

# Why Educational Exchange Programmes Miss Their Mark: Cross-Border Mobility, Education and European Identity\*

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## Abstract

Current research shows that participating in an Erasmus exchange does not strengthen European identity. However, this does not necessarily imply that transnational interactions are ineffective in fostering European identity. Rather, the Erasmus programme misses its mark by addressing university students who are already very likely to feel European. Due to a ceiling effect, their experience abroad cannot make a difference. In contrast, low-educated individuals who might respond strongly to cross-border mobility by adopting a European identity hardly participate in educational exchange because they leave school before these programmes take place. Analyses of Eurobarometer survey data support this hypothesis.

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The Erasmus idea should be compulsory, not just for students, but also for taxi drivers, plumbers and others. Spending time in other countries within the European Union is the way to integrate.<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

Scholars and policy-makers alike have put high hopes in the role of cross-border mobility and interactions as harbingers of a common identity among the European public (Deutsch *et al.*, 1957; Lijphart, 1964; Fligstein, 2008). In fact, the underlying rationale of the Erasmus student exchange programme, town-twinning projects and pan-European research projects is that by living, working and studying together, Europeans become aware of their commonalities and develop a supranational identity (Corbett, 2005; Papatsiba, 2005; Petit, 2007).

However, recent studies on European identity formation among Erasmus students (Sigalas, 2010a, b; Wilson, 2011) challenge these expectations: The Erasmus experience is found to have negligible effects on European identity and European Union (EU) support. These findings question the effectiveness of policies promoting international exchange. They also challenge previous findings that cross-border interactions foster European identity (Fligstein, 2008; Recchi and Favell, 2009; Roeder, 2011), EU support (Kuhn, 2011, 2012) and cosmopolitan attitudes (Mau *et al.*, 2008; Gustafson, 2009).

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<sup>1</sup> Umberto Eco, quoted in 'Umberto Eco's "Shallow Europe" and Dreams of a Different Sexual Revolution', *La Stampa*, English online issue, 31 January 2012. Available at: <<http://www3.lastampa.it/lastampa-in-english/articolo/1stp/440660/>>.

While Sigalas' (2010a, b) and Wilson's (2011) studies paint a bleak picture for the prospects of fostering European identity via exchange programmes in higher education, their findings do not necessarily imply that cross-border mobility is ineffective in promoting European identity. Rather, this article argues that, by addressing students in higher education, the Erasmus programme is 'preaching to the converted'. This group of people is already very prone to interact across borders and to feel European. Young age and high education have been found to be strong predictors not only of cross-border interactions (Fligstein, 2008; Roose, 2010), but also of EU support (Gabel, 1998) and European identity (Duchesne and Frogner, 1995; Citrin and Sides, 2004). University students are likely to be already European-minded; due to a ceiling effect, their exchange with fellow Europeans can hardly make a difference. Contrarily, low-educated individuals who might respond strongly to cross-border practices by adopting a European identity rarely participate in educational exchange programmes because they leave school before these programmes take place.

Consequently, this article investigates the differential effects of transnational mobility and networks on European identity across educational groups. Contrary to conventional wisdom, it is hypothesized that the impact of transnational practices on European identity is stronger among the low educated than among the highly educated. This hypothesis is tested in an analysis of the Eurobarometer survey wave 67.1 (Commission, 2007). It was conducted in the EU-27 in 2007 and allows me to test the relationship between cross-border interactions, on the one hand, and European attachment and identification, on the other. Analyses show that this relationship is significantly stronger among low-educated Europeans than among the highly educated.

This article contributes to current research by expanding our knowledge on when and how cross-border transactions are effective in promoting a common European identity. Moreover, this research provides important insights for policy-makers as it suggests that exchange programmes aimed at students in higher education partly miss their mark in fostering European identity since they address individuals that are already prone to feel European. Educational exchange programmes might be more effective in fostering European identity by emphasizing less educated Europeans.

In what follows, I discuss the concept of 'European identity' and existing research on identity change among exchange students. I then formulate the hypothesis guiding this article. Next, I discuss the data and methods used and present the empirical results. I finally elaborate on conclusions and implications of this research.

## **I. European Identity**

'Collective identity' is a highly contested concept (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000; Strath, 2000) and needs to be carefully unpacked and conceptualized. While the concept of 'European collective identity' has been discussed in more detail elsewhere (Smith, 1992; Kohli, 2000; Citrin and Sides, 2004; Checkel and Katzenstein, 2009; Kaina and Karolewski, 2009; Risse, 2010), I briefly explain how it is applied in this article.

