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Who are Europeans?

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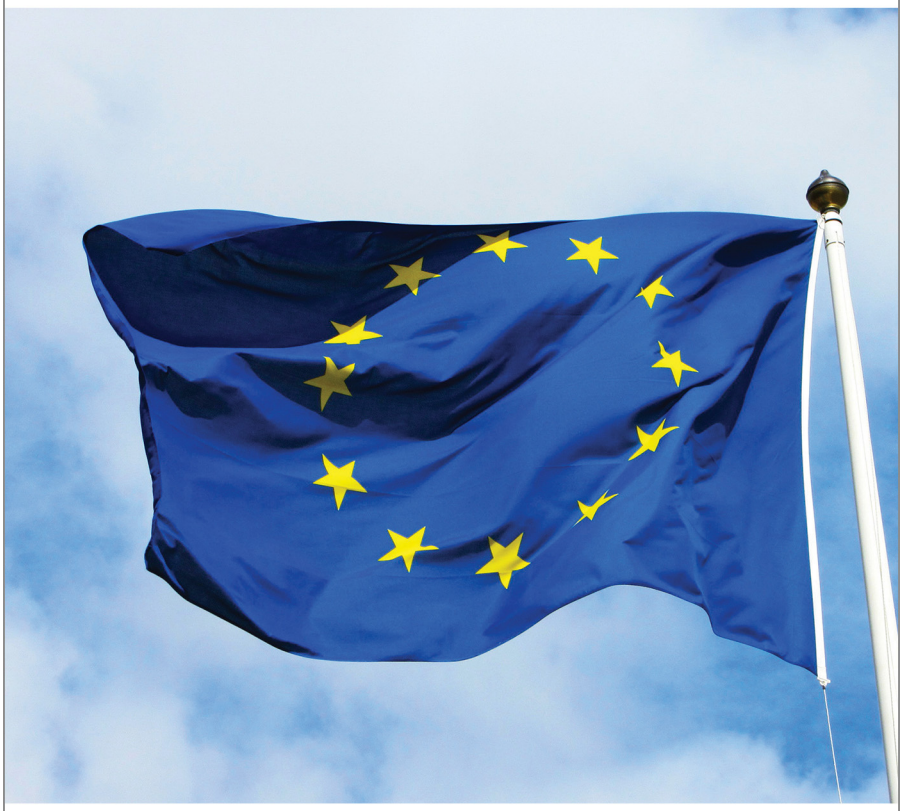

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Introduction

The problem of who, or what, are ‘Europeans’ is at the centre of many of the most acute political and social issues confronting contemporary Europe. Can a genuine European identity be constructed within Europe, and if so on what basis? This question is of even greater importance as the European Union expands and becomes ever more multicultural in character. This course examines the ways in which European identities are – or are not – being forged across Europe. It assesses the various mechanisms through which a potentially new identity commitment is being formed, and the limitations of, and oppositions to, this process.

This OpenLearn course provides a sample of Level 1 study in Geography.

Learning Outcomes

After studying this course, you should be able to:

- recognise that ‘European identity’ is a socially constructed attribute
- appreciate the basis for the unities as well as the divisions among Europeans
- understand the ways European identities are assessed and measured
- appreciate the key role of ‘culture’ in the organisation of a common European identity
- understand that European identity could be a bottom-up process as well as a top-down one.

1. Overview

1 1 Who are Europeans?

When I went to Loughborough for the first time I was pleasantly surprised as a social scientist to see that the town was twinned with Épinal, the French town where the founder of modern sociology, Émile Durkheim, was born. In fact, as you enter any major English town you are likely to see sooner or later a plaque indicating that the town is twinned with another European town. But what is the meaning of this practice?

After the Second World War, which pitched European state against European state, a number of countries, particularly France and Germany, decided to bring the European peoples together and put an end to national rivalries and xenophobia.

The idea was to start at the local level and make sure that friendships between citizens developed. In the words of Jean Berath, one of the founders of the twinning movement, the point of linking two municipalities from two different countries was to establish diverse forms of co-operation between their peoples.

At the symbolic level, twinning was an opportunity to establish contacts between different communities, often ignorant if not altogether suspicious of each other and to exchange ideas. It was hoped that people would see what united them rather than what divided them. Politically, the twinning movement was meant to contribute to the construction of European unity. The key issue, however, was to start at a grassroots level and to involve as many citizens as possible. It was also a framework in which information could be exchanged at a number of more offcial levels – from matters of urban planning to racial issues, from the defence of cultural heritage to the protection of the environment.

It was in this context that the Council of European Municipalities was established in 1951. It later became the Council of Municipalities and Regions. To ratify the commitment of the partners, the ritual of signing the *twinning oath* was instituted. The form of the oath is shown in Box 1.

Box 1

Mayors of …

- freely elected by our citizens,
- responding to the profound aspirations and real needs of our population,
- aware that the European civilization was born in our ancient ‘communes’ and that a sense of freedom was foremost inscribed in the franchise won by them,
- considering that history is made in an ever-expanding world, but that this world will only be truly human when men can live freely in free cities,

on this day, we take the solemn oath:

- to maintain permanent ties between our municipalities, to encour age exchanges in all domains between their inhabitants so as to develop through a better mutual understanding, the notion of European brotherhood,

- to join forces as to further, to the best of our ability, the success of this vital enterprise of peace and prosperity: THE UNION OF EUROPE.

By the end of the twentieth century there were more than 8,000 towns twinned. Not surprisingly, the densest network of twinning was between France and Germany (more than half of the twinning), but other countries belonging to the Council of Europe, including most Central European ones, have also become involved in the twinning movement. The Treaty on European Union signed in Maastricht in 1993 recognised the importance of bringing European citizens together.

Critics of the twinning movement have emphasised that the percentage of citizens involved in exchanges of one sort or another is extremely small. They have pointed out the perfunctory and bureaucratic character of many of the manifestations of the movement; this seems to be particularly the case in so far as the UK is concerned. Evidence seems to suggest, however, that Franco-German *jumelages* have been much more successful in developing lasting friendships and better understanding between the two countries.

In this course we shall be considering what *unites*, but also what *separates*, Europeans. It must be stated from the beginning that 'Europe' is a rather hazy concept, with no clear boundaries. In recent years, Europe and the European Union (EU) have become practically synonymous; the expression 'joining Europe', standing (at least in the British parlance) for joining the EU. Needless to say, the EU has become a disputed object: highly valuable and desirable for some, anathema to others.

