European Identity Formation in the Context of New Social Movements

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Abstract. The article deals with formation of European Identity which can be described in terms of being one of the expressions of active European citizenship. European Identity can be enhanced by social movements which play the role of connectors of people via social spectrum and react actively to changes and current issues while representing norms, ideals and values of today. Similarly, as it is with the case of social movements from the past, they can also be a stimulus for historical changes initiation. They lay basis for the so called universal citizenship, whereas the term identity can be found in the centre of their interest. Thus, citizenship has become a dominant form of social identity. It is not only about summary of individual´s rules and responsibilities but it is also focused to a great extent on civic culture. Our main aim is to have a closer look at European identity considering it as a key factor of European integration.

Keywords: Identity-European Identity; Citizenship; Active European Citizenship; New Social Movements.

Introduction

Identity plays a pivotal role not only in terms of European citizenship but also in terms of new social movements in the context of 21st century. First of all, before analyzing different definitions of European identity, it is important to mention the geographical delineation of Europe which is referred to as being problematic by many authors because the borders of Europe are not specifically demarcated and some of them are still disputed (the Eastern border e.g.). It seems that it is only the western and southern border which looks like being undisputed (the Atlantic and the Mediterranean) [10]. Still, this issue is open and hotly debated up till now. This vagueness of geopolitical elements concerning Europe can be also viewed as not being very helpful in defining common European identity and therefore being one of the obstacles in defining European identity.

European identity consists of several elements. They can be classified into two categories, namely legal and cultural. The legal aspect is based on the democratic values embodied in EU such as democracy, the rule of law and human rights. These mentioned elements are also deemed as universal, not just belonging to Europe and European´s liberal heritage. The cultural dimension comprises cultural heritage. What is important to say about European cultural heritage is the fact that it is mostly connected with the process of viewing European identity through the light of European historical roots. These roots are comprised of the several historical periods such as Antiquity, Christianity and the Enlightenment [8]. However, Delanty argues that in this way, Europe is depicted like an exclusive identity and thus other traditions, namely non-Christian ones like the Orthodox and Islamic are perceived as excluded and marginalized [6]. Besides, it is also dangerous because of the emergence of new binary opposition such as: Christian/non-Christian, European/non-European, citizen/stranger, self/other. In addition, it is also the Charter of European Identity (1995) which seems to be drafted using a modernist idea, stressing Antiquity, Christianity, Renaissance, Humanism, the Enlightenment, Liberalism and Democracy and thus making a sharp distinction between European and non-European.

In connection with the previous paragraph Derrida states that because of these homogenous values which are responsible for creation of binary opposition, European identity should be more open to differences and it should also undergo a process of re-definition and re-writing. Therefore,

one should be careful about these modernist assumptions as they have a tendency to categorization and making the notion of the self essentialized [8]. Moreover, stressing just Christianity (we must take into account also pre-Christian Greece and Rome) as one of the core values or roots of EU could mean negation of hybridity, which is so important for dynamic growth. Finally, this tendency to religious homogenization would not bring any good to the contemporary society of multiple, even multiple religious identities [4]. In addition Pombeni indicates that Christianity or the Enlightenment, the Jewish-Christian tradition or Greek-Roman cultures are no more cornerstone of Europe than they are of the US [16].

Many authors point out to the fact that although the European identity as a term was introduced (with the Declaration on European Identity, 1973) and has been used since then in several documents (Maastricht Treaty), its definition still has not been found or discovered [22], [8], [10] although many famous politicians played with the idea of how future Europe should look like even in the period after the second world war was finished. One of them was e.g. Winston Churchill, famous for coining the phrase United States of Europe, introduced during his speech at the University of Zurich in 1946 [23].

As it was summarized by Wallace and Strømsnes in the words of Jacques Delors: „We have created Europe, now we must create Europeans!" [22]. This task does not seem easy at all because of different obstacles connected with creating something which emerged after the WWII (nation-states came into existence much earlier, already in the period of Middle Ages) [17] and can be described by its motto United in Diversity which is significant for EU. According to Boylan „we may therefore describe European cultural identity as the matrix of the matrices of the various member cultures" [4].

