



Speed and Democracy: European Infrastructure Development Challenges and Public Opinion Towards Streamlining Processes

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Abstract

Title: Speed and Democracy: European Infrastructure Development Challenges and Public Opinion towards Streamlining Processes

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Infrastructure development is critical to Europe's economic success, social stability, and environmental objectives. At the same time, there is growing pressure to complete infrastructure projects more rapidly, which has led to discussions over whether democratic governance is compromised by quicker processes. Existing research has mostly focused on institutional and regulatory issues, with little consideration taken to how European public perceive infrastructure streamlining and its implications on democratic values. This paper aims to close this gap, analyzing public attitudes on the balance between streamlining infrastructure development and democratic principles. The paper uses a quantitative methodology based on an online survey of 140 respondents from Europe, looking at opinions on public engagement, opinions on streamlining, and perceptions of the necessity of new infrastructure. The results demonstrate that although the majority of respondents agree that new infrastructure is needed, they do not strongly favor massive streamlining. Rather, respondents support balanced governance strategies that maintain accountability, public engagement, and environmental protections. Hence, considering democratic participation crucial for establishing legitimacy and confidence.

Keywords: *Streamlining, Infrastructure Development, Democratic governance, Public Engagement, Public Opinion, Legitimacy, European Infrastructure, Regulatory Frameworks*

Abstract (versão portuguesa)

Título: Velocidade e Democracia: Desafios do Desenvolvimento das Infraestruturas Europeias e Opinião Pública sobre a Simplificação dos Processos

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O desenvolvimento das infraestruturas é fundamental para o sucesso económico, a estabilidade social e os objetivos ambientais da Europa. Ao mesmo tempo, existe uma pressão crescente para concluir os projetos de infraestruturas mais rapidamente, o que levou a discussões sobre se a governação democrática é comprometida por processos mais rápidos. A investigação existente tem-se centrado principalmente em questões institucionais e regulamentares, com pouca consideração pela forma como o público europeu percebe a racionalização das infraestruturas e as suas implicações nos valores democráticos. Este artigo visa colmatar esta lacuna, analisando as atitudes do público em relação ao equilíbrio entre a racionalização do desenvolvimento das infraestruturas e os princípios democráticos. O artigo utiliza uma metodologia quantitativa baseada num inquérito online a 140 inquiridos da Europa, analisando as opiniões sobre o envolvimento público, as opiniões sobre a racionalização e as perceções sobre a necessidade de novas infraestruturas. Os resultados demonstram que, embora a maioria dos inquiridos concorde que são necessárias novas infraestruturas, não são fortemente a favor de uma racionalização massiva. Em vez disso, os inquiridos apoiam estratégias de governação equilibradas que mantenham a responsabilização, o envolvimento público e a proteção ambiental. Por conseguinte, consideram a participação democrática crucial para estabelecer a legitimidade e a confiança.

Palavras-chave: *Racionalização, Desenvolvimento de Infraestruturas, Governação Democrática, Envolvimento Público, Opinião Pública, Legitimidade, Infraestruturas Europeias, Quadros Regulamentares*

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1. Introduction

1.1. Research Proposal and Question

Infrastructure is crucial in every society, it influences economic progress, societal development and environmental sustainability (Benitez et al., 2012). In the context of the European sphere, transport networks, energy systems, digital infrastructure, and public utilities facilitate daily living and support long-term policy objectives at the national and European levels (E. Levitt et al., 2009).

In fact, the importance of infrastructure development has increased significantly in recent years, as Europe deals with major challenges including energy security, climate change, technological advancement, and geopolitical unpredictability. Addressing these challenges requires of new infrastructure as well of an improved coordination than that of the past (E. Levitt et al., 2009).

At the same time, European infrastructure development is closely linked to democratic governance practices. Nowadays, infrastructure decisions frequently entail trade-offs between economic efficiency, environmental preservation, social equality, and local implications; they are rarely neutral or strictly technical (Finka et al., 2017).

As a result, European infrastructure planning frequently involves public consultation, stakeholder engagement, and procedural protections designed to ensure trust and transparency (Benitez et al., 2012). These methods are intended to defend democratic ideals and provide citizens with a say in choices that may have an impact on the communities and their everyday lives (Finka et al., 2017).

However, there is this ongoing pressure for quicker infrastructure development creating a tension between the legal, social and environmental spectrums in the planning process. Policymakers and project developers are increasingly claiming that the current procedures are excessively inefficient and complex, resulting in delays that undermine critical policy goals, particularly in sectors such as energy transition and transportation decarbonization (Hammerschmid & Wegrich, 2016).

Because of this, simplifying permitting and administrative procedures has been a common subject in discussions concerning European policy (Hammerschmid & Wegrich, 2016). However,

initiatives to simplify or speed procedures frequently generate concerns regarding the potential weakening of democratic ideals, public engagement, and accountability (Finka et al., 2017). Thereby, this conflict between democracy and streamlining is at the core of contemporary European infrastructure governance. On the one hand, delays in infrastructure investments may negatively impact economic competitiveness, limit efforts to address climate change, and decrease overall resilience (Wegrich et al., 2016).

On the other hand, eliminating or ignoring popular opinions risks undermining trust in institutions and raising opposition, which may cause projects to be delayed even more (Wegrich et al., 2016). According to Lee et al. (2012), disagreements over infrastructure are typically about how choices are made and communicated rather than the infrastructure itself.

For these reasons, this paper is motivated by the fact that infrastructure debates in Europe are mostly focused on issues of legitimacy rather than streamlining. While legislative frameworks and governance models have been highly investigated, little attention has been paid to how European voters perceive the balance between streamlining decision making and democratic protections.

In this sense, it is very important to understand European views and attitudes since those opinions may affect support, opposition, and long-term trust in infrastructure governance systems (Dolan et al., 2025). This is why the main research question of this paper is centered in exploring how infrastructure streamlining challenges interact with European views towards democratic safeguards and regulatory efficiency.

Rather than addressing infrastructure streamlining purely through institutional or technical perspectives, this paper focuses on the sociological dimension of governance. It analyzes how democratic principles, participation standards, and perceptions of justice influence views toward changes aimed at speeding infrastructure development. Thus, wanting to contribute to a better understanding of how streamlining and democracy might be compatible (or not) in practice.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Infrastructure Development Needs

In Europe, several types of structural, economic, and environmental concerns are driving the need for additional and more streamlined infrastructure development (Wegrich et al., 2016). One of the most important reasons is the shift to a low-carbon economy.

Achieving European climate goals would need major investment in renewable energy generation, electrical grids, energy storage, transportation infrastructure, and digital systems capable of enabling flexible energy use. Much of Europe's existing infrastructure was planned for a previous economic and technical environment, and it is becoming increasingly insufficient to meet contemporary objectives (Enriquez de Salamanca, 2021).

Besides climatic concerns, infrastructure development is crucial for sustaining economic competitiveness and social harmony (Maciulyte-Sniukiene & Butkus, 2022). Efficient transportation and logistics networks facilitate commerce and labor mobility, while digital infrastructure enhances innovation and accessibility to services. At the same time, many European nations' aging infrastructures need to be upgraded or replaced to maintain safety, security, and resilience (R. Berkeley & Wallace, 2010).

However, despite this evident need, infrastructure projects throughout Europe often encounter significant delays. Planning and licensing processes can take years, especially for large-scale projects that extend beyond administrative boundaries or cause environmental problems (Sartori, 2008). Although legislative processes, public consultations, and environmental impact studies are necessary for maintaining the public's interests, they can also lead to many roadblocks and difficulties for legislators and developers, causing projects to delay or even come to an end (Enriquez de Salamanca, 2021).

One of the most addressed challenges is the increasing importance of investments in infrastructure. European governments are under increasing pressure to upgrade outdated infrastructure to increase capacity to meet evolving needs (Sutherland et al., 2009). For instance, energy transition,

digitalization, transportation decarbonization, and climate change mitigation require significant infrastructure development in relatively short amounts of time. Delays in infrastructure delivery are thus frequently presented as not merely administrative errors but also as barriers to accomplishing broader societal goals (Khumalo et al., 2017).

Public discontent is another key challenge. Infrastructure projects may face local opposition owing to worries about environmental damage, landscape consequences, health hazards, or unjust financial distribution (E. Levitt et al., 2009). When communities believe that choices are being made without true respect for their opinions, opposition may escalate and take the shape of protests, political mobilization, or legal actions. According to Gerlach (1987), such resistance may seriously delay or even stop projects, regardless of their larger social advantages.

As a result, in order to streamline infrastructure, national governments and European organizations need to push for procedural simplicity. The proposed reforms could include streamlining permission criteria, establishing clearer schedules for administrative choices, and avoiding regulatory redundancy (Wegrich et al., 2016).

However, while these improvements are intended to increase efficiency, they may also raise concerns about democratic legitimacy. How do European citizens feel about reduced or streamlined procedures? Do they see them as risks to democratic transparency and participation, or as necessary solutions to current challenges?

These factors illustrate the need of looking at infrastructure streamlining not only via institutional planning, but also through community perceptions and opinions. Hence, to create these governance structures that are both successful and socially acceptable, it is important to know how Europeans view the balance between democracy and infrastructure streamlining (Hetemi & W. A., 2021).

2.2. Infrastructure Development Challenges

New infrastructure development can be both necessary and challenging at the same time. Even though infrastructure can be very important for social stability, economic growth, and sustainable development, its actual development has grown more challenging (Wegrich et al., 2016). As it is

highlighted in the literature, infrastructure projects are now evaluated not just on their technical viability and economic efficiency, but also on how choices are made, who gets involved, and whether the procedure is seen as legitimate and fair (Dolan et al., 2025).

One challenge mentioned in the literature is the complexity of European governance structures. Infrastructure development involves several public entities working at various levels, ranging from national governments and European organizations to local municipalities (Marshall. T, 2011). Every level has its own political priorities, processes, and competencies, and, although this multi-level governance system is an aspect of democratic decentralization, it can slow down decision making processes and increase expenses related to coordination (Ahmad HS et al., 2020).

In addition, regulatory and administrative processes continue to be another major source of concern. Planning approvals, environmental studies, procurement regulations, and public consultations are all intended to protect public interests and to be transparent (De Vries, 2007). However, scholars point out that these processes, particularly when applied to large-scale projects, can become inconsistent, overlapping, and inadequately coordinated. In such instances, the accumulation of procedural requirements might create the impression of inefficiency, although every single step serves a genuine purpose (Soderland, 2009).

