



**European  
Movement**  
International

**Future of Europe**  
European Movement  
Reflection



The reflection process on the future of the European Union will dominate much of the EU's agenda in 2017, with the article 50 negotiations with the United Kingdom taking place in parallel. The EU and Member States will debate the future of the EU27 on the basis of the initial statements and input of three EU institutions: the White Paper of the European Commission<sup>1</sup>, the Rome Declaration of the European Council<sup>2</sup>, and three reports of the European Parliament.<sup>3</sup>

The European Movement Inter-

national has been engaging in the debate on Europe's future from the start and will continue to input its vision at key moments, in particular around the publication of reflection papers by the European Commission that will follow on the White Paper.

Alongside our topic-specific commentaries, this paper comments on the reflection process itself and the first scenarios for Europe's future, as sketched in the White Paper, Rome Declaration and Parliament reports.

## A Europe moving forward at different speeds

The question of moving forward at

1. [White Paper on the Future of Europe, European Commission](#), 1 March 2017

2. [Rome Declaration](#), 25 March 2017

3. [Resolution on possible evolutions of and adjustments to the current institutional set-up of the European Union, Resolution on improving the functioning of the European Union building on the potential of the Lisbon Treaty, Budgetary capacity for the euro area, European Parliament](#), 16 February 2017

the same or at differentiated speed appears to take centre-stage in the institutional debate on Europe's future. Whereas the Parliament report focusses on ending the fragmentation of the European Union (though also proposing simplifying requirements for enhanced cooperation), the Rome Declaration and White Paper put enhanced cooperation and "coalitions of the willing" decidedly on the table.

**“The reflection process following the White Paper can be used to further examine the relation between differentiation and European unity.”**

The issue of European unity is thus pertinent in the debate.

Though à la carte opt-outs

for individual Member States should be avoided, especially in the form of derogations on the level of EU primary law, flexibility has also played an important role in keeping Member States together. The reflection process following the publication of the White Paper can be used to further examine this relation between differentiation and European unity.

In this reflection, there are several risks of a differentiated Europe that need to be taken into account. The most prominent concern regards citizens' rights. Several scenarios in the White Paper foresee a reduction of citizens' rights or differing citizenship rights depending on nationality or country of residence. The European Movement International strongly advocates to guarantee the principle of equality of all citizens and their

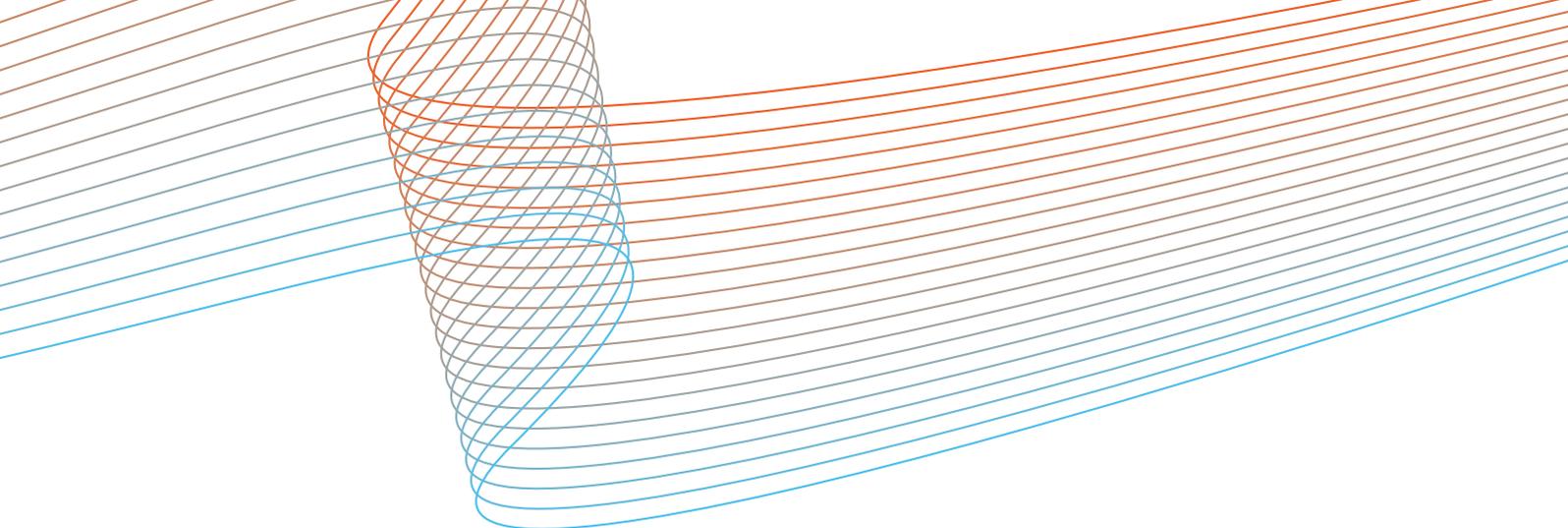


rights across the EU. Similarly, differentiated integration should not lead to blurred lines with regard to the safeguarding of European values including human rights and the rule of law, which must apply throughout the EU.

