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A LOCUS FOR EUROPEAN IDENTITY?
Understanding the role of Historical Memory in
attitudes of the MEPs towards the House of
European History

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Abstract

European versatile and complex history touches the questions “where do we come from” and “where do we want to go from here” making these questions crucial and potent tools in legitimizing the present and shaping the future of the European Union. Since collective memory itself, in the broader sense of the word, is an expression of collective identity we must assume that there is a positive correlation between historical memory and identity building. The never-ending dilemma: Who are Europeans (what demos?) and what makes them European (what Europeanness?), thus, may seek its answers in historical past of the Europe while projects as the House of European History (HEH) are perceived as an active contribution in constructing and modelling not only European identity but a collective, pan-European history.

This paper explores perceptions of the MEPs towards the HEH, through lenses of their own 'European identities' understanding to what extent is historical memory important for the construction of European identity.

The analysis is based on a distinction between civic, cultural and instrumental components of identity, based on previous works of academics on European identity (Bruter, Jimenez et al.) enabling testing of the model via semi-structured interviews on a sample of the MEPs. The findings show that European historical memory has negative effects on standpoints of the MEPs towards the HEH. While many respondents identify with Europe and the EU, acknowledging their own European identity existent mostly in cultural terms, only acceptance of European Collective historical memories based on European integrations creates positive relationship between (Instrumental) European identity and MEPs' attitudes towards the HEH.

The results have important implications for our understanding of European integration, shift in political discourse, and the role of history in European identity formation.

Key words: European identity, Historical memory, the House of European History, HEH

Introduction

Since the commencement of the European unification started almost immediately debate whether after building of the European Union, the process of the European identity building on supranational level will be put in practice as it was considered necessary for the long-term endurance of the Union. The process of evolution from “community of strangers” into a *community of Europeans* started as early as in 1970s with introduction of the Declaration on European identity. Symbolic transformation from Community into the Union, followed by the further enlargements to the post-communist east, extended understanding of what and who is considered to be European.

Even though the establishment of the European Union (Community) was the project without antecedent in the history and undoubtedly brought reconstruction of, by war destructed Europe, interconnected questions on its legitimacy, past and future stay still in the focus of a very vivid debate among citizens and political elites.

European diverse and divisive history touches the questions: “*where do we come from?*” and “*where do we want to go from here?*”; making these prerogatives crucial and potent tools in legitimizing the present and shaping the future of European demoi.

By looking deeper into the relation between European identities of the MEPs and their viewpoints on this project I seek to find out the answer to what extent is historical memory important for the construction of European identity. Many scholars have been concerned with the study of European identity explaining it by and in comparison with different variables: strength of National identity, culture, symbols, mobility, etc. While theoretical explanations on European memory and history have been putted forward, there have not been many empirical evidence on how the Historical memory influences European identity, especially in the case of the Members of the European parliament.

The never-ending dilemma: *Who are Europeans?* (what demos) and *What makes them European?* (Europeaness) may seek its answers in historical past of the Europe, and the House of European History is considered to be an active contribution to constructing and modeling not only European identity but a collective, pan-European history. The HEH, being a project in the phase of final development (2015) has not yet been subject of great interest for scholars leaving the gap in the literature and making this case study one of the very few in academic community.

Ch. 1 The research question: How perceptions of collective historical memory affect European identity of the Members of the European parliament?

Emergence of Homo Europaeus

In his inspiring *“The uses of history and the third wave of Europeanization”* Klas-Goran Karlsson, proposes a reinterpretation of Huntington’s “three waves of democratisation”(Huntington, 1991) presenting gradual European integration in 3 waves comprising (1) economic integration —“well on the road to completion”; (2) political unification —“notably less successful”; and (3) cultural Europeanization, “complex and strongly disputed processes such as linguistic homogenization, and the inculcation of a European amalgam of knowledge, attitudes and values”(Karlsson 2010). Moreover, he argues that obvious objective of “new Europe” is laying of the foundations for political guidance and legitimacy where general *historisation* of society is concomitant process. Although European integration started immediately after the end of the World War II, Karlsson argues that “*cultural Europeanization wave*” waited the collapse of communism in CEE countries in the early 1990s. Yet, importantly another earlier attempt was made in this regard as a consequence of the economic crisis and the failure of the Werner Plan by the early-1970: a quasi-utopian project of forging a “*European identity*” through culture in order to give an impulse to the failing reforms. In December 1973, European Community during its summit in Copenhagen, published a “*Declaration on European identity*” in order to outline Europe’s “role in the world”; now, after more than half of the century after its establishment and despite the repeated calls for bring “the Union closer to its citizens” (Kochler-Koch 2000). Europe is considered to be still far away from its people(s) and it is perceived mainly an elite affair. Clearly, the failure of the European constitution in 2005 with its rejection by French and Dutch citizens sent the message that gap between elites and people became alarming. Last economic crisis have had profound effects not only on national economies, social and political life but also have shaken the fundamentals of the European Union putting under question mark: its scope and legitimacy. *Where do we come from* and *where do we want to go from here*, could thus, become central questions and potent tool in legitimizing the present while shaping the future.

