

# Who are the Europeans? European Identity Outside of European Integration

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## Abstract

What do we know about the relationship between Europe, the European Union and European identity? While national identity is a multifaceted phenomenon, European identity has been linked to the growth of the European Union. This article attempts to analyze some of the attributes of individuals with European identity in central and eastern Europe prior to EU accession by applying existing hypotheses on correlates of European identity. The phenomenon of identification with Europe prior to EU accession provides a window into understanding the identity mechanisms that inform the concept of European identity. The first Eurobarometer surveys measuring European identification in central and eastern accession states reported a puzzling finding: that more people, not less, identified with Europe than in existing EU states. An analysis of the Eurobarometer results provides counter-intuitive comparisons and contrasts between eastern and western Europe and uncovers potential mechanisms illustrating the content of contemporary European identity.

We are doubtless rather too blasé today to believe in the ‘European dream’ as we did in the aftermath of the war. Nevertheless, Europe needs its dreams and without it, renaissance and reunification would be illusory. Eastern and Central Europeans, being less privileged than us and less concerned to protect a comfort, which they do not yet enjoy, are more open to that ‘European dream’. (Delors, 1999, p. 4)

## Introduction

What is the relationship between Europeanization, European identity and identification with the European Union (EU)? Scholars have studied aspects of identity in the context of the EU, but ‘European identity’ is an unresolved concept. Identification with the EU, identification with Europe and support for the EU are conflated categories of analysis in need of clarification (Cram, 2011). Over time, more EU citizens identify as ‘European’ according to public opinion polls (Gabel, 1998; Fligstein, 2008), but the content and causality of the European identity phenomenon remains elusive. It has been linked to instrumental outcomes of the EU (Delors, 1999; Laffan, 2004) through the building of a ‘European political identity’ (Bruter, 2005). Scholars frame it as parallel to national identity, where the EU creates affection in individuals through civic participation or cultural symbols (Laffan, 2004; Parks, 1999), although the phenomenon of EU identity-building efforts have been roundly critiqued as unsuccessful (Checkel, 2005). More recently, identifying with Europe has been linked to being ‘cosmopolitan’ – an implicit outcome of the increasing connectivity of sophisticated Europeans who benefit from the free flow of people, goods and services within the common market (Fligstein, 2008). However, as Checkel and Katzenstein (2009) observed, the phenomenon of European identity is fragmenting into

various interpretations and divisions. European identity may well be an outcome of secular and enlightened European integration on collective identities (Breakwell, 2004; Citrin and Sides, 2004; Kritzinger, 2005; Laffan, 2004), but scholars are also acknowledging the idea that European identity might also contain more traditional, religious and cultural foundations (Börzel and Risse, 2011; Green, 2007; Risse, 2010).

This paper analyzes the European identification of individuals outside the EU – but inside Europe – prior to EU accession. In 1997 the Eurobarometer survey of European individuals was expanded for the first time to EU candidate countries, primarily in central and eastern Europe (CEE), with the first results published in the spring of 2003. The ‘candidate country’ Eurobarometer incorporated the standard EU-15 Eurobarometer question querying an individual’s relative identification with their nation-state and Europe. In their analysis of the survey results, the European Commission reported: ‘contrary to journalistic impressions, the data suggests that in the new member countries – compared to the old EU nations – more people, not less, are defining themselves as being European in one way or other’ (Eurobarometer, 2003, p. 7).<sup>1</sup> Before the expansion of the EU in 2004, current EU citizens reported more nationalist attachment than eastern Europeans: ‘current European [EU-15] citizens display a higher level of exclusive national identity – not those of the accessing ones. In none of the new member countries does the percentage identifying itself as “national only” – and not “European” – reach 40 per cent’ (Eurobarometer, 2003, p. 7). These reported Eurobarometer results require further analysis, as do extant assumptions about the relationship between European identification and the EU. European identity may well be a top-down product of the EU and its institutions, but an analysis of European identity outside of the EU provides a natural experiment for understanding alternative paths to identifying as European.

This article examines hypotheses regarding the determinants of European identity in EU candidate countries by applying research conclusions from scholars of the traditional EU-15 Eurobarometer. The first hypothesis presumes the cross-cutting cleavage in society is between national-exclusive and plural identity, not between national and European identification. In other words, a stronger sense of national identity is positively correlated with one’s readiness to accept (or express) a sense of European identity.

Second, the individual-level predictors of European identity identified in EU-15 countries – high education, knowledge, urbanism, white-collar economic class, cognitive mobilization and youth – are all correlates of European identification. There should be no difference in the direction of the correlates here between EU-15 and EU-27 Europeans.