Authors agree that collective identities entail an individual and collective part (Smith, 1992), are socially constructed (Risse, 2010), and that people can hold multiple collective identities (Díez Medrano and Gutiérrez, 2001). Furthermore, collective identity is a multidimensional phenomenon (Tajfel, 1981). On a cognitive level, individuals need to

perceive themselves as members of a group. With respect to European identity, individuals need to categorize themselves as European. This self-categorization is not necessarily exclusive; one can consider oneself as European in addition to being a member of a national community. As Cram (2012, p. 72) notes, self-categorization ‘tells nothing about the meaning or intensity of that categorization to the individual’. The second important dimension of collective identity thus refers to an affective relationship to the community: one need not only to identify *as*, but also to identify *with*, the collective (Cram, 2012, p. 72) – that is, to feel attached to it. Citrin *et al.* (2001) argue that collective identities are also based on a set of beliefs with respect to the criteria of inclusion to the collective. These criteria can be based on a civic or an ethnic/cultural construction of collective identity (Bruter, 2005; Risse, 2010). While civic criteria of inclusion refer to the acceptance of democratic values and human rights, ethnic/cultural criteria relate to an ‘ethno-history’ (Smith, 1992, p. 58) of the collective, entailing common ancestry, cultural heritage and the like. Additionally, Bellucci *et al.* (2012) emphasize the role of salience – that is, the value and emotional weight attached to a collective identity. As people can hold multiple – often competing – collective identities, a collective identity needs to be perceived as salient in order to ‘trump’ other identities and to have behavioural consequences.

While criteria of inclusion and identity salience are, without doubt, important aspects of collective identity, the data used in this analysis do not allow me to measure them. Thus, in line with other studies (Niedermayer and Westle, 1995; Citrin and Sides, 2004), the concept of ‘European identity’ used in this article will consist of a cognitive component relating to one’s self-perception as European and an affective component referring to one’s attachment to Europe.

To be sure, questions of collective identity are not easily tackled using quantitative survey data alone. White (2009) argues that survey respondents may have difficulties in relating to abstract concepts such as ‘identity’ or ‘attachment’. Equally, Duchesne *et al.* (2010) claim that quantitative surveys tend to create an artefact of European identity as ordinary people would not relate to the EU if not explicitly asked in survey questions. Indeed, to fully grasp the dynamics of identity change in an integrating Europe, it is best to combine insights from experiments (Bruter, 2005; Cram *et al.*, 2011), focus groups (Duchesne *et al.*, 2010), qualitative interviews (White, 2009) and anthropological research (Bellier and Wilson, 2000). Bearing these caveats in mind, I believe that quantitative analyses of European identity contribute to our knowledge by pointing to broader patterns of identity change that cannot be detected in small-n studies.

## II. Transnational Interactions and European Identity

Scholars agree that collective identities are socially constructed rather than previously given. Elites can shape these constructions by actively employing symbols and narratives emphasizing commonalities and strategies of inclusion and exclusion (Bruter, 2005), which strengthen the psychological existence of the collective (Castano, 2004). Furthermore, individuals may acquire a collective identity in a more subtle way by socialization. Being exposed to a certain set of institutions, they gradually adopt their values and norms (Zürn and Checkel, 2005).

One way of bringing about such processes of socialization was proposed by Deutsch *et al.* (1957). Their point of departure was the finding that existing (national) communities

were held together by a high degree of cohesion, mutual trust and feeling of collective identity generated by social, political and economic transactions (Deutsch, 1953; Lijphart, 1964). Deutsch *et al.* (1957) aimed at applying this process to the international level. They proposed to establish 'security communities' where strong bonds of common identification and trust make war virtually impossible. These latter are generated by increased transactions – that is, 'various types of exchanges, including symbolic, economic, material, political, technological, and so on' (Adler and Barnett, 1998, p. 41). These interactions are expected to bring about 'learning processes' promoting a common identity. By interacting with each other, people approximate each other's perceptions and norms (Wendt, 1994; Adler and Barnett, 1998). A necessary condition for this to happen is that individuals expect positive consequences from this change.<sup>2</sup>

Against the backdrop of these considerations, the European Commission launched educational exchange programmes, such as Erasmus, in the hope of instilling a feeling of European identity among its future elites (Corbett, 2005; Fernández, 2005; Petit, 2007). Since its inception in 1978, Erasmus has sent over 2.3 million university students abroad and aims at having supported 3 million student exchanges by the end of the academic year 2012/13 (Commission, 2011a, p. 3).

To be sure, Erasmus serves several aims, such as strengthening participants' human capital and integrating the European labour market (Papatsiba, 2009). Moreover, the promotion of a European identity is not as important a policy goal of Erasmus as it used to be. This development needs to be seen in the broader context of changing priorities of European education policy. Very early on, European policy-makers recognized the potential of education as a means of fostering the ties between the nascent European polity and the population (Keating, 2009). However, this changed in the 1990s. Amid rapid sectoral changes and precipitating globalization of education, European policy-makers increasingly understood education as an economic commodity to be used to foster Europeans' employability and to advance the EU as a knowledge-based society (Walkenhorst, 2008, p. 576; see also Pépin, 2007).

