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National identity as core concept for the European standardization procedure

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Abstract

It is known that the numerical expansion of the population and the diversity within the European Union (EU) change the complexity of the standardisation process. A socio-demographic analysis revealed the items frequently mentioned among the most important sources of European and National identities that has to be considered when standardize services. Another issue of the study is the fact that both the standardization process and the balance between National and European identities are in fact dynamic, changing over time. Starting with this paper, we can later explain how the globalization of economies influences the notion of National identity.

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1. Reasons behind slow standardization

Services sectors comprise a wide range of economic activities, from banking, education, IT and transport, to childcare, cleaning and hospitality. The freedom of services movement is one of the foundations of the single market - replacing national and often conflicting standards - along with the freedoms of movement of persons, goods and capital. In one of these areas, respectively goods, the European standardization system has already made an important contribution, principally by means of the “New Approach” to legislation, designed to prevent the creation of technical barriers to trade.

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The European Council of 4 February 2011 confirmed that standardization is a crucial framework condition to boost private investment in innovative services and that standardization processes should be accelerated, simplified and modernized. For that, the ESOs should reduce the average time to develop European standardization deliverables requested by the Commission (50%) until 2020. In addition, the Regulation will streamline and shorten the procedure for objections to a harmonized standard.

Despite the increasing growth of the standardization provision role, standardization activity has been controlled towards local development, with the vast majority of service standards developed at national, rather than European level. In this situation we raise the question relating to the slow standardization process and the reason behind that. To offer pertinent answers, we decided to investigate also the impact of diverse national identity and the integrated migration process studies at the EU level.

2. Understanding the diversity

2.1. Standardization provision challenges a top to bottom concept

The role of services standards is to support the development of the single market for services as the Project 2020[†] states and has been increasingly promoted and formally recognized by the European Commission in 2006, through its Directive on Services, as well as in other important legislation[‡]. The revision of the European legislation on standardization has been elected as one of the 12 priority actions of the Single Market Act[§]. In order to avoid fragmentation of the market by proliferating national service standards and to facilitate the cross-border provision of services, standardisation should be developed at European level, taking full account of market needs^{**}. So, in 2013, to ensure that Europe's standardisation system can meet business' challenges, the Commission proposed a reform package^{††} including a new Regulation on European standardisation which took effect from 1 January 2013. This reform aimed at increasing the system's inclusiveness, speed, responsiveness, transparency, flexibility and scope. Starting with this study, we can later explain how the globalization of economies influences the notion of National identity.

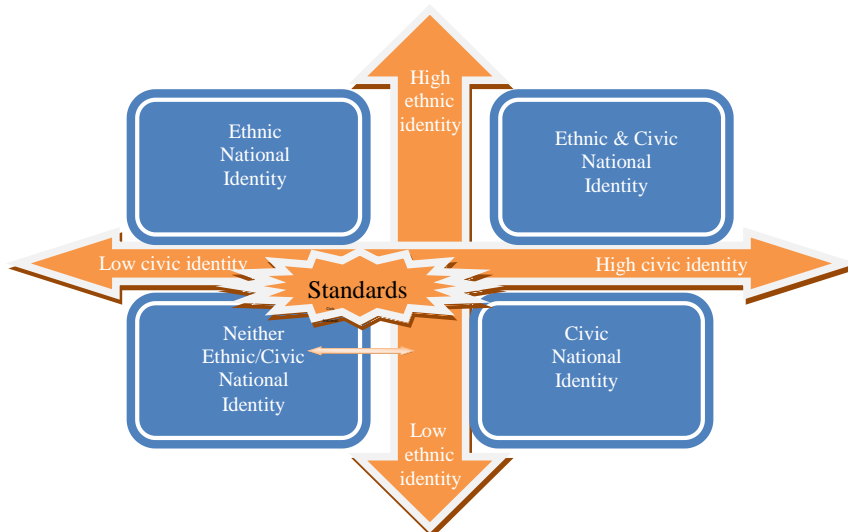


Fig. 1. The two dimensions of national identity (Cohen,1994) and the standardization policy

[†] A strategic vision for European standards: Moving forward to enhance and accelerate the sustainable growth of the European economy by 2020

[‡] COM (2011) 0206: Single Market Act, Proposal for a regulation on European standardization

[§] COM/2011/0206: Single Market Act, Twelve levers to boost growth and strengthen confidence "Working together to create new growth", Point 2.5.

