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## Building up European identity in primary education

Claudia BORCA, Calin RUS, Simona SAVA\*

### Abstract:

*Building up the personal identity is a lifelong process, as identity can change, according with the groups of belonging, with new knowledge and changes of beliefs and contexts. There are more stable components of identity, like the values and attitudes, but there are contexts and experiences that sharpen different aspects of the identity. The article argues that education systems in Europe have responsibilities in supporting learners to develop their competences to act as citizens at local, national and European levels and thus have also the legitimacy to contribute to the development of a European identity and of a sense of belonging to Europe. Furthermore, it argues that such a process can and should start already in early ages. Therefore, teachers in primary school need appropriate competences to foster a positive identification of children with Europe and European values. They need to master intercultural competence, appropriate pedagogical and methodological approaches, they need to reflect on how to design teaching and learning contexts meant to stimulate, in a joyful, playful, attractive and consistent manner the building up of a European identity. The article mirrors the training needs of primary school teachers of 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade in Western Romania, to develop these competences and be able to foster such process. The assessment of the training needs of primary school teachers involved covered all aspects of the competence, including values, attitudes, as well as the knowledge about EU, and their reflection on their teaching practices. The conclusions of the analysis can be useful for further training programs and reconceptualization of (initial) teacher education.*

**Key words:** European identity, primary school education, teacher training, intercultural competence

### Introduction

The European Union (EU) is not only a social, economic and administrative construct, but also a cultural and educational one. Education plays a crucial role in building up the sense of belonging and identification with this construct, with this space, where different identities co-exist, different cultures meet, and need to be understood, known, accepted and valorized (Ghisoiu, 2012). The EU is an imagined construct, an ongoingly emerging space, a project to be continuously built, (re)created, (re)shaped in a constructive way.

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The EU as a political project is strongly associated with a set of explicit democratic values and a sense of belonging to Europe and to the EU has to be connected with these values. However, in recent years, the EU construct was heavily challenged and questioned, by different crisis, tensions, growing populist and nationalist attitudes, tendencies of segregation, racist and xenophobic manifestations. Such phenomena, generated by approximative, superficial knowledge (E. Morin, apud A. Chermelleu, 2016), proved that by “standardizing ways of life at the European level it is not enough to create a European culture” (Chermelleu, 2016). The rapid changes generate confusion and the feeling of insecurity, multiplying the phenomena of acculturation. The homo digitalis is even more exposed to this situation, needing to be properly equipped with relevant knowledge and critical analysis skills and an open-minded attitude, to decode, understand, accept other cultures, while being confident about his own roots. Thus, in order to re-create the shared and more consistent European ethos, Adia Chermelleu argues for an “education of comprehension”, for a proper understanding of the complex effects of the Europeanization, both beneficial and harmful, for dedicated pedagogic actions of teachers as cultural mediators, in order to build the “transcultural competence”, understood as “capitalizing the other cultures, while insourcing the own values” (Chermelleu, 2016), to build the solidarity with the European values, and the capacity to live and understand multiple identities, and the European destiny (Catarci, 2014; Bruter, 2005).

The explosion of cultural references, the mixing up of cultural models and knowledge, in the pluricultural societies, and the ever-diverse Europe have consequences on structures of identity and social integrity. The European identity, as social identity, as supranational and complementary to the national identity, is seen as a precondition of the well-functioning of the European Union, but also as viable solution for building self-esteem and sense of belonging to people with migrant background, to the mobile citizens of Europe, as in “ethnically diverse contexts, European identity has a higher potential than national identities to become a unifying common identity” (Agirdag, Phalet, Van Houtte, 2016; Duchesne & Frogner, 2008; IEA, 2017 – see Losito et al; EC, 2018). Therefore, for a well-functioning society and European Union, a bi-dimensional model of identity, both national and European, is to be favored, combining “shared sense of nationhood, the recognition and affirmation of distinctive (ethnic) identities, ..., creation of multiple identities” (Agirdag, Phalet, Van Houtte, 2016), together with developing the sense of belonging to different communities, reshaped, enlarged or comprised, mixed-up, in the liquid society (Hooge & Verhaegen, 2017; Catarci, 2014).

This means ensuring proper knowledge and positive attitudes towards the European values of freedom, equality, tolerance and non-discrimination, respect for human rights, peace and democratic principles and culture, openness towards the histories, ideas, confessions, traditions, heritage and landscapes (EC-Eurydice, 2017; Catarci, 2014; Hadler, Tsutsui & Chin, 2012; Bruter, 2005). Thus, the education systems, all over Europe, are asked to nurture the building up of the European identity, and equal opportunities for

every child, starting this life-long lasting process from early ages, with solid fundamentals, based on appropriate knowledge about its meaning, role and values, ways of functioning and purpose, creating this way positive attitudes of well informed and open-minded, active citizens, with a solid democratic culture (EC-Eurydice, 2016; Council of Europe, 2018).

Studies show that European identity, as a multinational civic identity, is a more, permeable and more inclusive category than often implicitly ethnically-defined national identities. European affiliation correlates positively with better school achievements (Agirdag et al, 2012, 2016; Grad et al, 2004; Losito et al, 2017 - IEA), especially in multicultural schools and societies, and for the migrant groups. The two social identities, the national and the European one, are not mutually exclusive categories. On the contrary, they positively complement each other, as the Ingroup Projection Model shows, proving that “the higher the level of the superordinate category, the more easily groups can be counted as being part of that identity” (Agirdag, Phalet, Van Houtte, 2016; Duchesne & Frognier, 2008; Reicher, Spear, & Haslam, 2010; Rus & Chermelleu, 2019).

Both national and European identification are emerging categories for the children between 6 and 10 years old, and the awareness of belonging to the European supranational group peaks around 10 years old (Barrett, 2007; Duchesne & Frognier, 2008; Agirdag, Phalet, Van Houtte, 2016). Therefore, dedicated activities, programs, projects are to be run in primary education.

This leads to the need to identify to what extent the teachers in primary education in Western Romania are fostering building up the European identity to their pupils, and what are their training needs for doing this in an appropriate manner.

### **Training of teachers for building up European identity**

Teachers are the main actors and professionals expected to strengthen, through intercultural education, education for democratic citizenship and human rights education the competences needed for democratic culture. This is best done in an integrative and trans-curricular manner, aiming at a “European positive and inclusive sense of belonging, complementing the local, regional and national identities and traditions” (Council of Europe, 2018). Therefore, teachers need proper training, proper knowledge, methodologies, and a positive attitude, to be able to create authentic, active and attractive learning environments and situations, to support pupils in developing a European identity (Sales Giges, & Garcia Lopez, 1998; Nedelcu, 2008).

Unfortunately, as the Eurydice study shows (2017), in almost half of the member states there is no national curriculum reference and policy for including citizenship education in initial teacher training, or as entrance examination into the teaching career, Romania being among them. The same situation is true for the continuing professional development opportunities, the Eurobarometer (2018) identifying a remarkably low level of knowledge of the EU, mainly among the older teachers. In addition, the study carried out by Badescu et al (2018), in line with the World Values Survey (2014), aiming

to identify the attitudes of the Romanian teachers towards the democratic societies, highlights a worrying high percentage of teachers (45%) having a low attachment towards a democratic regime, even higher percentages being identified amongst the young teachers, with a lower level of social tolerance as well. However, the trust in EU and its institutions is quite high (47,7%), on the third place after the army and the police. Obviously, the current policies and measures implemented at national level are not enough to secure a proper attitude and competence of teachers to foster the European identity. However, national initiatives to stimulate proper training of teachers and a more extensive focus on European issues do exist in Romania. Thus, since 2004, the national competition for schools to get the label of “European school”, aims at stimulating appropriate management of schools, their culture and ethos with reference to the European dimension in education. Through common European projects, partnerships, programs and activities. Also, the moto of the Romanian Presidency of the European Council in 2019 was “Cohesion, a common European value”, showing commitment towards ensuring a cohesive and inclusive Europe. There are existing national stipulations concerning the optional subject of intercultural education and of civic education included in the curriculum for pre-service training of teachers, both in primary school, and in the pedagogic module aiming to prepare for the teaching career the teachers of secondary school and high school. But it is no guarantee that this happens with the needed extension, as it is up to the institutional autonomy, both in pre and in-service training. Thus, more determined actions are to be taken by teacher educators in universities and not only (Dias & Soares, 2017), to ensure proper knowledge and training, teaching resources and guidelines, dedicated sites and materials, to help teachers of all specializations to master the pedagogy of diversity, being able to design participatory trans-curricular learning environments on citizenship and diversity (Nedelcu, 2008; Council of Europe, 2018).

Teachers of primary school, both the class-teachers and the teachers of languages, are more likely to have dedicated training on intercultural education and cultural diversity than the ones in secondary schools (Petrescu, 2012). Also, the teachers in primary education have more possibilities to act in an integrative, trans-curricular manner, as they are teaching most of the subjects in the class. They have even the possibility to introduce a whole optional subject in their curriculum design. But they do not really use this possibility, as previous studies done at West University of Timisoara (Ilie, 2016) show. Teachers have a certain fear to use pedagogic concepts in curriculum design (Ilie, 2016; Nedelcu, 2008; Petrescu, 2012), and, even when they were provided with teaching materials and resources and the tailored training, they were not so enthusiastic to introduce a whole dedicated subject. Their proffered choice was to approach the topic of Europe and European identity in compulsory subjects (at geography and history, for instance), or as specific, additional topics, mainly in non-formal activities, but not on a regular basis.

As our findings show, even when provided with guidelines, manuals, materials, examples developed in the previous Jean Monet projects (Ilie, 2016), teachers need training to acquire appropriate knowledge and critical understanding about European Union, its policies, legal framework and institutional arrangements, to be confident enough to teach their pupils on a regular basis and on more advanced issues than about flags, symbols, and European Day. Therefore, a compendium about Europe was also provided (Rus and Chermeleu, 2019), covering issues about European history, emergence and evolution of the European Union, European law and institutions, with distinct references on how to build a European identity in a sustainable manner, with the view towards 2030, and using the European Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture, launched by the Council of Europe (2018, with adaptations for primary education in 2019). These are, however, isolated initiatives. Even available as open educational resources, they have still a relatively low visibility and practical use in education practice, needing more dissemination.

To ensure that primary school teachers have the right mixt of values, attitudes, skills and knowledge, associated with critical understanding about European Union and its diversity in order to foster a European identity, several actions are needed. There is a need to provide, even from preservice training, an integrative, interdisciplinary and transversal civic education, making sure that teacher get relevant knowledge supporting in-depth understanding of the principles and core values of democracy in general and of the values of the European Union, together with knowledge on policies, history, law, and culture of Europe and of its member states. They have also to be enabled with methodologic capacities to conceptualize, design, implement and evaluate learning contexts using a wide range of methods, resources and tools for an attractive, joyful and playful, cooperative learning, inside and outside the classroom. Teachers need also to develop their own social competences, necessary for encouraging discussions and debates in the classroom, for involving the pupils in the school and in the community life, building in the same time relevant partnership with stakeholders in the community. Lastly, teachers need self-reflection and self-evaluation capacity, as well as autonomous learning skills enabling them to continuously improve their competences, to undertake transformative action, and to be aware of their own values, stereotypes and attitudes (Eurydice, 2017; Nedelcu, 2008) concerning the cultural diversity of the European ethnocultural space, being able to act as a “cultural broker”. To what extent the teachers in primary education are equipped in initial teacher education, and also updated and upskilled in continuing professional development is to be identified, for tailored action. Thus, a dedicated training needs analysis is further illustrated.

## **Methodology**

In order to find appropriate answers to the question “To what extent teachers in primary education have appropriate knowledge, skills and attitude about European Union and the European identity?”, data from two sources have been collected and analyzed.



First, a questionnaire-based survey was designed, aiming to identify the educational practices in this regard, as well as their training needs of a group of teachers having pupils on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade. The questionnaire, administered both online and paper-based, was designed in line with the items of the Eurobarometer (European Commission, 2018) and the IEA survey (2016 – see Losito et al., 2017), and compatible with the questionnaire designed by the University of Bremen on “European citizenship”.

The questionnaire has three parts, on assessment of values (A), of knowledge and attitudes about the EU (B), and on teaching practices and needs (C).

Secondly, qualitative data on these issues was obtained from the participants, also teachers of primary school, involved in the piloting of descriptors of competences for democratic culture adapted for children below age 10.

In parallel, a curriculum analysis of national curricula for these grades was also performed, to situate the responses in the context of existing educational policies and curriculum requirements.

## Results

31 teachers provided responses to the questionnaire and 24 attended the workshop on descriptors. Their feedback had a high degree of coherence and a relatively low level of variability. This allowed for the identification of some key ideas which are presented below without quantitative details.

Teachers involved display clearly and consistently predominantly positive attitudes towards the EU, considering that EU had a positive impact on themselves as individuals, on their region and on Romania.

While the assessment of the economic impact reveals a more balanced perspective, there is a clear consensus on the fact that EU had a strong positive impact on the protection of the rights of citizens. To a very large extent participants disagree with the common negative perspective on the EU portrayed in the media as a bureaucracy wasting time and money. On the contrary, there is a strong emphasis on the fact that the EU has an important contribution to ensuring peace in Europe and a significant impact on global matters. However, there is an even distribution of responses with regards to the impact of the EU on cultural identity and on diversity in society. Thus, a significant proportion of teachers consider that the EU poses a certain degree of risk to cultural identity. The degree of identification with the local and national level is significantly higher than the identification with Europe and with the global human community.

There is a strong acknowledgement of the need for teachers to know more about the EU and about other countries in Europe, as well as to do more to support their students to acquire such knowledge. There is also confirmation of the limited information participant teachers have about their rights as EU citizens and a moderate interest about EU affairs. Teachers also welcome to a very large extent having more opportunities and support to reflect on European identity and its consequences.



With regards to the knowledge about the EU, the most common elements are generally widely known, including founding countries, current membership, anthem and motto. However, teachers involved have much less information about the history of the EU, but also about the EU values. While human rights, freedom and democracy are without doubt considered as key European values, there is less consensus regarding human dignity, as a source of human rights, as well as regarding the importance of solidarity.

In terms of rights and benefits provided by the EU to its citizens, teachers focus almost exclusively on the freedom of movement.

The review of the actual teaching practice related to Europe and the EU shows that in most cases teachers address European topics between once and three times per school year, which means that most probably national references have a much stronger presence in educational activities. This is related to some extent to the limited opportunities provided explicitly by the curriculum, but also to the fact that many teachers consider that children at this age are not able to understand certain issues about other countries and the EU. Many consider that the most appropriate approach is to allocate certain specific activities to Europe a few times per year, as extraordinary additional aspects, for example on special occasions, on Europe's Day or in project-related activities. There is also little awareness of the educational potential represented by reflection on European values in relation to daily life and school situations.

In addition, when activities are organized for children to learn about other countries, the emphasis is on simple facts and aspects like the flag, monuments, official language, etc, with certain risks of over-simplification and therefore reproduction of stereotypes. Also, the other countries are presented as if they were culturally homogeneous and the EU as being a mosaic of clearly separated and differentiated entities.

### **Discussions and conclusions**

The results obtained prove that the questions regarding the legitimacy of addressing European aspects and supporting the development of a sense of belonging to Europe are far from clear among primary school teachers. The Council of Europe (2018) and the Council of the EU (2018) are very clear in underlining that promoting EU values and developing competences for democratic culture, including knowledge and critical understanding of the self with one's multiple affiliations, including European belonging, should be an essential part of the mission of schools. Therefore, both national policy documents and the initial and in-service teacher training programs should pass this message to teachers in an explicit way, allowing of course for critical reflection and supporting teachers to become aware of their responsibility and their importance in this respect.

The other key issue is whether such a goal is achievable at the age of primary school. Many teachers consider that very little can be done at this age and prefer to take the easy way of remaining at a superficial level of European symbols, list of countries with their flags and location on the map, therefore limiting the learning to simplified knowledge.

However, as the Council of Europe (2018) emphasizes, in order to have a functional democratic culture at local, national and European levels, young people need values, attitudes, skills, together with knowledge and critical understanding.

Klitmøller and Jensen (2019) prove, based on experiences in Denmark, that it is possible and desirable for teachers at primary level to focus on developing the critical understanding of children, their attitudes towards self and others enabling democratic and intercultural processes, as well as the skills needed for such processes, with an emphasis on deliberation, respectful exchanges and critical reflection.

This shows therefore the need for teachers training programs to incorporate examples, illustration and arguments for the possibility of such activities with primary school students (Savvides, 2006). In addition, the creativity and adaptability of teachers should be encouraged, so that they become able and confident to design educational interventions in line with these goals. In this context, the on-going work of the Council of Europe to provide descriptors of competences for democratic culture adapted for children below age 10 can significantly facilitate the work of teachers and encourage them to include activities on these topics.

Making it clear to teachers that human rights education activities, activities related to values or focused on the development of critical thinking should also be seen in the context of promoting European belonging and awareness.

It is obvious that, as our results also point out, teachers need support in both the development of their own competences for democratic culture, and pedagogical competences to support students to develop these competences in an appropriate way. Having good intentions is not enough and not managing such sensitive issues in the right way may actually lead to opposite and undesired results. Therefore, teachers need to be supported in planning and managing interactive, engaging and adapted activities and allow children to develop the full range of elements of competence, without insisting exclusively on knowledge or replicating moralizing messages.

It appears important for teachers to be informed about the EU and the major European current issues, but it is even more important that they truly adhere to the European values and illustrate them on a daily basis in their behavior and interaction with students, with parents and with community members. For this, tools, support and training is essential and one of the concerns should be on the development of skills of reflection on teaching practice and of self-reflection, which would enable teachers to take ownership of the way they manage the task of supporting primary school students in feeling European and in acting according to European values.

