



How to measure European Identity?

Report on the construction of the CIEI indicator

Introduction

Early 2018, Vicente Royuela, researcher of the University of Barcelona, issued the third deliverable of Work Package 2. The main aim of this deliverable is the construction of a **synthetic indicator of EU citizens' identification** for the survey conducted within the PERCEIVE project. Clearly, a first question is why we need such a synthetic indicator when we ask individuals directly about their identification with Europe? The easy answer to this question is related to the **complexity** of the concept and how and if we **approximate** it **correctly** with a simple question in a survey.

In order to capture the concept of European identity, individuals are usually asked if they feel Europeans in their everyday life, if they feel close to the European Union project, or if they are happy to be Europeans. Alternative questions propose the use of inverted scales, for example, if they feel that Europe is worthless. In that regard, **Mendez and Bachtler (2017)** identify a wide list of **alternatives** to request people on European identity. Many works consider the so-called Moreno question in the Eurobarometer: *"In the near future, do you see yourself as (1) European only, (2) European and [nationality], (3) [nationality] and European, or (4) [nationality] only"*. A key advantage of Eurobarometer data is that it allows studying the identification with Europe both over time and across countries. Nevertheless, the idea of identification with Europe can be addressed from many angles. As a consequence, no measure is free of critique, as all suffer from limitations.

A debate on the types of **collective identities** is as necessary as it is supportive since it benefits the understanding of the aspects veiled within the latent concept of European identity. Understanding **how the constituents of European identity work** for building this association of individuals is as important as looking at the determinants, this is, the factors that condition the citizens' identification with Europe. PERCEIVE's deliverable 3.2 looks at two main aspects within

the scope of the project: **citizens' perception of institutional quality and their support to policies backing redistribution and aid.**

In this document, we aim at providing a **definition of European identity together with the main aspects** that we can label as **constituents** of the concept. They are being considered to build a **composite index of European identity** after studying the experiences in the literature, the possible alternatives and their pros and cons. Finally, the work provides some insights on the relationship of European identity with two key variables: institutional quality and the support to regional policy, and its main aims, redistribution and, aid.

Results Highlights

Defining European Identity

Two main approaches are being used in the literature (Bergbauer, 2018) to define the **individual identification with Europe** and the **European social identity**. First, the concept is derived from **social psychology**. Social identity is “that part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his **membership of a social group** (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership” (Tajfel, 1981). There is a need then of a subjective claim and a person’s self-recognition of membership in a social group. This subjective awareness of identification involves **cognitive, affective** and **evaluative** aspects of identity.

The **cognitive** dimension refers to the self-categorisation as a member of a group, whether people categorise themselves as European. Once individuals have certain knowledge of social groups, they **evaluate** both social groups and social membership. The final aspect of individual identity is the **affective** component. Group members can cultivate emotional attachments and feelings of love and concern for the group. The three dimensions can reinforce individual identification with a social group. Nevertheless, they are **not perfectly correlated** and one can think on the same level of European identity.

This calls to reason on what type of dimension can be more important in different situations, what drives to two alternative constructions of European identity: those based on **ethnic and cultural values** and those grounded in **civic and political principles**. The *cultural approach* proposes that the common identity is based on **cultural roots**, historical experiences, and traditions, sharing a heritage that differentiates a social group from another. This line is particularly adequate for national identities, but there is a cultural background of European identity: **Europeans share a common cultural background**, such as the right-wing sentiment that Europeans are Christians sharing joint history.

The **civic approach** considers the set of institutions, rights, and rules that preside over the **political life of a community**. This can be a good basis for building the European identity, as European ideas are linked to civic values such as solidarity and cohesion, finally driving to rights and obligations resulting from European laws and treaties.

The deliverable also analyses the **collective identification** with Europe “a situation in which individuals in a society identify with the collective and are aware that other members identify with this collective as well” (David and Bar-Tal, 2009). Two aspects are important then: individual’s self-identification with the group and awareness of other group members. A second approach of the collective identification is the notion of **“we-feeling” or “sense of community”**, the feeling of belonging together as a group, the affective ties among members of a community and the amount of political unity and solidarity between fellows.

