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# How European identity could frame intercultural dialogue in the EU

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# Introduction

- The EU is experiencing since 2008 not only an economic crisis, but a political one. The Eurobarometers carried out by the European Commission show that percentage of people who consider that their country has not benefitted from being a EU member has increased and EU image has been eroded.
- The economic crisis we are experiencing is testing the extent of trust and solidarity among Europeans. Both elements are crucial to define a “sense of community” (Deutsch, 1957). Economic help from the richest countries to poorer ones is increasingly criticised by both donors and recipients. Economic crisis has remarked that the EU is far away from being a political community, where citizens take care of each other. European identity, still emerging, is threaten by these economic and political crises.
- In addition, extreme-right parties have increased their presence in several democracies of the EU. All these parties have in common that they are anti-European and anti-immigrants. This fact shows that both phenomena, **Europeanism and tolerance to immigration, are linked.**
- This paper studies:
  - Which factors are associated with developing a European identity.
  - How European identity influences 1) solidarity with poorest regions in the EU and 2) positive attitudes towards immigrants.

# Theoretical framework: European identity

- Following **social identity theory** (Tajfel, 1981) it is argued that, in order to develop, European identity must contribute to positive aspects of people's social identity. An important mechanism which can explain whether a person identifies with the EU is the number of contacts with other Europeans (Gaertner, 1999, Recchi and Nebe, 2003, García Faroldi, 2008). This explains why Erasmus students develop a strong European identity (European Commission, 2007, De Federico, 2003, King and Ruiz-Gelices, 2003).
- **Interaction between national and European identities:** most findings show that both identities are compatible, but this depends on the way people think about their identities and whether they are afraid that European integration could mean the loss of their national identities (Duchesne and Frogner, 1995, Carey, 2002, McLaren, 2004, Citrin and Sides, 2004, Ruiz Jiménez et al, 2004).
- **National contexts:** frame theory points out that attitudinal objects are not perceived in a *vacuum*. In fact, people who are members of the same group tend to acquire similar frames of reference (Newcomb, 1953, Díez Medrano, 2003). Economic and political factors at the national level are important to understand both the European identity and the support for the EU integration (Eichenberg and Dalton, 1993, Anderson and Reichert, 1996, McLaren, 2006, Kritzinger, 2003, Sánchez-Cuenca, 2000).
- **Intercultural values:** postmaterialist values (Inglehart, 1970, 1971, 1977) correlate positively with European identity, because they are more inclusive and open than materialist values.

# Theoretical framework: attitudes towards immigrants

- **The Self-interest model:** this theory associates individual's vulnerabilities with prejudice. People who perceive immigrants as competitors develop prejudices (Bobo and Hutchings, 1996, Quillian, 1995).
- **Socio-psychological theory** (Allport, 1954): both ignorance about members of out-groups and faulty generalizations promote prejudice. Education and social interaction are correlated to positive attitudes towards immigrants,
- **Intercultural values:** some values are associated with less prejudice towards immigrants. Inglehart's postmaterialist values (1990, 1997) or Davidov self-transcendent values correlate with positive attitudes towards immigration (Davidov et al 2008, Bello, 2013).
- **National contexts:** prejudice is a response to perceived group threats. This perception depends on the size of immigrant communities and the economic conditions (Quillian, 1995). Countries in more difficult situation and with higher percentage of immigrants develop more prejudices (O'Rourke and Sinnott, 2006, Bello, 2013).
- We propose that **broader identities**, less linked to national and subnational territories and ethnicities (like the European one) are associated with more positive attitudes towards immigrants.

# Objectives and hypotheses

The aim of this work is to study which factors are associated with developing a European identity and if this identity influences 1) solidarity with poorer regions in the EU and 2) positive attitudes towards immigrants.

## **Hypotheses:**

- 1) European identity, as well as other variables expressing support for the EU, are positively associated with both solidarity with poorer regions and with positive attitudes towards immigrants.
- 2) National contexts are important factors for explaining the three variables. It is expected that solidarity is more mentioned in countries which have suffered the crisis more intensively, and that attitudes towards immigrants are less positive in these EU members states, specially in countries where the percentage of immigrants is higher (Spain and Ireland).
- 3) Postmaterialist values correlate with European identity, solidarity and positive attitudes towards immigrants.
- 4) Trust in international institutions (UN and EU) and broader identities (feeling citizen of the world) are associated with solidarity and positive attitudes towards immigration.
- 5) Sociodemographic variables are poor predictors of European identity, solidarity and attitudes towards immigrants.

