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### **Motto:**

*“Each is for the other the middle term through which each mediates itself; and each is for himself, and for the other, an immediate being on its own accord, which at the same time is such only through this mediation. They recognise themselves as mutually recognising one another.” (Hegel 1977:112)*

When at the end of the 1980s the EU launched a number of policies aimed to creating a European identity, the member states responded by incorporating into the Maastricht Treaty a clause stating that the European Union should respect the member states' respective national identities (article F, point1). This reaction, along with the introduction of principle of subsidiary and the rejection of the word “federal”, revealed that many member states considered the creation of a European identity as a potential threat to their own national identities and their citizen's national loyalties (Hojelid, 2001).

Along with these pessimistic visions of the creation of European identity, there are optimists who do not conceive European identity in zero-sum terms or see incompatible with national identity (Caporaso and Risse, 2001; Weiler 1999). Some authors believe that the increasing globalization of communication and economy is weakening the national identification with issues beyond national borders (Ceruti, 1992). Other analysts conclude that EU integration actually strengthens the nation state (Milward, 2000) and accentuate the importance of multiple identities within the EU.

Those who remain skeptical about the development of a European identity reject the notion that citizens can possess more than one identity simultaneously, whereas other authors have noted that

people can hold multiple identities, conceptualized as concentric circles, or feel simultaneously attached to multiple identities based on different factors of identification (Kersberg, 1997).

This context place the European Union at a crucial juncture. It not only faces challenges of enlargement and an expanding agenda but it is also simultaneously questioning its destiny. A number of authors claim that the European Union can face these challenges successfully only if it gains the support of the European population for its current and future projects. Instrumental to creating, this support appears to be the forging of some sort of commonly shared European identity. It is necessary to ask if the construction of such an overarching identity is realistic. Is it possible to establish a feeling of belonging among over 300 million citizens who speak different languages and come from different cultural backgrounds?

A significant part of difficulty comes from the resilience of well-established national identities based on national cultural and political heritages. In these circumstances any future European society will be multicultural and thus its sense of common identity will have to be built upon noncultural factors. The EU may choose to stress one particular European identity, unique and in continuous adaptation to different factors and trends.

There is in today's discourse on European identity one strand that emphasizes such a supranational identity as one to be preferred, or indeed the only one plausible. It would argue that identities are necessarily fluid and ever in need of reinscription, that "there cannot be such a thing as a European identity in the singular but only a plurality of European identities" (Neumann, 2000) that will clash and reconstruct one another in the process that is identity politics.

Each of Europe's states strands in some kind of relation to the EU, as core member, member, honorary economic member or whatever. The prospect of imposing a supranational identity on this very graded and overlapping set of political entities would entail a lot of work. One might think of situations of crisis and war that would help such an undertaking but it remains unlikely that Europe will succumb to the supranational temptation. This does not mean that the trade-off between exclusion and integration is not central to policymaking.

Unlike traditional societies, where a unified common identity prevailed, in modern European societies identities are fragmented according to class origin, gender, religion, local, national and European sense of belonging. Despite this, in the modern world we have simultaneously more than one identity and these identities are often compatible and not generate conflicts of loyalty

(King, 1993, p.6). Identity as a problem manifests itself in situations of uncertainty. As Eric Hobsbawm (1996) has stated, genuine identity problems emerge when people are prevented from having multiple, collective identities. Leaving aside the issue of language, is the European Union collective identity, which is the frame within which people see themselves as Europeans, at stake? To what extent can the parochialism of a plurality of identities coexist with the cosmopolitan nature of a 25 members European Union?

National identities have been constructed in modern Europe with the alliance between the imagery of traditions and the realities of citizenship contracts. It is well-known that “citizenship affects people’s identity because it defines where they belong” (Dahrendorf, 1996, p.31). But the formation of national identities has often been promoted by corrective means or war between nations (Wallace, 1991, p.66-67). Europeans have liked to be able to say, “I am European, but I am also British and perhaps also English, and perhaps even Cornish” (Kumar, 2003). Europe-wide identities have been accompanied and often overshadowed by national and local identities, but there is a tendency of losing their exclusiveness and are now increasingly accompanied and perhaps superseded by other forms of identity: regional, supranational and transnational.

