Research Article

HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL PREMISES OF CREATING A EUROPEAN IDENTITY IN THE CONTEXT OF YOUTH EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

There are a number of current socio-political problems that need to be addressed that are weakening the unity of the European Union, such as Brexit, Euroscepticism, and migration. Economic imbalance between the extremely rich and very poor results in a growing dissatisfaction of the member states' citizens whose trust in their governing bodies is decreasing. The loss of civic certainties and unstable personality profiles lead them to search for new identities. This study aims to reflect upon the issue of European identity in the light of the historical and political development of Europe and Slovakia. It also presents the opinions of students regarding this issue.

INTRODUCTION

Definitions of Personal, Collective and European Identity

The topic of European identity is the subject of current and long-lasting discussion, however, the definition of the term "identity" varies depending on the discipline as well as the initial paradigm. Identity as a term came into use in the 1960s within the field of sociology, social psychology, historiography, anthropology, political sciences and other disciplines. All the emerging definitions of identity stemmed from the Latin poly-semantic word "idem"-the same, identical. One of the meanings refers to the notion of commonality, the other assumes a certain constant pattern that persists over time. (Findor, 2010). Identity as a term comprises of two aspects prominent in comparison of persons/phenomena-sameness and difference. (Jenkins, 2008: 17).

The main subject of this study is pedagogy, therefore we will take the basic definitions of personal identity from the field of psychology and refer to the political sciences for the notion of national and European identity. According to Brubaker and Cooper there are five repeating ways of how the term "identity" is perceived.

1. Identity as a basis for social and political activity contradicting the „interest of an individual".

2. Identity as a specific collective phenomenon marking the essential feature of sameness in members within a group or category.

3. Identity as a key to both the individual and the social group. Without understanding identity we would be unable to discuss the essentials of existence on individual and group level.

4. Identity as a result of social and political activity (in terms of its procedural nature).

5. Identity resulting from various competing definitions of individual and collective affiliation pointing out the unstable nature of those definitions. (Brubaker - Cooper, 2000: 6-8)

Psychology defines the identity of an individual as the subjective experience of a human being that is created and maintained through social interactions. We are much more interested in the developmental point of view (Kroger, 2000) where identity is seen as a new onto-genetic quality of self-reflection that one achieves at a certain stage of personality development. Erikson who has introduced this term claims the difference between self-identity (personal identity) and ego-identity. Personal identity is the act of a temporal and social realisation of one's self. Ego-identity is crucial for the individual in the long run and it is formed predominantly at the age of late adolescence (Erikson, 1969). When creating one's

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own personal identity the adolescent needs to experience their own uniqueness that makes them take their stance in the social environment and evaluate their social experience in a new way. (Miller, 1989).

We perceive personal identity (in agreement with Bačová drawing from B. R. Schlenker) as a self-constructed perception of an individual regarding the way they are, the way they want to be perceived and treated in their social life. We can see it as a tidy collection of self-knowledge in social situations and relationships past, present and hypothetical. Creation of personal identity is a continuous and never ending process. Social identity is a subjective view of one's affiliation with social groups objectively determined and overlapping with personal identity. (Bačová, 1997)

The notion of European identity is even more ambiguous and subject to complicated explanations. The theoretical basis of European identity lies within its historical roots as well as in the historical development of individual national identities and their sense of belonging with the greater political aggregates. The other end of theoretical spectrum forecasts the emergence of a new identity – the supra-national European identity. Europe is unique in its national, regional, linguistic, cultural and religious diversity, aiming for "unity in diversity" at the same time. Any common identity has to be based upon this cultural diversity while maintaining similar systems of values within the individual nations.

The theories of European identity emerging from the concepts of national and regional identities are basically of the following two kinds. The first theory is represented by social constructivism and points out the arbitrary nature of identity criteria when we aim to emphasize the difference between "our" group and "others". The second theory claims that the bonds we form by being born into a specific language, religious and cultural group are the strongest ones (Štichová-Popper, 2004) and this view of identity is predominantly cultural.

Federalists favour the supra-national European identity and claim that national states are obsolete and Europe has to adapt in order to face globalisation issues. Advocates of the cultural view believe that democracy is an obligatory precondition for the development of a nation where in turn democracy needs a common language, cultural origins, and shared past and future. Both factions agree, nonetheless, that Europe today faces challenges well beyond the boundaries of the individual member states. These have to be solved on the European Union level, because the competences of individual states are insufficient.

