

Spinning the European Wheel: Benefits, Welfare, and Identity Layers in the Old and New Member States

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Abstract: *The main question addressed by this study is whether citizens from the new Member States are more likely to perceive themselves as Europeans than their counterparts in Western Europe. We employ Standard Eurobarometer survey data from 2009 to test how identity is shaped by trust in political institutions, perceptions about national economies (both current and prospective), benefits of membership, satisfaction with the direction in which the country and the EU go, and individual socio-demographic factors (gender, age, and education). Our results show that national identity continues to be prominent, and especially so in the EU15. Second, the examined determinants act in the same direction for both the national and the European sense of belonging. However, their strength differs significantly, with less influence at national level. Finally, the explanatory factors did not perform differently in the two sets of countries.*

Key words: identity, economic evaluations, membership benefits, trust.

Cuvinte cheie: identitate, evaluări economice, beneficiile aderării la UE, încredere.

Introduction

The two most recent enlargement waves of the European Union (EU) did not imply solely the formal inclusion of almost 100 million new citizens, but also marked a relevant step towards a stable institutional setting at supranational level. The latter was complemented by the issue of European identity, emerging on the public agenda in a decade of visible display of nationalist feelings (e.g. radical right and populist parties). Is there room for European identity

on the continent where modern nationalism was born and reached its highest peaks within a democratic setting? The theoretical framework of multi-layered identification (i.e. local, regional, national, and European) provides a positive answer to this question. Building on the assumption of coexistence of national and European loyalties, this paper investigates how perceptions of political and economic conditions and evaluations of benefits affect the citizens' sense of belonging to their nation and to Europe.

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We investigate if citizens satisfied with the general conditions of their country are likely to see themselves primarily as members of the national polity. Conversely, we are interested if the respondents from the new Member States are likely to perceive themselves more as Europeans, than their counterparts in Western Europe. We employ Standard Eurobarometer survey data from 2009 to test how the identity is shaped by trust in political institutions, perceptions about the economy at a national level (both prospective and retrospective), benefits of membership, satisfaction with the direction in which the country and the EU is going, and individual socio-demographic factors (gender, age, and education). Our analysis includes all the EU27 countries. We use bivariate (cross-tabulation and correlation) and multivariate analyses (binary logistic regression) to assess the impact of the variables emphasizing both the general picture and differences occurring between the populations of old and new Member States.

The first section of this paper includes the theoretical framework in which our approach and specific hypotheses are embedded. The second section brings empirical evidence supporting the prominence of national over European identity. Next, the bivariate and multivariate analyses reveal that national and European identities have similar determinants, with the perceived benefits of EU membership and economic evaluations playing an important role. The conclusions summarize the main findings and elaborate on their implications.

From National to European Identity

The concept of “identity” has contextual meanings (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000, 1). In its basic form, social identity is the complex of emotional and rational factors derived from the awareness of belonging to a group (Tajfel, 1978, 63). This process

implies both the positive identification with one owns’ group and the strengthening of particular features through a comparison with other groups (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). At individual level, identity refers to the abilities of persons to acquire and internalize values characterizing the group to which they belong (Festinger, 1954). The development of the group is modeled by the sense of common identity (Smith 1995). The modern period projected the state as a major driving force of identities. Various theories from the field of nationalism studies consider identity as a social, cognitive (Turner, 1981; Turner, 1991) and elite construct (Hobsbawn and Ranger, 1983) or as a product of ethnic (Smith, 1998) and cultural interactions (Hutchinson, 1994).

Identity is not confined solely to the state, especially in Europe where the fully sovereign nation-state has reached an end (Habermas, 1994). In this context, previous studies revealed two possibilities: a divergence between the national and European identity or a multi-stage identity formation. On the one hand, individuals consider their national identity as being threatened within a broader European context in which they interact with a multitude of cultures (Carey, 2002; McLaren, 2002). As a result, they display negative attitudes towards the EU and thus provide solid bases for euroskepticism. On the other hand, there are multiple layers of identity (Madens et al., 1996) in which the nation-state becomes the propeller of identity formation at the European level (Janssen, 1991; Anderson, 1998). According to the latter view, individuals often identify with several territorial communities simultaneously (Brewer, 1993). The coexistence of national and European identities is thus possible; they are not opposites but heavily intertwined (Marks, 1999; van Kersbergen, 2000; Haesly, 2001; Brutter, 2003; Risse, 2003).