^{**} Regulation 1025/2012/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 on European standardisation OJ L 316/12

^{††} COM(2014) 500: „The annual Union work programme for European standardisation for 2015”

2.2 National identities seeking for homogenization

Literature on “national identity” is vast, but the background is developed mainly from only one side, with a lack of global vision and a need of series of historical case studies focus on interrelated areas: ethnic communities, tendencies in education and communication, geopolitical changes, national structures, uniformity and continuity elements, national myths and legends.

In contemporary literature, Smith (1992) locates the origins of modern nations in pre-modern culture (ethnies) and underline that nations emerge out of pre-existing ethnic groups. He considered that each ethnic group should have, at least, a myth of common ancestry, shared historical memories, a collective name, and an association with a specific territory. Smith sees symbols playing particular importance to identity. National identity is built through specific social dramas and events in which the meaning of the nation is contested and potentially transformed. Cultural differences can be seen also inside a nation, but in this case we consider nation as a cultural homogeneous area, with one national identity representation in material symbols, in rituals that succeed taking hold the national culture (Sewell, 1999).

On the other hand, many studies see the national identity in various dimensions: territorial boundary of separate cultural populations; the nature of myths of origin and historical memories; a mass standardized culture; a unified system of common legal rights.

Modernist such as Ernest Gellner (1964) considers that nations are socially constructed by those in authority, to serve a specific purpose, generally to modernise the economy and society. Part of the process, Gellner argues, is that symbols were and continue to be manipulated to gain the support of the masses. Roger Brubaker (1992) speaks about one’s nation that shapes the institutional realities of statehood inform immigration policies, and affect integration practices.

Some contemporary theories tell that there are signs of a kind of fear of what might be called “placelessness” signifying a loss of roots in this globalizing world. What might be called “hybrid identities” arise from international migration. This is increasingly a global phenomenon. People may define themselves by the place of origin of their ancestors, identifying perhaps as Turkish Germans or Syrian Greeks. An identity with other nations beyond one’s country of residence is called “transnational identity” (Airriess and Miyares 2007). The authors demonstrate that more recent immigrants are generally more likely to retain stronger contact with their places of origin through remittances and still-active migration chains. Among immigrant groups that have been in a host country for generations, transnational identity becomes more of an occasional nostalgic gesture (Hawkins, 2007).

To conclude, Ernest Renan underlines the three things that constitute the spiritual principle of the unity of a nation: “. . . the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories . . . the desire to live together, [and] the will to perpetuate the heritage that one has received in an undivided form”. (Renan, 1990).

3. Contradictions between national and European

3.1 The real level of standards harmonization

During the period 1998-2004 almost a quarter (24%) of the new service standards developed were at European (as compared to national) level, but more recently (2005-2011) this share has fallen to just 17%.

