Blekinge Institute of Technology

European Spatial Planning and Regional Development

2008/2009

Master Thesis

European Identity
Conditions for a European Political Identity

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Abstract

The present master thesis deals with European identity as an important aspect for the further development of the European Union. Several theories regarding identity in general and political collective identity in particular are applied to the European Union as a citizen based community. Conditions, which are needed for the development of a common identity among citizens of the European Union, are elaborated. Therefore data of the statistical poll “Eurobarometer” are used to assess the European citizen’s feelings, expectations and attitudes regarding the important identity issues. The main result shows that a European identity could not only be based on shared values or attitudes. Especially for a common political identity a real European political community, an effective European political civil society and one common European political public arena has to be established by the European citizens. Thereby a common political project, comparable with the European peace project, is considered as the main starting point for the future development of a shared European “We-feeling”. 
Acknowledgement

Sincere thanks are given to all who supported me writing my master thesis and inspired my train of thought. In particular I would like to thank my supervisor Prof. Jan-Evert Nilsson for his ingenious visions. Furthermore I thank Christoph for his motivation every time I was lost. Also thanks to Paul for his linguistic help.
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1. Introduction

In 2006 the European and Luxembourg Politician Jean Claude Juncker stated that “L’Europe ne fait plus rêver” (Europe no longer makes people dream). With this statement he reflected the feeling of many people after the failed ratification of the European Constitution as well as the troubles regarding the Treaty of Lisbon. Next to the French and the Dutch citizens the Irish citizens also voted against a further European political unification. In response the European Union proclaimed a phase of reflection regarding the further development of the European community. In this time a stronger identification of the European citizens with the European project should be achieved by a more intensive inclusion of the people in the European dialogues. The result of this procedure is still unclear. However the process towards the Treaty of Lisbon is already readopted. Thereby it is doubtful in how far a stronger identification of the citizens with the European project has been achieved.

The present master thesis is drawn up against this European context. It proceeds on the assumption that the further development of the European project has to be based on a common European identity of the citizens. So, the master thesis aims to elaborate theoretical conditions against which the range of European identity can be assessed.

Therefore the master thesis is divided in five parts. The first chapter discusses the theoretical model of identity. Different types and dimensions of identity are defined as well as related to each other. The focus is on the collective identity with a political dimension. The main aim of the first chapter is to define a useful meaning of the term identity and to elaborate theoretical conditions which are necessary for the establishment of a collective political identity. The second chapter defines the European Union in the sense of a European community. Different meanings of a European community are discussed. The aim of the second chapter is to define the term European community in such a way that it is useful regarding the theoretical model of collective identity. The third chapter analyzes the European identity in the sense of a collective identity. Therefore the theoretical features regarding the model of collective identity are applied to the European community. For a realistic assessment the data of the statistical poll Eurobarometer are used. This is a European wide survey in which the European citizens are asked about their European attitudes, expectations and feelings. The aim of the third chapter is to analyze to what extent the theoretical features regarding a collective identity are met by the European community. The fourth chapter analyzes the European identity in the sense of a political collective

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1 The terms Europe and European are generally restricted to the European Union in this thesis.
identity. The analysis is based on the results of the third chapter and is enhanced by the theoretical conditions for a political dimension of a collective identity. For this analysis the data of the poll Eurobarometer are also used. The aim of this chapter is to assess in how far the theoretical requirements for the establishment of a political collective identity are met by the European community. The fifth chapter demonstrates the final discussion. Therein is given a short summary on the main findings of the previous chapters. In addition the main current characteristics and deficits of the European identity as well as an outlook to strengthen it are discussed.
2. Theoretical Concepts of Identity

In the modern context the term “identity” has many different meanings. During the last decades much research on the various meaning of identity has been done. There are two main traditional views of identity regarding the history of the term [Roose, 2007].

The first concept was introduced by George H. Mead. He was a supporter of the social science of Chicago School and developed a concept of identity composed of “I”, “Me” and “Self” around 1934. The “Self” in the sense of a human personality needs the two elements “I” and “Me”. Mead argues that the development of identity is strongly affected by society. [Cronk, 26.03.09] The second main view was developed by Erik H. Erikson. He was a psychologist, who enhanced Freud’s ideal of Ego. Erikson argues that the ego is “a positive driving force in human development and personality” (1966). Consequently, a strong ego is necessary to establish an individual identity. A main focus of Erikson was to analyze the development of identity during human lifetime. He classifies life into eight phases, especially emphasizing identity in adolescence. [Heffner Media Group, 26.03.09]

Mead and Erikson are only two of a multitude of researchers who studied identity. Until today a number of ideas about the meaning of the term have been developed. It is almost impossible to find a uniform definition which meets the diversity of all ideas and concepts. Therefore this text does not aim to reconstruct the historical approaches toward the term identity but to define a reasonable word usage with regard to the European context. [Roose, 2007]

2.1. Types of Identity

In general identity is a concept which is related to humans. It arises from the development of a perception of oneself based on the questions who, what and how I am [Risse, 2004]. Identity could be described as the “self concept” (“Me-feeling”) which an individual has of himself or herself [Roose, 2007]. Erikson describes this in a vivid way: “A man’s character is discernible in the mental or moral attitude in which, when it came upon him, he felt himself most deeply and intensely active and alive. At such moments there is a voice inside which speaks and says: ’This is the real me!’” [Piazolo, 2006, p.19].

Personal self perception changes in different social contexts, but the identity of a person remains constant and coherent. It provides an orientation and a hold for the person’s attitudes and behaviour. [Roose, 2007] Even if the identity does not change spontaneously in different situations, it is not fixed. Rather it is subject to lifelong change. Individuals themselves as well as their environment are in constant change. [Schumacher, 2007] The British sociologist Giddens says: “the reflexive project of the self, which consists in the sustaining of coherence, yet continuously revised, biographical narratives, take place in the...
context of multiple choice as filtered through abstract systems” [Roose, 2007, p. 125]. Each person chooses, consciously or unconsciously, from a wide range of possibilities how to develop during his or her own life [Roose, 2007]. His or her identity develops as a result of these decisions throughout his or her whole life.

The identity of an individual in the sense of a self-concept is composed of two elements: the personal identity and the social identity. The differentiation between these two is referred to “I” and “Me” of Meads concept. [Roose, 2007] The personal identity (“I”) contains the characteristic attributes of individual person. An individual determines a personal uniqueness and attaches himself or herself to it [Schumacher, 2007]. The social identity (“Me”) involves the social context of a person. The British social psychologist Tajfel defines social identity as “that part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership” [Roose, 2007, p.126]. Social groups could be sports clubs, religious communities, political parties as well as social roles like mothers or teachers. There is a large variety of possibilities and the individual has to choose his memberships, either in a voluntary or in an obligatory way. Besides the sense of belonging per se the intensity of a group membership is significant for the social identity. The affiliation to social groups can have a very large or a very small impact on the individual self-concept. Depending on the scope of involvement there can be a strong or weak effect on the personal attitudes and behaviour. [Roose, 2007] Thus, the combination and the interaction of a person’s social and personal identity results in his or her **individual identity**.

The concept of identity in the sense of a self concept is not only used for individuals but also for groups and is called **collective identity**. It specifies the inmanent characteristics of a community. The collective identity is a construction similar to the individual identity, but is made up out of at least two persons. According to the German sociologist Straub the members have to develop a common identity in the form of shared ideas, values or practices. They have to be aware of these similarities and have to find an accordance among themselves to create a “We-feeling”. [Roose, 2007] This could be seen as an equivalent to the “I-feeling” and “Me-feeling” in the individual identity concept. An indispensable requirement for collective identity is an interaction between the individuals. Identity in the sense of a common “We-feeling” has to be created from inside the community. Like the individual identity the collective identity is also not fixed, but alters continuously. Change can come about by members joining or leaving the community as well as by varying topics or by a shift in the community’s orientation. Both influences as well as their interaction are change the development of the community. [Schumacher, 2007]
The individual identity (the personal self-concept) and the collective identity are strongly interconnected with each other. Obviously both of these identities are developed by the same actors, namely persons. An individual is able to hold multiple identities in parallel: her personal identity as well as her social identity. In particular the social identity itself is composed of and influenced by various collective identities. A person could be influenced simultaneously by the collective identities of his favourite sports club, his religious community and his family [Nord, 2004]. So individuals are able to feature multiple identities.

In theory there are different models of how these identities relate to each other. The German political scientist Risse distinguishes between three kinds of interaction between collective identities. The first kind is nested identities. Here the underlying communities have to be built on each other. A typical example is the pyramiding of local (e.g. Munich), regional (Bavaria) and national (Germany) identities. The second one is cross-cutting identities. The related communities have a significant intersection. For example a religious identity (e.g. Catholics) could cross-cut with a national identity (Spain). The third one is separate identities. There are nearly no common members in the underlying communities. Typically only the person, which is uniting both collective identities, is the only connection between the communities. A strictly separate private and professional life is an example for this. [Risse, 2004]

The multiple identities are composed to one individual identity. This identity remains constant in general and is only changing continuously during the whole life. Nevertheless, based on the social context certain collective identities could have an essential effect on the behaviour and the attitudes of a person. During a football match the collective identity of the favourite club has a higher impact than the religious identity, which would play its essential role in a church or mosque for example. [Schumacher, 2007]

The social identity is part of the individual self concept. At the same time it interacts with various differently connected collective identities. So, the social identity can be seen as the common denominator of the individual identity and the collective identity. The influence of different identities on each other is not one-sided. Beside the impact of the collective identities on the social identity, each individual also has an impact on the collective identities. A single member of a collective can change the self concept of the community by contributing its own personal attitudes and behaviour. [Roose, 2007] The German anglistier Assmann points out that the strength of a collective identity depends on the thinking and behaviour of the group members and on the ability to motivate them [Schumacher, 2007].

The European Union comprises about 455 million members, hence 455 million individual identities. These members together as a community form one uniform collective in sense of the “Europeans”. For the establishment of a “European We-feeling” it is necessary to develop a collective identity between the European citizens.


