

## **Inclusivity. Vision, Mission, Goals, and Perspectives**

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### **Abstract**

*This text is a discussion of the Inclusivity journal development project, a presentation of the institutional and academic frameworks in which it was created, and a concise justification of the main research directions that this editorial endeavor will address and promote. Inclusivity, which operates under the auspices of the EuroINCLUS Research Center, is dedicated to the advancement of knowledge in the field of EU studies and was established with the objective of disseminating information on EU-related topics to a broader audience. This initiative is poised to foster enhanced understanding and engagement between the EU and the general public, thereby strengthening the bond between the EU and its citizens. Concurrently, Inclusivity journal endeavors to adopt an analytical and synthetic approach in its pursuit to consider fundamental and specific concerns pertaining to the theorization, conceptualization, and operationalization of concepts related to identity management and minority issues, fundamental human rights, the promotion of integration processes, inclusion, intercultural education, societal security, and the societal resilience of minorities, immigrants, and refugees.*

### **Keywords**

*Inclusivity, identity, minority, integration, culture, interculturalism*

The establishment of the Inclusivity journal, as a new academic project carried out by the EuroINCLUS Research Center at the University of Oradea, is a tangible result of one of the main objectives of the Jean Monnet Center of Excellence project, entitled Identity, Security, and Inclusivity in border areas of South East Europe (EuroINCLUS, 2024). The Jean Monnet Center of Excellence project was conceived as a hub of excellence and expertise in research, documentation, teaching, and dissemination in the field of European studies, security, and cooperation at the EU's external borders. The necessity for the establishment of the center was justified by the imperative to strengthen cooperation and

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interaction between academia and society, local and regional decision-makers, civil society, and the media. The center brings together professionals from academia with specializations in alignment with EU trends. The main objective of the project was to promote the processes of integration, inclusion, intercultural education, societal security, and societal resilience of minorities, immigrants, and refugees.

This project was developed with the aim of creating a focal point of academic knowledge, serving as a center of know-how and excellence. The objective is to facilitate the dissemination of good practices from the EU to the border regions of neighboring states. The foundation for this initiative is rooted in the expertise acquired at the University of Oradea, which over the last few decades has emerged as a preeminent player in the field of research, education, and the management of identity, societal security, and inclusion in the cross-border area of Romania. The identification of proper responses and solutions to the predominant issues and challenges encountered in border regions can serve as a foundation for the development of an inclusive society within the European Union and in its neighboring regions.

The University of Oradea, as a promoter of European studies, aims through this Center of Excellence to capitalize on the experience gained by 6 professors, who coordinated Jean Monnet modules in the specific thematic areas of this project: PhD Professor Mircea Brie - project coordinator (ethno-confessional realities and societal security), PhD Professor Sorin Şipoş (historical and cultural heritage), PhD Professor Karla Barth (intercultural education and communication), PhD Associate Professor Luminița Şoproni (socio-economic inclusion), PhD Associate Professor Alina Stoica (cultural diplomacy) and PhD Associate Professor Polgár István (migration and integration).

The project builds on the EU's prior experience in promoting intercultural dialogue and education, both internally and externally. It underscores the necessity to establish thematic and policy-specific centers on integration, inclusion, and societal resilience. These centers could offer the EU novel perspectives and pragmatic solutions for formulating and implementing its policies in Southern and Eastern Europe.

It is imperative to facilitate the transfer of know-how, expertise, and excellence in accordance with European values and principles of human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to ethno-religious minorities, immigrants, and refugees. The transfer of good practices from the European Union to the border regions of neighboring states is imperative.

*Inclusivity* is dedicated to disseminating knowledge regarding EU-related subjects to a broader audience bringing the EU closer to the public.

The *Inclusivity* journal employs a dual approach, integrating analytical and synthetic methods, to examine fundamental and specific issues pertaining to the theorization, conceptualization, and operationalization of concepts within its primary areas of focus. Consequently, *Inclusivity* will facilitate the convergence of teams of researchers, theorists, and practitioners, thereby amassing academic expertise and proffering models of good practices and know-how for the formulation of public policies congruent with the promotion of inclusion at the societal level. This approach is also intended to establish a framework for research design in the specific areas targeted and to engage young researchers, doctoral students, master's students, and undergraduates in the development of research teams that promote academic knowledge and facilitate the transfer of knowledge to interested specialists, decision-makers, and society at large.

