EUROPEAN IDEAS

<u>Sub-questions</u> from participants in the *European Ideas* Discussion Workshop at the Diplomatic Academy on 28 January 2013 on the topic of EU Democracy:

Block 1: *the current state of European democracy and the interplay between national and European democracy*

The legitimacy of EU institutions only holds for as far as they bring material benefits to European populations. This legitimacy quickly erodes when these material benefits cease to be provided. What does this tell us about the state of democracy in the EU?

What does the ´great paradox` tell us? Paradox: On the one hand, European economic government would be needed in order to overcome the European crisis. On the other hand, the political steps taken towards this end are alienating the public, strengthening nationalism and disunity.

Democracy being challenged by growing populism and the erosion of the middle class, can the current crisis be turned into an opportunity for democracy or will it merely contribute to its worsening?

What is the effect of the polarization of national politics (that have been energized towards left and right extremes in various countries) on European politics? Taking into account the awakening of public movements and mass protests, what ways can be found for the EU to counteract the scapegoat position it often finds itself in?

Let´s consider that democracy in Europe should be built on three levels: the local, the national and the European level. Some recent events such as the 2012 referendum in Romania and the controversial Hungarian Constitution show that certain EU member states have a hard time to secure the first and the second level of democracy. How is it possible to achieve the third level under these circumstances?

Block 2: *the specific nature of European democracy*

There may be a tension between democracy and efficiency. Is it necessary for the European Union as an organisation to be democratic, or can that democracy be much more local, with the EU acting within its sphere as an efficient bureaucracy, a more meritocratic technocracy?

If the EU should not remain a technocracy, what measures should be taken and how effective can they be?

A few days ago, Thorbjørn Jagland, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, warned that "corruption is the biggest single threat to democracy in Europe

today. More and more people on our continent are losing faith in the rule of law". Is corruption really the greatest challenge for European democracy today? What could be a possible solution to corruption at national and supranational level?

To what extend should democratic participation be given in the areas of CFSP and CSDP?

Block 3: *European Parliament elections and our political systems in general*

Can the European Parliament be considered as legitimately representative in any European country, meaning that it enjoys authority on a par with national legislatures?

Can a European democratic system exist without European parties?

Do 27 independent national election campaigns contribute to a political discourse about the entire Union's concerns?

Would the European electorate be ready for fully-fledged European parties?

Are our representative political systems in Europe, constituted by political parties, still up to date?

Block 4: *The European Demos*

The cultural factor: To what extend can we talk about the existence of a European culture? Are some European cultures considered as more European than others?

What is the importance of the cultural factor with regards to democratic decision-making in the European Union? If language differences and the size of Europe make an integrated European political debate impossible, should the EU try to amend this?

What can be done about the integration and representation of minorities within the EU, such as the Roma communities?

Block 5: *Diverse questions*

Considering that democracy in the EU is currently in a dismal state, can the EU still go on exporting its values and democratic know-how to outside countries?

What new forms of participation could be used (are being used) to engage young people in the question of democracy of the European Union?