A democracy game that symbolises EU paradigm shift

The EU Democracy Game symbolises the paradigm shift in international relations which the EU brings about. It shows in a light-hearted manner that the European Union is neither a state nor a union of states, but rather evolves from a common market to a common democracy.

The game may be used to explain why EU governance is at odds with the traditional Westphalian system of international relations. Whereas the latter holds that sovereignty must be absolute and indivisible, the hallmark of the EU is its flexible approach to sovereignty. This flexible perception has ensured lasting peace and has subsequently led to the creation of a common market. The treaties of Maastricht (1992) and Lisbon (2007) are enabling the EU to evolve from a common market to a common democracy.

The new approach to sovereignty also underlies the introduction of the euro. In the old Westphalian concept, each currency must be backed by a state. In that perspective, the euro was doomed to fail from the outset. By addressing the financial crisis of the past decade in a concerted manner, however, the member states of the EMU and the EU-institutions have shown beyond doubt that they are the joint sovereign behind the euro. Defying Westphalian doctrine, the EU has proven that it is possible for states to share the exercise of sovereignty without losing statehood. At the same time, they are demonstrating that states can enjoy a common currency without having to become a federal state.

The change of paradigm is epitomised by the academic thesis of the EU Democracy Game. The game suggests that, if democratic states decide to share the exercise of sovereignty in order to achieve common goals, the organisation they establish for these purposes, should be democratic too. From a citizens’ perspective, the EU may be described as a polity of states, wherein the citizens can participate both in the national democracies of their countries and in the common democracy of the Union.

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