The Empirical Results of the European Identity

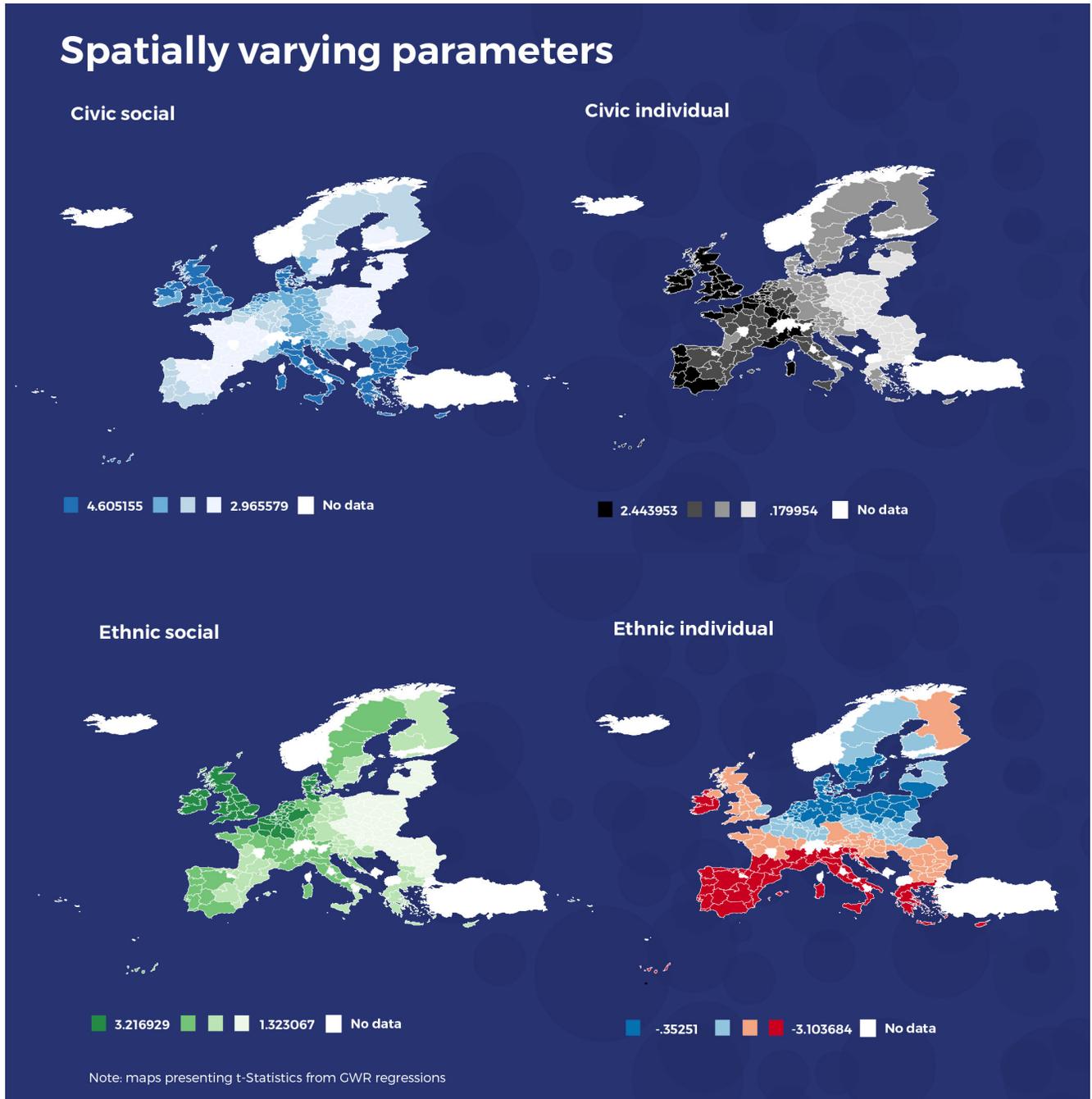
The report analyses empirically

- 1) the **civic - ethnic dichotomy**;
- 2) the **cognitive, affective and emotional construction of identity**.

