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Liubov Fadeeva, Perm State National Research University, Russia. E-mail:  
lafadeeva2007@yandex.ru

### **Universities in constructing of a European identity: an actors or just a tools?**

It is common for researchers to estimate University as trustee of the European humanistic tradition. Political and social scientists study the role of Universities in developing of a democratic European culture (Alain Renaut), they investigate University dynamics and European integration (Peter A.Maassen, J.P.Olsen).

Regarding European identity there is wide-spread conviction that it is presumably an elite project. But we should take into account that constructing of identity is complicated process with participation of various actors, not only political elite.

Recently organized electronic debates on Europe and European identity are targeted to interaction of them (Debates on European identity (2013-2014) /

Council of Europe// [http://www.coe.int/t/policy-planning/debates/identity\\_debates/default\\_en.asp?toPrint=yes&](http://www.coe.int/t/policy-planning/debates/identity_debates/default_en.asp?toPrint=yes&);

Debating Europe (2013 – 2014) //: <http://www.debatingeurope.eu/>).

Special part of “Debating Europe” is targeted to the students and is available in Facebook and Twitter.

There are several dimensions of the problem how universities are involved in this process. First of all, there is institutional framework of Bologna system. Bologna process stimulates the discussion on the European higher education space and necessity of reforms (Adrian Curaj, Lazar Vlasceanu, Peter Scott, Lesley Wilson).

“The best thing which has happened to European universities in the past decades is the Bologna agreement” (Jo Ritzen). Ritzen keeps in mind, first of all, abilities for competitiveness, but also the significance of common educational space for European identity formation.

Universities are involved into Bologna process and participate in dissemination of a European integration ideas and politics (policy) through Jean Monnet chairs activity, educational programmes, European studies centres etc. Probably, one of the most important for European identity formation thing is academic mobility process. "The university exchange programme Erasmus is barely mentioned in the business sections of newspapers, yet Erasmus has created the first generation of young Europeans. I call it a sexual revolution: a young Catalan man meets a Flemish girl – they fall in love, they get married and they become European, as do their children. The Erasmus idea should be compulsory – not just for students, but also for taxi drivers, plumbers and other workers. By this, I mean they need to spend time in other countries within the European Union; they should integrate." (Umberto Eco). The citation of Umberto Eco is widely replicated and used by students' activists as argument against reducing of Erasmus programme financing. Strategic plans of universities include special point on academic mobility development and cooperation in order "to develop our capacity to generate and share knowledge in the UK, Europe, and globally" (Oxford university), "cooperates with the other university institutions of the European Union in the creation of a community forum for research and higher learning" (university of Florence). University of Coimbra (Portugal) established in 2002 Mission Group for the European Space of Higher Education. It declared the purpose "to inform all the members of the University about the developments that, in the follow-up of the Bologna Declaration, will contribute to the creation of the European Space of Higher Education; to stimulate and support inside the University the reflection, innovation and reforms that will contribute significantly to this shared project".

The Jean Monnet programme which launched in 1989 has helped to set up 879 Chairs and supported 3500 projects. Projects on European identity were financed for 45 millions of Euro. Significant part of the projects is devoted to the stimulation of civil identity and citizens' activity in EU, for example, the project of Free University of Berlin "European Union and its Citizens" (2009-2014). Common set of values is estimated by researchers as necessary condition and

prerequisite of European identity and influence on the European project perspectives. The Programme “Reflective society: cultural heritage and European identity” was initiated by European Council with expected impact: Research will support the EU cultural policies linked to fostering the emergence, transmission and use of cultural heritage at local regional, national and, in particular, European level.

«Monnet's apocryphal sentence – that he should really have started with culture – is ritually invoked by those who see the Union's prime deficit as a lack of meaning and an ability to inspire loyalty, or even just "enthusiasm". Intellectuals, so the argument goes, should catch up with a project that was implemented without them – but which now desperately needs them to articulate reasons for its further progress (and, ideally, a master narrative that justifies its past, its present and its future all at once)» (Jan-Werner Muller). Although Muller's article is entitled as “Failure of European intellectuals”, he recommends a lot what European intellectuals can and should do for the popularization and promoting of European project.

