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## European Identity in Crises

European identity in light of the euro crisis and the immigration crisis

Bachelor's project in European studies

Supervisor: Anna Brigevidh

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# Abstract

The European Union has experienced several crises throughout the years. This thesis examines how the two most recent crises – the euro crisis and the immigration crisis – have affected European identity. European identity in this thesis is understood as two-fold and consist of a civic and cultural part. Using ordinary least squares regression analysis makes it possible to examine what variables impact European identity the most. Scholarly works in EU studies typically treat European identity as an independent variable. In this thesis, it is treated as the dependent variable. This makes it possible to examine what exactly affects people's European identity. The thesis argues that even though the variables connected to the two crises do have an impact on European identity, they do not have the biggest impact. Variables that capture whether the respondent perceives benefits from the EU and whether they feel their voice counts in the EU have by far the biggest impact. Another interesting finding is that some variables do not impact the expected component of European identity, which goes to show how the theoretical framework not necessarily transfer perfectly to the real world.

# Sammendrag

Den Europeiske union har opplevd flere kriser gjennom årene . Denne oppgaven skal undersøke hvordan de to nyligste krisene – eurokrisen og migrasjonskrisen- har påvirket europeisk identitet, sammenlignet med andre faktorer. Europeisk identitet i denne oppgaven fortsås som to-delt og består av en borgerlig og en kulturell del. Oppgaven består av en kvantitativ metode, hvor en regresjonsanalyse blir benyttet. Dette gjør det mulig å undersøke hvilke variabler som har den største påvirkningskraften på europeisk identitet. Tidligere forskning som tar for seg europeisk identitet behandler som regel europeisk identitet som en uavhengig variable. Denne oppgaven bruker derimot europeisk identitet som den avhengige variabelen, ved å gjøre dette blir det mulig å se hva som spesifikt påvirker europeisk identitet. Oppgaven argumenter for at selv om variablene som er tilknyttet til de to krisene har en viss påvirkningskraft på europeisk identitet, er det ikke de som har størst påvirkning. Variablene som har den sterkeste påvikrningskraften er de som omhandler hvilke fordeler man føler man har fått av EU og at ens stemme blir hørt i EU. Et annet interessant funn i oppgaven er hvordan noen variabler ikke har den effekten som forventet på de to aspektene til europeisk identitet (borgerlig og kulturelt), noe som kan indikere at det teoretiske rammeverket ikke nødvendigvis kan forklare de empiriske tilfellene.

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## List of Abbreviations (or Symbols)

EB	Eurobarometer
ECB	European Central Bank
EMU	Economic and Monetary Union
ESC	European Economic and Social Committee
EU	European Union
OLS	Ordinary least squares



# 1 Introduction

The euro crisis has been called one of the most far-reaching events in the last two decades (Braun & Tausendpfund, 2014, p. 231) and a test that determined the member states' commitment to the European Union (EU) (Lichtenstein & Eilders, 2019, p. 603). Just as the dust settled on this crisis, the EU and Europe experienced a huge increase in immigrants. This was declared the worst refugee crisis that the world had experienced since the second World War and fuelled public perception that immigration was the most important issue facing the EU (Conti, Mauro, & Memoli, 2019, p. 493).

How have these two crises impacted attitudes of EU citizens towards the EU and? And, how significant is the impact of these two crises on European identity?

While there are many excellent studies on the factors conditioning integration support, such as economic utilitarianism and xenophobia, European identity is less frequently used in public opinion analyses (Harteveld, Meer, & Vires, 2013; Hobolt & Vries, 2016; McLaren, 2004; Sánchez-Cuenca, 2000). And, when it is employed, it is usually treated as an independent variable, (see Basile & Olmastroni, 2020; Conti et al., 2019). One exception is the study by Lichtenstein and Eilders (2019), who examine the impact of the euro crisis on different national constructions of European identity. But largely, many more studies examine if the economic and immigration crises eroded citizens' support for the EU and if it that might represent a threat to further integration (Braun & Tausendpfund, 2014).

Though my research examines a well-researched topic, I take a different methodological approach. Instead of using European identity as an independent variable when looking at support, trust, or integration in the EU, I use it as the dependent variable. This makes it possible to see which factors impact European identity and what Europeans can be said to considered as important when forming or building their European identity. It also highlights how European identity is a complex concept and that even though one can parse it into civic and cultural types (Bruter 2003), it is not possible to disentangle them completely when applying it to empirical data.

This thesis is guided by the following research questions: What factors impact European identity – both civic and cultural? And how do economic and immigration policy preferences impact cultural and civic European identities? I argue that the economic and immigration variables do have an impact on European identity, but to a lesser degree than variables such as perceived benefits from the EU and that one's voice counts in the EU. The thesis also finds that immigration variables have a bigger impact on European identity than economic variables. This may be because the immigration crisis is closer in time.

