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European Identity in the Context of the EU:
Construction of European Identity in Civic and Cultural Terms

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Abstract

European identity has been constructed and reconstructed on different bases, such as Christianity or common values throughout history. There has been an ongoing construction of European identity during the integration process within the EU. European identity refers to citizens' sense of belonging to the EU, mainly with reference to its institutions and values (civic) or it may refer to citizens' sense of belonging to Europe with reference to common cultural characteristics (cultural). The EU policy makers have sometimes used cultural, sometimes civic references. Although cultural references such as Greek heritage, Christianity and the Roman Empire have been effective on construction of European identity, they can not be main references in the context of the EU; because not all of the Member States have not passed through all of these processes, there is much cultural and religious diversity among them, even within the Member States. In this article, construction of European identity in the EU is discussed mainly through discourses of the political elites of the EU.

Introduction

European identity has been in a construction and reconstruction process throughout history, but it has never been constructed within a common institutional framework like the EU. Since the 1950s, European identity has been under a construction process for the first time within an institutional framework which has some supranational characteristics. The problem of "European identity" has been increasingly felt in the EU, with the deepening of European integration. Since European integration increasingly touches upon the boundaries of state sovereignty, there has been a growing need to strengthen people's identification with the EU (van Ham 2000, 15). The question of European identity has been increasingly discussed in the EU in the post-Cold War era. Especially the ratification crisis of the Maastricht Treaty and rejection of the Constitutional Treaty at the referendums in France and Netherlands, which showed the importance of support of public opinion to go

towards the political integration process, which is closely related with the construction of European identity.

European identity has been constructed on different bases throughout history. Sometimes Christianity was the main reference point, sometimes (especially after Enlightenment) common values like democracy and human rights became the main reference points of European identity. This article focuses on the construction of a European identity within the EU and the question I try to answer is on what bases European identity is constructed within the EU and its effects on the future structure of the EU. The goal of this article is to analyze the role of the political elites and several institutions of the EU in construction of European identity. It contributes to previous related studies especially through analysing discourses of the political elites of the EU, which shows that even among the political elites of the EU there are not common reference points of European identity. The basis for European identity construction also has implications on the daily lives of the peoples of Europe, because it affects the construction of boundaries of Europe, the content of "Europeanness" and the policies towards non-European immigrants.

This article first conceptualizes terms and clarifies wide notions used in previous studies with a particular focus on what European identity refers to; thus- various bases of European identity in different historical periods are discussed. Then, the theoretical framework is briefly explained, which is based on social constructivism. Second, what we mean by "construction of civic and cultural European identity" is discussed. The roles of the Commission and the EP in construction of European identity are discussed. Their roles are emphasized, because they represent the supranational aspect of the EU. There are references to the interviews made in Brussels and discourse analysis is made in order to understand the perceptions of the political elites of the EU. In the conclusion, the perceptions of the MEPs about construction of European identity and the impacts of construction of European identity on the future structure of the EU are discussed.

Conceptual Analysis and Theoretical Framework
"European identity is a specific construct in time and space, whose content changes depending on the social and political context" (Wiener, Diez 2004, 171).

As "Europe" has always been in a construction process throughout history, "European identity" has been simultaneously under construction. As Strath argues, European identity is a "…contested political programme or project, which must continue to be contested and questioned" (Strath 2000, 44). According to Thatcher, "Europe is not the creation of the Treaty of Rome, nor is the European idea the property of any group or institution…The EC is one manifestation of that European identity, but it is not the only one" (Thatcher 2002, 206-207). As Thatcher argued, the idea of Europe has not emerged with the establishment of the EC.

European identity has been defined on different bases in different periods of history. In the Medieval period, Christianity was nearly European identity itself (Mc Cormick 2002, 32). After the emergence of secularism and the nation-state, Christianity lost its primacy. In the modern era, the dominant collective identity is national identity, which was one of the most effective factors on the emergence of a secular European identity. With the effect of secularism (and while the authority of the Church was declining,) the authority of the nation-states increased (Yurdusev 1997, 37-41). Özdemir argued that "if we look at history, Enlightenment…separation between religion and state…Roman Empire…all could be found in the European identity construction process" (Özdemir 2006). Thus, all these processes including Enlightenment and secularism have been influential on construction of European identity. Frank argues that European identity means to feel European. For the emergence of European consciousness, firstly there is a need to feel European (Frank 1999, 45). In the context of the EU "European identity is seen to function as a social glue to be invented by the EU institutions and certain intellectual elites" (Nanz 2000, 287).

