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The Unfinished
EUROPE
Democracy

A Vision for the European Union

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Ute Scheub

EUROPE
THE UNFINISHED
DEMOCRACY

A VISION FOR THE EUROPEAN UNION

WE LIVE IN A DEMOCRACY WE'RE
STILL FIGHTING TO ESTABLISH.

ROBERT MENASSE

The European house

Is the fate of the European Union something that is close to your heart? Are you worried about the danger that it might disintegrate at any moment now? About the growth of nationalism and right-wing populism? Then you've come to the right place. The elections to the European Parliament in May 2019 represent a dramatic and fateful choice: they may determine whether the Union survives at all.

Donald Trump's former chief strategist Steve Bannon has announced that he intends – through campaigns by his foundation, The Movement – to increase the number of right-wing populists and right-wing radicals sitting in the EU Parliament from the current 14.4 percent to around 30 percent, and then to destroy the EU from within. Bannon has already met with Viktor Orbán, Nigel Farage, Alice Weidel, Marine Le Pen and Matteo Salvini on several occasions, and has also appeared in front of their supporters. Salvini is now considering taking the fight to the enemy by standing for election as the head of the EU Commission and, together with Le Pen, rages against "the true enemies of Europe" in Brussels.[1] Bannon, former vice president of the scandal-hit firm *Cambridge Analytica* and executive chair of the media portal *Breitbart News*, knows exactly how to rig elections – with the financial help of neoliberal billionaires like Robert Mercer. *Cambridge Analytica* is strongly suspected of manipulating Trump's election and the Brexit vote via "dark posts" on Facebook and social bots. He also played a possibly crucial role in the WhatsApp-led, extremely dirty election campaign of the new fascist president Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil.[2] Bannon should be very proud: no fewer than three globally important votes have gone his way. Next up on his programme of destruction is the EU.

The EU is in the deepest crisis it has faced since its foundation. The United Kingdom will soon leave; right-wing governments of member states are refusing to implement joint decisions; mutual distrust is

eating into its bones. For the first time ever, the possibility of collapse is in the air. Europe is much more fragile than we thought. Reform and democratisation of the EU institutions seems more urgent than ever, especially since those with responsibility often seem to be acting irresponsibly, or cluelessly. Their lack of political imagination is palpable.

The EU summit of the national heads of government in July 2018 enabled us to see the disaster playing out under a magnifying glass. It was a morality play about how national politicians afflicted by St. Vitus's dance – in this case, the German Interior Minister Horst Seehofer – could paralyse the entire Union. The search for solutions to the most urgent problems – banking crisis, social crisis, euro crisis, climate crisis, democracy crisis – was put on hold. On account of Seehofer's desire for a power politics wrestling match with Angela Merkel, the heads of government, at the insistence of the German Chancellor, had to focus almost exclusively on the situation at their national borders. Despite declining numbers of refugees, they agreed to further tighten asylum laws, including introducing "regional disembarkation platforms" in countries known to practise torture, such as Libya – which makes a mockery of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. The Pope accused the Union of "shocking egoism".[3] If Seehofer had succeeded in getting his way at the Bavarian-Austrian border, this in itself would have affected only a handful of asylum seekers; but it would have set off a domino effect at other borders, thereby possibly bringing the entire EU to the brink of collapse.

All the crises listed above are about borders, boundaries, or limits. About limitless political egos, about the borders and/or limits of the EU, of its member states, and of its capacity to act. And about underlying questions. Should integration go further? Should the EU become a federal state, or should it remain a confederation of states? How should it handle borderless free trade, borderless and limitless data streams, and the runaway fear that afflicts so many people in the face of this boundless modernity? How should the EU deal with those who want to protect themselves against this fear with so many new walls and fences that nothing would remain of European integration? How should it counter the gigantic, looming shadow of the threatening,

border-hopping refugee, who supposedly calls into question all borders and values?

The worst thing is that those in charge in Brussels and the European capitals no longer even ask themselves such questions. In the summer of 2018, the European public witnessed an EU summit of cluelessness. Hardly anyone – apart from the French President Emmanuel Macron – still dares to put forward a vision. Oh, for the days when even arch conservatives would enthuse breathlessly, as Franz Josef Strauss did in 1984, that "Europe is our future!"[4] But the deepening, now almost bottomless abyss of distrust between the EU and the public cannot be resolved by ever-further tightening of the asylum regulations. Evelyn Roll, editor of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, outlines what would be required as follows. "Right-wing populism is enforcing a switch from what was in effect rule by the elites to citizen participation. Citizens are the ones who can get things done. In fact, in the beginning it was their job, their responsibility. That was the whole point of democracy." She even found a pithy slogan for it: "We are Europe!"[5]

Events sometimes develop a frightening momentum of their own, as we know from the fall of the Berlin Wall. Gradual processes of decay can lead to a dizzyingly sudden collapse of our accustomed and ordinary present. It could happen to the EU, if right-wing populist leaders achieve a widespread breakthrough. They whip up an imaginary homogenous "people" against a "corrupt elite", and after a victory they present themselves as the "embodiment of the will of the people" as they threaten and bully the media, the judiciary and the opposition. The sociologist Oliver Nachtwey calls this "de-civilisation" – when "the mortar really begins to crumble".[6]

This makes it all the more important to come up with a visionary plan for Europe, in order to defend it – and to do so from the bottom up, from the citizens. We should be prepared for Zero Hour. We need to think of new ideas for the reconstruction of the European house, and we need to mix up some more mortar. The run-up to the elections to the EU Parliament offer us an opportunity. We need a pan-European

movement that flows across borders just as easily as the streams of European capital do.

Because we have a lot to lose – a tremendous amount. People who have not experienced the horrors of war often do not realise this. "Europe's young people take many things for granted," writes Jens Baumanns, a 24-year-old student. "We don't know any different – elections, democracy, peace, stability, in short, Europe's fundamental values, things of which the rest of the world can only dream. Now these values are under attack. Now we have to learn to fight for them."[7] European union was the answer to the Second World War. It brought us decades of peace and prosperity. And we're supposed to put all that at risk? Was everything really better in the pure, unsullied nation states of yore? Was it much more fun to wait in traffic jams for hours at European borders? Would it somehow be an uplifting experience to exchange currencies again? Would it be homely to renounce our freedom to travel and to move to other countries? How could little countries like Germany, France or Hungary still hold their own in a future in which Europe's economic strength is shrinking compared with China or India? The former Belgian Prime Minister Paul-Henri Spaak once observed that "there are only two types of states in Europe: small states, and small states that haven't yet realised that they are small".

The shared European house

What do you think of when you hear the term "European house", or "European home"? A ruined shack? A bureaucrats' skyscraper of mirrored glass? An impregnable fortress surrounded by barbed wire, CCTV cameras and security guards? Or a freeform modular open building, with lots of cosy apartments for the diverse community living there and their different needs?

The European house is a metaphor frequently used by politicians and journalists for the EU or for Europe as a whole. It goes back to Mikhail Gorbachev, the former Soviet head of state and party. In the final declaration after his meeting with the then Federal Chancellor Helmut Kohl before the fall of the Berlin Wall in June 1989, it was stated that

the particular goal of both states was the "construction of a common European house". (Gorbachev's original metaphor was variously translated as "common European house", "common European home" or "all-European house".)

Of course, he didn't mean the EU administrative buildings in Brussels, which had long existed already. They stick out of the bourgeois architecture of the Belgian capital like a sore thumb: here, the patrician apartment blocks of the old city, with their ornate facades; there, the European Quarter – all glass, no frills, the huge buildings loom upwards to the sky, sober to their very core; pure functionality, without creature comforts of any kind; the essence of administration. The only splash of colour comes from the blue Euro flags with their 12 golden stars.

Yet the European Quarter is a place where history has been written. Here, a shared house is being built for the peoples of the continent, who, following centuries of war, are now living together peacefully. A historically unique place, therefore, that has overcome aggressive nationalism, and might perhaps have deserved more colour, perfumed breezes and passion. This is the first transnational governmental institution in the world without its own territory. According to the late German sociologist Ulrich Beck, the EU is a "negotiated state".[8] The Union is a pioneer, says the Austrian writer Robert Menasse. "What is currently developing in Europe, accompanied by all the crisis symptoms that such a world-historical process produces, is something completely new".[9] "The rest of the world will hopefully learn from the European example," writes the bestselling Israeli author Yuval Noah Harari.[10] And the French philosopher Bruno Latour even compares the EU "with its multifaceted, intermeshing rules" to an ecosystem. "It is precisely this kind of experience that is needed if we want to get to grips with climate change, which recognises no borders."[11]

From a distance, perhaps non-Europeans see the advantages of the EU even more clearly. "Nowhere else in the world," wrote the leftist British-American historian Tony Judt in 2010, "has such a vast region been so successfully built up and managed without war or empire

formation."[12] Barack Obama, certainly no leftist, wrote in 2016 that "it's easy for a non-European to remind Europeans how great what they have created is … With more than 500 million people and at least 24 languages, Europe is one of the greatest political achievements of modern times".[13]

In 2004, US author Jeremy Rifkin compared Europe with the USA. He wrote a rapturous hymn to the EU with its "polycentric style of government" and its "multilevel governance". Europe, he went on, has a great future ahead of it. European societies are more oriented towards the common good than individualistic US-Americans. Europeans, he claimed, find their freedom in relationships and quality of life, not in autonomy.[14] At the core of the American dream lies individual success ("from dishwasher to millionaire"); at the core of the European dream is community.

Some readers may now be asking, "I beg your pardon, but where did Rifkin experience that? Is he hallucinating after spending too much time sunbathing in Italy?" But people who travel to Europe from the USA can probably see the differences much more clearly than people who grow up here. The sociologist Oskar Negt is also a firm advocate of rescuing the unique social elements that characterise Europe.[15] And this should help us to see what it is we have to lose. And why US President Donald Trump declares the EU to be an "enemy", and why he wants – together with Putin and other autocrats – to destroy it: because, despite all the wrongs and hideous injustices in Europe, things are much better and fairer here than they are in the USA. Or in Russia, China, and many other countries.

Of course, the EU can also be seen in a completely different light. As a bureaucratic monster. As an artificial, self-contained bubble. As an empire run by pompous Eurocrats who prescribe the permitted degree of curvature for cucumbers, and prevent countries from governing themselves. As the neoliberal government of business, making the rich ever richer and the poor ever poorer. And so on. Yet even the most critical views cannot deny the fact that the EU is something historically unprecedented.

But it is also true that Europe is unfinished. That term applies above all to its democracy, i.e. the capacity for self-determination of its supreme sovereign – its roughly 510 million people. But what would happen if its citizens were involved in the construction of their shared house? If they could discuss and draft the architectural blueprints together? The buildings would surely be completely different. More open; more varied; more citizen-friendly; more inviting, for all who live on this young – and at the same time old – continent. Alongside the necessary administrative skyscrapers there would probably be open spaces, public works of art, and little niches in which the best of European traditions would be celebrated, inspired by the most beautiful architectural styles. For example, a Greek agora with space for citizens' assemblies and the democratic exercise of the art of debate. Freely accessible libraries, landscapes of culture and knowledge where edifying and illuminating thinking is encouraged. Restaurants celebrating the wonderful diversity of European cuisine. Coffee houses, as informal meeting places where the noble traditions of gossip and idle chatter are cultivated. Spacious market halls filled with the scents of foods of all kinds: Italian pasta, German bread, Romanian tomatoes, Belgian chocolates, French wines and much, much more.

We want to have a say in government

The most important thing is perhaps the agora, the public meeting and discussion place of the city states of Ancient Greece. People have a deep-seated need for self-determination and a say in how they are governed. Their voice is their key social instrument. The Latin term "res publica" gave us our modern "republic". In all public (or "republican") affairs, we reach agreement on our common goals through language and voice. What's more, it is how we first establish republican community. And it is how we create wider resonance – literally, re-sounding.

The essence of democracy is polyphony, in contrast to the enforced mono-phone and mono-tone aural environment of dictatorship. It consists of raising one's own voice and finding concordance, or harmony, with others. This is a joyful experience in which mouth, heart and lungs, feelings, spirit and soul are all involved. We speak for

ourselves. We experience ourselves as living individuals. As vocal and effective. Our voices go back and forth; they may be dissonant, or create strange tones, but afterwards they often come back together to form a new main chord, a consensus – a concordance. Not only in choirs, but in discussions, too, it is clear that there is a fundamental human ability to tune into one another, and a need for resonance. And this in turn is the basis for mutual understanding. We need democratic polyphony like we need the air we breathe. Voices sound when we listen to each other and look at each other. Hence our deep need to be seen (re-spected, held in regard) and to be heard (to be listened to).

Only when this is not fulfilled, because the rulers do not listen to the voices of the ruled, when they do not enjoy re-spect, only then does dissatisfaction arise – and frustration, anger, annoyance, resentment, burning hatred of "those at the top who don't listen, to whom we don't matter". In short: the hatred that fuels right-wing populism. Its leaders and their resentful trolls demand revenge for all those who feel unheard, unseen, ignored.

Representative democracy does not completely fulfil the fundamental human yearning to be seen and heard, the yearning for respect and resonance. This is because it involves delegating our voice to those whom we elect. We literally give them our voice, our vote (from a Latin word meaning a promise or a vow) at the ballot box. Consequently, many of our representatives are only interested in us shortly before they come up for re-election – every 4 or 5 years. Democracy is thus dangerously reduced to purely electoral democracy. In Ancient Greece, the European birthplace of democracy, it was practised as direct democracy, in the form of assemblies and sortition (appointment to office by lottery). Anyone wanting to resolve the democracy crisis, in the EU or elsewhere, should therefore demand and promote the idea that its representative forms need to be supplemented by direct and consultative democracy.

"Consultative citizens" councils, set up to advise politicians, often find better, more convincing, more inclusive solutions to political problems. Randomly selected bodies of this kind have been used – in

Canada, the Netherlands, Iceland and Ireland – to discuss proposed new election laws and constitutional reforms. In Iceland, the world's first "citizens' constitution" was created on the basis of a collective citizens' consultation, though it ultimately foundered on the conservative forces in their parliament. In Ireland, a citizens' council helped pave the way for the success of the direct democratic referendum on the introduction of same-sex marriage.[16]

A decisive factor for the quality of citizens' councils is that demographic criteria such as gender, age, ethnic background, occupation and educational level are taken into account in the lottery procedure (this is known as "qualified random selection"). If the first selection stage produces predominantly old, white, Christian men, or predominantly young, dark-skinned, Muslim women, then the draw continues until the selection is broadly representative. The biggest advantage of citizens' councils is that they give lobbyists virtually no opportunity for influence, on account of the selection being random. Additionally, those selected are not pursuing their own interests. A great variety of voices can be heard, and a variety of interests and wishes expressed and taken into account. Because – in the aggregate – women tend to have different needs from men, young people different from old, homosexuals different from heterosexuals and so on.

Our threatened democracy in the EU can only be saved by defending it from the front. By expanding, broadening, deepening its legitimacy, through the inclusion of all members of society. By making all voices audible. Through direct democracy as in referendums, through consultative democracy as in citizens' councils, from the smallest village up to the EU bodies. And all of this always on the common foundation of values, and under the common roof, of the European house.

Chapter 1

A brief reminder of Europe's long history

Nation states may have their justifications, but historically speaking they have often lasted no longer than the blink of an eye. In the Middle Ages, they were more or less carried around on horseback by princes, kings and emperors, who changed residences according to the seasons and the political exigencies – and simply took their power and entourage with them. They were not nation states in the modern sense of the term: there were no borders, only political spheres of influence. People could walk for thousands of kilometres without anyone stopping them at a border post and demanding to see a passport. Or throwing them into a refugee camp if they didn't have one. Before the First World War, you didn't need a visa to travel across Europe, and passports in their present form were only introduced in the 1920s. "Before 1914, 'abroad' was just a figure of speech," wrote Heinrich Mann. "In the old Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, 'nation' referred exclusively to the higher nobility," adds the historian Peter Alter. As late as the end of the 18th century, "nation" did not include the entirety of the adult population, "but only the numerically small ruling class of the nobles."[17] Historically, the nation was very blue-blooded – and by no means, as right-wing populists claim, the "fatherland of the people".

In Latin, "natio" means people or tribe. But today's nations are *not* tribal societies. They do not have a unitary culture or language, and they also include people "not born here". When France became a republic in 1789, only half of the inhabitants spoke French, and only about 12 percent spoke it "correctly". At the time of its unification, Italy was made up of dialect regions; only 2.5 percent communicated in Italian. In 18th century Germany, fewer than 500,000 people spoke "High German".[18] So it was hardly possible to speak of a single, inherited language.

Historians and political scientists have sweated blood trying to clearly define a "nation". The German historian Friedrich Meinecke resorted to a rather vague distinction between "state nations" and "cultural nations". Following this distinction, state nations are created by a collective of people who at some point adopted a common constitution and thus founded a community of (mostly male) citizens with equal legal rights and a sense of a shared future. Myths and tales of sacrifice are often connected with this history. Typical examples are the revolutionary France of 1789 and the USA, which were founded almost simultaneously. Cultural nations, on the other hand, consist of people with a common language and culture who do not necessarily live in a common formal state. Examples are the patchwork of small German territories before the foundation of the German Reich in 1871, or the divided Poland of the period between 1772 and 1918.

