Exploring EU-Identity as a "social one" - a research outline
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Abstract

The paper will present and discuss a research project on European Identity based on a comparative country analysis in three EU member countries. The investigation will be realized on three levels: script, political culture and political actors (here: political parties). Within this project I would like to examine in how far the identity project meets with approval or disapproval in the selected countries, because an intricate obstacle for European identity building is the essential asymmetry of institutionalization in two policy fields that are at the heart of both the institutional script and the political socio-culture of EU identity: foreign policy and social policy. The epistemological interest of the investigation therefore is to find out how and to what extent the self-definition of the EU is underpinned in the political culture of the national states. By focusing on the social dimension of the European Identity the paper is to state the normative social self-definition of the EU and to flesh out the scheme of the project.

Key words: European Union – Political Identity – Political Culture – Legitimacy – Democratic Deficit – Social Europe

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[1] Under "normative issues" are understood primarily legitimacy and identity as eminently political issues as may emerge in regional organisations and polities.

I. Introduction: the apparent need for a political identity of the EU

The outcome of the referenda in France and the Netherlands last year led to a new controversial debate about the development and future form of the European Union.

However, the crucial question does not seem to be whether the EU should refrain from further developing its political project and instead go back to its core integration project, i.e. concentrate on its more or less successful economic project. The EU, today, is already far more than an economic project - a development which has gradually been confirmed by the treaty revisions since the Single European Act (SEA). Populist reproaches towards a too bureaucratic Brussels, trying to acquire as much competences as possible therefore do not lead to the core of the problem.

The apparent problem could be stated as the following: the EU needs a public political debate which involves the (European) citizens and gives them the possibility of participation in common decision-making. It is basically all about developing a political identity of the European citizens, an identity which is necessary to both safeguard and foster the legitimacy and efficiency (I take over the widely accepted assumption that there exists a strong relation between the legitimacy and the efficiency of a political system) of the European Union in the long term. The underlying assumption thereby is that the question to be addressed is *not* whether the EU *should* be a "polity" (a political form) but rather whether there exist the necessary common basis - i.e. the basis for what I call a European identity - to develop a substantial political project/polity. Of course, in a second step, the question remains *how* this polity would then supposed to be organised and legitimated - and in particular *how* the political solidarity of its "citizens" can be achieved. In this context it has to be stated that on the one hand a not negligible part of academic observers, EU accession candidates and international partners regard the EU as a transnational democratic polity having a great attraction from the outside while, on the other hand, the latter is said to be suffering from an inner deficiency with regard to democracy and legitimacy. This leads us to the question in how far the EU can live up to/meets its own expectations of being a democratic polity. In my view this will not be the case in the long term without the development of a European political identity. Without a shared understanding of what the EU is and ought to be and how it does and could contribute positively to the life of the citizens, without a shared sense of solidarity among them and the consciousness of being part of and participating in this political Europe, the EU's legitimacy and democracy will always remain in deficit. Thus, my work by elaborating this topic would at least somehow contribute to such a process of creating awareness.

In the following, the theoretical-conceptual framework of the research project will be outlined and the key concepts of the approach spelled out (II). Then, the methodology will be presented (III), followed by an exemplary outline of one aspect of the social dimension within the script (IV).

II. Theoretical-conceptual framework

The project links a theoretical with an empirical interest. My theoretical interest is to further develop the distinct theoretical-conceptual approach on political identity, as it was developed by Thomas Meyer. The empirical interest is to show in how far the project of European identity meets with citizens' approval or disapproval in seven member states of the EU. In the following, I will first briefly outline the theoretical approach on political identity elaborated by Thomas Meyer and afterwards discuss the main concepts in more depth and present the pathways of my empirical investigation of the country cases.

