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Research Article

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# European Citizenship and Youth in Bulgaria: A Qualitative Comparative Analysis between Bulgarians and Bulgarian Turks

Gianfranco Brusaporci\*

European citizenship is a new concept, which has evolved with the process of European integration. Starting from the younger generations, the EU seeks to establish a modern and innovative view of citizenship through three fundamental elements - rights, identity and participation - that could lead to new ways of conceiving the relationship of institutions-citizens and citizens-citizens. The idea of European citizenship tends to overcome the historical idea of national states and national identity. It does this by reinforcing its supranational nature and developing an attitude of tolerance towards diversity and human/minority rights. Thus, to verify the impact European citizenship has on the younger generation in Bulgaria, this research is based on an inter-ethnic sample of 30 interviews (16 Bulgarians, 14 Bulgarian Turks) and applies a qualitative comparative analysis method. This research seeks to answer these two main questions: 1) How do young Bulgarians perceive the concept of EU citizenship? 2) How do young Bulgarians perceive the new European citizenship in regard to the inter-ethnic relations in their own country? The study suggests that the EU's attempt to promote European citizenship is underachieving. On the one hand, young Bulgarian people tend to be well exposed to European citizenship, irrespective of their ethnic belonging. On the other hand, the majority of them are sceptical of the tangible value of European citizenship for the reinforcement of a more encompassing and shared notion of diversity and minority rights.

**Keywords:** citizenship, Bulgaria, youth, minority rights, ethnicity

## Introduction

The debate on the concept of citizenship is often focused on daily political experiences and the perceptions of the relationship between states and people. Therefore, redesigning the concept of citizenship could lead to a new perception of both the state-society and institutions-citizens relations. In all European countries, the end of the Cold War saw trends of new liberalism processes, in which market borders moved from the national to the global level. The development of new technologies and transport, as well as increasing global

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issues (such as migratory flows from south to north, the greenhouse effect, the recent economic crises), have brought about the need to reinvent the concept of citizenship, which is pursued by the EU through a modern and innovative approach in a new democratic experiment. The concept of European citizenship represents a new goal, which is still evolving within the European integration process. The idea of European citizenship was introduced by the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 as complementary citizenship. Today, it represents a real democratic test, leading to the definition of a new concept of citizenship on the basis of a different organizational model. This model includes new institutions and a new system of governance that is completely different from the classic nation state.

The EU strategy<sup>1</sup> regarding European citizenship begins with young citizens. It could lead to a better understanding of the concept of European citizenship and increased tolerance regarding human and minority rights,<sup>2</sup> but it is still underachieving. In fact, many people still do not know exactly what the concept of European citizenship means and, above all, how they could integrate it into their own daily lives. The development of a homogeneous approach to raising awareness and encouraging daily practices as part of a single policy could support the EU in promoting greater social cohesion among its citizens.

This article contends that this new citizenship plays an innovative role, as observed by different scholars.<sup>3</sup> Yet, it also seeks to analyse how effective this new concept is and to outline the perceptions and behaviours of young Bulgarians *vis a vis* this new institutional framework, which designs new rights and responsibilities for them.

The first part of the article explains the new features involved in the concept of EU citizenship and the challenges it may face in the future. The concept of European citizenship is compared to the classic concept of citizenship, and the new features of this European experiment are presented. The meaning of citizenship is compared by its three key historical and conceptual elements: rights, identity and participation. The second part of the article analyses, based on an empirical framework and a sample of 30 semi-structured interviews conducted in Sofia, how young people in Bulgaria see this new approach, and,

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<sup>1</sup> European Commission, 2004. *Making citizenship Work: fostering European culture and diversity through programs for Youth, Culture, Audiovisual and Civic Participation*. (accessed: 09. February 2015); 2001. *European Commission white paper - A new impetus for European youth*. (accessed: 09. February 2015); 2013. *Youth in Action Programme 2007-2013*. (accessed: 09. February 2015).

<sup>2</sup> See the Citizenship Programme 2007-2013, General objects and Priority themes of the Europe for citizens Programme; See also the Euro-Mediterranean co-operation - this Partnership promotes various training courses focusing on a broad notion of citizenship, beyond its European dimension: Participation and Intercultural Exchange, Human Rights Education and Citizenship and Citizenship matters – Participation of Women and Minorities.

<sup>3</sup> Habermas, Jürgen. 1992. Citizenship and national identity: some reflections on the future of Europe. Praxis International; Bellamy, Richard / Castiglione, Dario and Josephine Shaw. (eds.) 2006. *Making European Citizenship*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan; Magnette, Paul. 2003. European Governance and Civic Participation: Beyond Elitist Citizenship? *Political Studies* 51, 1-17; Bruter, Michael. 2005. *Citizenship of Europe? The emerge of a Mass European Identity*. London: Palgrave Macmillan; O'Neill, Paul and Susan Sandler. 2008. The EU citizenship acquis and the Court of Justice: citizenship vigilante or merely vigilant treaty guardian? *Richmond Journal of Global Law and Business* 7(3), 205-46; Moro, Giovanni. 2009. *Cittadini in Europa. L'attivismo civico e l'esperimento democratico comunitario*. Roma: Carocci.

in particular, their potential attitudes regarding the development of the EU project. The analysis rests on three main independent variables: awareness, daily practices and ethnic self-identification. Further, the research seeks to understand the correlation between these variables, as well as the role that the concept of EU citizenship plays in majority-minority relations and the intercultural perception in the country. This is because the features of diversity and inclusion are intrinsic to the very concept of European citizenship and could be conducive to the fostering of a new perspective on ethnic and social relations of people in Bulgaria, as well as in the Balkan area where EU enlargement is expected. Therefore, in order to understand the relevance and the combination of the variables, the article starts with a qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) to analyse the data collected in interviews with 30 young people - 16 Bulgarians, 14 Bulgarian Turks – who are professionals in different fields and students who are well educated and reside in the capital city of Sofia. The city of Sofia has been chosen because it has the highest percentage of tertiary education, 36.84%, and the highest percentage of resident students, 42.88%.<sup>4</sup> In addition, the choice to select and compare a sample of young people of Bulgarian and Turkish ethnicity was determined by the fact that Bulgarian Turks form the largest minority group of the country and that they represent the historical antagonists who had dominated Bulgarian territory for five centuries. Today, there seems to be a peaceful dialogue between the two groups, but there are still some social tensions that re-emerge at times, such as during the protest of the Bulgarian nationalistic party Ataka in front of the mosque of Sofia in May 2011.

How could European citizenship be perceived by the new generations in this context? It could be perceived positively in terms of new opportunities, new horizons of cultural, social, financial and political nature, but also negatively, with scepticism towards the European system as being alien and not adaptable to their own situation. Thus, the potential results of the sense of European citizenship in this sample of young Bulgarians in Sofia could be a good example for the whole country and the Balkan region. The link between young people and European citizenship could foster a crucial policy for a long-term European integration policy throughout the whole region.

## **1. The Innovative Nature of European Citizenship**

### **1.1 A New Outlook**

European citizenship was introduced by the Maastricht Treaty (1992) and supplemented by the Amsterdam Treaty (1997). It is defined as complementary to the citizenship of any national member state. Its aim is to strengthen European identity by getting people to be more involved in the integration process. Thanks to the single market, citizens enjoy a number of rights in different areas like the free movement of goods and services, consumer protection and public health, equal opportunities and treatment, and access to jobs and social protection.