Keeping in line with the nature of our project we will focus on historical and cultural definitions of European identity. We perceive it as an overlap of individual national identities with the existing tendency towards acceptance and internalisation of common European values.

Historical and political basis of European identity

If we want to bring European identity under our scrutiny we have to take its historical background into account. The development within the temporal dimension of the past has been a witness to a symbiotic coexistence of several traditionally perceived national identities that have never become one stable homogeneous entity. The European continent and the regions within have been known for their vast heterogeneity and plurality in the ethnic and cultural (including language, religion, history, societal structure, etc.) aspects. Taking historical, social and cultural factors into account it is obvious that the Europeanisation of the continent continues under a strong influence of transculturalism, multiculturalism, multilingualism, and supra-national configuration of individual state units. However, the new dynamic geopolitical situation develops strictly within the ideas of European democratic societies.

The following historical notions have to be taken into account when analysing the historical and political foundations of European identity. This identity draws from the historical sources that were crucial to a later idea and the subsequent creation of European identity. Individual societies felt a sense of belonging to larger political groupings than in the past. The development and shaping of their national and ethnic identities have been unique and have to be respected as well as the contexts of the development of our Slovak national identity. The issue of historical periodisation regarding the forming of the European identity is still the subject of a professional discussion. Two different accounts of periodisation are given below:

According to a British professor A. Ross (2008) the shaping of the European identity is to be regarded from the following four aspects of human history.

1. 490-480 BC, the period of Persian attacks in the Mediterranean. The author puts an emphasis on those Persian values that enriched the Greek culture, such as formalised system of law, elimination of slavery, emergence of a centrally planned economy and monetary trade. The Edict of Cyrus was the first charter of human rights containing the notions of human dignity, religious freedom and tolerance while supporting local religions, rejecting slavery and oppression, etc.

2. The Roman Empire was the first attempt at European unification. Ancient Rome influenced the shaping of the European identity long after its demise in 476 AD, since the "barbarian" cultures drew from its political, cultural and economic heritage. This period is also notable for the migrations of peoples as well as the significant diversification of societies within Europe where the predominantly urbanised southern regions grow rich and the northern and eastern part of the continent remains uneducated and sparsely populated. Emerging monotheistic religions became increasingly popular. Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Islam traditions shared a common refusal of polytheistic and idolatrous religions. Social frameworks of behaviour of various civic groups mingle and duplicate. A new European identity in the 16th century was shaped under the influence of catholicisation, both in the positive and negative aspect.

3. The fall of Constantinople in 1453 is the initiative for a new qualitative development of European culture. The Renaissance period in particular relies upon the ideas of Antiquity and puts them into everyday practice. The overall worldview shifts from the ocentric to anthropocentric with the dominating humanistic ideas of Erasmus of Rotterdam. There is notable progress in

technologies and inventions and the typical national states are established. Several European powers compete in the colonisation of the world. The Protestant Reformation initiates the change of relationships within the society. "Nation" is defined as a group of people sharing common language and culture. A new configuration happens on the European and worldwide scale, an event that is being replayed currently, almost 500 years later. This very period is deemed to be a historical milestone in the shaping of European identity.

4. The period after Piece of Westphalia in 1648 is the most important according to Ross. The definitions of terms such as nation and national identity underwent several transformations.

At the same time these terms have shown their limitations as proven by the painful events in the period from 1914 to 1945 in the form of two world wars with their nationalisation, destruction and bloodshed. Drawing from the World War II experience Jean Monet tried to define a change in the orientation of European identity. He saw the vast social and cultural diversity of Europe as fruitful ground for further development and shaping of the region. (Ross, 2008).

Basic factors and historical periods shaping the European identity as well as individual national identities have been determined by the stages of the historical development of the European continent, Central Europe and Slovakia in particular. One cannot underestimate the educational potential of the European history in the worldwide context. It plays a crucial role in the Europeanisation process when it comes to the issue of youth education towards European citizenship.

