Scenarios for the Future of Europe

Final event
Brussels, February 27, 2018
Guidelines for discussion
EUENGAGE Final Event – Scenarios for the Future of Europe

EUENGAGE Final Event

Hosted by

OPEN SOCIETY EUROPEAN POLICY INSTITUTE

A PART OF
OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS
EUENGAGE project

WHAT
EUENGAGE is a three-year project that investigated the current tensions between the EU supranational governance and popular mobilisation at the national level, and critically questioned EU driven policies and EU legitimacy. It also aimed at proposing remedial actions based on sound empirical research on the relationship between public opinion, national and supranational political elites.

Over three years, EUENGAGE produced a large number of datasets focusing on citizens (EUENGAGE Mass Surveys, Waves 1 and 2, e-Voice pre- and post-deliberation surveys), elites (EUENGAGE Elite Surveys, Waves 1 and 2), parties (Chapel Hill Expert Surveys, EP Election 2014 Party Manifestos), political leadership (EUSpeech), social media (EP Election 2014 – Tweets), and electronic media (MRC Data).

It also set up an innovative deliberative experiment (e-Voice), which brought together about 350 European citizens from 10 European countries, to talk about the EUENGAGE themes, and to interact with experts and politicians.

A number of research papers, newsletters, and working papers based upon EUENGAGE data were also published.

To learn more about the project, visit the EUENGAGE website: www.euengage.eu, or follow us on Twitter: @EuengageProject and Facebook: @euengageH2020.

WHO
EUENGAGE partners are from universities and research institutes across Europe: University of Siena (project’s coordinator - Italy), Vrije Universitat Amsterdam (Netherlands), University of Mannheim (Germany), London School of Economics (United Kingdom), Median Research Centre (Romania), Kantar Public (Belgium), Unitelma Sapienza (Italy).
GOALS OF THE FINAL EVENT

In line with the goal to “engage in a dialogue on the future path of Europe” this event aims at discussing future scenarios of the EU, and at reflecting collectively on the possible outcomes, drivers and branching points that might lead to (or prevent) each outcome.

The privileged people that will take part to this insightful discussion, will help us to shape the policy conclusions of this project.

The result of this brainstorming/foresight exercise will be ultimately translated into a policy brief, which represents the last, concluding output of the EUENGAGE Project, providing policy input to the European Commission. The document will be also shared and disseminated to a wider audience, to contribute to the discussion on the future of European integration and to provide policymakers with indicators that would make them able to recognise an unfolding scenario at its early stages, and those factors and players that would make them possible or prevent them from happening.

In the knowledge map contained in this document here, there are some basic information and some food for thought to start the discussion.

*Moderation room of the EUENGAGE online deliberation, October 2016*
EUENGAGE Final Event – Scenarios for the Future of Europe

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We are also thankful to our project’s partners, who kindly supported us in drafting the summary results.
We of course assume the full responsibility for the re-elaboration of their papers and researches.

HOW THE EVENT WILL WORK
This event has been organized so as to encourage the participants, to discuss and share their opinions in a way that guarantees to all participants the possibility to express themselves and to collaborate with each other.

For this purpose, participants will be divided into 3 round tables and each table will be supported by a facilitator, who will encourage mutual listening and the exchange of views, even if they are diverging. Participants will be randomly assigned to scenarios. It might occur participants do not share the scenario they have been assigned to: this will offer the opportunity to make participants’ views heard and to enliven the discussion pointing to the factors that might brake or obstacle that scenario to unfold.

The working group sessions will alternate with plenary sessions, where the results of groups discussions will be shared.

Each group of participants will discuss one of the three different scenarios for the future of Europe during two rounds of discussion.

- In the first round, we will launch the first question on the plausibility of each scenario, the main drivers, and the possible outcomes.
- Results will be then collectively discussed by all groups in the Plenary session
- In the second round, we will launch the second question on the branching points that might lead each scenario towards one outcome or another.
- Results will be then collectively discussed by all groups in the final Plenary session.

To guarantee an informed and constructive discussion, we kindly ask participants to read with care the following sections and the knowledge map of the three scenarios.

