National–European identity and notions of citizenship: A comparative study between Portuguese and Greek university student teachers

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National–European identity and notions of citizenship: A comparative study between Portuguese and Greek university student teachers

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Abstract

This paper reports a study of prospective teachers' views about Europe, and European and national identity, in Greece and Portugal. The paper analyses written responses to a closed multiple-choice questionnaire provided by 33 Greek and 35 Portuguese prospective teachers following courses in Ioannina and Braga universities in early 2018. First, students were asked to answer 15 closed questions related to their perceptions of national, European and other identities. More specifically they were asked to choose among different associations of Europe and different levels of how their country is integrated into Europe. Also, they were asked to choose their preferred 'identification with particular identities' (Villaverde Cabral and Machado Pais, 1998) and to articulate their notions of citizenship by commenting on different criteria for the naturalization of immigrants. Finally, they were asked to predict the future of the European Union by answering an open question. Data analysis focused on the 2018 data and on comparisons with existing data sets, collected in Greece and Portugal since 1994, relating to perceptions of national and European identity and to notions of citizenship. The authors expected to find change over time in data on attitudes in the two countries, reflecting the impacts of the recent economic crisis in both Portugal and Greece and the refugee crisis, particularly in Greece. Portuguese participants were found to manifest a more positive perspective on Portuguese–European integration than had been the case in earlier data sets, while at the same time wishing to preserve some specific aspects of national identity. The Greek students were found generally to be consistent with their pro-European viewpoints, but at the same time there seems to have been an increasing distrust of the European Union after the experience of the 2010–18 economic crisis – indications of which were apparent in some earlier findings.

Keywords: citizenship; pre-service teachers; comparative research; Greece and Portugal; European Union

Introduction: Conceptions of European and national identity in Greece and Portugal

This paper discusses conceptions of European and national identity among Portuguese and Greek university students. It also discusses concepts of citizenship in the current changing political and economic context, which affects the European area, and particularly smaller nations such as Portugal and Greece. Europe is currently witnessing various challenging phenomena such as anti-Europeanism, xenophobia and resurgent nationalisms. One of the most recent phenomena that has been widely publicized

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in the mass media and in academia is populism, which constitutes a challenge for education systems, including for curricula and textbooks (Kohl, 2018). Populism is an ideology 'based on the moral distinction between "authentic", "pure" and "honest" people on the one hand and "corrupt", "pathological" and "dishonest" people on the other with both groups seeing themselves, as honest and virtuous communities' (ibid.: 496). Pandazopoulos (2013: 176), in relation to Greece in the context of its recent crisis, has also identified the phenomenon of non-nationalistic populism, where the 'enemy' is impersonal and vague, and identified with entities such as 'financial capital', 'multi-national companies' and even 'consumerism', understood as creating excessive needs. The latter expressions were present in the protest culture that developed in Greece from 2008 onwards – a culture not based on the collective notion of the nation but expressive of the rights and needs of many collectivities at the same time.

In the context of these developments, the main aim of this research is to analyse and compare conceptions of European and national identity and citizenship held by Portuguese and Greek pre-service teachers, and to explore any possible changes in attitudes in these countries over the past decade. The hypothesis that is defended in this study is that the political and economic contexts of Portugal and Greece are reflected in ideas about Europeanism, national identity and citizenship held by future teachers. The ideas of these students were expected to vary to a certain degree because of the cultural and political differences between the two countries from which the students came. In this study, 'nation' was regarded in a constructivist not an 'essentialist' way and as being a 'product' of its people, which is consolidated through 'traditions' that, according to Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) and Gellner (1983), are usually 'invented'. History school curricula, textbooks, school and other public celebrations, commemoration processes and museums (Carretero, 2011) are all part of this process of constructing and consolidating an 'ethnos'. We also expected pre-service teachers' perceptions of Europe to be changing. This research proceeded on the assumption that people actively participate in the formation of their changing identities – be they national, social or others (Frangoudaki, 2011). Notions of citizenship were also expected to have changed since earlier studies, reflecting changing political circumstances, such as the refugee crisis in Europe. This study presents the results of a survey carried out with university students studying to become primary school teachers at the universities of Minho, Portugal, and Ioannina, Greece, in 2018.

Research design

This research takes the form of a parallel case study (Yin, 2003) that is predominantly quantitative but that has a qualitative element – an open question at the end of the questionnaire (Erickson, 1986). Quantitative and qualitative data analyses were used to enable in-depth understanding of the data and the corroboration of findings (Johnson *et al.*, 2007).

Our sample comprised 68 student teacher respondents aged between 19 and 35 years from the primary education departments of the universities of Ioannina, Greece, and Minho, Portugal, in early 2018. It was a 'convenience' sample (Cohen *et al.*, 2000: 102) and students volunteered to complete the questionnaire, which comprised 15 closed, multiple-choice questions and one open question.