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<sup>4</sup> National Statistical Institute. 2011. *Population and demographic processes*. (accessed: 09. February 2015).

Despite being innovative, the concept of European citizenship is criticized by some scholars because it was established with a top-down design<sup>5</sup> and, in particular, for the so-called European democratic deficit and the lack of common European heritage. The European democratic deficit is expressed in several main points. There is not one *demos* that can legitimize the European institutions, there is no government voted for directly by the citizens, and the parliament is not the only legislative body, even if it has been voted for by the citizens since 1979. There are also some highly influential political actors who are not democratically legitimated, such as functionaries of the European institutions, private lobbies or experts. Furthermore, there is a reservation principle in European Council procedures, which does not allow people to check all the official documents issued. All these issues cast some doubts as to the real meaning of this new citizenship concept and they demonstrate how this democratic deficit is kept hidden from citizens and the public European debate. In 2006, Castiglione stated that the European Convention for a Constitution sought to overcome these problems by creating a European *demos*, but the paradox was that this project failed due to the *demos* itself, with the two referendums held in France and Holland in 2005.

The concept of citizenship should be defined as “a principle of an individual belonging to a community based on his power to participate in the definition of the political regime and which is translated into a set of rights and responsibilities governing his relationship with the state and the community.”<sup>6</sup> This concept, following the view of other scholars,<sup>7</sup> involves three main theoretical elements: rights, identity and participation (legal, identity and political dimensions). All three elements and their evolution should be studied in order to explore the innovative nature of European citizenship.

## 1.2 Rights

Rights are given to all citizens of a society who, generally, obtain their citizenship through two main, socio-cultural norms and historical experiences: by birth (*ius soli*) or by blood (*ius sanguinis*). In an *ius soli* system, citizenship is based on the place of birth, while in an *ius sanguinis* system, descent and heritage play a pivotal role in defining who is and who can become a citizen. In terms of European citizenship, some of the rights are given by residency (*ius domicilii*), such as the political right to vote for and stand as a candidate in European and municipal elections. The concept of *ius domicilii* could mark a new approach to citizenship even for migrants or people from non-EU countries who live in any of the member states. This approach, therefore, could lead to an innovative relationship between the state and the people of a society that is based on their residency and not on their nationality.

Moreover, even if there is no classic democratic legitimacy between the citizens and a representative government in the EU and there is no effective constitution, a European citizen benefits from all of the following rights: to

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<sup>5</sup> Wiener, Antje. 2007. *European Citizenship Practice*. Paper at the EUSA - Tenth Biennial International Conference, Montreal, 17-19 May 2007.

<sup>6</sup> Moro, *Cittadini in Europa*, 57.

<sup>7</sup> Kymlicka, Will and Wayne Norman. 2000. *Citizenship in Diverse Societies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

move and reside freely within the EU, to be protected by the diplomatic and consular authorities of any EU country when there are no diplomatic or consular authorities from the citizen's own country in a non-EU country, to sign a petition to the European Parliament and to complain to the European Ombudsman. The fact that these rights are established by a supranational citizenship, different from a national state, is already an essential innovation. The EU is the only international organism with this specific, trans-border status.<sup>8</sup> It is not important whether the EU recognizes the member states as constitutive actors or not, as the innovative perspective is that it is the source of the European citizens' rights.

Another innovative tool related to the evolution of rights is certainly the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI), which was included in the draft EU Constitution (2003) and later in the revised Treaty on European Union (Lisbon Treaty, 2007). Since April 2012, European citizens have been able to use this instrument. It gives citizens the right to directly engage in setting the legislative agenda for the EU. Once signatures supporting a policy proposal have been collected and verified from at least one million citizens of at least seven EU member states, the European Commission is obliged to consider that proposal. It can, but is not required to, respond by proposing new legislation. The ECI is the first transnational instrument of participatory democracy in world history.

Finally, it is important to mention the “push and pull” legal role of the European Court of Justice (ECJ). In contrast to a common national justice system where judges rule on the basis of a constituted system of laws, the decisions of the ECJ may expand the legal framework of the EU, thus affecting the rights of citizens and the relationship between nation states and the EU. In the majority of cases, such rulings favour the EU, therefore empowering it. An example is the European Court of Justice's expansion of the scope of non-discrimination and free movement principles, which cover new and not financially productive categories, after 1998<sup>9</sup> in the case of *Martinez Sala*.<sup>10</sup> Thus, the innovative aspect in the legal dimension of the European citizenship is the possibility for the judgments of the ECJ to alter the conceptual framework of citizenship, as it typically happens in an international judicial system and not in a national one.

### 1.3 Identity

The second element, identity, is often criticized due to the lack of a common European *demos* with a common consciousness of the citizens, which makes the legitimacy of the institutions and their future much weaker. As argued by

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<sup>8</sup> Bellamy, Richard and Alex Warleigh. 2001. *Citizenship and Governance in the European Union*. London, New York: Continuum, 3-4.

<sup>9</sup> Bellamy, Castiglione and Shaw, *Making European Citizenship*; O'Neill and Sandler. The EU citizenship.

<sup>10</sup> Court of Justice of the European Communities. 1998. *Press release No 32/98, Case C-85/96, Martinez Sala v. Freistaat Bayern*, E.C.R. 1-2691. (accessed: 09. February 2015).

Schmidt in 2006, the European Union does not have only one *demos*, but multiple *demoi*<sup>11</sup> that are the base of a “demoicracy.”

The identity of European citizenship is based on the concept of *diversity*, while the national one is based on the concept of *equality*. The concept of European citizenship overcomes the dichotomy of inclusion and exclusion to embrace the idea of a cosmopolitan community that encompasses recognition and affirmation of the diversity of our society. In the EU, in fact, there is not one single language, one tradition, one history or one religion, but an awareness of living in a multicultural environment with different people of different backgrounds. Hence, Europeans are living in a society that supports the motto “United in Diversity.” This diversity represents the new perspective of European citizenship, in contrast to the dominant idea of an ethnic nation, which is even, to some scholars, characterized in historically multi-ethnic societies, such as the United States. Smith expresses the idea that modern nations tend to form based on a pre-modern, ethnic core that provides myths, symbols and memories; the WASPs (White Anglo-Saxon Protestants) were, indeed, the core in the USA.<sup>12</sup>

Others scholars have underlined that the common sense of cosmopolitanism of Europeans derives itself from the historic, painful and cruel heritage of the two World Wars and from the “never again” promise.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, according to Bruter (2005) and Magnette (2007), considering the evolution of technologies and current lifestyles, the conception of identity by each European citizen is no longer seen as traditional membership, but involves a process of continuous political and cultural transformation. This cultural transformation includes three different spheres: transformation of national identity, transformation of horizontal relations (living with people from different nationalities) and transformation of vertical relations (the relationship between people and the EU).<sup>14</sup>

One of the most significant contributions trying to explain the idea of a common European identity is certainly that of Habermas, who defines the concept as “constitutional patriotism” - the idea that political attachment ought to centre on the norms, values and, more indirectly, procedures of a liberal democratic constitution.<sup>15</sup> He contrasts the previous national culture with the present, constitutional and normative conception of society linked to the European Union project. Bearing in mind this framework, European citizenship differs from the conception of national sentiment by evolving into a

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<sup>11</sup> A nation-state model of democracy presumes a single “demos” (citizenry) constituted by a resilient collective identity, a common public sphere and a developed political infrastructure of associations and parties that serve as the social underpinnings of a legitimate and well-functioning democracy. Such a demos is strong at the national level, but weak in the EU. The EU has a new aptitude; it is characterized by more *demoi*.