# Methodology

- **Database:** Eurobarometer 71.3 (summer 2009)
- **Countries included in analysis:** Euro zone, countries most touched by the economic crisis (Spain, Portugal, Greece, Ireland, Italy) and less affected (Germany, France, Netherlands, Austria, Belgium, Finland).
- **Dependent variables (logistical regression and multiple regression):**
  - Solidarity with poorer regions (“Aspects EU should emphasize to strengthen the EU”).
  - Positive attitudes towards immigrants (principal component analysis).
- **Independent variables:**
  - **Sociodemographic variables:** sex, age, education, ideology, habitat (Model 1).
  - **EU attitudinal variables:** EU negative/pragmatic/positive meaning (principal component analysis), Country benefit, Trust in EU, EU image, EU citizenship, European identity (Model 2).
  - **Other attitudes and values:** Postmaterialist values (index composed by the sum of environment, solidarity and openness)/Materialist values (index composed by the sum of free trade, progress and traditions), Trust in UN, Feeling citizen of the World/National/inhabitant of Region (Model 3).
  - **Countries:** Spain, Italy, Portugal, Greece, Ireland, Germany, France, Netherlands, Austria, Belgium, Finland (Model 4).
  - **And for studying European identity:**
    - **Characteristics of European identity:** Be Christian/Cultural traditions/Place of birth/Parentage/Feel European/Master second European language/Citizen rights/Been brought up/Participation with other Europeans/None.

# Results: What factors influence European identity?

- **Education** is the most relevant sociodemographic variable for explaining European identity: less educated, less Europeanist. European identity is more spread in **big cities**.
- **Pragmatic and positive meanings of the EU** correlates with European identity, but the most important variable is EU citizenship (European citizenship involves a process of recategorisation, Gaertner et al, 1999).
- **Materialist values** are associated with European identity before characteristics of European identity are included in the model.
- All the identities correlate positively with the European one, but the strongest is feeling a **citizen of the world**. **Trust in the UN** is relevant before countries are included in the model.
- Characteristics more connected with European identity are mainly **civic-based** (in opposition to ethno-cultural based): feeling European, mastering other Languages, being brought up and cultural traditions.
- The majority of **countries** differ from Spain: citizens from Italy, Ireland and Greece feel less Europeans and Germany, Austria, Belgium and Finland feel more. **The extremes are Greece (-) and Germany (+)**.

# Results: Solidarity with poorer regions

- In model 1 and 2, **young people and people less educated** are more in solidarity with people from poorer regions, and people from the **left wing** show more solidarity.
- **Meanings of the EU** are only relevant when other attitudes and variables are not included. **European identity** is negatively correlated with solidarity, but the significance disappears with the inclusion of national contexts in the model.
- **Postmaterialist values, feeling a citizen of the world and positive attitudes towards immigrants** are all positively correlated with solidarity, even with the countries are controls. **Trust in the UN** is negatively associated only before national contexts are taken into account.
- The majority of **countries** differ from Spain: only Greece mentions solidarity with poorer regions more than Spain. The rest of the countries, including Ireland and Italy, mention this less. **The extremes are Greece (+) and Netherlands (-).**



# Results: Attitudes towards immigrants

- **All sociodemographic variables** (excluding sex) are relevant for explaining these attitudes. People less educated, young people, people expressing right wing views and those living in urban areas are more prejudiced even once other attitudinal variables and national contexts are controlled.
- **Pragmatic and positive meanings of the EU** correlate positively, and **negative meaning** in the opposite direction. **European identity** is associated with tolerance, as well as **solidarity** with poorer regions. The most relevant variable is **EU citizenship**.
- **Postmaterialist values** and **Trust in the UN** are associated with positive attitudes, even when countries are included in the model, while **National feeling** is negatively correlated.
- The majority of **countries** differ from Spain: all of them have less positive attitudes towards immigrants, specially **Greece**. Italy and Portugal (together with Finland) do not differ from Spain, despite its different immigrant population size.

# Conclusions

- 1) **European identity** is associated with positive attitudes towards immigrants, but it is not related to solidarity with poorer regions when national contexts are included in the model.
- 2) **Education** is the most relevant sociodemographic variable in the three analyses. **Ideology** is important to explain solidarity and attitudes towards immigrants.
- 3) **Postmaterialist values, trust in the UN and feeling a citizen of the world** have shown to be relevant in explaining both solidarity and attitudes towards immigration.
- 4) **National contexts** are important factors for explaining the three variables. They improve the fit of the model. Indeed, several sociodemographic and attitudinal variables lose their significance once national contexts are taken into account.
  - a. Unexpectedly, persons from countries more touched by the crisis mention solidarity to different extents: Spain and Portugal are similar, but Greece mentions more often while Ireland and Italy less so. As expected, countries that have a better economic situation are less supportive.
  - b. The Perceived group threat's hypothesis is only partially confirmed. Italy, Portugal and Spain have similar levels of tolerance, despite their different foreign population percentage, and countries less affected by the crisis show less positive attitudes. Greece is the country with fewer positive attitudes.

This long-standing crisis is weakening European identity and solidarity, and increasing prejudice, as the rise of extreme-right parties throughout Europe also demonstrates.