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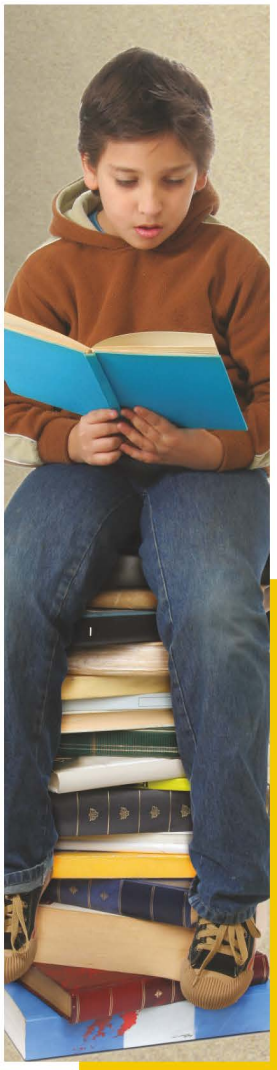

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CULTURE AND EDUCATION

Research for CULT Committee - European Identity

STUDY

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European Parliament

DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR INTERNAL POLICIES

Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies

CULTURE AND EDUCATION

Research for CULT Committee - European Identity

STUDY

Abstract

This study seeks to examine the concept, challenges and prospects of 'collective identity' in a European context. The text acknowledges the complex nature of collective identities in general and a common 'European identity' in particular. On that basis, the study critically assesses the potential of cultural and political approaches to foster allegiances with a supranational body politic such as the European Union. Particular attention is paid to the role of history and historical remembrance, as well as that of bottom-up initiatives aimed at active civic engagement, in strengthening a European sense of belonging.

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CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY **5**

1. INTRODUCTION **9**

1.1. The multifarious character of identity 9

1.2. National collective identity 12

2. 'EUROPEAN IDENTITY': INTRICACIES AND POLICIES **15**

2.1. Intricacies of a pan-European identity 15

2.2. EU policies 18

3. PROSPECTS OF A EUROPEAN IDENTITY **25**

3.1. Identity building – political and cultural, top-down and bottom-up 25

3.2. Identity through history 27

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS **35**

REFERENCES **41**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study provides some reflections on the concept, challenges and prospects of 'collective identity' in a European context, although without claiming to provide an exhaustive analysis of the issue. The text comprises the following constitutive parts:

1) an introduction, briefly elaborating on the concepts of 'identity' and national collective identity in particular;
2) an outline of the intricacies of a pan-European identity, and a presentation of past and present European Union policies in this regard;
3) an exploration of the prospects of European identity, with particular emphasis on the potential of different approaches (cultural vs. political; top-down vs. bottom-up), and the role of historical memory for a European sense of belonging to emerge;
4) a series of concluding recommendations.

Introduction

Over the last decades, 'identity' has been a widely used – indeed inflationary – term in public discourses, characterised by a broad range of meanings ascribed to and expectations associated with it. While scholarly research agrees on the constructivist and dynamic nature of 'identity' and its inherently featuring both an individual and collective dimension, the term evades any clear-cut definitions and is characterised by conceptual ambiguity. Its concrete explanatory value and its usability as a reference point for actual policymaking are, accordingly, restricted. Despite the terminological and conceptual challenges associated with it, however, 'identity' has gained the status of one of the most pervasive concepts to describe and politically steer community-building processes, especially at nation-state level ('national collective identity'). Notwithstanding the 'nation (state)' having become *the* model for political organisation in the modern age, overcoming differences in communities as large as nations and making their constituent members accept an assumed sameness and common identity has proven a difficult task. Nations are – first and foremost – 'imagined communities'. All the more challenging is community and identity building in transnational contexts.

European identity': intricacies and policies

Irrespective of the problems associated with identity building in environments marked by ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity, the issue of a 'European identity' continues to enjoy significant scholarly and political attention. In this context, two competing understandings of European identity and its repository can be distinguished: I) Europe as a cultural community of shared values; II) Europe as a political community of shared democratic practices. The idea of Europe as a cultural *Gemeinschaft* ('community') is in the tradition of identitarian concepts of identity applied to the nation state, and puts emphasis on common cultural legacies and historical experiences. The idea of Europe as political community stresses the bonding capacity of democratic institutions and active civic engagement, giving rise to a democratic political culture ('constitutional patriotism'). Both concepts of European identity have their respective appeal, but also face substantial criticism as regards their desirability and feasibility.

European policies aimed at fostering a collective transnational identity – be it directly or indirectly – have been wavering between these two alternatives, with approaches focusing on a civic understanding of 'Europeanness' which has generally gained momentum since the turn of the century (and in parallel to the European project facing increasing obstacles). This is

manifest in the Europe for Citizens Programme launched in 2006, which pays tribute to historical remembrance and thus to the cultural dimension of European identity, but also puts emphasis on active citizenship (political identity). Equally manifest in Europe for Citizens is another discernible shift over time, namely from an almost exclusive 'top-down' to a more 'bottom-up' approach, cherishing individual experience and action. At the same time – and concomitant with the uncertain fate of European integration as such – growing discomfort vis-à-vis the idea of a European identity and an increasingly polemical debate on the issue are discernible.

Prospects of a European identity

While the prospects for a European identity proper appear grim, considering the general difficulties of transnational identity building and the current political framework in particular, fostering a European sense of belonging among citizens is within the realms of possibility. For the EU, such fostering is nothing less than a *sine qua non* if the Union is to endure as a political entity requiring corresponding legitimacy and public support.

Inevitably, any European layer of political identification requires positioning towards and arrangement with entrenched national identities. With a view to minimising potential conflicts between those identities and a novel 'post-national' type of allegiance, basing the EU's legitimacy exclusively on its output is an appealing perspective. But while 'output legitimacy' merits more attention to be paid both in theory and politics than is currently the case (given the scarcity of structural prerequisites for 'input legitimacy' alone, e.g., a common culture or a European *demos*), other sources of identification with 'Europe' and the EU more particularly are indispensable. This is not just because the EU's means to pursue 'good policies' for which it can claim ownership is limited, but also because relying merely on output puts any body politic on shaky ground. What seems best suited for a European sense of belonging to emerge is supplementing output performance with policies that promote in parallel both a political *and* a cultural identity, and bring bottom-up initiatives centre stage.

In this context, a key role for the genesis of any 'European identity' can be ascribed to history and remembrance. The underlying rationale is: if European peoples cannot even agree on how to handle their past, how can they possibly find common ground in dealing with the present and tackling the future? For quite some time, European policies have indeed made an effort to foster a 'European historical memory' in order to add legitimacy to the European project. Yet doubts arise as to the suitability of these efforts for a European identity to develop, since they are characterised by a narrow focus of historical remembrance on the experiences of 20th-century totalitarianism and follow a barely disguised rationale of self-legitimisation. Concentrating European efforts for transnational historical remembrance on the Holocaust and National Socialism as well as Stalinism proves problematic in two respects. Firstly, such an approach fosters a simplistic and biased black-and-white scheme of history that makes Europe's 'dark past' appear as the logical alternative to its 'bright present', thus doing injustice to the richness and complexity of European history. Secondly, narrowing historical memory to National Socialism and Stalinism, elevated to the status of a 'negative foundation myth', reduces incentives to critically examine stereotypes and sacred cows of one's own national history, and hampers the development of a sense of shared European responsibility for the past (and present).

Accordingly, a reflexive and process-oriented 'culture of remembering', rather than an imposed and prescriptive 'remembrance culture' (with standardised views on and reference points for Europe's past), is argued to be the nucleus of a common European identity. Such a 'culture of remembering' puts emphasis on *how* rather than *what* to remember and requires capacities for

a (self-) critical 'reworking of the past' to be generated at national level, providing incentives for scrutinising diverse and often divisive memories under a consciously transnational and European perspective. For successful implementation, corresponding education policies are indispensable. These policies would be ideally guided by the leitmotif of *'sapere aude!' (*'dare to know!'*)* and would lay the foundations for a vivid civic political culture. The envisaged 'culture of remembering' would form an integral part thereof. The ultimate vision is that of a civic culture finding expression in a sense of shared possession of and responsibility for the common good and citizens' active participation politically as well as socially – a cardinal element of which is cognisant and unbiased 'work on history'.

Conclusions and recommendations

The findings of this study as regards the state and prospects of a 'European identity' can be condensed in the following eight suggestions:

1) Recognising identity to be an elusive and intrinsically constructivist concept;
2) Acknowledging collective identity as being central to any body politic;
3) Weighing the chances and limits of national identity-building patterns being transferred to a supranational level;
4) Recognising the need for European identity to be both political and cultural;
5) Revising existing identity policies with a view to strengthening bottom-up approaches;
6) Defining historical remembrance as a focal point of identity struggles, yet also a potential nucleus for a European identity;
7) Fostering a civic 'European culture of remembering';
8) Acknowledging the central role of education.

1. INTRODUCTION[1]

'Identity' is among the most frequently used terms in contemporary debates on the status of the individual within and vis-à-vis modern societies, as well as on the latters' prospects in times of ever-increasing dynamics of social, economic and cultural change. Similarly, 'identity' is widely present in discussions relating to the fate of the nation state and supranational endeavours such as the 'European (integration) project' in the 21st century. Over the last two decades, the term has actually seen an inflationary dissemination, which makes some authors even warn of an "identity crisis" – understood as a "crisis of overproduction and consequent devaluation of meaning" of the word 'identity'.[2] Undeniably, the language of 'identity', as today firmly embedded in both academic[3] and popular discourses, has become characterised by plurality, meaning quite different things to different people.

Against this background, it is imperative to aim for a clearer understanding of the concept, its roots and current trends of usage before 'identity' and its challenges in a European political context can be examined in more detail. As with other concepts in social and cultural studies, this is anything but an easy task.

1.1. The multifarious character of identity

Authors of specialised literature in the field often complain about the "diverse and often generalising, undifferentiated use" of 'identity' as a "theoretical construct"[4]. Yet the conceptual difficulties surrounding the term 'identity' are not only due to widespread sloppiness in dealing with the term. There is also the more fundamental problem that 'identity' per se is ambiguous: there is no one single meaning, nor even a set of equally valuable multiple meanings which one could agree on; rather, what 'identity' is supposed to mean and describe depends on the specific context in which it is used and the disciplinary background from which the use is derived.

In academia, it was especially in the 1950s and 1960s that identity became established as a scientific-analytical concept by scholars such as Erik H. Erikson (1902-1994), who took Sigmund Freud's question of 'Who am I?' further by asking 'Who am I with respect to the group and/or society around me?', 'How do I fit in?' and 'What makes me distinct from others?'.[5] Erikson considered that a person's sense of (him-/her-)self is embedded in the surrounding society and culture: within society, social roles and societal expectations shape the individual (socialisation), and the individual faces the challenge of finding the role he or she wants to 'play' (internalisation), which is also dependent on the roles which society has to offer and allows the person to take up. The question of how 'I' may fit into a larger social collective implies that the concept of identity is relevant on two distinct levels, namely the **individual level** and the **group level**.[6] The individual level describes a person's own 'sense of self', while the group level is concerned with the dynamics of the group the individual is part of. At the

[1] Special thanks for their support in preparing and reviewing this study go to Roisin Boyd, Emese Embersits, Michaela Franke, Patricia Henning, Lars Lehmann, Laura Limperk, Darren Neville and Maria Papadimatou.

[2] Brubaker and Cooper 2000, p. 3.

[3] The attractiveness of identity as a subject of scholarly studies is manifest in the sheer amount of literature in the field, with tens of thousands of publications addressing different aspects of the concept. A few examples of influential works published recently may be cited: Alcoff et al. 2006; Burke and Stets 2009; Schwartz, Luyckx and Vignoles 2011; Jenkins 2014; Stets and Serpe 2016.