<sup>12</sup> Smith, Anthony D. 1986. *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*. Oxford: Blackwell.

<sup>13</sup> Beck, Ulrich and Edgar Grande. 2006. *L'Europa cosmopolita. Società e politica nella seconda modernità*. Roma: Carrocci, 135.

<sup>14</sup> Bruter, *Citizenship of Europe?*, 2-3; 2007. Magnette, Paul. 2007. How can one be European? Reflection on the Pillars of European Civic Identity. *European Law Journal* 13(5), 664-79.

<sup>15</sup> Habermas, Jürgen. 1990. *Die nachholende Revolution*. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp; Habermas, Jürgen. 1994. *Citizenship and national identity: Some reflections on the future of Europe*, in *In the Condition of Citizenship*, edited by Steenbergen, Bart van. New York: Publications Ltd.

common constitutional sense. Thus, a strong awareness among the people of this meaning of European citizenship could spread a stronger democratic sense of tolerance, solidarity and social cohesion. In any case, despite Habermas successfully articulating the concept of “constitutional patriotism,” in trying to introduce the word patriotism into a series of principles, his argumentation is still too weak and abstract to support and justify a real sense of solidarity and belonging among citizens. His optimistic view of the landscaping of modern, pluralist societies by building an authentically shared, political culture is misplaced.<sup>16</sup> The challenges that cultural diversity and pluralism face in contemporary states cannot be resolved through a normative approach that focuses solely on political legitimacy. Yet, the difficulties that surround the concept of “constitutional patriotism” advise that modern states will resist the building of a collective, political identity that could generate a genuine sense of solidarity. Thus, it seems that the modern concept of European citizenship relating to pluralist states faces more profound challenges, which cannot be simplified as part of an inevitable march of modernization or rationalization, as Habermas assumes.<sup>17</sup> One of the challenges in building a basis for a collective identity will be the major participation of citizens at all levels of governance of the EU. A stronger relationship between civic engagement and empowerment, and therefore the development of a civic involvement and social solidarity,<sup>18</sup> could be key to pursuing a trustful sense of democratic common will and constitutional patriotism.

#### 1.4 Participation

The third element, participation, refers to the link between *who* is representing and *who* is represented, the engine of the policy making process in any democratic body. Nowadays, the political crisis is related to the crisis of citizenship, in which our societies have difficulty legitimating politicians and the political arena, and the concept of citizenship itself becomes more and more “empty.”<sup>19</sup> European citizenship, because of its new nature, could invigorate political legitimacy, allowing modern society to face the global problems that seem too vast to overcome. The gap between civic society and the democratic representative institutions has grown, and the historical process leading to the creation of a unique, common civic identity - the modern citizenship - has stopped.<sup>20</sup> In this sense, participation, in particular, could play an essential role for the future of political legitimacy of societies. Thus, the key point of this part of the analysis addresses the innovative approach of European citizenship, in respect to the European policy making process, and will check if it is capable of facing the current lack of legitimacy.

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<sup>16</sup> Viroli, Marco. 2006. *È possibile un patriottismo costituzionale europeo?* MA-thesis. University of Trento, 3-4; Baumeister, Andrea. 2007. Diversity and Unit: The problem with Constitutional Patriotism. *European Journal of Political Theory* 6(4), 483-503.

<sup>17</sup> Viroli, *È possibile un patriottismo costituzionale europeo?*; Baumeister, Diversity.

<sup>18</sup> Putnam, Robert. 1993. *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

<sup>19</sup> Donati, Pierpaolo. 1996. *La cittadinanza democratica fra particolarismo e nuovo universalismo*, in *Multiculturalismo e democrazia*, edited by Crespi, Segatori. Roma: Donzelli, 193; Rossi, Unico. 2000. *La cittadinanza oggi. Elementi di discussione dopo Thomas H. Marshall*. Working Paper 39. Siena: Università di Siena, 37.

<sup>20</sup> Rossi, *La cittadinanza democratica*, 37-38.

Further, regarding electoral participation in the European Parliament and the European Citizens' Initiative, there is another notion worth considering, "participatory democracy." This consists of all the instruments and procedures that aim to involve citizens in defying public decisions and politics, trying to increase their influence in these public procedures.<sup>21</sup> Concretely, this definition refers to legislative initiatives, procedures of deliberative democracy (like a forum or jury of citizens), consultations, participatory budgeting, etc. This participatory democracy is the new approach of the European Union, formally included in the Treaty of Lisbon, to face the crisis of representative democracy and its democratic deficit. Thus, the intent is prominent and innovative, but it still seems weak and not completely efficient. In fact, to implement this method of participation, the European institutions work with two main actors: individuals (for example, through online campaigns) and the civic society (lobbies, organizations, companies, etc.). However, they do not have specific criteria, particularly regarding the latter, for choosing their interlocutors and for measuring their respective political representatives' roles (one organization could have 100 or 10000 members). In addition, 60% of the organizations involved in European round tables are private companies, while the majority of the other 40% are financed by EU funds and represent the civic sphere and workers in Brussels. This particular framework leads to pertinent criticism of "professionalising" civic activism, where the work of the European Union appears to be more oriented towards its own legitimacy and not towards measurable civic-political participation.<sup>22</sup> Regardless of these critical aspects, participatory democracy was successful in some cases, as demonstrated by the 1992–1993 civic initiative of the Active Citizenship Network, which reached an important civil milestone by promoting the European Charter for Patients' Rights.

This experience can be considered in a positive light for the following reasons: 1) the relevance and sensibility of the problem 2) the specific know-how of the association and the use of the European Court jurisdiction (free movement and non-discrimination principles) 3) the confirmation of the communitarian legal supremacy, which gave a European dimension to the management of patients' rights 4) the fact that the initiative was independent and based in locations different from the capital of Brussels 5) the role of citizens, who were not the target, but rather the first actors of a European civic initiative and, therefore, actors in the creation of European citizenship.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, in this case, the civic *bottom-up* initiative from the Active Citizenship Network met a judicial *top-down* initiative from the European Court judgments in order to finally reach the European institutions.

Hence, as Moro observed, yet another innovative feature of European citizenship is its incremental approach, where citizens can play a fundamental role. This is the case with the Active Citizenship Network initiative proven by its successful results.

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<sup>21</sup> Cotturri, Giuseppe. 2005. La democrazia Partecipativa, in *Democrazia e Diritto* 1, 27-40, 27.

<sup>22</sup> Obradovic, Daniela. 2006. Civil and the social dialogue in European governance. *Yearbook of European Law* 2005 24, 261-329; Magnette, Paul. 2006. *Le régime politique de l'Union Européenne*. Paris: Les presses de Sciences Po, 225-6.

