

## **The Problem of “Democratic Deficit” in the European Union**

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### **Abstract**

*This study tries to understand the causes and effects of the problem of democratic deficit in the European Union (EU). There is a multitude of reasons and solutions regarding the democratic deficit in the EU, which lead to complex interpretations. Generally, academic literature on the issue of democratic deficit in EU relies on two opposing arguments. The majority argument is that there is democratic deficit in the EU; the minority argument rejects this view. This study falls within the majority argument. The majority argument draws on the two dimensions of the EU. First argument asserts (institutional) that the EU's institutional design and structure is not democratic. Second argument (socio-psychological) claims that the EU is not capable of being a 'real' democracy in principle, since the structural and social prerequisites, on which democratic rule depends, are lacking at the European level.*

### **Introduction**

The European Union (EU) is variably described as “powerful economic and political union”, “mighty voice in foreign policy”, “sui generis model” and “democracy defender” in the 21st century. The EU, which has, in addition to being an economic union, become a political union in progress, has been a focal point of countless investigations as a sui generis model. The EU was composed of six countries in the 1950s. There have been many innovations and changes in many fields from the ECSC to the Lisbon process. The EU has expanded its authority in this period. Now, the EU has 27 member states and a population approximately of 500 million people. However nowadays the EU is criticized for lacking democratic structures although it keeps on expanding its authority. Democracy is an important value for the EU. However the EU has suffered for the lack of democracy, whilst most of countries are trust in respect of democracy in the EU. The European Union democracy debate seems rather vague. Its vagueness derives from the fact that the EU, as a polity, represents a unique case. The EU has evolved as a sui generis organization, on account of its unique system.

The EU has supra-national institutions such as the European Parliament (EP), the European Commission, the European Central Bank, and the European Court of Justice (ECJ). For that reason, the EU is far from being a classical nation-state formation. On the other hand, the member states' possession of territory, the EU flag, common currency and anthem, and the EU citizenship bring the EU closer to nation-states.. In this context, for more than two decades, the question has been raised whether the currently designed EU is a democratically legitimate system or not. The principal question of this study is to seek and analyze the reasons and points of criticism against the EU in terms of democracy. In this vein, the major and critical issue is the concept of democratic deficit. However; the EU democracy debate seems rather vague. Its vagueness derives from the fact that the EU, as a polity, represents a unique case. The EU has evolved as a sui generis organization, on account of its unique system. The question of democratic legitimacy has to be understood within the context of the EU, which means constitutional framework of the EU.

The problem here is whether the EU should be considered as an international organization of sovereign states and whether the EU should be seen as a federal state. In any case, the question of how decision-making process should be more democratic under this condition should be raised and asked. How should democracy be represented at the EU level? These concerns are the reasons why the EU suffers from democratic deficit. This problem has been investigated and researched by many scholars who have different perspectives on this issue. Many political scientists consider the EU as the first example of transition from an economic union to a political union. According to Marcus Höreth, the issues regarding democratic legitimacy gained visibility with the Single European Act (1987) and Maastricht Treaty (1992). These treaties forced the transfer of political decisions and attributions from the national to the European level. This has weakened the democratic influence and control at the national level without having been rewarded by equally strong democratic institutions and processes at the European level.

Therefore, the EU is a new subject for theories of legitimacy which poses fundamental questions to the established principles and concepts of democratic theory.<sup>1</sup> The aim of this study is to examine the reasons of democratic deficit in the EU. Besides, I want to reveal that which is implied when someone mentions that the EU's democracy and democratic credentials are insufficient: what do they really mean? What should be the most meaningful approach to the EU's democracy deficit. Hence, the study deals with the critical perspective about democratic deficit in the EU. The argument regarding the democratic deficit of the EU institutions manifests integrated and deeply-seated political problems. There is a multitude of reasons and solutions regarding the democratic deficit in the EU, which leads to a complexity of interpretations.