II.1. Political identity: two levels, two pillars

As to these theoretical assumptions, I take *political identity* to be based *on two pillars at two levels*. In contrast to individual identity, political identity is (also) always a collective or group identity, whereas – though - the term "collective identity" is not understood as a given and integrative wholeness. A collective identity always relates to a group, or collective so that political Identity encompasses an individual as well as a collective dimension. It is constructed by socio-political interaction of individuals in relation to a collective in the framework of a polity. Modern political identity can be characterised by two basic features:

- it is always a construction of meaning (and insofar people's source of meaning and experience related to a political project)
- under conditions of globalisation it adopts increasingly a multi-layer shape

When political identity is linked to a polity project - in my case to the one of the European Union - it implies a consciousness of the citizens of belonging to the *same* polity, but the mere consciousness of the citizens to belong to the same polity does not necessarily entail his/ her acceptance and support of this fact. Consequently, the second pillar of political identity refers to the identification of the citizens with a common political project of that polity as defined through basic values and political objectives, which they consent to pursue 'in common'.[2] In other words the first pillar can be described as the objective and subjective affiliation of a person to a polity and the second as the person's approval of the common basic values and objectives of this polity. Despite the scope left for *interpretation* of these basic values and political objectives, political identity - in

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[2] Meyer (2006 b)

order to become effective - requires a minimum of commonly agreed propositions concerning their content and meaning. Surely, the concrete meaning of these values for political action might be and remain *disputed*, yet the political project defined by its values and projects needs at least some binding quality.[3] In addition to the two pillars, the conceptual framework entails the idea of two distinct "levels" or "reality dimensions": institutionalised script and political socio-culture.[4] In order to be an *actual* (and effective) part of the political process, citizen's political identity needs to be anchored on both levels. *The concept of the script* refers to the "material" and binding institutionalisation of the project identity in form of well defined basic values and political objectives; within *the socio-culture* the project identity is turned into a collective mental reality."[5] The concept of European Identity – that is the political identity of the EU - will be analysed on three levels: script, political culture and political actors (here: political parties). The analysis of these three levels will be conducted within a case of political action. Thus, I focus on the policy field which I take to be of central importance for identity building processes: social policy.

I argue that the asymmetry between an already significantly developed script as well as – according to regular opinion surveys - strong expectations within the national political cultures in the member states on the one and the lack of a substantial institutionalization and implementation in these two policy-fields at EU-level on the other is a major challenge for the further development of the European political project and its (popular) legitimation.

The epistemological interest of the investigation is therefore twofold: first, by focusing on the *social* dimension of European identity to outline the normative self-understanding of the EU within this field. Second, to investigate in which ways and to what extent this self-understanding of the EU as a "Social Europe" is underpinned in the *political culture* of the national states. In order to avoid conceptual confusion with the notion of "culture" which is used further down (and rejected for the purpose of the project), please note that 'political culture' in the concept is defined as one part of the culture, namely that part of the culture that turned to be *political*, and as such can and should be distinguished from the others sectors. Thus the political culture of a social collective can be defined as a "*limited set of orientations, as it concerns just those attitudes and values that are directed at the political dimension of the community.*"[6] According to this, political culture is somehow limited in its scope and roots and can therefore coexist with differences in other fields of cultural orientations and persuasions. Political culture researches proved that in a liberal democracy

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[3] Meyer (2006 b) And even though the citizen's core political identity depends on a shared institutional framework and in this sense is still of a *modern* quality, in a globalized world it also has some more or less *post-modern* features, especially a sense of belonging that transcends the boundaries of a given national or regional polity.
[4] For the concept of an identity script see John W. Meyer (1997) and Jürgen Gerhards (2005)
[5] Meyer (2006 a)
[6] Meyer (2006 b) referring to Almond/Verba (1963)

differing cultural orientations, e.g. with regard to religious beliefs or everyday life habits may be compatible with its political persuasions and habits. Consequently, my focus is on political identity, as distinguished from cultural identity.[7] However much political and cultural identity can at times overlap, as it is the case in the nation state model) but on an analytical level this distinction should be made. This seems to be relevant in order to avoid the culturalist fallacy, i.e. to reduce the identity of the members of a polity to their cultural commonalities.[8] Such a fallacy seems to be empirically misleading, because we know about cases where a group shares a political identity notwithstanding their cultural radical differences (e.g. in India).[9] But it seems to be also normatively problematic as it may suggest policies of cultural homogenisation as necessary precondition for the quest of a political identity.[10] In the case of the European Union, as a compound and supranational polity, the pursuit of a political identity, referring to the political values and objectives of the political project and not to cultural or religious reasons, seems to be the most realistic and adequate pathway. In this sense a European identity as defined differs clearly from national identities.

