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Divisions in Europe between Elites and Citizens[1]

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In the negative outcomes of the 2000 referenda on the European Constitution in France and the Netherlands, a deep split has arisen between elites and citizens about European integration. This fact, recognised by the elites themselves, is highly challenging from the scientific point of view. How can we explain the fact that such a historically unique, seemingly successful process is pursued enthusiastically by the political, economic and bureaucratic elites, and seen as a model for the world among some social analysts,[2] but accompanied by much more sober, sceptical and critical attitudes among the citizens? Is it true that citizens do not recognise the achievements of integration, as the political elites argue? Or is it simply false that integration has brought with it all the blessings that are ascribed to it? This division is highly problematic also from the viewpoint of the legitimacy of the European Union. Even a huge new political community such as the EU is based on feet of clay if it is not supported by a clear majority of citizens. Both its stability and its capacity to act will be seriously undermined if it does not posses an adequate degree of identity, that is, a consensus on its basic characteristics and its ultimate aims.

In this chapter, these questions shall be investigated in three steps: first, the growing division between the elites and citizens is documented; second, the interests of the different elites – political and professional, economic, and bureaucratic – are investigated in order to understand their enthusiasm for integration; third, it will be investigated if 'output legitimacy' can provide a substitute for 'input legitimacy'.

The increasing division between elites and citizens over European integration

Already in the referenda about the Maastricht treaty in the early 1990s, a split had emerged between elites' and citizens' evaluation of the integration process. This treaty was accepted by only small margins of the French and rejected by the Danes. Later on, only small majorities of the Swedes and Finns

voted for joining the EU and the Norwegians and Swiss rejected membership altogether, in spite of the fact that their elites had also supported it strongly.

The signing of the Constitution for Europe in October 2004 was rightly seen as a significant step forward in European integration. In France, President Chirac decided that a popular referendum should be held about the Constitution. After this announcement, a very vivid debate unfolded in France. The constitution itself and books about it appeared in millions, and in the printed media and TV a very vivid discussion went on. A very high turnout rate (70 per cent) characterised the referendum itself. The Constitution was rejected by a clear majority of 54.8 per cent of voters – in spite of the fact that all large and governing parties and politicians had supported it. Only three days later, the Dutch people rejected the constitution, with an even larger majority, 61.6 per cent. Also in this country, the ruling economic and political elites had advocated its acceptation unanimously. In two other popular referenda, the Constitution was accepted, however: in Spain with 76.2 per cent and in Luxembourg with 56.5 per cent. However, the latter proportion was surprisingly low, given the wholehearted support for integration in this small country. In both Spain and Luxembourg, subsequent parliamentary votes were held about the Constitution. Results were: 94.2 per cent and 97.4 per cent in Spain (parliament/senate), and 100 per cent in Luxembourg.

In these referenda, three characteristics emerged which are typical of the two dozen popular referenda and the preceding or successive parliamentary votes about important steps in European integration which have been held since the early 1970s.

First, a much higher level of endorsement came out in the parliaments than in the popular referenda. To give just a few examples: in Norway, joining the EU was endorsed in 1992 by the parliament with a 67 per cent vote; in 1994, citizens rejected it again (they had already done so on 1972) with a 52.2 per cent vote; in Switzerland, participation in the European Economic Area was supported by 85 per cent/62 per cent of the parliaments (Council of States/National Council) in 1992, but the citizens rejected it (50.3 per cent); the French Congress accepted the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 with a majority of 89 per cent, citizens did so with only 51.1 per cent. In the new member states in central east Europe, the referenda usually brought out high percentages of 'yes' voters (about 66 per cent in the Baltic states and up to 90 per cent in Slovakia and Slovenia); in the parliaments, the result usually was 100 per cent.

Second, there exists a significant correlation between the level of turnout and the outcome of the referenda: the higher the turnout, the lower the proportion voting 'yes'. High proportions of 'yes'-votes but low levels of turnout were characteristic for the post-communist new member countries, low levels of 'yes'-votes but high levels of turnout for the smaller western and northern European countries (Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Switzerland). Analyses of these referenda have shown, in addition, that particularly in

those countries where the decision was highly contested, at the time of the referendum the voters were quite well informed about the issues.

