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Abstract

This article analyzes the perception of political and national identity of European Millennials in the year of 2018. Results indicate that there are significant differences in political and national identity between three different age groups: Baby Boomers, Generation X and Millennials. Findings indicate that Millennials display significantly higher trust in democratic institutions and are significantly more satisfied with democracy than previous generation. Results are not only important to the understanding of political and national identity of young adults but also for European policy makers as they give insight on the contemporary state of European nationalism and satisfaction with the democratic system of the European Union. A special attention has been given the analysis of discrepancies between Eastern and Western Europeans. Results indicate that there are consistent and significant differences between the two geographical cohorts in question, ranging from the perception of national identity, to trust in democratic institutions and satisfaction with democracy.

Content:

The political framework of Europe has been an ever-changing structure over centuries. It gave birth to the rise and fall of great Empires, witnessed two World Wars which would shape global structures to an unforeseen extent and is currently referred to as the cradle of modern societies, democracies and their institutions. When the French president, Emmanuel Macron, gave a thrilling speech about the troubled path of the European Union in 2018, he made clear that Europe is an inevitable policy maker and is here to stay: "People will just have to get used to it, because I will not stop talking about it. Because this is where our battle lies, our history, our identity, our horizon, what protects us and gives us a future".

If, however, Europe wants to succeed as a political entity, it needs grass-root support from its citizens. Political integration on the old continent set in after the events of the Second World War. What began as economic cooperation in terms of steel production (Paris treaty 1951), would be extended over decades to reduction of borders, a common monetary policy, fiscal federalism, and the active shaping of a European identity. Scholars such as Habermas and Derrida (2004, 2005, 2017) speak of a necessity for a European nationalism for future integration. Rightly so, if European societies do not perceive themselves to be European, why should they fight for a supposed common future?

However, there is reason to believe that Europeans gradually view themselves more European. European integration has a long-lasting tradition in Western European states such as France, the Netherlands or Germany. In a time in which global challenges such as migration or climate change occur, there is a growing need for European responses instead of individual state decisions which would be not as effective given their small-scale possibilities. Young adults could spearhead the revolution in European understanding of nationalism. They grew up with a common currency, they see borders only as mere administrative entities, are equipped to communicate with other Europeans with the spread of English as a lingua franca and are well

connected to other Europeans via Social Media or other modern digitalization products. While some might claim that nationalism is stronger than ever in Europe with the pending refugee crisis, I argue that it reinforces an image of a "defining other", which is key to the formation of nationalism (Anderson 2006, Gellner 2008). The idea of a "defining other" works as a counter-image to a perceived community. While scholars as Habermas and Derrida (2005) argue that the United States serve as a defining other, one could argue that Russia or the Muslim World works quite as effectively in this regard. Counter-images to imagined communities in the sense of nations are key and are diffused even by the most skeptical parties in terms of European integration. Political parties, and this includes nationalist parties, increasingly aim to defend a European nation instead of an Italian, a Hungarian or an Austrian nation.

If the top-down process of building a European identity was indeed successful, young adults should show strongest emotional attachment to Europe, since they have been raised in an already European environment. This article deals with the question how European Millennials view their respective national and political identities and aims to resolve the main research question: "How can one describe political and national identity of European Millennials in 2018"? This question has severe implications for the future of Europe. While there is solid research on political identity of young adults claiming they are increasingly disregarding democratic structures (Checkel & Katzenstein 2009, Foa & Mounk 2016, Montgomery 2009, Rensmann 2017, Russel et al. 2002, Voeten 2016) and show lower trust in institutions than previous generations, I aim to resolve the question of how they define themselves in terms of political and national identity in 2018. If the rise of authoritarian structures does continue, will Millennials spearhead this revolution? If Europeanization was fruitful, can we measure it by analyzing different generational cohorts? Are Eastern and Western European countries truly different in terms of their political and national identities (Checkel & Katzenstein 2009, Kumar 2008, Voeten 2016)?

If Europe wants to succeed as a supranational structure, we need to understand where exactly we stand in the process of European integration. This article gives solid implications as to how far the process of building a European nation has come and what the implications are for democracy in Europe and the self-understanding of its various societies. It is not only useful to contemporary literature, which primarily tries to paint a holistic picture of the process, meaning not taking into account possible differences between generations, but also to European politics as it gives orientation and hope for a sustained future in an age in which Europe does not seem to put a stop to being crisis-ridden.

2. Literature Review

The following section deals with contemporary theories from the body of literature which focus European identity, European nationalism and give implications as to how Millennials construct self-perceptions of national and political belonging in present times.

First, I will lay down why national identities are highly volatile in contemporary Europe. I will then move on to explain how digitalization can affect identity building processes of young adults, describe how the idea of a European nation has been diffused and co-constructed by political elites and lastly why differentiation between Eastern and Western European cohorts seems plausible in this analysis.

2.1 Political and National Identities are Dynamic Concepts

National identities are ever-changing constructs. They depend on a vast array of national and international developments and are embedded in dynamic historical contexts. Especially in Europe, nation states have been constructed and also disintegrated over the last decades. Also, new understandings of nationality are arising with European integration, which of course started with the founding of the European Union after the devastating events of World War II. European elites have been trying to construct a European identity through economic tools such as the introduction of a supranational currency or dynamic symbols of European integration

such as the iconic EU flag. All these factors contribute to a change in political and national perspectives of European Millennials, as especially symbols have a potent power in influencing perceptions of belonging to imagined communities (term by Anderson 2006). Scholars analyzed and demonstrated that EU symbology like the European flag, the Euro or the anthem have a tremendous effect on individuals when juxtaposed to national identity (Bruter 2003). If Millennials grew up alongside those very symbolic images, be it in everyday life, in news reports or in schools, they should feel more European than the generation of their parents. This is intuitive to think, but this hypothesis will be resolved at a later stage in this article (H1). It seems obvious that there is a generational gap between the older generations of Europe and the young – the young tend to share a collective European identity, supported by free movement within the EU, the potency of symbols, easy communication with other Europeans and so forth. Scholars have already shown this empirically, however, it was mostly a side product of research or research has been conducted over a decade ago (Boehnke & Fuss 2008, Citrin & Slides 2004, Kumar 2008, Reinelt 2001). I argue that research in this specific field has to be renewed constantly since political and national identities are highly volatile and are subject to constant change.

