



## **PERSPEKTÍVY EURÓPSKEJ INTEGRÁCIE NA FUNGOVANIE KULTÚRY V SOCIÁLNO-EKONOMICKEJ KONŠTRUKCII EÚ**

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### **A EUROPEAN INTEGRATION PERSPECTIVE ON THE FUNCTION OF CULTURE IN THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONSTRUCTION OF THE EU**

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Cieľom článku je koncepčne preskúmať vzťah medzi integračným procesom a kultúrou a prispieť k lepšiemu pochopeniu komplexného (vnútorného a vonkajšieho) prostredia Európskej únie. Príspevok analyzuje úlohu kultúry v architektúre EÚ a zároveň zohľadňuje vnímanie občanov EÚ v súvislosti s ich vlastnou kultúrnou identitou. Cieľom je taktiež poskytnúť relevantný pohľad, ktorý možno aplikovať v procese navrhovania verejných politík s možnosťou zlepšenia procesu európskej integrácie.

Kľúčové slová: európska identita, európska kultúra, európska integrácia

This paper aims to conceptually explore the relation between the integration process and culture and to contribute to the better understanding of the complex (internal and external) environment of the European Union. More precisely, it analyzes the role of culture in the EU's architecture, while also taking into consideration the perception of EU citizens regarding their self-perceived cultural identity. The purpose of the papers is to provide relevant insight that could be used in the process of designing public policies aimed at improving the European integration process.

Key words: european identity, european culture, european integration

JEL: H1, Z1

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The European integration process is perhaps one of the most complex political and socio-economic phenomenon of our times, with what it seems to be an ever growing number of factors, both internal and external, constantly influencing its course. It is consequently no wonder that ample research efforts are dedicated to various aspects of this wide topic, in an attempt to better understand and more effectively and efficiently influence integration related outcomes. In this context, this paper focuses on culture and the role that it plays in the integration process, aiming at providing an improved understanding of the culture-integration relationship that could act as a stepping stone for other, more specialized, research activities in this field.

After decades of sustained integration both at regional and global levels, decades in which the forces of globalization have shaped social, economic and political interactions contributing to deepening cooperation, redefining communication and accentuating interdependencies, the last years have meant a sharp increase in divisive forces, with numerous voices requiring less integration and a return to an approach that focuses on the nation state. The causes are multiple and the reactions explainable, even one does not share them. Whether we search for cause in the acute the economic crisis broke out in 2007 and soon caught the whole world, or whether we analyze the rising geo-political tensions, the immigration crisis or the development of a climate of high insecurity in areas previously deemed as extremely safe, many elements can be identified that underpin the growing mistrust, feeding these disintegrating forces that seem to become more and more intense, culminating with the vote “Brexit” and the rise of different Eurosceptic groups.

In this context, many wonder what will happen with the European project and its ambitious social, political and economic system designed to develop a genuine supra-state structure with the aim to better cope with the challenges of globalization and to facilitate a better global positioning of Europe. The current shape of the European Union, although it has often faced obstacles that have not yet been completely overcome, is the product of an accelerated development, that has paved the way in a relatively short time to a relatively high level of integration, despite the failure to adopt a constitutive treaty or the inefficiencies that can be observed in the EU’s structure of governance. At this point, however, development is not only considerably slowed, almost stagnant, but is even faced with real possibilities of canceling out the progress made and embarking in a process of disintegration.

As stated before, the purpose of this paper is to conceptually explore the relation between the integration process and culture and to contribute to the better understanding of the complex (internal and external) environment of the European Union. Consequently, as a preliminary step, some conceptual clarifications regarding the term of „culture“ are required, whose multiple valences and, implicitly, different

