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European Disintegration: Tendencies of Renationalization within the European Union and its Impact on the Common Labor Market and EU Consumer Markets

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Abstract: Starting in 1952 with Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and West Germany as the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), the European Union (EU) successively enlarged to 27 member states in 2011. Since 2004, 10 Eastern European countries have joined the EU and, at the time of writing, five countries still have official EU candidate status and may join the EU in the near future. The permanent enlargement of the EU has led, and continues to lead, to social, cultural, economic, and linguistic pluralization and heterogenization and, more and more, causes a feeling of alienation among EU citizens. This comes along with a reduced willingness to share power, labor, and money among EU states, provokes tendencies of renationalization, and the resurgence of national thinking and acting. In the European common labor market these tendencies are attended by emerging exclusive nationalistic working climates and therefore undermine the formal freedom of movement for workers within the EU. In the European markets for consumer products (especially for food) these tendencies are reflected in augmented efforts that are undertaken to accentuate the national origin of domestic products. Empirical data of several EU member states will be analyzed and discussed. As a case study, the actual nationalistic tendencies of the Austrian consumer market will be parsed and integrated in a broader European picture.

Keywords: EU Enlargement, Renationalization, Labor Market, Consumer Markets, European Union, Nationalism, Austria, Europe

Introduction

After the accession of ten new member countries to the EU since 2004, it seems that the willingness among the European states and citizens to deepen the European integration has massively declined. In fact, quite the opposite seems to be true. European politics more and more are characterized by emphasizing different “national” interests. Politicians can earn political points in their home-countries when they create the impression they have “won” against or in Brussels. Furthermore, nationalistic and exclusive tendencies are observable within the national labor markets of the EU. This article will outline the situation in the UK, Ireland, Spain and Italy and discuss the consequences for the common European labor market through the theoretical lenses of different approaches to European integration. As a second path of analyzing Europe’s emerging nationalisms, its impact and exemplary mode of operation on the national consumer markets are analyzed. For the European Union, the Austrian market is a good example because Austria unites two different streams of nationalistic polarization and self-aggrandizement. The first stream is...
the polarization against, mainly, Turkey, the Arabian countries and the Eastern European countries. One important voice of that stream is the right-wing party, FPÖ (Freedom Party of Austria), and its offshoot, BZÖ (Alliance for the Future of Austria). In the actual opinion poll of July 2011, 31% of the Austrian votes would make them the leading party (Gallup 2011). In the European Parliament, the FPÖ together with, amongst others, the French “Front National” and the Italian “Alternativa Sociale” was a founding member of the political group “Identity, Tradition, Sovereignty” (ITS). Compared to the other European right-wing parties, the FPÖ has had, and still has, by far the biggest political heft in its home country (Almeida, 2010). The second stream of nationalistic self–aggrandizement in Austria is the polarization against Germany. As an element of a politically intended formation of a “new” Austrian identity, this stream was and to some extent still is supported by Austrian mass media and Austrian politics and pervades all political factions, and therefore does not fit into a political left–right scale (see e.g. Godeysen, 2010; Utgaard, 1999; Ritter, 1992). This situation in Austria provokes resistance against both a proceeding European integration and enlargement. The Austrian consumer market therefore reflects the two mainsprings of European tendencies of renationalization.

The European Union

Drawn from a historical perspective, there can be deduced 5 imperatives that have been constitutive for the process of European integration and European enlargement in different emphases (Spohn, 2000). The historical basis of these imperatives is Europe’s loss of former hegemonic power in the world over the course of its nationalistic and totalitarian self-destruction in two world wars. As first imperative, Spohn (2000) describes the domestication of the self-destructive nationalistic potential by forming a common European peace—and security system that also shields smaller states from possible claims of power of bigger states. The second imperative aims at the overcoming of totalitarian and dictatorial empires by establishing a democratic legal system and guaranteeing human rights and the protection of minorities. The third imperative of the European integration and enlargement aims at the supporting of a competitive economic development as the basis of societal prosperity and wealth in democratic freedom. The fourth imperative is related to the third one and aims at the recovery of a global position of power by bundling and using the resources of the European states. This leads to the fifth imperative, the premise that principally every European country, as long as it wants to, can be a legitimate part of the European integration project (Spohn, 2000: 222). Watching all of the European constitutive as well as the more specific treaties signed until now in the process of European integration, it becomes obvious that the goal setting or motivation for every single contract follows at least one of these imperatives.

