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The European dimension of Education
The Role of the Community Action Programmes in Developing the
European Citizenship and a Common Identity

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Abstract

Building the European identity and strengthening the concept of European citizenship is a task that can be achieved through various ways. One of the most powerful tools is represented by the system of education. Since the inception of the Community action programmes in this field, pupils, students and teachers take part actively in a new form of socialisation at the European level.

Realised in the theoretical framework of the social constructivism, this paper shows that a feeling of common belonging to the European construction can be nurtured by building transnational and multinational networks, by initiating partnerships between various European academic institutions and by encouraging and facilitating students' and teachers' mobilities across the continent.

The repeated interaction between participants gradually leads to a process of mutual learning and consequently to a sense of sharing the same European values. This development is unique in respect to the process of socialization that took place twenty or thirty years ago. Although no immediate, visible results can be expected until the educational programmes run for a substantial period of time, an important change of perception (towards feeling more Europeans) has already been noticed in the case of the participants within the educational Socrates framework programme.

Key words: education, Community action programmes, European identity, European citizenship, European dimension

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1. Introduction

1.1 Methodology and delimitations

Analysing the European identity formation and the way in which the European citizenship is strengthened by developing the educational Community action programmes is far from being an easy task. This is mainly due to the fact that these programmes have been relatively recently implemented and a large number of projects are still on-going. It is also reasonable to make a clear difference between the results in the short run and those in the long term, especially because:

“If development of the European dimension is viewed in the short term, it is clear that mobility projects in particular have resulted both in greater interest in international affairs and in greater cooperation within the participating organisations themselves. Development may also be viewed as a long-term process whereby citizens gradually come to see themselves as a part of the European family. From this point of view, no perceivable effect can be expected until the programme has been running for a considerably longer period”. (National report on the implementation of the Socrates programme in Sweden, 2000-2002, 2003: 17-18)

This is the reason for which the aim of the paper is rather to assess the projects that have already been realised and, in the same time, to evaluate their impact and results. It is beyond its scope to enter the unending debate over clarifying the nature of the European identity and the European citizenship. Still, as the two notions constitute defining elements of the thesis (in the context of the European cooperation in the field of education), a review of the main definitions and interpretations has been considered necessary and useful.

Due to the limited amount of time and inadequate resources, it would not have been possible to realize field interviews among the participants within different actions of the Community programmes. This is why I have chosen to mainly use secondary data, in the form of articles relevant to the topic, the results of evaluations and surveys realized by various educational experts, by the European Commission and by the national Socrates agencies. Among these documents, the national reports on implementing the Socrates programme proved to be particularly valuable resources. That is because they cover the entire pool of participating countries, offering relevant information on the projects that have been realised.

The purpose of this paper is to critically analyse the results achieved by implementing the educational programmes, assessing the impact on European identity and citizenship formation. Nevertheless, in order to avoid a biased point of view (evaluating these results through the European Commission’s “eyes”

only), both the official reports and academic articles have been used. With regard to the latter, it has been argued that:

“a growing literature is addressing these questions, but much of it is highly specialised. Most of it can be found in the scholarly journals or professional publications of various kinds. Ronald Sultana estimates that in the decade up to 1994 something like one hundred papers on the theme of education and the European Union had appeared in refereed journals in English, French and Italian together. He also claims that much of it has been marked by an uncritical acceptance of the goals and processes of European unification, and an approbation of the presumed implications of these for educational practice” (Sultana 1995: 116, quoted in Field 1998: V).

The situation has not visibly improved in the decade after 1994. The specialised journals dealing with the EU policies very seldom touch upon the issue of education (for example, between 1997 and 2005, not more than two articles published in the *Journal of Common Market Studies* refer to this topic), confirming the fact that it still is in the shadow of the “traditional” far-reaching policies: agriculture, justice and home affairs, enlargement etc. Moreover, the same negative pattern is maintained in the books dealing with the process of European integration and EU policies, where references to the educational policy are very rare (if any at all) – see for example Wiener and Diez (eds.): *European Integration Theory*; Richardson (ed.): *European Union. Power and policy-making*; or Nelson and Stubb (eds.): *The European Union. Reading and Practice of European Union* (to mention only a few of the relevant literature in the field, at present).

Most of the scientific articles used for the purpose of this paper are published in specialised journals (*European Education*, *European Journal of Education*, *European Journal for Education Law and Policy*, *Higher Education in Europe*), some of them dedicating certain issues particularly to the topic of education in connection with the European identity and the European citizenship.

An important delimitation has to be made in order to explain why the field of vocational training has not been included in this paper. The main reason is related to the limited dimension of the thesis. Integrating both the educational and the vocational training field would have resulted in a rather superficial analysis. Although, usually, in the specialised literature they are dealt together, I have decided to separate the “twins” (the “Socrates” and the “Leonardo da Vinci” framework programmes) also because the latter is more relevant to issues as professional training, immigration etc., than to European identity and citizenship.

1.2 Language and languages

With regard to the terminology, throughout the paper, I have chosen to use (for consistency reasons) the term European Union (adopted after the ratifying of Maastricht Treaty in 1993). This is despite of the fact that previously, from 1957

onwards, the European construction has been referred to as the European Economic Community and, starting from 1967 as the European Community (EC). John Field makes a useful remark for explaining the concept of “Community” action programmes. He notes that somehow confusingly, the Union’s own institutions still use the term “Community” for many purposes (Field 1998: VII), including here the programmes in the field of education.

In analysing the documents - evaluations, studies and, above all, national reports – I have mainly used those materials written in English and to a lesser extent the Italian ones. I have not used the reports written in French, Portuguese and Spanish because of language barriers and in order to avoid possible misunderstandings in translating the text.

1.3 Structure of the paper

In accordance to the purpose of the paper, it has been divided into four main chapters, as follows: Chapter 1, the present one, introduces the topic of the thesis, drawing the methodology and the necessary delimitations.

Chapter 2 sets out the theoretical framework, arguing why a certain theory was found to be better suited for answering the research question (it is provided an explanation for choosing social constructivism instead of other theories, functionalism and transactionalism in particular). In the same time, it reviews the history of educational cooperation at the Community level (pointing out the main developments, influential documents, and decisions of the European Court of Justice). There are described the main programmes in this field, with an emphasis on the way in which they came into being.

Chapter 3 represents the main body of the thesis and it is organised in two main sub-chapters: European identity and citizenship reflected in the EU official documents (the European Commission in particular) and as a rationale behind establishing educational programmes. The second part analyzes the impact of the programmes over the beneficiaries - pupils, students and teachers, taking part in various forms of academic cooperation.

Chapter 4, the final one, concludes upon the most important findings of the previous chapters. It is underlined the importance of integrating the Central and Eastern European countries into these programmes, so that creating a European identity, which is not limited to the Western Europe. In the same time, there are indicated some issues (financial, bureaucratic, administrative) that make even more difficult the way from designing the educational policy in Brussels to the actual implementation at regional and national levels.

2 Theoretical and historical background

2.1 Theoretical framework of analysis

Within the various theories of European integration, the authors have emphasized the process of economic integration, integration through law, or the role played by the EU institutions in achieving European integration. Although the European education is not perceived as a far-reaching policy field (as in the case of agriculture, justice and home affairs, enlargement etc.), in this paper I will try to analyse the ideas and principles promoted by the Community Action Programmes in the field of education, and the way in which they are related to creating a common European identity and strengthening the idea of European citizenship.