The third hypothesis concerns the relationship between European identification and expectations of benefit from European accession. In EU-15 countries, Van der Veen (2002) found a positive correlation between expectation of benefits from the EU and identification that is positive and significant only after accession *but negative before accession*. The causal arrow from European identity to support for integration is also more than five times as strong as the causal influence in the opposite direction. Moreover, European identity outweighs the systematic contribution of material, utilitarian factors to support for integration. The introductory Jacques Delors quote represents the shaky conventional wisdom presuming that individuals in candidate countries aspire to be

<sup>1</sup> The Eurobarometer Comparative Highlights report does not expand on what the ‘journalistic impressions’ are of the national and European identities of individuals in candidate EU countries.

European to reap the benefits of Europeanization. Given that there was no relationship between European identity and expectations of individual gain from EU membership in western European states, why should this have been the case in eastern European states? Following from Van der Veen's (2002) findings – and in contrast to Delors – I expect no correlation between European identification and expectations of EU benefits in eastern Europeans.

Finally, I test the hypothesis that national differences across candidate countries in European identification may be a reflection of differences in the percentage of the national population that is an ethnic minority group or an ethno-linguistic minority. This hypothesis has less to do with social or cultural context, but is a function of the Eurobarometer question possibly forcing respondents who are not members of the dominant national identity to choose the simple alternative of 'European'.

The article is divided into three parts. First, it addresses the definition of individual European identification and its relationship to national and other forms of identification. Then it presents hypotheses regarding European identification in eastern European states and compares the results to research conclusions from western Europe. The final part of the article presents the empirical analysis, discussion of the results and avenues for further inquiry.

## **I. Identity, National Identity and European Identity**

The concept of 'European identity' varies considerably. Scholars have concluded that 'Europe' is an empty category that is filled with different national and cultural meanings (Breakwell, 2004; Brewer, 2001; Marcussen *et al.*, 1999; Risse, 2010). Being 'European' can mean overcoming the German past (Engelmann-Martin, 2002), French Republicanism and enlightenment (Schild, 2001) or British national exceptionalism (Knopf, 2002). Even among two nationals, in their 'claim to "feel European"', they might mean totally different things in terms of both the intensity of the feeling they describe and the imagined political community they refer to' (Bruter, 2003, p. 1154).

Within EU studies, the conventional wisdom has been to conflate the identification of individuals with Europe with the top-down civic pressures or benefits of EU membership (Cram, 2011). Identifying as European, then, may be the result of identity-building projects and symbols (Bruter, 2005; Laffan, 2004; Neumann, 1998; Parks, 1999), such as the 1980s EC Adoninno Committee proposing the identity-building projects of a European hymn, a European flag and a European day. The results of these projects have been mixed; although the EU has not succeeded in luring individuals away from their national identities, it has become hegemonic in defining for EU scholars what it means to be European (Checkel, 2005). The EU may or may not be the source of European identification from the perspective of European individuals, but it has become the exclusive precondition for researchers explaining European identification. For example, EU scholars have suggested Europeanness may be observed only inside EU Member States. Rometsch and Wessels (1996, p. 357) claimed 'with the EC membership [states] will start moving in the direction of Europeanization and convergence whereas countries outside the EC [...] will not follow this direction until they have gained full membership'. Similarly, Morlino (1999) ruled out the possibility of European identity as a phenomenon outside the EU. More recently, Fligstein (2008) built upon Inglehart (1970), proposing

that European identity is a class-based phenomenon directly linked to the transnational mobility benefits of the common EU market. The EU creates elite European citizens through transnational exchange, but also leaves behind older, poorer, less educated citizens who will reinforce their national and ethnic identities. Additionally, The EU is assumed to be the direct or indirect source of feeling European, when in fact European identification might also be an alternative or pre-existing cultural framework to the European integration project. In a recent departure, Fligstein *et al.* (2012) have acknowledged the possibility of extant European cultural frameworks, but have framed them as normatively xenophobic, reactionary or right-wing frames of cultural reference. Fligstein *et al.* are correct in broadening the cultural sources of supranational identification from purely functional, transactional associations, but they have not acknowledged the bottom-up variation in ways individuals might have supranational identity that is cultural but normatively neutral, historically predates the EU or even stands in tension with EU institutions, laws and practices. The empirical results of this article demonstrate the existence of individual identification with a supranational 'Europe' before accession to the EU that does not correlate with low education, information, backwardness or even support for EU accession. This empirical result stands in tension with the conventional wisdom about how individuals come to identify as European as it precedes EU accession and benefits and involves educated, civic-minded individuals that do not necessarily support or expect benefits from the EU.