The reduction of borders is another vital part which relativized national identity. Here, Austria serves as a prime example as a landlocked state in Central Europe with nine borders. Before 1995, one had to present passports when crossing frontiers. I argue that the fact of having a European passport which gives access to the labor market in 26 different states (European Commission 2018) drastically alters the perception of national belonging. Further, as governance is no longer a purely national affair in contemporary Europe, young adults look towards European institutions for decision making. Although scholars believe this is not an indicator for the death of nation states (Zürn 2003: p.411), political power is taken away from nation states gradually, which in turn affects perceptions of political power for Millennials.

It is due to the fact that political identities are very generation-dependent that we need to start asking what differences we can sort out between them when we analyze perceptions of national belonging. While people born in the 1970s were politically socialized during the Cold War, Millennials born in the 1990s did not witness the hard-stuck conflict between the imagined community of the East and West. Further, European integration was highly accelerated within the 2000s when huge Eastern European territories were integrated. This event, according to temporary literature, marks the biggest change in European identity in this millennium since religion gave a huge comeback on the European cultural scene (Checkel & Katzenstein 2009, Kumar 2008). No longer was European identity based on Western European style secularism. However, I do see flaws within this reasoning. While Eastern states like Poland are highly catholic with a religious and political sphere being interwoven, this is much less the case in the Baltic states. It begs to ask the question if a pan-European identity is even possible when demographic aspects of nation states influence European identity this much and if political identity is truly as unstable as it seems. For the sake of being accurate in a narrative of constructing a European identity, I argue that there are measureable differences in the very perception of nationalism between East and West in terms of being European. This article therefore also tests the hypothesis that Western Europeans Millennials feel more European than Eastern Europeans because of different starting points in European integration (H1.1)

Although there is a comprehensive body of research surrounding these ideas (Boehnke & Fuss 2008, Checkel & Katzenstein 2009, Citrin & Sides 2004, Kumar 2008), scholars always tried to capture a holistic concept of European identity. I call for a focus on the perception of different generations, as they make fault lines in competing perspectives visible. Moreover, even if scholars capture attitudes of different generations, they might not be valid a very long time. If we look at the past ten years in retrospect, no one could argue that the political scene has been stable. 2008 began with the biggest financial crash in modern times, then the European debt crisis was the center of attention accompanied with the Euro crisis, the wars in the Arab world

led to huge refugee streams into Europe, Brexit happened and populism threw a looming shadow over Western style politics. Authoritarian political movements are again en vogue in Europe partially due to the previous chaotic decade. Although it is a common understanding among scholars that populism is rooted in the ongoing identity crisis of voters in Western countries (Rensmann 2017), I argue that younger generations tend to be more receptive to such political perspectives as their political development has been shaped by this chaotic environment. This article argues that it is because the last decade has been very unstable in terms of political developments that Millennials show lower trust in democratic institutions than did previous generations (H2).

In summary, analyzing national and political identity is a task which goes hand in hand with analyzing historical, geopolitical, national and supranational contexts. If one does not capture exactly *what* leads a certain generation to display high levels of nationalism or why certain generations tend to trust democratic institutions less than others, scholars might miss what actually distinguishes generational identity. Findings have to be constantly renewed since the pace of developments in terms of nationalism is rapid and opinions are highly volatile due to ever changing circumstances surrounding the concept.

2.2. National and Political Identity of Millennials in the Age of Digitalization

Although scholars have captured political attitudes of young European adults in prior studies (Boehnke & Fuss 2008, Foa & Munk 2016, Montgomery 2009, Citrin & Sides 2004, Kiesa et al. 2007, Checkel & Katzenstein 2009), it was hardly done in detail. In other words, most studies focus on broader questions and only then find implications for younger generations. Further, they simply state *what* Millennials think about politics but not *why* they would choose to do so. This article argues that political socialization differs from generation to generation and this can be explained in various ways. Identities in the next generation, that is Millennials, are not only shifting but also more flexible (Bennett & Iyengar 2008: p.716). Identity building has been analyzed in the age of the Internet and, traditionally, there has been an abundance of research

in this area (Bennett 1998, Giddens 1991, Inglehart 1997), but as developments are highly dynamic, findings have to be renewed constantly, as old patterns do not apply to modern communication anymore. In other words, an article published in 2003 does not take into account how social media affects the construction of political identities since they were much less relevant fifteen years ago. In 2018, European Millennials are more connected with each other than they have ever been. Transnational communication is positively associated to the convergence of cross-national policies, as scholars have shown already ten years ago (Holzinger et al. 2008). Further, transnational communication also benefits convergence of high-educational policies (Voegtle et al. 2011). In this sense, I argue that Millennials spearhead the convergence of European political policies as they grew up alongside digitalization and use modern technology more effectively than older generations ever could.

I argue that especially young adults in Europe are equipped to be European since they have more reliable tools to engage in communication. They are better trained in languages and scholars argue they will drastically shape educational settings in the future due to dealing with information differently and more selectively (Rickes 2009). If we assume that English has become the Latin and thus lingua franca of our age, it is reasonable to assume that Millennials are better prepared than any other generation before them to be European and co-construct a European identity. To resolve this question, this article also looks for differences between generational cohorts in terms of Internet and Media use. It is argued that high Internet use, which corresponds to high interaction to other Europeans and non-nationals positively correlates with feeling European (H3).

One can clearly state that most European Millennials are used to communicating freely with the rest of the world. Millennials were raised during the digitalization boom – this boom has had vast and global implications for communication patterns (Tapscott 2009). The Internet knows no borders, and this might have led young adults to the impression that borders truly are not significant in modern Europe. As I have argued before, Schengen contributed to the feeling

of having a territorially integrated Europe in the last decades. Further, American scholars (Montgomery 2009, Pasek et al. 2006) showed in population studies, that the Internet truly does affect voting behavior of young adults. Not only do they consume media differently, they are also exposed to less qualified opinions on social media when compared to commentaries in ordinary newspapers. Social media offers an immense playground for political discussion and representation. However, opinions are often not shared by experts but by amateurs, as a quick glance in political forums of politicians demonstrates.

Moreover, American scholars have empirically shown that young adults care less for politics than the parents' generation (Delli Carpini 2000: p.341). Nevertheless, European scholars argued that Internet use does not necessarily lead to less informed opinions or to individuals being less interested in politics (Bakker & De Vreese 2011, Saldana et al. 2015, Gil de Zuñiga et al. 2012). Also, free and globalized communication may lead to lower national identification for young adults. Not only do young people travel more than their parents did when they were young, they are also better educated in foreign languages. If English serves as a transnational language in modern Europe, which undoubtedly is true, then Millennials are better prepared to communicate with other Europeans then older generations. As a common language is a basis of common culture, a logical conclusion would be that younger generations feel more European than ever (Checkel & Katzenstein 2009: p.135).