The problems of identity and legitimacy in the EU are significant, but tangentially interconnected. For a very long time political scientists have argued that “the emergence of a corresponding political identity can be considered as the primary source of legitimisation of a political community” (Bruter 2005). Rousseau in his *Du contrat social*, teaches us that citizens choose to give their political community its legitimacy and its right to determine what is the “*general will*” through a social contract. This contract will later develop as a kind of identification, chosen by citizens when legitimizing the relationship between them and the state. “*L’obéissance à la loi qu’on s’est prescrite est liberté*”, prescribes Rousseau.

Seeking the answers to my main research question I have selected the House of European History as case study for testing of the presupposed relation.

Since the launch of the project, the House of European history (HEH) was conceived as “*a locus for the European identity to go on being shaped by present and future citizens of the European Union*”.¹ Thus, it would seem that this project is imagined as an instrument of European identity politics which again, in its essence, is a process whose necessity is subject to some criticism. While questioning the attempt of the Institutions (European Parliament) to endeavor into museography and historiography I began to question: *How the perceptions of collective historical memories affect European identity of the Members of the European Parliament?*, thus creation of Pan-European collective memory reservoir. The relationship between these two variables seems to be interesting for a deeper understanding of the nature of the European identity in the European Parliament, but also to open new questions on the process and challenges of euro-historisation and EU legitimacy seeking.

My first expectation is, therefore, that perceptions of (collective) historical memory can significantly influence salience of one of the components of the European identity. Subsequently, salience of European identity component will determine the nature of the relationship with the MEPs opinion on the House of European History.



Making the collective historical memory explanatory factor in understanding how European identity affects MEPs attitudes towards the HEH, I will deal with empirical testing of the hypotheses working on a sample of European political elites. I depart from the presumption that European identity is present in the European Parliament, among the MEPs and that the latter has three key dimensions. Operationalization of the concept of European identity into these three dimensions proves necessary for better understanding of the nature of European identity of the MEPs and explaining their viewpoints.

The research question: *How do perceptions of collective historical memory affect European identity of the Members of the European parliament?* includes two major theoretical concepts which have benefited from a considerable amount of research over time. First, the notion of historical memory and second, the concept of Pan-European identity. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the role of historical memory in the European identity building process. Thus, I work with the assumption that the effort to gradually legitimize European integration and unification has opened the road for identity politics and consequently history politics. Since the collective memory itself, in the broader sense of the word, is an expression of collective identity we must assume that there is a positive correlation between historical memory and nation (building). **Hence**, my basic assumption in regards to identity is that European identity politics – as any other identity politics – must include history as unifying constituent.

Ch. 2 Europeanization of Historical memories

Theories and Empirical implications

A European Collective Memory, is it possible?²

“If Europe is to be saved from infinite misery, and indeed from final doom, there must be this act of faith in the European family, this act of oblivion against all crimes and follies of the past”. (Churchill 1946)

The aim of this paper is not to embark into a complicated interpretation of European past, but to link Pan-European Historical memory to the concept of European identity. For this purpose it is necessary first to provide clear definition and the concept of *Historical memory* that will be approached in this paper.

It is considered that memory is a crucial component in creating and maintaining individual and communal identity. One of the first authors to attribute memory directly to a collective entity was Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945). In his *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*³, Halbwachs sustained that individual memory is developed in interaction with social networks and the larger community. In his posthumously published *La Mémoire Collective* he gave theory which states that all memory depends on: a) a group in which one lived, and

b) the status one held within that group. However, he distinguished collective from historical memory, where the first is a “sequence of events for which national history conserves the memory”⁴ and historical memory is a part of collective memory. Nevertheless, for Halbwachs these two memories are partially juxtaposed. While one can differentiate different kinds of memory as a rather “elastic” concept, it is important to look deeper into the reciprocal relationship between history and memory. During last few decades references to the past have been made in terms of memory rather than history or even these two concepts have been equated. Without going into further details of academic debate on the concept of “historical memory” we can draw several conclusions:

- a) Historical memory is a part of collective memory
- b) There are many definitions of the concept of “*historical memory*”
- c) Historical memory can be potentially purposeful but also dangerous tool for a deliberate misinterpretation or falsification of history by historians, political elites and alike

