Concept paper

Shared European citizenship
in a multinational and multicultural setting

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The political and economic transformation Europe has gone through since the end of the second World War is remarkable and even unique in more than one respect. The strong state nationalism that had been at the origin of repeated violent confrontations, was finally abandoned. For more than forty years the continent was split along the East-West divide, not only militarily and ideologically, but also economically and mentally. The collapse of this post-war system in the 1989-1991 period was giving a momentous boost to a new understanding of political integration on the European continent. Eastern and Western Europe had to be reunited in a common endeavour to create an area of peace, democracy and prosperity.

Already in 1991-1992 the West-European leaders of the then European Economic Community gathered in Maastricht in view of a fundamental revision of the Treaties, stressing the political character of a hitherto mainly economic arrangement. So, the Communities were complemented with a common foreign and security policy on the one hand and the domain of justice and home affairs on the other. Common political values were highlighted and European citizenship introduced for all nationals of the member states. Finally, the EEC was renamed 'European Union', referring to a new institutional paradigm.

In this contribution particular attention will be given to the innovative measures regarding citizenship. Why was such transnational citizenship actually introduced ? How has it originally been understood and how can it, twenty years later, be assessed ?

Our approach is a double one. First, European citizenship will be positioned vis-à-vis the classic notion of citizenship of the by now 28 member states. How can one simultaneously be a loyal member of a state order and of a transnational Union without statehood ? The very nature of the still 'undefined political object', called EU, is at stake. This is not just an issue for academic debate, since a large group of Europeans have shown little commitment to their unique system of governance, especially not since they have personally experienced the effects of the economic and financial crisis. In one word, the democratic legitimacy of the Union is affected by this cleavage between the political rhetoric of the leadership and the creeping euroscepticism of the masses.

1

Secondly, the legal-institutional wording of the Treaties is not paying attention to the societal diversity in many European countries. Europe is not only multinational, it is also multicultural. To a certain extent, this has been a reality over the centuries, given the fact that states have not always been built on ethnic-cultural grounds. Even in the so- called nation-states, minorities are prominently present, protected as they are by a series of Conventions, monitored – among others – by the Council of Europe in Strasbourg.

Recently, however, new migration flows have blurred this well-known picture of a multiplicity of European states, peoples and cultures. This migration may take place within the EU, as has particularly been the case since the accession of new member states, such as Poland in 2004 and Romania and Bulgaria in 2007.

More challenging is the immigration from non-EU countries, due to preferential links of some member states with former overseas territories (e.g. the United Kingdom, Spain, Portugal, France, the Netherlands), or caused by recent military conflicts, such as Kosovo, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, etc. Another category is the immigration on economic grounds. Sometimes the member states have been insisting on this workforce, e.g. from North Africa or Turkey. More and more, however, the migration flows from the 'South', especially from Africa, are beyond control.

The overall picture, especially in the well-off EU countries, is one of manifest social diversity in terms of ethnic origin, culture, religion and way of life. The phenomenon is not welcomed by a large part of the original population. Not that much the member states' authorities, but the EU policies are blamed for the perceived loss of national identity and traditional values. 'Europeanization' is identified with the unwanted aspects of globalization. Predictably, European citizenship is associated with 'multiculturality', for many a concept with negative connotation.

This article aims at highlighting the paradox of a European citizenship that, on the one hand, illustrates the democratic character of the successful integration process since the reunification of Europe, whereas, on the other hand, a large number of 'citizens' is taking distance from some controversial interventions of EU policies in economic life and society. We will first draw a picture of the current 'state of the Union', before elaborating on the multinational and multicultural aspects of European identity.

I.   The state of the Union

Looking back on an integration process of more than sixty years, if one qualifies the Schuman declaration of 9 May 1950 as a starting point, the European Communities/Union have not followed a rectilinear development path. Quite on the contrary, political and economic crises have been at the origin of crucial shifts in (re)defining the common journey and enhancing its institutional pattern.

Nowadays, the financial crisis in the eurozone is omnipresent in the media and affects the daily lives of millions of Europeans. It would, however, be erroneous to restrict our analysis of the ongoing integration process to the current precarious situation of the national debt crisis in some weaker partners in the Economic and Monetary Union. We rather prefer to highlight five paradigm shifts,

approaching the financial turmoil since 2008 as only one of the crises that currently challenge the Union, but also contribute to shaping its future development.

1. From negative to positive integration

The original popular support for the integration process, described as permissive consensus by the American political scientists Lindberg and Scheingold, was based on two grounds. First, the reconstruction of Europe, after the war, on a fully new foundation. Lasting peace could only be guaranteed if the pursuit of common interests would prevail over national accumulation of power and wealth. This idea was formalized in the supra-national Coal- and Steel Community (1951). On the other hand, the European Economic Community (1957) was gradually abolishing all tariff- and trade barriers between the six founding member states. The original Customs Union ended up in a Single Market (1993).