However, there has been discontent among social scientists when scholars claim that Millennials display alarming levels of political apathy, are prone to more radical political ideologies and show lower support for freedom of speech (Foa & Mounk 2016). Although this claim was quickly relativized (Voeten 2016), election results in European countries show that Millennials are indeed drawn towards populist ideas which often contradict core democratic values. In the Austrian election in 2017, the far-right party FPÖ was able to gather most votes among the age group of 29 years of age and younger (SORA analysis). After taking into account how politically chaotic the last decade has been in Europe, it should come to no surprise that

Millennials show authoritarian tendencies, as populist ideologies are most attractive in times of crisis and cultural disorientation (Rensmann 2017: p. 124).

Again, I argue that there are fundamental differences between age groups which are often overlooked in the social sciences. As I argued before, this article also tries to resolve the questions if European Millennials truly do distrust democratic institutions more than other generational cohorts (H2). However, I also argue that Millennials display higher rates of apathy towards democracy than previous generations (H4). Democratic politics are slow pace and require substantive discussion of policies and often demand consensus seeking before ratification and lastly implementation of a given policy. Millennials are used to fast pace developments, faster results to given problems and therefore view democracy as less valuable than previous generations. Further, while baby boomers still fought for democratic values such as equal representation of all citizens (e.g. equality of women and men in politics, equal voting rights, minority rights and so forth), and grew up in a time in which democracy was not consolidated, Millennials are spoiled in this regard and take it as a given. It is because they are growing skeptic of it at the one hand and never experienced having to fight for democratic values, that they view them differently and attach lower value to democratic orientations altogether.

Finally, although civil engagement is higher among Millennials than it was among former generations (Kiesa et al. 2007), voter turn-out is at an all-time low. This can, again, be attributed to political apathy as young people feel disillusioned and disenfranchised by current parties. However, it can be argued that the current populist tendencies of young adults might be due to the fact that populist votes are also seen as protest votes against the political system in general. Classical politics are not as fast pace as young adults might be accustomed to. Changes in society are slow and policies are hard to modify once they are implemented, which might feel wrong to young people who are used to having instant results and instant answers to pressing questions, thanks to modern information gathering.

2.3. Europeanization is a Top-Down Process

Historically, nationalism was a force of destruction in Europe. After the events of the two world wars, measures were taken to integrate Europe, reduce tensions between nation states and develop collective ideas of belonging. The fathers of the Europe, most importantly Jean Monnet and Konrad Adenauer, "[…] regarded a common European identity as an antidote to the antagonisms fostered by ethnocentric national loyalties […]" (cit. Citrin & Sides 2004: p.162). While originally covering a secular and central Europe with the former arch rivals of Germany and France as the main core, the Union expanded to 28 members in 2018. European identity thus changed when Eastern states were added as they brought the salience of religion back to the newly evolved European identity (Checkel & Katzenstein 2009, Kumar 2008).

Along with European treaties, such as Maastricht in 1992 or the treaty of Lisbon in 2007, power was gradually taken away from nation states and supranational institutions gained in importance. However, with the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) and the Treaty on the European Union (TEU), integrated Europe based its belief system on peace, democracy and protection of minorities the second paragraph of the TEU. It is the basis of what Habermas calls as "constitutional patriotism" as a form of national identity (Calhoun 20002, Habermas 2004, 2017, Habermas & Derrida 2005, Markell 2000). Although one has to point out that the European Union does not have a constitution per se, the wording of the TEU/TFEU was only slightly adapted and scholars describe it as a form of multi-level constitution which ultimately offers many advantages in terms of shaping common identities (Pernice 2008: p. 349, Hofmann: p.482). Again, this top-down approach of shaping a collective identity in modern Europe was gradually intensified over the last decades. This should result in generations being affected by these developments differently. While the baby boomers of France grew up within an early form of integrated Europe, the same age group in Poland grew up behind the Iron Curtain. I call for a different approach when analyzing political as well as

national identities as I expect significant gaps between age groups in terms of national belonging.

We are moving towards collective identities in modern Europe, as citizens developed feelings of belonging to their respective nation states and Europe as an entity of liberal beliefs (Karolewski 2009, Eder 2009). If we understand nations as a perception of belonging to imagined communities (Anderson 2006), it seems plausible that young adults are more drawn to collective identities then their parents as they were politically socialized during the described process. As I argued earlier, with the introduction of the Euro in 1999, Millennials also grew up with European symbols which contribute to a sense of belonging to a common European society.

In conclusion, the development of national identities in Europe must be attributed to the top-down process of constructing collective identities. It was elites that enabled supranational institutions to increase political power (Citrin & Sides 2004: p. 163, Checkel & Katzenstein 2009: p. 87), but it in 2018, we find ourselves with solid support for European core values among the society as a whole. By no means is the European Union a super-state, nor is its future development foreseeable. Europe as a political project has altered the perception of national belonging to a vast extent and will undoubtedly still exert influence in the years to come. Nation states are economically, politically and increasingly culturally interdependent (Zürn 2003: p. 402). If this is true, one should be able to find implications of European integration when addressing political attitudes of various generations within one society, be it European or national.

2.4. Attitudes of Western and Eastern European Millennials

In the social sciences scholars have made the point that Eastern and Western Europeans, regardless of specific generations, differ in terms of perceiving European identities (Wallace 1998, Petrakos 2013). So why and how is it that one needs to distinguish between different European blocks? As it is argued throughout this article, perceptions of national, civic and

political belonging are highly dynamic constructs. Earlier, I laid down that the European project was gradually constructed and enhanced over time. In other words, while Europeanization took off in France, Poland was still under a Soviet sphere of influence. Eastern Europe had to adapt values from Western European countries and assimilate over time (Schimmelfennig & Semelmeier 2005: p.4ff). Due to the fact that some countries were integrated into a European economic, political and belief system early, while others joined relatively late, there must be measureable differences among various national Millennials and between different European cohorts (H1.1, H2.1) . Scholars also hint at the fact that the Soviets, if we take Poland as an example for late Europeanization, actively tried to construct a common Soviet and thus Communist identity during their reign over Eastern Europe (Szporluk 1998: p.210). It is therefore intuitive to think that a person being born in the 80s in France has been politically socialized with a greatly different understanding of politics than another in Poland.