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## Intercultural Competence in Education to Foster European Identity

Agostino PORTERA<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

*The paper summarizes the results of a qualitative study that aimed to identify the positive outcomes and opportunities, as well as the risks related with the identity building in migration and living in a multicultural context. Research consisted of a 7-year longitudinal case study, during which the life-stories, conflicts, crises, and problem-solving strategies of 23 young people of Italian origin with migration experiences – some of which were still living in Southern Germany and some of which had returned to Southern Italy – were observed. The sample was composed of both adolescents with intellectual disabilities or other psychological and social disorders and adolescents who seemed to have benefited from living and growing up in different cultures. From the biographies it was possible to identify the main risk and protective factors related to migration and life in a multicultural context, and the adequate coping ability associated with their development. Based on the main findings of the study it was also possible to hypothesize that migration can inhibit or facilitate the fulfillment of fundamental human needs. So, the qualitative data was analyzed in order to identify the needs which seemed to be related with the harmonious development of the personality and a tentative theory of fundamental needs of human development was proposed. Finally, the results suggest that intercultural education can play an important role in determining whether subjects experience enrichment and growth or increasing difficulties or mental illnesses and social disorders. Therefore the paper takes the position that education can be an effective measure for fostering stable, flexible and multiple European identities. Given the research results, intercultural education, as developed and applied in a European context, can be considered as the most appropriate approach.*

**Keywords:** identity, risk factors, protective factors, fundamental needs, intercultural education.

### 1. Introduction

The beginning of the third millennium has seen an increasing of human mobility, more interdependence, and new and diversified migration flows. Due to the increasing differences between rich and poor countries, the longevity of dictatorial regimes, violence and war in many parts of the world, and crimes against humanity, a reduction in

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migration flows is not expected in the near future (Bauman, 1977; Soros, 1988). On the other hand, services in many industrialized States, the low birth rates and the growing demand for foreigners workers, services migration should be considered also as a new resource and opportunity. The evolution of relations between nation states as a consequence of globalization can give new importance to the phenomenon of migration, as it evolves from a transient, marginal phenomenon into one that permanently alters societies at a structural and systemic level. The benefits, however, are not always realized.

Education, especially at school, is deeply affected by globalization and mass migration. Fears and insecurities slowly emerge; educational strategies, curricula and teaching methods are hastily revised, with the result that solutions are often technical and devoid of clear aims and stable moral principles: instead of being solved, problems escalate. The situation degenerates resulting in a “treatment” which is often worse than the “disease” itself (Portera, 2011; Gundara, 2000).

Nowadays the main questions are: a) In a time of increasing interconnectedness between people, is migration and growing in a multicultural context a risk or an opportunity for the development of a stable identity?; b) What are the main risk and protective factors for mental disabilities faced by children and adolescents with experiences of migration and multicultural backgrounds?; c) Which interventions are the most appropriate for prevent disease and promote stability and health?

## **2. Research on young people of Italian origin in Germany**

For several decades many authors have been trying to find possible answers to similar questions. The broadest amount of researches conducted in Germany (mostly quantitative and/or based on the cause and effect hypothesis) as main results considered emigration and leaving in multicultural societies as a stress factor and migration children as a risk population (Tietze et al., 1942; Tyhurst, 1955; Busch, 1983; BfAuSs?, 1986; Prodehl, Geiger, & Korporal, 1990; Siefen, 1996; Kirkcaldy et al., 2006; Waller, 2008; Knipper & Bilgin, 2009; Novák, 2012). The qualitative study conducted by the author (see also Portera, 1995, 1997, 1998, 2014) discussed whether migration represents a greater risk for distress and disease, or a possibility for enrichment and growth. The aim of this work was to identify positive outcomes and opportunities, as well as negative factors and risks related to migration and living in a multicultural context. Research consisted of a 7-year longitudinal case study of the life-stories, conflicts, crises, and problem-solving strategies among young people of Italian origin with migration experience. Specifically, some of the interviewees were living in Southern Germany, while others had returned to Southern Italy.

Regarding the *methodology*, the use of a longitudinal case study allowed an appropriate consideration of specific social norms and values, that is of “subjective reality” (Wiedemann, 1982, p. 66). It also allowed the holistic identification and exploration of the origin and development of symptoms and disorders among foreign children. The



collection of the biographies was carried out using semi-structured interviews. The author largely followed the method of problem-centered interviews developed by Witzel (1982). However, the study also incorporated elements of Rogers's person-centered approach (Rogers, 1951, 1961) without marginalizing the role of the respondents' social context. Following Bronfenbrenner (1986), the study aimed to analyze the adolescents and their environment as an "integrated system". For this purpose, it was considered useful to also employ the methodology of participant observation in the most important spheres of their lives (family, school, free time). Finally, when possible and appropriate, interviews with the most important people in the subjects' lives were also conducted, such as parents, teachers and friends. This led to a better understanding of the respondents' specific life situations, and helped to examine their situations from other points of view and to obtain additional important information.

The *sample* consisted of a diverse, but non-representative, group of 23 adolescents of Italian origin living either in Südbaden (Germany) or in Southern Italy. The criterion for selection was diversification, in order to sample a wide range of attributes which had been regarded as important in previous studies (Tyhurst, 1955; Riedesser, 1982; Pfeiffer, 1983; Zimmermann, 1983; BfAuS, 1986; Prodehl, Geiger, & Korporeal, 1990; Siem, 1992; Siefen, 1996): gender, social status, education, period of residence in Germany and experiences of return migration. Care was also taken to select a sample of young people with intellectual disabilities, other psychological and/or social disorders as well as adolescents who seemed to have benefited from living and growing up in a different culture (based on self-assessment, social status and clinical diagnosis). Special attention was also paid to the conditions and mechanisms that – thanks to or despite their experience of migration – promoted psychological stability. The study also sought to explore the systemic functions (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Ochs & Schweitzer, 2009) of family and school and the development of the disorders so as to gain a deeper understanding of the origin, development, forms and functions of individual symptoms.

The *findings* largely confirmed the results of previous studies (see Murphy & Moriarty, 1976; Belsky, 1984; Rutter & Smith, 1995; Knipper, Bilgin 2009; Novák M. 2012), which suggested that migration constitutes a stress factor for adolescents dealing with bi-cultural or multi-cultural enculturation and/or acculturation. The likelihood of success through adequate coping strategies was strongly reduced mainly because of differences in cultural values, norms and behavior.

More specifically, from the biographies it was possible to identify certain risks and protective factors, but it was not possible to isolate a single risk factor as directly responsible for specific illnesses or disorders. No single negative factor (even early separation from the mother) appeared sufficient to predispose a subject to a particular disorder. Subjects dealing with one strong, lasting stress factor were usually dealing with other stress factors concurrently. In addition, negative and positive factors were seen to affect human development not only during childhood, but also in all other stages of life. The study also suggested that negative factors and early childhood disorders may be

compensated or corrected with positive experiences. Finally the results highlighted that many developmental disorders and “normal” development are neither static nor mutually excludable. Instead, they constitute a continuum ranging from vulnerability to adequate coping ability, and the subject’s mental health can change in different contexts and phases of life.

### 3. Risk Factors

On the basis of the research results, the following main risk factors for adolescents in a multicultural context were identified: “supra-cultural” factors, separation, “Pendeln” (commuting back and forth or frequent (re)migration), ambivalence, social marginality, discrimination, loneliness, language problems, strict upbringing, and bicultural orientation.

1. *Supra-cultural developmental risks*: the adolescents who were interviewed were affected by the same negative factors which are experienced by all human beings during human development, regardless of one's personal migratory experiences. The most frequent factors were: *prenatal and perinatal difficulties* (sometimes also resulting from the parents' scant knowledge or acceptance of the German health care system); *chronic difficulties*, for example serious psychological disorders of one of the parents; unstable somatic illness; *negative socio-economic conditions*, such as belonging to the lowest social class, unstable environmental conditions; *highly disruptive life experiences* like the death of the father, moving, change of school or town, separation or divorce of the parents; and *family burdens* like severe family conflicts, a large family in inadequate or unsafe housing, a single parent household, the father's unemployment, or a working mother with limited time to be with the children.
2. *Sudden, unprepared separation*: it has been largely acknowledged that children who are suddenly separated from their mother are not able to develop a feeling of protection and trust in a “Bezugsperson” (primary caregiver; Bowlby, 1969); consequently, a strong lack of self-worth often arises (Erikson, 1968). Although the study confirmed the psychoanalytic theory of maternal deprivation, an analysis of the biographies collected by the author showed that the following aspects must also be emphasized: the mother does not necessarily have to be the primary caregiver; somebody else can fulfill this role, as long as he/she is stable and reliable; relationships with other people are significant and may have compensatory effects; other factors or circumstances (e.g. social groups and large families in which each adult feels responsible for the children; a strong predisposition of the child to require attention and be positively valued) may have

compensatory functions. In the biographies it was noted that the experience of separation even in adulthood often has negative consequences. The subjects who suffered the most, and manifested the most negative symptoms, were frequently those who were not (adequately) prepared for separation or those who did not have regular contact (even by means of letters or phone calls) with their parents after separation.

3. *Frequent journeys between Germany and Italy* (Commuting back and forth or frequent (re)migration): this is due to the fact that migratory Italian families often do not adequately plan for their futures; frequent commuting may be due to sudden crises or unrealistic expectations of one of the two countries (Riedesser, 1982, Klitzing, 1983; Zimmermann, 1986). Consequently, families migrate back and forth between the home country and the host country and, as a result, neither the parents nor their children can make adequate decisions (to buy a house in Germany or Italy, whether the children should continue studying in Italy or Germany, whether it is convenient to learn German, etc.). The research results suggested that instead of facing such problems, whose solution would lead to growth and personal stability, migrants often find shelter in a world of their own (what Zwingmann, 1961, calls "nostalgic illusion"). Italian parents often use territorial separation as a coping strategy. Separation was also frequently applied to avoid sending the children to the "Sonderschule" (school for children with special needs); however, the experience of separation turned out to be one of the main causes for their actual enrolment in a German "Sonderschule".
4. *Ambivalent behavior*: a further difficulty faced by the subjects was that they had to face a range of ambivalent situations and attitudes. Specifically, many of them experienced educational norms in *school* which are different from those within their families. On the one hand parents often teach their children to remain within the family, to respect and obey adults (which often entails passivity and submission). On the other hand, teachers encourage children to be active, inquisitive and more independent from their families. Contrary to the results of other studies (Schrader, Nikles, & Griesse, 1976), students who do not overtly demonstrate their "cultural difference" at school, those who do not exhibit an obvious external stigma (physical features or a different appearance), usually experience cultural conflicts more acutely and have more profound identity crises. At school and during their spare time these young children are considered to be "German", and hence are not expected to be different. Consequently, they are almost obliged to remove the cultural identities constructed within their family or their Italian subculture and to take on behavioral and coping strategies typical for German society. Ultimately, these adolescents are bound to have conflicts with their teachers, their German friends and their families: at school, because of the

removal or negation of one part of their personality (frequently unconscious conflicts), at home due to manifest differences in thinking and behaving.

In some of the biographies it was noted that one or both of the parents (often the mother), showed ambivalent feelings and behavior. Italian emigrants experience drastic changes in family structure and roles, including: a nuclear instead of an extended family; an incomplete family (often only the father moves, followed by the mother and some of the children); lack of help from neighbors; isolation and lack of social contacts; "indistinct" or conflicting family roles; higher rates of divorce and family separation. Less stability in the family structure caused by migration implies a stiffening of the rules and values acquired in the original society. The migrants' social role is further destabilized by the paradoxical way in which they are treated, socially and legally, in Germany: as both "*Gäste*" (guests) and "*Arbeiter*" (workers). The consequences of this "double bond" situation (Watzlawick, Beavin, & Jackson, 1967) are increasing diffidence towards German society, fear, depression, aggressiveness, and dogmatism.

Further ambivalent behavior was observed among teachers (especially in German schools). Their relationship with children of Italian origin frequently ranged from admiration and encouragement of their diversity (for example their liveliness), to the opposite tendency of rejection, and forcing them to assimilate "German" behavior. During the course of the study it was possible to notice that both types of behavior may cause disorientation and even cognitive or emotional disorders.

5. *Social marginality, and practical problems*: generally, financial problems, debt, the loss of social status, unsafe housing and insufficient legal protection are some of the main causes of crises (Riedesser, 1982; Pfeiffer, 1983; Siefen, 1996; Boos-Nünning, 2002). The study found clear evidence that meager opportunities to achieve economic success, serious debt, downward social mobility, marginality and insufficient legal security, which occur at higher rates in immigrant populations (BfAuS, 1986; BfMFI, 2012), lead to frustrating experiences which may be qualified as the triggering factors of various psychological crises and scholastic or socioeconomic failure. Other factors may be added to these heavy burdens, e.g. exclusion, or difficulty in school due to language problems, differences in teaching methodology, lessons on Italian language and culture.
6. *Discrimination and stigmatization from peers or adults*: most of the difficulties related to stigmatization (Goffmann, 1964) are attributed to features of people with conspicuous physical or religious differences. Although citizens of Italian origin do not manifest obvious differences in German society, the study showed that many adolescents were ostracized both in Germany and Italy (after returning

home) mainly because of differences in language, behavior or even in thought processes.

7. *Isolation and loneliness*: many of the subjects interviewed were isolated both upon arrival in Germany and after returning to Italy. Some had great difficulty making friends during their stay in Germany. At times they experienced a feeling of loneliness (*Einsamkeit*) or a feeling of being different from others. The experience of being isolated from parents, especially from the mother, proved to be a very negative factor in the child's development.
8. *Language problems*: such problems are mainly due to inadequate or insufficient social stimuli (isolation, lack of help, code switching, a mixture of dialect and official language). Many studies in Germany (Pfeiffer, 1983; Siefen, 1996; Boos-Nünning, 2002 BfAuS, 1986; BfMFI, 2012) have found a lower proficiency of German amongst the Italian immigrant population than in other immigrant communities. The research results confirm that inadequate linguistic competence leads to negative experiences which contribute to a reinforcement of isolation and the feeling of being an outsider. The interviewees also showed linguistic deficits deriving from prolonged social and emotional deprivation.
9. *Very strict upbringing*: many interviewed parents had raised their children more strictly than the norms of the country they live in would require; this phenomenon occurred both with Italian migrants living in Germany and those who had returned to Italy, possibly because of their long absence from their homeland and because of an unconscious need to atone for having abandoned their family and friends in Italy. Some authoritative behavior is intensified by the living conditions of Italian families in Germany, characterized by isolation, hard work and social conflicts. Parents often do not notice that the traditional norms of behavior which they are trying to transmit to their children have become outdated even in Italy. This leads to crises, especially among the adolescents who have noticed the gap between family upbringing and the liberal norms typical of the external world.
10. *Bicultural orientation especially during puberty*: the results showed a general worsening of difficulties during the pre-adolescent phases when children most need both the help of their parents and that of their peers and teachers. Dealing with different cultural standards is not necessarily negative. However, for many young people the fact that they have to choose between their families on the one hand and their school and peer group on the other can be very upsetting and destructive. The choice is impossible. The developmental stage they are going through requires both the love of their parents and acceptance and stimulation at

school and from their peers. All this leads to marked loyalty conflicts. The consequences are identity crises and cultural disorientation.

#### 4. Protective Factors

In addition to the above-mentioned negative factors, which led to crises and seem also to be related to intellectual disability and other mental or social disorders (though more comprehensive further research is needed to verify this), the study also revealed some positive and protective factors which help adolescents cope with crises and in many cases seem to transform crises into opportunities. For some adolescents these factors also contributed to a positive reassessment of emigration and to the acquisition of a stable identity in a multicultural context. The most important factors were:

1. *Personal features*: certain factors, some of which are also hereditary (e.g. physical appearance, social attitudes, intelligences, resilience), played an important role in the positive development of a stable personal identity and also helped the subjects to cope appropriately with crises.
2. *Establishing a stable and secure relationship* with a person of reference during childhood: the presence of the mother, or both parents, in the first years of life seemed to have had a very positive effect on the overall development of the subjects interviewed. Those who spent the early years of their lives with their mother or with both parents appeared to be strongly aided in their further development. Moreover, the presence of other significant individuals (grandparents, nurses, brothers or sisters) took on a similar protective function for some of the subjects.
3. *Parents' openness towards the German environment*: when parents had a positive attitude towards the German social environment, did not try to inculcate prejudices, or negatively interfere with their children's development outside the family, it was easier for the subjects to interact positively within the new social environment.
4. *Parents' understanding and trust*: self-esteem was better developed in those subjects whose parents trusted them and allowed a certain amount of freedom; later on, these adolescents were also better equipped to solve problems within and outside their own families. In these cases behavioral difficulties were rare and the advantages of growing up in a multicultural context prevailed over the difficulties.



5. *Readiness for separation*: the parents who prepared their children for the experience of separation due to migration and who always tried to maintain contact (e.g. phone calls, letters or frequent visits) greatly helped their children reduce the negative consequences of this experience; moreover, they supported and accelerated the maturation of their children by strengthening their psychological stability.
6. *Positive experience of acceptance and respect in the host country*: especially during the initial contacts. When interaction with the German environment was mainly positive, due to adequate preparation by the parents or by other educators (no discrimination or sense of inferiority), the subjects interviewed were able to positively accept and were interested in new situations and people.
7. *Understanding from teachers and educators*: when teachers respected and showed interest in and comprehension of the cultural differences of the subjects interviewed, the subjects more easily developed self-esteem, openness and trust in oneself and others. A further indicator of these attitudes can be seen in the subjects who found serious discrepancies between the rules and values of their family and the values of the school; this was highlighted in those who had to change class and teachers frequently. The importance of this factor is also noted by the fact that some pupils improved their schoolwork and social behavior immediately after the change from a teacher who was not as open to a more sympathetic one. In some cases the teacher's positive attitude was transmitted to the German schoolmates. This was very important in coping with challenges and crises.
8. *No pressure to assimilate in or outside school*: when teachers, educators and German friends did not immediately reject and did not exercise cultural pressure on the children with Italian cultural backgrounds, the latter overcame their integration problems more easily. These subjects were able to make positive compromises between the requirements of the environment and their personalities.
9. *Important role of friends as a "bridge" between the cultures*: this factor is highly protective. It eased or even allowed the taking on of non-conflicting contacts both with the new culture and with the rules, regulations and values in Italy upon their return. In some cases, after arriving in Germany, Italian friends or friends of other nationalities took on the role of highly efficient cultural mediators. The interviewed adolescents were able to take advantage of these experiences and to apply previously tested coping strategies.



