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# European Citizenship Policy:
## Trying to Stimulate the Citizens' Sense of Belonging to the European Union

*Abstract:* This paper's aim is to approach the issue of European citizenship by showing the dynamics of the related policies. While recognising the importance of the legal assessment of the Union citizenship as defined by the Treaties, much attention is paid to the socio-cultural meaning of the European citizenship, which stimulates the emergence of a supranational loyalty and a sense of belonging to the European Union. After an analysis of the historical development of the concept of European citizenship, it is empirically demonstrated that the success of the European citizenship policy depends critically on the capacity of the Union to meet the mainly pragmatic expectations of the citizens. Accordingly, the lack of a harmonised welfare system at the European level, which causes restrictions of the free movement of the Union citizens within the member states, proves to be the major disincentive of the European identification.

*Keywords:* European citizenship; EU policy making, history of EU citizenship; EU citizens' rights; supranational identification; European identity; "Europeanness"

## Introduction

The issue of European citizenship has become increasingly relevant in the scholarship in the past years. Given the specific nature of European Union (EU) as a complex multi-level polity, there is obviously a basic consensus among the scholars on the fact that the EU citizenship—legally established by the Treaty on European Union (TEU), signed in Maastricht in 1992—presents unique features that places it beyond the classical concept of citizenship exclusively based on nationality. Since as a matter of empirical observation, there is—at least at present—no European *demos* (i.e. people holding democratic sovereignty and authority in a State),[1] it has been argued that a supranational citizenship is emerging, creating multiple loyalties and identifications and challenging our traditional understanding of the meaning of citizenship as such. Yet beyond this elementary consensus, the answers to the question about the meaning of the European citizenship vary substantially and depend basically on the way in which one conceives the course and the purpose of European integration.

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[1] Significantly, there is no mention of "popular sovereignty" in the Union neither in the EU Treaties nor in the proposal of the Constitution for Europe. For a critical analysis of the lack of European *demos* see Weiler (1996).

With regard to the EU policy aiming at the implementation of European citizenship (we can define it as the EU citizenship *practice*), at first glance it might seem that the citizenship policy is rather marginal in the EU agenda: the only institution which is directly in charge of the EU citizenship is a small bureau "Civil Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship."[2]

Nevertheless, a more attentive insight reveals that the notion of European Community (EC) or EU citizenship has often been present in the Community discourse, as well as in the judicial acts of the European Court of Justice (ECJ). To bring just one illustration: in his speech before the European Parliament (EP) in February 2004, Romano Prodi, at that time President of the European Commission, pointed out that one of the three main priorities underlying the Union plan for the 2007–2013 period is "to put the idea of European citizenship into practice" (Prodi 2004).[3] Therefore, we may provisionally claim that there is a number of EU policies somehow related to the European citizenship, as they provide civil, cultural and social conditions which permit to the EU citizens to identify themselves with Europe.

In what follows, we will firstly clarify theoretical framework of our analysis of the EU citizenship policy by defining the concept of citizenship that we will employ. We will then sketch historical development of the EC/EU citizenship policy, placing the process of gradual formalisation of the idea of European citizenship in proper context. Eventually, we will evaluate the impact of the EU citizenship policy in both legal terms and in terms of its public reception.

### Theoretical Framework of Analysis

Generally speaking, citizenship is the status of a citizen as a member of a community. As such, it is defined by legal rules and norms, which determine certain rights and obligations. This static juristic definition notwithstanding, the relationship between the citizen and the polity (i.e. the citizenship practice) entails historically variable elements, which render the concept of citizenship relational and dynamic. As Wiener argues, "[t]aking citizenship practice into consideration […] implies a recognition of citizenship as contextualised. Its historical variability is empirically identified according to the realisation of rights and the representation of identity expressed through struggle over access to full membership. *Rights*, *access* and *belonging* are therefore termed the three historical elements of citizenship" (Wiener 1997: 2). Thus, much attention shall be paid to the role of EU citizenship as an important push factor of the building of a European identity and of the popular support for the European integration process.

We can distinguish two approaches to the analysis of citizenship. The first is a "minimalist" one, as it limits attention exclusively to the legal rules fixing the citizens' rights,

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[2] It is part—as Directorate C—of the "Justice, Freedom and Security" Directorate-General of the European Commission. Beside this, the European Parliament has an office "Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs" which is under the Parliament's Directorate General II: Internal Policies.