To test the hypothesis, I perform quantitative analysis; specifically, an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression analysis. For the most part my hypotheses are correct. The most interesting finding is that some of the variables have an impact on a different aspect of European identity than expected. This shows how European identity is a difficult and complicated concept to measure and work with. Those hypotheses that were incorrect, were so in a way that they did have an impact on European identity, but not on the component it was predicted to. This was the case with the following hypotheses: that if

one feels that one's voice counts in the EU and in one's country one will be more inclined to have a stronger European identity (H5) and if one is positive towards both immigration from within and outside the EU, one is more inclined to have a stronger European identity (H4a). H5 was predicted to have a bigger impact on the civic aspect, but indeed my voice counts country proved to be insignificant on the civic part, but both variables were statistically significant on the cultural dependent variable. Looking at H4a the immigration from outside the EU variable did not have a statistically significant impact on attachment to Europe – the cultural aspect, as predicted. But as mentioned both hypotheses were partly correct, because all the variables did have a statistically significant impact on at least one of the dependent variables.

The thesis is structured as follows. Section 1 details the two crises and their effects on public opinion in the EU. Following, section 2 reviews the literature on European identity and defines how European identity will be understood in this thesis. The third section present earlier research and my hypotheses. The fourth section outlines the data, operationalization and method. Eurobarometer (EB) data is used to perform OLS regression. In section 5, the results are presented and discussed before moving on the last section, the conclusion.

## 2 Two decades of crises and public opinion

In 2007 the first indications of a financial crisis emerged in the US (Szczepanski, 2019, p. 2). This resulted in a breakdown of the American financial sector, which led the global economy into its worst recession in over 60 years (Szczepanski, 2019, p. 2). This crisis was transmitted to the EU largely because European banks were heavily involved in subprime mortgage securitization in the US and therefore took losses almost as heavy as American banks (Szczepanski, 2019, p. 2). Going forward from 2007 there was little concern about European sovereign debt throughout 2008 and 2009 and it remained relatively stable during this period (Lane, 2012, p. 55). This changed in late 2009, when the European debt crisis entered a new phase, and a lot of countries reported larger-than-expected increase in deficit/GDP ratios (Lane, 2012, p. 56). Greece turned out to be the most extreme case and were shut out of the bond market in May 2010. Ireland and Portugal followed in 2010 and 2011 (Lane, 2012, pp. 56-57). The euro crisis can be understood as the second part of the initial financial crisis from the US, and while the US managed to recovery relatively quickly, the EU was unable to do this because of the second crisis they experienced (Szczepanski, 2019, p. 3).

This is not the only crisis that the EU has undergone in the last two decades. From 2014 until 2015, Europe experienced a large increase in refugees crossing the Mediterranean Sea (Conti et al., 2019, p. 493). In 2015, one million people arrived, which was a big contrast to the 250,000 people arriving in 2014 and the 60,000 in 2013 (Conti et al., 2019, p. 493). This increase in immigration can be explained by the upheavals in the Arab world (Basile & Olmastroni, 2020, p. 671). Donald Tusk remarked that "the migratory crisis ... is testing our Union to its limits" (Basile & Olmastroni, 2020, p. 669).

This was a crisis that affected the EU member states on different scales, as some countries were exposed to the crisis on the front line where the immigrants arrived, while others were affected by being on the route that most immigrants took through Europe (Basile & Olmastroni, 2020, p. 671). Responses to this crisis varied. Some countries demanded a fair distribution of the "burden", while others chose to build fences and refused to take part in the responsibilities and costs (Basile & Olmastroni, 2020, p. 669). The varying responses to this crisis exemplify ideological and political differences through EU member states, and these differences made this issue even more salient (Conti et al., 2019, p. 493).

Both crises can be argued to have had an impact on public opinion of the EU. Since the Euro crisis there has been strong politization within the EU (Lichtenstein & Eilders, 2019, p. 603). Politization of the EU can be defined as opinions, interests, or values differing between member states, and to what extent these differences impact policy formulation (Lichtenstein & Eilders, 2019, p. 603). During the euro crisis, some politicians have highlighted the importance and value of European integration, while others have called membership and further integration into question (Lichtenstein & Eilders, 2019, p. 603). During the migration crisis of 2015, the EU experienced an increase in Euroscepticism and distrust between its member states (Lichtenstein & Eilders, 2019, p. 603). Looking at data from the EB, one can see that since 2015, immigration has been viewed as the

most important issue currently facing the EU according to its citizens (Conti et al., 2019, p. 493). This shows how the crises brought to attention the issues surrounding them and that they've had an impact on public opinion.

However, when it comes to European identity, Risse (2014, p. 1210) finds that European identity did not take a beating during the euro crisis, and that Europeans indeed were willing to pay a price for their European identity and showed solidarity towards their fellow EU citizens (Risse, 2014, p. 1210). When looking at the immigration crisis, Basile and Olmastroni found that there was general lack of an overall solidarity among European citizens (Basile & Olmastroni, 2020, p. 685). This can indicate some negative effect on European identity caused by the migration crisis. It is interesting to see if the more politicized issues related to the newer crisis will affect European identity, in a positive or negative way, as oppose to other factors. Based on this, the thesis will examine how and if issues on immigration and economics have had an impact on attachment to the EU and attachment to Europe. Thus, it will be possible to get a sense of if the two crises have had an impact on European identity.