[4] Thiel 2011, p. 29.

[5] Erikson, a neo-Freudian, is best known for this theory on human psychosocial development, in the context of which he also coined the phrase 'identity crisis' (referring to failure to achieve 'ego identity' during adolescence). See Erikson 1968 and 1970.

[6] See, e.g., Kaina and Karolewski 2013, p. 17.

same time, these two levels are not independent from each other, but are two sides of the same coin, each conveying a different emphasis; and it is only by taking both into account that one can make sense of the complex and abstract notion of identity. The discernible trend over time of identity – a term which was initially meant to explore the individual and personal – having become increasingly applied to groups is thus not an inappropriate amplification of the concept, but is, rather, immanent in its dual nature.

This study focuses on **collective identity**, in particular its concrete expression of 'European identity'. It therefore refers mainly to the above-mentioned group level of identity. More particularly, collective identity targets the group itself and is concerned with those characteristics group members have in common, with a view to distinguishing that specific group from other groups – notably by delineating who is 'in' and who is 'out'. Social groups of all kinds use such characteristics as a marker to draw their boundaries, with 'sameness'[7] serving as a justification for the connection between the group's members. Group members might be very different in terms of personal interest, socio-economic status, etc. Still, the group accepts "a fundamental and consequential sameness that causes them to feel solidarity among themselves".[8] To a large degree, the connection between a given group's members is imagined and constructed, since individual differences are ignored for the benefit of and covered up by the emphasised sameness. Indeed: among the most important common denominators of scholarly work on '(collective) identity' is its being seen as something **constructed, dynamic and learned**, rather than natural, fixed or God-given. This view reflects the influence of postmodern and constructivist strands of (academic) thought in the 20th century, which share a fundamental disbelief in the existence of any 'objective truth' and 'definiteness' – conceptual or otherwise.[9] Acknowledging that not only does identity have both an individual and a group dimension, but also that it is not static and does not contain any essence sensu stricto, provides the basis for understanding that people's identities may have many different facets, can change all the time and might even contain contradictions.

To be distinguished from collective identity is **'social identity'**, which emphasises the subjective meaning of a social group for the individual member, and the degree to which the individual identifies with that social group. In other words, social identity refers to the group membership of an individual and how the individual relates to that membership.[10] Evidently, the issue of identity becomes more complex and difficult to address if we consider not only 'who identifies with whom or what', but also 'why' and 'for which reason'.[11] Attempts to actually measure degrees of '**identification**' – which can be defined as the "process [...] of placing ourselves in socially constructed categories"[12], which is a central feature of, yet not to be confused with 'identity', and may also be characterised as '**self-categorisation**' – have accordingly proved challenging. Nevertheless, three main dimensions of the identification process can be distinguished and used to investigate a person's commitment to a certain group:

a) the cognitive dimension, assuming that the individual has to be aware of his or her group membership in order to identify with the group;

[7] 'Identity' actually originates from the Latin *identitas*, a notion of 'sameness' signifying an emphasis on commonalities. This, in turn, raises the question of how identity and diversity might be aligned.
[8] Fligstein 2009, p. 134.
[9] See, e.g., Schmitt-Egner 2012, p. 34; Scott and Marshall 2009, p. 333.
[10] See, e.g., Amiot et al. 2007, p. 366. Accordingly, social identity proves to be a key element in linking an individual to his or her social group. Anthropologists refer to 'qualities of sameness, in that persons may associate themselves, or be associated by others, with groups or categories on the basis of some salient common feature' (Byron 1999, p. 229).
[11] See Risse 2010, p. 19; Kaina and Karolewski 2013, p. 16.
[12] Scott and Marshall 2009, p. 331.

b) the emotional dimension, assuming that individuals can either be emotionally attached to the group or, alternatively, reject it;
c) the evaluative dimension, assuming that the individual might value the group, and therefore his or her membership of it, either negatively or positively.[13]

Bridging those three dimensions, social identity can be "understood as that part of the individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership to a social group (or groups) together with the value and the emotional significance attached to that membership".[14] Nonetheless, acknowledgement of one's group membership does not necessarily imply positive emotions and judgements[15], in particular when a social identity is not chosen but imposed. As a matter of fact, people are not always free to place themselves in a social group: they may also be placed by others in that group. One evident example is nationality, which is mainly the result of circumstances (e.g. nationality of parents or place of birth). Moreover, social identification is likely to fluctuate depending on the **social context**.[16] Situational changes in identification are closely linked with **identity performance** and **social comparison**: identity performance refers to individuals actively creating and shaping their identities by emphasising different aspects of it in different situations;[17] social comparison describes the practice of a member of one social group comparing the style, values or behaviour associated with his or her group with that of another group he or she deems different. Indeed, it can be argued that "the characteristics of one's group achieve most of their significance in relation to perceived differences from other groups".[18] The specific social context and the emphasis it places on a specific attribute determine which identity attributes are actually compared.[19] To complicate things further, individuals may also assume **multiple social identities**, given that they can associate with a variety of groups.

Identity studies prove to be a puzzling and heterogeneous field. This is due not only to (1) the existence of multiple levels and forms of identity that need to be distinguished, as well as (2) a broad range of intervening variables that need to be considered, but also (3) the considerable divergence of concrete focuses of interest and methodological approaches among different (social) sciences. A few examples may be given:

- Psychology explores the emotional and cognitive determinants of individual and social identity formation, the sense of identity and the sense of self (who am I?);
- Sociology investigates the societal and social construction of social and collective identity through narrative discourse;
- Political science examines the institutional structures and normative functions of collective identity (*demos*, legitimacy), as well as the individual, social and cultural determinants of political identity (political culture, citizenship);
- Anthropology discusses values and interpretation of meaning as well as cultural elements such as language, religion, symbols, rituals and lifestyle as constructs and foundation of identity;

[13] See Klein 2014, p. 26f.
[14] Tajfel 1981, p. 255.
[15] That is to say that even if someone identifies with a group because he or she acknowledges his or her membership, that person does not necessarily feel positive attachment to the group.
[16] Taking up the example of nationality, one person may sometimes feel more French, German, etc., and sometimes more European, depending on the context.
[17] See Haralambos and Holborn 2008, p. 665. In order to express or 'perform' an identity, individuals may use different means, e.g. symbols, behaviour, or stressing certain values.
[18] Tajfel 1981, p. 258.
[19] See Amiot et al. 2007, p. 367. Social comparison is in contrast to autonomous forms of social identity, which use internal standards of assessment. See Amiotm and Aubin 2012, p. 564.

- History investigates the relation between cultural heritage and collective memory, as well as the genesis, continuity and change of 'identities';
- Geography explores territorial/spatial exclusion and inclusion processes and the construction of cognitive maps.[20]

From this preliminary analysis of the concept of identity, a few general conclusions may be drawn:

a. identity has witnessed an inflationary usage over the last few decades, which suggests an intrinsic appeal, but also a potentially immanent randomness of meanings that can be ascribed to it; this is in particular because
b. identity proves to be a highly complex, not to say problematic, empirical category, which eludes clear-cut definitions and classifications, and
c. identity is placed at the crossroads of personal and soci(et)al life, which necessitates a balanced consideration of both individual and group features when studying it; accordingly,
d. the value of the concept for abstract and generalising descriptions of collective entities is limited, as is its suitability as a reference point for political action.

Bearing these observations in mind, let us now turn to national identity as a specific expression of collective identity, and examine its actual feasibility as well as related challenges in a political context.

1.2. National collective identity

As a general rule, the building of collective identity rooted in commonalities proves the more difficult the bigger and the more heterogeneous a group actually is, since more individual interests, behaviours, etc. need to be reconciled. Or to put it another way: the bigger the group, the more abstraction with regard to the (assumed) commonalities is required. Groups defined by geographical scope are an evident example: while it may still be fairly easy to find shared elements among members of a local community (e.g. attendance at the same school or similar socio-economic background), shared characteristics at regional level may already be less concrete (e.g. cultural similarities such as a specific dialect spoken), becoming even more abstract at a supra-regional level (e.g. a common history or religion). Somewhat paradoxically, however, the concept of collective identity has most frequently been applied in the context of nations and nation states, representing highly differentiated and large (until the mid-20th century, for most people even the largest conceivable) social 'in-groups'.

This paradox is rooted in the overwhelming success of the '**nation (state)**' as *the* model for ordering and organising societies politically, socio-economically and culturally since the 17th century, thus turning it into the most pervasive reference point of collective identity, too. For that reason, and considering the susceptibility of collective identity to political instrumentalisation, national identity has become a predominant concern of scholars and politicians alike. The appeal of identity as a political tool springs from its potential for achieving or reinforcing '**unity**' and creating a '**sense of belonging**' – indispensable elements of legitimising any political order. What is more, (collective) identity can be actively influenced through political action, thus offering the prospect of 'unity' and 'belonging' being in line with what is politically desired. In the case of nation states, identity policies therefore aim to substantiate this particular form of a body politic, notably by defining and fashioning its

[20] See Schmitt-Egner 2012, p. 32.

foundation – one people sharing common features. Two elements are to be distinguished in this regard:

a. the substance of the collective identity, including the attributes one ought to have in order to be part of the collective; and
b. the purpose and function of the collective identity, and what it is being used for.

As for the **substance of any national collective identity**, the British sociologist Anthony D. Smith has identified five fundamental elements:

- a historical territory or homeland;
- common myths and historical memories;
- a common mass culture;
- common (legal) rights and duties; and
- a common economy.[21]

These material – essentially historical-cultural – dimensions of national identity relate closely and reflexively to the **functions ascribed to national identity**. In any case, determining a nation in identitarian terms requires a considerable degree of constructivism and indeed imagination being involved, even from the viewpoint of considering the multitude of individuals in all their diversity who are to be merged into a common 'one'. In this context, by emphasising the constructed nature of identities, and of national identities in particular, Benedict Anderson has famously coined the concept of **"imagined communities"**. In his view, a nation "is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion". At the same time, a nation represents a community because "regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings."[22]

As with other forms of (collective) identity, moments of demarcation, and often also of exclusion, play a crucial role: differences are consciously accentuated or may even be artificially created to underline the unique character of 'the nation' and distinguish it from other nations and/or specific (minority) groups within that nation. Two groups or nations may objectively have more commonalities than differences, yet emphasis may still be put on the latter rather than the former, hence justifying distinction or confrontation. The essentialisation of 'identity' and 'nation', as well as the creation of an **in-group** as opposed to an **out-group**, is distinctive for different forms of nationalism – past and present: nationalism as a social and political movement invokes a unified community, which tends to be characterised as 'special', and is prepared to actively and resolutely achieve the envisaged *Gemeinschaft* as well as the goals of the nation, at times even by militant and violent means.

After all, however, nations – and nationalisms alike – are merely "cultural artefacts of a particular kind",[23] lacking an 'absolute nature' and any clear finality. Generating homogenous nations organised around and guided by clear-cut national identities has been a daring enterprise in the past, and will be even more so in the future. The difficulties of national identity building are obvious, taking into consideration that most contemporary societies around the

[21] See Smith 1991, p. 14.
[22] Anderson 1991 [1983], p. 7.
[23] Anderson 1991 [1983], p. 4.

globe – including those in the Western world – are much less unitary than they might appear at first sight, with a series of both potential and real divisions making community building a challenge:

- differences with regard to social class, education, etc.;
- regional discrepancies (for instance, between northern and southern states in the US, Flanders and Wallonia in Belgium, or Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and England in the UK);
- minorities or immigrant groups perpetuating their own home-grown traditions, including language, rather than being acculturated.

Divisions of this kind within a given political entity cannot easily be overcome, and manifest themselves in the difficulty of finding commonly accepted landmarks and standards on which to build a universal 'national identity'. Yet if the model of the nation (state) – and thus that of national identity – is fragile per se and becoming increasingly challenged in a globalised world, what about the chances of **transnational community and identity building**? This question will be taken up, with a focus on Europe and the European Union, in the following section.