[3] The other two priorities mentioned by Prodi are the sustainable development and the enhanced role of the EU on the international stage.

especially political ones. In the case of European citizenship, this approach focuses on the articles regarding those rights, as they are embedded in the Treaties (especially in the TEU and in related amendments collected in the Amsterdam Treaty). In particular, the "minimalist" approach, which is closely connected with constitutionalism, [4] tends to point to the formal deficiencies of EU citizenship compared to national one, then it advocates amendments to the EU law which would shape the concept of EU citizenship according to a basically neo-national pattern. By contrast, the second, "dynamic" approach—while recognising the constitutive nature of the citizens' rights—focuses on "the socio-culturally constructed meaning of citizenship" (Wiener 2003: 405). In other words, it tries to grasp the peculiar nature of European citizenship by appreciating its constructivepotential, its symbolic value and the psychological impact it has as a generator of the idea of "Europeanness" in the minds of Europeans. In this paper, we will adopt—and then empirically test—mainly the second standpoint, though we will also carefully analyse the legal account of European citizenship as well as the criticism related to it. [5]

As another general consideration, we should be aware that the European identification stimulated by the social practice of EC/EU citizenship does not mean that the more the European identity emerges, the more loyalties are transferred from the national to the supranational European level. The double identification is not a zero-sum game and the two identities are largely compatible, because they bear different meanings. It has been empirically demonstrated that "attachment to national identity is largely 'cultural', while attachment to a European identity is primarily 'instrumental'" (Ruiz Jiménez et al. 2004: 18), which means that the degree of belonging or closeness to Europe depends first and foremost on the performance of different European policies aiming at the improvement of the quality of life of European citizens. In other words, people virtually need to perceive concrete social and economic benefits of the EU membership in order to *feel* European citizens, regardless of the fact that they already *are* European citizens by virtue of law.

Moreover, another unique feature that the creation of EU citizenship brings about is that the enhanced feeling of belonging to Europe strengthens identifications of the Europeans at a sub-national level. In this sense Meehan claims that the European citizenship is an incentive to "new interactions among regions with each other and more directly with Community institutions" (Meehan 1998: 44). In fact, what we witness (and what could occur even before the creation of the EC/EU) is not only a dual (national and European) identity, but rather a multiple identification, that is to say the coexistence of a number of complementary identities which are both sub-national and supra- or trans-national (as is the case, for instance, of religious identities) and which have very different meanings, as they refer to different values.

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[4] An attempt to exploit the pro-European potential of constitutionalism is represented by Habermas's call for "constitutional patriotism" at the EU level. For a critical discussion with this concept, see Bauböck (1997).

[5] Although Wiener (2003: 405) makes a distinction between "Union Citizenship" (based on legal rules and citizens' rights) and "European Citizenship" (seen as a socio-cultural belonging to Europe), we will not employ consistently this terminology in this paper.

## Historical Development of the EU Citizenship Policy-making

If we want to do justice to the actual dynamics of the course of European citizenship policy, we should first of all realise that "citizenship did not emerge out of the blue on the agenda of the Maastricht Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) which negotiated the TEU in 1990–91, but that it is possible to identify agenda-setting steps in earlier stages of the policy process" (Wiener 1997: 1). Indeed, we assume that the foundations of EC/EU citizenship policy-making were represented by certain ideas and values—defined by Wiener (see ibid.: 3) as informal resources of the *acquis communautaire*—which had been determining policy objectives and practices, leading to the final setting of formal rules, procedures and regulations. This general pattern notwithstanding, the case of citizenship policy-making is specific, because until Maastricht, citizenship was not officially named as a homogeneous policy area. In consequence, only "bits and pieces of citizenship related policies […] can be identified and then put together in the same way one works on a jigsaw puzzle" (ibid.: 2).

### 1. Pre-Maastricht Period

We start our reconstruction by recalling that the citizens' right of free movement within the territory of EC/EU has its remote origin already in the Treaty of Rome (EEC Treaty, signed in 1957), where this freedom was established not yet for all citizens (the words "citizen" and "citizenship" do not appear in the text of this Treaty), but for the workers only. Nevertheless, it is important that Art. 48, where this freedom is defined, also specifies that the freedom of movement entails "the abolition of any discrimination based on nationality between workers of the Member States as regards employment, remuneration and other conditions of work and employment." Despite the partial scope of this provision, the freedom of movement, which would later become one of the fundamental rights of the Union citizens, was set within the primary European legislation, opening the way for the ECJ to interpret legal implications of this freedom. Indeed, the role of ECJ in the process of EC/EU citizenship policy-making was determining, as the legal framework of the citizens' rights gradually broadened mainly through the ECJ's jurisprudence, which "has tended—spasmodically—to expand the scope of rights" (Meehan 1998: 43). Even in this early stage of European integration, "the ECJ established that the Treaty of Rome gave a common legal right to individual nationals, migrant or not" (ibid.: 42).

