Participatory Democracy in the European Union:

An Evaluation of the European Citizens' Initiative

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AFFIDAVIT

I hereby affirm that this Master's Thesis represents my own written work and that I have used no sources and aids other than those indicated. All passages quoted from publications or paraphrased from these sources are properly cited and attributed.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis evaluates the extent to which the European Union suffers from democratic deficit. Likewise, principally focusing on a newly launched participatory tool, namely the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI), the study aims at assessing the potential role of such tool in effectively reducing this so-called democratic deficit.

The research shows that these accusations are broad, vague and therefore partly inaccurate. The development, in several key steps, of a multi-faceted discussion accordingly narrows down and specifies the actual issues addressed. Moreover, it provides a structured initial approach to assess the effectiveness of the ECI, ultimately facilitating the outlining of a comprehensive evaluative framework.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

"At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us." (Albert Schweitzer)

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EP: European Parliament

EC: European Commission

EU: European Union

MLG: Multi-Level Governance

OCS: Online Collection System

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1. INTRODUCTION

How democratic is the European Union? The "democraticness" and also legitimacy of the European Union are recurrent and highly debated questions opposing those who argue that the EU suffers from a democratic deficit, those who argue the opposite, conversely those who recommend a greater integration and politicization to solve the situation, and those from whom any decrease in national sovereignty (in favor of the EU institutions) unquestionably leads to a democratic and legitimacy loss. The plot thickens even more in the light of the numerous understandings and definitions of "what democracy in the EU is, how it can be legitimated, and whether it can or should be improved" (Schmidt, 2010, P.1).

Still, proceeding on the basis of a holistic view on system of government, democracy has been generally praised and certainly idealized as the best or the most socially desirable form of governance in European societies. Yet, there is a blatant lack of common working definition due to the plethora of views, situations and assumptions. This accordingly leads to the formulation of compound interpretations and analysis of the shortcomings and benefits consequent to the democratic organization of today's complex social systems (Dahl, 1989). In a way, all these conceptual questioning surrounding democracy may appear somehow detached from people's everyday preoccupations, even seen perhaps as fickle and abstract discussions reserved to academicians or political elites. However, these considerations are in fact the core issues from which emanate most of the problems citizens are confronted with in the course of their life.

The European Institutions are facing great challenges in the midst of economic, social and environmental hardships. In fact, nothing really new viewing the EU's recurrent structural problems (e.g. unemployment, sluggish economic growth, inequalities) and seemingly irreconcilable political divisions, which may hamper the European authorities' ability to find a way out. Nonetheless, under the present circumstances, the European experiment indubitably stands at a crossroad. Recent surveys reveal a pervasive discontent among the European populations (Pew Research Center, 2013) and a growing distrust in the European Union (Eurobarometer, 2012). Measures have certainly been taken and initiatives to address citizens' concerns are encouraged. Yet, convenient scapegoats or not, the European Institutions and the "technocratic" authorities in charge are generally pointed out for being responsible of the current slump (Staes, 2012). Are the problems the EU is facing symptoms of deeper and more latent ills? What would it take to tackle the ambient dissatisfaction and foremost which impact will it have on European governance?

In this concert of accusations and demands, voices are raising claiming for a more direct approach to address the situation. Modernizing democracy by tapping the power of the crowd

has certainly been a very topical issue, and not only in times of crisis (Buss, Redburn, & Guo, 2006). Likewise, the idea of "Governance without government", although far from being novel, is gaining a new momentum and vitally explores how the old problems may be tackled on a new technologically driven landscape. Along those lines, Mathias Albert argues that "a reconceptualization of European governance using some central tenets of modern systems theory can show some openings as to the possibility of addressing the problem of democratic legitimacy in elusive processes of governance" (Albert, 2009, P.4). Nevertheless, despite the initial appealing democratic features of a European society governed via schemes of open, multi-level and universal participation, the actual implementation and concrete outcomes of such polity may reveal deceiving aspects (Hooghe & Marks, 2004).

In the context of the EU, new experimental participative structures of decision-making have emerged as attempts to foster political engagement. An answer to one of the most well-known and still very vaguely comprehended challenge, i.e. the so-called European democratic deficit, may thus partly come from the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI), a new tool for direct democracy which was designed by the European Commission to help bridging the gap between citizens and institutions, and to strengthen the contested trajectory of a European federal Union (Collignon, 2012). Last April 2013, this one-of-a-kind direct, transnational and digital instrument of participative democracy has celebrated its first anniversary. However, after a year of practice, the ECI, indeed still in its infancy, leaves a bittersweet taste to the often-frustrated organizers. Still, despite of the numerous ups and downs, countless meetings in Brussels and across Europe, nearly 1.5 million statements of support have been collected (Kaufmann & Berg, 2013). Further, the initial enthusiasm has not completely faded and the announcement of a first ECI to successfully reach the required quorum of signatures still increases "appetite for politics and desire for democracy" (Hardt, 2013, P.1).

The topical nature of the challenges faced by the European Citizens' Initiative and the related debates around the future of the European Union have concomitantly driven the selection of the present Master's thesis topic. This dissertation expressly evaluates the practice of direct democracy in the European Union via the implementation of the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) and further investigates the potential role of this tool in alleviating the claimed lack of legitimacy in the EU.

This enterprise proceeds in four main steps. First, relevant background information is provided as well as further thorough explanations of the aims and scope of this paper. The second section of this study comprises an essential review of the concepts approached, which are first analyzed from a broader outlook, then explored from the specific context of the EU, and finally examined with respect to the concrete ECI case. The subsequent section exposes the methodology and findings of an empirical study, which aims at grasping EU citizens (from France and United Kingdom)'s perceptions on the institutional facet of democratic deficit. In other words, this facet refers to the EU's institutional design, structure and decision-making.

Finally, both sections are combined in order to critically evaluate whether the ECI is an effective tool to reduce European Citizens' perceived democratic deficit and provide suggestions for improvement.

1.1 AVENUES FOR FURTHER REFLECTIONS ON THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT

First and foremost, this present section seeks to provide the reader with an insight into the context and thereby highlights information on the current climate that inherently influences the topic of this study. The following contents, mostly echoing news media coverage of European affairs and enriched contributions from political analysts, are obviously normally subject to new developments on a daily basis. However, for the sake of conciseness, and because of the static constraint attached to the writing of this thesis, the explored period principally starts from the crisis's epicenter (2008/2009) and ends in early 2013 but also includes elements related to the construction of the EU, which have significant contemporary repercussions.

1.1.1   The economic crisis, in a nutshell

For Claus Offe, one of the world's leading political sociologists, the cogs of the European machine have, particularly recently, been in severe turmoil (Leonard, 2012). Diverse factors, internal as well as external, can be examined in this respect. The economic downturn is accordingly one of the most covered issues dominating the political agenda and the media attention. The wide economic and Eurozone crisis have throne the whole European Union into commotion, maintaining the focus on rescue plans, default risks, or on the financing of the stability fund and upcoming budgets. For some, the aspirations picturing a more social European Union, which would tend towards a relatively more desirable model of democratic government, have vanished or were at least largely undermined by the perceived hegemony of the financial sphere (Casertano, 2013). For other, the limitations encountered result from the blatant incongruities of an intricate European Integration strategy, which combines elements of federal and functional multi-level governance (Schimmelfennig, Leuffen, & Rittberger, 2011).

Economic fluctuations, chronic slumps, persistent high unemployment rates, increasing rich-poor gap, speculative bubbles, and inflation are, inter alia, some of the problems, which have critical direct impacts on the European social and political fabric. As a result, the current political discourse and policy orientations are largely embracing austerity plans (softened with

a tinge of solidarity) as the only solution to step out of the economic downturn and return to the salvific economic growth (Leonard, 2012). Indeed, as a remedy, despite a clear lack of fiscal harmonization, endeavors and significant investments have been made in order to consolidate the public finances and reinforce strategic economic and social-support sectors. The EU2020 strategy is, for instance, the latest EU blueprint for growth, which targets five key areas: employment, innovation, education, poverty reduction and climate/energy (European Commission, 2012).

Nevertheless, several politics experts question the effectiveness of this strategy, (Casertano, 2013; Offe, 2013; Staes, 2012). In fact, although some obvious progress have certainly been made, especially in terms of resource-efficiency, the EU2020 is largely based on its predecessor, the Lisbon Strategy, which itself, failed in reaching numbers of its goals. With respect to the changes and updates incorporated to the new strategy, it is – perhaps - too anticipatory to assume that the EU2020 will follow the same path than the Lisbon Treaty (Vilpišauskas, 2011). Overall, most of the decisions and measures undertaken may amount to nothing more than tinkering with very flawed legislations. Actually, even in relatively stable times, most of the issues previously mentioned are, without contest, structural and recurrent problems in the EU (Offe, 2013). Soon, and at least for a little while, the euro will eventually be rescued. Yet, at the present rate, it is the European Citizens themselves, who may be on the verge of breakdown (De La Porta, 2011). By their mobilization and a newly created wide range of "subterranean movements that explore ways to complement representative democracy and empower citizenship" (Pleyers, 2012, P.1), EU citizens have however certainly proved to be more than a passive audience.

The European Institutions have undeniably been very active, "fit and mean" as stated by Frans Van Daele (Herman Von Rompuy's head of Cabinet) to reform the European economy, for example, through the ratification of the Fiscal Compact and the so-called "Golden Rule" (Van Daele, 2012). The potential outcomes or relevance of the reforms undertaken to solve the social and economic crisis will not be further deeply discussed in this study. However, it is significant to consider the influential factors stirring up the European administrative procedures.

1.1.2   Institutionalization: between compromises and political stalemate

A real sticking point to mention at this stage is the on-going palpable tension between concerns over Member States' sovereignty loss and the building of a supranational all-inclusive project. The current position of the EU Institutions wandering between one and the other has clear repercussions on the European legal framework. This tension is concretely illustrated by

the subsequent comments. On the one hand, the relative vagueness and substantial room for interpretation of some European legislative texts may accordingly reveal the Janus-faced characteristics of the policies. Conversely, one the other hand, Member States may need more room for manoeuvre in order to tailor the prescribed legislations to some country-specific cases (Golub, 1996). Finding the right balance is thus a real stumbling block and, besides, underlines fundamental contradictions that may further nurture a climate of incomprehension and hence mistrust (Offe, 2013).

The EU machinery is intrinsically a political system sui generis, of which reforming attempts towards institutional change have been triggered and punctuated by periods of "stasis followed by painstakingly slow change" (Finke, Konig, Proksch, & Tsebelis, 2012, P. 23). Similarly, the construction process of the EU and its contemporary implications are fundamentally associated with the history of European cooperation, enlargement and integration. Although the contemporary implications of such dynamics will be further addressed, for now on, a few observations can be outlined. Over the last five decades, the EU has been triggered by an expansionist logic, which initially received a somehow favorable response from European citizens expecting that bigger markets and increased mobility opportunities would continue to improve their quality of life (Offe, 2013). However, recent surveys show that fewer Europeans support economic integration, as only a median of 28% think European economic integration has strengthened their economy (Pew Research Center, 2013).

Additionally, a number of flopped referenda on treaty reforms has exposed the limitations of an inclusive European political project and may indicate an underlying "integration fatigue" from citizens undergoing the effects of the economic slowdown and demographic change. Some academics accordingly claim that a disequilibrium has progressively emerged between the "widening" and the "deepening" (Lehne, 2012) while others stress that such dilemma, which has become emblematic in many of the debates around the future of the EU, presents very little empirical evidence (Kelemen, Menon, & Slapin, 2009).

Furthermore, the concomitant shifts in the political spectrum, i.e. the prominent rise of populist rightist parties at the expense of the founding social democratic and conservative "people's parties" may indicate that the vision of Europe communicated by Brussels does not match the expectations of European citizens (Karp, Banducci, & Bowler, 2003). Similarly, the plummeting involvement of European citizens in political parties inevitably questions the role of traditional political participative structures as "a meaningful linkage mechanism between the general public and the European institutions of government" (Van Biezen, 2013, P.10). In any case, an analysis inquiring whether there is a public disenchantment with the EU per se or its organization is an extremely compound enterprise, since it entails a wide array of intertwined variables to control for.

Taking into consideration the previously mentioned political and economic factors, the EU may appear, to the views of many EU citizens, as rather unable to tackle and solve an extensive variety of problems, either internally or externally induced (Kaldor, 2013). However, the reasons behind these relative failures are certainly not clear-cut given their pervasive nature. Besides, it may be of little interest for a large majority of citizens who have, to some extent, other more vital preoccupations rather than getting involved in a seemingly very trivial conflict of interests and powers. Tackling those issues via the implementation of policies or through the redesign of decision-making methods in order to increase the legitimacy of the decisions taken has reportedly been rather laborious and complex given the supra-national characteristics of the European Union (Finke, Konig, Proksch, & Tsebelis, 2012).

In parallel, the favorability or confidence of citizens in the EU is reported to be rapidly waning: "a median of only 45% now think favorably of the Brussels-based organization" (Pew Research Center, 2013). Likewise, the real question to understand citizens' likely disinterest for European political affairs may not be that much related to "who decides on what?" but rather "what is decided by whom?". In fact, this slight subtlety actually highlights the fact that most decisions taken at the European level deal with economic matters whereas social aspects are more generally dealt at the national level. Of course, the EU is above all an economic union and, themes related to, inter alia, the creation of a strong single market do impact and concern citizens but maybe not as much as some more closely related social policies, addressed at the national level (E.g. retirement, social security…etc.).

Overall, the decision-making interplay between national and supranational authorities does not appear satisfactory for any of the factions (federalist, nationalist, regionalist…etc.) and citizens may be disorientated by this "power game". In addition, understanding the rules of the game, the implications and constrains binding each decision taken may appear as very complex or even largely off-putting. The blame for political fiascos or rather "persistent disagreements" is hence, rightly or not, almost invariably attributed to organizations which are the most poorly understood.

1.1.3   Europe, Media and Communication

Various national media depict a rather "gloom and doom" situation focusing on the recent tight budget negotiations over rebates and the on-going civil demonstrations (notably in Spain, Greece or Bulgaria) principally led by a so-called "lost generation" (De La Porta, 2011), (Pleyers, 2012). The role of the news media in communicating on the actions taken by the European authorities and creating a common space for debate is therefore understandingly critical. The press coverage can, in fact, be seen as "a platform for the dissemination of public

discourses and as an indicator of public understanding" (Hänska, 2013). Yet, it may also sometimes appear rather like a space of contestation where to behead the culprits of the EU's troubles than a genuine place set up to discuss the Europe's form and future. Nonetheless, comparing various newspapers, from different countries and from the same or opposed political orientations, it is highly relevant to examine the perspective adopted, whether the views include a cross-national understanding or rather a sole Member-State focus. On the same line, one may think that in absence of shared understanding of the compound parameters shaping the functioning of the EU and ultimately the fortunes of European citizens, any key decisions impacting the social or economic fabric are unlikely to receive popular legitimacy.

The communication campaigns directly organized by the European Institutions via the very broad network of official media may help balance the prominence of potentially biased national media, provided that the message actually reaches all citizens to the same extent as national media do. One of the last extensive media campaigns recently launched by the European Commission for instance aimed at reinforcing "EU citizenship, by revitalizing the link between the citizens and the EU and bringing real effect to their rights" (European Commission, 2012, P.3). This communication campaign forms also part of a wider endeavor, namely the European Year of Citizens. This year 2013 has been indeed declared Year of Citizens and consequently numerous events are held across Europe in order to show the Commission's engagement to "make EU citizenship a concrete reality in the life of all EU citizens" declared Viviane Reding, Vice-president of the European Commission. Several areas of action have been chosen, i.e. EU electoral rights, e-justice, healthcare rights, common civil documents, free movement of EU citizens, or disable people integration (Reding, 2013).

This year, dedicated to the rights directly derived from EU citizenship, is also encouraging dialogue between all levels of governments and all stakeholders of the civil and corporate society. In the midst of an incontestably agitated context, creating virtual or direct platforms of meeting, where citizens can exchange and discuss views and concerns is essential. Albeit important and praiseworthy, these actions may only be relevant if a significant part of the population actively takes part. For instance, the vitality of public debate largely channeled though national media, has been particularly noteworthy lately in the United Kingdom. The matter presently in the center of the discussion has in fact mainly dealt with the future of the country in the EU along with its terms of adhesion and the potential organization of a referendum, on whether United Kingdom should remain a Member State (Walace, 2012), (Begg, 2013).

For some like the sociologist Carlo Ruzza, a real climate of "euroscepticism", i.e. a varying degree of discontent, which ranges from challenging the EU's existence per se to demanding improvements, has risen along with the current (re)-emergence and thrive of extremist political or civil movements riding the wave of fear, hatred, ignorance and popular

indignation. Apparently, this "euroscepticism" not only adds an extra layer to the complexity of the political, economic and social situation but also may concomitantly bias the European debate and even create an "uncivil society" (Ruzza, 2009, P.1). Accordingly, "as an attempt to find support for and increase the legitimacy of a process of supra-national polity-making", the European Commission particularly focuses on the importance of creating a "European Identity", meaningful to all citizens, transcending the limited rights-based status entailed by the European citizenship and comprehending a wider definition of civil society (Smismans, 2011, P.1).

The previous comments on the current state of the EU are obviously very debatable and may be, within less than a few months, be completely or partially irrelevant. Yet, the aim is only to highlight some of the topical issues, which have been taken into consideration for the formulation of the subsequent research question.

1.2   RESEARCH QUESTION AND HYPOTHESIS

This section intends to provide an insight into the core of the study by highlighting the research question's embedded elements. Nonetheless, another later section further details the methodology to actually tackle and answer this research question.

From an overarching perspective, the evaluation conducted in this study focuses on the "democratic quality" of commonly named democratic tools, the ECI in this case, and particularly with regards to its participatory purpose. **In fact, the study actually intends to assess the potential contribution of the ECI in reducing the EU's democratic deficit, questioning whether the citizens' right of initiative effectively and genuinely brings the EU closer to its citizens.**

A specific attention is drawn to the institutional dimension of the democratic deficit, i.e. EU citizens' perception, knowledge and understanding on the EU's decision-making processes and structure. To do so, this study also inquires what are the European citizens' expectations in regards to the European institutions themselves and from a direct democratic tool such as the ECI. A theoretical and empirical framework is therefore articulated around the following research question:

Are the European Citizens' Initiatives an effective tool to reduce
European citizens' perceived democratic deficit?

The hypothesis, which aims at testing the validity of the assumptions underlined in the research question, accordingly reflects the elements, which could help reduce the European democratic deficit.

If the ECI can effectively foster citizens' interest for European affairs, thereby increasing their comprehension and potential influential power over the European decision-making process, it contributes to bridge the gap between European Institutions and citizens, i.e. reduce the democratic deficit.

At this stage, it appears crucial to analyze the problem statement and its main hypothesis so as to clarify the foundation and components of the research study. First, a few words shall then comment on the closed-ended formulation of this study's central questioning. Indeed, it is essential to mention that this structure absolutely does not entail a clear-cut answer. Actually, it is rather intended to reflect the shape of the debates, relatively restricted to the Manichean views attached to the existence or non-existence of a democratic deficit. Indeed, even though the debates remain somehow immutably positioned on one or the other side, there is a need to move beyond this stance. This way, it would enable to rightly ponder and discuss the dilemmas and paradoxes resulting from the examination of the interactions between values that often compete between each other.

Along those lines, it appears then that the research question can be further analyzed under different perspectives. Nonetheless, a clear scope and frame must accordingly be set in order to clearly structure and limit the study. Therefore, when broken down, the research question reveals several subsequently developed cornerstone aspects, which are considered as preliminary framing points for a critical and comprehensive approach of the study's enquiry. These points outline the contents and approach adopted to conduct the study.

The initial step hence consists in addressing the underlying factors explaining the so-called democratic deficit as well as the definitions of the concept applied to the specific EU context. Indeed, the terms central to the research field, such as democratic deficit, democracy and citizen participation are acknowledged polysemous words. Besides, numbers of bias or prejudgments linked to democratic principles (such as the benefits of direct democracy and citizen participation) need to be detected and stressed. The key theoretical concepts shall be thus firstly defined or made clearer given the relative intangible nature and scale of the issues comprehended.

A subsequent section focusing on the EU further explores the concepts from a more narrow and specific angle. The analysis of the prevailing literature is in fact essential to ponder the existence of a democratic deficit in Europe. However, it is also necessary to reflect on those studies in order to breakdown and highlight the compound elements defining this lack of democratic legitimacy which may resonate the most with citizens' perception of the European machinery.

Then, a working explanation of the concepts and mechanisms founding the ECI needs to be formulated. The ECI is in fact the main actual instrument used in this study to provide a bridge between theory and the real world. Likewise, since the ECI is considered as one of the European Commission's answer to tackle the perceived distrust between citizens and institutions, this tool and its potential impacts should hence be examined along two key axes: the theoretical framework and the primary goals and vision based on which it was created. The collected views of experts, namely the initiators (multinational citizens in charge of carrying out the ECI on the field) and a representative from the European Commission, in this regard, bring a concrete dimension to the analysis. Besides, a survey of the public opinion in two pre-selected member states (France and United Kingdom) shall shed light on citizens' outlook on the EU and on the ECI's democratic potential.

Finally, as an output of this study and humble contribution to future research, the overall appraisal of an ECI is outlined in a multidimensional evaluative framework, which is itself derived from the prior conceptual analysis, the survey's findings, the experts' observations and a final discussion on the ECI and the European democratic deficit. Furthermore, the framework intends to provide a comprehensive basis for inserting the ECI within the European decision-making process meanwhile aligning the tool with different legitimizing mechanisms and key democratic principles. The resulting analysis also pushes forwards a series of recommendations and the elaboration of step-by-step pre-conditional success indicators for the ECI organizers and the EC.

1.3   SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

Theorizing the European governance approach and the decision-making processes is a long-winded affair, which has been largely debated by numerous scholars. The European Union has indeed served as a so-called field for experimentation, an actual "polity laboratory" with a plethora of metatheoretical dialogues, aligning, updating or opposing a flow of diverse EU literatures studies (Wallace, Wallace, & Pollack, 2005, P.8). However, despite the general acknowledgement of the unique features of the EU, a large number of EU governance literature is essentially drawn from concepts coming from comparative politics and

international relation studies, which may not be the most adequate or appropriate framework to carry out a relevant EU-oriented analysis (Finke, Konig, Proksch, & Tsebelis, 2012). The concomitant risk is then the undermining of critical information and knowledge required to solve the complex social and economic situation in the EU. Consequently, the core of this research and the concepts analyzed are firstly discussed from a general perspective but also expressly considered reviewing a EU-based literature on governance and public participation.

The scope of this research is limited to the specific area of governance and decision-making in the EU but also includes aspects related to citizenry, which are examined through an institutional lens. Two main perspectives are thus considered to cover the said field of research: namely, an institutional outlook featuring a top-down approach, along with a citizen-based viewpoint highlighting a bottom-up approach. This focus area is chosen for being a keystone, a central aspect influencing and embedding the two-targeted sets of actors (EU citizens and Institutions).

Furthermore, preliminary research has revealed the direct interconnectedness of democratic deficit with the European institutional structure and decision-making (Holzhacker & Albaek, 2007). Nonetheless, this position has largely been debated and criticized for overlooking numerous diverse cultural, societal and political variables (Clarke & Foweraker, 2001). Undeniably, there are tremendous theoretical difficulties associated with the terms and conditions according to which a democratic deficit may be identified. Likewise, while links and relations can be intimately established with institutional design and political practices (Wallace, Wallace, & Pollack, 2005), it is important to bear in mind that the concept of democratic deficit is not merely characterized by an objective reality, which can easily or ever be identified or assessed.

The question of the existence per se of a democratic deficit may be ultimately contestable, precluded or undividable. Nevertheless, it is incontestably crucial to remain sensitive to the issues of actual political and ethical significance, especially since the realm of political affairs has such a pervasive and concrete impact on all citizens' daily life. Accordingly, this study is restrained to the earlier stated focus area because of the conceptual limitations but also since a wider scope assessing a potential democratic deficit in the EU and the associated European Citizens' perception would not, most probably, result in any valid approximation of the effectiveness of the ECI.

Throughout this paper, although being a point of formal divergence, the actual existence of a democratic deficit in the EU is considered as a central assumption, from which is derived the argumentation responding to the research question. However, a discussion around this concept, its actual existence and what really lies behind the associated catchall terms is still necessary to refine its components (see section 2). The fragility of the study's hypothesis is

therefore fully acknowledged. Nevertheless, the clear establishment of specific parameters and a limited scope may encounter the subjective features of such evaluation.

Likewise, questions may arise in relation to the ultimate reason motivating a research on a theme like "democratic deficit" in the EU and potential means of reducing it. In fact, asserting that the conceptions of the EU, its role, structure and future differ to a great extent is a real euphemism. Some may reject the EU's very existence, others advocate a strong and united federation beyond nation-states, or a "à la carte" construction without any core or again, an Union of the regions (Stetter, 2012). In any case, this thesis does not seek to privilege one view over the other. However, since the ECI is a tool created by the European Commission in order to foster citizen participation and ultimately strengthen the social cohesion within European Member States, this study correspondingly adopts the Commission's vision regarding the ECI's stated goals.

An additional limiting aspect relates to the size of the population studied. The topic of this thesis actually concerns or, at least, has an impact on all European Citizens, regardless of any pre-existing interest or implication in the European Union's political life. Simply being a citizen of a Member State, thus having the European Citizenship, entails that any decisions taken or legislations passed at the European level will have more or less direct repercussions on all citizens. The same goes for rights and duties attached to European citizenship.

Consequently, it would not be legitimate to reduce or design a too restrictive population sample. Indeed, it is crucial to emphasize the fact that part of the study's purpose is to obtain a picture as valid as possible (despite the numerous constrains, as well practical as conceptual) of European Citizens' perceptions of the EU and the ECI. "European citizens" may thus appear as quite a wide population. Nonetheless, what is really meant, the specific target of this study is the "average citizen", the "man in the street". No need to mention the high degree of uncertainty and vagueness attached to such hypothetical statistical unit. The relevance and significance of this complex choice aligned with the central topic of this study is well illustrated by Andrew Moravcsik, for whom concerns over the legitimacy of the EU "gains plausibility (…) from the geographical and cultural distance between those regulators (in Brussels) and the average person in the street" (Moravcsik, 2014, P.2).

Similarly, time and resources limitations do not allow a thorough grasp of the European citizens' perception with regards to the decision making in the EU and the potential effect of a tool such as the ECI. Ideally, the views of citizens from all the Member States should be gathered but for practical reasons, only two Member States are chosen (United Kingdom and France). Overall, the study may be seen, under several facets, as a proxy, a base to interpret (but certainly not extrapolate) observations or certain characteristics of interests in the population, and hence making cautious inferences about population features. A later section dedicated to the design of a survey, the population targeted and other relevant

methodological aspects, further develops the restrictions encountered and the literature-supported attempts to overcome them.

In addition, as further developed, the criterion chosen for this evaluation, i.e. effectiveness is also an aspect subject to fierce debates and disagreements. For instance, many authors disagree on whether effectiveness or the related efficiency should be considered as democratic principles per se (Hooghe & Marks, 2004). Accordingly, this choice may be questionable given the frenzy around these concepts, its widespread use at the expense, according to some, of truly democratic values. Yet, effectiveness does really matter when assessing how the ECI can achieve its stated goals. Besides, the whole debate also calls into question the extent to which it is possible to enhance decision-making effectiveness and efficiency as well as democratic legitimacy and accountability by implicating citizens in the European political agenda.

Finally, since this thesis aims at evaluating the democratic quality of the ECI, hence, to be as thorough as possible, such assessment should include the administration of pre/post tests. Yet, the scope of this thesis is particularly "pre-experimental" and expressly intends to explore European citizens' concerns and reported factors explaining euro-skepticism. This way, a preliminary evaluation of the ECI would gauge the democratic input potentially brought by the tool in relation with the examined elements of democratic deficit. An individual approach, initiative by initiative could also have been a more precise evaluative approach but, in this particular study case, the locus of attention really is the impact of participatory democracy on citizens' perceptions of their European governing authorities and decision-making processes. Besides, so far, very few initiatives have reached an advanced stage in the ECI process. Nonetheless, specific information about three ECIs are still provided in order to illustrate the practical and conceptual flaws of the tool (Section 2.3.2).

1.4   PURPOSE AND RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

The arguments presented in this section are developed following an inductive reasoning, i.e. starting from the narrowest points, the most closely related to the study to then gradually adopt a wider stance. Besides, the purpose and relevance of this thesis not only follow a multi-dimensional approach, but also a joint scrutiny given their numerous interlinks.

One prime aim of this study is to evaluate the extent to which the ECI is a case for good governance and can actually contribute to make up for the democratic deficit in Europe. It correspondingly examines, on the one hand, the European Commission's approach to participative democracy via the ECI, and on the other hand, the European citizens expectations

and motivations for influencing and/or intervening in EU policy-making. The purpose is hence to compare both perspectives and highlight potential discrepancies. Consequently, recommendations or possible corrective measures are derived in order to address shortcomings.

The topic selected is accordingly very relevant given the current context in the EU and the raising pressure mounting from the civil society to have a say in political affairs. The increasingly higher abstention rates in European elections as well as national ones are likewise considered as markers indicating a crisis of traditional participatory visions. Besides, while the links between European Institutions and citizens may be progressively eroding, the ECI, among other incentives, may have the potential to realign what is described as, inter alia, "a misfit", "a gap", "a tension" between citizen's views on the EU and the institutional decision-making practices (Clarke & Foweraker, 2001). Conversely, it is absolutely essential for this study to grasp a valid estimate of perception and foremost regarding the standpoint adopted by the European Citizens when gauging the European institutions. The goals are accordingly to further narrow down and possibly comprehend the magnitude of the factors from which are derived a myriad of European ills.

Likewise, this study also aims at clarifying what is meant by democratic deficit, insofar as a reappraisal of every variable within the conceptual realm of democracy shall be carefully undertaken. The aim is thus to clearly position this study's final evaluation of the contribution of the ECI to the reduction of the hence delineated European deficit within the contemporary and real-world context. Indeed, it would be inappropriate to evaluate any dimensions of the institutional structure or processes characteristic to the EU based on utopian or idealistic concepts of democracy, which are completely inapplicable given the contemporary features of European governance. A purely theoretical conception of democracy, or a mere statement of its principles and ideals is indeed, somehow worthless if these principles cannot be practically applied and do not reflect the versatile compound dimensions of European society.

Following those lines, it appears absolutely crucial to adopt a more hands-on and systemic approach to clarify, justify and support the process of concepts definition. Alongside with this reappraisal, there has been in fact a salient renewed interest in issues related to "democratization", indices and benchmarks used for the definition and assessment of democratic progresses (Beetham, 1994, P.34). This study, in a way, comparably intends to address the complex assessment of democratic quality in the EU. Although the development of "democratic indices" for the purpose of "democratic audit" remains a highly questioned or contestable enterprise, it may also be, for this precise analysis, a relevant and adequate approach for illustrating the complexity attached to the two central themes of this thesis: citizen participation and democratic deficit. Obviously, the prime requirement for an inclusive and balanced set of democratic indices is fully acknowledged. However, keeping in mind the limitation highlighted in the former section, a comprehensive assessment of democratic

quality including various key indices appears not realizable. Nonetheless, a rigorous dissection of the concept of citizen participation, which stresses its connections and boundaries, may constitute a significant preliminary undertaking of such democratic audit.

Finally, as a side note, it should be mentioned that, as stated, this thesis' broad goal is to question whether the ECI can effectively contribute to bridge the gap between the EU and its citizens. Nonetheless, a point is made in underlining what is really meant here by "bringing the EU closer to its citizens (and vice versa)". Indeed, advocating any ideological bridge is nothing further away than this thesis' intended aim. Reviving civic interest and engagement, overcoming cynicism and carelessness, thereby creating a strong civil society with high human capital and composed of empowered citizens are the actual foundations meant to tie citizens and their institutions.

To recapitulate, the overall purpose of this study is to run a delineated evaluation of the quality of the European democracy with regards to citizen participation, taken as the main democratic indicators. More concretely, the conducted evaluation of the ECI aims at stressing the elements of the tool, which may result in the reduction of the European democratic deficit. Moreover, this tool's "democratic assessment" necessarily goes hand in hand with a discussion around the concept of democratic deficit and the perception of citizens on the decision-making procedures at the European level. Indeed, such a procedure would ultimately expose some of the variables frequently associated with the existence of democratic deficit and hence enable a deeper reflection on the role of the ECI in fostering citizen participation and possibly increase the extent of democracy in the EU. Supported by a thorough and pragmatic justification of the criteria and assumptions involved as well as a multi-methodology, the approach will allow the comprehending of this study's main research question.

2. THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

This section carries out an analysis of the numerous concepts falling under the wide umbrella term that is democracy. Yet, a selection and specific focus is made with respect to the topic and research question[1] of this thesis. The overarching goal of this section is accordingly to explore, discuss and refine the key concepts' definitions in order to comprehensively grasp and denote the embedded various dimensions and understandings ascribed to democratic deficit. To do so, a deductive logic is adopted, which leads the reader through the concepts' analysis process, pinpointing theoretical and contextual elements of democratic deficit that will be ultimately synthesized and reviewed in 2.1.2.2.3.

The first part of this section covers and discusses the more general concepts (i.e. overview on democracy, contemporary challenges, representative and direct democracy, and citizen participation) from an overall perspective. Then, after reviewing and broadening the first part's most relevant elements in the light of the European context, the second part similarly continues the examination of the notions more closely related to the theme (i.e. democratic deficit, Multi-level governance) from a sole European perspective. This is due to the unique characteristics inherent to the European Union. Finally, last but certainly not least, the section concludes by linking key concepts, particularly the most critical aspects presented, with the European Citizen Initiative. The scheme below sketches the structure of this section.
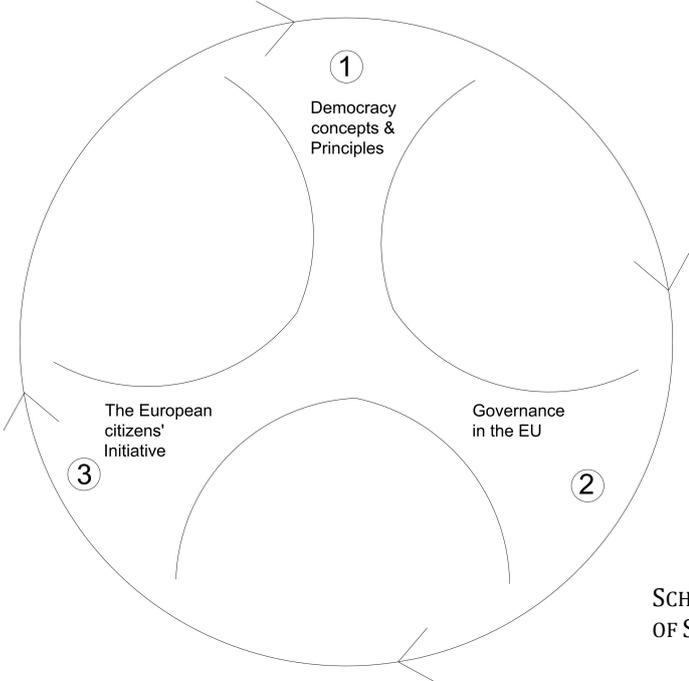
SCHEME 1: VISUAL REPRESENTATION OF SECTION 2

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[1] Are the European Citizens' Initiatives an effective tool to reduce European citizens' perceived democratic deficit?

As a side note, it is important to mention that this section has been divided in order to help the reader throughout the concepts' meanders. Yet, the interconnectedness and complexity of the terms may ultimately render somehow irrelevant all categorization attempts. Accordingly, several notes refer back or forward to different subsections.

2.1 CONCEPTS EXPLORATION AND DEFINITIONS

2.1.1   Introduction to Democracy

Living in civilization has entailed the development of diverse forms of social organizations, varying in essence but also converging in regards to several aspects. In fact, members of a group need to agree on and conform with a set of principles, rules, norms, laws, conducts etc., all together shaping the process on which is based the association's decision-making. In democracies, this political process lies on the fundamental notion of "rule by the people", in other words, the "rule by a demos", referred to as a citizen body of which members are deemed "equals for purposes of arriving at governmental decisions" (Dahl, 1989, P.5). This way, democracy is often seen as an ultimate ideal, a form of governance founded on socially desirable principles, from which are derived rights and duties for all the citizens. Indeed, fairness, justice, equality, inclusivity, participation, and possibility for contestation are, inter alia, the quintessential qualities of any democratic system. Democratic principles thus intrinsically go hand in hand with human rights such as the right to free speech (Clarke & Foweraker, 2001).

As a political order, democracy entails the application of rules, which are derived from a recognized social contract. Further, the process, the democratic way of ruling assumes that citizens are obliged to obey the rules (or laws), thus making the decisions binding (Dahl, 1989). In relation, two fundamental concepts (namely legitimacy and accountability) that have indeed been previously mentioned undeniably deserve a thoroughgoing approach.