## ***Democracy, Democratic Deficit and the Eu***

### **The Definition of Democracy**

The word “democracy” comes from the Greek word *demokratia* which was formed by *demos* which mean “people” and *kratos* meaning “rule” or “power”.<sup>2</sup> According to Robert A. Dahl, the fundamental democratic principle for an entirely and absolutely liberal democracy is,

the right to vote, the right to be elected/eligibility for public office, the right of political leaders to compete for support and votes, free and fair elections, freedom of association, freedom of expression, alternative sources of information, institutions that make government policies actually depend on votes and other forms of (voter) preference<sup>3</sup>

In addition, Basu emphasizes that;

Democracy entails many things—the existence of a variety of political and legislative institutions, avenues for citizens to participate in the formation of economic policies that affect their lives and, in the ultimate analysis, a certain mind-set. Yet at the core of it and in its simplest form, democracy requires that (1) people should have the right to choose those who rule them and (2) the principle that the vote of each person should count as much as another persons. Even this simple principle runs into paradoxes and puzzles<sup>4</sup>

In as much as we are keen on interpreting democratic standards, to apply these standards to a society and to make the political claims and institutions emerge are not easy and smooth processes. Furthermore the concept of the EU democracy cannot be explained as definition of “nation-state democracy” as “the government by the people” thorough the citizen participation. Since the European Union (hereafter EU) is not a classical establishment or phenomena, it is not easy to decide according to which democratic standards this establishment should be evaluated.

### **Europeanization of Democracy**

In contemporary world, democratization is a very crucial subject. Although it is a widely shared belief that democracy is the most suitable regime over which there is a consensus regarding the desirability of democracy, the definition and content of the term democracy and its applications are always already questioned and thus its definition and content has changed, has been challenged and been transformed. Three big events transformed global meaning of democracy. The first of these important events is American Civil War. The second one is the French Revolution and finally the last one is Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points<sup>5</sup>. After the collapse of the Eastern Bloc in 1990s, the political scientists quickly responded to the transition and started to study the problems of transition of Eastern Europe to liberal democracy. In addition, democratization became an object of study in International Relations. Some scholars such as Robert Dahl (1994) and David Held (1987) also drew attention to the crisis of contemporary democracy<sup>6</sup>. Robert Dahl identifies the three waves of transformations of democracy: Dahl notes in referring to the first wave that the first signs of democratic practices were seen during the first half of the fifth century in Greek city-states where the people participated in law making and administration.

<sup>1</sup> Katz, Richard (2000), “Models of Democracy: Elite Attitudes and the Democratic Deficit in the European Union, Competing Conceptions of Democracy in the Practice of Politics”, European Consortium for Political Research Joint Sessions of Workshops, Copenhagen, p.1.

<sup>2</sup> Sartori, Giovanni (1987), *The Theory of Democracy Revisited*, New Jersey: Chatham House Publishers, p.278.

<sup>3</sup> Dahl, Robert (2001), *Demokrasi Üstüne, çeviren, Betül Kadıoğlu*, Ankara: Phoenix, p.40.

<sup>4</sup> Basu, Kaushik (2001), *The Retreat of Global Democracy*, p.1

<http://www.arts.cornell.edu/econ/kb40/Globaldemocracy.PDF>, (23.05.2008)

<sup>5</sup> Sağır, M., Öztoprak, Karkın, Naci, (2005), “Demokrasinin Güncel Sorunları ve Demokratik Paradokslar”, *Akademik DDBF Dergisi*, 1, (10):7

<sup>6</sup> Attina, Fulvio (1997), “EU Democratization from Patch to Party Democracy”, paper presented at the ECSA-USA, 5th. Biennial International Conference, Seattle, p.2.

The second wave is “nation-state model of democracy” and the third and the last wave transformation of democracy is insistence on the process of “transnational democracy”. According to Dahl’s third wave or third transformation of democracy, the spread of technology, telecommunications and intensification of financial transactions have eroded the nation state concept of popular sovereignty which was known as the central unit of democracy and legitimacy<sup>7</sup>. Nation-states’ decision-making capacities and policy-making competences were so much transferred from the national to the transnational level. Now, the concepts of transnational and supranational democracy have gained greater currency. The world system -international relations- has changed incredibly. Francis Fukuyama claims that maybe we are coming close to the “fourth wave” of democracy with the European Union case.

The EU is an ideal type and primary example for this discussion because it is a new type of political system within the traditional parliamentary democracy<sup>8</sup>. As Fukuyama’s argued, the EU is as an example of fourth-wave of democracy and since the EU has its own sui generis structure and formation as an institution it obviously has its own understanding of democracy. In the context of intertwined relations between the EU Council, the EU Commission and the European Parliament, the EU has developed its own system of democracy. In the scholarly literature, this is named as “Europeanization of democracy”<sup>9</sup>. With its current form, the model of democracy in the EU does not conform to liberal parliamentary democracy or federal state, consensus, deliberative or corporatist models. Existing models of democracy (approximately 25 models of democracy) do not represent the EU democracy in a clear-cut fashion. Furthermore, a nation-state cannot be easily understood from the vantage point of democracy. However, the EU represents a prolific case, which strains the limits of classical understandings and perceptions of democracy.