The questionnaire was a revised form of the Jovens Portugueses de Hoje (Young Portuguese Today) questionnaire that was developed in 1997 within the context of research carried out by the Secretary of State for Youth and the Institute of Social Sciences of the University of Lisbon (Villaverde Cabral and Machado Pais, 1998),

supplemented with questions from the Youth and History questionnaire, which was used in 1994 with a sample of 31,611 15-year-old school students in Europe and elsewhere, and that focused on historical consciousness and political attitudes (Angvic and Von Borries, 1997). Although the intention of this study was to determine Portuguese and Greek university students' conceptions of European, national and personal identities, it also covered citizenship, in order to enable comparisons to be made between past and present data sets.

Students were asked to choose from different associations of Europe and to indicate their preferences for different levels of integration of their countries into Europe. Also, they were asked to indicate which particular identities they identified with (Villaverde Cabral and Machado Pais, 1998) and to articulate their notions of citizenship by commenting on different criteria for the naturalization of immigrants. Finally, in an open question at the end of the questionnaire, they were asked to make predictions by answering the question: 'What do you think about the future of Europe?'

Responses to the 15 closed questions were analysed using frequency tables (Mann, 1995), and descriptive statistics were used to describe and summarize the data. The final, open question was analysed using content analysis (Bardin, 1994). Recurring patterns and themes were identified in students' answers and are presented below, using illustrative quotations (translated by the authors)**.** The patterns were not identified using 'previously defined units', as in classic content analysis (Titscher *et al.*, 2000: 56), but were identified inductively, as we developed interpretations of the students' responses.

The study follows a comparative research model, asking the same questions in two different contexts (Cowen, 2014; Nóvoa and Yariv-Mashal, 2003), and also aims to make comparisons over time by using questions that enable change and continuity to be considered. This work sought to find commonalities and differences in different national contexts and times in students' ideas about Europe and European identity, the future of Europe and values relating to identity, citizenship and immigration. Students' ideas were expected to vary to a certain degree, because of the cultural and political differences existing in their own countries, including long-term patterns of difference in the more remote periods of their pasts and their histories of nation-building. Nevertheless, we expected to find some similarity between the students, given parallels in the political and economic contexts of the two countries, as part of the southern bloc of the European Union, as countries that both have recent experience of dictatorship, as countries that have both been through a long and destabilizing economic crisis over the past decade, and as countries that have both experienced the effects of the current refugee crisis, which particularly affects countries that have functioned as 'entrance gates' to Europe (Apostolidou and Solé, 2017).

In what follows, short histories of Portugal and Greece are presented in order to provide an explanation of the two contexts. Long-term and immediate contexts are considered, including the context at the time of data collection in spring 2018.

Greek history, patterns of historical consciousness, the current political context and teacher education

Greece has existed as an independent state since 1830, following a nine-year war of independence against the Ottoman Empire. It could be considered as a 'product' of nineteenth-century nationalism and the simultaneous decline of the big empires of the past. With respect to historical consciousness, historians define two main narratives equally dominant in the public and official spheres in Greece, which have been

described as the 'revival' and 'continuity' schema of Greek history (Gazi, 2000; Liakos, 2002, 2007). According to the 'revival' schema, modern Greece originated in ancient Greece and was reborn after it was liberated from the Ottomans. According to the 'continuity' schema, Greece has existed without interruption from ancient times until now and, thus, has managed to retain a permanent identity.

Greece became a member of the European Community in 1981 and the European Union in 2002. With regard to Greek public opinion in relation to Europe, Yalouri (2001) reports ambivalence: Greek people either consider themselves Europeans because of their ancient origin (Herzfeld, 1987), or fear the possibility of their cultural assimilation by Europeans and possible interventions by Europe in their politics. The latter negative connotation of Europe became apparent following the start of the ongoing economic crisis in 2010 (Apostolidou, 2014):

> The economic crisis in Greece officially started in May 2010, when the country – after having notified an 'unsustainable debt' – applied to be supported by the International Monetary Fund, the European Union and the European Central Bank. In October 2011, a second memorandum, also agreed with the above economic organizations, followed, and then a third, in August 2015, after a short period (June–August 2015) in which Greece was not supported financially either by the IMF or the EU. (Apostolidou and Solé, 2017: 100)

The latter condition of unsustainable debt only ended in 2017. Throughout this period, Greek people have tended to regard the representatives of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Central European Bank and the European Union as 'enemies', and analysts have described a tendency in contemporary popular Greek culture to see enemies everywhere (Panagiotopoulos, 2013: 256; Frangoudaki, 2013: 154).

In relation to this wider context, data collection took place during a pre-election period characterized by divisive tensions between those Greek people who favoured and those who did not favour the Prespes Agreement between Greece and the Republic of North Macedonia (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia). This agreement was signed in June 2018 and is still a controversial issue in Greece – so controversial that, in January 2019, it was a potential occasion for no confidence to have been voted in the government, had it not been passed into law.