2. 'EUROPEAN IDENTITY': INTRICACIES AND POLICIES

Identity is something of a compound concept, and applying it to (imagined) communities as large as nations poses a particular challenge. The task is all the more challenging when examining identity at a trans- or supranational level, especially a 'European' level, given the national, cultural and linguistic diversity of the continent. Nevertheless, or perhaps precisely for this reason, a vast amount of literature now studies 'European identity' from various angles, applying different disciplinary as well as methodological perspectives and approaches.[24]

Common to all research on European identity, which has become a multi- and partly interdisciplinary endeavour over time,[25] is that one is not only faced with the problem of dealing with a concept as multidimensional and evasive as identity, but also defining 'Europe(an)'. What is actually meant by Europe, and which Europe is one referring to? Europe as a geographical space? Europe in some cultural sense? the European Union? or perhaps Europe as a sort of 'transcendental' utopia or model? In many cases, there is no clear definition, and most literature tends to prescribe a rather generic use of the term, without distinguishing between identification with Europe and identification with the European Union. This cannot solely be attributed to a lack of conceptual clarity, but also reflects the significant role that the EU has played in defining what belonging to Europe means today.[26] Yet if an intrinsic correlation between the EU and European identity can be claimed, it is the EU that assumes the role of an active player in shaping European identity and its intensity.

Before addressing the current and potential future EU policies designed to forge and/or strengthen some form of a common 'European identity' (understood mainly in the sense of identifying with a transnational, political European community), a closer examination of the conceivable leverage points of transnational European identity policies is required, that is: the nucleus around which a 'European identity' could reasonably be built.

2.1. Intricacies of a pan-European identity

As with other forms of collective identity, a fundamental question is what European identity actually comprises and on what it is grounded. Given the constructivist nature of any form of identity or identity building process, we should also question what the substance of this identity does or should consist of.

In this regard, there are two basic understandings of the **repository and substance of European identity**:

I. Europe as a cultural community of shared values, constituting a 'cultural identity';

II. Europe as a political community of shared democratic practices, constituting a 'political identity'.

[24] Some fields of study include research by philosophers, political scientists, international relations scholars, historians, psychologists, anthropologists and sociologists. There is also a broad corpus of work on the different aspects of 'European identity', such as Europeanisation (see, e.g., Harmsen/Wilson 2000; Börzel/Risse 2000), democratic citizenship (e.g. Habermas 2005; Habermas 2006; Castiglione 2009) and Euroscepticism (Hooghe and Marks 2005; Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008), but also EU foreign policy (e.g. Katzenstein 1997; Manners 2002), migration (see, e.g., Recchi and Favell 2009) and territorial politics (Keating 2001a, 2001b; Bourne 2008), to name but a few.

[25] See Cini 2006.

[26] See, e.g., Risse 2004, p. 255, in relation to the 'identity hegemony' of the European Union. While the EU does not comprise the largest part of Europe in geographical terms (Russia's western territories are excluded), the majority of European states and nations are part of the project. The idea of the EU becoming the embodiment of Europe per se can also be discerned from its symbols: both the European anthem and the European flag had for many years represented the Council of Europe, before becoming the official symbols of the then European Community in 1985.

Ad I. Europe as a cultural community of shared values:
According to this understanding, the substratum of European identity is largely determined by shared values, which originate from **common (cultural) legacies and (historical) experiences**. The basic assumption here is that any *Gemeinschaft* – but especially a political one – is based on cultural 'bedrocks', and that a collective identity originates from a common language, history and/or culture. Shared values guarantee the coherence of the *Gemeinschaft* and at the same time form the basis for collective (political) action, which in turn makes the stability and feasibility of the *Gemeinschaft* dependent on its character as a 'cultural community'. When applied to the EU, this view suggests that a historically grounded identity based on shared values is paramount to the success of the European integration project. These values assume the dual function of a point of departure and an orientation framework for concrete political action. In this context, the language of 'European cultural heritage' is not only an *expression* of a collective identity, but also a *source* of common value orientation.

Conceived in such a way, however, European identity has come in for considerable criticism. Perhaps the most central point of reproach vis-à-vis the idea(l) of Europe as a cultural community stems from the fact that it largely borrowed from traditional concepts of identity that were rooted in the nation state, thereby assuming a direct link between origin, culture and politics. The application of such 'identitarian' concepts of identity[27] to the European level has been challenged with both normative and empirical arguments. On the one hand, critics have argued that it was precisely these identitarian concepts, with their national(istic) and particularistic assumptions, that paved the way – or at least served as a powerful instrument to legitimise – jingoism and the traumatic experiences of mass violence and genocide throughout the 20th century, thus rendering them unusable as models for the future. On the other hand, it has been argued that the 'universalisation' of identitarian concepts borrowed from research on nationalism and accordingly fixated on the model of the nation (state) is deficient if not unusable in empirical terms; notably since it neglects and comes into conflict with the realities of the EU as a transnational and multicultural entity, insofar as it disregards historical examples of multinational empires, such as the Habsburg Monarchy or the Ottoman Empire. Such criticism has fostered the development of alternative concepts of European identity, emphasising the character of Europe as a form of 'post-national democracy' constituting a generic political identity.

Ad II. Europe as a political community of shared democratic practices:
The concept of Europe as a political community puts the emphasis on 'political identity' and suggests the need to separate culture from politics in order for a pan-European sense of belonging to develop. Among the most pervasive concepts of a European political identity is that of '**constitutional patriotism**', the most prominent proponent of which was the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas (born 1929). Coined by Dolf Sternberger (1907-1989) in the late 1970s, *Verfassungspatriotismus* is based on the key assumption that people should develop an attachment to liberal-democratic institutions rather than any national culture. Group identity is hence reconceptualised with a focus on the bonding capacity of democratic citizenship rather than on individuals' cultural and/or ethnic identification, something which is seen as particularly relevant – if not indispensable – in modern states characterised by the coexistence of multiple linguistic, cultural and group identities.[28] In particular, the concept of constitutional patriotism is deemed vital for multiple nation states belonging to a supranational entity such as the EU.[29]

[27] It is worth mentioning at this juncture that while identitarian concepts of identity often emerge from the idea of (shared) cultural values, as evidenced by the German notion of *Kulturgemeinschaft*, there are also alternative reference points. One evident example is the biologistic concept of 'descent communities'.
[28] See, e.g., Tonkiss 2013.
[29] See, e.g., Lacroix 2002.

The very term constitutional patriotism suggests that democratic structures and **institutions** have a crucial role to play in engendering the envisaged 'political identity'. Yet the 'constitution' of the political system concerned is but one of two elements which should be considered as closely interlinked. The other is represented by the **democratic process** and active civic engagement. It is assumed that while democratic institutions provide the basis and reference point for the development of a collective identity, the potential for the *demos* to identify with those institutions can only be harnessed by the democratic process. Accordingly, political community can only materialise through the active interaction of citizens in the context of a (political) **public sphere** that provides the necessary space for public reasoning. Essentially, what needs to emerge is a **democratic political culture** which is grounded in institutionally guaranteed civil rights and political participation and which is per se open to everyone, one conceived in opposition to 'closed' national(ist) cultures that represent and are (pre-) defined by specific ethno-cultural values. This concept reveals an intrinsically republican understanding of the nation as a community of citizens bound together by a common (democratic) will and active civic engagement, thus accentuating the constructivist character of community building and repudiating primordialism in its assumption of nations as ancient and quasi-natural phenomena.[30] According to Habermas, "a consensus on the procedures for the legitimate enactment of laws and the legitimate exercise of power"[31], rather than a consensus on any ultimately discriminatory 'cultural values' sensu stricto, proved both necessary and auspicious for modern societies, since it allowed for the development of a novel form of legitimation based on a new and more abstract mode of social integration.[32]

However, like the idea of Europe as a cultural community and a community of shared values, the concept of 'constitutional patriotism' as the basis of a European 'political identity' has also provoked considerable criticism. In particular, critics have argued that a political identity that is largely based on rational-democratic institutions and practices was not only too abstract, but also lacked elements of excitement and zeal.[33] Accordingly, an affective commitment to the body politic, which is deemed critical for any community to foster a deep bond among its members and characteristic of most forms of national identity and identity building, was largely absent. In addition, clear references to territory and population, which, together with state power (sometimes also simply referred to as 'government') make up the three commonly acknowledged features of a state in classical legal theory[34], have also been lacking, as have strong links to (common) language and history.

Moreover, the postulation of 'constitutional patriotism' as an open and inclusive concept can be called into question, since membership of the in-group is still contingent on a hard criterion, namely acceptance of the existing constitutional framework. Citizens that repudiate this framework or refuse to take an active part in the democratic process are consequently shifted to the fringes of the political community. Other critics have cited potential conflicts originating from citizens' traditional beliefs, especially those of a religious nature. Such beliefs may not easily be integrated into a 'civic religion' that is effectively constituted by constitutional patriotism, insofar as a secular and rational morality may not be accepted at all, or may be accepted only with the proviso that religious beliefs continue to be given priority.[35] Still others have reasoned that the idea of a European public sphere – on which the concept of a

[30] On this issue see, e.g., Köster 1995.
[31] Habermas 1994, p. 135.
[32] See, e.g., Habermas 1976.
[33] See, e.g., Yack 1996.
[34] Worthy of particular mention here are the works of Georg Jellinek, whose *Drei-Elemente-Lehre* distinguishes territory, people and state power (*Staatsgewalt*) as the three constitutive elements of a state. See, e.g., Jellinek 1900.
[35] See, e.g., Breda 2013.

transnational political identity largely rests – is deceptive: not only is there a lack of truly European media outlets, but EU politics and civic political activities remain framed by national contexts, as can be witnessed from the absence of genuinely trans-European parties competing in the European Parliament elections. Finally, critical reference has been made to the specific context of Germany, in which the concept of constitutional patriotism was originally framed. While this theoretical approach could indeed be applied to post-war (Western) Germany, its principles and assumptions should not be generalised and applied to other political entities and situations.[36]

It can hence be demonstrated that the concepts of European identity as 'cultural' and 'political' face genuine criticism. What unites them is not only the fact that both are the subject of reproach, but also the overarching question of how to deal with the **nation state**, which continues to be ***the* predominant political reference point** in contemporary Europe and beyond. Are nation states an obstacle to, or rather a requirement for, the development of a European identity? Is European identity supposed to replace existing national identities or simply complement them? Many of the polemical elements that characterise political and public debate about European identity, and its desirability and feasibility, are the product of diverging views on the role and fate of nations, and of the corresponding sense of belonging in a united Europe. It is of no great surprise that this issue has also been highly present in all EU political initiatives and policies on European identity, whether in attempts to devise a clearer understanding of European identity, or in actively increasing allegiance to Europe and the EU in particular.

2.2. EU policies

European political elites have been attempting to add a transnational layer to existing national collective identities since the dawn of European integration. These efforts have been based on the assumption that there is a need to engender a feeling of belonging to Europe that goes beyond the economic and institutional dimension. It was not until **1973**, however, that a decisive step was taken towards an official and normative declaration of identity, when the **Copenhagen Declaration on European Identity** was adopted by the nine foreign ministers of the then 'European Communities' on 14 December.[37]

Not without a degree of pathos, the Declaration stated that "the time has come to draw up a document on the European Identity". Defining "the European Identity" involved the following:

- reviewing the common heritage, interests and special obligations of the nine Member States, as well as the degree of unity so far achieved within the Community,
- assessing the extent to which the Nine are already acting together in relation to the rest of the world and the responsibilities which result from this,
- taking into consideration the dynamic nature of European unification.