The issue of whether the development of the EU has created a sense of European identity among its people is open to controversy, due to the lack of agreement as to what is meant by 'European identity' and hence the difficulty of its measurement. The problem of the issue of European identity partly stems from the assumption that the EU is, for both partisans and foes, a proto-nation state and hence the comparison between national and European identities is appropriate. If, however, the EU is envisaged as an attempt not to emulate the existing nations, but to transcend them, then it will perhaps be easier to understand its trajectory. Nonetheless, fifty years after the inception of the European Economic Community (EEC) the EU has hardly dented national identity, although in most countries an important number of people are happy to express a joint European/national identity (SubSection 1.2.1).

An important question that we must tackle in any approach to the study of Europe is the very ambiguity of the concept. There are no clear-cut geographical, political, cultural or historical boundaries that define Europe once and forever. It would surely be difficult to conceive of Europe without reference to a core group of countries, of which the founders of the EEC (France, Germany, Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg and Italy) would definitely be part. Beyond that, the ambiguity begins. Today there are arguments as to whether Russia or Turkey are European, while not so long ago it was said that Africa began at the Pyrenees. The UK is often perceived both by natives and aliens as being detached from Europe – and not only geographically. Another important issue, discussed in SubSection 1.3.1, is that 'being in Europe' and 'being European' are different things. Even accepting the existence of a vague feeling of belonging to Europe, that might have very few cultural and political implications because the paramount allegiance of the individual is to the nation. In any case, it would be surprising, and against the grain of what we know about the formation of national sentiments, to expect that 'Europeanness' should have flourished in a world in which the dominant actor was, and still is, the nation. In any attempt at coming to terms with the meaning of the term 'Europe' we shall have to explore

the literature on the topic and ask: What is Europe? Is it a purely geographical term? Does it make sense to talk about European culture? Or is 'Europe' just a civilization or a cultural area?

Our next stage will be to ascertain the importance of the so-called European ideal. Ideas can become social forces if they capture the imagination of people. After the Second World War, with all its well-known horrors, leading European intellectuals and politicians met a number of times to find ways of avoiding future conflicts and wars. The idea of uniting the peoples of Europe was rekindled, though it was soon realised that the path was fraught with difficulties.

How different collective actors (trade unions, political parties, and so on) have reacted over the years to the idea of the unification of Europe is the object of SubSection 1.2.1. It must be said that the building of a unified Europe has always relied upon the initiative of, at first, a few individuals, and, later, of small elites. However, the bulk of the population, particularly in the core countries of the EEC, has agreed with the moves toward further unification. SubSection 1.2.1 looks briefly at some of the ways in which unity and the development of a European identity are being created through 'bottom-up' processes.

In SubSection 1.2.1 we shall be considering in some detail two crucial areas which are of great relevance to any attempt at 'constructing' a European identity: education and the mass media. How effective have they been in creating, across the EU, a sense of belonging to a community, not only in the material, but also in the more intangible cultural or civilizational sense?

SubSection 1.2.1 explores the following issue: to what extent has a European public space or civil society developed? It is fair to say that over the years a common space has been created in the economic, legal, and, to a certain extent, political spheres. However, when we come to other realities (language, culture, religion, history, memories, values and practices, and so on) the peoples of the EU have tended to maintain their national allegiances. It is only very slowly that a public space is emerging. This should not be surprising given the strength of national sentiment and the absence of a comprehensive policy of Euro-building.

SubSection 1.3.1 is rather more speculative in considering the main variables that are likely to affect the EU in the next ten years. The point is not so much to predict future developments, but to provide a conceptual framework with which to envisage the dynamic possibilities of the EU.

In many of the documents emanating from the EEC/EU one term that seems to crop up with regularity is *acquis communautaire*. It is rarely translated into English, perhaps because no appropriate equivalent has been found, although 'community patrimony' is perhaps the closest approximation. It refers to the legal, constitutional and other levels of agreement reached by the community over the years. At the end of the second millennium, and in the light of the *acquis communautaire* of the past fifty years, but particularly since the mid-1980s, it is possible to state that the EU has radically transformed European society at the economic and legal levels, has created a new political space and has begun to construct a sense of European identity. What is far from clear is the final outcome of these complex processes, particularly in the context of both closer union and enlargement.

To many social scientists the project of constructing a European community out of an array of different states with different languages and cultures was utopian (Shore, 1993). There is no doubt that in the mind of the founding fathers of the EEC (Monnet, Schuman, De Gasperi, Spaak, Adenauer and others), there was a clear federalist project which, for different reasons, has been realised only in part. The construction of the European

community has had its ups and downs, often following the vagaries of the moment and reflecting the difficulty in harmonising the different national perspectives. If today there is no clear picture of what the EU is, and what it wants to be, this is due to a certain extent to the often intricate language of the documents produced by the European Commission.

1.2 Measuring European identity

1.2.1 The role of the *Eurobarometer*

In 1973 the Directorate of Information of the European Commission instituted a survey of public opinion amongst the members of the EEC. So now, twice a year, a sample of about 1,000 people from each country are interviewed on topics related to European integration and EU policy and institutions. This survey of public opinion is usually referred to as *Eurobarometer*. The reports are initially published by the Commission in French and English, though they are subsequently made available in the other official languages of the community. The *Eurobarometer* presents data by individual states and also about the community as a whole. When it refers to 'European opinion' what it is in fact doing is averaging national opinions. To a certain extent the *Eurobarometer* assumes the existence of European citizenship, while at the same time some of the questions are trying to find out how committed the different nationals are to the EU. Furthermore, some of the questions in the surveys are rather consensual and not probing enough, particularly in relation to the future of the community. Perhaps the most interesting thing that the *Eurobarometer* shows is the divergence of opinions between the different member countries (Wolton, 1993a, pp. 288–90).

The results of successive editions of the *Eurobarometer* show that in most EU countries only a very small percentage of people (around 5 per cent) declare having an exclusive European identity, while up to 50 per cent do not have any sense of European identity. Among the founding members of the community the sentiment of Europeanness is most developed. Although it is possible, and perhaps even justifiable, to criticise the methodological assumptions and categories used in most opinion surveys – including, for example, the dubious assumption that European identity and national identity are the same type of identity – none the less there is little doubt that the sentiment of belonging to an entity called Europe is rather limited.

In their study of European values at two different moments in time, 1981 and 1990, Ashcroft and Timms (1992) concluded that perhaps there is no such thing as 'European values' or rather that there is more disagreement than consensus. It is true that in some areas (family life, gender and attitudes toward the state and the economy) there are some broad similarities, but concerning, for example, the role of the individual and religion, the differences are staggering and do not appear to fade away. In the opinion of the authors 'national culture and opinion remain robustly diverse in spite of the increasingly close political and economic ties' (Ashcroft and Timms, 1992, p. 112).

