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# **European Identity in Global Perspective**

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(not yet revised by a native speaker - sorry)

## **1. Introduction**

European Identification is regarded as one of the crucial problems for European integration. A strong sense of belonging to a community seems to be the basis for solidarity and thus a stable political system and redistributive policies. Easton (Easton 1975; see also Fuchs 1999; Fuchs 2002) prominently pointed out the importance of support for the 'political community'. While other concepts of political culture in the tradition of Almond and Verba (1963; 1980; Almond 1980) took the political community for granted, Easton recognized the importance of this precondition for a stable political system. The widespread neglect of the community in the perception of citizens is easy to explain. At least in Western Europe and North America, where the most influential part of social science is situated, the nation state and the nation as a community is a generally accepted 'reality'. Taking a closer look this is only partly true for some nation states even in Western Europe (e.g. Belgium, Spain, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland), the community is definitely highly disputed regarding the European Union (EU).

The debate about whether a community as the basis, the demos, for the EU political system exists or could be formed, takes place under the label 'European identity'.<sup>1</sup> While the actual influence of political culture in its various aspects and forms on the stability of political, especially democratic regimes, is often stated and seldom shown empirically (Elkins/Simeon 1979; Muller/Seligson 1994), this cannot be said for the identification with the EU. We have ample evidence that identification with Europe increases the acceptance of the integration process as a whole, the trust in EU institutions, the support for further accession waves and further deepening of the EU and other disputed political projects (see e.g. Fuchs u.a. 2008; Roose 2007). The relevance of European identification for the European integration process is obvious.

However, for detailed research on how such a European identity develops and which measures might support the process of identity formation and therefore support the process of European integration, suffer from two interwoven shortcomings. Firstly, the term identity itself is vague and used in differing meanings, to say the least. For conceptual clarity and cumulative research, we need an explicit and theoretically founded understanding of identity. Secondly, we lack more or less any research on European identity beyond Europe. This might sound like a contradiction per se. However, the insights of comparative research would be helpful for the question of identification as well. Comparisons are not only possible with the identification in nation states. I want to argue, that it is also worthwhile to look for comparison beyond the borders of the European continent.

In the following, I will first propose two conceptions of identity (one of which I rather call identification). Then I would like to present some arguments why European identity should differ from other continents' identities. Afterwards I will test these arguments empirically.

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<sup>1</sup> There is a very broad literature on this field. See for example Bruter 2006; Cinnirella 1996; Díez Medrano 2003; Donig u.a. 2005; Duchesne/Frogner 1995; Elm 2002; Giesen 2002; Henrichsmeyer u.a. 1995; Herrmann u.a. 2004; Hewstone 1986; Immerfall/Sobisch 1997; Jiménez u.a. 2004; Karolewski/Kaina 2006; Kohli 2000; Krienke/Belafi 2007; Kutz/Weyland 2000; Lepsius 1997; Lilli 1998; Lorenz 1999; Mayer/Palmowski 2004; Meyer 2004; Mokre/Bauböck 2003; Nida-Rümelin/Weidenfeld 2007; Noll/Scheuer 2006; Pfetsch 1998; Quenzel 2005; Robyn 2005; Smith 1992; Thalmaier 2005; Westle 2003.

Depending on the meaning given to identity the empirical test has to take different forms. Therefore, I will return to the two conceptions of identity in turn and present data that help us to assess the arguments. That this empirical investigation is heavily dependent on available data is obvious. But though we are confronted with considerable shortcomings the findings will enable us to come to informed conclusions.

## **2. Conceptions of European identity**

“Few concepts are as polysemic as identity”, write Deschamps and Devos (1998: 1) and thereby describe a major problem, which also complicated the debate on European identity (see also e.g. Kohli 2000). Looking from a very general perspective it is possible to distinguish two approaches to collective identity (with European identity being one form). The first approach is to regard collective identity as a substantial identity. The second approach is to understand collective identity as subjective identification.

The idea of collective identity as a substantial identity focuses on the substance of the collective identity. The term focuses - in this understanding - on characteristics of a social entity, which are regarded as specific enough to make the respective character of this entity. Accordingly, one would need to clarify, what members of this entity have in common and regard as important or at least not as completely irrelevant. There have been many more or less philosophical approaches to identify what is typically European and therefore makes up the core of the European social entity (e.g. Balibar 2005; Joas 2005; Le Goff 2004; Nida-Rümelin 2007). Taking these and many more analyses together, we can say two things. First, most accounts concentrate on culture and therein mostly on values. Obviously, in modern times values seem to be the anchor for finding relevant commonalities. Second, it becomes obvious that the result is fairly arbitrary. Kocka (2007) points out in an historical analysis that descriptions of the substance of European identity have always been the result of interested reasoning. They are not the result of factual coherence of the entity but rather the outcome of a political process. Descriptions of what Europeans characteristically have in common need to be interpreted as “invention of tradition” in the sense of Hobsbawm (1983; Hobsbawm/Ranger 1983). To understand, how these descriptions come into being, there is no need to look at historical developments but rather to concentrate on their role in present

