



Diversity and unity in European Philosophical THought

DEPTH

**European diversities and
commonalities,
including their historical origins
and evolution**

The proposal: Facts and Figures

European Union

The Seventh Framework Programme (FP7): "Cooperation"

Activity 8.5: "The Citizen in the European Union";

Area 8.5.2 Topic 1 (SSH-2007-5.2.1): "Histories and Identities – Articulating national and European identities".

Collaborative project (medium-scale focused project).

Duration: 3 years.

Anticipated start: 01.01.2008

Planned volume: 2 mil. Euros

Grants: 1,5 Mio. Euro





DEPTH: The Proposal Abstract

It is the objective of the DEPTH project, based on an analysis of “unity” and “diversity” and their interpretation in the philosophical tradition,

- a) to research the conflict between the pluralist composition of the European member states in their tradition and history and the claim to a European unity in its self-understanding inwardly as well as outwardly in a global context - the research will concern the areas of society, culture and religion;
- b) to present this transformation and convey the results of the research to a broader public on a national and European level.

The project will contribute to a more in-depth understanding of current and future socio-political developments and will formulate concrete and sustainable measures to channel these trends in accord with the EU motto: “united in diversity”.

The academic impact of DEPTH will consist in the cross-linked and interdisciplinary research of four Focus Groups developing innovative theories on cultural, social and religious aspects of EU citizenship, aiming at possible solutions to more concrete current

problems. Eight individual research projects culminating in published monographs and six academic conferences will document these results.

As concerns its social impact, DEPTH includes the following measures for a targeted dissemination of the research results to policy-makers and citizens of the EU: Database-supported presentation in the internet, three informational brochures, public appearances in the media and public institutions and an event for political consulting.

DEPTH offers an pan-European perspective on these issues, taking into account the national particularities of new and old member states as well as third countries.

Alongside its academic innovations the contribution of DEPTH will be to raise the awareness of diversity and the shared values, convictions and practices in the enlarged EU in order to strengthen social cohesion, solidarity and democratic responsibility in Europe.