10. *External support*: in some cases the help on the cognitive and emotional level, in the form of school guidance, counseling or therapy, turned out to be highly effective for scholastic, family and social inclusion and also in the management of conflicts, diseases and/or disorders. However, these measures should not oblige foreign subjects to adopt pre-set solutions, arbitrarily fixed by counselors (no assimilation pressure). Instead, counselors and therapists should allow adolescents with migration backgrounds to have compensatory experiences, to be understood, accepted and appreciated as they are, without prejudice, and should help them develop their own personal identity.

## 5. Theory of Fundamental Human Needs

Based on the main results of the study it was also possible to hypothesize that migration can inhibit or facilitate the fulfillment of fundamental human needs. Therefore, after determining the main risk and protective factors related to migration and life in a multicultural context, and after identifying the most appropriate coping strategies, the qualitative data was analyzed in order to identify the needs which seemed to be related with the harmonious development of the personality. Principally based on the work of Maslow (1954), but also considering other psychological theories, mainly Rogers (1961) and Erikson (1968), a tentative *Theory of fundamental needs of human development* was proposed which also takes into account the effects of globalization, cultural differences and life in multicultural context. The most important needs are: *Physical Well-being; Social Relations and Sense of Belonging; Social Bonds; Separation; Positive Emotional Regard (Respect, Acceptance, Love and Acknowledgement); Deep Understanding (Empathy); Congruence; Trust; Active Participation; Structure; Continuity.*

## 6. Intercultural Education To Foster Flexible, Multiple European Identities

Based on the research results education can play a preeminent role for fostering stable (and in the main time), flexible, multiple identities. Education, considered as the best form of “caring”, can foster personal enrichment, and inhibit the development of disease or disorder. Unfortunately, both families and schools still seem to be unprepared to deal with multicultural situations. Many of the interviewed teachers and educators do not seem to have sufficient knowledge of the cultural background of the children with foreign origin and do not adopt specific educational approaches.

Intercultural Education, as developed and used in Europe since the 1980s, is widely considered the most appropriate approach to education in a time of globalization, in which diversity has become the norm rather than the exception; and it is conceived as especially suitable to discover, respect and cope with all forms of cultural diversity

(Gundara, 2000; Portera, 2011; Barrett, 2016; Chermeleu & Rus, 2019)<sup>2</sup>. Intercultural education is a process that leads to a complete and thorough understanding of the concepts of democracy and pluralism, as well as different customs, traditions, faiths and values. It constitutes a Copernican revolution in pedagogy, mainly because: a) it does not define identity and culture rigidly, but views them as being dynamic and in constant evolution; b) it perceives diversity, otherness, emigration and life in a complex and multicultural society not only as risk factors, but also as opportunities for enrichment and growth. A person from a different ethnic or cultural background poses a positive challenge, a chance for discussion and the study of values, norms and ways of behaving. The intercultural approach is placed between universalism (a transcultural approach which emphasizes cultural similarities like universal human rights) and relativism (a multicultural approach which stresses cultural difference) as it takes into consideration both the opportunities and the limitations, yet transcends and synthesizes them to permit improved chances of dialogue, exchange and interaction. Whereas multiculturalism aims to discover and tolerate people from different cultures, living peacefully side by side, the prefix *inter-* implies relationships, interaction, and exchange. Intercultural education rejects immobility and hierarchy; it is meant to encourage dialogue and relationships on equal terms, so that individuals do not feel forced to sacrifice important aspects of their cultural identity. It is based on a direct exchange of ideas, principles and behavior, on a comparison of concepts and mutual discovery.

Finally, in the era of globalization and interdependence there is an urgent need to overcome strategies of verbal, physical or psychological violence (which ignore or exacerbate problems), of assimilation (which are bound to fail, as the process of identity construction always implies free will) and of universalism (which only considers cultural similarities and risks becoming a new form of colonialism). In Europe, given the growing diversities and according to many studies and scholarship (Gundara, 2000; Allemann-Ghionda, 2008; Barrett, 2016; Portera and Grant, 2017;), intercultural competence in education are crucial, both in family and schools, in order to prevent mental and behavioral disorders and promote healthy and positive European identities.

Europe is a complex reality where linguistic, cultural, political, juristic, religious diversity constitute the norm rather than an exception. Many differences are related e.g. with the ancient Greek, Roman heritage, colonial empires, Christian reference and religious diversity, wars, East-West division, Renaissance, etc. (Chermeleu & Rus, 2019). Today there are 48 countries member of United Nations and 28 countries are member of the European Union. Therefore, if understood and applied correctly, intercultural education could help identify the opportunities of developing flexible and multiple identities. Since intercultural education takes into consideration both common human dignity and the specific peculiarities of individual cultures, it offers the opportunity to

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<sup>2</sup> For more details about the many studies and the development of intercultural education both in the USA and in Europe and for a semantic clarification of multicultural and intercultural education, see Grant & Portera, 2011.

live as an equal by respecting the differences. Therefore, the use of intercultural education in families and schools and of intercultural principles in the workplace, media and civil society, could allow Europeans (specially adolescents with experiences of migration) to contrast stereotypes and prejudices and to take advantages and benefits from all form of diversities present in Europe. It could also help fostering and acquiring competences related not only with knowing and respecting diversities, but also to get in contact, to compare and exchange cultural standards, to interact and to manage internal and external conflict positively.

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## Intercultural education in the primary school education in Romania: ways to achieve and integrate it in curricular documents. Students' perspective

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### Abstract

*Intercultural education is unanimously recognized as one of the new dimensions of education. In Romania, in the 6th grade, students aged 12-13 years study a subject with this name, according to the curricular documents entered into force in 2017. At the same time, in various other subjects, especially from the socio-human area, numerous elements of interculturality are found in each educational cycle. Because in the primary school education it lays the foundations of the later stages of formal education and personal development of the students, we were interested to see the support that this new dimension of this type of education benefits in the school curriculum from Romania. The results indicate a strong support for intercultural education from school subjects such as Religion, Personal Development, Social Education. This article includes the results of a research we conducted with the help of the survey based on a questionnaire, to identify how the students from the bachelor's degree specialization "Pedagogy of primary and pre-school education" relate to the possible ways of achieving and integrating the intercultural education in curricular documents at the primary school education. We wanted to identify the point of view of the students, the future teachers from primary school education, which is why the research was carried out at the end of the last year of their undergraduate studies. The conclusions show that there is a certain knowledge of the problem of the intercultural education at the primary school education, based on the university studies and the experience in the classroom, from the teaching practice or from the current activity of the students already working in education. However, we cannot fail to notice the significant differences between the points of view of those who have experience in teaching activity, including during high school education in a pedagogical high school, compared to their colleagues who have a much lower didactic experience.*

**Keywords:** primary school education, interculturality, teaching experience, university studies, teaching practice of students.

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## **Preliminaries**

The issue of intercultural education has also become in Romania for more than two decades a constant presence in the debates in the educational area and not only, because of the increasing challenges related to cultural exchanges and intercultural meetings that benefit students, but Romanian students. At the same time, the accelerated globalization, with population exchanges between countries and continents, a process of unprecedented magnitude in the last centuries, in which Romania is also a part, makes the attention of the investigative efforts in the field of education sciences to be increasingly directed towards this area.

The research undertaken by us had a sample of 100 students in the third year in the specialization "Pedagogy of primary and pre-school education" (PIPP), from the form of day courses and from distance courses, before their graduating. We chose this sample due to the fact that in the university curricula it is foreseen to study Intercultural education in the IIIrd year. Thus, we add to the experience that many of them have as teachers in the Romanian pre-university education, the one from the teaching practice in the primary school education, realized during the three years of the degree studies, under the coordination of a university teacher and of a mentor from the application school where this teaching practice is carried out. Our previous research has shown us that the end of the bachelor's degree is the most appropriate moment for a pedagogical research, since the meeting with the elements of interculturality and the challenges that they raise in the educational space knows a significant moment. The sample of subjects was established by the method of the sampling step, after eliminating the questionnaires in which the requested data were presented incorrectly.

## **Characterization of the sample of subjects and data analysis**

18% of the sample of subjects are graduates of the teaching high school, and 82% of them graduated a high school with a different specialization. Almost half of the respondents (40%) enrolled in the college immediately after finishing high school, and the others (60%) at a number of years. Regarding the age distribution, we have three levels: 56% are between the ages of 20-29 years, 32% between 30-39 years and 12% between 40-49 years.

In order to interpret the data, the job of the students plays an important role. Thus, 43% already work in education (based on teaching high school, as a result of undergraduate studies in other fields or are unskilled substitutes), 20% in another field, and 37% do not work (in this case it is mainly respondents who started their university studies immediately after finishing high school).



The students who have already worked in education have the following age brackets (out of a total of 43%): 23% between 1-5 years; 7% between 6-10 years; 7% between 11-15 years; 4% between 16-20 years; 2% over 20 years.

In the sample of the present research, we have an insignificant percentage of students who declare that they have had significant experiences in the family regarding interculturality, so we do not have relevant data for the analysis according to such a variable. At the same time, we can consider that the opinions expressed in the research are based on the information acquired in the undergraduate studies, as well as on the experience as a teacher in pre-university education, respectively in the teaching practice activities.

The data in this article were analyzed in order to highlight the students' opinion regarding the values associated with intercultural education and the possibilities for its achievement in primary education in Romania. We did not consider the analysis of the research data relevant after the form of education – day courses/ frequency education, respectively distance courses/ ID programs - as all students in the sample followed the same university curriculum and benefited from the same stages of teaching practice.

### **Intercultural education and priorities from the pedagogical space of the students from "Pedagogy of primary and pre-school education" specialization**

One of the items in the questionnaire asked the students to give a grade from 1 to 10 (1 - the minimum value, 10 - the maximum value) to some aspects related to intercultural education, during the collegiate discussions that they participated during the university studies in within the framework of the degree program "Pedagogy of primary and pre-school education" (PIPP). In the list presented by us, we find different aspects for most dimensions of education, placed in a random order. In table 1, we presented the results in the order of the averages calculated based on the grades offered by the students.

According to the data in table 1, we observe that in the pedagogical discussions of the students in the first place are the aspects related to moral education, with an average of 9.30, the only average with values between 9-10. At 40 cents, there are aspects related to intercultural education (average = 8.94). The students' discussions focus on issues related to moral, intercultural, civic and religious education, which scored above the average for the entire sample ( $m = 8.40$ ).

Even if it is unanimously recognized that the current Romanian education focuses on cognitive / informative aspects to a higher degree than on the formative component, in the discussions between the students from the PIPP, the elements in the university curriculum run by the students is implicitly present.

*Table 1* Topics of discussion among PIPP students, in relation to different areas of education, in descending order of the average

<b>Definitive aspects for different fields of education</b>	<b>Average</b>
1. the need for moral education of children	9,3
2. carrying out an education that facilitates the integration of minority groups in the majority groups	8,9
3. the importance of involving the students in the civic field	8,6
4. the role of religious education in shaping new generations	8,5
5. the need for an ecological education adapted to the new challenges of today's society	8,4
6. the importance of a good technological education of the children	8,3
7. the role of aesthetic / plastic education in the training and development of the child	8,2
8. focusing current education on information, to a greater degree than on training	7,5
<b>Average</b>	<b>8,4</b>

In the case of this item, for the aspects of interculturality we have performed analyzes according to different variables. We were particularly interested in the percentage of students who scored grades 9 and 10, namely values above the average obtained for the entire sample ( $m = 8.90$ ). Regarding the specialization of the high school the students followed, there are no significant differences between those who graduated from a teaching high school and those who graduated from another high school: 77.77% of the total students who graduated from teaching high school gave grades of 9 and 10, respectively 75.60% of the students who graduated from high school at another specialization.

If we report the results according to the job of the respondents, the research data reveal a lower percentage of grades of 9 and 10 for the elements of interculturality in the students already working in education (69.76%), compared to those who work in another area (80%), respectively those who do not work (81%).

The analysis of the data according to the seniority in education highlights differences, more precisely a relationship of inverse proportionality between the percentage of high marks granted by the respondents and the number of years of seniority in education, as evidenced by the distribution curve of the results, in figure 1.

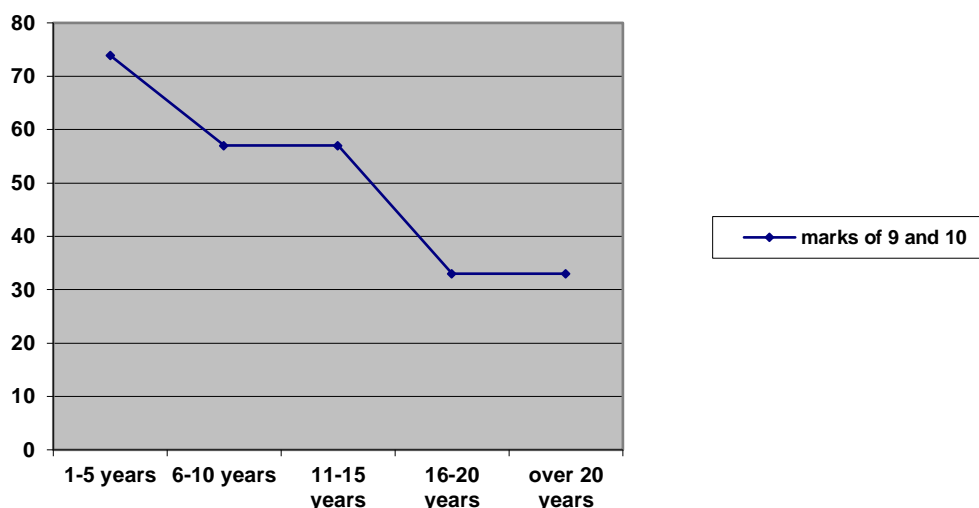


Fig.1. Distribution curve of the percentage of teachers who gave grades of 9 and 10, according to seniority in education

It is thus highlighted that in the pedagogical discussions of the students from PIPP the topics related directly to the domains that consider personality formation take precedence. The elements of intercultural education are present mainly in the concerns of students working in other areas than the educational one or not working, in relation to those who are already teachers. Of the students who are already working in education, those with older seniority explicitly value less intercultural education than those with little seniority in education (1-5 years).

### **The students from PIPP and the values of intercultural society**

Another item considered how students from PIPP relate personally to the principles and values of an intercultural society: developing their own cultural identity, accepting and respecting diversity, positive appreciation of differences, equal treatment of people, solidarity, promoting social inclusion, intercultural dialogue. We proposed three sets of two pair statements, one of which promotes openness to intercultural values (1.1., 2.2., 3.2.). The students were invited to choose from the list of six statements that characterize them most. The results are presented in table 2.

The data in table 2 reflect that, internally, students value the elements of interculturality in a high degree. Most elections (82.66%) received statements regarding their own cultural identity and the need to positively value the differences: "I accept the idea that we are different constitutively" and "The knowledge and understanding of those around us is a complex and progressive process". It is the choice to refer social inclusion (72%) at a statistically significant difference of more than 10 percentage points.

*Table 2* Reporting students on a personal level to the principles and values of an intercultural society

<b>Affirmations in the field of intercultural education</b>	<b>% choises</b>
1.1. I accept the idea that we are different constitutively.	<b>89</b>
1.2. I think the groups should not keep their identity.	<b>1</b>
2.1. It is necessary to standardize the value standards in today's society.	<b>36</b>
2.2. Knowing and understanding those around us is a complex and progressive process.	<b>87</b>
3.1. I hardly accept in my group those who do not have good relations with all people.	<b>13</b>
3.2. I easily include those who are different from others in my group.	<b>72</b>

The highest percentage of students, almost a third, chose this statement from the statements that are not in favor of the values of an intercultural society: "It is necessary to standardize the value standards in today's society." Research data show that almost half of the students (47%) chose at least one statement with negative connotations in relation to intercultural education, 4% of the total chose two such statements. No student made the three choices of statements with negative connotations.

### **The educational priorities of students from PIPP, from the perspective of diversity reporting**

The presence in the class of students belonging to cultural, religious, ethnic area etc. different from those of the majority naturally raise a series of pedagogical questions from all the factors involved in the educational process: on the one hand, the teacher refers to a hidden curriculum, based on his own perception of the cultural difference present in the school space, and on the other hand it faces a reality (the students, but also the school environment as a whole) that forces it to adapt its teaching style to the individual and group particularities, respectively to the specific educational needs of the actors involved in the teaching process. In another plan, the challenges come on the one hand from the way the students in the majority group respect the values of the minority group, and on the other, from the way the students from the minority group receive the impact that their values have on them. These four different ways of reporting diversity, two from the teacher and two from the students, were the subject of another item. The respondents were invited to rank them according to the priorities that they consider

should have their intercultural education in the school space (1st place – the least important, 4th place – the most important). The data are presented in table 3.

