

first publication

Regarding the theme »European cultural identity«, we have to ask first, if we can talk about such an identity. Since we don't talk about only one identity for all people in Europe, we can do this. In spite of that, we are talking about common values, common principles in addition to our national or regional identity.

Cultural Identity and European Values

Identity can be considered as:

- *historical identity*: inventing of past important events and creating of socio-cultural, natural and economical heritage for the sake of the community
- *living identity*: reflection of daily life and contemporary style of life
- *designed/projected identity* (Pierre Centlivres – CDCC seminar on *Cultural Identity and Regional Development – Comparative Analyses and Prospects*)

Identity is not invariable, on the contrary it is closely connected with daily life. Identity in general has many considerations such as history, heritage, culture, religion, ethnicity, language, and consciousness. Thus, it is a complex of characteristics and different features.

Europe has its own cultural system with its common values. There are different levels of this system such as cultural systems of ethnic groups, cultural systems of nations, of regions, of continents. And in Europe, there are also two large spheres to find – Roman and Byzantine.

European Culture and Development of its Values Paradigm:

- 1) The roots of this paradigm lie in ancient times, where principles, such as human activity or good, rational understanding of humans etc. seemed to be given.
- 2) Their background was formulated in the Middle Ages under the influence of christianity and its principles of freedom, meaning the intellectual development and equality of people in the face of god, as well as the principle of individualism in the sense of personal responsibility to god.
- 3) European intellectual life in modern times was determined by natural science, and mechanics that were mainly shaping the world. It is the period of establishing the system of European values including those of rationalism, freedom, activity of humans, humanism etc.
- 4) The last centuries were influenced by the development of industrial technology, the so called scientific-technological revolution, and by the consciousness of globally connecting humans. The accent lies on individuality and its rights and freedom expounded in the unity of law and responsibility of each human being. The knowledge of global responsibility of mankind (ecology) becomes the new principle.

Rationality – Freedom – Man as an Active Being – Morality – Humanism with the Value of Individuality

The paradigm of connected rationality-based freedom and morality in favor of humanism and individuality is very important for European cultures because of its influence on the style of living and orientation of each man and of entire groups.

After 1989 there have been many political, social, and economical changes in Europe, that are marked by deep gaps between most of the post-socialist states and those in the tradition of democracy and economy of free and competitive markets. In conditions of the proceeding European integration we need to create a common framework for this new Europe, in order to unify a divided continent, but we have to support individual identities of nations and regions and give them a place in European society equally.



¹ A Strategy for Cultural Cohesion and Cultural Pluralism. In: <http://www.coe.fr/eng/act-e/ecohecul.htm> v. 29.09.1997.

² NL of the Council of Europe 3 (1993), pp. 6-11.

The *Council of Europe* (COE) reacted to this situation with its *Strategy for Cultural Cohesion and Cultural Pluralism*, in which the role of cultural co-operation is emphasized:

- by promoting a positive attitude toward cultural diversity within societies, thereby recognizing the role of culture as an antidote to intolerance;
- by strengthening the sense of a common European identity (in addition to national or regional identities), and the feeling of belonging to a common culture;
- by building a concept of cultural identity which, beyond its reference to a specific history and heritage, continually dynamically, multi-facetedly and open to otherness and future changes develops;
- by clearly re-affirming the ethical and human dimension of a democratic society and a changing Europe, and by promoting democratic values and human rights with a common cultural approach.¹

Also a new category of human rights was established – the so called »cultural rights«. The 8th interdisciplinary human-rights colloquy in 1991² discussed these subjects with the following conclusions:

1. that cultural rights are rights of identity, and that – if it is not possible to agree to a definition of culture preliminary to defining the rights of it – there should be at least recognition of:
 - a. culture as the capacity to develop individual and community potential;
 - b. cultural right as human right to decide one's identity;
3. cultural identity is a product not of isolation but of interrelation hence it has to be regarded as ongoing process of development and not as an unevolving set of distinctive features;
4. the right of cultural identity, which encompasses the whole range of cultural rights, is at one and the same time the right of distinctiveness and the right of membership of local or wider communities, including the community of mankind, regardless of international borders;
5. the right of cultural identity includes the right to claim distinctiveness and manifest it in economic, political, social and cultural spheres;
6. on the basis of such cultural rights, already defined by international instruments, and given our better understanding of cultural identity, it is possible to agree to the following indicative list of cultural rights:
 - freedom of cultural choice, in particular with regard to languages and beliefs
 - the right of a cultural heritage or heritages.