Another factor possibly influencing the attitudes of the Greek pre-service teachers is their experience of teacher training, and the extent to which it may lead them to take a critical stance on historical and political matters. Primary school teachers in Greece tend by their teacher training to be oriented more towards pedagogy than towards historical courses, and tend to have limited knowledge of the 'topic under scrutiny' (McCully and Montgomery, 2009: 103). By contrast, secondary school teachers tend to have a stronger orientation towards history courses, and to have little exposure to pedagogy or the didactics of history (Apostolidou and Solé, 2017: 98). Scrutiny of a sample of study guides from ten history departments training future secondary teachers in Greece suggested that prospective secondary school history teachers, who are history department graduates, usually attend introductory courses related to historical methodology, analysis of sources and history of historiography but that this is not always obligatory, and that history of historiography or theory of history sometimes do not appear in their programmes at all. In addition, obligatory initial training for those teachers appointed either to primary or to secondary schools generally lasts for four weeks (Apostolidou and Solé, 2017: 98), while the institution of practical training in schools exists mainly in university departments of primary education.

Portuguese history, patterns of historical consciousness, the current political context and teacher education

Portugal has existed as an independent state since 1143, and is thus the oldest and most stable political unit in Europe. The formation of Portugal as a nation resulted from a gradual process that ended with the definition of its borders in the middle of the thirteenth century, the constitution of a centralized monarchical state and the formation of a cultural and linguistic identity, which gave rise to Portuguese as its official language (Mattoso, 1986).

Economic, cultural and geographical boundaries are objective indicators of nationhood, but they are not sufficient for it to exist, since nationhood also requires the existence of national consciousness among the communities inhabiting a territory. The development of such national consciousness can be a long process impacting different communities at different times. Thus, in Portugal, national consciousness began 'by expressing itself within minorities capable of intellectually conceiving the notion of belonging to a community and then slowly propagating itself to other groups until reaching the majority of the inhabitants of the country' (ibid.: 46–7).

The appeal to nationality and manifestations of national consciousness arose at decisive moments in the history of Portugal, which intersect with the history of Spain following the dynastic crises of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and the period of the Iberian Union (1580–1640) in which Portugal came to be united with Spain in a union of the two kingdoms. Other events, such as the French invasions, led to the departure of the Portuguese court to Brazil and the temporary assignment of its government to the British. This national consciousness, which was reaffirmed at several decisive moments of national history, contributed to the construction of a national identity within particular economic and social circumstances. On the other hand, 'European citizenship consciousness appears, as a result of national citizenship; that is, as the extension of acquired dispositions regarding rights and obligations transferred from the national to the supranational space' (Fernandes, 1998: 309).

Portugal became a member of the European Community in 1986, simultaneously with Spain, and then of the European Union in 2002. According to the Public Opinion Portal, the Portuguese now feel more European than they did in the past, although the Portuguese connection to Portugal is still greater (European Parliament, n.d.). The membership of Portugal in the single currency is a further strong indicator of Portuguese support for the European Union, although this feeling of belonging to Europe was shaken in Portugal by the 2011 crisis.

This economic crisis officially started in March 2011 and the situation culminated with Portugal submitting itself to the Troika Economic and Financial Assistance Programme, which was signed in May 2011. This programme imposed a set of harsh financial cuts and measures to overcome the crisis, and these affected Portuguese society, affecting the wages and living conditions of the middle classes and leading to a general impoverishment of the population and a drastic increase in unemployment, affecting half a million people, or around 20 per cent of the workforce. This fell to 11.1 per cent by July 2016 and the economy has begun to recover, although the situation in the country is still monitored by the European authorities, who supervise Portuguese accounts and public debt, and require the continuation of austerity measures (Apostolidou and Solé, 2017).

Despite this recovery, the national political agenda is still impacted by uncertainties and risks, such as the impact of Brexit on Portugal. Analysts speak of continued support for Europeanism but note that this is under increased pressure (Raimundo, 2017).

Prospective primary teachers in Portugal attend history didactics courses in their third year of pre-service training. Understanding of the epistemology of history, which is indispensable for history education, is partly acquired in the courses on the history of Portugal and the history of Europe. Issues such as the importance of history and historical disciplinary knowledge, and the different types of historical source and how they can be questioned and used as historical evidence (Collingwood, 2001), are also addressed in these courses. In consequence, a primary school teacher in Portugal could reasonably be expected to have some knowledge of historical method and historical epistemology. Since the reformulation of teacher training courses following the Bologna Process in 2006, there has been greater emphasis on the disciplinary component in the subject areas and less on pedagogy and practice. Those wishing to teach history in primary schools – or primary education in general – have to conduct a project that links pedagogy with research, and then carry it out in practical training in schools in order to complete their MA programme, and they have to defend their thesis in public (Solé, 2016).

