NATIONAL REFERENDUMS CHALLENGE THE EU'S POLICY LEGITIMACY

PROFESSOR RICHARD ROSE FBA

Robert Schuman Centre, EUI & U. of Strathclyde Glasgow
prof_r_rose@yahoo.co.uk

COUNCIL FOR EUROPEAN STUDIES

International Conference, Glasgow University

Thursday 13 July 2017
DEMOCRACY REQUIRES REPRESENTATION

Democracy gives every citizen the right to vote

Every European has two citizenships and European is secondary

National institutions represent national citizens:

  Representative democracy: Parliamentary parties discuss, decide

  Direct democracy: Voters decide an issue independent of parties

European Union Trustee democracy: Multi-national institutions decide collective policies in collective interest
INTERDEPENDENCE CREATES GROWING NEED FOR EU LEGITIMACY

. Founders of EC&SC & EEC claimed absolute and instrumental legitimacy

. Democracy has replaced preventing World War III as the primary absolute value

. Inputs by national votes for MEPs buried in multi-national Party Groups and majorities combining parties of left and right (Rose & Borz)

. Throughput legitimacy. Checks and balance bargaining within multi-national EU institutions does not create national legitimacy (Vivien Schmidt)

. Ineffective policy outputs for economy, migration undermine instrumental legitimacy (Scharpf)

*There is a democratic surplus at the national level and a legitimacy deficit at the EU level
MEPS DO NOT REPRESENT THEIR CITIZENS ON EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

Positive view of EU integration

- Anti: 35% Citizens, 30% MEPs
- As is: 37% (N.a for MEPs)
- Pro: 27% Citizens, 70% MEPs

NATIONAL REFERENDUMS EXCLUDE MOST EUROPEAN CITIZENS

REFERENDUMS LEVERAGE SUPPORT FOR ANTI-EU PROTEST PARTIES

Anti-EU parties win seats—but only up to a point

In a coalition government participating parties compromise positions

A referendum on a protest issue:
   Enables protest parties to mobilize and expand support on an issue
   Established parties face defection of minority of supporters who disagree with their EU stance.

Outcome decided by division among established parties; size and unity of protest parties; campaign effect on unattached voters.
NATIONAL REFERENDUMS ON ISSUES WITH EU CONSEQUENCES

% anti-EU vote

- 23% (2005 Spain)
- 55% (2005 France)
- 62% (2005 Luxembourg)
- 44% (2008 Ireland)
- 53% (2009 Ireland)
- 53% (2012 Ireland)
- 40% (2014 Switzerland)
- 61% (2015 Greece)
- 64% (2015 Denmark)
- 53% (2016 Netherlands)
- 52% (2016 UK)
- 98% (2016 Hungary)

The graph shows the percentage of anti-EU votes across various national referendums with EU consequences.
THE GOLDONI PROBLEM OF PRIME MINISTERS: Serving Two Masters

European Council as Master:

- Treaty commitments inherited from distant predecessor
- Prime Ministers meant to serve European norms
- At EC a PM binds all of a state’s citizens but represents an average of 49% of a country’s voters

National electorate as Master:

- Prime Minister accountable to national parliament, electorate
- Each PM accountable to a different electorate
- Seven or eight governments face re-election each year
OPTIONS FOR EU RESPONSE TO NATIONAL REFERENDUM DEFEAT

Ignore as lacks legal authority: Hungary

Enforce legal authority: Switzerland

Enforce through international market pressure: Greece

Fudge, think again referendums: Denmark, Ireland

Accept legality under Article 50: Brexit

Accept advice from Dutch voters