history writing. "The peculiarity of 'invented' traditions is that the continuity with it [the historic past, JR] is largely factitious. In short, they responses to novel situations which take the form of reference to old situations" (Hobsbawm 1983: 2). What Hobsbawm says about traditions directly applies also to descriptions of a supposed common character, a collective identity in the substantial sense.

This criticism, however, does not imply that this conception is uncovered as objectively wrong and therefore obsolete. Quite the opposite. Studies on nationalism have shown the enormous power of images and ideas perceived as true regardless whether they are robust against scientific reasoning. The idea of nation is an impressive case in point (Anderson 1991; Hobsbawm 1991; Tilly 1975). Though studies on nation state formation have proven, that in most European cases there hasn't been a nation, i.e. a defined collectivity of people understanding itself as a common social entity, which has taken over power to form a nation state. Rather state formation was often the first step and implementation of a national consciousness was the second (Weber 1976; Shalins 1989). Accordingly, crucial is not the objective (which means supported by results found in accordance with modern methods of science) characteristics of a social entity but rather what the members of the entity themselves *regard* as their common characteristics. As we know from the Thomas-Theorem (Thomas/Thomas 1932: 572) social relevance is not dependent on something being true but rather of being *believed* as true.

Following this line of argument, we have to modify the substantial version of collective identity. *Collective identity as substantial identity embraces all the characteristics of a collectivity, which are regarded as common by its members. Typically this concerns cultural characteristics, especially values.*

The starting point for the second understanding, collective identity as subjective identification, comes from a different starting point and different tradition of thought: the social identity theory (Tajfel 1978; Tajfel u.a. 1971; Tajfel/Turner 1979; see also Abrams/Hogg 1990; Brown 2000; Stets/Burke 2000; Worchel u.a. 1998; with regard to European identity also Cinnirella 1996; Roose 2007). The social identity theory divides the

identity of a person into two parts: the personal identity and the social identity. The personal identity is a concept which is basically neglected by this research tradition. It is a residual category and consists of all arbitrary parts of the personality which are not part of the social identity. The social identity refers to that part of the self-concept which can be accounted to social groups the person is a member of. For example, I have some characteristics as part of my identity because I am a sociologist and I am (partly) like sociologists, another part is made up by the fact that I am a father and regard that as relevant, another part can be accounted to me being the son of my respective family and so on. The social identity is „that *part* of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership“ (Tajfel 1978: 63).

The collective identity now refers to aspects which are integrated into the self-concept as the social identity (or as part of the social identity). Thereby the collective identity becomes something radically individual. The focus is on the fact whether a person attaches value and emotional significance to a group membership - for whatever reasons. There is no need anymore for all (or many) group members to ascribe the same characteristics to the group. In extreme, every member may have completely different ideas of the relevant group characteristics. Relevant is only the fact that the membership is valued and therefore incorporated in the self-concept.

*Accordingly, the collective identity as subjective identification denotes the fact and significance of a person incorporating a group membership into his/her social identity. The personally perceived characteristics of the collectivity which are incorporated into the self-concept are of secondary importance, as the focus is now on the intensity of identifying, i.e. the importance the group membership has for the self-concept.*

Both concepts of collective identity, the substantial identity and the subjective identification point in different directions of interest. However, they are not mutually exclusive, at least not necessarily. In an extreme case every group member might incorporate the membership for different reasons and with different aspects into his/her self-concept, however such a

situation is highly unlikely. Rather we should expect considerable overlap, enforced by common narration, shared myths and history writing. Nevertheless, we need to keep in mind, that a broad consensus on characteristics is a necessary condition for the substantial identity while it is a possible side-phenomenon for the subjective identification.

### **3. Formation of European Identity**

Having defined the central concept identity in two ways, we now turn to the global comparative perspective. For this task we need take a detour. What we can expect to be specific for European identity contrary to identification on a continental level in other regions of the world, can be inferred by explanations of European identity formation.

