

**EUROIDENTITIES project Workshop  
Brussels – 9-11.02.2011**

**Theoretical presentation**

**Farmer ‘sensitized group’**

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*“Let’s believe in the EU, in the future”.*  
S. H., German farmer

This is a paper prepared for advance circulation prior to the Euroidentities Final Conference in February 2011

**(1) Occupational identity: perfection of biographical path in an unstable world**

Within the preparation of the field work within the EUROIDENTITIES project we identified three major types of farmers and farm performing individuals<sup>1</sup>. The first group is that of the **agrarian business people** who have taken up farming as an investment and hire specialists and workers. To some extent their activities are similar to those in other industries – they are organized in big companies with horizontal and vertical division of duties and responsibilities, whose governing and performance require certain managerial skills and professional knowledge. In this particular case we could not really speak about farming as an occupation but as a profession<sup>2</sup>. The second group consists of “**subsistence ‘farmers’** and/or **hobbyists** who escape to the countryside as an alternative lifestyle, often relying on external financial support. They don’t do farming in terms of stable and basic work. Rather they utilize the benefits of farming in addition to their everyday work, earnings and life. The third group are the **owners** or **tenants**, who run the farm on their own. They are self-employed in the

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<sup>1</sup> 39 interviews have been conducted with farmers from Wales, Germany, Poland, and Bulgaria. All the interviews were anonymous and the names of the informants were masked. We would like to thank the Welsh, Polish and German teams for supplying valuable biographical interviews. We would also like to express our gratitude to Prof. Fritz Schutze whose theoretical reflections and ideas on farmers’ ‘sensitized’ groups were essential in preparing this paper.

<sup>2</sup> On the analogy of the theories of stratification (Duncan 1961, Treiman and Ganzeboom 2000) we distinguish an occupation from a profession. The profession needs more extensive training and specialized knowledge acquired mainly throughout higher education in comparison to an occupation it doesn’t need. Persons engaged in an occupation are not paid for their knowledge, but only for what they produce. When considering responsibilities, a profession demands that the responsibility lies with the individual. This means that professionals can assess fellow professionals in contrast to an occupation, where any person can make assessments because occupational work does not require high degrees of knowledge and skill.

farm, working with their family or with a small number of hired workers. Most of the interviewees in our sample from Bulgaria, Germany, Wales and Poland are representatives of this group.

In the analysis below we focus on comparatively small or medium agricultural and stock-breeding enterprises in the four countries mentioned above<sup>3</sup>. Most of them were born in villages or small towns in all studied countries. This predetermines their living and acting within **visible boundaries**, mostly interacting within **small and familiar groups** and/or (ethnic, religious, etc.) **communities**. According to the theories of social capital and networking (Putnam 2001, Granovetter 1973, Castells 1997) farmers establish narrow social networks of strong ties. While the nature of farm work demands continuous engagement and permeates their lives 24 hours a day, 365 days per year, farmers develop (1) dedication and stewardship to farm, land and occupation and as well as (2) conservatism and reciprocity.

In the framework of the EUROIDENTITIES project we developed a typology of farmers' occupational identity based on the biographical process structures and their ordering or coexistence (Schutze 2008a). We distinguish two main types of using biographical work in the farmers' biographical process.

The **first type** is when biographical work overlaps with farmers' occupation. In this case the biography

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<sup>3</sup> There is no standard definition of what a small and large farm is and the farm structure has not been theorized in the project. A great variety of farm typology in the understanding of big, small and medium-sized farm in the countries studied within the EUROIDENTITIES project was found. Using the biographical method farmers were left alone to identify themselves. In their story rendering the personal perception of 'small-large' distinction was locally visible – not as a distinction between the communities/nations but rather as a distinction within the own community and was specified in comparison with the others [farmers] in the community. Otherwise, by definition in **Poland** large farms are farms with 15 ha and more and small farms - less than 15 ha (Zawojnska 2006). The average size of Utilized Agricultural Area (UAA) of a holding in Poland is 12.3 ha and in **Bulgaria** - 24 ha (country total, all type holdings). In recent years in Bulgaria there is a trend towards land consolidation and increasing the UAA by the holdings. However, the vast majority of farms remain small economic sized in the range between 0.4-3.9 economic size units (Farm Structure Survey in Bulgaria, 2007). In 2007 the average size of **German** agricultural holdings was 48 ha (Martins 2009). In the UK the average farm size is of around 57 ha, much larger than the European average size of approximately 20 hectares. However for **Wales** sizes are smaller at around 40 ha. ([http://www.ukagriculture.com/uk\\_farming.cfm](http://www.ukagriculture.com/uk_farming.cfm))

of the farmer is actually a process of him/her becoming a farmer, being a farmer and living as a farmer. It seems to our interviewees that farming as a social environment (field) and social activity (to be a farmer) simultaneously is their whole life (Mihail and Yavor from BG, Marek and Baca from PL). According to Schutze (ebd.:11) biographical process structures normally follow each other. In this case most often the **institutional expectation patterns** in which individuals follow up normatively defined courses of life through family life cycle is the biographical structure in dominance. We would illustrate this through the case of a young Bulgarian farmer.

Mihail is 27 years old, whose habitus is deeply rooted in agricultural work. To him work is not a burden and unpleasant toll – work, just like play, was part of an idyllic childhood, that children today don't have (1: 9-10):

*For me today's childhood is not a childhood. Children don't have childhood. No matter how weird that sounds .And- high school education was also connected to work.*

“Becoming” a farmer was a very smooth process for Mihail. That conditioned him to feel he could not do anything else and this was what he wanted to do for life. At many points in his interview essential quotes confirm his biographical commitment to farming 1: 13-15 & 20-23; 2: 45; 10: 48; 11: 1)

*Agricultural work – mostly always – every summer I worked, I helped my father and from there mainly I began to learn ...to get into agriculture, year after year.*

*The other thing, - / this is the only thing, that I have worked at, I never did// I haven't done anything else, that is what I want. And /for the future I want that. As a whole that is what I like. ..agriculture... my opinion is that...agriculture is a good business, as long as it is interesting for you, if you want to work...*

*I...if some one asks me – want to do it as long as I live.*

*The important thing for me is, that I want things to get better, I want to work at that.*

*I can not work at anything else, it is what I want to do. And I believe that I will do that.*

Mihail was born into farming, but he had the fortune to be born to a father who came from the agricultural elite of the farming cooperative during communism – his father was a technologist. After the 1989 changes his father became the chairman of the newly formed cooperative.

*After that my father, right, many years during communism was a technician in the former cooperative in our village...And then democracy....long term chairman of the cooperative. (1: 36-38).*

Compared to other farmers, who also grew up in a village, among many animals and doing agricultural

work, and their parents were not part of the cooperative management (for example another Bulgarian farmer, Assan), Mihail had an advantage which could be seen in the scale of his current production. **Social status and advantages granted to one's biographical development due to one's family life cycle may still have stronger identity-formation potential for Bulgarian farmers than national or even supranational entities, such as the European Union. Even further, they could be more influential in the biographical transformations in Bulgaria in comparison to the other nations studied because of the totality of the social changes in the '90s. Although in the Polish farmers group there is no evidence for such an important influence unlike in Bulgaria.**

As stated by Schutze (2008a: 11) despite the fact that in their biographical dominance, biographical process structures follow each other, we can observe phenomena of actual simultaneity, competition or mutual support of structures. The case of the young Polish farmer Marek is an example for the sequential combination of family acquired pattern and trajectory of suffering on the basis of outer events which happened to people in Eastern Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Although similar to the case of Mihail, Marek's patterns of perception, thought and action were predominantly acquired within the normatively defined courses of life in the "visible boundaries" of his family, village and local agricultural community close to nature and land. The life history of Marek, a thirty-three years old inheritance farmer shows clearly that the *'gestalt'* of being a farmer is almost everything that he has and what gives him and his existence stability. He gives two reasons for becoming or remaining on the farm: (1) he loves it and (2) there was nothing else he could have worked at. However, the love does not come through his story as much as the lack of choice:

*I: Aaa yy did you ever think of quitting and leaving this place? N: Once there was such a period // but actually you have to know how to do things, to go to the city, to have a skill \. (...) I can work in a village and that is it, so I remained here". (1: 30-31)*

This biographical commitment might have grown into a passion, or it was passed down on him, but it is definitely a commitment he was born into.

The family is perceived as a safety net by Marek. It is something stable which has always been there:

*I live and work in an agricultural farm – but I don't work alone, my parents are helping me / once I*

*helped, now they help#.* (1: 13-15)

It is not going to be there much longer though - the generational differences are evident:

*I: Don't you think, after you said, that it's not really profitable, so really, do you think, that you can go and work somewhere?*

*N: Oh no, I am a single child, I have parents, they help me, somehow it will happen . . . It could be worse, however, with the kids, but#" (7: 19-22)*

Marek finds stability in his relationship with his parents, who will be there for him because he was there for them - a stance that might lead to his inability for him to cope with them becoming less physically able. Another source of stability is his feeling of belonging to the home - his own house, which, out of all the unstable places, seems to be the place he will be safest:

*Well, I am 33 years old already//for now I am living somehow, right. Nobody is throwing me out of here and I will be. I think, I will stay here. There is no point of me moving somewhere, it's not easy anywhere now\...*

*I: Hmm, hmm. Of course, if you are building a house#*

*N: #So, there it is, that means, that I am growing roots... ((smiling)). (8: 16-20)*

As is evident from both of these cases, the social worlds and arenas of farmers whose biographical identity overlaps with their occupational activity are **dominated by stable entities, such as land, nature and family**. Therefore heritage, tradition and kinship relations - family patterns, patrilineality, gender roles, sons having responsibility towards their fathers are playing a special role in the formation of their identity. **Mobility** is not so important in this case. **On the contrary**, immobility seems to be one of the main features. For instance, Marek spent all his life on the farm, and any prospects of moving have been severed by the fact that he cannot do anything else in the town.

The **farmers' immobility** is also based on the level and character of their professional skills and knowledge. Agricultural skills and knowledge are inherited in the same way as the farm or the land. In many cases – in Bulgaria and Poland but also in Germany – an important part of them is the experience-based agricultural skills acquired in “doing” farming under the surveillance of a father, an uncle or other elder individuals. If there is a formally acquired agricultural education or training it is strictly specialized and not at the highest level. It could hardly be utilized in other professional fields.

In terms of biographical commitment there is a **strong intergeneration tie**. Farmers are getting their land and farms through inheritance. Following the paragraphs from the interviews with senior and junior representatives of one and same Welsh family – both farmers:

*Right. Well I was born and bred here, over fifty years ago now /ehm/ and my family were, I'm the **fifth generation** -ehm- farming here. (Merfyn Sr. 11: 3-4)*

*Well, first of all, my name's Merfyn. /Ehm/ I'm 24 years old and my life story'd be that I, well, live in XXX on a farm in GGG in mid Wales. **I've lived here all my life.** (Merfyn Jr. 1: 11-12).*

For strong intergenerational links which are decisive for a biographical orientation to farming the next quote from an interview with a Bulgarian farmer speaks strongly:

*Weeell... **My earlier memories are ...//See, I will never forget and I still think...// my grandfather was a stockbreeder.** In my childhood – that's how I remember him - - you know, going out with the sheep/ - coming back home with the sheep/ and only caring for the animals. ... It's just ... that was his job.. And it was very curious for me/ ...// see, I had this great desire... to go with him. (Mincho: 1: 3-8)*

Although the interviewed farmers do not expect their children to take on their farms.

The **second type** consists of farmers who use farming as a **conscious strategy for overcoming surrounding instability**. More or less farming is an occupation chosen by people in a crisis situation when instability increases greatly. For illustration of this type and for further analysis of the biographical process structures we have chosen two examples again – Ruby, a Welsh female farmer and Murat, a Bulgarian tobacco farmer. In both cases – so different in their geographical location and historical-cultural development – overwhelming outer events (Murat) or creative inner metamorphoses (Ruby) become basis for further development of biographical action schemes. This is done by means of farming and for final (more or less) successful overcoming of (outer or inner) provoked trajectories of suffering.

The trajectory of suffering aggravated by overwhelming outer events such as dissatisfaction or crass disagreement in the family or business environment, social anomie in the post-socialist societies or just the accession to the EU of their own or other new nations can have important inner developments as a consequence. In these cases individuals suffer surrounding instability of previously perceived as stable social environments. Important in this particular case is the determination of the individuals to overcome the suffering by developing an **active biographical work**. Farming is becoming a

biographical action scheme, by which persons attempt to actively shape the course of their lives. Incentive for that is given always by encountering “**significant others**” - business and family partners, or turning back to the self and the routines of confidence. The turning point in one’s biographical process is evident in one’s life course because it has always been reflected in a confirmation of the individuals’ active role in the development and the transformation of their biographical identity.

Ruby had a difficult childhood, defined by the early death of her father, who was a Royal Navy officer, killed in the war<sup>4</sup>. Because of that and maybe because of her complicated relationship to her mother (she does not talk about her mother) Ruby grew up in problematic and conflicted family relationships. Ruby went through a big family break up because her mother greatly disapproved of her being a ‘peasant’.