European identity has been defined on different bases by different scholars. According to Bauman, "European identity is a utopia at all moments of its history" (Herzog 2006, 86). Garcia asserts that "the current search for identity in Europe is a response to global economic transformation and to the geopolitical changes in the old continent" (Garcia and Wallace 1993, 172). Kohli argues that there are mainly four understandings of European identity. The first understanding is the constitutional one, which was expressed in the "Document on European Identity" that was accepted by the foreign ministers of the EC in 1973. There was a reference to this type of European identity also in the Maastricht Treaty. It refers to the identity of the Community on the

international scene. A second understanding of European identity is the idea of Europe which was manifested in the discourses of intellectuals and politicians. The third one is cultural understanding of European identity, which is reflected in written texts or cultural practices. The fourth understanding of European identity is related with collective identity that has been the focus of attention by European integrationists, leading to public opinion surveys, which have been made by Eurobarometer since 1972 (Kohli 2000, 120-122). In this article, construction of European identity within the EU as a collective identity among the peoples of Europe is focused on, especially the role of the several institutions of the EU and political elites of the EU are discussed.

In this article European identity is analyzed mainly on the bases of social constructivism. There has been a constructivist turn in international relations theory in the post-Cold War era. It has been also used in European studies, especially for studying effects of the EU on norms, values and identities. European identity is not static and it has been always under the construction and reconstruction processes throughout history. The integration process within the institutional framework of the EU has affected the identities of the Member States, simultaneously- European identity has been under a construction process among the citizens of the EU. Social constructivism is helpful to understand the dynamics of European identity construction process.

Social constructivism focuses on identities; in particular- it deals with the construction process of identities and their change through interaction. According to Wendt, identities are not given but they are developed or transformed in interaction. According to him, "identities may be hard to change, but they are not carved in stone" (Zehfuss 2001, 318-335). Risse argues that "we would expect a complex transformation of the EU together with people's identities" (Risse 2004, 263). Construction of a post-national identity, without eliminating national and regional identities within a unique political structure like the EU, is the first and most unique case in world politics. Social constructivism also argues about the possibility of emergence of a post-national identity.

Construction of Civic vs. Cultural European Identity within the EU
Nationalisms can be defined on two main bases: "Civic" and "ethnic". According to civic nationalism, the case of France is usually given as a classical example; the "nation" is defined "in terms of the willingness of

its people to adhere to a certain set of civic values and rules based on *jus soli* (citizenship by birthplace)." On the other hand, ethnic nationalism which can be found in Germany, the nation is defined in terms of ethnic origin and birth, nationality is based on *jus sanguinis* which is based on ancestry and blood ties (van Ham 2001, 66). This differentiation is not concrete, in many cases these two types blend into each other.

Cultural identity refers to a common language, religion, ethnicity, history and myths. On the other hand, civic identity refers to a set of institutional frameworks, which define individual's values, rights and obligations. Usually, both of these components of identity exist in people's minds (Bruter 2005, 103). Thus, it is not so easy to differentiate them, especially in the context of the nation-states. German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies distinguishes between *gemeinschaft* and *gesselschaft* which refer to two kinds of collective identity formation. The *gemeinschaft* refers to a deep sense of belonging such as a family or a village. On the other hand, *gesselschaft* is the modern manifestation of identity which refers to the "artificial construction of identity through state builders' production and distribution of benefits in exchange for citizen loyalty". Civic nationalism emphasizes the individual's commitment to the *gesselschaft,* on the other hand, ethnic nationalism emphasizes the organic sense of belonging, which is the main characteristic of *gemeinschaft*. An analogy may be made between *gemeinschaft* and construction of European identity on cultural bases, on the other hand, between *gesselschaft* and construction of European identity on civic bases. As van Ham argues, the political consequences of "organic-community building in an EU framework" are risky. Such a "European *gemeinschaft*" may legitimize exclusion (van Ham 2001, 66-71).

Bruter makes a distinction between identification with the EU as a civic entity and a larger Europe as a cultural and historical social space. Europe as a civic and political space refers to the EU (Bruter 2004). According to him, "European civic identity" refers to the perception of belonging to the EU. On the other hand, he defines cultural identity as "…the feeling of belonging to a culturally meaningful human community…the perception of being closer to people within the group…" (Bruter 2005, 168-169). It is too hard to measure in the surveys, whether people refer to civic or cultural understanding of European identity. While European civic identity refers to a feeling of belonging to the EU, cultural identity refers to a feeling of belonging to a European

265

civilisation. (Waever and Kelstrup 1993, 67). Spohn distinguishes between "European civilizational identity" and "European integrational identity". The latter refers to the "attachment, loyalty and identification with the European integration"; on the other hand "European civilisational identity" refers to the broader cultural identity of Europe (Spohn 2005, 3-4). For example, Eastern European countries are thought to possess European civilizational identity which accelerated their accession process to the EU; but their identification with the European integration project will take time (Spohn 2005, 3). "European civilizational identity" may be considered as similar to the "European cultural identity", on the other hand, "European integrational identity" may be considered as similar to "European civic identity".