Higher education is considered key to the achievement of these objectives (Commission, 2011d); this might also explain why Erasmus is the 'flagship' of the Commission's lifelong learning programme (Pépin, 2007). To be sure, the Commission has also launched mobility initiatives addressing secondary schools (Comenius) and vocational training (Leonardo da Vinci). Moreover, a number of policies targeting young people, such as the Youth in Action programme, promote intercultural exchange in a non-formal learning environment. However, the emphasis is clearly on exchange in higher education, and the Leonardo da Vinci programme has a much smaller scope. In 2010, 85,821 trainees received vocational training abroad (Commission, 2012), while 213,266 university students went on an Erasmus exchange in the academic year 2009/10 (Commission, 2011a, p. 4).

The recently presented programme proposal 'Erasmus for All' (Commission, 2011c) suggests that this emphasis may be even stronger in the period 2014–20. Of the overall 5 million mobility opportunities to be created, almost half (2.2 million) are planned to be among students in higher education (Commission, 2011b). Moreover, the envisaged budget for this programme foresees an increase of 85–95 per cent in funding for intra-European exchanges in higher education, but only an increase of 50–60 per cent or even

<sup>2</sup> Social psychologists formulated similar ideas in intergroup contact theory (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998).

less for exchanges in vocational training, adult learning or schools (Commission, 2011c, p. 16).<sup>3</sup>

In sum, the Commission has created a number of educational exchange programmes that aim, among other things, at strengthening European identity among its participants. Among these programmes, Erasmus, for exchanges in higher education, plays a key role.

Empirical evidence partly supports the expectation that educational exchanges foster European identity. Using a postal survey among graduates from the University of Sussex who had spent a year at a European university, King and Ruiz-Gelices (2003) found that these respondents were significantly more likely to feel European than the control sample of sedentary Sussex graduates. The picture changes, however, when directly assessing identity and attitude change across time. Recent studies (Sigalas, 2010a, b; Wilson, 2011) relying on panel data seriously challenge the assumption that participating in an international exchange programme strengthens European identity.

Sigalas (2010a, b) carried out a two-wave longitudinal survey among two samples of Erasmus students (British students going abroad and European students going to the United Kingdom) who studied abroad in the academic year 2003/04 and a control sample of British university students staying at home. His analyses showed that the Erasmus experience did not strengthen participants' EU support over time (Sigalas, 2010b). Moreover, while the stay abroad leads to increased interactions with other Europeans it does not strengthen participants' sense of European identity (Sigalas, 2010a).

In a panel study comparing British, French and Swedish Erasmus students to sedentary university students in 2007 and 2008, Wilson (2011) yielded similar results. He analyzed their attachment to Europe, European self-identification, propensity to vote for a pro- or anti-European candidate, and their position towards further political integration. While he found exchange students to be significantly more pro-European than stayers, this difference existed before they embarked on their year abroad. He found no observable change in attitudes during their sojourn.

Sigalas (2010a, b) and Wilson (2011) greatly contribute to scholarly research on transactionalist theory by providing empirical evidence on the effects of educational exchange experiences across time. While this might be bad news for the Erasmus programme, I argue that these findings do not necessarily imply that transnational practices have no effect on identity change. Rather, these programmes seem to target the wrong group of people. Research has consistently shown that the younger and the more educated an individual, the more likely they are to support European integration (Gabel, 1998) and to have a European identity (Duchesne and Frogner, 1995; Citrin and Sides, 2004; Fligstein, 2008). In fact, education is among the strongest predictors of these variables.

There are several explanations for this relationship. First, a higher level of education prepares people to better compete in an integrated market economy (Gabel and Palmer, 1995). Thus, highly educated individuals have a clear interest-led motivation to endorse European integration. As interests and identity are strongly intertwined (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000), highly educated individuals might develop a European identity on the basis of persisting specific support (Easton, 1975). Education not only increases individuals' human capital, it is also argued that it promotes cosmopolitan orientations. With

<sup>3</sup> The proposal foresees an average annual budget of €1.10–1.15 billion for intra-European exchanges in higher education, €500–540 million for exchanges in vocational training and adult learning, and €250–275 million for school exchanges.

higher levels of education, people are expected to acquire an increasing level of cognitive mobilization – that is, the ‘the political skills necessary to cope with an extensive political community’ (Inglehart, 1970, p. 47). According to Inglehart, cognitive mobilization is a necessary, but not sufficient, requirement for European identity formation. Moreover, as many educational curricula aim at promoting cosmopolitan and pro-European ideals, highly educated people have been exposed for longer to such ideals and might thus readily endorse them (Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2006). In short, mobility programmes in higher education address ‘winners’ of European integration who are already likely to be convinced of its benefits (McLaren, 2006, p. 40) and who are already prone to feeling European. Consequently, university students might already be so prone to feeling European that an exchange abroad cannot ‘add’ anything to their Europeaness.