### 3 European Identity

European identity can be defined in numerous ways. To answer the research question in this thesis, European identity should be understood as a feeling of unity among member states of the EU (Stråth, 2002, p. 388). Here the focus is unity amongst Europeans, where one identifies with the other EU citizens and/or Europeans. This does not exclude national identities. Individuals hold multiples identities and this is not controversial (Risse, 2010, p. 23). Usually individuals do not see their different identities as being in conflict and they are often invoked in context dependent situations (Risse, 2010, p. 23). One can think of identities to be nested in each other, local identities can be nested in national identities, which again can be subsumed in European-wide identities (Risse, 2010, p. 24). This shows how one can hold a European identity and a national one simultaneously.

It is useful to look at European identity in accordance with a sub-theory of social identity theory, collective identity theory. European identity can be seen as a collective identity and collective identity can be understood as the way a collective group establishes meaning to the identity in question (Davis, Love, & Fares, 2019, p. 257). Here, among other things, emotional attachment and solidarity are critical for the formation and maintenance of the identity in question (Davis et al., 2019, p. 257) Another way of explaining collective identity is that it is the part of the individual that belongs to a larger group or community, and "social identities are not only shared, they are collectively shared" (Risse, 2010, p. 22). Both these understandings of collective identity emphasize that individuals identify with a bigger group.

Furthermore, collective identity can be defined as "the norms, values, and ideologies that are associated with a specific group" (Brigevich, 2016, p. 3). This understanding of collective identity can especially be linked to the cultural component of European identity. This is because one emphasizes attachment and loyalties to those who can be categorized as the in-group, often at the expense of the out-group (Brigevich, 2016, p. 3). The distinction between who is part of the in-group and who is the out-group is essential to social identity theory (Risse, 2010, p. 26). We should see that fellow Europeans feel closer to one another than to non-Europeans (Bruter, 2003, p. 1155). This is about who Europeans choose to see as their fellow Europeans, and who they deem not to be a part of that group, for example immigrants from outside Europe.

According to Bruter (2003, p.1154), what is needed when trying to measure or define European identity is to understand what people mean when they say they feel European. Here it is important to keep in mind that a European identity will exist alongside other identities and the components of what is European identity for individuals will vary greatly, depending on what they ascribe to it (Bruter, 2003, p. 1154). Bruter (2003, p.1155) looks at how European identity consists of a cultural and civic component; cultural identity is about European's perceptions of fellow Europeans being closer to them, as opposed to non-Europeans. This will be measured by using the EB question that asks respondents how attached they feel to Europe. This makes it possible to examine what can affect the notion of who are Europeans and who are not. This cultural aspect

will relate to the in-group and out-group distinction mentioned above, and it will be possible to see if immigration as an out-group will shake European identity.

On the other hand European civic identity is based on to what degree people feel that they are citizens of a European political system, where the laws and rights of that system influence their everyday life (Bruter, 2003, p. 1155). European identity can be constructed as a political identity for some individuals. A political identity can be understood "as the elements of an individual's identity that relate to a formalized political community" (Bruter, 2004, p. 26) and here the formalized political community will be the EU. This will be measured by looking the EB question about how attached respondents feel to the EU. This question makes it possible to examine what may affect people's attachment to the EU and the civic component of European identity. This civic aspect of European identity will also relate to in-group and out-group dynamics, but more so on loyalties towards the EU and their politics, and if this has been affected by both the crises.

The questions I have chosen on identity from the EB try to tap into both the civic and cultural component. As mentioned above, attachment to Europe will be used to tap into the cultural component of European identity. The civic component may be easier to measure and it will imply a reference to the EU (Bruter, 2004, p. 26). The reason for distinguishing between them is that the civic part will relate to the EU as a political system (Bruter, 2003, p. 1155), and will exclude countries in Europe that are not members. The cultural aspect will on the other hand cover the whole continent, as it looks at Europeans as a whole (Bruter, 2004, p. 26). It is important to include both aspects of European identity because people will possibly relate to their European identity as either or both. Based on this distinction the hypotheses will be presented and examined how they may impact both aspects of European identity. Even though some of the hypotheses will be more directed to and have a bigger impact on either the civic or the cultural aspect, I still assume that it will be hard to parse them out completely and that most variables will impact both.

## 4 Theory and hypotheses

The thesis will now examine how different factors may influence European identity, both the civic aspect (EU attachment) and the cultural aspect (European attachment). In the literature, attachment to Europe, support for integration, attachment to the EU and support for enlargement have been used interchangeably. Normally European identity is treated as the independent variable. I am using it as the dependent variable. I am going to use support for integration theory and see how it travels to the European identity variable. Similar variables as used in earlier studies will be used to see if they have an equivalent impact on European identity.

First, studies have shown that perceived benefits of EU membership are important when predicting levels of support of integration among the EU member states (McLaren, 2004, p. 905). McLaren finds that national-level benefits and individual-level benefits are important when explaining why some people are supportive of integration, and others not (McLaren, 2004, p. 905). It will be interesting to see if this is the case when European identity is the dependent variable. Here it will be natural to assume that this will affect the civic part of European identity more than the cultural. This is because it looks at how the respondents have benefited from the EU as a political institution.