Two main arguments can be found in literature. One prominent argument explains support for the European integration process and as part of that also European identification as a result of personal gains. In this approach, gains are basically defined as material gains. Research translates this basic argument usually into hypotheses on different social strata benefitting differently from the integration process (as an overview Dubé/Magni Berton 2009). The repeatedly shown finding that the highly educated with better jobs are more likely to identify with Europe is regarded as support to this position.<sup>2</sup>

In a similar line of argument but rather as an historical analogy in respect to nation state formation, some authors hope on increasing identification by strengthening the social policy of the EU time (see e.g. Meyer 2004; 2007). The output legitimacy is supposed to strengthen the identification.

Finally, the EU itself and its institutions and elites share the view, that a European identity is important (Pfetsch 1998). A wide array of measures were taken by EU institutions to enhance a European identity, among them exchange programmes for young people in various situations like students, pupils, young people in professional training. Also the idea

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<sup>2</sup> Problematic to this argument is the assumption of rather vaguely diagnosed social groups profiting from the integration process. Mau (2005) has shown that perception of individual gain from the integration process is not strongly associated with socio-demographic characteristics.

of a European cultural capital, projects in border regions and political initiatives like the (failed) constitution treaty also target the establishment or strengthening of European identification (Nida-Rümelin/Weidenfeld 2007).

According to these arguments, the formation and strengthening of a European identity seems to be a peculiar European endeavour. It is the result of EU activities, directly or indirectly. If the assumptions are correct and the EU does have an influence on European identity in the mentioned ways, this should be mirrored in the attitudes of the Europeans. First, we should expect an understanding of the Europeans of their collective identity in the sense of a substantial identity. As the EU tries to mark values as particularly European (and if this is believed by the Europeans), then we should find hints of a consensus about common characteristics being typical for Europeans.

Taking the global comparison into account, one should expect a higher level of continental collective identity in Europe than on other continents. We should find more subjective identification as a result of gains from the integration process. Additionally, we should find in Europe a specific distribution of identification with Europe. As the highly educated with better professional positions are said to identify more with Europe due to their specific gains then we should find this pattern only or dominantly in Europe, while distributions of continental identification elsewhere should follow no or different rules. These assumptions are tested in the following chapters.

#### **4. Substantial Identity in Europe**

To find a substantial identity of the EU-citizens, we have to look for the idea of having values in common on a European scale and a factual consensus on what values are in fact the common European values.

The European Commission is conducting public surveys in all member countries on a regular basis, the Eurobarometer.<sup>3</sup> In spring 2008 the EU concentrated special Eurobarometer

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<sup>3</sup> For detailed information on the studies see [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/index_en.htm) and <http://www.gesis.org/dienstleistungen/daten/umfragedaten/eurobarometer-data-service/>

surveys on the values of Europeans.<sup>4</sup> These results are valuable for our questions on a substantial European identity.

The Europeans were asked whether “in terms of shared values are European Union Member States... A. close to each other, B. distant from each other, C. don’t know?” The question is ideal to control for the first step of our concept, i.e. the perception of having values substantially in common. As can be seen from table 1, a small majority within the EU thinks in fact that the EU member states are close to each other. However, also a considerable part of the population regards the countries as distant to each other or does not feel able to judge.

**Table 1: How close are the EU member states in terms of values? (in %)**

	Very close to each other	Fairly close to each other	Fairly distant from each other	Very distant from each other	DK
Belgium	3,9	57,7	28,3	6,1	4,0
Denmark	3,0	58,6	29,2	6,2	3,0
Portugal	6,5	52,8	23,3	3,1	14,3
Italy	6,0	52,1	22,6	6,1	13,3
Spain	5,7	52,0	21,8	4,5	16,1
Netherlands	1,3	56,3	31,6	4,1	6,6
Greece	4,9	52,5	30,8	11,4	0,4
Ireland	4,1	51,1	15,5	7,5	21,8
Luxembourg	9,0	44,3	27,3	6,2	13,2
Sweden	1,5	51,2	37,1	6,1	4,1
Germany	4,4	47,9	32,8	6,5	8,4
Finland	0,7	48,0	41,8	6,8	2,7
France	2,2	45,6	36,5	5,4	10,3
Great Britain	2,7	41,6	29,9	7,4	18,4
Austria	3,1	36,3	39,8	9,6	11,2
Slovakia	4,2	67,3	20,5	2,4	5,7
Cyprus (Republic)	6,2	62,1	13,7	6,2	11,9
Czech (Republic)	5,0	63,1	22,3	3,7	5,9
Slovenia	3,4	62,7	23,9	6,0	4,0
Malta	7,6	58,0	11,0	2,6	20,8
Poland	2,6	59,0	20,2	2,6	15,6
Lithuania	2,7	50,6	29,6	3,9	13,1
Hungary	4,2	48,4	33,3	8,5	5,6

<sup>4</sup> Similar questions were already asked in autumn 2006, but I analyze only the most recent data.