Two preliminary conclusions can be drawn from the information published by the *Eurobarometer*: European political identity is weak and there is a great variation across states. It is naive, however, to contrast national identities and European identity with the argument that the former are natural and the second is artificial. It is true that at present national identities can be envisaged as given, while European identity is only in its infancy, and hence has to be constructed, but it is a well-known historical fact that national identities are also the result of a centrally-engineered process of nation-building which in

many cases is relatively recent. It is, of course, another, quite different, matter as to how far the EU would want to go along the path of constructing a European identity.

Measuring the degree of European unity might necessitate looking at the support accrued to the European community over a long period of time. However, according to the *Eurobarometer*, a number of general points can be made.

- At the affective level, support for European integration tends to be stronger among the original founders of the community (between 70 per cent and 80 per cent); among the other countries, Spain ranks as high as the original six and Denmark is the lowest of all (with less than 50 per cent).
- At the utilitarian level, support is still strong among the 'old guard' (with figures between 60 per cent and 70 per cent) and rather low for the UK (37 per cent) and Denmark (38.8 per cent); the other countries are somewhere in between.
- Between 1973 and 1992 support for membership of the EEC/EU increased in all individual countries.
- Support increased when the national economy performed well and it decreased when the economy slumped. In the oldest communitarian states this correlation is less relevant, that is, people do not envisage their membership of the EU in economic terms.

According to Inglehart and Reif (1991), it is possible to state that support for the EEC reached high levels in the 1970s and 1980s, though, as we have seen, during this period Denmark showed a lesser commitment. In surveys conducted in the late 1980s, that is, before the Maastricht Treaty, 87 per cent of the EEC people were in favour of the unification of Europe, and only 11 per cent against. However, when it came to the formation of a European government that would be responsible to a European Parliament, the results were rather different: 49 per cent in favour versus 24 per cent against, with 26 per cent of don't knows/abstentions. These figures hide, however, the fact that there was strong opposition to the idea in two countries: Denmark (with 64 per cent against it and only 13 per cent in favour) and the UK (45 per cent against and 31 per cent in favour). It would appear that for the British the main reasons were economic (a perceived 'bad deal'), while for the Danes they were political (concern about further national erosion).

Since 1992 the *Eurobarometer* has been following the extent to which the citizens of the EU define themselves as sharing a European identity. The question asked in the surveys is:

In the near future do you see yourself as:

1. Nationality only?
2. Nationality and European?
3. European and nationality?
4. European only?

The results from Spring 1992 to Spring 1998 are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Responses to survey question, Spring 1992 to Spring 1998 (in percentages)

	Spring 1992	Autumn 1993	Autumn 1994	Autumn 1995	Spring 1996	Spring 1997	Spring 1998
Nationality only	38	40	33	40	46	45	44

Nationality and European	48	45	46	46	40	40	41
European and nationality	7	7	10	6	6	6	6
European only	4	4	7	5	5	5	5

The way in which the European Commission reads these results is instructive.

> Throughout the years that the survey has tracked the development of a European identity, there have always been more people who feel to some extent European than people who identify themselves as only having their own nationality. However, as the table above shows, the sense of sharing a common identity does not appear to have become more widespread over the years.
>
> The rank order amongst countries that had been established in previous surveys has now changed slightly. Although Luxembourg residents are at 13% still by far the most likely to feel European only, the number of people who now feel Luxembourgisch only has increased significantly (+8), so that Italians (67%) are now most likely to feel to some extent European. In Portugal (62%), the UK (60%) and Sweden (59%), people are still most likely to see themselves as their own nationality only.
>
> (Eurobarometer 49, September 1998, p. 41)

The sense of feeling to some extent European had increased in some countries (Belgium, Denmark, Spain and Italy), while the sense of identifying with one's own nationality had also increased in Portugal, Ireland, the Netherlands and the UK. By age, people over 55 were less likely to feel European than other age groups (42 per cent, while the average was at 52 per cent). Gender differences were small: 54 per cent of men and 50 per cent of women felt to some extent European. Among those groups who felt more European than average were: well-educated people (69 per cent) and students and managers (66 per cent). Also worth mentioning is the fact that 70 per cent of those who supported the EU felt European.

In the *Eurobarometer* 50 (released in 1999) there was a question which had direct impact on the issue of European identity. It was formulated in the following way: ‘Is there a European cultural identity shared by all Europeans?’ It was plain from the answers that Europeans distinguished between the sentiment of being European and the issue of whether or not there was a European cultural identity. The responses obtained do not always follow the patterns that occur in other parts of the survey.

By the beginning of the twenty-first century identification with Europe in its three modalities (nationality and European, European and nationality, and European only) was at an all-time low (50 per cent) when compared with the 1990s. Not surprisingly the European Commission expressed a growing concern with this issue. It is not clear, however, whether this state of things was due to excessive centralisation (the ‘Brussels syndrome’) or to the inability of the EU to offer an appealing European agenda.

1.2.2 Summary

- The results of successive editions of the *Eurobarometer* show that in most EU countries only a very small percentage of people, around 5 per cent, declare having

an exclusive European identity, while up to 50 per cent do not have any sense of European identity.

- European political identity is weak and there is a great variation across states.

1.3 Being in Europe, being European

1.3.1 Europe and the EU

Is there a Europe beyond the EU? This is a question that becomes more and more difficult to answer. It is quite common for example to hear of such or such a country wishing to 'join Europe', when what is meant is that they wish to apply to join the EU.

The criteria for joining the EU were laid down in the summit of Copenhagen, 21 and 22 June 1993. Candidates must have reached an institutional stability that guarantees democracy, legality, human rights, and the respect and protection of minorities; they must have a functioning market economy and the ability to withstand the competitive pressures and forces of the Union market; and finally, candidates must be able to fulfil the economic, political and monetary obligations of the Union.

Turkey's desire to join the EU provides an interesting case study. Different Turkish governments have pursued, at least since the 1960s, the objective of being a part of first the EEC and later the EU. Not until 1999, however, did the EU give the green light to Turkey to start negotiations with a view to joining the community. (At the other end of the spectrum, the UK joined the EEC in 1973 but a variable part of the intelligentsia, politicians and public opinion still see themselves as non-European and against the idea of an EU, unless it is limited to a pure common market.)

To many Western observers Turkey is, if anywhere, on the margins of Europe. It is envisaged as an Islamic country that traditionally, in its Ottoman incarnation, was the fiercest and most important adversary of Western Christendom. The Ottoman Empire was characterised by extreme cultural heterogeneity, incorporating many ethnic groups. The sense of belonging, however, was based not on nationality but on religion, and more specifically the Muslim idea of *umma* or community of the faith. Within the Ottoman Empire the Turks were the ruling ethnic group, although they had no interest in spreading their culture throughout the Empire because Islam already cemented its fabric.