The division between these two perspectives is not clear-cut as differences between the national and European identi-

ties are not limited to territoriality. Even if we consider the multi-layered approach and we refer to European identity as a second layer, there are a few relevant obstacles. First, the EU is a young community composed of old communities – the nation states – animated by individual strong feelings of separate belonging (Boari and Gherghina, 2009). Second, the European identity is built upon the national one. Very few characteristics shaping group identity – language, culture, historical experience, single economic and geographic areas, and shared necessity for security – can be reproduced at European level without being mediated by national layers. Consequently, very few people consider themselves Europeans without belonging initially to a country (Jacobs and Maier, 1998). On a complementary key, European identity means allegiance to broader political values and principles such as democracy, tolerance, and transnational cooperation (Citrin and Sides, 2004, 49). Third, the diversity of the 27 Member States creates a heterogeneous entity that adds a supplementary component to cognitive mobilization towards identity: the acceptance of other cultures (McLaren, 2002). Such instances could fuel lower degrees of identification at European compared to national level.

Following this logical reasoning, the coexistence of the national and European sets of loyalties is possible. There is empirical evidence supporting this claim: recent figures from survey data illustrate how dual national and European attachments increased by 10% in less than a decade, starting 1992 (Citrin and Sides, 2004, 50). Such shifts in attitudes take place even in countries known for their Euroskeptic traditions, such as the United Kingdom. Consequently, our empirical endeavor departs from multi-layered identity formation and seeks to observe whether national and European identities were influenced during the financial crisis emerging in 2008. We focus on four categories of factors expected to make a

difference: confidence in political institutions, economic evaluations (prospective and retrospective), membership benefit-related perceptions, and general evaluations regarding the evolution of the country and of the EU. Throughout this paper, we refer to the European identity as loyalty towards the EU, especially since the survey respondents originate from Member States. According to the theoretical frame of multi-layered identities, we do not expect differences between the national and European levels in the hypothesized effects. However, we expect some differences among groups within the EU, and this is why we run separate analyses for the old and new Member States.

The relationship between political trust and national identity is bidirectional. Berg and Hjerm (2010) illustrate how national identity can shape political trust in various ways, differentiating between civic and ethnic types of identification. At the same time, the causal arrow goes in the opposite direction, as the political state is the reference object of the national identity.¹ This is why citizens are expected to develop a higher sense of belonging to a state in which they have confidence. As the political institutions of the central administration – Parliament and government – are the primary tools for decision making within a state, we expect citizens trusting them to display a higher level of national identification.

The complex decision making mechanisms and the sophisticated institutional arrangements in the EU can hardly be followed by regular citizens (Janssen, 1991). The high level of abstraction of these processes is worsened by the inattentiveness and ignorance of people (Bennett, 1996; Blondel et al., 1998), the distance separating Brussels/ Strasbourg from citizens, and the media coverage emphasizing solely events of extraordinary importance. These shortcomings are overcome if people are able to construct a reality that helps them understand politics. In doing so, individuals use domestic cues to approxi-

mate the European developments (Anderson, 1998) and their perception of the EU is mediated by the national institutions. Rohrschneider (2002) argues that citizens that trust their national institutions have the tendency to vest confidence in the EU institutions as they trust the stances adopted by the national leaders at European level. This tendency of citizens to display attitudes towards the EU according to their evaluation of domestic political institutions is mostly observed with respect to the integration process (Franklin et al., 1994; Gabel and Anderson, 2002; Rohrschneider, 2002). A similar logical mechanism is employed by identity formation and thus we hypothesize that trust in domestic political institutions positively influences the national and European identities (H1).