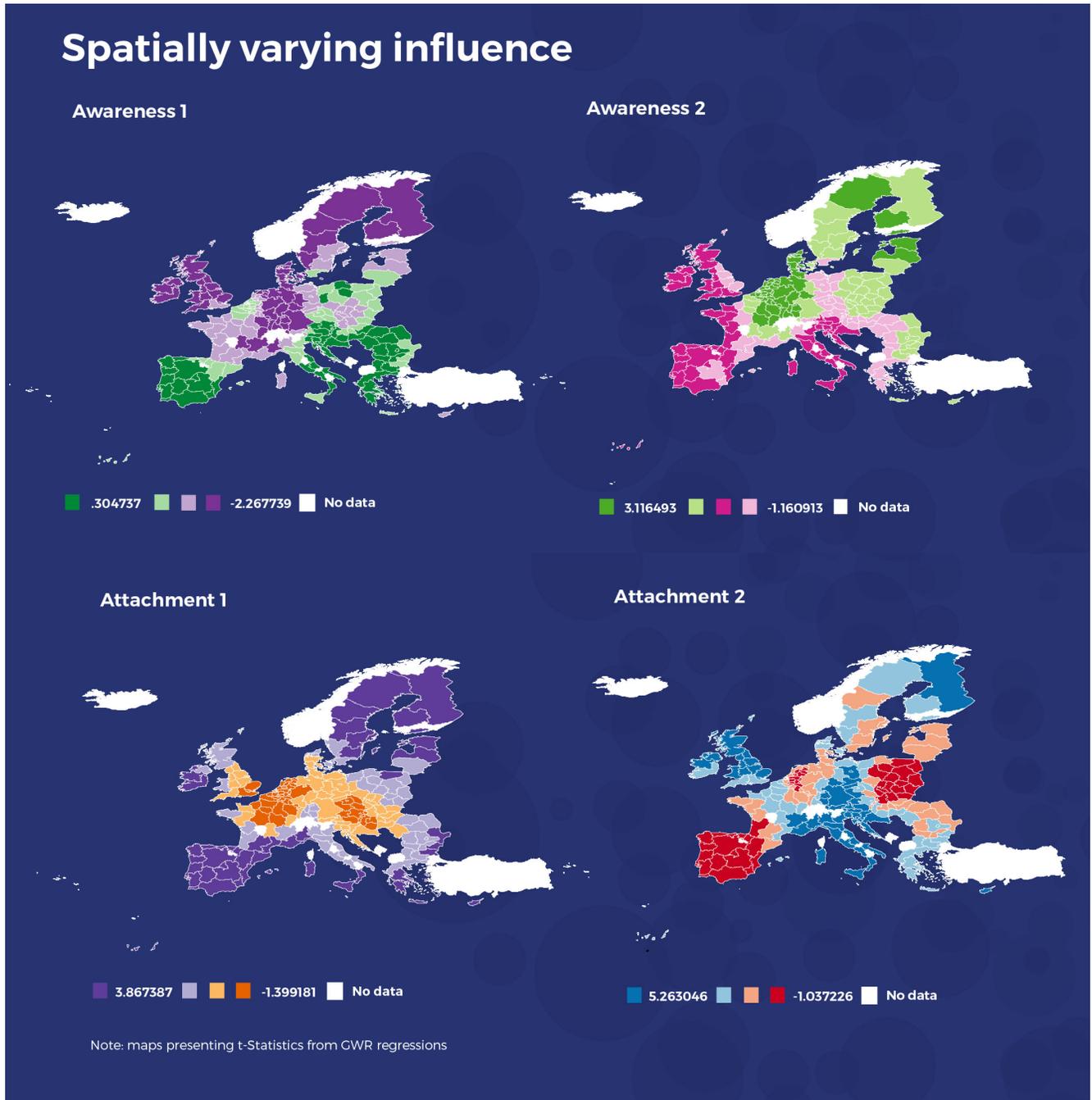
We have found that the first approach can provide **both positive (civic) and negative (ethnic) associations** with the European identity, while the second alternative is found to be much more theoretically consistent with the data, as all axes are found to be **positively associated with European identity**. Besides, aggregate regressions show much stronger association with citizens’ self-reported identification with Europe.

We have found that **neither the social psychology theory nor the civic-ethnic approach report spatially homogeneous results over Europe**. In fact, using Geographic Weighted Regression (see the attached group of maps of parameters) analysis we have proved that European Identity formation has multiple ways to be performed.

Graph 1. GWR results. Civic-ethnic model. t-Statistics.