By the early nineteenth century, and in the context of European philhellenism, the romantic movement that favoured Greek independence, the Turks were vilified. The foundations of a reactive and invented Turkish nationalism were laid by the end of the nineteenth century. After the First World War modern Turkey made its appearance. Led by Kemal Attaturk, the new republic was meant to represent a clean break with past authoritarianism; it was meant to be a progressive, secular and popular-based republic, in which the state would still have the economic upper hand. An important political blunder was the idea that all those people who lived within the Turkish border were ethnically Turks, while in fact there were many ethnic groups (the Kurds being the most numerous one).

In the context of the Cold War, Turkey became a staunch American ally and the pillar of NATO's south-eastern flank. Turkish relationships with Western Europe were friendly, at least until the Greco-Turkish dispute over Cyprus tended to poison them in so far as Western countries sided mostly with Greece. Because of its Ottoman past, the perception that it is an Islamic country, its poor human rights record and the issues of Kurdistan and

Cyprus, Turkey was seen as a non-European country. However, the Turkish elites, both left and right, have long seen themselves as modernisers and failed to understand why the EU rejected them for such a long time. They also argued that the growth of Islamic fundamentalism in Turkey was partly the result of the European community's failure to accept them as a member (Keyder, 1993).

In December 1999, at a meeting in Helsinki, the EU decided to accept Turkey as a candidate for membership. However, accession was conditional on Turkey satisfying a number of tough conditions. Another twelve countries, from Central and Eastern Europe, are also negotiating access to the EU; most of the countries could become members between 2004 and 2010.

Accepting Turkey as a candidate raises the issue of how far the EU can extend itself. Russia also has a foot in Europe and could, in due course, apply for membership. If the only criteria are those decided at the meeting in Copenhagen in 1993, could not Morocco, or Israel or Lebanon become members as well in the future? Geographically they may not strictly be in Europe, but are not also Britain and Ireland detached from the continent? As to their past, North African countries were influenced by Greece, saw the birth and spread of Judaism and Christianity, and were part of the Roman Empire, and so on.

Any approach to the study of European unity and diversity must tackle the issue of what exactly is this entity called ‘Europe’ – how should we conceptualise it, and what are the distinguishing characteristics that set it apart from other regions of the world? However, we have also seen how difficult it is to delineate the external boundaries of the continent, to the point that the officials of the EU have given up this endeavour.

To say that Europe is at the same time one and diverse is a truism. Many things unite Europeans – a common civilizational heritage, the attachment to liberal-democratic values and the will to overcome past conflicts. However, the construction of Europe cannot ignore the national diversities of culture and language. Europe can only move forward if the different peoples that constitute it do not sense that they are being railroaded into becoming identikit Europeans. Furthermore, as the EU expands further east, to include even Turkey, its own identity will have to be redefined, becoming more inclusive.

In the past, one way of looking at what united Europeans was to consider who they were fighting against. Historically, Islam was the classical enemy. In the twentieth century, it was the struggle first against fascism and then against communism. At present there are three main factors which some authors maintain unite Europeans: increased economic relations between the different European states, increased information exchange through the mass media, and personal contact through tourism, study, work and so on. At the same time, it is also the case that these exchanges are intensifying at a global level. So perhaps the most significant factor to apply to Europe specifically is the increasing integration at a political level through agreements and treaties, and an increasingly vigorous drive toward legislative and institutional standardisation, particularly within the EU. So, will increased integration within the EU act as a catalyst to greater homogeneity within Europe or will it exacerbate differences between EU members and non-members?

What, then, is the extent of the differences within Europe today? The general consensus is that with the collapse of Soviet communism after 1989, market economies and liberal democracy are the dominant principles of organisation for Europe as a whole, independently of how long it might take for some of the Eastern economies to implement these principles. However, this begs the question of whether these changes will eventually result in significantly levelling Eastern and Western Europe and making for a more homogeneous whole. A persistent factor of differentiation within Europe is the socio-

economic level of development as expressed not only in the per capita GNP but also in what is usually referred to as ‘quality of life’ (standard of living, level of education, state of health, access to cultural facilities and so on).

At the cultural level there are also important historical differences, although there are some indications that these may be, if not fading away, at least attenuating. For example, with respect to religion it is possible to distinguish three major historical religious groupings: Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox Christianity. Linguistically, we can isolate three major groups: the Romance, Germanic and Slavonic languages. Up to a point a correlation can be established between religion and language group, with the consequence that on the whole there is an overlap between Catholicism and Romance languages, between Protestantism and Germanic languages, and Orthodoxy and Slavonic languages.

As the historian Hugh Seton-Watson (1985) has noted, the word ‘Europe’ has been used and misused, and interpreted or misinterpreted from so many different perspectives, that its meanings appear to be both legion and contradictory. What is particularly interesting to note, both historically and sociologically, is the way in which the ‘idea of Europe’ as a political ideal and mobilising metaphor has become increasingly prominent in the latter part of the twentieth century. Much of the catalyst behind this has undoubtedly been the growth of the EU which has rendered even more urgent and problematic the question of defining Europe. One effect of this, which increased with the advance toward the millennium, has been a growing number of speeches and books by European leaders setting out their ‘visions’ of Europe. The Treaty of Rome states that ‘any European country is eligible for membership to the EC’, yet it fails to specify what ‘European’ means. Given the perceived economic and political advantages of membership, it clearly matters to some governments on which side of the ‘European/non-European’ divide their country falls.

To some extent, therefore, ‘Europe’ might be considered an example of what Victor Turner called a ‘master symbol': an image that succeeds in embracing a whole spectrum of different referents and meanings. The boundaries of ‘Europe’ change according to whether it is defined in terms of institutional structures, historical geography, or observed patterns of social, economic and political interaction. In each case, a somewhat different ‘core’ area emerges. In spite of that, Europe can be defined as a distinctive civilizational entity, one united by shared values, culture and psychological identity. Guibernau stated that it is possible to point to Europe's heritage of classical Greco-Roman civilization, Christianity, the Renaissance, the ideas of the Enlightenment, and the triumph of science, reason, progress, liberty and democracy as the key markers of this shared European legacy. Significantly, these are all features which EU officials emphasise as being particularly representative of ‘the European idea’ as they see it (Goddard et al., 1994).

1.3.2 Summary

- The shifting character of European geographical boundaries is illustrated by Turkey and the other twelve countries from Central and Eastern Europe which are currently negotiating access to the EU.
- The boundaries of Europe change depending on whether Europe is defined in terms of institutional structures, historical geography or observed patterns of social, economic and political interaction.