Based on the above mentioned theoretical assumptions identity is understood as a *political* concept and neither a cultural substance nor a cultural construct in a stricter sense. So what are the implications of these basic assumptions for the analysis of the case of the European Union?

II.2.Project identity

Up to now there exists no integrative theory of political identity, so that the issue is analysed on the basis of very different theoretical approaches. With regard to the analysis of European integration "top-down" analyses were dominant for a long time. It is only in the last years that "bottom-up" perspectives have been adopted more often. Whereas the former could be assigned more or less in the field of institutional theories ("just institutions matter", e.g. Bo Rothstein), the latter are followers of cultural theories ("just culture matters", e.g. Samuel Huntington). One could say that I adopt an integrative position as I take both, institutions as well as socio-cultural aspects to be important, as they indeed interdependent. In this regard institutions and political culture have a reciprocal relation with regard to political identity. The formation of political identity thus takes place on the institutional level as well as on the socio-cultural level.

From a sociological perspective I agree that all identities are constructed, so that the real issue is how, from what, by whom and for what they are constructed. Following Manuel Castells, identity is

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[7] Cerutti (2001)
[8] Bottici (2006)
[9] Meyer (2004)
[10] Bottici (2006)

"the construction of meaning" (Castells 1997:6) whereas meaning is defined "as the symbolic identification by a social actor of the *purpose* of her/his action" (ibid.). Collective identities can then be considered as *sources of meaning* for the actors (themselves) and become only identities when and if social actors internalize them and construct their meaning around this internalization (ibid.). This process of identity construction always takes place in a context characterised by power-relations. In this context Manuel Catsells proposes three forms and origins of identity building: *Legitimizing identity, Resistance identity* and *Project identity. Legitimizing identity* is "introduced by the dominant institutions of society to extend and rationalize their power vis à vis social actors. *Resistance identity* [is] generated by those actors that are in positions/conditions devalued and /or stigmatized by the logic of domination, thus building trenches of resistance and survival on the basis of principles different from, or opposed to, those permeating the institutions of society. *Project identity* [emerges] when social actors, on the basis of whichever cultural materials are available to them, build a new identity that redefines their position in society and, by doing so, seek the transformation of overall society structure." (Catsells 1997, p. 8) In the latter process of identity construction, a new "subject", carried out by or in close relation to a project, emerges.

Applying this approach to the European Union three aspects are of main importance:
- First, the project-related construction of a *new* identity.
- Second, the necessity of an internalization process by the individuals of the polity – in the case of a European political identity this means the internalization of and identification with the content of the European political project (values and objectives)
- The third, the contextuality of identity construction (i.e. the necessity to take into account the specific historical and political context in which identity construction takes place).

Inasmuch as I follow these three assumptions for my research, I adopt the perspective of a conditioned/founded constructivism on the issue of European identity. Important in this context is that identities are conceptualised as being endogenous, i.e. that they are not taken as given realities. However, they cannot be constructed without any connection to the given reality that is why I do not follow a *pure* constructivism.

II.3. Script

I address now some of the key concepts, starting with the one of the "script": If I want to find out in how far the political project of the European Union meets approval or disapproval in the member states, I first have to identify a point of reference for my analysis. The European Union can not only

be described by structural aspects as a specific control system but also in form of an institutionalised *script.*

I take the term from the World-Polity-Theory of John W. Meyer. In his approach, John W. Meyer analyses the nation-state as an institution of global extension constructed by worldwide cultural and associational processes. Since the end of World War II these *global* models define and legitimate agendas for *local* action, shaping the structures as well as national and local actors in all of the domains of rationalized social life (business, education, medicine etc.). If a society which has committed itself to the identity of the rationalizing state, it will implement appropriate policies (e.g. national development, individual citizenship and rights, environmental policies etc.). These policies are depicted by the actors as *autonomous decision* because nation-states are defined as sovereign. However, following John W. Meyer they are more or less enactments of *conventionalized scripts.*[11]