Estonia	1,8	49,5	30,5	3,7	14,6
Latvia	1,4	41,0	44,6	4,9	8,1
Bulgaria	9,3	52,0	14,1	5,7	18,9
Romania	8,4	45,4	21,5	4,3	20,3
Cyprus (TCC)	28,8	45,4	9,2	3,4	13,2
Macedonia (FYROM)	18,4	53,7	11,5	4,4	12,0
Turkey	22,3	41,6	6,8	3,3	26,0
Croatia	6,7	47,6	27,0	12,1	6,6

EB 69, Spring 2008.

In the Eurobarometer, we have also the question whether these common values are general Western values or are regarded as specific for Europe. Overall the Europeans are undecided on this matter. 44 % think there are only global Western values, while 37 % disagree with the statement, that the common values are common to the transatlantic region (13 % are undecided).

To specify common values the respondents had to choose from a list the three most important values. As values were presented, the choice was limited, which will have substantial impact on the answers. Anyhow the consensus on highlighted values is remarkable. There are three top values, chosen by more than 40 % each: peace (45 %), human rights (42 %) and respect for human life (41 %). These three top values are followed by another four values, mentioned fairly often: Democracy (27 %), Rule of Law (21 %), Individual Freedom (21 %) and Equality (19 %). Other values are mentioned less often: tolerance (16 %), solidarity/support for others (13 %), self fulfillment (11 %), Respect for other cultures (9 %), religion (7 %).<sup>5</sup>

The populations of the member states are quite consistent in the ordering of the values. In all but one member state the most often mentioned value (peace) is among the top three values. In 21 out of 27 countries all top three values (EU wide) rank as top three in the respective country. This coherence is quite remarkable. Admittedly, the consensus is of course also highly influenced by the presented choice of values, which have a strong bending

<sup>5</sup> The options None of these and Don't know each got 1 %.

towards the officially propagated values of the Union. Still, the data supports the impression that this message from the EU reached its addressees.

The presented findings have considerable limitations, as only a small set of values - and only values - were analyzed. Still, the consensus as well as the impression shared by a considerable share of Europeans, that the member states are close to each other, can be regarded at the least as some support that people in Europe regard some values as characteristic for Europeans forming a substantial European identity.

## **5. Subjective Identification**

The extent of subjective identification should be dependent on the individual gains from European integration, according to many authors. If the assumption is correct, we should expect two deviations of continental identification in the EU from continental identification elsewhere. As the EU with its wide reaching integration process is unique in the world, the Europeans should identify more with Europe than people on other continents. Additionally, in the EU the people profiting most from the integration process should identify more with the continent, while this difference between social strata should be less or none existent on other continents.

### **5.1 Extent of Subjective Identification in Global Comparison**

The International Social Survey Programme is conducting Surveys in many countries in the world. The wave 2003 focused on national identity and brings together respondents from 41 countries. The question, we are most interested in, was: "How close do you feel to [continent]?" with the options very close, close, not very close, not at all close.<sup>6</sup> Table 2 presents the answers to this question per country.

The identification with Europe varies considerably in the old member countries of the EU. Austria ranges first with 30 %, who feel very close to Europe and Great Britain at the very

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<sup>6</sup> For details on the study see: <http://www.gesis.org/en/services/data/survey-data/issp/modules-study-overview/national-identity/2003/>.

end with only 5 % feeling very close to Britain. Taking the first two categories together (very close and close), Portugal ranges even higher than Austria, while Britain remains at the end. The mean of the countries belonging to the group of old EU-15 member states for feeling very close is 16 %, for feeling very close or close 55 %. Six countries represent the Eastern accession countries of 2004. They cover an even wider range from 64 % (Hungary) to 3 % (Latvia). The average of these countries for feeling very close is a considerable 24 %, which is even higher than the subjective identification among the old member states. As the people in these countries profit from EU transfers, such a result might be plausible, though the differences among the countries remain hard to explain.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Díez Medrano (2003) shows in his in depth study of attitudes on the EU and European identification, how country specific the influences are and accordingly how difficult general explanations are to find.

