Identifying with the European Union and the problem of responsibility

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Abstract

Modern authorities are normally considered to be primarily responsible to their demos. The existence of European demos, however, is questionable, and a way to measure it would be to explore the identifications of the EU member states citizens. The authors explore identifications within the borders of the EU, ensuing from the important role of everyday practices and activities on supranational instance. Noting that identifications with European space cannot be delimited only to supranational political entity, they stress the significance of particular cultural and political discourses on those processes. Identifications with the EU on individual level certainly hold on deeper conceptualisations of the meaning of Europe, while individuals' geographical, cultural and political contexts, more firmly rooted in their national backgrounds, play a crucial role. The lack of firm and consistent European identification, which only seems to exist on the level of thin culture, may pose problems for the development of clear and consistent European responsibility.

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Povzetek

Za moderne oblasti navadno velja, da so prvenstveno odgovorne svojemu demosu. Obstoj evropskega demosa pa je vprašljiv, način njegovega merjanja pa bi lahko bil v raziskovanju identifikacij državljanov držav članic EU. Avtorja raziskujeta indetifikacije v okviru EU in poudarjata pomembno vlogo vsakodnevnih praks in aktivnosti na nadnacionalni ravni. Ko ugotavljata, da identifikacij z evropskim prostorom ni mogoče omejiti le na nadnacionalno politično entiteto, avtorja poudarjata pomen posameznih kulturnih in političnih diskurzov za te procese. Identifikacije z Evropsko unijo na individualni ravni gotovo slonijo na globljih konceptualizacijah pomena Evrope, pri čemer pa geografski, kulturni in politični konteksti posameznikov igrajo odločilno vlogo. Pomanjkanje trdne in konsistentne evropske identifikacije, za katero se zdi, da obstaja le na ravni plitve kulture, lahko predstavlja probleme za razvoj jasne evropske odgovornosti.

Ključne besede: *vzorci identifikacije, Evropska unija, regresijska analiza, odgovornost*

The authorities of the modern nation states are normally considered to be primarily responsible to their constituencies: modern nation state typically implies the existence of *demos* to which the authority is responsible and in relation to which its legitimacy is established. Since

the EU is supposed to be considerably more than just a coordination of countries it should imply a responsibility that goes beyond the national governments. Intensified by the Maastricht Treaty of 1993, the European unification has gained a power structure of supranational authority (Kaina 2006). Supranational political entity follows the long tradition of democratic thinking, which has to be based also on the citizens' consent. The existence of European *demos*, however, is questionable. Do people in the EU member states only hold its EU leaders and bureaucrats responsible as the European citizens – as members of the European *demos* - or only in an indirect way as the citizens of particular member states? The former case is only possible if the people are truly able to identify with Europe and European Union as its political organisation. This leads one to the identify issues.

A typical way to approach the European identity would be to explore the European identifications of the EU member states citizens. In this paper we thus intend to consider the existence of European identifications as a complex and ambiguous issue, substantiated by various political, cultural, and economic contexts.

Europe has never been just a geographical entity, but more a symbolic imaginary changing its meaning due to different political interests. The concept of Europe contains many non-geographical meanings involving various political, cultural, and economic aspects (Ifversen 2002). Often it is used synonymously with the European Union, which is undoubtedly a political manifestation of the idea of united Europe, ensuing from clear economic interests. Similarly, the idea of European identity has been evolving on account to those interests, and has thus become ambiguous, variable, and not clearly formulated concept. Accordingly, we do not attempt to embrace the issue as collective social category insinuating on supranational *imagined community* (Anderson 1983) based on national conceptual roots. Instead, we attempt to elucidate particular factors enabling identifications with European Union as such, while revealing

the importance of particular cultural and political discourses on that process. Our underlying task is therefore (1) to explore processes of identification within the borders of European Union, and thus (2) represent not everyone is able to feel European in that respect, and (3) that there is no single European identity.

The task is nevertheless a complex one, demanding a clear conceptual framework and empirical endeavours. **Firstly,** we attempt to present which factors actually influence the social processes enabling identifications with European Union, ensuing from the important role of everyday practices and activities on supranational instance. As Favell argues, being European is as much likely to be about this, as it is about shopping across borders, buying property abroad, handling a common currency, looking for work in a foreign city, taking holidays in new countries, buying cheap airline tickets, planning international rail travel, joining cross-national associations. What seems to be important are actions facilitated by the European free movement accords (Favell 2005: 1113). Our attempt is therefore to approach identifications as contemporary processes influenced by the growth of global communications, media, consumerism and popular culture. While recognising actual social processes as important elements of identifications with European Union, we argue that the intensity of identifications on that level depends to a significant extend on the participation in European (transnational) social fields. However, seeing transnational social fields as a set of multiple interlocking networks of social relationships, through which ideas, practices and resources are unequally exchanged, organised and transformed (Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton Blanc 1994), the participation in them is conditioned with the participation in other fields that disposes them to a lifestyle, or a way of living associated with the particular social group from which they derive. The individual has to possess particular economic and symbolic resources, which 'open the gate' to transnational fields.