It soon became apparent that next to this negative integration, i.e. by removing all types of barriers to the free movement of capital, goods, services and people, positive measures had to be taken, i.e. policies had to be developed in view of complementing and sometimes correcting the market forces. So, since the mid-eighties and up to the present day, new policy fields have been explored and step by step implemented. Among the new domains, one can refer to structural policies, supporting regions and social groups that are lagging behind, research and technology policy, environmental policy, and many other fields next to the already existing common agricultural policy.

Despite the fact that most of the EU financial expenditure was devoted to positive integration, the support of the general public sharply decreased in the early 1990's. Policy development always includes difficult choices to be made. Even the categories who benefit most, as the farmers for instance, are not always happy with the policy outcomes. It is absolutely paradoxical that the introduction of European citizenship, along with a substantial enhancement of the powers of the European Parliament, coincides with the decrease of public support for the EU's institutions and policies. Perhaps the slogan of some opponents in the referendum on the Maastricht Treaty expresses rather well the general feeling : "Yes to Europe, no to Maastricht". Since the shift from negative to positive integration, the EU has lost many of its supporters.

2. The constitutionalization process

Remarkably enough, this decrease in public approval has not withhold the EU from fundamentally restyling its institutional profile. After the Treaty amendments (Amsterdam 1997, Nice 2000) preparing the Union for its territorial expansion to Central- and Eastern Europe, the political leadership as well as the European Parliament came to the conclusion that the core structure of EU decision-making had hardly been touched upon since the days of the Economic Community. How to prepare for a Union with 27 member states, with a clear profile and a global mission ? A commission 'ad hoc', of representatives of the member states, the national and European Parliaments, as well as the Institutions, called Convention, unexpectedly found a clear majority in favour of a constitutional charter.

This 'Constitution', in the legal form of a fundamental treaty, should include a self-definition of the Union, a set of political values and symbols, a code of rights and freedoms, and, of course, key institutional arrangements. Among the major innovations, the permanent function of a President of the European Council (of Heads of State and Governments) was introduced, as well as the position of a European Minister of Foreign Affairs, partly responsible vis-à-vis the national governments, partly member of the European Commission. This Minister would be in charge of the new European External Action Service, i.e. the EU diplomacy in cooperation with the member states' diplomatic services. On the other hand, among the political values, representative and participatory democracy were highlighted under the title 'The democratic life of the Union'.

The idea was to provide the EU with an ambitious 'mission statement' that would appeal to its citizens and to the world. Therefore, the already existing 'Charter of Fundamental Rights' (2000) was included, as well as some symbolic elements as a flag, an anthem and a slogan ("United in Diversity"). The consensus on this 'constitution' among all stakeholders, including all member states, was striking. The 'Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe' was signed and then submitted to ratification (2003-2005). However, the remarkable agreement among the stakeholders was not shared by the public in several member states. Some governments had submitted the document to a popular referendum instead of the usual ratification procedure in parliament, convinced as they were of a large approval rate. Once the French and the Dutch voters had decided otherwise, the procedure was broken off, before the well-known eurosceptic countries had expressed themselves on the issue.

Confronted with this major disappointment, the political leaders decided to leave out all reference to the 'constitutional' character of an updated Treaty on European Union. The Lisbon Treaty (2007-2009) is a watered- down version of the constitutional charter, not appealing at all, but introducing the major institutional changes that were laid down in the previous arrangement. For instance, the profile of the European Minister of Foreign Affairs has been kept, but the function is now called 'High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy'. The Charter of Fundamental Rights is no longer included in the Treaty, but published in annex and is still valid. Finally, the 'Treaty on European Union' is limited to the core provisions, whereas their implementation has been formulated in a parallel 'Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union'. This way, there is still a key charter available, at least from a legal perspective, however not in an attractive format and a transparent wording that might mobilize citizens to political participation.

In any case, the failed constitutionalization process has revealed the profound cleavage between the inner circle of EU decision-makers (including the representatives of the national parliaments and the European parliament) and the public in many EU countries, even among the founding member states. The progressive political and economic integration is favoured by the decision-makers, however probably not understood and certainly not supported by a majority of citizens.

3. From regulatory state to strategic objectives

Many observers of the first decades of the European integration process have qualified the EC/EU first and foremost as a regulatory state. The shaping of a customs union, a common market and, ultimately, a single market, has required numerous decisions, regulations and directives. Quality standards had to be set, procedures elaborated into full detail. Later on, the new policy fields the

EC/EU was embarking on, were giving rise to a full panoply of so-called secondary legislation, implementing the Treaty based primary legislation. Especially in the Delors period (1985 – 1995), the European Commission excelled in taking legislative initiatives.