The event is organised with the methodological support of Avventura Urbana, an Italian society that has been working on collaborative processes and alternative dispute resolution for more than 20 years.
The EU is at a crossroad. Over the last decade it has been facing multiple crises, which have seriously challenged the project of European Integration.

It is not possible to elaborate a single prediction about the future of European integration in a complex situation, such as the one the EU is facing today. The economic, migration, and security crises have put the European project under strain, and they have exposed the weaknesses related to the “democratic deficit” of the EU and of its institutional mechanisms.

In this context, we will explore three possible scenarios for the future of Europe in the mid-term (2030):

#DISINTEGRATION

#BUSINESS AS USUAL

#INTEGRATION

For each of them, we want to identify, over the **two rounds of discussion**:

- The main **drivers** that can lead to each scenario. By drivers, we mean structural conditions and factors, or trends, such as: increasing migration flows, rate of economic growth and so on. (Round 1)

- The possible **outcomes** of each scenario, that is to say the different “shapes” it can take. (Round 1)

- The **branching points** that can shift the evolution of things toward one or another outcome within the same scenario. By branching points, we mean turning points, occurrences such as elections, referendums, upsurge of specific party families, unexpected natural disasters, social upheavals and so on. (Round 2)
SCENARIO 1
#DISINTEGRATION

In this scenario, the European Union falls apart or becomes a hollow structure.

The project of European integration comes definitely to an end.
We would like now to ask you:

**Question for Round 1**

How plausible is this scenario?

- What are the main *drivers* that might lead to this scenario or that might prevent it from occurring?

- What are the possible *outcomes* of this scenario?
  
  We suggest you a few (they are not necessarily alternative): “A *Multipolar Europe of sovereign nations*”, “A *Multipolar Europe under German hegemony*”, “The Europe of the Regions” ...

**Question for Round 2**

- Which *branching points* might tilt towards one outcome or another in this scenario?
In this scenario, the European Union fails to significantly reform itself, or Member States achieve an agreement only on limited aspects of cooperation. The EU institutions nevertheless survive.
We would like now to ask you:

**Question for Round 1**

**How plausible is this scenario?**

- What are the main *drivers* that might lead to this scenario or that might prevent it from occurring?
- What are the possible *outcomes* of this scenario?
  
  We suggest you a few (they are not necessarily alternative): “Europe à la carte” (i.e. policy cooperation only on certain areas such as Single Market, or immigration by building a “Fortress Europe”), “Shrinking EU or Back to the Past” (i.e. reducing EU just to a trade union” …

**Question for Round 2**

- Which *branching points* might tilt towards one outcome or another in this scenario?
In this scenario, the European Union carries out important reforms and/or manages to strengthen policy cooperation.
We would like now to ask you:

**Question for Round 1**

**How plausible is this scenario?**

- What are the main **drivers** that might lead to this scenario or that might prevent it from occurring?
- What are the possible **outcomes** of this scenario?

We suggest you a few (they are not necessarily alternative): “United States of Europe”, “Two Speed Europe” (i.e. strengthened cooperation across policies among a core group of States)...

**Question for Round 2**

- Which **branching points** might tilt towards one outcome or another in this scenario?
SOME INSIGHTS FROM THE EUENGAGE PROJECT.

One of the core objectives of the EUENGAGE project was to use the results of the analyses carried out over the three years to **elaborate policy scenarios about the future institutional structure of the EU**.

The vast amount of data and research generated by the EUENGAGE project produced a number of interesting findings. Here we provide you with a few insights drawn from EUENGAGE current researches. They are intended as food for thought for the discussion:

- **Support for burden-sharing measures and more EU cooperation among citizens and elites:**
  - In the field of **economy**, surveys show both EU citizens and elites are more prone to share resources among Member States to fix economic problems (burden-sharing) than to delegate economic policy competence to the EU (sovereignty issue). However, country differences emerge: southern countries (Italy, Spain, and Portugal) are decidedly more in favour of burden sharing than the other countries; Germany and France lead the group of those willing more EU policy coordination; UK and Czech Republic stand at the lowest pole of support on both dimensions.
  - For what concerns **immigration**, mirroring what happens within the EU institutions, there are country-based divisions among European publics and elites on the migration and asylum policy, drawing a line between destination/frontline countries on the one side and the least affected countries on the other.
  - Survey data revealed that there are cross-countries differences about the desired level of policy coordination on **security** issues and on the nature of the relations between the EU and NATO. Both elites and citizens tend to polarise between intergovernmentalists (the Netherlands and UK) and supranationalists (all the other countries), and between NATO supporters (Germany, Czech Republic, Poland, Portugal) and EU supporters (France, Greece, Italy, Spain).
What do leaders and parties talk about?