In order to achieve this aim there will be used both official documents of the European institutions (especially the European Commission), studies, surveys, final and intermediary evaluations on the impact of the educational Community action programmes (with regard to the European identity and citizenship) and articles published both by those directly involved in the process of implementing the programmes, but also by independent educational experts.

Concerning the theoretical framework in analysing the developments of the Community action programmes in the field of education, it would be tempting to employ the functionalist theories of European integration in explaining this evolution (see the second part of the paper, in which the evolution is described). It has to be taken into consideration the fact that the 1970's first efforts of cooperation in the field have not been realised "through vertical-style harmonisation, but rather through a model more suited to the horizontal, communications-based approach, identified with David Mitrany and Karl Deutsch, that stressed the development of trans-national linkages" (Blitz 2003: 26) In this context, it is useful to recall the words of Karl Deutsch, the proponent of the transactionalist / communications school. When referring to the creation of a sense of community he mentions travel, trade, telecommunications, that might lead to mutual relevance, but would not necessarily create mutual responsiveness. For him, the so-called mutual responsive transactions are grounded in a complex learning process from which shared symbols, identities habits of cooperation, memories, values and norms would emerge. (Richardson 2001: 52-53) Deutsh's vision of integration is not dependent of a particular institutional composition, but on a "historical process of social learning in which individuals, usually over

several generations, learn to become a people" (Deutsch 1966: 174, quoted in Richardson 2001: 53)

Studying the process of European integration in the field of education might prove to be a provocative attempt, as the development of cooperation and the interaction between the European institutions (in search for a more visible profile, the European Commission in particular) and the individual Member States (concerned with having and maintaining full powers over education and not sharing their prerogatives at the Community level) cannot be easily framed into a single defining theory. Below, there are provided a few reasons that could be argued against the functionalist theory as a conceptual framework in this concern:

“Contrary to functionalist explanations, education did not become part of the Community’s agenda and produce a change in the division of political power. While the very discussion of education is suggestive of policy-creep (or, as proponents of integration term it, ‘spill-over’), the introduction of education was limited to areas of direct relevance to the Single Market Plan. Functionalists might point to the creation of a specific directorate as evidence of ‘spill-over’ (and indeed the blurring of policy areas is a traditional indicator of functional integration), but the introduction of education into the Maastricht Treaty did not advance the drive towards supranational integration. Rather, one might argue the converse: that the lack of supranationalism in the educational sector raises some important questions about the limits of state power and the possibility of genuine joint-ownership”. (Blitz 2003: 27)

As shown above, at certain moments, the developments in the field of education might send to the misleading conclusion that it was the result of a functional process. However, the history of educational cooperation within the European Union represents only a background tool for understanding how the educational programmes came into being. The focus of this paper is placed on the way in which these action programmes contribute to creating the feeling of common belonging to the European values among their participants; leading in the end to a process of European identity creation and a better understanding of the concept of European citizenship. In this context, a series of important questions have to be answered:

To what extent the Community educational action programmes succeed in nurturing the feeling of a common European belonging? What are the necessary preconditions for the emergence of a common European identity? Which are the means used by the educational action programmes to creating this identity? Do the social interactions created by the participation within transnational projects generate a sense of European identity and citizenship?

One of the most influential theories that could be employed in answering to the above questions and explaining the European identity formation is represented by the social constructivism. Moreover, this theory is able offer a plausible account for the interaction and the process of mutual transformation (constructing and re-constructing) between the cultural variables (ethnic, religious, ideological affiliations) and the collective identities. "Accordingly, social identities contain... ideas describing and categorizing an individual's membership in a social group or community, including emotional, affective and evaluative components. Common Europeaness, for example, could constitute such a community". (Risse 2004: 167)

It is not difficult to agree with the social constructivist view on European identity formation as a social process, where, let's say, participants in a trans-national educational projects (schools from different European countries) or students of different European nationalities studying abroad, help each other in better understanding the European values, the differences and similarities among them, as belonging to the same political, economic, social and cultural construction, the European Union. In an article on the developments for the creation of a common European higher education area, Froment notes that:

"First, Europe needs future leaders—leaders trained in Europe—having lived and learned in more than one European country. It is difficult to deny that the people one meets during one's period of studies and particularly during the years that one has spent in a university are very often those who will be one's friends, those whom one will contact, call upon, or refer to in one's work. When thinking beyond one's national context, one's reflex must be to think first of other European countries, before looking at the rest of the world". (Froment 2003: 27)

Empirically, this idea is supported (among other similar statements) by the report of an ERASMUS English student, after a period of study abroad, at the University of Tuebingen, Germany: "My ERASMUS experience did not stop after a year. I made many good friends in Germany, whom I have frequently been back to see for visits and weddings. I now regard Tuebingen as one of my homes; a place where I feel a sense of belonging. Since my ERASMUS experience I possess a much greater sense of having a European identity". (Robson 1992: 96)

An important component of the social constructivist approach on European identity formation is also the concept of social learning, where given a repeated interaction between the participants, is likely that they influence each other in acquiring new preferences and interests. As argued by Checkel, both interests and identities are shaped through interaction, two of his hypotheses fitting into our framework of analysis:

- Social learning is more likely in groups where individuals share common professional backgrounds, and
- Social learning is more likely where a group meets repeatedly and where is high density of interaction among participants. (Checkel 2001: 53-54)

Accepting the process of social learning as being essential for the formation of European identity and strengthening the concept of European citizenship, it has to be noted that: "active citizenship demands the acquisition of cognitive and communicative competence through the social and educational process" (Fernandez 2005: 62) This constructivist view is used in developing a model of educational dimension of citizenship, and the related consequences on identity formation, as developed by Osler and Starkey. According to them:

"On the one hand we have the structural and political dimensions and on the other the affective dimensions, linked to culture and personal identities. At a minimal level citizens need to have knowledge and understanding of their responsibilities, their rights and their various (multiple) identities. This implies both human rights education and a learning environment where feelings and choices about identity are explored and developed". (Osler 1997: 19)

Components of citizenship education (Osler and Starkey 1999: 200)

<p>MINIMAL</p>	<p>Structural/ Political Rights</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - knowledge of rights - democracy - absence of discrimination - civil society <p><i>Implies: human rights education</i></p>	<p>Cultural/Personal Identities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - either/or (tension) - both/and (hybridity) <p><i>Implies: feelings and choices</i></p>
<p>MAXIMAL</p>	<p>Inclusion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - basic income - security: physical, social - active participation <p><i>Implies: the good society/school as a model</i></p>	<p>Competence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - political literacy - skills to effect change: e.g. language, mobilisation <p><i>Implies: actions skills, training</i></p>

According to the authors of this schematized view on education for European citizenship:

“The upper horizontal axis suggests that at a minimal level citizens need to have an understanding of the democratic basis of European society. It implies a learning environment where feelings and choices about identity are explored and developed. This is shown in the top right hand quadrant of the figure. The feeling of belonging to a community is essential for citizenship and a primary task of education is to enable learners to develop new identities to add to those that they bring to the learning process. One such identity can be that of a European citizen: a sense of belonging to Europe. Explorations of identities are thus at the heart of education for citizenship”. (Osler and Starkey 1999: 200)

In order to be effective, the education for developing the European identity and strengthen the European dimension of citizenship has to emphasize on different related concepts, such as: democracy, human rights, civil society, fundamental freedoms etc. “The practical implications of this can be achieved through projects within Leonardo, Socrates and Youth for Europe programmes by providing participants with experiences and partnerships which include access to the world of work and an opportunity to establish useful relationships with social partners such as industry and local authorities” (Osler 1997: 20).

