Original Research Reports

How Citizens Evaluate the Legitimacy of Direct Vote and Representation-Based Decision-Making: Findings From the Focus Groups on Adoption of the Euro and Acceptance of Refugees

Zuzana Scott[1], Lucie Lomičová[1], Jan Šerek[1]

[1] *Psychology Research Institute, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic.*

Corresponding Author: Zuzana Scott, Psychology Research Institute, Masaryk University, Joštova 218/10, Brno, 602 00, Czech Republic. E-mail: scott.zuzana@gmail.com

Abstract

How should political decisions be made to ensure a high level of legitimacy in the eyes of ordinary citizens? In order to answer this question, we conducted six focus groups (N = 29) with adults (20-78 years old). We analyzed data using a thematic analysis, within the essentialist/realist framework and focused on the explicit meanings of the data. Two specific issues were explored: the adoption of the Euro and acceptance of Syrian orphan refugees. The bottom-up analysis revealed that participants considered two strategies of political decision-making (direct vote and representation based) and discussed the pros and cons of each process in detail. The results point out the importance of public deliberation, transparency, and the source of decision-making in evaluating the overall legitimacy of decisions-making process. Further, unlike popular belief that citizens are thirsty for direct democracy our results suggest that people are rather hesitant about placing big decisions into the hands of ordinary citizens, nor do they want to be burdened with making decisions about issues that might not affect them directly. Rather, people described representation-based decisions as legitimate if condition of transparency, deliberation, and trust in politicians is met.

Keywords

Non-Technical Summary

Background

When political decisions are made people can agree or disagree with them, however it is important that people see them as just and are willing to abide by them. In other words, that people see the process of political decision-making as legitimate. When people see elected leaders as legitimate they are generally more likely to trust their judgement on various matters. Thus, it is in the interest of each ruling government to be seen as legitimate. This however has not been the case for many governments across Europe as they face loss of trust and legitimacy by citizens.

Why was this study done?

Our goal was to explore people's views on legitimacy of political decision-making in their own words on two specific topics: one was adoption of Euro, which had been discussed for over a decade; and the second being acceptance of Syrian orphan refugees, which was a hot topic at the time of data collection. Data were collected in the Czech Republic during the fall of 2018. We wanted to find out which strategies of political decision-making people viewed as more legitimate than others and

why. Specifically, by allowing people to speak freely and react to one another in a group discussion (as opposed to giving them a survey with questions) we wanted to explore specific circumstances that contribute to decisions being viewed as more legitimate, hence more acceptable. Lastly, by inquiring about two real-world topics (Euro, refugees) we aimed to explore whether topic in question affects people's preferences for specific political decision-making strategy and why.

What did the researchers do and find?

We conducted six focus groups (group discussions) with adults aged 20-78 years of age. People discussed two main strategies of political decision-making: first one being referendum, a form of a direct vote; second one was a decision by political representation. Regardless of which strategy was used, people wanted decision-making process to be transparent, meaning public and presenting unbiased information. At the same time, people were worried about large amount of information that would surface during this public deliberation and about their own abilities to filter out relevant information and distinguish potential misinformation. Trusting that ordinary citizens will be able to make best informed decision was described as risk factor surrounding referendum. Trusting that politicians would make the decision that is the best for citizens, rather than serving agendas of politicians in power, was the biggest risk factor surrounding decision made by representation. Lastly, people described the two topics of the decision (Euro, refugees) and playing important role in deciding what decision strategy was seen as enhancing legitimacy of that decision. Adopting Euro as a new currency was seen as affecting every single citizen on daily basis, thus people described referendum as more legitimate strategy compared to leaving the decision completely in the hands of politicians. Accepting refugees was seen as more of a humanitarian issue that would not affect people's daily lives and as such should be left in the hands of elected political representatives.

What do these findings mean?

People across all of the groups described public deliberation as a foundation of political decision making. If politicians want to be seen as more legitimate and want people to accept political decisions, they need to provide people with transparent discussion about the topic, invite independent experts into the debate and avoid spreading misinformation. People did not express a great need to take matters into their own hands (in form of more referendums), they just wanted decisions by representation to be more transparent and politicians to be accountable for decisions they make. This pointed out an interesting distinction that people made between government as a system and government as specific people. People trusted the institution of democracy and how it functions, it was individual representatives who can potentially harm the decisions made by representation. Lastly, referendum, as form of direct vote could be appreciated by citizens, if used in instances that directly influence people, whether on large national scale (such as adoption of Euro) or on smaller, local scale. People do however value the political responsibility that comes with decisions made by political representation and referendum should not be used by politicians to get rid of this responsibility.

It is in the interest of each ruling government that the citizens perceive decisions made by such government as just and are willing to abide by them: in other words, that citizens perceive the political decision-making process as legitimate. By legitimacy, we are referring to people's perception that the ruling authority is entitled to its power and their belief that they can rely on and support the decisions made by the government. When people see elected leaders as legitimate they are generally more likely to trust their judgement on various matters. The question then is, how should political decisions be made to satisfy citizens' need for legitimacy? One can argue, and research supports, that outcome favorability plays a crucial role – in other words, it is easy to be on the winning side (Arnesen, 2017; Esaiasson et al., 2019). However, the proponents of the procedural justice approach argue that simple outcome favorability is not the only factor influencing people's willingness to accept a decision. Instead, it is people's perception that the decision was reached in a proper and just way that determines their willingness to accept it. This knowledge is powerful for policy makers as they can strengthen people's acceptance of an alternative that is not in line with people's primary preference.

Simply put, the procedural justice approach highlights the importance of perceived fairness of the process and one's treatment during the decision-making process. The distributive justice approach focuses instead on the outcomes, i.e. whether the final decisions are perceived as fair. Social exchange theory focuses on whether the decisions are perceived as favorable (in the sense of self-interest or group-interest). Each of the approaches has been studied in depth and has unveiled a number of conditions under which either procedural factors or distributive factors played a bigger role

in people's evaluation of legitimacy of a particular decision. However, there is no simple answer for what matters to people more when evaluating the legitimacy of decision-making. Some recent experimental findings pointed out the importance of outcome favorability as the main explanatory factor for people's willingness to accept a collective decision (e.g. Arnesen, 2017; Christensen et al., 2020; Esaiasson et al., 2019). At the same time, other experimental findings concluded that it is procedural arrangements that affect people's perceptions of legitimacy of political decision-making, such as personal involvement (in the form of direct vote), perceptions of fair treatment, and presence of public deliberation (de Fine Licht et al., 2014; Esaiasson et al., 2012; Gilljam et al., 2010). Further, experimental study carried out in Germany by Towfigh and colleagues (2016) showed that people's level of acceptance of decisions derived from direct or representative democratic procedures was dependent on the relevance of the issue (direct vote produced greater acceptance than representation-based decision for issues that were important to respondents).