2.2. Dimensions of Collective Identity

The collective identity is a construction formed by a group of individuals. These individuals become aware of similarities and evolve to a community with a shared identity. Each collective identity needs some similar aspects which serve as a common reference point. This could be shared values, personal qualities or even common political frameworks. Collective identity is mostly made by a combination of different reference points. There are no universal characteristics for a collective identity. Rather, the member’s interaction develops the most important characteristics of the identity from within. Thus, the dimensions of a collective identity depend on the community. [Schumacher, 2007]

There is a large diversity of theoretical approaches concerning the dimensions of a collective identity. The German sociologist Giesen distinguishes between a spatial, a temporal and reflexive dimension; whereas the German political scientist Pfetsch differentiates collective identity on a psychological, a philosophical, a geographical, a cultural and a historical-political level. A third opinion is given by the German political scientist Kielmann. He defines a collective identity as a communication-, a memorization-, and an experience community. So, there are no basic or general common dimensions of collective identity. For the European context it is reasonable to distinguish between the historical, the cultural and the political dimension of collective identity [Schumacher, 2007].

The historical dimension of collective identity, in the sense of a historical “We-feeling” [Rensing, 1996] is based on a “collective memory”. It mostly relates to the past but is practiced in the present and influences the future. So, there are three levels of a historical community [Schumacher, 2007]. The most obvious one is the past. Members of a collective are aware of their shared history and their common origin [Weidenfeld, 2007]. This history is communicated by the members [Schmale, 2007]. So, history is not just the totality of past events (objectively) but also a narration of the past (subjectively) [Röttgers, 2007]. Similarities like cultural traditions, shared values and common standards have to be constructed by assessing the past. Hence, the past level is strongly connected with the present one. The present collective has to select its history in a reflexive way. Historical events could vary in their importance depending on the present perception inside the community. Common history also means common oblivion to events which are seen as unimportant. In this way, the history is always a present projection of what has been in the past. By acting in the present the collective also influences its future. Common actions and decisions have to be taken and common goals have to be set to continue the process of a collective identity. The community has to enhance historically developed economic, social, political and cultural circumstances in the present for the future. [Schumacher, 2007]
The historical dimension emphasizes the common memory of a collective identity. These memories are mainly composed of cultural characteristics. Historical traditions and common qualities grow over time and are strongly influenced by cultural preconditions. So, the historical and cultural dimensions of identity complement each other. A historically developed community is usually strongly connected by cultural similarities. The cultural dimension of a collective identity involves the culturally-orientated aspects which form the self concept of a community. Common priorities, mindsets and qualities establish an inner homogeneity [Uhle, 2004] as well as a distance of the own collective to other cultural communities [Schmale, 2007]. It is important for a collective identity that the members recognize and comprehend the cultural features of their group. Furthermore, they have to live and preserve the shared values in a common way. Both for the historical identity and the cultural identity it is very important to communicate its similarities within the community. [Schumacher, 2007]

The historical and cultural dimensions of collective identity are also often connected with a political dimension. The Austrian politic scientist Bauböck puts them into context. He argues that a historical collective has to forget or invent parts of its history to make its cultural community plausible which is needed to legitimate a political community [Schumacher, 2007]. So, political identity is strongly connected with cultural and historical identity. A community with a political identity is based on shared values, common beliefs and attitudes which form the background for one common political system. The American political scientist Almond points out the relation between political identity and cultural and historical aspects. He defines “political culture” as the main part of political identity and defines such a (democratic) political culture as “a set of beliefs, attitudes, norms, perceptions and the like, that support participation” in a political system [Regis University, 02.04.09]. In this sense political culture, as part of the political identity, covers all the values, orientations and knowledge of the overall culture which are related to political objectives [Weidenfeld]. Thus, political identity is based on historical and cultural grown values which are a basis for the political system of the community.

Historical, cultural and political dimensions are strongly interconnected with each other as parts of one shared collective identity. But if one examines them in detail there are some main distinctions. There are some differences especially between the historical and cultural identity on the one hand and the political identity on the other. The belonging to a historical and cultural identity is mostly based on emotional and unconscious relations. In contrast the membership to a political identity is mostly based on a rational and conscious connection [Schumacher, 2007]. The German sociologist Habermas describes it as a "post-conventional identity". This kind of identity is not an inherited fate (historical, cultural identity) but an identity which could be changed by the members (political identity). The members decide on their own if they want to belong to this kind of community. [Eder, 2000] In the case of the
political identity there are two main factors. The members have to be aware of their belonging to the political community and they have to participate in the political processes of the collective. [Schumacher, 2007]

The European Union is a multilayered and complex community. Its development is strongly influenced by historical and cultural aspects. Especially the development towards a “political community” has resulted in current challenges for the further European development. So, the European Identity (What is European?) is strongly related to all three dimensions of collective identity. As far as the complexity of “European Identity” and the current impact on the political dimensions go, the further analysis will be focus mainly on the political dimension.

2.3. Development of Political Collective Identity

The development process of a political collective identity takes a long time. It evolves over history and is influenced by many diverse as well as foreordained conditions. Hence, it is not possible to construct a predefined political identity within a community. Rather, it is only possible to influence the conditions, which are essential for the development of a political identity. Thus, not a direct but an indirect influence on the evolving process of political identity can be taken by creating and changing the necessary conditions for the development of identity.

There are three main conditions which are necessary for the development of a political identity within a community: At first a political community whose basic features (values, political belief and aims) are fixed in a common political framework, secondly a kind of social society whose members legitimate the political framework by participate in the political processes and thirdly a public arena which enables the public political interactions of the social society.

Political Community

A collective political identity has to be based on a community with certain common beliefs like trust in a common political system, acceptance of political processes and support of a political elite group. The most important feature for political identity is the shared values which play a key role in the community’s political context. Examples are elementary values like freedom and human rights which are viewed as fundamental in the Western Civilization. These are cultural and historical growing values which are taken as a basis for the political systems in many countries of the Western Civilisation. A community with such kind of political substructure can be called a “political community”.

The term political community is not clearly defined. Evidently it is composed of the terms “policy” and “community”. A community is an association of individuals which are joined by similarities [Arnold, 2003]. Policy and its features establish a political framework for the
interplay of these community’s members. So, the interactions of the community take place within the self selected political framework. This assumption is based on the composition of the two terms community and policy.

In general a community is a unity of different individuals which have something in common [Arnold, 2003]. The American sociologist Brint defines “community as an aggregation of people who share common activities and/or beliefs and who are bound together principally by relations of affect, loyalty, common values and/or personal concern (i.e., interest in the personalities and life events of one another)” [Gläser, 2006, p.304]. This definition enables a wide range of appliance. It offers a large range of possible similarities as well as social relations between potential community members. Thus, this definition of community covers small collectives like family or sport club as well as large collectives like national people or the global community. Regarding to political community the term “policy” narrows the kind of community further down. The political sciences define policy as the combination of three dimensions: the Polity, the Politics and the Policy. The Polity is the formal dimension and covers the organization of political norms, political structures and political institutions. The Politics dimension reflects the political procedures and processes. It points out how to solve conflicts and shows the constellation of power between the political actors. The Policy dimension defines the content of the policy processes [Donges, 2006]. Herein are defined the decision fields as well as the political tasks, goals and political programs [Nodehi, 10.04.09.].

Summarizing a political community is a homogeneous and completed group of individuals which are joined by common political matters. Typical examples are political parties as well as national states. Whereas the political party is composed of members with closed political attitudes (e.g. conservative party or liberal party) a national state community can be composed of members with totally different attitudes (e.g. conservative orientated members and liberal orientated members) but with similar basic values (human rights, freedom). The main point of political community means that there is a political orientated community whose interaction takes place in a political framework. This framework provides as a reference point for the common political identity. It specifies the basic characteristics of the political community (e.g. values, aims, beliefs) as well as its political structure (e.g. organization, processes and content). So, it is a self made frame of references which has to be developed by intensive dialogs and cooperation within the community [Feldmann-Wojtachnia, 2007]. Therefore it is important that the political decisions and processes as well as the framework itself are transparent and understandable for all members of the community [Schumacher, 2007].
Coming back to the term identity it is obvious that the political community is the only collective which is capable of establishing a political identity. So, a political community, with a fixed and transparent political framework, has to be considered as the starting point for the development of a political identity.

**Figure 1 Political Community**

**Political Civil Society**

A common political identity emerges within a political community whose interactions take place within a self made political framework. This is only a fundamental starting point for the development of a common political identity. More essential is the establishment of a civil society in sense of a deep rooted solidarity group between the community members. Hence each member has to identify him or herself with the basic values, political attitudes and beliefs (defined in the political framework) of the political community. [Schumacher, 2007] By involving the collective values in his or her individual identity these became also part of the individual everyday life. So, the members feel responsible for the political happenings within their political community. They participate in current political processes and take responsibilities for the political outputs. Depending on their individual motivation the members get involved either by little participation (e.g. taking part in an elections) or by

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2 Own illustration
strong participation (e.g. accepting public offices) [Bundestag Germany Enquete-Kommission, 2002]. The main point is that the members are very close to the political community which causes a strong member’s support of the community’s political activities.

The Canadian American political scientist Easton discriminates between two modes of member’s support toward their political community: The “specific modality” and the “diffuse modality”. The specific support is based on the particular interests of the members. They support the political community because they expect that the policy will meet their interests and expectations. The diffuse support is irrespective of the member’s expectations regarding the political community. It remains unchanged even if the personal expected interests will not be achieved by the policy. [Thalmaier, 2007]

Exemplifications are given in the theory. There are two main modes of democratic civil societies: the liberal model and the republican one. The liberal model is justified by the English philosopher Locke [Lemke, 2003]. It is based on an association between governance and citizens. Its aim is to assure civil rights. So the citizens are seen as individuals with individual rights and interests. They do not have to take an active part in political processes but they have to legitimate the system in sense of a specific support [Karolewski, 10.02.09]. The republican model is justified by the French philosopher Rousseau. It is based on sovereignty of the people [Lemke, 2003] and a community association. The citizens have obligations toward their community. The individual citizen is a holder of duties for the polity so she or he has to take an active part in the political process. In this model the diffuse support is strongly rooted [Karolewski, 10.02.09].