European cultural identity is based on shared memories, traditions, myths and symbols of several generations of the peoples of Europe (Smith 1995, 126-127). According to Wintle, identity is about an image rather than a reality. European cultural identity is not an objective reality and will not become so in the future, instead it is a set of images. He puts forward that Europe is real in an essentialist sense, but European identity is imaginary. As Wintle argues, "cultural identity largely remains at the national level, even with a tendency to move down towards micro-national regional identity" (Wintle 1996). In cultural terms, people usually have stronger national, regional identities than European identity. Smith asks that "…without common symbols and myths, without shrines and ceremonies and monuments, except the bitter reminders of recent holocausts and wars, who will feel European in the depth of their being and who will willingly sacrifice themselves for so abstract an idea? In short, who will die for Europe?" (Smith 1995). Smith differentiates between cultural and civic aspects of identity. According to him- in the future, the peoples of the EU may have double identities. A double loyalty would consist of a national level, which represents cultural dimension and a European level, which represents a civic dimension (Smith 1992). European identity which is constructed on the bases of civic elements would be more compatible with national identities.

> In cultural and religious terms, there is much diversity within Europe, such as differences between the Catholic south and the Protestant north, also between Christianity and secularized Enlightenment identity (Bruter 2004, 190-208). Scholars and politicians, who define European identity in cultural terms, usually refer to the Judeo-Christian and the Greco-Roman

traditions (Sezer 2004, 268). Barnavie argues that the bases of European civilisation are "the Greco-Roman heritage, the Judeo-Christian heritage and the feudal system" (Barnavi 2002, 88). Especially some of the Christian Democrats, who usually define European identity on cultural bases, make references to these processes. However, it has to be emphasized that Christianity or the Greco-Roman heritage does not reflect the experiences of all Europeans. As Delanty argues, because of the multicultural structure of Europe, European identity can not be based on particularistic understanding of cultural identity (Delanty 2005, 135).

In his speech from 22-24 March 2007, when the European bishops gathered in Vatican for the 50th anniversary of the signature of the Treaties of Rome, Pope Benedict XVI criticized the EU leaders for ignoring Christianity and argued that Europe doubted its identity. He asked that "if on the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome the governments of the Union want to get closer to their citizens, how can they exclude an element as essential to the identity of Europe as Christianity in which the vast majority of its people continue to identify?" (Kubosova 2007). This speech of the Pope was made while EU leaders were gathering in Berlin to celebrate the EU's birthday and German Chancellor Merkel was signing a declaration on their behalf which makes no reference to religious values. Before the EU gathering, there had been a meeting of the centre-right heads of states and governments in Berlin, including Merkel. They adopted another declaration, which mentioned "Judeo-Christian roots", also the contributions of the Christian Democrats to Europe's integration (Kubosova 2007). Thus, Christianity is still considered as one of the main components of European identity especially by the Christian Democrats.

In 2002, the ex-Commission President Prodi asked the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna to set up a group of academicians and politicians from different Member States to discuss on cultural and intellectual dimensions of the EU. In the results of the Reflection Group, it was stated that "Europe sees itself as both a zone of peace and a community of values…There is…no fixed list of European values. There is no finality to the process of European integration…Europe is a project of the future…Europe's capacity for constant change and renewal was and remains the most important source of its success and its unique character" (Reflection Group 2004). With regard to European identity, it was stated that "…it must be negotiated by its peoples and institutions"

(Reflection Group 2004). It was added that the construction of Islam as an "other" of European identity is too dangerous (Reflection Group 2004).

The values of Europe in the modern world include support for a welfare state, democracy and liberal economy, etc. (Citrin and Sides 2004, 183). According to Laffan, the EU is founded on a system of values (Laffan 2004, 79). Möller argues that the EU can be differentiated in terms of fundamental rights, emphasis on environmental protection and having a social market economy (Möllers 2003, 38-40). In terms of environmental sensitivity, the EU usually differentiates itself from the USA. Fundamental values such as respecting human rights, minority rights and rule of law are usually considered as common values of the EU which are crucial in construction of European identity on civic bases. Some scholars argue that these values are mostly globalized, thus they may not be so effective on construction of European identity. Soysal asserts that "at the end of the 20th century, human rights, democracy, progress, equality are everyone's, every nation's modernity" (Soysal 2002, 274). It is not so easy for the EU elites and the general public to agree on what is their common values and another question is to what extent they are peculiarly European (Casanova 2006, 237). What differentiates the EU is that most of these values primarily emerged in Europe. Also, the EU puts more emphasis on some values such as respecting minority rights, fighting against discrimination towards women, supporting sustainable development and being more sensitive on global warming. The death penalty is also forbidden in all of the Member States.

