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Introduction

Can shared European identity help overcome historical tensions still tearing Europe apart? What is the relationship between European identity and solidarity among EU member states and among Europeans? How the way Europeans see themselves affects the relationships between them? How our common shared past affects our everyday lives and our dreams about the future? The authors of the essays collected in this section have grappled with these and similar questions, providing some answers, pointing to inherent contradictions and dilemmas, and posing new questions. Before we give them voice, however, let us consider for a moment the intricate interplay between identity and solidarity. On one hand, the links between identity and solidarity seem to be rather obvious. Solidarity by definition implies some sort of shared identity. Solidarity derives from identification with others, from the certain bond that we feel with others, from shared past or shared future, and shared interests and responsibility. This intersection of identity and solidarity has at least two dimensions. One is moral-symbolic. A shared European identity implies a moral duty vis-à-vis fellow European citizens. It may also imply a vested interest, an understanding that what happens in other member states affects the situation in our own. Both this moral duty and this enlightened self-interest may inform our decisions regarding economic issues, e.g., the conviction that fellow member states in less favourable economic situations need to be helped; or political dimensions, i.e., that challenges to democracy and the rule of law in one member state affect the situation all over the EU and thus need to be handled together. A shared European identity should presumably also help us look at our past as a shared experience, at tensions *within* a mutually owned territory and polity*,* just as arguments within a family, and not as conflicts *between* a collection of national polities with their particular experiences and competing truths, interpretations and interests.

Virginie Girondon refers in her text to these two dimensions of solidarity and emphasizes that solidarity based on interdependence or mutual interests is not usually sufficient, particularly during times of crisis. She stresses that a utilitarian understanding of solidarity may contribute to tensions among member states and calls for actions to restore trust and a sense of reciprocal obligation between EU member states and between European citizens.

However, as Ruth Wodak reminds us in her contribution, neither individual nor collective identities are unique or stable. What is more, there is no single form of identity, but *multiple identities*. Indeed, identities are fluid and evolve over time. The good thing about this is that adopting European identity does not imply fitting

a pre-existing template, but rather co-constructing it. What is more, European identity is not meant to replace other identities, be they national, local or regional, but rather to co-exist with them, and at best enhance those elements in these identities that underpin the European project. Józef Niżnik warns us against the fallacy of opposition between European and national identity that seems to be all too present in the public discourses. European identity, he poses, needs to accommodate and supplement the sense of national identity, rather than seek to replace it.

And here another question arises: if European identity is fluid and constantly co-created by Europeans, does it have any fundamental elements? What can be changed and what is the essence without which Europe would cease to be? In fact, not just its essentials, but the very existence of European identity and the need for a unified Europe is being challenged these days. Once again. Almost two decades ago the prominent Polish and European historian Krzysztof Pomian spoke of a unified Europe with considerable confidence. In his Post Scriptum added to the initial text on the occasion of this conference, he emphasizes that history is not linear, and that a unified Europe needs to be justified and defended again and again. Today it is being challenged from two sides: by nationalists who emphasize particularities and the separate interests of EU member states, and cosmopolitans who see the European project as too divisive, unjustifiably dividing the world into "us" Europeans and "them" non-Europeans. The most daunting challenge to the future of Europe, however, as Krzysztof Pomian emphasizes, is the one coming from the new authoritarians, agents of what they call "illiberal" or "sovereign democracy" from outside as well as from within Europe. Russia and China stand out as examples of the former, while Hungary and Poland as the most vivid examples of the latter. As Pomian puts it: "The term 'illiberal democracy' does not seem to be used in the official discourses of the Polish Law and Justice party. But its ideology, openly Catholic from before the Second Vatican Council, nationalist, patriarchal, and authoritarian, is obviously opposed to political liberalism starting with the freedom of conscience. It is opposed therefore to the fundamental values of the European Union, which for speakers of this party is nothing other than 'the civilization of death'".

Andrzej Rychard poses the question whether the deviations from the already achieved liberal democracy model that we are observing in Central Europe are signs of initial shallow integration or rather symptoms of shared pan-European trends. He also provides three possible scenarios of the European project's further development, including the most optimistic scenario of European re-integration. But for that a new type of European identity, underpinned by clearly-defined ideas, is instrumental. Remembering the past may help us in building this new identity, but only when we focus on the relevant aspects. In Rychard's words: "the memory of building democratic and market institutions, and long-term structural processes creating societies supporting Europe, could be helpful in building the new European identity". Rychard also warns against the temptation for some ardent pro-Europeans to blame the Eastern newcomers for the current crisis of authoritarian populism and the temptations to roll back the integration project to the countries of 'old Europe'.