Pierre Nora, as one of the key contributors in this field, defines history as a means by which modern societies capture and arrange past events which would otherwise be forgotten due to processes of change⁵ while remembering sustains a sense of sameness over the time and space, as Pakier and Strath argue in *A European Memory*. Conceptual slide from history to memory clearly relates to the construction of legitimacy. At national level, the role of collective historical memory is crucial for building of national identity and creates positive correlation among them. Yet, it is not directed towards history per se, but towards important events in national history both positive and negative. For example, Serbia’s great defeat against Turks in Kosovo Polje 1389 or granting of the Magna Charta Libertatum and the Bill of Rights in England. These key historical milestones were without doubt important in forging National identities. Hence, to the list of key attributes of the concept we link another important element:

- d) Historical memory leaves space for oversimplifying of the past and creating myths rooted in (national) history

In recent years, a number of politicians and intellectuals have openly expressed the wish to see the formation of a kind of “Europeanization” of collective memory or even a clearly discernible “supra-national European memory” (Muller 2012). In the course of European integration there were several important attempts in linkage of collective identities and memories, which can be found in:

- i) The Declaration on European Identity where the concept of “European heritage” and the role of common culture as essential elements of European identity can be found
- ii) Schuman Declaration (1950), where reference to WWI and WWII is made as a momentum for creation of Europe and prevention of similar events in the future
- iii) Creation of The founding fathers myths, distinctive symbols etc., achievements of the Euro-integrations itself: unique currency, Nobel prize, The House of European History
- iv) Commemoration policies (Holocaust)

It can be reasonably argued that over time and particularly during the last couple of years (historical) memory has moved centre stage in EU discourse and become powerful vehicle for shaping identity policies.⁶ More and more political elites speak about Pan-European Historical narrative as a powerful tool in shaping identity of European citizens. Past efforts in this direction had proved insufficient and inefficient as routes for identification with the EU. Instrumentalization of European historical memory for political purposes, leaves space for rising doubts on “correct” or “true” interpretations of history. The very idea of European unification, as noted by Muller, has a deeply conflicted history- a history that needs to be remembered not least in order to counter simplistic narratives of European progress against the background of negative national past (Muller 2012). With European memories not just divided but also divisive, homogenisation of memories at European level is therefore to be faced with considerable obstacles.

Unfolding European Identity: Cultural, Civic and Utilitarian components

Many authors believe that ongoing debates see European identity predominantly as a by-product of the emerging supranational institutional framework of the European Community/Union and as such questions on identity and affiliation, become particularly detectible and important at the moments of economic and political milestones.

The concept of European identity is an idea expressing contrived notions of unity rather than an identity in the proper sense of the word and even takes on the proportion of an ideology (Delanty 1995). Intensified European integration has gone hand in hand with a growing academic and political search for the roots of *Europeanness* in history, religion, science and culture.⁷The idea of Europe became, historically and sociologically, a political idea and mobilizing metaphor at the end of the twentieth century, particularly in the wake of '1989' (Strath 2002). Only few decades later, French and Dutch rejection of the European Constitution (2005), sent clear message of rejection of the historical groundings for further euro-integration as it "displayed a lack of understanding of the historical complexity of the past upon which visions of the future might be built." *Who we are* becomes, thus, central question in unfolding the future. While *No demos thesis* had been putted forward and borders of the Europe still remain quite vague, the answer to what keep us together leaves a lot of space for interpretation.

The main emphasis on Europe is made on shared values and ideas, its distinctive cultural and ethnical diversity (in unity) and identity prevalently based on Greco-Roman heritage of Western Europe. Several authors postulate the presence of an obvious "other" as pre-condition for a deeper-rooted feeling of being European.⁸Indeed, the question what defines Europe(ans) has been debated question in political and academic circles since the beginning of unification of the European continent in the second half of the 20th century.

What unites people from Greece to Sweden and from the United Kingdom to Austria in terms of cultural heritage and social and political values (Bruter 2003) and most importantly what can hold them together in the days to come? By simplifying existing theories about the emergence of a European identity, I have identified three main tendencies in the literature, based on sources of European identification they represent. Here I take into account, two major researches in the array of European identity made by M. Bruter and A.R Jimenez et al.

Cultural component

In his inspiring research on citizens' perceptions of news, symbols and "borderless-ness" with regard to their identification with Europe, Michael Bruter makes distinction between civil and cultural components of European identity. Bruter defines cultural identity as a persons' "identification with their political community as a human group, regardless of the nature of the political system."⁹ For him, united in diversity means that "the perception of a shared European heritage, regardless of so-called objective historical reality, might include any form of common history; moral, religious, or ethnic traditions; philosophical, political, or moral norms and values; and so forth"(Bruter 2003).

