

# THE IMMIGRATION CRISIS – REFLECTIONS CONCERNING THE CRISIS OF EUROPEAN IDENTITY

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**Abstract:** *The theme of this paper focuses on the nature and on the issue of identity because starting with the immigration crisis the European identity was slowly affected; as we know in this moment the entire world faced new threats, the moment when terrorism became the main problem of the 21st century. On the other hand this paper brings into spotlight a few aspects regarding the exodus of the non-Europeans immigrants of Arab origin, both Muslims and non-Muslims, who come from countries of the Middle East or North Africa and highlights the absence of a unilateral approach and in accordance with the different viewpoints and, in subsidiary, with the policies on migration and additional influx of immigrants into the European Union.*

**Key words:** *crisis, European identity, exodus, immigrants.*

## 1. Introduction

According to some commentators of foreign policy at present we are witnessing a siege of Europe which tends to shatter the European structure, institutionally speaking, and raising tensions of everyday life of millions of Europeans who feel increasingly more affected by the massive wave of non-European immigrants.

The exodus of these non-Europeans immigrants of Arab origin, both Muslims and non-Muslims, who come from countries of the Middle East or North Africa, generated in the same time a strong confused murmur in the European governments, especially among the citizens of the Communities who complains that the situation is out of control and this is a direct result of exceptionally lax policies of the European Union as regards to the freedom of movement and unmanned international borders, all of this has taken effect and can be observed with the slow collapse of the migration process.

Confronted with this major challenge the European diplomacy it seems that is drifting, balancing between showing indulgence, compassion and supporting these multitudes of people who have chosen exile for economic reasons, security or personal reasons and the rejection of the tradition system of asylum seekers.

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## 2. Discussions

To some extent migration is a demographic phenomenon that is a result of the process of globalization and regionalization to which we are witnessing in recent decades, we can appreciate it is a normal phenomenon but with causes and multiple socio-economic effects.

It is obvious that generally migration occurs from regions which have a less developed economy to developed countries, being involved in this process the adults, especially young men, women and children at the same time. For them migration is an opportunity to start a new life which will hopefully ensure a decent secure life but consequently some emotional comfort, however things are different for the citizens from Member States of the European Union as this means that they are feeling increasingly more exposed to economic, social, political, and even violent attacks.

The opinion polls by the end of 2015 and beginning of 2016 reveals that a significant percentage of citizens belonging to the Member of the European area no longer feel safe and protected, considering that with this exodus of non-Europeans into a region of stability, security and prosperity will have an influence on the status of politics within Europe.

The results that I have mentioned also reveals the collapse regarding the absence of a unilateral approach and in accordance with the different viewpoints and, in subsidiary, with the policies on migration and additional influx of immigrants into the Member States of the European Union.

The Arab and African population exodus has found a scarred Europe; it is totally unprepared to manage the migrant wave crisis within Europe. It all may be the effect as a result of a lack of coherence and of a mediocre level of a very rarely consistent foreign policy concerning various crises that challenged the reaction time of the European Union institutions.

This situation must be scrutinized considering the fact that the European Union is faced with no individual requests for refugee placements which would impose a normal flow rate of processing, with no pressures from massive immigration on European Union borders or a transparent process to refugees that could be controlled administratively by Member States, but rather the European institutions face a process of massive exodus of populations from different areas for different reasons, a phenomenon that happens suddenly, in the crushing waves of immigrants and which has no estimate of ending any time soon.

With the promotion of the Permanent Relocation Mechanism immigrants to European Union countries and of the European strategy on measures to manage the flow of these groups, more and more citizens belonging to the communal space feel a strong frustration regarding the preservation of European identity that seems it is diluted with the starting of the massive influx of immigrants which necessitate fundamental change to our way of life and freedoms.

The core of the refugee issue is that we are facing within the European Union an identity crisis.

According to the theory the concept of identity is extremely comprehensive and it covers a multitude of policy analysis; therefore, the concept refers to the individual identity (or subjective), the social identity (or collective), cultural identity, gender

identity, sexual identity, the religious identity, racial identity, ethnic identity, national identity.

Considering the economy of this paper and the problems analyzed here, I will not detail these types of identities but just try to explain a few conceptual aspects that derive from national identity, ethnic identity with direct references to the European identity.

