eastern member states.

In terms of policy positions, Germany can be associated with the more market-friendly camp of Northern member states (Thomson et al. 2012; Lehner and Wasserfallen 2019). During the Eurozone crisis, Germany took a fiscally conservative stance, promoting austerity and structural reforms in exchange for financial assistance to troubled European economies. However, in order to safeguard the EU as a political project, Germany has repeatedly reached beyond the economic orthodoxies of its Northern camp to build compromises with France, whose more statist economic ideas are usually closer to the preferences of Southern member states (Degner and Leuffen 2019; Krotz and Schild 2013). Through close relationships between its respective leaders – Adenauer and de Gaulle, Schmidt and Giscard d'Estaing, Kohl and Mitterrand, the so-called

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<sup>9</sup> This section has been adapted from Heermann & Tigges (2023).

Franco-German engine has provided ideational leadership for the advancement of European integration (Degner and Leuffen 2021). The joint proposal by Chancellor Angela Merkel and President Emmanuel Macron for the 'Next Generation EU' COVID-19 recovery programme – which breaks with the German taboo of joint EU debt liability – can be interpreted as the latest instance of this Franco-German leadership (Heermann et al. 2023).

According to Eurobarometer surveys, the EU generally enjoys high levels of public support in Germany and a majority of Germans identify – at least to some degree – as 'European' (Freudlsperger and Jachtenfuchs 2021: 124). However, Germans remain reluctant when it comes to debt mutualisation and overt redistribution between member states. In fact, during the Eurozone crisis the public acted as an important constraint (Schneider and Slantchev 2018). While German business groups were generally in favour of providing financial aid to troubled member states in order to safeguard the EMU and the Single Market, citizens were less supportive (Degner and Leuffen 2020). Even so, amidst Brexit and the climate crisis, the EU has enjoyed further increases in support in Germany (Böttger and Jopp 2021, 15). In contrast to the Eurozone crisis, during the COVID-19 crisis German citizens were broadly supportive of providing financial support to other member states (Heermann, Koos, and Leuffen 2022).

The German party mainstream has long been generally in favour of further European integration, albeit with differing positions regarding fiscal integration in particular (Freudlsperger and Weinrich 2021). The more economically right-wing parties, the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschland/Christlich-Soziale Union – CDU/CSU) and Free Democratic Party (Freie Demokratische Partei – FDP), are supportive of further integrating the European Single Market, but reluctant when it comes to fiscal integration and redistribution between member states. The more left-wing parties, the Social Democratic Party (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschland – SPD) and the Greens (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen), are in favour of more integration in the areas of social welfare policies. The socialist Left party (Die Linke) is more ambivalent about European integration, criticising its market-liberalising elements and the fiscal

policy regime of the EMU. The most Eurosceptic party is the Alternative für Deutschland (Alternative for Germany – AfD) which was founded in 2014 as a response to the financial bailouts of member states during the Eurozone crisis and which first entered the Bundestag in 2017. There is a general agreement among the other parties not to form coalitions with the AfD. Freudlsperger and Weinrich (2021) argue that due to the politicisation of European (fiscal) integration, German mainstream parties have developed a general preference for regulation over capacity-building despite their integrationist conviction (Freudlsperger and Weinrich 2021, 148).

From 2005 to 2021, Angela Merkel’s Christian democratic CDU/CSU parties were in power, governing in altering coalitions with either the social democratic SPD or the liberal FDP. On questions of European integration, these government coalitions could usually count on the (tacit) support of the Greens. In December 2021, Merkel’s successor Olaf Scholz (SPD) took office. His ‘traffic-light coalition’ is composed of the SPD, the Greens and the FDP. The coalition agreement is generally pro-integration in tone and signals the new government’s readiness to engage in treaty change. It remains, however, blurry when it comes to questions of fiscal integration. This is unsurprising as the coalition – like the previous CDU/CSU-SPD coalition – includes parties with widely diverging preferences on this issue.

## **Democracy, Dominance, and Differentiation in the German Future of Europe Debate**

The following summarises how *democracy*, *dominance* and *differentiation* are discussed in the German FoE debate. First, we show how German parties evaluate the functioning of democracy in the EU and which polity reforms they propose to rectify potential malfunctioning. Second, we discuss how they perceive Germany’s role in the EU in the context of a dominance discourse. Finally, we present party positions regarding internal and external differentiated integration.

### **Democracy: Perceptions of Malfunctioning and Polity Reforms**

As Figure 2 illustrates, questions of democracy played a central role in the collected reform proposals. In this section, we discuss how the actors in our sample assess the functioning of democracy in the EU and what polity

reforms they proposed in order to improve democracy in the EU’s multi-level system.

While democracy was a prominent topic in most reform proposals, actors differed in their assessment of the extent to which democracy was malfunctioning and what reforms were needed. The German Federal Government, the CDU/CSU and the FDP did not explicitly assess the quality of the EU’s democracy. The latter two parties, however, acknowledged a lack of transparency and efficiency. They argued that the EU was often perceived by citizens as too bureaucratic and too removed from their daily lives.

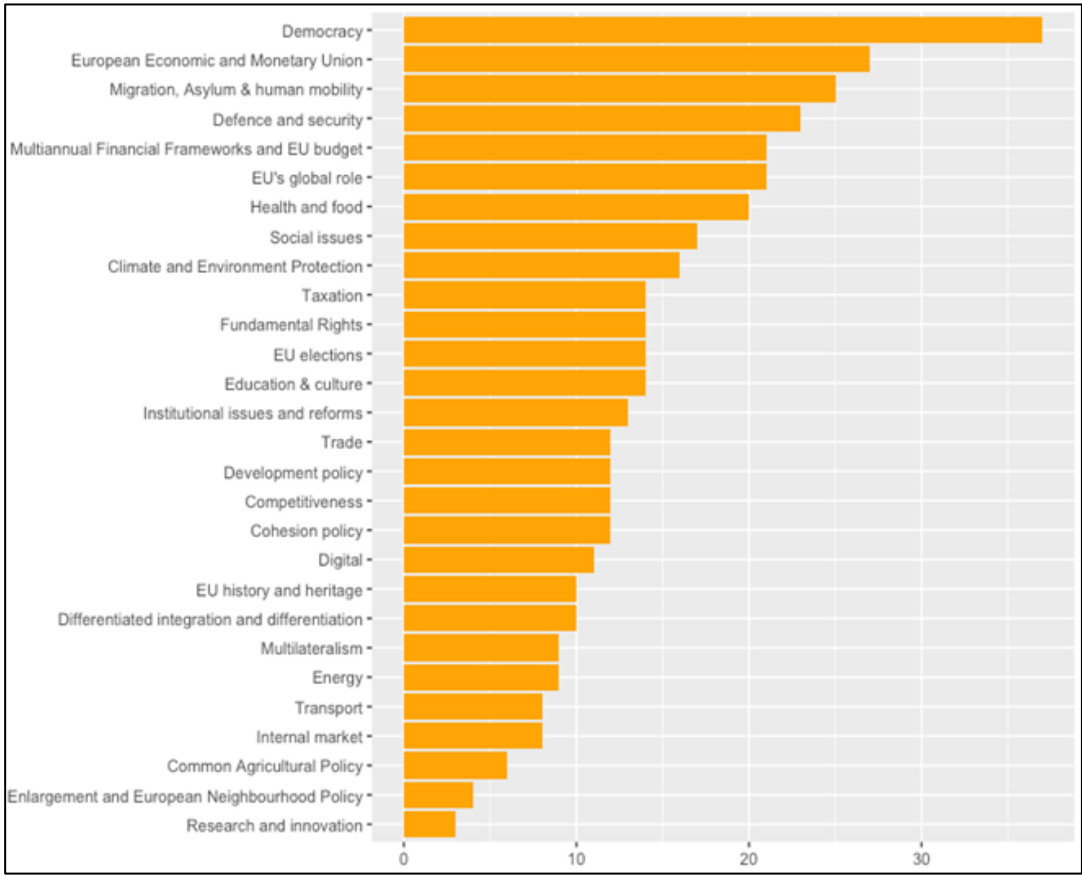


Figure 2. Distribution of policy areas mentioned in German proposals

The SPD and the Greens maintained that the EU was democratically legitimate, while at the same time acknowledging democratic deficits and the need for democracy-enhancing reforms. In particular, the two parties favoured strengthening the European Parliament (EP). Against this

background, the Greens explicitly criticised the dominant role of national governments and the tendency of intergovernmental decision-making, calling for the EP to become the central *locus* of European democracy.

By contrast, both the AfD and the Left party stated that the EU's democracy was fundamentally malfunctioning. Although their critiques were similarly harsh, they came to vastly different conclusions. The Left party criticised that the EU had enshrined 'neoliberal' principles and policies in its primary law, thereby removing it from democratic politics. Accordingly, democracy in Europe was threatened by capitalism. To illustrate this argument, the Left pointed to the treatment of Greece during the Eurozone crisis, claiming that the EU had imposed austerity on Greece and thereby harmed its democratic self-determination. Institutionally, the Left questioned the legitimacy of the European Commission and Council, calling for a more powerful EP as well as for more influence for national parliaments. In sum, the Left party advocated a fundamental revision of the EU Treaties to make the EU 'more democratic'.

The AfD traced the EU's democratic malfunctioning to the alleged lack of a European *demos*, which, in the party's view, constituted a threat to democracy in Europe. According to the AfD, democracy could be only truly lived in culturally homogenous nation states that had evolved over centuries. Therefore, in 2017, the AfD called for renationalizing EU competencies to strengthen national sovereignty and democracy and for referenda about Germany's membership in the EU.

Finally, beyond discussing the quality of democracy at the European level, the SPD, the Greens, and the Left party also criticised democratic backsliding at the national level in some member states, calling for stronger EU measures to enforce compliance with democratic norms in member states. Likewise, in its coalition agreement, the current German Federal Government composed of SPD, Greens and FDP called for a stricter norm enforcement by the European Commission and the development of new instruments, including making EU funds conditional on adherence to the rule of law, to safeguard democracy in EU member states.

Irrespective of the actors' assessments of the state of the EU's democracy, they all proposed measures to strengthen the EU's democracy. Some of

the reform proposals diametrically opposed each other. For instance, the AfD argued that the EU was not democratically legitimate, unless national referenda on remaining/leaving the EU were held, whereas the SPD deemed further integration, not least in the area of social policy, necessary to strengthen the EU's democracy. By contrast, the Left declared that it would oppose any further integration, unless the European Treaties were fundamentally reformed. In the rest of this section, we discuss proposals for the reform of the EU polity, in particular concerning the relationship between the different EU institutions (*law-making horizontal differentiation*).

### ***Strengthening the European Parliament vis-à-vis the Council and the European Commission***

All parties, except the AfD, advocated a strengthening of the EP as a key avenue to improve democracy at the European level. For this purpose, they proposed a right of legislative initiative for the EP and the maintenance of the *Spitzenkandidaten* procedure.<sup>10</sup> The SPD, Greens, FDP, and the Left all support a harmonisation of European election procedures among member states and the introduction of transnational list. The German Federal Government of former Chancellor Angela Merkel also voiced support for transnational lists in the 2018 Meseberg Declaration. The current Federal Government of Chancellor Olaf Scholz, in its coalition agreement, also endorsed a right of legislative initiative for the EP, the *Spitzenkandidaten* procedure, and the allocation of some EP seats to transnational lists.

Furthermore, to strengthen the EP's control function vis-à-vis the European Commission, the SPD, the Greens, and the Left proposed to grant the EP the right to elect - and recall - individual Commissioners and not just the entire College of the European Commission.

Moreover, the three left-wing parties advocated for a strengthening of the EP's budgetary powers and their role in the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), putting it on an equal footing with the Council. Beyond the EMU, these parties also called for the extension of the ordinary legislative procedure to all policy areas in order to extend the EP co-decision rights. By contrast, the AfD considered the EP undemocratic and demanded its

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<sup>10</sup> The *Spitzenkandidaten* procedure refers to the EP's interpretation of Article 17(7), Treaty on the EU, according to which the EP would only elect a candidate as Commission President, who run as their party's lead candidate in the European elections (Heidbreder & Schade 2020).

abolition. According to the AfD, the member states alone should have legislative competence.

### *The role of national parliaments*

All parties made the case for strengthening the role of national parliaments in the EU. For example, the Greens proposed that national parliaments should receive comprehensive information rights to improve their ability to scrutinise their governments' activities at EU level. For the pro-European parties, strengthening national parliaments' control function vis-à-vis member state governments was complementary to strengthening the EP's influence at the EU level. Both measures would strengthen European democracy. By contrast, for the Eurosceptic AfD, strengthening national parliaments was a means to impede further European integration.

### *Extending the use of Qualitative Majority Voting in the Council*

As discussed above, the German parties envisioned a comprehensive set of reforms to strengthen the EP. By contrast, with regard to the Council of the EU, the debate focused mostly on the use of qualified majority voting (QMV). Again, all parties, except the AfD, advocated for an extension of QMV to more policy areas and in particular to foreign and security policy. In its coalition agreement, the current Federal Government of Chancellor Scholz also endorsed QMV in this policy area. In contrast to foreign policy, party positions on extending QMV to tax policy differ. It's supported by the SPD and the Greens but opposed by the FDP.

In addition to QMV, the Greens proposed the introduction of a mandatory time limit within which the Council has to debate legislative proposals as another instrument to speed up the EU's legislative process.

Furthermore, there was broad agreement that the Council should become more transparent. For example, the Greens proposed an obligation of member state governments to publish their position in the Council on each legislative file so that national parliaments and voters could hold them to account.

### *Direct and participatory democracy*

The AfD and the Left party advocated for more direct democracy by holding referenda on different EU issues. The AfD explicitly demanded

referenda on Germany's membership in the EMU and in the EU in general. Rather than calling for referenda, the SPD and Greens advocated for the extension of other participatory instruments. For example, they proposed to strengthen the European Citizens' Initiatives by reducing the quotas an initiative must reach in order to be successful. In addition, the Greens and the Left party went further and proposed that if a European Citizens' Initiative was successful, the European Commission should be required to initiate a legislative proposal.

## **Dominance and Germany's Role in the EU**

The term 'dominance' occurred only rarely in reform proposals. However, implicitly, perceptions of *political and economic dominance* motivated many reform proposals, especially among opposition parties.

Germany's role or position in the EU was a focal point of the *dominance* discourse advanced by the AfD and the Left party. The two parties, however, came to two very different conclusions. On the one hand, the AfD suggested that German citizens were economically dominated and *materially deprived* by other EU member states and referred to Germany as 'Europe's paymaster'. Arguing that the bailout packages during the Eurozone crisis were violating the EU treaties, the AfD claimed that German citizens were illegitimately stripped of their money by indebted EU member states. On the other hand, the Left party argued that Germany itself was the dominating actor in its relationship with other member states. While the AfD framed Germany as being dominated by indebted member states, the Left party argued that the excessive German export surplus caused these countries' accumulation of debt in the first place. The Left reasoned that EU-imposed austerity interfered with the sovereignty of Southern European countries, *materially depriving* them.

While the Greens also recognised patterns of dominance in the treatment of indebted member states during the Eurozone crisis, the party was overall much more moderate in its assessment of Germany's role in the EU as compared to the Left party. It located dominance in the actions of the 'Troika', i.e., the International Monetary Fund, the European Commission and the European Central Bank, rather than in the German government. According to the Greens, the Troika and the conditionality included in financial assistance programmes have harmed trust in



European democracy in Southern Europe. The Greens argued that Germany should show greater consideration for the needs of other member states, for example, by reducing its export surplus.

The Greens and the Left party were the only parties to mention the Troika in their policy proposals. Neither the CDU/CSU, the FDP nor the SPD associated Germany with the exercise of dominance in the EU.

## **Territorial Differentiation**

Territorial differentiation – also known as ‘differentiated integration’ in the political science literature (Leuffen et al. 2022; Holzinger & Schimmelfennig 2012) – refers to scenarios, in which not all EU member states participate in all EU policies.

Temporary differentiation was popular among German parties. The CDU/CSU, the SPD, and the FDP all advocated for the temporary closer cooperation between willing member states (‘multi-speed Europe’). To this end, the FDP called for a more frequent use of the enhanced cooperation procedure. Former Chancellor Angela Merkel argued that differentiated integration, in the form of a multi-speed Europe, was crucial for further European integration. Considering the heterogeneity of EU member states, uniform integration was not always possible. However, she also underlined that such closer cooperation between some EU member states should be temporary. Other EU member states should always have the opportunity to join. The Greens expressed a preference for uniform over differentiated integration because they worried that the formation of a ‘core Europe’ could lead to a permanent division and the eventual demise of the Union. Nevertheless, the Greens still argued that temporary differentiation should also be possible. The current SPD-Green-FDP coalition government of Chancellor Olaf Scholz agreed on a similar stance: While uniform integration was the first preference, Germany would also participate in enhanced cooperation, if necessary.

Differentiated integration also has an external dimension, enabling third countries to participate under certain conditions in select EU policies (Leuffen et al. 2022). External differentiation gained particular prominence after Brexit. In this context, the CDU/CSU, the SPD, and the Greens opposed a cherry picking of EU benefits by the UK (and other third

countries) in the absence of binding associative obligations. There should be no ‘Europe à la carte’.

The AfD was more favourable to the idea of a ‘Europe à la Carte’ even among member states. The party advocated for Germany to opt out of policy areas such as the EMU or the Common European Asylum System. They thus supported what could be called ‘differentiated disintegration’ (Leruth et al. 2019).

## External Differentiation and Enlargement

The Russian war in Ukraine has given new momentum to the debate on EU enlargement. What were German parties’ positions on enlargement prior to 2022? In its 2021 manifesto, the CDU/CSU favoured ‘deepening over widening’ the EU. In other words, the priority should be the continuing integration of member states as compared to the accession of new members. Enlargement should not undermine the cohesion of the EU. The Greens, too, linked deepening and widening, albeit in a more positive light. They saw enlargement as an impetus for internal EU reform. The Greens were also the only party that advocated for concrete progress in enlargement: accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia should be started. The other parties voiced their support for intensifying cooperation between the EU and countries in the West Balkans without committing to a near-term enlargement. Rather the vague statements point towards forms of ‘external differentiated integration’ (see above). The FDP was most explicit in expressing a preference for new models of integration or external differentiation without, however, making concrete proposals.

## Financing a United Europe: Policy Positions on Fiscal Integration

In addition to enlargement, differentiation and the distribution of competences among EU institutions, EU finances and fiscal policies play a crucial role in actors’ vision for the FoE. This section first summarises key policy positions related to the EU budget and its ability to raise own resources, before asking whether the COVID-19 pandemic constituted a critical juncture on the fiscal integration preferences of German political parties.

### Policy Positions on the EU Budget and Fiscal Integration

The EU budget is at the centre of fiscal reform debates in Germany (see Figure 3). Following the United Kingdom’s (UK) exit from the EU, CDU Chancellor Angela Merkel, the SPD as well as the Greens voiced their readiness to increase Germany’s contributions to the budget in order to compensate for the UK’s budget contributions. The AfD, in contrast, advocated a reduction of the budget and lower contributions by Germany.

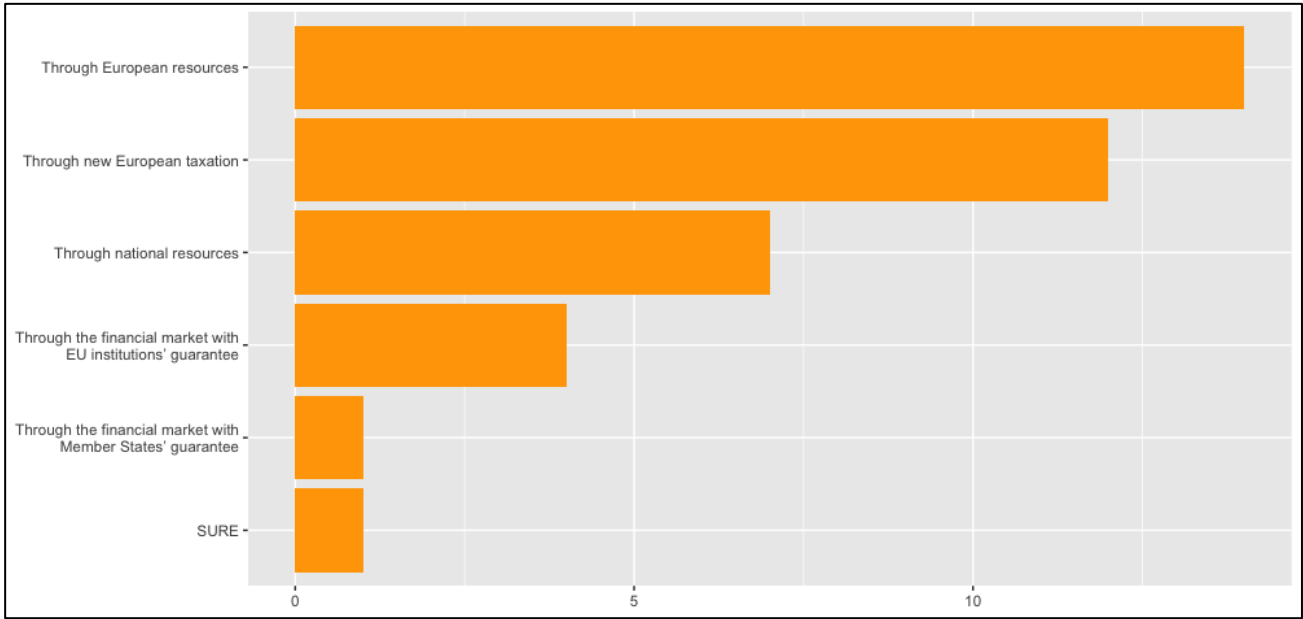


Figure 3. Distribution of how proposals’ aims should be financed in German proposals

As Figure 3 illustrates, German parties remained reluctant to propose the financing of EU policies through raising common debt on the financial markets. However, they were willing to discuss the creation of new sources of own revenue for the EU.

The CDU/CSU, the FDP and the AfD repeatedly expressed their opposition both to the issuing of joint debt titles (i.e., in Euro bonds) and to communising past public debt. The Greens and the Left party, on the other hand, supported the idea of Euro bonds. The SPD did not address the issue of joint debt in its electoral manifestos.

The SPD proposed to increase the EU’s own resources by introducing a financial transaction tax and a digital tax, prospective revenues from a carbon border tax and higher returns from the EU emission trading

system. The Greens were even bolder in their proposals for European taxes, proposing digital, carbon and corporate taxation on the EU level to make the EU less dependent on national budget contributions. The Left party proposed a one-time wealth tax to finance an EU investment programme and a permanent financial transaction tax. The AfD and the FDP opposed granting tax powers to the EU. Meanwhile, the Federal Government was supportive of coordinated tax policies in the areas of a financial transaction tax and a digital tax, as well as of harmonising minimum standards for corporate taxation. While the then Finance Minister Olaf Scholz, in 2018, supported the proposal that revenues from a financial transaction tax should go to the EU budget, he preferred to coordinate a new digital tax among the G7 group of rich countries to the introduction of an EU digital tax.

### **The COVID-19 Pandemic as a Critical Juncture in the German Debate on Fiscal Integration?**

The FoE was acutely at stake when Germany took over the presidency of the Council of the EU in July 2020 in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. While the German government had originally planned to move the EU's environmental, digital and defence agendas forward, it was now forced to focus mainly on managing the COVID-19 crisis.

During Europe's first COVID-19 wave in the spring of 2020, Germany, in keeping with its long-held position on fiscal integration, rejected calls for Eurobonds coming from member states such as Italy and Spain. Instead, Germany advocated the use of loans from the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) to support national economies. However, the economic costs of the first COVID-19 wave and the perceived lack of German European solidarity in other member states – perhaps most clearly visible in Italy – contributed to a shift in the government's policy position.

In an instance of political leadership, German Chancellor Merkel and French President Macron jointly proposed the creation of a pandemic recovery fund, which would later result in the Next Generation EU programme. This marked a significant shift in Germany's fiscal policy stance. Chancellor Merkel and the CDU/CSU justified this position reversal as a temporary, one-off emergency measure to ensure the survival of the EU in an unforeseeable crisis (Heermann et al. 2023). According to

the CDU/CSU, Next Generation EU was necessary first and foremost to avoid the risk of disintegration in the face of rising Eurosceptic voices, especially in Italy. Secondly, the party stressed Germany's economic self-interest in a quick European recovery. Thirdly, Merkel and her MPs framed the pandemic as an external shock for which no member state was to blame. They thus deliberately contrasted COVID-19 with the Eurozone crisis, which had been framed as a sovereign debt crisis resulting from years of lacking structural reform and mismanagement in the affected member states. Therefore, Merkel's policy shift can be seen as a continuation of an approach to EU policy-making that seeks to safeguard the present level of integration by engaging in pragmatic crisis measures, without, however, formulating ideas on how to move the EU forward in the medium and long term. In particular, CDU/CSU politicians emphasised the one-off nature of Next Generation EU (Heermann et al. 2023).

In contrast to the CDU/CSU, the SPD and the Greens responded more enthusiastically to the Merkel-Macron proposal, welcoming Next Generation EU as a first step towards a fiscal union. Merkel's successor Olaf Scholz, then SPD finance minister, called the initiative an 'Hamiltonian moment' for the EU, referring to the historical development of a fiscal union in the United States. The liberal FDP showed hesitant support for Next Generation EU, highlighting the importance of conditionality attached to any transfer payments and opposing fundamental change of fiscal policy in the EU in the form of lasting debt mutualisation.

In the new German government of Chancellor Scholz, FDP party leader Christian Lindner serves as finance minister, indicating that the Liberals intend to act as a break on the fiscal policy preferences of their more left-wing coalition partners, the SPD and Greens, both, domestically and at the EU level. It therefore seems unlikely that the new coalition government is embarking on a paradigmatic change in Germany's EU fiscal policy (Heermann et al. 2023). In early 2023, debates about an EU 'green investment fund' to finance public investments and subsidies in renewable energy and green technologies, highlight Germany's continued reluctance to deeper fiscal integration.

## Conclusion: European Constitutional Narratives in Germany

After more than a decade of crises, the European party system has remained broadly pro-European (see *Figure 4*). The SPD, the CDU/CSU, the Greens, and the FDP have all supported further European integration in a variety of policy areas and made concrete proposals for institutional reforms to strengthen the functioning of democracy at the European level. In particular, they proposed a strengthening of the EP's legislative and control functions. Their reform proposals amount to a vision of a parliamentary system with two chambers at the EU level, which has clear *federalist* contours. That said, the parties differed in the extent to which they criticise *intergovernmental* decision-making and the European Council in particular. Especially the CDU/CSU remained quite content with the institutional status quo (cf. Heermann & Tigges 2023). Emphasising the principle of subsidiarity and stressing that the member states must decide on the future of European integration, the CDU/CSU offered a more *intergovernmentalist* narrative that clearly diverges from the more *federalist* narratives of the SPD and the Greens in particular.

The Left party shared some of these proposals but maintained a more ambivalent stance. Criticising the 'constitutionalisation' (Grimm 2015) of 'neoliberal' economic and fiscal policies in the European Treaties, the Left demanded a fundamental revision of EU primary law. Meanwhile, the right-wing AfD took a *sovereigntist* stance on European integration, favouring the shifting of competences back to the member states and national referenda on EU and EMU membership. The AfD envisioned a 'Europe of Nations' ('Europa der Vaterländer'), in which sovereign states cooperate based on international law.

Fiscal integration has remained arguably the most controversial aspect of the FoE debate in Germany. While the AfD depicted Germany as being dominated by the less wealthy EU member states, the Left party argued that Germany acts as a dominating hegemon imposing austerity on other countries. Between these two extremes, the pro-integration parties contended for the right level of fiscal solidarity and national self-responsibility.

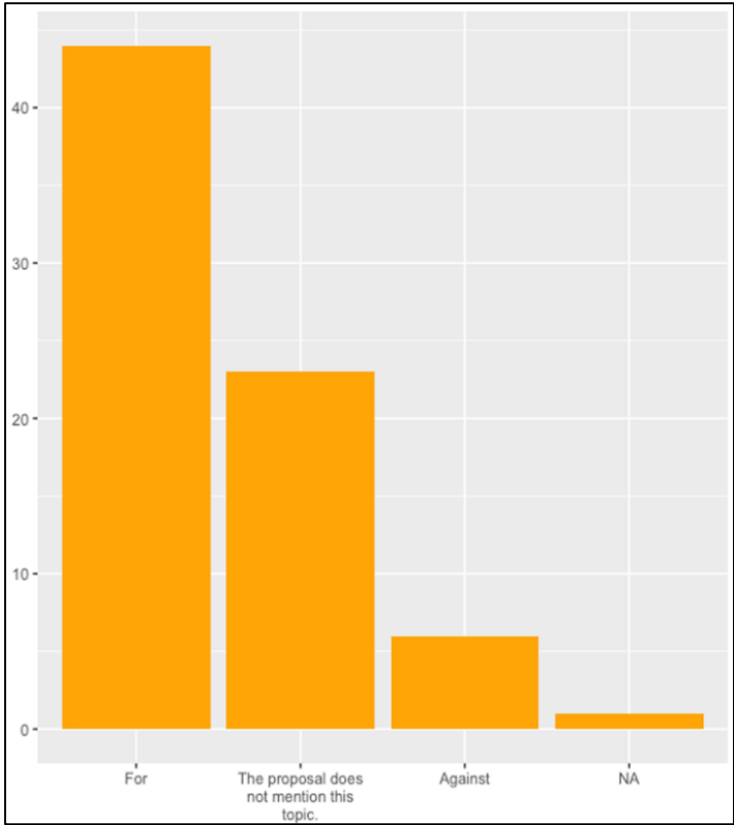


Figure 4: Distribution of German proposals for or against further European integration

Despite advancing institutional reform proposals pointing towards a more *federalist*, parliamentary EU democracy, the FDP and the CDU/CSU remained opposed to more fiscal integration and common European debt beyond one-off crisis measures. While the SPD and the Greens were more open to fiscal and social policy integration, they remained constraint by coalitional politics and public opinion (Heermann, Leuffen, Tigges 2023; Degner & Leuffen 2020). In its coalition agreement, the SPD-Greens-FDP government of Chancellor Olaf Scholz voiced its support for a constitutional reform of the European Treaties and the further development of the EU towards a federal state with a strong principle of subsidiarity. However, its reluctant stance on fiscal integration – both in its coalition agreement and in the political debates since its inauguration in December 2021 – calls into question this federalist narrative.

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# Chapter 4

## The Future of Europe Debate in Italy: Policy-Specific, Crisis-Induced, and Incomplete Reform Proposals<sup>11</sup>

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### Introduction

This chapter summarises the future of Europe debate that took place in Italy over the timeframe from 2015 to 2022. To do so, it assesses proposals on how to reform the European Union (EU) that different political actors presented.

The chapter has two main research question:

- How do the Italian proposals to reform the EU deal with differentiation, dominance, and democracy?
- Which—if any—constitutional narratives can be derived from the proposals?

To reply to these questions, the chapter proceeds as follows. First, a short background on Italy's membership in the EU is provided. Then, the chapter points to the main actors that issued reform proposals. The focus of this chapter is on political parties and governments because these actors presented by far the largest number of proposals. The chapter identifies a

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<sup>11</sup> The chapter is partially based on Zgaga, Tiziano. 2023. The Italian Chamber of Deputies and the Future of Europe: policy-focused and incomprehensive policy positions. In *What Future for Europe? Political Actors' Narratives on European Integration and Democracy in National Parliaments (2015-2021)*, edited by Magdalena Góra, Elodie Thevenin, and Katarzyna Zielińska, 143-178. EU3D Report no 10. <https://www.eu3d.uio.no/publications/eu3d-reports/eu3d-report-10-gora.pdf>.

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so-called “red thread” of Italy’s reform proposal. This red thread is affected by three important crises that hit the country (euro crisis of 2009-2013, migration crisis of 2015, and COVID-19 pandemic of 2020). Italy’s proposals to reform the EU are crisis-induced. The two policy areas at the centre of the three crises – fiscal policy and migration policy – feature very prominently in Italy’s debate on the future of Europe. As such, the chapter shows how Italy’s proposals to reform the EU are policy-specific (in line with what happened also in other member states). The whole future of Europe debate in Italy, thus, followed a bottom-up approach: proposals on how to reform specific *policies* were the starting point for reforming the general EU *polity* (meaning, its system of governance).

The chapter then assesses how the reform proposals dealt with the four types of differentiation (functional, vertical, lawmaking, and territorial), with patterns of dominance, and with democratic malfunctioning. Did the proposals identify any remedies to pathological situations such as dominance and democratic malfunctioning? Afterwards, the chapter zooms on the key questions of how to finance EU reform proposals – through (new) European resources or through national resources. The last section draws some conclusions. Specifically, it identifies the federal and the intergovernmental (with its sovereigntist variant) narrative as the three constitutional models that can be extracted from the analysis of the reform proposals. The least common denominator of all proposals is their incompleteness, meaning the fact that pro-EU proposals do not explain the impact of proposals on the member states, whereas anti-EU proposals do not explain the impact of proposals on the EU, meaning, its existing institutional setting.

## **Background: Italy in the EU**

As a founding member of the EU, Italy has so far taken part in all steps of the integration process, including the adoption of the euro. From the late 1960s until the end of the 1980s, the large majority of Italian citizens argued that being part of the EU was beneficial to their country (Eurobarometer 2022) for three main reasons. First, the single market contributed to relaunch Italy’s economy after the defeat in World War II. Second, EU membership was necessary for Italy to regain international legitimacy in light of its fascist past (1922-1943). Third, EU membership represented a reassuring factor given domestic terrorism and structural

problems in the country, most notably governmental instability, high inflation, rising public debt, and unemployment (Bona 1988).

When the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) was launched in 1992, Italy was among the group of countries adopting the euro as a common currency (since 1999). To do so, Italy had to implement a number of harsh reforms in order to meet the so-called convergence criteria, namely the requirement to become part of the Eurozone. Although this external constraint (“vincolo esterno”) (Carli 1993) allowed for those domestic reforms that could not be implemented before, “contrary to what happened in other countries such as France [...], the decision did not provoke an immediate significant debate either in parliament or among the public [...]. Such a permissive consensus on the signing of Maastricht Treaty, however, would not persist in the long run” (Lucarelli 2015, 44).

The Italian political élite acknowledged the need for some common rules on budgetary discipline at the national level as a way to prevent the spillover of economic externalities to other countries. However, as these rules represented a challenge for the country in light of its public finances, Italy has constantly attempted to change EU fiscal integration, meaning EMU’s rules, in two main ways: first, by tailoring them to the specific macroeconomic situation of the country (no one-size-fits-all approach); and second, by complementing them with spending powers for the EU and policies oriented towards economic growth (Zgaga 2018).

Italy used two large-scale crises – the European sovereign debt crisis (2009 to ca. 2013, henceforth, “euro crisis”) and the COVID-19 pandemic (since 2020) – to overcome the regulatory approach of the EU’s fiscal policy and increase the EU’s fiscal capacity, meaning the ability to collect and spend resources (Genschel and Jachtenfuchs 2016). A third crisis – the so-called “migration crisis” (with its peak in 2015) – severely hit Italy as a country of first arrival of migrants. As such, it opened a debate in Italy in favour of a new European approach to migration, concretely meaning a redistribution of migrants across the member states.

This chapter summarises the main proposals that Italian political actors expressed on the future of Europe from 2015 to 2022: how should the EU be reformed? It shows that overall the Italian debate on the future of Europe was strongly focused on two specific policies that are very salient

for Italy given the impact that they have on the country: fiscal policy and migration policy. Moreover, the proposals on how to reform were crisis-induced: domestic actors use the euro crisis, the migration crisis, and the COVID-19 pandemic as “windows of opportunity” to position themselves on the future of Europe. Lastly and crucially, the reform proposals were incomplete, meaning that their implications for domestic sovereignty and for the EU integration process were not discussed in depth.