In contrast, the odds that low-educated individuals have adopted a European identity are much smaller. Their low level of education makes it unlikely for them to be part of the ‘winners’ of European integration and to gradually build up affective and diffuse support based on lasting specific support (Easton, 1975).<sup>4</sup> Moreover, as they leave school earlier, they are less exposed to ideas promoting cosmopolitan or European forms of attachment (Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2006), and they are less likely to have developed cognitive mobilization and other ‘transnational skills’ (Koehn and Rosenau, 2002) that would help them appreciate European integration. In short, low-educated people are less likely to adopt a European identity.

Because of this lower ‘baseline’ in European identity, transnational practices can be more effective in triggering European identification. In fact, for the low-educated people, interacting across borders can be the decisive moment that leads them to adopt a European identity. To a certain extent, the exposure to a different culture might have the same formative effects as brought forward by education. Moreover, while low-skilled Europeans might be the ‘losers’ of integration at the outset, their cross-border mobility and interactions might be a way to circumvent their marginalized position. Low-skilled workers from low-wage Member States might have a comparative advantage by offering their labour in a high-wage country (Gabel, 1998). Consequently, they might eventually experience European free movement as a window of opportunity. I therefore formulate the following hypothesis:

*H1:* The lower one’s educational attainment, the stronger is the relationship between transnational practices and European identity.

### III. Data and Methods

It would be desirable to test this hypothesis using a panel survey tapping the effect of cross-border interactions among the entire population over time. Such a data source would enable me to rule out any possibility of reversed causality and to account for selection effects. To my knowledge, however, no such data set exists. The panel studies carried out by Sigalas (2010a, b) and by Wilson (2011) are restricted to university students and thus do not allow comparing across educational groups. The only cross-national surveys including representative samples of the entire population tapping both cross-border

<sup>4</sup> McLaren (2006) finds, however, that the ‘losers’ of European integration are often not as cognizant of their losing position as winners are of their winning position.

interactions and European identity are provided by Eurobarometer. While this data source is cross-sectional only and thus clearly a second choice, it is the only one available. The results of the following analysis should be seen in the light of this limitation and understood as a building block in the study of transnational interactions and European identity. Bearing this limitation in mind, Eurobarometer wave 67.1 (Commission, 2007) forms the basis of the present analysis.<sup>5</sup> Fieldwork was conducted in spring 2007 in the EU-27 and Croatia. Given that Croatia is not part of the EU all Croatian respondents have been excluded from the analysis.

### *Dependent Variables*

Due to the limited choice in potential operationalizations of European identity in the present Eurobarometer wave, European identity is conceptualized in terms of attachment to Europe and European self-categorization. To measure the former, I use the following item: 'Please tell me how attached you feel to Europe – very attached, fairly attached, not very attached, not at all attached, don't know'. In a benchmark of the most frequently used operationalizations of European identity in survey research, Sinnott (2005) found this question to be the most appropriate measure of all existing measures of European identity.

Of all respondents, 21 per cent answered 'very attached', 44 per cent felt fairly attached, 27 per cent did not feel very attached and 6 per cent reported to be not at all attached. About 1 per cent of the respondents gave no answer. The item was recoded to range from 'not at all attached' to 'very attached', while all 'don't know' answers were dropped.

To measure European self-categorization, I use the following item: 'In the near future, do you perceive yourself as (nationality) only, (nationality) and European, European and (nationality), European only?' This is a widely used operationalization of European identity (Kohli, 2000; Citrin and Sides, 2004; Fligstein, 2008; Risse, 2010; Sigalas, 2010a). A plurality of respondents (45 per cent) in Eurobarometer 67.1 consider themselves as national only, whereas 43 per cent perceive themselves as members of their national community and European, and 7 per cent as European and member of their national community. Only 3 per cent view themselves as European only, while 2 per cent gave no answer.

What matters most is whether people consider themselves as European at all or not (Risse, 2010). It is less important whether respondents belong to the marginal group of people who perceive themselves as first European, then national, or as European only. In fact, Risse (2010, p. 9) finds that: 'The main cleavage is between "exclusive nationalists", who identify only with their nation-state and "inclusive nationalists", who also identify with Europe as a secondary identity'. Thus, echoing previous analyses (Citrin and Sides, 2004; Fligstein, 2008; Risse, 2010), the item is recoded into a dichotomous variable, distinguishing between exclusive national identification ('nationality only') and those who reported some sort of European identification, while all non-responses are dropped.

