

## **The Project**

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### **THE IDEA**

The history of the European Union is a success story. It stands for more than sixty years of peace, freedom, rule of law and prosperity. Never before in Europe's history were so many people so well off, and never before was a war on European soil so unlikely.

But still: the European success story is stuck today in a deeply rooted crisis of legitimacy. The dilemma did not begin with the current financial and economic crisis, during which the Euro, a major integration project, is called into question. Also, the crisis did not begin with the project of a European Constitution, which failed in polls in France and the Netherlands. The above mentioned examples are merely points of culmination, where Europe's basic plight can be experienced. The root causes, however, are more substantial and run deeper.

### **The Problem: A Lack of Communication**

Europe's crisis of legitimacy, expressed in low levels of consent and sympathy to the European Union, is rather a crisis of communication between policy makers and citizens. In the public perception, "Europe" is a bureaucratic elite project, which has long since decoupled from the reality of its citizens. Whereas technical and administrative procedures "in Brussels" have intensified during the last decades, effective public communication of this process was in short supply. Politicians have failed to raise awareness among European citizens, and the necessity and usefulness of European integration was not communicated sufficiently.

The collective experience of war, misery and displacement, the bearers of European integration over the first decades, are gradually fading into the mists of history. A convincing replacement for this legitimacy has not yet been found. However, as a response to the challenges of globalisation, a united Europe is today as important as it was sixty years ago.

### **The Solution: Involvement of the Citizens**

Europe's legitimacy crisis can be resolved only by its own citizens. Europe will either be supported in the long term by a wide segment of its population - or it will fail. The calls for a radical shift away from Europe, which were expressed during the current Euro crisis, must be understood as a warning signal. The emergence of a robust European identity, supported by common values, is essential for lasting progress in the integration process. However, EU citizens are still far away from this common European consciousness. As a prerequisite and a first step into this direction, the existing mutual information deficit needs to be reduced. And this is where Cosmopublic.eu comes in.

### **What Moves your Neighbour?**

Not least, the current euro crisis has shown that Europeans know too little about each other. Although there is some basic historical knowledge, most of the time we are informed only superficially about the issues which dominate public opinion in our neighbouring countries. Hardly anyone knows much about current debates or social developments in the neighbourhood, and stereotypes often dominate the perception of each other. This unfortunately leads to misunderstandings and irritations.

It is obvious that a pan-European public does not yet exist. For the public discourse, the nation-state is still the crucial frame of reference, structuring feeling, thinking and living. There is a lack of information services contributing to a better understanding of European neighbours, their worries and problems, their lifestyle and self-understanding. To reduce this lack of information is a prerequisite to overcome deeply rooted prejudices.

Currently, there are some attempts to create a pan-European public by seeking to identify pan-European issues. However, these projects are at present merely artificial. If the idea of Europe is to emerge stronger from its current crisis, mutual misunderstandings have to be overcome in favour of a relationship based on respect, understanding and trust.

### **Cosmopublic.eu is born**

Therefore, the prime objective of the European Cosmopublic Project (ECP) is to establish a web-based information service that allows the interested public to gain a quick and thorough overview of developments and debates within the member states of

the European Union. With Cosmopublic.eu, the ECP therefore seeks to make a long-term contribution to overcome the crisis of Europe, because in the long run, the European Union can only be based on a common sense of its citizens. Only on this basis it can successfully meet the challenges of a globalised world.

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## **PROJECT STATUS**

**Cosmopublic.eu** is online since early April 2010. Based on a sophisticated methodological concept, a German Editorial publishes **Cosmopublic Country Reports** ever since on a two-weekly basis. These reports sum up current debates and discussions which have characterised the German public sphere.

The main topics of public discussions are determined by an author team through continuous monitoring. For this purpose, the key print media, online sources and television news are evaluated on a permanent basis. To ensure a balanced and neutral coverage, the ECP has conducted an independent analysis of the German media landscape. The offer is complemented by selected background information on certain topics to increase understanding for foreign readers.

But **Cosmopublic.eu** is of course not limited to Germany. Already since November 2011, we are also reporting from Poland. In 2012, we opened new editorials in Belgium and the Netherlands. In 2013, Italy, Sweden, France and Bulgaria came on board. In 2014, we were joined by Spain and Hungary, followed by Portugal, the UK and Romania in 2015. In 2016, we welcomed Finland to the ever growing Cosmopublic.eu family.

If you are interested and would like to learn more about our project, please contact us via [contact@cosmopublic.eu](mailto:contact@cosmopublic.eu)

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