2.2 Historical developments of the Community Action Programmes in the field of education

One of the most emblematic figures of the European construction, Jean Monnet, is credited to have said at the end of his life that: "if I were to set the process of uniting Europe in motion once more, I would start with education" (Volker 1998: 11, Savvides 2005: 6, Sprokkereef 1995: 340, quoted in Ertl 2003: 4).

Despite this idea, the educational policy at the European Union level is considered a relative newcomer. In fact, the word education is not even mentioned in the original treaties of the EU. In the Treaty of Rome (1957), for example, the only references are made in connection with recognition of the academic qualifications among the Member States at that time (article 57) and vocational training (articles 118 and 128). During that period of time (late 50's), the focus for a united Europe has been placed on economic and political integration, as means of avoiding further conflicts; after the continent had already witnessed the devastating experience of the World Wars in less than a half of century.

The first time when the educational policy has been officially mentioned in a Treaty was in 1992, when the provisions of article 126 explicitly mention the role of the Community in contributing to: "the development of quality education by encouraging cooperation between the Member States" and by this aiming at "developing the European dimension in education, particularly through dissemination of the languages of the Member State; encouraging mobility of students and teachers; promoting cooperation between educational establishments...; encouraging the development of youth exchanges and exchange of socio-educational instructors..." (Treaty on European Union - Maastricht Treaty 1992, article 126).

The Amsterdam Treaty of 1997 will amend the previous provisions by stating that the Community action in this field has to take into account the "cultural and linguistic diversity regarding content of teaching and the organisation of education system". (Amsterdam Treaty 1997 - article 149) This article underlines the sovereignty enjoyed by the Member States in regard to the educational policies, the principle of subsidiarity representing a guarantee that the European Commission will not interfere with the elaboration of national content and curricula.

Although it took more almost 35 years in order that the educational policy to gain official recognition in the Treaty on the European Union, the real cooperation of the Member States and initiatives of the European institutions have taken place much earlier. One of the possible chronologies of the development of EU Programmes in the field of education can be made according to each generation of programmes and their subsequent waves. (for a detailed description see Ertl 2003)

2.2.1 The first generation of programmes: 1974 – 1995

First wave: programmes for particular target groups as a reaction to youth unemployment

The first meeting of the Ministers of Education took place in 1971 and it was concluded by a resolution establishing cooperation in the following areas:

- cooperation between universities with particular reference to student exchanges;
 - education of second-generation immigrant children;
 - promotion of closer relations between educational systems in Europe.
- (Resolution of the Ministers of Education, meeting within the Council, of 6 June 1974 on cooperation in the field of education - Official Journal C 098 , 20/08/1974 P. 0002 - 0002)

In the Council Resolution of 9 February 1976 establishing an action programme in the field of education, the expression "European dimension" is used in relation to the promotion of closer relations between educational systems. This Action Programme for education aimed at facilitating the:

- transition of young people from study to the world of work;
 - promotion of language teaching outside the traditional school system;
 - cooperation in the field of higher education;
 - promotion of closer relations between educational systems in Europe.
- (Resolution of the Council and of the Ministers of Education, meeting within the Council, of 9 February 1976 comprising an action programme in the field of education Official Journal C 038 , 19/02/1976 P. 0001 - 0005)

Second wave: programmes for particular educational sectors as a result of the rulings of the European Court of Justice

An important role in this development was played by the European Court of Justice, which, ruling on the bases of article 128 in the Treaty of Rome has strengthened the role played by the European institutions, the European Commission in particular. There were at least two very influential cases: case 293/83 Gravier (1985), regarding the equal treatment and the students' registration fee (students coming from France were charged additional taxes in comparison to the Belgian students) and the Erasmus case. Thus, the European Commission and Council have been provided with the legal base of initiating a new series of programmes designed to cover almost all educational sectors:

- Comett (European Community Action Programme in Education and Training for Technology);
- ERASMUS (European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students);
- Petra (European Community Action Programme for the Vocational Training of Young People and their Preparation for Adult and Working Life);
- Eurotecnet (European Technology Network for Training);
- Lingua (Programme for the promotion of Foreign Language Knowledge in the European Community);
- Iris (European Community Network of Training Programmes for Women).

Third Wave: educational programmes in relation to the adoption of the European Single Act (1986)

Some of these programmes represent an extension of the previous existing programmes (Erasmus II, Comett II, Petra II) or they are newly established programmes (Force, Yes). All of them have to be put in connection with the adoption of the SEA and the creation of the Single European Market in 1993. During the first part of the 90's, the EU education and training programmes were the following:

Acronym	Full title	Educational sectors	Content areas	Types of actions
<i>Arion</i> (1991-1992)	Programme of study visits for educational specialists	- schools - vocational training - higher education	- general education - vocational education	- projects - exchanges
<i>Comett</i> (1990-1994)	Community programme on cooperation between universities and industry regarding training in the field of technology	- vocational training - higher education - further education	new technologies	- projects - institutional cooperation
<i>Erasmus</i> (1990-1994)	European community action scheme for the mobility of university students	higher education	general education	- exchanges - institutional cooperation
<i>Eurotecnet</i> (1990-1994)	European action programme to promote innovation in the field of vocational training resulting from technological change	- vocational training - higher education - further education	new technologies	- projects - networks
<i>Force</i> (1991-1994)	Action programme for the development of the continuing vocational training in the European Community	further education	vocational education	projects

<i>Lingua</i> (1990-1994)	Action programme to promote foreign language competence in the European Community	- schools - vocational training - higher education - further education	languages	- exchanges - institutional cooperation
<i>Petra</i> (1988-1992)	Action programme for the vocational training of young people and their preparation for adult and working life	vocational training	vocational training	- projects - exchanges
<i>Yes</i> (1988-1991)	Action programme for the promotion of youth exchange in EC	vocational training	vocational training	exchanges

Sources: Manning (1994: 139); Piehl and Sellin (1995: 214f.) and Moschonas (1998: 146) quoted in Ertl: (2003: 9)

An important role in the adoption of the above-mentioned programmes was played by the increasing focus on promoting the concepts of European identity and European dimension (both within and outside the Community area) as underlined in the final declaration of the Fontainebleau European Council: "The European Council considers it essential that the Community should respond to the expectations of the people of Europe by adopting measures to strengthen and promote its identity and its image both for its citizens and for the rest of the world. An ad hoc committee will be set up to prepare and coordinate this action. It will be composed of representatives of the Heads of State or Government of the Member States." (Conclusions of the Fontainebleau European Council of 25 and 26 June 1984)

In the same time, the most common tools employed for achieving these aims in the field of education have been the:

- exchange of participants (students, teachers, trainees, school and university administrators);
- promotion of joint pilot projects and transnational initiatives;
- promotion of the exchange of information about educational practices in other countries.

Regarding the impact of the first generation educational programmes, it has been argued that "their success was limited in many cases to the people and institutions directly involved in the projects funded by the programmes", but, in the same time: "the transfer of positive outcomes of the projects to the standard systems of education and training proved to be much more difficult" (Ertl 2003: 10)

2.2.2 The second generation of programmes: 1995-2006

The second generation of educational programmes has been launched in connection to the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty. There have been introduced the so-called framework programmes “Socrates” and “Leonardo da Vinci”, which were based on the articles 126 and 127, respectively, of the Treaty on the European Union. The Socrates programme operates in the field of education, as Leonardo da Vinci represents its equivalent for vocational training.