Common political identity has to be based on a political community which is featured by a political civil society. The political decisions have to be anchored in the member’s everyday life. They have to legitimate and support their political community in a more or less active way. The German political scientist Thalmaier underlines the importance of trust towards a political organization. Members have to have trust in the political community independently of the current political events or particular interest constellations. Therefore a diffuse support is indispensable. [Thalmaier, 2007] Accordingly the diffuse support appears to be also elementary for the establishment of a common political identity.
Figure 2 Political Civil Society

**Political Public Arena**

The model of a civil society is strongly connected with a political public arena. The political civil society needs a political public arena which allows political discussions and interactions among the members of the civil society. Only by this public participation in political processes is possible.

The Dutch political scientist Van de Steeg demonstrates that public is composed of different actors who debate about a subject which is of common collective interest. The discussion takes place in a public arena and is observed by a publicity which is interested in the subject. Each of these passive viewers can take an active part in the discussion by joining the actors. The actors are aware of the observers. So, the main point of a political public is the ability that each member of the community can take part in the political public life. [Van de Steeg, 2003]

Based on this definition two requirements appear to be essential for a political public arena in sense of a basis for civil society's interaction. First the members of a political community have to be able to develop an understanding of each other. Second they have to get in

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3 Own illustration
contact with each other. So, an effective communication is the main condition for a community wide political public arena.

Regarding the first requirement a common language is most effective to communicate with each other. Members of national political communities are able to discuss with each other based on common languages, mostly their mother tongues (e.g. in Sweden with Swedish or in Great Britain with English). Nowadays for many people it is even possible to communicate in several languages enabling conversation between people speaking different foreign languages. But communication does not have to be reduced to common languages [Van de Steeg, 2003]. It includes next to words also norms and meanings in sense of mimics, gestures and actions. So the way of understanding is also strongly related to the particular cultural background. [Schumacher, 2007]

Regarding the second necessity, the most obvious way to get in contact with each other is a personal meeting. Members of political parties meet in sessions and interact together. Bigger communities can use mass media for example instead of personal interaction. Media enable the distribution of information and arguments among a broad public [Van de Steeg, 2003]. People get or publish information at the same time at different locations so that they can join public discourses although they are not in direct contact [Schumacher, 2007]. In comparison to personal meetings the media communication has one main risk. The choice of information and the way of publication is up to the media. So, media are able to lead a public discourse by keeping information back or focusing on special information. [Van de Steeg, 2003]

In the context of a political identity a political public arena is very important. The public arena offers encounters between members of a community. It is important that the members know each other to notice the similarities between each other. Furthermore, the public arena ensures a public discussion regarding the current political processes and establishes a common public discussion process.

A European political identity is a special dimension of the general European identity. Relating to the European Union the term identity is hard to specify. Generally a common feeling (We-feeling) between the European Union members has to exist to establish some kind of identity. Based on a poll in 2007 obvious topics which create a common feeling among European Union citizens are economy (e.g. European Single Market) as well as culture and history (e.g. Christian origins, Peace keeping). [European Commission, 2007] However, this poll seems to be insufficient to analyze the real extent of European Identity. Rather, it has to be examined weather the European citizens are joined by elementary commonalities like shared values, attitudes or modes of life. Such kind of similarities has to be pinned to the individual identity of all Europeans to establish a real collective identity within the European
Union. Therefore it is also important to understand the character of the European Union as the essential basis for the development of a common identity.
3. European Community

The European Union is “a unique economic and political partnership between 27 democratic European countries” [European Commission, 26.04.09]. There are 455 million European citizens living in the several European countries. Regarding the concept of collective identity the European Union has to constitute a kind of European community to establish a common identity. In principle two kinds of European community regarding the development of European Identity can be defined.

First, a European community could be limited to European function owners. Especially, Brussels (as well as Strasbourg and Luxembourg) has a large European orientated environment originating from the governmental institutions and their administrations. The employees and national representatives who are working in this European environment establish a different kind of European identity to “normal citizens” which have never been in direct contact with European organizations. The Norwegian political scientist Egeberg points this out: “Being embedded in EU level structures and separated in time and space from their primary institutional affiliations back home, officials tend to develop a sense of allegiance to the supranational level” [Madeker, 2004]. So, European function owners as a “European elite” develop a special European “We-feeling” which is strongly related to the European Union as a supranational organization [Madeker, 2004]. Hereby it would be interesting to analyze if members of the European Commission or the European parliament (European orientated bodies) elaborate another identity to members of the Council of the European Union (Member states orientated body). Nevertheless, the every day life of all European function owners is strongly featured by European matters compared to the everyday life of “normal citizens”.

Second, a European community could be composed of all members which are part of the European Union. It covers all European citizens (around 455 million), those with European functions and those without. Consequently, this community is not as a homogeneous group as the first kind of European community (composed of European function owners only). The members are different in a lot of aspects (e.g. language, education, cultural and historical background). So, a common European identity between the members of this kind of European community has to be based on elementary similarities like shared values and attitudes.

The second meaning of the European community (with all European citizens) is widely spread in the literature [e.g. Weidenfeld, 2007]. The European Union describes itself among others as a liberal, participatory and social democracy [Weidenfeld, 2007]. Its main aim is the safeguarding of “peace, prosperity and freedom for its (...) citizens – in a fairer, safer world” [European Commission, 26.04.09]. Although the main actors within the European Union are
the national governments the Union regards itself mainly as a citizen based community. So, the further analysis on European identity will be based on this meaning of European community.
4. European Identity

As seen in the theoretical discussion about collective identity, there are three main features characterizing a collective identity. First, the community’s members have to have something elementary in common like shared values, ideas or attitudes. By becoming aware of these commonalities - this awareness is the second feature - the members develop the third one: a common “We-feeling”. This process of establishing a collective identity develops over generations. Regarding to European identity it has to be analyzed if and how far the community of European citizens are up to these features. The following data are taken out of the regular public opinion poll “Eurobarometer” conducted by the European Commission4.

4.1. Common Values

A collective identity has to be based on common values and attitudes. Furthermore, these values should be represented by the community and should be rooted in the identity of the individuals, thus the European citizens. Figure 3 is used to check whether these necessities for a collective identity are fulfilled.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal values of Europeans</th>
<th>Values representing the European Union</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peace</td>
<td>Human rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect for human life</td>
<td>Respect for other cultures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human rights</td>
<td>Solidarity, support for others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy</td>
<td>Equality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual freedom</td>
<td>The Rule of Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tolerance</td>
<td>Respect for human life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equality</td>
<td>Tolerance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Rule of Law</td>
<td>Individual freedom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solidarity, support for others</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-fulfilment</td>
<td>Self-fulfilment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Respect for other cultures</td>
<td>Religion</td>
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<td>Religion</td>
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</tbody>
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52%                            | 38%                                    |
43%                            | 38%                                    |
41%                            | 36%                                    |
24%                            | 24%                                    |
22%                            |                                        |
19%                            |                                        |
18%                            |                                        |
17%                            |                                        |
14%                            |                                        |
11%                            |                                        |
11%                            |                                        |
7%                             |                                        |
88%                           |                                        |
88%                           |                                        |
36%                           |                                        |
19%                           |                                        |
17%                           |                                        |
14%                           |                                        |
13%                           |                                        |
11%                           |                                        |
10%                           |                                        |
10%                           |                                        |
4%                            |                                        |
3%                             |                                        |

Figure 3 European shared Values (2006)5

4 The „Eurobarometer“ is a regular public opinion poll sponsored by the European Commission. Its task is to monitor public opinions for diverse question relating to the European Union (Cini, 2007). This poll started in 1973 and since then it has been published always twice a year (spring-poll and autumn-poll). In each European country a random sample of among 1000 persons is taken. The Eurobarometer covers some key questions which are asked continuously and such which are related to current European events. [Schumacher, 2007]

Figure 3 (2006) shows values which are important to the European citizens as individuals (based on personal experience) on the left hand side and values which represent the European Union (as an organizational system) in the view of these citizens on the right side. Peace, human rights and democracy are the most important values in both cases. Additionally the respect for human life plays an important role as a personal value, but is not equally strongly represented by the European Union. Another difference can be found in individual freedom. This is seen as a central value on the personal level, but is far less important in the European Union.

As described above, it seems to be a common opinion among the citizens that peace, respect for human life and human rights are very important. This is expressed by more than 40% of the respondents. Only these three values could be seen as some which are already building a strong common value basis. This is a first step to the development of a collective identity. Other values like democracy and rule of law are less important but still mentioned by many citizens. This could be interpreted as a first step towards a collective identity with a political dimension because these two values are the basis for nearly all democratic political systems. Additionally, the personal values are reflected in the values which also represent the European Union. Hence, the values which are important for the individual identities are also seen important for the European community. This means that citizens can identify themselves with the European Union with regard to their main values. One drawback could be identified regarding the individual freedom. This is important to nearly a quarter of all questioned people. On the other hand only one in ten people think that the European Union is representing this value. This gap can be interpreted in two ways. Either it shows that many citizens feel that the European Union is limiting their personal freedom or the people are aware about the European Union as a community. Therefore the main aim would not be to save the individual freedom but the interests of the collective as a whole.

A major criticism is mentioned in the literature. For example the German political scientist Weigl argues that this common value basis (peace, human rights, democracy) is not typically for the European Union. Weigl does not deny that these common values exist but claims that they are not limited to the European community. [Weigl, 2007] Rather the whole Western Civilization has these values; maybe with some different focus, but still quite similar. In addition more European specific values are less assessed by the European citizens. Judging by the motto of the European Union “Unity in Diversity”, typical European values would be respect for other cultures and tolerance. Especially tolerance appears to be important for the specific character of the European Union. The current German Chancellor describes tolerance as the “Spirit of Europe” [Merkel, 26.04.09]. But tolerance as well as respect for other cultures is not very highly assessed as a personal value. Even more important is that
these two values are not seen as key values for the European Union. Nonetheless, respect for other cultures is mentioned by nearly 20% of the interviewees but tolerance only by 11%.

