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EUROPEAN IDENTITY IN BALKANS
THE CASE OF CROATIA AND THE FORMER YUGOSLAV
REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

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International Relations and European-Asian Studies

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ABSTRACT

From Dante to Nietzsche, from Napoleon to Churchill, the idea of a unified Europe and a common European identity remains at the core of the ongoing process which keeps moving towards the uncertainty compelled by a high differentiated reality and complex integration process. Within the transformation's frame, the discourse of European identity reflects the continuous debate where the divergences which lie at the substratum of collective identities become sharper if the topic is analysed from the Balkans perspective. The integration trap, mirrored in the inherited pro and anti-European divisions, remains the proof of how the efforts and strategies of the EU institutions for the creation of a unified Europe and a common European identity are continuously undermined by regionalism and nationalism.

This thesis aims to explore this issue placing the European identity discourse in Balkans while connecting it with the Western Balkans as an EU constructed identity concept. It claims that European identity in this region remains irrelevant as long the EU strategies will fail in embracing the cultural and political differences, either at regional as well at national level. The thesis uses historical analysis for proving the hypothesis from a macro level perspective, whereas comparative and case study research design help for analysing two in-depth case studies – Croatia, and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia – hence, to prove the hypothesis from a micro-level perspective.

In both cases, the qualitative and quantitative data used in this study proved that the dominant perceptions among the citizens remain related to the materialist benefits that the EU membership and integration offers, preventing in this way the shifting of local and collective identities towards the European political and cultural values. As the consequence of a set of factors, both historical and present, internal and external, similar perceptions make the European identity discourse highly questionable in a future integration of the whole Western Balkans in the European Union.

Keywords: European identity, Balkans identity, nationalism, European Union, Western Balkans, Europeanization.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Central Eastern Europe	(CEE)
Eurobarometer	(EB)
European Community	(EC)
European Union	(EU)
European Union Member States	(EUMS)
Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	(FYROM)
Stabilization and Association Process	(SAp)
Stabilization and Association Agreements	(SAS)
South-east Europe	(SEE)
Western Balkans	(WB)

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INTRODUCTION

‘We are what we make of what the others have made of us’

J. P. Sartre

Whether optimistic or pessimistic the image of the European Union may look today it is difficult to say to what extent the articulation of a common European identity discourse has still relevance for what the citizens of Europe feel today and what leaders of the ‘European dream’ thought yesterday (De Rougemont 1948; Delanty 1995; Checkel, Katzenstein 2009; Zielonka 2014). If this discourse is moved in Balkans, the argument becomes more relevant. The impact of the reformation process over the past years, reflected in the lack of pro-activity from the EU institutions in getting closer to the Balkans’ regional and local differences, has raised many questions on the outcomes at the level of a macro-identity formation discourse. If a possible integration of the whole region would take place how the EU would deal with the increase of differences within its area? Would the EU institutions be able to establish an effective strategy in order to conciliate these differences at the function of a macro collective identity? Would in following the EU institutions be able in pursuing the creation of a common political community?

The hypothesis in this study will prove that a possible future integration of the whole Western Balkans countries will undermine the European identity discourse. It remains based on the argument that as long the European politics hesitate in getting closer to the Balkans regional identity/identities through the establishment of a common regional strategy which fits with the macro-micro level differences, any future enlargement will contribute for less cohesion within the EU’s frame, hence, making the European identity discourse more questionable.

Based on this topic, the study elaborates the relations between European identity and Balkans identity/identities and the discussion how the European identity topic has been accommodated in Balkans after the dissolution of Yugoslavia and collapse of the communist regimes. Taking into analysis two-depth case studies, Croatia and Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the thesis aims to examine the report of Europe with Balkans and how the dynamics of the EU policies and strategies have succeeded in bringing closer the Balkans' national identities to the core European values and to the European identity discourse.

Therefore, it will seek to inquire and answer the questions:

- What are the consequences of the historical Balkans 'in-betweenness' position in its report with Europe?
- What is the contribution of the EU in the deconstruction of the negative image of the Balkans during the last decades?
- What is the approach of the citizens in Croatia and Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to Europe and the European Union?
- How relevant at the end is the European identity discourse in these countries and in general in the Western Balkans?

This work offers a contribute in the field of European and Balkan studies. With the idea of examining the concept of European identity within the Balkans' reality, this study brings a new alternative which follows the importance of general discussion on the future integration of Western Balkans in the European Union.

In following the methods of research used in this work, in order to link the dynamics of the European identity concept with the reality of Balkans, the current study will be based on historical analysis for proving the hypothesis from a macro level perspective, whereas the comparative and case study research design, will help in analysing Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia as case studies – hence, for proving the hypothesis from a micro level perspective.

The whole inquiry is based on qualitative and quantitative data, in more specific book publications, reports, articles, and quantitative surveys. A number of relevant works will bring

into discussion prominent names such as Delanty, Strath, Todorova, Zielonka, Mazower, and other important scholars in the field of European and Balkan Studies, and interdisciplinary research. While the main electronic sources will be Eurobarometer and other supplementary qualitative and quantitative data.

Limitations to this research remain in combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews, which in similar cases can give a major contribution to findings through attaining a more exhaustive output of the respondents. However, the advantage of data and methods used should allow the elaboration of the central idea of this thesis.

The structure of the work consists of four chapters. The first chapter covers the theoretical part which outlines the conceptual framework of the study. The combined use of concepts such as supranationalism, pluralism, and nationalism with primordialism, constructivism, and continualism will help in explaining the relation between European identity and Balkans identity, also the historical position of Balkans in its report with Europe.

The second chapter elaborates the relation between Balkans and Europe during the last decades. The analysis will focus on the process of democratization and Europeanization with particular attention on the political and cultural challenges for the EU institutions in preparing the path for Balkans' integration.

Otherwise, chapters three and four take into analysis the case of Croatia and Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for illustrating with empirical data how citizens of this countries feel with regard to European Union and European identity discourse.

In the conclusive part, the analysis will draw a final summary in which some remarks will give attention to further research on the topic. Similar studies remain important in the field of European and Balkan Studies, therefore further research remains of scientific relevance.

1. EUROPEAN IDENTITY AND BALKANS IDENTITY - THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter starts the analysis by unfolding the theoretical part which constitutes the main axis of this work. The importance of linking European identity with Balkans identity stands in the establishing of some theoretical connections, reason why a set of core concepts in the following will be used.

In examining the various theoretical approaches, the author considered important mapping the theoretical framework from the perspective of three theoretical schemata. The first scheme is constituted by the theoretical concepts examined initially from Charles Petland elaborated in his book *International Theory and European Integration* (1973) and elaborated further by Richard Robyn in his book *The changing face of the European identity* (2005). which includes *pluralism*, *nationalism*, and *supranationalism*. The second scheme is based on the work of Gerard Delanty *Inventing Europe: Idea, Identity, Reality* (1995), and his conceptual division of idea of Europe, European identity, and unification of Europe. Otherwise, the third scheme is based on the scholarship explanation of Balkans identity which lies in three theoretical stances, *primordialism*, *constructivism*, and *continualism*. The linking concept between these theoretical representations will be the ‘*frontier image*’ for explaining the relation between the European identity and Balkans identity and arguing how the ‘in-betweenness’ position of Balkans has influenced in the construction of its image as the ‘Other’ of Europe and how this ‘otherness’ on the other side has forged the creation of European xenostereotypes with regard to Balkans.

In the base of the literature assessed the first part of this chapter will introduce a brief review of the European identity discourse based on the aforementioned approaches. Otherwise, in the second section, the analysis will seek to explain how the idea of Europe in the Balkans has been articulated from the theoretical perspective of three main streams in the Balkans studies, *primordialism*, *constructivism*, and *continualism*. The comparative analysis in the third section

will cover the relations between the European identity and Balkans identity with the purpose to link the discourse with the following chapters where a narrow top-down analysis will focus on the policies of the European Union in Balkans after the dissolution of Yugoslavia, taking a closer look from a behavioural bottom-up perspective at the case studies already presented in the introductory part of this work.

1.1. Identity

Definition

Lat.: *Identidem* [*<idem et idem>*] - *Repeatedly, again and again, continually* (Oxford Latin Dictionary 1968, 820)

Considering that this work will take the initiative to analyse the relevance of the European identity discourse in Balkans through discussing the relations between Europe and the Balkans Peninsula, an important part will be given to the factors which have determined this report. With this idea in mind the first part of the work will bring a combination of the European identity discourse with the *Balkans identity*, otherwise, in the second, the analysis will focus in the relation between the European Union and the Western Balkans states remaining within the frame of the European identity discourse. Therefore, in order to avoid the misinterpretation of the concepts, a clarification is deemed as necessary for what the author understands with *Balkans identity* and *Western Balkans*.

Despite the difficulties in giving a definition of the Balkans, either geographically, politically, or culturally, this work considers anyway the *Balkans identity* as the result of self-other interaction process where the ethnic collective communities are constantly constructed and reconstructed under the pressure of outside forces. These forces are geographic-spatial, cultural-religious, economic-social, and international politics. Hence, the author does not consider the Balkans identity as the result of a static and homogeneous process for identity remains an open process and in continuous negotiation, and this becomes more relevant in case of multi-ethnic communities, the reason why a common Balkans identity in such case is not possible. What the author stresses the most instead is the cogency of the relation self-other in the creation of the image that is shaped in continuous interaction serving as an inclusion or exclusion process. In this case, the Balkans identity as a concept is treated as the 'other' of

Europe. This idea helps to get a more complete map on the position of Balkans in the European politics, how the consequences of this position have affected the European policies in the aftermath of the dissolution of Yugoslavia, and how the outcomes may influence the European identity discourse in case of future integration of the whole the Balkan States in the European Union.

While, the *Western Balkan* states as a European Union concept introduced in 1998 during the Austrian presidency includes all countries actually in the phase of negotiations for accession, hence it includes: Croatia (the only exception as already an EU Member), Bosnia&Herzegovina, Montenegro, Albania, Macedonia, Kosovo, and Serbia.

1.2. European identity revisited

Paradoxically or not, the discussion on the European identity remains still present in a lot of questions which continue to feed the readiness to find a conclusive definition of the concept. Is the European identity an image or a real identity? Is the construction of this identity applied at consciousness or unconsciousness level? Is it a 'reflection' or 'taken-for-granted'?

In the light of developments since the creation of European Coal and Steel Community '...two different models can be extracted from the literature regarding the formation and development of European identity: one functionalist and one identity based' (Sanders *et al.* 2012, 111). Among the most relevant lines of inquiry remains that of Charles Petland examined and published in his seminal book *International Theory and European Integration* (1973). According to Petland, *functionalism*, and *pluralism* remain the core theoretical positions which explain the development of the European identity within the frame of European integration. Functionalists project the European Identity from economic perspective asserting that modern developments will lead toward more cooperation, hence making the creation of a political unity in Europe unavoidable. Otherwise, pluralists remain inclined in considering the European integration as a process in which preserving of national sovereignty remains important despite the will for cooperation on the other side (Pentland 1973). Both supranationalists and pluralists share to some extent the same interest in the success of the European integration with the only

difference which consists in the speed of the process and the structure of governance (Robyn 2005).

However, as Robyn has commented in his book *The changing face of European Identity*, Petland does not specify *nationalism* as an element which despite the developments in the international politics and economy remain essential in understanding the paradox which makes the relevance of the European identity discourse highly debatable (Robyn 2005). How the initial goal of European project in strengthening the economic ties among the EU members have halted on the other the process of bringing closer the cultural heterogeneity within the EU landscape explains the reason why the emphasis for a common European identity at a macro-level remains merely in the limits of creating an invented Europe constructed on the uncertainty rather than a political community which shares a set of common cultural values and follows the same political interests.

This became evident especially after the 2004 enlargement, in which the validity of the European identity argument was challenged by the reality in which the discordances between the physical and cultural boundaries of what was considered Europe and European unfolded a whole new debate on what the European identity in following should be. Who should be considered European and who feels European moved the discourse towards identity and citizenship, enforcing in the same time the doubts of where the natural and cultural limits of Europe are, what the citizens of Europe understand with Europe, and how they are attached to it (Bruter 2005). The endless efforts in finding the magic formula for reducing these doubts through conciliating the cultural Europe with political Europe created many paradoxes such as in following years the debate shifted gradually towards considering the whole concept merely as an elite project rather than a realistic approach which can be applied at the level of nation-states (Strath *et al.* 2000).

In recent years, the discourse has taken different forms where between doubts, critics, perspectives, and theories, today, the whole academic debate suffers from a conceptual overstretching which remains related to three main problems. Firstly, the European identity remains more a conceptual problem. The relations among diverse types of identities predominate in the theoretical realm with major complexity that can be found. Secondly, the idealistic expectations on a common European identity do not fit with the actual European political community. And,

third, the topic's relevance to the Europeans life is far away from what can be expected in the academic circles and European institutional establishment (Kaina *et al.* 2015).

Hence, despite highlighted as the concept which can replace the nation, its content remains vague in the attempts to make the creation of a pan-European identity possible. Consequently, most of the recent theories consider the whole discourse as a cacophony which requires a re-conceptualization at the discourse level (Lucarelli *et al.* 2011; Zielonka 2014).

1.3. Idea of Europe, European identity, and unification of Europe

However, if a re-conceptualization of the concept is necessary, the whole argument would end in a vicious circle without a conclusive explanation what the concept of European identity really means in terms of methodological and substantive conditions (Cerutti 2011). Hence, before proceeding with the analysis of the relation between the European identity and Balkans identity, it would better start making a brief introduction of the difference of what is Europe, what is European identity, and what is the unification of Europe. Hence, in following, this sub-chapter will seek to understand the differences based on the argument of Gerard Delanty and his theoretical approach published in his seminal book *Inventing Europe: idea, identity, reality*.

As Delanty has been arguing:

Defining Europe is then fraught with problems, for Europe is a protean idea and not something self-evident. It is erroneous to regard Europe as merely a region for the simple reason that it means different things to different people in different contexts. Europe does not exist any more naturally than do nations.

(Delanty 1995, 3)

In his thorough analysis, Delanty argues that the idea of Europe should be considered at a higher level of abstraction and not mirroring it at the image of nation-states. It cannot claim universal validity for it represents a cultural model, construct, and reproduction. As it started

merely as a perception of Europe in terms of its geographical boundaries, it evolved in following as a politico-cultural product moulded in the falling of the Roman Empire, the Muslim advance, and the division between the western Roman Church and the Eastern Orthodox church in 1054 (*ibid.*, 28-29). In this context, its roots do not lie in conciliating the cultural differences within Europe as a geographical entity, but in the transcendence of the sense of superiority of the Greco-Roman culture supplanted by the Christianity, on one side, and in the creation of division-lines between Occident and Orient, on the other.

The consolidation of the idea of Europe would take place only during and after the XV-th century with the beginning of the age of 'discovery' period in which Europe started its path as an autonomous discourse. In following, the idea would be transformed into the European identity as referring to Europe not any longer as a geographical area but as a system of 'civilization' values (*ibid.*, 30). This transformation would be crystallized only in the late of XIX-th century as a result of the gradual evolvement since the Enlightenment reflected in following in the life of European citizens and movements (*ibid.*).

For Delanty, the 'European identity is a form of self-recognition and exists as a constellation of diverse elements articulated through emerging repertoires of evaluation and social imaginaries' (Delanty 2005, 137). However, what remains important in following the argument of the author is that European identity born in defeat and not in victory. As the result of transcending Hellenism, Christianity, and the idea of Europe attached to structures and processes of collective identity formation, the European identity would be transformed from a cultural identity into a political identity only in facing with the 'Other' during its encountering with civilizations outside Europe and internal divisions. The adversity in which the identity was borned was not based on the idea of a culturally homogenized Europe for the cultural divisions and historical discontinuities in Europe prevented the creation of a single European identity. As a political consciousness the European identity born as the result of the increase dichotomy Self-Other or West-East division and the national struggles among the European nation-states which used the universalistic patterns of the Christendom legacy for their particular interests, serving at the same time for keeping the dichotomous division with East and reinforcing the dominance of the centre over the periphery (*ibid.*, 13). In this context, the European identity took a dualistic form, where the result of the continuous converging-diverging process with the European national identities prevented the creation of a pan-European identity.

Therefore, the final goal, that of unifying Europe under a common European identity remained questionable. For what is relevant to the question whether it is possible or not a unification, it is important to keep into consideration the simple fact that the idea of Europe and that of a European identity pertain to elite projects, hence, represent ideas from above and not from below where the possibility to take the forms of life through struggle could make these ideas more realistic and approachable to the citizens. Today, ‘for many Europeans unity is a cherished goal only so long it is unattainable; or, indeed, as a strategy to enhance social exclusion or to strengthen the power of centre over the periphery’ (*ibid.*, 1).

Hence, the cogency in treating the European identity as the myth of unifying the Europeans remains in what Bo Strath has been commented, that ‘Europe is so diluted that it means everything and nothing’ (Strath 2000, 13).

1.4. European identity and Balkans identity

Nevertheless, despite the high critics on the idea of a common European identity, modern Europe framed in terms of European Union continue to exert a high ascendancy over its citizens. People can travel more easily, work in other countries of the Union, spending time and study abroad. Hence, the facilities do not hide that Europe has a notable influence on the lives of Europeans (Duchesne 2008). However, from what has been argued so far, can this modern Europe become the telling story as an identity representation for all its people, especially to those who aspire to become part of it?

