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## **European Identity 2.0?**

An analysis of the European Parliament's  
communication strategy via social media in the  
context of European identity building

BACHELOR THESIS

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## List of Abbreviations

European Parliament	EP
European Union	EU
Facebook	FB
Member of the European Parliament	MEP

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

"[...] they are determined to defend the principles of representative democracy, of rule of law, of social justice – which is the ultimate goal of economic progress – and of respect for human rights. All of these are fundamental elements of the European Identity." (Member States of the European Community, 14 December 1973)

The question of European identity is entangled with the question of the nature of the EU polity. The European Union (EU) has developed from an economic project based on the common purpose of peace, to a political project which has not found its identity yet (Schmitt-Egner, 2012, pp. 16–19) (Delanty, 2005, p. 127). Despite its extensive increase, the current academic discourse on European identity still lacks a distinct terminology (Vogt, 2007, pp. 348–350). In the sociological debate the question of the possibility and structure of a *European public sphere* is dominant. The realisation of *transnational discourses* among Europeans is supposed to lead to the formation of a shared European identity (Schmitt-Egner, 2012, pp. 55–60). Pursuant to the debate in political science, *European polity* as institutional structure, *European demos* as collective basis and *European Citizenship* as individual basis, depict the political form of a European public and enable the formation of a collective identity (Schmitt-Egner, 2012, pp. 60–62).

In September 2013 the European Parliament (EP) has launched its information campaign for the 2014 elections. The general aim of the campaign has been the raise of awareness and the motivation of EU citizen to express their voice. The motto 'Act.React.Impact' emphasises that EU citizens can shape Europe's future by making use of their right to vote (Press Service, Directorate for the Media, 2013). Moreover, the campaign has also made use of social media to increase citizen's awareness of the upcoming European Parliament election. The hashtag #EP2014 has been prevalent and used to inform, communicate and motivate voters over social media in an organised manner. Notably, the EP addresses the right to vote and hence the status of belonging to the EU as citizen, via the interactive and European-wide medium of social media.

According to Walkenhorst, political institutions have the ability to influence collective identity. In the context of identity-building, the use of mass media is crucial. Walkenhorst remarks the issue that the EU has no common broadcasting services, which would enable the formation of a public sphere (Walkenhorst, 1999, pp. 43, 179-180). As shown above, social media is not affected by this issue. As a European-wide medium, without an intermediary, its potential for European identity

building could exceed the common mass media and might provide a solution for the lack of European collective identity.

## **1.2 Objective**

Against this backdrop, the precise objective of this thesis is to analyse the European Parliament's communication strategy via social media in the context of its potential for European identity building. As a rather new communication channel which is extensively used by the EP, it enables the EP to directly communicate and engage with citizens, to stress European issues and foster debate and also to frame communication under a certain notion. Hence, social media will be carefully considered as a potential solution, a mean to build European identity and to overcome the issue of a lack of European collective identity. Deriving from the presented objective, the research interest has been translated into the following main research question:

### **To what extent does the European Parliament have recourse to social media for purposes of European identity building?**

In this regard, two sub-questions have been formulated which, each on their own, constitute a piece of the main question. Hence, by answering them, and by integrating the generated findings, it will be possible to answer the main question. The two sub-questions are as follows:

*In what way can social media, as used by the European Parliament, contribute to European identity building?*

And in this context: *In what way can social media, as used by the European Parliament, contribute to the building of a cultural or a civic European identity?*

*How does the notion of European identity building shape the European Parliament's communication via social media?*

The first sub-question addresses the general potential, as well as limits of social media as used by the EP for European identity building. Additionally, it is crucial to pose this question separately for civic vis-à-vis cultural European identity building, due to the inherent conceptual differences. The second sub-question is concerned with a more specific consideration of social media content. Here, findings will allow determining whether European identity building is communicated and how. The addition of both sub-question, hence the addition of the general potential of social media as used by the EP for European identity-building, with the knowledge on how the notion of European identity building shapes the actual content and communication

via social media, will then amount into the extent to which the EP has recourse to social media for purposes of European identity building.

### **1.3 Approach**

Based on the identified research interest, the overall research approach has been developed. The formulated research questions will be answered by executing empirical research. The research methodology will consist of two qualitative research methods, based on which the respective data will be collected and analysed. A mixed methods approach has been identified as suitable for the thesis at hand. To begin with, expert interviews with three employees of the EP' communication team will be conducted. Their practical knowledge and insight will allow elaborating on the potential of social media, as used by the EP, for European identity building. In the second place, but equivalent, will be a qualitative content analysis of the central EP's Facebook account. Data in this regard will consist of the posts by the EP. It is hence textual data which is already existent and does not need to be generated. A content analysis of a specific social media platform will allow drawing conclusions on how the notion of European identity building shapes the Parliament's communication via social media. The research design and the case selection will be explained in detail in Chapter 3. In Chapter 2 the theoretical concepts which will be applied to the data, will be established. A discussion of the state of the art will be presented. Regarding the concept of European identity, "[...] the 'Wherefore' cannot be deduced without the 'Why' and the 'How' not without the definition and conceptualisation of the 'What' and the determination of the 'Who' (Schmitt-Egner, 2012, p. 24)."<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the discussion on European identity will be of a threefold nature, addressing its substance, significance for the European Union and possibilities of formation. The second part of Chapter 2 gives a brief overview of peculiarities of the Web 2.0, which will then result in a depiction of the EP' application of social media in the context of its communication policy. Chapter 4 constitutes the empirical part of the thesis, where the concepts developed in the theoretical framework will be applied to the actual data and analysed by using the stated research methods. In the end, an answer to the posed research question will be given, as well as further practical implications discussed.

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<sup>1</sup> Own translation from German. „[...] als das 'Wozu' nicht ohne das 'Warum' und das 'Wie' nicht ohne die Definition und Konzeptualisierung des 'Was' und die Ermittlung des 'Wer' erschlossen werden kann.“



## 2 A Framework of European Identity and The Web 2.0

Based on a literature review, the core of the subsequent chapter will be a thorough discussion of the concepts of interest. To begin with, a definition of collective European identity and its specific modes shall be discussed. Based on this understanding of European identity, the next step will then be to specify why the existence of European identity is of such great importance for the EU. Then, it will be described whether European identity has played a role on the EU's agenda and in this context if the EU has tried to actively foster identity among EU citizens. Linking to this, the next section will develop if European identity can be built and if so how this can be achieved. Finally, the concept of social media will be described. Here, a link to the EP's social media use and its overall communication policy will be made. Moreover, the theoretical connections between the concepts will be established and highlighted in the interim conclusion.

### 2.1. Defining Collective European Identity

“With the European Union, for the first time, the question is posed whether the peaceful and voluntary integration of nations under the relinquishment of the right to self-determination and under the care of a political, supranational entity, can also give rise to a stable sense of community, without that enemy images or ethnic segregation dominate as identity-establishing elements. ”

(Walkenhorst, 1999, p. 20)<sup>2</sup>

In the following, the question regarding the essence and substance of the contested and debated concept of European identity will be answered. It has to be clarified in advance that the following thesis will solely concentrate on the meaning of identity relating to the European Union (EU) and not the European continent. By doing so one is able to avoid a potential “dilemma of lack of sophistication” (Bruell, 2007, p. 369).<sup>3</sup> European identity, as well as national or regional identity connote a collective form of identity or in short *collective identity* (Walkenhorst, 1999, p. 28). In general collective identity can be defined as “[...] the emotionally powerful sense of belonging to a group [...]” (McMahon, 2012, p. 473). Walkenhorst (1999, p. 28) uses a similar definition. “Collective identity corresponds to the basic human need to form groups and to feel a sense of belonging to a group.”<sup>4</sup> Two distinctive features of col-

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<sup>2</sup> Own translation from German. “Mit der Europäischen Union stellt sich zum ersten Mal die Frage, ob der friedliche und freiwillige Zusammenschluss von Völkern unter der Aufgabe des Selbstbestimmungsrecht und unter Obhut einer politischen Supraebene auch ein stabiles Gemeinschaftsgefühl entstehen lassen kann, ohne dass Feindbilder oder ethnische Abgrenzungen als Identitätsstiftungen dominieren.”

<sup>3</sup> In order to clarify their research interest and to differentiate it from a notion of European identity of Europe, some scholars, for example Antonsich (2012) and Bruell (2007), use the term ‘EUropean identity’ as visual distinction.

<sup>4</sup> Own translation from German. “Kollektive Identität entspricht dem Grundbedürfnis des Menschen, sich zu Gruppen zu formen und sich einer Gruppe zugehörig zu fühlen.”

lective identities become apparent. On the one hand the implication of a sort of affective dimension due to individual feelings of belonging and on the other hand the necessary existence of reference objects to which those feelings of belonging can be projected. Consequently, in terms of European collective identity, the European Union constitutes the corresponding object of identification (Nissen, 2004, p. 21).<sup>5</sup> Pursuant to Vogt, the mutual existence of regional, national, and European collective identity is possible. Hence, a pivotal feature of collective identity is that it is not exclusive and not confined to a single reference system (Vogt, 2007, pp. 351–352). This characteristic is especially significant in consideration of European identity as it entails that individuals do not have to make a decision in favour of one reference system and against another. According to Walkenhorst (1999, pp. 28–41) significant characteristics of collective identity are an inherent ‘we-they’-distinction, internal heterogeneity and the parallel existence of multiple collective identities. Correspondingly, Peters adds that the relation between European collective identity and national identity is not bound to be competitive (Peters, 2005, p. 93). The fundamental features of collective European identity can be summed up as follows. The European Union is the essential reference system for collective European identity to form. Collective identity is not exclusive, allowing the mutual existence of regional, national and European identity. It implies the imposed status of belonging to the EU combined with the actual feeling of belonging to the respective group.

According to Schmitt-Egner (2012, pp. 40–52) the discussion on the substance of European identity is defined by two theoretical approaches. Among *theoretical-discursive approaches* constructivist ideas prevail. Identity is seen as a construct and the process of construction is enabled through mutual interaction and communication in discourses. As the second major approach he identifies the *post-national paradigm*. In the context of the ‘nation-building model’, knowledge of national identity is used as a starting point and extended and deepened in the concept of European identity. The post-national debate on a European identity is dominated by controversies concerning the relationship between national and post-national identities, political versus cultural identity and whether the European Union depicts a rights-based or value-based community.<sup>6</sup> Kostakopoulou (2001, pp. 27–37) has identified six specific ‘modes of identity’ that will now be elaborated dependent on their prevalence in the discussion. As the core of the *Euro-nationalist mode* Kostakopoulou identifies the application of concepts derived from the research on

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<sup>5</sup> Lepsius (2004, pp. 3–4) even claims that the European Union as reference object is not only a prerequisite for identity formation but actually its predecessor the European Community has been the first institutionalized reference point for a European identity.

<sup>6</sup> The question of European identity is often entangled with the question of the nature of the EU polity. In this regard Sjørusen (2012) analyses the EU as a possible value-based, rights-based or problem-solving community. I will not expand on this as it would go beyond the scope of this thesis.

national identity-building to the question of European identity. This leads to the re-birth of a well-known dichotomy: *ethno-nationalism* versus *civic nationalism*. In case of the former, a deep and thick cultural bond is believed to exist between Europeans. Hence, European identity is understood as *cultural identity* which is based on shared heritage, common memories, traditions, values, and myths (Kostakopoulou, 2001, pp. 27–28). The citizens of the EU are seen as an *ethnos*. An *ethnos* is a community of belonging and descent (Balibar, 2003, p. 28). In case of the latter, European identity is conceived as *civic identity*. Europeans do not share a common past, but a collective future. As a mainly political community, they are connected by certain political core values (Kostakopoulou, 2001, pp. 28–30). Here the European citizenry is identified as *demos*. Balibar (2003, p. 27) characterizes a *demos* as a subject of representation and choice as well as a legal entity. According to Kostakopoulou neither parameter of the Euro-nationalist mode is suitable for giving European identity its substance as they have been developed in the context of the nation state and hence should not be simply reproduced at the European level (Kostakopoulou, 2001, p. 31). In contrast, she supports a *constructivist approach* to identity. Delanty follows a similar chain of argumentation. A strong cultural European identity, a European *ethnos*, cannot exist due to a lack of common language<sup>7</sup> and emotive shared memory. Although a political European identity is certainly more appealing to him, in his opinion it still lacks the crucial point that collective identity is not static but a process which is embedded in participation and communicative discourses. He introduces the constructivist concept of a *cosmopolitan European identity* (Delanty, 2005, pp. 129ff.).

“To the extent that identification with the state mutates into an orientation to the constitution, the universalistic constitutional norms acquire a kind of priority over the specific background context of the respective national histories.” (Habermas, 2006, p. 78)

Habermas’ concept of *constitutional patriotism* is commonly perceived as the most elaborate theory within the paradigm of civic nationalism. On the post-national, European level, identification is not affectively fixated on the state but shifted to the constitution.

In contrast to the concepts outlined above, Bruter focuses on the individual level, aiming at defining European identity by examining what people mean when they articulate themselves as European. According to Bruter, European identity is a form of *political identity*, which contains a *cultural and a civic component*. The former is a sense of belonging towards a specific *political group* which is defined based on

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<sup>7</sup> In contrast Vogt (2007, p. 353) argues that nowadays most nations are multilingual. There can be several languages but one collective identity or one language but several collective identities.

culture, values, religion and ethnicity. The latter, on the other hand, expresses the identification with a *political structure* which is defined as a certain set of institutions, rights and rules (Bruter, 2005, p. 12). Moreover, Bruter is able to conclude and empirically prove that the civic-cultural distinction is present within the European identity of individuals (ibid. 2005, p. 114). Even Antonsich who favours the notion of a post-identity Europe, establishing a somewhat ‘counter-thesis’ to European identity based on utilitarian aspects, has to admit that “The analysis of these opinions clearly confirms the relevance of the ethnic-civic distinction in relation to EUrope.” (Antonsich, 2012, p. 489)

### **2.1.1 The Significance of European Identity for The European Union**

“[...] one of the main questions concerning the future of the EU is that of collective identity: to what extent is this a necessary requirement for the EU to develop a legitimate policy as well as to establish the common will needed for collective action?” (Sjursen, 2012, p. 505)

As outlined above, there is no shared definition of European identity existent among scholars. However, supporters of this concept coincide in the quest of the very same, due to the necessity of its existence for the European Union. The question of why the development of collective European identity is essential for the EU is embedded in the broader notion of why collective identity is relevant to any political system and how this applies to the EU polity.