The starting point for the European Union was the constitution of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1952. With the treaty of Paris, Belgium, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, France, Italy and (West) Germany agreed to establish a common market for their coal and steel industry without internal tariffs and a common external tariff. With the treaty coming into force, the “International Authority for the Ruhr” was abolished. From 1949 until then, it controlled the coal and steel industry of the German Ruhr Area. In 1957, the six states signed the treaty of Rome. The first part of the treaty was the constitution of the European Atomic Energy Community, coordinating the Member States’ research and development activities for the peaceful use of nuclear energy. The second part of the treaty of Rome was
the establishing of the European Economic Community (EEC) with the objective to create a common market for the six founding members. In 1967 the Brussels treaty united the tree institution under the umbrella of the EEC. From 1952 until 1973 the six founding states went along the way of European integration alone. With the first enlargement in 1973, Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom acceded to the EEC. Greece joined it in 1983 and Portugal and Spain in 1986. After the reunification of Germany, East Germany became part of the EEC as part of Germany. These twelve members of the EEC in 1993 signed the treaty of Maastricht, founding the European Union (EU) that took over the functions of the EEC. In 1995, Austria, Finland and Sweden joined the Union. In 2004, the EU was enlarged by Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia. Bulgaria and Romania acceded to the EU in 2007. Croatia will join the EU in 2012 and Iceland, Macedonia, Montenegro and Turkey have an official candidate status for the EU and are still negotiating about their accession. Albania and Serbia applied for EU membership and Norway twice conducted referendums that opposed a membership (see e.g. Thorhallsson & Rebhan, 2011).

The enlargement is attended by a continuing social, cultural, economic, and linguistic pluralization and heterogenization of the European Union. Figure 1 provides an overview on the history of EU enlargement and its impact on the average gross domestic product (GDP) of the EU. It becomes obvious that every step of enlargement (except in 1995) has meant a descent of the average GDP because usually the new member states had a weaker economy than the average EU member–states. This does not necessarily mean that every round of enlargement signified a lowering of life standards of the previous EU member–states but almost every enlargement lead to transfer payments from the old to the new member states.
Due to the fact that almost every single country of Europe has its own official language, the EU enlargement led and still leads to a continuing linguistic pluralization of the union. With 27 members, the EU in 2011 has 23 official languages that are used for EU business. Only Austria, Belgium, Cyprus and Luxemburg share their official language(s) with other countries. Because of its crucial role for territorial identity formations, this linguistic diversity can be seen as a crucial brake shoe for the formation of a European identity or a European citizenship (see e.g. Blommaert & Verschueren, 1992; Hautefeuille, 2011; Kraus, 2008). Beyond that, the linguistic differentiation within the EU promotes the strengthening of national mass media and therefore hinders the formation of a European media-driven public (Maier & Rittberger, 2008). The failure of “Euronews”, as one attempt to create a European news channel that transmits in various languages, and thus could create a European public, shows the strength of the monolingual national TV stations (de Vreese, 2007; Garcia-Blanco & Cushion, 2010; Hurrelmann, 2008; Peter & de Vreese, 2004). On the level of community law, the European multilingualism causes some problems when it comes to the national translations of European directives into national law (Taylor, 2011). Language and culture are two strongly linked phenomena (Caglar, 2007). Cultural diversity on the one hand can be seen as the unifying common basis of the European Union, but on the other hand can be the breaking point when national identities become predominant and exclude alternate anchors of identification (Pit’ha, 2009). Excluding a common language and defining culture as based on shared values, Zivko (2006) finds that nevertheless a process of cultural harmonization is observable within the EU. But a proceeding cultural convergence does not directly implicate a proceeding common identity.