2.1.2   Legitimacy

Legitimacy "is about the moral grounding of power and therefore involves social and cultural norms and expectations concerning proper behavior of those that govern, the social relationship between rulers and the ruled, the role of trust, reputation and force, and the balance between authority and obeisance" (Papadopoulos, 2013, P.10). From this definition, a

few relevant features shall be highlighted. Firstly, legitimacy seems to embed two very related perspectives: a normative one, which also relates to input-legitimacy (see also further in section 5.1) and a more practical one. This latter stresses the actual conditions (social, political…etc.), which must be achieved by rulers in order to be considered as legitimate by the people, based on their own standards of legitimacy. The former can be illustrated by a political system that is considered illegitimate because it fails to match citizen's expectations vis-à-vis the availability of channels conveying their preferences (including the opportunity to sanction the rulers) (Scharpf, 2003).

Overall, legitimacy is a relational phenomenon, which deals with the perception of the rulers by the ruled. Yet, this does not necessarily mean that public opinion data provide the best means to assess legitimacy (E.g. some social groups may have a greater influence and the items of a questionnaire cannot comprehensively echo the respondents' priority interests…etc.). Ian Hurd perfectly illustrates this comment referring to legitimacy as "the normative belief by an actor that a rule or institution ought to be obeyed. It is a subjective quality, relational between actor and institution, and defined by the actor's perception of the institution" (Hurd, 1999, P. 13).

Legitimacy or the lack of it, and more precisely the sources from which it is perceived to emanate, is therefore one of the cornerstones to explain the democratic deficit. In fact, in "democratic" governance systems, citizens may be considered as a central legitimacy sources. Governing authorities would therefore suffer from a democratic deficit if people perceive that they cannot achieve governmental responsiveness using their participatory opportunities and resources. Nonetheless, the examination of the nature of the European Union's legitimacy deficit (in section 2.1.2.2.3) reveals that other aspects must also be considered.

2.1.3   Accountability

Like legitimacy, accountability is a compound and multi-facet concept. The term can in fact be comprehended as a desired goal and a normative value-laden symbol. Accountability also "involves the presence of checks and balances: the acceptance of rulers that they must somehow live up to expectations and justify their actions within given norms, and that the ruled have some sanctioning power" (Papadopoulos, 2011, P.10). In this definition, checks on power refer to the constitutional dimension of accountability, whereas the control exerted by citizens forms part of the democratic approach. An important mention about those two aspects is that they can be conflicting, i.e. democratic bodies may take decisions that go against the rights of minorities (Weimer & Vining, 2011).

Accountability is hence also a concept, which founds its basis on relations between a forum, and other actors, who have to explain and justify their acts, ultimately possibly facing sanctions. Accountability relates to legitimacy in cases where some changes in governance may improve the accountability of decision-makers, therefore positively impacting the level of legitimacy. The control and setting of the political agenda is likewise very relevant with regard to policymakers' accountability (Dahl, 1989). A lack of citizen involvement in deciding in what ways current matters are to be placed on the agenda would accordingly negatively impact the extent to which people perceive how accountable and concurrently legitimate their rulers are. In this regard, participatory governance arrangements have become central blueprints of good governance agenda under the form of trendy strategies for enhancing vertical accountability (Speer, 2012).

Making institutions and policy-makers accountable via measures increasing transparency and trust, is therefore a fundamental aspect of institutional reforms and governance shifts (Ansell & Gingrich, 2003). Likewise, trust and transparency are terms inherently related with accountability, which have regained certain popularity. In fact, transparency is widely believed to be a pivotal pillar in the process of restoring accountability and trust in democratic institutions. Yet, today, while transparency pompously lies at the center of politics, it may not be really about earning back citizens' trust but rather about the political management of mistrust. Further, the so-called "crisis of accountability" can be traced back to various sources such as the growing complexity of governance systems or politicians' own agenda settings (Bovens, 2009). In addition, this crisis may also be linked to the fact that "people start to understand that they can change governments but they cannot change policies" (Krastev, 2012).

Furthermore, transparency, at first sight, particularly enhanced thanks to new media and technologies of communication is however far from being a panacea since it ultimately reveals several more or less latent shortcomings. The double-edged sword of transparency is therefore investigated in section 2.1.9 on Democracy and New Media Technologies. In addition, the links and meanings of accountability, legitimacy, trust and transparency are more thoroughly examined in the context of the European Union and with regards to the democratic deficit in section 2.1.2.2.3.

2.1.4   On democracy, alternatives and measurements

A major and quite foolishly ambitious undertaking of all times has been to compare democracies with alternative political systems, from both a feasible and ideal perspective. For instance, in The Republic, Plato argued in favor of a guardianship system, of which knowledgeable guardians and the philosopher king are the only ones competent for governing

the City. Is it relevant to wonder whether today's society could be governed in such way? Likewise, should politics be professionalized? Or Is Democracy where "the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must"? (Boyle, 2007, P. 36). Plato's arguments, made so long ago, already highlighted several shortcomings attached to democratic forms of governance, which may, to some extent, accurately resonate the current "crisis of governance", and therefore help review the underlying assumptions "regarding the best way to govern and the best way to manage those scarce resources available to us" (Okpala, 2009, P.51). Today, governance is intrinsically based on how powers affect outcomes in a finite world.

In short, indeed, there is a wide consensus acknowledging that democracy implicates several significant practical flaws (subsequently detailed and analyzed). However, government or rather more adequately, governance, still seems to be evaluated on the basis of democratic utopian ideals (Moravcsik, 2004). This is maybe due to the fact that democracy is still too often considered as a tool, rather than a sole ideal. In order to clearly "maintain the distinction between democracy as an ideal system and the institutional arrangements that have come to be regarded as a kind of imperfect approximation of an ideal" (Dahl, 1971, P.44), Dahl introduced the term "polyarchy" to denote the latter. Polyarchy is described as "a set of institutional arrangements that permits public opposition and establishes the right to participate in politics" (Coppedge & Reinicke, 1991, P.29). Hence, polyarchy supposedly strays away from democracy, as it would offer a more accurate, operational appreciation and measure of the degree to which governments meet a set of minimum political requirements.

This endeavor also dovetails the most recent phases of democratization since the late 1980s, which were accompanied by a renewed interest for redefining and assessing the performances, the quality of democracy. Similarly, for an evaluative purpose, political scientists have developed democratic indices, which can be aggregated into a more qualitative scale, disaggregated and qualitatively assessed, ranked or combined into a single score (Bollen, 1991). Yet, although the whole enterprise may provide a basis for running a democratic audit, critiques argue that it relies on a biased culturally neutral conception of democracy (Beetham, 1994). Since democracy is understood differently in different cultures, the development of indicators and audits shall therefore be more stringent and context-specific.

2.1.5   Overview on democracy and its contemporary challenges

As a form of governance "for the people", modern democracy allegedly relies on an extensive representation and inclusiveness of citizens via the free, transparent and just election of hence legitimized representatives (Landman & Larizza, 2010). Nevertheless, Brigitte

Boyce duly asks "is it possible to ensure adequate representation in any modern complex state system?" A question to which she categorically answers "No" (Boyce, 1993, P. 31). This use of "proxies" is, for some, a necessary step to ensure a relatively or rather adequately fair and legitimate governance system, while others virulently criticize the tendency for elitism and professionalization of politics (Vauchez, 2012). This debate on representativeness and direct democracy, central to the core topic of this thesis, will be further developed in the next section on representative, direct, participatory and deliberative democracy.

Focusing on modern-days concepts of democracy, it is interesting to notice that while peace has been relatively reigning in most long-established democracies (thus apparently reinforcing the beneficial role of this governance system), the participation and involvement of citizens in political life seems to paradoxically decrease (if solely observing the elections turnout rates and number of political part subscriptions) (Van Biezen, 2013). In democratic rhetoric, a consensus among scholars, politicians and general public invokes a severe "democratic deficit", a term widely used to justify the perceived lack of legitimacy, the substantial disjuncture between policymakers and public, and consequently the decreased citizen participation rate (Arnold, Franklin, & Wlezien, 2010), (Moravcsik, 2004). Albeit challenging, addressing the actual underlying reasons explaining this reported discrepancy is of utmost importance and highlights the need for new governance models and innovative forms of participation in democratic initiatives.

Furthermore, the current social, economic and environmental challenges, the so-called "wicked problems", have shaped the political landscape in a much faster and greater extent than ever before. Along with those ubiquitous transformations, the shortcomings inherent to the current institutional system have resulted in a relatively slow reactive adaption, thus further hampering and undermining democratic principles. Overall, the roles of governments have dramatically evolved concomitantly with changes affecting their structures and powers. Indeed, governments have traditionally the crucial role and legitimated duty to provide public goods and services on the basis of their non-rival, non-excludable nature (i.e. no one can be denied the privilege of using a specific asset and its use by one person does not reduce the amount available for everyone else) (Perman, Ma, Common, & Maddison, 2011). However, government's transformations are certainly not exempt from criticisms as political leaders increasingly follow an entrepreneurial tangent, which may undermine these stated traditional roles and duties.

Furthermore, as explored in a latter section (section 2.1.9), democratic governments are nowadays largely influenced by an ever growing demand for transparency and accountability enabled by e-governance and e-participation, which have literally challenged and revolutionized the ways to govern, pushing for the disclosure of public databases (Millard, 2009). Likewise, societal needs and expectations have evolved endorsing technological breakthroughs and proactive citizenship values based on new paradigms (Milev, 2004).

Nonetheless, with all its imperfections and critics, the current democratic form of governance remains, first and foremost, a moving target. Views and definitions are thus similarly dynamic and versatile. Yet, bridging the gap between ideals and reality, the increasing account for the role of civil society, culture, and socio-economic variables accordingly plays a critical function in creating "substantive" democracy (Bass, 2010). Moreover, since "defining democracy is a political act" (Beetham, 1994, P. 46), the debates entailed are consequently based on subjective and personal grounds. However, be it a "thin" or "fat" conception of democracy, when stumbling upon definition matters, several criteria somehow achieve a consensus, i.e. for example, an inclusive participation along with citizens' equality of rights (Clarke & Foweraker, 2001, P.87). Correspondingly, some argue that modern democracies are not democratic since they are dominantly based on representation (Barber, 1984).

2.1.6   Representative and Direct Democracy

Can the scale of contemporary democracies allow all, or a substantial part of citizens to directly deliberate and participate in political decision-making? a compound question from which many more arise. The characteristics of modern societies have involved profound changes with regards to the assumptions, preconditions, justifications and actual means of governance. This section expressly examines two forms of democracies (representative and direct), their characteristics and variants. As a second step, in the following sections, their respective actual applications and practices are explored.

Direct democracy, defined by Benjamin Barber as "a process of ongoing, proximate self-legislation and the creation of a political community capable of transforming dependent private individuals into free citizens and private interests into public goods" (Barber, 1984, P.59), has been an undeniable sine qua non of public governance in modern democracies. Direct democracy, like its counterpart, representative (or also indirect) democracy, are forms of governance from which are further derived an actual plethora of variances (E.g. participatory and deliberative democracy fall under the label of direct democracy). Yet, very often, both direct and indirect models keep being polarized against each one another (Schiller, 2009).

Nevertheless, these "sub-divisions" overlap these two forms of democracy to a varying extent. For example, depending on the school of thoughts, some authors consider that participatory democracy can be either solely direct, or can also include represented forms of participation (i.e. indirect citizen participation) (Parker, 2003). The different dimensions attributed to the idea of participatory democracy can explain this overlay. Originally referred

to as "processes through which citizens would participate directly in decentralized governance settings", the concept of participatory democracy has more recently been extended to include the new forms of direct citizen engagement (i.e. e-democracy) and the processes "in which those concerned by an issue should be involved on the drafting of decision on it" (Smismans, 2012, P.24). This latest dimension is associated with the participatory processes occurring at a large scale and therefore implies the intervention of functional representatives (civil society organizations for instance) acting as intermediaries between citizens and institutions.

For the sake of clarity, the henceforth-mentioned notion of participatory democracy and the actual citizen participation (mainly examined in the next two sections) refer to the concept's sole direct conception and forms. The differentiation is also expressly formulated when appropriate. The schema below illustrates the previous paragraph.
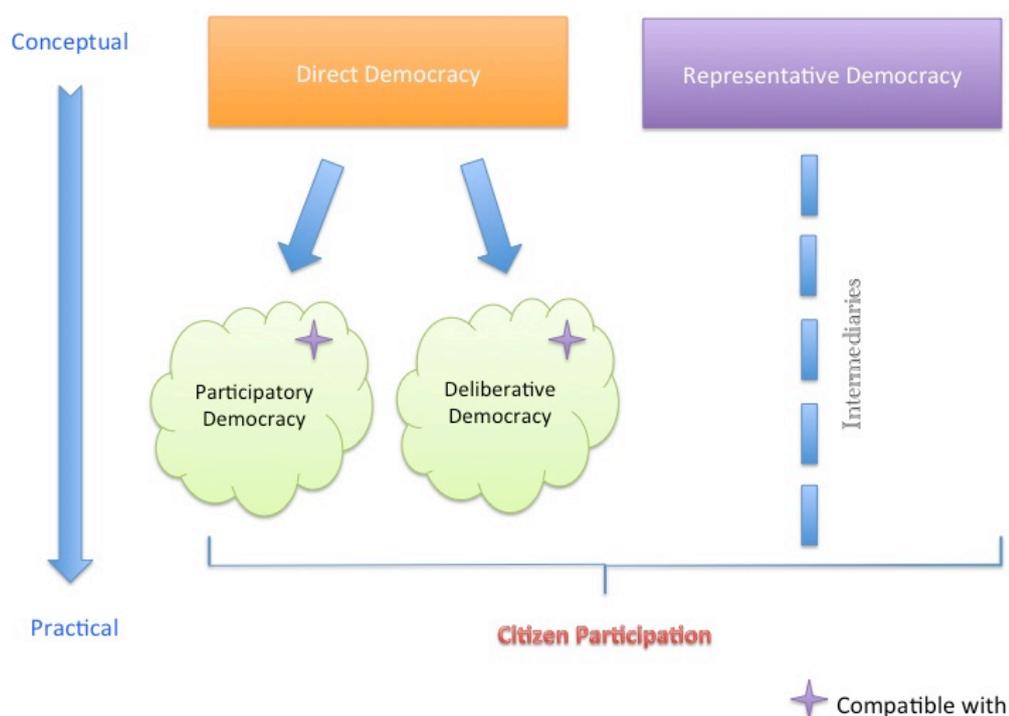
SCHEME 2: ILLUSTRATION OF DIRECT AND REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY

In reference to the debate on representation and direct participation, Kweit and Kweit split the difference in a practical manner arguing that citizens should democratically define the overarching goals for governments (i.e. set the ends), while representatives decide on the means to get there (Kweit & Kweit, 1981). However, this conciliatory view leaves little room

for continuous public involvement and likewise undermines the quality of deliberation (Schmidt, 2010).

However, the real relevance of the debate may not lie on the opposition or tension between representativeness and other direct forms of democracies. One of the early pivotal aspects, in fact, rather entails finding a balance between an indispensable expertise and the need for citizens to have a real say in decisions that affect their lives, in proportion to their stake in the outcome (Warren, 2009). Nonetheless, since institutions can only be assessed according to their relative capacity to reach the stated democratic goals, those "tensions" may therefore be interpreted as tradeoffs or as an adjustment process between democracy's principles (E.g. between political equality in participation) and the efficiency requirements.

2.1.7   Critical discussion on Citizen Participation

In many respects, citizen participation has today somehow become a new must-have feature in the political arena (Warren, 2009). At first sight, the idea is indeed appealing since it perfectly fits the idea of a democratization process, likewise suitably complying with the democratic quality of inclusion, and meanwhile suggesting a greater legitimacy and transparency of the decisions being taken. Moreover, according to many analysts, "institutional procedures allowing citizens a more direct role in government decision-making will increase civic engagement" (Tolbert, McNeal, & Smith, 2003, P.46). However, although the value added by citizen participation may be generally undeniable, a thorough attention shall be drawn on the concrete forms, terms and conditions, as well as limitations attached to this practice of direct democracy. There is actually a plethora of criticism, particularly relating to the feasibility and desirability of citizen participation, which deserves to be theoretically confronted in the first instance, and then, scrutinized under current social conditions. In this present section, a definition is firstly analyzed, and then, further arguments are pondered to comprehensively broaden the debate.

Citizen participation or interchangeably public involvement is often referred to as a "process, which provides private individuals an opportunity to influence public decisions and has long been a component of the democratic decision-making process" (Cogan & Sharpe, P.12).

An obvious but still relevant point to stress in this definition is the central link between the democratic property of decision-making and the capacity of citizens to correspondingly act upon it. Nevertheless, this definition appears somehow weak since it does not provide much detail about the indicated "process" and also the implications and consequences linked to citizen participation, which are therefore discussed later on in this section.

In addition, although it mentions the "opportunity" given to citizens, the definition somehow overlooks the existence of various mediums and, importantly, their potential outcomes. Public participation can indeed be exerted through various conduits such as petitions, pressure, elections, referenda, public deliberation…etc. A range of channels, which, besides, has nowadays been largely broaden, becoming very versatile since subject to numerous experimentations and social innovations (Hardt, 2013). This evolution accordingly circumnavigates, renovates and complements the more traditional and less direct participatory means such as voting. Still, in modern democracies, the voting system remains as of today the main mediated participatory vehicle. The next section on efficiency, efficacy and democracy further develops the paradox of voting.

Nonetheless, still continuing on the analysis of citizen participation, a significant point to mention is the two dimensions affecting public involvement, here namely the downstream and upstream dimensions. Indeed, on the one hand, the previous comments have emphasized the upstream dimensions, this is to say, the different participatory mediums at hand, and notably the resulting differentiated levels of influence associated with those participatory tools.

However, on the other hand, the downstream dimension of public involvement refers to the citizens' triggered reactions (i.e. the drive for participation), which may originate from a problem, and therefore possibly create a need for legislation. As a result, given the potential impacts on their daily lives, citizens are fostered to take part in civil or political actions and express their concerns or ideas. Similarly to the upstream dimension, the downstream facet of citizen participation also entails varying degrees of involvement, logically explained by the different interests and stakes. The subsequent scheme (figure 3) illustrates this downstream / upstream ideas (1&2), and conversely reflects on government's actual responsiveness, accountability and problem-solving effectiveness (3&4).
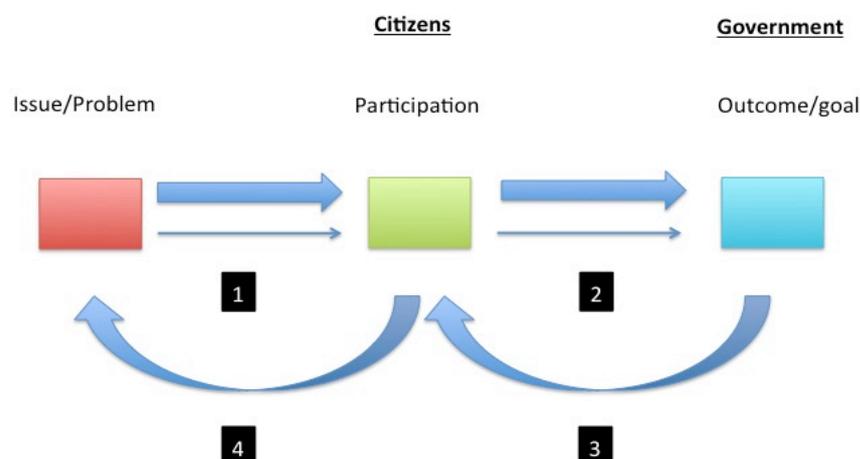
SCHEME 3: ILLUSTRATION OF THE DOWNSTREAM/UPSTREAM PARTICIPATORY DIMENSIONS

Likewise, the definition provided at the beginning of this section briefly touches another aspect of interest (and utmost relevance for this thesis), which therefore deserves a greater consideration: the notion of "democratic decision making". The democratic property of decision-making comes in contrast with bureaucratic or technocratic forms of decision-making, which regard experts and specialists as best suited to take complicated, technical and scientific decisions. Yet, interestingly enough, Dorothy Nelkin, commenting on these top-down approach, states, "they not only fail to solve social problems but also contribute to them" (Nelkin, 1981). A quote meant to be thought over, especially in the light of the current political situation. Conversely, democratic decision-making assumes that "all who are affected by a given decision have the right to participate in the making of that decision" (Parker, 200", P.4).

This democratic versus technocratic argument has been frequently used to justify the restricted involvement of citizens. Ultimately, it relates to experts' disregarding attitudes towards the crowd, the masses: "a lot of very thoughtful experts say that the public is too stupid to be consulted, that it only has patience for a few sound bites and the elites should decide" (Fishkin, 2012, P.34). Along those lines, it could be easily said that most people are not well informed about current political affairs, public policy in general, consequently creating an umpteenth barrier to citizen participation.

Yet, is access to information the real problem, and if yes, to which extent? In his recent research paper called "Motivated Numeracy and Enlightened Self-Government", Dan Kahan investigates the impact of existing political beliefs on people's basic reasoning skills. The troubling findings show that a lack of information turns out not to be the real problem (Kahan, 2013). In fact, according to Kahan, education, scientific evidence, reasoning or media literacy do not provide people with the means to make good decisions. Commenting on these findings, Professor Marty Kaplan notes, "we rationalize what our emotions already want to believe […] more and better facts don't turn low-information voters into well-equipped citizens. It just makes them more committed to their misperceptions" (Kaplan, 2013, P.2). Be it well substantiated or not, what a deterministic study, which does not leave much hope for the future of mankind!

Dr. Kahan's comments refer to the important notion of "misperceptions". Similarly, it is appropriate to elaborate on what primarily determines perceptions as well as the types and nature of these energy arrays interfacing between individuals or social groups and their environments. Perceptual information are what makes someone's reality, they are continuous, structured and influenced by many variables (Interpersonal Perception and Communication Laboratory , 2003). Researchers at Harvard University's Interpersonal Perception and Communication Laboratory have established a typology of perceptions of which three types are particularly relevant to this study.

First, learnt perceptions are thoughts, beliefs, and opinions quite straightforwardly relating to habits, character and culture. They are taught and affect the way an individual analyses and reacts to certain information. Learnt perceptions are mostly socially transmitted, from parents to children. Second, environmental perceptions are formed around the notion of contextual relativity and infer that a cognitive filter corresponding to one's environment shapes the perceptions through which an individual sees it reality. Third, and echoing the previous type, cultural perceptions are based on wider societal surroundings. They can be juxtaposed or enter into conflict between each other since cultural stereotypes depends on the sub-society in which an individual is brought up.

The reason for taking a closer look at what perceptions are, is that the present study intends to grasp citizens' perceptions of the European institutions and decision-making process. The analogy between a filter and perceptions is rather neutrally connoted but, in many ways, perceptions, although inherent to human nature, are also biases shaping and/or distorting affecting citizens' visions of the world and interpersonal relations. With regards to the EU, comprehending such perceptions is as critical as complex. For instance, a widespread climate of euroscepticism and overall political cynicism may impact to a varying degree all citizens. Public engagement in the political or social life can similarly be altered.

The potential reasons explaining the highly debated discussions around the involvement of citizens abound but also tend to be overgeneralized, and consequently, naturally fail to encompass the pervasive, compound and culturally-laden nature of the issues. Overall, in the political sphere, there is relatively little debate about the need to make policy choices congruent with the informed preferences of the people. Eventually, the whole issue of citizen participation seems to lie on a paradoxical choice between "politically equal and uninformed masses or politically unequal and more informed elites" (Fishkin, 2012, P. 34). Yet, along those lines, political equality and uninformed masses entails the involvement of citizen in cases where the issue is relatively straightforward and trivial. Conversely, the political inequality and expert decision-makers case completely undermines the notion of popular participation in politics.

Furthermore, two key aspects (subsequently detailed below in this section) can respectively be derived from the examination of citizen participation:

- First, which are the opportunities for the people to have an input in the legislative or decision-making process? Likewise, a debated issue relates to the extent to which all the people or groups of citizens should have a say in policies that have collective impacts.

-        Second, how genuinely responsive governments are in addressing citizens' concerns?

The first point correspondingly means to further question how much direct democracy can or should be applied, and in which circumstances. The second ultimately touches on one aspect of government effectiveness, i.e. on the credibility of the political establishment's ability to provide feedback, suitably incorporating citizens' requests and ideas in their agenda. Furthermore, it also draws attention on the potential limits, claimed, unfounded or practical of citizen participation.

The first key aspect mentioned above also deals with the limits to public intervention in terms of the existence of government failures arising from the inability of collective choices to "promote social values in desired and predictable ways" (Weimer & Vining, 2011, P.65). These limits are intrinsically linked to the direct and representative forms of democracy along with governments' bureaucratic supply. Nevertheless, for the purpose of this study, only the relevant problems inherent to direct democracy are examined further in details. The fundamental problem is connected to the difficulties (or rather the impossibility) of aggregating individual preferences in a fair and coherent way that agrees with everyone's inclinations and results in a social consensus. In relation with the previous discussion on legitimacy, one could likewise ask whether all preferences are equally legitimate.

This key issue, the paradox of voting, relates to the apparent initial irrationality or lack of utility of voting since one voter sees his/her act as inconsequential with respects to the other hundreds of thousands of votes (Easley & Kleinberg, 2010). According to Kenneth Arrow's Impossibility theorem, the voting system is an attempt to aggregate diverse individual preferences into social preferences. Now, a particularly important point to inspect is the implications of this paradox for the interpretation of democracy. The main problem lies on the potential agenda manipulation and the creation of political disequilibrium especially when the stakes are high. Another associated shortcoming appears when "a permanent majority consistently inflicts costs on a permanent minority or a temporary majority opportunistically inflicts very high costs on a temporary minority" (Weimer & Vining, 2011, P.66). Therefore, this danger called "tyranny by the majority" makes the practice of direct democracy via referenda undesirable. A common example is the well-known popular decision, which has led Swiss voters to back a ban on minarets (Feld & Kirchgässner, 2006, P.23).

Obviously no clear limit can be set on how much direct democracy can or should be applied. However, as long as other democratic values such as liberty and equality are well adjusted and preserved by accountable and independent institutions, a possible abuse of power by majorities may be balanced in favor of essential intrinsic social values.

2.1.8   Efficiency and effectiveness in Democracy[2]

"Wir wollen mehr Demokratie wagen" (We should dare to seek more democracy) once said Willy Brandt (Stetter, 2012, P.1). Yet, today's large, complex and volatile modern societies make the actual practice of any kinds of democracy a real stumbling block. As a result, decision-making processes somehow stray away from an ultimate and ideally superior end (such as creating public value) and tend to solely favor operational means (such as effectiveness and efficiency) (Millard, 2009). A balance between ideal superior ends and operational means should hence be found when designing new appropriate policy-making tools. Nonetheless, a review of the two key concepts, efficiency and effectiveness is required in order to examine their real relationship and impact with other values (E.g. equity, citizen participation).

Efficiency considerations are primarily derived from the functioning and performance assessment of markets and can be simply defined as "the ability to be productive of desired effects, especially without waste" (Gravelle & Rees, 2004, P. 22). Following a market-based logic, efficiency is a key criterion for economic and governing systems dealing with the determination of optimal allocation of resources and the apparition of naturally occurring sources of inefficiency. The ultimate goal should therefore be the maximization of well being, even though, echoing the previous section's considerations, an obvious problem lies on the delineation of the maximum social well-being.

Vilfredo Pareto and his contemporaries have long tried to solve this tricky issue. Accordingly, the use of Pareto's definition of efficiency (Pareto Efficiency or Pareto Optimality) has become widespread. Also referred as to the concept of allocative efficiency, the theory states that the Pareto Optimality is reached when "no possible reorganization of production can make anyone better off without making someone else worse off. Under conditions of allocative efficiency one person's satisfaction or utility can be increased only by lowering someone else's utility." (Samuelson & Nordhaus, 2005, P.68). In the light of this definition, an essential question emerges. How to quantify or evaluate the degradation or improvement of someone's condition? One individual is the only one able to establish the impact of any changes occurring.

The validity of the Pareto criterion is based on several assumptions. Indeed, according to Pareto, matters related to efficiency can possibly be objectively assessed if and only in the cases where the analysis makes abstraction of any issues linked to equity or social justice. The reason being that all forms of value judgments must be avoided. To do so, one shall not

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[2] Section 2.1.8 resumes a few paragraphs from a report written at the end of a course on Intermediate Microeconomic Theory.

compare the level of satisfaction of different individuals and avoid interpersonal appraisals. In the same manner, questions raised on equity would be examined only when the society would have ruled on the desirable social decisions to be taken. The aim of those procedures is to provide a value-free scientific justification as a basis for decision-making (Brownstein, 1980).

These few paragraphs have exhaustively underlined a number of incoherencies and limitations associated with the Pareto efficiency, which prevail for both markets and public administrations. Moreover, even though efficiency and the implied rationality shall not be completely undermined, it has however, albeit still arguably depending on the views, overextended its role in the terrain of public administration (Stabile, 2009). Can efficiency and other democratic values be ever reconciled so that citizen participation, equity or dignity are no longer considered as costs? (Goward, 2005). Although the existence of an intrinsic tension between democracy and efficiency is undeniable, it does not mean that either have to be jettisoned in favor of the other. The whole craft of governments is thus to strike the balance between both in a way that reduces government inefficiencies meanwhile counteracting the corrosion of people's confidence within a long-term perspective.

Likewise, the attempts to address the trade-off between democracy and administrative efficiency shall be further studied in relation with the concepts of good and multi-level governance in the EU (Section 2.1.2.2.2).

Effectiveness is another cornerstone of public administration very frequently associated with efficiency: "Government that works can be said to be effective; government that spends wisely must also consider the question of efficiency" (Stabile, 2009, P.34). Effectiveness or also effectivity relates to the quality of being able to producing a decided, decisive or desired effect (Merriam-Webster, 2011). Effectiveness is accordingly widely used as a substantive element for assessing governments, governance systems, or more specifically policymaking processes.

Along with the central theme of this study, effectiveness is here examined in concomitance with the concept of legitimacy and citizen participation. The relationship between effectivity and governing bodies' legitimacy is a two-way correlation since this former can be positively or negatively impacted by the latter and vice versa. In fact, to be effective, a government requires the legitimacy generated by public participation. In turn, effective participation is a key criteria of democratic process provided that citizens have an adequate and equal opportunity for stating their preferences as to a governmental decision's final outcome. Dahl additionally comments "to deny any citizen adequate opportunity for effective participation means that because their preferences are unknown or incorrectly perceived, they cannot be taken into account. But, not to take their preferences equally into account is to reject the principle of equal consideration of interest" (Dahl, 1989, P.58) and thus would ultimately undermine legitimacy.

Overall, what criteria or elements should really be considered when comprehensively evaluating policies or any products of public policy? Kweit and Kweit argue that the decision is based on "the accessibility of the process and/or the responsiveness of the policy to those who are affected by it, rather than the efficiency or rationality of the decision" (Kweit & Kweit, 1981). There is not either a perfect recipe on how to capture more subjective evaluative aspects such as the quality, fairness and social desirability of policy outputs. In short, a comprehensive justification of the assumptions involved in the process is necessary to be of real value. Besides, contextual conditions, changes in the macro-social environment are other decisive aspects to take into consideration.

Contextual changes, social and technological innovations can indeed have a great impact on the design, as well as procedural and organizational arrangements of governance systems. The pervasive and multi-dimensional role of new media technologies is hence analyzed in relation with the previously debated issues.

2.1.9   Democracy and New Media Technologies [3]

The 21st century is marked by the hegemony of information and communication technologies supported by a wide variety of media and spurred by an active civil society demanding more transparency, accountability and openness (Bertot, Jaeger, & Munson, 2010). This new versatile digital era has literally revolutionized institutions, questioning governments' traditional operating approaches. Nonetheless, meanwhile, a myriad of associated barriers and challenges have emerged. Some of the most noteworthy challenges are linked to a wide array of difficulties, which ranges from accessibility, inclusiveness (E.g. the digital divide) and the related increasing power gap, resistance to change, transparency's double edged sword to interoperability, security and intellectual property issues (Millard, 2009).

Overall, taking into consideration the three previously mentioned elements, and in the views of the numerous benefits attributed to new media, institutions have endorsed a real "e-" culture. E-government, e-participation…etc. are hot topics that have virtually been popularized as symbol of modern democracies. Open governments are nowadays seen as the new mainstream, pushing further the concepts of citizens' engagement, information sharing and public data access. Likewise, crowdsourcing, namely, tapping crowds' potential and expertise for a general public good via the use of apps and mobile resources also forms part of this "beyond formal democracy" movement (Access !nfo, 2012). Nevertheless, this fast-moving paradigm shift also raises numerous questions:

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[3] Section 2.1.9 resumes a few paragraphs from a report written at the end of a course on Information Systems Management

- What should government be actually doing in the area of transparency, citizen involvement and accountability to qualify as "open government"?

- What are the best practices using new communication technologies, which really enhance openness as opposed to merely perpetuating existing bureaucratic practices in a digital environment?

- What are the limitations and how should governments make the best use of those new technologies and forms of communication?

- How to monitor the real impact of e-Governance, and how to encourage the usage and constant improvement of the tools and policies framing their use?

Furthermore, this technological evolution in association with new social paradigms of participation seems to really challenge the old narrow idea of welfare states' clientelism (defined as a government's preferential allocation of benefits to a particular category of people, friends, relatives rather than improving the quality of public provision of services as a whole) and demonstrates that citizens can be empowered (Robinson & Verdier, 2003).

These "new" or constantly evolving media technologies can be considered as very potent auxiliaries of participatory practices, since enhancing efficiency (reduction of participatory costs) and effectiveness (potential to broaden access and inclusion) (Kroes, 2012). Under certain conditions, later on referred to as Participatory Key Success Factors (PKSF), this form of electronic democracy can enable, in a cooperative manner, the elaboration of answers to social problems. Likewise, making democracy more "liquid", transparent and flexible in an increasingly global and connected environment has been made a lot easier and faster thanks to technological progress (Arnold, Franklin, & Wlezien, 2010).

Technology and new media-enabled political or civil movements such as the "Occupy movement", the "Indignados" in Spain or the "Pirate Party" in Germany are incontestable game-changers (Pleyers, 2012). Although contested on various aspects, they have surged as a part of a wider array of subterranean movements, which look into ways to complement or more radically reform representative democracy and empower citizenry. Many consider them as grassroots driven initiatives prefiguring a new politics based on deliberative democracy principles and, which profoundly differs from current political structures. The measurements of democratic quality would accordingly be based on "the possibility of elaborating ideas within discursive, open and public arenas, where citizens play an active role in identifying problems, but also in elaborating possible solutions" (De La Porta, 2011, P1).

Those considerations are particularly relevant given the movements' potentially significant capacity to foster and address the obstacle to citizen participation and their ability to challenge increasingly less appealing conventional participatory tools. "How thoroughly have the electoral systems trained us to find boring and unrewarding even the most minimal political participation!" (Hardt, 2013). Furthermore, a noteworthy feature common to most of those movements is to be citizen-induced, i.e. bottom-up driven and also relatively independent from political institutions. One may accordingly question their legitimacy in the name of the whole society along with their effectivity in actually interfering in political decision-making processes.

Such societal transformations and new paradigms clearly induce changes in "the rules of the game and the public-ness of public management" (Buss, Redburn, & Guo, 2006, P.46). There is incontestably a need to reconsider old and recurrent problems faced by democracies in the light of the new opportunities inherent to a new terrain. Citizens aspire to a more active and richer dialogue with governments, resulting in a more receptive, accountable and effective decision-making. Still, the answer is not clear yet, whether politicians and political leaders will genuinely embrace new means of citizens' participation and whether those new modes of cooperation will be innovatively integrated to the legislative process or merely crafted on to existing methods.

At this stage, the issues and concepts require to be examined from a real-world and specific perspective. The following section hence focuses on the situation in the European Union.

2.2 DEMOCRATIC CONCEPTS FROM THE EUROPEAN UNION PERSPECTIVE

Now that the key concepts have been established and pondered, the present section expressly aims at creating links between theoretical notions and actual practices in the European Union. A first subsection emphasizes on citizen participation and European Citizenship. A subsequent part principally seeks to explore the complexity of mechanisms attendant to the EU's unique type of steering policy mode (i.e. the Multi-Level Governance). Furthermore, it also concomitantly reflects on the legitimacy and accountability aspects entailed by the related decision-making procedures. Last but not least, the concept, dimensions and solutions of democratic deficit in the EU are analyzed based on the previous conceptual discussions.

This section therefore constitutes another significant step in dissecting first, and then, more holistically, comprehending the connections between democratic values and principles (such as effectiveness, legitimacy and accountability), context-specific issues and the accusations according to which the EU suffers from a democratic deficit. Additionally, it sets the ground for the examination (section 2.3) and evaluation (section 4) of the European Citizens' Initiative.

2.2.1 Participatory Citizenship and European identity

The construction of the European Union has progressively led to the definition and enactment of a wide range of legal rights. Yet, the normative outlining of rights appears to be largely insufficient to enable all citizens to actually activate and exercise their rights. The durable establishment of participatory norms (E.g. voting) would in fact involve a greater emphasis on obligations since maintaining these rights demands from citizens a relatively active and constant involvement in civic and political life. This way, participatory citizenship, comprehended, as "participation in civil society, community and/or political life, characterized by mutual respect and non-violence and in accordance with human rights and democracy" is essential to ensure the accountability and legitimation of institutions (Hoskins, Abs, Han, Kerr, & Veugelers, 2012, P.6).