For the research project, I appropriate the term *script* in a version: for us, the EU provides an institutionalised *'identity-script'* within the treaties.. Such a self-perception/ understanding of the EU is anchored in the treaties and to a certain degree substantiated in official statements and declarations (e.g. Policy Agendas etc.). Constitutionalism therefore is not just about institutions and structures, but also about ideas and values. So besides their controlling and aggregation function, defining their influence on different modes of action, institutions - and especially constitutions - have a symbolic function as well as a function of integration: they influence the *formation/construction* as well as the *content* of human interests (Göhler 1994, 1997; Gebhardt 1995).

 Therefore, the *script* can be defined as a normative self-understanding (as laid down in the treaties) of the EU, which implicates a specific 'project-design'. Thus, the *script* of a polity project entailing both the *explicit and implicit* overall content (values, principles, objectives) of the project but also a framework for the putting into practise, that is the implementation of these overall orientations.

II.3.1. Constitutions as "sites" of the script

By using the Treaties for reconstructing and analyzing the EU's self-image, I follow partly the idea of "identity building through costitutionalisation", as it is developed in institutional analyses based on a social constructivist approach. Such a (constructivist) constitutional theory conceptualises the change and transformation of collective ideas and world views as *a collective learning process of a society*. Transformations of world views are linked to the possibility of identity building processes.

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[11] In his view the European Union could be described as a 'world polity en miniature', with its character sui generis (implying traits of the nation state) based on a set of rationalized cultural models. With the term of culture, he refers to the foundational cognitive and rationalized models of identity and actions, which are defining what occurs in the social "reality" and which actions are appropriate for the constructed actors of a system.

My understanding of constitutional politics (Verfassungspolitik) with regard to the singular case of the EU will not be limited to an implementation of a Constitution. The notion is taken in a broader sense and regards all treaties as the basis for constitutionalism.

This perspective is not entirely new in the field of EU-research. Especially Markus Jachtenfuchs has designed the transformation of collective world views of a society as a collective learning process. Such a learning process (complex learning) can, on the one hand, be defined as a bottom-up-process. This is for example true if environmental changes, such as socio-economic crises of technological innovations, lead to new world views and ideas in a society, which gradually superimpose the former ones. Those world views and ideas can then be institutionalised; they can also have the effect of a reinterpretation of institutional rules (Habermas 1981; Eder 1985). In this context, the notion of *world views* is used as conceptualised by Max Weber. The latter defines world views as a generic term for the *cognitive, aesthetic and normative basic hypothesis/assumptions about the social reality (reality of a society)* as being embodied in different social groups of reference.[12]

However, the relation between world views and institutions can - following Achim Hurrelmann (2002) - also be defined as "top-down-processes". In this case, the transformation/change of institutions - intended or not - can lead to the spread of new world views or world views which have until then not been capable of obtaining a majority (Olson 1997: 222-224). Following this assumption, such a learning process can be deliberately caused through constitutional politics. This is then called a „strategic social construction" (Finnmore/Sikkink 1998: 910). It follows that the constitutional politics of the EU comprises and expresses world views of a society which can be analysed as such (cf. Kohler-Koch 2000). The constitutional politics is then not necessarily intended to influence the structures of power in a society, but can be interpreted as an attempt to facilitate learning processes, leading to the transformation of the world views of a society. „Comprehensive change in a political order involves not only affecting human conduct and formal-legal institutions, but also affecting peoples' inner state of mind, their moral and intellectual qualities, their identities and their sense of belonging (…)" (Olsen 2000: 173). However, attempts to influence world views deliberately can only be successful if the ideas put forward somehow "refer" to already existing world views, i.e the former are conditioned by the latter (Hurrelmann 2002; Marcussen et al. 1999, Risse et al. 1999).