The EU is not a market or an international organization or conversely, a nation-state. The EU is supranational body and its democracy is different than others democracies. This is very important subject for political sciences today and its importance will grow in the years to come. Philippe Schmitter argues that “It is certainly arguable that the EU is already the most complex polity that human agency...has never devised”<sup>10</sup>. In addition, as Katz claimed, the EU’s structure represents a clear hope and a danger for the EU democracy.<sup>11</sup> From 1990s onwards, the EU leaned towards being a politic unity rather than being a sole economic unit. This political renaissance brought the question “is the EU democratic enough to represent its members’ interests?” The policy-makers and scholars claim that the EU suffers from certain shortcomings and deficits of democracy. In this vein democratic deficit has been defined as the gap or discrepancy between “ought” in theoretical sense and the “is”, in terms of existing order, in the EU<sup>12</sup>

### What is Democratic Deficit?

The concept of democratic deficit is used in academic circles to connote and address different issues. Moreover, various scholars have appropriated the concept to signify diverse issues and problems. The usage of the word “deficit” echoes a negative connotation or meaning. Wincott suggests that there are two different interpretations of the word “deficit”, which are extensively used in this context. The first interpretation draws on “too little democracy” and the second interpretation draws on an “over-shadowed democracy”<sup>13</sup>. Dictionary defines *deficit*: “as deficiency in an amount, a lack or impairment in a functional capacity and disadvantage”<sup>14</sup>. Thus, democratic deficit in the EU means the lack or discrepancy between “what is” and “what ought to be” in terms of democracy in the EU. The term “democratic deficit”, in a historical context, was firstly used by David Marquand. Marquand used “democratic deficit” to describe the weakness of the democratic legitimacy of the European Community institutions in the 1970s<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> Dahl, Robert, (1994) A Democratic Dilemma: System Effectiveness versus Citizen Participation, Political Science Quarterly, Vol. 109, No: 1., p.26

<sup>8</sup> Attina, (1997), p.2.

<sup>9</sup> Genç, Sava (2008), “Lizbon Antlaşması Daha ‘Yönetilebilir’ Bir Avrupa Birliği Vaad Ediyor mu?”, Civilacademy, 6, Summer: 162.

<sup>10</sup> Chrysochoou, Dimitris N. (May, 1997), “Democracy and European Integration Theory in the 1990s”, paper presented to the Fifth Biennial ECSA\_USA Conference in Seattle, Washington, at the Workshop on the “EU Democracy in Global Perspective” p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> Katz, (2000), p.2.

<sup>12</sup> Cıngı, M. C. (1996), “AB’nin Demokratik Eksiklikleri”, Yeni Şafak, <http://www.yenisafak.com.tr/arsiv/2005/nisan/19/dusunce.html>, (18 Nisan 2005).

<sup>13</sup> Jolly, M. (2003), “Debating Democracy in the European Union-Four Concurrent Paradigm”, Eight Biennial International Conference, United Kingdom, p. 9.

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/deficit>, (26.09.2010).

<sup>15</sup> Milev, M. (2004). A Democratic Deficit in the European Union, Master Thesis, I.H.E.I., p.5

Since the Single European Act (SEA) and the Treaty on European Union (TEU), the forcible transfer of political decisions and allocations from the national to the European level has weakened democratic influence and control at the national level without having been compensated by equally strong democratic institutions and processes at the European level. Thus, the European Union is a new heated topic for theories of legitimacy. This new topic poses fundamental questions to the established principles and concepts of democratic theory<sup>16</sup>. Then a question is raised as to whether democracy should be appreciated at national parliamentary systems level or not?