In every state, region and group, people therefore relate in very different ways emotionally to their nation. For a population that has for centuries felt itself oppressed by "occupiers" or "aliens" before finally creating a common nation through a shared struggle, a feeling of liberation and pride is understandable. Among many Germans, by contrast, and especially among descendants of Nazis, there is a great wariness and distance towards nationalism, which has brought so much misery to the world.

State, nation and property were historically interdependent and closely linked. The main task of the state was to protect private property and establish equality of rights among property owners – through the judiciary, the military and other institutions. The enclosure of the commons in England, of pastures and forests that were previously accessed and used by all, began the process of the privatisation of land and farmland. The former users were driven out and had to hire themselves out as day labourers. In the 17th and 18th centuries, this was the catalyst for the industrial revolution, which created capitalists and proletarians. And a historically new concept of property that excluded other people from using or enjoying something.[19] The national state defended this form of property with legal titles.

This process was accompanied by the inclusion or exclusion of people "not born here". They were defined as "aliens" and often aggressively attacked. Nations were created by demarcation, by defining "others", by "othering". The national political consciousness of the Germans was ignited in the 19th century by Napoleon Bonaparte's conquest of a large part of the German territories. German elites became anti-French, and the French anti-German. Italian national consciousness arose as a self-defining reaction to the Habsburg monarchy. The Irish rose in opposition to their British colonial rulers. The Poles defined themselves as Poles in conflict with Russia, Prussia and Austria-Hungary. [20]

The nation – a fragile construct

The nation is thus an artificial and fragile construct – yet it remains an emotionally charged issue for millions of people. Probably because for many it is synonymous with "protection" and "home", with "belonging" and "security". And because people tend to think of a nation as a continuation of their own bodies. This can be seen in political terms such as "corporation", "head of state", "organs of state", "military arm" and "body politic". However, the protection they hope for from this huge, imaginary nation-body – often symbolised by female figures such as the French Marianne – was and is very contingent. Subject namely to the will of its respective ruler, who would sometimes lean towards peace, sometimes mobilise for war. With often fatal consequences for their subjects, however enthused these might be with nationalist fervour.

In uncertain times, uncertain and insecure people wish for support and orientation. If this leads to calls for a "popular national body ready for military action" with a "strong head of state" and a "leader" ("Führer"), then the ugly side of nationalism emerges: the exclusion of all those denounced as "foreign bodies" on account of the fact that they have a "foreign body". Nationalism can have a liberating effect, sometimes even revolutionary, if people are standing up against dictatorial rule or to overcome the *Kleinstaaterei* of small states. But it also has a hateful, violent, even genocidal face, as German National Socialism did. The Nazis saw Jews, Roma and Slavs as "parasites" on the

"German body politic" who "poisoned German blood". The deaths of millions in Europe were the result.

Today, nation states are much less important – perhaps not in people's subjective perceptions, but objectively. Nations are no longer isolated entities, but woven into the global economy and innumerable cooperative and media networks. And – however flawed they may be individually – such networks now exist in greater numbers than ever before in human history: the Internet, the mass media, the UN and its subsidiary agencies, the EU and many others. In earlier times, a messenger arrived once a month on horseback and announced the news from distant parts on the medieval village square. Today we know within fractions of a second if a rickshaw has collided with a holy cow in India, or a bag of peppers has fallen over in Hungary.

There is also not much left of the nation's shared ancestry – even if we leave aside for a moment the European border regions that have constantly changed their nominal national identity. If a French woman today can claim two French parents, four French grandparents and eight French great-grandparents, then she is the exception rather than the rule. People in the raptures of love have always intermingled. And they are doing so today more than ever, because in a globalised world it is easier than ever. In Germany, almost every fourth person now has what is called a "migration background", and in France and other EU countries it is not appreciably fewer. Conversely, the aggression shown by ethnic nationalists towards foreign men is often an outcome of the fear that there might not be any women left over for them. In some East German villages, the population is now almost exclusively male, because the women have all moved to the West to find a job and/or get married there. The comedian Carolin Kebekus put it with biting sarcasm: in such areas, now almost devoid of women, men "feel their sperm backing up all the way into their erect arms".

"No nation can keep itself free from the influence of other nations. None of the things we're proud of would then continue to exist. That's the story we need to be telling in Europe," writes the Danish-born author Janne Teller.[21] The Goethe-Institut presents a number

of wonderful little examples of this European cultural heritage on its website.[22] For example, the story of how the Swiss-Austrian Jacob Christoph Rad invented sugar cubes in Moravia in 1841 after his wife had injured herself while chopping off a piece of the then ubiquitous sugarloaf; he sold his patent across half of Europe. Or the story of Pilsner beer. In the West Bohemian city of Pilsen, 260 individual brewers were experimenting with secret added ingredients such as the ground bones of the recently deceased, pieces of wood taken from the gallows and dog excrement, until in 1838 angry councillors poured away all the resultant undrinkable swill. Following a citizens' meeting, the local residents decided to club together and set up a modern brewery. They imported the Bavarian master brewer Josef Groll, who promptly invented a new beer – Pils – which soon set off on its triumphant conquest of the world. Or the cooperative movement: cooperatives originated in France, developed into a movement in England and grew exponentially in Germany. Or the picture postcard. Or the Ore mountains …

So isn't it about time we developed a new European consciousness? The social philosopher Jürgen Habermas criticises the timidity of the "despondent social democratic parties", which no longer even contemplate such things and "underestimate the disposition of their voters to engage themselves for projects reaching beyond narrow self-interest".[23] Emmanuel Macron won the election in France by focusing on Europe; Martin Schulz, the SPD's candidate for German Chancellor and former President of the EU Parliament, was pressurised by his advisers to say almost nothing about Europe in the election campaign, and duly lost. According to Habermas, there is considerable evidence for the emergence of "not only … a shared European identity distinct from national identity, but also an unexpectedly high willingness to support European policies that would imply redistribution across national boundaries."

It is important to bear in mind that this is not about disparaging national consciousness, or simply abolishing the nation states without so much as a by-your-leave. People carry within them overlapping local, regional, national and continental identities. Some feel

bound first and foremost to their home town or region, others to their nation, and others see themselves above all as Europeans. This can all fit together wonderfully well, as long as these feelings of belonging are *permeable*, and as long as the geographical borders are permeable as well. As long as everything is able to mingle freely. As long as no one is excluded, discriminated against or harassed simply because they have a different background, or come from somewhere else. As long as we remain aware that – without exception – all human group affiliations are fluid entities that have changed many times over history and will change again and again.

But this is precisely what the right-wing populists oppose with their new boundaries and the increasingly inflexible worldview they pro- mote. They want to re-establish the old national borders and the old dominance of men over women. They see everything that seems to weaken the boundaries of the old order – migrants, dark-skinned people, non-Christians, dissident men, strong women, homosexu- als and transsexuals – as a threat. Unstable personalities are especially fearful of the strange and threatening elements of their own psyche, which they then project externally onto others. To all political, eco- nomic and social questions they have only one answer: *they* are to blame. The refugees, the migrants, Muslims, Jews, feminists, the lefty Green degenerates who contaminate the purity of the nation.

In the beginning was the peace project

Many European landscapes carry a heavy historical burden. Some places and soils are literally soaked with blood: Waterloo, Verdun, Auschwitz and countless others. The German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas travelled to Verdun on a motorcycle as a young man, and said, "I have seen the endless cemeteries, the landscape still disfigured by shell craters, and the charnel house at Douaumont. The bones of 130,000 German and French soldiers lie there; of soldiers who were so torn to shreds that no one could identify them anymore."[24]

There is hardly a region on our ancient continent that has not at some time changed its affiliation to some mini- or maxi-state as a result of

being conquered and forcibly added to the portfolio of a new ruler. If all the battlefields and trenches of the Thirty Years' War and the First and Second World Wars were marked on a map of Europe, it would be so full that there would be almost no room for anything else. Millions have killed each other at the command of the leaders of their kingdoms or nations. So it is a unique historical achievement for the EU to have overcome war.

And the longing for a peacefully united Europe is far older than the EU itself. The writer Victor Hugo expressed it poetically as early as 1849: "A day will come when you France, you Russia, you Italy, you England, you Germany, you all, the nations of this continent, without losing your distinct qualities and your glorious uniqueness, will merge into a higher entity."[25]

In the middle of the First World War, European women were playing an outstanding role in furthering cross-border thinking about peace. In 1915, 1,200 women delegates from 12 countries, belligerent and neutral, met in The Hague and demanded an end to this "terrible mass murder". They identified and exposed the root cause of warmongering: the search for profits. In 1919, they founded the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, which continues to operate across the world to this day from its headquarters in Geneva and is affiliated to the United Nations.

In the 1920s, Count Richard von Coudenhove-Kalergi published his manifesto "Pan-Europa" and founded the Pan-European movement in Vienna. He was convinced that European unification was the only way to secure peace. He proposed a common flag and anthem, a parliament, a constitution and a single currency for the whole of Europe. Many intellectuals of the time, such as Stefan Zweig, defined themselves primarily as Europeans and not by the birth certificate that fell to them by chance. In 1942, however, he found to his despair that "nationalism has destroyed European culture, has destroyed Europe."[26]

After the end of the Second World War, the vast majority in Europe saw things the same way. The way out of the "tragedy of Europe"

was to overcome "frightful nationalistic quarrels", Winston Churchill warned in a visionary speech in Zurich in 1946. What was needed was "a kind of United States of Europe".[27] It should be noted, though, that "a kind of" was not to call for the same form of government as that of the USA, even if today some people can only imagine a new EU as the "United States of Europe". To found a European USA, i.e. a centralist great power that would compete with the other great powers and inevitably tend to steamroller smaller powers, would be to repeat the mistakes of the past. No; Europe dared to draw from its history of bloody nationalism and colonialism the lesson that something historically unprecedented was called for, and it should not lose sight of that now.

In 1941, while in prison, the Italian resistance fighter Altiero Spinelli wrote his "Ventotene Manifesto", an impassioned call for the foundation of a united Europe. And in Paris in 1946, a number of national associations invoked Spinelli when they came together to form the "Union of European Federalists". However, a dispute soon arose with the United European Movement, which was inspired by Winston Churchill and founded in Brussels in 1948, as to whether the ultimate aim should be a federal state or a confederation of states. The youth organisation of the European Federalists gave its own answer: in 1950, the German section unceremoniously broke up the barriers dividing many border towns, demonstrating in this simple but effective way how to achieve a "Europe without borders". In view of the border fences going up again today, perhaps a similarly bold move is called for once again?

On 9 May 1950, France's Foreign Minister Robert Schuman called for the creation of a coal and steel production community, something his colleague Jean Monnet had already proposed. The date was later designated "Europe Day" in his honour. The European Coal and Steel Community, in which West Germany and France would in future jointly control their steel and coal industries, was established in 1951. Its structure was designed to prevent any future war between the former arch-enemies and to promote reconciliation. Belgium, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands also joined the Union – not least

because there was a great need for coal and steel in the years of reconstruction. Jean Monnet was the first President of the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community. Particularly important to him was the idea that "we don't unite states, we bring people together."

In 1957, the governments of West Germany, France, Belgium, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands signed the so-called Treaties of Rome and in 1958 they founded the European Economic Community (EEC). The central element was the establishment of a common market with the so-called four freedoms for goods, services, capital and labour. They also agreed on common customs barriers vis-à-vis third countries. The formation of cartels and the abuse of economic power were prohibited, as were subsidies to domestic industry to the detriment of foreign industry.

Other countries gradually joined this supranational entity, which later became the EC and then the EU: Denmark, Ireland and Great Britain in 1973; Greece in 1981; Spain and Portugal in 1986; Finland, Austria and Sweden in 1995; Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Czech Republic, Hungary and Cyprus in 2004; Bulgaria and Romania in 2007; Croatia in 2013. The conditions for admission to the EU were established in Copenhagen in 1993. The "Copenhagen accession criteria" include democracy, the rule of law, human rights and civil liberties in the applicant countries.

In 1992, with the Treaty of Maastricht, it became – by name also – the European Union. The EU institutions in Brussels were given new responsibilities beyond the economic sphere, including foreign and security policy. Then came the Treaties of Amsterdam (1997), Nice (2000) and Lisbon (2007). In 2012, the EU was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize – ironically perhaps, just after the "European Defence Agency" was legally integrated into the Lisbon Treaty.

The EUphoria is over

From the very beginning, however, the EU involved a gross violation of the idea of democracy as conceived in Ancient Greece and

developed by the thinkers of the Enlightenment. Before the French and American revolutions, Jean-Jacques Rousseau repeatedly emphasised that the people must be the supreme sovereign. The people must have the power or "force" to provide itself with a constitution and adopt it. Democracy means self-government of the people. But the EU treaties, which have become ever more complicated, have no democratically legitimised constitution. The Union was the work of governments and their bureaucratic negotiation processes, not of the European population. The European house lacked its true, proper foundations.

A number of politicians foresaw that this would not work out well in the long run. So in 1999 they organised a convention, chaired by the CDU politician Roman Herzog, which drafted a Charter of Fundamental Rights. In some aspects, this goes further than many national constitutions (such as the German Basic Law), in that it includes social rights for children, the elderly and consumers. The preamble states that the Union is "based on the principles of democracy and the rule of law. It places the individual at the heart of its activities, by establishing the citizenship of the Union and by creating an area of freedom, security and justice". The EU contributes "to the preservation and to the development of these common values while respecting the diversity of the cultures and traditions of the peoples of Europe" and is committed to the principle of subsidiarity. This term is derived from the Latin "subsidio", meaning "help" or "substitute". The principle of subsidiarity is intended to promote the highest possible level of self-determination and personal responsibility. Everything that can be regulated in the smallest political entity, such as the municipalities, should be regulated there. Larger entities at national or supranational level should only become involved if the smaller unit is not able to do so.

There then follow 54 articles which the institutions and bodies of this supranational EU entity recognise as binding. The first states that "human dignity is inviolable". The others affirm, among other things, that everyone has the right to life, to respect for their physical and mental integrity, that no one may be tortured or subjected to inhuman

or degrading treatment or punishment. Everyone has the right to freedom of expression and assembly, freedom of conscience and religion, respect for private and family life and the protection of personal data. Everyone has the right to work and join trade unions in any EU member state. The right to asylum is guaranteed, no one may be deported to countries where they would risk the death penalty, torture or inhuman punishment. Discrimination of any kind is prohibited and equality between women and men must be ensured.[28] It would have been wonderfully democratic if the Convention had legitimised the Charter through referendums in as many EU countries as possible – majorities in favour would have been nigh-on certain. But that didn't happen.

Instead, in 2002, another convention was set up from among the "usual suspects" – national and EU parliamentarians, representatives of governments and the Commission. It drafted countless other articles that do not belong in a constitution, such as the Union's commitment to a particular economic system. And all this in such a non-transparent fashion that even the then Luxembourg Prime Minister Jean-Claude Juncker complained that "the Convention was announced as the great democracy show. I've never seen a darker back room than the Convention."[29]

The consequence was that in two referendums in 2005, a majority of the population in France and the Netherlands rejected the undemocratically produced work in its entirety, with all its illegible 448 articles. Those responsible in Brussels and elsewhere then simply incorporated substantial parts of it, together with a reference to the Charter of Fundamental Rights, into the Lisbon Treaty, which entered into force in 2009. No wonder criticism of the EU's "democratic deficit" has never ceased from that point on. For many people the impression has remained that we, the real sovereign power, are simply being bypassed. And if, as in France or the Netherlands, we are asked, but do not give the answer that Brussels wants, we are ignored.

In fact, the time of EUphoria was altogether over. The speculation-driven real estate bubble in the USA caused a global financial

crisis, beginning in 2007, which shook many banks in Europe, notably in Spain and Greece. The EU could have overcome the crisis by means of concerted Europe-wide action, but instead each government of each EU member state acted more or less on its own. Many took on debts to save "their" banks and burdened the taxpayers with the costs. They thereby also pushed the euro into a tailspin – and caused outrage over this merciless redistribution from the bottom to the top.

The consequences in the indebted euro states of Greece, Spain, Cyprus, Ireland and Portugal were devastating. A "troika" made up of experts from the EU Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund forced the respective governments into brutal privatisations and cuts to national budgets. Otherwise there would be no new loans, the troika threatened. An unelected body of technocrats thus overruled national parliaments – a clear violation of democratic norms.