uses, both in the academic literature, as well as in colloquial forms of communication, contribute to the increase of the level of ambiguity in the way it is perceived and understood, generating the danger of a sort of terminological ambiguity that negatively influences the accuracy of the scientific approach. So, without challenging the validity of other perspectives on the concept, clarifications on the understanding of the term which underpins this paper must be made. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Taylor (1871) defined culture as „that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society“. The decades that followed have brought numerous additions to Taylor's vision, without however fundamentally altering its content. Out of these, we observe the additions made by the definitions given by Yucel and Dagdelen (2010), whose vision of culture includes elements that belong to the spheres of political and economic philosophy, religion (a useful nuance to Taylor's simple mention of faith), language and the educational system, or that of UNESCO (2001), which explicitly nominates both art and literature, while observing the central role of culture in the contemporary identity debate, in ensuring social cohesion and in the development of a knowledge-based economy. Also, we turn our attention to Hofstede's formulation, which, without contradicting Taylor's vision, clarifies the aspects regarding the causal relationship between collective and individual cultural values, defining culture as „the collective programming of the mind“ which ensure the differences between the members of different groups (Hofstede 1980).

This vision centered on the individual assures the understanding of only half of a wider cultural process, namely how the individual, a member of society, is modeled by its cultural characteristics. And yet, observing the cultural environment reveals a second sense of interaction that flows from the convergence from individual to collective. In this context we note the definition proposed by Mulholland (1991), which understands culture as „a set of shared and enduring meaning, values, and beliefs that characterize national, ethnic, or other groups and orient their behaviour“. Thus, culture is seen as going beyond the process of modeling the individual through social interaction and its structural role is recognized: through the individual's belonging to the collective, the collective behavior is modeled by the common cultural elements of individuals.

## **2 CULTURE AND THE EUROPEAN UNION'S CORE ARCHITECTURE – AN ELEMENT OF OMISSION?**

The European Union project, which for the first time took shape following the Treaty of Paris in April 1951, when Robert Schuman's plan materialized in the emergence of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), is the fruit of an initiative born in the ashes of World War II from an acute need to promote a climate of

peace and cooperation and to avoid the conflicts that devastated Europe in the first half of the century, remaining to this day one of the most ambitious political and economic constructs in history. The initial goals have been largely economic, both the ECSC and the European Economic Community (EEC), created by the 1957 Treaty of Rome, focusing on economic cooperation between the six Member States (the Federal Republic of Germany, France, Italy, Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg), even if, since the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 1958, the management of these structures was to be ensured by a series of common institutions of a political nature. With the election of General De Gaulle as President of France, the pressures of creating a political union outside the sphere of American-British influence have grown. Three years later, the French administration's efforts led to a high level meeting held in Paris in 1961, which recognized the need to ensure an additional dimension, eminently political, and to set up a commission tasked with identifying concrete ways of implementing such an extension. Subsequent negotiations have resulted in failure as a result of the antagonistic positions of France on the one hand and the other five Member States on the other (Sauron 2000, pp. 52-54). However, political cooperation has become more and more intense since the 1960s, culminating with the Treaty of Lisbon in 2007, during which time the powers of the European institutions have steadily increased, significantly enhancing economic and legislative integration. Consequently, in 2004, Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa, one of the major economists involved in defining and implementing the single currency project, notes that, despite the predominantly economic nature of its content, the European Union is primarily political, with the political dimension being crucial, including for the understanding of the economic and monetary integration processes (Padoa-Schioppa 2004, p. 1).

The vision is shared by most observers and is accurately synthesized by the observation of Archik (2015), who regards the European construction as a political and economic partnership materialized in an unprecedented form of cooperation between sovereign states. However, the question remains whether this „unprecedented“ cooperation is enough to ensure the optimal functioning of the EU and an effective interaction between its two main elements: economic and political cooperation. Indeed, the current environment, characterized by the existence of an economic and monetary union and, at the same time, a very small degree of fiscal integration – and the low level of political integration deriving from it, as shown in Fuest and Peichl (2012) – raises a series of questions about the future of the Union, a series of analyzes, among which Alphanbéry (2013), Vetter (2013), Dan (2014) indicating the need of accelerating the integration process on the fiscal component. This state of affairs will either contribute to changing the political attitude towards this subject and facilitate decisive steps in the direction of economic integration, or, in the absence of a broad political will, will push towards the implementation of an economic and political

system based on differentiated integration where Member States are no longer equal in rights and obligations.

