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REGIONAL POLICIES & EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

FROM POLICY TO IDENTITY

Regional Policies and European Integration

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For my boys, Matthias and Freddie.

ABSTRACT

Regions are making headlines in European politics: Wallonia is blocking the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA); the South West of England's Cornwall's Council is defying the Brexit vote in their own region because they recognise opportunities in the European Union and are hence keeping their Brussels representation open. Regions are acknowledged as actors in European politics in a growing body of scholarship. Yet, what role do they play in European integration—or disintegration? A glaring gap in our understanding of regions remains: what are the scope and objectives of these regions' respective European policies and programmes—and how diverse are they? And in a time of mixed signals of European cynicism and identity, the question remains how European identity is perceived, fostered and even promoted in regions' European policies.

This book has taken an important step in starting this area of research in presenting empirical findings on four EU regions as case studies, including Germany's Brandenburg, Belgium's Wallonia, France's Nord–Pas-de-Calais, and last but certainly in the current context of Brexit not least, the South West of England. The book compares four regions' scope and objectives of European policies and engagement (based on a policy and documents analysis); it assesses the political elites' and civil servants' reflections on their regions' European engagement (based on 60 semi-structured interviews) and compares their objectives with those proposed by the Cohesion Policy's designers (further semi-structured interviews). It also evaluates whether the policies and programmes aim to foster long-lasting European integration through European identity-building initiatives, or

whether European policies are Eurosceptic, merely highlighting economic or infrastructure benefits. Drawing on the British case study, the book also identifies strategies implemented, which in turn accelerated a distance or even disdain toward the European Union and most likely had an impact on the subsequent vote to leave it—a warning sign toward other regions.

Besides investigating a new area within political science and European integration research, the findings presented in this book are grounded in political practice—thus offering accurate accounts of what happens on the ground in regional governments of different countries, political systems and political identities. It is a must-read for practitioners of European politics and researchers, and is complementary to the literature in neighbouring fields of politics and theories of European integration. It also offers linkages to research in political psychology and behaviour, as well as European identity and Euroscepticism.

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What Role Do Regions and European Identity Play in European Integration and Politics? An Introduction; Literature Review; Hypotheses and Chapters' Outline

European integration has broadened and deepened all regions' ability to participate in European politics. Its scope and depth, however, vary and greatly depend on regions' socio-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural characteristics. The sub-national level of some EU members' governments, such as the German Länder, as well as the Belgian and French regions, has since the beginning of the European project become increasingly institutionalised. These regions now have the political authority to design their own European policies in addition to participating in the programmes offered by the European Commission's Directorate General for Regional Policy, amongst others. Yet, what are the objectives of their European policies? Do regions aim to foster merely economic development or also European social integration and identity building? Can economic collaboration and integration occur without the supportive framework of social integration? Or does a European Union, which focuses on economic integration, fail to take along the citizens of Europe and eventually head straight towards members voting to leave the European Union?

Based on the decades-long history of the European project, extensive research on the effect of European integration on the role and involvement of regional governments has been conducted. Also research on conceptualising and measuring levels of European identity across the European Union has been conducted in order to assess whether citizens accept or reject a European identity and gauge whether they support European integration. However, it has not yet been researched whether

representatives of regional governments *intend* to develop social cohesion through fostering a European identity as part of their European engagement; whether European identity develops as a natural by-product of collaboration; or whether identity building does not feature at all in regions' European engagement—be it due to ambivalence or even an anti-EU stance. In the absence of such evidence-based research, it cannot be conclusively explained whether the 98 regions' European policies are indeed aiming to bring the citizens of Europe closer together; whether their European engagement is of a purely economic nature, distinct from cultivating a European identity; or whether the regions may be taking steps toward leaving the European Union. With public funding increasingly supporting regional European policies, more clarity about their objectives is required. The current gap in both political science research and literature places the spotlight on the question: What are the scope and objectives of regions' European policies and what role does European identity play in them? This book addresses this research question and sheds new light on the pro-EU and anti-EU positions held within the comparative EU regions' European policies and programmes.

Due to the diversity of the European Union Member States and their respective regions, there is great variation in regions' ability, scope and objectives to engage in European politics. Indeed, there are 98 NUTS 1 (Nomenclature of Territorial Units of Statistics, the European Commission's geocode standard for sub-national levels) regions within the 28 EU Member States, offering such variation. The European engagement of EU regions in some cases is limited to managing EU funds from the Cohesion Policy, which deliver economic growth within the region; whereas other regions have the authority and capacity to design their own European policy and influence the European policy designed by their national government. Thus, European engagement in the context of this book encompasses all European political activity of a regional government and regional government agencies—whether they have designed this policy themselves or are participating in a top-down European policy or programme, as designed by their national government or supra-national institution such as the European Union. Regions' European policies typically include the management of EU funding for infrastructure or European cooperation within both public and private sectors. Regions developing their own European policies typically engage in European-wide best-practice sharing networks across a range of policy areas relevant to them; developing political partnerships with governments of other EU

regions; identifying cooperation opportunities between both public and private sectors across the European Union to foster innovation, competitiveness and regional economic growth; or developing educational partnerships and exchanges for school / university students and lifelong learning participants. Thereby, the objectives of regions' European policies can be purely economic development related, or also include a European-wide social integration and identity-building dimension. Regions can thereby be actors within the European Union and take pro-EU or anti-EU positions.

Whilst the overarching objective of regions' European engagement is regional socio-economic cohesion and development, it leaves to the imagination of both policy and political decision makers whether the priority to pursue is the strengthening of their regional economies and social integration in the European Union, or whether in the tradition of the general Liberal Intergovernmentalist position on European integration, European policies and programmes are to strengthen economic cooperation exclusively. With more than a third of the EU budget allocated for the Union's regional policy (Cohesion Policy 2007–2013) and an increasing number of regional governments pursuing and managing European opportunities, it becomes necessary to assess why some regions participate more than others, and whether, indeed, the core objective of EU regions' European engagement is to foster economic development and integration exclusively, or whether the core objective also includes a sociological dimension of fostering European identity and furthering European integration. And if the answer is affirmative, why do some political actors deliberately cultivate and reinforce a European identity through their regions' European engagement, whilst others pointedly block the concept of a European identity from their European portfolio?

Learning from EU regions' case studies, this book will provide new insights into the missing links that marked decades of discussions in academic and political circles about the evolution and the making of both EU regions' European policies and programmes and the fostering of a European identity, as well as a more complete understanding of the evolution and objectives of EU regions' European policies and programmes. In doing so, the book will present both the range and scope of EU regions' European engagement, be it self-designed and / or EU-designed European policies and programmes implemented by the respective regions. Based on interviews with regional political elites and civil servants, perceptions of the link between European identity and the region's European

engagement will be characterised and analysed. Both policy and perceptions analyses will highlight the positions taken, be they in favour of the European Union or against—and what their consequences are. Due to the great variation amongst regional characteristics across the European Union, regional idiosyncrasies will be identified and investigated in order to better understand and properly appreciate how they both challenge and foster a region's European engagement. The book will also analyse the value-added of European regional networks, which were originally designed to dually bridge the gap between regional idiosyncrasies and facilitate European engagement and cooperation amongst EU regions.

This book provides a comprehensive study on the state of regions' European engagement, whether European identity is an intended component found within their policies and programmes, and how in turn this shapes and impacts the scope of their European engagement. This research empirically answers the research question: What are the scope and objectives of regions' European policies and what role does European identity play in them? It also discusses how the British case study to a large extent explains an anti-EU and pro-Brexit position—and sends warning signals to other regions heading down a similar path.

This chapter will serve as a road map, drawing together political science research, which has provided the context and boundaries of the research question of this book, and it will identify and clarify this book's new contributions.

Researchers have used both theoretical and empirical approaches to explain the variation in both scope and objectives of regions' European engagement. Theoretical debates have focused on the contrasting views of the objectives of European integration and the European engagement pursued by political actors. Primarily framing the debate have been the two grand theories posited by representatives of the Neo-Functionalism and Liberal Intergovernmentalism schools; the latter setting economic boundaries to their engagement and the former suggesting spill-overs from economic to political and social objectives. Contributions to the debate have also been made by scholars focusing on the pursuit of political objectives and the impact and influence of Multi-Level Governance. Its protagonists traditionally focus on the various levels of national (including subnational) and supra-national governments involved in European policies and programmes. Thus, theory-based explanations suggest that objectives of European engagement reflect not merely economic ones executed by national political elites; they suggest instead that,

at the regional level, the seeking and realising of political and social objectives are an integral part of both their European engagement and the European integration process.

This theoretical approach needs to be supplemented by evidence-based empirical research and its findings to more comprehensively grasp the objectives of regions' European engagement. This would also provide more conclusive insights and answers as to whether the social domain, including a European identity, is being fostered through European engagement. This in turn would have an impact on further European integration. Bolstering the empirical approach, political scientists have studied the effect of EU institutionalisation on regions' European engagement; the variation of political authority in a range of European regions; the effect of transition of political authority on regions' level and scope of policy engagement; and whether EU regional policy indeed fosters participation and engagement of all EU regions. However, from an empirical perspective, there is to date no discussion on whether the regions' various European policies and programmes foster a European identity or not. That notwithstanding, the discussion of how European identity *may* come to life and be encouraged through regional characteristics or enhanced European engagement still needs to be held, and its launch in this book is both timely and a useful starting point to this research.

1.1   How European Integration Has Shaped Regions' European Engagement

European integration theories have developed explanations of EU Member States' objectives for the European project and the actors involved at the national, supranational and subnational levels. The theories have evolved alongside the European Project, rising from the ashes of World War II and manifesting itself institutionally through the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC); the European Economic Community (EEC); and, finally, through the Maastricht Treaty, the European Union. European integration theories emerged to explain why European cooperation occurred and what the primary drivers of its objectives were. They also tried their hand at predicting where the process of European integration might be leading to. Based on the initial years of European cooperation, Ernst B. Haas presented his theory of Neofunctionalism in which he predicted that political, economic and social spill-overs would occur as nation states shift their authority and jurisdiction to a new centre, or a "new

political community, superimposed over the pre-existing ones" (Haas 1958:16). Thus, a new, supranational government would be established with authority to oversee economic, political *and social* objectives. This new body could also be expected to address, implicitly and/or explicitly, the issue of European identity within the context of the European policies and programmes it was charged to design and implement.

Andrew Moravcsik critically distinguished his theory on Liberal Intergovernmentalism from Haas' Neofunctionalism, explaining that nation states would remain the dominant actors throughout the process of European integration; that they would only cooperate when all other approaches and instruments had been exhausted; and only agree to compromise to the lowest common denominator—whilst at all times securely maintaining the upper hand and control of the levers of political authority over the European institutions (Moravcsik 1991:49–50). The objectives of European policies and programmes would primarily be of an economic nature and the actors involved in European politics and certainly EU politics would be limited to those at the nation-state level. This very narrow interpretation may owe much to the then prevailing belief that the pursuit of the objectives of European cooperation and politics are optimally achieved in the context of efficiently and effectively tackling predominantly economic domestic challenges (Börzel and Risse 2009:1–2). However, the European Union clearly states in its Regional Policy, which receives more than a third of the EU budget and thereby clearly lies at the core of the European Union's work, that its objective is to foster socioeconomic development, and that it is to be run by regions, the subnational level of government. It becomes quite clear that Liberal Intergovernmentalism neither offers an adequate explanation for the objectives of the European project nor for the actors involved. The same criticism must be made of Neo-Functionalism. Whilst it posits that functional spill-overs occur and embrace the social domain into the European project, it also fails to capture the political elites' reticence to transfer their authority to the supranational level. Both theories have not fully advanced an accurate explanation of the objectives of the European project and they have not accurately explored the actors and levels of government involved in the European project—and, in turn, the objectives of regions' European engagement. Whilst it is still highly contested whether European policies and programmes first and foremost foster an economic outlook on cooperation or whether they also provide pillars for the indispensable social underpinning to European integration, Börzel (2005) concludes that

both the scope and level of European integration continue to increase over time, from its beginnings in 1958 with the formation of the EEC, to 2004, following the Nice Treaty, thus encompassing policy areas reaching beyond those with strict economic objectives. However, the question remains: What is the scope of regions' role in EU and European politics?

Whilst Moravcsik describes states as sovereign and autonomous actors within European politics, Marks (in Hooghe 1996) contends that there are several layers of actors in European politics, including the subnational, national and supranational layers. Marks thus accords the regions quintessential actor attributes in European politics. His Multi-level Governance approach is at odds with the two leading approaches explaining European integration: Liberal Intergovernmentalism and Neofunctionalism (Hooghe and Marks 2001). Marks, Hooghe and Blank further develop this approach by arguing that since the 1980s, decision-making in the European Union has had multi-level governance characteristics, as opposed to the prevailing governance of sovereign states (Hooghe et al. 1996:372). Though the authors do not reject the mainstream perception that state executives are the most important actors in European politics, they do ascertain that the subnational, regional governments are fully involved in the making of European politics: "While national arenas remain important for the formation of state executive preferences, the multi-level model rejects the view that subnational actors are nested exclusively within them. Instead, subnational actors operate in both national and supranational arenas. […] States do not monopolise links between domestic and European actors, but are one among a variety of actors contesting decisions that are made at a variety of levels" (Hooghe et al. 1996:346). Hooghe and Marks (1996) have also identified and localised a growing mobilisation of subnational government representatives in Brussels. By the mid-1990s, nearly 100 regional Brussels offices and a substantial number and variety of inter-regional associations and agencies were established; they comprised both institutionalised associations, such as the Committee of the Regions, and independently set up agencies (Hooghe and Marks 1996:258–259). A further interpretation of Multi-level Governance includes the regions' involvement in legislative politics—regions are increasingly involved in influencing the EU policy-making process and regional parliaments have an official role in transposing EU policies into regional law (Abels 2013; Högenauer 2014; Van Hecke et al. 2016). Regions have thus served notice that they have every intention of becoming more visible actors in

EU and European politics, giving justification to the Multi-level Governance approach.

Indeed, further research has continued to shed light on the extent of regions' involvement in the EU and European politics. According to findings by Hooghe et al. (1996), regions have gained access to European institutions as well as the European project in the 1980s and 1990s. Hooghe characterised the increasing visibility and voice of the regions in the European integration process as "sub-national mobilisation" (Hooghe 1995). Opportunities for increased mobilisation and engagement on the European sub-national level have been provided, amongst others, by the European institutions by way of inviting regions to manage the Cohesion Policy programmes and through systematic policy and programme consultations. With regions joining national and supranational actors at the European table, the process of European integration has indeed brought the Multi-level Governance theory to life as they seek not only access to European institutions but also to systematically pursue their very particular European interests directly with their European counterparts (Hooghe and Marks 1996). The Multi-level Governance approach has, over the course of the past 15 years, offered a more inclusive analysis of the regions as actors in the European project and thereby rendered the further study of regions' policy scope and objectives indispensable. Identifying actors within the process requires further explanations of their objectives and scope of engagement.

Bauer and Börzel (2010) introduce to this debate the notion of the European policy scope of regions in order to determine their role within European politics. Though their findings echo those of Hooghe and Marks (1996) on the increased institutionalisation of regions into the European process, Bauer and Börzel's (2010) findings also stipulate that whilst all regions have gained the political authority necessary to be included in policy consultation processes, central governments in the capitals of Europe have been able to maintain the upper hand in the making of EU policy (Börzel 2005:258). Furthermore, Hooghe and Marks (2008) have evaluated whether European integration and with it the institutionalisation of regions into the European project automatically makes regions the beneficiaries of a devolution of political authority at the expense of central governments. They have found that whilst there has been a vast overall increase in regional authority within the researched time frame 1950–2000, the evolution of regional authority in the newly acceded EU regions has been particularly noticeable (Hooghe and Marks 2008). Taken

together, a thorough analysis of available data supports the contention that the Multi-level Governance approach is very much in evidence. Regions are in fact European actors and therefore part and parcel in the evolution and implementation of European projects. It follows that, therefore, regions must be(come) an integral part of any theory aimed at equitably describing and assessing the process of European integration.

That said, whilst a Multi-level Government theory postulates that regions are actors in the European integration process, and that their levels of authority are increasing as they extend the scope of their involvement in European politics, the theories do not extrapolate what their objectives are within the context of European politics. Is their predominant motive the pursuit of economic benefits, or is there a significant social dimension at work that fosters European identity? After appraising the various theoretical explanations of European integration, the central question of this book is more relevant as ever: What are the objectives, challenges and benefits of regions' European policies and programmes and what role does European identity play in their European engagement? Both Neo-Functionalism and Liberal Intergovernmentalism have posited their interpretations of the objectives of nation states' European engagement, and both have encountered their limitations. However, Neo-Functionalism quite rightly identifies the social objectives, which have developed in EU policy in addition to the purely economic ones. As the Multi-level Governance theory has explained, and political scientists have empirically affirmed, regions are increasingly engaging in European politics. Yet with 28 EU Member States, considerable variation of engagement is to be expected. The next steps in this research therefore seek to hone in on political scientists' findings on the comparative institutionalisation of regions across the European Union, the variation in scope of regions' European engagement and their underlying objectives.

1.2   Comparative Levels of Regions' Political Authority Within European Governments

1.2.1   Institutionalisation of Regions

As is the case with literature on European integration theories, research on comparative European governments is beginning to incorporate regions as new actors in European politics in their data collection and analysis.

Thus far, the research conducted on regions has looked primarily at shifts in political authority, whether acquired through deliberate acts of power devolution by central governments or as a consequence of power struggles between central and regional governments. Research, whilst still limited in scope and depth, also offers first comparisons of some regions' levels of political authority and capacity to act independently from their respective national governments in the European project. And as this section will identify, considerably more comparative European government research is needed to comprehensively understand regions' role within European politics and their objectives and perceptions vis-à-vis their respective European policies and programmes.

Firstly, it is important to be cognizant of the fact that in all the EU regions merely a minority of them are institutionalised as sub-national political actors in their own right. Whilst some countries have regions with considerable autonomy and political authority, such as regions in federal states including Belgium and Germany, many regions lack all the attributes characteristic of influential institutionalised regional governments: political actors who by virtue of established governance—and governmental—institutions and structures are credible decision-makers and implementers. These regions' political authority is expressed primarily in terms of their administrative character, according to Hooghe et al. (2010:52). The six decades between 1950 and 2006 "has been an era of regionalization. Not every country has become regionalized but, where reform has taken place, it has generally been in the direction of greater regional authority. [29 out of 31 countries' regions have become more regionalized and 86 percent of the reforms have increased regional authority]" (Hooghe et al. 2010:52). Furthermore, Hooghe et al. (2010) have found that the scope of regions' policy portfolio is widening, granting additional political authority to regions (Hooghe et al. 2010:56).

Why are regions becoming increasingly institutionalised and who are the main beneficiaries of this development? Hooghe et al. (1996) argue that it was a long-term goal of the European Commission to institutionalise regions' European engagement. By creating the Advisory Council for Local and Regional Authorities in 1988, the Commission provided subnational entities with a potentially powerful platform to represent their views on the Cohesion Policy to the Commission —and beyond. Five years later, in 1993, the Commission established the Committee of the Regions to facilitate the regions' institutionalisation into the European Union. Pressure from the German Länder and Belgian regions provided addi-

tional incentives to accelerate this process. Hooghe et al. (2010) have also found that regions from centralised states did undergo regional reforms to acquire the required political authority and competence to manage dedicated EU funding to the regions (Hooghe et al. 2010:59). A further area, in which regions have gained a more formal role, is that of parliamentary affairs. The Lisbon Treaty, which was introduced in 2009, states that not only national parliaments but also regional parliaments are responsible for transposing EU law (Abels 2013). Hooghe and Marks (2001) proceed to argue that Multi-level Governance is not only in the interest of European regions. National governments, they declare, have an intrinsic interest in the development of Multi-level Governance schemes because the diffusion of political authority to the regional level provides central governments with additional bargaining leverage and power in the EU arena by, for instance, claiming domestic constraints and requiring countries with less dispersed political authority to further compromise (Hooghe and Marks 2001:72). National governments have, however, delegated various levels of political authority to their respective regions. The only commonality has been that European politics are the prerogative of and nested within national governments' domain (Hooghe and Marks 2003). Beyond that, divergence abounds.

A principal source of divergence amongst EU regions has its origin in the regions' national government systems. Demmke and Moilanen (2010) have documented considerable variation in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) member countries' respective organisation of public administration and civil service at the subnational levels (Demmke and Moilanen 2010:46–467), and Keating (1999) has found that regions in federal government systems have more political authority to engage in European politics than do regions governed by unitary government systems. In this setting, political authority typically takes the form of administrative agencies and not the mantle and reign of institutionalised regional governments. Empirical research conducted by Jeffery (2000) has produced ample evidence that, indeed, sub-national authorities "constitutionally endowed with extensive internal competencies are likely to exert stronger influence over European policy than their more weakly endowed counterparts" (Jeffery 2000:12). He underpins his findings by applying Loughlin's typology of the internal structure of the EU Member States: including federal states (Austria, Belgium, Germany), regionalised unitary states (France, Italy, Spain, and arguably Portugal), decentralised unitary states (Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Sweden),

and centralised unitary states (Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg and the pre-devolution United Kingdom) (Loughlin 1997 in Jeffery 2000). Jeffery (2000), however, cautions that constitutionally set political authority delegated to the sub-national authorities can differ from country to country, even if they are in one defined government category. In fact, variations can even occur among regions of the same country (Jeffery 2000:18), further adding to the levels of complexity in understanding regions' degree of institutionalisation and of political authority to engage in European politics.

In their attempt to better comprehend the depth and breadth of this complexity, Jones and Scully (2010) studied the effect of regions' variation in subnational political organisation and allocation of political authority and its impact to engage in European politics. They arrived at their conclusion by both looking at the subnational levels of political organisation in the European Union and comparing the EU regions as statistically defined by the European Commission's Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS). Whilst Germany, for example, had already existing administrative regions at the NUTS 1 level (the Bundesländer), the UK's regions were drawn specifically to meet the NUTS criteria, thus grouping together Devon, Dorset, Summerset and the Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and Bristol and Bath areas, as well as Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly in order to make the "South West of England" region (Jones and Scully 2010:7). Thus, the regions as defined by the European Commission have, in some cases, been intentionally drawn onto existing subnational political structures, such as in the example of the UK. Jones and Scully (2010) have also identified a number of EU Member States of particular interest to regions because of member states' varying regional political authority and the way regions were either naturally designed or superimposed by the European Commission's statistical approach. In their analysis of EU regions, they identified a number of distinct variants. These included France, a traditionally centralist sate, which underwent regional reforms; England, a country in which there are regions that have no administrative capacities; Germany, which has constitutionally embedded regions; and Belgium, which has devolved even more political authority to its regions (Jones and Scully 2010:7–10). When previously drawn regional boundaries and government structures are redrawn to better suit EU project criteria and expectations, the notion is that such makeshift governments would not have the same policy jurisdiction as long-standing institutionalised governments. This supposition will be further field-tested through

research conducted in the four regions Jones and Scully (2010) high-lighted as being of particular interest—at the regional level and within the context of their national governments. By focusing on four case studies, some similarities and dissimilarities between EU regions will become visible and, in turn, shed light on the reasons for the variation in scope of regions' European engagement, their positions on European identity and European integration.

1.2.2   *Comparative Levels of Political Authority for Regions to Engage in European Politics*

Past and present scholarly literature and research have identified and analysed both the variation amongst EU regions' political authority and their capacity to engage in European politics. They have also made the argument that subnational political organisations do not naturally fit into the European Commission's definition of a region, forcing regions to adapt to the Commission's NUTS system. Four countries have been highlighted as particularly interesting examples of variation in regional political authority and European engagement by Jones and Scully (2010). They include the United Kingdom, France, Belgium and Germany. Other researchers, notably including Keating and Jones, Balmer, Harvie, Gerstenlauer, Palmer, Hooghe, and Marks and Schakel, have further investigated these regions and countries due to their comparative value. In further pinpointing the variation found in these countries' levels of regional political authority, a clearer understanding of regions' comparative ability to engage in European politics will emerge.

According to Harvie (1994), what sets the UK apart from other EU Member States is its comparative lack of regional governance: "Most Westminster models looked at federalism and sulked patriotically, Britain being now the only substantial state within the European Communities which had no regional legislatures" (Harvie 1994:1). Keating and Jones (1995) also have identified this comparative lack of regional political authority: "The United Kingdom faces the problem that its regional institutions are woefully underequipped for the competitive challenge of the internal market. Compared with German Länder or even the French […] regions, UK regions lack institutional identity, a capacity for autonomous decision-making and planning, and networks of social and economic interests" (Keating and Jones 1995:113). This lack reflects in part the absence of elected regional representatives able to push the national government for

consensus and compromise. It also deprives them of the opportunity to represent themselves at the European level with optimal political authority (Keating and Jones 1995:112–113). These findings thus concur that the UK lacks in both regional institutionalisation and political authority and is thus not able to optimally participate and engage in the European political decision-making processes. Regions in the UK, such as the South West of England, are therefore at a distinct disadvantage vis-à-vis many of their European counterparts. Indeed, European policy decision-making and pro-grammes was re-centralised during the conservative government; a first step that would lead to a Brexit vote—less European engagement and visibility of its benefits and opportunities, less support for remaining in the European Union, with its regulation constraints and membership costs.

Whilst France has historically also centralised the powers of govern-ment, it underwent regional reforms in 1982–1983 and 1986 by institut-ing elected regional councils and providing regional governments with the capacity and the tools to engage in European cooperation (Harvie 1994:58; Balmer 1995:168). Though this has improved France's regions' position to participate in European politics, regional councils are still con-strained by the central government and cannot represent themselves to the same degree as German Bundesländer or Belgian regions. Nonetheless, the French regions are involved in the regional policy decision-making process as part of the Community Support Framework, which integrated regions into the process at the time Jacques Delores headed the European Commission (Balmer 1995:187).

In comparison to the UK and France, Belgium provides ample evidence of the regionalisation of Europe, as it has undergone decentralisation and produced, in the process, three very strong regions (Hooghe 1995:137; Hooghe et al. 2010). The regions and (language) communities have acquired in the constitutional reforms of 1993 a high degree of political authority. In fact, Belgian dual federalism encourages the regions to directly deal with the European institutions and participate in European and EU policy-making (Hooghe 1995:141–142). The federal govern-ment plays a co-ordination role whilst the regional governments and the communities have the political authority to manage their international affairs (Hooghe 1995:148).

Similar to Belgium, Germany's regions also enjoy some of the highest levels of political authority when compared to their European counterparts: they are "autonomous states with original legislative, executive, juridical, and budgetary competencies" (Gerstenlauer 1995:191). According to the

Grundgesetz (basic law) Article 23 GG, the Bundesländer have the political authority to participate in both domestic decision-making processes and European law decision-making (Palmer 2004:56). Being fully in charge in the Bundesrat, the Bundesländer can participate in the decision-making process of European policies during the consultation and implementation processes through their votes and, if necessary, veto (Palmer 2004:57). In fact, the regions' involvement in EU affairs is constitutionally guaranteed (Gerstenlauer 1995:209). This includes being involved in preparing policy positions at the federal level; having a representative of the Bundesrat represent the positions of the German federation in both the Bundestag and at the Council of Ministers where the policy positions are being discussed. Thus, the regional government is involved throughout the entire policy-making cycle, whilst this previously would have only fallen under the political authority of the federal government. To make their influence fully felt, however, the regions must reach a two-third majority in the Bundesrat, thus requiring compromise and coordination (Gerstenlauer 1995:210). Palmer correctly points out that harmonizing distinct regional interests and preferences can cause tensions among the 16 Bundesländer (Palmer 2004:58–60). For the German regions, however, it has been more beneficial both in terms of voice and visibility as well as impact to endure the tension-causing search for compromise with their regional German counterparts whilst participating in European policy decision-making.

An evaluation of the most current research and body of literature on comparative European governments has produced evidence of substantial differences in the scope and depth of political authority granted to and assumed by regions across the European Union. The country examples reviewed have highlighted the variation across four countries in particular: the United Kingdom, which has no institutionalised regional government; France, which has undergone regional reforms in order to expand the regions' European political authority; Belgium, which has decentralised and granted its regions the political authority to manage their own international affairs, with some coordination at the federal level; and Germany, which has always granted its regions the political authority to participate in decision-making processes and alongside European integration made amendments to its basic law (Grundgesetz) to include European policy-making to the regional capacities. The scholarly literature has provided sufficient data and analysis for a comprehensive understanding and appreciation of the variation amongst both EU Member States and their

regions as regards their political authority to engage in European politics. However, it has not yet produced evidence-based data that makes it sufficiently clear which actual European policies and programmes these regions decide on and implement, what variation is found within the scope and objectives of their European engagement, and what the causes of this are. In view of the rising presence and influence of the regions in the European political landscape in general and in EU-relevant policies and politics in particular, it is of essence to gain an understanding of their scope of policies and programmes within the framework of European politics.

1.3   A Common Regional European Policy?

Bringing some harmony to the manifold variation of 98 EU regions' scope of political authority to engage in European policies and programmes, the European Commission's Directorate General for Regional Policy (DG REGIO) proposed a policy designed to, in principle, enable all regions to equally participate and integrate. The origin of this comprehensive EU regional policy dates back to 1975 with the creation of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). It was the first policy, which linked the European Economic Community as well as regional and local authorities—bypassing the member states (Armstrong 1995:34). The UK played a key role in formulating the scope of the ERDF's regional policy in response to both its legacy of crafting and implementing a far-sighted regional policy within its national borders and its continued need for regional development (Armstrong 1995:35). The British prime minister at the time, the Labour Party's Harold Wilson, favoured regionalisation and regional governance in the UK, policies that were at odds with those championed by the Conservative Party at the time—and of current time. The European Union's Regional Policy has always maintained a strong focus on developing the region, facilitating convergence in regions experiencing industrial decline, and tackling problematic socio-economic issues such as youth unemployment and long-term unemployment (Armstrong 1995:43). Indeed, economic development objectives have routinely proven to produce positive impacts on regions' economic convergence by improving infrastructures, skills, employability of citizens and by both building and strengthening a positive business environment (Meeusen and Villaverde 2002:79). With European enlargement and the ensuing strain on the ERDF's budget, however, the policy started to concentrate its limited resources to the most disadvantaged regions

(Armstrong 1995:45). The Regional Policy's underlying theme has thus been the development of regions' economies; putting it squarely in line with the economic objectives identified by Liberal-Intergovernmentalism, and thus at odds with the economic, political and social objectives advanced by Neo-Functionalism. The added complexity of the Cohesion Policy, whose primary raison d'être and mandate is to give EU members equal access to economic and social integration opportunities and to provide the funding for projects and programmes designed to positively affect this mandate, further compounds the complexity and quest to harmonise the multitudinal variations among the 98 EU regions. For research has documented, regions' access to engage in the European Cohesion Policy's projects and programmes is not equal, thus raising the spectre of further variation and stratification among its members.

Bache identifies 1988 as the turning point in European Union Regional Policy: "The 1988 reform of the structural funds is widely accepted as being the most significant after the creation of regional policy in 1975" (Bache 1998:67). Prior to 1988, national governments were clearly the dominant actors within the decision-making process of the regional policy (Bache 1998:137). However, from 1988 onwards, the European Commission insisted on the adherence to what it called a "partnership principle" to ensure the involvement of subnational actors in the process (Bache 1998:137). The EC thus "challenge[d] established hierarchical relationships between central and subnational governments" (Bache 1998:141). Variation amongst the regions, however, persisted. It reflected member states' respective will to delegate (or not delegate) more political authority into the hands of the subnational political elite and civil servants. Bache (1998) in reference to these developments coined the term "gatekeeper" to characterise national governments' (Bache 1998:142) decisions to either fully embrace a Multi-level Governance approach or to maintain a firm grip on preserving the intergovernmental approach.

According to Chapman, there are no regional governments that manage the Cohesion Programme in the UK. Instead, there is "a complex array of organisations at various territorial levels" including the Government Office, Regional Development Agencies (RDAs), and Partnerships as "intermediary bodies" (Chapman 2008:46) with decision-making powers fully maintained by the central government in London. This stands in contrast to the approach taken by both the new EU Member States, which have determined to decentralise the implementation of the cohesion policy (Baun and Marek 2008:254), as well as the position taken by one of the

European Union's founding members, Germany, which designated the regional governments (political elite as well as civil servants) as the appropriate implementation authorities and indispensable party in the decision-making process (Sturm and Schorlemmer 2008:71). The European Union thus embraces fundamentally differing approaches: whilst the British clearly favour the intergovernmental approach, the Germans champion the Multi-level Governance approach. Sturm and Schorlemmer (2008) advance the argument that, in addition to its federal government influenced processes, Germany makes for an interesting case study for the EU Cohesion Policy because of the country's vast economic divide, between former East Germany and the West (Sturm and Schorlemmer 2008:71). These examples manifest that even within the Cohesion Policy, member states and their regions take different and distinct approaches—whilst the UK's central government keeps to a minimum the spread of European engagement and harnesses its implementation, the German federal government's approach is highly decentralised and multi-levelled. This, in turn, also makes for a variation in scope of regions' European policies and programmes.

One component of the European Union's Cohesion Policy may, however, remedy the variation in regions' engagement. European regional networks have been created to help provide access to the EU Regional Policy and much-needed resources to all regions. Keating (1999) suggests that networks play a complementary role in mobilising regions to participate in European affairs by connecting cities and regions and organising their interests and goals, regardless of the strength or weakness of their regional and / or national governments' European level of engagement. Jachtenfuchs (2001) also highlighted the growing importance of networks in the context and approach of Multi-level Governance: "With their emphasis on informal, loose structures that extend across and beyond hierarchies […], the network concept seemed to be the main opponent of intergovernmentalism which stressed clear hierarchies and privileged channels of access" (Jachtenfuchs 2001:253–254). Networks have been established through EU-funded programmes, but they have also been founded by regions independently from the European Union in order to foster European-wide cooperation and to bring about economic development. However, given the lack of conclusive research conducted on European regional networks and their impact on, for example, regions' European engagement and the formulation and pursuit of a common regional European policy, further studies are indispensable to better understand

their place in the European Union's multi-faceted European integration and policy environment.

What has become very evident is that there is an inexplicable lack of research on regions' European policies and programmes, the scope of their respective European engagement and their objectives. And within the body of research conducted on European integration, the institutionalisation of regions and the variation in levels of regions' political authority, gaps remain in assessing the scope of regions' European policies and programmes and their objectives. The significance of shaping a European identity through a range of European policies and programmes will now be discussed and evaluated.

1.4   What Role Does European Identity Play in Regions' European Engagement?

The study of identity in a political science context attempts to better understand and evaluate whether citizens identify with their governments, and, thus by extension, determine the legitimacy of a government's democratic representation (Bruter 2005; Barker 2001; Habermas 1992; Rousseau 1762). Eurobarometer surveys conducted by the European Commission periodically examine the levels of European identity of citizens across the European Union. In general, citizens across the European Union are increasingly supportive of the notion of a European identity (Bruter 2005). The data produced covers all EU Member States, however, it does not generate data that originates at the regional level, and it does not yet distinguish between the level of support for a European identity between political decision-makers and implementers and whether they intend to facilitate a European identity through their European policies and programmes. Is the promotion of social cohesion intentional and integral part of the regions' European engagement, or is it merely a by-product of economic cooperation, development and cohesion; or do states and regions try to prevent a European identity formation? The body of scholarly literature on the subject reveals data and knowledge gaps about regional politicians' and civil servants' objectives and intentions with regard to the European politics they are instrumental in designing, deciding and implementing.

This section will present and analyse the research and findings on European identity in the fields of political science and sociology. It will do

so in an effort to more tangibly define European identity and to properly reflect its significance in the study of EU and European politics. European identity has been defined as a concept of unity to provide and instil an overarching sense of belonging to the quintessential actors involved in the shaping and making of European affairs and its integration and to citizens. By feeling a common sense of belonging, a common sense of purpose, shared responsibility and thus shared tasks and cooperation ensue (Stråth 2002:388–390). Fligstein (2008) further posits that perceived commonalities will develop over time, as will a feeling of solidarity and common identification (Fligstein 2008:127). Bruter further differentiates between the adoption of a cultural European identity, which is socially constructed, and the acquisition of a civic European identity, which is linked to the full gamut of European-driven interventions by the state and its multiple layers and levels of government and institutions that govern communities (Bruter 2004, 2003:11). Both, civic and political European identity can be intentionally supported by national and supranational political elites (Checkel and Katzenstein 2009:3). Research on European identity has thus identified a body of data, findings and interpretations to persuasively establish a theoretical link between citizens' European identity and the state of European institutions. Yet the question remains: If it is important for citizens to identity with their institutions, and a European identity would legitimise European policies and programmes—do these policies then aim to cultivate a European identity?

Political scientists analyse European identity in order to verify a link between the people and the state, thus justifying and legitimising the state in representing its citizens. National political elites play a key role in building public support for European integration, yet often they primarily act to further what they consider to be in their national interest (Smith 1992). When national political elites do not hold a unified position in support of European integration, they can foster Euroscepticism amongst the citizenry (Hooghe and Marks 2005:436). Political elites, when taking polarising positions, mobilise public opinion against European integration and, by extension, the fostering of a European identity (Hooghe and Marks 2004:418). This has dire consequences for the European Union, as Hooghe and Marks have explained: "Political institutions that lack emotional resonance are unlikely to last" (Hooghe and Marks 2008:117). Indeed, with its Brexit vote in 2016, the UK has shown that the willingness to be a member of the European Union and its institutions crumbles when citizens do not feel European. Therefore, publically demonstrated unity at

the political elite level plays an important role in garnering and consolidating public support for European integration and European identity; with European identity in turn supporting European integration (Hooghe and Marks 2008). However, Risse (2010) is concerned about the public displays of reticence by some of the European Union's key member states. He singles out the United Kingdom, the third largest EU Member State, for not taking part in the Schengen agreement, the European Monetary Union or the Charter of Fundamental Rights, and for not participating in a mainstream European party and thus being able to influence European decisions in Parliament (Risse 2010:251). Given the lack of public support for European integration at present, Risse expects citizens to be less supportive of European politics and less inclined to assume a European identity. Risse (2010) suggests that a lack of connectedness between the citizens and the political elites and institutions would set off Euroscepticism and threaten the sustainability of European institutions and EU politics. The European Union and its institutions are still stable, however, its membership is encountering some bumps along the road—notably with the UK voting to leave the European Union and other European states increasingly supporting populist parties with anti-EU sentiments. Forming a European identity to underpin the European economic and political objectives therefore proves to be necessary. Risse believes that the interest of the national political elites to support European integration cultivated a European identity amongst the citizens in continental Europe, whilst the British citizens were particularly sensitised to the destiny and values of the English nation by its political leadership (Risse 2005:6).