Beside the mere enlargement, the integration of the European Union also continues and more and more competences are transferred from the national to the European authorities. Starting as a pure economic union, the European integration more and more points to a
political union. Nevertheless, the highest degree of European integration still is reached on the economical level. First of all the idea of a common and single market has become reality for the European Union. The European internal market is based on four freedoms: the free movement of goods, the free movement of capital, the free movement of services and the free movement of people within the EU. Furthermore the European customs union stands for the application of a common external tariff for goods and services entering the common market and for the abolishment of all internal tariffs and restrictions. A next step of economic integration was the monetary union with the creation of the Eurozone and the introduction of a common currency in up to now 17 EU member states (Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxemburg, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain). In the context of the actual economic crisis in some South–European members of the Eurozone again a probable next step of integration is discussed on a political level: a fiscal union (Darvas, 2010; Hallerberg, 2011; König & Zeyneloglu, 2010).

The social and political integration of the European Union happens for example in the field of higher education through the Erasmus students exchange program and the general aim to create a European Higher Education Area, often labeled as “Bologna Process”. An important step of integration also was the creation of the Schengen–Area, an agreement that aims at the abolition of physical borders. In 2011 all EU member states bar Great Britain and Ireland are part of that area within their borders usually passport controls are abolished. Furthermore there are a lot of other European integration projects for example in the area of space and military (Kaiser, 2011; Keutel, 2011; Nello, 2002; Scharpf, 2010).

The whole process, that can be described as different intensities and layers of Europeanization, provokes and provoked different degrees and intensities of euroscepticism or eurocynicism all over the EU (see e.g. Boomgaarden, Schuck, Elenbaas, & de Vreese, 2011; Dixon, 2010; Eichenberg & Dalton, 1993; Elgun & Tillman, 2007; Flood, 2009; Gabel & Palmer, 1995; Gerritsen & Lubbers, Hix, 2007; Hooghe & Marks, 2005, 2009; Jones & van der Bijl, 2004; Krouwel & Abts, 2007; Lobo & Magalhaes; Loveless; Lubbers & Jaspers, 2011; Lubbers & Scheepers, 2005, 2007; Lubbers & Scheepers, 2010; Ruzza, 2009; Vasilopoulou, 2009; Vida, 2008).

European Integration, Disintegration and Identity Formation

Until now only a few attempts have been undertaken to theorize European integration, and therefore offering theoretical links as explanations for the conditions of a continuing and unifying integration or even for a falling apart.

One direction of theoretical framing can be found in the theories of empire–formation and the phenomenon of imperial overstretches (Kennedy, 1987). A crucial issue of that perspective would be the discussion and analysis of the capacities of the administration in Brussels to “reign” the enlarging “empire”. This approach can be supported by the findings that the enlargement of the European territory and thus the mere extension of the distances between its borders strongly undermine its cohesion (Berezin & Diez–Medrano, 2008; Clark & Jones, 2008). Enlarging in general thus means an enhancement of the danger of disintegration. Another theoretical approach to European integration is the concept of communitarianism (Etzioni, 2001). According to that the biggest danger that threatens the European integration is its character of only being and remaining a “halfway–integration” in terms of different
degrees of integration in different policy areas combined with the fact that the different member–states are on different integration levels itself. Against this background and indicating lack of a common basis of shared values and the lack of the availability of a common “arena” to discuss these potential values Etzioni (2001) concludes that “moving from 15 to 27 nations may well be enough to severely threaten any supranational community already developed” (Etzioni, 2001 cited in Vollaard, 2008: 11). Vollaard (2008) adds for consideration “The increase in socio–cultural heterogeneity may foster a sense of alienation among the citizens in the EU. That makes citizens nostalgic for their place (regional or national) where they find more homogenous values” (Vollaard, 2008: 11).