It is perhaps the unique combination of these factors that together affects individuals' overall evaluation of the decision-making process. In this paper, we aim to contribute to the discussion on the importance of various facets of procedural justice. In order to penetrate beyond the barrier of survey and experimental data, we employed a qualitative perspective and used focus groups to inquire about lay people's perceptions of legitimate political decision-making process. Culturally, the study took place in the Czech Republic and focused on an adult population. Our aim was to explore what qualities of the decision- making process are important to people and whether these qualities differ in the context of two specific topics: the long-discussed adoption of the Euro as the official currency and a topic relevant at the time of data collection on the acceptance of Syrian orphan refugees.

Components of Procedural Justice

In order to provide deeper understanding of a simple question of "But what do people mean when they say a process is fair or unfair?" Blader and Tyler (2003, p. 747) argued that the overall legitimacy of a given decision is affected by four types of concerns (components) people use to judge process fairness. These four components are created by the intersection of two dimensions.

The first dimension deals with procedural function and identifies two procedural aspects affecting people's evaluation of the legitimacy of decision-making: the quality of the decision-making and the quality of the treatment. The former refers to people's belief that decisions are unbiased, that rules and procedures apply consistently across situations (neutrality), and that people have a voice in the decision-making process. The latter refers to people's evaluation of the social atmosphere of the group or situation, meaning people's belief that they were treated with respect and dignity during the decision-making process. The second dimension focuses on the procedural source and identifies two basic sources of fairness: the policies, rules and norms of the group as a whole and the actions of particular representatives of the group. The former refers to an authority aligned to an institution (institutional legitimacy) and the latter to the authority that is linked to a person (personal legitimacy, Rasinski et al., 1985).

The intersection of these two dimensions then forms the four-component model of procedural justice: (a) evaluations of formal rules and policies related to how decisions are made in the group (formal decision making); (b) evaluations of formal rules and policies that influence how group members are treated (formal quality of treatment); (c) evaluations of how particular group authorities make decisions (informal decision making); and (d) evaluations of how particular group authorities treat group members (informal quality of treatment; Blader & Tyler, 2003, p. 749).

The aforementioned study highlighted the importance of the source of justice and showed that people's judgements are affected by rules and norms separately, as well as by specific representatives or authorities imposing these rules. However, in order to create a more complete picture of factors influencing whether people view decisions as fair, we need to consider the possibility of personal involvement in decision making (e.g. Esaiasson et al., 2012) and the importance of public deliberation (de Fine Licht et al., 2014).

Direct-Vote and Representation-Based Decision-Making as Sources of Legitimacy

People can use several ways to take part in political decision-making. The most straightforward form of personal involvement is the direct majoritarian vote (i.e. referendum). In practice, however, decision-making by elected repre-

sentation or expert decision-making is much more commonly used. Researchers have attempted to capture people's preference for each of these common democratic practices, but the findings are far from unanimous.

In a controlled field experiment, Olken (2010) found that Indonesian villagers who had an option to choose a specific development project for their village through direct vote (plebiscites) showed greater satisfaction and perceived legitimacy of the decision than when village representatives made the decision. Similarly, in an experimental study, Esaiasson et al. (2012) found that personal involvement through direct voting substantially increased participants' legitimacy beliefs. The authors further pointed out that participants evaluated the procedural fairness of representational decisions as worse compared to expert decision-making. Persson and colleagues (2013) found that both direct vote and deliberation generated stronger legitimacy, with direct vote being a stronger generator. From these studies, it may seem that direct vote is the omnipotent tool to ensure citizens' greater legitimacy beliefs, at least compared to representation-based decisions. This line of reasoning make sense from the perspective of direct democracy, as it gives voters the option to bypass the representatives and institutions (Matsusaka, 2005), especially if they are viewed as elite or corrupt.

However, some authors have pointed out that actual use of direct vote might not yield such straightforward results. In their study with Belgian adults, Marien and Kern (2018) found that although the political trust strengthened after a referendum took place, it happened only among those who actually voted and that perceived fairness or perceived influence over the decision did not play a mediating role. Further, the change in political trust happened only among those who were on the winning side. Bauer's and Fatke's (2014) Swiss study focused specifically on the idea that availability of and the actual use of direct vote might be related to political trust differently. Authors found that while the availability of direct vote rights was related to political trust positively, the actual use of direct democratic instruments was related to political trust negatively, assuming that the need to correct or oversee political authorities signals that the authorities might not act with citizens' best interests in mind.

Further, it seems important to consider people's views on various topics and investigate how topic relevance affects perceived legitimacy. Towfigh and colleagues (2016) addressed this issue and found that people's preference for direct involvement (referendum) was greater when the issue in question was more important for voters, while decisions by intermediaries (political parties or expert-based) were preferred for low-importance, everyday issues. In similar vein, in order to investigate the role of threat on legitimacy, Šerek and colleagues (2022) manipulated the level of perceived threat and found that the effect of public deliberation and direct democracy on legitimacy were positive, but unlike authors' expectations, the effects were also rather stable. Their exploratory analysis brought up the intraindividual differences in legitimizing effects of public deliberation and direct vote: legitimacy beliefs of people with high RWA (right-wing authoritarianism) or low political interest were less affected when public deliberation was lacking while people with low political alienation or high political interest were less affected by the lack of direct vote.

Other authors questioned the proclaimed effect of direct vote on legitimacy from methodological perspective and argued that "the only reason it appears the people want to get more involved in politics is that survey items (including ours) generally force them to make a tradeoff between elected elite control and popular control" (Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2002, p. 88). In her studies, Bengtsson (2012) addressed the proposed shortcomings of survey data and tested people's preferences for representative, expert and participatory decision-making. Based on her findings she called for use of items that "go beyond the model with simple (and provocatively phrased) statements and instead provide respondents with more and balanced information concerning the procedures that are of interest" (p. 62). By implementing more detailed items, she was able to identify belief patterns among the participants and found that citizens' perceptions of their role in decision-making seems to be a divisive element, identifying groups that are "strongly in favor of greater citizen involvement, while others prefer anything but that" (p. 62). In another study, Bengtsson and Christensen (2016) tested whether these preferences align with people's conceptions of how democracy should work. Results suggested that people who believed in representative democracy were also people who were more likely to vote and participate in activities close to traditional politics. Those with beliefs closer to participatory democracy were more likely to participate in both institutionalized and non-institutionalized activities, and the effect on voting was insignificant, suggesting low enthusiasm for voting and preference for a more direct form of participation.