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[12] See Hurrelmann (2002)

What I take from these discussions, is that constitutions can be understood as (and in the case of the EU the treaties) actually *expressing* world views. For my analysis of the political identity of the EU, I modify this in order to make it applicable to this concept of political identity: the normative socio-political assumptions of the EU **about itself**, as embodied in the treaties can then be taken as an expression and therefore a reference point of an EU-identity. It follows that a cognitive agreement of the EU-citizens with the norms and objectives as expressed in the treaties can be taken as an indicator for an emerging identity.[13]

Assuming that a political identity is constructed by means of internal congruity and in some cases also by external segregation, two policy fields are of main importance: social and foreign policy. According to Furio Cerutti[14] experiencing common decision-making in an environment with *contrasting proposals* is an absolute necessity for identity-building-processes. It serves to shape internal congruity. Furthermore, Furio Cerutti emphasises, common values and principles can only be the result of a *practical process*. Following this idea, political identity is in a sense conscious political behaviour which emerges and is expressed through interaction and common experiences. Cerutti lists four fields of experiences, which can lead to the development of a European identity:

1. Everyday Europeanization (according to Wallace 2001): the increasing influence of EU Directives, regulations on and financial resources in more and more areas of the economic and public sector – a fact that confronts people with the growing importance the EU has for their everyday life.
2. Steps which symbolise identification, for example the Euro, not only as an integrative currency but also as a common scale unit for the standard of living in Europe.
3. The debate about the charter and the constitution – erroneously often regarded as the privileged place for identity definition although it only is the place where processes which evolved elsewhere get a provisional legal form and serve as a channel to the European public opinion.
4. Decision-making in relevant political areas (fields of policy).

Cerutti regards the fourth field of experience, that is: policy fields as the core element for the development of a European Identity because being part of it, being an actor as well as an addressee for the "good and evil" of the same political measures is the most important aspect for the creation

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[13] However, what remains problematic in this context is that an agreement with these norms and objectives does not emerge automatically
[14] Cerutti (2001)

of a political identity[15]. *Political participation* therefore is the primary place for identity processes and for the input-legitimacy (F.W. Scharpf) of the EU. If (relative) political identity necessarily means congruity as well as segregation, two policy fields are of particular importance for identity-building-processes: social and foreign policy. By drawing and experiencing the differences between 'their own' values, principles which are held by other social collectives and expressed in their political behaviour, political identity receives its external frontier. However, for the *internal* identification social policy is essential as it is the field of policy which is directly affecting the everyday life of citizens and therefore represents an important field for common political experiences.

III. Methodology

I *first* conduct a content analysis of the script, that is, as I understand it, the treaties, complemented by other official statements in order to identify the core elements of the normative commitments of the European Union with *regard to the social dimension*. By looking at the social-policy *declarations of the treaties* I obtain an image of the normative self-understanding of the EU. The basic treaties of the EU fulfil all the conditions for a clear-cut political identity: they constitute the EU as a common polity and they establish the outlines of a political project (script).

Therefore the social and foreign-policy dimension of European Identity should be analysed on these two-levels: script and political culture. So far, the script contains the self-conception of the European Union and the present state of agreed compromise – out of the divergent national interests - among the member-states of the European Union. One has to look for them in the treaties of the Union.[16]. To reach more in depth insights about the meanings behind the normative statements and policy regulations it will be necessary to look at the state of the art of European social policy and discuss it in a broader context.

I choose three countries for my analysis: not with the aim of an in-depth analysis, but in the hope nevertheless I might be able to find main orientations and positions. I decided to analyse Germany, Great Britain and Poland. My choice was made upon three main considerations:

1. The relevance of these countries within the identity-discourse, especially Poland and Great Britain can be considered as problematic regarding a European identity-building- process. *Poland* because of certain presently observable tendencies (within the government and key

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[15] These assumptions seem to be problematic in the case of the EU: Neither an identification with the symbols of the EU nor a real common decision-making process in high politics on the basis of an still missing European public sphere until now has developed. Just these short comments as I will further work on it.
[16] Gerhards (2005)

political parties) which might be labelled as euro-sceptical, if not anti-european. *Great Britain* because of its strong transatlantic relations.

2. The degree of diversity within these countries regarding their social policies/ social models.
3. Similar size of the countries

In a *second* step I will conduct a content analysis of the party manifestos of the two biggest parties within each of the selected member states in order to find out the differences and congruencies of the party positions across Europe.