#### **2.1.1.1 The ‘Democratic Deficit’**

The alleged *democratic deficit* of the EU is often mentioned along with the concept of European identity. Müller (2011, pp. 161–174) addresses the EU’s democratic deficit from the ‘complementary theory of civil society’. Accordingly, the European civil society is composed of four dimensions, European identity and the European public sphere being two substantial components.<sup>8</sup> Müller remarks that instead of one deficit, it is better understood as accumulation of institutional and socio-cultural deficits. Müller suggests that the EU’s deficit is de facto based on a deficit of the European civil society, proclaiming a fundamental interconnection between both concepts. Simon Hix identifies five ‘standard claims’ that are hidden behind the term democratic deficit. In short, it is argued that European integration has increased executive power and decreased national parliamentary control (1), that the European Parliament is too weak (2), that there is not democratic electoral contest for EU political office or over the direction of the EU policy agenda (3), that the EU is too distant

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<sup>8</sup> As such European identity is intrinsically connected with the other dimensions of European civil society. Of particular interest is the linkage between collective identity and the public sphere (2011, p. 163). Unfortunately it would go beyond the scope of this thesis to dwell on the conceptual commonalities or disparities between the two concepts.

from voters (4), and that there is a gap between policies wanted by citizen and policies they get (5). Hix is able to confute four out of the five claims, leaving the third claim what he believes to be the substance of the EU's democratic deficit. Accordingly, the EU does not meet the substantial requirements to be considered a democratic system. Thus, he recommends to strengthen political competition, democratic contest and debate (Hix, 2008, pp. 67–86). In accordance with Müller, Thalmaier (2006, pp. 10–12) clarifies that the core of the EU's deficit is actually a deficit of the European public sphere, whose existence is in turn a prerequisite for the emergence of identity. In consonance with Hix' line of reasoning, she consents, that the EU is in the definite need of more vigorous debate. Although there seems to be some form of correlation between the EU's democratic deficit and European identity, it is not the main reason for the necessity of European collective identity.

### **2.1.1.2 Legitimacy**

Collective identity is important for the support and the cohesion of a political entity, as its presence is closely connected to the *democratic legitimacy* of a political system (Rautenfeld, 2007, p. 105). According to Peters (2005, p. 98) “[...] legitimacy requires that people have some beliefs about a political order that motivate them to support that order in some way, to accept obligations towards it and to act mainly according to its rules [...].” In this regard, it is necessary to distinguish between two types of support that can be generated towards a political system: *specific support* and *diffuse support* (Easton, 1975, p. 436). The development of specific support among people is premised on satisfactory outputs and performances by the respective political authorities (Easton, 1975, p. 437). In this regard, specific support is ‘object-specific’ as it is both a response to the incumbent political authorities and a response to the actions and performances of these authorities (Easton, 1975, p. 437). However Easton emphasises that in the long term political authorities cannot solely rely on support in exchange for benefits (Easton, 1967, p. 269). As opposed to the former, diffuse support is not dependent on the favourability of outputs and performances. Inhabiting such ‘unconditional attachment’ members will continue to support the political system, even if its outputs are not congruent with their own interests and needs (Easton, 1967, p. 273). Diffuse support is linked to the intrinsic value a person attributes to a certain object (Easton, 1975, p. 444). Whereas outputs and performance are subject to fluctuations, diffuse support is of greater continuity and durability. Easton characterises diffuse support as ‘basic’, meaning that it is not only directed towards the incumbent but the whole political entity. According to Easton diffuse support manifests in *trust* and in the belief in *legitimacy* of the respective political object (Easton, 1975, pp. 444–451). On this basis, Thalmaier argues that the

EU as a political entity is also in need of diffuse support in order to be ensured of fundamental trust. Hence, the existence of collective identity and the identification with the European community will generate such diffuse support (Thalmaier, 2006, pp. 5–7).

Fritz W. Scharpf differentiates between *input-oriented legitimacy* and *output-oriented legitimacy*. Input-oriented legitimacy equals ‘government by the people’, whereas output-oriented legitimacy equals ‘government for the people’ (Scharpf, 1999, p. 6). In case of the former, the legitimacy of political choices is based on reflecting the common preferences of the people (Scharpf, 1999, p. 6). Scharpf argues that the crucial point of input-oriented theories of democratic legitimacy is to establish a justification of majority decisions. Within the input-oriented perspective the quest for legitimacy is filled with ‘thick’ collective identity, consisting of solidarity, a common history and a common culture.<sup>9</sup> Hence, collective identity is able to legitimise actions which are derived from majority rule (ibid. 1999, pp. 7–9). Yet, Scharpf argues that due to cultural diversity of its member states, the EU has little chance to attain ‘thick’ collective identity (Scharpf, 1999, p. 9). In case of output-oriented legitimacy, the legitimacy of political choices is dependent on the strengthening of *common welfare* (ibid. 1999, p. 6). In this regard, legitimacy is derived from the capability to develop collective solutions for existing problems. Unlike input-orientated legitimacy, here thick collective identity is not a prerequisite for legitimacy of the political system. Output-orientated legitimacy is based on *common interest*. Hence, the mere presence of ‘thin’ collective identity as well as the coexistence of a variety of collective identities is sufficient and not an obstacle. “[...]There is, therefore, no conceptual difficulty in defining the European Union as the appropriate constituency for the collective resolution of certain classes of common problems.” (Scharpf, 1999, p. 11) At the same time, the presented theoretical distinction between input- and output-oriented legitimacy cannot be empirically retrieved. In democratic nation states input- and output-oriented legitimacy do not only exist in parallel, but are also complementary (ibid. 1999, p. 12).

To put it briefly, the existence of collective identity contributes to the legitimacy of a democratic political entity. Ostlinning argues that the formation and strengthening of European identity would lead to an improvement of EU integration. Both, input- and output-oriented legitimacy have to prevail mutually in the European Union (Ostlinning, 2011, pp. 78–84).

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<sup>9</sup> Regarding the models of collective European identity in Chapter 2.1, this would be defined as cultural identity.

## **2.1.2 European Identity in the course of European Integration**

Up to now, the fundamental questions of substance and necessity of collective European identity have been addressed. In order to attain a coherent theoretical framework of European identity and to illustrate the link with the subsequent empirical analysis, it is necessary to now approach the issue of building European identity. First of all, the question whether European identity has played a role on the EU's agenda will be pursued. Secondly, against the backdrop of building European identity, factors which influence the formation of European identity will be identified.

### **2.1.2.1 European Identity on The European Union's Agenda**

Bruter asserts that European institutions have actively attempted to foster a European identity. According to Bruter, the process of European integration can be divided into four distinct stages, whereas instead of replacement, each stage adds a new perspective and objective (Bruter, 2005, pp. 58–59). Of interest here will be solely the fourth phase of development: 'European citizenry, European citizenship, and the attempt to foster a new European identity', which approximately started as of 1985. The fourth phase has derived from the need for greater democratic legitimacy of the EU institutions. As a consequence, the EU has introduced an exclusive EU citizenship as well as attempted to foster European identity. Resulting measures were generally aimed at European citizen and tried to enhance Europe's accessibility (Bruter, 2005, pp. 72–74). Bruter even assumes that the development of EU citizenship has been partially shaped by the intention to increase identification with the EU (Bruter, 2005, p. 73). Kostakopoulou has also identified the presence of European identity on the EU's agenda. She develops five phases, each exhibiting a unique emphasis. Of interest will be the second phase (1972 to 1984) focusing mainly on 'European identity' and the third phase (1984 to 1991) which puts an emphasis on 'the duality of Europe – a people's Europe versus a states' Europe. In case of the former, a mere economic focus, a 'Europe of goods', shifted towards a more political focus, a 'people's Europe'. The 'Declaration on European Identity' (1973) defined European identity as a civic identity which is based on 'principles of law, social justice, human rights and democracy'. Moreover, in this phase a uniform passport was introduced. Kostakopoulou argues that a Euro-nationalist mode of identity based on processes of national identity-building was dominant. In case of the latter and regarding European identity, especially the reports of the 'Adonnino Committee' (1985) must be mentioned. The established measures were designed to connect the Community and its citizen as well as to strengthen a common identity (Kostakopoulou, 2001, pp. 44–48). Amongst other things the 'People's Europe Campaign' has introduced common myths, symbols and a European hymn which are typical means

of identity-building (Rautenfeld, 2007, p. 111). In addition, Ostlinning (2011, p. 92) stresses the 'Europe for citizens 2007-2013 program'. One of its general aims has been the development of a shared European identity of a rather cultural kind.<sup>10</sup> Apart from various reports and programs also the mass opinion survey of the EU, the 'Eurobarometer', questions the feelings of belonging towards the EU.<sup>11</sup> Embedded in the broader research subject of European citizenship, EU citizens are questioned about their attachment to Europe and the EU as well as whether they define themselves by their nationality, as a European citizen or as European only (European Commission -Directorate General for Communication, 2014).<sup>12</sup> As shown by this brief outline, European identity in civic as well as cultural form has not only played and still plays a role on the European Union's agenda, but has been actively built.

### 2.1.2.2 Building Collective Identity among Europeans

Statements concerning the process of European identity formation among EU citizen, as well as the EU' ability to actively influence and build collective identity among its citizenry, are substantially dependent on the initial understanding of European identity that the respective scholar has adopted.

"[...] The socialisation and politicisation on elite as well as citizen level through current European issues by whom they are directly affected [are], besides traditional ties, crucial for an identification with the EU." (Schmitt-Egner, 2012, p. 43)<sup>13</sup>

The dichotomy underlying the concept of European identity is reproduced. Accordingly, the extent of European identity can only be partially influenced as pre-political, historically and culturally existing bonds can hardly be changed in the present. Bruell (2007, pp. 369–385) argues that due to the dominance of the nation state, identification with the EU cannot be founded on a shared history. Instead a prerequisite for identification will be a vision of a joint presence and future which is exclusive to the EU as a political system and has to be articulated and communicated in *public discourse*. Thalmaier (2006, pp. 10-12; 21) equally stresses that a *European public sphere* and consequently intensified communication between Europeans about European topics in the form of debate and discussion will lead to the formation of European collective identity. Likewise, Sösemann (2007, pp. 259–263) argues that in order for collective identity to develop, public communication has to be expanded by European topics. In this regard, the media plays a key role in shaping the public

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<sup>10</sup> The Europe for Citizens program has been extended for the time span 2014-2020.

<sup>11</sup> Eurobarometer surveys can be requested online at [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/index_en.htm)

<sup>12</sup> Nissen (2004) tries to answer the question of the existence of European collective identity on the basis of the Eurobarometer surveys. She argues that questions about the extent of European identity have an emotional as well as benefit-oriented dimension.

<sup>13</sup> Own translation from German. "[...] Die Sozialisierung und Politisierung sowohl auf Ebene der Eliten wie der Bürger durch aktuelle Europäische Themen und Probleme, die sie direkt betreffen [sind], neben traditionellen Bindungen mit entscheidend für eine Identifizierung mit der EU."



image of the European Union. Rautenfeld (2007, pp. 110–122) emphasises education as the main factor which will contribute to the development of collective European identity. Actions by the EU in the education sector have intensified. Through enabling exchange and mobility and hence expanding citizens' possibilities to the European level, the feeling of being 'European' can be strengthened. According to Berg (2003, p. 421) two crucial processes allow citizen to identify with the European Union: *Labelling* and *Participation*. In case of the former, he illustrates that the media has the ability to shape how people perceive the EU as it has the power to label events as national or European and thus can decide whether in certain cases the European Union or the nation state will be appreciated as the respective benefactor. In case of the latter, Berg argues that active participation leads stronger commitment (ibid. 2003, p. 421). In Fligstein's study the issue under scrutiny is whether a European society exists, and in addition how different levels of 'Europeanness' can be explained. In this context, he is able to single out *age, education, mobility* and *social status* as the four main factors which positively influence the level of European identity, as they enable fully profit from the advantages of European integration (Fligstein, 2008, pp. 206–207). In terms of identity-building measures, Walkenhorst (1999, pp. 179–206) classifies three areas which jointly contribute to the formation of identity: *identity-building policy sectors, mythologization* and *symbolisation*. The EU can reach their citizen through the official channels in the form of educational policy, through policy areas which explicitly aim at the formation of European identity, and through the use of media. Concerning the latter, the EU is able to directly address its citizen. According to Walkenhorst, this may include advertisement, information as well as public relation. Additionally, several common European symbols have been established, whose main objectives are the reduction of complexity, the advertisement of current policies and the visualisation of the existence of a collective European people (Walkenhorst, 1999, p. 205). Likewise, Bruter identifies two actors and two means that have the ability to impact the extent of European identity. On the one hand the mass media and messages spread about the EU, influence citizens' level of identity. Whereas good news in terms of achievement have a positive influence, bad news in terms of failure have a negative influence on European identity. Moreover EU institutions can make use of symbols to foster identification (Bruter, 2005, pp. 123–128). According to Bruter the symbols of European integration mirror the civic-cultural identity contradiction. As civic symbols he identifies the EP election, the Euro as single currency and the EU passport. The EU anthem and the design of the Euro notes on the other hand can be regarded as cultural symbols. In contrast, the EU flag and the Day of Europe comprise civic as well as a cultural values (Bruter, 2005, p. 85).

In a nutshell, the existence of a European public sphere, thus communication, participation and debate, European issues in the media and education are three broad factors which can influence collective European identity. Moreover, it has been highlighted that the EU can actively build identity. Other factors, such as age and social status are outside the EU's range of influence.

## **2.2 Definition: The Web 2.0 and Social Media**

In the context of European identity building, the present thesis is concerned with an analysis of the European Parliament's communication strategy via social media. In the following, the key terms Web 2.0 and social media, as well as enclosed concepts will be defined, classified and distinguished. In the subsequent sections the EP's social media application and the link between social media and its communication policy will be discussed.