**Table 2: Feeling close to continent (ISSP, in 5)**

country	continent	very close	close	not very close	not at all close	N
Austria	EU-15	29,5	41,5	25,4	3,6	992
Denmark	EU-15	18,2	35,8	34,9	11,2	1255
Finland	EU-15	7,4	32,2	47,1	13,2	1211
France	EU-15	20,4	34,0	29,1	16,5	1522
Germany (east)	EU-15	10,2	46,9	36,9	6,0	401
Germany (west)	EU-15	13,3	47,9	33,1	5,6	803
Great Britain	EU-15	4,5	22,7	41,2	31,6	813
Ireland	EU-15	10,8	33,7	38,6	16,9	1046
Portugal	EU-15	26,0	41,9	25,7	6,4	1542
Spain	EU-15	17,3	60,6	17,2	4,9	1192
Sweden	EU-15	14,2	34,5	41,8	9,4	1103
<b>EU-15*</b>		<b>15,6</b>	<b>39,2</b>	<b>33,7</b>	<b>11,4</b>	
Czech Republic	EU-NMS-10	20,3	51,4	22,0	6,2	1204
Hungary	EU-NMS-10	63,6	30,2	5,2	1,1	1007
Latvia	EU-NMS-10	3,4	16,2	41,6	38,8	925
Poland	EU-NMS-10	19,5	43,5	32,3	4,7	1199
Slovak Republic	EU-NMS-10	17,8	51,7	21,2	9,3	1047
Slovenia	EU-NMS-10	21,2	45,5	23,6	9,7	1057
<b>EU-NMS-10*</b>		<b>24,3</b>	<b>39,8</b>	<b>24,3</b>	<b>11,6</b>	
Bulgaria	EU-NMS-2	32,4	40,1	17,7	9,8	950
Norway	Europe	19,7	40,2	33,0	7,1	1322
Russia	Europe	2,9	8,3	30,8	58,1	2039
Switzerland	Europe	20,7	58,3	18,9	2,1	1031
<b>Europe (not EU)*</b>		<b>14,4</b>	<b>35,6</b>	<b>27,6</b>	<b>22,4</b>	
Canada	North America	19,2	44,0	27,2	9,6	1031
United States	North America	27,1	38,4	27,5	7,0	1165
<b>North America*</b>		<b>23,1</b>	<b>41,2</b>	<b>27,4</b>	<b>8,3</b>	
Chile	South America	36,0	36,5	21,6	6,0	1467
Uruguay	South America	22,3	32,2	34,5	11,0	1089
Venezuela	South America	30,0	28,3	23,5	18,2	1162
<b>South America*</b>		<b>29,4</b>	<b>32,3</b>	<b>26,5</b>	<b>11,7</b>	
Japan	Asia	16,1	46,5	28,2	9,2	901
South Korea	Asia	6,0	24,4	45,6	24,0	1286
Taiwan	Asia	1,3	10,1	34,5	54,2	1827
<b>Asia*</b>		<b>7,8</b>	<b>27,0</b>	<b>36,1</b>	<b>29,1</b>	
South Africa	Africa	38,7	31,4	19,2	10,7	2357
Israel (Arabs)	Arabia	12,5	25,7	34,2	27,6	152
Israel (Jews)	Arabia	21,1	23,7	28,8	26,4	1051
Australia	Asia	2,1	13,6	34,4	49,9	1984
New Zealand	South Pacific Region	14,2	32,1	34,0	19,7	957

country	continent	very close	close	not very close	not at all close	N
Philippines	South East Asia	10,7	31,9	37,9	19,5	1140

\*All averages are unweighted means.

Feeling close to Europe is considerably less frequent in the remaining European countries, not part of the EU. The lower average is mainly due to Russia, where only 3 % feel very close to Europe and only another 8 % feel close to Europe. In the other two European countries, not part of the EU (i.e. Norway and Switzerland), we find much higher subjective identification with Europe. Again an ad hoc explanation might help us. Though not part of the EU, both countries are part of the European Economic Area. Therefore, indirectly these countries profit from the EU. This is not the case for Russia.

The puzzle is complete, however, when we turn away from Europe towards the other continents. The highest continental identification, we find in South America. Even in North America (Canada and USA), the subjective identification with the continent is in tendency higher than in the EU, especially in the old member states of the EU. Also in South Africa, people identify to a large extent with the continent as a whole. Only in the three Asian countries (excluding the due to geography unclear cases of Australia and Philippines), the continental identification is way behind the identification in the EU.