Adding numbers to the argument, Spence (1998) and Hooghe (2003) find that political elites can influence the level of European identity; they also identify certain groups in civil society and public service, which generate remarkable levels of variation with respect to their responsiveness to the notion of a European identity. In her research on political elites and European identity formation, Spence (1998) found that 94 percent of top decision-makers in EU Member States were in favour of the EU membership, whereas only 48 percent of citizens were in favour of their EU membership (Spence 1998:1). Risse (2005) explains that the political elites identify more with Europe and the European Union than citizens do, as Europe is more "real" to their daily lives and thus to them (Risse 2005:6). Hooghe (2003) presents research on the support for Europeanisation based on 13 policies and the Multi-level Governance approach. She identified considerable variation amongst the different groups: while European

Commission elites are 64.7 percent in support of the Europeanisation of policies, a mere 55.6 percent of national elites and 53 precent of citizens are in favour (Hooghe 2003:284). Despite these variations—between citizens and elites at national levels and the European Commission elites level—Hooghe's (2003) findings show that citizens' and administrative political elites' level of support for Europeanisation within "their" respective countries are very similar. And Spence (1998) found that the variation between the national and European Commission levels of support for "Europeanised" policies in 2003 is smaller than the variation between elites' and citizens' support toward EU membership in 1998. Though these two studies have researched slightly different aspects of support for the European Union, they both represent sub-fields of European integration and document that, in general, the gap between citizens' values and those of political elites at national and European levels is narrowing. Taking into account the important role regions play in European politics and European integration, the review of existing research on European identity have, so far, failed to include the perceptions of the political elites and civil servants at the regional level. Particularly in light of Hooghe's finding on the variation between national elites' and citizens' levels of support for the Europeanisation of policies, it is imperative to learn which side of the argument regional level political elites' and civil servants' are on— what are their perceptions on their respective region's involvement in European politics? Particularly if it can be assumed that political elites and civil servants drive the regions' European engagement, that they can bring Europe to the citizens and form a European identity through their work, it is important to know whether these driving forces are for or against an ever closer union.

In addition to the scholarly literature on European identity's role in legitimising EU and European politics, as well as the impact of (supra-) national political elites on citizens' European identity formation, a number of academics have looked into additional factors shaping a European identity. Bruter (2003) has argued that symbols, such as the EU flag and the EURO currency help citizens identify with the European Union and foster a European identity. Also a country's government and governance system have been identified as influential factors in the formation of multi-level identities. Citizens governed by federal government systems are used to and comfortable with multi-level government involvement (subnational, national supranational) and multi-level identities (local, regional, national) and thus more readily add and adopt a European identity level than citizens

who have experienced very centralised government systems and a national/single-level identity (Risse 2005). Duchesne and Frognier (1995) have further researched factors influencing citizens' identity-building inputs, and they have isolated the following: education level, income, gender, size of locality and age (Duchesne and Frognier 1995:209).

Geography is also impacting the formation of a European identity, and for the following reasons: First, the divide of Europe following WWII into two distinct political and geographical entities (one part East and one part West, separated by the Oder–Neisse Line) kept alive a conflict-ridden past with painful memories; but it also put in focus socio-economic inequalities (Meinhof 2010:781). Meinhof argues that: "people in these communities, by looking across their borders – over rivers or brooks, meadows or mountains – literally look across a socio-economic fault-line which divides the richer from the poorer in today's Europe. Thus it comes as no surprise that the construction of identity for many of the people living on these borders works itself through a system of in-grouping and out-grouping" (Meinhof 2010:789). The identity of communities in these geographical border areas has thus been shaped according to a geo-political past, as well as a socio-economic present. Second, it has been found that whether a person lives in a rural or an urban area also influences the European identity formation. Leconte explains that there is more Euroscepticism in rural areas than in urban ones, as people in rural areas are less connected with other Europeans (Leconte 2010:96). Hence, if more interactions and European experiences took place, the people in these areas would be more disposed to embracing a European identity instead of adopting Eurosceptic sentiments and attitudes. Furthermore, Leconte (2010) identifies the geographic location of a region as influential in terms of the scope and depth of citizens' levels of European identity and Euroscepticism: she anticipates regions on a border to other European regions to have higher levels of European identity, whereas regions more isolated from European borders would exhibit higher levels of Euroscepticism. Leconte's hypothesis, if supported by evidence-based, empirical data in the future, would help explain both the natural disposition of all European regions and whether peripheral regions' exposure to more European interactions and experiences would foster a European identity on par with the European Union's core regions.

Citizens' extent of European engagement and exposure has been identified by several social scientists as a further influential factor in the formation of a European identity. Risse has found that, as Europeans socialise, they construct a European identity in time (Risse 2010). Risse's findings

have been supported by Checkel and Katzenstein (2009:3). They conclude that European identity develops as a social process through increased interactions in networks, among others. Increased interactions between European students have also been found to contribute to the development of a European identity. A respondent in one of Bruter's focus groups explained that she had experienced Europe during her Erasmus year, making friends with other European students. She said that she felt more European in that special European "Erasmus environment" than she would have at home, in her own environment (Bruter 2004:22). Fligstein agrees with this finding by explaining that almost 200,000 university students participate in the ERASMUS European exchange programme every year, which provides ample opportunities of interacting with European counterparts, finding similarities and, ultimately, shaping a European identity (Fligstein 2008:139). Thus, experiencing Europe first-hand and engaging in activities with other Europeans helps to construct a European identity for individuals. And, as Bruter predicts, the more citizens are exposed to European experiences, the more overall levels of European identity will grow (Bruter 2004:31).

Regarding the influence and impact of citizens' European interactions shaping a European identity, Fligstein (2008) looks specifically at the discrepancies amongst the different social classes and their access to Europeans professionally and in their free time. He found that white-collar workers who interact more with other Europeans tend to feel more European than blue-collar workers who interact less with other Europeans (Fligstein 2008, 2009). "Business people, educators, academics, consultants, government employees, and lawyers are all likely to have travelled for business and to meet their counterparts across Europe. Young people are likely to travel, for pleasure and also for schooling" (Fligstein 2008:139). These people are the ones who, according to Fligstein's findings, eventually see themselves as Europeans (Fligstein 2008:156). He also adds that the European project has so far been a process primarily actively involving the political elite, businessmen, women and the well-educated, and for the blue-collar class to also feel more European, the European project must include and place them more prominently in their policies and programmes (Fligstein 2008:156). This would possibly narrow prevailing European identity discrepancies between political elites and citizens.

Political scientists and sociologists have presented theoretical and empirical research results on European identity. Whilst there has not yet been an agreement amongst social scientists on the definition of European

identity, a consensus is emerging about its key features. The link between the European Union and European identity formation has been explored and explained and a number of factors supporting the facilitation of a European identity identified and outlined. However, as Bruter (2003) cautions, there is a gap in the research on European identity as there is to date no data explaining whether or not administrative political elites *intend* to convey to their citizens a European identity through their policies and programmes (Bruter 2003:1172). And whilst, as already indicated, research on Multi-level Governance has sufficiently documented that there are several levels of actors involved in European affairs (e.g., the supranational, the national and the subnational), research on European identity has not taken into account the role political elites at the regional level of government play. It has thus far also failed to account the role of civil servants, who implement European policies and programmes. These omissions constitute a significant knowledge gap and lack of understanding about the perception of the link between the European identity of citizens and the European engagement of their respective regions, as well as the intention and ability of regional political administrative elites and civil servants to foster a European identity through their European policies and programmes. As this in turn would have an impact on European integration or disintegration, it is essential to garner a better understanding of how it is shaped.

In addition to this knowledge gap, research also needs to address the scope and objectives of regions' European policies and programmes. Though there is a general understanding in political science to date on the comparative political authority of regional governments across Europe, their actual objectives for and output of European policies and programmes has not yet been researched. In order to have a more complete understanding about the objectives of regional governments' respective European policies and programmes and the role of European identity, it is imperative that political science literature pays more attention to the analysis of regions as European actors. Furthermore, whilst European integration theories have included regional level aspects in their explanation of actors in EU and European politics, complementary theories have not yet been advanced tackling the questions on the objectives of regions' European engagement. Whilst Liberal Intergovernmentalism has clearly identified the pursuit and realisation of economic benefits to be a top objective to national actors and, by extension, also of national interest, Multi-level Governance has not yet clearly identified and elaborated

regions' objectives. It therefore does not propose a comprehensive explanation of regions' European engagement.

This literature review has identified major gaps in political science research; gaps which harbour the question: What are the objectives, challenges and benefits of regions' European policies and programmes and what role does European identity play in their European engagement? This knowledge gap needs to be addressed through empirical research in the field. This book attempts to both address and remedy the existing deficits in this area, and thereby also help explain how the vote for Brexit came about, how it might have been avoided, and how other EU Member States can identify early warning signals.

In response to the identified research—and knowledge—gaps on the objectives of EU regions' European engagement, this book endeavours to ask and provide conclusive answers to questions, which have thus far eluded the academic community both from an empirical and theoretical perspective. Firstly, this book will investigate whether regions include a social European integration and European identity-building dimension within their European policy, or whether they only include policies that will foster economic benefits for the respective regions. A comparative analysis will probe to what extent European identity building plays a role within the case studies. Swiftly following this policy analysis, the findings must be corroborated by dependable and authoritative sources—in this case, those who have designed and implemented regions' European policies. Therefore, the two perspectives of political elite decision-makers and civil-servant implementers are authoritative sources and, taken together, dependable. In previous research, it has been suggested that political leaders have a higher level of European identity than ordinary citizens and that top decision-makers' policy choices are shaped by and reflect their personal interests. But do political elites actually transform their keener interest in Europe into an intention to cultivate a European identity through their European policies? This has not yet been empirically studied. And further, how does this translate to the apparatus implementing the European policies; do these civil servants feel European and wish to build a European identity through their work? As they manage the policies on a day-to-day basis, they too have ample opportunity to cultivate a European identity through their work. And what is the outcome when political elites and / or civil servants are not pro-European Union and further European integration? The objectives and perceptions of elite politicians and civil servants involved in regions' European policies must be studied to answer the research question

of this book. And, thirdly, to complete the initial research on whether European identity building plays a significant role in EU regions' European policy, it must be investigated whether European regional networks intend to cultivate a European identity in order to enhance European cooperation. European regional networks are very popular with EU regions and feature in nearly all regions' European policies and are also appearing more frequently in European Commission policies and strategies, such as the Cohesion Policy's territorial cooperation networks and the "Macro Region Strategy." Networks have been designed to help regions engage more in European politics. Based on the proposition in scholarly research that there is a two-way correlation between enhanced European engagement and European identity building, networks may use identity building amongst its membership as a tool to foster enhanced European cooperation. Or European identity may emerge as a result of enhanced European cooperation within the network. In either of these two cases, regions participating in European regional networks have a high likelihood of developing a European identity through their participation. Thus, it will be significant to learn whether directors and members of such a popular network perceive the network to intentionally build a European identity and how this may affect regions' European engagement and policy, provided that network participation features in nearly all regions' European policies. In the following, hypotheses on these three core areas encompassed by the research question will be presented.

1.5   Hypotheses

In the core research on the scope of regions' European engagement (Keating and Jones 1995; Hooghe et al. 2010), national government systems have been found to have the greatest impact in shaping regional authority and capacity. Therefore, regions operating in federal government systems can be expected to manage a broader range of policy areas and programmes than regions in unitary states. It therefore stands to reason that political elites in federal states have more authority to promote a European identity in their European policies than political elites in unitary states (Risse 2010). However, as Bruter (2003) points out, there is no evidence to support the claim that political elites act on their interests and indeed intend to develop identity-related European policies in addition to economic development-related policies. Studies on European identity have shown us that levels of European identity vary amongst the EU Member States—also amongst the

EU Member States with very similar government systems. Therefore the extent of political authority to develop a broader or more narrowly scoped European policy cannot be the sole determinant of whether a policy is European identity-related or not. Interests of the political decision-makers must still play an important role in determining the nature of a policy—whether it is purely economic or also incorporates an identity-building character. Therefore, the first hypothesis of this book claims that:

Hypothesis 1
If an administrative political elite has a personal interest in European identity, this will result in that political elite's region's European policy featuring identity-building objectives, as opposed to the policy only being economy related.

Once the policy has been determined by the political elites, the regional civil servants take charge in the daily implementation of that European policy. Civil servants often interact on a daily basis with their European counterparts. In contrast to their political elites, they are not directly elected and are thus not directly restricted by public opinion and elections. They are also not in direct contact with a political party, which Hooghe and Marks (2004) have found to hold a firm grip on a politician's position on European integration. And more, whilst administrative political elite's daily work and interactions are split between the regional, national and European political arena, civil servants, on a daily basis, manage the implementation process of the European policy and in light of this typically engage only with their European counterparts or connect constituents from their own region with those of another European region. Thus, civil servants engage more with Europeans than their political elites do. Fligstein (2008) has found that the extent of European integration impacts the extent of European identity building. According to this, it can be anticipated that civil servants managing European policies feel more European than their political elites do. Also, it can be assumed that civil servants recognise that a common identity eases work relations, thus identifying the value of building a European identity through their work. Therefore, the second hypothesis of this book claims that:

Hypothesis 2
Regional civil servants implementing regions' European policies have developed a stronger personal interest in European identity building and focus more on this in their work than political elites do.

Once the political elites' and civil servants' objectives to build a European identity through their policies and work have been assessed, it is helpful to evaluate whether European regional networks intend to cultivate a European identity through their work. European regional networks feature a significant part of this research on EU regions' European policies, as nearly all EU regions participate in such a network within the scope of their respective European policies. Drawing on the challenges presented by government systems on regions' ability to engage in European politics, European regional networks were launched to help regions overcome political authority impediments and engage in European affairs (Checkel and Katzenstein 2009). Gänzle and Kern (2016) present the four "Macro-Regions," which are similar to geographically determined networks to foster European cooperation. These were introduced from 2009 as an "add-on" to the Cohesion Policy, as it supports territorial cooperation opportunities within the geographic zones. Fligstein (2008) suggests (yet has no evidence in support) that the heightened interactions within networks cultivate a European identity. If, indeed, regional participation in such networks builds a European identity, then in turn the regions, which participate as part of their European policy, would be building a European identity. Thus, even if political elites and civil servants did not intend to design and implement an identity-related European policy, this might still be an unintended outcome of their policy. Therefore, the third hypothesis of this book claims that:

Hypothesis 3
European regional networks are likely to intentionally build a European identity so regions participating in the networks cultivate a European identity and in turn cooperate with greater ease amongst the European membership.

1.6   Book Chapters' Outline

Chapter 1: What Role Do Regions and European Identity Play in European Integration and European Politics? This first chapter is dedicated to setting the stage of the research project. It introduces the context of EU regions' European engagement, as well as the role of European identity in regions' European policies. This section identifies and explains regional reforms, which have contributed to both the expansion and contraction of regional political authority in European politics. Relevant

research and its findings on the scope of regions' European policies will also be presented, and preliminary positions on whether European identity plays a role within their European engagement and what impact this might have on European integration or disintegration will also be discussed. Throughout this book, steps leading to anti-EU sentiment and such outcomes as the vote for Brexit will be highlighted. The analysis will lay the groundwork for the definition of the research model by identifying gaps in our understanding of regional governments' European engagement and the relationship between policy and practice. Finally, an overview of all chapters will be presented.

Chapter 2: Regional Characteristics Affecting the Scope and Objectives of European Policy The second chapter introduces the 98 EU regions (according to the NUTS 1 definition set by the European Commission) through a quantitative comparative analysis. It provides a descriptive analysis of the European regions—their regional characteristics and features. In turn, it will be assessed how these characteristics and features manifest themselves in the 98 regions' European engagement and their levels of European identity. These are vital clarifications to the understanding of EU regions' European politics; they will also contribute to the development of a justification for the selection of the four case study regions.

Chapter 3: Comparative Regions' European Policies The third chapter explores the scope of the four case study regions' European policies and specifically assesses to what extent the respective regions' policies build a European identity. This lies at the core of whether a region promotes EU membership and integration or whether it distances itself from an ever closer union. Particularly the evolution of the UK's case study region will be insightful in understanding how a vote for Brexit could have come about in that very region—and how, perhaps, this result could have been avoided. This chapter's analysis includes policies and programmes designed and implemented by the regions themselves, and those that have been dispensed by the European Commission's Directorate General for Regional Policy. This section is based on both a documents analysis of the four case study regions' European directorates and the European Commission's Regional Policy, as well as on interview findings from officials of the Directorate General for Regional Policy. This chapter will also look at the

regional characteristics and features more closely, analysing their influence and impact on the scope of the four case study regions' European engagement. This chapter will be complemented by Chaps. 4 and 5, which will present regional political elites' and civil servants' perceptions on the scope of both their respective regions' European engagement and whether they aim to form a European identity through their work.

Chapter 4: Is European Policy European? The Political Case Chapter 4 explores the four case study regions' political administrative elite's role in building a European identity through the respective regions' European policy. It assesses whether political elites intend to design identity-related European policies or purely economy-related policies. After studying the scope and objectives of EU regions' European engagement in Chap. 3 and the regional characteristics and features, which influence the scope and objectives of regions' European policies in Chap. 2, this chapter sheds new light on the role and influence of regional political decision-makers within the European directorates—do these driving forces aim to build an ever closer union or are they motivated by other sentiments? Implications of political elites' decisions are discussed, particularly those of the South West of England and the citizens' vote to leave the European Union. The findings are based on semi-structured interviews with regional political elites from the four case study regions.

Chapter 5: Is European Policy European? The Administrative Case Chapter 5 presents the findings of semi-structured interviews with regional government civil servants involved in European politics. This chapter complements the previous chapter on the political elites' intent to build a European identity through their European policies. Its focus on civil servants offers additional insights on whether civil servants feel more European than the political elites and in turn cultivate a European identity through their implemented work. It will also be discussed to what extent civil servants can influence not only the region's European programmes but also the region's sentiment toward Europe and EU membership. The civil servants also assess the role of political elites in reinforcing a European identity through the European policy they design. Further interview findings include a discussion on which regional characteristics and features have an impact on the scope and objectives of the respective regions' European policies.

Chapter 6: European Regional Networks—Enhancing European Engagement and Identity Building? With nearly all EU regions participating in European Regional Networks as part of their European policy, it becomes vital to conduct an evidence-based assessment on whether networks cultivate a European identity through their work. This chapter presents a case study on "ERRIN," a European regional network. It will help understand whether networks have the ability to mitigate circumstances when national and / or regional governments are Eurosceptic and nevertheless foster European cooperation and identity building. By providing a review of the network as well as presenting the findings from thirteen semi-structured interviews with network members, it will be determined to which extent European Networks can facilitate cooperation, integration and support the emergence of European identity.

Chapter 7: The Scope and Objectives of Regions' European Engagement—Lessons Learned and More Questions Revealed Chapter 7 provides a final analysis on the comparative scope of EU regions' European policies, and how European identity or Euroscepticism shape the regions' European engagement and EU integration. For this, conclusions will be offered on the influence of regional characteristics and features, which can either challenge or facilitate a region's European engagement. Furthermore, conclusions on the regions' political elites and civil servants, as well as DG REGIO officials and European regional network participants will be provided in order to analyse the link between actors' preferences and policy outcomes and implications—do they foster further European integration or do they help explain why one of the EU members suddenly decides to leave the European Union?

Regional Characteristics Affecting the Scope and Objectives of European Policy: And European Integration or Disintegration

The first chapter has introduced and explored relatively recent developments on regions' role in European affairs. It has also discussed an apparent lack of systematic research on the EU regions and the opportunities and constraints of their respective European policies and programmes. In fact, very little evidence-based information and insight exists about regions' European policies and programmes and the scope and objectives of their European engagement. Theory opines that there is variation amongst regions' European engagement. Reasons advanced to explain this variation have drawn primarily on regional characteristics and features. These characteristics have not, however, yet been empirically studied and validated as factors affecting the scope and objectives of regions' European engagement and identity building.

This chapter takes the theoretically based claims of political scientists to the next level: the level of evidence-based empirical data and analysis. It presents the full gamut of regional characteristics and features identified in political science scholarship that potentially impact the scope of regions' European policies and programmes as well as the cultivation of a European identity. And newly gained insights will provide a clearer understanding of the ratio of regions facing specific challenges in engaging in European affairs. This chapter will then pinpoint the regions participating in the different categories of EU-funded Cohesion Policy objectives. This in turn will explain and further clarify the extent regions experience "their" European engagement.

Whilst Objectives 1 and 2 of the EU's Cohesion Policy are merely implemented within the respective NUTS 1 region, Objective 3 offers a range of programmes in which regions must collaborate across at least small parts of Europe. As, to date, no database exists that captures the scope and objectives of EU regions' European policies and programmes, this preliminary assessment will provide a first indication of regions' European engagement with respect to EU-funded programmes. Further information on the full gamut of the regions' respective European policies and programmes will be presented in the case studies in the subsequent chapters. This chapter will close with a discussion of the spread of levels of European identity across the EU over time, based on data collected at the national level as it is not yet available at the regional level.

This chapter will not only present original data and newly gained insights about representative characteristics and features potentially influencing the scope and objectives of 98 regions' European engagement, their wish for further European integration or disintegration. On the back of this new knowledge base acquired, this chapter will also prepare the grounds for the case studies and further assessment of the impact of these regional characteristics. The case studies will, in turn, provide the critical backbone to answer with greater certainty the research question on the scope and objectives of regions' European policies and the role of European identity in their European engagement.

2.1   Overview of the Regional Characteristics that Are Suggested to Influence the Scope and Objectives of Regions' European Policies

Six regional characteristics were identified, theoretically but not empirically, in the first chapter as having an impact on the scope and identity-building objectives of regions' European policies. These include the political elite's personal inclinations in favour of a European identity; a government system providing regions with sufficient political authority to engage in European politics; whether a region is situated on a border to a European neighbour; whether a region participates in a European regional network; how long a region and its country have been part of the European Union and engaged in European integration politics; and whether a region's language and heritage is shared by other European regions and thereby brings them closer socially and politically.

The first characteristic on the political elite's perceptions on European identity goes back to the discussion of political elites feeling more European than citizens and the anticipation that political elites shape policies based on their own interests—thus in this case, Europhiles including identity-building dimensions to their respective region's European policy. There is a great need to collect and evaluate data on *regional* political elites' European inclinations to better understand whether indeed there is causation between interests and policy design at the emerging regional level of European politics. This will be assessed in the policy analysis of Chap. 3, as well as the analysis of semi-structured interviews with regional political elites and civil servants, in Chaps. 4 and 5 respectively. But first, this chapter will continue to grapple with the other regional characteristics that are expected to have an impact on the scope and objectives of regions' European policy—for which there is data available.

The second regional characteristic indicates that the type of government system impacts the levels of political authority delegated to regional governments to, in turn, develop their own European policies and programmes, instead of implementing those decided on more centrally. Furthermore, the scope of regions' European engagement also influences whether the objectives pursued are of a primarily economical nature or whether, indeed, regions' European policies and programmes also intend to cultivate and reinforce a European identity.

The third characteristic is the region's geographic border location in terms of proximity to another European region. Data available manifests which proportion of regions is physically located on a direct land border to another European region and which regions must overcome the challenge of geographic separation or even isolation from potential European engagements. Furthermore, regions with borders to European neighbours may more organically develop a European identity through daily or frequent interactions and the reality of proximity and the perception of commonly shared values.

The fourth characteristic builds on the constraints of geographic separation, isolation and impediments associated with particular government systems on the one hand, and the mitigating effects of European regional networks potentially supporting access to those regions constrained to more fully engage in European politics and develop a European identity on the other hand. European regional networks are thus expected to not only enhance regions' European engagement, they are also suspected to cultivate European identity amongst their membership. Networks feature

in the EU's Regional Policy within Objective 3 on territorial cooperation; the "Macro-Region Strategy" (which in 2009 was implemented for specific geographic regions, to support territorial cooperation initiatives); and various European Commission Directorate Generals' policies, which include network funding to support policy implementation and cooperation in their field. Gaining more evidence on the participation rate and performance of networks would make it possible to estimate networks' potential impact on the scope and objectives of regions' European engagement.

The fifth characteristic draws on the extent of time regions have been members of the European Union and postulates membership duration to have an impact on the levels of European identity perceived among and within regions. Though it is known how long each region and their respective countries have been EU Member States, European identity data has not yet been broken down to the regional level. Therefore, duration of membership's impact on regions' levels of European identity cannot be measured. However, on the base of available national data, an indication measure will be presented as it shows that a longer duration of EU membership indeed produces higher levels of perceived European identity. Furthermore, what membership duration really looks into is how much people engage with other Europeans over time. Another way to study this is to assess the extent of European engagement within regions' European policies. Though data on regions' European policies is not widely available and within the scope of this book not possible to collect, preliminary data on the extent of European engagement within the EU's Cohesion Policy is available. Though this data, once more, is only available at the national level, it shows an indication of which countries within the European Union predominantly, within the Cohesion Policy, engage with other Europeans and which countries do not—and in turn, what their respective levels of European identity are.

The sixth regional characteristic looks into whether European regions share a common language or heritage and what this impact may be on the scope and level of European identity. Whilst all languages in the European Union are official EU languages, English and French—the two languages most commonly learned in school and spoken—are de facto acknowledged as the European or the EU working languages. Regions whose official language is one of the official European working languages can engage with greater ease with their European counterparts. However, regions that have a language distinct from the European working languages

must overcome their linguistic constraints by investing resources (both material and non-material) into language capacity-building measures to ensure that they will be able to operate on par with their native English- and French-speaking colleagues. Due to the complexity of this "heritage attribute" identified in the literature, its potential impact will be assessed in the interviews with political elites and regional civil servants presented in the subsequent chapters.

As there isn't sufficient data available on the scope of all regions' European policies and whether European identity features in them, it is not possible to quantify and measure the impact of these regional characteristics on their scope. Also, the data on European identity levels across Europe have not been broken down to the regional level, hence it is not possible to measure whether these regional characteristics have an impact on the levels of European identity in the respective regions. Discovering the proportions of regions across the European Union with characteristics that either boost or challenge their European engagement is nevertheless a useful study. It helps political scientists understand why some regions may have a European policy with a broader scope, or why they may naturally have higher levels of European identity and thus potentially more identity-building dimensions within their European policy. This study thereby takes the theoretical identification of influential regional characteristics a step further. It shows the proportional distribution of them across Europe and prepares the grounds for when political elites and civil servants discuss their perceived impact of these characteristics on both European engagement and identity-building.

2.2   The Representativeness of Regional Characteristics and Features Potentially Impacting the Scope and Objectives of Regions' European Policies

2.2.1   National Government Systems

EU Member States' approach to and engagement in the "European project" oftentimes reflect their quite distinct national government systems. This routinely evokes varying reactions in the regions, both in terms of the way the policies and politics of the European Union are interpreted and, subsequently, how they influence and impact their responses. There is also

great variation in terms of capacities and resources among the regional governments. Scholarly literature has identified several categories for levels of political authority delegated to regions. It has shed light on the complexity and idiosyncrasies of the continent's different government systems and, moreover, the multitude of regional governance and how it works. It follows that it is extremely difficult to know "who is in charge" and whom to contact when collaboration on specific issues is being contemplated. The levels of authority in the regions are everything but self-evident—the dichotomy between federal and unitary states oversimplifies outliers in unitary states, which nevertheless are nearly as devolved as regions in federal states. Monumental research has been conducted into the level of regional authority in 42 countries (Hooghe et al. 2010), which provides a Regional Authority Index (RAI) score from 1950 to 2010. The RAI includes measures for self-rule (institutional depth; policy scope; fiscal autonomy; representation) and shared-rule (law-making; executive control; fiscal control; constitutional reform). This book will use the RAI country score of 2010 to show the level of regional authority in Table 2.1.

From Table 2.1 it becomes apparent that the unitary system of government is the most common government system in the European Union with 77.5 percent of all regions. It is also the system of choice of the new EU Member States, which have only recently developed their democratic, multi-party governments. Very few regions (22 regions or 22.5 percent of all regions) have federal governments, in which regions have been granted substantially more policy design and implementation autonomy from the central state than regions in unitary government systems. To be more specific on the ability of regions to govern, Hooghe et al. (2010) have developed the RAI, which looks at government authority not specific to European affairs; thus it is still an indication of regions' ability to engage in European affairs. The RAI score ranges from 0 to 37.0 within the European Union. Indeed, the federal regions have substantially higher levels of regional authority (mean score of 31.03) than regions in unitary government systems (mean score of only 8.83). However, there are some outliers amongst the regions in unitary states; Spanish regions have an RAI score of 33.6 and Italian regions have an RAI score of 27.3. Both have higher scores than some of the federal regions.

Each of these categories of government systems influences and impacts the extent to which a region can initiate and participate in European politics independently from their national government. When adding the regions in federal states and the regions in unitary states with similarly

Table 2.1 Government systems and border status in European regions

Country	Gov't system (RAI country score)	Region	Border status
Austria	Federal – 23	East Austria	Border
		South Austria	Border
		West Austria	Border
Belgium	Federal – 33.1	Brussels capital Region	No border
		Flemish Region	Border
		Walloon Region	Border
Bulgaria	Unitary – 2.0	Severna I Iztochna	Border
		Yugozapadna I Yuzhna Tsentralna	Border
Croatia	Unitary – 9.0	Croatia	Border
Cyprus	Unitary – 0	Cyprus	Border
Czech Republic	Unitary – 9.0	Czech Republic	Border
Germany	Federal – 37.0	Baden-Wuerttemberg	Border
		Bavaria	Border
		Berlin	No border
		Brandenburg	Border
		Bremen	No border
		Hamburg	No border
		Hessen	No border
		Mecklenburg-Vorpommern	Border
		Lower Saxony	Border
		North-Rhine-Westphalia	Border
		Rhineland-Palatinate	Border
		Saarland	Border
		Saxony	Border
		Saxony-Anhalt	No border
		Schleswig-Holstein	Border
		Thuringia	No border
Denmark	Unitary – 7.3	Denmark	Border
Estonia	Unitary – 0	Estonia	Border
Spain	Unitary – 33.6	North West	Border
		North East	Border
		Community of Madrid	No border
		Centre	Border
		East	Border
		South	Border
		Canary Islands	No border
Finland	Unitary – 7.1	Mainland Finland	Border
		Aland	No border

(*continued*)

Table 2.1 (continued)

Country	Gov't system (RAI country score)	Region	Border status
France	Unitary – 20.0	Ile-de-France	No border
		Parisian Basin	No border
		Nord-Pas-de-Calais	Border
		East	Border
		West	Border
		South West	Border
		Centre East	Border
		Mediterranean	Border
		Overseas Departments	No border
Greece	Unitary – 11.0	Voreia Ellada	Border
		Kentriki Ellada	Border
		Attica	No border
		Nisia Aigaiou Kriti	No border
Hungary	Unitary 10.9	Central Hungary (Kozep Magyarorszag)	No border
		Transdanubia (Dunantual)	Border
		Great Plain and North (Alfold es Eszak)	Border
Ireland	Unitary – 3.0	Ireland	Border
Italy	Unitary – 27.3	North West	Border
		North East	Border
		Centre	Border
		South	Border
		Islands	No border
Lithuania	Unitary – 3.0	Lithuania	Border
Luxembourg	Unitary – 0	Luxembourg	Border
Latvia	Unitary – 3.0	Latvia	Border
Malta	Unitary – 0	Malta	No border
Netherlands	Unitary – 17.5	North Netherlands	Border
		East Netherlands	Border
		West Netherlands	No border
		South Netherlands	Border
Poland	Unitary – 8.0	Central (Centralny)	No border
		Poludniowy	Border
		Wschodni	Border
		Polnocno-Zachodni	Border
		Poludniowo-Zachodni	Border
		Polnocny	Border
Portugal	Unitary 3.8	Mainland Portugal	Border
		Azores	No border
		Madeira	No border

(*continued*)

Table 2.1 (continued)

Country	Gov't system (RAI country score)	Region	Border status
Romania	Unitary – 10.0	Macroregion one	Border
		Macroregion two	Border
		Macroregion three	No border
		Macroregion four	No border
Sweden	Unitary – 12.0	East Sweden	No border
		South Sweden	Border
		North Sweden	Border
Slovenia	Unitary – 1.0	Slovenia	Border
Slovakia	Unitary – 8.0	Slovakia	Border
United Kingdom	Unitary – 11.2	North East England	No border
		North West England	No border
		Yorkshire and the Humber	No border
		East Midlands	No border
		West Midlands	No border
		East of England	No border
		Greater London	No border
		South East England	No border
		South West England	No border
		Wales	No border
		Scotland	No border
		Northern Ireland	Border

high RAI scores (Spain and Italy), the percentage of all 98 EU regions with high levels of regional authority are merely 34.7 percent. It can therefore be anticipated that just short of 35 percent of EU regions have sufficient political authority to engage in European politics themselves and determine the objectives of that European policy—whether it is of a purely economic nature or also includes European identity building. The majority of the EU regions, just over 65 percent of them, are dependent on their central governments' positions on the extent of regionalisation and decentralisation of the European policy, as well as to what extent the European policy supports European integration or whether it takes a Eurosceptic position. For these near 65 percent of regions, the type of government system and lack of devolution is a significant regional characteristic in terms of influencing the scope and objectives of their European policy.

2.2.2   *Regional Geographic Location*

A further regional characteristic, which may influence the extent of regions' European engagement, is that of its geographic location. The scholarly literature has posited that a region located on a (foreign) European border would have more contact with its neighbours, thus engage more in European politics and potentially also grow a European identity. It is in the context of this presumption that this book will look further into regions that share a border with another European member state's region, as well as regions that are not geographically located on a border. How many regions share a border with another EU Member State's region and how many regions are geographically isolated from other European regions?

A small majority of the 98 EU regions are physically located at the heart of the European Union, sharing their borders with European neighbours, whilst other regions are geographically separated or even isolated from having direct European neighbours—such as island Member States. The citizens of the 63 percent of regions that have a border location, therefore, may have direct, daily contact and interactions with other Europeans and may need to inter-regionally cooperate on policy areas such as transport in order to get to and from work. Thirty-seven percent of the regions, however, are located on the outskirts of Europe and may therefore feel more distant to the European Union and "Europeanness."

If regional values for European identity were available, their respective depth and breadth could be compared with the designated category of geographic location to better understand whether natural cooperation based on sharing a border with another European region facilitates the emergence of European identity. Knowing that 63 percent of regions are either entirely or partially on a border to another EU region makes the cross-border cooperation initiative within the Cohesion Policy's Territorial Cooperation Programme very relevant. However, this also means that 37 percent of the EU regions that do not share a land border and therefore have to take a ferry or flight to reach their European neighbours, cannot participate in cross-border cooperation projects within the EU Cohesion Policy's Territorial Cooperation Programme as easily and therefore are geographically constrained in the extent of their European engagement. Island states in particular have more geographic hurdles to overcome when seeking contact or cooperation opportunities with other Europeans —this might help explain the British Eurosceptic sentiments and vote to leave the European Union, however, several

other EU Member States that are further away from the "heart of Europe" have a stronger affinity toward Europe and the European Union. Though regions' geographic location influences regions' scope of European engagement by either enabling participation in funded cross-border European cooperation projects or withholding such opportunities, it needs to be further evaluated what the impact on European identity-formation might be.

2.2.3   European Regional Network Participation

The scholarly literature has suggested that European regional networks boost European territorial cooperation by narrowing both the access and participation gaps widened by national government systems. In the absence of empirical evidence on both the scope and impact of these networks, an email survey was conducted within the scope of this book to fill persisting data gaps. Forty-six out of 98 EU regions replied to the survey, and 100 percent of them stated that their regions participate in European regional networks. It also found that the number of networks regions participate in varies in part because their existence is either unknown or under-utilised by regional civil servants. How networks aim to provide ubiquitous and easy access to all regions, particularly to those constrained by their unfavourable regional characteristics, will be evaluated in Chap. 6.

2.2.4   Duration of EU Membership Affecting Regions' European Policies

The European Union has an evolving membership history. When considering European integration, the duration of membership plays an important role. The founding members of the European Economic Community in 1958 were Belgium, France, West Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. European enlargements occurred in 1973, 1981, 1986, 1995, 2004, 2007 and 2013. The most significant enlargement was in 2004, when 10 predominantly Eastern European countries joined the European Union and grew its membership from 15 to 25 states. The enlargement, however, was not only significant because of its sheer magnitude in number. It was also, and perhaps even more importantly, significant because of the wave of democratisation and development it unleashed in Eastern Europe and its new member states' orientation toward the West. When viewed from a cultural, historical, political and economic

perspective, the 13 new Eastern European countries joining the European Union in 2004, 2007 and 2013 brought with them very different experiences, orientations, values and levels of development, thus enriching and complementing, but also complicating affairs of the more cohesive *Werteunion* formerly established by the Western EU Member States. It is against this historical backdrop that EU Member States are often put into two categories: the EU-15 Member States (from 1957 to 2003) and the new EU Member States (the members that joined in 2004, 2007 and 2013, respectively).

In addition to the differing experiences, orientations, values and levels of development experienced by the EU-15 Member States and the new EU Member States, a divide in extent of European engagement within the EU-funded Cohesion Policy ensued. In most cases, regions of the EU-15 Member States had already received infrastructure development funds from the European Union within the Objective 1 of the Cohesion Policy, and, by 2007/2013, were predominantly participating in Objectives 2 and 3, European-wide cooperation programmes. Thus, EU-15 Member States, which had already benefited from a longer period of European integration, also are expected to engage more with other Europeans within the Cohesion Policy than the regions that are newer to the European Union. If extent of engagement has an impact on the extent of European identity felt and thereby also the extent of identity building included in European policy design, then it should be expected that EU-15 Member States have much higher levels of European identity than newer EU Member States, and that European identity features more prominently in the EU-15 Member State's European policies than those of the newer EU Member States.

This analysis will be taken up in the section on European identity later in this chapter.

2.2.5   *Language Affecting Regions' European Policies*

How close people feel to Europe is firmly rooted in language and the ability to speak, understand, participate and thereby integrate. Although the European Union publishes all official documents in every one of its 24 official EU languages, the most common working languages in Brussels are English and French; thus the largest share of pertinent information about both interregional and intraregional cooperation circulates in those

two languages only. For people not proficient in either English or French, their nature-based geographic isolation is further compounded by their de facto linguistic isolation.

The majority of EU regions (73 percent) and their populations (72 percent) do not have English or French as their natural official language and therefore the minority of regions and EU population (27 percent and 28 percent, respectively) is naturally integrated linguistically and can communicate and process information with ease. Adding to this, the regions that are already geographically located at the core of the European Union, such as France and Belgium, also speak the Union's most commonly spoken languages, whilst the regions located on the margins of Europe, such as Cyprus and Greece, not only have to overcome geographic challenges but also linguistic ones to engage more naturally and easily in European affairs. Both these factors may have an impact on the extent to which regions participate in European-wide cooperation programmes and engage with other Europeans, and in turn, the extent to which they feel European and want to build a European identity through their European policy. Though the British case has shown that sharing the EU working language does not naturally foster an affinity for EU membership, perhaps being geographically separate from the European continent played a more significant role. For 73 percent of EU regions, language could significantly challenge their European engagement and identity-building opportunities.

2.3   Levels of European Identity (1990–2015)

Having identified and assessed a number of EU regions' characteristics with a likely impact on the scope and objectives of their European engagement, it is significant to know "how European" their citizens actually feel. The question was asked as part of the Eurobarometer survey commissioned by the European Union. The Eurobarometer data is based on national values; it does not allow for a specific evaluation of the regions' levels of European identity. Across the European Union, the average levels of European identity have increased from 1990 to 2015 by 19 percent, from just shy of 48 percent to more than 67 percent. The actual levels of European identity by EU Member State, however, differ amongst EU Member States. This is also the case when splitting the 28 EU Member States into two groups: the EU-15, which have been integrating for a

considerably long time and the newer EU Member States, which joined in 2004, 2007 and 2013, respectively. Figure 2.1 shows these comparative average levels of European identity.