The then Federal German Minister of Finance, Wolfgang Schäuble, was particularly harsh in the negotiations with Greece – "Game is over". He seemed to have set himself the goal of overthrowing the left-wing Syriza government. The result was that the "Greek aid package" of around 263 billion euros was mainly for banks and rich investors. Not a penny reached the people on the Peloponnese. Since 2010, Germany alone has received around 2.9 billion euros in profits arising from the purchase of Greek government bonds.[30]

The economy in the crisis countries shrank – in Greece, by a whole quarter. Millions of people lost their jobs. The health and social cuts hit women particularly hard: many had to leave their jobs to provide unpaid care for relatives. Youth unemployment rose to breathtaking heights: in 2011 it was 46 percent in Spain, almost 45 percent in Greece, 30 percent in Portugal and just under 30 percent in Italy and Ireland.[31] The EU, once a beacon of hope, morphed into a monster, especially in the eyes of the younger generation whose prospects had been laid waste. Is it any wonder that young people (in Italy for example), who at the age of 30 still had no permanent jobs and lived with their mothers, voted in disproportionate numbers for anti-EU

parties?[32] The EU Commission really ought to personally and individually shake the hand of all those who in spite of everything remained well-disposed towards Europe.

The second EU crisis, which has not yet been resolved, was caused in part by the war in Syria. Tens of thousands set out in 2015 to save their bare lives, in rubber dinghies across the Mediterranean and then often on foot across the European borders. But the right-wing governments of the Višegrad states simply ignored the EU majority decisions on the solidarity-based distribution of refugees. And this despite the fact that the EU treaties oblige them to show solidarity and uphold the rule of law. And despite the fact that this was reaffirmed by the highest European court. "The refugee crisis is proving to be Europe's 9/11" – this is how Bulgarian sociologist Ivan Krastev describes the situation. And the further consequences are that "since the fall of the Berlin Wall, which was perceived as a harbinger of an open world, Europe has erected or begun to erect 1,200 kilometres of border fences to keep others out".[33] British right-wing populists also used the migration issue in their Brexit campaign. More such exits from the EU no longer seem to be out of the question today.

Europe is our daily life

But – notwithstanding all its problems – the EU has changed our daily lives for the better, in many ways. We live, travel, work, see, hear and smell differently since it was created. National borders gradually diminished in significance, especially since the "Schengen Agreement" did away with passport checks at many border controls in 1995. Holidays on the Adriatic, freedom of movement within Europe, a common currency in the eurozone since 2002: the EU became a region in which freedom of travel and movement were not theoretical principles but lived reality.

"Every day, 1.7 million people travel to another EU country just to work," writes the German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas. "16 million EU citizens live, work, retire or study in another member state. And we Europeans cross an internal Schengen border 1.25 billion times a

year, a barely imaginable figure. No customs, no passport control, no barriers – that has to stay that way!"[34] People from different nations get to know each other. Visit each other. Fall in love. Start bi- or multi-national families. Learn foreign languages. Enrich each other's lives with their different cuisines, ways of looking at the world and ways of thinking.

When the Iron Curtain fell in 1989, EUphoria broke out in Eastern Europe. The sheer intoxication of being able to drive anywhere! The first thing many Poles and East Germans did was to travel to the Mediterranean. The fall of the Wall "brought the hope of a better life, and this hope was bound up with Europe, especially among young people. Europe stood for the future, for modernity, for a life of dignity and style. The European Union was cool," recalls the East Berliner André Wilkens, who later moved to Brussels.[35]

We still have national passports, but since 1985 in a uniform burgundy red EU style. At international airports we can stroll through the checkpoint with the inscription "EU Citizens", sometimes with a certain pride. According to the Charter of Fundamental Rights, citizenship of an EU country guarantees us certain rights in other Union countries: freedom of movement, protection against discrimination, the right to vote in local elections in our place of residence, the right to vote in European Parliament elections, diplomatic protection, the right to petition and complain, and the right to receive replies from EU institutions in any of the official languages of the Union. Since 1992, the European Ombudsman, based in Strasbourg, has been on hand for complaints from citizens. As has (since 2001) the European Data Protection Supervisor in Luxembourg, for cases of illegal data gathering.

It is the "Erasmus generation" that has benefited most from Europe. With around 200,000 students participating every year, "Erasmus" is the largest exchange programme in the world. More than three million young people have used it to date. "Almost one in three Erasmus participants has found a life partner from another European country and had an estimated one million 'Erasmus children' with them. Erasmus

is going very well indeed," enthuses André Wilkens. By 2020, the EU wants to invest an additional 15 billion euros in the programme, and with good reason, Wilkens argues. "Erasmus & Co. is investing in Europe's educational elite, from whom the next generation to shape Europe will emerge, who in time will write the next chapter in the history of Europe … European networks will be created, analogue and digital. European families founded. An excellent prescription against nationalism and neo-nationalism. This is how European identity is brought into being."[36]

And so a new European identity emerged and thrived in the EU states – slowly, almost imperceptibly. People began to feel that their European identity was more important than that of their country of origin. Surveys carried out in 2000 showed that two thirds of respondents in the EU felt "European", and one third of young adults between 21 and 25 felt "more European than nationals of their home country". According to another survey commissioned by the European Parliament and carried out in October 2018, 62 percent of all EU citizens view their country's membership positively – in Germany as high as 82 percent.[37]

When it comes to nature and consumer protection, too, Europe is far more progressive than, for example, the USA. Over 20 percent of the EU's land area is now protected by directives such as the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive, an enormous achievement in a region as densely populated as Europe. The so-called Product Liability Directive of 1985 is intended to ensure that goods such as cosmetics or children's toys are free of harmful substances. In cases of doubt, the manufacturer bears the burden of proof, not the customer. Following the Maastricht Treaty of 1992, genetically modified products must be labelled as such – and this, according to a ruling of the European Court of Justice, also applies to new procedures such as CRISPR, the so-called "genetic scissors". And the precautionary principle – adopted by the EU Commission at the end of 2002 – prescribes a scientific risk assessment for the proposed introduction of any "innovative" products. If there are any signs of harmful effects, the products authorities will not be licensed. In practice, however, this is often dealt with in a

business-friendly way, for example in the case of the dangerous pesticide glyphosate. The EU Commission approved it for use for a further five years in 2017 despite much opposition.

Another achievement – notwithstanding all the criticism of unclear implementation provisions – is the European General Data Protection Regulation, which has been in place since May 2018 to protect citizens against gigantic data extraction technologies such as Facebook, Google or Amazon. Anyone who wants to prevent Google & Co. from creating dangerous "digital doubles" of themselves, and possibly even passing these on to intelligence agencies, should definitely make use of the new rights to have data deleted. Instructions on how to do this can be found on the Internet.[38] Neither the USA nor China have anything similar, which is why EU law is de facto becoming the worldwide standard to which the US network giants also have to adhere. Jan Philipp Albrecht, a former MEP for the German Greens, now (since autumn 2018) digital and agriculture minister in Schleswig-Holstein, comments that "we are a superpower if we act together as Europe".[39]

A Union consciousness emerges when we experience, live and feel Europe on a daily basis. We breathe a common air that does not stop at national borders. We eat our way through the European cuisine with pleasure. We cultivate work and friendship networks and conduct love affairs right across the continent. On our journeys through Europe, we take pleasure in the great number and diversity of landscapes, cultures and artworks. And in the funny misunderstandings when we talk to each other in our many and varied languages, nest pass?

Why is the European house teetering? The main construction flaws

However, construction flaws in today's European house prevent us from being able to live this dream consistently. There are very many of them; we cannot hope or claim to identify them all here, only a few representative examples.

Almost before we start, we come up against the organisational complexity of the EU, which prevents anyone from maintaining an overview. To begin with, there are three Councils with almost identical names – the Council of Europe, the European Council and the Council of the European Union – which causes utter confusion. Even professional EU watchers confuse the different councils. How can a mere mortal hope to tell them apart?

The **Council of Europe**, based in a building in Strasbourg which resembles a lost freight container somehow stranded on a lawn, has nothing to do with the EU as an institution, even though it confusingly uses both the EU flag and anthem. It was established in London in 1949, with the European Movement (of which Winston Churchill was co-founder) playing an important role in its genesis. Today its membership comprises 47 states with 820 million citizens, including non-EU members such as Russia, Turkey and Switzerland. In 1950, it drew up the European Convention on Human Rights. Anyone in any of the member countries who feels that their fundamental rights have been violated can invoke the ECHR and take their case to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

The **European Council** is a "summit meeting", taking place several times a year, of the heads of state and government of the EU member states. It performs a kind of custodian function, defining and watching over the general political objectives and priorities of the EU.

The *Council of the European Union*, which we shall refer to from now on as the *Council of Ministers* for easier differentiation, is composed of departmental ministers from the EU member states. They – and not the Parliament – together with the Commission draft and adopt the laws (which are called "Directives" in the EU).

The confusion of competences continues with the "five Presidents of Europe". This male "gang of five" consists of the heads of the EU Commission, the EU Council, the EU Parliament, the Eurogroup (the finance ministers of the eurozone countries) and the European Central Bank. Who could possibly keep track of the different committees and their overlapping competences? Who can see through the thicket of overlapping authorities, or understand the fiendishly complicated European law system? Most people just conclude that the EU is a bureaucratic maze and turn away, simultaneously exasperated and bored. "Nobody falls in love with an internal market," was how former Commission President Jacques Delors summed up the dilemma.

Non-separation of powers

We learn at school already what the separation of powers ideally looks like: the legislature (parliament) controls the executive (government); the judiciary corrects both. Thus decreed the French Enlightenment philosopher Montesquieu. It is a doctrine intended to combat the concentration of arbitrary and untrammelled power that was part of everyday life under Europe's absolutist rulers. But the EU does not adhere to this time-honoured tradition. And it thereby violates the very democratic norms to which it claims to be committed.

The *European Parliament*, whose 750 MEPs are elected every five years via electoral systems that vary across the member states, is supposed to represent the supreme sovereign, namely us. Its plenary sessions take place alternately in a futuristic building in Strasbourg which resembles a broken cooking pot next to the hob, and in a complex of buildings in Brussels which looks like a fake temple. The parliament is tasked with passing laws in our name and with monitoring and supervision of the budget and the government. In reality,

however, it has no right of initiative in legislative procedures, and its powers over the EU budget are shared with the Council of Ministers. Nor can it elect the Commission (i.e. the EU government); it can only confirm. Although it is among the world's largest parliaments, it is therefore a strange kind of second-class parliament that sits at the heart of the EU – an institution which ironically has been awarded a Nobel Prize in part for the quality of its democracy. But it has one big advantage: no government coalition votes down everything put forward by the opposition. There is no party whip, but fluid majorities, so arguments made in the debates always count.
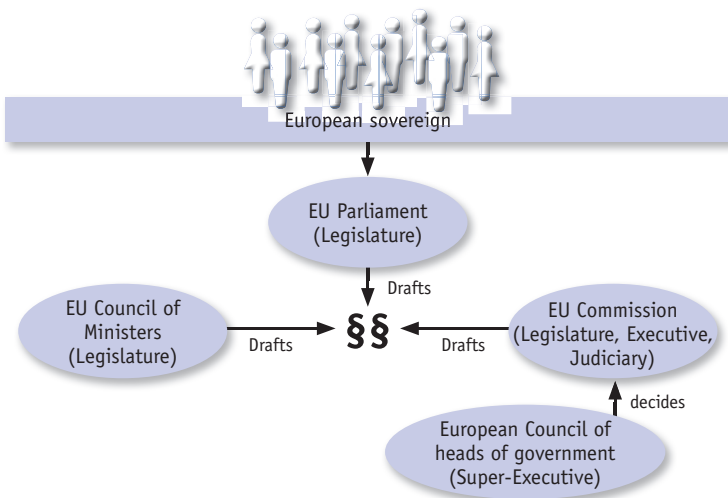
The *EU Commission* is the government of the EU and the "guardian of the treaties". It is based in the three-winged Berlaymont building in Brussels, which, with its criss-cross metal struts, looks a bit like an oversized hamster cage. The EU commentator Martin Leidenfrost claimed it reminded him of "a regional health insurance company gone mad".[40] The 28 EU Commissioners – 27 after the departure of the United Kingdom – come from all member states and are appointed according to the proportions of the ruling parties in their national governments; like ministers in nation states, they are responsible for specific departments. Curiously, however, the Commission also has the right of legislative initiative and manages the budget, i.e. it works as an executive and legislative body. It issues directives and other legal acts which have to be transposed into the very different national legal systems. And it warns member states of violations of EU law and imposes fines, so it also works as a judiciary.

The *"European Council"* of national heads of government has no functional equivalent in Montesquieu's model of the separation of powers. In fact, it is a kind of super-government and a constitutional assembly at the same time. It interprets and amends the treaties, which are the EU's equivalent of a constitution. It also appoints the members of the Commission. Through this "council of guardians", national governments ensure that they, and not the elected Parliament or the Commission, have the final word. Its secretariat is based in the "Justus Lipsius Building" in Brussels, completed in 1995, which looks like a gigantic steel cabinet on the outside and was "wired like a pinball

machine" on the inside: in 2003, numerous listening devices placed by other secret services were found there, some of them even embedded in concrete, which led a German EU diplomat to remark sarcastically that "finally someone is listening to us".[41]

The "Council of Ministers", i.e. the meeting of national departmental ministers which jointly drafts laws, could pass as a regional chamber and thus as part of the legislature, similar to the Bundesrat in Germany, which represents the federal states.

The *Council of Ministers* shares (with the European Council) the "Justus Lipsius Building" and the "Europa Building", inaugurated in 2017, which resembles a glass kitchenette for Columbus' egg. The head of a glass cleaning company, confronted by the countless mini-windows, supposedly passed this succinct judgement: "Oh dear".[42] The egg is supposed to represent a "heart of glass", a symbol of the transparency of the EU. However, the Council of Ministers could hardly be more opaque in its operations – although as a legislature it should in theory be obliged to work openly, in the public eye. It makes it "practically impossible for citizens to follow the discussions of the national representatives regarding legislation" as Emily O'Reilly, the European Ombudsman, complains.[43]

So, to sum up: we have a parliament in Europe which is only half a legislature, and two executive branches, which act partly as legislatures and partly as judiciaries. It could hardly be more confusing. The novelist and commentator Robert Menasse concludes (and in this he voices a critical opinion held by many others) that the separation of powers has effectively been repealed in the EU.

Menasse is particularly angry about the way the European Council of heads of national government functions. He was undertaking research in Brussels for his novel "The Capital" just at the time when the heads of state met in March 2010 for the crisis summit on the Greek debt – but the official agenda read: Chile. The experts from the Commission, i.e. the EU government, had worked up a proposal for the resolution of the Greek budget problem. But German Chancellor Angela Merkel and the then French President Nicolas Sarkozy disappeared for a tête-a-tête and then simply took it off the table.

With the Commission and the Parliament, "two truly supranational institutions" have been created, according to Menasse. But the fundamental construction flaw of the EU was that "the nations whose power was to be broken had to be given institutional power within the Union – precisely because they are representatives of nations who have to come together in order to overcome the nations".[44]

On the other hand, he will leap to the defence of the Commission as a government. All the old familiar stereotypes of overpaid civil servants, he says, are now wrongly projected onto "Brussels". But the majority of the Commission's staff work transnationally and multilingually, and are highly qualified and clued-up. "There are no sinister figures at the Commission, no fascists or anti-Europeans (of the kind who sit in the Parliament), no crooked opportunists (of the kind found in the apparatuses of national governments)". Euroscepticism, Menasse goes on, is based on the image of the bureaucratically distant Moloch in Brussels. But the EU bureaucracy is "incredibly cheap" and "lean"; to enable it to carry out all its duties and the administration of almost an entire continent, it has at its disposal only 0.06 percent of EU gross domestic product.[45] In fact, the EU government, i.e. the

Commission, with its approximately 33,000 employees, is about the same size as the administration of the city of Munich.[46] The Moloch is a mini-Moloch.

Is Europe a business club?

Was the European integration process a peace project, or was it a purely economic project driven by business? The question cannot be answered unequivocally, because both are true. The EU is a dazzling, inherently contradictory entity in which different forces compete for, and alternate in, positions of dominance. European pioneers like Jean Monnet may have been primarily concerned with securing peace on the old warring continent, but in the postwar years they sought to pursue their cause by enlisting the business community.

The left-liberal author Menasse believes that "the European Union has never been primarily an economic policy project. The process of unifying Europe was not initiated for economic reasons or pressures, and it was never in the interests of 'business' to drive this process forward".[47] He believes that many companies are more interested in playing the nation states off against each other in order to gain for themselves the most favourable locations and tax breaks.

Conversely, in their book "Entzauberte Union" ("Disenchanted Union"), a group of authors linked to Attac Austria claims to see the fingerprints of the corporations and their lobbyists all over the EU treaties: "20,000 lobbyists from multinational fossil fuel corporations, car manufacturers and energy suppliers continuously influence the work of the EU Commission and the EU Parliament". [48]

And Transparency International criticises the "revolving doors" that deliver more than half of former EU Commissioners straight into jobs for lobby organisations, corporations and financial institutions after they leave. The NGO "Lobbycontrol" has been calling for the introduction of a compulsory lobby register and the legal closure of the revolving doors for years – in vain.

Attac Austria argues that EU policy is neoliberal at its core. This is because the "four freedoms" of goods, services, capital and labour fuel competition over business location decisions: countries compete with each other, forcing governments to push tax rates, minimum wages and social standards ever lower. A fundamental EU reform is impossible in practice because all member states are bound to a neoliberal budgetary policy by the "Stability and Growth Pact", and amending the EU Treaties would require unanimity.[49] However, Attac doesn't recommend leaving the EU either. What, then? The Attac booklet doesn't really answer that question.