<sup>23</sup> Moro, *Cittadini in Europa*, 137-141.

## 2. European Citizenship and Young People in Bulgaria

### 2.1 The EU Youth Strategy

The topic of European citizenship has gained considerable importance for both the Council of Europe and the European Commission over the past years. In their policies, the two institutions emphasize priority actions, particularly in the fields of education, training and youth: 1) Sustaining the role of youth organizations in the development of democratic participation; 2) Citizenship education and the participation of young people; 3) Access of young people to decision making.<sup>24</sup>

The Commission's communication on youth participation, which was issued to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions in 2009, declares that, "Europe's future depends on its youth."<sup>25</sup> It formulates a new strategy for engaging young people in contributing to the EU project; the strategy is based on two key approaches: 1) Investing in Youth - putting in place greater resources to develop policy areas that affect young people in their daily lives and improve their well-being; 2) Empowering Youth - promoting the potential of young people for the renewal of society and for contributing to the EU values and goals. The Commission incentivizes greater collaboration in formulating the policies focused on youth and other policies such as those on education, employment, inclusion and health. This would be developed through initiatives promoting youth activities and youth work.<sup>26</sup> The implementation of this cross-sectoral vision is especially supported by the Commission through different actions: The Youth-in-Action programme, Culture, Lifelong Learning, Progress, Media, Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs, Competitiveness & Innovation Programme and Structural Funds.<sup>27</sup> In general, the EU vision considers young people as essential players with an active role in constructing and creating Europe and its new concept of citizenship; they are committed to the European ideal of an open, inclusive and socially cohesive society.

Notwithstanding all of these actions and political perspectives, many people (not only the youth) still do not know what the concept of European citizenship entails exactly, and, most importantly, they do not know how they can integrate this new concept into their daily lives. In 2010, although the majority (78%) of EU citizens claimed familiarity with the term "citizen," the Eurobarometer calculated that still 22% had never heard of the term "citizen of the European Union."<sup>28</sup> Yet, 48% had declared that they are "not well

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<sup>24</sup> Dolejšiová, Ditta and Miguel Garcia López. (eds.). 2009. *European citizenship - In the process of construction: challenges for citizenship, citizenship education and democratic practice in Europe*, Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 5.

<sup>25</sup> European Commission. 2009. *The European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - An EU Strategy for Youth*. (accessed: 09. February 2015).

<sup>26</sup> European Commission. 2009. *The European Parliament*.

<sup>27</sup> European Commission. 2009. *The European Parliament*.

<sup>28</sup> European Commission. 2010. *European Union Citizenship Report 2010. Dismantling the obstacles to EU citizens' rights*. COM(2010) 603 final. Brussels: Published online 27. October 2010. (accessed: 09. February 2015). This survey concerns the citizenship of the European Union. Are you familiar with the term "citizen of the European Union"? Base: all respondents, % EU27.

informed” of the rights that stem from this new concept.<sup>29</sup> It is interesting to point out that citizens of the new member states were less likely to claim they had never heard the term (13%), compared to respondents from the EU15 (EU members prior to 1 May 2004) countries (24%). Citizens of the new member states were also more likely to indicate that they knew what the term meant (46%), compared to the older EU15 respondents (42%). Slovakia, Hungary and Finland, with 96%, 94% and 93% respectively, had the highest percentages of respondents declaring to be familiar with the term “citizen of the European Union.” On the contrary, Belgium (70%), Denmark (66%) and Germany (59%) had the lowest percentages of people claiming to be familiar with the term. In Bulgaria, the same statistics showed that 41% were familiar with the concept of European citizenship, 44% were familiar, but not sure about its meaning, and 11% had never heard of it.

All these data are even more significant if we take into account that the electoral participation in the European Parliament is constantly decreasing with time, from 84% to 31% between 1979 and 2009.<sup>30</sup> The EU needs to mobilize its citizens to achieve major democratic legitimacy, and it intends to start with young people.

This paper shares Moro’s observation that one of the most innovative features of European citizenship is its incremental approach, through which citizens can play a fundamental role in the shaping of this new concept. It is also shared that the EU has the vital role of raising awareness and forming new attitudes among the young citizens, which leads to stronger participation on the EU level. Yet, this paper is going to verify the evolution of this new concept of citizenship and to try to understand young people’s perception of, and their behaviour with respect to, the new institutional framework, which designs new rights and responsibilities for them.

## 2.2 Young Bulgarians’ Perception of EU Citizenship: The Research Structure

The aim of this empirical work, which is based on thirty semi-structured, English-language interviews, is to study the perceptions and attitudes of young Bulgarian people in regard to the new concept of European citizenship. The research purpose is also to discover how this new citizenship approach could facilitate inter-ethnic dialogue in the opinions of young people in Bulgaria. Thus, there are two main research questions posed by the article. The first one is: 1) How do young Bulgarians perceive the concept of EU citizenship? Is it perceived positively as an opportunity, a new way to improve their lives and perspectives for society, or rather negatively, as something artificial, imposed, useless, unequal or simply unattainable? The second question is: 2) How do young Bulgarians perceive the new European citizenship with regard to the inter-ethnic relations in their own country? Do they see it as a new framework in which to improve inter-ethnic dialogue and social integration between the different communities? Hence, even if the inter-ethnic dialogue between Bulgarians and Bulgarian Turks is a salient topic, which involves different stakeholders and historical issues (i.e. the historical role of the MRF party),

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<sup>29</sup> European Commission. *European Union Citizenship Report 2010*, 20.

<sup>30</sup> European Commission. *European Union Citizenship Report 2010*, 17-8.

could a new perception of European citizenship contribute to a new viewpoint on the cultural and social relations of young people living in Bulgaria?

The research method applied in this paper is a comparative research design through the qualitative comparative analysis (QCA), which is a middle way between conventional qualitative and quantitative research approaches.<sup>31</sup> QCA exemplifies some key strengths of the qualitative and quantitative approach. First of all, it considers each case as a complex entity, maintaining the concept of causality, which is typical for the qualitative approach. At the same time, it allows the researcher to produce generalizations by comparing a high number of cases through Boolean algebra, which represents the cases by using specific variables.

The research performs a micro-level comparison of 30 cases of young Bulgarians in an attempt to understand the relationships and relevance of independent variables that influence the outcomes the most. The QCA, thus, links the combination of the variables with the outcome, offering “multiple conjunctural explanations.”<sup>32</sup> This method deals with macro-social phenomena and macro-level units of analysis, but also with micro-level cases. Recently, there were the first micro-level applications of the QCA with individuals as units of analysis.<sup>33</sup> Instead of the classic qualitative approach, the QCA enables a systematic comparison of a smaller number of individual cases, which preserves complexity and is as parsimonious as possible, underlining often-hidden, causal relationships on a micro-level.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, considering the extensive primary information gathered through the qualitative technique, QCA allows for the data to be cut down, while their preserved complexity and diversity allows a systematic comparison of the cases through a small number of variables.<sup>35</sup> The most appropriate strategy for this study is the multiple cases – most similar system design (MSSD).<sup>36</sup> It is synchronic, so similar cases are compared in real time to highlight the combined variables related to the different outcomes. Cases that are chosen are as similar as possible, so as to observe and control for any external variances. The aim of MSSD presupposes a purposeful, rather than random, selection of the cases. It is, however, impossible to identify all factors relevant to outcome differences. Some findings of this research design may be over-determined and have several possible explanations that cannot be ruled out - a limitation that could be overcome

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<sup>31</sup> For QCA, see Ragin, Charles C. 1987. *The Comparative Method. Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*. Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press.; Ragin, Charles C. 1991. *Issues and Alternatives in Comparative Social Research*. Leiden: Brill.; De Meur, Gisèle and Benoît Rihoux. 2002. *L'analyse quali-quantitative comparée (AQQC-QCA): approche, techniques et applications en sciences humaines*. Louvain-la-Neuve: Academia-Bruylant.

