

# Perceived legitimacy towards the European Union

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## **Abstract**

The European Union (EU) suffers from an increase in citizens' discontent (Schweiger, 2017; Loveless & Rohrschneider, 2011). The appropriate remedy for this increase in citizens' discontent, however, remains the subject of scholarly debate (Steffek et al., 2007). Political authorities have been experimenting with possible remedies to counter this problem. One possibility, which is widely endorsed by governments, is the use of basic types of democracy (Geissel, 2012; Best et al., 2011). This study distinguishes between two basic types of democracy, namely direct democracy and participatory democracy (Best et al., 2011). The focus of this study resides on the effect that the use of these basic types of democracy have on the legitimacy of the European Union. After discussing the overarching concepts of democratic and legitimacy deficit in the literature review, this study will lay focus on the more subjective side of perceived legitimacy. Derived from the literature two hypotheses concerning 'direct' and 'participatory' democracy are formulated. After establishing a proper research design to structure the data collection and analysis, four cases are selected. Belgium and Sweden are chosen to conduct research on the effects of direct democracy. France and Germany are selected to conduct research on the effects of participatory democracy. The in-depth analysis of this study concludes that direct democracy, in contrast to expectations of the first hypothesis, has a negative impact on the perceived legitimacy of the EU. In line with the expectations of the second hypothesis, the effects of participatory democracy were found to have a more positive effect on perceived legitimacy. However, after consideration of the in-depth data of the cases, it is found that the answer to the second hypothesis is more nuanced. The effectiveness of participatory democracy is disputed due to two different observations, concerning the content and design of this method, made in the data.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## Perceived legitimacy

What makes governments legitimate in the eyes of citizens? If one asks this question of highly educated youth in the Netherlands, they almost uniformly consider free and fair elections the most important characteristic of legitimate political authority (Mazepus, 2017). However, history has demonstrated that this important characteristic of free and fair elections is not enough to ensure the legitimacy of a political system over time. Many other factors, such as civic participation, are important to ensure that citizens perceive their system as a legitimate one (Føllesdal, 2004). The fact that the concept of legitimacy consists out of so many different factors, which can change over time, causes difficulty when conceptualizing the principle (Beetham, 2013). However, roughly speaking legitimacy can be divided into two distinct approaches. On the one hand, there is normative or system level legitimacy this relates to the working principles and the functioning of state institutions. Normative legitimacy lays emphasis on decision-making and exercise of power. On the other hand, there is subjective or descriptive legitimacy this refers to the public assessment of the quality of state institutions. Subjective legitimacy builds on factors of political support and trust. With subjective legitimacy citizens of a political system identify their common interest and, with regard to those interests, develop standards to assess the performance of political institutions (Gherghina, 2017). This thesis lays focus on the subjective side of legitimacy.

The changes in citizens' perspective of subjective legitimacy hold especially true for the political system known as the European Union (EU). For a long time it looked as if the European Union could count on the 'permissive consensus' of the European people (Thomassen & Schmitt, 1999). However, this did not last long. After the Maastricht Treaty, this 'permissive consensus' changed into a lack of perceived legitimacy of the EU due to the lack of agreement between political elites and citizens on the decisions concluded in this treaty. The decisions of the Maastricht Treaty were too far removed from the preferences of EU citizens (Thomassen & Schmitt, 1999).

This feeling of illegitimacy towards the EU entails a much greater focus on the subjective side of legitimacy, where the sense of legitimacy is an assessment of this political regime through the eyes of citizens (Føllesdal, 2007). This also demonstrates that a legitimate democratic system is a variable and not a constant. Democratic and legitimacy standards constantly reinvent and adapt themselves to political demands and changes as the standard of

democratic and legitimate conduct increases. Democratic practices that were acceptable in the past may be poorly adapted to modern circumstances (Newton, 2012).

Simultaneously with the Maastricht Treaty, the focus of European studies and international relations has moved towards the subject of legitimacy and, more than a decade after this shift, the debate about legitimacy is becoming mature and increasingly sophisticated (Føllesdal, 2006; Steffek et al., 2007). Despite this development in the field, authors remain divided on whether the EU actually suffers from a democratic and, closely related, legitimacy deficit (Moravcsik, 2004; Majone, 1994; Holzhaecker, 2007; Føllesdal & Hix, 2006). However, even though the democratic deficit remains under debate, there is a definite increase in citizens' discontent with the European Union (Loveless & Rohrschneider, 2011; Schweiger, 2017). The appropriate remedy for this increase in citizens' discontent, however, remains the subject of scholarly debate (Steffek et al., 2007).

Possible remedies that political authorities have experimented with are basic types of democracy. Basic types of democracy are innovations such as direct and participatory democracy. With basic types of democracy citizens are directly, and on an individual level, involved in political decision-making, rather than acting through intermediaries (Best et al., 2011). These innovations aim to increase citizens' political awareness and understanding, as well as improve the working and quality of democracy (Geissel, 2012).

Direct and participatory forms of democracy are hardly ever used at EU level. The EU tends to prioritize the protection of the minority over majority rule. There are, however, forms of direct and participatory democracy at national level covering major EU decisions (Best et al., 2011). Research into the use of these basic types of democracy and their effect on democratic performance, such as legitimacy, is very limited (Rowe & Frewer, 2004; Abelson & Gauvin, 2006). Therefore this thesis will focus on the following research question:

*What is the impact of the use of basic types of democracy at national level covering EU issues on the perceived legitimacy of the European Union?*

## **Social and academic relevance**

Citizens' participation in political deliberation has increasingly manifested itself in both the academic literature and administrative guidelines regarding decision-making (Grimes, 2008). However, evidence of the effect of citizens' participation in these basic types of democracy on democratic performance and legitimacy is very limited (Rowe & Frewer, 2004; Abelson & Gauvin, 2006). One can take the example of a specific form of direct democracy such as

referendums. Even though there exists extensive literature on referendums, the impact of the use of referendums on legitimacy remains understudied (Arnesen et al., 2019). There are several reasons why there is a gap in the literature regarding the effect of basic types of democracy on society. First, limited research has been conducted on the impact of basic types of democracy, especially research with a before and after approach are rare. This type of research is especially important due to the fact that it focuses on the particular societal effect of a democracy innovation. Second, research into the effect of basic types of democracy has encountered complex research problems such as impact measurement. The timeframe in which the effects of basic types of democracy tools occur varies. The effect of some basic types of democracy innovations could be immediate, or when other innovations are considered, the impact of these innovations may take generations to take effect (Newton, 2012). Due to the fact that it remains unpredictable when the effects of the use of democracy innovation will occur researchers can't be sure if impact of the tools will have already occurred when research is conducted (Newton, 2012). Even though the reasons behind this gap in the literature seem understandable, it is important that more research is done into these effects. The main reason for this is the fact that the debate on the effect of basic types of democracy on perceived legitimacy and the debate about democratic and legitimacy deficit of the European Union are incredibly intertwined. Perceived legitimacy can be seen as an important part of the debate about democratic and legitimacy deficit in the EU. As mentioned above, however, the existence of a democratic and legitimacy deficit remains under scholarly debate. (blondel et al., 1998). More in-depth knowledge on the closely intertwined subjected of perceived legitimacy will create a firmer basis of analysis for the larger debate on democratic and legitimacy deficit of the EU. This might bring the contrasting views of the authors disputing the existence of the democratic and legitimacy deficit closer together. This way the contrast in the academic literature might become less stark and more stable analysis surrounding these subjects can be made.

As the first sentence of this section stated, citizen participation in political deliberation has become increasingly important in administrative guidelines regarding decision-making (Grimes, 2008). However, the effects of the use of basic types of democracy tools remain unknown (Rowe & Frewer, 2004; Abelson & Gauvin, 2006). This entails that basic types of democracy tools are widely endorsed and increasingly used in political systems, even though current knowledge of the effects of such processes remains scant (Grimes, 2008). Advocates of basic types of democracy claim that, if done correctly, these tools can enhance citizens' trust and increase the legitimacy of a political system. However, governments should be

careful with introducing basic types of democracy tools into their societies without an understanding of the actual effects of these tools. Basic types of democracy tools are now implemented without the academic knowledge of the effects of these tools. Policy makers implement these tools with the unsupported assumption that these tools will increase legitimacy. With more academic research on this subject, possible decisions on the implementation of these tools could be made with more knowledge of their effects and therefore contribute to better administrative guidelines and enhancing the decision-making process.

### **Structure of the thesis**

This section introduces the general structure of this thesis. The next chapter will deal with the existing literature surrounding the main concepts of this study, namely the perceived legitimacy of the European Union, the different types of basic democracy and possible control variables influencing perceived legitimacy. The theoretical framework will flow from the literature review. This framework will provide a basis for the formulation of the hypothesis, which will aid in answering the research question. Chapter 3 on the research design of the thesis will provide a structure for the execution of the analysis. Chapters 4 and 5 will present the collected data and an in-depth analysis will be made. The thesis will end by providing an answer to the research question, describing the limitations of the study and making suggestions for future research in the area of perceived legitimacy.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review will mainly focus on the dependent variable of the research question, namely the legitimacy of the European Union. The concepts that will be discussed to fully understand the dependent variable are ‘democratic deficit’ and ‘legitimacy deficit’. The legitimacy deficit will be further explained by assessing different norms for legitimacy by differentiating between input, throughput and output legitimacy. This will be followed by a discussion of the independent variable of the research question, basic types of democracy. Here different forms of the basic types of democracy will be established and the empirical research conducted about the connection between these basic types of democracy and legitimacy will be presented.

### **Conceptualizing legitimacy**

According to Holzacker (2007), politicians, the public and scholars have, for a long time, complained about the lack of legitimacy in the EU. Ever since the rejection of the constitutional treaty by the Netherlands and France, the debate surrounding legitimacy has advanced. Some have even proclaimed that the democratic legitimacy of the EU is in ‘crisis’. Despite the rejection of the constitution, the EU institutions have continued to exist. While the decision-making in the EU continues, there is great concern about the consequences of the lack of legitimacy in the EU. This lack of legitimacy is frequently regarded as due, at least in part, to the ‘democratic deficit’ of the European Union, while scholars have debated whether either of these concepts can actually be applied to the EU. Therefore it is necessary to examine both concepts, legitimacy deficit and democratic deficit, in order to see if, or in what way, they are indeed applicable to the European Union (Blondel et al., 1998). First, the democratic deficit will be discussed.

Føllesdal and Hix (2006) have stated that the term ‘democratic deficit’ does not have a single meaning. Definitions of the term vary, but according to Føllesdal and Hix, democratic deficit can be defined by following five main claims. First, EU integration has caused a decrease in national parliamentary control and an increase in the executive power of the EU. The actions of the directing agents at EU level are beyond the control of member states. Second, and related to the first element, the European Parliament (EP), which is the only directly elected institution, is too weak. Even though the power of the EP has increased over time, the institution remains weak compared to the governments in the Council. Some might



argue that this argument is outdated, due to the fact that the Lisbon Treaty granted a great deal of power to the EP. However, the next argument provided by Føllesdal and Hix explains why the EP is still, even after the Lisbon Treaty, a weak institution. Third, EU elections are second-order elections. This means that in the EP elections the focus remains on domestic issues, rather than really focusing on the EU issues under consideration. This causes EP elections to be turned into mid-term national elections rather than having a real European focus. Fourth, the distance between the EU and its voters is considerable. Fifth, European integration causes 'policy drift'. This policy drift, partially caused by the four previous factors, causes the EU to adopt policies that are not in line with the preferences of a majority of citizens or even most member states (Føllesdal & Hix, 2006).

By contrast, Moravcsik (2004) disagrees that there is a so-called 'democratic deficit'. Moravcsik has argued that due to the institutional set-up of the European Union, member state governments and citizens still have great influence in the workings of the EU, causing the European Union's democratic credentials to be well within the democratic norms. Moravcsik believes that the checks and balances within the EU, the constitutional restrictions on the EU mandate, the increasing power of the European Parliament, and the democratic control via national governments are enough to ensure that EU policy is fair and responsive to the demands of European citizens. The claim of democratic illegitimacy is, according to Moravcsik, therefore unwarranted (Moravcsik, 2004).

Moravcsik (2004) is not the only researcher who disagrees with the existence of a European democratic deficit. Majone (1994) also argues against the existence of a democratic deficit, however, for different reasons than Moravcsik. Majone proclaims that the European Union suffers from a credibility crisis rather than a democratic deficit. According to Majone the EU is essentially a 'regulatory state'. 'Regulation' revolves around addressing market failures and therefore concerns producing policy outcomes that are pareto-efficient. Pareto-efficient policy outcomes are produced when there is some benefit and no one is worse off. Member states have delegated certain regulatory policy qualifications to the European level, and by doing this, created the EU as a regulatory agency. By doing this, governments have created a fourth branch of government, comparable to domestic regulatory agencies. According to Majone European policy-making does not have to be 'democratic' in the usual sense, because, if this were the case, the EU would lose its Pareto-efficiency. The political mass would create policy outcomes closer to their short-term ideal policy preferences. This would disadvantage the minorities and be against the majority's own long-term interest. A truly democratic EU would therefore lead to the politicization of regulatory policy-making,

which would cause redistributive rather than Pareto-efficient outcomes, and so disadvantage rather than increase the legitimacy of the European Union. Marjone believes that the EU deals with a 'credibility crisis' rather than a democratic deficit (Marjone, 1994; Føllesdal & Hix, 2006).

## **What is legitimacy?**

As argued by Blondel et al. (1998), legitimacy is an important element of democracy. The concepts of democratic deficit and legitimacy deficit are sometimes used interchangeably, but lack of legitimacy can be defined as one of the building blocks leading to a democratic deficit. In this section, the concept of legitimacy will be explained and discussed.

An exploration of the concept of legitimacy should begin by acknowledging its complexity and the full range of factors that influence the concept (Beetham & Lord, 2014). A good starting point for the discussion about the nature of legitimacy is to relate it to authority, because the two concepts are rather intertwined. Legitimacy presupposes authority: An authority is legitimate if it is recognized as valid by those to whom it applies. If there is legitimate authority, the decisions that have been made will be perceived as binding (Easton, 1965: 107) Therefore, legitimate authority is authority that is rightful, because it meets certain normative criteria regarding how those in power have obtained their power and how they exercise it. Legitimacy concerns the normative dimension of power relations, and the normative ideas and practices that give those in power their moral authority and credibility (Bekkers & Edwards, 2007).

Unfortunately, this starting point for the nature of legitimacy hides important problems. Who is to judge whether power is obtained and exercised rightfully and what criteria are used in doing so (Beetham, 2014)? Thomassen and Schmitt (1999) further elaborated on these normative criteria. According to them, there are indeed two ways to determine the legitimacy of a political authority. The first approach focuses on to what extent a political system conforms to certain normative criteria. These normative criteria can be deduced from normative democratic theory, which goes back to the very basic meaning of democracy: government by the people. The basic normative questions that arise from government by the people are the following: who are these people, what does it mean for them 'to rule' and what should they rule on? The first question revolves around the domain of the political system, the second around the scope of the government and the third around the processes and institutions of the government (Thomassen & Schmitt, 1999). This could also be viewed as the functional level of legitimacy, relating to the workings of state institutions

that focus on power and decision-making (Gherghina, 2017). The second approach is to assess to what extent the political authority is viewed as right in the eyes of the relevant members of this political system. This second criterion can be assessed by looking into the subjective judgements of members of this political system, which can be established by looking at the empirical evidence of survey data (Thomassen & Schmitt, 1999). This way of approaching legitimacy could also be defined as descriptive or subjective legitimacy, indicating the assessment of the citizens of the quality and responsiveness of the institutional performance. Legitimacy focuses on notions such as political support and trust. A political authority remains legitimate as long as citizens identify it as such. These values, based on a judgement of the state institution, are measured by the compliance of citizens with the laws and regulations (Gherghina, 2017).

A further important notion regarding legitimacy is that legitimacy changes over time. Legitimacy principles and practices change over time according to changes in the systems of power and whether citizens accept these changes. To fully understand this, social scientists have to undertake a in-depth analysis of peoples beliefs, based on internal beliefs and values of these people while regarding the system in question, rather than on the external criterion of validity (Beetham, 2013).

### **Why does legitimacy matter?**

Beetham (2013) states that legitimacy matters because of the influence it has on people attitudes and behaviour. If people acknowledge a political system as legitimate, acquired through a valid process and properly exercised, they will feel a corresponding obligation to obey and support it without having to be coerced into doing so. Political regimes that are accepted as legitimate are likely to be more stable than other ones that are not. They are better able to withstand economic and other shocks and are less vulnerable to political challenges from dissatisfied sections of the population. It is likely that if legitimacy has a positive effect on the stability and effectiveness of power, power holders will make an effort to establish and maintain their legitimacy (Beetham, 2013). Power holders will then also acknowledge the importance of providing their citizens' with good reasons to acknowledge this power. What might these reasons be? What are the key elements that contribute to creating legitimate power (Beetham, 2013)?

According to Føllesdal (2006), there are four fundamental concepts that make power legitimate. First, legitimacy implies legality. Here legitimacy is related to a legal question. This means, when the EU is considered, that the EU was created according to legal

requirements. Second, legitimacy implies compliance. This entails compliance with the agreements and therefore recognizing the EU as legitimate. Third, legitimacy implies problem-solving. Here legitimacy is seen as the ability of the EU to implement solutions and solve problems that would otherwise be unattainable. Only the problem-solving capacity of the EU can create the preferred joint outcome. Fourth, legitimacy implies justifiability. Normative concepts of legitimacy are often expressed in terms of acceptance and consent of members of the system with the workings of the system (Føllesdal, 2006).

## **Norms for assessing legitimacy**

Up to now this literature review has explored legitimacy as a general notion, that is, as a general quality that tells something about how authority is recognized as valid or justified. In this section the concept of legitimacy will be distinguished in terms of input-, throughput- and output-orientated norms and criteria for assessing the legitimacy of a political system.

### ***Input legitimacy***

Input-orientated legitimacy focuses on government *by* the people (Scharf, 1998). Government *by* the people refers to a number of norms and values related to political equality, active citizenship and popular sovereignty. This comes down to the opportunity for citizens to participate in the political process. A minimal opportunity is the right to vote in elections. In the context of governance, however, input legitimacy should be extended to other means as well. Citizens should be able to express their wishes and interests in political decision-making and have the opportunity to engage in public debate. Further relevant norms are the quality of representation and the openness of the agenda-setting process. The quality of representation refers to the fact that if citizens are only indirectly involved, an assessment should be made about the quality of the representation of interests and preferences by political intermediaries. The openness of the agenda-setting process refers to the process whereby the demands and concerns of citizens become part of the agenda. Are issues easily put on the political agenda (Bekkers & Edwards, 2007)?