Figure 2.1 shows that levels of European identity are, overall, rising; however, the newer EU Member States have slightly lower levels of European identity than the more integrated EU-15 Member States. The average of the EU-15 Member States show that in 1990, 47.4 percent stated to "feel European." In 2006, this percentage rose to 58.5 percent. In 2010, 66.2 percent "felt European" and oin 2015, 70.13 percent "felt like a citizen of the EU." In comparison, the new EU Member States' average in 2006 was 60.5 percent; it rose to 62 percent in 2010 and to 67.77 percent in 2015. In all cases, the respondents' display an increase in "feeling European" over time. Interestingly, the new EU Member States already felt significantly more European when joining the European Union than the EU-15 Member States.

Assessing to what extent regional characteristics influence the levels of European identity would enhance our understanding of their correlation. However, the data on European identity is only available at the national level and therefore inferences of regional characteristics cannot be made on regional levels of European identity. However, it is possible to glean an
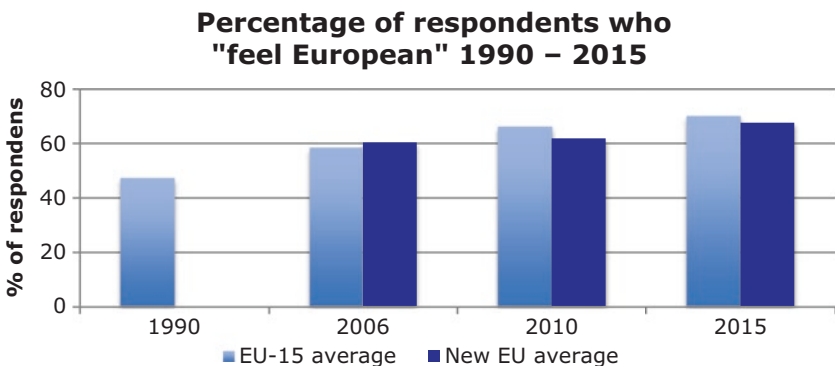
Fig 2.1 Percentage of population who "feel European" 1990–2015 (This figure shows whether populations from before 2004 EU enlargement Members States have higher or lower levels of European identity than populations from states that joined the European Union in or after 2004. Source: Eurostat European identity survey results in 1990, 2006, 2010 and 2015; and categorised EU membership duration before and after 2004 enlargements)

indication from the national values. Countries of federal government systems had higher levels of European identity (74 percent in 2015) than countries of unitary government systems (68 percent in 2015). However, when considering countries with the highest RAI (the three federal states plus Spain and Italy), the average level of European identity drops to 69 percent and the states with lower RAI scores have an average European identity level of 68.4 percent—thus the difference is not very significant at all at the national level. Furthermore, countries in which an EU working language is the official national language had slightly higher levels of European identity than countries with non-EU working languages (in 2010: same language = 67.8 percent and other language = 63.3 percent; in 2015: same language = 70 percent and other language = 69 percent). That said, the United Kingdom had the fifth highest level of Euroscepticism, reaching 42 percent in 2015 (and then voting in favour of leaving the European Union with 51.9 percent in 2016), and France was not far behind with 37 percent, also in 2015. With these inconclusive and rough first results it becomes clear that more data on European identity as well as European engagement at the regional level must be collected in order to make more meaningful and reliable evaluations. This in turn would make it possible to better understand what shapes European identity and support for European integration, and what shapes Euroscepticism and even the willingness to leave the European Union. Taking first steps in uncovering more empirical evidence on this, a deeper analysis, based on qualitative research of the four case study regions and the European regional network, will be presented in the following chapters of this book.

2.4   Conclusions on Regional Characteristics' Potential Influence

This chapter has provided a basis for understanding the potential impact of regional characteristics on their respective European policies and the role of European identity and support for European integration and membership both within their regions and their European policies.

The regions, by nature and choice, exhibit varied degrees of institutionalisation at the levels of national and regional governments and EU institutions, respectively—which can either encourage or limit their engagement in European politics as independent actors and policy designers. Only 34.7 percent of the regions have high RAI scores (Austria, Belgium,

Germany, Spain and Italy), which means they might have enough political authority to design and implement their own European policies and programmes—independently from the central government. This leaves a significant 65.3 percent of regions without this political authority and heightened level of European engagement and, if they so wish, the opportunity to include European identity-building objectives in it.

The daily need to be active in European politics, relations and cooperation is also influenced by regions' geographic location. Sixty-three percent of regions in the European Union share a border with another EU region, making the need to cooperate on policy areas affecting mutual cross-border concerns essential. But this also means that the citizens of 37 percent of the 98 EU regions live in regions that do not have an intrinsic need to cooperate with their European counterparts, and therefore, perhaps, do not participate in the "European project" as actively as those who are located on a border. Furthermore, for the 37 percent of regions not located on a European border, the lack of European encounters and interactions on a daily basis may also inhibit their natural European identity building. European policies for those regions can be expected to look quite different from the border-located regions in terms of their European cooperation and integration features.

Also the duration of EU membership influences and constitutes an important regional characteristic because of its impact on the regions' cohesive integration. Indeed, it has been shown that EU Member States with a longer membership duration than the states that joined more recently in the three European enlargement waves have higher levels of European identity compared to the newer EU members. As was shown, regions in the EU-15 Member States also participate in more European-wide cooperation programmes funded by the European Union than regions in the newer Member States. The extent of European engagement may also play a significant role in shaping the levels of European identity, which, due to Cohesion Policy criteria, goes hand in hand with regional GDP and, in this case also, EU membership duration.

Language also matters. The language barrier for those who do not speak the two de facto EU working languages, English or French, can also be a significant challenge to engaging in European programmes and projects. It can also act as an impediment to feeling European if the official regional language is not one of the more commonly spoken languages in Europe. With 72 percent of the EU population not speaking the most commonly spoken languages, English and French, a significant language

challenge may make it more difficult for those Europeans to engage with other Europeans and build a European identity. However, data also shows that the United Kingdom and France have comparatively high levels of Euroscepticism, featuring in the top fifth and sixth places respectively in 2015. These two cases therefore do not support the language theory whereas Luxembourg, which has the highest level of European identity (88 percent in 2015), does. More insights on this from actors in the field will be enlightening.

Taking into consideration these and other impeding regional characteristics, European regional networks have been established to bring regions together, level the playing field and facilitate European cooperation amongst the regions. The survey results presented showed that 100 percent of respondents participate in a European regional network; the response rate, however, was only 47 percent of EU regions. A more contextualised and detailed account of the ability of European regional networks to foster regions' European engagement and identity building will be presented in Chap. 6.

In absence of European identity data being broken down to the regional instead of merely national level, it is not possible to measure to which extent these identified characteristics affect how European citizens of respective regions feel. As regions' European policies and programmes have also not yet been mapped, it is not possible to measure the impact of these characteristics on the European engagement of regions. To take the research in this field a step further, this book will continue by looking more closely at four case study regions. The scope and objectives of these regions' European policies and programmes will be assessed, the characteristics that shape them will be evaluated and the role European identity plays in regions' European engagement will be gauged.

Comparing Regions' European Policies: A Comparative Policy Analysis and Assessment of the Role of European Identity

The evolutionary process of European integration has seen states work increasingly closely together in the pursuit of common objectives and interests. Cooperation in the European Union has indeed spread to the same number of policy areas as Member States, thus greatly expanding its scope of political cooperation. A vast body of research has analysed both the process of European integration and the impact of the Europeanisation of national policies and programmes. The insights gained produced a better understanding of rising socioeconomic disparities amongst the regions in the enlarged European Union. In recognition of this stark reality on European Union soil, the European Commission responded by developing the Regional Policy aimed at boosting and pumping much needed support into the regions and, so its expectation, fostering in the process socioeconomic cohesion and a heightened sense of unity throughout the European Union.

The Europeanisation of Regional Policy has had a positive impact on the regions' integration into the European institutions. It has enabled them to more systematically represent and present their interests and, though to a varied extent, participate in the Regional Policy's decision-making process. Furthermore, regional governments have been developing their own European portfolios. They are becoming increasingly vociferous and visible participants in the shaping and making of European affairs and operate quite independently from either EU institutions or their respective national governments. Particularly in preparation of future

EU budgets, regions that anticipate to no longer "make the cut" for the most significant EU regional funding objectives, were increasing their European interregional cooperation activities by tapping into EU funding in support of regions' European engagement; efforts designed to be(come) sustainable European actors without receiving EU funding. Regional governments are thus transitioning from being, primarily, EU funding recipients for regional development projects to European cooperation-seeking actors; they are asserting and exercising more authority at the European level by broadening their competencies and capacities and taking more pro-active steps in the European sphere. In this process, some regions are gaining access to the European sphere for the first time. However, other regions' European engagement is also being scaled down—as will be shown in the case of the British regions.

In general, regions across the European Union are reaching out further than ever before, participating in European politics in concert with supranational and national actors. Indeed, all 98 EU regions have designated European teams; many regional governments have departments that are mandated to design, implement and manage their regions' own distinct European portfolio. In some regions, teams merely manage EU-allocated funding to the regions for internal infrastructure development. In other regions, European teams or departments manage bilateral partnerships with their European counterparts and provide European educational and training programmes to raise awareness of European opportunities and even European identity; whilst others help start European projects linking citizens of their region with citizens of other European regions for entrepreneurial collaboration or social integration purposes. There are numerous ways in which regions engage in European affairs. But what exactly is the scope of regions' European engagement and what are their objectives? Do they purely seek regional economic development or also a form of social integration and European identity building? How broad are the variations across the 98 regions' European engagement?

The Introduction chapter cited research findings relating to regional governments' differing degree of exercising political authority and breadth and depth in shaping European politics. It also identified research gaps in the comparative European governments field: whilst the objectives and scope of European policies and programmes of the EU Member States have been accorded centrestage attention, the fact is that, to date, the

academic community as well as policy and political decision-makers know very little about what the regions' respective European objectives, policies and programmes are. Are they restricted to stimulating and strengthening economic development within the confines of their regions, or do the regions' European policies and programmes also include social policy dimensions, such as fostering, for instance, a European identity?

This chapter addresses this particular research gap by placing and focusing its analytical instruments onto four European regional case studies. The case studies will highlight the increase of European engagement at the regional government level. They will also provide an evidence-based understanding of the state of regions' European policies and programmes, as well as the distinct objectives, scopes and variations that occur amongst the four selected regions. These four case study regions include France's Nord–Pas-de-Calais; the South West of England; Germany's Brandenburg; and Belgium's Wallonia. They have been selected in accordance with the regional characteristics discussed in Chap. 2; the Table 3.1 depicts these criteria.

The regions' self-designed and implemented European policies will be assessed alongside their participation in EU-designed and implemented policies and programmes. Based on this document analysis, the scope of European engagement of four regions will be documented and presented. Furthermore, findings from semi-structured interviews with European Commission delegates overseeing these four case study regions within the context of the EU Regional Policy's Operational Programme will be provided to strengthen the understanding of developments in the EU Regional Policy and their effect on the regions' respective European policies' and programmes' designs. This chapter will conclude with a preliminary assessment of whether European identity plays a paramount role in the regions' European policies and programmes, or whether it is tantamount to the objectives' focus on economic development and integration. The findings will offer a first explanation of the scope and objectives of regions' European engagement, thereby producing evidence-based answers to the book's research question. This chapter's initial findings will also set the stage for the subsequent chapters addressing and analysing the perceptions of regional political elites and civil servants shaping and managing the regions' European engagement.

Table 3.1 Presentation of regional case study selection

Region	Region's economy GDP in PPS / inhabitant (of old EU MS)	Type of EU regional policy funding 1=conv. 2=comp. 3=coop.	Duration of EU member-ship (year joined EU)	% citizens feeling European (national levels)	National government system	Geographic location on a border?	EU working language or other?
Wallonia	20,700	2+3	1957 (Founding Member)	1990:53 2006:60 2010:76 2015:70 Average:65	Federal	Border	EU working language
Nord-Pas-de-Calais	22,000	2+3	1957 (Founding Member)	1990:58 2006:55 2010:57 2015:61 Average:58	Unitary	Border	EU working language
Brandenburg	20,500	1+3	1990 (German Reunification)	1990:41 2006:58 2010:73 2015:81 Average:63	Federal	Border (since 1990)	Other language
South West of England	26,600	1+2+3	1972	1990:28 2006:32 2010:41 2015:56 Average:39	Unitary	No border	EU working language

Sources: Regional economy, population and European identity data from Eurostat. Type of EU regional policy funding: European Commission's Directorate General for Regional Policy website on each region's operational programme 2007–2013. EU Membership duration: EU Website: Members. National government system: country's website. Region's official language: region's government / RDA website. Geographic location: Google Maps

3.1   First Indications of Variation
Amongst Regions' European Engagement

Regions that had not already been granted political authority to participate in the debate, policy-making and implementation of policies reaching beyond regional geographic and administrative boundaries were delegated new political authority to participate in a range of European interregional policies and programmes offered through the EU's Regional Policy. The programme affecting all regions, initially, was the convergence programme. Its main objective was to tackle the socioeconomic disparities across the EU's membership. However, the programme's available resources did not keep up with a vastly expanding EU membership. With limited resources at its disposal to distribute amongst the regions of the EU Member States, critical choices had to be made, putting great pressure on the programme. In the most recent funding period running from 2007 to 2013, the European Commission's Directorate General for Regional Policy (DG Regio) managed the EU's Regional Policy under the umbrella of three core Cohesion Policy objectives: Objective 1 was to distribute convergence funding to those regions with a regional GDP below the 75 percent EU regional average; the regions with a GDP above the 75 percent EU average received Objective 2 funding for competitiveness and employment. All regions received funding from either the Cohesion's Policy Objective 1 or Objective 2 as long as they had the regional political authority and capacity to manage these funds. Although both Objectives 1 and 2 had economic development as their core aims, Objective 2 also provided regional actors from the public and private sector with the opportunity to connect with their European counterparts in exchange of best-practice collaboration. This enhances their European engagement with other Europeans and can boost European identity building. Because of this, the regions of Objective 2 as opposed to the regions of Objective 1 may have a higher chance of developing a European identity through their management of EU Cohesion Policy funding and participation in its programmes. All regions could, under Objective 3, develop European territorial cooperation projects, apply for funding, and, if granted, implement them in cooperation with other European regions. The extent of European engagement in these projects is by far the most influential in building a European identity, when compared to Objectives 2 and certainly Objective 1. However, it is also more challenging to participate in Objective 3 than in Objectives 1 or 2. Firstly, for regions receiving Objective 1 funding,

connections across Europe may not yet have been established and thus it would be considerably more difficult for those regions to identify European partners and set up a European-wide project under Objective 3. Secondly, under the rules and regulations of this objective, regions were required to invest their own resources upfront into both the planning and application stages without guarantee of receiving any funds for project proposals submitted. The precarious financial resources in most regions have prompted many not to invest in this potential funding opportunity. The Cohesion Policy's qualification limitations and prerequisite regional investment provisions de facto contributed to a variation in the scope of EU-funded programmes available to the EU's 98 regions—and a variation in regions' opportunities to build a European identity through their participation in Cohesion Policy programmes. The variation in regions' European engagement, however, continues to increase. In addition to the programmes designed and co-funded by the European Union, the 98 regions are at liberty to design and implement their own European policies—though this option is exercised to dissimilar degrees.

Although to date there is no available data on the variation in scope of the 98 regions' European policies and programmes, Hooghe et al. (2010) have developed a political authority index of European regions, which is based on the scope and depth of all policies within the respective regions' portfolios. Table 3.2 outlines the political authority index of the four case study regions presented in this book:

Table 3.2 shows that there is variation amongst the regions' respective political authority as related to their entire policy portfolio. It indicates that the regions' political authority with regard to their European policies and programmes portfolio will also show variation. However, empirical evidence on the regions' scope and objectives for their European policy

Table 3.2 Political authority index for the four case study regions

Region	Policy depth	Policy scope	Timeframe
Brandenburg, GER	3	3	1950–2006
Nord–Pas-de-Calais, FRA	2	2	1986–2006
South West of England, UK	2	1	1999–2006
Wallonia, BEL	3	3	1989–2006

Source: Hooghe et al. (2010). This table outlines four European regions' political authority index based on policy depth (1 lowest – 3 highest) and policy scope (1 lowest – 3 highest). It also provides a timeframe to the administrative existence of the respective region

and programme portfolio still needs to be presented in support of this claim—and will be done so in this chapter. This chapter will further investigate the variation in regions' European policy, as manifested by the four regional case studies: Nord–Pas-de-Calais, the South West of England, Brandenburg and Wallonia. It will also assess the role of European identity within the regions' respective European policies.

3.2   Regions' European Policies: Four Case Studies

The European policies of the four case study regions—Nord–Pas-de-Calais, the South West of England, Brandenburg and Wallonia—will be the focus of this section. More specifically, the comparative extent of European engagement and identity building of these four sub-national government actors will be presented and analysed. Regions' European policy includes the programmes funded by the EU Cohesion Policy as well as the regions' own European policies and programmes. The objectives of their European engagement will be addressed and explained in order to determine whether European initiatives are primarily driven by commercial considerations and forces, such as economic convergence and socio-economic cohesion, or whether objectives extend to achieving long-lasting European political relations, collaboration, a sense of unity and a European identity.

3.2.1   Nord–Pas-de-Calais

The French region Nord–Pas-de-Calais is both actively engaged in the pursuit of EU regional policy objectives and in the sign and implementation of its own European initiatives. Regarding EU-based funding, the region was allocated and €2.3 billion in competitiveness and employment funds under Objective 2 for the period 2007–2013 (Source: European Commission Directorate General for Regional Policy Operational Programme for Nord–Pas-de-Calais region 2007–2013). With a population of just more than 4 million, the competitiveness and employment funding allocated to the region amounts to €575 per person for the seven-year funding period. The region recently underwent a phase of extensive development, due to high unemployment rates, low levels of research and development and growing urbanisation. The region's programme focus therefore is on creating and supporting a competitive and innovative business environment to stimulate sustainable economic growth and create, in

the process, new and well-paying jobs. EU funds are therefore targeted to support and accelerate developments in the areas of training and research, cultural regeneration and fostering a new image, as well as promoting regional solidarity.

In addition to Objective 2–funded activities, which are European funds to be spent within the regions, Nord–Pas-de-Calais also actively engaged in three EU-facilitated European cross-border cooperation programmes and one transnational cooperation programme. The first cross-border cooperation program was entitled "France-Wallonie-Vlaanderen" and dealt with border-related issues between France and Belgium. It was supported by a total budget of €248 million (Source: European Commission Directorate for Regional Policy Nord-Pas de Calais Operational Programme 2007–2013). The second cross-border cooperation programme was "Deux Mers," and it addressed maritime cooperation issues between Belgium, the Netherlands, France and the United Kingdom. It could draw on a total budget of €295 million (Source: European Commission Directorate for Regional Policy Nord–Pas-de-Calais Operational Programme 2007–2013). Nord–Pas-de-Calais' third cross-border cooperation programme was the "France (Channel) England" programme. It dealt with strictly bilateral maritime border cooperation questions between France and England and had a total budget of €329 million (Source: European Commission Directorate for Regional Policy Nord–Pas-de-Calais Operational Programme 2007–2013). Furthermore, the transnational cooperation programme of "North West Europe" aimed to address territorial issues through the exchange of best practice in regional networks. The networks were home to approximately 180 million people, and the total budget for this programme zone was €696 million (Source: European Commission Directorate for Regional Policy Nord–Pas-de-Calais Operational Programme 2007–2013). The region's EU-funded European policy has shown to include both economic development and, through network participation, European identity-building opportunities.

Beyond the EU Regional Policy funding for Objectives 2 and 3, the region Nord–Pas-de-Calais was also very active in European politics. Its regional government ("Conseil Régional"), which is the leading governmental institution dealing with European affairs, developed the Institute for European Territorial Cooperation. The institute conceives and implements educational events on issues about Europe, broadly defined, for students, academics, civil servants and the general public. Events cover

seminars on Europe and European opportunities for regional politicians and civil servants, training events on European cooperation projects and the role of regions in Europe. The institute also promotes student exchanges across Europe (Source: Booklet on the European Institute for Territorial Cooperation. Published by the Conseil Regional of Nord–Pas-de-Calais). In addition, the regional government develops bilateral and multilateral relations with other European regions and provides assistance designed to develop and promote European interregional cooperation projects (Source: Nord–Pas-de-Calais Website on Europe). In initiating and supporting the extent children, students, public and private sector constituents engage with other Europeans, Nord–Pas-de-Calais' own European policy incorporates the potential to develop a European identity, in addition to possibly enticing economic development through its interregional cooperation projects.

The European engagement of the region Nord–Pas-de-Calais thus extends from EU Regional Policy funding for Objective 2 on competitiveness and education to Objective 3 on transnational cooperation and includes a range of self-designed and implemented European initiatives to develop training programmes and research projects as well as raise awareness and appreciation of European opportunities to help stimulate sustainable economic growth and employment. It has allocated five civil servants to work on Objective 2, between 12 and 16 on Objective 3 and 14 on self-designed initiatives including the institute for bilateral relations and the development of cooperation projects (Source: Internal Document on Nord–Pas-de-Calais European Directorate Staff provided during interviews in May 2010). Furthermore, the region is represented by one civil servant in Brussels. These staff numbers also show that the region invests significant resources into developing European social integration and the potential to building a European identity through its more socially minded and European-wide engaging programmes. These broad objectives of the region's European policy come as a surprise when reflecting on the government system–led anticipation of Keating (1999). According to his initial research on political authority delegated to regional governments, regional governments within unitary states are expected to have less authority than regions within federal government systems. Considering that Nord–Pas-de-Calais' government system is highly centralised, it has not only allowed the implementation of a number of substantial initiatives led, amongst others, by its Institute for European Territorial Cooperation. It has also encouraged the Institute's active engagement in developing

European social integration and, through this, European identity building, and ensured its appropriate funding and staffing. The Institute was established in 2008 and has grown from two to six full-time staff members. In addition, the region's own initiatives in the European-wide bilateral arena and its cooperation project development support efforts have grown to include eight full-time staff members. The region is expanding its European social integration and identity-building objectives within its European policy.

3.2.2   *South West of England*

The South West of England European Policy and Programmes team has undergone significant changes in the past years—since the coalition government of Conservatives and Liberal Democrats was elected in June 2010. Previously, the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) were set up in lieu of institutionalised regional governments, and were predominantly tasked with managing EU regional policy funds. During the 2007–2013 EU regional policy funding period, Cornwall's GDP was less than 75 percent of the EU average GDP, and therefore was eligible to receive convergence funding under the Regional Policy's Objective 1. This objective did not include any scope for interacting with other Europeans, thus fostering a European identity through the objective would have been unlikely. The rest of the region received competitiveness and education funding under Objective 2 (Source: European Commission Directorate General for Regional Policy South West of England Operational Programme 2007–2013). Due to this locational division of funding, there was also a division in location of teams. The team assigned to address Objective 1 was managed in Cornwall, while the team in charge of Objective 2 was managed in the RDA in Exeter. It is also in Exeter where the team dealing with Objective 3 of the EU Regional Policy funds was located. Team staff allocations, however, were quite uneven. The team assigned to pursue Objective 3 consisted of only two agents, while the teams delegated to address Objectives 1 and 2 had eight to 10 agents each "on the job" (Source: Internal document on South West of England RDA European Policy and Programmes Team staff provided during interviews). Objective 3 is the programme with the most opportunity to interact with other Europeans and through this engagement foster social integration and European identity building. As this objective was not staffed as systematically as the management of EU funding within the region under

Objectives 1 and 2, it can be gleaned that this area fostering European integration was not prioritised. The focus of the work thus was managing EU funding within the region. Furthermore, the South West of England's RDA joined forces with universities and businesses from the region to share a regional representation office in Brussels. There were between four and five members of staff in the Brussels office. The South West's Brussels office was shut down and replaced with the Cornwall Brussels office (currently staffed by one person), which still remains a public private partnership.

In the United Kingdom, there are no institutionalised regional governments. Decisions on European policy are the domain of the central government; regional governments, as presented in the other case studies in this book, do not exist. Consequently, there is only very limited authority at the regional level for European politics in the country. And the extent and focus of European affairs dealt with at the regional level in the United Kingdom revolves very much around EU Regional Policy objectives—and especially those that manage EU funding within the region, but not those that would foster European interaction, engagement and identity building. It does not reach beyond the set objectives of developing the regional economy.

During the 2007–2013 EU budget period, Cornwall and the Iles of Scilly received convergence funding amounting to £565 million, whilst the rest of the region received competitiveness and employment funding amounting to £345 million (Source: European Commission Directorate General for Regional Policy South West of England Operational Programme 2007–2013). The total EU Regional Policy funding for Objectives 1 and 2 allocated to the South West of England amounted to £910 million. With a population of just less than 5.2 million, the allocated funding for Objectives 1 and 2 is just short of £176 per person for the seven-year period. The projects' primary aims for Objectives 1 and 2 included support for both economic regeneration and economic growth, increasing the level of productivity and halting and reversing prevailing socio-economic inequalities within the region (and in Europe, as parts of the South West of England are less than 75 percent of the average EU GDP; a GDP percentage quite uncommon for Western Europe).

In addition to the allocated funds of Objective 1 and 2, the South West of England's European policy stated that it was a partner in two cross-border cooperation programmes as well as two transnational cooperation programmes. These are part of the Objective 3 of the Cohesion Policy—

the programme that can foster a European identity through enhanced European interactions and engagements. It was part of the "Deux Mers" cross-border cooperation programme between the United Kingdom, France, Belgium and the Netherlands (together with Nord–Pas-de-Calais), with a total budget of €295 million, and was also part of the "France (Channel) England" cross-border cooperation programme (again, together with Nord–Pas-de-Calais) between the United Kingdom and France with a total budget of €328 million (Source: European Commission Directorate General for Regional Policy South West of England Operational Programme 2007–2013). The two transnational cooperation programmes in which the region participated are the "North West Europe" programme (again, together with Nord–Pas-de-Calais) and the "Atlantic Coast" programme, together with the Atlantic coastal areas of France, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Spain and Portugal. Its total budget was €159 million (Source: European Commission Directorate General for Regional Policy South West of England Operational Programme 2007–2013).

Whilst there were approximately the same number of team members working on Objective 1 and Objective 2, only one team member was delegated to manage Objective 3 and nobody was exclusively assigned to oversee European initiatives beyond the scope of EU funding (Source: European Commission Directorate General for Regional Policy South West of England Operational Programme 2007–2013). This lies in stark contrast to the staffing numbers of Nord–Pas-de-Calais, which has eight civil servants working on interregional cooperation opportunities and six civil servants working on programmes that have the potential to include elements of social integration and European identity building. The interviews conducted with the RDA's European Policy and Programmes Team will shed some light on why European territorial cooperation and European initiatives beyond EU funding do not play a more important role for the region of the South West of England—especially those that have the potential to construct a European identity in addition to fostering economic development.

The RDA's European policy team, however, was shut down once the coalition government of Conservatives and Liberal Democrats was elected in June 2010—all European decision-making and project management were to be dealt with centrally at Westminster instead of in the regions. The RDAs were closed on 31 March 2012 and abolished on 1 July 2012 (South West RDA, September 2011). Individual negotiations between

Westminster and the regions across the United Kingdom decide how project management will continue and are still ongoing—though the government's aim is to centralise this authority. Exceptionally, Cornwall Council maintained provisional management authority status for the small scope of existing EU-funded projects—and the scope of the region's European engagement did not increase.

This political change, re-prioritisation of EU programmes and European policies, and re-organisation of how European engagement is managed throughout the country, has meant a further decrease from an already slim European portfolio. With a government sending these signals to its citizens, ensuing low levels of European identity in the United Kingdom do not come as a surprise—nor does the eventual vote to leave the European Union. The interviews with the European policy team presented in Chaps. 4 and 5 will offer more valuable insights and explanations on this.

3.2.3   Brandenburg

Germany has a federal government system, granting its regions, the Bundesländer, considerable latitude in exercising political authority in the European policy area, amongst others. It is against this background that the Brandenburg regional government (Ministry of Trade, Industry and European Affairs) derives both its mandate and authority over not only the management of EU-funded programmes within the framework of Objectives 1 and 3, but also develops a host of additional European initiatives, such as identifying and launching broadly based bilateral relations with other European regions and countries. Within its policy scope, there is a strong possibility of Brandenburg cultivating a European identity.

Brandenburg is geographically located in the former German Democratic Republic ("East Germany"). It has thus only become a constitutive part of the European Union after the reunification of Germany in 1990. Economic convergence by way of putting in place the basic pillars for a stronger, more stable regional economy with well-paying jobs in an increasingly competitive business environment has been a top priority for the region. In addition, the region also intends to strengthen its Small and Medium-sized Enterprise (SME) innovation capabilities, develop its research and development capacity, and turn Brandenburg into a premier address for businesses (Source: European Commission Directorate General for Regional Policy Brandenburg Operational Programme 2007–2013).

More than 20 years after having formally joined the European Union as a "Bundesland" of the Federal Republic of Germany, Brandenburg still received convergence funds in the funding period 2007–2013, under Objective 1, amounting to €2 billion. With a population of just more than 2.5 million, the per capita convergence funding amounts to just about €787 per person for the project period.

Brandenburg chose to participate in two cross-border cooperation programmes and two transnational cooperation programmes. The two cross-border cooperation programmes were "Lubuskie-Brandenburg," a Polish–German cooperation programme supported with €146 million, and "Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Brandenburg and Zachodniopomorskie," another Polish–German cooperation programme funded with €156 million (Source: European Commission Directorate General for Regional Policy Brandenburg Operational Programme 2007–2013). Brandenburg's two transnational cooperation programmes were expected to provide the region with best-practice experiences on territorial issues. Of particular relevance and interest for Brandenburg were the "Baltic Sea" programme, which supported regions in Germany, Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Finland and Sweden with €293 million, and the "Central Europe" programme, which was allocated €298 million for regions in the Czech Republic, Italy, Hungary, Austria, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia and Germany (Source: European Commission Directorate General for Regional Policy Brandenburg Operational Programme 2007–2013). By engaging with the membership of these cross-border and transnational cooperation programmes, there is a likelihood that, through increased interactions, Brandenburg may be fostering a European identity.

In addition to EU Regional Policy funding, Brandenburg has also developed pro-active relations with other governments in European regions and countries, additional European interactions that may contribute to European identity building. In view of substantial cooperation funding with Polish regions, Brandenburg's regional Ministry of Trade, Industry and European Affairs has been able to develop very close ties to their Polish colleagues. Being able to draw on sufficient staff support, both in terms of quantity and quality, has greatly contributed to building those ties. Whilst the French Nord–Pas-de-Calais region has only one regional government official managing its European bilateral relations, and the South West of England region has none, Brandenburg has been able to commit eight full-time civil servants managing the federal region's bilateral relations (Source: Internal document on Wallonia European

Directorate Staff as provided during interviews in May 2010). Additionally, a branch of Brandenburg's ministry has a liaison office in Brussels, staffed with 11 professionals, to cover the region's European programmes sur place (Source: Internal document on Wallonia European Directorate Staff as provided during interviews in May 2010). In contrast to the French and UK case studies, Brandenburg has thus sufficient manpower in place to comply with, among others, EU framework rules and regulations, such as coordinating and translating EU laws into regional laws. The regional ministry assigned six civil servants to dispose of these types of obligations (Source: Internal document on Wallonia European Directorate Staff as provided during interviews in May 2010).

Whilst the three regions' teams dealing with Objectives 1 and 2 are of very similar size, the teams dealing with additional regional European capacities run higher in staff numbers. Brandenburg's team sets itself apart from the British non-institutionalised RDA team; it is also better equipped than an otherwise very active French regional government in drawing in needed manpower. The French and British regions' more constrained access to professional human resources, however, is primarily a reflection of both their more limited European mandate and authority as well as ready access to resources provided by a decidedly more centralised government system eager to preserve their European prerogatives. This particularly holds in the case of the British region. However, it must be noted that the French region does have ample opportunity to foster social integration and European identity building through its European policy.

3.2.4   Wallonia

The Walloon region, like Brandenburg, operates within a federal government system. And like the German region, it enjoys substantial regional political and legal authority. In the recent 550 days' absence of a functioning national Belgian government, Wallonia, together with its Belgian counterparts Flanders and Bruxelles–Capitale, has become one of the most autonomous regions in the European Union.

Similar to Brandenburg, Wallonia has an extensive regional government staffed with experienced civil servants. And like the South West of England's Cornwall, Wallonia's Hainaut received EU convergence funding, while the majority of the region received competitiveness and education funding. Wallonia received EU funding for programmes covered by Objective 1 in the amount of €1.1 billion, and €720 million to address

EU-relevant challenges as defined in Objective 2. The region also drew in money set aside for initiatives under Objective 3. Wallonia was actively involved in four cross-border cooperation programmes and one transnational cooperation programme (Source: European Commission Directorate General for Regional Policy Wallonia Operational Programme 2007–2013). With a population of just more than 5.5 million, the region received €322 per citizen in EU funding for Objectives 1 and 2 for the 2007–2013 budget period. On the basis of this funding, the region aimed to improve its competitiveness by restoring and enhancing both its urban and rural areas. But in view of Hainaut's convergence objective, Wallonia must also tackle its persistent economic inequalities (Source: European Commission Directorate General for Regional Policy Wallonia Operational Programme 2007–2013). By participating in both Objective 2 and particularly Objective 3, Wallonia had the opportunity to develop European identity alongside its economic growth. As was explained previously, it is through participation in Objective 3 that regions could interact to the largest extent with other Europeans (within the EU-funded programmes)—and develop a European identity by way of these interactions. As will be explained later, Wallonia participated very actively in Objective 3 programmes, and thus created ample opportunity to participate in European identity building.

Wallonia was part of numerous cross-border cooperation programmes. Firstly, it was involved in the "Deux Mers" (together with Nord–Pas-de-Calais and the South West of England) programme with total programme funding for the Belgian regions, the Netherlands, France and the United Kingdom in the range of €295 (Source: European Commission Directorate General for Regional Policy Wallonia Operational Programme 2007–2013). Secondly, the region was engaged in the "France-Wallonie-Vlaanderen" cross-border cooperation programme, a Franco-Belgian programme with total funding of €248 million (Source: European Commission Directorate General for Regional Policy Wallonia Operational Programme 2007–2013). It was, thirdly, participating in the €145 million "Euregio Maas-Rhein" programme with designated regions in Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands (Source: European Commission Directorate General for Regional Policy Wallonia Operational Programme 2007–2013). And fourthly, Wallonia was associated with the "Grande Région" programme covering regions in Belgium, Germany, France and Luxembourg; the amount allocated for this cross-border cooperation programme was €212 million (Source: European Commission Directorate General for Regional

Policy Wallonia Operational Programme 2007–2013). Furthermore, Wallonia was part of the "Nord-West Europe" transnational cooperation programme. Regions of the United Kingdom (including the South West of England), Ireland, France (including Nord–Pas-de-Calais), Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands and Luxembourg were part of this programme with an allocated programme budget of €696 million (Source: European Commission Directorate General for Regional Policy Wallonia Operational Programme 2007–2013). Through this long list of European cooperation programmes Walloon public and private sector constituents could participate in, Walloons are at a strong advantage to interact with other Europeans and through this interaction foster a European identity.

Furthermore, benefitting from its geographic location, which puts the region alongside several European borders, Wallonia is in a very favourable position to conduct its cross-border cooperation projects. This natural comparative advantage is complemented by the country's federal government system. It not only allows for maximum European outreach in times of recurrent national political stalemates—with the most recent one lasting through much of 2010 and 2011—it inter alia encourages the Walloon European Ministry to build an extensive European portfolio, reaching far beyond EU-funded objectives. And while the region's government headquarters in Namur are generously staffed to systematically pursue regional European interests, core staff remains in Brussels in a collaborative "umbrella agency" jointly managed by Wallonia and Bruxelles-Capitale, the two francophone Belgian regions. Wallonie Bruxelles International (WBI), the European affairs branch of the regional government, is charged with maintaining European and international bilateral relations, managing EU funds and promoting European cooperation and representing the region to the EU institutions, including the Committee of the Regions and the Assembly of European Regions. It is also responsible for translating EU legislation into Belgian and Walloon laws (Source: WBI Europe organisational introduction on website).

These and additional responsibilities are routinely handled by two representatives of the region attached to EU institutions; four civil servants in the European legal department; twelve civil servants managing bilateral relations with other European regions, countries and international partnerships; nine civil servants overseeing EU-funded Objective 3 cooperation programmes; and several civil servants working in different regional offices of the ministry, managing EU-funded Objective 1 and 2 programmes (Source: Internal document on Wallonia European Directorate

staff as provided during interviews in May 2010). The region is thus well staffed to cultivate a European identity through its European cooperation work, if it sets this as an objective. Taken together, the Walloon European Ministry and WBI constitute a large regional governmental body. It has well-developed links abroad and a smoothly running, large European programmes apparatus, which effectively supports the region's ability to significantly extent its political authority on all European matters of relevance to Wallonia. And the Walloon region compares favourably to the other three regions presented in this book, as it enjoys substantial political authority and the means necessary to engage in European affairs, both within the scope of EU-funded programmes and beyond.

All four regions presented here manifest variations in national government systems, which influence and impact the extent of regional authority to engage in European politics. The English region with its centralised national government and re-centralised European policy team does not provide regions the indispensable European capacities and authority to optimize the acquisition and management of EU-funded objectives. This lack of European engagement at the government level, and the ensuing lack of trickledown effect of European engagement of citizens, helps explain why citizens don't feel very European and don't understand the benefits of being part of the European Union.

While the French regional government is institutionalised, it routinely faces a highly centralised national government's opposition when its outreach is interpreted as a move to bring about the devolution of power. The region has, however, been able to acquire more European political authority, ranging from EU-funded objectives to bilateral relations, development of further cooperation projects, as well establishing a European Institute dedicated to raise awareness among civil servants, academics, students and citizens about the European Union and European opportunities.

The German region, operating within a federal, highly de-centralised national government system, enjoys extensive political authority on matters relating to the European sphere. As the region is still in a process of socio-economic convergence following the reunification of Germany and membership accorded the former East German region(s) to the European Union in 1990, it is not yet developed on par with the Belgian region; notwithstanding the fact that it also manages its regional European affairs in a highly de-centralised federal government system. Existing academic research suggests that a region's national government system is a core influence in the development of regional capacity and effective engagement

in European politics. Yet, the policy analysis has shown that the French region, Nord–Pas-de-Calais, has significant staffing resources to boost the region's participation in European cooperation projects, which can foster both economic development and European identity building through the enhanced interactions of the participants. Thus, the claim cannot yet be made whether government system has a strong enough impact on both scope and objectives of a region's European policy. Field research in the four regional governments and semi-structured interviews conducted with political elites and civil servants pointed at additional factors influencing the scope of a region's political authority and its European engagement. The following section will discuss the findings.

3.3 Commonalities Amongst the Four Regions' European Engagement

The one commonality shared by all four regions' European engagement is their pursuit and receipt of European funds within the confines of the EU's Cohesion Policy. Whether they receive convergence or competitiveness and employment funding depends on their respective regional GDP as compared to the average EU regional GDP. During the 2007–2013 period, Brandenburg received convergence funding, the South West of England and Wallonia obtained convergence as well as competitiveness and employment funding, and Nord–Pas-de-Calais secured competitiveness and employment funding. There is thus some variation in the commonality of receiving EU funds from the Cohesion Policy. Table 3.3 shows the variation in funding allocation.