1.4 The role of European elites in the unification of Europe

1.4.1 Historical background

European unification was begun by the social democratic and Christian democratic leaders of the Western European states who had fought each other during the Second World War. The idea was to create a community of states that would guarantee peace and prosperity. The process turned out to be long and arduous, particularly after the federalist failures of the Congress of the Hague (1949) and the European Defence Community (1953). The main emphasis was on economic co-operation, and the project was essentially élitist (Hayward, 1996, p. 253).

European unification was a process lead by top political elites. It was the decisive leadership of Konrad Adenauer in Germany, Robert Schuman and Jean Monnet in France, Alcide de Gasperi and Altiero Spinelli in Italy and Paul Spaak in Belgium that created the first institutions: the European Coal and Steel Community (1951) and the European Economic Community (1957). British political elites adopted a studiously ambiguous attitude toward European unification. Although it was favoured by Churchill in the aftermath of the Second World War, it was also viewed as a continental development excluding Britain.

The elites who participated in these developments in France, Germany, Italy and the Benelux countries were small in number but they agreed on the basics. Apart from the communists and extreme nationalists, all major political parties backed the move toward European unification. Other major social forces such as industrialists, farmers and trade unions followed suit. An important force in the original impulse toward unity came from the senior civil servants of all these countries, France being the weakest link. The progress of the EEC/EU has often been the task of a few dedicated people with a clear sense of purpose, from Jean Monnet in the 1950s to Jacques Delors in the late 1980s and early 1990s. On the other hand, the path has been anything but easy; there have been a lot of interruptions. In some periods of history the EEC/EU stood completely still, left to the vagaries of powerful politicians who aimed at blocking any progress – as was the case with de Gaulle in the 1960s and Thatcher in the 1990s (Wilson, 1999).

1.4.2 Unification and the EU

With the development of the EU an arena for collective action has appeared. But, as we shall see in SubSection 1.4.3, it is rather limited and it cannot be compared to the public sphere of the member states. Although collective actors have reacted to the emergence of new European-based institutions, due to internal constraints not all are in the same position to make the best of the EU opportunities. According to Marks and McAdam (1996) three areas should come under scrutiny:

1. *Labour movement*. The EU has had an important impact on industry, but while firms have become transnational, trade unions are still much constrained by being state-based. Multinational firms can out manoeuvre national unions by relocating all or part of their business to another country where the labour movement is less organised or less powerful. Attempts to create European-based trade union organisations led to the forming of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) in 1973,

representing more than 40 federations in over 20 countries. In practice, however, the ETUC has little power and, because of national constraints and idiosyncrasies (different legal frameworks in each country), it is not very effective.

2. *Regional movements*. Encouraged by the Maastricht Treaty and the principle of subsidiarity, regions and stateless nations are not only represented individually in Brussels but they have organised themselves on a European basis. They constitute an increasingly powerful pressure/lobbying group. The best known is perhaps the Association of European Regions. Ethnonations, that is, stateless nations, see in the EU of the future a guarantee for their survival as differentiated entities and an alternative to the issue of independence.
3. *New social movements*. Following on the Common Environmental Policy of 1972, the environmental movement has become ever more powerful. The policies of the EEC/EU have encouraged this kind of action. Both the Commission and the European Parliament have taken an active role in promoting environmentalism, often against the wishes of the states (Baker, 2001). Four major organisations have a base in Brussels: the European Environmental Bureau and the European offices of Friends of the Earth, WWF and Greenpeace. They operate at a European level, lobbying, gathering information, educating and using the European Court.

There is little doubt that different collective actors will play an increasing role in European affairs. How far this will create a level playing field in the EU is still open to contention. During the 1980s almost all socialist parties made a serious commitment to the European community. This represented a major change of orientation for many of them, having hitherto shown varying signs of euroscepticism; the British Labour Party was a case in point. However, following the Brussels meeting of 1989, the socialist parties of the EEC/EU intensified their collaboration and established a variety of cultural and organisational networks which meant an important affirmation of Europeanness. The Treaty of Maastricht was endorsed by all social democratic parties, despite some factual reservations expressed by the British Labour Party. It was obvious to them that socialism needed to operate at the EU level or it would lose power within each individual state (Melò, 1993).

As for the Western European communist parties, they were originally strongly against European unification. This was particularly true of the French Communist Party. By the 1970s the gap between communist and non-communist support for the EEC began to narrow. The Italian Communist Party took the lead in this movement. More recently, communist and ex-communist parties have manifested their commitment to the EU, though in some countries (Greece, France and Spain) there still persists rhetoric against what they call the ‘Europe of capitalists’.

Finally, a word of caution in relation to the convergence of the European elites. Although it has been assumed that the area of industry and business is the most Europeanised one, important differences still persist between different EU countries. In a comparison between business elites in three major European countries (France, Germany and the UK), Bauer and Bertin-Mourot (1999) have shown that the national models of business leadership are still firmly entrenched in their respective countries, making it difficult for a European model to emerge (see also Dent, 2001). While European integration is strongly visible in the marketplace, the elite in big business is still reproduced in ways specific to each nation state. In their study, the authors emphasised that while in France they have compartmentalised hierarchical ranks, in Germany there is a high degree of differentiation of the ruling class along with low horizontal circulation among elites. The British system exhibits a degree of social openness, in which there are opportunities for upper-level

white-collar workers. In the French system the validation of merits before entering work is the result either of inheritance or of academic achievement; in Germany the authority of the business head has to be legitimated all along, hence the importance of ongoing education and training. In Britain, occupational mobility is turned toward short-term financial earnings.

1.4.3 Summary

- The process toward European unification was initiated by top political elites in France, Italy, Germany and the Benelux countries after the Second World War.
- New collective actors are progressively being engaged in European affairs, among them the Labour movement, regional movements and new social movements such as the environmentalism of groups like Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth.
- European elites, although engaged in a convergence process, are still reproduced in ways specific to each nation state.

1.5 European identity

1.5.1 A true community of Europeans?

Ray Hudson (Hudson and Williams, 1999) has maintained that the formation of a true community of Europeans is important and desirable, and that it will not follow automatically from the converging of linguistic and cultural practices. It is difficult to envisage the disappearance of national differences, though they may be less pronounced in the future. What seems to be clear for Hudson is that only by looking at the future can a European identity be created; the past, unless highly sanitised, is likely to remain controversial and divisive. Europe, in his view, has to be invented; it is essential to construct an imagined community. This will inevitably make some people part of the in-group and others of the out-group; where to draw the boundaries is another matter. In reply to his critics, Hudson has suggested that increasing Europeanisation will not necessarily lead to a 'fortress Europe'. It could equally, and perhaps even more likely, have the opposite effect, that is, make life easier for immigrants, asylum seekers, and so on. It is probable that the existence of a strong European citizenship will contribute to an increase in all kinds of rights for a variety of 'alien' groups.