Inspired by, and building on the extensive array of terminology relating to the concept of citizenship, the European authorities have developed their own jargon. The initial notion of "European citizenship", which has had for long a strong geographical attachment, has in fact been enlarged to "Active European Citizenship" as a reference to the democratic values that should be promoted. With the adjunction of the adjective "Active", citizenship directly relates

to "civic participation". Interestingly, this European participatory dimension entails a diverse semantic and political resonance within various Member States, ranging from a rather coercive to more favorable and beneficial connotations. Still, despite of these cultural discrepancies, the notion of "Active European Citizenship" is reportedly uniformly transcribed in official texts. The aim is to emphasize the necessity to further develop European citizens' political literacy (i.e. "the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that are needed to become an active citizen") and civic competences (E.g. aptitude to deliberate and listen) (Fischer-Hotzel, 2010, P. 9).

National identity and feeling of belonging to a social group, which shares a relatively homogeneous set of values and norms appear to be revitalized in the light of the resilience of nationalism nowadays, but also ironically at a point in time when Nation States are commonly said to be "in decline" (Jenkins & Sofos, 1996). Quite paradoxically in fact, while the EU has often been held responsible for the dilution of national identities, on the contrary, it may be argued that it is its very same construction, which has, to some extent, contributed to the nationalist movements' upsurge of popularity. In today's contemporary Europe, this phenomenon may be correlated with the search for identity and meaning in a wider environment perceived as hardly sizeable and rather hostile, hence challenging the attempts of the EU to somehow artificially create and bound around same citizenship different social groups.

The notions of National or European identity are today a clear locus of attention. However, the current discussions unfortunately often echo the relatively popular sectarian views rather than focusing on more constructive considerations. It is likewise very regrettable that the whole identity debate seems to have been left alone in the hands of political parties, which are stigmatizing and monopolizing the problems associated with National or European identity. The very controversial philosopher and essayist Alain Finkielkraut, who is notably well known for his work on "living together", continues along this line of thoughts arguing for the need to develop inclusive projects which would foster citizens' feeling of belonging to a community and thereby reduce the current identity crisis (Finkielkraut, 2013).

Finkielkraut further associates the "social malaise" to a contemporary democracy crisis. In this regard, he discusses the evolution of citizens in conjunction with the increasing individualization of European Society: persons would be less and less citizens and more and more individuals. The underlying consequences of this observation are clearly compound but yet, relevant to consider. For the philosopher, individuals are only concerned by their rights, hence limiting democracy to an accumulation of rights. On the contrary, a citizen feels responsible for the community s/he is living in and takes decisions based not only on rights but also on the duties ascribed by the citizenship (Finkielkraut, 2013). The latent conflict between citizenship and individuality could accordingly be one factor undermining the European project.

The stakes, implications and difficulties implied are extremely high and challenging for the European authorities. Indeed, people's opinions over the concepts of Nation-State and supranationality have significant impacts on the type of discourses and views related to the existence and development of the EU. These considerations actually dovetail the discussion on the different types of perceptions (section 2.1.7) and the concept of discursive identity, defined as "an understanding that speakers apply as they select genres of discourse with the knowledge (tacit or implicit) that others will interpret their discourse as an artifact of their cultural membership" (Brown, 2011, P. 36).

Adding to this intersocietal complexity, the understanding of the European civil society per se, its role in shaping the EU may have been misleadingly comprehended by the governing European Institutions. In parallel with the construction of the Union, two key concepts of citizenry have evolved but surprisingly not coincided: the European Citizenship and the European Civil Society. Both have been presented as "an attempt to find support for and increase the legitimacy of a process of supranational polity-building" (Smismans, 2011, P.45). Accordingly, while the former limitedly reflects a rights-based perspective of citizenship, somehow undermining the participatory status of citizens and the role of civil intermediary entities, the latter does take into account these civil organizations but also somehow restricts citizens to a rather passive role.

The European Commission may have been inspired by those implicit and changeable conceptions of citizenship. One must therefore question and carefully examine the role of citizens and the wider civil society as defined and applied by the European bodies. Furthermore, the democratic credentials of the European citizenry may appear quite equivocal because of its interdependencies with the "different images of the nature of the European polity" (Smismans, 2011).

The rather uncertain and open future of the EU also enables the exploration of different conceptions and, correspondingly, conflicting outlooks on potential democratic virtues of citizen participation in the European Union. The effects on the orientations of the EU, notably in terms of policymaking are therefore an essential concern for this thesis. In fact, along those lines, the ECI, as a participatory tool created by the European Commission may reflect a biased conception of citizen participation. Likewise, it is of utmost relevance to question whether the description of the instrument and the type of response, which the Commission intends to deliver, is actually based on a more or less restricted conception of citizen participation. Those points are later on expanded in the section analyzing the ECI (2.3) and in the final fourth section.

2.2.2   Multi-level governance in the EU[4]

The European Union machinery is intrinsically a political system sui generis. In fact, the emergence and incremental development of this unprecedented supranational form of cooperation between Nation States and key institutions is another undeniable keystone of contemporary democracies. The concept of Multi-level governance also accordingly emerged in concomitance with the construction of the EU (Bache & Flinders, 2004), namely the "widening" (enlargement as to include new Member States) and foremost the "deepening" (strengthening of the EU via an increased transfer of competencies, i.e. the level of integration, and a wider scope, i.e. the policy-making procedures) (Kelemen, Menon, & Slapin, 2009). New analytical outlooks and frameworks were thus required to analyze the relationships and the associated rules steering the interplay between the multiple jurisdictions.

The evolution and increasing complexity of the European polity therefore largely reflects the discussions and interests in Multi-level governance (MLG). Scholars have been particularly prolific and a myriad of definitions have been elaborated. Gary Marks initially defined MLG as a "centrifugal process in which decision-making is spun away from member states in two directions", namely upwards to supranational institutions and downwards to subnational ones (Marks, 1993, P.55). This model of governing is said to entirely challenge and refine the traditional understandings of power attribution within States and, broadly speaking, of all institutional relationships. More importantly, it is the monopolistic status of the Nation States, which is questioned, and precisely the potential undermining impact on state-centric governance.

Nonetheless, the creation of the EU per se is not the sole catalyze for the fragmentation of governance structures. Indeed, new forms of governance, steering mechanisms and sets of rules have resulted from the widespread contemporary dissatisfaction with the democratic quality of existing governing authorities, at the Nation State level as well as supranational one. The stakes and challenges linked to the MLG debates actually take root in the rather recurrent discussion dealing with the democratic nature of the contemporary political systems. The generally pointed out lack of legitimacy and accountability are, for instance, two of the key parameters used to explain the so-called democratic deficit attached to governing institutions (Clarke & Foweraker, 2001). Likewise, while the institutional design and structure have undeniably changed, the necessary reappraisal of virtually every variable assessing the democratic quality of political systems may not have followed the same development. The risk is to distort the debate, inaccurately attributing vices and virtues, and falsely diverting concrete decision-making by focusing on limited and short-term gains (Wallace, Wallace, &

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[4] Section 2.2.2 resumes a few paragraphs from a report written at the end of an elective course on Contemporary Challenges of Public Governance and democratization.

Pollack, 2005). As mentioned in section 2.1.8, the current frenetic emphasis on efficiency in fact presents several drawbacks creating tensions or trade-offs with the core democratic values.

The literature on MLG theory offers a wide and comprehensive analysis of the ongoing discourses and cultural assumptions that have shaped and spurred the fragmentation of spheres of authorities. The scrutiny of the process of political authority's diffusion reveals several salient features of the MLG theory. The emergence of more network-like structure (rather than hierarchical) essentially characterizes the relationships between institutional and non-governmental actors. Those relationships or, more specifically, the degree of the ties between actors is said to be of variable geometry and differs across time and policy area. Moreover, informal and "soft" (this is to say non-binding) forms of regulation are notably used among a wide range of actors, multiple jurisdictions of which heterogeneity supposedly better reflects the preferences of citizens.

MLG is therefore interpreted as a particular form of political game between various actors as well as a result of a drive to decentralization and disaggregation of the Nation States' functions (Keating, 2008). Besides, this decentralization process varies according to the degree of actual transfer of power as observed in the following stages: deconcentration (transfer of administrative functions via relocation of executive bodies), delegation (transfer of managerial and regulatory functions to other agencies) and devolution (actual transfer of powers, rights, resources and assets to local governments) (UNDP, 1999).

The core argument used to legitimate the dispersion of powers across multiple jurisdictions and scales is based on the necessity for governments "to capture variation in the territorial reach of policy externality" (Hooghe & Marks, 2004, P. 21). Governments provide public goods but also generate "government failures", notably negative externalities, potentially pervasive and unbounded by nature and therefore which have to be internalized at a multi-level. This is particularly the case for environmental issues or natural resources management (Weimer & Vining, 2011). Accordingly, in the European Union, environmental policy matters are considered as one sensitive policy area characterized by cross-sectoral elements and a significant transboundary dimension for which stakes often compete.

A point of disagreement between scholars relates to the organization of MLG. Two contrasting visions have actually been identified, namely "Type I" and "Type II" (Hooghe & Marks, 2004). Type I refers to a more traditional state-centric concept of politics as it mostly focuses on the interactions and the sharing of competencies of "general-purpose" jurisdictions at different levels. The "Europe of the Regions" concept, where regional and local authorities act as a third layer in EU policy-making, may partly dovetail this rather restricted "Russian doll set of nested jurisdictions". Type II is portrayed as a MLG consisting of "special-purpose jurisdictions that tailor membership, rules of operation, and functions to a particular policy

problem". At the EU level, this type would imply that decision-making and implementation bodies undertake functions, which are rather vaguely defined in the EU secondary legislation. The example of the European structural funds can also reflect the partnership arrangements. Overall, both types are very different but complementary as they represent contrasting visions of collective decision-making.

At this stage, the MLG theory appears to provide a flexible and inclusive approach to the challenges that the multi-layering of institutions represents. However, it may also be considered as a sort of panacea, "a cozy, consensual and accommodative process" (Hooghe & Marks, 2004, P.22) straying away from the real problems attached to decision-making and negotiation in a supra-national context, for instance at the European level. A critique attached to MLG's features, which is presently of utmost importance, notably questions the democratic nature of such form of governance. In fact, the aggregation of multiple governance layers undermines democratic accountability by adding complexity to the system for the claimed sake of increased efficiency. Two key aspects of accountability, namely answerability (obligation of the institution to provide information to the public) and enforcement (possibility for the public and responsible institutions to sanction contravening behaviors) (Schedler, 1999) are rendered nearly impossible under a MLG framework.

The legitimacy (defined as "the belief by the majority of the citizens and significant part of the key elites that a particular regime is the best for a particular country" (Clarke & Foweraker, 2001)) of such form of governance can also be questioned. Interestingly enough, it may be considered that the legitimacy loss is perceived as greater when Nation States disseminate powers to the upwards levels rather than the downwards ones. This notably shows the persistent importance of the national boundaries (Golub, 1996).

Overall, in relation with section 2.1.5 on democracy and its contemporary challenges, the main drawback is that democracy and efficiency sometimes evolve in different directions, which results in the weakening power of steering instruments. Furthermore, the democratic accountability of governing instruments highly matters, being the very basic fundamental requirements of sustainable, transparent, trustful and fair institutions (Kjaer, 2004). Another key aspect to consider the possible impact of the apparent delegation of powers to very technocratic, largely perceived as illegitimate authorities such as the European Central Bank (ECB) or especially the very controversial Troika (composed of representatives from the European Commission, the ECB and the International Monetary Fund), which has imposed extremely drastic austerity measures to European countries in financial turmoil. Similarly, the expansion of the EU Parliament's powers, notably ratified in the Lisbon Treaty, is supposedly increasing the legitimacy of the directly elected Members of the European Parliament (MEPs). Yet, one can query the genuineness and the extent to which this apparent shift of power can correct the European Union's democratic deficit (Laşan, 2008).

2.2.3 Democratic Deficit in the EU

Now that the examination and analysis of key concepts and relevant contextual information regarding democracy matters and the particular European governance system has set an in-depth and solid basis, this study goes on with the scrutiny of European democratic deficit. This section is composed of five sub-divisions. After an initial introduction on the phenomenon and its characteristics, a wrap-up analysis summarizes its main associated factors. Subsequently, a conceptual typology of public euroscepticism sheds light on the degree and features of democratic deficit. Finally, the last two sections scrutinize the empirical and concrete antidotes available to tackle the European democratic ills.

2.2.3.1 Discussion on the concept and its dimensions

- Institutional dimension

This section is central for answering this study's research question. Yet, a synthesis on the European democratic deficit is also surely as intricate as it is of significance. First, as Follesdal and Hix (2006) rightly note "definitions [of democratic deficit] are as varied as the nationality, intellectual position and preferred solutions of the scholars or commentators who write on the subject" (Follesdal & Hix, 2006, P. 37). Besides, the concept, which implies and addresses different issues is apparently also further appropriated by various authors and scholars to indicate various problems (Azman, 2011).

The word "deficit" is rather negatively connoted and can be, according to Jolly (2003), interpreted in two ways: "too little democracy" or as an "over-shadowed democracy" (Jolly, 2003, P. 16). David Marrand is seemingly the first to have used the concept of democratic deficit and applied it to the EU to designate the European Community Institutions' weak democratic legitimacy in the 1970's (Milev, 2004). In the EU, democratic deficit basically refers to "the lack or discrepancy between "what is" and "what ought to be" in terms of democracy" (Azman, 2011, P.11).

Over time, democratic deficit has become mainstreamed, a term widely used, overused or misused in various ways, by different people, to qualify the so-called perceived gap between to powers held by European Institutions and the ability of EU citizens to intervene in the decision made by those institutions on their behalf (McCormick, 1999). Today, democratic deficit is also somewhat the pre-established, fashionable catchword and widely media-staged

term used to describe the EU citizens' low understanding, identification and ability to access and regard the EU as an accountable and transparent system of government (Follesdal & Hix, 2006). The EU itself describes, very generally, the democratic deficit as "a concept invoked principally in the argument that the European Union and its various bodies suffer from a lack of democracy and seem inaccessible to the ordinary citizen because their method of operating is so complex" (Europa, 2012).

The democratic deficit has thus largely been theorized and examined through various fundamental elements. The wide array of normative definitions seems to notably dovetail the evolution and the different cooperative forms adopted throughout the foundation of the European Community along with the two dominant intergovernmental-supranational visions previously discussed. Furthermore, the analysis of three major aspects (relative to each vision), namely, the source of legitimacy, the nature of the legitimacy deficit and the conception of democracy are crucial for the development of a comprehensive understanding of the matter (Rittberger, 2003).

Nevertheless, a complete lack of consensus between scholars, commentators and politicians still exists as for the existence per se of legitimacy deficiency in the EU (Moravcsik, 2004). The topic has received significant attention for quite some time subsequent to the transformations of the EU legal framework, i.e. the ratification of various primary Treaties increasing the degree of integration and hence the concentration of powers in favor of the European Parliament (EP). The greater emphasis put on the EP (increased power in several policy fields and significant shift from consultation to co-decision procedure) notably endorsed by the Lisbon Treaty, is presented as the primary source of democracy in the EU. The enhanced role of the EP, a directly elected body, is thus considered as a direct compensation for the reduction of National Parliaments' sovereignty. This argument is largely used to sweep aside the critics of lack of representativeness at the European level (Mayer & Haltern, 2003).

Likewise, Mihail Milev (2004) describes the legitimating beliefs and potential solutions to democratic deficit from the views based on the intergovernmental and supranational ideologies (Milev, 2004). Considering his approach and the previous theoretically-based examination of the legitimacy concept, it appears that the federalist or supranational view sees legitimacy originating from popular sovereignty at both state and communitarian levels whereas for the intergovernmental view, legitimacy lies on the sole indivisible national sovereignty. Accordingly, a remedy to reduce the legitimacy deficit is, for the former view, to increase even more the EP's powers, and for the latter, to increase the scrutiny powers for national parliaments. In conclusion, according to these authors, the EU's political trajectory determines the type of democratic deficit faced and the ways to tackle it. Although the validity of these interpretations is certainly not completely rebuttable, a more inclusive examination should also encompass a less technocratic perspective.

- Socio-psychological dimension

The former comments have all addressed democratic deficit from an institutional perspective. However, a scrutiny of the concept would not be complete if not examined from a socio-psychological dimension. Section 2.1.7 has already presented a beginning of explanation regarding the cognitive processes framing perceptions. The following observations intend to provide a concise but thorough understanding of the democratic deficit's socio-psychological dimension with respect to the three formerly mentioned types of perceptions (learnt, cultural and environmental).

The critical point is that a democratic deficit is very often attributed to organizations such as the EU on the restricted and ambiguous basis that the organization breaches democratic ideals, which are, by definition, very variable and intangible (Moravcsik, 2004). Consequently, assessing the democratic legitimacy of the EU is very challenging since such evaluation necessarily includes both institutional and socio-psychological perspectives. The distinction and study of those two approaches, the former emphasizing on institutional power sharing and on institutional reforms, the latter focusing on questions related to European civic identity and large-scale demos development is essential. In addition, each of these two perspectives offers various means and tools to solve the potentially perceived lack of legitimacy (Chryssochoou, 2010).

Nonetheless, the ubiquitous and psychological nature of the topic also implies several biases affecting how European citizens perceive the EU. There is consequently a need to examine how European citizens perceive the European institutions and examine the extent to which such assessment influences their satisfaction in regards to the practice of democracy in the EU. For instance, previous research has shown that citizens' opinions about the EU largely echo the way they view their national institutions (Moravcsik, 2004), (Karp, Banducci, & Bowler, 2003). However, these findings are far from being clear-cut, particularly in regards to the disparity in political interest and knowledge among citizens (Karp, Banducci, & Bowler, 2003). Likewise, to prevent any preconceptions, citizens should learn how to see the EU from a pan-European position, not only looking at Europe from a national perspective in order to get the big picture of the situation. The EU is, after all, still relatively young, and transcending the ambient nationalism is a real stumbling block. The national media and the notorious partial outlooks adopted by some of them is another determining influencing factor. It is undeniable that public medias are responsible for keeping citizens informed on the EU's numerous incoherencies. Nonetheless, successful achievements are certainly much less reported on.

As hitherto highlighted there are a significant number of underlying and undermining factors that must be preliminary taken into consideration when gauging the origins and drivers of a European democratic deficit.

2.2.3.2 Democratic deficit in the EU: Anthology of causes

Several potential causes have already been mentioned in the previous sections. However, it may be important to resume and summarize the most frequently stated ones. This following list consists of the synthesis of these main aspects, and is derived from Kübra Dilek Azman (Azman, 2011) and Mihail Milev's research (Milev, 2004) on democratic deficit in the EU. Once collected, the various claims have been subsequently categorized under three categories: first, the criticism relating to the EU institutions themselves and, second, to the decision-making processes. A third category relates to the European citizenship, a theme that has been previously discussed in section 2.2.1.The potential overlaps between categories are fully acknowledged.

Moreover, it is to be reminded that these two first categories (highlighted in blue) cover the facet of democratic deficit selected as focus areas in this study. Four points (in bold) have been chosen and included in question 2, section B of the survey (asking respondents to select the one(s) which is, according to them, the main problem in the EU).

Criticism towards the Institutions	• Over-concentration of powers in the hands of the EC (a non-elected institutions) • Non-proportionality and inbalance of power between the EC and the EP • The European Council and the Council of Ministers are not properlly controlled and accountable • **Elitist and technocratic criticism towards the EU institutions and lack of transparency** • Apathy towards the EU linked to the fact that the EC is not held responsible for its decisions • **Brussels' remoteness and resulting unaccountability**
Criticism regarding the decision-making	• **Complex institutional design and decision-making processes, leading to bureaucracy** • Occasional clashes or lack of connections between domestic politics and EU politics • **Illegitimate extensive lobbying activities** • The Qualified Majority Voting is undemocratic • Not enough control by the EU citizens over the decision-making processes • Too much delegation of authority to specialists and bureaucrats • An Union run like a "cartel"

Citizens of Europe or "demos" simply do not exists, implying that there is no real democracy in the EU

TABLE 1: MAIN FACTORS ATTRIBUTED TO DEMOCRATIC DEFICIT

2.2.3.3 Typology of public Eurosceticism

The conceptualization of European democratic deficit can almost be traced back to the origin of the EU's construction, and therefore has been looked at from virtually every angle. Has it then recently gone out of academic fashion? Not exactly but, in fact, while the main conceptions of democratic deficit are still being brought up to date, an arguably new phenomenon or ideology, namely Euroscepticism, has apparently stolen the spotlight. Both concepts have obviously a lot in common: stormy disagreements and never-ending meta-debates relating to definitional issues, origins, drivers and temporal evolution.

Euroscepticism or Eurosceptics, being highly correlated with the umbrella term of democratic deficit, are terms that have already been previously mentioned and defined in this study with relation to the climate of hostility spreading across and against the EU (Section 1.1.2). Yet, now further ahead in the analysis, taking a closer look at these diverse anti-system actors, their claims, motivations and roles appears to be an essential introductory stage before the examination of the EU's strategies set up to circumvent the effects of the European democratic deficit (in sections 2.2.3.5). The relevance of this critical review lies on the following statement:

> "euroscepticism assumes forms that are contradictory, and this has consequences for the success of pan-European strategies and communication plans: What citizens want from the EU differs from member state to member state, and insensitivity to the various types of skepticism may result in counterproductive efforts" (Sørensen, 2010, P.6).

Furthermore, the present focal interest dwells thus on an individual/group-based perspective. The aim is to cross-check any potential overlap between the previously summarized factors attributed to democratic deficit and the existing conceptual taxonomies of euroscepticism. A combination of different authors' own typologies is developed in parallel.

To start of, a broad definition presents euroscepticism as "a sentiment of disapproval—reaching a certain degree and durability—directed towards the EU in its entirety or towards particular policy areas or developments" (Sørensen, 2010). Maybe the most important element to stress is the different degree, from soft – skepticism towards specific aspects of the EU - to hard euroscepticism – complete rejection (Szcerbiak & Taggart, 2008), very much like a skepticism spectrum. Also, initially, the phenomenon was observed via the surge of eurosceptical political parties but has recently shifted to individuals (Kaniok, 2011). What are then, along this spectrum, the various conceptual classifications of euroscepticism? The following continuum of Euro-skeptical attitudes is mainly based on Catharina Sørensen's research paper: "Love me, love not – A typology of euroscepticsm (Sørensen, 2010).

➡ "**Utilitarian-based euroscepticism**": although the EU's raison d'être is supposedly to be utile, the Community has failed to bring about the economic benefits, taking away the power of much more efficient Nation-States. The two key dimensions of this postulate are then the lack of benefits associated with the European membership and the inefficiency of the EU institutional functioning. The author uses frauds and bureaucracy as indicators to measure this latter dimension.

➡ "**Sovereignty based skepticism**": quite straightforwardly, the accusations lie on the weakening of national powers and integrity. Likewise, nationality of perceptions of group-memberships overrides the EU's integration endeavors. This type is also opposed to the EU's raison d'être viewed in terms of cooperation; independence and sovereignty priming over any utility-maximizing claims derived from a concentration of power in the hands of supranational authorities. In short, there is "no need" for the EU.

➡ "**Ideological euroscepticism**": this category relates to contestation at a political level in terms of value-based opinions. A growing left/right or social/liberal divide of the main political families has likewise resulted in the emergence of more "extreme" Euro-skeptical views. One of the prime indicators to assess this skepticism is "criticism for a lack of social Europe". Yet, other variants of political skepticism (than the social one) exist.
Very important to the core subject of this study, the author includes in this grouping, the skepticism associated with the perceived limited level of democracy in the EU, also referred to as democratic deficit.

➡ "**Principled euroscepticism**": complete and irremediable rejection of the EU, the "go away" style. This type forms part of the "hard" extremity of the euroscepticism spectrum (Szcerbiak & Taggart, 2008).

This classification can be complemented by Nathalie Brack who adds another overarching dimension to this typology, arguing that the roles assumed by Euro-skeptics corresponds to an "exist or voice strategy" (Brack, 2011, P.10). Accordingly, Euro-skeptics possibly belonging to the utilitarian and ideological categories may be more likely using a voice strategy while the two remaining are definitely applying an exist strategy.

Taking benefit from Catharina Sørensen's empirical study on contemporary euroscepticism in France and UK (a very convenient selection of European country), it can be

observed that the degree and intensity of euroscepticism vary from country to country. The subsequent table is adapted from her findings (Sørensen, 2010), presents a simplified analysis.

Relative euroscepticism (to the EU average)	Economic	Sovereignty	Democracy	Social
France	Mixed	No	Mixed	Yes
United Kingdom	Mixed	Yes	No	No

TABLE 2: RELATIVE EUROSCEPTICISM IN FRANCE AND UK; SOURCE: (SØRENSEN, 2010)

In this table, "Yes" indicates that the indicators show significant results in terms of euroscepticism (and vice versa). "Mixed" means that the results were polarized. It is interesting to note to dominant types in each country. The findings and interpretations dating from 2010 must however be carefully considered as euroscepticism should not be conceptualized on a static view of the EU that is moving towards a set finality.

France has notably a strong "Social euroscepticism", i.e. the EU is accused of disregarding social components when taking decisions for the sake of a hegemonic economic sphere. In comparison, UK does not suffer from this type, not very surprisingly indeed since the opposition to liberalism is de facto stronger in France than what it has ever been in UK. Similarly, France and UK have divergent results when considering "democratic euroscepticism". Yet, it could be argued that the relatively recent (especially over the last 4 years) skyrocketing increase in popularity of the French extreme right party (Le Front National) of which watchwords promote pride over a strong and independent sovereignty has a game-changing impact (Cohen, 2014).

The apparently limited "democratic euroscepticism" in UK is also worth noticing. Furthermore, based on the nature of the dominant types of euroscepticism in UK, it may be induced that the British Euro-skeptics are rather applying an exit strategy than a voice one.

The empirical foundation of this comment is obviously very weak but it still somehow echoes David Cameron's intention to hold an in-out referendum on the EU membership by 2017 (if he is reelected) (Mason, 2014).

Developing such taxonomy is understandably very complex given the nature of this multi-faceted phenomenon. Yet, its "study does not make sense unless the phenomenon is put in a positive context, which is, made part of a typology containing and describing both positive and negative attitudes towards the EU" (Kaniok, 2011, P.13). Furthermore, Euro-skeptics appear to have very different intentions and roles as well as being more or less critical regarding the issues at stake. They are all somehow opposed to the EU, and disagree with the European integration process or/and with the politics of policies to a varying extent. Nonetheless, a disagreement does not automatically mean opposition, but more often, that one part can complete the other (as illustrated by Don Quixote's anecdote[5]). All Euro-skeptics shall not thus be put together in the same basket.

One the same lines, it unfortunately seems that scholars debating on the origins and drivers of the European democratic deficit do not really take into account impacts of the various perceptions associated with the multidimensional euroscepticism. Likewise, from the European institutions' sides, considerations over the distinctive elements of euroscepticism do not appear to impact the strategy set up to tackle democratic deficit. A differentiated approach surely is a brainteaser since "what one population want may be what another population fears will happen" (Sørensen, 2010). Yet, a good starting point may be to engage with critical eurosceptics who do not, implicitly or explicitly, trample over democratic rights. Likewise, as highlighted by Catharina Sørensen, certain focal areas, which matter to specific groups of eurosceptics, can be targeted.

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[5] "The two men were asked once to judge a barrel of wine and to give their opinion of its condition, quality, strengths, and weaknesses. One of them tasted it with tip of his tongue, while the other merely held it up to his nose. The first said the wine savored of iron; the second claimed it savored more of leather. The owner insisted that the barrel was clean and the wine contained no ingredients that could give it the taste of iron or leather. Despite this the two famous wine tasters stuck by what they had said. Time passed, the wine was sold, and when the barrel was cleaned, they found inside it a key on the end of a leather strap" (Cervantes, 1605, P. 157).

2.2.3.4 Measurements and empirical attempts to grasp democratic deficit

Although it has somehow become a common belief that the EU is suffering from a democratic deficit, actual attempts to empirically measure it have not been very conclusive. Still, their targeted focus has the merit to reveal interesting elements that only a thorough exploration can detect. For instance, one attempt by Crombez (2001) to measure democratic deficit has been to quantify "the distance between the median voter's preferences and the outcome of a political process" (Crombez, 2001).

More recently, two political scientists from the Vienna Institute for Advanced Studies, Peter Grand and Guido Tiemann, have investigated the factors keeping EU citizens away from the polls (a key elements of democratic deficit) at EP and general elections or conversely, "second-order" and "first-order" elections (Grand & Tiemann, 2012). Going beyond the common wisdom that EU citizens merely find European elections less important than national ones, the researchers focused on the influential role of political parties to explain low turnouts. To do so, they used a cost/benefit analysis called "indifference versus alienation" whereby a citizen only casts a ballot if his/her benefits (E.g. seeing a preferred party being elected) exceed the costs (E.g. spending time, efforts collecting information and going to vote instead of enjoying the sun) of voting. A citizen is respectively indifferent if s/he sees two or more political parties yielding the same benefit, and alienated "if all competing parties yield a benefit lower than the individual voting costs" (Grand & Tiemann, 2012). Quite interestingly, the findings reveal the following:

> "Decreasing voting benefits can cause only a higher share of alienated individuals because for being indifferent only differences in utilities matter. Increasing voting costs also increase the likelihood of an individual feeling alienated because even the most preferred party yields a benefit that is too low to justify voting" (Grand & Tiemann, 2012).

The alienation hypothesis is therefore assumed to be a major driver behind voters' abstention. The authors additionally argue that European political parties do not adequately represent citizens. Reflecting on these findings and with respect to this present study, two central, and foremost interdependent pillars of the EU's democratic legitimacy can be highlighted. These two factors are, one the one hand, the EU's particular institutional organization in line with the effectiveness and efficiency of political output, and, one the other hand, the political parties' ability to translate, correlate voters' preferences with the political processes in the EU. In conclusion, brought together, they shall warrant the European political system's democratic legitimacy.

The last sections have more thoroughly exposed the concept of democratic deficit, its potential causes, the associated debated dimensions from a European perspective and the attempts to get a grasp on the phenomenon. Now, the following final subdivision of this section aims at dissecting and discussing the actual tools or rights available to European citizens to communicate with the European Authorities and interfere within the decision-making and agenda setting. This overview lays the foundations of the EU's involvement endeavors as a pre-introduction to the latest participatory tool, the ECI (in section 2.3).

2.2.3.5 Participatory democracy: concrete attempts to tackle EU's democratic deficit

The journey towards participatory governance in the EU has a long history, which is coupled with the rejection/enactment of Treaties, and more concretely with the application of the principles of direct effect and supremacy of EU law by the European Court of Justice. For instance, the conceptualization of participatory democracy was explicitly included in the (failed) Constitutional Treaty under the section "the democratic life of the Union" (Communities, 2005). Yet, in the current consolidated version amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community, namely the Treaty of Lisbon, the reference to participatory democracy is clearly less prevalent. The sensitivity of the topic is therefore rather obvious in the Lisbon Treaty as highlighted by the "downplayed part of its constitutional and symbolic language" (Smismans, 2012, P.17) and "the rather restrictive EU framework of participation as voice and consultation" (Fischer-Hotzel, 2010, P. 9).

Accordingly, tackling the democratic deficit in the EU has been quite notably undertaken from an institutional perspective, particularly via the European Parliament's increased budgetary and legislative powers. Measures potentially welcomed by the "democratic Euro-skeptics" (section 2.2.3.3. In addition to this institutional strengthening, one option is the radicalization, or better put, the politicization of the European way of action (Smismans, 2012). Politicizing the decision-making process is actually officially enacted in the Lisbon Treaty since the outcome of the European parliamentary elections now determines who become president of the European Commission, i.e. the political party obtaining the majority selects a candidates among its members (Europa, 2012). According to Prof. Smismans, this could also be taken a step further if the composition of the Commission would reflect the EP's ideological majority (Smismans, 2012). Creating a straight connection between the only European direct suffrage and the authority that has the right of legislative initiative would therefore stimulate a pan-European discussion on policy choices. Additionally, this European-wide debate on policy choices, echoed in the EP by the citizens' representatives, would clearly establish the Commission's governing trajectory and hence ensure its accountability before European citizens.

Such remedy to the issue of democratic deficit is not problem exempt either. First, as stressed by Prof. Smismans, politicization does not ensure the development of a European-wide public sphere. Also, an underlying assumption is that "if European elections are about clear ideological and political choices which would be reflected in the composition of the European Commission, European citizens would engage more with the European debate and identify themselves as active participants in this polity" (Smismans, 2012, P. 27). Yet again, such postulate takes for granted the spread of an active public debate and omits the bias represented by national interpretations of European political choices that medias, vested interests and even politicians establish.

Second, the role of the Commission would be intrinsically modified, shifting from being the sole representative of the interests of the EU as a whole, the engine of European integration to a mere political party. Furthermore, if the Commission, in its current institutional and ideological form, already entails political contestation among citizens opposed, for example inter alia, to its "policy entrepreneur" style, what would then happen if such keystone institution was to embody the increasingly prevalent populist and equally controversial political movements?

Third, even if the politicization of the European institutions and of the Community Method could bring citizens to dialogue, it would still only partially answer the issue of "complexity with regards to governance mechanisms and interactions between public and private actors at the level of agenda-setting and drafting and implementation of policies" (Smismans, 2012, P. 32).

These three arguments consequently make the case for participatory democracy in the EU. However, it remains to clarify how participatory democracy is understood and which of its dimensions is applied. Indeed, the normative-theoretical sense of participatory democracy (previously examined in sections 2.1.5; 2.1.6; 2.1.7) raises numerous hitches, which hence naturally questions how the Commission interprets and applies such concept.

Closer to the EU citizens' concerns, problems such as weak legitimacy and lack of trust have been approached via the creation of a variety of participatory and consultative methods. In this regard, it must be stressed that although the overlap between consultation and participation is quite obvious, participation is more thoroughly viewed as a partnership between citizens and institutions (OECD, 2001) whereas consultation only consists of a one-way relationship. It is extremely relevant to bear in mind this point when going through the subsequently described list of democratic apparatuses. In the EU, given the size of the polity, hybrid models and instruments have been developed incorporating representative elements to the so-called participatory democracy tools. The main prevalent participatory tools (here based on both representative and direct democratic principles) available to European Citizens are outlined in the ensuing list.

European Elections

representatives at the European Parliament. The number of seat is based on the principle of degressive proportionality (more populated countries get more seats). Once elected, most of the MEPs join a transnational political group. (the European Parliament, 2013).

Petitions to the European Parliament

•Individual or mass petitions; "request, complaint or observation concerning the application of EU law or an appeal to the European Parliament to adopt a position on a specific matter". (European Funding Network, 2013)

Complaints to the European Commission

•Any EU citizen can directly lodge a complaint to the European Commission on matters dealing with a potential infringement of EU law by a Member State. (European Funding Network, 2013)

Consultations

•Citizens have the possibility to respond to Commission Consultations giving their "opinions on various EU policies and influence their direction". (European Funding Network, 2013)

SOLVIT

•SOLVIT (Effective Problem Solving in Europe) is an online platform of which purpose is to solve legal proceedings problems involving a cross-border issue. Both EU citizens and businesses can submit a case and receive support. (SOLVIT, 2013).

The Ombudsman

•Representative elected by the European Parliament who ensures "that the EU institutions conduct themselves correctly in their dealings with citizens" by receiving complains. (European Funding Network, 2013)

TABLE 3: MAIN PARTICIPATORY TOOLS IN THE EU

Besides those relatively well known ways to participate in the EU decision-making (or more rightly put, to complain about it), individual Directorates General (DGs) (E.g. notably DG Education and Culture, DG for Communication) have undertaken tailor-made citizen's projects or programs following the White Paper on European Governance (Fischer-Hotzel, 2010). However, these projects have most of the time a limited lifespan, which highlights a lack of consistency and involvement over time. A long-term participatory strategy featuring truly transnational, uninterrupted and strictly monitored projects would therefore eventually contribute to make people think that the EU does not remember its citizens only once every five years.

Others forms of citizen engagement have also been created by civil society actors, NGOs, think-tanks and other non-profit organizations, politically oriented or apolitical to lobby or influence agenda setting and decision-making. The year 2013 (European Year of Citizens) was notably marked by the organization of numerous grass roots events across the EU. Yet, a majority of these events were still mainly scattered in a few capitals like Brussels, Paris, London and Berlin (Citizens for Europe, 2013). Although the web streaming of these events or meetings has improved, closer and more tangible settings may also increase citizens' interests and involvement. In parallel, the new technologies of communication have played a critical role in the making of public European sphere. For instance, websites like "debatingeurope.eu", "citizenhouse.eu", or "asktheeu.org" are very useful and practical social platforms. Nevertheless, their accessibility and visibility to a larger European audience remains to be ensured.

