

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES TO EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

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This article is an analysis and a reflection on the paper “Rethinking European integration after the debt crisis”, by Giandomenico Majone (2012). Majone’s paper explains how as the European Union has grown stronger, its country members have declined Europe’s international status and most of its member nations are unsatisfied with the Union.

Analysis

Majone’s criticism in the article mainly consists of three topics:

1. the decline of Europe’s international status;
2. only Germany benefitting from European integration;
3. one size fits all politics, decisions and policy-making.

Giandomenico Majone is a clear critic of European integration. In this paper he gives an interesting view that the present crisis should be viewed as a sort of blessing for giving attention to flaws of the traditional integration methods and questions the continuation of the integration process. He points out important findings in the different countries: how most member countries’ economies have stagnated or contracted since the launch of the single market programme and the EMU. Maybe the clearest criticism is pointed towards the full harmonisation of laws and policies, which is difficult because of the socioeconomic heterogeneity in the enlarged Union: different needs make for different policies. Is the EU an elitist project with no room for public opinion? I don’t see how the EU is the main forum for close European cooperation, or why people insist on this. However, the concentration of decision-making powers in very few hands has reached a level never attained before. The problem of a high level of heterogeneity, already noted in the case of monetary union, arises with any type of policy harmonisation.

How to face the described challenges

It may seem as if EU policies are too far away from normal people’s everyday concerns. Even the title of this article can be misleading. I don’t see the point

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of making the laws and policy-making of the Union more flexible than they are today: that could also be seen as unfair to those countries who will experience the less flexible side of the lawmakers. This can be well-known for Norwegian authorities if one takes a look at their connection to EU policy-making through the EEA agreement. A good thing that comes out of clear criticism of the EU is all the strong feelings Europeans have towards the Union. I think the European leaders should be clearer about which problems you can blame on the European Union and those that would have happened regardless. Somebody should be put in charge of exchange rate policy-making and make this not only a political project but also an economic one. With responsibility taken and better cooperation between the South and the North, hopefully Europe can stay even stronger together in the days to come.

References

Majone, Giandomenico. "Rethinking European integration after the debt crisis". University College London, June 2012 (online) <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/european-institute/analysis-publications/publications/WP3.pdf>