There is another way of creating unity: from bottom to top. According to Borneman and Fowler (1997) a number of areas can be mentioned.

- Teaching of foreign languages. There are at least 70 languages spoken in Europe, and 15 of them are official in the EU. Although English dominates in a number of areas (popular music, science, business, tourism, and so on), multi-linguistic competence will still be required. It is open to argument whether English domination will lead to Europeanisation (it is, after all, a global language).
- Increased exchanges at all levels (educational, cultural, and so on).
- Teaching an agreed curriculum on European history.
- Development of common European symbols – community of destiny (avoiding wars, preserving environment, and so on); community of values (tolerance, freedom,

human rights, solidarity, and so on); community of life (active role of individuals in the making of Europe).

- Presence of Europe in the world arena (common defence, common foreign policy, and so on).
- Encouraging cultural tourism. Unlike mass tourism, which reinforces stereotypes, cultural tourism can help to dismantle prejudices and contribute to the creation of a genuine respect and appreciation for other cultures and languages.
- Some authors maintain that sport can help in the process of creating unity, even if they acknowledge that it can be a way of venting national passions. It can be argued, however, that the increased Europeanisation of sport will promote a certain amount of European consciousness.
- Marriage and other unions across European nations are on the increase. In these cases the family unit becomes a microcosm of diversity, mirroring the wider European dimension and creating a space in which cultural, religious and other identities coexist and have to be negotiated.
- Europe as a cultural actor is an option defended mostly by French intellectuals as a way of opposing the penetration of American culture, particularly in the area of the audio-visual. In fact, this is a rather élitist position that is not shared by the people of Europe who vote with their feet concerning cultural products: 70 per cent of the market is dominated by American movies. Another concern about the so-called European cultural market is the fact that 93 per cent of European movies stay within their countries of origin. Furthermore, it is difficult to see how a continent so diverse linguistically and culturally can present a united front, unless it is to defend national cultures.

1.5.2 Summary

- The development of a European identity will be the outcome of a long process in which bottom-up as well as top-down initiatives are likely to be employed.

1.6High culture and education in the making of Europe

1.6.1 High culture

It has been said that high culture unites Europeans, while low culture separates them. Another way of putting it is to say that the European elites share a considerable amount of culture, while the masses do not.

For Mike Featherstone it is legitimate to talk about European culture in the sense of a ‘symbolic representation, a historic idea which has developed above that of the nation state, yet does not entail the elimination of national cultural affiliations’ (Featherstone, 1996, p. 34). In this he follows the German sociologist Georg Simmel who envisaged European culture as the reworking of a tradition (Judeo-Christian and Greco-Roman) by a variety of cultural specialists (writers, painters, priests, and so on). From this perspective,

European culture is what people like Dante, Shakespeare, Michaelangelo, Goethe, Mozart, Beethoven, Goya, Dostoevsky and many others produced.

An area that unites Europeans is literature. Most genres of literary discourse are pan-European; this includes poetry and the theatre. But if there is one genre that is quintessentially European, it is the novel. For Milan Kundera (1988) the novel has accompanied *Homo europaeus* for the past four centuries; it reflects a common experience which is the 'passion to know'. And this feature is typical of European civilization. With the novel was born the 'imaginative realm of tolerance …; a dream many times betrayed but none the less strong enough to unite us' (Kundera, 1988, p. 164). In Europe the respect for the individual has not followed a lineal path, but has rather progressed in leaps and bounds. The history of the European novel encapsulates the right of the individual to a free life.

There are some individuals who assert their Europeanness whole heartedly, and perhaps it is not surprising to find that many of them are intellectuals of sorts. This is the case, for example, with the originally Dutch writer Cees Nooteboom. Born in 1933, he has lived in Amsterdam, Berlin and the Balearic Islands. Widely travelled in Europe, he believes that Europe can only be the incredible diversity and richness of its peoples. In his book *De Ontvoering van Europa* (Nooteboom, 1993) he asserts that it is in the realm of the spirit that Europeans will find the currency that will allow the contact between the big and the small nations. Nooteboom's recipe for Europeanness presupposes an education which emphasises the European heritage, a knowledge of other European languages, travelling in different countries and living in, and being familiar with, a number of European cultures. Another committed pro-European is the Czech writer and politician Václav Havel, who has written extensively on this topic.

1.6.2 Education

Education is obviously one of the crucial dimensions in any attempt to develop a future European identity or at least more understanding and convergence among Europeans. If the school made the nation, it should also be a key factor in promoting Europeanness. Observers of the school scene in Europe acknowledge the existence of a growing sentiment of interest for European themes (institutions, politics, peoples, languages). Furthermore, the EU-based exchange programmes have recognised the importance of emphasising what is common about Europeans, as well as what is distinctive of each nation, region and locality. However, until the school curriculum reflects the importance of fostering links among European countries, of knowing each other better and of developing a common project for the future, the European ideal will remain the province of the few and the eurosceptics will continue to have the upper hand.

The Council of Ministers of the European Community, in its meeting of 24 May 1988, resolved to develop among children the awareness and knowledge of being European. The most important objectives of the decision were to:

- Strengthen in young people a sense of European identity and make clear to them the value of European civilization and of the foundations on which the European peoples intend to base their development today – in particular the safeguarding of the principles of democracy, social justice and respect for human rights.
- Prepare young people to take part in the economic and social development of the EU and in making concrete progress toward European integration, as stipulated in the Single European Act.

- Make them aware of the advantages which the Union represents, but also of the challenges it involves, in opening up an enlarged economic and social area to them.
- Improve their knowledge of the Union and its member states in their historical, cultural, economic and social aspects, and bring home to them the significance of the co-operation of the member states of the EU with other countries of Europe and the world.

How can these objectives be translated into action? At the level of the formal curriculum, teaching about the environment, the media, information technology, business, and so on can be used to enhance European understanding. Furthermore, the curriculum can also not only provide information about economic and monetary union, but also reinforce cross-cultural appreciation. Pupils should be made aware of the advantages of speaking European languages. An important thing recognised by educational experts is the development of a school environment which promotes a sense of respect and appreciation of other Europeans. In this context, the encouragement of contacts of all sorts across Europe is of paramount importance if integration is to be achieved.