When trying to find a common definition of the *Web 2.0*, scholars coincide in the realisation that a universally valid definition of the Web 2.0 is not existent (Rother, 2010, p. 4), (Walsh, Hass, & Kilian, 2011, p. 4), (Berge & Buesching, 2011, p. 21), (Kraemer, 2014, p. 15). The Web 2.0 is not a tangible object, but rather a fusion of new procedures and technological innovations, that mark a distinct change of direction in the use of the Internet. Therefore, the Web 2.0 is commonly perceived as the successor of the prior 'version' of the Internet, the so-called *Web 1.0* (Rother, 2010, pp. 1–4). Tim O'Reilly, the initiator of the term Web 2.0, has developed a first, broad definition of this concept.

"[...] Web 2.0 doesn't have a hard boundary, but rather, a gravitational core. You can visualize Web 2.0 as a set of principles and practices that tie together a veritable solar system of sites that demonstrate some or all of those principles, at a varying distance from that core." (O'Reilly, 2005, p. 2)

According to O'Reilly the stage of Web 2.0 is characterized by internet decentralisation. The focus has shifted towards the user, who is able to actively participate and cooperate in the Web 2.0, enabling the exploitation of resulting *collective intelligence* (O'Reilly, 2005, p. 6). In contrast to the prior Web 1.0, the Web 2.0 has emerged from a mere medium of information, where users are passive recipients, to a medium of communication and participation, where users are able to actively create and produce what is then known as *user-generated content* (Walsh et al., 2011, pp. 3–4). Hence one can notice, pursuant to (Berge & Buesching, 2011, p. 25), an evolution from a *one-to-many* to a *many-to-many* communication. Users are able to participate, communicate, cooperate and create on globally networked platforms (Kraemer, 2014, pp. 15–16). According to Zanger, the term *social media* is synonymous with the Web 2.0. Common denominators of social media platforms are communica-

tion and interaction (Zanger, 2014, pp. 3–5). The Web 2.0 is an umbrella term for several applications which integrate certain types of *social software*. These applications are generally defined as *online communities*, whereas *social network sites* are a specific type of community (Rother, 2010, pp. 4–7). Howard Rheingold has first used the term *virtual community* in the context of his experience with *The Well* (Whole Earth Lectronic Link). From a sociological perspective he defines virtual communities as follows.

“Virtual communities are social alliances that arise in the web, when a sufficient amount of people will publicly debate for a sufficient amount of time and thereby introduce their feelings, so that a network of personal relationships emerges in the cyberspace.” (Rheingold, 1994, p. 16)<sup>14 15</sup>

According to Walsh, Kilian and Hass (2011, pp. 10–12) online communities either focus on certain topics or users. They can differ in content, format and strength of communication.

“We define social network sites as web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.” (Boyd & Ellison, 2008, p. 211)

Boyd and Ellison (2008, pp. 211–216) point out that the key distinction between social networks and other online communities lies in the possibility to publicly display the own social network. These connections frequently reflect already existing ties. The Web 2.0 and its diverse applications constitute a popular area of research. Social media has gained significant recognition in the fields of marketing and business administration. But the relevance of social media is not limited economics. On the contrary, also the political sphere has acknowledged social networks as a communication channel which could have a crucial impact in shaping public opinion (Machill, Beiler, & Krüger, 2014, pp. 9–11).

### **2.2.1 Application of Social Media by The European Parliament**

The European Union and its institutions have also made the transition from the Web 1.0 to the Web 2.0. Not only do they offer a wide range of information on their websites, but they are also active on a variety of social media platforms. Social media

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<sup>14</sup> Own translation from German. “Virtuelle Gemeinschaften sind soziale Zusammenschlüsse, die dann im Netz entstehen, wenn genug Leute diese öffentlichen Diskussionen lange genug führen und dabei ihre Gefühle einbringen, so dass im Cyberspace ein Geflecht künstlicher Beziehungen entsteht.”

<sup>15</sup> Rheingold made this observation before the Web 2.0 was rung in. Here it becomes evident what Hass, Walsh and Kilian (2011) mean when they state that the Web 2.0 is not a revolution, but an evolution and a more innovative use of already existing technology.

has become a core element of the EU's public relations activities. This section will focus primarily on the European Parliament's presence on social media platforms. The following table facilitates to obtain a general overview of the social media platforms on which the European Parliament is represented.

**Table 1 The European Parliament's presence on social media platforms**

Social Media Platform	Shared Content
Facebook <sup>16</sup>	Updates on EU affairs Chats with members of the EP
Twitter	News in 24 languages Articles Live streaming of debates Photo galleries
Google Plus	Information about the Parliament's work Hangouts with MEP Discussions Entertainment
LinkedIn	Discussions about EU policy making
Foursquare	Real time geo-positioning
Flickr	Original photographs of daily life in the EU Parliament
Instagram	Original photographs of daily life in the EU Parliament
YouTube	News reports Short movies
Pinterest	Infographics
Spotify	Playlists
Vine	Brief videos of policies
EP Newshub	Collection of all social media feeds of MEP, political groups and EU institutions

Source: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/atyourservice/en/20150201PVL00030/Social-media>, own compilation

In this regard, it is striking that the European Parliament is not only represented on the most known social networks such as Facebook and Twitter, but in fact is active on all major Web 2.0 applications. Evidently the contents shared are dependent on the peculiarities of the respective online community.

### **2.2.2 The European Parliament's Communication Policy**

The background for the European Parliament's high level of activity on social media platforms can be integrated into the European Union's fundamental *communication policy* (Prutsch, 2005). The necessity for a common European communication policy has been put forward by the European Commission's "White Paper on a European Communication Policy" in 2006. In sum its main objective is to establish a coherent

<sup>16</sup> The European Parliament refers to Facebook as the "flagship of EP social media presence" (<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/atyourservice/en/20150201PVL00030/Social-media>).

and joint communication policy for EU institutions in order to close the existent *communication gap* between the European Union and its citizens. As a consequence, the EU institutions have to rework their communication approaches, hence place their focus on the citizen's needs. Apart from mere one-way information, dialogue and debate is desired (European Commission, 2006). Accordingly, the European Union is required to ensure the information of the European citizenry about European issues. Regarding the objectives of communication between EU institutions and EU citizens, three main principles have been developed: *listening, communication and connecting locally*. The use of the web and linked platforms has been one of many initiatives in order to achieve those objectives. Obviously, the European Parliament has actively realised this initiative, hence amplifying the possibilities of information, communication and debate (Prutsch, 2005). In the "Report on journalism and new media – creating a public sphere in Europe" several suggestions for improvement are made which are based on the underlying objective of facilitating a European public sphere. In this respect social media is assigned particular potential. In brief, the use of social media enables the EP to connect, communicate and engage with new, possibly younger, audiences which are not as reachable otherwise (Løkkegaard, 2010, pp. 12–15).

"Web 2.0 tools are core elements of the European Parliament's new communication strategy, as the characteristics of social networks are congruent with the criteria of democratic political public relations work – Accessibility, participation, plurality and interactivity." (Dialer & Richter, 2013, p. 37)<sup>17</sup>

Social media platforms are indeed an important tool in the European Parliament's new communication strategy 2011-2014. Dialer and Richter identify four main targets: Emphasis on the EP's vital political role, distribution of information, information about legislative processes and involvement of citizen. In particular this new strategy focuses on participation and dialogue. However, they also identify two major shortcomings. Firstly, the European Union is still missing a joint communication strategy. Secondly they argue that although social media does provide new opportunities in terms of extensive reach, this reach is limited to a specific part of European citizen, namely the younger generation. In order to overcome these shortcomings, Dialer and Richter suggest, that an effective communication approach has to be tailored to its diverse audience (Dialer & Richter, 2013, pp. 34–40).

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<sup>17</sup> Own translation from German. "Web-2.0-Tools sind Kernelemente der neuen Kommunikationsstrategie des EP, da sich die Charakteristika von sozialen Netzwerken mit den Kriterien demokratischer politischer Öffentlichkeitsarbeit –Zugangsoffenheit, Partizipation, Pluralität und Interaktivität – decken."

## **2.3 Interim Conclusion**

The theoretical framework of European identity and the Web 2.0 has been established. Before proceeding with the further research, a brief summary of the main findings derived from the literature review shall be given. The concept of European identity is heavily contested and debated. A common definition is not existent. However, European identity is predominantly understood as a kind of collective identity which means the status and sense of belonging towards a certain group. The dichotomy of civic versus cultural identity is inherent. Research has shown that both components are present when people assess their feeling of belonging to the EU. Moreover, the existence of European identity is vital for the EU in terms of political legitimacy. As has been shown, the building of a collective European identity, both cultural and civic, has been on the EU's agenda. The EU has actively tried to foster collective identity among its citizen by all available means. In this context, it has been stated that collective identity can be politically initiated and constructed (Walkenhorst, 1999, p. 43). Public debate about European topics, the use of media, the communication of messages and European symbols, are factors which contribute to the formation of European identity and can be actively used by the EU for identity building. Here, the point of intersection with social media is found. Its characteristics as a medium of communication and participation have led to the integration in the European Parliament's communication strategy. Without an intermediary, social media platforms can be used to inform, communicate, foster debate and engage citizen. In the context of European identity, the EP communication strategy and social media, the thesis at hand will add a new point to the discussion. Mainly embedded in the debate on European identity building, social media as used by the EP will be considered and analysed regarding its potential for European identity building. The appeal of this idea is connected to the issue in the debate. The EU is in need for collective European identity, but former attempts of buildings have not yet led to satisfying results. In order to execute the research and to find an answer, the concept of collective European identity and the inherent dichotomy of civic vs cultural identity will be especially relevant and will be applied. Moreover, the factors that have been identified to contribute to identity formation will be crucial in the subsequent research.

### **3 Methodology**

The subsequent chapter will present and discuss the explicit research methodology that has been chosen in order to answer the sub-questions and the main research question. As a reminder, the thesis at hand intends to answer the following main research question: *To what extent does the European Parliament have recourse to social media for purposes of European identity building?*

Firstly, it is crucial to justify the fundamental case selection. Hereafter, an explication of the overall research design, an illustration of the chosen research methods and an explanation of their explicit application will follow. It will also be imperative to clarify the connection between the research question and the chosen research design, thus justifying why research in the chosen manner will enable to answer the posed questions.

#### **3.1 The Case Selection**

In the following, the fundamental *case selection* will be justified. Evidently, the choice of the research subject, which has been made prior to the analysis, has influenced the overall structure of this thesis. Here, the pre-selection of a suitable research subject has been twofold, since the analysis will solely focus on the usage of social media by European Parliament and in this regard in particular on Facebook as an exemplary social media platform. On the one hand technical reasons have resonated in this selection. In terms of time and space, it would simply go beyond the scope of this thesis, to take the social media use of each EU institution and each social media platform into account. On the other hand substantive reasons have led to the choice of the EP and Facebook as research subjects.

##### **3.1.1 The European Parliament**

The European Parliament is a supranational EU institution. The fact that it is the only EU institution which is directly elected by the European citizenry, establishes a proximity to the EU citizens which other EU institutions are potentially missing. According to Hix (2008, p. 83), the EP is significantly more trusted by people than any other EU institution. With respect to social media use, the EP has integrated social media as an inherent part into its general communication policy. As shown in Table 1, it is active on all major social media platforms. Moreover, social media has played an important role in the 2014 EP election campaign.

##### **3.1.2 Facebook**

As a consequence of the first selection, Facebook has been chosen as the exemplary social media platform to constitute the actual research subject of the subsequent content analysis. Assumptions of its particular suitability were consolidated by

knowledge acquired in the expert interviews. It is notable that EP itself considers Facebook its “flagship” of social media presence. Additionally, in terms of users, Facebook provides access to a broader public, as it is used by the majority of the ‘general’ public and not limited to scholars and journalists. In terms of content, FB allows several possibilities of expression and visualisation. There is no limitation concerning the length of a post.

In the following, the chosen research design, as well as the specific qualitative research methods and their application will be discussed.

### **3.2 Research Design**

The relevant concepts of European identity and European identity building have been established through a literature review (Chapter 2). Moreover, social media has been identified as a major component of the EP’s current communication policy. The actual empirical research (Chapter 4) will be executed in a twofold manner, due to the choice of two qualitative research methods. First will be *expert interviews* conducted with social media commissioners of the European Parliament and the EP’s information office in Germany. Second will be a *qualitative content analysis* of the European Parliament’s central Facebook page. A mixed methodology, the practice of *triangulation*, will expand the knowledge acquired about the research subject, hence allows grasping the issue in its full complexity, and in terms of the subsequent analysis, will increase the information acquisition necessary to answer the research questions (Flick, 2008, p. 318). In the present thesis, the use of mixed research methods corresponds to the *between-method triangulation* and the *data-triangulation*. In line with the former, two diverse but equivalent methods, expert interviews and a content analysis are combined. Pursuant to the latter, data from different sources is combined. In this regard, a rather new possibility, which will be made use of, is to triangulate electronic data with for instance verbal data collected in interviews (Flick, 2008, pp. 311–314).

In the following, the use and value of each research method as well as the processes of data collection and analysis will be discussed separately.

#### **3.2.1 Expert Interviews**

Social media has been identified as a substantial part of the EP’s communication policy and is extensively used. Because of the diversity of accounts on a variety of social media platforms, it is difficult to get a precise overview of how social media is used by the EP. In order to gain insight into fundamental strategies of use and consequently to analyse the potential of social media for purposes of European identity-building, knowledge will be gained by conducting expert interviews.



### 3.2.1.1 Method of Data Collection

Expert interviews depict a specific kind of *guided interviews* which are characterised by its aim to extract practical knowledge through interviewing a person identified as an expert in the area of interest. Consequently the definition of an expert is always dependent on and will be determined by the particular research interest (Flick, 2010, pp. 214f.). In this thesis the central objective of the expert interview will be to receive insights into the EP's social media use. By gathering firsthand knowledge, it will be possible to analyse in what way social media as used by the EP can contribute to European identity building and particularly its potential for civic vis-à-vis cultural identity building. The purpose of conducting interviews in this study is comparable to what Bogner and Menz identify as the *systematizing expert interview*, which allows to partake in the expert's exclusive knowledge that is otherwise out of the researcher's reach. Subsequently, the accumulation of the expert's practical knowledge will enable the researcher to gather the essential information for answering the research question (Bogner & Menz, 2009, pp. 64–65). Against this backdrop, the actual experts to be interviewed have to be found.