## Future of Europe Debates in Italy Since 2015

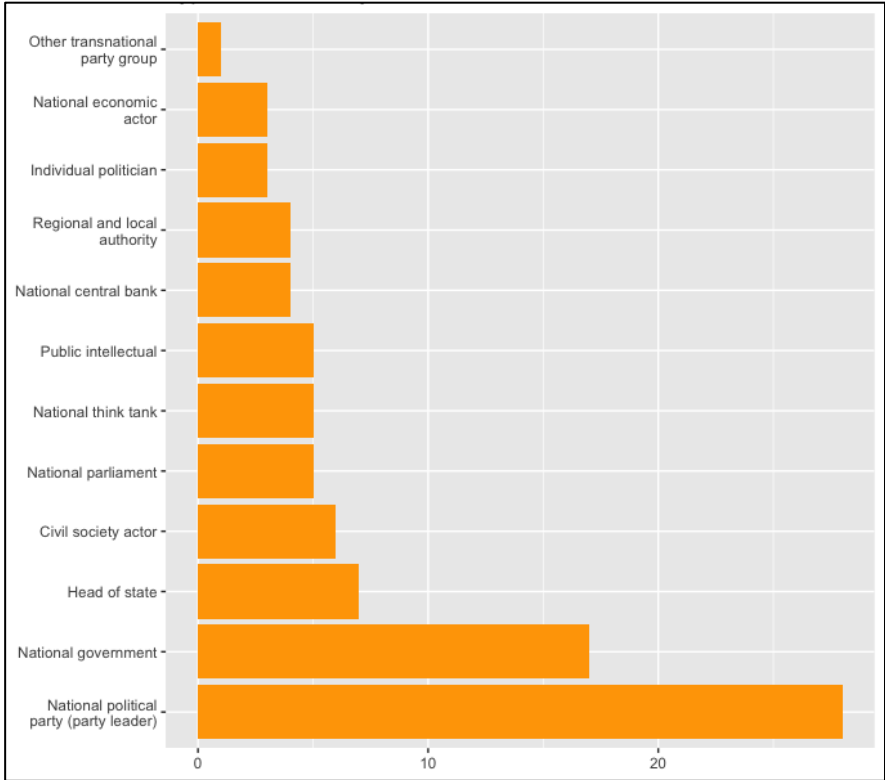
### Who Issued Proposals to Reform the EU?

The data collection considered political and non-political actors in Italy that issued proposals to reform the EU (see Figure 1). Among the political actors, it included partisan actors: political parties and leaders; the government, the parliament, regional and local authorities, and individual politicians. It also covered political institutional actors, such as the head of state and the national central bank. With regard to non-political actors, proposals issued by economic actors, civil society actors, think tanks, public intellectuals and other transnational party groups were analysed.

Since political parties and the national government by far presented most proposals on the future of Europe, the present chapter focuses on these actors<sup>13</sup>. Thanks to their function of representing and filtering preferences of societal actors, the political parties and the national government – which, in a parliamentary system of fusion of powers are connected – provide a comprehensive account of Italy’s proposals on the future of Europe. This is even more true in a consensual democracy with a mixed electoral system (partly majoritarian and partly proportional) and a low electoral threshold (3 per cent) like the Italian one. In other words, the positions (what the EU is) and propositions (what the EU should become) that we found among parties and governments are in almost all cases the same that we found in other actors who took part in the future of Europe debate.

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<sup>13</sup> By proposals by parties we mean EU reform proposals made by different parties. By proposals by governments we mean EU reform proposals made by different governments as a whole entity (e.g. Renzi government, Conte II government).



Figure<sup>14</sup> 1. Distribution of Italian proposals by type of actor

Italy’s political system is notoriously unstable, which results in a frequent change of government. As a matter of fact, in the timeframe considered (2015-2022), six governments were in office during two legislatures (Table 1).

Table 1: Governments in Italy from 2015 to 2022.

| Parliamentary term and years                   | Government | Political orientation<br>Mainly supported by        | Time in office                   |
|--|------------|---|----------------------------------|
| 17 <sup>th</sup> (15 March 2013—22 March 2018) | Renzi      | Left-wing<br>Democratic Party and Democratic Centre | 22 February 2014—7 December 2016 |
|  | Gentiloni  | Left-wing<br>Democratic Party and Democratic Centre | 12 December 2016—24 March 2018   |
|  | Conte I    | Left/right-wing<br>Five Star Movement and League    | 1 June 2018—20 August 2019       |

<sup>14</sup> The author is very grateful to Raquel Ugarte Diez for the figures used in this chapter.

|  |          |  |                                  |
|--|----------|--|----------------------------------|
| 18 <sup>th</sup> (23 March 2018—12 October 2022) | Conte II | Left-wing<br>Five Star Movement<br>and Democratic Party                    | 5 September 2019—26 January 2021 |
|  | Draghi   | Technical/national<br>unity<br>All parties except for<br>Brothers of Italy | 13 February 2021—21 July 2022    |
| 19 <sup>th</sup> (25 September 2022 – since)     | Meloni   | Right-wing<br>Brothers of Italy and<br>League                              | 25 September 2022—since          |

The Democratic Party (PD) has traditionally been the strongest pro-EU party in Italy. It called for the “United States of Europe”. In such a federal vision of the EU, Brussels should have a substantial own budget, far-reaching spending powers, security and defense capabilities and – last but not least – a joint migration policy. From this stems the party’s criticism of fiscal regulation and the attempt to reform the Stability and Growth Pact (SGP) – a position, however, voiced more assertively by the Renzi government than by the Gentiloni government (Fabbrini and Zgaga 2019). In addition, the PD repeatedly called to reform the Dublin Regulation on the processing of asylum requests. The Five Star Movement (M5S) considered itself as being neither left nor right – its main argument is that those are old, 19th-century ideologies.

After the 2018 parliamentary election, the M5S first entered the government. The M5S was a protest party (neither left nor right) with strongly Eurosceptic traits. Its coalition partner during the Conte I government was the League (“Lega per Salvini Premier” or LSP), an anti-EU party that harshly criticised the Commission and wanted to radically reform the Eurozone. Both the M5S and the LSP became slightly less anti-EU following the COVID-19 pandemic (Conte II) and the participation in the government of national unity (Draghi) (Greene 2016). Brother of Italy (FdI) was the strongest anti-EU party in Italy. Before its first participation in the government (Meloni), FdI wanted to re-nationalise a number of policy areas and radically change the European treaties. The specific approach of the current Meloni government (supported by FdI and LSP) towards the EU is still to become clear: while some of the traditional anti-EU positions have no longer been voiced or have necessarily been



expressed through a more diplomatic language, it remains to be seen how the two parties will deal with their respective electoral constituencies.

Besides political parties and governments, Italian regions jointly, or the economically most developed Italian regions separately, such as Lombardy and Emilia-Romagna, issued EU reform proposals. In its role of representor of the national unity, the head of state, Sergio Mattarella, did not issue formal reform proposals but moderately showed its support for those positions most widely shared among parties, such as the reform of the SGP and the Dublin Regulation. We also considered reports by the Bank of Italy, whose position was particularly authoritative on reform proposals concerning economic and monetary integration. In addition, the largest representations of employers (Confindustria) and employees (CGIL and CISL) were considered. The analysis also included proposals by influential think tanks, such as the Institute for International Affairs (Istituto Affari Internazionali) or the Institute for the Studies of International Politics (Istituto per gli Studi di Politica), and civil society actors, such as Amnesty International Italia, European Federalist Movement (Movimento Federalista Europeo), and the Italian Council for Refugees (Consiglio Italiano per i Rifugiati).

## The “Red Thread” of Italy’s Proposals to Reform the EU

Notwithstanding the different actors involved in the debate on the future of Europe and the many positions involved, a common “red thread” can be identified in Italy’s proposals to reform the EU. Such red thread concerns those policy areas that figure most prominently in the proposals collected (Figure 2): fiscal policy and migration policy. By “fiscal policy” we mean those proposals concerning the “European Economic and Monetary Union” and “Multiannual Financial Frameworks and EU budget”.

Fiscal and migration policy of the EU were so salient in the Italian debate on the future of Europe because all main political actors believed that the way these policies currently work damages the country. Italian political actors claimed that EU fiscal policy—which mainly consists of rules constraining the national spending capacity—did not adequately consider the country’s specific macroeconomic outlook, characterized by a public debt out of control.

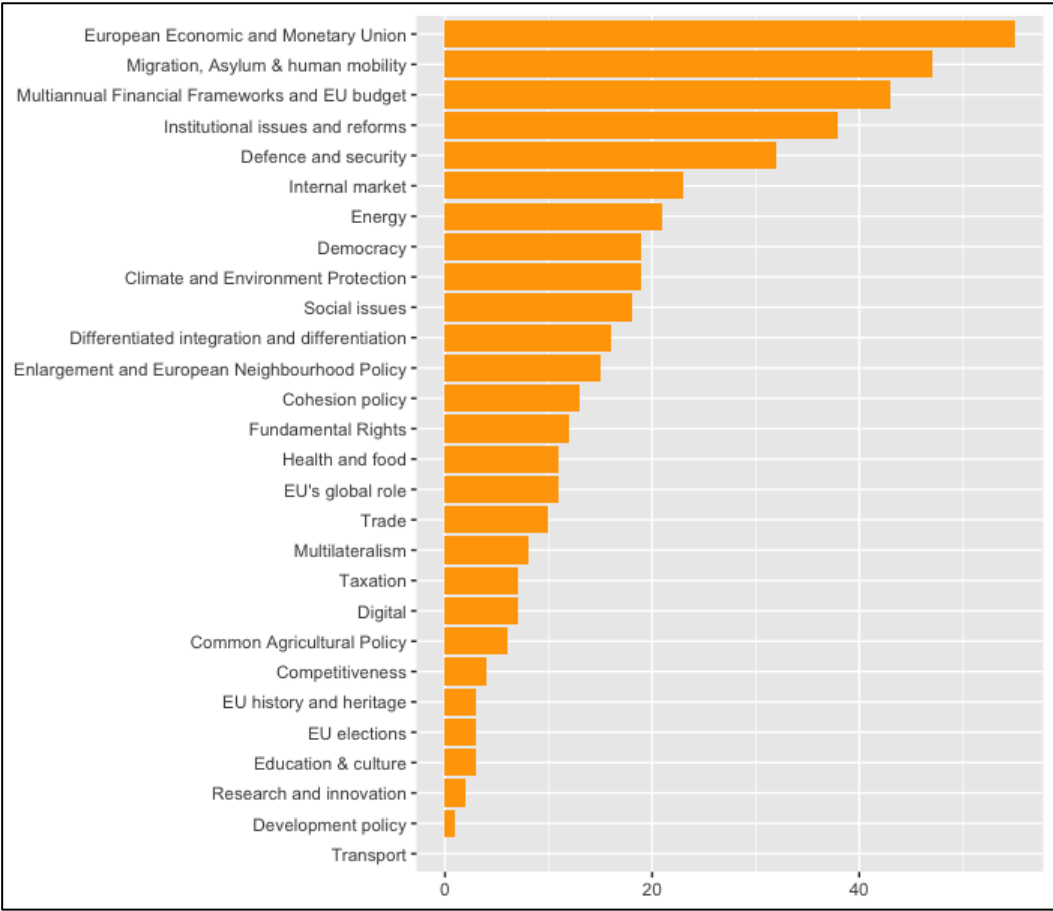


Figure 2. Distribution of policy areas mentioned in Italian proposals

Moreover, political actors concurred that growth-oriented policies should complement these fiscal rules in order to stimulate the economy. Italy had interest in granting the EU stronger spending power and engaging in some form of debt mutualisation at the EU level. The country traditionally advocated the need for European public goods in ordinary times and countercyclical policies in times of crisis. Political actors in Italy agreed that one of the European public goods the country would mostly benefit from is a common approach to migration policy. Hence, several proposals advanced form of shared responsibility consisting in the mandatory redistribution of migrants across the EU.

In sum, most Italian proposals claimed that the EU should radically change its approach to two areas of core state powers – fiscal and migration policy. This position was so prominent that the whole debate on the future of Europe was policy-specific and “bottom-up”: the EU first needs to change selected *policy* areas, and only then a change of *polity*,

meaning institutional setting, becomes possible. The policy-specific debate was strongly shaped by three large-scale crises that concerned specifically fiscal and migration policy.

First, the euro crisis. This crisis broke out as an indirect consequence of the global financial crisis of 2007–2008. The peak of the euro crisis took place in the EU approximately from 2009 to mid-/late 2013. Italy was not a receiving country of financial assistance, but in light of its very high public debt, it was forced by markets as well as by other member states to adopt a number of so-called austerity measures. More generally, austerity policies aiming to consolidate public finances were at the heart of the EU's response to the crisis – most notably through the strengthening of the SGP (Zgaga 2020). As this chapter outlines, criticism of EU austerity policies figures prominently in the Italian debates.

The second crisis shaping the Italian debates was the so-called migration crisis of 2015. Also known as the Syrian refugee crisis (because most asylum seekers were Syrians), this crisis marked a period where “more than in any previous European refugee crisis since World War II” (OECD 2015, 1) refugees and migrants reached Europe. The 2015 migration crisis led to the 2016 EU-Turkey agreement where Turkey agreed to stop people travelling irregularly to Greece (to the EU) in exchange for €6 billion in funds from the EU to improve the humanitarian situation faced by refugees in the country. As a country of first arrival, Italy has always welcomed a high number of refugees. The 2015 migration crisis represented an even stronger challenge for the country. Calls for the EU to share responsibility for the management of migration grew louder (Panebianco 2019).

The third crisis is the COVID-19 pandemic. This crisis hit Italy very strongly since the beginning. As a result, the country has been among the first – together with a group of other, mostly Southern European member states – to propose a common European approach to tackle the crisis. This approach foresees sharing the issue of debt at EU level to financially assist member states in their post-pandemic recovery (Schelkle 2021). The chapter demonstrates that some Italian parties have seized the pandemic to advance their long-standing request to overcome EU austerity policies.

Public actors in Italy proposed radically different solutions to deal with the alleged flawed design of fiscal and migration policy. Some advocated deeper European integration; others, a radical re-nationalisation of both policies. To do so, many proposals advanced new “Institutional issues and reforms” (see Figure 2). All actors used the crises as a critical juncture and a window of opportunity to stress their positions on specific policy areas.

## Differentiation, Dominance, and Democracy in the Italian Proposals to Reform the EU

### Differentiation

The two mostly mentioned forms of differentiation in the Italian proposals to reform the EU were functional differentiation and vertical differentiation. Lawmaking, and even more territorial differentiation, were comparatively less often mentioned (see Figure 3).

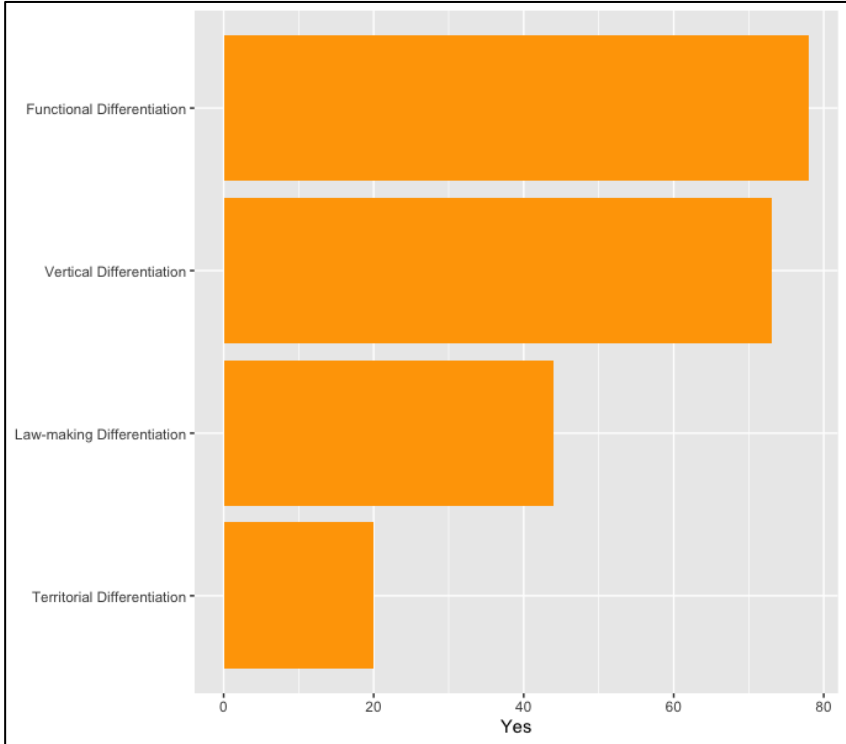


Figure 3. Distribution of types of differentiation mentioned in Italian proposals

Functional differentiation is about the EU developing new policies and/or policy instruments, or changing existing policies/ policy instruments. The pre-eminence of functional differentiation mirrors the policy-specific

future of Europe debate in Italy. But what exactly did Italian actors propose with regard to functional differentiation?

### ***Fiscal Policy***

All parties and governments considered called for the reform of the EU's fiscal policy. Specifically, they all criticised the so-called EU austerity policies implemented during the euro crisis as having prevented economic growth.

The PD argued for not including public investments in the public deficit to Gross Domestic Product ratio of the SGP. In addition to making the enforcement of the SGP more flexible, the PD also favoured a stronger EU fiscal capacity made up of new own resources and controlled by a European finance minister. Having for a long time supported forms of risk-sharing, the PD seized the opportunity of the financial assistance programme "Next Generation EU" (NGEU) adopted to face the COVID-19 pandemic to push for a permanent increase in the EU's spending capacity. Hence, it called for NGEU to become a structural component of EU fiscal policy. Until its participation in the Draghi government, the M5S pushed for radically changing the EMU. With the outbreak of the pandemic, the M5S' position on EU fiscal policy became more moderate – the party also convincingly voted in favour of NGEU in the parliament.

LSP and FdI considered the SGP an illegitimate political construction limiting national sovereignty. Not surprisingly, therefore, they pushed for abandoning the austerity policy epitomized by the SGP. However, both parties opposed any new spending powers granted to the EU. Being unable to openly oppose NGEU, LSP and FdI tried to frame it as quantitatively insufficient and risky for national sovereignty in terms of conditionality. After 2021, LSP's position became less radical following the participation in the Draghi government.

In terms of vertical differentiation, the PD supported more competences for European institutions, while LSP and FdI supported more competences for national institutions. The position of the M5S changed over time from empowering national to gradually accepting the empowerment of European institutions. To advance in EU fiscal integration, pro-EU parties would also welcome forms of territorial differentiation in which the more "willing" member states advance either

because they want to do so or because they are already more integrated (e.g. Eurozone), and the less “willing” ones are not forced to join the integrationist camp but do not block it either.

### ***Migration Policy***

Different Italian governments advanced proposals on how to reform EU migration policy. In 2018, the Conte I government called for a comprehensive approach to migration, i.e. encompassing the entry, stay, and return of migrants. The EU should jointly be responsible for managing migration flows, enforcing border control, tackling transnational crime, and developing a partnership among countries of origin, transit, and destination (Governo italiano 2018). In 2019, the Conte II government presented plans for a “migration compact” between the EU and African countries of origin and transit. As part of this compact, the EU should offer investment projects, easier market access, cooperation on security, legal migration opportunities, and resettlement schemes to these countries. In exchange, the EU would ask to commit to effective border control and reduction of flows towards Europe, cooperation on returns/readmissions, management of migration and refugee flows, and the establishment of an asylum system. The proposal suggested that the “migration compact” be financed through existing EU external action financial instruments and through so-called “Common EU Migration Bonds” issued by the EU (Governo italiano 2019).

In 2020, the same Conte II government developed a so-called “integrated approach”, which foresaw that European member states should share the responsibility for migration. Migration should not only focus on asylum but also on integration through labour policies. To promote the necessary pan-European solidarity, European resources are needed (Governo italiano 2020). In 2020, Italy also sent proposals – together with countries like Greece, Malta, Spain, and Cyprus – for reforming the Common European Asylum System. The cornerstone of the proposals advocated the mandatory distribution of asylum seekers among member states (CY-EL-ES-IT-MT non-paper 2019; Greece, Italy, Malta and Spain 2020). To reach this aim, pro-EU governments would also accept a policy regime of which not all member states are part (vertical differentiation), even though an common approach to migration supported by all member states would be more welcome.

Left-wing and right-wing parties differed in their suggested reforms of EU migration policy. The former argued in favour of stronger European integration: all the member states should equally bear responsibility for welcoming and integrating migrants. If this cannot be achieved on a voluntary basis, mandatory quotas are needed. Their approach was thus focused on integration (dealing with migrants after they reached a country). The latter argued in favour of stronger nationalisation: member states should better protect their borders, and the EU should help them. No state should be obliged to welcome and integrate migrants as a result of mandatory quotas. The approach of right-wing parties is thus focused on securitization (dealing with migrants before they reach a country). Like in fiscal policy, also in migration policy we saw that for left-wing parties the European institutions should be empowered, whereas right-wing parties favoured a stronger involvement of national institutions.

## **Dominance**

Different actors diagnosed as a problematic issue in the EU, for different reasons. They also proposed different remedies to dominance. As Figure 4 shows, exclusion, illicit hierarchy and unequal burden that member states of first arrival face in the EU are the most frequently mentioned forms of dominance. Exclusion refers a situation when an actor is explicitly excluded from relevant information; and/or access to decisions and decision-forums/arrangements that will affect the actor's choices, resources and status. Specifically, instances when powerful member states take decisions informally without notifying those affected therefore count as exclusion. Illicit hierarchy indicates an institutional arrangement that makes binding decisions without being properly democratically authorised and/or lacks legal authorisation – through legal provisions that are transparent and accessible to all concerned (Czerska-Shaw et al. 2022). Exclusion and illicit hierarchy were diagnosed mostly in EU fiscal policy. “Unequal burden that MS of first arrival face in the EU”, instead, specifically referred to EU migration policy.

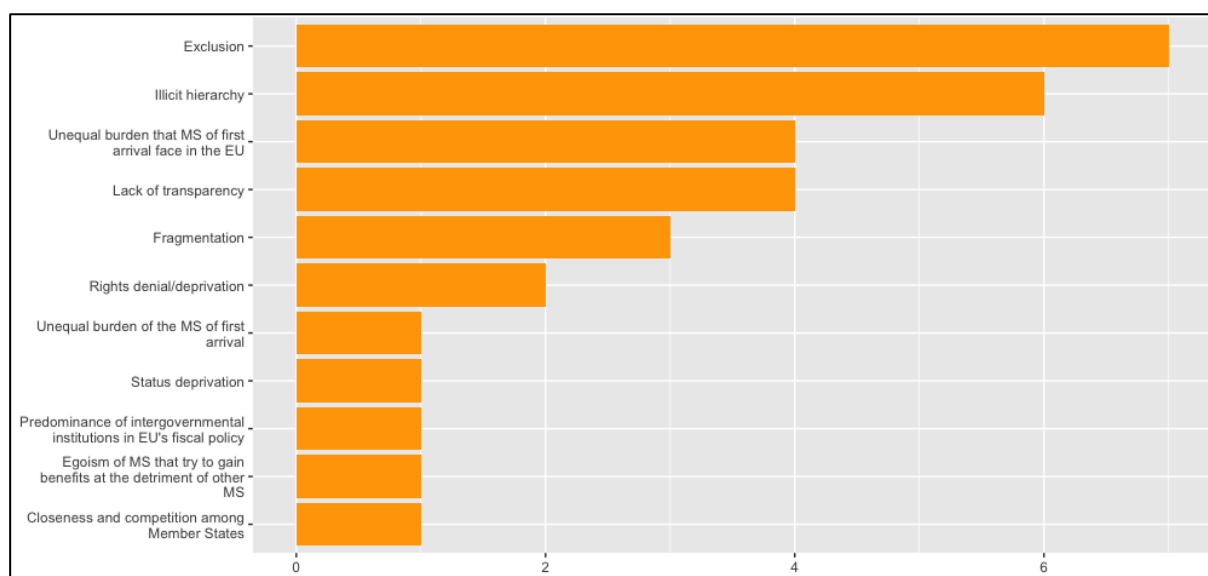


Figure 4. Distribution of forms of dominance mentioned in Italian proposals.

### *Fiscal Policy*

In many proposals from LSP, FdI but also the M5S, Germany was said to dominate other countries within EMU. This was arguably especially manifest in the measures to face the euro crisis. There, the right-wing parties in Italy believe, Germany used its economic and political power to shape the anti-crisis measures by informally first reaching a deal with France, thus excluding the other member states, and ultimately *de facto* imposing decisions on those member states subject to pressure from financial markets, such as Italy (Schoeller and Karlsson 2021). In some Italian proposals, the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) – the financial assistance fund created in 2012 to provide loans to member states in financial distress through conditionality – emerged as the epitome of “illicit hierarchy”: the ESM was seen as an institution that dictated reforms to member states by blackmailing them. Similar considerations applied to the so-called “Troika”, the group made up of the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund, in charge of managing bailouts and overseeing the implementation of domestic reforms. Although Italy never received assistance through the ESM and was never subject to monitoring by the Troika, both institutions were accused of triggering patterns of dominance.

For LSP, FdI and the M5S, thus, the EMU is a German-dominated construction which has undermined the EU as a system of equals. As a



solution to these patterns of dominance, until 2017, LSP, FdI, and the M5S called for Italy to leave both the EU and the euro area. Afterwards, this solution was abandoned in favour of calls for ending the SGP. Left-wing parties spoke of asymmetry rather than dominance. In their view, austerity policies created an intra-European division between creditors (Northern European member states) and debtors (Southern European member states) that can only be overcome through new, growth-oriented policies at the EU level and a more flexible implementation of the SGP at the domestic level.

### *Migration Policy*

All Italian proposals on the future of Europe considered that Italy carried a disproportionate burden when it comes to welcoming migrants. They blame the Dublin Regulation for disadvantaging member states of first arrival, such as Italy, who had to process the asylum requests. The proposals of most parties and governments also expected the Commission and the other member states to understand the challenges that Italy faced on migration and to come up with solutions. Many proposals viewed EU migration policy as problematic because it was incompatible with a Union of equal states that are supposed to share both honours and burdens. How to exit the stalemate? Left-wing parties argued that a mechanism of mandatory redistribution (based on quotas) of asylum seekers across the member states was needed. Right-wing parties opposed redistributive mechanisms because they represented an interference with national sovereignty. They, therefore, advocated for national measures that limited migration.

### **Democracy**

Most proposals of parties and governments mentioned that rectifying measures on the functioning of democracy were needed at the EU level. This was the main position of the pro-EU oriented parties and governments. Not surprisingly, Italian regions also stressed that they would like to be stronger involved in the EU decision-making. Also a party historically deeply rooted at the regional level, LSP, supported this position. Anti-EU parties saw the solution to the alleged democratic deficit at the EU level in the improvement of democracy at the national level, including through instruments of direct democracy (see Figure 5).

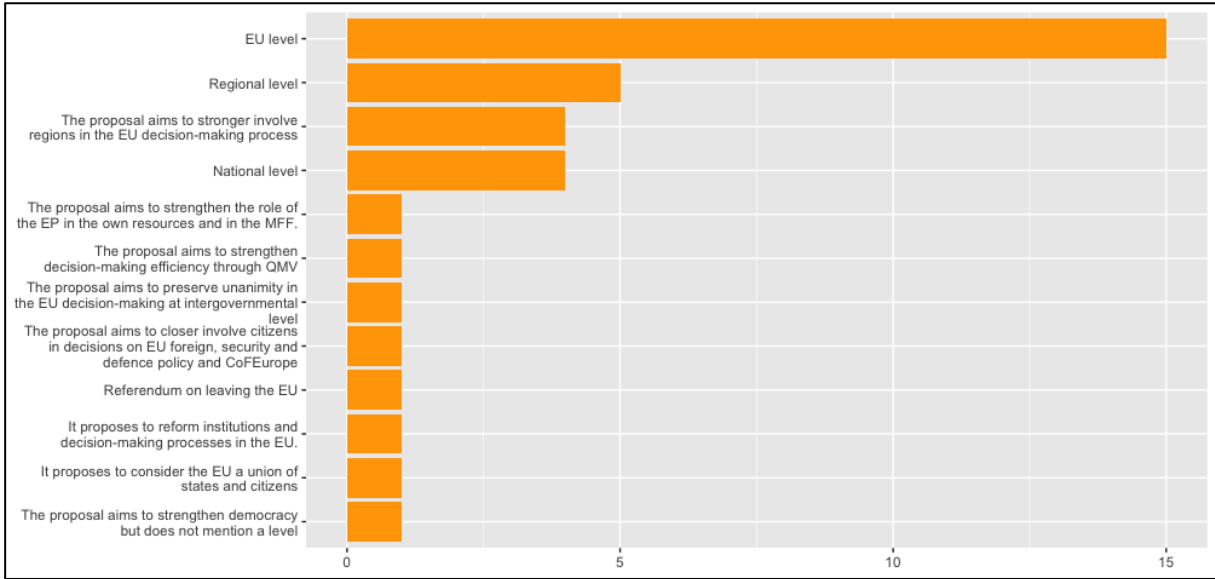


Figure 5: Distribution of level of rectifying measures for democratic malfunctioning mentioned in Italian proposals

**Fiscal Policy**

Most parties and the pro-EU governments argued that the European Parliament (EP) should have a say on the system of own resources, meaning the EU’s revenues. Currently, national governments unanimously approve how many and which resources the EU budget can collect. Many proposal favoured an empowerment of the EP vis-à-vis the Council also when it comes to the adoption of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), the long-term planning of the EU’s finances. But some proposals also advocated a new role of the Commission in managing the EU budget, including the creation of a European minister of Economy and Finance with the task of spending EU resources. Proposals against further integration criticized the role of the Commission and claimed more spending discretion for national institutions.

**Migration Policy**

The pro-EU parties and the pro-EU governments argued that the Council should be able to take decisions on migration policy through Qualified Majority Voting (QMV) – also when it comes to adopt mandatory quotas of redistribution of migrants across the EU. The main reason was to prevent the veto power that each member state had in the unanimity-based framework of migration policy. In addition to this, QMV was supposed to make the decision-making process of the Council more

efficient, also in other policy areas. Anti-EU parties and governments were in favour of maintaining the institutional status quo: to protect their sovereignty, member states should be able to block unwelcome decisions on migration policy.

## Financing Future of Europe Proposals

The question about how to finance EU proposals is very important, yet not all proposals considered here explicitly addressed it. As it becomes clear in Figure 6, most proposals argued that the EU needs more European resources. This means genuinely own resources collected, managed, and spent at the EU level – in other words, a system which differed from the current transfer-budget where national contributions accounted for more than 60 per cent of the budget, thus making the EU's finances dependent on the willingness to pay of the member states. All proposals wanted to put an end to the contribution-based system and make the EU fiscally independent from the member states, for different reasons. The pro-EU proposals argued that by making the EU fiscally autonomous, truly European public goods, such as protecting external borders, fighting climate change, or regulating mitigation, but also more effective countercyclical policies, such as fighting unemployment or supporting enterprises, became possible. The anti-EU proposals argued that Italy already contributed too much to the EU budget and that more resources for the EU would mean higher taxes for Italian citizens and enterprises. Some proposals argued for the extension of NGEU and the creation of similar mechanisms of finance based on the “financial market with EU institutions’ guarantee”. The most pro-EU oriented proposals explicitly argued that the EU needs own taxes. Ultimately, proposals claiming for the re-nationalisation of policies argued for financing based on domestic resources.

In terms of spending of resources (Figure 7), by far the majority of proposals argue that it is the EU which should directly spend resources rather than distributing them to the member states. An EU spending capacity was advocated particularly with regard to a common European migration policy, for instance the protection of external borders or the support to member states integrating migrants into their territory. Interestingly, loan and grants featured a similar popularity among parties

and governments, even though the former need to be repaid and the latter do not. The explanation for this is that ultimately loans and grants were perceived to be similar in term of substantive conditionality, i.e. items on which resources can be spent.

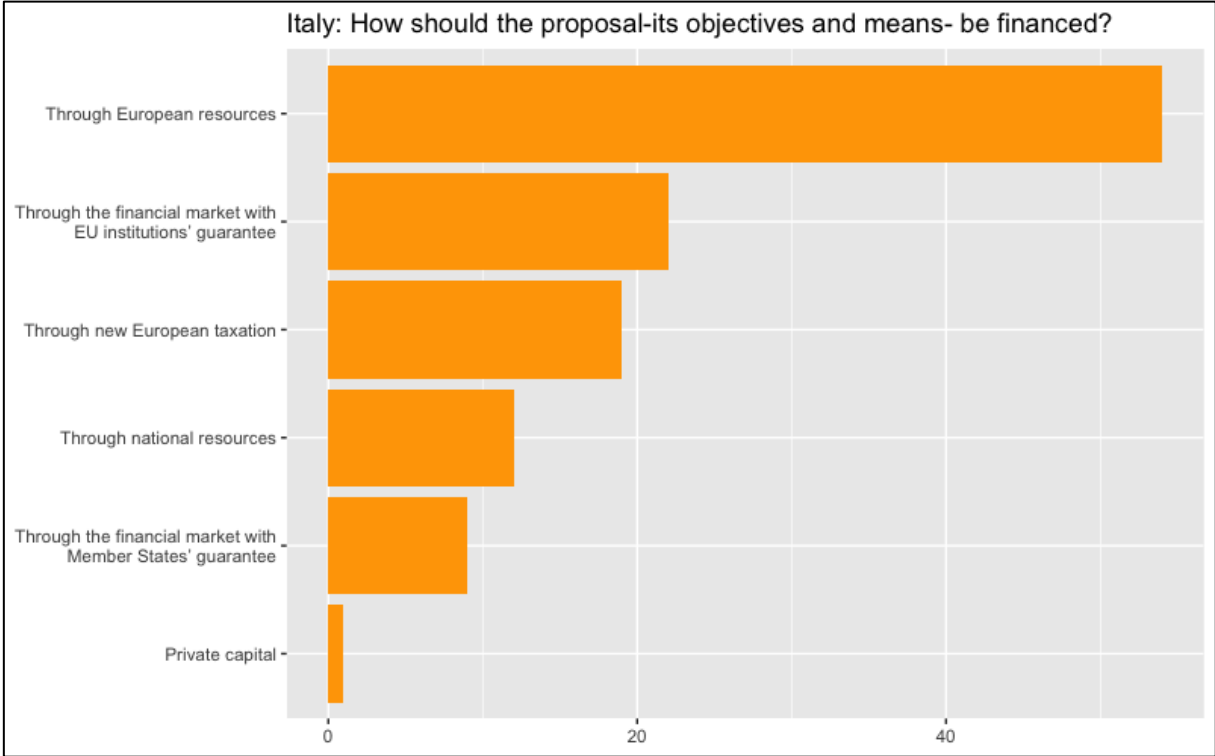


Figure 6. Distribution of how to finance the aims of Italian reform proposals

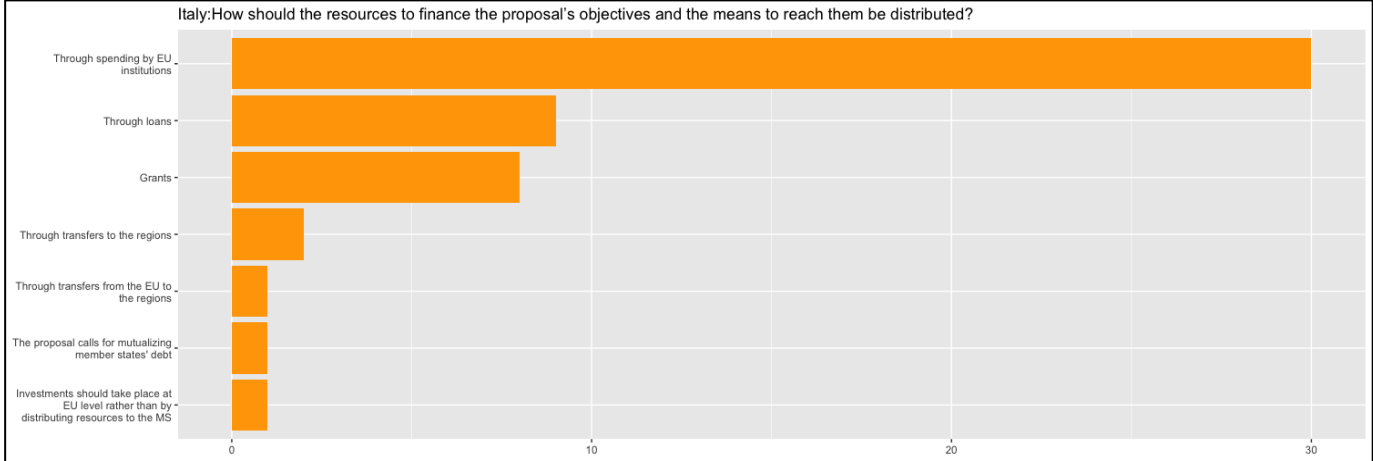


Figure 7. Distribution of resources to finance the Italian reform proposals

## Conclusions: Which Constitutional Narratives?

This report has analysed the future of Europe debate in Italy during the timeframe from 2015 to 2022. It focused on proposals presented by parties and governments – the two most active actors in the debate. The report argued that proposals by parties and governments well represent a “snapshot” of the most often debated reform proposals in Italy. Focusing on parties and governments allowed to effectively illustrate the positions also expressed by other actors (political and non-political). In other words, the positions (what the EU is) and propositions (what the EU should become) that we found among parties and governments are in almost all cases the same that we found in other actors who took part in the future of Europe debate.

