

In Search of the ‘Good European Citizen’: WYSIWYG?

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1. Introduction

Democracy cannot survive without democrats. Citizens should show at least some minimum level of interest in democratic decision-making processes in order to present their wishes and demands, and to communicate with other citizens. Besides, citizens should consider the rules of the game as basically fair and appropriate; that is, the legitimacy of the system should be undisputed. Probably no community can exist on the basis of power and control only – without some minimum level of acceptance of its fundamental principles by its members, the persistence of any community is endangered. By now, these platitudes are widely recognized. The core debates about democracy and citizenship do not focus on the need for engaged citizens with democratic orientation. What is disputed, however, is the degree of involvement and the nature of the orientations required for a vital democracy. Furthermore, citizenship does not only include engagement in public and political affairs and the acceptance of particular norms and values, but also the recognition of particular duties. In fact, it is the very recognition of a balance between rights and duties which characterizes democratic citizenship.¹

The general consent about the balance between rights and duties of democratic citizens disappears rapidly when we take a closer look at specific depictions of the ‘good citizen’. Political philosophers from Aristotle and Plato to Michael Walzer and Benjamin Barber have dealt with the relationships between the requirements of the community on the one hand, and the rights and obligations of people living in that community on the other. Interesting and stimulating as these ideas might be, it remains unclear *which* conceptualizations of the ‘good citizen’ are actually used by politicians, policy makers, and citizens. What image do these actors have of citizens and citizenship? How are these images distributed in democracies? These questions appear to be especially relevant for the opportunities to develop (more) democratic decision-making processes and active citizenship in the European Union (EU). Almost by definition, the ‘good citizen’ is a national citizen; that is, the rights and duties which come with citizenship are the rights and duties of citizens towards the national state (cf. Hix 2005: 345-346). The rise of the EU system of multi-level governance has affected this situation deeply. A complex system of national, sub-national, international, trans-national, and supra-national institutions has emerged, whose democratic character increasingly is approached sceptically (cf. Majone 1998; Follesdal and Hix 2006; Eriksen and Fossum 2007). Political decision-making is

¹ See Heater (2004) for a general overview of the history of the concept, or van Deth (2007) and Dalton (2007) for applications in empirical political science. A detailed analysis of the historical development of citizenship in the United States is presented by Schudson (1998).

more and more characterized by ‘Europeanization’ (cf. Graziano and Vink 2007) and the ‘good citizen’ seems to have difficulties to keep up with the high speed of changes in Europe.

With respect to the huge amount of conceptualizations and the century-old discussions about the ‘good citizen’, it is remarkable that empirical research on these images is rare. Besides, empirical research on images of a ‘good European citizen’ is even more difficult to find. In this paper a search for actually used images of the ‘good citizen’ in Europe is presented from various points of view. Following a conventional top-down approach², the ideas of *EU Policymakers* (Commission and Council) on the further democratization of the EU and the expected role of citizens in that process are examined. Since civil society is presumed to perform essential functions in these democratization processes by linking the various levels of decision making, the second point of view considered here is offered by *civil society bodies*. Finally, the images of the ‘good citizen’ among *EU citizens* are considered. The main conclusion is that civil society organizations and ordinary citizens are content with the dual process of strengthening the position of civil society and not increasing the participatory demands on citizens, whereas EU policymakers are left behind with their ideas about civil society as a mean to integrate ordinary citizens and to close the gap between citizens and the EU. Apparently, WYSIWYG does not apply to the ways European elites perceive the ‘good European citizen’.

2. Different Points of View

Images of the ‘good citizen’ are, by definition, normative statements about desirable orientations and behaviours of individuals in a democratic polity. As such, appraising the specific content of these images is the domain of political philosophers, ideologues, politicians, and, of course, citizens themselves. Interesting as normative questions about the desirability of orientations and behaviour are, they are not the main concern here. Instead, the principal empirical question here is *which orientations and behaviours are considered desirable* by various actors in Europe. A factual gap between the images among those actors might effectively block the chances of improving democratic decision-making processes. Similar barriers can hamper improvements if policy makers have unrealistic images of orientations and behaviour of citizens, and base their plans on these ideas directly. In reverse, citizens will be frustrated if they are constantly confronted with proposals based on either over exaggerated or underestimated expectations about their orientations and behaviours.