Føllesdal (2006) has identified four institutional ways of achieving legitimacy. The first two of his criteria fall under input legitimacy and are quite similar to the relevant norms mentioned above. The first is legitimacy through participation. Actively including citizens, interest groups and experts in the decision-making process increases legitimacy. Actively including citizens can happen at various stages of the decision-making process, for example by citizens directly participating in a referendum. The second is legitimacy through

democratic rule. Here citizens can hold political elites accountable for their actions by voting in the representative democratic system on the basis of an informed discussion.

### ***Throughput legitimacy***

Throughput-orientated legitimacy focuses on government *with* the people. Throughput is judged in terms of the accountability, transparency, and efficacy of the EU's governing processes. Equally important is the inclusiveness and openness of consultation with the people (Schmidt, 2013). Throughput legitimacy is assessed in terms of the quality of the rules and procedures by which binding decisions are made, in other words, how collective decision-making is realized. Relevant norms in throughput legitimacy are the values of majority rules, checks and balances and free deliberation. Are the decisions made on the basis of individual voting or on the basis of integrating mechanisms such as deliberation and debate? As a general norm, it is preferred to provide a combination of individual and collective mechanisms. Another relevant norm is the quality of participation in the decision-making process. In a representative democracy, the legitimacy of decision-making is based on the participation of politicians who are elected by the voters. In a more participative model of democracy, legitimacy also depends on citizens' participation or on the inclusion of experts in the process. The last relevant norm is the quality of the checks and balances of the decision-making processes. These include institutional devices that constrain the use of power by politicians, bureaucracies and private stakeholders and are important to protect the specific interests of minority groups (Bekkers & Edwards, 2007).

Føllesdal's (2006) third criterion under throughput legitimacy is quite similar to the norms mentioned above. The third way of achieving legitimacy is legitimation through actual consent. This involves a society where other authorities recognise the authorities that rule (Føllesdal, 2006).

### ***Output legitimacy***

Output-orientated legitimacy focuses on the notion of government *for* the people (Scharpf, 1999). It builds on the notion that the government produce outputs that contribute to solving collective problems. Here, the capacity itself is not judged but the (un-)intended effects which have been realized. Output legitimacy includes two important norms, first the capacity of the government to efficiently and effectively create outcomes and outputs which are responsive to the expressed wishes of the citizens, and second, how accountably the system operates. The political system that makes the decisions has to be accountable for these decisions and for the

results that are produced. The political system should be transparent by providing information on the decisions and their effects (Bekkers & Edwards, 2007).

Føllesdal's (2006) fourth criterion under output legitimacy is legitimation through output. To achieve this legitimacy, the EU is first required to investigate and agree upon an option that would benefit all member states, whereafter the EU must then achieve this option. Mechanisms to achieve this must be binding and sanctioned by law to be effective (Føllesdal, 2006).

### **Definition of legitimacy applied in this research study**

An important question arises: which concept of legitimacy will be applied in this thesis? The chosen definition of legitimacy, to be appropriate for the theoretical framework, will build on the concept of perceived legitimacy. Perceived legitimacy will be defined by using a combination of definitions from Thomassen and Schmitt (1999), Gherghina (2017), Schmidt (2013), and Gherghina (2017).

*A political system is perceived as legitimate as long as the relevant members of this system assess it as such. The input and throughput processes should be acceptable to citizens', such that the citizens believe in the authority of these processes and trust that these processes are just. Perceived legitimacy can be assessed by looking into empirical evidence of survey data and can be measured in terms of political trust, political support and acceptance of political institutions.*

This definition focuses on input and throughput processes due to the fact that the independent variable of this study, basic types of democracy, causes output legitimacy to be inapplicable to increasing perceived legitimacy. This will be further elaborated upon in the theoretical framework.

This literature review will next elaborate on the independent variable of the research, namely the basic types of democracy. Various basic types of democracy will be discussed, including direct and participatory democracy, and empirical research will be presented on the influence of these basic types of democracy on perceived legitimacy. The literature review will end with control variables of other possible influences on perceived legitimacy.

### **Basic types of democracy**

Best et al. (2011) have distinguished between two basic types of democracy, namely direct democracy and participatory democracy. In these basic types of democracy, citizens are not acting through representatives, here, they are directly involved on an individual basis. However, there are important differences between direct and participatory democracy, for example the amount of deliberation that takes place before the final outcome of a decision. With direct democracy, there is little to no deliberation among citizens and the vote is mostly cast individually. With participatory democracy, there is extensive deliberation among citizens and the vote is cast as a collective, deliberated decision.

### ***Direct democracy***

Direct democracy originated in Athens, here citizens were allowed to be personally involved in the assembly. Issues were discussed amongst participants but if consensus proved impossible, a decision was made on the basis of majority voting. The decision made was then binding on all citizens. In modern society direct democracy means popular voting on specific issues, without much deliberation, especially if the vote takes place through electronic means (Best et al., 2011). Appendix 1 includes a table with all the different forms of direct democracy identified by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) (Beramendi et al., 2008). As shown in appendix 1 there are many different methods of direct democracy. However, due to the fact that member states aren't obliged to conform to these exact definitions provided in appendix 1 it often occurs that member states use different definitions when these methods are concerned. For this reason this study conceptualizes direct democracy by characteristic instead of selecting specific methods. The characteristics chosen for the conceptualization of direct democracy are deducted from the operationalization used by the International IDEA. These overarching characteristics can also be found in the definitions of the different direct democracy methods shown in appendix 1 (Beramendi et al., 2008). So even if the definitions of these methods vary in different member states the basis of analysis will be equal due to the fact that characteristics of these methods are considered. The characteristics used to conceptualize direct democracy are, one, methods of direct democracy have to be conducted at national level. Two, while using direct democracy there will be no collective deliberation among citizens. Citizens' are not required to seek information elsewhere or deliberate on the subject. They are, of course, allowed to acquire information and deliberate with fellow citizens but it isn't obligated. Three, the votes in direct democracy will be cast individually. Citizens can cast

their vote according to their own individual opinion. Hereby opinions of other citizens need not to be taken into account.

### ***Participatory democracy***

Participatory democracy has no universally recognized conceptualization. There is, however, a general consensus on the spectrum describing participatory democracy. This spectrum ranges from participatory democracy methods that provide citizens with direct influence over policy-making, consultative influence over policy-making and informative influence over policy-making. These methods are often used only at local and/or regional level, since the number of citizens participating in these methods is limited (Best et al., 2011). Appendix 2 includes a table with all the different forms of participatory democracy as identified by Slocum-Brandley (2003). Since there are so many different participatory democracy methods and similar methods are often referred to with different names, the methods used in this study will not be specified by name but by characteristics. The characteristics chosen for the conceptualization of participatory democracy are deduced from the operationalization of Slocum-Brandley (2003). These overarching characteristics can also be found in the definitions of the different participatory democracy methods shown in appendix 2. The participatory methods used in this study have the characteristics of, one, collective deliberation among citizens, both online and offline. This means that citizens' will have the opportunity to deliberate with each other about the subject discussed in the participatory democracy tool. Different opinions from different citizens' will be heard and discussed. Two, participatory democracy will take place at local or regional level. Three, decisions while using participatory democracy will be taken as a collective action. This entails that deliberation will ensure distribution of different opinions on the subject and through deliberation the citizens will establish a collective decision on the subject in question. This collective decision will be the eventual vote.

### **Influence of basic types of democracy tools on perceived legitimacy**

Having established what basic types of democracy exist in the literature, this literature review takes a look at the presumed impact of these democratic tools. Gherghina (2017) has written about the relationship between subjective regime legitimacy and the use of direct democracy. According to Gherghina direct democracy tools may promote policy legitimacy for decisions where representative channels are insufficient. There are sensitive issues, such as fundamental aspects of self-identity on the topics of rights, liberties and sovereignty, which bring about



major changes in society. These changes are often ill received by citizens if debates on these issues only take place among political elites. Direct democracy tools used to settle these issues are not meant to avoid conflict and debate, but to add legitimacy. The link between direct democracy and legitimacy can further be found in the compensation direct democracy provides for the shortcomings that characterize representative democracy. Over the last five decades the changing social trends have caused an increase in critical citizens. When the representative institutions do not live up to the expectations of these critical citizens, direct democracy may alter the degree of discontent by favouring the emergence of a (partial) system of self-government. The existence of the possibility for direct involvement of the public, through basic types of democracy tools, reflects a high importance given to citizens and a regime that shows openness for different ways of decision-making. This causes citizens to be more likely to accept and support the regime and thereby improving or maintaining its legitimacy. Therefore Gherghina positively associates the use of direct democracy at national level and participatory democracy at local level with legitimacy. Basic types of democracy, however, have a greater impact when applied. If outcomes of these tools remain solely on paper, direct democracy does not trigger regime legitimacy (Gherghina, 2017).

### **Other variables impacting on perceived legitimacy**

This study defines perceived legitimacy by using a composition of definitions from Thomassen and Schmitt (1999), Gherghina (2017), Schmidt (2013), and Gherghina (2017). Within this definition it is stated that perceived legitimacy is measured in terms of political trust, political support and acceptance of political institutions. As mentioned above the use of direct and participatory democracy tools can have a positive effect on the perceived legitimacy of citizens. However, literature has shown that other variables can also have an impact on these concepts building up to legitimacy. Therefore this study identifies other variables impacting perceived legitimacy.

#### ***Economic development***

The economic development of a European member state has a significant impact on the public support of this member state for the EU. These utilitarian explanations dictate that in countries that profit directly from net fiscal transfers from the EU or profit indirectly through trade and favourable economic conditions, public support for the EU is greater. However, the simple argument that net receivers of EU funds are more supportive has found mixed empirical support. More recent studies have indicated that the economy has a powerful

moderating effect, for example the studies by Anderson and Singer (2008) and Berezin and Medrano (2008) (Hobolt & de Vries, 2016).

Anderson and Singer (2008) conducted an analysis of 20 European democracies, which revealed that income inequality mattered for citizens' attitudes about democratic governance: greater inequality is associated with lower levels of support for the political system (Anderson & Singer, 2008). In terms of the present research, one could say that it is to be expected that when countries have greater economic inequality, they will perceive the democratic political process and the public institutions of the EU as less legitimate. Furthermore, if inequality is present in these countries, citizens on the left of the political spectrum will perceive the EU as even less legitimate.

Berezin and Medrano (2008) have conducted research into the role of distance in foreign relations. The distance from Brussels and support for the EU has a considerable connection. The further a European citizen lives from the political centre of Europe, the less likely he or she is to support the EU. When the EU is considered, distance is especially an important factor impacting political legitimacy. In the EU the political power is located in a supra-national place, which makes geographical distance more relevant. Distance matters for political legitimacy because people who reside far away from Brussels have a lesser sense of the political impact of the EU. The EU, however, has been successful in countering this negative effect through redistributive policies. Net budgetary transfers positively counter the negative impact of distance. Member states that reside far from the centre of the EU (Greece, Ireland, Spain and Portugal) are among the most positive due to the fact that they have benefited the most from the EU's structural funds. A good example of the positive influence of positive net budgetary transfers is the impact it had on Ireland. An increase in receiving EU's structural funds caused Ireland to move from being one of the poorest member states in the EU to becoming one of the richest. Simultaneously, Ireland moved from being one of the most Eurosceptical member states to becoming one of the most Europhile ones (Berezin & Medrano, 2008). When relating this particular study to this thesis, one could make the connection between receiving structural funds from the EU and the perceived legitimacy of the EU. The more structural EU funds a country receives, the higher its perceived legitimacy by this country.

### ***Nationalism***

As the EU has evolved from an organization primarily concerned with trade to both an economic and political union the literature also shifted to explanations for support that build

on the notions of identity, group conflict and symbolic politics. These are concepts closely related to a citizens feelings of trust and acceptance that people have in EU institutions. People's attachment to their nation influences their attitude towards the EU. There are studies that demonstrate that individuals who perceive their national identities as more important than other identities are more likely to be sceptical of the EU than those who have multiple nested identities (Hobolt & de Vries, 2016).

Halikiopoulou et al. (2012) have attempted to explain strong Euroscepticism of radical parties. The answer can be found in the role of nationalism as motivation for opposing European integration. This link between nationalism and Euroscepticism can be found in both radical right-wing parties, as well as, in radical left-wing parties. Political parties with a stronger focus on nationalism tend to adopt a more Eurosceptic position due to the fact they view their nation to be better equipped for decision making than the EU (Halikiopoulou et al., 2012). Relating that study to this thesis, it could be stated that the more nationalist a European member state is, the more Eurosceptical the country will be. There is a connection between having a strong right or a strong left party in government and a country's negative attitude towards the perceived legitimacy of the European Union.

### 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This theoretical framework will identify and specify the theories and definitions used in this research study. It will start by providing the connection between the basic types of democracy and legitimacy and continue by defining the term legitimacy. Lastly, theories will be presented which lead to the formulation of two hypotheses.

First, the literature review shows that there exist a considerable conceptual connection between direct democracy and normative input legitimacy. The normative origins of input legitimacy can be found in the work of Scharpf (1999). Input-orientated legitimacy focuses on government *by* the people. The most relevant norms in input legitimacy are opportunities for citizen participation, the right to vote, quality of representation and the openness of the agenda-setting processes. It all comes down to the fact that citizens should be able to directly express their wishes and interests in political decision-making (Scharpf, 1999). Direct democracy means voting on a specific issue, often without much collective deliberation, to express the citizens' opinion (Best et al., 2011). This way citizens are able to express their wishes and interests directly and without intermediaries, thereby providing citizens with the perfect tool to participate in political decision-making. As explained in the literature review, the conceptualization of direct democracy will not be done by selecting specific methods derived from the methods provided by the International IDEA shown in appendix 1 but by selecting specific characteristics (Bermendi et al., 2008). Characteristics are preferred above selecting specific methods due to the fact that member states often provide different interpretation of these methods. Therefore when selecting methods instead of characteristics the basis of analysis will not be equal due to difference in interpretation. When selecting characteristics this study will make ensure similarity in analysing different direct democracy tools. These characteristics are, first, no specific need for deliberation among citizens before casting a vote in a direct democracy tool, second, direct democracy tools take place at the national level and, third, individuals participating in these direct democracy tools are able to cast their own individual vote.

Second, the conceptual connection between participatory democracy and throughput-orientated legitimacy can be found in the deliberation processes. As stated in the literature review, throughput-orientated legitimacy focuses on government *with* the people (Schmidt, 2013). Throughput legitimacy is judged in terms of the efficiency, and transparency of the government processes, as well as how collective decision-making is realised. To increase

throughput legitimacy, the collective decision-making processes should build upon integrative mechanisms such as deliberation and debate (Bekkers & Edwards, 2007). While in direct types of democracy citizens express their opinions without much deliberation, in participatory types of democracy deliberation is central to the process (Best et al., 2011). Therefore, actively engaging citizens in participatory democracy creates more deliberation in decision-making among citizens and contributes to the throughput legitimacy. As explained in the literature review, the methods of participatory democracy used in this study will not be derived from selecting individual methods but by looking into specific characteristics derived from the theory. The characteristics chosen for participatory democracy are, first, collective deliberation among citizens, both online and offline, second, taking place at local or regional level and, third, decisions are taken as a collective action.

Third, the connection between basic types of democracy and output-orientated legitimacy is less clear. As stated in the literature review, output legitimacy focuses on government *for* the people (Scharpf, 1999). It revolves around the capacity of the government to produce certain outcomes. What is judged is not the capacity, but the (un-)intended effects that have been realised. The most important norm is the connection between the actual policy output and the responsiveness of these policy outputs to the wishes of the citizens (Bekkers & Edwards, 2007). By making use of basic types of democracy, the knowledge about the preferences and wishes of the people increases. However, the connection between the actual policy outcomes and the responsiveness of these policy outcomes to the wishes of the citizens is not affected by using basic types of democracy, because the distance between the use of basic types of democracy in individual member states and the policy creation processes at EU level is too large. The governments of the member states of the EU have delegated significant power for policy development to the Commission, and hence the Commission has developed many of the characteristics of a supranational ‘government’. As a result, the Commission is able to pursue an agenda independently from the member states (Hix & Høyland, 2011). This entails that often, even though the wishes of individual citizens of individual member states might be made clear through the use of basic types of democracy, the policy outcomes in the EU differ significantly from the preferences of the individual member states.

The general definition of legitimacy used in this theoretical framework combines the definition of perceived legitimacy with the workings of input and throughput legitimacy processes and is derived from the work of Schmidt (2013), who in turn built upon the work of Weber (1972) and Scharpf (1999). Furthermore, an important component, namely trust, mentioned in the work of Gherghina (2017), will be included.

*The definition of legitimacy relates to the extent to which input politics and throughput processes are acceptable to the citizens, such that citizens believe that these are morally authoritative and trust that these processes are just. Perceived legitimacy focuses on the extent to which the political system is perceived as legitimate in the eyes of the relevant members of the political system. A regime remains legitimate as long as its citizens identify it as such (Schmidt, 2013; Gherghina, 2017).*

## **Input legitimacy**

As mentioned above, input legitimacy focuses on government *by* the people. Political choices are legitimate if they derive from the will and authentic preferences of the members of this political system (Scharpf, 1999). According to many academic scholars the EU suffers from input illegitimacy (Schmidt, 2013). This input illegitimacy is caused by the fact that the European elections suffer from high rates of abstentions and are mainly second-order elections in which national issues are more important than EU ones (Schmidt, 2013; Hix & Høyland, 2013).