In September 1993, the European Commission has issued a Green Paper on the European Dimension of Education, aiming at contributing to the European citizenship, offering opportunities for improving the quality of education, and preparing young people for better social and professional adjustment, by using the means of mobility, exchanges of students and teachers, training of educators, development of the teaching of Union languages, promotion of educational innovation, exchange of information and experience, and promotion of remote teaching and multimedia products. (COM (93) 457: 29). "In this context, it is considered that education is the primary instrument with which people can be socialized to think and feel as Europeans, an instrument through which a European identity or feeling of European citizenship could be nurtured in them". (Ollikainen 2000: 7)

In 1999, at the end of the first phase of the Socrates programme, through the decision number 253/2000/EC (24 January 2000), it has been extended for another seven years period and its total budget has been increased to 1850 million EURO (from 930 million EURO allocated for its first phase). Socrates has eight different actions. Besides the joint actions with other European programmes (“Leonardo da Vinci” and “Youth”) and the accompanying measures, the following six actions are part of the framework programme:

Comenius - Scope: actions aimed at enhancing the quality of teaching, strengthen its European dimension and promote language learning and mobility. In the same time, it emphasizes learning in a multi-cultural framework, which is the cornerstone of European citizenship; **Educational sectors:** school education; **Types of action:** school partnerships; training of school education staff, networks;

Erasmus - Scope: actions aimed at enhancing the quality and reinforce the European dimension of higher education by encouraging transnational cooperation between universities, boosting European mobility and improving the transparency and full academic recognition of studies and qualifications throughout the Union.; **Educational sectors:** higher education; **Types of actions:** inter-university cooperation, exchanges of students and university teachers, thematic networks, language courses (EILC), European credit transfer system (ECTS).

Grundtvig - Scope: actions aimed at promoting the development of concrete products and valid results which will be of use in several participating countries (if possible, throughout Europe), promoting European co-operation between

bodies providing adult education, furthering the debate on lifelong learning and contributing to the dissemination of good practice; **Educational sectors:** adult education, formal and non-formal learning, lifelong learning; **Types of actions:** cooperation projects, education partnerships, mobility schemes for trainers, Grundtvig networks;

Lingua - Scope: actions aimed at encouraging and support linguistic diversity throughout the Union, contributing to an improvement in the quality of language teaching and learning, promoting access to lifelong language learning opportunities appropriate to each individual's needs and raising citizens' awareness of the Union's multilingual wealth, encourage people to learn languages throughout their lifetime, and improve access to foreign language learning resources across Europe; **Educational sectors:** school education, vocational training, higher education, further education; **Types of actions:** exchanges, institutional cooperation, development of language learning tools;

Minerva - Scope: actions aimed at promoting European co-operation in the field of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Open and Distance Learning (ODL) in education; **Educational sectors:** mainly open and distance learning; **Types of actions:** projects to better understand and support innovation, projects to design new teaching methods, ICT networks;

Arion: - Scope: actions aimed at observation and innovation of education systems and policies; **Educational sectors:** all areas of education; **Types of actions:** study visits for decision-makers in education; transnational projects developing resources. (The above description of the Socrates actions is adapted from Ertl 2003: 16 and the European Commission web-site "Programmes and actions")

As the Leonardo da Vinci framework programme entirely deals with the vocational training, its characteristics and actions will not be detailed here.

Among the latest initiatives launched by the European Commission and the Council, the EUROPASS and the eTwinning play a central role. EUROPASS (introduced on the basis of the Council Decision adopted on the 21st of December 1998, but officially launched on the 31st of January 2005) aims at facilitating employment and mobility across Europe through a better communication of people's skills, experience and abilities. On the other side, e-Twinning was designed to facilitate employment and mobility across Europe through a better communication of people's skills, experience and abilities, providing an opportunity to motivate young people to learn about each other, their school culture, and family while practising their ICT skills (What is e-Twinning? at www.etwinning.net) Regarding this last project, the French Minister for Europe, Claude Haignere is quoted to have said that e-Twinning is also about making children in the EU feel like European citizens from an early age: "School is a place where you can learn, but also a place where you can learn to build your own identity. You have to become aware of your European citizen status at a very early age" (Sara Cassidy, "Web pals across Europe", in: The Independent, 20 January 2005, available at <http://education.independent.co.uk/schools/story.jsp?story=602500>).

2.3 Concluding remarks

As far as the two generations of community action programmes in the field of education are concerned, besides the official rhetoric of a "European space of Education", featuring "common principles", a "European Model of Education", as a result of "deepening cooperation", and a "European House of Education" built by coordination of educational developments in an enlarged Union", it is often brought the critique according to which: "Probably the most striking weakness of the programmes...was the unsatisfactory impact in terms of innovation and improvement of the education and training structures in the EU member states" (Ertl 2003: 26-27)

In the same time, some other authors emphasize the active role played by the European Commission in designing and administrating these programmes: "At the start, the European Commission showed the way forward. The first step was the launching of the famous ERASMUS Programme in 1987. Despite the (relatively) small percentage of students who have been able to participate in it, this programme has had a tremendous impact on students and their families...The second step, as of 1995, was to involve the institutions in the processes of student mobility. Again, the Commission, through so-called institutional contracts, was the motor of this change. Thus, the institutions themselves acquired a stake in mobility. As it would no longer be a matter reserved to individual professors, a guarantee of long-term commitment was assured". (Froment 2003: 29) As it was underlined from the very beginning, even after the adoption of the Maastricht Treaty, education is still not perceived as a far-reaching policy at the European Union level:

"In many respects, what has been achieved in the past thirty years is recognition of the value of cooperative efforts rather than an evolved policy. Institutionally, education is now secure within the Commission and, indeed, the growing number of programmes under its guidance is evidence of an active interest in this area. However, education remains a minor concern for the European Union. While the Commission was not able to extend its formal powers over education as it has done in other sectors, it has used educational policy to enhance its profile and, through action programmes such as Erasmus, increase its popular appeal". (Blitz 2003: 29)

3 European identity and citizenship in educational context

3.1 Educational documents reflecting European identity and citizenship

Although it is beyond the aim of this paper to enter into the unending debate over defining the European identity and the European citizenship, it is necessary to make an investigation into the literature dealing with these two concepts, especially when they are related to an educational dimension. In the case of the first concept, for example, it has been argued that: "defining the concept of European identity is very challenging and both academics and politicians seldom agree. Howorth (200:85) describes it as a 'major headache' and Brewin (2000: 55) points out that it is "more problematical than the national identity' It is such a loose concept that not even the European Union has been able to provide a formal definition" (Savvides 2005: 2)

On the other side, in the case of the European citizenship, the concept was formally defined within the Maastricht Treaty - 1993 and the Amsterdam Treaty - 1997, with the underlining the important idea according to which it does not substitute, but rather supplement the citizenship of the national state: "Citizenship of the Union is hereby established. Every person holding the nationality of a Member State shall be a citizen of the European Union. Citizenship of the European Union shall complement and not replace national citizenship" (Amsterdam Treaty - 1997). In the Maastricht Treaty (Article 8) the concept is defined "as giving citizens of the European Union certain rights and responsibilities such as freedom to move about in the European Union unhindered, to settle within the EU, to vote and be a candidate in local and European Parliament elections, to receive protection from the embassies of member countries and to be able to petition the European Parliament and the European Ombudsman". Naval and Print 2002: 111)

