

**Supranational Attachment of Elites and Masses.  
Comparative Analysis of Six Post-Socialist Countries.**

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**Abstract**

*The paper investigates the European attachment of national elites and their respective public in West- and East-European countries. It presents the gap between supranational attachment of elites and masses and raises a set of interconnected questions. Are there similarities among the post-socialist countries concerning supranational attachment? Do they differ from their West-European counterparts? Or alternatively, are there significant differences among post-socialist countries in this respect? What are the characteristics of hard and soft euroskepticism? How does the connection between national and supranational attachment look like? Do they weaken or strengthen each other? What sort of connections are between factual knowledge about the EU and supranational attachment? Is there a difference between attachment to Europe and to the EU? To what extent can the concept of „empire” be applied to the EU? The paper is based on a comparative survey of national elites and masses in 16 European countries, from 2007. In Eastern Europe the cases of Estonia, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Serbia and Bulgaria are taken into account.*

### **Social identity, national and supranational attachment**

Relevant researches posed the question how the support of integration is influenced by identity and utilitarian factors (Hooghe-Marks 2005, Gabel 1998). Now we may step back and ask what the underlying structures of supranational identity are. European identity, a complex phenomenon, could be approached among others by attachment to Europe. Checkel and Katzensein (2009) - who depict the European identity formation with the darker colours of uncertainty and anxiety rather than hopes and assurance – distinguish between the two versions and visions of European identity. In one it is a process, as an outcome of deliberation, exchange and unintended outcome of spontaneous social processes, such as growing proportion of cross-border communication, etc. In other cases however the supranational identity formation is more purposeful, as a result of elites' identity-building efforts. There is little doubt about the possibility of influencing identity-formation with consciously applied symbols, even re-invented myths and strengthened sense of imagined communities (Anderson 1983) on behalf of the elites and spread by the media.

When you are to describe what and who you are, you can start out from your personality traits – modesty, courage, honesty – or from social categories like gender, age, family status and occupation. Belonging to the latter categories designates your basic social coordinates, comprising your social identity. Some are characteristic and you cannot influence them, while you can modify and mould others. Some are accepted as endowments, while you are attached to some others that influence your life chances as ligatures (Dahrendorf 1980). Personality traits and belonging to social categories are the two major dimensions of identities; - this paper focuses on the social one.

International comparative surveys have found that the most typical markers of social identity regarded as most important are family status and occupation, followed by gender and age, then the variables of national and regional attachment. Belonging to a class, party, ethnicity or religion are less important markers all over the world, even though they may have great mobilizing force in conflicts. The primary difference is not that family status, occupation, gender and age are less abstract categories than class, religion, nation or ethnicity. The difference in mobilizing force derives mainly from the fact that the latter are supported by institutions, ideologies and organizational interests, while the categories of family, occupational and demographic identity are not or are to a very little degree. In a Hungarian survey the above categories were inquired about with the addition of attachment to Europe. It was found that European identity followed the most important markers of gender, age,

occupation, locality and nation, while far fewer respondents named class, party, religion or ethnicity in identifying themselves (Lengyel-Göncz 2006).

In this paper I am looking at social identity, the exact target of investigation being the supranational attachment prevalent in the elites and in the public of Europe. The data are taken from the 2007 wave of the international comparative research INTUNE (Integrated and United) supported by FP 6. In 16 European countries there was a parallel survey concentrating on questions of identity, scope of governance and representation both in the political and economic elite and the adult populace. The participating countries were Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, all EU-members except for Serbia (in the Czech Republic and in Lithuania only the elite, in Slovenia only the population were surveyed, therefore they are omitted from the present analysis). According to the design the elite samples consisted of 80 MPs and 40 top business leaders (bankers, managers and leaders of employers' organizations), the general population surveys were based on 1000-strong representative samples of the respective countries.

#### **Eastern and western European attitudes: are there differences?**

In a previous paper, focusing on elites, I tried to find out whether eastern and western European elites differed in regard to identity, the assessment of the EU goals and the support of integration, and whether there were noticeable differences among East European countries in these respects (Lengyel 2009). At first glance the East European elites had less commitment to the supranational entity, were less supportive of the institutions of the integration, and named competition as the main goal of EU. (The Hungarian elite had above-average identification with Europe, support of the integration and preference of the strengthening of competitiveness.) The deeper analyses, however, made clear that in some regards the East–West differences disappeared as they were simply mediating the effects of other explanatory factors. Differences in the symbolic, or ideological aspects – identity and goals – disappeared, while they remained in the explanation of pragmatic aspects: the East European elites remained the moderate supporters of the integration and the supranational institutions when this support was controlled with cultural, social and other differences (Lengyel ed. 2008). What actually explained the supranational commitment of the elite was level of education and the social resources. In this regard, however, there was more significant discrepancy between the elites of founding and later joining countries than between eastern and western elites.

In this section I investigate again the impact of country-groups on symbolic and pragmatic attitudes towards the EU. Besides of political and economic elites, the public opinion of the respective countries is investigated as well.