Beyond funding for Objectives 1 and 2 of the Cohesion Policy, the regions could also receive funding for participation in territorial cooperation programmes. This funding was allocated to the programme, not directly to the participating region. Therefore, based on the information available, it is not possible to gauge the total amount of funding regions receive for participation in territorial cooperation programmes. Drawing on the earlier outline of the four case study regions' participation in the Cohesion Policy, Table 3.3 shows the number and scope of the territorial cooperation programmes each respective region participates in.

Table 3.3 documents that the amount of funding received by the regions through the Cohesion Policy varies considerably; whilst Brandenburg is allocated €787 per person over the seven-year period from

Table 3.3 Cohesion Policy funding per region

Region	Objective 1	Objective 2	Total O1 + O2 funding p.Pers.	Objective 3 Cross-border and transnational cooperation programmes
Nord- Pas de Calais		€2,3 billion	€575	'France-Wallonie-Vlaanderen' €248 million 'Deux Mers' €295 million 'France (Channel) England' €329 million 'North West Europe' €696 million
South West of England	€565 million	€345 million	€176	'Deux Mers' €295 million 'France (Channel) England' €329 million 'North West Europe' €696 million 'Atlantic Coast' €159 million
Brandenburg	€2 billion		€787	'Lubiskie-Brandenburg' €146 million 'Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Brandenburg and Zachodniopoporskie' €156 million 'Baltic Sea' €293 million 'Central Europe' €298 million
Wallonia	€1,1 billion	€720 million	€322	'Deux Mers' €295 million 'France-Wallonie-Vlaanderen' €248 million 'Euregio Maas-Rhein' €145 million 'Grade Region' €212 million 'North West Europe' €696 million

2007 to 2013, the South West of England was allocated a comparatively small amount of €176 per person for the same period. In view of this variation, it could be expected that the Brandenburg region is staffed with more civil servants to manage the initiatives within the confines of Objective 1 than the South West of England region for Objectives 1 and 2. However, the South West of England RDA mainly dealt with managing European funding, whereas the Brandenburg region's civil servants have

developed a broader scope of European engagement and have a comparatively small staff managing the copious European funds of Objective 1. This gives credence to two assumptions: firstly, that the German federal government system gives Brandenburg more political authority to develop and engage in a European policy beyond managing the EU-funded programmes than the British government system gives the South West of England; and secondly, that for some regions managing EU funding has been set as a prioritised objective, whilst for other regions it has been used as a mechanism to develop the European scope of their regional political engagement.

The objectives for the Cohesion Fund's programmes are set by the European Commission. In the passages that follow, it will be clarified to which extent these objectives undertake economic development and European identity building. The Regional Policy, now called Cohesion Policy, has, generally, undergone a transformation from being a purely regional development fund to a fund fostering development on the one hand and better collaboration between the European regions on the other hand. The initial baby steps of the Regional Policy were taken in 1957, with the decision to implement a European Social Fund. In 1972, the heads of state institutionalised the Regional Policy, and in 1975 implemented the European Regional Development Fund with a budget of €1,300 million for a period of three years. In 1986, alongside the Single European Act and the creation of a single market, the Cohesion Policy was implemented in order to more effectively address the need for convergence and cohesion across the European Union. The funding mechanism of the Cohesion Policy were called Structural Funds and amounted to €65 billion for the period of 1989–1993. However, it was only in 1990 that the interregional component was added to the scope of the Cohesion Policy, and it has evolved ever since. In its second period, from 1994 to 1999, the budget reached ECU 3,519 million. In its third period, covering the years from 2000 to 2006, the budget was set at €4,875 million. And finally, in its fourth period, from 2007 to 2013, the budget for interregional initiatives not only grew to €8.72 billion, but Objective 3 was added to the Cohesion Policy, now including cross-border cooperation, transnational cooperation and inter-regional cooperation. By fostering better collaboration amongst Europeans, a shared identity can emerge as a by-product of the increased interactions and interconnectedness. And this is precisely the area the European Commission intends to further develop in the next budgets.

Referring to the exponential growth of interregional initiatives within the Cohesion Policy, a top policy development decision-maker within DG REGIO's Regional Policy Directory C explained that interregional engagement throughout Europe will play an increasingly important role in future Cohesion Policy strategies and plans (Source: Interviewee number 1). At the moment, the interviewee is working on the next Cohesion Policy. In future, the top policy development decision-maker interviewed said she expects a clear funding transition from convergence to competitiveness and employment and, finally, to interregional cooperation (Interviewee number 1). She added, that the focus would shift from spatial areas to sectors—making it essential for regions to develop sufficient capacities to work with other regions, as they will not only need to better cooperate with their closest neighbours and develop and implement collaborative project ideas with their counterparts located in areas throughout the expanded European Union. Regions will thus need to develop and manage their European engagement more independently from the European Union than has been the case in the current funding period. And as EU funding is oftentimes dependent on proof of European project experience, EU regions must boost the scope of their European engagement from managing allocated funds to be spent within the region to participating in pan-European projects to ensure continued procurement and participation in EU-funded projects in the future. The next funding periods will thus place a key objective of European cooperation; a programme that develops both EU regions' economies and fosters a European identity due to the increased interactions amongst European participants.

Transitioning development funds allocated to regions for specific objectives to funds given to regions for cooperation projects in specific spatial areas and sectors will become the new modus operandi and funding basis of the EU Cohesion Policy. Whilst all four regions receive either convergence funding or competitiveness and employment funding (or, as in the case of the South West of England and Wallonia, both types of funding), they show significant variation in the scope of their European engagement beyond managing the EU funds allocated to their region. As was noted earlier, some regions have their own dedicated civil servants managing bilateral partnerships with other European civil servants, or organising European exchange programmes for social integration, or supporting the start-up of European entrepreneurial or political cooperation projects. But not all regions. This variation in scope and objectives is paramount, as regions are meant to position themselves for a future in which interregional

cooperation will be the central objective of the EU's Regional Policy. Which of the four case study regions are in a good position through their European-wide engagement, and which may already be fostering a European identity? And furthermore, with populism on the rise in Europe, EU projects and programmes are increasingly scrutinised. Governments must work harder at informing their citizens about the benefits of their European programmes and policies, and engage citizens in them so they can learn the relevance and opportunities of a closer, more integrated, and more efficient European Union. If governments fail to do so, citizens may feel distanced from the EU project and question their participation and future in it.

3.4   Variation Amongst the Four Case Study Regions' European Engagement

The most profound variation in the regions' scope and objectives of European engagement lies in the policies, which they themselves design. Secondary to that is their engagement in the EU's Cohesion Policy. The first variation assessment of the four case study regions' scope of European policy can be seen in Table 3.4.

As Table 3.4 documents, there is significant variation across the four regional case studies in terms of the scope of their self-designed European policies reaching beyond EU-funded programme participation. The South West of England region placed its focus on managing European funds allocated for Objectives 1, 2 and 3, respectively. Both the region's regional Brussels office and its participation in regional cooperation networks were initiatives with the aim of identifying cooperation partnerships. This is in keeping with the extent of political authority provided to the artificial region, created for managing the EU funding. However, it also shows that the region has not developed on this scope since its creation in 1999—and indeed, it is decreasing again under the Conservative government. The other three regions have integrated into their European portfolio bilateral partnerships across the European Union. Partnerships are typically formed between and among other regions and countries. The objectives of fostering new and consolidating existing relationships with potential cooperation partners will be discussed in detail in the following chapter. Particularly for a region as geographically isolated as the South West of England, establishing and growing close partnerships with European neighbours is

Table 3.4 European engagement of the case study regions

	South West of England	Nord–Pas-de-Calais	Brandenburg	Wallonia
Bilateral partnerships		✓	✓	✓
Cooperation projects and support	✓	✓	✓	✓
Brussels regional representation office	✓	✓	✓	✓
Regional cooperation networks	✓	✓	✓	✓
European Affairs Ministry (with own policy)			✓	✓
Represents itself to the EU institutions and Council of Ministers				✓

more difficult; and whilst having a set of bilateral partnerships would be very beneficial for developing interregional cooperation opportunities, the region did not have the authority and capacity to do so—hence its European engagement was not as actively involved as would have been helpful for growing European connections, a shared identity and an interest in furthering European integration. Thus, the notion of being part of Europe and the European Union isn't familiar or natural to the regions' citizens and it is unsurprising that they would vote to leave a union they don't have much awareness of or experience with. Of the remaining three regions, Wallonia, with its highly developed decentralised government system, has put in place the most elaborate bilateral partnerships. Both Brandenburg and Nord–Pas-de-Calais, though the latter to a lesser degree, have developed a number of strategic bilateral partnerships; primarily with neighbouring regions dealing with similar economic regeneration needs and challenges.

All four regions have implemented European cooperation projects and initiatives. Of the four regions, the French Nord–Pas-de-Calais region had, together with Brandenburg, the broadest set of objectives of all four regions' cooperation programmes, ranging from regularly organised social integration and cooperation programmes for particular social groups within the region, to producing a manual for potential cooperation participants and running seminars and workshops, igniting the interest and involvement of its constituents in EU-funded activities. Their cooperation programmes were thus on the one hand targeted toward EU-funded opportunities and on the other hand, reaching for social integration and

perhaps even identity building. Whether this heightened interest of the region is in response to anticipated changes in the next EU-funding period, as mentioned earlier, remains to be seen.

Of the case study regions, the Nord–Pas-de-Calais and also Brandenburg regional governments have developed and adopted a multi-pronged strategy, pursuing a host of cooperation initiatives across the full gamut of EU-funded objectives. Brandenburg also generated cooperation opportunities with the objective to raise public awareness and engagement in all stages of development and implementation of EU projects and programmes. The region identified target audiences, including schoolchildren, students, university researchers and entrepreneurs, and organised a steady flow of specialised and focused "reaching-out" events to drive home the message of European opportunities, benefits and identity. But Brandenburg's strategy clearly goes beyond awareness raising and motivating people and entrepreneurs alike to strengthen the region's economic base and prospects; it also used its political mandate and authority to communicate to the region that it is as important to make Europe a *social* project—and making the people the centrepiece of this project.

The same motivation and drive is markedly absent in the South West of England. While the region designated staff to manage and develop cooperation projects, it had, for political reasons, not been able to dedicate more than one (!) full-time staff to develop a broadly based, effective cooperation strategy with the objective of creating EU-funded opportunities for the region. How the region was meant to develop its cooperation capacities in such a way is unclear.

The Walloon cooperation projects, in contrast, have enjoyed the benefit of professional support throughout the regional government. Its projects were very much focused on the opportunities provided by the INTERREG programme—thus staying close to EU Cohesion Policy opportunities instead of developing a broader range of cooperation themes and objectives, like Nord–Pas-de-Calais and Brandenburg. Wallonia was clearly in charge of driving and managing cooperation opportunities; it only stepped aside if cooperation communication events needed to be coordinated through the bilateral partnerships division. The pre-eminence of INTERREG makes it clear that Wallonia's cooperation objectives were primarily driven by and linked to making the most of available EU-funding opportunities. It also further highlights the variation amongst the four regions' cooperation policies and programmes. It is nothing less than substantial and significant.

All four regions have assigned representation offices in Brussels—although Wallonia's main headquarters for European engagement (Wallonia Bruxelles International) is located in Brussels. Though their sizes vary (Nord–Pas-de-Calais—1; South West of England—used to be 4–5 and now is 1; Brandenburg—11; Wallonia— approximately 14), all representation offices are mandated to give voice and visibility to their regional interest when engaging the representative of the European institutions, provide links between regional actors and the European institutions, diffuse information from the European institutions to the region, and network with other regional representation offices and regional actors in order to establish and nurture closer ties with potential cooperation partners. Whether the regional Brussels offices are meant to build a European identity through their work is not stated in any terms, however, it can be anticipated that, being European connection hubs, their amount of European-wide interconnectedness and engagement could cultivate a shared identity.

The prominence of the four regional Brussels offices varies slightly. The offices of the South West of England, Brandenburg and Nord–Pas-de-Calais are highly visible in terms of their proximity to the relevant EU institutions (the WBI office is located in the very large, and thus less centrally located headquarters building of the region). The South West of England shares office space with other British regions and, together, they have some space for holding meetings; Nord–Pas-de-Calais used to have its own very small office far away from the institutions, but has recently moved to share a centrally located office with their British partner-region Kent; Brandenburg and Wallonia's offices are spacious with the capacity to hold medium- to large-size meetings and events. All offices have professional and support staff and maintain their own, generally informative, websites.

Similarly, all four regions participate in European regional cooperation networks. The objectives and ambitions behind their participation in such networks will be discussed in the next chapter and the perceptions of regional cooperation network members will be presented in Chaps. 5, 6 and by extension Chap. 7. European regional cooperation networks have the principal objective of linking potential regional cooperation partners and disseminating relevant information in the most timely and cost-efficient manner to enhance cooperation opportunities amongst its membership. It can also serve as an instrument for building a European identity through the European-wide collaboration it facilitates. The objectives of

the regions participating in European regional networks are listed as tools to identify and connect with cooperation project participants. However, whether identity building also plays a role in their network participation will be studied in Chaps. 4, 5 and 6.

Brandenburg and Wallonia are both integral parts of their countries' de-centralised government systems, and therefore, unlike Nord–Pas-de-Calais and the South West of England, have the political, legal and regional authority and capacity to maintain a ministry devoted to European affairs. Belgian's constitution and political tradition has supported the evolution of a government system that gives the country's regions a greater degree of independence than, for example, the German "Bundesländer." Wallonia has therefore the ability to exercise more authority and capacity than Brandenburg in designing and implementing its own European positions. It also is able to represent its interests directly to the European Union in Brussels by way of its permanent regional representatives. Brandenburg is, of course, also equipped to represent its views and interests to the Brussels-based European institutions; however, it is obliged to get clearance first through the Bundesrat, Germany's second legislative chamber representing all 16 "Bundesländer," before speaking on behalf of German regions—not just its own. And whilst both Brandenburg and Wallonia are sufficiently staffed to manage both their European Affairs Ministry and directly represent themselves at the European institutions, the Belgian region can draw on more directly allocated permanent staff for individual assignments and thus appears to be better positioned to make optimal use of its official European branch both in Brussels and within its regional government system.

There is significant variation in the scope of the four regions' European engagement; particularly within their self-designed policies and programmes. Whether the causes of this variation are the differing levels of political authority, an argument for which a strong claim has been made by Hooghe et al. (2010), or the other regional characteristics discussed in Chaps. 1 and 2 (including political elites' interests, geographic location, network participation and shared heritage and language), will be raised and clarified by both the perceptions of regional decision-makers on and implementers of regions' European policies and programmes in the next two chapters. However, based on the policy analysis in this chapter, it has become clear that the Political Authority Index proposed by Hooghe et al. (2010) is not sufficient in explaining the variation in scope of regions' *European* policies. Whilst German and Belgian regions would be expected

to have equal policy scope (as they both received the same maximum rank in the index), it has been shown that the two case study regions indeed do not share the same scope. Wallonia enjoys more independence from the central state in its representation to the European Union, and Brandenburg has developed a wider scope of social engagement in its European policy and programmes. However, the Political Authority Index (Hooghe et al. 2010) does accurately reflect the comparative scope of the French and English regional case studies; Nord–Pas-de-Calais would be expected to have a wider policy scope than the South West of England, and this was shown to be true—even before the activities of the South West of England were scaled down after the Conservative government was elected. A further assessment of explanations on the variation of regions' scope in European policies and programmes will be presented in the following two chapters. First, however, it will be assessed whether the four regions' European policies and programmes claim to cultivate a European identity.

3.5   Preliminary Assessment of the Role of European Identity Within the Regions' European Policies and Programmes

Whilst the term "European identity" does not appear in any of the European policy documents of the four case study regions, and thereby no official claim is made by either of the regions on intending to cultivate a European identity through their European work, the analysis of their respective policy scope allows for a preliminary assessment of whether certain policy aspects build a European identity as an explicit, intentional objective; as a by-product or not at all.

The South West of England's European portfolio is strictly limited to EU-funded programmes, which typically involve infrastructure and competitiveness development within the region itself. In the region's previous activities on cross-border and transnational cooperation, it had the opportunity to exchange and interact—and thereby build a European identity as a by-product. Yet with the closing of the RDA, the reorganisation of regional involvement in European affairs, and the upcoming Brexit, it can be expected that the region will only decrease its European engagement, perhaps needing to privatise it completely if it is still desired. It is a shame for the region to be losing out on substantial EU funding opportunities as

well as for the region to be even more isolated from Europe than it already is—this will likely have negative consequences for its economy, infrastructure, employment opportunities and youth retention.

The three other regional case studies have shown that they too participate in cross-border and transnational cooperation programmes through the EU's Cohesion Policy Objective 3. In contrast to the South West of England's European portfolio, these three case study regions also design and implement their own European policies and programmes, which, though quite distinct, display a number of features and attributes capable of constructing a European identity. The Nord–Pas-de-Calais and Brandenburg regions in particular offer programmes that would quite naturally cultivate a European identity—by intent. The Nord–Pas-de-Calais' European youth exchange programme and Brandenburg's European awareness campaign and cultural exchange programme provide opportunities for citizens to experience Europe, engage with other Europeans, and, through interactions and personal experiences, potentially identify similarities and a common identity. Whether the programmes are indeed intended to achieve this will be raised with and clarified by the political decision-makers of the two regions in the following chapter. Also Wallonia's bilateral partnerships including cultural exchanges for musicians could potentially foster a European identity, however, this programme does not include the extent of personal interaction with other Europeans when compared to, for instance, the programmes offered by Brandenburg and Nord–Pas-de-Calais. Therefore, Wallonia's European policy may foster a European identity more as a by-product than as an intended objective. The preferences and intentions of the four case studies' political elites must be critically explored and evaluated through, amongst others, insider accounts of regional political decision-makers and policy and programme implementers. Their accounts and reflections will be presented in the following two chapters.

Is European Policy European?
The Political Case

Chapter 3 has started to assess whether European identity building plays a role in the four case study regions' European policies—as they are formulated. It has found that, somewhat surprisingly, the region Nord–Pas-de-Calais has developed a broad scope of objectives within its European policy, through which it can foster a European identity—although it does not explicitly say so. The opportunities include bilateral partnerships, interregional cooperation, raising awareness of European opportunities and engaging constituents with social exchanges throughout Europe to share best practice and experiences. Particularly the latter programme fosters a significant opportunity to build a European identity. Also Wallonia may foster a European identity through its bilateral partnerships and participation in interregional cooperation programmes and European regional networks. Brandenburg, too, has the opportunity to build a European identity through its policy scope. Particularly through its interregional cooperation programmes, bilateral partnerships, European regional network participation, and an impressively represented and connected Brussels office, the region places as core objectives the awareness building of European benefits and citizenship in schools and communities throughout the region, and connects constituents with other Europeans. A particularly interesting regional case study is the South West of England. Being a non-institutionalised region lacking the authority to develop its own European policy and programmes, the region has notoriously few opportunities to engage in European affairs

beyond managing EU funds—and even these were primarily related to infrastructure development and not European cooperation initiatives. Therefore, there was little scope to work closely together with other Europeans, raise awareness on European opportunities, foster cooperation and build a European identity through their European policy and programmes. Though European identity levels cannot be studied at regional levels to draw conclusions on the relationship between lack of European engagement and European identity levels, the entire United Kingdom's European identity levels are amongst the lowest in Europe, therefore it can be estimated, when also drawing on theoretical work on European identity, that the there is a correlation between the region's small scope in European engagement, low European identity levels and a subsequent vote to leave the European Union. This will be further discussed with regional actors at the civil servant and political elite levels in this and the following chapters.

To learn whether building a European identity indeed plays a role in the regions' European policy objectives and what outcomes ensue, this research speaks directly to civil servants and political elites of the four case study regions. This chapter will assess whether the political elites intend to cultivate a European identity through the policies they design and decide on, and the next chapter will evaluate the perceptions of the civil servants on the role of European identity within the work they implement. The two chapters will, taken together, answer the question whether civil servants, who engage more with Europeans on a daily basis, feel more European than the political elites and want to build a European identity through their work, or whether indeed political elites feel more inclined to want to shape a European identity through their policy. This question stems from opposing views within the literature and the research presented in this and the next chapter will provide an evidence-based answer. Thirdly, this chapter, as the next, will determine to which degree political elites and civil servants have experienced regional characteristics to either challenge or support the European engagement and identity building of the respective regions. Before assessing the role of European identity within regions' European policies, as confirmed by the political elites, it must be explained which level of political authority the respective regions' political elites hold in order to develop their European policies—in other words, do they have the capacity to determine whether they want to shape European identity through their policies or not.

The political elites affirmed that their respective system of government and the extent of decentralisation have a substantial impact on their regions' European objectives and scope—and thus their role and ability to influence and manage their regions' European engagement. The political elite who was in charge of the South West of England's European Policy and Programmes within the Regional Development Agency (RDA) explained that in the absence of political authority to develop a wider range of European policies and programmes "[his] primary purpose [was] to ensure that convergence and competitiveness programmes in the regions are running well" (Interviewee 11). His authority is thus limited to overseeing and managing administrative duties. His counterpart in Nord–Pas-de-Calais, on the other hand, enjoyed considerable political leverage in the management of his European engagement. The breadth and depth of their activities greatly benefitted from French decentralisation in the 1980s and the initiatives taken by two leading regional politicians, Mr. Michel Lamblin and Mr. Michel Delbarre. Both Lamblin and Delbarre used their authority to set up the Institute for European Cooperation within the Conseil Régional. The power the institution projected not only enhanced the standing of the political elite's role within the European Directorate of Nord–Pas-de-Calais, it also was decisive in broadening their scope of action and range of responsibilities on matters relevant to the regions' multiple European interests.

Brandenburg, like Nord–Pas-de-Calais but to a much larger extent, enjoys the benefits that heightened levels of decentralisation offer. Constitutionally set within a federal government system, Brandenburg wields substantial political authority to effectively pursue its European interests. Yet, its political elite's standing differs significantly from that of either the Nord–Pas-de-Calais or the South West of England regions. In addition to overseeing EU funding within the region, Brandenburg's "Minister will also be working on the transmission of European affairs within the region, including developing an enthusiasm within the region to open up to European as well as international affairs" (Interviewee 13). The minister thus performs the dual role of political decision-maker and chief diplomat on behalf of his region.

Wallonia has also benefitted from decentralisation reforms. The region's political elites now have the political authority to manage interregional cooperation (mainly EU-funded projects under Objective 3): the transposition of EU laws into regional legislation and pursuance of bilateral relations and partnerships with other regions and countries. The scope is

similar to that of Brandenburg, although Wallonia draws on a greater range of constitutionally granted political and legal authority. And whilst both exert considerable power when it comes to their respective European engagement, their focus differs. Walloon's political elite does not have a European identity dimension built into their portfolio. Brandenburg's portfolio, on the other hand, is explicitly mandated to strengthen European awareness and identity.

The political authority granted to regional political elites thus already provides essential background information to the extent to which political elites can decide whether European identity ought to play a role in their European policy or not. Whilst for the political elites of the South West of England this appears to be a highly contested and limited objective, it will be significant to learn what their perceptions of European identity are. Furthermore, the continental European political elites' impressions on whether European identity should and does play a role within their European policies will be assessed in the next chapter section.

4.1   Does European Identity Feature Amongst the Objectives of the Regions' European Policies? Perspectives from the Political Elites

Political elites don't operate in a political vacuum. They are part and parcel of political, organisational and institutional structures. And they are, in the end, held accountable for what they do and what policy is implemented by their European directorate. They manage their directorates' European engagement: the approaches chosen to secure EU-funded projects; the strategies applied to enhance interregional cooperation; the policies designed to build bilateral partnerships and interregional networks; the commitments made to have a Brussels presence; the investments required to augment the quality of their overall European communications; and, particularly relevant to Brandenburg and Wallonia, the ways and means designated to ensure the transposition of EU laws. Whether they believe European identity should feature in these components of their European policy matters, for they shape regions' policies and engagement. This section will assess the four regions' political elites' views on the scope of their policies' objectives: are they striving solely for economic development, or also for social integration by way of weaving elements of European identity building into the fabric of their European policy?

4.1.1 Regions' Participation in EU-Funded Programmes: Does European Identity Feature in this Engagement?

In Chap. 3, the South West of England's European engagement was described as being confined to EU-funded Cohesion policy Objectives 1 and 2. This constraint has the practical effect of making the region ineligible to develop its own European policies and programmes and unfit to participate in Objective 3's interregional cooperation programmes. The region's political elite considers the limited participation in EU funded programmes and European politics to be a structural constraint imposed by political interests of the national government. Though there is a myriad of opportunities for interregional cooperation between the South West of England and other European actors, the political elite has determined that to optimally pursue the region's European interests "[they] don't step out into other areas like the arts and culture, fisheries and agriculture; areas where a lot of people feel that they might have a close connection [with other Europeans]. [This is] because these are areas for which London has the legitimacy and authority to lead on" (Interviewee 11). Including these potential areas of collaboration into the region's European engagement mix could have considerable impact on building a European identity over time, particularly in light of its physically conditioned isolation from the European continent's landmass. This approach and attitude clearly reflects the political elite's appreciation of operating in a highly centralised government system where political interests at the level of national government are tightly controlled, and the process of regionalisation reversed. The scope of the region's European engagement within EU-funded programmes is thus de facto limited to the promotion of economic development within the region, based on funding allocated by the European Union—and even this was the result of lengthy negotiations with the central government after the RDA had been shut down. Whatever political ambitions the region may harbour in the area of championing interregional cooperation programmes or cultivating a European identity through EU-funded collaboration opportunities, the prevailing distribution of power and authority renders them beyond their reach.

By comparison, Nord–Pas-de-Calais, Wallonia and Brandenburg enjoy greater operational latitude. All three regions' political elites expressed to have been given the authority to manage their regions' allocated funding as well as the freedom to explore additional cooperation and funding opportunities. According to the political elite in the Nord–Pas-de-Calais

region, the broadening of its scope of activity and, specifically, the advancement of the territorial cooperation desideratum of the European Union, was a political objective of its European Directorate with extension to the political elites of the regional government (Interviewee 10). The region's timely systematic outreach has been beneficial in that it not only successfully managed the territorial cooperation programme, but it also established a sound reputation for its effective leadership in this domain. The region's engagement has thus been in large measures the result of a strategic approach championed by the European Directorate's political elite, reinforced by the articulated political interests of key regional decision-makers and institutionally supported by far-reaching regionalisation reforms. The objectives of the regional political elites who had determined the importance of Europe to the region and the region's close participation with European integration and EU opportunities, was based on their personal interest in Europe. This interest was then translated into developing a broad European policy, within the scope of EU-funded programmes and also beyond it. The political elite explains that identity building is part of European programmes, as identity is naturally cultivated through repeated interactions, which are fostered by Objective 3 of the EU-funded programmes (Interviewee 11). In contrast to the South West of England, Nord–Pas-de-Calais participates in the EU-funded programmes that are said to cultivate a European identity—and has the government system and political elites' interests to do so. At this stage, it is also important to note that the political elites do not refute the economic benefits of participating in EU-funded programmes. Thus it can be concluded that the French region in all likelihood participates in EU-funded programmes for both economic and identity-building objectives.

The political elites of Brandenburg and Wallonia expressed their strategic objectives for developing and participating in territorial cooperation opportunities (Objective 3) in quite similar terms to the political elites of Nord–Pas-de-Calais. They also, like Nord–Pas-de-Calais, benefitted economically from direct EU funding for the policies and programmes covered by Objectives 1 and 2. Brandenburg's political elite attributes the region's statistically more prosperous status due to the EU enlargements; as a consequence, it cannot expect to receive as much funding from the European Union for Objectives 1 and 2 in the future (Interviewee 13). The remaining funding opportunities are thus limited to participation in territorial cooperation programmes under Objective 3. The region is strategically bolstering its capacities to engage itself more in interregional

cooperation, primarily through bilateral partnerships. The cooperation projects Brandenburg develops under Objective 3, however, are not merely ones of economic development interests, they also include projects that foster social integration and in turn identity building as a by-product. These projects are primarily in cross-border regions, thus geographic proximity and shared interests and enhanced connectedness also play a large role in identifying cooperation projects, getting them started and sustaining them.

In comparison to Brandenburg's political elite, Wallonia's decision-maker does not go into as much detail on the objectives of the Objective 3 projects. The EU-funded opportunities are said to substantially contribute to the economic development of the region. And instead of discussing identity building as being a by-product of cooperation, the Walloon political elite explains that it is helpful to the region that they are centrally located in Europe, indeed at the heart of Europe, feel European, and therefore engage with other Europeans naturally (Interviewee 14). Therefore, already having cultivated a European identity helps the regional practitioners to engage in EU-funded opportunities— and European-wide cooperation opportunities at large. Nevertheless, the strategic objective of the region's participation in EU-funded programmes, according to the political elite, is to entice economic benefits for the region.

4.1.2   The Role of European Identity in the Regions' Interregional Cooperation

European interregional cooperation is one of the core strategic European engagement objectives of three of the four case study regions; namely, Nord–Pas-de-Calais, Wallonia and Brandenburg. The scope and objectives of the four case study regions' European interregional cooperation follow two distinct but often interconnected tracks: regions either participate in EU-funded territorial cooperation programmes or they engage in both EU-funded opportunities as well as non-EU-funded and self-initiated cooperation opportunities. In some cases, regions set up their own (funded) programmes that help identify and develop cooperation project ideas and, if successful, will be funded by the European Union. This section evaluates whether the political elites consider interregional cooperation to be an opportunity to promote economic and European identity development, or merely the former. Their assessments and perceptions are

based on their respective region's participation in non-EU-funded interregional cooperation programmes.

The South West of England is presently not pursuing interregional cooperation projects; the decision to forego such projects is, however, not taken at the regional level, but rather at the national level. The regional political elite simply lacks the political authority to engage with other EU regions in that context—this was even the case before re-centralisation from 2010 onwards. Nord–Pas-de-Calais, on the other hand, has no such political constraints. According to its political elites, the region manages a wide scope of interregional cooperation programmes—partly with the objective of further strengthening its involvement in EU-funded territorial cooperation programmes. "The idea to establish the 'centre de formation' [training centre] within the Institute for European Cooperation was to demonstrate the region's willingness to engage with Europe and create a place in the region for Europe; it was also to show that we have the know-how based on our experience in managing European regional funds and cooperation projects funded by the EU. We of course want to capitalise on this experience to enhance the potential project benefits for the participants as they start up cooperation projects and apply for EU-funding" (Interviewee 9). Whilst the French region has a bouquet of programmes covering a variety of European cooperation initiatives, including training and youth exchange programmes, it can be assessed as having social integration and European identity building as a significant objective. However, its present and principal objective has been to strictly refocus on participating in EU-funded programmes—since the two regional political elites, who had set up the Institute for European Cooperation, were no longer in office and thus the scope has been scaled down (Interviewee 10). With the European-wide social interaction programmes being scaled down, it does not mean that identity-building objectives are being cut out of the region's interregional cooperation programmes. Indeed, identity building can still develop from private and public sector programmes funded by the European Union. As the political elite describes: "I expect you would find the link between European regional cooperation and European identity mainly with the project participants, less so with the citizens at large why may be positively affected by improvements caused by the programme. Those involved in the running of cooperation programmes realise what a project produced by European wide interactions and synergy can achieve – and as they have shared this experience of working together on a common project and objective, they foster a European identity" (Interviewee 9).

Further to this, the second political elite explains: "Project participants may have gained an enhanced European mind-set through the collaboration process, as when Europeans work together, they can develop a sense of European citizenship and identity" (Interviewee 10). The two political elites thereby show to both hold perceptions of identity-building opportunities within their interregional cooperation programmes. However, neither of the political elites expresses a priority objective between economic or identity development through their work. Though both appear to be aware of identity-building opportunities within the policies, they also share an awareness of regional political elites being wary of publicising objectives that go beyond the nature economic development to citizens who, at large, were not Europhile. This will be further discussed in the communications section of this chapter, however, it is important to note that European identity, for regional political reasons, would not be explicitly announced as an objective within a policy.

Wallonia's primary motive for its systematic pursuance of EU-funded interregional cooperation opportunities within the context of the territorial cooperation programmes under the European Union's Cohesion Policy is largely driven by identified economic benefit of receiving EU co-funding on projects the region would otherwise seek to develop and also finance by itself. Indeed, before the European Union started funding interregional cooperation, Wallonia was already engaging with other Europeans. The political elite describes the region as having a European mind-set: "Wallonia is quite pro-European. Belgium is a founding country of the European Union, Belgium is at the heart of Europe, Brussels is the capital of the EU, so we perceive Europe in a positive way" (Interviewee 15). He further explains that, due to this European mind-set, both public and private sectors quite naturally cooperate with particularly geographically close European neighbours—in cross-border cooperation projects. Indeed, given Wallonia's geographical setting with several borders engulfing the region, the extent and quality of cross-border cooperation is critically important and makes it imperative to tackle, for instance, issues such as cooperation in transportation and the smooth flow of goods and services. "The region and even the country is quite small and therefore it is not imaginable to live in withdrawal from our immediate surroundings. Cooperation is very important to us, and we have, consequently, been involved in cooperation projects since the start of the European Community" (Interviewee 14). The projects are also developed out of a European problematic that needs to be solved. "Our cross-border

cooperation initiatives were identified because of their local relevance. They include research, environment, culture, and, more specifically, communication, transport, exchange of cross-border labour, security and policing" (Interviewee 14). The projects bring Europeans closer together and support social integration as well as economic integration. Importantly, these projects were also set up before there was the opportunity to economically benefit from them by receiving EU funding. The region can therefore be assessed as perceiving a shared identity with their geographic neighbours and having an interest in working together. This shows that there is a starting level of European identity in the region before cooperation commences, and it can be expected to grow with further European interactions and engagement. However, the political elite does not talk much about whether he believes European identity should feature as an objective in his European policy. He speaks about European identity as though it were a constant characteristic throughout the region. Indeed, the level of European identity in Belgium is quite high, at 70 percent in 2015 (Eurobarometer 2015). Yet if it continues to grow, it is more likely to be a by-product of the engagement-fostering policies than due to particular identity-cultivating policy objectives developed by the regional government.

The objectives of the German region Brandenburg's interregional cooperation are more varied than those of both Wallonia and Nord–Pas-de-Calais. Though the region also highly values and seeks EU-funded cross-border cooperation opportunities with its Polish neighbours, for example, it also develops a range of non-EU-funded European engagement events to allow citizens to experience Europe and build a European identity. The political elite speaks about the European identity-building objective within his policy much more explicitly and enthusiastically than any of the previous case studies' political elites. Like Wallonia, Brandenburg actively initiates cross-border cooperation programmes in order to deal with challenges it shares with its immediate neighbours, such as providing bilingual education facilities near borders to support the movement of labour between Poland and Brandenburg. The political elite is painfully aware of existing shortcomings in this arena: "[The region has] one civil servant dealing with relations to Poland as well as other Central and Eastern European countries, including Romania. There are two civil servants from the Brandenburg region who are based in Poland, and one is based in Romania, in order to further strengthen the cooperation ties" (Interviewee 13). The political elite explained that, as these are new EU

members, it is important to get to know each other and build a relationship, so that practices of cooperation may follow suit. He thereby identified identity building as being a key component in this cooperation policy objective.

However, all ambitious plans to expedite and optimise cross-border cooperation will fall short if language-related and a host of other very practical cross-border problems cannot be mitigated. Despite these challenges, the region's political elite is pro-actively developing its interregional cooperation engagement and is advancing it beyond the scope of exclusively EU-funded projects. The political elite's decision to place civil servants at the region's expense in countries with which it is building closer ties is very ambitious and a deliberate demonstration of its willingness to start up broad and mutually beneficial cross-border exchanges. Under the direction of the region's political elite, acting in full compliance with the political authority granted by constitution and budgets allocated by its parliament, Brandenburg also organises European-oriented, but non-EU-funded cultural events, such as music group exchanges for citizens. These have the sole objective of European social integration and identity building and the political elite is very proud in talking about them as he believes them to be very important for the region, for Europe, and out of principle. The attitude of Brandenburg's political elite appears not only more Europhile and keen to promote European identity through his policy than the political elites of Wallonia and Nord–Pas-de-Calais, but it also sharply contrasts the opportunity of the South West of England region to develop policies embracing social integration throughout Europe and thereby cultivate a European identity.

4.1.3   Bilateral Partnerships: Building a European Identity?

The political elites representing the four regions' European interests show considerable variation in the set objectives; a case in point is the development and pursuit of bilateral partnerships. The political elite of the South West of England no longer has the authority and capacity to create and cultivate bilateral partnerships with their European counterparts; political constraints and the re-prioritisation with a focus on managing EU funds allocated to the region effectively put on hold any kind of meaningful bilateral outreach initiatives (Interviewee 12). The region once more misses a European identity-building opportunity by foregoing bilateral partnership development, which could have fostered European interactions

and the cultivation of shared interests and identity. As was shown in the empirical scholarship on European identity discussed in Chap. 1, engaging with other Europeans increases citizens' level of European identity. If being European had been more relevant to British citizens, the vote on Brexit may have turned out differently. Offering bilateral partnerships therefore could have made a difference in shaping a sense of belonging to the European Union and wanting to remain in the European Union.

The English case study stands in stark contrast to the attitudes and approach adopted by the other case study regions with regard to the maintenance of bilateral partnerships with other European regions and countries—yet their reasons vary. The objective underpinning the Nord–Pas-de-Calais' bilateral partnerships is to support the region's participation in territorial cooperation programmes funded by the European Union's Cohesion Policy (Interviewee 10). The primary objective thus is not primarily identity building as contact building and fostering enhanced engagement —which in turn can cultivate a European identity. And whilst Wallonia's embrace of interregional cooperation programmes has been one of its most enduring and pronounced features—an attribute it shares with Nord–Pas-de-Calais—the region's higher levels of political authority also led to a wider scope of engaging in a range of bilateral partnerships. The motives for these partnerships are broadly based and varied, as is the breadth and depth of the region's political mandate and mission. The region's priority has historically been on strengthening its ties within the global French-speaking community. More recently, Wallonia's focus has been on economic rejuvenation, with particular attention being paid on bilateral cooperation in selective domains of life sciences: logistics; agriculture and food security; nanotechnologies, aeronautics and space; as well as environmental sustainability. Where opportunities for the exchange of expertise and collaboration present themselves, bilateral partnerships are established (Interviewee 16). However, European identity building does not stand at the forefront of Wallonia's bilateral partnerships. The political elite also mentions two regional characteristics that have affected its bilateral partnerships. Whilst the political elite is conscious of the key role heritage has played and continues to play in establishing bilateral partnerships, present-day regional needs and priorities as identified by its top political decision-makers have shifted, and so has the nature and context of the region's bilateral partnerships. He also explains that as the levels of Wallonia's political authority increased, so did the region's capacity to develop bilateral partnerships.