Viewpoint I: EU Policymakers

² See for a brief overview of ‘top down’ vs ‘bottom up’ approaches: van Deth and Maloney (2008).

For a long time citizens were not considered to be very relevant actors for the democratic character of the European Union (or its predecessors). Until the 1992 Maastricht Treaty, the democratic legitimacy of the EU was presumed to be based mainly on the democratic character of its member states (Majone 1998). Consequently, the phrase ‘democratic deficit’ became fashionable only recently. With the publication of the *EU White Paper on Governance* the Commission took the initiative to improve the democratic character of the EU by encouraging citizens “... to engage more frequently with its institutions ... [and] to stimulate initiatives by *bodies engaged in the promotion of active and participatory citizenship*” (COM 2001; emphasis added).³ In a speech to the European Parliament in February 2000 Commissioner Prodi “... called for a civic participation in all stages of the policymaking process” (as cited by Sloat 2003: 130). In a similar manner, the Council launched a “Community action programme to promote active European citizenship (civic participation)”. The main objective of this programme is “... to bring citizens closer to the European Union and its institutions and to encourage them to engage more frequently with its institutions”.⁴ These goals clearly indicate a withdrawal from the conventional, on the role of member states and representative democracy restricted approaches to integrate citizens in decision-making processes. Although citizens’ involvement and the wish to “bring citizens closer to the European Union” unambiguously are the main targets of European policymakers, citizens are not expected to play major roles in attempts to close the presumed deficiencies in this area. Instead, “bodies engaged in the promotion of active and participatory citizenship” and “civic participation” are the main mechanisms proposed to improve the democratic character of the EU. In order to make decision making in Europe more open, transparent, and participatory a wide range of collective actors – not citizens – from varying institutional, territorial, or thematic areas levels are to be mobilized and offered access to these decision-making processes.⁵

With their focus on “civil society” and “civil society bodies” European policymakers apparently aim at collective actors and so only indirectly at individual citizens (Sánchez-Salgado 2007). This aim is based on two different, but complementary lines of reasoning. Firstly, civil society, by definition, encompasses non-governmental organisations (NGOs), which are presumed to offer a kind of countervailing power to the institutionalized political actors of conventional, representative democratic decision-making processes.⁶ As Friedrich notes, civil society opens “... the possibility for

³ A clear indicator of the prominent position of the White Paper is the fact that it will be difficult to find a CONNEX-paper that does not refer (extensively) to the arguments presented in this paper.

⁴ Council Decision of 26 January 2004 (2004/100/EC) Art. 1 (b).

⁵ See for extensive overviews of approaches to the role of civil society organisations in European democratic decision-making processes: Eising (2000), Mair (2005), Kohler-Koch (2007), and especially Finke (2007). Haug (2008: 4) recently stressed the need to include “less institutionalised transnational spaces of communication”.

⁶ See for an extensive overview of the arguments linking “civil society to participatory democracy in EU affairs”: Finke (2007). Vibert (2007: 138-43) presents a very interesting discussion about “fundamental failures” resulting from an “incompatibility” of existing power-sharing arrangements in the EU and the role of civil society associations. Case studies of actual decision-making processes usually show that contacts are mainly concerned with the exchange of expertise in advisory bodies and written consultations (cf. Dąbrowska 2007; Sánchez-Salgado 2007).

thoughts about additional, complementary institutionalisations that are capable of rendering policy-making process more democratic which cannot (and perhaps even should not) rely predominantly on representative mechanisms” (2007: 9).⁷ In this respect, it is important to emphasize that NGOs are seen as being able to act as a counterbalance to other societal interests and “... to reach the poorest and most disadvantaged and to provide a voice for those not sufficiently heard through other channels” (COM 2001: 5). Secondly, the renaissance of communitarian and neo-Tocquevillean ideas in the 1990s evidently had an impact on European policymakers by strengthening the belief in the benevolent consequences of civil society and social capital for the functioning of democracy. Putnam summarized these ideas neatly: “Good government in Italy is a by-product of singing groups and soccer clubs” (1993: 176).⁸ By now, the notion that democracies are dependent on a well-developed civil society and a considerable stock of social capital is widely accepted. From the perspective of EU policymakers, then, “civil society” and “civil society bodies” have the potential to enhance the quality of political decision-making processes by expanding the group of collective participants beyond the conventional borders of representative democracy. Furthermore, “civic participation” of citizens within associations is expected to generate democratic orientations and values which, in turn, strengthen democracy and reduce the distance between citizens and the EU.⁹