Italy is a founding member of the EU and as such it took part in all integration steps pursued so far. The country’s position on the future of Europe has been strongly shaped by three crisis that harshly hit the country: the euro crisis, the migration crisis, and the COVID-19 pandemic. The two policy areas at the core of these crises – fiscal and migration policy – have thus become key in Italy’s debate on how to reform the EU. As such, the whole debate is crisis-induced and policy-specific. All proposals approached issues of differentiation, dominance, and democracy in the EU through the lenses of these two policy areas.

It is difficult to clearly distil constitutional narratives from the analysed proposals. In broad terms, the federal and the intergovernmental narrative were most prominent in proposals by parties and governments, whereas the cosmopolitan narrative was marginal.

The federalist narrative argues that the EU should significantly advance in its integration process up to the point of becoming a federal state or at least a federal polity where also the central level of government (the EU) has substantial competences and resources. It was advanced by left-wing and pro-EU parties and governments. Such federalisation of the EU should embrace also the area of core state powers, specifically fiscal policy and migration policy. In the former, it implies new own resources for the EU (including taxes) and far-reaching spending powers, coupled with a

much stronger role of the European Parliament and the Commission. But to reach this aim, a revision of the SGP was also advocated. In the latter, the federalist narrative implies that migration is approached and managed as a truly common task, with every member state – not only those of first arrival – contributing to the integration of migrants.

The intergovernmental narrative has for long time featured as a sovereigntist variant of intergovernmentalism, specifically among right-wing, anti-EU parties and governments. The sovereigntist narrative developed when right-wing parties acknowledged the negative implications of Brexit. From that moment onwards, they abandoned any demand to leave the EU. Instead, right-wing parties started pushing for the re-patriation of specific policies under national control and strongly criticised the supranational institutions. In Italy, the sovereigntist narrative was primarily based on an economic rationale, namely the alleged damage that the rule-centred design of the EMU causes to Italy. However, as Fabbrini and Zgaga (2023: 13) put it, “if the right-wing sovereigntist approach would lead to the nationally differentiated disintegration of the EU, the polity form that the EU should acquire to accommodate the latter remains an unresolved puzzle (for them)”. While the sovereigntist narrative was supported mainly by LSP, FdI and to some extent the M5S when they were part of the opposition, once in government the three parties had to “institutionalise” their positions. As such, they became to some extent supporters of an intergovernmental narrative which does not fully abandon calls for policy repatriation but officially supports the institutional status quo in the EU, with particular regard to unanimity for taking decisions and the veto power held by every member state as a protection of its domestic sovereignty.

Overall, the proposals by parties and governments analysed here, but also by other actors, tended to be incomplete: more or less radical proposals were made, but they were never inserted into the broader policy and institutional framework into which the EU integration process *de facto* constrained them. In other words, as Zgaga (2023: 174) puts it, “while the [pro-EU proposals] did not explain the impact of proposals on the member states, the [anti-EU proposals] did not explain the impact of proposals on the EU, meaning its existing institutional setting.”

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# Chapter 5

## The EU's Dwarves? Reform Proposals in Czechia, Hungary, and Slovakia

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### Introduction

In mainstream fantasy stories, dwarves are typically not the main heroes driving the plot forward. They are not only often depicted as small in size, but also as preoccupied primarily with material interests, such as security and wealth. At the same time, they are occasionally capable of memorable deeds and with a significant voice in shaping future developments. This report argues that Czechia, Hungary and Slovakia as per the mapping of proposals on the EU's future undertaken in this report, resemble the dwarves in the EU's story: typically inward-looking without raising major voices, but not without potential to play a key role in its pivotal moments.

The three small 'Visegrad' countries have shared considerable similarities in their relation towards the EU after the fall of state socialism in 1989. The 'return to Europe' narrative was central in Hungary (see Steuer 2023), as well as in Czechia and Slovakia, even though the latter paradoxically underwent a dissolution from a common state with the intention to join the EU 'in their own way' (Kosatík 2022 for Slovakia, also Ostatník 2023). EU membership acted as an 'endpoint' for joining fully-fledged independent states after a century of fast-changing political regimes with prevailing authoritarian rule (e.g. Heimann 2009; Bozóki and Simon 2019). The 1993 Copenhagen European Council with its substantive criteria for

EU accession provided a beacon for these countries' politics to meet the determined yardsticks for early accession (Henderson 2002, 89–92). Yet, in Slovakia's case, the 'superficially pro-integration orientation of the third Mečiar government' (1994-1998) (Henderson 2002, 93) accompanied by the deterioration of domestic democracy slowed down EU accession, which was only made possible together with Czechia and Hungary due to the post-1998 executive and broader societal commitment towards 'catching up' with the delay.

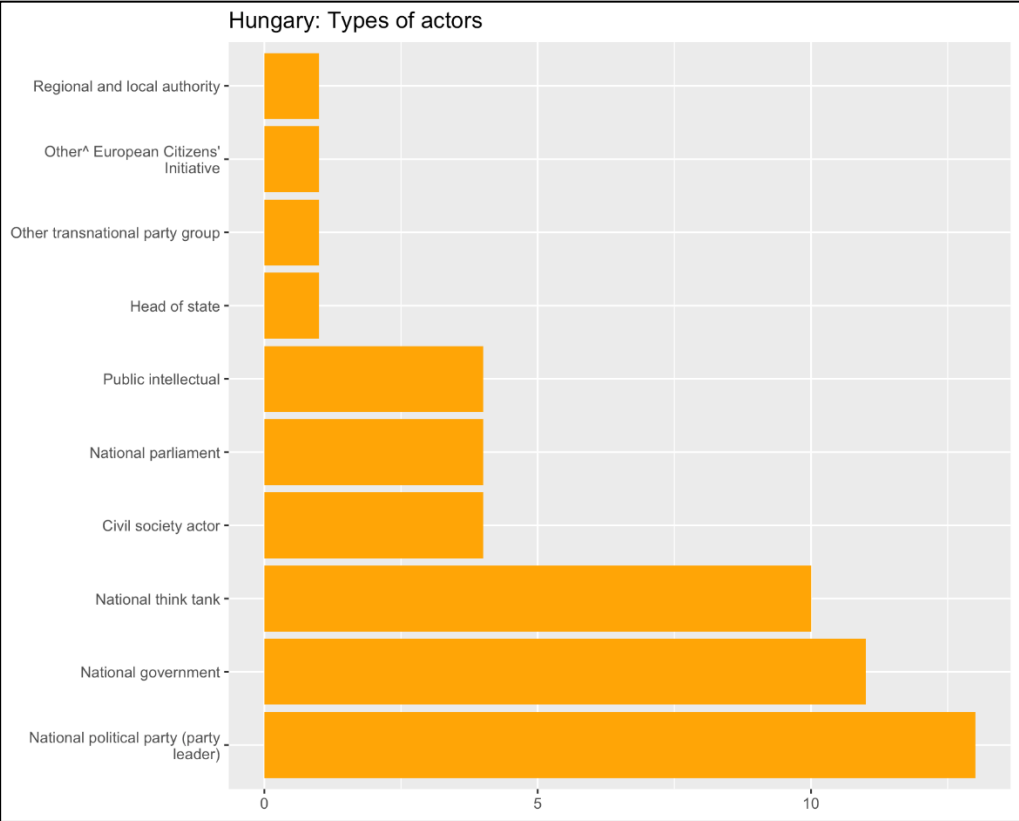
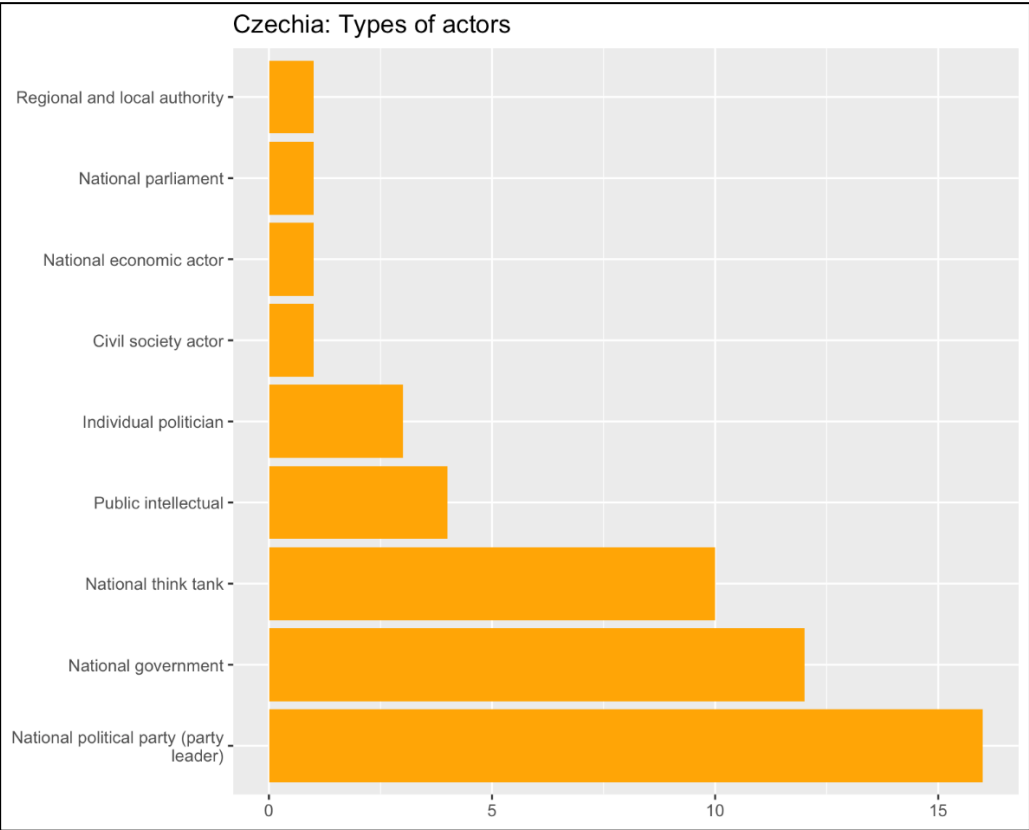
Even after accession, the positions of the 'new member states' towards the EU remained volatile, and reservations against fully committing to deeper EU integration remained the norm, with many stakeholders seeing limitations in such progress as necessary due to 'national identity and sovereignty' (Malová and Lisoňová 2010, 169–70). Before the 'illiberal turn' in Hungary, Czechia was arguably among the most outspoken critics of further EU integration. The Czech discourse on the EU was, after the fall of state socialism, shaped by the contestation symbolized by 'two Václav's' (Blaive and Maslowski 2011): former presidents Václav Havel and Václav Klaus. While both professed anti-communist leanings, Klaus' rejection of the EU has intellectual roots in long-term rejection of 'the West' in favor of 'the East', the concepts here representing, broadly, the divide between democracy and authoritarian rule. Yet, the series of challenges the EU faced after 2015, notably with recognizing its value-based commitments in relation to people facing political persecution, and later the COVID-19 pandemic, have enhanced anti-EU narratives in Hungary relatively more than in Czechia and Slovakia (Steuer 2019; Drinóczi and Mészáros 2022). In all three countries, anti-refugee narratives have spurred, which manifested in all of them rejecting the temporary relocation mechanism adopted by the Council in late 2015, and subsequently calling for 'flexible solidarity' to allow member states not to commit to hosting any refugees (Braun 2020, 933). With the notable exception of refugee rights, in Czechia and Slovakia, the debate has, for a few years at least, embraced the narrative of belonging to 'the EU core', although this position has been more unanimously endorsed in Slovakia than in Czechia (Kazharski 2019), especially surrounding the former's EU Council presidency in the latter half of 2016.

This difference seems to align with the divergent historical trajectories of entering the EU (whereby Slovakia had to overcome the semi-authoritarian regime in the 1990s, as opposed to Czechia), which have prompted a reflection on 'two different approaches' of the countries, which were formerly one (Czechoslovak) state, towards the EU. According to Braun (2010, 147), the 'Slovakian political elite has accepted more fully that it is the weaker part in an asymmetric relationship with the other EU member states than the Czech one has'. Yet, Slovak discourse has not overcome the underlying opposition towards the EU based on identitarian and illiberal readings of values, which manifested in PM Robert Fico's pragmatic embracing of the pro-EU narrative, that underwent a complete U-turn after it had become incompatible with his personal political ambitions (Malová and Dolný 2016). A manifestation of this indecisiveness in the positioning vis-à-vis the EU has been limited presence, in Czechia and Slovakia, of voices rejecting the Hungarian PM Orbán's policies, and the continued viability of the 'Visegrad Four' group despite Hungarian and Polish drifts towards authoritarianism.

## **2015 – 2021: A gradually more impoverished debate?**

The analysis of proposals pertaining to the post-2015 development can be situated into existing works examining narratives about the EU in the pre-2015 period as well as zooming in on particular arenas in which these discourses unfold. The consensus from these reports seems to be that in all three member states, EU-related discourses remain superficial, with limited ideas proposed (Havlík and Smekal 2020; Kyriazi 2021; Janková 2021; for the parliamentary debates, see Góra et al. 2023). Do these conclusions change when a broader range of actors is considered?

Reform proposals for the future European Union (2015-2022)



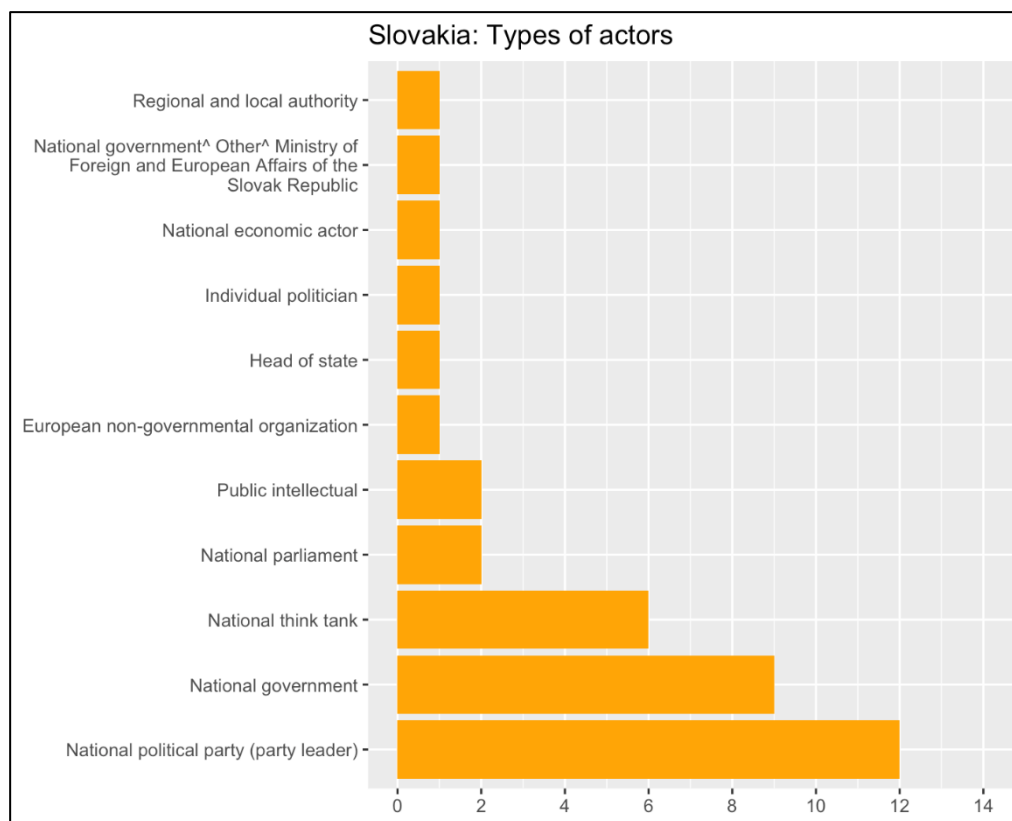


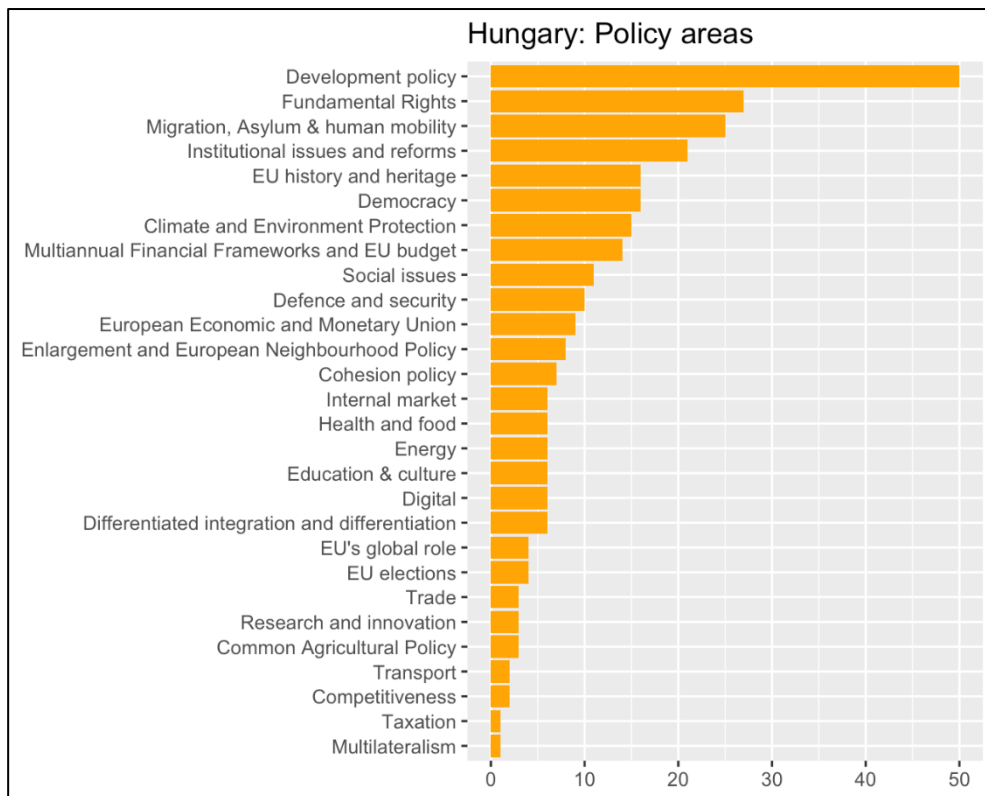
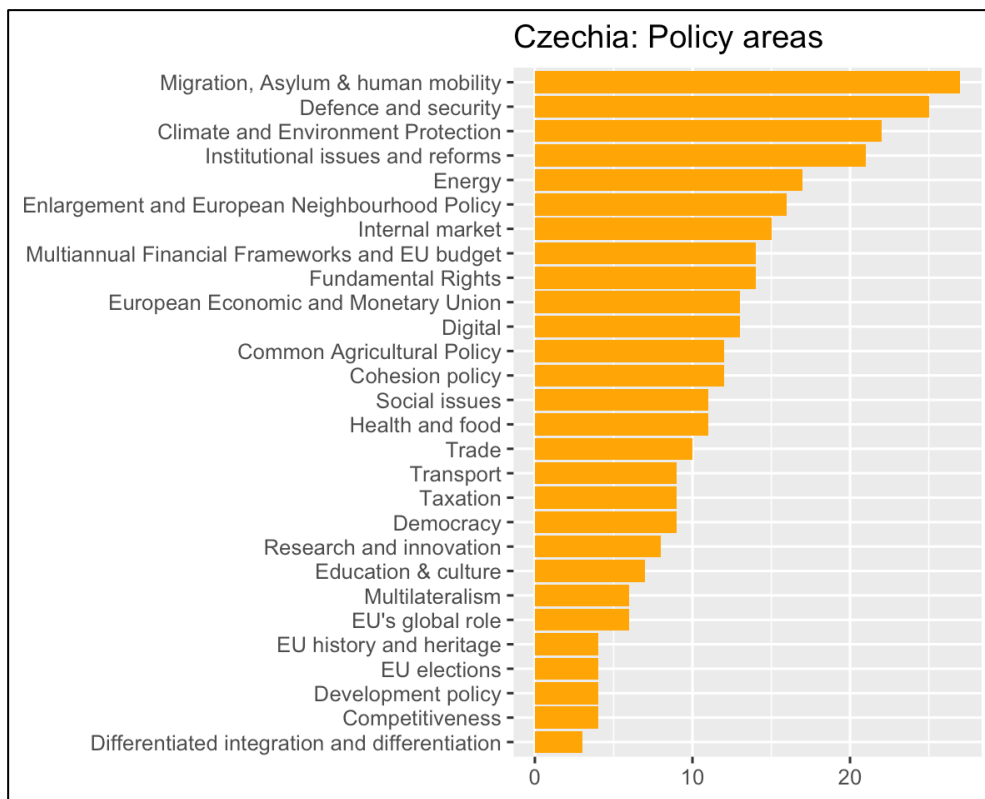
Figure 1. Distribution of proposals by type of actor in Czechia, Hungary and Slovakia. The number of proposals located via equivalent search methods in the three member states indicates that, in Slovakia, there is slightly less engagement with ideas on the future of the EU than in Czechia and Hungary (Czechia 45(+1), Slovakia 32(-1), Hungary 44 proposals). Slovakia is the smallest state of the three and its closeness to Czechia historically and linguistically implies that Slovak actors may engage with and even contribute to proposals that are formally produced in Czechia (the opposite trend is much less common). Furthermore, a non-negligible portion of the proposals is published under the auspices of country offices of foundations of other member states (e.g. Konrad Adenauer Foundation), or of organizations with broader, even global reach (GLOBSEC). In Slovakia, there are virtually no think tanks or civil society organizations focusing exclusively on EU affairs, resulting in most proposals in the database originating from governmental or partisan opposition actors.

Czechia and Hungary fare slightly better in generating proposals from civil society or think tanks with a focus on EU politics. While they also

include proposals originating from recognized foundations from abroad (e.g. Friedrich Ebert Foundation), the conservative Polish think tank (Sobieski Institute) is represented with a report on the Conference on the Future of Europe put together by collaborators from all V4 countries and translated into national languages. Czech think tanks such as Association for International Affairs, EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy, or Institute for Politics and Society (the latter associated with Andrej Babiš's party ANO) are represented, as well as a few individual actors with journalistic or similar publications addressing the future of the EU. In Hungary, there is a greater diversity of actors, including from civil society, some of these (such as the Századvég Foundation, the Barankovics István Foundation or the Centre of Fundamental Rights) are considered to be affiliated to the government or the parties it is composed of (see also Geva and Santos 2021 on the building of illiberal educational capacities in Hungary). This composition of actors is consistent with the observations on the 'co-optation' of considerable segments of Hungarian civil society, particularly of sector-specific organizations defending 'traditional values' (e.g. the family or the prominent Christian religious presence in social life) that can be well combined with the illiberal government's narrative (Gerő et al. 2023). Even though pragmatic perceptions of the EU might prevail among the population in some of these countries (see Bátorá and Baboš 2022 for data on Hungary and Slovakia, among others), these actors would by nature appeal more on ideas rather than material interests, or at least aim at combining the two.

In all three countries, this analysis has focused particularly on proposals originating from member state governments and key political institutions, including political parties. With key political parties typically commenting on the EU in their election manifestos (particularly for the EP elections, of which the 2019 elections are covered by the period of study, but also general elections), with Slovakia's EU Council Presidency included as well as the dominance of member state government voices in fueling the 'refugee crisis' (see Gilbert 2015) as well as, alongside a few key EU institutions, in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic (Quaglia and Verdun 2023), it is little surprise that proposals from these actors prevail in the database.

Reform proposals for the future European Union (2015-2022)





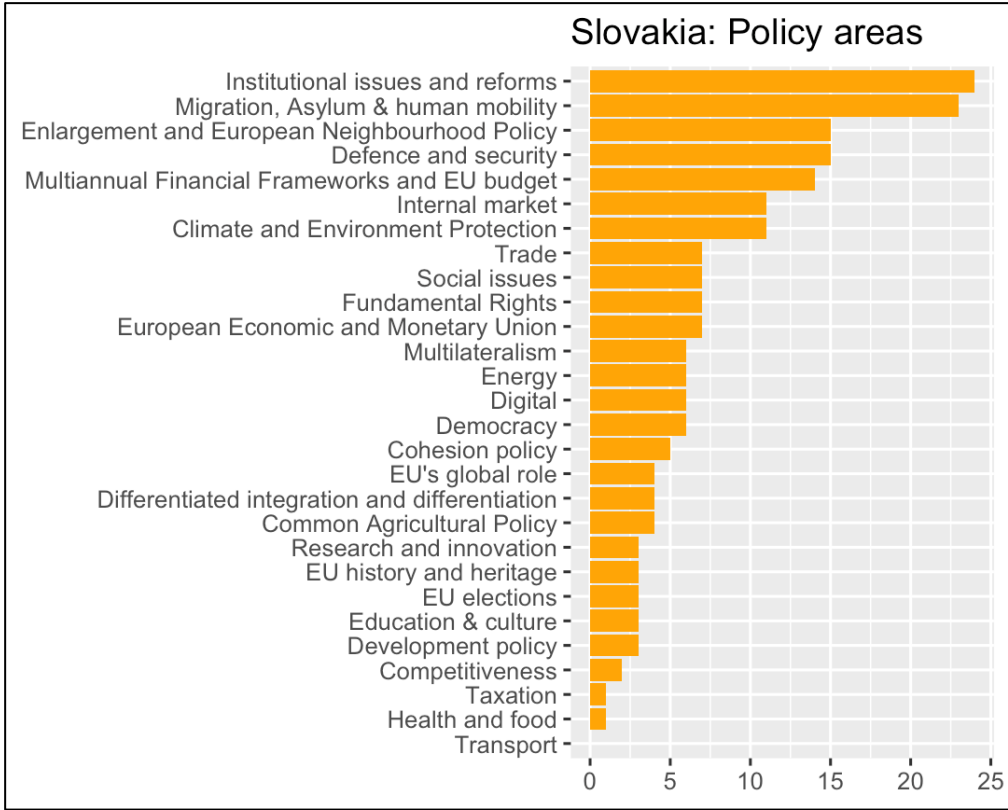


Figure 2. Distribution of policy areas mentioned in Czech, Hungarian and Slovak proposals

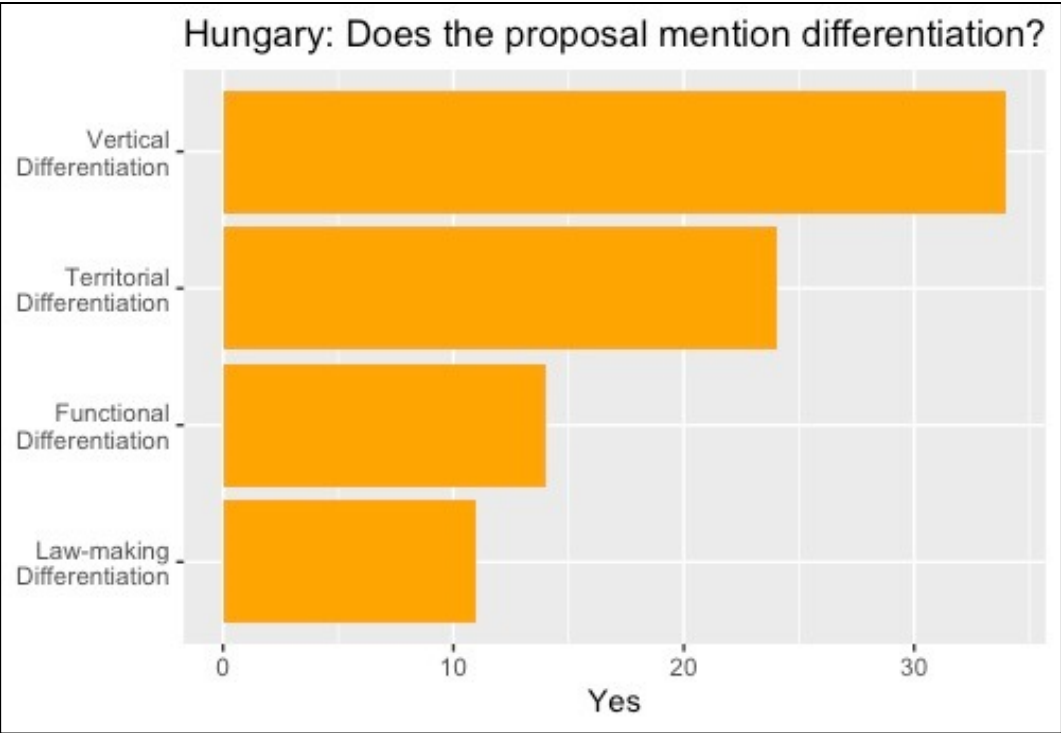
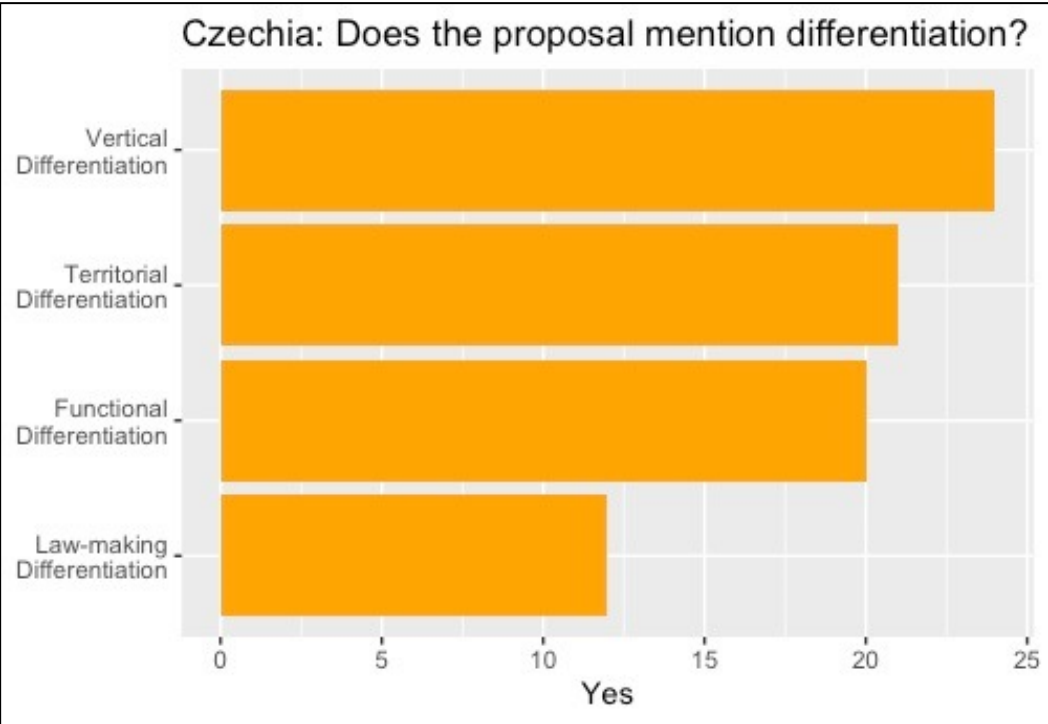
Topic-wise, we see a conventional mixture of focusing on the particular member state’s position in the EU with comments and observations on more overarching developments. Among the most recent proposals, the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE) attracted more attention, both with proposals specifically on the manifestations of the CoFoE in domestic politics and society, and with more general proposals. Hungary stands out among the latter, particularly through pro-Orbán articulations of the future of the EU. For example, in one interview, the Hungarian Minister of Justice, who is known to be the defender of the governmental actions vis-à-vis the judiciary and the civil society (e.g. Coman 2022), pleads for the ‘public opinion’ to prevail over conclusions from ‘various working groups’ of the CoFoE, the former presumably less open to restrict EU funding for Hungary due to rule of law concerns than the latter (Magyar Nemzet 2022).

At the level of government proposals, Hungary again comes across as most active among the three member states, in pushing forward an

illiberal vision of the EU. It has reacted critically to challenges levelled against it by EU institutions, in particular the conditionality mechanism for allocation of the EU budget, which it saw as discriminatory and perpetuating inequalities due to the economic consequences of the funding that might be withheld from poorer member states. The Czech government stood in the middle, focusing on growth, convergence and competitiveness with some regard for environmental commitments and energy efficiency. The Czech government of PM Babiš (replaced by PM Fiala in December 2022), however, without acknowledging the impact of the pandemic, was reluctant to accept any extension of supranational competences and to commit for Czechia to join the Eurozone. In the plans for the Czech EU Council Presidency, which were already under the auspices of the more pro-EU Fiala executive, the issues of post-war reconstruction of Ukraine and managing energy security and the 'refugee crisis' related to the Russian invasion of Ukraine took priority (Czech Presidency of the Council of the European Union 2022). These topics can be expected to gradually have overshadowed the COVID-19 pandemic, though, due to the end of the data collection period, it is not possible to provide an in-depth mapping of the trends after the Russian invasion on 24 February 2022. The Slovak government, which also changed after elections in February 2020, just ahead of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, supported joint EU action, but was least concrete on coming up with own initiatives and firm positions on the nature of such action.

## **The '3D' Trends: Differentiation**

Proposals for *any kind of differentiation* (lawmaking/vertical/territorial) are generally in scarce supply, as they seem to require a degree of sophistication and depth that most analysed proposals do not contain. There is no consistent pattern in the type of actors that invoke differentiation either.