European University Association declares: “The strength of Europe and its universities lies in the interplay of diverse cultural and multiple linguistic traditions and heritage. ...Europe's universities, as mainly public institutions serving the common good, therefore assert a grand aim: to support, for the benefit of all, the continued development of the culture, society, technology and economy of Europe” (A Vision and Strategy for Europe's universities and the European University Association).

The public role of universities in “A Vision...”) placed first, before academic and educational. It is understandable because universities as institutions are written in the context of multi-piece: European, regional, local. University as a complex social institution have multiple interactions with different communities on the various levels of social and political processes, so European identity problem has not only political, but also regional, ethnic, territorial and many others dimensions.

University is involved in the constructing multiply identity matrix (European, national, regional, local) with conviction that there is non-zero-sum of a game.

The complicated identity problem is the problem of university identity today. Ronald Burnett since 1997 raises the question on imagining (or believing) of university: “Can we any longer, should we any longer, believe in the university? To believe in the university in part implies an attachment to at least an idea of the University, if not the idea of the University. In other words, belief in the university implies – at a deep level – a sense that the concept of the university retains some substance”. Set of his questions are following: “to what extent can the University be associated with the largest possible ideas – of truth, of knowledge, of dialogue, of human being and of societal wellbeing? To what extent is there still space for the University to articulate creative but realisable concepts that are critical of the dominant concepts of the age? Is any kind of universality still available to the University?”.

Regarding the role of universities in European identity’ constructing it is possible to say that Universities not just follow the decision-makers of the EU institutions but create their own version of a European identity as a prerequisite and cornerstone of a European integration. University experts try to search efficient ways to combine a European and national identities models (kind of non-zero-sum of a game). There is some equilibrium between the mission of Universities as institutions and the mission of University professors as independent thinkers (and experts).

Jurgen Habermas as the strong supporter of European project expresses the conviction that European identity formation should go hand in hand with European public creating. He sees a radically altered European Union as a model of supranational association of citizens and states. European public means, in his understanding, communication of civic communities on significant issues. “The prime example of this kind of work – many readers will not be surprised here – are the interventions of Jürgen Habermas, who is not just Europe's most important

intellectual, but also the most important intellectual sincerely trying to grapple with the meaning and the potential futures of the EU...

the fact remains that here is an intellectual who sincerely tries to learn from experts, to explain what he, rightly or wrongly, takes to be the achievements, shortcomings as well as normative potential of the Union, and thus to advance a serious political conversation. Put differently: one can reject the content of what Habermas proposes, and still find the model he furnishes for intellectual engagement with Europe attractive” (Jan-Werner Muller).

European intellectuals organize various actions like collective appeals against Iraq war (May 2003), for political unity of EU (January 2013), for support of Maidan in Kiev (January 2014). Especially important thing that they can be different in esthetic, philosophic or other points of view nevertheless they unite their efforts promoting humanistic traditions of Europe.

In some aspects they are severe critics of EU policy, estimating crisis of EU as a result of neoliberal model (global capitalism) (Zizek, Badiou, Negri, Vattimo), or as crisis of German “ordoliberalism” and Eurocrats (Habermas). But Euro-optimism vs. Euro-scepticism gives them hope to reassess the European project, which is “not merely an institutional fantasy” (Habermas).

Intellectuals make both collective and individual attempts to find new perspectives for European project. Italian left intellectual Franco Berardi proposes a new look on the problem: “Certainly we must give up the hyper-consumption imposed on us by large corporations, but not the tradition of humanism, enlightenment, and socialism—not freedom, rights, and welfare... We know very little about growing old, and we know nothing about the emotions of the elderly and their ability of social organization, solidarity, and political force. We don’t know because we have not experienced it”. He makes paradoxical appeal “for exhaustion now needs to be understood and accepted as a new paradigm for social life. Its cultural and psychic articulation will open the door to a new conception of prosperity and happiness. The coming European insurrection will not be driven by energy, but by slowness, withdrawal, and exhaustion. It will be the autonomization

of the collective body and soul from exploitation by means of speed and competition”.

Public intellectuals, university professors influence the debates on a European identity as non-zero-sum of a game, they are able to create influential intellectual communities. The ideas and opinions of people like Jurgen Habermas, Umberto Eco, Slavoy Zizeck, Zigmunt Bauman and others are discussed in public space and universities audiences. There is European public in Habermas understanding as a community of people with civic identity and will to influence political agenda keeping Europe as “an active utopia” (Bauman).

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