EU policymakers have not only presented ideas about the improvement of democracy and the need to narrow the gap with its citizens. The strong focus on civil society and civil society bodies has also been materialized in opulent and continuous subsidizing of these organisations (cf. Greenwood 2007; Sánchez-Salgado 2007). Almost each and every citizens’ group in Brussels or Strasbourg receives EU funding and some groups are almost completely financed by the Union. In order to strengthen “civic participation” the EU is apparently willing to pay the bill of mobilising potentially critical citizens’ groups. We do not need to go into plausible motives for this, at least partly, masochistic behaviour here – clear is that the EU takes the mobilization of civil society organisations very seriously.¹⁰ In practice, the EU goes much further than providing cheap rhetoric about civil society or by inviting collective actors to participate only.

From the perspective of European policymakers, the ‘good European citizen’ disappeared rapidly behind the benign horizon of civil society bodies. The arguments used seem to be characterized by the following five aspects. A ‘good European citizen’ is somebody who:

1. uses the opportunities offered by representative democracy;

⁷ See Finke (2007: 6-7) for a detailed overview of the debates about governance, participation, and legitimacy that lay behind these lines of argument.

⁸ These types of claims are not restricted to “good government”. To quote Putnam once more: “... social capital makes us smarter, healthier, safer, richer, and better able to govern a just and stable democracy” (Putnam, 2000: 290).

⁹ For an evaluation of this last part of the argument virtually no empirical research is available. Van den Berg (2006) presents a highly original study of the ways Dutch voluntary associations enable their members to (further) develop attitudes towards Europe.

¹⁰ As Sánchez-Salgado notes: “No matter whether voluntary organizations approve European politics or not, what is significant is that they consider the EU to be a legitimate operator” (2007: 262).

2. supports a variety of civil society organizations;
3. supports the role of civil society organizations in decision-making processes; direct involvement of citizens is superfluous;
4. develops (more) positive orientations towards the EU due to the mobilization of civil society organizations in EU policymaking processes;
5. is not concerned about possible inconsistencies between the results of electoral participation and participation of civil society organizations.

Viewpoint II: Civil Society

Civil society associations usually do not present explicit ideas about images of the desirable orientations and behaviours of the activists, volunteers, or members of their organizations. Neither do they offer ideas about the ‘good citizen’ in general. Instead, they articulate the aims of the organization and act as voice for the interests and viewpoints of particular groups among the population – certainly not only of the members of the organization concerned. The relevance of civil society bodies is based on their perceived functions as collective actors in democratic decision-making processes and not on probable normative ideas about the ‘good citizen’. As Saurugger remarks, civil society associations are “supposed” to come with grass-roots involvement and accountable leadership (2007: 388) and these presumptions are often taken for granted.¹¹

How do civil society organisations view their members and citizens in general? Empirical research in this area is rare, but the available findings seem to be coherent (cf. Maloney and van Deth 2008).¹² A century after Robert Michels predicted the unavoidable rise of oligarchic tendencies in each organization, civil society bodies in the EU are confronted with exactly these developments. Studying the role of associations in development policies, for instance Warleigh found that these bodies are staff-dominated and made “... little or no effort to educate their supporters about the need for engagement with EU decision-makers” (2001: 623). Later he notes that several group leaders conceded that a lack of membership “... participation was a problem for their credibility” (2001: 634). In their recent, extensive study of campaign groups in Britain Jordan and Maloney (2007: 158-159) also cite similar evidence of staff dominance and the attractiveness of passivity for members of these groups. Working in a very different policy area Sudbery (2003: 90) found that with limited resources groups preferred “effective results” to raising awareness. She quotes a senior representative of the European Environment Bureau who said that “While ideally it would be good to get people involved ... my role is not to encourage the most participatory governance, but to ensure the best results for the

¹¹ Alternatively, one can focus on the potential and desired opportunities, which are presumably offered by various kinds of contacts and associations and simply neglect actual expectations and demands (see, for instance, Haug 2008).