DEPTH: The Partners

Technische Universität Berlin (TUB) | Germany

Université de Toulouse Le Mirail (UTM) | France

Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB) | Belgium

Universidade de Coimbra (UC) | Portugal

Ludwig-Maximilians Universität München (LMU) | Germany

University of Zagreb (ZU) | Croatia

Università "Federico II" di Napoli (UNINA) | Italy

Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (UAM) | Spain

Johann-Wolfgang-Goethe Universität Frankfurt (UF) | Germany

Uniwersytet Warszawski (UW) | Poland

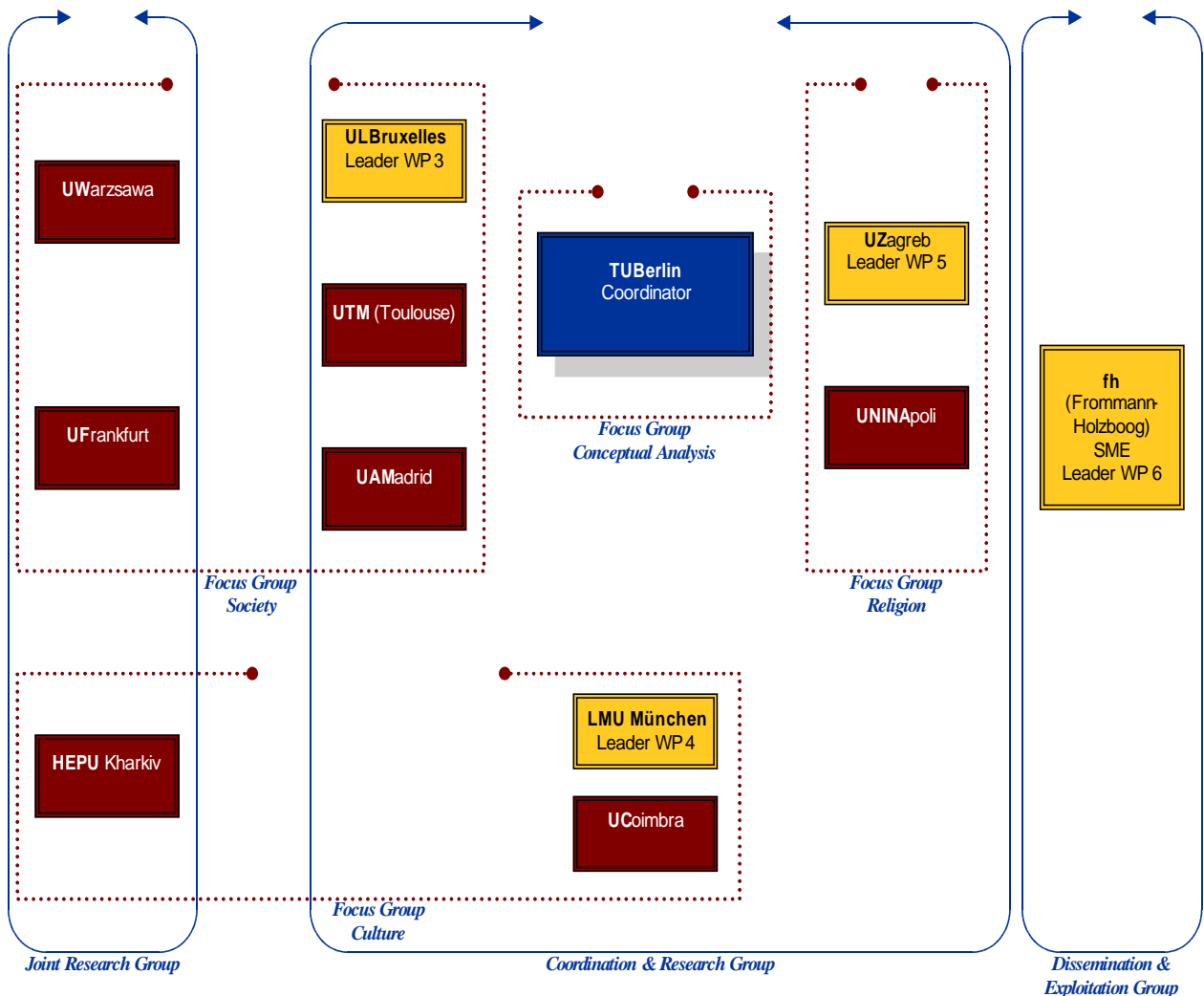
Kharkiv University for economics and law (HEPU) | Ukraine

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DEPTH: The Structure of Consortium





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DEPTH: Concept and objectives

It is the objective of the DEPTH project, based on an analysis of “unity” and “diversity” and their interpretation in the philosophical tradition, to research the transformation of the particular European nations into a European Union in the areas of culture, society and religion and to present this transformation and convey the results of the research to a broader public. The project will contribute to a more in-depth understanding of current and future developments within the EU and will formulate concrete measures to channel these trends in accord with political guidelines.

This project takes its urgency from the conflict between the *pluralist* composition of the European member states in their tradition and history and the claim to a European *unity* in its self-understanding inwardly as well as outwardly, i.e. in a global context. The challenges of an expanded EU cannot be tackled solely at the economic level but rather demand a response on the social level as well. The project will address first and foremost the needs and interests of the EU citizen: social cohesion, solidarity and the creation of a European feeling of belonging are the necessary prerequisites for a constitutionally governed European Union.

Yet Europe does not just stand for the idea of unity, it is at the same time a guarantee of tolerance and of the acceptance of the plurality of social, cultural and religious forms of life, particularly as it concerns minorities. The motto of the EU as formulated in article 1.8 of the constitution, “united in diversity”, eloquently summarises the foundation of the DEPTH project’s line of enquiry: how can the diversity and unity of the European citizens be brought into a stable social and political balance? What is the role of these conceptual categories in the past, present and future of Europe?