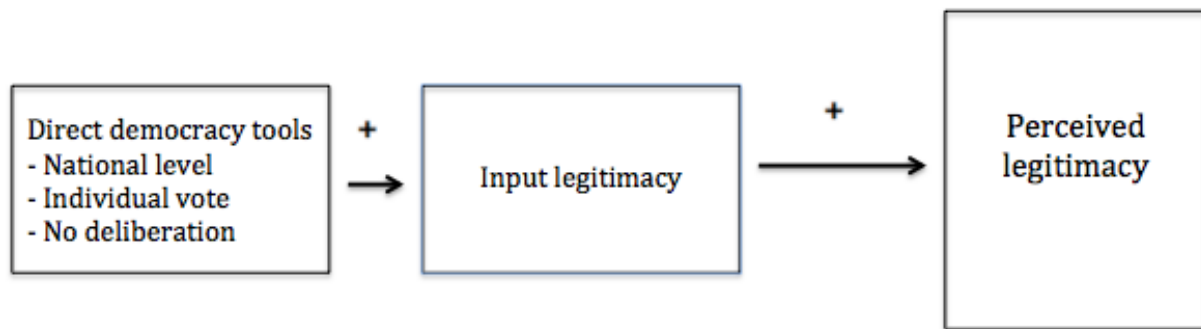
The impact that the EU has on the national democracies further complicates the issue of input-orientated democratic legitimacy. The EU's supranational institutions alter the operation of national institutions. The EU is placed above national politics, which causes policies that traditionally have been decided at the national level to be directed to the EU level. This has reduced national policies to mere politics without policy, due to the fact that the policies created by the European Union will always be ranked above the national ones. This causes national citizens to feel like their input no longer matters, as it has only marginal impact on the EU throughput and output policies (Schmidt, 2006). Due to the fact that the EP is the only EU institution in which citizens directly vote and participate it is an important actor to be considered when discussing the participatory quality of the system. Only in the EP can citizens directly portray their wishes and interests by voting.

Even though the EP has become increasingly powerful over the past 20 years, it has failed to fulfill one of its core functions, namely to ensure the democratic legitimacy of the EU (Menon & Peet, 2011) the EP has failed to perform the core task of any parliament, to acceptably represent its citizens. Inspiring democratic legitimacy requires more than just being elected. For the EP to become democratically legitimate, it must be considered by the voters to represent their interests. However, the EP has largely ignored its electorate and frequently upholds positions that are considerably different from its citizens' perspectives (Menon & Peet, 2011). Menon and Peet (2011) proclaim that strengthening the role of

national parliaments enhances the democratic legitimacy of the EU. Citizens need more efficient access to the EP, either through national parliaments, which can be realised by increasing the input and throughput policy process through basic types of democracy. National parliaments would then have a direct link with the preferences of their citizens, or greater national parliamentary involvement in the EU political system. At the same time, various authors have made the assumption that participation by citizens through the use of basic types of democracy will have a positive influence on citizens' empathy with other citizens. This will cause benefits, such as the fact that citizens will be better able to resolve conflict, will be more engaged in politics, will perceived their political system as legitimate, and will tend to place more faith in the workings of their democracy (Delli Carpini et al., 2004).

Norms that help increase input-orientated legitimacy are opportunities for participation, which next to national elections also extends to other means of participation, such as referendums where citizens can directly participate and indicate their opinions. More participation through individually casting a vote at national level, with sometimes little to no deliberation, on issues concerning the EU can help to increase the feeling among citizens that their individual political input matters at EU level, since they have a direct say in issues concerning the European Union. The use of advisory direct democracy tools within member states on issues concerning the EU will also strengthen the role of national parliaments, since their input will be more legitimate as it comes directly from their citizens, which in turn will have a positive effect on the public perception of legitimacy. This connection between the use of direct democracy tools and the positive influence it has on input legitimacy due tot the fact that it creates opportunity for individual participation is show in the first conceptual model (conceptual model 1). The model further shows that a strengthening of input legitimacy in turn has a positive influence on the perceived legitimacy of citizens. Based on the above argumentation, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H1** – *The opportunity to use direct democracy tools at national level on issues covering the EU will increase the perception of the legitimacy of the European Union in this specific member state.*



Conceptual model 1 - Input legitimacy

## Throughput legitimacy

Throughput legitimacy focuses on the workings of the ‘black box’ of EU governance. Throughput processes are all process that resides in the space between political input and political output. It concerns the quality of the processes, hereby focussing on a different kind of normative legitimacy. The focus of these processes must lay on creating interaction between all engaged stakeholders. The point here is that increased quality of interaction among all stakeholders will contribute to a more legitimate throughput process. Throughput legitimacy revolves around norms such as accountability, transparency and accessible institutions, but equally important is the quality of the deliberation process between all actors involved (Schmidt, 2013; Schmidt, 2006).

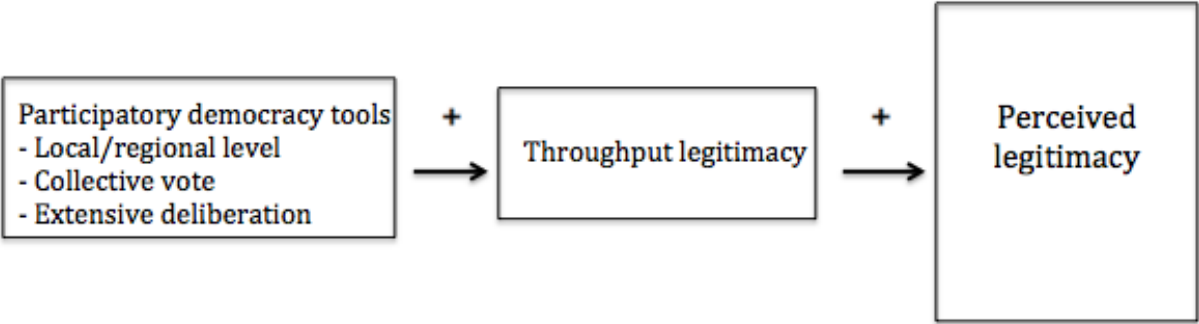
The quality of the deliberative processes is seen as a counter-steering mechanism, ensuring that citizens’ preferences are adequately channelled in societal and administrative decision-making. The main problem of throughput legitimacy is that of ‘policy without politics’, meaning that policy is made without the political consideration of the constituency, which is a realistic problem considering the supranational level of the European Union. Finding ways to include more citizens in the decision-making process can solve problems with throughput processes. Furthermore, national governments can do more to include civil society in national processes focused on EU, as well as ensuring that disadvantaged interest groups and social movement can make their voices heard (Schmidt, 2013; Schmidt, 2006).

An important part of the throughput-orientated process is deliberation with all stakeholders. One norm that helps increase the throughput-orientated legitimacy process is collective decision-making. Deliberation and debate can be realized through participatory democracy tools. These participatory democracy tools must have a few specific characteristics to ensure influence on the throughput processes. They must ensure that, in contrast to direct democracy tools, they focus on extensive deliberation. Due to the fact that extensive



deliberation can only truly be realised by ensuring the participation of a limited number of citizens, participatory democracy is most effective at the regional and local levels (Royo et al., 2011). This gives more advantages since local government is where the concerns of the local citizens most directly intersect with those of governance and the state. Furthermore, these participatory democracy tools also remedy some of the problems of throughput legitimacy, because they include citizens at the local and regional levels and bring them into the formulation process focused on EU throughput decision-making. This connection between the use of participatory democracy tools and the positive influence it has on throughput legitimacy due to the fact that it creates opportunity for deliberation among all stakeholders involved in creating policy is shown in the second conceptual model (conceptual model 2). This model further shows that improving the throughput legitimacy in turn has a positive effect on the perceived legitimacy of citizens. Based on the above argumentation, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H2** – *The opportunity to use participatory democracy tools at regional and local level on issues covering the EU will increase the perception of legitimacy of the European Union in this specific member state.*



**Conceptual model 2 - Throughput legitimacy**

## 4. RESEARCH DESIGN

The choice of a particular research design is crucial for the overall quality of the research. This chapter will discuss the specific choices made while selecting an appropriate research design. The chapter will begin by contrasting the available research designs. A choice has to be made between qualitative and quantitative research, followed by describing three specific qualitative designs. Next a feasible research design for this particular study has to be selected. The chapter ends by elaborating on the case studies selected for this research study.

### **Comparing the available research designs**

In an attempt to differentiate between quantitative and qualitative research approaches, one could argue that quantitative research builds on the measurement of the subject matter, while qualitative research refers to the meaning, concepts, definition, characteristics and description of the subject matter (Berg, 2001). Due to the fact that the research question of this thesis is both a ‘what’ question and an explanatory research question, this thesis could use both quantitative and qualitative research designs. However, since the dependent variable of this thesis is perceived legitimacy, which is defined in the theoretical framework as a more subjective form of legitimacy, concerning the extent to which citizens find government processes acceptable, rather than a more institutional legitimacy where the exact workings of the process are taken into account, the focus of the research question is more suitable to identify meaning and an in-depth description of the concepts and characteristics of the subject matter. Furthermore, the number of cases to choose from, namely the member states that use basic types of democracy on EU issues, is rather limited. Small sample research is better suited to qualitative research methods (Blatter & Haverland, 2012).

Among the many available qualitative research designs, two research designs will be discussed, namely congruence analysis and co-variational analysis. A research method is appropriate if it fits the research question and increases the internal and external validity of the research project (Gibbert & Ruigrok, 2008).

Furthermore, the research needs to be feasible and reliable. This means considering the amount of time and work constraints for this project. Reliability is also known as the absence of random error, which implies that other researchers, if they conduct the same study with the same means and using the same steps, should come to the same results. This should be taken into account when deciding on a research design (Gibbert & Ruigrok, 2008).

### ***Congruence analysis***

Congruence analysis is a research approach suitable for small sample research. A typical research question using congruence analysis revolves around which theory provides a better explanation for the studied phenomenon (Blatter & Haverland, 2012). This research design is helpful for theory specification and helps to avoid strong confirmation bias when searching for information on the chosen phenomenon, by looking at the problem from different perspectives, for example theories. The internal validity of this research design is ensured by both horizontal and vertical validity control. The horizontal internal validity provides a higher level of theoretical congruence than other studies and the vertical internal validity provides a stronger operationalization, due to the fact that all aspects of theory are included, and combines the congruence of predictions with empirical observations. The external validity in congruence analysis is achieved through the selection of the cases. The case studies need to be crucial to the phenomenon and preferably 'hard' cases. This means that if a theory can explain a least likely case, it can probably also explain a more likely case (Blatter & Haverland, 2012).

### ***Co-variational analysis***

Co-variational analysis (COV) is a research approach suitable for small sample research (Blatter & Haverland, 2012). This research design looks for empirical evidence for the existence of co-variation between an independent variable (x) and a dependent variable (y) to deduce causality. The COV focuses on the question as to whether a specific feature of social reality produces a significant effect on social reality or not. The design uses different cases and, by systematically comparing the variation of the features of these cases, attempts to look for potential effects (Blatter & Haverland, 2012). The most important factor in ensuring internal validity with the COV is by deliberate, not random, case selection. The most important criteria for case selection are that the cases should vary as much as possible with regard to the independent variable (x) and should be as similar as possible with regard to the control variable (z) (Blatter & Haverland, 2012). External validity or generalization for the COV, as with many small sample research designs, is relatively low. However, the more the selected cases are based on the consideration of representativeness, the easier it is to generalize the findings, even if only a few observations are made (Gibbert & Ruigrok, 2008).

## **Selection of a feasible research design**

Due to the fact both the research question and hypothesis of this study explore a specific feature of social reality and the influence this has on society the co-variational design creates the most appropriate ‘fit’ with this study. Furthermore, the focus of the research question and hypothesis doesn’t touch upon finding an appropriate explanation for different theories. The choice for a co-variational design is made based on the ‘fit’ with the research question, since the validity and reliability for both research methods can be equally ensured by proper research steps and case selection. Co-variational analysis has the best ‘fit’ with the research question, due to the following reasons: the co-variational analysis has a strong focus on whether a specific feature of social reality has a particular effect on social reality (Blatter & Haverland, 2012). For this research, the basic types of democracy tools can be seen as the specific feature of social reality and this research tries to determine its impact on the social reality of the perceived legitimacy of the European Union. Co-variational analysis is chosen over congruence analysis due to the fact that the social phenomenon of perceived legitimacy, in contrast to a more theoretical phenomenon, lies at the centre of this thesis. Furthermore, the main goal of this thesis is not to compare and contrast different theories, which is the main focus of congruence analysis, but to test the relevance and impact of specific factors on social reality. This particular goal fits better with co-variational analysis, which focuses on whether a specific factor has a particular influence on social reality (Blatter & Haverland, 2012).

This research study will select four cases, because of the differences in hypothesis 1 and 2. The first two countries selected will make use of direct democracy tools and the second two countries selected will focus on participatory democracy tools. This differentiation creates focus and feasibility in the research. However, before cases are selected, it is important with co-variational analysis first to establish control variables, whereafter the cases can be selected and appropriate data sources can be found.

### ***Control variables***

With co-variational analysis, the most important criteria for case selection are that the selected cases should vary as much as possible with regard to the independent variable (x) and should be as similar as possible with regard to the control variable (z). Hence it is logical to start with establishing the control variables. To ensure internal validity, the control variables need to be as similar and constant as possible. This means that the member states should not differ

significantly in terms of their control variable scores. By ensuring the similarity of the control variables, the chance of these variables being influential on the dependent variable (y) is minimal. Since the control variables are not influential due to the fact that they are similar in both cases, the influential factor must be the differentiation of the independent variable (x) (Blatter & Haverland, 2012).

The control variables can be deducted from the literature review of this research. The identified control variables are derived from the literature surrounding economic development and nationalism. In regard to this research three control variables are chosen. These control variables are income inequality, net receivers/contributors of EU structural funds and nationalism. These variables will be further elaborated upon in the next chapter.

In selecting cases, this thesis will look at all 27 European member states with regard to economic inequality, EU structural funds and nationalism, and select the ones that are most similar to each other. This does not mean the selected cases are exactly the same in terms of these control variables, but they are as close as possible. For a proper case selection with COV, the independent variable, which for the first hypothesis concerns the opportunity to use direct democracy tools and for the second hypothesis concerns the opportunity to use participatory democracy tools, needs to be as different as possible in the selected cases.

## 5. CASE SELECTION

For this study four cases will be selected. For the first hypothesis, which focuses on direct democracy tools, Belgium and Sweden are selected as case studies. For the second hypothesis, which focuses on participatory democracy tools, Germany and France are selected as case studies. This study specifically chooses four cases, two for each hypothesis, instead of only two cases due to the difficulty in finding four countries that vary on both direct and participatory democracy and are constant in the three selected control variables of income inequality, net receivers/contributors of EU structural funds and nationalism. The choice of these specific cases will be discussed below, in two parts. The first section will elaborate on the differences with regard to the independent variables in the selected cases. The second section will elaborate on the similarities with regard to the control variables in the selected cases. Since no two European member states are exactly alike, the similarities of the case selection will be based on a ranking, which will compare all 28 EU member states.

### **Case selection based on the differences regarding the independent variables**

The European Institute of Public Administration (EIPA) conducted research that provides an overview of the basic types of democracy tools in all 27 member states of the EU (Best et al., 2011). This research will be a great place to start exploring the differences in the use of basic type of democracy tools for the selected cases.

#### ***Sweden – Belgium***

For the first hypothesis that focuses on direct democracy tools, Sweden and Belgium were selected as cases to be studied. The Swedish constitution accommodates both non-binding and binding referendums at national level. Six non-binding referendums have taken place to date, of which two were on the subject of the European Union: Membership of the EU (1994) and the introduction of the euro (2003). In Sweden the parliament controls the initiation of a referenda, they can also formulate the question, and interpret the outcomes (Best et al., 2011).

A national referendum has been organised only once in Belgium. However, the implications of this referendum were considered so severe that a referendum was never conducted again. The restrictions in the Belgian constitution do not provide the opportunity for the possibility of a referendum (Best et al., 2011).

### ***Germany – France***

For the second hypothesis which focuses on participatory democracy tools, the EU member states Germany and France were selected as case studies. As with direct democracy tools, the EIPA had conducted research that provided an overview of participatory democracy in all 27 member states of the EU (Best et al., 2011).

Germany knows various forms of participatory democracy (Best et al., 2011). Citizens' juries and consensus conferences have been used as variants of non-binding, advisory assemblies. They have been conducted at federal level for purposes of legislation. For example, a consensus conference was held in Dresden in 2001 on genetic diagnostics. The results of the consensus conferences and citizens' juries are forwarded to the relevant federal ministry for consideration. Public dialogue sessions such as charrettes/citizens' panels, which are both non-binding and deliberative, take place at the local level. The city of Bremen organised citizens' panels on the subject sustainable energy resources (Best et al., 2011).

France has some participatory mechanisms at the local level. However, most arrangements are purely consultative, topics are constrained to local issues and there is some doubt as to the effectiveness of these participatory mechanisms used in France (Best et al., 2011).

### **Case selection based on similarities regarding the control variables**

In terms of the control variables of income inequality, net receivers / net contributors and nationalism, the selected cases should be as similar as possible. As described at the beginning of this chapter, similarity will be based on the relative ratio when comparing EU member states in respect of different control variables. Below three rankings, each concerning one control variable, will be presented before continuing the discussion on the case studies.