“Expert describes the specific role of the interviewee as a source of special knowledge about the social circumstance to be researched. Expert interviews are a method used to make this knowledge accessible.” (Gläser & Laudel, 2010, p. 12)<sup>18</sup>

This definition clarifies that not the expert himself is the subject of interest but rather his connection to the area of interest. Hence, the expert acts as an intermediary between the researcher and the research object, allowing the researcher to partake (Gläser & Laudel, 2010, pp. 12f.). For the present thesis, this means that experts need to have a direct connection to the EP. Not as MEPs, but as executors of its communication with EU citizen. Additionally, they need to have expertise in communication via social media. In a nutshell, only people charged with the supervision of the European Parliament's social media accounts can be considered an expert. Here, experts are the ‘actors’ and not the ‘users’. Against this background, three experts have been explicitly chosen due to the variety of knowledge, experience and insight they hold. As previously mentioned, a main objective of the EP's communication strategy is the local connection to EU citizen, which is mainly executed by the information offices in each EU member state. First, Ms Wold has been contacted via email, what then also resulted in the establishment of contact to Mr Kunzemann and Ms Wozniak as representatives of the EP's central social media communication. All three experts are indeed in charge of the EP's social media activity, but occupied

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<sup>18</sup> Own translation from German. “Experte beschreibt die spezifische Rolle des Interviewpartners als Quelle von Spezialwissen über die zu erforschenden sozialen Sachverhalte. Experteninterviews sind eine Methode, dieses Wissen zu erschließen.”

with different social media platforms, leading to a broader spectrum of specific expert knowledge and greater possibilities for in-depth understanding of social media's potentials in the context of European identity building. The following compilation serves as an overview of the conducted interviews.

**Table 2 Overview Expert interviews**

Interviewee	Institution	Remit	Language	Date	Location	Duration (min.)
Ms Wold	Information Office of the EP in Germany	Management of the Facebook and Twitter account	German	01.07.2014	Via telephone	35:30
Mr Kunzemann	European Parliament Web communication team	EP website Coordination of the EP's Twitter-network Social media monitoring	German	10.07.2014	Via telephone	45:18
Ms Wozniak	European Parliament Web communication team	Coordination of the EP's social media presence In charge of the Facebook and Google+	English	23.07.2014	Via telephone	37:53

Source: (Kunzemann, 2014; Wold, 2014; Wozniak, 2014), own compilation

### 3.2.1.2 Method of Data Analysis

A guideline has been developed in order to ensure the extraction of relevant information. According to Flick, a well-prepared guideline is a necessity due to its 'control function'. Consequently, it allows including relevant expert knowledge and excluding irrelevant information. Hence, the interviewer has to gather profound theoretical knowledge of the topic of interest before the actual interview takes place (Flick, 2010, pp. 214ff.). The construction of the guideline and the design of the actual interview questions will follow the principles and recommendations as stated by Gläser and Laudel. In brief, the interview guideline is supposed to reflect the concrete research interest. The information need is a result of the main research question which will be translated into the topics and questions of the interview guideline. In this regard one should absolutely refrain from merely handing down the research question to the respective expert, as this would sabotage the subsequent analysis where primarily objective facts and not subjective opinions are of interest (Gläser & Laudel, 2010, pp. 111–115). Concerning the structure of the guideline, it is advisable to start with a kind of 'warm-up question' which can be easily answered by the respective interviewee. Questions should be divided into several topic areas. A suitable ending question would allow the interviewee to mention further important aspects which have not yet been addressed. Moreover, the developed guideline does not have to be definite. It can be adjusted afterwards and should always be adapted

to the particular interviewee and situation (ibid., pp. 144–149). Taking the stated principles and recommendations into account, 4 main topic areas or categories have been developed which each on their own will provide information about the potential of social media as used by the European Parliament, for European identity-building. The established categories are: *Communication strategy of the EP in social media, User, Projects and Campaigns, Prospects*. To each topic area, several more specific interview questions have been assigned. Of interest are questions concerning guidelines, strategies, user behaviour, campaigns and projects. Apart from these factual questions, the interviewees will be asked opinion questions at the end of the interview in order to gain insight into their personal experience with social media on behalf of the European Parliament. Due to the premise of openness, questions will not be asked one by one, but addressed if the specific interest is not sufficiently covered by the expert's answer. Before the actual interview, I will enquire the explicit approval of the call recording and if desired, assure the anonymity of questioning. The interview will start with an introductory, easy question, referring to the remit of the respective expert. Furthermore, questions will be adapted to the specific situation of each interviewee. By conducting these expert interviews, I aim to gather information that will enable to answer in what way social media as used by the EP can contribute to European identity-building and in this regard to the building of a cultural or a civic European identity. Also in terms of content, I expect to gain insight if the notion of European identity building shapes the EP's communication via social media. The interviews will be fully transcribed. In terms of the analysis, the gathered material will be structured based on the previously mentioned categories and compiled in a table. In the context of the potential of social media for European identity-building, I will then be able to sort, summarise and compare the interview material. The interview guideline can be found in the appendix of the thesis.

### **3.2.2 Qualitative Content Analysis**

The second qualitative method used in the mixed methodology approach is a qualitative content analysis of the EP's central Facebook page as an exemplary social media platform. In concrete, the analysis will be conducted by using a *qualitative content analysis* pursuant to Philipp Mayring. Qualitative content analyses provide an opportunity for systematically processing textual material based on communication. A qualitative content analysis puts its focus on embedding the material in the context of communication. Hence, one does not only observe the visible phrase, or in regard of this study 'post', but also analyses the target audience, the sender and the receiver of the message, the background of the message and possible characteristics (Mayring, 2008b, pp. 469–471). Mayring's approach to a qualitative content

analysis fits the objective of the study at hand for several reasons. A theoretically justified concept of European identity will be applied to the research subject. The approach used is hence theory-driven and rule-based as the textual material will be examined using a category system which has been constructed in advance (Mayring, 2008b, p. 471). To be exact and to apply Mayring's term, the approach will resemble a *deductive category application*. Here, categories of the evaluation are theoretically justified and developed in advance. These explicit categories will then be assigned to the textual material. If necessary, it will be possible to revise and extend the categories during the actual analysis. Although the method used is clearly qualitative in character, it also allows utilising parts of a quantitative content analysis, as for example frequencies (Mayring, 2000). According to Mayring (2008a, p. 11) the deductive approach is associated with the *structuring* qualitative content analysis.

### **3.2.2.1 Method of Data Collection**

The object of the qualitative content analysis will be the EP's central Facebook page, as a specific and exemplary social media platform used by the EP.<sup>19</sup> The choice of Facebook as the exemplary social media platform to be analysed has been previously justified. In the light of the research interest, 'posts' written and communicated by the EP on its FB page will be understood as the data to be examined. Posts are textual data and as such suitable for a qualitative content analysis. Hence, any kind of visualisation, for instance European symbols whose importance has been stressed in the theory part, will not be considered on their own but only in conjunction with the textual message of the post. The users' comments will not be taken into consideration. Next, it is necessary to define a suitable time frame for the data collection and analysis. Here the research will be limited to the year 2014. Firstly, this data will bear reference to the information gathered from the interviews and therefore allows to detect commonalities as well as contradictions. Secondly, being the year of the European Parliament election, it provides an especially interesting analytical framework, as it will contain special communication in the context of the election campaign 2014. However, a mere consideration of special communication during the EP election would compromise the findings. In order to develop a valid answer to the posed questions, also regular communication has to be considered. Hence data collection as well as analysis will exceed the election campaign. Due to reasons of transparency, traceability and accessibility, posts will be collected and saved as screenshots.

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<sup>19</sup> The EP's central FB page can be accessed via <https://www.facebook.com/europeanparliament?fref=ts>.

### 3.2.2.2 Method of Data Analysis

Mayring's determined processes of structuring qualitative content analysis and deductive category application will guide the ensuing analysis and serve as a framework (Mayring, 2000, 2010, pp. 92ff.) Derived from the specific research questions and the research subject, the core of structuring content analyses are theory-grounded *structuring dimensions*, whose manifestations will be further differentiated and then compiled into a *category system*. For reasons of reproducibility it is indispensable to carefully define when textual content will be assigned to a specific category. Mayring strongly suggests using a *coding guideline* which should contain the developed categories, a concise *definition* thereof, as well as *typical examples* and *rules of coding* (Mayring, 2010, p. 92). With regard to this thesis, the content analysis of the EP's Facebook page aims to answer in what way social media, as used by the EP, can contribute to European identity-building and how the notion of European identity-building shapes the EP's communication via social media. In concrete, the EP's communication via FB will be examined for notions of European-identity building. Specifically, notions of European identity-building will be understood as examples where the EP as an actor frames posts under the notion of European collective identity, thus refers to European commonalities of their users. Consequential, the fundamental structuring dimension will be European collective identity. Furthermore, it is crucial to take the inherent dichotomy in the concept of European identity into account. Carefully defined in the theoretical chapter, the two sub dimensions of the structuring content analysis will be cultural and civic European identity. A coding guideline will determine the rules for when textual material falls under one of the categories.<sup>20</sup> However, the strategy of analysis will deviate from the proposed eight steps (Mayring, 2010, pp. 92–94). Due to the electronic nature of the data, the screening and sighting of suitable material and the subsequent extraction of the material will be performed parallel. Once the textual material that matches the theoretically developed categories has been identified, it will be summarised and described. Moreover, frequencies will be determined and added to the analysis. By conducting a content analysis of the EP's Facebook page I aim to gain in-depth knowledge of the EP's communication via social media and especially whether it is shaped by notions of commonalities, a sense of belonging and we-feeling. If this proves true, it will be interesting to see whether the civic-cultural dichotomy can be retrieved. The coding guideline will be made available in the appendix of the thesis.

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<sup>20</sup>Here the gold standard would be to employ two independent assessors in order to guarantee 'inter-coder reliability' Mayring (2008a, pp. 12–13).

## 4 The European Parliament and Social Media for Identity Building

The core of the subsequent chapter will be the actual empirical analysis of the gathered data under the application of the concepts of European identity and identity building which have been established in the theoretical framework. As a result it will be possible to answer in what way social media, as used by the EP, can contribute to European identity building, as well as how the notion of identity building shapes the EP's communication via social media. Due to the previously discussed mixed methods approach, the argumentation will be of a two-part nature. The argumentation will then result in an interim conclusion.

### 4.1 Expert Interviews: The Need to Link Online and Offline Experiences

The subsequent section contains the analysis of the data collected by the conducted expert interviews and will present the crucial findings.

“We want to segment; we want to target the communication, to reach everyone quickly.” (Wozniak, 2014)

Fundamentally, the European Parliament's exceptionally high presence on social media platforms is guided by the general objective to find a point of intersection with the EU citizen, or in other words “to be where people are” (Wozniak, 2014). Consequently social media is a medium which allows the EP to actively transport certain information and ideas directly to a community. Here it is important to realise that the communities of the respective social media platforms can differ greatly. As the above mentioned quote indicates, the EP has adapted to this fact, resulting in a segmentation of social media communication. As a result of being present on a variety of social media platforms, the EP is thus able to generate a broader reach. Some people might use Facebook but not Google+ or Twitter and vice versa. Hence the limitation to only one social media platform would substantially minimise the available audience. As a consequence the EP does not follow an identical strategy on all social media platforms, but rather the general objective is translated into specific content which is then adapted to the specifications of each platform and the audiences using that platform. In brief, the strategy applied and content shared is contingent on the targeted audience (Wozniak, 2014). In addition, the EP's general strategy can be called a *cross-media strategy* and a combination of *centralisation* and *decentralisation*. The latter especially refers to the social network Twitter. In essence, this means that content will be prepared centrally, but shared on numerous decentralised accounts in order to achieve maximum range (Kunzemann, 2014). To sum up, the main objective and strategy in social media application by the EP, which has been stressed by all three experts, is to maximize the potential of reaching peo-

ple in order to inform, communicate, engage and connect (Kunzemann, 2014; Wold, 2014; Wozniak, 2014).

“The main thing is to present what the Parliament is doing of course.” (Wozniak, 2014)

The realisation of content is planned for each social media platform specifically. However, the content itself is not specific. Instead, content is for the most part based on the Parliament’s work, such as current subjects of discussions, votes and dossiers. The visualisation of the content will then be dependent on the respective platform and the preferences of its users. For example, on Twitter one may find news, information and infographics but no infotainment. On the contrary, infotainment is shared on Facebook, where topics are generally visualised in an easier and more comprehensible way. LinkedIn is a more professional social network, where in-depth discussions are present. Instagram and Flickr on the other hand contain only visual and no textual content (Kunzemann, 2014; Wozniak, 2014). As stated above, the Parliament has created a broad presence on social media platforms in order to shift from one-way information to two-way communication. A possibility made accessible by Web 2.0 applications. With this in mind, it is rather remarkable that the possibilities of communication between the EP and citizens still seem to be limited. In fact, the EP is only able to answer factual questions. Due to the premise of *political neutrality*, there is no aim to actually partake in discussions and political debates. Moreover, communication is time-consuming and oftentimes confronted with limited manpower (Kunzemann, 2014; Wozniak, 2014). Nevertheless some form of debate can be observed between the users. Users’ behaviour may take several forms. In terms of Facebook ‘Eurosceptics’ will mostly voice their opinion in a negative comment. Users with a more positive attitude will often just share or like the respective post. Then again there is a group of users that will emotionally discuss almost every post (Wozniak, 2014). So far, the EP’s communication strategy via social media has been analysed from its central perspective. But the EP information offices play an important role in connecting to citizens locally. In terms of social media application, content is recommended centrally but then adapted to national needs and issues. Particularly interesting in this regard are the different preferences of users of the central and the local Facebook pages. In contrast to the former, the latter prefer mere informational content (Wold, 2014). Evidently, major EU topics are communicated but the general focus is shifted to the national debate. This is in so far crucial as “[...] not necessarily the same things are relevant to people in the one country than in another county.” (Wozniak, 2014)

“If you look at the statistics you can see that the technical conditions and the material conditions are still so different in Europe, that simply because of these differences there are still big differences in usage [of social media].” (Kunzemann, 2014)<sup>21</sup>

In general, the EP is trying to make itself felt to a maximum number of interested people. In specific, and especially on Twitter, specialists and multipliers are targeted. In contrast, during the campaign for the EP election 2014 less interested citizens were targeted in order to motivate them to vote (Kunzemann, 2014). In terms of usage, Facebook can be identified as the most general platform due to its general audience. Citizens from each EU member state and even outside the EU make up the EP’s ‘fans’. All age groups are present, whereas young people form the biggest group. Different from that, users of the EP’s Twitter page consist of journalists, activists and multipliers. Moreover, Twitter users are not as broadly distributed over Europe as Facebook users. The use is much more diverse and dependent on the respective country of origin. For example, in Eastern European states Twitter plays only a minor role (Kunzemann, 2014; Wozniak, 2014). As indicated by the quote above, these vital differences in usage have a more profound background. Differences in usage are not only dependent on interest and profession but are also connected to material and technical conditions. Accordingly, the European Parliament will certainly not be able to reach every EU citizen via social media.