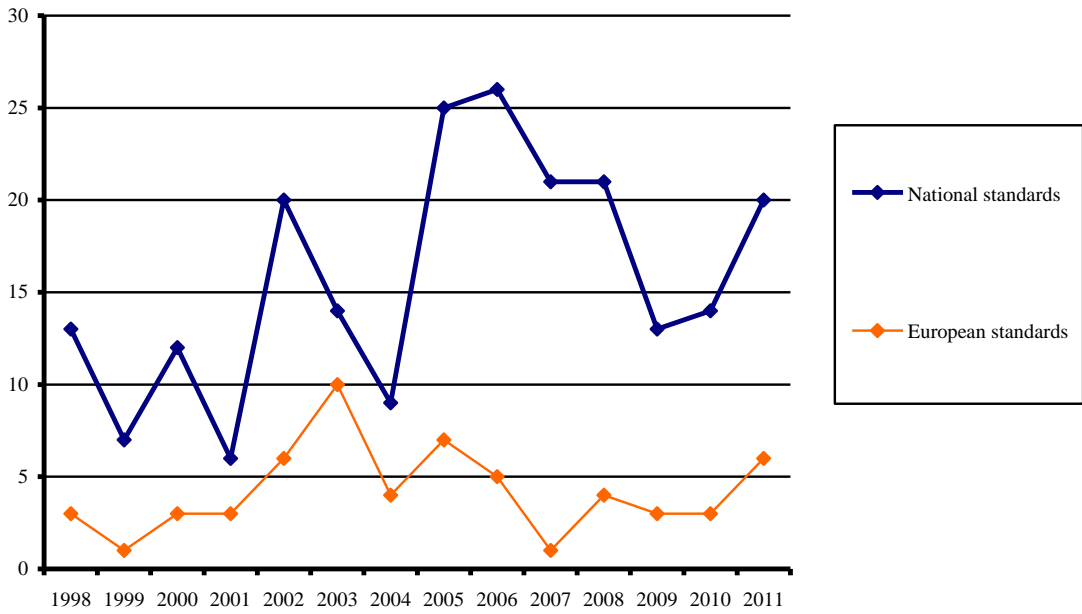


Fig. 2. Comparing national and European published standards by year of publication

A study made by Technopolis Group^{††} (2012) in the services area has identified a total of 55 full European standards and 380 full national standards. This is a relatively small number in comparison to the several thousand product standards developed at national and European levels over the past few decades.

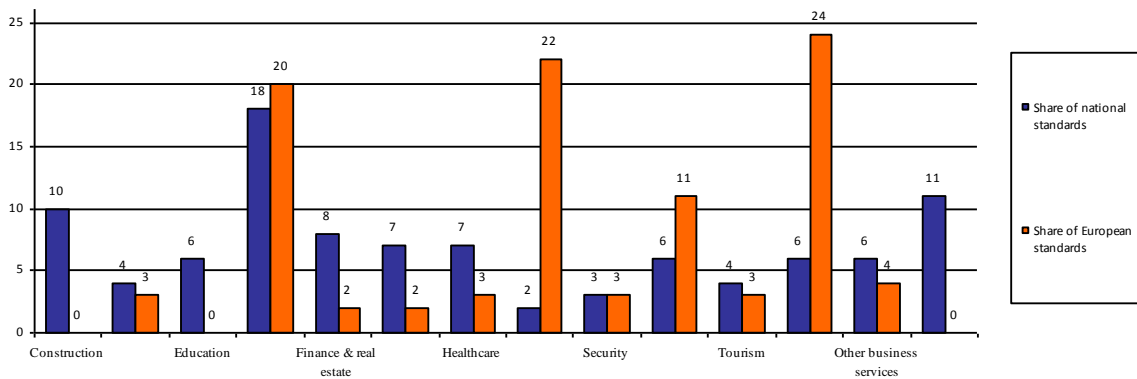


Fig.3. Share of national and European standards

^{††} Nordic Innovation Report 2012: A study on services certification linked to service standards at national level in Europe

The same study has identified 163 relevant certification schemes, which are operated by 41 different Certification Bodies based in 17 different countries. The 163 schemes collectively cover 111 different service standards, or 26% of those identified through the study. Based on these results we can say that around one in four of the national and European service standards developed appear to have certification schemes linked to them. A higher proportion of the European service standards have linked certification schemes (44%) as compared to national service standards (23%).

Table 1. Areas of harmonized services and affected by certification schemes

Main domains	Services with a high ratio of National to European	Services with a low number of certification schemes	Services with a high number of certification schemes
Construction and utilities	X	X	-
Customer contact	-	-	X
Education, training and recruitment	X	-	-
Facilities & maintenance	-	X	-
Finance & real estate	X	-	-
Food & accommodation	X	-	-
Healthcare & personal services	X	-	-
IT, information & communication	-	-	-
Security and emergency	-	-	X
Sport & leisure	-	-	-
Tourism	-	-	X
Transport & logistic	-	-	X
Cross-sector	-	X	-

Seven times as many service standards exist at national level within the 32 countries (n= 380), analysed by Technopolis Group, as compared to European service standards (n=55). A high proportion (86%) of the schemes is linked to just one standard. A further 10% of the schemes are linked to two standards, and the remaining 4% of schemes are linked to between three and seven standards.

The standards with schemes have to cover the same ground as each other in order to trade the services in the countries affected. Due to the existence of the standards and schemes, traders are countering market barriers.