The group of scholars that we identify with the "cultural" theory argue that if a European identity were to emerge, it would not, and should not, be based on the same elements (such as a common cultural heritage, language, myths, symbols and emotional bonds) which form the foundations of national identities (see Smith 1992, 1995, 1999; Østerud 1999). According to Østerud, European identity building could emulate "classical" nation-building seen in Europe during the 19th century on a larger, European scale. However, he believes that this process would be problematic because of European strong cultural and linguistic (among other factors) diversity hence "expectations of the emergence of a European identity should be regarded as rather utopic. Thus, European identity building via historical reference would need to focus on notions of European heritage and following the itinerary of classical nation-state building, would need to lead to acceptance of parallelism of historical memory of member-states. Hence, Unity in diversity can be understood as a reversed Pierre Nora's "Memory divides, history unifies",¹⁰ where **memory unifies** and **history divides**.

Civic identity component

By civic identity, Michael Bruter means "the degree to which they feel that they are citizens of a European political system, whose rules, laws, and rights have an influence on their daily life" (Bruter 2003), adopting Habermasian vision of Constitutional patriotism. Jürgen Habermas envisages formal allegiance of citizens to the polity through adherence to the constitution and in the light of public sphere of politically proactive citizens. Constitutional patriotism, however, excludes the common cultural identity and places in the core constitutional loyalty of jointly agreed principles. Bearing in mind that the European Union is built on the assumption of factual diversity of peoples (national identities) in Europe, followers of the European constitutional patriotism

advocate belief that the identification of the citizens with the EU could be obtained only by non-national conception of political loyalty since it has a chance to be if not attractive, then “at least acceptable to all its current and future member states” (Baubock 1997).

Instrumental component

Another group of scholars, analysed European identity components expanding cultural and civic components to instrumental i.e. utilitarian component. Many authors have claimed that instrumental factors may play an important role in defining and strengthening individuals’ sense of identity (Brass 1979, Cinnirella 1997). The perception of the potential gains or losses that might result from membership of a given social group may influence peoples’ identification with it (Jimenez 2004). This cost-benefit understanding of identities implies that low welfare spending, poor economic performance, and low-quality national-level democracy would all make citizens more likely to feel more European (Gabel 1998; Eichenberg and Dalton 1993; Gabel and Palmer 1995; Kaltenthaler and Anderson 2001; Olsen 1996; Sánchez-Cuenca 2000; Fernández-Albertos and Sánchez-Cuenca 2001).

From this instrumental perspective it could be implied that European membership is perceived as a win-win combination for both, member-states’ citizens and political elites, where latter are motivated by utilitarian dimension of its membership. This dimension of European identity is very important to my research as it expands basic understanding of traditional perceptions of the meaning of Collective history, anchoring the utilitarian component of European identity into a last 60 years of effectively shared history in Europe, shared history of European integrations.

It is of mine particular interest to examine whether an individual’s European identity is closer to any of its three objective components—that is, how historical memory is embedded in their corresponding identity. Understanding which of three components of European identity is dominant will, thus, determine the individual attitudes towards the House of European History.

Ch.3 Research design and methodology

In my empirical analysis, I will take Bruter’s distinction between a civic and a cultural component of European identification as my main point of departure enriching it with utilitarian (Instrumental) component of European identity.

Research diary

Research was conducted in two steps: 1) the collection of documentary analysis on the House of European history and interviewing the members of the HEH Academic team followed by 2) interviews with MEPs. For the purpose of empirical testing of above mentioned hypotheses, I draw a set of questionnaires with my own questions.

During the first step an effort has been made to draw a general picture of the purpose and aims of the HEH on the basis of **documentary analysis** of available documents, EP proceedings and hearings in Brussels and Strasbourg. This phase of the research process have been very helpful in identifying key divergences in opinion among the MEPs (discourse analysis, MAXqDA software) and initial mapping of potential interview candidates. An explanatory interview with the team member of the HEH’s Academic team was conducted in the early stages of the research process gaining me insight into a progress of the 2015 scheduled project and its approach to the elements of my study. Conducted in-depth interview oscillated around 4 main topics:

- a) Shared interpretation of the past
- b) Relationship between history and memory; Memory and identity building
- c) Diversity of perceptions (key historical events)
- d) Composition of exhibits and general questions on the HEH

The questionnaire is reported in Annex of this study. Since the case study selected is addressing new, on-going project it was very important to obtain information on current state of affairs at this stage of the research.

Second phase of the research process involved interviewing of the MEPs, conducted between September 2013 and March 2014 in the European Parliament in Brussels. The interview partners for the semi-**structured interviews** were chosen primarily on the basis of their involvement in the debate on the HEH (first part of the research process). Origin of the MEPs, his/her EU political party affiliation were taken into account, for the balance between National provenience of the MEPs would give me a wider understanding of their attitudes and a possibility to investigate its possible connection with outcomes in the further steps of the research process.

