

Greeks, Germans or Europeans? The views of the students at the Greek High School (Lyceum) in Stuttgart¹

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Abstract

Europe has long been facing a series of pressing social, political and economic problems; hence, the issue of the citizen's identity acquires quite complex dimensions. On the one hand, the place where a person lives may be different to their place of origin; on the other hand, this fact may or may not affect their sense of identity.

The question whether or not a person feels a citizen at the reception country and if so, to what extent, is further complicated by the fact that, apart from holding the citizenship rights of the reception country, certain migrants also have the identity of the European citizen. It seems that the significance ascribed to this identity varies considerably across European member states.

Forced to follow their families, in pursuit of a solution to their financial problems, to a country such as Germany that still provides employment to foreigners, young Greek immigrants problematize their identities. Greeks, Germans or Europeans then? We conducted a survey on their sense of identity on approximately 200 students who attend the Greek High School (Lyceum) in Stuttgart. We also sought to establish whether their sense of identity is linked to the general attitude of the reception country towards them and if so, to what extent. We further explored the question whether they think that the attitude of the German state towards them would have been different (better or worse), provided that the European society and, therefore, Germany itself was not socially and economically depressed. We also explored the relationship they think there is between their identity and the rights they enjoy.

Key words

Identity, Citizen, Country of Origin, Reception Country, Rights

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Introduction

The last decade Greece was hit by a severe economic crisis which had a serious impact on the life of Greek citizens. Notwithstanding the strictly financial problems, it also triggered off a number of social, personal and family problems which affected a large percentage of the population. Individuals attempted to deal with these problems on their own as the Greek state, in its attempt to remain within the European Union, could not implement short-term policies with the aim of improving the quality of its citizens' everyday life, though the latter were barely responsible for the crisis. Affected social groups which attempted to address these problems on their own, resorted to migration.

Migration has long been known to the Greek society throughout the twentieth century. Yet, today's circumstances are quite different. Greek migrants no longer come from the lower classes. They are rather members of the dissolving middle class and scientists. Unfortunately, although the Greek state recognizes that this solution which many Greeks were forced to resort to is temporary and has destroyed the country's productive class, it does not have the ability or the intention to reverse this situation. Thus, Germany which historically has been a reception country for Greeks during the second half of the twentieth century – though a large percentage of them has already been repatriated– is again receiving a considerable number of new migrants that now migrate with their families. Consequently, the Greek schools that were left in Germany and were dwindling away are now full of students. Their arrival is fraught with difficulties as they either do not speak German nor do they have a good command of the German language or a good knowledge of the way German schools work. Therefore, if they were to attend German schools, they would face major adaptation difficulties. Instead, they look for a Greek school to attend as most of them intend to enroll in a university.

The author of this study is employed as a teacher at the Greek High School of Stuttgart attended by approximately 200 young Greeks between the ages of 16 and 21. Discussing with them, significant questions arose which are analyzed in our paper.

Greece and Migration

Migration is a phenomenon that dates back to the ancient times. The reasons why populations move vary across time and place; yet, we believe that they do point to the inability or the difficulty of people to live in safety or to low living standards in the country of origin.

In recent years, migration is becoming again one of the most complex and compelling social issues (Sam & Berry, 2006). Societies in developed countries are called to address this problem.

The term migration could be defined as follows: “the move of a person or a social group with the aim of settling in another country permanently or for an extended period of time” (Tsaousis, 1984, p. 180). We draw a distinction between internal migration and the kind of migration we will be discussing in our paper; internal migration is the move of populations within the country while external migration refers to the move of populations to another country.

Historically, Greece has been a country of migrants from the period spanning from the late nineteenth century to the 1970s. During the last two decades of the twentieth century, Greece also became a reception country for migrants. Lately, due to the ongoing financial crisis, although Greece itself gets large influxes of migrants, mainly from countries where war is raging (which is a topic that does not fall within our discussion) has become again a country from which people migrate to the affluent northern European countries.