Reviewing the existent literature concerning the notion of the European citizenship, Fernandez concludes that:

"Citizenship is a plural concept: it is a **normative idea** and, as such, related to the concept of civil society and its moral and ideological defence; it is a **social practice** and develops through a dynamic process, during which the sense of belonging is formed on a basis of differences, communication with others, conflicts and negotiated compromises, and shared images; it is a **relational**

practice between individuals and their social context at the level of state, local government associations, etc. - a concept that includes a set of values that is part of the inalienable heritage of Europe, fundamental for finding our way into the future, and not only as values per se, but as lines of defence of our civilisation.”
(Fernandez 2005: 5)

Other authors have identified the concept of European citizenship along four axes of political/legal, social, cultural and economic dimensions, as follows, delimitations that are useful in relating it to the educational policy, in a social constructivist context:

- **Political/legal dimension:** political structures and processes, political interest, history of Europe, functioning of civil society, democratic values human rights;
- **Social dimension:** counter social exclusion, attention for minorities, equal treatment of the sexes, training for information society, anti-racism;
- **Cultural dimension:** intercultural experience, European cultural heritage, respecting cultural and political diversity;
- **Economic dimension:** vocational qualifications, minorities in economic process, consequences of globalization. (according to the grid presented in Veldhuis and Ostermann 1997: 12)

The four dimensions have been taken into consideration by the policy-makers in the field of education and integrated into the objectives of the cooperation programmes. At the basis of implementing the second phase of the most important educational project, the Socrates framework programme, the idea of citizenship with a European dimension is clearly emphasized: “This programme shall contribute to the promotion of a Europe of knowledge through the development of the European dimension in education and training...It shall support the building up of the knowledge, skills and competences likely to foster active citizenship”. (Decision No. 253/2000/EC)

The Decision is not a singular one in this respect. Many of the founding documents issued by the European institutions and by the relevant actors at national levels underline the idea of a European dimension in education as supporting element for the European identity and citizenship. For example, in a Resolution adopted in 1988 by the Council of Ministers, there is a call for adopting measures aimed at “strengthen(ing) in young people a sense of European identity and make clear to them the value of European civilization and of the foundations on which the European peoples intend to base their development today, that is in particular the safeguarding of the principles of democracy, social justice and respect for human rights” (Resolution of the Council and the Ministers of Education meeting within the Council on the European dimension in education of 24 May 1988 Official Journal C 177 , 06/07/1988 P. 0005 - 0007).

In order to better understand the results achieved by implementing the action programmes, it is needed to assess the departing point, as expressed by the policy-makers. In an extensive analysis of the Community official documents on education regarding the concept of European citizenship and the meanings attached to this concept, Ollikainen states that education is the primary vehicle for inculcation of the values of citizenship - whether national or European. Thus, he identifies two broad senses of the European citizenship: “First, it forms a very

general expression, which is used to give an air of respectability and general beneficiality to common European measures. Second, it may be used to display certain desirable characteristics of Europeans.” (Ollikainen 2000: 8).

Attached to these two senses, in the European documents on education he points out four important meanings of the concept, as follows:

- *European citizenship as recognition of common European heritage* – this refers to “belonging to Europe or identification with the European Union. European citizenship is often regarded as arising from shared history and cultural heritage, and historical affinities and similarities between the peoples of Europe. As often, however, this feeling of citizenship is regarded as only being formed, not least through conscious effort to expand educational cooperation. Education should revitalize the European awareness of Europeans”. (p. 9). As expressed in a Communication of the European Commission on a common European system of recognizing the higher education diplomas:

“...the existence of cultural unity within Europe is a fact that is nowhere called into question, but that in the law of the Member States of the Community only makes its presence felt in sporadic and feeble fashion. One expression of this cultural unity is the university, which is an institution common to all the member states and in particular the primary means of transmitting professional skills that are provided via courses of training of comparable level in each of the member states”. (COM (85): 355)

- *European citizenship as loyalty to the European Union* – this meaning is related to “awareness of the significance of the European Union, that is, the cognitive and emotive attachment of people to the integration project at hand” (Ollikainen 2000: 10):

”The ever-closer union among the peoples of Europe that is called for by the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community can only be achieved on the basis of the citizens’ understanding of political, social, and cultural life in other member states. They must also be well informed on the goals of European integration and the European Community’s means of action. Teaching about dimension is therefore part and parcel of the education of the future citizens of Europe”. (Commission of the European Communities – European Education Policy Statements 1987: 143 - 144)

- *European citizenship as a right of free movement* (p. 10) – the process of European integration and the various forms of educational cooperation are seen as closely related. For example, the mobility of students and teachers has been facilitated to a great extent through the adoption of the four freedoms of the common European market: the free movement of people, of capital, of goods and services. As it is suggested in the evaluation of the results achieved by implementing the European action programmes between 1986 and 1992:

“The growth of the Community’s education and training programs has coincided with mounting interest in the development of a concept of “a People’s Europe.” The idea and practice of European citizenship is reflected in and supported by the kind of experience they offer; they are themselves instruments of free circulation and examples of the recognition of European diversity. They offer experience of the reality of European Union and unity: the free movement of people, ideas, and

products". (COM (93) 151. Report from the Commission to the Council, European Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee: EC Education and Training Programs 1986-1992. Results and Achievements: An Overview)

- the last meaning attached to this concept is *European citizenship as political participation*. As it is emphasized in "European education, European citizenship? On the Role of Education in Constructing Europeanness" (p. 11), and it will be argued in the second part of this chapter, most of the projects initiated and realized within the framework of the Comenius sub-programme focus on the European dimension. This was actually the intention of the policy-makers in designing the Socrates programme:

"Education about the Community and Europe must be provided in schools, both as a nucleus of common content in the various schools curricula and as a vital body of knowledge enabling European citizens to freely exercise their political rights of control and critical participation". (Decision No. 819/95/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 March 1995 establishing the Community Action Programme "Socrates." Official Journal of the European Communities)

The European Union is now at a moment of substantial changes, both from the political and economic point of view. The extensive wave of enlargement accomplished on the 1st of May 2004, with ten new countries joining the Union (and, possible, the forthcoming waves, comprising at least four new members) and the issue of adopting the European Constitution are only two of the major challenges that have to be addressed. In the light of these developments, the concepts of European identity and citizenship are subject to different interpretations. Nurturing the feeling of identity and enhancing the idea of European citizenship among the nationals of the various Member States is a complex process of which final aims may be reached through different ways and approaches. One of this ways is represented by increasing the European dimension of education.

Regarding the educational dimension of European citizenship and common identity, a series of official documents issued by the European institutions emphasize the role of played by the cooperation in this field at the Community level: "the Commission can make a clear choice in favour of the citizen and of a European identity drawing strength from our shared cultural heritage" (Commission 2000: 3). Still, despite of the enthusiastic rhetoric of this document, a Resolution of the European Parliament drafted in the same year, shows that except for the Community action programmes in the field of education, "not many measures and actions are envisaged to strengthen this policy, although it is essential for the establishment of European citizenship" (European Commission 2000, quoted in Fernandez 2005: 60)

As shown throughout this chapter, a series of official documents issued by the decision-makers in the field of education make references to the concepts of European identity and European citizenship. That is because education is commonly perceived as a very powerful instrument that can be used in order to bring the young Europeans and their teachers together, achieving in this way a new, powerful form of socializing at the European level.