<sup>32</sup> Ragin, Charles C. 2003. *Making Comparative Analysis Count*. COMPASS Working paper Series 2003-10. Published online 10 September 2003. (accessed: 09. February 2015).

<sup>33</sup> Lobe, Bojana. 2008. *Integration of Online Research Methods*. Ljubljana: Faculty of Social Sciences; Scherrer, Vanessa. 2006. *Citoyens sous tensions. Analyse qualitative des rapports à la politique et des configurations d'appartenances à partir d'entretiens projectifs sur les proches*. PhD-thesis. Paris: Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris.

<sup>34</sup> Rihoux, Benoît and Bojana Lobe. 2009. *The Case for Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA): Adding Leverage for Thick Cross-Case Comparison*, in *The Sage Handbook of Case-Based Methods*, edited by Byrne, David and Charles C. Ragin. London: Sage, 474-476.

<sup>35</sup> Rihoux and Lobe, *The Case for Qualitative*, 474-476.

<sup>36</sup> For MSSD, see Przeworski, Adam and Henry Teune. 1970. *The Logic of Comparative Social Inquiry*. NY: Wiley-Interscience.

with further research on a larger sample of young Bulgarians. Bearing this framework in mind, the attempt is to point out any differences across the selected cases that are capable of producing a similar outcome.

The case selection is based on the features of age, education, gender, ethnicity, residence and knowledge of the English language. Among the 30 respondents selected, there were 14 males and 16 females. Out of this, 16 defined themselves as Bulgarians (7 males and 9 females) and 14 as part of the Turkish community (7 males and 7 females). The latter group is the largest minority in Bulgaria, forming 8.8% of the population or 588.318 people according to the latest census in 2011.<sup>37</sup> The participants in the sample<sup>38</sup> are between 21 and 30 years of age; they are students and professionals in different fields, all residing in Sofia (for at least 1 year), holding at least one Bachelor's degree or in their last year of a BA. In order to create a more similar *casings*, similar classifications of residence and education were chosen. Also, to avoid the expected outcome being altered, the typology of the study (technical, human or social sciences) could have a certain influence on the knowledge of those who partook in the study. Although the number of cases is limited, it has been thoroughly selected and covers all the expected possibilities for our qualitative comparative analysis. Furthermore, the research has an important specificity regarding the youth's perception of EU citizenship in Bulgaria, a country of interest to this study for a number of reasons. Bulgaria, together with Romania and afterwards Croatia, is one of the newest EU member states (acceded in 2007). Therefore, its social, legal and financial background linked to the EU can still be seen as "under construction" or not as consolidated as that of older member states. Furthermore, Bulgaria has not yet entered the Schengen area. Other relevant reasons for choosing Bulgaria as the country of analysis are as follows:

- According to the statistics of Eurofound, in 2010 Bulgaria had the highest percentage of young people who were not in employment, education or training (21.8%);
- In the country, diverse minorities (Bulgarian Turks, Roma, Pomaks, Jewish, others) live peacefully together, even though some episodes of ethnic tension have created a more uncertain context. In May 2011, there was a protest of the Bulgarian Nationalist Party Ataka in front the Mosque of Sofia, and in the autumn, protests against the Roma communities were held in different cities;
- There is a huge gap between young people and politicians in Bulgaria. Politicians do not enjoy the confidence of the people and do not have high standing with the public. One of the main reasons is the highly corrupt system, which keeps people distant from politics (i.e. the recovery of fake election ballots printed by GERB during the parliamentary elections in May 2013).

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<sup>37</sup> According to the *Bulgarian National Statistical Institute* – 2011 Population Census – these are the main ethnicities. The Bulgarian ethnic group has 5.664.624 persons and comprises 84.8% of the people who declared their ethnic identity on a voluntary basis. The Turkish ethnic group has the second largest population – 588.318 persons. It represents 8.8% of the population. The Roma ethnicity is traditionally the third one, numbering 325.343 persons, with a relative share of 4.9%.

<sup>38</sup> The interviews took place from April 2012 to November 2012. (accessed: 09. February 2015).

Moreover, there is a deficit in the civic education of the young in the country, which affects their trust in politics.<sup>39</sup>

This background could partly explain the research results and the answers of some interviewees. The economic crisis and the economic situation of Bulgaria (the lowest GDP per capita of all EU member states – Eurostat, 2012), for example, could play an important role in the perception of European citizenship of young people. This new citizenship could be considered to be an opportunity or, on the contrary, inequality compared to citizens living in other countries. At the same time, the inter-ethnic issue could influence the perception of European citizenship and *diversity* as a new and positive challenge, applicable to Bulgaria or, alternatively, as being irrelevant, useless and imposed.

Having defined the *casing* and the selected cases, the following paragraphs present the combined independent variables (i.e. awareness, European daily practices and ethnic self-identification) and how they relate to the final outcomes.

The first variable, *awareness*, aims to identify respondents' knowledge of the term "European citizenship" and, in particular, the new nature of the concept. The second variable, *daily practices*, seeks to understand how European experiences<sup>40</sup> are already part of the respondents' lifestyle, and how young Bulgarians are changing their vertical and horizontal relationships in terms of belonging, and normative and civil participation. The last variable, *ethnic self-identification*, seeks to evaluate the level of attachment of people to their respective communities. This last variable represents a "litmus paper;" it is relevant in order to identify the possible connection between ethnic identity and European citizenship. In the study, the three variables are considered as binaries (high-low: 1-0). Although they do not permit a pure qualitative analysis of the data, they allow a more systematic analysis to focus on the chosen outcomes covering a larger general framework of our QCA.

Awareness and daily practices are measured through the levels of three indicators - the three main elements of the citizenship concept described above – namely, rights, identity and participation. Ethnic self-identification is evaluated through three other indicators: the level of declared self-identification, the links with one's own and other communities, and the strict following of cultural traditions and practices of one's own community. Some examples of the questions are: Do you know what the European Ombudsman is? Do you know anything regarding the diplomatic and consular protection of citizens of the EU abroad (Rights)? Do you feel more Sofianez,<sup>41</sup> Bulgarian, European..., and why? Do you consider yourself cosmopolitan? Why? What do you think about the EU slogan "United in Diversity" (Identity)? Did you vote in

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<sup>39</sup> Krasteva, Anna and Tolya Stoitsova. (eds.). 2008. *Parva godina evropejska Balgaria: izbori i obrazi*. Sofia: New Bulgarian University.