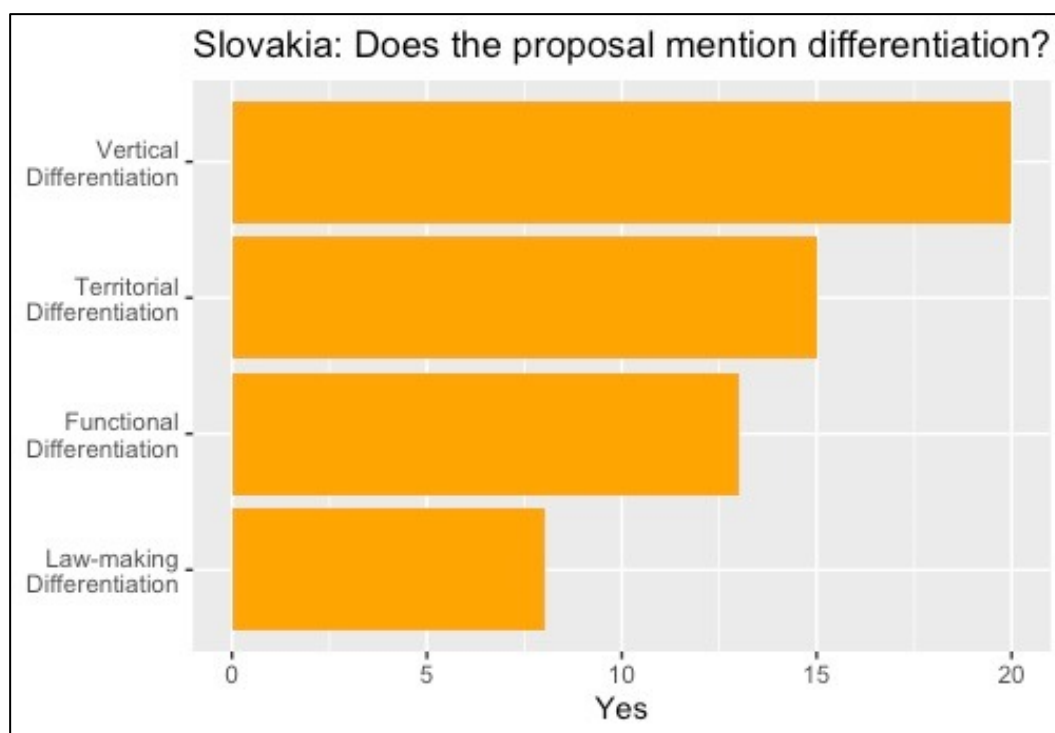


Figure 3. distribution of types of differentiation mentioned in Czech, Hungarian and Slovak proposals

Hence, in Slovakia, the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, although it has officially presented a position that it wants to listen to the citizens' proposals in the context of the Conference on the Future of Europe (Slov-Lex 2020), while signaling openness to enhance the number of areas decided by QMV, says that it 'does not support' the Spitzenkandidaten process (p. 3). Outside the executive, the political party Freedom and Solidarity (*Sloboda a solidarita*) is most vocal. In its 'Manifesto of Slovak Eurorealism', it subscribed to the fourth scenario from Juncker's White Paper ('doing less more efficiently'), advocating the transfer of several competences back to the member states and abolishing the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, among others. This is in line with the party's generally Eurosceptic position (e.g. Rybář 2020, 238–39), little regard for the importance of participatory and deliberative democracy, and the historical role that it played in the fall of the pro-EU cabinet of Iveta Radičová in 2011 due to this party's refusal to support the ratification of the European Stability Mechanism (Gould and Malová 2019). A rare example of a more demanding reform proposal is presented by a Slovak diplomat (in personal capacity) writing in the Slovak Euractiv portal on the need for

institutional reform as a condition for the EU to succeed, albeit his particular proposal (which includes the introduction of a second chamber of the EP and the allocation of the right to legislative initiative to the Council) would benefit from more explanation (Euractiv 2022). Similarly, the demand of the Hungarian parliament, in the summer of 2022, for an introduction of a Treaty amendment that would require the Commission to be ‘explicitly ideologically neutral’ is not accompanied by concrete content. A few concrete proposals are presented, such as the introduction of transnational party lists (manifesto of the Green Party in Czechia or the Momentum Movement in Hungary) or the fusion of the positions of the Commission President and the European Council President (Christian and Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People’s Party).<sup>[1]</sup> Similarly, in Hungary, one political party (Democratic Coalition, 2019) advocated the right to legislative initiative to the EP and the transformation of the European Council and the Council into a second chamber of the EP. The Hungarian Socialist Party also proposed a bicameral EP in its manifesto, which would have supervisory competences over a directly elected Commission President, referencing Elmar Brok’s ideas (Arató 2020, 119–21). In contrast, the Hungarian Parliament, when reflecting on the CoFoE, floated the idea of transforming the EP into a chamber consisting of representatives from national parliaments, whereby national parliaments should have the right to initiate and reject EU legislation.

The proposals generally do not support enhancing *the EU institutions’ competences*, and if so, they prefer strengthening intergovernmental, rather than supranational institutions. Some are characteristics with selective ‘uploading’ of their priorities to the EU level, without clarifying how exactly the EU should address them without more competences (for example, protection of religious rights demanded by the Christian Democrats in Slovakia, more action against corruption demanded by the Jobbik party in Hungary). In sheer numbers, political parties’ manifestos which adopt a skeptical position towards the EU, relying on national institutions instead, are quite frequent in the database. In Slovakia, not only illiberal or outright antidemocratic parties (such as the Slovak National Party, Sme Rodina, the party of the former minister of justice and Chairman of the Supreme Court Štefan Harabin called Vlast’), but also more mainstream parties (notably the Christian Democrats and Freedom and Solidarity) are reluctant to transfer more competences to the EU and

emphasize the principle of subsidiarity. For example, the manifesto of the Slovak National Party for 2016 argues for treaty reform which should return more competences to national institutions, including through the Council Presidency, that would also slow down the spread [sic!] of multiculturalism in the EU (Slovak National Party 2016). In this sense, the results from the analysis of the reform proposals offer a less 'optimistic' picture on the support towards EU integration among Slovak political parties than an earlier analysis that included media reports and speeches of party leaders as well (Világi, Baboš, and Králiková 2021, Chapter 4). Czechia offers a mixture of ideas, with some castigating what is seen as high levels of EU spending (journalist and historian known for plagiarism scandal Martin Kovář), while others showing more openness towards enhanced EU competences (e.g. Charity Czechia, a branch of an EU-wide civil society organization, arguing for the introduction of humanitarian visas, extended community financing in relation to migration and asylum; also public intellectual Martin Hančl).

Rarely, proposals explicitly comment on competences as a dimension that *ought not* drive the debate (manifesto of Top 09 party, arguing for 'doing things better' and adjusting competences to the way the best solutions can be reached). Some calls for more competences in the area of health can be observed in the wake of the pandemic (e.g. Radek Špicar, Vice President of the Confederation of Industry and Transport or even the Statement of the Czech Republic on the process of economic recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic in relation to the European Green Deal). As a whole, however, the sentiment of 'soft Euroscepticism' (Hloušek and Kaniok 2020) is thriving in the Czech proposals. In Hungary, references to the lack of effectiveness of the European Citizens' Initiative occasionally occurred (e.g. series of blogs by conservative lawyer Lomnici Zoltán Jr.),<sup>[2]</sup> indicating some space for enhancing the powers of this institution, however, with motivations tied to strengthening the member states', which could drive proposals contrary to what the supranational institutions advance. Member states' competence enhancement was also defended in foreign policy (separate energy agreements with third countries, such as Russia or China, proposed by Viktor Orbán).

*Territorial differentiation* enjoys limited explicit support in the proposals, which might be driven by the fear of the countries and their societies being

'left out' of decision making while de facto still required to adhere to legal obligations (see Eriksen and Fossum 2015). An alternative explanation is provided by the claims to have 'equal' voice in the EU structures operating as an effective slogan for gaining public support, particularly when voiced by political parties. It must be noted, nevertheless, that the condoning of deviations from accepted EU values and the rejection of rule of law enforcement, while not framed in this way, could be considered as tacit endorsement of de facto territorial differentiation; hence, these were coded as such and are more present among the Hungarian proposals.<sup>[3]</sup> The Party of the Hungarian Community in Slovakia, known for its alignment with Orbán's Fidesz, campaigned in the 2019 elections for 'saving the European values', rejecting 'two-speed Europe' as based on 'liberal and leftist ideology' and undercutting equality and solidarity. The desire to reduce territorial differentiation is also invoked in prevailing support of the accession of the Western Balkan countries, provided they meet the conditionality criteria (mentioned, for example, both in a Slovak government manifesto and by think tanks such as the Slovak Foreign Policy Association). In Czechia, territorial differentiation occasionally materializes in the form of rejecting, or at least conditioning, the accession to the Eurozone (e.g. ANO2011 and Andrej Babiš as its Chairman). Hungary's PM, in turn, in 2022, voiced opposition against reducing unanimity voting in foreign policy. The opposite trend (rejecting territorial differentiation) entails voices for enhancement of the European Neighbourhood Policy (Czech government, 2015), or multi-speed Europe (former Czech PM Bohuslav Sobotka in 'Two-speed Europe is a mistake', also Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 'The impacts of Brexit on Czech politics towards the EU'),<sup>[4]</sup> or the need for Hungary to join the European Public Prosecutor's Office to eliminate rule of law violations (now defunct Hungarian party 'Together' in its 2018 general election manifesto).

## The '3D' Trends: Dominance and Democracy

In this section, the positioning of the reform proposals to dominance and democracy is evaluated together, since the former have been coded with the methodological choice of including only *explicit* references (for a less specific coding method, see Góra, Thevenin, Zielińska 2023 introductory

chapter). Because of this, references to dominance are minimal; for example, in the whole database, one proposal, a collaborative output of Visegrád Four think tanks (and hence included for all three countries considered here)<sup>[5]</sup>, makes a reference thereto due to the influence of social media companies, with more EU regulation being the proposed solution. In Czechia, a policy brief by the Czech branch of the German Friedrich Ebert Foundation sees the risk of dominance of large states, but considers this also as a potential advantage for Czechia. An academic article published in Slovak in a Czech legal journal by a Slovak academic argues for the reduction of hierarchy and increased transparency through making the EP the sole institution influencing the composition of the Commission (Baraník 2017). Most references to dominance appear in the Hungarian proposals. Notably, the resolution of the Hungarian Parliament from July 2022 reacts to the Conference on the Future of Europe, which it perceives as an instance of illicit hierarchy due to the perceived lack of control of the member states. While it appreciates Hungarian citizens' involvement in the CoFoE, it castigates EU bureaucracy and calls for such Treaty revisions that would strengthen the member states, including national parliaments, and 'conservative values'. An even more determined judgment comes from the government-affiliated Centre of Fundamental Rights, which issued a proposal titled 'The European Commission attacked our country in the back!'.<sup>[6]</sup> Here, it condemns the cuts in EU funding against Hungary, which it sees as a result of lobbying of political opponents of Hungary, especially left-wing actors from the West and the LGBTQ+ movement influencing not only the Commission, but also the Court of Justice. In this picture, 'EU leaders' wield the law as a source of oppression of Hungarians (the Polish are mentioned as victims as well, albeit to a lesser extent), and a source of punishment for the latest (2022) victory of PM Orbán. The commentary titled, tellingly 'It's time to start talking about huxit' by political scientist<sup>[7]</sup> T. Fricz goes perhaps further to the extreme when presenting the EU as a reference point that is 'irredeemable' for Hungarians, and floats the idea of leaving it altogether.

The malfunctioning of democracy at the EU level is invoked more frequently, mainly remaining in the context of what is perceived to be a 'rule of bureaucrats', without sufficient accountability.<sup>[8]</sup> In Czechia, for example, this line of thought is regularly voiced by former President and ardent critic of EU integration Václav Klaus. On very few occasions, more



participatory instruments or other forms of EU-level democracy (e.g. through the European Parliament) are advocated, both types of voices are almost inaudible amidst the majority of the proposals that do not go into detail.<sup>[9]</sup> The proposed solution (when articulated) is therefore the reduction of the powers of EU institutions (where specified, especially of the Commission). A few proposals (e.g. by the Czech Pirate Party) are more keen on strengthening EU competences, but are countered, particularly in Hungary, by several pro-government NGOs. One of the most extreme standpoints is presented in the 2020 annual speech by Viktor Orbán, which demands nothing less than an ‘illiberal revolution’ at the EU level (Magyar Nemzet 2020).

References to identity, either EU or national, remain scarce in Czechia and Slovakia. In Slovakia, they have only appeared in the context of the CoFoE, with the government hoping to see the enhancement of Slovaks’ European identity through this endeavor. In Czechia, references to only European and only national identity evened themselves out, without a dominant actor uttering them. There are more frequent references in the Hungarian proposals, however, including those which mention both ‘identities’. Generally, references may be observed in governmental proposals which articulate the ambition to not only build Hungarians’ national identity, but also to impact the interpretations of European identity, with some NGOs and think tanks (e.g. the Antall József Knowledge Center) pushing back against these narratives. A peculiar reference to national identity is by the Hungarian Constitutional Court’s (2020) press release on one of its EU law-related judgments, which matches with the concerns on the building of illiberal identities through interpreting the Hungarian 2011 Fundamental Law (Kovács 2023). In sum, it appears that the overall polarization of EU issues in Hungary has had the side effect of more frequent references to identity and to ‘constitutional affairs’ more broadly in the proposals.

The comparatively greater silence of voices critical of the EU’s status quo in Slovakia may be seen in the context of the country trying to limit its association with the Visegrád Four, a grouping that has attained a rather nefarious ring in the context of EU integration support (Bátora 2021, 9), yet, this gives relatively more space for actors from other countries,

particularly illiberal voices supportive of the Hungarian government (see Petrović, Raos, and Fila 2023), to voice their ideas.

## Conclusion: Dwarves... or Ostriches?

The landscape of proposals on the future of the EU in the small V4 countries is rather unimaginative. This may partially be explained by the limited presence of intellectuals in the discussion, particularly through lengthier, more deliberative contributions that would position themselves to be the ‘critical friends’ (cf. European University Institute 2021) of the EU. Even the platforms for such debates seem to be limited: media seem typically largely uninterested in more reflective pieces, while think tanks are often pursuing analyses on particular policy areas rather than offering space for exchange of broader visions.

The proposals largely do not endorse major changes such as treaty revisions, albeit the Conference on the Future of Europe seems to have stimulated more debate in this regard (including towards treaty revisions supportive of less integration, or outright disintegration). Furthermore, words might conceal meaning – especially with some Hungarian illiberal actors, the verbal claims against territorial differentiation are combined seamlessly with the support for ‘separate readings of values’, which have the potential to entrench precisely such differentiation. References to dominance are rare, given that the coding required explicit mentions in the proposal, but the representation of opposition towards the EU institutions’ deciding on behalf of ‘member state communities’ spills over into claims of undemocratic conduct and, to a lesser extent, requests for rectifying measures reducing the existing competences. Future research could more systematically map the academic discourse, which has only limited representation in the dataset.

A Eurosceptic party in Slovakia (Freedom and Solidarity) advocated for the EU to abandon its ‘ostrich policy’ in relation to migration by building more refugee ‘camps’ outside the EU territory. The lack of comprehensive, thought-through, constructive, and broadly deliberated proposals on the EU’s future, however, gives rise to the suspicion that it is the small V4 societies that are the ostriches instead, trying to pretend that ‘business as usual’ can continue. The silence of advocates of more robust readings of democracy, particularly in the form of more public participation and

deliberation (cf. Alemanno and Nicolaïdis 2022), in turn, de facto empowers the proponents of weakened majoritarian or even only elite-driven readings, full of othering and division (cf. Urbinati 2019). Dwarves, while small and generally inward-looking, can shape history; ostriches less so. Czech, Hungarian and Slovak political actors might benefit from reading more fantasy stories.

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<sup>[1]</sup> Others are less concrete, e.g. former PM Babiš's party ANO2011 in their 2019 EP elections manifesto ('We Will Protect Czechia') demands the reduction of the Commission's competences, but without specification which ones should be transferred/eliminated. Viktor Orbán, in a 2021 speech at the 'Thirty years free' conference adopted the same narrative (reduction of the competences of the Commission without specification).

<sup>[2]</sup> This intertwining between the stronger ECI and

<sup>[3]</sup> For example, 'Resolution 2/2018. (II. 21.) of the National Assembly on supporting Poland against the pressure of Brussels'. A more convoluted instance is the speech of the Hungarian head of state János Áder in 2021, in which, while rejecting territorial differentiation (by arguing for the need to accelerate enlargement processes), he also pushed for 'respecting' the values of every member state in the EU—which, if they were to read as mutually contradictory, would amount to territorial differentiation.

<sup>[4]</sup> Yet, in 2021, Sobotka's party, the Czech Social Democratic Party, was defending a 'core Europe' with enhanced third-country participation. This shift may be attributed to the COVID-19-related developments.

<sup>[5]</sup> Involved were Institute for Politics and Society (Czechia), F. A. Hayek Foundation (Slovakia), Institute for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Hungary). The coordinator was the Polish Instytut Sobieskiego.

<sup>[6]</sup> Methodologically, however, it must be noted that an explicit reference to dominance (*főlény, uralkodás, dominancia*) is not present in this proposal, which was coded by another researcher. The author of this report would not have coded the presence of dominance in this proposal (and probably would not have identified the report in the first place).

<sup>[7]</sup> Based on the author's self-identification.

<sup>[8]</sup> Exceptions occur—for example, the Czech Institute for International Relations in Prague criticized the EU institutions for not doing enough in the context of the Russian invasion which may undermine the EU's standing as a community as well.

<sup>[9]</sup> In one case, that of the 2019 EP election manifesto of the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia, even both positions were advocated simultaneously regardless of their internal contradiction. This party has produced a several dozen-page long manifesto demanding both more 'Europe of states' and 'Europe of citizens' (cf. Middelaar 2013), while demanding a considerable weakening of the Euro-Atlantic collaboration and effectively the EU's foreign policy (by opposing sanctions against Russia before the invasion of Ukraine).

# Chapter 6

## The Future of Europe Debate – the Case Study of Poland

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### Introduction

Poland entered the European Union in May 2004, during the fifth and biggest EU enlargement. However, the year 1989 already marks the beginning of the transition from the authoritarian regime of the communist state to a democratic order. From the onset, joining the European project was one of the priorities of the Polish post-transformation governments. In 1991 the Europe Agreement was signed between the Republic of Poland and the European Communities and their Member States, thus forming the legal framework for the future accession process. The Europe Agreement and the prospect of future accession was concluded parallelly to the Maastricht Treaty. In 1994 Poland submitted a formal application for the EU membership and in 1997 the National Integration Strategy was adopted. After the signing of the Accession Treaty and the successful national referendum (both in 2003), Poland entered the European Union on May 1, 2004.

The history of Poland's gradual joining of the European project has been intertwined with the process of political, economic, and cultural

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transformation from authoritarian ruling party and centrally-planned economy towards liberal democracy and free-market capitalism. Thus, the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was marked by modernization and its two crucial aspects: the aspiration of becoming a modern democratic state, which could be a part of modern Europe and the plan of developing a free-market economy. And that legacy of 'catching up' to the developed West European democracies has been a recurrent theme during the times of transformation. The European Union was commonly accepted as the desired goal and positive model for transformation. At the same time, the EU, along with NATO, which Poland joined in 1999, were seen as safety guarantees for Poland in the future geopolitical map of the world. So, the EU on the one hand was a positive model for transformation, and on the other it was a guarantee of escaping a possible post-Soviet sphere of interests (cf. Higashino, 2004; Orzechowska-Wa ławska et al., 2021).

From the onset the issue of Poland's place in the EU was central to the discussions on the European Union and its polity. And perhaps due to being one of the latecomers to the European project, the internal discussion about the future of Europe has revolved around and still focuses not on how EU should be, but on the role of the Poland in it (G ra, Thevenin, and Zieli ska 2023). Therefore, the most salient and vocal positions in the public discourse concentrate on national interests in the context of the integration.

## Future of Europe Debate Since 2015

One of the substantial proposals authored by Poland in the past decade regarding the future of Europe was the Three Seas Initiative (TSI). It was proposed jointly by the presidents of Poland and Croatia in 2015. The goal was to promote subregional cooperation and create a counterbalance to the most powerful EU states, such as France and Germany. The aim of TSI was to build a stronger bond between twelve Central and Eastern European and Balkan countries in the area between the Adriatic, Baltic, and Black Seas. This was a resurrection of a pre-WW2 Polish idea of *Intermarium* – a confederation of states from that region that was to counterweight the geopolitical position of Germany and the Soviet Union at that time (Bartoszewicz, 2021; G rka, 2018; Grgi , 2021; I tok et al., 2021). The TSI has not been successful in providing a strong and unified

alliance within the EU, instead its primary focus appeared to be infrastructure connectivity between the twelve countries.

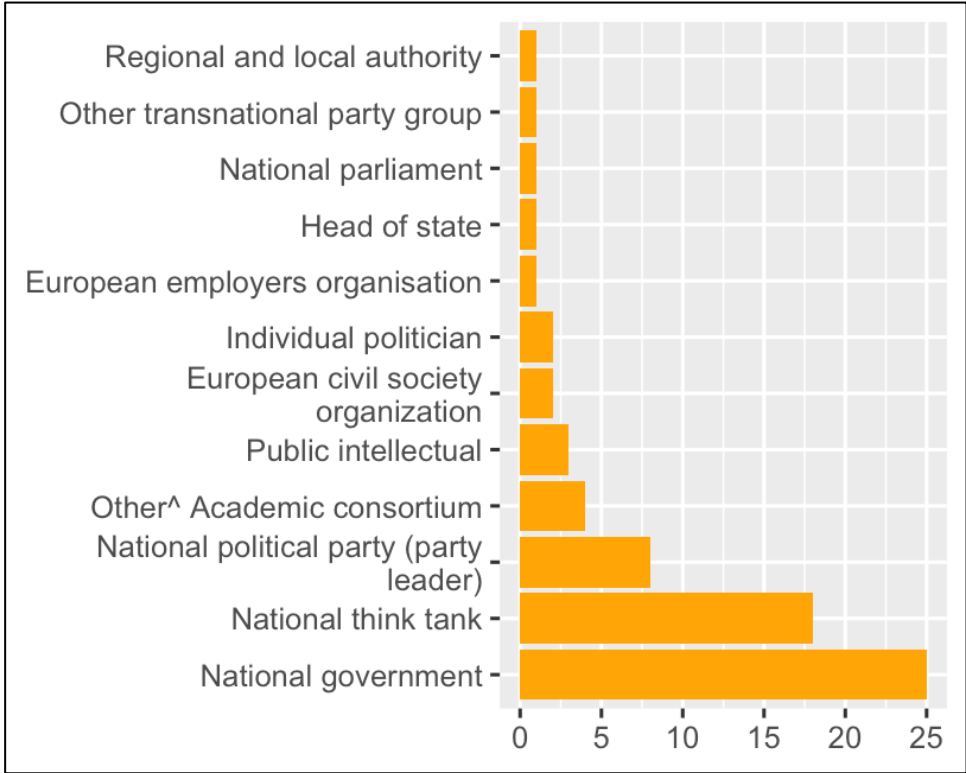


Figure 1. Distribution of Polish proposals by type of actor

The idea of counterbalancing the strongest EU countries has been in Poland central to the debate on Europe. Europeanisation has been a polarising and at times contentious topic. The discussions on institutional, economic, legal, and political integration have been imbued with arguments concerned with values. Thus, in the public discourse sovereignty and the fear of losing it has been a recurrent theme in the debates on adjusting to the EU. And sovereignty has been operationalized in various contexts: legal, political, and axiological. The most salient conflict between the Law and Justice (PiS) government and the EU has been the one regarding the rule of law in Poland and the conditionality of receiving the EU recovery funds. Poland refused to acknowledge supranational legal order and challenged it via the decision of the Polish constitutional tribunal of October 7, 2021 (K3/21). Underneath the official Polish position there has been jostling within the government coalition for internal power. Nonetheless, the official stance of the government vis a vis the EU relies upon arguments on sovereignty and the claim that the rule

of law requirements pushed by the EU are in fact external interference in Polish sovereign decisions. As stated by the PiS leader Jarosław Kaczyński, the Polish constitution is the highest normative act in Poland and the EU should operate within European culture, which should respect law and legal order (Kaczyński o wyroku TK, 2021).

The concept of sovereignty has been expanded to the axiological level with vague signifiers, such as 'the traditional Polish way of life' allegedly endangered by the EU. The conflict is framed as a clash of values, where the EU might deprive Poles of their cultural rights has been accompanied by palpable events and legal decisions adversely affecting the lives of individual Polish citizens. Most notably on 22 October 2020 the constitutional court in Poland, whose legitimacy has been itself contested since 2015 (cf. Bunikowski, 2018; Łętowska, 2019; Sadurski, 2019; Sołtys, 2022; Szwed, 2022), ruled that abortion due to foetal impairment was unconstitutional (K 1/20), and thus de facto delegatized any abortion in Poland. The ruling has further restricted already one of the harshest anti-abortion laws in Europe (Bucholc, 2022b). Furthermore, Poland governed by Law and Justice has been infamous for cumbering the rights of and stigmatizing its LGBTI citizens. Perhaps the most illustrative examples were adopting resolutions on 'LGBT free zones' by over 90 local communities in Poland (Bucholc, 2022a; CMFHR, 2020).

Such contentious issues, like abortion laws or the place of Christian values (with non-heteronormative sexuality presented as ideology in conflict with Christianity) have been placed within the Europeanisation context and associated with the EU as an actor enforcing 'non-traditional' tenets, thus threatening the Polish sovereignty. This climate of moral panic (Gressgård & Smoczyński, 2020; Jaskułowski & Majewski, 2022; Jawor, 2015; Krzyżanowski, 2020; Yermakova, 2021; Żuk & Żuk, 2019) has been kindled and reinforced by the public service media, which since 2015 have been controlled exclusively by the ruling coalition and have become a propaganda tool (Banasiński & Rojszczak, 2021; Połońska, 2019; Sadurski, 2019). Therefore, in the public discourse sanctioned by the government, the EU is not a platform for common European identity, but rather a threat to Polish sovereignty. However, one must bear in mind that at the same time, opinion polls show not only that Polish citizens are attached to the EU, but that they are the population which expresses the highest EU

attachment among all the member states, with only 2% of respondents claiming that they do not feel attached at all (Eurobarometer, 2022). Moreover, the EU popularity has been on the rise (Fagan & Gubbala, 2022).

## **Key Issues in the Future of Europe Debates: Sovereignty and Values Rather than Democracy, Differentiation and Dominance**

The debate on the future of Europe has in Poland been limited and lacks nuance and details in the public sphere. One cannot find many proposals that would tackle a given aspect of issues pertaining to the future of the EU polity. Instead, certain topics have been reiterated and repeated without much breakthrough, and they have contributed to the polarising issues that divided political identities into the ruling coalition and the opposition. The Eurosceptic representatives have been largely incorporated into the ruling coalition, hence the governmental stance on the EU has been portraying the Union rather as an entity external to Poland. Rarely has the EU been presented as a common responsibility. Instead, it is described as a vehicle of interests of the biggest and most influential member states.

Since 2015 it has been the ideologically right-wing parties along with the right-wing government who were the main actors publicly referring to the ways the EU is or might be developing. They have been more visible in the public arena and mass-media and more successful in framing the debate. Yet, their message about the future of the EU has been alarmistic in tone and oftentimes antagonising the Union vs Poland. Certain recurrent themes became almost battle cries of the right: 'no to federalization', 'defending sovereignty', 'no to external ideologies' (cf. Program PiS, 2019). In turn, the political opposition has taken the role of opposing the views expressed by the right-wing actors and not much beyond that. More complex discussions are relegated to outlets, such as NGO analyses (cf. Balcer et al., 2016, 2017; Buras, 2017; Lewandowski, 2020; Pełczyńska-Nałęcz, 2017a, 2017b), and it is not certain whether they do reach wider audience.

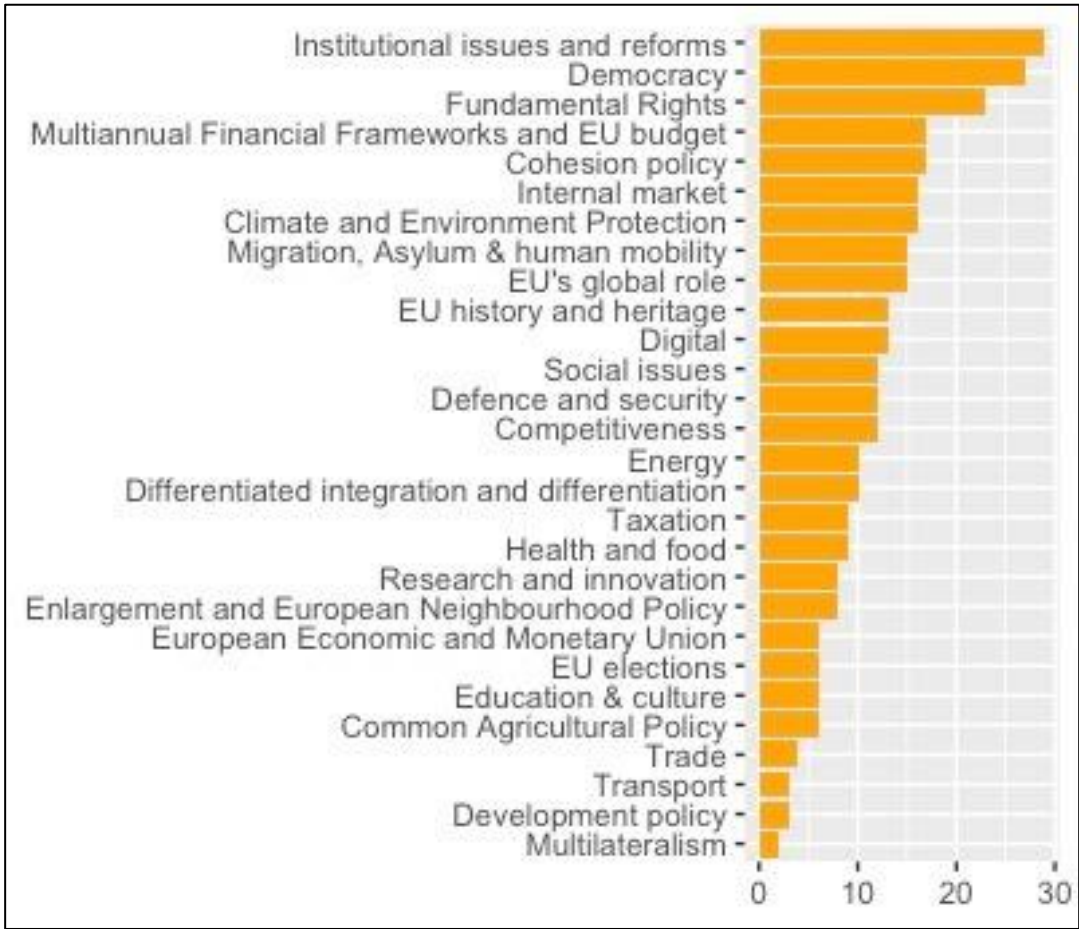


Figure 2. Distribution of policy areas mentioned in Polish proposals

If one were to name the recurrent ideas about the future of Europe, beyond those preoccupied with values, those would include deepening the common market and further economic integration, tightening the tax system in the EU and common policies against tax evasion, respecting the solidarity and developing and continuing cohesion policy, opening EU for new member states, and developing common regulations for digital innovations. The Polish government has tried to counterbalance the influence of the most powerful MS by stressing the importance of regional initiatives, such as the Visegrad Group and Three Seas Initiative. Although trying to co-create regional alliances, the ruling party actors have been repeatedly opposing to multi-speed or two-speed Europe, seeing it as vehicles for relegating countries like Poland to the peripheries within the EU (Czaputowicz, 2018; Program PiS, 2019). Along with opposition to federal proposals, governmental actors have been expressing their objection towards the widening of the prerogatives of EU institutions at

the cost of MS competencies. Respecting sovereignty has been one of their core statements.

The beginning of 2020 brought about the new crisis the EU, as the rest of the world had to face: the Covid-19 pandemic. Initially the unconcerted response in the EU were presented by the Polish government as a proof that in the end it is the nation-state that must take responsibility for its citizens. A lack of initial common EU response was treated as a sign of weakness of European institutions and a proof of the strength of nation-states. However, the reality of cross-border threats to health led to a concerted approach and the approval of the European Commission Vaccine Plan by the MS in June 2020 (EC, 2020; Forman & Mossialos, 2021). Firstly, the joint procurement mechanism for vaccines, then the EU recovery plan (Next Generation EU) have shown that – even in the absence of a common EU health - EU did act cooperatively. After that turn, the Polish government stressed its role as a successful negotiator in guaranteeing proper funds for Poland. However, due to the rule of law conditionality in the disbursement of the EU funds, Poland has missed out on substantial financial support for post-pandemic recovery. For the governmental actors, this has been a sign of lack of solidarity on the part of the EU, which in their opinion is violating the Treaty in the name of petty differences and by denying MS to have sovereign legal systems, based on their own traditions. The rule of law conditionality has been presented as violating Poland's sovereignty. In the words of Polish PM Mateusz Morawiecki 'the Treaties respect and protect sovereignty, whereas the new mechanism violates it and constitutes its significant limitation' (Morawiecki, 2020).

One of the most visible themes that have been prevalent in the narrative of the government and permeate the public discourse is sovereignty. This may be not unique for Poland (cf. Fabbrini & Zgaga, 2023). Nonetheless, the recurrent idea poses the EU as a threat to Polish sovereignty, both political sovereignty and what is more salient: cultural sovereign (Góra, Zielińska 2023). Therefore, the fear that cultural and national identity might be endangered, is accompanied by the emphasis Polish proposals lay on the concept of Europe as a family of nations and the need to preserve national and cultural identities. Certainly, the concept of Polish national identity is vague and value-laden, hence within the government



and right-wing actors dominating the public scene, this concept has been monopolized by a narrow vision of what constitutes the core of that identity. It is a nostalgic view of a Christian heterosexual family cherishing common and supposedly universal values enshrined in the motto of the military of Poland 'God, honour and fatherland'. The significance of this motto has been reinforced *inter alia* by placing it on every passport issued for Polish citizens since 2018 (RPO, 2019). Any challenge to that romanticized picture is a potential sign of being influenced by alien values. Thus, the EU on the axiological level is in that view a threat to traditional Polish values. Essentially, there is an implicit understanding that there is a conflict between individualistic values (represented by the West, and the EU), and traditional collective identities (like family, religious or national identities). From that perspective, EU is an embodiment of changes posing threat to those ostensibly traditional values (e.g., Kaczyński w Karpaczu, 2022; Warsaw Summit declaration, 2021). In the polarized political arena, the representatives of the opposition in turn see this as one of the themes feeding the populist imagery, proclaiming the return to nation-states as the preferable way forward (Lewandowski, 2020). In contrast to the ruling parties, the opposition stresses common European values as the base for building a common future. With that objective in mind, the MEP Janusz Lewandowski proposed the EC to include funding NGOs that cultivate those common European values in the 2021-2027 framework, bypassing the allocation of funds by the member state (Lewandowski, 2020).

It is not a place to judge, if preoccupation with traditional values is a sincere concern, or a discursive practice. Nonetheless, these concerns about traditional values are salient in the discussion revolving around Poland and the EU. The emphasis for the need for preserving national identities and traditional values is echoed by a firm negative position on potential federalization. In fact, in the governmental and right-wing proposals, the word *federalization*, is portrayed as a danger for Poland and its sovereignty and serves as a bogeyman, not as one of the possible pathways of the development of the EU. One of the recurrent messages conveyed by the governmental actors and their political supporters, like right-wing NGOs is that it is the nation-state that is the optimal political solution to various problems (eg. Collegium Intermarium, Ordo Iuris, Instytut Sobieskiego). Furthermore, the nation state is juxtaposed to the

EU with the claim that it has democratic legitimacy, whereas the EU institutions do not. Another concern with federalization is that in reality it would mean the dominance of France and Germany in the EU, with simultaneous deprivation of other member states of power (Cichocki, 2019; Grosse, 2017; Kubacka & Przebierała, 2022; Zalewski & Zych, 2021). Hence, also members of the opposition appeal for abandoning these ideas, as they 'give ammunition to the sceptics and enemies of the Union' (Lewandowski, 2020) and instead to focus on improving common fiscal, banking and capital policies (Lewandowski, 2020). The governmental actors are proposing as the core for the EU 'the family of nations' or 'Europe of homelands'. Along with the firm negative position on federalization the ruling party have stressed the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality in EU decision-making processes (cf. Program PiS, 2019).

One of the reform proposals voiced by the government and not referring to sovereignty, has been the appeal to tighten the tax system in the EU, with the objective of fighting with tax havens and tax evasion. This should strengthen the EU budget and discourage the EU from curbing cohesion funds in EU's Multiannual Financial Framework. Poland has been an active member of the 'Friends of Cohesion' initiative, whose primary goal was adequate funding of the cohesion policy. As a beneficiary of this policy, Poland has been defending the principle that Member States should receive a balanced allocation of funds, with less developed and more disadvantaged regions benefiting from those structural funds (Morawiecki, 2020). However, beyond general expressions of the importance of EU own resources through taxes, no specific solutions have been presented in the public sphere.