Whilst the main goal envisaged by the Treaty of Rome was to establish a common European market, we can observe the shaping of first political paradigm of the European citizenship policy in the 1970s. After a strong Community commitment to start building a political union in Europe based upon a common European identity, which was expressly formulated at Paris Summit in 1972, Belgian Foreign Minister R. van Elslande stressed, in the same year, the necessity of creating a sense of belongingness of people to Europe which would go beyond economic and technical issues, and he announced the "first concrete stage towards establishing European citizenship" (Europe Documents, No. 752, quoted in Wiener 1997: 5).

Similar declarations—as for instance the paper on "European Identity," issued at the 1973 Copenhagen Summit, which officially introduced the idea of "Europeanness"—paved the way for the 1974 Paris Summit, where clear policy objectives related to the European citizenship were addressed (though at that moment they lacked substantial institutional instruments and thus were not immediately binding for the member states' governments) and the role of citizenship as an important identity-generating factor was recognised. Those objectives were: to grant "special rights" to citizens of the member states (this issue was already touched in 1972, when Belgian and Italian Prime Ministers advocated the right of member states' citizens to participate in local elections in the EC territory by virtue of permanent residence, regardless of their nationality); to prepare the first election to the EP by direct universal suffrage (which actually took place in 1979); to establish the passport union (with common European passports, which are actually issued since 1985). Moreover, the concept of a "citizens' Europe" was born, and strategies leading to the ideation of EU as a political entity were inaugurated.

In 1984, the EP approved an audacious draft of the "Treaty Establishing the European Union," presented by a federalist politician Altiero Spinelli. Although this proposal never entered into force, it arguably represents one of the most influential documents concerned with European integration. Significantly, its Art. 3 establishes the Union citizenship in the following way: "The citizens of the Member States shall *ipso facto* be citizens of the Union. Citizenship of the Union shall be dependent upon citizenship of a Member State; may not be independently acquired or forfeited." Furthermore, in the Spinelli draft the Union citizenship shall be reinforced by the constitution of a homogeneous judicial area (Art. 46) and promoted by appropriate cultural and information policies (Arts. 61 and 62), to mention just the policies where the link to the EU citizenship is explicit.

Later in the same year, the Fontainbleau Summit set up an *ad hoc* Committee, which was presided over by another Italian politician, Pietro Adonnino, with the purpose to put forward a series of less ambitious but politically more acceptable proposals connected with European citizenship. Consequently, policies promoting European identity were activated, such as various cultural programmes, youth, students and professors exchanges (notably the Erasmus programme which started in 1987), or town-twinning. Some European symbols (as flag and anthem) were then adopted in order to increase the sense of belonging to the EC, and the European Commission prepared a proposal for a Council directive on the right to vote and stand for election in municipal elections in the country of residence. In spite of this development of a formalisation of the original idea of European citizenship, the Single European Act (SEA), ratified in this period (1986), did not mention the term "citizenship" at all.

Admittedly predominant preoccupation in the 1980s was to pursue a number of policies in order to put into practice the single European market in an area without internal frontiers (abolished by the SEA) until 1992. Within this framework, a gradual widening of social rights (including health care, the right of establishment, old age pension, and the recognition of diplomas) took place, and the social concern of the

Community culminated then with the Social Charter ("Charter of Fundamental Social Rights for Workers"), adopted by the Council in 1989. Those rights, however, could produce a tension between the included and the excluded, since "the new social rights remained limited to those who had access to economic activity within the Community" (Wiener 1997: 9), even though in 1990 the right of residence was granted also to the workers' families, to students and to persons having sufficient financial resources and health insurance covered.

### 2. The Maastricht Treaty and the Legal Account of EU Citizenship in Post-Maastricht Period

During the IGC that negotiated the Maastricht Treaty on European Union, the main concern of the European leaders, that influenced the way in which the concept of EU citizenship established therein was conceived, was that for legitimacy and democracy. The inclusion of the Union citizenship in the TEU—following a proposal advanced for the first time by Spanish delegation in October 1990 at a meeting of the European Council—aimed mostly at diminution of the "democratic deficit" which could hinder the process of further European integration. In order to strengthen the tie between the Union and its citizens, the EU portrayed itself as a rights-granting entity, and it included the introduction of the Union citizenship among the main objectives of the Treaty (Art. B).

The rights granted by the TEU have first and foremost political nature as they enhance the access to participation of the citizens in the EU decisions, but it is also true that the TEU extended to all citizens and institutionalised (or constitutionalised) those rights that were already formulated as part of the EC *acquis communautaire*. As to the role of ECJ in the process of EU citizenship constitutionalisation, it had certainly a high profile, because "the expanded role of rights occurred through the legal interpretative actions of courts. Politicians have generally incorporated rights into the treaties as a response to the actions of courts on rights." (Fossum 2000: 133). The account of citizenship emerging from the TEU is indeed strictly a legal one, since there is no expressed link in the Treaty between the Union citizenship and the values underlying European identity.