Therefore, **as secondly,** not everyone is able to feel European in that respect. Social spaces that exceed national borders are framed by particular national economic, cultural and social horizons, from which individuals derive. Individuals who participate in transnational social fields are also present in the national ones, while nation state is still a primary container of people's lives. We assume that nation states offer unequal abilities for individuals to enter transnational fields. As it was written elsewhere, socio-structural elements certainly hold an impact on the identification processes with Europe (or European Union) (Petithomme 2008; Pichler 2008a; Fligstein 2009). Particular social fields could provide individuals with resources enabling them to implement social practices that help them to attach to the European space. Connections of European citizens on transnational scale comprise different cultural, social and political horizons relating to nation states, while the increasing complexity of contemporary society simultaneously combines and fragments those horizons on units not limited with the national frames. Flows of goods, people, and services across national borders and geographic regions present a complex set of conditions that affect construction, negotiation and reproduction of identities. These identities play out and position individuals in the course of their everyday life within and across each of their places of attachment or perceived belonging (Vertovec, 2001).

Thirdly, we argue that there is no single European identity. Identifications with European Union on individual level certainly hold on deeper conceptualisations of the meaning of Europe, and the role of European Union in that respect. Beside that, individuals' geographical, cultural and political contexts, which are more firmly rooted in their national backgrounds, seem to be important. While comparing key aspects related to the formation of identifications among all national members of the European Union, we intend to identify the diverse patterns in the ways of the *European* identification. In that regard,

although ensuing from the conceptualisation that European Union is a supranational political entity, which legitimacy is to large extend possible by the existence of its *demos* and that feelings of citizenship are important in that context, we do not attempt to delimit the concept of Europe and European identity to such a narrow formulation. Thus we intend to undermine the essentialist ideas of the role of common European history, heritage and culture as crucial ingredients of European identity. Those ideas have existed along with the projects of more successful integration, and are political tasks of the elites operating at European and national levels (Katzel and Checkel 2009). Beside that, while claiming there is no collective, common European identity, we encourage new perspectives on formation of identifications in contemporary social realities, which are tightly knitted with various transformations resonating both on global and local levels.

Therefore, **as fourthly,** by theoretically and empirically deploying a concept of *European* identifications, we intend to offer some further consideration in examining contemporary formation of individual and collective identifications. In that context, dialectic relation between *thick* and *thin culture* (cf. Mishler and Pollack 2003) influencing individual perception of social reality on different levels (e.g. national and transnational) may have been of great importance. Global processes caused by technological development and mass media have significantly changed certain aspects of people's everyday life. Social life is increasingly seen as constituted by the material world, which reflects new distinguishing connections enabling and providing new mobilities (Urry 2003: 122). It has become widely recognised that social and cultural processes regularly exceed boundaries of nation-states, and thus enable cultural circulation, identification and action (Kearney 1995; Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Appadurai 1996; Crang et al. 2003). Therefore, new perspectives considering individuals and their attachments to territories have come to the fore (Hannerz 1996). The

latter does not mean that territory has become irrelevant; nonetheless under global conditions it has become re-imagined and situated into global context (Held in McGrew 2003:8). New intersections have emerged between national units and their actors on the one side and transnational actors, identities, social spaces and situations on the other side (Rek 2006: 47). Taking into account a dialectic relation between *thick culture* (Geertz 1973) based on common values, tradition and culture often associated with national environments and *thin culture* (Mishler and Pollack 2003) more associated with contemporary social practices exceeding national boundaries, reflexivity and agency in individuals lives, is coinciding with the contemporary approaches to identity construction. The latter have considered the meaning of the social location in identification processes, but in emphasizing the dispositional nature of identity, more explicitly reflexive and self-consciously mobilized aspects have also been acknowledged (Bottero, 2010). Therefore, while the power of the nation-state has been challenged in some circumstances by supranational and transnational institutions, the organs of the nation-state still play a crucial role (Kelly 2002; Willis et. al. 2004). Even though the term transnational points to the limited role of the nation-state in current cross-border relations, "the very word 'transnational' nevertheless tends to draw attention to what it negates – that is, to the continued significance of the national" (Hannerz 1996, cited in Fog Olwig 2003: 802). In terms of the present discussion, it seems to be necessary to take into account both contexts, national and transnational, since activities across national borders do not necessary erode the importance of national identities. Although individuals maintain contacts across national borders, this does not necessarily mean that their national affiliations and identities are similarly fluid and malleable. Predominantly, there is a continuous identification with nation states also in transnational social spaces or fields.

