



Report on the Youth and Stakeholder Event
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The Future of Europe: Exploring strategies for strengthening EU Citizenship

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EU citizenship is about a set of rights complementing one's national citizenship. EU citizenship is also about active membership of a European community, about influencing decision-making on rules, policies and practices that affect one's own national and local societies. The opportunities and capacities to exercise these rights and to participate differ between countries, between groups and in time. Social, cultural and economic trends and crises as well as policy responses to these trends and crises, create potentially new barriers for EU citizenship. Although we cannot predict the future, we can prepare ourselves for different thinkable futures. What choices can we make within these futures? What can we do, given our position and role, to foster (cross border) rights and citizen participation for the future?



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Youth and Stakeholder Event

Although we cannot predict the future, we can prepare ourselves for different thinkable futures. As Gerald Davis stated: *“Scenarios are stories about the future, but their purpose is to make better decisions in the present”*. With this event, we intend to feed the discussion on what might happen with EU citizenship in different circumstances. We want to stimulate the discussion on what repertoires of action might protect, foster or boost EU citizenship in thinkable alternative futures.

On the 26th of April, a group of 35 participants joined the event. These participants represented different worlds: the world of (national and local) public administration, the world of NGO’s, the world of the younger generation, and the world of labour. Especially the younger generation had a major role during the event, because who are better positioned to think about the future than the next generations themselves?

Four scenarios

In four so-called ‘what if’ scenarios we presented four images of how the EU, Europe, might look like in 2030. These images are partly based on earlier research and events that have taken place in the context of the bEUcitizen project. We identified four driving forces which can be seen as the ends of two continua. The first continuum is about the level of identification, integration and governance in Europe. Here we see growing nationalism throughout Europe as a strong driving force at the one end and Europeanism as driving force at the other end. The second continuum deals with the primacy in regulating society: state or market. On the one hand, we come from decades in which the role of the market is creating the greatest wealth and wellbeing for all was seen as dominant, including the privatisation of public services. At the other hand, and partly in reaction to different sorts of crises, the state is to a certain extent brought back. By combining the critical driving forces of the two continua, we constructed a set of four different future scenarios.

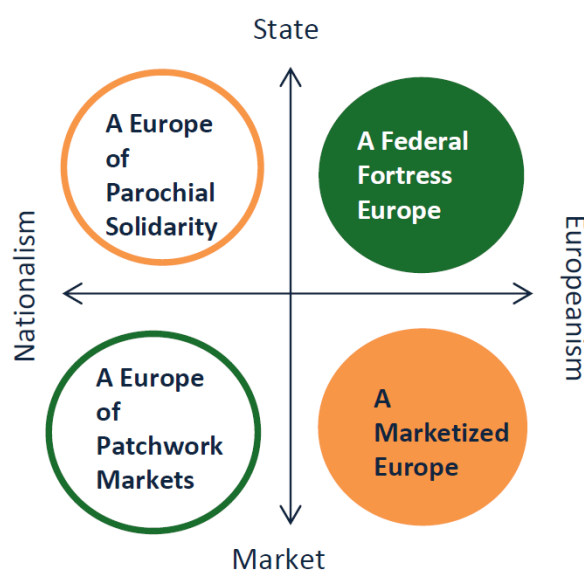


Figure 1: Four thinkable future scenarios



A Europe of Parochial Solidarity in which the nationalism, state intervention and state guaranteed social security are dominant. In this future:

- Member states took power;
- Member states provide the provisions for a decent life;
- The EU is primarily about trade relations;
- National parliaments review EU decisions.

A Federal Fortress Europe where supra-national state intervention is combined with Europeanism, protecting those with EU citizenship within the EU, protecting the EU from outsiders. In this future:

- The EU has a European federal government, active in a broad spectrum of policy areas;
- EU guarantees minimal provisions for a decent life;
- EU coordination on fiscal, social and taxation matters as well as an integrated capital market;
- EU invests extensively in federal border protection and defence;
- EU government responsible for foreign affairs, defence and immigration.

A Marketized Europe in which the market power by market actors is dominant side by side with Europeanism. In this future:

- The EU is primarily active in domains related to the functioning of the single market;
- There is a strong focus on deregulation;
- Cooperation on common concerns depends on the capacity of governments and companies;
- Social inequality is growing, rights are conditional and related to positions on the labour market;
- Organising around economic interests becomes more important than traditional democratic processes on the national and the EU level;
- Access to (EU) rights can be bought by third national citizens.

A Europe of Patchwork Markets where the interests of nations and national and regional markets are dominant and the variation between these markets is high. In this future:

- Governments are weak, the EU ceases to exist;
- Inequalities in income within and between countries grow;
- The focus is on the nation and its market with a strong focus on deregulation;
- There is an increasing divergence in how countries, economies and markets develop;
- There are no common rules and standards within Europe.



What will happen and what to foster?

After the presentation of the four scenarios, the first breakout session took place. In this session, the participants were asked to discuss in mixed groups all four scenarios: how likely are the scenarios? What will happen with EU citizenship in each scenario? What is there to foster? After the breakout session, one rapporteur per group presented the main findings in the plenary session.

The participants recognized in all scenarios developments that are already happening now. For instance, in countries as France and the Netherlands nationalism is growing, but at the same time Europeanism is visible too. Also, the role of the market is visible to some extent. In regard to the likeliness of the scenarios, the groups concluded in different ways. Some argued that A Marketized Europe is more likely to become reality, since citizens distrust governments. Others argued that A Federal Fortress Europe is most likely, but the participants also thought it is likely that a mix of the scenarios will become reality.

The consequences of each scenario for EU citizenship was also discussed. In the first scenario, A Europe of Parochial Solidarity, the existence of EU citizenship rights will change; it will be mostly about economic rights. Other EU rights will probably not exist. Moreover, the inequality within the EU will increase, since there are no equal standards within the EU. In the second scenario, A Federal Fortress Europe, the equality within the EU will increase. For instance, it is possible that gay rights are recognized across the EU. This scenario seems to be 'a best option', but there are negative side effects too. For instance, equality within the EU can lead for some member states to a lower standard than they know nowadays. Moreover, it is possible that national interests and different cultures will be scrapped, and that migration policy becomes even more tight. As a result, the EU will be a fortress that is not accessible for third country nationals. In a third scenario, A Marketized Europe, there are minimal (EU) citizenship rights. There is no focus on the social aspect. The elite will become more rich and social cleavages will grow. Furthermore, the possibility to buy rights is dangerous: it will be only accessible for wealthy people and/or companies. In the fourth scenario, A Europe of Patchwork Markets, EU citizenship will probably not exist at all.

Designing strategies

After the plenary session where each rapporteur presented their main findings, the second breakout session took place. The participants were asked to discuss in different groups two scenarios: what can be done by whom to protect, foster and/or stimulate conditions for (EU) citizens in these scenarios? What can we do today? After the breakout session, one rapporteur per group presented the main findings in the plenary session.

One of the main findings of this session is the importance of education. The participants recognized a lack of proper education about the EU and EU citizenship. One of the steps that should be taken now is reforming education. Pupils and students should learn (more) about the EU, the existence of EU citizenship, the rights they have, how to use their rights and get a view on the decision-making process. The ultimate goal should be to make citizens more critical and to let them vote more critical. To do so, the key is to simplify



teaching material about the EU and EU citizenship. However, education should not become EU propaganda. Therefore, NGO's can play an important role in the development of teaching material.

Also, the governments play an important role. For instance, the EU can serve as a guardian of social rights to overcome social dumping and by introducing social security standards. Moreover, the national governments have a huge responsibility too: they are elected by the citizens and, thus, has to advocate for (EU) citizenship.

Another finding of this session is the role for citizens themselves. According to some participants it is difficult to identify yourself with the EU and also the role of citizens seems to be minor. Citizens can already initiate a Citizens Initiative, but they can do more. For instance, when a problem affects many citizens, they can organise themselves in, for example, protests to raise awareness.

The future in the present: reflecting on strategies and policies

In the debate between participants several interesting topics were addressed. One of these was the idea nationalism is a too narrow concept to describe what is and might happen. It is not only about the focus on the nation state, but it is a broader category, it refers to a focus on your 'own' homogeneous group; your own community. Secondly, it was mentioned that socio-economic differences and exclusion did not receive enough attention as this is in the heart of the problem. Lastly, the issue was debated how the distance between politicians, governments, administration at the one end and citizens at the other end can be bridged as you need both for finding solutions and legitimacy to safeguard citizens' rights and political participation.