Looking at the national levels the process of European Integration can be described as a permanent construction and reconstruction of national interests, political institutions and collective identities of every single national state in its aggregation and in its relation to the European Union (McLaren, 2002; Spohn, 2000). These processes of construction and reconstruction also surrounded every round of EU enlargement but there is a substantial difference that distinguishes the enlargements before 2004 from the Eastern European enlargements that goes beyond the impact of the mere linguistic, economical, social and cultural pluralization and diversification of the union. Jacques Delors, the former president of the European commission, therefore estimated the probability that the EU East–enlargement is the beginning of a process of European disintegration to be 50% (Vollaard, 2008).

Until the fall of the Berlin wall and the breakdown of the bipolar world order of the cold war the construction of “West–Europe” was an essential and important factor for the social, political and territorial cohesion and therefore for the cultural consolidation of the European Union. But with the fall of the iron curtain the growing convergence between the old EU member states was confronted by the idea of enlarging the Union to Eastern Europe. Therefore for the “Western” European states the centripetal forces of integration and deepening the common basis of the Union is diametrically opposed by the centrifugal forces of enlargement (Karp & Bowler, 2006; Spohn, 2000). This polarization is intensified by the fundamental ambivalence of the Eastern European countries towards the European integration: On the one hand the European Union, perceived as a new supranational power of the “Western” European states in Brussels, seems to take away or at least to question their just achieved national sovereignty. On the other hand the secular, political and economic perspectives of modernization that are connected with the European Union were very attractive and in the end made them join the EU (Christin, 2005; Cichowski, 2000; Jackson, Mach, & Miller–Gonzalez, 2011; Lyons, 2007; Rohrschneider & Whitefield, 2006; Tanasoiu & Colonescu, 2008; Vetik, Nimmerfelft, & Taru, 2006). But still their perceived price they paid for accession to some extent is the loss of traditional national fundaments. On the political level this ambivalence became evident when in 2007 at the negotiations for the European constitution Lech Kaczynski, the former president of Poland, pushed through that the definition of the European hymn (“Ode to joy” from Beethoven) and the definition of the European flag (12 golden stars on blue ground) had to be removed from the treaty. Furthermore the name of the treaty had to be changed from “European Constitution” into “Reform Treaty” (now it is usually referred to as the “Treaty of Lisbon”). For the last negotiations he had with the German chancellor Angela Merkel on that issue Kaczynski was openly supported by the President of the Czech Republic and more covertly by most of the other heads of the Eastern European states (Lewis, 2010). Something that on the first appearance seems to be negligible, especially when that compromise made him agree to the new voting
system and voting weights of the union, in fact means the removal of the three most powerful anchors of a possible future European identity of European citizens. Also when the removal does not inevitably mean that the “career” of the European flag and hymn comes to an end, it reveals the unwillingness of the Eastern European states to let Europe replace them as perceived home country of their citizens. On the symbolic level (flag, hymn, constitution) they therewith implicate the other EU member states as well.

The phenomenon of “European identity” can be understood as formed by European integration. The emergence and development of a European identity systematically can be conceptualized as an overlay (Eder, 1999) or an replacement (Lepsius, 1999) of national identities. Imaginable is also an “as–well–as–identity” but usually territorial identities usually need one main anchor, in this case the nation or the EU. Taking both territorial concepts as contingent and replaceable, identity constructions that equally refer to both question the whole concept of territorial identities. Maybe that can interpreted as the “perspective of belonging” of a post–national constellation of a future Europe or world (Habermas, 1998), but in the actual Europe national identities are still predominant. Data of the EU Eurobarometer support that view. Periodically in all the EU–member states representative samples of citizens are asked “In the near future do you see yourself as…?” The five categories of responses are (Nationality) only, (Nationality) and European, European and (Nationality), European only, do not know. For the six founding members of the EU figure 2 and figure 3 show a time series of the share of people that see themselves as only Europeans and or as only nationals.

