

# The Objectification of European Identity in the Treaties and in European Institutions' Declarations

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## ABSTRACT

In recent decades the concepts of "nation" and "territorial identity" have undergone a transformation in terms of politics and academia, with a shift from traditionally dominant ethno-cultural concepts to others of a political-civic nature. The former tend to define identity through objective elements (language, history, territory, culture, traditions, etc.) while the latter take a more subjective approach (basically, 'the will to be'). In this paper, we delve into this transformation in the case of European identity. To this end, we propose a qualitative and evolutionary approach that uses texts promoted by the EU (declarations and treaties), in which identity plays a relevant role. We carry out a content analysis that singles out those elements that have come to objectify the European identity (and, as a contrast, we look at those elements bearing on the identity of the Member States). While we identify an advance in the political-civil conception as a reflection of the general trend, culturally-oriented objective elements still remain in 21st Century texts. This reflects the need to publicly present an identity in construction as something naturalised, and as part of a reality built through the ages. For Europe the concepts with greatest presence are "European identity" (more frequent in reports and brief declarations), "European culture" and "common European heritage" (more common in the treaties). These are concepts that, in some sense, reflect a given reality.

**Keywords:** European identity, European Union, nation, European construction.

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## INTRODUCTION. THE SUPRANATIONAL EUROPEAN IDENTITY

Over the last few decades, ethno-cultural nationalism has become increasingly discredited while at the same time political and civil identity approaches have been gaining acceptance (see Author). The conception of European identity has undergone a transformation from culturally-oriented approaches (in which there has been an attempt to objectify the common identity of Europeans) to formulations that some call ‘Republican’ (but that, following the logic of nationalism, could fit within the civic-political sphere), and even within a partial renunciation of the ‘objective’ of European identity.<sup>1</sup> This paper takes a qualitative approach from a historical perspective; its goal is to reveal this hypothetical transformation and at the same time show the hurdles to creating a European identity, one of the EU’s ‘non-economic’ priorities at various points in time. This in turn lets one more accurately pin down the self-definition of European identity drawn up by the architects of ‘The European Project’ and that lay plans for building such an identity.

As a first step and in order to develop an argument, we will try to determine to what extent a European identity can be equated with a national identity. Here, we combine both objective and subjective factors on similar lines to Hroch (1996) and Gellner (1983). In doing so, we consider that a nation enshrines: (1) a community with a common origin and history (often embellished to give a little mystique); (2) a common territory; (3) a shared culture (including some elements that in some cases are decisive such as language, customs, traditions, lifestyles, religion and so forth), and which could have undergone some kind of political formation or institution to which all members are (or were) linked. A nation is also one whose members recognise that they belong to

a community based on internal homogeneity that is provided by common characteristics (Author).

European identity is based on a Continental European ‘super-nation’ and as a ‘national identity’, combining both objective and subjective elements. Yet its short, murky path towards objectification to date attracts little support from citizens in EU Member States (Authors).

### *The objectification of European identity*

First of all, one needs to determine whether objective factors (the first part of the definition previously cited) make sense in the case of a European identity. Maryon McDonald (1999: 78; also see Delanty, 2003; Innerarity, 2013) highlighted the difficulties of such an approach some years ago, namely:

1. The “culture-history-people-territory” package that nationalism has traditionally used is not easily transferable to Europe, and therefore it is complicated and less than convincing.
2. Nations have been built progressively, in some cases over centuries, permitting a greater accommodation of the elements of identification. The short life of the EU carries connotations of artificiality, making the *ad hoc* construction all the more apparent.
3. Nationalism is linked to certain traditions and beliefs that do not correspond to current forms of diversity and relativism.
4. The old *nationalism* assumes that identities are monolithic and that cultures are homogeneous; however, identities are contextual, relational and changing (something that is becoming increasingly clear).

We largely accept these reasonable objections and consider, like Popa (2016: 11), that we are talking about two identities (the European-supranational and the national ones of Member States) whose interaction — whether competitive or of a complementary

<sup>1</sup> The concepts that tend to objectify identity are of an ethno-cultural nature, while those based on subjective elements are more of a political-civic nature (see Author). Political-civic concepts are linked to acquired traits while ethno-cultural concepts are more linked to innate ones (see Westle, 2016), although this last dichotomy is not covered in this paper.

nature — means they need to be approached on the same level. The hegemonic rivalry among pro-European elites and some of the Member States, sharpened precisely by the effort to create a European Constitution in 2004 first, and later by the financial crisis, reveals this need at a time when the European project is being openly challenged.

We have already pointed out the difficulties of pinning down the factors objectifying European identity. In this respect, Europe lacks both a single, exclusive history and clear political precedents providing a shared sense of European belonging. Furthermore, the territory is under constant change and debate, there is no identity based on a clearly-defined cultural tradition. Likewise, there is no single language that could facilitate the development of a common public culture and Christianity cannot yield a clear, unifying nucleus. In addition, European symbols are pending consolidation. Last but not least, there is no recognisable 'other' for the whole of Europe beyond diffuse continental delimitations.