¹² Furthermore, empirical information about activists and volunteers in several European cities is collected as part of the CID-Activist Study (cf. van Deth 2008).

environment” (2003: 91-92).¹³ Civil society bodies, then, are increasingly characterized by staff-dominance (professionalization) and the need to concentrate on their mission (cf. Saurugger 2007: 397-398; Grande 2002: 130).

The flipside of the professionalization of associational life is the relative passivity of members and supporters. Empirical studies on this linkage have been especially stimulated by the fruitful application of interpretations based on rational expectations of both leaders and members. From the perspective of civil society associations, the urge to show effective results clearly has a significant impact on the nature of the ‘demands’ it makes of its membership. For instance, Crenson and Ginsberg (2002) draw attention to the need for expertise and technical knowledge in new policy areas that is much more important for reaching associational goals than the mobilization of large numbers of citizens. As they conclude, a new policy area is open “... to all those who have ideas and expertise rather than to those who assert interest and preferences” (2002: 147). Skocpol points out to a similar mechanism: “If a new cause arises, entrepreneurs think of opening a national office, raising funds through direct mail and hiring pollsters and media consultants ... Organizational leaders have little time to discuss things with groups of members” (2003: 134). Consequently, a ‘protest business’ of increasingly professionalized organizations aroused articulating interests and demands, and mobilizing expertise and power (Jordan and Maloney 1997).

These rather practical restrictions on the opportunities to stimulate grass-root activities seem to be remarkably congruent with the demands and expectations of ordinary citizens. If civil society bodies are urgently looking for opportunities to be involved in political decision-making processes, many citizens are willing to leave that job to those associations and their professionals. As Jordan and Maloney note most members and supporters “... are content to embrace a politically marginal role and contract-out their participation” to groups and many do not see membership of groups as a means of being ‘active in politics’ (2007: 160-161). The opposite seems to be the case for ordinary citizens. Many citizens perceive passive involvement as a ‘benefit’ and would consider leaving organizations that sought to impose the ‘cost’ of active involvement in group activities.¹⁴ Although the evidence is clear, simple generalizations should be avoided:

“... it is too simplistic to suggest that groups want *only* passive cash-cow members, rather than activists. More accurately it should be seen that groups are prepared to accept membership on that basis, and may welcome more active involvement. However, they may not always be keen to roll out the red carpet for a *policy-making* membership” (Jordan and Maloney 2007: 161; emphasis in original)

¹³ Members of the European Commission Governance team also expressed their concern about the tension between efficiency and citizen participation: “We simply do not have the resources to deal with all civil society organisations ... Perhaps the most effective way to link with the citizen ... is by more effective results ... The issue about bringing in the citizen is for speeches, for the rhetoric” (Sudbery 2003: 91-92).

¹⁴ As participation research shows, highly active civil society groups can erode the willingness of people to become involved in political decision-making rapidly (cf. Fiorina 1999).

‘Checkbook participation’ seems to be a division of labour that combines the best of two worlds, enabling organizations to focus on policymaking and citizens to provide resources. At the EU level, this gearing for one another is stimulated by the considerable support provided for European civil society bodies by the EU. As mentioned in the previous section, the EU subsidizes most of the citizens’ groups in Brussels and Strasbourg, and this financial backing covers almost the whole budget of some of these associations. This generous funding relieves civil society bodies from the pressure to mobilize members and supporters and to secure their resources based on contributions made by these members and supporters. Rather bluntly Skocpol brings this to the point – for civil society bodies “Members are a nonlucrative distraction” (2003: 134). There is no need to spend organizational resources seeking and servicing members or supporters, when EU subventions enable fully focussed professional lobbying.