It is not surprising to find that people hold various preferences for participatory or representative democracy procedures. In order to understand why the preferences differ we need to consider other mechanisms that affect people's evaluation of the decision-making process, such as public deliberation and transparency.

Public Deliberation and Transparency as Sources of Legitimacy

According to deliberative democratic theorists, citizens do not necessarily have to take part in decision-making themselves (i.e. direct vote) in order to perceive the process as legitimate. Rather, the presence of public deliberation, meaning respectful and rational argumentation about alternatives, can increase people's understanding of and tolerance for opinions and alternatives that are not their primary preference. As such, deliberative mechanisms can increase people's willingness to accept the decision and enhance the perceived legitimacy of decision-making process. However, empirical evidence for such a claim is ambiguous. While some authors found support for the positive impact of public deliberation on perceived legitimacy (Persson et al., 2013), others reported more complex mechanisms under which deliberation brings or does not bring positive outcomes. For example, Christensen et al. (2020) reported that the direct effect of justifications made by decision-makers was negligible for participants and pointed out that an indirect negative effect can occur when people do not get their preferred outcome and receive general, rather than specific, justifications from decision-makers.

Other studies focused on the function of deliberative mechanisms through the effects of transparency in decision-making. de Fine Licht et al. (2014) looked closely at conditions under which different levels of transparency evoked greater legitimacy beliefs about representative decision-making among high school students, using Mansbridge's (2009) distinction between transparency in rationale and transparency in process. The former refers to information given about facts and reasons on which the decision is based and is often aimed at the audience that is affected by the decision but was not involved in the decision-making process. The latter constitutes a higher form of transparency as it involves information on actions involved in the decision-making process, such as deliberations, negotiations, and votes, either in real-time or in retrospect. De Fine Licht et al. (2014) concluded that transparency did indeed improve legitimacy beliefs among their participants, highlighting the effect of transparency in rationale, often considered as a modest form of transparency in contrast to transparency in process. The authors, however, warned that their findings were highly context dependent and future research is needed on the effects of various levels of transparency on broader types of social and moral issues.

The Present Study

The overall goal of this study was to explore how adults think about political decision-making (in our case, adoption of the Euro and acceptance of Syrian orphan refugees) and its legitimacy. We did not want to measure the level of agreement with pre-defined statements about political legitimacy (cf. Bengtsson, 2012) but rather explore what qualities of the decision-making process or actors are important to people and why, in their own words. Given the ambiguous findings in previous research about the deliberative, participatory, and representative democratic procedures, we conducted an exploratory qualitative study. We built on the assumption that people evaluate political legitimacy based on subjective criteria. These criteria carry different weights among people and are potentially subject to change depending on the subject of decision-making (topic relevance). Further, we wanted participants to have the opportunity to both give and receive feedback from others and to be an audience for each other; thus, we opted for focus groups for data collection. Our research questions were the following:

> RQ1: What qualities enhance or hinder the perceived legitimacy of decision-making among adults
> (in the Czech Republic)?
>
> RQ2: Do these qualities change based on the topic of the decision itself?

Both the socio-political context of the country and the topic of the decision itself play important roles in how people view and evaluate a decision-making process and its legitimacy hence a brief introduction of both follows. The Czech Republic is a central European parliamentary democracy and a member of the European Union (since 2004). Compared

to other post-communist countries, the system of political parties was relatively stable and structured around the left-right dimension in the first two decades after the end of communism. In the last decade, however, the country has witnessed a growing success of newly established populist parties, one of them becoming the leading government party from 2017 to 2021 (e.g., Voda & Havlík, 2021). Although this development is in line with recent illiberal tendencies in the 'Visegrad' countries, the populist discourse is more technocratic than ideological and its practical impact through illiberal policies is less pronounced in the Czech Republic than in countries such as Hungary or Poland (Havlík & Hloušek, 2021).

We decided to inquire about the adoption of the Euro because it has been in the background of political debate for over a decade. We wanted participants to feel invested in the issue and the topic to be broad enough to affect all participants. During the presidency of Václav Klaus (2003-2013), the Czech Republic could be characterized as Eurosceptic, an attitude that is slowly diminishing as the popularity of the former president wanes (Miller, 2017). However, the current government is rather noncommittal about the adoption of the Euro and keeps postponing decision-making on the topic, mirroring the overall attitude among the Czech people (about 70% of people reported that adopting the Euro would be bad for the country, Kersan-Škabić, 2019). We selected the second topic as representing a more emotionally charged dilemma, and we wanted it to be a real-life issue. At the time of data collection (fall of 2018), the idea of offering asylum to 50 Syrian orphans from refugee camps became one of the surprising topics to dominate media and political debate, creating division between strong proponents and strong opponents. This can be explained by prevailing neutral to negative attitudes toward immigrants across society (e.g. Scott et al., 2019) despite the fact that the Czech Republic remains a relatively homogeneous country, compared to neighboring Germany or Austria (Heath & Richards, 2019). We discuss the potential limitations that come with the selection of these topics in the Discussion section.

Method

Participants and Interviewers

We conducted six focus groups with 29 respondents assigned to one of three groups based on age (2 groups for each young adults: 20-34 years of age; middle-aged: 35-59 years of age; older adults: 60-78 years of age; M = 45.93, SD = 18.18). We held no prior assumptions about possible age differences, but we grouped the people based on a belief that shared generational experience could facilitate group interactions. The majority of respondents (25 out of 29) voted in the last parliamentary elections, but only one respondent indicated an affiliation with a political party.

Data were collected during the months of September and October in 2018. To recruit participants, we employed multi-staged purposeful random sampling (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007). First, we recruited participants via either online advertising or promotion of the research through personal contacts and snowballing. Later, we divided participants into groups based on their age, gender, size of the place of living, and political preferences to ensure variability in each group. We attempted to create an information-rich sample that would provide opportunities to explore topics from various perspectives, rather than a sample that would simply represent the country's population. The final sample included 14 females; the majority (23) of the respondents were residents of a large city (100,000+ residents), 14 had finished high school, and 15 had finished some form of higher education, 12 were employed or self-employed, 3 were caring for a child/relative, 3 were students, 8 were retired and 3 were unemployed.

Three researchers conducted the focus groups, always as a team of two, based on availability. The second author of the study was present at all six focus groups. All moderators were female and in their late 20s or early 30s. The second author of the study acted as the main moderator. She is of Czech nationality, holding strong pro-democratic values, actively volunteering and encouraging active citizenship among others, but is politically inactive. All interviewers were trained in conducting focus groups and did not reveal their personal preferences on the issues discussed to avoid influencing the participants.