We argue that those who predominantly identify with Europe are

individuals that possess certain economic and symbolic capital which exceeds national borders. They participate in transnational social fields which insinuates on a certain form of transnational habitus, which could present a basis for the European habitus. The scale at which the habitus is to be found refers more to the scale of potential face-to-face encounters, where bodily disposition is important, and not so to the original formulation of the concept which is applied more to geographical places (Bourdieu 1977; Kelly and Lusis 2005). Therefore, it is crucial to take into account not only the dispositional and positional but also the interactive dimension of social games. It then becomes obvious that reflexive accounting, conscious strategising, and rational calculation are not exceptional but routine, constitutive elements of human action (Kelly and Lusis 2005: 845-846). The conceptualisation of transnational social fields suggested by Lewitt and Glick-Schiller (2003) highlights the difference between the ways of being as opposed to the ways of belonging. The former refers to actual social relations and practices that individual engages in rather than to identities associated with their action. Social fields comprise institutions, organisations and experiences that generate categories of identities that are ascribed to or chosen by individuals or groups. On the other hand, ways of belonging refer to the practices that signal or enact an identity which demonstrates a conscious connection to a particular group. Individuals within transnational social fields combine both ways differently in a specific context (Lewitt and Glick Schiller, 2003: 10-11). Individuals are able to choose wheatear to be European or not, but certain conditions have to be fulfilled. Transnational social fields should be thus considered as multi-dimensional, encompassing structured interactions of differing forms (Basch, Glick Schiller and Blanc-Szanton 1994; Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004), involving individuals' active production of social space exceeding national borders (Low and Zúñiga, 2003). Nevertheless, we assume there is set of prepositions of particular national fields, which

significantly influence contemporary identifications, playing important role not just in European identifications, but in general consideration of contemporary social realities.
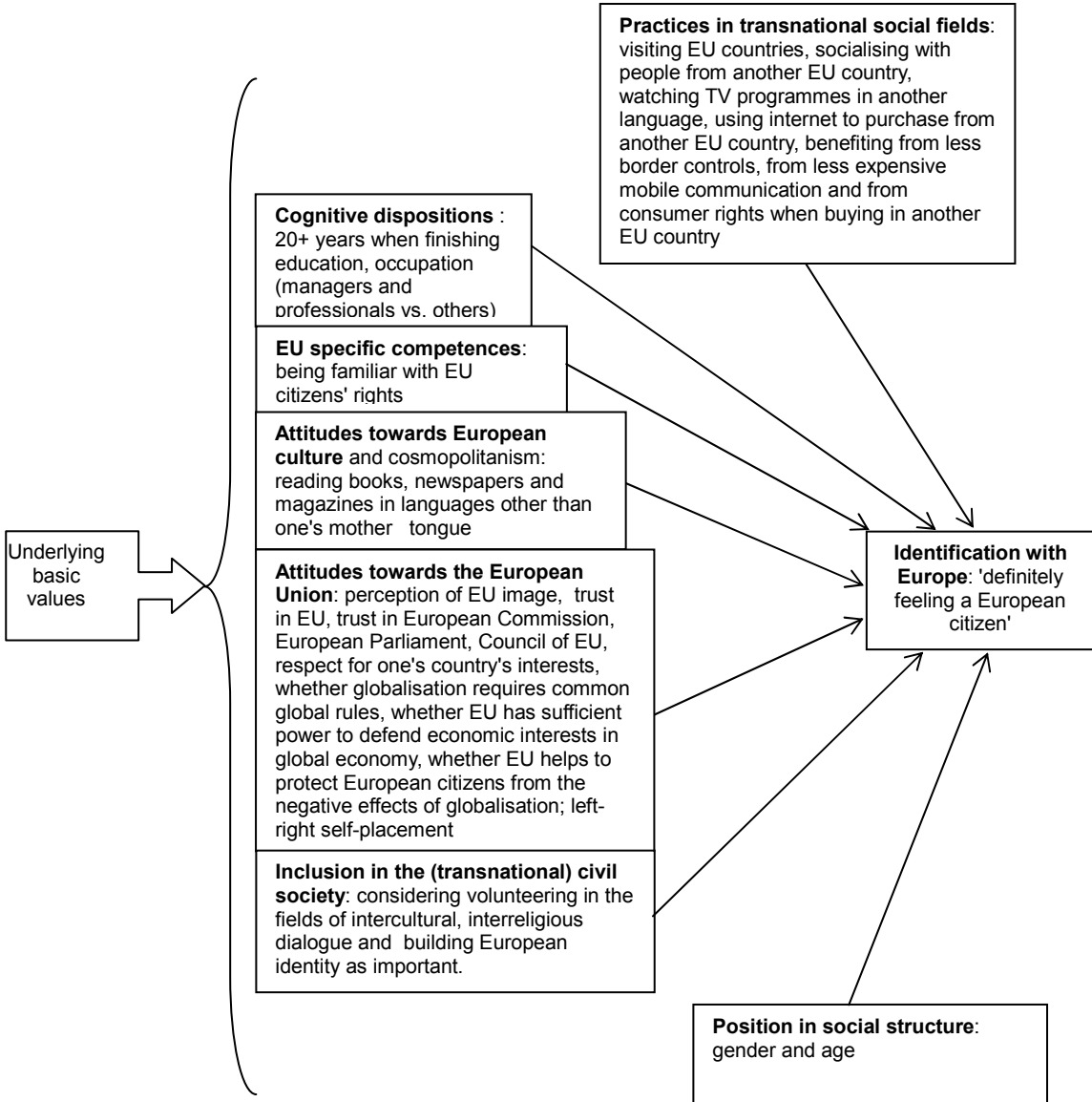
As Immerfall et al. argue (2009), national histories are crucial in shaping patterns of discourse about European integration, while national history conditions the consequences of European Union membership. Social representations of the European Union's policies and actions are embedded and linked to nation-specific discourses about sovereignty, society and nation state (cf. Menéndez – Alarcón 2004). Although we cannot speak about collective European identity, there are processes of identification with European space, which appear in dialectical relation with stronger, more firmly rooted identity constructions. Therefore, popular postmodern postulation about multiple, multilayered identifications referring to the idea that European identity can non-competitively exists next to the national seems to be too narrow. Immerfall et al. emphasise (2009) that adding a new layers to particular identifications requires elective affinity, a certain Wahleverwandtschaft as Max Weber articulates, between mythology, narratives, and historical realities. While no such common things exist (so far) on a European level, is the perception of the letter specific and influenced by national environments.