It is therefore not by coincidence that the EU has been identified as a highly legalistic voluntarist actor, eager at imposing its standards . 'Brussels centralism' has been criticized by the late Mrs. Thatcher and her disputes with Mr. Delors on this issue have reached legendary status.

Around the turn of the century , neo-liberal ideas have to a large extent replaced 'socialist' voluntarism. Exactly as in many of its member states, the EU started to build its policies on dialogue and cooperation with the stakeholders in society, the business community, the social partners and civil society in general. Soft law, i.e. agreements elaborated with the stakeholders, were seen as an alternative for hard law. The open method of coordination, preferring best practices as a standard, rather than legal prescriptions, was introduced in the sphere of social policy. In one word, policy making was no longer regarded as a privilege of the political authorities but seen as a common endeavour of all public and private actors involved in a particular field.

Consequently, the European Commission fundamentally redefined its role, shifting from legislation to strategy. Based on its long term targets, the member states, meeting in the European Council, were now giving political support and legal-financial authority, first to the Lisbon Strategy ("Europe as competitive knowledge-based society"), and, more recently to the" Europe 2020 Objectives". This is called in EU jargon the 'Lisbonization' of policies. All social and economic policies, e.g. cohesion policy, are assessed in function of their effective contribution to reaching the strategic aims.

This evolution has quite some consequences for the democratic legitimacy of the Union. Whereas the regulatory state was blamed for its centralism, the legal procedures were at least transparent and the representatives of the member states were keeping an eye on the national interests. In the current era of strategic options, the public is hardly aware of the macro-perspectives and does not feel involved. Despite its explicit commitment to representative and participatory democracy, the EU has not been able to mobilize its citizens for this common undertaking.

4. Multi-level Governance

A fourth debate in the Union is the one on the qualification of governmental action. Although by no means a European super- state, missing even some basic characteristics of statehood in the Westphalian tradition, the EU is undoubtedly an authoritative political actor, with its own Treaty-based institutions, decision-making powers and financial means. We have seen how the 'core business' has been defined at a certain moment as legislative, nowadays rather as strategic, but there is a need for clarification without embarking on the old dispute between federalists ("The United States of Europe") and intergovernmentalists.

In recent years, the concept of governance has contributed to a new understanding of the EU's 'raison d'être'. Prominent scholars as the British Lord William Wallace, have qualified the EU as " a system of governance without statehood". In contrast to 'government','governance' points at the multiplicity of actors mentioned above : i.e. public authorities and civil society. In the White Paper on

European Governance, published in 2001, the European Commission, then chaired by Romano Prodi, explicitly subscribes to that view.

Shaping and implementing policies does not only require dialogue and interaction on the national and the transnational (in this case EU) levels. Many issues have, on the one hand, a global dimension, whereas their successful implementation depends on the dynamic commitment of regions and local communities. Instead of viewing the latter 'actors' as 'executors' of what has been decided on national and/or European level, the paradigm of multi-level governance offers an opportunity to involve them as partners. Without intervening into the complex institutional realities of sub-national government in some member states, the EU welcomes the MLG paradigm as an opportunity for 'integrated' policies, e.g. on environmental issues, from the local to the global level. One can refer in this respect to the worldwide phenomenon of 'glocalization', mobilizing locally for issues with a global dimension.

Although the concepts of governance and multi-level governance have not yet acquired legal status, they are frequently used for designing partnership agreements between multiple actors. A convincing dossier has been published in 2009 by the Committee of the Regions (and Local Authorities) : White Paper on Multi-level Governance. It is quite clear that such paradigm creates opportunities for effective citizens' participation in complex societal issues where their views and commitment are crucial in view of a sustainable solution.

5. The crisis of economic governance

Reporting on the economic and financial crisis since 2008 does not enter into the scope of this contribution, even if it affects millions of people and draws the attention of the public opinion on the deficiencies of the monetary union. The credibility of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) as supreme achievement of the economic and social integration is clearly at stake.

One dimension should, however, be highlighted : the unbalanced concept of a monetary union without a consistently integrated system of economic governance. Twenty years ago, in Maastricht, the leading member states have agreed to a common currency, mainly as a political project, without giving up their sovereign rights on an independent social and economic policy and without stringent EU monitoring of budgetary orthodoxy.

 The current crisis has shown how vulnerable this construction was, confronted as it was with the collapse of some major banks and the sovereign debt debacle. However, as many times before in the European integration journey, crises can create opportunities. This is, once more, the case at this very moment, with drastic new powers given to the European Commission and the European Central Bank in the domain of budgetary control and the reorganization of the banking system. Solid standards of economic governance are, finally, complementing the monetary union. In other words, the crisis has achieved what was unthinkable around the negotiation table only a few years ago.