The level of satisfaction with the state and the EU represents the basis for the following two hypotheses. On the one hand, the citizens' evaluations of the current state of the economy reflect their satisfaction with previous policies or their hopes for future policies (prospective). Earlier research explains how perceptions of favorable national and personal economic conditions positively correlate with attitudes towards the EU (i.e. support) in the Member States (Anderson and Kaltenthaler, 1996; Anderson and Reichert, 1996; Palmer and Whitten, 1999; Tverdova and Anderson, 2000). Thus, we expect assessments of the current (H2a) and prospective (H2b) shape of the economy to have a similar impact on the national and European identities. On the other hand, the benefits of EU membership can also influence positively the sense of belonging (H3). Benefits are not restricted only to the economic dimension, but involve in addition freedom of movement, access to labor markets etc. it is intuitive to expect that respondents who perceive their country as being part of select club of prosperous and democratic states to foster a higher sense of national belonging. Similarly, the perception of EU as a source of benefits advances identification with it.

Connected with the latter argument, appreciating the direction in which the country goes is expected to enhance national attachments (H4). Such a general evaluation allows respondents to refer to multiple issues, ranging from the political and economic aspects partially covered in hypotheses 1 and 2 to any social outcome or relationship. The empirical testing of these four main effects is complemented by three control variables: gender, age, and education.

Research Design

We use data from the Standard Eurobarometer 71.3 (June–July 2009). We are interested only in the responses of EU citizens (the survey included also nationals of candidate countries). The dependent variable(s) is based on the answers to the following identity questions: *To what extent do you personally feel you are: European?... NATIONALITY?* These items had four possible answers 1) to a great extent, 2) somewhat, 3) not really, and 4) not at all. These categories are used as such in our bivariate analyse and dichotomized in the logic analysis to make the interpretation of the results straightforward. When creating the dichotomous variable, answer 1) is coded as sense of belonging, whereas 2), 3), and 4) are coded as not belonging. In doing so, we consider that individuals have a strong sense of belonging when they are completely sure about their identification (i.e. “to a great extent”). We think that the analytical leverage gained through the dichotomization helps stressing this distinction, and precisely in this way the information loss is compensated for. All cases with missing data on the dependent variable were deleted.

In order to assess the citizens' trust in their national institution we aggregate their responses to questions measuring the level of citizens' confidence in parties, government, and parliament: *I would like to ask you about how much trust you have in certain institutions. For each of the follow-*

ing institutions, please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it. The index created in this manner had four categories, with '0' signifying no trust at all, and '3', a high level of confidence in the national political institutions. The index constructed in this manner proved adequately reliable, with a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.837. Moreover, a principal-component factor analysis confirmed the uni-dimensionality of the three original variables (all scoring high on the same, unique factor).

The question regarding the retrospective evaluation of the state of the domestic economy was the following: *How would you judge the current situation of the (NATIONALITY) economy?* A complementary item asked, in turn about the national economic prospects: *What are your expectations for the next twelve months: will the next twelve months be better, worse or the same, when it comes to the economic situation in (OUR COUNTRY)?* We also included the citizens' evaluation of EU membership benefits: *Taking everything into account, would you say that (OUR COUNTRY) has on balance benefited or not from being a member of the European Union?* The questions asking citizens about trends in their country and the EU's evolution were: *At the present time, would you say that, in general, things are going in the right direction or in the wrong direction, in (OUR COUNTRY)/ The European Union?* Appendix 1 covers the operationalization of all the variables.

We divide our analysis into two phases. The first employs general descriptive statistics meant to explore which of the two layers of identity predominate and the relationship between them. Thus, we provide empirical evidence regarding the intertwining national and European identities. The second phase involves the statistical tests of the hypotheses – bivariate correlations and multivariate logistic regression – aiming to capture the effect of certain variables when the other factors are held constant. Both the bi- and

multivariate tests are conducted separately on three sets of citizens: the first included all the respondents from the EU 27, the second only the nationals of EU 15, while the third comprises the citizens of the new member states (NMS).