The history of migration of Greek populations during the last two centuries which has sparked considerable academic interest and has been meticulously studied does not fall within the scope of this paper. However, we should stress the fact that the reasons of mass migration of Greeks to the USA during the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth century, and to Australia and Northern Europe during the interwar period and during the 1960s and 1970s were distinctly different to those that led Greeks to migration post 2010. In other words, the farmers’ impoverishment due to the massive destruction of their crops, the uncontrolled usury in rural areas, the long-standing practice of dowry that put a lot of strain on families, the wars, the division of rural land to many inheritors and the internal political conflicts were among the main reasons why Greeks were forced to migrate during the 19th and 20th centuries (Hasiotis, 1993). Nevertheless, the new wave of Greek migrants is linked to the financial crisis that hit the country starting in 2010, impairing the quality of life, especially of the middle class (this quality of life whether true or notional did exist), wiping out whole sectors of economy (manufacturing, processing), leading to a dramatic drop in salaries and pensions (mainly of those employed in the public sector), destroying health, welfare and education infrastructure to a great extent, hindering development and, finally, leading a considerable number of Greeks to unemployment (some of the age cohorts affected face serious problems landing a new job in an economy fraught with problems). What is more, the prospects of employment for the young who were to a great extent highly qualified were daunting.

As a result, from 2009 onwards a considerable number of Greeks have migrated to Germany in order to address the financial problems they faced. Their majority comprises people that had some connection to the country as they lived there as children or their parents had migrated to Germany. Next comes the group of young scientists and workers with some form of expertise. Besides, a considerable number of Greeks migrates were followed by their families. As a consequence, the children of these families found themselves in different educational infrastructure at a crucial age. Notwithstanding their difficulty to integrate in German society, these children have to deal with the problem of language. Greek schools in Germany are expected to help these children and young adults cope with these difficulties in order to enroll in different types of schools which either lead to university studies or offer vocational training to enable them to continue their life in Germany (for the length of time they would stay in Germany).

The research

Our research was carried out at the Greek High School of Stuttgart where we have been employed as teachers. The school's population numbers approximately 200 pupils. During discussions, a number of questions arose that the present study seeks to address.

Research aim and hypotheses

The main research question was whether these young people feel Greeks, Germans or Europeans. Our study provides insights into the reasons why these students feel as such; The question whether there is any relationship between their identity and the rights they hold at the reception country is also explored.

Method-Participants

A hundred and forty-two pupils agreed to participate in our research. Sixty-seven were male and the rest female students. Their age ranged from 16-21 years old.

Data collection procedure

The participants were requested to complete a questionnaire comprising a total of eleven questions. The first two were demographic in nature (sex and number of years staying in Germany) while the rest were directly linked to the research questions. Depending on the content of each question, a Likert scale was

employed ranging from “not at all” (1), “a little” (2), “enough” (3), “a lot” (4) “plenty” (5) (for question number 4 “enough” was replaced by “not of concern”).

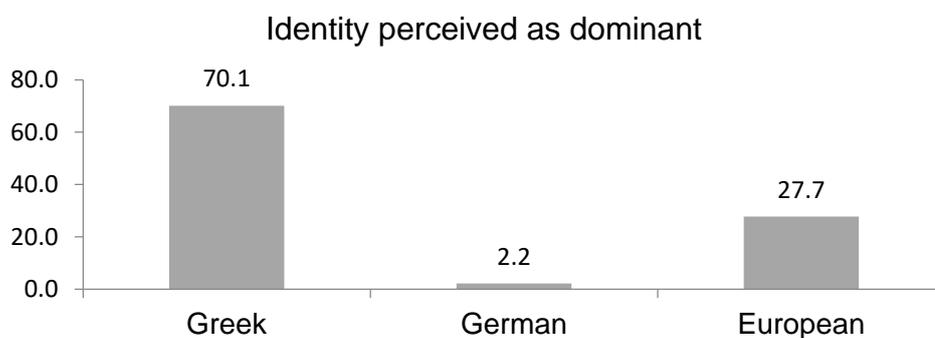
Analysis of the responses

In the beginning, responses were analyzed by employing descriptive statistics (Kiohos, 1993) in order to draw conclusions from the students’ responses. Where possible, some correlations were drawn by using SPSS analysis (Nova Kaltsouni, 2006).