## II. European Identification in Eastern Europe

When the European Commission refers to the 'journalistic impressions' of post-communist eastern European identity, one must assume they are referencing the rapid re-emergence and redefinition of distinctive national and minority cultural identities. The decade after 1989 seemed marked by the tension between national self-determination projects and 'returning to Europe' through North Atlantic Treaty Organization (Nato) and EU membership. This tension, however, simplifies the complex historical and geopolitical eastern European context, where the experience of independent statehood over the past century has been characterized by external insecurity and internal weakness. The return of nationalist ideology in eastern European politics can be considered a reaction to this predicament, but its presence should not obscure an alternative, and equally long, tradition of cultural 'pan-European' thinking, in many ways more cosmopolitan than the western European national experiences (Batt, 1999; Harris, 2012). Scholars (Case, 2009) have attempted to fill in the content of what 'Europe' means to eastern Europeans, and have hypothesized that Latin Christianity, rejection of Russian hegemony, centuries of invasion by non-European armies, the French Revolution and a shared medieval and Renaissance history have informed a supranational European identity in eastern Europe that often predates the phenomenon in western Europe. After 1989, a desire for EU membership and the assertion of European identity was not just nostalgic 're-inventing of Austria', but a rational conviction that European integration was more necessary than ever in the volatile context of post-communist transition to support democratic statehood and economic reconstruction (Batt, 2001, p. 35).

Since 1997, the Eurobarometer survey has been conducted in the candidate and accession countries. This survey is identical to the one that is used in the 15 original EU

states.<sup>2</sup> The ‘candidate country’ Eurobarometer includes the same question that has been asked of individuals in the standard Eurobarometer survey since 1992:

In the future do you see yourself as [nationality] only, [nationality] and European, European and [nationality], or European only?

The findings indicate that, overall, individuals in current EU Member States display a higher rate of exclusive national identity than individuals in candidate or accession states. The difference was not small: the candidate countries with the highest national-only identification were Estonia and Hungary, at 39 per cent (Eurobarometer, 2003, p. 5). At the same time, close to half of the Dutch, Irish and Portuguese, and over half of the Austrians, Greeks, Swedes and Finns, saw themselves only according to their national identity. In Great Britain, the ‘British only’ identity designation was close to two-thirds.

These survey findings complicate the top-down constructivist theories of Europeanization through the EU. If more individuals on the outside of the EU institutional structure are European than individuals on the inside, there are either other subtle institutional effects at work, such as international socialization or persuasion, or an important source of ‘European identity’ exists outside of EU civic structures.

### *Multiple versus Exclusive Identities*

An ordering debate over European identity and Europeanization is whether the nation-state will be the dominant institutionalized identity or whether a different loyalty will replace it (Checkel and Katzenstein, 2009). National identity was framed by the circumstantial fit of cultural and political dynamics (Gellner, 1983): it is an open question whether these dynamics will disappear or be re-institutionalized at a supranational level. ‘European identity’ is framed as either a functional or utilitarian form of association or as a ‘super-nation’ that replaces or layers upon other identities and symbolic institutions (Smith, 1991).

The constructivist concept of multiple identities allows us to conceptualize both Europe and nations as coexisting imagined communities of loyalty. Empirical analyses from survey data and social psychological experiments indicate that many people who strongly identify with their nation-state also feel a sense of belonging to Europe (Duchesne and Frogner, 1995). This positive correlation between national and European identity has indicated that strength of national pride and European identification correlate. The empirical evidence of multiplicity or layering of identity corroborates the constructivist logic that multiple identities coexist within an expanding identity repertoire, and the identities that become salient depend on the context in which people act (Risse, 2001).

Most empirical studies have shown that the real cleavage in public opinion is between those who exclusively identify with their nation, on the one hand, and those perceiving themselves as attached to both their nation and Europe, on the other (Duchesne and Frogner, 1995). The European polity does not require an exclusive ‘demos’ that replaces

<sup>2</sup> The Eurobarometer project has been polling central and eastern Europe since 1989, but the previous survey content differed from the standard Eurobarometer questions, with no question relating to national, regional or European identification.

a national with a European identity, but one in which national and European identities coexist and complement each other (Marcussen *et al.*, 1999; Risse, 2001, 2004; Marks and Hooghe, 2003). Marks and Hooghe add that exclusive identification with the nation-state is more powerful in explaining opposition against European integration than any functional or rational calculations about economic costs and benefits, and this phenomenon varies widely across different countries and time frames.

*H1:* Although discussion of Eastern European identity often narrowly focuses on ethno-national identification over other forms, the underlying cleavage structure in eastern Europe is similar to western Europe: strong national identity is a predictor of strong European identity, not weak European identity.

### III. Demographic Predictors of European Identification and Support for the EU

Europeanization of identity might be a phenomenon either dependent on civic European institutions (Laffan, 2004) or other ideological or cultural mechanisms (Parks, 1999). In the context of nation-states, Craig Calhoun (1997, p. 11) proposed that:

[T]he development and spread of nationalist discourse is not reducible to state formation or political manipulation; it has autonomous significance, appears in cultural arenas not directly defined by state-making projects, and has often informed popular action to reform or resist patterns of state-making.