Brandenburg has experienced similar developments in both its level of political authority and concomitant scope of objectives. Whilst, on the one hand, its partnerships garnered expected interregional cooperation opportunities, they triggered a range of positive spin-off effects that political elites in the region characterised as "more far-reaching; engagements which go beyond cross-border cooperation clearly providing additional opportunities for governmental and sectoral collaboration" (Interviewee 13). To develop and consolidate their bilateral relations and, in their wake, collaborative initiatives, the region has seconded two civil servants to operate out of Poland and Romania. The dedicated resources manifest Brandenburg's keen interest to open itself toward Europe and actively engage with its European counterparts. The political elite explains this further: "European identity should be sought and facilitated because the region has become part of an enlarged Germany with deep roots in the Europeanisation of the European continent and the European Union; it should therefore be open to Europe and feel as part of Europe" (Interviewee 13). The European outreach strategy, or bilateral partnerships, thus aims to foster a European identity. Furthermore, the bilateral partnerships' orientation toward Eastern Europe is strategic; it is based on geographic and political considerations, a shared heritage and similar economic needs.

4.1.4   *Participating in European Regional Networks: Fostering a European Identity?*

All four case study regions participate in European regional networks—however, the South West of England region participates in networks indirectly. There, it is the region's Brussels office that participates in networks to learn of and disseminate relevant information campaigns—"relevant information" being best-practice expertise on how to manage the EU funding allocated to the region most effectively (Interviewee 11). This also underlines how narrow the scope of European engagement is for the region—and how slim the chances have been of developing a European identity. This said, the region used to participate more actively in interregional cooperation fostering networks, however, the scope of activity was downsized once the Labour government was replaced with the Conservative coalition government.

The continental political elites address one common overriding objective: to identify potential cooperation partners amongst the membership

of a specific network and thus strengthen their regions' interregional cooperation ambition. Nord–Pas-de-Calais is empowered to participate actively on the European scene. The region not only obliges its regional Brussels office representative to participate in the networks' sur place, it is also actively engaged in the production and dissemination of information and knowledge sharing on policy areas relevant to the region (Interviewee 9). In doing so, civil servants dealing with transportation policy exchange best practice with relevant European counterparts. This collegial sharing of ideas and advice can bring regions throughout Europe closer together, based on their shared interest, and in turn, cultivate a European identity. The region, however, does not invest the kind of resources Brandenburg and Wallonia have committed over the years to further optimise the potential of the European regional networks.

Both Wallonia's and Brandenburg's political elites and civil servants participate in a range of networks that either operate under the umbrella of the territorial cooperation programme or non-EU-funded networks. Their common feature is to facilitate interregional cooperation amongst participating network members. This objective, too, can cultivate a European identity through developing common interests and increasing regions' European-wide interactions and engagement.

An additional incentive is to closely work with and through European regional networks in order to lobby for continued EU allocations for phasing out convergence funding. The region thus finds regions of similar economic situations and interests, builds a common identity based on that interest, and they join forces to influence the EU's Regional Policy. Brandenburg had successfully led a network of 13 regions with similar interests; they all secured "phasing out" convergence funding for the funding period of 2007–2013 and have continued to cultivate a close relationship. Most of them again joined forces during the budget discussions for the 2014+ period. Thus, it appears, a European identity has been cultivated and sustained in this network.

4.1.5   Regions' Brussels Offices: Do They Cultivate a European Identity?

In addition to regions' commonly shared vision of the value of pooling their efforts by jointly participating in European regional networks, they also determined that operating Brussels offices would further enhance their effectiveness. According to the expectations of the political elites, the

common objective of regions' Brussels offices is to more pointedly represent their particular interests at the relevant EU bodies and provide an effective information and feedback loop to their respective regions. The Brussels-based regional representatives are also expected to liaise with their European counterparts in order to shape and maintain strategic contacts and provide hubs for information and knowledge sharing. Engaging regularly with other European region's representatives as well as European bureaucrats, regional representatives working in the Brussels offices can be expected to develop a European identity through their interactions. Brussels provides a breeding ground for European identity as those working there are joined by their European interests and work in a European environment daily. However, the political elites of the South West of England and even Wallonia and Nord–Pas-de-Calais do not identify European identity building as being an objective of their Brussels offices. Brandenburg's political elite, however, acknowledges the opportunity of developing a European identity by working in a Brussels office and through the work of the Brussels office (Interviewee 13). Having been the director of the region's Brussels office, he described the civil servants working in the office as being very engaged with a number of other regional representations and EU institutions. European cultural events also frequently are hosted in the Brussels office, to foster closer European partnerships and collaboration. This, in turn, fosters European identity.

4.1.6   *Regions' European Communications: Does European Identity Building Feature Amongst Them?*

Unlike the commonalities jointly developed and operationalised in the networked-based Brussels offices, the management of the regions' European communications follows different pathways. In fact, only Brandenburg has a designated communications team in place to produce and disseminate its European messages to the constituents at large—thus raising European awareness and aiming to cultivate a European mind-set and identity.

The political elite of the South West of England, conscious of the importance of strategic communications, regretted the absence of a dedicated communications team in the region's European directorate of the RDA. Its communications and outreach efforts were limited to maintaining and updating the region's website. Beyond that, additional information was generated by an off-site website (the "Convergence Cornwall")

operated out of Cornwall. In all, the political elite appeared to be comfortable with this arrangement at the time as the focus of the South West of England's EU-oriented engagement involved the procurement and management of both Objective 1 and 2 funding within the Cohesion Policy; areas that, in the political elites' eyes, do not necessitate active citizen involvement. It is, however, conceivable, that this would have been a straightforward opportunity to cultivate a European identity in the region, communicating about the development and improvement fostered by European programmes. Yet, the political elites, in the course of the interviews, did not appear overly concerned about the lack of a dedicated communications strategy and team within the RDA's European directorate. This lack of concern, as Chap. 5 will show, was not shared by the region's civil servants. They, in fact, saw the benefits in communicating to their constituency and stakeholders on European opportunities, and they criticised the national government for not allowing the region to conduct and implement a pro-active European communications and outreach strategy.

The South West of England's political elites' minimalist communication approach and its view that the various media and communication platforms don't hold much promise in shaping and influencing the region's Europeanness was in effect shared by the political elite of Nord–Pas-de-Calais. They differed, however, in their perception and critical perspective of their government's imposed strict limitations in all communication matters. The political elite in Nord–Pas-de-Calais would like to be able to communicate more widely on European opportunities and improvements to the region as she said this would potentially combat some Eurosceptics in the region, cultivate a European identity and support the directorate's European work (Interviewee 10). Nonetheless, the political elite in the end appeared resigned to the recognition of the political realities on the ground—that the political decision about communications was made at the top of the regional government, and that it was unable to overcome the limitation of its political authority to develop a broad range of communication activities. In shedding additional light on the latter point, the political elite stated: "We communicate fairly little with the citizens about the European programmes because it is not supported politically, unfortunately. […] We also see in the political debates which take place just before European elections that neither the media nor the newspapers talk about Europe. They discuss national problems, and they blame Europe for them. Our regional government is elected of course, and our politicians are worried about discussing European topics, as it might cost them their election.

The programmes which were presented during the elections two months ago did not mention Europe once – although the regional government is very much engaged and the region capitalises on European opportunities within the region. Speaking of Europe during elections is a political problem, which is a great pity" (Interviewee 9). It is against this background that the scope of communication on the European engagement of the region has been strategically limited to the operation of a website and the occasional release of project success stories—when no elections are on the calendar. The region's lack of communication to citizens stands in stark contrast to its active outreach programmes, including its European youth exchange programme, training sessions for European interregional cooperation opportunities and the effective management of the INTERREG programmes within the Cohesion Policy's Objective 3. In view of the economic benefits these European projects bring to the region, the lack of political support within the higher ranks of the regional government for a pro-active communications strategy is surprising.

The Walloon region's European directorate does not have its own communications service; each functionary is responsible for providing information to citizens through the multiple media outlets: the region's website, articles placed in newspapers, and by way of disseminating information to various local services. These efforts are complemented, according to the region's political elite, by a multitude of information and awareness-raising campaigns: "During the Belgian Presidency of the EU [in 2010], approximately 400 social European encounter events were held. And in addition to the official political agenda, WBI [Wallonia Bruxelles Intérnational] organised 70 events. But, when it is not the Belgian presidency, there are pretty much daily events held, which relay relevant information about Europe and current initiatives. These events are held at universities, research centres, villages, and government offices, amongst others" (Interviewee 15). Thus, the region works, in a slightly fragmented way, to raise awareness on European opportunities, benefits and improvements within the region, which has a strong potential for fostering Europhile attitudes and cultivating a European identity.

Brandenburg's political elite's perception on its European communications shows slightly more prioritisation than Wallonia's political elite, however, in comparison to the political elites of the French and British regions, Brandenburg's European communications are at the other extreme end of the spectrum. It has put in place its own communications team, which very actively manages its website, publishes articles and

advertisements in regional newspapers, distributes leaflets and routinely organises a host of communications and outreach events—particularly during election times with the full support of the region's political elite. Indeed, the political elite fully endorses Brandenburg's European communications despite residual Euroscepticism amongst its citizens. As a member of the political elite from the European directorate explains, the communications team, the region's minister and the political elite work together closely to effectively communicate the scope and intent of the region's European engagement. The region's political elite has shown to be very concerned about cultivating a European mind-set and identity throughout the region by engaging citizens and raising awareness on opportunities and benefits. However, the communications team does not only work in this single direction. Instead, "the Communications team also tries to gauge the citizens' perception of European affairs. Of course a Minister can be very active in European politics but it is essential to know what the citizens think of Europe. This is also very important to me, as, in addition to my work here in the Ministry [of economics and European affairs], I am in my personal time the chairman of the association 'European Union of the Region Brandenburg', which tries to frame the topic of Europe in a positive light throughout the region" (Interviewee 13). The objective behind learning what citizens think about Europe helps the communications team and political elite to coordinate an appropriate response to citizens' worries, concerns and doubts about Europe. The political elite reiterates the importance of needing to understand the concerns before being able to overcome them, foster a European identity and fully integrate into Europe. Publicising the European opportunities and benefits is thus a top objective and significant part of the strategy pursued by the political elite and the communications team in the region—and they aim to foster a European identity through their work.

In addition, the ministry complements the region's communications strategy by organising events about European topics relevant to the region; promoting a "Europe Week" each May, addressing an important EU theme tackled by both the European Union and the region each year (in 2009, the theme was eliminating poverty throughout Europe), and awarding prizes to citizens who contributed significantly in promoting social integration in Europe. Developing these associations between the region and Europe, and raising awareness on them at the citizen level, can be expected to and is aimed at fostering a European mind-set and identity.

The directorate also organises events in schools and helps to establish European schools throughout the region to more systematically introduce European themes in history and social studies classes and enhance schools' ability to offer more foreign language classes. According to the political elite, the objective of these supporting interventions is to "bring Europe closer to the citizen because for many the EU is perceived merely as 'those people in Brussels, what do they do again?'; and we are trying to show that Europe is also very much present within the region and trying to foster support for Europe in the minds and hearts of particularly the young people. However, we are not trying to glorify Europe. We are trying to inform citizens and get them to participate in exchanges and events so that they can experience up-close and personal, instead of studying Europe from afar, and build their own opinion about the European project" (Interviewee 13). To Brandenburg's political elite, the communication strategy is part and parcel of its overall objective to inform citizens about Europe and European opportunities available to them to participate in: "It is my aim to enable every student of Brandenburg to go to another European city for a couple of weeks, so they can see for themselves what the similarities and differences are across Europe. We also offer internships to up to four students for approximately two months, so that they can learn more about the ministry and our initiatives, and better understand the many opportunities to the region" (Interviewee 13). And while the scope of Brandenburg's communication on the region's engagement is broad, its objectives remain very strategic and focused on promoting and capitalising on European benefits to the region and promoting the cultivation of a European identity throughout the region. The political elite exudes a very enthusiastic demeanour when discussing the scope of the region's communications strategies and activities.

Although Brandenburg and Wallonia can be seen in contrast to Nord–Pas-de-Calais and the South West of England because they have European communications strategies, they have shown to be of a different nature and objective. Wallonia raises awareness of the European opportunities to engage citizens more and inform them of the benefits to the region from European programmes. Brandenburg's political elite is very keen to cultivate a European identity in the region and makes extensive use of a broad range of communications strategies to bring this objective to life. The enthusiasm the political elite has for making citizens aware that they are part of Europe and should experience Europe with a positive instead of sceptical mind-set is contagious.

4.1.7   Does EU Legal Integration Encourage
a European Identity?

The process of transposing EU laws into regional legislation is, due to the prevailing government systems and their resultant respective regional legal authority and capacity, relevant only to Wallonia and Brandenburg. To the political elites of both regions these unique regional political characteristics have great importance; they greatly influence what they consider their regions' "heightened scope of European engagement" when compared to many other European regions. The Belgian political elite in charge of EU legal integration made it a point to express and explain the challenges of transposing very complex laws into the Walloon legislation (Interviewee 15). To ensure that the region's larger EU agenda does not fall victim to these challenges, a dedicated team in Wallonia coordinates these processes within WBI (Wallonia Bruxelles Intérnational) and the relevant ministries. Working on the transposition of EU laws into regional laws not only provides a European nature to the regional law, it also, to those realising the change, provides a heightened appreciation of European integration and Europeans being increasingly the same. Legal integration, thus, fosters awareness of social integration and European identity cultivating over time. In Brandenburg, the political elite has been tasked with managing and coordinating the complexity of transposing European laws. Whilst the political elite carries out these responsibilities and deems them to be important, he does not attribute as much interest in discussing the region's legal integration work compared to the other domains of European engagement, including the region's bilateral partnerships, interregional cooperation, and in particular its European communications approach and strategy (Interviewee 13).

4.2   Political Elites' Perceptions on the Future
Objectives of the Regions' European Engagement

A common priority of regions' European policy has been to manage EU funding and, those who have the political authority and capacity to do so, develop and participate in interregional cooperation programmes. The dominant benefits of both were identified as being economic development of the region. However, European identity building also featured as part of the objectives within interregional cooperation programmes, particularly across all of Brandenburg's programmes; as a

status quo in Wallonia's programmes; and as a previous objective but recently cut in Nord–Pas-de-Calais.

Thinking forward, the political elites offered their perceptions on the regions' priorities for the future, when potentially most Western European regions will no longer receive funding under Objectives 1 and perhaps also 2.

The political elite of the South West of England expects that "realistic[ally], there is an inevitability of a South and Eastward drift of the European money" (Interviewee 11). In consequence, the political elite believes that the North West of Europe must be prepared to participate more in transnational and territorial cooperation projects in order to attract EU funding. "A lot of the funding will be dependent on having good partnerships, working with other parts of Europe" (Interviewee 11). There is a distinct sense of urgency amongst the political elite that the region must do more to develop its experience, networks and partnerships in interregional cooperation as this will, most likely, be the future of European funding the region would be able to access. With Brexit strategies commencing, it is unlikely that the United Kingdom will need to consider how to attract EU funding in future, however, if the United Kingdom were to remain in the European Union, the South West of England would have been very poorly positioned to participate in an be able to attract funding for European-wide cooperation projects due to the constraints set on them by central government. Even if remaining in the European Union, the government's political decision would have further diminished the region's future opportunities of attracting EU funding—as well as strengthening its European identity.

The other case study regions have been more pro-active in establishing and positioning their bilateral partnerships and engaging in interregional cooperation programmes, whether they are funded by the European Union or initiatives developed internally. They also cultivate a European identity, be it a by-product of their European engagement or an intentional core objective of the entire region's European policy. Having gained the political authority in 2001, the Nord–Pas-de-Calais region "has developed its capacities and experience as the managing authority for cooperation projects. It is in 'starting mode' for the next period of programmes. The strategy decided by the regional elected politicians and advised by the European service is to develop three pillars: one pillar must reinforce the management of interregional cooperation projects; the second must strengthen the region's European image through both institutional and

bilateral relations with Germany and Poland, Kent, Wallonia, Flanders, and others, with the Institute for European Cooperation taking the lead; and the third pillar needs to raise potential regional cooperation actors' awareness of European opportunities and provide them with guidance on how to start cooperation projects" (Interviewee 9). Though it is very possible that European identity building will feature in these three pillars as a by-product, it is not an explicit objective set for the region's European policy in future funding periods.

The Walloon political elite's strategy for the future follows a similar pathway to that identified by the political elites of the French case study region; it is also focused on interregional cooperation: "The EU member States, which need the funds most, should receive them. […] I expect there will be more competition for funding, which will ensure that the most useful projects will be selected. And furthermore, territorial cooperation should be pursued – with or without the financial assistance of the EU" (Interviewee 14). The political elite does not further elaborate what the objectives of this territorial cooperation ought to be—whether they aim to cultivate a European identity or whether this will occur as a by-product, depending on the extent of Europeans' engagement throughout the project.

Brandenburg's political elite is not only quite conscious of the need to establish a broadly based cooperation model; he is very enthusiastic about interregional cooperation: "Although we are trying to influence the decision-making process for convergence and competitiveness and employment funding in future, we are also investigating how the work of the Directorate would change if Brandenburg were to no longer receive Objectives 1 and 2 funding. Certainly, cooperation is a very important aspect to be considered at this time" (Interviewee 13). These reflections relate to the region's future European engagement based on EU funds. Beyond the EU funds, the region's political elite continues to embrace the need for cooperation, particularly cross-border cooperation with its Polish neighbour, as both countries continue to restore and revitalise their rural areas and deal, at the same time, with the challenges of an ageing population in this area. However, as a key priority, the political elite still identifies European communications and building a European mind-set and identity through all of the regions' European policies and programmes. Cultivating European identity is a cornerstone of his personal interest, and he weaves this into the policy he develops and the work he completes. This shows that Brandenburg's political elite's personal interests have a very

similar impact on the region's European policy as Nord–Pas-de-Calais' regional political elites had when one set broadened the scope of objectives in the 1980s and 1990s to fully engage in European opportunities and identity building, only to be overturned by a less Europhile political elite's personal interests recently.

4.3 Four Dimensions to the Role of European Identity in Regions' European Policy

This chapter has revealed that the four case study regions' political elites are interested in incorporating European identity-building objectives into their policies to a varied degree.

In the Nord–Pas-de-Calais, the regional political elites were instrumental in broadening the scope of the region's objectives—alongside the process of regionalization, which granted more political authority to the region to engage in European politics. However, with a new generation of political elites, a change in policy objectives followed suit. The programmes within the European policy, which included identity-building objectives (bilateral partnerships and the social integration projects for regional youth), are in the process of being compressed, whilst more strategic and resource attention is being shifted toward the development and management of interregional cooperation programmes (which are partly funded by the European Union). The regional political elite managing the European directorate's Institute for European Cooperation regrets the decision made higher up in the region's hierarchy. Thus, the role European identity plays in Nord–Pas-de-Calais' European policy is changing from being highly significant to being potentially on the margins in future.

Whilst the political elites in the South West of England show a vivid interest in developing programmes that would build European identity, they are disappointed by their lack of political authority and shrinking mandate to do so. In Wallonia, the political elite expresses interest in European identity and fostering a European identity through the work of the European directorate. The political elite believes there is a widespread European identity throughout the region and this will naturally continue to thrive—without making it a policy priority. Perhaps a risky strategy when Belgium's level of European identity has decreased from 84 percent in 2010 to 70 percent in 2015. Whilst the political elite does not entertain a lengthy discussion of this objective, he, instead, focuses

more on the objectives of continuing to develop and manage interregional cooperation for more economic purposes than social integration or identity building.

Of the four case studies' political elites, the leader from Brandenburg appears to be the most interested in cultivating a European identity through the policies he designs. Of course, his political authority to do so also enables him to put on paper his preferences and interests in European identity building. Furthermore, compared to the other political elites, he is very outspoken about European identity being a key objective of his policy. He believes in the benefits of providing citizens the opportunity to experience Europe, engage in European activities and build a European identity. To raise their awareness and cultivate European identity, the political elite has prioritised a well-coordinated European communication strategy throughout the region, which also stands in contrast to the other case study regions' procedures of raising awareness of citizens at large. Based on this personal belief, he integrates this objective into the European policy—and has the region's top political elite's support to do so.

Based on the policies' analysis as well as the explanations of political elites, European identity can indeed be intentionally fostered through regions' European policies—if there is an interest to do so. European identity can also be cultivated through regular European interactions, as a by-product. However, this correlation cannot yet be established through a quantitative analysis as there is a lack of European identity data at the regional level, as well as a lack of quantitative data on regions' European policies. Nevertheless, the national levels of European identity are helpful in providing indications of how European people feel in the four case studies' countries. As was explained before, the Belgian level is comparatively strong, with 70 percent of the population feeling European in 2015. Though this has increased quite steadily from 54 percent in 1990, European identity levels had reached a high in 2010 at 86 percent. If this value is seen as an indication of Walloon levels of European identity, it would be surprising to see European identity levels increasing substantially again, as the region does not pro-actively promote European identity building through their European policy. A 16 percent increase would also be a significant by-product of European cooperation's effect on identity building. Yet, as the data is based on national and not regional values, this must be seen as an indication only of the Walloon levels and not a direct cause and effect relationship. From the four case study regions' countries, Germany has the highest levels of European identity and has

experienced a significant rise from 42 percent in 1990 (during Germany's reunification phase) to 68 percent in 2010 and 81 percent in 2015. If this data were from Brandenburg only, it could be assumed that the substantial increase is attributable to pro-active European identity-building European policy. However, again, this must be seen as indicative values provided the data is not based on the Brandenburg region but instead on all of Germany's sixteen Bundesländer; whereas it can still be said that Germany has positioned itself to be very pro-European Union and perhaps therefore its citizens also feel more European. France has the third highest levels of European identity of the four case study regions' countries with a fairly stable 58 percent in 1990, 52 percent in 2010 and 61 percent in 2015. If these levels were for Nord–Pas-de-Calais only, they would be surprising. The region previously had strong identity-building objectives within their European policy—and only recently side-lined those objectives in preference to economic development objectives. Thus, it should be assumed that the levels of European identity had increased in Nord–Pas-de-Calais alongside the identity-building policies from 1990 to 2010, and that the levels would be decreasing in the next years, as the revised policies start to have an impact. As the data is based on national values and not regional ones, regional data would be required to conduct an appropriate impact evaluation of policy scope onto identity levels. Finally, it is unsurprising that the United Kingdom has the lowest levels of European identity amongst the four case studies' countries with only 28 percent in 1990 and 54 percent in 2010 and 56 percent in 2015. The increase from 1990 to 2010 is quite substantial, through the United Kingdom is still one of the least Europhile members of the European Union. However, it is interesting to see a slight increase in level of European identity between 2010 and 2015, when a year later the citizens would vote to leave the European Union. Although the data for all case studies is insufficient as it is at the national instead of regional level, it does provide some initial indications on the countries' respective levels of European identity. The results of Germany are not that surprising. It is, however, surprising, that Belgium's levels decreased quite significantly from 2010 to 2015; that France's results are significantly lower than both Germany's and Belgium's provided the central role France has played in European integration and the strong identity-building dimension of its European policy; and it remains surprising that the United Kingdom's values have increased quite substantially from 1990 and even to a small extent from 2010.

Further to the link between political elites' perceptions of the role of European identity within their European policies, the political elites also corroborated a number of regional characteristics affecting the scope and objectives of their European policy. From the South West of England, the regional characteristic identified as having the most significant impact on their European policy was the government system. Because of the highly centralised state, the regional government is very artificial, it is not institutionalised and it does not hold the political authority to design a European policy or enhance the region's European engagement beyond the management of EU-allocated funding within the region. Even this is subject to negotiation under the current Conservative government, which has fortified central government powers with respect to European affairs. To a different degree, Nord–Pas-de-Calais also mentioned the government system as having an impact on regions' European affairs. In this case, however, the government system in combination with top regional political elites' interests are deciding factors on either enhancing or scaling down the role of European identity throughout the European directorate's policies and programmes. Furthermore, Nord–Pas-de-Calais', Wallonia's and Brandenburg's regional political elites identified their geographic location near European borders as having an impact on the natural need and daily relevance of collaborating interregionally with their European neighbours and counterparts. Political elites from Wallonia and Brandenburg also explained that the border location fosters a European identity amongst the citizens experiencing the border and their European neighbours. Thus, from the six regional characteristics mentioned in the literature (government system, politicians' interests, geographic location, European regional network participation, membership duration and shared language and heritage), the political elites corroborate the following three regional characteristics as having an impact on the scope of their European policy and whether European identity would feature in it: government system, top (regional) politicians' interests and geographic European border location. It is expected that these regional characteristics are the most relevant to the regional political elites, however, that regional civil servants, who deal with the daily workings of European cooperation, may identify a different range of influential regional characteristics, which hinder or boost their ability to communicate and coordinate work with their European counterparts—such as language, membership duration (or experience in European work) and network participation. This will be evaluated in the next chapter on civil servants' perceptions.

Reflecting back to the literature supporting the assumption that political elites feel more European than citizens and therefore civil servants may be less inclined to foster a European identity through their work, the political elite of Brandenburg's case corroborates the findings from Spence (1998) that political elites, as top decision-makers of European policy, are, comparatively, very likely to feel European and potentially translate this into their work. However, the case studies and interviews have found that not all case studies' political elites feel similarly European and act upon an interest in European identity building when designing their European policy. Further to this, the question of policy implementers' interests and influences remain to be assessed, as they too may affect the role of European identity in regions' policy. More specifically, what role do civil servants play in the implementation of the European policy—and potentially further shaping the role of European identity through their work? Fligstein (2008), Mitchell (2015), Kuhn (2012) and Stoeckel (2015) expect that those who engage more with Europeans will feel more European, and according to Verhaegen and Hooghe (2015) and Inglehart (1970), those who learn more about the European Union feel a stronger identity towards it. Political elites' working day is split between managing their European policy and dealing with regional and national political hierarchies and issues. Civil servants spend the entire day implementing their European policy and, as long as they are allowed to, engaging with their European counterparts. Do they feel more European and have a stronger interest in cultivating a European identity within their respective European policy? According to current scholarship, a difference in perceptions on European identity and its role in European policy should be expected between political elites and civil servants. The next chapter will probe this expectation and provide further evidence on the civil servants' (differing) perceptions.

Is European Policy European? Perspectives from Regional Civil Servants

The previous chapter has shown that the political elites from the four case study regions who are Europhile translate this interest into European identity building within their European policies. Variation amongst the four case studies was significant, ranging from European identity featuring as a cornerstone objective within the different strands of Brandenburg's European policy to it being more of a by-product than intended objective in Wallonia and to it not even being considered in the South West of England—potentially with severe consequences in terms of lack of support for continued EU membership. The political elites also discussed which regional characteristics affect the scope and objectives of both their European policy and identity-building practices. Scholarship proposes that civil servants, who engage to a larger extent with other Europeans on a daily basis, would be bigger Europe enthusiasts and therefore want European identity to feature more prominently within their work—and may implement this dimension naturally. Whether, indeed, civil servants demonstrate this variation both from their political elites and from the determined objectives of the European policy will be assessed in this chapter. Based on the existing scholarship, it is indeed expected that regional civil servants feel more European than their political elites and consider European identity building whilst implementing the region's European policy. Civil servants' findings on whether European identity is cultivated as a by-product of their work will also be evaluated in this chapter. The differences in perceptions between the civil servants and their political

elites will be the focus of analysis. Secondary to this, this chapter will also reflect on the regional characteristics which the civil servants identify as affecting the scope and objectives of their region's European policy and identity-building practices.

5.1   Does European Identity Feature Amongst the Objectives of the Regions' European Policies? Perspectives from the Civil Servants

In this section, civil servants' perceptions on the role of European identity within the scope of their European policy will be assessed. These include the region's participation in EU-funded programmes (Objectives 1 and 2); interregional cooperation (including EU funded Objective 3); bilateral partnerships; participation in European regional networks; European communications, European business connections; European legal integration; and anticipated objectives in their future European affairs.

5.1.1   The Management of EU Funding Allocated to the Region: A European Identity-Building Opportunity? Civil Servants' Perspectives

All four regions participate in either Objectives 1 or 2, or both, of the EU-funded Cohesion Policy. The civil servants in the four case study regions acknowledge the benefits EU-funded programmes bring to the region—be they infrastructure development projects under Objective 1; strategic competitiveness and employment development initiatives under Objective 2; and in some cases, even European identity-building opportunities within the two objectives. Though civil servants were happy to discuss the correlation between Objective 3 projects (territorial cooperation) and European identity-building opportunities, they were more hesitant to make the connection between Objectives 1 and 2 fostering a European identity. Within the scope of Objective 1, a civil servant in the South West of England made it very clear that European identity building was not part of her work: "We are all so very busy with our heads down and trying to drive the programmes forward [within our region] that we don't have the time to step back and look at [European] opportunities within our regional implementation work" (Interviewee 33). However, a civil servant from the same region's European Policy team explained that, in her opinion, there are opportunities to cultivate a European identity by connecting

with other Europeans managing similar EU-funded programmes and sharing best-practice suggestions on their similar work (Interviewee 30). The mismatch in perceptions on whether European identity building features in the management of EU-funded projects in the region can be attributed to different personal interests and backgrounds affecting the way in which civil servants perceive their work and execute it. Interviewee 30 has had more European experience than Interviewee 33 and therefore naturally identifies opportunities to improve her work by seeking advice from her colleagues—and importantly categorises her European regional counterparts as colleagues as much as colleagues sitting in her office in the South West of England. However, Interviewee 33 does not benefit from this wealth of experience and European-wide contacts to seek advice and best-practice suggestions for her work. And the political elites do not encourage their staff to manage EU funding with a European mind-set. If even the civil servants working in a European department are not meant to act upon European instincts, how can citizens in the region be expected to feel European?

In contrast to this, a civil servant from Brandenburg, who also manages Objective 1 EU funding within the region, engages with European networks and advice centres to gather suggestions on how to best manage the convergence funding. He explained that there is information available on regions that have completed their conversion and that had similar situations to that of Brandenburg—their retrospective advice is, at times, very useful (Interviewee 40). Interviewee 40 and Interviewee 30 from the South West of England share not only their European mind-set and approach to managing EU funding within the region's convergence / competitiveness programmes, but they also both have a quite long-standing European experience: Interviewee 30 has 5–8 years' working experience with other Europeans and Interviewee 40 has 10 years' experience in his position and working with Europeans. Also, the civil servant in the Brandenburg region is working for the political elite who, in the previous chapter, was identified as being a very keen Europhile and who encourages his staff to engage in European opportunities themselves and seek European approaches to their work. In the example of Brandenburg and of the political elite and Interviewee 33 in the South West of England, the interests and mind-sets of the political elites affect not only the European policy of the region but also the mind-set and approach of the civil servants. The European Union's convergence and competitiveness funding thus is identified by civil servants as focusing on economic development

objectives within the region—yet the civil servants with European experience, mind-sets and political elite support also seek opportunities to engage with their European colleagues in managing the Objectives 1 and 2 funding within their respective regions—and cultivate a European identity through their work.

5.1.2   Does Interregional Cooperation Foster European Identity?

The civil servants of all case study regions perceive the interregional cooperation objectives of their European policy to be of primary importance to their respective regions' socio-economic development prospects. For civil servants' work, territorial cooperation (within Objective 3 of the European Union's Cohesion Policy) can be very helpful in tackling and solving complex public policy issues within their regions by seeking best-practice advice from a European-wide network of regional colleagues. For regions at large (both public and private sectors) interregional cooperation (including both Objective 3 and regions' own interregional cooperation projects) can facilitate both social integration of those collaborating and boost innovation and economic development. As a civil servant from Nord–Pas-de-Calais pointed out: "In a good European [interregional cooperation] project, there is collaboration throughout and the end result could not have come to fruition without each participant's contribution and the synergy of each participant's expertise" (Interviewee 29). A civil servant from Wallonia develops this further: "For cooperation to work well, it is important to see each other regularly. It is easier to find commonalities through contact and to foster a good working rapport – as well as a European identity" (Interviewee 56). Through the collaboration, a new product or service gets developed, which boosts economic development but also the collaboration of like-minded, complementary people cultivates a shared, European identity. Particularly the interregional cooperation example of Nord–Pas-de-Calais' youths who are categorised as being "troubled," having left school and not integrated on the job market. They visit youths in similar situations in other European countries and learn what opportunities these youths have, what services are provided to them, and they exchange ideas on how they all can improve their situations and become better integrated in their own societies or perhaps other European ones. This exchange programme has a strong social context and delivers a European approach to solving a local social problem shared by other Europeans. The civil servant in charge of this programme explains

that through the interactions and experiences, the youths feel more European and realise the opportunities they have beyond their home towns or even countries. "The European identity cultivated through the programme, offers the youths a pro-active and positive mind-set and has the ability to help them progress in their lives. This all happens fairly quickly as the exchange only lasts one to two weeks and the support programme all together lasts approximately one month" (Interviewee 19). However, a different Interviewee from Nord–Pas-de-Calais cautions that it takes time for close and constructive collaboration to be fostered, and even longer for the collaborators to develop a European mind-set and European identity through their European engagement: "The link between cooperation and European identity is still a while off as it takes a long time to establish an identity through collaboration" Interviewee 28). Nevertheless, the statements made by civil servants in Nord–Pas-de-Calais reinforced the interests of their political elites' predecessors, who were very Europhile and considered European identity building in the policies and programmes they developed. The civil servants' positions are not congruent, however, with the current region's political elites, who are more Eurosceptic and plan to downsize the scope of the region's European engagement—particularly the European identity-building dimension of the European policy.

In contrast to the discrepancy between the civil servants' and political elites' positions on European identity's role within their European policy, both decision-makers and implementers in Brandenburg believe European identity building plays a key role within their interregional cooperation. The civil servants agree with the political elite that the region's European engagement fosters a European identity. This objective has been communicated to civil servants by the political elite and through his Europhile interests and personality, and the civil servants who work on the INTERREG team expressed their support to these sentiments and objectives in the course of their interviews. Two testimonials illustrate their feelings and perceptions about the region's European engagement cultivating a European identity: "There are many INTERREG activities, however we realistically cannot reach every citizen – and many of them do believe that the EU is a big bureaucratic system that isn't very useful. When people have concrete practical experiences, a point of reference, they perceive Europe in a positive way" (Interviewee 48). An INTERREG colleague chimes in: "There is an example of a European school, in which the engagement of students with European languages, cultures and people

has facilitated a European identity. Students graduating from this particular school in Poland typically work in European positions and feel European" (Interviewee 50). Both civil servants have given examples of the way in which their work facilitates a European identity, be it through a European school near the Brandenburg / Polish border, or providing European experiences to the constituents who ordinarily would not come into contact with European cultures or people in their daily lives.

5.1.3   Region's Bilateral Partnerships: Growing a European Identity?

Civil servants and political elites have stated that bilateral partnerships are essential in developing potential interregional cooperation partnerships. With interregional cooperation playing a key role in the future of regions' European policy, it must be assessed how bilateral partnerships help the European policy implementers to develop cooperation partnerships and also what role European identity building plays within this objective.

Civil servants of the Regional Development Area (RDA) in the South West of England, unfortunately, did not have the political authority and mandate to develop and participate in bilateral partnerships with other Europeans. This policy choice and lack of European engagement and communication reinforces the low levels of European identity and support for a continued EU membership.

Civil servants in the Nord–Pas-de-Calais emphasised the critical need for well-functioning bilateral partnerships in order to support and strengthen interregional cooperation opportunities in specifically identified domains such as language training, improving transport opportunities, promoting culture through outreach initiatives, enhancing both the breadth and depth of youth and children mobility and exchanges, and other such activities for which the region has both a political mandate and the required human resources (Interviewee 22). The regions with which Nord–Pas-de-Calais has established bilateral partnerships are Silesia in Poland and North Rhine Westphalia in Germany. Cultural heritage, language, as well as geographic proximity and the perception of mutually benefitting from developing cooperation opportunities have been influential factors in selecting those partnerships. However, as the civil servant managing the bilateral partnerships clarified, whilst the region officially designates bilateral partnerships as a key objective in its strategy to support interregional cooperation, the budget for partnerships is being put into

question—an important point omitted by the political elite (Interviewee 22). The civil servant explains that, presently, "[t]here is a lack of political interest and support for bilateral partnerships. I had an intern for six months to help identify additional bilateral partnership links and opportunities, with the intention of hiring the intern full time depending on the development opportunities identified. Indeed, there were several solid opportunities which would have been beneficial for the region to pursue; however there was a lack of political will to follow up on them. I am trying to initiate as many of the opportunities as possible, however the budget therefore may shortly be put on hold" (Interviewee 22). The French civil servant explains the direct link between starting bilateral partnerships to develop interregional cooperation opportunities out of them. He also explains the political challenge in mastering this objective of the European policy, which is surprising because the political elites and civil servants all identify interregional cooperation as being the region's European policy priority; and bilateral partnerships are a useful way to sustain cooperation project development. Furthermore, the civil servant discussed that partnerships were sought with regions that have similar backgrounds and interests to Nord–Pas-de-Calais. When bilateral partnerships are developed and people from the regions begin to interact more, a European identity can be reinforced through this enhanced engagement. "Indeed, it is this common mind-set and identity which boosts collaboration both within partnerships and cooperation projects" (Interviewee 22).

In contrast to Nord–Pas-de-Calais' exclusive bilateral partnerships' objectives, those of Brandenburg and Wallonia are two-fold: on the one hand, both regions want to facilitate European interregional cooperation and on the other hand, they expect to further strengthen their outreach opportunities and engagement throughout Europe beyond interregional cooperation opportunities (Interviewee 43, and Interviewee 57). The wider mandate and operational scope of both Brandenburg and Wallonia—when compared to Nord–Pas-de-Calais and the South West of England—is a direct consequence of their higher levels of political authority to be more active internationally, as well as due to their political elites' interests in reaching out beyond the region and country to be part of a European (or even global) society. These objectives have at their core a European identity-building nature. The variation amongst their scope is that Wallonia may manage its own international relations (as a foreign office of state would), whilst Brandenburg develops bilateral partnerships primarily for the purpose of exchanging experiences (Interviewee 43). As a civil servant

from the bilateral partnerships teams explained: "Citizen encounters [with our bilateral partners] help foster European identity the most, because people learn about their common heritage and perceptions and realise they share an identity. You can only experience this through encounters. (…) Interaction and common interests are the key to European identity development" (Interviewee 42). Both regions engage with other Europeans on a very regular basis, which cultivates a European identity. They have both categorically sought bilateral partnerships with other regions and countries of similar interests and background. These similarities were expected to foster closer partnerships, more relevant experience exchanges, and, down the line, opportunities to work together. Brandenburg invests significantly in its relations with Eastern European states. The region has three designated civil servants living and working in Poland and Romania. The reasons behind and importance of Brandenburg's pursuance of bilateral partnerships with Eastern European states is their shared commonality of a number of key development objectives and goals, primarily in identifying and testing development projects. Civil servants characterize the driving force of these bilateral partnerships as the recognition that "a problem shared is a problem halved" (Interviewee 42). This true collaboration and partnership mind-set is testimony to the identity-building process with its neighbours to the East. In addition to the two civil servants delegated to Poland and Romania, Brandenburg tasked five civil servants with managing bilateral partnerships with regional governments: one manages partnerships with Poland; the second manages partnerships with Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary and the Baltic republics; the third manages cross-border partnerships with Poland and focuses on INTERREG cooperation opportunities; the fourth manages partnerships with the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia and Croatia; and the fifth manages partnership developments. These countries have been selected based on the priority objective of tackling the transition from being an Eastern European state to opening up to Western European opportunities and EU programmes—developing a European mind-set and identifying shared interests with other Europeans. These objectives, too, can foster a European identity by appreciating the commonalities and shared interests amongst Europeans. Shared thematic orientations have been found to include, amongst others, education, employment, demographic change, culture, and, where relevant, INTERREG cross-border cooperation programmes (Interviewee 42). In Wallonia, a specific thematic cooperation objective revolved around the region's political elite's demand to shift priorities from francophone interests broadly defined to specific cooperation opportunities with strategic

countries and regions, all of which having a number of prioritised "problématiques" in common. Identifying opportunities to collaborate with European partners would also develop a European identity, instead of furthering a francophone identity only.