Results

The descriptive analysis of the participants’ responses has shown:

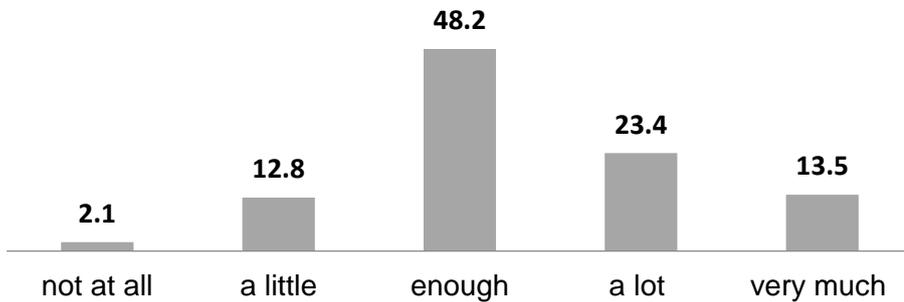
To question no. 3 whether students feel mostly Greeks, Germans or Europeans, the majority of them responded that they feel Greeks as shown in the following table.



From the above it can be inferred that most students continue to feel Greeks (70%), although they live in Germany. A negligible number (2%) feel Germans although all the respondents live in Germany. This small percentage might point to the resistance of the majority of the students to give up their national identity. Almost 28% feel Europeans; We think that it is easy for them to accept a new collective identity that integrates their national identity as well.

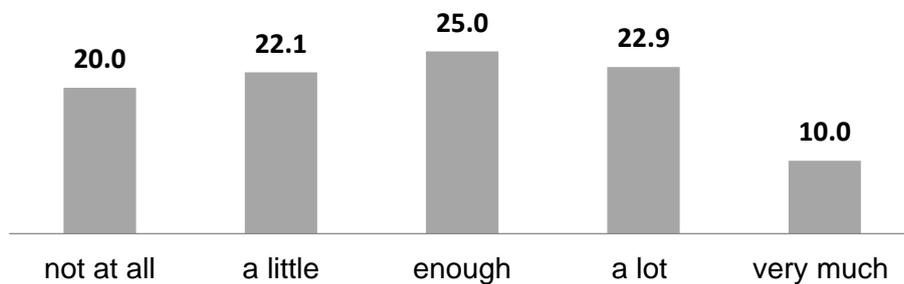
In question no. 4, whether they think that the European identity brings benefits, the majority responded that to a certain extent this identity comes with benefits, as shown in the following table.

Usefulness of the European identity



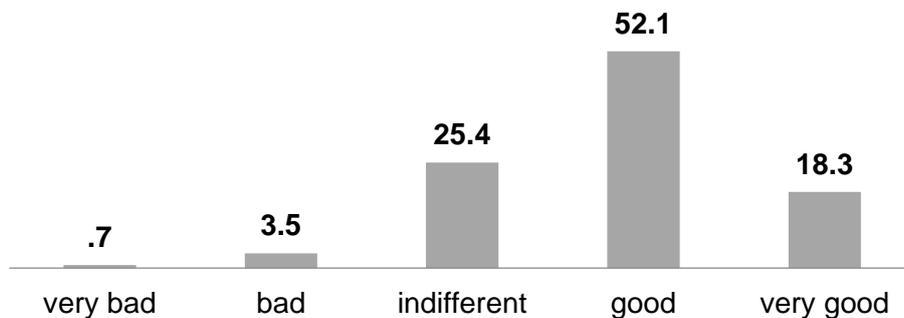
As can be seen from their responses, students seem to reach this conclusion, not based on knowledge of their statutory rights as European citizens but mostly based on their everyday contact with other migrants coming from outside the European Union. This finding is further confirmed by the students' responses to question no. 11. In this question, the majority responded that, as compared to migrants from outside the European Union, they are better treated on account of their European identity as illustrated in the following table.