In the theory it was assumed that common values are important to form a collective identity. For this process it is not important that the community is the sole owner of these values, which is demanded by Weigl. In fact following the theoretical model of Risse it is a typical case that several collective identities are constructed as multiple identities. In the regarded case it could be a cross cutting construction in which most members of the European Union are also members of the Western Civilization. Of course these two communities are based on similar values. A difference between these communities emerges on the basis of other features. So, the European identity is not only formed by common values but also by other collective similarities, for example historical, cultural or political dimensions. By overlapping of these various collective commonalities the unique European identity is formed, even if the value basis is not typically European.

**Summing up** it could be assumed that the European citizens have a common value basis. There is a strong correlation between the personal values (part of the individual identities) and the values which represent the European Union in the citizen’s opinion (part of the collective identity). So, the personal experience based values of the European citizens are in accord with the values which represent the European system. However these European values cannot be limited to the European Union. The United States as well as the whole Western Civilization is also based on values like peace, human rights and democracy. Thus, these common values are not able to establish a European identity in separation to other - e.g. democracy based - communities. In addition other similarities between the European citizens, which distinguish the European identity from the Western Civilization identity, have to exist.

**4.2. Common Awareness**

Common similarities (e.g. shared values) between members are important for the establishment of a collective identity within a community. But as important as the shared similarities is the awareness about these. Individual members who have common similarities are only able to develop a common identity when they are aware of their commonalities.

The findings of Figure 4 (2006) demonstrated that the European citizens have a common value basis either related to the European Union or to the whole Western Civilization. Figure 4 is useful in analyzing the awareness concerning these common values. To use the two diagrams an additional basic assumption has to be made: The personal values of citizens also represent the basic values of their particular national state.
In your opinion, in terms of shared values, are European Union Member States ...

Figure 4 European shared Values (2006)

Figure 4 shows how European citizens rate the closeness of European member states with regard to common values. The result is divided in three parts. The majority (48%) of the interviewed European citizens feel that the European member states are close to each other based on shared values. About 40% of the interviewees feel that the European member states are distant to each other regarding common values. One in nine citizens (11%) does not have an opinion.

Analysis of Figure 4 according to the awareness of common European values shows that, as described above, nearly half of the interviewees support the claim that the European member states are close to each other based on common values. But the majority of the European citizens disagree with this statement. One of nine respondents does not have an opinion to the question. So, these 11 % are not aware of any common value between the European Member States. Together with the 40 % which sees no closeness, more than 50% of the European citizens do not feel that the European member states are close in terms of common values.

Summing up, half of the European citizens are not aware of common values between the European member states. Irrespective of whether the mentioned values are interpreted as European values or as values representing the whole Western Civilization they are definitely values which connect the European citizens, and hence their countries. So, it is questionable

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if the majority of European citizens is aware of any strong similarities between the European member states.

4.3. Common We-Feeling

The main theoretical feature of a collective identity (next to similarities like shared values and the awareness about these) is a common “We-feeling” of the community members. The individual members join to a community and have to elaborate a common feeling between each others. Only based on such a “We-feeling” a real collective identity could be developed.

Table 1 European “We-Feeling” (2004)\(^7\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>European</th>
<th>National and European / European and National</th>
<th>National</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>European Union 25</td>
<td>3,1 %</td>
<td>54,7 %</td>
<td>42,1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Union 15 (old member states)</td>
<td>3,5%</td>
<td>55,9%</td>
<td>40,6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New members states since 2004</td>
<td>1,5%</td>
<td>48,6%</td>
<td>49,5 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 shows a survey carried out in 2004 which asks the question “In the near future do you see yourself as a) European, b) National and European respectively European and National\(^8\) or d) National.” To take into account the influence of the new member states the poll was divided in three parts. The first shows the result for the whole European community. The second shows the result for the old member state citizens only (European Union 15) and the third reflects the opinions of the new member state citizens. In summary a main tendency is shown: The results demonstrate that the citizen’s feeling towards their national states dominates the feeling towards the European Union. Nevertheless, the citizens seeing themselves as National and European are still the majority.


8 The original poll of Eurobarometer offers both possibilities as an answer (European and National or National and European). Under the prevailing context it appears to be useful to join these two possible answers to get clearer tendencies regarding a European identity.
More than half of all citizens living in the European Union 25 identify themselves in some way with Europe (57.8%). This European-friendly perspective could be contrasted with a more detailed interpretation. Compared to their nation the European citizens identify themselves less with Europe. There is only a minority which sees itself exclusively as European. The German political scientist Thalmaier, a representative of the prevalent opinion in the literature, claims that the European identity is superposed by the national identities [Thalmaier, 2007]. The theory of collective identity generally allows individuals to hold different collective identities in parallel. Feeling as a National does not prohibit a person from also forming a European feeling of belonging. In addition the establishment of a collective identity takes generations. The European Union is in comparison to many member states a very young community. The beginning of the European integration process took place in the 1950s and the European Union was established by the Maastricht treaty less than 20 years ago. Considering this background it appears to be obvious that the European identity is still less important than the national identities. So, the fact that the majority of citizens sees itself not only as National but also as National and European could be interpreted as a positive signal and a first step on a process towards an European identity which takes generations.

Based on the previous argumentation the results of the new European members seem to be surprising. The theory of collective identity claims that members are joining or leaving a community. Thereby the collective identity is in a continuous change. Especially new members are influenced by the community regarding their individual identity. But this change is a life long process and does not happen from one day to the next. In 2004 ten new member states comprising 75 million citizens joined the European community. The new members became part of the European community but of course they did not automatically and instantaneously establish a European identity. Nonetheless there is already a small fraction of new citizens which feels European and a larger fraction which sees itself as National and European. This result is attributed to the history of the new European countries. Especially the eastern countries are featured by a strange development from members of the (communistic and dictatorial) Warsaw Pact to members of the (democratic and western) European Union. At a first glace this could disprove the assumption that the establishment of a common We-feeling needs always a long time. Obviously the eastern member states changed their feeling of belonging during only 14 years (from the end of Cold War to the EU-East-Enlargement)

At a second glace the case it more complex. So, many of these eastern countries were only “temporarily” members of the Warsaw Pact. Before the Second World War and after the Cold War they could be allocated to the community of the Western countries, hence the Western Civilization. As already mentioned the Western Civilization and the European Union are quite similar regarding their value basis. So, it can be assumed that many of the eastern European
citizens have been rooted in Western values before the Soviet takeover. In addition it is questionable in how far dictatorial regimes are able to change the value basis of individuals. Probably a dictatorial regime could influence the personal behaviour by pressure but it is not able to change the individual basic values. So, the membership to the Warsaw Pact could be interpreted as a temporarily belonging which did not change the basic Western orientated values of the citizens. After the Fall of the Wall these Western values were readopted during the first ambitions to join the European Union in 1997. In this time other European matters (next to European values) surfaced in the public national discussions. So, the awareness of European matters in the new countries did not begin in 2004 but long before. This is a possible explanation for the eastern citizen’s feeling as European / National and European already in 2004. This interpretation would also support that the process toward a collective identity is definitely a long term process.

Another interesting point regarding the enlargement of the European Union towards the east is to analyze in how far the new members influence the European process of identity or the identity itself. The theoretical model of collective identity claims that this process is not one-sided. The collective identity influences the new members, but the new members also influence this common identity. Of course both ways are processes which span decades.

The establishment of a collective identity between the European citizens is a life long process. Figure 5 demonstrates the development during at least 12 years (1992 – 2004). These results are related to the same question as Table 1 and demonstrate a similar tendency. The feeling as European has been weak all over the time in comparison to the feeling as National. But the majority of the European citizens have been feeling as National and European across the entire timespan. Two variations regarding the feeling as European or National and European are shown in 1994 and 2000 / 2002.
In the near future do youd see yourself as ...

The first variation regarding the European as well as the National and European feeling could be related to the implementation of the European Single Market which was established in 1993. One year later the four free movements of goods, persons, services and capital were implemented within the European member state. These implementations could be seen as European orders with an direct influence to the every day life of the European citizens. The second variation is in 2000 and 2002 regarding the feeling of National and European. This could be related to the adoption of the Euro in many European countries. The European currency was introduced in two steps: in 1992 as bank money and in 2002 as real money. As well as the four fundamental rights the Euro was also a European matter which could be experienced in a direct way by the European citizens. The theoretical model of identity points out the importance of experience of citizens with community features. According to that, the feeling as a European increases depending on the extent to which the European matters are part of the citizen everyday life. This assumption could be contrasted that the feeling as European (National and European) does not increase continuously. So, the Euro as well as the fundamental freedoms became an ordinary part of the citizen's lives. These were used stronger during the time, but the feeling as European has not increased in parallel.

The data which demonstrates in Figure 5 are difficult to interpret regarding the development of a common European Identity. The process of collective identity takes generations. Thus,

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Figure 5 European “We-Feeling” (1992-2004)\(^9\)

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12 years are not enough to get a clear tendency regarding the feeling of the European Citizens. Preferable data would be a poll which shows the development of this feeling at least for 50 years.

**Summing up** there are two main conclusions based on Table 1 and Figure 5. First it has to be assumed that the European feeling, hence the European identity is still very weak in comparison with the “We-feeling” based on national identities. Regarding the development toward a European identity this does not have to be a negative sign. Based on the theoretical model of collective identity individuals are able to be part of different collective identities in parallel. In the given case Weigl argues that an inspired Europe cannot be built on the ruins of the nations. So, the aim of establishing a European identity could not be to replace the national identity but to create a European identity in addition to the national identities [Weigl 2007]. Of course it is doubtful if the European identity thereby will become a “second class identity” which is always subordinated to the national identities. But the reality shows that this does not have to be. An example would be an individual which is part of a German identity as well as of a Bavarian identity. Both identities are very strong but they exist alongside each other. The German identity is featured by specific German similarities (e.g. language, history) whereas the Bavarian identity is characterized by specific Bavaria similarities (e.g. regional dialect, regional culture). Depending on the situation, the German or the Bavarian identity can influence the particular behaviour of the individual. Similarly, a national and European identity should be able to exist in parallel. It is important that each of these two identities harbours its own characteristics (next to similar matters) to which the individual can relate in different situations. The second conclusion based on Table 1 and Figures 5 underlines the previous argument. So the majority of the European citizens already feel as National and European. Considering that collective identity takes generations to develop this could be interpreted as a starting point toward a separate European identity in addition to the national identities.