In this context, beyond identifying the problem and outlining potential solutions, consistent views on the implementation phase, which cannot ignore the extremely heterogeneous cultural environment that represents more than just simple diversity, could underpin the European construction through their crucial role in shaping multiple interactions of social, economic and political nature. This can support the idea according to which the European construction should have begun by paying more attention the process of cultural integration, thus strengthening the foundation for the development of economic and political components. However, it must be recognized that the European project started in the years following the Second World War was not a „laboratory“ experiment, carried out in a controlled environment, but a genuine project pioneered and implemented in a real environment characterized by a series of political tensions and other economic and social factors that have made it even more complex. Therefore, any kind of discussion centered on post-factual recommendations generates few useful conclusions and the analysis should instead focus on identifying the inefficiencies within the integration process which is currently underway, while proposing viable solutions for their elimination.

Without denying the existence of bivalent relationships between the culture-economy couple and political culture, it should be stressed that the cultural environment is much more stable than the political-economic one, thus being more resistant to change, especially if such change is promoted from the outside. Therefore, the effects of cultural elements on the political and economic environment are faster and more intense than those generated in the opposite direction, situation that advocates the use of various public policy instruments in the attempt to promote economic and political goals.

This being said, one can identify a need to intensify research focused on the cultural component and the effects it has on the economic and political integration processes, starting with the premise that, in the absence of a certain level of cultural integration, the active management of differences and cultural peculiarities is a prerequisite for the success of economic and political actions designed to transform the European Union into a fully functional supra-national entity, which is able to impose itself in the long term as one of the main actors within a highly complex world order.

At the same time, the effort to create a true European identity that acts as a natural extension of the national identity, invalidating the perception that those who belong to other European nations are assimilated to foreigners, must be promoted as one of the main items on the agenda of European integration. In this context, it should be emphasized that the simple statement of objectives of a cultural nature is useless if

the acceptance of its necessity is not ensured, a difficult thing precisely because of the fragmented identity environment and the increasing intensity of the Euro-skeptical forces that apply disintegratory pressures.

Surprisingly or not, the concept of culture is just briefly outlined in the treaties that stand at the base of the European Union. A first reference from the cultural area appears in the Treaty of Rome of 1957, but from an economic perspective, as it states that certain cultural goods of national interest are not subject to the free movement of goods, a provision aimed at protecting the cultural heritage. A more consistent reference can be found about two decades later in the Tindemans Report, which identifies the need to strengthen the idea of „European identity“ (however without defining or indicating the link between it and culture) in the context of the political interaction with international partners (Tindemans 1975, p. 15, 18). The Treaty on the European Union, signed in Maastricht in 1992, though using general formulations, pays more attention to the importance of culture in construction Europe. Thus, as far as the objectives are concerned, it stipulates the development of both a the national cultures of Member States and, at the same time, the common cultural heritage, while it is noted that cultural elements will also be taken into account in the application other provisions of the Treaty. These provisions are present also in the Treaty of Lisbon (2007) and the rights to free artistic expression and respect for cultural diversity are mentioned in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2007, art. 13, 22), a document that produces legal effects that are binding for all Member States since 2009. However definitions of culture and cultural elements are still missing from all the documents underlying the functioning of the EU and its institutions.

The cultural approach of the European Union is centered around a defining element, namely that the responsibility for the creation and implementation of cultural policies lies with the Member States, the actions of the European Commission being only a series of instruments related to cultural policies promoted at national level, meaning that a common cultural policy is abandoned in favor of a series of potential common cultural approaches resulting from joint efforts that could lead to a partial synchronization of cultural policies across Member States. In other words, in a highly complex socio-cultural context marked by the anxiety generated by the idea of a potential loss or mitigation of national e cultural identity, the cultural field has been included in the area of support competences, according to article 6 of the Consolidated version of Treaties, corresponding to the lowest level of intervention by the European institutions, which do not have legislative powers in this field and therefore can only intervene to support, coordinate and complement the actions of the Member States (European Union legislation on division of competencies).

In these circumstances characterized by the lack of a common cultural policy, it is difficult to ensure an effective use of cultural instruments to achieve political,

economic and social objectives expressed at a European level. However, culture seems indispensable both for the consolidation of a European identity capable of providing the foundation of the continuation of the integration process, and for the development and implementation of optimal public policies in order to make the European integration process more efficient.