### **Democratic Deficit in the EU**

Generally, academic literature on the issue of democratic deficit in EU relies on two opposing arguments. The majority argument is that there is democratic deficit in the EU; the minority argument rejects this view. This study falls within the majority argument. The majority argument draws on the two dimensions of the EU. First argument asserts (institutional) that the EU's institutional design and structure is not democratic. Second argument (socio-psychological) claims that the EU is not capable of being a 'real' democracy in principle, since the structural and social prerequisites, on which democratic rule depends, are lacking at the European level<sup>17</sup>. After this two-tiered argument, it is possible to move on to the question whether or not "democratic deficit" in the EU can be solved? How can European citizens be included in the decision-making process of the European Union? Thus, the list of reasons and related inferences on the question of why EU suffers from democratic deficit, are as follows:

- European Commission is a non-elected institution. It enjoys too much political power. Although it does not take its legitimacy from the people, it has significant and effective role in the decision-making process.
- Although the EU Parliament is the only elected body, it is widely criticized due to the imbalance between the representation and power. Theoretically representation and power should be proportional and imbalance between two institutions, where one is not commissioned to represent and the other is commissioned to represent people, cannot be greater<sup>18</sup>.
- The EU Parliament has relatively lesser power in law making with respect to EU Commission. This leads to a wave of criticisms as it cannot protect or guard people's rights and entitlements.
- EU's institutional design is complex. This design and structure is also perceived as distinguished and separate from lay people and their concerns.
- There is a lack of linkage between the logic of domestic politics—which is viewed as democratic—and the logic of the EU politics, which is viewed as elitist and technocratic<sup>19</sup>.
- People in the EU observe a democratic deficit, because in their view granting that the Commission's headquarters are in Brussels, the Commission appears to be remote and democratically unaccountable, and the national governments seemingly run the Community like a cartel<sup>20</sup>.
- The Euro-electorate simply does not have enough control over the process of decision-making in Brussels/Belgium<sup>21</sup>.
- There is too much delegation of authority to experts and bureaucrats.
- Extensive lobbying activities are sometimes considered as illegitimate<sup>22</sup>.
- In classical parliamentary system, people are represented by elected MPs. People use their constitutional right to vote to elect and un-elect MPs and the parliament. That means MPs, political parties and the parliament are responsible against the people. However, in the EU, people do not have such power.
- European Commission is not held responsible for its decisions. This leads to public dissent against the EU and apathy towards EU institutions, elections and other related issues.
- Those of take part in the EU institutions are not even indirectly elected. The European Council and the Council of Ministers are not directly elected for their role within the European Union. The members of the Council of Ministers represent the "national" interest rather than the "partisan interests" of their electoral constituency as done in domestic politics.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Höreth, Marcus (1998), "The Trilemma of Legitimacy Multilevel Governance in the EU and the Problem of Democracy", Center for European Integration Studies, p.4

<sup>17</sup> Stavridis, Stelios (2006), "Why The EU'S Constitutionalization And Parliamentarization Are Worsening the Existing Democratic Deficit in European Foreign and Defence Policies", Jean Monnet Working Papers in Comparative and International Politics, Pittsburg, pp. 4-5.

<sup>18</sup> Demir, Nesrin (2007), *Avrupa Birliği'nde Demokrasi*, Ankara: Seçkin, p.41.

<sup>19</sup> Alberta M. Sbragia, (2003). "Post-National Democracy: A Challenge To Political Science?", Paper Delivered as the Introductory Presentation Convegno Nazionale Della Societa Italiana di Scienza Politica (SISP), p.13.

<sup>20</sup> Richard Katz, (2000) p.5.

<sup>21</sup> Katz, (2000), p.4.

<sup>22</sup> Jolly, (2003), p.10.

- Another common criticism is that the European Court of Justice has continuously expanded its own power<sup>24</sup>.
- Council of Ministers and the European Council are not properly controlled and accountable<sup>25</sup>
- QMV(qualified majority voting) in the Council is undemocratic to outvoted publics.
- Since there is no “demo” or “people” in the EU, there is no real democracy in the EU.

As I stated earlier, there are different criticisms raised by different disciplinary perspectives. Furthermore, there are also people who claim that there is no democratic deficit in the EU and people who assert that the EU cannot be questioned in terms of democracy. Obviously, the initial problem stems from the fact that there is no single definition of democracy. There are different concepts, different style and different policy prescriptions about the way in which the EU might or should be democratized<sup>26</sup>.