There are differences within the EU, even in terms of values. According to World Values Surveys, there are mainly five different European value areas: Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, English-speaking and Baltic-former communist one (Casanova 2006, 237). Delanty asserts that Europeans can only be united towards an "other" as well as by recognizing their diversity (Delanty 2005, 133). He also argues that there is no European people as a *Volk* or *ethnos,* which refers to a "culturally constituted community of memory and descent", there is no European people as a "national community defined by the political boundaries of the state and its territory", there is also no "republican or Kantian notion of European people defined by the civic consciousness of a *demos*." He contends that there is no desire to construct a European people as an *ethnos* (Delanty 2005, 137). It is obvious that to construct European

people as *ethnos* is almost impossible in the context of the EU. The initiatives of the EU may be considered as efforts for the construction of *demos.* According to Laffan, instead of establishing a "European people", the coexistence of "European peoples" should be emphasized. She puts forward that European identity must be built on civic bases, such as the EU citizenship, Constitution (Laffan 1996, 98-99). She also argues that the EU has been trying to construct a "post-national civic identity". Democracy, human rights, and rule of law are the main characteristics of this civic identity. She also argues that the EU has been constructed as a legal community and the EU sanctions against Austria about Haider and his party's entry into the government can be understood in terms of European civic identity (Laffan 2004, 83).

According to surveys of Bruter, when people answer questions about European identity, they primarily think of European civic identity. Also, the respondents' civic identity was usually more developed than their cultural identity, except in the British sample, which tended to have a predominantly cultural European identity. Bruter argues that the main reason of this is the opt-outs of the UK, from the two main policy areas of the EU, which are the Schengen Agreement and the European Monetary Union (EMU) (Bruter 2005, 114-130). He also argues that for the respondents who mainly have a cultural European identity, the images associated with Europe include values of peace, harmony and cooperation between similar cultures. On the other hand, respondents who mainly have a civic European identity associated Europe with free movement, democracy and environmental policy (Bruter 2005, 162-163). Bruter argues that "…left-wing and centrist people are more likely to feel attached to an EU 'civic' community, while right-wing voters are more sensitive to perceptions of a European 'cultural' identity and European shared heritage" (Bruter 2005, xv). He also found out that civic European identity has a positive impact on the citizens' support for European integration. Thus, if European identity is constructed on civic bases, the peoples of Europe will have a tendency to support political integration. Bruter also argues that the news have an important effect on "civic" identity, while symbols have an important effect on "cultural" identity (Bruter 2005, xv).

According to the Eurobarometer 66 carried out in autumn of 2006, for the EU citizens three main values which represent the EU are: human rights (38%), democracy (38%) and peace (36%). Margot Wallström,

Vice-President of the Commission and responsible for Institutional relations and Communication Strategy, stated that "this Eurobarometer survey shows that on the eve of the 50th anniversary of the Rome Treaties, citizens clearly identify the Union with universal values like human rights, peace and democracy" (Standard Eurobarometer 66, 2006). She emphasizes civic elements of European identity. According to Risse, the EU has increasingly defined what it means to be "European"; it has been filling "Europeanness" with post-national civic values. The European integration would have led to "a quite dramatic reconstruction of European identity" (Risse 2004, 257).

On which bases European identity is constructed affects people's attitudes towards immigrants and further enlargements. According to Delanty, the construction of European identity is an open ended process of cultural and institutional experimentation (Delanty 2002, 357). As he argues, European cultural identity is too hard to construct. The construction of European political identity is future oriented and based on common values (Citrin and Sides 2004). The construction of European identity on civic bases will lead to a decrease in xenophobic feelings and make the EU citizens more supportive of future enlargements (Risse 2004). If European identity is constructed on cultural bases, the membership of the EU will be much more restrictive. Religion in particular cannot be the main bases of European identity, because of secularism and the presence of non-Christian religions in the EU. Excluding these people from European identity may lead to an increase in rivalries among people from different religions. Especially with the effect of the last Eastern Enlargement in May 2004, the heterogeneity of the EU has increased much more in terms of language, ethnicity and religion, which make it more difficult to construct European identity on cultural bases. Moreover Turkey (which has a predominantly Muslim population and secular political structure) was accepted as a candidate country and the negotiation process has still been ongoing since 3 October 2005. The construction of European identity on the bases of religion would exclude Turkish people, Muslim Bosnians, Albanians and Muslim immigrants living in the EU.