The East-West divide has no significant effect on EU-attachment within political and economic elites. There is a weak impact of these territorial and historical differences on EU-attachment within the general population. Country differences however prove to be important in terms of EU-attachment, especially among elites. There are no significant differences between East- and West-European economic elites in terms of attachment to their country. In this respect political elites differ from each other more than the population according to country-groups. Economic elites' opinion concerning further support for unification is more divided by the East-West distinction than that of the political elites and the population.

There are greater differences in the evaluation of pragmatic issues than symbolic ones. Table statistics for strengthening further unification are stronger (and in several cases more significant) than in the case of EU-attachment.

**Impact of country-groups on attachment to the EU, to the country and on the support of unification (Cramer's V values)**

		Attachment to the EU	Attachment to the country	Support of unification
<b>Political elite</b>	East-West	ns	.14****	.183****
	Country	.237****	.289****	.31****
<b>Economic elite</b>	East-West	ns	ns	.259****
	Country	.252****	.268****	.354****
<b>General population</b>	East-West	.023*	.09****	.074****
	Country	.168****	.171****	.238****

\*\*\*\*level of significance is .0001

\*\*\* Level of significance = .001

\*\* Level of significance = .01

\* Level of significance = .05

Ns= not significant

The East-West comparison of the political and economic elites reveals no significant difference, though the “very attached” categories diverge in both elite groups. The difference is that in western elites the rate of those “very attached to EU” is higher than in their eastern counterparts. Since, however, samples are smaller here, the divergences do not reach the level of significance, whereas in the population this rate is a bit higher in the east –, which is sufficient to cause significant deviation owing to the large sample. In other categories there is no remarkable deviation, although in the western samples “somewhat attached” is a little higher.

As against that, there is significant divergence between the elites and the population as regards EU attachment: over one third of the elites (two-fifths of the western elites) are strongly attached, the corresponding rate among the population being less than a quarter. This difference is more marked in the west European countries.

#### EU-attachment of elites and the population in West-and East-European countries

	Attachment to the EU (very attached, %)			Cramer's V
	Political Elite (n=1234)	Economic Elite (n=636)	General Population (n=15760)	
<b>West</b>	39,6	39,5	22,2	.115****
<b>East</b>	36,8	34,4	24,1	.096****
<b>Cramer's V</b>	ns	ns	.023*	

Within both the political elite and the population there is stronger attachment to one's own country in the eastern than in the western European countries (without significant deviation being found in the economic elite). The divergence between the elite and the population in national attachment is even more marked than in EU attachment. National attachment was particularly higher in the political elite than in the population and the economic elite. Since with a few exceptions the political elite was identical with the members of parliament, the strong national attachments was asserted as a norm.

#### Attachment of elites and the population to their country in West-and East-European countries

Country	Attachment to the country (very attached, %)			Cramer's V
	Political Elite (n=1244)	Economic Elite (n=641)	General Population (n=16069)	
<b>West</b>	70,7	62,1	57,0	.055****
<b>East</b>	81,6	63,7	65,2	.065****
<b>Cramer's V</b>	.14****	ns	.093****	

As regards the pragmatic implication of the attitude to EU, it was approached by the degree to which the further integration was supported. It was significantly higher in the western than in the eastern European elites. Especially great are the deviations in the economic elites, while similar but less marked differences are found in the samples of the populations. To be more accurate, let us recall that the question on unification – “Some say European integration should be strengthened. Others say it already has gone too far. What is your opinion? Please indicate your views using a 10-point scale, ‘1’ means unification “has already gone too far” and ‘10’

means “it should be strengthened”. What number of this scale best describes your position?” – was answered in the positive by both the elite and the majority of the population. The tables below indicate strong support marked with points 7-10. It can also be gleaned that the deviation in the opinions of the elite and the population in regard to supporting further integration is greater in the West European countries than in Eastern Europe.

### **Support of unification within West-and East-European elites and population**

	Unification should be strengthened (%)			Cramer's V
	Political Elite (1174)	Economic Elite (628)	General Population (14522)	
<b>West</b>	66,8	70,6	40,9	.124****
<b>East</b>	48,4	45	33,3	.097****
<b>Cramer's V</b>	.183****	.259****	.074****	

Further shades can be added to the picture gained from the East-West dichotomy if we subdivide the group of western countries and handle the Mediterranean countries as a separate group (Italy, Spain, Portugal and Greece). In term of EU attachment, this causes little difference (only the western economic elites display somewhat greater attachment to the EU than their Mediterranean counterparts).

### **Attachment of elites and the population to the EU and to the country in West-European, Mediterranean and East-European countries**

	Attachment to the EU (very attached, %)			Cramer's V
	Political Elite (n=1234)	Economic Elite (n=636)	General Population (n=15760)	
<b>West</b>	39,7	41,1	22,5	.107****
<b>Mediterranean</b>	39,5	37,5	21,8	.127****
<b>East</b>	36,8	34,4	24,1	.096****
<b>Cramer's V</b>	ns	ns	.021*	

	Attachment to the country (very attached, %)			Cramer's V
	Political Elite (n=1244)	Economic Elite (n=641)	General Population (n=16069)	
<b>West</b>	63,5	54,3	55,6	.039****
<b>Mediterranean</b>	79,5	72,4	59,1	.088****
<b>East</b>	81,6	63,7	65,2	.065****
<b>Cramer's V</b>	.153****	.124****	.068****	

In regard to attachment to one's country, however, there is very strong divergence between the western and Mediterranean elites. Among the political leaders the Mediterranean ones are characterized by about as high attachment as the eastern Europeans. In the economic elites, national attachment is even higher than among the eastern elites.