The fundamental areas targeted by the *Inclusivity* journal are as follows:

- Identity management and issues related to ethno-national, linguistic, and religious minorities
- Cultural and educational integration
- Socio-economic inclusion at the community and society levels
- Interculturality, integration, resilience, and societal security
- Cultural-historical heritage and cultural diplomacy
- Migration management and refugee issues
- Human rights and vulnerable groups
- Fundamentalism, divisions, borders, and identity conflicts

The conceptualization of these fundamental directions gives rise to specific concepts, such as identity, integration, inclusion, security, and societal resilience, all of which fall under the umbrella of interculturalism. At the community level, considerations are given to minorities, migrant groups, and refugee groups.

Beyond the models of multiculturalism, the theoretical and applied framework of *interculturalism* promotes an integrative approach, which serves as the foundation for the thinking and structural-methodological philosophy of the project we are building around the *Inclusivity* journal. It is imperative to recognize that human beings, groups, and human communities must *live together, not side by side*. This reality leads to the development of a common frame of reference, shared values, and public policy models that promote equality and coexistence.

From a general perspective, the concept of "inclusivity" refers to "the fact of including all types of people, things, or ideas and treating them all

fairly and equally" (*Cambridge Dictionary*, 2025). Of course, a thorough examination of the concept yields meanings that extend far beyond those assumed by the editorial team of this journal, which appears under the auspices of the *EuroINCLUS Research Center*. The meanings and directions of conceptual expression towards which the research published in this journal will be directed are aligned with the eight fundamental directions previously outlined. The entire operationalization of the concept of "inclusivity" is therefore built in accordance with these principles, developing the entire theoretical, methodological, and applied frameworks in which the authors and academic works selected for publication in the journal will express themselves.

The main area of research is Europe, although the investigation is not limited to this region. To comprehensively understand the integrative and global perspectives on the phenomenon and facets of inclusion, comparative and contextual references, as well as models found in other geographical areas, are essential.

In the context of analytical inquiry, reference is made to the various levels of expression that identity may assume. Given the specificity we attribute to it, *Inclusivity* focuses on the *national level*, as well as the *subnational*, regional/local level (including internal regions, administrative units, and the community level). It also encompasses the *supranational* level, European or global, and that of international organizations (which may also have a regional associative dimension at the national level). The conceptual debate also extends to the reality of cleavages and identity boundaries. In addition to the articulation of identities associated with the national and ethnic characteristics during the identity revolution of the 19th and early 20th centuries, this process continues to evolve, resulting in the emergence of new levels of identity in the contemporary era. At the same time, more and more "border" cleavages are emerging within European societies. These boundaries are most often symbolic and ideological (Brie, 2023: 283-284). Despite the progress made at European level in terms of consolidating the European identity, we are witnessing a resurgence of the national in the contemporary period. The process of European construction was accompanied by a certain blurring of the national identity, particularly in terms of the expression of nationalist-extremist movements. European identity appears as a higher-ranking identity, reducing the forms of expression of national and regional identities. This is, at least, in theory. On the other hand, in the current context, we are entitled to believe that European identity has emerged alongside national and regional identities, without being closely related to them. In other words, the reduction or amplification of manifestations at one level does not lead to a counterweight at another level (Brie, 2018: 237). Diachronically, stimulated by the

phenomenon of globalization and the success of the EU, especially the European enlargement to the east and the disappearance of the "Iron Curtain", the European identity has experienced exaltation at both the level of public discourse and in daily life. In our opinion, the phenomenon has another facet: the identity revenge of the current period. As a result of systemic crises at EU level (economic, financial, social, institutional or legitimacy), new geopolitical realities in the neighboring area (e.g. the situation in Ukraine, the Middle East and North Africa), but also as an effect of mass migration, there has been a return to local, regional or national identities (Brie and Blaga, 2015: 255-273).