Currently the *Council of Europe* doesn't talk about a unified Europe, but about »the Europe of cultural co-operation«, what means to think about Europe with some common principles and values, but at the same time with many different identities on different levels.

Cultural identity is closely related with cultural policy, while one common cultural policy for the entire European region does not exist, but »only« a set of common principles belonging to such a cultural policy that favours a space for individual differences of and for each national/regional culture and its members, authors, and institutions. It is possible to come to an agreement over a common economic policy or a common (democratic) style of policy decision making, but culture is and has to be unique in each country, moreover in each region, and it is closely connected to each area's history. Each European country has its own cultural policy, and it is not only quite difficult to create a common, and binding policy for all of them, moreover it could be also very dangerous, because no unifying rule or standard has its place in the fluctuating cultural field that underlies different spheres of influence by national policy, economy, and also history, value systems, and official needs. What can be done, is just to talk about common principles or concepts of cultural policies. In my opinion the above stated »Europe of cultural co-operation« is the maximum of a possible unifying process regarding culture in Europe of the 21th century.



The Role of Cultural Heritage

Culture and within this framework also cultural heritage are not only inseparately connected with international cultural relations, but also with the responsibility to create the necessary conditions for the appropriate and just development of human society. If we take culture in its widest definition as a system guiding human activity, that means a system of a society's basic values, then culture logically is reflected in human activities and their results. Cultural heritage, as a bearer of values of past generations, which influences our present, also belongs undoubtedly to these results. Bearing historically documented values, culture reminds mankind on its past. The places, we live in, carry themselves values represented by both, natural and cultural resources. Both are almost unrenowable, nevertheless they are necessary for the life of people. Today cultural heritage represents one of the significant features co-creating cultural identity in connection to cultural plurality or diversity, which is necessary for the life of society in this historical phase of its development. Cultural plurality in the framework of society represents enrichment of its culture, and its acknowledgement contributes, thanks to the acknowledgement of cultural plurality, to the growth of tolerance and democracy.

The development of the role of cultural heritage and the growth of attention devoted to its protection is closely connected with the modern development of civilization, starting with the second half of the 19th century and with the development of international relations along with the continuous increase in their intensity, whereby international organizations and documents undoubtedly are playing a main role.

Cultural heritage also has great significance for international relations from the perspective of how well cross-cultural communication functions. And in the process of European integration, and accession of new members to the European Union, the smooth functioning of cross-cultural communication is very necessary. According to expert analyses inefficacy of international negotiations is from up to 70% caused by mutual misunderstandings of members of different cultural systems. This fact also plays a negative part in peaceful conflict resolutions. In the first place the recognition of one's own culture and at the same time also obtaining knowledge about different cultures and their environment belong to the main pillars of proper communication. Becoming better acquainted with cultural heritage is one of the important assumptions of such recognition.

The world protection of cultural heritage can be divided into three main groups. First, in armed conflicts, secondly, fight against illegal trade in this heritage, and thirdly ensuring the overall concept of the protection of cultural heritage. Each of these groups is covered by one of the conventions of UNESCO that represents one of the most significant, if not the most significant institution in relation to cultural heritage.

A general trend of protection of cultural heritage is the shift from individuality to larger entities. The progress of protection of single objects to whole areas and from random uncoordinated activities (especially before World War I) to a whole international system of cooperation, where UN, UNESCO and many other expert organizations, both governmental and non-governmental, play a significant part.