By analysing the positions of political parties I argue that parties still occupy a central position among all political organisations and are central to the political process for two reasons:

1. Only political parties can handle the task of drawing up programmatic compromise for an entire society on the basis of a diversity of social interests and values, civil society action groups and associations.
2. Parties have a central role to play in the process of mediating between social interest and state action.

Thus I state a reciprocal relationship between nation-states societies and political parties, which is crucial for opinion aggregation and political action.[17]

In a *third s*tep I want to know how the normative self-understanding of the EU – as revealed in the Treaties - is underpinned within the political culture of the selected member states. By means of value surveys (Eurobarometer, European Value Survey and World Value Survey) I want to find out in how far the provisions made within the script regarding the social and foreign policy dimension meets with the values and attitudes of the citizens. Insofar the categories for the analysis can be taken out of the script (concerning the social dimension e.g. social security, social inclusion etc.).

IV. Outline of the case: Social policy

Here I will in consideration of the historical development of these two policy fields briefly illustrate a normative key concept/the draft concept of the script for each case.

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[17] However, using party manifestos remains problematic regarding the explanatory power. One might ask whether party manifestos really mirror true believes or whether they are merely rhetorical propositions in order to win elections. Despite these objections, I will use this kind of data for two main reasons: First, I have simply no empirical feasible alternative for my project and second, the subsequent analysis should contain important information especially if I focus on policy orientations and differences rather than on the comparison of absolute policy positions at given points in time. But I will try to fill this methodological gap by first, differentiating the different type of manifestos (general long-term party manifestos, election manifestos, policy declarations) and secondly, by counterchecking the findings through expert interviews.

VI.1. Exploring European Identity as a "social one"

Within the Treaty of Rome (1957) social policy was considered to be an extension of economic policy, whereas the *Single European Act from* 1986 put special emphasis on social protection. In 1998 the *Community Charter of the Fundamental Social Rights of Workers* in 1998 was adopted, except from Great Britain. Fresh impetus to the codification of laws in the field of work and social policy came from the *Maastricht Treaty* in 1992 and the *Agreement on Social Policy* was concluded by eleven member states (w/o UK). The *Amsterdam Treaty* (1997) was an essential step forward in respect of the social dimension. The United Kingdom signed the Social Chapter and it was incorporated in the Treaty, furthermore the *Open Method of Coordination* (OMC) for employment policy was implemented and later then also for social inclusion policy. Within the *Nice Treaty* (2000) a Social Protection Committee was created and the Community activities (re-drafted Article 137) specified. Traditionally, European social policy initiatives were set out in a series of Commission action programmes. This name was replaced by that of 'Social Policy Agenda'. The Nice Summit endorsed the Social Policy Agenda for 2000-2005 and invited the Commission to present a scoreboard each year describing the progress made in implementing this agenda. The agenda informed the preparation of the Lisbon European Council (March 2000), which led to a policy agreement designed to promote "the most competitive and dynamic knowledge economy in the world, capable of sustained economic growth accompanied by a quantitative and qualitative improvement in employment and greater social cohesion". Last year the Commission launched the new Social Policy Agenda for 2006-2010 , which identifies the priorities that should guide the European Union's action in the development of the European social model.

In the *Constitutional Treaty* - for example- the social dimension was enshrined at five levels, which, together, give it a quite outstanding position: In the introductory chapter *The Union's Objectives* the claims are for a "social market society, aiming at full employment and social progress", the combat against "social exclusion and discrimination", the promotion of "social justice and protection", and "social and territorial cohesion and solidarity among member states" (I-3).

In summary, the cautious but growing consideration of the social dimension of the European Union provides an indication with regard to the self-view of the Union as a slowly but continuously developing *Social Union*. Nevertheless it is also indicative of the difficulties to reach agreements in social matters, not the least in view of and due to the disparities of national welfare cultures and intuitions between the member states in their strong anchorage. Despite these difficulties the permanent reflection on the social dimension of the integration process including the shift in the

1990s when social policy became a topical issue and has been upgraded from a "supporting role" for economic integration to a second "leading role" fostered the emergence of a social awareness and - of course with qualifications - of a social identity on the script level. In the rhetoric of the Commission "*high social standards were presented as a key element in the competitive formula and a factor contributing to the efficiency of European society*"[18]. The self-conception that the social dimension plays an important role for the integration process and that the political institutions at the national and/or supranational level have a social responsibility and the right to interfere in the market can be considered as a sign of a more or less common social identity within the European Union and its member states (actors level).