The Polish government has been advocating for deepening the common market, including digital common market and for further economic integration. However, despite the concern about the need for regulations regarding the digital development, Poland is one of the countries that did not introduce Digital Services Tax (DST) (Piasecki, 2019) and, although stating that a common EU DST should be introduced, Polish government has not been active in this field and the public debate on this topic has not been wide. Another theme that has been visible regarding the EU was the stress on common EU security, protection of external EU borders, and

geopolitical solidarity. Nonetheless, regarding the migration policies, the Polish government, along with other V4 countries have opposed to proposals of EU relocating mechanism regarding asylum-seekers. In turn, Poland has argued that the EU should focus on strengthening the EU borders and supporting refugees outside the EU (*Sejm przeciw przymusowej relokacji*, 2017; Stolarczyk, 2017). Poland has also been advocating for upholding the unanimity rule in key issues for the member states.

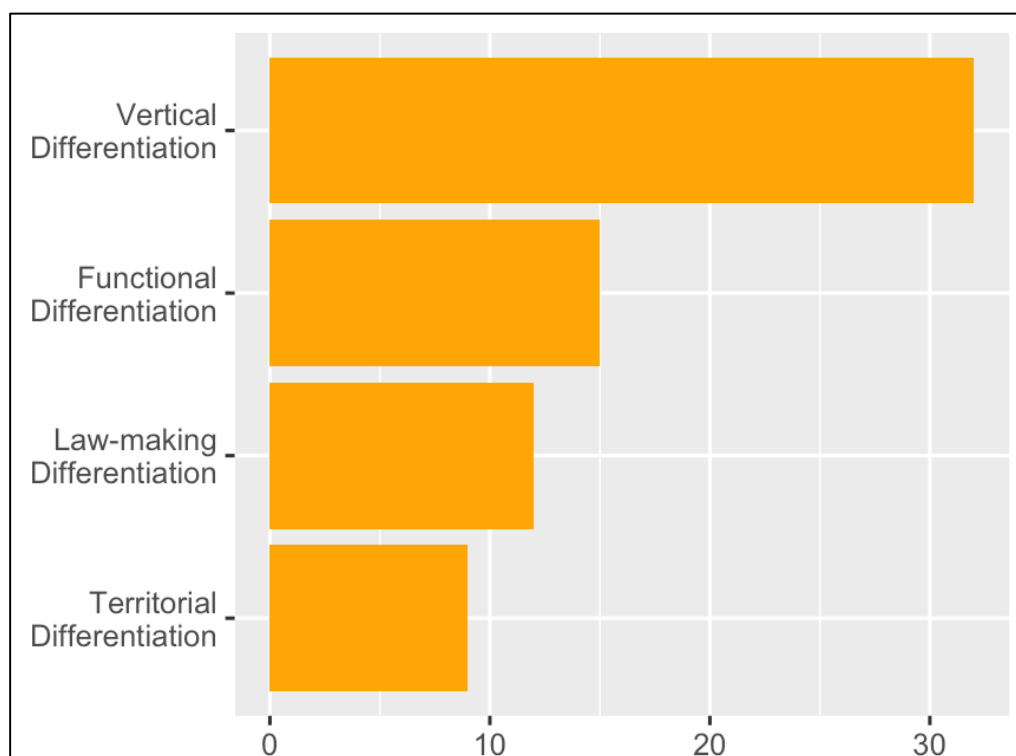


Figure 3. Distribution of types of differentiation mentioned in Polish proposals

There are two stances regarding territorial differentiation expressed by the Polish government. On the one hand, it firmly opposes to multi-speed EU scenario as unfavourable to Poland and not benefiting the EU as a whole. It is seen as a prospect of strengthening the core of the Eurozone states at the cost of further relegating to peripheries those who are already in less favourable positions, like CEE countries (e.g., Czaputowicz, 2018). On the other hand, Poland seeks regional coalitions, like the Three Sees Initiative, or V4 in order to gain stronger voice in the EU. Also, the Polish government has claimed that policies, such as those regarding climate neutrality should be differentiated based on the specific situation of a given MS (Program PiS, 2019).

The public discourse on financing has been dominated by the issue of rule of law conditionality and Next Generation EU. The ruling party and the opposition have a contradictory reading of this contentious subject. Where the government sees the EU interference in Polish sovereignty, the opposition sees EU as defending democratic principles against autocratic ruling coalition. This has been a polarizing topic, which overshadowed any other possible discussion on funding reform proposals. Overall, the governmental actors advocate tightening of the EU tax system, they also accept the need for higher contributions to the EU budget from MS, but they oppose to rule of law conditionality as violating the treaties. By the same token, the malfunctioning of EU democracy has been pointed at by the government actors because of EU institutions' power without proper democratic legitimacy. That legitimacy in their view is held exclusively by national parliaments and governments. Hence once again the ruling coalition presents strengthening the member states as a way for strengthening EU democracy. The proposal of granting legislative initiative to the European Parliament is presented as a back door route to federalism (Kubacka & Przebierała, 2022: 79-80). The right-wing parties, calling themselves Eurorealistic (Program PiS, 2019: 20), but by many perceived as Eurosceptic have been in power in Poland since 2015. The opposition in turn has been focusing on democratic malfunctioning of Poland, due to legal changes introduced by Law and Justice, and in this light the EU is safeguarding democracy. Given the conflict over the rule of law conditionality and the preoccupation with traditional Christian values and national sovereignty, it is not surprising that the Polish government actors perceive Poland as a state and themselves as its representatives as being dominated, both by the most powerful MS, and by 'Brussels bureaucracy'. In its party programme, Law and Justice stated this explicitly:

We reject political correctness, which increasingly limits freedom of speech and opinion, painfully affecting many Europeans, imposed not only through cultural violence, but also through administrative actions and criminal repression. We do not accept the uncontrolled erosion of the sovereignty of European homelands. We will vigorously defend our freedom, by introducing strong legal barriers against the possibility of such practices towards Poland. This is our Eurorealism. [...] In the face

of contemporary threats to freedom, manifested primarily in economic pressure but also ideological and political violence, defending and expanding the spheres of human freedom and social communities has become a great challenge of our times.'

(Program PiS, 2019: 20).

## Conclusions

The discussion on the future of Europe in Poland has not been widely present in the public sphere. One cannot find many substantial proposals. Moreover, it has been dominated by the right-wing actors and the ruling coalition, especially given the fact that the government has gained unprecedented control of the public media in post-transformation Poland, including the local tv, radio and press (Banasiński & Rojszczak, 2021; Połomska, 2019; Sadurski, 2019). If one were to point at a preferred constitutional model voiced by the actors dominating the debate, this would be intergovernmentalism (Fossum, 2021). In this version the EU should deepen the economic integration but keep business as usual regarding other aspects. Furthermore, member states should not cede more power to EU institutions. At the same time, the Law and Justice party has been ostensibly supportive of developing stronger EU defence and security systems and potentially a common army (*Kaczyński: UE powinna stać się supermocarstwem*, 2017). Nonetheless, Poland under their government has been reluctant to support any EU defence cooperation, arguing for caution, as this could undermine national armies or the NATO pact (*Wiceszef MSZ*, 2021; Usewicz et al., 2021; Zaborowski, 2018). The historical geopolitical position of Poland between major political and military powers has placed security at the centre of concern, but projects such as *Nord stream 2*, which have not considered EEC countries' reservations, have undermined trust in common security, like energy security plans (e.g., Tilles, 2021b). Both the ruling coalition and the opposition agree on negative assessment of this pipeline, treating it not only as a venture directly disadvantaging Poland, but also one that undermines common EU interests (Tilles, 2021a).

With the Polish government as the major voice, setting the tone for the debate in Poland, it was not only dominated by perspectives of national interests, but also by Eurosceptic sentiments. The opposition in turn

concentrated on refuting the untrue – in their opinion – right-wing portrayals of the EU. Thus, the prevailing narrative referred to the place of Poland in the EU, and especially to the contentious topic of the rule of law conditionality. The discussion revolved around the issue whether the EU has legal credentials to withhold the post-pandemic recovery package from Poland or not. This topic overshadowed the rest of the debate on the future of EU. This controversy has been contextualized as an external threat to Polish values and to Polish sovereignty. With intergovernmentalism being the preferred way forward, Poland has been seeking to establish regional alliances (like TSI or V4) that could provide a stronger voice to countries who – like Poland – perceive to be on the peripheries of the EU. Along with attempts at regional coalitions, the Polish government has been active in political alliances that have been uniting major Eurosceptic actors in the EU, like the ‘Warsaw summit of conservative leaders of Europe’ (Kucharczyk, 2021). None of those laid ground for proposals beyond reaffirming the primacy of nation-states. In this narrative the Future of Europe debate has been polarised and framed as a conflict between federalisation tendencies and actors defending the prerogatives of member states.

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# Chapter 7

## The Debates on the Future of the European Union: the Spanish Case

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*LUISS University*

### Introduction

Spain has been a member of the European Union (EU) since 1 January 1986, when it became the twelfth member to join the EU, with Portugal. This accession culminated a process that started in 1977, when the country applied for EU membership. The country had been a dictatorship under General Francisco Franco from 1939 to 1975, and after his death, Spain underwent a transition to a democratic system. During this time, Spain modernized its economy and infrastructure, making it a strong candidate for EU membership. Spain's accession occurred at the same time as the implementation of the Single European Act (SEA), which aimed at creating a single market within the EU, which would allow for the free movement of goods, services, capital, and people. The SEA also strengthened the decision-making powers of the European Parliament and introduced the concept of qualified majority voting, which allowed for faster and more efficient decision-making within the EU. In this sense, Spain's accession to the EU and the implementation of the SEA were two important events that occurred around the same time and had a

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significant impact on the EU as we know it today (cf. Nasarre and Aldecoa Luzarraga, 2015)

Since becoming a member state, Spanish public opinion of the EU and the EU integration process has tended to be supportive. The Eurobarometer reflects that Spanish public opinion on the EU has remained positive, or has even improved over time. Indeed, in 1991, 52% of Spanish citizens had a positive image of the EU; in 2021 it had improved to 64%. In 1991, 55% of Spanish citizens felt that EU membership was a good thing, 62% did in 2021. Indicators on trust and on the belief that Spain has benefited from EU membership reached similar values (Commission of European Communities, 1991; 2021).

The content of the debate has changed over the years. In the early years of Spain's membership, the focus of the debate was mainly on the benefits of EU membership for the Spanish economy and the modernization of Spanish society. Increases in trade, investment, and access to funding from the Structural and Cohesion funds were central elements in the debate, and the Spanish government and the mainstream political parties shared a view of EU membership as a way to modernize the country (Closa 1995). More recently, with events such as the financial crisis in 2008, Brexit, the COVID-19 pandemic, the debates have more directly addressed the impact of EU policies on national interests and the future direction of the EU. Key themes included the future of the eurozone, the management of the migration and health crises, the implications of Brexit, and the division of powers and responsibilities within the EU. Different proposals have regarded how to make the EU more democratic and accountable, and how to develop a more federal Europe, and what role national governments should play.

## **Future of Europe Debate Since 2015**

Since the start of the debate on the Future of Europe, some Spanish actors have actively participated in the discussion. The national government, the different national and regional political parties and a few civil society organisations have been amongst the most outspoken.

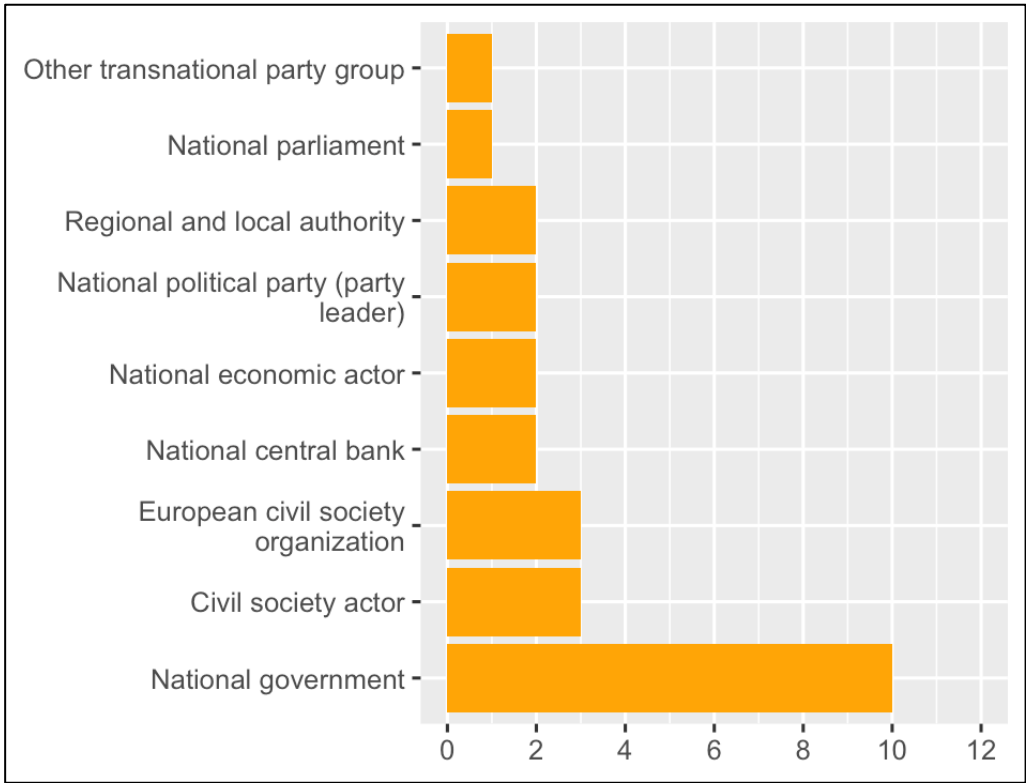


Figure 1. Distribution of Spanish proposals by type of actor

The national government has been an active actor initiating and establishing the main lines of debate on European integration. Since 2015, Spain has had national governments of different political sign. From 2011 to 2018, the executive was headed by Mariano Rajoy, of the conservative Popular Party. Since 2018 Pedro Sanchez, of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) leads the government in coalition with Unidas Podemos, a left-wing political party. The different Spanish governments have adopted a similar general position with regards to the EU, mainly aligning itself as a supporter of the EU and emphasizing the benefits of EU membership for Spain. But within these general lines, differences exist. The PSOE has generally supported a stronger and more integrated EU and favoured the idea of a more federal Europe with greater power and decision-making authority granted to the EU institutions. The PP has supported a greater role for national governments in the EU, advocated for policies that promote fiscal discipline and deficit reduction, and kept a more cautious discourse about public spending. It also tends to be more critical of the EU's policies on issues such as immigration and border control (cf. Estrella and Molina, 2015).



Their different stances have been displayed, and even intensified, under the different crises that the EU has faced, such as the financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic. Indeed, since the onset of the financial crisis, the PP's position - both in government and in opposition - has been to focus on austerity measures, including spending cuts, tax increases, and labour market reforms. The PP argued that these measures are necessary to reduce Spain's budget deficit and debt levels, and to restore investor confidence in the Spanish economy (Powell, 2012). This has continued with the COVID-19 crisis, when the PP agreed with the positions of other conservative parties in the EU, and defended 'stronger conditionality' in the provision of EU financial not to endanger the monetary union (El Pais, 12/06/2020; Publico 18/06/2020).

In contrast, one of the main initiatives put forward by the Spanish coalition government of PSOE and Unidas Podemos since 2018 has been its support for the EU's plan for a Banking Union, which aimed to strengthen the eurozone and enhance the stability of the EU's financial system (Presidencia del Gobierno, 2020). Early on during the COVID-19 crisis, Sánchez advocated for a coordinated EU response to the pandemic, calling for greater cooperation among member states and the sharing of resources and information. The national government emphasized the importance of EU solidarity and cooperation in responding to the crisis, calling for greater collaboration among member states to address the health, economic, and social impacts of the pandemic. The government led the proposal for the establishment of the Recovery and Resilience Facility to support member states in recovering from the economic impact of the pandemic, and one main supporter of the establishment of the EU's Joint Procurement Agreement to secure vaccines for all member states. Sanchez has been one of the most salient representatives of the idea of a more united Europe with increased European solidarity and cooperation to respond to common crises such as the COVID-19 crisis, which has affected all EU countries in similar ways, regardless of political colour or policies; disruption such as job losses, economic contraction, and public health risks made it necessary a common response (Wilmes et al., 2020).

Besides the national-level political parties, regional and nationalist political parties from Catalonia and the Basque Country have also had a distinctive role in the debates on the Future of Europe, particularly with

regard to issues related to regionalism and the place of small nations in the European Union (Gobierno vasco, 2020; Generalitat de Catalunya, 2022). With differences, they share a view for a more decentralized, federalized Europe in which regions have greater autonomy and influence. Strengthening the role of national parliaments in EU decision-making has been defended as a manner to gain greater democratic accountability and a more effective decision-making in the EU.

Other social actors, such as trade unions and business associations have also participated in the debates on the future of the EU by focusing on the economic, trade and social policies of the EU, rather than on institutional affairs. Trade unions such as Comisiones Obreras (CCOO) and Union general de Trabajadores (UGT) have defended a more socially just and democratic Europe that respects workers' rights and promotes greater investment in public services and social programs. They have been critical of the austerity measures following the financial crisis of 2008, and have called for a more expansionary economic policy that prioritizes social welfare, the promotion of higher wages and workers' rights (Comisiones Obreras and UGT, 2020). Also the Confederación Española de Organizaciones Empresariales (CEOE), which is the main Spanish employers' organization, has participated in the debates about the future of Europe by defending measures that, in their view, can make Europe more competitive. Amongst them are ensuring greater flexibility in the European labour market, so companies can hire and fire workers and adjust to changing economic condition more easily. Equally, they have called for a reduction in bureaucracy and red tape at the EU level, as well as the simplification of regulations, such as those related to Next Generation Funds (CEOE, 2022).

Other civil society organizations and think tanks have also participated in the debate on the Future of Europe, albeit with less influence. They have engaged in the debate by participating in public consultations, making policy recommendations, and organizing events. Most commonly, they have looked at particular sectoral policies affecting Spain and the wider EU - rather than governance and institutional aspects of the EU - such as environmental protection, migration and human rights.

## Key Issues in the Future of Europe Debates: Democracy, Differentiation and Dominance

The topics of democracy, differentiation and dominance have been implicit in the discussions around the future of the EU in Spain. Although the debate is rarely presented in such terms, it is possible to identify some of the narratives in the most salient proposals that Spanish actors have defended. Here we focus on various initiatives that have been more visibly supported by Spanish actors: proposals that deal with the need to reform EU monetary and fiscal policy and governance, initiatives concerning the EU migration and neighbouring policy, and proposals referring to institutional reforms.

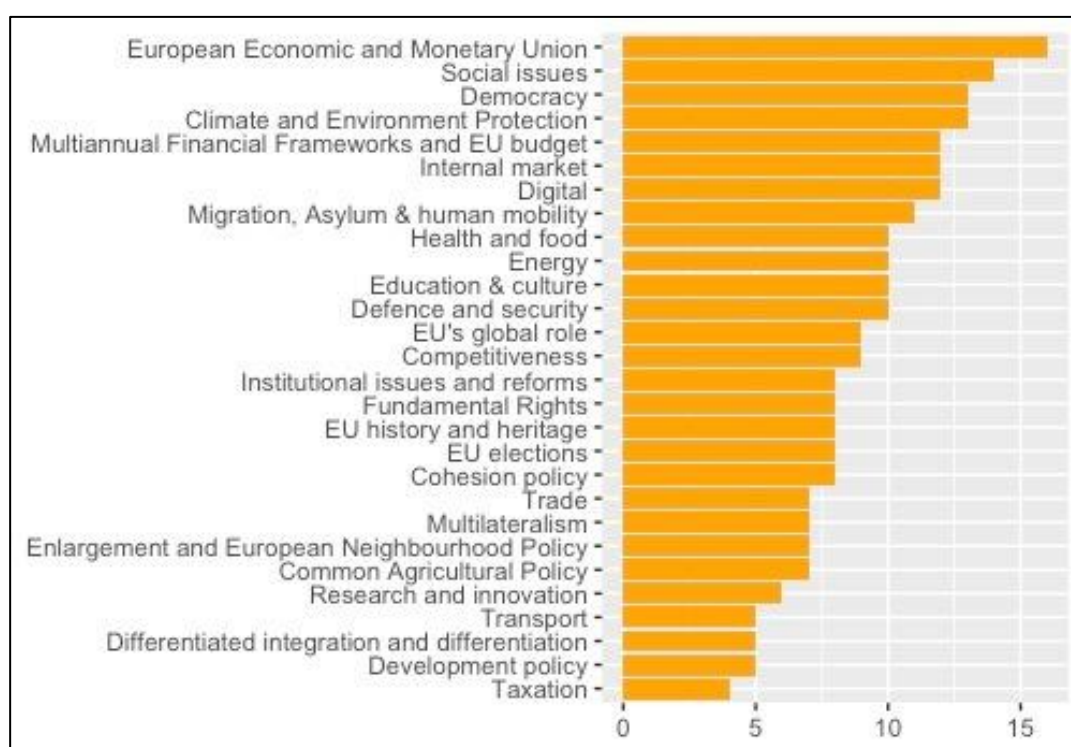


Figure 2. Distribution of policy areas mentioned in Spanish proposals

### EU Economic Policy Reform.

The need to reform EU economic policy and, more specifically, the eurozone's governance framework and the EU's fiscal rules, has been an important topic of debate at the national level when discussing about the future of Europe. Since the 2008 financial crisis, the Spanish government has defended the need of advancing towards an EU Banking Union to ensure the stability of the financial system in the EU and to prevent future

financial crises. The government has also argued for taking steps towards a EU fiscal union. The economic challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic have intensified this view: 'Europe's future is at stake in this war against coronavirus' (Sánchez, Pedro, *The Guardian*, 05 April 2020).

Since 2018 the Spanish government has advocated more robustly for economic reform in the EU as a way to advance towards a federal European union, considered to be a desirable horizon. The defense of the reform puts the accent on creating the conditions for more centralized EU that can promote integration and cooperation among member states. In words of Pedro Sanchez 'without solidarity there can be no cohesion, without cohesion there will be disaffection and the credibility of the European project will be severely damaged' (Sánchez, Pedro, *The Guardian*, 05 April 2020). Amongst the economic reforms that the Spanish national government has defended are the following:

- The establishment of euro-area budget for the members of the European Monetary union (the European Investment Stabilization Fund), that can serve as an instrument to use in a crisis, to stabilize the economy and be spent under the political guidance of a eurozone minister of finance.
- The adoption of an EU-wide economic recovery plans including a large-scale borrowing program, known as the EU Next Generation initiative. The Spanish government, along with the Italian executive at that time, spearheaded the defence of this initiative.

These proposals have been backed by other Spanish actors, including the Spanish central bank, the CEOE, labour unions such as the CCOO and UGT, and some regional governments in Spain. It has also received criticisms from the civil society organisations that have argued that these funds are likely to benefit multinational corporations and banks more than ordinary citizens (Albarracin and Moreno, 2021). Other organisations have also raised concerns about the lack of democratic accountability and transparency in the allocation of these funds. (UGT, 2021)

## **Migration and Neighbouring Policies**

EU's migration policy has been a contentious issue among EU member states. Spain, as one of the main entry points for irregular migration into

the European Union through the western Mediterranean route, has been an active participant in the debates concerning the management of migration in the EU. Since the height of the migration crisis in 2015, the Spanish government has advocated for a more coordinated EU approach to the migration policy and more human and financial resources. The government has also defended the need to reform the Dublin Regulation in order to create a more equitable system for processing asylum claims in the EU, as it places an unfair burden on countries at the EU's external borders, and has the objective of agreeing a new Pact on Migration and Asylum during its EU presidency. The Spanish government has presented its proposals as an EU member state, and since 2020 in coordination with other states located in the Mediterranean region: Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta, (the group Med5), which have sought to coordinate the issues migration crisis affecting them all. (Presidencia del Gobierno, 2018).

The subject of migration has been a central topic for political parties and civil society organisations. Podemos proposed the establishment a High Commissioner for Fundamental Rights and Equal Treatment, and civil and political rights (Podemos, 2019). Human rights organisations have criticized the 'outsourcing' of border controls to third countries and the use of 'express deportations', and asked for improvement in access to healthcare and education for migrants and refugees (ECRE 2020).

## **Institutional Reform**

As for the proposals for institutional reforms, they have taken the backseat in the last few years since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, but have commonly been subjects considered by all Spanish political parties, particularly during EU election periods. Political parties of different sign have defended the need to improve the functioning of democracy within the EU, particularly by increasing the accountability and transparency in the EU institutions, and of increasing the transfer of responsibilities to EU institutions - territorial integration. Specifically, the following have been discussed in several proposals:

- Reforming the European Commission, which have included measures to ensure greater diversity and representation within the Commission, as well as changes to the way that Commissioners are appointed and held accountable

- Improving transparency and accountability: Many political actors in Spain have called for greater transparency and accountability in EU decision-making. This involves measures such as greater public access to EU documents and proceedings, stricter rules on lobbying and conflicts of interest, greater public consultation and engagement.
- Reforms to strengthen the powers and role of the European Parliament, so that it can better represent the interests of European citizens and hold the EU's executive bodies accountable. Transnational lists.
- Reduce the policy areas where unanimity is required for decision-making in the Council and European Council

## Conclusions

The Spanish government and other organizations from Spain such as political parties and civil society organizations have historically been supportive of EU. Spanish political parties across the political spectrum, including the ruling Socialist Workers' Party, the main opposition People's Party, and other smaller parties, have consistently supported the EU and its objectives, and supported higher involvement of the EU in many different policy areas. Whilst criticism of particular EU policies does exist, widespread anti-EU sentiment is residual. Spanish public opinion generally associates the EU to progress and prosperity for Spain and throughout the continent. This circumstance has been evidenced with the start of the conference on the future of Europe and during the diverse large crises that EU has confronted in the last few years – financial crisis, migration crisis and COVID-19 pandemic. To guarantee further integration and EU democracy, Spanish actors support a more federalized institutions and policy-making, accompanied of measures that facilitate EU-wide political participation and transparency.

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# Chapter 8

## Sweden: Balancing Economic Interests and Sovereignty in the National Debate on the Future of Europe

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### Sweden's Relationship with the EU and European Integration

Sweden applied for EU membership in the early 1990s. By a slim majority, accession was approved by a referendum in 1994, resulting in Sweden joining the Union in 1995. Since then, Sweden has remained in the 'outer core' of the European Union by de facto opting out of the third stage of the Economic and Monetary Union<sup>18</sup> (Leruth 2015). Their decision to not opt in the European banking union further consolidated this de facto model of differentiation (Leruth, Gänzle, and Trondal 2019). The logic of Sweden's membership in the EU was largely instrumental, motivated by economic considerations (Miles 2019; Stegmann McCallion 2018). This resulted in a consistent emphasis on making the EU a well-functioning (internal) market (Sydow 2019). Simultaneously, attitudes remain critical of any steps towards a more federalised Europe and to further delegate powers to the supranational level. This 'paradox' of economic

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<sup>18</sup> The Persson government first decided not to join in 1997. It then held a referendum on joining EMU in 2003, which was rejected by 55.9 per cent (Leruth 2015).

interdependence and the wish to retain political independence came to define Swedish foreign policy towards European integration (Miles 2019).

Some argue that Sweden's reluctance to form close alliances can be traced back to its principles of neutrality. Historically, Sweden has been wary of joining any external organization that would require a significant surrender of national sovereignty and thereby infringe on its neutrality doctrine (Miles 2019). The resulting hesitation toward European integration earned Sweden a reputation for being a 'reluctant European' (Miljan 1977; Dinkelspiel 2009) or practising cautiousness (Bernitz and Kjellgren 2010). Thus, Sweden can be considered a near-core insider regarding its relationship with the rest of Europe, while still engaging in significant levels of differentiated integration (Miles 2010).<sup>19</sup>

Instead, Sweden has preferred to promote intergovernmental or 'soft' ways of governing the EU. Better law-making, a stronger role for national parliaments and support for enlargement rather than deepening of the EU seem to be areas of common understanding (Sydow 2019). A common narrative in the Swedish debate on the Future of Europe (FoE) has thus been to maintain the status quo by balancing economic interest and national sovereignty. Still, Swedish public opinion during the last ten years has been characterized by a rise in support for EU membership (Weissenbilder and Andersson 2022).

## Sweden's Debate on the Future of Europe since 2015

There appears to be a broad public discussion on EU-related politics in Sweden by various actors salient both on the government level and in the public sphere. In these debates, some thematical patterns can be identified which coincide with the priorities put forward by the Swedish government before their 2023 Council of Europe presidency; security, competitiveness, green and energy transitions, democratic values and the rule of law (Government of Sweden 2022).

Both competitiveness and climate change responsibility seems to be long-running themes in the Swedish EU-approach; both were also put forward as the main Swedish priorities before their last Council presidency in 2009

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<sup>19</sup> See e.g. Leruth and Trondal (2022) for a thorough description of Sweden's relationship with the EU and European integration.

(Government of Sweden 2010). Democracy and rule of law principles represent another long-standing Swedish priority, as expressed both in the Council presidency priorities of 2009 and 2022 (Government of Sweden 2010; 2022). Here, adherence to democratic principles seems to be expressed not only as a central value for the EU and its members but also as a prerequisite for cooperation in other areas such as trade or access to financial mechanisms. Security seemed to have gained in salience during recent years. Though initially sceptic toward the EU developing its own defence policy, the post-Brexit political landscape started to ease this scepticism (Håkansson 2021). In the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the debate around the Swedish stance on neutrality and defence policy increased in salience, resulting in a decision to apply for NATO membership (Forsberg 2023). Additionally, during their Council presidency, Sweden made security a top priority, stating that to strengthen the security of the Union and its citizens, a consensus must be built towards a robust European security and defence policy (Government of Sweden 2022). Simultaneously, nuances in public discussions about the FoE seem to be lacking (Sydow 2019). The economic dimension, for example, seemed to be continuously addressed in the public debate. However, a possible deepened eurozone cooperation and its consequences for the EU's member states have mainly been superficially addressed in wider political debates (Sydow 2019).

In the next section, 79 proposals by various actors in the Swedish public are analysed to shed light on the Swedish FoE debate.<sup>20</sup> The section starts by describing collected proposals, including their content and how they relate to differentiated integration. Subsequently, the section describes proposals aimed at improving the functioning of democracy within the EU, and proposals discussing issues of domination. Lastly, the section concludes by discussing the overall expectations for the reform of the EU inherent in the analysed proposals, and whether these present a coherent narrative on the FoE.

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<sup>20</sup> Note that no consistent guidelines on proposal identification were adopted. Thus, the internal validity of these findings is limited due to low intercoder reliability and is not a representative sample of active actors in the Swedish FoE debate. This report is only intended as an exploratory study and would require a more in-depth analysis to make robust assumptions about actor attitudes and FoE.

## The Swedish Future of Europe Debates: Examining Differentiation, Democracy, and Dominance

Key actors in the collected data were national political parties and think tanks. Figure 1 describe included proposals by frequency of actor.

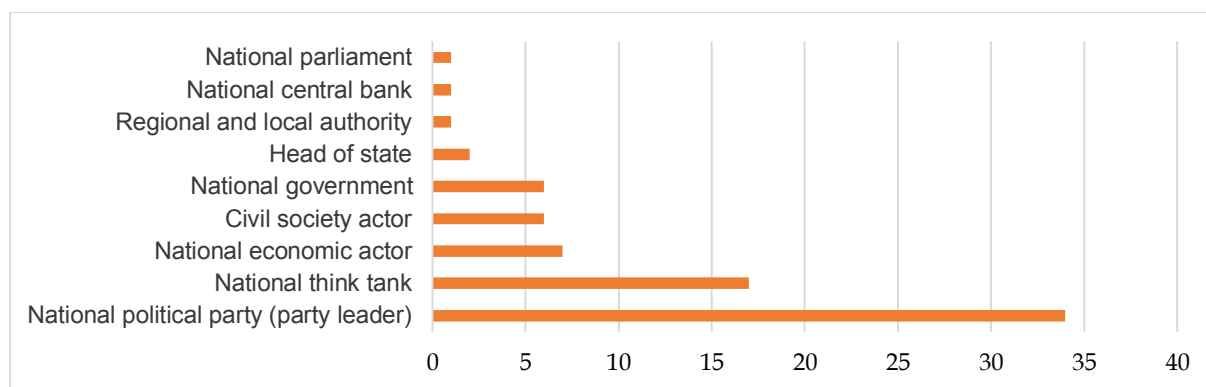


Figure 1. Distribution of Swedish proposals by type of actor

In the analysed data, proposals mentioned a wide range of policy areas.<sup>21</sup> The most frequently mentioned policy areas were (1) climate and environment protection (2) fundamental rights, rule of law and free press, (3) migration, asylum and human mobility, (4) internal market, and (5) trade.

Differentiation seemed to be a topic present in many proposals. Of the identified types of differentiation, functional differentiation was the most frequently mentioned type, followed by vertical differentiation, territorial differentiation, citizens' differentiated right and lawmaking differentiation.

More than half of the collected proposals made argued for functional differentiation (41 proposals). Of these, 28 proposals argued to develop new policies or expand existing shared competence at the European level. However, where such a development should take place varied. Some policy areas were mentioned more frequently. Those include climate and environment, marked related policy areas such as the European economic and monetary union, budget, competitiveness, and industrial policy. In addition, the policy areas of social policy, fundamental rights and democracy were also mentioned recurrently. 21 proposals also argued for

<sup>21</sup> Note that proposals can contain mentions of multiple policy areas.

the development of new types of policy instruments – mostly within the same policy areas. These topics seem to closely align with what the Swedish Government put forward as their priorities before the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The analysed data thus suggests that many actors find it acceptable to increasing EU knowledge and expertise in specific policy areas seen as a Swedish priority.