The EU citizenship established in the TEU has a supranational character, and it is reserved exclusively for citizens of the member states (see Art. 8). The instituted rights are the following (see Arts. 8a–8d):
- the right to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States;
- the right to vote and to stand as a candidate in municipal elections and in elections to the EP in the Member State of residence;
- the right to protection by the diplomatic or consular authorities of a Member State other than the citizen's Member State of origin on the territory of a third country in which the state of origin is not represented;
- the right to petition the EP and to apply to the EU Ombudsman.

A rather thin content of these rights was criticized, sometimes very harshly—as is the case with Weiler, who asserts that the Maastricht concept of EU citizenship is either "the result of muddled and hasty drafting" or "little more than a cynical exercise

in public relations" (Weiler 1996). Yet other scholars point out that "[t]he importance of the TEU citizenship provisions lies not in their content but rather in the promise they hold out for the future. The concept is a dynamic one, capable of being added to or strengthened, but not diminished" (O'Keeffe, quoted in Wiener 1997: 12).

In the TEU text, there are several other elements linked to the citizenship issue, notably the commitment of the Union to "respect fundamental rights, as guaranteed by the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms signed in Rome on 4 November 1950 and as they result from the constitutional traditions common to the Member States, as general principles of Community law" (Art. F). Moreover, the TEU includes a declaration on the access to documents produced by the EU administration, highlighting the transparency of European institutions.

After the ratification of the TEU, the requirement arose to specify the meaning of the Union citizenship in relation to the citizenship of the member states. It was made soon clear that the TEU has no intention to establish a neo- or post-national citizenship which would substitute the member states' citizenship based on nationality: already in October 1992 the Declaration of the Birmingham European Council explained that "citizenship of the Union brings our citizens additional rights and protection without in any way taking the place of their national citizenship." Furthermore, a declaration later attached to the TEU specified that "the question whether an individual possesses the nationality of a Member State shall be settled solely by reference to the national law of the Member State concerned."

The Treaty of Amsterdam (signed in 1997), which made some amendments to the TEU, clarified that "[c]itizenship of the Union shall complement and not replace national citizenship" (Art. 17, ex Art. 8).[6] Other amendments were rather slight, and a new right was added in the Art. 21 (ex Art. 8d), namely that of writing to the European institutions in one of the official languages of the Union and being answered in the same language. It is also noteworthy that the Treaty of Amsterdam includes a provision that for the first time enables the EU to initiate sanctions against breaches of the principle of non-discrimination: according to Art. 13 (ex Art. 6a) the Council "may take appropriate action to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation." This scope of the Union citizenship remains substantially unmodified in the proposal of a Constitution for Europe, although an important new feature of the Constitutional Treaty is that it gives legal status to the Charter of Fundamental Rights (proclaimed in Nice in 2000) by embedding it in the Constitution text.

Major criticism of the legal concept of EU citizenship as shaped by the Treaties, advanced in the post-Maastricht debate both by scholars and by Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs) such as ARNE Group (the Antiracist Network for Equality in

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6 We find further clarification regarding the nature of the Union citizenship in "Third Report from the Commission on Citizenship of the Union" (COM(2001) 506 final), issued in September 2001: "When considering the scope of citizenship of the Union, attempts to draw parallels with national citizenship should be avoided. Because of its origins and the rights and duties associated with it, citizenship of the Union is *sui generis* and cannot be compared to national citizenship of a Member State" (p. 7).

Europe) or ECAS (the European Citizen Action Service), concerned the fact that the EU precludes the possibility of acquiring the Union citizenship for third countries' nationals who have legal residence in the EU territory. To give an example of the campaign for a revised concept of EU citizenship, in a document issued by the ECAS, entitled "Blueprint for European citizenship in a future Constitution," we find the proposal that the EU citizenship be granted to "[e]very person holding the nationality of a member state or legally resident in a member state for a minimum of five years." It was pointed to the fact that such a residence-based citizenship would somehow remedy for the lack of harmonisation among the member states as to the required conditions to obtain their national citizenship, but on the other hand the concept of citizenship based on residence would raise a good deal of institutional and legal problems, for instance the question of loss of citizenship on departure from the Union.