“Facebook, I believe, is more interesting in this regard, if it involves reaching new people or people who for instance are not present on classical news sites and now through diverse apps or promoted posts have the chance to see that this election exists and that it would be interesting for them to participate.” (Kunzemann, 2014)

The campaign for the European Parliament election 2014 has been the first campaign realised on the EP’s central as well as local social media platforms. Although social media has been an important tool to communicate the campaign, the campaign took place online and offline. The content of the general campaign was thus adapted to the specific social media platform and audience. The overall motto ‘This time it’s different’ emphasised the fact that for the first time EU citizens would not only elect the EP but also the president of the European Commission (EC). The main objective of the campaign was then to intensively inform about the election period and ultimately to get people to vote. With this intention specific campaign applications and events have been developed for social media and specifically Facebook. For example, the ‘I’m a Voter’ application was created as a virtual balloon which could be passed on from friend to friend, creating a chain of voters. Less symbolic

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<sup>21</sup> Own translation. The expert interviews with Wold and Kunzemann have both been held in German. Any direct quotation has been translated by me.



but equally engaging was the 'Taste of Europe' application which, amongst other things, contained a competition between the MS for the best national dish. Notably, these events were often combined with offline spectacles. Moreover several applications targeted mainly young people and first-time voters. In addition to those applications, the EP cooperated with social media companies, resulting in for example the development of the 'I am a Voter' button on each user's Facebook newsfeed. The experts coincide that the social media campaign has been statistically successful. Certainly, people have been reached and actively used the developed applications. However, the question whether the social media campaign has made an impact on the decision to vote of people who otherwise would have refrained from voting, cannot be answered at this point (Kunzemann, 2014; Wold, 2014; Wozniak, 2014).

"I think one has to have a comprehensive package. And that is what the Parliament is trying to do, so are we in Germany. We communicate via social media, but we produce brochures and have events that are not online. I think you need a mix."  
(Wold, 2014)

In general, the use of social media provides a variety of new opportunities for the EP. New, potentially younger, audiences can be reached in a fast and efficient way. Apart from mere information it provides possibilities for communication and engagement. Based on the concepts of European identity and European identity-building, the gained knowledge will also allow drawing conclusions about social media's potential in the context of identity-building.

The European Parliament certainly uses social media in order to reach EU citizen and to increase its visibility among them. Moreover social media as used by the EP fulfils certain factors which influence the formation of a collective European identity. Most compelling evidence is its characteristic as a medium which enables not only information and advertisement, but direct communication as well as the display of commonalities. Messages sent by institutions have been identified to have an impact on citizens' identity. In addition, it facilitates direct engagement with EU citizen without an intermediary. Certain ideas can be publicly communicated and debated about. The establishment of a European public sphere is oftentimes seen as a prerequisite for European collective identity to develop. It would go beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss if social media fulfils the requirements to be called a public sphere. Nonetheless, a case can be made that the social media accounts of the EP provide a space for Europeans to discuss about European topics, hence a space which is not bound to national interests. Correspondingly, the EP's strategy is to maximize their reach of audience. But what is striking in this regard is that although users of the various platforms may differ, they are all provided with the same

content, which is then adapted to the respective network and its users. Nevertheless, via social media only a certain and limited kind of citizen can be reached. In particular, reasons of age as well as technical and material differences will exclude an equally important group of EU citizen from the Parliament's communication via social media. As has been noted, one part of the EP's communication strategy is to decentralise communication. For this purpose, the EP information offices adapt their communication via social media to national needs and issues. Local disparities are emphasised rather than thwarted by central and uniform communication. Against the backdrop of the civic versus cultural dichotomy prevalent in the debate on European collective identity, this fact is an argument against the contribution of social media to a cultural European identity. The manner of communication as well as the contents shared, point to the communication of a potential civic European identity. The EP underlines its importance as a political institution which is directly elected by the citizen. Consequently, legislation, debates and EU issues that influence EU citizens' daily life, shape the EP's communication via social media. In conclusion, one can imply that social media as used by the EP can contribute to the building of European collective identity. However the chances of building cultural European identity seem to be rather limited compared to the chances of building civic European identity, at least in the context of the current manner of communication. Furthermore, a rather interesting concept has been introduced during the expert interviews. Despite the various possibilities social media offers, its full potential can only be reached when online and offline communication are combined. As visible in the prior post, online communication means communication via social media, whereas offline communication takes place via brochures or events. As a specific example for offline-communication between the EP and its citizens, Kunzemann mentions the EP visitor centre, the 'parlamentarium'. In this context, he also argues that a real emotional bond can only be established offline. Hence, the closeness and understanding of EU politics established online might function as a starting point, if combined with offline experiences (Kunzemann, 2014). At present, Facebook, the EP's 'flagship' social media platform, seems to be most suitable for the building of European identity due to its Europe-wide reach, the presence of usual EU citizen and the possibilities to share a variety of textual and visual material. Indeed, the general objective of establishing commonalities or communicating a sense of community via social media has not been verbally confirmed by the experts. However, the fact that the EU has actively tried to foster European identity, coupled with the fact that social media as used by the EP fulfils certain requirements for the contribution to European identity-building, implies that several posts could be framed under the notion of European

collective identity. The following in-depth analysis of the EP's central Facebook page will allow confirming or rejecting this assumption.

#### **4.2 Content Analysis of Facebook Page: Unity in Diversity**

Turning to the EP's central Facebook page, the focus in this section will be placed on the actual content of communication via social media. Whereas in a first step the EP's overall social media use has been examined with regard to its potential for European identity building, the ensuing analysis of its 'flagship' social media platform will enable to answer how the notion of European identity building shapes communication. Before presenting the pivotal findings, a brief digression to the general textual setup of the EP's Facebook page will establish the necessary fundamentals for integrating the findings.

For the chosen time-frame January – December 2014, the total number of posts amounts to 598. Each day a minimum number of one and a maximum number of three messages are posted. An exception to the rule has been made on May 25, the day of the European Parliament election, with a total of six posts. Regarding its presentation, it is usually a two-piece post which consists of textual content and a picture. Typically, the picture either emphasises or visualises the textual message of the post. Concerning the latter, common choices are infographics whose frequent use has already been stressed by the experts. They are used to visualise a variety of policy topics or issues. Concerning the former, the popular use of so-called infotainment can be retrieved. Here, an amusing picture or a fun fact is oftentimes coupled with an issue of relevance for the EU. As an illustration, on September 19 the picture of a 'Jolly Roger' and the fun fact that it is the 'International Talk Like a Pirate Day' has been linked to the information that "[...] piracy is a serious problem in the EU, costing European businesses €250 billion every year. How is Parliament proposing to tackle it? [...]" (EP Facebook, September 19, 2014) Apart from infographics and infotainment, the most frequently used motif is the European Parliament itself, such as the EP buildings in Strasbourg and Brussels, their outside, their inside or their current view. Occasionally, there are posts whose content is limited to the respective image of the Parliament. On a regular basis a summary of the Parliament's monthly plenary session is posted, containing information about the main topics as well as an album with pictures of the session. Again, this characteristic can be linked to knowledge gained from the expert interviews, namely the general objective to present the Parliament's current activities. However, content is not limited to the Parliament's work. Apart from a portrayal of debates, votes or objectives in the EP, the content of the Facebook page is a reflection of current political topics and issues on the European as well as international level. In brief, three general catego-

ries of content are regularly repeated: European policies and issues, the EP's activities and especially a cover of its plenary sessions, and EU foreign affairs. Although Facebook posts are not limited to a certain amount of characters, the textual content of the posts is rather sparse. Instead, there is usually a link to further information on a different website embedded in the post. The majority of posts end with a question which is directed at the users and asks for their thoughts, ideas or proposed solution. Particularly interesting in this regard is the following post.

“Can your comments change Parliament policies? Yes! Alejandro Cercas included remarks sent to him on social media on the topic of the Troika in his report adopted by Parliament.” (EP Facebook, March 19, 2014)

It illustrates the Parliament's approach to actively engage users through competitions, events and hands-on activities and thus make the Parliament more tangible for its citizen. Another interesting competition which is directly connected to the EP election 2014, has been a photo competition called “On the way to vote – election day” where users were invited to submit pictures of their personal voting experience and eventually become the Parliament's next guest photographer (EP Facebook, May 6, 2014). Adding to that, in October users were invited to make a short video, having the chance to win a trip to Strasbourg and manage the EP's FB page for a day (EP Facebook, October 21, 2014). To some extent, one can identify a realisation of the stressed online-offline mixture, as online activities are coupled with offline prizes and experiences. Altogether an interesting combination of informing and entertaining content can be found on the EP's Facebook page.

In order to find out how the notion of European identity-building shapes the European Parliament's communication via social media and in what way social media as used by the EP can contribute to European identity-building, a structuring qualitative content analysis has been identified as the suitable method for the data analysis. The exact procedure of the analysis has been disclosed in the Methodology section, the developed coding guideline and the extracted data can be found in the appendix. The main category applied to the textual material has been ‘European collective identity’, here understood as posts that are framed under the idea of commonalities between users, create a sense of belonging to the EU and/ or communicate a sense of community between Europeans. In a second step, it has then been of interest to determine whether the communicated sense of belonging can be classified as cultural or civic, hence recreating the empirically proven dichotomy inherent in the concept of collective European identity. In the following, the results of this analysis will be summarised. Due to the large number of posts it will only be possible to highlight the most interesting ones and to stress typical characteristics. A

qualitative content analysis also allows including frequencies into the analysis, which will now be anticipated. A total number of 598 posts in the year 2014 have been analysed. Thereof, a total of 120 posts have been identified to communicate a certain sense of commonality between Europeans, of which 4 have been assigned to the main category as an unequivocal categorisation has not been possible, 75 posts were assigned to the sub-category of civic identity and 30 posts were assigned to the sub-category of cultural identity. In addition, 11 posts have been allocated to the category of cultural as well as civic identity. As a result, about 20 percent of total posts are shaped by a notion of European collective identity. Moreover, a case can be made that the civic versus cultural opposition can also be retrieved in the European Parliament's manner of communication via social media. At the same time, it must also be acknowledged that a clear distinction between both categories has sometimes been difficult. I will expand on these difficulties, or in other words on the reasons for the double assignments below.

“The Parliament cares about Europeans’ quality of life.” (EP Facebook, January 18, 2014)

It is striking that references to a common European identity are not blatant but in fact rather subtle. The following post also demonstrates this statement.

“[...] what is the European Parliament doing to rebuild and protect our economy?” (EP Facebook, February 21, 2014)

The term ‘European’ is frequently used when talking about people, topics and issues. Instead of stressing the national impact or national descent, the general reference object is Europe, the European Union or Europeans. Accordingly, this kind of exclusiveness serves the idea of community. The pronoun ‘our’ emphasises this idea more strongly, as it indicates that the users share a common ground. However, it is still a rather neutral form of address and nowhere near as personal or emotive as for instance the address ‘we Europeans’ would be.

#### **4.2.1 Cultural Diversity**

The subsequent section will present and analyse the data that has been assigned to the category of cultural European identity.

Based on the concept of cultural European identity which has been discussed in the theoretical part of this study, several topics have been identified that serve as a signifier for the communication of cultural European identity. Mainly, a post has been assigned to the sub-category of cultural European identity if it refers to a collective European past, shared heritage and memories, common traditions and values as well as culture. The explicit rules of coding can be found in the ap-

pendix. As mentioned, only 30 posts have been assigned to this category, which is less than half of the amount assigned to the category of civic European identity.

“You fancy graffiti? Art embraces the spirit of a generation and belongs to our culture. The members of the cultural committee voted last week to simplify processes for countries to get stolen cultural objects back.” (EP Facebook, April 12, 2014)

As an example, this post directly refers to a common culture. But the nature of this culture is not further exemplified. Only due to the fact that the sender of this message is the European Parliament, there is reason to believe that it refers to a common European culture. Although this may be true, it is also notable that the second part of the message refers to a political accomplishment of the EP and does not expand on the notion of a common culture. During the year 2014, two religious holidays have been acknowledged. In April ‘Easter’ and in December ‘Christmas’ have both been referred to in several posts. In this regard, it is important to realise that both holidays are of Christian origin and moreover the only ones mentioned. Then again in terms of festive traditions it is stated that “[...] Europeans have found as many ways to celebrate Easter as there are stars in the EU flag.” (EP Facebook, April 19, 2014) Here it is stressed that despite a common holiday in Europe, the prevalent traditions may vary greatly. This contradiction within posts shaped by the notion of cultural European identity is not a rarity but rather the norm. A second pivotal example of this contradiction can be found in the ‘A Taste of Europe’ competition which has taken place in the context of the EP election 2014 (EP Facebook, May 15, May 25, 2014). On the one hand the objective of the competition is to find the most popular dish of Europe. To put it differently, it is asking for a dish which is commonly favoured by all Europeans. On the other hand it is a competition between popular national dishes. Ultimately, the choice of the most popular European dish is tied to personal taste or national pride, but not to a genuine nature as a traditional European dish.