The ethnic identity can be defined by fact that individuals are perceived considering the existence of some common cultural features such as: language, tradition, and customs.

In other words, by this ethnic identification is achieved in same time a diversity structure of cultural, ethnic community, which representing "any large group of people whose members are bound together by their lineage shared, by the language they speak and by the culture that considers his own". (Roth, 1999, p. 74)

Whenever the issue of European identity is raised we have to be considered the principals which particularize the Europeans, we think at: Europe's cultural heritage, common cultural and historical roots which are shared by the countries of the continent, all these plays a crucial role in understanding European integration, in understanding the formation of a common identity, especially the European identity.

European identity describes more than one sense that defines the community cohesion and refers to the components, generally and the perception of citizens as belonging to Europe, in particular.

In retrospect, the identity of the European Union has been established on the cultural basis: the legacies of the Greek authorities, the influence of the Roman Empire and also Christianity decisively contributing to the formation of the identity of the European Communities. Greek culture, civilization and the Roman Christianity constitutes the historical roots of the European identity, but the European identity cannot be regarded only from a historical perspective, currently the identity of the European Union as constituted also by other factors of nature: political, economic, legal, administrative etc.

European identity overlaps on national identity and therefore it should be perceived also from the point of view of the connection with the national identity which refers to the concept of membership to a state of a nation, either ethnic or multiethnic.

According to the Lisbon Treaty (Article 3a/TUE), the Union (and therefore, all EU institutions, especially the Commission) undertakes to respect the national identity of the Member States, this means clearly that can be no legal EU policy which promote up to absolutization principle of solidarity over other EU obligations concerning Member States. (Antonescu, 2015, p. 6)

Although the European Union includes diverse countries in terms of ethnicity, by creating the European identity attempting to maintain the cultural and ethnical diversity and not the eliminate national identity, by creation of an overlap of these two types of identity, the individual sharing in same time two identity, the European identity and the national identity, reaching to experience this kind of duality.

In this respect, the Euro is an important factor in creating this European identity, introducing the single currency has set a new reference currency and simultaneously removing out the use of national currencies in some Member States. This fact has contributed to the consolidation of the European identity, as we know some Member States renouncing to this national economic symbol (which is the national currency) for reinforce the European identity. It is known that, at the beginning, the introduction of the single currency has not been received with enthusiasm of all states, it is hard to believe that all the member states will pass immediately to the use of the new economic common

element, being expected this situation, because the national currency represent a symbol of the state sovereignty.

It raises a question of whether and how long will co-exist the Europe of nations with a Europe in which, as analysts say, the nation state is strongly eroded and it feels a strong European identity, a powerful European constitutional patriotism. Relevant are the European responses in most EU Member States in the light of recent terrorist attacks in Brussels, on 22 March 2016, which have demonstrated a strong solidarity and even real pan-European patriotism. It is very sad that these features come to light in such moments so dramatic for Europe and for humanity in general.

The difficulties of creating solidarity in fact are numerous and mainly due the diversity of national cultures, because of the ongoing enlargement process and recently by the massive wave of immigrants that crosses the European area.

Returning to the issue of identity, the European Parliament is trying to cultivate a European identity, because it considers that this is the only way to ensure a lasting union between Member States.

The eurosceptics appreciates that the European Union may not exist in the future without a constitution, taking into account that the decision-making processes may not be only the results of some intergovernmental organizations and existing decision-making arrangements as can be observed in the context of the crisis of refugees does not work.

Instead of these, are necessary similar decision ways to those used in the internal affairs of the Member States, i.e. ways based on reflection, on the deliberations and for this it is essential the trust and the consciousness of belonging to a community that exceed the boundaries of the Member States borders. (Balogh and Bernath, 2011, p. 73)

If at the theoretical level the identity of European policy can be translated by political loyalty to Europe or to the European Union, it raises another question: if the current situation on the migration crisis reveals an absence of such identity among the citizens in the European area, having regard the lack of viewpoints cohesion on their assimilation and the effective management of the crisis?