The prevalence of National Identity

The relationship between the national and European layers of identity is asymmetric. The former has priority for historical, political, and social reasons. Most of these were implicitly outlined in the theoretical framework. The preemption of the national state in the post-WWII Western Europe has an equivalent in the Eastern part of the continent after the fall of the communist regime. The triple transition (Offe, 1992) these countries undertook involved the creation of a state that became the only relevant reference point for at least one decade before the EU accession. The accelerated developments and constant changes in the EU's structure and functions during its half-centennial life contributed to this backlog in the formation of a European identity. Not only had the emergence of the EU chronologically followed that of its Member States, but its boundaries are still moving and institutions are constantly changing. For example, in virtue of the noble goal of decreasing the democratic deficit (Featherstone, 1994; Neunreither, 1994; Katz, 2001; Follesdal, 2006), the European Parliament constantly gained more powers and modified the checks and balances system in the EU (Hix, 1999; Corbett et al., 2000; Kreppel, 2002; Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace, 2006; Cini, 2007). Moreover, there is more contestation against the EU than against national states. The contestation takes the shape of Euroskepticism with diverse forms at organizational /representational (i.e. among political parties) and individual level

(Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2001; Kopecký and Mudde, 2002; Rohrschneider and Whitefield, 2006; Hix, 2007; Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2007).

Following these arguments, we expect a relevant difference in the levels of national and European identity. Figure 1, including the percentages of respondents identifying with the two entities, provides empirical evidence in this direction. A great majority of the respondents consider them-

selves as belonging to their national state to a great extent (82%). Only one third of the respondents provide the same answer when the EU is taken as a point of reference for their belonging. When declaring their sense of attachment to the EU, citizens are positive, but less enthusiastic as in the case of national identity. Thus, the answer category “somewhat identify” is the most popular. Almost one quarter of the respondents do not share feelings of belonging to Europe.

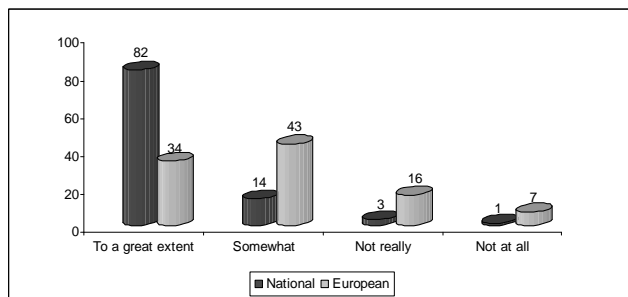


Figure 1. *Distribution of National and European Identities in the EU.*

Two general observations can be derived from this graph. First, most of the citizens display a sense of identity at both the national and European levels. The identity feelings are considerably stronger with respect to their own state: 96% of the respondents cluster in the “somewhat” and “to a great extent” categories, compared to 77% in the case of European identity. Second, the national identity is sharper, with most people being categorical regarding the sense of their belonging. The European identity is more nuanced, most respondents cluster in the “somewhat” category. In fact, this difference is visible in the entire distribution. Apart from the strong identification category, the EU exceeds the national layer. Such an instance reflects both a diluted sense of belonging and an increased distance from Europe (the “not really” and “not at all” answers).

Is there a difference between the identity feelings in old and new Member States? Two bodies of literature provide positive

answers to this question, from contrasting stances. On the one hand, following the theories emphasizing the consequences of second-class citizenship, we would expect higher national identity and lower European identity in the new joiners, compared to the old Member States. On the other hand, numerous studies emphasize the willingness of the post-communist countries to join the EU (Beichelt, 2004; Jacobs and Pollack, 2006; Gherghina, 2010), their levels of support for the latter being considerably higher than the one in the EU15.

The logic emphasized by each approach is straightforward. The concept of “second-class citizens” refers to the existence of discrimination and its perception against certain categories of citizens in contemporary countries. The labels apply to various categories ranging from people belonging to ethnic minorities (Torres et al., 1999) or with disabilities (Eisenberg et al., 1982) to recent waves of migrants (Alba et al., 2003; Ireland, 2004). Referring to the

later stream of literature, newcomers require more time for adaptation and integration. Accordingly, their European identity should be lower than that of the Western Europeans who were part of the EU for a while. Without such European roots, the national layer of identification is expected to play a relevant role. This is complemented by recent historical evidence in some of these countries where the creation of their nation and state coincided (Smith, 1996; Dawisha and Parrot, 1997; Norgaard and Johanssen, 1999; Kuzio, 2002). Opposed to this perspective, newcomers can perceive themselves more as Europeans compared to the citizens from the EU15 due to the conditionality policy. Apart from the benefits brought by the accession promise in terms of democratization and marketization, the EU was seen as a final destination with multiple benefits (Schimmelfenning, 2000, 2003, 2005; McFaul, 2002; Olsen, 2002; Schimmelfenning and Sedelmeier, 2005; Pevehouse, 2005; Gherghina, 2009). In addition the state and policy failures in the post-communist region could shed negative light on the concept of national identity and alienate some of the citizens. Accordingly, their national identity is weaker and the

European one stronger than in those socialized with the EU.