Another risk linked to a differentiated Europe is an even more complex legislative process to the detriment of transparency and accountability, which are key especially in light of low trust in the European institutions. Thus any form of enhanced cooperation must avoid more complexity in an already complex architecture of institutions, and be accompanied by internal political reform towards more transparent and accountable decision-making, in order to increase legitimacy and trust.

## Citizens to take centre stage in Europe's future

Citizens should take centre stage in any scenario for Europe's future through more inclusive avenues for citizens' engagement with EU decision-making. The final scenario for the EU's future should entail proposals on increased citizens' participation, including a constructive, inclu-



sive and permanent dialogue with citizens and representatives of society at large, be it trade unions, business, local authorities or civil society organisations. This dialogue should continue throughout the legislative cycle and reach citizens at all levels – local, regional and national. It should also include a structured and truly transparent institutional consultation process that ensures the equal participation of all stakeholders. In short, the institutional system must



be more democratic and transparent, and take into account Europe's diverse and plural voices.

To ensure that a citizens-focussed EU is possible, representatives of all society and individual citizens' have to be incorporated into the debate around the future of the EU from the very beginning. A broad representation of civil society in these debates should be ensured through participatory mechanisms that go beyond the planned Citizens' Dialogues, and are designed to seriously engage

with citizens' input. Youth deserves a special mention in this regard – the future of the European Union cannot be designed without taking into account the future generations. In a similar vein, issues that affect people's lives, like environmental protection and sustainability, fairness and equality, social protection and well-being, must be at the core of EU policy-making and the debate on Europe's future.

### Avoiding the deepening – widening debate

There is one notable hiatus in the discussions on Europe's future, which is enlargement. Sketching the European Union in 2025, none of the scenarios of the White Paper take the widening of the EU into account. Whereas the Rome Declaration wants a 'Union which remains open to those European countries that respect our values and are committed to promoting them', the White Paper only briefly mentions the attractiveness of the EU and the transformative power of the prospect of EU membership but does not mention enlargement as such. The European Movement International unequivocally supports the enlargement process especially because of its real transformative impact on regional cooperation, citizens' rights and freedoms, and peace and stability.

Accession of new Member States has been put on hold for the term of the current European Commission, but is not blocked until 2025. The White Paper neither pays attention to the effect each of the five scenarios might have on enlargement policy, nor to the effect enlargement (or loss of credibility of enlargement policy) might have on the EU. The future shape and position of the EU cannot be seen separately from its relation with (potential) candidate countries and the effect that has upon the stability in Europe's direct neighbourhood.

It seems that in order to avoid a new deepening versus widening debate, the issue has instead been avoided altogether. It means not only a hiatus in the scenarios, but is also unfair towards those countries currently in the accession process, who thus also have a stake in the debate on the future of the EU. Their voice should just as well be included in the reflection process.

### Lack of vision? It all comes down to the process.

By taking a neutral stance vis-à-vis the five scenarios it proposes, the White Paper is criticised across the board for lack of a clear vision for Europe's future and has been compared to a simple think-tank exercise. However, being published along

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with clearly outlined visions on Europe’s future by the Parliament and European Council, the White Paper, with its broader range of options, does offer a starting point for a wider debate on Europe’s future which has the potential to go beyond the EU institutions only.

It is exactly this wider debate, though, where there is the risk for a lack of ambition. First of all, the proposed ‘Future of Europe Debates’ will not have any impact on the reflection process if the results of these debates and the different visions of citizens and civil society at large are not integrated in the process and the eventual outcome. An open and inclusive debate is needed, where the voices of all those with a stake in Europe’s future are taken into account.

Secondly, there is a risk that the reflection process will be stuck at a perpetual state of reflection. The topic-specific reflection papers of the Commission will again provide dif-

ferent options on issues where comprehensive plans are already on the table (such as the Five Presidents’ Report with regard to the deepening of the Economic and Monetary Union). A prolonged process of reflection should not be to the detriment of needed action. Jean-Claude Juncker’s September 2017 State of the Union speech and the European Council meeting in December 2017 will have to put forward concrete visions and roadmaps, together with a genuine commitment from the Member States and the European institutions that these will be implemented.

The European Movement International already put forward proposals for addressing the challenges faced by the European Union in its “Crafting a way forward” paper.<sup>4</sup> In the coming months, we will publish a series of topic-specific reflections ahead of the European Commission papers on Europe’s social dimension, the deepening of the Economic and

4. [Crafting a way forward – European Movement Proposals](#), European Movement International, September 2016

Monetary Union, globalisation, defence and the EU’s finances. During the debate on Europe’s future and ahead of the European Elections in 2019, the European Movement will actively engage and input its ideas on the direction our Union should take.

#### The European Movement

seeks to provide a platform to encourage and facilitate the active participation of citizens and stakeholders in the development of European solutions to our common challenges. We offer thought leadership on the issues that affect Europe and we give the opportunity to representatives from European associations, political parties, enterprises, trade unions, NGOs and other stakeholders, through our 39 National Councils and 34 International Associations, to work together, towards improving the way that Europe works.

#### European Movement International

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