*My mother thought it was // well she 34 couldn’t believe it and she, I remember her telling somebody, -ehm- oh Ruby wants to be a peasant.” (3: 34-35).*

But the final break up comes when she marries a much older Welshman:

*I broke completely with my family when I married Merfyn because I was /ehm/ they were Catholics and my mother was a very high church Catholic and so divorce... he divorced to marry me.”(3: 36-38)*

Thus, Ruby is an active agent in her life choices, opted for a different lifestyle than was expected from her and claims to have been very happy with her professional and personal life choices. Two important encounters with significant others in her life are decisive for her final and active orientation to farming: the early interactions with a childless neighboring farm couple. She even claims that one of the first things she learned to say was “*where is the baa baa sheep*”. The second significant encounter is with her husband, who himself is a Welsh farmer.

Ruby is a self-content woman, who is happy with her life choices, loves her farming occupation and adores her locality of residence – Wales.

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<sup>4</sup> In the narrative it was not mention exactly which war has died, her father, but it can be assumed that the Second World War.

Bulgarian farmer Murat is a Pomak<sup>5</sup>. He was born and raised in a village in an agricultural, tobacco-growing region where people are relatively poor, but have strong interpersonal bonds and relationships, believe in superstition and live close to nature. Characteristic for him are strong bonds with family and relatives as well the attachment to place. The turning point for developing his trajectories of suffering is partly self experienced trauma, partly observed distress of his own relatives from the “revival process”<sup>6</sup>:

*.. life was passing by ... in children's games/ came// -the revival process ..appeared in our town.. which was stamped in our minds...with fear-((speaks slowly, distinctly, but with pauses)) that's how we remember our parents- afraid, frightened always.. told us to be quiet/.. to that sort of thing/..and ((sighing)) and/ we went to the plots tobacco//... there were different events (3 sec) in life- everyone has some events, experiences... ((very quietly)) stop it, stop it. ((the clatter of the microphone is heard - end of first recording)). (1:12-18)*

Before becoming a tobacco farmer Murat developed different alternative “exit strategies” which lead him to metamorphosis. During the socialistic youth of Murat there were not too much people like him (born in a small Pomak community lacking social and cultural infrastructure diversity). Starting school in town, seeing the movie ‘The West’ by which he was “dazed”, getting an job in the village council are among the strategic steps leading to escape from the “revival process” trauma and from being perceived as “different” by the major “we-community” (the orthodox Bulgarians). Aspirations and ambitions lead him out of his traumatic situation and help him become “normal”, “just like the others” – for example he was studying the guitar, he wanted to travel and see the world ‘like the others’ or build a small dam to bathe ‘like other people’.

*My **first** steps in life, my earliest memories are playing in the yards, in the streets.. with my little friends/.. the **first** fair before first grade.. in G., the merry-go-rounds, something that really impressed me ((smiling bitterly)) for the **first** time/.. ...”I recall the **first** games”; “I recall my **first** teacher”] ..... (1:10-13/2:2)*

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<sup>5</sup> Pomaks are Bulgarian Muslims officially recognized as a religious Muslim minority speaking Bulgarian language. Since the start of the 20th century the Pomaks in Bulgaria were the subject of state-supported assimilation which included the change of their Turkish-Arabic names to ethnic Bulgarian ones and conversions from Islam to Eastern Orthodoxy. Part of this people self-identify as Bulgarians.

<sup>6</sup> The “Revival Process” was first used as a term in 1985. Popularly used, the term signifies not only the forceful name change of Turks and Bulgarian Muslims (Pomaks) but also the attempt of the Bulgarian socialist state authorities to eradicate the group religious identity of the Pomak population. The names of 850 000 Muslims were forcefully changed from Turkish-Arabic to Slavic Christian.

In contrast to the first type where immobility was widespread, farmers here are ready to travel and have had experiences with traveling abroad. For example, Ruby is a well traveled person. She visited friends and relatives in France, America, South Africa, New Zealand, and even Hong Kong. Her travel is not related to her work but to her curiosity and cosmopolitanism, although she wanted to see even more sheep in New Zealand. Ruby is also interested in foreign cultures, and although her comments are not always politically correct, she presents herself as a person of varying interests. This has made her an informed and “with it” woman, which inspires her to take action towards a collective goal like uprising against the “cobblers” in Europe or in her home country.

Even more interesting is the story of Stefan whose main story is diversified by many international experiences:

*I grew up here on the farm in D., This has been a family business for many generations. ... We also had livestock, dairy cows. Later my parents stopped that and kept pigs. When I was a small child there have always been animals. However, we didn't keep any animals later. My brother was three years older and looked after me when I was small. My sister is five years younger. I looked after her a little bit. Sometimes I fought with my brother, just for fun, testing our strength. After the war, my mother's sister immigrated to Australia. She and her husband hadn't felt happy here and so they emigrated. In Australia they founded a new family. ... They visited us and told us a lot, brought films from over there and it was the great distance which was interesting for me. However, I didn't want to leave here. It was really interesting. Later on my older cousins took a trip around the world, came here in between and told us about their experiences. There were a lot of soldiers here on the farm. This was border area. A lot of manoeuvres took place here. Dutch, British, and also Americans came here. .... As a child I mostly played in the village. My brother's friends used to come here. I looked up to them. And then by and by I found more friends in the village. I started to get out of the village with my bike. As a child I helped on the farm sometimes. On the farm were many buildings so it was a place for work and a playground at the same time. We also played in the garden a lot in the summer. And then I got out ... Because my father got ill. He was an alcoholic, and I was forced to help quite a bit. I realized that it is more fun when you are your own boss. I liked farming, and I like it until now. At that time we had very little money. My father had financial problems with the farm. ... We got in touch with Edinburgh, Scotland. ... And I also got in touch with some other farmers in Europe, especially in Scotland. ... It might be of interest for you that I was in touch with Russian interns. They came here via an association that helps to bring people who are interested in agriculture, mostly students, from Eastern Europe closer to Western agriculture. For two or three summers we had a Russian intern here.*

Similar to the other type of biographical farmers' identity, neither Ruby or Murat expect their children to take on the farm. Although Ruby went through a big break up with her family in order to pursue her desire to be a farmer, her life choice in a way ended with her. Even though Ruby succeeded in passing on her love of the land and the animals to her daughter, who opted for a city career as a lawyer.

Concluding in the cases shown above, especially in those where farming is chosen as a **conscious strategy for overcoming surrounding instability**, social worlds and the connected social arenas are those of the occupation, namely the farming. Following Schutze (2008a) these communities are prone to be established in all cases of conscious orientation on farming activities that have to be assessed regarding their authenticity and quality. As we will show in the following parts more exactly they become partial **we-communities** that furnish a collective awareness or a self-consciousness of their own unity and identity in the special terms of farming. This is a little bit different from we-communities like a farmer family that cover the entire totality of life aspects of their members and therefore shape the totality of farming. Both we-communities are linked to the biographical identity of their individual members but in a different way. As we had shown above in the second typological case farmers are passing over more complicated chain of biographical processes structures than in the first one where biographical work is dominated by the life and work pattern of the (more often) extended farmer family. Following the analysis above we can presume that farming based on the family tradition (and stability) is most likely to be encountered in societies like the post-socialist countries (Bulgaria and Poland) where spatial and social immobility is typical or in smaller nations like Wales or even in Bulgaria than in bigger European union member states like Germany for instance.

## (2) Collectivity and Figurations

Looking into the farmers' narratives through a 'collective' perspective means to identify the shared feelings of belonging to 'farmership' and/or the voluntary membership in occupational/professional groups or organisations<sup>7</sup>. The membership in the voluntary groups is self-chosen and hence actively shaped in the individual biographical trajectory. The social arenas of farming organize the social world of the individuals and establish 'we-communities', which are a field for social interactions, collective awareness and shared mental space. As concluded in the first part of this analysis there are different we-communities an individual is interacting in during his biographical life trajectory – those that cover

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<sup>7</sup> We are using here the distinction between two memberships in identity organizations – voluntary and involuntary according to Klandermans (Klandermans *et. al.* 2002: 238).

'the totality of life aspects of their members' (for example, the nation and the family) and those that cover a specific collective membership.

Based on the empirical records we can confirm that within the group **farmers feel farmers** in terms of an "imagined community" (Anderson) - although the community members do not know each other every of them has got the idea about the existence of other farmers. They have got an idea about their occupational position in the society and awareness about the existence of professional farmers' community. This idea can be seen articulated in the narratives.

*Cause we are small farmers... (Mihail, BG, 2:50)*

*And over eighteen years in every negotiation about merger and what have you, I talked with an angels tongue that us, the farmers, that we must stick together. (Wiard, GER, 10:49-50)*

*Well, we are all one, they cannot break us up as a unit, we are out in the field every day (Zanko, BG, 13: 24-26)*

**This self-identification ('us, the farmers')** often comes in a combination with one of those 'background' identities ('we-communities') like nation, race, ethnicity or family. Even more, the feeling of belonging to a farmer family strengthens the feeling of belonging to a farmership and generalised community of "adherents".

*The life of the shepherd is very difficult - in the sense that - well, you don't know what Saturday is - you don't know what Sunday is\ - There are no holidays and no week days ((coughing)) aaand .. it might rain - there might be thunder - you are in the field with them\ ... You cannot leave the animals - for example hungry and thirsty ... this is out of the question\. ... They are like// they are like people. (Mincho, BG, 1: 34-38)*

*N: This is one very, exceptionally good occupation that both of us have. // so, from the very beginning I started working with him -a- / books - we bought - ... and so. // [...] so, we just formed a little family firm, I would say, because the three of us do an incredible amount of work - we do have a boy who herds the cows - but the three of us do such an incredible amount of work so that we could -aa- to succeed with the bees - we have 90 hives, it's mainly me who deals with them, - because -mm- my husband and my son - they deal with the land, with cultivating it. The accounting is a separate thing.*

*I: Do you do that yourself?*

*N: Yes, yes. (Petya, BG, 2:10 - 3:4)*

As already mentioned in the first part often this business is inherited within the family generations so the family is the smallest collective body to move the farm forward.

*The whole family, both sides, my mother's side of the family and my father and my wife's side,*

*they're all farmers. (Carwyn, WAL, 5: 37-38)*

*I lived with farming even as a small child. – This has been a family business for many generations, many centuries. It has been handed down from generation to generation. (Stefan, GER, 1: 26-28)*

*If he has shepherds blood, this would determine his occupation for his whole life. (Baca, PL, 1: 46-47)*

*N: In the family everyone, every ancestor, I don't know how many generations back, everyone - father, grand-father, great-grand- (2 s.)*

*I: Everyone herded sheep?*

*N: They were involved in raising other animals as well. (Baca, PL, 2:16-19)*

Exactly that combination of belonging to different “we-communities” creates different figurations in the sense of Norbert Elias (1999) and this further has an impact on the self identity construction process. Along the whole variety of collective dimensions protrude those of the figurations “**our nation vs. Europe**” and “**our nation vs. another one**”. These figurations have to deal with the national (sometimes territorial or citizenship) identity and their influence on the farmers’ occupational identity. It creates two spatial categories – ‘here’ (in our ‘we-community’) and ‘there’ (in their ‘we-community’) and visualizes the borders and boundaries in the collective perceptions.

*The Bulgarian tomato is tastier. Right, tastier... and it's not on the market. Even if it does appear, although it's more expensive, people prefer it, 'cause it's tastier right. – So coming from other states here neighbouring Turkey or that Greece. Coming these, these tomatoes. You can't tell whether it's a tomato, in form, in appearance it's a tomato, but in taste I don't know what it is. However they come cheaper, people buy from them... (Murat, BG, 16: 34-39)*

*So, we will not use the funds – we, the Poles. (Iwona, PL, 6: 17-18)*

*There is a great difference - what they give us [as subsidies to us, Bulgarians] –aaa-.... for example like - some [there in the West] small farmers, who work - just when you see their machinery, which they work the land with - everything is so ahead of us. (Petya, BG, 10: 18-20)*

An Important part of the collective identification process is the figuration of “**small farmers vs. large farmers**”. Most of the informants consider themselves as farmers with a small business, respectively – with small influence on decision taking and law constructing on national and European level and marginalized from the EU Policy.

*This is the problem in D. , many people are not informed and they don't know that this is the problem of agriculture, that there is too much disloyal competition. All types of methods are used so that smaller farmers are done away with. (Mihail, BG, 5: 8-10)*

*..Those who founded the big companies, through the big programs, they are not farmers. ... They [the small farms] are, they are doomed to go bankrupt within five years. (Yavor, BG, 24: 15-18)*

*The big farmers, who had 30- 50- 60- thousand decares, when they apply to the fund they get very different attention from us, the small ones. To us, small ones, no oone... how can I say it, they don't count us as people - who do small-scale production. i think this still goes on - that the large-scale ones paid - the large-scale ones paid so that their documents would go ahead, they didn't wait in the queue there in the fund. Do you understand what this is all about? When they [the subsidies] were being paid, they [the administrative personnel] ring up: "come over, please, we are keeping your place" - they would pass us - outside we would be a hundred people, they would always jump the queue, // people who knew them //, they would always go in before us, we would wait, their business is being dealt with. Once they [the big farmers] were done, they [the administrative personnel] would start dealing with us (Peter, BG, 5: 19-28)*

Thus very often the identity of the collective body is constructed and articulated via reference to 'the generalised other' (Alfred Schutz) and in a process of comparison: we are small farmers because we are not big farmers. We are Bulgarian farmers because we are not German farmers. But **we are farmers** and the knowledge of this creates mutually shared concerns.