Structural and organisation aspects enable civil society bodies to be indifferent about images of the ‘good European citizen’. The arguments seem to be characterized by the following aspects. A ‘good European citizen’ is somebody who:

1. supports civil society organisations, which, in turn, participate in decision-making processes;
2. supports the role of civil society organizations in decision-making processes; direct involvement of citizens is superfluous;
3. judges civil society organisations on the results they obtain in decision-making processes.
4. is not concerned about possible inconsistencies between the results of electoral participation and participation of civil society organizations.

Viewpoint III: Citizens

What image do ordinary citizens have of a ‘good citizen’? How are norms of citizenship distributed in democracies? Astonishing as it might be, not much empirical information is available to answer these questions (cf. van Deth 2007), although for instance Lane (1962) already asked people what they consider important aspects of ‘good citizens’. Pamela Johnston Conover and her collaborators (1990; 1991; 1993; 2004) relied on focus groups and found a fairly clear outline of a ‘good citizen’ in Britain and the United States. A ‘good citizen’, firstly, understands his or her rights mainly as civil rights (US) or social rights (Britain) and does not consider political rights to be equally important or relevant. Secondly, a ‘good citizen’ understands his or her duties mainly as duties and responsibilities that are required to preserve civil life. A ‘good citizen’ certainly values social engagement and active involvement in community matters, but no consensus exists about the reasons for these activities (cf. Conover et al. 1993; Conover et al. 1990; Conover et al. 1991).

Focus groups are useful to trace images of the ‘good citizen’, but these findings do not provide information about the distribution of various aspects of these images among the population. Survey

research can fill this gap. Major examples of international studies covering these images are the Citizenship, Involvement, Democracy project (CID) and the first wave of the European Social Survey (ESS).¹⁵ Questions on the image of a ‘good citizen’ used in these two surveys clearly direct the attention of the respondents to the contested meaning of the concept as well as to his or her personal opinions about the ‘good citizen’¹⁶:

As you know, there are different opinions as to what it takes to be a good citizen. I would therefore like to ask you to examine the characteristics listed on the card. Looking at what *you personally* think, how important is it:

- A. To show solidarity with people who are worse off than yourself
- B. To vote in public elections
- C. Never to try to evade taxes
- D. To form your own opinion, independently of others
- E. Always to obey laws and regulations
- F. To be active in organizations
- G. To think of others more than yourself
- H. To subject your own opinions to critical examination.

Respondents expressed their opinion for each item on an 11-point scale ranging from ‘very unimportant’ to ‘very important’. A similar but shorter instrument is used by the ESS including the items A, B, D, E, and F as well as an additional item “Be active in politics”.

The results of both the CID and ESS findings are summarized in Figure 1. In spite of the use of different items and different sets of countries the results are remarkably similar for the two studies. Autonomy and law obeying are unreservedly supported by about 70 percent of the respondents, whereas voting and solidarity are considered to be important by about 60 percent.¹⁷ On the other hand we see that the neo-Tocquevillean idea that engagement in voluntary associations is an important aspect of being a ‘good citizen’ is supported by about one out of every four respondents only. Even more remarkable is the clear lack of support for the idea that a ‘good citizen’ should be active in politics: only ten percent of the respondents support the norm that a ‘good citizen’ is – generally speaking – a politically active citizen.¹⁸

¹⁵ The network ‘Citizenship, Involvement, Democracy’ (CID) was funded by the European Science Foundation; see: www.mzes.uni-mannheim.de/projekte/CID and van Deth, Montero, Westholm (2007) for further information. For the European Social Survey see: ess.nsd.uib.no/2003.

¹⁶ The questions are based on a extensive battery developed as part of a Swedish citizenship study, which focuses on four dimensions: solidarity, participation, law obeying, and autonomy (Petersson et al. 1998, 129-130).

¹⁷ The World Values Survey contains an extended measure for the acceptance of pro-social norms. The results obtained with this measure underline the conclusion that pro-social norms are widely accepted in democratic states (cf. Gabriel et al. 2002, 73-79).

