

NGOs in European migration policy: strengthening legitimacy?

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If we go along with the conclusions of several scholars and monographs on the EU, Europe appears to be suffering from a democratic deficit and problems of legitimacy. The process of European integration involved the relocation of competences from the national level to the EU level. However, to date this transfer of power has not (yet?) been accompanied by similar transfers of accountability mechanisms and systems of democratic control. The institutional make-up of the EU does not resemble the familiar nation-state, hence the EU is not democratic.

Several authors suggest that NGOs can play a role in addressing this lack of democratic legitimacy. NGO involvement in European policy making, it is believed, could resolve issues of accountability, representation and participation.

European cooperation in the domain of migration and asylum regulation has emerged as an important yet controversial expansion of the powers of the EU. Against the background of the aforementioned themes, my research will deal with the (potential) role of NGOs in remedying European legitimacy deficits in the field of EU migration policy. I will examine the involvement of NGO's in the development of three directives (family reunification, asylum procedures, and long term residents).

In my presentation I will examine one of the central concepts of my research: legitimacy.

If someone mentions the legitimacy deficits of the EU, just what exactly is he or she talking about? What is the yardstick of democratic legitimacy? And can we 'measure' legitimacy? I will discuss both the normative and the sociological/empirical dimension of the concept. More in particular I will look into the relation between legitimacy, European migration policy and the role of NGOs.