Summarizing

The EU is undoubtedly involved in a major crisis. However, there are several dimensions to be taken into account in this period of transition between an 'inward' looking EU in the first years of the 21st century, puzzled about its self-definition, and the current vulnerable Union, confronted with global financial and economic challenges. One of these dimensions, the issue of democratic legitimacy, is crucial in this perspective. Can a multi-national and multicultural EU provide the Union with the essential legitimacy for continuing on the path of political and economic integration ?

II. A multiplicity of national identities vs. a common European citizenship

Contrary to the perception of the EU as a 'block' of states, sharing an internal market and committed to defend their collective interests on the international scene, the EU's self-definition is far more ambitious. It refers to an ongoing process of integration, "creating an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe, in which decisions are taken as openly as possible and as closely as possible to the citizen". In its art. 1, the Treaty on European Union immediately refers to key words as process, peoples, citizens and openness of decision-making. This statement indicates that the EU is not all a traditional international organization characterized by intergovernmental decision-making. The draft Constitutional Treaty was even more explicit in its art. 1 : "Reflecting the will of the citizens and States of Europe to build a common future, this Constitution establishes the European Union, on which the Member States confer competences to attain objectives they have in common". Citizenship, therefore, appears to be a crucial concept in characterizing the Union. How has it been formulated in more operational terms and how is it accepted by the citizens themselves?

1. Towards European citizenship

No international organization, let alone a free trade association, has ever considered offering formal citizenship to the nationals of the associated states. The Council of Europe in Strasbourg has 47 member states, however no citizens. The North-American Free Trade Association never intended to give Canadians, US citizens and Mexicans an overarching NAFTA citizenship. Actually, in classic political philosophy as well as in institutional practice, citizenship is the exclusive quality of the members of a national community, i.e. a state or, in former times, e.g. in Greek antiquity or in Italian Renaissance, a city state. Individuals can acquire another nationality, e.g. after migration, but it was unseen to offer a double citizenship : that of a member state and that of the Union.

The idea has its roots in civil society, more precisely in the European Movement that wanted to promote a common European identity and sense of belonging. In the mid-eighties also the European Parliament, under the impulse of Altiero Spinelli, insisted on an inspiring and mobilizing Charter, involving the Europeans (and not only the states) in the integration process. In 1985 an ad hoc-commission, led by another Italian, Pietro Adonnino, came with the proposal to introduce a complementary citizenship to be offered to the nationals of all member states. The proposal was welcomed without too much debate and integrated in the Maastricht Treaty.

So, European citizenship is neither the achievement of a broad popular movement, nor is it acquired after a heated debate. It's rather a present from the Treaty-makers, inspired by pro-European political elites. The general public hardly took notice of this provision in the Maastricht Treaty, with the exception of the Danish. Attached as they are to their national identity, they rejected this particular point in a referendum. The EU had to clarify the issue. The final wording in the Treaty on European Union (TEC) is as follows : "Every national of a Member State shall be a citizen of the Union. Citizenship of the Union shall be additional to and not replace national citizenship". (TEU, art. 9)

2. Which rights are involved ?

a. Free movement . It's not very surprising that the EU citizens in 1992, when the citizens' rights were formally introduced, were not too impressed with the "right to move and reside freely within the territory of the member states". All EU countries of that time belonged to the Western world, enjoyed already that freedom in the framework of the single market and became gradually involved in the 'Schengen agreement', abolishing border control within the EU and associated states.

The right has become much more relevant to the newcomers in 2004 and 2007. After a maximum period of transition of 7 years, they can freely establish themselves in Western Europe. Millions already did, as we will discuss in the next section of this contribution.

b. Voting rights, i.e. "the right to vote and to stand as candidates in elections to the European Parliament and in municipal elections in their Member State of residence, under the same conditions as nationals of that State" (TFEU, art. 20.2)

Especially the latter part of the provision can have quite some impact on the local electoral scene. Foreign residents happen to stick together and to form communities with strong territorial concentration. If they form political associations on that ground, they can fundamentally disturb the existing power relations, also in the executive branch, since they have access to local mandates. However, not too many of such cases have been signalled.

c. Diplomatic and consular protection. In a non-EU country, a European citizen can call on the protection of whatever diplomatic representation of a EU member state, if his own country is not represented.

This provision is not only useful. It also refers to the tendency to establish collective diplomatic representations in third countries. Cfr. the European External Action Service, mentioned above.

d. Right to petition the European Parliament, to apply to the European Ombudsman and to address the EU institutions in any of the Treaty languages (currently 23) and to obtain a reply in the same language.

This respect for cultural, in this case linguistic, diversity is typical for the EU. It is meticulously observed.

3. The democratic principles

As important as the rights European citizens enjoy, are the democratic principles presiding over the functioning of the European Union. Remarkably enough, this political philosophy is of more recent origin than the explicit rights just referred to. The ideas of the Convention and the Draft of a Constitutional Treaty are still very present in the Lisbon Treaty. The titles have been formulated more modestly, but the content is still striking.