The major factors of the European identification

Our first step in the empirical part of the research has been to test the significance of the practices within transnational social fields, together with some other potentially relevant factors, in contributing to the feeling of European citizenship. We assume that the relevant categories influencing the individual's European identity may thus include concrete practices in the transnational social fields, general cognitive

predispositions, more specific European Union related competences, attitudes towards the European Union, the attitudes towards Europe as a cultural concept and cosmopolitanism, and the inclusion in the (transnational) civil society. From the background there may also be a relevant impact of some basic underlying values that may also influence most of the categories relevant for the European identification. In addition, we have also taken into account the individual's age and gender that may influence to some extend her or his position within the social structure. A simplified model – since we are fully aware that the actual causal relationships may be much more complex and running in different directions – in this regard is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: A hypothetical selection of categories influencing the European identification

Practices in transnational social fields: visiting EU countries, socialising with people from another EU country, watching TV programmes in another language, using internet to purchase from another EU country, benefiting from less border controls, from less expensive mobile communication and from consumer rights when buying in another EU country

Cognitive dispositions : 20+ years when finishing education, occupation (managers and professionals vs. others)

EU specific competences: being familiar with EU citizens' rights

Attitudes towards European culture and cosmopolitanism: reading books, newspapers and magazines in languages other than one's mother tongue

Attitudes towards the European Union: perception of EU image, trust in EU, trust in European Commission, European Parliament, Council of EU, respect for one's country's interests, whether globalisation requires common global rules, whether EU has sufficient power to defend economic interests in global economy, whether EU helps to protect European citizens from the negative effects of globalisation; left-right self-placement

Inclusion in the (transnational) civil society: considering volunteering in the fields of intercultural, interreligious dialogue and building European identity as important.

Underlying basic values

Identification with Europe: 'definitely feeling a European citizen'

Position in social structure: gender and age

We consider it necessary to combine a wide variety of aspects influencing the European identification, which has mostly not been the case up to now. Compared to the previous research by Fligstein (2009) and Pichler (2008a), we have combined more categories within a single model to observe their relative relevance in relation to the European identity. Although all categories are not included to a sufficient extent to any single survey, we have found the Eurobarometer 73.4 survey from 2010 (European Commission 2010) to be the best available collection of relevant data for our purposes. The variables from this survey used as the indicators are also presented in Figure 1. Using these data we have applied binary logistic regression based on the Statistical Package Social Sciences (SPSS) software backward conditional method. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Binary logistic regression for European identification based on the Eurobarometer survey, 2010