The difference between political and economic elites and the population is stronger in the Mediterranean countries than in the western and eastern groups of countries, as the table statistics reveal.

#### **Support of unification within West-European, Mediterranean, and East-European elites and population**

Country-group	Unification should be strengthened ( %)			Cramer's V
	Political Elite (n=1174)	Economic Elite (n= 628)	General Population (14522)	
<b>West</b>	60,2	67,1	32,4	.139****
<b>Mediterranean</b>	74,1	75,1	54,1	.133****
<b>East</b>	48,4	45	33,3	.097****
<b>Cramer's V</b>	.214****	.193****	.192****	

Taking the Mediterranean countries separately, the truly salient difference was found in the pragmatic attitude to EU. The earlier-found higher EU support in the west was largely due to the Mediterranean countries' well above-average support of the EU. That applies particularly to the political elites, but is also valid for the economic elite and the population. As regards the population support of EU, it appears to be the same in the east and in the west taken in a narrow sense. Outstandingly high EU support could be found among the Mediterranean population.

West and East-European citizens do differ in many other ways concerning their perception of the EU. West Europeans think in significantly higher proportion that they would be seriously neglecting duties if didn't vote in elections for the European Parliament, they do trust more in fellow-Europeans, think more that what happens to Europe has to do with their personal life. West Europeans are significantly more satisfied with the way democracy works in their country (51 vs. 39 %). They were however more concerned and divided about the economic conditions of their country in 2007. Higher proportion of them felt that the economic conditions got either better or worse, while higher proportion East-Europeans felt no change in this respect.

As for the evaluation of the country's EU-membership one can see a similar and basic difference. West Europeans report in significantly higher proportion that EU-membership of the country is a good thing. However they mention in significantly over-average proportion that membership is a bad thing as well. It is possible because there was a spontaneous third option, (neither good, nor bad), and East-Europeans were overrepresented in that option.

In terms of threats caused by the fact that people, money and ideas travel quickly across borders there is no major difference between East and West Europeans: more than half think that these are threats for security and well being. As for culture and way of life the average proportions are similar, but East Europeans feel that these phenomena of globalization are more serious threat for them.

### Hard and soft euroskepticism

Opinion polls have registered that after heightened expectations, the Hungarian public was quick to get disillusioned by the EU. Indeed, even in international comparison there was a considerable decline in the rate of positive answers to questions like: Do we benefit from EU, is joining the community useful for the country? It is, however, expedient to differentiate the concepts of soft and hard euro-skepticism in opinion polls, just like in policy analyses. In political science hard skepticism characterizes a position that opposes the EU and integration in principle, while soft euro-skeptics do not object to the EU in theory but question its special policies (Szczerbiak & Taggart 2008). Thus, in opinion polling, we have to separate those who symbolically reject a supranational identity (on theoretical, ideological or emotional basis) from those who find no benefit in such integration or do not regard it as positive.

Soft euro-skepticism alludes to pragmatic-utilitarian aspects that could easily change with changes in the policy conditions. Hard euro-skepticism refers to symbolic, ideological or emotional rejection, which is presumably more difficult to change and has different motive springs.

### Hard and soft euroskepticism within the elites and population of 16 European countries (%)

	no EU-attachment			country hasn't benefited from membership			unification has gone too far		
	political elite	economic elite	population	political elite	economic elite	population	political elite	economic elite	population
<b>Austria</b>	13,6	17,1	28,3	6,8	0	39,0	12,3	0	42,8
<b>Belgium</b>	11,3	13,6	36,1	1,3	0	18,4	8,9	7,0	21,2
<b>Bulgaria</b>	19,5	40,5	45,4	3,7	0	29,8	11,4	10,0	14,2
<b>Denmark</b>	10,2	20,0	27,3	13,6	2,5	19,3	12,1	5,1	16,0

<i>Estonia</i>	15,9	10,0	44,2	1,4	0	18,6	30,6	22,5	20,7
<b>France</b>	11,4	4,8	40,3	8,8	0	36,8	7,5	2,3	23,1
<b>Germany</b>	5,1	16,3	25,8	2,6	0	35,4	4,3	7,1	18,1
<b>Great Britain</b>	54,3	30,0	56,3	8,9	5,3	50,8	27,3	9,5	28,4
<b>Greece</b>	19,3	25,8	50,0	2,3	2,9	15,6	7,8	8,3	13,8
<i>Hungary</i>	7,5	12,2	16,0	12,8	4,9	52,2	13,9	2,4	15,9
<b>Italy</b>	7,3	16,7	19,9	3,7	4,9	23,2	6,0	4,8	12,9
<i>Poland</i>	6,3	2,4	23,9	10,8	0	18,2	13,8	4,8	9,5
<b>Portugal</b>	3,8	5,0	26,1	5,1	0	19,4	8,8	5,0	9,6
<i>Serbia*</i>	30,3	17,9	41,5	13,9	2,5	25,9	10,0	10,0	14,5
<i>Slovakia</i>	8,8	25,0	41,0	0	5,0	18,4	8,9	10,0	15,7
<b>Spain</b>	8,5	7,3	40,6	2,1	0	14,7	1,1	0	10,2
<b>Cramers's V/Phi</b>	.305****	.268****	.233****	.192****	ns	.274****	.238****	.345****	.195****