**Coming back to the title European Identity** it is the main question if the members of the European community are joined by a common European identity. The previous discussion demonstrates that many European citizens feel as European (and National). So, a European “We-feeling” features at least the half of the European citizens. However it is questionable if this European “We-feeling” can be equitable with a European identity. Shared values are essential for a European Identity. The European inhabitants have a value basis in common but these values are first of all Western values and not typical European values. In addition a lot of citizens are even not aware about these common western values. Thus, based on the similarity “values” a typical European identity does not establish between the citizens. Rather the European “We-feeling” has to be based on other shared similarities in addition to the common western values. The European identity covers different dimensions (history, culture,
political). These have to be analyzed in detail regarding additional European similarities which establish a common European identity.
5. European Political Identity

A main dimension of the European identity is the political dimension. Of course such a European political identity is orientated to political aspects of the European community. So, also the conditions for the establishment of a European political identity are related to a political context. As far as the theoretical model of political collective identity is concerned there are three main conditions. First the community concerned has to be a kind of political community. Second, the community members have to form a civil society. Third there has to be one common public arena which can be assessed by each community member. Therefore, the following analysis will probe to what extent these theoretical assumptions are implemented in the European community and how far they contribute to a European political identity.

5.1. Political Community

Obviously only members of a political community are able to establish a common political identity. As already mentioned the individuals of such a community are mainly brought together by common political matters. A political framework specifies the political characteristics (values, attitudes, structure) of the community and serves as a fixed frame of reference for the community’s interactions. In addition the German political scientist Meyer raises an interesting point: He emphasizes that a common political project between the members of a political community is important for a political identity [Meyer, 2007]. Thus a common implementation of shared political aims would be the foundation for the establishment of a common political “We-feeling” between community members. So, the members of a political community are not only joined by common political matters but also by common political projects. The political framework covers the characteristics of the political community and specifies the conditions for the community’s interaction to achieve the political projects. The German reunification constitutes a good example for such a political community. In the 1980s there were strong ambitions to reunite the old western and eastern part of Germany. These ambitions constitute a political project which united many German citizens (living in the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic) as one political community. The implementation of the German reunification was bounded to the guidelines of the former Allied forces as well as to the West German and East German basic laws. So the interactions to achieve the reunite were limited by a political framework composed of the several laws and guidelines. All in all the political project (German reunification) based on the political framework (laws and guidelines) joined the members (citizens of the eastern and western part) to form one political community. This political process was strongly related with the process toward a common political identity in the sense of a “We-feeling” of the new German community, hence citizens of the “new Federal
Republic Germany”. Apart from the German reunification there are lots of other political projects of political communities on national level.

The European community could not be translated one-to-one to national communities. Nevertheless there are many similarities between the European community and national state communities. So the European Union has a state-like institutionalization, political decision fields as well as a sovereignty which is democratic legitimated. Regarding these similarities the European Union could also defined as the political project of the European member states, hence the European citizens. Consequently the European community also has to have a political framework which specifies the basic values, aims and structure principles for implementing the European political project [Meyer, 2007]. The development of the European community gives some indication of the current character of the European political community hence the European political project(s) and the European political framework.

The European community is featured by a unique formation - even a confederation - of several autonomous national states. This uniqueness is especially justified by the specific foundation and development of the European Union [Thalmaier, 2007]. The idea of a European Integration process has existed for several centuries. However, these concepts were only implemented after the Second World War. The European countries had to negotiate their fateful past by establishing a new system of political cooperation and political culture. The new key word of a peaceful cooperation was “Integration” The overriding aim of the European experiment was the protection of peace within Europe. Further secondary aims were the establishment of economical wealth, the development into a powerful global actor and the obviation of other totalitarian regimes in perpetuity [Weidenfeld, 2007]. So the European community started as a political peace project which was mainly predicated on the awful personal experiences of the Second World War.

Based on this historical challenge a new European awareness was established. The British politician Churchill described it in these words: “It is to re-create the European Family, or as much of it as we can and to provide it with a structure under which it can dwell in peace, in safety and in freedom.” [Weigl, 2007, p.106]. So, also in the beginning of the European Union the idea existed of one political community whose members are joined together by a strong political project (“European Family”). However the further development was mainly characterized by a “European Family” in the sense of a European elite project (composed of national representatives and European functions owners) instead of the European project of the European citizens.

The first efforts for an implementation of a European community featured a competition between supporters of a European intergovernmental organization and supporters of a
European federal and basic democratic organization [Weidenfeld, 2007]. During the processes of the Congress of Hague (1948), the start of the European Coal and Steel Community (1952) and the Treaties of Rome (1957) the courses for the principles of the integration process were set. It was geared towards intergovernmental principles and orientated toward economical cooperation fields. Based on these essential orientations the European Economic Community (with the aim to develop a common European market) and the European Atomic Energy Community (with the aim to ensure a peaceful use of atomic energy) was established by the Treaties of Rome. The ECSC, EEC and EURATOM (with one common institutional and administrative organization since 1965 [Auswärtiges Amt, 29.04.09]) demonstrated the beginning of the European Union. [Wiesner, 2007] Each of these communities can be seen as a single European project mainly implemented by the national governments and without citizen involvement. Of course each of these projects was based on its own political framework. So, the previous citizen based European peace project was replaced by several economic orientated and technical projects of the national governments. Thereby the common European Single Market was the most important ambition of this time.

In 1986 the European Single Act was passed. Its main aim was to accelerate the completion of the European Single Market. At first glance it was only the resumption of the economic actions but further scrutiny shows that it was also an extension of European responsibilities towards "new" political fields by ensuring the four fundamental freedoms in all European Countries. So, the implementation of the European Single Market was the starting point for the process from a mostly economic orientated community towards a political community. [Wiesner, 2007] Thus, the main European political project still remains technical but the European political framework was extended from mainly economical competences to new political responsibilities.

So, in 1992 the Treaty of Maastricht was set up as an extended political framework of the European community. It is also called Treaty on European Union and constitutes the current organization of the European Union as the foundation for a political union. By this the European Union was established as an overarching organization supported by three European pillars: First, the EEC which was renamed as European Community and served as a kind of supranational body. The Common Foreign and Security Policy formed the second pillar and the Cooperation on Justice and Home Affairs formed the third pillar. The second and third pillars were only based on intergovernmental cooperation. The European institutional machine (mainly the European Council, European Parliament, Council of the Union and the European Commission) was adapted for this three pillar system. [Wiesner, 2007, Cini, 2007] So the European Union became one uniform political framework. The
European Treaty of Amsterdam (1999) and the Treaty of Nice (2003) that followed were less important modifications to the European Union as a political community.

Thus, since the passing of the European Single Act a process toward a more democratic and supranational orientated community of the European Union could be realized [Wiesner, 2007]. The attempt to establish a European Constitution was the most ambitious effort in this process [Weidenfeld, 2007]. But this development has not ended. Rather it became more complicated due to the previous failed ratifications of the Constitution as well as the Treaty of Lisbon. So, today the European community as a political community is still based on the political framework given by the Treaty of Maastricht, and modified by the Treaties of Amsterdam and Nice.

**Political Community**

The European integration process demonstrates the dynamic and flexible character of the development towards the European community. Thereby the European community featured a smooth transition of an economic community to a political community. Instead of a purposive and specific process it was a creeping development towards a political community. Of course, the idea of a European political community has existed for a long time. As mentioned above “the overriding goal of such integration has always been political – namely the prevention of war on the European continent” [Cini, 2007, p. 383]. The Treaties of Rome mentioned a number of proposals toward for political unity such as ambitions to create one European federal state [Bruter, 2009]. However this idea was never implemented in a direct and purposeful way. The attempt to establish the organization European Political Community failed in 1953. Thus the original six founding states clarified that the European integration should first of all be of an economic and intergovernmental nature. [Wiesner, 2007] This perspective was advanced by eurosceptic member states like Great Britain, Denmark and Sweden. The several additions to the European Union made it to a community composed of vastly diverse members, imaginations and wishes. So, the process toward a European political community became more complicated and opaque. Today especially for the European citizen it is unclear if the European community is still an economically orientated or already a fully fledged political community.

**Political Framework**

Just as the European political community has been in continuous modification, so too has its political framework. With regard to the political identity this is a negative situation. A political framework has to serve as a fixed reference point for the citizen interactions. However the European political framework is characterized by a lot of changes. Thus the European political decision fields as well as the European political processes became increasingly opaque for the European citizens over time. Today a main reason is an unknown number of
specific decision processes as well as a plurality of political participated actors. As described above the European responsibilities have been extended over time. But instead of a closed list of European competences there is a gradated system of European and national responsibilities (e.g. exclusive competences, competing competences, parallel competence). So the European and national decision making is strongly intertwined. Furthermore the European level itself is characterized by a non-hierarchical structure. The European institutions are characterized by interdependencies. [Thalmaier, 2007] So, for the citizens it is difficult to identify which European institution is mainly responsible for which European decision. In addition the role of the European and the national politicians in political processes are often unclear. This circumstance is often exploited in a negative way by national politicians. National governments, as the main actors in the European Union, are responsible for a lot of political decisions at the European level. But if citizens criticize these decisions the national politicians often lay the blame for their failure on the European institutions. [Weigl, 2007] In summary, the European political processes and structures are for the most part unclear and opaque to the citizens. So, the European political framework does not fulfill its task to serve as a transparent frame of reference for the political community, hence its citizens.

**Political Project**

A European political community with a transparent political framework would be an important starting point of the establishment of a European political identity. However most important are common political projects between the European citizens. As far as the theory goes such shared projects are mainly targeting for the process towards a common political identity. The historical development of the European community demonstrates two main European political projects.

First, the European project for protecting European peace. The main aim of this project was the protection of peace and safety for the European citizens. Especially after the Second World War and during the Cold War the belonging to the European community implied a personal feeling of security for each European inhabitant. So, the European peace project had a direct impact to the citizen’s everyday life. Thus, this common feeling of security was a main force supporting a European political identity. But during the time the strength of this project as an identity forming project lessened. Especially new generations related less to the European peace project and took peace increasingly for granted. Today the issue of peace is still important for the European integration process but less important for the process of a European political identity.