“In the near future do you see yourself as (Nationality)?”

![Image of a graph showing the percentage of people who identify as only Europeans or only nationals in the six founding members of the EU over time.]
“In the near future do you see yourself as European only?”

Figure 2 and 3: To be Nationality European in the Future? (in %), (Source: Question 40, Eurobarometer of the European Commission)

Figure 2 indicates the considerable increase of people who see themselves only as nationals in 2004, the date the EU–enlargement to the east. Figure 3 mainly shows the generally low share of Europeans that see themselves only as Europeans. The only exception is Luxemburg. Beside these mere numbers there are more indicators and symptoms of arising nationalistic tendencies and nationalisms observable in Europe. One symptom is the recent accumulation of nationalistic incidents on the European labor markets and another one is the emerging tendency to come back to nationalistic consumer behaviors. Both is exemplified and discussed in the next.

Nationalism and the European Labor Market(s)

After the enlargement in 2004 a large–scale emigration from Poland and the Baltic States to Great Britain and Ireland took place. After and also already before joining the EU in 2007 there was a second big European wave of emigration from Romania and Bulgaria to Italy and Spain.

The Case of Polish Migrants in the UK and Ireland

In 2006 between 5% and 7% of the Polish labor force worked outside Poland (Kaczmarczyk, 2008). Before 2004 Germany was by far the most important European target country for Polish workers at which the immigration and naturalization of 1.4. million so–called “ethnic Germans” between 1950 and 2002 is not taken into account, i.e. people of German descent who before the new demarcation of Germany’s and Poland’s borders after World War II
lived in the former German territories (Kaczmarczyk & Okólski, 2005; Pallaske, 2001; Wedel, 1992). In 2000 there lived 76,700 Poles in Great Britain and 327,000 in Germany whereas in 2004 410,000 Poles were living in Great Britain compared to 300,000 in Germany (Kaczmarczyk, 2008; Rock & Wolff, 2002).

Between 2004 and 2007 about 66% of the immigrants that came from the new EU member states to the UK came from Poland. Irish data confirms these tendencies. Between 2004 and 2007 about 200,000 new Polish immigrants were counted, representing 56% of all immigrants from the new EU member states (Grabowska–Lusińska, 2007, 2008). Compared to the Polish immigrants coming to Germany that completely has opened its labor market for the new EU member states as recently as May 2011 (Gerhards & Lengfeld, 2009; Krings, 2009), the immigrants in Great Britain are younger and possess higher levels of qualification. But compared to the average workforce in Great Britain the Polish immigrants get much lower returns to their qualification (Drinkwater, Eade, & Garapich, 2009). By directly opening their labor markets for the new EU members without any restrictions the United Kingdom, Ireland and Sweden sent a clear welcoming signal that sets them apart from all the other “old” EU member states. But fired up by the economic and financial crisis, that started in 2007 and especially strong affected the UK and Ireland, the seemingly inclusive working climate for workers from the Eastern European countries changed. Primarily in the industrial sector more and more examples came up for overtly hostile and exclusive climates.

A starting point was the case of an oil refinery in North Killingholme in North Lincolnshire that is operated by the French company Total. In January of 2009 the company decided to place the order for the construction of a desulfurization installation at IREM SpA, an Italian construction company. The announcement of IREM solely to employ Italian and Portuguese contract workers caused a walkout of the British employees of the refinery and provoked a wave of national protest and solidarity among the British workers of other plants all over the UK. Within a few days in more than 20 different refineries and power plants the workers organized walkouts and protest rallies and the focus of protest in most of the plants switched to the Polish workers or the workers and colleagues from Eastern Europe in general that now more openly were perceived and labeled as competitors on a labor market where jobs are getting scarce. An often used slogan was “British jobs for British workers”, a quotation of a speech of the former British Prime Minister Gordon Brown from 2007. The media referred to these events for several weeks as the “Lindsey Oil Refinery strikes” (Barnard, 2009; Castles & Vezzoli, 2009).