\*For Serbia the questions were formulated in conditional mode

Somewhat more than one third of the studied European population was found to be hard Euro-skeptics, while the corresponding rate among political and economic elites is a mere 13-16%. Looking at countries individually, the British, Bulgarian, Greek, Estonian, as well as French, Spanish, Slovakian and Serbian populations have above-average aversion to the supranational entity. The elites, as seen earlier, are less unsympathetic than the populations, with the exception of the British political elite that showed just as little attachment to EU as the British population.

A very small rate of the elites thought that their countries did not profit from the EU membership, as against over one quarter of the population. Particularly negative was the attitude of the British and Hungarian population, somewhat less of the French and German adult populace. Among the political elites, the Danish, Hungarian, Polish and Serbian appeared skeptical. Among the economic elites, the low rate of mentions resulted in a floor effect, and since there is no significant correlation, it cannot be analyzed.

18 % of the population rejected further unification, compared to 11 and 7 % of the elites. The Austrian and British public was particularly skeptical, the political elites of the latter sharing the opinion of the population. The case of the Estonian elites is particularly remarkable, since they rejected the further enlargement of the EU even more strongly than their population.

From background calculations it turns out that neither East-West, nor East-West-Mediterranean country group differences have connection with hard euroskepticism. In other words East, West and Mediterranean elites don't differ concerning the refusal of EU-attachment.

They do differ in terms of soft euroskepticism in the followings. In the case of the elites the Easterners are over-average against further unification, while in the case of the general population, contrary, the Westerners are over-average dismissive. Taking a closer look however it turns out that there is a huge difference within the “Western” block: the Mediterranean public is the least sceptical concerning the unification, and the Western public in the narrow sense is the most sceptical. The same holds true in the case of the other indicator of soft euroskepticism. One-third of the Western, but less than one-sixth of the Mediterranean public feels that their country has not benefited from the integration.

Among the Eastern countries one can see below-average hard euroskepticism in Hungary and Poland. On the other hand soft euroskepticism is among the highest in the Hungarian populace: more than half feel that the country hasn't benefited from being a member state of the EU.

### **Attachment to Europe, attachment to the EU**

Some critics opine that the verbalization of questions about European attachment instead of EU attachment in international surveys may imply the deliberate intention of supranational elites to manipulate identity (Immerfahl & Boehnke & Baier 2010). After all, people who decline the EU as an institution may well be attached to Europe, therefore a question like that may inspire a higher than real rate of supranational identity. Even if there is not a conscious attempt at modification, it should indeed be looked at whether there is a significant difference between European attachment and EU attachment, and if there is, what social aspects it correlates with.

It stands to reason to presume that the EU institutions themselves generate a European identity, but it would be a mistake to overlook the European identity that exists independently of the EU. Not only the public opinion of the non-EU member countries is meant here: there is a continental identity in the public of the member countries that is free from the frames of the EU. The Eurobarometer did approach the issue in different waves with different wording: in 1991 European Community and Europe as a whole, in 1995 the European Union and Europe as a whole were the applied categories. The question is whether there is a significant difference between European and EU attachment: this could be answered by comparing the breakdowns of the different years. There is a second possibility when the results of the same survey are compared in respect of the EU/Europe difference. What I can do at the moment is to investigate the breakdowns in 1991 and 1995.

### **Attachment to Europe and to the European Community/European Union, 1991, 1995, general population, member states**

	1991*		1995**	
	The European Community	Europe as a whole	European Union	Europe as a whole
<b>very attached</b>	12.3	13.1	9.3	9.5
<b>fairly attached</b>	38.3	37.7	35.2	34.3
<b>not very attached</b>	32.2	30.2	38.3	37.4
<b>not attached at all</b>	17.2	18.9	17.2	18.9
<b>N</b>	12286	13155	15681	15684

Source: Eurobarometer 1991/2, 1995/2

\*"People may feel different degrees of attachment to their town or village, to their region, to their country, to the European Community or to Europe as a whole. Please tell me how attached you feel to...?"

\*\*"People may feel different degrees of attachment to their town or village, to their region, to their country, to the European Union or to Europe as a whole. Please tell me how attached you feel to ...?"

As one can judge from the table there was no significant difference between the attachment to Europe and to the EC/EU. There was a slight drop between 1991 and 1995 both within continental and institutional attachment, but they didn't differ within the same year. A more exact result could be expected from an empirical survey, applying split ballot in a given year: the possible impacts resulted from the cross-effects of the Europe/EU questions might be avoided this way.