Following the same lines, environmental regulation is often seen as another challenge or process to successful infrastructure development (Wegrich et al., 2016). In this sense, environmental impact assessments and associated processes are necessary to ensure democratic and sustainable development. However, they are frequently blamed for adding to the length of project schedules (Vanclay et al., 2015).

Furthermore, the literature does not frequently advocate for the elimination of environmental regulations, but it does highlight the conflict between meticulous review and fast decision making. These conflicts are particularly obvious in energy transition projects, where environmental preservation and climate urgency might seem to pull in opposite directions (Reusswig et al., 2018).

Infrastructure development also frequently faces opposition from the general public or populations. Local communities often oppose large infrastructure projects, especially when they have an impact on everyday things, housing prices or landscapes (Valentin et al., 2017). According to the literature, opposition may be motivated more by disagreements with the way decisions are made than by rejection of the infrastructure per se. Hence, communities may agree that infrastructure is necessary, but they might be against some projects that they believe were imposed without enough involvement or awareness of the community interests (Dolan et al., 2025).

This distinction is important because it focuses attention on issues of legitimacy and governance rather than simplified narratives of opposition (Dolan et al., 2025). Opposition is more likely to grow when people feel left out of decision making or think their opinions do not matter. In contrast, when processes are regarded as transparent and equitable, even unpopular projects may find less opposition. This supports the premise that disagreements over infrastructure are frequently more about decision making processes than the infrastructure itself (Salet et al., 2012).

Trust in institutions is directly related to these factors. According to Rangarian et al., (2013), when trust in public authorities is very low, successful infrastructure development becomes more difficult. When trust is low, errors in procedure tend to be considered as evidence of unfairness, incompetence, or insensitivity for the interests of the public. This could make it more challenging for authorities to defend procedural modifications that attempt to increase efficiency, as they may be perceived as suspicious rather than as objective improvements (Valentin et al., 2017).

The last challenge addressed in the literature is the allocation of both costs and benefits. Infrastructure projects can provide advantages at the regional, national, or European levels, but expenses tend to be concentrated locally (Judijanto et al., 2025).

This imbalance may increase feelings of injustice, especially when impacted communities believe that far away governmental goals take precedence over their concerns. To address these perspectives, decision making processes that are viewed to be considerate, and sensitive are just as important as compensation programs (Short & Kopp, 2005).

When considered in its entirety, the literature describes infrastructure development as a governance challenge influenced by its complexity, urgency, and legitimacy. All in all, initiatives to streamline infrastructure cannot be fully understood without considering democratic principles and public opinions, making it rather a complex challenge for authorities (Dolan et al., 2025).

2.3. Stakeholder Engagement and Infrastructure Development

The literature on infrastructure governance places a major focus on stakeholder engagement. Participation has grown to be an essential element of European public decision making over the last years, especially in fields with considerable social and environmental consequences. As a result, it is becoming more and more expected that impacted communities and the general public should be involved in infrastructure development in addition to professionals and authorities (Rangarian et al., 2013).

The literature often presents stakeholder involvement as having several purposes. On the one hand, from a democratic standpoint, involvement aims to offer citizens a say in choices that impact their daily lives (Cowell & Devine-Wright, 2018). On the other hand, from a governance standpoint, it is also viewed as a means to increase the quality of decisions, detecting possible conflicts early on, and improving the legitimacy of actions. The two of them are closely related because decisions that are seen as transparent and just have a higher chance of being accepted, even if they require compromises (Valentin et al., 2017).

The literature discusses several engagement strategies such as consultation, the exchange of information, and more deliberate methods. The exchange of information entails a one-way interaction in which authorities explain the upcoming initiatives and possibilities. Stakeholders can then share their thoughts or concerns during consultation, which often takes place within predetermined boundaries. Lastly, more deliberative methods attempt to encourage debate and mutual learning, which may influence the project's planning and execution (Dvir et al., 2023).

The literature also suggests that the timing of the engagement is very important. Early participation, before significant decisions are made, is often connected with better results. When stakeholders are included early on, there is more flexibility to alter initiatives, resolve issues, and

establish trust. In contrast, late-stage interaction can be seen as symbolic or procedural, building discontent rather than reducing confrontation (Chester & Allenby, 2018).

Despite general agreement about the importance of public engagement, the literature also identifies some challenges. For instance, one of the most recurring problems is the technical complexities of infrastructure projects. It can be complex for people with no expertise to understand planning papers, impact studies or legal issues. This creates a knowledge gap that may reduce engagement and increase power imbalances between experts and citizens (Wegrich et al., 2016).

Another factor to consider is representation. Participation mechanisms do not always reflect every aspect of affected parties. In this sense, participants who engage are often people or organizations with strong beliefs, more resources, or higher levels of education. This creates questions regarding who gets heard and if engagement outcomes genuinely reflect wider community viewpoints. According to the research, these factors may have an impact on how public engagement methods are seen, especially if certain groups feel underrepresented (Mansuri & Rao, 2013).

In the last years, digital engagement technologies have been seen as potential answers to some of these issues. Online consultations and interactive platforms can help reduce participation barriers and reach a larger audience. However, the literature states that digital technologies are not a definitive solution. This is mainly because the distribution of technology is still unequal and not accessible to everyone. Online participation may also not be as deep as in-person discussions, especially in situations that are challenging and complex to solve (Kenneth Chung et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the literature also explains how democratic values are related to stakeholder engagement. It explains how participation is more than just giving an opinion, it is also about recognizing citizens as legitimate decision makers (Abels, 2007). In addition, according to the literature, the key components of how participation is perceived and valued are transparency, responsibility, and accountability. Therefore, when these principles are believed to be respected, engagement can increase legitimacy and trust, however, when they appear to be limited, engagement may fail to accomplish its intended purpose (Waddington et al., 2019).

In brief, some scholars are concerned that initiatives to streamline infrastructure decision making could reduce engagement, limiting options for conversation and feedback from the public. Other scholars say that long and poorly structured engagement procedures compromise democratic objectives, causing dissatisfaction and disengagement, thus, the opposite desired effect.

2.4. Research Gap: Public Perceptions, Democratic Values, and Procedural Streamlining

Despite the existence of extensive research on infrastructure governance and stakeholder engagement, there is still a significant gap in the way that transformation is perceived by the general public. Much of the available research focuses on either strengthening participatory practices or improving the effectiveness of administration, with both goals being viewed as separate objectives (Speer, 2012). However, less emphasis has been given to how citizens perceive this conflict of interests.

On the one hand, debates over infrastructure governance often make the assumption that simplifying processes inevitably reduces democratic engagement (Cowell & Devine-Wright, 2018). Reducing consultation procedures or speeding up approvals, according to Sweering (2025), runs the danger of undermining trust and transparency.

Proponents of streamlining, on the other hand, emphasize the social costs of delays as well as the importance of prompt action, particularly in key areas such as the environmental and energy transition (Ilesanmi, 2025). However, as previously mentioned, the literature provides little empirical evidence about how the public assesses these trade-offs.

Research on public opinion indicates that perspective about justice and transparency are more important in determining whether or not choices are accepted rather than the outcomes by itself. If people think the process is inclusive and fair, they are more inclined to accept results, even if those are not favorable. This suggests that procedural change may not be necessarily incompatible with the standards of democracy, as long as the essential concepts of engagement and transparency are upheld (Schmid et al., 2021).

Nonetheless, rather than focusing on broader opinions regarding governance improvements, research often looks at public approval at the project level (Wegrich et al., 2016). There is little research on how public view initiatives to streamline procedures, shorten deadlines, or centralize decisions in infrastructure development as a whole. This is especially noteworthy considering the increasing importance of infrastructure streamlining and its relative processes at the national and European levels (Crescenzi & Rodríguez-Pose, 2024).

The literature's tendency to regard "the public" as a homogenous group is an additional limitation. In practice, views regarding infrastructure development and governance procedures are likely to differ between nations, regions, and socioeconomic groups, reflecting differing institutional norms, degrees of trust, and public engagement experiences (Denhardt et al., 2009).

The literature also indicates that democratic principles play an important role in determining opinions regarding infrastructure streamlining. Transparency, accountability, and engagement are commonly considered as basic concepts, but how they are applied varies among citizens (Waddington et al., 2019). Some may emphasize efficiency and output, while others place a higher value on procedural protections.

Hence, this paper places itself at the core of such discussions, combining information gathered regarding stakeholder engagement, infrastructure governance and the public perception on those debates. Moreover, taking in consideration judgements on infrastructure needs, its importance and its relation with attitudes towards streamlining and engagement, the paper addresses how streamlining processes are seen by the European public and under which circumstances they could be considered acceptable by them. It raises several questions such as: Is Europe slowing its own development? Is it overregulated? Is streamlining the preferred solution?

3. Methodology

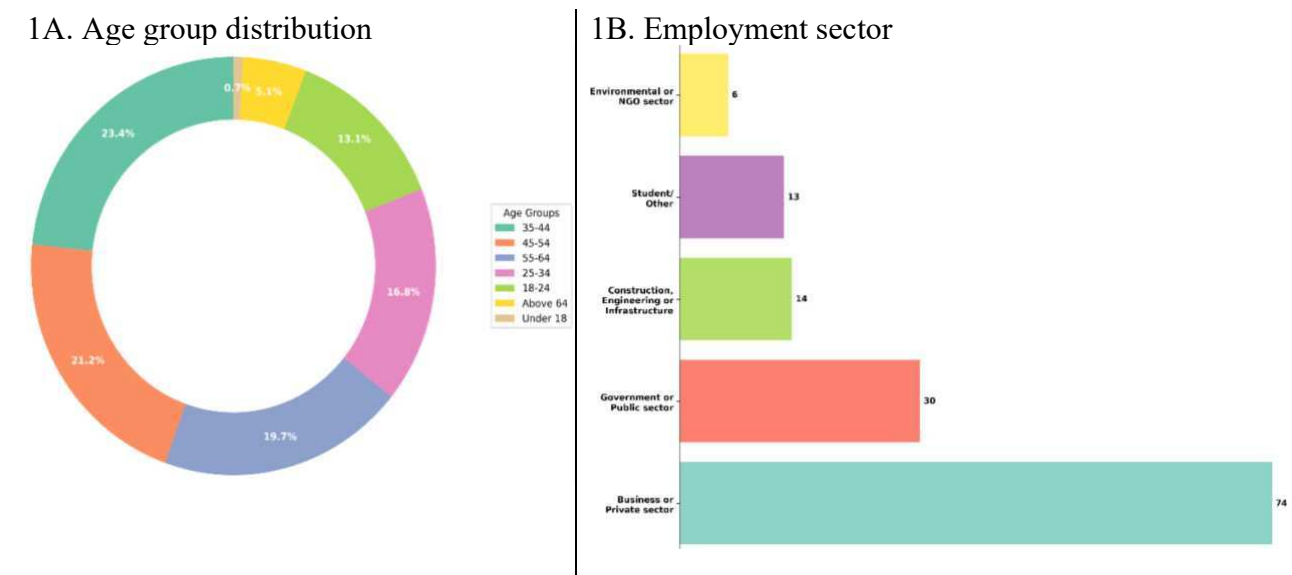
In order to address the research gap on public perceptions, democratic values and procedural streamlining, a Google forms survey on European views on Infrastructure streamlining was developed using my own specific measures (see Appendix I).