In the above mentioned article on constructing Europeanness (European citizenship, in particular) through education, the author points out several ways in which this aim can be achieved:

- “*Firstly*, study abroad brings one into enduring contact with other national and regional culture and provides a point of comparison for one's own culture. Thus, it might increase peoples' awareness of their "common European cultural heritage," characterized by the diversity of local, regional, and national cultures.
- *Secondly*, educational cooperation is typically an image-enhancing activity for the European Commission. The EU has sought to employ the aura of general beneficiality surrounding education” (Ollikainen 2000: 7 - see also the conclusion of the second chapter, where, it is clearly shown that the European Commission has used the educational programmes, Socrates-Erasmus in particular, in order to enhance its profile and increase its visibility). “According to EU education-policy statements, education promotes equality; prevents social exclusion, racism, and xenophobia; fosters socioeconomic welfare; and makes individuals more able to exercise their rights as European citizens”. (Brine 1995: 152, quoted in Ollikainen 2000: 7)
- “*Thirdly*, the right of transnational free movement for professional or study purposes which must be regarded as the cornerstone of European citizens' rights - crystallizes in European student mobility.
- *Fourthly*, educational cooperation is the most efficient way in which the EU organs may seek to influence national curricula; to bring a European dimension to them, and thus to impact on the political socialization of future Europeans”. (Ollikainen 2000: 8)

All the way through the phases of constructing the European unity, several criticisms have been brought, one of the most common referring to the fact that this project is almost entirely elitist-based. The European decision-makers have tried to involve the citizens of the Member States to actively take part in this process, and by that hoping to create a feeling of belonging, a common European identity and citizenship. This approach was necessary in order to confer legitimacy to the political and the economic project. Elaborating in 1997 a study for the European Commission on active citizenship and education (as part of a larger project aimed at analysing the role of the Community action programmes in developing citizenship with a European dimension, a study that covers almost the entire geographical area of the European Union), Haahr identifies several cognitive preconditions and catalysts, which constitute essential elements of most of the cooperation projects in the framework of the Socrates programme:

COGNITIVE PRECONDITIONS FOR ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP (empowering practices)	CATALYSTS FOR ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP (experiential elements)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> civic rights political rights social rights • skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> communicative skills information handling skills social skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • participatory practices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> personal experience of inclusive and participatory practices • practices and learning which stimulate common identity and social inclusion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> personal experience of common practices

Source: Haahr 1997: 11

Analysing this figure, one has to notice the common elements with the components from the box present in the theoretical chapter, addressing “both cognitive and affective or experiential elements. The affective provides the catalyst for action. The cognitive informs the action and gives it coherence”. (Osler and Starkey 1999: 204) An important idea that can be concluded based on the extension made from the concept of European citizenship to the concept of active citizenship is that the “European citizens should be cognitively equipped to operate in the new, wider economic and political environment created by European integration. <<European citizenship>> is a diffuse concept with multiple uses. The conception increasingly promoted in EU education policy is that of "active citizenship," which suggests delegating responsibility for individual success and fulfilment for citizens themselves”. (Ollikainen 2000: 19)

3.2 Contribution of the Socrates programme to building the European identity and citizenship

In the second chapter of the paper I have reviewed the history of the European cooperation in the field of education, presenting the main action programmes and the way in which they came into being. The first part of the third chapter represented an analysis of the notions of European identity and European citizenship, as they are used in the official documents of the European Union, in regard to designing and implementing the Community educational programmes.

In the following lines of this chapter it is provided an assessment of the way in which the concepts presented above have been implemented through the educational cooperation projects and which were the perceivable effects on those (pupils, students and teachers) who took part in these projects, actually, the main beneficiaries of the Socrates framework action programme. For this purpose, a series of national evaluations (internal and external) and independent studies will be used. They are also important because, in elaborating them, the authors have used previous evaluations and studies.

According to their relevance, I have chosen to use in the first place the national reports on the implementation of the second phase of the Socrates programme, evaluation realised in 2003. These reports will be compared with the findings of the external independent “Socrates 2000 Evaluation study” realised in 2001 – following the invitation to tender launched in 1999 by the European Commission, the contract has been awarded to the Centre for Research of Higher Education within the University of Kassel (Germany). This institution has coordinated the entire process of evaluation.

Next, the two sets of documents will be analysed, their outcomes being put in the light of the stated aims of the programme. As mentioned in the theoretical part, according to the social constructivist theory, the process of social learning is more likely where a group of individuals meet repeatedly and where there is a high level of interaction among the participants. The social learning is essential in defining and explaining the formation of European identity and citizenship. In our case, this process is correlated to the various ways in which the educational projects, exchanges (both multinational and trans-national) and mobilities contribute to achieving this aim. The final result is that of substantially modifying the perceptions and the attitudes of those involved in such projects, developing in this way a feeling of belonging to the European construction.

Through the Community action programmes in the field of education, pupils, students and teachers are provided with the opportunity and stimulated to study and work abroad for a substantial amount of time. The overall results, as emphasized in the evaluations of the Socrates programme (in general, and each of its sub-programmes, in particular) show a strengthening of the European dimension of education. As shown in the independent evaluation “Socrates 2000”, “the major successes of the Socrates programme are seen in the development of a European dimension in education” (p. 25). This conclusion is supported by the 2003 national evaluations, for example, the Swedish rapporteurs arguing that: “Developments so far suggest that progress has been made in terms both of the European dimension and of mobility and exchanges of experience between European countries”. (p. 7). Moreover, “mobility is understood to be as an opportunity to improve skills and knowledge required for the employability of EU citizens, towards supporting their consciousness of belonging to the European continent and the development of European citizenship”. (The Czech national report, p. 35)

3.2.1 Methodology used by the national evaluations

In order to realize an accurate and complete analysis of the results and to gather valid and relevant primary data on the implementation of the Socrates programme, a large pool of methods have been used. Some of them are common for most of the countries, while some others have been used only by a few countries. The most often common methods are the web-based surveys (e-surveys), postal surveys, focus group meetings and interviews with relevant actors (Denmark, Holland, Romania, Finland). In the UK both face-to-face and telephone interviews have been used.

As far as the correspondents are concerned, they have been selected from among the actors on system-level and the end-users: project co-ordinators (Comenius, Arion, Grundtvig, Lingua and Minerva actions), Erasmus coordinators in universities, teachers and pupils participating in the projects. In the Czech Republic, parents of the children involved in the Comenius action have also been interviewed. In the case of the Erasmus action, students who took part in mobility programmes have been contacted and asked to provide information regarding their period of study abroad.

In almost all the cases, conducting the evaluation was the task of the national Ministry of Education and the national Socrates Agency. For this purpose, the evaluators have also used a series of secondary data in the form of “EC and national decisions, compendia, annual reports, membership application guides, newsletters, best practice check lists, operating agreements” (Romania), statistics and previous evaluations (Denmark, Sweden) and reviews of published articles on Socrates in the daily newspapers and magazines (the Czech Republic, Hungary).

Sometimes, gathering all these data proved to be a difficult process, as underlined in the Greek report, “due to limited administrative resources, data were not always easily accessible”, an element which might negatively influence the accuracy of the evaluation report.