A first statement refers to representative democracy as the cornerstone of the EU : "The functioning of the Union shall be founded on representative democracy" (TEU, art.10.1). This foundation is a double one :

- *Citizens :* "Citizens are directly represented at Union level in the European Parliament".
- *Member States :* they "are represented in the European Council by their Heads of State or Government and in the Council (of Ministers) by their governments, themselves democratically accountable either to their national Parliaments, or to their citizens" (TEU,art.10.2).

  In other words, the EU is not an intergovernmental arrangement, but a genuine polity, since it is founded on the democratic legitimacy, not only of the European Parliament, but of the member states' political mandate as well.

  Secondly, citizens have the right to be informed and to " take part in the democratic life of the Union". This provision may appear to be a bit puzzling. How can a Union of 500 million inhabitants, spread over 27 member states and with 23 official languages (not to mention the minority languages), engage in a truly democratic dialogue ? Fortunately, a few intermediary bodies are indicated in the Treaties, next to a brand-new instrument : the so-called citizens' initiative.

- To start with, political parties have been shaped, representing the major ideologies and political sensitivities , such as Christian Democracy, Socialism, Liberalism, Conservatism, Ecological awareness ('The Greens'), next to more extreme opinions to the Left and to the Right, as well as outspoken euroscepticism and -criticism. Actually, one could rather qualify these European parties as political families, federating national parties. Since the elections for the European Parliament, every five years, take place within national constituencies, these national parties tend to pay more attention to the national power relations than to a truly European political programme. It's a missed opportunity for debate on the future of the Union.
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- Secondly, the European Commission and all other institutions have to invite citizens and their representative organizations to make known their views on new policy initiatives. This dialogue with civil society should be "regular, open and transparent". Sometimes broad consultations are held in order to collect all opinions, especially on complex issues with a societal impact.

- Thirdly, Brussels has, after Washington D.C., the largest concentration of groups and organizations of interest representation in the world. Not only the business community is represented, but all regions and many local authorities, next to numerous NGO's. All take actively part in discussing the policy agenda with the institutions.

- Finally, the Lisbon Treaty has taken over an initiative that was already included in the Draft of a Constitutional Treaty. The Citizens' initiative (TEU, art. 11.4) creates the opportunity to request a policy initiative from the European Commission. The precondition is double : first, at least one million citizens originating from 7 member states should sign the request, and secondly, the issue should fit within the legal competences of the Union. Moreover, the Commission is not bound by this request, but it has to react to the initiative. It's clear that such action will only occasionally be successful, but it stresses the will of the Treaty makers to include a form of direct democracy.

4. Participatory democracy

Even if the title 'Participatory democracy' , given in the Constitutional Treaty to the just mentioned forms of dialogue between (organized) citizens and the institutions, is not taken over in the Lisbon Treaty, the wording of these provisions has not been altered. It shows the commitment of the Institutions to a type of policy-making that was already advocated by the European Commission in its 'White Paper on Governance'. The EU is not a technocratic body in the traditional sense. It has understood that policy-making in the phase of positive integration requires political backing in Parliament (representative democracy), but also the input of all kinds of stakeholders (participatory democracy). This is not a tribute to democracy in its abstract form, but an experience-based requirement for effective policy-making on societal issues.

However, two main questions are still open :

How to organize this dialogue with civil society without favouring the professional interest representation ? In other words : how to reach out to the non- or weakly organized groups in society ?

How to reconnect the citizens with the Union ? Despite the unique opportunities offered by the Lisbon Treaty, the democratic deficit gains momentum.

5. The democratic deficit

The cleavage between the average citizen and the EU has indeed increased despite the enhanced powers given to the European Parliament and the real opportunities for participatory democracy. There seems to be no relationship between the 'upgrade' in recent years of the institutional capacity for political participation and the trust and confidence in these institutions.

The most striking example is the turnout at European elections. In 1979, when the EP was for the first time directly elected, 63 % of the electorate showed up at the polls, despite the fact that this Parliament only had consultative powers. Thirty years later, in 2009, now that the EP is a full co-legislator , only 43 % participated. Of course, one has to be nuanced in assessing such overall figures. Many new countries joined and the results in a few eurosceptic countries have an impact on the Union as a whole.

The problem of democratic deficit is nevertheless there. Every six months, the Eurobarometer provides us with detailed information, country per country, on the disappointment of at least half of the EU citizens with regard to the EU, its institutions and policies. And national referenda, recently in Ireland, have become a nightmare for the political leaders. They hesitate to propose treaty amendments which require popular approval in some member states.