If we look at the contemporary political situation in Europe, we also experience patterns that point towards differences between Eastern and Western Europeans. Populism as a right-wing political philosophy is strongest in Eastern Europe, predominantly in Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic. Eastern Europe has gone through a profound transformation in terms of political structures and policies. This article therefore argues that Eastern Europeans display lower trust in democratic institutions than Western Europeans (H2.1.). Liberal democratic structures are historically new in the East of the continent while showing a rich tradition in the West. The lack of democratic liberalism in historic self-understanding of Eastern European societies should lead, it is argued, to lower trust in democratic institutions in Eastern Europe than in the West (H2.1). Going back to the argument of political apathy, I again argue that there are perceivable differences between Eastern and Western cohorts. As populist parties are deeply questioning and undermining democratic principles in Eastern Europe, I argue that Eastern European Millennials display higher rates of democratic apathy than their Western parallel (H4.1).

As right-wing populist parties show strong authoritarian and anti-liberal belief systems, they are by no means compatible with the European core values that are stated in the TEU and TFEU. Various authors have explored mechanisms behind populism in Eastern Europe and see European ideas endangered by their successful rise to power (Mesežnikov et al. 2008, Bugaric 2008), or at least challenged (Lang 2005). If we take into account that populism draws from cultural and identical crisis (Rensmann 2017), it is plausible to assume that states once under Communist rule experience European values differently and thus ultimately alter European values. The fear of "illiberal democracy", which gained heavy support in Eastern Europe, is colliding with the liberal democracy envisioned by Western states. This conflict became most evident during the refugee crisis, which still poses a threat to the cohesion of European politics. While Western states, that were early integrated into a European collective national system like Germany or France, defend minority rights and thus are ready to integrate refugees into the society, Eastern states that joined the integration process much later on, such as Poland or Hungary, are refusing to take in refugees. I argue that scholars need to take into account historical constructs and thus need to differentiate between Eastern and Western Europeans in terms of political and national identity. If we want to find out how political and national affiliations are constructed and altered over time, I argue that generational approaches to constructed identities offer an array of insights, as they analyze political situations more accurately.

In conclusion, the construction of national identities did not start simultaneously in Europe. If we want to find out how Millennials perceive their national and political identity, we need to start asking in what part of Europe this individual was born and how it was politically socialized, as well as analyzing their respective national political influences.

2.5. Summing up the Current State of Art

There is a continued abundance of literature which discusses national and political identities. However, due to the fact that the body of literature describes a highly dynamic phenomenon,

research needs to be updated continuously. In other words, literature published five years ago hardly took into account the ongoing refugee crisis, which dramatically affected European politics or the Brexit referendum which dramatically affected the European Union. Further, this article makes the question of perceptions of national and political belonging of Millennials its primary focus. In most studies, as is argued before, findings for younger generations are mere side products of holistic theories and thus fail to analyze the problem hand thoroughly.

Moreover, this article offers a generational approach to analyzing national and political identity. I argue that due to the top-down process of forging a European identity, various generations within Europe or various nation states are affected differently by the political process. Understanding how today's young adults are politically oriented is not only interesting to scholars, but to society as a whole as they will influence the political process dramatically in the decades to come.

Lastly, I do recognize the threat this logic poses to this article itself. If single political events such as Brexit have implications for the topic in question, the political situation might be drastically different soon again.

3. Methodology

This article relies on quantitative empirical methods. In this section, I will discuss the data set in use, give a proper definition of generational cohorts and. discuss operationalization of various hypotheses presented throughout the literature review. Lastly, I will lay down a clear structure on how to operationalize differences in national and political identities between Western and Eastern Europeans.

3.1. ESS Data

The European Social Survey (ESS) captures political and social attitudes of Europeans. It gives access to a wide array of attitudes from various topics, ranging from political participation to

media and internet use. Until the present day, there are eight versions of the ESS available for scholars worldwide. It has a rich tradition of being used in social sciences and is often called a main pillar of making visible societal attitudes and behavior (Bilsky et al. 2011, Davidov et al. 2008, Schwartz 1994). In addition, it shows striking similarities to the World Social Survey and thus makes comparison available to cohorts tested in a different sample (Morselli et al. 2015). The ESS is conducted every two years and features core sections which are repeatedly asked as well as rotating models which ask for different topics each round. For this analysis, I will rely on the 8th version of the ESS, as it includes a wide array of questions aiming at perceptions of national and political identities. The 8th wave features 23 European countries which have been organized in three categories by the author: (1) Western European countries (i.e. Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom), (2) Eastern European countries (i.e. Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, the Russian Federation and Slovenia) and (3) European countries with a lack of political integration (i.e. Iceland, Israel, Norway, the Russian Federation and Switzerland). Used item sets will be available in the annex of the final document, as well as tables from which results and specific data have been drawn from. I am convinced that the ESS is a solid set of data for this analysis, as it has an extraordinarily high number of recipients which could never be gathered on a cross-national basis as an individual scholar.

3.2. Definition of Generational Cohorts

There are various definitions of the term Millennials in the scholarly world. While Gil de Zuñiga and colleagues (2018) distinguished between four groups (i.e. Dutiful Citizens, Baby Bommers, Generation-X and Millennials), I will use a different approach since the topic at hand is different and calls for a slight variation. Age groups are hence coded according to milestones in the process of European integration. This article uses three cohorts, since European integration started in 1951: (1) Baby Boomers (born 1951 [i.e. creation of ECSC] – 1965 [i.e. creation of

EC], (2) Generation X (born 1966 – 1991 [i.e. end of Soviet Empire] and (3) Millennials (born after 1992).

<u>3.3. Operationalization of the Hypotheses</u>

Operationalization is crucial for statistical approaches to analyzing phenomena of the social sciences. I will therefore briefly explain how variables are defined into measurable factors to empirically explore the chosen hypotheses.

H1 deals with "feeling European". To measure European nationalism, I will use various variables from the secondary data set. Since "feeling emotionally attached to Europe" (i.e. item C10), indicates a strong personal bond to an imagined community (Anderson 2006) it serves as a fitting variable to explore the issue at hand. Although scholars warn about confusing nationalism and patriotism (Kosternman & Festbach 1989), I do believe that the items taken are fitting to analyze nationalism since they do not only ask about emotional attachment but also about further European integration (i.e. item B37) and transferring decision-taking power to Brussels at the cost of national jurisdictions as well as stronger fiscal federalism in the EU (i.e. item E37) which all indicate a desire of a more influential European nation.

