

## **As the Time Flies By - Changes in National and European identity in Croatia and Serbia in the Past 13 Years**

The idea of the most theories on social identities is that the stronger the feeling of belonging to the group, the stronger the social identity is. Consequently, it is reasonable to expect that European identity will become more relevant in the countries when they become member states, or at least, a member candidate state.

Having this in mind, we have conducted a study dealing (among other things) with the issue of national and European identity in Serbia (a member candidate state since 2015.) and Croatia (a member state from 2013.) to determine whether there are any changes in the levels of both social identities measured from the original research on this topic conducted in 2003.

As in the previous study, we have compared levels of national and European identity (measured by the same scale; Cinnirela 1997) on ethnic majority groups in Croatia and Serbia, with the main purpose to determine the changes in the strength of both identities. In both samples (comparable in age, gender, education and place of residence), in 2003. (791 citizens) and 2016. (967 citizens) we used the quota sampling for the respondents concerning age, gender and the level of education.

Results show that in both countries European identity is lower in 2016. than it was in 2003. ( $F=18.33$ ,  $p < .001$ ). As for the strength of national identity, although it was unchanged for the whole sample ( $F=1.38$ ,  $p > .05$ ), there is a significant drop in the strength of the national identity in Croatia in 2016. compared to 2003. study (country X time interaction was significant;  $F=6.07$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

All this results point to the notion that closer ties to the EU can decrease national identity strength, but need not lead to the increase in the European identity neither in Serbia, nor Croatia.