

Economic, Political and Social Identity in the European Union

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**Social Constructivism and an
E.U. identity**

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Two perspectives about the way in which identity is produced are:

- ESSENTIALIST
- CONSTRUCTIVIST

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1. ESSENTIALISM

- an approach that looks for the
‘essence’ or ‘true core’ of
objects, values,
identities and cultures

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2. CONSTRUCTIVISM

- identities not ‘fixed’ or static, but instead should be understood as a process of ‘becoming’ within which they are continually mediated and influenced by other factors, built up – for example, socially – or constructed

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- citizen identity is 'constructed' every day by the social determinants of our actions
- Constructivism is based upon the concept of

IDEATIONAL SOCIALISATION

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Constructivists hold the view that the ‘building blocks’ of international reality are *IDEATIONAL*, as well as material

- in other words, ideas, as much as experience and actuality, shape international reality

(- the ideas, beliefs, norms and values of elites, as much as the actuality and experiences of individual citizens, shape and form the reality of everyday life)

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Constructivists argue that:

- ideas (ideology) shape institutions
- those (structural) institutions, based on those ideas, in turn promote rules, values, beliefs, norms and practices which produce a ‘collective’ identity that citizens identify with
- so, ‘ideas’ about identity matter – they have structural characteristics through State and societal institutions – and those ‘ideas’ interact with the individual citizen’s social and cultural experiences = Ideational Socialisation

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E.U social and cultural policies

PLUS

economic growth and stability

(material interests)

produce

‘citizen interest’

+

E.U. cultural and social images and institutions

= socially constructed E.U. identity