In this respect, many authors agree with the statement that unity in diversity will need to be combined and balanced and brought in such a way to European citizens, groups and communities within the EU also via social movements. People of EU should be also conscious and capable of dealing with diversity, regional, national, cultural, gender, lifestyle, diversity in economic and political activities, etc. In order to achieve these objectives, the authors recommend teaching European citizens tolerance and respect towards diversity through the medium of conflict solution strategies and techniques acquired through education and socialization procedures. This fact is connected with the notion that European identity ought to endorse at least three values, the value of of equal opportunities for all, freedom for all and respect of diversity by all [15].

As far as education is concerned it could go hand in hand with development of intercultural communication competence during teaching process or it could be also supported by establishing the study programs which mediate culture and language to their students. Thus intercultural negotiation skills are needed too in order to prevent creation of tensions between nations.

Debate over the issue of European identity is connected also with two specific views i.e. multiculturalism and monoculturalism. The first one strongly opposes any common rule in which certain groups of people could be disadvantaged or marginalized and the second promotes a eurocentrist view [15]. The authors also point out to the fact that maneuvering between these two views is not fruitful for enhancing the European identity because either the first or the second both have got their pitfalls.

One of the reasons why it is so difficult to instill European identity is the fear that national identities of individual member-states could be possibly endangered. However, the opposite is true because as it was stated in many important documents of the EU defining the European citizenship, European identity in this respect should have a complementary function towards NIs. It means that it should not take over the national identities of the single states but, on the contrary, it should support them in their diversity adding them a new cultural value. In addition, EU and national identity are thus not conflicting but enriched by each other so European identity must be seen in relation to entrenched national identities [7], [10]. In this respect, the opinion of Stojkovic seemed to be of great value as he purported that European identity should not deny national identity but on the contrary, it should supplement national, regional, personal and other identities (social identity). Moreover, he also described European identity as a metanational category because it transcends and complements national identity [8]. Therefore, rather than fostering one homogenous identity (overarching one) it is more advisable to foster diversity awareness instead because Europe is polyethnic and multinational [7].

Additionally, there are many other opinions about the relationship between European identity and national identity which support the before-mentioned arguments. Some of them arise from the idea that European identity will evolve gradually alongside the existing national identities in a non-competitive way. However, the question stays if Europeans will feel the European identity as one of their core identities or if it will be just one identity in their multiple identities. The possible question is also if they could match one day European identity with their national identity. Another contested issue is if the strength of European identity will ever be so powerful as the strength of national identity which is truly strong and still it has not lost its power or has not been diminished yet [20].

Fossum stresses that „the prospect of supplanting a national with a European nation-type identity appears highly remote" [7]. Therefore, he also argues that national identity should be strictly supported alongside the common European cultural tradition. Furthermore, there is not a so called zero-sum struggle between a national on one hand and a European identity on the other. It is because people have always had different identities, multiple identities, so it could be possible for European citizens to embrace simultaneously both, the European identity as well as national identity. This can come true also through the medium of social movements and groups. Identity formation can be also realized by them (by active citizens´ participation) [7].

What is nowadays viewed as another topical subject linked with European identity is that of emergence of the so called quasi-national European identity and an eclipse of national identities. Several authors see a revival of nationalist sentiments such as ethnocentrism and xenophobia, while others emphasize growing importance of local and regional affiliations. Xenophobia is highest in Turkey according to European Values Study, relatively high in Bulgaria, Croatia, Poland, Romania and Slovakia and very low in countries such as Sweden and Netherlands. Although European identity and national identity are viewed by some as being in conflict, it does not have to be so given the fact that according to Smith people are perfectly happy with multiple identities so they can be members of both their nation as well as of Europe [1].