Another dimension of farmers' collectivity is the **voluntary and self-chosen participation in formal or informal organizations**. This participation could be based on a specific occasion but generally it is understood as a membership status. This membership gives easier access to information, interactions with other members in the collective body and shows in a practical way the awareness of sharing a similar life course and occupational experience. There are several exemplar interviews in which the informants mention their individual membership to a local or national collective body without going into deeper details about their exact role in it. For instance a German farmer Sylvia, being a member of the regional association of sheep breeders, underlines positively her association within the organization as a source of information for her family. (Halet Family, GER, SR, 2)

On the other side, the biographical narratives give the perspective of a perfunctory membership into farmers' organizations with a lack of personal interest and active participation. This kind of membership is mostly negatively evaluated by the farmers. This membership is more formal, without personal actions for the organization and shared idea of belonging, nor real belief in the goals of the association. It is much more like a sheath with no real content in it. This membership creates the dichotomy '**me**' (as a member of the organization) vs. '**them**' (those who are in power in it), which is

expressed through certain verbal structures and shows the gap in the organization goals, communication, decision taking and self-identification with the group.

This is in the biographical trajectory of Baca from Poland, who is a dairy farmer, breeding a special type of sheep. He is an inherited farmer, his parents and grandparents were breeding sheep as well. He has got a herd of 600 sheep (years ago it was 1500-1700 sheep) but he is not their owner. He is breeding them and by this way he is allowed to produce sheep cheese which he is selling. There are some extracts from his interview showing the lack of trust in the organization although the high position he is taking – a member of the revision commission of the union. (Baca, PL, 8: 2-7; 9: 24-28; 13:25 – 14:16)

*I: So what is such a union for then?*

*N: Well, they have a few people personnel, I think 9 people work there, but this is their income, right?*

*I: Well, yes, it pays them.*

*N: Salaries, bonuses, 13th salary# ((smiling))*

*I: Well, that is so, but what do they actually do?*

*N: From our payments, from our sheep that are kept... That's the assortment they imposed on us. The bureaucrats wanted things, right? - well, now they have them ... and this is some kind of thingumabob.*

*I: Well, it gives milk normally like other [sheep], right?*

*N: Well of course, it is a sheep, isn't it? Like any other one.*

*I: So what, this Union has worked it out so that you need to have this protected one and so it's like they do something, right? ((Ironically)) ((laughter))*

*N: Oh, they do a lot - a lot of wind#*

*I: But what else do they do, do they coordinate the activities here?*

*N: Nothing here//*

*I: I also wanted to ask about this dairy union, do you have any influence over what is being done there, I don't know, some meetings, counselling, how do you make decisions, such things?//*

*N: ((laughter)) (1 s.) Of course, I am a delegate, chosen every year by the village and participate in the meetings and everything. I am, what do you call it, (3 s.), oh, yes, the control committee.*

*I: And this is an important role.*

*N: I am a member of the control committee, there were elections. [...] the power there is a one-man power, right?/... the director always arranges these these asses, such that (whispering the names to himself), they are five there in the executive committee, right?/... There are five people there, together with the chairman, and the people there are malleable*

*I: So this union doesn't think up anything concrete apart from these different types of sheep?*

*N: Well, yes ((laughing)) this is what they think up - nothing about the other problems. (1 s.) [...] It is bad and there are no prospects it will get better, it's just vegetating.*

*I: I thought that with the starting of these lambs going to Italy things have got better.*

*N: Hah, got better - they've even got worse.*

*I: Well, I now understand it is so.*

*N: In one year the value of the Zloty has gone down, right?*

I: Well yes.

N: My God! (2 s.) well this is again because of the single-headed power, because the executive board doesn't have influence on this, because none of them has participated in the different negotiations. The director decided things himself (3 s.)

I: And those in the executive committee, do they at least have their own sheep.

N: Well they do, because you have to be a shepherd, in order to (????) become a delegate and from the delegates they choose the executive committee? Among the delegates. But it is something like a photocollage. If this is how things continue, nothing will come out for generations ahead.

Another dimension of farmers' collective inclusion is an **active participation in social and political movements**. Within the mental space on a European and national level which creates the 'we-farmers-community' the collective action is a positive experience of the biographical process of a self-identification with this community. Although such an active participation is evident only in studied German farmers group. Both Wiard and Stefan who are German farmers, are very pro-active and have founded and participated in different initiatives throughout their lives. Their participation in collective action comes from a conviction that individuals, groups, associations can and should influence the work of the authorities. In the **figuration farmers-state** both share an understanding that social injustice can be counteracted through citizens' activism. While Wiard's convictions come from and are associated with his leftist political orientation, Stefan's disposition can be related to the belief and participation in *civil society* (citizens' associations which counterbalance state politics).

Wiard has been a political activist throughout his life. Although his father was a parliamentarian for a right party, what we can expect could influence his habitus, Wiard has sympathized with communist groups since his college years:

*And, on the other side we tried to work politically, again in student committees eh – in every possible group. And, yeah, I have to say, we really through we would//See, I was in communist groups for a long time – or at least in groups who sympathized with that a lot, a lot.*

*I: Yeah, I remember now ((laughing))*

*N: Yeah, I was doing that with absolute conviction*

*I: (laughing) yeah*

*N: And we thought we could change life, the world. That's what I would say today" (7: 24-31)*

It seems that his activism comes from a conviction that through the right ideas (left) one can accomplish change in society when organized politically. However, his experiences have taught him that change occurs when people are deeply affected by social injustice, otherwise they won't get mobilized (p.8:25-29). Wiard believes in leftist concepts, such as solidarity, equal chances, unity

(p.31) and internationalism (p.19):

*And when I begin to philosophize, which I do enjoy as someone who's politically interested, what would be just, what should be done?... Then today I would tend to or I would appreciate to try to provide people with//sounds very much global now but to help people to have – equal chances at the beginning. (p.18:21-24).*

Interestingly, in *practice* Wiard has participated in civil initiatives, such as a president of a consultancy co-operative (voluntarily) (p.16:1-30) and founder of a civil law association with his son (p.22:7-14), but *has refused to participate in collective action with other farmers*. He even rationalizes it with his experience that being independent (farmer) is the best way (p.10:42-44) and has refused to go on strikes with other farmers (p.10:49-9). That may be due to the fact that he thinks of farmers as not very informed and of himself as someone more sophisticated.

What can be easily found in the biographical narratives is that farmers establish networks but they are narrow social networks of 'strong ties' (Granovetter) based on kinship and friendship relations. These networks are being understood as individual relations and favours. Whenever there is mutual help, it is between individuals and based on the principle that the favour will be returned. The favour is individual (it benefits individual interests) and the reciprocal favour is also individual.

*I: Don't you help each other?*

*N: We do .. right ... we do help each other. - Mm- our relationship are - for example if I need to call someone to help me - they come, help me, and then I am obliged to return the help... This is how our relationships are. (Peter, BG, 10: 30-34)*

*I: I am famous across the Republic, I have reached the level of ... on the phone... to diagnose a disease and to treat it.*

*I: of your colleagues with (?)#*

*N: #yees, of our colleagues, they are still alive even. In K. there are (?) numbers, the person even has... I even#*

*I: #Aha, they want your advice over the phone#*

*N: #He thanked me in tears, he didn't know how to express his gratitude, three doctors stand next o him and he says "I pay thousands, 40 lambs died" he says "Every hour and they cannot react. Zanko, you are my hoope". No problem, open it up right there, what do you see inside, what are the intestines like, how is the stomach, what colour is it, what can you see... do this, this, and this. The next day// I got goosebumps, eh.. - the next day, the man cries, I was embarrassed, he is older than me, ((slightly higher voice)) he says "where did you come from, who created you". (Zanko, BG, 33:40 – 34:3)*

*With a big number of people we already// we help people, they come to us, because -aa- we are the only younger people who have come back to the village. Most of them there are old people ... and .. yes.. most of them are old people - mm- we help in whatever way we can. (Petya, BG, 6: 24-27)*

On the other hand there are interesting examples of outspoken **salient individualism**. This individualism is expressed through negative attitude towards existing associations (usually based on personal experience) and within the stereotype that two people working together create conflict. Based on the narratives collected within this project we can conclude that this is an East European phenomenon, perhaps just Bulgarian ones. It might be explained through the weak institutions, low level of institutional trust and the lack of organisational culture in the new Eastern European democracies after the changes.

Here is the narrative of Zanko from Bulgaria who is breeding a special for his region type of sheep. He has travelled a lot in Europe (and worked in different professional areas) and in the past he worked for the communist party organizations. He has been testing new sheep breeds, working with institutes, has got knowledge about medicine and curing his animals with alternative phytotherapy, reading a lot of books and identifying himself as a person with knowledge and experience.

*I:# In these local organizations, do you have (?)*

*N:# we have Rhodopean zones, it's organized like this, it just happened like this, we had to commassate, right, so we ended up like this#*

*I:#where did this come from/*

*N:#yes, just sheep-herders, but this is where we ended up#*

*I:#from this area?*

*N: from the region, specifically our region.. it is// the organisation is open to everyone.*

*I: How many members sheep-keepers do you have?*

*N: Well, there are few, about 15-20, although there are hundreds of us... but they drop off, they go (?)#*

*I: #Well, what does this organization give you, what dd you create it for?*

*N: Well, what does it give us - we could apply to different programs, bigger ones// more information, it had the prospects of having offices, they even gave us equipment... It is standing without being used, we don't have an office either.. We went here, we went there, everywhere they blocked us, suffocated us.. well... the administrative (face), the administrative (insitutions)... And our power is in being on our own, then we are very strong. If we are more than two, we become very weak. Our potential and capacity is a lot, a lot more than theirs. (Zanko, BG, 14:44-49)*

The narration of Zanko is illustrating the unsuccessful project for collective organization and the stereotypes. Such explanations could be found in other informants' biographical course 'memories':

*These people - peasants - have one trait inbred in them - everyone has - to be a leader - to be a leader like this, do you understand, when you see the other one, that something is above him, but not everyone makes a good leader - you need to speak a foreign language, you need to know this and that. (Yavor, BG, 14: 34-36)*

*Well then, in 2002, yes, 2003, when we bought, to buy// the cooperative, which existed and was announced to be in liquidation and we bought// we participated in an auction in a completely legal way with a lawyer and everything, the auction was announced, we won the buildings and bought with an additional credit from the bank but we had decided to definitely uhm to invest, we had some money of our own - to invest, although we could have stayed here in town and not to waste our money in the country ((smiling a little)), but that's what we decided. That's what we decided. **And then -aa-, in one moment, the people jumped -uhm- against us , most people jumped up, they accused us that we had robbed the cooperative, their labour, there were some serious rows**, -aa- so we were forced to call some council representatives – aa- to call a meeting in the village, to show the deeds we have, that we hve paid for everything legally, the buildings were -aa- assessed by a licensed surveyor, ((speaking faster)) everything was legal with the auction for the sale of the buildings..// **But there were people, who came, took down our roofs of the ... one of the premises, they took down ... a this - a- the rooftiles. Another one tried to set the farm on fire...** (Petya, BG, 6: 4-22)*

Finally we would like to underline the appearance of **crisis** in the farming collective action. Crisis is a special period of common (and shared) suffering and therefore – of common (and shared) goals to surmount it. The chaos created by the crisis and the obstacles in it are the conditions which clarify the desirable social picture shared in collective mental space. So the crisis creates a powerful collective action and a shared (even emotional) feeling of belonging – ‘we = being farmers’ and ‘we are protecting our farming’. Crisis in the collective space, on the other hand, problematizes the collective identity and the collective status quo so the conscious social movements are movements for identity defence. Although there are differences in the ability to provide self-organized action, (for instance high in Germany and low in Bulgaria), a crisis is always a purpose for collective action, even on a temporary basis.

*So then the foot and mouth came and all of our neighbours and farmers got together then – as one. They soon forgot – everybody was friends and everybody phoned each other. But after that it's gone to the old, old way of the greedy, of the jealousy.’ (Cynog, WAL, 3:50-4:8)*

Stefan from Germany tells the story how the state agency wanted to take the licence of a special type of potatoes, which were being tested for 30 years in the region of R. He actively participated in the movement for saving the ecological farming in the example of the R: ‘*we then founded a Save R initiative mhm – together with consumer groups, environmentalist groups – groups, yeah, to do something against it.*’ (Stefan, GER)

In conclusion it must be stressed that farmers in Europe despite their immobility and tendency to relatively stability have the idea of being and ‘functioning’ as a “farmers-we-community” across the EU

member states. However there are different “fine distinctions” (Bourdieu) in the ability to provide collective actions and to organize themselves in the particular country which is being studied. On one extreme is Germany where farmers based on the well developed organisational processes in that country are motivated for collective action from a belief in civil society principles and values. On the other extreme it could be observed the case of Bulgaria where farmers even tend to a sort of non-modern individualism with stereotypes and prejudices against collective action and effectiveness of membership in professional organisations.