At a conceptual level, identity constructions appear to be on the same level of analysis, but they can have different connotations. Regardless of the level of reporting (European, national or regional/local), identity is found as a form of expression in the public space despite universal trends, globalization and the uniformity of values, characteristics or community expressions. Elements of ethno-religious identity are found in the global public space, including in forms multiplied through the channels of global propagation. Therefore, it is not only the global increase itself that is important, but also the particular and the specific. The latter often take forms of extremism, nationalism and ethno-religious violence are multiplied by gaining followers thousands of miles away. The national and ethnic state, associated with the national territory, has not only survived the pressures of the "global society", but has also demonstrated an even greater capacity for affiliation. *Identity globalization* has proven to be stronger in urban and industrialized societies. However, where there are consistent rural areas, a rich heritage and cultural tradition, resistance to globalization has developed (Poenu 2012). Consequently, local and national-cultural identities are more strongly preserved in the rural-agricultural environment, as well as in the proximity of cultural sites (Brie, 2021: 5-29).

In most Western countries, the national identity has been built mainly around citizenship, and consequently, the territory of citizenship has become the fundamental term of reference for the "national territory" - *the civic dimension of national identity*. Eastern Europe has had a different pattern of development, in which ethnicity, *the ethnic belonging or affiliation has fulfilled* a fundamental role in building the national identity - *the ethnic dimension of national identity* (Flóra, 2011: 116).

In Central and Eastern Europe and in the Balkan countries, from the conceptual point of view, we can identify different kinds of identity characteristics. There are a lot of cleavages or borders associated with the identity: ethnic identity, religion identity, linguistic identity, alphabet identity, citizen identity / civic identity, cultural identity, geopolitical identity. A fundamental feature of state-type nation-state constructions in Western

Balkans is their permanent lack of legitimacy or, rather, their incomplete legitimacy. By identifying the state with a single national identity, the other national communities inevitably found themselves outside this process of legitimation, which constituted a fundamental source of inter-ethnic and inter-religious tensions (Brie, 2024: 73-74).

Conceptual analysis is never enough without the application of appropriate public policies and the implementation of models for managing relations between the majority and the minority. The aim should be, beyond ensuring multiculturalism, to reach interculturality, by ensuring effective inclusion and integration through dialogue. Interculturality goes beyond dialogue carried out at the level of partnerships that ensure coexistence, such as *consociationalism* (McCrudden, 2006: 2). This concept designates a model for managing diversity and supposes arrangements that involve the division of power in multi-identity states and societies in ethno-national, community linguistic or religious terms. The common interest in maintaining the state and citizenship are elements that support the community "contract" (Kymlicka, 2000: 203-204). This is one of the general principles underlying the protection of ethno-national minorities, namely the principle of partnership between identity communities. The specialty literature and models resulting from international practice identify several general principles underlying the protection of ethno-national minorities: a) *the principle of respect for diversity* - by promoting coexistence in the same habitat and equality, this principle is "largely different from the principle of tolerance which presupposed the arrogance of the hierarchical relationship between tolerant and tolerated" and ensures the mechanism for protecting the rights of all communities ethno-national and linguistic; b) *the principle of partnership coexistence* (of the partnership between the cultural-identity communities) - based on this principle the ethno-national minorities are associated in the process of local, regional and national governance (general leadership); c) *the principle of positive discrimination* - the ethno-national and cultural minorities obtain rights of a privileged nature in relation to the majority. These benefits are granted in order to compensate for inequalities, differences in socio-economic and cultural status and to stimulate integration; d) *the principle of preserving the cultural identity* - considers the creation of an institutional and legislative regulatory framework that would contribute to the preservation of the specific elements of the ethno-national and cultural-identity communities; e) *the principle of multicultural integration* (multiculturalism) - which "goes beyond mere coexistence and, refusing, equally, both the assimilation of minorities and their isolation (insularization, ghettoization), aims for the members of each entity, be it majority or minority, to and to acquire, understand, respect and express

themselves according to the values specific to the culture of the other coexisting cultural communities” (see Brie; Islam and Polgar, 2021: 68).

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