3.2.2 Preferential partnerships

One interesting aspect clearly showed by the comparison between the national Socrates evaluations is that some countries tended to develop preferential partnerships according to their cultural, historical or linguistic affinities. In an article regarding the process of enlargement, Helene Sjursen emphasizes the fact that in supporting certain countries for the EU membership, the “old Member States” have developed certain preferences: Spain (and to a lesser extent Italy) has been a constant supporter of the Eastern countries accession (due to the economic interests in that region), as Finland, for example has supported the three Baltic states - Estonia in particular. (Sjursen 2002: 498). The same pattern can be noticed

in the case of the educational partnerships, exchanges, students and teachers mobilities.

Let alone that the UK, Germany and France have constituted the top destinations (the three languages being extensively taught in the European schools), several examples confirm the above described phenomenon. The Italian national report, for example, clearly shows that among the European countries establishing projects with this country, Romania (non-EU member), Spain and France take part in all the sub-actions of Comenius (school projects, linguistic projects, school development projects and so on). The same developments are valid for the projects initiated within the Grundtvig action. In the same time, we read that: “In a future prospect, a particular attention should be dedicated to involve in the programme the European countries that do not belong to the European Union yet, among these countries, those belonging to the Balkan and Mediterranean regions being of particular relevance from the Italian point of view” (Italian national report, p. 2)¹

Further considering the South-European perspective on this issue, the Greek evaluation can be brought to support the argument: “Although cooperation varies by specific Action and/or project, Greek institutions appear to have developed preferential relations with education agents mainly from Italy, Spain, Britain and France.” Moreover, “interesting and on certain occasions impressive is also the cooperation with the countries of the enlargement among which the two Balkan countries –Bulgaria and Romania– feature prominently, thus revealing the prospects of Balkan regional cooperation in education within EU and the role the Greek education institutions can play in the region.” (Greek national report, p. 6)

For the Northern European axis of preferential partnerships, the Swedish report is eloquent, describing a situation in which, under the Grundtvig sub-programme: “In 2000, the UK and Finland were the **most popular partner countries**, but many other countries were represented as well. When trans-national cooperation projects were launched, Denmark and Norway became the most popular partners”. (Swedish national report, p. 5)

3.2.3 Motivation to participate in the European action programmes...

As underlined by the vast majority of the evaluations, strengthening the European dimension represents the main motivation to take part in the Socrates framework programme (see for example the UK national report, p. 15). Europeanness plays a key role in the case of Denmark, as well. Motivations for involvement and

¹ “In prospettiva futura, un’attenzione particolare dovrebbe essere posta al coinvolgimento nel programma di paesi europei non ancora appartenenti all’Unione, quali i paesi dell’area balcanica e mediterranea sono di particolare rilevanza in prospettiva italiana”

priorities of action are reflected by the results of the surveys, according to the different actions, as follows:

Comenius - to strengthen the pupils' consciousness about other cultures (87%), to increase the school's orientation towards Europe (69%)

Erasmus – To strengthen the students' consciousness about other cultures (68%), to increase the institutions' orientation towards Europe (57%)

Grundtvig - to improve the teachers' competencies (78%), to increase the institutions orientation towards Europe (78%) – (Danish national report, pp. 9-14)

A combination of both historical arguments and involvement in the contemporary European issues appear to be the main motivational engine in the Greek case. There are two different levels that can be distinguished:

“- the first relates to the generally positive feelings of the Greek society towards European integration. After all, the Greek education has managed over the years to instil to the general public the belief that contemporary European institutions are based on the fundamental principles of ancient Greek civilization and hence co-operation with other European countries –not least in education– is not only natural but also welcomed.

- at the second level motivation arises from the recognition that Greek education can benefit from European experience and expertise.” (Greek national report, p. 11)

3.2.4 ...and the perceived European dimension

All the national evaluations on implementing the Socrates programme emphasize the positive results of the trans-national projects and mobilities. The first obvious result is a change of attitude, of the way in which *the other* (individual from another European country) is gradually perceived as *one of us*. This modifying of perception is the consequence of a repeated interaction between the participants in different projects.

An interesting observation is related to the fact that the changes in attitudes and perceptions are not dependent on age. They are not only visible among the pupils and students, but also among their teachers and instructors. The individual experience is “evident and tangible, programmes appearing as an enjoyable experience in primary education, because of the age of students”. (Hungarian national report, p. 9) Being European has different meanings at this level, the common idea that arises is that of belonging to the same community.

For example, the answers of the Finnish people, aged 10-19, encompass the perceived notion of being European (a necessary precondition in building the European identity and strengthening the European citizenship): “I am European, I live in Europe and I belong to Europe, which is a good and safe place to live. I feel I belong to the European community and I also understand other cultures, not only my own... We are proud to be European, although we have lost our national currency.” Another pupil taking part in the Comenius sub-programme, identifies the European belonging, as contrasted to the perceived *others*: “It is good to be

European and not American or from a poor country. In Europe we speak European languages; we are used to different cultures and different people. From this diversity we should find unity and a way to represent our own cultures". The mechanism of the European Union functioning is expressed by another participant: "As a small country it is good to belong to the wider community in which we have a right to say our opinions and we have a possibility to influence the decision making, our lives and the happenings in the world. We belong to a developing union, we all have the same rights and we have a good standard of living".

Still, specific to this age, the European dimension also means that: "Marabou's "Coco" (Swedish chocolate) beats Fazer's "Blue" (Finnish chocolate)." (Finnish national report, p. 54)

According to the teachers' views, the concepts of European identity and citizenship are also translated into the notion of European dimension of education. Central to all the opinions expressed remains the importance of cooperation, exchange and mobility: "...Teachers working in schools do not live or feel the European dimension, but just get to know German, Italian colleagues and students, and make friends with them. Participants emphasise that one of the biggest benefits they gained by travelling abroad and realising projects together is that the real meaning of the European dimension was experienced and became tangible with the new knowledge they got from personal contacts." (Hungarian national report, p. 9)

The European dimension, as underlined by the respondents, is structured on the four axes: cultural, social, political and economic. For the teachers involved in the Socrates programme, being European is strongly connected to "accepting differences, transforming and changing patterns of thoughts towards greater community, tolerance, decrease of prejudice and racism". In the same time, "the European dimension means working for a better collective and more equal economy" and "treasuring the European cultural legacy, and transferring it to the next generation. It means that the world of our children and youth becomes more international, and the future Europeans will have to think of the consequences of their work, actions and decisions on a completely different scale than we do". (Finnish national report, p. 55)

Other evaluations clearly show that the Socrates framework programme's results have achieved the initial aims, promoting the European citizenship and identity. A wide variety of activities, taking the form of exchange visits, study visits, project meetings, publications, discussion lists, web-sites designed by the participants, "have brought an important contribution to the development of the European citizenship concept and the elimination of certain preconceived ideas and stereotypes" (Romanian national report, p. 27).

