

## STRATEGIC OPTION 5: **CHANGING THE 'MORE/LESS EUROPE' LOGIC** (a fundamental rethink is needed)

### ***The basic rationale***

Supporters of this option believe the traditional debate about European integration along the lines of more or less Europe has been exhausted. The experience of the last six decades has shown that a further transfer of national political and democratic concepts to the European level would not work in the absence of truly European transnational political debates and is not really desirable taking into account the already visible deficits of national democratic systems. They say the state of the Union and complexity of current and future challenges require a more fundamental rethink of European cooperation and a longer-term approach aimed at strengthening the EU's ability to respond to the challenges that lie ahead, making it more accountable to the public for its actions, finding new ways to involve the public in policy-making, and boosting the EU's capacity to safeguard the fundamental rights of its citizens and guarantee their basic social rights by strengthening the Union's caring dimension.

### ***Key potential measures under this option***

- > Better monitoring, auditing and control of EU spending, including creating a 'European Public Prosecutor' to investigate, prosecute and bring to justice those who commit criminal offences affecting the Union's financial interests.
- > Increased citizens' participation in EU policy-making via new instruments encouraging active involvement in decision-making (for example, through 'regional referenda' on how EU funds should be spent at the regional/local level).
- > Strengthening the EU's capacity to ensure respect for civil rights and fundamental freedoms when they are encroached upon at national level.
- > A greater focus on long-term policies of direct benefit to citizens, from safeguarding minimum social rights to guaranteed access to education and health services and delivering sustainable economic growth beyond a simple GDP orientation.
- > Establishing a "Charter of European Citizenship", setting out people's individual and collective rights, to strengthen their sense of what it means to be an EU citizen.
- > Setting up new consultation groups including NGOs, regional and local bodies, and experts in particular areas to consider long-term policy options and inform decision-making at EU level on issues such as migration, mobility and the economy.

### ***Main advantages and disadvantages***

#### ***Meeting the socio-economic challenges***

- +** Champions of this option say it would give the public a greater sense of ownership of EU policy-making, help to ease social tensions by safeguarding basic rights, and enable the EU to do more to support recovery in countries hit hardest by the crisis.
- Opponents say the suggested measures are either not sufficiently bold or the wrong recipe to address the root causes of the crisis and current and future socio-economic challenges.

They would be too costly, too difficult to implement and divert attention away from the need to create a Genuine Economic and Monetary Union.

#### ***Meeting the political-institutional challenges***

- + Advocates of this option argue that EU fortunes will improve when citizens feel fully engaged, with more direct involvement in – and influence over – European policy-making and a greater sense that the Union is working for their best interests.
- Opponents say current EU structures already include consultation with citizen groups and other democratic checks and balances, and the focus now should be on strengthening national governments and parliaments as key sources of EU legitimacy, not on bolstering EU bodies and institutions.

#### ***The societal dimension***

- + Supporters of this option say it would improve public understanding of European integration and the value of EU membership, and help to create a stronger understanding of what Europe is ‘for’ and thus a greater sense of ‘belonging’.
- Opponents question whether this option would really give people a new sense of where the EU is headed, or enhance their understanding of what the Union does. A political system modelled more on national democracy is needed to make it easier for citizens to understand how ‘Europe’ functions.

#### ***Meeting the external-global challenges***

- + Champions of this option say that moving away from a “more or less Europe” approach would boost the EU’s global credibility, with a longer-term strategy that goes beyond a narrow focus on GDP growth underscoring Europe’s position as a role model and a key world player.
- Opponents say this option does not deal with the reasons why Europe is facing the risk of gradual marginalisation in international affairs, because it fails to emphasise the need for much closer cooperation on foreign, security and defence policy and could further contribute to the tendency of policy-makers getting lost in navel-gazing and introspection.