<sup>5</sup> Eurobarometer waves 65.1 for 2006 and 73.3 for 2010 also include items tapping cross-border relations. However, while the former lacks items referring to European identity, the latter misses some relevant control variables, such as respondents' left-right placement. Thus, Eurobarometer 67.1 was chosen as it allows operationalizing European identity and includes the most relevant control variables.

Hence, 46 per cent of the respondents are coded as having an exclusive national identification and 54 per cent as having some kind of European identification.<sup>6</sup>

### *Independent Variables*

Table 1 shows the items used to operationalize transnational practices. They have been selected on the basis of face validity and using Mokken analysis. The overall Hjk coefficient of 0.43 is clearly above the threshold of 0.30 for satisfactory survey constructs (Van Schuur, 2003) and indicates that all items relate to one underlying dimension. The items were combined into a scale, which will be the main independent variable of the following analyses. With a mean of 0.19 and a standard deviation of 0.26, this scale is clearly skewed to the lower end. In other words, the majority of Europeans have very low levels of transnational practices.

As shown in Table 1, the items used to construct the transnational practices scale do not directly inform us whether a person has embarked on an educational exchange. However, people having done so are likely to be highly engaged in such practices (Sigalas, 2010a, p. 248). Nonetheless, one can argue that educational exchange programmes imply a more demanding and formative experience than the transnational practices captured in the scale. On the other hand, relying on these variables also bears a considerable advantage. Considering the scant possibilities for low-educated people to participate in an educational exchange programme, they are unlikely to be adequately represented in a survey of the overall population to make robust inferences.

The information on educational attainment provided by Eurobarometer refers to respondents' age when having left full-time education. This is a suboptimal but widely used operationalization of education (Schneider, 2010). Three dichotomous variables are constructed: low education (respondents having left school at age 15 or lower),<sup>7</sup> medium education (having left school between 16 and 19 years of age) and high education (having left school at age 21 or higher). These thresholds roughly relate to the age when pupils move from compulsory education to secondary school, and from secondary school to

Table 1: Operationalization of Transnational Practices

<i>Which, if any, of the following statements apply to you?</i>	<i>% yes</i>	<i>Loevinger H</i>
You have travelled abroad at least three times in the past three years, for leisure or business	28.62	0.39
You have friends who are from other European countries	28.33	0.42
You have friends who are from non-European countries	16.37	0.38
You often communicate with people in other countries via the Internet or email	14.48	0.44
Your job involves contact with organizations or people in other countries	9.32	0.40

*Source:* Eurobarometer 67.1 (Commission, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> As a robustness check, I conducted additional analyses with the undichotomized dependent variable. Results confirmed the findings presented in this article.

<sup>7</sup> The category 'no full-time education' has been merged into this category as there are no or very few observations in some countries.

higher education. To test *H1*, the two lower educational categories will be interacted with the transnational practices scale, while the highest educational category will be used as a reference category. In additional analyses, I included the original variable (age when left education) rather than the three dummy variables, and the results confirmed the findings here. However, as interaction effects with binary variables are more easily interpretable (Brambor *et al.*, 2006), I opted to present the models including the three binary variables.

### *Control Variables*

Considering existing research on European identity, I include a number of control variables to estimate a fully specified model. Younger people have been found to feel more European (Duchesne and Frogner, 1995; Citrin and Sides, 2004; Fligstein, 2008; Kaina and Karolewski, 2009). I therefore control for age using the four age groups 15–25, 26–39, 40–54 and 55 and older (reference category).

As intra-European movers have been found to be more likely to have a European identity than stayers (Recchi and Favell, 2009; Roeder, 2011), I control for not having the nationality of the country of origin. I include a variable for being female as women have been found to be slightly less prone to identifying with Europe (Duchesne and Frogner, 1995). A strong predictor of European identity is individual endowment with resources (Kaina and Karolewski, 2009). Consequently, respondents' economic situation is measured by a five-category item relating to how one's household keeps up with bills and credit commitments. I include dummy variables for the employment categories offered by Eurobarometer: manager (reference category), white-collar worker, blue-collar worker, homemaker, retired, unemployed and student.

To assess the impact of (exclusive) national identity, I rely on an item capturing respondents' attachment to their country. As it stems from the same battery of questions as the dependent variable referring to attachment to Europe, it will not be included in the models predicting European attachment.