Data analysis: Closed questions about issues of identity and citizenship

The first 15 items in our questionnaire were closed questions in multiple-choice format. We focus, here, on four of these questions that address national identity, European identity and notions of citizenship – the first, third, fourth and thirteenth items in the questionnaire.

Self-identification and location

Our first question asked students *With what space do you identify yourself the most?* and asked them to make selections from a number of options, listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Identification and location

Identities	Portuguese students		Greek students	
	n=	%	n=	%
Home town	2	5.7	4	12.1
Region	19	54.3	7	21.2
Portugal/Greece	9	25.7	22	66.7
Europe	4	11.4	0	0
Do not know/Not applicable	1	2.9	0	0
Total	**35**	**100**	**33**	**100**

Responses to this question indicate that, while the vast majority of the Portuguese students did not identify with Europe, and none of the Greek students identified with Europe, the Portuguese students exhibited a higher regional self-identification than the Greek students and the Greek students identified more with their home country than the Portuguese students did.

Instrumental and symbolic dimensions of European citizenship

Our third question asked students *What feature do you associate most with Europe?* and asked them to make a choice from a list of items reproduced in Table 2.

Table 2: Instrumental and symbolic dimensions of European citizenship

European characteristics	Portuguese students		Greek students	
	n=	%	n=	%
Cultural diversity	15	42.9	8	24.2
Democracy and freedom	11	31.4	8	24.2
Common civilization	0	0	3	9.1
Diversity and welfare	9	25.7	7	21.2
Nothing special	0	0	7	21.2
Do not know/Not applicable	0	0	0	0
Total	**35**	**100**	**33**	**100**

Whereas all of the Portuguese respondents in our sample attributed positive features to Europe, 21.2 per cent (7/33) of the Greek respondents associated Europe with 'nothing special', which indicates some indifference, if not an anti-European attitude, among a proportion of the Greek respondents. In a comparative context, the Portuguese students scored almost twice as highly as the Greek students in relation to the 'cultural diversity' option. On the other hand, if one compares 'materialist' to 'ideational´ characteristics of Europe (Prodromou, 2000), or the 'cultural diversity' option against the 'diversity and welfare' option, there is not much difference between the two samples in terms of the latter (25.7 per cent in the Portuguese case and 21.1 per cent in the Greek case), but a greater preference for 'ideational' characteristics in the Portuguese sample.

Attitudes to European integration

Our fourth question asked respondents to respond to the question *What do you think about the integration of Portugal/Greece in relation to Europe?* by selecting one statement from a number of paired statements (A, B and C), expressing positive and negative views on several aspects of this issue. These statements, and the distribution of responses by statement and country, are reproduced in Table 3.

Table 3: Attitudes towards European integration

Attitudes of university students towards European integration	Portuguese students		Greek students	
	n=	%	n=	%
A) Europe is just a geographical expression	6	17.1	14	45.2
Europe has its own identity	17	48.6	17	54.8
Do not know/Not applicable	12	34.2	0	0
Total	**35**	**100**	**31**	**100**
B) EU integration is favourable	31	88.6	21	63.6
EU integration is dangerous	0	0	8	24.2
Do not know/Not applicable	4	11.4	4	12.1
Total	**35**	**100**	**33**	**100**

Attitudes of university students towards European integration	Portuguese students		Greek students	
	n=	%	n=	%
C) Portugal/Greece should emphasize European ties	21	60	16	50
Ties with Portuguese-/Greek-speaking countries (should be emphasized)	3	8.6	8	25
Do not know/Not applicable	11	31.4	8	25
Total	**35**	**100**	**32**	**100**

Responses to this item appear to corroborate the impression of indifference towards Europe on the part of many of the Greek students, as expressed by the much greater preference for the option 'Europe is just a geographical expression', which could be read as a condescending, if not dismissive, expression among our Greek respondents. At the same time, however, the majority of Greek students opted for the statement 'Europe has its own identity'. This latter finding perhaps echoes the comment by Metaxas (2000) in relation to the 1997 Greek data, which found that Greek students tended to adopt extreme positions, which Metaxas called 'rhetorical haughtiness'. While just over a third of the Portuguese students chose not to answer to this question, the Greek students split between the two extreme positions, 'just a geographical expression' and 'has its own identity'.

Differences in the perceptions of Europe between the Greek and the Portuguese samples were corroborated further in responses to the B statements in this item. While similar proportions of both samples were not sure what they thought on this issue, none of the Portuguese sample and nearly a quarter of the Greek students considered national integration into the European Union to be 'dangerous'.

Access to national citizenship

The final item that we consider here – the thirteenth in the questionnaire – asked respondents to indicate which of a number of groups *should have priority in access to national citizenship* in their countries. Options and responses are set out in Table 4.