There was also realized a research into the relationship between national identity and European identity (within the project of Eurobarometer) and it was found out that smaller states had stronger affiliation to their national identity. It means that the respondents from Ireland, Netherlands, Greece, Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Portugal felt at first to be citizens of their own country and only secondly they felt affiliation towards Europe. This can be also supported by the fact that they are afraid of the loss of their national identity and culture. In Ireland it is connected with historical events which contributed to formation and cultivation of their national identity. The case of Britain is much different as British identity is a contested issue as well as the role of Britain in the EU. It is difficult to measure such opinions in a quantitative way as there is also an emotional element present [17]. According to Arts and Halman European pride is the lowest on British Isles, national pride is very high in countries like Ireland, Poland, Malta and Portugal but according to the survey (within the project of Eurobarometer and EVS), most respondents are proud to be Europeans so it is not only patriotism but also Europeanism which is widespread [1].

Possible questions which might arise from the debate about European identity could be connected with what elements can be attributed to European identity. We have mentioned earlier that territoriality can be one of them. It can be an element which unites people. Territorially, European borders are more or less delineated unless it is the case of the eastern border (Ukraine, Russia) which is regarded as being the significant other towards the EU. Following Orzechowska, during different historic periods, like the one of Cold War, the feeling of otherness was felt towards the USSR, while in the medieval times it was the Christians versus Muslims (infidels) issue [10]. To sum up, European identity can be also defined in terms of what it is not regarding the we-they concept (or how it differs from others). Except for Russia, there is also another significant other, namely the USA, characterized by different cultural and historical traditions, different attitudes to normative power and solution of conflicts, different self-image and different approaches to legal issues, etc. [9].

Furthermore, European identity can be supported by many symbolic elements. It is also the way how European identity can be enhanced. European identity is believed to be enhanced through the medium of several created institutions as well as symbols such as European Academy, European lottery, voluntary work camps for young people (aimed at the preservation of heritage, or

the restoration of historical buildings), via social movements, the celebration at schools of 9th May of each year as Europe Day, European anthem and flag which are used at national and international events, euro-currency, etc. As for education exchanges, the program Socrates has been initiated, the aim of which is to develop the European dimension in education [20].

It is also the authorities who can be described as being the main and principle identity producers. For this purpose identity technologies exist. Citizens are just recipients of these positive self-images like e.g. green Europe, social Europe, anthem and common currency or the enhancement of common values (e.g. the Charter of Fundamental Rights). But citizens can be also active citizens by their participation in social movements. Thus, the European identity can be described in terms of being a symbolic and institutional. The first one presupposes creation of previously mentioned shared symbols and the second is based predominantly on specific institutions (including norms, principles, regulations) and on the belief of superiority of these institutions. This transfer of European identity is called internal as it happens within the territory of EU while there is also an external transfer of European identity. This is a transfer of European identity to other non-European countries which is realized e.g. by European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) by the way of socialization in non-candidate states (i.e. without stricter standards imposed which are main tools specific for conditionality used in candidate-states) [9].

Last but not least, European identity could be possibly enhanced via social movements having thus a functional/instrumental value no just symbolic one. Following Ivic and Lakicevic Adonnino Report stated how important it would be to support citizens´ participation and active engagement in social movements because in the same terms as social identity, European identity is also dynamic (according to Udine Declaration) [8]. Moreover, European citizenship is a part of postnational model of citizenship which is not tied to fixed borders or any essentialist notion of identity and any further strict classification of European identity into strict rules should be avoided aimed at redefinition and re-writing of the concept of European identity having in regard multiple/shifting identities in the context of 21st century.

To conclude, the process of European identity is far from finished. According to Grindheim and Londhal European identity does not have a primordial base like national identities which were created through a long process. That is why it cannot be built on the same principles as national identities were. It is a new construct and there is still a long way to go and therefore European identity creation and formation can be described as work in progress [22].

European Identity and its Interconnection with New Social Movements

From the point of view of European identity classification there are several fundamental concepts of citizenship, namely – liberal, communitarian and civic-republican. In the period of 21st century these fundamental concepts of citizenship are according to Osler further enriched by cosmopolitan citizenship [13]. As far as liberal citizenship reminds us of human rights and freedoms´ importance it also frees individual from strict or firm social status, traditional roles and fixed identities. Thus, it enables each individual to choose own identity. European Convention on Human Rights adopted by Council of Europe in 1950 can be described in terms of being the main safeguard or guarantee of rights in the EU. Communitarian citizenship prefers solidarity instead of individualism and broadens further the concept of identity into ethnic or cultural affiliation towards certain community on the basis of similar values or principles. On the other hand, civic-republican citizenship determines political and institutional basis of public space as a priority which is regulated by state. Identity is in this case reduced to class, ethnicity, religion and similar categories.