#### **Differences within Eastern Europe**

There are massive differences in EU attitudes among the countries of Eastern Europe. The Estonian elites are skeptical; the Polish and Hungarian elites are enthusiastic about identification with the EU. Such differences are, however, present among the western elites as well, and let us just mention the extremes: the skepticism of the British and the supportiveness of the French elites. Concerning the support of integration, the picture gains more shades when controlled by different variables, but the Estonian elites remain skeptical and the Hungarian remains supportive of the supranational institutional solutions. The relative rapprochement of the elite and the public is more typical of Mediterranean countries which, however, prefer social security to economic competitiveness.

Turning the attention to the general public one can see that Hungary is well above the average concerning the proportion of those who felt much attached to the EU. The high rate of symbolic supranational

identification exceeds not only the East-European, but the West-European and Mediterranean averages as well. This populace – together with the Bulgarian one – exceeds most of the rest in terms of the attachment to their country as well. In practical terms however the Hungarian and Bulgarian populations are less enthusiastic. Half of the Polish and more than half of the Mediterranean population supported further unification, but only a quarter of the Hungarian, and less than a quarter of the Estonian population did so.

#### Attachment and support of East-European countries' general population (%)

	very attached to the EU	very attached to the country	support of unification
<b>West</b>	22,4	55,6	32,4
<b>Mediterranean</b>	21,5	59,1	54,1
<b>Bulgaria</b>	16,3	77,9	30,5
<b>Estonia</b>	14,2	68,7	22,2
<b>Hungary</b>	46,5	76,4	25,5
<b>Poland</b>	23,6	68,2	50,3
<b>Serbia</b>	18,9	61,2	39,2
<b>Slovakia</b>	18,9	40,7	30,4
<b>Phi=</b>	.16****	.223****	.193****
<b>N=</b>	16119	14522	16069

While three-quarter of Mediterraneans and two-third of West-Europeans think that their country's EU-membership is a good thing, only three out of five of East-Europeans think so. The proportion of positive evaluation is especially low in the case of Hungary, where almost a quarter think that the EU-membership is bad thing. This is not exceptional, it is actually close to the West European average, while the spontaneous „neither good, nor bad” type of answer is well above the average. What is strange is that the negative evaluation and low pragmatic support goes together with a strong symbolic supranational attachment.

#### Evaluation of the country's EU-membership (%)

	Generally speaking, do you think that the country's membership of the European Union is...?		
	a good thing	a bad thing	neither good nor bad (spontaneous)
West	67,3	24,7	7,9
Mediterranean	78,0	9,9	12,1

Bulgaria	62,7	8,0	29,3
Estonia	66,6	8,6	24,8
Hungary	43,1	22,6	34,2
Poland	77,1	9,5	13,5
Slovakia	58,9	5,5	35,7
Serbia	61,1	18,1	20,8
<b>Cramer's V=.236****</b>			
<b>N= 15641</b>			

### Some experiences of a long-term prognosis and a fieldwork

It is worth to invoke some remarks of the “EU citizen” prognosis about people’s lives in 20 years’ time (Flash EB 227). One is that the citizens of old EU member states are more pessimistic than those of the new members, the majority envisaging a deterioration of their living circumstances 20 years from now and a growing gap in social differences. How come? So far, it was usually found that the citizens of old member countries were more optimistic, satisfied, supportive concerning most questions than the citizens of novice states. It was so because we usually considered “here and now”, the near future. Now that the question is put in a longer perspective, the image is reversed. It is perhaps a sign of *saturation* among citizens of western countries (“from this point there is nowhere but downwards”), or maybe it is seen as an effect of the recession or the integration. In the latter case, overtly or covertly the pre-enlargement state might be conceived as Pareto optimal in that some members can only be promoted to the detriment of some others. And they fear they would be these others.

Among the citizens of new member counties who are less optimistic and supportive of the present, an effect of *catching up* might be working (“there is a lot to make up for” in the standards of living, competitiveness or social security). The institutional conditions might as well support this attitude that looks upon the EU – however suspiciously or inimically – as a power that could regulate national administrations, despite – or because of – the crisis. Such opinions are, obviously, not free from contradictions particularly when the formations in question are distant and rather abstract, and can be easily coupled with opinions that associate threats to the integration. Let me just cite a recent example of such opinions. In our latest sociological fieldwork, students had to keep a logbook in addition to questionnaires, interviews and visual documentation, in which they had to describe the situations of the interviews, the comments elicited by the questions, and the problems of interpretation. (From a methodological point of view, these logbooks are very instructive as they reveal

something that is regrettably overlooked for lack of time even if the rite of inquiry is observed strictly.) There is an example in a logbook how the negative EU image is mitigated by a question on the national economic policy, as an unintentional side effect;

*“The respondent was a lady in her forties, whose son also arrived little after our entry and who also listened to the questionnaire attentively. The lady was vehemently against the EU, not veiling her political views. Interestingly, when the question concerning ‘keeping the strategic industries in national hands’ was asked, it reminded her of corruption and this drove her away from hostility to the EU towards some middle-of-the road attitude. This response was also often met with from other informants.”*

(Emese Rigó, Fieldwork logbook, 2009, excerpt)

Essentially, the point is that pragmatic opinions on the EU are often motivated by the principle of the “lesser evil”, the need for regulation and simply by utilitarianism.

