



# **European identity in troubled times: conception and practice**

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# 1. What is European Identity

## Normative democratic theory

The further democratization of the EU must go along with the development of a democratic subject, a **demos**. Democratic institutions and procedures must be **carried** and **actively filled** by a democratic subject that defines itself as such to a minimum extent. Democratic identity means that self-identification of the demos



# 1. What is European Identity

## **Normative democratic theory**

Democratic identity has to be respectful of differences concerning race, class, gender, religion or culture. EU political values therefore must be as neutral as possible regarding these differences. Neither culture nor religion can define EU political identity



# 1. What is European Identity

## **The Chicken and egg question of demos building**

- 1) The No-demos-thesis: European identity is pre-political and has to exist before the EU can be further democratised
  - 2) The constructivist (and empirically based) argument: democratic identity can and probably will develop within (representative) democratic institutions and democratic practice.
- pre-political identities do not exist



# 1. What is European Identity

## Constructivist Research on nationalism

### Collective identities

- not pre-political, but socially constructed.
- Imagined communities
- not static, but open to change.
- Democracies do not rely on a homogenous people or Nation, but on heterogeneous societies



# 1. What is European Identity

## Constructivist Research on nationalism

### Collective identities

- not necessarily linked to geographical areas.
- Identities are always are complex and express belongings on all levels of human existence.
- should rather be termed “collective pattern of individual identifications” than “collective identity”



# 1. What is European Identity

**It is a kind of collective identity, i.e.**

1. socially constructed
2. changeable
3. Not necessarily geographically fixed
4. Marked by complex arrangements of belonging
5. has an individual component (Micro-level)
6. has a collective component (Macro-level)



# 1. What is European Identity

**Can be analysed by regarding**

- a) individual elements (opinions, orientations),*
- b) collective elements (patterns of meanings, concepts, discourses)*



# 1. What is European Identity

## b) Results of quantitative studies

### ➤ *EU-Citizens / micro-level*

1. Majority of EU citizens supports EU integration, and ca. 50% have an unspecific identification with the EU („I feel European...“)
  2. Differs as according to a) nationality, b) the socioeconomic context, c) level of education
  3. BUT: EU citizens do not know much about the EU
- So, what do they identify with?



# 1. What is European Identity

## c) discourse-analytical results

### ➤ *Patterns of meaning, concepts*

1. EU-European Identity is constructed in discourse, using definitions of “Us and Them” and founding myths
  2. National and European identities are related
  3. Political elites have a central role (citizens much less)
  4. National elite discourses => national EU concepts
  5. More EU-critical constructions + euroscepticism
- ### ➤ *The Meanings of EU-Europe* are contingent and controversial!



# 1. What is European Identity

## **A working definition: European identity**

- means the self-definition of a demos
- has to accept difference
- is to be interpreted as a collective pattern of identification
- is socially constructed and
- will develop in discourses and



# 1. What is European Identity

## **A working definition: European identity**

- can be influenced by socioeconomic factors, structures, and the political cultures of the different member states
- The definition of an `Other´ for the EU and the reference to a founding myth plays a role.
- European identity will be multi-level identity.
- Consists of different national models of European identification



## 2. Why do we need a European Identity?

The EU as a strongly developed trans- and supranational democratic polity - with certain deficits

It needs to be further democratised because

- It intervenes in citizen's everyday life
- Europeanisation leads to a net loss in democratic substance

## Slajd 14

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**MM18**

**KW**

Melina Mercouri; 10.02.2012



## 2. Why do we need a European Identity?

Democratisation regards

- Institutions (European Parliament)
- Processes and procedures (elections, citizen´s initiatives)
- Citizen´s activity ...

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**MM18**

**KW**

Melina Mercouri; 10.02.2012



## 2. Why do we need a European Identity?

MM1

...and that means:

4. the EU needs a better developed *Demos*

The EU should have a democratic subject that  
a) defines itself as such to a minimum extent,  
b) identifies itself with the EU polity, and c) is  
politically active with regard to the EU polity

➤ We need more of a democratic EU-european identity





## **2. Why do we need a European Identity?**

MM1

### **2 ways to democratise the EU**

- a) Top-down: institutions, processes, procedures
  - b) Bottom-Up: Demos-building and citizen´s activity
- Related to EU-European identity building





## 3. European Identity formation and democratic practice

- European Identity not a *pre-condition* for EU democratisation: does not have to exist *before* EU democratisation can start
- But: condition for a sufficiently successful democratisation process. Development of a European Identity will be an indicator for the *quality of the EU democratisation process*
- The democratisation process therefore can well go on without having a strong European Identity today – but it should get stronger over time



# 3. European Identity formation and democratic practice

- A further democratised institutional system should increase the chances of developing European identity
- Every political activity directed to the EU will actively contribute not only to the development of an active *demos*, but also a European identity formation and a stronger democratisation

Textfeld 1 (variabel)



Thank You!