Furthermore, the already quoted ECAS's document pleads for an extension of the electoral rights, so that they shall include a residence-based right to vote in national elections as well as in referenda. Although it is unlikely that the member states will—at least in the near future—accept such an enlarged scope of EU citizens' rights which would considerably modify traditional conception of national sovereignty, we can see in those proposals possible implications of a closer European integration (inspired by a federalist model) for the concept of the Union citizenship.

### 3. Recent Challenges to the EU Citizenship Practice

With regard to what we have called the citizenship practice, we should firstly observe that little progress has been made, since Maastricht, in the process of removing the restrictions on free movement within the Union, which is one of the most sensible issues related to the citizens' rights. According to Shaw, the persistence of obstacles to free movement is due to "difficulties in achieving the correct balance and parallelism between controls on internal and external borders" (Shaw 1997: 3). Others, drawing on the interpretation emerging from the ECJ's case law, argue that the freedom to move and reside within the EU territory has been subject to limitations and conditions basically with intent to prevent and avoid so-called "social benefit tourism." Indeed, current Union law judges as illegal abuses all the cases in which "the right to free movement is exercised in order to profit from higher social benefits" (Kokott 2005: 5). From a legal point of view, this paradoxical situation in which we have the case of a *fundamental yet conditioned* freedom should be eliminated by the removal of restrictions that reflect national socio-economic interests. As Kokott puts it, "[i]n order to develop into a fully fledged fundamental freedom, the right to free movement of EU citizens cannot stop at the stage of a prohibition of discrimination, as is the case for the time being, but must develop into a prohibition of restrictions like the other […] fundamental freedoms. Restrictions are national measures liable to hinder or to make less attractive the exercise of fundamental freedoms guaranteed by the Treaty" (ibid.: 8). Although the Union commitment to "work together with national governments to ensure the same individual rights, security, protection and quality of

life throughout its territory" (Prodi 2004) was clearly formulated, it remains to be seen whether and when this promise will start to become a tangible reality.

Let us pass now from implementation of the legal concept of EU citizenship to the policies aiming at a development of the EU citizens' sense of belonging to Europe. In spite of the fact that—as we have already suggested—the EU citizenship in this broader sense (i.e. understood as an identity-generator) is operationalised in a fragmented way (in the sense that there are many community-building factors in many Union policies), we nevertheless find a number of Union programmes whose explicit goal is to bring Europe closer to its citizens by promoting European citizenship, stressing not only legal rights, but also shared values. The Union documents that deal with this broader and dynamic citizenship practice after Maastricht are relatively recent, which might reflect the fact that EU policy-makers were unsatisfied with weak public interest in the Community issues (particularly visible while considering the low participation in elections to the EP),[7] even several years after the formal establishment of the Union citizenship in the TEU.

A step forward in recent EU citizenship practice was undoubtedly the decision of the Council of 26 January 2004 establishing a Community action programme to promote active European citizenship.[8] The programme consists of relatively small financial support (EUR 72 million for the period 2004–2006) granted to the NGOs or other bodies operating in the field of European citizenship, like for example those involved in the town-twinning arrangements.

In March of the same year, the Commission issued a communication entitled "Making citizenship Work: fostering European culture and diversity through programmes for Youth, Culture, Audiovisual and Civic Participation" (COM(2004) 154 final), which takes into account the need to strengthen a common European identity after the accession of 10 new countries on 1 May 2004. The main goal of the project is to stimulate mobility of European citizens in order to give them "the possibility of encountering the common elements in their *developing* European identity, an identity which complements those—national, regional, ethnic, religious—that citizens already have" (p. 2). Mobility actions proposed by the Commission include youth exchange programmes, *European Voluntary Service* (which would enable active commitment of young people in the Union's solidarity actions), and *Socio-educational instructors and support systems*. As the Commission states, "[t]hese activities have considerable European added value because, individually, the Member States cannot organise mobility for young people across Europe, multilateral exchanges involving groups of young people from various Member States and third countries or a European Voluntary Service. These measures must complement those pursued by the Member States" (p. 8). On the cultural level, the Commission activates a series of measures aimed at the support of intercultural dialogue as well as at the promotion of European audiovisual heritage.

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[7] The turnout across the EU in elections to the EP has been continuously decreasing: 63% in 1979, 61% in 1984, 58.5% in 1989, 56.8% in 1994, 49.4% in 1999 and 45.5% in 2004.

[8] Published in "Official Journal of the European Union," 4.2.2004, and available also online.

Furthermore, in April 2005 the Commission presented a more elaborated document that would insert the citizenship policy within the framework of EU strategic and financial plan for the period 2007–2013. The programme "Citizens for Europe" (COM(2005) 116 final), while drawing on previous programmes, clarifies that Union citizenship "is to be promoted with due regard for subsidiarity" (p. 9), and it underlines in particular the Community commitment to support civil society organizations operating at the European level and to foster their cooperation. In addition, emphasis is put on research activities, high-visibility events and information and dissemination tools. The presumptive expenditure allocated for this programme for the above mentioned period is EUR 235 million.