The idea of using culture as a means of consolidating a common European identity, with the implicit implications for the integration process, are based on the causal link between culture and identity. This relationship, which can be considered to be the basis of such an approach, is very well synthesized by Jandt's interpretation of the findings in the field the neurosis generated by the research of Damasio (2010), according to which culture has the function of regulator of human life and identity (Jandt 2013, p. 5). However, at the level of the official documents regulating the functioning of the European Union, whether one is referring to the Treaties, the resolutions of the European institutions or the documents governing the implementation of the Culture program, the problem is only tangentially touched.

Regarding the treaties on which the functioning of the European Union is based, the consolidated version reinforces, on one hand, the desire to strengthen the identity of Europe (but through a common foreign and security policy and not through a common cultural policy), and, on the other hand, the commitment to respect national and religious identities in the Member States (Consolidated version of Treaties). However, the provisions are formulated in a general manner, without providing, like in the case of culture, a definition of the concept of identity and without detailing a specific framework that would underpin the process of identity consolidation. Furthermore, no specific reference is made to cultural identity, even if there are obvious links between it and national and religious identities.

A more consistent mention on the link between culture and identity can be found in a Council Resolution on the European Agenda for Culture. The Act was adopted at the proposal of the Commission based on the belief that „culture and its specificity, including multilingualism are key elements of the European integration process based on common values and a common heritage – a process which recognizes, respects and promotes cultural diversity and the transversal role of culture“ (Council Resolution of 16 November 2007), setting out a series of better articulated (but at the same time only indicative) objectives for cultural development. Thus, although one of the specific objectives refers to „promoting intercultural dialogue as a sustainable process contributing to European identity, citizenship and social cohesion, including by the development of the intercultural competences of citizens“, the same document redefines the already stated objectives as simple „common guidelines“ part of a flexible and optional framework, which „do not preclude the definition and implementation by Member States of their own national policy objectives“ (Council

Resolution of 16 November 2007). Of course, it is inconceivable that any provision that would have entered in contradiction with the classification of the cultural field as a part of the sphere of support competencies would be anything else than null and void. However, it is difficult not to notice the tone somewhat hesitant, which seems to be consistent with the subsequent work of the European institutions in the field of culture.

The situation regarding the concept of culture described above is even more acute in terms of European identity, a concept that seems to be placed at the edge of the taboo area, being often insinuated in European documents, but rarely explicitly named and never defined. That being said, one must not overlook a number of elements from the text of the resolution that may represent the first steps towards a revision (unlikely at the time of the drafting of this paper) of the European cultural strategy which, in the event of a possible revision of the Treaties, could tend towards a common cultural policy by including the cultural field in the scope of the shared competences.

The first such element consists in recognizing the transversal role of culture, which influences a wide range of domains and processes, thus constituting an important variable in the integration equation. Moreover, this recognition of the transversal character of culture represents a step that, although incipient, is an indispensable element in designing and implementing a real common European policy approach to policies from the cultural sector.

The second element is related to the function of intercultural dialogue in the process of defining European identity and belonging. In addition to being one of the few direct mentions to the desideratum of defining a European identity, the document identifies intercultural dialogue as one of the means to achieving this goal. Also, it must be noted that the text does not stop at the role which intercultural dialogue (and implicitly culture) in the identity and belonging equation, but goes further with reference to social cohesion, a central element of the European integration process, which is stemming from the sense of belonging to a common identity, but which corresponds to a deeper level.

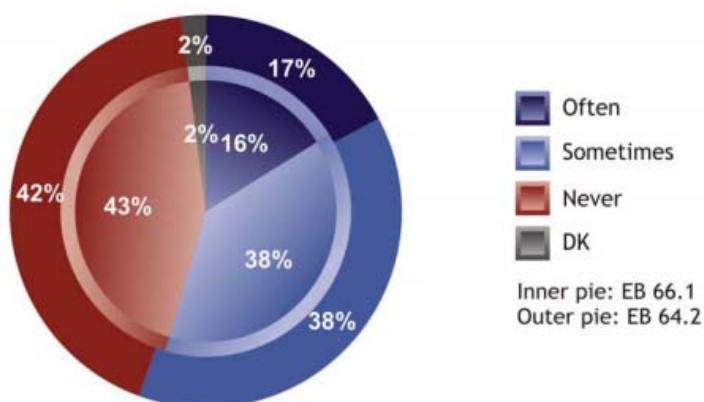
### **3 THE CULTURAL PERCEPTION OF EU CITIZENS**