*Table 3* Educational priorities from the perspective of the teacher and students

<b>Methods of action for the integration of students belonging to cultural, religious, etc. different from the majority</b>	<b>1st place</b>	<b>2nd place</b>	<b>3rd place</b>	<b>4th Place</b>	<b>Total 3 + 4</b>
how the teacher perceives the cultural difference	28	22	12	<b>36</b>	48
how the teacher adapts his / her style to the student's cultural profile	19	25	36	<b>20</b>	56
<b>Total teacher</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>56</b>	
how the student in a minority group receives the values of the majority	19	32	29	<b>20</b>	49
how the students in the majority group respect the cultural values of the students in the minority group	34	21	23	<b>22</b>	45
<b>Total students</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>44</b>	

The data in table 3 show a certain balance in terms of the respondents' image of the pedagogical actions included in the item. The biggest differences appear for the actions placed on the 4th place, considered to be the most important by respondents. Thus, 56% of the respondents place the responsibility on the teacher, especially regarding the need to change their mentality regarding cultural, religious and ethnic differences. We find at a difference of 12 percentage points the answers of those who consider that more important than the actions of the teacher are those regarding the relationships between students, both in the case of the majority group (22%) and those of the minority group (20%).

### **Values of intercultural education and curricular documents from the primary school education**

From the analysis of the school curriculum in use for the primary and secondary school (which includes pupils between the ages of 6-15 years), we observe that, with the exception of the 6th grade where the Intercultural education appears as a self-discipline within Social education subject, in all the other classes, a number of elements of interculturality appear, in different forms, at the level of education purposes, learning contents, examples of learning activities.

Two of the eight key-competences supported by the educational policies at European level<sup>3</sup>: "interpersonal, intercultural, social and civic competences" and "cultural sensitivity" are supported by most disciplines in the curricular area "Human and society". For example, in Table 4, we present the way in which different elements of interculturality are formulated or presented at the level of contents of the learning in the primary cycle in the school curriculum of some school subjects.

Table 4 Elements of interculturality, approached at the content level in the study of some school subjects

Subject	Grade	Examples of learning contents in which elements of interculturality can be approach
R.E. (Religious Education)	P	God is teaching us to help one another <sup>4</sup> - I am a Christian at school, too (relationship with adults and children at school) - My first friends (colleagues and friends; choosing friends; friendship models, etc.) - People from all over the world (diversity of people in the world; activities for helping others, etc.)
Personal Development	P	Simple interactions with familiar beings and objects <sup>5</sup> - Favourite beings and objects. Their characteristics
R.E. (Religious Education)	Ist Grade	Man prays to God for himself and others <sup>6</sup> - For whom I pray (prayer for all people) - The benefits of prayer (strengthening the relationship between people)
Personal Development	Ist Grade	Simple interactions with familiar beings and objects <sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Irina Horga, "Religious Education - an explicit choice of European education systems", in Dorin Oprea (coordinator), *Religious education in dialogue with society. Pedagogical, psychological and historical research*, Alba Iulia, Reintegirea Publishing House

<sup>4</sup> \*\*\*Syllabus for Religious Education school subject, *Orthodox worship, Preparatory grade, the Ist grade and the IInd grade*, approved by the order of the minister of National Education, no. 3418/ 19.03.2013, pp. 10-11.

<sup>5</sup> \*\*\* Syllabus for Personal Development school subject, *Preparatory grade, the Ist grade and the IInd grade*, approved by the order of the minister of National Education, no. 3418/19.03.2013, p. 10.

<sup>6</sup> \*\*\* Syllabus for Religious Education school subject, *Orthodox worship, Preparatory grade, the Ist grade and the IInd grade...*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>7</sup> \*\*\* Syllabus for Personal Development school subject, *Preparatory grade, the Ist grade and the IInd grade...*, p. 10.

		- The friendship. The main characteristics of a good friend. What is a good friend?
R.E. (Religious Education)	the IInd grade	People show their love for one another <sup>8</sup> - Gratitude towards those who do us good (what is gratitude; biblical examples of people who have shown their gratitude to benefactors; models in the daily life of rewarding those who do us good, etc.)
Personal Development	the IInd grade	Simple interactions with familiar beings and objects <sup>9</sup> - Necessary skills and accepted behaviors in relationships with others Respect in relationships with others
R.E. (Religious Education)	the IIIrd grade	Life with others <sup>10</sup> - Gentleness and kindness in relation to others - Respect for self and others
Civic Education	the IIIrd grade	The concept of <i>person</i> <sup>11</sup> - What does it mean to be people? - My person - His/Her person Our relationships with other people - Small groups of which we belong (family, friends group, play group, learning group) and the relationships between their members
R.E. (Religious Education)	the IVth grade	Christian love, support for living with others <sup>12</sup> - Love, command given by the Lord Jesus Christ - Life in harmony with others, an urge of God - The friendship and the command of christian love
Civic Education	the IVth grade	Local membership <sup>13</sup> - Local traditions National membership

<sup>8</sup> \*\*\* Syllabus for Religious Education school subject, Orthodox worship, Preparatory grade, the 1st grade and the IInd grade..., p.10

<sup>9</sup> \*\*\* Syllabus for Personal Development school subject, Preparatory grade, the 1st grade and the IInd grade..., p. 10.

<sup>10</sup> \*\*\* Syllabus for Religious Education school subject, Orthodox worship, the 3rd and the 4th grade, approved by the order of the minister of National Education, no. 5001/ 02.12.2014, p. 8.

<sup>11</sup> \*\*\* Syllabus for Civic Education school subject, the 3rd and the 4th grade, approved by the order of the minister of National Education, no. 5003/ 02.12.2014, pp. 10-11

<sup>12</sup> \*\*\* Syllabus for Religious Education school subject, Orthodox worship, the 3rd and the 4th grade..., p. 8..

<sup>13</sup> \*\*\* Syllabus for Civic Education school subject, the 3rd and the 4th grade..., pp. 10-11.



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Homeland and, where appropriate, country where we live</li> <li>Moral-civic behavior</li> <li>- daily moral life: family behavior; behavior in school; behavior in the group of friends; behavior in public places</li> <li>- prosocial behaviors (help, cooperation, competition, tolerance, support, volunteering) and antisocial (conflictual, aggressive)</li> </ul>
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Starting from the data from the preliminary research, presented in table 4, we proposed an item by which we wanted to find out the status that the students would grant to the intercultural education in the curricular documents for the primary education. We formulated a semi-open item, in which, in addition to the three variants proposed by us, we also introduced an open item in which I gave the respondents the possibility to specify another variant. The data obtained are presented in table 5.

*Table 5* Ways of integrating the elements of intercultural education in the curriculum at the primary school education, related to the total sample

<b>Ways of integrating intercultural education in curricular documents from the primary school education</b>	<b>Total choices (%)</b>
1. It should be introduce a school subject, in its own right.	52
2. Elements of intercultural education should be included in the curriculum of some school subjects.	29
3. Learning activities should be carried out only when situations involving elements of interculturality arise.	17
4. Other way: optional.	2
Total (%)	100

Over half of the respondents (52%) opted for the alternative of a school subject, in its own right. Almost half (48%) being divided between the introduction of elements of intercultural education in the curriculum of some educational disciplines, as it is now realized (29%), carrying out learning activities for specific situations (17%), respectively the introduction of an optional discipline (2%).

The percentages regarding the possibilities of integrating the elements of intercultural education in the curriculum at the primary school, depending on the type of high school graduates (pedagogical or other high school) by the respondents, are presented in table 6.

*Table 6* Ways of integrating the elements of intercultural education in the curriculum at the primary school subject, depending on the type of high school graduates

Ways of integrating intercultural education in curricular documents from the primary school education	The type of high school graduate (%)	
	Teaching high school	Another high school
1. It should be introduced a school subject, in its own right.	44	53,7
2. Elements of intercultural education should be included in the curriculum of some school subjects.	44	25,6
3. Learning activities should be carried out only when situations involving elements of interculturality arise.	12	18,3
4. Other way: optional.	0	2,4
Total (%)	100	100

The data analysis shows for the first variant a lower percentage with almost ten percentage points for graduate students of teaching high school. A greater positive difference regarding the teaching high school graduates, of almost 20 percentage points, compared to the total of the choices, appears for the second variant. We find identical percentage values for the first two variants of integration of the elements of intercultural education in the case of graduate students of pedagogical high school (44%). A statistically significant increase appears at variant no. 3, for graduates from a high school other than the pedagogical one, which proposes that the elements of interdisciplinarity be introduced to the primary cycle when educational situations arise that demand these measures. The research data indicate a strong polarization of the options of the teaching high school graduates towards the constant approach of the elements of intercultural education at the primary cycle, corresponding to the first two possibilities of integrating it. A much lower knowledge of the school realities made the graduates of another high school than the teaching one, for whom the professional experience in the primary education was summarized until the moment of the research in the pedagogical practice of the three years of college, led to the strong option for the first variant of integrating intercultural education into the primary cycle.

Another analysis of the data was made according to the students' workplace. We have reported the data for the total number of students for each of the three categories: who work in education (table 7).

*Table 7* Ways of integrating the elements of intercultural education in the curriculum at the primary school education, according to the job of the respondents

<b>Ways of integrating intercultural education in curricular documents from the primary school education</b>	<b>The place of work:</b>		
	education (43%)	other area (20%)	not work (37%)
1. It should be introduce a school subject, in its own right.	48,8	50	56,7
2. Elements of intercultural education should be included in the curriculum of some school subjects.	30,23	40	27,1
3. Learning activities should be carried out only when situations involving elements of intercultural arise.	16,37	10	16,2
4. Other way: optional.	4,6	0	0
Total (%)	100	100	100

Research data shows that, 48.8% of the respondent students who were already enrolled in education at the time of this research believe that intercultural education should be supported in the primary school education by a school subject, in its own right. The other half proposes other ways of integrating the elements of interculturality into the curriculum. The value of the amplitude in the case of those who propose a new discipline is almost 8 percentage points, the highest value being registered for students who did not have a job at the moment. In the case of those who propose to support the elements of intercultural education through the contribution of several school subjects, the highest percentage values appear in those who work in another field than the education (40%), the value of the amplitude being  $A = 12.9$ .

### Conclusions

Students who already have the experience of integrating elements of interculturality at the level of other educational disciplines, especially in "Personal Development" and "Civic Education", operate more openly with the terms. At the same time, the novelty and the challenges involved in the achievement of intercultural education, make the students with less experience in education consider that a self-discipline is required to sustain in the Romanian primary education the values of this new dimension of education.

A strong element of support for an effective achievement of intercultural education in the current Romanian primary school education may be constituted by a better presentation within the university curriculum of the values of this dimension of education, present in the school curricula of different disciplines. We refer here in particular to the exercise of reading and understanding by the students of the curricular documents by "reading in integrum" of the curricula at the level of the primary school education, so that the distinction between the school subjects is not supported only by the formulation of the contents of learning.

The data of the present research lead us towards the development of the investigative approach, including in the line of identifying ways to support a better collaboration between the teacher for primary school education and Religion Education teacher. We especially consider the possibilities of carrying out interdisciplinary activities of project type, especially when the class group includes between the intercultural elements that define it different religious and ethnic components.

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## The construction of European identity in fourth grade history handbooks

Atalia ONIȚIU\*

### Abstract

*The fourth grade represents the first year of study of the discipline History for students in pre-university education. Before being a matter of civics, the European identity is a historically grounded construct; therefore, we naturally wondered whether the issue that we have not only an ethnic or national identity, but also a European one is, even incipiently, raised when teaching history. Our analysis started from the definition of the concept of European identity, to the general perception of Romanians regarding Europe according to Eurobarometer data, to reach the analysis of the school syllabus in the History discipline and then to the textbooks constructed starting from this syllabus. The conclusion we reached following our approach was that, as the school syllabus supports the formation of the national identity first and on a secondary place, the sketching of elements of European identity (through the elements related to the history of the national minorities in Romania, the location on the map of Europe of the events in the history of Romanians, discussing in different topics subjects such as the European Union or presenting some important personalities for the history of Europe), the three existing textbooks, available and at the decision of the teachers have an accordingly approach, that we consider to be correct. The European identity cannot be built before the national identity, historically speaking, and for the age category to which we refer (9-10 years), in the condition of one course hour per week, the simultaneous construction of the two types of identity (in other words teaching the history of Romanians and universal history at the same time) is difficult to achieve. Therefore, we believe that the choice for national history and identity before the European one is properly substantiated. The national and European identities cannot be constructed from the simple enumeration of historical names or data. The well-built explanation, accompanied by carefully chosen examples is essential in teaching history to this age category and, of course, in the solid construction of one's own identity (national and European).*

**Keywords:** Europe, European identity, history, handbook, syllabus

### 1. Introduction

The concept of European identity has been most often correlated with the existence and functioning of the European Union, in the common language and the collective

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perception being assimilated to a form of "supranational nationalism" (Checkel, Katzenstein, 2009, p.14), as John Meyer (2003, p.3) also stated

"the exact definition of Europe and its people is uncertain, variable, and for most participants unknown."

Since the first decades of existence of the European Union, its members have raised the question of building a common identity. Thus, in 1973, the year of Denmark's, Ireland's and the United Kingdom's accession on December 14, the foreign ministers of the nine Member States issued the *Document on the European Identity* (Available online at [https://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/1999/1/1/02798dc9-9c69-4b7d-b2c9-f03a8db7da32/publishable\\_en.pdf](https://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/1999/1/1/02798dc9-9c69-4b7d-b2c9-f03a8db7da32/publishable_en.pdf), last accessed on 4.10.2019). European identity is seen as a dynamic concept, in interdependence with the dynamics of the European Union. The document states that the following aspects must be taken into account when defining the European identity:

"reviewing the common heritage, interests and special obligations of the Nine, as well as the degree of unity so far achieved within the Community; assessing the extent to which the Nine are already acting together in relation to the rest of the world and the responsibilities which result from this; taking into consideration the dynamic nature of European unification".

In the same document it is stated that the elements underlying the European identity are: common values and attitudes, shared by all inhabitants of the Member States, preservation of national cultures in their diversity, defense of the principles of democracy, respect for human rights and laws, common market, institutions, policies and cooperation mechanisms. The European identity is understood in the document as an original and dynamic concept, which takes into account the diversity of cultures, the existence of common interests, values and principles.

Although with a long existence, both the European Union and the European identity, V. Sotirović (2014, pp. 100-101) argues in a recent study that the European Union is still a "multiethnic experiment" (Sotirović, 2014, p.102) and that one cannot speak of a European identity in the true meaning of the word. According to the author, the European identity is hardly under construction, suggesting the need to follow the French model of ethnic indifference (a model that implies the use in the public space of a unique official language, and according to which all citizens living within the borders of a state, regardless their ethnic origin, have an identity related to belonging to that state, which contributes to the development of the civic spirit, to the national and linguistic homogeneity and to the integration of minorities).

The idea that European identity is a construct under construction has been formulated previously, in a collective volume coordinated by Jeffrey T. Checkel and Peter J. Katzenstein (2009). In the opinion of the contributors to this volume the European identity does not exist, due to the fact that there is no single Europe, but a community of foreigners, therefore it is possible to speak only of multiple identities. European identity must be seen as both a social process and a political project (of the elites). As a project,

the basis of the construction of the European identity is a series of mechanisms, the most important being, in the opinion of the authors, fear (Checkel & Katzenstein, 2009).

European identity can be understood and interpreted in various forms, either as a cultural identity (based on common history), as a civic identity (related to the quality of European) or as a political, supranational identity (Tsumarova, 2012, p.139), forms of identity that coexist and are dynamic, all the more so as Europe is a dynamic space. Identity is a construct that is (re) defined continuously (Chaniotis, 2009, 48-49).

Comparing the European Union with the two models of antiquity, the Hellenistic world and the Roman Empire, A. Chaniotis concludes that the European Union lacks many elements necessary to speak of a collective identity: common citizenship, history and culture, unitary foreign policy, common language, religion, mythology, system of beliefs and values, myths and symbols. Homogeneity is lacking, given that Europe's defining element is diversity (Chaniotis, 2009, 49-51; Kreck, 2015, 157-158). Some authors believe that, despite its existence, materialized through different identities, regional or national, through territorial borders, but also cultural, social, political, ethnic, they do not exclude the possibility of a collective identity (Kreck, 2015, p.157). In the opinion previously expressed by G. Delanty, the European identity is not in opposition to the national identity, the two forms of identity coexist, the European identity being a form of collective, cosmopolitan identity, which must face the permanent dynamism of the contemporary world, and must form as a unitary construct, beyond the characteristic diversity of the European space (Delanty, 2003, p.76-86).

That national and European identity are not two opposing constructs is a fact reaffirmed by other authors, who consider that it is not the nation, but nationalism that opposes the construction of a European identity, and that to resist it, it is necessary to emphasize its cultural component, in order to develop the emotional attachment of individuals to Europe (Cinpoies, 2008, 11-12).

## 2. Romanians and the European identity

In her work on European identity, Grete Tartler refers to an IRSOP study from 2005 (unfortunately the web page to which the author refers is no longer active), according to which European values such as "pluralism, minority rights, equality between men and women, freedom, democracy, tolerance, non-discrimination, human rights, equality, respect for the law, support for less developed regions, justice, human dignity" are not always respected in Romania (Tartler, 2006, p.173). In the opinion of Romanians, the political values would have ceased, not the economic, social or cultural ones, the Romanians being, unlike Europeans, inclined towards aggression, authoritarianism, dishonesty, disorganization, superficiality (Tartler, 2006, p.174).

Analyzing Eurobarometer data (available online at <https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Chart/index>, last accessed on 7.10.2019), the question "*How attached do you feel to Europe?*", we can see

the existence of significant statistical differences between the frequencies recorded in the years before Romania's accession to the EU and those after. Thus, in 2004, 44% of Romanians declared that they are very attached to Europe, and 41% quite attached, so practically an overwhelming majority, a situation that we find again in the following year (47% very attached and 38% fairly attached). In 2014 and 2015, on the other hand, only 18%, respectively 22% feel much attached, 44% / 42% fairly attached, and the number of not very attached increases, to 26%, respectively 21%. However, despite these increases, we have over 60% of respondents who have declared themselves attached to Europe.

To the question *"Do you ever think of yourself as not only (nationality), but also European? Does this happen often, sometimes or never?"*, Romanians offered in the years before joining comparable answers (15% / 11% often, 44% / 46% sometimes and 32% / 38% never), while to the question *"Does the European Union give you personally the feeling of ...? (MULTIPLE ANSWERS POSSIBLE)"*, 67% of Romanians answered hope and 45% confidence (in 2005).