The efforts invested by the European institutions to foster citizen participation and communicate on the EU's activities are certainly quite substantial but there is still some room for improvement. Moreover, although these platforms contribute to "the confrontation of ideas that is vital to policymaking and to wider involvement in Europe's future" (Friends of Europe, 2012, P. 1), the direct link connecting citizens with the EU decision-making is somehow missing. The several rights attached to the European citizenship can also contribute to tackle the apparently rampant democratic deficit. Nevertheless, particularly in terms of political inclusion into the EU decision-making, the several civic rights democratically and legitimately granted to citizens remain rather shallow.

Besides, when putting into perspective, on the one hand, the measures taken, and, on the other hand, the reported problems (see the previously outlined aspects of the democratic deficit in the EU), it is the actual adequacy of the efforts undertaken which can be questioned. Can the direct involvement of citizens solve the most technocratic hurdles? Would the addition of a third counterpart only further complicate an already entangled European machinery? Participatory democracy is certainly not a magic wand or a miracle cure to counteract this democratic deficiency. Yet, citizens surely need to be actively involved in order to oil the machinery and keep it running.

The European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) has for instance been expressly tailored to fulfill this role. This way, the ECI supposedly propels the EU into a new democratic territory. Thus, the following section seeks to investigate where does the ECI, both from a conceptual and practical outlook, fit into the European political and societal spectrum.

2.3 THE EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVES

2.3.1 Concept and legal framework of the European Citizens' Initiatives

Answering the criticism pointing out the lack of legitimacy in the EU and according to the article 11.4 of the Lisbon Treaty (ratified by most member states over the course of the year 2008), the European Commission (EC) officially launched the European Citizens' Initiatives in April 2012. While the article 11.4 provides the legal basis for the tool, the Regulation 211/2011 establishes its functioning and concrete application (Karatzia, 2013).

The ECI is promoted as the first-time ever-supranational tool for direct democracy, which aims at giving European citizens a voice in the EU. The main purpose of the instrument derives from the need for input legitimacy. It concretely enables European citizens to participate in shaping EU politics and to co-determine the political agenda. By supporting and signing an initiative, 1 million citizens can directly call upon the European institutions to address their concerns, suggest the review of legislation, or potentially enact a new bill. The validation of an initiative by the Commission lies on various criteria subsequently described (Europa, 2012). The illustration below pictures the different steps of the ECI process.
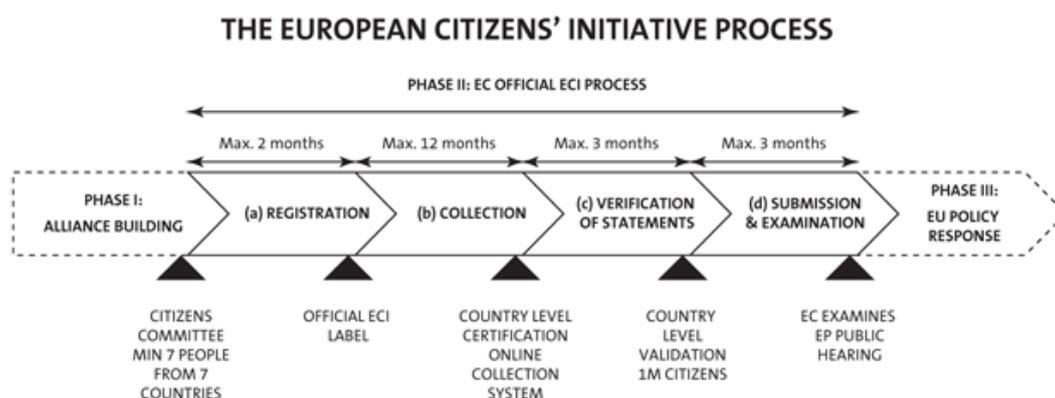
SCHEME 4: THE ECI PROCESS (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2012)

Based on the previous graphic and on the Regulation No 211/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 February 2011 on the citizens' initiatives, a more through description of the tool is now provided.

Phase I of the graphic comprises the creation of a "citizens' committee" composed of seven citizens originated from different EU countries, and the drafting of the initiative. The draft can either be a set of general principles introducing the main concept and purpose of the initiative or a more thorough legal proposal.

Phase II of the official ECI process starts with the online registration of an appropriate initiative before the European Commission, which has two months to approve or reject it. Prime selection criteria are the conformity with registration rules and other conditions outlining the ECI, this is to say, the respect the values of the Union (as set out in article 2 TEU), and the alignment of the initiative with the framework of the EC's "powers to submit a proposal for legal act of the Union" (Europa, 2012). For the sake of transparency, the EC shall make public the detailed reasons justifying the refusal of any initiative and inform the organizers of all available legal remedies.

A one-year collection of signatures period (online and in paper form) can begin as soon as the European Commission confirms the registration. A Standardized, secure and open-source software is made available for the online collection. Apart from this online collection platform, the assistance provided by the European Commission is limited to the provision of information via a point of contact. The organizers are then responsible all along the ECI process (E.g. for providing translated versions of the initiatives and publishing updates in their own campaign website), and are liable in case of any legal infringements or damage potentially caused by the ECI or linked to the data collected. A minimum number of signatories (a quorum) must be reached in at least one quarter of all member states, which corresponds to the number of national representatives at the European Parliament (MEPs) multiplied by the total number of MEPs (750). All European citizens can support an initiative providing that s/he is entitled to vote, i.e. from the age of 18 or 16 in Austria.

At the end of the collection period, it lays upon each member state the responsibility of verifying (through random sampling for instance) the collected statements of support and delivering a certificate stating the total valid number of signatures within a period of three months. All along the process, the data provided by the signatories shall be carefully handled, and its collection and time-limited storage should follow the European legislation on personal data protection. After receiving the official certificate from the national authorities, the organizers may submit the initiative to the EC, complemented with all relevant information regarding any funding or support received. Transparency is sine qua non of the whole ECI procedure, the disclosure and publication of all steps throughout the lifetime of the ECI is a key

requirement. The rules regulating the funding of ECIs are then similarly very explicit and follow the legislation governing the funding of European political parties.

The next stage of the ECI process is the procedure of examination by the EC, which shall invite the organizers and allow them to further detail the concerns or issues raised by the initiative. Within three months, the Commission is expected to publish "in a communication its legal and political conclusions on the citizens' initiative, the action it intends to take, if any, and its reasons for taking or not taking that action" (Europa, 2012). Finally, a public hearing is held at the European Parliament to officially present the initiative and the EC's conclusions.

2.3.2   Introducing the European Citizens' Initiatives

As of January 2014 and since its inception, a relatively significant number of initiatives have been submitted. In total forty ECIs were proposed, of which twenty-three were registered and seventeen rejected. The "drop out" rate appears quite high since, in addition to the seventeen rejections, two of the twenty-three registered withdrawn and four abandoned (Berg & Głogowsk, 2014). More than half of the total number of ECIs did not ultimately make it until the final stages. The seventeen ECIs initially declared inadmissible by the EC received and publicly disclosed a very detailed letter informing them of the legal reasons backing this decision. These rejected ECIs were reportedly "outside the Commission's competence" (Berg & Głogowsk, 2014). A few of the rejected ECIs are named below (the full list can be found in the EC's official register) (European Commission, 2014):

- My voice against nuclear power
- Unconditional Basic Income
- Stop cruelty for animals
- Cohesion policy for the equality of the regions and sustainability of the regional cultures
- A new EU legal norm, self-abolition of the European Parliament and its structures, must be immediately adopted
- Together for a Europe without legalized prostitution

The subjects, matters of the ECIs, both registered and rejected, are quite diverse, ranging from energy, education, social rights, environment, health or again market liberalization. Yet, of course, an ECI can by no means change the allocation of the EU's competences.

Three ECIs, subsequently described, particularly stand out for reaching the 1 million signatures threshold. These three successful initiatives have gathered nearly 90% of the total

5.5 million signatures of collected since the launching of the first ECIs (Berg & Głogowsk, 2014). Besides, it is especially noteworthy to stress the fact that although their respective path to success (i.e. completion of the collection quota in due term) took different directions, a few determining success factors stand out.

2.3.2.1   "Right to Water"

Initiated by the European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU), the ECI is the first to collect 1 million validated statements of support within 12 months, despite of the numerous "teething pains" suffered (Van den Berge, 2014). The aim of the initiators is to invite the EC to "propose legislation implementing the human right to water and sanitation as recognized by the United Nations, and promoting the provision of water and sanitation as essential public services for all" (Right2Water, 2012), thereby preventing the liberalization of water services across Europe.

The main strength of the ECI lies in its network of European volunteers and the substantial crowdsourced funds (100,000 euros) raised before starting the campaign which were used for practical and organizational issues (translation, creation and design of the website, online collection system...etc.) (Right2Water, 2012). The media coverage has also played a critical role, especially in Germany where the ECI collected more than 1.3 million signatures. The graph below shows the evolution of signatures gathering, the initial lethargic state due to the technical and practical issues faced, followed by an extensive "snowball effect" generated by the increased media traction.
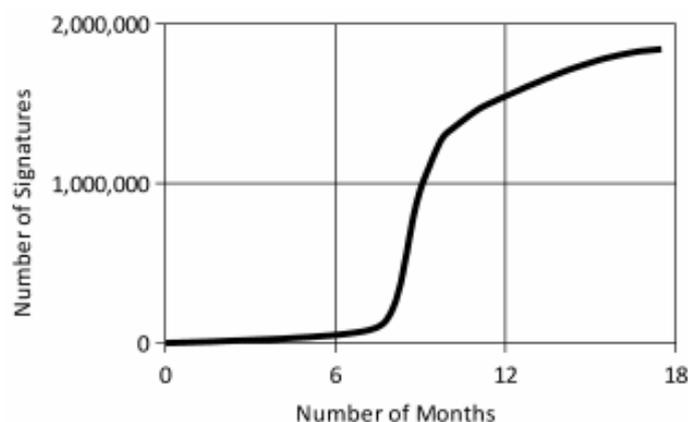
GRAPH 1: ECI RIGHT TO WATER - SIGNATURES GATHERING TREND-

Source: (Van den Berge, 2014)

2.3.2.2   "One of Us"

The ECI's purpose is to put life related issues on the EU agenda. It was introduced by national pro-life movements advocating against the EU's "financing of activities which presuppose the destruction of human embryos, in particular in the areas of research, development aid and public health" (One Of Us, 2012). The particularly interesting aspect of the initiative is that the EU competence on life matters is not implicitly or explicitly implied. According to Ana del Pino, campaign manager of the ECI, "it is possible to support this ECI and at the same time affirm that currently the EU has no legal basis for activities in this field" (Del Pino, 2014).

Another point of interest is that most of the signatures were collected on paper (53,62%) rather than online. The graph below illustrates the ECI's signatures gathering process.
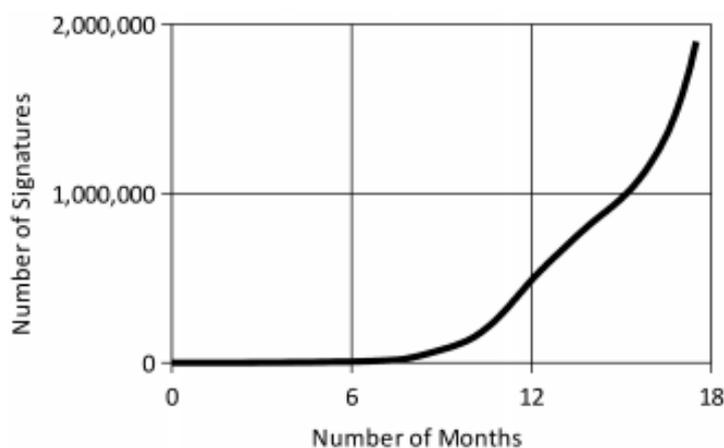
GRAPH 2: ECI ONE OF US - SIGNATURES GATHERING TREND - SOURCE: (BERG & GLOGOWSK, 2014)

Like for the ECI Right to Water, One of Us experienced a very sluggish start. Yet, the number of signatures collected increased at a very steady growth rate and did not suddenly "took off" as it did for the ECI Right to Water. Such trend can be traced back to the initial lack of media interest, which became much more manifest when the ECI received support from Pope Benedict and Pope Francis. An impressive amount of funds (160,000 euros) was also raised, which along with a strong group of dedicated volunteers, enabled the ECI to collect a remarkable number of signatures in the last few months of its campaign (Berg & Głogowsk, 2014).

The ECI, which has undeniably received a great popular support, notably in Spain, Poland and Italy, however remains quite controversial. Indeed many NGOs fear for the implications of such a ban, warning the EC that it would "undermine international efforts to reduce maternal mortality as well as the fight against HIV/AIDS, child marriage and sexual abuse" (International Planned Parenthood Federation, 2014).

2.3.2.3   "Stop Vivisection"

The ECI aims at the abrogation of the European directive related to the "protection of animals used for scientific purposes", and instead "presents a new proposal that does away with animal experimentation and instead makes compulsory the use - in biomedical and toxicological research – of data directly relevant for the human species" (Stop Vivisection, 2012).

The two previously introduced ECI's campaigns were professionalized, particularly well planned and had a quite substantial funding at hand. One the contrary, this ECI did not receive much financial support (14,000 euros) but still managed to gather the required number of valid signatures.
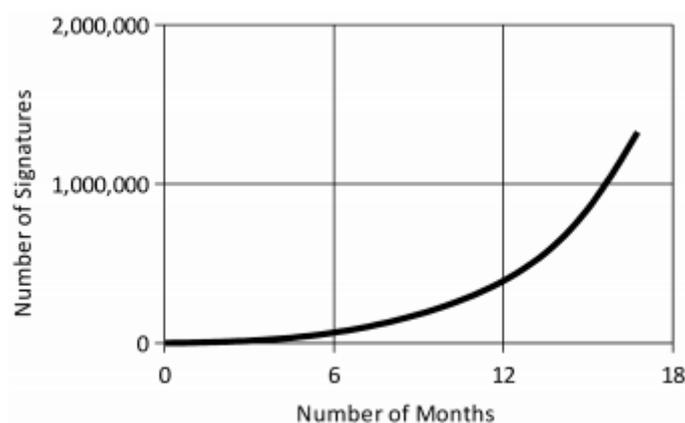
GRAPH 3: ECI STOP VIVISECTION! - SIGNATURES GATHERING TREND - SOURCE: (BERG & GLOGOWSK, 2014)

The above signatures gathering curve is very similar to the One of Us'. The three ECIs analyzed faced difficulties during the six first months following their registration. The delays linked to the disfunctioning OCS significantly impaired these initiatives but their successors shall be spared.

2.3.2.4   Signatures' concentration

So far, two years after the launching of the first ECIs, only very basic information is available on the origin of the overall number of signatures collected, an issue that would hopefully be solved with time and practice. Yet, based on the data disclosed, it is not very surprising to observe a substantial concentration of signatures on a few of the largest EU member states.

Signatures' origins
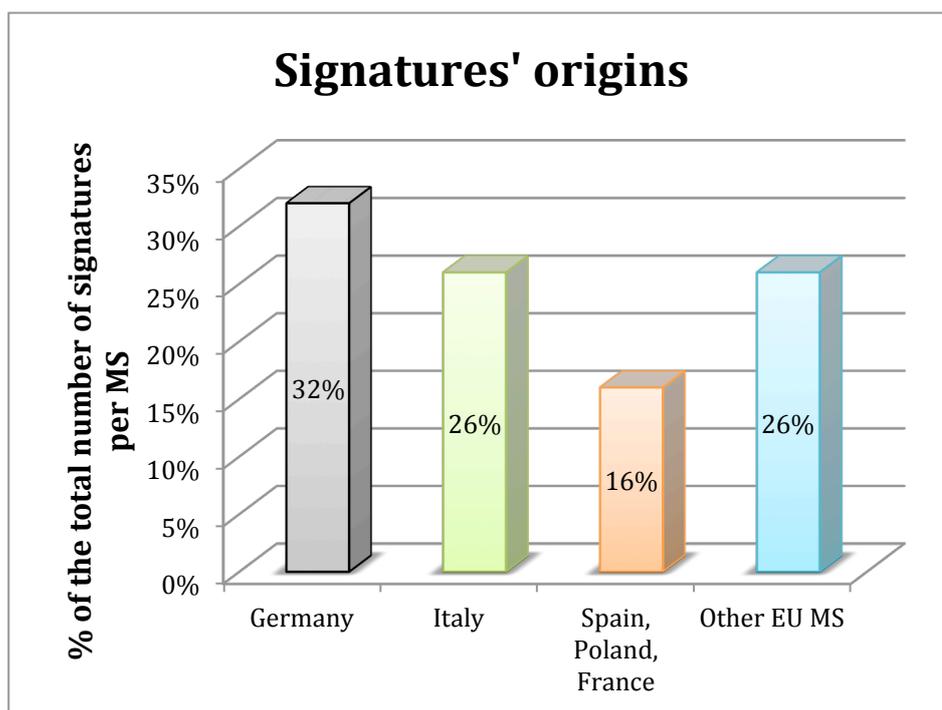
GRAPH 4: SIGNATURES CONCENTRATION PER MEMBER STATES COLLECTED UNTIL MARCH 2014 - *SOURCE: ADAPTED FROM* (BERG & GLOGOWSK, 2014)

The above graph gives a noteworthy illustration of the main citizens' nationalities who have signed an ECI. Given the population size of Germany, Italy, Spain, Poland and France such results are quite understandable. Out of the largest EU member states (population wise), United Kingdom is the only exception. In fact, statements of support from UK citizens only represent 1.5% of the total collected signatures. Carsten Berg and Pawel Glogowski comment on that matter that "ECI rules have prevented many UK citizens living abroad from supporting an ECI, but this is probably not the main reason for this low participation rate" (Berg & Głogowsk, 2014).

Considering the quotas reached in each country, a specific connection also appears between one or a few member states and an ECI of which core issue may be particularly relevant for the country. This tie is especially obvious between Germany and the ECI "Right to Water". Likewise, the ECI "Stop Vivisection!" received a strong support from Italian animals rights associations, and the ECI "One of Us" attracted a large interest in predominantly Catholic countries

2.3.3   Conceptual flaws – Actual direct democracy?

The ECI may have truly a great potential in eventually contributing to create and nurture a feeling of European citizenship and social cohesion. The ECI is in many ways very ambitious and is, somehow, displayed as the European supranational flagship for direct democracy. Nonetheless, is the ECI really a tool of direct democracy? The following paragraphs now reflect on this question.

In Europe, only very few cases of "pure" direct democracy exist (E.g. the Landsgemeinde or "cantonal assembly" in Glarus, Switzerland (SwissInfo, 2006)) and are characteristically locally based. The scalability (at the European level for instance) of direct democracy practices remains an open and highly debated question (from a possibility and desirability perspective) as argued in section 2.1.6 on Direct Democracy and Representative Democracy. Based on the previous conceptual discussions, especially from a governmental accountability perspective, a "pure" direct democracy is therefore authentic when the decisions taken by the population consulted are transcribed into legislation without further ado. The key question is then, what is the popular understanding of direct democracy and does it match the EC's conception?

Regarding the ECI, one may consequently argue that the tool is not based on direct democracy since the Commission is not bound and only has the obligation to examine the proposal. Furthermore, a series of prior "obstacles" or "check points" are already set up all along the ECI's life cycle, which are restricting the ECI initiators' scope for action. However, the main initial obstacle, entailed by the boundaries of the EU legislative power (the ECI must fall under the competency of the EU in order to be accepted) can be considered as valid. Furthermore, along with the review previously given on the benefits and shortcomings of direct participatory democracy as well as the concepts of accountability and legitimacy, two subsequent observations can be derived.

On the one hand, the incoherence or vagueness involved by the "advertising" of the ECI as a tool for direct democracy and its non-binding feature is certainly one of the prominent

undermining factor inherent to the ECI per se. However, since none of the ECI currently registered have achieved the next steps (i.e. examination stage by the Commission and EU policy response), the answer to this initial question depends very much on the attitude of the Commission in these latest stages of the ECI process. More precisely, the answer depends foremost, on the type and form of answer given, this is to say how does the Commission proceeds with the proposal, whether it genuinely corroborates or concretely arguments a potential refusal. The goals, the means and support provided by the Commission and notably the outcomes of the completed ECI must be set and provided coherently.

On the other hand, the final control and decision power of the Commission can, in some ways, be positively contemplated. In fact, it could prevent the negative participatory slides associated with pure forms of direct democracy (tyranny of the majority principle). This way, the Commission would act as a democratic warden ensuring that minorities' rights are preserved from the enactment of discriminatory ECI.

It is without doubt too early to determine whether the ECI is only a mere participatory smokescreen. However, if actually operational and consistent, the ECI shall, in theory so far, become a successful (but limited) blueprint for citizen participation.

2.3.4   Practical flaws – Experts' testimonies

This section aims at describing the difficulties and challenges encountered by ECIs' organizers from the early concept definition until the final phase of the ECI. Besides, it highlights the potential legal issues linked to the concrete application of the Regulation 211/2011 on the ECI.

The information subsequently collected mostly come from conversations (and following e-mail exchange) with ECI organizers which took place in October 2012 at a conference on "the Assessment of the European Initiatives in practice" at the Austrian Institute for European Law and Policy in Vienna. Secondary data from diverse political researchers and from the recently published report "An ECI that Works" (2014) is also added to enrich or complement the discussion.

The conference was organized as "an opportunity to evaluate the first practical experiences with ECIs and their impact" (Austrian Institute for European Law and Policy, 2012). The one-day conference was punctuated with speeches and panel discussions from ECI's organizers, scientists and researchers in the field of democratic rights and a member of the EC's Secretariat-General from the ECI task force. The most important aspect of this

gathering was the exchange of best practices, the sharing of information and the fruitful scrutiny of the most technical features of the regulation.

The atmosphere of the conference echoed the frustrations of the organizers who literally poured out a torrent of complains and incriminations more or less directly directed against the European Commission. In these earlier days, a couple of months after the official launching of the ECI, the organizers, like Ana Gorey (representative of the ECI "High Quality European Education for All") mostly deplored the lack of support from the Commission, which *"does not provide the means to implement the ECI"*. Later on, when asked about the genuine commitment of the EC, Klaus Kastenhofer (representative of the – rejected - ECI "My voice against nuclear power") even stated, *"initiators are at the mercy of the Commission"* and the ECI might just be *"a sleeping pill for European citizens".*

Before getting down to the examination of more technical flaws of the ECI, one key hurdle regarding the panning of each initiative. In fact, the traditional EU policymaking process, i.e. "the way the EU develops, adopts, carries out and revises policies" (Mastenbroek, 2013) follows a routine, an institutionalized "policy circle", as described by the schematic representation below.

Policy Circle

SCHEME 5: POLICY CIRCLE - *ADAPTED FROM (MASTENBROEK, 2013)*

The aim of any ECI organizers is to ultimately influence and introduce a proposal before the review of a law if the issue is already regulated or raise a new point in the agenda. Nonetheless, timing and proper preparation are required so that an ECI's end phase coincides with the agenda setting. An ideal launching date is therefore quite tricky to set because in case an ECI reaches its final phase shortly after the review of a piece of legislation, the proposal will

be adjourned until the next evaluation. For instance, the Regulation 211/2011 on the ECI was officially published in February 2011 and, according to the article 22, will be reviewed in April 2015 (European Parliament , 2011). The idea of launching *"an ECI on the ECI"* in order to amend the most controversial articles of the Regulation 211/2011 should thus be decided coherently with the scheduled review date. As Bengt Beier, from one of the first ECIs registered ("European Fair Roaming"), declared *"the registration procedure needs to become more transparent, projectable and plannable"*.

The early stages of the launching have been and are still laborious due to numerous constrains included in the regulation (e.g. online data protection) and technical issues. One major difficulty is linked to the setting of an online collection platform, of which high cost was at first born by each initiator. Given the lack of harmonized official registration systems (e.g. Citizens from each member state have a different ID number format), the Commission decided to freely provide this platform. Bengt Beier (Representative of the ECI "European Fair Roaming") mentioned that it took five month just to install the software, and one extra month was also necessary to upload the language versions. Furthermore, Simona Pronckute (from the ECI "Fraternité 2020") also pointed out the lack of *"citizen-friendliness"* based on the error-proneness of the Online Collection System (OCS).

The simplification of the requirements, especially regarding the ID or passport number entry is even more important that it is not adapted to the diversity of national legal frameworks, an actual "European legal limbo". Indeed, another aspect of great concern is that "*nearly 11 million European citizens cannot vote and state their support for any initiatives because they are not residing in their home country*", said Gregor Wenda, Deputy Head of Department of Electoral Affairs in Austria. This way, a British citizen living in Vienna will not be able to cast his vote. The source of the issue is that, during the collection of support, the OCS requires both nationality and residence, which may clash with the requirements asked by each member states (since each one can decide upon the criteria asked when signing). In addition, a EU citizen resident outside the EU "may or may not be able to sign up to an initiative. This is due to the fact that some member states are not able to verify statements of support from their nationals living outside the EU" (European Commission , 2013).

Annex III of the ECI's regulation (featuring the signatures validation procedures) somehow reveals the sheer magnitude of the incoherence resulting from the fragile equilibrium of the EU's founding principles (proportionality and subsidiarity). Giving the member states the responsibility to establish their own criteria during the validation procedure may have generated more inefficiencies than what a uniformed and centralized system would have achieved.

The fact that France allows fourteen personal identification options whereas seventeen other member states only recognize two methods (ID card and passport) and nine do not

required the provision of any personal identification number is a great illustration of the EU's incoherencies. Consequently, the OCS provided by the Commission happened to be an actual administrative nightmare "designed to reject as many signatures as it can" (Dutoit, 2013). Consequently, it may not be very surprizing to note that France has one of the lowest percentages of valid signatures (75%, final figure for the ECI Right to water) (Van den Berge, 2014). During a meeting of the expert group on the Citizens' Initiative, a few Member States have subsequently manifested their desire "to modify some data requirements for signatories" but they were told by the Chair Mr Mário TENREIRO, "it could hardly happen before one year given the technical work involved to update the various IT tools" (European Commission, 2013).

Such online system is nevertheless an essential component of the ECI. Although signatures are also collected on paper, a critical mass of pan-European signatories can only be reached via online campaigns. The role of social medias is likewise a crucial element, a keystone for the viral spread of petitions. Yet, as portrayed by the German MEP Gerald Hafner, the *"masochistic features"* of the program remain an unnecessary hurdle for ECI's organizers and an off-putting difficulty for citizens. Moreover, very importantly, the platform does not allow citizens, who would want to follow up or obtain more information on an ECI, to sign up for a newsletter, or again, to grant their consent to be subsequently contacted. Many call on the EC to simplify the procedure in order to facilitate citizen participation. For example, the OCS's functioning could be modeled on Avaaz.com or Change.org, both global civic organizations. Likewise, each signatory could be added on a voluntary basis to a database available to all ECI organizers.

Yet another difficulty for ECI's organizers is the complete and unlimited liability they endorse when launching an initiative. They face potential criminal, administrative and civil charges. These lawsuits could follow a piecemeal of European legislations concerning data protection and liability. This is why aspiring organizer may be reluctant to get started and shall therefore be granted a better legal security.

Likewise, funding is a key issue, as the organizers do not receive any financial support from the EC and should find themselves sponsors are individual donators. Gael Drillon (representative of the ECI "For responsible waste management, against incinerators!) explained the difficulties to find sponsors or any sources of financing and concluded *"we can't make it, we were doomed to fail before even starting"*. Disheartened, the organizers of this ECI announced the abandonment of the procedure. Subsequently contacted, Mr Drillon declared that the financial hurdle was the main reason justifying the organizers' decision. Yet, they would only suspend the initiative leaving time for the Commission to solve the most technical and bureaucratic hurdles. Moreover, the team would dedicate time to examine the other successful ECI as case studies, derive best practices and develop accordingly their own tailor made strategy before re-presenting their proposal.

Looking at the three most successful ECIs (Right to Water, One of Us and Stop Vivisection), which have to date reached and exceeded the 1 million signatures threshold, a clear correlation can be established between its success and the amount of funding received. In fact, according to the ECI campaign coordinator and researcher Pawel Glogowski, stable funding and level of organization (large pool of pan-European volunteers) are critical since "without at least one of these two elements, collecting one million signatures in 12 months seems like a "mission impossible" (Berg & Głogowsk, 2014).

Following the various accusations, Charlotte Rive, only representative of the European Commission presented, maybe unnecessarily, the main steps of the ECI procedure to an audience mostly composed of seasoned citizens and NGOs representatives before briefly answering the initiators' complains about technical issues.

Later on, during a conversation on the side, she commented that the first steps of the ECI had been *"more challenging than expected"* but that *"we all need to work together to find more sustainable solutions"*. She also reiterated that a team was working on fixing the IT problems, and that the EC was about to launch a call for public procurement in order to outsource the OCS. Besides, Ms. Rive highlighted the importance for her and her colleagues at the ECI task force to take part in these conferences and collect information at its source to be *"as responsive as possible to the organizers' queries"*.

Many other meetings and panel discussions were similarly held and are scheduled, unfortunately mostly in Brussels but sometimes elsewhere in Europe as well, the majority of them being also available in web stream. Yet, one must be carefully following up the few websites (E.g. democracy-international.org or citizenhouse.eu) announcing these independently organized events (which by the way take place during weekdays) to get to know what is happening.

The ascribed working group to the ECI, part of the G.4 – General Institutional Issues is also quite small; *"about twenty"* employees are dedicated to tackle the ECI's issues on a full time basis. Just to give an idea of the European Commission's headquarters in Brussels employs 21,511 civil servants (Europea, 2014).

Ms. Rive was also *"not very surprised by the reaction of the initiators"* who have literally assaulted the ECI task force with questions and queries.

"Most of the initiators contacting us have questions regarding the formal registration process and we help them the best we can through the procedure […] but our role is only to provide information and support. The committee of initiators is entirely responsible for the drafting and promotional campaign".

Initiators mostly deplore the high cost of running such promotional campaign, should the European Commission contribute as well?

"This isn't part of the EC's mandate. The ECI is by definition a citizen-led endeavor […] and providing financial support may generate accusations of conflicts of interest, which could even backlash on the EU.

Could signing an ECI ever be as easy as supporting an Avaaz campaign?

"There are many features of the Online Collection System which can be improved, Open Source Software developers will, for example, be free to incorporate any social media features they'd like or create mobile applications. But, protection of personal data is also a great concern for the EC. Avaaz provides a useful tool to citizens but its registration criteria are too loose."

A question on the apparent failure of the EC to promote the ECI was unfortunately promptly eluded. From this discussion, and based on the ensuing e-mail conversation, the overall impression left is that, within the European Commission, a core team may be genuinely dedicated to support ECI organizers. Yet, from a wider perspective, the EC appears relatively indifferent as to the ECI's fate. Additionally, although this participatory tool, since included in the Lisbon Treaty, has been known for quite some time, its inauguration ceremony certainly went unnoticed. This deplorable orchestration may lead to question to the EC's actual pledge towards a strengthened European participatory democracy.

Nonetheless, another question arises as to whether the EC' potential disengagement can, in fact, be unexpectedly but ultimately fortunate for the ECI. Indeed, a greater legitimacy could be associated with the ECI if it was truly seen by citizens as originating from grassroots, citizen-driven movements.

2.4 CONCLUSIVE REMARKS ON EUROPEAN CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND THE ECI

The least that can be said is that numerous challenges and hindrances must be overcome for the ECI to actually foster citizens' participation, civic interest and direct involvement in the European political agenda. However, concluding this section on the ECI also somehow leaves a bittersweet after taste.

Most of the technical problems, quite prevalent but in fact relatively trifling will certainly be solved, and awareness of the existence of the tool pressing, the EC will eventually tackle the other bureaucratic burdens. Likewise, the great disillusionment, which followed the euphoria of the beginning, will not indefinitely tarnish the dedication of organizers and volunteers who genuinely fight for what they believe in.

Nonetheless, persistent but fundamental questions result from the examination of the ECI and the debate on direct citizen participation.

Should the ECI, or can it, become an authentic tool for direct democracy? On the same lines, should a successful ECI become binding?

The idea of having truly accountable institutions directly translating the expressed *Vox Populi* intro regulations is quite appealing, especially given the limits of a European democracy merely framed on a parliamentary model. Obviously, bearing in mind the supranational character, the levels of scale and the humongous amount of legislative initiatives in the EU, an all-inclusive involvement of citizens is quite unrealistic. Correspondingly, European authorities have mainly focused their efforts on a broad understanding of participatory democracy, namely interactions with civil society representatives.

On a complementary basis, this is precisely where the ECI come into play, as more direct participatory democracy is still unquestionably required to balance institutional powers. The ECI was originally highly praised as the first supranational for direct democracy. Yet, its inherent limitations shall not be forgotten. Thus, although the ECI can surely contribute to awaken and develop a European public sphere where fruitful deliberations can thrive, its impact will always be limited to a certain number and type of citizens. Furthermore, citizens can only be called upon to take a stand on particular questions of major concern; in other words, the use of the ECI can be strategic but only periodic. Thus, regular citizen participation in the day-to-day functioning of the complex administrative European governance is not possible.

Likewise, the wide range of possible initiatives ("merely" limited by the EU's competencies) could certainly cover some of the various groups of Euro-skeptics' core

problems with the EU. Yet, in some cases, the risks and stakes are too high. Besides, it is quite unlikely that any of these initiatives would obtain the approval from the European Commission. Ultimately, the initiatives, which may receive the green light, will probably be directly in line with the EC's political trajectory.

In conclusion, the ECI's democratic potential may be as great as the "democratic dilemma"[6] it infers. Thus, answering the question whether the ECI should be binding is extremely tricky and very arguable. As stated by Robert Dahl, "Democracy cannot be justified as merely a system for translating the raw, uninformed will of a majority into public policy" (Dahl,1994). However, the creation of the ECI is not either, of course, a matter of turning the European democracy into a plebiscitary one.

Despite all that, the ECI can be considered as a desirable tool, which deserves a pro-eminent and genuinely acknowledged position in acting upon European decision-making. The democratic tool has definitely a role to play, attracting more citizens in a European civic arena. Alongside, European institutions must also be utterly responsive, in both political and legal discourses, to strengthen the legitimization of the EU's democratic credentials.

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6 Term coined by Robert Dahl in "A Democratic Dilemma: System Effectiveness vs Citizen Participation" (1994)

3. EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

This section explores the methodology and research design used to conduct the empirical research. A brief segment firstly introduces the research approach adopted in the European Union for the evaluation of policies in order to clarify the method presently selected. Accordingly, an emphasis on this study's methodological choices and processes used to develop a survey is added in the subsequent section. Besides, the connections between the survey and the formerly explored and defined concepts (in section 2) are established. Finally, after the analysis of the data collected, the results and implications are discussed.

3.1 RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT

The research approach of this thesis is an ex ante evaluation based on a quantitative and qualitative data analysis. This method is particularly suited since the ECI has only been very recently introduced and, therefore, the outcomes of the policy cannot be appraised yet. Additionally, research methods such as positivist, purely quantitative approaches evaluating the legislative output, being still dominant at the European level (European Commission, 2001), certainly leave room for improvement in the field of policy evaluation. An ex ante evaluation definitely offers numerous benefits to the way policy evaluation is carried out. Indeed, being an essential tool for effective management, this research process supports the initial steps of a policy, gathering information, developing analysis that help delineate reachable objectives, and preparing the ground for a post-evaluation (Weimer & Vining, 2011).

Nonetheless, while the evaluation stage is of utmost importance in order to improve legislations, the European Institutions reportedly acknowledge a lack of ex ante evaluation experience in the past (European Commission, 2001). More recently, the European Commission has been "increasingly promoting the development of a culture and practice of evaluation in general, and ex-ante in particular" (European Commission, 2005). Ex-ante evaluations, complemented by a thorough ex post evaluation are practices being mainstreamed so as to become the core of sound and informed decision-making. This scarce or incomplete evaluative expertise may be partly due to the pressures on official European bodies to demonstrate the cost-efficiency and value-added of policies.

3.2   RESEARCH METHOD

The ultimate purpose of this study is to evaluate to which extent the ECI may be able to reduce the European democratic deficit. The theoretical and empirical analyses are therefore the means to reach this stated goal. A clear step-by-step procedure is likewise defined and detailed so that the reader fully comprehends the approach undertaken.

As previously mentioned, this study's methodology follows a mixed methods research. Indeed, it includes a qualitative dimension under the form of gathered and enriched testimonies and discussions with members of ECI's boards and a representative from the European Commission, which took place during conferences or via the exchange of e-mails. Accordingly, the "expert" consultation provides the essential complementary information in order to grasp and assess the Commission's perspective on the ECI.

Besides, the large source of open data provided by the European Commission will also complete this research phase. For instance, as a secondary data source, official websites such as the EU Barometer (European Commission, 2012) are a very large source of information, notably in regards to the measurement of citizens' trust in the European institutions. Section 2.3 includes those experts' testimonies, which, later on combined with the quantitative findings, also form part of the evaluative framework developed in section 4.

The following subdivisions now address this quantitative investigation, which incorporates the survey design process, the analysis of the data, and a final discussion around the main findings as well as their implications for the further evaluative discussion and development of an ECI's outline assessment framework.

3.3   PURPOSE AND COMPONENTS OF THE SURVEY

The quantitative part of the study is completed via a survey. Derived from this study' s main research question, a central postulate evaluates whether the ECI can effectively foster citizens' interest for European affairs, thereby increasing their comprehension and potential influential power over the European decision-making process. In this regard, the ECI would be considered as a relatively efficient tool if it can contribute to bridge the gap between European institutions and citizens, this is to say, reducing the democratic deficit.