It is certainly true that at the end of the 1980s a neoliberal orientation was enshrined in the EU Treaties, and since then the EU Commission has adhered to it. This was demonstrated not least by the trade agreements – TTIP and CETA – which the Commission proposed to conclude, with their dangerous corporate rights to legal action and secret arbitration. At a hearing before the European Court of Justice in June 2018, it emerged that the Commission and all EU governments bar Slovenia were prepared to accept such private courts for large investors. An astonishing number of trade agreements – 1,355 – would be affected.[50] Remote from its citizens?

The European house was clearly designed without input from its citizens. Its top personnel often give the impression of wanting to get rid of residents and critics who annoy them. Just the way the EU deals with citizens' conferences speaks volumes. After a majority of the population in both France and the Netherlands rejected the planned Constitutional Treaty in 2005, Brussels officials hurriedly organised "European Citizens' Conferences". A good 1,500 citizens from all member states took part, selected by lottery. At each event, they discussed the future of Europe for two days, and initially appeared to be highly satisfied with this form of consultative democracy. But then the EU officials abandoned this demonstration of participation in practice, to which a total of around 100,000 people had been invited by 2010, without any explanation. The results were more or less completely ignored. The reactions of those who had taken part ranged from disappointment to fury.

Anyone who has launched or taken part in a "European Citizens' Initiative" has suffered a similar experience. Following many years of lobbying by organisations such as Mehr Demokratie (More Democracy) and Democracy International, the procedure was finally introduced in 2010. Citizens' Initiatives can oblige the Commission to take up an issue as long as it does not conflict with the existing EU treaties. However, the procedure is cumbersome, bureaucratically over-regulated and ultimately non-binding. A "European Citizens' Initiative" on a specified issue must be registered with the Commission – which, however, may decline to accept it. Registration must be carried out by a "citizens' committee" composed of people from at least seven member states. One million valid signatures must then be submitted, via a certified online collection system, gathered within a 12-month period from at least a quarter of all EU states. In some countries, such as Austria, citizens even have to submit their personal ID card details. And – worst of all – even if an initiative fulfils all the formal requirements, the EU Commission is not obliged to take legislative action. It is only required to issue a statement on how it intends to deal with the issue. That's it.

A European Citizens' Initiative organised by the EU-wide alliance Right2Water and proposing that "Water is a Human Right" was the first to achieve the required number of votes in 2013. Its aim, among other things, was to ensure that drinking water, as a public good, could not be privatised by corporations, and that tap water in restaurants was provided free of charge. But five(!) years later, in February 2018, Commission Vice-President Frans Timmermans announced that there must be no binding fundamental right to water; such a right was not included in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. And with the Japan-EU Free Trade Agreement entering into force in February 2019, things may get even worse: water may become a private commodity.

The "Stop TTIP" alliance, made up of some 500 organisations opposed to the business-friendly TTIP and CETA investment agreements, had even more support. After the EU Commission refused to accept its registration, the Alliance decided to collect signatures anyway – for a self-organised rather than "official" European Citizens' Initiative. And in 2015, Stop TTIP submitted about 3.3 million supporting signatures

to the Commission. But the Commission still didn't want to know: its flimsy justification was that TTIP and CETA were not "legal acts" but "internal administrative acts between EU bodies". A decision which was declared inadmissible by the European Court of Justice following an action brought by the alliance in May 2017. A slap in the face for the Commission. And from a very Brussels-friendly court.

In October 2017, the European Citizens' Initiative "Stop Glyphosate" presented more than one million signatures to Brussels after only four months of collecting. A month later, it was duly able to obtain a hearing in the EU Parliament on the use of this dangerous pesticide. But although scientists and researchers then presented plentiful evidence of how the glyphosate manufacturers Monsanto had manipulated relevant research, no consequences ensued from the petition. In December, the Commission confirmed renewed approval for the use of this toxic substance for a further five years. And this despite the fact that the precautionary principle enshrined in EU law should clearly have led them to revoke it.

To date, not a single European Citizens' Initiative has achieved its objective. And each time this happens, the Commission, as the government of the EU, alienates at least one million signatories by simply dismissing their objections – assuming it deigns to recognise the Citizens' Initiative in the first place. A more effective way of denigrating and weakening democracy in the EU could hardly be imagined.

In 2018, at the suggestion of Emmanuel Macron, citizens' consultations and dialogues on the future of the Union were organised in all EU member states (with the exception of the UK). The results will be collected and evaluated by national governments, and the European Council of heads of government wanted to review the results at the end of 2018. In parallel, the Commission has established an online dialogue platform for citizens.[51]

In Germany, the dialogues are organised by the Federal Government with the help of civil society partners.[52] Organising institutions receive posters, advertising material and feedback forms, but no financial

support and no indication as to how suggestions will be evaluated and what binding effect they will have. There are no plans to set up representative citizens' councils, drawn by lot, which could produce better results. The German section of the European Movement among other similar associations criticised the non-binding nature of the citizens' dialogues. The survey should be representative, they argued; there should be "no top-down agenda-setting"; and it was important to communicate clearly and transparently "why certain demands would be implemented and others not".[53]

In July 2018, the Federal German Foreign Office held an initial dialogue. Many official and honorary "European functionaries" – from the European Union and the European Movement, for example – were invited. The format was a fine example of participatory practice: over 100 people got to speak at the 20 tables of the so-called World Cafés. But the exclusively pro-European participants were far too homogeneous to enable thinking "outside the box", or to dare to articulate new visions. The results, sometimes gently guided in a particular direction simply by the way the event was facilitated, were for the most part worthy and conventional. The whole thing gave the impression of being a somewhat directionless search for new PR strategies for presenting the EU in a favourable light.

Too much regulation, too much deregulation

The European house has a very strange set of house rules: there are both too many and too few at the same time. Obviously, the EU is struggling to find the right level of regulation. It issues thousands of regulations, directives and other legal acts every year. To take just one example: in 2013 the Commission wanted to ban open jugs of oil on restaurant tables because they are allegedly unhygienic; protests rained down, and the directive was withdrawn.

Since then, the "Eurocrats" have become much more wary in order to avoid being accused of "over-regulation". Especially since there are numerous fake news stories in circulation about their "regulatory frenzy". The regulation concerning the "degree of curvature of

cucumbers", which has long since been abolished, did not originate in the EU regulation factory, but in the member states. As did the ban on incandescent light bulbs. The then German Environment Minister Sigmar Gabriel pressed hard for this in 2007 – to the delight of electrical companies such as Osram, who made billions of dollars out of it.

On the major political issues, however, it would be welcome if the EU were to regulate more and to intervene more decisively. What about programmes for the integration of refugees, against youth unemployment, for a transition to climate-compatible agriculture, or for the democratisation of democracy? And what about regulation of the financial markets and banks who gave us the financial crisis and are now evading billions in taxes through cum-ex trading and other such tricks? "Deregulation" is a catchword that – contrary to all the pointed jokes about the EU's regulatory frenzy – tends in fact to arouse positive feelings among the neoliberals of Brussels. To the delight of speculators and investment bankers. The most important EU issues are subject to far too little regulation, and the people responsible for that cannot be voted out.

The cold language of "competitiveness"

In the European house, the cold language of money rules. It is always more "growth" that is called for, despite the already growing climate crisis and the growing carpets of plastics in the seas. The economist Kenneth Boulding once observed wryly that "anyone who believes that the economy can grow indefinitely in a finite world is either a madman or an economist". In an open letter in September 2018, 238 researchers called on the EU to abandon its focus on growth and instead to establish "ministries for transformation" in the member states.[54]

The language of "competitiveness" is similarly problematic. Everywhere we hear constantly that the EU has to remain competitive on the world markets, that the EU member states have to compete with each other for economic leadership, that companies have to compete, regions, cities, municipalities, hospitals, transport companies, museums, universities, schools, kindergartens, maternity wards …

Such is the familiar refrain, from almost all parties and factions. And the less real competition there is, the louder it gets. Ever larger corporations dominate the markets by swallowing up others and dictating prices and production conditions like monopolies. The most recent of countless examples is the merger between Bayer and Monsanto approved by the EU Competition Commissioner. It means that there are now only four – giant – agrochemical companies left in the world: ChemChina-Syngenta, Dupont-Dow, BASF and Bayer-Monsanto. It is small farmers and consumers who will have to pay the price for this.

Today, we are experiencing capitalism in reverse. In theory, companies compete with each other; in practice, it is mainly states and individuals who compete. However, people yearn not so much for competition as for a sense of home, for security, safety and community. The human trait that most clearly distinguishes us from all other species is our wide-ranging capacity for cooperation rather than competition. The Israeli author Yuval Noah Harari, who has specialised in "Big History", demonstrates this clearly in his international bestsellers. Our historical progress to date is unimaginable without Homo sapiens' talent for perpetual collaboration. "Competition" and "competitiveness" are inventions of the modern age. Or more specifically, of the neo-Darwinists and neoliberals. They have some limited validity, of course, but the overwhelming importance they have assumed today damages everybody's well-being. Or is there anything at all good about the fact that studies show about one in six students and one in four employees today suffers psychological problems at some point brought on by constant competition?

The eurozone fosters inequality and tensions

The talk of perpetual competition puts the whole of Europe under stress. And especially the eurozone, which comprises 19 countries with a common monetary policy, but without a common economic and social policy. This is a major construction flaw that leads to disastrous competition between states and governments over who can push down wages and salaries the furthest. This is because it is no longer possible for them to adjust to economic shocks by devaluing their own

currency. Moreover, there is no system of financial and social equalisation payments between poorer and richer regions, of the kind familiar in nation states, to ensure equality of opportunity and to prevent economically more powerful regions driving weaker regions to destruction.

Competition inevitably and of necessity produces losers as well as winners. Germany and the Netherlands, in particular, benefit from the euro and the single market, while southern European countries, because of economic distortions, have not yet succeeded in emerging from the crisis. The eurozone has "sown discord", according to US Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz. The euro system "took away governments' main adjustment mechanisms (interest and exchange rates)". Instead of helping countries in crisis, the EU "imposed new strictures … on deficits, debt, and even structural policies". Not only Greece, Spain, Ireland and Portugal continued on their steep decline, but Italy too. A banking union with a common deposit guarantee could prevent financial crises such as that of 2008, but it is still being blocked, by the German government among others. The consequences in Euroland, according to Stiglitz, are that anti-German sentiment increases, and so too does populism.[55]

With the EU Commission's short-sighted decision to reject the Italian draft budget in October 2018, on the grounds that it exceeded specified debt ratios, this is likely to intensify again massively – even to the point of Italy's possible withdrawal from the eurozone. No matter what one thinks of the Italian government, from a democratic perspective that would be a "disastrous" development, writes the Brussels journalist Eric Bonse. Because "the new government is being forced to abide by agreements made with the EU Commission *before the election.* In other words: the election can have no influence on the budget".[56] Matteo Salvini and Steve Bannon will be licking their lips at this conflict.

The nuclear power obligation

The basement of the European house – where the boiler is located – is also dangerous. The heating system has been operating for decades using mainly fuels associated with major problems: coal, oil and nuclear. It's now high time this expensive monster was replaced.

At the same time as the signing of the Treaty of Rome in 1957, the European Atomic Energy Community "Euratom" was established. It has continued almost unchanged until today, as a formally independent organisation alongside the EU, but sharing all its institutions. Euratom serves to promote the nuclear industry because, according to the Treaty, the industry contributes to "raising the standard of living in the member states" [so nuclear reactors increase well-being?]. It is accordingly subsidised from the EU budget. Anyone who joins the EU must therefore help to support and promote dangerous nuclear facilities.

The second major problem is the fossil fuels used for domestic heating. In 2017, the EU still had to import more than half of its energy supply needs, at a cost of 272 billion euros.[57] The money for the oil flows out of Europe and often ends up with oil sheikhs, who use it to finance Islamist movements. And the mass combustion of oil, gas and coal calls into question the EU's ability to comply with the Paris climate agreement.

Agricultural madness

The kitchen of the European house also leaves a lot to be desired: the EU produces food of dubious quality at enormous cost. And allows every interest group to have something simmering on the hob. The agricultural subsidies distributed by Brussels make up the largest single chunk of the EU budget, at just under 40 percent. At present that means around 56 billion euros, or 110 euros per capita per year across the Union. A huge amount of money – distributed in a completely nonsensical way.

The direct payments are intended to ensure that farmers can make a living from their work. But they fail entirely to achieve this goal,

because they are based principally on farm size (by area) and thus serve to make agro-industrialists even bigger. Even corporations like RWE and Bayer receive huge sums, simply because they are also big landowners. Conversely, millions of family farms went out of business because only the biggest and fattest survive. The motto "grow or go under", endorsed, absurdly, by the *Deutscher Bauernverband* (German Farmers' Association), drives them into ruin – and nature with them.

Agro-industry is allowed to poison nature through the mass use of chemical fertilisers, slurry, antibiotics and pesticides. The cheap food it produces comes at a high price: greenhouse gases; nitrates in groundwater; antibiotic-resistant germs in cowsheds and hospitals; the mass deaths of insects, bees and birds; and rising cancer rates in the human population. According to a study by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), such cheap foods cause environmental, health and social damage totalling \$4.8 trillion worldwide every year. Divided by the global population, that is around 685 dollars per capita per year.[58]

The basic problem with EU agricultural policy is the mistaken belief that agriculture has to develop following the same logic as industry. This leads to ever larger monocultures, land consolidation, and pressures on costs. This has resulted in turn in food becoming much cheaper: a policy goal, as it frees up purchasing power for industrial products. The EU then exports its food surpluses to southern countries, where it ruins market prices for small farmers and thus creates migration pressures. Farmers in Ghana, for example, are left unable to sell their own locally produced tomatoes because subsidised EU tomatoes are cheaper. Driven to ruin, significant numbers try to escape across the Mediterranean to southern Italy. There, in the clutches of the mafia, under slave-like conditions, they grow – believe it or not – tomatoes, on EU-subsidised fields. If they could do this profitably at home, everyone involved would be better off.

Militarisation and securitisation

The people in charge of the European house are allowing its home security and border facilities to develop into a "fortress Europe". Even the front door is now being barricaded. In order to deter migrants, the EU is working closely with dictators, and is thus indirectly responsible for serious human rights violations in prisons and torture camps. Such are the criticisms made by various human rights organisations, and by the journalists Christian Jakob and Simone Schlindwein on their award-winning website.[59] European aid is increasingly flowing to repressive regimes which provide support for EU migration control policy, such as Sudan, Eritrea and Turkey. If any government fails to deliver, it is blackmailed with the threatened withdrawal of development funds and market access, according to the two reporters.

Every year, thousands drown on flimsy, unsafe rubber dinghies in the Mediterranean; women are raped on the escape routes; children are abducted and kidnapped. Why don't they come on safe planes or ferries? The blame for this lies with the EU, which issued a directive in 2001 stipulating that any airline or ferry company which brings people without a valid visa to Europe has to pay all the costs of their "repatriation". Allegedly, this doesn't violate the Geneva Convention on Refugees. But de facto it functions as a bulwark against all those seeking protection in Europe from political persecution or war. And it also promotes people smuggling, which the Union is supposed to be combatting.

Six EU bodies are involved in external border surveillance and checks on entry and exit. The most important is the "European Border and Coast Guard Agency", also known as Frontex, based in Warsaw. It coordinates the relevant national authorities and manages the "Eurosur" network which produces joint reports on the current situation, in order for example to ward off "refugee movements" at an early stage. The journalists' group "Investigate Europe", however, found that the expensive Eurosur network does not work in practice at all. Nor does the planned new electronic entry system for non-EU citizens, which is supposed to store passports, visas, fingerprints and facial images at all 1,800 checkpoints belonging to the Schengen states. The journalists'

explanation for this farcical situation is that the EU is unduly influenced by lobbyists from the "European Organisation for Security" (EOS), which relies exclusively on technological solutions. Industry is very well represented in the advisory bodies to the Commission: one third of the "advisors" are involved in conflicts of interest, and their principal aim is to sell their products at high prices.[60] This also applies, incidentally, to other areas, such as the financial industry.[61]

In any case, refugees and migrants will not be deterred by ever higher walls if the basis for their subsistence in their home countries is destroyed – whether by dictatorships, climate extremes or European politics. The author Christoph Ransmayr reminds us that Europe has permanently weakened the countries of Africa economically. "Wherever a traveller to Africa turned on this continent … he came across the traces of Europe, trampled sites of cruelty, but also: the sources of European wealth. Without the ores and rare earths dug up here, without the gold, silver and diamond mines and the innumerable other treasures of the earth, without the harvests brought in here, without the labour of millions upon millions of slaves and pittance workers, it is unlikely that Europe would yet be anything like the paradise longed for and marvelled at by the streams of refugees that spring up from the battlefields and sites of misery and drought for which Europe is partly to blame."[62]

Redesigning and rebuilding the European house

So the European house urgently needs a fundamental overhaul: it should be open, inviting, democratic, transparent, based on solidarity, hospitable, eco-social, beautiful and sustainable. But who is to draw up the blueprints? Who should lay the foundations? Who decides who can live and work there? Across Europe, countless ideas can be found on these issues among thought leaders and visionaries, writers and philosophers, citizens' initiatives and civil society alliances. There simply isn't space for them all to be presented in full in this booklet – and it has to be admitted moreover that the presentation leans quite heavily on German source material, which we hope readers will understand.