Figure 1 illustrates the ratio of the total income received by the 20 per cent of the population with the highest income (top quintile) to that received by the 20 per cent of the population with the lowest income (lowest quintile). Income in this figure must be understood as equalised disposable income (Eurostat, 2017)

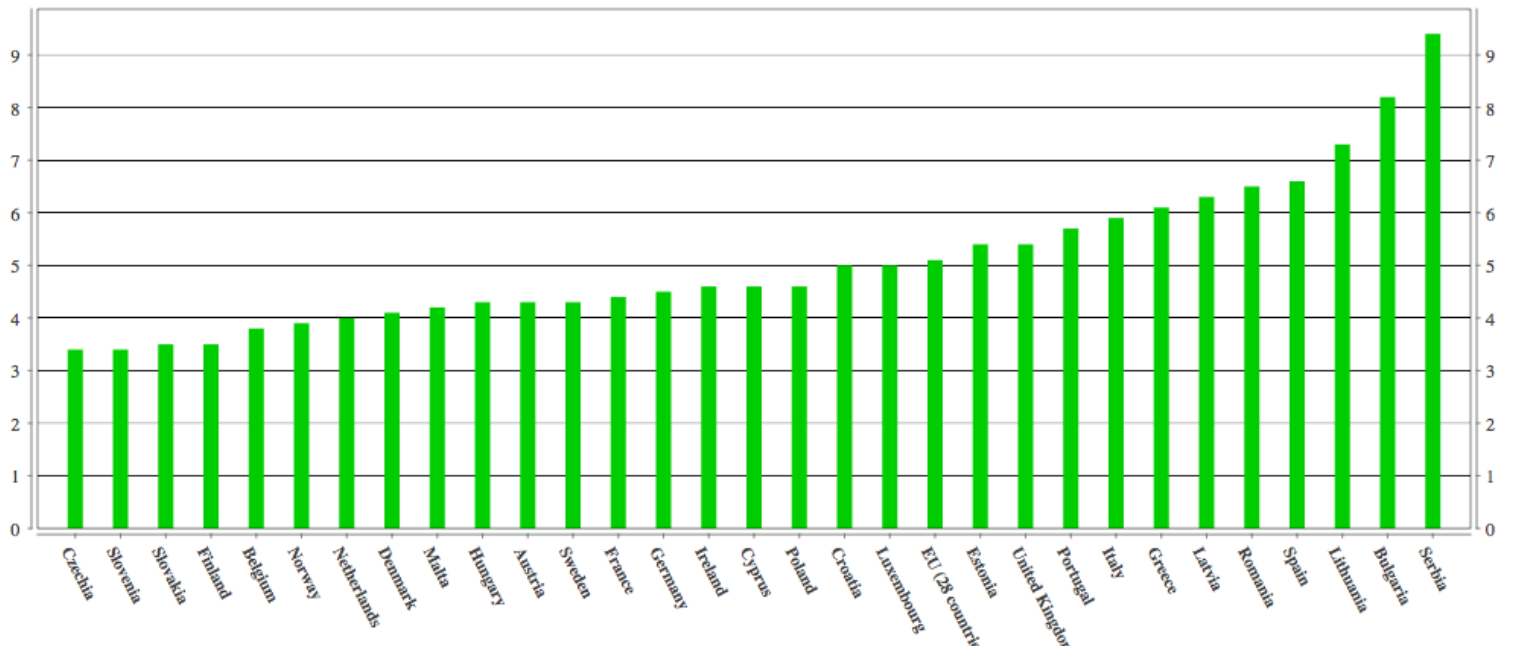


Figure 1 - Inequality of income distribution, income quintile share ratio

Source - Eurostat, 2017

Figure 2 shows the percentages of votes won by nationalist parties in the most recent national elections. The ranking continues from 1 – 8 per cent, 9 – 16 percent, 17 – 25 percent until plus 25 percent of votes won by nationalist parties (BBC, 2018)

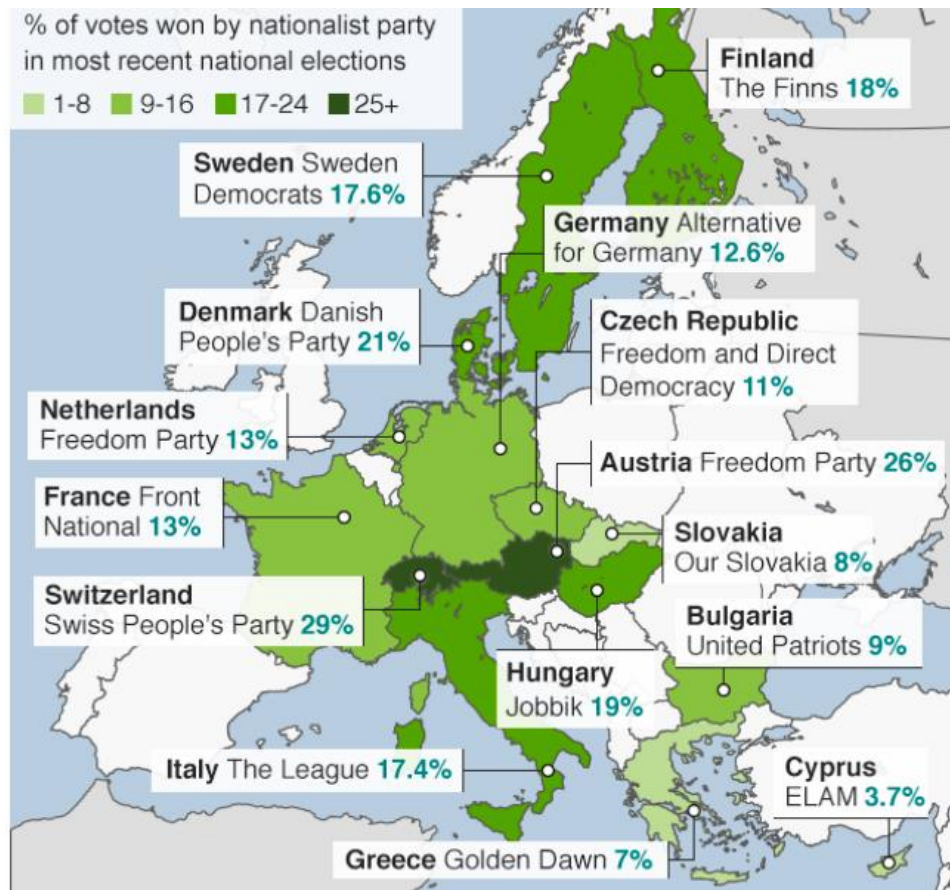


Figure 2 – Europe and nationalism

Source - BBC, 2018



Figure 3 depicts the operating budgets of the EU member states in 2017. A negative balance means that a country contributes more to the EU budget than it receives from it, while a positive balance means the country contributes less than it receives (statista, 2018).

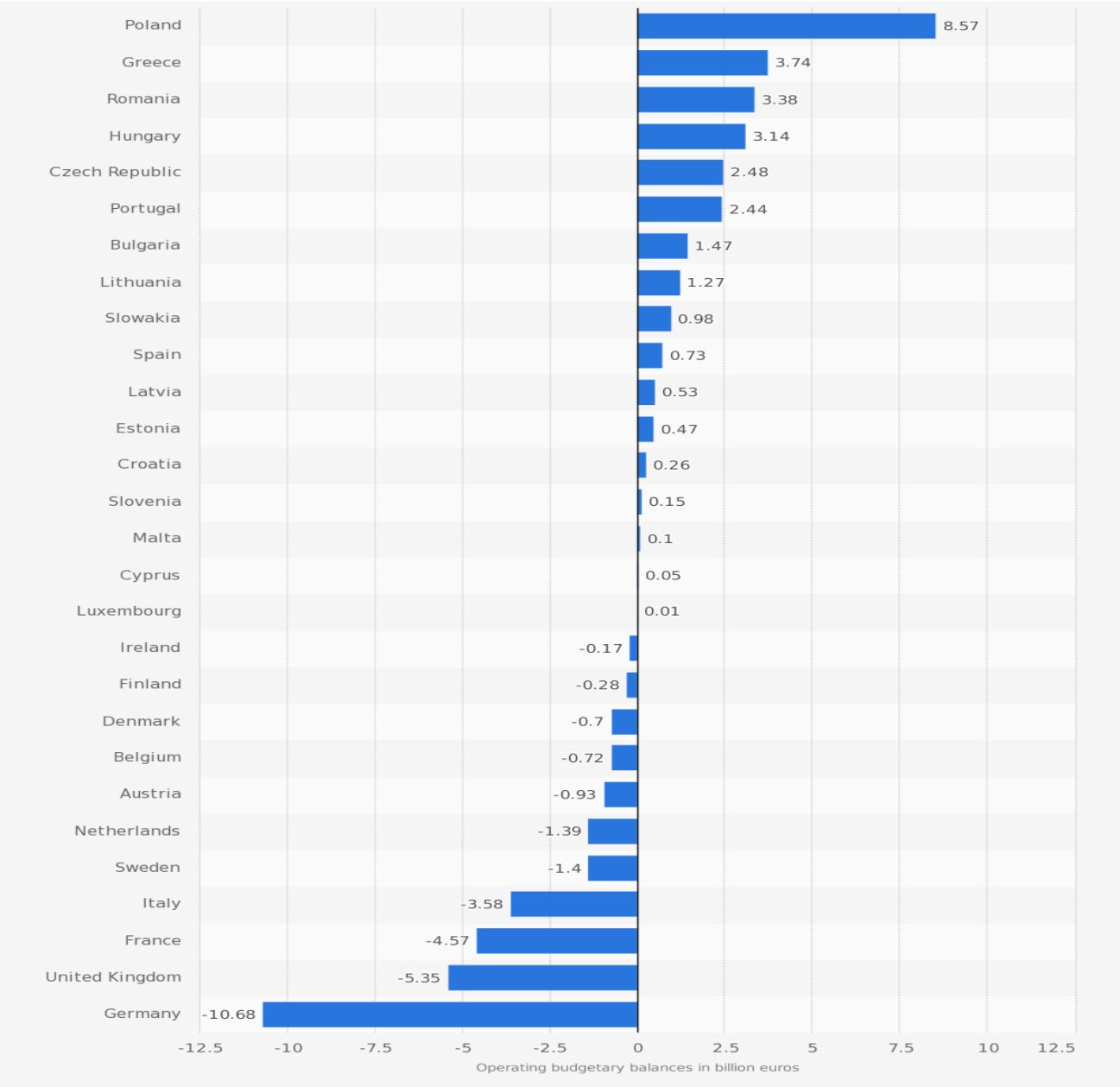


Figure 3 - European Union: operating budgets in 2017, in billion euros

Source - (Statista, 2019)

### ***Sweden – Belgium***

Figure 1 presents data provided by Eurostat on inequality of income distribution for all European member states. In 2017, Belgium had an income inequality rate of 3.8. The inequality had been fairly stable in recent years, with a rate of 3.8 in both 2015 and 2016. Sweden had an income inequality rate of 4.3 in 2017, which has been slightly increasing in recent years, from an income inequality rate of 4.1 in 2015. The figure illustrates that in comparison to other European member states, Belgium and Sweden are quite similar in the region, just below the EU average (Eurostat, 2018).

Figure 2 presents the percentage of votes won by nationalist parties in the most recent national elections of specific member states and provides an overview for comparison of the different EU member states. For Sweden, the figure indicates that 17.6 per cent of the votes were won by a nationalistic party (BBC, 2018). In Belgium, the nationalist party of the New Flemish Alliance (N-VA) gained 20,33 per cent of the votes (Deloy, 2014). When looking at the percentages of other EU member states, it can be stated that both Sweden and Belgium are in the same category of 17-24 per cent of votes being won by nationalist parties in the most recent elections (BBC, 2018). In appendix 3 a ranking of European countries is provided in a table overview.

One could argue that nationalism runs deeper within Swedish culture, as it does in all Nordic countries (Berezin, 2018), than it does in Belgian culture. However, Sweden is a very delicate case, in the sense that the Swedish political mainstream parties Swedes long viewed the extreme right-wing milieu as morally and politically illegitimate (Elgenius & Rydgren, 2018). Furthermore, the Swedish socialists have dominated every election for the past 101 years, making Sweden a special case worldwide (nbcnews, 2018).

Figure 3 depicts the operating budgets of all EU member states in 2017. As indicated, a negative balance means that a country contributes more to the EU budget than it receives from it. A positive balance means a country contributes less than it receives. In 2017, Belgium had an operating budget of -0,72 billion euros, while Sweden had a balance of -1.4 billion euros. In comparison to the other EU member states, Belgium and Sweden are quite similar, with Belgium ranking number 21 and Sweden ranking number 24 in comparison to other EU member states (Statista, 2018).

### **Germany – France**

Figure 1 indicates that in 2017, Germany had an income inequality rate of 4.5. Germany's inequality has been slowly declining in recent years, with an income inequality of 4.8 in 2015 and 4.6 in 2016. France had an income inequality rate of 4.4 in 2017. Contrary to Germany, its income inequality rate has been fairly stable in recent years, with a rate of 4.3 in both 2015 and 2016. Just like Belgium and Sweden, France and Germany are quite similar in comparison to the EU region, being just below the EU average of 5.1 (Eurostat, 2018).

Figure 2 presents the percentages of votes won by national parties in the most recent national elections. In Germany 12.6 per cent of the votes were won by nationalist parties. In France, 13 per cent of the votes were won by nationalist parties in the last national election. Compared to other EU member states, these percentages are extremely similar (BBC, 2018).

Figure 3 depicts the operating budgets of all EU member states. In 2017, Germany had an operating budget of -10.68 billion euros. By contrast, in 2017 France had an operating budget of -4,57 billion euros. Even though this is quite a different figure, it indicates that France and Germany are the two of largest contributors to the EU. Here the UK is not considered as a possible case due to the recent referendum in which the UK decided to leave the European Union (BBC, 2019). The current negotiations about the withdrawal agreement are expected to have such an impact on the British' perceived legitimacy of the EU that this specific case was not considered.

Tables 1 and 2 provide an overview of all variables considered when selecting the cases. The first table provides information on the variables considered in the first hypothesis and the second table provides information on the variables considered in the second hypothesis. Variables are extremely important in the next chapter on operationalization and data sources and collection.

**Table 1 – Overview of the variables for hypothesis 1**

Variable	Case 1: Belgium	Case 2: Sweden
Direct democracy tools (H1: independent)	No opportunity to use direct democracy tools	Opportunity to use direct democracy tools
Income inequality	3.8 (1.3 below the EU average)	4.3 (0.8 below the EU average)
Nationalism	20,33% (group 17-24 per cent)	17,6% (group 17-24 per cent)
Net receivers/net contributors	-0.72 billion euros (place 21/28 of all EU member states)	-1.4 billion euros (place 24/28 of all EU member states)
Perceived legitimacy (dependent)	<i>Not considered for case selection</i>	<i>Not considered for case selection</i>

**Table 2 – Overview of the variables hypothesis 2**

Variable	Case 3: France	Case 4: Germany
Participatory democracy tools (H2: independent)	No opportunity to use participatory democracy tools	Opportunity to use participatory democracy tools
Income inequality	4,5 (0.6 below EU average)	4,4 (0,7 below EU average)
Nationalism	13% (group 9-16 per cent)	12,6% (group 9-16 per cent)
Net receivers/net contributors	-4,57 billion euros (place 26/28 of all EU member states)	-10,68 billion euros (place 28/28 of all EU member states)
Perceived legitimacy (dependent)	<i>Not considered for case selection</i>	<i>Not considered for case selection</i>

## **Timeframe**

Choosing the correct timeframe of analysis is important for the subject of perceived legitimacy with regard to the opportunity to use basic types of democracy. When looking into the perceived legitimacy of the EU by individual member states the most recent available data will be selected. This will ensure that the focus of the study remains on the effect of the opportunity to use basic types of democracy on the perceived legitimacy of the EU by a member state. However, this means that the research should therefore take into account the use of basic types of democracy tools for EU issues for as long as this opportunity has been available. Due to practical reasons, however, a certain period had to be selected. A period of 25 years was selected based on important events when basic types of democracy were used in respect of the selected cases. An example of an important event is the referendum held in Sweden on membership of the EU in 1994 (Best et al., 2011).

## **Variables and operationalization**

In this section the dependent and independent variables will be operationalized and explained. The section starts by operationalizing the dependent variable of perceived legitimacy and continues by operationalizing the independent variable of the basic types of democracy. The operationalization of the control variables was already explained in the previous section. Lastly, it is important to clarify what is meant by basic types of democracy covering EU issues. Therefore the section ends with the operationalization of which EU issues are considered in the basic types of democracy tools.

The dependent variable in this study is the perceived legitimacy of the European Union. As defined in the theoretical framework, perceived legitimacy relates to the extent to which input politics and throughput processes are acceptable to the citizens, such that citizens believe that these are morally authoritative and trust that these processes are just. A regime remains legitimate as long as its citizens identify it as such (Schmidt, 2013; Gherghina, 2017). Furthermore, the literature review indicated that descriptive or subjective legitimacy refers to the public assessment of the relevance and quality of the institutional performance of the European Union. Perceived legitimacy builds on concepts such as political support and trust (Gherghina, 2017). Thomassen and Schmitt (1999) have argued that the extent to which a political system is legitimate in the eyes of the relevant citizens can be established by looking at the subjective judgement of members of this political system. Practically, this can be approached by looking at empirical evidence of survey data.

Every year the Standard Eurobarometer provides a report about public opinion in the European Union. Here topics very closely related to perceived legitimacy are surveyed among EU citizens. Based on the literature review and the theoretical framework, perceived legitimacy is operationalized with three questions of the Eurobarometer survey, on the concepts of trust, democracy and authority/political support. The Eurobarometer provides the following question on the subject of trust: *‘I would like to ask you a question about how much trust you have in certain media and institutions. For each of the following media and institutions, please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend to not trust it. – The European Union (Standard Eurobarometer 89, 2018, p. 103).’* The available answers to this question are: ‘Tend to trust’, ‘Tend not to trust’ and ‘Don’t know’. The Eurobarometer provides the following question on the subject of democracy: *‘And how about the way democracy works in the EU (Standard Eurobarometer 89, 2018, p. 141)?’* The available answers to this question are: ‘Satisfied’, ‘Dissatisfied’ and ‘Don’t know’. The Eurobarometer provides the following question on the subject of authority/political support: *‘Should more decisions be taken at European level (Standard Eurobarometer 89, 2018, p. 169)?’* The available answers to this question are: ‘Agree’, ‘Disagree’ and ‘Don’t know’. All three questions will be weighted equally to form a new average of the concept of perceived legitimacy of the European Union.

The independent variable of this thesis is the opportunity to use basic types of democracy tools on issues covering the European Union. The basic types of democracy tools are divided into direct democracy tools and participatory democracy tools. As mentioned in the theoretical framework, three specific characteristics are assigned to each of these basic types of democracy tools. These characteristics are in fact the operationalization of these basic types of democracy tools. Direct democracy tools are considered tools in which citizens can (1) individually cast their votes, (2) without much deliberation, (3) at national level. Participatory democracy tools are considered tools in which citizens can cast (1) a collective vote, (2) with extensive deliberation, (3) at local or regional level (Best et al., 2011). To further operationalize these basic types of democracy, this thesis will not only look at the availability and number of these basic types of democracy, but will also select specific cases for both direct democracy tools and participatory democracy tools to further conduct an in-depth analysis of the workings and impact of these tools.

Lastly, an operationalization of the concept ‘EU issues’ which are discussed and voted on in the basic types of democracy tools is required. The term ‘EU issues’ which are discussed in the basic types of democracy tools includes two components. The first component covers issues that are directly related to the European Union. An example of this

component is a referendum about the EU constitution. In this component the institution of the EU is directly discussed. The second component concerns issues that overlap with the policy domain of the European Union. This includes both exclusive EU competences and shared EU and member state competences. These competences cover issues such as regulation of the single market, the monetary policy of member states, environmental regulation, public health and energy (Hix & Høyland, 2011). The second component is taken into account because if citizens are allowed to directly influence these issues that are in the policy domain of the EU, they will regard this as influencing the EU, and therefore, as described in the theoretical framework, feel that they have more influence on the input and output processes.