5.1.4   Participating in European Regional Networks: Cultivating a European Identity?

The objectives behind participating in a network are clearly stated by one of the South West of England civil servants interviewed: "Networks help [us] to get involved in cooperation" (Interviewee 30). Whilst there is a general agreement amongst the statements of all civil servants of the four case study regions on the desired outcome of their participation in European regional networks, they also untangle how they believe networks are able to achieve this improved connectedness and collaboration. Networks, on the one hand, offer a space for regional practitioners from both public and private sectors to meet, discuss common thematic interests and then potentially develop a project idea in which each participant can contribute an original skill-set to produce a symbiotic result. The outcome of this is cooperation, as well as European identity building through the enhanced European engagement of the project participants. However, networks also foster a European space and identity in order to foster collaboration of its membership (Interviewee 30). Cultivating a European identity amongst the membership makes them feel more comfortable to share ideas and experiences whilst connecting with practitioners from across Europe. The membership realises that they share thematic interests and focus on the thematic matter at hand, instead of whether they are talking to somebody from the same or a different country. This open mindedness fosters a European identity, based on shared interests. The network thereby develops a European mind-set and European identity. This will be further discussed in the next chapter, which presents a European regional network and assesses how it fosters a European identity.

5.1.5   European Communications: A European Identity Accelerator?

The four case study regions' civil servants developed a variety of communications and outreach methods, and they produced and disseminated an equally broad range of communications and outreach materials to inform citizens of their European engagement. These, in turn, are aimed and

expected to have varying impacts on the European identity building amongst the four case study regions. Whilst the majority of the South West of England's civil servants had a very limited understanding of their communications and outreach role, bluntly stating that communicating to the citizens is not part and parcel of their many responsibilities, Brandenburg invested considerable manpower and material resources into informing its citizens of their region's bouquet of European engagement, benefits and opportunities. Brandenburg's communications strategy thereby appears to be in line with raising citizens' awareness of European opportunities and cultivating a European identity through the region's European policy at large—including its communications. Indeed, Brandenburg stands out amongst the case studies for having placed a full-time communications officer in charge of designing and managing Brandenburg's European mass communication strategy.

The limited communication efforts employed by the civil servants of both the South West of England and Nord–Pas-de-Calais reflect their perception and understanding of their assigned responsibilities and interpretation of prevailing political constraints—it does not, however, reflect their perception of the significance of communication within the context of their European engagement and, to the most part, their desire to develop a European identity through their work. Whilst civil servants managing EU funding (Objectives 1 and 2) in the South West of England categorically negate having any responsibilities to communicate to and with the citizens of their region (Interviewees 32, 33 and 35), civil servants in Nord–Pas-de-Calais have strategic orders not to communicate about their European engagement during election campaigns; however, they may advertise their achievements in the region's public transportation networks when no elections are on the political horizon (Interviewee 17). The civil servants of both regions believe the reason for the elected political elites' concern, both within the Conseil Régional and the national government in the United Kingdom, is rooted in widespread Euroscepticism throughout both areas. Politicians are weary of re-election chances if they publicise their European engagement, particularly if this features anything beyond direct economic benefits to the region. A civil servant representing the South West of England, however, criticises this political position, as she believes engaging and communicating with citizens can change their perceptions of Europe: "If more of us publicised and people realised what EU funding comes into the region and what further opportunities and benefits are available to the region through European programmes,

they would feel more positive toward Europe" (Interviewee 30). This assumption goes in line with the theoretical and empirical claims found in the scholarship (Inglehart 1970; Verhaegen and Hooghe 2015) stating that education and awareness-raising on EU affairs increases the level of European identity.

In contrast to the South West of England and Nord–Pas-de-Calais, Brandenburg and Wallonia both communicate extensively throughout their respective regions. In both Brandenburg and Wallonia, civil servants are tasked with publicising information not only on their websites—as the civil servants in Nord–Pas-de-Calais also do—they are also charged with writing newspaper articles (Interviewee 55, Interviewee 56, Interviewee 18 and Interviewee 41). The gist of Wallonia's communication and outreach materials focuses on its territorial cooperation programmes and future opportunities (Interviewee 55 and Interviewee 56). Brandenburg's scope of communications is significantly wider, as it covers all of the regions' European engagements, including EU funding for Objective 1 and territorial cooperation programmes; developments in the bilateral partnerships; the range of European engagement programmes the region organises for its citizens to experience Europe first hand; and the transposition of new EU laws (Interviewee 41). The communication strategy's central message is: "Europe is also here in Brandenburg"; this recognition, however, requires raising the level of citizens' awareness, it is a call to engage them and allow them to make up their own minds about Europe (Interviewee 41). Yet, the civil servant in charge of communications knows that the political elite would like the citizens to feel more European in light of the communications and the region's European engagement at large (Interviewee 41). Similar to some of the civil servants of Nord–Pas-de-Calais and the South West of England, the civil servant of Brandenburg is mindful of significant scepticism toward both the European Union and the West within the region. He realises that Germany's "reunification from within" will take time. The civil servant further adds that: "For decades, citizens of former East Germany had been told by their government and teachers that cooperation with the West was not permitted. Changing peoples' mind-set, ideology and habits takes time" (Interviewee 41). However, Brandenburg's approach of dealing with Euroscepticism differs considerably from the one adapted, for example, by their counterparts in Nord–Pas-de-Calais, as documented earlier. Brandenburg is confronting prevailing Eurosceptic sentiments in the region by pushing back, by providing a full range of Euro-friendly materi-

als and organizing public events to inform and engage citizens on behalf of "project Europe." The civil servants are as actively engaged in the pursuit of the project and its objectives as is the elected regional political elite. Provided more data were available, it would be very interesting to measure the impact of these very different communication strategies on level of European identity in the respective regions.

The regions' European communications and outreach approach and strategies vary significantly across the four case study regions. Citizens' sentiments have a negative impact on political decisions in both the South West of England and in Nord–Pas-de-Calais. Thus interests of political decision-makers shape policy, and as their interests have been shaped by citizens' preferences, this comes to the detriment of European identity building taking shape within the regions' respective European policies. In Wallonia, civil servants maintain pro-active news on their respective programmes—yet there is no overarching communications objective and it does not pro-actively seek to foster European identity. This may be because levels of European identity in Belgium are quite high; however, there are still Eurosceptics amongst the Europhiles. And Brandenburg, in contrast to the South West of England and Nord–Pas-de-Calais, takes a determinately pro-active position in dealing with the Eurosceptic mind-set of its citizens by communicating strategically throughout the region and aiming to cultivate a European identity through its communications. The region makes use of all communication and outreach platforms at its disposal, including organising information events for citizens to engage in their European activities. Political decisions on how to deal with Eurosceptic undercurrents and communicating, in response, a positive message about the regions' European objectives and engagement shapes and drives the tone and tenor of Brandenburg's communication and outreach strategy.

5.1.6   Regions' Foreign Direct Investment/Business Connections: Investing in European Identity?

Both Brandenburg's and the South West of England RDAs' European teams are staffed with business savvy civil servants whose primary responsibility is to impress upon the regions' business community the advantages of embracing a European perspective to all of their operations. The objective of this work is very clearly driven by an economic agenda, with no European identity-building consideration. The South West of England region has designated one civil servant to court European businesses into

the region to help develop its competitiveness and employment prospects (Interviewee 38). In Brandenburg, a civil servant is tasked with supporting companies from the region in their efforts to expand their business throughout Europe (Interviewee 44). The two case study regions display a variation in objectives as the South West is attracting business from abroad into its region; and Brandenburg displays a more international mind-set by wanting to promote its business opportunities abroad—once more Brandenburg shows that it wants to play a pro-active role on a European and international stage, not only the regional one. For both regions, it is possible that a European identity is cultivated through more European business developments and a heightened European mind-set—however, this would be a by-product with the key objective being economic development and competitiveness.

5.1.7   Does Regional EU Legal Integration Spill Over to European Identity Formation?

The political authority accorded to Wallonia and Brandenburg empowers the two regions to transpose EU directives and legislation into regional laws. In the case of Wallonia, the political elite had highlighted the European identity-building dimension to legal integration, as each regional or national law changed receives a European dimension. The civil servant managing the transposition of EU regulations into Walloon law also discusses benefits of European legal integration and opportunities for cultivating a European identity through better communication on legal improvements thanks to the European Union: "The EU deals with fundamental issues, which improve the daily lives of people; for example the public goods provision of clean air and clean water. People don't often perceive the EU as making such changes; they see the EU as a regulatory body which imposes conditions. Maybe if people saw how the EU touches their lives and tries to make things easier and better, they would be more supportive, identify with the institutions and feel more European" (Interviewee 51). In the case of Brandenburg, the competent authority in charge of legal transposition and integration is the region's political elite (whose findings were presented in Chap. 4). Though he is very Europhile and believes the legal integration to be very important European work, he also believes that it is not as strong of an opportunity to develop a European identity as are the interregional cooperation programmes, bilateral partnerships, European communications and Brussels office activities.

5.2   Civil Servants' Perceptions on the Future Objectives of Regions' European Engagement

Political elites identified interregional cooperation as "the future" and primary driver of regions' European engagement in response to the anticipated South-East drift of convergence and competitiveness funding. In line with this expectation, civil servants anticipate that the bulk of their work in the intermediate future will be focused on identifying and supporting interregional cooperation opportunities across the European Union. Whilst civil servants in Wallonia and Brandenburg are already involved in the planning for the next EU budget period—giving them opportunities to provide input on how the regional European strategy should be developed—civil servants in Nord–Pas-de-Calais and the South West of Europe are not involved in future strategizing. Civil servants from Nord–Pas-de-Calais in particular would like their programmes to include social integration elements and greater citizens' involvement through increased and enhanced communications, exchanges and outreach events. And civil servants from the South West of England are keen to regain the political authority required to engage in interregional cooperation programmes and making strategic communication on European opportunities and the benefits they can bring to the region a key component of their responsibilities. For the South West of England, European affairs are bound to become more difficult to conduct than is currently already the case. As there is widespread Euroscepticism within Britain's national government, there is little support for making the decision to grow the region's European engagement. When the United Kingdom is no longer a member of the European Union, it will most likely not be able to participate in regional policies anymore, however, it will certainly not receive infrastructure development funding from the European Union. Without bilateral partnerships, a lack of European cooperation and networking experience, it will be even more challenging to set up collaborate projects, which could boost the region's economy and employment. Yet, without a European department in the region, it is particularly unlikely that such initiatives would be developed in the first place. European initiatives were thus already constrained by re-centralisation of the government, and they will likely disappear with Brexit rather than be invigorated and help bring sustainable benefits to the region.

Brandenburg's civil servants expect the region's European communications will continue to play a key role in the pursuance of its future European objectives: "Our political elite operating inside the European Directorate

works very hard here, and in his own time he promotes Europe and get citizens to experience Europe. He works very closely with the civil servant managing the region's European communications. This has always been very close to his heart and as long as he continues to work here he will most likely continue to invest his efforts in communications about European opportunities and the relevance of Europe to citizens, as well as getting citizens involved" (Interviewee 43). The political interest of regional decision-makers and the readiness to closely collaborate with the relevant civil servants plays an important role in shaping the scope and objectives of the region's European engagement.

5.3   Variation Amongst Civil Servants' Perceptions of the Role of European Identity within Their European Work

The four case study regions have provided illuminating variations firstly between the different case study regions; secondly between civil servants and political elites; and, thirdly between civil servants who interact with other Europeans and those who do not. The largest variation in perceptions on European identity emerged when the level of engagement with Europeans was at issue. In the South West of England, when the RDA was still mandated with a European department, very few civil servants engaged with Europeans as civil servants primarily managed EU convergence and competitiveness funds within the region. With the RDA shut down, there are fewer civil servants dealing with European affairs and all of them are charged with the management of EU -funded programmes only. Even when the RDA was still up and running, the majority of the civil servants either saw no correlation between European identity and their work, or did not identify with Europe. Those who had dealt with their European counterparts acknowledged the benefit of exchanging experiences or felt a commonality and thus believed the notion of a European identity to be a very realistic concept. These civil servants in the South West of England were disappointed by national government decisions to re-centralise the UK government and stop regions from being pro-actively engaged in interregional cooperation and bilateral partnerships—two policy dimensions that make it possible to foster a European identity. Furthermore, the civil servants were frustrated about not being able to raise awareness of the constituents regarding the benefits to the region by European funding and European opportunities. They believe this would have helped to cul-

tivate a positive European attitude and even a European identity throughout the region—and in turn this might have an impact on top political decision-makers, the way they shape European affairs and the decision to leave the European Union.

Civil servants of the other regions are much more involved with their European counterparts. They also focused more on interregional cooperation programmes instead of the management of convergence or competitiveness funds within the region. All of these civil servants were able to conceptualise European identity and articulate the role they perceived European identity to play within their respective European policy. However, civil servants had different expectations as to the influence and impact their European engagement might have on the facilitation of a European identity. Whilst most European policy dimensions of regions have as a core objective the economic development of the region, all policy dimensions have the possibility of cultivating a European identity when implemented. Key causes of variation in implementation included the political elites' interest in building a European identity through the region's policy; whether civil servants perceived an opportunity of fostering a European identity through their work; whether civil servants themselves have a European mind-set; and the scope of regions' European policy, as predominantly determined by government system and top political decision-makers' interests.

The first two hypotheses of this book proposed explanations for the variation in the role European identity would play in regions' European policies. The first hypothesis explained that variation would stem from political elites' interests and consideration of European identity as part of the region's policy (H1). The second hypothesis expected civil servants, who engage more with their European counterparts and colleagues on a daily basis than political elites, would feel more European and thus want to build a European identity through their policy implementation work (H2). Evidence from the interviews provides sufficient support to claim that these hypotheses are supported. Indeed, the interests of top regional decision-makers have shown to have had an impact in deciding on the scope of regions' European policies, as well as whether they would feature European identity in them or not. In the case of Nord–Pas-de-Calais, the previous political elites had dramatically enhanced the role of European identity within the European policy, however, current political elites do not support those objectives and have limited their programmes in comparison to those focussing on economic development. In contrast to this,

the political elite of Brandenburg is an enthusiastic Europhile and translates his personal interests and preferences into his policy–and communicated to the civil servants that they ought to do the same to remain consistent with the policy they are implementing. The second hypothesis also holds true in most cases studied. Regional civil servants indeed talked about European identity with greater ease than political elites, and many suggested that their attitudes stemmed from the extent of their European engagement. Two civil servants in the South West of England, who had had more European exposure and experience than others from the RDA, were very Euro-friendly and disappointed in the failure of the region's European policy to feature European identity building. The civil servants who did not have comparable European exposure and experience did not miss European identity building's absence within the European policy. Also in Nord–Pas-de-Calais, the civil servants managing European projects that foster European identity (the youth exchange programme and bilateral partnerships in particular) felt more European than the present political elites and therefore felt let down by the decision to scale down identity-building programmes and refocus the resources to economic development projects with identity building as an un-stated by-product. In Wallonia, the civil servants working on interregional cooperation were also more outspoken about European identity building in practice than the political elite. The only exception to the findings is Brandenburg, where the political elite was such an enthusiastic Europhile that it would be impossible for the civil servants to be more Europhile than him–and more keen to implement European identity-building activities through their work. Though the third hypothesis, on European regional networks cultivating a European identity, was also corroborated briefly in this chapter, based on civil servants' interviews, this will be studied with more precision in the next chapter with research findings from network members and managers evaluated.

5.4   The Impact of Regions' Characteristics in Shaping the Scope and Objectives of Their European Policy

Chapters 1 and 2 of this book presented research findings from political scientists, who hypothesised that five regional characteristics have an effect on the scope and objectives of regions' European engagement. Civil ser-

vants have also identified these five regional characteristics, which they have found to shape their European engagement. They include the system of government, key political interests, the region's respective geographic location, language and heritage, as well as its networking capacity and participation. This validates all of the regional characteristics identified in this book as having a meaningful impact on the regions' European engagement. How these regional characteristics shape the scope and objectives of regions' European policy will be evaluated later, based on the four case study regions' civil servants' experiences. This section provides an additional explanation for why some regions are more pro-active in their European engagement and why some regions perceive European identity more naturally than others.

5.4.1   Government System and Political Elites' Interests

The political constraint imposed by England's centralised government system and the political interests of those wielding political power at the centre is not an experience shared by–nor an impediment inflicted on–the other three case study regions, at least not to the same extent. Due to a lack of political authority combined with a lack of political interest from the central government in European integration, the South West of England's European policy had been shrunk to only manage EU funding allocated to the region for convergence and competitiveness development. European opportunities for which the region must identify European partners and apply for EU funding–or fund the projects themselves–are no longer deemed appropriate for the region to undertake and have been cut (Interviewees 30 and 31). And with the decision to leave the European Union, even the most basic scope of the region's European affairs will cease to exist. Nord–Pas-de-Calais' civil servants both share and support the English region's claim that government systems and political interests heavily weigh in and impact on regions' territorial cooperation scope and objectives. And whilst Nord–Pas-de-Calais has established, over time, a substantial territorial cooperation portfolio within the European Union's funded Objective 3, the region's civil servants still feel constrained in their efforts to further optimize existing opportunities by their political elite. "The wide scope of activities of the European Directorate and, in particular, of the Institute for European Territorial Cooperation, was decided through a sequence of European regional reforms in the 1980s and by regional political elites who recognised great opportunities for the region

to be more active in European affairs. The current political elite, however, does not share this enthusiasm and, as a result of their different take, our budget has shrunk and some projects have been put on hold, such as the youth exchange programme" (Interviewee 19) and bilateral partnerships (Interviewee 22). Both civil servants in charge of the youth exchange programme and bilateral partnerships explain that their work fosters social integration, a European mind-set and European identity building. They recognise a shift in objectives as determined by the interests of the region's political elites: whilst previous political elites strongly encouraged the inclusion of a social dimension within their cooperation programmes (which has the ability of fostering a European identity), the current political elites are shifting back toward an economic focus.

5.4.2   Geography

In addition to the government system and political interests, regional civil servants have also found geographic factors to have a significant impact on both the objectives and scope of their European engagement–particularly in interregional cooperation projects. A civil servant from Wallonia identified projects in which geographic proximity to another country's region has, for instance, fostered cooperation of hospital treatment and health insurances, as well as public transportation: "Citizens from one country may get treated in a hospital which is the geographically closest to their residence, however this hospital is located in a different country; or public buses don't stop at the border to enable people who live and work in different regions and countries to more easily experience the EU's free movement of labour and services. In time, we see people working together more naturally and thinking less about national borders" (Interviewee 56). In turn, when citizens think less about national borders and more about receiving equal treatment by Europeans in general, they also begin to embrace a European mind-set and European identity. Developing a sense of sameness with their European neighbours, indeed, can foster a European identity and cross-border cooperation projects cultivate this exchange and feeling. The civil servant recounts that opportunities for interregional cooperation arise due to geographic factors, thus corroborating the hypothesis that geographic border location does have considerable impact on regions' European engagement. A second civil servant dealing with interregional cooperation confirms this assessment: "Nord – Pas de Calais is geographically ideally located for cross-border cooperation

projects; therefore, these come quite natural to the region" (Interviewee 28). And a civil servant from Wallonia confirms that based on the very positive experience with a geographically determined cross-border cooperation project, a larger interregional cooperation programme can evolve, encompassing a wider scope of European regions (Interviewee 55). Geographic location is documented by civil servants from both the French and Belgian case study regions as being an important influence in their natural participation in interregional cooperation, and a facilitator to building a European identity through their cross-border cooperation work.

Geography however is a multifaceted natural phenomena, and not always a "natural" when it comes to linking people, goods and services, and thereby cultivating a European identity. It can compound already existing socio-political, socio-economical and socio-cultural barriers. In fact, geographical barriers, according to the civil servants in Wallonia, the South West of England and Brandenburg, can make the difference between a successful and less successful cooperation venture; it can also be the deciding factor for a failed cooperative initiative. A civil servant from Wallonia put it this way: "Cross-border cooperation in Belgium depends very much on the geographic location. On the one hand, regions to the North of Wallonia have easy cross-border opportunities to France for a range of topic areas; whereas the southern part of the region has a vast forest on the border area and therefore does not have as many cross-border cooperation opportunities beyond forestry activities" (Interviewee 56). Even though the region is located on a border to another European region, a forest can act as a border and cause a disconnect, thereby impeding cooperation. This perception is widely shared by civil servants in the South West of England, who blame the region's geographical isolation for exacerbating an already unique set of challenges to its interregional cooperation efforts: "It is more difficult to conceptualise interregional cooperation in the South West of England due to the Channel; people do not walk back and forth from the South West to another European region, and therefore don't as easily identify shared problems and the possibility of creating, together, shared solutions" (Interviewee 31). The geographic isolation can therefore, also, further compound the lack of European identity building in the South West of England, as there is no natural European exchange, engagement and experience.

Also Brandenburg's civil servants had mixed feelings about the region's geographic location and its impact on interregional cooperation. On the

one hand, being a direct neighbour to Poland, which is still much in need to develop across the board, provided opportunities to cooperate in innumerable areas, whereas opportunities in the more developed western regions of Europe were much more limited; particularly in the absence of access to EU funding. A civil servant explains: "We have a 250Km long border to Poland, which offers many collaboration opportunities in transportation, encounters and exchanges, amongst others" (Interviewee 43). However, the mutual will to cooperate is somewhat tempered by the very fact that the Oder river flows directly between Brandenburg and Polish regions causing great cooperation difficulties because of the lack of connecting bridges: "This makes it more difficult to meet and communicate. We first need to build bridges and develop an interlinked transportation infrastructure between the regions; and then we can develop additional cooperation opportunities" (Interviewee 50). The region's civil servants have identified that its geographic location has an impact both on the potential for people to connect and collaborate, and through this European engagement and experience, build a European identity. This is in line with statements made by civil servants from the other regions. Whilst sharing direct land borders can potentially be great natural assets supporting regions' cooperation objectives and efforts, their lack and, moreover, natural geographic borders like thick forests, rivers or the English Channel, can present serious impediments to cooperation and identity building across regions. There is an evidence-based consensus among civil servants from Brandenburg, Wallonia and the South West of England and Nord–Pas-de-Calais that their geographic location has both positive and negative impacts on cross-border interregional cooperation experiences and, furthermore, on their European engagement in general. This corroborates the findings from the literature review in Chap. 1 and regional characteristics analysis in Chap. 2.

5.4.3   *Language/Heritage*

Further developing the civil servants' explanations of government systems and political interests, as well as geographic location having a significant impact on their objectives and scope of their interregional cooperation, they also identify language and heritage as influential factors. In Wallonia, language poses a challenge to cooperation: "If a project participant is calling a potential participant to discuss an idea and knows that that person also speaks French, communication is much easier and they can make deci-

sions more quickly. However, if the potential participants do not share a common language, particularly when discussing very specific technicalities, it is more difficult to cooperate" (Interviewee 56). And when there is a lack of European collaboration and engagement, European identity is not cultivated in turn. Also civil servants in Brandenburg have identified language hurdles in their cooperation practices: "From our side, we have great difficulty learning Polish, whereas our Polish counterparts learn German quite well. So from our side, we need to overcome this linguistic challenge and improve our language skills so cooperation can develop more easily" (Interviewee 42). The impact of both language and heritage was also very much on the mind of a civil servant from Nord–Pas-de-Calais: "The French have some difficulty in working within other cultures. To overcome cultural differences, we organise a course teaching our potential French project partners how to overcome cultural differences and collaborate with other Europeans" (Interviewee 18). This course also fosters a European mind-set, which can start developing a European identity.

In response to these explanations of language and heritage impacting interregional cooperation, civil servants from both the Nord–Pas-de-Calais and Brandenburg region prepared and introduced educational materials to overcome heritage-driven challenges: "We have organised bilingual Kindergarten and schools together with Polish regions in order to help the families with German and Polish citizenship" (Interviewee 43). These Kindergarten and schools will, of course, also facilitate future cooperation opportunities of the next generation of potential project participants. Yet, not all language and heritage challenges can be overcome with educational materials and measures, no matter how innovative. In Brandenburg, the heritage it shares with its Polish partners is two-sided: on the one hand, the political elites point toward commonalities between Brandenburg and Poland in terms of development stages and needing to integrate into Western Europe after having shared a socialist past; and on the other hand, the civil servants in Brandenburg convey that the regions have a difficult heritage to cope with due to World War II and its consequences. The civil servants working on INTERREG programmes all agree that numerous prejudices persist in this area because of the war. Many people who originated from one side of the border have not yet set foot across the other side of the border. They explain that motivating people to not become prisoners of history and break free from prejudices in order to work together is a challenge. A civil servant reflects on the

enormity of this task: "[The] Polish region bordering the northern part of Brandenburg has a very small population because after the war it was thought that that area would go to Germany again at some point. However, this did not happen. Nonetheless, Polish people were reticent to move there. Hence, in that area, there is little immediate cross-border cooperation. In the southern areas of the border, the German and the Polish populations live much closer to the borders, naturally, and there is more immediate cross-border cooperation occurring there" (Interviewee 49). Brandenburg is a particularly interesting case study in this context as it brings to life the complexity of its recent history: of being part of former East Germany–and contributing perceptions approaches and insights into cooperation and identity-building opportunities with Eastern European regions that are unique when compared to those of the other case study regions.

5.4.4   *European Regional Network Participation*

European regional networks have been established to help all regions engage in European opportunities. Particularly the regions with characteristics that challenge their European engagement, networks have been set up to level the playing field. In practice, they provide a space for regional public and private sector actors to meet each other, discuss their common thematic interests and identify potential collaboration opportunities, if this is a bilateral partnership amongst regions or an interregional cooperation project. "Networks have been very useful to gain European-wide access to thematic information and best practice advice helpful to the region – without needing to conduct a large scale research project on what each of the European regions is doing in that thematic area right now. If I am working on transportation policy, it is useful to know how other regions have dealt with their transportation policy and which elements of that I can learn from through a bilateral partnership and best practice sharing. The network enables me to find this information and the corresponding contacts quickly" (Interviewee 29). A civil servant from the South West of England explained how networks compensate for low levels of political authority in the region's European engagement: "When we were still working in interregional cooperation projects, I found it very useful to attend some network meetings to connect with other regional representatives and brainstorm potential project ideas together. I would not have had the political authority or resources to travel across Europe to hold

meetings with regional representatives, but attending network meetings in Brussels fit within my scope of political authority. We met useful contacts to the region and developed some interregional cooperation project ideas with them. Unfortunately, we don't know whether we can pursue these or not. But without the network, I would not have met the project participants or participating in project design brainstorming at all" (Interviewee 30). Networks can boost European cooperation, and can develop a European mind-set amongst their membership. This will be further investigated in the next chapter, dedicated to the analysis of the European Regions for Research and Innovation Network (ERRIN).

The regional characteristics that have the ability to facilitate or challenge regions' European engagement and identity building have been identified by civil servants to include government system, political interests, geographic location, language / heritage and European regional network participation. These corroborate the characteristics identified by political scientists, as documented in Chap. 1, and thus provides more evidence-based support for their validity in shaping both the scope and objectives of regions' European engagement and identity building.

5.5   Civil Servants' Perceptions: The Role of European Identity and Impact of Regional Characteristics

This chapter has presented the perceptions of the four case study regions' civil servants implementing their respective regions' European policies. It was assessed what role European identity plays in the policies the civil servants implement, and whether they personally want to cultivate a European identity through their work. This chapter also provided civil servants' support for the claims in the literature, as presented in Chaps. 1 and 2, on the six regional characteristics that affect the scope and objectives of regions' European policies.

Interview findings have documented that the majority of civil servants are enthusiastic about Europe and that they perceive there to be a natural link between engaging in European-wide programmes and developing a European identity. Furthermore, they perceive European identity to be connected, predominantly, to experiencing and interacting with their fellow European counterparts through interregional cooperation (including European regional networks) and bilateral partnerships, as well as by hav-

ing access to European communications. Hence, the more citizens are aware of European opportunities, the more they are involved in European projects, the more European identity is cultivated–and in turn, more support for the European Union emerges. Civil servants in Brandenburg perceived European identity to play an important role in their region's European policies and programmes; civil servants in Nord–Pas-de-Calais perceived their European engagement to also facilitate the development of a European identity; and civil servants from Wallonia believed that interregional cooperation in general facilitates a European identity; whilst civil servants from the South West of England, due to political and operational constraints, perceive no link between their European engagement and developing a European identity–and some civil servants deeply regret this to be the case. The hypotheses on European identity building were also corroborated by civil servants' perceptions in this chapter. Firstly, the European mind-set and interests of political elites determine whether European identity features in their European policies. Secondly, the civil servants who engage more with other Europeans feel more European and want to foster a European identity through their work. Those who cannot do so are disappointed by limitations typically determined by their national government system and extent of regional political authority or by their political elites' interests. Thirdly, European regional networks cultivate both a European identity and then interregional cooperation.

Civil servants also identified a range of regional characteristics that influence and impact the scope and objectives of their respective regions' European engagement. The five characteristics include: the government system, the political interests of top decision-makers, the geographic location of the region, its regional languages and heritage, as well as the region's participation in European regional networks. These findings are of particular value as they document perceptions of implementers dealing with these issues on a daily basis, and they are of importance as they corroborate the literature's hypotheses presented in Chap. 1 and studied in Chap. 2.

Finally, this chapter documented a new range of positions as the civil servants were prepared to comment quite critically about the top level regional decision-makers' (notably in Nord–Pas-de-Calais) and national decision-makers' (in the South West of England) policy decisions and voiced their disagreement. Civil servants identified territorial cooperation to be a key area of regions' European engagement and the domain with the highest future funding potential. Whilst civil servants in Wallonia and

in Brandenburg are optimistic about the future of interregional cooperation, civil servants from Nord–Pas-de-Calais showed signs of disappointment and frustration with the increasing constraints and subsequent limits of their scope of cooperation, and furthermore civil servants from the South West of England expressed little hope or expectation in attaining the political authority necessary to re-engage more effectively in interregional cooperation again in future–and certainly now with the decision to leave the European Union entirely, the door has closed even further on future European opportunities. This notwithstanding, civil servants from both Nord–Pas-de-Calais and the South West of England argued that for any European policy or programme to achieve its full potential, they must be able to communicate and raise awareness throughout the region. In both regions, this is a politically unsupported objective. Furthermore, civil servants from the four case study regions identified the link between European identity building and sustainability of European-wide cooperation and socio-economic integration–an important link several political elites did not discuss. If people do not feel European and comfortable collaborating with other Europeans, also European economic integration will not ensue to the extent of its potential. Or if citizens do not feel any attachment to the European Union, they may, as in the case of the United Kingdom, vote to leave the European Union. Thus, regardless of whether political elites are Europhile or not, they ought to want European identity building to feature within their European policy in order to ensure continued support for EU membership and the sustained economic development and competitiveness that come with it.

European Regional Networks: Enhancing European Engagement and Identity Building?

In the previous two chapters, regional political elites and civil servants have explained that European regional networks help them engage in European opportunities. Networks have been useful particularly to civil servants in search of thematic information and best-practice advice, building bilateral partnerships and in meeting interregional cooperation project partners. By doing so, European regional networks provide an environment conducive to regions' European-wide collaboration. They offer their membership a space in which Europeans can connect on shared thematic interests, be it transportation or research and innovation. Members can disseminate information, which could be relevant to other network members and also share ideas of potential projects, which could be developed with practitioners from within the network membership—where each practitioner would contribute a particular skill. Members participate in such networks because of their common interest in a particular field, and they are motivated to work together and create projects that could receive EU funding. The motivation of members is therefore not only European thematic collaboration, but also seeking economic development and potentially also seeking further European social integration. Indeed, it is believed that European regional networks also foster a European identity through their work. Fligstein (2008) hypothesised that networks would cultivate a European identity as a by-product of participants' European engagement with the membership. This chapter will not only evaluate whether networks foster a European identity through their work, but also whether they intend to cultivate a European identity within the membership to boost their col-

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laboration and interregional cooperation practices. If the membership had a European identity, working together would come more naturally and the network would render its services of supporting interregional cooperation, bilateral partnerships and information dissemination more effectively. These key questions of this chapter directly relate to Hypothesis 3 of this book and will produce evidence-based answers to the role of European identity within European regional networks. As a case study, ERRIN (European Regions for Research and Innovation) will be evaluated—whether it fosters European engagement and European identity. It will also be assessed whether the network helps regions overcome their regional characteristics, which challenge their European engagement, as this was one of the original objectives of European regional networks when they were established by the European Commission's Directorate for Regional Policy.

This chapter will first conceptualise the evolution of European regional networks and the types of networks that exist. Their aims and objectives will be explained to gain an understanding on whether networks intend to cultivate a European identity or merely foster European interregional cooperation with European identity being a potential by-product. Then, the case study on ERRIN will be assessed. ERRIN is an example of a significant European regional network; it has not only managed to sustain itself after its EU co-financing came to an end, it has also been able to facilitate regional partnerships as well as EU funding for projects, which were crafted by network members. As the network has developed regional partnerships and interregional cooperation, it will be assessed what role European identity plays in the network's objectives. It will also be assessed how the network helps regions overcome their regional characteristics that hinder their European engagement. This would have a positive impact on furthering European integration and subsequently also European identity. To additionally provide perceptions of the network's objectives and results, findings from semi-structured interviews with ERRIN members will be presented.

6.1   Evolution and Objectives of European Regional Networks: Are They Set Up to Help Boost Regions' European Engagement and Cultivate a European Identity?

This section will look at the relatively brief history of European regional networks; what they aim to achieve and what their announced and actual value-added is to its members. This research will provide a better under-

standing of whether networks can realistically aim to bridge the coopera-
tion hurdles posed by incompatible regional characteristics (including
national government system, geographic location, regional official lan-
guage, and duration of EU membership); whether the promotion of a
European identity, either intentionally or unintentionally, is part and par-
cel of the networks' expected value-added benefits; or whether networks
are solely seeking to promote economic benefits to the region by securing
access to an expanding European market.

The progression of European integration has been aided by initiatives
of European interregional cooperation, which address needs identified
by supranational, national, regional and local organisations as well as
practitioners. The European Union's Directorate-General for Regional
Policy was established in 1968 to strengthen the European Community
by addressing the removal of economic disparities across the European
Union, the necessary restructuring of declining industrial areas and the
diversification of rural areas with declining agriculture (European
Commission Website: On the history of the Regional Policy). The ori-
gins of policies directed at the regions dates back to 1975 with the
European Regional Development Fund. It had a budget of EUROS 1.3
million (European Commission Website: On the history of the Regional
Policy). The Single European Act in 1986 formalised the initiatives of
the European Union to both close the gap between regional economic
disparities and foster European regional cohesion. Whilst the first
European interregional programme started in 1989 (INTERREG I,
funded by the European Regional Development Fund), the mention of
the need to form European regional networks to foster interregional
cooperation only came in 2000 with the INTERREG III programme,
running from 2000 to 2006. It called for the exchange of experience and
good practice, as well as networking in policy areas including research,
technology, enterprise, information, tourism, culture and environment
(European Commission Website: On Regional Policy's INTERREG 3
programme). The INTERREG IV programme, running from 2007 to
20,013, also embraced interregional cooperation as its third strand, and,
within it, a section on European regional networks for cooperation
(European Commission Website: On Regional Policy's INTERREG 4
programme). Especially when preparing for the 2004 Enlargement pro-
cess of 20 new EU Member States from Eastern and Central Europe
backed by mostly weaker economies than those of the previous EU-15,
cohesion and the removal of economic disparities was a key objective the

European Union was expected to tackle. In light of this, and in reaction
to the increasing competitiveness of the global economy, the European
Council adopted the Lisbon Strategy in March 2000 and renewed it in
2005. Both placed under the spotlight the need for European coopera-
tion in the fields of innovation, employment and growth in the European
Union (European Commission Website: On the Lisbon Strategy).
Targeting a sustainable level of competitiveness of the European knowl-
edge economy, the European Commission designed programmes to
facilitate European interregional cooperation in the identified core fields.
It has progressively developed these programmes in terms of scope and
budget. The commission has also implemented network strategies, such
as the "Macro Regions," to further support territorial cooperation, par-
ticularly within the scope of the Regional Policy. Here, countries and
their regions within a specific geographic zone (such as the Baltic Sea
region in 2009, the Danube region in 2010, the Adriatic and Ionian
region in 2014, as well as the Alpine region in 2015) are encouraged to
tackle shared challenges and problems together, by sharing their exper-
tise and ideas and develop common approaches with the support of
Regional Policy funding (Gänzle and Kern 2016).

In an effort to further enhance the operational force of the Lisbon
Strategy and European regional networks, additional programmes have
been developed to optimise and go beyond the resources of INTERREG
IV, the Structural Funds and Cohesion Funds with the objective of facili-
tating cooperative ventures amongst Europeans and to strengthen the
European Union's knowledge-based economies and making them glob-
ally more competitive and sustainable (Council Decision on FP7
Document in December 2006). European Commission–funded projects
fostering European regional cooperation in the fields of research and
innovation have been joined together from DG Research, DG Enterprise,
DG Regio and the Committee of the Regions. It is expected that the
synergies created would make the scope more comprehensive and the
management of the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7), and later
Horizon 2020, housed in DG Research, more efficient and effective.
This programme deals mainly with strengthening European interre-
gional cooperation in the areas specified by the Lisbon Strategy; it also
manifests a growing interest of both the European Union and the mem-
ber state governments for substantial budgetary increases. Because of
the programme's relevance to the mandate and mission of the European
regional networks–as it covers significant policy areas, strong budget,

and deals with issues pertinent to regional governments, universities, small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs) and other practitioners–the FP7's short history will be briefly reviewed.

FP7 ran from 2007 to 2013 with a budget of EUROS 50.521 million (FP7-Cooperation Website). It had four core objectives: "Cooperation" (for European trans-national cooperation by sharing knowledge, experience and ideas; thus becoming more efficient and competitive) (FP7-Cooperation Website); "Ideas" (for science and technology engineering projects) (FP7-Ideas Website); "People" (for human resources in research and technology) (FP7-People Website); and "Capacities" (for research and innovation capacities of SMEs across European regions in order to strengthen European competitiveness in the knowledge economy) (FP7-Capacities Website). The "Capacities" objective of FP7 touched on both the Lisbon Strategy and the key objective of European integration: economic strengthening through European cooperation (FP7-Capacities Website). The European Community boosted these initiatives by propelling the Lisbon Strategy to the forefront of European collaborative public sector activities and consistently increasing the funding for especially those projects supporting European interregional cooperation in the fields of research and innovation (European Commission Communication: "Building the era for knowledge of growth"). Its two predecessors, the Fifth Framework Programme (FP5), running from 1998 to 2002, funded initiatives for projects in research and innovation, competitiveness, growth and the knowledge economy (European Commission FP5 Website: "Key") with EUROS 14.960 million (European Commission FP5 Website: "Budget"), while the Sixth Framework Programme (FP6), running from 2002 to 2006, funded projects in research and innovation to strengthen SMEs (European Commission FP6 Website: "Activities") with EUROS 17.883 million (European Commission FP6 Website: "Budget"). FP7 shows yet an increase both in budget (EUROS 50521 million) (European Commission FP5 Website: "Budget") and in project scope and specification (European Commission FP5 Website: "Key"). Projects dealing with research and innovation, economic growth and competitiveness have improved in coordination and funding. Also European interregional cooperation has experienced increasing importance, and facilitating networks have received growing support. Are networks therefore established to foster economic growth, or do they also foster a European identity? Based on the programmes' policy description, the objectives appear to be more of an economic nature than of a European identity-building nature.