Yet the hurdles to objectifying a European identity are not much different from those faced by Nation States in the past (and even currently), and they have been resolved through ignoring certain facts, modifying others, reframing historical facts, stressing the pertinent elements, etc. (see Hobsbawm and Range, 1998). Yet despite our reservations, we assume that there are still elements (whether clearer or murkier) that help objectify Europe and its identity.

### *The subjective factor: problems of legitimacy*

The EU's own publications set out the European Union as a project that — in theory at least — stemmed from the laudable objectives of preventing new confrontations among States and promoting co-operation and democracy. Yet the embryonic entity (The European Coal and Steel Community — ECSC), and practice since then, and the legal framework deployed to date cannot hide the EU's servitude to the markets, the widening of which (coupled with the creation of better conditions for European capital) have been the drivers of Continental legal-

institutional development (Etxezarreta, 2008: 123; Balanyà *et al.*, 2002). In parallel, the ideological struggle against the political model represented by the USSR cannot be underestimated.

Nevertheless, after the excessive initial emphasis on economics and the push towards a single market and the free circulation of goods (and later also of people), the need was felt to bring the EU closer to the citizenry. To address this need, a package of democratic measures was drawn up to attract support for the idea of Europe and for realisation of its founding ideals. This need grew as the EU expanded; surveys confirmed Europeans' disaffection with the European project (Fligstein, 2009), and the stigma of the 'Europe of Merchants' was not lessened by the Treaty of Maastricht. In fact, in order to explain the primacy of a liberal approach to the economy, bureaucracy and the law, Pribáň (2009: 45-46; see also Hernández and Ramiro, 2016) the EU introduced an oxymoron — the "politics of depolitisation" — which in nothing more than an update of the Enlightenment's slogan "Everything for the people nothing by the people" [attributed to Austro-Hungary's Joseph II]. There has been an attempt to neutralise political conflicts through the legal system and through an acceptable level of economic wellbeing, with little democratic development of European institutions.

Therefore, the idea of Europe or the European supranation as an entity that generates a territorial identity with a specific sense of belonging is still far from becoming a reality, as we have pointed out in another work (Author). Identity is still a supposition, because the fact of "being European has not been identified" in a precise way (Friese, 2004: 110), at least for the time being. Furthermore, the national lens of each of the Member States still prevails and there is no decisive support for the idea of a European "supranation". There is, however, insistence on the promotion of democratic values, the goodness of co-operation, and the 'common' history but without questioning the primacy of national identities. This is reflected in the difficulties in passing The Treaty of Lisbon: a treaty that should have meant a step forward for the Union, but that instead is better

remembered for the successful opposition of some of its members (with the culmination of *Brexit*) rather than for its significance and future projection.

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## METHODOLOGY

Using the European Coal and Steel Community (1951) as a point of departure, European institutions have produced a great number of official documents. Logically, we are interested in those that can reflect the way in which these institutions project European identity. Based on the contributions of various authors (Clerc, 2014; Guth and Nelsen, 2014; Bekemans, 2012; Innerarity and Acha, 2010; Moes, 2008) and prior exploration, we consider the most relevant ones to be those that best show the evolution of official political positions bearing on European identity, namely: The Treaty of Paris (1951), The Declaration on European Identity (1973), The Tindemans Report (1975), The Adonnino Committee's Report (1985), The Treaty on European Union-Maastricht (1992), The Laeken Declaration (2001), the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe (2004) and The Lisbon Treaty (2007).

Other documents were explored, including the Treaty establishing the European Defence Community Treaty (1952), which did not alter the provisions of The Treaty of Paris and did not enter into force; The Treaties of Rome (1957) that established the EEC; the Treaty of Merger or Brussels (1965), which arose to bring together various European communities; The Act of the European Union (1986), which marks the beginning of Europe without borders but is mostly economic in character; The Treaty of Amsterdam (1997), which does not suppose a fundamental change with respect to Maastricht and implies above all extensions related to justice and security; The Treaty of Nice (2001), which barely alters The Treaty of Maastricht and served to prepare the way for the great Eastern enlargement. An initial content analysis of the above texts revealed a lack of relevant concepts related to identity (in most cases because the documents mainly focus on economic issues).

This is not the case for the finally included treaties (Paris, Maastricht, Constitutional and Lisbon). Although they were very general in nature, they increasingly included (with the advance of the integration process) elements that made reference to European identity. The case is different for the other four documents reviewed. They are briefer and correspond to declarations and reports ordered by the European Commission at different stages (above all during the 1973-1985 period) and are the result of the desire to offer an image of European construction less linked to economics and which would begin to connect with citizens. This desire was spurred by the first European surveys which revealed respondents' general indifference to an EEC that scarcely touched their lives (Fligstein, 2009). These texts contain a greater proportion of concepts bearing on identity, and logically this is even more so in the case of the monographic *Declaration on European Identity*. That said we do not need homogeneity in volume of words or in the nature of the texts given that our goal is not to determine which screed contains most references to European identity. Rather, our aim is to observe the evolution of the conceptualisation of European identity.