Table 4: Priority in access to national citizenship

Priority to access Greek/Portuguese citizenship	Portuguese students		Greek students	
	n=	%	n=	%
Brazilians/(Balkan) Neighbours of Greece	1	2.3	0	0
Europeans of the European Union	8	18.6	0	0
Europeans in general	2	4.7	2	6.3
People from the former Portuguese colonies/people of the Greek 'diaspora'	7	16.3	23	71.9
People seeking political asylum	1	2.3	1	3.1
Immigrant workers in general	5	11.6	3	9.4
Refugees applying for asylum	6	14	2	6.3
Do not know/Not applicable	13	30.2	1	3.1
Total	**43**	**100**	**32**	**100**

Table 4 again suggests greater scepticism or negativity in relation to the European Union in the Greek sample and a markedly greater prevalence of ethnocentrism,

indicated in the preference for 'people of the Greek "diaspora"'. A common trait among the Portuguese and Greek students was that they did not seem to be especially generous in attitudes towards people applying for 'asylum' (in either of two categories) or 'immigrant workers in general'. Greek students seemed less prone to be positive towards refugees and immigrant workers. The latter finding could be explained by the fact that, while Greece has functioned as an 'entrance gate' throughout the refugee crisis of recent years, Portugal has actively sought to attract refugees (Jurriaans, 2017).

Comparisons with earlier data sets

Comparisons between our data sets and findings from the Youth and History project and other existing data sets reveal convergences and deviations.

In the case of Greek data, a convergence would be a tendency to ethnocentrism, while a deviation would be the stance towards Europe and the European Union. Ethnocentrism can be seen in the identification expressed by the Greek students with their country (Question 1) and also in their reluctance to attribute citizenship to foreigners (Question 13). This finding is corroborated by the 1994 Youth and History data, and by Hantzi and Abakoumkin's (2000: 331) conclusion that 'the finding that Greeks are very ethnocentric is well established'. According to Voulgaris (2000: 279), who wrote about Greek adolescents involved in the 1994 sample, what at first glance appeared to be a contradiction that:

> an intensely ethnocentric culture combined with an equally intense pro-European stance can be explained by the fact that the European Union seemed at the time to hold out the guarantee that 'our homeland' will be counted among the 'aristocracy' of countries …

Deviation in the Greek data from 1994 is apparent in stances towards Europe. Despite the assertion made by Voulgaris that pro-Europeanism in the 1994 Greek data could be supportive of Greek ethnocentrism and did not indicate any broader European identity, Voulgaris (ibid.) showed that in the 1994 Greek sample 'the view that Europe is simply a geographic entity meets with strong disagreement'. Despite the fact that the two samples are not comparable, since our data set only concerns a sample of 33 students, the suggestion made in our data that this positive evaluation of Europe has changed can be supported by literature concerning changing political attitudes in Greece in response to the economic crisis. A dominant reading of public opinion in the Greek economic crisis is that 'foreigners', the IMF, the Central European Bank and the European Union itself were the causes of the problematic economic situation (Apostolidou and Solé, 2017; Pandazopoulos, 2013).

Comparisons between our Portuguese data and earlier data sets – namely, the 1994 Youth and History data that is also used by Machado Pais (1999), the Young Portuguese Today project applied in 1996–97 (Fernandes, 1998: 310–15) and a 2001–12 longitudinal study (Freitas *et al*., 2002; Solé, 2013) – reveal more convergences than deviations. In these older data sets, in relation to the identification with locations, young Portuguese showed strong ties of infra-national identification with the place and the region where they lived, although most of them also identified with national space. Older and more qualified young people identified with supra-national spaces (Europe and the world). Broadly speaking, this trend is echoed in our 2018 Portuguese sample (Question 1); although students seem to identify more with their region and the country, they are also pro-European and recognize European Union values such as cultural diversity, democracy, freedom, quality of life and well-being (Question 2). In both studies, young Portuguese people recognized in Europe an identity of its own,

as opposed to a mere 'geographical expression' (Question 3), thus revealing a pro-European stance that has proved more developed and conscious in the students of our sample.

For the Portuguese students in these earlier studies, this identification with the European community was reinforced, and they did not see the possible threats that transnational identity might represent for traditional national identities. Young Portuguese citizens considered European integration more favourable for solving the economic and social problems of member countries, rather than being 'dangerous for the sovereignty of nations, their identities and cultures' (Fernandes, 1998: 124–5), although fracture lines also emerged, perhaps because, as in the past, integration 'depends on the distribution of material and cognitive resources of society' (Villaverde Cabral, 1997, in Fernandes, 1998: 124–5). In 2012, most young Portuguese people recognized the potential benefits of European integration and held a positive view of the future of Europe. Portuguese students emphasized the economic advantages of European integration and the freedom of travelling, studying and working abroad. In 2018, they manifested a more positive perspective on Portuguese–European integration than in the previous survey (Freitas *et al.*, 2002; Solé, 2013), but at the same time they defended the preservation of some specific aspects of national identity.