PsychOpen GOLD

Procedure and Research Methodology

Participation in the research was voluntary and all respondents signed informed consent. Each focus group took 90 minutes and included an introduction section where we informed participants of the research goal, procedures for group discussion, and the voluntary nature of their responses. We also explained that we would audio and video record the sessions for transcripts and anonymize the entire data set.

At the beginning, we introduced respondents to a hypothetical scenario where the Czech Republic should decide whether to adopt the Euro as currency (*"Imagine that the issue of adopting the Euro becomes a current topic for the Czech Republic. According to you, how should the decision be made about whether to convert to the Euro or stay with the Czech koruna?"*). We asked participants to discuss their perspectives on how this decision should be reached, probing about who should be involved, what the process should entail for them to accept the final decision, and whether they would consider the described process to be democratic. During the second half of the focus groups, we recalled a real-life example where the Czech Republic faced the question of whether to accept fifty Syrian orphan refugees (*"Recently, the Czech Republic faced a decision of whether to accept fifty Syrian orphans from a refugee camp. According to you, how should such a decision be made?"*). We purposefully omitted the word legitimacy/legitimate from all our questions, as we wanted the participants to discuss the decision-making process freely and in their own words.

All discussions were transcribed verbatim and anonymized. The data drove the process of inductive thematic analysis: first, getting familiar with the data through multiple readings of the transcripts; second, generating initial codes to highlight topics in the data; third, grouping the codes into categories and searching for recurring themes; fourth reviewing the emergent themes; fifth defining and naming the themes; and finally, producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun & Clarke, 2013). We were interested in experiences, meanings and reality as seen by participants; thus, we conducted the analysis from an essentialist/realist theoretical framework perspective and identified the themes at the semantic level. To increase the validity and credibility of the findings, both first and second authors of the study were involved in all stages of the analysis, first independently and later in cooperation from stage three forward.

Results

Across all focus groups, people identified two specific forms of decision-making, one being a direct vote (i.e. referendum) and the second being a decision made by elected representatives. Participants elaborated the pros and cons of each process in an attempt to identify conditions under which they would consider the decision to be the most legitimate. We were able to identify four themes as factoring in the legitimacy of decision-making: participants' *need for public discussion and unbiased information* as a prerequisite to either form of decision-making; *people's vulnerability to mis-/dis-information;* as well as *questionable trust in political representation*; lastly the *shift in reasoning about the legitimacy based on topic relevance.*

Need for Public Discussion and Unbiased Information

Respondents across all groups mentioned that public discussion should precede any decision made. They ascribed several key characteristics to the discussion in order to perceive the decision derived as legitimate. Most important was the presence of *both sides of the argument* in the discussion.

> P6: *"There should definitely be some kind of larger analysis beforehand [decision made]. Talks on the television, in the newspaper, basically explaining to ordinary people what saying yes will mean and what saying no will mean…just like it was before joining the EU, when it was sufficiently expressed what both options meant."* (F[1],40[2],FG2)

---

1) F = female, M = male

2) Age

Respondents expected to hear *unbiased, complex* information about what the decision would entail, what the *prognosis and consequences* of each option meant for citizens in the end.

> P20: *"All the experts should lay out the numbers about what [the decision] will bring, all the areas, and comparisons for when we do adopt the Euro and when we do not."* (F,64,FG4)

Second, the discussion should be *transparent*, meaning that the information should be available for and presented to the public.

> P27: *"I don't think it's possible [to make a decision] without a broader information campaign because if the decision were to happen behind somewhat closed doors, even with some information leaking out [to the public], the acceptance of such decision would be low, regardless of what the decision would be. I believe that an intensive information campaign would contribute to greater acceptance of the decision."* (M,34,FG6)

In three groups, respondents specifically discussed the *importance of the timing* of public deliberation – emphasizing that enough time needed to be provided so people could process the information and have time to form opinions.

> P11: *"I'm not saying that fourteen days is sufficient time, that would be really rushed, but for example half a year seems normal for people to form an opinion, research information, and also to observe whether the people are changing their opinions, affected by the discussion, that's the question."* (M,27,FG3)

Participants across groups clearly outlined who should provide the information to the public: in all groups, they mentioned *independent experts* (e.g. in the case of the Euro: economists from various areas, sociologists, and universities in general; in the case of the refugees: NGOs, social workers, foreign police). Participants also mentioned *political parties* as sources of information (to inform their voters on the party's perspective on the issue) and various *media,* most commonly television, newspaper, and the internet.

How the public deliberation should happen and what the actual outcome would be did not necessarily align. People discussed various factors affecting the final decision, whether reached by direct vote or by representation. In the two themes that follow, we discuss these factors, which many participants described as worries.

People's Vulnerability to Mis-/Dis-Information

Participants expressed *worry over navigating a large amount of information and filtering what was relevant*, especially when discussing direct vote as a possible strategy. Many participants expected information to be contradictory, making it hard for ordinary people to form opinions. Namely, they questioned the *ability of the public to process information* and recognize possible mis-/dis-information that would most likely spread via media. Further, some participants pointed out their inability to understand the complexity of an issue and wondered how many other people might feel the same way or be *genuinely uninterested* in the issue at all:

> P19: *"I think it is an illusion that we would have enough information, that we could make a rational decision. It's a game... one person is saying this is important information and the other the opposite. I don't have any illusion that I would be able to understand or absorb enough information to make a decision on my own."* (M,61,FG4)

Most of the participants were unsure how to avoid the spread of possible dis-/mis-information and concluded that it is the *responsibility of each citizen* to search for relevant and unbiased information. This, however, was seen as a rare ability and people anticipated that not everyone is willing (or capable) to dedicate their time to research.

> P14: *"Being informed is important. On one hand, everyone is responsible for themselves, so everyone searches the information based on what is closer to them. We live in a society where information is widely available; people should be able to filter out what they agree and disagree with."* (F,23)

> *P13: "...but not everyone can find that information, even if they want to...In the ideal universe, people would have enough background to study and make their own decision, but we don't live in such a universe. There are manipulators and just information that is incorrect or taken out of context. So for a regular person who is not an expert, it is hard to find the ground and decide who is telling the truth." (F,30)*

> *P14: "If I may, I agree about the manipulators and populist talk, but we also have to consider that a lot of people don't even want to find out more about [the topic] ...and I think that's the problem if we wanted to have a popular referendum. Because the background information and discussion, that's all a great idea, but it's very hard to believe that people would actually want to listen, would want to find out more about it to make the best decision possible." (FG3)*

Since the most significant concern was how laypeople would navigate the flow of information, some respondents provided suggestions to conduct *preparation courses* or administer consent forms to citizens before they cast their votes, stating that they had read sufficiently about the issue. However, it is important to note that these suggestions were rare (presented in two groups), and others questioned their feasibility.