Correspondingly, the aim of this survey on participatory democracy in the European Union is twofold. First, the overall goal is to capture the target populations' views regarding

the perceived democratic deficit affecting the European Institutions. In order to provide a tailor-made analysis for each population sample, the distinct observation of national results is also necessary given the expected divergences (which imply a subsequent adaptable national strategy) as highlighted in section 2.2.3.3 on euroscepticism.

For this purpose, the evaluation is thus centered on the most tangible features of the European democratic deficit; namely, from the bottom-up perspective of EU citizens' knowledge and perceptions on European institutions, and decision-making processes. A key question relates therefore, to which extent is the assumed democratic deficit of European Institutions observable, empirically provable?

Accordingly, as a second stage, the survey aims at revealing whether the ECI can relatively bring a beginning of solution to tackle the issues derived from the gap between institutions and citizens.

The structure of the survey is divided into three main categories dovetailing the focus areas previously identified:

A.
- **Decision-making process in the EU**
- **Perceived democratic deficit**

B.
- **Problems identification in the EU**

C.
- **Solution provided by a tool like the ECI**
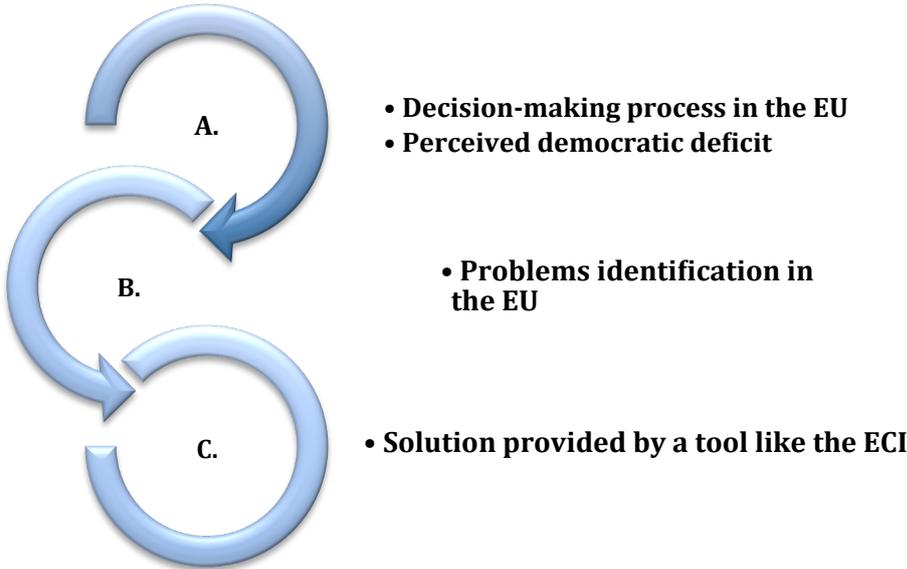
SCHEME 6: SURVEY'S STRUCTURE

Needless to further stress that a main assumption leading the whole research is that a democratic deficit exists in the midst of the European Union's Institutions, hence justifying the need for tools such as the ECI to address the derived challenges.

2.3.3   Instruments and difficulties

The selection of this type of research tool is particularly suited for this thesis since the topic evolves around the public opinion. Yet, the limitations of this tool are acknowledged as public opinion surveys are by nature very volatile and may be biased (E.g. some social groups may have a greater influence and the items of a questionnaire cannot comprehensively echo the respondents' priority interests…etc.). In order to overcome these issues, the questionnaires are widely spread as later on described.

Once designed and before its online publication, the survey is pre-tested by two persons, one in each of the population sample's languages, English and French (see following section 3.5). The goals are the following: first, avoid any internal validity threat (alignment between the questions' meaning and the understanding of the respondent), and second, determine the average time needed to fulfill the questionnaire (about 7 to 10 minutes).

The survey is then conducted in two preselected countries: France and the United Kingdom (UK). It is, of course, correspondingly translated and disseminated in both countries respectively in French and English languages. In regards to the language issue, a very noteworthy aspect to mention relates to the translation of complex and ambiguous vocabularies. In short, this thesis' central concept of "effectiveness" does not have an equivalent word perfectly translated in the French language. Indeed, in French, the concepts of efficiency and effectiveness are very frequently linked together and used interchangeably. Besides, even though a term exists to define effectiveness, it is only extremely rarely evoked. As a result, the use of the term effectiveness in the French questionnaire is literally translated as efficiency.

The surveys are created via Google Docs, which enables the online distribution of the surveys' hyperlinks. Those links are distributed or "copied" in specifically chosen online platforms, websites and social medias (Facebook, Twitter for which new anonymous profiles are created) where citizens exchange their views on topics ranging from politics, "how to" forums to more frivolous celebrities-related issues. The links were sporadically copied during ten days. These platforms include for instance (For France) "Doctissimo.fr", "CocottesMag.fr", "tvmag.lefigaro.fr", and diverse newspapers and online magazines where the link is posted on various conversations threads with an introductory comment. A similar method is applied in UK, copying the link on "marieclaire.co.uk", "bbc.co.uk" and other websites.

At the end of the collection period, the data was downloaded from Google Drive, then inputted into an excel spreadsheet and finally into a SPSS dataset. During this process, the data had to be adapted but those technical adjustments did not, in any ways, alter the data per se. The results are analyzed using the IBM SPSS software.

3.3.2 Population Sample

Two countries (France and UK) were chosen according to several attributes such as the average turn out rate at the European Parliament elections, the accession date to the EU and the countries' subjective "receptivity" to the European project.

	1979	1984	1989	1994	1999	2004	2009
France	60.71	56.72	48.8	52.71	46.76	42.76	40.63
United Kingdom	32.35	32.57	36.43	36.43	24	38.52	34.7
Total EU	61.99	58.98	56.67	56.67	49.51	45.47	43
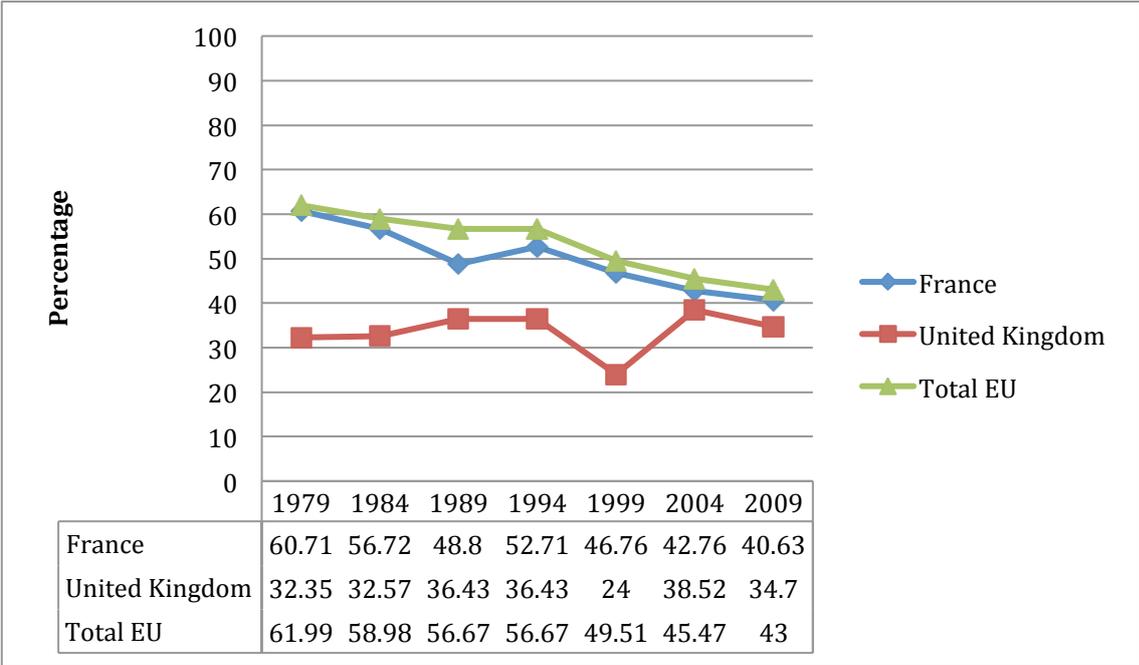
GRAPH 5: TURNOUT AT THE EUROPEAN ELECTIONS, *ADAPTED FROM (EUROPEAN ELECTION DATABASE, 2012)*

Graph 5 perfectly illustrates the increasing abstention rates almost constantly observed since the first European elections. In France for instance, the turn out has been decreasing at a tremendous rate, which more or less also corresponds to the average decline across the EU. UK's turnout rate appears more erratic; it is still lower than France's and the EU average, albeit the gap is getting much tighter over the last two elections.

Considering the EP elections turnout rates are extremely relevant with regards to the on-going debates about a democratic deficit in the EU. In fact, the decreasing electoral scores have been used as a major justification for the existence of such accusations. Nonetheless, one must according ponder the elements driving citizens to abstain from voting. Note, parenthetically, that voters' turnout has also been quite remarkably decreasing in national – general and local - elections in UK (House of Commons Library, 2012) like in France (Ministery of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Energy, 2013).

The countries' profiles, examined with respect to the EU, also present important divergent and convergent characteristics, which have been taken into account for the selection

of the population sample. Indeed, while France was one the founding members states (in 1957 with the European Economic Community), UK only joined the Community in 1973 (Europa.eu, 2010). Yet, both countries are nowadays considered as central pillars of the EU having a significant influential impact upon the decision taken in Brussels. Moreover, it is quite noticeable that France and UK have relatively contrasting ideologies regarding, inter alia, the EU's shape and Community Method (the usual decision-making procedure).

The population targeted is then the French and UK citizens above the voting age, i.e. above 18 years old. The latest available data shows that the voting age population, including all citizens above the legal voting age counts 44,521,900 French Citizens and 45,804,100 in UK (Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2003).

As mentioned in this study's section on scope and limitations, determining the sample size and the response rate is a real stumbling block given the characteristics of the population target and the aim of the thesis. Reaching a representative population sample is therefore rather unlikely given the expected low response rate and the respondents' interest biases. However, it has also to be reminded that extrapolation of the survey's findings to entire French and British population in voting age has certainly never been considered. A large range of respondents' demographic characteristics shall therefore, to some extent, palliate the lack of representativeness of the study population.

3.3.3   Linking questionnaire design and theoretical approach

A set of questions have been derived from the three previously stated axes (A, B, C) framing the question. The following detailed description presents, content-wise, the linkages between each section and the overall reasoning used to form the backbone of the survey. The actual form of the questions and answers are subsequently dealt with. The entire survey can be found in appendix 3 and contains 3 pages of questions.

Questionnaire: Europeans' views and engagement in
participatory democracy

SECTION A: Understanding of the EU's decision-making process and perceived democratic deficit

Questions:

1. In general, how much do you know about the legislative process in the European Union?

2. For each of the following European Institutions or representative, please indicate how familiar are you with their respective roles and powers.
   a. The European Commission
   b. The European Parliament
   c. The European Council
   d. The European Ombudsman

3. Which of the following piece(s) of European legislation or current affairs have you heard of?
   a. Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy
   b. European Union - United States Trade Agreement
   c. Financial Programming and European Budget
   d. EU Data Protection Regulation and Property Right
   e. Freedom of movement for workers and social policy
   f. European Year of Citizens 2013
   g. None

4. Can you name one or more of your national representative in the European Parliament (MEPs)?

Inter and intra-section links:

Section A sets the bases to section B as it aims at exploring EU citizen's degree of knowledge and interest in EU decision-making before deepening the accusations made against the EU.

While Q1 & Q2 focus on the institutional structure, Q3 & Q4 focus on policymaking and representations. It is assumed that the degree of knowledge and interest in the European affairs is highly correlated with a potential familiarity and knowledge on the existence of the ECI (referred in section C).

SECTION B: Problem identification

Questions:

1. For each of the following actions, please indicate the degree of effectiveness in influencing political decision-making?
   a. Voting in local/regional elections
   b. Voting in national elections
   c. Voting in European elections
   d. Taking part in a demonstration
   e. Signing a petition
   f. Joining a political party or an association
2. What are according to you the main problems in the EU?
   a. Bureaucracy
   b. Lack of transparency
   c. Remoteness of the institutions
   d. Influence of lobbyists
   e. Other

Inter and intra-section links:

Q1 relates to section C as it intends to identify which are the current participatory means used and how citizens perceive them. Moreover, the goal of this question, which will be further examined in the data analysis section, is to gather information on the ECI users (those who would answer yes to question 2 of section C), i.e. whether they take part in other forms of civic actions. Can the simplicity and easiness of online signature collection attract citizens who otherwise may not be willing to participate more actively?

Q2 aims at further comprehending the perceived issues regarding the functioning of the EU and relates to section C insofar as the ECI supposedly contributes to tackle those issues.

SECTION C: The ECI

Questions:

1. The European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) is the first transnational instrument of participatory democracy and enables one million EU citizens to call directly on the European Commission to propose legislations of interest. Have you heard of it?
2. Have you signed one or several of ECI?
3. What are your main expectations towards the ECI?
   a. Increased considerations of citizens' voice
   b. Creation of debates around topics relevant to EU citizens
   c. Provide opportunities to disseminate information / raise awareness
   d. Ensure popular acceptance of European legislations
   e. No expectations
   f. Other
4. Do you think this instrument will actually foster citizen participation in the European political affairs?
5. Will you follow up the evolution of the ECI you have supported or will you seek more information on what the ECI is?

Inter and intra-section links:

Section A and B aim at uncovering how citizens comprehend the EU and thus what they consider as the main institutional problems. Section C accordingly seeks to grasp the "solving potential " of the ECI.

Each section of the questionnaire, especially Section C, intends to reveal whether a tool such as the ECI could contribute to raise awareness among citizens vis-à-vis the EU. If providing information on the ECI is one little but essential step, the proactive monitoring of an ECI until its completion by the signatories is then a leap forward: a potential sign of greater interest and awareness.

3.3.4   Format of the survey

During the design of the survey, a prime concern has been the so-called "questionnaire fatigue", this to say the impact of questionnaire length on a topic primarily possibly off-putting. The entire survey is composed of 11 questions on the topic and 5 more questions gathering demographic data. The survey includes three types of questions:

- Dichotomous questions (Yes/No questions): Section A, Q 4; Section C, Q 1, Q 2, Q4, Q5.
- Multiple choice questions: Section A, Q 3; Section B, Q 2; Section C, Q 3
- Four points Likert scale questions: Section A, Q 2, Section B, Q1

The Likert scale questions offer the following response answer: Unknown, Little knowledge, Average knowledge, Excellent knowledge (Section A, Q 2) and No impact, Somewhat effective, effective, very effective (Section B, Q 1). The answers are displayed from the most negatively connoted option to the most positive one.

No completely open questions are asked but the respondent has the option, in all multiple-choice questions to further comment or add details in the "Other" case. This way, respondents are encouraged to expand and/or refine the set of choices available, which dovetails the most socially known examples, which were also notably stressed in the literature review.

3.4   SURVEY - DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The prior codification of the data collected has been an indispensible step of the analysis. The four point Likert scales were coded from 1 to 4, 1 relating to the most negatively connoted option (i.e. No impact or Unknown). A similar codification system has been developed and applied for each question. The analysis of the data collected is consistent with the stated goals of the survey alongside with its theoretical split up (detailed in section 3.4).

This section proceeds as follow: first, an examination of the survey demographic questions provides information about the respondents' characteristics. Second, following the above mentioned three principle categories according to which the questionnaire was designed, the results of the questions forming part of these three units (A, B, C) are discussed one section by section. Apart from focusing on the whole dataset, a particular attention is devoted to underline the differences and similarities between the two sample groups (French and British). Finally, keeping in mind the central research question of this study, correlations between these three sections are drawn in order to clear the ground for the subsequent development of an evaluative framework.

A consistent color code is used throughout the following sections analyzing the survey. While the French sample is attributed the color blue, the British one corresponds to red and the color orange illustrates the results for the complete dataset. Besides, "Yes" matches the green color and "No", the black one. For further detailed information, the raw data and tables used for the analysis are included in the appendices.

3.4.1   Descriptive statistics – Sample Demographics

3.4.1.1   Nationalities

Overall, 115 questionnaires were filled in of which 56 in French and 59 in English. However, given the nationality criteria and according to the target population, 4 questionnaires in French and 5 in English were deleted for being completed by non-national citizens. As a result, the total final number of questionnaires analyzed is 106, of which 52 are from self-declared French citizens, and 54 by self-declared British citizens. An interesting fact to mentioned about the respondents from the United Kingdom is that 8 persons out of the 54 kept expressly stated being Scottish rather than British.

A comparative analysis of their answers and the ones from British citizens, especially in regards to their respective views on the problems faced by the EU as well as on a participatory tool such as the ECI, would have been extremely interesting. Nonetheless, given their little number and the added complexity layer, they were autocratically attributed the British citizenship.

3.4.1.2   Gender
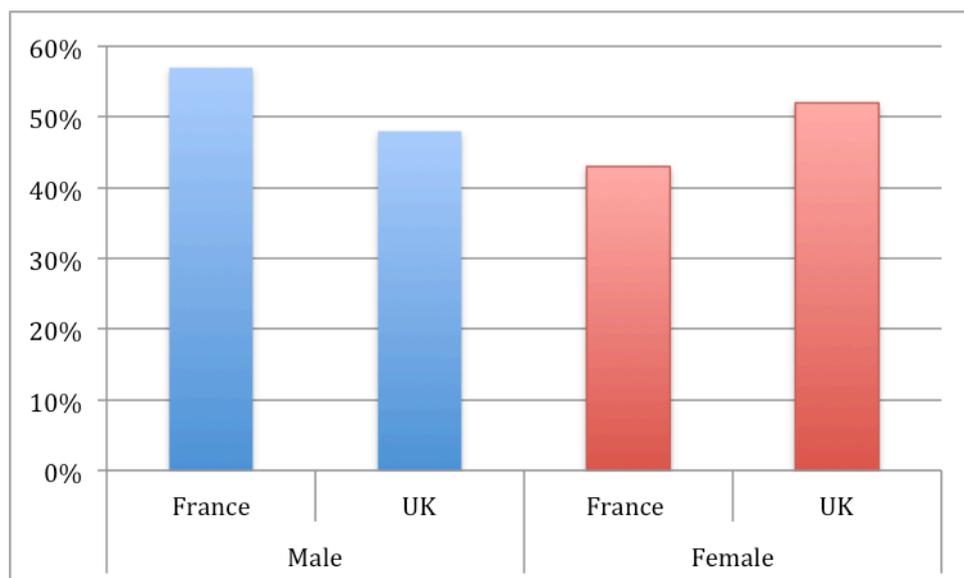
GRAPH 6: GENDER REPRESENTATION

The gender representation is relatively equal both in and between countries. In fact, 57% (in France) and 48% (in UK) of the respondents are male. Conversely, 43,4% (in France) and 52,8 % (in UK) are female. In total, 48,1% of the sample population is female and 51, 9% is male. This does not exactly represent the parity, but close enough.

3.4.1.3 Age

	18-29 yrs old	30-39 yrs old	40-49 yrs old	50-60 yrs old	60 +
France	26%	24%	30%	7%	11%
UK	28%	30%	26%	11%	4%
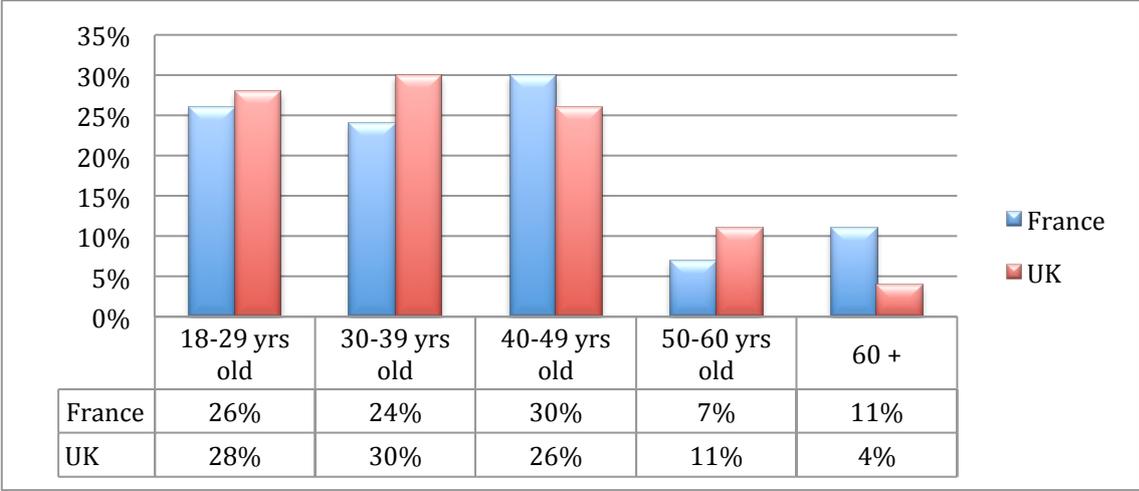
GRAPH 7: AGE DISTRIBUTION

Similarly, the age distribution graph shows a quite evenly represented proportion of respondents within the age range of 18-29 years old, 30-39 years old and 40-49 years old. The two remaining ranges are underrepresented. This may be due to the digital gap, the lack access and knowledge about the Internet, which was the only medium used for the distribution of the survey.

3.4.1.4 Education

The distribution of respondents in terms of highest educational achievements is much less balanced between the two samples, as revealed by the graph 8 below.

Still, interestingly enough, the data show that respondents have very diverse educational backgrounds. This is a quite positive observation since it demonstrates that not only highly educated people chose to fill up the survey by interest or familiarity with the topic.

	High School or eq	College	Bachelor´s degree	Master´s degree	Doctoral degree	Professional degree	other
France	21	21	11	23	8	17	
UK	11	28	34	13	4	9	
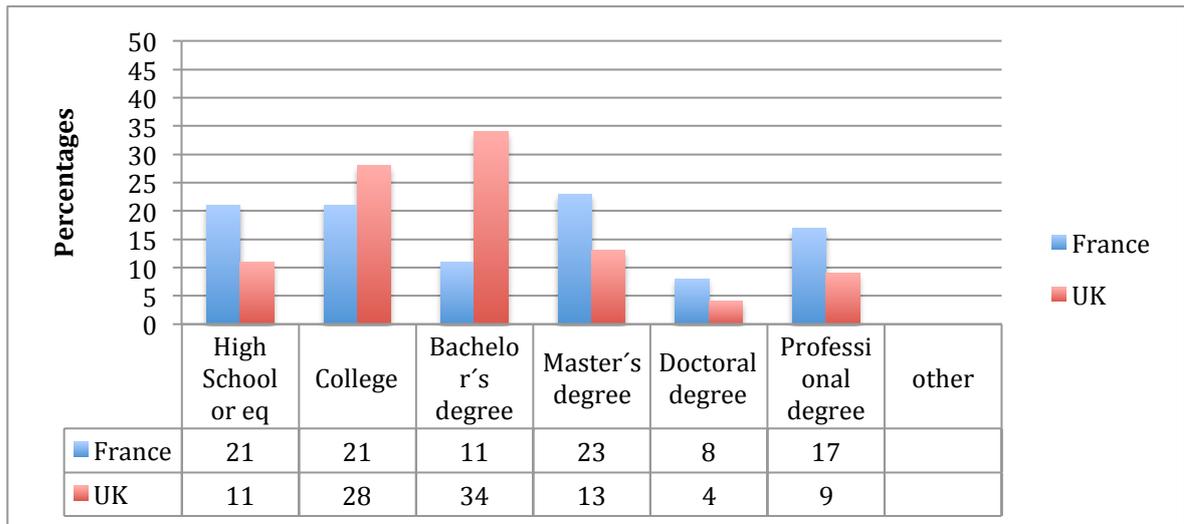
GRAPH 8: ACADEMIC ATTAINMENTS

A noteworthy difference between the French and English samples indicates that much more French respondents (20,8%) left the schooling system after high school compared to 11,3% in UK. Likewise, 34% of the British respondents stop after their Bachelor's degree (only 11,3% for the French respondents).

3.4.1.5   Employment areas

	Student	Retired	Unemployed	Ag, fishing	Art, entertainment	Education	Construction	Finance	Govt and public admin	health care, social assistance	Information	Retail	Telecommunications	Tourism industry	Self-employed
France	9%	6%	11%	4%	6%	9%	6%	7%	6%	6%	6%	2%	7%	4%	11%
UK	13%	8%	6%	6%	7%	4%	2%	9%	2%	5%	4%	13%	8%	9%	4%
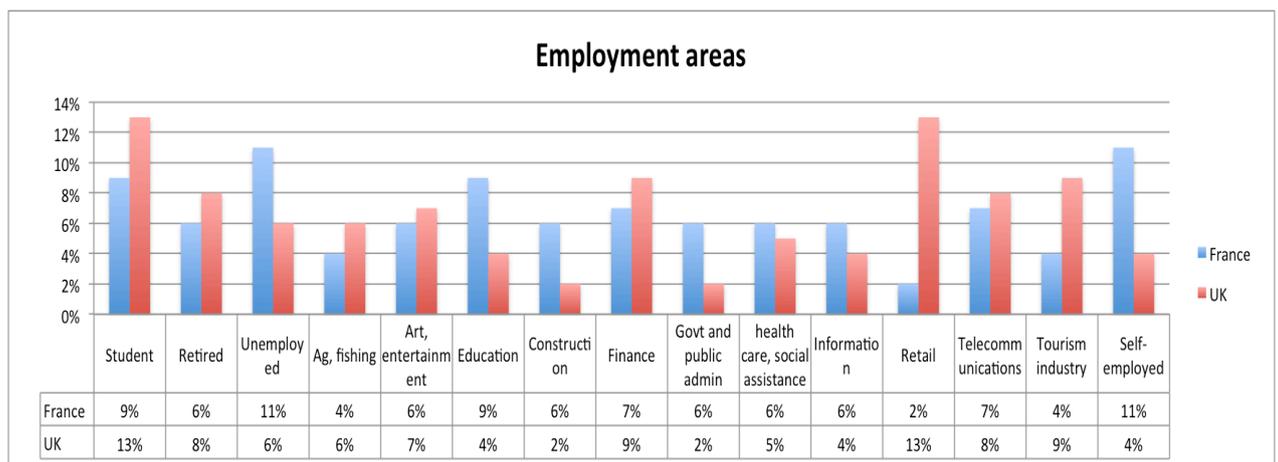
GRAPH 9: EMPLOYMENT AREAS

The range of sectors in which the respondents from both population samples is quite heterogeneous and no substantially relevant disparity deserve to be highlighted.

3.4.2 Data analysis – Survey's Section A

Section A aims at getting a grasp on the respondents' self-assessed knowledge and interest on the EU, and more precisely on the European decision-making process, the main actors and current affairs.
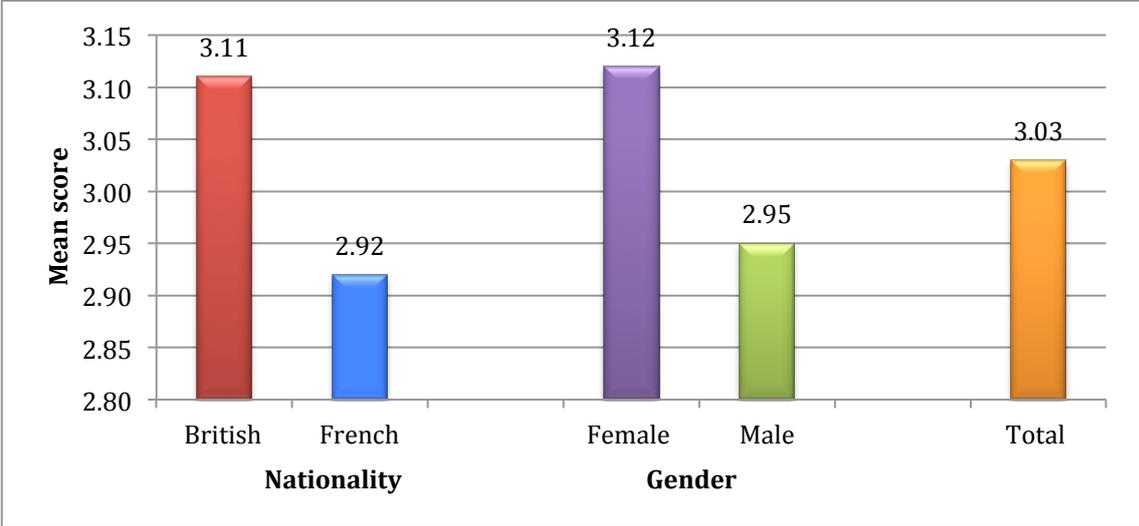
GRAPH 10: GENERAL KNOWLEDGE ON THE EUROPEAN LEGISLATIVE PROCESS BY NATIONALITY AND GENDER

	Low	Relatively low	Average	Good	Exellent
Complete Sample	12.3	22.6	23.6	33	8.5
British	11.3	22.6	22.6	30.2	13.2
French	13.2	22.6	24.5	35.8	3.8
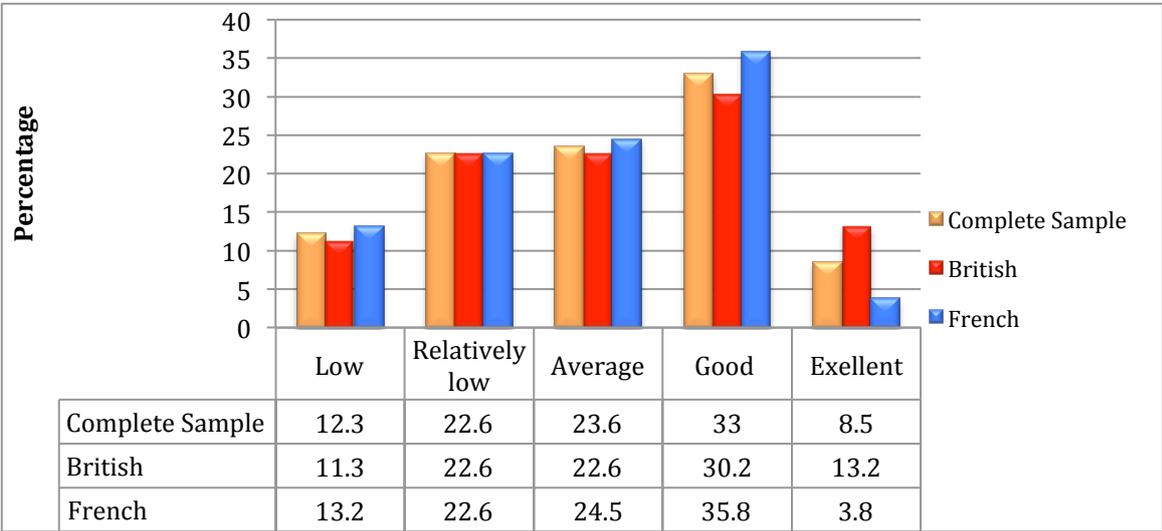
GRAPH 11: GENERAL KNOWLEDGE ON THE EUROPEAN LEGISLATIVE PROCESS BY NATIONALITY

All in all, the respondents state having a relatively good knowledge on the European legislative process with the complete sample mean value exceeding the neutral value of 3. The gender and national distinction on this matter offers much more interesting results. Female

respondents, regardless of their nationalities, obtain a higher knowledge ranking compare to the male respondents of the population sample.

Similarly, overall, Brits have declared a greater understanding of the European legislative process than French respondents. The output of the Mann-Whitney test for the two groups tested, the Ranks table, confirms that the group with the highest knowledge is the British sample with a mean rank of 55.51, compared to 51.49 for the French respondents.

From this initial observation, the examination of the respondents' familiarity with the main European institutions and representatives can enable a more refined analysis. The results indicate that the least known "institution", the European Ombudsman is completely unknown for 48,1% of the respondents.
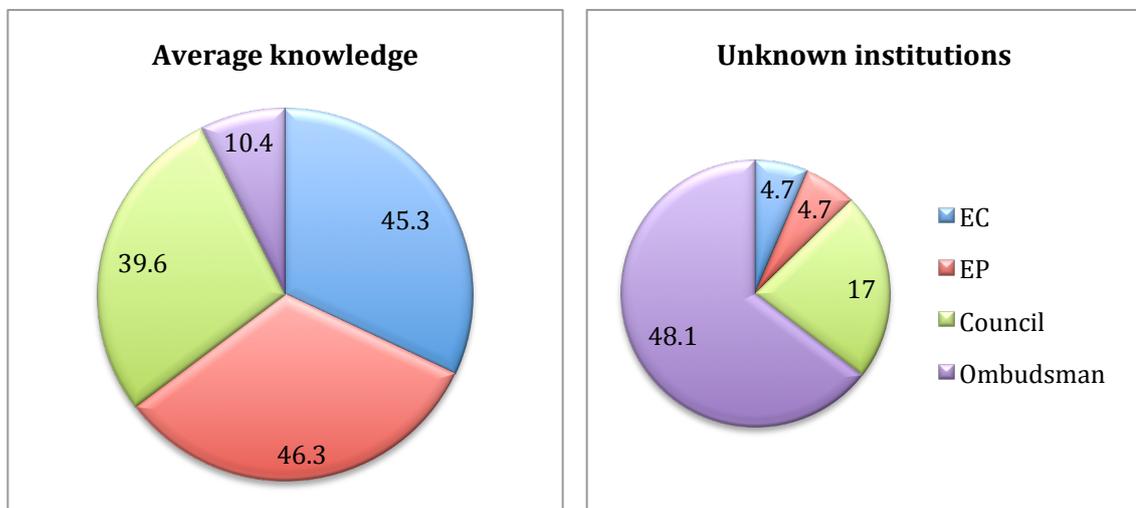
GRAPH 12A-B: FAMILIARITY WITH EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS

Conversely, the European Commission (EC) and the European Parliament (EP) are relatively well known with 45,3% and 46,3% of the respondents declaring having an "average knowledge" about these respective institutions.

The institutions with which Brits are the most familiar ("average knowledge") are also the European Commission (41,5%) and the European Parliament (41,5%). Even 22,6% and 24,5% of the British respondents assert an "excellent knowledge" regarding these two governing bodies.

From the French side, similarly 49,1% and 50,9% claim having "an average knowledge" on the EC and the EP. Nonetheless, a quite remarkably smaller share of French respondents

asserts an "excellent knowledge" (only 3,8% for each institution). The complete set of results is illustrated by the graph found in appendices 4.

The following graph (13) similarly presents the mean ranks for the two samples.
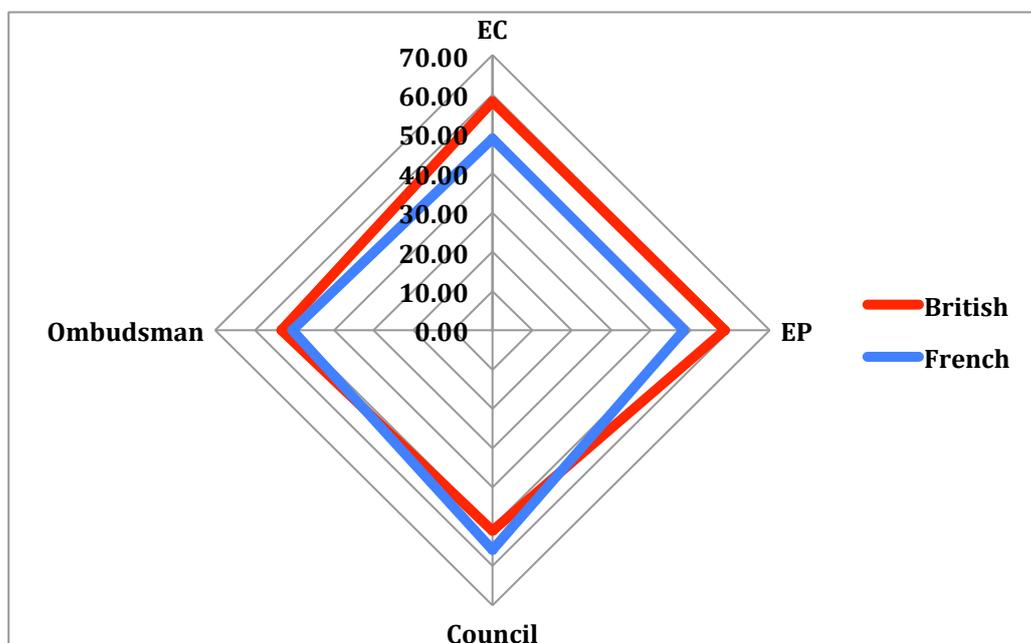
GRAPH 13: MEAN RANKS - FAMILIARITY WITH EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS

Indeed, these results can appear quite encouraging given the stated overall familiarity with, at least, the two main European institutions (EC and EP). Yet, this interpretation is too superficial since the figures do not specify to which extent the respondents are precisely aware of the institutions' legislative interactions, respective competencies and powers. Similarly, the degree of knowledge or familiarity does not provide much information on whether these institutions are more or less positively or negatively perceived by the respondents.

