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TRADUCCIÓN INGLÉS-ÁRABE

A QUESTIONING OF TRUST AND LEGITIMACY

The various changes affecting the world and the real sense of insecurity felt by many have given rise to a growing disaffection with mainstream politics and institutions at all levels. This often manifests itself through indifference and mistrust towards the action of public authorities. And it also creates a vacuum too easily filled by populist and nationalist rhetoric.

Blaming “Brussels” for problems while taking credit for success at home, the lack of ownership of joint decisions and the habit of finger-pointing at others have already proved damaging. Europeans are not immune to these stark images of disunity. There is still strong support for the European project, but it is no longer unconditional. Over two thirds of Europeans see the EU as a place of stability in a troubled world. More than 80% support the EU’s four founding freedoms. 70% of euro area citizens support the common currency. However, citizens’ trust in the EU has decreased in line with that for national authorities. Around a third of citizens trust the EU today, when about half of Europeans did so ten years ago.

Closing the gap between promise and delivery is a continuous challenge. This is partly because the EU is not an easy construct to understand as it combines both the European level and Member States. Who does what is not well explained enough and the EU’s positive role in daily life is not visible if the story is not told locally. Communities are not always aware that their farm nearby, their transport network or universities are partly funded by the EU.

There is also a mismatch between expectations and the EU’s capacity to meet them. Take the example of youth unemployment: in spite of many high-level summits and useful EU supporting measures, the tools and powers remain in the hands of national, regional and local authorities. Resources available at European level in the social field account for only 0.3% of what Member States spend in total in that area.

Restoring trust, building consensus and creating a sense of belonging is harder in an era where information has never been so plentiful, so accessible, yet so difficult to grasp. The 24/7 nature of the news cycle is quicker and harder to keep up with and respond to than it ever has been before. More tweets are now sent every day than in a whole year ten years ago. And by 2018, around a third of the world’s population will use social media networks.

These trends will only accelerate and continue to change the way democracy works. This creates new opportunities to facilitate public debate and to engage Europeans. However, Europe and its Member States must move quicker to interact with citizens, be more accountable and deliver better and faster on what has been collectively agreed.