



How could petitions be better referred to in political decisions?

Alberto Alemanno

Jean Monnet Professor of European Union Law



MY
PERSPECTIVE

how to **strengthen the role and impact of petitions** as

the privileged instrument of EU participative democracy

10 years after the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty.



Right to petition

Oldest (since 1950's ECSC)

Most accessible (e.g. minors, migrants)

Most user-friendly

Widest scope

Permanent & right to response



“the bridge between EU citizens and the EU institutions, thus the Committee should be the door for the citizens of Europe to bring their concerns and ideas to the attention of their elected representatives”.

Guidelines – Petition Committee, introduction, p.2.

Functions

de facto **one-stop shop** for any citizen complaint regarding the Union's activity broadly defined:

1. oversight over application of EU law (administrative)
2. oversight over the Commission's oversight (supervision)
3. agenda-setting (political)
4. participatory mechanism

enabling “to participate in the Union's democratic life”



untapped
potential

at a time of CoFoe, the EU **already** disposes of
open platform enabling citizens to interact
with EU via the EP



Several incremental reforms, but **structural** limitations

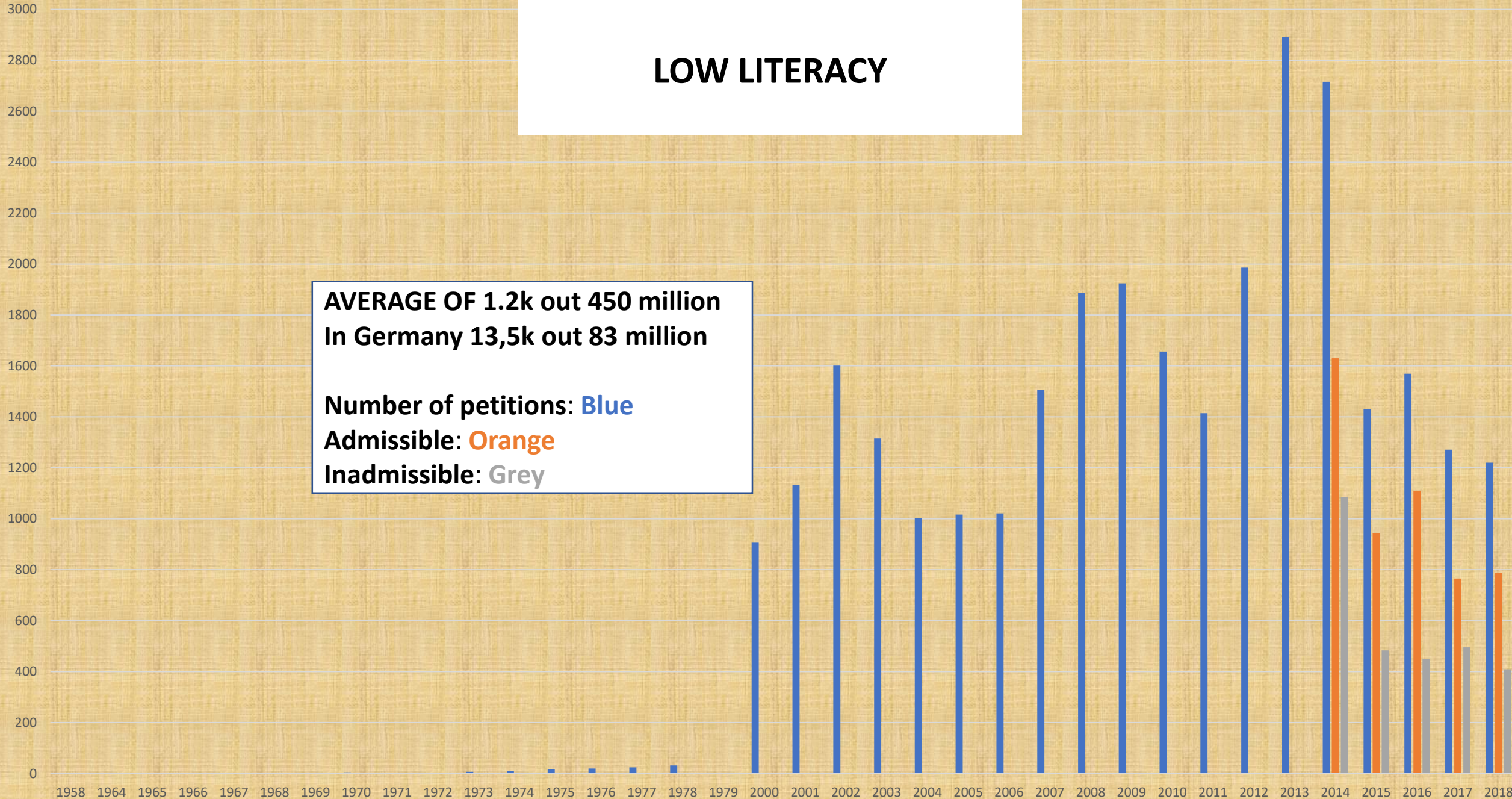
- Low literacy
- Fragmentation of EU Participatory Infrastructure
- Limited capacity
- Dependency on external cooperation