However, the "Cooperation" objective under FP7, which fostered transnational cooperation by sharing knowledge, experience and ideas, could also foster European identity through the participants' European-wide engagement.

To test the scope of such networks' objectives and clarify whether networks indeed support regions' European engagement and whether they additionally cultivate a European identity, the European regional network ERRIN will serve as a case study. There are several aspects of the network that make its study particularly relevant and that contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of regional European activities and the role of European identity within them. Firstly, it has gained the European Commission's as well as European regions' attention because of its record of facilitating European interregional cooperation. Secondly, the overview of the European Community's interest and increase in financial support manifests the belief that the network is indeed supporting regions' access to participate in European politics. The case study network displays a bottom-up approach: regional representatives and practitioners perceived a need and desire to cooperate on the basis of grassroots level engagement. This desire resulted in the establishment of the network and its reaching out to the European Commission for financial support through its programmes. It will be illuminating to learn whether the bottom-up generated aims and perceived value-added of ERRIN will mirror the top-down economic prioritisation programmes designed by the European Union's DG REGIO—or whether the cultivation of a European identity also plays a central role in the network's objectives. Furthermore, ERRIN's membership includes multiple regions with a wide range of characteristics. These features and characteristics can pose challenges to regions' European engagement, as has been explained in the previous chapters. Most members also operate from within unitary national government systems, and they are geographically isolated. They have different regional languages which are not EU working languages; they are seeking to strengthen their economies; and they do not participate regularly in other European networks, thus have little networking and collaboration experience at a European level. Therefore, examining the network more closely will help understand how European regional networks facilitate all regions' access to European politics and indeed help regions overcome their constraints posed by various regional characteristics. Furthermore, as the membership does not draw on a vast cooperation

experience, this network will be a useful assessment of whether it cultivates a European identity purposefully in order to more naturally and effectively foster cooperation opportunities.

6.2   CASE STUDY ON ERRIN: EUROPEAN REGIONS FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION NETWORK

This section will examine ERRIN in more detail, including its history, aims, objectives, activities, effectiveness and member satisfaction rates. Furthermore, it will assess the network's ability to bridge existing regional capacity gaps, irrespective of their causal relationships (national government systems, geographic location or economic situation).

ERRIN started off as a pioneering network. It was established by regional governments and chambers of commerce representatives in 2001 when regions' European engagement, European interregional cooperation and the establishment of European regional networks gathered momentum and when networking at the heights of the information and communication revolution became the preferred modus operandi. It was mandated to enhance regional awareness of cooperation opportunities and thereby help foster and enhance the extent of their European engagement. In operational terms, ERRIN set out to provide a platform for regional practitioners from SMEs, universities, chambers of commerce and local and regional authorities to network, exchange information and best practice, and, through a cooperative approach, jointly design and execute projects on a European level with EU funding.

ERRIN is an example of a successful initiative brought to life with European Commission support within the FP6 / Regions of Knowledge Programme. It received Commission co-funding from 2004 to 2006 and then successfully transitioned from being a partly Commission-funded pilot project to a sustainable and independent not-for-profit organisation with 65, and later more than 100 paying members from 25 European countries. The network has managed a difficult transition period from being primarily dependent on public funding from the Commission to relying on membership's financing. This underlines that ERRIN has successfully identified and addressed regions' needs, as otherwise its membership would not contribute to the financing of irrelevant or unsatisfactory services—particularly not during an economic recession with stringent budget cuts.

6.2.1   *ERRIN 2001 to 2006*

ERRIN was established in 2001 by a number of regional representatives based in Brussels. They had perceived an increasing need for regional involvement in the thematic area of research and innovation and were aware of growing opportunities offered by the European Commission (ERRIN Prospectus Document from January 2007)—yet they needed help in identifying cooperation partners and connecting with them in a way that collaboration could evolve. They also wanted to raise awareness of the potential for economic gains by linking and cooperating in that area. The network, in short, was to provide a platform for the exchange of ideas, information, contacts; it was to be "a marketplace" where everybody benefits from the accumulative input (Letter from Glynis Whiting, West Midlands in Europe Director and ERRIN 2004–2006 Management Board Member and Chair, 2006).

Three years after its establishment, ERRIN received European Commission co-funding through FP6 / Regions of Knowledge Pilot Action. By receiving funding, the network was able to grow its membership, expand network activities and further promote and optimise its key objective: jointly identifying and implementing projects with a European approach.

The network's central administration was tasked to facilitate coordination and communication amongst members, their regional representatives in Brussels, regional decision-makers, regional practitioners, as well as designated EU officials (ERRIN Prospectus Document from April 2004). Having the central administration manage these tasks would further increase the benefits to participating European regions (Letter from Glynis Whiting, West Midlands in Europe Director and ERRIN 2004–2006 Management Board Member and Chair, 2006).

From April 2004 to March 2006, ERRIN was co-funded by the European Commission. During this time, its free membership had grown steadily to 181 members, including the following numbers of regions per European country: Austria (9); Belgium (7); Cyprus (1); Czech Republic (2); Denmark (11); Estonia (2); Finland (10); France (15); Germany (15); Hungary (3); Ireland (3); Italy (18); Latvia (1); Lithuania (1); Netherlands (10); Norway (6); Poland (14); Poland (14); Slovenia (1); Spain (18); Sweden (9); and the United Kingdom (25) (ERRIN Document: Membership Contacts as updated in March 2006). The breadth of regional members demonstrated that irrespec-

tive of regions' different national government systems, geographic locations, regional languages and economic situations they identified in a jointly designed and operationalised European regional network—an instrument of mutual purpose and benefit. Founding members included regional administrations, universities and non-profit regional public and private organisations (ERRIN Document: ERRIN Prospectus 2006). The members were steered by the Management Board, headed by eight network members: West Midlands (Chair); City of Helsinki; Regione Piemonte; Freie Hansestadt Bremen; Unioncamere Lombardia; Scotland Europa; Ministry of the Brussels-Capital Region; and Uusimaa Regional Council (Letter from Glynis Whiting, West Midlands in Europe Director and ERRIN 2004–2006 Management Board Member and Chair, 2006).

In the case of the Management Board, a pattern of engagement emerged: regions not located on a border to another European region and operating within unitary national government systems took a leading role in the network's activities, whilst regions located at a border to another European region and conducting their affairs within the confines of federal national government systems opted to adopt a more passive role. It indicates that the more active regions are those that are by virtue of their geographic location or levels of authority obtained from their central government more isolated from European engagement and interregional cooperation. They are the network participants that needed to benefit from the network's services the most and possibly this encouraged them to engage the most in steering the network during its establishment. Network activities included policy area-specific working groups; information sessions on calls for proposals for Commission funded projects, seminars and workshops, as well as high-profile annual general events (ERRIN Document: ERRIN Prospectus, 2004). Through these activities, members would be able to connect, based on their thematic interests, and discuss and develop potential collaboration ideas. European identity could be cultivated through this engagement of European members, however, it is not clearly stated as an objective of the activities.

In its first few years of operation, three interregional cooperation projects were born from the network's membership: Net Bio CluE involving eight European countries; an e-Health Biotechnology project coordination between two ERRIN members; and an entrepreneurial innovation project between two other ERRIN members (ERRIN Document: Final

Report 2006). ERRIN also received positive feedback from its members based on its ability to bridge the gap between regional characteristics that threatened to interfere with cooperation and coordinating activities; to design novel approaches for dealing with research and innovation initiatives on a regional level; to provide a central and efficiently managed location in Brussels to gain fast access to information and face time with EU institutions' staff (ERRIN Document: Member Feedback Forms March – April 2006). Thus, network members were happy to be engaging more with their European colleagues and some were working together particularly closely within their projects—it can be assumed that European identity building became a by-product of the enhanced collaboration on both fronts.

It is significant that ERRIN members feel the network is able to not let the challenging effects of regional characteristics, including the pros and cons of respective national government systems, geographic locations and economic situations impede on regions' opportunities for cooperative action and mutual benefits. The feedback forms also indicated that 88 percent of the members are satisfied with the networks ability to facilitate interregional communication—thus the members perceive to be developing European mind-sets and discussing their ideas more freely than they had prior to joining the network. Improved and natural communication is very important in developing relationships and identity, and improvement on this can be expected to boost the level of European identity within the membership. A further 72 percent of the network membership stated to be satisfied with the network's ability to encourage best practice exchange amongst other members; and 70 percent were satisfied with the network's ability to connect ERRIN members with officials of the European Commission (ERRIN Document: Member Feedback Forms March–April 2006). The network, in the eyes of its members, has thus successfully facilitated European engagement and interregional cooperation by fostering cohesion amongst its diverse membership, and it has brought benefits to its members through the activities, services and project funding. Left unaddressed in the documents, however, is whether ERRIN also aims to facilitate European identity in addition to its multiple cooperation objectives. Less explicitly, these survey results also show that the membership is communicating better and growing together as a closer community—which not only fosters improved collaboration but also cultivated a European identity amongst the European membership as a by-product.

6.2.2 ERRIN 2006 Onwards

In response to the members' interest in continuing the network post co-financing from the European Commission, a voluntary steering group of 25 members formulated the following objectives of the network (ERRIN Document: Draft Prospectus April 2006):

- Facilitate information and dialogue on research and innovation at the EU level;
- Promote interregional exchange and support on selected issues of interest;
- Develop practitioner contacts for future project cooperation;
- Strengthen policy and thematic knowledge by sharing best-practice experience;
- Co-operate with other European networks.

These objectives show that the membership, during this time of transition, was opting for further enhancing the extent of their collaboration. They perceived benefits of their collaboration and wanted to continue to grow as a community founded on a shared thematic interest and willingness to collaborate. Although identity building does not feature as an explicit objective in the preceding list, a shared group identity has been established from 2001 to 2006 and members pro-actively decided to further develop this—at their own expense. During the transition period, members provided ERRIN with free-of-charge office space for its secretariat as well as financing for its re-organisation and re-launch. This suggests members were confident about the network's ability to generate value-added for the membership (Letter from Glynis Whiting, West Midlands in Europe Director and ERRIN 2004–2006 Management Board Member and Chair, 2006). As with the composition of the Management Board, it is significant to note that the most active regions during the transition phase were regions from unitary states as well as regions geographically isolated from European regional cooperation opportunities—thus the regions that needed the network's services the most in order to boost their European engagement.

The transition period of ERRIN indicates a demand for European interregional cooperation from the grassroots level and that the membership from the previous lifespan of ERRIN assessed the network as being useful in boosting their European engagement. As a regional Brussels

office director explained, there are always budget cuts to public organisations such as regional governments, and therefore they must very carefully consider which initiatives demonstrate the largest potential for success, and they would then be the ones to focus on and grant financing and manpower investment to (Interviewee 67).

With the support of its members, ERRIN was successfully re-launched in January 2007 with around 50 members. It has since grown to encompass just more than 100 members (including regions, cities and organisations) from 25 countries (ERRIN Document: ERRIN Members Contact List, 2016). Thus, a healthy increase in membership from a broad spread of member states. An analysis of the type of regions, which predominantly remained in the network, shows that they were primarily those from unitary states experiencing geographical isolation from other European regions and encountering significant linguistic challenges within the European Union. Once more, the regions most isolated from European engagement and also European identity-building capacities were the ones to join the network.

6.2.3   ERRIN Structure

ERRIN is now composed of the Secretariat, the Management Board, Working Groups and slightly more than 100 members (Information from ERRIN Statutes Document, 2016). The Secretariat's staff is led by a director, a membership manager, an EU projects advisor, and a communications associate. During the re-launch period, the ERRIN staff consisted of a director, an EU advisor, and one rotating stagiaire, who was "on loan" from an ERRIN member office. The ERRIN team is the "engine" of the network, driving and manoeuvring ERRIN initiatives designed by the Management Board and voted on by the members. The Secretariat is in charge of providing guidance and support to the Management Board on the preparation and execution of the network's annual work programme; it ensures the organisation's financial management and assists the ERRIN working groups. In addition, the Secretariat manages the smooth running of information dissemination, partner searches, project ideas and market places. It is also the contact hub for ERRIN members.

The ERRIN Management Board is composed of 15 ERRIN members and is elected every year for a three-, two- or one-year membership to the Management Board. A limit has been placed on regions' representation; maximally two regions per Member State can be elected to sit on the Management Board to make for a truly European representation (Interviewee 67).

The emergence of a regional pattern of activity is clearly evolving: most Management Board members are from unitary states and represent geographically isolated regions. The Management Board is in charge of preparing the annual work programme and budget proposal. It also decides on the strategies for policy, projects, communications, and budget. The Board's strategy is then implemented by the secretariat. The Management Board monitors the implementation of the work programme by leading thematic working groups and ensures that ERRIN members participate and share information and ideas. The thematic working groups reflect the policy area interests of the members. They include, amongst others: biotechnology; energy, health, innovation and funding, ICT, space and transport. In addition, the Management Board liaises with working groups engaged in related but relevant issues to the membership with European institutions. All of the network's roles and initiatives have been decided and agreed upon by the members by consensus to ensure democratic representation and the broadest possible support within the network.

6.2.4   ERRIN Aims and Activities

The core aim of ERRIN is to facilitate European interregional cooperation in the field of research and innovation (European identity being a by-product of enhanced European engagement and collaboration, but not an explicit objective). The official, intended value added is to secure economic benefits through cooperation. This is to be achieved through the following strategic objectives: knowledge sharing at EU level, interregional exchange, practitioner development, policy and thematic development, and networking. Yet, to achieve these objectives, the network must also foster a European mind-set and identity amongst the membership to make them feel comfortable to share their ideas and want to work together. This is particularly important for the regions lacking in European experiences when joining the network, and not knowing the fellow network members when joining. As civil servants from the four case study regions had expressed on several occasions—trust must be developed before cooperation projects can come to fruition. Therefore, the network must create a European environment conducive to building trust and a European identity, in order to foster cooperation. That this is not mentioned explicitly in the network's objectives comes as no surprise—this would come across as quite forceful considering that it is the development of an emotion which is required. Yet, the network's director during this transition and relaunch phase explained that providing a European space,

mind-set and even cultivating a European community and identity were key objectives that she personally had in mind when meeting with members, and that she and the Management Board agreed needed to be promoted by them when meeting with members and particularly new joiners (interviewee 59). Therefore, European identity building is not only a by-product of the network's activities, it is also an objective of the network's culture and general atmosphere.

The network kept these identity-building objectives close to heart when participating in the activities run by the network. Firstly, the Secretariat organises information services delivered by the network's website. It also organises events aimed at increasing the understanding of research and innovation funding opportunities in Europe. The network also manages the 15 thematic working groups, which facilitate members' information exchange and presentations of regional project ideas. In both the events and working groups, members are encouraged to share best-practice experiences and disseminate calls for project proposals from the European Commission. Furthermore, the working groups' leaders try to involve European Commission officials in briefing sessions with the objective of ensuring that the members properly understand EU opportunities—and constraints—and gain access to Commission representatives (ERRIN Document: Overview – ERRIN Thematic Working Groups). A review of the Work Programme 2009 (ERRIN Document: Work Programme 2009) revealed that the two core initiatives on which the network will focus in subsequent years will be to strengthen ERRIN internally through enhancing networking capabilities, services and projects and to profile the network externally through policy dialogue, public relations and marketing. These are the explicit core initiatives and objectives—the unpublished in policy but nonetheless important additional objective is that of European identity building amongst the membership, as guided by the director and Management Board (Interviewee 59). All activities planned do promote regional cohesion by strengthening relationships, exchanging information, expertise and best practice, and thereby improving regions' economies. While the documents state that the network is open to all regions and practitioners involved in or wanting to be involved in European projects, the type of region most visibly engaged in the network are the ones operating within unitary state government systems and, by virtue of geographic location, are the most isolated from other European regions. These regions are in particular need of engaging more with other Europeans and developing a European identity to do so.

6.2.5   *ERRIN Interview Participants*

In order to discern the perceptions of as many ERRIN members as possible, 12 semi-structured interviews were conducted with representatives from both regional Brussels offices as well as regional chambers of commerce Brussels offices during the network's Annual General Assembly events at the seat of the European Commission. Interviewees selected represented a cross section of EU Member States, regional size, regional Brussels office size and staff, and years of Brussels experience of the regional representatives. As was the case in previous chapters, the respective regions' national government system, regional geographic location, regional language, regional economy, and European regional network participation beyond ERRIN was taken into consideration. In order to encourage discussants to share their views and perceptions openly, their identity will not be disclosed. A table providing information on their profile characteristics is listed in the Appendix (Table A.5). In addition to the interviews with members, a former ERRIN director was interviewed to provide both a historical and holistic account of the network since its conception. The findings of the interviews will provide much needed insider information and insights on how ERRIN brings together such a diverse group of European regions and facilitate their cooperation. In other words, how does the network cultivate a European identity and foster cooperation? In particular, the members' perceptions on how the network manages to bridge the gaps between the various regional political structures and the differing geographic and economic capacities will be presented and reviewed. Furthermore, members' perceptions about the added-value of the network with regard to securing economic benefits and facilitating a European identity will be related and assessed.

6.3   Value Added by ERRIN: Findings from Membership Interviews

ERRIN's mission is to add value to its members by disseminating information on EU policies and programmes, facilitating funding opportunities for projects and providing a platform for partner searches and project marketplaces. By providing these resources and activities, ERRIN contends to contribute to the interregional cooperation of its European members. ERRIN's satisfaction rate was very high: 4.5 out of 5 (ERRIN Document: ERRIN Satisfaction Survey). That said, any bottom-up, grassroots-type

organisation will by definition be very responsive to what its membership, its shareholders, wants. Therefore, it needs to be explained what kind of value-added the members expect from the network, and how it manages and manoeuvres to cater to the different demands and needs of the regions. Particularly in light of the membership's diversity, regions require support on a host of different issues and at differing scales. It also needs to be clarified why in fact regions choose to make a European network its instrument of choice to pursue their European objectives. Are they in fact primarily seeking the regional economic benefits the European Commission and literature are postulating? Do they want to be more immersed in European-wide activities and projects because they identify with Europe at large? Are they seeking to strengthen their European identity through increased cooperation? Interviews conducted with 12 network members and its former director will provide their perceptions about these—and other—questions; the interviews will also allow a more thorough understanding of the perspectives of the receiving end of ERRIN's activities, and they will clarify how the network intervenes to promote members' interests in the priority areas of support needed, and whether the network succeeds in adding the expected value to the regions.

As explained in the previous section, ERRIN's membership is very diverse and ranges from old to new member states, regions with strong and weaker economies, regions on borders to other European regions and those that are isolated, regions that have a different official language from the EU's working language, and regions that are more and less involved in European networks. The core activities of the network have been determined by the entire membership, and while they reflect the regions' characteristics, varying expectations may continue to persist, and particular considerations for assistance for specific regions may trump assistance sought elsewhere.

A resounding, top priority value-added sought from the membership is the network's mission to disseminate information and assist in partner searches. All interviewees identified these as key value-added deliverables to their region's European activities. Particularly the representatives from smaller regional offices with less manpower and / or infrastructure capacity at their disposal underlined the network's information dissemination services (Interviewees 61, 64, 65, 66 and 68) as a significant value-added. One interviewee stated that it would be impossible to keep up to date with all the relevant news and updates for a sole representative in Brussels (Interviewee 61). This perceived value added fosters, as a by-product, European identity.

Other regional representatives named assistance in overcoming language challenges as a second value-added deliverable (Interviewees 69, 70 and 71). Without this service they would be unable to properly and in a timely manner disseminate pertinent EU information on policies and programmes to their respective regions. One member made very clear that more often than not civil servants in the regions do not have a good command of the EU working languages, English and French, making the translation of documents for them a necessity to ensure active and substantive dialogue and engagement with the European Commission (Interviewee 60). Furthermore, the European Union routinely publishes information resorting to the use of "EU jargon" when addressing technical issues. "Insider speak" is difficult for those to understand who are not involved in EU exchanges on a daily basis (Interviewee 66). Therefore, technical documents must be translated using more commonly understood, non-technical vocabulary. The regional representatives also stated that language can be a challenge in either communicating new developments in the pipeline and changes made in EU policies and programmes, or in making these policies and programmes more readily accessible to their respective regions (Interviewees 61, 62, 66 and 68). Another interviewee added that the regions with more office staff assist regions with less capacity; in addition to being very appreciative of this assistance, gestures of this nature do their part in facilitating a sense of unity and common interest (Interviewee 61). This demonstration of sharing and supporting those in need was also evident in the larger context of information dissemination, one of the memberships' key expected value-added. Several interviewees made it a point that members with larger and better staffed Brussels offices routinely volunteer to offer additional input (be it mere information sharing or the financing of events) to the benefit of all (Interviewees 60, 62, 67 and 69). This attitude and approach documents a supportive and cooperative spirit within the network, and it suggests that the regions enjoy the European experience and perspective of having a hand in bringing about a more equitable European Union.

A third expected value-added by the members is the network's ability to provide a platform for regional representatives to network and work together. Interviewees with more extensive networking experiences on a European scale explained they had developed mechanisms to do so efficiently (Interviewees 63, 67, 69 and 71); whereas other interviewees, who were either new to Brussels themselves or whose region was comparatively new to the idea of European cooperation, stated they had difficulty networking and

received substantial support from ERRIN in taking the plunge (Interviewees 64, 65 and 68). This value-added links very closely with the director's and the Management Board's objective of cultivating a European community identity within the network. By doing so, the members can more easily meet and discuss opportunities together. One interviewee in particular mentioned that the network very successfully connects members with each other and integrates new members into the network to ensure all can benefit equally from their membership. The interviewee felt that without the guidance and assistance of the network, he, depending on his own efforts, would not have been able to engage as quickly and as effectively in such short time (Interviewee 65). Two interviewees mentioned that their European cooperation links date back a very long time and have occurred nearly naturally because they share a border (Interviewees 63 and 69). And another interviewee made the point that without international business links and especially European cooperation the region's economy would not be stable and as strong as it is now. In terms of networking experience, the findings suggest that regions geographically located on European borders have a strong history of cooperation and network with ease; regions that economically need to cooperate with other European regions also have a long-standing history of cooperation and network competently and comfortably.

The fourth expected value-added by member regions is for the network to boost the regions' standing vis-à-vis the European Commission. Senior representatives and staff of the European Commission regularly attend ERRIN events in order to present specific calls for proposals or explain new initiatives and programmes. The European Commission staff gains from these efforts because it is the most time efficient way to engage 65 European regional representatives (Interviewee 59). The benefits for the members vary, however. Most members perceive direct bilateral and multilateral contacts, additional information and explanations to be important value-added the network provides, which they, on their own, would not be able to attain (Interviewees 60, 61, 64, 65, 66, 69 and 70). Some members also expressed their appreciation of being able to establish direct lines of contact with high-ranking European Commission staff; access that their region in view of their size and influence but also lack of integration into the European sphere would find difficult to bring about (Interviewees 61, 64, 66, 68 and 69). Being a member of a European network with a track record gives them access to the European Commission and its senior representatives and support staff; it also ensures them access to exclusive information—a very important expected value-added by the membership.

The key perceived value-added from the network are information collection and dissemination and assistance in partner searches; networking opportunities with regional representatives and practitioners; as well as access to European Commission representatives and staff. These are the primary activities aimed at facilitating European interregional cooperation. These activities also, however, foster a European identity. Identity is cultivated through the enhanced engagement of the membership with their European colleagues, and it is fostered in the network's mind-set and atmosphere by the director and Management Board.

The findings suggest that regions with limited financial backing and office capacities at their disposal in, for example, the conduct of information research or event hosting, benefit greatly from the network's information collection and dissemination activity and event organisation. The findings also suggest that regions located on or near a border of another EU member region have had better access to networking and cooperation opportunities than geographically more isolated regions. They indicate, furthermore, that regions with strong financial support have generally large Brussels representation offices and are very active in the network. The finding also showed that regions with weak economies and very limited financial resources are also very active in the network and in the pursuit of cooperation opportunities. And, finally, the findings suggest that some regions from unitary government systems feel they have not yet been fully integrated in the European sphere because of both their limited understanding of how "the system works" and a lack of experience in how European interregional cooperation could work for them. All of these regions feel they are, ultimately, beneficiaries of the activities offered by the network. The perception is that the network is quite successful in bridging the gap between regional characteristics and disparities, which, according to the regions, pose a challenge to their European engagement and interregional cooperation efforts.

6.4   Importance of European Interregional Cooperation and How European Identity Features in It

All members seek information on opportunities of cooperation, network opportunities to meet practitioners active in similar fields with whom they can brainstorm and exchange ideas and best practice for future project

ideas, and, ultimately, identify and engage with prospective project partners. Projects in terms of scope and support vary according to the policy areas of interest to the regions. For some regions, the policy areas of high relevance are fisheries (Interviewee 66), some are particularly keen on engineering in the automotive industry (Interviewee 67), and others seek opportunities in the textile industries (Interviewee 69). Regional practitioners use the network to gain access to their colleagues operating in either the same field or complementary ones, and they try to establish cooperative links to further develop their knowledge, ideas, products, and build opportunities for future endeavours (Interviewee 59). This expected value-added is very much based on the expectation of securing economic benefits to the region, at least in the long run.

There is, however, a second benefit sought that is not related to economic growth: the fostering of a European identity. A common understanding amongst the membership of the conception of European identity revolved around the notion that regional representatives perceived their professional colleagues to be just like them—they were "European" and eager to establish working relationships across the board. One interviewee noted there is no bias in the selection of regional practitioners and no "pre-selection" in their preference of working with somebody from a specific country or region. As long as the skills and experience relevant for the successful acquisition of projects and project funding are evident and potential partners are prepared to proceed on the basis of a unified European approach to cooperation (Interviewee 63), they are open-minded and ready to engage.

Some interviewees had been part of the network for some time already; considerably longer than those representing regions from the newer EU Member States. Clearly, as is the case in any organisation, the established members have shaped and influenced over time the network's dynamics; yet it was open to welcome its new members and help them become an integral part of a closely knit group; they have become "almost like a family" (Interviewee 62). They assist each other in full recognition that by sharing information and ideas, better project proposals will emerge and chances for project funding increase (Interviewee 61). Thus, the collaboration of network members cultivates, in a time, a European identity.

All members clearly strive to work together, with the end goal being successful in creating common projects delivering economic benefits to their respective regions. And while all members expressed their open-mindedness in approaching programmes and projects, the source of their

European approach cannot be fully grasped. Surely, the network facilitates the continuation of the European approach and helps different members work together more closely. Whether the determination to collaborate on the basis of a European approach also signifies that their sense of being European, and thus their European identity, had already been cultivated before they became members of the network or is the result of network membership could not be definitively established in the interviews. It is reasonable to make the argument however that multiple "inputs" over time form perceptions, as was so vividly expressed by the interviews conducted with the political elites and civil servants in the four case study regions (Chaps. 4 and 5). The general interpretation and perception of the interviewees was that European identity is greatly shaped by an increased number of interactions with European counterparts and by engaging in European events, be they high-level "top-down" events with political leaders or low-level "bottom-up" information sessions in schools or artist exchanges. Whilst it can be assumed that members in the course of their engagement in network activities with other European members develop a heightened perception and awareness—and notion of adopting—a European identity, this correlation cannot be established based on the evidence at hand.

6.5   Do European Regional Networks Cultivate a European Identity and Succeed in Boosting Regions' European Engagement?

The example of ERRIN has shown that European regional networks can cultivate a European identity by fostering a European-minded atmosphere and helping regional representatives with little to no European collaboration background connect, openly communicate, share ideas and work together. The collaboration in turn fosters a European identity. Furthermore, the network helps regions participate in European collaboration because it helps them overcome the hurdles of their European engagement hindering regional characteristics. The network thus encourages European identity to foster enhanced European engagement, which further produces the by-product of a stronger European identity—and potentially more European engagement.

In light of the growing support by both the European Commission and the EU Member States for European interregional cooperation, European

regional networks have been created to provide guidance and assistance. Alongside the European objective of increasing European competitiveness by initiating European regional economic growth through, amongst others, research and innovation, European Commission programmes were launched to support the emergence of European regional networks and projects in the field of European interregional cooperation in R&D. Based on expressed demand, ERRIN was founded to facilitate, on a not-for-profit basis, European interregional cooperation in the field of research and innovation in a variety of policy areas relevant to its regional members. Its 100+ members have managed to successfully transition ERRIN from an organisation dependent on the European Commission's co-funding to one of financial independence. And in terms of its ability to serve its members well across the board, a member survey gave ERRIN high marks (4.5 out of 5) for the services and opportunities provided. Members clearly feel that their financial and manpower investment in the network is being rewarded with benefits of particularly in the area of information flow, enhanced regional profile, broadening and deepening of European-wide contacts both in the European Commission and with practitioners in European regions—and beyond.

The evolution of European interregional cooperation and the demand for European regional networks have not been one without substantial challenges. Regional characteristics will persist irrespective of on-going integration and cooperation efforts, and they continue to influence the ability and ease of regions to participate in European-wide cooperation. ERRIN is very ably manoeuvring its membership around these challenges. It has its sight set on meeting the objectives set and overcoming cooperation hurdles and instilling, in the process, a sense of common purpose around a growing range of cooperation activities.

Interview findings and documents analyses have substantiated this tentative conclusion. Of particular importance—and concern—is the challenge to manage five regional characteristics, which greatly contribute to variations in the respective regions' ability to participate and cooperate. They encompass: national government system, geographic location, language, economy and regional budget for European affairs, and the regions' network experience. These cooperation challenging characteristics have been identified by both the regional representatives in Brussels and the regional political elites and civil servants. Scholars in political science have postulated that networks would be able to level the playing field, mined by regional characteristics, and offer all regions an equal chance at engaging

in European politics, particularly regional cooperation projects. Indeed, the evaluation of ERRIN has shown that networks can level the playing field and facilitate European interregional cooperation in a range of EU regions—regardless of their challenging characteristics. The network provides a platform for regions, which usually are politically, linguistically or geographically isolated from European politics and cooperation, or lack the financial resources to participate effectively in the European sphere. Also, it cultivates a sense of solidarity and unity amongst the regions, which, to one degree or another, partake in European activities and initiatives. All member regions appear to believe they are benefiting from the services provided by the network and the inputs offered by the membership. Regions are in the process of coming closer together and the network is facilitating the linkages through fostering cooperation. In sum, ERRIN is on track to achieve its mandate and mission of facilitating European interregional cooperation in both regions that share common characteristics and features and regions where political, geographic, linguistic and financial challenges persist.

The network's value-added, however, extends beyond its official objectives of fostering interregional cooperation. The membership interviewed in the course of this case study have indicated that there is a sense of unity amongst the members, that they are not merely representatives of their region and / or country, that they feel alike, as Europeans. Working together in the network is in fact propagating a notion of European identity. Due to the nature and scope of this research, it is not possible to establish whether the notion of a European identity was in fact established through the collaboration within the network; whether it had already existed in some form previously and whether existing traces encouraged regions and their regional representatives to seek opportunities of working together more closely in an institutionalised, ERRIN-type setting. It is still significant, however, that the interviewed regional representatives all expressed feeling a sense of "Europneanness." It is also important to note that they select potential cooperation partners by expertise and not national identity or cultural or linguistic preferences; this underlines their perception of "everyone being equal," of being European. They are willing, if not eager, to reach out, collaborate and engage in a European experience devoid of physical and mental borders. Moreover, the network director explained that cultivating a sense of European community identity within the network, particularly for the new network members, would most likely boost their network participation and collaboration—in turn

producing the by-product of European identity. Thus, it is the objective of the network's director and Management Board to cultivate a European identity throughout the network.

This case study has provided evidence that European regional networks can help overcome collaborative impediments prompted by regional characteristics, support European regional cohesion and pave a path toward a more integrated Europe with enhanced European engagement in the field of European interregional cooperation. The case study has also shown that there is a high level of European identity and awareness at ERRIN and that this is fostered by the network's director and Management Board with the intention of boosting collaboration amongst the membership. Whether the members' European identity predates them joining the network or was fostered within the network could not be determined in this study. What can be said with confidence is that the network provides a "cultivating environment" for the germination of a sense of unity, solidarity, collaboration and focus on expertise. Though the network does not, in its official set of objectives, make the cultivation of a European identity its main mandate, it does facilitate this value-added and thus has a political as well as social impact on the process of European integration, regions' European engagement and European identity formation.

The Scope and Objectives of Regions' European Engagement: Lessons Learned and More Questions Revealed

The most significant finding of this book shows that EU regions can and do, indeed, cultivate a European identity through their European policies. The four case study regions have provided evidence to show that both the administrative political elites of regions and their civil servants intentionally foster a European identity within the policy design and through policy implementation—if they are Europhile and if the government system so allows. The case studies have also shown that regions, which are prevented from developing a full gamut of European engagement, fail to develop a European identity, support for EU integration, and even the will to remain in the European Union. This book has presented strategies and explanations behind both of these scenarios and the space in between, in order to better understand why some regions are more actively involved in European politics than others, as well as to learn from best-practice examples of how regions can foster a European identity through their policies and programmes.

In addition to looking at political elites and civil servants, regional characteristics have been discussed throughout this book and validated as affecting regions' extent of European engagement and identity building. These regional characteristics include the government system, political elites' interests, geographic location, European regional network participation, EU membership duration and a region's language and heritage. In particular, it has been found that European regional networks can help regions overcome their European engagement hindering characteristics and boost not only their participation but also cultivate a European identity.

This chapter will offer a final analysis of the role played by both regional political elites and civil servants in determining whether European identity-building measures feature in the region's European policies and programmes. It will also offer final considerations on the role of European regional networks in cultivating a European identity. A further set of "push and pull" factors both on scope and objectives of regions' European policies are the regional characteristics; their impact will also be reviewed one more time. The chapter will close by deliberating on the potential implications the research findings of this book might have across all 98 EU regions—and which questions remain to be addressed and answered.

7.1   REGIONAL POLITICAL ELITES AND THEIR ROLE IN DETERMINING WHETHER EUROPEAN IDENTITY FEATURES IN EUROPEAN POLICY (HYPOTHESIS 1)

The key distinction for whether regions' European policies foster a European identity lies with the interests of their national and regional political elites. When political elites are Europhile and want the European policy they design to include a European identity-building nature, this preference tends to shape the policy objectives. However, when political elites are not particularly Europhile, or indeed are Eurosceptic, their region's policy tends to focus on developing the region's economy through their European engagement, instead of also addressing European identity building. And in the case of the South West of England, re-centralisation interests brought about the closure of the Regional Development Area (RDA), which shrunk even further the region's European engagement. These findings corroborate Hypothesis 1, which suggested: "If an administrative political elite has personal interests in European identity, this will result in that regional political leader's region's European policy featuring identity-building objectives, as opposed to the policy only being economy related."

This hypothesis was particularly verified by the three case studies: Brandenburg, Nord–Pas-de-Calais and the South West of England. In the two former regions, the administrative political elites had implemented European programmes that have social integration as their key objective— and a European identity was cultivated within these projects intentionally. These programmes stood out when the European policies of all four regional case studies were compared—and when the members of the polit-

ical elite and the civil servants discussed their European policies' objectives. In both regions, these European social integration and identity-building projects were developed whilst the regions had very Europhile political leaders. However, in the case of Nord–Pas-de-Calais, when the political leaders were replaced by less Europhile ones, the European social integration and identity-building policies were cut and their funding was shifted toward the economic development objective of the region's European policy. In Brandenburg, the administrative political elite remains Europhile and the European policy continues to cultivate European identity with a key priority. Furthermore, in the case of the South West of England, the national political elites have also shaped the objectives of regions' European engagement. With a Labour government, regionalisation had been supported and regions were not only developed to engage in and manage a range of European programmes; they were also provided with the political authority to participate in European opportunities, which would enhance European collaboration and identity building. However, with the Conservative, more Eurosceptic national leadership, regionalisation has been retracted and regions' scope to engage in European-wide collaboration and identity building has been demolished. Here, it was shown that national political elites' interests are translated into policy objectives and affect whether European identity features in regions' European policies or not.

7.2 The Role of Civil Servants in Including European Identity-Building Objectives Within Regions' European Policies (Hypothesis 2)

The four case studies have shown that civil servants, on balance, are more likely to feel European and want to cultivate a European identity through their work as compared to their political leaders. Though this contradicts the expectation derived from Spence (1998), that political elites are more likely to feel European and be more in favour of further European integration, it confirms the scholarship of Bruter (2005), Fligstein (2008), Inglehart (1970), Kuhn (2012), Mitchell (2015), Stoeckel (2015), and Verhaegen and Hooghe (2015), that those who engage more in European activities (including the Erasmus study abroad programme) will also be more in favour of European identity. In turn, this scholarship and this book's research findings corroborate the second hypothesis of this book:

"Regional civil servants implementing regions' European policies have developed a stronger personal interest in European identity-building and focus more on this in their work than political elites do."

The Brandenburg case study has shown that, when the administrative political elite was Europhile, civil servants were also keen to promote European identity building through their work. However, in the case of the South West of England and Nord–Pas-de-Calais, civil servants were enthusiastic about European social integration and identity building, whereas their respective political leaders were not. In none of the case study regions did it occur that civil servants were not interested in promoting European identity when political elites were. Thus, on balance, civil servants feel more interested in cultivating European identity through their work than their corresponding political leaders. This was particularly the case with civil servants who regularly work with other Europeans or had previously done so. The extent of their European experience can be assumed to have developed their European mind-set and approach to their work. As was explained by both civil servants and European regional network members, when Europeans work together, they appreciate their similarities and common interests, and naturally develop a European identity.

7.3   European Regional Networks and Their Role in Cultivating a European Identity (Hypothesis 3)

European regional networks have been established to help all regions engage in European opportunities—particularly the regions, which have regional characteristics hindering their European engagement. In the case of European Regions for Research and Innovation (ERRIN), this book has found that in order to boost regions' European engagement, the network in fact aims to cultivate a European identity within its membership. This allows the regional practitioners to work together more naturally and in turn more effectively develop European cooperation projects—and fulfil the objective of the network. In addition to pro-actively cultivating a European identity, the network's outcome of enhanced European engagement further strengthens the European identity amongst the membership—as a by-product. Thus, European networks build a European identity in two ways, which supports the third hypothesis of this book: "European regional networks are likely to intentionally build a European

identity so regions participating in the networks cultivate a European identity and in turn cooperate with greater ease amongst the European membership." Part of the corroborated hypothesis could be expected, as based on the theory advanced by Fligstein (2008), that European networks foster enhanced engagement and, as a result, European identity. However, it is a surprising result that the network ERRIN intentionally tries to cultivate a European identity amongst its membership in order to boost their participation in the network and European cooperation.