Heated by the economic crisis and the rising rate of unemployment in the country also in Ireland an upcoming animus against the new migrants can be stated. Konics (2009) illustrates this atmosphere with the statement of a Polish woman in Ireland: “Latterly I permanently get questioned by Irish people where I am coming from. There resonates a strong and non-suppressed aggressiveness in that questioning. I am more and more fed up with that and I would like to bawl at these people and say them they shouldn’t care a rat–fuck about it. But I control myself and deny myself such responses.” (Konicz, 2009: 3).

The Case of Romanian Migrants in Italy and Spain

The second biggest Eastern European country that joined the EU in 2007, 3 years after Poland, is Romania. Until 2011 an estimated 1.6 million Romanians emigrated or legalized their residence into other European countries (Martínez, 2011). For the wave of Romanian
emigration that started in 2002 and abated in 2008 Spain was by far the most popular destination, followed by Italy (Ban, 2009; Sandu, Radu, Constantinescu, & Ciobanu, 2004). 50% of the migrants chose Spain as target country and about 25% Italy. Whereas in 1998 about 3,500 Romanians were registered in Spain (Viruela-Martínez, 2002) in the end of 2009 there lived 800,000 Romanians in the country (Martinez, 2011). Being amongst others attracted by the economic growth of the Spanish economy the situation totally changed since 2008. With a quota of more than 20% Spain in May 2011 has the highest rate of unemployment in Europe and the rate of unemployment within the Romanian population in Spain is even higher than the average Spanish quota. In 2008, the government of Romania started campaigns in several Spanish cities that promised their countrymen support and employment in Romania aiming at convincing them to return. In 2009 the Spanish government cooperated with the Romanian government and offered money for those Romanians who agree to leave the country for at least three years, but only very few Romanians accepted that offer (Campomori, 2010; Martinez, 2011). Over the last years, especially since the beginning of the economic crisis and the rapid boost of the amount of unemployed people in Spain, the working climate and generally the conditions of everyday-life for Romanians and other immigrants has worsened. Because of the crisis the acceptance and tolerance that is shown to the immigrants in Spain massively slumped (D’Ancona & Valles Martínez, 2008; Ëltetó, 2011). The stress and the psychological problems caused by the experienced discrimination and everyday demotion is increasing among the Romanian population (Gonzalez-Castro & Ubillos, 2011) and generally the Romanians are confronted more and more with situations of public rejection, especially in the workplace (Agudelo-Suárez et al., 2009; Porthé et al., 2011).

In Italy there are living about 400,000 immigrants that have Romanian citizenship. (Martinez, 2011). The Romanian government started campaigns to convince the Romanian emigrants to return to Romania in 2008 in Italian cities as well but also here the rate of acceptance was very low (Campomori, 2010; Martinez, 2011). The everyday-situation for the Romanians in Italy differs a little from the situation in Spain because Italy has several examples of public hostilities and aggressions against the housing schemes of Romanian Sinti and Romanies. These organized aggressions that in some cases had the character of pogroms often were heated by one-sided local news coverage that found Sinti or Romanies guilty for any actual crime. The Italian politicians quite often in the past avoided to take a tough stance against these violence and racism and quite the contrary sometimes encouraged the aggressors and showed sympathy for their behavior (Sigona, 2010). Also Romanians in Italy that have not experienced that aggressions personally, know the images and know the stories about it and know the destructive potential that is inherent in the softer types of exclusion they are confronted with in their workplaces and in their everyday life. And therefore also they are personally affected by these aggressions (Pavone, 2010; Uccellini, 2010).