¹⁸ Dekker and de Hart (2002) also show that politics is an astonishingly unimportant aspect of the image of a ‘good citizen’ in The Netherlands. Carmines and Huckfeldt conclude that “... a revised model of citizenship has emerged – a model of the citizen as a cost-conscious consumer and processor of political information who, while

<Figure 1 about here>

These results are confirmed by several other analyses. Denters, Gabriel, and Torcal (2007) analyzed the CID-questions and report a high degree of integration of the various aspects as well as a remarkable high level of support for the major aspects of being a ‘good citizen’: law-abiding, opinionating, and solidary. Using the ESS data Rossteutscher (2005) reports high levels of support for law obeying, solidarity, and autonomy. This high level of support can also be revealed for the norm to vote in public elections. Much lower, however, is the support for the norm to be active in organizations. A British and American surveys applying measures from the CID-project found high levels of support for “civic duties and obligations” and a corresponding limited “sense of duty to become politically engaged” beyond voting (Patty, Seyd, and Whiteley 2004, 48-50; Dalton 2008: 88, respectively). Based on completely different sources Schudson (1998) describes the rise of “monitorial citizens” in modern democracies in a similar way: they are “perhaps better informed” and “have no more virtue than citizens of the past – but not less, either”. The crucial point is that they “... tend to be defensive rather than proactive” (Schudson 1998, 311; cf. Hooghe and Dejaeghere 2007). People do take their rights and duties as citizens seriously, but they are reluctant to get involved in public and political affairs beyond voting.

As these results show, for the majority of respondents a ‘good citizen’ is someone who visits the ballot box – not someone who is engaged in public and political affairs beyond voting. Moreover, these findings do not support the idea that engagement in voluntary associations can be seen as a substitute for political engagement. People are consistently reluctant to place much value on both social and on political participation as core aspects of being a ‘good citizen’ (cf. Theiss-Morse and Hibbing 2005, 242-245). Obviously, the “... ideal citizen is not the enlightened political participant cognizant of the common good but the effective one” (Gross 1997, 233). This is a remarkably restricted conception of a ‘good citizen’, which is not only far away from ideas presented by political theorists from Pericles to Benjamin Barber, but also far away from the ideas presented by EU policymakers.

Although no empirical information is available about the images of a ‘good EU citizen’ it is very unlikely that these images would attach more importance to engagement in political affairs beyond voting or to activities in civil society associations than found in images of a ‘good citizen’. From the perspective of citizens, the ‘good EU citizen’ is probably rather similar to the ‘good citizen’ at best. The arguments seem to be characterized by the following aspects. A ‘good [European] citizen’ is somebody who is:

1. law-abiding, opinionated, and solidary;
2. casts a vote in elections, but is not necessarily involved in other political activities;

taking her duties seriously, has successfully reduced the impulse to be consumed by politics and political affairs” (1996, 250).

3. is not necessarily involved in civil society organizations;
4. supports the role of civil society organizations in decision-making processes; direct involvement of citizens is superfluous;
5. is unlikely to develop (more) positive orientations towards the EU due to the mobilization of civil society organisations in EU policymaking processes;
6. is not concerned about possible inconsistencies between the results of electoral participation and participation of civil society organizations, because the latter is not salient.

3. WYSIWYG?

The images of the ‘good European citizen’ appear to deviate clearly between the EU policymakers, civil society organisations, and ordinary citizens. Apparently, EU policymakers and civil society bodies do not get what they see as the ‘good European citizen’. As in other areas, the images of a ‘good citizen’ seem to confirm the depiction of the EU as “*Union of deep diversity*” (Eriksen and Fossum 2007). Among citizens, normative considerations about solidarity, obeying laws, autonomy, and electoral participation are widely shared and supported. Much less convinced are citizens that participating in voluntary associations or being politically active are features of a ‘good citizen’. Empirical information on images of a ‘good citizen’, then, is not in line with over-enthusiastic expectations about citizens eagerly looking for opportunities to participate in “thick democracy”. Whether such participation, in turn, would have positive consequences for the development of support for broader conceptualizations of citizenship still is a controversial topic. Some authors strongly argue that participation does not seem to be necessary for the development of support for aspects of citizenship such as solidarity (cf. Segall 2005). Others draw a more complicated picture (cf. Theiss-Morse 1993; Mansbridge 1999; Verba et al. 1995: 500) or underline the benevolent impacts of “deliberation” (Fishkin and Luskin 2005).