““Remembering this lesson is the best way to honour those who fought and died,” Martin Schulz – European Parliament President about the anniversary of the First World War.” (EP Facebook, July 28, 2014)

Concerning the communication of a shared European past and a collective memory, Europeans are reminded of a tragic common history, the First World War, in the hope to learn from past mistakes. Against the same backdrop of a shared history, the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall is emphasised (EP Facebook, November 6, 2014). Although the existence of a collective memory in this case can hardly be denied, it is questionable how it might evoke a positive identification with Europe. An illustration of a more positive shared history is that “next 1<sup>st</sup> May the EU

will celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the largest single EU enlargement. [...]" (EP Facebook, April 24, 2014) Besides, this post has been also assigned to the civic category. On the one hand it communicates a shared history. On the other hand this shared history is limited to EU citizen and directly linked to the EU as a political system. To sum up, it is to say that although the notion of cultural European identity can be retrieved in the Parliament's communication via social media, if anything, only thin and shallow cultural commonalities can be identified. Conversely, cultural diversity is stressed regularly and cultural differences between MS are emphasised. For example on 'World Book Day' the Parliament underlines that it "[...] wants to increase knowledge and promote cultural diversity." (EP Facebook, April 23, 2014)

#### **4.2.2 Civic Unity and the Right to Vote**

In the following, the data that has been assigned to the sub-category of civic European identity will be discussed and analysed.

The topics that serve as a signifier for a communication of civic European identity have been identified as collective future, political core values and collective rights and obligations. In this regard, it is crucial that mere information about the Parliament's activities has not been assigned to this category. Instead the decisive factor has been a visible significance for, or the referral to, the status and implications of being an EU citizen.

"Do you know your rights? Watch this video to learn about what rights Europeans enjoy. Which one matters most to you?" (EP Facebook, February 7, 2014)

Overall, 76 posts have been assigned to this sub-category which is almost twice as much as compared to the category of cultural European identity. As indicated by the post above, the majority of posts aim at informing users about their rights and status as an EU citizen. Prior to the analysis it has been remarked that the chosen time frame would also allow looking at special communication in the context of the EP election campaign 2014. Two interesting findings can be presented in this regard. Firstly, the overall frequency of communication has been intensified. Secondly, posts are shaped by the notion of commonality between EU citizens more frequently than usual.

"Yes! The moment where you decide what happens in Europe has almost arrived. This time it's different. To find out why, watch the short video below [...] for more information about the European elections!" (EP Facebook, May 14, 2014)

Leading towards to Election Day, the right to vote as an EU citizen has been obviously brought into focus. On the one hand the concentration on the voting theme has been informational. For instance, in May one can find a chart that shows the

latest projection of seats weekly before the Election Day. As explained by the experts, social media has been a main channel of the EP election campaign. It is therefore not surprising that already in the beginning of the year the hashtag #EP2014 can be detected (EP Facebook, January 8, 2014). At the same time, posts are not limited to mere information. The European Parliament election 2014 is portrayed as a political event, whereas participation is restricted to EU citizen. In this regard, a sense of belonging to the EU is emphasised, based on the collective right to vote which is shared by all EU citizen. The 'I'm a Voter' application which has been exclusively designed for the election period enables users to be identified as an EU citizen and voter. Moreover, this application also demonstrates the aforementioned online-offline mix, as the longest chain of voters had the chance to win a trip to the EP in Strasbourg (EP Facebook, April 22, 2014). Another interesting aspect is the introduction of several Europeans as "voices of the #EP2014 campaign" who not only remind of the importance to vote but also share their personal motivation (EP Facebook, July 30, May 3, April 30, 2014). After the EP election there is a shift towards other topics. The collective right to vote is then again mentioned in the context of the EP hearing of the new commissioners which is the main topic from September 28 to October 8.

"In May 2014, millions of Europeans voted for who should be in charge in Europe. They were heard. Now it's up to their elected representatives in the European Parliament to ensure the European Union takes the right decisions for them." (EP Facebook, October 8, 2014).

Accordingly, it is highlighted that by exercising their right to vote, Europeans decide who is in charge in the European Union. In addition, the importance of the EP as the only directly elected institution, which will transform citizens' will into action, is stressed. Posts are remarkably often shaped by the promotion and advertisement of the Parliament and its work. If an issue is presented, there is usually a direct connection made to what the Parliament is doing in this regard and what it proposes as a solution. Apart from their right to vote as EU citizens, users are also introduced to the concept of the European Citizen's Initiative (April 10), the political institution of the European Ombudsman (September 17) and the possibility to submit a petition to the EP (September 10). Following what has been previously mentioned, the EP stresses its general objective to improve EU citizens' quality of life (EP Facebook, January 24, 2014). In this context, another focus is put on the political right of free movement of EU nationals. Here the "[...] the European Professional Card, the electronic passport which allows you to easily look for a job in another EU country. [...]" is introduced. (EP Facebook, October 30, 2014) This right and simplification is ex-



clusive for EU citizens. Likewise, a regular emphasis is placed on the topics of consumer protection (e.g. October 16), passenger rights (e.g. December 25) and education in connection with Erasmus+ (e.g. August 24).

“Share it: this year the International Day of Democracy is all about engaging young people. Let us know what challenges and opportunities you’ve recently experienced.” (EP Facebook, September 15, 2014)

This post serves as an illustration of two important insights. On the one hand it shows that also political core values can be retrieved in the Parliament’s manner of communication via social media. Obviously, here the shared European value is democracy. But also further political values such as human rights, equality and social justice have been extracted from the gathered material. On the other hand the EP’s focus on the European youth can be perceived. During the ‘European Youth Event 2014’, which is a crucial example, that target group has been invited to the EP in Strasbourg in order to develop a “[...] vision for the future of Europe. [...]” (EP Facebook, May 10, 2014) After all, the European youth and a collective European future are intrinsically connected.

#### **4.3 Interim Conclusion**

By combining the insights gained, it will now be possible to sum up the main arguments and answer the posed sub-questions. As shown above, the notion of European identity building shapes the European Parliament’s communication via social media, but only to a certain degree. After all, the EP addresses commonalities between Europeans, articulates a sense of belonging to the EU and highlights the significance of the EU for Europeans. Moreover, the dichotomy between a cultural and a civic European identity has been retrieved in its manner of communication. However, it is important to realise that posts shaped by the notion of collective European identity only amount to twenty percent of its general communication via social media. In fact, a majority of posts are merely informative, advertise the EP’ current activities or contain infotainment. As has been noted, the communication of a European we-feeling remains rather subtle and neutral. Although Europeans are the distinct reference object, there is no primarily emotional accentuation or the aim of demarcation from non-Europeans visible. Again, this finding can be retrieved in the determined communication of cultural European identity. Although Europeans are reminded of a shared history and traditions, what is actually highlighted is their diversity. Instead of cultural unity, cultural diversity and hence European diversity is proclaimed. Consequently the extent to which social media, as used by the EP, can contribute the building of a cultural European identity is limited. In essence, Europeans are encouraged to value their cultural peculiarities and to share them with other

Europeans. However, the communicated notion of civic identity paints a different picture. Here, Europeans are reminded that, despite their cultural differences, they are united in their status as EU citizen and share a common civic identity. Especially the right to vote is frequently stressed. To sum up, the fact that social media enables the EP to not only address a broad and diverse range of Europeans, but also to initiate discussion about mainly European topics must be acknowledged in conjunction with the finding that communication is shaped by the notion of civic commonalities and a sense of belonging to the EU as an EU citizen. In conclusion, the empirical evidence suggests that social media as used by the European Parliament has potential to contribute to civic European identity building.

## 5 Conclusion

The research interest of the thesis at hand has been to establish the connection and to depict the points of intersection between European identity, the EP's communication strategy and social media. In this context, it aims to answer the ensuing main question: *To what extent does the EP have recourse to social media for purposes of European identity building?* In the conclusion, the answers to the sub-questions will now be merged into a final argument which will allow answering the main question. Moreover, further possible research as well as practical implications in terms of the EP communication strategy, based on the research findings, will be discussed.

### 5.1 Gateway or Dead End

Taking everything into account, it will now be possible to answer the main research question. As stated, existent theories of collective European identity and identity building have been applied to a new research subject, social media as used by the European Parliament as a part of its communication strategy. The answer to question to what extent the EP has recourse to social media in the context of European identity building will be presented in a twofold manner. Is social media as used by the EP a 'gateway' to the issue of building European identity among EU citizen or is it a further 'dead end'?

In terms of European identity-building, three general preconditions have been identified, which are mostly fulfilled by the Parliament's communication strategy via social media. According to Walkenhorst (1999, pp. 179–183), political institutions have the ability to influence collective identity via the use of media. Pursuant to Bruter (2005, pp. 123–128), messages and symbols sent by the media and institutions influence citizens' identity formation. Moreover, a European public sphere and hence debate and discussion about European topics are identified as a prerequisite for collective identity-building (Thalmaier, 2006, pp. 10-12;21),(Sösemann, 2007, pp. 259–263). As shown above, social media as used by the EP is a mean to communicate news in the form of textual content as well as symbols. Moreover, content is shaped by a mix of information, advertisement, but also direct engagement of citizen in terms of events and competitions. Additionally, it serves as a space for discussion about mainly European topics. Furthermore, it has been empirically proven that the EP communicates a sense of belonging to the EU and stresses commonalities between Europeans. Without intermediaries, users which otherwise might show little interest in European issues, can be reached. Most importantly, the civic-cultural identity dichotomy has been retrieved in the Parliament's manner of communication via social media. According to Bruter, the EU has tried to foster cultural as well as civic European identity (Bruter, 2005, p. 86). In contrast to this find-

ing, the EP's communication emphasises unity in the status of being an EU citizen, but also explicitly stresses cultural diversity. Given these points, the potential of social media as used by the EP for cultural European identity appears to be low, but seems more likely in terms of civic European identity.

Although these findings seem to be in favour of social media as a gateway for European identity building, several shortcomings which have been identified in the EP's communication strategy must be mentioned as well. For example, the news coverage on European topics is almost unilateral, as merely positive solutions are presented. Oftentimes, content is shaped by advertisement for the EP. Moreover, news is limited on the EP, leaving other EU institutions aside. In line with Dialer and Richter (2013, pp. 34–40) it is also important to realise that a large group of Europeans cannot be reached via social media platforms. Although EU citizens' rights are highlighted, those occasions are rare and overlapped by mere infotainment or advertisement.

In conclusion, social media as used by the EP is neither a definite gateway nor a dead end for European identity building. Actually, it possesses potential to contribute to a civic European identity. However, this finding has to be enjoyed with care. As mentioned, not all social media platforms are suitable, as textual content and a broad and diverse audience is of importance. Another key point is the combination of online and offline experiences. A genuine feeling of belonging will not be reached by merely reading about ones rights online. Instead, knowledge will be strengthened by being linked to experiences in the real world. This finding is in consonance with Walkenhorst. He argues that identity building cannot be limited to secondary communication of a desirable identity, but has to be connected to primary experiences of cultural as well as civic commonalities (Walkenhorst, 1999, p. 183).

## **5.2 Practical Implications**

Ultimately, the core of this subsequent section will discuss the results of the research in terms of their implication for the European Parliament's communication strategy.

It has been previously identified that the existence of European collective identity would contribute to the political legitimacy of the European Union as a political entity. Still, a 'European identity 2.0', as it has been boldly asked in the title of this thesis, cannot be determined. Resulting from the empirical analysis, it has been identified that social media, as used by the EP, has potential to contribute to European identity building, but with reservations. Merely, a potential for the contribution to civic European identity building can be confirmed. In connection with this, in the context of the second sub-question, the notion of civic European identity building

has been identified in the EP's communication via social media. Here, especially the right to vote has been stressed as the point of commonality between EU citizens. But, after the election campaign, mere information and advertisement have prevailed. Against this backdrop, it can be assumed that communication via social media has not yet reached its full potential. Pursuant to what has been concluded in the interview analysis, it would be advisable for the EP to not only offer online and offline communication side by side, but to actually establish further connections between both, as it has been done during the EP election campaign. As it has been noticed previously, lots of content on the EP Facebook page consists of mere advertisement for the EP. What is missing in this regard is a referral to the other EU institutions, to explain the importance of the EU in general and its significance for its citizen, and not just the importance of the EP. In accordance with Dialer and Richter it might also be advisable to opt for a joint communication policy. Moreover, it would be advisable to focus communication more on the demonstration of commonalities as EU citizen, meaning the frequent explanation and emphasis of common rights and obligations as well as political core values. In a nutshell, there is definitely potential in the use of social media which has not been fully used by the EP. However, social media might only function as reinforcement and cannot compensate genuine experiences as an EU citizen. Hence, this would implicate the need to enable more genuine experiences in terms of active participation, discussion and debate.

The conducted research provides a suitable base for further empirical research. It would be of great interest to examine the part of the user. In this regard, it would then be possible to question the actual impact on the user and further if the frequent use of EU social media platforms establishes a sense of belonging among them. In this regard, Bruter has stressed the importance of analysing European identity from a bottom-up perspective. He also observes that despite the classification of civic and cultural symbols, the objective and the result do not necessarily coincide. In fact, symbols mainly influence the cultural component of identity, whereas news have a stronger effect on the civic component (Bruter, 2005, pp. 128–130) A consideration of the users' side might allow to test this finding and in general to gain further insight into the relation of top-down identity building and bottom-up identity formation.

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## **Appendix**

### **1 Interview Guideline**

#### I Introduction

**1. Please describe your remit as a social media coordinator in the European Parliament.**

#### II Communication strategy of the European Parliament in social media

**2. The European Parliament is active and present in a range of social media platforms. What guidelines are followed in the use of social media?**

- Is there a common guideline or varying guidelines dependent on the medium and institution?

**3. Which strategy is pursued in the communication via social media?**

- What is the goal of communication via social media?

- Is there a common, fundamental strategy or varying strategies dependent on the platform?

- Who decides about the actual contents visible on the respective EP account?

**4. How do the contents of the various communication channels take shape?**

- Which issues are presented and addressed?

- Merely information or information and communication?

- What kind of media (graphics/ videos) is used for visualization?

- Do contents and media differ according to the respective communication channel?

**(5. What are the characteristics of the EP Facebook account, compared to the other existing social media accounts of the EP?)**

- Characteristics of use and in content.

**(6. To what extent does a thematic nexus between current political events and the contents of the respective posts, tweets etc. exist?)**

### III User

#### **7. Who is supposed to be reached via the use of social media?**

- What kind of users?
- What kind of relationships is supposed to be established?