The survey was considered the most appropriate method for investigating public attitudes, perceptions, and values across a large European population, especially since its main purpose was to capture diversity in opinions rather than in depth individual experiences.

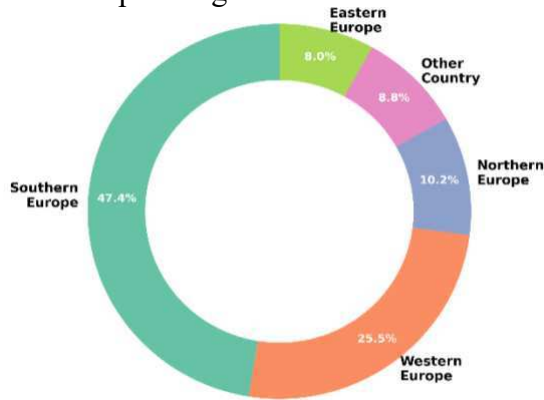
3. 1. Sample

As previously mentioned, there were 140 respondents with different general demographic characteristics. Figure 1 clearly displays the characteristics of the sample in terms of age, region, level of education and employment sector. When looking at the sample characteristics, the group of respondents is mainly composed of people from southern and western Europe, that hold a bachelor's or master's degree and predominantly work in the government and in the business or private sector. Moreover, the age group distribution is very varied with the main age group being 35-44 years, followed by 45-54, 55-64 and 25-34 years respectively.

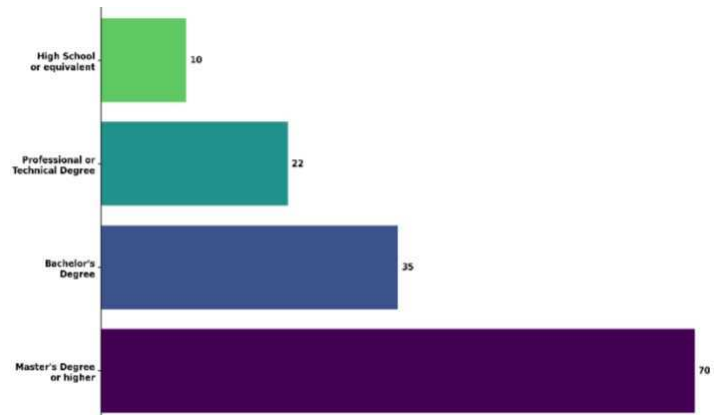
Figure 1. Sample characteristics.



1C. European regions



1D. Level of education



3.2. Survey Design and Procedure

The topics found in the literature review mainly on stakeholder engagement and infrastructure streamlining were used to design the questions. This made it possible for non-specialist respondents to complete the questionnaire while maintaining academic discussions. Moreover, four demographic questions were added to further contextualize the findings, together with one control question to verify the accuracy of the results.

The survey was divided in different sections, those including:

- **Section 1:** Background information, encompassing the four demographic questions.
- **Section 2:** Personal experience, with two questions on if respondents have been personally affected by major infrastructure projects and, if yes, on which type of projects.
- **Section 3:** Infrastructure needs and priorities, including two questions regarding the importance and urgency of different factors as well as new infrastructure projects.
- **Section 4:** European vs global efficiency in infrastructure projects, including two questions comparing infrastructure projects in Europe vs in other regions and its potential roadblocks.
- **Section 5:** Stakeholder engagement and democratic processes, encompassing three questions. Two related to public engagement effectiveness methods and one being the attention check to ensure accuracy in the results.

- **Section 6:** Streamlining vs democratic values, this last section includes three questions related to streamlining processes and its trade-off with democratic values along with future perspectives.

The majority of the questions on the survey were closed ended, including several Likert scale questions that let respondents indicate how much they agreed or disagreed with the different topics. This style was developed to allow for comparisons between replies and to represent deeper opinions rather than binary beliefs. Furthermore, definitions of concepts such as *major infrastructure projects*, *stakeholder engagement* and *streamlining processes* were used throughout the survey to reduce misinterpretation and prevent directing respondents to certain answers.

The data was gathered using an online survey (through google forms) that was distributed using social media, reaching people of many European regions. The use of a digital platform allowed for the quick reach of respondents from various geographical and sociopolitical contexts which allowed getting very varied responses with different personal experiences and perspectives.

Moreover, participation in the survey was optional and anonymous, and respondents were informed of its goal before filling out the online survey. Throughout the whole research process, ethical issues were taken also into account. Hence, no personally identifying information was gathered and all data was kept safely and confidential.

3.3. Survey Performance

All 140 respondents fully completed the survey answering to all 16 questions. Ultimately, an attention check was also included in the survey (Q13) presenting respondents with four different options (option 1, option 2, option 3, option 4) and asking them to just select only option 3. Out of the 140 respondents only three did not select option 3 (97.9% of accuracy). Because of that, they were not included in the data analysis as their answers could not be considered fully reliable.

3.4. Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using both analytical and descriptive data analysis techniques, correlating the different answers to the questions in order to find key takeaways. The research aimed to find

broad trends in responses, including levels of agreement with arguments about procedural effectiveness, infrastructure streamlining in Europe and other regions, democratic involvement, and the levels of trust toward decision making processes.

In order to facilitate the analysis of the data results, the answers of survey were divided according to different variables including: geographical (for Q1, Q2, Q3 and Q4), experience (for Q5 and Q6), needs (only for Q7), importance (only or Q8), streamlining (for Q9, Q10, Q14 and Q15), engagement (for Q11 and Q12) and priorities (only for Q16).

4. Results

The current section covers the survey findings and includes a summary of respondents' perspectives on infrastructure development with a specific focus on perceptions of streamlining, engagement, and on how decisions are made. This chapter's goal is to outline the most important patterns that emerged from the data, while the next chapter will cover the key takeaways as well as the implications of those findings.

The findings have been divided into different topics that correspond to the questionnaire's structure and the main research components. Each section includes several questions with the correspondent answers presented in a visual format so that it is easier to identify patterns and relations. Ultimately, the results are compared in relation to the expected results within this chapter.

4. 1. Descriptive Analysis

4. 1. 1. Experience

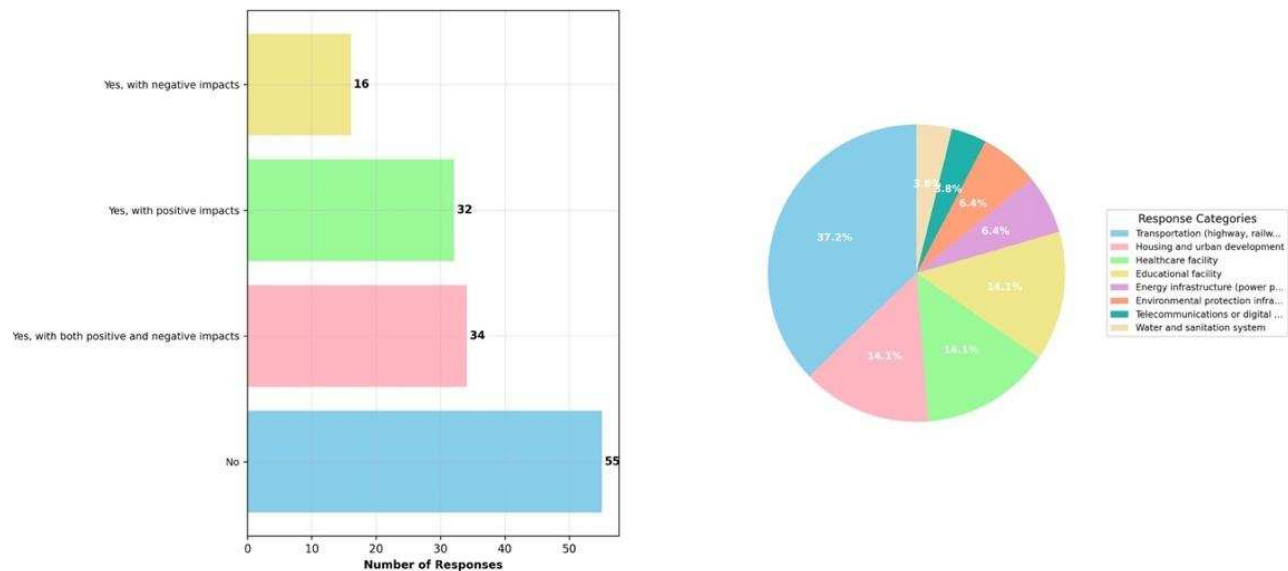
This section investigates if the respondents had any previous experience with infrastructure projects, including whether those were perceived as positive, negative or both. Moreover, it also includes which type of projects involved facilitating the analysis of potential relationships among experience and project type. This is also relevant when considering the potential effects that personal experiences might have on the way respondents perceive public engagement in infrastructure projects and its related processes.

In Figure 2, the results to the two questions related with the experience section are presented. On the one hand, Q5: Have you been personally impacted by a major infrastructure project in your life in way that led to significant positive or negative disruption of your life (e.g., health issues, trauma or career opportunities, financial benefits, etc.).