### **Data sources and collection**

Starting with the dependent variable, perceived legitimacy, this information was retrieved from the Eurobarometer Survey (Standard Eurobarometer, 2018). Three specific questions, mentioned above, on trust, democracy and political support, were used to assess the concept of perceived legitimacy. The averages of the answers to these three questions constitute the new percentage of the perceived legitimacy of the European Union. Due to the fact that the averages of these three questions are taken to evaluate the concept of perceived legitimacy, all questions are viewed as equally important. A prerequisite when evaluating the averages of these questions is that the results of each individual questions should not reveal too much variation compared to the new outcome of perceived legitimacy. So, for example, if Belgium indicates a high new calculated perceived legitimacy average the question on trust towards the EU should also be relatively positive. When looking at the answers to the individual questions per case this seems to be the case. The answers to the individual questions can be found in Appendix 4.

For the independent variable, basic types of democracy, a few different data sources were used. The data collection for these independent variables began with the already presented data sources of Best et al. (2011) that provide an overview of the use of basic types of democracy tools for each EU member state. Taking this research as a starting point, the situations in Belgium, Sweden, France and Germany were further examined in, first, a more quantitative measure by looking at the availability of the basic types of democracy tools. Second, a more institutional measurement was taken of the constitutional accessibility of these basic types of democracy tools. Third, a more qualitative measurement was taken by looking into the public opinion on basic types of democracy tools. At the end of each sub-chapter of data collection for Belgium, Sweden, France and Germany a table will be provided

summarising the elements of quantitative measurement, institutional measurement and qualitative measurement. Sources for the independent variable were found in government documents, academic sources, media and civil society. In Appendix 5 an overview is presented of all the data sources used, for both the dependent and the independent variable. For the independent variable, it is specified to which of the four categories mentioned above the sources belong.



## 6. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

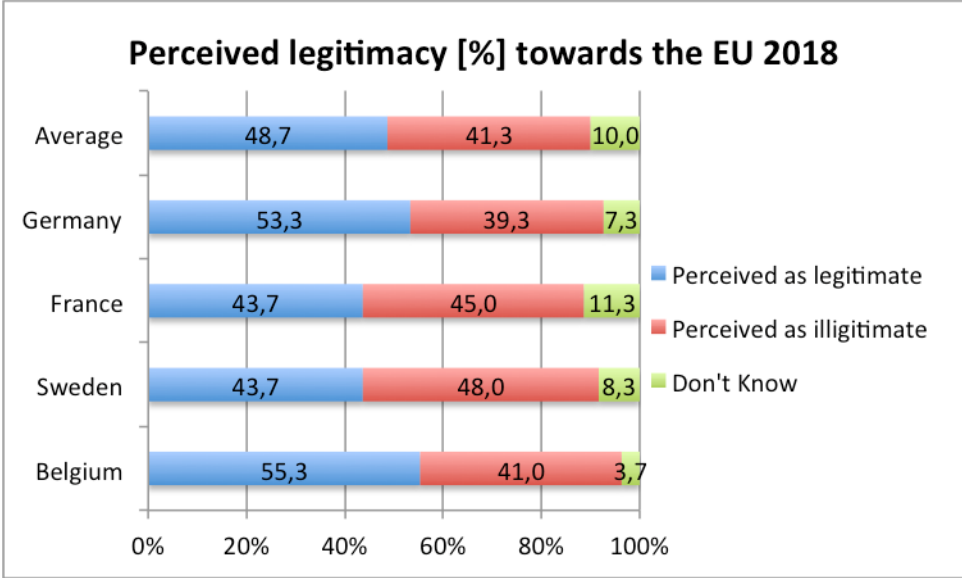
This chapter begins with a description of the dependent variable, perceived legitimacy of the European Union, from the viewpoint of the selected cases. As discussed under the operationalization of the dependent variable, three main concepts were selected to build up the contextualization of perceived legitimacy: trust, democracy and authority/political support. All these concepts were equally weighted to eventually form the perceived legitimacy of the European Union for each selected case. As discussed under the timeframe, the most recent data on perceived legitimacy were selected. This means that perceived legitimacy was based on the Eurobarometer Data from 2018 (Standard Eurobarometer 89, 2018). Per case the perceived legitimacy will be discussed and contrasted with the other cases and the EU average. The discussion of the dependent variable will illustrate the perceived legitimacy of the EU from 2014 to 2018 and possible trends. These possible trends will be contrasted with the other selected cases and the EU average. Then the independent variable, basic types of democracy, will be contextualised for all selected cases. As discussed in the operationalization of the basic types of democracy, this discussion will take a more quantitative, institutional and qualitative approach.

Once the dependent and independent variables have been outlined and discussed, the relationship between the two variables will be analysed and the proposed hypotheses will be tested.

### **Dependent variable: Visualization and discussion of perceived legitimacy**

Each year the European Commission conducts a survey into various services of the European Commission and other EU institutions and integrates the results with those of the Standard Eurobarometer. Each survey consists of approximately 1,000 face-to-face interviews per country. Reproduction is authorised, except for commercial purposes, provided that the source is acknowledged (European Commission, 2019). From this survey three questions, on the topics of trust towards the European Union, satisfaction with the workings of democracy in the European Union and political support for the European Union, were selected to comprise the concept of perceived legitimacy of the European Union. For the full data structure of this concept, see Appendix 6 of this thesis. In this section, the perceived legitimacy of the European Union by Belgium, Sweden, France and Germany as well as the EU average, using the 2018 statistics, are visualised using Excel, and interpreted and discussed. Furthermore, the

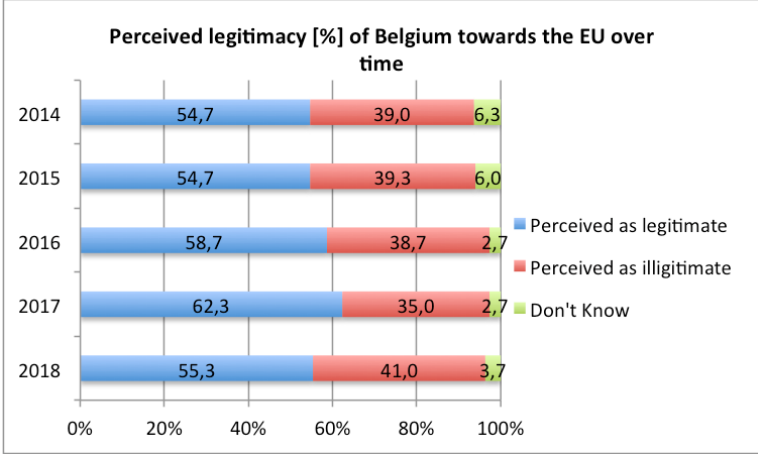
perceived legitimacy for the selected cases over time is presented. Due to the fact that for one of the concepts, political support, data are only provided from 2014 onwards, the timeframe for this characteristic will be from 2014 onwards.



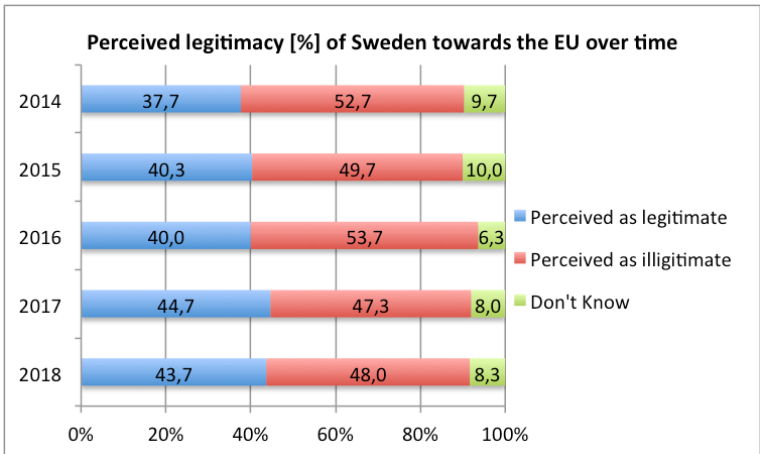
**Figure 4 - Perceived legitimacy toward the EU 2018**  
 (Standard Eurobarometer 81, 2014; Standard Eurobarometer 82, 2014;  
 Standard Eurobarometer 84, 2015; Standard Eurobarometer 86, 2016;  
 Standard Eurobarometer 88, 2017; Standard Eurobarometer 89, 2018)

Figure 4 shows the perceived legitimacy of the EU by Germany, France, Sweden and Belgium in 2018. When looking at the figure, the scores of perceived legitimacy of the EU seem very similar. At the same time, the perceived legitimacy average of the European Union is indicated, which in 2018 meant that on average 48,7 per cent of all European citizens perceived the EU as legitimate. 41,3 per cent perceived the EU as illegitimate and 10,0 per cent had no answer. Both Sweden and France are significantly below the European average when it comes to perceived legitimacy in 2018. Furthermore, both France and Sweden perceived the EU as more illegitimate than legitimate in 2018. France had a perceived illegitimacy of 45,0 per cent compared to 43,7 per cent of the French perceiving the EU as legitimate. Sweden had a perceived illegitimacy of 48,0 per cent in contrast to 43,7 per cent of the population perceiving the EU as legitimate. Germany and Belgium are both significantly above the average EU perceived legitimacy. Both Germany and Belgium perceive the EU as more legitimate than illegitimate: 53,3 per cent of German citizens perceived the EU as legitimate in 2018, in contrast to 39,3 per cent of the population perceiving the EU as illegitimate. In Belgium, 55,3 per cent of the population perceived the EU as legitimate, in contrast to 41,0 per cent of the population perceiving the EU as illegitimate. So in both

Belgium and Germany more than 50 per cent of the population perceived the EU as legitimate in 2018. In France and Sweden less than 50 per cent of the population perceived the EU as legitimate in 2018.



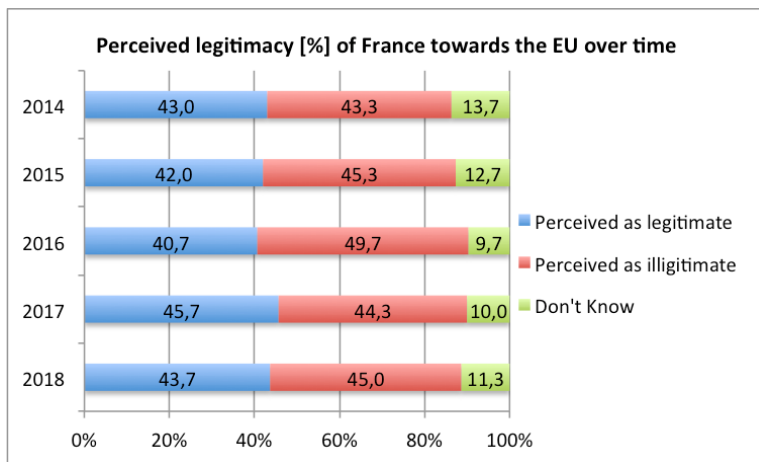
**Figure 5 – Perceived legitimacy of Belgium towards the EU** (Standard Eurobarometer 81, 2014; Standard Eurobarometer 82, 2014; Standard Eurobarometer 84, 2015; Standard Eurobarometer 86, 2016; Standard Eurobarometer 88, 2017; Standard Eurobarometer 89, 2018)



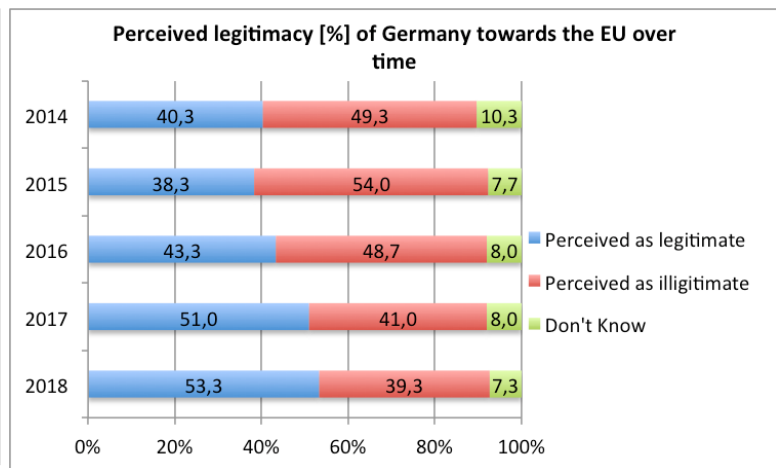
**Figure 6 – Perceived legitimacy of Sweden towards the EU** (Standard Eurobarometer 81, 2014; Standard Eurobarometer 82, 2014; Standard Eurobarometer 84, 2015; Standard Eurobarometer 86, 2016; Standard Eurobarometer 88, 2017; Standard Eurobarometer 89, 2018)

Figure 5 and 6 illustrate the perceived legitimacy of the European Union by Belgium and Sweden over the time period 2014-2018. First, Belgium will be discussed. Overall, the perceived legitimacy towards the EU over time has been higher than the illegitimacy. Furthermore, the perceived legitimacy percentages for Belgium were always above 50 per cent, reaching a score of 62,3 per cent in 2017, in contrast to only 35,0 per cent of Belgians perceiving the EU as illegitimate. It is interesting to see a slight decline in legitimacy in 2018, when 55,3 per cent of Belgians perceived the EU as legitimate, in contrast to 62,3 per cent in 2017. Overall, it can be stated that Belgium is very positive when it comes to perceived legitimacy of the European Union.

Second, Sweden reveals quite the opposite image to Belgium when it comes to the perceived legitimacy of the EU. Over this time period, the perceived illegitimacy of the EU by Sweden was always higher than the perceived legitimacy. In 2014 and 2016 the perceived illegitimacy even reached figures above 50 per cent of Swedes perceiving the EU as illegitimate. However, even though perceived legitimacy of the EU by the Swedes reveals quite a negative image over the last two years, the perceived legitimacy has increased slightly. When comparing Belgium and Sweden, it is clear that the two countries are quite the opposite of each other, with the Belgians perceiving the EU as very legitimate over time and the Swedes perceiving the EU as very illegitimate over time.



**Figure 7 – Perceived legitimacy of France towards the EU**  
 (Standard Eurobarometer 81, 2014; Standard Eurobarometer 82, 2014;  
 Standard Eurobarometer 84, 2015; Standard Eurobarometer 86, 2016;  
 Standard Eurobarometer 88, 2017; Standard Eurobarometer 89, 2018)



**Figure 8 – Perceived legitimacy of Germany towards the EU**  
 (Standard Eurobarometer 81, 2014; Standard Eurobarometer 82, 2014;  
 Standard Eurobarometer 84, 2015; Standard Eurobarometer 86, 2016;  
 Standard Eurobarometer 88, 2017; Standard Eurobarometer 89, 2018)

Figures 7 and 8 indicate the perceived legitimacy of the EU by France and Germany over the time period of 2014 to 2018. First, France will be discussed. Over the years, France has perceived the EU as more illegitimate than legitimate, with the perceived legitimacy percentages not exceeding 50 per cent over the past five years, even though there was a slight increase in 2017 in the perceived legitimacy with 45,7 per cent of the French perceiving the EU as legitimate, in contrast to 44,3 per cent perceiving it as illegitimate. This declined again in 2018, with 43,7 per cent of the French population perceiving the EU as legitimate and 45,0 per cent perceiving it as illegitimate.

Second, Germany will be discussed. Over the past five years there is a steady increase visible in the perceived legitimacy of the EU by German citizens. In 2017 and 2018, the perceived legitimacy of the EU even exceeded 50 per cent. The perceived legitimacy was the highest in 2018, with 53.3 per cent of the population perceiving the EU as legitimate, in contrast to 39,3 per cent perceiving the EU as illegitimate. When comparing France to Germany, it becomes clear that when taking the time factor into account, Germany has perceived the EU as far more legitimate than France. Where Germany has demonstrated increasing perceived legitimacy percentages over time, France's perceived illegitimacy percentages have remained fairly stable.

## **Independent variable: The use of direct democracy tools**

### ***Belgium – Sweden***

The first hypothesis compares the two selected cases, Belgium and Sweden, on the basis of direct democracy tools. As identified in the theoretical framework, these tools must have the characteristics of being at the national level, with an individual vote and little to no deliberation. Appendix 7 will first provide a broad overview of the approval rate of direct democracy throughout Europe.

As discussed in previous sections, the independent variable will consist of a more quantitative analysis, such as the use and frequency of using direct types of democracy tools and the institutional set-up of direct democracy tools, while in a more qualitative analysis, a few examples of the use of basic types of democracy tools will be selected and discussed. In table 3 and 4 an overview of these three measurements concerning direct democracy tools are presented for both Belgium and Sweden.

### ***Belgium***

The only referendum ever held in Belgium was the *Question Royale* in March 1950 (Reuchamps, 2011). In this referendum the majority of Dutch-speaking Belgians voted in favour of the return their king, in contrast to the majority of French-speaking Belgians who opposed it. Ever since this popular consultation, Belgians in general and Belgian politicians in particular have feared direct democracy, due to the series of riots that followed the referendum. Civil war was only avoided because the abdication of the king in question. Article 33 of the Belgian constitution proclaims that ‘all powers emanate from the Nation and are exerted in the manner established by the Constitution’. This article is interpreted in Belgium as that the principle of representation does not allow for direct democracy, that is, the organization of referendums. In this regard, the non-binding referendum of 1950 is referred to as a popular consultation. Furthermore, Belgian citizens are also excluded from treaty ratification processes by articles 53 and 167 of the constitution. This means that Belgians have never been consulted on questions surrounding European integration (Reuchamps, 2011).

Even though currently there are no legal provisions to hold a national referendum, this does not mean that the idea of a referendum has never been discussed in Belgium politics. A discussion about direct democracy has been held several times in the Belgium parliament, for example in 1893, 1921 and 1970. However, these discussions have never met with any success. As mentioned above, the most important obstacles for direct democracy are the

Belgian constitution and lack of political support. Interestingly enough, almost two thirds of the Belgian political parties are in favour of changing the constitution and making direct democracy possible (Verhulst & Nijeboer, 2007). However, the political party programs of these parties in favour of direct democracy show different interpretations of what direct democracy should entail. Therefore the question remains whether the potential majorities in favour of direct democracy can ever agree on a workable format. Furthermore, certain political elites, such as the ‘Socialistische Partij (SP)’ (‘socialist party’) from Wallonia, proclaim that every form of national direct democracy, even the non-binding versions, will increase the already existing tensions between the Flemish and the Walloons. A possible referendum will provide the opportunity to vote on the financial capital that flows from the richer Wallonia to the poorer region of Flanders. A vote on this subject will accentuate the already tense relationship between Wallonia and Flanders, with the possible result of separating the two provinces. The political elites from the SP state that direct democracy cannot be reconciled with the current Belgian state structure and they would rather sacrifice their democracy than their country (Verhulst & Nijeboer, 2007).