The Gap between the Political Elites and the General Public
The gap between the elites and the general public has been one of the main challenges of construction of European identity (Hersom 2004, 44). The elites of Europe have had an important role in construction of

European identity, even before the establishment of the EC. The establishment of the EC was inspired by the founding fathers of the European project, such as Monnet and Schuman (Bruter 2005, 60-64). As Taylor argues, within the EC and especially at the elite level, there has been the idea of "reconstruction of Europe" from the beginning. The process of European unification was initiated by top political elites of the founding members. Thus, the EU may be seen as a "European elite project" (Taylor 1996, 140-143). It is argued that "European identity is formed through the activities of the Europeanising elite, such as top managers of industry, experts, leading political figures and intellectuals" (Münch 2001, 159). Thus, not only political elites, but also academicians, economic elites and representatives of civil society have played important roles in the development process of the European project (Smith 1995, 127). In the second half of the 1980s the European integration process was under the joint push of Delors, who was the President of the Commission from 1985 to 1994, as well as Kohl and Mitterand. They supported the idea of construction of a "People's Europe" (Bruter 2005, 84). Contemporarily despite the decline in importance of the elites' role, they are still crucial for maintenance of the integration process and construction of European identity.

The public opinion has also become much more important to establish legitimacy of the EU and to go on the path towards integration. European identity can not be constructed only by top-down initiatives of the EU elites and institutions. "Bottom-up" initiatives of the civil society and providing channels of participation for citizens to the EU are also necessary. Some scholars argue that to construct European identity, there is a need to build up a "Europe-wide civil society" of pan-European voluntary associations and pressure groups (Bloomfield 1993). Thus, construction of European identity has been affected primarily by top-down initiatives. This is the reason for which the following sections briefly discuss the role and implication of the relevant EU institutions and the political elites.

The Role of the Commission in Constructing a European Identity
The Commission has a very important role in constructing a European identity, because it initiates the legislative process, it is in direct communication with the NGOs, it has direct contacts with the EU citizens through conferences, giving funds to the EU projects, it has many initiatives to increase communication with the citizens and provide different ways of involvement of the citizens to the EU.

271

According to the Commission "it is necessary for Community action to look beyond economic issues to the major concerns of day-to-day life, which will lead to strengthening the sense of belonging to a European culture and thereby strengthen European identity" (Hansen 2000, 60). For the Commission "European identity is the result of centuries of shared history and common cultural and fundamental values" (Hansen 2000, 126). Thus, there are references to both cultural and civic understandings of European identity. Delors asked "who falls in love with an inner market?" (Waever and Kelstrup 1993, 65). The ex-Commission President Prodi asserted that "we are seeking a shared identity, a new European soul. We need to build a union of hearts and minds, a shared sense of common destiny, of European citizenship" (Wise 2000, B9). He makes references to both cultural and civic understandings of European identity. During his speech at the EP in 1999 stated that further development of the EU institutions have to build up gradually "a shared feeling of belonging to Europe" (Follesdal 2000, 503), which shows the role of the institutions of the EU in the construction process of European identity.

There is no consensus on the meaning of European identity even among the political elites of the EU. In one of the Commission reports, it was stated that:

> The term 'European' has not been officially defined. It combines geographical, historical and cultural elements, which all contribute to the European identity. The shared experience of proximity, ideas, values and historical interaction can not be condensed into a simple formula and is subject to review by each succeeding generation. The Commission believes that, it is neither possible nor opportune to establish now the frontiers of the EU, whose contours will be shaped over many years to come (Shore 1993, 786).

Here there are references to both cultural and civic aspects of European identity. It was also emphasized that there is no fixed European identity; rather it has to be reconstructed by each generation.

The Role of the European Parliament (EP) in Constructing a European Identity
The EP has had an important role in construction of European identity, because it is the only institution of the EU, which is directly elected by the citizens since 1979. Direct elections to the EP every five years bring

its members into direct contact with the public and provide an opportunity for participation of the citizens to the politics of the EU. The turnout rate of the EP elections has been steadily declining (Laffan 2004, 94-95). It is argued that the EP with its periodical elections could stimulate European identity, but because of the low turnout rates and the "second-order" status of these elections (Panebianco 2004, 24-25), its effects have been limited. The competencies of the EP within the institutional structure of the EU have been increased the most, compared to the other institutions of the EU since its foundation, with the amendments of the treaties since the Single European Act (SEA).

The EP also makes references to both cultural and civic understandings of European identity. In the Resolution issued by the EP, it was stated that "Europe is not only an association of economic interests but also a cultural unit" (Hansen 2000, 60). It was also stated that "the integration of Europe…must be built on the common foundations of European culture" (Hansen 2000, 60). In one of the EP reports, it was stated that "the cultural dimension is becoming an increasingly crucial means of giving effect to policies seeking to foster a union of the European peoples founded on the consciousness of sharing a common heritage of ideas and values" (Shore 1996, 476). Here again there are references to both civic and cultural aspects of European identity.