## 5.2 Socio-structural Differences in Subjective Identification

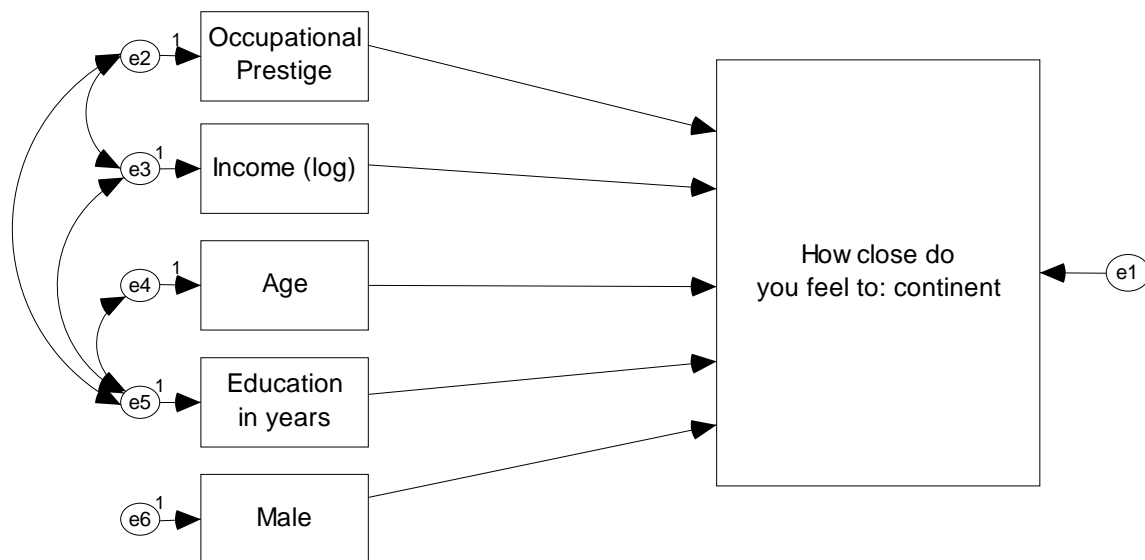
Besides the extent of subjective identification, we also should expect specific differences in continental identification according to socio-structural characteristics. As argued above (3.), within the EU the highly educated with higher professional status and higher income should identify with Europe to a larger extent, as these people profit most from the integration process, while the lower social strata are rather threatened with higher competition on their respective labour market. These influences should be irrelevant outside the EU.

Again we turn to the mentioned ISSP data set of 2003, but now compare the influence of socio-demographic variables on the extent of continental identification. Group comparison

for structural equation models is a powerful tool to analyze how similar a causal structure is for different samples.<sup>8</sup>

Figure 1 presents a fairly simple path analysis model. The influence of occupational prestige, income, age, education and gender on the subjective identification with the respective continent is modeled.<sup>9</sup> Some of the variables can be expected to be highly intercorrelated. Occupation prestige, education and income are closely connected and the world wide educational expansion translates into a correlation of age and education.<sup>10</sup>

**Figure 1: Path Analysis for Feeling close to the continent: Theoretical model**



<sup>8</sup> Due to unclear identification of the respective continent or due to missing data, the following countries had to be excluded from the analysis: Venezuela, Taiwan, New Zealand, South Africa, Chile, Israel, Australia and the Philippines. Germany is analyzed separately for east and west.

<sup>9</sup> The occupational prestige is defined according to the data of Treiman (Ganzeboom/Treiman 1996). Income is measured as the logarithm of the household equivalent income. Education is measured as years of full-time education. Modeling a nonlinear effect of age would have been useful, however due to the high correlation with age the data matrix is not positive definite anymore, so that an estimation becomes impossible.

<sup>10</sup> These intercorrelations can be found in the double arrows connecting the error terms of the respective variables.

What should be expected for the group comparisons according to the assumption of a specific influence of socio-demographic variables on continental subjective identification in the EU and a modified (inexistent or lesser) influence of the same variables outside the EU? First, we should expect, that we are unable to fit a model with fixed path coefficients for all groups.<sup>11</sup> Second, we should expect a better fit for a group comparison model with fixed path coefficients, if separate EU-countries and other countries than for a group comparison model with all countries together.