<sup>40</sup> European experiences are defined as familiarity/experience with the EU Programmes (Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci, Youth in Action, etc.), friendship and communication with other European students, participation and involvement in European networks or associations, mobility and willingness to travel, willingness to know other European cultures, etc.

<sup>41</sup> Sofianez is a term used to indicate an inhabitant of Sofia.

the last European Parliament elections? Do you know what the ECI (European Citizens' Initiative) is (Participation)? The second part of the interview is focused on ethnic self-identification (third variable), where the questions are more related to the respondents' own community: Do you have a lot of friends belonging to other Bulgarian ethnicities? How important are cultural and religious traditions to you?

### 2.3 Young Bulgarians' Perception of EU Citizenship: Data Analysis and Research Results

The following paragraphs present the separate aspects of the variables and the indicators examined, followed by a presentation of the results obtained for the two research questions. As shown in Table 1, with regard to the first independent variable, *awareness* of the concept of European citizenship, it appears that young people, despite being well educated, are not very familiar with the meaning of European citizenship. Bulgarian respondents gave eight positive and eight negative answers, whereas Bulgarian Turks gave four positive and ten negative answers. Although awareness differs between Bulgarians and Bulgarian Turks, it can be argued that raising awareness of the new democratic concept of citizenship is still a challenge for the EU. The indicators show that the majority of the micro cases have a better knowledge of rights than of identity and participation, even though with some cases it is superficial. An example is that they know and appreciate the role of the Ombudsman and of the ECJ, but they do not know the terms and specific functions of these authorities. There is only one case where the respondent could give more details on them because of being directly involved in litigation against the State of Bulgaria.

Conversely, there is rarely any detailed knowledge of the idea of a common European identity, which, although defined by the majority (almost 80% of the respondents) as real, is perceived as missing. Some say that EU citizens have a common identity due to the "interrelated historical, artistic and cultural experience," while only two people stated they only have a common "system of law," similar to Habermas' assumption of "constitutional patriotism." The last awareness indicator, knowledge of the mechanism of participation in the EU system, is also not well-known, even if a large number of respondents affirmed that European citizenship is an "evolving process" that can be improved and modified by citizens. Thus, paradoxically, respondents believe that they can influence the democratic evolution of this new concept, but they do not know how exactly. Many of them do not know about the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) or the European public consultation. This problem is less evident, yet exists, among those young people who are active participants in the civic society and members of cross-border associations or NGOs (30% of all respondents). For instance, one respondent stated: "I know that ECI is an instrument which allows European citizens to express their will, but I do not know it in detail." In these cases, and in a broader view, the research finds that young people live as active European citizens in their daily lives without actual awareness of their active participation. Awareness and daily practices seem to be two sides of the same coin; however, they are very different, one being vastly more perceptible than the other. Contrary to the focus of the EU strategy on raising awareness and promoting participation through actions, which mainly

support the daily practices of the European citizenship (for example through mobility, exchanges, etc.), young respondents declared that most of the information and knowledge that they have about EU citizenship is “derived from personal interests and studies.”

This finding is confirmed by the results of the second variable, the *daily practices*, which are positive in twelve cases for the Bulgarians and in six cases for the Bulgarian Turks. Both results are more positive compared to awareness, even if for the Bulgarian Turks there is a lower predisposition to living inside the European framework every day. All interviews demonstrate that the European daily practices of the people mainly relate to identity and participation - second and third indicators - corresponding to what Bruter and Magnette describe as transformation of horizontal and vertical relations,<sup>42</sup> which include living with people from different nationalities, travelling and having contact with other European citizens, and being involved in actions and activities correlated with a European cross-border level or, in some cases, with specific European topics. This sample, for example, includes two people who work as international affairs officers, for a bank and for a political party member, five members of cross-border associations who deal with various matters not related to European issues, and one person volunteering in a Bulgarian blog focused on European policies. It is interesting to point out that only two interviewees declared to be involved in local civic activities connected with Bulgarian issues. This confirms the study of Krasteva and Stoitsova of 2008 on the gap between young Bulgarian people and the country's political system. In a way, it seems that European citizenship brings a new and optimistic civic will among the youth. The last indicator, rights, is seen as correlated with the other two because travelling, for example, to attend initiatives for transnational associations is clearly an indication of exercising the right of free movement in the EU. With regard to this right of free movement, some respondents expressed critical attitudes, saying “it is not justified that Bulgaria is not part of the Schengen area yet,” but they believe that the situation would change soon. At the same time, they believe in European rights concerning legal protection. Consider the answer: “the positive thing is that there is some sort of control over corruption and over the Bulgarian judicial system.” Even if people do not know the legal procedures for claiming their rights, they believe that they could easily understand them when needed. Eight respondents, four Bulgarians and four Bulgarian Turks, stated that “the best advantage of EU citizenship is exactly the opportunity to claim one's rights on a higher level.” The Bulgarians connect this with a negative judgment of the Bulgarian system; the Turks connect this with greater protection of their human rights as a minority community. In addition, another relevant practice that the research illustrates is that the majority of the respondents, 24 out of 30 people, declared to vote conscientiously for the European Parliament, even if some of them do not know all the European bodies very well or the role of the European Parliament and the Commission. Therefore, with different levels and different modalities, all these assumptions confirm a change of the horizontal and vertical relationships of people and the EU towards a new thinking of their own concept of citizenship.

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<sup>42</sup> Bruter, *Citizenship of Europe?*; Magnette, *How can one be European?*

The third variable, *ethnic self-identification*, is predominantly positive, with ten Bulgarians and eight Bulgarian Turks responding to have a strong sense of community for cultural and historical reasons. In Bulgaria, but also in Eastern countries in general, this has been reinforced by the collapse of communism as a system based on social differentiation, politicizing ethnic identities, movements and parties.<sup>43</sup> A high number of respondents, 26 out of 30, declared to belong more to their own communities than to other identities, even though four people declared to feel more like citizens of the world, and six people to feel both their ethnic and European belonging. European identification is less prominent with the Turks, but, in general, it is not refused. Ten Bulgarian Turks declared that they would like to see Turkey as a member of the EU, while, on the contrary, only four Bulgarians agreed with such membership. Some Bulgarians explained their position by saying “Turkey is part of another culture,” “the ruling government is Islamist” or “Turkey is too large and would imbalance power on the Balkans and in the EU.” Still, others admitted the existence of historical tensions between the two countries, especially on behalf of the Bulgarian side. Considering the second indicator, the majority of the interviewees stated that they have interactions with people from the respective other ethnicity, although they did not have strong relationships with them. Four Bulgarian Turks also expressed their desire to live in Turkey in the future, and one of them wanted to attend the Erasmus Program in Istanbul next year. Finally, related to the last indicator, the interviewees who follow cultural practices declared that “it depends mostly on our family and our religion.” In this indicator, Islam plays a relevant role in distinguishing Bulgarian Turks.

It is important to study the combination of the variables through the QCA, which will make possible an evaluation of the relevance of the three variables linking them to the results of the outcomes.