Third, referenda about the integration process were held more frequently in countries with a longer democratic experience and well-established democratic institutions. In all those countries which had experienced fascist periods in the 20th century (Italy, Germany, Greece, Portugal), the citizens never or only recently (Spain) got a possibility to co-decide about this extremely important process which transferred significant competences from the level of nation-states to the EU and thus changed all national constitutions in a significant way. Also in the two post-communist countries with the least democratic experience during the 20th century, Bulgaria and Romania, citizens were not asked about their consent.

Furthermore, several surveys carried out both among political elites and citizens show a deep split in the attitudes to European integration. In the late 1990s, British and German political scientists investigated attitudes toward integration among members of the European Parliament, members of national parliaments and citizens in the 15 EU member states.[3] It turned out that the first two groups, but particularly Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), had much more positive views of integration than citizens. Pride in Europe, for instance, was very high among 75 per cent of the first, 68 per cent of the second, but only 55 per cent of the voters. The authors concluded: 'One might wonder whether the governments and politicians responsible for the Maastricht Treaty were living in the same European world as the people they were supposed to represent.'[4] In 1996, EOS Gallup Europe made a survey on behalf of the EU Commission among 3778 top decision-makers in the 15 member states.[5] The sample included politicians, high civil servants, business leaders, top media persons, and cultural, academic and religious leaders. Some of the questions put to the elites were taken over from the Eurobarometer series; thus, they could be compared directly to citizens' opinions. Also here, there was a deep split between elites and citizens. The statement '(our country's) membership in the EU is a good thing/a bad thing/neither good nor bad' was answered as follows: elites 94 per cent good, 2 per cent bad, 4 per cent neither good nor bad; citizens 48 per cent good, 15 per cent bad, 28 per cent neither-nor.

A deep split between elites and citizens is also evident if we look at the views concerning the political role of the European Union in the world. The Centre for the Study of Political Change (CIRCaP) at the University of Siena (Italy) has carried out a survey[6] among the public in nine member countries of the EU, telephone interviews among MEPs and top officials of the EU Commission in Brussels. Table 6.1 shows that large majorities of MEPs and top EU officials were in favour of an active role of the EU in foreign politics and of the use of military force; the public, however, was much less sympathetic toward such a position and a majority opposed the use of military force altogether.

Table 6.1: Attitudes toward the role of the EU in world politics among the public and among political and bureaucratic elites of the EU (per cent agree*)

	Public	MEPs	EU officials
The European Union should have its own foreign minister, even if (country) may not always agree with the positions taken	69	79	96
The European Union should strengthen its military power in order to play a larger role in the world	48	71	65
The European Union should concentrate on its economic power and not rely on its military power when dealing with international problems outside Europe	82	66	64

* Rest up to 100%: disagree

Source: CIRCaP, *European Elites Survey 2006*, Siena: Centre for the Study of Political Change, 2006. Available at: http://www.gips.unisi.it/circap/ees_overview; 8 March 2008. Survey method: computer-assisted telephone interviews, May–July 2006; Ns: 205 MEPs, 50 top-level officials of the EU Commission; public: representative population surveys in nine EU member countries.

How did this astonishing split come about? Three theses are proposed in this paper: 1) already the 'founding fathers' of the EEC/EU exhibited an elitist stance which is typical of many European politicians up to the present day; 2) the elites themselves benefit from the integration process in a significant way; and 3) the benefits for the populations at large are much more modest than those claimed by the elites. In the next section, we shall substantiate these theses.

Interests of the elites in the process of European integration

In recent decades, there has been a proliferation of integration theories. Functional and neo-functional theories hold that integration between hitherto separate units emerges because this leads to gains in economic productivity and welfare. Once integration has been initiated in one sector, it spills over to others, and from the economic to the social and political sphere. Thus, integration processes acquire a logic of their own and reinforce themselves with increasing exchange and division of labour between the members of the Union. The final stage will be a highly integrated economic and political community.[7] Intergovernmental theories see integration as a strategy pursued by national governments in order to gain security in a changed international situation, and to enable them to come to grips with the forces of globalisation. Integration strengthens the position of national governments

both within their own state and at the international level.[8] However, both these theories contain serious flaws.