However, the fear of direct democracy in Belgium has gradually declined over the years. This is due to two reasons: first, the increasing numbers of referendums organized throughout the world, and second, because of the increasing gap between the political leaders and the Belgian citizens, referendums are considered to be a solution to this growing problem. These two reasons have initiated gradual change, with the creation of a new possibility to hold local and provincial consultation (Rechamps, 2011). Furthermore, Belgian politicians don’t see the instalment of local and provincial forms of direct democracy as a threat due to the fact that these regional referendums differ substantially from a binding national referendum, since the government can still decide autonomously whether to adopt the policy. Therefore, the great divide between Flanders and Wallonia will not come to a debate due to the fact that these referendum remain at local level and final say remains with the Belgian government (BelConLawBlog, 2005). Furthermore, the political influence of regional and provincial public consultations on the national politics is weak and therefore has almost no effect (Verhulst & Nijeboer, 2007). Some might suspect that the acceptance of regional and provincial direct democracy will lead to further acceptance of the tools at national level, but no such consensus has occurred to date. It seems that both political and constitutional factors will continue to hinder the use of direct democracy instruments in Belgium. Therefore, although Belgians on average demonstrate a high support for European integration, they have

not been given the chance to state it through a formal procedure such as a referendum (Reuchamps, 2011).

The paragraphs above have mostly focused on the standpoints of the Belgian government and the political elite. However, it is also important to consider the opinions of Belgian citizens on the issue of introducing direct democracy, because public opinion on direct democracy might indicate whether they find this specific tool a viable option to enhance legitimacy. Over the years, the voice of protest has grown among Belgian citizens. Political observers have claimed that the rise of both the political party '*Vlaams Belang*' ('Flemish Interest') in Flanders and 'Front National' in Wallonia are the consequence of protest votes against the current government. Research indicates that the trust Belgians have in their politics, and specifically in their political parties, is extremely low (Verhulst & Nijeboer, 2007). This lack of trust in politics and the rise of more extreme political parties could mean that Belgians would lean towards getting some power back from the current system by introducing forms of direct democracy. However, for most of Belgian citizens the instrument of a referendum has not yet been accepted as a viable solution to their current problem. Instead the focus has been on decreasing the gap between politics and citizens, with promises of politicians of increasing deliberation with citizens' as a sign of 'good governance' (Verhulst & Nijeboer, 2007).

However, not all Belgians regard direct democracy as an impossibility. In Belgium, especially in the province of Flanders, the society of '*Meer Democratie*' ('More Democracy') has been active for more than 20 years. This society tries to promote direct democracy not only by applying political pressure, but also by spreading knowledge about democracy and increasing political support amongst Belgian citizens (*Meer Democratie*, 2019).

The increasing support for direct democracy tools also extends to the use of these tools on EU issues. This was demonstrated in 2004, when the prime minister of Belgium announced that he wanted to put any new EU constitution up for approval by Belgian citizens. Due to the fact that Belgium has a strong tradition of being supportive of the EU, the referendum would not be seen as a threat to the EU's constitution (*The Irish Times*, 2004). However, the Belgian liberal prime minister lost the political backing needed to have this particular referendum, due to the fact that their political ally, the social-liberal coalition partner, changed its mind about backing the referendum. The social-liberals defended its change of mind by stating that it had concerns that the referendum would be hijacked by the far-right '*Vlaams Belang*' party and would focus on campaigning against Turkish

membership of the EU. Lacking support from the social-liberals, the prime minister no longer had the majority support in parliament for holding the referendum (EUobserver, 2005).

**Table 3 – Overview Belgium independent variable**

<b>Case 1 – Belgium</b>	
<b>Quantitative</b> – What kind of direct democracy tools are in place covering EU issues?	Direct democracy tools have never been used to consult on issues of the European Union in Belgium.
<b>Institutional</b> – constitutional set-up	Due to the implications of the first and only referendum in Belgium the constitution of Belgium and the lack of political support prevent a current referendum in Belgium.
<b>Qualitative</b> – public opinion towards direct democracy	Even though political dissatisfaction has been growing in Belgium over the past few years, introducing a referendum does not seem to be a viable option. At the same time, the growing support for a referendum is undermined by the current political set-up in Belgium.

**Sweden**

In Sweden both binding and non-binding referendums are allowed by the constitution. Binding referendums are only held on a proposal to amend the constitution, to this date no binding referendum has ever been held in Sweden. However, six non-binding referendums have taken place: the first in 1922, on the prohibition of alcoholic beverages; the second in 1955, on which side of the road they should drive; the third in 1957, on the introduction of a general supplementary pension; the fourth in 1980, on nuclear power; the fifth in 1994, on membership of the EU; and the last in 2003, on the introduction of the euro (Best et al., 2011). As this study only focuses on direct democracy tools that either cover issues inside the domain of EU policies or are directly about the EU, only the last two referendums are considered in this study: the referendum of 1994 on membership of the European Union and the referendum of 2003 on the introduction of the euro.

On November 13, 1994 Swedes voted on the issue of EU membership: 52,3 per cent voted in favour and 46,8 per cent voted against. The turnout of this referendum was 83,3 per cent. For this referendum, the main themes that were given most importance by citizens when considering their vote in the referendum were identified. Economic advantages as a result of



EU membership were flagged as one of the most important themes. In Sweden, 67 per cent of the population named this motive as the most important reason for voting in favour of EU membership. The most important motive for Swedes who voted against EU membership was that the decision-making structure of the EU was widely seen as undemocratic and lacking transparency. This argument was mentioned by 65 per cent of the people who voted against EU membership (Kaiser, 1995).

In general, when looking at referendums there is a discussion about direct and representative democracy. Some scholars believe that parties are side-lined in referendums, as voters do not follow party loyalties. When analysing the 1994 EU referendum, however, it was found that the results were in least to some extent similar to the standpoints of the political elite. Even though interest groups and the media played an important role in shaping the debates, the party positions were considered to be the most important influence (Kaiser, 1995). Furthermore, while the majority of voters favoured EU membership, there were strong variations visible in the Swedish regions, individuals from economically disadvantaged regions were significantly more negative about the EU than citizens from more economically advantaged regions. Regions with more trade advantages in relation to the EU were also more positive about the EU, as well as, citizens with a high level of education (Vlachos, 2004).

Also interesting with regard to the 1994 referendum is the following. Research has suggested (Andersen & Bjørklund, 1990, 2000) that the experience of a national referendum creates favourable conditions for the emergence of a radical right populist (RRP) party, since a referendum can be a platform to portrait the negative attitudes towards the EU as way to attract voters. The reason for this is the prevalent mood of political distrust and declining alliances between voters and their parties. However, even though the national referendum of 1980 on nuclear power did indicate an increase in favouring RRP parties, the 1994 referendum on EU membership had no such effect. There are four reasons for this: first, the RRP party had already started forming earlier with the referendum on the nuclear issue; second, the issues of immigration and national identity was of low importance in this referendum; third, the attention for the referendum was relatively low; and fourth, other non-RRP parties could capture most Swedish 'no voters'. The Swedish EU referendum therefore did not create favourable conditions for the emergence of an RRP party. However, the possibility should not be disregarded that the referendum may have created long term effects, which may favour the a Swedish RRP party in the long run. When the Swedes were asked in 1998 whether the EU had had a positive effect on their country, Swedish voters, compared to the rest of Europe, were the ones most inclined to give a negative answer (Rydgren, 2002).

On 14 September 2003, Swedes voted against joining the EU's Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) (Aylott, 2005). Their rejection of the euro represented a key moment in the contemporary history of Sweden's relationship with the evolving EU. This 2003 referendum was the first time since the beginning of Sweden's full membership status that the public had been 'consulted' on a key question of further integration. The referendum result was a victory of 14 per cent, with 42 per cent in favour and 55,9 per cent against, the so-called 'no voters'. The referendum also had a high turnout of 82,6 per cent of the electorate. The high turnout and the definite no vote can be regarded as a signal to the Swedish political elite to recognize that Swedes are very wary of participation in further European integration (Miles, 2004). The prime minister at the time called the referendum in the belief that most Swedes would agree to abandon their currency, the krona. Experts have depicted the ballot of the 2003 referendum as a judgement on eight years of Swedish membership of the EU. The outcome therefore suggested a profound disenchantment with the idea of moving closer to other European nations. The governing minister Ulrika Messing even proclaimed that '*there's a bigger fear for the new than we expected*' (*The New York Times*, 2003).

When the prime minister at the time announced the referendum, many believed his growing reputation as an international statesman, derived from the 2001 EU Presidency, and political leadership after the 2002 elections victory could be influential enough to lead to a positive outcome. Furthermore, the 10-month notification before the actual date of the referendum could facilitate a 'pro-euro' consensus given sufficient time (Miles, 2004). Also, since autumn 2000, public opinion had been leaning strongly towards a pro-EMU direction. However, towards the end of the campaign the prime minister expressed his regret that the EMU had even become the subject of referendum at all, since the issue was under no lawful obligation to be consulted on, but was purely an initiative taken by the prime minister himself. Instead, the EMU referendum was held due to domestic political contingency, and was purely advisory to its parliament, although all parties pledged to respect the electorate's verdict. At the time when the referendum was initiated, public opinion was beginning to swing against the EMU (Aylott, 2005).

Only 10 days after the referendum on the adoption of the euro, EOS Gallup Europe and a partner institute in Sweden conducted a survey among the Swedish population to understand the motivations behind the 2003 referendum. Respondents were asked what the key elements were that led to their vote in the referendum. The majority of voters, at 52 per cent, indicated that their overall opinion regarding the European Union, not their actual stance on the euro, was the main element that had influenced their vote. This in contrast to their

opinion on the euro, 32 per cent, or their opinion on who had led the campaigns, 4 per cent for the yes campaign and 2 per cent for the no campaign (Flash Eurobarometer 149, 2003).

More than 24 years after joining the European Union, Sweden has adjusted to the role of being an established, reliable and pragmatic member of the EU. Staying outside the Eurozone has not limited the country's influence in Europe. Even though immediately after the referendum to join the EU the Swedes were amongst the most reluctant member states, support has gradually increased and from 2001 on there has been steadily growing support in favour of Swedish EU membership (Lidström, 2018).

After the 2003 referendum on the subject of Sweden joining the EMU, no more referendums on issues covering the EU have been held. However, since 2003, organizing a new referendum has been a subject of discussion on multiple occasions, for example regarding the introduction of the EU Constitution. At this time, two thirds of Swedes wanted a referendum on the future of the European Union. Some 67 per cent of the 1,000 Swedes questioned said that they wanted to vote on the EU Constitution in a referendum. Only 29 per cent wanted the parliament to decide. The June List a Eurosceptic party, not represented in the Swedish parliament, instigated the survey. However, the government has said that its plans were to ask only parliament to vote on the text. Therefore, no referendum took place (Radio Sweden, 2007).

Currently, the subject of a referendum corresponds with the United Kingdom leaving the European Union via a referendum. Like most EU citizens, the Swedish population does not want their country to leave the European Union, but is in support of a referendum on membership, according to a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center. The survey was conducted among 9,935 respondents in ten EU member states, including Sweden, in March and April of 2017. Only 22 per cent of all Swedish citizens are in support of leaving the EU, but 53 per cent support a national referendum on EU membership. This means that even though the Swedes in general want to remain inside the EU, they do believe that their citizens should be able to express this view via a direct referendum (POLITICO, 2017).

At the same time, the current nationalist leader of the right-wing Sweden Democrats, Jimmie Akesson, has stated at the beginning of 2018 that the party was in favour of a Swedish exit referendum from the European Union. Akesson claimed that the Swedes '*pay unbelievable amounts of money and get back unbelievably little*'. In contrast to the right wing Sweden Democrats, almost all the country's other political parties are firmly in favour of EU membership (Express, 2018). However, the far-right Sweden Democrats have quietly changed their stance on support for a 'Swexit' referendum. They are no longer making any demands

for Sweden to leave the EU or for conducting a referendum. This changes is due to the upcoming EP elections and the possibility of receiving more votes if they take a more pragmatic stance (Reuters, 2019). Akesson has said that the party had to be pragmatic and try to change the EU ‘from the inside’. This change was instigated by several recent polls which suggested that the majority of Swedes are still in favour of EU membership. Support has even been growing in the wake of the ‘Brexit’ turmoil in the UK. As mentioned above, in the 2018 October Eurobarometer poll, a total of 77 per cent of Swedish respondents said that EU membership is a good thing, Sweden’s highest recorded level since 2007, according to the survey. Only 7 per cent said it was a bad thing and 16 per cent described it as neither good nor bad (The Local SE, 2019).

**Table 4 – Overview Sweden independent variable**

**Case 2 – Sweden**

<p><b>Quantitative</b> – What kind of direct democracy tools are in place covering EU issues?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. (1994) – Membership of the EU</li> <li>2. (2003) – Introduction of the euro</li> </ol>
<p><b>Institutional</b> – constitutional set-up</p>	<p>The constitution of Sweden allows both binding and non-binding referendums at national level. However, non-binding referendums are more common.</p>
<p><b>Qualitative</b> – public opinion towards direct democracy</p>	<p>The call for more referendums on issues covering the EU has increased since the last one in 2003. The Swedes seem to want to express their opinion about both the EU Constitution and a possible ‘Swexit’.</p>

## **Analysis of the relationship between the dependent and independent variables: H1**

In this section the relationship between the dependent and independent variables for the first hypothesis will be discussed. The first hypothesis proposed:

*H1 – The opportunity to use direct democracy tools at national level on issues covering the EU will increase the perception of legitimacy of the European Union in this specific member state.*

As illustrated in Table 5, which derives its content from the data collection of both the dependent as independent variable, Belgium, which has no opportunity to use direct democracy tools on issues covering the EU, perceives the EU as legitimate. By contrast, Sweden, which has the opportunity to use direct democracy tools on issues covering the EU, perceives the EU as illegitimate. Since the first hypothesis suggests that when the opportunity to use direct democracy is available in a member state the perceived legitimacy of the European Union will increase, it has to be stated that the first hypothesis cannot be confirmed. This section will continue by analysing the relationship between the dependent and independent variables to find possible explanations for the fact that the first hypothesis cannot be confirmed.

As stated in earlier chapters, Sweden provides the opportunity to use direct democracy tools such as referendums on issues covering major EU topics. It is interesting to see, however, that contrary to the expectations of the hypothesis, this does not inspire an increase in perceived legitimacy. The data does indicate that in Sweden there exists a connection between the use of direct democracy tools and RRP political parties. Andersen and Bjørklund (2000) have suggested that the experience of a referendum, and in Sweden specifically the one on nuclear power (1980), created favourable conditions for the emergence of an RRP party. This is due to political distrust and the deteriorating alliance between voters and their parties (Andersen & Bjørklund, 2000: p. 194). This political distrust and deteriorating alliances between parties and voters in turn result in the discussion of major issues cutting through established political and party ties. When major issues are put to referendums, such as joining the European Union or entering the EMU, it can provide an opportunity for the formation and growth of RRP political parties (Rydgren, 2002). Not only do referendums provide an opportunity for the launch of RRP parties, but existing RRP parties find the

conditions created by referendums favourable. This is because there is a strong connection between a referendum and one of the main values of a populist party, namely the notion of mobilizing the citizens against the elite. If a populist party therefore emerges based on resentment against the representative system, it can be seen as a force that favours direct democracy (Deiwiks, 2009). The populists' professed aim is to cash in on democracy's promise of power to the people, which political decision-making by referendums provides (Canova, 1999). By using direct democracy tools, citizens' are empowered to bypass the national representative elites and offer their opinions directly. This results in populist parties having a strong preference for direct democracy, since with this tool they can deliver the promise of standing up to the 'political elite' to their voters (Andersen & Bjørklund, 1990).

Furthermore, populist parties that push for referendums are able to attract disenchanted voters who normally do not participate in the political system. These populist parties advocate the will of these disenchanted people against the political elites. They use direct forms of democracy to alleviate the importance of these people by providing an alternative to the long and complex decision-making model of representative democracy (Treib, 2014). However, it has been said that disenchanted voters do not actually want more direct democracy, but simply want representative democracy to work better. Their support for parties that use direct democracy reflects dissatisfaction with the behaviour of their representatives, rather than an interest in greater participation (Norris, 1999). As stated above in the data collection on Sweden, the current right-wing populist party of the Swedish national democrats is, like most populist parties, very anti-Europe and even called for a 'Swexit' referendum, pushing Sweden to leave the EU (Express, 2018).

So in contrast to what the first hypothesis suggests, namely that the perceived legitimacy of citizens who have the opportunity to use direct democracy tools will increase, an alternative explanation to the data, which suggest the opposite to what the first hypothesis suggest, can be found in the fact that referendums provide an opportunity for the formation of a very anti-EU sound through the rise of RRP parties. Once formed, these RRP parties continue to use referendums as a mouthpiece for their anti-EU message. As demonstrated in the data collection on Sweden, this was also the case here. Not only did the referendum provide an opportunity for the social democrats to emerge, but ever since they have been calling for an anti-EU referendum. This means that in contrast to referendums providing an opportunity to create perceived legitimacy for the EU due to the fact that citizens might have more direct influence, the referendums are politicized by RRP parties to spread an anti-EU

message. Therefore the use of referendums in a country, also in the case of Sweden, provides an opportunity to create more perceived illegitimacy rather than perceived legitimacy.