According to Andrew Moravcsik, hundreds, perhaps even thousands of scholars, commentators, lawyers, and politicians have analyzed this very problem. It is the first time in the history of international politics that such rich and varied intellectual resources have been brought to bear on an international political process—a discourse from which we can learn a lot<sup>27</sup>. Thus, it might be rather challenging to analyze the arguments of those who claim that there is a democratic deficit in the EU. In addition, criticisms are criticized and this leads to constant intellectual exchange about this issue among intellectuals. Jolly names them as paradigms, and divides them into four categories to analyze. Theorists, who claim that there is a democratic deficit, have different reasons. The first vertical paradigm argument draws on the “loss of democratic control via the EU”. The second paradigm is horizontal paradigm which claims that “the EP has too little power with respect to domestic systems”. The third paradigm is the efficiency paradigm which argues that “effective governance can supply some of the legitimacy lost on the input side”. The last paradigm is the socio-psychological paradigm which asserts that “democratic deficit exists because there is no demo”<sup>28</sup>.

In the vertical democracy paradigm, the main object is “governing”. It draws on the relations between “the EU and member states”. It focuses on the relationship between the EU and member states domestic political processes. In addition it seeks to propose for more effective democracy. However like other paradigms two different ideas exist in vertical paradigm. First group holds that legitimacy is ensured in the Council of Minister. The others claim that the EU has negatively affected democracy within member states?<sup>29</sup> In the horizontal democracy paradigm, the main object is “governing” like the vertical paradigm. The difference comes from the differences of approaches. Vertical democracy paradigm sees the solution on the EU and members, whereas horizontal paradigm is based on the EU and its institutions, especially the EU Parliament. And they ask “What institutional measures should be taken at the EU level in order to fix the democratic deficit.”<sup>30</sup>

The starting point of horizontal paradigm is the advocacy of improved democracy at the EU multinational government level. Furthermore adherents of this theory ask the question “How can institutional change at the EU level improve democracy?” They emphasize “about the future design of the EU system and divisions of power between EU’s institutions”. Horizontal and vertical paradigms treat the issue in terms of executive authority thus they make institutional analysis. On the other hand, efficiency paradigm focuses on the EU politics and their effects<sup>31</sup>. In the efficiency paradigm, the main object is “policy” under the integration process. They pay attention to the relations between efficiency and democracy. However two different kinds of ideas exist in that paradigm. The first group claims that efficiency and democracy are interconnected so that a high degree of output will increase overall legitimacy although the process may affect democracy in a negative manner. Others don’t agree with it, they therefore deny it. They argue that, a high output necessitates a high input in order for governance to be democratic.

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<sup>23</sup> Alberta M. Sbragia, *Ibid.*, p.6.

<sup>24</sup> Jolly, (2003), p.10.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Newman, Micheal and Hoskyns, Catherine (2007), *Democratizing the EU issues for the Twenty-First Century*, UK.: Manchester University Press, p.5.

<sup>27</sup> Moravcsik, Andrew, (2004), “Is there a ‘Democratic Deficit’ in World Politics? A Framework for Analysis”, *Government and Opposition*, 39, 2:336-363.

<sup>28</sup> Jolly, (2003), p.12.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 12-24.

According to the efficiency paradigm, the classical dilemmas in democratic theory are “how can we find the right balance between efficiency and democracy” and “should this balance be the same in any polity and all times”<sup>32</sup>. Clearly they pay attention to the heaviness of applying democratic standards at the EU level. They interrogate issue with this point. And they ask the question: “How can we ensure that efficient governance does not become an elite-driven guardianship or even dictatorship.”<sup>33</sup>

Socio-psychological paradigm bases its arguments and ideas on the nature of “demos” and its existence. That means representative government depends on the “demos”; thus this paradigm emphasizes much of governed and the ruled, rather than the governing activity itself. Furthermore, this view claims that democracy cannot exist or survive without people. This view claims that collective self is equal to collective determination. If there is a collective self, there can be collective self-determination. Two underpinnings of no-demos view are related with each other. The first underpinning states that since there is a lack of demos in the EU, there is no real democracy in the EU. The second view claims that, with shared identity, belonging and consciousness, demos can be cultivated and thus this can lead to a democratic structure. Scharpf claims that without social structure, even fair and open elections to the EP will not be sufficient for legitimacy<sup>34</sup>.