Since the differences in the images of the ‘good European citizen’ between the EU policymakers, civil society organisations, and ordinary citizens are considerable, the consequences will be considerable too. Firstly, we see that the ideas of EU policymakers to integrate citizens more intensively in democratic decision-making processes is not met with equal enthusiasm among these very same citizens. Apart of casting a vote, ordinary citizens do not support the idea that a ‘good citizen’ is necessarily characterized by political and social engagement. The restricted importance attached to voluntary association, moreover, makes it rather unlikely that mobilizing civil society bodies as proposed by EU policymakers will change this reluctance.

Secondly, the attempts to include civil society organizations in EU decision-making processes will be much more effective than efforts to mobilize citizens, because they fit seamlessly to the ideas of these organisations about their main tasks. Both EU policymakers and spokespersons of voluntary associations stress the need for a more prominent role of civil society. The increasing integration of civil society bodies in decision-making process has a number of positive consequences: expertise is made available, measures can be attuned to specific needs, societal demands can be articulated early, European bureaucracy is met with countervailing powers, complementary opportunities are offered outside the representative institutions, etcetera. Although on the negative side the prospects for patronage, ‘closed shops’, and corruption are also evident, the resemblance of the ideas of EU policymakers and civil society organisations are too strong to hamper a further integration of these organisations in EU decision-making processes.

The third conclusion is based on the different expectations about the benevolent aspects of citizens’ engagement in democratic decision-making processes among EU policymakers and civil society bodies. For EU policymakers the need to mobilize ordinary citizens is an important pillar of their pleas for a stronger position of civil society. But as we have seen, these organisations stress their role as collective actors and are, in practise, virtually under no pressure to mobilize members of supporters – a strategy that is nicely met by the apparent lack of eagerness among citizens to participate. Consequently, civil society organizations and ordinary citizens will be content with the dual process of strengthening the position of civil society and not increasing the participatory demands on citizens. The EU policymakers are left behind with their ideas about civil society as a mean to integrate ordinary citizens and to close the gap between citizens and the EU.

The common aspects of the three perspectives on the images of a ‘good [European] citizen’ are summarized in Table 1. From this sketchy overview it is clear that only the idea that civil society bodies should play an important role in democratic decision-making processes is explicitly supported from the perspectives considered here. The consequences of three of the remaining aspects are unclear, because the importance attached to these points appears to vary. Two aspects, however, seem to be problematic. From a *top-down perspective*, the strong expectations among EU policymakers that integrating civil society bodies in decision-making process will eventually result in (more) positive attitudes towards the EU is not met by similar ideas among civil society bodies or ordinary citizens. Frustration is likely to accumulate at both sides: policymakers will not reach their goal and citizens will be constantly reminded of something they don’t care much about. From a *bottom-up perspective*, the core elements of the image of a ‘good citizen’ among the population – law-abiding, opinionated, and solidary – are not very important for the ‘good citizen’ as conceptualized by EU policymakers and civil society bodies. Frustration is likely to accumulate here especially among ordinary citizens, whose ideas about citizenship are not met with similar ideas from other actors. Clearly, citizens do not get what they see.

<Table 1 about here>

People do take their rights and duties as citizens seriously, and they strongly support norms of law-abiding, the expression of opinions, solidarity, and casting a vote. Ordinary citizens will not, however, develop (more) positive orientations towards the EU as a consequence of the increased involvement of civil society bodies in democratic decision-making processes. EU policymakers and ordinary citizens seems to emphasize different aspects of a ‘good citizen’ – as a result, neither of them will get what they see. Consequently, pleas for “*reconstituting* democracy in Europe” (Eriksen and Fossum 2007) can only be successful if these very different images are taken into account and cultural and structural approaches are integrated.