Where hypothesis 1 is concerned, Sweden is the outstanding case. The focus of the analysis lies here, since it illustrates the reason behind the rejection of the first hypothesis. Belgium will be analysed next: even though Belgium does not provide an opportunity to use direct democracy tools, changes and trends in the most recent national and EU elections indicate signs of possible similarities with the situations in Sweden where referendums are concerned. Although on average Belgians demonstrate a high level of support for the EU (Rechamps, 2011), this support has recently declined (Verhulst & Nijeboer, 2007). This is most potently illustrated in the most recent EU elections, where the party '*Vlaams belang*', an anti-EU political party, received 12,4 per cent of the votes, which represents two extra seats in the European Parliament (VTR NWS, 2019). '*Vlaams belang*' wants to change the EU from the inside and return the EU to separate countries with a healthy competition between them (HLN, 2019). Furthermore, in the most recent national elections '*Vlaams belang*' received 18 per cent of the votes, which is three times as much as in the previous election (NOS, 2019). As stated in the data collection on Belgium, the rise of political parties such as '*Vlaams belang*' can be viewed as a protest against the current systems. This distrust in politics and the rise of these more extreme right-wing political parties could mean that Belgians are leaning towards getting some power back from the current system by introducing forms of direct democracy (Verhulst & Nijeboer, 2007). '*Vlaams belang*' is in favour of national referenda discussing major EU issues; this is revealed by the fact that in 2005 the party asked for a referendum concerning the introduction of the EU Constitution. This request was denied (*De Standaard*, 2005), due to the fact that the initial supporters of the referendum backed out because of their belief that '*Vlaams belang*' would hijack the referendum and refocus it on campaigning against the Turkish membership of the EU (EUobserver, 2005).

Even though Belgium, at this moment, does not provide an opportunity for direct democracy, recent developments in the government indicate that if referendums were introduced, it is very likely that there will be many similarities with the processes found in the Swedish case.

**Table 5 – Overview dependent and independent variables hypothesis 1**

Variable	Case 1: Belgium	Case 2: Sweden
Direct democracy tools (H1: independent)	No opportunity to use direct democracy tools on EU issues	Opportunity to use direct democracy tools on EU issues
Income inequality	3.8 (1.3 below the EU average)	4.3 (0.8 below the EU average)
Nationalism	20,33% (group 9-16 per cent)	17,6% (group 17-24 per cent)
Net receivers/net contributors	-0.72 billion euros (place 21/28 of all EU member states)	-1.4 billion euros (place 24/28 of all EU member states)
Perceived legitimacy (dependent)	<i>Perceives the EU as legitimate</i>	<i>Perceives the EU as illegitimate</i>

## **Independent variable: The use of participatory democracy tools**

### ***France - Germany***

The second hypothesis compares the two selected cases, France and Germany, on the basis of participatory democracy tools. As identified in the theoretical framework, these tools must have the characteristics of extensive deliberation, casting a collective vote and being at regional or local level.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the analysis and data sources of the independent variable will consist of a more quantitative, institutional and qualitative measurement. In table 6 and 7 an overview of these three measurements concerning participatory democracy is presented for both France and Germany.

### ***France***

French general principle of representative democracy gives the state the mission to prioritize the general interest over the more individual interests of groups and individuals. In the case of France it is said that the link between citizens and the state is often based on a tradition of conflict and frontal confrontation rather than institutional participation, such as the use of participatory democracy tools. For a long time France was considered a ‘civic desert’ compared to the more participatory communities of Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian countries (Saurugger, 2004). Furthermore, France is a very centralized country, so that even though there has been a tendency towards some progressive decentralization, the central state still has a great deal of power compared to most other European countries. Even though France accounts for many ‘*communes*’ (municipalities), which could indicated a leaning towards



local citizenship and possible participatory democracy, the municipalities tend to focus on enhancing the centralized tendencies of French political life rather than increasing the characteristic of active citizenship (Bevort, 2012). Due to this centralized and statist structure of France, the possibility of local participatory tools is more limited.

However, there are a few examples to be found of new policies reacting to the demand for more participatory citizenship. The Proximity Democracy Act, voted upon in 2002, was a response to the decreasing voters turnout on local level. The act was first called the Participatory Democracy Act, but members of parliament were afraid of this title. The law installed neighborhood councils in towns with more than 80,000 inhabitants. However, these neighborhood councils could be seen as statist, established and controlled by the state, and a form of civil society participation since the mayor creates these councils. Furthermore, decisions are only consultative and the board leading the meetings consists of elected members of the municipal council (Bevort, 2012). One can note that over the years the neighborhood councils have evolved. In 2002, only 292 councils were held, in 2003 the number increased to 982, in 2005 to 1305, and in 2009 the number increased to 1552. However, as said before, the mayor is the one who decides whether the citizens are to be consulted or not on issues only related to the community's problems or the policies of the city. These are very specific, non-EU-related topics (Gillia, 2013). Since this means that no European issues are discussed in terms of this participatory democracy tool, it means that this tool is not included in the study's selected participatory democracy tools.

In recent years the EU has attempted to improve its democracy by increasingly including civil society and citizens in its processes. However, this process of inclusion seems at odds with the tradition of some EU member states, including France. Where the democratic thoughts of more northern countries seem to fit well with the EU's policy on the participation of citizens, other member states with a generally more statist government structure, such as France, seem to be at odds with these developments. France society either participates through the state or by protesting the establishment (Saurugger, 2007).

The introduction of participatory democracy was a major topic in the 2007 presidential campaign in France. Ségolène Royal, the socialist candidate, focused on participatory democracy as a symbol of a renewed approach to politics. Even though direct democracy tools attracted much attention at this time, no essential changes were made by implementing them (Blatrix, 2007). The topic of participatory democracy was not important enough, since it disappeared after the 2007 presidential campaign, without any changes to the current system, and played no role in the 2012 campaign (Bevort, 2012). At the same time, it seemed that the

participatory techniques installed before 2007, the Proximity Democracy Act of 2001 and the citizens’ initiative for a referendum often interfered and clashed with each other, making it possible for one tool to abolish the outcomes of other tools. Due to the fact that these tools were so easily manipulated, this led to the abuse of the direct democracy tools in place (Blatrix, 2007).

Current developments on public opinion regarding participatory democracy can be found in de the ‘yellow vest movement’. The developments surrounding this movement, however, took place in early 2019, which makes the data surrounding these developments outside the scope of this study. However, to illustrate the current public sympathy toward the use of participatory it’s important to briefly mention this development. The yellow vest movement is a social movement which points out social injustice in a political system that has excluded citizens’ voices for decades (Open Government Partnership, 2018). The movement calls for an update of French democracy and expresses the need for a more inclusive decentralized democracy system. Therefore the creation of dedicated platforms for political expression that are accountable, transparent and democratically governed is needed (Open Government Partnership, 2018).

**Table 6 – Overview France independent variable**

<b>Case 3 – France</b>	
<b>Quantitative</b> – What kind of participatory democracy tools are in place covering EU issues?	Very centralized country with extremely little representative democracy tools. However, the Proximity Democracy Act allows neighborhood councils but only on local issues. Issues covering the EU or touching the EU are not considered.
<b>Institutional</b> – constitutional set-up	Other than the Proximity Democracy Act, there are no legal provisions for participatory democracy stated in the constitution.
<b>Qualitative</b> – public opinion towards participatory democracy	Citizens call for an update in the French democratic system and express the need for a more inclusive decentralized democracy.

**Germany**

When it comes to participatory democracy, Germany has a very interesting history (Lazär, 2014). After the Second World War, during the country’s creation, basic type of democracy tools were eradicated from the constitutional framework, even though it had existed in the

Weimar constitution. This decision was an institutional response to the political instability of the Weimar era, as well as a reflection of the general distrust in people's capacity to act wisely. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, however, discussions on participatory democracy reform came back on the table. Requests surrounding participatory democracy manifested mostly at communal and regional levels. As a consequence, gradually participatory democracy became institutionalized and applied at the local level all over Germany. The regional level in Germany offers participation by three different methods: The first method is a petition or popular initiative, when citizens present a request for a local referendum on legislative or co-national matters. The second method comprises non-institutionalized and non-binding tools of participatory democracy such as consensus conferences, citizens' juries, planning cells, public dialogue sessions and citizens' panels. Associations of citizens, local authorities or NGOs on different topics organize these tools. These '*Burgerengagement*' (citizen engagement) as the Germans call them, have been growing in importance and reach. However, they often take the form of volunteer work by residents for the benefit of the council or the local community (Lazär, 2014). The third method is network governance and is supposed to create closer cooperation between local groups and politicians. The method is also known as participatory budgeting and is implemented in 140 municipalities all across Germany (Lazär, 2014). Of these three methods, only the second and third options will be considered in this research, because of the specific characteristics selected to represent participatory democracy, namely local/regional level, collective voting and extensive deliberation. Since local referendums do not require collective voting and extensive deliberation, this method is not considered in this study.

Specific examples of participatory democracy practised in Germany are the following. First, the citizens' jury that took place in Dresden (2001) on genetic diagnostics (Best et al., 2011) where the results were forwarded to the relevant federal ministry for consideration. Second, the planning cells that are practised at regional and local levels popular in Berlin and Bavaria. These planning cells seek consensus and contributions on local governance issues and spatial planning problems, as well as establishing citizens' priorities and preferences in public policy. Third, public dialogue sessions such as charrettes and citizens' panels in, for example, the city of Bremen. Here, between 2008 and 2010, a citizens' panel took place on the use of and contribution to the development of sustainable energy resources (Best et al., 2011).

The specific examples above are examples of participatory democracy that mostly discuss local issues, only sometimes these issues also match issues in the domain of the

European Union. There are no specific EU issues discussed in the participatory mechanisms organised by the government. However, there are a few examples of participatory democracy in Germany covering the EU itself. It is important to note that NGOs or citizens' associations rather than municipalities or local governments instigate these initiatives. An example of this is the citizens' assembly for Europe which started the project Citizens' Assemblies for Renewing Engagement (CARE). This project aims to provide practical and research-based evidence on how citizens can most effectively engage in any debate about the future of Europe and influence the EU policy agenda. In this project, citizens discuss what is the most effective way to engage in the future of Europe and develop policy recommendations to achieve a vision for a more democratic Europe (Citizens' Assemblies for Europe, 2019). Over two weekends in May and June 2018, representative groups of 25 and 30 citizens met in Berlin to discuss increasing citizens' engagement in Europe. These assemblies resulted in great support for an increase in both referendums and citizens' assemblies to increase citizens' engagement (the Conversation, 2018).

However, some authors (Geissel, 2009; Premat, 2006) who have reflected on Germany's participatory mechanisms have stated that participatory innovations do not improve the quality of democracy in Germany per se. They have stated that these mechanisms need to be carefully designed, otherwise participatory innovations can have a detrimental impact and, for example, reduce legitimacy (Geissel, 2009). The crux is whether all citizens who can potentially participate in these tools know that these tools exist. If not, these tools only contribute to the illusion of participation rather than real participation (Premat, 2006). This illusion of participation indicates that offering these tools to citizens is based on government passivity, where these tools are included in communicative strategies by government representatives who only represent their own interests. However, if participatory mechanisms find a solid basis in legislation, they have the potential to enhance legitimacy, to add to the political processes and to improve civic skills; if not, they contribute to the illusion of participation (Lazär, 2014).

The political parties in Germany exhibit a great tendency towards embracing basic types of democracy in intra-party affairs, with the hope that the practices of these direct and participatory democracy tools might stop the decline in mass participation in traditional politics. It is their hope that by making such participation more appealing to citizens, the citizens will participate more in these unconventional forms of participation (Donavan & Karp, 2006). Public opinion to representative democracy in Germany is difficult to pinpoint. At the beginning of 2000, most Germans leaned towards giving the public a greater say in

important political decisions. Support for direct and participatory democracy was greater in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) states. East Germany was also more in support of forms of consultative democracy, such as roundtables, than the West (Dalton et al., 2001). Furthermore, studies have found that the greatest popular support for direct and participatory democracy in Germany is located among citizens at the periphery of politics. These are citizens who are less interested in and less informed about politics and tend to favour the extreme parties. In Germany, 84 per cent of the supporters of the populist party AfD are in favour of direct democracy (World Economic Forum, 2017). There are worries that direct and participatory democracy might encourage the populist tendencies that exist in Germany. Overall, support for direct democracy in Germany is found among politically dissatisfied citizens (Donavan & Karp, 2006).

Table 7 – Overview Germany independent variable

**Case 4 – Germany**

<p><b>Quantitative</b> – What kind of participatory democracy tools are in place covering EU issues?</p>	<p>Participatory democracy tools such as consensus conferences, citizens’ juries, planning cells, public dialogue sessions or citizens’ panels. Topics of these tools cover issues that are mostly locally focused and only sometimes cover issues in the domain of the EU.</p>
<p><b>Institutional</b> – constitutional set-up</p>	<p>After the fall of the Berlin Wall participatory democracy became institutionalized at the local level.</p>
<p><b>Qualitative</b> – public opinion towards participatory democracy</p>	<p>The public is leaning towards the introduction of more participatory democracy tools. However, the citizens that are most in favour of these tools tend to be less interested in politics and lean to right-wing parties.</p>

## **Analysis of the relationship between the dependent and independent variables: H2**

In this section the relationship between the dependent and independent variables for the second hypothesis will be discussed. As illustrated in Table 8, which derives its content from the data collection of earlier sections, France which has no opportunity to use participatory democracy tools on issues covering the EU, perceives the EU as illegitimate. In contrast to this, Germany, which has the opportunity to use direct democracy tools on issues covering the EU, perceives the EU as legitimate. The first hypothesis proclaimed:

*H2 – The opportunity to use participatory democracy tools at regional and local level on issues covering the EU will increase the perception of legitimacy of the European Union in this specific member state.*

The second hypothesis states that it expects that due to the fact that participatory democracy tools provide extensive deliberation among citizens and therefore find its results in collective decision-making, the throughput legitimacy increases, which results in greater perceived legitimacy by these citizens of the system in which they participate. At first glance it seems that the second hypothesis can be confirmed, due to the fact that France, which does not provide the opportunity to use participatory democracy tools on issues covering the EU, perceives the EU as less legitimate, while Germany, which does provide this opportunity, perceives the EU as legitimate. However, after consideration of the in-depth data of the case studies, it is found that the answer is more nuanced. The disputed eventual effectiveness of these participatory democracy tools lies in two different observations made from the data collection.

The first observation covers the topic under consideration while using these participatory democracy tools. The primary topics discussed in these participatory democracy tools remain locally, instead of EU, focused. The fact that this is the case for most of the participatory democracy cases is not strange, since a main characteristic of participatory democracy is extensive deliberation, which can only be realised at local level (Royo et al., 2011). Therefore, the notion that the topics under consideration are also locally focused is completely natural. However, some issues discussed do fall within the EU policy domain, for example the topic of sustainable energy resources discussed in Bremen at a public dialogue of a citizens' panel (Best et al., 2011). Since these topic do not specifically mention the EU and

are in quantity considerably fewer than local topics, it can be expected that citizens do not always make the connection between these tools and the EU, and they will therefore have a lesser impact on the perceived legitimacy than if issues directly mentioned the EU.

Second, as mentioned in the data collection, issues directly covering the EU are not completely excluded from the participatory democracy tools in Germany, but these issues are almost always instigated by NGOs and citizens' associations and not so much by municipalities or local governments. As argued by Geissel (2009), Premat (2006) and Lazăr (2014), participatory mechanisms only have a true impact when they are carefully designed and have their basis in legislation. Furthermore, an important attribute of a successful participatory mechanism is that the process should be free from manipulation (Grimes, 2008). Since the participatory democracy tools covering EU issues are mostly organised by NGOs and citizens' associations, it is very likely that these preconditions for successful participatory democracy, namely careful design, based in legislation and free from manipulation, are less well represented than if the organisation lay with the local government. First, it can be expected that the local government will be less biased than an NGO regarding a pre-setup mission while organising these participatory deliberations. Second, careful design and based in legislation will be more easily realised by local government, because they have the necessary experience, finances and manpower. This means that even though issues directly concerning the EU are expected to have the most impact on the perceived legitimacy of the EU by the citizens of Germany, these deliberations have less impact due to the fact that the organisation of these issues lies outside the organization of government.

Lastly, this chapter will look more specifically at the case of France. Interesting to note are the more recent developments in this country. As discussed in the data collection, France is a very centralized and statist country, whose government system seems at odds with democratization developments such as participatory democracy. The current societal participation processes seem to take two forms: either through the state or through a form of protest and a more anti-establishment attitude (Saurugger, 2004). The recent development surrounding the 'yellow vest movement', however, show a definite increase in the public acceptance of more participatory democracy tools (Open Government Partnership, 2018). However, the means of obtaining this more inclusive democracy is done via the old participation process of protest with an anti-establishment attitude.

**Table 8 – Overview dependent and independent variables hypothesis 2**

Variable	Case 3: France	Case 4: Germany
Participatory democracy tools (H2: Independent)	No opportunity to use participatory democracy tools on issues of EU	Opportunity to use participatory democracy tools. Mostly covering local issues, only sporadically covering EU issues
Income inequality	4,5 (0.6 below EU average)	4,4 (0,7 below EU average)
Nationalism	13% (group 9-16 per cent)	12,6% (group 9-16 per cent)
Net receivers/net contributors	-4,57 billion euros (place 26/28 of all EU member states)	-10,68 billion euros (place 28/28 of all EU member states)
Perceived legitimacy (dependent)	<i>Perceives the EU as illegitimate</i>	<i>Perceives the EU as legitimate</i>



## 7. CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter the study returns to the original research question: ‘*What is the impact of the use of basic types of democracy at national level covering EU issues on the perceived legitimacy of the European Union?*’ As stated in the introduction, research into the effect of the use of basic types of democracy is hard to come by (Rowe & Frewer, 2004; Abelson & Gauvin, 2006). This entails that basic types of democracy tools are widely endorsed and increasingly used in political systems, even though current knowledge of the effect of such processes remains unclear (Grimes, 2008). As expected from the literature, the use of direct and participatory democracy tools will increase the workings of input- and throughput-orientated processes due to the fact the use that basic types of democracy tools increase the opportunity for participation and collective deliberative decision-making. An increase in the input- and throughput-orientated process is expected to lead to an increase in the perceived legitimacy of citizens. Since this study focuses on the use of basic types of democracy tools covering issues of the EU, this study expects the perceived legitimacy of the EU to increase in the member states that use these tools (Schmidt, 2006; Schmidt, 2013; Scharpf, 1999; Gherghina, 2017; Delli Carpini et al., 2004). However, when testing the first and second hypotheses, these expectations were not confirmed. This study was unable to demonstrate that direct democracy, such as referendums, have a positive impact on the perceived legitimacy of the EU by Sweden. Furthermore, even though this study did seem to find that participatory forms of basic types of democracy, such as citizens’ panels, have a positive impact on the perceived legitimacy of the EU by Germany, analysis of the in-depth data reveals a more nuanced picture.