According to the 2019 Eurobarometer, 60% of Romanians have a positive image of the European Union and 52% have confidence in the European Union (data available online at <https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/survey/getsurveydetail/instruments/standard/surveyky/2253>, last accessed on 7.10.2019), data comparable to the previous year (available online at <https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/standard/yearFrom/1974/yearTo/2018/surveyKy/2215>, last accessed on 7.10.2019), when 59% of Romanians declared themselves attached and very attached to the values of the European Union.

In terms of citizenship, 68% of Romanians identify themselves as European citizens; when it comes to nationality, 50% of Romanians declare themselves Romanians and Europeans. 20% of Romanians said that the main element of connection between the members of the European community is culture. Among the most important European values we mention human rights (36%), peace (29%) and democracy (25%).

Therefore, it can be seen from the analysis of the statistical data, that it is possible to speak of a European identity among Romanians, that it is perceived above all as a civic identity, and that the national and European identity coexist in the Romanians' consciousness.

### **3. European identity in the 4th grade history syllabus**

History as a subject matter is introduced in the school syllabus from the primary cycle starting with the fourth grade, in the curricular area *Human and society* [Man and Society / People and Society / Humans and Society], having an hour per week (according to Annex no. 2 to the Order of the Minister of National Education no. 5003 / 02.12.2014).

There are four general competences formed through this discipline, and in the context of our analysis we will stop at the fourth one, namely “forming a positive image of oneself and others”, in other words of national identity in a narrow sense, and regional and European in a general sense. As specific competences, the school syllabus mentions the specific competence “4.2. *Recognizing the similarities and differences between oneself and the other, between individuals and groups*”, again with the undeclared purpose of shaping a national identity of students.

As can be seen in the *Introductory Note*, in the *Learning Contents* section, the building of national identity is stimulated, by reference to universal history and especially to the history of other European peoples (an example in this sense being the history of the national minorities that are found in the Romanian territory):

„Most of the themes propose contents that concern national and European history. When applying the syllabus to the classroom, the teacher will be able to negotiate with the students the options for topics of European and national history. This way of applying the program responds to a principle of curricular design that aims to capitalize on the context of the school, according to the interests of the students, the didactic resources, support elements that the school can offer and even the option for a more traditional or more innovative didactic approach. In this context, we recommend that teachers approach from a European perspective at least one of the sub-topics of each field.”

There are some observations deriving from this paragraph: the autonomy of the teacher regarding the application of the school syllabus; focusing the activity on the student, according to his needs and interests, including the active involvement of the students in making decisions on the topic to be addressed at the classes.

The learning process is based on three main areas, namely:

*” The past and the present around us (Introductory concepts: past-present (millennium, century, decade, historical era), historical space, historical sources; Family: family past, family holidays, free time, daily activities; Local and national community: territory, housing and daily life, traditions, holidays, religion, monuments of heroes; Minority communities on today's territory of Romania; Childhood of today in the local community; Peoples of yesterday and today: map location, occupations, traditions, customs, holidays; knowledge of the world through travelers.*

*Ages, events and personalities (Antiquity (Legends and writings of the ancients about Dacians and Romans); The Middle Ages (Legendary figures of voivodes, rulers and local rulers in literary and historical works; Transylvania - multiethnic space. Village and city in medieval Transylvania; Historians and chroniclers about minorities' personalities); The Modern Age (A.I. Cuza and the Union; Carol I and the Independence, Carol Davila; Heroes of the First World War; Ferdinand and the Great Union; Romania at the turn of the millennium).*

*Culture and heritage (Historical places in the community: monasteries, streets and historic houses in the community, monuments of heroes, representative monuments of*

*ethnic communities in Romania; Places of historical importance for Romania: Dacian settlements and constructions, Greek and Roman (Greek cities on the Black Sea shore); castles and fortresses of historical events; religious buildings and their founders; Monuments and places included in the UNESCO heritage”.*

Some basic observations can be made from the simple reading of these contents: the history taught to the students of the fourth class is one that emphasizes the local and national, integrated into a universal context; learning the history of the local and national community also forms an identity feeling, and analyzing the communities of minorities or the history of various peoples, by relating to others, the regional and European identity is shaped.

#### **4. European identity in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade history textbooks**

Three are the textbooks available to teachers for teaching history, namely (We have consulted the digital handbooks available online at <https://www.manuale.edu.ro/>): Doina Burtea, Alina Perțea (2016), *Istorie*, Bucharest: Aramis Publishing House; Cleopatra Mihăilescu, Tudora Pițilă (2016), *Istorie*, Bucharest: Aramis Publishing House; Zoe Petre (Eds.), Bogdan Teodorescu, Corina Andrei (2016), *Istorie*, Bucharest: Corint Publishing House. Each of the three textbooks is structured in two parts, for the two semesters of the school year.

We will analyze each of these textbooks, in terms of content, to see in a concrete way how the competences provided in the school syllabus are formed and, in particular, how the European identity of the students is constructed through the history textbooks.

##### **Doina Burtea, Alina Perțea (2016), *Istorie*, Bucharest: Aramis Publishing House, Part I**

The images selected for the cover of the manual suggest not only the idea of chronology and historical time (prehistory, antiquity, middle ages, contemporaneity), but also presents "us" (through the image of the Citadel of Neamț with the Romanian flag hoisted) and "others" (through the Roman temple and the rocket launched in space), an expression of the intention of identity construction.

The second page contains very important information for our approach, but especially for the perception of the students, namely the insertion of the European telephone line for child support, an indirect form of belonging to the European space.

The national anthem and the specific symbols (flag and coat of arms) on page 5 of the textbook do not require any further comment, the purpose of which is more than obvious.

From the first lesson ("What is history?") it is possible to observe the accessible language, corresponding to the age, the use of drawings, suggestive images, a cartoonish style of transmitting knowledge, focusing on chronology. Although in line with the provisions of the syllabus regarding the integration of national history into the European and universal context, we believe that the inclusion of examples such as the 100 Years War between England and France (p. 6) in an introductory lesson is a little uninspired

and unfounded, as at this stage in their education the students do not yet possess the background information necessary for understanding it.

Learning unit 3 – “The local and national community” transmits, as stated on page 31, knowledge to the students about the local community, the national community, about the historical-geographical areas of Romania, but also about UNICEF. The language is preserved in the same childish note, of a story, but again lacking in consistency with regard to the concrete examples offered, as is the case with the presentation of UNICEF and especially of the UN. However, while UNICEF receives a definition in the Vocabulary section, the UN is only mentioned in passing (p. 34). The same situation can be found in the case of objectives such as the Adamclissi monument, historical events (wars with the Turks) or Romanian rulers (Vlad Țepeș, Mircea cel Bătrân), who are merely mentioned (p. 38).

In order to convey to the students` knowledge about the national community, the authors first choose to place our country on the map of Europe (p. 40), followed by the enumeration of the ethnic minorities in Romania and the geographical regions in which they can be encountered (p. 41). In the section “How do you interpret?” on the next page (42), there are two short paragraphs about the Roma. Also, in the section “How do you interpret?” on page 45, it is stressed that minorities have their own language and customs, the students being encouraged to find out on their own about the minorities in our country.

Learning unit number 4, “People of yesterday and today (I). Antiquity”, briefly gives information about the Dacians and the Romans, but also about the Gauls, Greeks and Slavs. The spatial location at the European level of these peoples occupies a significant place in the text economy, by the inclusion of maps. Unfortunately, not the same thing can be said about temporality: the three peoples are analyzed concomitantly, although chronologically speaking their presence and action is consecutive, not simultaneous.

### **Doina Burtea, Alina Perțea (2016), *Istorie*, Bucharest: Aramis, Part II**

Learning unit 5 – “Peoples of yesterday and today (II). The Middle Ages” continues in the same way the presentation of the Romanian medieval states, emphasizing some aspects such as the way in which the medieval institutions were founded. Spatial location also occupies an important place, by including at the beginning of each theme a relevant map. The accessible and friendly language, the first-person narrative of the Romanian rulers, the rich illustration are likely to come to the aid of the students, for a better understanding of the historical events and facts. However, we notice that the inconsistency and insufficiency of historical information has a negative effect, it requires an additional effort, both from the teacher and the students, to detail and clarify the many missing elements, without which the correct and complete reconstruction of the historical past, of the relations between communities, understanding the causes of many conflicts that existed between the European peoples is not possible.



Theme number 3 - "Middle Ages in the World - Turks, French, English, Hungarians, Russians" tells in three pages (14-16) aspects of military and political history, with emphasis on spatial location (via map), and on enumeration, without giving detail, of some leaders (with their reign) or events (with their period). Although welcomed as an intentionality, for the purpose of creating an image of "the others", different from "us", a necessary and useful step in the identity construction, this theme is not, from a historical perspective, sufficiently well and properly constructed, transmitting too little information about what the Middle Ages actually meant and about the specificity and history of the peoples announced in the title. Reading the title, the reader expects to find information about people, in terms of history, culture, customs, specificity. The textbook, however, approaches the subject from the point of view of the state formations, failing to outline a sufficiently conclusive image neither of the peoples, nor of the political-military history, nor of the historical period itself.

Theme number 4 - Legends and historical writings about the great rulers offer on two pages (17-18) examples of remarkable leaders from the Romanian and European Middle Ages. The authors choose the legend of Dragoș, the founder of the medieval state of Moldova and a poem about Ștefan cel Mare, and for Europe they stop at Louis XIV (dedicating over half a page to his daily program) and Queen Elizabeth of England (the students learn that her reign was called the "Golden Age", but it is not explained why, instead it is emphasized that the queen had smallpox-like marks and that legislatively regulated the clothing of her subjects).

Learning unit 6 - "People of yesterday and today (III). The modern age" tells in 15 pages (from 25 to 40) the modern history of Romania, from the Revolution of 1821 and that of 1848 (mentioned by means of comic strips), to Alexandru Ioan Cuza and the Union of the Principalities, the War of Independence and Carol I, World War I and Ferdinand I, the Union of 1918. Three pages (38-40) are assigned to the other peoples of Europe ("Turks, Hungarians, Germans, Russians, Serbs and Bulgarians"). The economy of the page is dominated by maps, images and comics. The information itself is still incomplete and insufficient.

"Romania at the turn of the millennium. The Contemporary Age" is Learning Unit 7. The objectives it aims to achieve set out on page 47 draw our attention:

- „√ to analyze the economic situation of the Romanian people at different times;
- √ to identify the progress of the Romanian society in the Contemporary Age;
- √ to name the leaders of contemporary Romania;
- √ to identify the positive and negative parts of the various periods in the contemporary history of Romania."

Students are supposed to carry out economic analyses, although this is not the purpose of history as a discipline, and make valuable considerations, based on a learning unit covering only 10 pages (48-58). The contemporary history of Romania, including the Second World War, the monarchy, the communist period, the Revolution of 1989 unfold before the eyes of the students through maps, pictures and tapes, with

brief and insufficient information, we would say, to outline a comprehensive picture of the contemporary period, much less allow students relevant and well-argued assessments.

### **Conclusions**

Going through this first textbook we can draw some conclusions: it aims to present the history of Romanians from the beginning to the present, with reporting and framing, whenever possible, in European history; the language is accessible to students, with an emphasis on images; events and characters from the history of Romanians and from the history of Europe are presented in a comparative register, as well as a significant number of maps, which allow students to acquire knowledge about the historical space, but which, categorically, contribute to the construction of a national identity and, why not, a European one. Beyond these positive aspects as a whole, we cannot ignore the negative aspects, namely that the actual text and historical information are completely overshadowed by images, insufficient and inconsistent. The historical periods are presented in the form of brief information, inaccuracies and in some cases less relevant. For the age category in which this textbook is used, because we are talking about the first year of history study, we believe that not the quantity but the quality of the information should prevail, which will give the students a correct perspective and good understanding of the historical phenomena. The accessible form is not sufficient, and the content must be carefully selected and accessible. The form in which this textbook is presented, which in two parts of 66 pages (including numerous maps, images, recapitulative sequences and tests of knowledge assessment) covers the whole history of Romanians and sequences of universal history, is not a viable tool, nor enough for one hour per week. An enormous puzzle with many missing pieces cannot help the fourth-grader to understand the history of their people, much less the history of the neighbouring countries or of Europe, a continent which in this manual is made up of a number of people well located on the map, with some leaders or events mentioned in passing. Identity construction is intentional, but insufficiently sustained.

### **Cleopatra Mihăilescu, Tudora Pițilă (2016), *Istorie*, Bucharest: Aramis Publishing House**

Analyzing from the perspective of identity construction the cover of this second manual, we find that the authors opted for symbolical images, meant to outline at least one national identity, not a European one: the statue of the goddess Minerva, of Emperor Trajan, an image of war, the coronation of the King Ferdinand, the Great National Assembly of Alba-Iulia, and in the background a clock and a cathedral, nowhere explained to the students, probably being left to the teacher's decision.

The child's European telephone line and the national anthem with the symbolic insignia (flag and coat of arms) are present, identical to those in the previous manual.

We notice from the first learning unit that we have a slight paradigm shift in the content approach. Although the form is still accessible, the emphasis does not fall solely on the form, but also on the content. The images are no longer so cartoonish, but are taken from reality, even if they are still not explained. Roman inscriptions and coins are pasted to the same page as Greek vessels, without any explanatory legend (page 7).

Speaking of family (pages 10-13), the authors include the image of a birth certificate, suggestive we consider for what identity construction means. Unfortunately, we cannot help but notice that the examples could have been taken from history, not from literature, since it is, after all, a history textbook.

We cannot fail to notice the careful manner, and we do not refer to the form, in which the authors explain the concept of minority and the relationship between the Romanian majority and the national minorities in our country, a very important element for the identity construction.

However, the reference to the right of children to citizenship (p. 18) or to the General Assembly of the UNO (p. 20) without other explanations is not so appropriate.

Theme 6 of Unit 1, namely "Peoples of yesterday and today", particularly important not only for understanding national and European history, but also for developing identity, includes some aspects that we would like to emphasize: inclusion on the same map of the peoples of antiquity and those of the Middle Ages (Slavs alongside Gauls, Germans, Dacians and Turks), without other adjacent explanations, without clarification of concepts such as colonization or migration, without a minimum history of events, violates the chronological principle and negatively affects the image that the students form about the history of Europe; the history of the peoples we find as minorities in our country should precede the lesson about minority communities, respecting the logic of events.

Unit 2 - "Historical times, events, personalities, historical places" stops at a chronological approach, starting with Antiquity. Information is presented on the history of the Greeks ("the first civilization of Europe"), Dacians and Romanians, the formation of the Romanian people. The ideological content is rich, but the inclusion of terms without defining them (civilization, polytheism, Romanization, province) does not bring any benefit to the students.

A certain superficiality is also found in the presentation of the medieval era (pp. 42-45). The authors insist on focusing on the formation of the Romanian medieval states, but they do not place these events in the wider historical context, they do not provide explanations; we need to think about the foreign political situation that forced the formation of the Romanian medieval states, and their importance is insufficiently explained (p 44):

„The establishment of the Romanian medieval states meant a period of progress for the Romanians and the preservation of the national entity”,  
without taking into account the fact that at that time the question of a "national entity" was not yet raised.

The textbook continues with the presentation of the Romanian princes (Mircea cel Bătrân, Vlad Țepeș, Mihai Viteazul), continuing, in the second part with Stefan cel Mare and Iancu de Hunedoara. We cannot fail to find the authors' option to group the rulers not according to the chronological principle, but according to the territorial one, the presentation of the reign of Iancu de Hunedoara making the transition to topic 3 of Learning unit 3, namely "Transylvania - multiethnic space. Village and city in the Middle Ages. About minorities' personalities" (pages 14-17). We observe from the beginning that, although the title is extremely generous, it is not clarified, and the students cannot understand, from the simple reading, the concept of "multiethnic". Unfortunately, the four pages do not insist on clarifying the situation in Transylvania, the information being insufficient, we believe, to substantiate the concept of multi-ethnicity. As for the personalities of minorities, the only one referred to in the passage is Gheorghe Doja.

The following themes (Cuza and the Unification of the Romanian Principalities, the Conquest of Independence during King Carol I, Heroes of the First World War, King Ferdinand and the Great Union) (p. 18-33) focus on national history and little on European history, contributing to the much to the construction of national identity, but the focus is radically changed by theme 8 "Romania at the turn of the millenium", in which students learn about the European Union, the UN, NATO, the Euro currency and the EU flag, the composition of the EU and its institutions. Some contents important for our investigation appear on page 37, namely a reading proposed to students in a speech by the President of the Pan-European Union, Richard Nikolaus von Coudenhove-Kalergi, on the European consciousness and identity, but also the topic of reflection addressed to the students, with the question "Do you think you can be Romanian and European at the same time?".

### **Conclusions**

This second book published by Aramis Publishing House offers to the readers a different approach to the first. If in the case of the previous one we found an emphasis placed on the form, to the detriment of the content and the explanation, this time we can speak of some balance between the two. The textbook focuses on the transmission of Romanians' history knowledge, placed in the broader context of European history, contributing in a consistent way to shaping a national identity among students. According to the provisions of the curriculum, there is a theme dedicated strictly to the history of Europe and the European Union, with elements meant to contribute to the formation of the European identity.

With the minus of rigor mentioned above, this textbook is a viable tool in teaching history to fourth graders, contributing to the construction of a national but also a European identity.

**Zoe Petre (Eds.), Bogdan Teodorescu, Corina Andrei (2016), *Istorie*, Bucharest: Corint Publishing House**

The last manual we will refer to has as editor a significant personality of Romanians history, namely Ms. Zoe Petre. The editors opted for a simple cover, with a single image inserted - Trajan's Column (for the first part) and the first siege of Constantinople (for the second part) - in other words Antiquity and the Middle Ages, Romania and Europe. We find both the child's European telephone line, the national anthem and the symbols (coat of arms and flag).

