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Grosfeld, E.

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Increasing Public Perceived Legitimacy of the European Union Through the Integration of Psychological Insights into Law

E. GROSFELD

Since the 1990s, the expansion and deepening of European integration have increasingly challenged the perceived legitimacy of the European Union (EU) among its citizens. Events like Brexit and the rise of nationalist and Eurosceptic parties highlight this trend. Yet, public perceived legitimacy is crucial for the EU to address pressing societal challenges effectively.

This dissertation adopts an interdisciplinary approach, combining social psychology and EU law, to explore how the EU's perceived legitimacy can be increased. The empirical research, based on seven studies involving nearly four thousand EU citizens, investigates the psychological factors shaping public perceptions of EU legitimacy, with a focus on social identity and moral values. It also evaluates the effectiveness of potential legitimization strategies. The legal analysis then examines how these psychological insights can be integrated into the EU's legal framework, offering concrete recommendations that balance respect for national identities with the EU's core principles and values. These proposals aim to spark debate and inspire further interdisciplinary research.

In summary, this dissertation provides an evidence-based roadmap for increasing the EU's public perceived legitimacy, demonstrating how psychological insights can inform legal strategies to foster legitimacy and ensure the EU's future resilience and effectiveness.

This is a volume in the series of the Meijers Research Institute and Graduate School of the Leiden Law School of Leiden University. This study is part of the Law School's research programme 'The Progression of EU Law: Accommodating Change and Upholding Values'.