7.4   European Identity: Cultivated Intentionally or as a By-Product?

As was discussed previously, a number of scholars have postulated that enhanced European engagement fosters a European identity. The evidence gathered in the four case study regions as well as in the ERRIN case study on European regional networks supports this claim. Those who engage regularly with their European colleagues discussed their work from a European perspective and were keen to strengthen European-wide social integration and identity building through their work. Those who did not have any European experience did not perceive the benefits of adopting a European approach and also were not interested in European identity featuring in their work. The administrative political elite had had significant European experience, having been the director of the region's Brussels representation office prior to leading the regional government's European directorate. His European experience most likely influenced his strong European identity and interest in spreading European identity throughout the region. He also explained that he wishes his constituents to experience Europe so that they, too, may understand the benefits of a European approach and develop a European identity.

In contrast to this, civil servants in the South West of England, who had had no European experience and whose work remained strictly within the region's border, did not feel European and also perceived no relevance in promoting European identity through their work. Yet, in the same region, the two civil servants who had had European experience prior to their work for the RDA's European policy team felt very strongly about their European identity and were disappointed that they were no longer allowed to pro-actively seek European cooperation or identity-building opportunities for their region.

The extent of European experience and engagement, as Fligstein (2008) had predicted, indeed has an impact on European identity building. Yet, it is important to differentiate between European engagement that cultivates European identity as a by-product and European identity that is fostered intentionally in policy design and implementation. In the case of Brandenburg's administrative political elite, identity building is a core intentional priority and objective. However, the civil servants in the South West of England, Nord–Pas-de-Calais and Wallonia explained that European identity emerges amongst those who engage in European cooperation projects or interact with their European neighbours regularly. They explained that a European mind-set is developed through European engagement and that this in turn cultivates a European identity naturally. Thus, the distinction between European identity building by intention or as by-product must be made.

7.5   Regional Characteristics Affecting Their European Policies' Scope and Objectives

In addition to the influence of regional administrative political elites, civil servants and European regional networks, regional characteristics have also been explained to affect region's European engagement and identity building. Whether regions participate in programmes providing opportunities to engage with other Europeans or whether regional leaders can design European policies to include identity-building features, are significantly determined by the region's national government system and the extent of political authority it has. Indeed, this impact has been studied at great length in political science; particularly within the work edited by Keating and Jones (1995) and Hooghe et al. (2010). Their findings have been fortified by all of the four case study regions' representatives. However, the regional political elites, civil servants and representatives in Brussels also named additional regional characteristics, which have an impact on the scope and objectives of their European engagement—and these characteristics validated the theories that have been proposed by political scientists and discussed in Chaps. 1 and 2 of this book. The list of regional characteristics that have been found to challenge regions' European engagement and, ultimately, European identity building include: government system, political elites' interests, geographic location of a region, whether regions participate in a European regional network,

the language / heritage of a region, as well as how long regions have been part of the European Union and engaged in European opportunities.

The regional political elites provided primarily three explanations for the variation in regions' European policies and programmes. They included the regions' respective government systems, top-level political decision-makers' interests, and the geographic location of a region vis-à-vis its proximity to a European neighbour. The civil servants and regional representatives in Brussels, however, drew on a broader set of explanations of the variation in their European engagement. Furthermore, the perception of whether European identity plays or ought to play a role in the respective regions' European policies and programmes differed quite significantly both from region to region and according to players' level of power and responsibility (for instance, civil servants felt that European identity should play a more central role within European politics than some of the political elites). The semi-structured interviews with the political elites and civil servants from the four case study regions and the semi-structured interviews with the regional representatives in Brussels shed considerable light on the correlation between regional characteristics identified in this book and the variation of regions' respective scope and objectives vis-à-vis their respective European policies and programmes.

The regional political elites highlighted the impact of national government systems on a region's level of political authority, and thus the opportunities and constraints they felt in developing the scope and objectives of their region's European engagement. Thus, even if the political elites in Nord–Pas-de-Calais and the South West of England would have liked to engage more actively in cultivating a European identity and the political elites in the South West of England would be keen to participate in and pursue more interregional cooperation opportunities, they felt constrained by the lack of political authority to execute those decisions and widen the scope of their regions' European engagement in the process. In the case of the South West of England's RDA—their office was even shut down with immense implications on the scope and objectives of the region's European policies and programmes, as well as, potentially, the vote on Brexit.

Civil servants of the French and British case study regions were indeed very keen to engage in a wider scope of interregional cooperation opportunities than they were authorised to pursue by their political leaders and as determined by constitutional constraints. They would have liked to embrace and cultivate through their work a European identity. They felt that citizens who identify more with Europe will also seek more European

focused opportunities—and in turn bring significant economic benefits to the regions. However, the civil servants were not only as disappointed as their political elites about the political restraints put in place by constitutional constraints. They were also disheartened because of their inability to operate on the basis of a concept designed to promote a European identity within the region. The sole exception to these European identity impeding constraints were found in the Brandenburg region where the political elite enjoyed a relatively wide scope of political authority and political support from top regional decision-makers. These observations and explanations of the political elites and civil servants verify the impact of government system on scope and objectives of regions' European policy.

Regional political elites and civil servants also identified the interests of core decision-makers (whether they are Europhiles or Eurosceptics) as a key factor affecting scope and objectives of their European engagement. Top political decision-makers in three of the four case study regions were in principle very keen to secure interregional cooperation opportunities for their respective region and procuring future EU-funded programmes; the British top political decision-makers being the sole exception. Even in the French region, which benefits from a relatively wide scope of European policies and programmes, the change of political leadership and, in its wake, political priorities and interests at the top regional level negatively affected the scope of engagement within the past couple of years. In both the French and the British case study regions, the top political decision-makers not being interested in furthering European integration caused the regions to forego economic, social and political opportunities and disappointed those working on the regions' European engagement at both the political elite and the civil servant level. The civil servants in particular observed that agenda changes by the top political decision-makers significantly impact all aspects of European interregional cooperation. It matters whether politicians at the highest levels of government are Europhile or Eurosceptic. With Europhile political interests supporting the work of the European departments, regions are more likely to have a broader scope of European policies and programmes. It provides them with the space needed to also include initiatives into their work programs designed to cultivate a European identity. Civil servants very pointedly observed that such initiatives greatly facilitate their efforts to promote interest in and demand for European opportunities, and they further support their economic objectives within the European portfolio. The findings of both political elites and civil servants from the four case study regions thereby

verify that political elites' interests shape the scope and objectives of region's European engagement—the English case with particularly devastating effects for regional European politics.

The third regional characteristic identified by the political elites and civil servants as playing a key role in shaping the scope and objectives of their respective regions' European engagement was the proximity of a region to a European border and neighbour. On a very practical level, some regions are in need of finding and establishing cooperative links with their neighbours from other countries and regions to successfully pursue their development aspirations. Proximity is critical in this context. Whilst civil servants from Nord–Pas-de-Calais, Wallonia and Brandenburg attribute collaboration opportunities and experience with their immediate neighbours in great measures to physical proximity, civil servants in the South West of England point out that it is more difficult to establish close cooperation with other EU regions because of their region's geographically isolated location. This sense of lack of natural "connectedness" expressed by civil servants was shared by the political elites who also felt that it adds an additional challenge to the already existing constraints set by the prevailing government system and political interests. Regional representatives in Brussels, who participate in the ERRIN network, also shared their perception of geographic distance causing challenges in their European engagement. The feeling was that particularly the regions most isolated from their European neighbours had to overcome difficult and costly logistical challenges to connect with potential European interregional cooperation partners, making it very complicated to fully and successfully chase European opportunities and better integrate economically, politically and socially.

The finding that regions sharing borders with other European regions more naturally develop a European identity than regions that are geographically isolated from European neighbours underlines the significance of geographic location and daily interactions across the entire social, economic and political spectrum matter. Geographic location in particular is not only a significant factor in shaping a European identity, it also plays an important role in the development of cooperation opportunities as it can promote and/or inhibit developments prospects. Based on the accounts of the political elites, civil servants and regional representatives in Brussels, their region's geographic location has an impact on both the scope and objectives of their European engagement and the cultivation of a European identity.

Language and heritage were also noted by regional civil servants and representatives in Brussels as significant regional characteristics affecting the extent of regions' European engagement. Language, on the one hand, was described by the French-speaking regions to facilitate cooperation amongst other regions and countries among and within francophone areas. With language being an important component of identity, there is a natural way for francophone countries to feel more European due to the shared language and cultural heritage. And, in turn, countries that do not share a common language with other European countries may not feel this natural European identity connectedness. They also have been found to have more difficulties in successfully collaborating in a European context and environment. Civil servants from Brandenburg described their linguistic challenges when engaged with Polish-speaking representatives eager to cooperate, but finding it difficult to communicate. And regional representatives in Brussels shared the difficulties they experienced when trying to timely disseminate vital information on European opportunities throughout their region because of the time needed to translate each piece of information.

In addition to language, heritage was also depicted by a number of civil servants from the four case study regions as an influential factor. On the one hand, shared francophone heritage facilitated cooperation, as did a common mining heritage for Wallonia and its bilateral partners; on the other hand, memories of the recent war with forced migration and redrawing of country boundaries in Germany and Poland generated negative responses of a shared heritage. These greatly challenged interregional affairs between Brandenburg and some of its developing partnerships with Central and Eastern European countries and regions. Thus, regional civil servants and representatives in Brussels have confirmed the impact of both language and heritage on their European engagement and, in turn, common identity building.

Both regional civil servants and regional representatives in Brussels also verified the impact European regional network participation has on regions' European engagement. Where regions had little political authority or little top-level political interest in the region's European engagement and oftentimes therefore a small European budget at their disposal, networks helped to provide access to "weaker" regions and facilitated participation. And where regions had to overcome linguistic challenges when pursuing European opportunities, the membership coordinated translation needs while the network's head office provided translation support

services. Participation in a European regional network has proven to be especially critical for the newer EU members with little European experience and/or considerable regional developmental needs. Because of their inexperience and lack of knowledge about accessing and procuring European cooperation programmes, participation in a European regional network was key to facilitate such cooperation opportunities. In addition, network members also credited the network with promoting a sense of European community and European identity through its events and membership interactions. Civil servants and particularly regional representatives in Brussels who participate in the ERRIN network verified the positive impact of network participation on both the scope of regions' European engagement and their influence on cultivating a European identity.

The duration of EU membership, as stated by both regional civil servants and Brussels representatives, not only has an impact on the degree to which a region is competently engaging in European affairs, it also greatly influences the scope and objectives of those regions' European policies. The Brandenburg region, a relatively recent EU member, while actively developing ties with the more established members continues to cooperate extensively with the more familiar Central and Eastern European states, who are also new to identifying and seeking European opportunities. As European identity grows in tandem with enhanced European interactions, it is expected that it will come to fruition in the newer EU Member States somewhat later than in the countries which have been members of the European community and have engaged within the European domain for a longer period of time. Membership duration thus has been explained to have an impact on regions' European engagement and identity building.

The semi-structured interviews conducted found a three-fold explanation of the variation in regions' European engagements' scope and objectives by the political elites, whilst they produced a six-fold explanation by the civil servants and regional representatives in Brussels. The three categories of actors independently identified the regions' government system (and levels of regions' political authority); top regional political decision-makers' interests; and the regions' geographical location and proximity to European neighbours with having either a positive or negative impact on the scope and objectives of regions' European engagement. Beyond these three influential characteristics, civil servants and Brussels representatives identified four additional characteristics

with effectively influencing the scope and objectives of their European engagement: language and heritage; European regional network participation; duration of EU membership and European engagement. This book has therefore assessed both the variation in scope and objectives of four case study regions' European policies and programmes and providing six explanations for the variation. It thus directly evaluates the regional characteristics which shape regions' European policy scope, including European identity objectives. The next section will illustrate and interpret the potential implications of the explanation of variation across the 98 EU regions.

7.6   Potential Implications of Research Findings Across 98 EU Regions: Further Questions Revealed

Six regional characteristics have been identified in this book and verified by actors in four regions' European policies and programmes to be influential in either facilitating or challenging the scope and objectives of regions' European engagement. This section will summarise how the regional characteristics are represented across the 98 EU regions, and therefore what impact these characteristics can be expected to have on all of the 98 EU regions' European policies and programmes—though further research will be required to verify this.

The impact of government systems on the scope and objectives of regions' European policies and programmes has been verified by regional political elites and civil servants. It has been shown in the Political Authority Index (Hooghe et al. 2010) that regions in federal states enjoy more political authority than regions in unitary states. With 65.3 percent of EU regions having low scores on the Regional Authority Index (Hooghe et al. 2010), it can therefore be expected that only 34.7 percent of EU regions have been constitutionally provided with political authority necessary to develop a wider scope and set of European policy and programme objectives. However, as the example of the Nord–Pas-de-Calais case study has shown, regionalisation also plays an important role in this categorisation; therefore further research on the remaining 94 EU regions' scope of European engagement is required to gain a more fuller and more detailed understanding of all regions' European engagement.

With regions' geographic location being verified as having an impact on their extent of European engagement and European identity means that with 63 percent of EU regions being located on a border to another

European country's region, only a slim majority of EU regions can expect to reap the benefits of the positive border location impacts. This also means that 37 percent of EU regions must find ways and means to compensate for their unfavourable geographic location. They clearly must work harder to develop and establish the necessary working connections with their European counterparts before they can effectively cooperate in European projects. It also means that 41 percent of the European population does not live in a border region and thus does not have natural access to other Europeans and, by extension, the possibility of developing a European identity through organic daily interactions with their European neighbours. However, to corroborate the impact of geographic location, further research is required in the area of regional level data collection on European identity and the extent of regions' European engagement across the remaining 94 EU regions.

With 13 of 28 EU Member States just having joined the EU in 2004, 2007 and 2013 respectively, nearly half of the EU members have not had the opportunity to engage in European affairs for any period of time. Their focus has been less on European interregional cooperation and more on managing EU funding for regional infrastructure development. It can therefore be expected that the scope of European engagement by the regions of the more recent 13 EU Member States will become broader when they no longer receive convergence funding from the European Union, and the levels of European identity will increase once opportunities for systematic and prolonged engagement with other Europeans become an integral part of their "European project." However, to glean such insights, data on regional levels of European identity must be made available.

Regional civil servants and representatives in Brussels in particular have verified that language and heritage act as either facilitators or inhibitors to European engagement and the cultivation of a European identity. Whether a region's official language is also one of the European working languages determines the ease with which they communicate and cooperate with one another. The language barrier affects about 70 percent of the EU population, and with only about 30 percent of EU regions able to easily conduct their business in the EU working languages. European cooperation and the fostering and cultivating of a European identity will be a multi-generation challenge. Clearly, it would proceed much faster if a higher percentage of Europeans were conversant in the most common European languages.

Preliminary research has shown that all regions participate in a European regional network. Participation in European regional networks constitutes part of regions' European engagement, while the extent and intensity of their participation varies. Interview findings presented in this book verified that networks boost regions' European engagement because, as this book documented, they help regions overcome impeding regional characteristics and geographical challenges. It can therefore be expected that regions that systematically and actively participate in a European regional network will be able to draw on continued support in order to widen the extent, scope and objectives of their European policies and programmes. It has been corroborated that networks help regions to more effectively manage limited political authority caused by their prevailing government system; overcome isolating geographic locations; fast-track their European engagement when becoming EU members at a later stage; support regions with small European affairs budgets and limited human resources through; and provide language support services. Continued participation in European regional networks by those regions which are faced with challenging characteristics and circumstances can thus be expected to lead to more effective engagement in European programmes and enhanced and accelerated levels of European identity.

If the regional characteristics identified by regional political elites, civil servants and representatives in Brussels were also to hold for regions with similar characteristics, their impact on the scope and objectives of regions across Europe would be considerable. However, this section has also pointed out the critical lack of data available at the regional level. With regions increasingly active at the European level and the number of EU member regions increasing, it is essential to continue the research efforts of the regions to fill the apparent knowledge gaps.

7.7   Final Considerations

This book has started the investigation on whether EU regions' European policies feature European identity building, and if so, whether this was mainly due to political elites' or civil servants' interests—or other factors. Indeed, the study has shown that European identity is cultivated in three of four case study regions' European policies. In two of those three cases, European identity had been intentionally considered in the policy design due to the personal European interests of the political decision-makers within the respective regions. Civil servants in all four case study regions

believed European identity building to be relevant within their work, thus making civil servants more likely to want to include identity-building objectives within their implementation work than political elites in their policy design work. This finding was exacerbated in the British case study region, where some civil servants were very keen to develop European awareness and identity through their work on order to grow support for EU membership and a European identity in the region—this was not possible and subsequently the citizens, who felt the European Union to be insignificant to them, voted to leave it. This notwithstanding, European regional networks were found to intentionally develop European identity amongst their membership in order to boost their participation and collaboration.

However, European identity was not only found to be fostered by intent. It also naturally develops through enhanced European engagement of a range of actors participating in European-wide cooperation projects; bilateral partnerships, European regional networks, European communications and legal integration. In these European encounters and activities, participants gain a European mind-set, learn about shared interests or commonalities, and naturally develop a European identity as a by-product of their primary European engagement. Thus, European identity has been shown to evolve through both intentionally designed policies and as a by-product of other activities.

As a secondary study to whether European identity intentionally features in the design and implementation of European policies, this book also looked into the regional characteristics affecting the scope and objectives of regions' European policies. Here, it was found that regional characteristics including government systems; political interests; geographic location; European regional network participation; duration of EU membership, as well as language and heritage can affect both the scope and identity-building objectives of regions' European policies.

This book has provided evidence-based contributions to the studies on regions' European politics and European identity building—a field within political science that has been identified as under-studied and in need of substantive research. This book also proposes a new range of findings to the broader field of European integration—what are the objectives and desired outcomes of regions' participation in the European project? However, in answering the three hypotheses and looking further into reasons behind regions' European policy variation, this book has also uncovered more questions. The findings are based on the four case study regions

and the one European regional network and are not generalizable. In order to glean a better understanding on all 98 regions' European policy's scope and objectives, the role of their designers and implementers, and the role of European regional networks in cultivating European identity and collaboration, more research in this area is required. This book has already paved the path for that further research, having probed and clarified the three hypotheses and confirmed the theoretical regional characteristics that affect variation.

Appendix 1: Case Study Selection Criteria

In Chap. 1, Germany, Belgium, France and the United Kingdom were highlighted by political scientists for being of particular interest to the study of regional European politics. The four countries, it was argued, provide a range of regional characteristics influential in determining the scope of regions' European engagement and levels of European identity. These regional characteristics include political elites' interests; participation in a European regional network; the government system; geographic location (proximity to a European border); duration of EU membership; and whether a region shares the same language or similar heritage with another European region. Which regions best showcase these characteristics and are thus more relevant to study than others?

Political scientists researching European regions' level of political authority, in order to determine the opportunity and constraints in engaging in European politics, have posited that the government system (federal vs. unitary) impacts the scope of regions' authority and activity. They have also emphasised the usefulness in further researching regions in Germany, Belgium, France and the United Kingdom, as these offer significant explanations of national governments' impact on regions' participation in European politics. Belgium was highlighted because of its on-going decentralisation process. The East German regions were set apart from others because they demonstrate the dichotomy between East and West in the post–WWII world era and they provides a unique window into fairly recent exposure and outlook changes among East Germans (being

formerly more oriented toward the East, and, more recently, being more integrated into West Germany and oriented toward the European Union). Furthermore, the German regions extent of decentralisation differs from that prevalent in Belgium, and it thus offers a further variation in the analysis of government systems. The French regions have also been identified as appropriate case studies as they have received generous national political support to engage in European politics through the country's regionalisation reforms. And British regions, particularly English ones operating within a currently re-centralising government system, have been described as deliberately isolated regions in terms of their European engagement. Hence, regions within these four countries offer valuable data about their respective national government systems' influence and impacts with regard to both objectives and scope of their European policies and programmes.

In addition to the regions' governmental and political characteristics, they also offer diversity in terms of geographic location. The literature review indicates that regions located alongside a European border should, in theory, have a higher extent of European engagement and a more natural and organic approach to fomenting a European identity. Assessing their diversity in geographic proximity to a European border, the four regions studied are expected to also yield a variety of explanations vis-à-vis the impact of their respective geographic locations on their European engagement and European identity levels.

The EU's Cohesion Policy provides all EU regions with opportunities to participate in European regional networks. The number of European regional networks in which regions participate, however, has not yet been studied. Therefore, more sophisticated selection criteria cannot be advanced at this point. However, because networks have been identified as important facilitators of regions' European engagement on the one hand, while very little empirical research has been conducted with regard to their respective range and depth, on the other hand, this book will present a two-fold study on a European regional network by providing an introductory review and illustrating how it is perceived within the context and confines of the chosen four case studies' European engagement.

Political science research has also drawn on the significance of the "time factor" when studying levels of European identity. It has been empirically demonstrated that levels of European identity increase with and over time. Identifying with Europe and feeling European simply takes time. Therefore, it can be expected that levels of European identity would be

higher in areas which have been members of the European Union and participated in European programmes for a longer period of time than the newer member states. A country comparison based on EU membership duration could help establish a clearer understanding on the variation in levels of European identity across the European Union. The four countries highlighted in the literature for providing appropriate variation, however, do not offer great variation in the duration of their EU membership—with the exception of the German region of Brandenburg, which only reunited with West Germany and thereby joined the European Union in 1990. Hence, the relationship between being an EU Member State and the respective levels of feeling a European identity must be further studied and compared in order to establish whether time, indeed, matters.

Findings would potentially reflect greater variety if case studies presented both founding EU Member States and newly joined EU Member States (from the 2004, 2007 and 2013 enlargement periods), with regions in newer EU Member States being less mature and therefore "in greater need" to be studied. Government systems in newer EU Member States are, in many cases, still transitioning into democracies with brand new sub-national structures. Secondly, regions in the new EU Member States are just starting to engage in European politics and most regions had not yet set up regional European offices or even regional websites during the duration of this research. Thirdly, as this book is covering new ground within the field of political science, a qualitative research design and approach promises to produce a new level of knowledge and understanding. Finally, the primary tool employed in this exploration is semi-structured interviewing. All interviews will be conducted in the interviewees' mother tongue or regional language to ensure accuracy and to put the interviewee at ease. This path-breaking research will be conducted on regions that were EU members prior to the 2004 enlargement phases.

Additional impacts on the scope of regions' European engagement and the level of European identity and whether political elites and civil servants foment a European identity is expected to be caused by both regional heritage and language. Do regions with a similar heritage work better together on a European scale? Do citizens identify more with citizens of regions who share a similar heritage? Do they work engage more naturally and identify more with each other if they speak the same language? The impact of heritage and language has not yet been studied and therefore these

initial findings ought to be captured as they, based on intuition, "naturally" influence how people work together and perceive themselves—and each other. The four countries offer and employ a variety in languages; in some cases the regional language is distinct from other European languages, and in other cases they are very commonly spoken languages across Europe. Also the four countries offer a variety of distinct and shared heritage backgrounds.

Drawing these multiple regional characteristics and features together, the case study selection criteria include: national government system; geographic proximity to a European border; European regional network participation; duration of EU membership; and regions' language and heritage. Based on these, the regions presented in Table A.1 have been selected for the research of this book.

Firstly, these regions are located in the four countries identified by political scientists as being particularly useful to study as they harbour the characteristics anticipated to impact the scope and objectives of regions' European engagement and level of European identity. Additionally, the selected regions within those four countries also offer unique evidence. Although Brandenburg and Wallonia are both in federal states, their respective government systems still offer variation in levels of regional political authority. Furthermore, even though they are now both located on a European border (very few regions in federal states are not on a European border as they are predominantly located in the core of the

Table A.1 Regional case study selection criteria based on existing scholarly research and literature

Region	Government system	Geographic border proximity	Network participation	EU membership since	Language
Brandenburg, Germany	Federal – RAI 37.0	On a border now, previously not	Very regularly	1990	German (uncommon)
Wallonia, Belgium	Federal – RAI 33.1	On a border	Very regularly	Founder	French (common)
Nord–Pas-de-Calais, France	Unitary – RAI 20.0	On a border	Regularly but very selectively	Founder	French (common)
South West of England, UK	Unitary – RAI 11.2	Not on a border	Marginally	1973	English (common)

European Union), Wallonia borders to regions of the founding states of the European Community, whereas Brandenburg was part of East Germany during the Community's founding years, and, upon joining the European Union in 1990, bordered to Poland, a non-EU Member State for 14 years. Therefore, Brandenburg has a unique history of European integration to unfold during this qualitative research project. And finally, Brandenburg and Wallonia can tell their respective stories on how language affects European engagement and identity building, as they offer variation on this criterion as well. For the two regions in unitary states, of course their respective government systems also significantly vary in the level of regional authority. And this makes them such useful case studies. French regions have had the benefit of regionalisation and gaining political authority to engage in European politics from the 1980s. English regions also benefitted from regionalisation, only much late in the late 1990s, and are very likely to lose them again under a Conservative government. In addition to the very important variation in the level of political authority of the regional "governments" in England and France, there is also significant variation on their geographic location as well as their membership duration. Therefore, these regions present valuable differences in their regional characteristics and history, and thus make for very unique and useful case studies. Regional European representatives of these four regions agreed to participate in semi-structured interviews and provide documentation and personal reflections on the scope and objectives of their regions' European policies and programmes. Details of this methodology will be further elaborated later in this Appendix, when presenting the methodology for Chaps. 5 and 6.

Before continuing with the methodological discussion of this book research, the definition of a "regional government" remains to be clarified. The European Commission's (Eurostat) definition of a region as outlined by the NUTS (Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics) level 1 has been selected and adopted as the level of analysis for the "region" (Source: European Commission Website: Eurostat on Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics, NUTS). Its focus is the sub-national level, which has the authority to manage EU funding and, in some EU Member States, to design and implement European policies and programmes. This is the appropriate level of analysis for the four case studies. In Germany, the regional government is the "Landesregierung" and the institutionalised body in charge of its European politics is the Ministry for Economy and European Affairs. It manages EU funding allocated to the region,

applying for additional EU funding for public and private sector European cooperation projects, and it manages the region's own European policy and mandate. Brandenburg has a high level of operational capacity as it is in a federal, decentralised state. This is a NUTS 1 regional classification. In Belgium, the decentralisation has established three regions: Flanders, Brussels Capital and Wallonia. The Walloon region's European politics are managed by the WBI (Wallonia Bruxelles Intérnational). As Brandenburg's Ministry for Economy and European Affairs, Wallonia's WBI also has a high level of operational capacity and manages EU funding allocated to the region; applies for additional funding for European cooperation projects; and decides and implements its own European policy. This is also a NUTS 1 regional classification. In France, the regional reforms have established NUTS 1 regions, which manage the regions' European affairs, the "Conseil Régional." Similar to Brandenburg and Wallonia, Nord–Pas-de-Calais also has the operational capacity to manage EU funding allocated to the region and apply for additional funding for European cooperation projects. The region also has the political authority to design and implement a European policy. The extent of political authority to do this, however, is less than in Brandenburg and Wallonia. In the United Kingdom, the NUTS 1 regional classification has been implemented especially in order to manage EU funding to the region. Here, the NUTS 1 level of regional government is the Regional Development Agency (RDA), which does not carry the same institutionalised weight as the regional governments in the other three countries. As such, the RDA in the South West of England does not have the political authority to design and implement its own European policy. It merely exists to manage the EU funding allocated to the region under negotiation between the British central government and the European Union. The RDA also has the political authority to identify EU-funded projects relevant to the region and assist regional actors from the public and private sectors to in applying for these European cooperation projects. However, with changes in central government from Labour to Conservative Coalition, the English Regional Development Agencies are undergoing authority and funding cuts and are to be gradually shut down; with their competencies divided between the Local Enterprise Partnerships and central government. Before this transition is complete, however, the NUTS 1 level of analysis is the appropriate level to investigate the regions' European policies and programmes and also offers valuable variation.

Appendix 2

Table A.2 Interviewees from the European Commission's Directorate General for Regional Policy (DG REGIO)

Number	DG REGIO unit	Role of interviewee	Experience in this role	Interview duration
1	Policy Development (Directorate B)	A senior representative	10–15 years	48 minutes
2	Territorial Cooperation (Directorate D.1)	A senior representative	5–10 years	65 minutes
3	Territorial Cooperation (Directorate D1)	Desk Officer, Brandenburg	2–5 years	12 minutes
4	Territorial Cooperation (Directorate D1)	Desk Officer, SWUK	5–10 years	13 minutes
5	Territorial Cooperation (Directorate D1)	Desk Officer, Wallonie	2–5 years	9 minutes
6	Programmes and Projects (Directorate F.2)	Desk Officer, Wallonie	2–5 years	18 minutes
7	Programmes and Projects (Directorate H.3)	Desk Officer, NPDC	5–10 years	12 minutes
8	Programmes and Projects (Directorate E.2)	Desk Officer, SWUK	5–10 years	22 minutes

Appendix 3

Table A.3 shows the political elites from the four case study regions who participated in the semi-structured interviews; it also includes information about their approximate professional European experience, of working in that role or in the European division, as well as the interview duration.

Table A.3 Interviewees—the political elites

Number	Region	Position/role	Experience in this role/ division	Interview duration
9	Nord–Pas-de- Calais	Deputy Director and General Director for European Projects	10–15 years	20 minutes
10	Nord–Pas-de- Calais	General Director for European Cooperation	15–20 years	45 minutes (30+15)
11	South West of England	Director of European Programmes	20–25 years	30 minutes
12	South West of England	Former Head of Policy incl. European Policy	15–20 years	25 minutes
13	Brandenburg	Deputy Director of European affairs and General Director of EU policy and legal coordination, European Ministerial Conference and European Communications	20–25 years	3 hours

Table A.3   (continued)

Number	Region	Position/role	Experience in this role/ division	Interview duration
14	Wallonia	General Director for European Territorial Cooperation	20–25 years	15 minutes
15	Wallonia	General Director for EU legal integration	15–20 years	56 minutes
16	Wallonia	General Director for European Bilateral Partnerships	20–25 years	38 minutes

Appendix 4

Table A.4 provides information on the administrative civil servants interviewed in the four case study regions.

Table A.4 Interviewees—the civil servants

Number	Region	Position/role	Experience in this role/ division	Interview duration
17	Nord–Pas-de- Calais	European Cooperation, Project Capitalisation Officer	4–5 years	35 minutes
18	Nord–Pas-de- Calais	European Cooperation, Training Officer	2–3 years	30 minutes
19	Nord–Pas-de- Calais	European Cooperation, Youth Mobility Officer	10–12 years	36 minutes
20	Nord–Pas-de- Calais	European Cooperation, Strategy Centre Officer	10 years	25 minutes
21	Nord–Pas-de- Calais	European Cooperation, Finance and Legal Officer	8–10 years	15 minutes
22	Nord–Pas-de- Calais	European Cooperation, Bilateral Partnerships Poland and Germany Officer	8–10 years	45 minutes
23	Nord–Pas-de- Calais	INTERREG IV A Programmes Officer	8–10 years	30 minutes
24	Nord–Pas-de- Calais	INTERREG IV A Programmes Officer	5–6 years	20 minutes

Table A.4   (continued)

Number	Region	Position/role	Experience in this role/ division	Interview duration
25	Nord–Pas-de- Calais	INTERREG Programmes Manager	8–10 years	20 minutes
26	Nord–Pas-de- Calais	INTERREG IV B and C Programmes National Authority	12–15 years	15 minutes
27	Nord–Pas-de- Calais	Structural Funds Assistant	8 years	15 minutes
28	Nord–Pas-de- Calais	Head of Projects Development	8–10 years	35 minutes
29	Nord–Pas-de- Calais	Projects Development Officer	5 years	15 minutes
30	South West of England	Policy Manager, Europe	5–8 years	60 minutes
31	South West of England	Policy Manager, Transnational Development	5 years	50 minutes
32	South West of England	Diversity & Equality Manager	4–5 years	15 minutes
33	South West of England	Head of Convergence	15 years	25 minutes
34	South West of England	European Programmes Business Manager	4–5 years	15 minutes
35	South West of England	Innovation & Enterprise Convergence Manager	8–10 years	30 minutes
36	South West of England	Head of Competitiveness	12–15 years	45 minutes
37	South West of England	Coordinator RDA – ESF (GOS)	5 years	15 minutes
38	South West of England	European Investment Manager	5 years	10 minutes
39	South West of England	RDPE Delivery Manager	5 years	15 minutes
40	Brandenburg	Head of INTERREG	10 years	20 minutes
41	Brandenburg	Communications Manager	10–12 years	30 minutes
42	Brandenburg	Head of International Partnerships	15 years	35 minutes
43	Brandenburg	International Partnerships Officer	5–8 years	40 minutes
44	Brandenburg	European and External Markets	8 years	10 minutes
45	Brandenburg	International Partnerships	3–5 years	10 minutes
46	Brandenburg	EU Structural Funds (Objectives 1 + 2)	8–10 years	25 minutes

Table A.4   (continued)

Number	Region	Position/role	Experience in this role/ division	Interview duration
47	Brandenburg	Technology and Innovation (European cooperation)	5 years	35 minutes
48	Brandenburg	Objective 3: INTERREG	10–15 years	30 minutes
49	Brandenburg	Objective 3: INTERREG	8 years	30 minutes
50	Brandenburg	Objective 3: INTERREG	5 years	30 minutes
51	Wallonia	European Integration, Head of Legal Intergation	8–10 years	25 minutes
52	Wallonia	European Integration, Environment, Transport and Energy legislation	5 years	15 minutes
53	Wallonia	European Territorial Cooperation, Manager of Finances	8–10 years	20 minutes
54	Wallonia	European Territorial Cooperation, Finances	5–8 years	15 minutes
55	Wallonia	European Territorial Cooperation, INTERREG IVA and IVB Contact Officer	10–12 years	30 minutes
56	Wallonia	European Territorial Cooperation, Head of INTERREG IV A (Cross-Border) and IVB (Europe North-West)	8–10 years	45 minutes
57	Wallonia	European Territorial Cooperation, Head of INTERREG IVC, INTERACT, and URBACT	15 years	35 minutes
58	Wallonia	European Territorial Cooperation, Head of INTERREG IVA 'Grande Region'	2–5 years	15 minutes

Appendix 5: Network Selection Criteria

A network was identified in which three of four selected regional case studies presented in this book actively participated. The chosen network was one of the first European regional networks to be established by a number of regions. At its inception, it received and was dependent on EU funding; it has further evolved over time and has become self-sustainable today through charged membership fees. The network chosen is a particularly suitable in the context of this book as it appears to have successfully addressed over an extended period of time the multiple and different needs of its varied membership and thus could be perceived as a successful network. The fact that the regions' membership pays the required fees to get access to the network's outputs and actively participates in its events is a testament to its usefulness. By presenting this network and conducting semi-structured interviews with its membership (including the three case study regions' representatives) this particular network complements the research conducted within the context of this book and further helps to develop its analysis.

Table A.5   Interviewees–the regional network case

No.	EU member since	Network member since	Function within ERRIN	Country	Gov't system	Geographic location	Language
59	–	2006–2007	Former Director	–	–	–	
60	1995	ERRIN 1+2	Management Board	Sweden	Unitary (RAI 12.0)	Isolated	Non EU working language
61	1957	ERRIN 1+2	Management Board	Italy	Unitary (RAI 27.3)	Isolated	Non EU working language
62	1957	ERRIN 1 partly + 2	Working Group	Italy	Unitary (RAI 27.3)	Isolated	Non EU working language
63	1957	ERRIN 1 partly + 2	Management Board	Belgium	Federal (RAI 33.1)	EU border	Non EU working language
64	1957	ERRIN 1 partly + 2	Working Groups	France	Unitary (RAI 20.0)	Isolated	EU working language
65	1973	ERRIN 1 partly + 2	Working Groups	UK	Unitary (RAI 11.2)	Isolated	EU working language
66	1957	ERRIN 1+2	Working Groups	France	Unitary (RAI 20.0)	Isolated	EU working language
67	1973	ERRIN 1+2	Management Board	UK	Unitary (RAI 11.2)	Isolated	EU working language
68	2004	ERRIN 2	Working Group	Cyprus	Unitary (RAI 0)	Isolated	Non EU working language
69	1957	ERRIN 1+2	Management Board	Italy	Unitary RAI 27.3)	EU Border	Non EU working language
70	1957	ERRIN 1 partly + 2	Management Board	France	Unitary (RAI 20.0)	Isolated	EU working language
71	1995	ERRIN 1+2	Management Board	France	Unitary (RAI 20.0)	Isolated	EU working language

Appendix 6: National Data Used

Appendix 6.1

Country	National population 2010	Total EU regional policy funding 2007–2013 (EUR millions)	Government system (coded)
Austria	8,375,290	1,461	2
Belgium	10,839,905	2,258	2
Bulgaria	4,563,710	6,853	1
Cyprus	803,147	640	1
Czech Republic	10,506,813	26,692	1
Germany	81,802,257	26,340	2
Denmark	5,534,738	613	1
Estonia	1,340,127	3,456	1
Spain	45,989,016	35,217	1
Finland	5,351,427	1,716	1
France	64,714,074	14,319	1
Greece	11,305,118	20,420	1
Hungary	10,014,324	25,307	1
Ireland	4,467,854	901	1
Italy	60,340,328	28,812	1
Lithuania	3,329,039	6,885	1
Luxembourg	502,066	65	1
Latvia	2,248,374	4,620	1
Malta	412,970	855	1
Netherlands	16,574,989	1,907	1

(continued)

Appendix 6.1   (continued)

Country	National population 2010	Total EU regional policy funding 2007–2013 (EUR millions)	Government system (coded)
Poland	38,167,329	67,285	1
Portugal	10,637,713	21,511	1
Romania	21,462,186	19,668	1
Sweden	9,340,682	1,891	1
Slovenia	2,046,976	4,205	1
Slovakia	5,424,925	11,588	1
United Kingdom	62,008,048	10,613	1

Source: Population: Eurostat 2010; EU Regional Policy Funding 2007–2013: European Commission Directorate General for Regional Policy Website; Government system: governments' websites as in June 2012

APPENDIX 6.2

Country	1990 European identity "NO" (%)	1990 European identity "YES" (%)	2006 European identity "NO" (%)	2006 European identity "YES" (%)	2010 European identity "NO" (%)	2010 European identity "YES" (%)
Austria	0	0	0	0	0	0
Belgium	46	54	39	61	16	84
Bulgaria	0	0	43	57	46	54
Croatia	0	0	0	0	37	63
Cyprus	0	0	42	58	36	64
Czech Republic	0	0	45	55	40	60
Germany	58	42	42	58	32	68
Denmark	51	49	38	62	18	82
Estonia	0	0	46	54	39	61
Spain	49	51	42	58	32	68
Finland	0	0	32	68	21	79
France	42	58	45	55	48	52
Greece	42	58	28	72	42	58
Hungary	0	0	42	58	27	73
Ireland	67	33	46	54	36	64
Italy	43	57	40	60	24	76
Lithuania	0	0	46	54	39	61
Luxembourg	45	55	32	68	15	85
Latvia	0	0	48	52	39	61

(*continued*)

Country	1990 European identity "NO" (%)	1990 European identity "YES" (%)	2006 European identity "NO" (%)	2006 European identity "YES" (%)	2010 European identity "NO" (%)	2010 European identity "YES" (%)
Malta	0	0	37	63	32	68
Netherlands	61	39	41	59	22	78
Poland	0	0	34	66	36	64
Portugal	49	51	38	62	34	66
Romania	0	0	40	60	31	69
Sweden	0	0	47	53	29	71
Slovenia	0	0	9	91	28	72
Slovakia	0	0	35	65	19	81
United Kingdom	72	28	68	32	46	54

Source: Eurostat News release Issue 25 / 2010, 18 February 2010

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