Petitions before the European Parliament (1958-2018)

LOW LITERACY

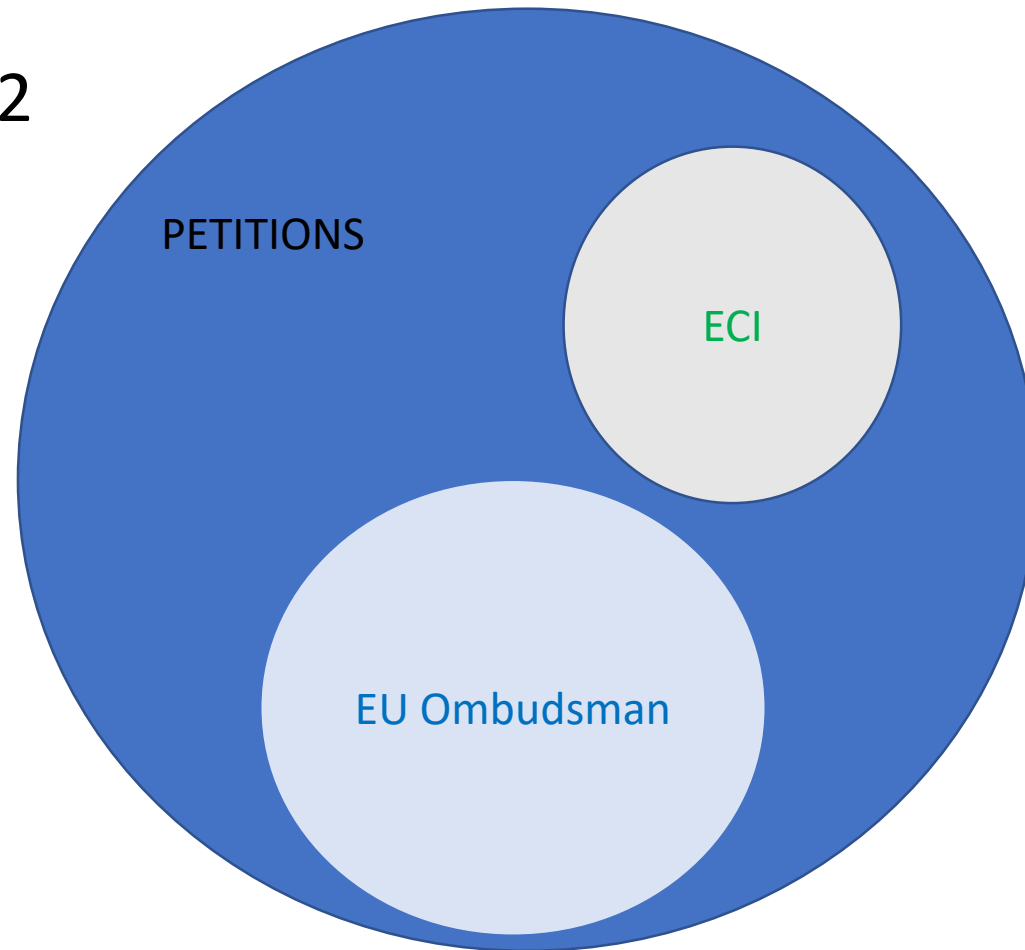
AVERAGE OF 1.2k out 450 million
In Germany 13,5k out 83 million