As seen in the image below, most of the respondents have been affected by a major infrastructure project either with positive, negative effects or both. A large number have also not been directly affected; however, it represents less than 50% of the answers (39.3%).

On the other hand, Q6 represented by the pie chart, follows up on which type of project impacted those that answered “yes” in Q5. Hence, it can be seen that Transportation is the most common one (37.2%), followed by Housing and urban development (14.1%), Healthcare (14.1%) and Educational facilities (14.1%). This is probably due to the fact that, of all the projects listed in the question, those are the type of projects which may directly impact the people’s everyday lives.

Figure 2. Dual analysis Q5 and Q6.



4. 1. 2. Needs

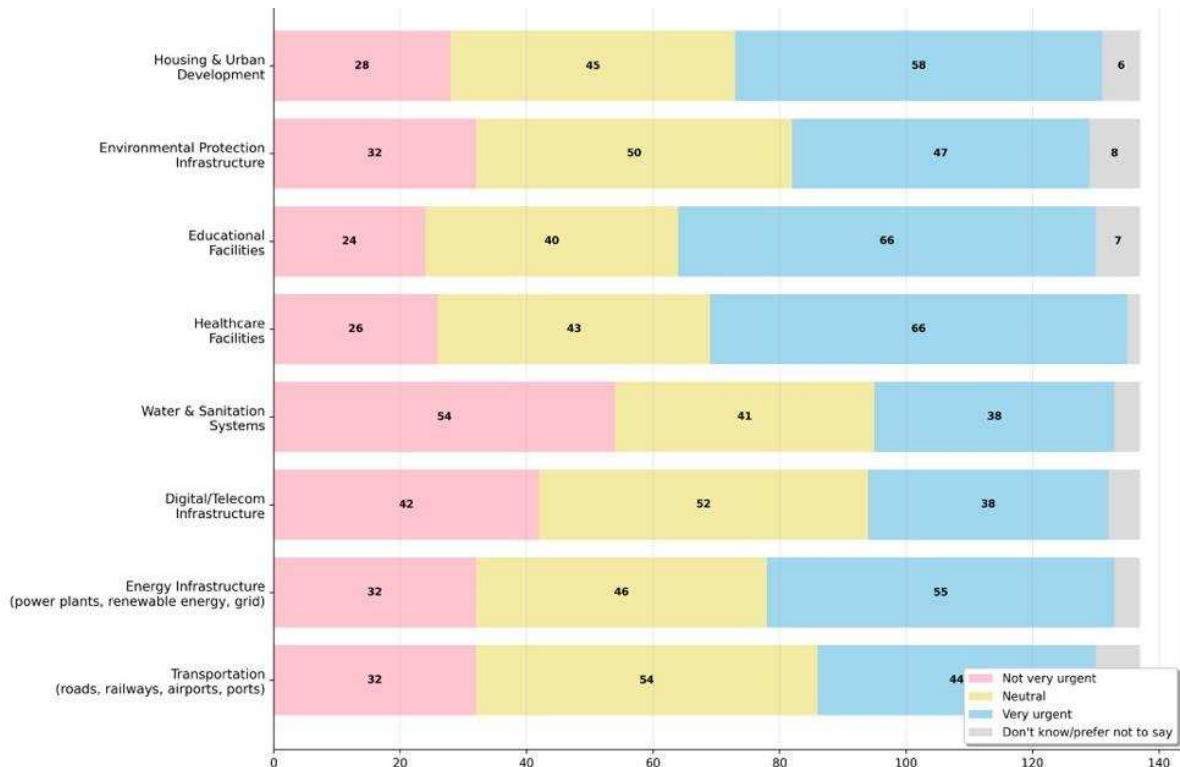
This part focuses on what respondents think to be most urgent type of projects needed in their area of residence. It looks into how respondents prioritize various types of development, such as transportation, energy, technological infrastructure, or facilities for society, allowing to identify the areas where improvements are considered to be more urgent and important.

Thereby, making it possible to gain a deeper understanding of how project perceived urgency may vary depending on the type of project. Figure 3 presents the answers to Q7: In your opinion, how urgent is the need for new major infrastructures in your area of residence? As it can be seen, educational facilities (66), healthcare facilities (66), housing and urban development (58) and energy infrastructure (55) are the types of infrastructure that respondents consider to be very

urgent. Moreover, they all have a considerable number of respondents that were neutral regarding the need for these types of infrastructure.

However, it is important to note that there is also a considerably high number of respondents considering water and sanitation systems as not very important (54 respondents), followed by digital infrastructure (42). This may be due to the fact that sanitation systems and telecom infrastructure are present in most of the European households/neighborhoods and, thus, it is not considered as a necessity but as a given. In any case, overall, they all have high rates of urgency meaning that respondents highly value the implementation of infrastructure projects in general.

Figure 3. Infrastructure urgency.



4. 1. 3. Importance

This section seeks to investigate which factors are considered to be the most important for respondents regarding infrastructure development. It includes considerations related to the economy, the environment, democracy and public engagement, offering a complete view on the levels of importance that each one of these factors have in relation to infrastructure development.

Figure 4. Importance factors.



Figure 4 is based on Q8: Rate the importance of these factors in infrastructure development. Overall, respondents considered all previously mentioned factors as highly important, with a particular emphasis on economic growth and job creation with 105 respondents considering it very important. Moreover, surprisingly, democratic participation and transparency was the option that the highest number of respondents considered as not very important (15 respondents).

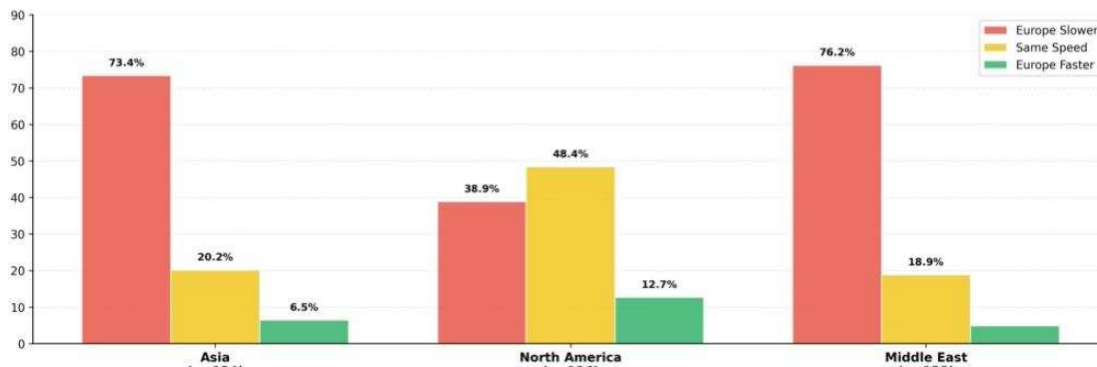
4. 1. 4. Streamlining

The following section, includes one of the core concepts of this paper, streamlining. It focuses on how respondents view streamlining efforts in infrastructure development and how those may be balanced with other important considerations. All in all, it measures how respondents perceive initiatives to simplify or speed infrastructure development procedures, focusing on perceptions instead of policy preferences. Thus, reflecting how procedural improvements are assessed when compared to broader governance objectives.

On the one hand, Figure 5 seeks to compare the respondent's perception of speed of Europe against North America and the Middle East. It is based in Q9: In your opinion, how are major infrastructure

projects construction in Europe compared to those in other regions? As it can be seen, generally, respondents rated Europe as much slower than Asia (73.4%) and Middle East (76.2%), and about the same speed when compared to North America (48.4%).

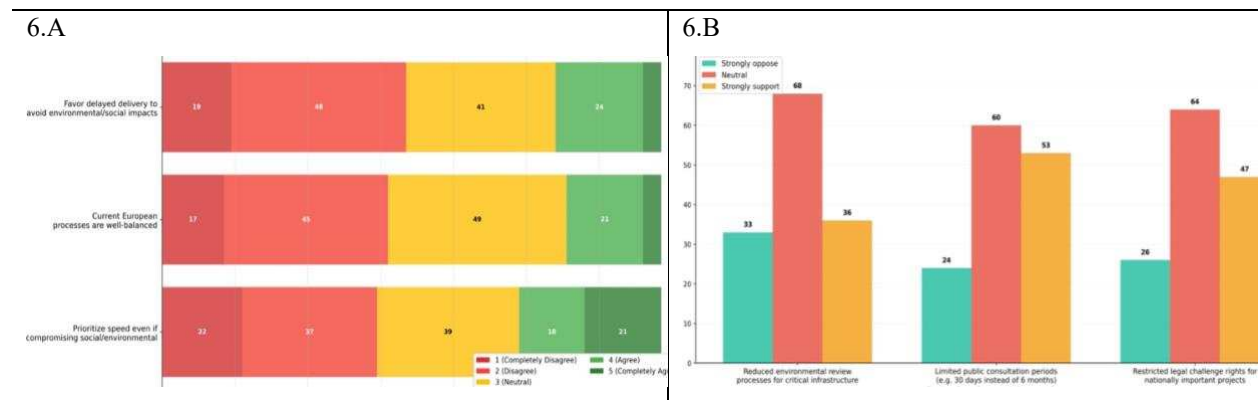
Figure 5. Regional comparisons.



On the other hand, Figure 6 shows responses related to Q14 (6.A) and to Q15 (6.B). Figure 6.A is a Likert scale based on the following question: What is your level of agreement with each one of these statements, whereas Figure 6. B is based on: 15. Would you support adopting faster development approaches if it meant (for each of the statements). Overall, the answers tend to be neutral, suggesting that respondents do not want to take a side in complex trade-offs in favor of streamlining such as reducing environmental reviews or limiting consultation periods.

However, in Figure 6.A respondents slightly favor prioritizing speed even if it compromises social and environmental effects (39 agree/completely agree answers) rather than favoring delayed delivery to avoid environmental and social impacts (25 agree/completely agree answers).

Figure 6. Streamlining preferences.