**H1:** The more one feels that one has benefited from the EU, the stronger European identity one will have.

Second, studies show that trust in the EU and European identity are positively correlated (Harteveld et al., 2013, p. 556). It is weakly related, but a strong European identity can overrule rational arguments, and therefore one can be inclined to trust the EU more blindly (Harteveld et al., 2013, p. 561). I want to flip this and see if it has the same effect the other way around. Earlier analyses have shown that identity-related concerns could be said to be as important, if not more, as utilitarian issues when it comes to support for European integration (Hobolt & Vries, 2016, p. 421). It will be interesting to see if trust in the EU will have a bigger impact on the EU attachment dependent variable, than utilitarian variables. It is possible that people who trust the EU, and therefore are more loyal, will have a high European identity and then be more immune to the politization of immigration and economics. This can also be seen with the in-group and out-group part of social identity theory. The assumption is that one is more loyal and puts the in-group in a positive light (Risse, 2010, p. 27). Based on this framework, if one trusts the EU one will be more attached to the EU, it will be your in-group. This trust variable taps more into the civic aspect of European identity because it examines how trust in the EU affects European identity.

**H2:** The more one trust the EU, the stronger European identity one will have.

Following the logic that there is a positive correlation between trust in the EU and European identity (Harteveld et al., 2013, p. 556), it will be interesting to look at if this general trust in the EU transfers to trust in the economic institutions in the EU, and if that again has any impact on European identity. That impact will be mostly at the civic part, as it looks at the economic institutions of the EU. It can be argued that the Euro crisis put the sense of community among the Europeans to a test (Risse, 2014, p. 1207), and therefore it was a test of European identity. Here it is interesting to examine if trust in the economic institutions will affect European identity. Also earlier studies have shown that there is a positive correlation between European identity and preferences for EU policies (Basile & Olmastroni, 2020, p. 673). Based on this it will be interesting to flip this relationship and see if there is a positive correlation between being for the economic and monetary union (EMU) and having a strong European identity.

**H3a:** If one tends to trust the economic institutions of the EU, one is more inclined to have a stronger European identity.

**H3b:** If one is for a common EMU, one is more inclined to have a stronger European identity.

Speaking of crisis, have issues relating to immigration been more politicized after the immigration crisis, and will issues about immigration have an impact on European identity? When looking at how different aspect of immigration may impact European identity, it is important to keep in mind that it will here affect both the civic and the cultural aspect. When it comes to preference in general regarding immigrants it will speak to the cultural aspect more, namely because of the in-group/out-group dynamic, but when looking at immigration with regards to EU policy, it will be possible to see how it may impact the civic aspect as well.

The founders of the "European movement" stated that a European identity would be an antidote to the antagonism that was fostered by ethnocentric national loyalties (Citrin & Sides, 2004, p. 162). Earlier studies have shown that when it comes to immigration and attachment to the EU, it is closely linked with identities (Basile & Olmastroni, 2020, p. 673). Citrin and Sides also found that people who hold an exclusive attachment to the nation tend to be less tolerant towards immigrants and on the flip side, those who hold a self-concept that includes multiple identities seems to be less ethnocentric, more friendly towards cultural minorities (Citrin & Sides, 2004, p. 165). This reflects how a strong exclusive in-group would not be open to other people. Citrin & Sides (2004, p. 179) find that those with an identity that includes Europe are clearly were more tolerant towards minorities. This lends itself to the assumption in social identity theory that a civic identity will still emphasize the difference between in-group and out-group, but without such negative assumptions of the out-group (Risse, 2010, p. 28). The findings in Citrin & Sides (2004) are from before the migration crisis, so it will be interesting to see if similar findings will be made in this study. If there are similar findings, it may be argued that the crisis has not affected European identity much. Here the cultural aspect is more activated.



**H4a:** If one is positive towards both immigration from within and outside the EU, one is inclined to have a stronger European identity.

Issues about immigration can also tap into the civic part of European identity. As mentioned above, studies have shown that there is a positive relationship between European identity and preferences for EU-level policies (Basile & Olmastroni, 2020, p. 673). Thus, together with the earlier reasoning about in-groups and out-groups, it will be reasonable to think along the lines that support for common immigration policy will have an impact on European identity. This taps into the civic aspect of European identity because it highlights if the respondents want a common policy through the EU.

**H4b:** If one is for a common European policy, one is inclined to have a stronger European identity.

Previous studies found that there is a strong relationship between confidence in the EU and if one is satisfied with the national democracy (Harteveld et al., 2013, p. 547). On the other hand, Sánchez-Cuenca (2000, p. 162) finds that a better opinion of one's national government implies a decrease in support for integration, for some individuals (Sánchez-Cuenca, 2000, p. 162). Harteveld et al. (2013, p. 549) also show how national performance may be related to trust in the EU, and the thought here is that if the national government is distrusted or viewed as performing badly, citizens may look at the EU as a better alternative. The study found that trust in national institutions had the greatest impact on how the respondents trust the EU (Harteveld et al., 2013, p. 556). Based on these earlier findings it will be interesting to see if respondents feeling of having a voice that counts both in the EU and nationally will impact their European identity. Here the notion is that if one feels that one's voice counts in both places it will transfer to a positive evaluation of the EU and then lead to a stronger European identity. This will tap into the civic part of European identity.

**H5:** If one feels that one's voice count in the EU and in one's country, one will be inclined to have a stronger European identity.

## 5 Data, operationalization and method

The thesis will now move on to look at the EB, all the variables used and the model.