While the undersigning European states might have been "pushed towards disunity by their history and by selfishly defending misjudged interests", the document ascertained that "they have overcome their past enmities and have decided that unity is a basic European necessity to ensure the survival of the civilization which they have in common" (Art. 1). The "variety of national cultures" and "dynamism" of European identity was acknowledged, yet with a strong

[36] For criticism on constitutional patriotism being too specifically German see, e.g., Turner 2004.
[37] Council 1973. Also in: Drace-Francis 2013, pp. 226-230.

emphasis on the cultural commonalities of the European nations and their attachment to "common values and principles" (Art. 1 and 3). These included representative democracy, the rule of law, social justice and respect for human rights, all of which were considered "fundamental elements of the European Identity". The Declaration concluded with a clear commitment to an ever closer 'United Europe':

"22. The European identity will evolve as a function of the dynamic construction of a United Europe. In their external relations, the Nine propose progressively to undertake the definition of their identity in relation to other countries or groups of countries. They believe that in so doing they will strengthen their own cohesion and contribute to the framing of a genuinely European foreign policy. They are convinced that building up this policy will help them to tackle with confidence and realism further stages in the construction of a United Europe thus making easier the proposed transformation of the whole complex of their relations into a European Union."

To this day, the Copenhagen Declaration remains perhaps the most spirited statement of a common European identity ever to be issued from political quarters, standing out for its prescriptivism and the fact that it strongly elucidates the principle of unity over that of diversity.[38] No commitments of such a kind and straightforwardness were to be made in the decades to follow. At the same time, the Copenhagen Declaration's approach of stressing different sources and repositories of a collective European identity set the tone for the general political discourse on the issue.

Overall, one can identify three reference points, or *topoi*, that were central to that discourse:

1) generic notions of '**European heritage**', which underline a common culture as *the* crucial element of European identity but refrain from focusing on one particular element or any specific historical period;[39]
2) the two **World Wars**, the horrors of which provided the momentum to set up 'Europe' as a supranational peace project designed to avoid similar culminations of radical nationalism in the future;[40]
3) **European integration** itself, the historical achievements of which add to the legitimacy of the Union and are embodied in its official symbols (the European flag, the European anthem and Europe Day).[41]

Nonetheless, though debates had been rumbling on for decades, it was essentially not until the turn of the 21st century that the potential to promote European identity as a crucial element in strengthening and safeguarding the process of European integration was, or rather had to be,

[38] This was also manifest in the Declaration emphasising 'The European Identity' (which consistently used a capital 'I') as an official identity to define the European Communities in relation to the rest of the world. See Delanty 2005, p. 134.

[39] Besides the Copenhagen Declaration, more recent European action in this regard includes the establishment of a European Union Action for the European Heritage Label in November 2011 (European Parliament/Council 2011). Similarly, the European Capital of Culture initiative takes up the central idea of the existence of a common, albeit diverse, European heritage. For a brief history of the initiative, see http://ec.europa.eu/culture/our-programmes-and-actions/doc443_en.htm.

[40] The Schuman Declaration of 9 May 1950 can be read as an expression of such reasoning. It itself followed in the wake of a long tradition of thought dating back to the 19th century that argued for a European (con-)federation as a means to overcome nationalism in Europe. See, e.g., Winston Churchill's famous call for a 'United States of Europe' in his speech at the University of Zurich on 19 September 1946.

[41] Those symbols were formally approved by the European Council in June 1985, following corresponding suggestions of the ad hoc committee *A People's Europe*, which was established in 1984 and comprised representatives of the Member States (known also as 'Adonnino Committee' after its chairman, Pietro Adonnino). For the Committee's reports, see Council 1985.

fully recognised. In particular, the failure of the ambitious "Constitution for Europe" project, epitomised by the rejection of the draft text in France and the Netherlands in the 2005 referendums, was seen as an expression of growing public disenchantment with European (Union) 'high politics'[42] and proved that there was a need for decisive political action going beyond what had mainly been symbolic politics.

In the wake of the 2005 referendums and preceded, among other things, by a detailed qualitative study funded by the European Commission on *The Europeans, Culture and Cultural Values* (encompassing 27 European countries),[43] a new programme entitled **Europe for Citizens** was launched in December 2006 by decision of the European Parliament and the Council (1904/2006/EC). Established for the period 2007 to 2013,[44] the programme put in place the legal framework to support a wide range of activities and organisations promoting "**active European citizenship**", a concept broadly intended as the involvement of citizens and civil society organisations in the process of European integration with a view to developing a sense of identification. The overall objectives pursued in the programme[45] included (Art. 1):

a) giving citizens the opportunity to interact and participate in constructing an ever closer Europe, which is democratic and world-oriented, united in and enriched through its cultural diversity, thus developing citizenship of the European Union;

b) developing a sense of European identity, based on common values, history and culture;

c) fostering a sense of ownership of the European Union among its citizens;

d) enhancing tolerance and mutual understanding between European citizens respecting and promoting cultural and linguistic diversity, while contributing to intercultural dialogue.[46]

More concretely, the programme had the following objectives (Art. 2):

a) bringing together people from local communities across Europe to share and exchange experiences, opinions and values, to learn from history and to build for the future;

b) fostering action, debate and reflection related to European citizenship and democracy, shared values, common history and culture through cooperation within civil society organisations at European level;

c) bringing Europe closer to its citizens by promoting Europe's values and achievements, while preserving the memory of its past;

d) encouraging interaction between citizens and civil society organisations from all participating countries, contributing to intercultural dialogue and bringing to the fore both Europe's diversity and unity […][47]

The clear focus of the Europe for Citizens Programme was hence on **civic engagement** and **active citizenship**, which were considered to be *the* key vehicles for promoting (European) identity. Putting the emphasis on citizens(hip) represented a considerable change of direction

[42] On the struggle for a 'Constitution for Europe' and its failure in the French and Dutch referendums see, e.g., O'Neill 2009 and Pusca 2009. See also Crum 2012.
[43] See European Commission 2006.
[44] See European Parliament/Council 2006. Two years later, the decision was slightly amended by Decision 1358/2008/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council (see European Parliament/Council 2008).
[45] For a summary of the programme's main objectives, see also the following websites: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/citizenship/programme/objectives_en.php and http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/justice_freedom_security/citizenship_of_the_union/l29015_en.htm.
[46] European Parliament/Council 2006, Article 1 (2).
[47] *Ibid.*, Article 2.

from earlier attempts to define and characterise (European) identity mainly by referring to cultural commonalities. While the idea of Europe as a cultural community was not abandoned as such, Europe was now predominantly seen as a **political community**, notably one made up of responsible and active citizens. This shift corresponded with the increasing legal and practical significance that had more generally been attributed to the concept of 'European citizenship' since the 1990s. The "**Citizenship of the Union**" had been formally established by the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992, together with a number of related rights, such as the right to vote and stand as a candidate in both municipal and European elections in the Member State of residence regardless of nationality.[48] The Lisbon Treaty reaffirmed Citizenship of the Union and specified the associated rights,[49] while introducing a new form of public participation for European citizens through the "**citizens' initiative**", offering EU citizens the chance to participate directly in the development of EU policies, namely by calling on the European Commission to make a legislative proposal.[50]

Together with Europe for Citizens, the citizens' initiative not only marked the internalisation of the politico-theoretical concept of '**constitutional patriotism**' by the European Union, but also the gradual shift from a top-down to a **bottom-up model of identity building**. Rather than something that requires central planning and *a priori* definitions of shared commonalities through (political) elites, identity in a bottom-up perspective is perceived as something generated at the level of the individual citizen through his/her concrete action. In the Europe for Citizens Programme, these considerable changes to previous policies corresponded with a stronger emphasis on diversity, which, unlike in the Copenhagen Declaration for example, was granted a status as equally important as unity.[51]

Citizens(hip) as the cornerstone has remained the hallmark of EU-wide identity policies in the last decade, as witnessed by the **new generation of the Europe for Citizens Programme** approved by the Council of the European Union in April 2014 for the period 2014-2020 (Council Regulation 390/2014).[52] As part of the "overall aim of bringing the Union closer to citizens"[53] the programme delineates two general objectives: "to contribute to citizens' understanding of the Union, its history and diversity" on the one hand, and "to foster European citizenship and to improve conditions for civic and democratic participation at Union level" on the other.[54] Specifically, this is to be achieved by "encouraging the democratic and civic participation of citizens at Union level, by developing citizens' understanding of the Union policymaking process and promoting opportunities for societal and intercultural engagement and volunteering at Union level".[55] The outstanding importance of "democratic engagement and civic

[48] See Treaty on European Union (TEU) 1992, Art. 8. Detailed arrangements to exercise the voting rights associated with the 'Citizenship of the Union' were adopted in the wake of the Maastricht Treaty. See, e.g., the Council Directive 93/109/EC of 6 December 1993 laying down detailed arrangements for the exercise of the right to vote and stand as a candidate in elections to the European Parliament (Council 1993).

[49] See TEU 2012 [2007] and TFEU 2012 [2007]. Art. 18-24 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) entitled EU citizens: to non-discrimination on the basis of nationality when the Treaty applies; to move and reside freely within the EU; to vote for and stand as a candidate in European Parliament and municipal elections; to be protected by the diplomatic and consular authorities of any other EU country; to petition the European Parliament and complain to the European Ombudsman; to contact and receive a response from any EU institution in any of the EU's official languages; to access European Parliament, European Commission and Council documents under certain conditions.

[50] See Art. 11(4) TEU, granting 'not less than one million citizens who are nationals of a significant number of Member States' to 'take the initiative of inviting the European Commission, within the framework of its powers, to submit any appropriate proposal on matters where citizens consider that a legal act of the Union is required for the purpose of implementing the Treaties'. For detailed information see www.ec.europa.eu/citizens-initiative/.

[51] For an impact assessment of Europe for Citizens' 2007-2013 edition see European Commission 2013.

[52] Council 2014.

[53] *Ibid.*, Art. 1 (1).

[54] *Ibid.*, Art. 1 (2) (a) and 1 (2) (b).

[55] *Ibid.*, Art. 2 (a).

participation"[56] for the Programme is underlined by the fact that 60 % of the total budget (of EUR 185.5 million)[57] was earmarked specifically for this particular strand of Europe for Citizens.[58]

Still, despite undeniable continuities between the 2014-2020 edition of the Europe for Citizens Programme and its forerunner, significant shifts of emphasis can be observed. Most significantly, greater importance has been attributed to "**historical remembrance**", both by considerably increasing the financial envelope dedicated to activities in this field (20 % of the total budget),[59] and by establishing it as one of only two remaining programmatic strands besides "**democratic engagement and civic participation**".[60] At the same time, 'identity' is far less present than before, not only as an underlying category and concept, but also as a term: it is mentioned only once – and quite peripherally so – in the recitals of the legislative text.[61] This can be interpreted as an expression of growing disinterest if not discomfort towards '(European) identity' as an explicit political objective at EU level and especially among Member States, with the Council serving as their mouthpiece.[62]

As a matter of fact, 'European identity' has been dealt with in an increasingly impassioned way over the last few years in the context of both political and public debates. To a fair extent, this may be ascribed to the **multiple crises** that Europe and the EU in particular have been facing of late; crises that raise concerns about the EU's ability to address contemporary problems and that ultimately also infringe upon the **EU's political legitimacy**, which, in turn, is intrinsically linked to the question of what holds this political construct *sui generis* together and creates a sense of unity among its citizens:

- the financial crisis and the refugees crisis, which (at different levels) raise the issues of 'European values' , the 'internal solidarity' of the EU and how far solidarity can or should mean 'solidarity without conditionality', or rather the reciprocity of rights and obligations (*quid pro quo*);
- the Brexit vote, which fundamentally calls into question the idea of European integration as an irreversible process;
- the repercussions of the 2016 US elections, challenging the 'Western model' as well as the role of the EU in and vis-à-vis other parts of the world;
- the political-institutional crisis of the EU itself, fomented by growing populism and an increasing distrust of 'elites' or 'the establishment', to mention but a few.