It is of mine particular interest to examine whether an individual's European identity is closer to any of its three objective components—that is, how historical memory is embedded in their corresponding identity. Understanding which of three components of European identity is dominant, will determine the individual attitudes towards the House of European History. For this purpose, I have created a questionnaire with 5 sets of questions on:

A1: Past, Future and HEH

A2: Self-assessment European identity

B: European identity CIVIC component

C: European identity CULTURAL component

D: European identity INSTRUMENTAL component

While the first set of questions aims measuring (with quite straightforward questions) the MEP's attitudes towards the House of European history another question was posed to interviewees regarding their self-assessment of European identity. Question A2.1: Name 3 characteristics (attributes) describing Europe? was inserted as a sort of control variable, as it provides in no middle-terms given meaning (significance) of the Euro integration process. Finally, questions in section B, C, D provide each 3 variables for measurement.

Case study: European Identity and the House of European History

"The study of history is the beginning of political wisdom."

Jean Bodin, the French jurist and political philosopher

"Collective identities require both a common goal for the future and common points of reference in the past" summarizes A. Assman (2006) by placing identity formation between past and future. While academics and institutional actors debate about the existence and need for European collective identity, new project aiming at presenting common points of reference in the past, emerged. Professor Hans-Gert Pöttering, ex-president of the European parliament and the initiator of the project, acknowledged that the House of European History (HEH) would be the place where the memory of European history and the process of European unification would be jointly cultivated so as to provide an environment for reflection on the meaning of European identity. "The establishment by the European Parliament of a House of European History in Brussels constitutes a significant innovation in the way in which an advanced democratic system approaches its relationship with the past."¹¹

The objectives and mission of the House of European History are based on a first concept paper, the Conceptual basis for a House of European History, which was drawn up in 2008 by a committee of renowned historians and experts from various European countries, chaired by Professor Hütter — President of the Foundation of the Haus der Geschichte in Bonn — and in response to the initiative of former President of the European Parliament Hans-Gert Pöttering, announced in 2008, to create the House of European History (European Parliament, 2013). The project immediately hit the news and initiated the debate among policy makers, non-state actors and general public questioning whether this project is "necessary" demonstration of Europe's shared history, or an expensive

vanity project. In his inaugural speech presenting the project, MEP Pottering explains what his idea behind the project is:

*"I should like to create a locus for history and for the future where the concept of the European idea can continue to grow. I would like to suggest the founding of a "House of European History". It should [be] a place where a memory of European history and the work of European unification is jointly cultivated, and which at the same time is available as a locus for the European identity to go on being shaped by present and future citizens of the European Union"*¹²

Following a discussion, Parliament unanimously welcomed the proposal and appointed a Committee of nine experts to draw up a concept for the House of European History. "It is the task of the European Union to contribute to the improvement of the knowledge and dissemination of the culture and history of the European peoples" says Article 151 of the EC Treaty but this project, in the eyes of some MEPs, is aiming to support European identity building and is a costly venture into an array of unknown. In addition, the debate on Pan-European history sparkled and remains unclear whether despite reports that "its (HEH's) story would start in 1946, to avoid dealing with contrasting views of World War II, the museum will deal with both world wars, and the communist Iron Curtain that followed" (Vovk van Gaal and Dupont, 2012). According to HEH's director, Taja Vovk van Gaal: "Europe, in the understanding of the HEH, is not restricted to the European Union. The whole continent is taken into consideration with its changing geographical borders and evolving definition through time" (Vovk van Gaal and Dupont, 2012).

According to European parliament "The concept of 'shared memory' will permeate the historical narrative of the HEH, forming a basis for the interpretation of history, including the passive and the active sides of this phenomenon, formed as it is in a social context — and which both characterises and binds groups of people together" (European Parliament, 2013).

*"We are trying to make a historical exhibition but use memory, the concept of memory as a kind of red thread thought the exhibition that will come back in different areas of the exhibition. For example we want to deal the memory of Holocaust, we want to deal with (...) how the communist past was dealt with after 1990 and we always want to stress different perspectives on this. Then, we also want to have a section where we confront public memory with individual memory."*¹³

Interviewed member of the Academic team told that shared interpretation of (history)

*"is one of our main challenges. We want to stress common experiences, shared memories, these shared processes, and shared historical processes. We want to stress that that they were perceived in different ways. We don't want to claim that everyone perceived history in the same way. So we want to stress the diversity of experiences, while stressing common phenomena, diversity of perceptions and to give different perspective on the same phenomena."*¹⁴

While MEP Pottering in his 2007. speech claimed that "the idea of supporting something such as a European identity is not totally absent in the political justifications expressed at the launch of the HEH"¹⁵ the interviewed member of the Academic team said that "(the HEH) actually want to avoid the notion of identity as we actually see it as something delimitating from the other."¹⁶ While stressing that exhibitions developed are focusing on "European perspective of events", interviewed member of the Academic team shared that key events as: 1989, de-colonialisation, Holocaust, war in former Yugoslavia, Unification of Germany, WWI, WWII and totalitarian regimes, will be presented in the 5 floors exhibition. In achieving this "European perspective", the member of the Academic Team argued that:

"there are not so many museums on European integrations, there are houses of the founding fathers, there are national museums which integrate a section on European integrations but they are seen from the National perspective. I think that our specificity lies in the fact that we are trying to see, without harmonizing, to see certain processes from a European point of view."