### **(3) Biographical relevance of Europe**

Studying farmers 'sensitized' group one of the EUROIDENTITIES project objectives was to trace the European relevance in their biographical paths; to examine whether the process of constructing their individual identity is developing an European identity as well; to analyze the impact that European structures (in terms of a social milieu, an arena of action), through their instruments and markets, have on farmers' everyday lives.

Regardless of that the surveyed farmers are European citizens. There are a great diversity and intragroup differences of images of Europe and Europeanness among farmers as "we-community" because of a heterogeneity of their social, political and economic background, values, and (self)identity. The biographical work of farmers coming from "old" and "new" EU member states respectively displays perceptibly different grounds and diverse development modes of their life trajectories, socio-cultural and professional experience and behaviour.

#### **Europe as a mental space of reference**

Seeking the projections of Europe as a "canopy of collective meaning" and a mental space of reference (Schutze) in the biographical work and development of farmers the analysis reveals different mental phenomena such as to take and practice the perspectives of the "otherness" or the 'generalized other' (Schutze), to project "self-image" or "me-picture" (Schutze according to Mead) to other collectivity/ies, to refer and assess one national farmers' "we-community" to other "we-community". In their biographies, Europe is a 'mental space', that they relate to and with reference to which they compare various spheres of their personal life and professional experience. The varying access to information that farmers have does not prevent them from interpreting and comparing the European agriculture as a whole with regard to: organizational, technological, and productive effectiveness; the low prices of agricultural products and the uncertainty of income; the lack of cash money and the difficulty of business planning in agriculture, encumbered with the bureaucratic procedures required for European programs; farmers' dependence on national agrarian policies and structure; their uncertain access to markets; the risk of unfair competition and the pressuring exercised

by intermediators and powerful agricultural businesses; as well as a number of other problems arising in their practice. The mental space of agrarian Europe in fact assumes forms of dichotomous opposition figurations (Schutze, after Elias) such as: centre vs. periphery, conventional vs. organic farming, urban life style vs. countryside life style, agro-business vs. family farm, technologically and economically modern farms vs. old-fashioned or even backward orientation, etc. (Schutze, Schröder, 2009).

Europe as a mental space of comparison between OMS-NMS farmers may go through their everyday life and routines, competence and skills, emulation, access to markets, life chances etc. and could be established in different ways, e.g. expanding communication activities, professional contacts and exchange visits between East-West European farmers (Yavor and his contacts with Swiss farmer; Stefan and his friendship with Scottish colleagues and a Czech farmer, etc.; Tadeusz knows about Western farming from his cousins working in Germany for some time and people who left for England; comparison through the mass media (TV) and especially through Internet and other sources and experience of the “others” (Assan images of Western European farmers by TV and relatives’ accounts of their perceived success abroad; Peter - only by TV).

Western European farmers refer to Europe mostly as a mental space for economic opportunities, markets and incentives, exchange of professional knowledge, experience and information, collective consciousness and actions, and solidarity.

*...Because, I mean, besides all economic advantages eh - Europe means for us it first of all it means **peace**. Yeah, we are having the longest peacetime in the history of Europe. And that eh when you think of the world today it's nothing to be taken for granted. ...Eh ... **for me Europe means also eh unlimited freedom<sup>8</sup>, yeah? You will notice that when going abroad, right? No border controls - same currency - eh whether I shop in France - or in Holland or in Italy. Eh that eh //.... If you experienced how everything was before. Eh - of course it was Europe but you had all these different currencies. For sure it had an somewhat exotic touch, hadn't it when you#... #yeah? On the whole, however, it was exoticism and holiday memories. But eh - altogether it was an obstacle, wasn't it? **And eh - for me personally, Europe also means eh free purchase of goods across borders, y'know?** (Bralandt, GER, 40: 26-46)***

In the biographical stories of Eastern European farmers Europe as a frame of reference most often appears as farmers’ assessments (based on the contrastive comparison of “here vs there”) that their

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<sup>8</sup> In German: *grenzenlose Freiheit*

farming conditions are worse than those of Western European countries which predisposed their biographical commitment to farming to lower prices and unequal dispositions.

I: *Do you have any observation, is there a difference between Bulgarian and European farmers?*

P: *Well, there is of course*

I: *What is the difference?*

P: *Well, the difference is that the states have long since, -aa- say, been members of the European Union and hence things have become clear to them already. And they **became involved in these things a long time ago**. While we are yet having them made clear to us now, we are now just starting to get involved ((confidently, with conviction))/ There is a big difference; I am... in the final account we have lived in that kind of order and that is the level we have reached. (Petya, BG, 10:11-20)*

*There's a big difference. Now, in our case there's a very great deal of drudgery. If we were to change places with a European farmer working in just any European country, if he came to my place for one month, I'm sure that he would go back on foot if need be. He wouldn't stay. (Yavor, BG, 27: 15-17)*

*Things for them there are peaceful. We've been there too, we've seen how people work. I simply envy them their peacefulness, the way he told me about it #. (Yavor, BG, 27: 21-22)*

*I: if you have to compare farming at the moment in Bulgaria and in Europe..*

*N: It cannot be compared at all.*

*I: It can't, are you sure?*

*N: I don't have a doubt, but... I don't know, if they are like us.. the EU is doomed ((both laughing))*

*I: Can't we be of any use to them?*

*N: Useful - no, what could we be useful with? We can't be useful with anything. Only they can be useful to us, I have always thought - as the poorest member state of the EU, (??) the goods, we would still have the lowest prices, we are the poorest - they are used to a certain level of finance, we are happy with 1/3 of// or half of their money. We can work, we are used to having little.*

*I: This is some kind of salvation for us, is it?*

*N: It is a salvation, of course, could you make them work for 10 Euro per day? (Peter, BG. 13: 40-50; 14: 1-4).*

For OMS farmers Europe is also seen as **territory, geographical space** (in Bourdieu sense), **diversity** (climate, plants, and people) where they live, act, travel, communicate, exchange experience etc.; Europe is well imagined as stated by our German informant as a “**multi-culti-society**” (Wiard, GER, 7).

*Yeah, no, Europe as such is, is ... somehow nice. It's large – and it's so diverse, isn't it? As for climate, plants, and people. (Stefan, GER, 23:44-45)*

Polish farmers who have very strong national identity and sense of historical presence in Europe, perceive Europe also as an integral part of their national, community and personal space. Tadeusz, a Polish farmer claimed that Poland geographically has always been in Europe and Poland does not fall behind West Europe.

Some biographical narratives of Bulgarian farmers also revealed a similar sense of belonging to the European territorial space, usually in a comparative mental term when they are asked if they feel Europeans, but it is somehow outside of their personal identity construction and identity work. Contrarily, for the Bulgarian farmers the image of Europe as a mental space is compared to and is unfolded in:

a) a **set of images** like Europe as ‘the West’, a ‘home of the rule of law’, symbol of values like honesty, cleanliness, more culture and nobility; ‘dreamed world’, ‘space without problems’, technologically advanced etc.,

b) **figurations** mentioned above where Europe means ‘there and others’ and mostly “better in all matters” etc.

These contrastive images with the “other West” might be based on the biographical experience of former eastern European farmers from the “closed society” in the communist regime. Imagining Europe as “the West” is displayed in the stories of Bulgarian farmers. Their individual biographical work does not overlap with the images of Europe but this does not prevent them from seeing “the West” as a better, developed and free world, a contrasting image to the Eastern bloc, laminated in their biographical memory from the time of the Berlin Wall. From this perspective, in their mental pictures Europe symbolizes:

### 1. A home of the rule of law and orderliness

The mistrust in the own institutional order drives some Bulgarian farmers to perceive Europe as a place where law is for everyone and is obeyed.

*...And ...I'm entirely convinced that either//either the system should be changed, by which the country is governed, or, I rely on – I relied very much on the EU, **they can't budge because we have to abide by their laws.** But the EU, if it wants to be stable// a stable EU each member state should pass the same laws. And not like we do making our own law, so that he can't be convicted when he's killed the child and they will sentence him to ten years. How is it possible to kill a person and to be sentenced to ten years –can such a thing happen in a normal country, can it be? These things should be exactly that way, centralized laws. We even ((he laughs)) with a colleague of mine we were saying – if you ask me, it would be better to dismiss the parliament, not to have any government and- to be governed entirely by the EU. (Yavor, BG, 5: 35-45)*

*I: Do only bandits succeed in Bulgaria?*

*N: Yes. At present.*

*I: Who succeeds in Europe?*

*N: In Europe, I don't know. In Europe, i don't know - it's just that in Bulgaria there are no rules... for everyone.. rules for everyone. Not just for me, for everyone.*

*I: Do you think there are in Europe?*

*N: I think there are, if people feel better, it means.. rules are obeyed. And not for rules to apply just for certain people. (Peter, BG, 16: 38-45).*

*Really for me when we joined Europe this was a plus for Bulgaria. Others think differently. My opinion is that they help more or less, **they will put the state in order**, because all the subsidies help - they monitor how the subsidies are spent. (Mihail, BG, 10: 31-34)*

*Well there **they simply have order**. ... Law and order. ...That's it. (Villi, BG, 26:5)*

## **2. A symbol, mental space and practice of values like honesty, cleanliness, culture.**

*That was when I saw order, culture, discipline. The place where we were working- I was simply in... I was simply (2s) dazed. Meaning that the people have discipline, culture. The boss isn't there, not there, but the worker does his best to do his work and abides by the working hours. (Murat, BG, 8: 30-34)*

*I mean the infrastructure isn't well set up. There's no tradition, people don't have the habit of disposing of their trash."(Murat, BG, 3: 33-35)*

*The cleanliness, this is something they are so used to, that if you comment on it, for example that the street isn't cleaned or there are potholes in the street, this for them is horrific. I have been to Germany mostly because we had someone close there. (Villi, BG, 26:5-8)*

## **3. More technologically advanced farming**

Most of the studied Bulgarian farmers have lived, experienced and construct their biographies and professional development in an environment of technical backwardness and low level of modernization of the agrarian sector. That is why for them the image of European farming is referring to and striking mainly of its technological advancement and modernization. The free and wider access they already have to information drive them to compare the technological advantage of farming in the developed European countries (in relation to machinery, technologies, innovations, consulting, access to information and ICT etc.) to as yet the underdeveloped technical infrastructure of Bulgarian agriculture.

*I: When you traveled in Europe did you get any impressions as to whether the situation in agriculture there is like ours or is it different?*

*M: There I don't know they're, for instance as a form of payment, o-o-of the sort of, for instance, subsidies or what. However when we see how orderly it is. (2s) and how with the little machines. There right next to us there was, where I was in Germany.. reinforcement steel shop and there was a plot of alfalfa. A little granny, like my mother 70 plus years old... she rides the tractor uuu she had the kind of tractor with some like a mower fitted on it... and behind a little trailer... the granny with a*

*straw bowler hat. The trailer it goes tsr tsr tsr - she fills it up. She goes to the cattle farm - most probably they had cows these people. She goes and loads for the cows. I would be in agriculture too if it was like that. But this agriculture of mine frankly speaking...#.* (Murat, BG, 14: 13-23)

*... if we succeed in buying by these programs in the European Union now, technology that we should have at all costs, not this baling machine that I have: ... you do it in a mechanized way, you load it, gather it, like I see them doing on TV, you know, if we get as far as that... with a lot of hard work... if this happens, and ... if some cattle-shed can be built or something, it should be mechanized so one can work with a greater number of animals..."* (Assan, BG, 9: 11-16)

*The Bulgarian farmer is more hard-working than all other farmers... If he had the same machines a German farmer has, I am convinced we would have better agriculture than them.* (Mihail, BG, 10: 7-10)

#### **4. Europe as “Brussels”**

For the Western farmers evident from their narratives Europe is often **labelled** simply with Brussels - *“Brussels emptied the storehouses”*; *“Brussels losses influence”* (Wiard, GER, 28: 48, 51).

#### **5. European farming and farming outside Europe**

This image of a comparison between European farming and the farming outside Europe is represented in biographical cases of several Welsh farmers traveling out of Europe. Their stories reveal that there was a strong connection between the farming communities in Wales and in New Zealand because many of the Welsh farmers have visited New Zealand for different reasons. There they met the ‘significant others’ that enriched their biographical action schemes and experience and put a mark on their biographical development. Some of the Welsh farmers have worked there (Merfyn Jr.), others – just made a ‘fact-finding’ trip to learn about how the others cope with certain problems (Emyr). The case of Hailey, a woman farmer of Irish descent, born and grew up in New Zealand in a farming community, presently living and farming in Wales, disclosed and connected her two different social worlds through farming by [contrastive] comparison between the European social world of farming and that in New Zealand. While in New Zealand it was the realty estate agent’s job to introduce the newcomers to the community, in Wales no one came to visit her and her husband when they bought the farm for more than a year. The one downside she saw in New Zealand farming is that

farmers there use a lot of fertilizers, while she prefers the European way with less fertilizers and her farm is organic. There are tough restrictions to grazing, for example, according to her Welsh farmers go around them to be able to survive. In general, however, she thinks that Welsh farmers are much poorer than the ones in New Zealand and their farms are going down because of so many restrictions.

