

Internet technology and deliberative democratic constitutionalisation of the EU: case study of the Citizen's forum

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(Conference abstract)

The article is based on assumption that the internet technology itself does not strengthen the democratic constitutionalisation of the European union nor increases citizens interest for political participation at the EU level. Both can not be realized without proper democratic institutional framework that enables collective expression of citizens interests and passions through electoral or other channels with a predictable and effective influence on EU governance (Schmitter, 2005: 193-194). Debates related to political models of democratic constitutionalisation of the EU have primarily highlighted concept of representative democracy, which historically developed within the national state. Its advocates (Van Gerven, 2005: 350-360) foresee democratic constitutionalisation in terms of strengthening decision-making and political role of the European parliament and Euro-parties. On the other hand, deliberative political model is favoured (Hoskyns, 2000: 199), whose elements were adopted by the participatory democracy principle in Article no. 46 of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe. This principle was established in order to strengthen and legitimise political elements of active European citizenship related to co-formation of common conditions for quality living in terms of expression and opinion exchange, civil dialogue and addressing initiatives to the EU institutions without the intention of fighting for political power. The evaluation of democratic impact of internet based Citizen's forums (http://www.e-participacija.si/forum_EU/) based on Macintosh, A. / White, A. (2002) methodology shows, that political models of democratic constitutionalisation have not been yet realised in practise. Slovenian citizens involvement in public debates on the future European social model and Future European energy policy in dialog with Slovenian members in European Parliament was most commonly characterized by a low number of people participating. The main reasons were limited extend to which citizens messages, viewpoints and opinions in form of moderators reports where actually included in changing or creating future european policies and low level of interactive deliberation on-line. Similar limitations were identified in the process of Convention preparation of Draft proposal for the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, which were critically described as a fictitious democratic involvement (Accetto, 2006: 256). The European union must, in order to become innovative and forward-regrading polity, invent a new institutional framework for democratic constitutionalisation that will create proper conditions for using internet technology for citizens participation in EU decision-making processes. The latest would represent a much needed addition to the current version of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe.

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