It remains, however, unclear what "European point of view" actually is and how will be achieved. This part of the research revealed a shift in discourse of European political elites involved and shift in presentation of the

aims and purpose of the HEH from “the locus for European identity” to the more complementary “European memory reservoir” i.e. a shift from a strategy adopted: “top to bottom” to an attempt of a boomerang strategy: top input-bottom impulse-top output.

Ch. 4 Empirical findings

What identity in the European parliament?

While acknowledging that European identity is present in the European Parliament, interviewed MEPs report, however, salience of Cultural component of European identity. As key elements of cultural identity were identified: French Revolution, Greek democracy, National history, National language and culture and Western background. The questions on future enlargement, especially reference to Turkey and Russia, were included into the questionnaire as a measurement of the reference to the significant Other as key identifier of *Europeanness*. When asked about possible future enlargements of the EU to Turkey and Russia similar answers among majority of the interviewees were recorded:

“Turkey is not Europe. Only 10% is in Europe, also, the whole culture of Turkey is not Western. Some democratic developments occurred in 1920, but before that it was - caliphate. It was structured Middle – Eastern. Again, we can have trade with Turkey, travel, cooperation it’s possible but they should not be part of European government, supra-national state of Europe. No.”¹⁷

Slipping from *Europeanness* into a detected *Eurocentricism* reflects in their attitudes related to history. One interviewee speaks about importance of history for future EU candidates, underlining this *otherness*:

“(Russia) They have different history, different views on organizing society. Nobody in Europe would be happy with government organized by Putin. It doesn’t work here, it works there. I don’t say it’s better or worse, it’s different. They are not part of this from Greece to French revolution history. And Turks don’t have this common denominator.”¹⁸

Reference to religion as a “common denominator” of European member-states is a subject of differentiation with Turkey making the religious component potent tool in depicting strength but also difference of (Pan)European (Cultural) identity: *“They are trying to convince us that they should be the part of the Union, under their conditions. That means that they wouldn’t change anything. Secularity of the state is one of the principles of European nation states. So I don’t think Turkey can now become member of the Union.”¹⁹*

The central role of Nation-states history is dominant in regards to more recent achievements of Euro-integration. Histoeuropeization or creation of Pan-European Narrative is regarded with hostility and pessimism or even confronted, from a Eurosceptic point of view with rectification of history and more dramatically as the Third Reich doctrine:

“The last time someone tried to create that (Pan-European history) it was a disaster. It was a certain German dictator who tried to unify Europe and push for central government in 1940-1945. I don’t believe in a unified political-economic bloc Europe, I believe in mutual cooperation, I believe in respect, I believe in dignity in working together as European governments. To be very practical, let’s say European ministers of transport meet every month in Brussels and discuss, share best practices, sure, no problem with that. But you don’t need European institutions for that. Its bit like federalist and government in the US, its bit like Perpetum mobile, to draw more power to Washington while states want to draw more power for themselves. It’s like that in Europe. I am on side of national governments saying: We want to keep our future for ourselves.”²⁰

Some perplexities among the future reflect in how the MEPs perceive *who we are*: Shall we become or are we already European?

“Europe wouldn’t be the same if all the nations, peoples, histories would make an amalgam, because we will not be the same not in 10 years not in 100 years. European identity is...well I don’t know how to describe it. What does that actually mean? We do have our national identities which have been made in the course of history. I don’t see an identity of an average European citizen. Who is he?”²¹

In search of commonalities, “joint denominators” and perceptions of Identity building via historical reference, several key conclusions have been identified:

- a) Historical memory leaves space for oversimplifying of the past and reifications
- b) Historical memory is considered to be potentially purposeful but also dangerous tool for a deliberate misinterpretation or falsification of history by historians, political elites and alike
- c) Historical memory is considered to be “owned” by the nations
- d) Identity building via historical reference uses memory concept as more neutral approach in order to avoid contra standing interpretations of history

Attitudes of the MEPs towards the HEH

When asked directly: How do you view the idea of the House of European history? (Q: A1, n.1) the MEPs answers ranged from the HEH being “ a ridiculous project...and a private mausoleum for Mr. Pottering”²² to “I don’t see how you can put together all nation-state’s history in one museum”.²³

The main objections in regards to this project are made in terms of: factual necessary, role of European parliament in museology venture, costs, homogenization of nation-states memories and histories and interpretations of past events. This research confirms the expected relationship among variables, making the utilitarian component of the European identity the most important for the outcome of positive attitudes of the MEPs towards the HEH.