> *P11: "What could happen is that when a person wants to vote, there will be a compulsory preparation course...as a requirement for voting. And the person decides for himself if it is worth their time and so on, and there will be a test at the end to see if people paid attention and got the main ideas. And if they fail, then I'm sorry, but you are "dumb" [quotes expressed by respondent] enough that you don't have the right to vote." (M,27,FG3)*

Questionable Trust in Political Representation

We detected two ways in which people discussed political representation – one being related to democratic establishment (i.e., majority rule, democratic elections) and the other to specific political representatives (i.e., the incumbent government, prime minister). From the first perspective, people described representation-based decision-making as "safer" than a referendum overall, but safety represented different things to different people. Participants in all focus groups emphasized the *political responsibility* for making decisions, meaning that people have the power to vote representatives out if they are not satisfied with their work. Participants discussed *politicians' access to resources* to make more informed decisions than most ordinary citizens can make. Each party is *tied to its political program,* thus providing a general idea about where a particular party stands on important issues.

At the same time, people also questioned the justice of representation-based decision-making. A few people raised a concern about the overall idea of *representation*; if an individual's preferred political party (or specific politician) is not sitting in the parliament[3] then who is representing that individual's views? Further, some people were skeptical about whether it is possible to have a political representation that aligns with one's opinion on all the issues.

> *P14: "Well I think the system we have, like Plato said, basically democracy is the least bad way of decision-making. It has, of course, its flaws...but nobody came up with anything that would make me say it's better. I think I have...yes I can say I have trust in it...it is my responsibility. I elected [politicians], it is my responsibility whom I elect, and then yes, over the course of four-five years it can happen that I think I made a mistake and I have a chance to change it." (F,23)*

> *P13: "But then there are people who really did vote, they wanted someone [in parliament] and that someone didn't make it there. And then I have nobody to identify with. I understand that it is a democracy, but you said 'I elected the people there, so I have to accept the decision' but what if it's people that I didn't elect? ...And the second thing is that there is never someone in politics with whom you can identify on opinions 100%." (F,30, FG3)*

---

3) Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic.

With the aforementioned concerns in mind, participants discussed several ideas that would contribute to their greater willingness to accept the final decision by representation. Commonly discussed was the idea of raising a simple majority vote (49:51 ratio) to a so-called *'constitutional majority'* vote[4].

> P1: *"For me personally to trust the political decision [to be representative] it probably shouldn't be a simple majority system. They are always competing for that one extra vote. [The final decision] should be decided by some bigger ratio in cooperation with the Senate. I'm not sure exactly how to phrase it, but something like a constitutional majority, to make the ratio slightly bigger."* (M,33,FG1)

Another condition that participants discussed as ensuring greater legitimacy was for the decision to be reached *transparently and be informed by expert opinions*. It is important to note that in neither group did people place the decision completely in the hands of experts, but rather considered experts as guides to political representatives, who will ultimately make the decision and accept the consequences.

> P19: *"First of all, we have a political system here. It's not true that the experts should make the decision. They don't carry any responsibility...they should decide this in the parliament."* (M,61,FG4)

When participants talked about representation-based decision-making, they pointed out several worries, linked to either specific politicians (e.g. prime minister at the time) or politicians as people in general. Specifically, people questioned the *motivation of politicians behind the information* presented to the public and worried about politicians following their personal economic interests by pushing their personal agendas or collecting political points by fearmongering, especially targeting vulnerable populations (e.g. senior citizens).

> P7: *"If there wasn't a referendum, the decision-making would be more political than when people vote [directly]. The party with the advantage would promote its interests, ...even if its arguments would not be acceptable to the public, as opposed to parties who don't have such a strong representation in government. For example, I vote for one party but disagree with their position toward the Euro, and I would vote against them, in a referendum."* (F,45)

> P9: *"As you are saying this, I'm thinking that if we have the referendum, I am absolutely certain that just like us here who cannot decide whether [a certain decision] is good or bad, there are people like our prime minister who have it very well calculated and know what would benefit them and what wouldn't. And then we have a referendum about it, with an information campaign; now imagine what impact the prime minister's interests would have, what arsenal he has at disposal to push his agenda, not just as prime minister but as the media owner. The impact would be significant, I think."* (M,47,FG2)

The participants agreed strongly that the political decisions should be made with citizens' best interests in mind rather than questionable political motives. To ensure this, some people discussed the idea of *moral values* that politicians should have and the possibility of applying specific rules for politicians. One respondent named it "codex of a politician" to ensure that people who enter national politics have experience at the local level and stand up to specific moral standards.

> P18: *"The problem is that there are no rules in politics. These days, if you want to enter politics and you have enough money you can enter. If you want to manage a company, you need education, experience, and so forth. Today if you want to run for president, you might succeed if you are a strong media personality and will make a good campaign. There should be such a thing as what I call the codex of a politician. It means I can vote from 18 years of age, ok, so I can run from let's say 21 years of age,*

---

4) Qualified majority refers to an agreement of more than 60% (that is 3/5) of elected deputies and senators. According to Czech law, it is required to reach the agreement of 60% of the deputies (120 out of 200 sitting in the parliament) and 60% of present senators to pass new or change current constitutional laws; hence sometimes referred to as 'constitutional majority'.

and first I should run in local politics…basically some rules, so people who enter politics have some accomplishments behind themselves." (M,66,FG4)

Overall, the vast majority of participants trusted the political system per se but at the same time expressed worries over how specific politicians handle their roles and what motives drive their actions. We detected a repeated desire to set limits on popular sovereignty by 1) greater transparency, which would help hold politicians accountable and monitor their stands on the issue, and 2) by implementing measures that are superior to the majority vote, such as the qualified majority rule (60% or more), especially when deciding important issues (i.e. adoption of the Euro).

The Shift in Reasoning About Legitimacy Based on Topic Relevance

Given the distinct nature of the topics we inquired about, we were able to identify specific differences in people's preferences and concerns. The most commonly pronounced one was the almost unanimous rejection of a referendum in the case of accepting Syrian orphan refugees. People clearly stated that putting such an issue in the hands of ordinary citizens brings more risks than benefits. Specifically, people worried about a tainted campaign that would aim at people's *emotions rather than facts*. Further, some people pointed out the clear link between a referendum and (lack of) *political responsibility* on the part of elected representation.