Figure 2 displays empirical evidence that supports the views of the second stream of literature. The level of strong national identity is slightly weaker in the new Member States (NMS) than in EU15. At the same time, there are more strong attachments to the EU level in NMS, compared to EU15. Thus, the discrepancies between the national and European layers are smaller in the NMS. Overall, a similar percentage of citizens in old and new members of the EU do not attach national identities, but there are differences with respect to the European layer. There are more citizens in the EU15 who do not consider themselves Europeans, compared to those from the new joiners. This general picture does not suffer relevant modifications if we exclude the United Kingdom from the analysis, a country known for its anti-EU feelings. Indeed, in terms of European identity there are very few UK citizens who see themselves as Europeans, but their level is comparable with that of other states (e.g., Portugal). In terms of national identity, the UK respondents are below the average, with seven out of ten citizens mentioning strong belonging to their country.

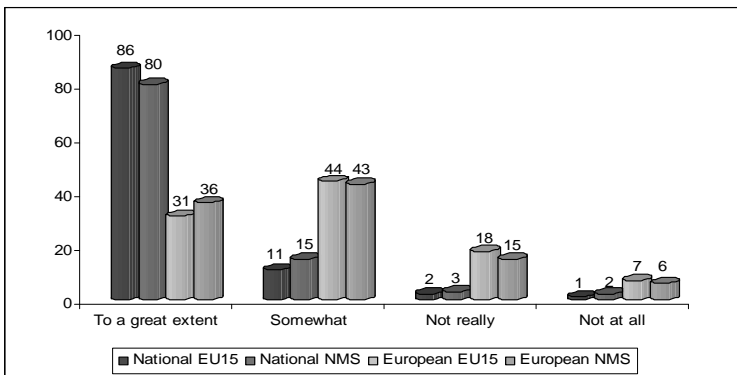


Figure 2. Comparison of National and European Identities between Old and New Member States.

Overall, the European identity lags behind the national one. The smaller discrepancy

between them in the NMS may be a positive sign: people belonging to new

joiners are more eager to embrace the label of Europeans. At the same time, if their feelings of second class citizens will emerge – and there are a few causes to trigger them (e.g., the work restrictions in some EU15 countries) – their identification is likely to shift. The reticence of the citizens from EU15 countries to see themselves as Europeans appears to be an attitude consistent over time. The recent years gave them the opportunity to oppose institutional changes of what they perceive as being anyway an elitist project: French and Dutch citizens voted against the Constitutional Treaty, while the Irish did the same with the Treaty of Lisbon.

Starting from these premises, it is worth noting how respondents seeing themselves as belonging to their nation consider the notion of European identity. There is a positive relationship between the two layers of identity examined in this paper. The figures above are illustrative to a certain extent. We have run a non-parametric bivariate test between the two variables with a four Likert scale and the results indicate a weak correlation. Overall, there is a slight tendency of people who identify themselves as belonging to their nation to also declare a European identity. The weakness of this relationship is a relevant finding, as it illustrates the existing discrepancies between the two layers of identification. The correlation coefficient is 0.17 (statistically significant), without any difference between the old and new Member States. Thus, despite the distribution discrepancies reflected in Figures 1 and 2, the citizens from the two groups of countries are characterized by a similar trend towards the two levels of identity.