Better treatment as European citizens as compared with other migrants

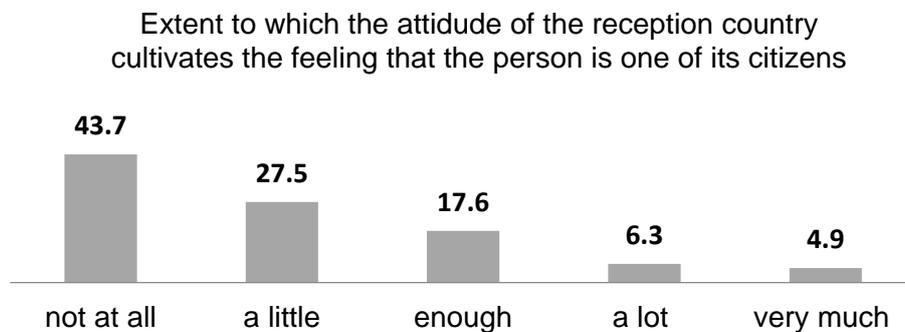


In question no. 5, how they perceive the attitude of the German state towards them, most students found it rather good as can be seen from the following table.

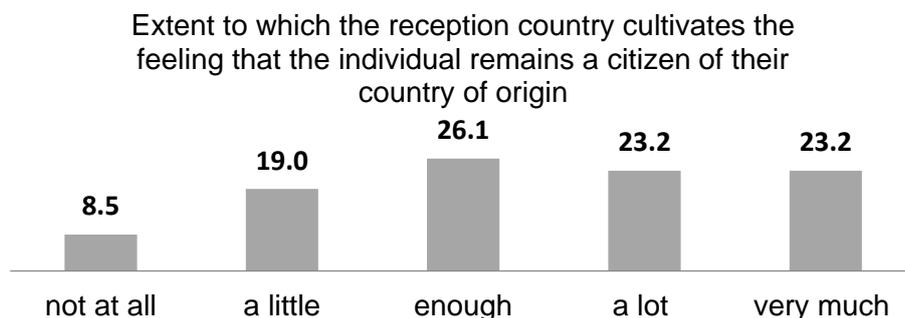
Treatment by the German state



Combining the results of the above table (where the majority of the respondents admitted to the good attitude of the German state towards them) with the results of their responses to question no. 6 (see the following table), it seems that the good attitude of the German state towards them is not in itself sufficient to make them feel German citizens.



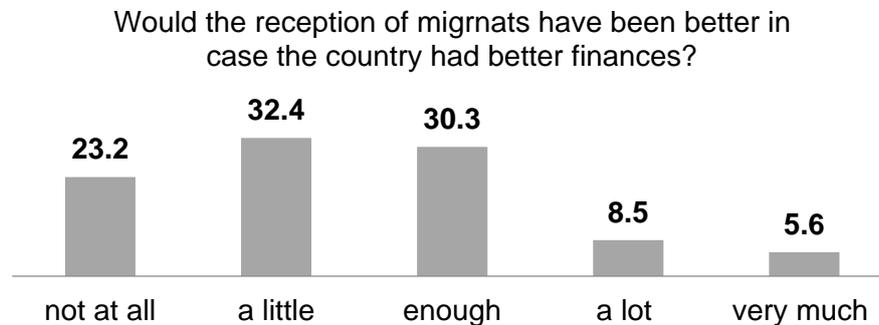
In question no. 7 whether the attitude of the German state cultivates their wish to remain Greek citizens, the majority were on the positive side as seen from the table below.