4. 1. 5. Engagement

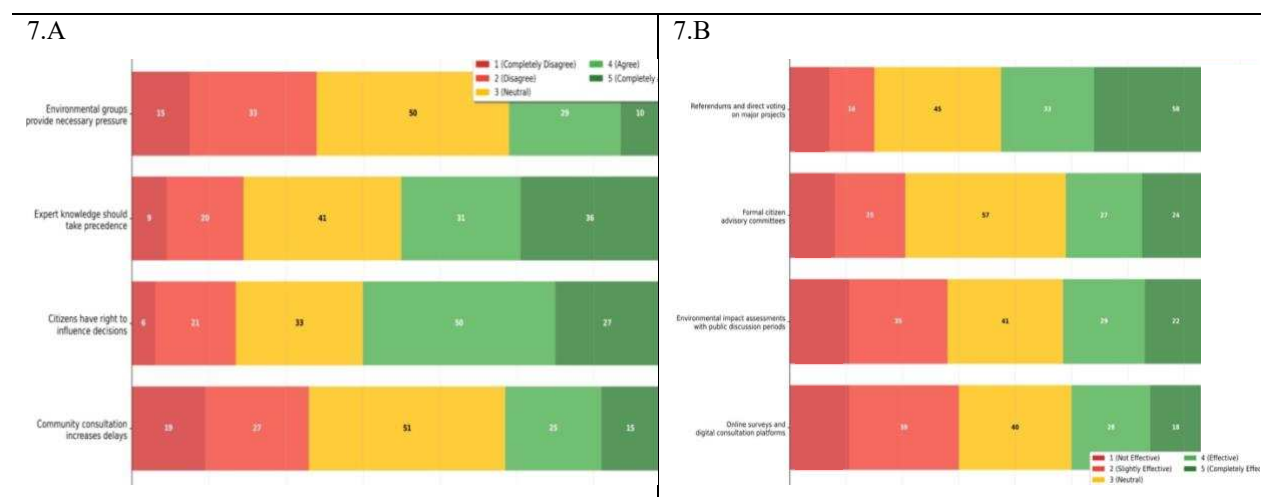
The engagement section, investigates attitudes about participation in infrastructure development. The findings in this part illustrate how respondents perceive public engagement and consultation, as well as how these procedures shape reliability and legitimacy.

It is also one of the core sections of the survey since it provides important insights on the level of agreement and effectiveness that several forms of public engagement have. Thus, in Figure 7, two Likert scales related to engagement preferences are presented, with 1 being completely disagree/not effective and 5 being completely agree/very effective.

On the one hand, Figure 7.A presents the answers related to Q11: What is your level of agreement with each one of these statements. It can be seen that more than 50% of respondents agree with the fact that citizens have the right to influence decisions (77), meaning public engagement is, thus, considered essential. However, a high number of them (67) also thinks that expert knowledge should take precedence over public opinion.

On the other hand, Figure 7.B represents Q12: How would you rate the effectiveness that each method of public engagement has. Here it is important to highlight that out of all four different engagement methods presented, the majority of respondents consider that referendums and direct voting on major projects is the most effective one.

Figure 7. Engagement preferences.



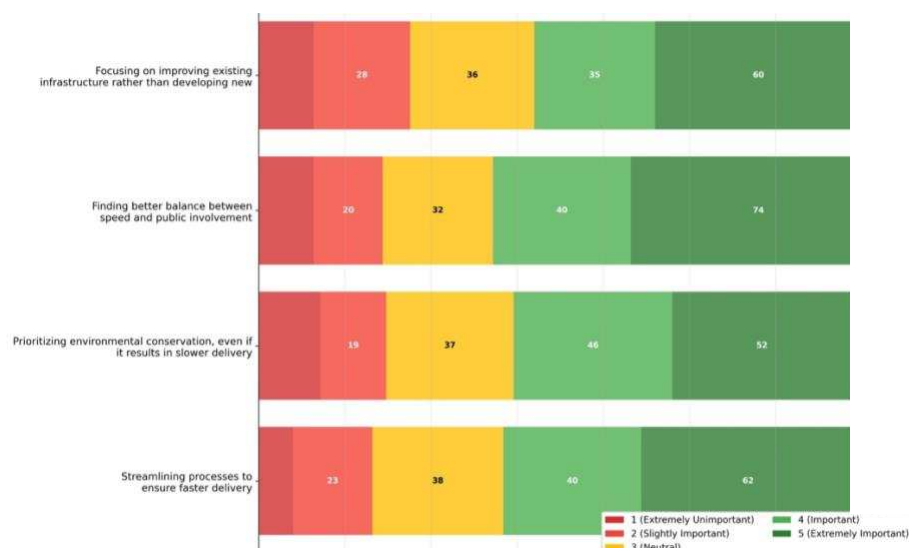
4. 1. 6. Priorities

The last section investigated, evaluates the respondents' priorities when many objectives are under consideration together. This section focuses on how respondents balance several variables, such as streamlining, engagement, and legal safeguards, giving insights into the perceived trade-offs. It also looks at future considerations, underlaying the respondents' preferences in the close future. Figure 8 presents a Likert scale showing the responses from Q16: Looking 10 years from now, how important do you expect each of these options to be. Respondents were asked to rank each of the four options from 1 (extremely unimportant) to 5 (extremely important).

This question is extremely interesting since it is the only one that looks into the respondents' future priorities to see what are they willing to compromise (if anything) in order to meet them. In the figure, it can be seen that overall, all the options are considered important. However, respondents highlight that finding a better balance between speed and public involvement is the most important one, followed by streamlining processes to ensure faster delivery.

Hence, there is a willingness to streamline infrastructure projects in the close future but without compromising public involvement, since as seen before, it is considered very important. Ultimately, focusing on improving existing infrastructure rather than developing new is the option that had less support by the respondents and it is overall considered the less important option.

Figure 8. Future priorities.



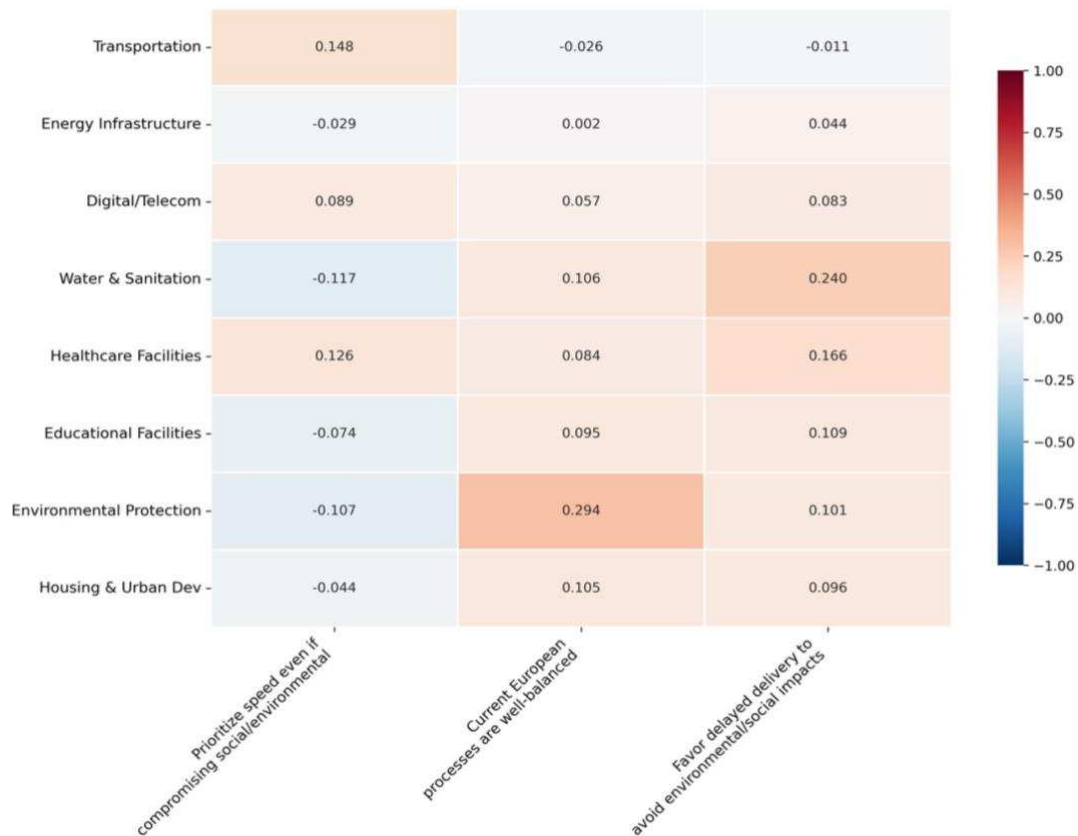
4. 2. Exploratory Analysis

4.2.1. Infrastructure Urgency & Policy Preferences

This section investigates the correlation between the respondents' perceived urgency towards several infrastructure types (Q7) and their policy preferences towards streamlining, legal protections, and the balance of European processes for decision making (Q14). In Figure 9, it can be seen the correlation matrix that relates infrastructure urgency between three different policy preferences: prioritizing speed above social or environmental implications, viewing existing European systems as well-balanced, and preferring delayed delivery to prevent such impacts.

In general, the correlations are small, suggesting the fact that perceptions of urgency do not significantly affect policy choices. This is consistent with past findings (Sections 4.4 and 4.5), in which respondents usually had neutral opinions when considering the advantages and disadvantages amongst streamlining and democratic rights.

Figure 9. Infrastructure urgency and policy preferences.



However, there are some correlations that, even though they are not extremely high, they are still worth mentioning. For instance, there is a small positive correlation (0.148) between prioritizing speed and perceived urgency in transportation infrastructure, indicating that those who consider transportation to be urgent are somewhat more likely to accept faster growth. This is in accordance with Section 4.1, where transportation was one of the most urgent infrastructure types.

In addition, the perception that the current European processes are well-balanced, is slightly connected with the urgency of environmental protection (0.294), suggesting more support for current policies rather than more streamlining.

In the same way, there is a positive correlation between urgency in water and sanitation systems and the preference for delayed delivery in order to prevent negative social or environmental effects (0.240), indicating a preference for prudence in those areas that are more complex and delicate. Also, similar but weaker tendencies appear regarding healthcare and education facilities.