H2 deals with trust in democratic institutions. Trust is a core element of social capital (Putnam 1995) and has implications for well-being of societies, political stability and even economic performance (Glaeser et al. 2000, Inglehart 1999, Inglehart 2003). However, scholars also point out that social trust and political trust show low interdependence (Newton 2001: 201). This article analyzes item sets of the ESS (i.e. B6-B12) which specifically ask for trust in democratic institutions, such as the legal system (B7), political parties (B10) or the European parliament (B11). I do regard this measurement as appropriate since the questions asked are clear and can hardly be misinterpreted. The items represent core indicators of democratic institutions and show high potential for analysis.

H3 checks for correlations between media and internet use and "feeling European". To measure the latter, I will rely on a similar construct that has been suggested to deal with H1. However,

while two indicators remain of the H1 construct (i.e. B37, C10), a new one was introduced (E41). In the light of the ongoing Brexit negotiations, it was considered that asking for desire of Europeans about remaining or leaving the European Union was more interesting and relates more to current debate on European nationalism. Concerning the internet use, I will explore various item sets from the ESS which ask for media use and internet usage (i.e. item A2, A3). Scholars are torn on the correlation of internet use and civic engagement, social capital and political participatory behaviors. A meta-analysis conducted by Boulianne (2009) that there is strong evidence against the Internet having negative effects on engagement. Simultaneously the meta-data shows that the Internet has no substantial impact on civic engagement at all. Experimental designs, however, showed strong correlations between internet use and civil engagement (Jennings & Zeitner 2003). Gil de Zúńiga and collegues (2012) showed that seeking information via social network sites correlates positively with social capital, engagement as well as political participation. I argue that the Internet as a virtual space without borders, with English being the predominant language, correlates positively with feeling European.

H4 suggests that Millennials show higher levels of apathy towards democracy than previous generations. To test this hypothesis, I will rely on items sets asking about to what extent democracy allows for ordinary people to "have a say in politics" (B2, B4), voting activity and behavior (B13), as well as how satisfied respondents are with democracy as a way of governance in the respective countries (B30).

3.4. Western and Eastern European cohorts

The ESS provides data from 23 European countries which have been divided into three cohorts. (1) Western European countries have been defined as countries which have joined European integration at an early stage (i.e. pre 2000), were not under Soviet rule and have a long-lasting

tradition with democratic governance. (2) Eastern European countries have been defined as countries which joined European integration with Eastern enlargement in 2004, have been under Soviet rule and show recent history of non-democratic governance. Lastly, countries which are not interwoven in a political framework provided by the European Union will be henceforth referred to as (3) European countries with lack of political integration. This thesis gives special attention to perceived differences between Eastern and Western European Millennials. It was thus decided further analyze the above described hypothesis in terms of differences between these two geographical cohorts (H1,1, H2.1, H4.1)

4. Results

This section features results obtained from the evaluation of the European Social Survey. While implications for science and society only may appear minor at first glance, there is substantive evidence for differences in terms of national and political identity between generational cohorts in contemporary Europe.

H1 has been operationalized via three variables in the ESS data set (i.e. C10, B37, E37). It was thus decided to split H1 in three components to analyze the question at hand, if European Millennials indeed display higher degrees of European nationalism than their parent- or grandparent- generation does. All three variables are shown in the table down below. However, splitting them in three seems more suitable to a comprehensive analysis. As for emotional attachment to Europe, there is no hard evidence that Millennials are more prone to a European nation than members of Generation X or the Baby Boomer Generation. While 26.4% of the later display high emotional attachment, the former only amount to 23.4%. Although results are statistically significant, with an asymptotical significance of .000 after Pearson, it has to be admitted that due to the exceptionally high N of the data sets, results will mostly be significant. Variables are thus statistically independent from each other. Moreover, when taking a look at the Cramer-V value of 0.032, only a minor relationship between the two variables at hand can

be pointed out (Kuckartz et al. 2013, p.98ff). Taking into account the results of the analysis of the described variable (i.e. C10), there is no support for H1. Moving on to the second indicator used (i.e. variable B37), attitudes on further European integration were analyzed. There are again only minor differences when analyzing a desire for a more integrated Europe. While Millennials are more in favor than other cohorts (19.6% versus 17.3% Baby Boomers) and results again being statistically significant, the relation between being a member of a certain generation and being in favor of further European integration again is a minor one, according to the Cramer-V value of 0.073. While differences are perhaps more evident in the analysis of the prior indicator, again there is only little, if any, support for H1 in total. Lastly, the final indicator looks at attitudes on European fiscal federalism. The last component of H1 paints a similar picture. While 66.9% of Baby Boomers are either in favor or strongly in favor of a EU wide social benefit scheme, the rate drops to 65.9% among members of Generation X and then rises to 72.5% among Millennials. As for the other two components of H1, H1c results are statistically significant (Chi – Square value .000) and again only display a minor association between variables (Cramer-V value .043). In conclusion, H1 can be supported in parts.

	Strong Emotional Attachment to Europe	In favor of further European Integration	In favor of EU-wide social benefits scheme
Baby Boomers	26.4% (n=2.965)	17.3% (n=1.834)	66.9% (n=5.801)
Generation X	23.0% (n=4.110)	18.0% (n=3.026)	65.9% (n=8.717)
Millennials	23.4% (n=1.206)	19.6% (n=918)	72.5% (n=2.658)
Statistical Values	Chi-Square p-value = .000 Cramer – V value = .032	Chi-Square p-value = .000 Cramer – V value = .073	Chi-Square p-value = .000 Cramer – V value = .043

H1.1. predicted higher European nationalism among European Westerners in comparison to their Eastern counterparts. In fact, the opposite was found. While 24% of Western European Millennials display high emotional attachment (variable C10), Easterners display a higher bond to the imagined community of Europeans with 30.1%. Again, results are statistically significant (Chi – square value .000) and little association between the variables was found, although stronger than when comparing generational cohorts (Cramer-V value .184). Surprisingly, Eastern European Millennials are more in favor of further European integration with 22%, opposed to 21.3% among Westerners. Lastly, as for the support for a European Union – wide social benefit scheme, again Easterners show more sympathy than their Western counterpart. While the former is 75.6% either in or strongly in favor of shifting power from the nation-state to a supranational level, only 71.1% support this approach within the group of the latter. Again, results are shown comprehensively in the table below, including relevant statistical values such as Chi-Square results or the Cramer-V value.