Referring to democratic deficit, Chrysochoou asserts that:

The transfer of legislative powers and responsibilities from national parliaments to the executive branches of the EU, like the Council or the Commission, has not been matched by a corresponding degree of democratic accountability and legislative input on the part of the European Parliament, as the only directly elected institution at the European and international level<sup>35</sup>

Chrysochoou says that, “Major problem of democracy in the EU is the question of how to encourage EU citizens to participate actively in the integration process and to construct a demo based on civic values” The answer is that legitimacy concerns the acceptability of policy by the public<sup>36</sup>. According to socio-psychological paradigm, the real problem of the EU’s democracy is non-participation by citizens of member states in the decision-making process. Since collective participation requires a “shared or common identity”, the further advancements in collective identity will have positive influence on the integration process as well as democratization of the EU. The problem here is whether it is possible to create such demos.

If “EU citizens” came into being, according to this view socio-psychological problems regarding the EU, such as distrust and inattention, would be solved. However new problems emerge in this process. Would it be possible to create and form demos, and, is it desirable? As these theoretical paradigms suggest, it is hard to produce one-sided or one-dimensional evaluation of the EU. The EU cannot be conceptualized solely by parliamentary nation-state terms and supranational or inter-governmental terms. In addition, to understand legitimacy in terms of institutions isolates the people element or the notion of public. This is a negative factor in European integration. Up to now, the problems, concerns and questions as well as criticisms regarding the EU in terms of democracy have been introduced. Those evaluations are generally made by institutionalist and social-paradigm theorists. Although they may agree that there is a democratic deficit, their purposes different interpretations and understandings. Briefly, these discussions and debates will not end until the EU finalizes its integration.

### **Democratic Legitimacy in the EU**

The principal question of this study as I mentioned above, is to seek and analyze the reasons and points of criticism against the EU in terms of democracy. In this vein, the major and critical issue is the concept of democratic deficit. The theoretical exposition of this concept and its underpinnings were presented above. The second critical exposition is the “EU’s lack of legitimacy”. At every stage of the European integration process, the question of democratic legitimacy has become increasingly sensitive. Then, what is democratic legitimacy? Before moving into this question, it should be argued that the debates regarding democratic legitimacy and democratic deficit coincide with each other. This is especially important since they both focus on the sources of legitimacy in the EU in the name of democracy. The inadequacies of the only and sole legitimate body in the EU, namely the Parliament, in this matter entail and warrant the concerns of democratic deficit. Thus, by answering the question of what legitimacy is, one may start to discuss the topic.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., pp. 12-14.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, pp. 20-22.

<sup>35</sup> Chrysochoou, D. N., 2001, “Models of Democracy and the European Polity”, University of Exeter Working Papers, no. 1/2001.

<sup>36</sup> Kodakçı, D. (2004). *Geni İleme, Avrupa Birliğinde Demokrasi Eksikliği ve Çözüm Önerileri*, Unpublished Thesis, EU General Secretary, p. 18.

Legitimacy can be defined as the recognition of political system by the citizens<sup>37</sup>. Principle of legality: “decisions have to be taken on the basis of a formal competence, which either obliges the decision-maker to make the decision or gives him/her the permission to do<sup>38</sup>”. Fritz Scharpf (1997) claims that;

Legitimacy can be won or lost either on the input or on the output side of government: democratic selection of office holders, electoral approval of programs, public consultation and so on are common ways of securing input legitimacy; meeting public needs and values, and ensuring that policy tracks public opinion, are sources of output legitimacy<sup>39</sup>.

The issue of legitimacy consist two kinds of approach at the EU level. First, legitimacy comes through the directly elected European Parliament and counter approaches dealing with EU legitimacy come from the indirectly elected national representatives in the Council of Minister and in the European Council. At the level of the EU, the concept of legitimacy is generally illustrated with the EU Parliament. According to these approaches, “the EU Parliament clearly has played an important role in redressing the democratic deficit and addressing the problems of democratic legitimacy”<sup>40</sup>. To put in a nutshell, the discussion about the “democratic deficit” either implicitly or explicitly focuses on the lack of parliamentary power at the level of the EU, the lack of an EU government formed by a parliament, and the continued influence of the governments of the member states<sup>41</sup> Many of the observes agree that, EU suffers lack of democracy or institutional crisis. According to them, the reasons lie on the legitimacy issue in twofold sense<sup>42</sup>

Common policies had diverged from voters’ preferences (output legitimacy)<sup>43</sup> and that decision-making mechanisms appeared to lack the basic requirements of transparency, accountability and democratic involvement (input legitimacy)<sup>44</sup>