Cosmopolitan citizenship emerged from the idea of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). It drifts towards citizenship in world´s community which is specific for acknowledgment of the same human values. Therefore, cosmopolitan citizen recognizes universal values in all contexts including national one. Cosmopolitan citizen combines humanistic approaches and norms with equality. Moreover, cosmopolitan citizen appreciates and supports diversity. Monolithic identity is a concept of the past, while international migration leads to creation of transnational communities and culturally diversified societies. Citizens thus do not possess only one national identity. In this understanding, citizens are not politically tied to one nation anymore but in this case we refer to multiple identity, or European identity which covers all other identities on lower level.

Referring to abovementioned facts, it is easier for many citizens to identify with certain place of region. According to the realized research, young people feel to a great extent like being a part of local community in which they live. This community is largely influenced by globalization trends and transfer within communities is the consequence of this process [13]. Today, young people are educated in several states and study mobility or international exchanges support this trend. Young citizens thus can identify themselves with more than one country. Such individuals refuse national identity supported by education system as well as symbols which seems foreign and remote to them. As for citizenship, it is regarded as expression of own self-defined identity.

In this case we use the term „new social movements" in order to define non-traditional movements or their forms and characteristics. These movements do not have strictly defined ideology or inherent theory. To a great extent, they interfere with the cultural identity of individual, ethnic or gender issue. Following Waters they are categorized beyond traditional „class" division of society and connect people across societal spectrum whereas they react actively to changes and current problems in society [24]. They represent norms, values and ideals of today.

When talking about social movements we have to take into account the fact that it is for sure very difficult to define clear borders. Thanks to information technologies, their extension is unlimited because they are not defined by borders of states. Instead of economic conflicts of old regime (middle-class base, working-class base and others) they accentuate different priorities and use also non-traditional forms of protests. Their pivotal topics include the topic of ecology, feminism, etc., which are being reflected in their performance and instead of effort to gain certain material advantages, their primary aim is to present specific values and norms. „Citizenship has been expanded historically from property-owners and adult males to women, children and even nature" [24].

New social movements represent „voice" of society demanding rights and freedoms for women, homosexuals, ethnic minorities etc. They claim for laying the basis of the so called „universal citizenship". Identity of man or identity of each individual alone is in the centre of their interest. In this way, citizenship has become dominant form of social identity. It does not represent set of rules and duties assigned for individual or group anymore but it is to a great extent defined by civic culture [11]. European identity has been defined as a by-product of new social movements which are not tied to nation because they transcend the notion of nation. European citizens join each other through the medium of initiatives. They participate in them and in such a way they support efforts for European integration indirectly. What is even more important to add is that European integration is not only happening in economic or legal sphere but it also influences citizens in their ordinary lives. It is also represented via different forms which citizens select in order to identify themselves. As this issue goes on, the questions about connection of European identity to territory can be described in terms of being just theoretical efforts in order to clarify and define this term. In practice, European identity is logically tied to identity – individual identity and individual subsequently is its carrier.

Although the terms like new social movements are expected to be interconnected with large-size unit, mass movements and popularity, these forms often do not have any support of media (except for huge actions of homosexuals´ marches type). They are often realized in the form of volunteer work on regional level whereas being attended by participants from different cultures and cultural backgrounds. As shown by various studies, support of community life today seems to be part and parcel of advanced modern society. As an example we can mention Centre for Community Organization Zvolen in Slovakia peculiar for active approach to citizens´ participation and engagement. On one hand, this centre is a model and on the other, it is a platform for other similar movements in Slovakia. It is quite interesting that the centre´s director is Chuck Hirt and community organizer is Sanja Nikolov, both of them of non-Slovak origin.

Conclusion

To summarize, new social movements, European identity, European citizenship and European active citizenship are truly topical issues nowadays and they are far from being explored. Therefore, it seems to be important to recognize their importance not only in Slovak but also in European context.

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