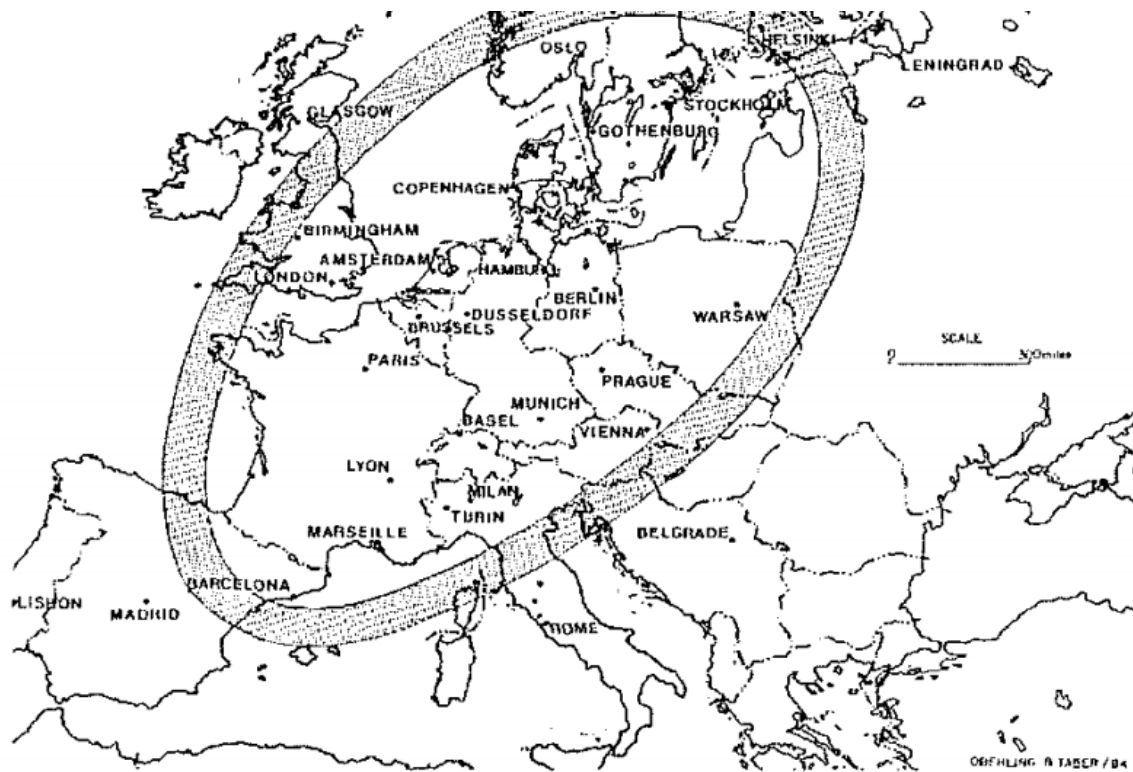
In seeking the answer, this sub-chapter will focus on the relations between the European identity with the Balkans identity, starting with a brief analysis of the relation between Europe and Balkans. As mentioned in the introductory part, the analysis will be based on three main theoretical stances which give different approaches to the argument, *primordialism*, *constructivism*, and *continualism*. Otherwise, the literature will be based on the relevant works of Billig, Kastakopoulos, Todorova, Hatzopoulos, Cvijic, Iorga, and Bechev, as representatives of these scholarship traditions, while Delanty and Strath will remain the main references for keeping the connection between the argument of the European identity and the Balkans identity.

1.4.1. Europe and Balkans

As already mentioned in the previous chapter the idea of Europe has been shaped as a cultural construction from the Western European nation-states. It has remained till today their cultural model which more than inclusive has served as an exclusive frontier for the other regions of Europe, such as the Eastern and South-Eastern Europe (Delanty 1995). Treated as zones of transition between Europe and Eurasia, the feeling of ‘Otherness’ induced in these regions, and the countries belonging to, has prevented their full integration into the core cultural and political zone of the continent. This remains the reason why the tensions between Western Europe and the rest of it have continuously created cultural and political fractures, creating in this way the conditions for keeping strong the paradox of the European cultural diversity, which on the one side represents the source of benefit, cooperation, and innovation for all its citizens, but on the other remains the main reason for the traditional divergences, where despite the good-will of the European Union in reducing the regional differences, its contribution, however, does not hide the influence of some states over the others, or the influence of the centre over the periphery (Figure 1.). As Strath has argued in his book *Europe and the Other, Europe as the Other*, the image of Europe represents an element of the nation. In this interaction, the ‘Other’ which reflects Europe represents the ‘Other’ as an element of ‘Us’. This category of both, inclusion and exclusion, provokes tension in communities constructed around the concept of nation (Strath 2000).

If this point of the argument is analysed from the Balkans perspective the whole issue takes another form, which enforces anyway the main author’s statement on the idea of European identity in relation to national identities.

Figure 1: Map of the Core and Periphery in Europe



Source: Klaus & Brunbauer (2007)

What makes questionable the idea of Europe and European identity in Balkans is its ambivalent position in the imagination of the Western European. Referred as the Near East till the 1990s the frozen image of the region has always evoked that of the *'frontier'*, where despite its location in the South-Eastern part of Europe, culturally, it has always been considered as part of the Asia Minor (Delanty 1995).

Nevertheless, despite the Turkish etymology of the word 'Balkans', which means 'mountainous terrain', the demarcation line which runs throughout the diversity of regional multi-ethnicities fades to some extent the monochromatic view of the Europeans in considering the region exclusively as part of the Eastern world. Three main religions have clashed in Balkans, the Sunni Islam, Roman Christianity and Christian Orthodox. These collision has designed

different lines in different periods since the Antiquity. The new border which followed the division of the Roman Empire into two parts under the ruling of the Theodosius Line in 393 ran through Balkans dividing the region into two territories. This was a line that first divided two empires, and then separated two worlds, as it apparently continues to do. The northern extension of this line today divides two eastern Europe, one predominantly Catholic and under Latin or Germanic influence, in which the transition to democracy is being accomplished gently, and the other largely Orthodox, if not Ottoman, in which this transition is being performed with difficulty, sometimes even a fortiori (Plasari 1992, 3). This schism positioned the Balkans in the middle, creating new religious, cultural, and political cleavages which in following would be the main source for tensions between the Latin West and the Muslim Orient on the one side (*ibid.*, 50), and the Latin Christianity and Slavic Orthodox on the other (author).

Therefore, drawing a trig line on what the Balkans represent in reality means bringing into attention what Hatzopoulos has been commented in his book *The Balkans beyond nationalism and identity*, that Balkans represent a spectral entity (Hatzopoulos, 2008). The political and regional fragmentation has prevented the unification of the region into a single state. As a result, it has never become part as an integrated factor of the European political and power system. If Russia became part of the Vienna Congress and European Concert in the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars, the Balkans remained part of the Ottoman Empire. However, on the other side, it never became a regional subculture of Asia. This ‘in-betweenness’ position would be an anomaly for Europe with devastating consequences in the following decades (*ibid.*, 53). Therefore, this exclusion from Europe derives precisely from these historical developments, which remain essential for understanding the consequences of being the ‘frontier’ between empires, civilizations, and religions (Delanty 1995).

1.4.2. Balkans identity

The disconcerting interpenetration of Europe and Asia, West and East, finds its way into most descriptions of the Balkans in modern times. Europe is seen as a civilizing force, a missile embedding itself in the passive matter of the Orient. Travelers routinely comment on signs of “European” life, such as houses with glass windows, cutlery, cabarets or hotels with billiard rooms. Balkan cities are usually described as having a European façade behind which hides an oriental—meaning picturesque but dirty, smelly, wooden and unplanned—reality. Railways are European, cart tracks are not; technology is

definitely European, but not religious observance. The social fabric is almost always divided into a modernizing surface and a traditional substance. Oriental realities—the power of religion, the prevalence of agrarian poverty—are assumed to be phenomena that have not changed for centuries.

(Mazower 2000, 3)

In one paper published in the *Journal of New Eastern Europe* in 2017, the Croatian Miljenko Jergovic warned the public opinion, in particular, the EU institutional presence in Balkans, for an increase of the de-Europeanization process in the region due to the increment of Turkish and Russian influence (Jergovic 2017). Considering how much in common have the European identity and Balkans identity if the European integration starts communicating with the *Balkans mentalité* this is not a news.

And in fact an important element of the region's history, nationalism, is still strong, maybe not in the form of the XIX-XX-th century's nationalism, but in the form of a nationalism vested with pragmatism, which despite the transformations induced from international institutions such as the EU and NATO, yet, at the societal and political level these transformations remain questionable. The continuous incidents and the reproducing of the old memories in new forms of propaganda for preserving the old interests of the political elites, makes this new nationalism tantamount to the Billig's concept of 'banal nationalism', where the idea of nationhood is regularly flagged in the daily life routine reproducing itself as a reminder of the national identity (Billig 1995). However, the question is, if nationalism in the Balkans is more particular compared to other regions in modern Europe, it is enough as an element such as to consider the Balkans identity an incompatible *mentalité* for modern Europe?

Traditionally, the Balkans history has been treated as the history of extreme nationalism which characterized by its ethnic dimension remains different from the civic nationalism of the nation-states of Western Europe (Hatzopoulos 2008). In order to make the difference and to elaborate the argument in correlation with the Europe-Balkans relations, a theoretical analysis is deemed as necessary in this case. Three are the core references for treating this argument: *primordialism, continualism, and constructivism*. The primordialists approach is basically "If you are born poor, you may die rich. But your ethnic group is fixed." (Chandra 2001). It means that the ethnic group remains the same no matter the historical changes. All the other processes - wars, economic crises - do not affect ethnicity. Hence, the conceptualization remains based on

the indivisibility of the ethnicity from the other components, such as politics and economy (*ibid.*).

Otherwise, the second tradition, the continualism, gives a more elaborated analysis, which differently from the primordialists, places the concept of ethnicity in the context of historical changes. History counts, hence ethnic identities are not static for they change in time (Bechev 2004). Whereas the third one, the constructivist approach, represent the more recent and the more revolutionary conceptualization of the argument which supports the idea that ethnic identity is not fixed. According to the constructivists, the ethnic changes are not independent and can be the product of the economic and political developments. Apart from this, individuals can have multiple identities which on the other side can change precisely because of these developments (Chandra 2001).

Returning to the primordial argument, in the attempts to answer the questions ‘What is a nation?’ and ‘what is nationalism?’ primordialists consider nation and nationalism as the unaltered natural being of human existence, immune from the historical time developments (Bechev 2004, 17). Among the scholars which have analysed the Balkan nationalism from this perspective is Cvijic which has made a further elaboration of the notion of *homo balkanicus* considering it as an unseparated entity from the *Balkan mentalité*. However, as Hatzopoulos argues, the *homo balkanicus* in the vision of Cvijic remains a simplistic and frozen image which evokes culture as the only element which defines and separate the collective identities from each-other, diminishing in this way the importance of other elements which today are considered of the same importance in analysing the regional identity and nationalism concepts (*ibid.*, 81-82).

Due to their simplistic analysis, the argument of the primordialists has progressed in more elaborated analyses which in this case brings into discussion the continualist perspective represented by prominent scholars in the Balkan studies such as Nicolae Iorga. Differently, from the primordialists view, the continualists give more importance to the historical changes placed in the concept of *longue durée*. According to the continualists, what distinguishes Balkans in their specificities reflect the results of the Ottoman influence. However, in supporting the argument of the Kitromilides, Todorova sustains that the Ottoman legacy has

been lessened by the modernity where other factors such as modernization and socio-economic structures transition have played an important role in the Balkans configuration (*ibid.*).

Both positions give a limited view on how the nationalism and regional identity interact with the collective identities such as to make the Balkans identity more particular compared to other regions of Europe. As Bechev argues in his article '*Contested borders, contested identity: the case of regionalism in South-East Europe*', both primordialists and continualists agree on the instability of the Balkans as an intrinsic element of the region. However, what they are not able to answer is the question what 'set apart the Balkans from the neighbouring areas'? (Bechev 2004, 83).

Between the different interpretations and theoretical stances, constructivists, remain the most relevant in explaining why Balkans represent an ambiguous entity. For constructivists, the regional identity remains a political construction. Neither geography, nor culture is immune to politics, and nationalism is not a thing which acts independently. What the politicians and people do with their regional identity depends on them, for identity is not given, it is continuously constructed in interaction. In this context, the report 'self-other' or 'us-them' remains important in understanding how the political decisions and collective perceptions define borders (*ibid.*, 83).

One of the most distinguished constructivists' scholars in Balkan Studies, Maria Todorova, explains in her book *Imagining Balkans*, that differently from what has been argued so far on Balkans, treated within the frame of Orientalism, the complexity which characterizes the region lies more in the interstate politics. In opposing the Said's *Orientalism* with the concept of *Balkanism*, Todorova argues that the negative image of Balkans has been the product of the international politics (Todorova 2009).

In supporting this argument, here becomes relevant what argument of Delanty, that in the root of the instability of the Balkans in its relation with Europe lies in the two main divisions, the first, between Christianity and Islam, and the second, between the Roman Catholicism and Christian Orthodoxy. Balkans was caught in the middle of these two divisions where 'The conflict between Latin and Greek Christianity far exceeded the division between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. The result of this division was that the identity of Western and Western Europe came increasingly to be expressed in an enduring cultural animosity.

Orthodoxy was seen as semi-oriental and foreign to the identity of the Latin West' (Delanty 1995, 52) These tensions became sharper during the successor of the Byzantine legacy, the Ottoman empire. Despite the differences in the tradition of the two empires, the tensions between East and West became to dominate in the region of the Balkans. The centuries of the Ottoman ruling in the Balkans design its oriental contours and traditions which would be in constant clashing with those of Latin and Orthodox, deepening in this way the division between Europe and Balkans. The stereotypes which have hunted the people of Balkans and the region during the last two centuries are the result of these ethnic, political, cultural, religious divisions which, nevertheless, have not lessened the European politics to put to the fore the 'Europeaness' and 'Westernness' (Bechev 2004).

Therefore, in this context, what makes *Balkans mentalité* incompatible to Western Europe requires the same attention on the self-other dichotomy, as analysing the concept from the perspective of the regional processes and historical developments. Throughout the XVIII-XIX-th centuries the coined term of the day for Balkans was 'Turkey in Europe', while in the aftermath of the violent dissolution of Yugoslavia, and the following ethnic wars, 'Balkanization' became the new term for bringing again into memory the old 'powder keg' of Europe. Hence, the Balkan stigma has been applied at the regional level as a reproduction of old collective images, without considering how ethnicity and local ethnic structures have been used from outside politics to enforce the image of the advanced nation-states of Europe.

This important detail remains the main factor which has halted the normal process of state-building through the transforming of these local units into political identities integrated within the state structures which could in following facilitate the state-to-state cooperation by avoiding the perpetual instability and making much easier the integration of Balkans as a political factor in the European politics and power system.

Therefore, remains important to keep into consideration the importance of impartiality during the analysing process for it can help for keeping in mind the balance between the internal and external factors. Defining regional identity basing only on stereotypes will not help any of the parts interested in the progress of integration. Hence, in this case, neither Europe nor Balkans will benefit if the 'us' and 'them' will continue to revive the past. It cannot be left aside the fact that the creation of the European Union has pushed the European elites to start to see the 'other' as an extension of the 'self'. However, the strong influence of the core Member States

on those who represent the ‘periphery’ shows that this shifting of the European mentality is an ongoing process.

1.5. Interpretations and conclusions

The aim of this chapter has been to show the historical relations of Europe with Balkans in the context of the European identity discourse. The analysis has started with a brief review of the European identity discourse, while in following the attention was focused on Balkans and the historical factors which have determined its relation with Europe. The analysis was based on the most important theoretical approaches in Balkan studies, primordialism, continualism, and constructivism. It helped for understanding that with the exception of the constructivist position, the analysis of the relation between Europe and Balkans has been based mostly on the notion of nationalism and historical changes in *longue durée*, avoiding the importance of other factors which bear the same significance in explaining the complexity of identity/identities and importance of inclusion/exclusion in the self-other interaction process.

It can be concluded that what has determined the posture of the Balkans in its relation with Europe is the consequence of its ‘frontier’ position where the multi-ethnic collective identities have been forced to survive under the strong pressure of outside forces. Nationalism, as the latest element which has brought into light the consequences of the historical struggles to keep the traditional religious and cultural-linguistics while supporting and opposing at the same time the outside interferences has given to the Balkans the last painting creating on its image an overall perception as the ‘uncivilized’ part of Europe. This stain has haltered in following the path towards a normalization of the relations among the Balkan states, making more difficult the regional cooperation, consequently, its integration in the European politics. Hence, if traditionally Europe has considered the Balkans as an incompatible mentalité for its progress and civilization, only the XX-th century would be the mirror of these stereotypes. The consequences remain still reflected in the European Union integration process where the discourse of the European identity remains challenged by the cornucopia of the multi-ethnic structures and old Balkan politics which more than being part of the same community of values and traditions, see in modern Europe the material benefits. Hence, in this context, what is the

contribution of the EU in the deconstruction of the negative image of the Balkans during the last decades will be in the focus of the next chapter.

2. EUROPEANIZATION OF IDENTITIES IN BALKANS

We lie to [the EU] that we are serious about reforming, and they lie to us that they are serious about accession.

(Referenced in ECFR; Tcherneva 2017)

Whether is the retrieving of Turkey from the accessions negotiations or the returning of the geopolitics in Europe, one thing remains clear, that from the post-conflict stabilization and the enlargement process the engagement of the European Union in Balkans needs to reconsider several developments of the last decades which can give the possibility to its institutions in getting more serious in its regional commitment. However, what can be noticed today reflects the difficulties and still the lack of the applicability of the neo-liberal principles and the new political mentality of modern Europe. Hence, with the aim to continue the argument on how the European identity is perceived in Balkans, how on the other side the EU institutions have helped in the deconstruction of the negative image of the Balkans, and whether these perceptions will help or not the European identity project in a possible future integration of the region, this chapter takes the initiative to analyse this issue by linking the Europeanization process this time with the Balkans identities. How the top-down policies of the EU institutions have been accommodated in the region after the dissolution of Yugoslavia and how the regional politics and people perceptions have facilitated or haltered these policies remain the main point of this chapter.

Definition : ***Europeanization:***

Defining what the author of this study understands with Europeanization of identities in Balkans, a clarification of what the *Europeanization* firstly means is necessary.

‘Europeanization is the impact of European integration [a process of transformation] on domestic political and social processes [the ontological object].’

(Börzel, Risse 2003 referenced in Jano 2010, 29, author’s parenthesis).

There is no a single definition of Europeanization as a concept. Among the varieties and the attempts to give a conclusive answer to what the Europeanization is *per se*, a great importance and major use have been the works of Sartori (1970) and Gerring (1999), which divide the importance of the concept in the base of its use and goal of the researcher. Essentially, the division lies in the theoretical and operational use of the Europeanization as a concept. Due to this division, there has been a long debate on what the Europeanization is, whether it represents a concept, a theory or process, whether it can serve as an independent or dependent variable, above all, where is needed to look in order to prove its concreteness?

In its broad use, Europeanization is the impact of the European Union on the potential Member States. However, studies are divided between considering the Europeanization process as a top-down process which affects the domestic system of governance, as a bottom-up process, and as a cross-loading process which affects indirectly the domestic policies through the projecting of the EU models in the form of socialization, learning, and interpretation of policy paradigm and ideas among the potential member states (Radaelli, Pasquier 2007 referenced in Jano 2010, 25).

In this study, the Europeanization is understood as the impact of the EU policies on the potential member states and those in the phase of candidates for accession. Hence, it remains based on the top-down approach where is possible to explain the direct relations between the EU institutions and the potential member states in terms of explanatory power and causality (*ibid.*).

2.1. Europe between Balkans and the Western Balkans

In his last declaration on the possible future integration of the Western Balkans, the President of the EU Commission, Juncker, (Cooper 2017) made clear that Montenegro and Serbia, considered as the ‘frontrunners’ of this process, would be part of the Union in 2025, if not sooner, while not including the other countries, and ruling out the possibility for Turkey to join the Union in the foreseen future. The violation of the rule of law and fundamental rights has halted the process

of integration for Turkey as Erdogan's regime continues to be perceived as very autocratic from the EU Member States (Grajewski 2017).