In our previous study (Apostolidou and Solé, 2017), Portuguese students, when referring to the IMF, the Central European Bank and the European Union, did not consider them 'enemies', as the Greek students did in that study, but, rather, as financial supporters who helped Portugal out of the financial crises of 1977, 1983 and 2011. The data from this current study corroborates and reinforces data from the 1997 study (Machado Pais, 1999: 159) in which young people made a positive assessment of European integration, considering that it contributed to the 'solution of the economic and social crisis of the European countries', seeing European integration as 'the way to achieve peace' between the nations, and seeing Europe as the 'cradle' of democracy, the Enlightenment and progress.

Data analysis: Open text responses to the question about the future of Europe

In the final question of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to write free text responses to an open question asking them *What do you think about the future of Europe?* Table 5 reports a synopsis of the data collected from the open question.

Table 5: Student perceptions about the future of Europe

What do you think about the future of Europe?	Portuguese students		Greek students	
	n=	%	n=	%
Pessimistic	3	8.6	7	21.2
Optimistic	11	31.4	17	51.5
Critical	5	14.2	8	24.2
Do not know/Not applicable	16	45.7	1	3.0
Total	**35**	**100**	**33**	**100**

Tendencies were detected in the closed questions and, more specifically, in Question 1, focused on identification with different entities including Europe; Question 4, exploring associations with Europe; and Question 13, about citizenship priorities.

Greek students were found to be indifferent towards Europe, since none of them identified with Europe as an entity. They were not willing to offer priority for citizenship to Europeans and, while the majority indicated that Europe had its own identity, a substantial minority considered Europe as a 'geographical expression'. Given the fact that citizenship, is 'something we actively "do"' (Isin, 2017, summarized in Andreouli, 2019: 7), and the fact that in an informed citizenry one ought to see the workings of political ideology 'in process' (Haste, 2004, cited in Andreouli, 2019: 7), it is important to gain qualitative insights into the chains of thought the students developed, which we do in what follows by examining their responses to this open question.

On a descriptive level, it can be seen in Table 5 that almost half of the Portuguese students did not answer the specific question, while a majority of Greek students did not hesitate to speak out. There were three categories or patterns identified in the responses of both the Greek and Portuguese students, all of which are illustrated below.

Some students articulated pessimistic responses, such as:

> I believe that in the future both Europe and the rest of the world could go to war … because of political and economic crises. (Portuguese student 8)

> It [the European Union] might fail because some countries wish to dominate. (Greek student 31)

Some students articulated optimistic responses, such as:

> I think the future of Europe has everything to thrive [for] and [that it will] become an increasingly open and more inclusive continent for those seeking a refuge for their life away from war. (Portuguese student 12)

> I believe that, despite the economic crisis of the recent years, the European Union will continue to exist, as it maintains prosperity among its constituent countries, as well as security and protection. Furthermore, one country should help the other and not turn against it. (Greek student 1)

Some students articulated critical responses:

> I think that Europe has already reached its peak. At this moment it is losing the union that it already had, since the countries that have more economic power want to impose themselves, before the less favourable economically. (Portuguese student 15)

> It [the European Union] will be retained, if the aim is to be the well-being and if certain actions do not serve individual interests of separate countries. (Greek student 23).

Comparing the Greek data with the Portuguese data, it is apparent that the Greek students in our sample seem to be more eager (97 per cent response rate) than the Portuguese students (54 per cent response rate) either to make their views towards the European Union known or to express their pro-European feelings in the sense of their support for the European Union (51.5 per cent of Greek responses were 'optimistic', whereas only 31.4 per cent of Portuguese responses were). On the other hand, the specific arguments that both groups use are similar – namely, both Greek and Portuguese students feared the possibility that some members of the European Union might come to dominate all of the others.

Analysis of the Greek data set

Comparing the Greek data of 2018 with the Youth and History data and, despite the fact that in the Youth and History case students selected from ready-made statements, in 2018 pro-European attitudes can be noticed but they are mixed with 'pessimistic' and 'critical' ones. In relation to the 1994 Youth and History sample, Von Borries (1997: A172–3) noted that 'The importance of European co-operation is not really held in high esteem but observed neutrally … only some candidates for membership and some members (Germany, Greece) have a better image of European co-operation'. In relation to the question about common currency in Europe, Von Borries (1997: A176–7) noted that 'Generally, this is accepted but not enthusiastically … the most positive reactions come from Italy, and in some other countries, Bulgaria, Greece, Portugal, Spain, France, Belgium and Israel too, mostly Mediterranean (or Southern)'. In this comparative context between the 1994 sample and the 2018 one, the synopsis made by Dragonas and Frangoudaki (2000) could be equally useful. Here, the Greek students from the 1994 sample presented 'the highest mean scores compared to other European students, as regards an affirmative conception of the European Union, as well as the most optimistic views concerning the future of Europe' (ibid.: 233).

Fewer Greek students opted for negative and critical statements in 1994 compared with their counterparts in 2018, who articulated their own negative and critical arguments about the European Union, a difference that could be explained by the latter students' experience of the recent economic crisis and the intervention of external supervising institutions in the policies of the Greek government.

