Preface

This book goes to press at a time when the constitutional debate in the European Union (EU) seems to be coming to a close. What started in grand style with sombre speeches in the Constitutional Convention ends in fatigue and disenchantment after the rejection of the Constitutional Treaty in popular referenda and the compromise reached with the Lisbon Treaty. Nonetheless, a major puzzle is left unresolved: why are citizens sceptical towards the legitimacy of the exercise of authority in the EU and what would it take to address their concerns?

The main intuition that led to the idea of writing this book was that neither one-off attempts at institutional engineering nor centuries of cultural integration would provide answers. Recent developments seem to confirm this initial thought. We need to look at the diverse social and political practices that Europeans are being exposed to, are exchanging and are learning to share and the moral content of these practices. This is the stuff of which political community is gradually and concretely being built in Europe. And it is against the background of political community thus conceived that citizens' concerns can be addressed.

Acknowledgements are due to the Alexander Onasis Public Benefit Foundation for funding my postgraduate studies throughout the period 1998–2002 during which part of the research incorporated in this book was conducted. I am grateful to Albert Weale and Lynn Dobson who read and commented on previous drafts of chapters of this book. Exchanging thoughts and arguments with each of them has been intellectually stimulating and a great pleasure. Friends who patiently endured discussions on political responsibility and the EU over the years include Andrea Zhok, Havi Carel, Helena Rovner, Marcus Vossel and Vasso Karageorgiou. I would like to thank them for that patience.

Much of the book was written in a small fishing village on the Greek island of Samos overlooking the Turkish coast, during the summers of 2006 and 2007. Quite apart from the peace and beauty of the landscape which greatly contributed to my being able to see the project through, there is a lot to say for thinking about political community from the valuable perspective of a place that stands on the EU's external border. When the 'other' is

only a swim's length away, one is not tempted to forget that the limits of community are always constructed, fluid and elusive.

Finally, my family – in particular my parents – have constantly and generously supported and encouraged me to complete this project throughout the past decade. This book is dedicated to them.

Myrto Tsakatika, Glasgow
January 2008