

# Constructing European identity

## Is it the same to be European and an EU Citizen?

Although sometimes used interchangeably, **it is not the same to be European**—from a country geographically located in Europe—**as an EU Citizen**—from one of the 27 EU Member States.

## European vs. EU Citizen

In practice, **the difference is not always clear cut:**

- many institutions or mechanisms we associate with the EU either do not include all EU countries (like the Eurozone)
- some of them include both EU and non-EU countries (like the European Economic Area) or include non-EU countries while excluding some EU countries (like the Schengen Area).

Also, all European countries can potentially apply to join the EU—this means that **the construction of the EU identity is closely linked to the general European identity.**

## Two main (coexisting) understandings of European identity

### Cultural

Europe as a community of **shared values**  
**Identitarian** nationalism  
Origins in common **cultural legacies and historical experiences**

### Political

Europe as a community of **shared democratic practices**  
**Civic** nationalism  
Gained momentum in the **21st century**

## A coexisting identity

Constructing a European identity is challenging because it coexists with other identities.



From the answers to "In general, how much do you identify yourself with each of the following".  
Source: Eurostat (2020).



## Questioning the EU's identity

How does the EU define its identity in relation to the rest of the world? How do its values relate with Europe's past and the EU's policies nowadays?