Table 2. Number of harmonized services standards by country

Country	National standards	National certification scheme	Country	National standards	National certification scheme
Austria	44	19	Italy	45	6
Belgium	0	0	Latvia	14	1
Bulgaria	0	0	Lithuania	2	0
Croatia	0	0	Luxembourg	0	0
Cyprus	1	0	Malta	5	4
Czech Republic	0	0	Netherlands	6	11
Denmark	2	4	Poland	0	0
Estonia	16	1	Portugal	20	0

Finland	1	0	Romania	9	0
France	78	30	Slovakia	4	6
Germany	12	13	Slovenia	0	0
Greece	6	4	Spain	40	25
Hungary	7	2	Sweden	2	0
Ireland	4	5	United Kingdom	17	28

Of the 28 European Union countries, France, Italy, Austria and Spain have developed the largest number of national service standards (40+ each), while Belgium, Croatia, Luxembourg, Poland, Bulgaria, and Slovenia have yet to develop any standards in the field of services.

3.2 National identity in the eyes of migration

Since 1500's the cultural map of the world has been changing because people started migrating. In most cases, one national culture forced its ideas and ways of life in the other cultural nation. This changes the ways some cultures existed for a long time.

OECD^{§§} shows a rise of immigration rate in the EU countries by 24% between 2005 and 2012. Another OECD statistics says that, on average, 59% of long-standing immigrants in the European Union held host-country nationality.

Table 3. Non-Eu Immigrants and cultural diversity by host country

Country	Cultural diversity index*	Non-EU Immigrants % of total population	Country	Cultural diversity index*	Non-EU Immigrants % of total population
Austria	0.10	6.7	Italy	0.44	5.5
Belgium	0.46	4.0	Latvia	0.26	16.0
Bulgaria	0.25	0.4	Lithuania	0.03	0.6
Croatia	0.06	0.4	Luxembourg	0.18	5.9
Cyprus	0.13	7.4	Malta	0.43	3.0
Czech Republic	0.1	2.6	Netherlands	0.78	2.0
Denmark	0.49	4.0	Poland	0.04	0.1
Estonia	0.16	14.6	Portugal	0.04	3.1
Finland	0.05	2.1	Romania	0.26	0.1
France	0.26	3.8	Slovakia	0.17	0.3
Germany	0.25	5.7	Slovenia	0.29	3.9
Greece	0.18	7.3	Spain	0.13	6.9
Hungary	0.04	0.8	Sweden	0.19	3.9
Ireland	0.36	2.2	United Kingdom	0.19	3.9

^{§§} OECD: Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2015

What Europe is facing today, is an inflow of migrants of very diverse in terms of national identities, profiles and cultures. There is a shift in the nationality of people arriving in the EU: while Syrians and Eritreans each accounted for about a fourth of the inflows in 2013 and 2014, only 6% of all people in 2015 were Syrian. By mid-2015, the main nationalities passing through EU were Eritreans (27%), Nigerians (11%), Somalians (9%), Gambians (5%) and Sudanese (5%).