Although the linkage between the two identity layers is quite weak, it should not be ignored. Previous empirical evidence illustrates that there are rare instances in which a layer of identity occurs in the absence of the other. The cross-tabulation reveals that almost 20% of the respondents

have only a national identity (lacking the European dimension), whereas less than 2.5% of the EU individuals perceive themselves as European citizens, without a national identity. Apart from being consistent with the above mentioned findings in terms of asymmetry of identities and prominence of the national layer, this statistical result highlights the co-existence of the two identities. It thus brings further empirical evidence to support the theoretical underpinnings laid out in the first section of the paper.

Explaining Identity

This section presents the results of the bivariate tests of the hypothesized relationships to which we added the three control variables (gender, age, and education). Tables 1 and 2 include the results of the non-parametric correlations for all the EU citizens, and separately for the EU15 nationals and those from the NMS. At a glance, three general observations can be formulated. First, the hypothesized relationships are supported by evidence in most of the cases. Similarly to our expectations, there are no differences in the signs of the relationships between the independent variables² and the two layers of identification. As illustrated also by the positive correlation between the national and European identity, respondents refer to their country and the EU in a similar manner. Second, the explanatory potential of the chosen variables is higher with respect to the European identity. The effects of most of the selected variables are stronger and bear more statistical significance when testing for the EU identity compared to the national one. Finally, there are relevant differences between the two groups of countries – EU15 and NMS – fact which offers food for thought.

Table 1 includes the correlation coefficients for the national identity. Half of the

hypotheses are supported by evidence, but these relationships are mostly weak. The weak negative correlation between the trust in institutions and national identity indicates that people having confidence in domestic institutions are slightly more likely to declare a sense of belonging to their country than the rest of their fellow citizens. Citizens from both the old Member States are similarly sensitive to this issue. The evaluations of the current shape of the national economy correlate weakly only in the case of Western EU citizens, where respondents more satisfied with the evolution of economy are more inclined to display national identity feelings. Surprisingly, the correlation with the perceived benefits of membership in the supranational

organism is slightly stronger in the EU15 than in the NMS, although the latter are often net beneficiaries.

The hypothesis about the prospective economy is weakly supported by evidence for both groups of citizens. The directions 'in which the country and the EU go' and gender correlate again stronger in Western Europe with the feelings of national belonging. As for the control variables, it seems that older and less educated people exhibit such attachments more than the rest. Summing up, the trust in institutions, perceived benefits of the membership, and retrospective economy are the hypotheses with the strongest support in the case of national identity.

Table 1³. *Correlations between national identity and variables*

	General	EU15	NMS
Trust in national political institutions	-0.06**	-0.10**	-0.07**
Current shape of national economy	0.01	0.06**	-0.01
Prospective national economy	-0.03**	-0.05**	-0.04**
Country benefits of EU membership	0.06**	0.09**	0.04**
Present direction country	-0.05**	-0.08**	-0.04**
Present direction EU	-0.05**	-0.06**	-0.04**
Gender	-0.02*	-0.03**	0.01
Age	-0.09**	-0.08**	-0.10**
Education	0.04**	0.04**	0.03**

Notes: All correlation coefficients are Spearman due to the likert scales of the variables.

We have checked for multicollinearity, the highest correlation coefficient is between the evaluations of the EU and country directions among the old states (0.57**).

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

The situation is completely different when the analysis concerns the European identity. All hypotheses find support in both groups of countries, the discrepancies being minimal. Respondents who trust their national institutions, have positive evaluations of their economies, value the benefits of membership, and assess in optimistic terms the developments in their country and the EU are more likely to perceive themselves as Europeans compared with the other citizens. The benefits of the membership correlate the most with the European

identity, followed by the confidence in political institutions and the evaluation of the current economic situation. Referring to the latter, respondents appear to formulate their identity more on retrospective than prospective bases. The control variables display reverse effects than those we observed in the case of national identity, with more educated people favoring a European identity, and younger people declaring to be more attached to Europe than their older fellow citizens.

Table 2. *Correlations between European identity and variables*

	General	EU15	NMS
Trust in national political institutions	-0.21**	-0.15**	-0.23**
Current shape of national economy	0.18**	0.17**	0.17**
Prospective national economy	-0.12**	-0.14**	0.10**
Country benefits of EU membership	0.26**	0.26**	0.27**
Present direction country	-0.22**	-0.22**	-0.21**
Present direction EU	-0.23**	-0.22**	-0.25**
Gender	0.04**	0.04**	0.04**
Age	0.05**	0.06**	0.05**
Education	-0.16**	-0.13**	-0.19**

Notes: All correlation coefficients are Spearman, due to the likert scales of the variables.