For the analysis of these texts, different lexemes have been selected that, based on the bibliography consulted and the semiotic analysis, we see as representing the construction of European identity (initially objectifying it): civilisation; culture; identity; heritage; religion; Christianity; history; ethnicity; tradition; destiny; symbolism; society and reality (these terms and their lexical roots were sought out). Evidently, the lexemes that refer explicitly to "Europe" or the "EU" are part of our analysis (the texts of the EU use both terms interchangeably. See Table 1), and these have been contrasted with the textual fragments where the lexemes have appeared (for example, cultural heritage of Europe, symbols of the EU, European society, religious tradition of Europeans, etc.) At the same time, these same concepts have been identified in the texts of Member States or other territorial groupings (Table 2) in order to serve as a contrast. Through the coding app of the qualitative analysis software *Atlas*

ti, the roots of the terms in the texts were located. Later the meaning was checked to ensure accuracy, either for the construction of the identity of Europe or the Member States. Once meaning was identified, frequency tables were constructed for the content analysis.

As reported by Hopkins and King (2010), and Gattermann, Högenauer and Huff (2016), the literal analysis of government documents is a common, relevant way to understand the policies and even the ideologies of those who run the institutions. Nonetheless, making use of official European texts is infrequent (see, for example, Wisniewski, 2013; or Waldschmidt, 2009), and it is even rarer to work with the treaties and declarations that we have selected.

Our approach is thus a novel one, allowing us to get to the core of official EU identity policies in order to delimit the channels running within the framework of the objective-subjective dichotomy.

## RESULTS. EVOLUTION OF THE OBJECTIVE FACTORS IN EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS' IDENTITY DISCOURSES

Following on from what has been outlined above, this paper analyses the evolution of the constructive elements in the official discourse of European institutions and — as our end goal — checks on their status in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century documents. The following frequency tables are based on the quantitative content analysis:

**Table 1** Presence of concepts that embody Europe or the EU in a selection of official documents of European institutions

	Words: thousands)	Civilisation	Culture	Identity	Heritage	Religion	History	Tradition	Society	Reality	Ethnicity	TOTALS	Concepts/ word
TP	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0.50
DEI	3	2	0	7	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	12	45.80
TR	16	1	1	7	3	0	1	0	6	5	1	25	16.11
ACR	7	0	2	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	5	7.19
TEU	104	0	3	1	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	7	0.67
LD	5	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	2	4.40
TCE	155a	0	5	0	5	1	1	1	1	1	0	15	0.97
TL	158	0	2	0	2	1	0	2	0	1	0	8	0.50
TOTAL		3	13	17	13	2	5	4	8	8	2	75	

(a) Without considering the declarations of the Final Act, which imply amendments and modifications of the original Treaty.  
*Legend:* TP=Treaty of Paris (1951), DEI=Declaration on European Identity (1973), TR=Tindemans Report (1975), ACR= Adonnino Committee's report (1985), TEU=Treaty on EU (1992), LD=Laeken Declaration (2001), TCE= Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe (2004), TL=Treaty of Lisbon (2007).

Source: Author's own research.

**Table 2 . Presence of concepts in a selection of EU institutions' official documents that embody the Member States of the EU or that refer to other territorial realities**

	Words -(000s)	Civilisation	Culture	Identity	Heritage	Religion	History	Tradition	Society	Reality	Ethnicity	TOTALS	Concepts/ word
TP	20	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.50
DEI	3	0	3	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	7	26.72
TR	16	1	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	5	3.22
ACR	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
TEU	104	0	3	4	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	10	0.96
LD	5	0	1	1	0	-1	1	2	0	0	-1	8	17.58
TCE	155 <sup>a</sup>	2	15	3	1	1	1	10	1	1	0	35	2.26
TL	158	0	4	1	0	0	0	8	0	1	0	14	0.88
Totals		4	29	10	2	2	5	23	1	2	1	80	

(a) Without considering the declarations of the Final Act, which imply amendments and modifications of the original Treaty.

Legend: TP=Treaty of Paris (1951), DEI=Declaration on European Identity (1973), TR=Tindemans Report (1975), ACR= Adonnino Committee's report (1985), TEU=Treaty on EU (1992), LD=Laeken Declaration (2001), TCE= Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe (2004), TL=Treaty of Lisbon (2007).

Note: Negative values indicate concepts used in a negative sense, as contrary to the EU project.

Source: Author's own research.

In absolute terms, the Tindemans Report (TR), the Constitutional Treaty (TCE) and the Declaration on European Identity (DEI) are the texts in which these concepts have the greatest presence in terms of the objectification of Europe. In the case of the objectification of Member States, the TCE clearly stands out, followed by The Treaties of Lisbon (TL) and of the Treaty of The European Union (TEU). The results are slightly different when one considers the total number of words. Here, objectifying concepts are given more weight in the short texts. They heavily include aspects of identity, most strikingly in the DEI but also the TR and the Adonnino Committee's Report (ACR) in the case of Europe, and the DEI and the Laeken Declaration (LD) for Member States.