From this instrumental perspective European membership is perceived as a win-win combination for both, member-states’ citizens and political elites, and horizontally between member states themselves. A win-win combination for actors in this equation reflects mainly in fact that the European integrations’ crown jewel is a lasting peace in Europe which is perceived as the most valuable gain of the EU membership. “Putting an emphasis on what we have in common rather than to speak about the have historical, military and political events that divided us.”²⁴

MEP Vuljanic from Croatia, explains what he would not like “That the House of European History becomes the starting point for creating a European nation. It would not work, I would be against it. Europe should not copy American model of nation, we have 2000 years of history. Quite diverse from time to time, quite common from time to time but this history has shaped us as independent states. I’m quite sure you agree too, from your point of view as every other European citizen. If this is starting point for the creation of European nation, I am against it. If the scope is to put us closer and better understand each other, then this is a good purpose, in interest of all European citizens. In these times of crescent nationalism and rightist movements, a project like this would be helpful.”

Although acknowledging the HEH as an instrument of European identity building, majority of respondents are not enthusiastic about the project and are more willing to discuss sharing of their National or even individual memories and not their histories. “I am very proud of my Western background, my culture, my history that I carry in me but it’s not up to European Union to monopolize that in their museum.”²⁵ emphasize MEP Hartong. While agreeing that shared interpretation of the past is a risky venture as it opens debate among member states, dragging them far away from the present and the future, the respondents reported that “collective interpretation of history is important for the Nation states” but it should not be invested in the “history of Europe”.

While the most dominant component of the European Identity was cultural element, instrumental component proved to be the most influential for the positive attitudes of the MEPs towards the HEH.

“Putting an emphasis on what we have in common rather than to speak about the have historical, military and political events that divided us. That made me think, this is a different approach and it’s a European approach and it’s what European Union is. And it can be a step in evolution.”²⁶

The place of history in the HEH for instrumental component of the European identity, is in the commemoration and remembrance. “The HEH shows the European history starting from 20th century with a catastrophe we had

we the WWI and WWII and the Holocaust, and shows that we left all that behind. It's a new approach, which has to do more with a history of people."²⁷ This new approach, a tendency in *stato nascendi*, is actually a European way, a European approach. It is reflected in attempt to legitimize European project through slow but less politically suicidal process of fusion among people of Europe: unification of collective memory by putting an emphasis not on National dynamics but on individual as a carrier of the burden. Hence, European way is an attempt of inducing bottom-top approach of Europeanization as a way of homogenizing European memories, creating memory reservoir which will supply European identity and legitimacy building with energy lacking in their political elites' circles.

These findings on the salience of utilitarian component of the European identity in relation with the HEH, are empirically confirming the existent gap between the instrumental character of the Union and latter problems of legitimization.

From the empirical findings, the research summary can be presented in a form of table:

Historical memory	Dominant Component	Created relationship
Parallelism of nation-centred memories	Cultural	Negative opinion towards the HEH
Broadly defined topoi "European freedom", European Liberty	Civic	Negative opinion towards the HEH
European integrations memories, Peace as a product	Instrumental	Positive opinion towards the HEH

Conclusions:

By looking deeper into the concept of historical memory we must agree that there is a certain elusiveness in its essence: juxtaposition of history as an objective narrative and memory as rather, personal and subjective process. Fusion of historical memories in Europe has as a scope support to European identity building via gradual legitimization of the Union's past and future.

Jan-Werner Müller believes that "the project of a united Europe will probably require the readjustment of historical narratives—and possibly the recasting of various collective memories from East and West." The results of this research confirm that the process of Europeanization of history is entering a new phase. This new phase leads to transformation of European National History into a European Joint Memory with an aim that memory unify where history divide.

Identity building via historical reference is not a novelty in the European politics, but its deepening through memory politics was fully acknowledged only after the failure of 2005 Constitution which rose the red flag : Attention. Wide gap between the politics and the people, ahead. This research shows that the people identifying with the EU in terms of utility of adherence to the European family of countries, have positive opinion on the House of European History. For others, the project (HEH) and the concept of joint European narrative are highly improbable and elusive concepts with whom they have difficulty to identify. While this readjustment of historical narratives between the past of the East and West, was approached with remembrance politics and its "culture of remembrance", pluralism of memories and historical narratives remains very vivid in the hearts of Europeans, today. Historical self-scrutiny, however, has a central role in promoting lasting peace and prosperity of Europe making the question *who we are less important than who we want to be*.

Appendix A – Political elites interviews

Questions Measuring European Identity and Its Components

Throughout the article, I refer to the questions measuring the general, utilitarian, civic, and cultural components of European identity. In this appendix, I report these questions in extenso in order to facilitate the understanding of obtained results.

Each question is presented with the following corresponding code used throughout the paper: General A1 and A2 for general identity measures, B for Civic 1 to 3 for the civic identity variables, C for Cultural 1 to 4 for the cultural identity variables and D for Utilitarian for the utilitarian identity measure.