Number of petitions: Blue
Admissible: Orange
Inadmissible: Grey



FRAGMENTATION OF THE EU PARTICIPATORY INFRASTRUCTURE

From 1950s to 1992



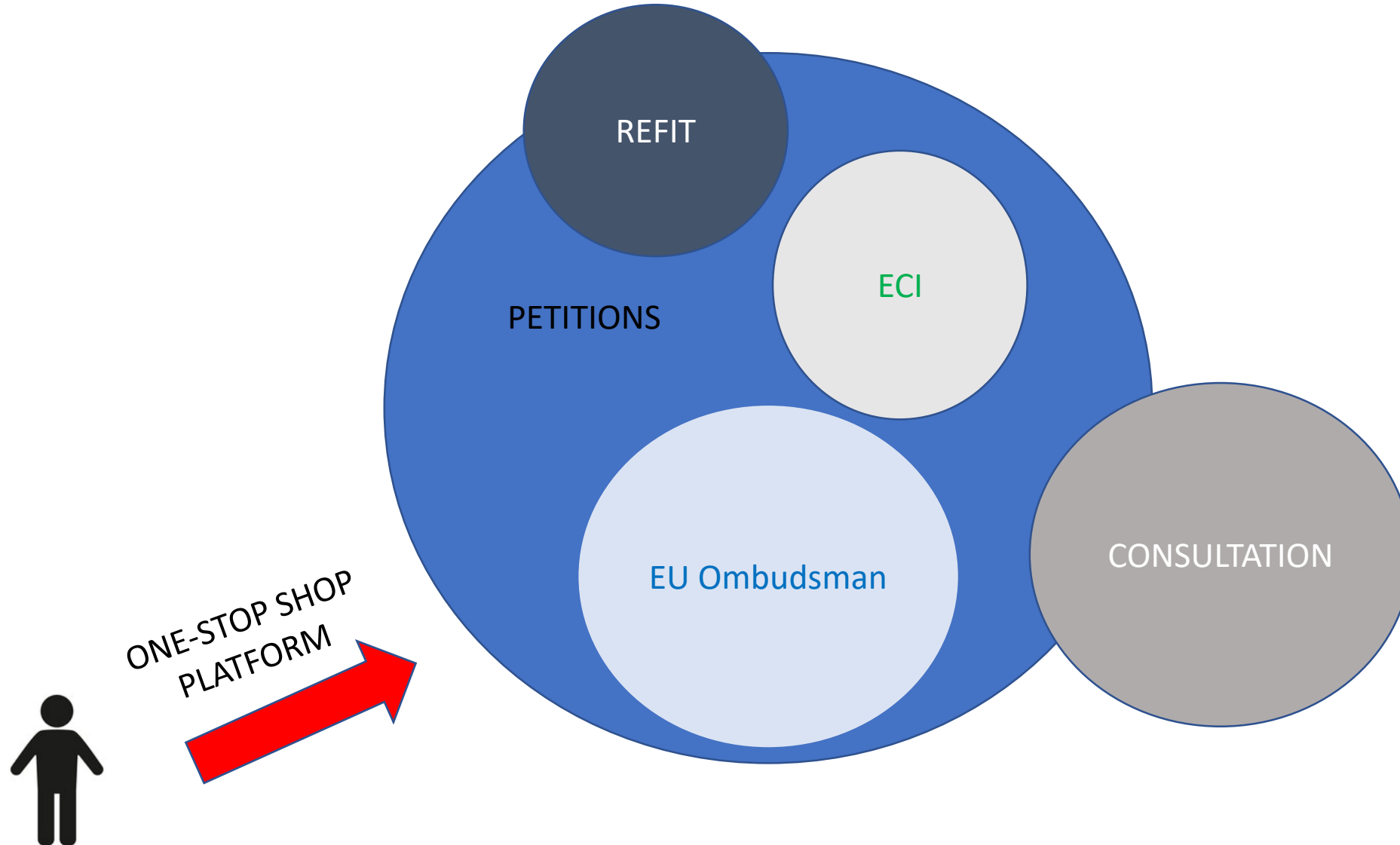
LOSE – LOSE

- Competition
btw mechanisms
btw institutions
- Less VISIBILITY
- Less INTELLIGIBILITY
- Less SELF-AWARENESS

capacity



OVERCOMING FRAGMENTATION



STRUCTURAL DEPENDENCY ON CO-OPERATION

PETI committee only institution legally responsible

BUT

heavily **reliant on** co-operation of **others**
(EU Commission)

Co-operation tends to work, but what if Commission doesn't act as wished for?

overlooked / unsolved tension



duty to problem-solve



individual case



wide discretion



Most important, systematic infringement

Tension worsened by

- **information asymmetry** between the Commission and Parliament in relation to enforcement
- Commission's practice of referring a significant number of petitioners to other bodies at national, regional or local level
- the lack of a binding agreement framing the co-operation between the Commission and the PETI Committee

Limited political commitment



PETITIONS NOT EVEN MENTIONED

EU Citizenship Report 2020

Empowering citizens and protecting their rights

Justice
and Consumers

A FULLY
OPERATIONAL
PETI SYSTEM
COULD OFFER
WHAT
CoFoE is
TRYING TO
ATTAIN FROM
SCRATCH....



Photo by Juliane Liebermann on Unsplash

The future is in your hands

Make your voice heard



Conference
on the Future
of Europe