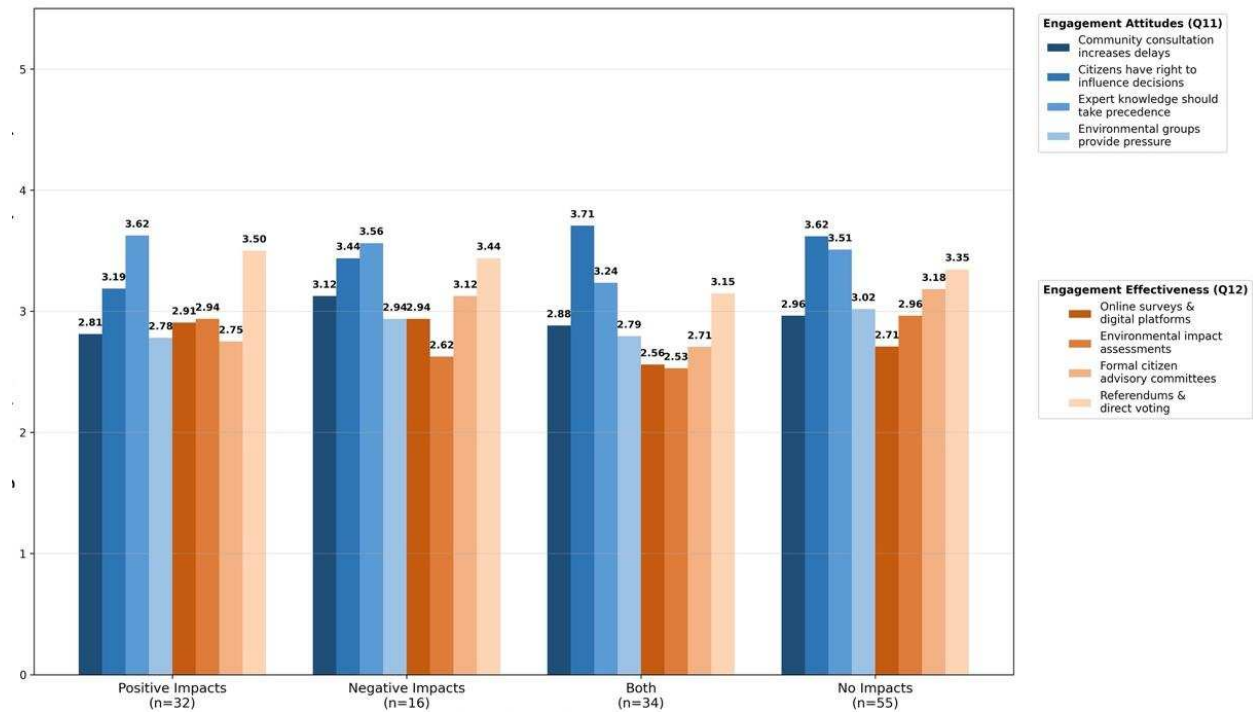
Hence, the data shows that infrastructure urgency alone does not imply strong support for streamlining processes. Overall, it can be said that the predictions are slightly more tenuous than anticipated: respondents distinguish among various types of infrastructure and often support balanced policies that protect democratic, social, and environmental interests.

4. 2. 2. Past Experiences & Engagement Attitudes

This section evaluates how respondents' prior experience with infrastructure projects influences their views toward public involvement and the estimated effectiveness of several engagement strategies. Figure 10 shows the mean of the agreement and effectiveness scores for four groups with different experience types: those who experienced positive impacts, those that had negative impacts, those with both positive and negative impacts, and the ones that did not have any impacts.

As it can be seen, support for public participation is generally strong across every group. The majority of respondents (mean = 3.71) answered that people have the right to participate in infrastructure decisions. In fact, those who experienced benefits as well as negative impacts showed the highest levels of agreement out of all.

Figure 10. Past experiences and engagement attitudes.



This shows that direct experience with infrastructure projects can increase perceptions of the necessity of public engagement. At the same time, there is also a slight agreement that expert information should take precedence over public opinion in all experience categories, indicating the balanced views that were previously described in Section 4.5.

Opinions regarding the fact that community consultation causes delays are also consistent with section 4.5, suggesting that efficiency issues are not entirely motivated by previous experiences that were negative. In terms of engagement effectiveness (Q12), on the one hand, referendums and direct voting are ranked as the most successful methods in all groups.

It is important to note that this preference is also highest among respondents with both good and bad prior experiences, supporting previous studies in the literature review where direct forms of engagement are viewed as more genuine than consultative or administrative procedures.

On the other hand, online surveys and digital platforms are generally regarded as the least successful involvement option, whereas formal citizen advisory groups and environmental impact

evaluations obtain average scores. This is also true when compared to the literature review, where some studies found that digital or online options were less effective as public engagement methods.

Importantly, those respondents that did not have any direct experience with infrastructure projects showed participation attitudes which were similar to those who answered that they were affected. This implies that opinions on participation are influenced not just by personal experience, but also by more general moral expectations of democratic engagement in infrastructure governance.

4. 2. 3. Perceived Streamlining in Europe vs Other Regions & Attitudes Towards Streamlining

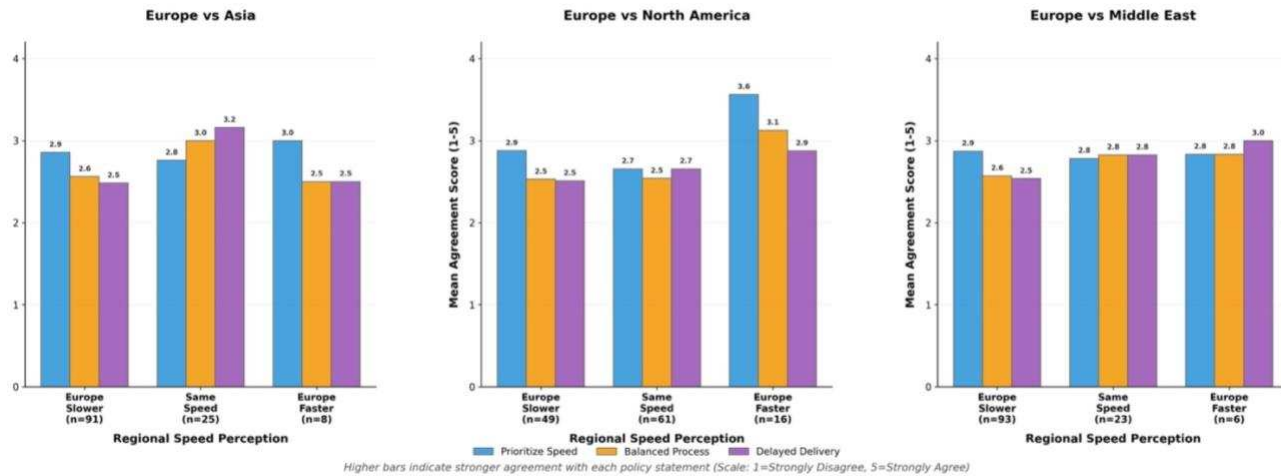
This section studies whether opinions regarding the speed of Europe's infrastructure development relative to other regions impact attitudes towards streamlining. Figure 11 shows the means of respondents' perceptions on perceived infrastructure development streamlining in Europe against Asia, North America and Middle East.

In the Europe-Asia comparison, respondents who view Europe as slower (n=91) are somewhat likely to prioritize speed (mean = 2.9). Those who believe Europe and Asia move at the same pace (n=25) are more likely to favor balanced procedures (mean = 3.0) as well as delays in delivery (mean = 3.2). Lastly, respondents who see Europe as faster (n=8) show somewhat stronger support for prioritizing speed, however this group is extremely small.

The comparison between Europe and North America shows a clearer tendency. Respondents who believe Europe is faster (n=16) are much more likely to agree with prioritizing speed (mean = 3.6), but they also indicate little support for balanced procedures (mean = 3.1) and delayed delivery.

In contrast, those who considered Europe to be as slower (n=49) or at the same speed (n=61) than North America, have more similar preferences in each one of the statements.

Figure 11. Streamlining in Europe and other regions.



In the Europe-Middle East comparison, opinions are generally evenly distributed among all categories. Even respondents who believe Europe is faster (n=6) continue to prefer delayed delivery (mean = 3.0), indicating constant concern about protections.

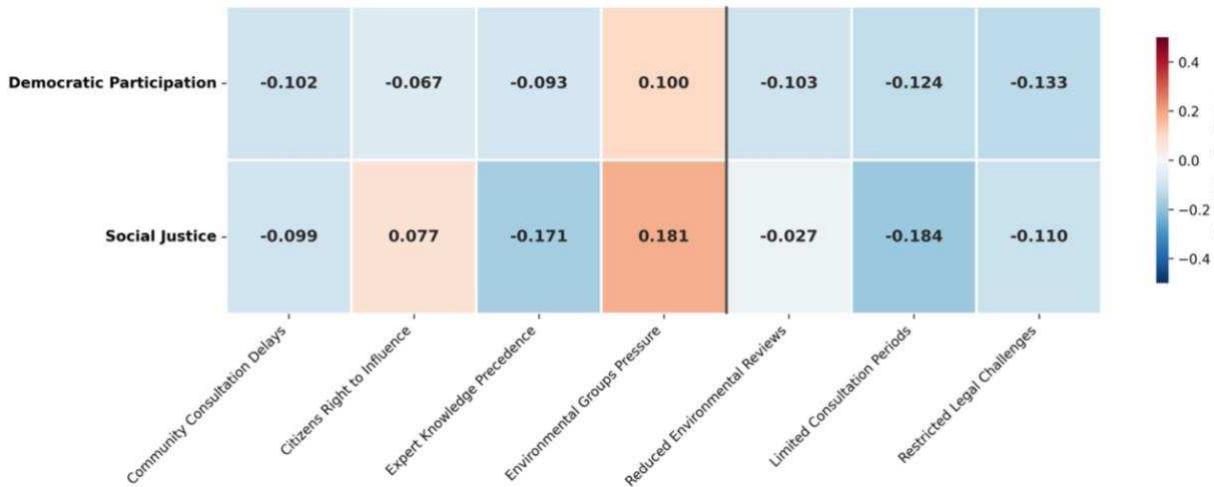
On the whole, when people believe Europe is slower (the majority of people) they prioritize speed, which is what was expected. When people believe Europe is same speed, they do not prioritize speed, also within what was expected.

However, the main unexpected finding is that people who believe Europe is faster (a minority group) also prioritize speed. Hence, there is group in the sample that is the “streamliners”: they think Europe is faster, but still, they want even faster.