The long-term prognosis has shown that in regard to social relations, social support, political participation the Polish, Hungarian, Slovak public opinion, similarly to the Austrian and German, was more pessimistic than the average, not expecting any improvement. This correlates well with the phenomena of distrust, lack of security, and the vulgarization of everyday life.

#### **Knowledge and attachment - clarification or growing uncertainty?**

Under the mentioned international cooperation we carried out a deliberative opinion survey on a representative sample of a small region. One subject of the inquiry was unemployment, the other was the informants’ views on the role and goals of the EU (Göncz 2009). The method combined the traditional opinion poll with intense debates in small groups and experts forums, while measuring the changes in knowledge and attitudes. Upon the impact of deliberation, the stock of knowledge and solidarity increased concerning unemployment, with views on individual responsibility also strengthening. Thus, as a result, a more differentiated and more accurate view evolved about this subject.

There was some change in the attitude to EU as well: it was seen more important to support the integration, to improve EU competitiveness and solidarity, but on the whole, the rate of those who felt that what was going on at EU level had an effect on their lives *decreased*. Before deliberation two-thirds of the respondents had positive attitudes, after the weekend discussions only half. What happened? Did the participants become disillusioned or uncertain after the debates and expert presentations? Neither effect can be excluded. An

initial, relatively vague though basically positive image was modified for there was a great degree of ignorance about the EU, and the counterarguments, conflicting opinions might also have cast the participants into uncertainty. Experts often mentioned that EU grants and other information are available on the Internet, which frustrated the older participants who must have felt that they were excluded from something that was also their business, something that began to interest them.

It was not the negative attitude, the mistrust in EU that increased, since the participants were ready to forward one-fifth of their taxes to the EU after the weekend dispute, compared to one-tenth at the beginning, and the evaluation of the competence of EU decision-makers also increased. It cannot be excluded that the new information brought opinions closer to reality.

This phenomenon can also be controlled by the European comparative data. We find that substantially fewer people can answer questions about numeric, factual topics than questions about verbal knowledge. Since at the time of the survey the number of members had just risen from 25 to 27, both were accepted as correct. Even so, hardly over one third of European respondents could tell how many members the EU had. It was also found - and this can be seen in the table - that correct factual knowledge had a positive connection with EU attachment, and to a lesser extent, with the support for further integration and with the perception of consequences of EU-membership.

#### **Connections of numerical and textual knowledge with attachment, support and feeling of personal consequences of EU-membership (%)**

question	answer	attachment (very attached)	support (strong support)	“consequences for people like you” (great)
know_1: nr. of member states	right	27,9	41,7	29,9
	wrong	19,9	37	26
know_2: unemployment policy	right	21,6	36,6	26,4
	wrong	27,8	44,4	31,2
know_3: health policy	right	22	36,9	27
	wrong	27	44,3	29,6

all connections are significant at 0.0001 level

By contrast, verbal knowledge revealed a reverse effect, in the opposite direction. The overwhelming majority correctly ranged anti-unemployment efforts and health care among national (in some member countries sub-national or combined) competences, and less than a quarter of the respondents thought that these policies belonged to EU competence (or they could not answer). However, among those whose knowledge was incorrect the EU attachment and support was significantly overrepresented. In this case it was not the effect of the lack of

knowledge but conversely, the positive attachment that led to an illusion fusing policy-related discourse and actual policy competences. The wording “mainly dealt with” of the policy-related questions also allows for the interpretation that where there is much discussion about the plans of the future, there is also decision-making competence.

### **Identity and attachment**

Special literature names the dimensions of culture and citizenship as the main factors that constitute national and European identity. Our empirical investigations, however, revealed another difference. The variables of culture and citizenship belonged to one group compared to the primordial, unchangeable factors determined by birth. Eastern European elites were overrepresented among those who defined the primordial factors as preconditions for national and European identity (Lengyel & Göncz 2009). Another interesting finding in this regard is that the German and French elites did not ascribe significance to the native land and the parents as preconditions of national identity, as against the cultural and civil components, whereas the rate of those who advocated the *jus soli* and *jus sanguinis* – being born in Europe and /or issuing from European parents – was above average among them in defining European identity.

Territorial attachments may mutually exclude or reinforce each other. For some people it is important to be attached to their nation or settlement but they only weakly identify with Europe. For others, attachment to the nation does not exclude but supports attachment to Europe. Researchers have shown that the exclusive national identity is not predominant in Europe. Territorial identities existing side by side in union are more prevalent among the people than those that suggest exclusiveness (Inglehart 1970, Haller 2007, 2008, Haller et al 2009). Earlier it also owed to the technique of inquiry that identification with mutually exclusive territories appeared stronger. If there is but a single question asking about the attitudes to national and European attachment – even if the evaluation is not dichotomous but along an ordinal scale – the question implies that there are two poles, the national and the European, and they are each other’s opposites (Fligstein 2010). There are of course some people in whose thinking the two concepts mutually preclude one another. Others, however, are easily attached to both nation and Europe. That applies to most of the elites. If not a single question inquires about the territorial attachments but several separate questions are used, then we can find that there is a positive connection between supranational and national, or European and local identities. It is disproved that strong attachment to the nation, region or locality contradicts the European identity. The overwhelming majority of the members of national

elites identify with Europe, only every seventh rejecting it. National and sub-national identities are thus in positive correlation with European identity. What proved true of the majority of the population also holds true of the elites: intense national identities are in statistically significant and positive correlation with attachment to Europe.