Variables in the Equation	B	S.E.	df	Sig.
image-positive	0.461	0.045	1	0.000
Trusting EU(yes)	0.202	0.078	1	0.010
Trusting Council of the EU			2	0.006
Trusting Council of the EU (yes)	0.001	0.086	1	0.989
Trusting Council of the EU (no)	-0.268	0.103	1	0.009
Country's interest respected			2	0.000
Country's interest respected(yes)	0.419	0.134	1	0.002
Country's interest respected (no)	-0.044	0.139	1	0.753
Globalisation requires global rules – worldwide governance	0.199	0.042	1	0.000
EU sufficient power in globalisation	0.165	0.041	1	0.000
Knowing European citizen's rights	0.826	0.041	1	0.000

Reading in other language			2	0.000
Reading in other language (several times)	0.516	0.085	1	0.000
Reading in other language (once, twice)	0.057	0.090	1	0.523
Socialising with people from another EU country			2	0.028
Socialising with people from another EU country (several times)	0.206	0.080	1	0.010
Socialising with people from another EU country (once twice)	0.060	0.086	1	0.485
Internet purchase abroad			2	0.069
Internet purchase from another EU country (several times)	-0.228	0.101	1	0.024
Internet purchase from another EU country (once, twice)	0.002	0.089	1	0.985
Benefit from less border controls	0.154	0.069	1	0.025
Benefit from lower mobile phone costs	0.144	0.066	1	0.030
Volunteering – intercultural	0.239	0.099	1	0.016
Gender (female)	-0.271	0.061	1	0.000
Finished education at age 20+	0.151	0.065	1	0.020
Constant	-6.439	0.276	1	0.000

Source: European Commission 2010; own calculations.

With Nagelkerke R Square of 31.2 per cent, we can claim that the regression model has certain predictive capabilities, though this has not been our main purpose. The key insight from the regression model is identifying the aspects significantly related to the European identification.

Both education and gender have turned out to be significantly related to the European identification in a way consistent with the previous studies: men (see: Pichler 2008a: 384) and more educated (see: Fligstein 2009: 133) tend to identify with Europe to a higher extend. The effects of age and occupational status, however, turned out to be insignificant in statistical terms and have thus been dropped from the model. This may imply that it is less important what people *are* in terms of their occupational statuses and age but what they actually *do*, particularly within the transnational social fields.

On the other hand, several concrete attitudes towards the EU and the proxy measure of the EU related competences turn out to be significantly related to European identification.

Distrust in the Council of the EU is negatively related to the European identification, which does not seem surprising, while this is not the case for the trust in the European Parliament and the European Commission. It may be argued that trust into certain political institutions in not necessarily related to the identification with a given community.

Regular reading of books, newspapers and magazines in non-native languages has also turned out to be significantly positively related to the European identification. It may be tempting to compare this to the findings of Anderson (1983) who also saw reading printed materials as the key factor of producing the identification with the national 'imagined communities' though it would be premature to draw the same conclusion for the transnational European level.

Being able to benefit from less border control and lower mobile phone costs and – as a key aspect of practices in transnational social fields – regular socialising with the people from another EU country also have a significant positive impact on the European identification. Growing body of research on social capital clearly shows the relevance of direct social interaction (more on this see Adam and Roncevic, 2003).

However, this is not the case for the practices that do not generate

sufficient social interactions. Travelling to another country and watching TV in non-native languages thus indicated no significant relation with the European identification. Regular internet purchasing from another EU country is even negatively related to European identification. As noted by Wellman et al. (2001) there is a clear difference between using the internet for social activities, which promote interaction and using it for asocial activities, such as Web surfing (and, of course, on-line shopping). They claim that while social users may build and maintain social capital, *networked individualism* reduces social cohesion and 'weakens their sense of community online' (Wellman et al. 2001: 451).

Although not included directly in the model, the underlying basic values are supposed to have mostly indirect impact on the European identification – exerting their influence mostly through the more concrete attitudes and practices. However, a clear shortcoming of the model is still related to the limits of our dataset: several indicators are far from optimal and not all the key aspects that may be related to the European identification are included.

The patterns of European identification

In order to understand the patterns of European identification, a wider variety of indicators should be considered. Moreover, we also need to recognise the varieties of the national contexts while entering the transnational social fields and identifying with Europe. To make this step, we have shifted the units of our analysis from individuals to the EU member states. While European identification seems to belong mostly to the level of the *thin culture* (cf. Mishler and Pollack 2003) – being related to the current practices in the European transnational social fields and attitudes on some very concrete issues – the patterns that contribute to its reproduction may still reside deeper in some of the more stable

structural and cultural aspects of the national social contexts. If this hypothesis is true, the (national) patterns of the European identification should clearly correspond to some historical, structural and cultural divisions of the European continent.