First, the distinction between the normative and the empirical-analytical perspective is blurred. Functionalist theory, which holds that integration begins in the economic sector and then spills over to other sectors, 'was imbued from the outset with pro-integration assumptions'.[9] This is also true for intergovernmentalism and in particular federalism, where integration is seen as the outcome of deliberate actions of governments, and which expects that its final state will be the United States of Europe.[10] Second, citizens do not play a significant role in both theories. They focus on general, abstract 'laws' of integration, but neglect the specific social interests and forces that lie behind them. Third, social and political values, ideas and visions connected with integration are neglected.

Both postulate more or less homogeneous 'national interests' which in reality do not exist. Interests often diverge considerably between different groups within a nation-state, and also between elites and citizens. As a consequence, they cannot explain the increasing split between elites and citizens over European integration.

Democratic elite theory – a sociological approach to European integration

The basis of the following analysis is democratic elite theory.[11] Within this theory, two perspectives can be distinguished. The empirical-analytical perspective tries to explain the actions of the elites and their consequences. From this point of view, elites are seen as those relatively small groups in any society which dispose of disproportionate power; this power originates from the fact that they occupy specific power-conferring positions or dispose of particularly useful resources.[12] It is not assumed here – as in early elite theory (Pareto, Mosca, Michels) – that elites are per se power-driven, egoistic, ruthless or even corrupt. However, elites are not inherently efficient and do not work in the common interest as much as they themselves would have it.

The basic assumption of normative democratic theory is that the power, the aims and the actions of elites must be monitored and controlled continuously. These include the values and goals of the elites (which often are not declared openly), the functional differentiation and the network structures between the elites, the patterns of elite recruitment, and the forms of their recognition and remuneration.

The role of the different elites in the successive stages of European integration

The first thesis proposed in this paper relates to the role of different elites in the process of integration. European integration as a whole is a discontinuous

process in which moments of dynamic integration are followed by periods of stagnation and crisis. The political elites are the force of acceleration, but also of slowdown of the integration process; the economic elites and the new European bureaucratic and professional elites are the forces continually furthering integration. As a consequence of the interaction of these different forces, the speed and direction of integration is often quite erratic, contradictory and produces problematic results. However, it is also going on continuously, even in periods of political stagnation and 'eurosclersosis'. In such periods, the integration process is furthered particularly by the Eurocracy and the professional-juridical elites in the European Court of Justice (ECJ). By and large, we can say that in the first phase of European integration, from the early 1950s up to the mid-1960s, the political elites were the driving force. Between the end of the 1960s and of the 1980s, the economic and the new European bureaucratic-professional elites (the members of the EU Commission and of the ECJ) took matters into their own hands. During and after the period of the breakdown of the state-socialist systems in Eastern Europe, however, the political elites again became proactive. Let us look here shortly at the decisive postwar period when the process of European integration was initiated. Three facts must be considered in order to understand the successful takeoff of the process of integration after the Second World War, and the form which it adopted later.

The new international situation is the first crucial factor. Federations between nation-states, from ancient Greece up to postwar Europe, have been initiated in situations of foreign threat; the aim was to gain security by uniting against a strong external, often despotic, power.[13] Such a situation existed also in postwar Europe. The United States and the Soviet Union emerged as new world powers from the Second World War, and all former large European states were relegated to second-order political and military powers on the world scene.[14]

Second, France and Germany, the two main proponents of integration, found themselves in a situation of profound internal weakness. Germany was devastated economically, divided into two parts, and morally compromised due to its connection with national socialism and the Holocaust, and its responsibility for the Second World War. Participating actively in European integration was seen – and is still seen today – as an undisputed strategy of its political elites to regain political autonomy and international respect. However, France also found itself in a weak situation; it was a defeated nation, with a poor economy and a damaged moral reputation due to the collaboration of many of its leaders with the Vichy regime.[15]

Third, the values, strategies and actions of the decisive political actors who initiated integration in the postwar period made a crucial and long-lasting imprint on this process. These were the French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman, the German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer and the Italian Prime Minister Alcide De Gasperi. They shared four characteristics. First, they all