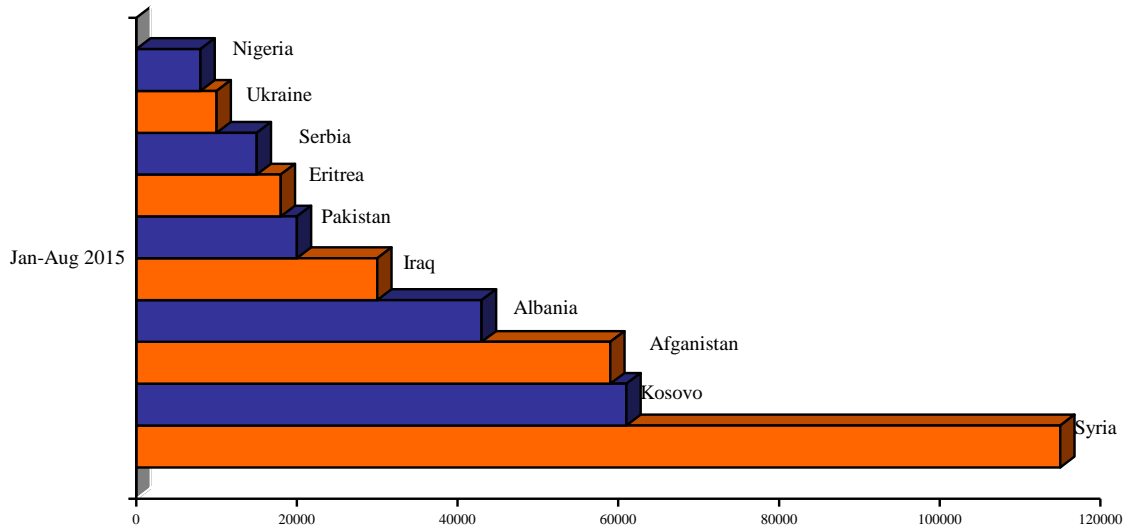


Fig. 4. Origin of people applying for asylum in the EU (Eurostat) in numbers

On the other hand, the longitudinal methodological approaches shows that many minority groups express more intense attachment to the value of maintaining their own traditions and cultures and explains the complexity of the process inside the host country. In this situation, the population structure change, provide the opportunity to ask about the new national behaviour. The mixed social, economic, political and cultural implications of immigration have frequently been assessed as a whole. Now, we have to assess the effective impact of migration in the eyes of cross-cultural values in order to establish the degree of importance relating to European standardization provision.

4. Strategy to redefine Europeans

As literature tells us, there are several conditions that may cause national identity to come into conflict with European identity. Factors such as economic decline, migration, etc., can bring about such re-evaluations of identities. The other category of arguments suggests that European identity can be constructed and can function alongside national identities, because their markers of cohesiveness are different. While national identities are based on perceived primordial allegiances and are enforced by shared cultures and history, attachment to the European Union is based on what Habermas (2001) calls “constitutional patriotism”.

A comparison made by Eurobarometer refers to the sense of European citizenship compared with national citizenship^{***} and shows that a majority of respondents continue to see themselves as European citizens. However, almost four out of ten Europeans define themselves solely by their nationality (39%). A majority of respondents define themselves solely by their nationality in three Member States: the United Kingdom (58%), Greece (53%) and Cyprus (51%). In Bulgaria, identical proportions of respondents define themselves solely by their nationality (49%) and as citizens of the EU (49%).

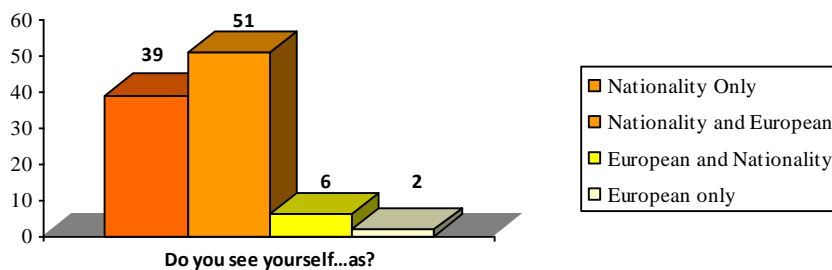


Fig. 5. The sense of European citizenship compared with national citizenship (Eurobarometer 82)

On the other hand, national identities are still dominant in Europe. The main distinguishing characteristics of the EU from the nation-state are the absence of a shared language, a uniform media, common education system and a central state structure. Surveys show that, people in Europe prefer maintaining their national identity and sovereignty, but increasing number of people has European identity in addition to their national identities.

Although individuals may have multiple identities, specific contexts and circumstances dictate which identity becomes more important at a particular time. The nature of the relationship between different identities is dictated by the categories those identities belong to. One can distinguish between contrasting and non-contrasting identities: the first type accounts for the identification with groups belonging to the same category, while the latter refers to groups belonging to different categories (Sen, 2007).