This returning of the EU in the Balkans after years of stagnation has raised many questions on the role of geopolitics and the increasing influence of other actors such as Russia, China, Gulf countries, or Turkey itself. Whether this returning is merely a classic example of the European pragmatism or the EU is really interested in the Balkans' integration the question remains still open (Dempsey 2017).

The importance of this issue in the context of the European identity and Balkans identities brings into discussion the importance of the differences which lie in the principles and the political mentality of the European Union on the one side, and the identities of a region which still is the prey of its past on the other. The neo-liberal principles on which stand the European Union politics remain still challenged by the presence of several problems in the region of Balkans. Corruption, high unemployment, ethnic tensions, lack of credibility in the institutions, especially in the judiciary system, remain the main issues which continue to hamper the integration process. If the relation between the European identity topic and Balkans identities transcends the theoretical concepts and face the reality in which the reforming process reflects merely a 'stabilocracy' rather than the engagement of both parts in getting closer to common values and interests, the cogency of the argument becomes sharper in trying to find a conclusive answer on how the EU institutions have succeeded so far in conciliating the past of Europe with Balkans, and how on the other side, a possible future integration of Balkans in the Union can affect the European identity project. Hence, focusing in following on the importance of the Europeanization process and the obstacles related to it, this issue will be more comprehensible.

2.1.1. Cultural and political challenges

'If the term 'Balkans' had the negative connotations associated with the Oriental past, disorganization, and the generally rickety of the character of government, and the political instability or regional parcelled into quarrelling little states...' (Ristovic 1995, 4), this image unfortunately has little changed in time. Hence, the question is, what the European Union

institutions have done in order to bring the Western Balkans countries closer to the core values, traditions, and political principles of modern Europe?

The main goal of the European Union at the end of the Bosnian conflict in 1995 was to transform the Balkans in a secure region and making it part of the political-economic integration. The whole region ran a profound changing in order to catch not only the rhythm of the European economy and pluralist democracies, but also to adapt to the model required based on the EU criteria for accession. This is very relevant for the accession in the Union means conforming to a particular economic, political, and social model, which in the case of the Western Balkans was equal to radical changes (Jano 2010, 11). But, in what consist these changes, and at the same time challenges for the EU institutions? Where is needed to look for the impact of the Europeanization in the Western Balkans societies?

The inter-ethnic conflicts that broke up concomitant to the dissolution of the Yugoslavian Federation in 1991 confirmed once more the traditional stereotypes and the essentialist interpretations of Balkans. The Bosnian conflict was considered simply a *deja vu* of what happened in 1914, and the Balkans peoples the same as at the beginning of the XX-th century. Transforming the region into a secure area became the main goal for the EU institutions, however, the reforms for the societies in the countries of the Western Balkans meant following a different path from their traditional. As already mentioned in the first chapter, the history of Balkans has been historically treated in the terms of extreme nationalism, where terms as ‘Balkans mentalité’ or ‘Balkanization’ have been used to describe the uncivilised part of the Balkans peoples and the medieval character of the Balkans politics. However, between the truth and the abusing with it, remains relevant what Misha Glenny has argued in his book *The Balkans: Nationalism, War, and the Great Powers 1804–2012*, that:

Balkans since the beginning of the 19th century has contributed
substantially to a history that is not static – in which age-old enmities are doomed
to permanent repetition – but breathtakingly dynamic.

(Glenny 2012, xxv)

It is in this context that the European Union tried to follow a different trajectory in order to de-construct the negative image of the region, which essentially consists in the peculiarities of its

identity formation reflected in the relation between the ethnicity, religion, and culture with geopolitical interests, which continually have generated similar historical developments. With the aim to avoid this reproduction of history, the EU sought to invest in those areas which were crucial for the stability and economic progress of the region, and which could at the same time building a common perspective for all countries to get closer to the EU integration. However, between theory and practice, between investments and real results, the challenges for the region to become part of the Union are still present. Bringing the comment of Barbara Jelavich:

The theme of the conflicting attraction to and rejection of foreign political, ideological, and economic influence has thus been a constant element in Balkan history. However, although Balkan societies, either willingly or under duress, have accepted much from the outside world, it must be emphasized that even where foreign institutions and ideas were adopted, they were subsequently molded and changed to fit national traditions and prejudices.

(Jelavich 1983, xii)

This remains essential for understanding the relation between the EU and Balkans during the last decades and why the Europeanization process in the region is still halting.

An important argument in this discussion is the influence of nationalism on the identity and nation-formation process, which in the case of the Balkans has been overemphasised as the main reason for its late development compare to other regions of Europe. ‘National identity, the sense of belonging to a particular state society, is considered to be formed according to two different criteria of membership in the national collectivity: ‘civic’, which is identical to citizenship and inclusion, and ‘ethnic’, which is connected mostly with ancestry, culture and exclusion (Table 1.) (Stamenova 2017, 312).

Table 1. The difference between the ‘civic’ and ‘ethnic’ dimension of nationhood according to Spencer and Wollman

<i>Western</i>	<i>Eastern</i>
Political	Cultural
Staatsnation	Kulturnation
Civic	Ethnic
Liberal	Illiberal
Individualistic	Collectivist
Voluntarist	Organic
Rational	Mystical/Emotional
Universalistic	Particularistic
Patriotism	(Chauvinist) Nationalism
Constitutional	Authoritarian

Source: Spencer & Wollman, (2002)

In the case of the Balkan countries, the ethnic dimension, in opposition to the civic dimension, has been predominant. Despite, that almost all European states are ethnic-national, there is a dichotomisation of the concepts ‘civic’ and ‘ethnic’. For the mentality of modern Europe, the ethnic nationalism is the opposite of its liberal political culture.

However, even though historically treated as a conflict of the ethnic groups, a closer look at the conflict in the ex-Yugoslavia, suggests a very different direction. How the identity has served as an enduring political tool for personal political ambitions and geopolitical interests, indicates another panorama of the discussed divisions (Caytas 2012). Despite the dominance of the tensions religious, and cultural ties throughout the history of Balkans, it would be an oversimplification treating the discourse by reducing it in a mere division of ethnic and civic,

nationalistic and non-nationalistic. In all parts of Europe in different periods of its history can be found elements of both concepts.

Therefore, in this context, there are different factors which require taking into consideration that the challenges of the European Union during the last decades with regard to the Western Balkans lie not only in the ‘democratization, marketization, and state consolidation’ (Kostakis 2012, 6). Inducing in the Balkans societies and politics the principle of cooperation over the fragmentation by abandoning the ethnic hatred and tensions can be considered in reality as the main challenge for the EU institutions (Marazopoulos 2013). The ‘big push’ which started de facto with the Dayton Accords in 1995 (*ibid.*, 18), followed by a consistent engagement of the EU institutions in the region, led to the creation of new entity, introduced as Western Balkans (WB), which comprised the most troubled countries in the region (the former territories of the Second Yugoslavia, plus Albania, minus Slovenia). The new design became somehow the newly constructed identity which would be the receiver and deliver of the Europeanization, a signifier the signification of which would be subject of the EU ‘policy recipes’ with the aim to repeat once more the success of the CEE post-soviet countries. But, was it possible?

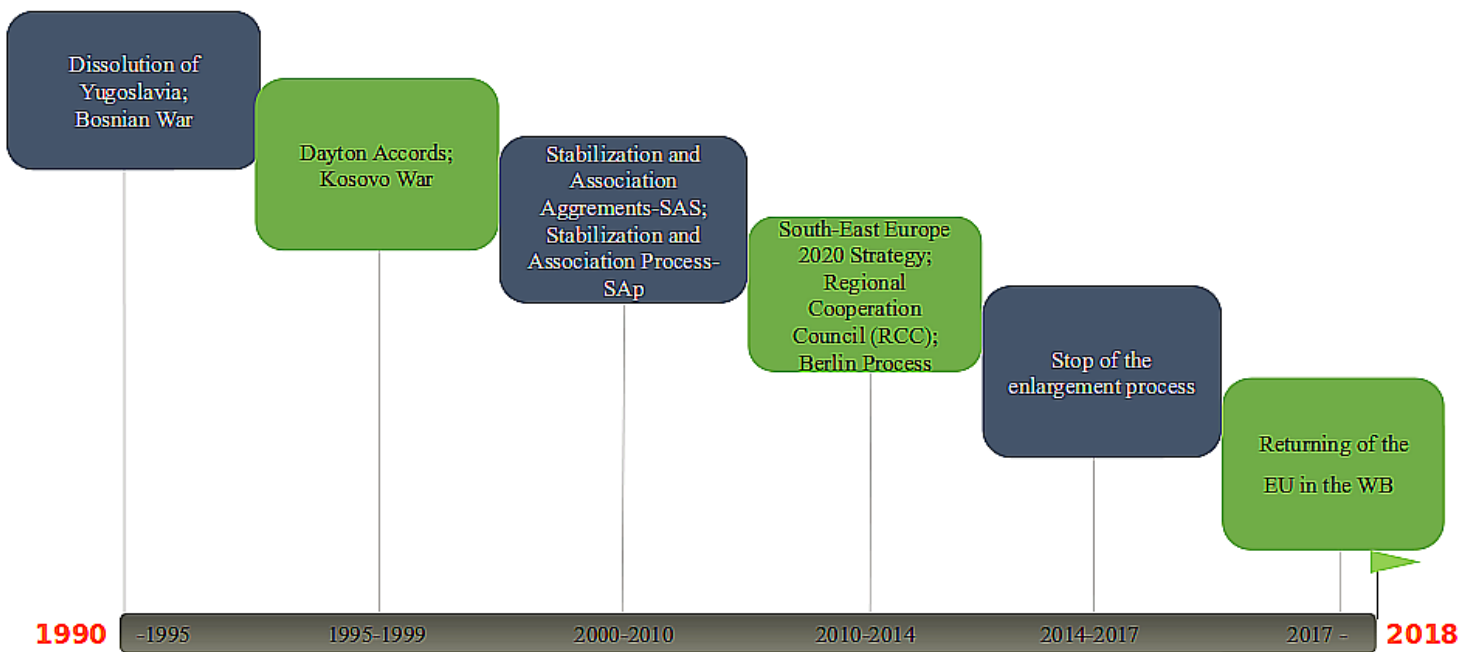
2.1.2 From Balkanization to Europeanization

Following the constructivist logic, it can be said, that Western Balkans is what the European Union has made of it. Raised ‘...from a small bureaucratic department in the External Relations Directorate of the European Commission at the end of 1995’ (*ibid.*, 20), from the 2000’s onwards it became the *foci* for the new regional policies of the EU, however, without creating an *ad hoc* strategy which could fit at micro level and make stable the regional cooperation. The main strategy of the EU institutions essentially was based on two pillars. First, increasing the regional cooperation among the Balkans states after the dissolution of Yugoslavia. Second, the concernings regarding the association/enlargement framework for transforming the candidates into member-states of the Union (*ibid.*, 21).

From 1995 till today the whole period of activity of the EU institutions in the region of the Western Balkans can be divided in six periods; the period from 1990-1995; from 1995-1999; from 2000-2010; from 2010-2014; from 2014-2017; and from 2017-present. Each of these

periods bears crucial moments that differ in time (Figure 2.). Based on this logic, the division of this engagement in periods is to some extent unavoidable. The moments that lie in the discussed periods remain related to the regional developments on the one side, and the response to these developments, mostly reactive rather than proactive of the EU institutions, on the other.

Figure 2. Timeline of the most important moments where the periodization of the EU’s activity is based on



Source: Author’s diagram

As illustrated in the table, the periodization remains based on the most important moments which in long-time have defined the EU engagement in the region of the Western Balkans. Starting from the first period, the attention brings back the Balkans turmoil started with the dissolution of Yugoslavia in 1990, followed by the broke-up of the Bosnian War in 1991 which ended in 1995. In this period the EU engagement is limited only in the frame of humanitarian aid and economic assistance and not focused politically to create a strategy for the region.

Otherwise, the second period, which includes the developments that took place between the 1995 and 1999 with signing of the Dayton Accords and the Kosovo War, reflects the changes in the EU perceptions in regard to Balkans, where the region – for security and stability reasons - got a more particular attention, as reflected in the following period (2000-2010), with the signing of the 'Stabilization and Association Agreements (SAs)', and 'Stabilization and Association Process (SAP).

In keeping the cooperation line with the Western Balkans countries, the third period 2010-2014, reflects a more solid engagement of the EU in the region. The agreements between the EU and the Western Balkans signed in the previous period were now enforced by the introduction of the South East Europe 2020 Strategy, the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), and the Berlin Process. These moments gave this period a more intensive colour compared to the previous one.

In following, what makes particular the period 2014-2017, starts with the Declaration of the EU Commission's President Juncker in September 2014, which stopped the enlargement process for the WB countries, and ends with another declaration of the same President in December 2017 which turned on the green light for the WB countries in retaking the accession process based on a new strategy of the EU.

Since 2017 the EU's activity in the region has recognised a slight increase. The Commission declared that in 2018 would return again with new declarations in regard to the process of accession for the WB countries.

Following now with a more detailed analysis, starting with the first period (1990-1995), or 'the last Balkanization' era, the activity of the EU institutions during this period was essentially "keeping the 'infection' at arm's length". Due to several factors, the EU's intervention in the Bosnian Crisis that broke-up in the aftermath of the dissolution of Yugoslavia was limited in the humanitarian aid and assistance. As a period characterised by conflict, chaos, and disorder the vision of the EU was in the frame of post-crisis reconstruction and not in pursuing a political strategy towards the region (Jano 2010).

During the second period (1995-1999), the EU engagement in the Balkans followed a different trajectory by envisaging a new strategy for the whole region with the aim to transform it in a

regional actor. Based on this strategy, in 1998, during the Austrian presidency, the EU introduced the Western Balkans (WB) concept, including Croatia, Bosnia&Herzegovina, Montenegro, Albania, Macedonia, Kosovo, and Serbia, minus Slovenia. This was the sign of changing in the EU perceptions towards the region, in considering it not any longer the door next to Europe, but as a part of it. However, despite the investments in the economic and political recovering, the EU regional strategy was based on bilateral agreements and not on a common strategy which could be applied to all countries at the same time under the same conditions. Apart from this, the Balkans represented still a '*Terra incognita*' for the EU, hence, any initiative meant facing with a different political culture, but above all, with a different historical legacy. However, what makes the difference between the first and the second period is the vision and the perceptions of the EU towards the whole region, and its goal to make it more secure and stable at the same time (Jano 2010; Mazarapoulos 2013; Prifti 2013).

Otherwise, during the third period (2000-2010), the strategic importance of the region for the EU got more attention, especially after the Kosovo War. During this period the EU takes the initiative for the implementation of a common strategy by extending the prospect of enlargement in all countries of the Western Balkans. Differently, from the previous periods, the focus of the EU was now directly related to the Europeanization process and the integration of the region in the European-Atlantic Community. However, despite the engagement, there were some limitations in regard. The progress conditionality was applied to all countries despite how far they were from their membership in the Union. Regional problems (corruption, economic stagnation, human rights, judiciary system, institutions inefficiency, poor governance, territorial disputes etc.) were other important obstacles for the EU. Apart from this, there was variation among the potential and candidates members in meeting the EU conditionality for accession. Consequently, the progress of the reforming process was slow throughout the whole period (Jano 2010; Mazarapoulos 2013; Prifti 2013).

From 2010-2014, the relations between the EU and the Western Balkans became more solid, where a set of new initiatives were introduced. The South East Europe 2020 Strategy, the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), and the Berlin Process, along with the advancing with the negotiation process with some of the WB countries while concluding the accession process with Croatia, were some of the most important moments. However, as in the previous periods, the obstacles were the same; apart the EU strategy in keeping and developing only bilateral relations within the frame of regional cooperation, transition problems reflected in weak

democracies and poor governance, along with other important issues, such as the presence of nationalism and the rise of Euroscepticism and populist movements, were some of the main problems which hampered the EU reforms (Jano 2010; Mazarapoulos 2013; Prifti 2013).

Otherwise, during the period from 2014-2017, the engagement of the EU in the Western Balkans recognised an important turning point. In September 2014, the EU President of the Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, declared that would be no further enlargement for the Western Balkans countries in the future five years (EC 2014). This break, considered as the consequence of the Euro and the Refugee Crisis, and an overall consequence of the Enlargement *fatigue*, created space not only for the backsliding of the democracies in the WB countries in the traditional 'Balkans mentalité' - but also for the instability in the region, reflected in security incidents and other issues, such as the strengthen of the Euroscepticism, nationalist movements, and Islamic fundamentalism (*ibid.*).

In the last period (2017-present), the break of the EU engagement in the Western Balkans came to its end. Due to several factors - where the most important the increasing presence of other actors in the region, such as Russia, China, Turkey, and the Gulf Countries - the EU took the decision to put the Western Balkans again in the agenda by re-establishing a new strategy in which more defined timelines with regard to the accession, the strengthening of the democracy, the rule of law, increase of economic investments and cooperation would be once again the priority for the European institutions. Whether this engagement will bring the Western Balkans closer to the accession or not, the process is still ongoing.

From this analysis, the results indicate two main points. First, during all the discussed periods the EU institutions have lacked a long-term strategy for making the Western Balkans a stable region with regard to its preparation for the integration in the Union. It can be noticed that during the first decade, concomitant the dissolution of the Yugoslavia and the Bosnian conflict, the EU was engaged mostly with assisting in the economic and humanitarian sector, while in the following decades the presence of the European Union became more visible through the enhancement of the regional cooperation with several bilateral agreements, which, nevertheless, the missing of a long-term strategy halted the reforming process which after 2013, especially after the decision of the EU Commission's President, Juncker, to stop the enlargement process in 2014 due to the EU policrisis, strengthened the Euroscepticism and populism in the Western Balkans. Helped by the other factors, internal and external, here

referring to the increasing influence of Russia, China, and Gulf Countries, - whereas the rise of Islamic fundamentalism and the Refugee Crisis fuelled further the instability and backsliding of the democracy in the region the whole process became a one step forward, two steps back, transforming the hopes of the WB peoples in disillusion while creating more space for internal instability.

On the other side, it is precisely because of these developments that the EU decided to turn back in the region after 3 years since the Juncker's declaration. In 2017, the Commission made public the new strategy for the WB while claiming new timelines for the accession of some of the WB countries within 2025. Further help for the reforming process was claimed to facilitate the negotiations process for the current potential and candidates members, while a particular point of the new strategy was the attention given to Montenegro and Serbia, considered as the 'frontrunners' of the WB integration. This particularist tendency, - followed by protests in the high levels of Balkans politics considering it as an unfair in respect to the other countries - makes questionable the choices of the EU, whether the importance of integration lies only in the economic statistics, or other factors are included as well. Hence, the second important point of the analysis's results is whether the policies of the EU are really grounded in making the integration process functional while taking into account the cultural differences in the name of a common European identity, or the priority will be given as always to the economic interest and geopolitics?