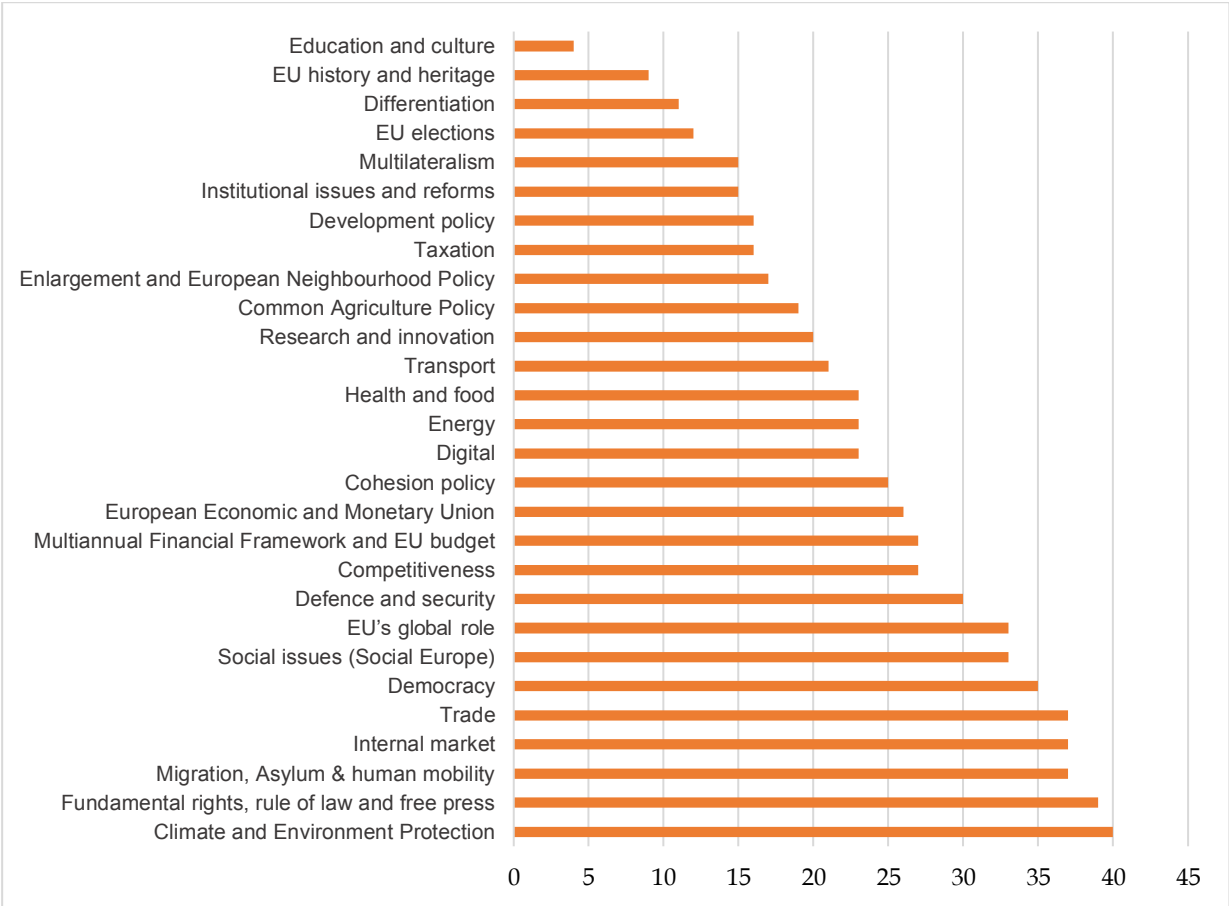


Figure 2. Distribution of policy areas mentioned in Swedish proposals

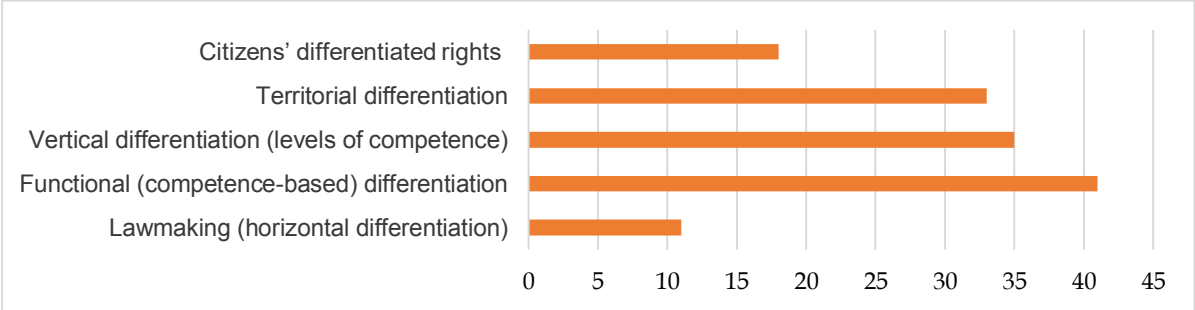


Figure 3. Distribution of type of differentiation mentioned in Swedish proposals

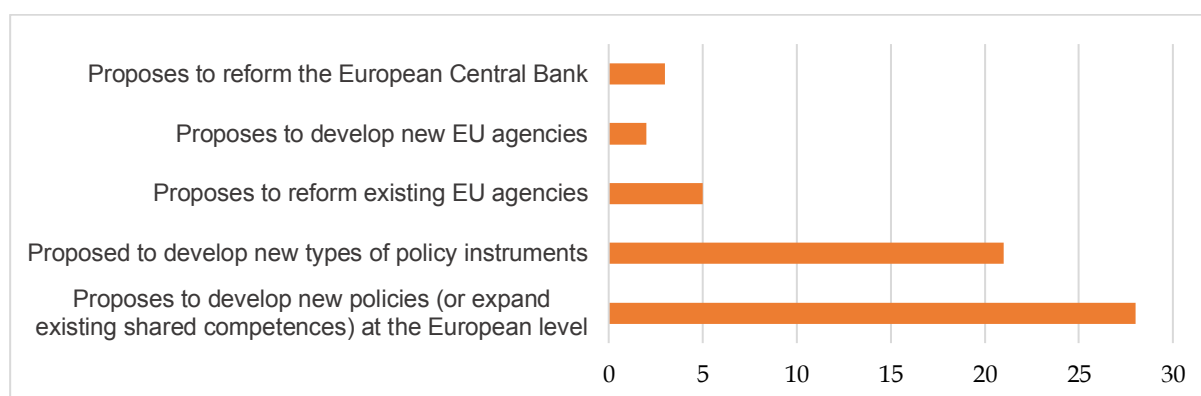


Figure 4. Frequency of mentioned dimensions of functional differentiation

Few proposals, however, proposed to reform existing EU agencies (5 proposals). The few who did point to agencies within the areas of migration and asylum and/or fundamental rights and democracy, such as Frontex, the European Agency for Fundamental Rights, Europol or the European Union Agency for Asylum. Even fewer proposals argued for the development of new EU agencies (2 proposals) or for reforming the European Central Bank (3 proposals). Agencies thus don't seem to be portrayed as central developing mechanisms in the Swedish FoE debate.

In the analysed data, few proposals argue for reallocating relations between law-making institutions and courts at the EU level (11 proposals). Simultaneously, the Swedish debate seemed to focused more on the division of competence between member states and the EU than it is about interinstitutional relations in Brussels. 33 actors proposed to reshuffle competence between levels of government within the EU multilevel polity. Of these, 25 argued for more competence and decision-making responsibilities for national institutions, while 11 argued for more competence for EU supranational institutions. On the one hand, some actors argued for more competence for national institutions from a eurosceptic perspective, suggesting that Sweden should leave the EU. Most, however, took an in-between stand, suggesting more competence to national institutions within some policy areas (e.g. social policy or migration) and more to supranational institutions in relation to other policy areas (e.g. environment or fundamental rights). More competence for EU intergovernmental institutions, though, was not explicitly stressed by many actors (4 proposals).

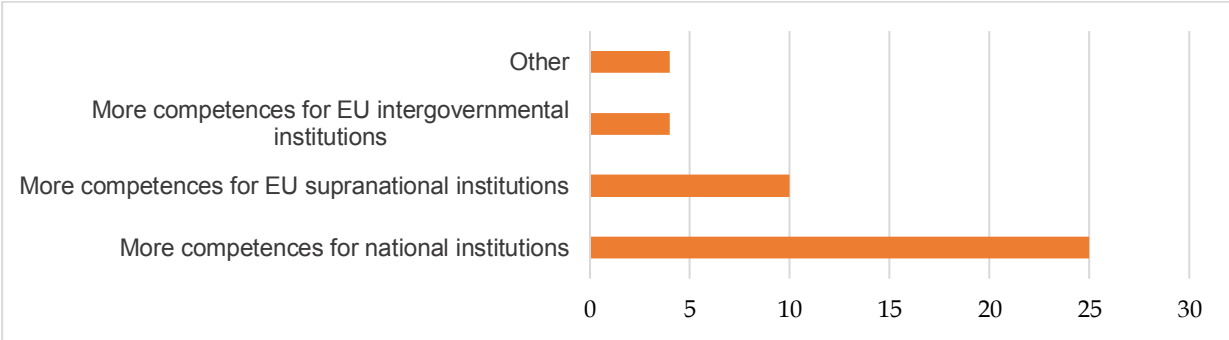


Figure 5. Frequency of mentioned levels of government in which competence should be reshuffled to

33 of the analysed proposals made references to territorial differentiation. Most commonly, proposals suggested permanent territorial differentiation among EU Member states. The aims of proposals that put forward such a topic were diverse. Some actors, amongst others those coming from a more Eurosceptic stance, aimed at outlining alternatives to the EU cooperation or suggested leaving the EU all together. Others proposed territorial differentiation to make the EU operate as a confederation rather than as a federation and instead focus on intergovernmental cooperation, highlighting the value of sovereignty. Others propose territorial differentiation in their attempt to map ways in which cooperation with the EU could better protect Swedish values.

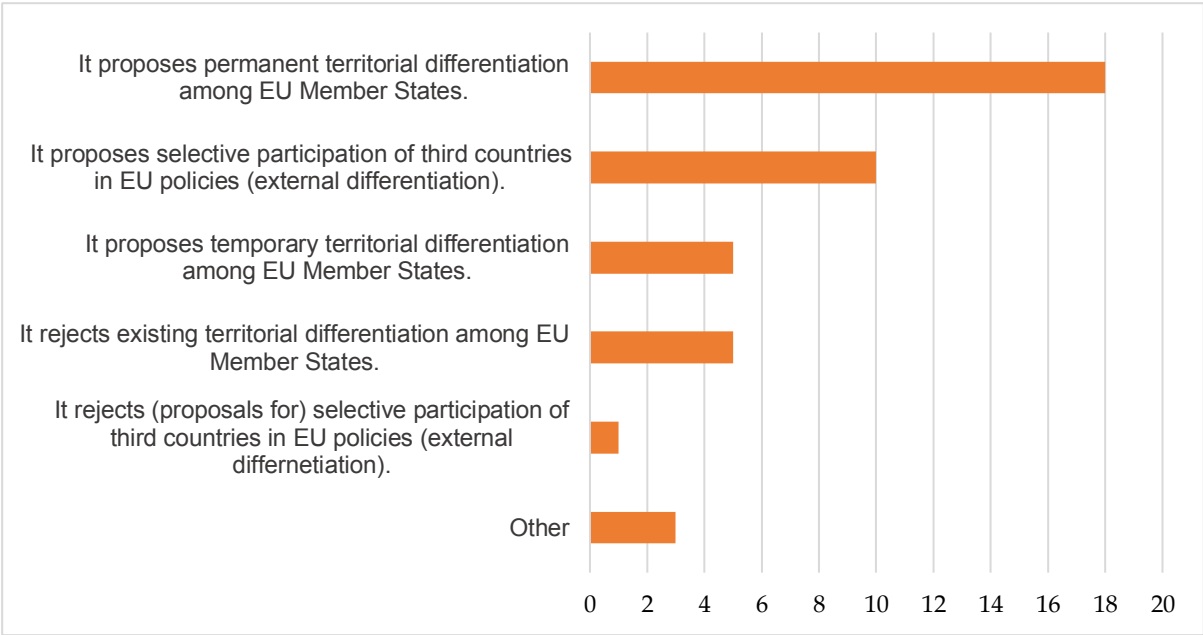


Figure 6. Frequency of mentioned type of territorial differentiation

A common narrative for most proposals suggesting territorial differentiation is a focus on member-state sovereignty, or specifically, Swedish sovereignty. Proposals on territorial differentiation thus seemed to be more about national conditions and priorities, rather than whether territorial differentiation is evaluated as critical for the FoE. In the analysed data, this either bore the characteristics of more Eurosceptic attitudes as a way to reduce European integration (i.e. territorial differentiation where a state can choose to opt-out as a measure against EU supranationality) or was put forward as a way to increase further cooperation (i.e. European integration should evolve without needing to include all the member states). However, the proposals were in most cases unclear on whether this should apply to other member states.

Another prominent tendency in the analysed data was a lack of consistent attitude patterns on territorial differentiation. Whether proposals expressed positive or negative attitudes toward territorial differentiation seemed to be largely dependent on the policy area. For example, regarding areas such as trade or social issues, there appeared to exist more positive attitudes toward differentiated integration. Regarding democracy or fundamental rights, actors more often seemed to present territorial differentiation as a threatening development. Transcending actor patterns were also hard to identify based on the adopted actor categories. A fruitful avenue for future analysis could be to identify whether any such patterns exist along other categories, such as along the left-right political spectrum or anti-/pro-EU axis.

The second most common territorial differentiation in the analysed data was the selective participation of third countries in EU policies (external differentiation). Most actors who put forward such proposals were economic actors, in addition to some political actors. Some of these proposals referred to increasing Swedish and/or EU competitiveness in the global economic arena by initiating different forms of trade agreements or other forms of cooperation, for example concerning the European neighbourhood policy. Most of these proposals seemed to also include references to fundamental rights or democracy, making references to the latter as being either a criteria for cooperation with third countries or stating it as a goal with the cooperation itself.



## Financing Proposals in the Future of Europe Debates

In most cases, actors did not explicitly identify how to finance the proposal's objectives or the means to reach them. Only about 1/3 of the analysed proposals suggested any financing mechanisms (28 proposals). The few proposals which did identify a way to finance proposals and the means to reach them mostly identified European resources as the financing mechanisms. Some also argued that a combination of European and national resources was preferable. An almost equal (ca 1/3) amount of the proposal suggests from where resources to finance the proposal's objectives and the means to reach them should be taken (24 proposals). In the analysed data, the EU budget was most commonly stated as the place from which resources should be drawn to finance the proposals. However, also here some suggested a combination of either the EU budget together with contributions from intergovernmental funds.

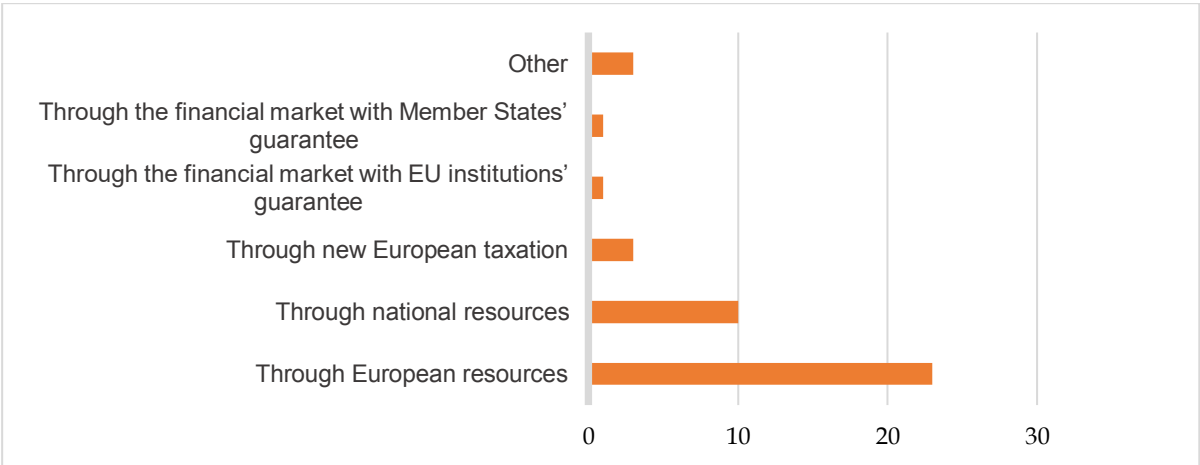


Figure 7. Frequency of mentioned financing mechanisms

Regarding how the resources should be distributed, the picture is also mixed. Of the 13 proposals which explicitly mention how distribution should look like, through loans, through grants, and through spending by EU institutions are mentioned almost equally, and often in combination with one or multiple distributing means. Thus, no clear pattern can be identified concerning preferences for the EU directly spending money versus distributing resources to the member states themselves.

Few, though, suggested that proposals should be financed through new European taxation (3 proposals). Actors also rarely suggest that resources should come from ad hoc funds (2 proposals), new resources of the EU

budget (7 proposals) or new resources of intergovernmental funds (4 proposals). In the analysed data, the main sentiment thus seems to be that established financing mechanisms were preferred, rather than establishing new ones. This seems to coincide with the previously mentioned Swedish stand on maintaining the status quo.

## Addressing Democratic Malfunctioning in the Future of Europe Debate

28 proposals explicitly mention some sort of democratic mal-functioning of the EU. Of these, 26 proposals aimed to improve democratic malfunctioning.

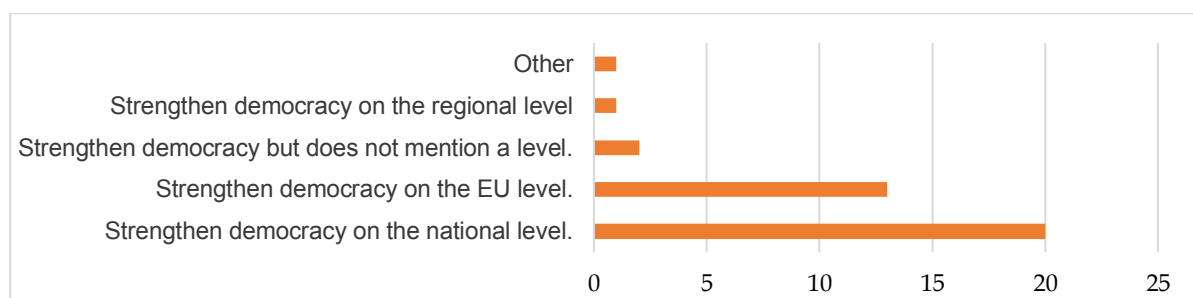


Figure 8. Frequency of identified rectifying measures

The most frequent rectifying measure in the analysed data was to strengthen democracy on the national level (20 proposals). The proposals varied in their reasoning for such suggestions. Some argued that the functioning of the EU was inherently undemocratic, having shifted power from national governments to the EU's bureaucratic institutions. Rectifying measures in such proposals could be leaving the Union all together and, in that way, strengthening democracy on the national level. Some actors took a less critical standpoint, arguing that the power transfer from national parliaments to the EU level could be reduced, often referencing the subsidiary principle. Others focused on other member states experiencing democratic backsliding and argued that their influence over the EU was problematic and one of the explanations for the Union's democratic malfunction. To remedy this, more efforts should be put into strengthening national democratic institutions and other measures to uphold the local rule of law.

The second most identified measure to reduce democratic malfunctioning was to strengthen democracy at the EU level (13 proposals). Few of these,

however, suggested mechanisms intended to make the EU as a polity itself more democratic such as granting new direct powers to the European Parliament. Instead, many of the proposals focused on member states scoring low on values such as democracy, fundamental rights and rule of law. Central to these proposals was the idea that, for example, democracy must be a prerequisite for participation in the EU, and that the benefits gained from cooperation should be reserved for member states that adhere to democratic principles. In this regard, some actors identified the EU budget as an important mechanism with reformative and rectifying potential. For example, actors proposed that the EU should implement more effective mechanisms for sanctioning member states that breach the values of democracy and the rule of law such as temporarily stopping funding from the EU budget. Similarly, other forms of budget conditionality were also suggested such as democratic accountability for the allocation of common EU funds. The transparency of EU political processes was another concern some proposals identified as a threat to EU democratic legitimacy. Here, actors called for increased transparency in trade agreements, in the workings of the EU institutions, in the EU's law-making process, or generally in 'EU's work'.

### Identifying Dominance in the EU

Yet, few proposals diagnosed one or more forms of dominance in the EU (9 proposals).<sup>22</sup>

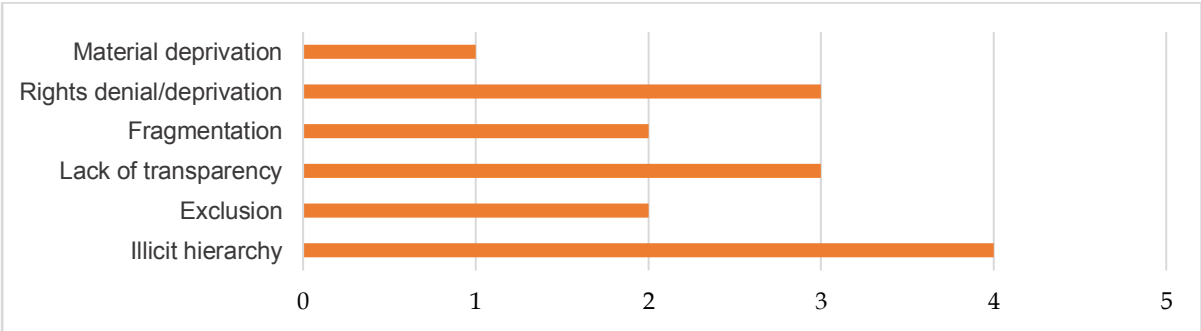


Figure 9. Frequency of identified type of dominance

Of the few proposals identifying any form of dominance in the EU, the Illicit hierarchy was the most common one (4 proposals), followed by

<sup>22</sup> Notably, to capture dominance in the textual material, it was coded for utterances of actors making explicit reference to the term 'dominance' (including its verbal and adjunctive uses). More indirect mentions of dominance may therefore have been undetected.

rights denial or deprivation (3 proposals). Even fewer proposals were sought explicitly to remedy the perceived form of dominance (7 proposals). In some of these cases, the EU is put forward as the dominating actor, allowing for solutions such as Sweden leaving the Union and seeking cooperation elsewhere. In other instances, the focus was on the conditionality of EU funding where proposals diagnosed forced austerity policies as dominating, arguing instead that all EU funding should be conditional on the receiving country respecting democracy and the rule of law.

### **Assessing proposals for EU Reform: Prioritizing Democratic Principles and Competence in Specific Policy Areas**

In the analysed proposals, there seems to exist a motivation to reform and increase EU competence within specific policy areas. Based on the analysed data, it thus appears that enhancing the EU's knowledge and expertise in specific policy areas considered a Swedish priority was deemed acceptable by numerous actors in their proposals. Adherence to democratic principles and rule of law were other policy areas of importance. In some proposals, a wish for increased EU capacity within the latter was presented as a way to progress democracy in member states. Others connected a critique of the democratic workings of the EU to territorial differentiation. For some, this presented a reason for Sweden to withdraw from the Union and seek cooperation elsewhere. For others it was expressed as an argument against territorial differentiation, i.e. democracy is something one cannot opt out of, referencing conditionality as important.

Overall, 25% of the analysed proposals were against further European integration. Most of these actors, however, can be characterised as Eurosceptic and in most cases made proposals for leaving the Union, criticizing the bureaucratic nature of the Union and arguing that the EU undermines democracy and state sovereignty. Most proposals (64%), however, were largely in favour of integration, though this seemed to be dependent on the policy area in question. Thus, if a main reform idea for the Swedish FoE debate can be identified in analysed data, it might be to reform the EU in favour of a less supranational way of working and protecting

Swedish sovereignty within some policy areas while increasing EU competence in other selected areas identified as Swedish priorities.

## **Swedish Proposals: Emphasis on Intergovernmental Visions of integration with Regional-Cosmopolitan Features**

If a coherent constitutional narrative could be identified from the above-identified themes in the analysed Swedish proposals, the predominant one would be more in line with the intergovernmental vision of EU integration, more so than the federal constitutional model. The emphasis on the role of member states is consistently reiterated, as reflected in the analysed data. Various actors suggest that the EU should have certain capabilities in particular domains and policy areas, such as those pertaining to the internal market or within climate and environmental policies. Nonetheless, the extent of interference ought to be determined by the member state, based on whether Sweden deemed it a priority. Being that many proposals expressed openness to territorial differentiation within many policy areas also seem to coincide with the intergovernmental model. Even so, proposals did not seem to advocate for strengthening intergovernmental institutions. Simultaneously, many Swedish actors did not seem to be preoccupied with interinstitutional relations within the EU, but rather between member states and the EU. More often, proposals suggested repositioning competence to national institutions, only advocating more competence for the EU in specific policy areas. This area-dependent contestation of EU capacity also seems to be in line with the intergovernmental model.

Themes in proposals aiming to improve the functioning of democracy within the EU could however be seen as alluding to some features of the regional cosmopolitan model. Most proposals indicated the EU's democratic legitimacy was an indirect product of the member states and requested strengthening democracy on the national level, being in line with the intergovernmental model. Concurrently, democracy and the rule of law were often presented as something more universal, sometimes referencing democracy as EU values. Many proposals also highlight the EU's role as the standard setter regarding democratic values. Some proposals also seemed to advocate for external differentiation in the form

of selected participation of third countries. The latter can also be understood as corresponding to the regional-cosmopolitan model.

## Conclusion

This analysis of 79 proposals on the FoE in the Swedish public sphere between 2015 and 2022 provides valuable insights into the ongoing debate on EU reforms. The proposals reflect a range of policy areas, with particular emphasis on climate and environment, fundamental rights, migration, internal market, and trade. The proposals frequently referred to competence-based differentiation, arguing for the development of new policies or expanding existing competence at the European level within some policy areas deemed a Swedish priority. The analysed data also suggests that few proposals focused on institutional reforms at the EU level, with most focusing on the relations between governance levels. Additionally, many proposals focused on territorial differentiation. However, any actor patterns were hard to identify as attitudes toward such differentiation seemed to be policy area dependent. Democratic malfunctioning was another concern in the FoE debates. The most frequent rectifying measure proposed was to strengthen democracy at the national level. Strengthening democracy at the EU level was also identified as a measure to reduce democratic malfunctioning, with some proposing more effective mechanisms for sanctioning member states that breach democratic values. Few proposals identified forms of dominance in the EU, however, with illicit hierarchy being the most common one. Overall, while some of the collected proposals allude to features of the regional-cosmopolitan model, the predominant narrative aligns more closely with the intergovernmental vision of EU integration.

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# Chapter 9

## The Future of (Norway in) Europe debate

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### Introduction

Norway has a peculiar relationship with the EU. It applied for EU membership four times, withdrawing the application twice and rejecting it in popular referendums in both 1972 and 1994 (Pettersen et al., 1996). Through the EEA Agreement Norway has access to the single market and in areas pertaining to the single market also the same rights and obligations. It has also been described as coming close to ‘quasi membership’ of the EU (Gänzle and Henökl, 2018:87). Norway has thus become tightly integrated, in some sectors arguable even more so than some member states (Egeberg and Trondal, 1999). Overall, the relationship can be described as one-sided (Fossum and Vigrestad, 2021) as Norway has to dynamically adopt relevant EU legislation without ‘no formal and very little real influence on decision-making processes’ (Gänzle and Henökl, 2018:81).

Despite the importance of the EU in Norwegian public life – 42% of laws were estimated to stem from EU legislation in 2021 (Regelrådet, 2021) – the EU is not a large topic of contention in the Norwegian public debate and often about technicalities (Sverdrup, 2019a:339). The issue of integration has been depoliticised and largely decoupled from the issue of EU adaptation (Fossum and Vigrestad, 2021). Discussions about Brexit

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and alternatives to EU membership has led to the EEA re-entering the public debate and contestation around the EU and EEA has started to increase in Norway (Stubholt and Grønnskakk, 2019:351; Sverdrup et al., 2019b:367).

Previous debates about the EU were primarily connected to the membership referenda in 1972 and 1994. While a utilitarian approach has been suggested (Ingebritsen, 1998), identity was found to be more fitting. Norway and the EU were constructed as mutually exclusive along themes such as centre vs periphery and people vs elite (Neumann, 2001). Democracy and sovereignty were also central themes in the debate and key factors for voting against EU membership (Pettersen et al., 1996:275).

More recently, the EEA has also become a topic of discussion, but debates about the EU and EEA differ (Hylland Eriksen and Neumann, 2011:419). A potential EU membership is discussed along lines of identity with big concerns about what the impact would be on Norwegian democracy and sovereignty. The EU is however also seen as a cooperation partner, especially in topics such as climate and environment and, in light of the Covid-19 pandemic, health and recent governments have sought closer cooperation in various areas. The EEA is discussed primarily along utilitarian lines with the focus lying on how the EEA agreement gives Norway access to the single market and ensures economic growth. It has however also been increasingly contested due to its democratic deficit (Hoffmann, 2023). As a non-member with a limited national debate about its own connection to the EU, the future of Europe has not played a significant role in national discourse.

Norwegian public support for EU membership decreased after the referendum it was rejected in 1994 with a narrow majority of 52.2% and reached a low point following the financial crisis (Europabevegelsen, 2022). At the same time, support for the EEA has increased over time. With increasing contestation of the EEA this has turned recently with support for the EEA decreasing slightly. At the same time support for EU membership has increased significantly, especially following the war in Ukraine – a recent survey showed that 40% of respondents were positive towards Norwegian EU membership (Tvinnereim, 2022).

## **Future of Europe debate or Future of Norway in Europe debate?**

The Norwegian debate about the EU does seldomly focus on the Future of Europe. Instead, it focuses on Norway's place in the EU by debating the Norwegian affiliation to the EU and EU cooperation on the one hand, and technical considerations about how EU policies are affecting Norway through the EEA framework.

Although the question of a future EU membership remains contested, there is little debate around Norway's current affiliation to the EU through the EEA agreement. The dynamic adaptation to EU law has sparked little debate but has in recent years become more controversial.

Actors discussed the EU differently. While civil society actors took discussed the EU in more general terms and at times problematised Norway's current EU affiliation, state actors took a more detail focused approach by discussing EU policy proposals. Both did however take a very national focus by debating the consequences for Norway rather than the EU. It is thus less a future of Europe debate and more a future of Norway in Europe debate.

In the following section 81 proposals will be analysed to shed light on the Norwegian debate about the Future of Europe. It will first explore the main actors and themes, before going further into detail and looking at the policy and polity changes suggested, as well as territorial differentiation, democracy and dominance. This study is only intended as an exploratory study and a first step towards exploring debates about the future of Europe. Its internal validity is limited by intercoder reliability and unsystematic data collection. However, it can give a first insight into the Norwegian debate, corroborated by previous research, and serves as an excellent point of departure for future research.

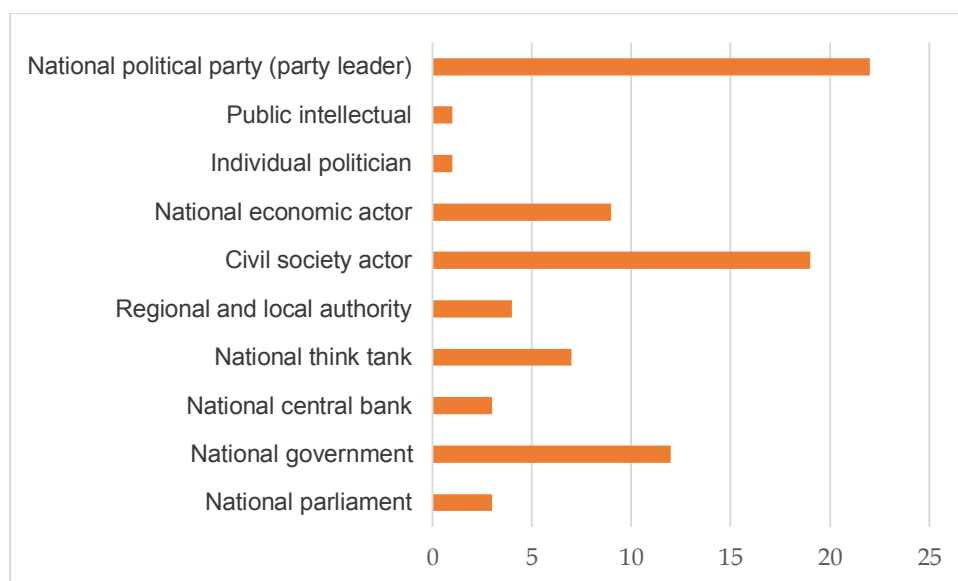


Figure 10. Distribution of Norwegian proposals by type of actor

Key actors in the collected sample were national political parties and their leaders, civil society and the national government. Since all party manifestos from political parties were coded (19 of 22 proposals), there might be a slight overrepresentation of proposals in comparison to how active Norwegian parties are in the debate. Previous research has, *inter alia*, established that Norwegian political parties are limited by ‘gag rules’ that keep debate about EU membership off the table (Fossum, 2010) and decoupled integration from rule adaptation (Fossum and Vigrestad, 2021). Policy proposals from the national government primarily took the form of responses to the EU Commission’s hearings, which were highly technical and not salient in the public debate. This leaves civil society actors as the most prominent actor with more salient contributions to the public debate. National think tanks, national economic actors, namely LO and NHO, and regional and local authorities also played a role in the debate. Other actors played a more marginal role in the collected proposals.

Few proposals specifically discussed the future of Europe. The debate has been limited and concerned primarily with technical details (Sverdrup, 2019a:339). This is also reflected in the collected proposals. Similar to the findings in the parliamentary analysis, the proposals are primarily focused on national and technical issues rather than reforms of the EU for the Future of Europe. As such, they often take the form of comments on specific developments rather than original reform proposals. A more general EU debate focused mainly on how the EU affects Norway.

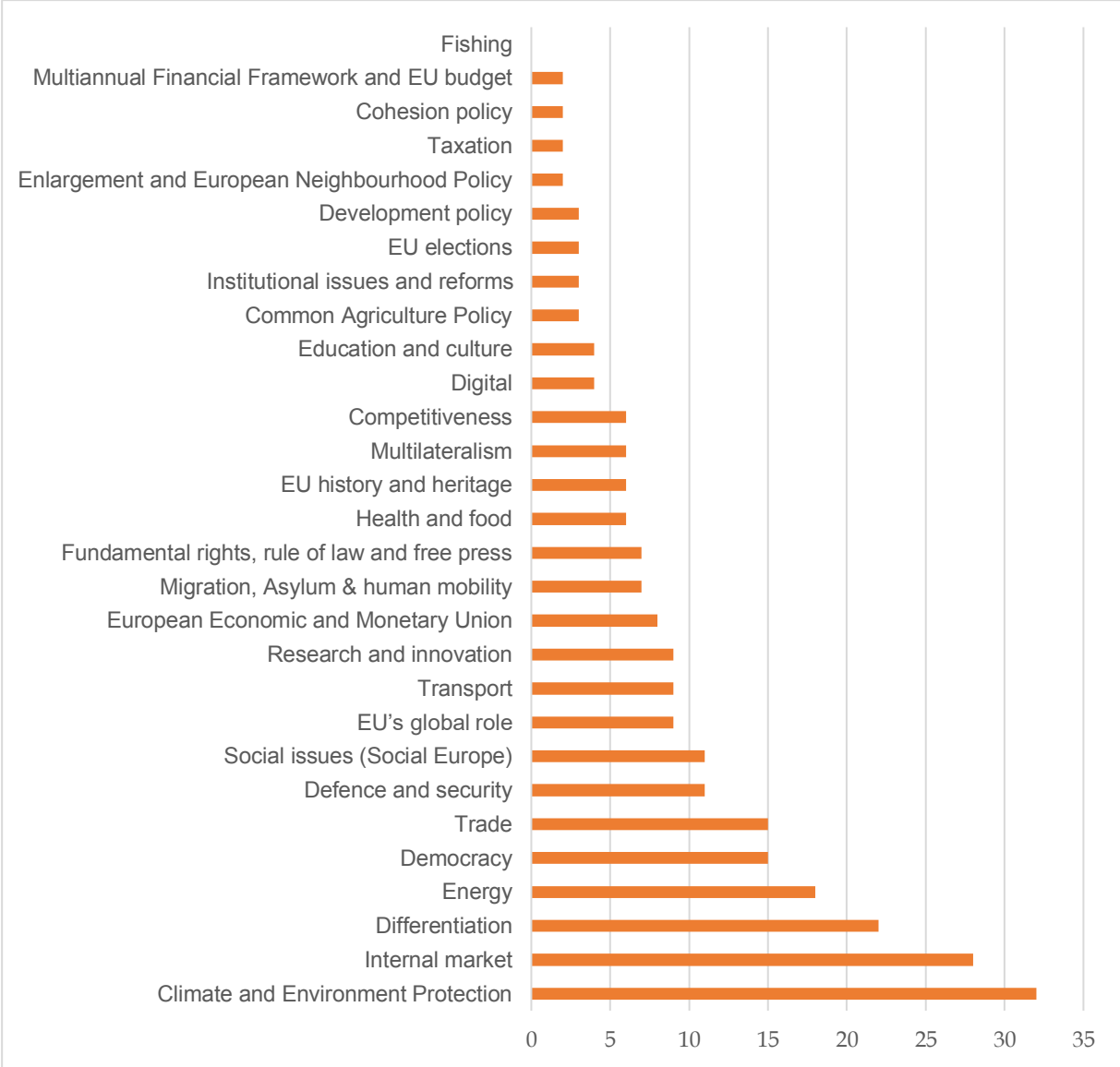


Figure 11. Distribution of policy areas mentioned in Norwegian proposals

Policy areas played varyingly important roles in the collected proposals. The three most salient policy areas were climate and environment protection, internal market and differentiation. Norway’s main connection to the EU is through the EEA Agreement to the internal market, which makes the large focus on differentiation and the internal market areas unsurprising. Many of the collected proposals were from the von der Leyen Commission, which has climate as a main policy priority and increasingly legislates cross-sectorally, which could explain the large focus on climate and the environment. While the most important policy areas remain the same, the importance of some of the other policy areas does however differ when excluding parties (as their proposals were

mainly manifestos) pointing to a difference in focus between campaigning and the overall public debate. The topics of e.g. democracy and energy became relatively less important pointing to a strong focus on these topics for political parties and campaigns.