Alternative explanations for the first hypothesis can be found in the possibility that the use of direct democracy tools such as referendums have a counter-effect of creating more illegitimacy towards the EU, due to the fact that right-wing populist parties use the tools as an anti-EU platform. The use of tools such as referendums creates a platform to influence citizens with an anti-EU message and therefore the perceived legitimacy of the EU by these citizens is likely to decline (Anderson & Bjørklund, 2000; Rydgren, 2002; Treib, 2014).

Alternative explanations for the second hypothesis can be found in a more nuanced analysis of the in-depth data. First, the connection between participatory democracy used at local level and the EU is not always as clear as it is with direct democracy. With direct democracy, citizens’ clearly see when a topic of a referendum covers the EU, for example the Swedish referendum on joining the European Union. Participatory democracy tools are

mostly focused at local level topics and the few times that the EU is covered, the EU is not specifically mentioned but topics merely concern EU policy domains. Since citizens might not make the connection between participatory democracy tools and the EU, it remains very unlikely that this will influence their perceived legitimacy of the EU. Second, good and careful design of participatory democracy tools is of the utmost importance for these tools to create impact (Geissel, 2009; Premat, 2006; Lazär, 2014). As mentioned above, since these participatory mechanisms are most impactful if citizens make the connection between the tools and the EU, it is important to acknowledge that when these tools specifically cover clear EU topics, the organisation of these tools mostly lies with NGOs and not with the local government. Since it is expected that NGOs are less likely to confirm to the preconditions of careful design than local government, the impact of these tools on perceived legitimacy is expected to be lower.

## **Limitations**

This study has a number of limitations, which ought to be kept in mind when interpreting its results and conducting further research. The first limitation can be found in the case selection of Belgium and Sweden. The control variable of nationalism, which was operationalized by comparing the percentages of votes won by nationalist parties in the most recent national elections, does not account for the more nationalist and Eurosceptic history these countries might have. Historically, Sweden was found to be far more nationalistic and Eurosceptic than Belgium. The cross-sectional analysis used to operationalize this control variable does not do justice to the historical developments of nationalism and Euroscepticism. Process tracing might be a good alternative to resolve these issues in further research. The method of operationalizing this control variable might have a greater impact on the concluding results of the first hypothesis than originally expected.

The second limitation of this study is the coinciding of the timeframes of the control, independent and dependent variables. The independent variable, basic types of democracy, goes back 25 years. This choice was made due to the fact that, especially with direct democracy tools, the study needed to ensure that the opportunity was used to have referendums, such as the referendum on Sweden joining the euro in 2003, to see the impact. However, the control variables and the dependent variable use the most recent data and the comparison between the two might therefore be less accurate, even though the dependent variable tries to incorporate time to indicate the changes in perceived legitimacy. The operationalization of the concept, which consists of three questions of the Eurobarometer, has

the limitation that one of the three questions only provides data from 2014 onwards. Therefore exactly coinciding the timeframes was not possible.

A third limitation of this study can be found in the available data. The study relies solely on publicly available information on the internet. However, to truly understand the impact of basic types of democracy on perceived legitimacy, citizens' direct personal opinions are necessary to truly understand the impact. The data should therefore be supplemented by interviews with citizens residing in the member states studied.

Another limitation of this study also focuses on the data. Regarding the second hypothesis, separating the opportunities to use participatory democracy instruments on issues covering the EU was considerably less black and white than expected when selecting the cases of France and Germany. France also has the opportunity to use participatory forms of democracy. Even though the issues covered in these participatory democracy tools in France did not discuss the European Union and therefore were not included in this study, the fact that the opportunity exists might influence the findings on the second hypothesis, due to the fact that the hypothesis is build on a more black-and-white separation.

The final limitation of this study revolves around the separation of direct and participatory forms of democracy. This study does not take into account that participatory democracy also exists in Sweden and Belgium and that direct democracy also exists in Germany and France. Even though case selection would not have been possible if this non-divide was taken into account, it does not change the fact that the results might be influenced by the fact that, for example, participatory democracy is a possibility in Belgium.

## **Further research**

Considering the findings and the limitations of this study, a few aspects have to be taken into account when conducting further research into the perceived legitimacy of the European Union. First, to truly understand the impact of basic types or participatory types of democracy on perceived legitimacy, future research should separate the two issues to create better focus. To truly understand the influence of participatory types of democracy on perceived legitimacy, it is recommended to include interviews when future research is conducted. To understand the influence of direct types of democracy on perceived legitimacy, it is recommended the conduct further research on the negative effects of referendums, considering the appeal of this tool found among more right-wing extremist parties. Lastly, the influence of nationalism on the perceived legitimacy of the EU by member states should not be underestimated. A research design that would be able to test this hypothesis in a way that is

not confounded by other explanations would have to include a triangulation approach. This triangulation would preferably include interviews, document analysis within member states with a before-and-after approach to measure impact, and a more quantitative comparison between member states.

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## 9. APPENDIX

### Appendix 1 – Direct democracy methods

Direct democracy	Explanation
Referendum	A referendum is a procedure that gives the electorate a direct vote on specific issues brought forth by authorities. Referendums take place when a governing body decides to call a vote on a particular issues or when a referendum is required by law under terms of the constitution or other legally binding arrangement. The result of the referendum may be legally binding but authorities may also use it for advisory purposes.
Citizens' Initiative	Citizens' initiatives allow the electorate to vote on a specific issues proposed and brought forth by a number of citizens and not by government or other political authority. To bring an issue to vote, citizens must gather enough signatures, as much as the law under which the imitative is brought forward requires, to be able to put it up for a vote. The law decides which topics may be brought forward under citizens' initiative. The results of a citizens' initiative may be legally binding or advisory. This depends, again, on the law under which the initiative takes place.
Agenda Initiative	With the Agenda initiatives citizens can put particular issues on the agenda of a parliamentary or legislative assembly. Law specifies the minimum of signatures need to put the issue on the agenda. After the issue is put on the agenda no popular vote takes place.
Recall procedure	Recall procedures allow for citizens to vote on ending the term of office of an elected official. This can only take place if enough signatures are gathered to support a recall vote. The outcome of the recall vote is always binding.

Appendix 1 - (beramendi et al., 2008 p. 10)

## Appendix 2 – Participatory democracy methods

### Participatory democracy

### Explanation

Charrette	Charrette is a process instigated to bring citizens’ from different backgrounds into consensus within a limited period of time. The topic discussed is divided into component parts, which are discussed in sub-groups. The sub-groups report back to the whole group and feedback from the whole group is then addressed in the next rounds. This is repeated until consensus is reached. The size varies, from 50 to over 1,000 people.
Citizens Jury	Citizens’ jury aims at involving informed citizens into policy decisions. 12-34 citizens’ are randomly selected. These citizens are then informed by several expert perspectives and go through a process of deliberation. Finally, the citizens produce recommendations in the form of a report. The process usually takes 4-5 days
Consensus Conference	A public enquiry of a group of 10 to 30 citizens who are charged with the assessment of a social controversial topic. Citizens form questions and concerns for the experts and negotiate their answers among themselves. The goal is to broaden the debate and include a non-expert viewpoint. Conferences usually take 3 days and the process is open to the public.
Focus Group	A planned discussion among a small group, 4-12 persons, of stakeholders facilitated by a skilled moderator. The aim is to obtain formation about people’s preferences and values pertaining to a defined topic. A focus group can be seen as a combination between a focused interview and a discussion group. Groups can also discuss in an online environment.
Planning cell	Planning cell make 25 randomly selected citizens into public consultants for a short period of time (e.g. one week) in order to find solutions for a given planning or policy problem. It’s all about exchanging information with involved stakeholders and experts on which the citizens can build their final report. The planning cells then create a report that is presented to the authorities.
The World Café	Creative process for facilitating collaborative dialogue and the sharing of knowledge and ideas to create living network of conversation and action. Participants discuss a question or issue in small groups around café tables. At regular intervals the participants move to a new table. One host remains at the table and provides a summary of the previous conversation. This causes the procedures to be cross-fertilised with the ideas generated in former conversations. At the end of the process the main ideas are summarised in a plenary session.

Appendix 2 – (Slocum-Bradley, 2003)

### Appendix 3 – Ranking European member states on nationalism

Ranking [%]	Country Ranking	Votes won by nationalistic parties [%]
1 – 8 percent	Cyprus	3,7
	Greece	7
	Slovakia	8
9 – 16 percent	Bulgaria	9
	Czech Republic	11
	Germany	12,6
	France	13
	Netherlands	13
	Italy	17,4
	Sweden	17,6
	Finland	18
	Belgium	20,3
	Denmark	21
25+ percent	Austria	26
	Switzerland	29

Appendix 3 - (BBC, 2018)

## Appendix 4 – Answers to the questions used in the operationalization of the dependent variable

### Hypothesis 1 – Belgium and Sweden

Belgium	Q1			Q2			Q3		
	Trust	Don't trust	Don't know	Satisfied	Not satisfied	Don't know	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
2018	47	49	4	52	43	5	67	31	2
2017	53	44	3	61	38	1	73	23	4
2016	48	49	3	58	41	1	70	26	4
2015	39	54	7	59	37	4	66	27	7
2014	43	49	8	59	37	4	62	31	7
Sweden	Q1			Q2			Q3		
	Trust	Don't trust	Don't know	Satisfied	Not satisfied	don't know	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
2018	51	40	9	53	37	10	27	67	6
2017	52	37	11	52	40	8	30	65	5
2016	43	48	9	48	45	7	29	68	3
2015	46	42	12	49	40	11	26	67	7
2014	48	40	12	48	39	13	17	79	4

Appendix 4 –  
 Standard Eurobarometer 81, 2014  
 Standard Eurobarometer 82, 2014  
 Standard Eurobarometer 84, 2015  
 Standard Eurobarometer 86, 2016  
 Standard Eurobarometer 88, 2017  
 Standard Eurobarometer 89, 2018

### Hypothesis 2 – France and Germany

France	Q1			Q2			Q3		
	Trust	Don't trust	Don't know	Satisfied	Not satisfied	don't know	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
2018	34	55	11	41	49	10	56	31	13
2017	33	56	11	45	45	10	59	32	9
2016	26	65	9	34	56	10	62	28	10
2015	26	63	11	41	44	15	59	29	12
2014	36	52	12	41	44	15	52	34	14
Germany	Q1			Q2			Q3		
	Trust	Don't trust	Don't know	Satisfied	Not satisfied	don't know	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
2018	49	42	9	52	43	5	59	33	8
2017	47	42	11	50	44	6	56	37	7
2016	37	53	10	44	49	7	49	44	7
2015	28	63	9	36	58	6	51	41	8
2014	34	53	13	47	43	10	40	52	8

Appendix 4 –  
 Standard Eurobarometer 81, 2014  
 Standard Eurobarometer 82, 2014  
 Standard Eurobarometer 84, 2015  
 Standard Eurobarometer 86, 2016  
 Standard Eurobarometer 88, 2017  
 Standard Eurobarometer 89, 2018

## Appendix 5 – Sources used to comprise data and analysis on the dependent and independent variable

<b>Data sources</b>	
<b>Dependent variable</b>	
<b>European Commission</b>	(Standard Eurobarometer 89, 2018) (Standard Eurobarometer 88, 2017) (Standard Eurobarometer 86, 2016) (Standard Eurobarometer 84, 2015) (Standard Eurobarometer 81, 2014) (Standard Eurobarometer 82, 2014)
<b>Independent variable</b>	
Belgium – Sweden	
<b>Government documents</b>	(EUobserver, 2005) (Flash Eurobarometer 149, 2003)
<b>Media</b>	(The Irish Times, 2004) (New York Times, 2003) (Radio Sweden, 2007) (POLITICO, 2017) (Express, 2018) (The Local SE, 2019) (NOS, 2019) (VTR NWS, 2019) (HLN, 2019) (De Standaard, 2005)
<b>Academic sources</b>	(Reuchamps, 2011) (Verhulst & Nijeboer, 2007) (Best et al., 2011) (Kaiser, 1995) (Vlachos, 2004) (Andersen & Bjørklund, 1990; 2000) (Rydgren, 2002) (Aylott, 2005) (Miles, 2004) (Lindström, 2018)



	(Reuters, 2019)
	(Deiwiks, 2009)
	(Canova, 1999)
	(Norris, 1999)
	(Treib, 2014)
	(Rosema et al., 2016)
<b>Civil society</b>	(BelConLawBlog, 2015)
	(Meer Democratie, 2019)
France – Germany	
<b>Government documents</b>	(Open government partnership, 2018)
<b>Media</b>	(World Economic Forum, 2017)
<b>Academic sources</b>	(Saurugger, 2004)
	(Bevort, 2012)
	(Gilia, 2013)
	(Blatrix, 2007)
	(Lăzar, 2014)
	(Best et al., 2011)
	(Geissel, 2009)
	(Premat, 2006)
	(Donavan & Karp, 2006)
	(Dalton et al., 2001)
	(Grimes, 2008)
<b>Civil society</b>	(Citizens assemblies for Europe, 2019)

## Appendix 6 – Full data structure dependent variable: perceived legitimacy

### Hypothesis 1 – Belgium and Sweden

Belgium	Perceived as legitimate	Perceived as illegitimate	Don't Know
2018	55,3	41,0	3,7
2017	62,3	35,0	2,7
2016	58,7	38,7	2,7
2015	54,7	39,3	6,0
2014	54,7	39,0	6,3
Sweden	Perceived as legitimate	Perceived as illegitimate	Don't Know
2018	43,7	48,0	8,3
2017	44,7	47,3	8,0
2016	40,0	53,7	6,3
2015	40,3	49,7	10,0
2014	37,7	52,7	9,7

Appendix 6 –  
 (Standard Eurobarometer 81, 2014) (Standard Eurobarometer 82, 2014)  
 (Standard Eurobarometer 84, 2015) (Standard Eurobarometer 86, 2016)  
 (Standard Eurobarometer 88, 2017) (Standard Eurobarometer 89, 2018)

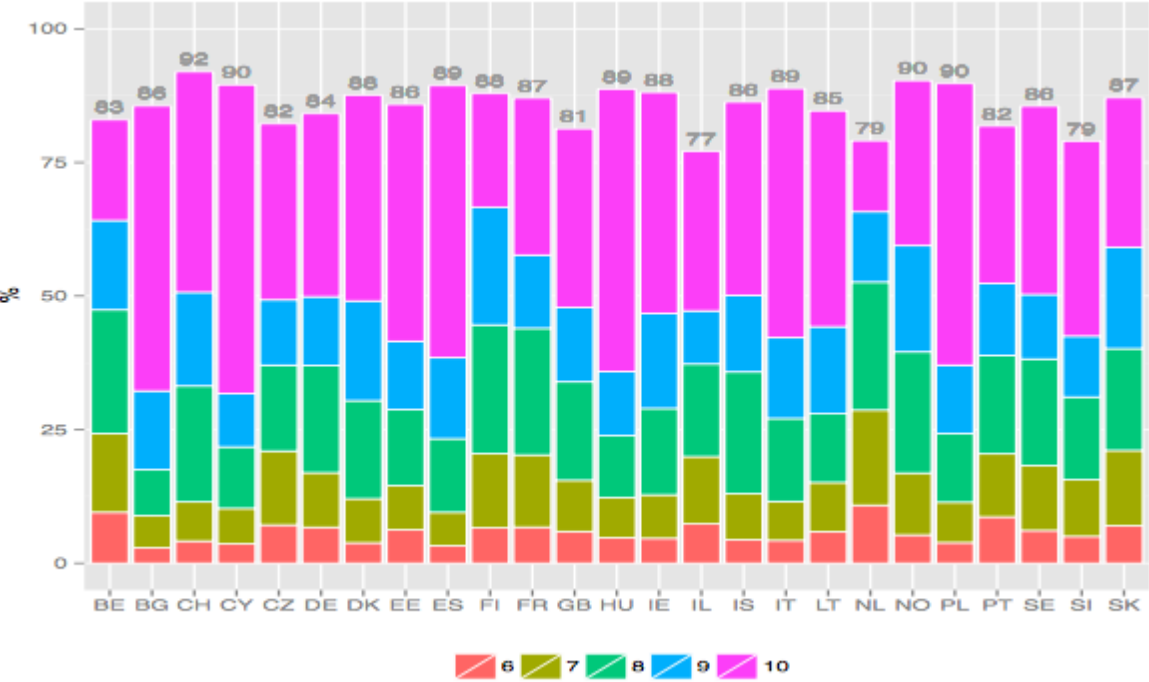
### Hypothesis 2 – France and Germany

France	Perceived as legitimate	Perceived as illegitimate	Don't Know
2018	43,7	45,0	11,3
2017	45,7	44,3	10,0
2016	40,7	49,7	9,7
2015	42,0	45,3	12,7
2014	43,0	43,3	13,7
Germany	Perceived as legitimate	Perceived as illegitimate	Don't Know
2018	53,3	39,3	7,3
2017	51,0	41,0	8,0
2016	43,3	48,7	8,0
2015	38,3	54,0	7,7
2014	40,3	49,3	10,3

Appendix 6 –  
 (Standard Eurobarometer 81, 2014) (Standard Eurobarometer 82, 2014)  
 (Standard Eurobarometer 84, 2015) (Standard Eurobarometer 86, 2016)  
 (Standard Eurobarometer 88, 2017) (Standard Eurobarometer 89, 2018)

### Appendix 7 - Percentages of citizens approving of direct democracy per EU member state

The figure in Appendix 7 presents the percentages of citizens approving of direct democracy per EU member state (Leininger, 2015). Participants responded to the following question based on an 11-point scale, with higher numbers indicating greater importance accorded to referendums: ‘And still thinking generally rather than about [country], how important do you think it is for democracy in general that citizens have the final say on the most important political issues by voting on them directly in referendums?’ If a respondent chose an answer from 6 to 10, it is viewed as support for direct democracy. The data represented below was retrieved from Round 6 of the European Social Survey (ESS6) and exported from the research of Leininger (2015). The ESS6 is one of the very few cross-nationally administered surveys that include a specific question on direct democracy (Leininger, 2015).



Appendix 7 - Citizens approving of direct democracy per member state (Leininger, 2015)

The figure indicates strong support for direct democracy throughout the European Union. Belgium has an approval rate of 83 per cent, with the percentages roughly equally divided by the four options provided, which together form the approval rate in percentages. Sweden has an approval rate of 86 per cent, with this percentage slightly more focused on the higher numbers of 8 and 9 on the scale. This figure indicates that not only the percentages of

Belgium and Sweden, but throughout the EU reveal only marginal differences when it comes to supporting direct democracy (Leininger, 2015).