had been born in the 1880s, and thus were of prime adult age when fascism came to power in Italy and Germany. Their resistance to fascism awarded them a high personal charisma after the Second World War. The lack of such charisma is one among the characteristics of political personalities at the end of the 20th century, which has contributed to the decreasing trust in politics in general and the European Union in particular. Second, they all were devout Roman Catholics. Catholicism was important for European integration for two reasons. Due to its universalistic orientation, it was sympathetic to European integration. But Catholicism is also characterised by a focus on tradition and dogma, hierarchy and authority.[16] A third common characteristic of Adenauer and De Gasperi was their elitist and autocratic attitude and behaviour. Adenauer was frequently criticised because of his autocratic style of governing.[17] Both Adenauer and De Gasperi shared a related, fourth characteristic, a fervent anti-communism. Adenauer continued the traditional German anti-communism, and saw to it that the Communist Party of Germany (KPD), re-established in the four occupied zones, was forbidden by the German constitutional court in 1956. De Gasperi was able to achieve a large share of the votes in the 1948 national elections not least because of a rather aggressive and spiteful election campaign in which the Italian Communist Party (PCI) was slandered as paving the way for a Soviet-style communist regime.[18] Thereby, the foundation was laid for the political dominance of the Democrazia Cristiana (DC) for decades, a reign that ended abruptly in 1992 when its deep involvement in clientelism and corruption was uncovered.

This elitist stance was also a very decisive characteristic of the most important 'spin doctor' of European integration, Jean Monnet (1888–1979). His political thinking and behaviour exhibited several characteristics which are typical of the European Union even today: the realisation of new ideas and plans 'from above' with no involvement of citizens and parliaments; the use of the strategy of persuasion, that is, the continuous replication and propagation of a few simple and seemingly true ideas to the public; a high degree of flexibility and inventiveness in developing new plans for cooperation and integration; and a focus on the restricted and seemingly politically 'neutral' area of economic integration.[19]

Let us now look at the specific interests of the different groups of elites in the process of European integration.

The political elites

At first sight, it seems difficult to comprehend why the governing political elites in Western Europe were and still are ready to give up a considerable part of their autonomy and power to the new EU institutions. Established theories of integration assume that integration was and is in the interest of the member states.[20] Membership of the EU also provides the possibility of pursuing

national political goals at the world level whose implementation would be difficult even for the very largest member states alone. In addition, membership of the EU provides the possibility of accomplishing political goals that national politicians would have been unable or unwilling to pursue in their home countries, using decisions of the EU (in which they have participated) as a pretense.

However, political elites are all the time also pursuing their own individual interests, as the economic theory of democracy has argued convincingly.[21] The first interest that politicians have – as with any other professional group – is to improve their job and income opportunities. European integration supports this interest strongly.[22] First, the EU has created myriad new political jobs and careers in the institutions of the European Parliament (EP), the European Commission and the European Court of Justice (ECJ), to mention only the most important. These are quite large numbers. MEPs get significantly higher salaries than members of national parliaments,[23] as well as generous allowances for personal expenses and a considerable sum (up to €15.000 monthly) for a secretariat and assistants. In addition to the MEPs, about 4000 persons are employed by the European Parliament, among them 1400 accredited personal assistants to the MEPs.[24] Another new career avenue is the European Commission where every member state has its political representative; this is particularly attractive for national politicians who have held top positions in their home country. All these new political jobs open up the possibility for national politicians to prolong their political careers after having been relegated from their political offices at home or after having been defeated in national elections. In this way, their chances of getting generous pensions later on are also increased significantly.

A second area where European integration has created individual gains for national politicians is the possibility it provides to participate in collective decisions at the level of the EU. This provides all heads and members of national governments with an additional source of prestige. The taking over of high offices (such as president of the European Council), the carrying through of the related manifold organisational activities on behalf of the EU, and the participation in the many festive summits and other public rituals provide immediate gratification, publicity and prestige.[25] This is particularly the case if a proposal of the presiding country is accepted by all other members. This is also one of the mechanisms which keep the process of integration running; every country and government that takes over the half-year presidency of the Council is eager to develop an ambitious programme of further integration.

The economic elites

The economy was a central element of European integration from the beginning. Integration started as a coordinated administration of a few basic

industries, extended into a free-trade area, and still today – even if called a 'Union' – it is characterised in the first instance as a huge common market. This market is dominated increasingly by large, multinational 'European corporations'. About 40 per cent of the 100 largest corporations in the world belong to the EU.[26] But other economic interests, such as those of agriculture, have also played an important role in the process of integration. The economic elites have played highly significant roles in all stages of the European integration process. The exertion of this influence mostly occurred unrecognised in public and by scientific observers but has led to a rising public scepticism and distrust of large corporations and of the economic-political system of the EU among the general public.