Yet, here again caution might be apposite, as the gradual development of a "European social model" (social dimension) and its diversity renders the analysis of this latter problematic in a twofold sense: On the one hand, the notion of the "European social model" is interpreted either from a scientific or from a political point of view - depending on the context.

The concept of the "social space" or the idea of a European social model put forward by Francois Mitterand and Jacques Delors in the 1980s pleaded for a complementation of the economic integration by a social dimension. However, what one can understand exactly by this notion is very varied and diffuse. A list of elements characterising the European social model has been drafted by Daniel C. Vaughan-Whitehead (2003:6):

The Different Elements of the European Social Model

- Labour law on workers' rights
- Employment
- Equal opportunities
- Anti-discrimination
- Workers' participation, information and consultation
- Social partner recognition
- Social dialogue and collective bargaining
- Involvement of civil society
- Public services and services of general interest
- Decent or "fair" wages
- Social protection
- Social inclusion
- Fundamental working and social rights
- Regional cohesion
- Transnational social policies and tools

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[18] Hantrais (2000) p.19

This list clearly shows that the political ideas and conceptions of a European social model include a great number of quite different elements/dimensions, which go far beyond a scientific definition of the welfare state. For a brief example I will reduce the notion "European social model" to the sum of the European conceptions of the welfare state within the treaties. In the scientific literature as well as in political debates the "European social model" is seen as one of the important features distinguishing Europe from other continents and countries, especially the USA. In this view, a comprehensive welfare state, organised on the basis of the idea of solidarity in a society, is seen as a special European characteristic and common feature (e.g. Aust et al. 2002). Following Jürgen Gerhards (2005), seven ESM-dimensions can be differentiated:

1. The right to participate, referring to the relation between labour force and capital (especially with regard to problems of in-company participation)
2. Working regulations at the workplace (workplace safety, health)
3. Tolerance (anti-discrimination) and civil society (mode of organisation of a democracy).
4. Public services (energy supply and transport system)
5. Wages policy
6. Full employment
7. Social security and social protection

Following this, the conceptions of a European social model do not refer in the first instance to institutionalised social security systems, but rather to the internal work relations. Out of these seven dimensions, only the last three falls under the more narrow scientific conception of the welfare state, as for example introduced by Edeltraud Roller (2000a). In her typology of four different welfare state models (liberal model, christian-democratic model, social-democratic model and socialist model) she mainly focus on decommodification and describes to what extend social assistance (Existenzsicherheit) - independently from a persons' income - is secured/provided by the state. In this model, the guarantee of social security and social protection (dimension 7) form the core of the conception/idea of the welfare state.

Taking the provisions that exist on the EU-level - in a narrow sense understood as social policy - one can define on the basis of the European "welfare script" the following conception. Here, I take the constitutional treaty as a basis. Among the objectives and values of the Union (part I), solidarity (Art.I-2) is defined as a central value. Furthermore, "a highly competitive social market economy, aiming at full employment and social progress" is mentioned (Art.I-3). However, it is not specified whether full employment is to be achieved through measures taken by the state or rather through

less state-intervention. In addition, part I also mentions the promotion of social security as well as the solidarity between the generations. Those objectives are - except the one on full employment - concretised later on in the Constitutional text (especially in art. 94 on social security and social assistance, part II of the constitutional treaty).

In summary, by this very briefly outlined example on the idea of a welfare-state, it may be said that the EU is clearly pleading for a welfare-state, however leaving the detailed services and payments to the traditions of the member states. This is why it seems necessary to investigate the conceptions of the welfare-state as they are held by central actors on the national level. On this basis, I will then be able to discuss further hypothesis on a (potential) European identity.

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