Is European identity analogous to national identity in that it cannot be reducible to the 'state-making' political and economic structures of the EU? If so, it should be found outside the EU. 'Outside' the EU could be geographical, in the public opinion of states that were recent EU accession candidates, or it could be historical, by looking at patterns of identity responses in the southern and northern European states that acceded to the EU at earlier stages.

Empirical studies of Eurobarometer data in the original EU-15 Member States have tried to assess the existence of a civic identity related to Europe, with variables that do not necessarily conflate identity with EU institutions. Although the European identification Eurobarometer question does not distinguish between civic and cultural belonging, certain individual correlations indicate high civic attachments. Education, income and liberal ideology all correlate positively to attachment to Europe (Citrin and Sides, 2004; Fligstein, 2008; Gabel, 1998). Attachment to Europe also correlates negatively to xenophobia, positively toward EU enlargement and positively with support for the EU. These findings can be interpreted to confirm assumptions that the EU has filled the definition of 'Europe' with the substance of a civic identity.

*H2:* Eastern European individual attachment to Europe and expression of European identity correlates with support for the EU, knowledge, education, income, age, cognitive mobilization and cosmopolitanism (urbanism).

### IV. European Identification Outside of the EU: Instrumental or Affective?

The perspective articulated by Jacques Delors (1999) in the introduction reflects a conventional wisdom regarding the identity and functional desires of individuals in EU candidate countries. Members of accession states were supposed to want to be Europeans

by way of wanting EU lifestyle and comforts. The direction of this functional logic flows from economic integration in EU institutions to political-institutional integration and feelings of affiliation. This explanation would require individuals within the accession and candidate countries to perceive themselves as 'less privileged' and have high expectations for economic benefits and political stability, therefore instrumentally 'projecting' themselves as Europeans.

Despite the historical significance of the eastern European accession into the EU, most of the research on attitudes toward European integration has been conducted on previous western and southern European accessions (Tverdova and Anderson, 2002). Eurobarometer analyses have tested the relationship between European identification and functional desires to receive benefits from membership in EU institutions (Kritzinger, 2005; Marks and Hooghe, 2003). Overwhelmingly, these studies have determined high correlations between European identity and the transfer of policies and institutions to the EU/EC (Kritzinger, 2005; Citrin and Sides, 2004). Most importantly, the pattern of positive correlation grows from the time of accession into the EU, with a negative correlation leading up to the point of accession. Marks and Hooghe (2003) found evidence of multi-level identities in EU Member States where strong, but not exclusive, national identity reinforces and correlates strongly with European identity. The highest incidence of this exclusive national identification with the nation occurred in accession countries, both economically strong and weak, precisely before and during referendums over the decisions to join the EU. These findings corroborate a link between European identification and EU benefits, but only after accession, with weak functional or instrumental explanation for any correlation before EU membership. Pre-accession referendums tend to exacerbate conflicts within and among elites and empower single-issue anti-European protest movements, and this mobilizes exclusive national identity in an anti-European direction.

Kritzinger (2005) found similar results, although her data analysis went one step further in determining the mechanism between expressed European identity and the desire for functional benefits. The Eurobarometer data on current EU/EC Member States in the 1980s were divided into clusters of nationally efficient and non-efficient countries. With the exception of Italy, none of the non-efficient countries had high levels of European identity. This analysis included data from pre-accession years, with a negative correlation before accession, as Marks and Hooghe also found. In an analysis of EU member and 1990s accession states, Kritzinger found increasingly positive correlations between European identity and the desire for functional benefits. Weakening correlations in the efficient Member States of France, Germany and the Netherlands can also be a sign of the legitimacy crises of Europe in the early 1990s (Eichenberg, 1998). Long-term, institutionally efficient countries were more affected by these crises than newer EU/EC members (Kritzinger, 2005; Schild, 2001). Kritzinger concluded that there was no evidence for countries classified as non-efficient before, during and after accession displaying higher levels of European identity than efficient states. Additionally, Van der Veen (2002) found that in the original Member States, European identity is not conflated with support for the EU. Instead, the causation flows from a sense of European identity to support for integration, with almost five times the causal influence. If studies of other waves of accession demonstrated no linkage between European identity and pre-accession expectations of EU benefits or EU support, there is no reason to think that the 2004 accessions of eastern Europe should be any different. Exceptionalist statements to the contrary reveal a

disturbing prejudice on the part of EU officials towards the motives of central and eastern European individuals prior to EU accession.

In all of these studies, a functional-utilitarian explanation is supported by empirical evidence, but its impact on identity *is only positive and significant in states that are already EC/EU members*. The phenomena of multiple identities are created and reinforced by the institutionalization processes of European integration. The findings also appear to refute the image that polities experience anticipatory or aspirational 'European identity' later degraded by popular backlashes over EU governance realities. The country-level summary data on eastern European candidate states pre-EU accession supports this conclusion.