It can be seen from the first lesson that, unlike the previous textbooks, here the written information, the explanation is the one that predominates in the economy of the text, written in the second person singular. The emphasis is more on the student, including the fact that the concepts taken from the school syllabus (learning unit, competences), which is difficult for a child to understand, were given up. This textbook seems addressed to children, and not to teachers, which we consider a positive trait. The first lessons about time and family includes general concepts, but we notice the emergence of examples, this time explained, taken from the history of Europe, whether they are in text or image form.

The lesson "Life in the local and national community" (p. 14-17) explains to the students the concept of community, whether local, national or minority, with carefully selected examples and information, designed to build national identity, but also to stimulate tolerance, understanding and acceptance of others.

In presenting the "Peoples of yesterday and today" (p. 20-29) the authors respect not only the chronological principle (first presenting the peoples of antiquity and later the medieval ones), but also of the equity one, allocating a consistent space to each presented population and providing information on their history. The authors focus on the explanation, with a story-telling tone, appropriate to the age, not on historical data and we find a special attention to details, no new concept being left unexplained. Finally, we find a fundamental lesson for the construction of identity, namely the one about the ethnogenesis of the Romanian people (p. 26).

"Getting to know the world through travelers" is another theme (pp. 30-33) where the universal is interwoven with the national, as if showing the students that they have reason to be proud that they are Romanians.

The construction of national identity continues on the pages that present, this time respecting the historical correctness of the chronological course, the rulers of the Romanian Countries from the medieval era (pp. 42-53).

Pages 54-61 are assigned to Transylvania, with its multiethnic specificity. Without abusing data, in an accessible way, respecting the principle of "sine ira et studio", the authors explain the situation of Romanians, but also of the other populations colonized in the territory of Transylvania in an equitable way, without making value judgments, on the contrary, offering striking examples of personalities of Hungarian or German origin, either cultural, political or military leaders, who have positively impacted the

history of the Transylvanian Romanians. Beyond national identity, the authors support the positive thinking of the students and the correctness of reporting on otherness, elements that contribute to the formation of a healthy transnational or European identity.

The second part of the handbook continues in the same way the presentation of events and personalities that have marked the modern history of Romania, starting with Al. I. Cuza. Europe becomes more present with the establishment of the monarchy, as students can learn that King Carol I came from a family related to the great monarchies of Europe (p. 10). The authors opt for an approach centered on national history, the elements of international relations being rarely mentioned, addressing the great moments that marked the existence of the Romanian people (World War I, Great Union, World War II, the establishment of the communist regime and its fall).

Page 28 brings to the attention of the students "The beginning of a new era in Romania's history, accession to NATO and to the European Union". Unfortunately, however, the two are presented briefly, the simple mention of the number of Member States and the symbols (flag, anthem, currency) are not enough to speak of a European identity.

The last major theme of the textbook, "Culture and heritage", refers exclusively to the national heritage, contributing fully to the construction of the national identity of the students.

### **Conclusions**

Unlike the previous textbooks, we could see in the pages of this textbook a special care for the accuracy of information, for documentation, attention to detail and to the chosen examples, the language accessible to students, focusing not on difficult-to-remember historical data, but on events, told with a storytelling tone. The emphasis is on the national aspect, with little being said about the European and universal aspects. By including a lesson about the European Union, the textbook respects the provisions of the school curriculum, but it draws attention, and we believe that it is right, to the fact that before being Europeans we are Romanian, that without first knowing the history of our people we cannot know and understand European history. Given that it is the first year of studying history in pre-university education, we consider that this approach is correct and justified.

### **Final conclusions**

The analysis of the three history textbooks available for teaching History in the fourth grade highlighted three distinct approaches to the same content. Some authors have opted for a form to the detriment of the fund; others have sought to strike a balance between the two, while the latter have emphasized the content, without



neglecting the importance of the form in which the information was exposed. Definitely, being a category of students of young age (9-10 years), history must be made accessible. The emphasis on chronology and events should be pushed back to a secondary level of importance, the story and the causality, the understanding of the context having to prevail.

As we have seen from the school syllabus, one of the main objectives of teaching this discipline in the fourth class is to build the national identity and to establish some fundamental benchmarks for the construction of the European identity. More or less each of the three textbooks contributes to this objective. Before being European, as stated above, we are Romanians, the two forms of identity are not excluded, on the contrary - we are also Romanian and European, but in order to understand the general we must start from the particular, in this case the history of the Romanian people. Our identity is constructed only by reference to the otherness, present in the above textbooks through the ethnic minorities, the peoples with whom the Romanians have come in contact over time, the states with which they had peaceful relations or conflicts. The maps, present in all three textbooks, bring an important contribution to the placement not only of events, but also to our location in the wider European context. Students can thus find out, indirectly, that we are part of Europe and that all events that have affected our existence have been part of a wider European context. Therefore, we can speak unequivocally of a European identity construction in the history textbooks used in fourth grade.

In our opinion, teaching history should not be merely a matter of substance or merely a form, but a balance must be reached between the two; the chronological principle must be respected for the correct understanding of the causal relationships between historical facts; judgments on values do not belong here, the language must be appropriate to the age of the students and make the content comprehension accessible, not difficult; the textbook is primarily a tool for the student, and not the teacher.

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## Strengthening European Identity by promoting multilingualism in education

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### Abstract

*Actual understanding of multilingualism refers to the ability of individuals to consistently use two or more languages in communication. Knowing several languages facilitates international mobility and cooperation, fosters educational and professional integration, strengthens people's belonging to the European community as European citizens. Many European citizens are motivated to study another foreign language because of multiple reasons, especially the personal and professional advantages of language skills. However, it is also important to understand why many others are not currently studying foreign languages or are limited to the knowledge of English as second language. Some may consider foreign languages not to be essential for their lives, others may consider teaching methods too academic, rigid, less attractive, too boring, other may be traumatized by their school experiences. Whatever the reasons, solutions must be found to overcome these hesitations and learning fears. The purpose of these study is to investigate students' representations (future teachers) on European multilingualism and their attitudes towards the acquisition, knowledge and practicing of foreign languages in Europe. In order to establish the theoretical framework of our research, we have reviewed official studies elaborated by the European Commission, specialized articles and papers addressing the issue of multilingualism in European context. Using a questionnaire based research we aimed to identify students' (future teachers) reasons for choosing the study of a foreign language; the extent to which students know and exploit the benefits of European multilingualism and how they think it could be promoted by them, as future teachers. In line with the results of our research, we intend to we intend to highlight ways of promoting multilingualism in education.*

**Key words:** education, foreign language, multilingualism, teacher training

### 1. Introduction

According to the *Special Eurobarometer 386, Europeans and their languages, 2012* ([http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/index_en.htm)), 54% of Europe's citizens speak another language than their mother tongue at conversational level and 88% of them think that speaking a second language brings benefits to personal development.

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Motivation lies at the basis of thorough learning and knowing of foreign languages. Many European citizens are already convinced and motivated to study another foreign language because of multiple reasons, especially the personal and professional advantages of language skills. However, it is also important to understand why many others are not currently studying foreign languages or are limited to the knowledge of English as second language. Some may consider foreign languages not to be essential for their lives, others consider teaching methods too academic, rigid, less attractive, too boring, other may be traumatized by their school experiences. Whatever the reasons, solutions must be found to overcome these hesitations and learning fears. By making this process a more enjoyable activity, we can hope that people will understand the personal benefits of language use.

The term of European identity carries within complex and problematic characteristics, which are in constant evolution and development. The development of a European identity implies the existence of a process of identification of people with the European Union, a sense of belonging to European history and its influence on the opinions and behaviours of European citizens. Numerous studies have shown that self-identification as a European is based, first and foremost, on feelings of national belonging. Therefore, the national identity is not contradictory with the feeling of belonging to the European Union, but, on the contrary, it is complementary: everything that can be observed by analysing the relationship with the European project is built in relation to the nation. Therefore, identity means both similarity and differentiation, objectivity and subjectivity; individuality and colectivity/community; permanence, contextuality, and transformation. Therefore, a European identity remains still dual, the national consciousness coexisting with the European one. Even if we live with "two identities", the uniqueness can be preserved while promoting common interests (Tartler, 2006).

One of the characteristics of European identity is speaking mostly Indo-European languages. The linguistic diversity within the EU is considered to be "the cultural and democratic vault of the European Union and an essential brand of European identity" (Tartler, 2006, p.88). Within the context of linguistic diversity, we approach the concept of multilingualism from two perspectives: one of Anglo-Saxon inspiration (within the society, several communities coexist, spirited by identity feelings, speaking regional and minority languages, against and not together with the official European languages); the other meaning has its source in the European humanism, referring to open societies, which communicate and intertwine to create new identities, while preserving their own identity and contributing to its development (Negrescu-Babuş, 2015). This is the approach we embrace in the present paper: „multilingualism is understood as the ability of societies, institutions, groups and individuals to engage, on a regular basis, with more than one language in their day-to-day lives”(European Commision, 2007). A narrow understanding of multilingualism reffers to the alternative use and knowledge of several languages; broadly it refers to the alternative use of several linguistic systems, regardless of their status.

## Methodology

The benchmarks from the specialized literature on multilingualism guided us in organizing the research methodology: we consulted documents elaborated by the European Commission, articles and specialized volumes that address the issue of multilingualism in the European context. The research question of these study is: **What are (future teachers) students' representations on European multilingualism and their attitudes towards the acquisition, knowledge and practicing of foreign languages in Europe?** Accordingly, the objectives of our study are:

- to identify students' representations (future teachers) on European multilingualism and the subsequent advantages;
- to explore students' representations regarding the way teachers could promote European multilingualism
- to analyze possible connections between students' level of language knowledge and their attitudes towards multilingualism as future teachers;
- to highlight ways of promoting multilingualism in education.

In order to realize the above objectives, we used a questionnaire based survey. The questionnaire was addressed to the 1st year students of the Faculty of Letters of the West University of Timisoara (various specializations: Romanian, English, German) enrolled in the Teacher Training Programme and to the 1st year students from Pedagogy of preschool and primary education (the Faculty of Sociology and Psychology). The sample consisted of 112 students, 97% female and 3% male, 58% from urban areas and 42% from rural areas. As the age, the vast majority (55%) of the respondents are 19 years old, 30% 20 years old, 3% 21 years old, and 12% over 21 years old (Pedagogy of preschool and primary education students who are already teachers in primary education or kindergarden). From the total number of students, 35% follow the study of foreign languages within the Faculty of Letters and 65% are students at Pedagogy of preschool and primary education. We chose to apply the questionnaire to students from these two faculties because their graduates have the greatest chance to work in education as teachers in kindergarden, primary school and in secondary and high school (teaching Romanian and foreign languages).

The questions addressed to students were ment to: (a) identify what multilingualism means to them, (b) identify the advantages of knowing foreign languages; (c) shape an image about their opinion on how European multilingualism could be promoted from the position of future teachers, (d) establish the reasons they would recommend the study of a certain foreign language.

All information from the answers to these questions acquires an added value when correlated with the linguistic level of respondents and with their own possibility of choosing the foreign language they have studied. The factual questions of the questionnaire referred to: the age and sex of the respondents, the environment of origin

and their specialization. Through the questions of our questionnaire we wanted to identify the following elements, which we will detail below:

- **how many foreign languages students know and the level of proficiency they have:** 20.6% of students know a single foreign language; 59.7% of students know two foreign languages and 19.7% of students know three or more foreign languages
- regarding students language level, the results are the following: 56% - A1/A2, - 87% - B1/B2, 37% - C1/C2
- 96% of respondents know English, 49% French, 27% German, 13% Spanish and 11% Italian. Other languages obtained 6 percents, here students mentioning: Croatian, Portuguese, Arabic, Czech, Russian, Hungarian and Bulgarian languages, which they learned either from their family or because they lived in another country.
- **the possibility of choosing the study of foreign languages:** 42% of the respondents chose the languages they studied and 42% have learnt the language their school offered, generally English or French. In the case of 11% of them, the decision belonged to the parents and 8% of them learned the language of the country where they or their parents emigrated.
- **the criteria for choosing / recommending the study of a foreign language.** The vast majority of respondents (82%) would choose or recommend the study of a foreign language depending on how often it is used internationally, 22% depending on how easy it is to learn and only 8% in depending on how similar it is to the mother tongue; 7% of the respondents listed other reasons, almost all referring to the needs, wishes and interests of the respective person for a certain language and culture, but also the benefits that knowing a specific language could generate.
- **ways to promote European multilingualism from a teaching position.** 69% of the respondents consider that they could promote multilingualism as future teachers through formal and extracurricular activities (cultural events focused on music, literature, drama or foreign film, holidays abroad, twinning activities or volunteering abroad) that could help students to become familiar with other languages and cultures; 30% of the respondents consider they could promote multilingualism by knowing and using several foreign languages and 33% recommending to students to learn foreign languages from the earliest age. A significant number of respondents also mentioned other variants (trips in foreign countries, meetings/conferences with writers/personalities from other countries, reading books in foreign languages, film festivals, visiting ethnic communities, partnerships with schools from other countries, multiethnic festivals, cultural events).



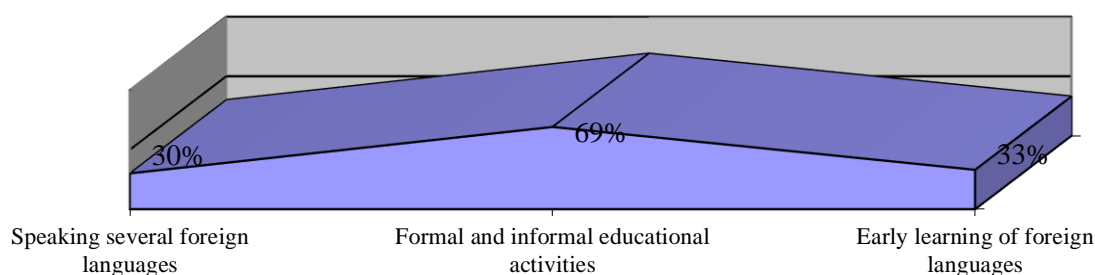


Figure 1: Ways to promote European multilingualism

Regarding the **reasons involved in the study of foreign languages**, 64% of the respondents learned or are currently learning a foreign language in order to use it in their professional activity and 65% in order to use it in their personal life. On the third and fourth places, with similar values, we find the help foreign languages (will) represent in obtaining a job (33%) and in discovering new cultures (30%). 13% of the students study foreign languages to settle in a foreign country and only 8% of them studied or are currently learning a foreign language in order to study abroad. 3% of our respondents affirm they learn foreign languages to impress the people around them. 16% of students mention that the study and mastering of a foreign language positively influence their self-esteem and decision making abilities, which proves that, at least, a part of students is aware of the transversal competences involved in foreign language learning.

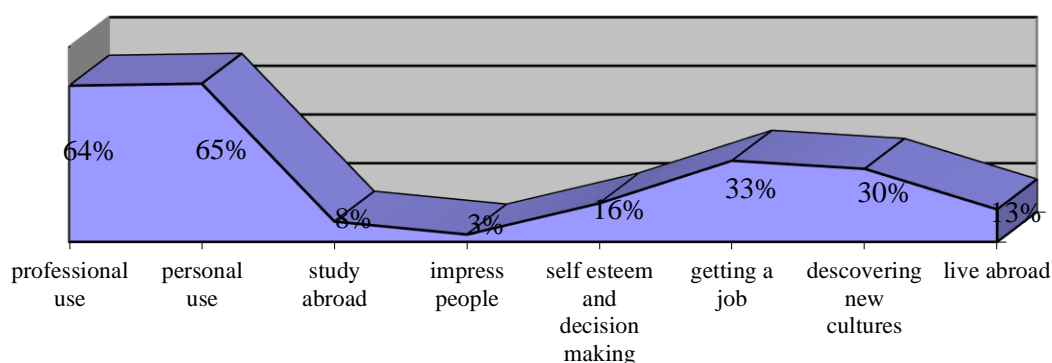


Figure 2: Reasons involved in the study of foreign languages

When asked to define **the notion of multilingualism**, students firstly associated it with **the ability of a person to use several languages**, secondly with **the alternative use of several languages**, the third and fourth place, with similar values, belonging to **the coexistence of several communities in a given geographical area** and **the**

**coexistence of several languages within a social group.** For reasons of scientific rigor, we present the results obtained by reference to the weighted average.

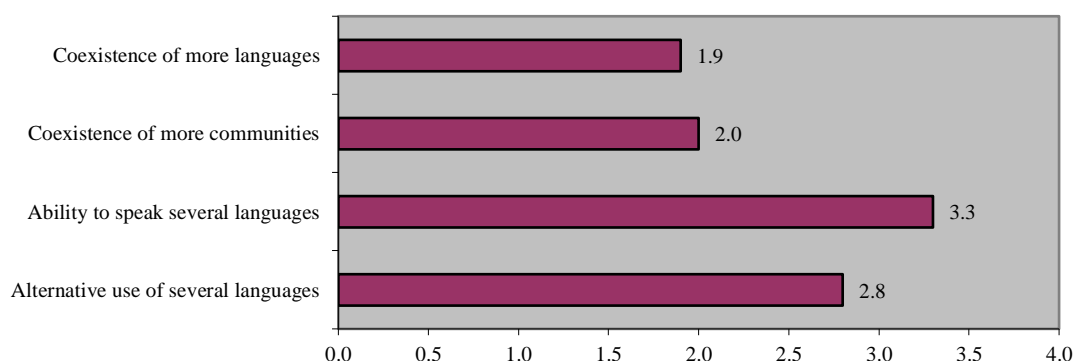


Figure 3: Multilingualism

In the opinion of our respondents, **the advantages of multilingualism** are: access to several linguistic communities and access to more information (with similar values 3.7 and 3.8). On the third and fourth place we find the possibility of communicating with more people and the increasing value of communication skills on the labor market. On the last place, students mention the fact that multilingual people have a higher concentration capacities, focusing better on their tasks.