Taking the EU member states as the units of analysis does not mean reverting back to methodological nationalism (cf. e.g. Beck 2005) in the sense of equating society with nation state. It is neither based only on the pragmatic reason that most of the data are collected within the national frames. Instead, it is based on the recognition that the political segmentation of social life in nation states implies a variety of (national) institutional and cultural features that may significantly affect the participation in the transnational social fields and the ways of identifying with Europe. Here, we can to some extend also continue the research began by Pichler (2008b) who also noted the national differences in the cultural and political aspects of European identification.

Using the countries' aggregates we have, beside the indicators used in our regression model, also included some additional material – not used in our logistic binary regression model, namely:

1) The practices in the transnational fields are also inferred from foreign direct investment intensity (European Commission 2010b), the shares of Erasmus exchange students (European Commission 2009) and international air transport passengers (European Commission 2010b).

2) Cognitive mobilisation as the macro level equivalent of individual's education is represented by the shares of those having tertiary education and those participating in life-long learning (European Commission 2010a).

3) As indicators of more specific EU related competences we used the percentages of those familiar and informed with EU citizenship and the related rights (European Commission 2010; European Commission 2007b).

4) We have added a range of other indicators related to the attitudes towards cosmopolitanism and European culture, namely believing that Europeans have more in common than others in cultural sense, believing in shared European history, identifying with the European flag, believing in cultural enrichment by people from different cultural backgrounds, in important role of cultural exchanges, understanding EU in terms of cultural diversity, refusing immigrants, Muslims and people of different races as neighbours, being concerned with the life of Europeans and with the entire humankind, as well as fear of losing national identity and culture because of the EU (European Commission 2007a; 2007c; EVS 2010).

5) For the issues related to the attitudes towards the EU and its political aspects we have added the EU related fears of losing social security, increased costs for one's country, its loss of power and the loss of jobs (EVS 2010).

6) For the category of the (transnational) civil society, we have included the numbers of INVO members and INVO headquarters per million inhabitants (Rek 2008) and the percentages of people doing unpaid for the Third World and human rights organisations, peace movements and the share of people belonging to no civil society organisation at all (EVS 2010).

7) The structural properties at country level have been represented by its Human Development Index (Human Development Report 2010), its GDP (European Commission 2010c) and the percentage of households with yearly income higher than 30,000 EUR (EVS 2010).

8) To illustrate the underlying values we have selected a set of choices from the European Value Study concerning some basic concepts for the upbringing of children (EVS 2010). We assume that the stress on learning obedience represents traditional

values, learning hard work and responsibility classical modern values, while learning tolerance and independence correspond to late modern, post-materialist and individualist values (cf. Inglehart 1997; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002).
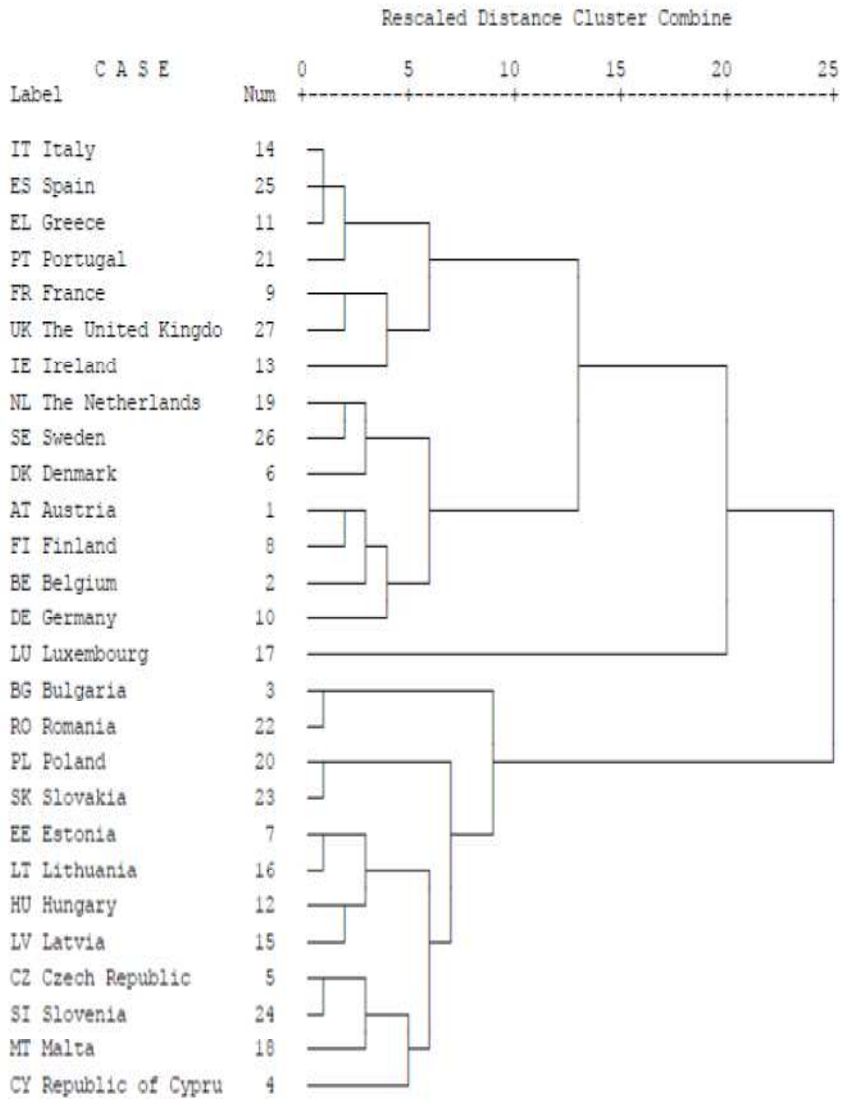
9) And finally, the indicators implying European identification have been feeling more European in the future, feeling EU citizen, belonging to Europe as the first geographic identification, belonging to Europe as the next one and identifying with the European flag (European Commission 2010; EVS 2010; European Commission 2007d).

