Andreas Josko:
Immigration and Identity: A European
Perspective

In branding, identity is an important concept and can serve as a starting point to then further build the brand concept. Considering building a brand for a nation, it is useful to look at the example of the United States of America.

One important trait of US culture is the ability to provide immigrants with a new identity. This has been key to integrating the steady stream of new arrivals from all over the world. Admission to the US was based on the adoption of a core set of American values. Everyone could become an American as long as he or she adopted these values sometimes known as „The American Creed".

In contrast to this, Europe has relied on birth or ancestry to define citizenship. Since European identity is much less developed than the American one, a branding process should start with discovering and defining European identity. Concepts of identity are seen for example in naturalisation tests of Germany and the US. They consist of a predefined set of questions around various political and historical aspects of citizenship.

Another source of identity might come from a shared set of beliefs and values. While naturalisation tests are very technical and promote memorized answering behavior, a creed is more binding, but also less graspable. Such a creed for Europe could be based on the core values of Western democracy such as secular democracy, rule of law, pluralism, tolerance. Specifically European concepts such as multi-nationality, common history and culture and the value of diversity could also be part of the creed.

Inevitably the question arises what to include and what not to include. Bassam Tibi proposed a debate on whether a leading culture exists for Europe and if not, whether it is necessary. As identity plays a vital role in both forming a society and in branding it, a debate on the contents and boundaries of European culture seems inevitable.