	Strong Emotional Attachment to Europe	In favor of further European Integration	In favor of EU-wide social benefits scheme
Western European Millennials	24.0% (n=614)	21.3% (n=534)	71.1% (n=1.787)
Eastern European Millennials	30.1% (n=385)	22.0% (n=262)	75.6% n=(871)
Statistical Values	Chi-Square p-value = .000 Cramer – V value = .0184	Chi-Square p-value = .000 Cramer – V value = .076	Chi-Square p-value = .000 Cramer – V value = .096

H2 predicted that Millennials show lower trust in democratic institutions than did previous generations and was operationalized via analysis of seven variables (i.e. B6 to B12). The items asked about trust in the respective country parliaments (i.e. B6), the respective legal system (i.e. B7), the police (i.e. B8), politicians (i.e. B9), political parties (i.e. B10), the European Parliament (B11) and the United Nations as an International Organization (i.e. B12). Contrary to a common stance in political science that Millennials show apathy towards democratic institutions (Foa & Mounk 2016, Russel 2002, Voeten 2016), my analysis shows that Millennials show consistently higher sympathy for democratic institutions than did older generations. However, results are only minor and of differences small. Nonetheless, results indicate that European Millennials show significantly more trust in supranational institutions, such as the European Parliament or the United Nations. Cramer-V values were higher (0.1 for the former) and we thus witness higher degrees of association between the generational cohort as one variable and supranational institutions being the other. Further, mean values in trust for European Parliament (i.e. B11) and United Nations (i.e. B12) stood out in terms of suspiciously high differing mean values. While Baby Boomers show a mean value of 4.83 when rating trust in the European Parliament on a scale from 0-10 (10 being maximum trust), Generation X members answered with an average mean of 5.04 and Millennials with 5.67, a considerable difference. Lastly, when analyzing mean values of trust in the United Nations, Millennials display a mean value of 5.67, compared to 4.33 among members of Generation X and a mere 4.00 among Baby Boomers. ANOVA results were significant for item B11 and B13.

In conclusion, according to the data provided for by the European Social Survey, H2 is not supported. In fact, the reverse seems true and Millennials believe more in democratic institutions than previous generations. Results are again shown in the table below.

	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Millennials	Statistical Values
High Trust Country Parliament (B6)	12.4% (n=1.397)	11.8% (n=2.102)	15.1% (n=756)	Chi-Square p-value = .000 Cramer – V value = .047
High Trust Legal System (B7)	23.6% (n=2.651)	24.1% (n=4.291)	26.3% (n=1.333)	Chi-Square p-value = .000 Cramer – V value = .038
High Trust in Police (B8)	36.9% (n=4.170)	36.7% (n=6.600)	39.4% (n=2.046)	Chi-Square p-value = .010 Cramer – V value = .014
High Trust in Politicians (B9)	4.3% (n=484)	4.3% (n=773)	6.6% (n=337)	Chi-Square p-value = .010 Cramer – V value = .050
High Trust in Political Parties (B10)	3.9% (n=440)	4.1% (n=727)	6.2% (n=314)	Chi-Square p-value = .000 Cramer – V value = .057
High Trust in European Parliament (B11)	8.0% (n=846)	9.0% (n=1521)	17.5% (n=831)	Chi-Square p-value = .000 Cramer – V value = .1
High Trust in United Nations (B12)	16.4% (n=1.727)	17.7% (n=3.007)	25.6% (n=1.232)	Chi-Square p-value = .000 Cramer – V value = .068

H2.1 predicted higher trust for democratic institutions among Western European Millennials than among Eastern European Millennials. Indeed, when comparing mean values between two cohorts in question, Westerners consistently display higher levels of trust. Again, item sets ask for trust on a scale from zero to ten, ten being complete trust in a democratic institution. A Levene – test (result .000) was further performed, to check for variance homogeneity (Kuckartz et al. 2013: S. 198). The result was significant, I can thus not guarantee variance homogeneity.

Mean values of the two cohorts analyzed in H2.1 are shown in the table below. Statistical errors were included for comprehensive understanding. In conclusion, H2.1 can be supported, although results are not drastic, there is a consistent pattern to support the hypothesis. ANOVA tests were performed to check for statistical significance. As indicated in the table below, all findings were statistically significant. Posthoc tests (Kuckartz et al.2013, p194) were performed to further analyze findings.

	Western Millennials	Eastern Millennials	Standard Errors / ANOVA
High Trust Country Parliament (B6)	5.16 (n=2.590)	4.36 (n=1.230)	West - .045 East - .067 ANOVA .000
High Trust Legal System (B7)	5.86 (n=2.621)	5.38 (n=1.250)	West - .046 East - .068 ANOVA .000
High Trust in Police (B8)	6.71 (n=2.685)	6.26 (n=1.281)	West - .044 East - .067 ANOVA .001
High Trust in Politicians (B9)	4.06 (n=2.646)	3.56 (n=1.245)	West - .045 East - .066 ANOVA .000
High Trust in Political Parties (B10)	4.25 (2.633)	3.53 (n=1.227)	West - .044 East - .064 ANOVA .000
High Trust in European Parliament (B11)	5.43 (n=2.528)	5.17 (n=1.214)	West - .044 East - .073 ANOVA .000
High Trust in United Nations (B12)	5.89 (n=2.524)	5.64 (n=1.170)	West - .045 East - .074

			ANOVA .000

H3 predicted a positive correlation between frequent internet use and a stronger European identity. All three indicators used in the operationalization (i.e. B37, C10, E41) support the hypothesis at hand. Individuals that are more digitally more connected and use Internet on an everyday basis show highest identification with the imagined community (term by Anderson) of Europeans. Chi square tests were performed to check for statistical significant, with all results showing a Chi square value of .000, as is shown in the table below, indicating statistical significance of the findings. Further, Cramer-V values were looked at further analyze correlations between the variables. While Cramver –V values for variable C10 and B37 showed a slight association between internet use and the items described (.12 for the former and .1 for the latter), no association was found for item E41. However, mere correlation between variables is an important condition for causation, but not equal to it. Findings are thus indicating that Internet Use is positively correlated to Europeanism, but findings only represent a small part of the mosaic which forms national identity. Results for H3 and statistical values in discussion are shown in the table below.