> *P17: "That would end up terribly; I can imagine it, how disgusting the campaign would be…"* (F,72)

> *P18: "Because the emotions would rise around the referendum. Because we don't have rational information, it would all be emotions and hysteria. I think that we wouldn't need a referendum for this. Because politicians are stripping off the responsibility and are shifting it onto ordinary people."* (M,66,FG4)

Several participants made a clear argument for when a direct vote is not an appropriate strategy; they pointed out a link between citizens' involvement and citizens being *directly affected by the decision*. In the case of the Euro, more people considered a referendum to be a legitimate strategy, because at the end of the day, all people will have to use the new currency, and it will affect people's daily lives. While in the case of refugees, this was not seen as a decision that affects everybody and the impact on ordinary people and their everyday lives would be negligible. An example of when a direct vote would be desirable included local affairs, such as local (town) infrastructure changes.

> *P5: "[Accepting orphan refugees] should be decided by politicians; in this case a referendum is not the right choice; politicians should decide this. Of course, they need to gather more information from people who understand the issue. Because it's not something that affects each and every person, it won't influence our lives. Whether I pay with Euro or with the Czech koruna that's something everyone will see, but whether we have fifty Syrian refugees, I don't know whether we would notice a difference; I think we wouldn't."* (F,20,FG1)

Some participants viewed the *referendum as a waste of resources* if there was already an outlined procedure of how to deal with the issue (i.e., refugees). These people did not want to be involved in any decision-making. They stated that the country should rely on already established international agreements and the legal procedures of foreign police and the ministry of foreign affairs. While people were less skeptical about representation-based decisions in the case of refugees, they still questioned whether the decision by politicians would be in the best interest of citizens, or of the refugees themselves, and whether this emotionally charged topic would be used to *collect political points*. People rejected the idea of politicizing a decision that is by its nature humanitarian.

> *P23: "The joke of this [accepting orphan refugees] is that there are certain laws, in each country, and we have to abide by them. That means if someone wants to bring this issue up, they have to know whether it is even possible to accept some orphans. This whole thing potentially brought up some political fight, but if it is not possible to retrieve orphans from this country then, the whole debate is about nothing; it's just simply not possible."* (M,72,FG5)

Overall, we could see a clear shift in people's evaluation of the two decision-making strategies depending on the topic. Both strategies were put under scrutiny; however, a direct vote was rejected almost unanimously in the case of accepting refugees. This was mainly because people expected emotions might drive other people's decisions rather than reason. Further, people believed that political representatives should use existing procedures rather than burden citizens with decision-making and avoid responsibility. The scale of the topic also played a role: people discussed the use of a referendum to voice their opinion on the Euro, since it would affect everybody's' day-to-day living; however, in the case of refugees, the scale of the decision was seen as negligible in the context of the whole nation.

Discussion

We conducted this study to find out what enhances or hinders people's perceptions of political decision-making as legitimate, specifically related to two topics we chose: adoption of the Euro and acceptance of orphan refugees. The qualitative nature of the research allowed people to speak freely about two prominent strategies, direct vote (i.e., referendum) and decision by political representation. The themes we identified pointed to two main factors affecting the final decision's legitimacy: first, the qualities of public deliberation, and second, the level of trust in the actors involved in the decision-making (political representatives and citizens themselves). The role of public deliberation has been shown to enhance legitimacy (Persson et al., 2013). Our findings further highlight the importance of transparency in political decision-making (de Fine Licht et al., 2014). The consideration of competencies, motivations, and trust in actors involved in decision-making makes our findings unique and might help shed light on some ambiguous findings of previous research. Lastly, our study supports the need to consider the topic relevance (de Fine Licht et al., 2014; Šerek et al., 2022; Towfigh et al., 2016), as people's preferences for various strategies were related to the topic in question.

Whether people discussed direct voting or decision by representation, the common denominator enhancing legitimacy was the presence of proper deliberation. People wanted clear, factual and unbiased information about alternatives from various perspectives. Similar to Christensen et al. (2020), our results pointed out that people's perception of legitimacy is enhanced if deliberation includes experts, rather than political representatives deciding on their own. One of the key qualities of deliberation that people discussed across all groups was transparency. People did not express the desire to participate actively in the deliberation, but as an audience, they wanted to have access to information, whether in real-time or in retrospect. It is not surprising that we found support for transparency enhancing legitimacy since "from a democratic viewpoint, legitimacy of the political system often stems from input, that is from the procedures preceding decisions, which clearly speaks in favor of transparency, as it facilitates public insight, input, and reaction." (de Fine Licht & Naurin, 2016, p. 218). Our findings further support the idea that the effects of transparency in decision-making are topic dependent (de Fine Licht et al., 2014). In the case of adopting the Euro, participants more often desired deliberation to precede the decision, hence, what resembled transparency in the process. This was true whether the decision was reached by representatives or by people in a referendum. In the case of refugees, people more often discussed the need for a clear set of rules on which the decision should be based (i.e., reliance on pre-existing international agreements, asylum policies, etc.), supporting the need for transparency in the rationale. Although the distinction between each type of transparency in each scenario was not straightforward, we were able to detect the need for insight into the decision-making process and link it to an increased level of perceived legitimacy of the final decision.

It is interesting to note that if people questioned the quality of the deliberation, they mostly cited cognitive factors, such as complexity, counterarguments, and possible manipulation of facts. Unlike in some of the experimental studies, we did not find support for an emotional/relational aspect of quality of treatment. The first possible explanation stems from the circumstances of decision-making. It seems reasonable to ask participants how they perceived their individual treatment when they were directly involved in the process, such as in the aforementioned experimental studies with students or village residents (Olken, 2010). However, in our research, people might not have thought of themselves as active participants in deliberation. Instead, they described themselves as spectators, and when they discussed the quality of treatment, they referred to what Blader and Tyler (2003) labeled formal and informal quality of treatment. By the informal quality of treatment, we mean people's references to whether politicians consider the needs of people

and what is best for them. By the formal quality of treatment, we mean people's references to having clear set of rules outlined before the decision is made – e.g. reference to qualified majority of the vote vs. simple majority vote. The second explanation stems from the unique nature of the research – our study is qualitative and builds on an essentialist/realist theoretical framework: hence, if people did not mention a particular aspect of deliberation, in this case their involvement and perceived treatment in public deliberation, we did not specifically inquire about it.