There are different perceptions among the MEPs about the role of the EP in construction of European identity. Although all the political elites of the EU do not have a common goal of construction of European identity, some of the initiatives of the institutions of the EU (the discourses of the political elites of the EU about European identity) have been effective on the construction of European identity. If the role of the EP increases in decision making process, the EU identity in the world will strengthen which will lead to strengthening of European identity.

Perceptions of Several MEPs and the Commission Officials about the European Identity
In this article, there are some references to the interviews which were made with twenty MEPs from 1 July to 1 October 2006. The MEPs were chosen from the Committees of Culture and Education, Foreign Affairs and Constitutional Affairs and also from those who are from the Delegation to the EU-Turkey Joint Parliamentary Committee. They were chosen from different party groups and Member States. In addition to

273

these interviews, one of the MEPs (Kauppi) sent the answers of the interview questions by e-mail.

Discourse analysis is made in order to analyse the in-depth interviews. Discourse analysis may be considered as a methodology which is "qualitative, interpretive and constructionist". It is founded on a social constructivist epistemology (Hardy, Harley, Phillips 2004, 19). "Discourse is shaped and constrained by social structure", but simultaneously they are "socially constitutive", so it does not only represent the world, rather it contributes to the "construction of social identities" (Halkier 2003, 7). In European studies, usually "political discourses" are considered as the most important discourses. Through discourse analysis, the structures in public statements that regulate political debate are discovered. Waever argues that many scholars who study political discourses are usually surprised that political language is generally systematic and coherent (Waever 2004, 199-200). Nanz argues that European identity has been constructed from above by the bureaucrats of the EU, political actors, theorists of European integration and intellectuals. It has been also constructed and reconstructed in people's everyday life discourse (Nanz 2000, 281). Articles or books of scholars of European studies or any speech of political leaders of the Member States or the officials of the EU have been effective on construction of European identity.

During the interviews, most of the interviewees admitted that European identity has been in an ongoing construction process within the EU and it has become stronger since the establishment of the EC. Only a few of them mentioned the necessity of more intervention of the EU, especially in cultural policy to construct a European identity. The interviews I conducted reveal that there is not a common definition of European identity among the MEPs. Cutchet emphasized the principle of "united in diversity". She defined European identity as "…sum of all different identities that exist in Europe…" (Badia i Cutchet 2006). She perceives differences in the EU as its richness and added that there are a lot of similarities among them. She stated that "…in language, I can find the same expressions to express the same feelings…many times they use the same words…there is very close kind of living, in food…when two European people meet in Asia…you feel that we are European…" (Badia i Cutchet 2006). She emphasizes that there are similarities among the peoples of Europe in terms of language and the way of living. The peoples of Europe usually become more aware of their similarities when

they are outside Europe. Kauppi emphasized the effects of the EU on the construction of European identity. She argued that "European identity is an ever-evolving concept. The EU marks its own mark by bringing people closer to each other and helps people understand each other better…the EU makes European identity stronger" (Kauppi 2006). Resetarits stated that "European identity is something, which we have to build up…It is not something already done or in the minds of people" (Resetarits 2006). She implied the role of the political elites of the EU in this process. Schöpflin asserted that "European identity is a constructed identity…its present phase…is something new, which is constructed after the 2nd World War as a way of bringing peace, democracy…Europeanness exists in the framework of EU…" (Schöpflin 2006). He emphasized the constructed nature of European identity. He referred to European identity in the EU as a new phase of European identity which has been under construction since the end of the 2nd World War.

Few of the interviewees mentioned the construction of European identity as a goal of the EU elites or institutions. Usually they perceive it as an ongoing construction process, which has been affected by many initiatives and policies of the EU. Fajmon, who is very sceptical about the concept of identity and particularly European identity, argued that "…we can only reasonably talk about it as the outcome of the relationship between the citizen and their state and that certain territory…I am very much against the generalisation of anything. The concept of identity is generalisation…European identity is very complicated to describe by means of any science…" (Fajmon 2006). He added that "I do not think European identity exists at all…it can only be described as a combination of national identities of states, which belong to Europe" (Fajmon 2006). European identity has been in the interaction process with national identities and does not replace them, but it does not mean that there is not any European identity.

The most Eurosceptic MEP among the interviewees was the one from the Independence Democracy Group Wise, who is against the idea of the EU and European identity. He claimed that "European identity does not exist" (Wise 2006). He argued that "…I do not want European identity…" (Wise 2006). He added that "the EU is a political construct; we do not know where it is going" (Wise 2006). It can be observed that even some of the political elites of the EU are sceptical about European identity.