### 5.1 Eurobarometer

I use standard EB data in this analysis. The EB from 2018 consists of questions in these following contexts: 1) standard EU and trend questions, 2) Europe 2020 strategy and policy priorities, 3) financial and economic crisis and related EU policies, 4) European citizenship, 5) EU budget and 6) the future of the EU (European Commission, 2018). It is beneficial to use this dataset, because the thesis examines the factors impacting European identity, and especially how the immigration and the euro crisis may have affected it.

To test my hypotheses, I will be using the standard EB 89.1 from 2018 consisting of 33,130 respondents (European Commission, 2018). The former 28 member states are all represented, in addition to Turkey, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania and in the Turkish Cypriot community (European Commission, 2018). For this thesis, I have removed all non-EU members and have dropped all remaining respondents with missing values on my variables of interest. As a result, I have 13,398 respondents in the first model and 13,402 respondents in the second model.

### 5.2 Dependent variables

The variables below are chosen because they tap into European identity, both civic and cultural. The EB 89.1 includes a question that asks respondents how attached they are to the EU. EU attachment is operationalized as a continuous variable on a four-point scale, where 1=not at all attached and 4 = very attached. This question is chosen because it taps into the respondents' feelings on if they are attached to the EU as a political system, therefore it taps into the civic European identity. The EB 89.1 also includes a question that asks the respondents how attached they are to Europe. Attachment to Europe is operationalized as a continuous variable on a four-point scale, where 1=not at all attached and 4=very attached. This dependent variable is used in a separate regression analysis, but with the same independent variables and control variables as the regression analysis with attachment to the EU as the dependent variable. Attachment to Europe taps into the cultural European identity.

## 5.3 Independent variables

The first variable tells us whether respondents feel that they have benefited from specific aspects of integration. This variable taps into the basic feeling of if a membership in the EU is something the respondents see as beneficial or not (H1). Respondents were asked if they have benefited from 1) working in another EU country, 2) living in another EU country, and 3) studying in another EU country. I coded it into one variable with an average. This variable is an index on a four-point scale where 0=not received any benefits and 3= benefited from all three. The expectation here is that the more the respondents feel they have benefited from these three things, the more attached they will be to the EU (H1).

The next variable taps into whether respondents feel that they can trust the EU. This variable is a binary variable, and the respondents were asked if they tend to trust the EU or if they tend to not trust the EU. The scale on this variable is 1=tend not to trust and 2=tend to trust. The expectation is that those who tend to trust the EU will be more attached to the EU (H2). This variable taps into the civic part of a European identity.

Thirdly, two variables are chosen for the economic aspect of the thesis and will operationalize how feelings and attitudes towards economics may affect European identity (H3). These are chosen because they give a notion on what the respondents feel towards the EU when it comes to how the EU deals with economic issues. These tap into if the euro crisis has affected a European identity, and by using these variables, it is possible to see if they have had any impact that is statistically significant on the dependent variable. If they have, one can argue that the Euro crisis has had some effect on European identity. The respondents are asked if they tend to trust the European Central Bank (ECB) and the European Economic and Social Committee (ESC). The expectation is that those who tend to trust these institutions, will be more attached to the EU (H3a). Both variables are binary and are scaled so that 1=tend not to trust and 2=tend to trust. They tap into the civic part of European identity.

Furthermore, I use questions that ask respondents if they are for a common EMU, and here the assumption is that the respondents who are for a common EMU will be more attached to the EU(H3b). This variable is binary and 1=against EMU and 2=for EMU. This variable tap into the civic part of European identity.

Continuing, the following variables are chosen to operationalize how feelings and attitudes towards immigration may affect European identity (H4). These have been chosen because they show how the respondents feel towards immigration, both within and from outside the EU, as well as if the EU should have a common policy on immigration. These variables can reflect if the respondents trust the EU with immigration, and if they seem to do so, then the migration crisis may have been thought of as handled well by the EU. It can give us some notion on if the immigration crisis (based on the immigration variables) has had any effect on European identity. The respondents were asked if one is positive towards immigration of people from inside the EU and if one is positive towards immigration of people from outside the EU. Both variables are on a four-point scale where a higher value indicates that one is more positive towards immigration. The expectation is that those who are positive towards immigration, both within and from outside the EU, will be more attached to Europe (H4a), this variable taps into the cultural aspect of European identity.

The respondents were also asked if one is for a common European policy on migration. This variable is binary and is scaled so that 1=against and 2=for. This variable taps into the civic part of European identity, and the assumption here is that those who are for a common policy will be more attached to the EU (H4b).

Lastly, two variables examine if one feels that their voice counts in the EU and in one's country (H5). The objective is to see if being a happy citizen nationally, and at the European level, will transfer to the EU and then your European identity will be stronger. Both variables are on a four-point scale and a higher value indicates that one agrees with the statement. These variables tap into the civic part of a European identity and the proposition here is that the more one feel that one's voice count both in the EU and in one's country, the more attached one is to the EU (H5).

When deciding which variables that are expected to tap into the civic or the cultural aspect of European identity, I have based this on whether it relates to EU specific topics or not. Topics that can be related to the EU will naturally be more civic, because of the EU's role as political system.

## 5.4 Control variables

In the regression analysis I also consider control variables such as gender, education, financial status and if one lives in western or eastern Europe.