Table 1: List of Cases and Outcomes

CASEID	Awareness (high-low)	Daily Practices (high-low)	Ethnic Self-id (high-low)	Perception of EU Citizenship (Pro-Sceptical)	Perception of Minority-majority Relations and the Intercultural Dialogue (Pro-Sceptical)
bg1	0	1	0	1	1
bg2	1	1	0	1	1
bg3	1	1	0	1	1
bg4	1	1	1	1	1
bg5	1	0	1	1	0
bg6	0	1	0	1	1
bg7	0	0	1	0	0
bg8	1	0	1	1	0
bg9	1	1	1	1	1
bg10	0	1	0	1	1
bg11	0	1	0	1	1

<sup>43</sup> Bunce, Valerie and Maria Csanadi. 1993. Uncertainty in the Transition: Post-communism in Hungary. *East European Politics and Society* 7(2), 240-75; De Waele, Jean-Michel. 2004. *Les cliques politiques en Europe centrale et orientale*. Bruxelles: Éditions de l’université de Bruxelles.

bg12	1	1	1	1	1
bg13	0	1	1	1	0
bg14	0	0	1	0	0
bg15	1	1	1	1	1
bg16	0	1	1	1	0
tr1	0	1	1	1	0
tr2	1	0	0	1	1
tr3	0	1	0	1	1
tr4	0	0	0	0	0
tr5	1	0	0	1	1
tr6	0	1	1	1	0
tr7	1	0	1	1	0
tr8	0	1	1	1	0
tr9	0	0	1	0	0
tr10	0	1	0	1	1
tr11	0	0	0	0	0
tr12	0	0	1	0	0
tr13	0	1	1	1	0
tr14	1	0	1	1	0

Source: Author's own illustration

Analysing the first research question (c), only six situations have a negative outcome; in all of them, the awareness (a) and the daily practice (d) are low.<sup>44</sup>

$$a . d . E + a . d . e \rightarrow c$$

The result occurs independently of the third variable, ethnic self-identification (e). So it could be minimized with the formula below:

$$a . d \rightarrow c$$

These assumptions are confirmed both for cases bg7, bg14, tr9, tr12 and for cases tr4 and tr11 (see graphic 1, pink rectangles) for Bulgarians and Bulgarian Turks. Thus, if a young person is neither familiar with the distinctive features of European citizenship nor with any European activities in his daily life, he tends to be sceptical or indifferent to the European Union and its new concept of citizenship; it does not matter if he has an ethnic sense of attachment or not. This could be explained with the lack of trust between the young Bulgarian people and their political system. In fact, some declared, "I am not interested in politics," while others said, "Politicians do not care about people." This cannot be overcome with new trust in Europe without awareness and daily practices. All of the other cases, which instead have a pro-inclination, have at least one positive variable of awareness or daily practices. In the same way, the third variable does not influence the outcome because it is individually neutralized by the other two. The presence of A or D indicates a positive outcome of C.

$$A + D \rightarrow C$$

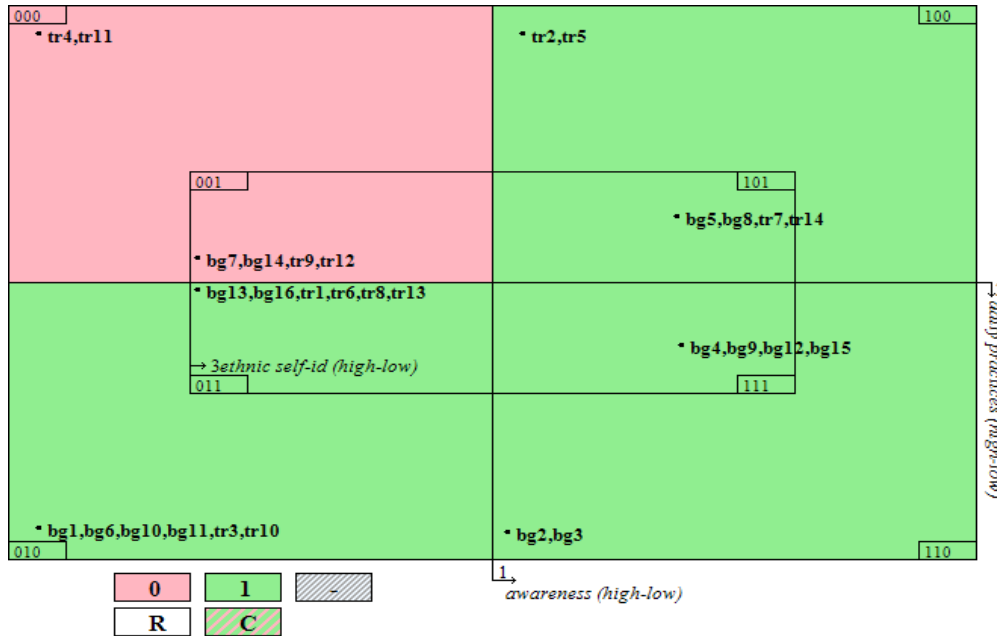
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<sup>44</sup> Considering the variables and the outcomes, the positive result (1) is represented by capital letters: A, D, E (variables) - C, M (outcomes); on the contrary, the negative result (0) is represented by small letters: a, d, e (variables) - c, m (outcomes). The symbols are represented by "+" which means "or" and "." which means "and."

Thus, if a young Bulgarian belonging to the Bulgarian ethnicity or to the Turkish one has awareness of the innovative aspects of the European citizenship concept – for example he knows the European rights, he is conscious of the multicultural sense of the EU or is already living with a European vision in mind, being part of European networks, travelling and participating in European Programmes – he tends to have a positive perception of European citizenship. During one interview, a Bulgarian student declared, “I really like to travel and to discover other European customs and traditions; they represent our long and fruitful history. In Europe, we do not have common national traditions, but each region has its particular ones. The EU should preserve and promote them.”

The graphic below shows how variable awareness and daily practices can even individually bring a positive outcome.<sup>45</sup>

Graphic 1: Perception on EU Citizenship



Source: Author’s own illustration, Tosmana 1.2.

Analysing this first research question, it can also be observed that a positive perception incentivizes the participation of young people, fostering a major personal motivation and strong belief in the future of the European integration process. On the contrary, a negative perception brings about a sceptical attitude and lower involvement of the person, physically and ideally, in the EU project (in terms of civic participation, propensity to know other European cultures, willingness to participate in EU Programmes, etc.). Finally, high

<sup>45</sup> The graphic is made by the Tosmana program. The green colour represents a positive result (1), the pink colour represents a negative result (0), the white colour represents a case combination not covered by the research, and the double colour/green-pink represents a contradiction. These two last cases are not present in our research.

ethnic self-identification, combined with both high awareness and high level of daily practices, represents the best combination with the highest propensity and motivation for involvement in the EU integration process. So, using the formula, it could be represented as:

$$A . D . E \rightarrow C$$

In fact the four cases, bg4, bg9, bg12 and bg15, could be seen as special cases because their combinations correspond to the highest pro-Europe civic activism and a higher spirit and sense of belonging to the EU, as one respondent said, “Europe is one great idea that will have a long future.” They also claimed to believe in a future federal system of the EU.