All variables mentioned above have been used to generate the hierarchical cluster model based on Ward method. The corresponding dendrogram created by SPSS software is presented in Figure 2. First, one can clearly distinguish between the Eastern and the Western cluster of countries.

Figure 2: Patterns of European identification: hierarchical cluster analysis for EU member states

* * * * * * HIERARCHICAL CLUSTER ANALYSIS * * * * * *

Dendrogram using Ward Method

Rescaled Distance Cluster Combine


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        C A S E            0        5        10       15       20       25
Label                  Num  +---------+---------+---------+---------+---------+

IT Italy                14
ES Spain                25
EL Greece               11
PT Portugal             21
FR France                9
UK The United Kingdo    27
IE Ireland              13
NL The Netherlands      19
SE Sweden               26
DK Denmark               6
AT Austria               1
FI Finland               8
BE Belgium               2
DE Germany              10
LU Luxembourg           17
BG Bulgaria              3
RO Romania              22
PL Poland               20
SK Slovakia             23
EE Estonia               7
LT Lithuania            16
HU Hungary              12
LV Latvia               15
CZ Czech Republic        5
SI Slovenia             24
MT Malta                18
CY Republic of Cypru     4
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49

The Western cluster consists of all countries that have been the EU members already before 2004. It can be subdivided into four sub-categories, namely the Mediterranean consisting of Italy, Greece, Portugal and Spain, the Nordic including the Netherlands, Sweden and Denmark, the Western European consisting of France, the United Kingdom and Ireland, and West-Central European consisting of Germany, Austria, Belgium and Finland. Finally, Luxemburg clearly remains a special case within the Western cluster.

The Eastern cluster includes all new EU members, i.e. the countries that entered the Union in 2004 and 2007. It is further divided into four sub-categories, namely the Baltic-Hungarian, including the non-Slavic East-Central European countries, the South-Eastern consisting of the Orthodox post-communist countries of Bulgaria and Romania, the East-Central European with Poland and Slovakia and the Mediterranean-Central European group consisting of Slovenia and the Czech Republic (as the closest to each other in this group), with the addition of Cyprus and Malta.

Identification and responsibility

Following the distinction between thick and thin culture as formulated by Mishler and Pollack (2003), identity is traditionally supposed to belong to the most stable, essential, unconscious, emotional, and given aspect of culture – it is supposed to be its thicker aspect, preceding and shaping human practices and even institutions. However, this cannot be argued about the European identification, which is – as we have claimed in this paper in line with several other authors – a significantly more fluid and contingent concept, depending on a variety of attitudes, competences and concrete practices within the transnational social fields. Unlike national identities, which may be based on the long

established traditions, myths and memories (cf. Anderson 1983; Smith 1995), reproduced through long periods of time, European identification resides more at the level of the thin culture. It is more chosen by the individual human actors than given in any kind of determinist way. As we presented in the first step of the empirical research, the actual social practices, which individuals choose to perform, and expect some sort of benefits from them, have a significant impact on European identification. Regular movement in European physical and cognitive space contributes to individuals' attachments to the European Union. However, their participation in transnational social fields does not necessarily mean that they will identify with the European Union but it makes the identification significantly more likely. Those fields evoke the idea of European habitus, which is more a result of dialectical relationship between individuals' actions and intersubjective consideration of their actions (Bottero 2010), as just structural predisposition. Therefore, in terms of understanding contemporary European identification, it seems to be important to consider what people actually do in an integrating Europe. The 'ways of being' (Lewitt and Glick Schiller 2004) European in transnational social fields, referring to actual social relations and practices that individuals engage in, thus play a crucial role.