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56 *Ibid.*, Art. 3 (1) (b).

57 See *Ibid.*, Art. 12 (1). It is worth noting, however, that in comparison with the previous 2007-2013 edition of the Programme, the total budget has decreased significantly, from the already relatively low figure of EUR 215 million to EUR 185.5 million. The current Europe for Citizens Programme is among the smallest EU programmes of the 2014-2020 multiannual financial framework (see http://ec.europa.eu/budget/mff/programmes/index_en.cfm).

58 *Ibid.*, Annex.

59 *Ibid.*, Annex.

60 *Ibid.*, Art. 3 (1) (a). In the preceding Europe for Citizens 2007-2013 Programme, four main lines of action had been defined: 'Active citizens for Europe', 'Active civil society in Europe', 'Together for Europe', and 'Active European Remembrance'. European Parliament/Council 2006, Article 3 (1).

61 See Council 2014, Recital 9: '[…] The relevance of historical, cultural and intercultural aspects should therefore also be taken into account, as well as the existing links between remembrance and European identity.'

62 As a point of fact, unlike for Europe for Citizens 2007-2013, the European Parliament was not granted the role of a full co-legislator for the 2014-2020 edition of the Programme. Instead, Europe for Citizens 2014-2020 was dealt with under the consent procedure, leaving the Parliament without the possibility of amending a Council draft act, but only of expressing its approval or non-approval by an absolute majority vote. The programme was ultimately passed as a Council Regulation. One may argue that the diminished importance accorded to the idea of a 'European identity' in the Europe for Citizens 2014-2020 Programme is at least partly due to the fact that the Parliament, which traditionally favours a stronger supranational dimension to EU policy, only played a minor role in its drafting.

Considering the set of difficult framework conditions and that the issue of burden sharing – financial or otherwise – between Member States subjects unity within the EU to an acid test, it seems understandable that the **fate of European integration** is a central theme that is now emerging and being discussed in highly contentious ways. Diverging views and visions on how and in which direction the EU should develop imply accordingly heterogeneous idea(l)s on the role and possible form of a collective identity at a European level. While some deny the need for a 'European identity' altogether, others deem the strengthening of such an identity the only way forward. As early as in 2009, the German historian Hartmut Kaelble stated that due to the EU's growing politicisation "public debate about identification with Europe and the EU has become more vivid and at the same time more diverse and controversial" –[63] an assessment which, in view of the current state of affairs, seemed all the more prescient.

Given the wide array of opinions on and existing disputes over this issue, finding common ground on how trans-European identity could and should be dealt with in the future has become a virtually impossible task. Even predictions on the direction and intensity of future debates at EU level prove difficult. Nonetheless, provided that one does not deny the possibility of some form of transnational identity and a value-based community as such, and that one considers strengthening a 'European public spirit' not as something to be repudiated from the outset (which, it should be stressed, is a position as legitimate as any), one can at least make the following assertion: identification with Europe and the EU continues to be very much in the making, and relatively weak in comparison with national identities.

But how might a transnational identity, if it may be so desired, be strengthened? How might it fulfil its intrinsic unifying purpose, while doing justice to the diversity of European cultures and nations? The following section seeks to outline a few perspectives.

[63] Kaelble 2009, p. 211.

3. PROSPECTS OF A EUROPEAN IDENTITY

3.1. Identity building – political and cultural, top-down and bottom-up

The Development of European Identity/Identities: Unfinished Business, was the telling title of a 2012 policy review by the European Commission,[64] which aptly describes the current state of affairs, yet also reveals the somewhat managerial approach adopted by the European institutions on the issue of a European identity. The title implies that identity is a 'business' which can actually be 'finished' – and hence eventually ticked off the political to-do list. But this view is as naïve as it is myopic: by their very nature, identities are anything but static; on the contrary, they are dynamic and subject to permanent change. A definite endpoint does not and cannot exist. While claiming any finality would be a contradiction in terms, however, fostering identity – including European identity – is not necessarily an impossible task, provided the political will exists.

Considering that essentially all European states have well-established national identities (not to speak of regional and local identities), the issue of a **European identity** needs to be seen in **relation to entrenched national identities**.[65] Would a European identity have to supersede the national ones? Not necessarily. Inevitably, however, such an identity would supplement the latter. It is hard to envisage a European identity *not* as a novel 'post-national' type of identity, given the exclusive character of most national forms of identification, which makes it impossible for prevailing models of national 'primordial' identities to simply be transposed at a European level. Since, however, supranational identity is virtually uncharted territory, especially in terms of political practice and as it also evokes deeply-held passions and convictions, there is no obvious blueprint for European policy makers to follow, either in empirical or normative terms.

Given the highly politicised character of debates on a trans-European identity, one might be inclined to argue that efforts directed at 'European identity building' should primarily focus on the **output of the EU's political system** rather than on developing any tailored 'identity policies', whether political or cultural in nature. The underlying rationale of an approach turning the spotlight on the '**output legitimacy**' of the Union[66] is that good politics and policies will eventually foster identity. In other words, identity and a sense of belonging will emerge by way of a reward for successful political work. This is an argument as plain as it is convincing, which despite – or perhaps precisely because of – its straightforwardness, is somewhat underrepresented in contemporary theoretical debates. Obviously, policymaking resulting in added value which is noticed as such by citizens is more likely to increase affinity and loyalty vis-à-vis a given political system than failed policies.

In the specific case of the EU, output legitimacy – that is, the problem-solving quality of laws and rules – appears all the more important, since there is shortage of constructive preconditions for input legitimacy, such as a European *demos*. Accordingly, with a view to strengthening a

[64] European Commission 2012.
[65] See Fossum 2001, p. 373f.
[66] On the politico-theoretical distinction between 'output' and 'input legitimacy' in the framework of the EU see, e.g., Scharpf 1999. While input legitimacy refers to participation *by* and representation *of* the people, output legitimacy represents a 'performance indicator' focusing on the ability of political institutions to govern effectively *for* the people – thus picking up on not only Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address of 1863, which famously characterised democracy as 'government by the people, of the people, for the people', but also systems theories. For the latter see, e.g., Easton 1965, distinguishing between input into the political system (citizens' demands and support) and output (mainly understood as government decisions and/or actions).

transnational European identity, the EU would be well-advised to improve the output of its activities *and* to assure that the Union's achievements are actually noticed by citizens and ascribed to it.[67] The latter also refers to the importance of adequately tailored **communication strategies**.[68]

Notwithstanding the undeniable importance of the EU's performance as a result of concrete political decisions and actions, there are evident challenges associated with such an output-centred approach to identity building. Three are particularly noteworthy:

1) The goal of improving the output of European policymaking is not necessarily compatible with that of strengthening democratic structures and procedures, a claimed lack of which ("**democratic deficit**") has been among the most frequently expressed criticisms of the EU and its institutions. As a result of its very nature, involving extensive deliberations and often driven by the aim of finding compromises, democracy tends to be at odds with demands for quick and resolute political decision-making. For citizens, democracy is often associated with a lack of clearly identifiable, personalised responsibilities, and synonymous with 'indecision' or 'muddling through'. The problem-solving capacity ascribed to many modern (representative) democratic systems is concomitantly modest. Thus, trying to improve the EU's output legitimacy and reinforce its democratic foundations at the same time may well prove to be a tricky, if not impossible, task.

2) If citizens' identification with a polity is primarily founded on the latter's output, any identity potentially resulting from it will be on shaky ground and susceptible to risk, since any 'non-success' of the political system will have a direct impact on its public appreciation. One lesson to be learned from national identities is their ability to overcome crises and outlive the 'bad policies' of their political classes due to not being exclusively dependent on systemic output, but relying on a broader basis and benefiting from citizens' **intrinsic loyalty**.

3) Finally, given the nature of the EU's polity, the extent to which output legitimacy can be realistically generated for the European level is limited, as a result of the distribution of competences between the Union and its Member States alone. In the light of the principle of **subsidiarity**, the EU is rarely in a position to claim the exclusive (in many cases not even principal) 'ownership' of policies, whereas what is perhaps the most effective tool for creating allegiances by means of 'good politics', namely social welfare, remains entirely in the hands of Member States.

Against this backdrop, at European level in particular, the – undoubtedly important – output performance of the political system cannot do without **other sources of identification** for a resilient shared sense of belonging to emerge. In this context, **promoting both a political *and* a cultural identity in parallel** seems indispensable, particularly since both face a more difficult starting point at EU level than is the case at nation-state level. Similarly, **top-down approaches** to 'European identity, which continue to prevail, whether on the part of European politicians and the EU institutions or of European-minded intellectual elites as their main promoter, require further substantiation by **bottom-up approaches**; that is, approaches

[67] In the terminology used in systems theories, the connection between the output and input sides of the political system is encapsulated by the notion of 'feedback': the fact that political output (or 'outcome', once 'output' produces actual changes in the 'environment') may generate new demands or support and groups in support of or against a given policy.

[68] In this context it is worth noting, however, that the influence of the EU itself on how its policies are communicated and perceived is restricted. A considerably more important role is played by actors at Member State level. As a consequence, even the most sophisticated communication strategies by the European institutions are confronted with difficulties in view of widespread 'Brussels-bashing' by national media and politicians alike. On the state of 'Communicating Europe to its Citizens', see http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2014/529080/IPOL_STU%282014%29529080_EN.pdf.

allowing citizens to develop an intrinsic sense of belonging to 'Europe' spontaneously rather than being told why such identification is essential.

The **Europe for Citizens** Programme already alluded to represents an important step in the right direction insofar as actual citizens and their contributions to a common Europe are its focal point and it includes both the political and the cultural dimensions of a transnational identity. On the one hand, the programme seeks to strengthen democratic engagement and civic participation in Europe, thereby increasing the participatory quality of the processes leading to political decisions ('**input legitimacy**') and fostering **political identification**; on the other hand, the "European remembrance" strand of Europe for Citizens explicitly pays tribute to the importance of a **cultural identity** . Despite its achievements, however, the programme's potential for strengthening allegiances with Europe appears not to have been fully exploited thus far. This is for a number of reasons, some of which have nothing to do with the programme itself. Above all, re-nationalisation tendencies in Europe and globally are important in this context, which – fostered by anti-globalisation sentiments and a sense of 'losing control' of political, economic and cultural developments – thwart the promotion of a transnational cause in general. At the same time, the financial envelope for Europe for Citizens has proven highly inadequate for the programme to have anything like a mass impact.[69] Moreover, the concrete approach adopted by the programme with the aim of fostering "European remembrance" raises doubts as to whether it is best suited to accomplish its objectives and strengthen a common cultural identity in Europe.

3.2. Identity through history

History has rightly been identified by European policy makers to be key in providing leverage for nurturing a European (cultural) identity. Indeed, history is likely to be the only, or at least the most promising, means of strengthening a culturally-substantiated sense of belonging in a continent as diverse as Europe. The question is simply: is the approach currently adopted at EU level the most promising one?

3.2.1 Appeal and challenges of historical remembrance

At national level, fostering a **common historical memory** – that is, a memory providing not only a shared view on, but also a 'sense' of, the past – has long been acknowledged to be among the most powerful tools for building collective identity. In fact, two of Anthony D. Smith's five constitutive elements of national collective identity presented above[70] are directly rooted in references to history: common myths and historical memories on the one hand, and a historic territory or homeland on the other (with the perception of a certain territory or homeland as 'historic' frequently being less of a 'fact' than the result of corresponding 'remembrance').

Accordingly, **historical remembrance**, actively practised and nurtured by corresponding policies, is a widespread phenomenon with a long tradition all around the world. The actual forms of remembering and commemorating the past can vary a lot, as can the media employed to promote them: school and textbooks, academic literature, museums, historical monuments,

[69] The numbers speak for themselves: with a total financial envelope of EUR 185.5 million distributed over a seven-year period (2014-2020), it can hardly be expected that civic engagement and/or historical remembrance could be actively nurtured even among a small proportion of the more than 510 million EU citizens (as per 1 January 2016; see: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&plugin=1&language=de&pcode=tps00001).