#### **8. Do differences between the users of varied platforms exist? If yes: What sorts of differences exist between the users?**

- Age/ Gender/ Views/ Willingness to communicate

#### **9. Which channels receive a stronger resonance on the part of the users?**

- Does this lead to a prioritization of channel xxx?

### IV Projects and campaigns

#### **10. In what manner can campaigns be established in social media?**

- Which campaigns have already been realized? (Example: #EP2014)
- What are the prospects of success?
- How well are campaigns received by the users of the respective platform?
- Are there further campaigns in the process of planning?

#### **11. During my inquiries I have come across the project “Share Europe Online”. What is it about?**

### V Prospects

#### **12. What kind of opportunities do social media provide for the European Parliament in terms of communication with its citizen?**

#### **13. What personal experiences in dealing with social media on behalf of the European Parliament have stuck in your mind?**

#### **14. Where do you see the future of the European Union in social media**

## 2 Coding Guideline for Qualitative Content Analysis of EP' Facebook Page

Category	Definition	Typical Example	Rule of Coding
<b>C1: European collective identity</b>	Sense and status of belonging to the European Union Commonalities between Europeans Addressing a 'we-feeling'	The Parliament cares about <b>Europeans'</b> quality of life. [January 18, 2014]	Posts framed under the notion of European collective identity are posts which refer to commonalities between Europeans and thus establish a feeling of belonging to the European Union. This 'we-feeling' can manifest in either civic or cultural form. Hence the retrieval of either of the sub-categories also means the retrieval of the main category. Content will only be specifically assigned to the main category, if an unequivocal categorisation is not possible.
<b>C1.1: Civic European identity</b>	Sense of belonging towards the EU as a political structure Status as EU citizen/ Demos  <u>Topics:</u> - collective future - EU institutions - political core values - collective rights - collective rules and obligations  <u>Symbols</u> - European Parliament election - Euro as single currency - EU passport - Day of Europe - Flag	Do you know your rights? Watch this video to learn about what rights Europeans enjoy. Which one matters most to you? [February 7, 2014]	As a sub-category the fulfilment of the definition of the main category is a requirement. Adding to that at least one of the identified topics has to be communicated. Hence mere information about EU policies is not sufficient. In order for this category to pertain, news about the EU have to be embedded in their significance for EU citizen.

<p><b>C1.2: Cultural European identity</b></p>	<p>Sense of belonging towards Europe as a political group Ethnos</p> <p><u>Topics:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- collective past</li> <li>- shared memories</li> <li>- culture</li> <li>- values</li> <li>- religion</li> <li>- shared heritage</li> <li>- ethnicity</li> <li>- traditions</li> <li>- myths</li> <li>- language</li> </ul> <p><u>Symbols</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- European anthem</li> <li>- Design of Euro banknotes</li> <li>- Day of Europe</li> <li>- Flag</li> </ul>	<p>25 years ago, the Berlin wall came down. Remember this historic moment for Europe and enjoy your photo gallery on the #berlinwall. #fotw25 #lichtgrenze [November 9, 2014]</p>	<p>As a sub-category the fulfilment of the definition of the main category is a requirement. Adding to that at least one of the identified topics has to be communicated. Additionally if for instance a tradition is communicated, only applies to certain EU member states, the requirements for this category to pertain are not fulfilled.</p>
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### 3 Extraction of References Matching the Developed Categories

Total number of evaluated posts: **598**

	<b>Category 1 European collective identity</b>	<b>Category 1.1 Civic European identity</b>	<b>Category 1.2 Cultural European identity</b>
<b>Post</b> [Date]	<p>The Parliament cares about <b>Europeans'</b> quality of life. [January 18, 2014]</p> <p>(...) and its impact on <b>Europeans</b>. [February 13, 2014]</p> <p>(...) What is the EP doing to rebuild and protect <b>our</b> economy? [February 21, 2014]</p> <p>(...) story about <b>Europeans</b> living</p>	<p><b>Happy new presidency!</b> For the next 6 months Greece will <b>be in charge of the European Union</b>. What should be its biggest priority? [January 1, 2014]</p> <p>Since 1 January the euro is also the official currency of Latvia. Have you ever visited this Baltic country? Did you know that Riga is also on of this year's European Cultural Capitals? [January 6, 2014]</p> <p>2014: the year to Act, React, Impact. Watch this video ... to see what the priorities are for the coming months! Which one matters most to you? [January 6, 2014]</p> <p>A new year means new rules! Erasmus+, improved food labelling, better recycling of electrical waste, European patent to boost innovation...A lot of important legislation will enter into force in 2014. Read more and tell us, which topic matters most to you?</p>	<p>Do you recognize these cities? Hint: they are the <b>European Capitals of Culture in 2014</b>. Why not already plan a trip there this year? [January 2, 2014]</p> <p>Unleash your inner artist! Stage an artistic performance at the <b>European Youth Event 2014</b>, be it music, dance, acrobatics or anything else you might want to propose. [January 21, 2014]</p> <p>Today we commemorate the victims of the holocaust. Share to say "not" to crimes against humanity. [January 27, 2014]</p> <p><b>And the winner is the European Union!</b> Together EU countries picked up an astounding 135 medals in the Winter Olympics. What was your favourite Sochi moment? [February 24, 2014]</p> <p>A minute of silence to commemorate the victims of terrorism to</p>