To sum up, the EU citizenship policy has been recently focusing on shared European values such as freedom, fairness, tolerance and solidarity, seen as factors that are favourable to a certain cultural cohesion. The purpose of the Community policy-makers is to bring those values to the fore by stimulating a bottom-up development of European identity primarily through multilateral interaction of the EU citizens. The wishful strategy generating this cultural policy is to allow citizens to experience practically the richness of cultural diversity which has been peculiar and unique characteristic of Europe for ages.

### The Impact of EU Citizenship Policy on European Public

A question arising at this point is the following: has the EU citizenship policy had any real impact on the public attitudes? The answer is not plain, not least because presently time has not yet come to evaluate the outcomes of the Community provisions related to the cultural meaning of EU citizenship, proposed in recent years. Nevertheless, we have at our disposal—especially thanks to the Eurobarometer (EB) surveys—some empirical findings that indicate the degree of identification of Europeans with the project of "ever closer Union," as the process of European integration is often called, even though we should also bear in mind that there is no simple equivalence between the feeling of being European, the awareness of being a citizen of the EU (and the knowledge of what it is about), the identification with the Union polity leading to the willingness to participate in the Union political life, and the support for further European integration, the last being admittedly subject to contingent, mainly social and economic events, as the support for a closer EU has tended to be utilitarian, in the sense that the Europeans are in favour of "more Europe" as far as they find it beneficial in socio-economic terms (see Panebianco 1996). [9]

With regard to the understanding of the very nature of the Union citizenship, it seems that European public still need more information. Indeed, the Commission report on the Union citizenship from 2001 (COM(2001) 506 final) admits that "[t]he

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[9] In the past years, the support of Europeans for the membership of their countries in the EU was decreasing: in spring 1990 it reached 72%, in spring 1995 it was 57%, and in February–March 2006 only 49% of respondents from the 25 EU member states were considering the membership of their countries in the EU "a good thing" (source: EB Standard 39, 43, and EB Special 251).

Commission receives a considerable number of letters from people asking how they can become a citizen of the Union without first obtaining the citizenship of a Member State" (p. 7, note 4). Moreover, in the same document the Commission acknowledges that establishment of the Union citizenship combined with lack of publicly available information has raised exaggerated expectation among the Europeans: "[t]his lack of knowledge has the perverse effect of making people assume that the responsibilities and powers of the Union, and the Commission in particular, are greater than they really are" (p. 28).

On the other hand, a survey conducted in September–October 2002 (EB Flash 133) reveals that at that time 32% of the EU citizens had never heard the term "citizen of the Union,"[10] but when asked if they though that the Union citizenship grants them the prerogative to be citizens both of their countries and of the EU, 87% of respondents gave the right, affirmative answer,[11] which demonstrates that the concept of dual citizenship is very easily understandable and that multiple identification is (or at least can be) a natural attitude of Europeans. Similarly, a very good knowledge of the EU citizens' rights was empirically detected by the same survey, which shows that particularly the right of free movement throughout the EU is well known, as 89% of respondents were aware, in autumn 2002, of their right to work in any EU member state.

However, there is a difference between mere awareness of being a citizen of the Union, and the sense of having "European identity," the latter being a matter of feeling, of "attachment" to Europe or of perceiving the "closeness" to it. Now if we look at the "feeling European" surveys which were effectuated, we find out that in spring 1995 (EB Flash 47) 60% of Europeans declared that they felt at least "sometimes" to be both citizens of their countries and European citizens—the percentage was highest in Luxembourg (80%), Italy and Spain (both 74%), and lowest in the Netherlands (37%) and the UK (39%).[12] The same survey measured the degree of identification of Europeans with both their countries and Europe in terms of their pride. This opinion poll shows that in spring 1995 42% of Europeans felt to be European citizens and at the same time were proud of it. Attachment to the nation was stronger than that to Europe, as 57% of respondents declared to be prouder of their nationality than of their European citizenship, and only 10% felt prouder of their European citizenship than of their nationality.

Unfortunately, we still lack such surveys delivered in all the EU member states which would rigorously identify the *trends* of Europeans' identification with Europe or with the EU, as questions posed to the respondents change from one survey to

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[10] People were best informed in Denmark, Finland and Portugal (where 83–84% of respondents had at least heard about the EU citizenship), while—surprisingly—the share of respondents who had never heard about the EU citizenship was highest in Belgium (49%).