Earlier studies have shown that the level of formal education is positively related to European identity. The more education the respondent has, the bigger the chance that the respondent has a European identity (Citrin & Sides, 2004, p. 172). This is also reflected in Hobolt and de Vries' (2016, p.420) paper, which shows that less educated people are less supportive of the EU. In this analysis, respondents were asked how old they were when they finished full time education. Based on this, the assumption here will be that the higher education one has, the stronger one's European identity is. (That's all you need to say, don't worry about the scale.)

Citrin and Sides (2004) find that there is only a small difference between men and women when it comes to having a European identity. The numbers were similar when asked if they were equally attached to their nation and Europe, but when looking at those who claimed to have an exclusive national identity women scored slightly higher than men (Citrin & Sides, 2004, p. 172). Based on this I will control for if males have a stronger European identity than females.

Earlier studies on integration and support for the EU have emphasized utilitarian factors, and here the notion is that those with higher levels of income and human capital have benefited more from the EU and therefore will be more supportive (Hobolt & Vries, 2016, p. 420). Citrin & Sides (2004, p.172) also found in their studies that the impact of income level mirrored that of education. Citrin and Sides also find that younger respondents were more likely to orient themselves towards Europe, and that those in the age between 15 to 24 were the least likely to have a national exclusive identity (Citrin & Sides, 2004, p. 172). Here, respondents were asked how they would judge the current financial situation of their household on a four-point scale, where higher values indicate that they would judge it to be good.

The last control variable is whether one lives in Western or Eastern Europe. Hartveld et al. (2013, p.560) find that the EU is perceived as a lifebuoy in the former communist countries. Therefore, I expect that people living in Eastern European countries will have a stronger European identity.

## 5.5 Descriptive statistics

Table 1 reports the descriptive statistics of the variables in the analysis.

**Table 1 Descriptive statistics for European identity, independent variables and control variables**

Variables	Number of respondents	Mean	Std Dev.	Minimum	Maximum
Attachment to Europe	27,428	2.754	0.852	1	4
Attachment to EU	27,389	2.568	0.877	1	4
Benefit index*	26,284	1.222	0.373	1	2
Trust in EU	25,018	1.511	0.500	1	2
Trust in ECB	23,564	1.555	0.497	1	2
Trust in ESC	17,009	1.476	0.500	1	2
Common EMU	26,286	1.668	0.471	1	2
Immigrants from EU	26,538	2.768	0.791	1	4
Immigrants from outside EU	26,338	2.217	0.872	1	4
Common immigration policy	26,004	1.696	0.460	1	2
Voice counts EU	26,199	2.417	0.970	1	4
Voice counts country	26,972	2.743	0.972	1	4
Education	27,559	24.597	20.112	0	98
Gender	27,988	1.542	0.498	1	2
Personal finances	27,385	2.781	0.729	1	4
Age	27,988	4.203	1.795	1	7
West European dummy	27,988	0.596	0.491	0	1

\*The benefit index is not a binary variable, but because it has been coded to look at the average it appears as a binary, but it is on a four-point scale.

## 5.6 Models

### 5.6.1 Regression analysis

To test my hypotheses, I use regression analysis. A regression analysis is a formalization of the idea of a linear connection between variable Y and the x-variables (Ringdal, 2018, p. 283). In an OLS regression analysis it is important that the dependent variable is as continuous as possible (Ringdal, 2018, p. 399). For the regression analysis of this thesis, STATA software was used.

When using a regression analysis, one evaluates several factors. One of them is the regression coefficient, which describes the connection between x and y (Ringdal, 2018, p. 400). This means that if y is attachment to EU and x is years of education, the coefficient will describe if and how much the attachment to the EU will increase when the years of education is increasing.

A regression analysis is also used to look at what the result from the analysis can tell us about the general population (Ringdal, 2018, p. 412). By setting the significance level at 0.05, any variable with a p-value higher than that and its accompanying hypothesis can be thrown away as not statistically significant. It also means that variables that have a p-value below 0.05 can be generalized to the population at large, in this case, the population in those countries represented in the dataset. In Table 2 below, model 1 uses attachment to Europe as the dependent variable, and model 2 has attachment to the EU as the dependent variable.

## 6 Results and discussion

The regression analysis shows that the variables about immigration and economics are all statistically significant and impact at least one of the dependent variables. They have a p-value smaller than 0.05 on at least one of the dependent variables. Looking at the other independent variables it also becomes clear that they too are all statistically significant on at least one of the dependent variables. The control values vary more, and some are not statistically significant at all.