The Brussels authorities and others are also developing proposals. But since it appears these are intended to forestall rather than kick-start a complete overhaul of the EU, we will only touch on them briefly, if at all. For example, the debate over a "two-speed Europe", or on new voting rules in the Council. The "White Paper on the Future of Europe" presented by the EU Commission in March 2017 also seems a little lacking in imagination. It depicts five scenarios leading up to the year 2025 – all of them variations on "business as usual". It is claimed that the concept is intended to initiate a "debate with citizens", but there is no word on how exactly it is supposed to inspire citizens or to take account of "every voice".[63] How are you supposed to escape from a crisis you yourself have caused with "more of the same"?

The French president is a commendable exception here. In his speeches at the Sorbonne in Paris, in Berlin and Athens, Macron delivered a veritable firework of ideas. The eurozone should have a common budget, a finance minister and a banking union; taxes and minimum wages should be harmonised; there should be a common

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asylum authority and an EU public prosecutor's office against terrorism; a defence union; an EU agency for innovation; transnational candidates' lists for the EU Parliament; an ecological CO_2 tax; a new partnership with Africa, and much more. Citizens' consultations should be convened in all EU countries to deliver ideas for a renewed Union.

But to put down new foundations for the Union – a constitution on which the European sovereign is allowed to vote – is something Macron does not want either. And this despite the fact that – as illustrated above – conditions in Brussels are still pre-democratic. The self-proclaimed defenders of Western values of democracy and human rights would do well to complete a republican separation of powers at the heart of Europe.

What are the visions of the future promoted by civil society actors? In what follows, we want to present a number of such ideas and visions. *We would like to stress that these are intended to open up a space for thinking; they do not necessarily or in all cases represent the opinions of the author or the publishers.*

Renovating the house

In order to put down new foundations for the European house, the existing EU treaties would have to be rewritten. Some Europhiles consider this too risky, because right-wing populists currently have too much influence. Instead they propose – symbolically speaking – merely to renovate the house, which would require fewer changes to the treaties, or none at all.

In order for parliamentarians to genuinely represent European interests rather than just their national ones, their election would have to be organised via transnational lists. Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker supports this idea. The same goes for Angela Merkel and Emmanuel Macron, who at their summit meeting in Meseberg in June 2018 proposed transnational lists for European elections from 2024.[64] But other conservative German politicians immediately tried

to rein Merkel in again – with distasteful arguments. "Many Germans already feel quite distant and critical towards the EU Parliament," said the CSU politician Florian Hahn. "If in the future they were to find Cypriot or Maltese representatives instead of Germans on the ballot papers, that distance would most likely increase." The idea only suited Macron, and "in every French president there is a little Napoleon."[65]

The idea did not originate with Macron at all, but with the British liberal MEP Andrew Duff. He was the author of the so-called Duff Report, which recommended enlarging the EU Parliament by at least 25 transnational seats. But in 2014 there was no prospect of a majority for it, so a planned vote on the Report was taken off the plenary agenda.[66] After the Brexit referendum, the question arose as to whether the imminently-vacant British parliamentary seats should be converted into transnational seats. But conservatives and right-wing populists voted down a proposal to that effect in February 2018. According to Robert Menasse, the blocking of transnational lists to date has been a disastrous mistake. "It cannot even be said that the nation states have resisted a sensible European voting system – they haven't even allowed it to be discussed."[67] Europe's sickness resides above all in the lack of interest among many of its officials and elected representatives in further Europeanisation. Those elected via national lists are dependent on their national parties. An MEP from the CDU, for example, who dared to vote against the interests of a CDU-led Federal German government in the EU Parliament, might as well give up on any career aspirations – they would simply not be nominated for the next elections. This prevents Parliament from perceiving itself as an independent and self-confident representative of the European sovereign and from making policy accordingly.

Harald Schumann, from the journalism group "Investigate Europe", believes that if the EU Parliament were to make better use of its power, it would generate a strong independent momentum. "MEPs would be able to dismiss the Commission and block the budget – as has actually happened once before. So far, however, they have only looked on passively as the European Council – that is, the national heads of government – has acquired more and more power. The Parliament does

not act as one, but as an adjunct of the Council. A majority in the Council de facto always produces a majority in the Parliament." [68]

Making the door wider

Wolfgang Schmale, Professor of Modern History in Vienna, is concerned. Anyone who paralyses the EU, or destroys it through further national secessions, has to be aware "that this would lead, in the historical region formed jointly by Europe, the Middle East and North Africa over thousands of years, to the emergence of a black hole, something that would trigger worldwide impacts".[69]

Schmale proposes a democratisation of the EU with minimal or no treaty changes. He particularly supports changes to the electoral system. All those who live in an EU country other than their country of origin should enjoy full voting rights there, as should non-EU aliens and migrants. He also supports transnational lists for the EU parliamentary elections and European lead candidates for the post of Commission President. The entire population should be able to vote on the accession or withdrawal of a country in a European referendum, and also on a new EU treaty.

Opening the doors, installing glass, closing the secret rooms

The abolition of opaque procedures and unauthorised bodies would be another highly effective measure requiring no changes to the treaties. To stick with the metaphor: this is about installing transparent glass and closing the secret rooms in the European house.

The Council of Ministers, for example, is totally opaque. In its 150 or so working groups, emissaries from the national ministries wheel and deal in order to pass laws – without any requirement for minutes or a formal account for the press, the citizens or the national parliaments. This undermines citizens' rights to hold their elected representatives to account and feeds scepticism towards the democratic legitimacy of the Union and anti-European sentiments according to Europe's

Ombudsman Emily O'Reilly, and she expressed this view in two critical reports to the EU Parliament. She had to write the second report because the Council of Ministers failed to react to her recommendations in the first report within the three-month deadline.[70]

"What is behind this is the reluctance of national government officials to disclose their manoeuvres and strategies within the Council bodies," is how the journalist Harald Schumann sees it. This "black box legislation" has, for those in charge, the "convenient advantage with controversial proposals that they are able to say that 'Brussels' is to blame, even when their own officials are involved".[71]

This is why Dutch parliamentarians also demanded more transparency from the Council of Ministers in a position paper. "The EU currently does not live up to … democratic standard[s]," they wrote; and "the Council, in particular, regularly violates EU transparency regulations." Council documents should be made public "without delay". The Council of Ministers should agree, they argue, on clear rules that correspond to the requirements of the EU Treaty of Lisbon, according to which every EU citizen has the right of access to EU documents. With its lack of transparency, the Council was also violating judgments of the EU Court of Justice and ignoring proposals from the Commission and Parliament.[72]

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The so-called "trilogues" also take place in secret rooms. Here, representatives of the Council of Ministers, Commission and Parliament meet to discuss legislation when they cannot reach agreement. It's supposed to speed up the process. But the alleged time gains have not been seen in practice since 2014, the EU advisory body "European Economic and Social Committee" complained in a study published in May 2017. It therefore called for the secret rooms to be closed, for trilogue documents to be published in advance, and for a user-friendly database to be established.[73]

EU observer Harry Cooper, writing in the journal "Politico", also found that trilogue wheeler-dealing fuels Euroscepticism. It serves primarily to ensure that more than 80 percent of the Commission's

proposals – i.e. from the executive branch – are waved through. Parliament, as the actual legislator, has hardly any influence at all. This undermines the separation of powers and trust in EU institutions, he argues. Corporate and financial lobbyists were able to put a lot of work into influencing the trilogues without leaving any paper traces. A slightly surprisingly alliance between civil society organisations and the business lobby BusinessEurope is calling for change: political debates, they argue, should be open to the public as a matter of principle.[74]

The informal "troika" similarly acted in a legal vacuum and placed itself de facto above the freely elected Greek government during the euro crisis. It forced Greek ministers to cut budgets, privatise, change laws and virtually destroy the health system – resulting in many deaths.[75] In March 2014, shortly before the European elections, the EU Parliament called for the abolition of the troika because it had "no legal basis".[76] After the elections, Jean-Claude Juncker, the head of the EU Commission, solemnly swore that "this must never happen again". The consequences so far, however, have been negligible.

Instead, more and more new informal bodies are being set up with lots of power but no real legal basis. Eurogroup, European Stability Mechanism (ESM), and so on and so forth – they are able to carry on meeting in secret rooms. If the EU wants to win more legitimacy, many observers say, this has to stop.

A house with guest rooms: refugee policy

The EU debate over what to do about incomers who were not born here has reached a dead end, and has served to bolster right-wing populism – to put it mildly. As a result, the European house is turning increasingly into a hostile fortress. Although the Commission has put forward reform proposals, national governments have refused for years to change the so-called Dublin Regulation. This obliges refugees to seek asylum in the EU country they first arrive in. This is a gross dereliction of solidarity towards countries bordering the Mediterranean such as Greece and Italy, which are closer to the departure states

of the so-called refugee crisis, leaving them feeling as if they have been totally abandoned. And it is a clear violation of the requirement for solidarity in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. This foolish and short-sighted policy helped the xenophobic Lega in Italy win 17 percent of the vote and propelled it into a coalition government whose interior minister refuses to accept more refugees.

Gerd Grözinger, Professor at the European University of Flensburg, proposes a simple solution. The EU should pay those states that let refugees in for their accommodation, food and education costs; under this system, by his calculation Italy would have received about 1.5 billion euros more, Germany as much as 17 billion.[77]

The Social Democrat Gesine Schwan argues that dispersal of refugees via compulsory quotas simply does not work; a voluntary system is needed. The EU should set up a fund to provide money to cities and municipalities that take in refugees. In the EU Parliament this was well received: in March 2018, it called on the Commission, by a large majority, to examine the proposal further.

The European Council should take a "dual decision" to release member states from what Schwan, a professor at the German-Polish Humboldt Viadrina University, calls an ineffective compulsion to solidarity. All European governments should agree on the creation of a "European Integration and Municipal Development Fund".[78] The EU money should go not to nations, but directly to municipalities. Communities willing to take in refugees should be reimbursed for the costs of integration work. And they should receive the same amount again for their own municipal projects. Citizens' councils made up of representatives from politics, business, civil society and refugees should develop local integration strategies.

This would be a win-win scenario: economically weak and neglected regions would receive additional support, and at the same time the refugee problem, which seems insoluble at present, would be largely solved through decentralised dispersal. "Communities whose inhabitants are emigrating," writes Schwan, "could gain new citizens who

give them new life, who work there and increase tax revenues; existing infrastructure threatened with closure (kindergartens, schools, medical facilities, housing stock, mobility, trade) could be fully used again and, if necessary, expanded." And "there would be consistency at last between the European values proclaimed and the steps actually being taken". "The attraction of this strategy lies in the fact that taking in refugees would in the first instance serve the material and immaterial interests of the existing and resident community members." It would eradicate the root causes of right-wing populism because it would kill off the constant accusation that migrants are given preference over the existing local population. And it would also strengthen the local economy.

The southern Italian village of Riace provided a real-life example of this. It had long been suffering from emigration due to the poor life chances on offer; everything had fallen into ruin, houses stood empty for years – until Domenico Lucano founded the association "Città Futura" (city of the future). He offered refugees the opportunity to repair the houses, with the aid of the association, and then to move in to them. In 2004, Lucano won the mayoral elections; in 2009 and 2014 he was re-elected, and he has since been showered with international prizes. He introduced a local currency for the village, the local economy flourished, and the workshops reopened – with mixed teams of locals and foreigners. It was a project that met with international resonance – and therefore a thorn in the side of the Italian Minister of the Interior, Matteo Salvini, who sees refugees as "human flesh" and regards Mayor Lucano as a "zero".[79] Lucano was legally exiled from the village, some of the Riace refugees were dispersed to other locations, and the showcase project was almost destroyed.

Much could also be gained if EU trade policy were no longer to treat southern countries only as cheap suppliers of raw materials, but rather to offer the people there genuine prospects for a better future. The Campact movement outlined what this might look like in a position paper of 2017. The EU, it argued, should be guided by its own fundamental values and should seek to promote democracy, prosperity, the rule of law, human rights, sustainable development, the protection of

the climate, the environment and consumers, and a less open, circular regional economy. Countries with low standards should adapt to higher ones, not vice versa. Fair trade should become the "gold standard".[80] Karl-Martin Hentschel from Mehr Demokratie proposes a new free trade model "which in future should rather be called a fair trade model … This means that free trade without customs duties would be the general rule. However, goods from countries that undercut international standards in order to gain competitive advantage would be hit with punitive customs duties." This would apply, for example, to goods produced without regard for human rights or environmental standards. Child labour, violations of workers' rights or of the Climate Convention would then be punished by the World Trade Organization (WTO) in just the same way as dumping measures.[81]

A house with a joint account and a shared money-box: monetary and social union

341 million people today use the euro. It was introduced in 1999, in the form of bank money, and in 2002 as cash in 19 of the 28 EU member states, as well as in Andorra, Monaco, San Marino and Vatican City. In everyday life, the colourful bills have proved their worth, saving us the cumbersome and expensive business of exchanging currency on business and holiday trips. But the euro lacks something essential: a common economic, financial and social policy to avoid economic distortions. When it was introduced, the governments involved insisted on their national sovereignty; to this day, many continue to block further economic and social union. To put it simply, this allows some in the European house to withdraw more than others from the bank account.

Germany in particular is a net winner, and is showing little solidarity. In Germany, the journalist Harald Schumann observes, "wages and salaries have consistently risen more slowly than productivity since the launch of the euro. The exodus of firms from collective bargaining arrangements and the Hartz reforms have together suppressed wage levels enormously". Since German goods became cheaper as a result, Germany has large surpluses in intra-EU trade, and other euro countries have corresponding deficits. "Germans benefit from the

purchasing power of others, but buy and invest too little themselves, and thus export unemployment. Capital flows operate in reverse. The countries with trade deficits accumulate debts, and the Germans build up credit balances." Schumann's blunt conclusion is that "monetary union cannot survive if it forces everyone into a race to the bottom. That only exacerbates inequality and strengthens the nationalists".[82]

Those who are responsible for this state of affairs within the EU addressed the problem in a paper published in 2015 and entitled "Completing Europe's Economic and Monetary Union", also known as the "Five Presidents' Report" because of its authors.[83] A psychologically interesting detail is that the Report is illustrated exclusively with euros; people do not appear anywhere – money seems to have higher symbolic value. This shortcoming can also be seen in the content: this, too, deals only with new measures for strengthening the "competitiveness" of EU countries. One central proposal is for new procedures to bolster national budgetary discipline. But this serves to fix in place rather than to eliminate a structural flaw in the construction of the European house: what we need is not new bureaucracies, but new competences for the EU Parliament and the Commission that will enable them to put a stop to competition between the nation states.

Economists, technical experts and civil society organisations have long called for an extension of Economic and Monetary Union into the political sphere, in the form of a separate budget and parliament just for the eurozone – among them such prominent figures as the US Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz and the celebrity economist Thomas Piketty ("Capital in the 21st Century"). The Irish professor of history Brendan Simms and the German historian Benjamin Zeeb even argue in their book "Europa am Abgrund" ("Europe at the Abyss") that the EU should reconstitute itself on the lines of the USA as the United States of Europe. The government bonds of the member states would be merged into "Eurobonds". Control and supervision would be the responsibility of a bicameral parliament. There would be a common army and a new constitution. They propose the following procedure: "we need simultaneous referendums in all member states and regions of the eurozone to decide whether a country or a region joins the new

federal union". The authors believe that majorities could be mobilised for this step. According to a survey conducted in 2015, 42 percent of respondents in the eurozone would support such a federal state, while 33 percent rejected it and 25 percent were undecided. National and regional parliamentarians in Europe should take a "federalist oath" to work towards and support such referendums, they suggest.[84]

Emmanuel Macron has also suggested several times that the eurozone should have both its own finance minister and a budget of around two percent of the EU's gross domestic product. Decisions on revenue and expenditure should be taken by an independent parliament. But in the summer of 2017, he met with the German Chancellor in Meseberg who simply shrank the budget without further ado. And even that was still too much for an alliance of northern states, led by the government of the Netherlands, who firmly shut the door on the planned common eurozone budget – for the time being, at least.