## 6. Optimistic and not optimistic voices of East European farmers to the EU

In the east-west comparison between farmers opposing views of the EU explicitly appear which probably come from different patterns of biographical life, work and developments farmers have from different social and economic spaces. For example a German farmer manifests his pro-European attitude in a sense of an integrated and united Europe:

*That's how we have developed. Mhm ... as for myself: family, farm – somehow, I am connected – somehow it's, well – a company – (a shop). We are – mhm – somehow – yeah, pro-European. It's nice somehow, Europe (as/I mean) the European Union. (Stefan, GER, 16: 29-31)*

Contrary to this opinion, in the biographical narrations of some Eastern European farmers, there is detected a skepticism about EU policy towards farmers and the future of the Union as a “supra-national entity”, an embodiment of many different countries. A Polish farmer shares the opinion that the EU has destroyed the small farmers in Poland:

*I: Well now, when we are in the EU, did anything change, any subsidies?#*

*N: It destroyed it, all this destroyed it. Here these small farms, the requirements, they couldn't (1 s.), these 2-, eh, 5-hectare ones dropped out of the game, there is no production. Because what could you make out of 5 hectares for example, right? (Baca, PL, 4: 28-32)*

Other Polish farmer sees the EU only as an economic union, and does not believe it has any other integrative functions so it may collapse:

*Well, i don't know. Poland pays taxes in this union, I don't know if this would be of use more than not, but. It probably won't get better, but if it did, it should have happened by now. .. But this Union could fall apart like the Eastern block or the Soviet Union so there you go - this could happen to this Union too, this is an economic Union, this is not one people, it will fall apart, this is how it's going to be... (Marek, PL, 6: 29-33)*

## Experiencing Europe

All farmers from the EU countries are not isolated and belong to the common social world of European

farming, despite the immobility, and regardless of living and working in different social and economic fields. Being European producers, European farmers are strongly influenced by and dependent on the EU agricultural policy, regulations and institutional procedures and bureaucratic order and all could be seen as the structural frames of European mental space referring to comparison between different national we-communities of farmers. Generally, all interviewed farmers experience Europe being outer observers of other farmer' referent community/s, through:

(1) comparative mental assessments of their institutional relations and dependence on EU policy and its experience on national level; of their state of life and life chances, work, skills and capacities, opportunities for prosperity and rewards for their efforts;

(2) a collective market, different practices and opportunities that Europe offers to move and travel, to exchange professional knowledge and practices etc.

## 1. Experiencing Europe as the EU agriculture policy

Institutional dependence and hierarchy in the **EU CAP** appear in various biographical lines of experience in farmers' stories through quotas, technological, (agri) environmental and hygiene requirements and standards etc. Farmers have to oblige with the new (European) set of rules and regulations:

*So ... well, in agriculture we are, I think// Now I'm already talking about agriculture. But in Germany we are we are always somewhat behind eh European structures. **Agriculture in Europe - is of course - totally interconnected.** Because for a long, long time what was permitted // As a farmer you had to deal with agrarian policy. It has been influencing us for a long time. - Everything is eh predominantly decided in Brussels and national influence - is at least limited...*

*N: And that's certainly something that I also// Because I'm very one-sidedly oriented at agriculture - I very strongly connect eh agrarian policy with with Brussels, with Europe. (Wiard, GER, 12: 4-12)*

*...**agriculture in Europe is an integrated network.**;*

*My main relationship to Europe is agrarian politic...;*

*As a dairy farmer I am a child of the milk quota (Wiard, GER, 15: 31).*

*I: What about the, impact of European policy on what you do? Is that something you're aware of and think about*

*N: It's*

*I: and react to?*

*N: It's a matter of, part of agriculture really, isn't it? Most things you do, you know, you look at all the livestock systems are based around the kind of the CAP system and the subsidy system and*

*everything. And the - us farmers I think we're probably glad we are part of the European Union and that the funding we get is one thing that's vital really for a farm our size. We'd be, if that just stopped overnight we'd probably struggle enormously for the, in the immediate term. I think - when we travelled it was, became apparent there was a lot of jealousy in a way from, you know, from people in Canada and New Zealand especially, that - they thought, oh, we just get government handouts and they thought it's easy but it's not. I prefer the single farm payment scheme to the other hedge payment scheme I think. It's better, but then - when you travel and, you know, it's, every government has got a way of subsidising farmers and food production in some way, it's just that it's hidden and not so apparent, really, perhaps, as the European system. But (Merfyn Jr. WAL, 9: 27-41)*

Marek, a PL farmer, is very unhappy about the regulations that make it almost impossible to remain a farmer, but he does not specify who is to blame - the national institutions, as he is about the European Union:

*For the cow's milk there needs to be the right certificate, well, the high hygiene, **they put a lot of pressure about the hygiene**, it's best to have tiles in the shed, such specialized tubs. (4: 9-12)*

*Yes, it's true but this is difficult to prove [that one buys lower quality milk] - it's difficult to prove, they **could** write down any level of quality they **wish** and that's that. (4: 30-31)*

N:# Well people here are very happy about the EU, it's very bad but... well (4 s.)

I: And? Why?

N: Well, it's simple, the regulations are too much. (5: 47-49)

## **2. Experiencing Europe as a set of institutional procedures and bureaucracy**

The institutional regulation that come from Brussels is implemented (interpreted and channelled) by the national governments into workable procedures, and may differ between the various European nations depends on the national agreements (Schutze). The implementation goes through national, regional and local institutions and farmers' are forced to communicate and interact with them. The crucial point of raising discontent and even conflicts is the **application procedures for direct payments** and **reimbursement of costs** farmers made.

There is a gap between the way the mechanism and procedures concerning agriculture are notified, interpreted and translated into national procedures and into practice in OMS and in NMS. Eastern European farmers have more often than the Welsh farmers for example the feeling that their governments fail in the communication, interpretation and translation process; in some cases they feel being neglected or disowned by their states; in other – they judged the lack of competence and skills among experts and officers in regional and local agencies or they might be careless and disinterested.

*In 2005 the translation of the EU documents from English into Polish was wrong and for every sort of animal it was required to build such a platform with a manure container, without taking into account whether that particular animal needs it. (Iwona, PL, 9:17-22)*

There are also other examples from Poland, Bulgaria and the Welsh farmers.

Hierarchical three-tier management of European funds at the national level is a serious barrier to farmers for accessing them – a heavy and aggravated system of applying for projects, cumbersome documentation upon registration [and proof of property status and the size of the farm] as well as other requirements, create a feeling among farmers that they are neglected, misunderstood, deliberately humiliated by the administration about the nature of their work, which leads to distrust of governing institutions.

*There's - some of the - bureaucracy sort of, it seems to be never ending that, you know, you just get a lot of very similar forms to fill in all the time, but I think it's not that bad really. There's a lot of - stuff that comes through which is kind of unnecessary, probably". (Merfyn Jr., WAL, 8: 44-46)*

*What can I say, I wouldn't want to go through this again, it would be a waste of effort. To put efforts into this swamp, because all this is a swamp (1 s.). They don't give you anything for free, they would torture you psychologically. Well I could do, I would get a little tractor, but I don't know if it is worth it. it could be second-hand - half-priced and without any unpaid dues (3 s.) Because I am still under control, the contract is for 6 years, but even after that some officer could check some documents, and this is my personal life, why do I need this...*

*To bow to do officers, I don't know how it is in different spheres, but definitely in the sphere of agriculture it isn't easy, whatever is being said (4 s.). (Baca, PL, 7: 19-29)*

*You are the applicant, you're the bad one who makes all the mess so you should be kicked out. (Iwona, PL, 5:19-20)*

### **3. Experiencing Europe as EU subsidies mediated through national institutions**

The dominant biographical experience of European farmers with Europe conveyed by the biographical narrations of both old and new NMS farmers is that of the **subsidies** coming from the EU CAP financial scheme of direct payments. For most of the NMS farmers the EU subsidies are instruments for survival, they do not see them as an economic capital/investment:

*Whatever they pledge, they should provide it - it doesn't matter, it could be little - but it would still be// it would **still cover some - it could not cover all expenses** - we don't want them to spoon-feed, right, - our sheep for free - and for us to just have the perks - but they still can be// until this*

*takes off// this... this animal-keeping business - right - for them to help us a little - to get out of the hole- we have curled up in just one spot. (Anton, BG, 21: 16-22)*

*As things are going// right now - yesterday I heard - the agricultural minister said that it will be 28 leva per head of sheep and goats and 104 leva per head of cattle// as things are going if they don't pay the subsidies this year, I'm talking about 2009 - I promise you, I will kill them to the last one - all of them\ I will sell the sheds - I don't know what job I will take up. (Anton, BG, 5: 34-39)*

*I: Do you feel a European farmer?*

*N: ((emphatically)) I do now! After I received the first European money. (Yavor, BG, 21: 41-42)*

Subsidies represented a suprasegmental marker for a comparison of Eastern with Western farmers through mental figuration like this: "**if we have enough money - then we would be like them or better them**". Examples are found in many of the narrations of the Bulgarian farmers who share opinions of their **unequal position** in comparison to their western colleagues in terms of the flat-rate of the subsidies they received according to the national regulations.

Unlike them old European farmers mostly operate with EU subsidies as a form of economic capital to be invested and expand the farm/business. It could be transformed also into another type of capital such as cultural and social capital.

On the other hand, there is a contrast in how different farmers from East and West perceive subsidies – for OMS farmers EU subsidies are seen as their **right**, which they should to defend or “by default”, (routine EU agriculture policy mechanism of regulation and financial instruments in the context of the European economic arena), while for the NMS farmers subsidies are perceived as a “**salvation**”, **benefit of the EU integration** (opinions strongly supported by the BG farmers).

OMS farmers are aware that in an enlarged Europe the competition between them and the new farmers from the East will increase in terms of changes in the (re)distribution of the subsidies. A Welsh farmer already feels "threatened" by the emulation with their counterparts from the NMS that have joined the EU, and the funds need to be split between more countries. Therefore they need to fight more for money:

*I: You feel very much affected by the European regulations*

*N: Yes and because you've got this growing now to different countries.. more. Another twelve countries have come into Europe in the last is it six or eight years, now. And obviously - the piece of*

*cake for the agricultural payment isn't getting much bigger but has to be shared amongst more people*

*I: Oh. Right.*

*N: There's only so much money in the pot. And when more and more like -ehm- Poland, Czechoslovakia /ehm/ the old Eastern Bloc countries – they're coming in now and they want a piece of the cake. And so it obviously has to be shared and because agriculture and especially upland farming is // and sheep farming especially is - of a higher percentage in Great Britain than it is in France and Germany and the rest of Europe -eh- then we have to fight more for that piece of cake.*

*(Emyr, WAL, 8: 41-49; 9: 4-15)*

#### **4. Experiencing Europe as a collective market and the power of monopolists**

According to Bourdieu (1990) the market is one of objective structures and mechanisms in which society exists where agents act/play. The EU market is a central to the EU farmers as it is a universal field where they play and interact, are interconnected and mutually related to the consumers. It is a united space, where, “*no matter in which country you may register crop varieties, you may sell them in all EU countries*” (Stefan, GER, 16: 5-7).

Farmers from “old” Europe are used to working and coping with the market demands and structures, so they are accustomed to the market environment. They are more sophisticated and adaptable to the structural market changes because of their professionalism and knowledge.

Whereas NMS farmers were thrown into the new and unfamiliar to them, market environment, after the collapse of the administrative economy. They had to adapt to and learn to “play” by the new rules. They have weak or little access to real European markets for their products. It is due to the closed nature or/and the underdeveloped national markets, or partly by lack of transmitters to enter the Western European market, or partly there is the lack of strategic knowledge about market access (Schutze). They feel more fearful, threatened and uncertain.

Adapting to the new market conditions contributes to the gradual change of their outlook and mentality, identifying with the farmers' community – new political and social identity. As a German farmer states that the change from protected agrarian economy to the free market model may encounter difficulties: different systems have lots to do with differences of mentality and habits.

A competitive market in Europe is interpreted differently by the farmers in our study. For example a German farmer who is reflecting the regulated agricultural markets in EU states using the example of New Zealand that **liberalisation** would be a better option for him:

*However, personally I can also - imagine it to be quite different. in eh in New Zealand//The other day I read an article or some articles already about New Zealand. - New Zealanders also used to heavily subsidize agriculture. Then at some point totally stopped it, practically no state funding anymore. They had a few weak years and afterwards – things started looking better. They adapted to markets and are now producing lots for the world market - especially milk. Meanwhile they're pretty happy with it. These things have lots to do with habits and mentality, I think. And eh - perhaps you need cuts sometimes before you actually have# (Wiard, GER, 20: 44-51).*

But the discussion whether the agricultural markets in Europe should be opened or not is too much advanced for the interviewed farmers and argumentative narratives like this above are rather the exception than the rule.