An area of education that is enormously divisive, however, is the teaching of history. The European Commission, for example, gave support to a project which involved the creation of a kind of 'Eurohistory'. One of the results of this initiative was the publication in 1990 and in eight different languages of *Europe: A History of its Peoples*. Written by the French historian J.B. Duroselle, it was criticised for being somewhat francophile, but more importantly for not covering the totality of Europe; the Greeks were particularly annoyed that the contribution of Ancient Greece was left out. Other critics suggested that Duroselle only emphasised the positive in European history, while non-Europeans were depicted negatively. It must be noted, however, that the book also had enthusiastic supporters, including the prestigious British historians J.M. Roberts and Keith Robbins.

Another book which has tried to break the mould of the narrow nationalistic perspective is *The Illustrated History of Europe* (1992), an initiative of the French historian Frederic Delouche. The text is a collective enterprise in which twelve historians of different nationalities have aimed to present a common and balanced history of Europe. Published in most of the official languages of the EU, the book is aimed both at schoolchildren and the general public; it tries to understand, explain and educate. The common European themes that run through the text are predictable: Greco-Roman heritage, Christianity, the Renaissance, the Reformation, world expansion, scientific revolution, Enlightenment, industrialisation, modernisation and totalitarianism.

No doubt historians have a crucial role to play in recovering a balanced vision of the European past. The collapse of communism from 1989 to 1991 meant the 'return' to Europe of the Central and Eastern European peoples. Their histories have also to be reflected in any Eurohistory; the publication of Norman Davies's *Europe: A History* (1996) is a good example of this desired change of focus.

By the year 2000 there was a convergence within the EU in the direction of a rather broad curriculum centred on four main areas: national languages, foreign language(s), mathematics and science; other subjects were also gaining ground, namely information technology, citizenship and learning skills. However, educational systems continue to reflect their long-standing association with the nation state and continue to play a key role in the creation and transmission of national identities. At present, it is still true that the main function of an education system is to reproduce the national culture. Furthermore, the labour force is exclusively prepared for the national or even the sub-national market – the very small percentage of EU members who work outside their countries/regions attest to that. It is obvious that to increase labour mobility across Europe the educational

systems must widen the horizon of the pupils well beyond the purely national/regional horizons (see Box 2).

Box 2: Suggestions for integration of a European dimension in the teaching of language and communication (secondary level)

Cultural awareness

- Use authentic materials such as magazines, newspapers, satellite and other television programmes.
- Meet native speakers such as language assistants or visitors.
- Continue to learn about the customs and traditions of the country of the community of the target language.
- Experience a wide range of song and music from other cultures.
- Gain insights into some prose or poetry from European writers.
- Gain insight into conflict in other European societies.

Vocational skills

- Use the target language in a real or simulated vocational context.
- Take part in work experience schemes involving the use of target language.
- Understand the links between modern European languages and access to post-sixteen educational provision, training and occupations.
- Analyse and interpret information in advertising in the single market.
- Adapt to the culture and way of life in another European country when necessary.

1.6.3 Summary

- High culture tends to unite Europeans.
- Education plays a key role in the construction of national identity. A common curriculum shared by all European peoples will be crucial in fostering the development of a European identity.

1.7 Toward a European civil society?

1.7.1 European citizenship

The EU is an economic, juridical and, to an extent, political reality. But is it a public space in the sense of an arena in which groups and individuals vigorously exchange symbolic messages of different types? It would appear as if, while the public of most EU countries are willing to accept ever closer economic union (including a common currency and even political convergence), when it comes to historical memories, social organisation and cultural ideas (including religion), they are mostly recalcitrantly national in their attitudes.

From its inception to the present, the unification of Europe has proceeded unevenly to consolidate the economic dimension, and with more difficulty the legal and political ones. The real difficulties have always been encountered when attempts have been made to progress along the issues of cultural identity. The explanation is simply that they clash with the entrenched national realities that still dominate the European world. This is where there is presently an unbreachable gap between the growing, but still small group of intellectuals, politicians, civil servants, entrepreneurs, media people, academics, syndicalists and others who are committed pro-Europeans, and the public opinion of the different European countries who espouse national perspectives, often accompanied by negative stereotypes and xenophobic attitudes toward other European nationals. In spite of the elections to the European Parliament, or perhaps because of the limitation of such an institution, public opinions and especially political ideas are largely formed by the national media; this is also the chosen arena where politicians expend most of their energies.

Dominique Wolton (1993b) and Victor Pérez-Díaz (1998) have pointed out that there are a number of major differences between the national public space and the proposed European one:

- It is a fact that national public spaces have developed over a long period of time (at least since the French Revolution). The EU is not only young, but it has hitherto had mainly an economic basis.
- National public spaces were created within rigid state borders (even allowing for the existence of multinational states). The way in which the EU is evolving seems to prefigure a vast space ‘from the Atlantic to the Urals’, to use de Gaulle's well-known expression. Borders may be on the way out, but it is not clear how to build the ‘common house’.
- While national identities are still strong, European identity is still in the making. The creation of a European citizenship may be a step in this direction, but Europe is still an aggregate of polities, not a new, fully shaped one.
- The question of a European commonality of values is becoming more difficult to achieve because the values *either* are becoming actually or potentially universal (democracy, liberalism, human rights, market economy, and so on) *or* can no longer function as European (Christianity, anti-Communism).
- The majority of national public spaces are constituted by the presence of a common language. This is not the case of Europe as a whole, where more than 70 languages are spoken. The absence of a lingua franca makes it difficult to participate in a political dialogue and makes the appearance of common ways of thinking and common attitudes more difficult. It is true that English is becoming the most commonly used language among Europeans, but it is difficult to see this development in other than purely instrumental terms.
- Within the EU a sphere of free public debate is little developed. As a consequence, it is difficult to know whether individuals are engaged citizens. In Europe most debates are about domestic issues.

Having a European passport, being able to freely travel around Europe (at least for the citizens of those countries which have signed the Schengen Agreement) and a few more trappings do not make for what Ralph Dahrendorf calls ‘hard citizenship’. It is true that the members of the EU may feel that they belong to a community of sorts and that they share, to a certain extent, certain ideas and aspirations. But to move to something more substantive, to develop a more meaningful kind of citizenship, institutional and symbolic

developments will have to be accompanied by educational ones. Even if European identity is not meant as a substitute for regional and national ones, but rather as complementary to both, history teaches us that it would be naive to think that it can grow quickly and without hurdles.

Not all authors are so pessimistic about the possibility of a European civil society. John Keane, for example, believes that the idea of European citizenship consecrated in 1992 will slowly but inevitably lead to the creation of a new political animal: the European civilian. He thinks that this person 'can take advantage of an emerging civil society comprising a mixture of personal contacts, networks, conferences, political parties, social initiatives, trade unions, small businesses and large firms, friendships and local and regional forums' (Keane, 1998, p. 111).