4. 2. 4. Democratic Rights & Streamlining/Engagement Preferences

This section evaluates whether respondents' support for democratic principles, particularly social justice (Q8), is linked to their views toward public engagement (Q11) and preferences for streamlining infrastructure development (Q15). Thereby, figure 12 shows the correlation scores between democratic principles and attitudes toward involvement and streamlining.

Figure 12. Democracy and streamlining/engagement.



Overall, the correlations are minimal, indicating that respecting democratic values does not result in significantly differing attitudes toward public engagement or streamlining processes. There are mostly negative correlations, for instance, expert knowledge should be prioritized (-0.093), consultations cause delays (-0.102), and preferences for restricting legal challenges (-0.133) or limiting consultation periods (-0.124), are all negatively correlated with democratic participation.

Conversely, social justice has small positive correlations with the public ability to influence decisions (0.077) and their views regarding environmental group pressure (0.181), but small negative correlations with giving preference to expert knowledge (-0.171), shortening consultation periods (-0.184), and minimizing legal challenges (-0.110).

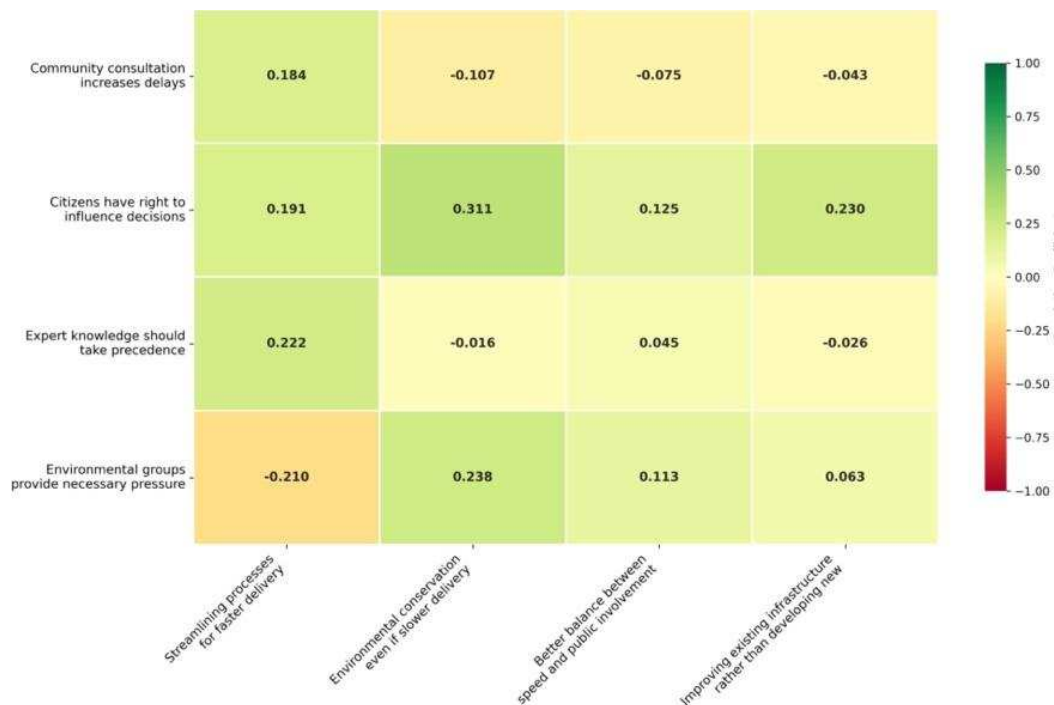
Overall, it was expected a clear-cut association between strong streaming attitudes and low adherence to democratic values and social justice in infrastructure development. However, this only show in few (but nonetheless important) instances. For example, it looks like people valuing expert knowledge are willing to compromise on social justice (a kind of “let the experts” attitude).

This is also consistent with the association between environmental groups pressure and social justice (people de-valuing these groups are also more whiling to compromise on social justice) and between limited consultation periods and social justice (people agreeing with limited consultation are also are also more whiling to compromise on social justice). However, the most unexpected finding is that this pattern is more tenuous that what was expected.

4. 2. 5. Streamlining Attitudes & Future Infrastructure Priorities

This section analyzes streamlining attitudes and how those might influence future infrastructure priorities. Figure 13 displays a heatmap showing the correlations among existing streamlining attitudes (Q11) and future infrastructure priorities (Q16). Positive correlations show that attitudes and priorities are aligned, whereas negative correlations reveal opposing viewpoints.

Figure 13. Streamlining attitudes and future priorities.



Respondents who feel people have the right to influence choices generally show strong correlations with all infrastructure objectives, especially preservation of the environment (0.311) and improvements to infrastructure (0.230). This implies that supporting public engagement correlates with support for sustainable practices and progressive infrastructure improvements.

In contrast, the belief that environmental groups provide necessary pressure negatively correlates with simplifying processes for streamlining delivery (-0.210), showing a possible conflict between advocating for environmental governance and prioritizing speed. Additionally, thinking that expert knowledge should take precedence, has small correlations with all future priorities, showing that relying on expertise alone does not highly influence future priorities regarding infrastructure.

It was expected that people prioritizing streamlining would do that because they had “negative” views about community consultation or community participation. Although that is mostly the case, it is not clear-cut if people prioritizing streamlining also have a higher tendency to believe that community consultation increases delays, that expert knowledge is critical, and that environmental groups are non-important, but still, they believe in the right for citizens to influence decisions.

In essence, the findings indicate that there is little correlation between future infrastructure priorities and views on streamlining. Instead, respondents' future infrastructure priorities are more strongly related to the importance they place on public engagement and the environment than to a preference for streamlining approaches or expert decision making.

5. Discussion

This chapter addresses the paper's major findings in relation to the information already available on stakeholder involvement, infrastructure regulation, and regulatory simplification in Europe. The goal is to interpret the findings beyond descriptive patterns, connecting the survey data to theoretical discussions regarding democratic legitimacy, streamlining, and public trust in infrastructure decision making.

All in all, the results show that rather than viewing infrastructure development as merely a technical problem, European citizens view it as a complex governance challenge. Although most respondents agree on the need of additional infrastructure, especially in sectors like healthcare or education, they are dubious of policies that favor streamlining over democratic protections.

This supports the literature's claim that infrastructure conflicts are often driven by legitimacy and procedural issues rather than by objections towards the infrastructure itself (Lee et al., 2012; Dolan et al., 2025). The findings also show that public opinion is not simple. In this way, respondents prioritize democratic involvement, expert knowledge, and institutional efficiency, confirming the complex dilemmas outlined by Wegrich et al. (2016) and Hammerschmid and Wegrich (2016).

Additionally, the results show a strong preference for participatory methods, especially direct forms of involvement like voting and referendums. This supports findings from the literature stating that whenever people perceive engagement as meaningful rather than merely symbolic, legitimacy and trust improve (Mansuri & Rao, 2013; Waddington et al., 2019).

Moreover, respondents choose balanced governance approaches that guarantee public engagement and transparency instead of excessive streamlining or bureaucratic simplicity. Additionally, the data also suggests that public opinions are not significantly influenced by perceived urgency or previous experiences with infrastructure projects. Instead, preferences remain constant across the different profiles, showing that democratic standards are more important than past experiences. Nevertheless, the following take-aways summarize the most important findings obtained from the survey responses, focusing on how respondents perceive public engagement, streamlining and bureaucracy in infrastructure development.

5.1. Key Take-Away 1: The Urgency of Infrastructure Does Not Imply Strong Support for Streamlining Processes

The first take-away is based on the fact that infrastructure development's perceived urgency does not always translate into support for quicker or more efficient decision making. Even though respondents did acknowledge the need for new infrastructure, especially in sensitive areas such as education or healthcare, there are only small correlations between urgency and willingness to put streamlining ahead of social or environmental concerns.

As it is stated in Section 4.7, respondents generally prefer delays above streamlining, especially in areas such as healthcare, education, and water and sanitation systems. For instance, environmental urgency is correlated with a favorable view of existing European systems as balanced, reflecting confidence in the existing processes rather than a need for additional streamlining.

These findings are consistent with the literature, which highlights that public support is determined more by the perceived equity and authenticity of how decisions are made than by the results themselves (Schmid et al., 2021; Salet et al., 2012). They question the fact that urgency automatically increases public support for streamlining processes. Contrary to what was expected, respondents were concerned about the risks associated with reducing transparency or engagement mechanisms even when the urgency of infrastructure was rated as very high.

According to Finka et al. (2017) and Cowell & Devine-Wright (2018), streamlining improvements need to be carefully implemented in order to maintain the trust of the public. Given the survey results, instead of viewing urgency and democratic protections as conflicting goals, respondents seemed to be expecting government strategies that balance both.

5.2. Key Take-Away 2: Equitable and Balanced Governance is Preferred Over Excessive Streamlining

The second take-away is based on the fact that respondents showed a strong support for balanced alternatives that combine procedural efficiency with substantial public engagement rather than

preferring streamlining decision making at the price of democratic protections. Contrary to what was initially expected, when the respondents were presented with different compromises among streamlining and democratic or environmental protections in the survey, their answers were neutral or moderate all through several sections of the results (particularly in Sections 4.4, 4.6, and 4.9).

While some respondents agreed to accept more rapid delivery under specific cases, there was no substantial support for shortening consultation periods, restricting legal challenges, or reducing environmental evaluations. Instead, respondents identified the largest future objective as achieving a better balance between speed and public engagement (Section 4.6), which rated higher than pure streamlining or maintaining current procedures as they are.

This preference for balance is reinforced the finding of Section 4.9, which indicate that considering Europe as slower than other regions (as most respondents did) does not substantially improve support for streamlining processes. Even those who thought European infrastructure development was relatively inefficient showed concerns about procedural protections when speeding processes was suggested. This implies that discontent with speed leads to expectations for more coordinated governance rather than a preference for deregulation and excessive streamlining.

These findings are consistent with the research, which further highlights the importance of procedural equity in infrastructure governance over administrative efficiency alone (Salet et al., 2012; Schmid et al., 2021). It seems that respondents expect improvements that improve organization without compromising engagement and transparency. As a result, streamlining initiatives that are regarded as complimentary to democratic protections may be more widely accepted than improvements aimed purely at speeding delivery.