Economic elites have several interests. Besides that of attaining an adequate income and profit, they also strive for security, power and prestige. In this regard, the interests of large European enterprises coincide with those of large member states. A widely established thesis holds that neo-liberalistic economic theories were dominant in the process of integration. The thesis proposed here is, however, that the dominant integration ideology has never been that of unconditional (neo-)liberalism. Rather, from the beginning both the leaders of the industrial corporations and the political elites were aiming toward establishing the EU and its large enterprises as 'big players' on the world scene. This motive was present already in the foundation of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1952. However, this 'Monnet-myth' does not withstand closer examination. The formal cooperation between the French and German steel and coal industry initiated by the ECSC was consistent with postwar efforts of many other French politicians of the time. The Nazi period and the Second World War had not destroyed earlier, close cooperation. Throughout this period, the big German coal and steel producers preserved the close and friendly relationship with the French, Belgian and other enterprises that they had been close to previously; in this way, the German type of 'organised capitalism' had been expanded to the occupied territories. Postwar, the French politicians' intent was to reintegrate Germany into Europe under similarly 'organised', but French, conditions and to subject Ruhr industry to 'organic control'.[27]

Business interests were also highly influential in later stages of the integration process. The postwar boom in Western Europe was associated with a strong process of industrial concentration. With the expansion of financial markets, a separation of ownership and management took place; ownership itself was transposed into a commodity. The process of European integration has contributed significantly to the emergence of this shareholder capitalism in Europe.[28] The basics for this process were laid by the internal market programme, activated to a large degree by the European Round Table of Industrialists (ERT) in the 1980s.[29] In this process, leading industrialists, such as the Swede Pehr Gyllenhammar and the Dutchman Wisse Dekker, played a significant role. They were able to establish the ERT as an informal, yet well

organised and highly influential group of leading European businessmen. From 1983 to 1985, this group developed a comprehensive plan ('Europe 1990') whose aim was to create the fully integrated market and to concentrate efforts to strengthen strategic sectors of industry and research in Europe. Their ideas were taken over by Jacques Delors and formally established in the Single European Act and the Maastricht Treaty. This aim led to a 'strategic industry and trade policy' which is used by the EU to support 'European champions', even if this runs counter to the preservation of competition.[30]

In the second half of the 1990s, this project was furthered by initiatives to create a single financial market, for instance, through the Financial Services Action Plan. The 2003 action plan for 'Modernising Company Law and Enhancing Corporate Governance' further extends this policy. A milestone was the earlier establishment of the European Monetary Union (EMU) and the euro. Since then, the EU Commission has attributed great importance to cross-border mergers. In spite of its official policy of a strict control of such mergers, there was only a very low number of cases in which the Commission was involved. In the period 1991–2004 about 152,000 mergers occurred in the EU, but only 1.7 per cent were notified to the Commission; of these, only about 5 per cent raised serious competition issues that could not be resolved in the first phase of the procedure. This means that, all in all, only the tiniest proportion of all M&A activities were seen as problematic by the Commission.[31] An important issue in this regard concerns the relation between business interest groups and the political and bureaucratic elites. Brussels has attracted thousands of lobby and interest groups who are in continuous close contact with the EU offices and representatives responsible for the enactment of new laws and regulations. These lobbies and their activities are considered as quite positive not only by the representatives of business but also by EU officials. Quite different are the perceptions of the public throughout Europe: they consider these activities with a high degree of suspicion and believe that large enterprises, farmers and the like have much more influence than workers, employees and 'normal' citizens.[32]

Agriculture is another area where business interests played a central role. The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), one of the basic pillars of European integration, is also an area where the preponderance of sectional interests, the collusion between the interests of economic, political and bureaucratic elites at the expense of those of citizens, but also the ideological appeal to certain ideals and values, masking particular interests, can be demonstrated very clearly. The majority of experts consider this policy, in spite of partial successes, as an overall failure.[33] In spite of its self-proclaimed aim: 'Investment in growth and better jobs ... building a foundation for the future', the bulk (54.8 per cent) of the EU budget of €121 billion still goes to the agricultural sector (2006). At the same time, the importance of this sector for employment has declined to less than 5 per cent in most member states, and it contributes only about 1 to 3 per cent to the gross national product. The agricultural

policy has been extended into a highly refined system of import and export regulations and tariffs, and domestic market regimes; a staff of 5000 Eurocrats in Brussels administrates the highly complex procedures.