Preconditions of the shaping of European identity according to authors of this study are based on the following historical periodisation

Antiquity-the first formation stage of European civilization (8th century BC-5th century AD)

This stage saw the emergence and shaping of unipolar Europe based on the residual influence of prehistoric civilizations. All the important cultural and civilisation features of antiquity, some of them existing since 3500 BC, have been fully developed by this time.

Basic development phenomena of continental Europe in the Middle Ages (5th-15th century AD)

The professional community agrees upon the division of the Middle Ages into two sub-periods. The era of geopolitical chaos lasting until the 10th century AD was followed by a period in which a unipolar Europe started to form. This ended in the 15th century AD. The regional diversification of Europe played an important role in the forming of a European identity during the Middle Ages. The fall of the Western Roman Empire in 476 AD resulted in the birth of three greater cultural regions. The south-eastern part of the continent, called the Balkans was the direct descendant of the Eastern Roman Empire. The Slavonic region spread in the central part of Eastern Europe with heterogeneous Asian, Byzantine, Islamic and western European influences. The western region represented the conjunction of Nordic and Anglo-Saxon cultures with a heritage of Greek and Latin traditions. These cultural regions met and mingled for the following sixteen centuries and so the foundation of the cultural diversity of Europe was laid. This diversity is still present where it is characterised by the continuous emergence and preservation of various individual identities.

Europe in the Modern Era, developmental conditions and issues in the forming of geopolitical centres (16th- 18th century AD)

The importance of new geopolitical centres reached far beyond the European scale. The gradual shift of economic, commercial and later political life from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic has become a major factor of development with a further impact on later history. From the 16th century onwards national identities were rising and Latin was being gradually replaced by national languages. However, any well-educated person of the period up to the 18th century, cultivated in the Graeco-Latin heritage, felt themselves to be a European citizen in the first place (see Dejiny Európy, 1992: 16). European culture and values found their way into the greater world due to overseas discoveries in the 16th century and the subsequent birth of colonial empires. Many new aspects of the world's cultural heritage have been added to the richness of European civilization. This aided the notion of "world citizenship". The whole historical development described in the paragraphs above ensured that Europe succeeded in maintaining a high level ofcivilization for centuries. Relatively homogeneous milieu enabled the shaping of the European identity even in the following periods marked with revolutionary conflicts. However, there were ongoing efforts to enhance national diversity, mostly in the context of national awareness movements throughout the South-Eastern, Central and Eastern Europe. These efforts brought an increase in ethnic, religious and national conflicts even though the background of the areas involved was homogeneous from the point of view of culture and civilization (Zemko, 1997: 19).

Modern Europe (1789- 1918)

The Age of Revolutions marked the beginning of Modern history. Revolutions in England, Netherlands, Northern America and France strengthened already existing social conflicts but also brought a new wave of spiritual awakening. The ideas of humanism, enlightenment, liberalism, nationalism and socialism were all a part of the emerging concept of democracy, justice (also in the social life) and the freedom of the individual. The second part of Modern history (1848/49 – 1918) has been governed by strictly nationalist tendencies which brought instability and international tensions escalating into World War I but this period is thought to be positive nonetheless. Basic European values have spread and taken root within other nations and world societies. It is to be noted, however, that the European powers have exported not only new technologies but also their notion of the supremacy of European culture and civilization, especially over their multiple colonies. Historical development in Europe has been of a twofold nature from the end of the 18th century. Emerging and "awakening" nations battle for their independence in this period. On the other hand the formation of the common European historical and cultural heritage is still underway and leaves its characteristic mark upon the history of all European nations, Slovaks included. The prominent Slovak historian J. Alberty (2005: 262) aptly remarked that "the European

dimension has an intellectual outlook, a policy of democratisation and nationalisation in the history of the national elites that led the European nations (even the Slovak nation - VK) and the region they populated to the historic crossroads of 1848 ". The development of a national identity of Slovaks copied that of the pivotal European nations of that period including our immediate neighbours in Central Europe. The historical and cultural values of the European region played their role in Slovak history with their multiculturalism and multi-ethnicity. Ethnic identity is a token of security in the Middle Ages and the beginning of the Modern Era. From the 18th century on, Central Europe experiences an acceleration of national-emancipation processes within the individual ethnicities (from 1780s in the Slovak ethnicity as well). National identity is shaped where it is temporally and semantically contrastive to the ethnic identity. These are the basic features of a national identity:

1. national freedom and interests,
2. national culture,
3. politics (the will of a nation enables the creation of national politics with their separate programmes),
4. territory,
5. state (statehood), the idea of nation states (statehoods) began to form (Škvarna, 2012: 15, 18).