The path from deliberation to legitimacy was not straightforward. When deliberation was perceived as corrupted, the legitimacy of decisions derived from either democratic process also was perceived as tainted. This was when the importance of the actors involved in deliberation (as sources and as recipients) and subsequently decision-making came to forefront of the discussion. As Blader and Tyler (2003) highlighted the importance of distinguishing between regime and the authorities, so did our respondents. Overall, people seemed to trust the institution of government (and sometimes explicitly mentioned the entire democratic establishment) and commented that representation-based decisions and direct voting are both democratic processes. However, they often questioned the motivation of individual politicians as representatives of the system or the abilities of other fellow citizens to make informed decisions. In their study on the effects of direct democracy on political trust, Bauer and Fatke (2014) found that the availability of direct democratic rights had positive effect on political trust, while extensive use of these rights affected political trust negatively. The authors then discussed potential causal explanations and argued that it might well be existing low levels of political trust that stand behind the found negative association. When people seek the use of direct vote, it is likely an expression of distrust that elected officials will do the best for the citizens; hence citizens want to take control of the decision. Our findings resemble these in that people generally appreciated the opportunity for a referendum, as it provides space for people to express their opinion and gives citizens agency. However, people's trust in the actual process of direct voting was affected negatively by many factors. In relation to political representation, the most prominent was fear of populism tainting the pre-referendum campaign and politicians following their own interests rather than being focusing on what is good for the public. Concerning people themselves, it was the worry about the ability of ordinary people to filter out possible mis-/dis-information and people's worry about unwillingness to navigate through the avalanche of information that would surface during the campaign. As such, both direct and representative processes were put under scrutiny. Both highlighted the importance of political trust: in the case of representation-based decisions more directly (questioning the motives of politicians) and in the case of referendum indirectly (politicians influencing the campaign). Further, the direct vote also brought up the broader issue of social trust, trust in other fellow citizens and their motivation to make an informed decision. Although people did not reach a unanimous agreement about which process generates greater legitimacy, a decision by representation seemed to be an advantage because it carried political responsibility.

There is a potential underlying psychological explanation for the preference for representation-based decision-making. When people are dissatisfied with a decision made by representation, they can easily assign the blame to a specific party or specific people. Borrowing from the model of approach coping with collective disadvantage (van Zomeren et al., 2012), if people assign the blame for disadvantage to an external party and identify with the group at disadvantage, their coping mechanism might result in a need for action, in our case, motivation to "punish" the decision-makers by voting them out of office. From this perspective, coping with an unwanted outcome seems more difficult when the method of decision-making is a direct vote involving unknown people and offering no opportunity for retribution.

Our findings further highlight the topic relevance when discussing legitimacy. We were able to identify specific characteristics of the two topics that might explain the switch in reasoning about the legitimacy of the direct vs representative democratic process. Adoption of the Euro was viewed as important since it would affect all citizens. Thus, the divide between proponents of a referendum and those favoring a representation-based decision was greater than when discussing the refugees. While the concerns about the deliberation remained, proponents of a direct vote valued the opportunity to participate in decision-making directly, especially those who did not feel represented by the current government. At this point, we can only speculate whether other personal level variables that come into play, such as the level of political interest or alienation. It is possible that people who prefer direct involvement are also more interested in politics, hence feel more confident about making decisions or feel more alienated from politics and want to take decision-making on important matters into their own hands (cf. Šerek et al., 2022). In the case of the refugees, people named several aspects of the topic that led to the complete rejection of direct voting. First, most people did not feel that

they would be personally affected by the issue and described the potential referendum as a burden, a waste of resources, and the representatives managing to avoid political responsibility. Next, people saw the topic as emotionally charged and worried that if the decision were left in the hands of citizens, deliberation would be emotionally charged and could divide the country. Lastly, some people viewed the topic as a humanitarian issue falling under pre-existing laws and international agreements. In sum, people did not want to be burdened by deciding on a topic that would not affect them directly, especially when seeing the potential for representatives collecting political points by stirring the debate on the topic with a pre-outlined solution or by toying with people's emotions.

Limitations

Our study bears limitations traditionally associated with qualitative studies. First, although focus groups provided the opportunity to explore in depth the topic of legitimacy in decision-making, the method is restricted by its external validity, and the results need to be interpreted within the given context. It is possible that higher levels of Euroscepticism and populist government in charge affected people's perceptions of two decision-making strategies. With that in mind, we see the parallel between our findings and two studies from other European countries: the German study by Towfigh et al. (2016) on topic relevance (preference for direct vote if the topic is seen as very important to participants) and the Swiss study by Bauer and Fatke (2014) on availability vs use of direct vote (use of direct vote might be seen as means of shedding political responsibility). Future cross-national studies could shed more light on the distinction between psychological and socio-political factors affecting legitimacy of political decision-making.

Next, we tried to create diverse groups of participants to stimulate the debate, including people with various socio-economic backgrounds and political orientations. However, the sample was somewhat homogeneous in that we did not include members of ethnic minorities (this was not an active exclusion but rather the result of a lack of response from minority members). Next, we need to consider the selection of topics we inquired about – both issues (Euro, refugees) are controversial topics in Czech society. This might have served our research "as a gift and as a curse"; people were opinionated on both issues and willing to share, however, they often drifted off-topic and discussed aspects of the issues that were not in the scope of our research question. This was when we had to bring participants back onto the topic of decision-making and probe more about how they think decisions should be made. It is possible that these repeated questions led participants to some creative solutions, such as offering preparation courses before a referendum.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Our participants described deliberation as a foundation of political decision-making. Public deliberation that is transparent, includes experts, and avoids mis-/dis-information has been described as the most powerful tool politicians have to enhance the legitimacy of decision-making. Overall, our findings follow the path outlined by Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002). They argued that a decline in the perceived legitimacy of political decision-making is not necessarily an expression of people's thirst for more direct democracy but rather people's need for representative democracy to function better. We found support for this line of reasoning in many concerns that people laid out about representation-based decision-making, while most still concluded that it is the best form of decision-making we have, further highlighting the need for differentiation between the system and the representatives (Blader & Tyler, 2003). While few people argued that they would prefer the opportunity to influence nationwide decisions (adoption of the Euro) directly, more people were skeptical about the ability of self and others to make the best-informed decision, hence questioning the legitimacy of a direct vote.

The concerns about one's ability to process information and identify when manipulation might occur were omnipresent and brought out interesting points of media education and one's political orientations. Many of our participants observed that information seemed to be everywhere but they did not know whom to trust. Our participants most likely did not receive media education at school and had to rely on self- navigation to distinguish so-called fake news. We did not explore the specifics of media consumption with our participants, nor did we assess their levels of political orientations (e.g. trust, interest or knowledge). Future research could expand upon our findings and explore the role of political trust (in the system and in representatives) on people's views on the legitimacy of political decision-making. Further, assessing people's political orientations together with media consumption on a larger scale could provide a

better picture of specific patterns present in the population and their relationship to views on the legitimacy of political decision-making.