The practical relevance of this question can be clearly seen in two current examples: the continuing enlargement of the EU and the attempts at negotiating a European constitution. Critics of the EU typically claim that the new (like the old) member states are motivated to join the EU above all by particular economic interests. This criticism suggests itself readily if we trace the history of the EU back to earliest political measures to found a European Community. The Treaties of Rome were in fact founded in the common economic goals of Europe (EEC) and in the agreement to consolidate atomic energy (Euratom). Yet as this year’s Berlin Declaration on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Roman Treaties correctly emphasized, the European Union is founded not just on individual or common economic interests. The common foundation is to be seen in the shared social notions of value and the knowledge and ability of the citizens. “This European model combines economic success and social responsibility. [...] We can thus shape the increasing interdependence of the global economy and ever-growing



competition on international markets according to our values. Europe's wealth lies in the knowledge and ability of its people; that is the key to growth, employment and social cohesion." Yet this standard has not been reached by far! The current and future expansions of the EU inevitably bring the challenge of harmoniously integrating a traditional potential for conflict into the European unity, whether the conflict be religious, societal, cultural or ethnic in nature. The potential for conflict is rooted in the differences and incompatibilities of the many particular standpoints (religious, social, cultural) of individual member states on the one hand and the European Union's claim of community on the other. Especially in light of the integration of new member states it is necessary to spread an awareness of the European ideas (such as human and civil rights, human dignity, tolerance, etc.) among the citizens of Europe. An essential condition of this is the research into the history of ideas and the cultural history of Europe from antiquity to the present day.

The rejection of the proposed constitution in France and the Netherlands also makes this challenge clear. The European citizens' deficient knowledge of their common intellectual heritage and their insistence upon regional or national interests calls for enlightenment under the guidance of the humanities. This is to achieve not only a feeling of social community but also the active political participation of citizens, which is essential for Europe's democratic composition. Without compromising regional or national affiliation, rather alongside this diversity and supplementary to it, Europe's citizens have to be introduced to the social relevance of a European identity.

The present-day problems in the European search for identity and for social cohesion and integration can be traced back to a paradigmatic constellation of relations between diversity and unity, a constellation that has a long tradition in the history of philosophy.

The debate unfolding in society and in politics around European unity, and in particular about its constitution and its enlargement, can be understood in a much more profound light if we examine the philosophical thought of Europe in history and at present. The idea of Europe, and the related tension of diversity and unity, are closely connected to the rise of philosophy in the Greek-speaking regions of antiquity. From its very beginning philosophy has stood for replacing the mythical worldview with the rational. Like all cultural innovations, it emerged from a concrete historical situation, one namely in which humanity, faced with the collapse of its old mythical models of interpretation, needed new possibilities of orientation. This vacuum was then filled by rational enquiry, by philosophy. Philosophy implies the demand for *rational justification* of everything we suppose to be true.



It is there and then that the concept of a society of knowledge, used so frequently today, has its roots. Philosophy assumed the educational role of spreading knowledge among citizens, who are no longer to blindly obey traditional authority but to steer their lives according to the lights of general rationality, which even the political elite are bound to follow. Thus Plato and Aristotle saw the “true” man as a citizen of the state (zoon politikon), who is only bound to the dictates of his own knowledge and conscience (zoon logon echon; logon didonai).

In this regard the historical period of the Enlightenment (Voltaire, Lessing, Kant) is only the continuation and natural development of this idea of a European society of knowledge. Its central characteristic was the call to rationalize all areas of human life, for the individual to leave behind all dependency on religion, state or tradition in order to act with self-determination on the basis of his or her own reason. This genuinely European conception of rationality serves as a means of general justification for practices, norms and institutions. It allows the individual citizen to identify with his or her state and with its laws and institutions insofar as they are rationally conceived; at the same time it creates a general international basis of identification for all people who live according to the same conception of rationality. Kant’s idea of a peaceful confederation of states founded on the universal laws of reason can be and often is seen as the forerunner to the idea of a European unity, that is, a unity of states and citizens that commit themselves to the same conception of reason. Although Kant envisioned this as a world-wide union, the philosophical tradition and world history suggest that the acceptance of this type of rationality is more limited to the European cultural field, even if the notion of a “clash of civilisations” (Huntington) seems overstated.