Development of Europe in the recent past (1918 – 1945)

The two World Wars have influenced historical development not only on the European continent but worldwide. However, the nature of the developmental tendencies in Europe has been determined by the efforts to solve national and social issues. The struggle against totalitarianism and its ideology, politics and practical implementation relied heavily on the endeavours to make Europe and the wider world democratic, stable and safe. Modernisation of social connections brought advantages for individuals to enhance their identity, self-realisation and relationship with the "foreign" people. Family ties that had been tight until that point were loosened, along with the ties to social background and traditions. Social integration of an individual underwent a formal change by achieving freedom from the confines of their local area. (Habermas, 1999:50). New national states emerged from small European nations, including Czechs and Slovaks, after World War I. was over. With many, the state-building and national-emancipation process was never completed due to the dominant nationalistic and totalitarian rule.

Current development of Europe (1945-now)

This (currently) last period of European and world history can be divided into three sections for the sake of clarity:

a) Europe in the bipolar world (1945 - 1989).
b) The unipolar period (1989 - end of the 20th century).
c) The multi-polar period in the context of the unification of Europe and the founding of the European Union (beginning of the 21th century until now) (Korim, 2015).

Integration efforts throughout Europe started to gain strength again from the 1990s and culminated at the beginning of the 21st century in the establishment of European Union. The world has entered an era of multi-polar development where the threats of clashes between different cultures and civilizations are intensifying. The prognoses for unified Europe and a common European identity are less optimistic due to the growing tendencies towards fragmentation spreading through the continent. These include not only Brexit, but also the loosening ties within the EU itself and with the USA, discussions of a common EU army, unequal economic potential of the member states, etc.

Experts in the field, thinking within the framework of contemporary European integration processes, agree upon the "European" perception of the ethnic and national histories of the region. This perception views the German, Romanesque and Slavic culture, politics and history as equal parts of European heritage. The building of a Slovak national identity relies greatly upon its education system. However, there still are many politicians and professional figures who tend to criticise the Europeanisation process and seek flaws within the European unification models. Advances in European integration are based on the principles of national identity, national cultural heritage, homogeneity of civilizations and language as a means of communication, and the sharing of common values imbued in national traditions.

Ross (2008) has articulated the following five groups of attributes of European identity, regarding the above mentioned topics:

a) Basic human rights and freedoms.
b) Social care.
c) Education.
d) Mobility.
e) Attitude towards language and communication.

The ability to learn not only from each other but also draw from our past experience is deemed to be the key attribute of European identity. Reflection with the emphasis on improving the original values of the mankind throughout all its history is the biggest challenge the European politicians, economists, historians, political scientists, and teachers have to face nowadays. Excellent education is critical for the basic development of civic and European awareness and one of the five cornerstones of the European identity.

The shaping of a European identity is a part of a complex process of Europeanisation. This process is not only continuous from the historical point of view but also necessarily flexible towards the changing contemporary tendencies of the young generation. The following fundamental hypotheses for the shaping of a European identity can be specified, based upon the current geopolitical tendencies of European and world development together with contemporary research and surveys conducted within the field:

1. Cohesion of spiritual thoughts (in concordance with the ideas of Robert Schuman).
2. Political factors: strengthened democratic participation at all levels of European societies, the EU itself should be more democratic (meaning it cannot refuse other cultures and civilizations – V.K.).
3. Culture and education: introduction of the European principle to certain areas (e.g. history), the importance of language learning, exchange programmes, etc.
4. Social and economic cohesion: Reactions of EU to the social and economic differences should become more

flexible. Otherwise, other less developed countries or regions may follow the Brexit example to express their criticism towards the dictate of Brussels. (EurActiv, 2007).