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

Multivariate Analyses

The results of the binary logistic regressions are included in Tables 3 and 4. The first includes the odd-ratios for the national identity as a dependent variable. The multivariate analysis confirms the conclusions reached after running the correlations in Table 1. The perceived benefits of EU membership are a key explanation for the EU15 group. The trust in political institutions and the economic perceptions have significant effects on national identity supporting the hypothe-

sized relationships. A first significant difference appears with respect to the evaluation of the current economic situation: only for the NMS, individuals bearing negative assessments are more likely than the rest to have strong national feelings. The prospective national economy evaluations act almost identically in both settings. Age and education have a significant effect – consistent across the models – in the direction explained by the correlations. Gender is significant only for EU15, with women declaring stronger national attachments.

Table 3⁴. *A Pan-European evaluation of national identity determinants*

	General	EU15	NMS
Trust in national political institutions	1.12**	1.21**	1.17**
Current shape of national economy	1.12**	0.97	1.16**
Prospective national economy	1.09**	1.10*	1.12**
Country benefits of EU membership	0.85**	0.79**	0.91*
Present direction country	1.02	1.10	0.99
Present direction EU	1.10**	1.05	1.01
Gender	1.11**	1.19*	1.04
Age	1.22**	1.19**	1.26**
Education	0.96*	0.93*	0.97*
Constant	1.40	2.98	0.98
Nagelkerke R ²	0.03	0.04	0.03
N	19,740	8,841	10,899

Notes: Reported coefficients are odd-ratios.

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

Table 4 includes the results of the multivariate analyses having the European

identity as dependent variable. The perceived benefits of membership appear again

as a strong predictor for the feelings of belonging to the EU: the NMS citizens are one and a half times more likely to have a strong European loyalty, when thinking their country has benefited from entering the EU. Trust in institutions and economic evaluations have significant effects, consistent with the results mentioned in the bivariate analyses. The expectations of citizens regarding their national economy are intrinsically linked at a theoretical level to the benefits of the membership. A positive evaluation of the EU direction has significant effects on the European identity for all the groups. The relationship is stronger in the case of the NMS, and it is consistent with the trends illustrated in

Figure 2. The fact that the direction of the country has non significant effects for the NMS citizens implies that these respondents fundament their sense of belonging to Europe on processes taking place at European level (i.e. the direction of the EU). Education has a strong and significant impact on the European identity. This result is relevant from two perspectives. Empirically, education is linked differently in the case of national and European identities: less educated people favor the former, whereas the more educated respondents favor the latter. Thus, at a policy level, fostering education (with a EU component) may represent a solution to the creation of a broader European identity.

Table 4. *Logistic Regression with the Determinants of European Identity*

	General	EU15	NMS
Trust in national political institutions	1,14**	1.08**	1.14**
Current shape of national economy	0.90**	0.91*	0.91**
Prospective national economy	1.11**	1.12**	1.08**
Country benefits of EU membership	0.69**	0.70**	0.67**
Present direction country	1.09**	1.19**	0.99
Present direction EU	1.19**	1.16**	1.29**
Gender	0.94*	0.94	0.94
Age	1.01	0.98	1.01
Education	1.12**	1.06*	1.14**
Constant	0.43	0.41	0.43
Nagelkerke R ²	0.08	0.07	0.09
N	21,288	9,835	11,810

Notes: Reported coefficients are odd-ratios.

* p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01.

The bivariate and multivariate analyses point to three main results. First, identity – irrespective of the layer – is primarily linked to pragmatic reasoning that includes the benefits gained after the EU membership or perceptions about an improved economic situation. The confidence vested in political institutions is an important predictor of identity, but it occurs more often when people display a sense of belonging to Europe. Second, there are no major differences between the old and new Member States with respect to the sense of

national and European belonging. Finally, despite the general prominence of the EU membership benefits in explaining identity, there is a proximity dimension in the observed effects. In other words, the national identity is mainly shaped by domestic components (e.g. trust in institutions, economic evaluations), whereas citizens look at EU processes when formulating their sense of belonging (e.g. direction of the EU).