The investigation of a genuine European rationality is the task of philosophy from its very outset; with its help we can make the common basis explicit and develop it as a theoretical, normative and political foundation for all European citizens and states. Here we can see the inherent connection of philosophical thought and European *unity*.

However the conception of a European rationality cannot be reduced to the category of unity. Equally important, if not even more central to this conception is the thought of *diversity*. Individual self-determination according to the light of reason implies that the agents of action (citizens, state governments, the EU) are not only bound to generally recognized norms, but also have insight into the reasons for their own particular actions and determine these reasons themselves. Thus the agent’s own rational action implies the recognition that other agents also act according to their own self-determined reasons. This idea of self-determination so deeply anchored in European thought, the idea of individuality, requires that the general normative framework leaves enough space for individual self-realisation. Precisely because of its commitment to rational insight, Europe requires not only the possibility but the reality of pluralism, a plurality of different forms of life, whether in the fields of religion or culture or in the state order or societal structures. Thus the continual struggle for a balanced and sustainable understanding of diversity and unity has its foundation in the very nature of European rationality.



Yet which precise balance of diversity and unity should we seek to express in European thought and action? It is clear that too much diversity threatens unity, and vice versa. Insofar as the categories of diversity and unity occupy a central position in European thought or can even be said to make up the core of European rationality, it is no surprise that the challenge of clarifying the relation of these concepts has been a focal point from the very beginning. As we saw, this pertains not just to a merely speculative conceptual analysis, but rather touches upon quite concrete questions of real-world practices.

The project “Diversity and unity in European philosophical thought” accounts for the practical relevance of the philosophical discussion of the “diversity” and “unity”. This project is guided by the thesis that philosophy has been an essential factor in the development of European rationality from its very beginning; it is one of the first and most significant of Europe’s innovations. The discussion of rationality in European philosophical history belongs to the unshakeable foundation of the project of a European community.

Thus alongside a fundamental analysis of the concepts of diversity and unity and their history in European philosophical thought, it is also necessary to investigate their concrete significance in three central areas of our common life: society, culture and religion. This has two further consequences for the project. Firstly, an in-depth investigation of this will require the interdisciplinary collaboration of philosophy with the social sciences and cultural and religious studies. Secondly this will require measures that ensure a pan-European approach and an open exchange and dialogue between the various nations – an approach that has yet to be applied to this topic. The constellation of diverse collaborative partners in DEPTH guarantees that the research and the presentation of its results to the public will also account for the regional and national differences among the European member states along with their European commonalities. The close network between the partner sites and their international dialogue are thus essential components of this project.

The joint research into these topics in general and into the details of more concrete issues will not just serve internal academic purposes. DEPTH is directed towards the citizens and politicians of the EU. The research results will be made a publicly accessible source of information, both to foster an awareness of European commonality on the part of its citizens as well as to provide politicians with socio-politically relevant strategies to help resolve the concrete problems of a pluralistically structured European community.

In its four cross-linked Focus Groups, DEPTH is devoted to the general relation of unity and diversity as well as to particular issues connected with this topic. The research in DEPTH is to take place within four Focus Groups:

- Focus Group “Conceptual Analysis”
- Focus Group “Society”
- Focus Group “Culture”
- Focus Group “Religion”



Establishing and maintaining networks is of central importance for this. The primary task is to coordinate the research efforts within each Focus Group, to plan and hold academic conferences for each Focus Group, and to oversee the publication of a collection of articles to document the research and the conference and make their results accessible. Additionally the individual research projects are to be published at the close of the project in monographic form. Here the focus will be on consolidating the specific questions within the philosophical research in light of the overarching question of diversity and unity in European philosophical thought. It is here in particular that the innovative potential of the collaborative partners will have its unique impact.

The following measures are designed to convey the research results to the citizens and politicians of the EU:

- Multi-media website on "European ideas"
- Event in Brussels on political consulting
- Public appearances at the regional, national and European level
- Three information brochures on the topics of "society", "culture" and "religion"

For the duration of the project DEPTH will hold semi-annual meetings for all partners in order to assess the results achieved by the consortium so far. In addition selected partners will assume the task of continually overseeing individual project modules.