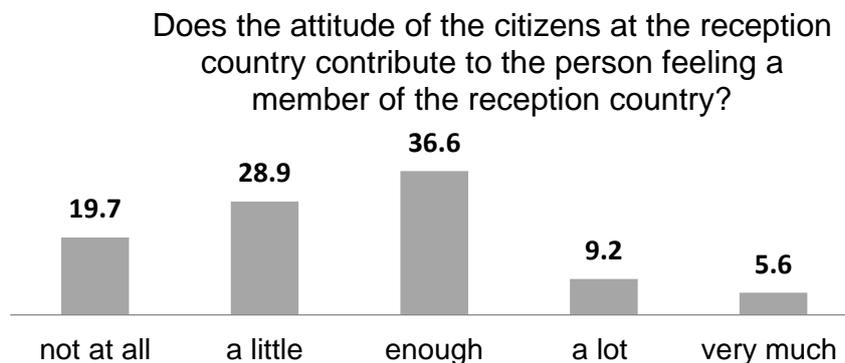
To a certain extent, this response contradicts their response to question no. 5 and therefore calls for further research into what the respondents define as good attitude of the reception country (i.e., financial benefits, salaries including social security etc.) which does not necessarily translate into the reception country attempting to create a friendly atmosphere and to cultivate the feeling of belonging.

In question no. 8, students were asked whether they thought that the German state would offer more provisions to foreigners if it had better finances. That question was instigated by our discussions with the students who had heard their grandparents or parents talking about the provisions the German state offered to migrants, provisions that no longer exist. As shown in the following table, their responses diverge, as some of the students believe that the German state would

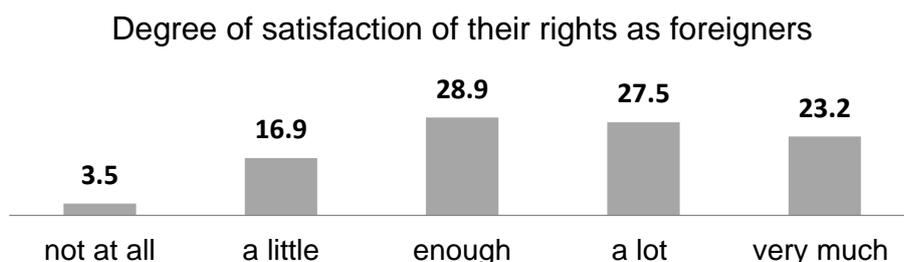
have had a better attitude towards them if the economic conditions were better while some others maintained that this attitude bears no relation to the current state of financial affairs.



Question no. 9 helped us gain profound insights into how students perceive the attitude of the German citizens towards them (not the attitude of the German state) and if this attitude helps them feel German. Their responses as shown in the following table indicate that the majority of German citizens have such good attitude towards the respondents that they make them feel closer to the German identity.



Their responses to question no. 10 whether they think that the rights they enjoy as foreigners are those they should have, show that despite being foreigners, they are quite satisfied with the rights they enjoy.



Correlation of variables

The descriptive analysis was followed by looking into the correlations among the variables. For instance, by applying the criterion χ^2 we looked into the extent to which the identity (Greek/German/European) perceived as dominant was correlated with the number of years the students had stayed in the reception country.

Because the number of participants who stated that the identity they perceived as dominant was the German one was negligible (N=3), this category was not included in the analysis. As the number of participants who had stayed in Germany since their birthday was rather low, the preliminary three categories of the variable “years of stay” merged into two: long-term stay and recent arrival.

Table 1. *Distribution of the sample based on the identity perceived as dominant and on the years of stay*

| Years of stay | Perceived dominant identity | | | | Total |
|----------------|-----------------------------|------|----------|------|-------|
| | Greek | | European | | |
| | <i>f</i> | % | <i>f</i> | % | |
| Long-term stay | 32 | 71,1 | 13 | 28,9 | 45 |
| Recent arrival | 64 | 71,9 | 25 | 28,1 | 89 |
| Total | 96 | | 38 | | 134 |

NOTE: *Relative frequencies have been calculated for the identity perceived as dominant*

As it can be seen from the above table (1), the majority of the participants, both those who had been living in Germany for a long time (71,1%) as well as those who had recently arrived in the country (71,9%) stated that they perceive their Greek identity as dominant as compared to their European identity. Besides, as it can be seen from the application of the criterion χ^2 , the identity they perceive as dominant does not correlate with the number of years the respondents had spent in the reception country $\chi^2(1, n=34)=0,009, p=0,923$.