The **producers-monopolists** on the market like big agribusiness companies and large farmers have the symbolic capital of power which creates conditions for the relations of coercion towards small and medium farmers. This power as well as the stringent regulations and requirements for application and the implementation of European programs itself (at least in Eastern Europe and especially SAPARD before the accession as such) further strengthen the symbolic capital of the larger producers, especially when they became the first beneficiaries in the social field of these programs and the largest market players (not just national). So, gradually and continuously in the minds of the surveyed farmers from East and West underlying conviction that these programs do not encourage the inclusion of the “small voices” in the concert of the large European market.

The overwhelming market power of the **intermediaries** as key players in the market like supermarkets, food chains, wholesalers etc. dictate and control the prices of the products (most often of milk and meat) and putting farmers in uncertainty they exercise symbolic violence (Bourdieu) over them. A striking example of such a mediator is a wholesaler so called the “Albanian” mentioned by 3 farmers-informants from 3 different areas of Bulgaria.

*There is one Albanian - I don't know where he is from - they call him the Albanian - he is at every market in P., ((village name)), A. // now recently - since 4 or 5 days - 10 days, they've opened the market in A.// it was closed for 5, 6, 7, 8 years/ - well, he loads whole lorries with young bulls/ heifers/ where does he take them/ - he says that he takes them to the American navy/ - where does*

*he take them to his mother's... so and so... I don't know where he takes them - he buys, pays and gets lost. Well, what can we say - we are worse off now and now they rarely buy calves, bulls, stuff only this Albanian and they plea with him and lick his boots - Last year it was 3.20 - now it went down to 2.60 - the beef. (Anton, BG, 16: 42-50)*

## **5. Experiencing Europe: effects on collective actions**

OMS farmers being European farmers with long-term experience in European legislation and regulations and acting on the European market and social arenas used to associate, interact actively and contact farmers outside Europe as well. Thus, they stand for their rights and economic concerns, transfer professional knowledge and experience. There is a solidarity among the “normal” farmers who cling together “so there’s the danger we are going to depend (on) only the few large ones”. (Stefan, GER).

The best example of collective experience in the studied sensitized group is Stefan, a German farmer who is a member of a big German farmers’ association, through which he also became acquainted with the agricultural practice and regulations of other European countries. He keeps international relations, contacts and mutual help with some other farmers in Europe, especially with farmers from Great Britain and Scotland: *“friendship with Scottish colleagues was that they said, ‘Okay, now we’ll help you”*. As an associative person he has participated in networks and has attended international farmers’ meetings. This is the case in which the biographical process successfully combines various biographical trajectories: professional development, plant variety protection, exchange of experience and knowledge, professional solidarity and collective action to protect farmers’ interests. In his case it could be argued that there is a conscious development of the individual towards its European identity.

In contrast, NMS farmers mistrust collective actions and organisations, work individually and are encapsulated in dissatisfaction and criticism; feel incapacitated from taking collective action to save their common interests.

## **6. Europe as a structure of opportunities to free movement, knowledge transfer and travel**

Europe is imagined as a structure of opportunities to travel freely and see new places, people and things, especially for eastern farmers who were unable to travel easily before the political changes in Eastern Europe and this is a real advantage and opportunity for them. The travel does not cover only the “semantic feature of “going on a holiday”. In addition, it includes the semantic features of exploring cultural otherness, of reaching the others in their strangeness and of creatively learning from them new aspects of life” (Schutze 2008c).

Being ‘Eurozone’ Europe is an excellent opportunity and a strong point for farmers as European citizens to move around freely, “curious to see different people”, to cross the borders easily without being controlled, which may not necessarily make one’s identify with Europe. (all German farmers, Iwona PL, Welsh and Bulgarian farmers). Europe is a short distance for travelling, getting experience, knowing new culture and curiosity to see different people) - Europe is geographically “here” (Baca, PL). Europe is also seen to support national diversity through language (Merfyn Jr., WAL) but using English language as a European lingua franca it may serve as a universal communicative and socio-cultural tool (Iwona, PL).

*I: And could you tell me more about the journeys, you mentioned you travelled a lot? (((a reference to a short conversation prior to the interview)))*

*N: Yes, I tra// I travel because of // because of my job, I meet a lot of people when doing business, but also, a bit err// well, we haven't travelled in a long time, because whenever we have an investment to make, we don't have money to travel around Europe, but in the past we visited many European countries, camping. Generally I think that **introducing the Euro zone was a very good idea**; at least we have one currency in all the countries and you don't have to exchange the money and figure out the currency. I remember before the Euro was introduced, I was in Austria and I wanted to take my kid to// to the zoo and I had, as far as I remember, only German marks, I didn't have the Austrian shillings.” I was lucky I could have paid with the credit card, otherwise I would have had to search for a cash point, withdraw the money, and now it's all the same everywhere and it's very convenient. And errr business is business, you just go places and figure out different things. I think that, despite all, **English is the most common language in Europe**. I know German, so I don't have any problems communicating in German but generally English is the language used in Europe, not only in business but also, so to speak, in everyday life. Well, maybe except for France, I don't have too many experiences when it comes to France; I was there only once, and I don't know, unfortunately they speak only French there ((smiles)), any other language is, they can't communicate in any other language. Everywhere else, well Holland is the best example, almost every child knows how to communicate in English. (Iwona, PL, 16: 14-23)*

*When he was a child while going to the tobacco field, he was playing games with a cousin of his and when dreaming what they would like to be, they wanted see the world; while we were going to the plot we would dream of what we wanted to become. Guitar players or what not ((he laughs)). So **we would also be able to see the world. We dreamed of things like that..** (Murat, BG, 2: 30-31)*

As evidenced from the narrations, some developments of the biographical action schemes of farmers occur through their international travels where they have gained a lot of experience and exchanged skills and knowledge. Most of the OMS farmers studied keep good relations with other European farmers for various reasons. Stefan from Germany has very extensive international experience because he works/trades with other EU farmers on a regular basis. In search of different potato breeds, he visited Scotland, France, Finland, Greece where he got in touch with local farmers and does exchange work with them:

*And ehm – I also got in touch with some other farmers in Europe, especially in Scotland. – Met friends who grew – sole older varieties. Diversity is more common there than here. Scottish varieties are more diverse than German ones. (11:14-17)*

*We had some contact to French farmers who sold a little bit for us or traded our potatoes.....; We are in touch with seed potato traders in Finland – ehm, who don't grow directly for us, but where it is nice to buy and have a nice exchange as well. And, ehm, well I went to Greece once – that Penelope near Patras – ehm they also have//there is a research institute we worked with. And they grew potatoes for us for over a year. And I had a looked at that as well. It was also nice to go there and meet the people. (11: 36/47-50)*

In conclusion, however, farmers as a group is not explicitly uttered European identity their mindset is strongly oriented to Europe and they experience Europe in their everyday (real and virtual) life (through their work, communication, information, markets etc.).

Analyses show that major intra group differences come from east-west comparisons. However, exactly European mental space and territory is what will make them closer and integrated as a we-community as one of the major economic player on the European arena.

#### **(4) Policy implications**

Out of all studied sensitized groups, the Farmers' one is one of the most dependent on certain European policies, as well as on national agricultural policies and implementation procedures on national and regional level. Therefore, the biographical narrative method offers the researcher the best opportunity to see how farmers assess the relevance and usefulness of these policies in other words to see how Europe, respectively the EU and its policies are functioning “from below”..

It is evident from the farmers' interviews that they have accepted the **overarching influence of the European policy** in agriculture and the fact that it determines their life and occupation as farmers:

*...all the regulations, that kind of, ((laughing)) - quite a, they're, they're foisted upon us from Europe... (Merfyn Sr., WAL, 14: 37-38)*

The interpretations of this influence vary across the interview sample and are presented here along the positive-negative divide with the provision that in many of the interviews the attitudes to the EU policies were ambivalent and could not fit neatly on either side of this conceptual line of separation.

The positive aspects of European policy that affect farmers most widely are the financial support it enables them to receive, the market opportunities it presents to them, the empowerment it gives individual farmers and professional organizations to pursue their interests and goals when local and national structures cannot provide the right conditions for such a pursuit, and the high standards it maintains in agricultural production and food processing.

The **financial support** farmers receive in the form of subsidies is the most common example interviewees can provide to illustrate the benefit that the CAP is to them. Farmers from all four national groups, especially if they were running a small-scale farm, stated that they need the subsidies to keep their business going:

*And the - us farmers I think we're probably glad we are part of the European Union and that the funding we get is one thing that's vital really for a farm our size. (Merfyn Jr., WAL, 8:33-4)*

For some Bulgarian farmers the subsidies have a central biographical significance, as the hope to receive them influenced the decision to stay in the business at a time of serious struggle to survive financially. Mincho's son for example, only became interested in his father's business when the stimulus of financial subsidies was introduced on the horizon and now keeps him enthusiastic:

*So, my son is a very good shepherd/ - a very good shepherd - I can say this - among all the young people - for example - that are his age - twenty four ... He ... I doubt there is anyone like him// I'm talking about our village/ - such a good shepherd... But he doesn't want to get involved. ... You heard what he said - "How could I get involved, when"// - now here, for about a year - since last year as we received the subsidies we stood back on our feet ... and he now has enthusiasm to work and this helps. ... So my son now/ - really he helped me a lot more this year - compared to ... previous years. ... The previous years// i would tell him - "Vanka, my son, - we need to treat the sheep" - and "Whoever's got sheep - they should treat them" - you understand - whoever's got sheep should treat them, because "You - he says - what is your income from this whole business.. what is your profit to keep these sheep/ - to treat them/ - you only spend money for medicines" and this was truly what was happening - so simple/ ... Now he has some enthusiasm - he is keen. (Mincho, BG, 6:49-50/7:1-13)*

Another type of support that farmers value highly is the help that they can rely on in times of a crisis, such as **compensations** for losses incurred from unfavourable weather conditions, animal epidemics and other unpredictable circumstances:

*There is also funding support from the EU for special (difficult) farming situations, for example the farming program or assistance in extreme situations (HELP, HIAB). (Bostel, GER, SR, p. 3)*

The **market opportunities** that the European common market presents to farmers is also viewed very favourably by many farmers, especially those from Germany. They appreciate highly the market environment in Europe that facilitates the exchange of goods and money, especially since the introduction of the common European currency and simplifies the process of documentation filing and cross-border control. Those farmers who can utilize the common agricultural policies and regulations to achieve assistance and help from fellow farmers from other European countries, see Europe as a **ground for international cooperation** and an **opportunity structure** to build on the interconnectedness of European member states in order to achieve goals that may be unachievable in one's own country or simply to reach wider professional horizons:

*But ehm – here it's also nice [in Europe]. And ehm especially when you've got a chance mhm even as a normal person, being a simple farmer – ehm to do something in Europe, and that you can just buy something, order something, – or file applications at their agencies – and maybe get a license for a variety or the like, things that are usually (done) by big corporations, you know? – or (associations). And ehm it's quite nice that you can do that yourself, isn't it?.. (Stefan, GER, 16:26-27)*

**Europe's high standards** in food production and processing, when they do not directly impose a high financial and technological burden on farmers, are another result of the EU CAP, which farmers are very appreciative of. Especially when it comes to comparing food standards between Europe and the USA or other parts outside Europe, farmers zealously support the European regulations and call for them to be maintained strictly:

*Europe has a high standard.. and I'd really wish that we maintain a good standard even with the whole discussion about liberalization. That we don't give in to the WTO. For example, thank God we don't have that in Europe. In America the growth hormone BST is widely used. It seems like American consumers don't care.. Thank God, eh the European farmers said, we don't need it. We have other ways of producing enough. Consumers don't want it.(...) You must be strict. - And thank God we didn't get that here. It was banned, and it must still not be used here. ... And in future we might have a similar discussion about genetically modified crops. Do we or don't we need them.(...) We will discuss about genetic engineering. In America genetically modified crops have been legal for a long time. - We'll discuss whether or not we should introduce them also. (Wiard, GER, 29: 10-27)*

The discontent with the EU agricultural policies stem from two main sources: the **complicated administrative and bureaucratic procedures** that accompany inseparably the routine farm work,

and the numerous **regulations** that they constantly have to keep up with.