^{***} Standard Eurobarometer 82, Autumn 2014

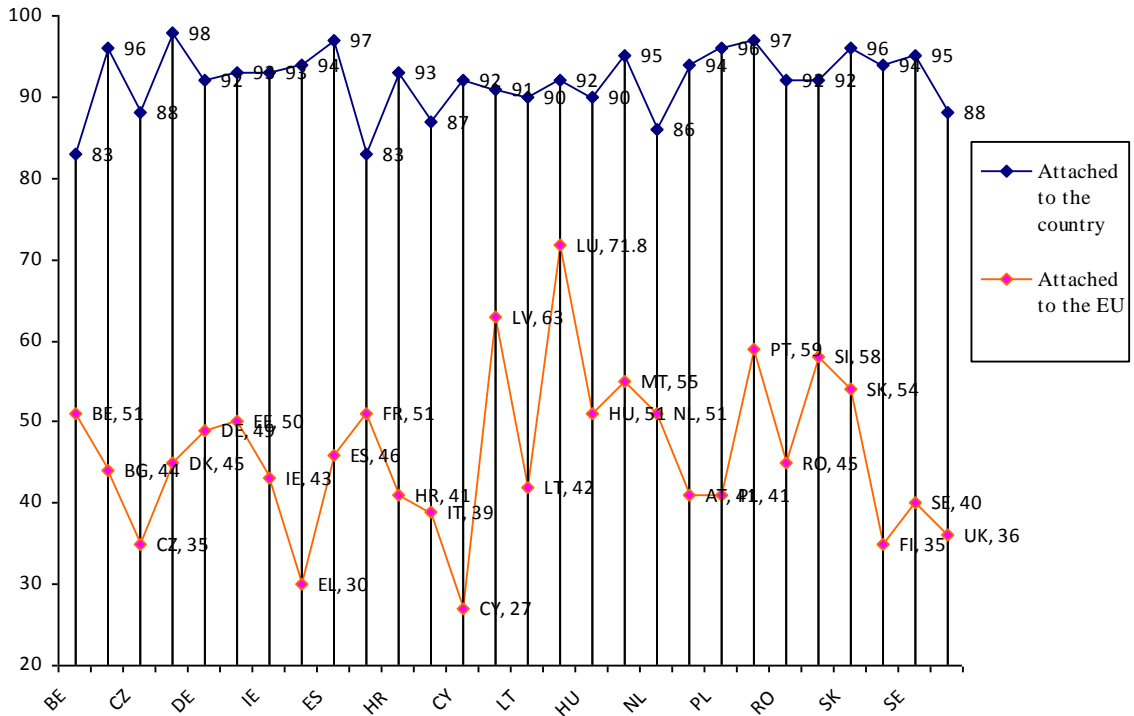


Fig. 6. The sense of European and national attachment by country (Eurobarometer 82)

5. Results

5.1. Study on correlation and conclusions

In the European Union, ethnic and cultural diversity, but also pluralism of values and ways of living are increasing and the same seems to gradually, even though asymmetrically, apply for the neighbouring countries.

Since cultural diversity and ethnic fractionalization supposed to have negative impact on social cohesion and favor inequalities, it should be tested whether those can have impact also on standardization process.

Although, it has not been statistically tested whether and what kind of correlation can be made among these different variables, I simply compare the scores of different countries variables in order to check whether the hypothesis that cultural diversity has multiple negative effects on standards.

Table 4: Study on correlation between variables

	Cultural diversity index	Non-EU Immigrants	Total attached to the country	Attached to the EU	National standards
Cultural diversity index	1				
Non-EU Immigrants	0.031820246	1			
Total attached to the country	-0.343240175	-0.027125429	1		
Attached to the EU	-0.032843302	0.21073565	0.09362064	1	
National	0.017903088	0.247875043	-0.303400012	0.058865336	1

standards National certification scheme	0.10804772	0.09343296	-0.257997518	-0.111415158	0.750494011
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Pearson's correlation coefficient:

r= +/- 0.5 large effect size

r= +/- 0.3 medium effect size

r= +/- 0.1 small effect size

The correlation matrix in Table 4 shows that not all associations are consistent with theoretical predictions, and few are statistically significant. The results of this analysis offer good evidence that there are no strong empirical backgrounds among all the six analysed economic and social dimensions, most of these correlations being small, which reveals a very low degree of impact.

The widely accepted assumption that cultural diversity and ethnic fractionalization have negative impacts on institutional and economic performance, social cohesion and economic policies is not confirmed.

The cultural diversity has a medium negative impact on attachment to the country (-0.343), but no significant correlation with attachment to the European Union. Also, high national identity displays a negative effect towards standardization (-0.303). As that table shows, there is a positive, but low association of migration with national standards (0.247). The correlation above shows that the attachment to the EU rises as the immigration, but with a slow trend (0.210).

To demonstrate the effectiveness of the European system, the Community needs a strong standards system at European level which is able to ensure that international standards, elaborated and transposed into European standards to support Community policies, are coherent with these policies. A diversified system based on many competing National Standards Bodies could never play such a role.

5.2. Further research

A great deal of work remains to be done examining other measures of impact and also considering how different dimensions of economic and social variable are influence the standardization process. Alongside this, a broader range of immigration indicators should be examined.

It would seem prudent to maintain a periodic watch on the rate of development of national and European service standards, to ensure that any proliferation does not begin to introduce barriers to trade in services as a result of competing or conflicting requirements. This because of the rise of the number of certification schemes in the area of services.

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