In addition they pay attention to the public support for further integration as a meaningful to cause of paralysis in institutional decision-making at the EU level. The main problem is that the institutional arrangements and political practices of the EU fail to conform to a particular conception of democracy, which is ideally rendered as parliamentary democracy at the national level. Is it possible to adopt democratic credentials in classical democratic system within the “sui generis” character of the EU? The counter view argues that “this is an unrealistic expectation, while we assess EU within the nation-states traditional parliamentary system. Especially since the party-governments exist in the EU, there will need to be a dramatic shift in the institutional design of the EU (i.e. Simon Hix)<sup>45</sup>.” In this way, Katz claims that, democratic deficit debate focuses on a model of democracy, popular sovereignty implemented through party government, that is not realistic and the critics of the EU recognize that national democracies’ fall short of the ideal as well. Thus, it will be misleading to argue that there is a democratic deficit in the EU, solely on the basis of evaluating the European Parliament through the lenses of a nation state democracy. The gap between ideal and reality is very much greater at the EU level and that by transferring the power to the less democratic level, the overall degree of democracy in the government is going to be reduced<sup>46</sup>.

Although the source of the problem is the same, different disciplines and perspectives produce different and divergant interpretations on the subject. This means that the problem of legitimacy in the EU can be analyzed through federalist and inter-governmentalist and economic community terms. According to federalists, the substance of the legitimacy of the EU is people or public, and the symbol of the legitimacy of the EU is the European Parliament. Federalists claim that the solution lies in the enhancement of empowerment of the EU Parliament and its further authorization. This leads to open public debates and participation in decision-making. According to this view, supranational parliamentary democracy should be formed, which is akin to national parliamentary systems<sup>47</sup>. Inter-governmentalist perspective treats the issue with a realist perspective.

<sup>37</sup> Milev, (2004), p. 18.

<sup>38</sup> DEMOCRACY IN THE EUROPEAN UNION: What is the Democratic Deficit? Jan-Erik Lane (University of Geneva and National University of Singapore), p.2

<sup>39</sup> *Id.*

<sup>40</sup> Andersen and Eliassen, (1996), pp. 7-198

<sup>41</sup> Attina, (1997), p.7.

<sup>42</sup> Micossi, Stefano (2008), “Democracy in The European Union”, CEPS, 286, Winter: 3

<sup>43</sup> In put legitimacy “government by the people”.

<sup>44</sup> Out put legitimacy “government for the people”.

<sup>45</sup> Hix, Simon, and Follesda, Andreas, (2006) “Why There Is a Democratic Deficit an the EU: A Response to Majone and Moravcsik” Journal Of Common Market Studies, Volume 44, Number 3, September, pp. 533-562.

<sup>46</sup> Katz, (2000), p.2.

<sup>47</sup> Demir, (2007), p.92.

According to this view, the EU inherits its legitimacy from nation-states, and thus for a powerful democracy, they pay attention to increasing the role of the national parliaments rather than the EP<sup>48</sup>. The last, but not least, perspective comes from the model of economic community. This model claims that supranational level derives its legitimacy from economic efficiency and respect for individual liberties. The supranational level is represented by non-majority institutions like independent regulatory agencies. As the Economic Community is legitimized by the efficiency and liberty, there is no need for democracy at the EU level. They argue that “the economic effectiveness (substance) and efficiency (means) guarantee legitimacy/indifferent to EP empowerment as long as it does not hamper effectiveness and efficiency<sup>49</sup>.” Since economic efficiency and concerns in the first pillar exceed the other concerns, model of economic community rules the debate of democracy out. Accordingly, democratic legitimacy is a political reality and it has remained at the national level. Due to a political character of economy and economic efficiency, this lies beyond the need for democracy<sup>50</sup>.

Obviously, one cannot evaluate the question of legitimacy in the EU solely on the basis of these three structures, since the EU is neither a federal state nor an economic alliance or international government. If one evaluates the EU in terms of society or legality, one might raise questions concerning the source of legitimacy in the EU. In other words, where does the EU take its legitimacy from, people or institutions? Does the lack of demos or institutional complexity of EU institutions create public negligence and disregard against the EU? Political system's in out put legitimacy related to its capacity to achieve the citizens' goals and to solve their problems<sup>51</sup>.