Farmers desire reducing of burdening administrative and bureaucratic procedures (complicated application procedures and requirements for different agricultural programs, farm accounts, on-going financial, professional and environmental control), simplification of application processes in order not to waste time and resources, better institutional organisation at national and regional level. In general farmers define EU bureaucratic requirements as being excessive, unduly complicated and causing considerable inefficiency in the grand scale of farming work:

*With Europe and Brussels what sometimes annoys me, too many regulations, too much bureaucracy. I say - eh if that what farmers have to do today regarding administrative work. Of course, on the one hand, it's necessary in order to get public funds but also //Stock indexes of animals eh so animals are better managed and administered today than people. At least cattle, definitely, being tagged and through central databases.(...) Administrative work, that is considerably too high today. I think one can ... // The reasons why some things are introduced// and eh sometimes they take it too far. (Wiard, GER, 20-1: 50-08)*

The way farmers are made sure to comply with these regulations - through control mechanisms of financial reprimands, is perceived by them as overbearing and even oppressive:

*But – I just think that this, you've got people telling you all the time you should be doing this and you've got to do that and otherwise we'll dock your money and all this sort of thing, you know; it's a control thing and I don't like that. (Hailey, WAL, 8:1-3)*  
*But it is not the bureaucratic process that they are complaining of, for them it is just routine work and nothing to be complained about. But what they find difficult to agree with is that the new EU-regulations are really tough to follow, they can hardly be anticipated and thus cause trouble in business planning. (Halets, GER, SR, p. 3)*

The difficulty to comply with all requirements and norms forces farmers to "go around" them and to resort to activities that might even be illegal, especially in the new member states where the new regulations had to be implemented in a very short period of time, which put a lot of pressure on individual owners, especially in stock-breeding and dairy production:

*You've got to have a special place [for slaughtering], a certificate, to go to some educational courses - all this is messed up, on one hand they require a lot, but on the other they cannot provide the conditions. So what we have is that you want to buy [from me], illegally, so I would produce it illegally. (...) Eeh, all these requirements from the Community, these bureaucrats, all these agencies, these agrarian consultancies, and the vets on top of that. All this is crushing you, and have you got any idea about how they hold you to ransom, eh ((waves his hand)). (Baca, PL, 7: 3-9)*

The perceived exclusive control that EU institutions have got over the agricultural policies is seen as depriving farmers from their right to have a say in the making of those policies. With the exception of a

few very socially and politically active farmers, most other farmers share the belief that they do not have any influence on the decision-making process of agricultural policies:

*I: Do you feel that you and people like you have a, an influence at all on these [agricultural] policies?*

*N: Not really. I think by the time, especially as far as European policies go, by the time we hear about them, there's, - I know there probably are ways that you could know what they are before they get passed and everything, but you never do and by that stage the whole intervention stage is about two years ago and it's too late to do anything about it. (Merfyn Jr., WAL, 9: 8-12)*

Regulations themselves are a target for criticism, as they are not seen as providing equal grounds for fair competition between European member states that are in different economic state. Arable farming is seen as favoured over livestock-breeding, which in turn benefits certain animal breeders more than others.

*The EU would not create conditions of fair competition, because farmers in Europe would be treated differently, for example oil is much cheaper in France and therefore the overall economic situation of the farms in France is often better. ... Another problem is the different legal situation in European countries, for example cages are banned in Germany, and in the Czech Republic they are not. Pesticides that are banned in Germany are allowed in other EU countries and so on => there are no equal conditions of competition. (Bostel, GER, SR, p. 4)*

Another reason for EU agricultural regulations and institutions to be criticized by farmers is that experts from these institutions often have a negative image among farmers. Widely spread among the farmers' in Europe is the opinion that European agricultural policy makers are not very familiar with the essence of farming as an occupation and its practices:

*It's, you can tell that it's kind of been an idea that somebody who doesn't really understand farming systems has come up with this idea. (Merfyn Jr, WAL, 8: 46-48)*

*And I don't think, I think some of the so called experts that have come in here and told us what we should be doing, I don't think they know the land. (Hailey, WAL, 7:31-32)*

*I feel that there are people // if you look at, what's his name Hilary Benn, have you ever seen anybody, less likely to know a thing about agriculture, the poor man's...he is a vegetarian for starter.. He is so completely out of touch with what the reality of - farming is and so I think it is wrong that we have a Minister telling us... and listening to bureaucrats telling us what we have got to do. They should surely - I suppose they say they have got advisors; but then they have probably got advisors even in the NFU they are not completely in touch with the average - farm. (Ruby, WAL, 5: 42-50)*

The whole set of European rules, regulations and programs is seen by a big number of interviewees

as geared towards **large-scale farmers and discouraging and marginalizing small-scale farmers**, due to requirements that are unreachable for small producers, as well as financial support, which is proportionately too little for small-scale farmers to afford any piece of equipment or renovation they might need.

*All sorts of methods are used for smaller farmers to be destroyed. (Mihail, BG, 5: 9-10)*

*N: It [the EU] destroyed it [farming], all of this destroyed it. Here these, these small farms, these requirements - they could not, these - 2, 5-hectare [farms] dropped from the game. (Baca, PL, 4: 29-34)*

*I think that err mmm, these EU grants are available only for ... for really huge farms mmm which in Poland account for, I don't know, a few percent. (Iwona, p. 4:29-30)*

*...those are entrepreneurs, not ordinary farmers; But, I think that the EU grants should be given to the ordinary, average farmers. (Iwona, PL, 4:39-40)*

Finally, many interviewees especially those from the new member states state that the EU schemes and programs are not adapted to the skills and competences of most farmers. On national level the applications and procedures are not tailored to the competence and experience of farmers, but require and stimulate skills that are not directly relevant to the farming occupation. This creates a market niche for consultancy businesses, rather than channel all existing means into helping farmers directly:

*And although the grants are there, people say they are not being used... Well, they're not used, because an average man is// the procedure of filling out the application, submitting it or signing it without the help of external specialized companies is beyond reach, and such help, you know, is very expensive. ;*

*But just the requirements to submit the application are so complicated and written in such a language that an average farmer, who// even assuming, he'd have graduated from high school err and was well-read, watched TV err even knew foreign languages, he wouldn't be able to go through it. Simply, he just wouldn't manage. And I don't think that those are the EU requirements, I think it's the Polish law. (Iwona, PL, 4: 7-10; 2: 46-50).*

*Many people gave up [farming] for this reason [difficulty with filling in and submitting their paperwork]. There is no one to do their documents. He - he is illiterate - do you understand - he doesn't know how and when they send him back twice he says 'Why don't you go to hell' and he gives up - abandons it - the very person who is competent in his work - do you understand? (Mincho, BG, 15: 9-13)*

As farmers have to follow EU-wide regulations, but they communicate with local or national-level administration, apply at those levels, and are controlled locally and nationally, farmers don't interact directly with EU-level institutions, so they did not express particular problems at EU-level – just the opposite, **national and local disapproval and criticism dominate**. Unlike the images concerning problems and attitudes on European level which could exist separate from each other because of the “distance” (administrative remoteness of the EU institutions and the mental distancing from their direct

implications) the attitudes on a national and local level are constructed on the basis of practical experience.

### **National policy implications shared across national groups**

Criticism towards national governments that they don't have a vision, strategy and guidance for the future development of agriculture is common among Bulgarian and Welsh farmers.

*because at the moment I don't feel for the last 8, 10 years we haven't had any guidance from our own British government as to where agriculture fits in and how agriculture should move forward. And definitely it is a slow /ehm/ process of change that agriculture can't change overnight (Emyr, WAL, 7: 45-48)*

*The Albanians - they are much poorer than us, but they don't eat rubbish from Europe. They eat our meat, which we produce almost completely [ecologically] clean, because they are people who just deal with animals bred outdoors. These animals have hardly seen medications - nothing. And here comes the problem with the government. I mean, we don't have governance - nobody cares, you see, what people have been eating all these years. (Yavor, BG, 4: 15-21)*

The underlying European principle of no national protectionism within the boundaries of the Union stands out as a lack of care on a national level and is reflected in criticism towards national governments as they don't protect and stimulate national produce. This is common in Bulgarian and Welsh interviews too.

*N: To be honest, agriculture will have a future, if it is paid attention to.*

*I: Who should pay attention to it?*

*N: Well, the government. The state. (...) [he can't understand how Bulgarian tomatoes, which are more delicious are not on the market - even if they were more expensive, people prefer them.] Well, after all, stop this import, let our stuff be sold. Give some subsidies to our men. The others are well ahead so we don't need to support them. (Murat, BG, 14: 28-38)*

*N: And when more and more like -ehm- Poland, Czechoslovakia /ehm/ the old Eastern Bloc countries – they're coming in now and they want a piece of the cake. And so it obviously has to be shared and because agriculture and especially upland farming is // and sheep farming especially is - of a higher percentage in Great Britain than it is in France and Germany and the rest of Europe:-eh- then we have to fight more for that piece of cake. :And I can't – seem - to believe that our -ehm- government is fighting hard enough. Compared to France#...#who are very agriculturally#*

*I: #farmers (???)#*

*N: #well not the farmers // not just the farmers but the politicians also# .. #understand how the farmers are important to their country... For their // for their food production because they value the quality of food that they have in France.*

*I: I suppose that supermarkets here are more powerful than farmers, aren't they?*

*N: Unfortunately. In France, if you visit a supermarket in France, you'll see local produce of that particular region... being sold in the supermarket. Whereas, if you go to this country, you'll see - aisles of food representing countries like India, Poland –ehm- any other country other than Wales. (Emyr, WAL, 8/9: 46-51/1-27)*

Another common problem that faces farmers across the sample is the perceived impoliteness and low service culture of local officers who are not helpful and do not speak the farmers' language. This compromises communication with the front men of national and European institutions:

*You're always fighting. There's nobody who'll come and knock on your door and say, 'Can I give you a hand? Can I be from the National Park and I'll give you assistance to be able to help you move forward.' You know, there's a Farming Connect Officer. Well you need to have a college degree to understand what they're talking about... they are being employed by the Welsh Assembly to give farmers advice. (Emyr, WAL, 25:36-39)*

*Eeh, these requirements from the Community, these bureaucrats, all these agencies, these Agrarian consultancies, and the vets too. All this crushes you, and if you knew how they blackmail you (waving a hand);*

*They don't give anything for free, they'd torture you psychologically... (Baca, PL, 7: 7-9/21-25).*

Farmers are the most vulnerable link in the producer-consumer chain. They feel the national governments don't protect them against the strong lobbies of middle-men, mediators and mostly - the large supermarkets who dictate the prices and sale conditions to a point where the farmers could be forced out of business. This is a **grey area** in agriculture on the border of agri-business and trade that is currently a treacherous zone for every farmer who does not process their produce and has no influence on the market:

*N: The state just has to pay attention// more attention. This year they said they would intervene in the market to prevent the price slump.*

*I: What happened? Why didn't they do it?*

*N: Well, they didn't do it.(...)*

*I: Do you have any clues why the state decided not to do it?*

*N: Well, all companies, all middlemen in the cereal export belong to somebody at a high level - random people cannot stock ships at the ports. We have farmers with 5-6000 hectares - they can't afford to stock the ships - they still have to go through someone else.*

*(Peter, BG, 9: 49-50; 10: 1-11)*

*N: So I'm farming sheep and cattle – that's my income. Organic – and as I was saying with the supermarkets, now, so powerful – they are now dictating the price that they are going to pay for organic producers – not because of our fault, at all, even though the Welsh Assembly is now pushing organic in Wales and trying to put local produce to local markets – because we are a country that's producing a lot of lamb, we are dependent on the supermarkets to sell this lamb.. because they are selling 82% of red meat in Great Britain..But they are also dictating the price that they are paying for the meat to us farmers. So I was producing organic lamb - and it's now a system that we have here- selling to Tesco, the lamb, and selling to Sainsbury's the organic Welsh black beef and the first that that I knew of it that the price was going to be brought down was when I phoned, this year, the -eh- buyer for Tesco and said that I had a batch of lambs coming in - and I asked him what the premium was going to be and they said that the premium had been done away with because of the credit crunch affecting the customers in Tesco buying organic produce and they were – a lot of the customers were buying cheaper cuts.. So the farmer was taking the brunt of that.. not the supermarket... I did go to Tesco the following week after I sold my lambs – I went to Tesco and had a look at the price of organic lamb and funnily enough the price of organic lamb had gone up - by a pound to £13.98 a kilo for organic lamb and my price had come down to conventional prices.. So Tesco obviously still making a profit from my reduction. -ehm- I had a letter also from the the -eh- abattoir that supplies Sainsbury's*

*saying that they were only going to pay up to £3 a kilo for their beef this - back end again because of the credit crunch – but the credit crunch is ex ex // is affecting also the rural community and the farming community.. My diesel bill is still the same - it's going up#... #like everybody else, my electric bill is going up, my heating, my oil bill is going up, but still my - income is going down. Because of the - policy of the supermarkets. So /ehm/ I will have to find other ways of bringing income in, in the next two years because my agri-environment scheme is going to be finishing. My single farm payment is going to be changing, again a European decision, by 2013.. and if nothing has been put in place before then - then I'm going to lose three quarters of my income. (Emyr, WAL, 5/6: 39-42)*

Neither EU policy nor at national level the relation between farmers as producers on one side and other important economic actors on the other side are threatened in a proper and efficient way. Many of the interactions in these areas “in-between” form “**grey zones**” (Schutze) on which farmers have a limited influence.