Knowledge and interest are two very intertwined concepts. In fact, gaining knowledge on the functioning of the European machinery requires a primary and continuous interest on matters dealt at the European level. It is hence coherent to ask respondents whether they have heard about the most current issues being discussed. Furthermore, while national medias are often accused of limiting their coverage on European issues, it is surely noteworthy to compare both population samples. In addition, a particular attention is drawn to the type or nature of the issues respondents have most heard of.

The respondents could select among six examples (multiple options possible) of European legislation and relatively current affairs or debates:
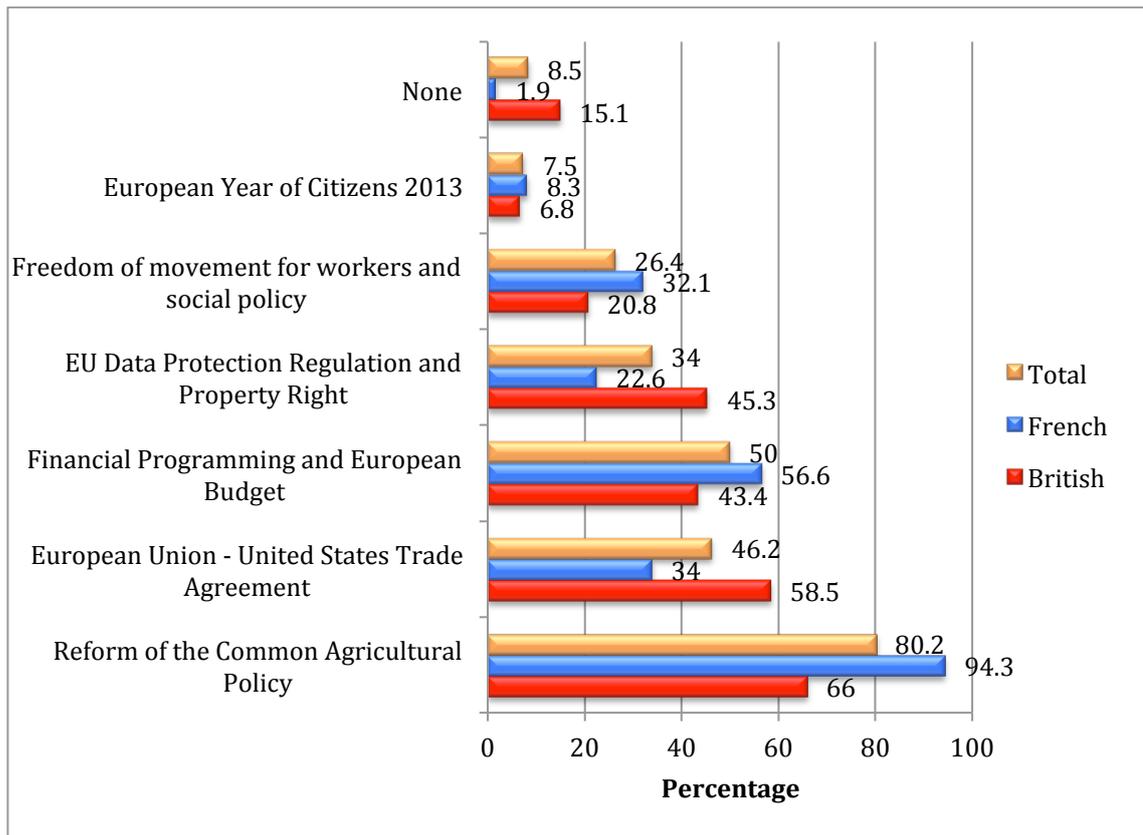
GRAPH 14: INFORMATION ABOUT CURRENT EUROPEAN MATTERS

It is not surprising to observe potential national preferences towards specific topical matters. For instance, although references to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) have been largely recurrent, the CAP reform 2014-2020 is a subject of particular importance in France since the country is the biggest beneficiary of the policy. A greater interest among French respondents (94,3%) is therefore understandable. Similarly, information regarding the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) may have been initially more prominent in the British medias given the historic ties between UK and the United States and the backing of this trade agreement by the British government. Budgetary issues are likewise matters of significant interest, or better said, of significant opposition in each country.

The relatively lower score of the option on "EU Data Protection Regulation and Property Right" is quite unexpected. ACTA (Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement), the anti-piracy treaty had however received quite a strong popular opposition, which led the European Parliament to overwhelmingly defeat the proposal. Another strangeness is the higher score on "Freedom of movement for workers and social policy" among French respondents (32,1% compared to 20,8% among Brits). Indeed, anticipating the Romanians and Bulgarians' mobility restriction lift (official on January 1st, 2014), so much media hype had caused a lot of ink to flow in the British press.

Finally, the topic that has received the least attention among respondents, regardless of their nationalities, is "The European Year of citizens 2013" (only 8,5% of the population sample has heard of it). This directly suggests that the EC's endeavours to communicate on the rights attached to the European citizenship, engage with citizens hence fostering a greater cohesion between European societies in order to ultimately create a "European demos", are quite unsuccessful. The EU-wide campaign on the European Year of citizens was also notably the opportunity for the EC to "market" its new-born tool for direct democracy. Such general interpretation is obviously too hasty given the limitations and scale of this investigation. Yet, interestingly enough, these comments also resonate with the conclusions drawn after the examination of the experts' testimonies in section 2.3.4.

Furthermore, these primary observations tend to show that the surveyed citizens are almost solely aware of matters related to economic matters. This does make sense since the EU is first and foremost a single market in which economic integration largely takes predominance over any fiscal or even social endeavours.

The last question of the survey's section A inquires whether respondents can name one or several of their directly elected representatives at the European Parliament (MEPs). This variable is interestingly one of the few, which, according to the Mann-Whitney U test Statistics table, shows an actual significant value (U=1139,50; p= 0,050). This indicates that a significant difference between the two sample groups when answering the stated question. The mean ranks likewise indicate a score of 58,50 for the British sample and 48,50 for the French sample (Nota Bene: SPSS coding: 1=Yes; 2=No). Consequently, French respondents are significantly more likely to be able to name one or several MEPs than their British counterparts.

3.4.3   Data analysis – Survey's Section B

Section B intends to uncover the respondents' insights on the main problems associated with the European decision-making process and the perceived effectiveness of the principal means available to citizens to influence this process.

	Voting in local/ regional elections	Voting in national elections	Voting in European elections	Taking part in a demonstration	Signing a petition	Joining a political party or an association
British	2.75	2.36	1.88	1.75	1.81	2.17
French	2.8	2.59	1.91	2.31	1.65	1.53
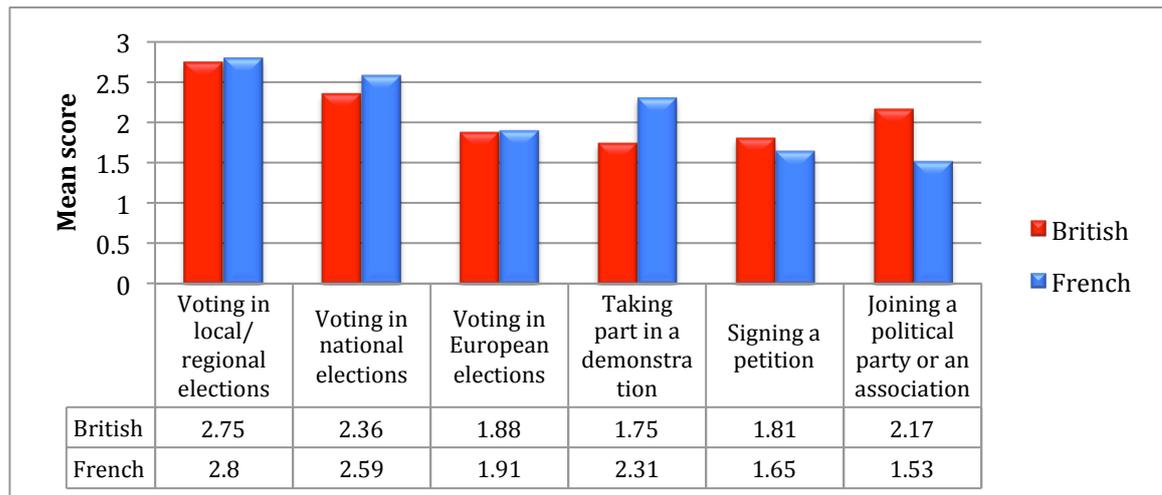
GRAPH 15: MEAN SCORE - EFFECTIVENESS IN INFLUENCING DECISION-MAKING

Graph 15 gives an indication of the perceived degree of effectiveness of these six democratic apparatuses. In both samples, the scores are quite alike. Yet, it is not very startling to note that "Voting in European elections" receives in each sample the lowest scores.

Furthermore, an interesting cultural distinction may be highlighted in view of the differentiated perception on the effectiveness of "taking part in a demonstration" among French and British respondents. Likewise, Brits would consider "joining a political party or an association" much more effective in terms of influential potential over political decision-making than French respondents would.

With regards to the specific features of these tools and their perceived effectiveness, it is relevant to examine the traditional vs. modern and passive vs. active debate around democratic tools. These six apparatuses are considered as relatively traditional means of influencing decision-making. Are these relatively low effectiveness scores the markers of a traditional participatory tools' crisis?

The subsequent graph 16 provides a more detailed understanding of the degrees of effectiveness attributed to each of these six means by the British respondents.

Joining a political party or an association
5.7
24.5
50.9
18.9

Signing a petition
3.8
5.7
58.5
32.1

Taking part in a demonstration
1.9
15.1
39.6
43.4

Voting in European elections
7.5
15.1
37.7
39.6

Voting in national elections
11.3
34
34
20.8

Voting in local/regional elections
26.4
34
28.3
11.3

■ Very effective   ■ Effective   ■ Somewhat effective   ■ No impact
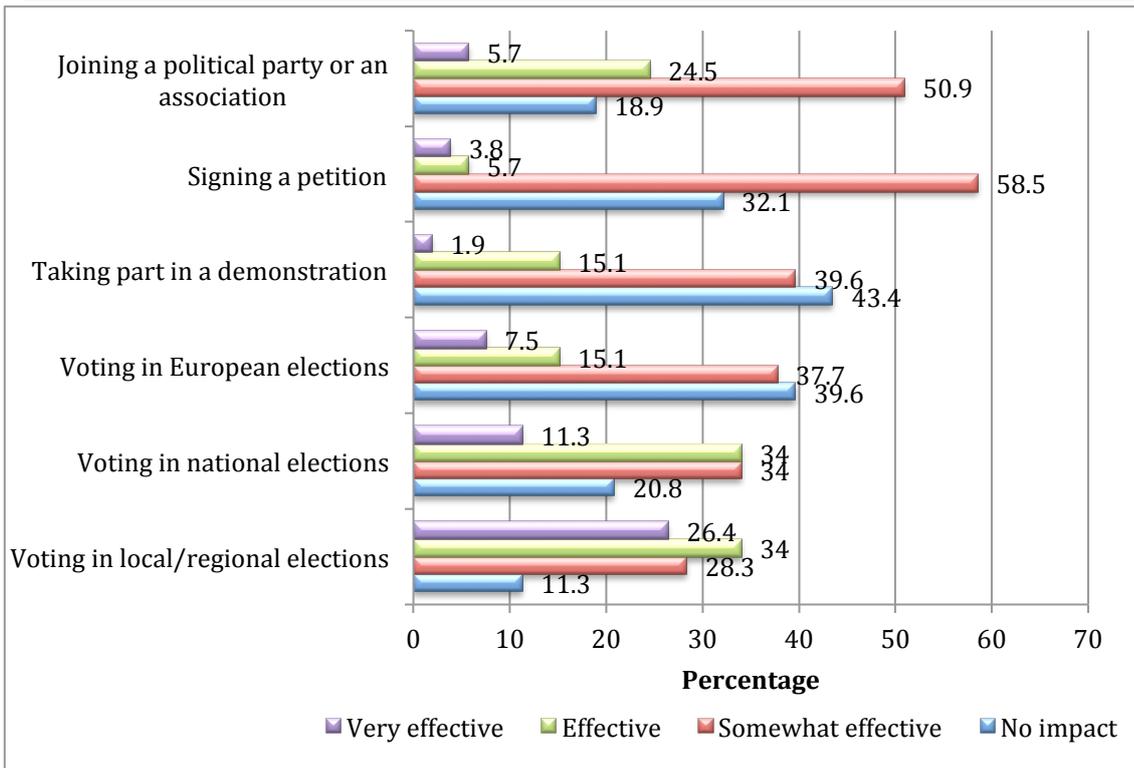
GRAPH 16: PERCEIVED EFFECTIVENESS OF MEANS TO INFLUENCE DECISION-MAKING – UK

Graph 17 below provides the same information but by the French respondents this time.

■ Very effective
■ Effective
■ Somewhat effective
■ No impact
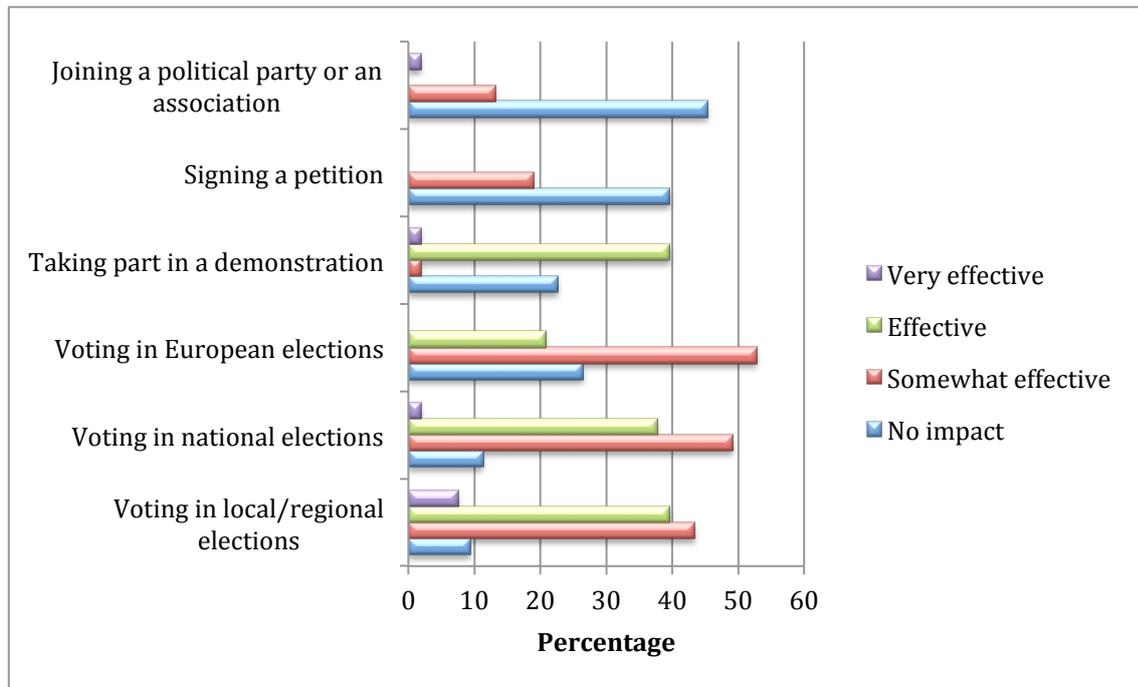
GRAPH 17: PERCEIVED EFFECTIVENESS OF MEANS TO INFLUENCE DECISION-MAKING - FRANCE

A central question in this study relates to the problems associated with the European decision-making process, which are considered as some of the main underlying factors of a democratic deficit. Graphs 18 a – b indicate for each sample the most prominently indicated ones.
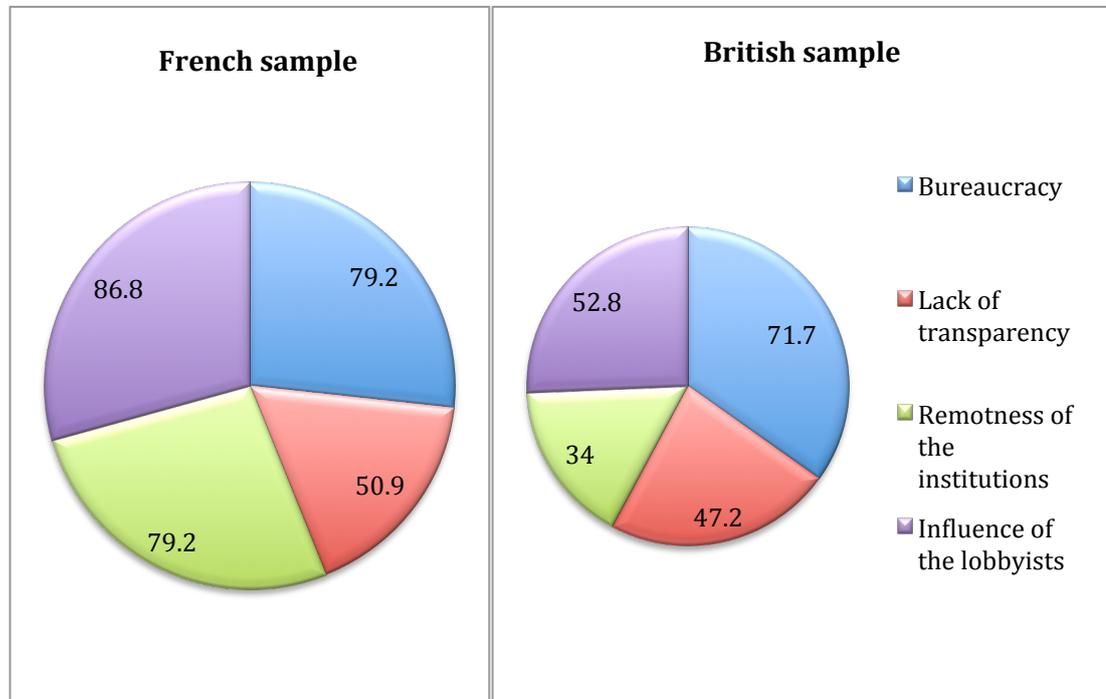
GRAPH 18 A-B: MAIN PROBLEMS RELATED TO THE EUROPEAN DECISION-MAKING

Although the respondents were given the option to complement this list, none of them did so. The results are quite similar between samples. Nonetheless, many more French respondents consider "influence of the lobbyists", "the remoteness of the European institutions" and "Bureaucracy" as the main issue in Europe. Conversely, British respondents rank first "Bureaucracy", followed by "influence of the lobbyists".

A noteworthy observation is the somehow limited percentage of British respondents considering "the remoteness of the European institutions" (34%) as a main source of problem compare to 79,2% for the French sample. "Remoteness" reflects the possibly perceived inaccessibility and geographical isolation of the central institutions taking decisions in the Belgian capital. In fact," Brussels" is short for the European Institutions as in "Brussels decides upon European politics". It is likewise relevant to note the popular (and media-induced) association of Brussels, where the EC is located, with centre of European decisions. The EP's powers may have been increased but, still, Strasbourg does not seem to be perceived as a place of power (providing that, in the first place, citizens know the locations of the EP and the other institutions in Luxembourg and Frankfurt).

Explaining the little consideration of remoteness by the British respondents can be potentially related to the widespread perception of UK being an outsider within the EU (ideologically-wise and given its insular status). The lobbying problem also appears relatively much more prominent among French (86,8% against 56,8% for the Brits). Lobbying seems to be rather directly negatively connoted by French respondents whereas the activity may be more neutrally perceived in the Anglo-Saxon world.

3.4.4 Data analysis – Survey's Section C

The aim of Section C is to gauge the respondents' opinion on the ECI, their expectations, and the tool's potential impact in awakening a European collective and civic awareness.

Given the relative novelty of the ECI, a first step is to ask the respondents whether they have heard about the tool, ultimately assessing the promotional endeavours undertaken by the Commission as well as the extent of the media coverage on the first few ECIs. The results show that a surprisingly high number of respondents (47,2%) have heard about the ECI, of which 39,6% are British and 54,7% are French. These scores could be linked to probable interest biases, although the questionnaire was meticulously spread across a very wide range of forums.

A point of even greater relevance is to check the share of respondents having heard of the ECI and subsequently signed (or not) one or several. The results are quite striking. In fact, as observed in graph 19, 76,2% of the British respondents having heard of the ECI have also signed at least one initiative, compared to 51,7% for the French respondents. Besides, comparing British and French respondents' likelihood to sign an ECI after having heard of it, an utterly salient difference between both samples shows that receiving information about the ECI has nearly no impact on French respondent's decision to sign an initiative. In comparison, more than twice as much Brits have signed an ECI after hearing about the existence of the tool. Regarding the complete sample, the difference between the share of respondents having signed an ECI and those who have not, is similarly quite significant, but still, not as much as the in inter-national results.
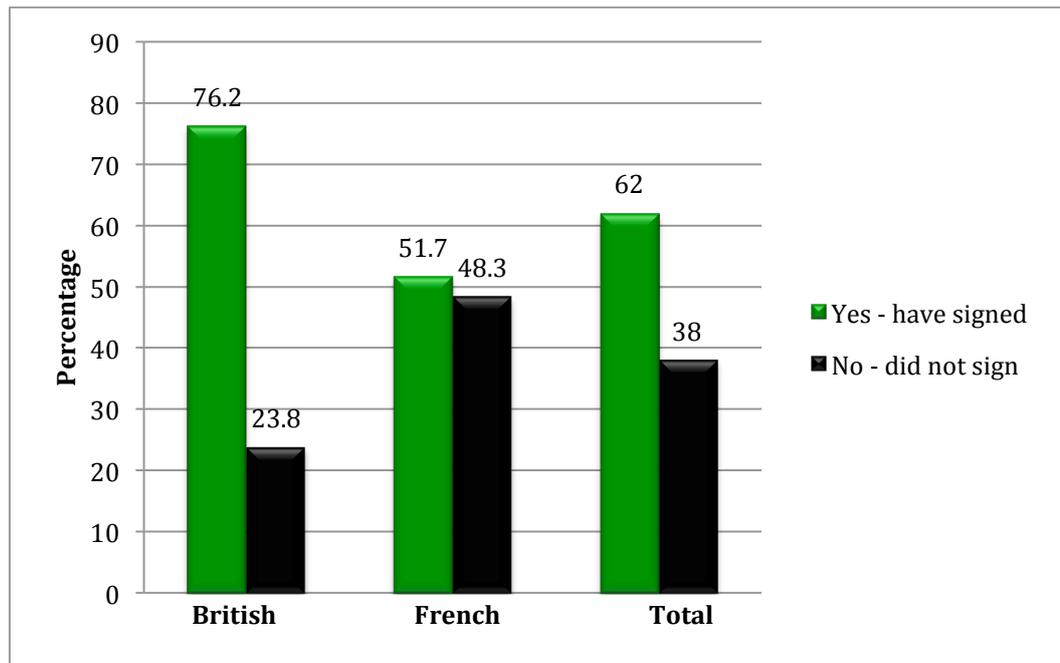
GRAPH 19: HEARING ABOUT THE ECI AND SUSBSEQUENTLY SIGNED IT BY NATIONALITY

In short, although more French respondents have heard of the ECI, they yet have not decided that it was actually worth signing one. Interpreting this rather tremendous national difference is quite tricky. A possible explanation is that French respondents did not want to make the extra intermediary effort, i.e. from getting an information to actually visiting an ECI website. This relates to the limitations of awareness: being aware of an issue of public concern does not automatically induce action (even as little as signing an ECI) unless the individual is more directly impacted (as confirmed by the downstream dimension of citizen participation detailed in section 2.1.7).

Likewise, French respondents may also have not felt concerned by any of the ECIs' topics. Questions must concurrently be raised about the type and source of information received in relation with their influential impact on the respondent's decisions. The possibility that French respondents simply do not believe in such participatory tool or merely do not care about it cannot either be excluded. The examination of the following questions regarding the expectations and perceived potential impact of the ECI may offer other lines of explanation.

The ECI has been held has a participatory instrument with great democratic potential. Yet, it remains to more precisely define what citizens actually expect from it. Respondents were asked to select the option(s) that would best define their hopes. Overall, as shown in the graph 20, the option gathering the largest score is "the increased considerations of citizens' voices" with 62,3% of the votes, followed by "opportunities to disseminate information / raise

awareness" and "creation of debates around topics relevant to EU citizens" with respectively 48,1% and 46,2%.

Observed nationality-by-nationality, French respondents have notably greater expectations in all regards than the British ones. For instance, the 81,1% of French respondents having selected "the increased consideration of citizens' voice" is quite conspicuous. On the one hand, this may denote a clearly outspoken desire for more political deference in regards to citizens' views.
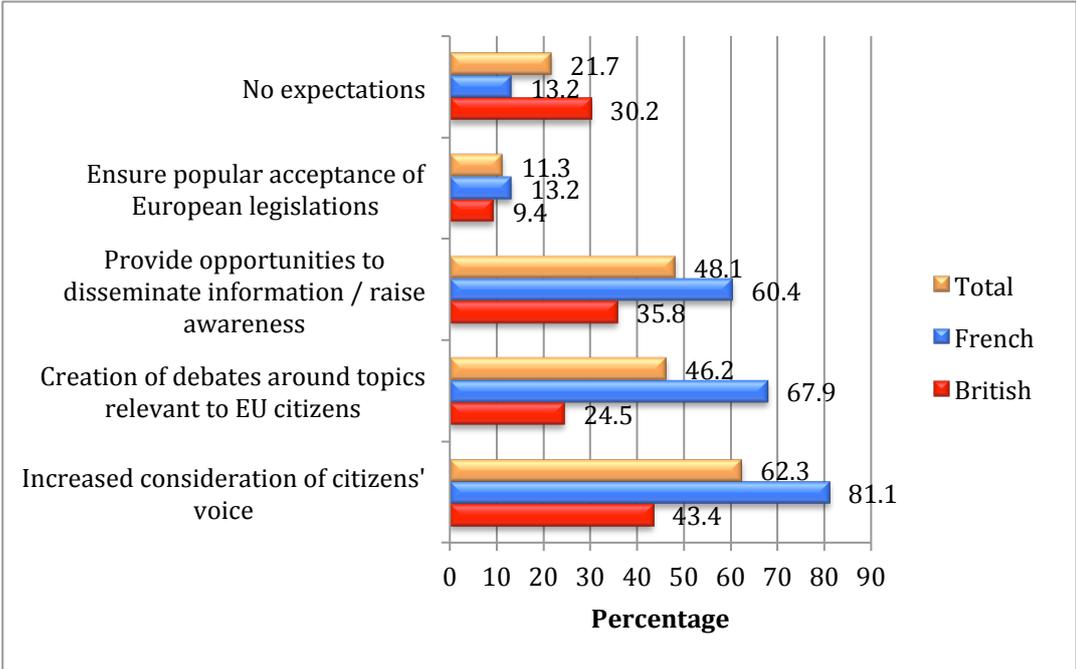
GRAPH 20: RESPONDENTS' EXPECTATIONS REGARDING THE ECI BY NATIONALITY

Nonetheless, on the other hand, French respondents may be seen as quite hypocritical. Indeed, keeping in mind the previous comments, they do not only have the greatest expectations but, on top of that, they do not even bother, for some reasons, using an instrument available to then, which could potentially get their voices heard. From the British side, keeping low expectations may also be a way to minimize disappointment in case expected prospects are not on the agenda.

The hypothetical impact of signing an ECI, especially in terms of interest and awareness raising is also an important aspect to investigate. Would respondents monitor the evolution and outcome of the ECI(s) they have signed? Graph 21 reveals that 63,2% of the total sample declare being interested in searching for more information on the ECI and/or follow up the ECI(s) they are supporting. The inter-nationality comparison goes along with the previous

observation still remaining very distinct. While a very high share of British respondents (71,7%) declare themselves willing to undertake this information-searching effort, only 54.7% of French would do the same.
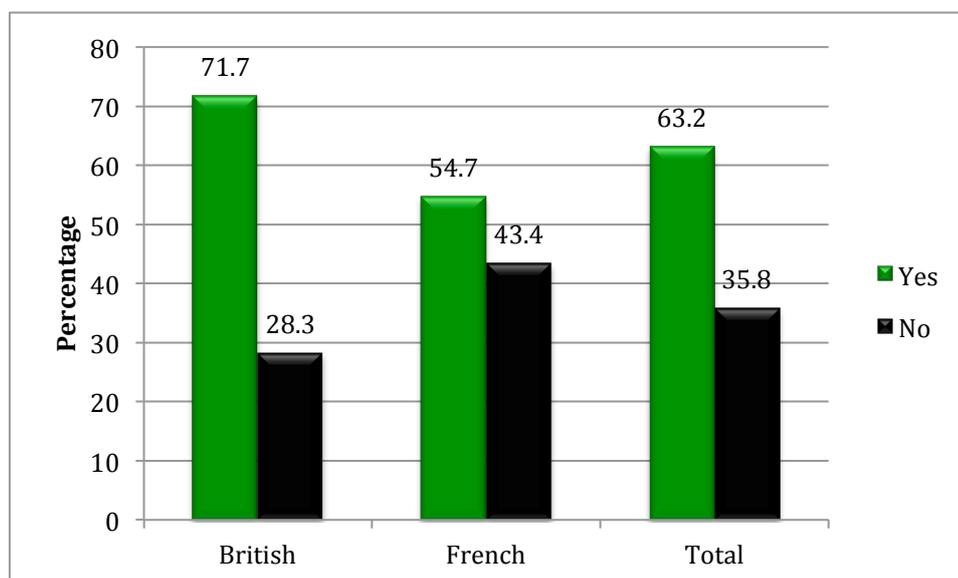
GRAPH 21: FOLLOW UP ON ECIS AND COLLECTION OF FURTHER INFORMATION BY NATIONALITY

As an aside, it is not very surprising but still pleasing to note that 100% of the respondents having signed one or several ECIs also declare intending to monitor the evolution of the initiative and/or seek more information about the ECIs.

Likewise, an additional noteworthy aspect to examine is the likelihood of a respondent who would not have signed an ECI to be still interested in searching more information on what the ECIs are. Note that 69,8% of the British sample, 71,7% of the French sample and 70,8% of the total sample have not signed an ECI.

According to graph 22, regardless of their nationality, the respondents who have not supported any ECI are fairly equality inclined or not to further research on that very same matter. Yet again, the scrutiny of each nationality's results is much more fruitful. In fact, the respective scores are almost in complete opposition: while 59,5% of British respondents (who have not signed an ECI) appear interested enough to expand their research, 23,2% of French respondents (who have not signed either) completely discard the idea of gaining more information on the ECI. Although this study's limitations must be kept in mind, searching for interpretations on these latest observations, other than narrow-mindedness, becomes quite difficult. French respondents apparently and strikingly reject the ECI.

GRAPH 22: SIGNING OF AN ECI AND WILLINGNESS TO SEEK INFORMATION BY NATIONALITY
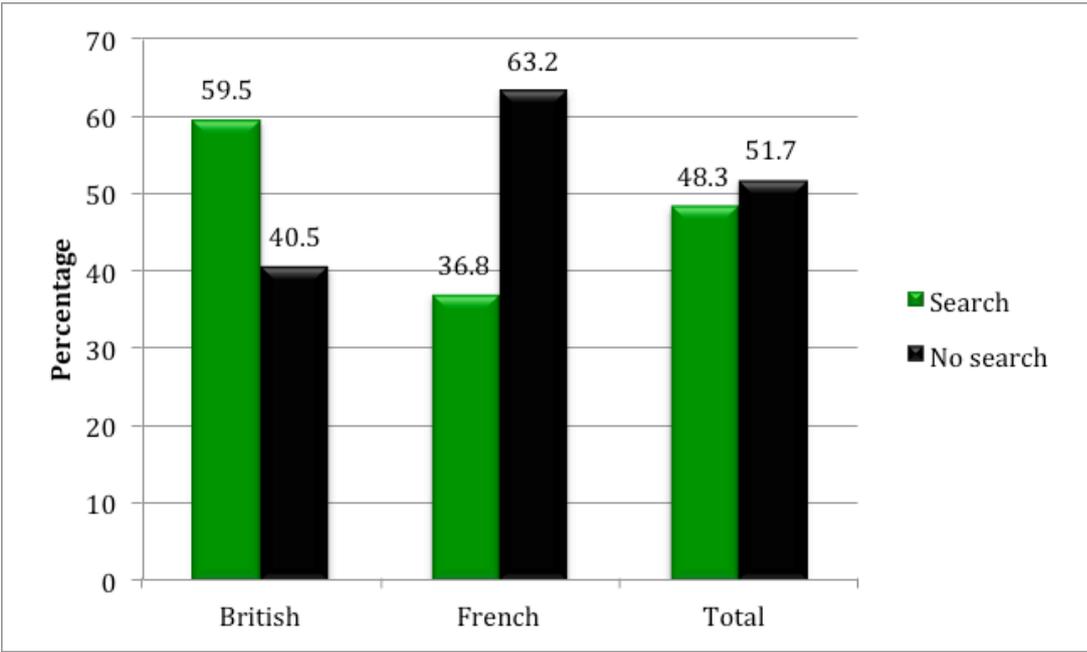
The following Graph was only added to this analysis for the sake of curiosity. Indeed, it indicates the share of respondents who had not previously heard about the ECI (before filling up this survey) and who subsequently claimed to be interested in gaining further information on what the ECIs are, and maybe ultimately support one or more ECIs. Yet again, this investigation has seemingly only triggered the curiosity and interest of a very small portion of British respondents.

GRAPH 23: HEARING ABOUT THE ECI AND SEEKING INFORMATION BY NATIONALITY
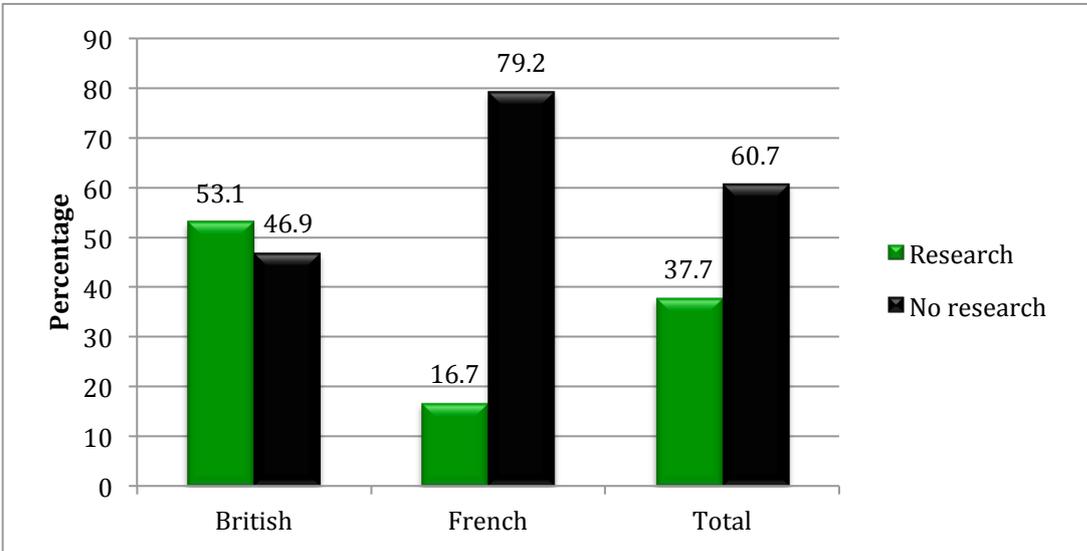
3.4.5   Data analysis – Democratic deficit and ECI

This section represents the discussion on the survey's findings' culminating point. Now that each section has been individually analysed, it is time to develop a selective cross-sections analysis. Indeed, a few relevant variables are chosen from each section in order to actually evaluate If the ECI can effectively foster citizens' interest for European affairs, thereby increasing their comprehension and potential influential power over the European decision-making process.

Understanding the key problems from which originate the citizens' perceived lack of legitimacy and accountability of the European institutions is also a fundamental intermediary step. In short, to which extent can the ECI contribute to bridge the gap between European Institutions and citizens, i.e. reduce the democratic deficit?

Building on the survey's earlier findings and taking into account the numerous limitations of the inquiry, this section is divided following the three main composite indicators developed to assess the ECI's effectiveness. Note that this present assessment is only partial and will be comprehensively completed in the evaluative framework found in section 4. The three measurement criteria are namely, "inclusiveness", "ability to voice", and "ability to foster an active citizenship".

3.4.5.1   Inclusiveness

First and foremost, attention is drawn to the inclusion factor as a determining element of the ECI's effectiveness. In fact, inclusiveness, a sine qua non condition for the assessment of the ECI's democratic quality is based on the survey's demographic data: age, gender, employment areas and education linked to the signature of an ECI. Besides, an additional correlated component is the self-assessed knowledge on the EU decision-making process of the respondents who have or have not signed an ECI.