A third period and process where economic interests played a central role in integration was the transition of the former state-socialist countries to market economies and their access to the EU. Following neo-liberal American economists, in many post-communist East European countries (most notably in Poland) a vigorous privatisation programme was carried out, the state sector was constricted in its activities, the unions were disempowered, and a restrictive monetary policy was established. The consequence was hyper-inflation, an expropriation of savers, a drastic reduction in industrial output, an explosion in unemployment, massive losses in real income of workers and employees, and a deterioration of the living standards of the entire population, expressed in a strong reduction of life expectancy and general decline in quality of life. Today, even leading Western economists (such as Joseph Stiglitz) admit that this form of transition, a kind of 'peaceful annexation'[34] was a failure.[35] One further consequence of this enforced process of transition was a political destabilisation of post-communist Eastern Europe.[36] The EU supported the accession of these countries by specific financial programmes, and even by public relations campaigns, before referenda about accession were carried out. Western capital, however, was extremely interested in the possibilities of investment in this region. Already since the early 1990s, a real 'buyout fight' for enterprises was setting in. The expected (and later on realised) high profitability of investments in these countries was enhanced by the fact that these countries provided formidable tax oases for Western capital. Today a considerable share (up to one third) of the large private enterprises in Eastern Europe is owned by Western capital, especially in the strategic banking sector; the income from these investments is significantly higher than from comparable investments in Western Europe.

The new Eurocratic elites

There is a third group of elites that is one of the most important driving motors of integration, whose personal interests, strategies and actions, however, are much less visible and publically discussed than those of the political and economic elites. This is the new EU bureaucracy in Brussels and in the member states.

At first sight, it may seem surprising to consider the EU administration in Brussels as representative of a new and powerful bureaucracy. Two arguments are frequently brought forward in this regard: first, size; with about 40,000 employees it is rather small, compared with those of the member states. Second, it seems it works in a much less 'bureaucratic' and more efficient way than national bureaucracies. It portrays itself and is seen by many analysts as

being less hierarchically structured, less bent on documenting every decision on paper, and more flexible and cosmopolitan-oriented, not least because of its multinational and multicultural composition.[37] However, all of these assertions are highly questionable.[38] Four arguments and facts are relevant in this regard.

First, as in any bureaucracy,[39] the EU Commission and its bureaucratic apparatus are instruments of power and domination. This is true even more strongly than for national bureaucracies. The EU Commission has a right that no national bureaucracy possesses, namely, to initiate legislation. The use of this extraordinary right is supported by the fact that the EU Commission in Brussels is remote from national capitals and, thereby, much less under the scrutiny of a critical public than are national bureaucracies. The effectiveness of the law-producing capacity of the Commission is enhanced by its impersonal and collective nature: the members of the Commission are appointed, not elected, to their offices; and the Commission is responsible only as a whole for its decisions. Even if a Commission contains many mediocre personalities, there are always some energetic members who continually propose far-reaching steps of integration which usually are accepted by the Commission as a whole and transformed into proposals for new regulations. Also, the top EU bureaucrats, the Directors General, are very powerful.[40] Benefiting from lifetime appointments, they are highly educated and often experienced politically. Their roles include developing a global mission and strategy for their Directorate, organising the work of their staff and establishing relations with the outside world. They have been compared to 'medieval barons'.[41]

The European Commission is no less bureaucraticised than national bureaucracies. Its formal structure is articulated closely along the hierarchy of educational degrees; Eurocrats enjoy a high level of job security (lifetime tenure). The Eurocracy continuously enacts new laws and regulations. In the decade 1970–80, the EU enacted about 9000 legislative and regulative acts, in 1991–2000 nearly 24,000.[42] These activities are seen more and more as being detrimental to entrepreneurial activity and economic growth in Europe, even by high-level EU representatives (see, for example, the former Commissioner Günter Verheugen) and by national political leaders (such as the German chancellors Helmut Kohl and Angela Merkel).