[70] See Smith 1991, p. 14.

national holidays, artistic expression (music, visual arts, plays), radio and film, etc. Collective historical memory at national level is characteristically dependent on and intertwined with the respective **state- or nation-building process**. While nation-building provides obvious historical landmarks for collective memory, historical memory can make an active contribution to constructing or (re-)structuring national identity. Nevertheless, historical memory-building is anything but an easy task, given the persistence of manifold cultural, social and educational divisions that are often only covered by the language of 'one nation (state)'. In a supranational context, the perception of the past proves all the more heterogeneous and the problems involved in having a collective memory or even defining common historical landmarks are multiplied.

It is redolent of the appeal of history and remembrance for policy makers that efforts have nevertheless been made to foster a '**European historical memory**'[71] in order to add legitimacy to the European integration project and foster collective identity. While traditional reference points had been European 'heritage' in a broad sense of the term, the Second World War as the catalyst for European integration, and the achievements of the integration process per se,[72] a new and more concrete focus has emerged powerfully over recent years, which puts the remembrance of **20th-century totalitarianism** – notably National Socialism and Stalinism – at its centre. This has manifested itself in a number of political initiatives at EU level since the 1990s, with the Europe for Citizens Programme as a centrepiece.[73] Other concrete examples of EU-level measures aimed at strengthening citizens' consciousness of a common European past and legacy are the European Parliament's resolution of 2 April 2009 on European conscience and totalitarianism,[74] calling for the proclamation of 23 August – the day in 1939 when the Molotov-Rippentrop Pact was signed – as "a Europe-wide Day of Remembrance for the victims of all totalitarian and authoritarian regimes",[75] or the House of European History[76] project in Brussels.

However, it would be misleading to conceive of EU memory policies as coherent or even internally uncontested. Instead, palpable competition between two **competing memory frames** persists: the '**uniqueness of the Holocaust**' frame that has shaped Western European post-war culture, and the '**National Socialism and Stalinism as equally evil**' frame that is a centrepiece of Eastern European nations' efforts to come to terms with their respective Communist pasts. These differences serve as a reminder of the difficulties in settling diverging interpretations of the past, not only across the political spectrum, but also between different Member States.

Perhaps even more challenging than the East-West- rift on the formative role of the Holocaust and Stalinism respectively is the fact as such that European attempts at transnational historical remembrance have almost exclusively focused on 20th century totalitarianisms. While this

[71] For a more detailed account of 'European historical memory' – existing policies, challenges and perspectives of future development –, see Prutsch 2015 [2013].
[72] See Section 2.2. above.
[73] A clear outline of the EU's agenda for promoting historical memory and an overview of the financial instruments available for the remembrance of totalitarian regimes in Europe was provided in the Commission's 2010 report to the EP and the Council on the *Memory of the Crimes Committed by Totalitarian Regimes in Europe* (European Commission 2010).
[74] EP 2009, Art. 15. The resolution was passed in the European Parliament by a vote of 533 to 44 with 33 abstentions.
[75] *Ibid.*, Art. 15. This particular call of the 2009 resolution had been preceded by the *Declaration of the European Parliament on the Proclamation of 23 August as European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Stalinism and Nazism* (23 September 2008), signed by 409 Members of the European Parliament. See European Parliament 2008.
[76] See http://www.europarl.europa.eu/visiting/en/brussels/house-of-european-history.

focus is certainly understandable, considering the beginnings of European integration after the end of the Second World War,[77] it proves problematic in at least three respects:

1) Basing the legitimacy of any political project primarily on a **negative foundation myth** is audacious per se, and historically the exception rather than the rule. In the specific case of what might be dubbed the 'European Project', one might reasonably ask whether present-day Europe and its values should be defined predominantly vis-à-vis past experiences of mass violence, genocide or population displacement. If so, one is at risk of lapsing into an overly simplistic black-and-white view, which turns European integration and the EU almost automatically into the obverse of Europe's 'dark past', and portrays today's Europe as a version of accomplished historical reason – a continent of noble traditions, institutions and principles; in short, as the embodiment of Western civilisation. In its wake, such simplification fosters an uncritical and one-dimensional historical understanding, which is detrimental to the creation of a critical (in the best sense of the word) European *demos*, and which likewise fails to do justice to the unmistakable achievements of the European integration process since the late 1940s. Rather than by idealising this process, fruitful debate on development and improvements can instead be effectively encouraged by allowing open discussion of the far-from-streamlined history of the EU and by challenging widespread platitudes of a 'perpetuated success story' or an 'ever closer Union'.

   Moreover, focusing on 20th-century National Socialism and Stalinism reduces European history to a matter of the post-First-World-War period. Historical complexity is thereby unduly reduced, obscuring the broader (inter-)relations essential to the understanding of contemporary Europe. For example, the problem of radical nationalism with all its consequences (wars fought and crimes committed in the name of the nation etc.), for example, can arguably be considered as less of a child of the 20th than the late 18th and 19th centuries. And if we think of common memories shared across the continent, would not those of Colonialism and Imperialism – in a wide sense of the terms – be no less European than the Holocaust?[78] This refers to a second problematic aspect.

2) Reducing the problem of 'working through the past' to National Socialism and Stalinism runs the risk of evading the issue of **shared European accountability for the past**. When talking about European historical memory, one also needs to address the question as to whether responsibility for atrocities and injustices committed might not also be 'European' in part. For obvious reasons, it is easier to find a transgressing dimension of European memory when references are made to the positive sides of a posited European heritage, such as the Enlightenment, for example. Yet when we assume the Enlightenment to be not so much a specifically French, British or German, but a

[77] The overarching experience of the Second World War, the extermination of the European Jews and the millions of victims of Stalinist crimes are widely accepted as being the major and indeed most formative historical catastrophes of the 20th century, if not of human history more generally. Keeping memories alive is therefore not only a question of the respect owed to the victims of these totalitarian regimes, but also a rational step given that knowledge and awareness of this tragic past can serve as a powerful tool to learn lessons for and develop the future. The choice of Nazism and Stalinism as the main reference points for a European collective memory is also consistent in that these two regimes and their policies embody an absolute contrast to the immanent ideals embraced by the 'European project': peace, freedom and democracy, the rule of law, human rights and civil liberties, the right to individual self-determination and pluralism.

[78] The arguments currently put forward against widening the focus of European historical memory in EU debates are not completely convincing. In the Impact Assessment Report of the current Europe for Citizens Programme, for example, it is argued that a more comprehensive approach 'beyond Nazism/Stalinism' might result in a "'nationalisation" of the issues addressed' (European Commission 2011, p. 29). This, however, seems elusive, since the same risk of 'nationalisation' applies equally – if not even more so – to Nazism and Stalinism as to any other historical experience.

European legacy, are the World Wars, the Shoah or the Gulags not also 'transnational' in a sense?[79]

While historical guilt can and should never be apportioned equally, a more critical approach towards, for instance, national legends of resistance, and a more inclusive understanding of responsibility for the past would seem called for. In research and scholarly study, a nuanced approach to dealing with the past has largely become the norm. Nevertheless, at the level of politics and public discourse, the appeal of having a clear-cut historical point of contrast that allows critical questions about one's own past to be sidestepped, as well as permitting the moralisation of history for one's own political purposes, is too tempting to wane any time soon.[80] Intertwining historical memory and moral categorisation, however, can prove to be a dangerous undertaking, serving more as a cause and a hotbed for new conflicts than a means of achieving a durable settling of the past. The nationalisation and political instrumentalisation of memory not only hamper critical engagement with one's own history and its 'sacred cows', but potentially also the ability to deal with the present and the future.

3) Reducing European historical memory to the experiences of National Socialism and Stalinism neglects the fact that citizens' **historical awareness is by no means static over time**. More specifically: almost 70 years after the end of the Second World War, the question as to which memories of totalitarian rule and the Holocaust *can* – rather than *should* – become part of a politico-historical European remembrance culture is a real one, which does not seem to have been given sufficient attention in political discourse. For people who have grown up with images of the War in Yugoslavia, the Rwandan Genocide or the ongoing Syrian Civil War, not to mention those who have personally suffered oppression and hardships, the Second World War is no longer necessarily their defining and natural historical reference point, which it might have been for the World-War-II and post-War generations. Instead, it might be only one among various other historic events of a distant past. Against this backdrop, attempts to more or less 'decree' a static, crystallised historical memory appear to be both futile and doomed to fail. One thing appears to be certain: a remembrance culture based on a deep rift between the individual experience of citizens on the one hand, and an official interpretation by political elites on the other, cannot endure.

In short: European remembrance policies in their contemporary form focusing on 20th-century totalitarianism hardly seem fit actually to help fashion a European identity. Rather, a somewhat different approach would appear indispensable if history is to be used as an instrument for transnational identity building; one less focused on *what* to remember, but rather on *how* the past should be remembered.

[79] The extermination of the European Jews and National Socialism have largely been dealt with as an exclusive German problem and historical legacy (in the same way as the Gulags and Stalinism have been dealt with as a Soviet one). This is not particularly surprising if the 'logic' of post-war Europe is kept in mind, when (Western) European nations needed to assert themselves quickly and to find a legitimate role in the emerging global confrontation between East and West. With 1945 depicted as Zero Hour and the point of departure for a 'New Europe', the dark side could easily be associated with the losing side of the War, Nazi Germany, and – to a lesser extent – Fascist Italy. The good side therefore comprised all the rest of Europe, and through reference to a heroic resistance movement, also included Italy. Due to the same connection with resistance against Nazism, Communism too, which otherwise faced growing scepticism due to its association with the Soviet system, largely remained accepted in Western Europe.

[80] A recent example for history becoming 'moralised' for political purposes is the reaction of the Turkish government to the 2016 resolution of the German Bundestag (see http://dip21.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/18/086/1808613.pdf; for more information on the resolution see https://www.bundestag.de/dokumente/textarchiv/2016/kw22-de-armenier/423826) commemorating the Armenian Genocide in the Ottoman Empire during the First World War (as well as the German Empire's involvement in it), which was harshly criticised by the Turkish side. One central argument was that considering its Nazi past and the Holocaust in particular, Germany would be in no (moral) position to make historical judgements and denounce the events in the Ottoman Empire in 1915/1916 as genocide.

3.2.2 Towards a trans-European 'culture of remembering'

Assuming that the ultimate aim of remembrance policies is both a **cognisant and self-critical European historical memory**, there then seems to be one particularly important starting point: active commitment on the part of each individual European country to 'come to terms with their own past', or rather **'work through the past**', a notion that might prove effective in describing an open-ended process of societal and political work *on* rather than a final mastery *of* the past.[81] This should clearly be done with shared European principles and universalised practices as a basis, yet acknowledging the multiplicity of different national pasts at the same time. In other words, it would not be a Europeanisation – or, putting it less politely, homogenisation – of the contents of different collective memories, but rather a "Europeanization of moral-political attitudes and practices in dealing with profoundly different pasts".[82]

European common values serving as a reference point and foundation for such an endeavour could be those that have emerged as the core of European integration and which have been enshrined in the European Treaties, including human dignity, tolerance, freedom and equality, solidarity and democracy.[83] In line with these principles, the envisaged **'culture of remembering'** would strictly refrain from attempts to establish a pecking order of guilt and suffering or from trying to offset one crime against another, but would rather aim at establishing an open sphere of discussion and developing mutual understanding that would allow for bi- and multilateral reconciliation worthy of the name. Inherent in such an approach is the readiness to address difficult moments of national histories unreservedly. Promising symbolic steps in this direction have already been taken, manifested particularly in what might be called 'politics of regret', both in Europe and beyond, with national leaders assuming responsibility for their country's past misdeeds and engaging in public acts of atonement.[84] The importance of political representatives publically acknowledging the failings of national histories should not be underestimated and can be seen as a crucial contribution to the unprejudiced dealing with and acceptance of one's own past, both at home and internationally.