Running a regression on "signing an ECI", it appears that gender, as a predictor does not significantly explain the dependent variable. The percentage indicates that 58,1% of women and 41,9% of men have signed an ECI. Gender was not expected to play a significant role with regards to signing an ECI in general. Depending on the type of initiative, one gender may be more represented than the other. It can be assume than such bias linked to interest or involvement may be hard to rectify.
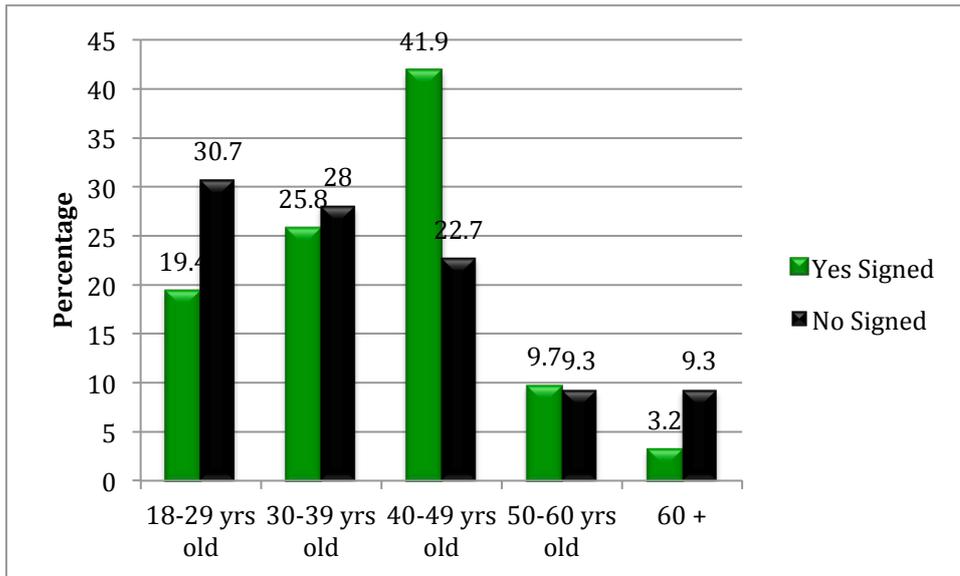
GRAPH 24: AGE AND SUPPORT OF AN ECI

The age distribution among respondents who have and have not signed (as illustrated in graph 24 above) shows an inter-generational discrepancy. The regression's results however identify age as a non-significant variable influencing the signing of an ECI. As mentioned the digital gap and hence access to digital information can explain why the age ranges from 50 years old to 60 and more are underrepresented. This can, to some extent, be corrected since statements of support are also collected on paper.

The "youngest" respondents also have relatively less signed an ECI than their elders. The digital gap certainly does not affect them as much as the senior respondents but their limited knowledge about the existence of the ECI may be an explanation.
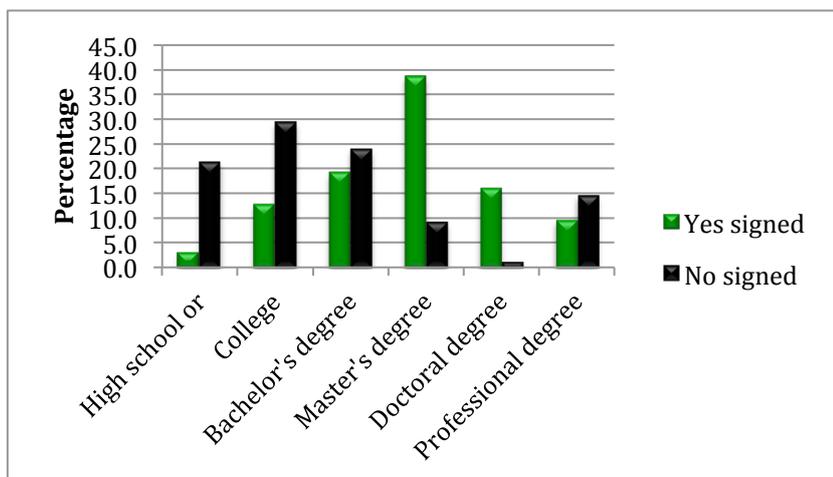
Graph 25: Signing an ECI and highest education level

Appendix 8 and 9 present the frequency tables of respondents who have and have not signed an ECI according to their areas of employment and highest education level. It is quite obvious that those having attained a higher education level are more likely to have signed an ECI.
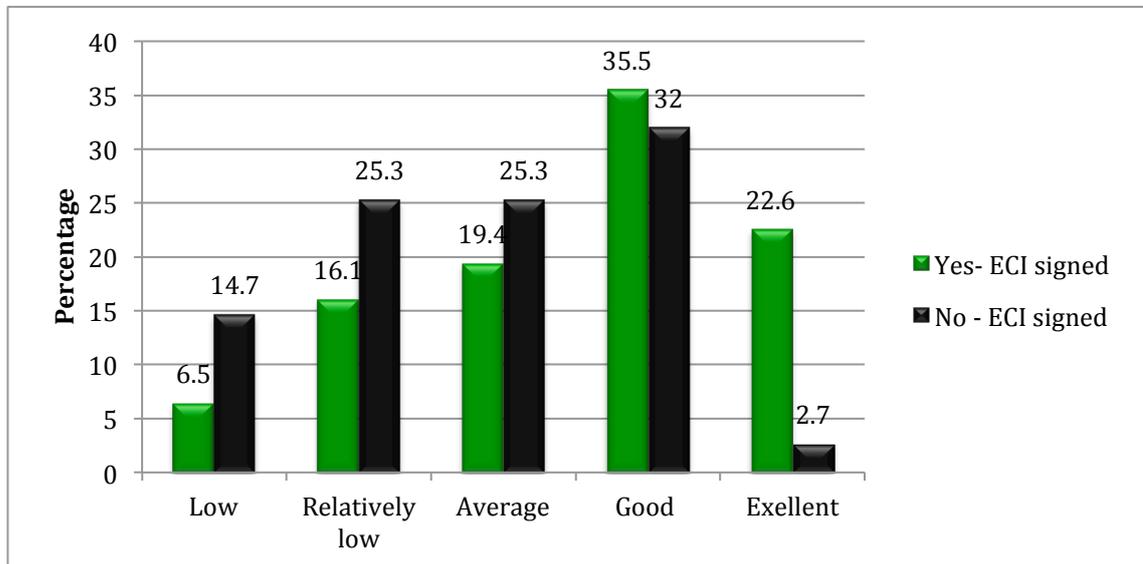
GRAPH 25: DEGREE OF KNOWLEDGE AND SUPPORT OF AN ECI

Graph 25 illustrates the degree of knowledge regarding the European decision-making process of the respondents who have and have not signed an ECI. A regression analysis notably shows that this knowledge has a significant influence on the signing of an ECI. Respondents who are aware of the current Community Method are therefore more likely to know about the participatory tool and to have supported one initiative. The most visible result indicates that 22,6% of the most knowledgeable respondents has signed an ECI.

Concluding this section on inclusiveness, it can be said that, although currently most of the signatories have a rather similar profile, i.e. highly educated, specific social background and relatively high knowledge about the EU's functioning. Yet, while the ECI may have only marginally penetrated the highest spheres of the European societies, time and the tool's democratization may make a difference (though providing that its promotion reach a wider audience).

3.4.5.3   Ability to voice

Ability to voice refers to the citizens' capacity to express their concerns, or put forward issues for which they wish the EU to take position. This way, citizens can stress the specific areas of types of problems to be tackle. Central indicators are linked to the initiators' ability to gather a critical mass of support (pan-European volunteers and national media coverage), to reach the number of signatures needed or again, to get access to technical assistance. Understandably, the extent to which voicing and being able to make an ECI prominent enough to be heard by the Commission is a central element of the tool's effectiveness. Yet, it is also a very limited one as some other critical elements are out of citizens' control.

Based on the data collected in this study, indicators for the ability to voice are quite restricted. Nonetheless, this section looks at the expectations of the respondents who have signed an ECI and the areas stressed by these respondents as being the EU's main problems. The examination of these areas is conducted for each sample.
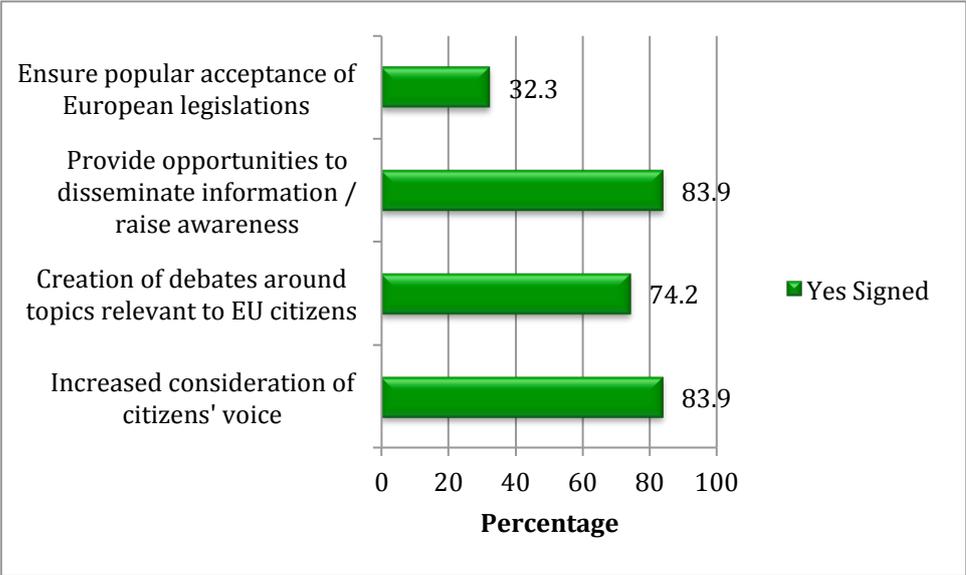
GRAPH 26: EXPECTATIONS AND SIGNING AN ECI

The expectations "Increased consideration of citizens' voice" and "Provide opportunities to disseminate information / raise awareness" are equally the highest. The question mark now is the effect, on the long run, of one or several rejections from the EC on the ability to voice. How resilient are these expectations?

Graphs 27 and 28 illustrate the main problems challenging the European institutions' legitimacy as identified by the British and French respondents who have signed or not an ECI. Interestingly, the one who have signed an ECI and the ones who have not, nationality aside, designate, almost in similar proportions, the same leading issues. Potential interpretations are numerous. Focusing on graph 27, two options seem to be favored by both Brits and French: bureaucracy and influence of lobbyists. Lack of transparency is very surprisingly not that relevant either for both samples.
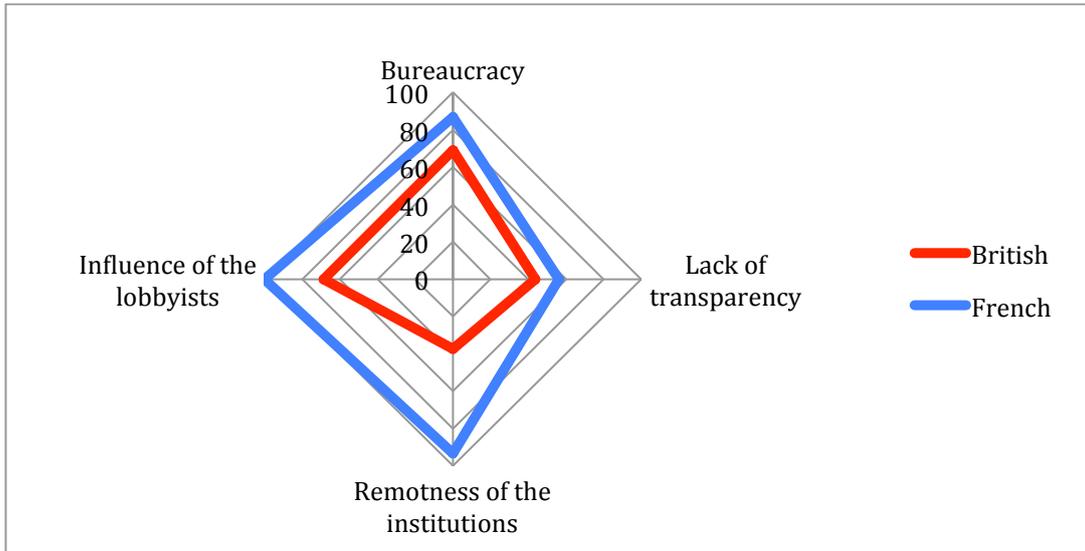
GRAPH 27: SIGNING AN ECI AND MAIN PROBLEMS OF THE EUROPEAN DECISION-MAKING
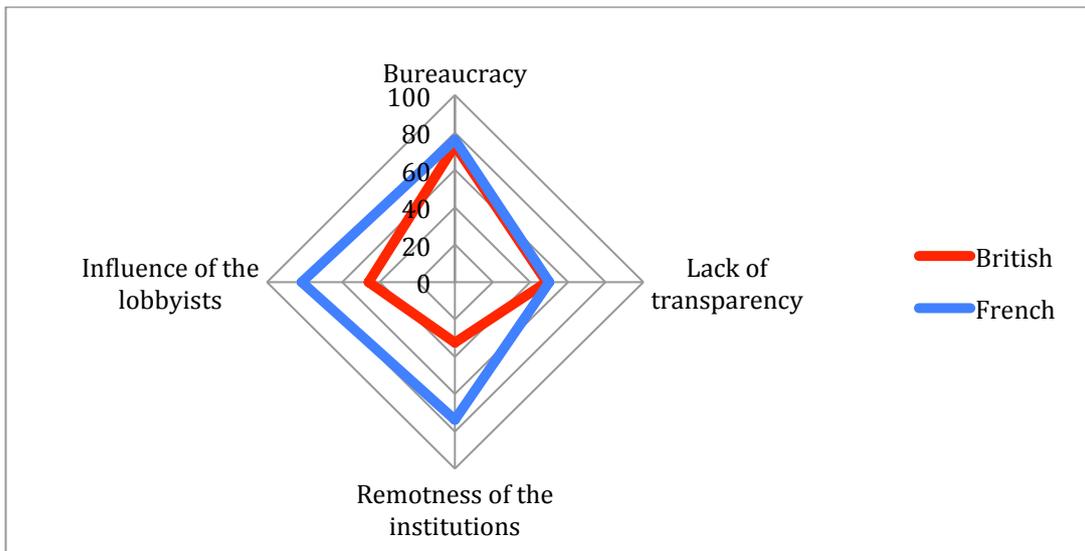
GRAPH 28: NOT SIGNING AN ECI AND MAIN PROBLEMS OF THE EUROPEAN DECISION-MAKING

Ability to voice is extremely critical as one of the main pillar of the ECI's effectiveness. Nevertheless, it is very dependent on numerous variables, the EC's responsiveness being one. Other aspects such volunteers' mobilization, national biases or preferences, access to European channel of communication and information, and the necessary increased level of citizen engagement stirred by a common goal are just as difficult to manage.

3.4.5.3   Ability to foster an active citizenship

Last but certainly not least; the ability to foster an active citizenship may be the most challenging marker of the ECI's effectiveness while being fundamental to an ultimate reduction of the European democratic deficit. As further developed in section 2.2.1 on Participatory Citizenship and European Identity, active citizenship relates to civic competences (affective: attitudes, dispositions; and cognitive: knowledge, skills). In the same way as for the previous composite indicator, fostering an active citizenship implies numerous underlying conditions. For instance, motivation, seen as an increasing willingness and resolution to take action, and the attainment of deliberative aptitudes or skills are essential. The ultimate aim is to break the vicious circle of cynicism, rising populism and demagoguery, and anti-democratic trends.

The specific components of this section examined further in to detail are 1) the increased interest of ECI signatories for the current European affairs, 2) the perceptions of ECI signatories on the effectiveness of voting at the European elections and signing a petition, and 3) the perceived ability of the ECI at fostering citizen participation in European political affairs.

The two following graphs (29 and 30) illustrate, to which extent the French and British respondents who have signed an ECI know more or/and have a greater interest about current European affairs than those who have not signed one. Yet, it obviously does not mean that signing an ECI has induced this higher interest.
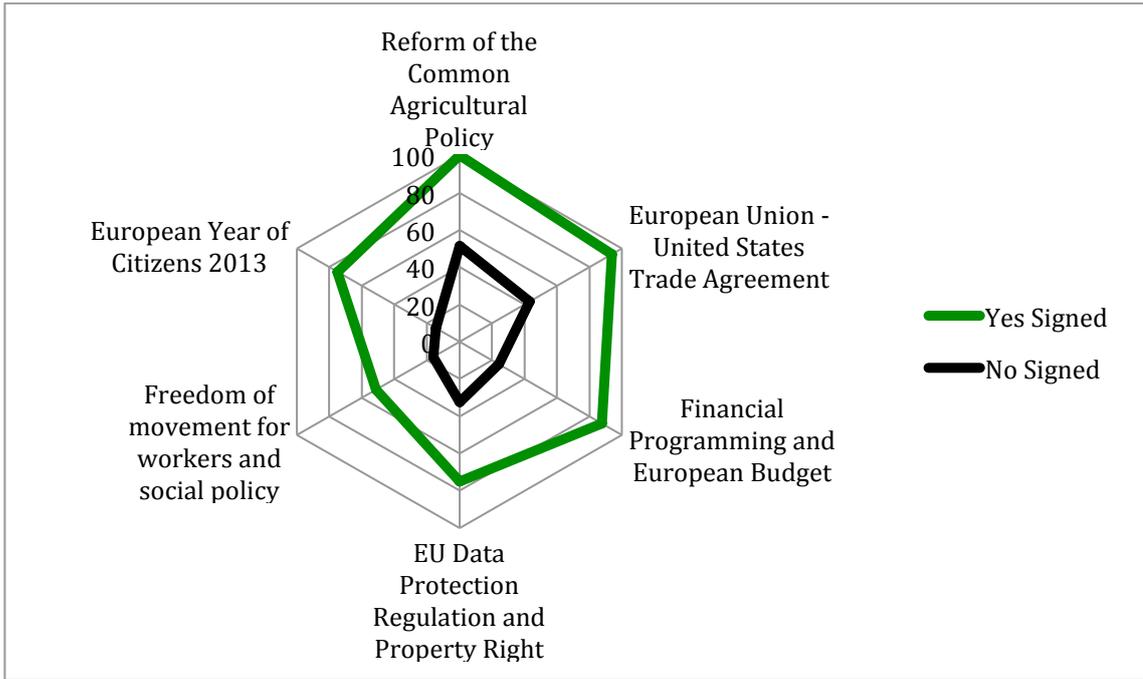
GRAPH 29: SIGNING AN ECI AND LEVELS OF INFORMATION - BRITISH RESPONDENTS
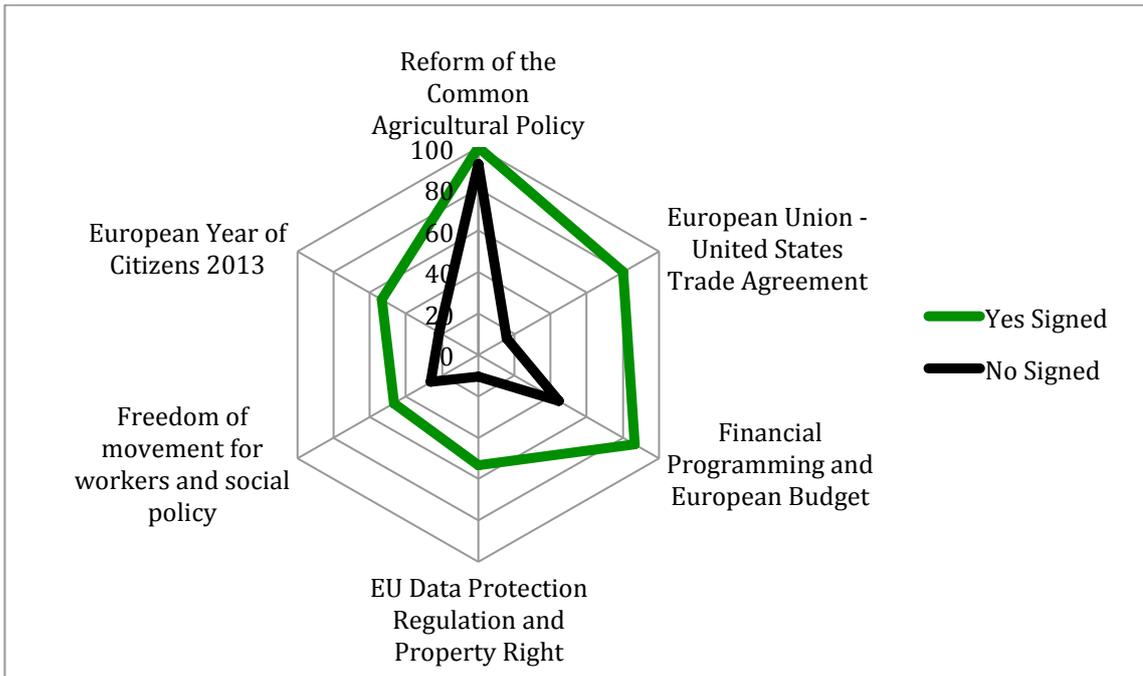
GRAPH 30: SIGNING AN ECI AND LEVELS OF INFORMATION - FRENCH RESPONDENTS

Nonetheless, since a political culture is a prerequisite of participatory democracy, it can be assumed that signing an ECI will trigger more interest towards related European affairs. Moreover, in light of the quite limited awareness of non-economic matters such as the European Year of Citizens 2013, even among signatories, an evident communication endeavor should therefore to target the already very few issues with which EU citizens can directly

relate. However, fostering citizen participation by making issues that should matter to them more visible depends, to a large extent, to higher spheres of authority.

Searching extra information and following up on an ECI have also been discussed as ways to trigger interest towards EU-related topics. Moreover, the race-like spirit or competitive nature associated with the ECI may eventually infatuate with interest citizens who normally would not have paid attention to such enterprise. Moreover, the dialogue and debates engaged subsequently to the launching of an ECI campaign may raise curiosity as the campaign becomes viral. These elements all contribute to the increase of civic competences.

Likewise, voting at the European elections, although surely rather disregarded, is a civic right and duty. It is relevant to note (graphs 31 and 32) that signatories predominately consider voting at the European elections an efficient way to influence political decision-making. A regression conducted on the dependent variable: degree of effectiveness (voting in European elections) shows that signing an ECI (and age) significantly explain the deviations in the dependent variable. Among the 4 points of the Likert scale (No impact, Somewhat effective, Effective and very effective), "no impact" and "effective" are the criteria chosen for having respectively the lowest and highest score among respondents having signed an ECI.
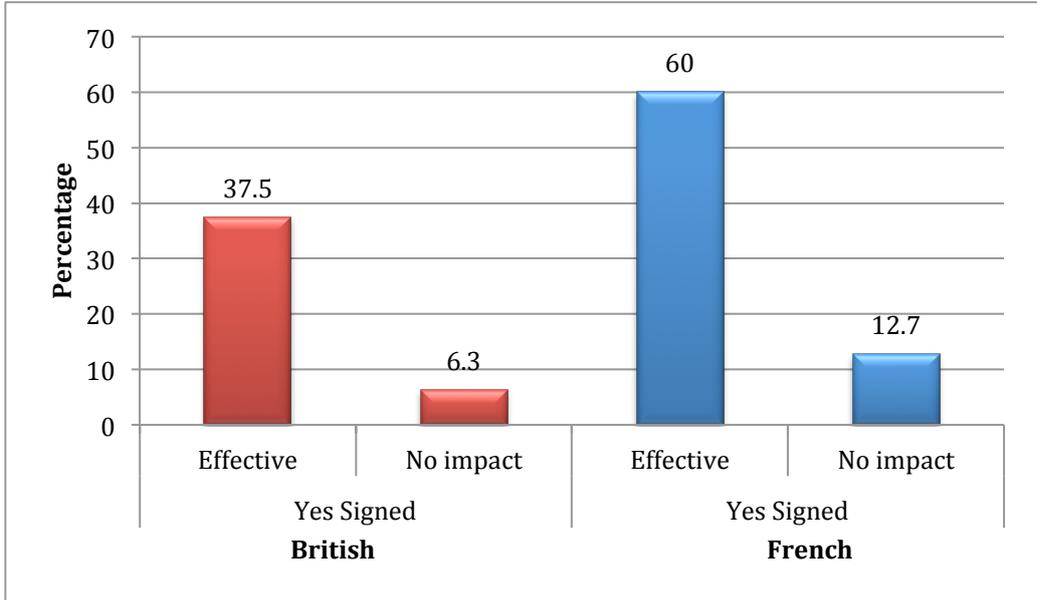
GRAPH 31: SIGNING AN ECI AND PERCEIVED EFFECTIVENESS OF VOTING AT THE EUROPEAN ELECTIONS

Similarly, signing a petition is not surprisingly considered as an efficient mean to influence political decision-making.
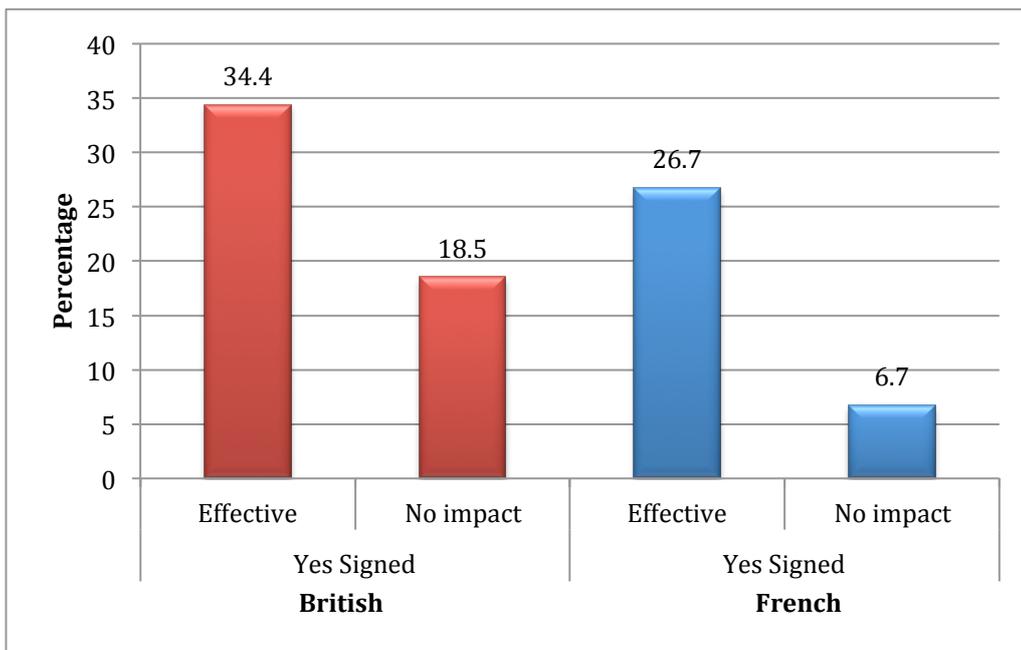
GRAPH 32: SIGNING AN ECI AND PERCEIVED EFFECTIVENESS OF SIGNING A PETITION

Finally, Those who supported an ECI largely believe that the tool will foster citizen participation. The kind or degree of involvement implied is missing but, as a start, every step forward is something gained.
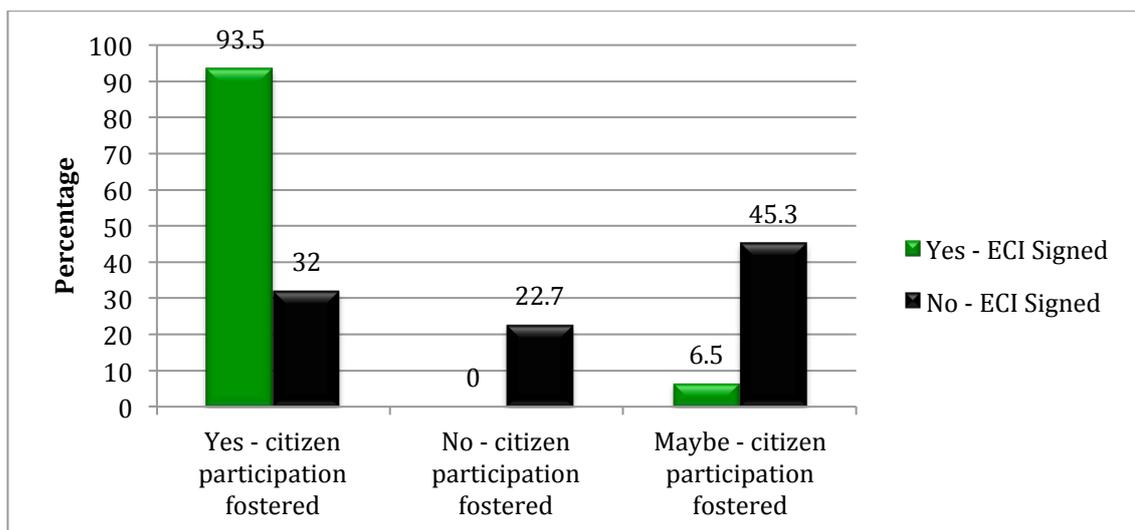
GRAPH 33: SIGNING AN ECI AND PERCEIVED ABILITY TO FOSTER CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

The ability to foster an active citizenship could be seen, in many ways, as an insuperable challenge. It takes time and is laborious until a real culture of participation is created. Some may also argue that the current political trajectory of the European institutions, very much geared towards through the sole pursuit of growth-oriented policies does not leave much room for more social considerations and citizen participation.

3.5   RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

"The cynic would have argued that the governance system always serves the interests of the "Big Capital" and the tools that increase accountability and transparency are meant to make ordinary citizens only believe that they have a voice and influence" (Albert, 2009).

Breaking cynicism has just been stated as a key element supporting the efforts to fill up the gap between citizens and their institutions, hasn't it?

Wicked problems and interconnectedness definitively make the practice of participatory democracy a stumbling block. Can participatory decision-making be truly effective? The ECI is still currently a rather insignificant tool, which however is likely to mushroom and generate numerous initiatives echoing citizen's concerns. In any case, participatory democracy is not something European institutions should be taking lightly.

British and French have views and perceptions, which coincide as often as they strikingly diverge. Cultural and ideological differences, associated with discrepancies regarding knowledge, interest, and considerations over participatory apparatuses, may result in a differentiated view over the kind of challenges faced in the EU. Along the same lines, if problems are country-specific or derived from the country's dominant ideology, responses shall be accordingly tailored. Indeed, the legitimization process and accountability may differ for the same reasons.

With hindsight, looking at the indicators, components and variables assessing the ECI's effectiveness in fostering citizens' interest for European affairs, increasing their comprehension of the EU's functioning and potential influential power over the European decision-making process, it is evidently impossible to clearly statute on whether the ECI is an efficient tool with regards to its democratic deficit reduction potential. Nevertheless, according to the survey's findings, there are variables, which can positively influence the ECI's ability to produce desired effects by reaching its goals. Some others are too unpredictable since being subject to various forces. Inclusiveness, ability to voice and ability to foster active citizenship are all exclusive: if one link is missing in the whole chain, the ECI's effectiveness is undermined.

The evaluation of the ECI shall be continued in the following discussion section, incorporating, besides the survey's highlights, elements of the literature review, experts' testimonies. Furthermore, as part of the future research section, an evaluative framework inserts the ECI within a broader perspective in order to create a more comprehensive assessment which examines how the ECI could the most effectively fulfill its goal.

4. SYNTHESIS AND EVALUATION OF THE ECI

This fourth and ultimate section is the synthesis of the thesis and formulates a skeletal support for evaluating the ECI. The discussion, both conceptually and practically enriched, is accordingly based on three main intertwined analytical categories. These three following point are besides further developed in section 4.1.

- First, the theoretical research, which has highlighted several paradoxes and challenges associated with the evaluation the "democraticness" of any political systems and governing tools, brings a necessary insight on the quintessential values that frame the overall functioning of today's society.

- Second, the analysis of the ECI, its concept, stated goals and concrete application issues stressed by the experts' testimonies provide a tangible approach to the evaluation.

- Third, the survey analysis gives a grasp of the prime stakeholders' understandings, opinions and expectations with regards to the functioning of the EU and the ECI.

This accordingly contributes to stretch the theoretical boundaries limiting the comprehending of the real-world features attached to the so-called democratic deficit. Additionally, given the humongous theoretically based gaps and concrete uncertainties inherently linked to this rather vague and broadly applied term, the development of the reasoning backing the subsequent evaluative discussion requires the concept to be narrowed down. To do so, the European democratic deficit is examined through the lens of the survey's findings. In relation with the core topic of this study, the ultimate goal of this discussion is to comprehensively examine and evaluate the ECI's potential contribution in reducing the EU's democratic deficit, questioning whether the citizens' right of initiative effectively and genuinely brings the EU closer to its citizens. Furthermore, this section sets the foundations for an ECI's evaluative framework (Section 5 on future research), which aims at assessing an ECI's effectiveness in reducing the citizens' perceived democratic deficit. A step-by step approach is adopted and three distinct legitimizing mechanisms associated with respective evaluative information provide the basic structure of this auditing tool.

4.1 ONE STEP BACK TO MOVE FORWARD

Let us face it, these past 108 pages exploring democratic musings, confronting opinions and perceptions on the existence of the European democratic deficit and ways to tackle it, the need for participatory democracy, and of course, the countless challenges and associated dilemma have only uncovered the very tip of the iceberg. At this stage, taking a step back and reflecting on these compound elements and stakes is intricate albeit essential to construct a sound basis for this discussion.

First and foremost, as declared in the introductory section, this study intends to refine what is meant by democratic deficit in the European context. Euphemistically speaking, this disharmony between institutions and citizens, which has so amply been theorized, has without doubt raised more questions than answers. Without re-entering into details in terms of dimensions and ideological understandings of democratic deficit (section 2.2.3), one general point shall still be examined. In fact, views on democratic deficit vary to a large extent whether the EU is comprehended with regards to its institutional form and governance system or in terms of a community's ideational and interactive construction. For reasons outlined in section 1.3, the scope of this study has been notably centered on this former view, i.e. the European decision-making process. Yet, precisely because of the bias and limitedness implied by a strict focus on either one or the other view, this study also deals with elements of the "demos": identity construction, citizenship, civic competences and euroskepticism (sections 2.1.7; 2.2.1; 2.2.3.3), which have been examined in relation with and through an institutional prism.

The scrutiny of the main ideologies justifying and defining democratic deficit (section 2.2.3.1) along with a typology of Euro-skeptics (section 2.2.3.3) and subsequently based on the empirical research's findings (section 3.4) have also revealed that national differences (expected trajectory and shape of the EU, knowledge, perceptions of effectiveness of participatory means, and main problems of the legislative process) may have an impact on the perceptions of legitimacy, accountability and participation. However, the extent to which this affects the ECI is certainly hard to determine, conceptually (sections 2.3.3; 2.3.4) as well as empirically (section 3). This may represent the main irremovable stumbling block, a considerable element making more complex the development of a future ECI's evaluative framework.

Furthermore, the desirability of citizen participation in the decision-making or their potential power has been largely previously debated (sections on citizen participation: 2.1.7. and conclusions on the ECI: 2.4). Earlier conclusions have also notably highlighted the great risks and stakes as well as the need for more citizen inclusiveness. The ECI, although a limited participatory tool, has been shown to enhance aspects contributing to increase, inter alia, civic

competences (Section C of the survey on the ECI and democratic deficit), a significant element positively influencing the democratic deficit. Finding the right balance is indeed a difficult task.

For this reason, from a broader perspective, it is also important to holistically consider the ECI's position within the European governance system so as to enhance its legitimacy, and the accountability of the cooperating institutions. Indeed, the effectiveness of the tool highly relies on its incorporation within the policy circle (as stressed in section 2.3.4 featuring the expert's suggestions). Therefore, the novel characteristics of the ECI entail a reform of the traditional European decision-making process, which, first, poorly suits the tool, and second, undermine its effectiveness. Although such insertion and reform are clearly outside of this study's scope, these aspects should still be kept in mind during the design of an ECI's evaluative framework. Still, a targeted and inclusive approach focusing on this participatory tool can allow the ECI to reveal its best democratic potential ensuring that the various types of legitimacy subsequently mentioned are optimized along with other key democratic principles.

4.2 DISCUSSION: THE ECI AND THE EUROPEAN DEMOCRATIC DEFICIT

This final discussion shall, step by step, argue and evaluate the ECI's input with regards to the reduction of the European democratic deficit. Theories, assumptions attempting to define the European deficit are countless. Yet, for the sake of a more hands-on approach, this conversation starts from the surveys' findings and goes on as to critically incorporate actual facts in order to better interpret the observations.

The empirical research featuring citizen's knowledge on the EU, perceptions and opinions on the ECI has revealed a serious divide between citizens and European institutions. Although widely associated to various factors in the literature, based on the empirical data at hand, this gap or discrepancy is presently explained, in a general manner, along those lines:

Among citizens who stated being…

- Knowledgeable regarding the EU decision-making process,
- Aware of current European issues and
- Able to judge what, according to them, are the main challenges faced by the European institutions,

Among these same citizens who have or have not…

- Heard about the ECI (in any case the survey has provided a basic description of the tool hence making them all on the same awareness level)
- Signed an ECI

… a significant number, notably French respondents, completely rejects the tool, despite of having high expectations regarding its participatory purpose.

How can such rebuff and inconsistency be explained? These citizens have even completely refused to merely consider a tool, which has expressly been described as a mean to give European citizen a say, an opportunity to bring before the decision-making institutions certain concerns or issues which have an impact on their lives and which could eventually be changed or improved. Indeed, the ECI has apparently raised very little interest.