5. There is a need for broader and much more constructive discussions about the topic of European identity.

Recent research on the shaping of the European identity of youth (e.g. the 2002 survey of 15 to 24 olds) point to several new problematic issues:

1. The right to employment is a dominant attribute of European identity and citizenship.
2. Young people are entering the labour market later than the previous generation. They also reach factual maturity proportionally later, a fact that is closely connected to their development of the sense of citizenship (according to research by Listerová from 2001).
3. Listerová also emphasizes the role of volunteering and community work in the shaping of the sense of citizenship in an individual. It is also the local-scale dimension of European citizenship. (Štichová - Popper, 2004: 358).

The shaping of European identity while considering individual national identities is a complex issue of international importance that surpasses the framework of education. The general process of education should therefore reflect the historical, philosophical, cultural, religious, political, civic and legal contexts that shape the development of individual societies, regions, nations, states, and larger groups. The European dimension of education can be perceived in the mutual connection of two essential components: the European educational policy and the education towards a European citizenship. European countries share a common history and therefore have a similar definition of citizenship: an affiliation with a certain state, nation or a group. This is the advantage Europe has in comparison with other societies and cultures worldwide.

Attitudes of adolescents towards selected aspects of identity

The previous two chapters have stated the theoretical basis for the topics of social and European identity. At the same time teachers involved in youth education note that young people tend to show increased indecision in their socio-political views. The Faculty of Education at the Matej Bel University in BanskáBystrica therefore decided to conduct research on how the identity of adolescents is formed. In order to meet this aim the research project VEGA 1/464/16named *Attributes of a European identity in the context of youth education* started in 2015. The main goal of this project is to identify and describe relevant attributes of European identity and decide upon their importance in the context of youth education. Theoretical analysis, expert studies and multidisciplinary research carried out at the Department of Pedagogy are all used to achieve this goal. The project is also aimed at the implementation of the examined attributes into the concept of youth education and to help to enhance the European identity in young people. The most significant change in personality development happens in the post-puberty and adolescent age according to the previously referenced definitions of identity. At this young age people are easily affected by their social environment. They tend to identify with certain social roles and try to find their own identity within their macro- and micro-social surroundings. Although the participation rate of Slovak citizens

of working age in social and political matters of the Slovak Republic and EU is low it was balanced by many, though often ambivalent, civic activities of young people in the last year (2017). The young generation demands the principles of democratic society be maintained (via anti-corruption marches, petitions, student anti-discrimination challenges, and various other events) however, many of them openly show their growing agreement with extremist opinions and discriminatory actions. These negative social reactions of young people are not being taken lightly by sociologists, political analysts, and other experts who endeavour to find the reasons for anti-social youth behaviour. The task of discovering the ways of changing this behaviour is left to the teachers. It is necessary to know how young people think, what they identify with and whether the attributes that we consider to be essential for the creation of a European identity are relevant for them as well. Only after that can a model of humanistic, pro-socially orientated pro-European educational activity be created and introduced into educational practice.

The key attributes of European identity established in this project:

1. The attribute of temporal change (dependent on the respondents' age).
2. The areal attribute (affiliation with micro-, mezzo-, and macro-societies-city, region, state, Europe-together with the respondent's interest in their own language, state politics, economic and social topics).
3. The attribute of cultural diversity (attitude towards other cultures-migration, equality, opportunities).
4. The My Identity questionnaire, which was a part of the project, aimed to identify the attitudes of young people to these attributes using the degree of acceptance of the selected statements.

Selected results from My Identity research

Attitudes of the youth to the individual attributes were determined by a scaled questionnaire ranged 1 to 8, with value 1 indicating complete approval and value 8 -absolute disapproval. Neutral attitudes were allocated to the values 4 and 5 (4.5 mean). The closer the mean of respondents' answers to value 1, the stronger their agreement with the claim, and vice versa.

Respondents were chosen by a random sampling method. They were sorted by the following criteria: sex, age (level of study), residence (countryside, city), region (Bratislava, eastern/central/western part of Slovakia). A total number of 484 respondents, 316 female and 168 male, took part in the research.244 of them attended high school and 240 were graduate MA students with an age difference of five years in average. 260 of the respondents lived in cities and 224 in the countryside. The western part of Slovakia, including the capital city, was represented by 204 respondents. 150 people came from the central part and 130 from the east of the country. The hypothesis of normality of distribution with the significance level $\alpha = 0.01$ was rejected in all items and variables of the questionnaire. Therefore the significant difference in individual answers were subjected to a non-parametric statistical testing.