However, according to a Eurobarometer accomplished initially in 2010 and repeated subsequently in the spring of 2015, which the measure the perceptions of EU citizens on the feeling of European citizenship and default recognition of European citizenship, the proportion of Europeans who consider that they are “definitely” citizens of the EU has increased (27%), while the proportion of those who see themselves as EU citizens “to some extent” is unchanged (40%); according to the Eurobarometer the sense of European citizenship is at its highest level since spring 2010 (21%). (Standard Eurobarometer 83, 2015, p. 15)

As was in the previous surveys, the feeling of being a citizen of the EU is more widespread in the euro area countries (68%, +4 percentage points since autumn 2014) than in the non-euro area countries (64%, +2). The sense of European citizenship is shared by a majority of respondents in 27 Member States (compared with 25 in autumn 2014). For example: opinions in Greece are evenly divided: 50% feel that they are citizens of the EU while 50% do not. This is therefore the first time since spring 2010 that at least 50% of respondents in every Member State see themselves as European citizens. However, there are still significant differences between Member States: the sense of European citizenship is shared by 88% of respondents in Luxembourg (where it is most widespread) and by 50% in Bulgaria, Cyprus and Greece (where it is weakest). According to the same Eurobarometer, 65% of Romanian estimated that they feel as being EU

citizens, while 33% gave a negative answer. (Standard Eurobarometer 83, 2015, p. 16)

A stable majority of Europeans continue to see themselves as European citizens (60% define themselves in terms of “nationality and European”, “European and nationality” and “European only”, +1 percentage point since autumn 2014). However, just under four in ten respondents define themselves solely by their nationality, slightly down since autumn 2014 (38%, -1). (Standard Eurobarometer 83, 2015, p. 21)

According to same eurobarometer, the sense of European citizenship can be broken down as follows: a) an absolute majority of Europeans define themselves first by their nationality and then as Europeans (52%, +1 percentage point); b) the respondents who define themselves first as European citizens and then by their nationality remain in a minority (6%, unchanged); c) lastly, only 2% of Europeans see themselves as “European only”. (Standard Eurobarometer 83, 2015, p. 21)

Mobility and migration continue to remain today among the most debated issues that try to adjust to reality the theory of social solidarity in the EU, because the whole discussion have to be moved from the sphere of free movement of persons to integration into the community of those who requests this. This is the reason why is essential an understanding of the connections between the immigrant and the Member State-host. Trying to understand deeply this interest issues is important for beeing able to grasp some aspects concerning the European citizenship, because achieving this status beyond the simple contribution to the host society through economical activities, in the same time offer the possibility of transformation of the residents/immigrants in a part of the society-host. Citizenship becomes in this way more than an extension of the economic citizenship, through which the free movement of persons, goods, capital and services is permitted. The inhabitants of the EU Member States enjoys the European identity, this is seen as an extension of the perception of the "EU Citizenship", sharing a feeling of belonging to the supranational union. (Eurobarometru Standard, 2012, p. 9)

In light of these realities, the main question that arises is how transform the European citizenship from an artifact in a reality can because trying to develop of a common sense of belonging and the imposition of top-down (from the European courts to individuals) can't work on long-term. (European citizenship, 2016)

Is currently estimated that within the EU is about 1 million immigrants, without having establish with certainty: the identity (many entering without identity documents or with false passports) status, origin and what is more important, the real goal for which have want to enter in the Union area (because of war, or fear of persecution, or economic reason). (Antonescu, 2015, p. 5)

A report published by the European Commission (on 16 March 2016) indicate that so far have been redistributed only 937 of the 160,000 migrant specified in the mandatory quota system established by the Council of EU Justice and Home Affairs of September 2015, the EU executive arguing that the main cause of slow implementation of this mechanism is 'lack of political will' of Member States, which asked them to take over from now on at least 5,600 migrants per month. (Popescu, 2016)

We can notice other worrying issues that challenge both security and stability of the Union in the long term, especially the European identity that the EU undertakes to keep this on the basis of the Lisbon Treaty, in this regard is significant the discourse of Jean Claude Juncker, Commission President, who prefer to talk about immigrants crisis "instead to guarantee that the Union will responds with powerful, realistic and coherent EU strategies on the medium and long term and try to identify and stop the causes of the

massive exodus, he said relaxed that "is about a phenomenon that no one knows how long will continue". (Antonescu, 2015, p. 6)