Second, since the 1990s the main European project has been the European Single Market. In 1994 the four fundamental freedoms came into force. These fundamental freedoms had a
direct influence to the European citizen’s everyday life. It is questionable however whether these were also able to establish a common political identity. Thus, the European Single Market was very technical and mainly economically orientated. In comparison to the European peace project the Single Market project was less noticeable to the citizens. The German political scientist Thalmaier claims that economic policies are not able to establish a European political identity. She distinguishes between “low policies” e.g. economical policies and “high policies” e.g. security policies. High policies are more “political” than low policies and influence the citizens in a stronger and more direct way than the low policies. [Thalmaier, 2007] So, the European Single Market could not achieve such a strong impact toward a common political identity as the European peace project. This is also emphasized in a quote by the French and European politician Jaques Delors: “You can’t fall in love with the single market” [European Commission, 03.05.09].

The two European projects “Peace” and “Single Market” constitute different kinds of political projects. The project regarding European peace appears to have a strong impact for the establishment of a European political identity. The project regarding the European Single Market does not demonstrate this effect. Consequently there are different modes of projects regarding the establishment of a shared political identity.

Summing up the European community does not constitute a “political community” which is able to develop a strong European political identity. Based on its unique development process the character of the European community is very unclear from a citizen perspective. Although the European citizens are joined by common values, political attitudes and beliefs the European community is still primarily recognized as an economic community instead of a political community. The European community has a political framework which specifies the basic European characteristics, political structure and organization. However this framework is mainly marked by a lack of transparency. So, it does not serve as a subsumable frame of reference for the community’s interactions. The major deficit of the European community is the failure of a current political project which is targeting for a European political identity. The European community has a lot of political projects but most of them are too abstract for establishing a European political “We-feeling” on the European citizen level.
5.2. Political Civil Society

The basis for the establishment of a shared political identity is a political community whose members are joined by a common political project. In addition, these members have to establish a civil society. Such a political civil society is typified by individuals who identify themselves with the essential political characteristics (values, attitudes, beliefs) of the political community. They involve the common political project in their daily routine and take responsibility for its implementation. So, they participate in the political processes and anchor the political outputs in their everyday life. The main point is that the members of the political civil society support the common political project in an active way. Like already mentioned in the theoretical part, there are two backgrounds which mainly affect the range of member’s participation. The first one is based on a specific support. Thus, the members have concrete expectations of and interests in the output of the policy processes. The range of participation in the political project depends on how much the members feel that they can influence the political processes in their favour. The second one is based on a diffuse support. The members trust in the political community and remain constant supporters of the political project. The participation remains high irrespective of whether or not either their personal interests are met by the policy. A strong support based on trust in the political processes appears to be an important factor for the establishment of a common political identity.

The European community is composed of around 455 million citizens. These citizens are joined by common values like democracy and the rule of law. During the European history they were related by several European political projects. Each of these projects was important for the European integration process but variably relevant for the establishment of a European political identity. Currently, the European community does not have a political project with a strong identity forming impact. However (as maintained by the German political scientist Meyer) the European Union itself can also be defined as a political project [Meyer, 2007]. So, the assessment of a European civil society will be analyzed in how far the political project “European Union” is supported by the European citizens.

Specific Support

The specific support is the most obvious stimulus for an active participation in the European community. The citizen has expectations of the European policy and she or he assumes that the policy will meet these. Citizens have European interests regarding their personal life (e.g. personal prosperity) as well as European expectations as far as the benefit of their home country goes (e.g. a positive economical development). These two perspectives are often strongly related to each other. So, a strong national economy makes an important contribution to the citizen’s personal prosperity. Based on this background Figure 6 is useful...
to analyze to what extent the citizen’s expectation are met by the European policy, and also to analyze the extent of the specific support.

Figure 6 European Membership (1996-2007)

Figure 6 (2007) shows the results of a survey of the question “Generally speaking, do you think that your country’s membership of the European Union is a) A good thing, b) A bad thing, c) Neither good or bad”. The data show the results from 1996 to 2007. The opinion that the European membership is a good thing clearly outweighs. During the whole time the number of citizens which approve this statement has been in a variation between 46% and 57%. In comparison the notion that the European membership is a bad thing has been much lower; only 10% to 17% of the interviewees thought so. The number of the answer “Neither good or bad” has remained fairly constant at around 28% over the whole time. A peculiarity is found in the data of 2003. There is a strong increase of citizens who assess the European membership as a bad thing with a corresponding decrease of citizens who assess it as a good thing. Apart from that, the results are more or less continuous whereas the most variations are shown in the graph are with regard to the answer that the European membership is a good thing.

Like already described the majority of the citizens assess the European membership of their country as positive. Thus, these citizens appear to be satisfied by the extent their interests

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are met by the European policy. Weigl points out (considering also other Eurobarometer polls) the citizen’s positive attitude toward the European community. He emphasizes a positive trend which is also supported by the result of Figure 6. The citizen’s agreement toward a positive European membership of their home country varies to a certain degree. However summing up the four highest results (1998: 54%, 2002: 55%, 2004: 56%, 2007: 57%) a positive trend emerge. Thus the results of Figure 6 demonstrate that there is a specific support of the European citizens toward the European community.

Analyzing the data in detail this kind of support does not appear to be a very steady one. The presented result shows a strong correlation between a positive assessment of the European community and the personal interests of the citizens. A good example for this correlation is shown by the data in 2003. The approval of the European membership declines for 6 percentage points. Correspondingly the opinion that the European membership is a bad thing increases. This variation could be related to the Iraq invasion in 2003. Regarding the Iraq question the European Union was divided. Members like Great Britain and Italy took a firm stand in support of the United States, whereas members like Germany and France took an opposite stand. This division also shredded the citizen’s expectations toward a European response to the Iraq issue. The European community did not act as one unique global player instead each country implemented its own interests and policy. With regard to the assessment of the European community this resulted in a two year negative trend. This example shows that the specific support of the citizens toward the European community is very susceptible to crises.

**Diffuse Support**

In contrast to the specific support there is the diffuse support. This support is not related to the European policy output but to the European community as an organization with basic and fundamental features. This citizen support does not depend on the implementation of the personal expectations but it is rooted in diffuse feelings like belief or loyalty. So it is difficult to measure if European citizens support the European community in a diffuse way. The German political scientist Thalmaier [2007] claims a strong relation between diffuse support and trust in a political system. Thus, Figure 7 appears to be useful to get an estimate of the citizen’s diffuse support of the European community.

Figure 7 (2007) demonstrates how much the European citizens have trust in the institution of the European Union as well as in the institution of their national governments. More than half of the interviewees express their confidence in the European community (57%) whereas 43% of the citizens have no trust in the European Union or do not have an opinion. In comparison the majority of the interviewees does not trust or does not know if they trust (59%) in the national institution whereas 41% of the citizens trust in the national governments.
The majority of the European citizens appear to trust more in the European Union than in their national governments. Based on this statement the diffuse support of the European Union would be stronger in comparison with the diffuse support towards the national governments. A reason for this could be that the political events on the national level are more popular for the citizens than the political events on the European level. Democratic based policy making is from time to time characterized by very long and opaque discussions between the different political actors. These processes often get out of hand: political groups struggle for preposterous demands or for the votes of the electors. Thus, for the citizens the national political melee is much more visible than the political events on the European level. This strengthens the trust as well as the diffuse support for the European Union in comparison to that at national level. This argumentation contrasts with the fact that not even one-third of the European citizens consider themselves well-informed about European political matters [European Commission, 2007]. Thus, it is questionable in how far trust in a political institute can be based on a widespread ignorance of European political knowledge. Another counter argument is given by the presented data itself. The diagram shows the trust in the particular institutions only for one year. Based on the structural background of both institutions it has to be assumed that trust in the national governments will vary more than trust in the European Union. In general the trust in the national government can be interpreted as trust in the current government, hence trust in the governing party. The governing party can change in each national election. In contrast the trust in the European Union.

Union has to be interpreted as a trust in the European organization. The actors in the main European institutions (European Commission, Council of the European Union) do not change by the European election. So, the meaning of trust differs with regard to the European Union and the national governments.

The presented data does not offer a uniform assessment towards a European diffuse support. In addition the diffuse support is more complex than “only” the citizen feeling of trust towards institutions. Thus realistic appreciation of the citizen’s diffuse support is very difficult to measure.

The previous discussions about European specific and diffuse support do not offer a clear interpretation regarding a European civil society within the European community. The analysis simply demonstrates that the specific support of the European citizens toward the political project “European Union” is clearer than the diffuse support. However the diffuse support appears to be more important for a European political identity than the specific support. Regarding the theory the diffuse support definitely leads to a continuous and strong participation of the citizens in political processes. So the actual participation of European citizens in political processes of the European community appears to be useful for the assessment of a European civil society.

**Participation**

There are two obvious possibilities for citizens to participate in the political processes of the European community. The first possibility is the European election for the European parliament. Every five years the European citizens directly vote for the European parliament. The first election took place in 1979 and the last one in 2004. The statistical data published by the European parliament demonstrates a continuous decreasing voter turnout. Whereas 63% of the European eligible voters elected in 1979 only 46% of them participated the election in 2004. [European Parliament, 09.05.09] There are different explanation attempts for this development. The German political scientist Walkenhorst claims that the decline of participation shows the increasing awareness of the limited political influence of the European Parliament [Schumacher, 2007]. The German political scientist Schumacher goes a step further and claims that most European citizens do not have sufficient knowledge about the European parliament. They are not interested in European politics and therefore not interested in European elections. A third reason can be found in the lack of transparency of the impacts of the European election. Whereas national elections results in change of the whole government (governing party) as well as single political function owners (the head of government) the European election does not cause such modifications. The European Commission, the Council of the European Union as well as the President of the Commission
remains constant. So, the citizens get the impression that they do not really change something by their election.