Apart from these attitudes, shared across nations, there are some nation-specific orientations to Europe which are more pronounced in individual national group samples.

Across the **Welsh** interviews there is a salient discontent with the British government for complying too strictly with all European regulations. There is a shared feeling that the state institutions are not doing enough to protect the interests of Britain and Wales in particular with its specific agricultural features.

*I: I was about to say that, yeah. I get the impression that your sort of, your whole farm life with your dad and you, be quite, sort of, at mercy of rules and regulations.*

*C: Yes.*

*I: Do you think you've been particularly at mercy of Europe rules and regulations or is that a whole combination? I'm wondering how*

*C: Whole combination.*

*I: How influenced do you think Europe has actually been in you life?*

*C: I believe that -eh- the British, the British Government have let the European rules - walk over them.. In my opinion they should have pulled back and said, right we don't like this idea; we would bring this proposal up work it between a panel and not let Brussels decide right we're going to pass this legislation for example the whole electronic tagging.*

(Cynog, WAL, 12: 9-20)

*..you always have something else, always something coming out of Europe –eh- some derogation (sic<sup>9</sup>) or some –eh- policy that has to be approved; and I seem to think that Great Britain is putting its hand up and saying “Yes. We'll comply with that within six months.” You know.. And putting a far greater pressure on the farming ((5sec.)) /ehm/ industry than a lot of the other European countries who are more relaxed about these rules and regulations.*

(Emyr, WAL, 5: 29-37)

As it was mentioned above, the unregulated **grey zones** between the producing and the trading sector, are another concern farmers have, and currently the pressure that they are under is only compensated by the European payment schemes. With the view to these being phased out, Welsh

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<sup>9</sup> Should be “directive”.

farmers are **critical of the power of large traders**, such as the supermarkets, to determine the way agriculture in Britain develops:

*...unfortunately -ehm- the supermarkets who are very very powerful, in my opinion, and dictate - the farming - system in Great Britain and payments as well -ehm- means that I'm not getting a premium for my organic stock. (Emyr, WAL, 4:42-45)*

The **Bulgarian** interview sample shows two nation-specific features of European orientation among farmers: while they harbour great hopes about the impact European Union membership would have on their own businesses, they are very critical of the national institutions that mediate the EU policies at local level, which are seen to be corrupt and offering bad services. More often than the other farmers, Bulgarian ones complain that EU and national subsidies are usually delayed, national and European funds are abused, and the bureaucrats at the local level do not perform their duties well and make mistakes at the expense of farmers.

*We're relying /aaa/- now on these subsidies like a little child. I even /aa/ in this economic crisis I reckon that facing us will be//, we'll surmount it best maybe I mean that// if the state, what it has to give us as subsidies, gave it to us, 'cause so far we haven't gotten a cent, if it gives us subsidies, we'll survive – in this crisis.;*

*M: # You know, our dream is to start working only – the land. Not to have any contacts with clerks, with permits, with payments...*

*I: And will the EU free you from bureaucracy?*

*M: If we adopt their rules - /but they're probably bureaucrats too .. #*

*Y: # no they probably have it too, but much less, much less. Now, you know, it can't come //the notice doesn't come to you directly by mail, by television if they would say – here are the subsidies 20 stotinki for a litre of milk, /aa/ three days before the term expires. And have in mind that I have to get /aa/ a certificate that I have no arrears, which costs me, which is ready for me after a term of one week ( )....And do you know what a row I made on Tuesday to have them issue me a document, because I've already missed// I applied for the document, they have it ready for me here in two days, true, I pressure them. They issue and it says I have 5 leva in arrears. I'm here for two days and the last day is tomorrow. I go there on the second, the accountant comes with me with hard copies showing I have no arrears. I go into the tax office, I said so and so I said – the woman clicked and said – you have arrears. I don't, I said, have arrears. "How's that?" Well I don't have any arrears, I said #*

*M: # She printed a hard copy, bank transfers and that's all- somebody made a mistake in the system, the one who entered the data...Alright, she said, come in one week to get it, I was ready to grab her by the throat. (Yavor, BG, 19: 16-19; 22: 31-49)*

This badly functioning administrative system in Bulgaria, together with the perceived lack of strategy, consistency and long-term vision in the agricultural development of the state leads to insecurity among farmers, so they cannot assure a smooth work cycle which needs at least a year's planning ahead. Wherever they can get subsidies, they are not certain of receiving them on time, which can jeopardize a whole season's crops. The insecurity demotivates some and makes them look for alternative sources of income.

*[explaining how young people who study for degrees in agriculture would not take up farming]*

*I: Because it is very difficult?*

*N: ((emphasising)) Cause it's insecure. (Mihail, WAL, 7: 31- 37).*

*They shouldn't lie to us – whatever they pledge, they should give it– it doesn't matter, it could be a little. (Anton, BG, 21: 16-17)*

Among the **Polish** interviews, the most commonly voiced attitudes to the local implementation of the EU policies is the impoliteness and incompetence of the local administration officers, as well as the inadequate translation and implementation of EU policies:

*...in 2005 the translation of the EU documents from English into Polish was wrong and for every sort of animal it was required to build such a platform with a manure container, without taking into account whether that particular animal needs it. (Iwona, PL, 9:17-22)*

*..Offentimes the officials are more stupid, because they're, I don't know, frustrated about their work, they can't deal with their lives and they influence other people's lives and they often cause// a lot of stress because of their stupidity and envy and they take no responsibility for that, absolutely no responsibility. (Iwona, PL, 15: 16-20)*

The **German** farmers, on the whole, are the national group that share the most positive attitudes towards the European union. However, there are also cases among them, of being critical to the state institutions, based on government institutions placing a higher value on corporate interests rather than farmers' and consumers' interests, as well as being overly diligent in implementing all European regulations, even if that is not to the benefit of farmers.

*Ehm – well, and now we've had to deal with similar gentlemen – ehm who were breeders-friendly, who represented the breeding corporations' interests and not the farmers' and consumers' (and everyone's). And I said, 'Wait a minute. This is a state yeah ehm agency which should act neutrally and should fulfill its tasks, no matter who is doing what, shouldn't it? – So, well, we were a bit shocked. (Stefan, GER, 15: 2-6)*

*I: rather feel, it makes me angry sometimes, when we discuss Europe, there are ... for example, such big differences in agriculture. There are national differences.*

*I: yeah yeah, - yeah, yeah*

*N: Take diesel, diesel prices vary so much between the countries. At the moment, the French pay much less than the Germans. Clearly there are some open questions and if you take the standards for pest management, for example, Germans always top it.*

*I: Yeah, yeah*

*N: I'd say, some fulfil the minimum requirement. Brussels offers a certain scope. And whereas some fulfil the minimum requirement, the Germans always fulfil 101 percent. I don't like that. But Brussels isn't responsible, no. (Wiard, GER, 3: 1-11)*

The biographical method allows the researcher to identify the development and transformation in attitudes towards major institutional frames, such as the EU CAP. In the Eastern European countries, where the Policy was introduced comparatively recently, there are identifiable changes in attitudes both ways: from enthusiastic to disappointed and from reserved to positive:

*N: #Here people are very happy about the EU, it's quite bad... but ... ((4 c))*

*I: And? Why?*

*N: Well, it's just, the limitations are too many. (Marek, PL, 5: 47-49)*

*I: # Poland joined the EU and I don't know how you view this fact? Did anything change in your*

*life in connection to the EU accession or not?*

*N: We-e-el - no, but, financially we are worse off. Despite the fact that we get additional payment, but these go only for fertilisers, that's what they cover, but... Now the payment all goes for fertilizers ...(...) Before, everyone in the area says that before it was better\ - although there were briberies for machinery, but for example, if once you could buy a (tug) for 20 pigs, now you can't, because for 8000 ((zloty)) you could buy some old (tug) - 20 pigs would cost about 8000 ((zloty)). (Marek, PL, 5: 21-32)*

*I: Were there// since you took up farming, were there periods, which were easier, more successful than now, were there#*

*N: #It has always been difficult. Very difficult... Well, now things are easier, with the subsidies, things became easier. In the beginning they crusified us for those subsidies.*

*(Peter, BG, 5:24-28)*

In the interviews where an outlook on the future of the European agricultural policy is shared, the two main views are (1) that sooner or later the centralization of the CAP would be weakened in favour of a more flexible and free market with fewer financial support instruments and safety nets, and (2), an equal treatment in terms of European financial support for farmers should be guaranteed. These two topics mark the main streams in the discussions how to revise the EU CAP. The first line includes issues like the liberalisation of the agricultural markets and rethinking and respectively redistribution of quotas for agricultural goods. This are issues which were questioned mainly in the narratives of Western European farmers (hire is good to remember the German farmer comparing the agriculture in Europe and in New Zealand for instance)<sup>10</sup>. The second line of thoughts about the future of the agriculture in Europe is "dominated" by the Bulgarians. Having to some extend unrealistic expectations according to European Union after their country's accession. Bulgarian farmers feel that they deserve to catch up with the rest of the European farmers and that they are entitled to as much help as the old member states' farmers have been receiving up until now.

## **Conclusions**

The meanings and images of Europe and Europeanness, as well as the experience of Europe rendered in the biographical narrations of the farmers' group contrastively differ from those of the other studied 'sensitized' groups mainly due to farmers' sedentary (in relation to [national] territory, locality,

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<sup>10</sup> In the course of the research there were a number of additional policy issues discussed by the interviewees, like the unequal distribution of production quotas between new and old EU member states, as well as the incongruence between the declared EU priority of stimulating agro-ecological practices on one hand, and on the other - European and national regulations, as well as market pressures, which impede the development and establishment of such practices. These issues will be discussed in more detail in subsequent reports.

land, occupation), immobility as a formative feature of identity construction, biographical action scheme dependent on family, land and agriculture.

The analysis of the farmers' narratives have confirmed that to some particular issues related to the EU the division between new and old Europe is still alive. Looking at the EU "from below" – from the individuals perspective some European areas of common interest like EU common policy, its effective national implementation, the free competitive market, etc. emerge as different, even contrastive between OMS and NMS farmers.

The biographies of farmers from the "old" member states have emerged and developed in European political, economic and value systems, collectivities and morally binding concerns (Miller 2007). Thus, "old" member states (OMS) farmers have internalized and incorporated the European norms and values being EU member states for a longer time. Their individual biographical experience and work have been developed for years through their interplay in the social world of European farming, the single European market and more or less common/similar European social arenas. West European farmers have a more "associative" habitus, i.e. they are more socially included and organized into associations and movements that express their interests and requirements before the EU CAP; they are more professionalized in terms of educational habitus, acquired learning, experience and knowledge in the use of modern technologies and information sources, having the skills to be competitive players in the market arena. They also have acquired routine skills in using European programs supporting the agricultural sector.

On the contrary, the farmers from the "new" Member states (NMS) being socialized in a disparate political and economic field of moral imperatives, and subjected to a different type of collectiveness and collective identities, so they are closely shaped as Eastern European "we-community" of farmers. Their nation-resident-identity is still stronger rather than the collective European identity in terms of European mental space. The majority of the NMS farmers prevalently imagine Europe as a "supra-national entity", Europe as "the West" perception that is still alien/external to their everyday life and individual identity. That is why, in the biographical narratives of these farmers, when references are made to Europe and "Europeanness", there are often used mental figurations (Elias, Schutze), such as national "Eastern European we-images"–"Western European they-images", collective "here"–

collective “there”, “our people-those people” etc.

At the same time we have to underline the groups of “old” and “new” farmers are not homogeneous themselves. There are significant distinctions and ambivalences due to the scale of the respective member state (small - large country) and specifics and history of their state and national governmental system (federal state, independent state within the framework of a larger monarchy, more or less dependant periphery country on the powerful central “empire” like the Soviet Union in the past).

The narrative biographical interviews of farmers reveal the reflections of farmers on Europe and the EU CAP in particular. By analyzing their opinions and evaluations and communicating them to policy makers, this research could be a contribution to the fine-tuning of European and national policies that could improve farmers working conditions, their market environment and fair competition. The research shows that farmers on the whole have very favourable attitude to the substantive ideas, priorities and instruments of the EU CAP, and where there is discontent, it is typically directed to the practical mechanisms used in the implementation of the Policy at local level.

It is evident that in general farmers benefit from the EU CAP and it is important that its fundamental goals and instruments are maintained. Where changes in the policies are to be introduced, they would be mostly needed in the area of local adaptation and implementation.

Along all differences among the European farmers-we-group there is clear evidence that farmers are sharing a certain European mental space (Schutze) as orientation of their thoughts and actions. Farmers are able even to transform it. Surprisingly, this is not due to their immediate collective action but because of the scale of their “we-community” in Europe and as such of their (unconscious) position in the European society as food delivers, hence having great potential for collective action and power. The existence in CAP of rules for its implementation on national or regional level does not allow them to emerge as united “European farmers-we-group”. Although we can expect that in times of crisis concerning the essence of European common agriculture policy, namely an attempt to eliminate the financial support farmers would be the strongest among those who will support the EU and Europe.

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