Nationalisms and the European Consumer Markets: The Case of Austria

For analyzing the interrelation of emerging nationalisms in the European Union and the European consumer markets this paper points out the example of Austria. Austria is beside the UK (Clements, 2009, 2010) the most eurosceptic country of the EU (Eurobarometer) but in contrast to the UK it is part of all European steps of integration that are made until now as for example the Eurozone and the Schengen-Area. Austria joined the EU in 1995 and has very close relations to Germany and to its bordering countries of South-Eastern
Europe. Therefore it can be seen as a medium between the founding members and the new member states that joined the union after 2004. Even though Austria does not have the political clout to politically mediate or to build bridges between these EU member–groups the situation in Austria reflects elements of both groups what makes its consumer market a good European example. The shared historical, cultural and linguistic roots with Germany make the Austrian nationalism and euro scepticism unique in Europe. With the end of National Socialism and World War II Austria tried to wipe away the common ground with Germany and one of the most important constitutive elements of the new Austrian identity–formation became “not–to–be–German”. That came along with the social demotion of everything that was perceived as German and with the national absorption and monopolization of what was perceived as positive. One striking example is the renaming of the school subject “German” into “Language” but these processes pervaded and to some degree still pervade all realms of the Austrian society and everyday–life (Godeysen, 2010). This being the situation the Austrian accession to the European Union for the Austrians equaled to some extent a political moving together with Germany and therefore carried the inherent danger of questioning the demarcation to Germany as one supporting pillar of Austrian identity. This connectivity was revealed by a campaign of the Austrian government to convince the Austrian to agree to the EU accession. The slogan of the campaign was “Sackerl bleibt Sackerl”. “Sackerl” is the expression for “bag” in the Austrian–German dialect and the slogan tried to dispel the preoccupation that the EU–accession will initiate a process that in the end will replace the Austrian dialect by the High German that is spoken in Germany.

The situation of the Austrian retail market has at least partially to be interpreted against that background, especially because it is dominated by German retailers. The market is highly concentrated and the German Rewe–Group is the leading retailer with a market share of 31% followed by the Austrian Spar holding a share of 28.4%. The third biggest retailer on the Austrian market is the German discounter Aldi–Süd that has a market share of about 20%. Another important retailer that predominantly is located in Vienna is Zielpunkt. The most rapidly expanding supermarket in Austria is the German discounter Lidl holding an actual market share of 3.8%. Lidl mainly is supplied by its German warehouses and for that had to face massive “patriotic” criticism in Austria. At a protest rally of Austrian farmers in the Austrian province of Carinthia the governor Dörfler publicly accused Lidl of “solely selling crap” (Cik, 2009) and only “offering imported junk” and concluded that “no Carinthian should buy there” (ORF, 2009). For analyzing the intensity of nationalism on the retail market examples will be given of actual (July 2011) leaflets of Rewe, Spar and Zielpunkt. Furthermore the presentation of the goods and the audio–visual merchandising and advertising at the point of sale will be analyzed. The data was collected in June and July 2011 in Vienna.

The Spar–Group that mainly runs the retailing concepts Spar, Eurospar and Interspar in its annual report (2010) describes itself as the only retailer running stores all over Austria that is possessed only by Austrians, a couple of families. Beside the annual report this information, accompanied by the slogan “For us Austria comes first”, is communicated at frequent intervals to the customers via the Spar–radio program that runs in every market. An actual campaign of Spar that is placed in newspapers and leaflets transports the message: “We are Austria: Priority for domestic quality” (see Figure 4).
The Rewe–Group runs three different channels of distribution in Austria: the supermarket “Billa”, the discounter “Penny Markt” and the superstore “Merkur”. For all of them they introduced a common national labeling system in June 2011. They designed two symbols to categorize the degree to what each product they sell is “Austrian”. Little tables all over the markets explain these symbols to the customers (see figure 5). An Austrian flag (3 horizontal stripes: Red–White–Red) with a single A stands for products with a value creation that has been made for more than 50% in Austria. They explain “value creation” as the share of the manufacturing cost and therefore exclude the margin between their selling and purchase prices. A double–A is given to products that only contain ingredients from Austria and that have a value creation of 100% in Austria. A footnote allows a tolerance limit of 2%. This nationalistic campaign is intensified by posters that are placed in every Penny Markt that say: “We are storage–rack–patriots, for us Austrian products come first” (see figure 6).