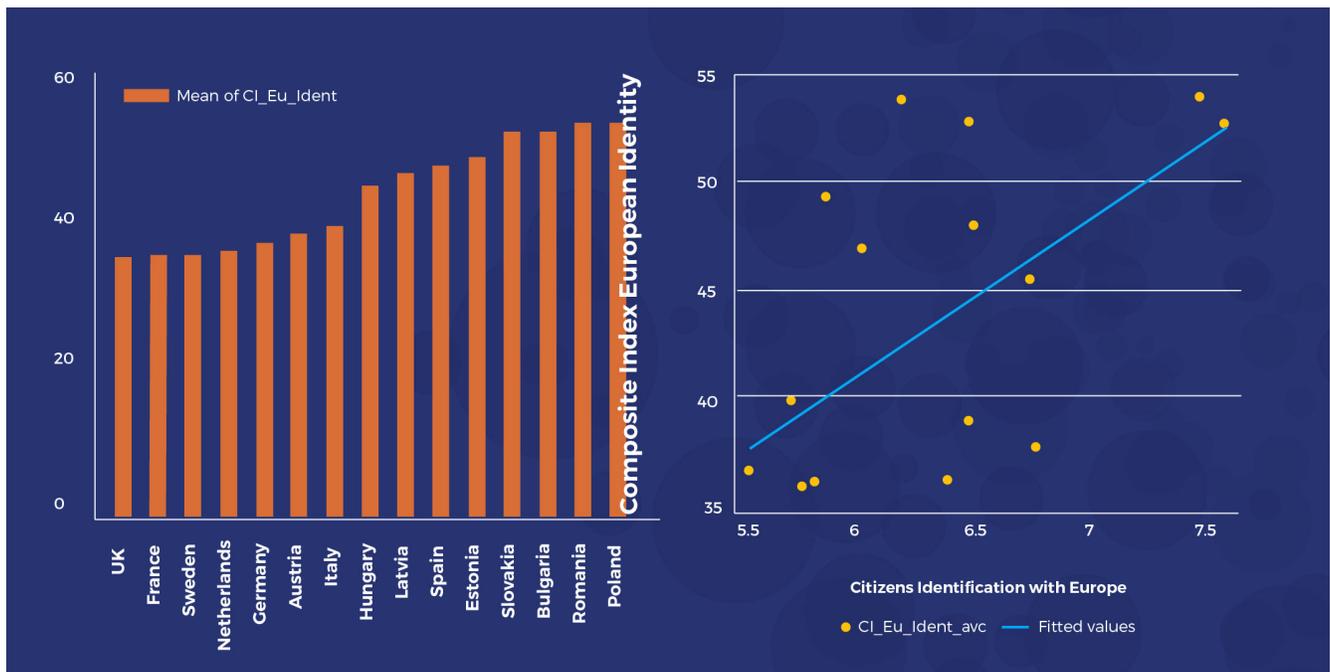


Graph 2. GWR results. Social psychology model. t-Statistics.



The final outcomes of the **Composite Index of European Identity** report an alternative specification to the self-reported perception given by individuals in the PERCEIVE survey. In this deliverable, we have provided a brief description of the **index**, which reports **higher values in Eastern European countries and Spain**, and **lower average figures in the United Kingdom, France, Sweden and the Netherlands**. The index is clearly **increasing with education, income and city size**, and does **not display any first-sight association with respondent's age and gender**.

Graph 3. European Identity by Country: Composite Index of European Identity and comparison with the Survey reported Identification with Europe (0-10 scale)