The candidate country Eurobarometer survey results – with high levels of European identity – are inconsistent with extant explanations of aspirational identification with the EU. Given the lack of a connection between 'feeling European' and expecting any benefit from EU membership, further analysis of the Eurobarometer results must allow for interpretation of 'European identity' as a concept independent from EU membership. These include analyses of Europe as a cultural and historical space, socializing institutions other than the EU, and the unique historical dynamics of ethnic group institutionalization and identity formation in central and eastern Europe.

*H3: European identification response does not correlate strongly with expectations of great economic and political benefits from the EU before accession.*

## V. National Identities and National Minorities in Eastern Europe

Given the doubt cast upon functional or socialization hypotheses for the salience of European identity in candidate countries, it is also necessary to frame the analysis with a discussion of certain structural factors that might distinguish eastern European countries from EU Member States and previous accession states.

The presence of significant ethnic minority or irredentist populations may have had a significant impact on the results of multiple versus exclusive identities in the candidate countries. One significant drawback of the Eurobarometer question measuring national and European identities is that the multiple-choice answers (nationality only, nationality and European, European and nationality or European only) are fixed at the dominant national identity in each country of interview. Alternative national, regional or non-territorial identities are not possible answers to the question. This is a known problem in the interpretation of Eurobarometer data: 'Because Luxembourg contains a high proportion of citizens from other EU countries, we once again find that people in this country are likely to feel European only' (Eurobarometer, 2001, p. 11). In a previous study, Van der Veen (2002) noted this discrepancy and tested the significance of reported levels of European identification with the individual's reported nationality, separating out nationality from country of interview and residence. Once nationals were separated out from non-nationals, the rates of European identification dropped significantly (20 per cent in Luxembourg), reflecting the fact that 'citizens of one EU state living in another are far more likely to see themselves as EU citizens in the near future' and represent a large proportion of EU-15 'European only' respondents.

The relative proportion of national minorities in eastern European states may indicate whether a similar dynamic is at work. Although nationality can be based just on the idea of citizenship and unite different ethnic or cultural groups (Stepan and Linz, 1996),



nationality is typically also defined by a common ethnic or cultural origin (Smith, 1986). National identity in eastern Europe has historically been assumed to be largely based on ethnicity, culture and language (Kohn, 1944). This assumption is reflected within the original ‘Kohn dichotomy’ distinguishing between civic and cultural forms of identity: that eastern European identity was backward, illiberal, ethnic/cultural and prior to the creation of the state, while western European identity formed after the nation-state and was as a result more civic in nature (Jutilla, 2009, p. 635). While this dichotomy is analytically dubious and ethnocentric, there are national minority populations in central and eastern Europe that can be identified through linguistic or ethnic census self-identification. Their continued self-identification does not imply they reside inside an ethnically based discriminatory and illiberal state, but provides a useful analytical tool for uncovering individuals less wedded to the dominant national identity and perhaps more likely to ‘feel European’, just as it has in EU-15 countries. Hence, the larger the national minority, the larger the potential response of European identification, when ‘European’ is the only alternative to the nationality in question.

Using language or ethnicity as an indicator for cultural diversity, Estonia and Latvia can be considered strongly heterogeneous countries, with significant Russian minority populations. Bulgaria, Lithuania, Romania and Slovakia are slightly heterogeneous with minorities that make up about 10 per cent of the population.<sup>3</sup> The Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia can be considered largely homogeneous. In the following model, I have replicated Van der Veen’s EU-15 analysis by recoding the respondents who report a different national, ethnic or linguistic identity than the state in which they are residing as a new variable (‘Minority/ethnic’) in order to determine whether minority respondents are driving the results of European identification.

*H4:* National, ethnic or linguistic minorities in the EU candidate countries of eastern Europe are highly correlated with the likelihood of reporting European identification.

## VI. The Determinants of Pre-accession European Identification

### *The Dependent Variable*

The question used to determine European and national identification has four possible outcomes: [nationality] only, [nationality] and European, European and [nationality] or European only. For the remainder of this analysis, I use a dummy variable that has the value 1 for those respondents who picked European citizenship as their first choice, and 0 otherwise. The analysis will therefore not capture all of the respondents who feel somewhat European, or national and then European. This is because the research question is seeking to uncover what drives a primary affiliation with Europe – even when this is still a minority of the population – rather than what causes some mild or neutral affinity with Europe.<sup>4</sup> Table 1 compares, on a country-by-country basis, the re-coded question asked in

<sup>3</sup> There are about 540,000 ethnic Hungarians in Slovakia (11 per cent of the population), 1.43 million ethnic Hungarians in Romania (8 per cent) and 800,000 ethnic Turks in Bulgaria (10 per cent).