At the storage–racks of the Rewe–markets every single product that fits into the categories of A or AA is labeled with the adequate symbols. This labeling includes all product groups. Figures 7, 8 and 9 give examples of infant–food at Penny Markt and noodles and sanitary tampons at Billa.
The third supermarket chain where data is taken from is Zielpunkt. Zielpunkt labels every product that is Austrian in its leaflets as well as at the point of sale with an Austrian flag and the slogan “quality from Austria”. Three examples for the labeling at the point of sale are shown in figures 10 to 12 and one example for the leaflet is figure 13.
Penny Markt as well as the retailer Zielpunkt is supplied by Schirmhofer an Austrian butchery. Within Zielpunkt's leaflets Schirmhofer usually has an own space for its advertising because in many Zielpunkt chain stores it runs own selling points. For emphasizing the Austrian origin of their meat they developed a label that’s says in front of the Austrian flag “100% Österrein” and subtitles “guaranteed meat from Austria” (see figure 14).
“Österrein” is a wordplay of Austria (Österreich) and purity or pureness (Reinheit). In German “Reinheit” has a meaning of being “clean” and not being mixed together with other things that harm the pureness or cleanliness. Using it as a national labeling for food it has a very strong connotation of heavily devaluing “dirty” foreign products or foreign elements of Austrian products. It provokes the association of giving to the product a genetically code in which the Austrian part is the good one. In considering the Rewe labeling of “A” and “AA”, there could be drawn a connection to blood types and the idea of an Austrian “pure bloodedness” or an Austrian “purity of breeding”.

Summary and Conclusion

The tendencies of renationalization within Europe confront the widespread assumption that the national state more and more is an obsolescent model in the “modern” or “postmodern” world (Beck & Grande, 2004). The dialectic approach that historically describes the process of nation building as a process of becoming a cosmopolitan citizen by continuously drawing bigger units of unification seems to be contrasted by actual politics (Etzioni, 2001; Popov, 2002). Also the imagination that peoples increasingly share their individual solidarity with concrete people instead of institutionalized communities (Appiah, 2006) like nations seems not to fit into the European situation right now. The still existing and growing need of the European citizens to identify with nations can be interpreted as a result of emerging insecurity and instability in terms of the interpretation and definition of Europe or the European Union itself. This insecurity increases with the pluralization of claims that are raised against the EU by the different member–states. By allowing access to the Union to the Eastern European countries, a new type of claim arose: that of compensation for the suffering and imposed economic backwardness in the past. This pure economic and monetary claim does not leave space for a political integration because the entity itself that raises the claim (i.e. the nation) would then be weakened. Having members in the union that so clearly only want to gain economic profits from it also effects the position of the other members because no one wants to pay the piper. That does not mean that also the “old” members did not draw any economic profit from the accession of the “new” members. But also the old members started to follow more inward leading politics that put the nation first and leave to the EU the position of a
milk cow that everyone wants to milk but not to feed. Against that background workers and products from other European countries on the own labor or consumer markets are perceived as a price that has to be paid for the membership and not as a benefit itself. If there is a real will to overcome this situation the national politics have to take up much clearer and louder positions against these nationalistic tendencies. To gain more insights in that topic, future research should go deeper into the single situations of all the national labor and consumer markets to help to understand the mechanisms of exclusion that work on the European markets and to help to develop measures to overcome them.
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