## Differentiation, Democracy and Dominance from a Norwegian perspective

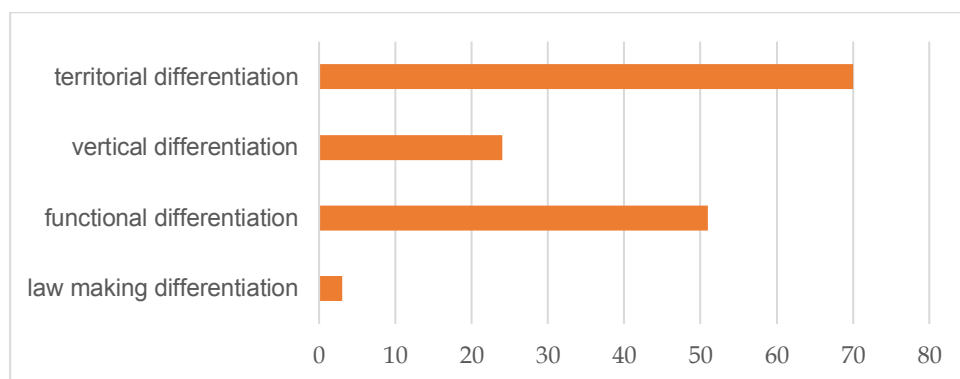


Figure 12. Distribution of types of differentiation mentioned in Norwegian proposals

Differentiation plays a central role in the Norwegian debate. It is among the top three most prominent mentioned policy areas, policy reform proposals and policy instrument proposals. The importance of the different types of differentiation does however vary substantially, as shown in figure 3. Since Norway is not a member of the European Union and is not represented in the institutions of the EU, it is not surprising that law-making differentiation does not feature frequently in the national debate. The proposals that do argue for law-making differentiation do in the context of improving democracy by either strengthening the European Parliament and by increasing citizen participation.

The proposals arguing in favour of vertical differentiation are primarily concerned with transferring (or keeping) more competences and responsibilities at the national level (14 proposals). They discuss this with a specific Norwegian focus. This can be exemplified by the headline 'Railway policy must be governed by Norway, not the EU' (Nei til EU, 2018; author's translation). These proposals came primarily from party manifestos and Eurosceptic civil society organisations. While parties discussed it along broad integration terms, civil society organisations often used participation in EU agencies, especially ACER as a point of

entrance and subsequently argued against European integration. A smaller number of proposals (4) argued for different ways of distributing competences. One argued for more involvement and competences of regional Norwegian authorities, stressing the concept of subsidiarity. Other proposals argued for shifting competences to European citizens and European youth.

Functional differentiation plays a bigger role in the national debate. Norway does partake in many of the EU's policies through the EEA Agreement. The technical nature of many proposals leads to a relatively high number of proposals discussing functional differentiation, as illustrated in the following section. While vertical differentiation primarily argued against European integration in general, specific policies and cooperation with the EU are proposed. This underlines the previous findings that the issue of EU integration is largely decoupled from EU adaptation (Fossum and Vigrestad, 2021).

Taking a more detailed look at how functional differentiation is proposed, a total of 34 proposals argued for new or reformed policies, 30 for new or reformed policy instruments, 5 for reforms of agencies and 2 for new agencies. Starting with the creation of new agencies, this was exclusively discussed by national governments in the collected data. Proposing reforms of agencies was more widespread, but still primarily debated by state actors.<sup>24</sup> Looking at policies and policy instruments, policy instruments were more often proposed than new policies. This aligns with previous finding of the technical nature of the Norwegian debate. Notably, in the analysed data civil society actors only proposed new policies rather than policy instruments, highlighting how they discuss the EU more broadly than e.g., national government or national economic actors which deal in detail with proposed EU policies. For both new policies and new policy instruments, climate and environment protection was the key issue. For policies, this was followed equally by differentiation and migration. Differentiation and energy were also mentioned equally when arguing for new policy instruments. It is however important to note that the majority of these proposals were commenting on and suggesting reforms of policies that the EU or other

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<sup>24</sup> Twice by national parties, once each by national government, national parliament and civil society actors (Nei til EU).



member states had proposed rather than original reform proposals from the Norwegian actors. Due to the institutional nature of EU-Norway relations, this does not come as an unexpected result. Since Norway cannot propose regulations themselves through representation at EU institutions, commenting on proposed EU policies while highlighting how these should be adapted to Norwegian interests is a way to actively participate in EU. Nevertheless, it remains that the debate is largely reactive.

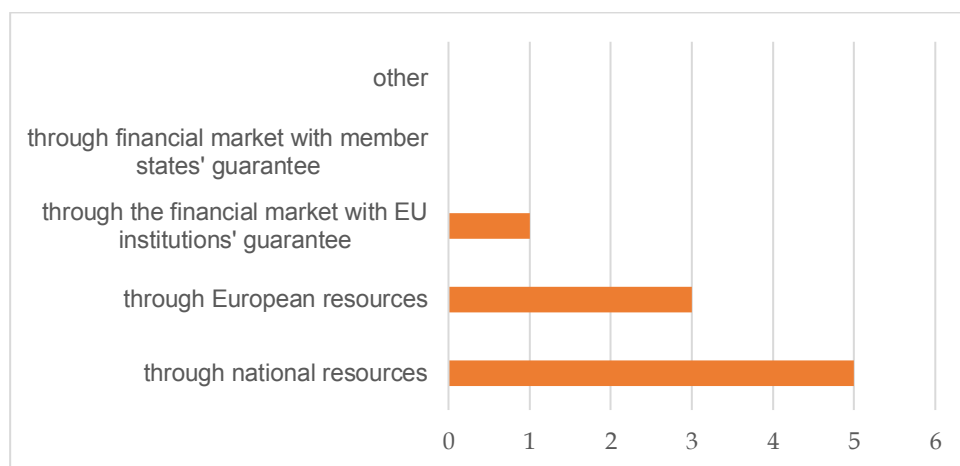


Figure 4. Frequency of mentioned financing mechanisms

Despite the proposals often being very specific, such as government responses to EU hearings, they seldomly addressed how the proposals should be financed. Only seven proposals indicated how proposal should be financed. These were two each from civil society actors, think tanks and national economic actors as well as one from the national government. Proposals primarily suggest financing through national resources. As a non-member, limited focus on EU funding does not come out of the blue, but reflects Norwegian access to decision making.

Returning back to different types of differentiation, territorial differentiation is without any doubt the dominating form of differentiation within the Norwegian debate. Out of all the proposals, only 12 proposals do not mention territorial differentiation. Norway, a non-EU member state, is tightly integrated into the EU system and cooperation with the EU is seen through the lens of the EEA Agreement, which has institutionalised territorial differentiation. Territorial differentiation is thus omnipresent in the Norwegian debate.

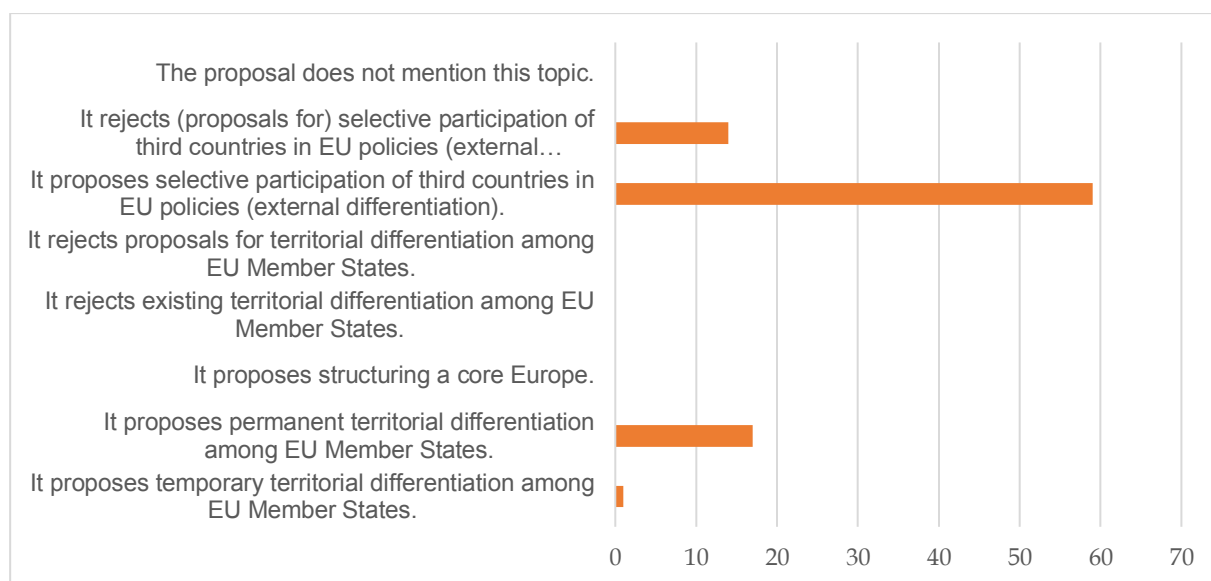


Figure 5. Frequency of mentioned type of territorial differentiation

Taking a closer look at the proposed territorial differentiation, it becomes clear that the focus is largely on selective participation of third countries and that Norwegian proposals are very positive towards it. 59 proposals argue in favour of selective participation of third countries, with 14 rejecting it. Notably, all represented actors argue for selective participation of third countries, which can be related back to previous findings that the EEA experiences high public support (Sverdrup et al., 2019a). Territorial differentiation, namely selective Norwegian participation through the EEA Agreement, is debated as vital. It is vital both through its access to the single market, strengthening the Norwegian economy as well as a base for further cooperation with the EU.<sup>25</sup> On the other hand, selective participation is rejected based on concerns for democracy as it undermines Norwegian democracy and leads to domination by the EU, topics further explored in the following paragraphs. Permanent territorial differentiation among EU member states was also proposed, mainly in the context of stronger Nordic cooperation. The focus again is very national. The debate does not consider the effects of territorial differentiation on the EU or the participation of other third countries, but only the advantages and disadvantages of it for Norway.

<sup>25</sup> 21 proposals argue both for selective participation of third countries and for further integration.

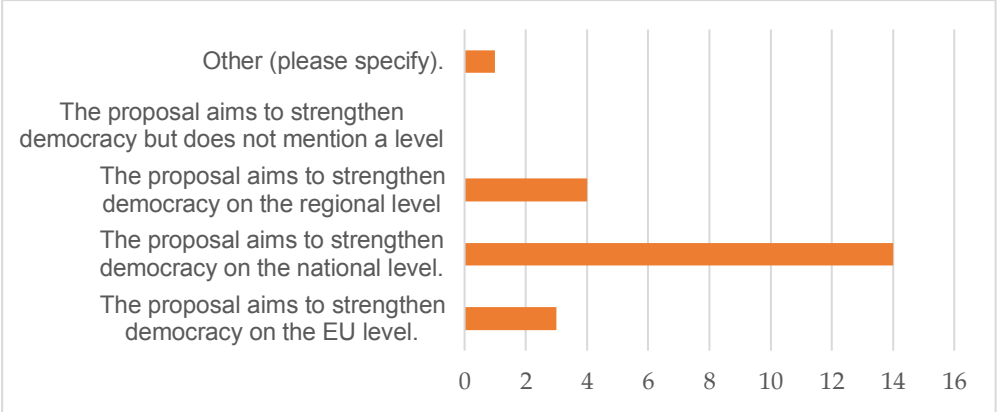


Figure 13. Frequency of mentioned type of territorial differentiation

21 of the proposals identified democratic malfunctioning in the EU. It was primarily civil society actors that were concerned with the issue. When looking at the proposed measures to improve and strengthen democracy, strengthening democracy on the national level was the primary concern. Interestingly, even strengthening regional democracy is featured more prominently than EU democracy, highlighting the strong focus on the periphery and subnational regional actors as well as limited Norwegian influence on EU democracy. The proposals identifying malfunctioning of democracy primarily argued that there is a democratic deficit through the EEA as Norway has to implement rules it does not have a say in. The majority of these proposals see less integration as the way to increase national democracy.<sup>26</sup> A less pronounced, opposing argument is that Norway should join the EU to rectify this democratic deficit and this way get a seat at the table or to increase cooperation to limit the democratic deficit. The selected proposals thus highlight the lack of nuance in the Norwegian FoE debate. As an outsider, Norway has very little options to improve democracy beyond changing its position in the EU system – either by leaving the EEA or by joining the EU and increasing its influence on the rules it has to adopt.

<sup>26</sup> Out of the proposals that argue for strengthening national democracy, 8 also argue against further integration and 6 for vertical differentiation.

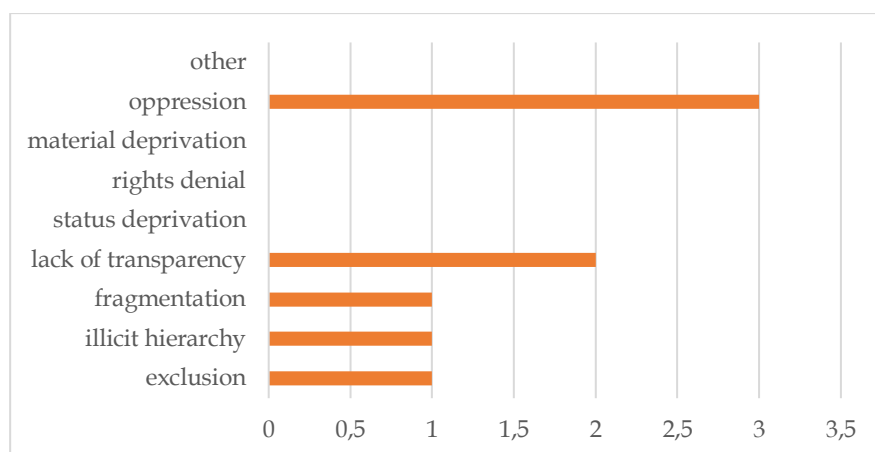


Figure 7. Frequency of identified type of dominance

While democratic malfunctioning was a relatively prevalent issue in the collected proposals, dominance played a less pronounced role. Six proposals – two from civil society actors and four from national political parties – identified dominance. The above graph shows the types of dominance identified. Oppression by the EU was seen as the main issue, with an asymmetry of power between Norway and the EU. When taking a closer look at suggestions how to rectify dominance, all suggestions were found in party manifestos and programmes by SV, SP and Rødt<sup>27</sup>, three of which connected to the last election in 2021. In 2017, Rødt argued that the lack of transparency should be addressed by limiting the ability of lobbyists and multinationals to influence Norwegian policy. The three more recent proposals had a stronger reaction to the identified issue, namely, to leave the EEA and Schengen and to disregard rulings of the EFTA Surveillance Authority, which can also be linked back to their argument to strengthen Norwegian democracy. Dominance and the asymmetry of power impacts the Norwegian debate on European integration through calls to rectify it through disintegration.

## Assessing the reforming process

Overall, the proposals reflect the lack of debate in Norway as highlighted by the literature. The FoE is not a topic of debate in itself, but the debate has a strong national focus, as illustrated by policy proposals that comment on EU policies rather than suggesting new policies.

<sup>27</sup> More information on the stances of these parties can be found in the WP4 parliamentary debate case study.

Much of this leads back to Norway's affiliation with the EU. Norway is an in-between member - a 'quasi member' of the EU, however without representation in the EU's institutions and limited influence on EU decision-making (Gänzle and Henökl, 2018). The debate has thus become two-fold. On the one hand, the issue of EU integration becomes an issue of Norwegian EU affiliation. On the other hand, limited influence on EU decision-making leads to a discussion on how to safeguard Norwegian interest in proposed EU policies rather than proposing new policies. Interestingly, the latter is discussed significantly more positively than the former as illustrated in the section on vertical and functional differentiation. This highlights that the Norwegian approach to the EU remains dominated by identity concerns, while the approach to the EEA is more utilitarian.

Climate and Environment was the dominating policy area and reflects increasing cross-sectoral legislation in the EU. It is also an area where international cooperation is most beneficial and Norwegian action alone would have very limited impact. Other areas where Norway seeks closer cooperation with the EU are the, among others, internal market and trade.

Proposals addressing dominance and democracy are relatively recent, corroborating findings that the Norwegian EU debate is becoming more active (Sverdrup et al., 2019b), and parties are starting to act as political entrepreneurs (Fossum and Vigrestad, 2021).

## **Combining republican intergovernmentalism and regional-cosmopolitanism through national interests**

The Norwegian vision for the future of Europe does not clearly fit into the narratives set out in Fossum (2021) but exhibits components from both intergovernmentalism and regional-cosmopolitanism. Both narratives are displayed to further Norwegian interests.

On the one hand the debate fits the intergovernmental narrative, more specifically republican intergovernmentalism. Actors focus on strengthening national democracy rather than European democracy. Allocation of competences is policy specific - while there is a debate of relocating competences back to Norway in energy policy, more cooperation and EU competences are often welcomed in the area of

environment and climate protection. The motivating factor for both is national Norwegian interests as Norwegian action alone has a limited impact on the climate, but integration in the electricity market has led to higher prices. However, Norwegian preferences for external territorial differentiation cannot be accounted for in this model.

While the national focus of the Norwegian debate does not fit with the regional-cosmopolitan model, its focus on external territorial differentiation does. Norwegian actors argued for selective participation of third countries in a number of policy areas. Policy areas such as climate and the environment as well as the internal market were dominating, however the range of proposed policy areas went beyond just economic considerations as in the de-coupled federal-political Union narrative, and also included areas such as security and defence. This has become particularly important in light of the Russian war on Ukraine, at the end of the data collection period.

## Conclusion

This exploratory study of the Future of Europe debate in Norway could give valuable first insight. It can be concluded that the debate resembles a Future of Norway in the EU debate more than a Future of Europe debate. Proposals have a very national focus and discuss either the Norwegian affiliation with the EU or comment on EU policies and their impact on Norway. Seldomly do they propose original reform proposals.

Civil society actors discussed Norwegian affiliation with the EU to a larger extent than state actors, which often focused on specific EU policies and proposed changes to them. This went hand in hand with discussions about Norway's place in the EU being more identity based and discussions about certain policies being more utilitarian.

Overall, the Norwegian debate exhibits components of both republican intergovernmentalism and regional-cosmopolitanism. Republican intergovernmentalism is the dominating narrative aligning with, among others, Norwegian preferences for democracy and allocation of competences. Meanwhile, regional-cosmopolitanism is limited to the aspect of external territorial differentiation. Underlining both is the

motivation to protect Norwegian interests, once again stressing the national focus of the debate.

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# Chapter 10

## European Think-Tanks and the 'Future of Europe' debate

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European think-tanks (TTs) are specific actors in the European Union (EU) multilevel governance system and are obviously different to the Member States regarding their role in the EU political system, in which they do not have any direct involvement in the decision-making process. Instead, they serve as expertise providers, so that the policies of the EU can be more effective, but also boost the input legitimacy of the Union, by feeding new, sometimes socially significant ideas into the system (Góra, Holst, and Warat 2018).

European think-tanks are also specific due to a difficulty regarding their definition. Sherrington (2000, 174), puts forward a broad definition of think-tanks, which describes them as 'relatively independent organisations, engaged in research on a broad scope of interests. Their primary aim is to disseminate that research as widely as possible with the intention of influencing policy-making processes'. This definition has

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been further developed by scholars, who indicated other constitutive elements of think-tanks such as permanency; specialisation in the production of public policy solutions; having in-house staff dedicated to research; ability to produce ideas, analysis, and advice; putting emphasis as their primary aim on communicating their research to policymakers and public opinion; not being responsible for government operations; aiming to maintain their research freedom and not to be beholden to any specific interest; seeking, explicitly or implicitly to act in the public interest (Boucher and Hobbs 2004). This can be further elaborated into various typologies of think-tanks, which can take the shape of academic think-tanks (Missiroli and Ioannides 2012); advocacy think tanks (McGann, Kent Weaver 2000); contract researchers, and political parties think tanks (Boucher and Hobbs 2004). To add to the complexity, the fact that think tanks are supposed to constitute a bridge between scientific knowledge, society and the policymakers; serve a public interest and also generate new knowledge, they can be easily confused with interest groups, professional associations, consultancies or university institutes (Stone 2007). Lastly, in this chapter, we understand European think-tanks as those based in Brussels and dealing with EU affairs. According to Bajenova (2019, 69) '[P]resence in Brussels is considered an almost compulsory element of the strategy for any EU-oriented TT seriously interested in the influencing EU agenda. A Brussels location allows TTs to facilitate their collaboration with their target audiences through 'subtle and effective networking' with both EU and national officials at events, as well as receiving information from them and promoting their own expertise'. We omit the nationally based think-tanks, even if their focus is mainly on Europe. According to the EU Transparency Register there are about 60 Belgium-based 'think-tanks and research institutions' with the main focus on Europe and (at least declaratively) not representing any commercial interests (search performed on July 9<sup>th</sup>, 2023). Putting an organisation into the Register is however voluntary, therefore it is not possible to assess the actual number of European think-tanks.

This number has been however growing and the think tank landscape in Brussels has become a prominent ground for various organisations. This process has been observed particularly in the 1980s when the EU political system (and thus the policymaking process) has become more pluralist

rather than corporatist (Stone Sweet, Fligstein and Sandholtz 2001). This has contributed to the strengthening of multilevel governance and thus brought many interest groups from European capitals to Brussels, where they could act as intermediaries of various interests (Gornitzka and Krick 2018). Additionally, bringing different perspectives and societal input into the EU policymaking has become a norm of EU governance, which further legitimised these actors' input (Saurugger 2010).

Regarding the embeddedness of the think tanks in the EU institutional makeup, it is rather clear that they mostly operate with, and provide expertise to the European Commission, and, but perhaps to a lesser extent, the European Parliament, which has established its own think tank – the European Parliament Research Service. The central arena for the think tanks and generally interest representation in the EU is the EC, mainly due to its exclusive right to initiate legislation. It however also makes sense from the legitimisation point of view – if we agree that the Commission is rightly accused of being the main source of EU democratic deficit, then the think tanks can boost its input legitimacy (Kohler-Koch 2012). In the context of the 'Future of Europe' debate this is also justified, as the whole process has been organised by the EC even if with the participation of the European Parliament and the Council of the EU. The EC has acknowledged it by stating that 'think tanks and policy research organisations are invaluable in providing visions for the future, as well as generating ideas and recommendations on how to approach complex issues, such as EU policies, active European citizenship, identity and values' (European Commission 2012).

Despite think tanks being well-established in the 'Brussels bubble', their actual impact on the EU decision making and policy outcomes remains unclear. Their importance lies rather in the agenda-shaping and policy-formulation phase. According to McGann and Kent Weaver (2000) the main roles played by the think tanks are providing basic research on policy problems and policy solutions; providing advice on immediate policy concerns that are being considered by government officials; evaluating government programs, serving as facilitators of issue networks and the exchange of ideas; supplying personnel to government and serving as a place for politicians and policy-makers who are out of power

to recharge their batteries; and helping interpret policies and current events for the electronic and print media.

When it comes to the Future of Europe (FoE) debate, the European TTs could play an important role in strengthening the legitimisation of European Commissions' proposals, especially in a situation when those proposals, despite a consultative nature of the reform process, turn out not to be so popular. Such circumstances, that is a situation in which Europe strives for new solutions in a very fragile internal and external environment, have been in place at least since the 2008 global financial crisis and the subsequent Eurozone crisis. It seems that uncertainty (also regarding the future of Europe) can constitute an opportunity for think tanks to become even more important players in the European system of governance, as they would possess the expertise not only to come up with new solutions, but also to assess citizens' proposals as well as (later on) justifying them with expertise. This epistemic uncertainty has proven to be beneficial for some think tanks during the Eurozone crisis, when they were expected to fill gaps in EU institutions knowledge as well as justify difficult policy choices (Coman 2019).

In this report we have chosen two types of think tanks for analysis. The first type are well-known Brussels-based TTs that focus mostly on European affairs, such as (but not limited to) European Policy Centre (EPC), Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS), Notre Europe (NE, formerly Jacques Delors Institute) and Transeuropean Policy Studies Association (TEPSA). These think tanks deal with a whole range of European issues, but also look at the EU polity as a whole. According to the information displayed at the websites of the aforementioned institutions, they 'cover most European policy areas, offer exchanges, provide insights on and potential solutions for EU policy-making' (CEPS); 'provide expertise on EU policies and politics combined with a vast experience in organising and conducting EU-wide research, training and networks' (TEPSA); 'produce analyses and proposals targeting European decision-makers and a wider audience, and to contribute to the debate on the European Union' (NE); 'foster European integration through analysis and debate, support and challenge decision-makers at all levels to make informed decisions based on evidence and analysis, and provide a

platform for engaging partners, stakeholders and citizens in EU policy-making and in the debate about the future of Europe' (EPC).

Even from these short mission statements, it is visible that some of these TTs already do have a certain bias, e.g., towards fostering European integration. These are also very well-established think-tanks, EPC being the youngest, as it has only existed for 25 years, which makes them very well known in the 'Brussels bubble'. Therefore, we also decided to include another type of think tanks in our analysis, that is the TTs that can be considered political party think tanks. These are: Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS), which aims to 'develop innovative research, policy advice, training and debates to inspire and inform socialist and social democratic politics and policies across Europe'; The Sallux Foundation, which represent a Christian-democratic and rather right-wing world view, although states its purposes in a very general way - 'Pan-European co-operation and the introduction of analysis, ideas and policy options'; and finally the Identity and Democracy Foundation, which serves as a think tank for the IED political group in the European Parliament. We decided on such a selection of actors, as we assumed a rather optimistic, EU-friendly discourse on the side of the Brussels-based, and well-embedded actors, whereas the TTs connected to political parties might bring more diverse (and perhaps sometimes Eurosceptic or euro-reject) ideas into the debate.

Our report follows the logic of the EU3D project and therefore looks at the future of Europe debate from the point of view the patterns of EU's possible differentiation, its perceived dominance as well as democratic character. We also look at which specific policies and EU institutions were mentioned by TTs in reference to the three 'D's.

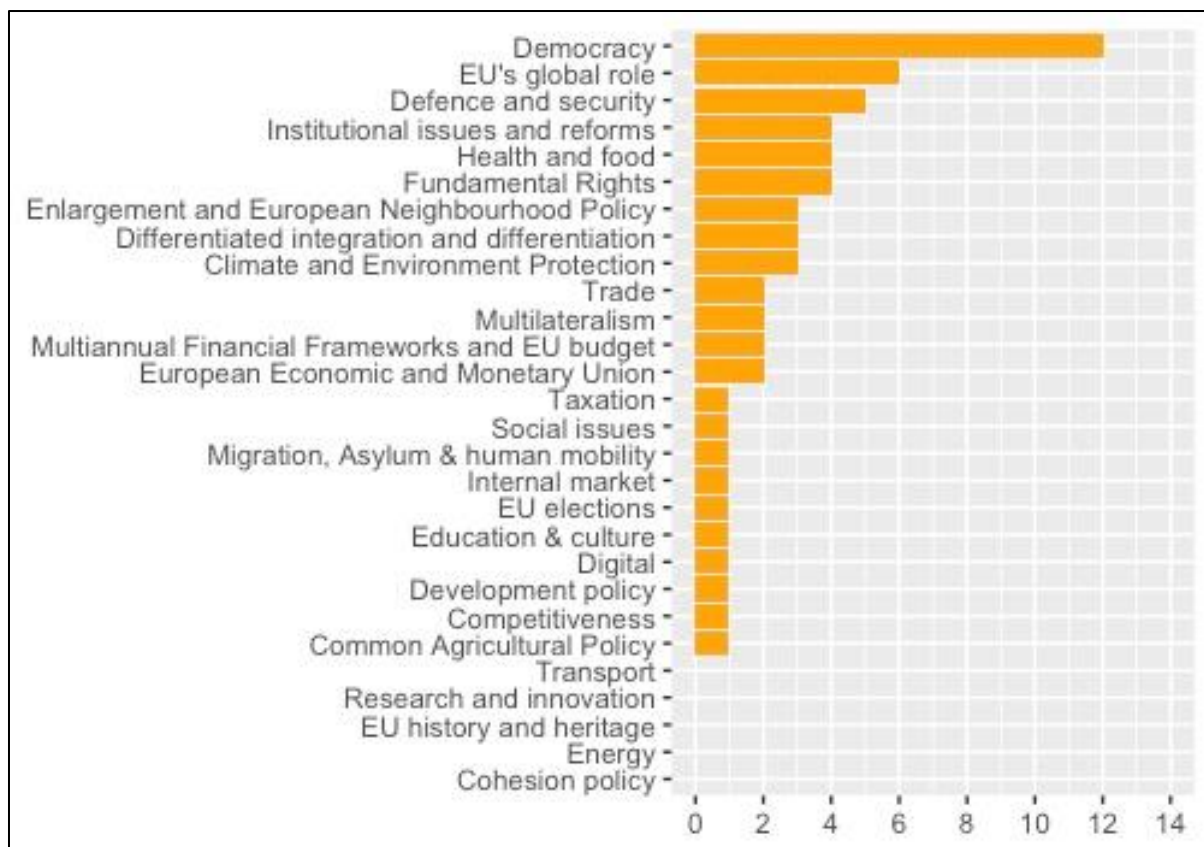


Figure 1. Distribution of policy areas mentioned in proposals from European Think Tanks

With regard to the main policy issues mentioned in the analysed proposals, it is rather clear that what sparks the most interest in the selected TTs is the question of democracy combined with fundamental rights and freedoms. We will come back to this issue in more detail at the end of this section. Final report. on. Apart from that, the TTs we selected are also focusing on defence and security; environment and climate policy; and migration and asylum policy. The environmental/climate policy may constitute an interesting example. On the one hand its implementation in the form similar to European Green Deal is expected from the EU (European Policy Centre 2020) as well as leading member states (TEPSA 2021). On the other hand, the Eurosceptics tend to frame this issue as very important but better realised by particular member states. There is however certain ambiguity here. On the one hand they argue for a more unified European policy when it comes to e.g. the Buy European Act ‘that applies national and European preference in all strategic sectors: pharmaceuticals, arms, food, digital, energy, etc’ (Identity and Democracy 2021, 12) or a stricter stance vis-a-vis NATO, as through the harmful EU environmental directives, the defence industry

suffers and is subjected to American interest (Ibid.). On the other hand, however, they also strictly link ecology and environment protection with territorialism, sovereignty, nationalism, claiming that the founding father of ecology 'were men of one Nation, one land and one country' (Identity and Democracy 2018, 4). On the security and defence topic, the dividing lines are somewhat similar. One of the TTs is advocating for stronger interoperability, common procurements, joint development of defence project as well as involvement of external partners of the EU (CEPS 2021). This particular policy brief is also arguing for strengthening the role of the European Parliament, by transforming the EP Security and Defence Subcommittee (SEDE) to a full committee status. This is an important claim from the point of view of strengthening democratic control over security policy in the EU. This general stance towards unification of EU defence assets is rather against fragmentation (especially with regards to procurement market) and in favour of inclusivity (yet without prejudice to differentiation) when it comes to Member States participation in the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), which should be achieved through 'seeking central, eastern and south-eastern European buy-in is through the greater involvement of the US' (Ibid., 8), but also characterised by naming and shaming peer review process, which would clearly differentiate leaders from laggards. The more Eurosceptic TT somewhat counters this approach and argues that even though joint procurement and common development of defence project indeed helps to save money, it also will have to lead to a creation of a 'new supranational authority' (Sallux Foundation 2017a, 4), which would decide what kind of equipment should be chosen, when and how to upgrade it, etc. Therefore, the TT advocates for more differentiation in this area, as it would benefit the quality of chosen military gear (states choose to arm themselves not with 'European' equipment, but with the best equipment), and also allow smaller Member States to develop their own defence industries, especially in the sector of small and medium enterprises. In this case it is not only visible that more differentiation is a preferred option, but also there are also misgivings regarding a possible domination of a new supranational body (or the Commission with new powers), or domination of the Member States with already highly developed defence industries.



Lastly, among the main identified issues, there is the migration and asylum question. It has been a hot topic in the EU for almost a decade, a topic which, if not handled carefully, could contribute to losing election in certain European countries. When the future of Europe debate has become more prominent, the migration crisis debate has however been less heated and more focused on the New Pact on Migration and Asylum. This is an issue in which one TT clearly points out to solidarity and responsibility-sharing among the Member States, which ‘must be corner stones in any response to refugee situations’ (Danish Refugee Council 2020, 2). One of the identified policy proposals pertains rather to common data collection and monitoring mechanism and issuing recommendations based on its functioning. It is supposed to be a ‘Migration Policy Scoreboard for Monitoring Progress on The Asylum and Migration Agenda’ (European University Institute 2020, 6), however the proposal does not mention any specificities regarding its impact on the balance of power between the EU institutions and the Member states, apart from the fact that the agenda on migration and asylum covers a vast range of policies. Many of these involve shared competences between the member states and the European Commission, while others are strictly the prerogative of member states. The framework for a monitoring mechanism must be able to deal with this complexity (Ibid, 4).

The analysed material brings interesting insights when the issue of democracy and domination is concerned. Drawing on the existing literature and the previous EU3D findings we understand dominance as unjustified exercises of power (Batora, Fossum 2022) and ‘relationship or a circumstance wherein an actor (be that a person, an organization, or a collective) can be arbitrarily interfered with and/or manipulated’ (Fossum, 2019, p. 2). TT engaged in the FoE notice and assesses the notion of dominance in different aspects.

The so-called ‘Brussels bubble’ is mentioned as a source of dominance and not entirely democratic performance. Eastern European member states (so-called new member states) may feel dominated by the ‘club’ of the old and more wealthy member states that are accused of ‘imposing’ their values and policy-making without consultation. One of the most recognised arguments voiced mainly by the Eurosceptic TTs is that EU institutions are seen as unable to represent the European people as they

are not democratically elected. In a similar vein, the argument of lack of accountability of the institutions is raised. In this respect, the Eurosceptic TTs propose to limit the power of the EU institutions and would propose an intergovernmental model of cooperation between the Member States in the future.

Contrary to this postulate, the pro-EU TTs underline the need to strengthen political cooperation, so that 'European integration cannot be reduced to a simple alliance between sovereign states' (Paris Institute Jacques Delors 2019, 2). They pledge for a more active and effective EU, especially with respect to addressing climate change, security in the region, migration, and economic policies but also democracy and promoting European values (ECFR 2019).

Interestingly, as noted by Czerska-Shaw et.al. (2022) for proponents of integration references to EU dominance becomes a legitimising tool – noticing and stressing the ability of the EU to dominate demonstrates the power and potential of the EU and its institutions. It can be seen as a tool for criticizing a failure to act. In this vein, we identified a postulate for a more active EU and a need for more power to the institutions. One of the common proposals among the pro-EU TTs is for strengthening existing legal instruments (soft law and instruments provided for by the Treaties), such as the Court of Justice, (Paris Institute Jacques Delors 2019) but also to strengthen the mechanisms for monitoring the use of European funds, for example by strengthening the role of the European Anti- Fraud Office (OLAF) (Ibid., 7). This must be done in a very careful manner not to strengthen the feeling of dominance which is grounded in 'victim's resentment' (Ibid.) that characterise the Central and Eastern European member states.

Pro-European TTs underline the need for more action regarding those member states that do not align with European policies and values, for example undermining the rule of law (Poland and Hungary) and opposing liberal democracy explained as imposed by the liberal West-European political elites. At the same point, withdrawing funds to Poland and Hungary as a result of democratic backsliding is criticised as a form of dominance by both pro-EU and Eurosceptic actors, for the first ones it remains a questionable strategy because could trigger anti-EU sentiments while for the Eurosceptic it remains an arbitrary decision taken by the

group of most powerful member states who wish (together with the EU institutions) to interfere into the internal affairs of the member states

Some of the think tanks (e.g. ECFR) recognise the need for more political cooperation and leadership, claiming that France and Germany could be the leaders of deeper political cooperation especially in the area of external relations and foreign policy. On the other hand, the powerful position of these member states involves the issue of their potential domination over the smaller states, especially pointing at German economic domination that influences also the political decision and French initiative of strategic autonomy.