Additionally, ideology has been found to influence European identity. With some exceptions (Duchesne and Frogner, 1995), people placing themselves more on the left are more likely to feel European (Citrin and Sides, 2004; Risse, 2010). Consequently, ideology is accounted for by the ten-category left–right scale and its square. Arguably, city dwellers are more likely to be transnationally active and to be exposed to European symbols and institutions. Thus, three dichotomous variables ('rural area', 'middle-sized town' and 'city') control for respondents' residence. Unfortunately, the data set does not include any variables referring to cognitive mobilization (Inglehart, 1970), or to immigration attitudes (De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2005). This is regrettable as I cannot rule out the possibility that potentially unaccounted effects of these factors feed into the effects of other variables, including the independent variables.

All independent and control variables have been standardized to range from 0 to 1 to make their coefficients comparable within the models and to more readily interpret the constitutive terms of the interactions. To account for cross-country differences, all models are estimated using country-fixed effects and robust standard errors clustered on the country level. This empirical strategy controls for all cross-country variance, such as educational systems, gross domestic product and the like. To predict self-identification as

European, I estimate logit models, while European attachment is predicted by ordinal logit models.

#### IV. Results

As shown in Table 2,<sup>8</sup> the transnational practices scale has a strong, positive and highly significant effect on European self-categorization (model 1). Equally, the scale is strongly and positively associated with European attachment (model 3). These results confirm previous findings that transnational practices are positively associated with European identity (Fligstein, 2008; Recchi and Favell, 2009).

To test the hypothesis that the relationship between transnational practices is especially strong among low-educated individuals, I interact the two lower educational groups with the transnational practices scale. The highest educational group is used as a reference category. For my hypothesis to be confirmed, the coefficient for the interaction effects Transnational practices\*Low education and Transnational practices\*Medium education (as opposed to the reference group of highly educated) ought to be positive and significant (Brambor *et al.*, 2006). This holds for low education in model 2: being in the lowest educational group significantly increases the effect of cross-border practices on European self-categorization by 0.961. The effect of transnational practices on European self-categorization is almost twice as big for low-educated individuals as for highly educated individuals. No significant interaction effect was found for those with medium education. A log-likelihood ratio test shows that model 2 has a significantly better model fit than model 1.

To further interpret these findings, Figure 1 presents the predicted probabilities of considering oneself as European for low and highly educated people as the transnational practices index increases (based on model 2, everything else held constant). The probabilities for both educational groups increase with each higher level of transnational practices. The predicted probabilities for low educated, however, start out on a much lower level: low-educated people that are not transnational at all have a probability of around 35 per cent to categorize themselves as European. In contrast, highly educated people with equally low levels of transnational practices have a probability of over 50 per cent to consider themselves as European. As the transnational practices index increases, these educational effects disappear. In fact, at a level of 0.6 of the scale, there is no significant difference between highly and low-educated people, and the low educated have 'caught up' with the highly educated.

When estimating the effects of transnational practices and educational attainment on European attachment (model 4), we find an even more pronounced effect: while the effect of transnational practices is 0.601 for highly educated people, it increases by 0.954 for low-educated people. Thus, being in the group of poorly educated more than doubles the effect of cross-border practices. Also, the interaction effect for people with intermediate education is positive and significant. Again, model 4 has a significantly better model fit than model 3. This implies that the effect of transnational practices is significantly weaker among highly educated people, providing strong support for the hypothesis of this article.

<sup>8</sup> For models including control variables only, see online Appendix Table S1.

Table 2: Effect of Transnational Practices and Education on Self-Categorization as European and on Attachment to Europe