- Leaders’ speeches data show that political leaders are more inclined to address economic issues in their speeches when economic numbers are in decline. Furthermore, a weakening economy also incentivises leaders to engage in blame-shifting, increasing their negativity towards, for example, banks and other EU member states. This might have consequences for burden-sharing among EU member states: national leaders may enter a vicious cycle in which decreased trust among the public (in response to plummeting economic numbers) may incentivize leaders to shift even more blame towards other EU member states or to specific EU institutions, thus further decreasing public’s trust about cooperation at the EU level. Compared to the economy, security issues are discussed, on average, much less frequently.

- In party manifestos published in the occasion of the 2014 European Parliament elections, it was found that most mentions of parties related to the EU revolve around the EU polity issue (i.e. issues relate to the competences, legitimacy or complexity of the EU). In comparison to these, the two EU issue domains of EU economic issues and EU immigration policy, are far less salient for parties. Far-right parties put more emphasis on EU polity issues in comparison to both far-left and mainstream parties.

- Far right parties increasingly oppose the scope of the EU polity and EU policies related to the economic sphere, followed by far-left parties. On EU immigration policy, only far-right parties become more critical of the way in which the EU handled policies related to immigration.

- Expert estimates show that the financial and migration crises have raised the salience of Europe and immigration in parties’ political discourse, especially among Eurosceptic parties. These crises of the past decade may be a critical juncture for Europe. One would expect existing political parties to respond to voter preferences by supplying appropriate policies. However, the positional flexibility of political parties is heavily constrained; rather, crises have intensified serious internal dissent among political parties that take a middling position on European integration. Moreover, these critical junctures also led to an upsurge of new political parties that reject the EU competence on migration and economic issues; voters have turned to these new parties that raise issues related to Europe and immigration that mainstream parties would rather ignore.
• **What do media talk about?**
  
  o Over the period analysed (January-October 2016), **economy remained the most frequently covered of the four topics Europe-wide**. Immigration was the second most frequently discussed topic for the first few months of the year, but then its coverage dropped and only increased again in October. Articles on security had a fairly steady flow. A short and not very steep peak followed the reported chemical weapons attack and the death of dozens of children in terrorist attacks in Syria in April (i.e., not long after the EU-Turkey statement of policy turn on 20 March). Another peak took place at the beginning of the war in Ukraine.
  
  o As for the EU integration topic, the **tone of the EU’s coverage** was predominantly – and throughout the year increasingly - positive in Germany and the Netherlands, predominantly negative in the UK in the months leading the referendum, and roughly as often negative as positive in the other seven countries and in the UK in early 2016 as well as after the Brexit referendum. Of the seven remaining countries, Portuguese media were slightly more often positive than negative about the EU. By and large, the typical sentiment of the articles about the EU were not so different before and after the Brexit referendum in any one of the ten countries.
  
  o Overall, it emerges that **there is no common EU public sphere** and way of discussing these issues. National media systems are distinct as expected given their long-term national embeddedness and the historical differences across countries that remain large despite digital changes and prophecies of convergence.
  
  o Social media data shows that, in the **Brexit debate on Twitter** most Leave politicians’ tweets discuss the excessive volume of EU migrants and the control of migration by the UK government. In contrast, tweets by Remain MPs focuses on 1) pointing out the false claims by Leave campaign, and 2) benefits of European migrants. Furthermore, Remain users tweeted more on **economy** than Leave users, who did not have as deep concerns about economic consequences. The Remain twitter users were more concerned about the potential, damning impact of Brexit on stock market, but the attention these users paid had been low before June, and the topic showed the surge in a few weeks at the end of campaign period.