However, such actions may well be culturally as well as socially structured. Therefore, our findings do not mean that the thick culture and some long established social structural aspects play no role in identifying with Europe. This role may be particularly visible when one considers the variety of national contexts: the values, attitudes, competences and practices are far from randomly distributed across the European continent. As demonstrated by our hierarchical cluster analysis, the patterns of aspects related to the European identification clearly correspond to some well-known and well established (historical, cultural, political, economic) divisions in Europe.

A consistent distinction between 'the old' and 'the new' Europe

produced by the cluster analysis is clearly not coincidental. But what does it tell us? It is tempting to adopt one of the two relatively straightforward and opposing explanations: based either on (too) shallow or (too) deep causal links (cf. Kitschelt 2003).

What one can call a shallow explanation is based on the fact that most of the distances between the countries may be explained by the time of their entering the EU. The ten countries that entered the EU in 2004 can be presented as a special group, while Bulgaria and Romania that joined the Union three years latter represent another one. More years in the EU seem to provide more opportunities for the actors and institutions in a given country to develop the relevant competences and to enter the European transnational social fields in increasingly elaborated ways. The patterns of identification with Europe thus become a matter of (a few) years or decades. The problem with shallow causal explanation is that it does not answer the question *why* these particular twelve countries have only joined the EU in 2004 or 2007 and not before.

The answer to this question may imply a deep causal explanation. The differences in national contexts reside not in the timing of joining the EU but in the underlying historical and geopolitical causes that had determined this timing. Ten of the twelve newcomers have experienced the communist rule. Even before, most of them (except the Czech lands) belonged to the underdeveloped European (semi)periphery characterised by late industrialisation and deficiencies in 'civilisational competence' (Adam et al. 2005; Berend 2001; Sztompka 1993). The specifics of Bulgaria and Romania might be related to the combination of communism and Orthodox religious traditions. In a similar manner, the position of the Nordic sub-category may be explained in terms of their distinct Protestant religious and cultural traditions. Moreover, the Mediterranean countries may also be claimed to belong to particular cultural circles, historically far older than any attempts of the European integration. The patterns of European identification may thus also

correspond to some old historical, cultural, economical and geo-political divisions in the European continent (cf. Davies 1996).

Neither the shallow nor the deep causal explanation is necessarily incorrect – they are just both insufficient and should be used in combination. The national predispositions for the practices in transnational fields and identifying with Europe may be related to both deep and shallow causal factors in a similar manner as European identification, as an aspect of thin culture, may be generated as a product of both thick and thin elements of culture. The factors influencing the European identification may thus range from the deep and long established values to the concrete daily practices and circumstances.

Moreover, comparing our regression analysis results with the member states aggregate data demonstrates that the relations that can be observed at the individual (micro) level cannot be directly transferred to the (emergent macro) national level. While individuals more engaged in transnational social fields also tend to develop European identification to a greater extend, the European identification of the general populations in most of the old member states is generally no higher than in the new member states – in some cases the situation is even just the opposite. This may be mostly caused by the fact that it is not only the individual experience but also the exposure to the prevailing *discourses* on European issues in a given national environment that influences European identification (cf. Jessop and Oosterlinck 2008) where the national elites may play a significant role as well (cf. Adam, Kristan and Tomšič 2009).

It remains questionable whether the European *identification* as an aspect of thin culture can in time become European *identity* and thus a part of the thick culture. Available evidence does not speak in favour of such theses. The same question can be asked in the opposite way when concerning the national identity: is it becoming thinner while coexisting

with the variety of identifications? Answering such questions is another challenge for the further research.

Although the European Union exists almost for a half of a century, it still remains manly an elite affair. The supranational political entity is still far from its citizens, and we can hardly speak about European identity. As we have shown in our research, certain conditions have to be fulfilled to bring the European Union closer to individuals. However, not everyone is able to participate in transnational European social fields, which seem to play a crucial part in that respect. Seeing that national patterns of identifications with European Union differ much among themselves, and there is a variety of perceptions of the Unity within nations, the responsibility for further existence of European Union seems to be more in the domain of national governments than the EU leaders and bureaucrats. The European Union draws legitimacy from the sovereign states which form it, and its bonding force in times of conflicting preferences and perceptions is limited (Immerfall et al. 2009). If the responsibility for unification, integration and action of the European Union would be in hands of its leaders and bureaucrats, another question should to be answered. The history of nation-building suggests that such a project goes hand in hand with excluding the 'Other', and having Euro-nationalism instead of well-know nationalisms sounds like an unsatisfactory option. It all points to the essence and goals of the European Union as such. Is it to remain a project of national elites or a common social space would arise and bond citizens together? Would the responsibility of the EU leaders and bureaucrats be needed afterwards, or is it a missing puzzle in the path of European integration?

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