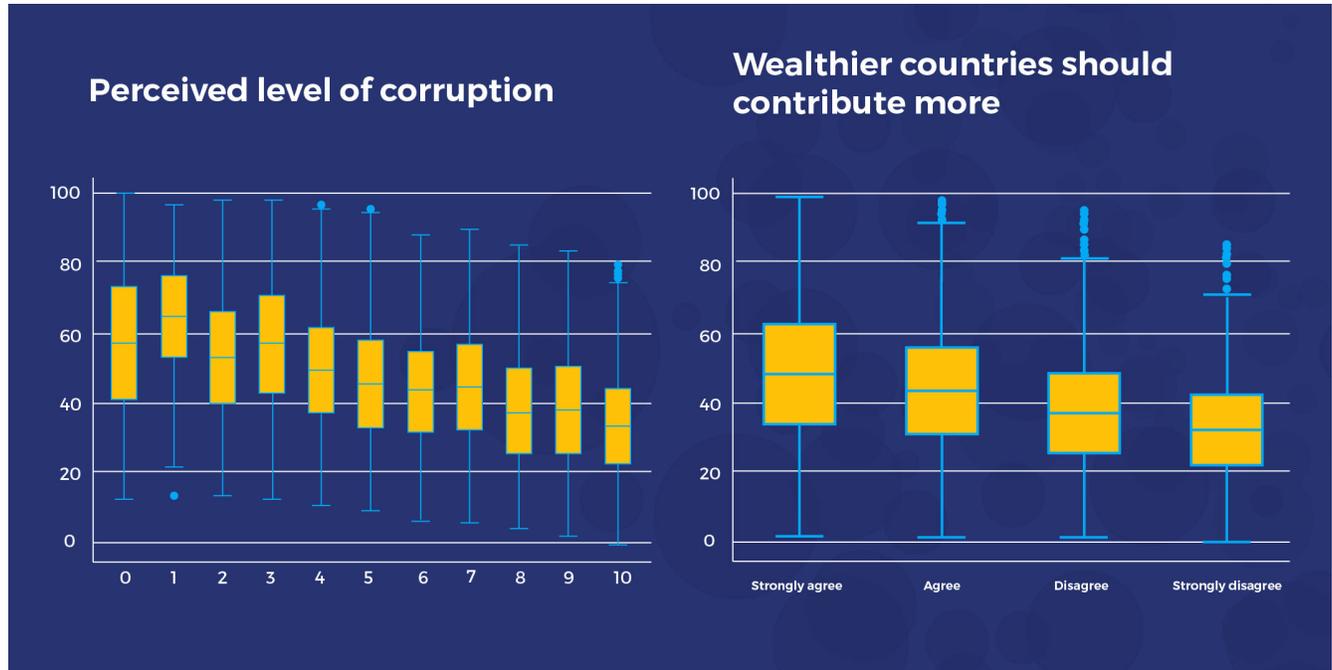


Perception of institutional quality and support for redistribution

The report finally analyses the association of European identity with two key determinants: citizens' perception of institutional quality and their support to policies backing redistribution and aid - two main aspects within the scope of the PERCEIVE project. The **results are in line with previous findings** within Working Package 2 of the PERCEIVE project: there is a **negative association between European identification and the perceived corruption in European institutions**, and a **positive correlation of identification with Europe** with individuals' support to **income redistribution**. These results, though, are **sensitive to national and local contexts**. We have found that countries with a **stronger identification** with Europe are the ones **less affected by perceived corruption in European institutions** and the ones that do **not need** a massive support to **redistribution** policies to have a **stronger connection** with the idea of Europe.

Graph 4. Composite Index of European identity and perceived level of corruption of the European Union

Graph 5. Composite Index of European identity and support to redistribution



Implications

These results, not unexpected, call for an **important role of national and regional contexts in the way European identity is built**. They also motivate future research to be developed within Work Package 2, where we will study to what extent citizen perceptions are **heterogeneous**, based on country or regional-level factors. This analysis will feed into recommendations for EU policy-makers on how to better frame the argument for Cohesion Policy. We understand that the Composite Index is an important complement to the survey's scores, as it **captures the grounds in which social identification is built**. Then, it will allow to enrich further research within the PERCEIVE project and consequently to give a more robust picture of the determinants of European identity and particularly by the role played by regional policies.

Methodological Note

Using Geographic Weighted Regression analysis we have proved that European Identity formation has multiple ways to be performed. This is a clear warning for considering techniques such as regression analysis or principal components, which in practice report results with parameters or factor loadings that are constant for all spatial units.

The proposed solution in this deliverable is the use of **fuzzy set techniques**. This option is **flexible** enough to report an **index of identification with Europe at the individual level**. Besides, it does not require to define subjective weights, the weighting scheme is sensible to the distribution of every attribute, and more importantly, it takes into account the environment in which individuals are, as the degree of membership takes into account the cumulated distribution of all dimensions and weights them by the frequency of the membership to the group. To the best of our knowledge, it has not been applied to the study of European identity, what makes this report innovative from a technical point of view.

Sources

Bergbauer, S. (2018) *Explaining European Identity Formation*, Springer: Netherlands.

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Tajfel, H. (1981) *Human Groups and Social Categories*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.