As so, we have to think of Europe as a field of multiple, overlapping and sometimes even conflicting identities, as constructed out of both categorical similarities and relational ties, but no set of these reaches all Europeans without joining a range of non-Europeans as well. Europeans derive their similarity not from a lowest common denominator nor from rigidly enforced boundaries but from characteristics that many Europeans hold in common without any being definitive of the whole. As some children have the family characteristic eyes and others its nose, so some Europeans may share musical tastes but not politics, others may share trade union ties but resist cultural similarity. But Europe need not be simply a melting pot, le *creuset européen* in which previous cultures are combined in a single new blend (Calhoun, 2000, p.53).

With regard to identity formation, the European integration process has posed (at least) two challenges. First, it has suggested that some sense of Europeanness should be integrated into in-group identity, with the fellow member states no longer being seen as external Others, but as part of the in-group. Second, the European Union itself has grown into an, inspiring or threatening, external Other for many European countries. Anna Triandafyllidou found response to these challenges in her material. In all countries studied, the press discourse revealed a dynamic interaction between, on the one hand, national traditions and established features of national identity and, on the other hand, the necessity to deal with new challenges and changing social,

economic and political environments. Discourses of nationhood tended to re-invent, modify, transform and re-interpret formerly established national features, giving birth to new understandings of nationhood and images of the nation. In some cases, however, this had its price.

The new-born opening towards a 'European' identity was accompanied by increasing hostility towards groups of immigrants. Through contrasting with the internal threatening Other, this suggests, the nation strengthens its sense of belonging and thus can afford to open towards inspiring external Others, such as the European Union. Anna Triandafyllidou, however, concludes her analysis in an optimistic tone. At least in three of her cases (not surprisingly, the ones that also are part of the Euro-zone) she traces a new form of nationhood, developing in interaction between former national identities and some form of Europeanness. National identities develop into more flexible forms of national belonging, which allow for national traditions and feelings of 'we-ness' to intersect with a wider transnational cultural and political space which is partly included in the identity space. Because these new discourses of nationhood become more complex and the boundaries more blurred, she argues that they may in the long run render difficult the definitions of Others as people not belonging to the in-group.

Like the notion of Europe itself, two features are characteristic of the European Union: its diversity and the changeability of its borders. The EU up to the 1990s was identified as a Western Europe, defined in contrast to the Eastern Bloc. The EU identity was defined in opposition to the East communism; the openness, democracy and freedom of Western Europe were contrasted with the totalitarian system of the 'other'. But, as the EU space was culturally and politically homogenous, it constituted its internal "others". The North was seen as the norm and the South as "other"-connected but deviant (Hadjimichalis,1997). With the fall of the Wall and the opening towards Eastern enlargement of the EU the main threatening "other" for Western Europe disappears. The borders between Western and Eastern Europe are redefined but not by eliminating the distinction but by moving the borders further eastwards (Neumann, 1994).

The claims that EU has an underlying unity or that it is a fragmented entity play the either/or assumption. As Moretti suggested, complex Europe carries meaning as a welter of contradictory, yet co-existent forces. This is "a productive entity" (Renwick, 1996) in a continuous dynamic and tension between different identities. And, as the making of selves is dependent on the raw material of available identities, the EU has to negotiate its identity with the amalgam of identities within it.

Summarising, it should be remembered that authors such Smith (1999) and Østerud (1999) hypothesised that it would be extremely difficult for a European identity to emerge, given the strength of national cultural identities and the simultaneous lack of European “cultural” elements shared by all Europeans. Hence, on the one hand we find that national identities are still stronger and primarily “cultural”, but on the other hand we find that “cultural” attachment to a European identity is also relevant mainly in the Eastern and Central European Countries but also in other member states.

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