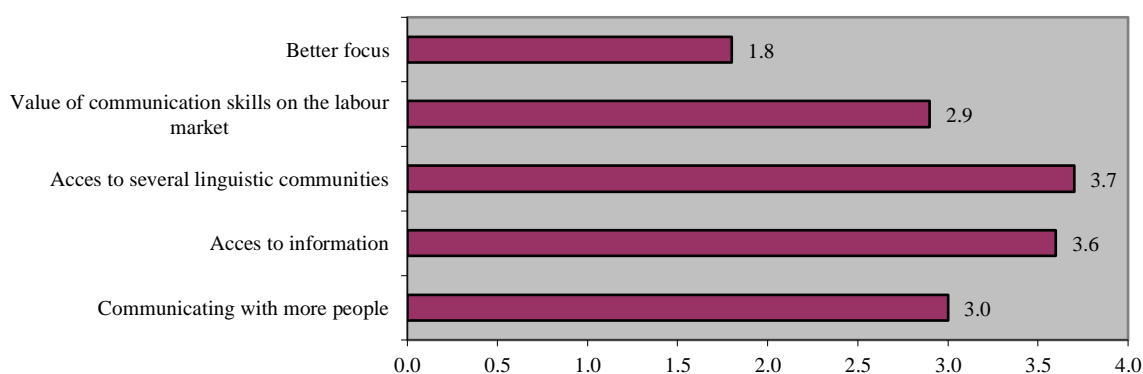


Figure 4: Advantages of multilingualism

### Results and discussions:

Analysing the information that emerged from the questionnaire, we observe that students who speak two languages (87% of them) are independent users, in other words, they know the two foreign languages at intermediate level (B1/B2). As expected, English ranks first, followed by French and future teachers have the ability to use foreign languages in authentic communication situations. According to the *Common European Framework of reference for language learning, teaching and assessment*, students with B1/B2 level have the following competences in the communication plan: can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in

work, school, leisure, etc. or ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation; can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken and can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party; can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest (B1) and can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options (B2); can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans (European Commission, 2001).

Most respondents (82%) would choose or recommend the study of a foreign language depending on how often it is used internationally, which proves **students interest for intercultural dialogue**. The stated intention of future teachers to promote multilingualism in the didactic and extracurricular activities through cultural events focused on music, literature, drama or foreign film, holidays abroad, but also through the knowledge and use by themselves of several foreign languages supports the idea that **education is a form of dissemination of multilingualism**. The fact that future teachers speak up to three foreign languages, having varying levels of knowledge (noticing in our research a general intermediate level B) is an argument in favor of their positive attitude towards promotion of multilingualism, besides the various recommendations they make regarding their intention to promote the acquisition of foreign languages. Therefore, we can argue that there is a connection between students' level of language knowledge and their attitudes towards multilingualism as future teachers. Learning a language can be done in a variety of ways and at different levels of proficiency. Thus, outside school settings, more options are possible, depending on the goals we want to achieve.

The approach of languages in the European educational systems has always been important. "In Romania, the study of languages has always been officially encouraged, and, particularly, the knowledge of as many languages, at advanced performance levels, has represented an element of social prestige, which can be explained primarily by the relative zonal character of the use of Romanian language" (Carp, 2007, p.25). The spread of multilingualism requires a significant educational effort: it is essential that schools and educational institutions adopt a holistic approach to language teaching, by establishing appropriate links between mother tongue teaching and foreign language teaching (Orban, 2008). In Europe, linguistic diversity is a reality of daily life, due to the fact that in the 28 Member States, 23 official languages and 60 minority languages are used. In this context, **learning English is a minimum requirement, but not a guarantee of the students' success in social life**; learning two or more languages is a way to ensure a personal development favorable to the economic and social success of each one (Negrescu-Babuș, 2015).

Viewed from the perspective of multilingualism and diversity, the European identity has a great chance of affirmation through a developing dialogue within the value-

generating diversity. The European Union also supports multilingualism through **mobility programs** designed for students since it allows them to study, train abroad, attend internships or volunteer, programs that contribute to the improvement of the languages they learn. Research shows that **over 80% of students attending an Erasmus program have significantly improved their language proficiency** (Agence Erasmus, 2018).

Valuing the recommendations of the *Common European Framework of reference for language learning, teaching and assessment regarding multilingualism in education*, the following aspects can be highlighted:

- multilingualism may be attained by simply diversifying the languages offered in schools or by encouraging pupils to learn more than one foreign language, or reducing the dominant position of English in international communication;
- the aim of language education is profoundly modified because it is no longer seen as simply to achieve 'mastery' of one or two, or even three languages, each taken in isolation, with the 'ideal native speaker' as the ultimate model; the aim is to develop a linguistic repertory, in which all linguistic abilities have a place.

Communication in foreign languages is one of the eight key competences of lifelong learning, necessary for personal fulfillment, active citizenship, social cohesion and employment in a knowledge-based society (Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning, 2006). Therefore, the ability to understand and communicate in several languages is a desirable skill for all European citizens. To achieve this goal, it is recommended to encourage people to become more open to other people's cultures / languages, to improve cognitive skills and to strengthen their mother tongue skills, as well as to exploit the opportunities to work or study in another Member State (European Commission, 2007).

In order to promote multilingualism in compulsory education, the curriculum should expand from a curriculum for each language taken in isolation to a curriculum for several languages, "in which linguistic knowledge (*savoir*) and skills (*savoir-faire*), along with the ability to learn (*savoir-apprendre*), play not only a specific role in a given language but also a transversal or transferable role across languages", which "implies progressive development of 'learning awareness' and the introduction of general language education which helps learners establish metacognitive control over their own competences and strategies" (European Commission, 2001).

As we have emphasized throughout our paper, in the actual European context, a central element of promoting democratic values and building European identity is education. The European identity is built daily and individually, and the educational context should give teachers motivating learning activities to contribute to the development of the awareness of belonging to the European community. Foreign languages and cultures are areas of essential knowledge in the construction of European

identity, a complex and long-lasting process, which should be shaped from the earliest ages.

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## Erasmus mobilities and European identity- an exploratory incursion

Cristina COJOCARU\*

### Abstract

*The Erasmus programme - EU's flagship student exchange programme – has drawn more and more scholarly attention in the last decades, proportionally with its expansion. In this context, the link between an Erasmus experience abroad and European identity has also been explored by a series of studies. This paper aims to “zoom in” on this matter through a review of the literature that deals with this topic, touching also upon some of the relevant theories and policy documents for the study of this subject matter. To begin with, it will provide some clarifications about the concept(s) of (European) identity, putting them in the context of the Erasmus programme. Further on, it will engage in a mapping exercise of the some of the various approaches that have been taken, the case studies and the research methodologies that have been used or the results that have been observed in the dominant literature on this subject.*

**Keywords:** Erasmus mobilities, Erasmus programme, student mobilities, European identity

### 1. Introduction

With a history of more than 30 years, the Erasmus programme is considered a “success story” of the European Union. It has facilitated the mobility of millions of students on the European continent and it has also extended (with the launch of the Erasmus+ programme in 2014) outside the European space. The European Commission (2019) estimates that 2 million more higher education students will benefit from the programme during the 2014-2020 timeframe and the programme is expected to have a substantial contribution at making mobility the “hallmark of the European Higher Education Area” (Bologna process, 2009).

Given its history and the number of beneficiaries that it involves, it comes as no surprise that many scholars took an interest in analyzing the impact that an Erasmus experience has on the participants. Thus, proportionally with the expansion of the programme from the last decade(s), this topic has started to receive more and more scholarly attention. Its impact has been approached in the literature from a variety of angles, ranging from the impact on language acquisition or on the so called “soft skills”, to the impact on employability and so on.

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In this context, the present paper proposes a “zoom-in” on the causal relationship (if any) between Erasmus mobilities abroad and the premises for the crystallization or consolidation of a European identity. As one can presume from the title of this paper, it aims to be a theoretical exploration of the aforementioned matter.

Thus, the main purpose this study is to organize the literature dealing with the link between an Erasmus experience abroad and European identity. In this process, it also aims to pinpoint patterns and trends identified in the literature. Furthermore, its third objective is to emphasize some potential research gaps and make further recommendations for new research approaches that could enhance the scholarly knowledge on this topic.

For a better insight into the topic of interest, this study has a comprehensive structure, with the first section being focused on the concept of (European) identity, aiming for a clearer understanding of the term while also trying to identify some of its main characteristics that would be of use in the context of its association with Erasmus mobilities. As we shall see, this concept tends to elude clear-cut definitions, having a puzzling and heterogeneous nature.

Following this, the second section will introduce student mobilities, and more precisely the Erasmus programme, into the picture. Dwelling on the broader accepted perception than cross border mobility, and particularly student mobility, can foster European identity, a brief history of the programme will be sketched, followed by a discussion about whether the Erasmus programme was originally thought of as a programme that could have an influence in fostering a common European identity.

Finally, the third section will center around the segment of literature that has tackled directly the relationship between Erasmus mobilities and European identity in an attempt to have a better grasp on the various approaches that have been taken, the case studies and the research methodologies that have been used or the results that have been observed in the dominant literature on this subject.

## **2. The concept of (European) identity**

For the purpose of the current paper, a “zoom in” on the concept of European identity seems necessary. Being a highly debated and often contested topic, it requires a careful “unpacking” and conceptualization, based on the selection of the literature related to this notion. Nonetheless, the vagueness of the concept, given by the multiple meanings that it has been attributed might still remain consistent.

It seems natural to start this discussion with noticing the fact that the debate about the mere existence or non existence of a European identity underlies the larger dispute between the essentialist view and the constructivist view. On the one hand, the first perspective refers to identities as “something that people are or have” (Ambrosi, 2013, p.145), as being comprised of a “fixed set of shared characteristics or experiences” (Moya & Hames-García, 2000, p.231) that are inherent, eternal and unalterable (Jarach, 2004). On the other hand, the constructivist perspective is more flexible, referring to identities

as being “fluid, relational, changing over time” (Ambrosi, 2013, p.145), being focused on their contingent, contested and constructed nature (Rumelili and Cebeci, 2016, p.32).

Not surprisingly, the literature on the subject of European identity dwells around the later perspective, approaching the process of identity construction from different views. As will be detailed in the further sections, the same applies in the discussion about the effect of an Erasmus mobility on the crystallization of a European identity.

Among the first noteworthy observations when talking about a European identity would be that (especially in relation to national/regional/local identity) it is not a matter of “either/or” and two or multiple forms of identification can coexist.

This idea would be in accordance with the what Henri Tajfel and John Turner’s social identity theory (1978, 1986) suggested, that a person does not just have a personal selfhood, but multiple selves and identities associated with the different groups that he/she is part of. In this context, social identity is “that part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance to that membership” (1978, p.63). This emphasizes two important aspects of social identity, that are the acknowledgment of being part of a group, as well as the value that one puts on being part of the group. In the context of the formation of a European identity, a cross-border mobility might act as a trigger or as an enhancing factor for this feeling of belonging to a larger, European group, while contributing as well to giving more value and emotional significance to the idea of being part of this group (as shall be detailed in the further sections, the Erasmus experience is positively valued by the vast majority of participants).

Moreover, social identity theory suggests that social, economic or political processes could influence the formation of identity and the determination of behavior of the groups in their relations with each other, emphasizing once again the fluidity and the changing nature of the concept.

Thus, a person can feel at the same time “Catalan, Spanish and European”, for example (Llera 1993, apud. Schlenker, 2007), with the local, national and supranational sense of belonging coexisting. Hence, European identity is not conceptualized under the form of a zero sum game, where an increase in feeling more European has to mean a decrease in the national and/or local loyalty (Schlenker, 2007, p. 32; Ambrosi, 2013, p.145).

In the constructivist approach the process of socialization is deemed to play an important role in the formation of identities. This element is noteworthy especially in the context of international student mobility, as socialization plays an important role during the exchange period (either with co-nationals, locals or other European/international peers), being a means of constructing, changing and/or renegotiating identity. Eder (2009) and Sigalas (2010), among others, have explored this aspect in their research, emphasizing the importance of social relations and socialization among the people living in Europe as an important factor in this process. Similarly, Checkel and Katzenstein (2009, apud Van Mol, 2013, p.210) indicate the influence of experience and social

processes in this direction. Thus, enhanced cross-border interpersonal contact would be expected to be an effective method of developing a European identity.

If we would turn the question on a different side and ask ourselves who are the people more likely to develop a European identity, research on the topic (Fligstein, 2009) would point in the direction of citizens who speak foreign languages, are mobile, educated, young, professionals or white collar workers, people who travel (be it for study, work or leisure purposes). Intuitively, these would also be the categories more likely to interact and to be exposed to different aspects related to Europe and to European Union, to have interactions with other cross-national peers, to experience other cultures, to study or work in multicultural environments, to experience the instrumental benefits of being a EU(ropean) citizen and thus following the constructivist logic to crystallize or expand their affinity towards Europe.

Different authors would give different directions and understandings to the idea of a European identity, focusing on it either from a cultural perspective (Sassatelli, 2002), giving it a political or civic component (Checkel, 2009; Mitchell, 2012), having an instrumental approach with a focus on the benefits attributed to EU membership (Verhaegen et al., 2014), and so on. On the other hand, in terms of negative definition, some authors suggest to keep the focus on a broader understanding of European identity, one that does not necessarily identifies it with the European Union or with the European institutions (Van Mol, 2013, p.210), hence not restricting it to political interpretation, but rather focusing on its more extended social/cultural component(s).

This section might have brought more questions than answers, since, as previously mentioned the vagueness of the concept of European identity has been largely emphasized throughout the body of literature that has been consulted. However the purpose was not to cover the variety of facets that the concept implies which has been debated in the literature, but rather to try to bring to surface those aspects that would serve in the context of international student mobilities. As Brubaker and Cooper (2000) put it, identity- also applicable for European identity - can mean “too much” (if interpreted in a strong sense), “too little” (if interpreted in a weak sense) or even “nothing at all” (given its ambiguous nature).

As a first conclusion, it is important to emphasize the plurality of perspectives from which we can approach the concept of European identity. The constructivist approach is dominant in the literature. Subsequently, this form of identification is not a matter of “either/or” and two or multiple forms of identification can coexist. However, there is no unanimously accepted definition of the term, nor even a brief set of broadly acknowledged determinants or characteristics of European identity. Thus, future debates, discussions and research could focus more on these aspects, which could further on facilitate comparable results for studies on European identity.

### **3. General considerations on the Erasmus programme**

When talking about student mobility in general, at a global level, in the literature it has been made a distinction between organized student mobility and spontaneous student mobility, with the first type of mobility being the most common on the European continent (Brooks and Waters, 2011, apud Van Mol, 2013). This is happening mainly as a result of the Erasmus programme (with its various subsequent names, during the different multiannual financial frameworks), which promotes organized mobilities and which has been institutionalized on a European policy level starting with its launch in 1987.

The programme takes its name from the Dutch philosopher Desiderius Erasmus, while being in the same time a backronym meaning *EuRopean community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students*. The programme was launched 1987, and while in the first year of implementation it enabled a number of 3244 students to pursue mobilities between 11 European states (Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Greece, France, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and United Kingdom), it now enables the mobility of more than 300000 participants every year, having become the EU flagship student exchange programme.

Thus, given the rather long history of the programme, and the fact that it is being implemented in the majority of higher education institutions of the 34 countries that are part of it - the programme is not restricted to the 28 EU Member States, it also includes Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Turkey, Macedonia and Serbia as programme countries- and it has facilitated more than 4 million student mobilities during the last 30 years, Erasmus is considered as a “success story” of the European Union and is expected to grow even further. The European Commission (2019) estimates that during the 2014-2020 timeframe, 2 million more higher education students will benefit from the programme. It is also expected that it will bring an important contribution at reaching the target set within the Bologna process, that by 2020, 20% of the graduates will have had a study or training period abroad (Bologna process, 2009). Moreover, it plays an important role in making mobility the “hallmark of the European Higher Education Area” (Bologna process, 2009).

By offering the students the opportunity to interact and to be exposed to a (more) different culture(s) for a period of one semester or one academic year, it is expected that they will get to know the culture of the host country and also discover and interact with other European cultures by the means of interaction and socialization with colleagues from various national backgrounds.

This rationale would go in the direction suggested by Fligstein (2008) who claimed that that increased interactions between Europeans can lead to a common European identity. Thus, he argues, as a result of direct interaction, “people will [...] come to see each other less as Italian and French, and thus foreign, and more and more as sharing common interests, a process that eventually will lead to seeing themselves more as Europeans and less as having merely a national identity” (Fligstein, 2008, p. 139).

Thus, one of the rationales of the Erasmus programme would be to provide the context for students of different nationalities and cultural backgrounds to interact, to mingle, to identify common cultural elements between the home country, the host country, other countries and on a larger scale, even in Europe as a whole. As Sigalas (2010, p.246) put it, “even if this falls short of a fully fledged common culture, an increasing awareness of things that unite rather than divide Europeans is a step towards a common identity”.

The characteristics of such an identity were not mentioned in the official documents that lead to the creation of the programme, back in 1987, except for some vague hints to a common European cultural heritage and a “People’s Europe”. As extracted from the Council of Minister’s decision, the objectives of the Erasmus programme would be to:

“(i) achieve a significant increase in the number of students [...] spending an integrated period of study in another Member State, in order that the Community may draw upon an adequate pool of manpower with first hand experience of economic and social aspects of other Member States [...]

(iv) to strengthen the interaction between citizens in different Member States with a view to consolidating the concept of a People’s Europe;

(v) to ensure the development of a pool of graduates with direct experience of intra-Community cooperation, thereby creating the basis upon which intensified cooperation in the economic and social sectors can develop at the Community level”.