Such an unprejudiced approach to history raises yet another issue: **renouncing the idea of 'historical truth'** as an absolute category. Truth remains above all an ideal, and it is commonly acknowledged that, even in science, one can only aim for an "ever-increasing approximation to the truth".[85] This applies to an even greater extent to the humanities. There might be historical facts, but there is no singular or static historical truth. As Michel Foucault has argued, truth always remains embedded in, and at the same time forms part of, given power structures, and shifts throughout history.[86] Similarly, one person's truth is not necessarily someone else's. Given that different cultures, but also individuals within a culture, emphasise different aspects of truth, there is a multiplicity of 'truths' even at any given historical moment. The best that

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[81] The notion of 'working through the past' (*Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit*) had been coined by the German sociologist and philosopher Theodor W. Adorno as early as in the 1950s, namely in the context of debates about residual Nazi attitudes among the recently democratised Germans. See especially his 1959 essay *The Meaning of Working through the Past* (printed, e.g., in Adorno 1998, pp. 89-103). Preference to 'working through the past' over 'coming to terms with the past' is also given by other authors working on collective historical memory. See, e.g., Pakier/Stråth 2010.

[82] Müller 2010, p. 27.

[83] These basic principles of the EU are outlined in the Preamble to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2012 [2000]) to name but one example.

[84] On this issue see, e.g., Brooks 1999, Barkan 2000, Olick/Coughlin 2000. Exemplary of the 'politics of regret', not least for its immanent symbolism, was the Warsaw Genuflection of German Chancellor Willy Brandt in 1970 as a gesture of humility and penitence towards the victims of the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Another more recent example is the apology issued by British Prime Minister David Cameron in 2010 for the events of 30 January 1972 (a day more commonly known as "Bloody Sunday"), which aimed at strengthening the peace process in Northern Ireland.

[85] Fromm 1999 [1947], p. 239.

[86] See Foucault 1970.

one can hope for is that increasing interaction between cultures and individuals will allow us to at least partially reconcile and integrate these differences with a view to coming closer to 'the truth'. Against this backdrop, imposing any 'historical truth' would seem not only to be a futile exercise, but even a dangerous one, since any such attempt is intrinsically divisive.

Any attempt to legislate on the past and its remembrance is correspondingly difficult: even if formalised memory laws might be driven by the noblest of motives, in the end they seem likely to do more harm than good. This is by no means to be taken as a plea for 'whateverism' in dealing with history, or even as an argument for accepting historical revisionism that neglects historical facts. However, for political purposes there appears to be a more promising alternative to legally imposing a certain view of the past: providing a solid framework for the establishment of a critical public. Of particular importance in this regard are **education policies** corresponding to the 'culture of remembering' delineated above; a culture which cannot be forced on European citizens, but needs to emanate from personal insight and conviction, as does any form of identity, too.

In this context, education can be conceptualised both broadly and more specifically. In the former sense, education refers to all the means at hand for creating the framework conditions providing (young) people with the possibility (and, indeed, the required skill set) to think independently and thus become self-reflexive and responsible citizens – in the tradition of the Enlightenment's call for becoming able to actively use one's understanding without guidance from another, encapsulated in the dictum: ***Sapere Aude!*** ('Dare to know!'). Here, the EU is in a strong position to provide active support for and supplement corresponding efforts at national level, even through existing instruments. Among the latter is one of the EU's most prominent programmes: **Erasmus**, which is celebrating its 30th anniversary in 2017.[87] On an individual level and in a non-invasive way, experiences of living and studying abroad made possible through Erasmus allow for experiencing the diversity of Europe, while levelling cultural and linguistic barriers and increasing understanding of what 'Europeanness' might mean. In requiring and further stimulating intellectual curiosity, independence and a sense of responsibility, Erasmus makes a valuable contribution to the personal development of young people and to the strengthening of active (European) citizenship through an approach that is distinctively bottom-up. The Programme thus prepares the necessary groundwork for identification with Europe, rather than directly kindling such identification.[88]

In a more specific sense, education refers to the teaching (and learning) of history. School and university play a fundamental role in our gaining information about history and promoting our historical consciousness, thus making it a key broker for any memory and identity policy. For the envisaged 'critical culture of remembering' to be successfully promoted, educational policies would need to be aimed at ensuring a critical and open-minded approach to conveying not only the present, but also the past, i.e. (history) teaching that:

1) increases awareness of the diversity of cultures, histories and memories in Europe, and promotes mutual respect;
2) provides students with the necessary knowledge and skills to assess their own local and national past in an unbiased manner in comparison and in relation with other European as well as global realities; and thus

[87] Building on the success of Erasmus, not least as a brand name, the new Erasmus+ Programme (see European Parliament/Council 2013) brings together seven existing programmes in the fields of education, training, youth and sport, with the previous Erasmus Programme continuing as its centrepiece.

[88] The direct impact of Erasmus on European identity has been described as limited. See, e.g., Sigalas 2009, Mitchell 2012.

3) encourages young Europeans to become active critical thinkers and participants in 'historical remembrance', which in turn may serve as the nucleus of a common transnational identity.

What is thus required is a radical departure from the predominantly national(ised) history currently taught across Europe, and an abandoning – or in any case questioning – of much-loved preconceptions of the (national) past that have hitherto been presented as semi-canonised historical 'truths'.

The path to a common European remembrance culture via the Europeanisation of memory practices and history learning at national level is certainly painstaking, yet it is difficult to identify any true alternative. No matter how appealing the idea of a genuinely European memory with practices and content shared by the continent's citizens might appear, it seems neither practicable nor even desirable. At a time when the nation is still the overriding reference point of collective identities, coming to terms with the past remains first and foremost a task to be performed at the level of the nation state; something which 'Europe' cannot do for or instead of them.

Critical voices may argue that openly dealing with national histories – even if on the basis of shared principles and in a spirit of mutual understanding – does not yet constitute European identity, and quite rightly so. However, one can also claim that a basic common understanding about how to deal with (one's own) history and its legacies is indispensable for solidarity and eventually a community to emerge. A common 'culture of remembering' is therefore not intended to shape European identity in a direct way, but rather to create the prerequisites for the emergence of such an identity. In conceiving '**Europeanness**' also – if not mainly – in relation to the ways in which we **manage our histories** and are able to draw our lessons from those histories, settling the past becomes significant in laying the foundations for a common modelling of the future at present.

By doing so, it might still be putting too much confidence in the actual potential of history to assist in the emergence of a culturally-substantiated transnational 'identity'. Yet even if concrete efforts at the EU and member state level only result in European citizens developing a more critical approach to history, this could still achieve more in terms of Europe coalescing than political and intellectual elites merely stressing the importance of European identity from their respective Ivory towers could ever hope to do. This hope is also nurtured by the fact that a 'culture of remembering' which deliberately focuses on and actively involves citizens is not only compatible with notions of civic engagement, but could in itself also become an integral component of a dynamic '**civic (political) culture**', in which individual and collective actions address issues of public concern not only at local and national, but also at European level.

These brief considerations on the potential contribution of history and historical remembrance – as well as a 'civic culture' more generally –and their implications for allegiances to a common Europe growing stronger lead to some more general concluding remarks and recommendations as regards the issue of a 'European identity'.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following conclusions and recommendations can be elaborated in relation to the issue of a European identity and possible future political action in particular:

1) **Recognising identity as an elusive and intrinsically constructivist concept:**
Identity is a well-established and frequently used concept in the social sciences and beyond. It tackles the issue of how an individual relates to specific (peer) groups or society as a whole around him/her, thus touching upon the fundamental issues of what makes human (co-)existence possible per se and what actually holds societies together. Despite its being so prominently present both in scholarly debate – manifested in the immense volume of studies and publications on the issue, the number of which has increased steeply over the last few decades – and public discourse, identity nevertheless proves to be a highly contested and elusive concept. If there is anything approaching common ground in contemporary research, it is the understanding that identity must not be seen as anything fixed or 'primordial'. On the contrary, any identity is highly constructivist by its very nature. This applies to collective identities in particular. Consequently, one would be well advised to avoid any essentialist understanding of collective identities, be it at national or supranational level. What is required is a pragmatic, dispassionate approach to collective identities, which are neither an end in themselves nor the teleological culmination of some historical rationality. This latter understanding is still present in relation to national identities, reflecting the legacy of the pseudo-sacralisation of the 'nation' as it developed historically with its culmination in the 19th and 20th century, but also newer forms of transnational or even cosmopolitan identity that often correspond to a perceived 'end of history'.[89] Accordingly, the supplementation or even replacement of any given identity by another should not be perceived in terms of deprivation, but merely the substitution of one form of imagination by another. In a nutshell, no identity is stable over time or eternal, no identity is intrinsically superior to another, and no identity is indispensable.

2) **Acknowledging collective identity as being central to any body politic:**
Collective identity is always a construct, but this does not imply irrelevance. Quite the contrary: collective identity is of crucial importance for individuals and communities of all sorts alike. While collective identity provides orientation for individuals, it provides systematic stability for (political) communities. Some form of identification is necessary for the legitimation and indeed very existence of any given body politic, since existing differences and divides need to be bridged by a presumed overarching and fundamental sameness being accepted by the members of that body politic. Against this backdrop, any political community has a natural self-interest in fostering and strengthening forms of collective identity. Accordingly, it would be most striking and indeed irresponsible if nation states, but also the EU, were *not* to pursue any actions or even formalised policies aimed at strengthening collective identities. In turn, this also implies that fundamentally calling into question the nature of nations or the EU as (political) communities would make such actions and policies obsolete.

[89] See especially the contributions by Francis Fukuyama (e.g., Fukuyama 1989, Fukuyama 1992). Fukuyama's concept of the 'end of history' essentially claims that the end of the Cold War not only marks the end of a historical epoch, but of history itself, characterised by the universalisation of Western liberal democracy as the final form of government. Fukuyama's theories soon provoked sharp intellectual dissent, famously represented, e.g., by Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* (Huntington 1997).

3) Weighing up the chances and limits of national identity-building patterns being replicated at a supranational level:

Probably the most striking example of collective identity building is the nation (state), which, having gained momentum in Europe from the 17th century onwards, has become a global model and one of the most pervasive patterns in human history. Given the formative power of the nation in terms of the modern world, it should come as no surprise that national identities have become *the* key reference point for debates on forms of supranational identities as well. This applies in two respects: on the one hand, strong nations – and hence national identities – continue to be a material fact to be dealt and reckoned with; on the other hand, national identity building represents a model, the emulating of which has considerable appeal. The fact that the national level is being consciously taken as a benchmark is perfectly understandable and also useful to an extent, since important lessons can be learned not only from the success of nation-building processes throughout the world, but also from the difficulties involved in overcoming 'heterogeneity' at national level, which at a supranational level emerge even more distinctly. At the same time, however, analogies prove problematic, since key political and/or cultural prerequisites for the development of national identities, such as existing governmental structures or a common cultural background (as manifested, e.g., in a common language) may be lacking at supranational level. Thus, national identities cannot serve as one-to-one blueprints for processes of trans- or supranational community formation. For a European identity to emerge, a degree of 'innovation' and the courage to allow for trial and error is therefore not an option, but a must.