<sup>4</sup> While it would be preferable to separate the correlates of those who feel European only from those who feel European and then [nationality], the candidate countries Eurobarometer results for the former category of identification were often 1 per cent or less of the respondents – in many cases fewer than 30 individuals per country. Aggregating the two categories together allows for a broader (though still minority) subset of the population for statistical analysis of understanding a European, over a national, identification.

Table 1: CC-EB 2001.1, Q16 (Identity: European)

<i>Country</i>	<i>European above all or European above national (1)</i>	<i>National above European (0) or National only (0)</i>
Slovakia	156 (16.8)	774 (83.2)
Estonia	143 (16.4)	731 (83.6)
Latvia	147 (16.3)	754 (83.7)
Czech Republic	120 (13.2)	786 (86.8)
Romania	121 (13)	811 (87)
Lithuania	96 (11)	777 (89)
Poland	88 (9.1)	880 (90.9)
Bulgaria	77 (9)	782 (91)
Slovenia	66 (6.9)	892 (93.1)
Hungary	63 (6.3)	942 (93.7)
Total	1077 (11.7)	8129 (88.3)

*Source:* Author's own calculations.

*Note:* Percentages in parentheses.

CC-EB 2001.1. The table is sorted in order of increasing sense of identity as a European citizen in CC-EB 2001.1, as shown in the first data column. Cyprus, Malta and Turkey have been eliminated, given their geographical and political distance from eastern Europe, as well as their distinctive response patterns.

### *Independent Variables*

#### 1. National Pride

*H1:* The coexistence of national and European identities

#### 2. Expectation of personal/country benefits from EU accession

*H2:* European identity and expectation of EU benefits

#### 3. Demographic and country variables

*H3:* Demographic factors explaining European identity

#### 4. National, ethnic, linguistic minority Status

*H4:* Minority effect on European identification

Following the explanatory variables of Gabel (1998) and Van der Veen (2002), the individual-level variables are cognitive mobilization, EU support, age, location and general knowledge scales. The measure of cognitive mobilization originated with Inglehart (1970), who argued that cognitive skills are necessary for understanding information about European integration and facilitating an individual's identification with a supranational political community. Greater cognitive mobilization thus makes an individual less likely to feel threatened by European integration (Inglehart *et al.*, 1991). The nature of these claims suggests that cognitive mobilization is likely to have an impact on an individual's sense of European identity. Another variable of interest is human capital, as measured by educational attainment. Higher levels of education are expected to increase an individual's ability to adapt to the changing circumstances of Europeanization

(Fligstein, 2008). This model has substituted a knowledge measurement variable for education due to a better statistical fit.<sup>5</sup>

Several additional factors are worth considering for their potential impact on a sense of identity. First among these is age. One assumption is of a large generational gap in candidate countries that is equal to or larger than the gap between youth and adult identification in EU-15 countries. Second is gender, likely to be correlated with (and prior to) other factors and also have an independent effect on identity. A third factor is urban or rural residence. Generally speaking, inhabitants of cities are likely to be exposed to more international information and interaction and have a more cosmopolitan outlook than those who live in rural areas. As a result, urban residence should be positively associated with European identity. Finally, since national traditions are likely to have an impact on each variable of interest beyond the model, I include dummy variables for each of the countries in the data set.

Additionally, some factors that – following Fligstein, Inglehart, Citrin and Sides, and Van der Veen's respective analyses of EU-15 countries – might have been considered, but had adverse or insignificant effects on the overall candidate country model include: media use, class-based cleavages, traditional left–right cleavages and income levels. They were either correlated with the other variables or not explanatory. Media usage had no effect on the model, either as a control variable or in combination with other variables. Again, there may not be equivalent historical class dynamics in eastern Europe as in western Europe since 50 years without capitalism might have erased many of those historical social cleavages. However, I can only hypothesize. Since the model uses a logistic regression (due to the dichotomous dependent variable) and not ordinary least squares (OLS), there is no function for testing multicollinearity in this iteration of the model. Additionally, one could hypothesize that the factors influencing EU-15 European identification have to do with *new* information changing individual minds via media, education, travel and business. In candidate countries none of these factors are significant and actually adversely affect the model. One might hypothesize that the factors leading to positive European identification in candidate countries is not through news or information exposure, but might be established cultural frameworks or historical information.

### *Model*

Given the preceding discussion, the binary logistic equation is as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{European identity} = & +EU \text{ support} + \text{Ethnic/National minority} + \text{National pride} \\ & - \text{Expectation of benefits (country/personal)} \\ & + \text{Cognitive mobilization} + \text{Knowledge} - \text{Age} \\ & + \text{Urbanization} + \text{Gender (male)} + \text{Country dummies} \end{aligned}$$

For the statistical analysis I used the binary logistic regression command in the SPSS statistical analysis program (see Table 2 for information on the variables used). Table 3 shows the results of the regression. The most striking result in the table was the

<sup>5</sup> Education might capture a different dynamic in eastern Europe, perhaps because literacy and primary education levels were uniformly high during the communist years although higher and advanced education levels were lower than in western Europe in the same period.