There are even those who, like Shaw (1998), think that the EU, conceived as a supranational community, is anchored in the idea of citizenship which implies the rights and duties of the citizen as expressed in the treaties of the EEC/EU. Following T.H. Marshall's classical formulation in *Citizenship and Social Class* (1950), we can distinguish three kinds of rights:

- Civil or legal rights. The European Court of Justice supersedes national law in any matters concerning situations of national discrimination on grounds of race, religion, gender, and so on.
- Political rights. Here the emphasis is not only on democratic participation in the EU institutions, but also the right to information about the different levels of the EU.
- Social rights. These affect areas of employment, consumption, and so on.

On the whole, this bundle of rights may appear as limited, but there is no reason why the idea of European citizenship could not be taken much further even within the existing institutional framework. European citizenship and the rights and duties associated with it hold the potential to encourage greater engagements with the European project. It is in this sense that individuals could feel motivated to participate in governance processes shaping the EU.

1.7.2 Summary

- The EU is an economic, juridical and, to a certain extent, a political reality but a single European public space has not emerged yet.
- The establishment of European citizenship could play a crucial part in fostering a common European public space.
- European citizenship could encourage Europeans to play a more active role in EU affairs and participate in governance processes.

1.8 The future of the EU

1.8.1 What happens next?

The next ten years are likely to be momentous for the history of Europe. However, in the same way that no social scientist was able to predict the collapse of the Soviet order, it is pointless to speculate on possible but improbable scenarios. At this point it is only

possible to project toward the future on the basis of the existing parameters; the more accurate and detailed our knowledge of the present trends is, the more likely our forecasts are to have some success.

Europe is at a crossroads in several different respects.

- Which way will Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) go? Will it contribute to cementing the EU *or* will it paralyse it for years to come? If EMU is reasonably successful, will it lead to further political and military integration? If EMU fails, what are the likely effects?
- When the expansion (mostly eastwards) of the EU comes, will it be accompanied by a thorough revision of its organisational and decision-making structures (which inevitably means more 'federative mechanisms'), *or* will it rather tumble along like a cumbersome, overbuilt contraption?
- Will NATO's expansion go ahead, incorporating not only 'central' European countries, but also the Baltics and possible others, *or* will the Russian veto stop or greatly curtail this project?
- What is the likely scenario in Russia in the years to come – a descent into further political chaos and economic decline *or* a slow but progressive move toward the consolidation of liberal democracy and sustained economic development?
- Will the EU be able to keep up technologically and economically with other world areas (USA, Japan, 'Asian Tigers') *or* will it lag behind and lose its competitive edge?
- Will future conflicts (including violent ones) be likely to originate at the cultural and religious levels *or* will more classical formulations, which emphasise the divisiveness of economic and social differences, be the shape of things to come?
- Is the trend toward the waning of the functions of the traditional European states likely to continue *or* will states reassert their sovereignty?
- Will stateless nations find satisfactory levels of autonomy within the framework of their respective states and within an overall, modified political structure of the EU *or* is it likely that separatist tendencies will prevail because of the rigidity of the existing state and communitarian political structures?
- Will the process of immigration continue at an accelerated pace *or* will the concept of a 'fortress Europe' prevail?
- What will be the fate of Third World immigrants in the EU? Will they be assimilated/ integrated *or* will they maintain their original cultures?

1.8.2 Summary

- A variety of factors will decide the future of Europe, including the success or otherwise of EMU, the results of expansion, and the evolving global situation.

1.9 Conclusion

If we try to recapitulate what we have done in this course two main areas need to be considered: is there likely to be a European identity in the near future? and how important are national sentiments going to be?

While it could be said that by the end of the twentieth century the EU had become a reasonably integrated economic space politically, and especially at the cultural level, progress was limited. But even at the economic level, areas like labour mobility were still very low in the best of cases and commodity exchange was mainly developing along a number of clusters of countries (Germanic, Latin, Anglo-Scandinavian). A major difference among EU countries is the persistence of linguistic diversity. Many observers have stated that, at the practical level, English has become the lingua franca of the EU, even if at the political and administrative level there are as many languages as member states. But languages have not only an instrumental but also an emotional dimension and people's sense of national identity is often tied up with their mother tongue. Furthermore, language has vast implications for work, education, high and low culture and many other aspects of social life.

There is another obstacle to the development of a sense of European identity. It is the fact that intercultural communication is still largely conducted in terms of stereotypes and prejudices. If competence in at least two foreign languages is the precondition for the creation of a fluid linguistic environment, being aware that there are serious cultural barriers to productive communication and understanding is the first step toward recognising that culture and language cannot be separated. If the EU takes its own slogan ‘unity in diversity’ seriously, it must acknowledge that without the mutual understanding and acceptance of this diversity the project of European unification will not travel very far. On the other hand, it has also been argued that the European project lacks an emotional dimension; it is too cold and bureaucratic. Without sentiments and without signs of identity it is impossible to generate a popular response in favour of the EU.

In relation to this issue we can close the argument by saying that there is not likely to be in the near future an entity that we can call ‘Europe’, at least not in the strong sense of the term. The political problems and approaches people take, their social concerns and their cultural habits and consumption patterns are still very much nation- and state-based, if not regionally coloured. Europe is bound to remain what Ralph Dahrendorf has called ‘a figment of statistics’. However, if Europe cannot be a ‘real’ community perhaps it can become a ‘virtual’ one (Delanty, 1998). As we are entering the knowledge society, it is not unthinkable that Europe could be built on the growing interaction between the EU and its citizens through the electronic media.

As to the second question – how determinant or important are national sentiments, national identity and national assertion (national movements) likely to be in Europe in the next ten years? – many social scientists, following Hobsbawm's (1990) conclusions in *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*, are claiming that the end of nationalism is in sight. Whatever may happen elsewhere, Hobsbawm's conviction is that in the Western world the days of nationalism are numbered due to the processes of cultural homogenisation that are taking place all over. However, it is possible to argue that this is just a mirage that has repeated itself in history at least since Marx and Mill predicted the decline of national identity in favour of cosmopolitan, universalist ideologies. The strength of nationalism is not undermined by the existence of a growing transnational elite who exhibit multiple levels of identity according to situational parameters.

National identities are here to stay. Any forward-looking perspective has to come to terms with the persistence of some very basic categories such as kinship, language, culture, religion and historical memory. The importance of any of the categories may vary from place to place; what matters is the specific combination that occurs in each nation, and which makes it different from others. It is probable that a kind of ‘European identity’ will be on the increase along with, but not against or as a substitute for, national identities.

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