[11] The awareness of a dual citizenship was strongest in Spain and Ireland (95–96%), and weakest in the UK and Sweden (77–78%). The same question was posed already in spring 1995 (EB Flash 47), when 77% of respondents across the EU gave the right answer.

[12] Those figures emerge after the exclusion of those who gave no or "don't know" answer (3%). If we consider the whole base of interviews, the (EU average) percentage of those who felt "sometimes" both a national and a EU citizen is 35%, while 23% of respondents experienced "often" this feeling.

another. However, we have at our disposal an important study (Ruiz Jiménez et al. 2004) in which the trends of national and European identification are empirically measured at least in some countries, including three of the states that entered the EU in 2004.[13] We summarise the most relevant findings gathered by this research in the following table:

**Trends of national and European identification in selected countries**

| | Closeness to nation | | | | Closeness to Europe and EU | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | % very close | | % very close + close | | % very close | | | % very close + close | | |
| | 1995[a] | 2002 | 1995[a] | 2002 | 1995[b] | E 2002[c] | EU 2002[d] | 1995[b] | E 2002[c] | EU 2002[d] |
| Great Britain | *24* | *14.1* | *70* | 78.6 | *4.2* | *1.8* | *3* | *21.3* | *19.4* | *27.2* |
| Italy | 42.9 | 38.9 | 70.6 | 87.8 | 23 | 4.2 | 10.5 | 69 | 43.5 | *58* |
| Austria | 56.1 | 30.9 | 90.8 | 81.3 | 27.3 | 5.5 | 7.8 | 68.6 | 32.4 | 43.3 |
| Poland | 54.6 | 42.7 | 93.9 | 93.8 | 29 | 5.2 | 6.6 | 70.7 | 37.1 | 43.3 |
| Czech Republic | 47.5 | 28.4 | 91.7 | *71.8* | 30.1 | 4.9 | 4.8 | 80.5 | 43.2 | 45.4 |
| Hungary | *79.6* | *65.9* | *96.4* | 96.8 | *75.7* | *9.7* | *14.9* | *94.3* | *45.8* | 42 |
| Selected countries[e] | 44.4[f] | 36.9 | 84.8[f] | 83.9 | 26[f] | 5.2 | 7.2[g] | 65[f] | 34.9 | 43 |

Source: Ruiz Jiménez et al. 2004, tables 2 and 3 (based on ISSP 1995—National Identity (ZA-No. 2880), and EB Standard 57.2—April–June 2002—surveys). Average figures added.

Notes:
   Numbers in italics indicate the highest or lowest figure of all the nine (or eight, in case Greece or Spain is excluded) countries included in the survey.
   [a] The question was "how close do you feel to your country?".
   [b] The question was "how close do you feel to Europe?" (as a continent).
   [c] The question was "how close do you feel to fellow Europeans?" (including all people living in the European continent).
   [d] The question was "how close do you feel to fellow EU citizens?".
   [e] The average percentage of countries appearing in the table plus Germany, Spain and Greece.
   [f] Greece not included.
   [g] Spain not included.

Moreover, it is noteworthy that according to those polls, in 2002 the proportion of people who actually felt to have a dual (national and Union) citizenship in the 9 countries considered by the survey we refer to was 49.8%,[14] with figures ranging from 36% in Great Britain to 64% in Italy (see ibid.: table 4).

Loyalties have not been therefore transferred from national to European level, as the emergence of the European identity (albeit in decline in the past years) has not substantially eroded attachment to the nation, which in all countries remains stronger than the feeling to belong to Europe, even though some irregular tendencies can also be observed, notably in Great Britain (where the sense of belonging both to the nation and to the EU has grown, though its vigour is still much below the average) and in the Czech Republic (where a considerable loss of both national and European identity has occurred). Thus, the theory of concentric circles of attachments to different identities—with nation at the core and Europe at the periphery of the iden-

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[13] The nine countries included in the survey are Great Britain, Italy, Austria, Germany, Spain, Greece, Poland, Czech Republic, and Hungary.

[14] This is the percentage of those who declared to feel close or very close simultaneously to their fellow nationals and to the EU citizens.

tification attitude—seems to be the most realistic explanation of the actual empirical pattern.