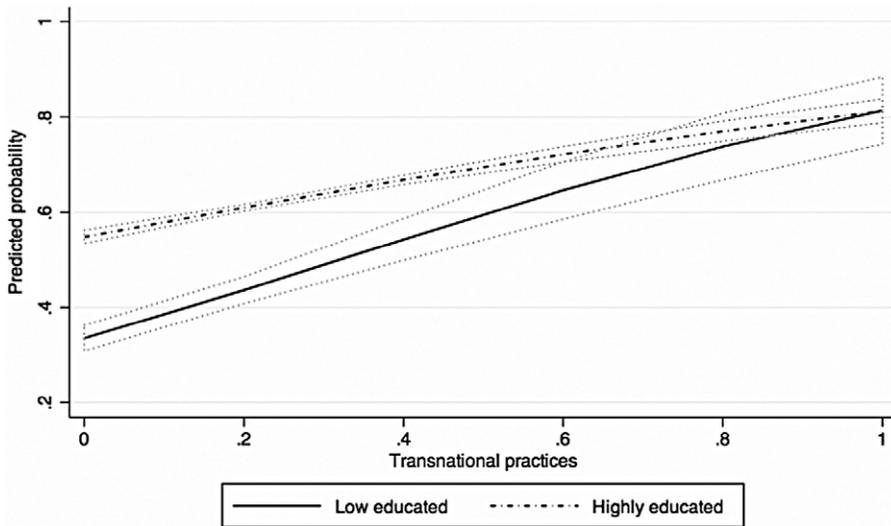
	<i>Self-categorization as European</i>		<i>Attachment to Europe</i>	
	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>
Transnational practices	1.552*** (-0.09)	1.365*** (0.111)	0.818*** (0.110)	0.601*** (0.103)
TN practices*low education		0.961*** (0.284)		0.954*** (0.253)
TN practices*medium education		0.187 (0.146)		0.336* (0.149)
Educational attainment (high education ref.)				
Low	-0.823*** (0.069)	-0.954*** (0.088)	-0.494*** (0.076)	-0.645*** (0.080)
Medium	-0.332*** (0.044)	-0.381*** (0.055)	-0.166*** (0.038)	-0.259*** (0.045)
Female	-0.124** (0.044)	-0.122** (0.044)	0.143** (0.044)	0.145** (0.045)
Foreigner	1.225*** (0.211)	1.216*** (0.210)	0.518*** (0.152)	0.509*** (0.155)
Age groups (55+ ref.)				
15–24	0.203 (0.138)	0.195 (0.137)	-0.115* (0.053)	-0.127* (0.053)
25–39	0.252** (0.096)	0.253** (0.096)	-0.253*** (0.057)	-0.251*** (0.057)
40–54	0.204* (0.079)	0.205** (0.079)	-0.061 (0.051)	-0.061 (0.051)
Occupation (manager ref.)				
Self-employed	-0.131 (0.067)	-0.141* (0.067)	-0.004 (0.060)	-0.014 (0.061)
White-collar	-0.042 (0.090)	-0.055 (0.091)	-0.074 (0.063)	-0.087 (0.064)
Manual worker	-0.250*** (0.076)	-0.263*** (0.077)	-0.093 (0.061)	-0.105 (0.062)
Home maker	-0.182* (0.077)	-0.187* (0.078)	-0.044 (0.085)	-0.048 (0.086)
Unemployed	-0.236* (0.107)	-0.246* (0.107)	-0.127 (0.112)	-0.135 (0.111)
Retired	-0.298*** (0.059)	-0.302*** (0.060)	-0.006 (0.073)	-0.009 (0.073)
In education	0.301* (0.127)	0.293* (0.127)	-0.104 (0.076)	-0.110 (0.077)
National attachment	-0.309* (0.157)	-0.311* (0.156)		
Left–right scale	-0.019 (0.102)	-0.019 (0.103)	0.301*** (0.078)	0.299*** (0.078)
Left–right scale sqd.	-0.182** (0.064)	-0.183** (0.064)	0.016 (0.055)	0.017 (0.055)
Household situation	0.507*** (0.121)	0.495*** (0.121)	0.661*** (0.078)	0.644*** (0.077)
Residence (rural ref.)				
Middle-sized town	0.117* (0.051)	0.113* (0.051)	0.054 (0.061)	0.049 (0.062)
City	0.265*** (0.055)	0.260*** (0.056)	0.204*** (0.049)	0.199*** (0.049)
Constant	0.720*** (0.210)	0.792*** (0.207)		
T1			-2.441*** (0.143)	-2.542*** (0.143)
T2			-0.255* (0.118)	-0.353** (0.116)
T3			1.923*** (0.122)	1.827*** (0.117)
Log-likelihood	-11913.2	-11904.3	-22626.4	-22612.3

Source: Eurobarometer 67.1 (Commission, 2007).

Note: Figures are coefficients of logit models (self-categorization) and ordinal logit models (attachment) with country-fixed effects and robust standard errors in parentheses. Country coefficients are not shown. Two-tailed test, \*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .  $N = 19,570$ .

From this follows that transnational practices can compensate for educational effects in European identity. As shown in previous research (Duchesne and Frogner, 1995; Citrin and Sides, 2004), highly educated Europeans are very likely to hold a European identity, no matter whether they interact across borders or not. For this group of people, cross-border experiences cannot ‘add’ much to their existing propensity to identify with Europe. In contrast, for poorly educated people, transnational networks and interactions really seem to make a difference. This is an interesting finding as it disconfirms the commonly held

Figure 1: Predicted Probabilities of Self-Categorization as European



Source: Eurobarometer 67.1 (Commission, 2007).

Notes: Predicted probability of European self-categorization for low and highly educated Europeans as transnational practices increase, based on model 2. Dotted lines refer to 95 per cent confidence intervals.

assumption that highly educated people respond especially positively to cross-border exchanges. It also may shed light on Pichler’s (2009) finding that while highly educated people generally hold highly cosmopolitan attitudes, there is a much greater variance in attitudes among low-educated people. They seem to be more influenced by personal experiences. However, as shown in Figure 1, the confidence interval for low-educated fans out at the upper end of the transnational practices index. This indicates that only few people with low education and high engagement in cross-border practices exist. Thus, only a small group of people actually makes up for their low education by being highly transnational.