This study gives an overview of the selected results relevant to its theoretical scope:

1. What is important for the shaping of European identity?
2. The respondents' trust in parliament.
3. How would the respondents vote in a referendum about Slovakia leaving the EU?
4. What kind of citizenship do the respondents identify with (EU, Slovak Republic)?

The answer to the first question was the most interesting in the framework of this study.

The respondents identified the following attributes as the most important ones in the shaping of European identity:

1) a high degree of legal protection, 2) democratic values, 3) a common currency, 4) unified political system, 5) the principle of "unity in diversity". (See Tab.1)

Tab.1 Importance of selected phenomena in regard of shaping of European identity

What is important in the shaping of European identity	Mean	Std. Deviation	Confidence interval
Shared history	3.645	1.818	1.8-5.5
Geography	3.492	1.827	1.7-5.3
Democratic values	2.579	1.585	1-4.2
High degree of legal protection	2.543	1.550	1-4
Common culture	3.647	1.993	1.7-5.6
Codification of common official language	4.864	2.493	2.4-7.4
Shared religious legacy	4.669	2.304	2.4-7
Common currency €	3.273	2.192	1.1-5.5
Symbols: flag, anthem	4.019	2.305	1.7-6.3
"Unity in diversity" principle	3.386	1.819	1.6-5.2
Unified political system	3.244	1.923	1.3-5.2

The assumption that common history, culture, and geographical location will be in the first three places has not been confirmed. Shared religious legacy and codification of a common official language of EU were deemed not very important for the respondents. Disparities in the answers of male and female respondents have shown a statistical correlation significant at the level α = 0.05 in the following phenomena:

Tab 2 Civic-political identification of the respondents

I see myself as:	number	%
EU citizen first, only then a citizen of Slovak Republic	17	3.5%
Slovak Republic citizen first, only then a EU citizen	340	70.2%
citizen of EU and Slovak Republic equally	127	26.2%
My vote in a referendum about Slovakia leaving the EU would be:	number	%
Pro	97	20.0%
Contra	283	58.5%
I don't know	104	21.5%
I trust	number	%
more in the Slovak National Council than in the European Parliament	33	6.8%
more in the European Parliament than in the Slovak National Council	159	32.9%
both parliamentary bodies equally	33	6.8%
neither parliament	259	53.5%

"Unity in diversity" principle (p = 0.00), Unified political system (p = 0.002). Based on this correlation it can be assumed that the fact women put much more importance on these two attributes in comparison to their male counterparts applies to all the students of high schools and universities in Slovakia.

It was necessary to know the civic-political characteristics of all respondents listed in Table2 (in addition to the already known attributes of sex, age/study, residence, and region) in order to identify their answers more accurately.

A closer examination of the opinions situated at both extremes of the sample spectrum regarding the civic-political identification was in order.

Figure 1 shows the arithmetic mean of the responses regarding the importance of individual attributes as seen by the groups identified by their citizenship (Fig. 1).
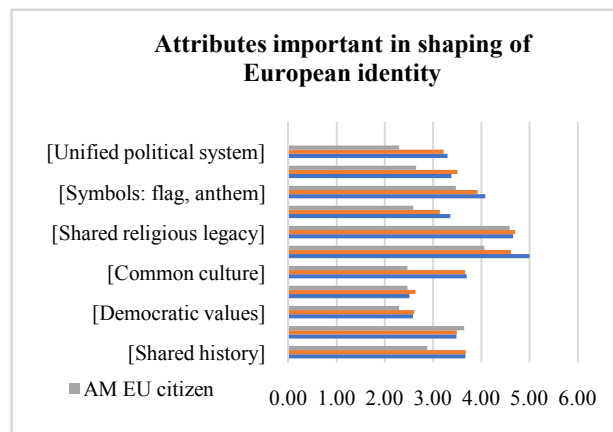

Fig 1 Responses of groups identified by their citizenship.

Responses at the extreme sides of the spectrum-Slovak citizen first/vs. EU citizen first-were compared. No significant statistical correlation was noted in any of the questionnaire items. After taking the standard deviation into account the overall values of responses were within the positive value range 1.3 to 5.6.