Furthermore, the same EB survey backs the idea of compatibility of national and European identities, based on different meanings of those two sorts of attachment. It does so by pointing to the most important elements that constitute national and European identification. When asked about the most relevant items building national identity, people mentioned most often language as the most important element, followed by such items (ranked according to the importance) as culture, ancestry, history, and symbols (see ibid.: table 6). The list of the most significant elements of European identity is somewhat different, as it includes the right of free movement and residence (as the most important item, considering the answers across Europe), language and culture (mentioned among the five most important items in almost all countries but nowhere considered the most important one), economy (mentioned in the first place in Italy and Spain), common civilization (the most important element in Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic), and borders (see ibid.: table 7). Those findings lead to the conclusion that "it is possible to have attachments to multiple identities as long as such attachments derive from different sources. That is, national and European identities would be compatible insofar as attachment to the nation is based on cultural elements, and to Europe on "instrumental" considerations" (ibid.: 10), even though especially in the Central Europe "cultural" element of European identity is also relevant.

Admittedly, then, neither the establishment of EU citizenship in the beginning of the 1990s nor other policies related to the cultural meaning of citizenship (some of them being even previous to the Maastricht Treaty, as we have seen) have succeeded in stimulating a stronger European identity. On the contrary, the sense of belonging to Europe fades away, and the arguable reason is that the EU fails to address primarily "pragmatic," that is socio-economic concerns of its citizens—notably, persisting restrictions on the freedom of movement and residence seem to undermine the process of emergence of European identity more than other legal factors related to the Union citizenship.

This detection can be further backed up if we turn to a recent survey (EB Special 251), conducted in all the 25 EU member states in February–March 2006, where Europeans were asked about the items that would strengthen their feeling about being European citizens. According to this opinion poll, the best way of strengthening European citizenship would be a harmonisation of national social welfare systems at the European level (mentioned by 32% of respondents). In second place comes a European Constitution (27%), followed by other political issues, namely the right to vote in all elections organised in the Member State of residence (21%), and creation of the post of a President of the EU directly elected by the EU citizens (16%). Thus, a deeper political integration of the EU is perceived as a desirable issue (so that we can presume that further steps towards the "federalisation" of the EU would help to fortify European identity among citizens), but the most important factor stimulating European identification remains the efficacy of the Union in welfare field.

**Conclusion**

We have tried in this paper to analyse the European citizenship policy, focusing attention not only on its formal instruments, but also on its impact on the pattern of European identification of the citizens. In order to do so, we have firstly underlined the peculiarity of European citizenship, which is not based on nationality, but rather on a number of special rights and social benefits that are offered to Europeans by the Union.

In the Commission's view, the purpose of EU citizenship is twofold: it should both reinforce political participation of citizens in the Union issues and be in that way a source of legitimation of the process of European integration, while it should also be "a fundamental factor in the creation among citizens of a sense of belonging to the European Union and of having a genuine European identity" (COM(2001) 506 final, p. 7). The idea to formulate a concept of European citizenship so as to bring Europe closer to its citizens has been present in the Community discourse since the early 1970s. While the milestone of the process of legal establishment of the Union citizenship was the Maastricht Treaty, other policies more or less directly related to the EU citizenship (aiming notably at the awareness of cultural meaning of the citizenship) had been developing before Maastricht and were parallel to the effort to put the citizens' mostly political rights into practice in the post-Maastricht period. In recent years a new vigour in promoting shared European values in order to foster European identification can be noticed, but it does not seem that those policies bring about such ideas and values which would be strong or new enough to remedy for the shortage of the common European cultural ground.

Indeed, if we evaluate the impact of the citizenship policies by considering relevant public opinion polls, we observe that while the *awareness* of a dual—national and European—citizenship is growing (likewise the knowledge of the citizens about their special rights), the actual *feeling* of belonging to Europe is in incontestable decline. In addition, the participation of Europeans in elections to the EP has considerably diminished in last 25 years. Therefore, the following, quite embarrassing conclusion can be drawn: the EU citizenship policies have so far completely failed both to strengthen the legitimation of EU politics, and to create a sense of closer identification of the citizens with Europe.

We can find the reason of this failure in the fact that the nature of attachment of Europeans both to their continent and to the EU is not predominantly cultural. Therefore, to put it mildly, we should not be too optimistic with regard to the effects of the cultural policies pursued by the Union, at least in the short term. Rather, the Europeans' propensity to feel close to Europe depends critically on the capacity of EU to accommodate the expectations of its citizens, whose overriding preoccupations concern the quality of their life in socio-economic terms.

At present, one of the biggest problems with a direct impact on EU citizenship to be still overcome is—as we have already suggested—the persistence of obstacles to the freedom of movement, which are connected with the actual inability of the Union to harmonise the welfare systems of the member states. Given the salient role

which the freedom of movement has likely played as an identity-generator among the Europeans, and given their mostly "instrumental" or "pragmatic" expectations, this unresolved issue is arguably a key disincentive in the process of European identity building. In other words, in order to bring Europe closer to the citizens and to make the EU institutions more credible, more social cohesion across the countries is needed.

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