In all of the texts, for Europe the concepts with greatest presence are "European identity" (more frequent in reports and brief declarations), "European

culture" and "common European heritage" (with greater presence in the treaties); while for Member States, "culture" and "traditions of the Member States" stand out above the rest. In many cases they are cited together to highlight the need to respect the diversity that is characteristic of the EU. "Tradition" does not appear as a concept in the objectification of Europe but we have already shown that it is frequently used for Member States. Likewise, "heritage" and "destiny" are barely used in connection with Member States but The Commission frequently relies on these terms when referring to European identity. In total, 75 concepts have been located that objectify Europe and 80 that objectify mostly all Member States. This reflects the delicate balance that the European Commission tried to strike in the wake of the ructions unleashed by the drafting of the 2004 constitutional text. Here, one should recall that some Member States rejected the text. These objected that it went

too far in extending EU powers and in using the same kind of symbols employed by Nation States. Based on the identification and quantification of the presence of these concepts through content analysis, we carry out a qualitative and evolutive approach to the documents to determine to what extent they maintain elements objectifying Europe as a supranational entity.

The idea of Europe as a union among peoples in order to preserve peace and to advance civilisation has its roots in the Enlightenment, and especially in the works of Kant and Rousseau. The idea was later taken up by Victor Hugo, who coined the term “The United States of Europe” by Victor Hugo (Granja and Charpenel, 2014; Clerc, 2014: 10). Against the wishes of its precursors, the idea of a European federalism along the lines of what had been formed in North America clashed with the formation and settlement of a world of Nation-States that reached its most perfected form in the first half of the 20th Century (Hobsbawm, 1992: 85-152). Around this time however, ‘Europeanism’ was already trying to find its place among Nation-States, albeit in a secondary fashion.

It was not until after post-war reconstruction efforts that these avenues began to be explored. As a backdrop, it was the desire for peace and reconciliation but also the need for capital (especially from The United States) to shape a stable market on The Continent. It was also part of an ideological battle against the Communist Bloc in Eastern Europe.

One of the most prominent personalities on the world stage, Winston Churchill, was among the first to insist on the need for co-operation and stressed that European States should move towards a sort of federation. His essentialist and supremacist conception of Europe is highlighted in his discourse at the University of Zurich (1946): Europe “is the home of all the great parent races of the Western world, the foundation of Christian faith and ethics, the origin of most of the culture, arts, philosophy and science” (cited in Popa, 2016: 13). He called for a collective

“act of faith” to achieve these goals “in which the millions of families speaking many languages must consciously take part” (Popa, 2016: 14). This, he felt, was the only way to forge a European identity and institutions, and so avoid future wars.

This is what stakeholders such as Robert Schuman, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs (who had German forbears) pressed for (albeit in a gradual way and with economic objectives only, without scope for the creation of a political community). In any case, the preamble of the Treaty of Paris (1951), which established the European Coal and Steel Community, foresaw that the pursuit of economic interests could suppose “the basis of a wider and deeper community”, an idea that The Treaties of Rome — which gave birth to the European Economic Community (EEC) — also insist upon (Bekemans, 2012). The first text mentions the common destiny to be pursued by European political institutions but there are few other references to constructing European identity. There are references to “civilisation” but with a more universal character, considering what European construction might contribute to Mankind.

It is worth noting that from the outset, European integration was a project of Christian Democrat Catholics<sup>2</sup> and was even supported by the Vatican. Protestant leaders, in contrast, showed initial reluctance of a nationalist nature, continuing the tradition of opposing the “universalist” project of the Catholic hierarchy. These Protestant sensibilities gave way to different branches with national links – Anglicans, Lutherans, and Calvinists. The religious variable has had — (from the first European-wide opinion surveys until now) great relevance to explain the level of citizen adherence to the European project. Catholic individuals (especially devout Catholics) have been those who have most supported European integration, compared with Protestants or agnostics (in general Protestants with nationally-formed

<sup>2</sup> Those considered founders of today's EU (Konrad Adenauer, Alcide de Gasperi, Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman) were devout Catholics and Christian Democrats.

churches were the ones most strongly rejected the idea). Only Conservative Catholics in the recently admitted Eastern countries and in some cases, The Republic of Ireland have escaped this tendency (Guth and Nelsen, 2014: 1-3).

Since the EEC's beginnings there have been references in declarations and various documents to a "common cultural heritage" that should join shared democratic values. There is the adoption of "the mechanisms traditionally used by States to create this shared identity, such as the hypostatisation of a common heritage, history and culture or a certain ethnocentric vision of culture" (Innerarity and Acha, 2010: 73-74). According to Keating (2009: 141; cited in Innerarity and Acha, 2010: 74), in this stage the initial elements of the search for a "European nation" can be identified but there is no mention of "European citizenry" (Máracz and Versteegh, 2010: 165). There is no civil conception of the nation, as we have said but rather a "cultural" one. This may be a result of the way identity was understood at the time (Churchill's statements show). The initial texts of the European institutions do not clearly reflect this conception because much greater weight was given to political issues.