	High Emotional Attachment to Europe (C10)	In Favor of Further European Integration (B37)	In favor of remaining in the EU (E41)
No Internet Use	21.7% (n=1.699)	15.9% (n=1.095)	75.7% (n=3.711)
Occasional Internet Use	20.9% (n=541)	14.3% (n=340)	74.1% (n=1.228)
Internet Use a Few Times a week	23.2% (n=688)	15.0% (n=417)	76.3% (n=1.525)
Internet Use Most Days	24.1% (n=1.011)	14.2% (n=570)	78.0% (n=2.169)

Internet Use Every Day	26.5% (n=6.910)	19.4% (n=4.802)	80.5% (n=13.312)
Chi-square & Cramer – V values	.000 Chi - square .120 Cramer - V	.000 Chi – square .10 Cramer - V	.000 Chi – square .056 Cramer - V

Finally, H4 asked the questions if Millennials indeed show higher levels of apathy towards democracy than previous generations. Again, and this seems to be a consistent pattern of this analysis, rather the opposite was found. In fact, Millennials are more prone to democracy than previous generations. This was proven by comparing mean values of four variables, indicating apathy towards democracy (B2, B4, B30). While B2 and B4 provide a scale from one to five (five being positive) B30 again offers a scale from zero to ten (ten being positive). However, Millennials considerably display lower election participation than older generations. This undermines the validity of H4. While three indicators prove that Millennials do not display higher rates of democratic apathy, the last indictor in question (i.e. B13) paints a grimmer picture.

Results for three indicators (i.e. B2, B4, B30) show that European Millennials are most democratic since they consistently display highest mean values when comparing variables. The last indicator, however, shows the opposite, as is discussed below. Results are shown in the table below.

	Baby Boomers	**Generation X**	**Millennials**	**Standard Errors / ANOVA**
People can have a say in politics B2	2.12 (n=11.203)	2.19 (n=17.765)	2.30 (n=5.060)	Baby Boomers - .009 Generation X - .007 Millennials - .013 ANOVA .000
People can influence politics B4	2.19 (n=11.223)	2.24 (n=17.706)	2.36 (n=5.025)	Baby Boomers - .009 Generation X - .007

				Millennials - .014 ANOVA .000
Satisfaction with Democracy as a Political System B30	5.11 (n=11.055)	5.22 (n=17.603)	5.70 (n= 5.001)	Baby Boomers - .024 Generation X - .019 Millennials - .033 ANOVA .000

The last indicator of H4 looked at voting behavior among different generational cohorts. While the hypothesis is supported via the first three indicators, the last clearly contradicts the findings. As is shown in the table below, voting turnout is severely reduced between the cohorts. While Baby Boomers participated to a degree of 82.0% in the last election, Millennials only showed participation of 56.5%. Given the drastic numbers, statistical tests were foregone. In conclusion, H4 can be supported in parts.

	Baby Boomers	**Generation X**	**Millennials**
Voted in last election	82.0% (n=8.986)	72.9% (n=12.314)	56.5% (n=1. 674)

H4.1. proposed that Eastern European Millennials display higher rates of democratic apathy than their Western parallel. The same variables as in H4 were used. When comparing mean values between the two cohorts, Westerners consistently display higher satisfaction with democracy as a political system. In addition, as in the hypothesis prior, ANOVA tests were performed to check for statistical significance. Again, as indicated in the table below, results were statistically significant. A Levene-Test was performed to check for homogeneous

variances. After, posthoc tests were performed. H4.1 is thus supported by available data. Results are shown in the following table below.

	Western Millennials	**Eastern Millennials**	**Standard Errors / ANOVA**
People can have a say in politics B2	2.40 (n=2.620)	2.12 (n=1.211)	Western Millennials - .018 Eastern Millennials - .026 ANOVA .000
People can influence politics B4	2.38 (n=2.639)	2.00 (n=1.222)	Western Millennials – 0.18 Eastern Millennials - .025 ANOVA .000
Satisfaction with Democracy as a Political System B30	5.68 (n= 2.598)	5.44 (n=1.236)	Western Millennials - .045 Eastern Millennials - .062 ANOVA .000

The discrepancy in voting turnout is shown in the table below. As discussed prior, Westerners showed a much higher voting turnout than their Eastern parallel. Although both results are very low, there clearly is a significant gap between the two geographical cohorts. As numbers are very clear in this hypothesis, statistical tests for significance of findings were foregone. In conclusion, data clearly supports hypothesis 4.1.

	Western Millennials	**Eastern Millennials**
Voted in last election B13	63.8% (n=902)	43.3% (n=308)

5. Discussion

This analysis of the national and political identity of European Millennials shows that a generational approach to the understanding of identities does yield interesting results. Statistically significant results were obtained in nearly all hypotheses. However, some of them are contradicting the current state of the art, while others are supporting current theories. Beginning with the theory, that Millennials are more prone to a European sense of nationalism than previous generations, work done by contemporary scholars (Boehnke & Fuss 2008, Citrin & Slides 2004, Kumar 2008, Reinelt 2001), can be supported in parts. While results are not drastic, but statistically significant, I can in parts support the theory that Millennials are the most European generation in our society. While Baby Boomers show higher emotional attachment to Europe than Millennials, they show lower support for fiscal federalism or further European integration. Interestingly, nationalism seems to be drastically declining. From the data available, one can draw the conclusion that collective nationalism does seem to be rising while single-nation nationalism is on the decline. This theory is further supported by the fact that Baby Boomers are very attached to their respective home nations (69.5%). Two generations after, only 46.8% of European Millennials are very emotionally attached to their respective nations. Hence, the idea of nationalism and the belonging to an imagined community sure is fading away from collective identities of European societies. However, one needs still deeper going research and perhaps data sets which are more suitable to analyze this issue. While the ESS does provide solid data, variables are limited and the questionnaire as a whole was not purely designed to figure out how nationalism can be understood in the year of 2018. Scholars need to find reasons to why this decline is ongoing and how these changes were brought about. In this regard, I thoroughly believe that experimental designs as in research conducted by Bruter (2003) is quite efficient in giving deeper insights. For the time being, the approach that Millennials show higher sympathy for European integration and European fiscal federalism can be attributed to the fact that they grew up alongside European symbols and in national context with weaker borders than during the coming of age of older generations.

I further hypothesized that Millennials show lower trust in democratic institutions, due to the fact that the last two decades were not the most stable years in terms of political developments. 9/11 was arguably one of the most game changing incidents in international relations and brought about the destabilization of the Middle East, the economic crisis of 2008 ravaged the labor market and left millions of European Millennials unemployed and the rise of populism on a major scale shattered traditional European politics. However, and this is quite surprising as it contradicts much of contemporary literature (Checkel & Katzenstein 2009, Foa & Mounk 2016, Montgomery 2009, Rensmann 2017, Russel et al. 2002, Voeten 2016), my analysis puts the findings previously made into question. In fact, my data shows the opposite. Over the analysis of six item sets of the European Social Survey (ESS) a consistent pattern was found which contradicts the current stance on the understanding of trust in democratic institutions among Millennials. However, many of the cited authors above analyzed American youth(s) and did not focus the same geographical group. However, Western societies are quite alike and I therefore argue that further research on this area needs to be conducted in the future to paint a better picture. If the quite unstable last two decades resulted in higher trust for democratic institutions, other factors must have influenced the development as well. Contemporary scholars thus need to start asking questions differently and find other factors playing into the equation.