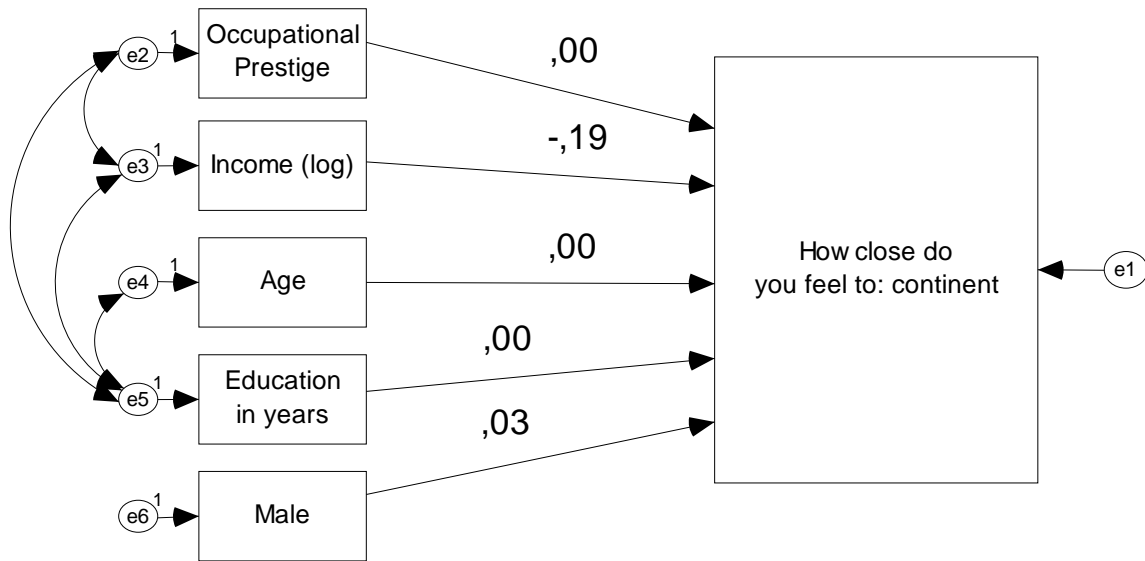
Interestingly, it is possible to fit a model for all countries with fixed (unstandardized) path coefficients (see figure 2). The model fit is satisfying, which is a surprising result keeping in mind that we have a very heterogeneous sample of countries being analyzed.<sup>12</sup> As feeling very close to the continent is coded 1 and feeling not at all close to the continent is coded 4, the coefficients show, that higher occupational prestige, higher income and longer full-time education result in a higher intensity of identification with the respective continent. Besides these theoretically interesting findings, we see also that according to the model, older people identify more with the continent and so do females, though the latter is significant only at the 1-% level while all others are significant at the 0,1 %-level.

**Figure 2: Path Analysis for Feeling close to the continent: unstandardized fixed effects**

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<sup>11</sup> For those unfamiliar with path analysis: This means, that the coefficients of causal influence (equal to regression coefficients in regression analysis) are equal for all groups.

<sup>12</sup> RMR=4,324, GFI =0,977 (usual threshold is >0,95), AGFI=0,920 (>0,90), RMSEA=0,020 (<0,10). For recommended thresholds of model fit see e.g. Schmidt/Davidov (2006: 41). As the global goodness of fit measures all have their advantages as well as their shortcomings, commonly several measures are presented.



Can the model fit be improved by separating the EU member states from other countries? In table 3, the model fit for the respective path analysis models is shown.

**Table 3: Goodness of Fit Measures of Path Analysis Models for Explaining Felt Closeness to the Respective Continent in Comparison**

	Model for EU-15 countries	Model for EU-27 countries	Model for non EU countries
RMR	4,028	4,513	3,865
GFI	0,976	0,976	0,979
AGFI	0,915	0,916	0,948
RMSEA	0,033	0,025	0,035

RMR - Root Mean Square Residual; GFI - Goodness of Fit Index; AGFI - Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index; RMSEA - Root mean square error of approximation

The models are identical in the influence direction of the explaining variables. For all country groups, higher occupational prestige, higher income and longer full-time education result in a higher intensity of identification with the respective continent. Also in all countries, older people identify more with the continent. Identical is also, that women identify more with the continent than man, but this influence is insignificant for the non EU countries.

The comparison of the goodness of fit measures is contrary to our expectations. We do not find a considerable better fit for the EU countries than for the non EU countries. The goodness of fit is by and large identical for the three models. The GFI and the AGFI as well as



the RMR indicate a slightly better fit for the non EU countries while the RMSEA is slightly better for the EU-15 and the EU-27 countries.

The order of the absolute amounts of the regression weights is also similar across the models. Identically for the EU-15 and the EU27-countries, age is the most influential variable, followed by income and occupational prestige, then following gender and education as the least influential variable. That these two models are very similar, is not surprising as the eleven countries belonging to the EU-15 are also part of the 17 countries belonging to the EU-27. The similarity with the model for the non EU countries is more telling. For the non EU countries, again income is most influential, followed by age and prestige in turn. Compared to the EU countries age and income change places but all three variables (age, income, prestige) remain the top three. For the non EU countries, fourth in rank of influence is also gender, however the influence of gender is not significant in this model. At the end of the rank order is again education. In sum, we find very similar models for EU und non EU countries to explain the felt closeness to the continent.