No consistent diagnosis for this cleavage is currently available. But it is clear, in our view, that the fundamental divide between the inner circle of EU decision-makers and the general public constitutes a major cause of the 'malaise'. The project of the Founding Fathers, that got that much support despite its embryonic institutional implementation, has not found an equally appealing update in recent times. There is a profound disconnection between the political leadership and the citizens, not only in the EU, but in many member states as well. Wonderfully formulated treaties, constitutional ones and regular ones, cannot compensate for the lack of trust and confidence.

Therefore, the model itself of a transnational Union of member states and active citizens should have its foundation in societal reality in order to be legitimate and lasting.

III.   The quest for identity in present-day European society

As we have seen, European citizenship has been founded by the EU Treaties on legal grounds : the nationality of one of the member states. No other considerations can be invoked, neither for acquiring, nor for turning down the condition of European citizen. To be more specific : a strong believer in the European cause cannot opt out from his national identity, whereas a non-believer cannot reject his European credentials. These – rather theoretical – examples highlight the particular character of European citizenship. It is not based on ethnic descent, place of birth or social involvement, but only on a formal civic quality.

In a highly diversified society as the current European one, this approach is creating opportunities for a non-traditional type of citizenship. On the other hand, the participation in a common political project requires a sense of belonging, a certain identity. The question arises if the EU will be successful in promoting such transnational type of citizenship in a highly diversified society.

1. Multicultural diversity
Within the reach of this contribution we cannot aim at drawing an overall picture of the multicultural diversity of today's Europe. There are several good reasons for this restraint. First, the national statistical offices and the EU's Eurostat in Luxembourg, despite the abundance of their data, hardly refer to the ethnic-cultural background of the individuals comprised in their surveys. This is, indeed, a delicate matter : for instance Roma people in Hungary, Slovakia, Romania or Bulgaria are full EU citizens, although with very specific characteristics, such as ongoing migration in group. Other

cultural minorities have solid territorial roots, but are sometimes at odds with the ruling majority in their country. In other words, cultural diversity is not only the result of a single migration in recent times.

Moreover, not all European states have been built on a mono-cultural identity. The Belgian case offers an interesting example. Brussels, the Belgian and EU capital, has not only a foreign population of 28,1 %, but is itself bilingual as meeting point between the Flemish and Francophone Belgians.

Nevertheless, migration flows have substantially altered the face of metropolitan and industrial areas all over the continent. In recent years, EU enlargement has played an important role in this ongoing metamorphose. The situation in the United Kingdom is particularly striking. Britain has welcomed over 3 million immigrants since 1997, most of them coming from the Commonwealth countries. However, since Poland joined the EU in 2004, half a million people of Polish origin have contributed to the migration flow. The Polish community is now the second largest group of foreign origin in the UK (after the people of Indian origin).

Many observers expect another wave of EU migrants in 2014. Seven years after the EU enlargement with Romania and Bulgaria, no member state can prevent these newcomers from taking residence in the country of their choice. The Romanian Prime Minister wanted to counter exaggerated scenarios, stipulating that 3 million Romanians have already left the country, mainly to France and Germany.

Summarizing : there is a real wandering of nations going on in Europe, especially if one takes into consideration the many asylum seekers from war-torn countries in the Middle East and the economic refugees from North Africa.

2. Reactions to cultural diversity

Cultural diversity is not at all a new phenomenon on the European scene. In the past, some states have even emphasized their multilingual, multinational or multi-ethnic character, e.g. the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the former Yugoslavia and, still nowadays, Switzerland.

Mainly since the end of the Second World War, a new type of cultural diversity has come to the fore : migration. The first wave has been labour market related. On the invitation of countries with a booming industry, firstly South-Europeans have been recruited, followed by North African and Turkish workers. In countries with a colonial past (France, the UK, but also the Netherlands), people from their overseas territories have been welcomed. At that time, hardly any negative comment could be heard among the local population, since this labour force was clearly contributing to the economic expansion.

However, the current migration flows are much less under control and take place in a fundamentally different economic context. A period of economic growth has been followed by stagnation, massive unemployment and economic crisis. 'Newcomers' are perceived as a menace to local employment opportunities, as a burden for the Welfare State, and, in some cases, even as a threat to the national cultural identity.

The latter dimension is illustrated by the perceived 'islamization' of society, a potent theme for emerging political parties (e.g. Geert Wilders' party in the Netherlands) and even national referenda as the anti-mosque attitude of the Swiss voters. The idealistic societal model of a multi-cultural dialogue (e.g. the so called 'multi-kulti' model in Germany) has been abandoned, even by the national leadership, confronted as they are with broad public rejection.

British Prime Minister David Cameron has recently echoed this shift in public opinion in a rather strong statement on the misuse of the social security benefits. In his 'Speech on immigration' of 25 March 2013, he points out that " the National Health Service (NHS) should be a free national health service, not a free international health service". Moreover, just as for British citizens, "there is no absolute right to unemployment benefit". "Job seekers' allowance is only available for those who are genuinely seeking a job. After six months, benefits will be cut off, unless you can prove that you have a genuine chance of getting a job". Summarizing : "It's too easy to come here and exploit the system".