Let us now place the official position of the European Council on this matter in the context of the popular perception within the EU. Thus, we will proceed by first analyzing the results of Eurobarometer 66 (2007), published in the same year as the Council Resolution, which reveals that 43% of the citizens of the European Union never define themselves as Europeans, while 38% do so only at times and only 16% do it with an increased frequency. Moreover, only 59% of EU citizens were proud that they are Europeans. The results are shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1: National vs. European feeling, spring 2015 and autumn 2014 (EU 28)

Question: QA30. Do you ever think of yourself as not only (NATIONALITY), but also European? Does this happen often, sometimes or never?



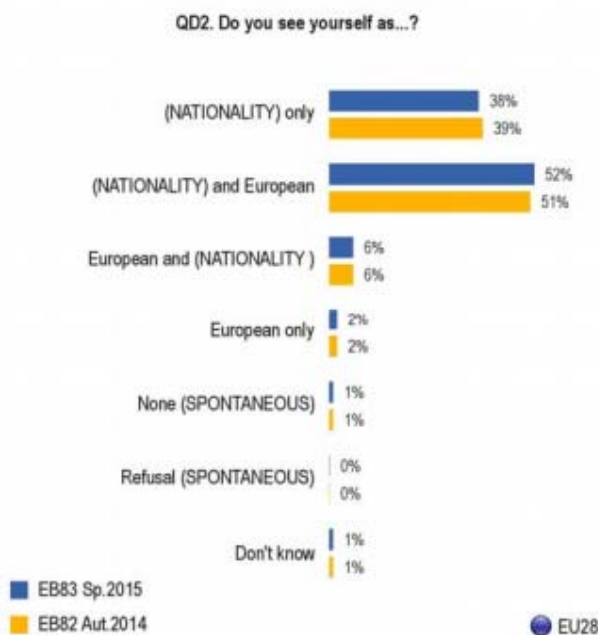
Source: Standard Eurobarometer 66.

However, one can observe improvement in the situation in the following years, the Standard Eurobarometer 83 (2015), which contains a slightly changed question compared to the proposed version respondents in 2006, pointing out that 38% of EU citizens are defining themselves only on the basis nationality, 52% primarily on the basis of nationality and subsidiary on the basis of European citizenship, while only 8% put European citizenship first, with or without a component national identity (Figure 2).

However, the results must be interpreted in the context of the evidence that a strong national identity leads to less support towards the European Union (Carey 2002). Thus, although the situation emerging from the 2015 survey indicates an increase of the European sentiment, the results may be somewhat misleading in terms of the identity feeling because of the way Eurostat sociologists have formulated the question, which refers, on one hand, to nationality, a concept that includes an extremely powerful identity component, and, on the other hand, to European citizenship (and not to European identity) in the conditions in which citizenship is a legal concept that includes identity elements only tangentially.

Subsequently, Eurobarometers 85 and 86, based on questionnaires applied 2016, indicate, despite the increase in intensity of nationalist and populist rhetoric, a similar picture regarding the self-perception of European citizens in this respect, as shown in the charts below.

Figure 2: National vs. European feeling, spring 2015 and autumn 2014 (EU 28)



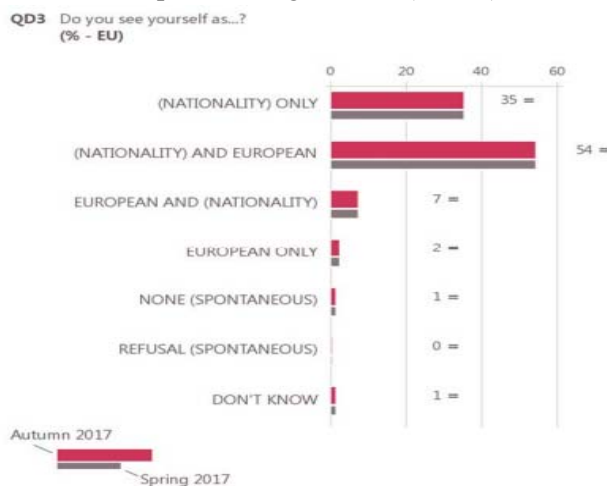
Source: Standard Eurobarometer 83.