This incoherence is therefore considered as an actual marker of democratic deficit. It further underlines several key questions and assumptions. First, the respondents could presumably reject the ECI for various reasons. The ECI could indeed be seen as the EC's hidden hand, the façade of political correctness, which is to blame for most of the economic of social issues their country is facing. Nationalities can also act like a prism through which perceptions are shaped and directed according the countries' culture, history and also current social environment. The respondents may have precluded – by principle – the ECI because of a currently strong domestic Euro-skeptical or even Euro-phobic atmosphere.

Many interpretations for this near disgust could be brought forward and, obviously, the potential underlying reasons are linked to both internally (institution) and externally (environment)-induced factors. From its side, the EC is apparently trying to (re)-gain European citizens' trust and legitimacy. Yet, what has it actually done to deserve it? Being a democratic system per se is not sufficient, i.e. democratic principles such as transparency and legitimacy should not be taken for granted. The European institutions visibly talk out of both sides of their mouth as recently indicated by the TTIP (Trans-Atlantic Trade Agreement between the United States and the EU) being negotiated being closed doors, a blatant example of transparency. Or gain more recently the conflict between a few member-states (notably Germany and UK) on the nomination of next EC's president, a candidate who should have been automatically selected based on the "winning" political group at the latest European elections. In short, there are many reasons to criticize the EU.

Nonetheless, a point of major concern is to note that, to some extent, citizens give up on a civic right off their own bats. The fact that the ECI is still in its infancy and that "time must be given some time" for the ECI to prove itself, is fully acknowledged. Yet, what if time and more effective communication were not enough?

The metaphor of a sick patient and his treatment is now used to answer the main issue of this section. The EC may be burying its head in the sand if it thinks that giving an aspirin, or even just a mere placebo, to an cancer patient is an efficient treatment. Is there a cure against democratic deficit? And if not, can or better said, for how long can the EU continue living before a generalized fascist cancer delivers a fatal blow? Ubiquitous and latent aftereffects

may even further weaken the social fabric. Yet, many citizens may refuse to take the bitter prescribed pill that is the ECI.

The contribution of the ECI in reducing the democratic deficit is therefore limited in the sense that taken individually any measure or policy simply cannot tackle its pervasive and compound dimensions.

The ECI might have a soothing or relieving effect or possibly the contrary if its outcomes appear consecutively and irremediably the same legislative void. In any case, the European citizenry is in great need of a whole cocktail of medications, a vitamin treatment rather than tranquillizers.

4.3 CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The European Union is an unfinished symphony. Today, the melody has somehow been replaced by cacophony and disharmony. If the music is to return, the musicians will have to accord their instruments and play a repertoire which inspires and resonates in the ears of its 500 millions' listeners. Many, feeling abused, deceived have even already left the concert room, and others keep silence, passively listening sour notes.

The ECI is a unique tool, which seems to have a great potential considering its mixed constitution (half institutional and half grassroots-based). This composition may represent the balance between, on the one hand, the numerous participatory biases and, on the other hand, the government failures and monopolistic tendencies.

Yet, the ECI has already revealed numbers of inborn shortcomings. Those problems are either linked to the slow and laborious implementation phases as well as the necessary adjustments required, aspect which are relatively normal considering the novelty and scalability dimension. However, the European Commission arguably seems to reluctantly clarify and provide support for solving some of the intrinsic technical issues. Other deeper problems relating to the actual nature of the ECI can be seen as inseparable in the ECI's present form.

The stakes are high for the European Commission, especially in regards to its democratic credentials (legitimacy, accountability and participatory deficits). The discussion pondering the potential contribution of the tool in reducing the European democratic deficit, central research engine of this study is obviously limited given the uncertainty attached to the actual reaction of the European Commission.

Will the commission walk the talk? Can the ECI be a catalyst for reform in the EU? The citizens' expectations are high, as much as the frustrations linked to the initial difficulties of concretely applying the tool and the general demand for an increased consideration of citizens' voice.

> *"Europe's citizens have spoken, and today the Commission gave a positive response. Water quality, infrastructure, sanitation and transparency will all benefit – for people in Europe and in developing countries – as a direct result of this first ever exercise in pan-European, citizen-driven democracy. I congratulate the organisers on their achievement"* (Citizens-Initiative, 2014) said the European Commissioner for Inter-Institutional Relations and Administration in charge of the ECIs, Maroš Šefcovic last 19th of March 2014.

Being the first of its kind, the "successful" ECI Right to Water collected 1,659,543 signatures from EU citizens, an impressive result despite the humongous mass of problems faced all along the ECI process. Yet, correspondingly, the European Commission does not intent to follow the legislative path. Instead, decision was made to launch a public consultation on the Drinking Water Directive.

Jan Willem Goudriaan, vice-president of the ECI commented, "*the reaction of the European Commission lacks any real ambition to respond appropriately to the expectations of 1.9 million people*", "*I regret that there is no proposal for legislation recognising the human right to water*" (Citizens-Initiative, 2014, P 2).

So little said for an increased concern of EU citizens' say. Still, the EC's has only ruled on this one ECI. The next ECI to bring forward a completed proposal is the ECI One of Us. The EC' decision may even be more expected given the controversial dimension attached to the precise ECI.

5. FUTURE RESEARCH

The evaluation of an ECI requires large and diverse sources of primary data at hands in order to conduct a thorough assessment. Such data are not collected yet, or to a limited extent. The still recent launching of the tool explain obvious loophole. Besides, the restriction imposed by the rather rigid personal data protection legislation prevents the creation of databases. Nonetheless, the evaluation and monitoring of the ECIs are critical for two reasons: first, to ensure that the main issues are detected and tackled. Second, to identify and stress the ECI's key success factors.

Based on these considerations, the present framework includes aspects of the ECI's effectiveness, which must necessarily be evaluated but for which no actual data is available yet. The aim is to create a narrowed down framework, which can also be applied to various ECIs. Yet, this framework is only a first sketch and would need to be complemented by further research and data collection.

5.1 CONCEPTUAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE ELABORATION OF THE EVALUATIVE FRAMEWORK

A key aspect of policy evaluation being of utmost importance for this study, (especially regarding the effectiveness criteria mentioned in the research question) lies on the assessment of policies' "output" and "input" legitimacy. The EU institutions have for long put the emphasis on gauging the "output legitimacy", which relates, in other words, to "the efficiency or popularity of EU policy outputs". However, a current increased consideration for reforms that would enhance the "input legitimacy", conversely referring to the prime democratic accountability of governing bodies towards the electorate can be observed (Wallace, Wallace, & Pollack, 2005). A recent and quite impressive publication by Vivien Schmidt even stresses the need to evaluate policies according to their "throughput legitimacy", i.e. with regards to the "accountability, transparency and efficiency of the EU decision-making process along with their openness to pluralist consultation with the people" (Schmidt, 2010).

These previous observations are particularly relevant considering the theme of this thesis per se and hence the research method applied. Indeed, decision-making processes, policy evaluation methods, and concrete outcomes of legislations have an influence on citizens' views about the EU's decision-making procedures. Besides, a thorough analysis of a policy life cycle can actually reveal the interdependencies and mutually reinforcing effects between the three previously mentioned legitimizing mechanisms of the process leading to

policy-making (input, throughput and output). Similarly, each of those three analytical categories incorporates and underlines a differentiated role of citizens in influencing the decision-making process. In fact, the "input legitimacy" of a legislation focuses on citizens' political involvement along with authorities' responsiveness to grassroots concerns, and therefore addresses the participatory quality of the process leading to legislation. Alongside, the "throughput" emphasizes on the inclusion of a large array of stakeholders all along the process while the "output", as a performance criterion, underscores the effectiveness of a policy outcome on citizens (Schmidt, 2010).

Indeed, these previous comments regard the legitimizing mechanisms of policies. Nonetheless, borrowing from this system theory approach of the EU policies can be considered an initial comprehensive analytical basis on which to build the ECI's evaluative framework.

5.2 FRAMEWORK'S DESIGN

Central element of this study's research question [7], the evaluation of the ECI's effectiveness in reducing the citizens' perceived democratic deficit is undertaken via several steps. In fact, a systemic approach is adopted to develop a composite evaluative framework. The framework is actually composed of two main phases:

- **I.** The pre-evaluative charter:

This initial step sets the basis and preconditions for the ECI's framework. As noted in section 1.4 on purpose and relevance of the study, making sure that from each "extremity" of the ECI process (from the organizers and from the EC's sides) are coherently functioning together is essential.

- **II.** The core ECI evaluative framework:

As indeed many times mentioned, the European democratic deficit is compound and hardly sizeable due to its multiple facets, which often encompass idealized or biased features that are inaccurately used to evaluate the EU's democratic quality.

Based on the previously mentioned system theory, phase II is hence especially set around three main criteria (input-legitimacy, throughput legitimacy, output legitimacy)

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[7] Are the European Citizens' Initiatives an effective tool to reduce European citizens' perceived democratic deficit?

considered as particularly important for the assessment of the contribution of the ECI to the reduction of democratic deficit. Each of these three legitimacy mechanisms respectively audits the ECI's participatory, deliberative, and problem-solving quality. Besides, the auditing goes further as to assimilate the three main composite elements used in section 3.4.5 on the survey's analysis of "democratic deficit and ECI" (inclusiveness, ability to voice, and ability to foster an active citizenship).

Additionally, in the second phase, actual core of the ECI's framework, all components, criteria and interdependencies are set out. Likewise, more practical evaluative questions are associated to each criterion in order to add a more hands-on oriented dimension to the overall evaluation of the devise under scrutiny. On the same lines, these questions are guiding the investigation and highlighting what is actually being monitored, where to look for it, how to establish its accuracy and what is regarded as the most effective level of attainment. Details specifying the context and actors involved are also provided.

The illustration 7 may clarify the main structure of the overall framework.
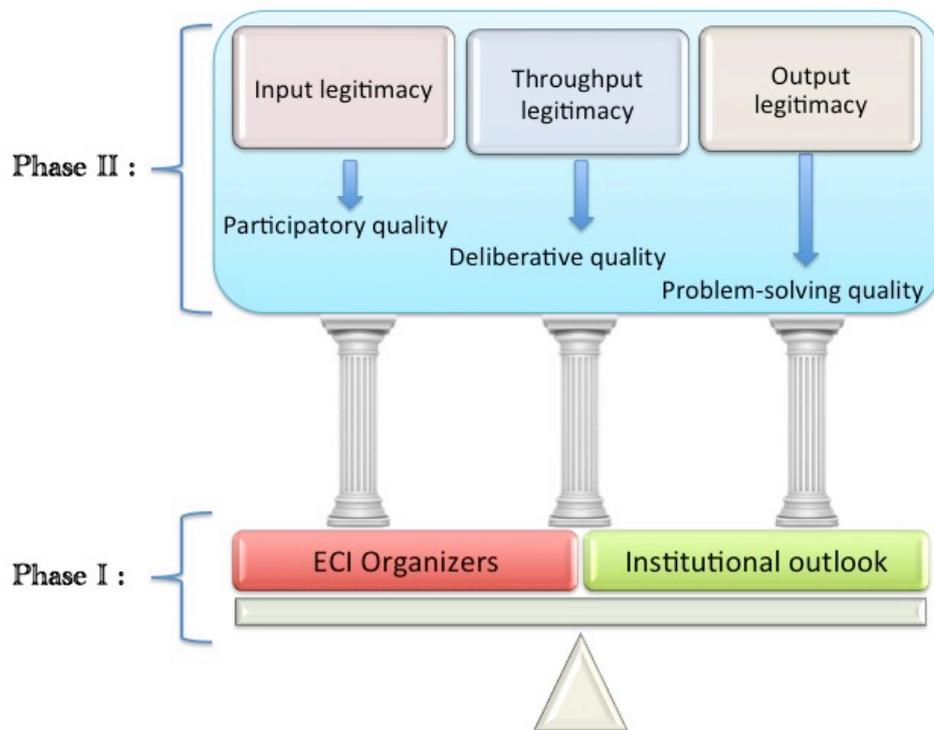
FIGURE 7: STRUCTURE OF THE EVALUATIVE FRAMEWORK

5.3 PRE-EVALUATIVE CHARTER

First and foremost, the study's evaluation framework requires an imperative fertile and adequate basis on which to be applied. This is to say that there are essential preconditions, which need to be fulfilled from two sides: from the institutional perspective and from the ECI's initiators side. Indeed, the effectiveness of the ECI requires a synergic combination of contributions from those two outlooks.

5.3.1   Phase I: Institutional outlook

The following table shows the four main pre-evaluation steps that must be satisfied by the European Commission. A more detailed description is thereafter provided.

1- Set out a participatory democratic strategy

2- Effective communication

3- Political feasibility and actual willingness

4- Clear rules of the game

TABLE 4: PHASE I: PRE-EVALUATION REQUIREMENTS - INSTITUTIONAL OUTLOOK

Indeed, citizen participation shall be encompassed within an overall strategy, hence entailing a consistent, thorough, genuine and sustainable vision. Embed the ECI within a long run strategy would also enable the systematization of the ECI procedures, hence allowing the development of a participatory custom. A participatory democratic project, or better said, a participatory strategy is consequently a must. The "Year of Citizens 2013", the ECI's main promotional vehicle, is per se a counter example to what should be undertaken. The results of the survey indicate how communication endeavors have failed to reach European citizens (the significance and limitedness of the survey's results are of course taken into consideration). Still, the year is over and no real feedback has come. Should European citizens wait for the eve of the next European elections before seeing such promotional campaign? The point raised is

clearly linked to the EC's communication gap. If national medias may have their fair share of responsibility, they cannot either receive all the blame.

Likewise, an undeniable requirement lies in the actual political willingness of developing a participatory tool, which truly and equitably involve citizens meanwhile empowering them. Going beyond political feasibility, it is only if this kind of political willingness is achieved and recognized that the first pre-evaluative steps can be passed. Yet striding into democratic terra incognita is not the EC's forte. The idealistic dimension of this element is fully recognized. Coherency between political or marketing-like discourses and actual undertakings may be a more pragmatic suggestion.

Along the same lines, an essential pre-condition is to ensure that the rules of the game are transparently and coherently set. If citizens are told that such a tool like the ECI enable them to gain a real decision power, then the terms, conditions and degree of impact of the EC's ultimate decision need to be clearly defined, disclosed and effectively communicated for each ECI. This means, for instance, that a clear distinction must be made whether the participation procedures are only consultative or involve citizens in the decision-making to a greater extent. The discussion on "purely" participatory tools has raised undesirable (because undemocratic) issues. Yet, citizens must know what to expect from such tool.

5.3.2   ECIs' administrators outlook

The following scheme presents the main pre-evaluative steps that shall be satisfied by the ECIs' initiators. The aim is to ensure that the ECI is, from the very beginning, administrated in the most coherent and legitimate manner.

TABLE 5: PRE-EVALUATION REQUIREMENTS - ECI'S INITIATORS OUTLOOK

1- Europeanization of the ECI

2- Supportive divers network

3- Independence

4- Plurilateral collection techniques
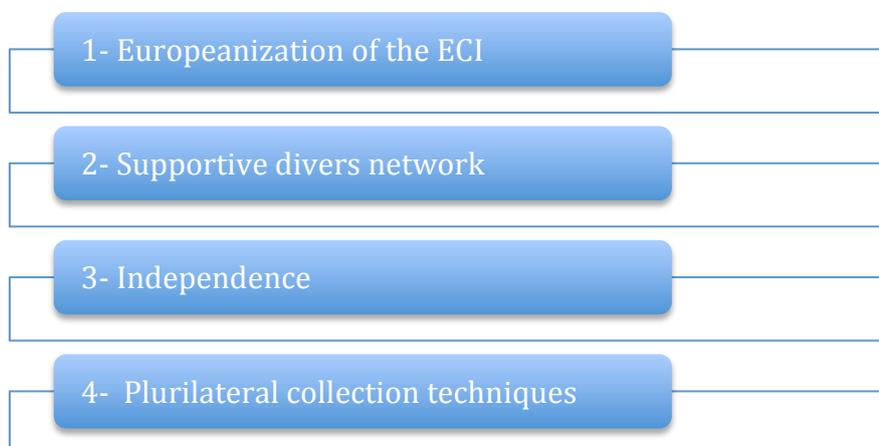
First, the Europeanization of the ECI refers to the critical aspect of multiple interests and variety of issues generating a fluctuating degree of reaction and participation (see section 2.1.7 on citizen participation critique). In fact, the definition of the core subject of an ECI shall be as much "European" as possible, meaning affecting to a relatively similar extent all European Citizens. This way, a sense of community and cohesion could be facilitated and therefore contribute to increase the effectiveness of the signatures collection. As an example, an impressive outpouring of support has resulted from the mobilization of signatories sharing the views held by the pro-life ECI "One of Us". The signatories mostly originated from predominantly Catholic or relatively "socially conservative" countries.

Nonetheless, the related national biases highlighted by the survey's results can also represent a counter argument. Indeed, cultural or ideological perceptions can undermine these fragile spheres of cooperation. Yet, this observation is not necessarily negative or regrettable. Indeed the plurality of opinions and freedom of speech are substantial democratic principles.

Second and third, the initial creation of a supportive network of various organizations (civil preferably in order to avoid any conflicts of interest and other accusations related to lobbyism, an aspect which is considered, according to the survey results as one prime problem in the EU) is an essential criterion. In fact, the most successful ECIs (i.e. the ones that have the most effectively and rapidly collected signatures, see details in appendix 1) are the ones that have developed the wider and diverse network of organization that support them in collecting and communicating on their actions. Similarly, section 2.3.2, introducing the three first ECIs to reach the 1 million signatures threshold details how this trans-national cooperation between devoted volunteers and networks of civil society organizations have managed to exploit and spread an existing pan-European interest and concern for their respective initiative.

Finally, in order to be as inclusive (and legitimate from scratch) as possible, the collection of signatures shall not only be undertaken online but also equally on the field in order to reach a wider population (hence somehow limiting the digital gap).

5.4 EVALUATIVE FRAMEWORK PRESENTATION

Three main legitimizing mechanisms are hence used to develop an inclusive evaluative framework of an ECI "by and of the people", "with the people", "for the people".

4.5.1 Input legitimacy

Input legitimacy *"by and of the people"*	
Features / goals	Evaluation of the ECI's participatory quality: - Citizens representativeness (Nationality-wise) - Citizens Inclusiveness (in terms of social categories, equal participation opportunities and degree of influence) - Responsiveness to citizens' concerns - Citizens ' mobilization
Evaluative questions	- How diverse are the traditional medias or social network channels are being used to spread information about a new ECI? - Is the initiative "European" or nationally driven? - What is the signature collection rate?
Elements monitored (where to look for the information)	- News media channel, nationals and European - Social networks - Demographic data collected by the ECI's organizers - Official European webpages - ECI's websites
Indicators	- Source / information point - Social backgrounds, age, gender - Number of civil society organizations involved - Number of signatories - Number of volunteers

4.5.2   Throughput legitimacy

Throughput legitimacy *"with the people"*	
Features / goals	Evaluation of the ECI's deliberative quality: - Accountability, transparency and efficiency of the ECI process (procedural legitimacy) - Access to information during the campaign - Cost utility/ effectiveness
Evaluative questions	- What is the signature collection rate? - How often do the initiators communicate? - Do they publish a newsletter?
Elements monitored **(where to look for the information)**	- ECIs' websites - News media / social networks
Indicators	- Increase/ decrease/stagnation of signatures collection - Amount of money raised - Origin of the donators - Frequency – disclosure of updates on the ECI's progress (statements of support) - Online collection & paper collection - Publication of articles related to the ECI

4.5.3 Output legitimacy

Output legitimacy *"for the people"*	
Features / goals	Evaluation of the ECI's problem-solving quality: - Effectiveness of the ECI's outcome - Insertion within the European policy circle - Universal public service provision - Feedback effect - Monitoring - Civic citizenship
Evaluative questions	- How thorough is the feedback delivered by the EC? - Are the initiative's stated goals aligned with the EC's answer?
Elements monitored (where to look for the information)	- EC's official media channels - News media / social networks
Indicators	- Number of signatories repeatedly signing ECIs - Attendance rates at the public hearing - Creation of civic forums/ platforms

Besides being further completed in terms of indicators, the evaluative framework should comprise an appropriate time frame detailing a targeted approach for each phase of the ECI. The three legitimacies already somehow dovetail the initial launching phase of an ECI campaign, the signatures' collection phase and the final submission stage.

Likewise, it is relevant to question who should be in charge of conducting such audit. Based on, inter alia, the experts' testimonies, a completely independent or mixed body composed of experienced initiators, civil society representatives and EC' delegates shall take on this responsibility.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Overview on the registered ECIs after one year

YEAR ONE
365 Days of European Citizens' Initiative Activity

ECI (Commission Registration number)	Title	Timing (1: Registration /Non- Registration; 2: Deadline)	Progress (Number of reported statements of support by March 10)	Documentation	Language	Funds	Mode	Info
(2012) 000001	Fraternité 2020 - Mobility. Progress. Europe.	09/05/2012 – 01/11/2013	60'348 (MAR22)	www.F2020.eu @fraternite_2020 en.fraternite2020.eu/ signatures.htm https://www.facebook.com/ Fraternite2020	Proposal (all), Website (all)	Reported funding: € 2907	Online	Pro-european networking (No draft legal act) Signature counter per country on FB
(2012) 000002	Single Communication Tariff Act*	10/05/2012 – 03/12/2012	Did not start to collect before relaunching as ECI (2012)16	> ECI (2012)000016				
(2012) 000003	Water and sanitation are a human right! Water is a public good, not a commodity!	10/05/2012 – 01/11/2013	1'308'765 (MAR25)	www.right2water.eu @right2water www.facebook.com/pages/ right2water/	Proposal (all), Website (10)	Reported funding: € 100'000	Online & paper	Against privatisation of wate resources (no draft legal act) Signature Counter No country per country statistics publisheh
(2012) 000004	EU Directive on Dairy Cow Welfare	10/05/2012 -> (WD) 20/07/2012	Did start to collect on paper before withdrawing in July 2012	www.happycows.eu (transformed into a general campaign and petition website)#happycows				„Please show the cows some love", PR for Ben&Jerry icemaker **"35000 signatures for petition"
(2012) 000005	One of us	11/05/2012 - 01/11/2013	133'807(MAR25)	www.oneofus.eu www.facebook.com/pages /ONE-OF- US/144037745755884 @oneofus	Proposal (most), Website (most	Reported funding: € 50'000	Online & paper	Banning related funding (draft legal act) Signature Counter No country per country statistics published **Former Pope signed as German citizen
(2012) 000006	Let me vote	11/05/2012 -> (WD) 29/01/2013	Did not start to collect before relaunching as ECI (2013)3	> ECI (2013)000003				
NN	My voice against nuclear power	30/05/2012	Did readapt with new ECI (and got pre-ok) but have put campaign on hold	www.my-voice.eu				Anti-nuclear campaign **"20'000 have joined the movement"
NN	Recommend singing the European Anthem in Esperanto	30/05/2012	Filed the initiative on April 1 and published communique in all languages	www.europo.eu				Adding esperanto version to EU hymne
NN	EU citizenship after secession	30/05/2012						** Oral question in EP after refusal (25-07-12), was answered by Mr. Barroso (28-08-12)
(2012) 000007	Stop vivisection	22/06/2012 – 01/11/2013	115'997 (MAR10)	www.stopvivisection.eu www.facebook.com/Stop Vivisection #Vivisection	Proposal (all), Website (9)	Reported funding: € 8901 (from Italy only)	Online & paper	Phasing out animal experiences (no draft legal act)
(2012) 000008	High Quality European Education for All	16/07/2012 – 01/11/2013	??? (MAR25, no published info) – did start to gather online from December 6/12	www.EuroEdTrust.eu	Proposal (all), Website (10)	Reported funding: € 12000	Online	Unifying education in Europe (no draft legal act)
(2012) 000009	Initiative responsible waste management	16/07/2012 – 01/11/2013	??? (MAR25, no published info) – did start to gather on paper from July 16/12	ice.id.st	Proposal (6), Website (1)	Low	Paper	Responsible management and treatment of waste (no draft legal act)
NN	Abolition of bullfighting	19/07/2012	Tried to re-register with an adapted ECI in august 12 but did give up in October	www.aboliciontauromaquia. com				
(2012) 000010	Suspension of the EU Climate&Energy Package	08/08/2012 – 01/11/2013	??? (MAR25, no published info) – did start to gather	www.affordable-energy.eu	Proposal (16), Website (1)	Report funding: €2500, EFD EP	Online	Suspend the 2009 EU Climate & Energy Package (no draft legal act)
(2012) 000011	Central public online collection platform for the European Citizen Initiative	27/08/2012 – 01/11/2013	No gathering	No website	Proposal (1)	Low	No	Instrumental Test-ECI by in-dependent developers for the Online Collection System (no draft legal act)
NN	Creation of a European Public Bank focuses on the social, ecological and solidarity	06/09/2012						**European Left Party initiative
NN	Unconditional Basic Income	06/09/2012	Did not start to collect before relaunching as ECI (2013)1	> ECI (2013)000001				
NN	„A Europe of Solidarity"	06/09/2012	Have appealed to European Court of Justice regarding the refusal to register by the Commission	http://www. 1millionsignatures.eu				** SEISACHTHEIA, Greek Debt Release Campaign , „83500 supporters"
(2012) 000012	End Ecocide in Europe: A Citizens' Initiative to give the Earth Rights	01/10/2012 -> (WD) 21/01/2013	Did not start to collect before relaunching as ECI (2013)1	> ECI (2013)000002				
> ECI (2013)000002	European Initiative for Media Pluralism	05/10/2012 – 01/11/2013	2323 (MAR25)	www.mediainitiative.eu	Proposal (9), Website (10)	Report funding: €2000	Online	Proposes legislations against media concentration (no draft legal act) Signature Counter No country per country statistics published
(2012) 000014	30 km/h – making the streets liveable!"	13/11/2012	17220 (MAR25)	www.30kmh.eu FB: /30kmh.eu	Proposal (14), Website (6)	Report funding: €5050	Online & paper	Signature Counter for each Member State
(2012) 000015	Termination of the contract of free movement with Switzerland	19/11/2012 -> (WD) 04/02/2013	Did not start to collect before withdrawing in February 2013	www.swissout.eu	Proposal (1), Webseite (2)	Report funding: €150'000		End free movement with Switzerland **"Happy with the Swiss government"
(2012) 000016	Single Communication TariffAct (Version 2)	03/12/2012	??? (MAR25, no published info) – did start to gather from December 3, 2012	www.onesingletariff.com FB: /OneSingleTariff TW: @ONESINGLETARIFF	Proposal (all), Website (4)	Report funding: €2000	Online	Unified flat-rate across Europe (draft legal act)
(2013) 000001	Unconditional Basic Income	14/01/2013 – 14/01/2014	3264 (MAR25), did start to gather signatures on March 21	www.basicincome2013.eu	Proposal (10), Website (17)	No reported funding	Online	Asking the Commission to encourage the member states...
(2013) 000002	End Ecocide in Europe: A Citizens' Initiative to give the Earth Rights	21/01/2013 – 21/01/2014	15331 (MAR25)	www.endecocide.eu	Proposal (15), Website (22)	Report funding: €3324	Online	Adopt legislation to prohibit, prevent and pre-empt Ecocide (no draft legal act), signature counter per country
NN	Enforcing selfdetermination Human Right in the EU	21/01/2013		www.europeancitizensdecide. eu	Website (9)			More freedom and self-determination for regional entities across Europe
(2013) 000003	Letmevote	28/01/2013- 28/01/2014	No gathering (yet)	www.letmevote.eu	Proposal (11), Website (3)	No reported funding	No	Resident voting rights for all EU citizens (no draft legal act)

Sources: ec.europa.eu/citizens-initiative, ECI websites (see above)/ Status: 25.3.2013
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Appendix 3: Questionnaire

SECTION I

In general, how much do you know about the legislative process in the European Union?	1=low; 5=excellent
For each of the following European Institutions or representative, please indicate how familiar are you with their respective roles and powers.	The European Commission; The European Parliament; The European Council; The European Ombudsman / Unknown; Little Knowledge; average knowledge; excellent
Which of the following piece(s) of European legislation or current affairs have you heard of?	Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy; European Union - United States Trade Agreement; Financial Programming and European Budget; EU Data Protection Regulation and Property Right; Freedom of movement for workers and social policy; European Year of Citizens 2013; None
Can you name one or more of your national representative in the European Parliament (MEPs)?	Yes/No
For each of the following actions, please indicate the degree of effectiveness in influencing political decision-making?	Voting in local/regional elections; Voting in national elections; Voting in European elections; Taking part in a demonstration; Signing a petition; Joining a political party or an association / No impact; Somewhat effective; Effective; Very effective
What are, according to you, the main problem(s) with the European decision-making process?	Bureaucracy; Lack of transparency; Remoteness of the institutions; Influence from lobbyists; other

SECTION II: The ECI

The European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) is the first transnational instrument of participatory democracy and enables one million EU citizens to call directly on the European Commission to propose legislations of interest. Have you heard of it?	Yes/No
Have you signed one or several of ECI?	Yes/No
What are your main expectations towards the ECI?	Increased consideration of citizens' voice; Creation of debates around topics relevant to EU citizens; Provide opportunities to disseminate information / raise awareness; Ensure popular acceptance of European legislations; No expectations; other
Do you think this instrument will actually foster citizen participation in the European political affairs?	Yes/No/ Maybe
Will you follow up the evolution of the ECI you have supported or will you seek more information on what the ECI is?	Yes/No

SECTION III: Demographic data

What is your gender?   Male/Female

What is your age?

What is your nationality?

Which of the following categories best describes your area of employment?

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

Appendix 4: Degree of familiarity with European institutions by nationality

Percentage

	EC			EP			European Council			Ombudsman		
	British	French	Total	British	French	Total	British	French	Total	British	French	Total
Unknown	7.5	1.9	4.7	7.5	1.9	4.7	24.5	9.4	17	52.8	43.4	48.1
Little knowledge	28.3	45.3	36.8	26.4	43.4	34.9	34	39.6	36.8	20.8	45.3	33
Average knowledge	41.5	49.1	45.3	41.5	50.9	46.3	28.3	50.9	39.6	15.1	5.7	10.4
Excellent	22.6	3.8	13.2	24.5	3.8	14.2	13.2	0	6.6	11.3	0	5.7

Legend: Unknown, Little knowledge, Average knowledge, Excellent

Appendix 5: ANOVA – Regression; Section A

ANOVAa						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	43.483	6	7.247	6.921	.000b
	Residual	100.517	96	1.047		
	Total	144	102			
a Dependent Variable: Q 1) knowledge about the legislative process in the European Union						
b Predictors: (Constant): age, gender, Q.2) Familiarity with European Institutions [The European Ombudsman]; [The European Parliament]; [The European Council]; [The European Commission]						

Appendix 6: ANOVA – Regression; Section ECI and democratic deficit

ANOVA a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	38,545	3	12,848	31,037	0,000b
	Residual	30,634	74	0,414		
	Total	69,179	77			
a Dependent Variable: 5) Indicate the degree of effectiveness in influencing political decision-making? [Voting in European elections]						
b Predictors: (Constant): age, Sign ECI, Education						

Coefficients a					
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Model	B	std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1 (Constant)	4,205	0,396		10,630	0,000
Age	0,146	0,059	0,194	2,493	0,015
Education	-0,059	,049	-0,097	-1,195	0,236
Sign ECI	-1,473	0,164	-0,730	-8,972	0,000
a. dependent variable: degree effectiveness (voting in European elections)					

Appendix 7: Indicators – Empirical research on euroscepticism

	IDEOLOGY		UTILITY		SOVE-REIGNTY	PRINCIPLED
	A 'Democracy'	B 'Social EU'	A 'Benefit'	B 'Efficiency'		
1	Satisfaction with EU-democracy: *'Not very satisfied'* plus *'not at all satisfied'*	Fears about the EU: *'The loss of social benefits'*	Benefit from membership: *'No benefit'*	Meaning of the EU: *'Bureaucracy'*	A European Government: *'No support'* (plus *'no need'* in 1996*)*	Opinion about membership: *'Bad thing'*
2	Reason for opposing the Constitution: *'Not democratic enough'*	Reason for opposing the Constitution: *'Not enough social Europe'*	Meaning of the EU: *'A waste of money'*	Reason for opposing the Constitution: *'Too technocratic/ juridical/ too much regulation'*	Reason for opposing the Constitution: *'Loss of national sovereignty'*	Reason for opposing the Constitution: *'Against Europe/ European construction/ European integration'*
3	The EU listens to the opinions of people like me: *'Disagree'*	EU proposi-tions: *'There should be closer cooperation between member states in social matters – Agree'*	Role of the EU in different areas: *'The economic situation – negative role'*	Fears connected to integration: *'Decision taken more slowly because of bureaucracy'*	EU integration is a threat to national identity: *'Agree'*	Personal feelings about the EU: *'Rejecting it'*
4	The European Parliament's ability to protect citizens: *'Not well'* plus *'not at all well'*	EUpriorities: *'EU should give more attention to social justice'* plus *'EU should give more help to socially excluded people in the EU'*	Effect of the EU in specific areas (7 areas): *'Bad'* plus *'very bad' effect*	Effective-ness of EU-policies: *'Protecting the environment – not effective'*	National or joint European decision-making (17 policy areas): *'National only'*	EU Referendum: *'Leave the EU'*

Source: (Sørensen, 2010)

Appendix 7: Mean Ranks – Section A

Mean Ranks

What is your Nationality		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Section A				
1) In general, how much do you k2w about the legislative process in the European Union?	British	53	55.51	2942.00
	French	53	51.49	2729.00
	Total	106		
2) For each of the following European Institutions or representative, please indicate how familiar are you with their respective roles and powers. [The European Commission]	British	53	58.26	3088.00
	French	53	48.74	2583.00
	Total	106		
Q 2) [The European Parliament]	British	53	58.66	3109.00
	French	53	48.34	2562.00
	Total	106		
2) [The European Council]	British	53	51.06	2706.00
	French	53	55.94	2965.00
	Total	106		
2) [The European Ombudsman]	British	53	53.32	2826.00
	French	50	50.60	2530.00
	Total	103		
3) Which of the following piece(s) of European legislation or current affairs have you heard of?1	British	35	43.00	1505.00
	French	50	43.00	2150.00
	Total	85		
3) 2	British	31	25.00	775.00
	French	18	25.00	450.00
	Total	49		
3) 3	British	23	27.00	621.00
	French	30	27.00	810.00
	Total	53		
3) 4	British	24	18.50	444.00
	French	12	18.50	222.00
	Total	36		
3) q 5	British	11	14.50	159.50
	French	17	14.50	246.50
	Total	28		
3) q 6	British	21	21.00	441.00
	French	20	21.00	420.00
	Total	41		
3) q 7	British	8	5.00	40.00
	French	1	5.00	5.00
	Total	9		
4) a Can you name one or more of your national representative in the European Parliament (MEPs)?	British	53	58.50	3100.50
	French	53	48.50	2570.50

Appendix 8: Survey section ECI & Democratic deficit – Inclusiveness - Education

What is the highest level of Education you have completed?

8) Have you signed one or several of ECI?			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	Valid	High school or equivalent	1	3.2	3.2	3.2
		College	4	12.9	12.9	16.1
		Bachelor's degree	6	19.4	19.4	35.5
		Master's degree	12	38.7	38.7	74.2
		Doctoral degree	5	16.1	16.1	90.3
		Professional degree	3	9.7	9.7	100.0
		Total	31	100.0	100.0	
No	Valid	High school or equivalent	16	21.3	21.3	21.3
		College	22	29.3	29.3	50.7
		Bachelor's degree	18	24.0	24.0	74.7
		Master's degree	7	9.3	9.3	84.0
		Doctoral degree	1	1.3	1.3	85.3
		Professional degree	11	14.7	14.7	100.0
		Total	75	100.0	100.0	

Appendix 9: Survey section ECI & Democratic deficit – Inclusiveness – Employment areas

Which of the following categories best describes your area of employment?

8) Have you signed one or several of ECI?			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	Valid	Student	3	9.7	9.7	9.7
		Education	5	16.1	16.1	25.8
		Finance and insurance	3	9.7	9.7	35.5
		Government and public Administration	2	6.5	6.5	41.9
		Health care, Social assistance	1	3.2	3.2	45.2
		Information service and data	2	6.5	6.5	51.6
		Retail	3	9.7	9.7	61.3
		Telecommunications	3	9.7	9.7	71.0
		Tourism industry	1	3.2	3.2	74.2
		Self-employed	8	25.8	25.8	100.0
		Total	31	100.0	100.0	
No	Valid	Student	9	12.0	12.0	12.0
		Retired	7	9.3	9.3	21.3
		Unemployed	9	12.0	12.0	33.3
		Homemaker	3	4.0	4.0	37.3
		Agriculture, fishing, forestry	5	6.7	6.7	44.0
		Art, Entertainment	6	8.0	8.0	52.0
		Education	2	2.7	2.7	54.7
		Construction	4	5.3	5.3	60.0
		Finance and insurance	5	6.7	6.7	66.7
		Government and public Administration	2	2.7	2.7	69.3
		Health care, Social assistance	4	5.3	5.3	74.7
		Information service and data	3	4.0	4.0	78.7
		Retail	5	6.7	6.7	85.3
		Telecommunications	5	6.7	6.7	92.0
		Tourism industry	6	8.0	8.0	100.0
		Total	75	100.0	100.0	