Furthermore, we attempted to look into the possible correlations of the identity perceived as dominant with other elements as these were reflected in the students’ responses. Using the Likert scale scoring (numerical variables where possible), we ran the ANOVA test. The results are presented in the table below.

Table 2. Means, standard deviation and ANOVA results

| Questions | Identity perceived as dominant | | | | F-value | p |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|------|----------|------|----------|-------|
| | Greek | | European | | | |
| | M | SD | M | SD | | |
| Question no. 4 | 3,37 | 1,03 | 3,32 | 0,70 | 0,08 | 0,773 |
| Question no. 6 | 1,76 | 1,00 | 2,53 | 1,16 | 14,54*** | 0,000 |
| Question no. 7 | 3,35 | 1,23 | 2,84 | 1,26 | 8,93** | 0,003 |
| Question no. 8 | 2,32 | 1,12 | 2,45 | 0,98 | 0,36 | 0,549 |
| Question no. 9 | 2,35 | 1,10 | 2,84 | 0,92 | 5,9* | 0,016 |
| Question no. 10 | 3,33 | 1,11 | 3,87 | 0,99 | 6,7* | 0,011 |
| Question no. 11 | 2,69 | 1,31 | 3,00 | 1,18 | 1,54 | 0,218 |

* $p < 0,05$, ** $p < 0,01$, *** $p < 0,001$

As it can be seen from the preceding table (2), the participants who stated that the Greek identity is the dominant one presented a statistically significant lower mean: in the perceived degree that the attitude of the reception country cultivates in the individual the sense that they are citizens of this country (question no. 6), $F(1, 133)=14,54$, $p < 0,001$; in the perceived degree that the attitude of the native citizens cultivates in the individual the sense that they are citizens of the reception country (question no 9), $F(1, 133)=5,9$, $p=0,016$; in the perceived degree of satisfaction with the rights they hold as foreigners (question no. 10), $F(1, 133)=6,7$, $p=0,011$. Yet, in the perceived degree that the attitude of the reception country cultivates the sense that the individual remains a citizen of their country of origin (question no. 7) the respondents presented a statistically significant higher mean, $F(1, 133)=8,93$, $p=0,003$.

Conclusions

As it can be seen from the above analysis, the students of the Greek High School in Stuttgart continue to feel Greeks. This feeling does not seem to correlate with the number or years they have stayed in Germany. Besides, they think that being a citizen of a European member state is useful as it accounts for their better treatment as compared with that of other migrants in Germany.

Although they think that the attitude of the German state is quite satisfying, the degree of satisfaction does not allow them to feel Germans. It is worth noting that those who stated that their dominant identity was the Greek one presented a statistically significant lower mean in the perceived degree that the attitude of the reception country cultivates the feeling that the individual is a German citizen. The fact that they are not fully satisfied with the attitude of the German state

towards them (mainly those who stated that their Greek identity is the strongest) might account for their wish to be citizens of their country of origin. However, the majority thinks that the attitude of the German citizens towards them is quite good. Let us also note that those who stated that they feel Greeks presented a statistically significant lower mean in the perceived degree that the attitude of the citizens cultivates in the individual the sense that he/she is a citizen of the reception country. Besides, most respondents were satisfied with the rights they hold as foreigners. The number of those who stated that the Greek identity was the dominant one presented a statistically significant lower mean in the perceived degree of satisfaction with the rights they enjoy as foreigners.

The number of responses to the question about the possible role the current state of economy in Germany (which is not as flourishing as it used to be) plays in the way the German state treats foreigners was almost equal. Therefore, our findings do not afford us a clear view as to whether the treatment of foreigners would have been better or would have stayed the same had Germany not undergone a recession. Consequently, the question that arises is whether this stance is the outcome of limitations posed by economic constraints or if, in essence, certain perceptions account for such treatment.

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