Table 2: Variable Information

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard deviation</i>	<i>Values</i>
European identity	0.117	0.321	0,1
EU support	3.15	1.384	0,1,2,3,4
Ethnic minority	0.1355	0.3423	0,1
Cognitive mobilization	0.9668	0.668	0,1,2
Knowledge	0.6848	0.601	0,1,2
National pride	0.8237	0.381	0,1
Age	1.74	1.07	0,1,2,3
Expectation of benefits	0.49	0.5	0,1
Location (urban)	0.956	0.828	0,1,2*
Gender (male)	0.544	0.498	0,1*

*Source:* Author's own calculations.

*Note:* \* Location (urban): 0 (rural area or village), 1 (small or middle-sized town), 2 (large town). Gender: 0 (male), 1 (female).

Table 3: European Identification as the Dependent Variable

	<i>EU identity</i>	<i>exp (B)</i>
EU support	0.165***	1.179
Ethnic minority	1.535***	4.643
National pride	-1.369***	0.254
Expectation of benefits	-0.363**	0.696
Cognitive mobilization	-0.082	0.921
Age	-0.224***	0.8
Gender	-0.161*	0.852
Urban residence	0.174**	1.191
Knowledge	0.288***	1.333
Bulgaria	0.217	1.243
Czech Republic	1.128***	3.089
Estonia	0.435*	1.545
Hungary	0.332	1.393
Latvia	0.002	1.002
Lithuania	0.29	1.337
Poland	0.731***	2.077
Romania	0.559**	1.748
Slovakia	0.940***	2.56
Slovenia	1.53***	1.333
Constant	***	0.2
N	10,045	
Chi <sup>2</sup>	630.803	

*Source:* Author's own calculations.

*Note:* Significance levels: \* = 0.05; \*\* = 0.01; \*\*\* = 0.001.

particularly strong explanatory power of the independent variable of ethnic or national minority status, confirming *H4*. As proposed in *H2*, expectation of benefits (country and personal had the same effect) were negatively and significantly correlated with European identification. This outcome contradicts the aspirational explanations for European identification attributed to EU candidate countries.

In Table 4, one of the most interesting findings of the country-level regression is the 'expectation of benefits' variable. It was not uniformly negatively correlated with European identification: in Romania and Slovakia it was positively correlated. Interestingly, those were the two countries that were (at the time) furthest from their accession dates with the fewest structural reforms. It seems that hope was still alive in the countries that had the least EU contact. In the other countries, there was already enough experience with the costs and benefits that the EU brings, and individuals had experienced the reality of accession – that it did not bring automatic wealth or development.

Additionally, the normally positive correlation between national pride and European identification, which has always been found in Eurobarometer studies, and which is now hegemonic evidence of multi-level identity, was not found in the candidate countries. In fact, the correlation between national pride and European identification was negative and significant. This finding raises important questions about the nature of 'European identification' in candidate countries pre-accession. It appears to be an alternative, not complementary, pre-accession identity to national identification, contra the findings of multi-level identification and complementarity within EU countries.

With regard to the other demographic factors, knowledge positively correlated with European identity. In contrast to EU-15 countries (Gabel, 1998), women were more likely to identify as European. Age (coded here as the oldest generation) was negatively and significantly correlated with European identity. The only demographic variable that had an estimated coefficient in the opposite direction of my prediction was the cognitive mobilization variable (that is, frequency with which one discusses political issues with others) that had a negative, but not significant, impact on European identity. This contrasts Van der Veen's (2002) findings of EU-15 countries in 1996. This also suggests that Inglehart's (1970) and Fligstein's (2008) arguments are necessary, but not sufficient, frameworks. On the one hand, greater cognitive skills do seem to facilitate one's ability to identify with a supranational political community. On the other hand, Inglehart *et al.* (1991) also assumed that all information and discourse about integration promotes support for it. The latter appears not true: information about Europeanness obtained in social contexts lessens one's support. Particularly in pre-accession candidate countries – where other variables that predict European identity (Gabel, 1998; Fligstein, 2008), such as media, travel and other exposure, also had no effect on identification – it seems that any identification with Europe has no relationship with new political or social information, whether obtained personally through networks or through another medium.

Additionally, the results show that support for the EU project is positively and significantly correlated with European identification (Table 5). This raises the question of which factor is driving the causal relationship, support or identification? Following Van der Veen (2002), I tested the reverse relationship, exchanging the identification dependent variable for EU support and making identification an independent variable. In EU-15 countries, the impact of EU identity on support for European integration is more than five times as large as the influence of support for European integration on a respondent's sense of European identity. The results of this model were even stronger. Not only was there less of a causal relationship between European identity and support for the EU, it was negative and significant in candidate countries. In other words, it was clearly *not* the case that the question regarding European identity simply captured individual support for the EU integration project because of EU civic citizenship.