**Table 2 Results from the regression analysis**

	European Identity	
	Model 1 (attachment to Europe)	Model 2 (attachment to EU)
Benefit index	0.128**(0.017)	0.184**(0.016)
Trust in EU	0.156**(0.016)	0.234**(0.016)
Trust in ECB	0.122**(0.018)	0.124**(0.017)
Trust in ESC	0.136**(0.018)	0.178**(0.018)
Common EMU	0.155**(0.015)	0.289**(0.015)
Immigrants from EU	0.141**(0.009)	0.111**(0.009)
Immigrants from outside EU	0.004(0.009)	0.038**(0.008)
Common immigration policy	0.095**(0.015)	0.152**(0.015)
Voice counts EU	0.112**(0.010)	0.199**(0.009)
Voice counts country	0.075**(0.010)	-0.005(0.009)
Education	0.001**(0.000)	0.001(0.000)
Gender	-0.009(0.013)	0.007(0.012)
Personal finances	0.092**(0.009)	0.023*(0.009)
Age	0.004(0.004)	0.002(0.004)
West European dummy	-0.101**(0.014)	-0.139**(0.013)
Constant	0.453**(0.052)	-0.063(0.050)
N	13398	13402
Prob>f	0.000	0.000
R squared	0.251	0.350
Adj R-squared	0.250	0.349

\*p≤.05  
\*\*p≤.01

What model 1 tells us is that H1a is correct. It shows that the more people feel that they have benefited from the EU, the stronger their European identity. This is consistent with



earlier research that found that benefits are important when explaining why some are supportive of integration (McLaren, 2004, p. 905). It was predicted that this benefit variable would mainly impact the attachment to the EU, the civic component of European identity. It is interesting that it is statistically significant in both models. The coefficient is higher in the second model though, which indicates that it impacts the civic aspect more, as expected.

The results are also consistent with the expectations in H2, trust in the EU increases identification with Europe and the EU. Consistent with expectations, the effect is more pronounced in the second model. This is consistent with earlier findings that show that trust in the EU and European identity are positively correlated (Harteveld et al., 2013, p. 556). Moving to H3a and examining if the trust in the EU transfers to specific institutions, those who trust the economic institutions are more inclined to have a stronger European identity. The results are in accordance with the expectations that it would affect the civic part more. This is consistent with the earlier research that has shown that there is a positive correlation between European identity and preference for EU-level policies (Basile & Olmastroni, 2020, p. 673). It is interesting, that when it comes to trust in ECB it is not that big of a difference between the models, but when looking at trust in ECS there is a bigger difference. It could be reasonable to think that this might be explained by that the ECB is something that people have more knowledge off, due to the Euro.

Continuing the economic variables, H3b is correct and support for the EMU strengthens European identity. According to the expectations, this variable affects the civic aspect more than the cultural one. This is in line with the studies that state there is a relationship between European identity and preferences for EU-level policies (Basile & Olmastroni, 2020, p. 673). Taken together, the economic variables indicate that the euro crisis had an impact on European identity.

Moving on to H4a, people who are positive towards immigration from other EU members have a strong attachment to Europe, and that this finding is statistically significant. What challenges previous findings about European identity and immigration (Citrin & Sides, 2004) is that the relationship between those who are positive towards immigration from outside the EU and who have a strong attachment to Europe is not statistically significant. Based on earlier research, it was predicted that people who are more tolerant of different races and religion, would have a strong European identity (Citrin & Sides, 2004, p. 179). This deviation can be explained by the fact that there are xenophobic and anti-immigration people, who at the same time are attached to Europe. This can be seen through the French Rassemblement National which have claimed since the 1980's to be pro-Europe (Lorimer, 2020). At the same time it is a party with a leader that has been accused of being anti-Muslim and anti-immigration (Bridge Initiative Team, 2020). Respondents who answer the EB question about outsiders negatively and have a similar ideology as the people in the French Rassemblement National, will not impact the attachment to the EU like they do with attachment to Europe, because they may be pro Europe but are often anti-EU (Lorimer, 2020). Therefore, these respondents will not show up in the second model. Despite this, there is still a clear correlation between immigration and European identity, and the main finding is that the more positive people are generally towards immigration the stronger European identity they will have, as opposed to those who are negative towards immigration.

Further looking at the relationship between European identity and immigration, H4b is proven correct. People who are for a common immigration policy will have a stronger

European identity, as opposed to those who are not. It is confirmed by the variables being statistically significant in both models. This is consistent with earlier findings that have shown that there is a positive relationship between European identity and EU-level politics (Basile & Olmastroni, 2020, p. 673). This confirms the relationship between a civic European identity and immigration as a politicized issue to be positive. It also has an impact on the cultural aspect. Therefore, it is hard to say that one variable only will affect either of two types of European identity. This is shown throughout the analysis by the fact that most of the independent variables have a statistically significant impact on the dependent variable in both models.

Moving to the last independent variable, H5 is correct, but not in the way it was assumed. It was expected that the my voice counts variables would have a bigger impact on attachment to the EU, the civic aspect. This did not turn out to be the case. The hypothesis was that if one feels that one's voice counts in the EU and in one's country, one will be more inclined to have a stronger European identity (H5). This is only the case in the first model (the cultural aspect) and not in the second model (the civic). This is interesting. It would make sense to assume that the my voice counts variable would have a bigger impact on the civil aspect, and earlier studies have found that there is a strong relationship between confidence in the EU and being satisfied with the national democracy (Harteveld et al., 2013, p. 547). One explanation for this outcome may be that the impact of my voice counting in the EU on the EU attachment dependent variable is so strong that it renders "the my voice counts in my country" variable as irrelevant in the second model. Because both independent variables have an impact on the dependent variable in the first model, it is still possible to state that H5 is correct, just on the cultural aspect.