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**Attachment to the EU, to the country, to the region, and to the settlement: correlations within the general population**

		EU	Country	Region	Settlement
<b>EU</b>	Pearson	1	,300	,205	,142
	Sig.		,000	,000	,000
	N	15760	15745	15670	15733
<b>Country</b>	Pearson	,300	1	,432	,393
	Sig.	,000		,000	,000
	N	15745	16069	15952	16027
<b>Region</b>	Pearson	,205	,432	1	,646
	Sig.	,000	,000		,000
	N	15670	15952	15979	15962
<b>Settlement</b>	Pearson	,142	,393	,646	1
	Sig.	,000	,000	,000	
	N	15733	16027	15962	16062

**The empire perspective**

Those who interpret the supranational integration as a threat to national values, culture and society, often associate the EU with images of a formidable empire (“the Roman army of our age” as a young interviewee who defiantly insisted on his extreme rightwing stance declared). In public thinking – especially in the ideological medium of rightist and leftist populism – the concept of the empire is usually associated with negative stereotypes. In the East-Central European perspective, both the Habsburg and the Soviet past elicits categories of aggression, territorial expansion, exploitation and oppression rather than security, advancement, catching up, equalization. The memory of the quenching of the 1848 revolution overshadows the late 19<sup>th</sup> century “piping days of peace”, just as the retaliations following the 1956 revolution overshadowed the emergent “gulash communism”. This is a remarkable paradox, for chronologically, the positive stereotype came after the negative one in both cases. Therefore, those who lived to see both phases, either revalued, relativized or – more probably – suppressed the image of the negative base. Still, the negative associations appear to have stronger effects in posterity. This is presumably so because they represent a more effective mobilizing force, they offer stronger

symbolical clues to the formation of the identity, than the categories of progress and security of an amorphous contour. Suffice it to state here that in public thinking the empire is identified with the great powers of whom not much good can be expected according to these historical stereotypes. The Central European public tends to identify with the image of the historical mission of small nations which they usually idealize (to this, see Kundera's position in his debate with Havel in 1968, Kundera 2008, Havel 2008, Chmel 2008).

Thus, the notion of the empire is an ideologically laden concept eliciting negative stereotypes in the first place, much more so than the concept of nation. It would be useful, however, to face up to the challenge and deliberate whether the application of the concept of empire to the EU could have any scientific gain, whether it has any realistic basis. Such an inquiry is not quite without precedents. There are researches (Zielonka 2007, Gravier 2008, Böröcz et al. 2001, Motyl 1997) that suggest that the concept of empire might be a meaningful coordinate in weighing the alternative future images of EU. What are empires, after all? Diverse answers are given by different authors from Eisenstadt to Hobsbawm and Tilly but their common features, as Gravier convincingly demonstrated are the following: empires are supranational compound entities that represent distinct ideological and cultural patterns differentiable from the parts, are divided into centre and periphery, and tend to expand. Expansion is not necessarily executed via aggression. Expansion can also be conceived as motivated by mutually expected advantages. In this interpretive frame, EU appears to satisfy the criteria of empires in several regards.

In research literature, territorially contiguous and divided empires, and somewhat differently, land and marine empires are differentiated. Motyl (1997) also speaks about the centre and periphery and points out that mutually reinforcing political, economic and socio-cultural organizations are rallied in the centre with considerable concentration of decision-making power. The presence or absence of these separates the empires from the ethno-territorial federations. More disputable but useful questions are inspired by another of his analytic viewpoints. He claims that the elite and population of the centre are culturally differentiated from the elite and population of the periphery. Within the frames of the empire, the relation of the central elite and the peripheral elite is necessarily dictatorial, whereas the relationship between the elite and the population in general is not. It is a conceptual question whether the dictatorial character of the elite hierarchies is regarded as a distinguishing sign of an empire. I tend to answer in the negative, as it applies only to certain types of empire. It is, however, a question open to empirical examination to what extent the elites and the public perceive the internal relations of the elites asymmetrical.

Another question is how realistic the centre–periphery inequalities are within the EU after the enlargement. Evidently, these countries are at massive disadvantage in all respects at the moment of joining the EU, so the question is to what extent these disadvantages become conserved, and to what extent there are deliberate efforts to eliminate them. The phenomenon can be examined from three angles. One may query whether the laws and regulations – the institutions in short – generate, intentionally or unintentionally, inequalities. Secondly, it can be investigated whether in the real economic and social processes there are centre–periphery differences that are lastingly conserved. Thirdly, it can also be inquired how the people experience and perceive the effects of the integration. Symbols and concepts may have obvious impacts on this perception. East European citizens are ready to understand the concept of “Core Europe” suggested by Habermas and Derrida as a hidden distinction between first and second class citizenship (Esterházy quoted by Case 2009), even if in a wider Euro-Atlantic actual political context it could have been a useful conceptual tool.