H3 looked at correlations between internet use and Europeanism. Unfortunately, this analysis only gives a superficial analysis of the issue at hand. However, there a striking correlation between heavy internet use and "feeling European" was discovered. I argued throughout this article that the cyberspace as a virtual space without borders and the predominant language of English should contribute positively to European nationalism. This might be one aspect of the equation, but by no means explains the social construct. In the age of globalization, I argue that the internet accelerates the convergence of societies and enhances its effect. However, scholars need to shed more light on the connection between internet use and national as well as political

identity. This hypothesis is perhaps the major weak point of this analysis, as the European Social Survey only provides superficial answers as to when and how often internet is used by the respondents. In order to fully understand the association that is asked for, one would need more detailed questions to broaden the findings.

Finally, there has been much discussion in contemporary literature about "the democratic disconnect" (term by Foa & Mounk 2016) of Millennials. This article, in the form of H4, also asked the question if European Millennials are indeed showing less interest in preserving democracy than other generations. Results are twofold. While, surprisingly, the European youth does care more for democratic structures and their ability to influence the political system, voting behavior is severely lacking behind other generations. There has been much talk on the erosion of politics in contemporary Europe. Not only is populism gaining dramatically in power, but also counter-approaches to classic post-war democracy is gaining momentum. When Austria formed one the first right-wing dominated coalitions in the European Union in the beginning of the millennium, there was an uproar in European politics. Today, the model of illiberal democracy proposed by autocratic rulers as Prime Minister of Hungary, Viktor Orbán, or Mateusz Morawiecki, a leading policy maker from Poland, seems to be quite popular, given the recent success of Lega Nord in Italy or the "Alternative für Deutschland (AFD)" in Germany. It was thus intuitive to think that European Millennials are disregarding democracy in comparison to other generational cohorts, as they increasingly vote for populist movements, as was shown in the Austrian national election of 2017 (SORA Institute 2017 analysis). However, this hypothesis was proven wrong in parts. A certain apathy towards democracy can, however, clearly be pointed out when looking at voting turnout. However, this is not only of European concern as voter turnout in the United States of America shows a similar pattern (Esser & De Vreese 2007).

A constant of this analysis was to show differences between Western and Eastern Europeans. Contemporary scholarly work often hints at the fact that Easterners and Westerners are quite

different in terms of their national and political identity (Checkel & Katzenstein 2009, Kumar 2008, Voeten 2016). An addition, the latest survey by the Pew Research Center also contributed to the discussion of differences between Eastern and Western Europeans. As findings have been released at the end of October 2018, findings align with findings of this thesis. I therefore highly value the hypothesis that the gap between East and West is nowhere near closing (Pew Research Center). This analysis gave special attention to seeking out differences between Eastern and Western cohorts in three of the four hypotheses (H.1, H2.1., H4.1). Across the board, striking differences between the two geographical cohorts were found. This gives legitimacy to the claim that East and West in Europe are indeed different, and traces of this can be found among Millennials as well. Findings were consistent and showed patterns, however, some were unexpected. Beginning with European Nationalism, results indicate that Easterners feel more European than Westerners. This may be due to the fact that the East still needs to separate itself from the Soviet doctrine and is gladly considering itself European as a counter to the former centralized Russian approach to political leadership. However, hypotheses were supported by data in both trust for democratic institutions as well as satisfaction with democracy as a political system. In these categories, results indicate that Western Millennials are happier with the predominant political system in Europe. The question remains, what one makes of the findings. I give special attention to the approach that the Eastern European youth still needs time to adapt to democracy as a political system. Trust is earned and this may take longer than two decades. However, the observed gap between the two cohorts was not dramatic and numbers might change in the near future. A special concern, as was discussed prior, is voting turnout among Eastern European Millennials. A mere 43.3% of young Easterners voted in the last election, which is not satisfactory by any means. If we then look at mean values of trust in democratic institutions such as a respective parliament, political parties or politicians, one can tell that the East still struggles with democracy as a political system. As in recent months, mostly with the rise of the alt-right movement in Italy, illiberal tendencies are gaining huge momentum, voting

turnout needs as well as trust in democratic institutions, especially in the East of Europe, need to be improved, should democracy be maintained as the predominant political approach in contemporary Europe.

6. Conclusion.

In 2018, hardly anyone would argue that political, societal or economic developments and transformations within the framework of the European Union have been beneficial for maintaining stability. In 2008, economic recession ravaged the European labor market, the following debt crisis destroyed trust on the financial market and lastly in 2015, the European Union was faced, perhaps for the first time since its existence, with the social question of widespread continuous streams of migration.

However, and this is the key message of this article, the youngest generation which grew up alongside these developments does not show severe signs of democratic apathy or distrust in the democratic institutions which are crucially influencing political policies, as is claimed in contemporary literature (Checkel & Katzenstein 2009, Foa & Mounk 2016, Montgomery 2009, Rensmann 2017, Russel et al. 2002, Voeten 2016). In fact, European Millennials are best equipped to preserve democracy in Europe. IF European policy makers are looking to enhance attachment to Europe as an imagined community, they, despite the troubling last decade described above, find highest trust for their plans among European Millennials. However, and this gives great concern, there can be severe apathy towards elections observed in voting turnout, when analyzed by a comparative approach of different generational cohorts. It has to be pointed out that European policy makers were quite successful in maintaining trust and widespread believe in the benefits of democracy in times of distress and political turmoil. Over the upcoming years, further research needs to be conducted in order to dissect the understanding of social construction of nationalism. More importantly, however, trust in the democratic system as a whole must be maintained to hinder alternatives to democracy from spreading.

A second major interest of this article was to analyze existing differences between Western and Eastern European Millennials. Results obtained throughout the article indicate that there are still drastic differences in terms of political and national identity. While, surprisingly, Easterners display higher rates of the perception of belonging to a European community, they are displaying significantly lower trust in democratic institutions as well as democracy. Lastly, there voting behavior is most concerning, and this seems to be a consistent pattern of young adults. However, this analysis perhaps does not go far enough in answering the question why this might be the case. One could point out, that perhaps democracy still is a fairly new concept to the East while the West has been subject to European integration many decades prior. At this point, we can however only speculate about the reasons for the gap perceived. For this reason, it is pointed out that further research will be needed to shed further light on the background mechanisms of national and political identity of European Millennials.

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7.2. Multimedia sources

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