A comparable annoyance with the 'misuse' of the Welfare State provisions can be noticed in almost all West- and North-European states, not only in xenophobic circles and movements, but in the mainstream public opinion as well. Inevitably, most major political parties had to adapt their generous positions on the issue, following their electorate.

The EU is particularly affected by this shift in public opinion, since the negative implications of the recent migration flows are quite often associated with the phenomenon of 'europeanization'. Instead of taking responsibility for their collectively taken decisions, national political leaders tend to refer to the framework agreements regarding the opening of the labour market to all EU citizens. In the British case, the moratorium of maximum seven years, foreseen in the accession treaties regarding the opening of the national labour market, was not applied. The result has been the unexpected influx of East-European workers.

The paradox is clear : on the one hand the EU is instrumental in creating a large single market, characterized by the free movement of capital and labour. However, in a period of recession this functioning of the free market may become uncomfortable and countries sometimes tend to regret their previous sovereign immigration policies. However, instead of confessing to their miscalculations, 'Brussels' gets the blame. How to build a solid sense of European citizenship in these circumstances ?

3. How to define European citizenship in times of crisis ?

Out of the brief sketch of the EU's diversity, on the one hand in terms of nationalities and their internal minorities, and, on the other hand with regard to ethnic-cultural diversity as a result of successive migration flows, the political decision to establish a European citizenship has been a daring undertaking. Back in 1992, the then twelve member states have probably underestimated the challenge they created by insisting on the common political identity on the eve of significant enlargement and in case of economic-financial turmoil. The democratic legitimacy of whatever 'polity' is at stake when large groups in society no longer trust the basic 'philosophy' of a political system and refuse to take part in the election of their representatives in parliament.

From a legal-institutional perspective, the EU can refer to the full acknowledgement of the shared values of all its member states and to the most explicit rejection of any form of discrimination. Just a couple of quotes from the Treaty provisions:

- "The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to a minority" (TEU, art. 2).
- The Union "shall combat social exclusion and discrimination, and shall promote social justice and protection, equality between women and men, solidarity between generations and protection of the rights of the child" (TEU, art. 3.2).
- The Union "shall respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity, and shall ensure that Europe's cultural heritage is safeguarded and enhanced" (TEU, art. 3.4).

In addition, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union has established a long list of grounds for discrimination it strictly forbids : next to 'nationality', "any discrimination based on any ground such as sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation shall be prohibited" (art.21).

Despite these efforts from 'above', i.e. the lawmakers, to qualify the Union as an area of 'opportunities for all', the societal reality is a different one. Many people, especially in the lower income categories, don't see the benefits of an economic and monetary Union that rather strengthens the negative effects of globalization, e.g. by restricting the social protection systems of the Welfare State. On the other hand, cultural minorities sometimes become majorities in specific neighbourhoods of metropolitan centres. Affected by unemployment, but also by (perceived) discrimination, they don't feel accepted and integrated. This is particularly the case in the muslim communities. Despite the fact that many (if not most) of them nowadays hold the nationality of the country of their residence, and are ipso facto EU citizens, they cultivate as well another transnational identity : the worldwide Islamic community. It's a most complex reality, since it deals with cultural traditions and religious beliefs. Moreover, it differs according to age groups and the personal migration trajectory.

In the light of these experiences at the grassroots level, one should be careful when defining European citizenship exclusively in legal terms. Perhaps the EU had no other choice in the context of Treaty making, but from a more societal perspective one could be more innovative. The Council of Europe, based in Strasbourg, took the opportunity when defining citizenship, to highlight the intercultural dialogue in society and to insist on the social inclusion of all stakeholders. In their definition, non-EU citizens as well as EU citizens, sharing the same habitat, should take responsibility for the common (local) community. This definition is worth our attention and reflection : "Citizenship, in the widest sense, is a right and indeed a responsibility to participate in the cultural, social and economic life and in public affairs of the community together with others" (White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue, 2008).

VI. Elements for a new understanding of citizenship and identity

1. Redefining European identity

Some critics of the introduction of EU citizenship have argued that a pan-European democracy was - per definition – unthinkable, given the fact that there is no European demos. They were right in referring to the historical reality of a wide diversity of peoples, of nations, of cultures and languages. Quite often these peoples were combating each other, with the dramatic consequences one knows all too well. However, there has always been a European sense of belonging, a community of values and beliefs, yes, a common identity. It is probably in art and literature that this identity has most prominently come to the fore .

