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THE EMPIRE AS STRIKING BACK: NOTIONS OF CULTURE AND IDENTITY AMONG CROATIAN NEGOTIATORS WITH THE EU

SUMMARY

The author conducted a series of semi-structured interviews with the members of the Negotiating Team for the Accession of the Republic of Croatia to the European Union in order to uncover the notions of culture and identity, understood as "questions of power", in their answers regarding the regional affiliation of the country, the EU and the West in general. In a series of questions posed about Croatian regional affiliation, the region of Central Europe (*Mittleuropa*) emerged as the representative of the most desired, "Western" identity. It also elicited references to Croatian Austro-Hungarian legacy. In terms of the negotiators' perception of the countries of former Yugoslavia, a reproduction of a new discourse, which may be attributed to the adoption of the EU discourse, was noted.

Key words: Croatia, the European Union, the West, Central Europe, the Balkans, the process of Croatia's accession to the EU