With this idea in mind, in the last sub-chapter, the analysis will take a closer look precisely at this issue which is relevant in the context of the European identity discourse. How the flexibility in the EU policies tend to mix the importance of culture with the market economy and geopolitical interests through bypassing the importance of the cultural differences and societal perceptions, remains a crucial point for taking into consideration.

2.1.3. Europeanization in the Western Balkans: democracy, culture, people, or 'business, as usually'?

How's the weather, Jeeves?

Exceptionally clement, sir. Anything in the papers?

Some slight friction threatening in the Balkans, sir.

Otherwise, nothing.

(Wodehouse 1923 referenced in CIA 1990, 1)

Should the European project started with culture and not with the economic integration, as one of the originators, Jean Monnet, has stated decades ago ‘Si c’était à refaire, je commencerais par la culture’ (if we were to do it all again, we would start with culture) (Monnet, referenced in Navracsics 2017), today, the idea of a unified Europe and common European identity reflects what the economy can produce. Whether it produces values and virtues, or simply strategies and interests, the Western Balkans can be the illustration for this where there is no need to hypothesise how the fluctuations of the EU engagement in the region indicate the reasons behind the lack of coherence and long-term vision, which can be linked essentially with two factors. First, the regional stability over democratization, which gradually has become the main direction of the EU policies. And, second, the geopolitical interests conflated with those economic, which have created over the years an artificial structure over the cultural differences, generating in this way a dichotomous image of the EU among the Balkans peoples, that ‘if I see you then I have missed you’.

Certainly, it is out of the discussion the role of the EU in the recovering of the Western Balkans as a region. The changes can be easily perceived in all countries and their societies. In few decades, the EU institutions have contributed to making the region more stable through pushing the countries towards more cooperation, while emphasizing the importance of leaving aside the ethnic hatred.

However, despite the achievements reached in time, the returning of the EU in 2017 with a new strategy for the Western Balkans has not lessened the scepticism among the Balkans peoples and politicians. The reactions that followed the declaration which makes the Montenegro and Serbia as ‘frontrunners’ of the EU integration, rise again the question whether the goal of the EU politics is credible or not such as to make possible the Europeanization process in the Western Balkans? In few words, is the EU really interested in the democratization of the Western Balkans peoples or once again is the economy that decides which country is closer to the EU?

A highly complex process which lasts for years, the Europeanization, based on the *conditionality criteria*, is recognized with both sides of its impact on the societies and countries which apply for membership in the European Union, positive and negative (Vachudova 2008, 30). In the case of the Western Balkans, the limits of the process in transforming the societies of these countries reflect different circumstances if the same analysis is applied to the Central-Eastern European Countries (CEE). If the Europeanization process in the CEE countries succeeded in accommodating the reforms which in the following lead to their accession in the Union, in the case of the Western Balkans the process has, and is facing, with other specifics and difficulties. The aim to treat the region as a common regional actor in order to make easier its reforming process, what the results indicate so far, is that the regional security and stability remains the main concern for the EU institutions. The democratic transformation is more complementary to the stability rather than being the quidity of the EU's institutional engagement.

For understanding the importance of this argument and placing the relevance of this issue in the context of the European identity discourse, remains important to understand first 'what' has been Europeanized, and what has not, in the Western Balkans.

If due to the historical developments, the main urgency in the Western Balkans countries - along with the security and stability, that required a constant attention from the part of the EU institutions - was the state and regional-building through reconciling the inherited ethnic hatred by building a triangle of communication, between the EU institutions, the local/regional political elites, and peoples, the investing of the EU, in reality, mirrored in concrete results became gradually a linear path which over the years gave birth to the so-called 'stabilocracy' and 'stabilocrats', which essentially represent that type of power and that class of politicians which remain loyal to the old politics while welcoming at the same time the EU funds in turning of promises for accomplishing the EU conditions for reforming (Tcherneva 2017).

Certainly, that the positive steps towards the fulfilling of the EU conditions for the integration process, - *inter alia* the most important, the leaving behind the era of the Balkanization while giving impetus to the EU perspective and the membership-building - enforce the impact of the Europeanization process in the Balkans countries, which so far can be considered as successful compared to the phase in which the countries were at the beginning of the 90^s. However, what

remains present in the region is the persistent backsliding of the democracy into ethnic tension, nationalism, corruption, and other issues which essentially create space for instability.

Based on the Freedom House 2017 rankings, all countries of the region experienced a decline in their democracy scores, where the most serious was in Macedonia and Montenegro (Freedom House 2017). Despite the country specifics, the presence of the same issues in all region, indicates that the strategies of the EU to build a regional identity based on common institutions with the aim to connect the differences among the states have failed anyway to connect people and their cultural, ethnic, religious differences, and above all, their historical legacy. Obviously, the lack of hard line of the EU politics which prevents the institutions to be intrusive in the politics of states, either in the case of the Member States, either in the case of those potential and candidates for membership, remains an important element, as remains important also the analysis of Barbara Jelavich that emphasises how the mentality of the Balkans peoples has traditionally accommodated and at the same time opposed by translating the foreign interference into local and particular interests, even in the case that interference has been benign (Jelavich 1983).

Nevertheless, the perspective of this point of the argument lead towards the conclusion that the lack of coherence of the EU engagement in the region has led towards a lack of clarity which makes sense saying that in 28 years the EU has been ‘one foot in, one foot out’ in the politics of the Western Balkans countries.

Otherwise, following the analysis with the second point, the logic that places the importance of the returning of geopolitics in Balkans conflated with the economic interests makes relevant arguing that - as aforementioned in the introductory part of this sub-chapter – the fact that the EU has decided to get back in the Balkans after the declaration of 2017, enforces once more not only the absence of coherence in its politics but also how the EU uses the regional stability for avoiding possible threats to the economic integration. And this becomes relevant if the increase of influence of other actors in the region, such as China, Gulf Countries, in more particular Russia and Turkey, remember to the EU how important is still the ‘economic cooperation’ and geopolitics.

The missing presence of the EU in the region of Western Balkans during the last years has created a political and economic vacuum. This vacuum has served the interests of new actors

and those traditional, here referring to Russia, ‘which in reality has never left’ the region, as Dimitar Bechev comments in his article ‘*Russia’s Foray into the Balkans: Who Is Really to Blame?*’ (2017). Certainly are well-known the historical ties between Russia and the Balkans countries, especially with Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Macedonia, also the tools that Russia has traditionally used to expand its control and influence in the region: ‘political pressure, soft power, including cultural, media, and religious campaigns; and economic leverage ranging from the control and acquisition of critical energy assets to the financing of political parties and media’ (CSD 2018). The recent incidents in the region, as the most serious, that in Montenegro, show that the attempts of Russia to create instability in the region remain the same, even though, following the logic of Bechev, between popularity and influence there is a difference. Despite the traditional print of Russia in the region of the Western Balkans countries, it cannot be stated for sure that it has the capability to make radical changes in the region. The influence of Russia is limited to the space created by internal and external factors, where the most relevant remains the lack of continuous engagement of the EU in the region, whereas, on the other side, the loyalty of the regional nationalities and identities to the traditional ethnic, religious, and nationalistic composition remain the internal factors in supporting the Russian interference, and not only (*ibid.*).

In this context, the role of China, another actor which is trying to increase its role in the region, becomes important in the analysis.

Differently, from Russia, the role of China in the region of the Western Balkans, remains related to the economic interests, which, however, even though Russia directly tries to preserve its traditional geopolitical interests, China veils similar interests under the cover of economic influence and market expanding. The booming of the Chinese investments in all region of the Western Balkans countries as part of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) (Tonchev 2017) makes relevant considering China as an important player which due to its politics represent a real challenge for the EU investments (*ibid.*).

In this context, while not counting the increasing influence of Turkey and the Gulf countries, the doubts on the returning of the EU in the WB remain mostly related to these factors. Even though the missing presence during the last years has been considered as the consequence of the Euro crisis, Refugee crisis, Brexit, and other issues, it does not anyway diminishes the

importance of the fact that despite the attention the EU gives to other areas, yet, the economic integration remains the most important.

How this influences the integration process and the reforming of the Balkans societies remains reflected in the national perceptions which essentially tend to accommodate more the physical /material benefits of the reforming rather than the core values of the democracy. At macro-regional level, the EU politics have transformed the reforming path of the WB in an ‘unfinished business’, where as long there is no danger from the region that can undermine the European project, the EU can follow its business at ‘home’. Otherwise, if other actors get closer to the European gates, then the EU get involved.

2.2. Interpretations and conclusions

The aim of the analysis in this chapter has been to understand the relation between Europe in terms of European Union and Western Balkans after the dissolution of Yugoslavia. The attention has been given to the Europeanization process and its impact on the Western Balkans societies. How the top-down policies of the EU institutions have been accommodated in the region after the dissolution of Yugoslavia and how the region’s politics and peoples perceptions have facilitated or constrained these policies have been the crucial point of the analysis. The conclusion can be divided into two main points. First, the engagement of the EU in the region of Western Balkans has lacked the coherence and clarity, creating over the years a hybrid class of politicians who seek to keep vivid the nationalistic past over the reforming process, and an overall tiredness and disillusion among the people. And, second, this political tendency and tiredness have contributed for more space for the intrusion of other actors, the most concerning, Russia, which continue to be of much supporting for the destabilization of the region.

The overall conclusion is that the EU needs to take more seriously the Europeanization process in the Western Balkans if it is really interested to have a plus-one region as part of its area. The importance of the reforming process does not lie in the time-lines of accession, neither in the material benefits or in geostrategic interests, as in the perceptions of people. If the EU continues to consider the integration process linked narrowly to the economic and other pragmatic interests by treating the Western Balkans as the gate which needs to protect for

keeping safe its core boundaries, then any connection is lost, for nations and identities still matter, and people lie in the communities and not in the markets. For keeping the track of this logic and taking a closer look at this issue, in the following chapters the analysis will stop on the national perceptions, taking as case studies Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. How people of these two countries feel with regard to the EU and the European identity discourse, will be at the basis of the analysis.

3. EUROPEAN IDENTITY AND NATIONAL PERCEPTIONS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

European integration will require a transformation
of the way European thinks and acts.
(Petland 1973, 242)

As already mentioned in the previous chapters, the idea of projecting Europe in the form of a supranational identity over its multiple identities remains questionable whether the efforts can succeed in the case of the Balkans countries (Scheck 2012, 17). As Scheck argues in her book, *Changing identities in the Southeastern Europe*, the attempts of the EU to succeed with the integration project remain challenged by the perceived threat that the Western Balkans societies feel towards the process which essentially means a renegotiation of the traditional identities and the creation of a new knowledge based on similar perceptions of the integration and accession process. Therefore it requires new and common cultural standards on the intercultural cooperation and multicultural coo-existence between the Balkans countries (*ibid.*, 18). View from this point, the problem consequently is threefold;

1. The renewal of ethno-nationalism following the dissolution of Yugoslavia;
2. The reluctance in assimilating the ethnic heterogeneity into a greater entity;
3. The growing uncertainty due to the globalization process and its consequences at the nation-state level (*ibid.*, 18-26).

Hence, the question is again, is the EU ready for making the whole Balkans countries part of its

family? Can the EU top-down policies ‘domesticated’ in order to make these countries to see from the same angle the integration process?

As already explained, the European Project lies in two pillars, in the economic and political integration. Every initiative serves to maintain and to move forward the project from these two directions. However, as the critics of the topic have argued, reforming the regions with the aim to transform them in market zones without taking into consideration the cultural differences means on the other side creating a mangle rather a design which may serve to the cohesiveness which can help the Union to become truer as an entity. As Marshall has been commented:

‘... if you try to deny [cultural differences],
then the trouble really begins.’

(Marshall 1996 referenced in Robyn 2005, 7)

Is for this reason why so far the national perceptions remain the mirror of how and where the success of the European integration can be perceived on the one side, and how the old identity constructions become problematic in the case the cosmopolitan dimension of the European identity tend to challenge them through moulding a new entity. In the case of the Western Balkans countries, where ethnicity, religion, and linguistic composition have been traditionally the main factors in shaping the collective identities, the process of Europeanization is still in its transitory phase, reason why the relevance of the European identity discourse remains still mixed with the material benefits of the European integration. The European ‘face’ is not yet strong enough to interfere in the daily life of the Balkans people, consequently, it remains within the frame of the advantages that gives the European citizenship. It is precisely because of these advantages where the national perceptions of the WB countries mostly rely on.

To make concrete the theoretical part of this argument, and to place the macro-level analysis in the micro-level plane, the attention in the following will be centralised on two case studies, Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. A set of qualitative and quantitative data, where the most important the Eurobarometer Interactive Opinion and other studies conducted by relevant institutes of research, will support the empirical analysis.

What brings closer Croatia and Macedonia, apart from their geosition in the Balkans Peninsula, remains related to the common history of Balkans and its relation with Europe. In the awakening of the nationalist movements, all the Balkans countries have been 'preceded and then accompanied by a cultural and literary awakening, during the course of which every national group developed inspiration from its own history, which served as a foundation for political claims' (Akhund-Lange 1998). Therefore, in both cases, taken into analysis, history, religion, ethnicity, language, and nationalism, represent the 'common' that connects the two countries, which on the other side evoke the role of international politics as one of the major factors in defining the history of Balkans. The influence of these factors on the perceptions with regard to Europe and European identity has made what the citizens of these countries feel today, where more than cultural and spiritual dimension, see in being part of the Union the material benefits.

If from a macro-level the historical development in Croatia and Macedonia reflects similarities, on the other side, there are important differences, which lie precisely in the historical legacy. In the case of Croatia, the perceptions towards Europe, in particular towards the European Union, remain conflated with the national pride due to religious factors, where Latin Christianity, as the most important factor in shaping the national identity and making it part of the spiritual world of Western Europe remains an important element why Croatians, paradoxically, remain pessimists with regard to the EU and its politics. The lack of the religious dimension in the treaties of the EU fades the image of Europe, which in the perceptions of Croatians remains strictly connected to Christianity.

On the other side, in the case of Macedonia, identity remains a complex issue. The historical past, where the presence of multicultural ethnicities and the continuous conflict between Bulgarians, Serbs, and Greeks to gain control over the Macedonian territories - at the same time seeking political independence from the Ottoman rule on the one side, and religious independence from Greek Orthodoxy on the other – have envisaged a different identity, which today remains in strong contrast compared to the rest of the region (*ibid.*).

Another important point of the comparative analysis is the report of these countries with the EU integration process. Apart from their similarities and differences in the historical context, what connects and not these countries with regard to the EU integration and membership is the report with the transition and the economic rationalism or the cost-benefit analysis of the membership.

In both cases, these countries remain prey of their transitory phase where several factors, internal and external, remain the main reason of the significant differences reflected in their EU integration phase, Croatia, already an EU Member while Macedonia still a candidate since 2005. These differences on the other side justify the scale of euroscepticism. If compared to other countries such as the case of the Czech Republic, where the success in carrying out from the transition explain the lack of enthusiasm in being part of the EU, in the case of Romania the enthusiasm is more present due to the membership benefits as the consequence of the transition problems the country has and is facing.

In the case of Croatia and Macedonia, the result is the same, for both countries share different historical developments, while the different degree of reforming in overcoming the problems of transition and to be part of the EU. This difference explains the different scale of euroscepticism, where Croatians have been continuously more sceptic with regard to the EU membership, while Macedonians, despite the fluctuations in their perceptions, still remain more positive for their country's integration. Croatia, differently from Macedonia, was the first country in the region of the Western Balkans to join the EU. However, despite the membership benefits, Croatia has been in economic recession for a long time, hence, it means, that if for any country which joins the EU the initial economic decline is normal, in the case of Croatia this declining was accompanied by a persisting not recovering (Vizjak, Vizjak 2012). This inequality at the EU Member States has induced an overall disillusion among the Croatian citizens.

On the other side, for Macedonia, the situation seems to be more complex. Due to the long internal instability of the country, the transition problems continue to be the main obstacle for the integration process, which anyway seems to be perceived more positively if it is compared to Croatia. Despite that even Macedonians see a level of economic inequality in a possible future membership of their country, their positivism anyway is more present. This has not reduced the level of euroscepticism in periods where the political crises have dominated the life of Macedonians, however, the economic rationality and the cost-benefit analysis is dominant.

As a result of this factors, placing these two countries *vis-a-vis* to the European identity discourse enhances the relevance of the analysis and in the following will help for understanding how the citizens of these two countries feel with regard to Europe and the

European Union, consequently, what does all this reflect in the relevance of the European identity discourse in the Western Balkan countries.

3.1. Croatia – Case study no.1

Croatia represents a particular case, where it is possible to find the classical example of how the national identity challenges the EU argument on the identity. In this study, Croatia is analysed with the aim to take a closer look at the national perceptions of the citizens with regard to Europe and the European identity. The reason of selection lies in the specifics of the relations between Croatia with Europe and European Union. While on the one hand stands the historical legacy of Croatia and its traditional ties with the Christian Europe, on the other, the attitude of Croatians and their euroscepticism with regard to the EU accession during the 2000's and in following, reflects the reason why Croatians do not approve the existence of a Union which does not represent Europe and its cultural heritage, here referring to religion as essential element in the Croatian national identity formation.

This argument serves for enforcing the author's idea that the economic and political integration, as the two main pillars of the EU, are not enough to produce the necessary conditions which can help for the creation of a common European identity. Despite what lies in the Declaration on European identity in 1973, where the 'common legacy' of the Nine Members of the EC was considered at that time as one of the conditions for the founding of a common European identity (CVCE 2013), or the re-conceptualization of the concept in the following decades in considering the European identity 'as complementary to national and regional identities, providing citizens with an additional set of rights, perspectives and self-understandings' (Lucarelli *et al.* 2011, 3) the actuality cannot hide that, as in the case of Croatia, the multitude of the European cultural identities do not fit in the EU criteria, which either in the case of common legacy or not, remains based in the 'self-other' and 'inclusion-exclusion' report, rather than in embracing all the cultural differences under the same umbrella. As a Croatian respondent answered in a survey conducted by Gong in 2011:

‘Why should I have to feel like a European? EU showed its teeth
and lack of understanding for the most refined values, such as religion.

It is trying to detach us from our spiritual roots. However, we are obliged to accept such reality because it is slowly becoming a socially desirable behaviour.

Just try going against it and you will be mocked.

(Gong 2011, 16)

These perceptions reflect the combination of ‘distrust in the European Union and distaste for membership’ (Stulhofer 2005, 141) among the citizens of Croatia. In considering the EU membership as an unavoidable process, Croatians continue to remain loyal to their nationalism and historical legacy, a particularity which highlights once again the relevance of connection between the national identity and the European identity discourse.