The critics were however wrong, when taking the classic Nation-State as sole model for truly democratic life. Common interests exist at many levels. Locally as well as globally, people are aware of the challenge of building-up a fair, safe, prosperous and sustainable society. They have developed mechanisms for participation in policy-making, how imperfect they might have been. When the need for a transnational system of governance appeared on the European continent, following the collapse of extreme nationalism, a totally new institutional model was presented and accepted. It was - and is - weird in many respects, but has proven to be functional.

At the critical juncture of 1989-1991, the opportunity has deliberately been taken to reunify the European nations, not only by offering them access to the Economic Community, but by redefining the integration process as a political-economic journey. European citizenship was - and is - a strong signal of a common identity. However, it has its flaws. First, it was not well introduced to the public. The Treaty makers were afraid from negative reactions (cfr. Denmark), so they did not advertize at all the meaning of this unique institutional innovation. Secondly, they never developed an appropriate 'modus operandi' for interest representation at the continental level, apart from the existing European Parliament and the active lobbying groups. So, the call for participatory democracy is appealing, but not very realistic in the given circumstances. Finally, in social and economic reality, the member states are no equal partners. There is a West-East divide and a North-South cleavage, that have even become more apparent in the recent crisis years.

In sum, the reference to a common destiny and a common identity is most meaningful. However, as long as the gap between the EU decision-making elites and large segments in society have not been bridged, the opportunities of an advanced representative and participatory democracy will not be appreciated, thus creating a major problem of legitimacy for the Union.

2. Citizenship : rights and commitments

The rights linked to European citizenship have been commented upon in part II of this article. Citizenship, however, from Greek Antiquity until nowadays, has always been more than a list of opportunities and privileges. Citizenship includes responsibility and commitment. Active citizenship involves participation in the debate on the choices to be made and in the implementation of some policies, especially the ones which affect the quality of our daily lives. The election, every five years,

of 751 representatives in the European Parliament, is for sure a crucial moment of political participation. But it should be complemented by political and civic action.

We already referred to the role of political parties, both at the national and the European levels. Next to them, as the history of European integration has taught, the dynamics of civil society can generate a substantial boost to a movement in favour of a trans- or even supra-national system of governance. The fear for a loss of sovereignty is a most relative feeling. As soon as people have understood that shared sovereignty benefits them more, since it strengthens the capacity for action, they are eager to support the transfer of certain powers. Even Prime Minister Cameron, in his famous speech on the role of the United Kingdom in the European Union of 23 January 2013, admits that Britain can exert more influence in global trade negotiations and in foreign policy in general, as a partner in the Union. The question, therefore, is not if the EU is still meaningful, but where its core business is located.

In whatever hypothesis, however, either a single market-oriented 'block', or an 'ever closer Union', political legitimacy is of crucial importance for the survival of this unique construction in a democratic society. Perhaps, citizenship should not too much be conceived after the traditional nation state model, but elaborated in the perspective of the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas : a post-national identity based on a constitutionally entrenched value system and the practice ('Praxis') of political participation.

Exactly as in all countries that had to develop a new political identity in the process of nation building, the role of education is paramount. Not only the school system should pay more attention at including the European dimension in their civic education. In civil society the culture of debate should be enhanced on the major policy choices the European continent is confronted with. Finally, the national governments themselves should be more explicit on their motives for cooperating so intensively and so effectively within the EU decision-making process . What is the added value of shared policy-making ? In other words : what are the good reasons for European integration in the 21st century, i.e. a new meta-narrative, now that peace and reconciliation have been achieved.

3. Participating in the common journey

"Crises are opportunities". This slogan may be true with respect to the current crisis of the EU, both in the economic and financial sphere, as with regard to its democratic legitimacy. In contrast to the former policy domain, the institutional provisions are in place for giving the citizens a full array of instruments for political participation.

The problem is, indeed , not of an institutional order. The European society is deeply divided, not only along geographic lines, but also within the national and local setting. Distrust and political apathy lead to eurocriticism and euroscepticism, even in the original six founding states. This dual society is not only characterized by the increasing gap between the 'have's' and the 'have-not's', but more and more also by the (self-?) exclusion on cultural or ethnic-religious grounds. Can we build a European common journey on this fundamental divide ?

In the year 2013, proclaimed as the Year of European Citizenship, the opportunity for debate should be seized with regard to the very orientation of European identity formation. Referring to the

American sociologists Checkel and Katzenstein, the EU has the choice between an outward-looking cosmopolitan identity and an inward-looking nationalist-populist identity project. As a result of the ongoing economic-financial crisis, the latter model seems to prevail in public opinion. It is fully opposed to the basic option of the founding fathers and would be disastrous for the development of the Union. The Heads of State and Government have expressed the common dream most eloquently in the preamble to the Constitutional Treaty, "…while remaining proud of their own national identities and history, the peoples of Europe are determined to transcend their ancient divisions and, united ever closely, to forge a common destiny". There is a long road ahead.

Footnotes will be added in the final version

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