Dividing the conclusions into two separate levels, the Czech evaluators state that at a general level "Programme Socrates has definitely opened the way for the fulfilment of European dimension, education towards thinking in European context, towards knowledge on European culture and development of European identity." (Czech national report, p. 24). At the individual level, "the contributions of the programme may be observed in strengthening of the consciousness on

European citizenship, European cultural heritage, increased interest on European and intercultural problem”. (p. 35)

An important aspect that proves the overall efficiency of the Socrates programme in building the European identity and strengthening the European citizenship is represented by the statements of the participants, which lead to the conclusion that their positive experiences have been similar in this respect. For instance, during the 2002 Erasmus Student Conference organized in London, one rapporteur noted that: “...nearly every student stated “I feel more European”, “Europe doesn’t seem as big to me as it used to”. Is that not a step towards European Citizenship?” (UK national report, p. 16)

The Socrates programme is perceived not only as a tool which contribute to the process of European integration in the field of education, but also as a way of offering equal chances to the less advantaged pupils and schools. This idea is expressed in a quotation from a head teacher of an English school, where almost half of the pupils are entitled to free school meals (an indicator of the low standard of living):

“Comenius ... brings real meaning in a very practical way to the whole spirit of European unity. It is the best example I know of EU funds being seen to reach the grassroots. For our school, it has given both staff and pupils opportunities that otherwise would have been missed...and added a new dimension to the life of the school. Our partnership links will continue after the end of our project this summer. I cannot commend the Programme more highly.” (UK national report, p. 16)

These results of the National Socrates reports are consistent with the findings mentioned in the “Socrates 2000” independent evaluation (led, among others, by Ulrich Teichler, one of the most well-known external evaluators of the programme). The methods used for realising the evaluation consisted in analysing previous studies, available statistics and various reports submitted by the beneficiaries, along with questionnaire surveys (24 questions mailed to 1608 institutions), interviews and workshops. (Socrates 2000: 41)

Once again, as it was showed by the national reports in 2003, the European dimension of education emerged as the pivotal element in the “Socrates 2000” evaluation (France, Finland, Belgium and Austria). For the Greek respondents, the European dimension is perceived as a necessary step in order to cultivate the concept of European citizenship, an idea supported by their Romanian colleagues, who made references to the impact of the Socrates programme in educating the pupils and students in a spirit of “European values” (Socrates 2000: 203)

One of the critiques brought to designing and implementing the programme (besides the major failure “linked to the functioning of the EC bureaucracy” – Socrates 2000 Executive Summary: 25) is that “goals pursued by Socrates put strong emphasis on operational objectives, leaving much room for interpretation of the European dimension”. (p. 29) A plausible explanation for not clearly defining the concept (which appears among the aims of the programme as strengthening the European dimension) might be that it was introduced only as a “symbolic catalyst”. Moreover, as stated in the recommendations of the independent evaluation: “the notion of the European dimension should remain

broad and subject to transnational, national and local interpretation, within the confines of individual actions/programmes” (Socrates 2000: 341)

Concluding this chapter, it has to be noticed that the social constructivist hypotheses employed to explaining the process of European identity and citizenship formation through educational programmes are backed up by relevant empirical data. A repeated interaction between pupils, teachers and students from different European countries leads to a better mutual understanding and results in creating the feeling of belonging to the wider European community. The educational projects, exchanges and scholar mobilities play a key role in building transnational networks, in which the future European citizens feel that “raising awareness of cultural differences, launching discussions on racism in education or democracy, encouraging mutual understanding and increasing people's understanding of minority groups enhance the perception of a European dimension”. (Socrates 2000: 229-230)

4 Conclusion

As seen in the previous two chapters, developing the European identity and citizenship has always been a priority for the decision-makers in the field of education. This fact is obvious by analysing the various national and Community documents establishing the process of educational cooperation between the Member States of the European Union.

The European construction has to overcome the label of an elitist projects; it needs legitimization on behalf of the citizens. Sharing the same European values and the feeling of belonging to the European Union are essential components to support the political, economic and judicial developments. The educational Socrates framework programme (and its subsequent actions: Erasmus, Comenius, Lingua, Grundtvig, Minerva and Arion) can be considered a corner-stone in achieving the aim of nurturing a feeling of common European belonging among its participants. One of the central aims of this programme has been from its inception that of strengthening the European dimension of education. This concept has consequently become an overall notion referring to the transnational and multinational cooperation/exchange/mobility projects and the resulting networks between partners from different European countries.

The Community action programmes in the field of education contribute to the development of a different, new form of socialisation at the European level. It is the participation in these projects that change the perception of the young people, who get to know each other better, get into contact with different European national cultures and languages. It is not surprising at all in this context that a large number of the people aged 21 to 35 (the so-called “Erasmus generation”) consider that they feel more European than Italians, Germans or French (according to a survey published in 2001 by the “Time” magazine, quoted in Bennhold 2005: 1).

Taking part in projects initiated by one’s school with other European academic institutions, studying abroad for a substantial period of time or teaching in another European country are elements brought by the educational programmes only recently. Stefan Wolff, a professor of political science in England (University of Bath), considers that:

“For the first time in history, we’re seeing the seeds of a truly European identity. Give it 15, 20 or 25 years, and Europe will be run by leaders with a completely different socialisation from those today. I’m quite optimistic that in the future there will be less national wrangling, less Brussels-bashing and more unity in EU policy-making – even if that is hard to picture today. When this generation takes the reins in coming decades, both in Brussels and in national capitals, it could produce a profound cultural shift”.
(Bennhold 2005: 1)

The experience of living abroad, getting into contact with people of the same age, exploring new methods of teaching than the traditional ones are the visible aspects and results. Besides, the pupils and students involved in these schemes also gain

deep knowledge of another European language and get accustomed with a different way of living, with a particular European culture. These are advantages that can be taken in developing a future career, as more and more employers demand mobile, multilingual individuals.

One of the most common critiques that are brought to the European educational programmes is that they actually involve a small number of pupils/students/teachers. Only a few of them can benefit from the Socrates programme. A possible explanation regards the insufficient amount of money allocated from the Community budget for education. According to the former Commissioner for education and culture, Viviane Reding, only 0,8 percent was allocated for this field, which “does not allow for more mobility projects to be funded” (Viviane Reding, former European Commissioner for Education and Culture, 12 March 2005). Under these circumstances, the grants provided for those studying in another European country are limited (usually the financial help from parents or other sources is absolutely needed in order to successfully accomplish the period of staying abroad). Moreover, “because of the complicated application procedures for Socrates programme...it could very well be possible that the participation in these projects is until now mainly limited to an intellectual vanguard” (Veldhuis and Ostermann 1997: 92).

Despite these financial, bureaucratic and administrative difficulties, the Erasmus programme (probably the best known action of Socrates) for example, in its 18 years history has enabled approximately 1.2 million students to spend abroad a considerable period of time during their University studies (DG Education web-site). Moreover, within Socrates, there have been designed other forms of academic cooperation -not necessarily involving going abroad-, but mainly based on projects realized via the new Information and Communication Technologies (the eTwinning programme is illustrative in this respect).

Another important aspect that has to be taken into consideration regarding the impact of the Community action programmes on developing the European identity and citizenship is the number and geographical variety of the participating countries. Since the beginning of these projects, they aimed at incorporating not only the European Union member states, but also the other European countries. They have comprised both the states that joined the EU at the 1st of May 2004, Bulgaria and Romania (Turkey, only recently) – among the candidate countries, and the partners from the European Economic Area (Norway, Iceland and Lichtenstein). This is exactly the feature that makes the educational cooperation important and attractive in the same time: the cultural and linguistic richness and diversity creates the common European identity nowadays. Referring to the impact of the educational programmes on the participants from different European countries, Jan Figel, the Commissioner for education, training, culture and multilingualism argues that: “They are not asked to give up their national or regional identity – they are asked to go beyond it, and that it what pulls them closer together. We are creating a community in which diversity is not a problem but a characteristic. It is an integral part of feeling European.” (Bennhold 2005: 3)

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