Usually the Christian Democrat MEPs define European identity on cultural bases. Hieronymi stated that "…the best definition is in the proposal of the Constitution, it is depending mainly on the common history of Europe…There are three main ideas…Ancient Greece, cultural, religious tradition (Jewish, Christian), Roman democracy, the spirit of Enlightenment" (Hieronymi 2006). However, some of the Christian Democrat MEPs such as Kauppi defined European identity mainly on civic bases. She stated that "…in 1993 the Copenhagen criteria was created to define the entrance criteria to the EU…it defines quite well what is meant by common values. These include a democratic way of governance, a stable market-oriented economy and acceptance of basic human rights…I do not believe religion, ethnicity or geographical location to be of great importance" (Kauppi 2006).

Some of the MEPs emphasized the impacts of Christianity on European identity. Guardans stated that "Religion is not part of European identity. Relationship with religion yes...Impact of religion on society…Europe has common values, which come from the French Revolution, Greek heritage…democracy…liberalism…with differences but some sort of social welfare state…role of religion in society, freedom, respect for individual, fundamental rights, engagement with multilateralism…are part of European project" (Guardans 2006).

Some MEPs referred to both cultural and civic elements of European identity. Schöpflin argued that European identity includes both cultural and civic elements. He stated that "…there is a civic element…it is constructed from above…there is also a cultural identity…the European political identity and political consciousness are very weak but there is actually a European cultural identity…the problem is how this identity can be converted into political consciousness" (Schöpflin 2006). According to him, there is already European identity but the EU has to convert European cultural identity to political identity. Sommer argued that "I think it works altogether. Of course, there is a cultural identity; although the Member States are a little bit different from each other…Additionally we are sharing common values…expressed in the Copenhagen criteria…democracy…human rights" (Sommer 2006). Deprez stated that "I think it is a mix. There is some kind of cultural heritage: the Roman civilisation, Greece, Christianity, secularism. European identity is a mix of those elements, sometimes in conflict, which are related in a specific mixture…" (Deprez 2006). Stubb also

made references to both civic and cultural elements, but he mainly defined European identity on civic bases. He stated that:

> I think both of them...to say that, there is one specific European identity would be wrong…European identity is very difficult to establish…What brings us together are common values...all these people, who are trying to see clash of values between Islam and Christianity are completely on the wrong track. The EU is about universal liberal values such as democracy, fundamental rights, rule of law…we get from liberal philosophy from 17th and 18th…They have some Christian roots…the cultural heritage and history…We have had various formations of Europe throughout our times…(Stubb 2006).

Hatzidakis argued that "The EU is based on certain principles, which are freedom, democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights... All these principles come from the period of Enlightenment…you may go back to ancient Greek philosophy, literature, the Roman law or to Christianity…We have to rely on tolerance and peaceful coexistence. We have to promote peace and cooperation in our continent…" (Hatzidakis 2006). Here there are references to both civic and cultural elements of European identity.

The interviewees from the Greens, the Liberals and the Socialists usually defined European identity on civic bases. Öger argued that:

> …some want to define European identity as a Christian identity…some Christian Democrat MEPs argue that European identity has three main bases: Greek philosophy, Roman law and Christianity…Social Democrats and people who have a more universal vision, define European identity on the bases of common values. These values emerged with the Enlightenment…this definition fits much more to contemporary Europe…if we define Europe on the bases of historical factors, we have to make a very controversial discussion…The historical background of Europe is full of wars, Holocoust…with Enlightenment…the focus is on reason, instead of church and religion…individual has become the main focus…With the discovery of individual, human rights…consolidation of democracy…in the period of Enlightenment…a new system emerged, which is based on reason... For me, Europe is a structure, which is based on reason, instead of beliefs (Öger 2006).

He emphasized the role of the Enlightenment on the construction of European identity and defined European identity mainly on civic bases. Duff argued that "we have to define ourselves in terms of liberal

democracy, that is the primary one…I am strongly oppose to geography and history as being part of that equation…" (Duff 2006). He is against the idea of the construction of European identity in cultural terms. Özdemir also defined European identity on civic bases. He argued that "…there are some points, which is common for all of us…emphasis on environment, although there are some exceptions, the tradition of a social state…totally liberal model does not fit to Europe, its opposite also does not fit, a model in the middle…We can define it as hesitation about war, sending military troops, preferring primarily civilian methods…" (Özdemir 2006). Bozkurt defined European identity on civic bases as well. She argued that "…fundamental values like the rule of law, human rights…I do not think in the cultural way there is a specific European identity…All Member States have different histories, languages" (Bozkurt 2006). Thus, the MEPs who have Turkish origin, mostly defined European identity on civic bases.