In this vein, the EU citizens' rights and entitlements are protected by the EU institutions. As a step, the recognition on the part of the citizens may lead keen public interest towards the EU matters and issues. Thus, it leads to citizens' active participation in the integration process. One of the most important characteristics of participatory democracy is “transparency”, “accountability” and “accessibility”. If the citizens of the member states cannot find them in the EU, then public prefers to stay away from the institutions and deliver deeply-seated disregard toward the EU issues. Then the EU citizens cannot understand or recognize, or be informed about the structure of the EU and the EU integration cannot be achieved. Briefly, it is not clear which one should be corrected first; institutions or social structure? As it is obvious, the outcomes of these two perspectives are related with each other, and it is hardly possible to draw a clear-cut line between the two.

### **Conclusion**

The argument regarding the democratic deficit of the EU institutions reveals integrated and deeply seated political problems. There is a multitude of reasons and solutions regarding the democratic deficit in the EU, which leads to a complexity of interpretations. We might therefore come to the conclusion that democratic deficit is studied and researched from a variety of perspectives and scientific disciplines. Law, political science, international relations, economics and sociology have contributed to the scientific study of a democratic EU. The democratic vicious circle in the EU, metaphorically speaking, can be taken as a labyrinth. That metaphor shows us how to cruise around the labyrinth to find our way to get out, which will take time and effort. In the same vein, Donald Paschal notes the vicious circle in the EU, with the following remarks: “A group of blind men approach and touch an elephant in order to find out what it is.

Each person investigates a different part and therefore they all come to different conclusions<sup>52</sup>”. Paschal provides a detailed explanation for our concerns here. In addition, As Mote Jolly claims “not only do scholars define the deficit differently but the result of looking at isolated parts often becomes that what one theorist would consider a reasonable solution to a particular problem, would worsen the problem as identified by another scholar<sup>53</sup>”. In this vein, I do believe that rather than engaging in a debate concerning validity of paradigms, focusing on what is done in the EU in the terms of democracy and analyzing which reforms exemplify which theories are more productive and beneficial for my research concerns. This is important since the EU highlights its own agenda as the protection and promotion of democracy rather than the creation of global democratic deficits.

<sup>48</sup> Rittberger, Berthold (2003), “The Creation and Empowerment of the European Parliament” *JCMS*, 41 (2): 210.

<sup>49</sup> Rittberger, (2003), p.211.

<sup>50</sup> Milev, (2004), p.8

<sup>51</sup> Höreth, Marcus (1999), “The unsolved legitimacy problem of European governance”, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 6 (2, June): 251.

<sup>52</sup> Kirchner, Emil J. (2009), “Thirty Years of the Journal of European Integration: Reflections and Outlook on European Integration Studies”, *Journal of European Integration*, 31, No. 2, Winter: 159.

<sup>53</sup> Jolly, (2003), p.3.



On the basis of this fact, it will be unfair to claim that the EU is clearly undemocratic by looking at institutional deficits and problems, or obstacles at decision-making process, which are deemed to be undemocratic and non-participatory from procedural viewpoint. As argued before, it is normal that the EU's legal structure is far more complicated than other models. It represents a unique case in itself. By taking this example as a sole criterion, it would be wrong and unfair to claim that the EU is a non-democratic entity. The development and consolidation of democracy is the central concept and foundation of all politics within the EU. The beginning of the road to membership of the EU is the condition of the applicant state being a European country; the second condition is being a democratic state. In brief, democracy and democratic credential are very important for the EU.

In addition, the EU is involved in the consolidation and establishment of democracy in the member states and third states with which it has signed agreements. The most visible aspect of this activity is the support given to elections in several countries through election monitoring. Towards the end of the 1990s, the EU developed several mechanisms and instruments to develop and instill democracy in several countries. For this purpose, the EU has been building partnerships and been engaged in persuasion and confidence-building both locally and nationally, in order to support democracy in these countries. In order to support non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and independent media, each and every measure is taken. For the "projects for democracy" project, there is a special budget under the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) initiative. It is necessary to analyze the democratic legitimacy of the EU within its own structure, since democracy is a core value for the EU as understood from its activities and proceedings.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Yılmaz, Sait (2008), AB'nin Yayılma Stratejisi, <http://www.isletme.biz/gundem/abnin-yayilma-stratejisi-2.html>