(Council of Ministers, 1987, pp. 21–22)

These targets would go in line with the Adonnino Report, “A people’s Europe”, which stated that action at the Community level to encourage exchanges of young people between different Member States helps to promote the identity of Europe for young Europeans (Adonnino, 1985, p.25). The report also mentioned that the exchange scheme that was about to be put in place should have a “distinct European dimension”, a “clear Community identity” (Adonnino, 1985, p. 26).

Nevertheless, the creation of a “People’s Europe” had a strategy based on symbols rather common for the national understanding of identity and culture, such as a flag, an anthem, as means of strengthening the image and identity of the Community, which proved to be an “euphemism for the dissemination of a common European identity and culture” (Shore, 2000 and Kraus, 2008, apud Sigalas, 2010, p. 243).

Even though clear mentions to a European identity are not explicitly put in the documents that laid the foundation of the mobility programme, as Petit (2007) showed, a closer look at the European Commission’s policy in the field of education will lead to the conclusion that through its actions it subsidiarily aims at redefining people’s “spatial representation of their community of belonging” or “the creation of shared values”. In addition, Petit (2007) suggests that the decision to make education policy a common field of action from the early steps of the integration process can also be interpreted in the direction of actions taken with the outlook of fostering a shared common identity,

necessary for the creation of an “ever closer union”, as it was put from the preamble of the Rome Treaty establishing the European Economic Community.

Thus, despite the fact that it is not clearly framed among the core objectives of the programme, the impact of an international mobility abroad in shaping a European identity is an aspect of interest for the European Commission, as we can deduct also from the fact that the Erasmus Impact Studies that it conducted in 2014 and in 2019 had separate sections dedicated to this topic (European Commission, 2014; European Commission, 2019), the documents also stating that we can regard the programme as a tool that serves the purpose of promoting European identity among young people.

Needless to say, the Erasmus programmes serves multiple ends and in the literature we can find works focusing on its impact on the participants’ employability, language skills, personal development and so on. However, we shall not insist on these approaches for the purpose of this paper, but focus on the literature that revolves around the causal relationship (if any) between an Erasmus mobility abroad and the premises for the crystallization or consolidation of a European identity, which shall be discussed in the next section.

#### **4. Erasmus and European identity – where does the literature stand?**

As a contribution to the European identity debates, there are a series of studies that are oriented towards cross-border mobility of people, and particularly student mobility, as a way of promoting and developing European identity and European integration. This section shall engage in a selective review of some of the dominant scholarly literature on this topic on the one hand, while also emphasizing some of the main theories relevant to the phenomenon being studied.

As it has been mentioned in the previous section, the purpose of contributing to a common, European identity has not been clearly put as a goal of the Erasmus programme. The programme would rather contribute to a kind of European integration from below. Offering the context for young European students to interact, to live together for a period of time (usually one semester or one academic year), to get to know each other and in extenso each other’s background and culture could provide a good basis for self-sustainable integration process from below and for supporting the European project.

Thus, the general assumption from where we start would be that cross-border mobility in general and student mobility in particular can foster a European identity. This assumption would be in line with Gordon Allport’s (1954) “Contact Hypothesis” or “Intergroup Contact Theory” which claims that, under appropriate conditions, transnational and intergroup direct contact is one of the most effective mechanisms of identity-formation and of reducing intergroup bias.

Another useful tool in this direction is Karl W. Deutsch’s inter-national integration theory. His theory, based on ten historical cases of integration was focused on the conditions necessary for (political) integration to occur. Deutsch came to the conclusion that successful integration needed a “we feeling”, a “sense of community” (Deutsch et al.,



2003, p.121) arguing that a common set of values, expanded communication and a large volume of international transactions sustained in time can lead towards the formation of an integrated community. Moreover, in terms of international transactions, people mobility would play an important role as it would create the framework for direct contact of people with different nationalities which could lead to creating the “we-feeling” and “sense of community” among them. Deutsch’s aforementioned ideas were followed later on by various scholars and applied in the context of the crystallization of a European “we feeling” and “sense of community” through cross-border mobility, particularly during an Erasmus mobility.

Sigalas (2010) tested the hypothesis that personal contact with other Europeans during the Erasmus mobility can promote a European identity. By the means of quantitative research, he applied a longitudinal survey to a number of Erasmus students (outgoing students from Great Britain, as well as incoming students to Great Britain) and also to a control sample of non-mobile students. His research, led to the (maybe surprising) conclusion that indeed the level of socialization with other European counterparts has increased, but this had only a slight impact on European identity. More than that, his research pointed out noticeable differences regarding this aspect between outgoing and incoming students. While outgoing students did show a modest increase in their European (self) identity, this situation was reversed in the case of incoming students, whose attachment to Europe slightly decreased following the mobility.

This latter find in Sigalas’ work might come as a surprise, but we would treat it with caution and not generalize it to the entire Erasmus population. Rather, the fact that the aforementioned result came from a sample of incoming students in Great Britain, the most eurosceptic country (as more recent event have also showed), might provide a better explanation and also might give birth to a series of other questions. In this context, it would be useful to see if different patterns can be observed, depending on the country of origin and/or destination of students. This idea could be further explored in future research on this topic.

Some authors did go in the direction of including in their research sample students from different European countries. Christof Van Mol (2013) included in his sample students universities in Austria, Belgium, Italy, Norway and Poland in an attempt to test for regional variations related to developing a European identity through student mobility. By using a mixed approach, of both quantitative and qualitative methods, he reaches the conclusion that regional variations can be identified. Nonetheless, since his sample included four different categories of students (non mobile, potentially mobile, future mobile and mobile), the focus was on the differences between the four categories within each country, not only on mobile students and the differences between this category of students in the five countries. Van Mol brings into the attention the idea of a multiplicity of possible identifications with Europe, spotting a diversity of identification patterns and notices that in the case of mobile students, their identification with Europe becomes social as a result of personal experience (as opposed to non-mobile students,

who show a merely political identification). His idea of an “experience-based social Europe” (Van Mol, 2013) that comes as a result of socialization, personal experience, international contacts is noteworthy and provides a good starting point for further research on this topic.

Nevertheless, the majority of studies on the selected topic tend to be focused on a sample from one country only, mainly due to the restrictive nature of the data gathering process. In their research, Russel King and Enric Ruiz-Gelices (2003) focus their attention on students from one university in Great Britain, with the purpose of identifying whether their year abroad influenced their European identity or consciousness and if they have a greater insight into European issues. Moreover, they also bring to front another aspect often related to a mobility experience- its influence on the future migration paths of participants. Thus, they focus on students as migrants, in trying to measure the participants' migration behavior after graduation.

Without being very clear how the sense of “feeling more European” is enhanced, it comes clear that social interaction has an important role. Thus, King and Ruiz-Gelices emphasize that mobility participants do show an increased levels of attachment to Europe, as a result of various (social) interaction. Also, they become more aware of belonging to a “European cultural space” and would identify themselves more as “partly european” or “european” than the students from the control group (who did not pursue a mobility). The study also emphasizes another relevant aspect- the participant's increased attachment to the host country of their mobility, as a result of living there for a period of time, discovering its culture, history, people and socializing with local students (and not only). This could be interpreted as another step away from the national paradigm and towards the crystallization of a European affinity.

Moreover, the link between a mobility experience and further migration behavior that King and Ruiz-Gelices make is noteworthy, as they conclude that such an international experience often represents a first step towards various international, European and cross border activities (professional and personal) and foster further geographic moves.

Since it comes clear that the process of socialization plays an important part in the entire process of developing a “sense of community” and feeling more European, it might also be relevant to try to trace this process and the social interactions that take place during a mobility. In this context, the framework proposed by Bochner et al. (1977) comes in handy. They propose a framework consisting of 3 social networks for foreign students: a primary monocultural one consisting of close friendships with other co-nationals – this network provides the context for the expression of the culture of origin; a secondary, bicultural network, with host country nationals, which serves more instrumental purposes such as academic, administrative, logistical assistance, etc., and a third , international, network, a multicultural circle of friends (and acquaintances) with the function of offering company mainly in recreational contexts.

Bochner's model can be validated in the case of Erasmus mobilities as well, as data collected by Sigalas (2010) and King and Ruiz-Gelices (2003) suggest the formation of the three networks and interaction paths that would revolve more around co-nationals for meaningful (both personal and academic) communication, around locals for instrumental issues and around European counterparts for less meaningful interaction.

In his work, Wilson (2011) brings also a new approach into the picture, in a panel study that looks not only at the relationship between an Erasmus mobility and (European) identity, but also at the political views and voting preferences of Erasmus students. With a sample consisting of mainly British (but also French and Swedish) students, he concludes that the attitudes towards Europe and the voting preferences of the "Erasmus generation" do not seem to diverge significantly from those of non-mobile students, adding to the literature on the limited/incremental impact of mobility in this direction.

In opposition to the aforementioned view, Mitchell (2012) brings empirical evidence supporting the civic nature of the Erasmus experience, based on self-reported assessments from Erasmus mobility participants of a rather large and heterogeneous (compared to other similar studies) sample. Thus, she shows that Erasmus students engage in meaningful cross-cultural interaction with other Europeans, become more interested in Europe and other Europeans as a result, and self-identity as European.

Another noteworthy aspect that has been pointed by various authors concerned about this topic (King and Ruiz-Gelices, 2003; Sigalas, 2010; Wilson, 2011; Van Mol, 2013) is the wider debate about the already "European nature" of students who choose to pursue a mobility. With little (if any) investigation on the potential "self selected" nature of mobility participants, some authors draw attention to the possibility that students who decide to benefit from an international mobility during their studies may be a priori already more oriented towards Europe. If this were the case, it would suggest that the transformative impact (if any) of the mobility period might actually be more reduced in real terms, given the students' already "European nature". Thus, while former Erasmus students may be more pro-European than their peers, this could be because students who choose to take part in it are already more pro-European.

This observation paves the way towards another recurrent element in the literature – the differences observed between mobile and non mobile students. Multiple studies (King and Ruiz-Gelices, 2003; Sigalas, 2010; Mitchell, 2012; Van Mol, 2013) engage in comparisons between the two different categories, finding consistent evidence that mobile students are more inclined to feeling more European and always score higher in the elements associated to an affinity towards Europe, while their non-mobile counterparts would show less attachment and a more reserved view.

As shown above, proportionally with the expansion of the Erasmus programme from the last decade(s), research questions started to emerge regarding the impact of such an experience in relation to various aspects, including the formulation/consolidation of a European identity. By looking at the literature dealing

with this topic, we can notice that different authors have engaged in a plethora of approaches in their attempts to identify the relationship (if any) between Erasmus mobilities and European identity. Nonetheless,

### **5. Final considerations**

The present paper aimed at engaging in an exploratory incursion in the literature revolving around the causal relationship between the formulation or consolidation of a European sense of identification of participants in an Erasmus mobility abroad, while touching also upon some of the relevant theories and policy documents for the study of this subject matter.

It was designed to have a comprehensive structure which debuts with some clarifications about the concept(s) of (European) identity and continues with further details about the European Commission's Erasmus mobility programme, while also engaging in a preliminary analysis of the implications in the initial programme's launch document on a common sense of identification among the Community's citizens. It also tries to map the literature that deals with this topic and identify some of the dominant approaches that have been taken, the case studies and the research methodologies that have been used or the results that have been observed.

While the main limitation of the present paper is represented by the fact that it engages in a review that has a rather selective than systematic approach, its main contribution is that it creates the foundation for a comprehensive insight into the otherwise diverse literature dealing with Erasmus mobilities and European identity.

Besides bringing its contribution to organizing the literature dealing with the aforementioned topic, it also emphasizes some patterns and trends identified in the literature. Furthermore, it identifies some avenues for further research that could enhance the scholarly knowledge on this topic.

It is noticeable the fact that Eastern European countries are underrepresented in the literature. Thus it is recommended that further studies on this topic focus or include representative data from countries appertaining to this geographical region. Furthermore, the case of the Great Britain and Erasmus mobilities in the post-Brexit context should be further studied, adding to the existing literature indicating a decreased sense of European identification among British mobility participants. Another point for consideration and further discussions in future studies that was briefly touched upon is represented by the potential "self selected" nature of mobility participants, which could suggest that the transformative impact (if any) of the international mobility period might actually be more reduced in real terms. Last but not least, another dimension that deserves a closer look and should be included in further research projects is represented by the negative impact that an international mobility might have on mobility participants, as this element is broadly overlooked by the existing literature.

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## Doing Educational Research – Overcoming Challenges into Practice. Book review

**Ekkehard NUISSL\***

Ed. by

**M. H. Hoveid, L. Ciolan, A. Paseka, S. M. da Silva**

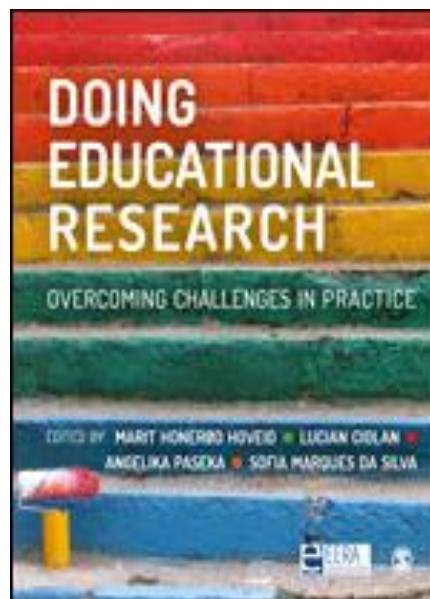
**Sage Publications, 2019, 335 pages**

This is an untypical book on educational research, for several reasons. One of these reasons is mentioned in the subtitle: “Overcoming challenges in practice”. The idea of this publication is to present concrete cases with different research approaches and to discuss there the problems occurring in practice, giving at the same time recommendations how to solve them. In this sense there are presented different research methods in the educational field, f. e. literature reviews, storytelling, Data analysis and multi-level statistical modelling, longitudinal research.

A second reason to qualify this publication as an extraordinary contribution to pedagogical research publications is the integration of international and comparative aspects, due to the origin as a project publication, but covered by 4 international editors and 37 international contributors, working at different universities in different European countries. Like this there is a broad overview on topics in European contexts.

A third one is the fact that the publication is embedded in European organisational networks, EERA, the European Educational Research Association, is involved in this book. In EERA takes place a lot of the discussions on methods in educational research, mainly in the annual ECER – European Conference on Educational Research, the largest event of this kind of researchers in this field in Europe. The book was launched at the ECER in Hamburg, in September 2019. EERA is the most prestigious association of educational research in Europe, so such logo on a book talks by itself about a high-quality book, a must for an educational researcher. It is the first product of this kind with the EERA logo.

And a fourth one is the fact that the chapters in this book are readable, useful for beginners as well as experienced researchers. This is based on the perspective of the text, which shows not only methods and the way to apply them, but also the wider frame of the “fluid research field” of education.




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The presented methods are a selection, prioritizing the more complex approaches and the more modern ones, focussed on the special needs of the field. The contributions are – some more, some less – critical, all of them trying to show a holistic view. Especially the descriptions of the process of research, the questions to answer in this process, the overcoming of obstacles are very helpful for other researchers, mainly since they are frankly described.

This book deserves a wider dissemination in the field, in the educational discussion all over Europe.

**In memoriam Associate Professor Phd. Adia – Mihaela Chermeleu**

24 aprilie 1958 – 19 august 2018

Assoc. Prof. PhD. Adia – Mihaela Chermeleu was a teacher in the Department of Educational Sciences, West University of Timisoara, specialized in many topics, among which the following have to be mentioned: *Romanian literature and children's literature, Romanian language, Didactics of Romanian language and literature in primary education, Didactics of the field language and communication in pre-school education, French Language, Intercultural education, Notions of comparative law and legal translation.*

Her specific research areas include: translation science, interculturality, European identity, European cultural policies, university management.

She took a Degree in Philology in 1980, specializing in French Language and Literature - Romanian Language and Literature, and got title of PhD in philology, the distinction of Magna Cum Laude, with the work: "The lexical-semantic field of the sacred in the Romanian language and traditional culture".

Prof. Chermeleu has combined in her professional activity the topic of interculturality, leading to the rank of expertise, internationally recognized, her concern for this field, and – as invited professor - she has taught courses on intercultural studies at several European universities. She cultivated aspects of identity with passion, being not only academic teacher, but also leader of many research projects, author, publisher and translator of numerous studies and books published both in the country and by prestigious publishers from abroad. Among the most representative publications we can mention here: *The Sacred in the Romanian Language* (2003), West University Publishing House, Timișoara; Adia Chermeleu et Claude Martin (2014). *La cohésion européenne en question. Travaux scientifiques du Réseau PGV*, Mirton Publishing House, Paideia Collection (with Claude Martin); *L'éducation transdisciplinaire. Quels enjeux dans l'enseignement primaire*, in Nabil Hajji et Odette Lescarret (Dir.), *Les mouvements sociaux à l'épreuve de l'interculturel*, Paris, Éditions l'Harmattan, Collection Espaces Interculturels; *Français juridique*, (with Raluca Bercea), Mirton Publishing House, Timișoara, 2000, Lumina Lex Publishing House, Bucharest, 2001 (six editions).

She has had a rich international activity, especially within the European Integration Association PGV (Pays du Groupe de Vysegrad) and within the Francophone Association



ARIC (Association pour la Recherche Internationale Interculturelle), enjoying high esteem and being elected board member.

She was a member of the scientific board of the Journal of Educational Sciences, and of this thematic issue, which she would have coordinated, if the disease had not struck a lightning strike. This issue of journal contains the ideal vein that she cultivated, being made based on the works presented at the International Conference "L'identité européenne en question", part of the international project Jean Monnet "Penser, raconter, vivre l'Europe à l'école" which he designed and coordinated. Thus, the last part of her life was dedicated to the idea of European identity through the coordination of this international project, an occasion with which she spread her vocation as a real orator and a remarkable professional in front of more than 150 teachers from the Timisoara pre-university education teachers.