Finally, the thesis that the new Eurocracy is a comparatively slim apparatus is highly misleading in three regards. First, it overlooks the fact that this bureaucracy is mainly concerned with the enactment of laws and regulations; this corresponds to the fact that the majority of EU officials are highly educated (about half of them are academics), polyglot and efficient. Second, the EU is a young institution, and so is its bureaucracy, compared with the bureaucracies of established nation-states in Western Europe. If one looks at the dynamics of development of this bureaucracy, a wholly different picture emerges (see Figure 6.1): Since 1968, the number of EU employees has grown

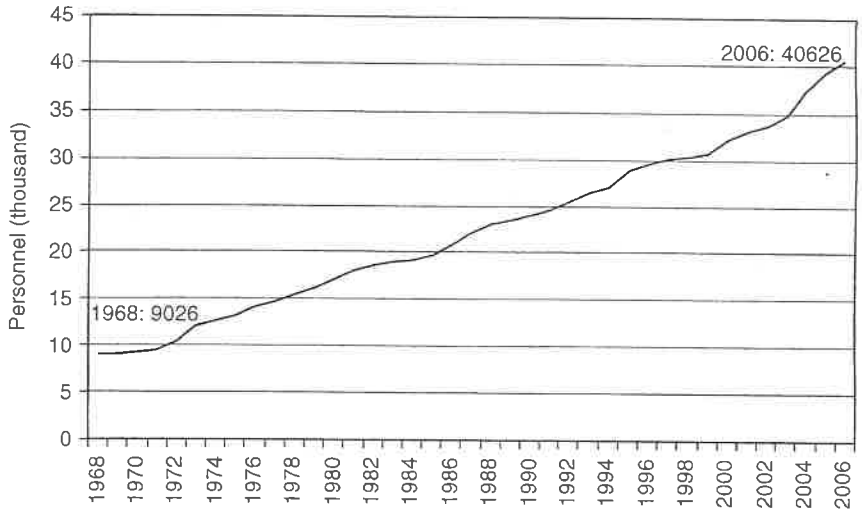

Figure 6.1: The development of EC/EU employees*, 1968–2006 (absolute numbers)
*In all institutions, including decentralised units and officials with fixed-term contracts
Source: Data from Eurostat/European Statistical Data Support (ESDS).

in a continuous manner; in 2006, their number was four times that of 1968. No deceleration of this trend is in sight.

A third fact is significant in this regard: since the EU is mainly a legislative body, in each member state an 'EU substitute bureaucracy' exists, which is concerned with the enactment of EU regulations, the administration of subsidies and so forth. An extrapolation of the size of this EU substitute bureaucracy from pilot studies in four member states resulted in a figure which is comparable to the number of employed officials in Brussels.[43]

The power of the Eurocracy is also confirmed by the fact that its members are highly privileged in terms of security of employment, income levels and fringe benefits: 'EU officials are reputedly among the most privileged public officials in the world'[44], and a position in the EU civil service has been called 'a bureaucrat's paradise'.[45]

Achievements of European integration and their perception by citizens

The foregoing section has shown that the political, economic and new European bureaucratic elites have massive interests in furthering integration. Their enthusiasm for the process of integration is hardly surprising from this point of view. This fact per se, however, is no argument against integration. If this process works in the interests of the citizens and peoples involved, a

generous remuneration of the elites that have initiated and furthered this process may well be accepted.[46] We must also investigate objectively, therefore, what the achievements of European integration have been and how they have been and are perceived by citizens.

How did the member states of the EU perform economically in the past decades? Is it true that European integration has been so successful? How do citizens throughout Europe perceive the achievements of the EU? It is well known that many citizens are quite critical in this regard. Political elites and some social scientists[47] argue that the population does not recognise the true achievements of integration. In order to get a comprehensive view of this situation, we have to look both at objective developments and their subjective perception by the populations.

Looking at objective developments in some important socio-economic indicators in the decade 1994–2005 and comparing the EU15 as a whole with its three main 'rivals', the USA and Japan, the following situation emerges: in terms of economic growth, the EU and Japan were far behind the USA; in terms of unemployment, development in the EU was a failure, with the worst figures in all of the ten years; only in terms of inflation did the EU perform quite well, but not as well as Japan. Within the EU, the countries of Euroland performed significantly worse than those outside of it (Denmark, Sweden, UK). However, the younger southern European members and Ireland were more successful. In these countries, EU membership may have contributed to economic growth, although in a moderate way.[48]

Let us now look at the perception and evaluation of these trends among the citizens. Asked about the role and success of the EU in several areas of politics, it turns out the negative evaluations overbalance the positive ones in five important indicators: 43 per cent said that 'the EU plays a negative role' in the area of unemployment (24 per cent see a positive role), 51 per cent in inflation (23 per cent a positive), and 29 per cent in social standards (22 per cent a positive).[49] Only in two areas (economic growth and the fight against crime) were positive evaluations somewhat more frequent than the negative ones. People in countries with objective positive developments saw things more positively, while those in countries with negative developments were more critical and negative.