The very different tax rates in Europe pose an additional problem. This is because they encourage the governments of the member states towards tax dumping, for example with respect to corporation tax. This is only possible because the EU Parliament lacks power and proper budgetary competence. Henrik Müller and Wolfram E. Richter, professors at the TU Dortmund, recall in their essays the famous slogan "no taxation without representation" with which the "Boston Tea Party" in the USA lit the fuse of the uprising against the British crown in 1773. They are a long way from setting up a "tea party", but they do want to show that paying taxes while having no political representation is democratically unacceptable. Their proposal is that every EU member state should continue to levy taxes on earnings at the national level, but that the taxation of corporate profits and capital gains should be harmonised across Europe and the revenues put into the EU's coffers.[85]

The "bad" (or "non-performing") loans that have been accumulating since the financial crisis of 2008, especially in southern European banks, are a huge problem. They now amount to approximately one trillion euros across Europe. The EU Commission knows that this represents a potential time-bomb, but it allows itself to be repeatedly

dissuaded from taking the necessary action (as does the European Parliament) by the very well organised finance lobby in Brussels. Strict rules would be needed to establish a safety net against future financial crises: a "banking union" involving higher equity capital requirements and lower levels of debt for financial institutions, a common deposit guarantee for savings deposits and a common monetary fund. This is also what "Finance Watch" calls for, one of the few independent organisations in Brussels that dares to take on the powerful financial industry. Finance Watch makes a number of other constructive suggestions in this area.[86]

The euro is in the crisis it deserves, writes Christian Felber in his book "Retten wir den Euro" ("Saving the Euro"). It is a part of the flawed neoliberal construction that is globalisation, of the equally flawed neoliberal construction that is the EU, and of the premature monetary union. To prioritise economic freedom over human rights, environmental protection, distributive justice and democracy is a political mistake that has serious consequences. There are, he suggests, four approaches to solving the euro crisis and dealing with public debt: bailout packages, debt relief, targeted inflation, and debt repayment via EU-wide taxes. Felber believes that the fourth is currently the most sensible. The European Central Bank should buy or guarantee government bonds on condition that states participate in EU-wide coordination of certain taxes, from which they repay debt. This solution is relatively simple, because private wealth amounts to many times the national debt and is largely concentrated in a few hands. A one percent reduction in the wealth of the richest ten percent of the population would reduce the national debt by five percent – after ten years, national debts in the eurozone would be halved.

A house with windows into the future

The political scientist Claus Leggewie believes the most important thing is for the EU to "change the subject": the current "preponderance of horror stories" should end, because it plays into the hands of the far right. Instead, visions of the future should "occupy European society more than the horror scenarios of foreign infiltration, terrorism and

religious wars".[87] Figuratively speaking: the classic horror-film cellar of the European house should be blocked up, and instead the house should open up its windows into the future.

They could be opened by means of a debate on the simple question, "how do we want to live differently, and better, in the coming years?" This question is about the good life not only of the current but also of future generations. To answer it, Leggewie has suggested that the EU should develop an agenda of intergenerational justice in line with the Paris Climate Treaty and the UN sustainability goals for 2030. The EU, he believes, is "the born protagonist of the goals set in Paris and New York in 2015".[88]

Leggewie is a big fan of civic participation and participatory democracy. He wants a "Plan D", where D stands for democracy, dialogue and discussion. He recommends that the EU should set up a "future council", using a qualified representative sortition procedure, which would serve as the "mouthpiece of the citizens" of Europe and advise its bodies on future issues. As part of a progressive social agenda, the EU could also introduce an unconditional basic income, financed perhaps by taxes on robots and financial transactions. Small countries could not manage such a thing, but the Union, acting as a whole, could.[89]

Professor Leggewie believes that cities and metropolises can play a major role in the process of the convergence of the European population. "Europe would generate more dynamism, and be better able to solve future tasks, through a European network of cities than through the intergovernmental interaction of refractory and risk-averse nation states."[90] The pioneering US political scientist Benjamin Barber suggested some years ago that the world climate would be better protected "if mayors ruled the world" instead of national governments.

And in fact there are countless other municipal networks throughout Europe, in addition to the traditional city partnerships, taking on all sorts of issues: fair trade, the abolition of pesticides, climate protection and many others. A few examples: in the "Bio-Città", a network of cities which started in Italy, around 200 cities are pursuing organic

farming and consumption; "Transition Towns" promote a carbon-free eco-social restructuring of the economy and of communities; "Solidarity Cities" is about the integration of refugees; "Inno4sd.net", the "Innovation Network for Sustainable Development", brings politics, science and business together; the "Climate Alliance" comprises 1,700 municipalities and 80 million people across 26 European countries, and is the largest European network of cities dedicated to protecting the global climate and the Amazon. And so on, and so on …

A house with a garden and kitchen: agricultural policy

Healthy food and drink is a basic human need. But this need is not currently being properly met by the Union's kitchen. Too many cooks, all of them only interested in making money, are spoiling the broth.

In order to promote an agricultural system that is good for the farming community and to conserve or even regenerate natural resources, we would need completely new rules for the EU's Common Agricultural Policy. The CAP should be based on the values of environmental protection and solidarity enshrined in the Charter. "Food sovereignty" would be a good guiding principle for any such reform: good food and a good life for everyone! Every country and every continent should meet most of its needs from its own resources, instead of plundering the soil of other countries, as the EU does by sacrificing Latin America's rain forests for the cultivation of genetically modified soya to feed European livestock and other animals. Klaus Töpfer, the former head of UN environment policy, expressed the situation succinctly: "Europe's cattle graze on the Rio Plata". Deforestation will intensify under Brazil's right-wing radical President Jair Bolsonaro, whose top adviser has already announced that he will "wipe his behind" with the UN climate treaty.[91] We Europeans should as far as possible feed ourselves from our own soils. And we should pay a fair price for the coffee, cocoa and bananas we buy.

Another guiding principle is "public money for public goods". Direct payments to farms based on area should be abolished. Anyone who receives taxpayers' money should be obliged to protect all common

goods under their stewardship, such as the soil, the air, rivers, groundwater, meadows and forests, and to maintain high animal welfare standards. We should reward not those who produce at high volume, but those who produce at high quality, who preserve nature and the climate and produce healthy food. Pesticide-free communities that farm without poisoning the ecosystems and thus protect their currently highly endangered biodiversity should be supported. Strategic plans to this end could be developed in participatory processes involving local authorities, farmers and consumers, as suggested by the organisation "WeMove.EU".[92]

Farmers and gardeners who build up humus, for example through the use of biochar, should also be rewarded. Humus, i.e. the proportion of amorphous organic matter in the soil, is a key element: it increases soil fertility and harvests; it regulates the water balance; it takes the greenhouse gas CO_2 from the atmosphere and stores it in the earth in the form of carbon. Per hectare, one percentage point more humus stores the equivalent of 100 tonnes of CO_2 and 160,000 litres of water. An analysis of flooding events often reveals that they take place in regions of humus-depleted soils abused by agro-industrial farming methods. Humus-rich soils are able to survive droughts and flooding by absorbing huge amounts of water into their soil pores. And they could significantly reduce global warming: one percent more humus in the Earth's soils could bring the atmospheric CO_2 content down to a relatively harmless level.[93]

A house with climate controls: energy, climate and mobility policy

A pleasant ambient temperature in a comfortable building is another basic human need. But the air conditioning system in the European house is not working – this was evident during the catastrophically hot summer of 2018. The Union consumes too much fossil and nuclear energy. A switch to 100 percent renewable energy would be possible throughout Europe, and would represent a win-win situation for everyone – except for the energy companies and the oil sheiks.

It would, however, bring with it a systemic switch from centralised energy supply to more decentralised solutions. An energy transition of this kind would create millions of new green jobs. It would be a hands-on, participative change: by 2050, around 125 million people would be contributing to electricity generation and associated services via decentralised facilities.[94]

There are countless ideas on how to coordinate – across borders – an energy transition with climate protection policy. The politics professor Claus Leggewie, for example, suggests a European climate protection fund. The revenues could come from common inheritance, estate and CO_2 taxes, and could be invested in storage technology for renewable energies, e-mobility or energy-saving building materials. Or cooperatively paid out to all EU citizens. For crisis-hit countries, the EU could set up a fund administered by the European Investment Bank to support decentralised solar facilities on roofs, especially on the Greek islands. This would create new jobs and help the climate.[95]

Another triple-win scenario involves reforestation and water security programmes giving jobs to unemployed young people. The fact that southern European countries suffer increasingly from dramatic summer droughts is due not only to the climate crisis, but also to a lack of greenery. Forests store huge quantities of greenhouse gases and water. However, empirical data demonstrate that deforestation and the spread of concrete tourist castles around the Mediterranean are leading to the destruction of the so-called small water cycles. Clouds are driven back towards the sea, precipitation on the landmass decreases, springs and rivers dry up, and rain patterns change across Europe. Municipalities, regions and countries can only maintain their "water security", i.e. sufficient groundwater and drinking water, if they allow precipitation to both evaporate and seep away across a wide area, and that requires reforestation, green roofs, the conversion of drainage systems, rainwater butts and many other measures.[96]

Another element of this is the greening of towns and communities. Global warming must be combated locally and everywhere, and public parks are facilities for well-being, leisure and social encounters as well

as places to cool down during hot summers. In the context of the climate crisis, the EU-sponsored "greening" of metropolises and smaller communities would add to both climate protection and the general enjoyment of life.

In 2008 and again in 2013, Copenhagen was voted the city with the best quality of life, and in 2014 it was voted the "Green Capital of Europe". Like most others, it used to be a car city, but city planner Jan Gehl succeeded over many years of patient and detailed practical work in changing it back to what might be called a human scale. His credo: people need to be able to meet in beautiful public spaces, something which is simply not possible in a "car-friendly city". Today, more than half of the city's population cycles to work or school, and 95 percent of people can get out to the countryside within 15 minutes. All of everyday life has been slowed down, detoxified and greened.

The EU should not, of course, prescribe to local authorities how people are to lead their lives. But it could use its money to promote forms of mobility within the EU that do not add to CO_2 or other emissions or to noise, and to set strict limits for pollutants. According to calculations by the Green MEP Michael Cramer, 60 percent of the relevant EU budget is still spent on promoting car traffic, only 20 percent on the railways and only 0.7 percent on cycling. Moreover, air traffic, which is especially damaging to the climate, is subsidised through tax exemptions. The result is that the EU's motorway and air transport networks are growing; the rail network is shrinking; and emissions from transport are increasing instead of decreasing. Modernising the (environment-friendly) EU-wide rail network and public transport system, conversely, would represent a gigantic employment programme, creating some 18,000 new jobs per billion euros invested.[97] An appropriate name for such a programme might be "Putting Europe on track".

A house with an agora: media and culture

Meeting up with people, gathering together to discuss shared concerns and to make one's own voice heard – this is also a basic human need.

In the ancient Greek city states, the agora – the town meeting place – played a central role in the emergence of democracy. The "res publica" cannot function without somewhere in front of, or within, the European house where the public sphere can emerge, where new ideas are expressed and merge into shared convictions.

The organic historical development of many of the cities of Europe has bequeathed them their beautiful ancient squares – arenas, forums, town squares, meeting places. But the EU in Brussels has no agora in the sense of a common public (media) sphere. This is a tragedy. Without it, the European people cannot unfold its full sovereignty, cannot think and feel beyond national borders.

The debate about "Europe" takes place almost exclusively in the national media: newspaper commentators in Warsaw dissect this or that proposal, TV presenters in Paris analyse it, Internet activists in Athens pronounce it impossible. How could all this be brought together? It is impossible to establish an EU public sphere "from above" – neither literally nor figuratively. The German-English topical magazine *The European*, founded in 2009, demonstrated this. Because not enough people were sufficiently interested in it, the employees had to be made redundant in 2015 and it was sold to a media group. Any newssheet controlled centrally from Brussels would likewise struggle to find readers. And a television station broadcasting mainly debates from the EU Parliament would probably quickly succumb to low viewing figures.

But there are alternatives that might just lead somewhere. The correspondents of the newsletter *eurotopics*, which is published in German, English, French, Turkish and Russian, sift through around 500 European media outlets every day and translate a selection. The *Süddeutsche Zeitung* cooperates fairly loosely with other European broadsheets such as the *Guardian*, *El País*, *La Stampa* and *Le Monde*. The French-German broadcaster *Arte* aims to gradually transform itself into a European television channel and to subtitle its films in all the main EU languages.

Another interesting experiment is "investigate europe", founded in 2017 by a group of nine journalists from eight EU countries.[98]

This multinational team publishes thoroughly researched investigations into – for example – the dependence of public administration bodies on Microsoft, or the complex links between European banks and BlackRock, the world's largest investment fund. According to the website, the project aims to break with national prejudices, make transnational structures visible and hold major players to account. Its work is financed by philanthropic foundations. Content appears both online and in the print editions of media partners from across Europe such as the German *Tagesspiegel*, the Italian *Corriere della Sera*, the Belgian *Standaard*, the Portuguese *Público* or the Polish *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

Of course, everything would be so much easier if we could all converse in one language. But forcing all of Europe to speak English is not a solution. That would just hasten the erosion of Europe's linguistic diversity, a distinct element of its cultural wealth, and, besides, it would exclude the currently less well-educated. For these reasons, the German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas proposed a "European cyberforum" in which everyone can speak in their own language and a digital language assistant translates everything in real time. Estonia has apparently already developed the technology.[99]

The European media's dependence on the US Internet giants is also both inappropriate and risky. They suck up immeasurable quantities of private data, and have indirectly contributed to the creation of a new hate industry. Troll factories churn out hate slogans on a conveyor belt, and sad screen addicts compensate for their fears of social exclusion through Facebook & Co. In more public spaces, subject to the social control of other people, they wouldn't dare. The (anti-)social media have facilitated the erosion of democracy and the rise of right-wing populist movements. The limits to what can be said in public have been massively extended. Abuse and insults have become "normal". Violence against minorities is demonstrably on the rise.

This would not happen with a public service Internet dedicated to protecting the culture of healthy debate. But to bring this about, the EU would have to promote attractive alternatives to Facebook and Google and their like. Why this has not happened, in spite of the rich

technological skills and opportunities in Europe, is a mystery. There have been serious attempts to create a European search engine. In 2005, the then French President Jacques Chirac agreed with German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder to support such a project under the name "Quaero" ("I seek") with 250 million euros. But just over a year later, the German government jumped ship. Was it because Google put pressure on them? The German headquarters of Google is only a few minutes' walk away from the German Chancellery. *Honi soit qui mal y pense …*

The French state continued to support Quaero to the tune of several million until it finally collapsed in 2013. Today, however, there does exist a French search engine (www.qwant.com) which does not suck up users' data, and a European cooperative (*PEP Coop*), co-founded by the writers Juli Zeh and Sibylle Berg, which seeks the return of the Internet to the public domain. The greater the numbers of citizens and Internet users joining up, the stronger they become.[100]

Others believe that the agora needs, above all, European symbols with real emotional impact. The common flag and anthem and the filthy Euro-money don't quite do it for them. The MEP Martin Sonneborn proposed that the Commission should issue a "Humour Directive" (satire alert …). The British writer Priya Basil, on the other hand, is serious. "The EU's circulation needs an infusion of ordinary citizens – the lifeblood of democracy." She proposes, among other things, five public holidays between the two Europe Days of 5 and 9 May, during which time public transport should be free and street festivals on the theme of Europe should take place everywhere, "debates, readings, games, exhibitions, concerts, plays, films – all manner of free intercultural activities through which people can explore and reflect on what it means to be European".[101]

Another idea has been put forward by two young enthusiasts for Europe, Vincent-Immanuel Herr and Martin Speer: wouldn't it be nice if the Commission gave all young people an Interrail ticket for their 18th birthday? MEPs took up the idea, and in March 2018 the EU Commission announced that 12 million euros had been earmarked

for 30,000 young people in the next EU budget.[102] Not perhaps such a big deal for the EU's young people, but it may put them on the right track …

A house with rooms for rest and relaxation: peace policy

To be able to live in peace and sleep well at night is also a basic human need. A united Europe has given us about 70 years of peace – a new record on the old warring continent. But here, too, the European house is displaying a number of cracks and wobbling corner stones. Or to put it another way: on the one hand, it now has comfortable bedrooms, but at the same time it is being transformed into a fortress.

The military history of the EU is long, complicated and contradictory. As early as the 1950s, a number of politicians expressed a wish for a European army. There have always been strong objections to this at the national level. The French government, for example, stopped the plan in 1954 because it saw in it a threat to its own sovereignty. NATO, too, worked hard to block the idea because it did not want any competition. So-called "security and defence policy" has therefore not played a major role in the EU so far. Although a "European Defence Agency" was established in 2004, its main purpose is to procure contracts for national defence industries. And although the Union has had at its disposal since 2007 an intervention force of 1,500 soldiers, it has never been deployed. Probably also because the sending countries wished to avoid incurring further costs.