#### Perception of differences within the EU (%)

		Those who make decisions at the EU level do not take enough account of the interests of my country					Phi
		Strongly Agree	Agree somewhat	Disagree somewhat	Strongly Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	
<b>Political Elite</b>	West	7,1	25,9	47,8	14,4	4,7	
	East	21,4	42,1	27,8	5,6	3,2	
		12,6	32,2	40,1	11,0	4,1	.315****
<b>Economic Elite</b>	West	5,7	33,0	44,8	12,6	3,9	
	East	13,7	48,1	27,0	6,6	4,6	
		8,7	38,8	38,0	10,3	4,1	.244****
<b>General Population</b>	West	22,4	38,3	28,9	7,8	2,5	
	East	28,1	44,2	17,9	4,8	4,9	
		24,5	40,5	24,8	6,7	3,4	.156****

There are significant East-West differences both between elites and between population samples in terms of fairness perception. Majority of Eastern, but only the minority of Western elites think that EU decision makers don't take into account their country's interest properly. Within the general population the differences are not so marked, because the majority of Western citizens think the same, but Easterners, again, feel so in a greater proportion. More than 4/5<sup>th</sup> absolute majority of elites agree with the statement that the interests of some member states carry to much weight at the EU level, but Easterners, again, do emphasize this more than their Western counterparts. Within the general population the East Europeans feel in a significantly greater proportion

that on the one hand the EU is relatively democratic, the decision makers are competent, but on the other hand they don't care much about what laymen think.

### **Concluding remarks**

The first remark has to do with European attachment and the nature of remembering. The ambivalence of European attachment partly derives from the fact that it is popular owing to the geographic endowments and selective historical allusion, while it only has a moderate mobilizing force. When no crisis or conflict is looming large, many choose it as their social point of orientation, but at times of crisis it has little appeal (unless the target of conflict is European attachment itself in the teeth of some external threat). When, however, there is some internal conflict, it might be easily suppressed by national or ethnic viewpoints. This is revealed by the unsympathetic attitude in Germany towards the Greek financial crisis in spring 2010 or the Hungarian-Slovakian conflict emerging around the question of citizenship to be granted to Hungarians living abroad. Though there are institutions and organizational interests beneath supranational identity, they seem not to be so effective, convincing and mobilizing as are the categories of national or sub-national attachment. Europe – let alone the European Union – has not often been sung by poets, thundered by politicians, taught by teachers, and more importantly, it has not often been the topic in conversations within the family and circle of friends as an object of attachment. Attila József, the Hungarian poet of a tragic fate was one of the few exceptions. When Thomas Mann visited Budapest in 1937, he greeted the writer – “*a European among whites*” – with a poem. What did “European” mean to the audience at that time, and what does it mean to readers? It meant to critical thinkers all that Hungary at that time was not, all that they would have liked her to be: all that was culture, all that was not petty, provincial, authoritative, intolerant, segregationist. If the standard measure of Europeanness was the man of culture, if the two were cross-referential, then we must remember that this “European” already had to leave his country and was soon forced to emigrate from Europe that was immersed in authoritarian, intolerant and menacing ideas and practices. That is also part of the common story, serving as additional explanation why it is hard to kindle heart-felt sentiments about Europe. Tony Judt made a strong point with the distinction between political forgetting and cultural remembering as an accompaniment of integration.

Of course in every national and collective history there are dark blots. Taking a Hungarian example again, several generations look back upon 1956, the Hungarian revolution, as the symbol of “trampled-down longing for liberty”, to use the pathetic wording typical of the age. Well, as documentary photos reveal, in the symbolic days of freedom the enraged and disoriented masses carried out lynching in Köztársaság tér. Such

atrocities did happen during other revolutions, too, but here collective memory tends to erase it. It is much more customary to recall the memory of the heroic teenagers, the honesty boxes in the broken windows of shops, and even the alleged case of a simple Russian soldier who went over to the revolutionaries when climbing out of his tank he realized he was not in Suez but in Budapest.

Some tend to mainly remember the glorious past and some are emotionally united by the cherished memory of the jointly experienced injustice, suffering and threat. Surveys have found that there is mutual correlation between national pride and a disposition for intolerance. We can only have guesses what the memory of suppression, injustice and threat predisposes people to. It may predispose them to empathy and tolerance, but it is possible that they will be driven to selfishness, trickery and illiberality as well.

The other remark concerns the role of symbols and concepts in the creation of an empire vision. Less the institutions than the real processes and their perception suggest that after the integration of the post-socialist countries there emerged – or to put it more precisely, shifted into the new institutional sphere – a peripheral situation in the EU. The East Europeans feel over-average that EU-decision makers don't take into consideration their countries' and their personal interest. On the other hand they are also slightly over-average satisfied with the competence of EU decision makers and the way democracy works in the EU. That suggests that the general East-European pattern of understanding is that the EU is not very fair with them, but it is ruled by competent people in a relatively democratic way. One may add that they feel it is a bit better and more competently managed polity than their national one. The question, however, is not merely what disadvantages we have and how people perceive of them here and now. The more important question is what the tendencies reveal. In any "imperial age", even the quickest changes are measured in decades at least. Symbols, however, may have generation-long lasting impacts. This is why the concepts of "Core Europe" or "double track European development" may strengthen the negative stereotypes interwoven with the empire vision of the EU in the long run.

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