Conclusions

The findings point to three general aspects having theoretical and empirical implications. First, national identity continues to be predominant over European identity, and this is especially so in the EU15. Most European citizens (eight out of ten) continue to vest their loyalty primarily in nation-states. However, the two layers of identity are not mutually exclusive: there are very few citizens who have one without the other. Inside this residual category, the respondents perceiving themselves as exclusively nationals of a state are ten times more numerous than their counterparts who express only a European identity. This empirical evidence shows that theories of multi-layered identity hold even in very special situations, such as the current global financial crisis.

Second, with the exception of age and education, the determinants act in the same direction for both the national and the European sense of belonging. However, their strength differs significantly, with less influence at national level. As previously mentioned, the perceived benefits of EU membership, confidence in national political institutions, and retrospective economic evaluations are the factors influencing the national identity. At the European level, one has to add to these elements the prospective economy evaluations, and the perceived direction of the EU. The theoretical implication of such results is that, although the sources of the two identities are similar, individuals derive their sense of identity from the corresponding level. In the formulation of their European identity, citizens do not use cues at domestic level, as previous studies indicated that they proceed with the support towards the EU.

Such indicators, although statistically significant in the logistic analyses, have little, if any impact on the European identity. Thus, it is quite likely to have a situation in which the performance of the EU serves as a basis for the identity formulation.

Finally, the results indicate that the European citizens have, in general, common views regarding identity. The determinants did not perform differently in the three groups of countries. Neither the time spent in the EU (the socialization effect) nor the gravity of the situation determined a differentiated impact of certain factors. This should be a positive finding for all those who hope in the development, on the long run, of a European *demos*.

The static analysis represents the main shortcoming of our endeavor. A dynamic study, accounting for the longitudinal changes in identity, can complement our findings and increase their reliability. Another significant limitation is represented by the impossibility to run a multilevel analysis, given the insufficient number of observations at the second level (i.e. the respondents are nested in the 27 countries). At the same time, once the determinants are observed, further studies can address the intrinsic question of the meaning of identity for the EU citizens. A qualitative assessment can be supplemented by a thorough micro-level investigation that looks at the content of the self-declared belonging. Additionally, we acknowledge the need to incorporate in further studies focusing on identity formation in European societies, the crucial nuances arising from the various minority – majority relations (ethnic, religious, sexual, etc.) and the immigration-related perceptions.

Notes

1. In fact, the conceptual extension of "nation" is broader than that of "state". For details, see Hardin (1995).
2. The section focuses on the results of correlations, and no causality is involved. We use the concept of "independent" variables consistent with what was hypothesized and with the content of the following section.
3. The bivariate analysis uses the original coding of the dependent variable: four categories, where the largest means less attachment to the nation/EU. This is why the coefficients are negative.
4. The multivariate models take as reference the category "strong attachment/ identity". We have checked for multicollinearity, the highest correlation coefficient is between the evaluations of the EU and country directions (0.58**).

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Appendix 1. Variable Codebook

Variable	Operationalization
Age group	1= 15 to 24 years, 2= 25 to 39 years, 3= 40 to 54 years, 4= 55 years and older
Country benefits from EU membership	0=not benefited, 1 = benefited
Years of Education	1= less than 15 years, 2= 16-19 years, 3= more than 20 years, 4= still studying, 5=no full-time education
European Identity	0 = rather weak, 1 = rather strong
Expectations about economy	0 = things will worsen, 1 = stay the same, 2 = become better,
Gender	1= male, 2=female
National Identity	0 = rather weak, 1 = rather strong
Present direction country	1= wrong direction, 2=neither wrong, nor right, 3=right direction?
Present direction EU	1= wrong direction, 2=neither wrong, nor right, 3=right direction
Evaluations of the current shape of economy	1 = very good, 2 = rather good, 3 = rather bad, 4=very bad
Trust index – national political institutions	0 = no trust, 1 = low trust, 2 = medium trust, 3 = high trust