3.1.1. Croatia, Balkans, and Europe

In a research study conducted in 2012 with 68 Croatians pupils from three different regions of Croatia (Ross *et al.* 2012), the researchers - focused in discovering what are the feelings of the pupils with regard to their nationality, and if they were affected somehow by the fact of being in Europe, or if they saw anything particular about Europe, – the results obtained, highlighted the fact that the perceptions of pupils reflected the traditional dichotomous stereotypes of Croatians in considering the Balkans as the uncivilised part of Europe, whereas Croatia as part of Europe.

No one wants to be part of the Balkans – for Croatians, the Balkans begin in Bosnia; in Bosnia, the Balkans begin in Serbia; and in Serbia, they begin in Romania – because of the prejudices of the Western countries.

(Andrija P, from Zagreb referenced in Milekic, Balkans Insight 2018)

While the perceptions of the pupils regarding the Balkans were most in the context of ‘us-vs-them’, the local differences were another crucial point of the research. The results indicated that apart from the negative connotations that the Croatians pupils gave to the other countries, their perceptions included - as normally happens - the country’s differences as well. As one of the pupils, Agata, from Rijeka, commented:

I think we are all proud of [Croatia] – but again, we are not friendly towards Serbians or Slovenians – we hate Slovenians – but again, we don't like each other in Croatia – I think it's like we are in Croatia, but we are separated in a lot of ways – we don't like people from Zagreb, because they are *Purgeri* [term used for Zagreb inhabitants], or people from Split or Dalmatia we call *Tovari* [Dalmatian word for a donkey, derogative term for Dalmatians].

(Referenced Milekic, Balkans Insight 2018)

What the results of this study indicate is that despite the perceptions on the local differences, the identity stereotypes among the Croatians with regard to Balkans and Europe still rely on the cultural divisions between East and West. As the study concludes, in school, the Croatians teach that Croatia is not part of the Balkans geographically, but its position lies at the crossroads between the Mediterranean region, Southeastern Europe, and Central Europe (Milekic, 2018).

3.1.2. Eurobarometer survey- Comparative survey analysis (period 2007-2017) Analysis, results, findings, and limitation to research

However, what is most interesting in getting a deeper insight of how the Croatian think and feel about their position as Balkans and Europeans, is to see the argument from another perspective, where the use of other data will help in getting closer to the perceptions of the Croatians with regard to the European Union after the dissolution of the Yugoslavian Federation.

Analysis

The aim of this analysis is to support the theoretical part of the study where the attention is given to the case of Croatia as an country of the Western Balkans and at the same time a EU Member State. The purpose is to prove the hypothesis from a micro-level perspective where the empirical data will enforce the author's core idea on the relevance of the European identity discourse in the Western Balkans based on three outcomes. First, the national identity in Croatia, as in the other countries of the EU, is still strong. Second, the perceptions of the

Croatians on the European identity remain conflated with the historical past, in particular with the religious legacy of the country which excludes the possibility to embrace an Europe without the Christian Catholic as an essential dimension of it. Third, as a consequence, the EU membership is perceived merely in the frame of utilitarian and materialistic gains rather than the ideal in which the Croatians can see their country, hence the model which can be followed.

The data used belong to two important sources, the Eurobarometer Interactive Opinion and Parlemeter. The data will serve for obtaining empirical results which support the author's thesis with regard to the relations between the European Union and the Western Balkans countries, as well the relevance of the European identity in Balkans. The analysis is comparative and takes two different periods, 2007 and 2017, in order to grasp the differences created in time and to understand what the Croatians value the most in their relation with the Union. This will serve on the other side for understanding not only the impact of the Europeanization and integration process in the Western Balkans countries during the last decades but above all, what is the relevance of the European identity discourse in Balkans, where this study is focused on. The questions where this analysis is based on, are:

- Q1. What does the EU mean to you personally?
- Q2. People may feel different degrees of attachment or their town or village, to their region, to their country or to Europe. Please tell how attached you feel to our country?
- Q3. Taking everything into account would say that [our country] has on balance benefited or not from being a member of the EU?
- Q4. Which of the following areas are the main reasons for thinking that our country has benefited from being a member of the EU?
- Q5. Reasons why your country has benefited from the EU membership?

Results and findings

Starting from the results of the first survey, what the main findings make evident is, that the Croatians - where the age of the respondents (11-17 years old) makes even more relevant the results – evaluate their position from the perspective of their historical, cultural and religious legacy, where considering Balkans as ‘uncivilised’ and their country different from the rest of

the Peninsula still remains at the core of their perceptions. On the other side, their consideration towards Europe reflects an assortment of feelings, where between nationalism and pride, and the historical position of Croatia in Europe, the importance still relies on the former, making even more contradictory the relations with modern Europe, here referring to the European Union, as the following results show. The Eurobarometer Interactive Opinion and Parlemeter surveys reflect a more interesting map of how the perceptions and feelings of the Croatians, as in the other countries of the Western Balkans, tend to be selective with regard to the EU. The inclination towards the material benefits of the EU membership and integration process, rather other aspects, enforces the overall perceptions what the EU membership delivers in reality to its members and potential members.

As the results of the Parlemeter indicate, 68 % of the Croatians has answered that their country has benefited from the EU membership, where 52 % consider more important the benefit of the membership's impact on employment, whereas the 35 % on the economic growth (see Appendix 8) (Parlemeter 2007, 2017). These data enforces the Eurobarometer results, where the image of the EU and what the EU represents for the Croatians remain limited in traveling and working. These trends in the analysed periods (4/2007) and (11/2017) have recognised a slight increasing, respectively, from 43 % in 2007, to 51 % in 2017, while the feeling of attachment to the own country has recognised a slight decline, respectively, from 69 % in 2007 to 50 % in 2017. Anyway, what makes this change insignificant is the fact that 23 % of the respondents which answered in 2007 that are '*Fairly attached*' to their country, this percentage in 2017 increased in 32 %, hence it can be noticed a balance between the first answer '*Attached*' and the second '*Fairly attached*' (see Appendix 7) (Eurobarometer 2007, 2017). These data remain an important indicator that enforces once more the traditional attitude of national identities that the national feeling and the attachment to the own country still remain the most important.

Limitations to research

Along with the findings, the limitations to research have demonstrated the importance for understanding why the data used limit to some extent the scientific depth of the study. The Eurobarometer, which essentially remains the most used source in collecting mass opinions when studying the European identity, poses significant challenges. The difficulty lies in the fact

that not all the EU Members are included as participants in the surveys, and not in all periods when the surveys have been conducted. For example, for making a comparative research between two periods, as in this study, the number of questions taken for the analysis is limited, because not all the EU Members have participated in the survey. This limitation is important for understanding why the Eurobarometer poses in many cases the use of additional resources of information. Apart from this, another limitation which would be considered important in similar studies is the lack of qualitative interviews, which can give a major contribution to findings through attaining a more exhaustive output of the respondents. Nevertheless, the empirical data used, have served anyway for supporting the theoretical part.

3.2. Interpretations and conclusions

The analysis in this chapter has been focused on the nationalist perceptions, taking as a case study Croatia. The analysis has started with an overview of the importance of the nationality within the discourse of the European identity and the integration process. Empirical data in following have served for supporting the theoretical part of the chapter and the study as well. The data used in the case of Croatia indicate that despite the engagement of the EU reflected in the significant changes during the last decades, have not contributed anyway in bringing Croatia closer to what the EU represents for modern Europe.

The main perceptions of the Croatians with regard to the EU remain related to the material benefits, in particular, traveling and working, while the feeling of attachment to the own country still remains relevant. What can be concluded, is that the integration process has not been strong enough to influence the Croatians to evaluate positively their EU membership which can go beyond the material interests. The EU is still considered as the opposite to the national identity, hence, no matter the historical, cultural and religious ties of Croatia with Europe – helped at the same time by the regional stereotypes where Croatians consider themselves different from the other Balkans countries - their perceptions with regard to the European Union and the European identity discourse remain divided between what their position in the history of Europe has been and what their position in the history of modern Europe is.

4. FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA - CASE STUDY NO.2

In this chapter, the analysis will focus on the national perceptions taking as a second study the Former Republic of Macedonia which is in the position of the candidate for the EU membership since in 2005. The aim of this chapter, as in the previous one is to discover what are the perceptions of the citizens in regard to the EU and to prove how these perceptions can affect negatively the European identity discourse in case of future integration of the whole region of the Western Balkans in the EU.

The debate in Macedonia with regard to the EU membership is pretty much similar as in the other countries of the Western Balkans, where the lack of coherence in the EU strategies and the missing presence during the last years have created an overall disillusion among the citizens. On the other side, the ups-and-downs of the reforming and integration process, reflected in the continuous backsliding of the democracy as in other indicators, show that the Europeanization process remains challenged by internal factors. The most important issues, the name dispute with the Republic of Greece, and the report with the minorities, the most important, ethnic Albanians, remain the reasons why the perceptions of the Macedonians with regard to the EU membership are dominated by the ethnic and nationalist feelings and at the same time by utilitarian needs which come as the result of the economic and societal level.

4.1. Analysis, results, findings, and limitation to research

Analysis

This analysis, as in the previous chapter, will support through empirical data the author's thesis that the EU policies and the general impact of the EU on the national perceptions of Macedonians have not transformed the way how citizens of Macedonia see the European Union, which, as in the case of Croatians, remains limited within the frame of the economic benefits and not the cultural gains. Without reducing the importance of democracy, which for Macedonians remains important, however, one of the reasons why the Macedonian citizens would be against to the EU membership is the threat to the domestic economy and the loss of national identity. Hence, as aforementioned, the aim of this analysis is to prove how similar perceptions, as in the case of Croatia, can produce negative outcomes in the context of the European identity discourse, contributing for more lack of cohesion, consequently, creating more space for disintegration within the EU.

The analysis, as in the case of Croatia, will be based on important resources where the Eurobarometer Interactive Opinion will be the first choice, supported in following by the study of Kristina Dimovska conducted in 2016 with the contribution of a number of institutes, such as Institute for Democracy Societas Civilis – Skopje (IDSCS), the Macedonian Center for International Cooperation (MCIC) and the Macedonian Center for European Training (MCET). As in the first case, the analysis is comparative and takes two different periods, 2007 and 2017, with the difference that the period in the first question belongs to March 2008 and not to April 2007 as in the case of Croatia. The research is divided into two parts, wherein the first part the questions are conducted only to the Macedonians respondents, whereas in the second part the analysis will include two additional questions conducted to both, to the Croatians and Macedonians. This in order to make the comparison between the Croatians and Macedonian perceptions and their 'wee-feel' in regard to the European Union and Europe. The questions where this research analysis is based on, are:

First part:

- Q1. What does the EU mean to you personally?

- Q2. People may feel different degrees of attachment or their town or village, to their region, to their country or to Europe. Please tell how attached you feel to our country?
- Q3. Why would you vote For EU integration of Macedonia?
- Q4. Why would you vote Against EU integration of Macedonia?

Second part:

- Q1. People may feel different degrees of attachment or their town or village, to their region, to their country or to Europe. Please tell how attached you feel to the European Union?
- Q2. People may feel different degrees of attachment or their town or village, to their region, to their country or to Europe. Please tell how attached you feel to Europe?

Results and findings

The aim of the empirical analysis in this chapter has been to discover how the results of the same questions applied to the Republic of Croatia reflect similarities or differences in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The same data sources have been used, with the difference that in both cases two different independent research studies have served as important supplementary information. Apart from Eurobarometer questions applied in the case of Macedonia, two other questions have been used for comparing Macedonia and Croatia. As in the first case, the analysis has been comparative where two different periods have served for measuring the differences in time. In the base of the results, the main findings reflect a very interesting outcome of how the Macedonians feel with regard to their own country, Europe, and the European Union.

Starting from the first question, *‘What does the EU mean to you personally?’*, the findings indicate that - as in the case of Croatia – what the EU represents for the Macedonians remains related to the materialist gains. 60 % of the respondents in 2008 answered that freedom for traveling, studying, and working everywhere in the EU represent the major impact and benefiting from a possible future EU membership. With a slight decline in 2017, where 52 % of the respondents answered the same, this option is followed by the *‘economic prosperity’* with

50 % in 2008 and 39 % in 2017. If compared with Croatia, the inclination towards the material benefits remains similar, as the inclination towards the own country reflects the same feeling, as reflected in the second question *'People may feel different degrees of attachment or their town or village, to their region, to their country or to Europe. Please tell how attached you feel to our country?'*, where 65 % of the respondents in 2007 selected *'Very attached'*. With a slight increase, the same option was selected by the 66 % of the respondents in 2017 (see Appendix 9) (Eurobarometer 2008, 2017).

While in the first two questions the attention was given to the image of the EU and what the Union represents for its Members (Croatia) as for those in the candidate status (FYROM), following with the third question *'Why would you vote For EU integration of Macedonia?'*, where a different source of data has been used, the findings show that even in the case of membership the improving of live standard and economic prosperity remain the main reasons why the Macedonians would be Pro to the EU membership, as in the opposite case why the Macedonians would be Against to it. As the results show, 29 % of the respondents answered that the reason of their vote for the EU membership of Macedonia is related to the improvement of the standard of living, while 26 % to the unemployment. On the other side, among the reasons for opposing the EU membership of Macedonia, 33 % of the respondents answered *'Worsening the standard of living'*, while 13 % *'Threats to the Macedonian economy'* (see Appendix 9) (Dimovska 2016).

What is more interesting in comparing Croatia and Macedonia, is not how their perceptions with regard to the image of the EU are similar, despite the different position – Croatia as an EU Member and Macedonia as a candidate – but how their attachment to the EU differs. The results of the question *'People may feel different degrees of attachment or their town or village, to their region, to their country or to Europe. Please tell how attached you feel to the European Union?'* indicate that 29 % of the Macedonian respondents in 2007 answered *'Very attached'* contrary to the 9 % of Croatians. Otherwise, the option *'Not very attached'* was selected by the 40 % of the Croatians in opposite to the 15 % of the Macedonians. To the same question in 2017, with some slight changes, 16 % of the Macedonian respondents answered that are *'Very attached'* to the EU, in opposition to the 10 % of the Croatians. Otherwise, the answer *'Not very attached'* was selected by the 37 % of the Croatian respondents contrary to the 25 % of the Macedonians (see Appendix 10) (Eurobarometer 2007, 2017).

In the last question *'People may feel different degrees of attachment or their town or village, to their region, to their country or to Europe. Please tell how attached you feel to Europe?'*, conducted only in 2017, the results indicate again similar attitudes of the Croatians and Macedonians with regard to Europe. If the attachment to the EU was more in the part of the Macedonians, the attachment to Europe reflect the same perceptions. In the base of the results, 21 % of the Macedonians answered *'Very attached'* in opposition to the 14 % of the Croatians, while 34 % of the Croatians selected *'Not very attached'* in opposition to the 19 % of the Macedonians. Otherwise, the option *'Fairly attached'* was selected by the 39 % of the Macedonians contrary to the 31 % of the Croatians (see Appendix 9) (*ibid.*).

What the results of the research analysis indicate is the fact that both countries share similarities in their perceptions towards the EU membership. Their interests towards the EU, and what the EU represents, follow those economic and material. Otherwise, with regard to the attachment to Europe and the European Union, the balance remains on the part of the Macedonians. Compare to the Croatian respondents, the Macedonians reflect more attachment, while on the other side, the attachment to the own country remains similar in both countries.

Limitations to research

Certainly, as in the case of Croatia, there are limitations to research, here referring to the Eurobarometer surveys, where the lack of data made necessary the use of other resources and studies to make complete the analysis. However, the main findings in this part of the study, have supported empirically the theoretical part, which, once again, is based on the idea that what the EU represents for the Western Balkans Countries remains merely in the limits of material benefits rather than the model which can serve for inducing in the traditional collective identities new norms and values. New identities take time, hence the relevance of the Western Balkans as a newly constructed identity of the European Union cannot yet represent the multi-ethnic structures of the Balkans countries and their respective cultural differences.

4.2. Interpretations and conclusions

The aim of this chapter has been to analyse empirically the question of the European identity

in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. As in the case of Croatia, the analysis has been based on a set of qualitative and quantitative data, the most important Eurobarometer, which has helped for getting an empirical overview of the national perceptions of the Macedonians with regard to their country, Europe, and European Union. While the first questions have focused on the Macedonians perceptions in regard to the European Union and the attachment to the own country, the last two questions have outlined a comparative view of both, Croatians and Macedonians, in regard to their attachment to Europe and European Union.

The main findings indicate that what the European Union represents in the case of Macedonians, remains limited within the material benefits of the membership and the integration process, whereas the attachment towards the own country remains high. What makes different Macedonia from Croatia is the attachment towards the European Union and Europe. Macedonians, differently from the Croatians are more attached, as reflected in the results of the data analysed, whereas the Croatians remain ambiguous.

However, for strengthening the analysis of both cases, and for understanding the relevance of the European identity discourse by making use of the analysed data, the following sub-chapter will summarise the most important points of the whole empirical analysis discussed so far.

4.3. The Conclusion of the case studies analysis

As mentioned in the theoretical chapter of this study, the relation between Europe and Balkans will be elaborated on two lines; the relation of European identity with Balkans identity and the relation of Europe with Balkans identities. The author has considered important to base the study on this frame for the main reason that the macro and micro level comparison can bring a complete picture of the analysis. Therefore, based on this idea, the analysis has brought a comparative perspective through connecting initially the European identity with the Balkans identity. From this, for understanding how this Balkans identity in the report with Europe and *vice-versa*, has facilitated or not the integration process concomitant with the dissolution of Yugoslavia, in following, the theoretical part has been supported by the empirical analysis where the use of qualitative and quantitative, such the Eurobarometer and other sources, have served for obtaining the necessary ground for bringing the comparison of Croatia and the

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia as case studies, serving at the same time as the illustration of the differences and similarities that lie in the Balkans identity and Balkans identities.

In the context of the European identity discourse, Croatia and Macedonia represent two particular cases, where due to historical developments at the regional and country level, the value of Europe and what it represents remain mixed. What connects these two countries lies in the frame of the macro-regional identity where a set of factors, such as the importance of religion, ethnicity, language, and nationalism, represent the ‘common face’, which is familiar to all countries of the region. What this Balkans ‘face’ has produced in the interaction with Europe throughout the history, and how on the other side the European politics have contributed to the ‘otherness’ of Balkans, remains reflected in the process of reforming and integration started with the dissolution of Yugoslavia in 1990, where the perceptions of the Balkans citizens, despite the goodwill in becoming part of the Union, do not hide the euroscepticism towards the European politics which in the most of the cases have been more exclusive than inclusive.