Emmanuel Macron now wants more: a common EU army, financed by a European defence budget. A first step in this direction was taken in November 2017: the foreign and defence ministers of 23 EU states committed themselves to a joint military upgrade within the framework of the "Permanent Structured Cooperation" agreement ("Pesco"). Under this, a total of 17 military projects will be financed through a joint fund, including the standardisation of soldiers' electronic equipment and a logistical hub for troop transports. And in July 2018, the conservative majority in the EU Parliament approved half a billion euros for the European armaments industry to develop drones and (it

is suspected) killer robots and cluster munitions. At the same time, the budget for civil conflict prevention and peacekeeping was cut by more than half.[103]

Wouldn't it be better if it were the other way around? A peacefully united Europe, the recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, should be an international model for disarmament and civil conflict management. The financial resources would be better used in programmes to promote conflict prevention and peaceful dialogue. With its "Civil Peace Service", Germany has created a model worth imitating. Since 1999, over 1,200 experts have helped to solve conflicts without violence and to promote human rights in more than 60 crisis countries; 300 are being deployed right now in 44 countries. In the former Yugoslavia, Israel-Palestine and Uganda they have established reconciliation initiatives. In Cambodia, they provided support to the victims of sexualised violence and to the international tribunal to deal with the genocide perpetrated by the Khmer Rouge. In Guatemala, they prepared the ground for the trials of high-ranking military personnel who committed violent crimes during the civil war. In Colombia, they promoted media coverage that served to de-escalate violence.[104]

Much more could be done in this vein. For example, a series of peace dialogues in the crisis states around the Mediterranean. Or initiatives to help the nine million Roma scattered across Europe living in appalling conditions. Or support for the women's peace initiatives trying to maintain the difficult dialogue between Russia and Ukraine. Or quite simply the signing of a UN agreement that requires companies to comply with human rights standards; under pressure from the German government, the EU has so far refused to support this.[105]

An open house for all: direct and consultative democracy

Being able to have a say in your own house, to make your voice heard, is also a basic human need. We all know the feeling of deep frustration when we put our hand up to speak at an event but are not noticed. We all need to experience self-efficacy: the satisfaction of knowing that your voice is heard and that your engagement in the res publica makes

a difference. The EU needs a democracy offensive: a firework display of new ways for the European sovereign to participate.

Mehr Demokratie e. V. (More Democracy) is therefore proposing that the right to people's initiatives, to petitions and referendums on a pan-European basis should be formally embedded in law – together with the right to block EU laws by referendum (a "people's veto"). The sovereign should have the final word. Mehr Demokratie has a simple solution to the concerns that are commonly voiced regarding this idea: if referendums – unlike in Switzerland – were required to comply with the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, there would be no votes on inhumane or discriminatory proposals such as deportation or the introduction of the death penalty.

However, it is also conceivable that such Europe-wide referendums might be permitted only on fundamental and/or constitutional issues, such as a new EU treaty or the accession of a new member state. And it could be stipulated beforehand that if a qualified majority were not achieved – for example, 55 percent – then the issue would have to be debated and negotiated anew; this would prevent a situation where a chance majority of 51 percent, or even a majority manipulated through social bots, can overrule almost half the voters, as was the case with Brexit.[106]

Mehr Demokratie does not believe that referendums would destabilise the EU. And provides statistical evidence: since 1972, there have been 57 referendums on EU issues, mainly on accessions and withdrawals; and only in 3 out of 21 cases, once in Switzerland and twice in Norway, did a majority vote against accession.[107]

In their book "Die Konsultative" ("The Consultative"), Patrizia Nanz and Claus Leggewie call for representative citizens' councils which publish informed opinion papers on disputes. The authors are convinced that these councils would have a positive impact on the political process and strengthen parliaments. A more permanent variant of citizens' councils might be so-called "future councils", which – at municipality, district, national or even EU level – could debate future-related topics:

intergenerational justice, climate protection, the future of work, artificial intelligence, the preservation of biodiversity, the protection of common goods and much else besides. Their informed recommendations could be "flanked" by public events and networked communications activities. Parliaments could be obliged to provide "binding feedback".

And Nicola Quarz of Mehr Demokratie also calls for a reform of the "European Citizens' Initiatives". The establishment of this procedure at the EU was due in part to the work of Mehr Demokratie, the biggest organisation promoting direct democracy in the world. However, the regulations governing how it works are far too bureaucratic and difficult, as described above. Mehr Demokratie therefore proposes to drastically lower the hurdles which citizens' initiatives have to overcome. Online signature collection should be made easier; the deadlines for submission should be extended; and the Commission should ensure translation into all official EU languages and proper public debate. "In the future, there must also be direct democracy at European level in the form of direct democratic legislation and referendums," said Mehr Demokratie. "Citizens must be able to introduce draft legislation in the Council and Parliament."[108]
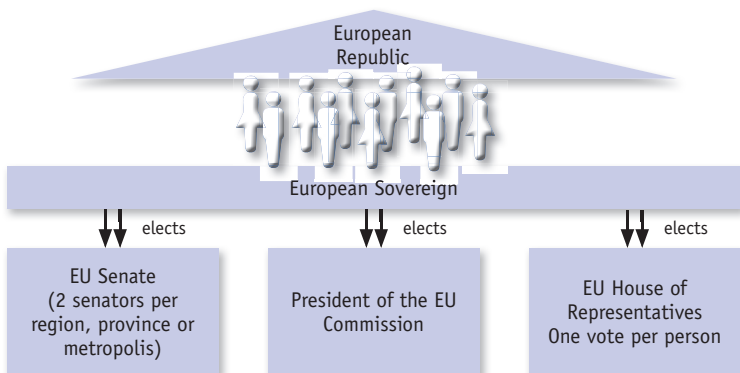
Rebuilding the house

The German politics professor Ulrike Guérot and the Austrian novelist and author Robert Menasse are among the leading pioneers of the idea of a totally reformed and renovated citizens' EU. In their jointly written manifesto, which was read aloud by artists and actors on over 100 public balconies and squares across Europe on 10 November 2018 – one hundred years after the end of the First World War – they symbolically proclaimed a new "European Republic" of cities and regions, with a proper separation of powers. "The Europe of nation states has failed. The dream of European integration has been betrayed. The Single Market and the euro fell easy prey to a neoliberal agenda which runs counter to the goal of social justice … The European Council is hereby decommissioned. The European Parliament now has the power to make law. It will appoint a government committed equally to the welfare of all European citizens."[109]

Guérot and Menasse are convinced that a democratised "Europe of the regions" would elegantly resolve the eternal dispute as to whether the EU should remain a confederation of states or become a federal state. At the same time, it would be closer to the citizens than the current one, if the regions are democratically governed and the EU provides a "common roof" based on shared values. But isn't that legally impossible? Menasse and Guérot believe that it is possible. They invoke the principle of subsidiarity as enshrined in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. All that is missing, they argue, is the political will to apply the principle consistently in such a way that regional matters are once again actually decided on in regional parliaments.

Another initiative in this vein is the "European Charter of Local Self-Government", adopted by the Council of Europe in Strasbourg in 1985. The Charter reaffirms the right of European municipalities to political, administrative and financial autonomy. It owes its existence to the Swiss historian Adolf Gasser, who after 1945 advocated a European federation of municipalities instead of nation states.[110]

Guérot envisages the Commission as a genuine government, with a president directly elected by the EU sovereign. And she would like to see the introduction of a "classic bicameral system": a chamber of deputies with full budgetary and legislative initiative rights, and a senate made up of "senators from the European regions and autonomous provinces".[111]

She sees the European Republic as a "federation of many regional units without an intermediate national authority". Because "it can be seen in Montesquieu already that the individual elements of a federation have to be small in order to remain close to the people".[112] The Republic would therefore be a horizontal network of autonomous provinces and metropolises linked by a common European infrastructure and a form of fiscal federalism yet to be defined. Those 50 to 60 discrete European regions that have existed since the Middle Ages have, with their current populations of 7 to 15 million people, an "optimal operational scale" for such entities, she believes.[113]

In a Europe of the regions, big countries like Germany would lose their powerful position. But their inhabitants would have more influence in Brussels and Strasbourg than before. Until now, the distribution of seats in the EU Parliament has placed large states at a disadvantage compared with small ones: a German EU Member of Parliament today represents about 850,000 people, a parliamentarian from Malta only 66,000.[114] In future, however, throughout Europe, each half a million votes would send one representative to parliament, via transnational lists and according to the principle of "one person, one vote". The result, Guérot believes, would be that "the citizens' Europe is born, the elites' EU project is buried".[115]

Guérot, founder of the "European Democracy Lab", has her sights set even higher. All the members of this new "RePublic" would be granted European citizenship – with a common EU passport, a single, universal tax number, a single universal unemployment insurance and an unconditional basic income, financed by a tax on financial transactions. There would be debt relief for over-indebted countries and economic insurance against future crises through joint government bonds. "This is the agenda for the pre-revolutionary period leading to the great Reformation of Europe. Oh, what bliss in that European dawn to be alive!"[116]

A house with doors open to the regions

We live in a Europe made up of regions that have developed organically over very long periods. Landscapes, languages, cuisines and

cultures alter slowly and incrementally as we travel from Bavaria to Tyrol and on to Trentino: the clattering wheels of the train are accompanied by the rolling R's of the speakers' tongues and the variations on dumplings in the onboard restaurant. We would also spot similarities as we travelled from Brittany through Normandy to Flanders or Wallonia. Or through the Baltic states region, once part of the Hanseatic League. Everywhere, so many areas have grown together with no thought at all for national borders. Home is where people recognise familiar smells and sounds, where they experience a resonance from their shared landscape and where they feel accepted as they are. That is, in villages, cities and regions; nation states are far too big for that.

But when these villages, cities and regions are "left behind" because companies, shops, medical facilities and schools close down and leave people without positive future prospects, it is precisely here where the right-wing populists gain ground. At least in France: if you compare two maps, one showing unemployment in France and the other the votes for the extreme right Front National, you can see that they are a very close match.[117] Promoting a good quality of life in rural areas is therefore an existential issue for the EU. And this also – perhaps especially – includes the democratisation of such areas, so that people feel they are being heard in Brussels.

The vision promoted by Ulrike Guérot and Robert Menasse therefore involves promoting the regional in Europe and downgrading the national. "A Europe of regions is evolving," believes Menasse, who defines himself as "a Lower Austrian and a European"; the nations are gradually disappearing. He appealed to "his" Lower Austrian provincial parliament members to take responsibility for the fate of Europe by invoking the principle of subsidiarity enshrined in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights: "home is a human right; a nation is not. Home is something concrete, a nation is abstract. While nations have fought each other, regions have suffered, have bound together, have always preserved their uniqueness. The roots of our identity are in the regions. Regions existed before the nations were formed, and the free association of the regions is the concrete and real utopia of a post-national Europe".[118]

Although the EU has a "Committee of the Regions", with 353 members, the Committee has so far had little say. It has only consultative status and has no decision-making powers. This is why Menasse demands that "whatever can be decided at the regional level should remain with the regional parliaments." And MEPs should no longer be elected at the national but at the regional level.

Had such a post-national utopia been in place already, Europe might possibly have been spared the war in Yugoslavia, he believes. Nobody noticed at the time the contradiction between politicians pushing for the enlargement of Germany in the form of reunification and at the same time for the dismemberment of Yugoslavia into small pieces. "The remnants of the destroyed state, now of course nations, will be accepted into the EU one after the other – why wasn't Yugoslavia simply admitted straight away?"[119]

Mehr Demokratie also advocates the decentralisation of the European Union "as a basic principle of the building of functional states" and the strengthening of regions and municipalities, but without wanting to abolish the nation states. "We regard the arrangements in Denmark or Sweden, where the majority of political decisions are taken in the municipalities, as exemplary." The competences at the EU level should be defined in a formal list. A financial equalisation or revenue-sharing system should be used to eliminate inequalities between EU states, but the money should go not to national governments but directly to regions.

"International comparisons show that in more decentralised states (such as Denmark and Switzerland) there are far higher levels of satisfaction with politics and the social order," writes Karl-Martin Hentschel of Mehr Demokratie.[120] "The citizens have more trust in their local political authorities, and the experience of democracy is much more real at the local level." Hentschel therefore proposes that a new EU constitution should establish independent taxation powers at the local, national and European levels. A "catalogue of responsibilities" should be drawn up for EU agencies, which should take over sovereign tasks such as justice, policing, foreign policy and financial

equalisation. Local authorities and regions, on the other hand, should have responsibility for basic public services such as education, health and transport.

The idea of a "Europe of the Regions" was the subject of intense debate in the 1980s, notably in the new green parties. Heidi Meinzolt, at the time a member of the board of the European Greens, was calling then already for such a democratisation of Europe – to include a "regional chamber" and solidarity-based financial equalisation. Regions, she argued, were more capable of being democratic and ecological. Regions and transregional alliances offered shorter distances and greater scope for action. "It is clear that under a common European roof the house has to offer a variety of different living arrangements," she wrote, "because we can't just extend the roof and look after the interests of the best tenants while fobbing off the others individually like beggars in the hallway."[121]

Modern systems theory agrees with her. According to this, physical, biological, and social organisations function best when their smallest units are self-organised without a hierarchy and align themselves with one another (or "peer to peer"). Examples of this are computer networks, flocks of birds and self-managed businesses. Hierarchical organisations, on the other hand, perform their tasks poorly, with difficulty and with a great loss of information. It is to be hoped, then, that in the long run there will no longer be any highly centralised states or corporations. Regions should have the right as far as possible to shape their own destiny. Provided, that is, they respect mutually agreed values, such as fundamental rights, democracy, the protection of minorities and solidarity.

Putting in new foundations for the European house

But is the actual sovereign of Europe, its citizens and inhabitants, also in favour of all this? Shouldn't they be asked first? This is exactly what is being advocated by a number of civil society organisations such as Mehr Demokratie, the Europe-wide left-wing alliance DiEM25 and the citizens' movement Pulse of Europe.
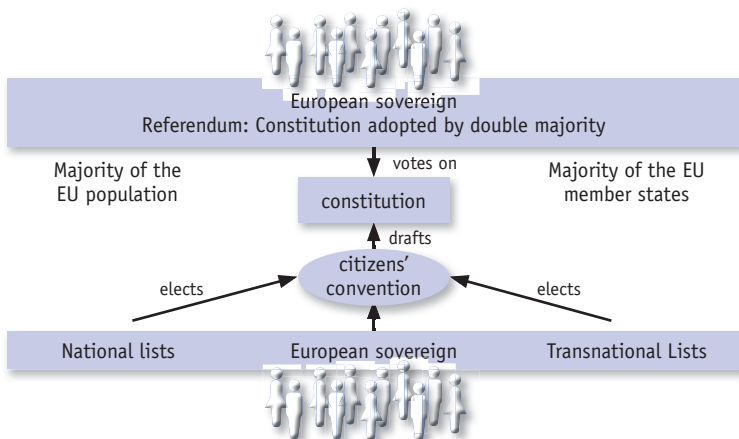
This citizens' initiative, which originated in Frankfurt in 2016 and organises and co-ordinates pro-European demonstrations in many EU countries, called in June 2018 for "house parliaments" or "sofa parliaments" to be set up. Anyone willing to turn their living room or sofa into a "parliament" should invite a group of three to seven people, as diverse a group as possible. The results of the discussion would be recorded. Pulse of Europe would analyse them and send the results to the Federal German Foreign Office, to Minister of State for Europe Michael Roth (SPD) – as an alternative and a supplement to Merkel's non-binding "citizens' dialogue". Three to four rounds of these "house parliaments" would be held before the EU parliamentary elections. Pulse of Europe would then endeavour to have the model introduced across the EU.[122]

Mehr Demokratie argues for fundamental reform – fundamental in both the abstract sense and the figurative sense. "We all live in one house, our 'European house'. That is why we have to agree on the construction plan for this house." They believe that the house is too confusing because it has too many unused rooms and corridors, with some of the inhabitants keen to move out and creaky noises and crumbling plaster everywhere. It needs new foundations: a constitution enshrining the proper and consistent separation of powers, direct democracy and decentralisation. In two position papers adopted by its general assembly in 2016 and 2017, Mehr Demokratie calls for the democratisation of the Union and the drafting of an EU constitution by an elected citizens' convention – as the ultimate owner of the new house.[123]

According to this proposal from Mehr Demokratie, the members of such a European citizens' convention should be directly elected, half from transnational lists, the other half from national lists. They should be given plenty of time for their work drafting the constitution. The convention should discuss and decide in public how it wants to work. The debates should be broadcast live in all EU countries and languages. Drafts, working papers and interim results would be available on the Internet.

Subsequently, the European sovereign – that's us – should vote on the new EU constitution. And it should be possible "to vote for several alternatives and, if necessary, to indicate preferences". And as a special feature of the process, it should be possible to collect signatures for alternative or additional constitutional articles. If one million signatures in favour of an alternative can be collected across the EU, it will be put to a vote. Finally, the constitution will only enter into force if it wins a "double majority" – a majority of the EU population and a majority of between two-thirds and four-fifths of the EU states.
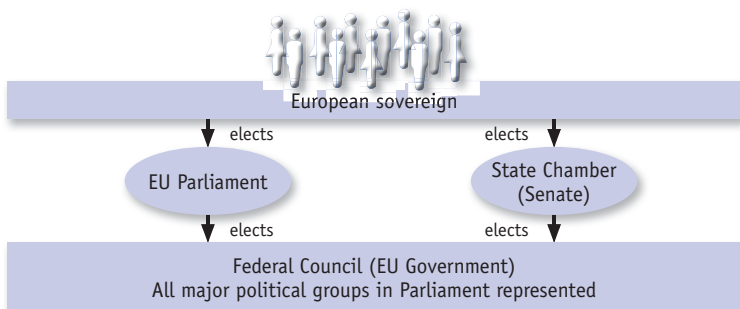
Mehr Demokratie also wants to see the right to referendums introduced at EU level, and believes that the EU Parliament should be supplemented by an elected second chamber. Unlike Guérot and Menasse, Mehr Demokratie is as yet undecided on whether nations or regions should be represented there. However, equal rights would be better guaranteed if only member states were present in the Senate, because if the second chamber were made up of regions, far more would come from Germany than from other countries, and these might then form a "German power bloc".

