MSc Thesis Abstract

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The European Union is vehemently criticized for its presumed ‘*democratic deficit*’. The fierce critics mainly anathematize this political system for lacking democratic legitimacy. However, this paper argues that much of the animadversion is actually untenable. In fact, democracy is experiencing a process of abstraction, in which political authority is gradually shifting from the national to the supra-national level. Thus, it follows that the European Union is characterized by a complex multi-governance structure, which is ineffable to the average citizen in Europe. Therefore, people merely consider this political system to be excessively remote and are apathetic towards the wheeling and dealing of supra-national politics. To make matters worse, national politicians are incline to use “*the EU*” as a scapegoat for unpopular decisions. Hence, the preposterous debacle of the European Union.

This paper employs a mixed methods research design, which consists of a survey with eighty-eight Austrian graduate students (i.e. quantitative phase) and expert interviews with six Austrian members of the European Parliament (i.e. qualitative phase). The results of the survey reveal that young people are oblivious to the structure and functioning of the European Union, whereas the findings of the interviews bespeak the urgency to educate citizens through enhanced civic education in the member states. Finally, the author develops a conceptual framework - **the** **knowledge-trust nexus** - so as to equip responsible entities with the theoretical foundation necessary to embark on a crusade against ignorance meant to revive democracy in Europe.