Based on this idea, the empirical analysis has brought a set of questions in function of discovering how the citizens of Croatia and Macedonia ‘feel’ with regard to their own country, Europe, and European Union. The questions’ structure has permitted to compare both countries by looking closer at their perceptions in two different periods, 2007 and 2017.

What the results indicate is that in both cases, the perceptions on the importance of nationality over that of the European Union is prevalent. This has remained unchanged throughout the analysed period. Otherwise, the perceptions in regard to Europe reflect different attitudes of the respondents, where Macedonians reflect more ‘attachment’ to Europe than Croatians. However, on the other side, the perceptions with regard to the European Union remain similar in both cases; the importance of material benefits of the membership and the integration process, which hides other elements, such as *democracy* or *cultural diversity*, is reflected as the first choice for the respondents of both countries. What does this mean? This means that what Europe and the European Union represent for the citizens of these countries is not the cultural idea of European identity but rather some narrow interests that rely on the economic benefits. This reflects the consequences of the economic and political integration which, as mentioned in the previous chapters, cannot conciliate the cultural heterogeneity that characterises Europe and its regions.

Hence, despite, that the respondents of both countries evaluate positively the EU membership, the reality is that the political culture of these Balkans countries which differs from that of the other regions of Europe, makes difficult to perceive Europe and the European Union beyond the traditional frame. It means, that the efforts of Europe for diminish the echoes of past through building new bridges for bringing the citizens of Balkans closer to the European values have not succeed to make silent the mistakes of the European politics during the last centuries, which essentially remain embedded in the 'otherness' and 'exclusiveness' of Balkans, which on the other side continue to see Europe as the cause of many of its past and current problems.

These stereotypes have not changed so much, therefore, if the European integration requires a different way how European think and act, in the case of Balkans countries this means transcending the collective memories for embracing new norms and values which go beyond ethnicity, religion, nationalism, and history. If in the case of Croatia the image of Europe remains still related to the country's historical contribute and pride, for Macedonia, is not yet distinguishable where Europe begins and the EU ends. Hence, the importance of the European identity in Balkans, is questionable, not only within the general frame which has accompanied the argument during the last decades, but in the context of possible future accession of the WB countries, where the cultural differences will contribute to more lack of cohesion within the EU, hence making the European identity discourse less relevant.

CONCLUSION

The discourse of the European identity remains highly debatable whether do exist or not such possibilities to bring closer the cultural, political, and economic heterogeneity of Europe under a common macro European identity. Despite the significant changes during the last decades - where the economic and political integration as the basis of the European project, have served to extend the principles of modern Europe through building a set of common norms and rules which along with the citizenship tend to create more space for the diversity through keeping a vertical line around which the EU citizens can 'touch' the unification - yet, there are two factors that should keep in mind. First, the differences at the macro-regional level, and, second, the importance of nation-states.

The aim of this study has been to bring into attention this argument, which in the case of Balkans the research has kept underdeveloped the importance on how the European identity project may be affected in case the Balkans countries comply with a set of norms posed by Europe by being part of it, which by no necessary can help for bringing closer the mentality of people and their culture to Europe, which on the other side tend to pose the idea of a unified Europe with reference to '...a commonly perceived past with common values and common roots' (Walkenhorst 2008, 7), keeping in this way a tension-line between what Europe is and what it wants to represent.

The theoretical part of the study, supported by the empirical analysis, has remained in function of the research questions, where the main findings have covered the logical argument which answers to these questions.

In the base of the results of both analyses, what the findings indicate, is that the relevance of the European identity in Balkans remains questionable due to the influence of several factors, the most important, the historical relations between Europe and Balkans identity, on the one side,

and the Balkans identities, on the other. Due to the 'frontier' position, the multi-ethnic collective identities in Balkans have been forced to survive under the strong pressure of inside/outside forces, the most important: geographic-spatial, cultural-religious, economic-social, and international politics. The influence of these factors has undermined the normal development at the level of community, nation, and region, keeping weak the internal cohesion at state-level. On the other side, the interaction with Europe has been determinant in giving to Balkans the negative image. The 'otherness' induced in the region has created in time stereotypes preventing in this way the normal political development of the Balkans states.

This remains reflected in the report with the European Union, which started to consider the real importance of the Balkans only after the Kosovo War in 1999. Even though the EU initiatives for cooperation with Balkans, with the aim to reduce the instability at macro-regional level, started with the Bosnian War and the Dayton Accords in 1995, in reality, the interest of the EU in making Balkans part of its agenda and the enlargement plan belong to the second decade after the dissolution of the Yugoslavia, concomitant the Kosovo War. What the EU has achieved in the several initiatives, projects, investments, strategies, agreements, implemented during this time reflect the success in making the region of Balkans part of the European politics and an important factor for the stability and security of Southeast Europe. In 1998, the EU introduced the Western Balkans (WB), a new identity concept which would include Croatia, Bosnia&Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, Kosovo, Macedonia, plus Albania, minus Slovenia. This newly constructed identity would serve as an intermediary between the EU and the WB countries with the aim to facilitate the reforming process. However, what remains crucial for understanding the reason why history matters - and why in a way or another the consequences of the 'otherness' of Balkans on the one side, and the mentality of Balkans people, on the other, remain an important factor in preventing the Balkans countries to perceive Europe and the European Union as the 'benign foreigner' in their internal affairs - is how people of these countries think and feel in regard.

Hence, in this context, the importance of national perceptions remains important for grasping to what degree the relevance of a European identity can be accommodated in the Balkans societies. For this reason, the case studies analysed in this work, support the author's thesis related to the argument. As the results indicate, in both cases, Croatia and Macedonia, the attachment to nationality dominate over the feeling of 'being European'. The perceptions with regard to Europe and the European Union remain conflated with the material benefits and

interests of the EU membership and integration process, diminishing in this way the importance of the other elements, such as democracy or cultural diversity. The dominance of the economic interest over the other factors remains the indicator why the Balkans countries remain pragmatic and utilitarian in their choices. As an opposing argument to this issue, it can be said that all the EU Members are similar to the Balkans countries. To some extent, all the Member States of the Union consider as primary the economic benefits in the EU membership. However, what makes different the Western Balkans from the other regions and countries, is the political culture and the peoples' mentality. The historical legacy and other factors remain the main obstacle for bringing closer Europe and Balkans societies.

The analysis can be concluded as follows. The emphasis on the European identity discourse has brought so much on the debate how the EU can bring closer the cultural differences among the nation-states, such as the relevance of the argument has become over the years highly questionable. How a macro-identity can be applied from top-down without taking into consideration the constructed identities which remain rigid in their collective norms, values, traditions, and mentality remains debatable in the academic circles, but above all in the perceptions of the common citizens. This becomes relevant in case the differences between regions are considerable, as in the case of the Balkans countries where the particularity which characterises its historical legacy, and not only, in the report with the rest of Europe remains the indicator why the Europeanization process reflect less success compared to the CEE countries. Despite the construction of new forms which can facilitate the connection between the EU institutions and the local political elites, yet, the reality and the daily life of people is far away from Brussels.

In concluding, is very easy to talk about European identity and Europeanization, but it is very difficult to be indifferent in front of the differences. If one day citizens of Europe, apart their passports, will call themselves 'Europeans', that day has still to come for the European identity remains a cultural idea that the EU uses for the economic and political integration, but in reality, this idea does represents neither the past, nor the future of Europe where an increasing cultural heterogeneity due to migration and other factors will require less cultural ties with the past and more political flexibility for the future. Hence, in this context, the accession of the Western Balkans countries will certainly not increase the cohesion within the EU, quite contrary, it will give a further contribute in making it less cohesive and along with it the European identity less true as it is now.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: EU-Western Balkans Strategy during the period 1990-1995

DIRECTIONS	RESTRICTIONS AND CONSTRAINTS
Post-crisis regional reconstruction.	Lack of intervention in the acute phase of the crisis management.
Humanitarian aid.	Lack of the EU's political strategy towards the region.
Incentives for economic and political reforms.	Conflict, chaos, disorder, ethnic and poverty issues.
Multi-speed in different perspectives to different countries of the region.	In the assistance programs not all the countries of the region were included as in the case of the ECC countries.

Source: Jano (2010), author's table

Appendix 2: EU-Western Balkans Strategy during the period 1995-1999

DIRECTIONS	RESTRICTIONS AND CONSTRAINTS
Changes in perceptions due to the developments in the European and international politics.	<p>EU-WB relations limited only in bilateral agreements;</p> <p>Balkans, still a ‘Terra incognita’ for the EU;</p> <p>Political culture and lack of liberal democratic tradition.</p>
Introduction of the Western Balkans concept, including: Croatia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Montenegro, Albania, Macedonia, Kosovo, Serbia, minus Slovenia.	<p>Incentives for post-conflict reconstruction and not to prevent conflict;</p> <p>Lack of financial resources;</p> <p>EU support limited only in few areas, and not linked directly to the Europeanization process.</p>
Western Balkans considered not any longer as the region at the door of Europe, but part of it.	<p>Different perspectives of the regional countries related to the European integration;</p> <p>Historical legacy.</p>

Source: Jano (2010); Mazarapoulos (2013); Prifti (2013); author’s table

Appendix 3: EU-Western Balkans Strategy during the period 2000-2010

DIRECTIONS	RESTRICTIONS AND CONSTRAINTS
Changes in the EU strategy due to regional developments in the WB.	Strategy based on a long-term prospect.
The EU takes the initiative for the implementation of a common strategy.	Different speeds between the top-down and bottom-up directions of applying and reacting towards the EU policies.
The prospect of the enlargement extended in all countries of the region.	Regional problems (corruption, economic stagnation, human rights, judiciary system, institutions inefficiency, poor governance etc.).
Europeanization of the region.	Territorial disputes.
Integration of the region in the core values of the European-Atlantic Community through the 'conditionality criteria'.	Variation among the potential and candidate member in meeting the EU conditionality for accession.
The progress conditionality applied to all countries, despite how far they are from their membership in the Union.	In overall a slow progress throughout the whole period.

Source: (*ibid.*); author's table

Appendix 4: EU-Western Balkans Strategy during the period 2010-2014

DIRECTIONS	RESTRICTIONS AND CONSTRAINTS
South-East Europe 2020 Strategy	Democracies in transition, problems of governance.
Advancing with some of the WB countries with the negotiation process. Accession of Croatia is closed.	Presence of nationalism (increasing of other influences in the region, Russia).
Strengthening the political ties with the political elites of the potential and candidate members.	Economic issues due to the Euro Crisis.
The Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) replaces the Stability Pact for the Southeastern Europe.	Rise of Euroscepticism and populism.
European Union engages to consider the Western Balkans as regional identity actor by framing a regionally framework for cooperation (Berlin Process).	Different results in the progress of reforming reflected in the variation among states.
Keeping the bilateral relations at the same time.	Disillusion of Balkans societies.

Source: (*ibid.*); author's table

Appendix 5: EU-Western Balkans Strategy during the period 2014-2017

DIRECTIONS	RESTRICTIONS AND CONSTRAINTS
Changes in the agenda of the EU due to the Euro, Brexit, and the Refugee Crises.	Enlargement fatigue. Chain of security incidents.
No enlargement for the Western Balkans.	Euroscepticism and populism. Rise of Islamic fundamentalism.
The countries need to meet the required criteria for accession.	Refugee Crisis.

Source: (*ibid.*); author's table

Appendix 6. : EU-Western Balkans Strategy during the period 2017-Present

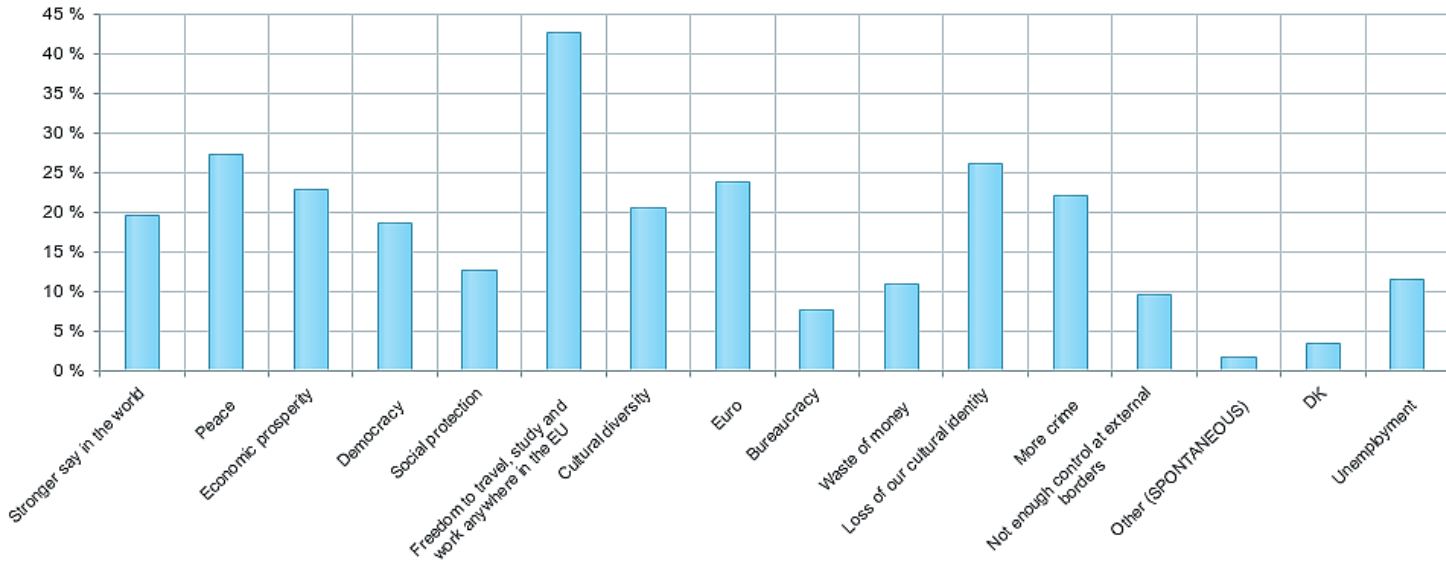
DIRECTIONS	RESTRICTIONS AND CONSTRAINTS
Positive climate. The returning of the EU's attention to the Western Balkans.	Differences between the current potential and candidate members with those at the beginning of the XXI-st century.
New strategy for the WB countries.	Presence of nationalism and nationalistic movements.
More defined timelines with regard to the accession.	Islamic fundamentalism.
Strengthening of democracy and the rule of law.	Disillusion and Euroscepticism.
Increase of the economic investments and cooperation.	Different results in the reforming process.
Increase of cooperation with non-governmental actors (civil society).	The aim of the European Union to treat the Western Balkans as a homogeneous regional actor remains constraint by the differences at state and societal level, as in the case of Serbia and Montenegro, considered as the 'front-runners' of the accession process.

Source: (*ibid.*); author's table

Appendix 7: The Eurobarometer results based on the answers of the Croatians respondents in the periods 04/2007-11/2007

Q1. What does the EU mean to you personally?

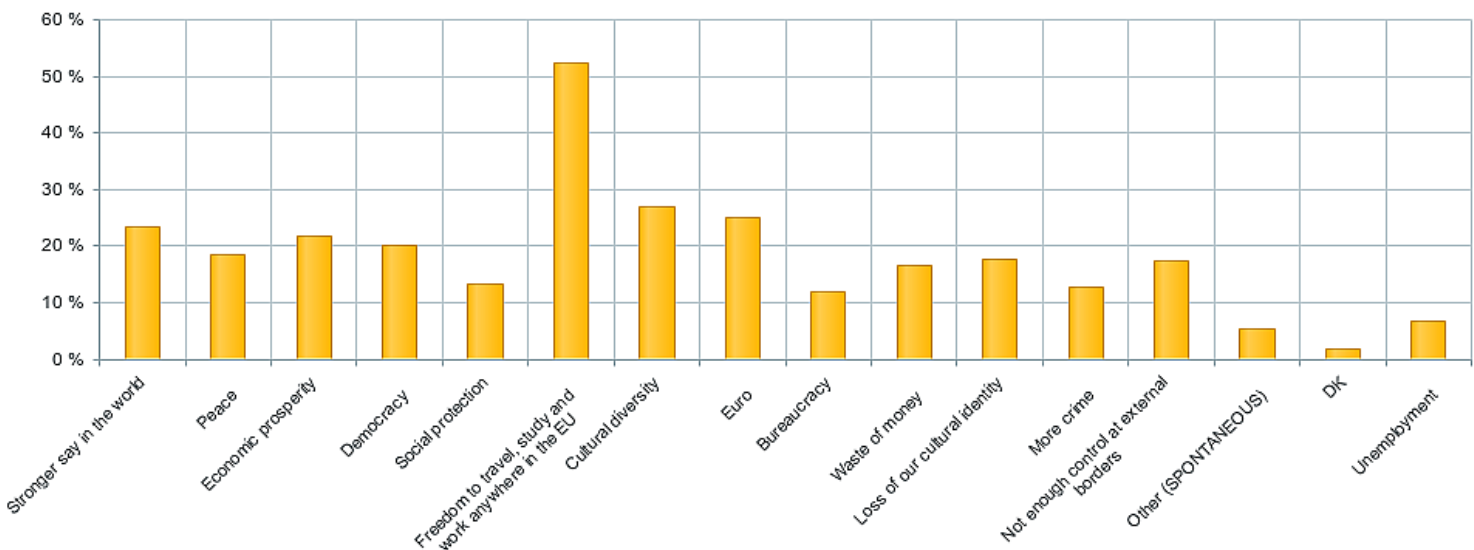
April 2007



Source: Eurobarometer Interactive Opinion

Q1. What does the EU mean to you personally?