Lastly, people's proximity to the issue also played a role. Based on our findings, there is a place for a direct vote when the outcome would affect people directly, whether on a large (national) or small (local) scale. However, proper deliberation must precede the direct vote to generate greater legitimacy. Future research that considers various topics (scope and relevance) can help us understand when a direct vote is appreciated and when seen as a burden.

References

Arnesen, S. (2017). Legitimacy from decision-making influence and outcome favourability: Results from general population survey experiments. *Political Studies, 65*(1, Suppl.), 146–161. https://doi.org/10.1177/0032321716667956

Bauer, P. C., & Fatke, M. (2014). Direct democracy and political trust: Enhancing trust, initiating distrust–or both? *Swiss Political Science Review, 20*(1), 49–69. https://doi.org/10.1111/spsr.12071

Bengtsson, Å. (2012). Citizens' perceptions of political processes: A critical evaluation of preference consistency and survey items. *Revista Internacional de Sociología, 70*(Extra 2), 45–64. https://doi.org/10.3989/ris.2012.01.29

Bengtsson, Å., & Christensen, H. (2016). Ideals and actions: Do citizens' patterns of political participation correspond to their conceptions of democracy? *Government and Opposition, 51*(2), 234–260. https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2014.29

Blader, S. L., & Tyler, T. R. (2003). A four-component model of procedural justice: Defining the meaning of a "fair" process. *Personality & Social Psychology Bulletin, 29*(6), 747–758. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167203029006007

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2013). *Successful qualitative research: A practical guide for beginners.* SAGE.

Christensen, H. S., Himmelroos, S., & Setälä, M. (2020). A matter of life or death: A survey experiment on the perceived legitimacy of political decision-making on euthanasia. *Parliamentary Affairs, 73*(3), 627–650. https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gsz014

de Fine Licht J., & Naurin, D. (2016). Transparency. In C. Ansell & J. Torfing (Eds.), *Handbook on theories of governance* (pp. 217–224). Edward Elgar.

de Fine Licht, J., Naurin, D., Esaiasson, P., & Gilljam, M. (2014). When does transparency generate legitimacy? Experimenting on a context-bound relationship. *Governance, 27*(1), 111–134. https://doi.org/10.1111/gove.12021

Esaiasson, P., Gilljam, M., & Persson, M. (2012). Which decision-making arrangements generate the strongest legitimacy beliefs? Evidence from a randomised field experiment. *European Journal of Political Research, 51*(6), 785–808. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6765.2011.02052.x

Esaiasson, P., Persson, M., Gilljam, M., & Lindholm, T. (2019). Reconsidering the role of procedures for decision acceptance. *British Journal of Political Science, 49*(1), 291–314. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123416000508

Gilljam, M., Esaiasson, P., & Lindholm, T. (2010). The voice of the pupils: An experimental comparison of decisions made by elected pupil councils, pupils in referenda, and teaching staff. *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability, 22*(1), 73–88. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11092-009-9084-0

Havlík, V., & Hloušek, V. (2021). Differential illiberalism: Classifying illiberal trends in Central European party politics. In A. Lorenz & L. H. Anders (Eds.), *Illiberal trends and anti-EU politics in East Central Europe* (pp. 111-136). Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

Heath, A., & Richards, L. (2019). *How do Europeans differ in their attitudes to immigration? Findings from the European Social Survey 2002/03 – 2016/17* (OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers, No. 222). https://www.oecd.org/berlin/publikationen/How-do-Europeans-differ-in-their-attitudes-to-migration.pdf

Hibbing, J. R., & Theiss-Morse, E. (2002). *Stealth democracy: American's beliefs about how government should work.* Cambridge University Press.

Kersan-Škabić, I. (2019). Comparison of public opinion on the Euro in the EU new member states. *Ekonomski Vjesnik/Econviews – Review of Contemporary Business, Entrepreneurship and Economic Issues, 32*(2), 487–502. https://hrcak.srce.hr/ojs/index.php/ekonomski-vjesnik/article/view/9173

Mansbridge, J. (2009). A "selection model" of political representation. *Journal of Political Philosophy, 17*(4), 369–398. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9760.2009.00337.x

Marien, S., & Kern, A. (2018). The winner takes it all: Revisiting the effect of direct democracy on citizens' political support. *Political Behavior, 40*(4), 857–882. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-017-9427-3

Matsusaka, J. G. (2005). Direct democracy works. *Journal of Economic Perspectives, 19*(2), 185–206. https://doi.org/10.1257/0895330054048713

Miller, D. E. (2017). The influence of Václav Klaus on Czech public opinion regarding the European Union. *The Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies, 2503,* 1–52. https://doi.org/10.5195/CBP.2017.219

Olken, B. A. (2010). Direct democracy and local public goods: Evidence from a field experiment in Indonesia. *American Political Science Review, 104*(2), 243–267. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055410000079

Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Collins, K. M. T. (2007). A typology of mixed methods sampling designs in social science research. *Qualitative Report, 12*(2), 281–316. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2007.1638

Persson, M., Esaiasson, P., & Gilljam, M. (2013). The effects of direct voting and deliberation on legitimacy beliefs: An experimental study of small group decision-making. *European Political Science Review, 5*(3), 381–399. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1755773912000173

Rasinski, K., Tyler, T. R., & Fridkin, K. (1985). Exploring the function of legitimacy: Mediating effects of personal and institutional legitimacy on leadership endorsement and system support. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 49*(2), 386–394. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.49.2.386

Scott, Z., Šmahelová, M., & Macek, P. (2019). Our democracy: Czech adolescents talk about the meaning of democracy and attitudes toward immigrants. *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy, 19*(1), 104–132. https://doi.org/10.1111/asap.12175

Šerek, J., Juhová, D. S., & Lomičová, L. (2022). The legitimizing roles of respectful treatment and direct democracy in collective decision-making: A school-based study. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 52*(2), 95–105. https://doi.org/10.1111/jasp.12839

Towfigh, E. V., Goerg, S. J., Glöckner, A., Leifeld, P., Llorente-Saguer, A., Bade, S., & Kurschilgen, C. (2016). Do direct-democratic procedures lead to higher acceptance than political representation? *Public Choice, 167*(1-2), 47–65. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11127-016-0330-y

van Zomeren, M., Leach, C. W., & Spears, R. (2012). Protesters as "passionate economists": A dynamic dual pathway model of approach coping with collective disadvantage. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 16*(2), 180–199. https://doi.org/10.1177/1088868311430835

Voda, P., & Havlík, V. (2021). The rise of populists and decline of others: Explanation of changes in party support in the Czech Republic. *Problems of Post-Communism, 68*(4), 279–291. https://doi.org/10.1080/10758216.2020.1869906

PsychOpen GOLD