It was during the seventies at the time of the first expansion (Denmark and The United Kingdom), that "the identification of European citizens as a base of legitimacy" first became a cause for concern (Innerarity and Acha, 2010: 74). This is explicitly reflected in the Declaration on European Identity (European Commission, 1973), which incorporates this concept, based on "common heritage and shared political values" and with the objective of supporting internal cohesion and ensuring the viability of the European project. There are already plans to integrate these elements into the educational system of Member States in order to forge friendly ties and, in synthesis, a culturally defined community (Innerarity and Acha, 2010: 74; see also Clerc, 2014: 8; Guth and Nelsen, 2014: 5). The civic elements are present in education plans but perhaps they are still subordinate to the historical and cultural ones.

In any case, at the time of the drafting of the Declaration on European Identity (DEI) the EEC was in its infancy, with limited political resources and the evident primacy of the Nation State (had this not been the case, The United Kingdom would have not even considered incorporation). This meant that prudence was a dominant feature in this declaration, and it therefore makes repeated reference to a "variety of cultures" within the framework of a "European common civilisation", highlighting above all the preservation of "legal and political values" and safeguarding "principles" such as representative democracy, the rule of law, social justice and human rights, as the basis for the formation of European identity. There is also trust in the ability of common institutions and policies to plant a seed in citizens' minds to become an "integral part of the European identity". Therefore, we find ourselves before an identitarian architecture that combines ethno-cultural and civic-political perspectives, in which there is no hesitation in using concepts such as "European civilisation" but where the emphasis of European identity clearly rests on present and future political-institutional construction. It explicitly states that:

Defining the European Identity involves: reviewing the common heritage, interests and special obligations of the Nine, as well as the degree of unity so far achieved within the Community; assessing the extent to which the Nine are already acting together in relation to the rest of the world and the responsibilities which result from this, taking into consideration the dynamic nature of European unification.

In conclusion, there is a combination of the historical-cultural (heritage) with the political-civil (interests and obligations, processes of construction), in addition to including a reference to the dynamics of selfhood-otherness (Europe-World), which is essential in the configuration of any identity (although other paragraphs speak of, for example, a shared heritage with The United States, in an Atlanticist widening of the civilising focus).

This declaration was one of the points of departure of the EEC's political development, and one year

later, at the Paris Summit, among other advances, the first steps towards popular election of the European Parliament took place. Those arrangements took effect in 1979 and thus strengthened the EEC's symbolic baggage. The first impulse given to a 'Citizen's Europe' was expected to foster a sense of belonging to a shared community.

The *Tindemans Report* (1975) is also of great importance, headed by another Christian Democrat, as were most of the initiatives of the first decades of European integration (Guth and Nelsen, 2014: 5). The report is perhaps the most visible antecedent of the European Union prior to Maastricht. Tindemans proposes a "Europe of the Citizens" including elimination of borders, unification of passports, a common educational space, the strengthening of the European Parliament, monetary union, etc. It is also a text littered with objective elements. For example, as with the DIE, it takes for granted the existence of a European civilisation (although it points out that it forms part of a wider civilisation) or the existence of a common heritage of all Europeans (which are values, culture, a world vision, etc.). European identity is expressed in several passages as a factual reality, both for non-Europeans and for Europeans (a reality that requires, however, both internal and external support). On the other hand, despite referring to a "history of unification of Europe", it was considered that such history was now at a key turning point and therefore was a history yet to be written. The Tindemans Report by insisting on "Europeans' common destiny" (a destiny that, like identity, should be seeded in the will of both European leaders and citizens), a "European society" (that exists, but also must be built along the lines of "our values") and even a "European reality", represents the most evident multi-conceptual objectification of a hypothetical "supranation" to date.

In 1984, at the Summit of Fontainebleau, in addition to economic measures, the EEC decided it was time to draw closer to citizens and to create/consolidate a European identity. With this in mind, the Adonnino Committee was created, this being the first push

towards the "Europe of the Citizens" and explicitly mentioning the need for "strengthening the image and identity of the Community" (Adonnino, 2014:19). The Committee was the precursor to the flag, the hymn and Day of Europe, elements that clearly imitate the symbolic repertoire of Nation States. Emphasis was also put on the need to intensify cross-border contacts at different levels (commercial, work, education, research, culture, etc.) to foster knowledge of more than one language, and other types of measures that would be of help in the construction of a European "us" (Adonnino, 1985; Guth and Nelsen, 2014:5).

Despite the focus on the citizen and the far-reaching elements of the Adonnino proposal at the time, the creation of identity was carried out from above and in a centralised manner (although it should be mentioned that the debate on participation in and the legitimacy of institutions had not reached today's feverish pitch).

In addition, in 1988 The Council of Europe decided that the educational systems of Member States should adopt a European perspective in order to continue fostering the idea of a common heritage and history. This included the publishing of books such as *Europe: A History of its Peoples* (Duroselle, 1990. London: Viking). That book speaks of over 5,000 years of the history of a European people (Karlsson, 1999: 65). This civilising Continental perspective was already being adopted after the Second World War, when for example "independence wars" of Gauls or Germanics "gave way to Romanisation presented as a process of European integration based on common civilisation and culture" (López Facal, 2010: 13). In general, historical explanations that are markedly national began to be rewritten in school textbooks, and a common European narrative began to take shape based on Greco-Roman tradition, Christianity and the feudal system of The Middle Ages, The Renaissance, The Enlightenment, The Industrial Revolution, and Liberal revolutions. This integrative perspective, which was meant to contribute to the prevention of conflict among European States, imposed a Eurocentrist vision that affirmed an "us" versus "them" (Asian or African),

which on occasions is made invisible and in others represented as antagonistic, in a similar way to what educational plans had done previously at the national level (López Facal, 2010: 14 and 23).

At the beginning of the nineties, the signing of The Maastricht Treaty (together with the recent fall of The Berlin Wall and the possibility of expansion to the East), was an inflection point in the bet on a European identity (Moes, 2008: 3). Steps toward a political union had already been taken and there was growing interest in and research on European identity, although more instrumental conceptions (civic-political or “post-national” ones, as noted by Innerarity and Acha, 2010: 74) were also becoming commoner.

The Treaty of the European Union (European Commission, 1992) states that the new institution is founded on the principles of “liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental liberties and the rule of law” (Article 6) and defines the legal status of European citizenship, granted to individuals from any of the Member States. It can be seen as a major step towards boosting a sense of belonging based on making democratic values effective, and as an instrument for empowering the internal dimension of ‘Europeanness’ (as opposed to merely drawing distinctions between the EU and the rest of the world). Aside from the success in achieving those aims and although the civic-political vision was the dominant one, the drafting of the text showed that part of the political spectrum saw the Christian tradition as being of overriding importance. To this extent, one can say the model was a “communitarian” one (Bekemans, 2012; Tsaliki, 2007: 159) and its cultural vision continued to play an important role.

This role is marked in references to “a common cultural heritage” or to a “cultural heritage of European significance”, which nonetheless was meant to be compatible with the cultural traditions of Member States. The existence of a “history of the peoples of Europe” is recognised, which since 1988 must be presented in a unified sense in text

books. In the same way, there is an explicit reference to “European identity”, not in the sense of what Recchi and Salamonska (2014: 512) call “belonging” but rather in the sense of an identity of difference and contrast with respect to other territories in the international context. This idea goes even further in the following statement: “the Union [should] assert its identity on the international scene, in particular through the implementation of common foreign and security policy, including the eventual framing of a common defence policy”. Other references are also made to a “European identity in terms of security and defence”. This, in addition to the restrictive definition of citizenship, is what has caused some authors to affirm that the TUE “establishes a unitary base for *exclusion*, rather than a coherent set of criteria for *inclusion*” (Tsaliki, 2007: 168), in terms of how to distinguish Europeans from the rest of the world, rather than laying the bases for the confluence of people in Europe.

Apart from the texts included in this study, various documents surfaced in the mid-1990s that focused on European identity. These documents shaped the conceptual debate and continued to highlight culturally-based objective elements in defining what it means to be European. The first of these is the *Charter of European Identity* (1995), prepared by the lobby of the European Federalists at the request of the ex-President of The Czech Republic, Vaclav Havel, and which saw Europe as a “community of destiny” whose values have been built on the “historical roots in classical antiquity and Christianity, (...) developed during the course of The Renaissance, The Humanist movement and The Enlightenment”, although the type of identity suggested is closer to a civic-political conception.

A year later, the EU celebrated a monographic meeting on European identity in Coimbra (Jansen, 1999), which also combined cultural and civic-political conceptions of identity. An example of the first is offered by Gilbert Trausch (1999: 26). From positions we could consider *perennialist* (Smith, 2005), he affirmed that European elites have acknowledged

this identity since The Middle Ages, even though its countries warred with one another until 1945. Yet the meeting also included talks about “European constitutional patriotism” (Eriksson, 1999: 66) — something that should be seen in the tumultuous world following the fall of The Berlin Wall and a context of ethnic conflicts. This new concept did not involve abandoning the idea of an ‘us’ versus an ‘other’ with competing interests (USA, Russia, China, etc.).

Before the dawn of the new millennium, it is also worth highlighting the appearance of the book *In From The Margins* (ETCD, 1997), edited by The Council of Europe and with a monographic focus on the importance of culture for development and for the formation of systems of symbolic meaning. As pointed out by Tsaliki (2007: 160), underlying this work is the need to define European identity based on cultural heritage, and in the future, based on “a common culture of the masses disseminated through an integrated European space in the media”. Tsaliki proclaims and puts value on European diversity but also points to unity and specificity as the initial impulses of democratic values.

Returning to the texts concerned in this analysis, the *Laeken Declaration* (2001) is another relevant text for understanding the official position of the EU in terms of European identity. Signed by the European Council of Laeken (Belgium), it laid the basis for the later *Convention on the Future of Europe* (2002-2003), which was then charged with writing the draft of The European Constitution. The truth is that it did not stand out for its support of European identity versus that of Member States but rather the contrary. It is an example of the precautions that later played a role in the boycotting of the Constitution. The section below is paradigmatic of a marked Liberal position on the issue:

In other words, what citizens understand [*hope for*] is opening up fresh opportunities, not imposing further red tape, (...) better responses to practical issues and not a European superstate

or European institutions inveigling their way into every nook and cranny of life.

In any case, as other texts previously mentioned, the idea of common European heritage also underlies this text but in this case, with an especial emphasis and value put on the history of Liberal thought (“Europe, the Continent of human values, The Magna Carta, The Bill of Rights, The French Revolution and the fall of The Berlin Wall...”).

This common heritage, which culminates in democratic values, is the identity baggage that the European project confronts in the so called “opposing forces”, which include “religious fundamentalism” and “ethnic nationalism”. Therefore, there is an explicit clash between the civic-political (positive) and the ethno-cultural (negative). The Laeken Declaration concludes by proclaiming the need to deepen democracy (although without sketching out anything more than a reform of the current delegation modality) and by making public the mandate of a Convention headed by Giscard d’Estaing, a former French President.

This new milestone, the *Convention on the Future of Europe* (2003), developed the work prior to the Constitutional Treaty and pointed to increasing the level of participation of European citizens in the decision-making process. The rejection of the European Constitution (2005) by the French and Dutch among others, forced a revision that culminated in The Treaty of Lisbon. This last treaty, however, has followed the same line as the Convention in terms of the reference to formal strengthening of the role of citizens, especially through “citizen initiatives” (Article 11.4) (Bekemans, 2012).

In terms of the content analysis, The Treaty of Lisbon is similar to The European Constitution, because it first emerged from the embers of the second, and therefore the total number of words is similar, and both texts are those of greatest length given their all-encompassing character. It is therefore logical that the analysed lexemes have a relatively lesser presence but

in absolute terms they do allow a detailed analysis. In the association with European identity or with Europe, common culture and heritage stand out, as in other documents, and are even put forward in a combined way to strengthen the objective basis on which the European construction must rest (“common cultural heritage”, “cultural heritage of European significance”, as pointed out in the TEU). Along the same lines, culture is associated with history (“history and culture of Europeans”). It seems to us very significant the way in which adjectives are added to heritage in Part II of The Constitutional Treaty (TCE), referred to as The Charter of Fundamental Rights, given that there are references to “spiritual and moral heritage” that the “Union is conscious of”, and that this acts as an historical framework for the current and future development of the EU’s universal and democratic values. More precisely, the preamble speaks of “cultural, religious and humanist heritage” that precedes these values, which is the only explicit reference to religion in both the TEC and The Treaty of Lisbon (TL) (although, in keeping with the Maastricht approach, it avoids any direct mention of Christianity).

However, in an effort to detect the objectification of European identity, the TCE stands out for its explicit introduction of symbolic elements. Specifically, Article I-8 states that the symbols of the EU are: the flag with the blue background and twelve yellow stars, the hymn based on “Ode to Joy” of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, the motto “Unity in Diversity”, the Euro (and its imprinted architectonic elements, anonymous but recognisable in European culture), and May 9th as The Day of Europe. This is precisely one of the principal modifications between the TCE and the TL, given that it was eliminated from the final text of the TL and only included as a declaration of the sixteen countries that accept the “sense of community” that exists behind these symbols. The other twelve (basically the Scandinavian and Baltic countries in the north, The British Isles, some of the Slavic countries as well as France and the Netherlands) partly rejected the constitutional text on the grounds that the introduction of these symbols could erode

their national integrity. The identity-based tension between the new supranational entity and the Nation States became manifest: the steps to reinforce the European identity on the apparently trivial symbolic plane were seen as a threat by some national elites (although this fear was also voiced by the public opinion of some countries; see Fligstein *et al.*, 2012).

In addition to the suppression of the above symbolic aspects, the presence of expressions and lexemes that objectify European identity is somewhat lessened in the TL but it still includes mentions of “the cultural, religious and humanist heritage of Europe” and even of the EU as “a society” — a term that had disappeared after its first intense use in 1975 in the Tindemans Report. By contrast, the cycle opened by the Laeken Declaration which culminated in The Lisbon Treaty was characterised by the significant omission of the concept of “European identity”, perhaps in an effort to avoid the controversy fanned by symbolism.

Compared to the objectification of Europe or the EU, the TCE and the TL go even further in referring to the culture or tradition of Member States as elements to preserve. In the case of culture, this is usually dealt with as part of a diversity that should not be harmed by the hypothetical uniformity represented by the EU. When it comes to the second lexeme, there are repeated references to the constitutional traditions of the Member States, normally in order to highlight that they are the sources from which European regulations emanate or that their singularity should be respected (in fact, some of the mentions of “tradition” in the TL are found in the annexed individual declarations of States such as The Czech Republic or The Republic of Ireland, which were two of the States opposed to the TCE). Likewise, and related to the notable absence of “European identity”, there are some mentions of “national identities” as a way of showing that these are not precluded by the common project.

Hypothetically, progress in defining the European citizen, his obligations and rights and the extension of his participation in decision-making (though still limited) allow for modification of the relationship

between citizen and nation. This provides scope for the settling the question of Europe and the development of a European public sphere, which is compatible with the national framework and the feelings of belonging it fosters (Bekemans, 2012; on the impact of the common judiciary framework, see Carr, 2015). In short, the values developed by the treaties (liberty, equality, pluralism, tolerance, justice, etc.) are meant to be constituent elements of a European identity. However, the cuts to the constitutional text, in some cases bearing on the development of European citizenry, left the progression of identification with the EU in suspense, while maintaining progress for Member States, thanks to the defensive movements that took shape at the beginning of the millennium and that consolidated with the crisis (Přibáň, 2009: 48).

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## ASSESSMENT

Despite the lack of drastic changes (because the general tone is of the primacy of a civic-political conception combined with ethno-cultural elements) one can inductively identify four stages in our round-up of the texts produced by European institutions:

1. Primitive (1950s and 60s): there is no great concern about European identity, and this is a time of political and even academic dominance of an ethno-cultural vision of territorial identity (although the subjective dimension is considered).
2. Focalisation (1970s and 80s): initial explicit concern about European identity. Combination of the civic-political and ethno-cultural conceptions.
3. Settlement (1990s): identity as a central question. Clear dominance of a civic-political conception, although cultural objective elements persist.
4. Displacement (2000s and 2010s): dominance of the civic-political conception is maintained,

with the presence of cultural elements, but European identity disappears from focus due to conflict with some national identities.

To sum up, one can see a gradual advance in the civic-political conception of European identity, with a clear intention to boost citizens' role and to increase legitimacy (at least formally). At the same time, the reaction to the European Union and its identity by forces within Member States have ranged from lukewarm to outright opposition, with some States advocating erasure of any mention of "European identity" and European symbols from official texts (and with them, what would have been the EU Constitution). Despite this, even in The Treaty of Lisbon, the elements objectifying European identity from a cultural point of view have remained and acted as a contrast to a civic-political project and concept. Even as the latter has gained ground, it is precisely the crisis of legitimacy of the EU, in part due to a democratic deficit and the scant weight of citizens in decision-making that hinders full expression of these ideals. Meanwhile, the authors of the preambles to these treaties argued the need to objectively shore up the EU, its identity, publicly assuming a common historical reality (Tsaliki, 2007). These formulations are made precisely to combat the stigma of the artificiality of the European edifice. As occurred in the past with Nation States, there is a recurring temptation to project a perennial discourse that conjures up a naturalised entity in the collective imaginary, that is long-lasting and whose existence is therefore self-explanatory merely through its historical trajectory.

In fact, what is taking place is a combination of the different models of identity construction outlined by Bekemans (2012), both the *communitarian*, with its emphasis on cultural elements, and the *Liberal-Republican* with its focus on a type of civic identity, based on the universal principles of democracy, human rights, the law etc. Even the *constructivist* category can be included because it is a fact that there is increasing interchange among Europeans, and thus a shared space begins to take shape at different levels.

In any case, the European identity still falls short of the vigour of the national identities, it is far from being qualified as a “strong” identity in the sense pointed out by Cathleen Kantner (2006; see also Přebáň, 2009: 44-45), and therefore a flourishing sense of identity that permits solidarity among Europeans is conspicuous by its absence. For instance, the Germans did not feel the need for solidarity with the Greeks in 2010, as was reflected in various surveys in Germany but the sense of national community did make solidarity possible with less fortunate Germans (see Fligstein *et al.*, 2012) just at the beginning of a *mini-job era* in this country.

In any case and taking Michael Billig’s arguments (2006) regarding “banal nationalism”, Europeans are citizens of the EU because of the legal links among the Member States. They have: a map; a flag; a hymn; capital cities; institutions; repeated references in the media and in textbooks; relative collective awareness of belonging to a community of Europeans. After

all, France at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century — one of the paradigms of a modern nation — was in no better shape to become a Nation State than Europe to become a “supranation”. For the latter ‘dream’ to come true, more needs to be done to build this “strong identity”, and most of all, the presence of Europe in citizens’ lives needs to carry similar weight to that of nations and the States they belong to, making the gestation of a real “European people” possible at some point (2006; see also Přebáň, 2009: 44-45). It does not seem that this will happen in the short or medium term. If anything, Brexit points in the other direction and to a much wider range of possible outcomes.

A new treaty is needed to update the project, taking into account the events of the past decade and the pressing need for democratisation, a requirement without which a European identity — for which universal rights and civil values are so important — will be stillborn.

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