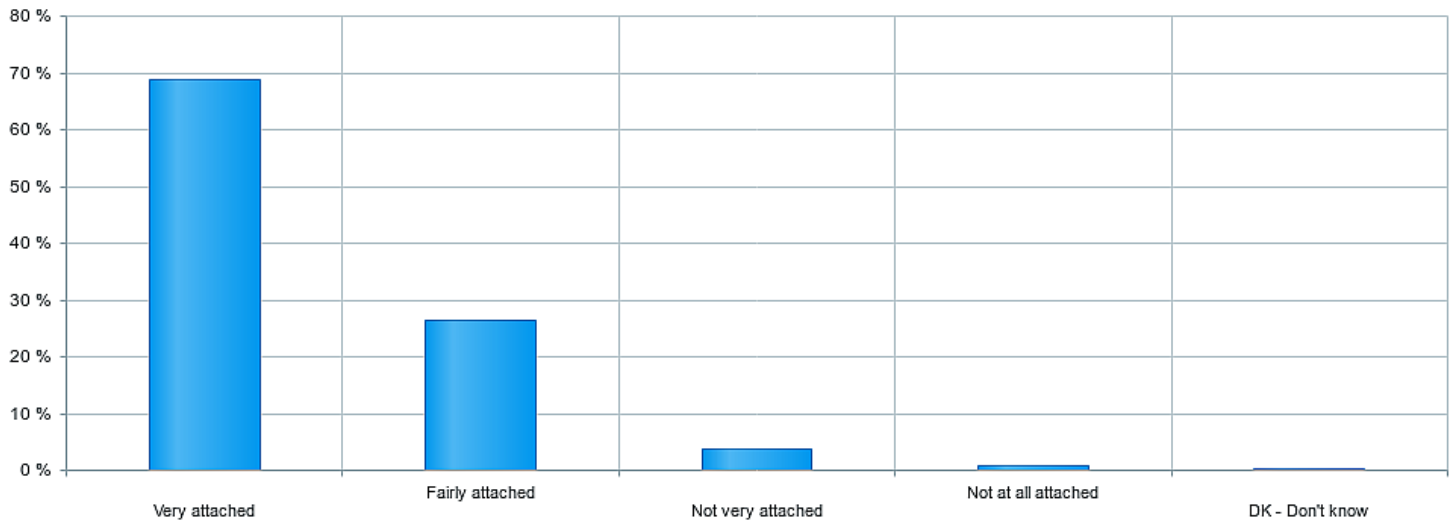
November 2017



Source: Eurobarometer Interactive Opinion

Q2. People may feel different degrees of attachment or their town or village, to their region, to their country or to Europe. Please tell how attached you feel to our country?

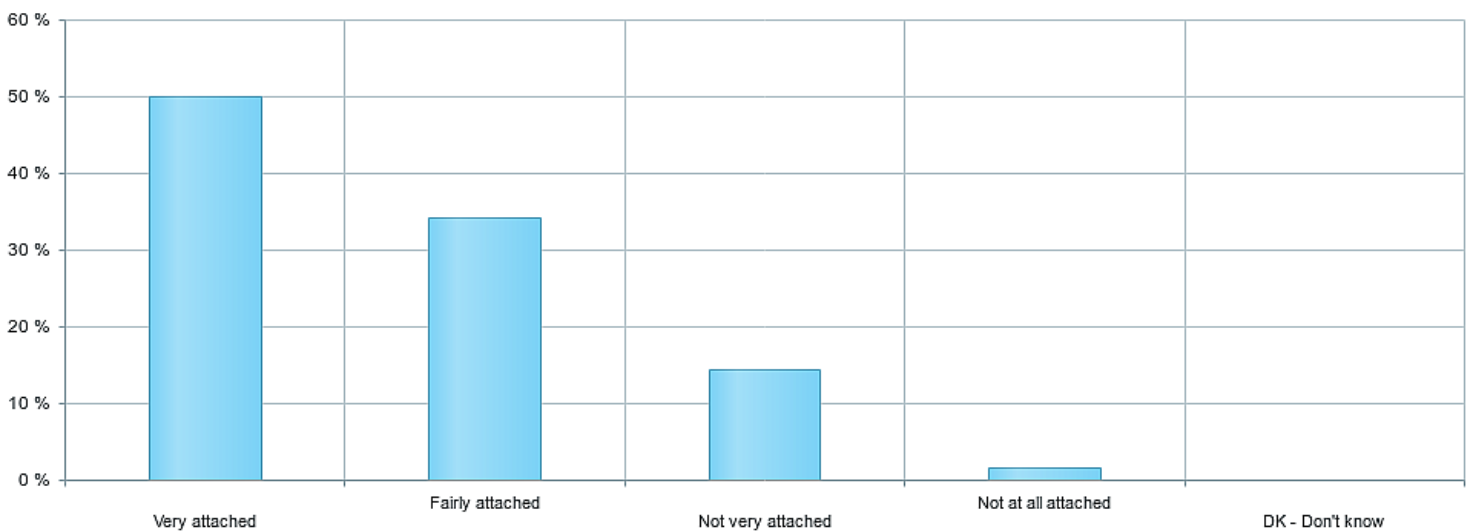
April 2007



Source: Eurobarometer Interactive Opinion

Q2. People may feel different degrees of attachment or their town or village, to their region, to their country or to Europe. Please tell how attached you feel to our country?

November 2017

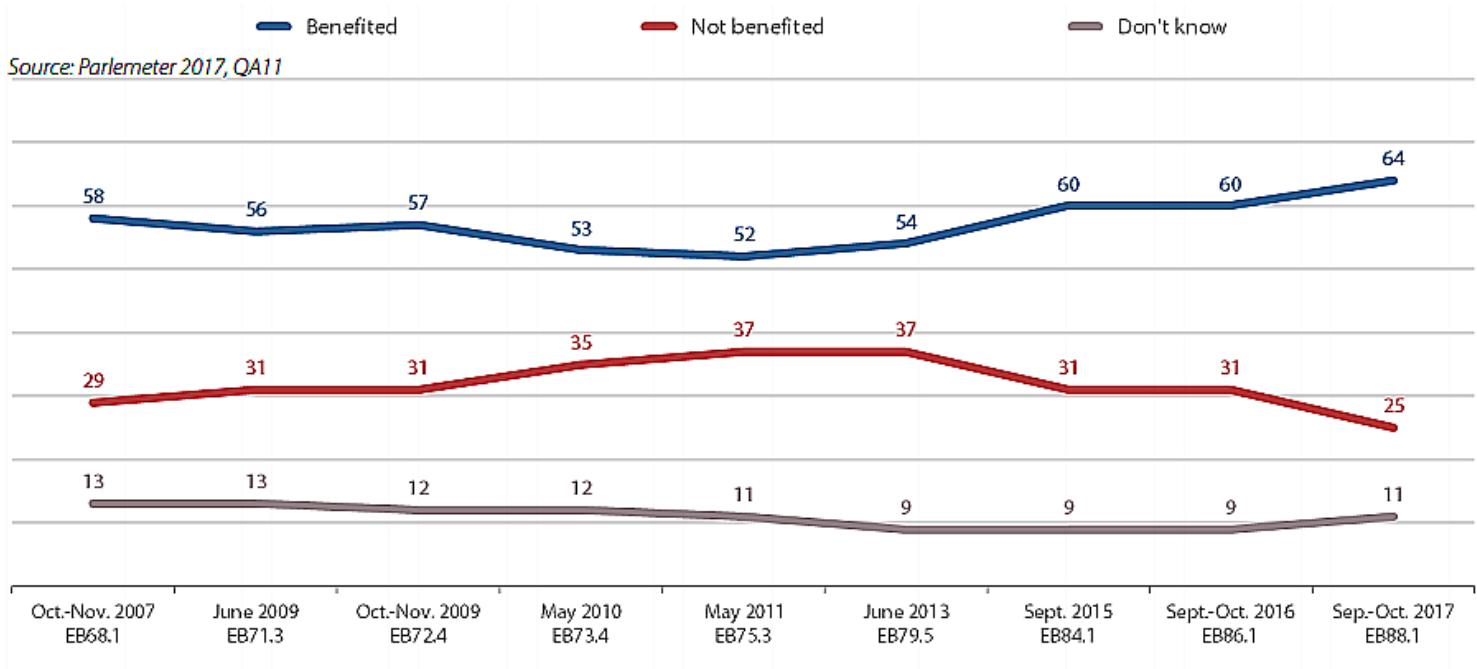


Source: Eurobarometer Interactive Opinion

Appendix 8: The Parlemeter results based on the answers of the Croatians respondents in the analysed period from 10/2007 to 10/2017

Q1. Taking everything into account would say that [our country] has on balance benefited or not from being a member of the EU

October 2007- October 2017



Source: Parlemeter

Q2. Which of the following areas are the main reasons for thinking that our country has benefited from being a member of the EU?

October 2007- October 2017

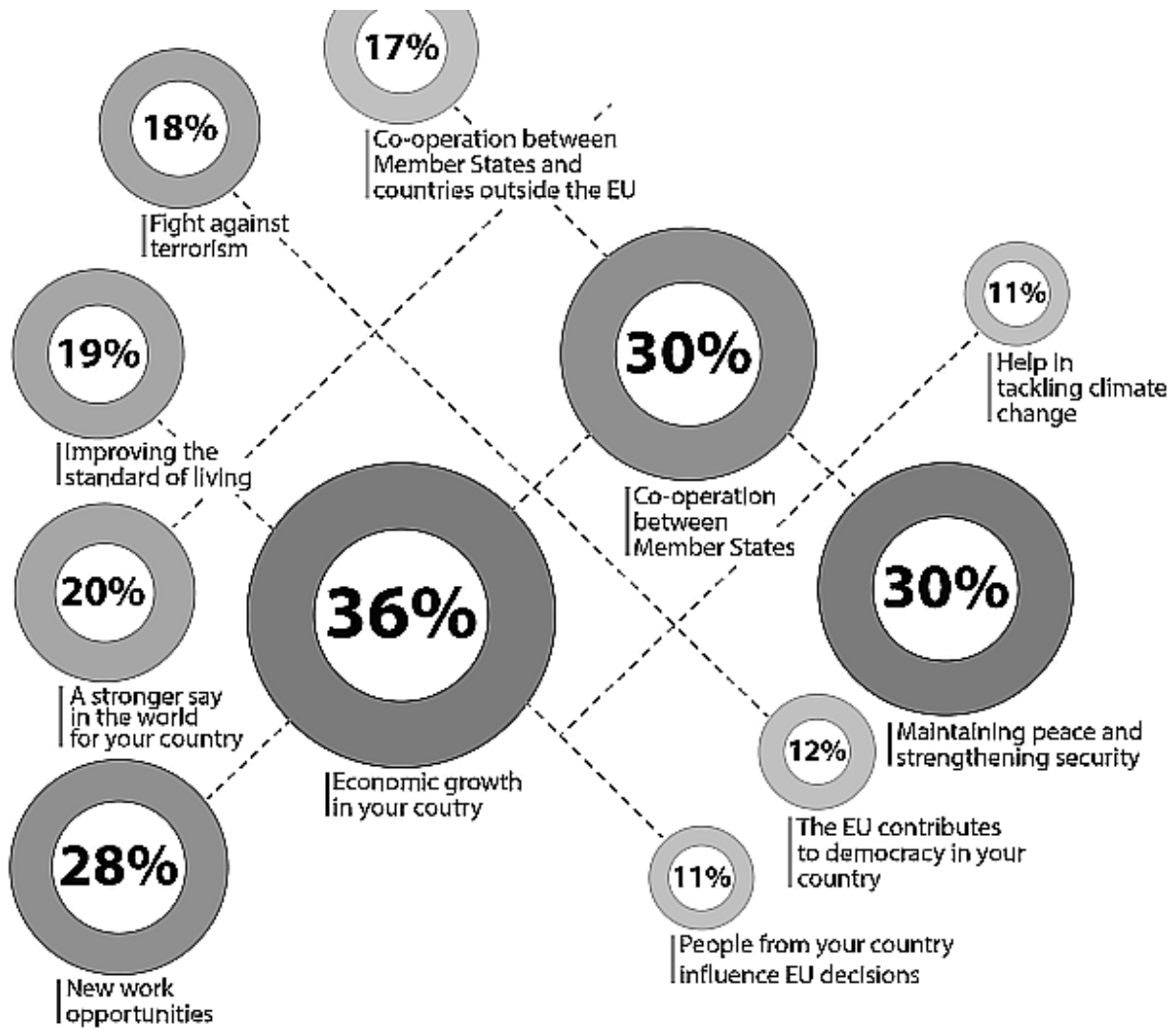
EURO AREA	36	33	33	23	22	17	19	18	11	11	11
NON-EURO AREA	36	25	23	38	17	24	15	15	14	11	10
BE	31	26	28	18	27	17	28	13	14	8	21
BG	26	35	23	52	19	16	14	18	17	7	4
CZ	34	25	28	51	15	32	17	11	13	5	7
DK	33	47	35	18	28	9	19	15	4	13	15
DE	45	33	43	17	14	17	18	18	11	13	12
EE	49	24	33	46	14	32	10	15	5	3	3
IE	49	19	13	34	24	41	13	14	13	11	10
EL	23	31	49	18	42	15	13	26	15	13	5
ES	39	22	21	23	17	22	21	14	12	7	6
FR	22	34	36	20	34	12	18	16	9	16	12
HR	28	19	24	46	18	24	16	11	19	8	9
IT	19	37	27	32	28	12	30	22	9	14	15
CY	36	20	38	29	30	17	14	19	22	6	8
LV	38	28	31	49	12	27	9	18	8	4	3
LT	42	24	28	47	15	30	7	11	15	5	3
LU	37	27	23	24	29	20	15	18	10	17	7
HU	45	19	16	51	13	30	12	9	14	10	9
MT	37	23	11	32	31	34	12	14	13	7	14
NL	56	62	37	15	7	12	19	30	3	3	18
AT	37	33	38	29	25	24	14	22	14	12	14
PL	37	18	19	38	16	31	12	13	16	10	7
PT	28	28	19	32	30	25	13	12	27	9	4
RO	23	18	24	46	13	26	20	14	25	7	8
SI	40	26	29	38	13	18	9	15	15	4	7
SK	28	24	20	47	22	22	13	13	16	7	6
FI	39	48	33	34	16	15	13	26	6	8	12
SE	28	62	40	35	16	4	15	18	4	21	21
UK	42	26	22	30	18	20	16	19	10	14	12
1st MOST FREQUENTLY MENTIONED ITEM											
2nd MOST FREQUENTLY MENTIONED ITEM											
3rd MOST FREQUENTLY MENTIONED ITEM											

The EU contributes to economic growth in (OUR COUNTRY)
Membership of the EU improves co-operation between (OUR COUNTRY) and the other countries of the EU
The EU contributes to maintaining peace and strengthening security
The EU brings (NATIONALITY) people new work opportunities
The EU gives (NATIONALITY) people a stronger say in the world
The EU improves (NATIONALITY) people's standard of living
The EU helps (OUR COUNTRY) in the fight against terrorism
Membership of the EU improves co-operation between (OUR COUNTRY) and countries outside the EU
The EU contributes to democracy in (OUR COUNTRY)
(NATIONALITY) people have an important influence in decisions made at EU level
The EU helps (OUR COUNTRY) to tackle climate change

Source: Parlemeter

Q3. Reasons why your country has benefited from the EU membership?

October 2007- October 2017

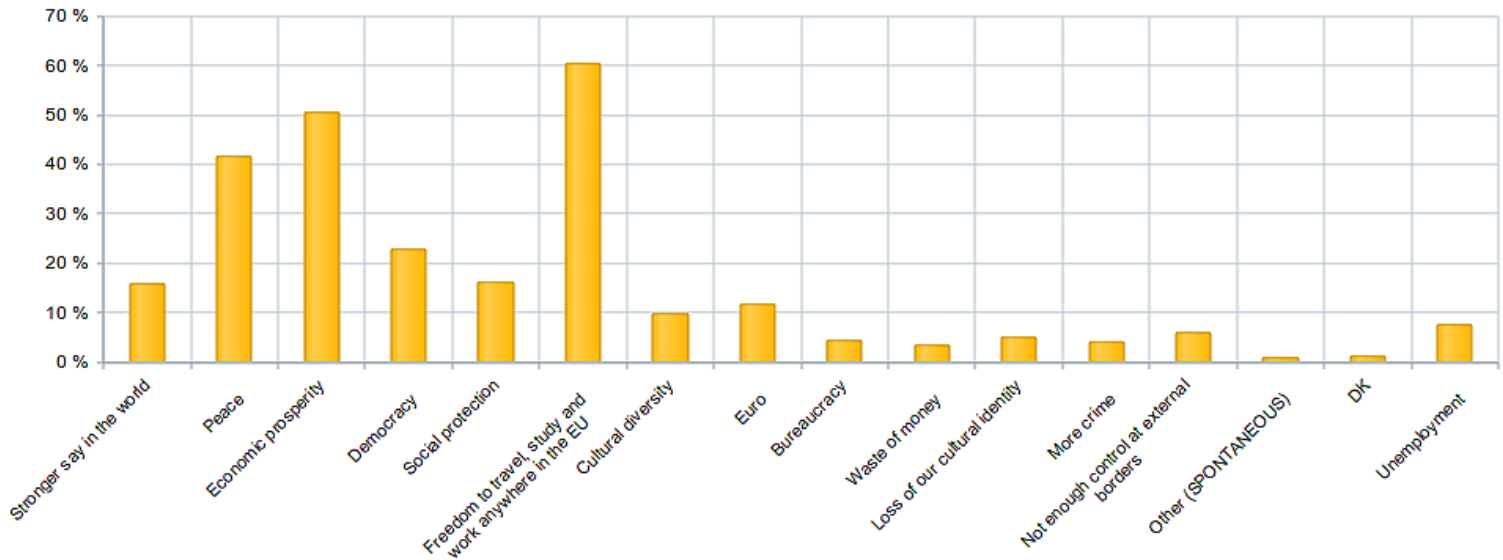


Source: Parlemeter

Appendix 9: The Eurobarometer results based on the answers of the Macedonians respondents in the period 04/2007(08)-11/2007

Q1. What does the EU mean to you personally?

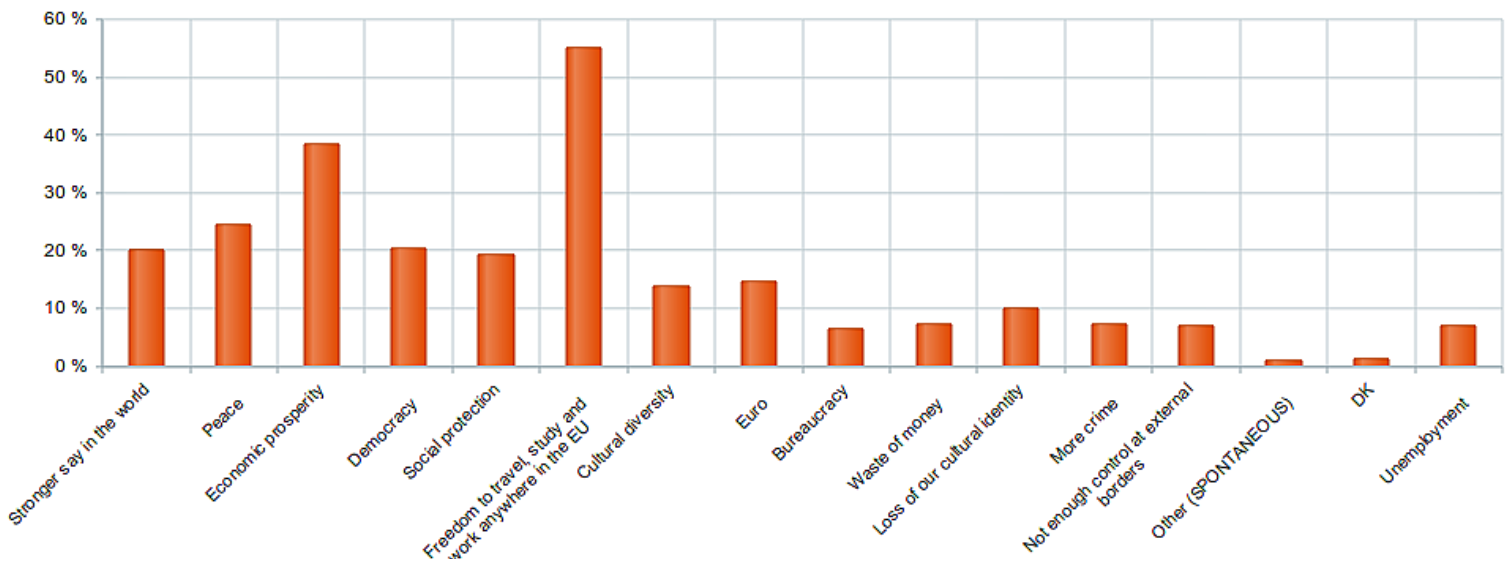
March 2008



Source: Eurobarometer Interactive Opinion

Q1. What does the EU mean to you personally?