European sovereign
Referendum: Constitution adopted by double majority

Majority of the EU population — votes on — constitution — Majority of the EU member states

drafts

citizens' convention

National lists — elects — European sovereign — elects — Transnational Lists

Unlike Ulrike Guérot, who wants the EU president to be directly elected, Mehr Demokratie proposes as head of government a federal council based on the Swiss model, made up of representatives of

the largest parliamentary groups. It would make decisions by consensus, and would be elected every four years by the parliament and the senate. Mehr Demokratie explicitly counsels against directly electing a president: this has led to a polarisation of the population in the USA, Russia, Turkey and other countries. In the transnational structure of the EU, with 24 official languages, numerous cultures, religions, and worldviews and a highly diverse history, there would be a danger of majorities being formed based on regional affiliations: Southern Europe versus Northern Europe, Eastern Europe versus Western Europe.

The political scientist Parag Khanna, a former advisor to President Obama, comes to the same conclusion.[124] He believes US-style presidential democracy to be ineffective and susceptible to populism, and recommends instead a federal or college-style government, as in Switzerland, with a rotating presidency. The big advantage is that a diversity of peoples, regions and traditions can then all be represented. The federal council would be essentially politically neutral and would implement laws passed in parliament and other constitutional requirements. The real debates would take place in Parliament and in public. Controversial issues would be decided by referendums. The Swiss Karl Bürkli, a pioneer of the democracy movement, observed already in 1869 that the people were far more likely to make wrong decisions or to be manipulated "when it is a question of judging people (elections) rather than of judging things (votes)".[125]

The Union as a bigger version of Switzerland – why not? In the past, the EU might have merited this description on account of its butter mountains and milk lakes …

But more important than the content of the constitution, according to Mehr Demokratie, is the process of getting there. It would be essential to ensure that citizens "are involved from start to finish". EU expert Armin Steuernagel calls this "emotional ownership". "Process fairness is more important than outcome fairness. Slow can sometimes be faster."[126]

Citizen participation should therefore be organised on an ongoing "cyclical" basis: after initial internal consultations, opportunities for public participation should follow. Comments could be reviewed, incorporated and discussed again. Possible ways of doing this include online surveys, telephone interviews, inviting position statements from individuals and civil society organisations, hearings, Internet platforms and representative citizens' councils selected by lottery.

Karl-Martin Hentschel, a thought leader working with Mehr Demokratie, has further suggestions.[127] In addition to the legislative, executive and judicial branches, he proposes a further separation of powers: a "monetative" branch, in the form of the European Central Bank, operating according to new criteria. The primary objective of monetary policy in the future should be low unemployment and good and sustainable economic development. Monetary stability would then only be a means to an end – and not an end in itself. A media council, under democratic control, should be responsible for the creation of a "European public sphere" of a kind that does not yet exist; and perhaps a European media agency should be established working in all 24 official languages of the EU. An Economic Council with responsibility for regulating competition should be tasked with preventing the emergence of monopolies and with systematically unbundling the existing ones – in particular the Internet giants. Instead, as an alternative to both the state and private sectors, public-interest business models should be supported and promoted. These tasks require bodies that are independent of government, because government cannot perform

them effectively: it is always suspected of influencing monetary policy or media and corporate regulation to favour its own re-election, and is therefore easily blackmailed.[128]

However, Mehr Demokratie acknowledges that the convening of a pan-European constitutional assembly would require a "great mobilisation", because governments in the EU states and the people in charge in Brussels have little incentive to call their own power base into question. From a legal perspective, this would represent a change to the EU treaties, so it would require the unanimous agreement of all national governments. Is it therefore totally unrealistic? No – because the EU crisis is first and foremost a crisis of legitimacy. If the EU falls apart, everyone loses. If we want to save the Union, we need completely new ways of winning more support from the European sovereign.

It has to be emphasised again and again: all of us together constitute the supreme sovereign. If we take democracy seriously, then we stand above parliament and government (as we do in the graphic illustrations in this book). They are supposed to be our servants, not the other way around. (Was that laughter I heard then?)

The European house in one or two decades' time

What would the European house in Brussels look like in a decade or two if the EU were to allow its citizens and residents to rebuild it? If it were possible for a Europe-wide citizens' movement to reconstitute the EU?

There would be a colourful bustle beneath the fluttering flags in Brussels' European quarter. One meeting or event follows another: discussions, debates, demonstrations … Members of parliament, other politicians, leaders of citizens' initiatives, legal experts, all weaving around each other, making appointments, arguing, scolding, laughing. Preparations for the establishment of a European Republic are in full swing. Everyone is working on the details. But one thing is already clear: the old controversy as to whether the EU should be a federal state or a confederation of states is no longer relevant. Which is lucky, because it would have provoked endless arguments between the national governments. No – a new utopia is emerging here, a political entity never seen before. A decentralised Europe, pervaded by shared structures which, though they are concentrated in Brussels, no longer form a centre in the old hierarchical sense.

The principle of subsidiarity is now serving to restore to local and regional authorities throughout Europe their lost self-determination, while the power of the nation state is being reined in. Only in Scandinavia is there less need for this: there, municipal self-determination remains as prominent a feature as before. People in the historic European regions are busy building strong regional self-government: in the Basque country, in Bavaria, Lombardy, Scotland, Wallonia and all those other places. One collateral benefit is that demands for independence, in Catalonia for example, start to recede.

When exactly the European Republic is to become concrete reality is still a matter of dispute among those engaged in these lively debates. Common symbols have been around for some time already: the EU flag, Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" as an anthem, the slogan "Unity in Diversity", the common currency, Europe Day on 9 May. But some things still have to be fully thought through, and some have to be built from scratch. Not only in Brussels, but in the regions, too. For example, a single citizens' insurance system for healthcare and benefits in old age. Or financial equalisation between the regions, so that all EU citizens have equal opportunities. Or agricultural policy: in the future, a form of agriculture needs to be adopted which will regenerate soils, water supply and the climate and respect non-human living beings as our fellow creatures. Pesticides and animal factory farms will be gradually done away with. Or peace policy: civil conflict management, which has spent decades in the political wilderness, will play a central role on the international stage in the future. Women's peace initiatives will be supported across the world; let's not forget that in Europe, too, before the world wars, it was above all women who called and worked for cross-border peace.

The EU's common citizenship authority is also still under construction, including its registration offices. There, every inhabitant and every citizen will receive their EU passport, which replaces the old national citizenship. The same applies to the common media institution with its regional branches. This covers television, radio, Internet services and search engines, all non-commercial, democratically self-governing, under common ownership. "Commoning" is the new buzzword for this kind of innovation in the offices and corridors of joint administration, creation and governance.

All these bodies are to be legally embedded in the new EU constitution. This is being worked on by what is in effect a standing convention with subsidiary working groups, which was set up under pressure from civil society groups supported by the EU Parliament and sympathetic politicians. The essential difference from earlier draft constitutions is that at the end of the process, this one must be adopted, via a referendum, by the EU sovereign – and not

by governments, as has been the case so far. The convention is made up of 600 members from politics and civil society, plus 50 delegates from aspirant EU states as advisors. 200 of them were elected via transnational lists, 200 were elected as national representatives of the EU member states, and 200 were drawn by lot. The Greek government in particular had insisted on this last element, invoking ancient traditions. However, Brussels doesn't always follow ancient precedent – otherwise only men would sit there.

There are heated debates about what should be the exact form and content of the new constitution. One thing is certain: unlike the Maastricht and Lisbon Treaties, it will be succinct and easy to understand, otherwise it would not stand a chance in the referendum. The Charter of Fundamental Rights will be further extended. It represents the true foundation of the European house, the common ground that supports all the walls, pillars and other structural components. Among other things, the right of all EU citizens to transnational and trans-sexual identities is under discussion. And whether animals and plants also have the right to dignity, protection and life. And how exactly the right to peace should be defined. Whether the strong commitment to climate protection should be buttressed by the acknowledgement of a historical "climate debt" on the part of the industrialised countries. Whether the orientation towards gross domestic product should be replaced by one towards gross national happiness, following the example of Bhutan and New Zealand, in order to get rid of the growth compulsion. And how the EU's commitment to promoting the common good can be made concrete.

Because, as many people are demanding, the Union's institutions should above all serve the interests of the polity as a *community* – thereby distinguishing it in a positive way from the USA, Russia or China. Universal public services – health, education, water, energy, transport networks and the like – should be protected against privatisation. Cooperatives, community interest and non-profit enterprises should enjoy privileged status. The previous commitment to the "principle of competition" between states should be abolished. After the disaster of the Trump government in the USA, now finally voted out of

office, it was recognized once again that the EU countries must speak with one voice and be part of a democratic cartel.

A consistent separation of powers has already been introduced. The parliament, i.e. the legislature, has been given budgetary and legislative initiative rights; its members are elected via trans-European lists and on the basis of equal voting rights across Europe. In turn, the parliament chooses the government. The Council of Ministers has been replaced by an elected second chamber where the regions are represented. The third chamber is a "future council", its members drawn by qualified representative lottery. Within the framework of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it is responsible for the restructuring of the Union on nature-friendly and humane principles. Its work is shadowed by future workshops in which citizens and experts elaborate and test-run tomorrow's Europe. At present, for example, expert-supervised experiments are underway in several regions on the introduction of an unconditional basic income.

All these changes were brought about by a strong civil society movement which emerged in response to the deep crisis of the EU. In several countries, right-wing populists threatened to secede or to obstruct the workings of the Union. In Catalonia, Flanders and elsewhere, calls for independence became ever louder. Into this volatile situation, "Paneuropa" was born. In mass demonstrations in Berlin, Warsaw, Rome and elsewhere, people vociferously demanded a decentralised republic. In Brussels, they wrapped the EU buildings in long banners with slogans like "We want to have our say" and "Democratisation now!" (but also, "EUphoria!"). In some regions, there were even general strikes. The European people were discovering their identity as the European sovereign.

This mass mobilisation was preceded by serious hard work, including a series of congresses involving the most important of the pro-European movements. The discussions were excellently moderated, but nevertheless they were difficult: for a long time, for example, the Catalans did not want to give up their right to independence. The European Federalists and the European Movement were in

favour of subsidiarity and of bringing politics closer to the people, but did not want to confront Brussels head-on. Nor did the Spinelli Group, a cross-party network of MEPs. Pulse of Europe also initially warned against changes to the EU treaties, but movements such as DiEM25, Podemos and Attac called for precisely that: an eco-social reorientation of the EU. It seemed as if agreement was impossible.

In the end, the crucial factor was when More Democracy and others joined forces with the initiatives driven largely by young people, such as WeMove.EU, the European Moment, European Citizens' Forum, Why Europe, Eyes on Europe, European Youth Forum, Young European Collective, The May9Movement, Stand up for Europe, European Alternatives, the Charter of the Regions and the rest of them.[129] Despite their very different political colouration, they worked together to outline a vision of a European republic of regions. And agreed on a short list of common demands.

In Brussels and in many European capitals, politicians initially reacted at a loss, especially as the new movement could not be neatly classified as "left" or "right". But since the alternative was an unmanaged disintegration of the EU, which would have meant them losing their own grip on power, they made concessions. For example, they agreed to survey people about what they considered the biggest problems and opportunities in their respective home regions. The results were collected, in a process that took several years, via citizen surveys, online platforms, citizen conventions and referendums. In many regions, especially in rural ones, it turned out that what people were lacking was above all basic public services: clinics, doctors, schools, nurseries, offices and shops, but also transport connections, employment and life prospects. The next step was to set up citizens' councils, drawn by lot, to discuss practical ways to change the situation. Local politicians were obliged to respond to the proposals and, if at all possible, to implement them.

A surprising side-effect was that right-wing populists lost much of their support. They had fed off the perception that "refugees get more attention and consideration than we do". The new movement from below largely put an end to that, because people finally felt that their

voice counted, that they were being listened to, that their home region was getting some attention. This deprived the right of some of their key arguments. Their small-minded nationalism seemed more and more to be a thing of the past.

At the request of its citizens and inhabitants, the "European house" is now also being constructed in the regions. Everywhere on the continent, "citizens' houses" for meetings and debates are being built to complement those in Brussels. In very different formats, nestling in the dreamy landscapes around the turquoise Mediterranean, in the stony heart of the Alps, on the wild Atlantic, in the Scandinavian forests, the marshy landscapes of the Vistula and the gorges of the Balkans. Everywhere there are now places for public discussion, for civilised conviviality. Free access for everyone, with a programme encompassing art, culture and historical community knowledge. Including the knowledge that the European idea cannot survive in the long run without regional resonance. Citizens and residents have the opportunity to hear, experience and feel what Europe really means in their own home towns. Home no longer stands in stark contrast to the remote bureaucracy in Brussels.

This vision of the future can of course be dismissed as "naïve" because it sees the possibility of a positive and hopeful solution to the current crisis. But visions always seem naïve, because they look beyond the obstacles towards the goal. But if, on the other hand, we only moan about the state of the EU and don't put forward ideas about how to resolve the crisis, we will only accelerate its demise.

One thing is clear: cautious reforms and small detailed changes will not get Europe out of its deep crisis. If the EU wants to strengthen its legitimacy, activists and others who want to save Europe, in Brussels and elsewhere, will have to dare to take big steps and to articulate stirring visions, and to involve as many people as possible, whether they were born here or moved here.

For, together, we – all of us – are the highest European sovereign. Not the nations and national governments, not the EU institutions, but we

"ordinary" people. This is what is meant by the age-old idea of democracy, based on Ancient Greece and the Enlightenment. We, the citizens of Europe, must plan, organise and democratically decide together what our future continent will look like. We have the right to do so. And don't forget: not the right-wing populists, but *we* are the vast majority!

"Joy, beautiful spark of the gods, daughter of Elysium …" Thus begins the European Anthem, the "Ode to Joy" by Friedrich Schiller, set to music by Ludwig van Beethoven.

The old saga of the king's daughter Europa, from the area of today's Syria, tells a very different story, of how Europa was raped by a bull and abducted to Crete. The bull can be seen as a symbol for the stock markets, or for right-wing populists like Steve Bannon, Donald Trump, Vladimir Putin, Jair Bolsonaro, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Victor Orbán, Jarosław Kaczyński, Matteo Salvini and the rest of them. Do we have to rewrite the European anthem?

How about a slightly rewritten version of Patti Smith's "People have the power"? With the exception of the chorus, the poem also goes well with Beethoven's melody. And it is an indirect plea to vote, in the EU parliamentary elections, for candidates who are starting the process of democratisation, and who are willing to defend Europe.

I was dreaming in my dreaming of an aspect bright and fair
And my sleeping it was broken but my dream it lingered near
In the form of shining valleys where the pure air recognised
And my senses newly opened I awakened to the cry
That the people have the power to redeem the work of fools
To rebuild the Union it's decreed the people rule
The people have the power
The people have the power …
Everything we dream can come to pass through our union
We can turn the world around and the European Union …

What does Mehr Demokratie e.V. want?

You're almost at the end of this book. You have read about the crisis of democracy and how it is being undermined. You have also read about how our right to self-determination could be reasserted, creatively and with new ideas. So, what happens now? Are you just going to close the book? Why not continue writing it together with us instead!

Mehr Demokratie e.V. is the largest non-governmental organisation working for direct democracy in the world. We advocate that citizens should have the right and the opportunity to decide important issues for themselves if they so wish – in local communities, at the regional level, at national level and in the EU. In addition to direct democracy, we are also committed to the right to vote, so that citizens have more influence on the election of their political representatives. Finally, we also support transparency and freedom of information.

Mehr Demokratie has so far initiated 39 petitions for referendums and popular initiatives itself, collecting a total of around six million signatures through community actions, popular initiatives and constitutional complaints. By this means we have brought about more than 20 reforms in the German federal states and fought for better co-determination rights. Together with Campact and foodwatch, we initiated the biggest constitutional complaint in German history against CETA.

Mehr Demokratie e.V. regularly publishes reports and rankings on direct democracy, voting rights and transparency regulations. Members receive their own magazine, the *md-magazin*.

Almost 10,000 members support the work of Mehr Demokratie and demand, with us, the completion of our democracy. That's a lot. Relative to the challenge, however, it is far too few. Join us! Become a member, donate, subscribe to our free newsletter. We will keep you up to date, and inform you about our actions and other activities – and our joint successes.

You can find us here: www.mehr-demokratie.de

When we stop working on democracy, democracy begins to stop working.

About the author

Ute Scheub holds a doctorate in political science, is a freelance journalist and writes books. Her most recent book is "Die Humusrevolution" ("The Humus Revolution"), published by oekom verlag. Mehr Demokratie e. V. has already published her book "Democracy – the Unfinished".

She fully supports the goals of Mehr Demokratie. You can find out more about her at www.utescheub.de

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