In all examined cases, in relation to democracy, the selected TTs were underlining the need for more democracy in the EU – however, the claims were different and varied from limiting integration and moving most of the decision-making on the intergovernmental level to give more power to the EU institutions that supposedly should equally represent all European citizens. The intergovernmental model is favoured by Eurosceptic think tanks, which stress the need for more democracy that would also be achieved by giving more power to the European Parliament and less to not directly elected bodies (such as European Commission).

The democratic deficit is addressed by Eurosceptic TTs such as ID Foundation that embrace the nation-state model, claiming that the European Union refuses to face reality; there is no democracy without land. The peoples of Europe must regain their freedom on their own territory. Holding on to one's territory is the law of life. The political form of modernity is that of the nation-state, and Europe is nothing if it is not the union of sovereign nation-states (Identity and Democracy 2021, 2).

Moving decisions to the European level makes citizens concerned, as the distant power is perceived as foreign and imposed (Ibid., 3). The future of Europe and well-functioning democracy should be organised by reducing political integration. Power should be taken away from the European Commission and permanent opt-outs should be implemented 'so that at any time a state can decide to opt out of a European regulation or not to participate in joint action (Ibid., 7).

The more pro-EU TTs also recognised a problem with democratic deficit and dominance, but propose reform, the outcome of which could, for

example, be a confederal structure, that is perceived to be an opportunity for the EU and its constituent nations to be strong together, to resolve sovereignty issues, and to reframe the mandate, membership and procedures of the EU's most important central institutions: the Council of Europe, the European Parliament, the European Commission, and the European Central Bank (Sallux Foundation 2017b, 4).

Analysing the documents issued by European think tanks, we noticed the criticism towards the EU institutions directed towards the lack of effective communication between the EU and the citizens. One of the postulates was also to mitigate the democratic deficit by including not only the citizens of the EU-27 but also of the Western Balkans in the conference and discussions on the FoE. The wide spectrum of voices could help in receiving feedback from the existing and future members of the Community and influence decisions that have an impact not only on the EU but also on the neighbourhood. Poor communication, lack of deliberation and engagement may intensify the feeling of being alienated and dominated by the 'Brussels bubble' that imposes the solutions without consultations with the EU citizens. In 2022, one of the TTs organised 8 Local Citizens' Agoras (LCAs) in 5 member states (Belgium, Denmark, Greece, Ireland and Romania) and the results clearly confirmed the above-mentioned concerns (European Policy Centre 2022). Citizens need more information and more opportunities to contribute to EU decision-making and possibility to interact with the EU institutions (Ibid., 10).

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# Annex 1: Codebook

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## DATABASE CODEBOOK

### EU3D Work Package Five “The Future of Europe” (all partner institutions)

*Version of 4 September 2020*

#### GENERAL INFORMATION

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This Manual provides guidance to gather and examine proposals on the debates on the future of the European Union (EU) published between 2015 to 2022. The most relevant information of the collected proposals will be introduced into **a public searchable database of reform proposals** specifically designed for this purpose. This Manual gives instructions to EU3D researchers on how to analyse and input this information into the database.

Building the database constitute the core of Task 5.2. of the EU3D research project, which aims to gather an extensive selection of proposals for the future of the EU from a **broad range of actors**, to analyse systematically their potential **impact** and map the **interactions** between these proposals. The database is a key constituent of Work Package 5, whose main aims are to establish:

- a. the prevailing dividing lines among EU reform proposals;
- b. how these proposals seek to deal with the problematic forms of differentiation;
- c. what alternative EU governance models the proposals defend.

We invite EU3D researchers to read the guidelines attentively when collecting proposals as many of the questions that might arise will be answered here.

## 1. TIMEFRAME OF THE DATABASE

The database of proposals on the future of Europe will cover the period **from 2015 until 2022** (the end of our EU3D project). The starting point is the publication of the Five Presidents' Report on Completing Europe's Economic and Monetary Union (available here: [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/5-presidents-report\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/5-presidents-report_en.pdf)) by the European Commission in June 2015.

## 2. WHAT DOES A REFORM PROPOSAL CONSIST OF?

WP5 aims to collect and analyse a broad range of proposals referring to the debate on the future of Europe. Proposals can take various forms. Paraphrasing Koopmans (2002) we define a **reform proposal** as a distinctive statement made in the public sphere which consists of the **expression** of a **political opinion** on the **future of the European Union, European integration** or an **aspect thereof** (such as a selected policy, policy instruments, institutions and politics) and refers to the **polity dimension** of EU (i.e. its institutional shape).

Hence, the proposals can address the future of the EU polity, its policies and politics – a division allowing us to further problematize the contestation of polity and policy as well as proposals dealing with the formal institutional set-up and practice of policy-making.

[Database guidelines: table of contents](#)

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These guidelines follow the sequence of data that the survey requests. Collectors should examine the proposals in advance before filling in the survey:

### 1. WHO:

- a. Origin of the proposal
- b. Type of actor
- c. Name of the actor (in original language)
- d. Name of the actor (in English)
- e. Additional information about the actor
- f. Geographical provenance of the actor (whenever possible, the nationalities of the actor involved)
- g. Title of proposal (original language)
- h. Title of proposal (in English)
- i. Document identifier

### 2. WHEN:



- a. Date when the proposal was made
- 3. WHERE:**
- a. Where the proposal was made (country)
  - b. Where the proposal was made (city)
- 4. HOW:**
- a. Medium of proposal
  - b. Genre of proposal
- 5. WHAT:**
- a. Policy areas
  - b. Differentiation
    - b1 Lawmaking (horizontal) differentiation
    - b2 Functional (competence-based) differentiation
    - b3 Vertical differentiation (levels of competence)
    - b4 Territorial differentiation
    - b5 Citizens' differentiated rights
  - c. Resources for the proposal
  - d. Democracy
  - e. Dominance
  - f. Other important information
  - g. Keywords
  - h. Summary
- 6. AT WHOM: RELATIONS/CONNECTIONS**
- a. Addressee(s) of the proposal
  - b. References to other actor(s) in the proposal
  - c. References to other proposals
  - d. References to other versions of the same proposal
  - e. References to critical junctures
- 7. WHY**
- a. Main aim of the proposal
- 8. TECHNICAL INFORMATION**
- a. Formal status of the proposal
  - b. Hyperlink (www...)
  - c. Original proposal or secondary document
  - d. Date the proposal was accessed
  - e. Author(ship)
  - f. Comments

[Database guidelines](#)

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**1. WHO**

Start with the actors. Choose each actor from the list "Type of actor" below and look for all the reform proposals each actor has put forward during the period of analysis (E.g. proposals

presented by the national central bank from 2015 to 2019). Fill in a new survey for each proposal.

#### **a. Origin of the proposal**

Does the proposal originate from the national or from the European level?

By "national level" we mean that the proposal comes from an actor which operates within a Member State. By "European level" we mean that the proposal originates from an EU actor.

#### **b. Type of actor**

##### **National actors**

We are gathering positions on the future of Europe as expressed by the following actors at the national level.

**National government.** We focus on official government proposals presented by the Prime Minister or, in case of sectoral policy proposal, by the relevant Minister or a government's spokesperson (i.e. referring to particular policy or area of European integration such as Eurozone or foreign policy). Consider position expressed in national parliaments, in the European Parliament and in international fora. Do not include personal positions.

**National political parties and their leaders.** Select proposals both from governing and from opposition political parties' spokespersons and their leaders.

**National parliament.** Focus on resolution (not debates) by the parliament.

##### **National central bank**

##### **Head of state**

##### **Regional and local authorities**

In unitary, federal or regional states, select official proposals by the relevant political sub-national authority. You can also select proposals by local authorities' representatives.

##### **National think tanks**

Focus on country-specific debates by think tanks on the future of Europe – both original proposals and their analyses. Try to cover think tanks with different political orientation.

##### **Public intellectuals**

Select public figures who are attributed cultural authority and leadership and recognized as such by at least more than one actor. Gather the most substantial and influential intellectuals' proposals and commentaries to other proposals.

A useful resource covering many national debates on Europe by public intellectuals to be found here: *European Stories: Intellectual Debates on Europe in National Contexts*, ed. by Justine Lacroix and Kalypso Nicolaïdis, Oxford, 2010.

##### **Individual politician**

Proposals by active public representatives that act on personal capacity, independently from their political party or institutional role.

### **Civil society actors (CSA)**

The aim of proposals by CSA is to gather what actors located in the public sphere have proposed. Special attention within the project will be paid to CSA that are indicative for specific actors prone to antagonistic politics (identitarian groups, (non-)confessional groups, Eurosceptics, Eurorejects movements with both left-wing and right-wing leanings, pro-European organisations, women/feminist CSA etc.).

### **Economic actors**

The aim is to gather – if available – proposals and commentaries by important economic actors representing both trade unions and corporate interest organisations, employers organisations, trade chambers, and even single companies' representatives, especially if concerning the sectoral proposals.

### **European actors**

We are gathering positions on the future of Europe as expressed by the following actors at the European level.

The list includes also international organisations of European and global reach as well as the United Nations, particularly when dealing with European responses to the COVID-19 crisis.

- **Committee of the Regions (CoR)**
- **Corporate interest organization**
- **Council of Europe**
- **Council of the EU**
- **European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)**
- **Employers organization**
- **Eurogroup**
- **European Commission (EC)**
- **European Council**
- **European Court of Justice (ECJ)**
- **European Parliament (EP)**
- **European party group<sup>30</sup>**
- **European civil society organization (CSO)**
- **European non-governmental organization (NGOs)**
- **European think tank**
- **Euro Summit**
- **High Representative of the Union for Foreign and Security Policy (HR) and/or European External Action Service (EEAS)**
- **Individual Commissioner (member of the European Commission)**
- **Leader of a European party group**
- **Member of the European Parliament (MEP)**
- **Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)**
- **Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)**
- **Other transnational party group<sup>31</sup>**
- **President of the European Central Bank**

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<sup>30</sup> Including its youth organizations.

<sup>31</sup> Including its youth organizations.

- **President of the European Commission**
- **President of the European Council**
- **President of the Eurogroup**
- **President of the European Parliament**
- **President of the Euro Summit**
- **Single companies' representative(s)**
- **Trade chamber**
- **Trade union**
- **United Nations<sup>32</sup>**
- **Other (please specify)**

**c. Name of the actor (in original language)**

The official name of the actor (name of organisation, institution, public person, etc.) in the original language.

**d. Name of the actor (in English)**

If the name of the actor is not originally in English, provide an official translation here. If there is no official translation, provide your own. If the official name is in English, rewrite it here.

**e. Additional information about the actor (if applicable)**

This can include a specific committee (for parliaments), department (for ministries), office, branch, directorate general (e.g. for the European Commission), etc.

**f. Geographical provenance of the actor**

Wherever possible, name the nationalities (may be multiple) of the actor involved or any information you think is important on where the actor comes from.

**g. Title of the proposal (in original language)**

Indicate the title of the proposal in the original language. If the proposal has no official name, write an appropriate title.

**h. Title of the proposal (in English)**

If the original title is not in English, provide a translation here. If the original title is in English, rewrite it here.

**i. Document identifier**

Identify your proposal following the sequence: your institution (in capital letters)\_lastname and firstname of coder\_country of the actor\_type of actor\_year-month-day the proposal was issued (i.e. when it was communicated to the public or published). E.g. LUISS\_Zgaga Tiziano\_Italy\_National central bank\_2019-04-30

**2. WHEN**

**a. Date the proposal was made**

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<sup>32</sup> And their institutions, organizations, programmes, etc., especially when dealing with European responses to the COVID-19 crisis.

This section refers to date of publication of the proposal or when it was made public (i.e. a speech act, communication, etc.). If a specific date is not available, indicate at least the year in which the proposal became public.

### 3. WHERE

Provide information where the proposal was published or appeared. This can be different to the geographical provenance of the actor involved. If the proposal was made online, then please choose ‘internet’.

a. **Country where the proposal was made**

Indicate the country where the proposal was made. If the proposal was made online, then please write ‘internet’. If unknown, leave blank.

b. **City where the proposal was made**

Indicate the country where the proposal was made. If the proposal was made online, then please write ‘internet’. If unknown, leave blank

### 4. HOW

a. **Medium of the proposal**

This refers to the way in which the proposal has been communicated – the medium through which it was brought to the public sphere.

- Governmental statement
- Parliamentary speech, debate, resolution
- Party conference
- Press conference
- University, academic setting
- Rally, demonstration
- Website (official website, platform)
- Social media platform
- Media interview
- Publication (book, leaflet, research or administrative report)
- Other form (please specify)

b. **Genre of proposal**

Genre of proposal concerns the main objective of the proposal. Please choose amongst the following possibilities. If no option applies to your proposal, click on “Other”.

**Plea:** the actor(s) attempts to appeal to a relevant authority to react to a given situation in a specific way or attempts to raise awareness to an urgent matter, by both outlining the situation and suggesting steps to be taken. Often in the form of open letters or statements.

**Guideline:** details a specific framework or scheme, which according to the authors, should be followed in order to reform the current policy situation. The proposal is not binding but may be of a universal nature (applicable to situations/ institutions outside the EU).

**Opinion**: the actors voice their opinion on a given topic or policy and outline their preferred way forward; the degree of specificity can vary greatly from detailed policy suggestions to general ideas.

**Analysis**: analysis of either the current situation (mostly linked to recent events, e.g. moments of crisis) or a specific policy in a given policy area. Usually, it also includes an indication of how to move onwards from the current state. This may be in the form of specific recommendations as how to reform a policy or how to (re-)act to the situation faced.

**Policy recommendation**: clearly marked as such, a policy recommendation draws on and analyses existing policy in order to make the case for either the need for an entirely new policy, a new approach to the policy area or amendments. Usually, recommendations contain much detail and give precise instructions on how to alter the policy in question.

**Policy brief**: policy briefs include a concise analysis of the current state of a policy area, outline the problems/ weaknesses/shortcomings and suggests on how to alter it. Policy brief are often addressed to parliamentarians, party groups or political factions in order to position them to a given topic.

**Policy position**: the actor or author(s) analyse and position themselves clearly to a given policy (area) and appeal to others to join that position. At times policy positions entail a certain vision for a way forward; the specificity of the reform or future proposals vary in detail.

**Other**: if none of the previous types apply, indicate the genre of the proposal

## 5. WHAT

### a. Policy areas of the proposal

In this section you are asked to select all the policy areas that the proposal mentions. Thus, please do not check only the main policy area(s) that the proposal refers to, but any other that may be identified. For a short description of each policy area, please see the survey.

- Common Agriculture Policy;
- Climate and Environment Protection;
- Cohesion policy;
- Competitiveness;
- Defence and security<sup>33</sup>
- Development policy;
- Democracy;
- Differentiated integration and differentiation;
- Digital;
- Education & culture;
- European Economic and Monetary Union;
- Energy;
- Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy;
- EU elections;
- EU history and heritage;

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<sup>33</sup> Including Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP).

- EU's global role;
- Health and food;
- Institutional issues and reforms;
- Internal market;
- Multiannual Financial Frameworks and EU budget;
- Migration, Asylum & human mobility;
- Multilateralism;
- Fundamental rights;
- Research and innovation
- Social issues (Social Europe);
- Taxation;
- Trade;
- Transport;
- Other than above.

## **b. Differentiation**

The next three blocks of questions seek to identify the proposals' main arguments according to the three areas of inquiry the EU3D project: differentiation, dominance and democracy. The questionnaire is designed to filter questions depending on the answers you provide. Thus, there are different paths to go deeper on the analysis of each proposal.

This section asks about four different types of differentiation that the proposal might refer to: (1) lawmaking (horizontal) differentiation, (2) functional (*competence-based*) differentiation, (3) vertical differentiation (levels of competence), (4) territorial differentiation, and (5) citizens' differentiated rights.

Your proposal might refer to different types of differentiation, or to none at all. The database will ask you about the different types of differentiation in sequence. If you click “yes” to the first question about a particular type of differentiation, you will be asked about the content of the proposal more in-depth. If you click “no”, the software will lead you to the following type of differentiation.

### **b1. Lawmaking (horizontal) differentiation**

*It refers to the proposals that argue for change in the relation between law-making arrangements and the relations between the executive, legislature and courts at a given level of government (EU level, member state level, regional level). The claims mostly refer to make-up of political system.*

*This is about how power is functionally organised at a given level of governing (horizontally). This is about the democratic nature and quality of the EU, as understood in the structure of the system of governing and how accountability is structured: who is accountable to whom?*

### **Does the proposal argue for reallocating relations between law-making institutions and courts at the EU-level (and/or in Member States)?**

By law-making institutions at EU level we are mainly referring to the European Parliament (EP), Commission and Council. If references to other institutions are made, you can include them.

By courts at the EU level we refer to the European Court of Justice.

*Yes, it does.*

*No, it does not.*

*The proposal does not mention this topic.*

If yes: ...

**Does the proposal advocate strengthening the role of the European Parliament (EP)?**

*Yes, it does.*

*No, it does not.*

*The proposal does not mention this topic.*

If yes:

**In relation to whom the EP should be strengthened?** (Various options can be selected)

*The European Commission*

*The European Council*

*The Council*

*Other (please specify)*

**In relation to what the EP should be strengthened?**

*The EP's ability to co-determine decisions*

*The EP's right to initiate legislation.*

*Other (please specify)*

**Does the proposal advocate strengthening interparliamentary cooperation between national parliaments and the EP?**

*Yes, it does.*

*No, it does not.*

*The proposal does not mention this topic.*

**Does the proposal advocate redefining the relations between the EP and the Commission and the Council?**

*Yes, it does.*

*No, it does not.*

*The proposal does not mention this topic.*

If yes:

**How does the proposal advocate redefining the relations between the EP and the Commission and the Council?**

*It proposes parliamentarisation (fusion of parliament/executive).*

*It proposes a system of checks and balances (similar to the U.S.).*

*Other (please specify).*

**Does the proposal advocate for changes in the role of the European executive institutions (i.e. Commission and European Council)?**

*Yes, it does.*

*No, it does not.*



*The proposal does not mention this topic.*

If yes:

**How does the proposal advocate for changes in the European executive institutions?**

*It proposes directly elected Commission.*

*It proposes to reduce number of Commissioners.*

*It proposes to merge the European Council with the Council.*

*It proposes to merge the Council's composition.*

*Other (please specify).*

**Does the proposal advocate for changes in the role of the European Court of Justice?**

*Yes, it does.*

*No, it does not.*

*The proposal does not mention this topic.*

**Does the proposal advocate for direct democracy: referendums or strengthening the citizens' initiative?**

*Yes, it does.*

*No, it does not.*

*The proposal does not mention this topic.*

**b2. Functional (competence-based) differentiation:**

This type of differentiation refers to the political system's scope of competence and the degree of functional specialization: which issues and how many a governing system at a given level is in charge of, what kind and range of expertise it possesses, how that is organized, and how specialized this political system is.

It focuses on the nature, range and scope of functions that are undertaken at a given level of governing (EU, national or subnational). It seeks to capture the role of expertise; the extent to which the EU is technocratic; the scope of expertise and possible built-in biases in the type of expertise that is available at the EU-level. It focuses on the type of expertise and policy specialisation: how many agencies, what type of agencies and the relationship between EU agencies and EU directorates.

This dimension includes focus on the type and range of policy instruments: regulatory, fiscal, and monetary, shedding light on the EU's biases in terms of monetary union without a fiscal union; and the EU's strong regulatory imprint and its weak redistributive ability.

**Does the proposal argue for the development of new policies (or expand existing shared competences) at the European level?**

*Yes, it does (please indicate the policy area).*

*No, it does not.*

*The proposal does not mention this topic.*

**Does the proposal argue for the development of new types of policy instruments?**

*Yes, it does (please indicate the policy area).*

*No, it does not.*

*The proposal does not mention this topic.*

**Does the proposal argue for the reform of existing EU agencies?**

*Yes, it does (please indicate which one(s) and to which policy area they belong).*

*No, it does not.*

*The proposal does not mention this topic.*

**Does the proposal argue for the development of new EU agencies?**

*Yes, it does (please indicate which ones and to which policy area they belong).*

*No, it does not.*

*The proposal does not mention this topic.*

**Does the proposal argue for the reform of the European Central Bank?**

*Yes, it does.*

*No, it does not.*

*The proposal does not mention this topic.*

**b3. Vertical differentiation (levels of competence)**

This is about the allocation of powers and competencies across levels of governing, in other words, vertical differentiation. This question addresses differentiation in terms of who (what type of institution) has a crucial role in deciding a certain legal act or a policy.

This dimension includes proposals that argue for a territorial differentiation of EU policies or institutional arrangements, including i.e. a set-up, in which not all EU member states take part in a common policy or institution, status of non-members etc. It also include proposals that explicitly reject existing or proposed territorial differentiation. This also includes proposals referring to the selective participation of third countries (i.e. non EU countries) in EU policies.

**Does the proposal argue for the reshuffling competences between levels of government within the EU multilevel polity?**

*Yes, it does.*

*No, it does not.*

*The proposal does not mention this topic.*

If yes.

*More competences for EU supranational institutions*

Refers to proposals that defend that institutions representing European interests (mainly European Commission and European Parliament) should be given more responsibilities in decision-making.

*More competences for EU intergovernmental institutions*

Refers to proposals that defend that institutions representing national interests (mainly Council and European Council) should be given more responsibilities in decision-making.

*More competences for national institutions*

Refers to proposals that defend that institutions located in the Member States should be given more responsibilities in decision-making.

*Other*

Refers to a different distribution of competences to those of the previous options. Please briefly state the features of such division of competences for the different institutions.

***b4. Territorial differentiation***

*This dimension includes proposals that argue for a territorial differentiation of EU policies or institutional arrangements, including i.e. a set-up, in which not all EU member states take part in a common policy or institution, status of non-members etc. directly and indirectly referring to differentiated integration.*

*In your view, does the proposal argue for a territorial differentiation of EU policies or institutions, i.e. a set-up, in which not all EU member states take part in a common policy or institution? Or does the proposal explicitly reject existing or proposed territorial differentiation? In addition, does the proposal refer to the selective participation of third countries in EU policies?*

**Does the proposal argue for a form of territorial differentiation?**

Yes, it does.

No, it does not.

If yes: for which form of territorial differentiation does the proposal argue?

*It proposes temporary territorial differentiation among EU Member States*

Refers to situation in which temporarily some member states form a closer cooperation.

*It proposes permanent territorial differentiation among EU Member States.*

Refers to situation in which some member states form a closer cooperation that is permanent such as SCHENGEN.

*It proposes structuring a core Europe.*

*It rejects existing territorial differentiation among EU Member States.*

*It rejects proposals for territorial differentiation among EU Member States.*

*It proposes selective participation of third countries in EU policies (external differentiation).*

*It rejects (proposals for) selective participation of third countries in EU policies (external differentiation).*

*The proposal does not mention this topic.*

***b5. Citizens' differentiated rights***

It refers to proposals that argue for issues connected with the nature and range of rights to persons, such as civil and political rights, freedom of movement, citizenship, etc.

**Does the proposal seek to alter citizens' rights and status in the EU, including changes in EU citizenship?**

*Yes, it does.*

*No, it does not.*

*The proposal does not mention this topic.*

*If yes:*

**Does the proposal seek to strengthen citizens' participation rights in the EU?**

*Yes, it does.*

*No, it does not.*

*The proposal does not mention this topic.*

**Does the proposal seek to change EU citizenship?**

*Yes, it does.*

*No, it does not.*

*The proposal does not mention this topic.*

**Does the proposal seek to change EU right of movement?**

*Yes, it does.*

*No, it does not.*

*The proposal does not mention this topic.*

**Does the proposal seek to change the status of third-country nationals?**

Third-country nationals are nationals from non-EU member states

*Yes, it does.*

*No, it does not.*

*The proposal does not mention this topic*

**Does the proposal seek to transform political parties?**

*Yes, it does.*

*No, it does not.*

*The proposal does not mention this topic*

**c. Resources for the proposal**

This section refers to information on how to finance the proposal's objectives and the means to reach them, from where to take resources and how to distribute them.

**Does the proposal indicate how to finance the proposal's objectives and the means to reach them?**

*Yes, it does.*

*No, it does not.*

If yes: how should the proposal's objectives and the means to reach them be financed?

*Through national resources*

Refers to Member States financially contributing to the proposal.

Through European resources

Refers to a proposal be financed by European resources (e.g. EU budget).

*Through new European taxation*

Refers to EU institutions establishing new taxes that they collect in order to finance a proposal (e.g. carbon tax).

*Through the financial market with EU institutions' guarantee*

Refers to resources (e.g. bonds) raised on the market, benefitting from the (high) creditworthiness of European institutions (e.g. Commission).

*Through the financial market with Member States' guarantee*

Refers to resources (e.g. bonds) raised on the market and jointly guaranteed by all Member States.

*Other*

Refers to a different means of financing the reform proposal compared to those of the previous options. Please briefly state the features of such financing.

**Does the proposal distinguish between euro area versus non-euro area Member States when suggesting how to finance the proposal's objectives and the means to reach them?**

*Yes, it does.*

*No, it does not.*

*The proposal does not mention this topic.*

If yes: please briefly indicate that differentiation (based on euro area and non-euro area Member States) in financing.

**Does the proposal suggest from where resources to finance the proposal's objectives and the means to reach them should be taken (EU budget, intergovernmental funds, etc.)?**

*Yes, it does.*

*No, it does not.*

*The proposal does not mention this topic.*

If yes: from where should the resources to finance the proposal's objectives and the means to reach them be taken?

*From the EU budget*

Refers to existing resources from the EU budget. The reform proposal does not foresee an increase of the budget.

*As part of new resources of the EU budget*

Refers to new resources – either national contributions or resources directly collected by EU institutions (e.g. through taxes or the finance market) – that increase the EU budget.

*From ad hoc supranational funds outside of the EU budget*

Refers to resources that supranational institutions collect for a specific reform proposal, e.g. through EU taxes (e.g. carbon tax) or through issuing of bonds guaranteed by the same institutions or by the EU budget (e.g. so-called “Coronabonds”). They do not become part of the EU budget.

*From intergovernmental funds*

Refers to the case in which resources associated to the reform proposal are part of existing funds created by Member States and constituted by national contributions (e.g. European Stability Mechanism). The reform proposal does not foresee an increase of resources of those intergovernmental funds.

*As part of new resources of intergovernmental funds or new conditions to access them*

Refers to the case in which the reform proposal is funded through additional resources that Member States allocate to existing intergovernmental funds, or through new forms of conditionality to access them. Existing intergovernmental funds are increased.

*From new intergovernmental funds*

Refers to new ad hoc funds that Member States set up for the reform proposal, with resources coming from Member States only (national contributions).

*Other*

Please briefly provide further information.

**Does the proposal distinguish between euro area versus non-euro area Member States when suggesting from where resources to finance the proposal’s objectives and the means to reach them should be taken?**

*Yes, it does.*

*No, it does not.*

*The proposal does not mention this topic.*

If yes: please briefly indicate the differentiation (based on being or not euro area Member States) in the location from where resources to finance the proposal’s objectives and the means to reach them should be taken.

**Does the proposal suggest ways to distribute the resources to finance the proposal’s objectives and the means to reach them?**

*Yes, it does.*

*No, it does not.*

*The proposal does not mention this topic.*

If yes: how should the resources to finance the proposal’s objectives and the means to reach them be distributed?

*Through loans*

Refers to Member States benefitting from resources related to the reform proposal in the form of loans, with conditions for their spending and specific expiry dates for repayment.

*Through grants*

Refers to Member States benefitting from resources related to the reform proposal in the form of grants, with no conditions for their spending and no need for repayment.

*Through spending by EU institutions*

Refers to EU institutions directly spending resources – with an EU-wide impact – for the reform proposal.

*Other*

Refers to a different way of distributing resources for the reform proposal compared to those of the previous options. Please briefly state the features of such distribution.

Does the proposal distinguish between euro area and non-euro area Member States when suggesting ways to distribute the resources to finance its objectives and the means to reach them?

*Yes, it does.*

*No, it does not.*

*The proposal does not mention this topic.*

*If yes: please briefly indicate that different distribution between euro area and non-euro area Member States.*

**d. Democracy**

Democracy captured in the proposed improvement of (current) democratic problem of the EU as a polity.

**Does the proposal explicitly mention democratic mal-functioning of the EU?**

*Yes, it does.*

*No, it does not.*

If yes:

**Does the proposal aim to improve the democratic mal-functioning of the current EU?**

*Yes, it does.*

*No, it does not.*

*The proposal does not mention this topic.*

**In reference to what level are rectifying measures (improvements) on the functioning of democracy mentioned?**

*The proposal aims to strengthen democracy on the EU level.*

*The proposal aims to strengthen democracy on the national level.*

*The proposal aims to strengthen democracy on the regional level*

*The proposal aims to strengthen democracy but does not mention a level*

*Other (please specify).*

**e. Dominance**

Dominance is defined as “relationship or a circumstance wherein an actor (be that a person, an organization, or a collective) can be arbitrary interfered with and/or manipulated” (Fossum,

2019, p. 2). There are several possible types of dominance referring to actors' "formal legal status; limits to or constrains on the actor's choice options; vulnerability or susceptibility to external influences; deprivation (material and emotional such as sense of self-worth); lack of or denial or recognition; undue impositions; and forms of exclusion" (Fossum, 2019, p.3).

In order to capture dominance in textual material, we will code for utterances of speakers/journalists that make explicit reference to the term "dominance" (including its verbal and adjectival uses, such as "dominated" or "dominant").

**Does the proposal diagnose any form of dominance in the EU?**

*Yes, it does.*

*No, it does not.*

*The proposal does not mention this topic.*

If yes:

**What form of dominance in the EU proposal is mentioned?** (These are not exclusive answers – more than one can be selected.)

*Exclusion*

It refers to when an actor is explicitly excluded from relevant information; and/or access to decisions and decision-forums/arrangements that will affect the actor's choices, resources and status. Instances when powerful member states take decisions informally without notifying those affected therefore count as exclusion.



### *Illicit hierarchy*

It refers to a particular type of hierarchy, since hierarchy as such should not be counted as dominance. The weight is on illicit: when an institutional arrangement makes binding decisions without being properly democratically authorised and/or lacks legal authorisation – through legal provisions that are transparent and accessible to all concerned. ECB acting beyond its bounds through undertaking a monetary policy that effectively trumps national fiscal policy is one example. Another is the largely informal Eurogroup, which sidelines parliaments. A further example is the European Stability Mechanism, which is regulated by international not Community law and whose decisions would not be accountable to the European parliament.

### *Fragmentation*

It can be associated with dominance when this amounts to a breakdown of coordination and governing no longer proceeds according to predictable rules but is the result of caprice and circumstances. Fragmentation reflects the notion that lack of order engenders vulnerability not only to public power wielders but also to private power, including market actors.

### *Lack of transparency*

It can be associated with dominance when actors know that their interests and concerns will be affected but not by whom, when and how.

### *Status deprivation*

It is when actors are stripped of or denied status such as for instance asylum seekers being denied legal standing or access to legal recourse; or a state is no longer recognised on a par with other states.

### *Rights denial/deprivation*

It is when persons are denied rights or when rights-holders are stripped of rights or their rights are 'less worth.'

### *Material deprivation*

It is when actors experience material loss or negative distributive effects that can be traced back to a wilful act or structural-institutional arrangement and not some natural disaster.

### *Oppression*

It is when a person (or organisation) is actively held down and controlled by another that it has not authorised. The situation is experienced as oppressive and negative by the subjected party.

### *Other*

Please specify which form of dominance and in what it consists.

## **Does the proposal seek to remedy a perceived form of dominance in the EU?**

*Yes, it does.*

*No, it does not.*

*The proposal does not mention this topic.*

*If yes: please state which form of dominance the proposal seeks to remedy and how it wants to do so.*

**e. Other important information**

**Does the proposal call for some form of solidarity between Member States?**

*Yes, it does*

*No, it does not.*

*The proposal does not mention this topic.*

If yes: please provide some information on how that solidarity would operate.

**Is the proposal for or against further European integration?**

*For*

*Against*

*The proposal does not mention this topic.*

**Does the proposal mention (explicitly) European or national identity?**

*Yes, it mentions only European identity.*

*Yes, it mentions only national identity.*

*Yes, it mentions both.*

*No, it does not mention either of them.*

**g. Keywords**

Indicate the key topics/themes relating to the proposal (3-5 words) which are easily searchable (i.e. EU-Turkey Statement, Dublin Regulations, etc). Place each keyword in a separate column.

Keyword 1

Keyword 2

Keyword 3

Keyword 4

Keyword 5

**h. Summary**

**a. Was the summary included in the proposal (Y/N)?**

If the summary was provided in the proposal itself, please indicate YES. You can then copy and paste the summary into the rubric of 'summary of the proposal'. If you indicate NO, it means that you need to provide the summary (200 words) in the next entry.

**b. Summary**

Provide a short (200 words) executive summary in English. Briefly state the main argument and the supporting points of the proposal. Do not include your own opinions, ideas, or interpretations into the summary. Try to present the proposal claims accurately.

**9. AT/WITH WHOM: RELATIONS / CONNECTIONS**

**a. Addressee of the proposal**

Was the proposal directed to/at a particular addressee? (It can be to another actor, or more general terms, i.e. to all migrants, to all young people, to citizens of Europe).

**b. References to other actors in the proposal (people, organisations, institutions, etc)**

Are other actors referred to in the proposal other than the addressee(s)? These actors may be referred to in passing or explicitly, neutrally, positively or negatively. Limit yourself to significant references and provide information who was mentioned (i.e. names of proposers, organizations etc.).

**c. Reference to other proposals**

If applicable, name other proposals (titles) that are referred to in a significant way in the proposal.

**d. References to other versions of the same proposal**

If applicable, indicate if this proposal is a revised/updated/amended version of a previous proposal. If so, name the title of the previous proposal. If not applicable, leave blank.

**e. References to critical junctures**

In some cases the proposals are reactions to events, to crucial points in time when a decision must be made. These are critical junctures. Name those critical junctures, if they are important for a given proposal. Usually such event will be explicitly mentioned in the proposal. But if it is not, keep in mind the date the proposal was published, and whether it coincides with an event that might be considered a critical juncture.

**10. WHY**

**a. Main aim of the proposal**

Briefly (in 50 words or less) indicate the aim of the proposal – this should match with the **type of document** (plea, critique, etc., see above), but provide the substance of the proposal – consider using verbs (ex: to renegotiate the financial arrangements within the EU-Turkey Statement).

**11. TECHNICAL INFORMATION**

**a. Formal status of the proposal**

Provide information (if available) if the proposal was processed further in the EU/Member State. If this is the case, provide information where and how it was processed.

**b. Hyperlink (www...)**

Provide the full hyperlink.

**c. Original proposal or secondary document**

Is this an original proposal or an analysis/commentary of a proposal (secondary document)? If it is not clear, choose ‘not clear’.

**d. Date the proposal was accessed**

Provide the date in which you accessed the proposal (DD/MM/YYYY).

**e. Author(ship)**

If a name is provided, please write it here. This may be an author or authors of a proposal that is published by a given organization, an interviewer etc.

**f. Comments**

Provide any important additional comments that you think should be considered.

**12. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND DATA MANAGEMENT:**

1. Ethical considerations (GDPR). The EU3D database consists of publicly accessible and available documents containing proposals for the future of Europe. No other data is collected and there are no other human participants of the research. The personal data that will be included in the database are related either to people in public posts whose opinions about the future of Europe have been published or authors who published their proposals, thus they hold the authorship rights. All partners will make sure to comply with the data minimisation principle as spelled out in the Grant Agreement. The GDPR officers from JUK and LUISS have been consulted and foresee no risks to the GDPR regulations from the EU3D database.
2. Data management. The data used for the project will be collected via the Internet from publicly available sources. They will be collected and stored in one database, in Survey Monkey. LUISS will serve as the database coordinator.  
Each partner will receive a link to a dedicated programme through which the data will be gathered and sent directly to the database. Partners will also keep a backup copy of the proposals (in pdf format) they have collected on their institutional servers.





## Contact

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