Considering the second question (m), the possible outcomes are more articulate (see graphic 2). In this case, ethnic self-identification is the most relevant variable; as a matter of fact, the other two variables, “awareness” and “daily practices,” taken individually do not impact the final outcome. Actually, when the ethnic self-identification variable is positive, the outcome is positive only when both of the other two variables are positive. Thus, there is a positive perception of the role of the European citizenship in terms of a greater intercultural and ethnic dialogue only in these combinations: awareness 1, ethnic self-id 0 (bg2, bg3, tr2, tr5); daily practices 1 and ethnic self-id 0 (bg1, bg6, bg10, bg11, tr3, tr10 and bg2, bg3); awareness 1, daily practices 1 (bg2, bg3, bg4, bg9, bg12, bg15). So, synthesized, the result will be:

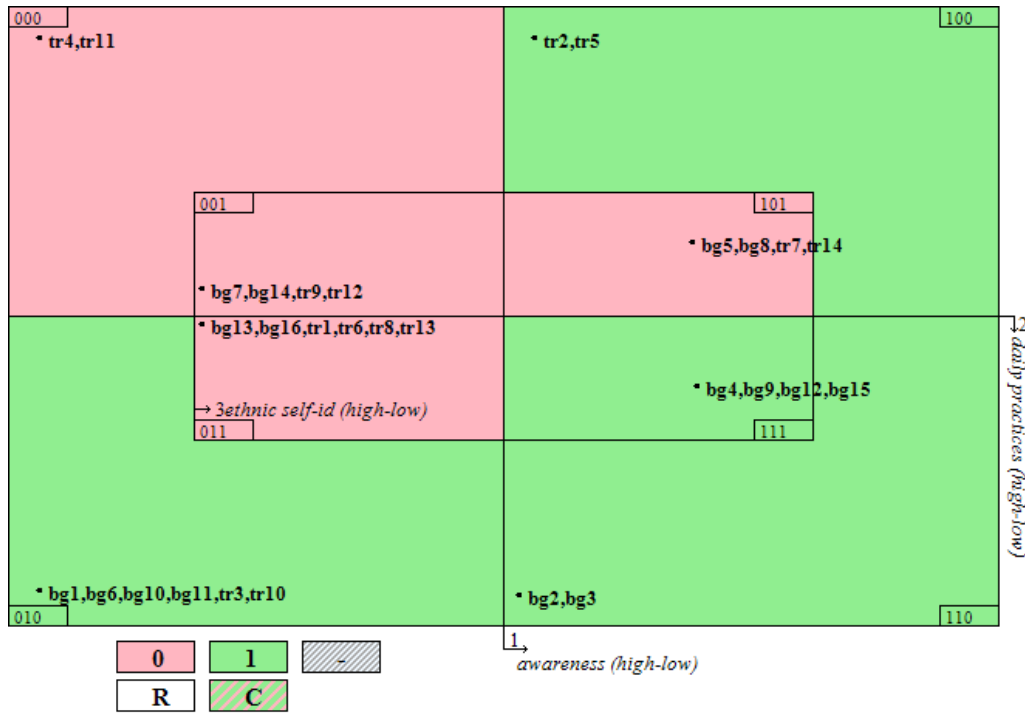
$$\begin{aligned} A . e + D . e + A . D &\rightarrow M \\ a . E + d . E + a . d &\rightarrow m \end{aligned}$$

Thus, when there is high ethnic self-identification, it corresponds to a negative perception, except in cases bg4, bg9, bg12 and bg15 with high awareness and high level of daily practices, which together are able to neutralize the ethnic sense of community of the people. These four cases can be explained with their proactive civil proneness, which gives them particular motivation and a marked positive attitude to the future and the role of the EU.

In any case, many Bulgarian respondents (around 60%) separated European citizenship from the minority/inter-ethnic issue, explaining it as an internal and history-related problem. Some said, “the minorities should first be integrated into the Bulgarian community and then in the European one.” Others criticized the European motto “United in Diversity,” claiming, “it is too easy to say.” Still, others stated, “some situations are not understood by the western countries which do not experience strong intercultural problems.” A Bulgarian Turk respondent, instead discussed that “there is a paradox in the EU: it proclaims equality among people, but in a way this equality is only controlled by Germany and France.” Another Bulgarian Turk stated, “nowadays there are still violations against Muslims in some European countries” and harshly criticised the negotiations for the accession of Turkey to the EU. Concerning this topic, ten Bulgarians stated they were against the accession of Turkey to the EU. Whereas, on the contrary, all Bulgarian Turks declared to be in favour, even if they appeared more interested in the advantages of this accession (for example, the possibility to study and live in

Turkey) than in the actual idea of the European citizenship. An analysis of this question suggests that the sense of community and belonging outlines the opinion of young people, that European citizenship can be achieved only if they are fully involved as European citizens in terms of awareness and day-to-day life. The different cases can also be summarized in the diagram below.

Graphic 2: Perception of the Minority Issue



Source: Author's own illustration, Tosmana 1.2.

### Conclusion

The European Union is trying to keep up with the times and face today's global challenges. Its new approach to European citizenship is innovative, regardless of the existing gaps and unresolved doubts, which are slowing down the evolution of European society and its political organization. Despite the complex panorama, this paper has tried to show that the concept of European citizenship with an elastic approach can be considered as evolution of national citizenship. In this regard, the EU is pursuing a modern and innovative approach with the three still developing key elements of the citizenship concept: rights, identity and participation.

The most fragile aspect of this new citizenship appears to be the efficient promotion of the comprehensive and evolutionary meaning of its three fundamental elements in a modern day interpretation and the effective implementation of the existing instruments. The analysed sample suggests that the EU strategy geared to young people seems to have some success. Based on the data outlined in this article, it is working well in regard to the Bulgarian youth. Especially in terms of overall perception of the innovative

nature of the concept, with 24 positive results out of 30, but insufficiently in regard to the new conceptions of ethnic and intercultural diversity and tolerance, where the positive cases are only 14. For the two dependent variables of the research, the Bulgarian ethnic majority has a better result with 14 and 10 positive cases (out of 16), compared to the 10 and 4 positive cases (out of 14) of the Turkish minority.

Although it works with a limited number of cases, the research covers all possible combinations envisaged by the QCA analysis and leads to a double result, which involves both Bulgarians and Bulgarian Turks. On the one hand, they tend to be generally well disposed to European citizenship regardless of their ethnic belonging. This is favoured by their awareness of the new concept and by their behaviour, which already involves a European lifestyle, being part of European networks, travelling and participating in EU Programmes. Contrary to the first result, however, the majority of the respondents (16 people) are sceptical as to the particular value of European citizenship in terms of a larger and shared notion of diversity and minority rights. In other words, within this sample, the variable of *ethnic self-identification* is non-influential in studying the first outcome on the general perception of European citizenship, whereas it is relevant to the second one concerning the perception of European citizenship with regard to the minority issue. In this situation, only high “awareness” together with many “daily practices” could neutralize a high ethnic self-identification. This is due to one main factor; the awareness and the daily practices should be considered together as part of the same matter and the same strategy from the EU. The findings of the research could foster broader future research involving other Bulgarian cities or even other countries with similar conditions, such as new Eastern-European member states or other western Balkan countries, in order to measure their European inclination before their official EU accession. A more in-depth analysis of this study could stimulate the EU to design a new strategy that promotes awareness of the three elements - rights, identity and participation - of the new concept of European citizenship and that also assesses and improves the current situation in the Balkans, which are still very sensitive when it comes to ethnic issues.

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