El Khadroui defined European identity on civic bases and emphasized the cultural diversity of Europe. He stated that "Europe is a political project. We have common values and we all believe in democracy…believe in same ideals. We do not have same culture. If you will travel around Europe, you will see many differences between traditions, countries…Europe is very diverse and I think this is something very positive" (El Khadroui 2006). He added that "…Europe is a mixed continent, with a lot of people from different nationalities, religions…We are all different, we have some values…but those who say that Europe is Christian…I do not believe in this…we also share many values together with Arab world, because they are our neighbours and we have historical bonds with them" (El Khadroui 2006). He is against the idea of construction of European identity on cultural bases. Prets also defined European identity on common values and goals and she emphasized maintaining cultural diversity within the EU. She stated that:

> …European identity is cultural diversity. We do not have European culture. The European culture is diversity…we do not like to have same system, same culture. That is what we are very proud of it normally….The common values are social standards…living together in peace, common economy should be strong…environment policy, everybody has access to good health system, human rights is the first one…this is the common European identity, some common aims, but we are different…Common cultural aim must be to save cultural diversity.

278

We were very active in the UN Convention for saving cultural diversity… (Prets 2006).

Thus, there is not a common definition of European identity among the MEPs. Usually Christian Democrats prefer to use cultural and religious references, when they are defining European identity; but most of the interviewees defined European identity mainly on civic bases and they made references to common values such as democracy, human rights, multilateralism and common goals of the EU such as environmental protection. Some of the MEPs made references to both civic and cultural elements of European identity.

Concluding Remarks

European identity has been under a construction process throughout history, as one of the interviewees argued; it may be referred to as an "ever-evolving concept" (Kauppi 2006). Since the 1950s, it has been under a construction process for the first time within the institutional framework, which is a unique case in world politics. Social constructivism is the most appropriate theoretical approach, one that helps in understanding the process of European identity construction in the EU. Social constructivism deals with the construction process of identities and their change through interaction. It focuses on construction of norms and identity shaping effects of the EU. For social constructivists, the EU institutions have effective roles on socializing and constituting the actors' identities and interests (Pollack 2001, 237). According to social constructivists, European identity is not given; instead it is a specific construct in time and space whose content changes depending on the social and political context (Risse 2004, 171). The institutional framework of the EU provides close and dense interaction atmosphere among the Member States and their citizens which have affected identities of the Member States, the elites of the EU and the general public.

European identity has been under construction for centuries, but it has been in an ongoing construction process for the first time within the institutional framework of the EU since the end of the 2nd World War. European identity refers to citizens' sense of belonging to the EU, mainly with reference to its institutions, values and the EU citizenship (civic) or it may refer to citizens' sense of belonging to Europe with reference to common cultural characteristics (cultural). Although cultural references

of European identity such as Greek heritage, Christianity and Roman Empire have been effective on construction of European identity, they can not be main references of European identity in the context of the EU; because all of the Member States have not passed through all these processes and there are many cultural and religious diversities among them, even within the Member States. The EU policy makers have sometimes used cultural, sometimes civic references during construction process of European identity. Thus, there are ambiguities in terms of main reference points of European identity in the context of the EU, which also affect the relations between Turkey and the EU, through questioning Turkey's "Europeanness"- sometimes by some important political figures of Europe.

There is a huge gap between the elites and the general public in terms of level of European identity and support to the EU which are closely related with each other. The construction of European identity is not a linear process which has been only under the control of the elites. Bottom-up initiatives of civil society have been also influential on this process. The elites, particularly the political elites and the institutions of the EU have crucial roles in the construction of European identity. Among the institutions of the EU, the Commission (which is the main representative of supranational aspirations of the EU) has played a key role in the construction of European identity. The Commission has made references to both cultural and civic understandings of European identity in different periods of European integration process, but mostly it has been effective on construction of European identity on civic bases. The EP is the only institution which is directly elected by its citizens, however turnout rate to the EP elections is very low and it has been declining. If citizens of the EU have stronger civic European identity, there will be more of a tendency to participate to the EP elections. Although the political elites of the EU do not have a common goal of construction of European identity, some of the initiatives of the Commission, the growing role of the EP in decision making process, the discourses of the political elites about European identity have been effective on the construction of European identity within the EU. According to the interviews, there is a lack of common references about European identity, even among the MEPs. They do not have a common goal of construction of European identity within the EU. The Christian Democrats mostly define it on cultural bases; they usually referred to a common European cultural heritage and emphasized the impacts of Greek heritage, Roman Empire and Christianity on the construction of

280

European identity. On the other hand, the MEPs from the Socialists, the Liberals and the Greens are usually in favour of construction of European identity on civic bases.

It is too hard to construct European identity in the context of the EU on cultural bases, because there is much cultural diversity, even within the Member States, there are religious and ethnic differences and also there is increasing number of non-European immigrants. The main emphasis of the EU project should be the common peaceful and prosperous future. European identity can be constructed within the EU on the bases of common civic values and as a future-oriented identity. In addition to maintenance of peace and consolidation of democracy, new common goals of the EU have to be found out, such as fight against global warming, terrorism, etc.; because, the past of Europe was full of wars among different nations of Europe.

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