4) Recognising the need for European identity to be both political and cultural:

Among the most important distinctions drawn in debates about trans-European identity is that of Europe seen as either a cultural or a political community, with a different emphasis accordingly on the core and the objectives of a transnational identity, as well as on possible policies aimed at fostering such an identity. While this distinction may be useful in analytical terms, it does not imply any strict 'either or', 'right or wrong' choices to be made. An argument can be made instead for 'Europeanness' having to be defined both politically *and* culturally, not only in the sense that there is evidence for Europe having at least some identifiable elements of a political (manifested, e.g., in existing political structures such as the EU, the Council of Europe, or the OSCE) and also cultural community (despite all of the differences, shared historical and cultural experiences, such as the influence of Greek and Roman philosophy, are far from negligible). It also seems that, if a trans-European identity is to be successfully strengthened, a combination of both political and cultural efforts will be indispensable. Criticism of cultural concepts of European identity as being too close to the traditional model of the nation and too 'identitarian' – hence at best replacing national with European chauvinism, if feasible at all given the cultural diversity of Europe – are certainly justified. However, the alternative of a 'political identity' alone seems too week to guarantee the unfolding of a broad trans-European sense of belonging, not least since concepts, such as 'constitutional patriotism' remain too abstract and elitist to have a broad public impact anytime soon.[90] A cultural component therefore needs to form an integral part of any reflection about European identity, though without merely reverting to primordial concepts of national identity. In the best case scenario, existing criticisms of cultural and political identity concepts alike might be integrated into a more inclusive vision of identity – one which is culturally substantiated and not only fully compatible with the ideal of a democratic, open and citizen-centred society, but actually reinforcing such a society.

[90] Moreover, it can be argued that 'constitutional patriotism' is the product of rather than the cause and bedrock of community.

5) Revising existing identity policies with a view to strengthening bottom-up approaches:

European politicians and institutions have endeavoured to foster a transnational identity since the beginning of European integration after the Second World War. However, these attempts have not been consistent, fluctuating in focus and intensity over time, and increasingly accompanied by polemics – especially as the European Union has assumed an increasing number of state-like characteristics. Much of the criticism directed against the EU's pursuit of identity policies today has not so much been triggered by these policies directly as it has originated in broader contemporary developments, including a perceived marginalisation of nation states, growing populism and a rejection of the 'political establishment', in addition to a general distrust of globalisation as well as change per se. But the polemics surrounding the EU's attempts at identity building are also due to these attempts being widely perceived as 'top-down', if not simply as propaganda from above. For collective identity to be built successfully, however, a strong 'bottom-up' component is also indispensable; that is, identification with a polity emerging from civic engagement and nurtured by citizens. In this context, the Europe for Citizens Programme, which has been in place since 2007, marks an important paradigm shift, with EU identity-building efforts moving away from agenda-setting by political and intellectual elites to targeting civil society and aiming at fostering active citizenship instead. Yet, in view of its present (financial) scope alone, the programme is not in a position to foster large-scale identification with Europe among citizens.

As a result, efforts at strengthening a civic, 'bottom-up' component of identification with Europe would need to be intensified and, in particular, put on a broader basis than is currently the case, which would in turn require joint efforts in devising corresponding initiatives and taking action both at European and national levels.

6) Historical remembrance as a focal point of identity struggles, yet also as a potential nucleus of a European identity:

History, and its collective remembrance in particular, have proven to be a crystallisation point for the problems involved in creating a common European identity – or even just a common identification with the 'European project'. It is widely recognised that for all community-building processes, at least some basic consensus on the past and how it should be perceived and tackled is a *sine qua non*. At transnational European level and in view of the lack of other shared elements, such as a common language to take but one example, historical memory appears to be particularly important – if not the only feasible tool – for a (cultural) identity to develop. At the same time, the pronounced diversity of historical experiences in Europe, with memories not just divided, but in many cases also divisive, means that any policy aimed at a common European historical memory is faced with considerable obstacles.

Despite these challenges, it nevertheless seems possible for history to become the leverage point for some form of European identity; notably if the aim is not to construct a common past to be shared by all peoples of the continent, but rather to ensure the possibility of a shared experience in dealing with often troubled pasts beyond the framework of individual national borders – an exercise characterised by a spirit of mutual respect and understanding. In short, it is not a common history that is to be sought after, but rather a common approach to (and in the best case scenario learning lessons from) the past, all with a view to laying the groundwork for collectively mastering the present and shaping the future.

7) Fostering a civic 'European culture of remembering':

For history to become part of a truly integrative concept of transnational identity building, a decentralised rather than homogenising approach is required; one in which the emphasis is not on any politically pre-defined understanding of history or individual events and moments thereof, but on developing capacities for a critical 'reworking of the past' at the national level, based on common European principles and values. What is needed is to move away from prescriptive and content-driven to more process-based approaches to historical memory: a European 'culture of remembering' rather than a European remembrance culture. Such a 'culture of remembering' implies:

- approaching Europe's past on the basis of European core values such as humanism, tolerance and democracy;
- refraining from any (pre)judgmental evaluation of the past or idea of 'collective guilt' in the interest of creating an open sphere of discussion that supports the overall objective of mutual understanding and reconciliation both within and between European nations;
- consciously and self-confidently addressing even the uncomfortable segments of national histories rather than suppressing or ignoring them;
- basing judgements of the past strictly on the examination of historical facts, while renouncing the notion of 'historical truth' that creates unrealistic expectations and is inherently contentious; and
- acknowledging the potential risks involved in legislating for a specific officially prescribed version or memory of the past.

An approach like this would do justice to the multiplicity of existing historical memories – and indeed histories – in Europe, while providing an incentive to critically scrutinise them within the premises of a clear supra- and transnational framework. Discerning historical self-reflection would: a) go beyond contemplating national pasts and also provide perspectives for the future; b) lay the foundations for a better informed European discourse on history that would allow for a mutual opening up of, but also a confronting of divergent national collective memories in a civilised and non-antagonistic, yet at the same time realistic manner. A 'culture of remembering' thus perceived would ideally be embedded in an overarching civic political culture characterised by a shared sense of common ownership of the body politic among citizens actively involved not only in shaping the present, but also dealing with the past.

8) Acknowledging the central role of education:

Education assumes a key role in nurturing a European sense of belonging, both cultural and political. The success of the envisaged European 'culture of remembering', as well as that of the civic political culture it should form part of, is inherently dependent on an adequate educational underpinning. The focus therefore needs to be placed, even more explicitly than is already the case, on promoting relevant educational measures at national level, with particular attention to be paid to school education.[91] Above all, these measures should be aimed at providing high-quality history and citizenship teaching that is geared towards:

- raising awareness of cultural diversity in Europe and the complexities of historical memory as well as the potential of civic engagement;

[91] Facilitated by the intrinsically more international character of higher education and academic research, critically dealing with past and present as well as addressing transnational issues are two areas which appear to be comparatively well developed in post-secondary education. This, coupled with the fact that schools are usually the first place outside of the family where young people learn about history and citizenship, seems to mitigate in favour of giving priority to (European) political efforts concerning school education.

- endowing teachers and students with the means required to scrutinise their own countries' pasts and presents objectively and in broader (trans-)European contexts;[92] and thus
- encouraging young Europeans to become actively-engaged and (self-)critical citizens contributing to an informed society.

To that end, particular educational efforts need to be made in two respects:

I) Revising existing curricula and teaching methods, with a view to shifting focus and allowing for more emphasis to be placed on the challenges as well as the potential of trans- and supranational historical remembrance and citizenship. Correspondingly innovative teaching styles would be also required, guided by the overall objective of making students learn 'how to think' rather than 'what to think', thus favouring reflection and discussion over mere knowledge transfer.

II) Providing tailor-made teacher training to fit these needs; i.e., training that would enable teachers to grasp transnational aspects of history and citizenship, would impart adequate didactic methods and principles of modern teaching, and would primarily be concerned with equipping young people with the tools for critical thinking and reflection.

The objective of equipping young people with critical thinking and reflection skills refers to the need for efforts at reform in history and civic education being embedded in broader, concurrent educational frameworks. A significant contribution to the establishment and design of such frameworks could be made at European level, whether through promoting and facilitating the exchange of best practice across national borders, or by means of political initiatives of its own.

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A European public sphere requires an informed and critical – in the best sense of the word – public at its heart. Strengthening historical awareness, civic participation and a sense of shared responsibility for the body politic not only at national, but also European level may allow for such a public sphere to emerge in the long run and help promote a European sense of belonging. Whether a 'European civil society' conceived along these lines will necessarily give rise to a full-fledged European identity in the end must, however, remain an open question.

Undoubtedly, the increasing re-nationalisation tendencies and growing alienation from the 'European project' being witnessed at present, of which Brexit is but one concrete expression, make the questions 'what is Europe?' and 'where is it going?' appear most timely, and have forcefully put the issue of a European identity back on the political agenda. All in all, it is not foolhardy to claim that the prospect of a supranational identity in Europe looks grim, not only in today's circumstances in particular, but also more generally. There is no common language or common culture in the strict sense of the word that would easily allow traditional models of identity building to be transposed to a European level. Even more importantly perhaps, there is no clearly defined image of an enemy that could serve as a foundation and bonding agent for the European project *ex negativo*. Paradoxically, one of the key achievements of European integration since the Second World War – its outspoken (and by all means prudent) dissociation from the chauvinism, imperialism and racism that permeated European political life during the 19th and the first half of the 20th century – has left it without one of the most effective tools

[92] Concrete examples of a consciously transnational approach to and understanding of history are ongoing projects for bi- and multilateral history textbooks (see, e.g., http://deutsch-polnische.schulbuchkommission.de/en/deutsch-polnisches-geschichtsbuch.html).

of historical community building: a clear-cut friend-foe distinction.[93] While this accounts for much of the appeal of the European project, it is also one of its most crippling limitations.

Are the grim prospects for a European identity emerging anytime soon something to worry about? For many Europeans, and not just self-proclaimed Eurosceptics, it certainly is not. And yet, viewed pragmatically, 'European identity' is not an end in itself; it is even less of a must. The same can be said, however, of national and any other form of identity. To put it crudely: the world can do without a European identity, as it can do without the EU; but it can as well do without national identities and without nation states. In the end, it all depends on what form of community is deemed the most appropriate and desirable – a largely personal decision to be made. Whatever the actual preference, however, it is undeniable that processes of identification fulfil a central function in legitimising and therefore stabilising any community: be it a real or just an imagined community; be it a family, a local community, a nation (state), or a European, perhaps even a cosmopolitan, community.

Many of the polemics surrounding contemporary debates on the subject could be mitigated if different forms of identity were not misleadingly perceived as 'exclusive' and a matter of 'either or', but rather compatible with each other. Multiple identities are a living reality today, with distinct regional and national identities existing in parallel in many parts of Europe and the world without being detrimental to each other, which is but one example worth mentioning. As a result, there appears to be no convincing argument as to why the existing multiplicity and interaction of (political) identities might not be complemented – and likely enriched – by an additional layer of identification, whether it be European or even cosmopolitan. Learning to perceive identity not as something which potentially might be lost, but rather which might be gained, would appear to add yet another dimension to the often-cited slogan of 'united in diversity' – and perhaps not the least appealing at that.

[93] A classic example for the historical role of – largely constructed – friend-foe distinctions is the 'Franco-German enmity', that is the idea of an unavoidable hostile relationship between the French and the Germans that had been nurtured on both sides of the Rhine since the sixteenth century and was of key importance for the amplification of French and the emergence of German nationalism during the 19th century. For an early theorisation of friend-foe distinctions and their political dimension see, e.g., the works of Carl Schmitt (1888-1985), for whom the area in which friend and foe were distinguished was nothing less than politics itself: "Die spezifisch politische Unterscheidung, auf welche sich die politischen Handlungen und Motive zurückführen lassen, ist die Unterscheidung von Freund und Feind. […] [Sie] hat den Sinn, den äußersten Intensitätsgrad einer Verbindung oder Trennung, einer Assoziation oder Dissoziation zu bezeichnen." Schmitt 1963 [1932], p. 26f.

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DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR INTERNAL POLICIES

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STRUCTURAL AND COHESION POLICIES

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