The refugee crises although it was triggered "in an unsuspectedly way and for an indefinite period, exceeds the humanitarian issue and it put into question the prospect of the civilizational identity, the prospect of security and defense, the social integration with success of large masses of populations whose identity, values and civilizational affinities between civilizations do not part of the European civilisation and which does not assume any obligation of behavior in the spirit of the European values, once entered inside the EU". (Antonescu, 2015, p. 7)

### 3. Conclusions

The current crisis facing Europe for more than a year according to analysts is a direct effect of the "first migrations of populations from history, with such proportion, which are globally broadcasting in real time", who is possible to generate a series of chain crisis, such as:

- Humanitarian and human rights crisis (see related crises generated by the failure to comply the human rights of migrants);
- The environmental protection and public health is another challenge (that may generate situations of epidemics and environmental pollution in the states in which the refugees have crossed in transit or remained temporary in precarious housing and personal hygiene, food, and the amounts of waste left behind them, which require urgent solutions of waste collection, environmental protection and public health, both for migrants and residents in areas where have been crossed this massive wave of immigrants);
- Demographic crisis, that may generate an integration crisis and social one, in the EU countries which facing massive departures of indigenous population, with aging population or increasing mortality rates;
- The economic crisis will generate an economic crisis over the countries confronted with the immigrationist pressure;
- Cultural/civilizational crisis is predicted that will generate a crisis of European identity, without possibility of assimilation of values belonging to other civilizations;
- Security crisis may be triggered when the wave of peaceful refugees will change their attitude (either by refusing to remain in countries which was distributed according to mandatory quotas for migrant disposed by the EU or by refusing to comply to the norms, rules, laws of the countries where are distributed) becoming turbulent groups will risk to produce a civil disorder and violations of domestic and constitutional orders of the state in which they arrived; could be also affected the security, the stability and domestic order (we refer both to the EU stability, the medium term and long-term stability and EU Member States stability);
- The crisis of the political class, the crisis of the relationship between rulers and the ruled, in states where is present this massive exodus, but also in other EU

countries; it can see a gap between the interest of the population to feel safe and defended and the politicians necessity to respond to these concerns and obligations of those States to comply with these laws concerning immigrants. Also, the inability to manage the crisis in the EU framework and imposing the mandatory quota of immigrants to the EU Member States, has already created a large gap between the European countries who can afford to support economically this massive wave of immigrants and the eastern states poorer of EU which do not have such possibilities. None of these countries, from the both groups, is not currently disposed understand the overall situation and identify generally accepted solutions in the short term. At these, we can notice the absence of some sustainable solutions, able to operate on medium and long term, that should be taken by the Union (and not by the states, each with own foreign policy, which no longer take into account the European interests, of having an EU strategy). (Antonescu, 2015, pp. 8-10)

There are theorists who consider that the process of building a European identity is just at the beginning, so that, gradually it will articulate a collective European identity; they are founded on a number of arguments based on data provided by the most recent Eurobarometers: so, firstly the European project is in progress just from the mid 1960s and the biggest expansion of opportunities to interact with other people from Europe have occurred with the opening of the European Single Market, in mid 1980s; from this reason, it maybe too early to shape a majority that would create a European nation. Finally, the national identities have taken them to evolve hundreds of years, while the Europeans interacts more intensely just of five and twenty years. Secondly, the demography which acting in favor of the EU and the new generation of young people will get progressively to assume the status of Europeans. Thirdly, with the upbringing of the skill levels and education, Europeans will be more interested in the cultural field and not only, by other issues (education, travel, services, etc.), this can see as a way to spread the European identity. (Irina, 2012, p. 12)

As appreciate Juergen Habermas (in the book "Divided West"), "the European identity will become reality, a reality having as pillars the solidarity focused at widespread sense of belonging to this space, but also at the involvement based on a collective identity explicitly built, this could occur if Europe will wants to speak with one voice at the foreign affairs level and to pursue an active internal politics". (Irina, 2012, pp. 22-23)

The event's history proves that the different histories and cultures, although are living together, have a limited degree of absorption and acceptance from each other, terrorist attacks claimed by the Islamic organization ISIS in the last few months being the most recent example in this regard.

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