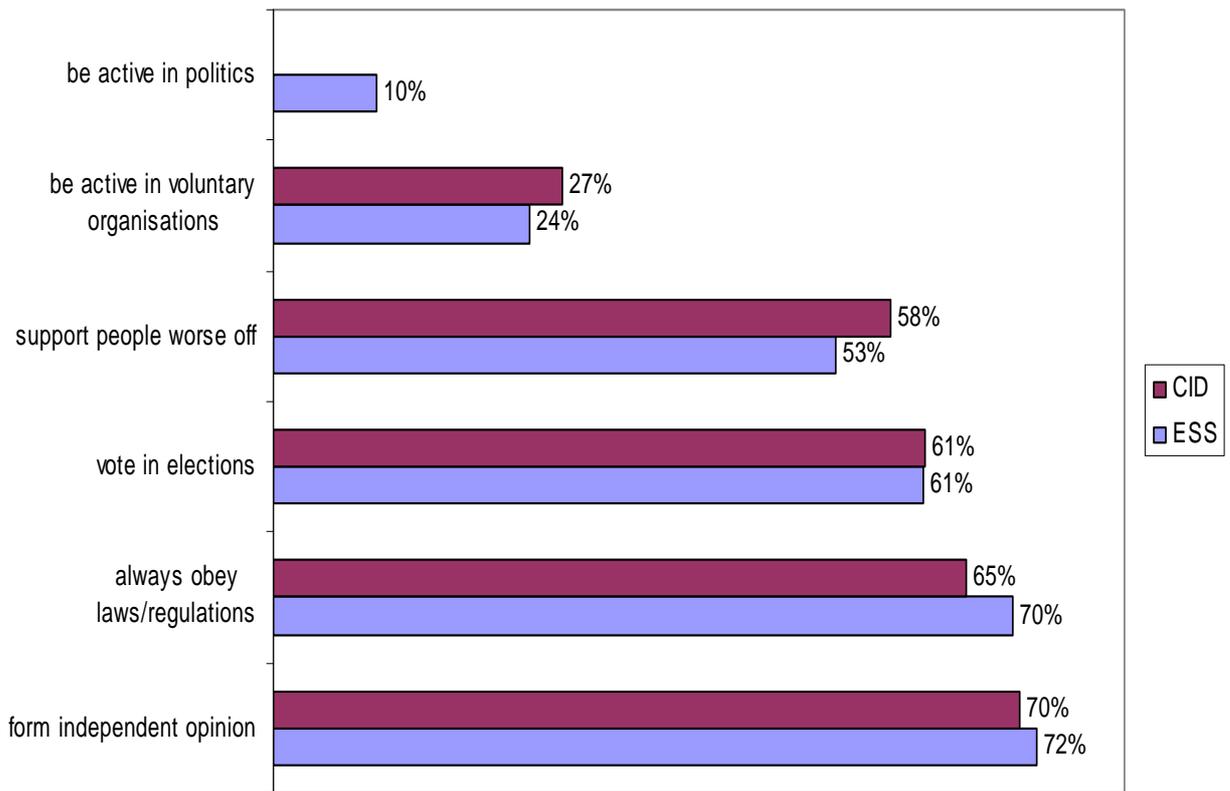
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Figure 1: Aspects of being a ‘good citizen’
 (Percentages of respondents scoring 8, 9 or 10)



Sources:

ESS: Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, Czech Republic, Germany, Denmark, Spain, Finland, France, United Kingdom, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, Slovenia.

CID: Denmark, Germany, Moldova, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland.

Table 1: Images of the 'good citizen' from various perspectives

<i>A 'good European citizen' is somebody who:</i>	<i>EU Policymakers</i>	<i>Civil Society Bodies</i>	<i>Ordinary Citizens</i>	
uses opportunities of representative democracy	idea supported	not considered	strongly supported	
supports civil society organisations	strongly supported	strongly supported	partly supported	
supports role of civil society organisations in decision making	strongly supported	strongly supported	strongly supported	
develops (more) positive orientations towards the EU	strongly supported	not considered	not considered	
is not concerned about inconsistencies between electoral and social participation	implicitly accepted	not considered	not relevant	
is law-abiding, opinionated, and solidary	not considered	not considered	strongly supported	