Table 4: European Identification According to CEE Country

	Bulgaria	Czech	Estonia	Hungary	Latvia	Lithuania	Poland	Romania	Slovakia
Constant	-2.271	-0.85	-2.167**	-0.133	-0.163	0.036	-0.525	-2.326	-2.423
Ethnic minority	1.470***	1.677**	1.501***	-19.278	0.714**	2.179***	-	1.628***	1.417***
EU support	0.521	0.291**	0.240*	0.02	-0.07	-0.195	0.243*	0.473	0.449**
National pride	-0.868**	-1.45***	-1.45***	-1.366***	-1.264***	-1.649***	-1.687***	-0.978**	-1.832***
EU benefits	-0.763**	-0.444	-0.098	-0.910**	-0.813**	-1.081*	-0.047	0.076	-0.165
Cognitive mobilization	0.065	-0.119	-0.187	0.011	-0.175	0.304	-0.059	-0.414**	-0.037
Age	-0.165	-0.326**	-0.245*	-0.048	-0.058	-0.554**	-0.541***	-0.296**	-0.003
Gender	-0.765**	0.102	-0.117	-0.157	-0.216	0.438	-0.483*	-0.485*	0.261
Urban	-0.078	0.319*	0.583**	0.221	0.326*	0.318	-0.161	0.05	0.122
Knowledge	0.201	0.319*	0.237	-0.149	0.2	0.475*	0.370*	0.116	0.538**

Source: Author's own calculations.

Note: Significance levels: \* = 0.05; \*\* = 0.01; \*\*\* = 0.001.

Table 5: EU Support as the Dependent Variable

	<i>EU support</i>
European identity	-0.198**
Ethnic minority	0.018
National pride	-0.47***
Expectation of benefits	1.5***
Cognitive mobilization	-0.198*
Age	-0.011
Gender	0.134
Urban residence	-0.174**
Knowledge	-0.337***
Bulgaria	-1.586***
Czech Republic	-0.535**
Estonia	-0.141
Hungary	-0.609***
Latvia	0.241
Lithuania	0.068
Poland	-0.584***
Romania	-1.815***
Slovakia	-0.602***
Slovenia	1.04***
Constant	-2.173***

*Source:* Author's own calculations.

*Note:* Significance levels: \* 0.05; \*\* 0.01; \*\*\* 0.001.

## Conclusions

This article presents a preliminary discussion of the relationship between the correlates of individual identification with Europe and the evolving political, cultural and historical framework of Europe and the EU. In distinguishing between the concepts of 'political support for the EU' and 'identification with Europe', it has problematized assumptions that conflate the phenomenon of European identity with EU identity-building projects, participation and benefits. It also blurs the idea of the EU as a top-down identity-creating institution due to its hegemony in determining who or what is culturally European. An analysis of the candidate country Eurobarometer data prior to accession provides necessary empirical clues as the degree to which the EU directly influences the construction of European identity, whether it might institutionalize cultural affiliations that have been constructed elsewhere, or whether there are cultural frames of 'being European' that are in tension or conflict with EU norm and institutions. As Fligstein (2008, p. 253) has acknowledged, the 'European identity which seems to have taken hold in many places is one that emphasizes not tolerance and enlightenment, but racial, ethnic, and religious differences between people who are thought of as Europeans and those who are others'. In other words, European identity might be neither an explicit attachment to the EU nor an implicit process of learning and socialization because of EU opportunities: it might be a raw cultural category of reference available to the entire public, not just the most travelled, cosmopolitan class of individuals. These research results do not presume that identification with Europe in candidate countries is a backwards or nationalist phenomenon, but that entire alternative categories of cultural European identification predate EU

accession and must be captured, hypothesized and measured across the entire European continent, both before and after accession to the EU.

Who are the Europeans outside of the EU, before EU accession? They are more likely to be women, are high-information citizens, do not expect great economic or political benefits from EU accession for themselves or their country, do not automatically support European integration, are less likely to express national pride or attachment, and possibly more likely to be a member of a linguistic or ethnic minority. Some of the variables that are regular findings of the EU-15 Eurobarometer do not hold for the candidate country identity dynamics: those who feel European are not more likely to travel, consume media or obtain positive information about the EU through social networks. Their identification with Europe is not new, and not changing with new information. The content or intensity of their European identities has not been evaluated in this article as they are clearly context-dependent and heterogeneous across states, cultures and individuals. However, the evidence suggests that material, self-interested considerations are not predictors of non-EU self-identified Europeans, calling into question conventional wisdom regarding the aspirational identities of individuals in candidate countries. European identity is a complex category of analysis, and it suggests a number of hypotheses regarding the determinants of both European identity and support for European integration that call for further investigation.

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