Thus, in the perceptions of citizens the achievements of the EU were not very noteworthy. In addition, quite high proportions – between 40 and 80 per cent – had concrete 'fears about the building of Europe' (see Table 6.2). Among the six achievements mentioned, the majority saw a positive effect in only one area, namely the perceived influence of one's own country in the EU. In two regards, the negative evaluations far outweighed the positive ones. One was the over-proportional influence of the big member states, the other was personal influence in the EU; 76 per cent of the respondents in the 15 EU member states felt that 'the biggest countries have the most power in the EU'; but only 32 per cent felt that 'my own voice counts in the European

Table 6.2: Perceived achievements of the EU and fears about the building of Europe, 2004

Perceived achievements		Tend to agree	Tend to disagree*
I feel I am safer because (our country) is a member of the European Union	%	43.0	46.6
I feel we are more stable economically	%	43.7	45.7
I feel we are more stable politically	%	40.0	47.7
My voice counts in the EU	%	31.8	55.0
(Our country's) voice counts in the EU	%	62.8	26.9
The biggest countries have the most power in the EU	%	76.0	14.3
Fears about integration			
A loss of power for smaller member states	%	49.4	42.0
An increase in drug trafficking and international organised crime	%	68.2	27.2
Our language being used less and less	%	39.7	55.7
Our country paying more and more to the EU	%	64.4	26.5
The loss of social benefits	%	53.6	38.5
The loss of national identity and culture	%	42.2	52.3
An economic crisis	%	47.7	42.5
The transfer of jobs to other member countries which have lower production costs	%	74.1	19.9
More difficulties for (nationality) farmers	%	62.2	26.2

* Percentages missing up to 100% are 'don't know'
Source: Eurobarometer 61 (Spring 2004). Questions 12 and 15; N = 16216.

Union'. An even more negative picture comes out if we look at the fears that the respondents associated with the EU. In four dimensions – job transfer to other member countries, drug trafficking, national payments to the EU, and difficulties for farmers – large majorities (between 62 and 74 per cent) had fears in connection with European integration.

Conclusion

Since the adoption of the treaty about the European Union in Maastricht in 1991, an increasing division is emerging between elites and citizens over European integration. While the political, economic and new European bureaucratic elites are zealous about this process and use all means to further it, citizens throughout Europe are accepting it just as a matter of fact, and large groups in many countries are critical about it. In this paper, it has been shown that elites hold clear interests in integration that may well explain their enthusiasm. However, there are also structural reasons for the increasing split between elites and citizens. On the one side, citizens throughout

Europe are becoming more educated and critical; on the other side, the EU has taken over more and more competencies from the nation-states. The latter trend clashes sharply with the fact that the European Union exhibits a serious democratic deficit.[50] Citizens can only very indirectly co-determine politics at the level of the EU; the directly elected European Parliament still does not have the crucial competences of a democratic parliament, that is, the autonomous proposal of laws and the election and de-selection of a government. This situation is all the more problematic because the thesis that the EU can refer to a high level of output legitimacy did not come true. Contrary to the assertions of politicians and some social scientists, the record of the EU in central matters of socio-economic policy – economic growth, employment, inflation, internal security – is rather modest compared to other large and advanced nation-states such as the USA and Japan. Citizens are well aware of these deficits.

The Lisbon Treaty, which takes over 95 per cent of the Constitution for Europe, improves the democratic accountability and effectiveness of EU institutions. The measures proposed (for instance, the strengthening the role of the European and the national parliaments, and the introduction of the right of initiative by EU citizens), however, are far from resolving the problem of democratic deficit. Three issues stand out as most pressing at present, and they offer a challenge to critical social science and politics alike:

1. The discussion and definition of the fundamental values, goals and visions of the Union;
2. The (re-)definition of the competencies of the Union, *vis-à-vis* the nation states; a clarification of this task would also be the first step toward a solution of the democratic deficit; and
3. The solution of the dilemma between market liberalisation and the preservation of the positive elements of the European welfare states.

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