A1: Past, Future and HEH

1. How do you view the idea of the House of European history?
2. What is the main advantage and main disadvantage of this project for European Union and its citizens?
3. Is this project contributing (and if yes in what manner) to the European identity building?

Optional: Can shared interpretation of the past be important element of a collective identity in Europe? Can a shared interpretation can be achieved in the case of HEH?

Optional: While prevailing opinion in Brussels seems to be that Europe is “making citizens”, historical legitimacy also requires that citizens are “making Europe”. Which of two approaches best fit the HEH?

A2: Self-assessment European identity

1. How would you define Europe, what Europe means to you? (in 3 words)
2. How does identity influence behaviour and argument in the European Parliament?
3. Does European Parliament embodies the European identity or spirit? How is identity felt in the European Parliament?
4. Is it easier to find common ground, common European dimension when references are made to positive sides of an argued European heritage, as in the case of enlightenment? But what about holocaust and world wars, are they also European to some extent?

B: European identity CIVIC component

5. Human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and the respect for human rights: these are the core values of the EU which are set out at the beginning of the Treaty of Lisbon. Does this provide an adequate framework for a European Identity?
6. Do these broadly defined *topos* represent the scope or the foundation basis of the European Union?
7. Could jointly agree European values (achievements) as peace, freedom and respect for human rights be taken as a base of European historical memory?

C: European identity CULTURAL component

8. Are there historical/cultural, Greco-Roman basis of European identity?
9. What role has the (national) history in making of the Union?
10. From Communism to Fascism and National Socialism, winners and losers of the WWII, old to new democracies; how realistic is the creation of Pan European history? Is accepting Unity in diversity and parallelism of historical memories in Europe - feasible?
11. In regards to possible enlargements of the EU towards Turkey or Russia for example, how important are culture, language or more controversially religious aspects?

D: European identity INSTRUMENTAL component

12. In regards to future and the most recent enlargements of the EU, would you say that joining the EU was a win-win combination for the candidate countries and the Union, itself? Or a sort of trade-off?
13. What are the main achievements of the European Union?
14. Can European integration's key milestones be regarded as a collective European history (historical achievements)?

¹Committee of Experts, "Conceptual Basis for a House of European History," October 2008, 4.

²Gerard Namer, "Une memoire collective europeenne est-elle possible?" in *Schweizerische Zeitschrift fur Soziologie / Swiss Journal of Sociology* 19, pp. 25-32

³See Halbwachs 1925.

⁴Halbwachs 1997, 129

⁵Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les lieux de Mémoire", in *Representations* 26, pp.7-25

⁶European Historical Memory: Policies, Challenges and Perspectives, IP/B/CULT/NT/2013-002, European Parliament, 2013, p.23

⁷Goddard et al. 1994

⁸Fuss and Grosser 2006, 213

⁹Bruter 2003, 1155

¹⁰Nora, "Nachwort" in Francois, Etienne; Schulze, Hagen (eds): *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte. Band III*, Munchen: Beck, p.681-686 (p.686)

¹¹Schulz, European Parliament 2013, p.1

¹²The President of the European Parliament, Prof. Dr. Hans-Gert Pöttering, MEP, 13 February 2007

¹³Member of the Academic Team, the HEH, Personal interview by Ana Milosevic on 29.11.2013.

¹⁴Member of the Academic Team, the HEH, Personal interview by Ana Milosevic on 29.11.2013.

¹⁵Vovk van Gaal and Dupont 2012, 48

¹⁶Member of the Academic Team, the HEH, Personal interview by Ana Milosevic on 29.11.2013.

¹⁷MEP Lucas Hartong, Netherlands, Personal interview by Ana Milosevic on 21.01.2014

¹⁸MEP Nikola Vuljanic, Croatia, Personal interview by Ana Milosevic on 22.01.2014

¹⁹MEP Nikola Vuljanic, Croatia, Personal interview by Ana Milosevic on 22.01.2014

²⁰MEP Lucas Hartong, Netherlands, Personal interview by Ana Milosevic on 21.01.2014

²¹MEP Nikola Vuljanic, Croatia, Personal interview by Ana Milosevic on 22.01.2014

²²MEP Lucas Hartong, Netherlands, Personal interview by Ana Milosevic on 21.01.2014

²³MEP Nikola Vuljanic, Croatia, Personal interview by Ana Milosevic on 22.01.2014

²⁴MEP Jens Geier, Germany, Personal interview by Ana Milosevic on 23.01.2014

²⁵MEP Lucas Hartong, Netherlands, Personal interview by Ana Milosevic on 21.01.2014

²⁶MEP Jens Geier, Germany, Personal interview by Ana Milosevic on 23.01.2014

²⁷MEP Jens Geier, Germany, Personal interview by Ana Milosevic on 23.01.2014

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