## **6. Conclusion**

The EU is worldwide unique in its kind. On no other continent we find such an endeavour of uniting established nation states in a new political system. The process takes its time, has its back drops, but it is progressing step by step in the direction of an ever closer fusion (though of course the final destination of the project remains unclear!). This political and economic process should be accompanied by a change in attitudes among its citizens. This sentence applies as a theoretical expectation as well as a normative setting according to the paradigm of political culture.

There has been ample research on European identity and its development within the EU. However, the debate is often incoherent concerning the understanding of European identity. Therefore this paper offered - in recourse of the debate - two understandings of collective identity, which can be applied to European identity: a substantial collective identity and a subjective identification.

For both understandings, we can conclude theoretical assumptions for European peculiarities in global comparison from the debate. Important are the activities of the EU in identity formation and publicly pointing out cultural similarities and collective cultural European roots. Supposed to be influential as well are specific gains from the EU integration process for population as a whole and even more for the highly educated with better jobs. Taking these descriptions and assumptions, we would expect the European population to perceive a substantial identity in the sense of common values. According to a survey, this is in fact the case for about half the population in Europe. In most countries there is a slim majority regarding European countries as close to each other rather than being distant to each other in terms of values. These values are regarded by nearly half of the people as not only general Western values, which is astonishing taking the actual stated values such as peace, human rights and respect for human life. Remarkable, however, is the relative consensus among the countries to highlight exactly these three values.

To assess the substantial identity is difficult as we are lacking comparative information. We do not know how people on other continents would judge their similarities in terms of values (or other parts of the cultural heritage). It is unclear whether the substantial identity is to be regarded as weak or strong, diffused widely or still restrained to a considerably small part of the population.

Results are clearer for the subjective identification, the personal feeling of people how important they regard their belonging to the continent. In this case, we have globally comparative data available. The results are even more remarkable. We expected to find a higher level of continental identification among EU citizens and we expected the intensity of this feeling of belonging to be structured according to the gains out of the integration process (i.e. higher gains = higher identification among higher income groups, higher occupational prestige groups and higher educated).

Both assumptions have turned out being wrong. The level of identification is similar on all continents, as far as they are included in our data. The differences between separate countries are enormous and much larger than the differences between continents. On

average we do not find a high level of continental identification in Europe compared to other continents.

Also, there is no specific social structuring of the felt closeness to the continent in Europe. On all continents, people with higher income, older age, higher occupational prestige and - with less influence - higher education tend to feel closer to their respective continent. A special situation in Europe cannot be found. Two general questions follow from these findings: 1. Why is there no difference between Europe and the rest of the world? 2. What conclusions should we draw from these findings?

The results presented here challenge considerably a usual explanation for identification with Europe. The approach of explaining attitudes towards Europe, including identification, on a benefit bases seem to be at odds with the results. What arguments could we mobilize, to defend this widespread assumption? Possibly the continental identification was under global average right from the beginning. Possible, the EU has had an influence on continental identification with the result of the EU countries and other associated countries to catch up with the world level of continental identification. We have not data on this, though we have long time data on the development of European identification within the older EU countries and this data does not indicate something like a steady increase in European identification (Duchesne/Frogner 1995; Nissen 2004; Roose 2007). Another explanation would be that assuming an influence of special gains on European identification is simply wrong.

Similar problems arise for the structure of influences on continental identification according to different social strata. If selective gains are influential we should expect different influence structures and accordingly different path analysis models for EU compared to non EU countries. This again is not the case. The hypothesis of selective gains influencing the level of European identification is seriously challenged by these results. Possibly it is rather a general cosmopolitan perspective, learned among higher social strata, which widen the view to the continent as a whole (cf. Beck/Grande 2004; Hannerz 1990; Held 2002; Mau 2006; Szerszynski/Urry 2002). This seems to be a global phenomenon, unrelated to political integration processes.

For the European integration process and elite strategies to support the process, these findings bare fundamental conclusions. European identification and the consequent support of EU integration, EU policies etc. seems to be a given fact, mainly unresponsive to selective gains. A considerable share of the Europeans regards the EU countries as culturally close together and this might be partly enforced by the public efforts of the EU pointing out European similarities. The consensus and the similarity of the mentioned 'European' values and the official proclamations of the EU may be a hint in this direction. Beyond that, to bind the people emotionally to Europe by successful policy output however seems to be futile. Ever more eager projects of giving the people even more from the EU like a common European welfare state and the like will probably not build up the collective identification need but rather fail because of too little European identification. The common constitution is a case in point. Accordingly, the EU should not count too much on emotionally founded support in excess to the current level. And scientifically, researchers of European identity, possibly also other European issues should not forget to open up their view beyond the EU as some things which seem obvious within the EU framework turn out to be global phenomena unrelated to the unique European integration process.

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