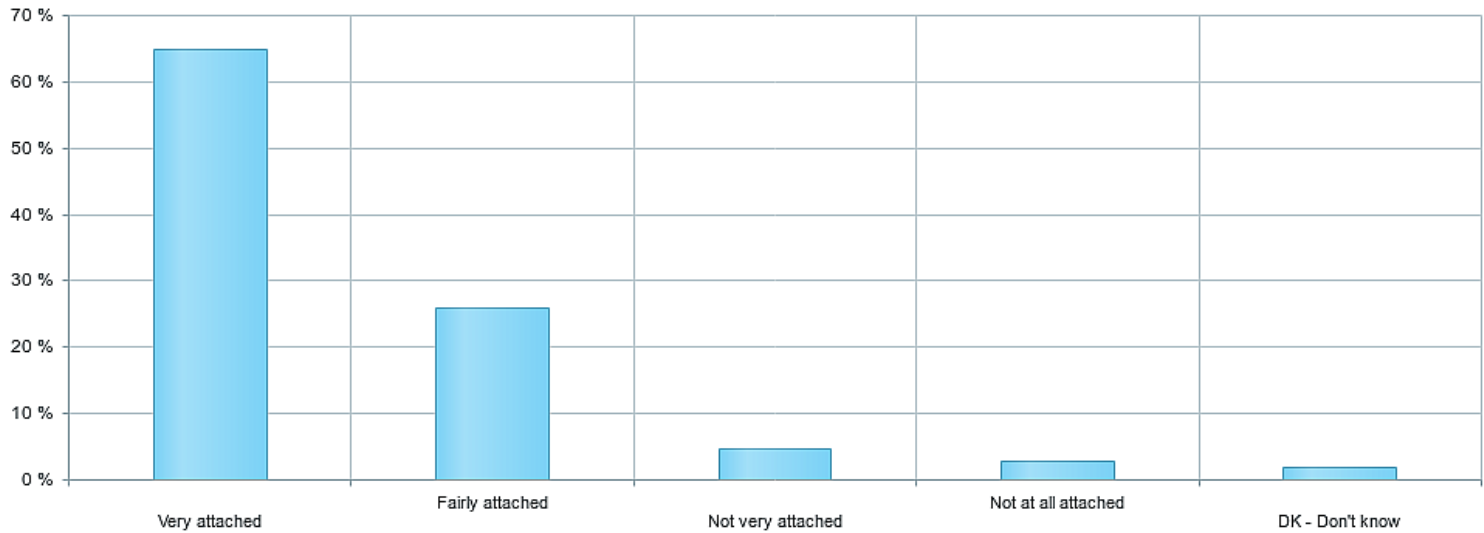
November 2017



Source: Eurobarometer Interactive Opinion

Q2. People may feel different degrees of attachment or their town or village, to their region, to their country or to Europe. Please tell how attached you feel to our country?

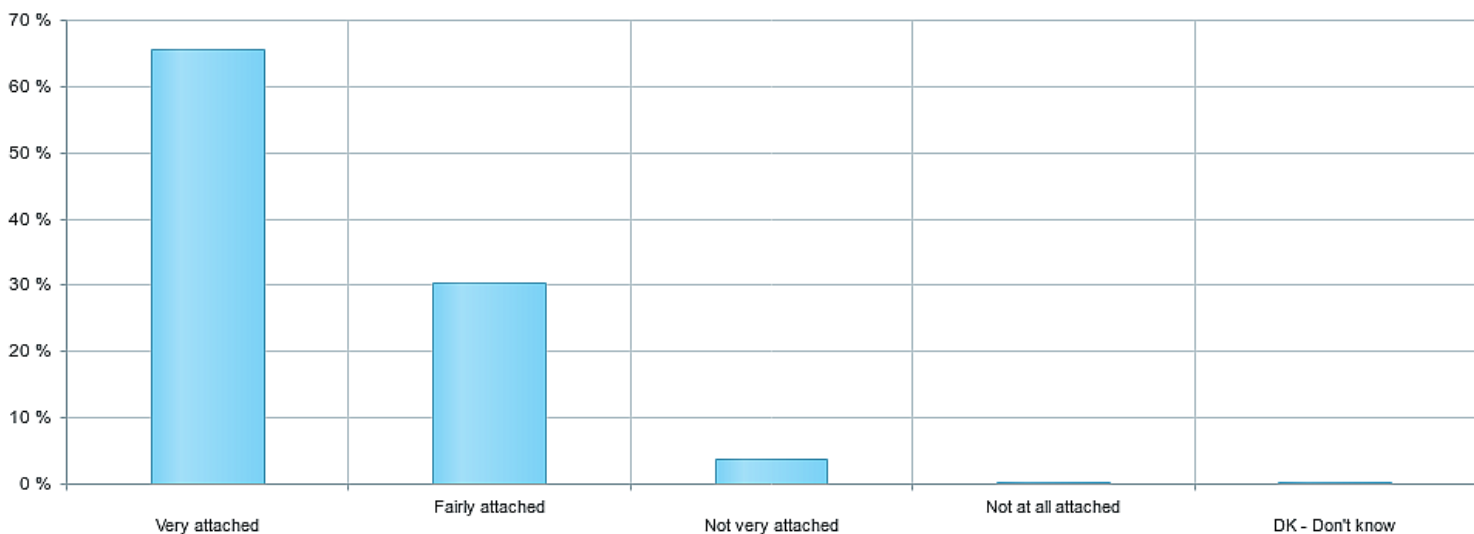
April 2007



Source: Eurobarometer Interactive Opinion

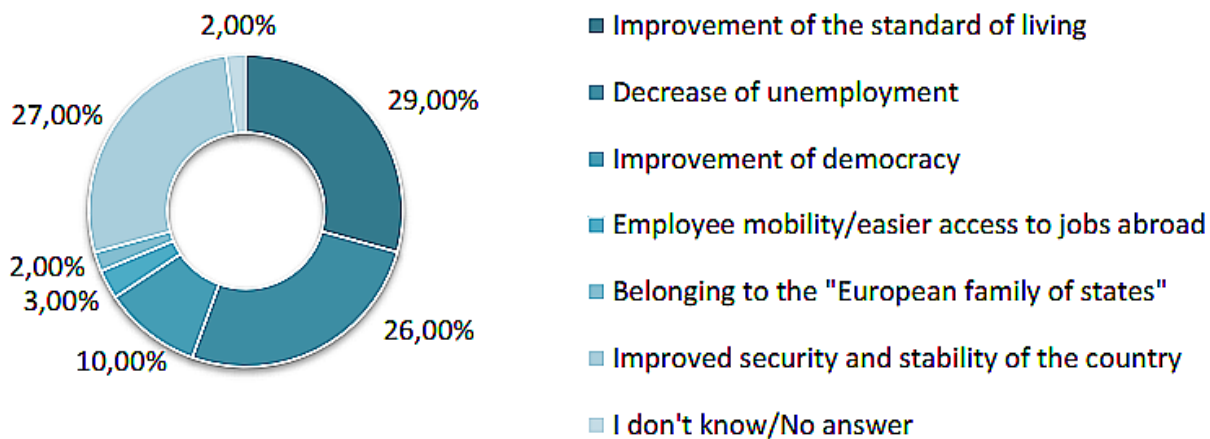
Q2. People may feel different degrees of attachment or their town or village, to their region, to their country or to Europe. Please tell how attached you feel to our country?

November 2017



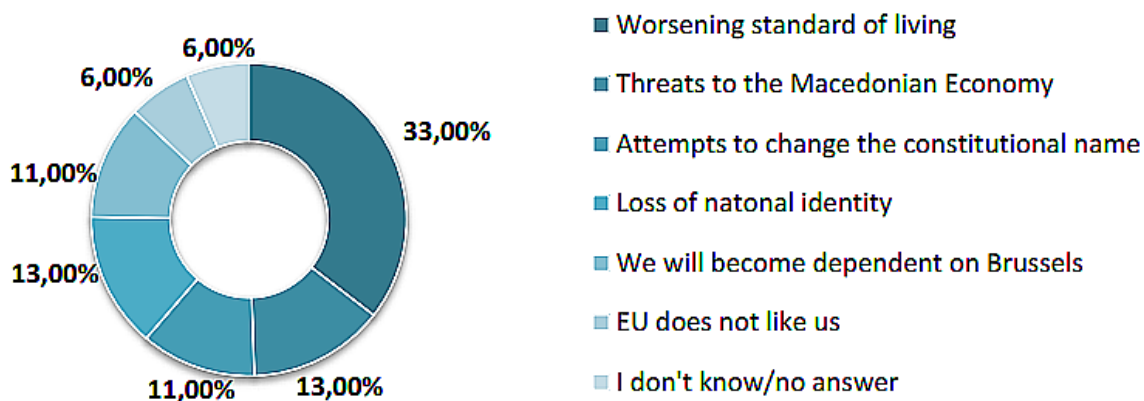
Source: Eurobarometer Interactive Opinion

Q3. Why would you vote For EU integration of Macedonia?



Source: Institute for Democracy Societas Civilis – Skopje (IDSCS) (Dimovska 2016)

Q3. Why would you vote Against EU integration of Macedonia?

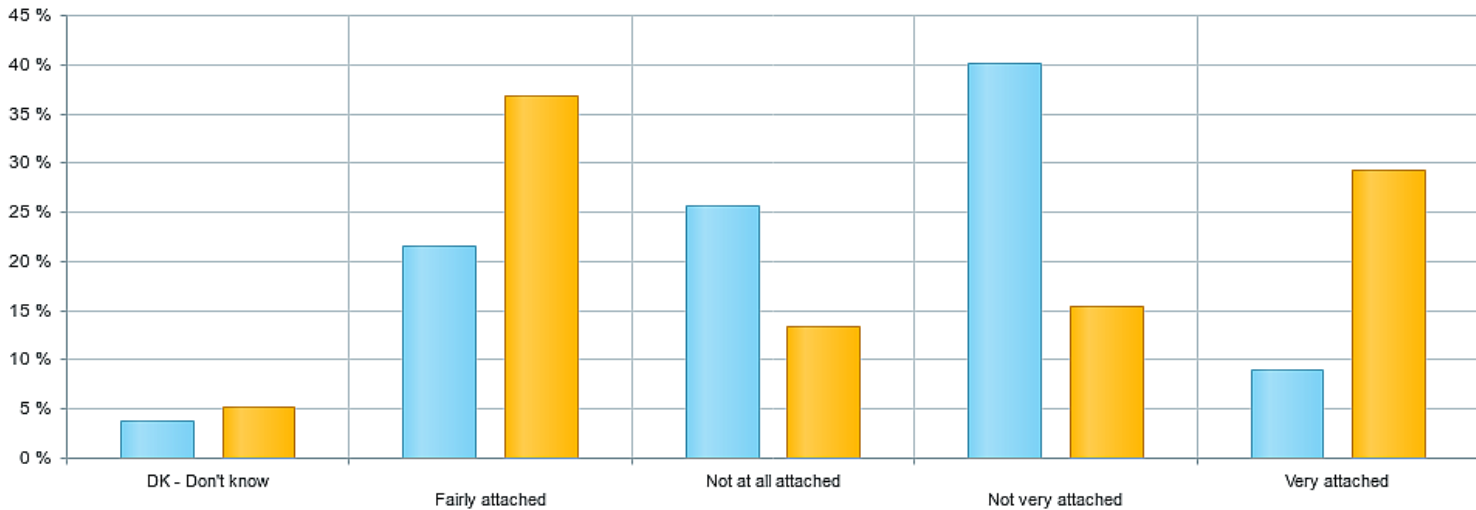


Source: Institute for Democracy Societas Civilis – Skopje (IDSCS) (Dimovska 2016)

Appendix 10: The Eurobarometer results based on the answers of the Macedonians and the Croatians respondents in the period 04/2007(08)-11/2017

Q1. People may feel different degrees of attachment or their town or village, to their region, to their country or to Europe. Please tell how attached you feel to the European Union?

April 2007



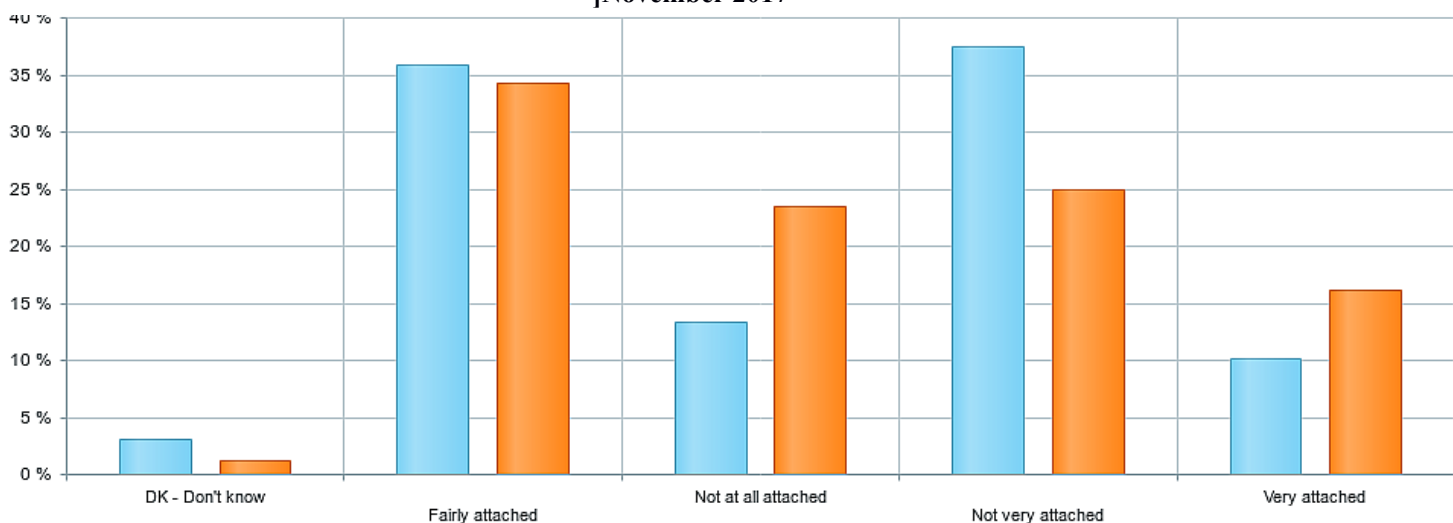
Source: Eurobarometer Interactive Opinion

Notes:

1. Croatia (Blue) and FYROM (Light Orange).

Q1. People may feel different degrees of attachment or their town or village, to their region, to their country or to Europe. Please tell how attached you feel to the European Union?

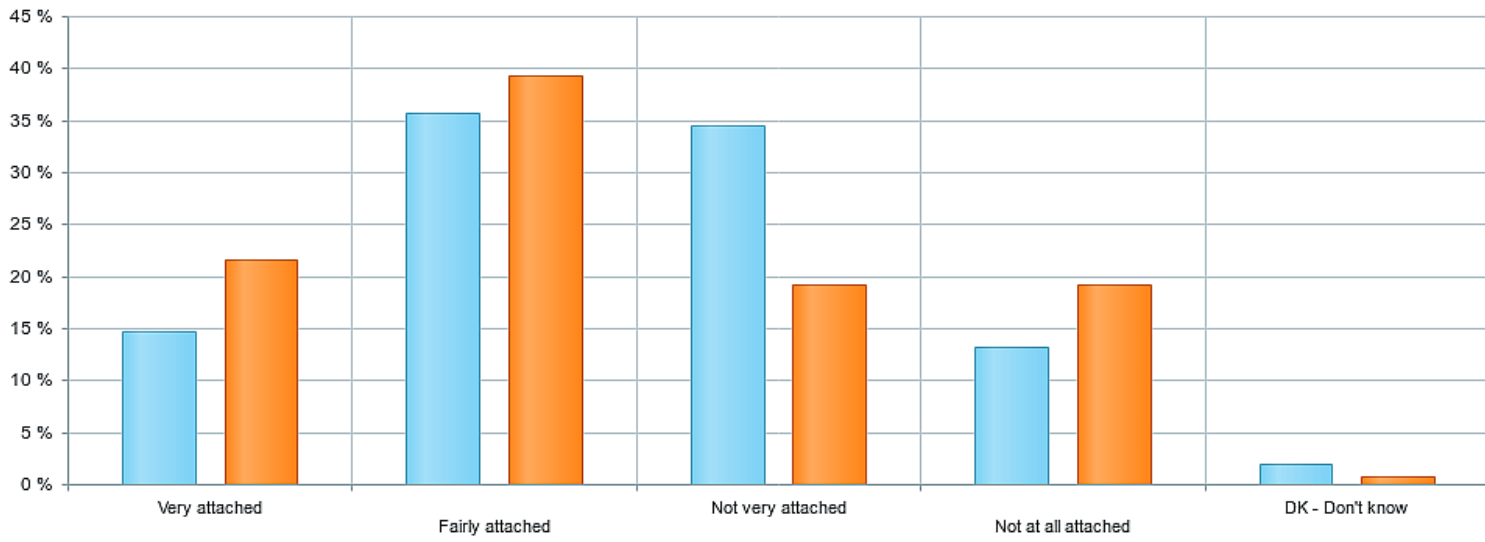
November 2017



Source: Eurobarometer Interactive Opinion

Q2. People may feel different degrees of attachment or their town or village, to their region, to their country or to Europe. Please tell how attached you feel to Europe?

November 2017



Source: Eurobarometer Interactive Opinion

Appendix 11: Map of Balkans as regulated by the Treaty of Berlin 13 June- 13 July 1878



Source: Emerson Kent.com http://www.emersonkent.com/map_archive/balkans_1878.htm

Appendix 12: Map of the Great Schism of 1054



Source: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc.