In his detailed reflections Maurizio Ferrera engages with pressing issues about the future of European integration. He starts from the observation that there is considerable disappointment about the actual effect that EU citizenship has had in the last 25 years since its introduction. This is a quite modest description for the fact that the rise of right wing nationalism and Euroscepticism seems to indicate severe doubts about the functionality and the legitimacy of the existing EU institutions and the project of European integration in general. In the economic and subsequent sovereign debt crisis tacit consent for the course of integration has evaporated. The EU increasingly influences the everyday life of citizens without at the same time increasing its legitimacy to do so. What can EU citizenship bring about in this situation?

The populist attacks against Europe can be interpreted as a result of the current lack of democratic and social integrative sources. Ferrera convincingly analyses the characteristics and flaws of EU citizenship, in particular regarding its social dimension, and proposes an agenda of reform to enhance the integrative function. He convincingly diagnoses the shortcomings of EU citizenship in its ‘isopolitical’ dimension but is rather reluctant to draw more radical conclusion of reform in the ‘sympolitical’ dimension. In what follows I will take issues with some general assumptions of his argument about enhancing social citizenship and reflect on the necessity and nature of democratic reforms.

Why social citizenship?

Ferrera reconstructs the historical process of a nationalisation of citizenship – its success in creating boundaries and bonds and demanding loyalty in exchange for protection – but mentions the main characteristics of democratic citizenship only implicitly: the promise of equality and freedom under self-given laws. In its current shape the EU might just be too far away from this promise, so any allusion to it seems overly risky and comes close to opening a Pandora’s box. But by taking up the language of citizenship this
box is already opened anyway. The association of the idea of citizenship with the European Community promised its transformation into a polity whose constituent elements are no longer only the member states. Has the EU ‘overstretched’ itself with this promise? Ferrara’s argument for strengthening the integrative function of EU citizenship rests on the assumption that the introduction of social rights as entitlements enhanced the salience of citizenship in the (national) past and is likely to do that in the (European) future. While he concedes that much has changed since ‘Bismarckian’ times – welfare states have been retrenched and changed in their logic of providing assistance – his general intention is to revive this idea: ‘adding stuff’, i.e. using instrumental resources such as monetary benefits in order to make EU citizenship more salient, visible and tangible in order to ‘directly empower’ European citizens. My concern is that this short-cut might not be successful unless European citizens envisage the European project as their voluntarily chosen common concern. Ferrara describes his strategy as realistic but this also means that it follows up on a problematic logic that has driven European integration so far: to win support by delivering tangible advantages for particular groups.

No doubt: no political citizenship without social citizenship. Political participation must not appear as a class or status privilege (if it is supposed to be democratic). But if citizenship is about authorising the laws one is subjected to, its normative core is about empowerment rather than protection. Citizenship is not a status that the enlightened monarch, in this case the European leaders (or an avant-garde judiciary as Susanne Schmidt argues), can bestow on subjects. Citizenship is about the development of a political subjectivity and a practice through which free and equal individuals collectively take their fate into their own hands. Enhancing EU citizenship would thus mean: moving away from the current focus on protecting rights – even if they are no longer primarily the rights of economically active ‘mobile’ citizens and include the socially disadvantaged – and putting the political agent who wants to influence the conditions of his/her existence at the centre.

**Countering anti-European politics**

Christian Joppke suggests that it might be a categorical mistake to apply the citizenship concepts to the EU in the first place, since the EU is a regulatory regime rather than a ‘protection racket’. We have every reason to be suspicious if EU citizenship is supposed to conceal this. Absolutely true, but
doesn’t this suggest another conclusion? The division of labour between economic, regulatory policies as European issues, on the one hand, and social, labour market and redistributive policies as national issues, on the other hand, is currently deeply contested. With every new step of integration, in particular with regard to Economic and Monetary Union, transnational interdependence has been growing, creating a need for political debate and discretion which is at odds with the depoliticised intergovernmental mode of decision-making in the EU.¹