5.3. Key Take-Away 3: Democratic Participation is Essential for Maintaining Trust/Legitimacy in Infrastructure Projects

The third and last key takeaway underlines the importance of democratic ideals and public participation in changing attitudes towards infrastructure development. Firstly, it is important to note that, after the analysis of the survey results, regardless of respondents' individual experiences,

sense of urgency, or opinions regarding streamlining, support for democratic engagement was consistently high throughout the responses.

Sections 4.5 and 4.8 suggest that the majority of respondents acknowledged that citizens should have a say in infrastructure decisions. This viewpoint was held by all experience groups, even those who were not directly impacted by infrastructure projects, implying that participation is regarded as a fundamental requirement of democratic governance rather than a response to previous negative experience.

Moreover, direct forms of participation, such as referendums and voting, were considered to be among the most effective engagement methods, showing a preference for meaningful instead of symbolic engagement. Simultaneously, respondents expressed support for both community engagement and expert decision making, indicating that both components are seen as complimentary rather than conflicting. Hence, respondents seem to prefer hybrid governance models, where democratic processes provide legitimacy whilst experts influence decisions.

On the whole, these results support previous research stating that infrastructure issues mostly come from the perceived exclusion of the public opinion, rather than by the opposition to infrastructure themselves (Lee et al., 2012; Dolan et al., 2025). Therefore, reforms that maintain citizen's as legitimate stakeholders are more probable to win public support, whereas streamlining initiatives that undermine democratic involvement face the risk of threatening legitimacy and the public trust.

6. Conclusions & Limitations

6.1. Conclusions

Contrary to what was initially expected, the paper illustrates that, even when European citizens recognize the importance of infrastructure development, they do not always favor streamlining it. One may think that urgency would result in significant support for quicker decision making, especially in areas like healthcare, education, and transportation. However, respondents were hesitant of decisions that could undermine democratic, social, or environmental protections.

This calls into question the initial belief that when infrastructure requirements are clear, efficiency and streamlining should come first. Interestingly, respondents also emphasized the important role of balanced governance. Instead of considering speed above democratic and public engagement, respondents clearly preferred mechanisms that could balance streamlining, transparency, and legitimacy. This was rather unexpected, given that society frequently presents streamlining as naturally positive in response to delays or inefficiency.

Another unexpected finding is substantial support for true public engagement. Direct forms of participation, such as referendums and voting, were generally regarded as the most successful, however expert knowledge was also preferred. This suggests that citizens would rather have hybrid governance structures in which technical competence has an influence decision making but still the general public maintains its status as a legitimate stakeholder.

Altogether, these results imply that European citizens prioritize fairness and institutional integrity over speed. Even in the face of urgent infrastructure demands, they want reforms that improve coordination following democratic principles. Thus, experts seeking to streamline infrastructure development must acknowledge that efficiency alone will not ensure public support; maintaining democratic legitimacy and public engagement is equally important, if not more so.

6.2. Limitations & Future Research

This paper provided several insights in a topic that has not been thoroughly researched, despite this however, it has some limitations which could become future research opportunities. Initially,

despite its geographical diversity, the sample consisted mainly of up of respondents from southern and western Europe with higher educational levels and mainly jobs in the private sector. This could limit the findings' applicability to other geographical areas or socioeconomic groups with diverse infrastructure governance opinions and experiences.

Subsequently, the survey was based on personal opinions and hypothetical situations, which may not accurately represent authentic behavior in reaction to infrastructure developments or governance reforms. Lastly, the quantitative approach used in this paper placed more emphasis on scope than on detail. Although the survey showed broad correlations and trends, it could not provide deeper insights into the reasons behind the respondents' answers.

Thus, this makes it more difficult to fully understand complex views and contextual elements that shape the respondents' opinions. Future research should therefore include more respondents from other European regions such as Northern and Eastern Europe as well as with more diverse socioeconomic backgrounds so that there is a higher variety in the level of education and jobs.

Moreover, qualitative research, such as interviews or focus groups, might also support survey results, providing additional information into how respondents perceive the compromises between streamlining, democratic engagement, and environmental or social priorities. As a result, future research might fill these gaps, offering further advice for policymakers interested in streamlining infrastructure development whilst keeping democratic legitimacy and trust among the public.

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Appendix I

European Views on Infrastructure Streamlining

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this research survey. The study is part of my master's thesis for the MSc in Business program. The present study analyzes the trade-off between infrastructure development efficiency and democratic participation in Europe, comparing European approaches with international practices.

The survey will take approximately 5-8 minutes to answer. Participation is anonymous, and all the responses will be kept confidential for academic research purposes only. No personally identifiable information will be collected or shared.

Section 1: Background Information

1. Which European region are you from?

- ☐ Western Europe (Germany, France, UK, Netherlands, Belgium, Austria, Switzerland)
- ☐ Southern Europe (Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Malta, Cyprus)
- ☐ Northern Europe (Scandinavia, Baltics, Ireland)
- ☐ Eastern Europe (Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria)
- ☐ Other Country

2. How old are you?

- ☐ Under 18
- ☐ 18-24
- ☐ 25-34
- ☐ 35-44
- ☐ 45-54
- ☐ 55-64
- ☐ Above 64

3. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- ☐ High School or equivalent
- ☐ Bachelor's Degree
- ☐ Master's Degree or higher
- ☐ Professional or Technical Degree

4. What is your employment sector? (if multiple, select the most important to you)

- ☐ Government or Public sector
- ☐ Business or Private sector
- ☐ Construction, Engineering or Infrastructure
- ☐ Environmental or NGO sector
- ☐ Student/Other

Section 2: Personal Experience

Major infrastructure projects include large-scale projects that have a strong impact on communities and regions. Some examples include: water and sanitation systems, telecommunications infrastructure, energy facilities (power plants, renewable energy installations, electrical grids), and transportation networks.

5. Have you been personally impacted by a major infrastructure project in your life in way that led to significant positive or negative disruption of your life (e.g., health issues, trauma or career opportunities, financial benefits, etc.)

- ☐ Yes, with negative impacts
- ☐ Yes, with positive impacts
- ☐ Yes, with both positive and negative impacts
- ☐ No

6. If yes, what type of project was this?

- ☐ N/A
- ☐ Transportation (highway, railway, airport, port)

- Energy infrastructure (power plant, renewable energy facility, electrical grid)
- Water and sanitation system
- Telecommunications or digital infrastructure
- Healthcare facility
- Educational facility
- Environmental protection infrastructure
- Housing and urban development

Section 3: Infrastructure Needs and Priorities

7. In your opinion, how urgent is the need for new major infrastructures in your area of residence?

Rate each one as Not very urgent, Neutral, Very urgent or Don't know/prefer not to say

- Transportation (highway, railway, airport, port)
- Energy infrastructure (power plant, renewable energy facility, electrical grid)
- Water and sanitation system
- Telecommunications or digital infrastructure
- Healthcare facility
- Educational facility
- Environmental protection infrastructure
- Housing and urban development

8. Rate the importance of these factors in infrastructure development

Rate each one as Not very important, Neutral, Very important or Don't know/prefer not to say

- Economic growth and job creation
- Environmental protection
- Democratic participation and transparency
- International competitiveness
- Social justice and community benefits

Section 4: European vs Global efficiency in infrastructure projects

9. In your opinion, how are major infrastructure projects construction in Europe compared to those in other regions?

Rate each one as Slower, About the same speed, Faster or Don't know/prefer not to say

- Compared to Asia (China, Japan, South Korea, Singapore)
- Compared to North America (USA, Canada)
- Compared to Middle East (UAE, Qatar, Saudi Arabia)

10. What are the Top 3 reasons infrastructure projects may take longer in Europe? (Select exactly 3)

- Extensive environmental regulations
- Several bureaucracy and legal challenges
- Multi-layered government approval systems (EU, national, regional, local)
- Strong environmental activist movements and public pressure
- Political instability and frequent policy changes
- Insufficient government funding and financing delays

Section 5: Stakeholder engagement and Democratic processes

Public involvement refers to the methods that allow citizens to influence infrastructure choices through consultations, public hearings, environmental impact assessments, and legal challenges. These mechanisms are designed to encourage transparency, responsibility, and inclusion of community concerns.

11. What is your level of agreement with each one of these statements?

Rate each one as 1-Completely Disagree, 2, 3, 4, 5-Completely Agree

- Community consultation increases project delays
- Citizens have the right to influence infrastructure decisions
- Expert technical knowledge should take precedence over public opinion
- Environmental groups provide necessary pressure

12. How would you rate the effectiveness that each method of public engagement has?

Rate each one as 1-Completely Ineffective, 2, 3, 4, 5-Completely Effective

- Online surveys and digital consultation platforms
- Environmental impact assessments with public discussion periods
- Formal citizen advisory committees
- Referendums and direct voting on major projects

13. ATTENTION CHECK. Please select option 3 to show you are reading the questions carefully

- Option 1
- Option 2
- Option 3
- Option 4

Section 6: Streamlining vs Democratic values

To speed up infrastructure project delivery, streamlining involves eliminating regulatory phases, decreasing consultation times, centralizing the power to make decisions, and reducing legal challenges. Some countries achieve speedier growth through such simplified systems, whilst others advocate for more stakeholder involvement.

14. What is your level of agreement with each one of these statements?

Rate each one as 1-Completely Disagree, 2, 3, 4, 5-Completely Agree

- Prioritize speed in infrastructure delivery to meet societal requirements, even if it means compromising social and environmental effects
- Current European processes are well-balanced
- To avoid environmental and social impacts, Europe should favor delayed infrastructure delivery, even if it means postponing current societal needs

15. Would you support adopting faster development approaches if it meant:

Rate each one as Strongly oppose, Neutral, Strongly Support

- Reduced environmental review processes for critical infrastructure

- Limited public consultation periods (e.g., 30 days instead of 6 months)
- Restricted legal challenge rights for nationally important projects

16. Looking 10 years from now, how important do you expect each of these options to be?

Rate each one as 1-Completely Unimportant, 2, 3, 4, 5-Completely Important

- Streamlining processes to ensure faster delivery
- Prioritizing environmental conservation, even if it results in slower delivery
- Finding better balance between speed and public involvement
- Focusing on improving existing infrastructure rather than developing new

Thank you for completing the survey!