The second possibility to participate in the European political processes is referendums. Since 1970 a lot of referendums in different member states have been held for diverse reasons. The most important referendums regarding European policies are the elections where the European citizens have to decide about European treaties as well as modification of existing treaties. However referendums are not generally used in every European country. Rather this participation instrument is limited to single European member states like Denmark, France and Ireland. [Wiesner, 2007] So the member states decide by their own (based on the national constitution and laws) if they want to decide on a European issue by way of referendums or by way of other decision-making processes. Thus it is questionable in how far the referendum can be interpreted as a European (wide) instrument for citizen participation.

Next to these well known and formal participation instruments there is also a set of newer and less known possibilities to participate in European processes. Since the 1990s the European Commission has made an effort to create more transparent and participation friendly opportunities. An example is the communication strategy which was published in 2006 in the form of a European white book. Its aim is to create possibilities to strengthen the dialogue between citizens and European politicians. Some internet-based features have already been implemented which enable citizens to express personal views on European matters. Another example is the European ambition to establish a European citizen’s initiative. This shall become an instrument with which the European citizens are able to make legislative proposals to the European Commission. A third ambition to enable citizens to participate in European processes is the increasing number of representative organizations in Brussels. The European Union is anxious to interact with these diverse citizen representative groups.

So, the factual participation of European citizens in political processes demonstrates a weak rank of active European support. The European voter turnout as well as the results of the previous referendums shows either a decreasing interest for European matters or an increasing dissatisfaction with the European policy processes. Both result in less citizen participation. The previous efforts to create participation possibilities in the European political process are positive but still too little and too unbeknown to the citizens.

Summing up the European community does not represent a “Political Civil Society” which is targeting for a European political identity. There is a specific support of the citizens toward the political project “European Union”. But this kind of support is too instable to create a strong identity within the European community. In comparison the diffuse support as well as
the factual participation of European citizens in political processes appears to be very weak. The European citizens seem to be either uninterested in European political matters or they do not trust in the political systems. So there is a deficit of a European civil society which bears the political activities.

5.3. Political Public Arena

A common political identity has to be established within a political community which is featured by a political civil society. In addition a formation of a political public arena is also elementary for a common political identity. It is strongly integrated with the model of a civil society. The members of a civil society have to be able to communicate and interact with each other. Therefore a public sphere is indispensable. It enables continuous public discussions about important political issues and activities of the community. Furthermore it assures a permanent information flow within the political community. Each member has to have access to this information to be able to participate in public discussion as well as in political processes. In addition the communication between members is a necessary condition for the development of a common “We-feeling”. They have to get to know similarities as well as differences between the different several European citizens. Thus a political public arena is essential to establishment a common political identity.

The European community extends across 27 national states. The economic borders between these countries are almost eliminated but the cultural boundaries still persist. Different languages, traditions or norms distinguish the European citizens from one another. However they form one European community. The extent to which these cultural differences impact a European wide communication is crucial to a European political public arena.

Language

The most obvious way to communicate with each other is to converse in a common language. Whereas almost each national state has a mother tongue a European mother tongue does not exist. Rather the European community is characterized by multilingualism. About 20 official languages as well as 60 indigenous languages and dialects are spoken within Europe. Furthermore the European citizens themselves are multilingual. The majority (56%) of the citizens know at least two languages. [European Commission, 2006a] For the development of a language-based European public arena it is necessary that all European citizens are at least joined by one common language to enable European wide political discourses.

Figure 8 shows the languages which are most used by Europeans. These are the most dominant European languages. For each language the diagram shows what percentage of people use it as their mother tongue and what percentage of people use is as a foreign
language. English is the only language which is used by over half of the European citizens (51%). The second most known language is German (32%) and the third one is French (26%). The other European languages are spoken by not at least 20% of European citizens. The most widespread mother tongue is German whereas English is the most established foreign language within the European community.

![Languages most commonly used in the EU ...](image)

**Figure 8 European Languages (2005)**

As already mentioned the most popular language used by Europeans is English. About half of the questioned people state that they know English. However 13% of these speak English as their mother tongue. Just 38% of the citizens speak English as a foreign language. English and French are the only languages which are used by more foreign speakers than by native speakers. The other languages are used by more native speakers than foreign speakers. This result leads one to the conclusion that Europeans are not particularly willed to learn a foreign language. This is underlined by the fact that almost half of the European citizens (44%) does not think that a European should learn another language next to his or her mother tongue. In contrast the majority of European citizens (83%) regard the knowledge of different languages as positive. They think that it would beneficial when traveling in foreign countries as well as to improve the chances to get a good job. This contrast shows that the European citizens would like to know several foreign languages but they are not sufficiently motivated to learn them. Those interviewed name three main reasons why they do not learn

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12 Source: European Commission 2006a, Special Eurobarometer – Europeans and their Languages.
foreign languages: lack of time, lack of motivation, expensive tuitions. Based on these facts young people (pupils, students, young employees) appear to be the largest part of multilingual speakers in Europe. Most Europeans (65%) learn a foreign language in school. So, Europeans which are able to communicate in other languages next to their mother tongue are mostly young and well educated people. [European Commission, 2006a]

A European “lingua franca” in the sense of a language which is known by all European citizens does not exist. Rather there is a large administrative machinery in Brussels which translates the European texts into the different national languages. With regard to the European motto “Unity in Diversity” this is a practical but very expensive way of communication. However for the development of a European political public arena as well as for the establishment of a European political identity the lack of one common European language is a major disadvantage. Most members of the European community cannot communicate without a translator. Of course culturally based mimicry and gestures also offer a kind of interaction but to establish a common political identity this kind of communication is not expressive enough. However one positive assessment of the presented results can be made: the development of political identity takes generations. It is positive that in particular young European citizens learning and speaking foreign languages. So formal education plays a key role in the spreading of a uniform European language. The aim in formal education is not to replace the national language by with a “new European” language. Rather a common language, one to be spoken throughout Europe (e.g. English) has to be added to the variation of national languages that exist. Another possibility for Europe-wide communication would be newly created languages like Esperanto. These would be languages that have not existed previously and are not linked to the history and culture of any one ethnic group, rather they would be languages which are newly defined. It would be interesting to analyze in how far such a newly created language could establish a European public arena and how it would be affect the development of a European political identity.

The Media

Based on the lack of one unique European language the media convey a certain message to ensure the information flow within the European community. The Dutch political scientist Van de Steeg defines a European “mediatization public” as a public whereas the media operates as an intermediary as well as a translator between the different European actors. In this constellation each member can participate in the public discussion by his or her mother tongue. [Van de Steeg, 2003] Thus the media take on an important function for the development of a European political public arena. On the one hand the media enable a direct contact between members of the European community which do not live in the same location and which do not speak the same language. On the other hand media safeguard a
continuous information flow which is commonly accessed by each European citizen of the community. So at first glance the media appears to be a good solution to support a European wide communication. At a second glance the media also poses some risks to the European public arena.

The European media does not constitute a uniform European media landscape, but rather a media landscape composed of the several national media. The European community does not have European wide newspapers, radio stations or television channels. National states are generally the domain within which media clusters exist. Thus European news and information are always coupled to national media. This has two main effects. First of all the quantity of published European information is decided by the national media. In European member states the published national information is many times more than the published European information. [Schumacher, 2007] The second effect is quality related. Obviously the national media represent their information from a national perspective. Therefore national newscasts with a European reference are a good example. Although they report about European issues they are primarily interested in the national citizen’s opinion towards European questions. However to establish a European “We-feeling” it would be more important to publish the European citizen’s opinions instead of only the national ones. So, the dominance of national information and perspectives restricts a real European public arena based on media.

A newer media, the internet, is an exception. Next to the traditional media (newspaper, television, radio) the internet offers a direct connection between European institutions and the European citizens. In 1995 the European Commission started a “Europe-Server” and published information and activities of the European community [Loizt, 2001]. Today each institution has its own website which functions as a direct information source for European citizens. Next to being an information source of European issues the internet also enables a direct contact between several European citizens in the form of chat forums, weblogs and e-mail. So, on the one hand the internet offers a European wide communication between the European citizens. As a start this appears to be positive for the establishment of a European public arena. But on the other hand the internet constitutes a World Wide Web community mad up of people all over the world. It is not limited only to the European community. So, it is questionable to what extent the internet plays a role in creating a special European public arena, hence a special European “We-feeling”.

These doubts are also reflected in Figure 9. It shows the European opinion about the quantity of nationally published information about the European Union. The results are divided in the different kinds of media: newspapers, television, radio and internet. In general a lot of European citizens regard the quantitative publication of European matters as too little
(Newspaper: 36%, Television: 48%, Radio: 46%, Internet 19%). In addition 7 - 15% of the questioned people do not know whether the European information is represented in an adequate way. So, the majority of the interviewees view the quantitative information flow of European matters as negative. A peculiarity is shown by the internet. Almost the majority of the citizens do not know how to answer the question.

![Figure 9 European Media (2007)](image)

As described above the majority of the European citizens feels that the national media coverage about the European Union is not enough. This result strongly relates with the fact that not even one-third of the Europeans consider themselves well informed about European political affairs [European Commission, 2007]. Consequently, the lack of media reports about the European Union leads to a lack of knowledge among citizens about European political matters. This correlation demonstrates the importance of media coverage for the establishment of a European political public arena, and hence for a common political identity. An interesting addition is shown by the interview regarding the quality of published European information. More than half of the European citizens assess the information published by the national media as objective [European Commission, 2008]. So, Europeans evaluate the quality of the published European information positively and the quantity negatively.

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The internet, as media form, is a special case. Almost the half of the European citizens does not know how to rate the European information published in the internet (neither quantitative (47%) nor qualitative (55%)) [European Commission, 2007]). The internet is the only media with a direct information flow from the European institutions to the European citizens. However the result reveals that the internet is not noticed as a good “European media” by the citizen. An obvious cause is the special characteristics of the internet. On the one hand the internet differs clearly from the traditional media by its format and accessibility and its way of presentation. On the other hand it also carries the same information as traditional media in the form of digital newspaper articles, television broadcasts and radio broadcasts. So there is a strong overlapping between the two kinds of media which is at the same time the main difference between them. Whereas the traditional media offers the user only a closed range of information the internet offers a virtually endless mass of information. The online user has to decide for what she or he is looking for. Although there is a lot of information about the European Union the internet user does not have to read these. The internet user does not even have to notice the mass of European information if she or he does not search for these. Thus the quantitative notice of European information depends on the particular internet user. Furthermore the information found in the internet is generally regarded as not necessarily reliable. Next to published information of serious authors and organization a lot of information is also published by private and unserious individuals. Of course the quality of internet information is recognized as less trustworthy than the traditional media like a well known newspaper.