	<p>in Spain. [March 23, 2014]</p>	<p>[January 7, 2014]</p> <p>The first plenary of 2014 is about to start! A busy week for Parliament with CO2 targets, plastic waste, public procurement and EU citizenship. Watch it live and tell us, how busy is your week? [January 13, 2014]</p> <p>Here's the first plenary week of the year in pictures. Lithuania told about the results of their EU presidency and Greece came forward with the priorities for their spring term. Free movement in the EU and new rules for public procurement was discussed. Vans will pollute less by 2020 [January 16, 2014]</p> <p>1975: Parliament votes on European elections by direct universal suffrage [January 23, 2014]</p> <p>We've all heard of the EP. But which impact does the institution REALLY have on our day-to-day lives? This short video explains some of the initiatives the European Parliament takes to improve our quality of life. [January 24, 2014]</p> <p>If you could hop on a plane right now, where would you go? A delayed or cancelled flight can ruin your dream holiday. Parliament pushes for better air passenger right. [February 5, 2014]</p> <p>More than 100 million women have been the victim of female genital mutilation. Share your disapproval and check what the</p>	<p>coincide with the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Madrid bombings. "We shall never forget," Parliament president Martin Schulz said. "Together we have to fight to stop radicalisms, to avoid new terrorist attacks, to stand by the victims and their families." [March 11, 2014]</p> <p>Whether covered in snow or sunlight, the <b>European spring</b> pictures you sent us all proved to be wonderful. Thanks for these amazing snapshots from all over Europe and feel free to take a peek at the selection and submit your own. [March 21, 2014]</p> <p>The <b>European bison</b>, sometimes nicknamed king of the forest, still roams freely in one corner of Europe. Do you know where? [April 10, 2014]</p> <p>You fancy graffiti? Art embraces the spirit of a generation and <b>belongs to our culture</b>. The members of the cultural committee voted last week to simplify processes for countries to get stolen cultural objects back. [April 12, 2014]</p> <p>Eggcited about <b>Easter</b>? We've got an eggstra treat for you – no yolking! Chick out our eggcellent Spotify collection and tell us, are you in the mood to paint some eggs yet? [April 19, 2014]</p> <p>Thanks for sharing your Easter preparations with us! Europeans have found as many ways to celebrate Easter as there are stars in the EU flag. Inspired by your different traditions, we compiled a fun Spotify playlist.</p>
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	<p>Parliament is doing. [February 6, 2014]</p> <p>Do you know your rights? Watch this video to learn about what rights Europeans enjoy. Which one matters most to you? [February 7, 2014]</p> <p>Strasbourg and Kehl were once on opposite sides in armed conflicts, but they now enjoy working together on anything from education to transport. Discover how it happened @... and tell us, have you ever lived or worked abroad? [February 12, 2014]</p> <p>(...) Do you think progress can be made on <b>human rights</b>? Parliament is investigating. [February 13, 2014]</p> <p>Flowers are not enough! Ahead of international Women's Day, discuss the situation with Mikael Gustafsson, chair of the women's right committee. [March 1, 2014] (core value)</p> <p>Any new car model sold in the EU from October 2015 will automatically make a 112 emergency call when involved in a serious accident. The new eCall rules approved by the Parliament could save up to 2500 lives a year. How safe do you feel in your car? [March 2, 2014]</p> <p>One century after the first international Women's Day, there are still women in the world being abused, raped, killed and facing discrimination or exploitation. How can <b>we</b> change this? (...)</p>	<p>[April 19, 2014]</p> <p>Happy Easter! How do you say it in your language? [April 20, 2014]</p> <p>Next 1<sup>st</sup> May the EU will celebrate the <b>10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the largest single EU enlargement</b>. Which one of the Member States that joined on that day was this picture taken from? Tell us and the European Commission in a comment and check out more about enlargement. [April 24, 2014] - (double assignment)</p> <p>The EU got a lot bigger on 1 May 2004! Looking at this storm shelter, can you guess which country was part of it? Tell us and the European Commission in a comment and check out more about enlargement. [April 28, 2014] - (double assignment)</p> <p>The Parliament and the European Commission continue the <b>EU enlargement celebration</b>. On May 1 2004 no fewer than 10 new countries joined the EU. The salt mine on the photo was added to the UNESCO list of the World Heritage Sites in 1978, but in which member state is it located? [April 28, 2014] - (double assignment)</p> <p><b>Happy Europe day!</b> [May 9, 2014] - (double assignment)</p>
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	<p>[March 2, 2014]</p> <p>Today is the International Women’s Day! Share this message to take a stand against violence against women. [March 8, 2014]</p> <p>Here’s one exhibition that is sure to get your vote. Follow the evolution of European elections since the first one in 1979 at the Parliament’s visitors centre in Brussels. Entrance is free. [March 22, 2014]</p> <p>1 in 2 LGTBI people face discrimination or harassment on a regular basis. Learn more about it in our animated infographic &amp; share to show your support for <b>equal rights</b>. [March 25, 2014]</p> <p>With 15 documentaries, the One World Film Festival is a moving tribute to the importance of <b>human rights</b>. It will take place at the EP in Brussels from 31 March to 2 April and you can take part for free! [March 26, 2014]</p> <p>Booking online makes holidays cheaper, but what happens when your plane is delayed or hotel staff strike? Parliament approved new rules to better protect you. [March 27, 2014]</p> <p>Today is Earth Hour day: it is time to turn off the lights! Share to support the initiative to reduce energy consumption. What do you plan to switch off? [March 29, 2014]</p> <p>Net neutrality, limiting card payment fees, keeping your pension</p>	<p>More than 28 years have passed since the <b>Chernobyl disaster</b> led to radioactive material being deposited all over Europe. Is the EU now better prepared for dealing with environmental disasters? [May 15, 2014]</p> <p>- (double assignment)</p> <p>Shopska salad from Bulgaria took over the cold beetroot soup from Lithuania and is currently the leading <b>most popular dish of Europe</b>. Do you agree with this choice? [May 15, 2014]</p> <p>And the <b>most popular dish in Europe</b> is Shopska Salad! The Bulgarian speciality almost 190000 votes! Find more recipes and everything else you need to follow the elections. Show us your elections night treats with #tasteofeurope. [May 25, 2014]</p> <p>Gold stars, blue background. What’s the story behind the emblematic EU flag? Read here. Which country flag do you like the most? [May 29, 2014]</p> <p>- (double assignment)</p> <p>Never again! On the <b>WWI centenary</b> have a look at postcards sent by soldiers to their families &amp; read the Parliament statement. [June 27, 2014]</p> <p>Europe has never looked more beautiful! Admire the EU’s picture-perfect top spots in our gallery of photos taken by our Facebook fans. Still not had enough? Discover more with the <b>European</b></p>
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	<p>rights when you move to another EU country: lots of topics <b>close to everyone's heart</b> during this week's plenary session in Brussels. Which interests you the most? Tell us and learn what else is on the agenda. [April 1, 2014]</p> <p>Want to work abroad? The European Professional Card can help you to clear obstacles towards your dream job in another part of the EU. [April 1, 2014]</p> <p>[Change of cover photo on April 8, 2014: "This May Alike will choose who's in charge in Europe. And you?]</p> <p>"One of Us" is the second <b>European Citizen's Initiative</b> and calls on the EU to ban and stop financing activities, including scientific ones, that could involve the destruction of human embryos (...) [April 10, 2014]</p> <p>With today's vote, the EP showed once more that it supports <b>democratic elections</b> in Ukraine and condemns Russian pressure. Check out the text of the resolution. [April 17, 2014]</p> <p>Happy International Mother Earth Day, Europe! The theme for 2014 is green cities. Did you know the EU awards the title Green Capital to a city with high goals for environment and sustainable development every year? Find out which city won for 2014 and enjoy your climate Spotify playlist. [April 22, 2014]</p>	<p><b>Summer</b> hashtag and follow us on Instagram. [July 25, 2014] "Remembering this lesson is the best way to honour those who fought and died," Martin Schulz – European Parliament President about the anniversary of the First World War. [July 28, 2014]</p> <p>#ThrowbackThursday: Robert Schuman signs his famous plan for Europe. [July 31, 2014] - (double assignment)</p> <p>Do you know where this is? From ruins and cities to radio shows or even simply rediscovering the joy of outdoor walking, the <b>2014 EU Prize for Cultural Heritage</b> was awarded to many deserving locations throughout Europe. Is your country among the recipients? [August 4, 2014]</p> <p>The #europeansummer is slowly coming to an end. If you are already feeling nostalgic, take a look back with our slideshow of the last semester and tell us, how have you enjoyed your summer so far? [August 15, 2014]</p> <p>#ThrowbackThursday Jean Monnet activating the hammer of the blast furnace which will allow the first European casting of cast iron. [August 28, 2014] - (double assignment) His Holiness Pope Francis will visit the Parliament on 25 November and address the Members.</p>
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	<p>Current balloon traffic over Europe! Have you already sent yours? Do it and tell your friends <b>you're a voter!</b> You might win a trip to Parliament in Strasbourg! [April 22, 2014]</p> <p>Next 1<sup>st</sup> May the EU will celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the <b>largest single EU enlargement</b>. Which one of the Member States that joined on that day was this picture taken from? Tell us and the European Commission in a comment and check out more about enlargement. [April 24, 2014] - (double assignment)</p> <p>Fill in the gap: I'm voter because .... Send your balloon to spread the message and you might win a trip to Strabourg! [April 27, 2014]</p> <p>The EU got a lot bigger on 1 May 2004! Looking at this storm shelter, can you guess which country was part of it? Tell us and the European Commission in a comment and check out more about enlargement [April 28, 2014] - (double assignment)</p> <p>The Parliament and the European Commission continue the <b>EU enlargement celebration</b>. On <b>May 1 2004</b> no fewer than <b>10 new countries joined the EU</b>. The salt mine on the photo was added to the UNESCO list of the World Heritage Sites in 1978, but in which member state is it located? [April 28, 2014]</p>	<p>[September 11, 2014]</p> <p>Mobile, yes we are! See how European have moved about and enjoyed the Mobility Week (European Mobility Week). [September 22, 2014]</p> <p>On Sunday, it's 25 years since the Berlin Wall came down. We asked seven Parliament members where they were when they heard of the fall of the Berlin wall – where were you? [November 6, 2014]</p> <p>Photo of the day: Autumn is at the European Parliament. Don't forget to share snapshots of your <b>European Autumn</b> with us. How is autumn in your country. [November 8, 2014]</p> <p>28 young Europeans born in 1989 in Berlin to discuss which walls in Europe still have to be torn down. Watch the video to learn how we can make a difference, according to them. [November 8, 2014] - (double assignment)</p> <p>25 years ago, the Berlin wall came down. Remember this historic moment for Europe and enjoy your photo gallery on the #berlin-wall. #fotw25 #lichtgrenze [November 9, 2014]</p> <p>Autumn colours are brightening up Europe. Thanks for sharing your <b>European Autumn</b> photos with us. [November 10, 2014]</p>
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	<p>- (double assignment)</p> <p>What better way to spend <b>election night</b> in great company? This free app will help you create a great night with special invites, national dishes and a dedicated live stream. [April 29, 2014]</p> <p>Just like Aliko, Ricardo, Magdalena and Trish, you can help decide how Europe will face the challenges of the future. What kind of Europe will you vote for? [April 30, 2014]</p> <p>Yesterday...Or rather, ten years ago today, the <b>EU</b> got ten new members. We wanted to <b>celebrate</b> by finding the same song, sung in all the different languages. Listen and send us the song in YOUR language – and we'll add it to the list! [May 1, 2014]</p> <p>"I believe that my future is one, where I can do, what I love", says Aliko. The architecture student from Athens wants to take part in the Erasmus programme soon. Watch the video to find out why she will vote in the European elections on 22-25 May. [May 3, 2014]</p> <p>Ever wanted to go back in time? Here's your chance! Enter our EU time machine and visit the year 1979. Find out how it was then and how <b>European politics have changed our daily lives</b> in the last 35 years. [May 6, 2014]</p> <p>Happy <b>Europe day!</b> [May 9, 2014]</p>	<p>Share it: Peace and stability should never be taken for granted. On <b>Armistice Day</b> read what was said in the Parliamentary debate on the occasion of the <b>World War One's centenary</b>. [November 11, 2014]</p> <p>Video of the day: Wind playing with the EU flag in front of the European Parliament. Want to learn more about <b>EU symbols</b>? [November 11, 2014]</p> <p>- (double assignment)</p> <p>"25 years after the Berlin Wall populists want to pull up walls in Europe again. Don't let them take <b>our peace, solidarity and freedom</b>," said Parliament President Martin Schulz about the fall of the Berlin Wall. Today members will <b>commemorate this historic moment</b>. Read more about their memories of the time and watch the plenary debate live. [November 12, 2014]</p> <p>Did you know that 118 million Europeans live in an area with mountains? On the occasion of <b>International Mountain Day</b>, read all about how they are being managed and tell us, what is your favourite mountain region? [December 11, 2014]</p> <p>The winner of the <b>LUX Prize</b> will be announced during the plenary next week. Beside the <b>European identity and values</b>, there is something else that the three finalists have in common: <b>young people</b> are in the spotlight. Which one is our favourite? [December 13, 2014]</p> <p>- (double assignment)</p>
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	<p>- (double assignment) Are you a <b>voter</b> as well? [May 10, 2014]</p> <p>The <b>European Youth Event 2014</b> – or the EYE2014, for short – gathered thousands of young people to the European Parliament in Strasbourg. But what is their vision for the <b>future of Europe</b>? We set out to find. Here’s what we came back with. [May 10, 2014]</p> <p>Yes! The moment where <b>you decide what happens in Europe</b> has almost arrived. This time it’s different. To find out why, watch the short video below or visit ...for more information about the <b>European elections!</b> [May 14, 2014]</p> <p>What should be the topic of the EUROVISION DEBATE between candidates for the president of the European Commission? Share your ideas with #TellEurope and watch it live tonight. [May 14, 2014]</p> <p>More than 28 years have passed since the <b>Chernobyl disaster</b> led to radioactive material being deposited all over Europe. Is the EU now better prepared for dealing with environmental disasters? [May 15, 2014]</p> <p>- (double assignment)</p> <p>Only a few days left before the elections! Share this video to remind your friends about the vote! [May 17, 2014]</p>	<p>The <b>Flame of Peace of Bethlehem</b> has arrived at the European Parliament. This <b>tradition</b> is part of a charitable relief mission for people in need. It was initiated by Austria and over the years the flame has spread to more than 30 European countries. [December 16, 2014]</p> <p>Did you know that today the sun did not rise at all in the very north of Europe? Celebrate the year’s shortest day with us by posting a pic on Instagram from where you are with the hashtag <b>European Winter</b>. [December 21, 2014]</p> <p><b>Merry Christmas!</b> How do you say it in your language? [December 24, 2014]</p>
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		<p>Are you a voter? Say it loud and send a balloon via our application. Create the longest balloon chain and you might win a trip to Strasbourg. [May 19, 2014]</p> <p>Small, tall, young, old, enthusiastic, <b>European</b> – we ran into a bunch of voters during the <b>EU Open Doors Days 2014</b> in the European Parliament in Brussels. Do you want to get an impression of who will be voting in the European Elections on 22-25 May? Watch our video. [May 19, 2014]</p> <p>Are you a voter? Only couple of days left until the European elections start. Have a look at our “I’m a voter” gallery to get into <b>election mood!</b> [May 20, 2014]</p> <p>You could say that the president of the European Commission is in the driver’s seat of Europe. But guess who puts him or her there? That’s right: <b>YOU do</b>. Don’t forget to <b>vote</b> and please help share this video! [May 21, 2014]</p> <p>35 years ago you could not be sure if a teddy bear would be a safe toy for your children. Today you can be, thanks to the European Parliament. Discover with our time machine what the <b>Parliament has done for you</b> since the first elections in 1979. [May 23, 2014]</p>	
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	<p>Gold stars, blue background. What's the story behind the emblematic EU flag? Read here @.... Which country flag do you like the most?  [May 29, 2014]  - (double assignment)</p> <p><b>Everything started here.</b> What was founded in 1952 as the Common Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) is today the <b>European Parliament, the EU's only directed elected body.</b>  [June 5, 2014]</p> <p>Martin Schulz has been elected by members as the president of the European Parliament.  [July 1, 2014]</p> <p>This time it's different! During the European elections in May <b>you</b> not only voted for new members, but also influenced who the new European Commission president will be! What will happen next? Watch our video!  [July 5, 2014]</p> <p>Planning to participate in the Erasmus+ programme? Check the most popular destinations published today by the European Commission.  [July 10, 2014]</p> <p>Jean-Claude Juncker has been elected as the new president of the European Commission. Now it's the turn of the other 27 commissioners to get appointed. Want to know how?  [July 16, 2014]</p>	
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	<p>“Parliament will not accept a gentlemen’s club,” president Martin Schultz told EU leaders at yesterday’s Council summit; if there are not enough female commissioners proposed for the next European Commission, Parliament may block it. [July 17, 2014]</p> <p>Remember Aliko? She, Trish and Ricardo and nine other <b>Euro-peans</b> told us during the elections why they were <b>voting</b>. Read more about the voices of the #EP2014 campaign. Do you think voting is important? [July 30, 2014]</p> <p>#ThrowbackThursday: Robert Schuman signs his famous plan for Europe. [July 31, 2014]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- (double assignment)</li></ul> <p>Wonder what was different when people went on holiday 35 years ago? Learn from our time machine how the Parliament has simplified <b>travelling</b>. [August 3, 2014]</p> <p>Today is <b>International Youth Day!</b> With more than 5.3 million <b>Europeans</b> under 25 without a job, <b>youth employment</b> is a priority for the EU. Find out what is being done to help young people. [August 12, 2014]</p> <p>End of summer + school = Erasmus. Is this equation true for you? If so, where will you be going for your Erasmus+ scholarship?</p>	
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		<p>[August 24, 2014]</p> <p>#ThrowbackThursday Jean Monnet activating the hammer of the blast furnace which will allow the first European casting of cast iron.</p> <p>[August 28, 2014]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- (double assignment)</li> </ul> <p>Volcano erupting + air travel plans = a tricky combination. Even in exceptional circumstances, the airlines have to help you to get to your destination. Read more <b>about EU passenger rights</b>. Did you have a problem in 2010 when Eyjafjallajökul was active?</p> <p>[September 1, 2014]</p> <p>With few women having been put forward for the next European Commission so far, <b>gender equality</b> also proves to be an issue at <b>EU level</b>. The women's rights committee discussed this week how to improve the situation <b>in Europe</b>. Read more. What would you do?</p> <p>[September 5, 2014}</p> <p>Did you know any <b>EU citizen</b> may submit a <b>petition</b> to the Parliament if they have a complaint regarding the EU?</p> <p>[September 10, 2014]</p> <p>Going on Erasmus soon? Then get ready to be Erasmussed! Find all information about the new and improved programme here.</p> <p>[September 13, 2014]</p>	
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	<p>Share it: this year the <b>International Day of Democracy</b> is all about engaging <b>young people</b>. Let us know what challenges and opportunities you've recently experienced. [September 15, 2014]</p> <p>"Being an Ombudsman can seem more like an art than a science," says current <b>European Ombudsman</b> Emily O'Reilly after one year on the job. What does she mean and how she can help you? (...) Which issue would you like Ms O'Reilly to pursue further? [September 17, 2014]</p> <p>Did you know that one billion children are living in conflict zones? The <b>EU's Children of Peace project</b> – funded with the award money EU received with the 2012 Nobel Peace Prize – is helping them. [September 21, 2014]</p> <p>Should the EU provide additional money for growth and job policies, Erasmus and help for war-stricken zones? The budget committee votes on the EU budget for 2015. [October 7, 2014]</p> <p>In May 2014, millions of <b>Europeans voted for who should be in charge in Europe</b>. They were heard. Now it's up to their elected representatives in the European Parliament to ensure the European Union takes the right decisions for them. [October 8, 2014]</p> <p>Ukrainian movement EuroMaidan, Congolese gynaecologist Denis Mukwege and Azerbaijani human rights activist Leyla</p>	
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		<p>Yunus are the finalists for the <b>Parliament's Sakharov Prize for human rights defenders</b>. Who do you think should receive it this year? [October 8, 2014]</p> <p>Happy <b>World Food Day</b>, Europe! How can the EU strike the best balance between innovation and new flavours on the one hand, and <b>consumer protection</b> on the other? [October 16, 2014]</p> <p>Have you ever worried about having health problems while travelling to another EU country? No need, your medical expenses can be covered by your national insurance. [October 25, 2014]</p> <p>Say hello to the <b>European Professional Card</b>, the electronic passport which allows you to easily look for a job in another EU country. Watch the video for more information and tell us, have you ever thought about working in another EU country? [October 30, 2014]</p> <p>28 young Europeans born in 1989 in Berlin to discuss which walls in Europe still have to be torn down. Watch the video to learn how we can make a difference, according to them. [November 8, 2014] - (double assignment)</p> <p>Video of the day: Wind playing with the EU flag in front of the European Parliament. Want to learn more about <b>EU symbols</b>? [November 11, 2014] - (double assignment)</p>	
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		<p>NO. Small word, strong message. Today is the International <b>Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women</b>. Watch the discussion in the Parliament live at approximately 15.50 CET and share to support the cause. [November 25, 2014]</p> <p>What if entering a building already proved difficult? It is a regular challenge for some of the 80 million people in the EU who live with a disability. Today, on <b>the International Day of People with Disability</b>, read about how the EU aims to make <b>society more inclusive</b>. [December 3, 2014]</p> <p>Our work, our dignity, our <b>future</b> ... 2015 is the European Year dedicated to <b>Development</b>. How can the EU best meet future development challenges? [December 8, 2014]</p> <p>The winner of the <b>LUX Prize</b> will be announced during the plenary next week. Beside the <b>European identity and values</b>, there is something else that the three finalists have in common: <b>young people are in the spotlight</b>. Which one is our favourite? [December 13, 2014] - (double assignment)</p> <p>The <b>plenary chamber</b>, the <b>centre of European democracy</b>, Parliament is gathering here right now, ready to start this year's last session. Get up-close with members on our new 360° panorama. Can you find your member? [December 15, 2014]</p>	
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	<p>#ÖzgürBasinSusturulamaz [The free press cannot be silenced] is a key principle to join the EU. #Turkey and press freedom proceed in different directions. The raid on Zaman daily is very troubling,” said EP President Martin Schulz on recent raids on Turkish media. [December 15, 2014]</p> <p>Santa has his trusty reindeer, and the rest of <b>us...</b> have <b>passenger rights!</b> Read all about what Parliament put in place to <b>protect you</b> and your fellow travellers and tell us, how do you mostly get around? [December 25, 2014]</p> <p>How was your <b>first time voting</b> for the European Parliament? Tell us and watch the video. [December 28, 2014]</p>	
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## **Affidavit**

I, Michelle Magaletta, hereby certify that this bachelor thesis is my own work. It has been created independently and under the exclusive use of the specified literature and tools. All verbatim or analogous passages that have been extracted from published or unpublished literature have been identified as such. The thesis has not been previously submitted in same or similar form to any other examination office and has not been published.

Hilden, 21.09.2015

*Michelle Magaletta*