Using cross-sectional data, I cannot exclude the possibility that the causal mechanism runs from European identity to transactions rather than the opposite, as suggested in this article. However, analyses that are shown in Online Appendix Table S2 yielded similar but less clear results when interacting individuals’ transnational background (that is, their nationality and transnational family ties) with educational attainment. Considering that these characteristics are given prior to one’s social identity acquired during socialization, it is fair to say that at least part of the association runs from transnational background and practices to identity rather than vice versa.

The control variables confirm previous findings: younger people and those with a higher-status occupation are more likely to identify themselves as European. This pattern also holds for European attachment. While the effect of age on self-categorization seems to be negative and linear, the age group 25–39 is significantly less attached to Europe than the reference category of the people of age 55 and older, and the other age groups are not significantly different. Stronger attachment to one’s country is negatively associated with European identification. Confirming previous findings (Recchi and Favell, 2009), being a foreigner has a strong positive effect on European identity.

## Conclusions

Cross-border interactions and networks among ordinary Europeans have long been thought to foster a feeling of European identity (Deutsch *et al.*, 1957; Lijphart, 1964). This expectation was one of the main drivers of European policies promoting international exchange in higher education such as Erasmus (Corbett, 2005; Petit, 2007). However, recent findings suggest that these expectations have been overstated. The Erasmus experience was found to have little effects on students' European identity and EU support (Sigalas, 2010a, b; Wilson 2011).

This article aimed at solving this puzzle by arguing that international exchange programmes in higher education are 'preaching to the converted'. For a variety of reasons, students in higher education are already likely to feel European, no matter whether they go abroad or not. It is therefore not surprising that they are not becoming more European during their sojourn abroad. In contrast, low-educated people are very unlikely to have a European identity. Taking part in an international exchange programme could be the decisive moment that results in a European identity developing in them. However, they leave school before the majority of educational exchange programmes take place. Consequently, the main hypothesis of this article stated that the relationship between transnational practices and European identity is significantly stronger among low-educated people than among highly educated people. This hypothesis was tested in an analysis of Eurobarometer survey data.

In all models, transnational practices have a strong, positive and highly significant effect on both European self-categorization and attachment to Europe. This strongly supports the expectation that transnational interactions promote European identity (Deutsch *et al.*, 1957; Lijphart, 1964; Fligstein, 2008), and confirms previous findings (Delhey, 2007; Mau *et al.*, 2008; Kuhn, 2011, 2012).

Confirming my hypothesis, transnational practices play a greater role in structuring European identity among low-educated than among highly educated individuals. In fact, low-educated people that are highly engaged in transnational networks and mobility are as prone to exposing a European identity as highly educated people. This suggests that education and cross-border interactions represent different routes to the same outcome. Transnational practices can make up for educational differences in European identity. However, as low-educated people are often reluctant or unable to become transnationally active (Fligstein, 2008; Mau and Mewes, 2009), this effect applies to only a small portion of the public.

Clearly, this research has some limitations. The use of cross-sectional data does not allow me to make over-time comparisons. I therefore cannot test whether people adopt a European identity *after and in reaction to* their transnational experiences. Further analyses of the impact of transnational background (see Online Appendix Table S2) suggest that at least part of the association runs from transnational background and practices to identity. Moreover, Rother and Nebe's (2009) finding that intra-European movers are more likely to have a European identity the longer they have been abroad confirms the position taken here that transnational practices have an impact on collective identities. Nonetheless, further research using panel data is needed to provide additional support for the ideas presented in this article.

Again, Erasmus does not exclusively aim at strengthening European identity. Rather, it is embedded in the EU's quest to strengthen economic growth and competitiveness by

investing in higher education. While the programme might very well serve its overall aim, this article suggests that educational exchange programmes are not as effective in promoting European identity as they could be: they mainly target the highly educated who already are more likely to interact transnationally and who are per se likely to develop a European identity. Moreover, those individuals who might respond strongly to cross-border contacts and mobility by adopting a European identity rarely participate in educational exchange programmes because they usually leave school before these programmes take place. Thus, a main implication of this research is that, in order to foster European identity, initiatives promoting international exchange should target lower educated individuals. Exchange programmes ought not only be timed earlier in the life course, but also take place outside of education rather than being embedded in an educational framework.

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## Supporting Information

Additional Supporting Information may be found in the online version of this article:

**Table S1:** Models predicting self-categorization as European and European attachment, controls only

**Table S2:** Effect of transnational background and educational attainment on European identity

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