In 2016, a qualitative study was conducted in Greece (Apostolidou, 2017) in which – among other tasks – university student prospective teachers were asked to narrate the history of the Greek state since 1830 (see the quotations from Greek students 120 and 10, below) and to attempt to predict the future of Greece in sixty years' time (see Greek student 18, below):

> … Greece till today is trying to respond to the burden of the economic crisis and her submission to Europe. (Greek student 120)
>
> … for how long are we going to follow the big ones? (Greek student 10)
>
> In sixty years from now, we don't know whether Greece will still exist as an independent country. (Greek student 18)

It is revealing, perhaps, that anti-European viewpoints were expressed by these students (explicitly by Greek student 120, and implicitly by students 10 and 18), even though they were not asked directly about Europe. Again, this is perhaps best explained by the fact that the data were collected during the period of the economic crisis – the third memorandum was only signed in summer 2015 – when the Central European Bank still belonged to the group of institutions supervising Greek finances.

Finally, in order to help understand transitions that could have taken place between 1994 and 2018 in the views of Greek students in relation to Europe, some unpublished data from 2016 – collected at the same time as data reported in Apostolidou (2017) – can be explored. These students were also asked to predict the future of Europe and, specifically, they were asked: *What do you expect life will be like in Europe in sixty years' time?*

From a sample of 97 students, only 44 responded to the question about Europe, and 28 of them were negative/pessimistic, as they either referred to the possibility of

the dissolution of the European Union or to the continuance of the economic crisis. Typical answers from this previous sample were:

> Power will be exercised only by a few countries of the European Union. (Greek student 21)

> Germany will take over all control. (Greek student 41)

> We will live to see the dissolution of the European Union. (Greek student 39)

Comparing the published and unpublished Greek data from 2016 (Greek students 120, 10, 18, 21, 41 and 39, above) with the Greek and Portuguese data (Portuguese students 8, 12 and 15, and Greek students 31, 1 and 23, above), it is easy to find similarities in the 'pessimistic' and 'critical' arguments articulated about the future of Europe. Greek and Portuguese students from 2018 claimed there was an unequal distribution of power among the European partners and also argued for the possibility that the European Union might not recover from the economic crisis. According to some Greek and Portuguese students, these two possibilities may lead to war. By contrast, the 'optimists' hoped to find refuge and stability in the European Union. Drawing on the 'materialist'/'ideational' analysis of Hantzi and Abakoumkin (2000), we might say that it is not for its values but for the security that it can provide that the Greek students in our 2018 sample supported the European Union.

Analysis of the Portuguese data set

Comparing the Portuguese data of 2018 with the 1996 data of the Young Portuguese Today project (Fernandes, 1998) and the Youth and History project of 1994 (Machado Pais, 1999), there are clear similarities with regard to European integration, and one of them is the inability to take a position. This is verified by the proportion of non-responses to the question about 'attitudes towards the European Union', which is the same as in relation to what they think about the future of Europe, since almost half of the students did not make any response. Among the actual responses, pro-European positions could be noted, but they were mixed with pessimistic and critical viewpoints. Those who expressed a positive view of the European Union, as well as the most optimistic views concerning the future of Europe – the *Europtimists*, reinforced ideas about the future of Europe associated with 'development', 'progress', 'prosperity', 'cooperation', 'evolution', 'unification', namely a change in the direction of improvement and progress, as these excerpts show:

> Europe has a promising future. (Portuguese student 9)

> Continuing European cooperation and integration. (Portuguese student 17)

While in 2012 optimism was expressed by the need to overcome the crisis, in 2018 this was no longer the focal point, since part of the crisis had already been overcome:

> I think that the European crisis will be overcome with unity and cooperation of all countries. Europe will return to stability. (Portuguese student 5)

In 2018, other students, despite being optimistic, were cautious and recognized the inequalities between European countries, or even decisions to leave the European Union, as is the case of the United Kingdom in relation to Brexit:

> I think that, depending on the decisions taken, Europe can evolve at all levels. (Portuguese student 10)

> For me, Europe has many ideas and ideas that are beneficial to European citizens, even though it allows for a great deal of inequality within their training. The future of Europe must continue as it is, even with some countries allowing themselves to leave the organization. (Portuguese student 30)

The Portuguese students in the 2018 sample who opted for negative or critical statements, despite being few in number, expressed scepticism and pessimism towards Europe – *Euroscepticism*. They predicted extreme situations, such as the beginning of a war or armed conflicts and the end of the euro (which was previously mentioned as an advantage of the European Union) and the threat from and influence of US policy in Europe.