Table 3 shows the mean values of the responses regarding the importance of European identity attributes if we compare them in terms of the respondents' confidence/distrust in the European Parliament/Slovak National Council.

Tab. 3 Mean values of the degree of agreement with the statements in the "parliament trust" group

What is important in shaping of European identity	more trust in the Slovak National Council	equal trust	more trust in the European Parliament	trusts neither parliament
Shared history	3.30	3.52	3.73	3.65
Geography	3.03	3.58	3.61	3.47
Democratic values	2.67	3.24	2.54	2.51
High degree of legal protection	2.21	3.15	2.56	2.50
Common culture	3.12	3.12	3.60	3.81
Codification of common official language	4.61	4.48	4.47	5.19
Shared religious legacy	4.03	4.09	4.85	4.71
Common currency €	3.45	2.70	3.00	3.49
Symbols: flag, anthem	3.45	4.18	3.78	4.22
"Unity in diversity" principle	3.48	3.73	3.16	3.47
Unified political system	3.64	3.09	2.82	3.47

Statistical correlation was found in the responses of border groups of respondents, who have been defined by statements: I trust both parliaments / I trust neither parliament:

Democratic values (p = 0.025), Codification of common official language (p = 0.025), Common currency € (p = 0.028).

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the questionnaire items has shown that most respondents consider themselves first to be citizens of Slovakia, and only then EU citizens. They would vote against Slovakia leaving the EU but they do not trust either the European Parliament or the Slovak National Council. The most important attributes of creating an identity are democratic values, legal protection, a unified political system, and compliance with the "unity in diversity" principle. The questionnaire has shown that the feeling of belonging to the European supra-nation is proportional to the individual's sense of being a Slovak, and vice versa. Respondents who feel to be more European than Slovak citizens attach greater importance not only to the principle of "unity in diversity", but also to teaching at least two foreign languages and the codification of a common official EU language. Young people are more aware of belonging to the Slovak nation and the Slovak Republic than to smaller social units (city, region). Their awareness of belonging to Europe and the EU is also less significant. However, they are more proud of living in Europe than of the fact they are living in Slovakia.

Some of the research results confirm the findings presented in regular Eurobarometer surveys (see Eurobarometer EB79.5) therefore they can be deemed relevant in terms of the subsequent creation of education models aimed at strengthening the European identity in young people. The proposed models will build on the specific attributes of identity in Slovakia (Lášticová, 2001), while taking the contemporary ideas of a European identity based on common values and preserving the principle of "unity in diversity" into account, so that the national identities of citizens gradually become a multicultural European identity.

Summary

The European Union is a complex society. When aiming for a sophisticated system of education supporting European citizenship it surely faces multitude of contradictions and other problems. Citizens in multicultural (but also transcultural) social systems (as is the case with the EU) are in conflict with national, regional and transnational (in this case European) identities. The education of students about European citizenship must cross the boundaries of learning about civic life in Slovakia and the European Union and aim to teach young people to live a full-fledged civic life in the EU.

A consistent system based on the following basic dimensions and factors seems an effective model of education for European citizenship:

1. Civilization dimension founded on these types of identities: historical, ethnic, national, religious (worldview), linguistic and cultural.
2. Political dimension with the following identity components: geographic (spatial), sovereign-hierarchical, state-building, military-strategic and regional-local.
3. Political dimensions which include: the political-legal component, the social identity, the civic identity and the value component, the economic-political dimension, and the educational component (education policy).

These four concepts are themain priorities when it comes to public discussion and education policy:

1. Cultural concept-Cultural Europe, Europe as a family of nations.
2. Political concept-Europe for citizens or Constitutional Patriotism.
3. Inter-civilisation concept-Europe as a conflict area.
4. Regional identity concept-Regional Europe.

One of the suggested concepts (perhaps a hybrid concept) will certainly play an essential role in fulfilling the vision (and reality) of shaping the European identity. This seems to be true especially with young people who are gradually becoming its architects and bearers alike. In addition to the system of education, family and society play an equally important role in the shaping of European identity and developing citizenship. Education should help to ensure that citizens to be are aware of their rights and responsibilities, and therefore the education system is a demanding one and a challenge not only for everyday social practice and social life, but also for researchers in the field.

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