We underline the lower percentage of respondents from the Non-Euro Zone Member States who consider themselves European citizens, namely 50% of them, compared to 64% of respondents from countries that have already adopted the single currency (Standard Eurobarometer 85, 2016). In this context, the question is to what extent are results indicative of a causal relationship and, if so, if the belonging to the Euro Zone determines the increase of the European sentiment or, vice versa, the Member States whose citizens feel to a greater extent Europeans are more likely to be integrated into the monetary union. Without the aiming in this paper to deepen the investigation into the link between European and national identity in the context of the extensive process of European integration, we consider useful to emphasize the increased importance of understanding this link in the context of the calibration of integration process and the determination of the optimal road to be followed for the completion of the European project.

Looking at the results of the Standard Eurobarometer 88 (2017), the latest with fully published results at the time of drafting this paper, one can find elements that suggest a positive dynamics of the European feeling, with the percentage of those who identify themselves only by referring to their nationality dropping to 35% and the percentage of citizens identifying themselves as being European only or primarily

European (with the nationality in the subsidiary) reaching 9%. This situation is illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3: National vs. European feeling in 2017 (EU 28)



Source: Standard Eurobarometer 88

Regarding the dynamics of the results from the Euro Zone membership perspective, Eurobarometer 88 (2017) reveals a substantial increase in the European sentiment of citizens from Member States outside the Euro Zone (56%, compared to 50% in the spring of 2016), doubled by an increase also in the percentage of those who consider themselves European citizens and are coming from Member States that have already adopted the single currency (66%, compared with 64% indicated by the results from the spring of 2016 and the spring of 2017).

#### 4 CONCLUSION

An analysis of the structure of the European Union, as stemming from its underlying treaties and other legal documents that lay down its principles of construction and operation reveal that, beginning with the documents pertaining to the creation of the first European structures after the Second World War and continuing with the treaties that have ensured the deepening of integration along a wide range of vectors, the focus has always been on economic and political elements, while issues pertaining to the field of culture have been only tangentially, at best, approached. More precisely, the consolidated version of the European Union's treaties reinforce the intention to create a stronger European identity while committing to respecting the national and religious identities of the Member States (Consolidated version of Treaties), without however providing with more details on how the process should

unfold, an absence that, in practice, fails in providing European institutions (and especially the European Commission, whose goal is to look after the interests of the EU as a whole) a clear basis for policy actions aimed at achieving this very general objective. Furthermore, as highlighted before in this paper, no specific reference is made to cultural identity, even if it exhibits obvious links with national and religious identities. On the other hand, the fact that a more recent Council resolution, namely the Council Resolution of 16 November 2007, has tackled elements that recognize the enhanced role of culture and its transversal function in the European integration process could be interpreted, at least by euro-enthusiasts, as a sign of potentially increasing efforts for the design and implementation of a real common European policy approach to policies from the cultural sector.

This structural picture is to be interpreted in the light of the recent dynamic of the European cultural perception among EU citizens, as depicted in Eurostat's Standard Eurobarometers, whose slightly positive change indicates that the Euro-skeptical trend that can be observed in numerous European political environments is limited. Moreover, one must note the substantial increase in the European sentiment of citizens from Member States outside the Euro Zone (56% in the spring of 2017, compared to 50% in the spring of 2016), an element that could consist in a non-economic argument for accelerating the Euro adoption process.

In the 2018 state of the union speech to the European Parliament, European Commission President Jean Claude Juncker stated that „to love Europe is to love its nations. To love your nation, is to love Europe“ (Juncker 2018). This very pro-European sentiment needs however to be doubled by clear policy actions that aim at strengthening the role of European culture and identity within the EU's construction.

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