In 2012, criticism related to the crisis situation and the difficulty of foreseeing a solution to the crisis, which in the opinion of some students was expected to lead to the disintegration of the European Union:

> I think the future of Europe is very complicated, due to the economic crisis. I think Europe will be very hard to keep together. (Portuguese student 15)

> Europe must collapse in a few years. (Portuguese student 2)

The critical Portuguese students of 2018 (the Eurosceptics) pointed mainly to differences between European countries in terms of economic development, political power and lack of social equity, which may have contributed to discord and disagreement among member countries. This view of inequality and hostility between member countries was expressed by students in 2012, who called for measures to help the poorer countries with their economic difficulties:

> I think the leaders of all countries should meet to discuss measures in order to help countries at this moment [that] have more difficulties. (Portuguese student 13)

The Portuguese students of 2018 were more optimistic than those of 2012. While they referred to the still ongoing economic crisis as one of the serious problems occurring at the time, they also focused on international politics and not just on national problems.

Both Portuguese and Greek students in the 2018 study tended, in a number of respects, to reveal a European consciousness, thus corroborating the results of 1994 (Angvic and Von Borries, 1997; Machado Pais, 1999). So, for example, 88.6 per cent of Portuguese and 63.6 per cent of Greek respondents considered 'EU integration' to be 'favourable' (see Table 3). The Youth and History results had also indicated that young people from the countries of southern Europe were the most optimistic, but that they were also sceptical or critical of other aspects of Europe, due to the current political and economic crises in both countries at that time – a finding that the limited range of our data, applying to two countries only, does not allow us to test.

There seems to be a suggestion in our 2018 data that the most Eurosceptical or Europtimist views on the future of Europe relate to differing expectations that students had about European politics (Machado Pais, 1999). Unlike the Greek students, Portuguese young people did not tend to adopt ethnocentric positions, and this may be related to the fact that they did not tend to fear that Europe could lead to the loss of national sovereignty. This difference in perception may relate to the longer-term histories of the two nations – Portugal being an old and consolidated nation without recent experience of occupation, and with a stronger national awareness.

Conclusions

Overall, the data sets reported and analysed in this paper seem to have implications for two issues: national and European identity. The findings were compared with previous surveys on similar issues, and the Portuguese data were also compared with the Greek data. The comparisons across time suggest continuities with regard to national identity and more specifically ethnocentrism, as well as slight transitions in respect of perceptions of Europe and European identity. More specifically, Greek students were found to share the ethnocentric attitudes reported in the 1990s and seemed to feel endangered with regard to aspects of European integration. On the other hand, Portuguese students seemed more confident in terms of European integration, as had been the case in the earlier data sets, while European identity seems to have had a more 'ideational' than 'materialist' character for them. Both Portuguese and Greek students seemed to be mainly positive concerning European identity overall, but there was also a substantial feeling of scepticism among the Greek sample, which appears to be a change from the past. While a European identity has consistently been perceived as desirable in studies of both Portuguese and Greek cases, the Greek students of our sample tended to appear to be indifferent or even hostile to Europe and its institutions. On the other hand, the Portuguese students appeared to be anxious, and feared unpredictable consequences following a possible disintegration of the European Union. The latter transition with regard to Europe could be related to the recent economic crisis, which both countries experienced in a traumatic way, and, especially for Portugal, to the possibility of Brexit, with all its expected and unexpected consequences for Britain and the rest of Europe. The persistent ethnocentrism of Greece may also be explained by the continued influx of populations into the country from the 1990s until now, and the economic crisis in combination with the dependence for many years on foreign institutions such as the IMF and the European Central Bank. The latter findings seem to confirm the initial expectations that there would be changes in the attitudes of the students towards their nation and Europe, due to the changing political, national and international environments. These changes have, according to Rüsen (2007), taken place in the context of crises, and especially where 'ethnocentric stances [appear as a] response to identity threat' (Dragonas and Frangoudaki, 1997: A419):

> History teachers constitute a particularly interesting case in education, since not only do they belong to broader society but they are also imparting the official version of the past of a country to their classes. Therefore, teachers seem to function, as part of the socio-cultural and – at the same time – educational framework of their students, since they bring together the official and unofficial pasts. (Apostolidou, 2010: 6)

Although it has roots in the academy, school history is realized in 'public' and not in the academic sphere. Especially in Greece, where there is a highly centralized educational system and dominant official and unofficial narratives, history education is often 'claimed' by politicians as much as it is controlled by practitioners or academics. By contrast, in Portugal, prospective teachers are required to apply research in the subject matter of history in their school practice during placements (Solé, 2016), and may, therefore, be better prepared to combine academic and non-academic versions of history. On the other hand, the findings of this study also suggest that Portuguese students cannot easily distance themselves from the general political atmosphere of their country. Phillips (2002: 5) has defined, as the purpose of professional development programmes and educational research in universities, the creation of a 'reflective

practitioner'. We would add a 'reflective historian', since history didactics involves more than teaching practices. Prospective history teachers ought to be familiarized with theory of history, theory and research in historical consciousness and also memory studies. As a result, they would be able both to 'construct' historical narratives and to historize or 'deconstruct' them in order to teach these processes (KÖrber, 2015).

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