Looking at the control variables, gender and age are not statistically significant in either models. Education is significant in the first model but not the second. This demonstrates that it has some impact on European identity, as shown in earlier studies (Hobolt & Vries, 2016, p. 420). Personal finances are statistically significant in both models, and this reflects earlier research that those with higher levels of income and human capital have benefited more from the EU and therefore are more supportive (Hobolt & Vries, 2016, p. 420). It also matches the expectation that people with higher income and those who are satisfied with their personal finances have a stronger European identity than those who are not. Continuing to the last control variable, the West European dummy is also statistically significant in both models. This is consistent with the research presented earlier, where Eastern European countries perceive the EU as a lifebuoy (Harteveld et al., 2013, p. 560) and there is a positive correlation between living in an Eastern European country and having a stronger European identity.

The size of the effects of the independent variables are presented in Table 3.

In the theory and hypotheses section I presented research that indicated that identity related concerns could be said to be just as important, if not more than utilitarian factors when it came to support for European integration (Hobolt & Vries, 2016, p. 421). I then said that it would be interesting to flip this and see if trust in the EU would impact attachment to the EU more than the utilitarian variables – here benefits. Looking at table 3 it becomes clear that the benefit index has a bigger impact on attachment to EU than the trust in EU variable. This is interesting, it shows how utilitarian factors still has a very big impact on European identity.

It is also interesting to see if the variables that concern issues related to the two crises, immigration and economic variables, impact European identity more than the other variables. Looking at table 3, it becomes clear that out of the variables connected to the crises, the variable concerning attitude towards immigrant from within the EU is the one that impacts both the dependent variables the most. This can indicate that the immigration crisis has had a bigger impact on European identity than the euro crisis. An explanation to this may be the fact that the immigration crisis is newer, and therefore more salient among Europeans. But nevertheless, all the variables concerning the two crises have an impact on at least one of the dependent variables, which indicates that they both have an impact on European identity.

Furthermore, it becomes clear by looking at the table 3 that variables connected to these crises are not the ones that impact European identity the most. The benefit index impacts attachment to Europe the most and my voice counts impacts attachment to EU the most. This indicates that even though the variables connected to the two crises have an impact on European identity, there are other factors that affect individuals more when it comes to European identity.

**Table 3 Marginal effects of independent variables on European attachment and EU attachment**

Independent variables	Attachment to Europe	Attachment to EU
Benefit index*	0.384	0.552
Trust in EU	0.156	0.234
Trust in ECB	0.122	0.124
Trust in ESC	0.136	0.178
Common EMU	0.155	0.289
Immigrants from EU	0.423	0.333
Immigrants from outside EU	0.012	0.114
Common immigration policy	0.095	0.152
Voice counts EU	0.336	0.597
Voice counts country	0.225	-0.015

Note: table reports the marginal effects of variable X moving from the minimum value to the maximum value. All other values are held at their means.

\*The benefit index is not a binary variable, but because it has been coded to look at the average it appears as a binary, it is on a four-point scale.

## 7 Conclusion

This thesis set out to examine the following research question: what factors impact European identity – both civic and cultural? And how do economic and immigration policy preferences impact cultural and civic European identities? First the thesis examined how European identity must be understood as two-fold, both civic and cultural. Following that, the hypotheses for this thesis were presented based on earlier research. The variables were then matched up with the hypotheses and the tested in an OLS regression analysis. Looking at the results all the independent variables have a statistically significant impact on at least one of the dependent variables. This shows that variables such as trust in the EU and its institutions, benefits received from the EU, preferences for policy on immigration, attitudes towards immigration and feeling that one's voice counts nationally and, in the EU, all have an impact on European identity.

The most interesting finding in this thesis was that the cultural and civic components of European identity are not easily separated. This is exemplified by how the immigration from outside the EU variables was not statistically significant on the attachment to Europe, but rather on the attachment to the EU. This was contrary to expectation that it should affect the cultural aspect more, because of the in-groups and out-group's logic in collective identity. Though this could be explained to some degree by software implications, it is interesting. The same goes for how my voice counts in my country variable did have a bigger impact on attachment to Europe, and not a statistically significant impact on the attachment to the EU. Both examples show that even though European identity can be divided into civic and cultural components in the theory, it is hard to separate these components when looking at what impacts European identity. This can be explained by that it is difficult to be able to tell what individuals emphasize when they think of their own European identity.

It was also interesting that even though EB data has shown that immigration has been viewed as the most important issues facing the EU by Europeans (Conti et al., 2019, p. 493) it did not have the biggest impact on European identity. It was the benefit index and my voice counts in the EU that had the biggest impact. This does not rule out that the immigration crises did have an impact, but it shows how other factors impact more. Looking at the variables surrounding the euro crises, they have a lower impact on both the dependent variables, compared to the immigration variables. As mentioned above this may be explained by the fact the immigration crisis is more recent, and maybe more present in the minds of Europeans.

As a typical issue with a statistical research paper, finding the exactly right questions and data is challenging. The data used in this paper are sufficient, but if there had been more space, it would have been interesting to compare this data with data from before the two crises. Then one would be able to tell if the variables that now impact European identity the most would have been the same, and if one would see a difference in how factors surrounding EU policy on immigration and economics impact European identity. Another thing that could have improved the research would be to see if other datasets with similar variables would result in the same result or not. That would help to strengthen the results

and one could be more confident when stating what factors impact European identity and if economic and immigration policy preferences would still not be the biggest impact.

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