The crisis of European democracy and the crisis of European citizenship go hand in hand. Detached from political space the European citizenry is left without clear addressees for dealing with social and political conflicts. The EU is not yet perceived as an (emerging) context of justice. The framing of justice has for a long time been gripped by a ‘Westphalian political imaginary’, which means it has been restricted to the modern territorial state.² Indeed, what is needed is a ‘broader conception of social justice in Europe’ (Andrea Sangiovanni). In the current institutional set up, taking on the pan-European perspective of a Union citizen is systematically discouraged. What a European democracy demands is a transnational coding of social conflicts, a border-crossing articulation and deliberation in order to make them visible and understandable as transnational economic or cultural lines of conflict.³ But what we witness instead is a resurrection of national stereotypes. Since the cosmopolitan, pro-European elite has difficulties in convincingly explaining why membership in this Union is worth promoting, disadvantaged citizens from prosperous member states tend to be in favour of putting an end to European integration, whereas less well-off citizens in the Union’s deficit countries demand redistributive policies within the Union which most of their prosperous counterparts are likely to refuse.⁴ It becomes

¹ Offe, C. (2015), Europe Entrapped. Cambridge; Malden, MA: Polity Press, 25–28.
² Fraser, N. (2008), Scales of Justice. Reimagining Political Space in a Globalizing World. Cambridge; Malden, MA: Polity Press, 12.
³ E.g. contrary to public representations it is not Germany as a whole that is ‘Export Master’, but certain regions, in particular in the South-West, whereas e.g. Northern Italy is comparatively more productive than East Germany.
⁴ It is remarkable that left-wing protest movements in debtor states such as Spain or Greece and the majority of the population in these countries are not ‘anti-European’ in general and not in favour of an exit from the EU, but rather against austerity policies which they identify primarily with Germany. Exit options are rather articulated in the relatively well-off member states. For an instructive differentiation of the Northern European New Right, a Central-East
painfully obvious that European citizens are not yet members of a solidly political Union, but that they are still primarily members within a Union of states, where national interests are played off against each other.

There is a fatal misframing of social conflicts along national rather than social cleavages. How can this misframing be broken up? A politicisation of European issues is needed. As Rainer Bauböck rightfully stresses: The dilemma of EU citizenship is a political one and needs to be addressed in a political arena. In the institutional architecture of the EU the European Parliament is the actor that is most likely to articulate and win recognition for transnational social interests. But it cannot be successful without social intermediaries: an active civil society and citizenry that would pass on the conflicts negotiated in parliament to the various democratic publics and vice versa.\(^5\) In the long run the future of EU citizenship will depend on how a multilayered governance system such as the EU will be able to balance the different levels of political participation, thereby accommodating principles of political equality, public control and influence on political decisions. ‘Liberal de-dutification’ (Joppke) is not a particular problem of EU citizenship, but what is a particular problem is the lack of a clear social reference group: a community of citizens who grant each other rights on the basis of reciprocity. The challenge lies in the construction and legitimation of new frames of reference for the deliberation of social and political conflicts. This is indeed a republican project but different from the one that Richard Bellamy envisages. Bellamy argues in favour of a complementary status rather than a fundamental status of all EU citizens on the basis of a protection of “diversity”. His idea of ‘republican intergovernmentalism’ is concerned with promoting equality of concern and respect between the different citizenship regimes of the EU’s constituent member states. But in a context such as the current EU, in which social and economic spheres are decoupled, ‘protection of diversity’ might well disguise power asymmetries and lead to a conservation of wealth disparities and inequalities.

---

\(^5\) See also the proposal by Thomas Piketty et al. for a parliamentaty assembly of the euro-zone which is supposed to be combined of members of the EP and members of national parliaments (Hennette, S., T. Piketty, G. Sacriste & A. Vauchez (2017), *Pour une Traité de democratisation de l’Europe* [Treaty for the democratization of Europe], Paris: Le Seuil).
Coping with the crisis demands effective coordination of economic and financial politics. But the peoples of the member states cannot be expected to give up creative power at the national level without a clear substitute on the transnational level in sight. That is why the answer to the crisis is unavoidably connected to issues of European democracy.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter’s Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter’s Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.