One of the mostly watched cultural processes, which has had a significant impact, both in the area of international relations and in the protection of cultural heritage, is a process of self-awareness of the fundamental world cultures and of its parts. For the protection of cultural heritage in particular the European approach was very important, including its strengths and weaknesses as well, its connections and differences in relation to the world protection of cultural heritage. This approach is considered also with respect to the current process of European integration, and also with regard to the growth in the significance of the re-discovered cultural identity of Europe and its regions. European care of cultural heritage thus serves also as an example for other regions, and future, or already are undertaken actions.

The field of protection of cultural heritage, just like many other fields, also formulated some elementary principles and tendencies during its development. Preservation of international peace and security by means of international cooperation and by the admission of the significance of culture and environment for a society is often characterized as a main goal. From this, the already mentioned system of international cooperation and the significance of preservation of cultural heritage for the harmonic development of society unfolds and that in two directions: First in humanizing, which is to be understood as cultural heritage in connection with human rights, formulating the right of the own history and to its cultural heritage as



another elementary category of human rights. The second direction intends the confirmation of the role of cultural heritage as a significant factor for social and economic development. This relates especially to using cultural heritage as means of tourism that is one of the main motives of development, not only of the branch itself but above all of society as a whole.

Other important points are:

- New role of knowledge of cultural heritage in society
- Dimension of integration
- Loss of psychological certainty, of cultural roots in a global society
- Knowledge of the own culture helps in cross-cultural communication
- Presentation of a state or a region in relation to international community (different nations) – especially for developing countries
- Mutual relation and dependence of cultural heritage and tourism industry
- New significance of knowledge of history for a society/a people, international community
- Sustainable development of tourism – some borders of its development
- New trends – i.e. cultural tourism, agro tourism etc.

Examples of European Cooperation and Programmes

The programme *Cultural Routes* by the *Council of Europe* shall be analysed exemplarily. The project is devoted to the cognition and understanding of different European cultures. The project was launched in 1987 by the *Council for Cultural Cooperation*, following the parliamentary assembly's proposal to revive the famous routes along which during the Middle Ages innumerable pilgrims travelled from all over Europe to Santiago de Compostela. This mass movement gave the pilgrims a feeling of belonging to a family of nations, each distinct from the others, but all sharing the same basic values and linked by a common civilisation. The *Council of Europe* and its member states quickly realised that it was an excellent idea to devise routes offering a tangible and visible illustration of both, the overall unity and the inherent diversity of European culture. Thus, this corresponds perfectly to the aims and ideals of strengthening European identity while respecting the cultural heritage and the beliefs of others, and was also likely to encourage cultural tourism. In the last ten years some twenty themes have been selected, covering the whole of Europe and rising initiatives for fruitful cooperations in the fields of research and development, enhancement of the memory, history and European heritage, cultural and educational exchanges of young Europeans, contemporary cultural and artistic practice, as well as cultural tourism and sustainable cultural development.³

Themes are for example:

- Santiago de Compostela Pilgrim Routes
- The Baroque Routes
- Mozart Route
- The Monastic Influence Routes
- The Viking Routes
- Celtic Routes
- The Routes of Humanism

There are also other projects and programmes of the *Council of Europe*, the European Union and other institutions, i.e. *Europe, a Common Heritage* has been a great campaign that wanted to enhance the awareness of cultural heritage in a European context, or *European Heritage Days*, that is promoting cultural heritage on a European level every year.

In the case of protecting cultural heritage, the matter is protection of a phenomenon which, by influencing individual societies, is reflected both, in everyday life and in exterior relations, and in the case of sovereign states it is also reflected in international relations. Full understanding of the significance of cultural heritage and support of its development is providing a chance to contribute to the growth of tolerance and democracy in the present multicultural society.

³ The Council of Europe Cultural Routes. In: <http://culture.coe.int/routes/eng/eitin..htm> v. 31.01.2001.