Wodak seconds Rychard's insistence on the significance of ideas for the European project and claims that Europe requires not so much legitimation through procedure but a *legitimation through ideas*. Without them the construction of a true "political identity" of Europe is not possible.

Niżnik highlights Europe's broader, shared historical and cultural heritage as the unifying source of a shared identity and mutual solidarity. It is important, he argues, to shape a collective European memory that goes beyond past conflicts, but focuses on what is common and serves Europe's unity rather than its internal diversity. And yet, this should still be done in a way that respects "the uniqueness and specificity of the member states' contributions to the shared heritage and collective unity". A sense of being heard, being represented is also considered by Katarzyna Pełczyńska-Nałęcz as a fundamental building bloc of solidarity and shared experience. And one way of ensuring that is to preserve a very complex but necessary balance of representation in the European institutions that – in her diagnosis – has been worked out over the decades.

Echoing Rychard's call for the recognition of experience of building democratic and market institutions in Central Europe, as "the last big system change on this continent", Grabbe invites us to reflect upon the possible lessons following from that experience. These lessons may prove useful in shaping our responses to contemporary challenges, climate change being one of them. She shows us that lasting solidarity is built around a common vision of the future. She warns us against falling into the trap of compensating for perceived past wrongs and injustices, as this leads to a competition of grievances. Instead, she claims, the EU needs to encourage the view that "we all have to make a contribution to creating a better economic system that serves us all."

The populist malaise that Europe is suffering from these days feeds heavily on the lack of a convincing European unity narrative underpinned by "the initial values of the cooperation and European integration process", including solidarity, unity, tolerance, consensus, and mutual assistance, Góralczyk argues in his text. Economic and political calculations cannot be made at the expense of smaller players. He also calls for adopting and stressing a common European identity as a counterbalance to the divisive forces within Europe.

Michał Boni argues that in order to ensure that the principle of sovereignty does not clash with the principle of solidarity, the principle of subsidiarity needs to be redefined in a way that ensures effective protection of fundamental rights in all member states, empowers European institutions to work out truly European responses to global challenges as a result of a trialogue, as well as enables Europe to achieve its full competitive advantage.

The contributions in this section clearly point to the conclusion that the current European project can only succeed if we manage to develop the twin concepts of European identity and solidarity that can challenge the retrospective authoritarian-populist utopia of a 'White and Christian Europe of nations'. For this intellectual project to succeed, we need a concept of European identity which is plural-

istic enough to embrace national and regional identities and narratives. We need a story of European unity which recognizes national narratives of both large and small nations as contributing to the diversity of united Europe. Perhaps even more crucially, we need the concept of identity that recognizes the experiences of both the Western and Eastern parts of the continent as valid and important for what Europe stands for in contemporary world. Such a concept of European identity has to overcome the divisive stereotypes of the liberal and democratic West versus the authoritarian populist East. This concept of European identity should recognize both the revolution of May '68 in Paris and Amsterdam and the Prague spring of 1967–1968, along with the birth of the Solidarity movement in Gdańsk, as parts of a bigger struggle against the demons haunting Europe – authoritarianism, nationalism, intolerance, and racism.

The spectre of authoritarian populism which threatens the European project from within and from without also needs to be countered by a new future-oriented and dynamic concept of European solidarity. This concept of solidarity as dynamic and reaching out towards not just our fellow Europeans but towards those who suffer from war and persecution beyond the borders of Europe counters important criticism against the concept of European solidarity as limiting – namely, that identification with the group of European citizens as a driver for solidarity is also limiting. Group membership that underpins the concept of solidarity may imply that it does not reach outside the EU citizens' community. In fact, this argument can be reversed: the nature of contemporary challenges to Europe and European integration (sometimes described as 'poly-crisis') can only be tackled if Europeans look beyond their borders and reshape the EU's political agenda in such a way that Europe can become a leader in addressing global challenges. The fast unfolding climate crisis can perhaps serve as the best example of this seeming paradox that Europeans can only save themselves by addressing global problems. In similar vein, in order to tackle the migration crisis, Europe needs to reach out and address the causes of migratory pressures: underdevelopment, poverty, war, and – last but not least – climate change. Finally, authoritarian populism which threatens democracy and civic liberties in Europe is exacerbated through malign influence of the authoritarian powers such a Russia and China, whose governments actively and ruthlessly persecute their own citizens who dare to challenge them. European solidarity needs to reach out to those like-minded people around the globe who think that democracy is better than dictatorship and deem the rule of law preferable to government's arbitrary power.

Drawing on the insights of so many excellent contributions to the current section, we may conclude by saying that Europe can resolve the historical tensions and conflicts around values by adopting a pluralistic and inclusive concept of European identity. This European sense of shared identity should be accompanied by an outward looking and future oriented concept of European solidarity, not just with other EU citizens but with our global neighbours.