The European media landscape is mainly characterized by the authority of national media. The quantitative as well as qualitative publication of European information is up the national media. So far there are only a few cross-national media projects. One example is the news channel “Europanews” which informs about worldwide news from a European perspective and in seven different languages [Schumacher, 2007]. However apart from a few exceptions there is a strong dominance of national media within the European community. Of course this is a significant obstacle for the establishment of a European political public arena. The European community (around 455 million citizens) is dependent on media to ensure European wide information flow. For a European political identity the European perspective of this information flow is important, without such a perspective a strong European “We-feeling” can not develop.

**Personal Encounters**

The most obvious way that members of a community come in contact with each other is through personal encounters. In large communities like the European community it is impossible that all members meet each other at the same time and place. However such a
meeting would not be useful in creating a European political public arena. Rather a variety of contacts between the European members is important. Thereby a continuous contact and communication between citizens from different member states is essential to establish a European public as well as a European “We-feeling”. Of course the main factor is the number of citizens which take part in such a continuous communication process. So, there is a variation of different procedures on how European citizens come into contact with one another.

First of all holiday travel constitutes a strong interaction between European citizens. In general the Europeans like to travel. Based on statistical data from 2002\(^{14}\) on average each second European makes one holiday trip annually. Of these people around 30% go on holiday in European countries in comparison to 9% which go on holiday in non-European countries. The majority of the citizens (60%) go on holiday in their home country. [Freyer W. 2006] Based on the European eastern enlargement in 2004 the flood of tourists has probably increased. So, the European travel behaviour enables a continuous contact between many European citizens. By staying abroad the citizens become aware of main differences but also of main similarities between the European member states and its populations. With regard to a European political identity this strengthens the awareness of European commonalities. However there is a variation of different type of holiday trips. The average of European citizens goes on holiday for not longer than 15 nights. In addition a lot of travel destinations are downright altered or newly structured for the holiday guests. An example appears to be Mallorca with the special beach area called “Ballerman”. In the past German tourists used to swamp these areas during their holidays. But it is questionable in how far such kind of mass tourism is beneficial for a European “We-feeling” from tourist perspective (German tourists) as well as from the inhabitant perspective (Spain inhabitant). So European holiday travels afford communication between lots of European citizens. But the kind of contact depends of the kind of holiday (ambition, length) and has a more or less positive influence towards a European public arena as well as European public identity.

Whereas holiday trips within Europe are mostly done out of personal interest, the European Union offers a variation of programmes which are aimed at continuous European interactions. Most of these are supported by cross boarder cooperation on the European citizen level. An example is European education programmes which afford an interaction between several schools, universities or education companies. The programme called ERASMUS is based on the idea that students go abroad to study at universities and get in contact with other students from the home country as well as from other European member

states. These exchanges last for at least for some months and enable a special way of continuous European communication. The students are exposed to a European experience at an early age of their life. They make friends and establish networks all over Europe and can share a lot of experiences with the other European students. Most likely they deepen their understanding of the European idea and will support this during their further life. Such a programme appears to be very useful for creating a European public arena as well as European political identity. Since the implementation of the ERASMUS programme in 1987 about 2 million students from almost all European countries have participated [University Augsburg 11.05.09]. Regarding to the total number of 455 million Europeans these students constitute only a small minority. The influence of such education programmes is limited but by and by the number of participants will increase. In addition there are also a lot of other European programmes like cross boarder cooperation between municipalities and regions (INTERREG) as well as citizen exchange through town twinning programmes. These are also programmes where the citizens get to know the European idea in their everyday life. Of course each of these programmes reaches only a minority of Europeans directly but all these small projects in addition result in a slow but steady process which is important for the formation of a European political public arena as well as for a European “We-feeling”.

So, apart from holiday travel, which may in some cases further cross-national bonds, the European community offers a lot of official procedures which bring citizens of different European member states together. So far only a minority of European citizens have taken part in these programmes but in any case they can be assessed as a good starting point for a European public arena. Thereby the everyday life experience of citizens with European matters an most important factor in a movement toward a European political identity.

**Summing up**, the European community does only have a limited “European public arena”. Because of the lack of a European “lingua franca” the European public communication is dependent on media interaction. However the European media landscape is strongly featured by national media dominance. There is a European information flow but it is mainly regulated by the national media. In addition the direct contacts between citizens of different member states are very few. All in all there is some future potential for a European public arena based on one European wide language, cross boarder media and many continuous personal contacts of citizens of different countries. But currently these processes are still at the beginning.

**Coming back to the title “European Political Identity”** the main question is in how far the European community meets the theoretical conditions which are necessary for establishing a political identity. The previous discussion shows that the European community does not fulfill the theoretical conditions very well. The main deficits are strongly related to each other. The
European community lacks a strong political project which could be establishing a common political identity. The lack of an identity forming project causes a lack of a real European political civil society. The members do not feel strongly related with the European community, so they do not strive to participate in the political activities. Furthermore the extent of the European community as well as the lack of a common way for understanding is a hindrance for European wide interaction. It is not easy to create a European wide discussion based on media limited to national borders. Thus, the political dimension of a European identity is very weak. However the development of collective identity is a process which takes generations. So the political dimension offers a lot of future potential as well as many approaches for active strengthen the necessary conditions for a common (political) identity within the European community.
6. Conclusive Discussion

The European Identity is a complex and multifarious phenomenon which covers many more aspects than the preceding analysis contains. So, the presented considerations are only single tesserae of the overall picture of European identity. The intention of the previous examination was not to estimate whether a European identity exists or not. Rather the intention was to elaborate conditions which have to be fulfilled for the development of a deep rooted European “We-feeling” of the European citizens.

The European identity has to be seen as a collective identity. Each member of the European community has to identify him or herself with the basic European characteristics. Thereby fundamental similarities between the European citizens originate which is the basis to develop a common European “We-feeling”. The different commonalities turn out to be the distinctive features which characterize differing collective identities. The European community is typified by multiple similarities. On the one hand the European community covers universal similarities (e.g. western values), on the other hand the European community covers special similarities (e.g. European diversity) which are exclusively shared by the European citizens. The interplay of both modes of similarities establishes the special European collective identity and separates it from other collective identities.

The European commonalities are mainly results of the common European history, European culture and European policy. These dimensions are strongly related with each other and form together the reference framework for the common European identity. The political dimension has a particular point in this overall concept regarding a European identity. The European uniqueness arises mainly out of the historical and cultural diversity. There is a common basis but there is not the one European history and the one European culture. In contrast the political dimension of the European community is featured by a stronger homogeneity. To ensure the political legitimization of the European community common political projects, one common political civil society as well as one common political public arena is needed. Although all three dimensions (history, culture, policy) are important for European identity, the political dimension appears to have the strongest potentials to modify the conditions for creating a European (political) identity. By contrast the historical and cultural dimension is already determined so there are fewer possibilities to change identity forming conditions.

The fundamental starting point for the development of a European political identity is a common political project which joins the European citizens. Only by the process of implementing a common political project (based on fundamental political aims) a real political identity can be developed by the citizens. Thus the implementation as well as the output of this political project has to be anchored in the consciousness of all members of the European community. So the political project has to become part of their everyday life. The first at once
the last identity forming project was the European peace project at the beginning of the European integration process. The vital source for this process was the hope for an enduring peace in Europe, the request for security against the eastern block and the expectation for welfare in the destroyed European countries after the Second World War. Today these goals are mostly fulfilled by a Europe which is characterized by security and prosperity. Whereas the preservation and extension of these achievements are still important for the further European integration process these projects lost their power as identity forming projects. Peace is increasingly taken as granted in particular by the younger generations. They are not searching for the sense of a European Unity in retrospect to the conflictual past but for a perspective for their future. Therefore Europe currently misses a strong political project being a justification for the European community. Without such a strong project the European identity cannot shape up anymore and is running risk to remain at its current state. Hence the central question to ask is what could serve as such a new strong European political project?

Such a project has to be based on challenges and issues all European citizens are facing. Compared to the postwar period the today’s challenges are more diffuse and not so perceptible. A typical example is the globalization causing worries and fears by many European citizens. Another point could be the desire of many people (about three quarter of the Europeans) for a strong foreign and security policy. Actually there are two tendencies how to approach these challenges: the protectionist way (single national) and the contrary trying to face the problems conjoined (joined Europe). The European and Dutch politician Brugmans augured already 50 years ago that world policy would be done by the European together or not at all. Today this statement points out to be truer than ever before. Just in a more and more globalize world the protectionist approach is the wrong one and only Europe as singular global player can unfold its whole influence.

One idea of creating such a global player, which could competes with other ones like the United States, China and Russia, is the vision of a “United States of Europe” (the concrete character is not essential and not necessarily alike the eponym). This would enable Europe to play a major role in the world development and to successfully face the today’s challenges. Besides the ones mentioned above there are others like energy logistics, control of the international capital markets, perpetuation of the social standards etc. So, on the other hand it could simultaneously serves as the wanted strong European political project. It would directly react on the desires and fears of the European citizens.

Before being able to start realizing such a project a few proceeding steps are necessary. It would be very important that the European policy became more importance in the everyday life policy and that feedback to the everyday life of the citizens is ensured. Only by this the European citizens can notice Europe as part of their environment and make it to a reference
point of their personal life. Hence, the establishment of such an incisive European political project has to go along with reforms and affords for a better participation of the citizens in the European processes. Also the transparency of the European policy making has to be amended. These first and preceding steps are already about to be implemented. Currently they are the easiest possibility to create identity supporting requirements.

But in order to bring forward the European identity in general as well as the European political identity in particular significantly such a European project would be the fundamental element which would “make the European citizens dream again”.
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