

# Catching Up in Times of Crisis?

Understanding the discourses of Normative Power in the European  
Commission's 2022 Standardisation Strategy



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# Abstract

Historically being a success to the European Union and its integration processes, technical standardisation has been a dormant policy area low down on the European Commission's agenda priority list – until now. The increasing international competition has arguably spurred the Commission to push for speedy developments in standardisation to establish the EU once again in a leading position, thus effectively hindering other actors and regions from exerting too much influence over Europe through their development of standards. Seeking to deepen the understanding of how the Commission aims to make changes in the area of standardisation and how European integration could be driven by crises, this thesis adopts a Normative Power perspective when analysing the latest large policy document issued in the area: the 2022 Standardisation Strategy. The Normative Power approach is applied because of the policy area previously not having been examined through this lens to a large degree in the literature. The thesis operationalises the nine norms from the Normative Power Europe framework through definitions and expressions provided by the United Nations, in order to analyse and explain the Strategy from a Normative Power standpoint with a global perspective. Working with a sequential mixed methods approach, the analysis begins with a two-step content analysis for data collection moving onto a discourse analysis analysing this data. The analysis found that the Standardisation Strategy communicates discourses belonging to the norms of good governance and sustainable development to a significantly higher degree than the other seven norms from the framework. However interestingly, norms such as democracy and human rights are also referred to even though the policy area is economic in nature, largely focusing on the industry and its stakeholders.

*Key words:* Normative Power Europe, European Commission, Standardisation Strategy, The Brussels Effect, Trade Policy

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## Table of abbreviations

CEN	The European Committee for Standardisation
CENELEC	The European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardisation
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
DHA	Discourse-Historical Approach
ESO	European Standardisation Organisation
ETSI	The European Telecommunications Standards Institute
EU	The European Union
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IEC	The International Electrotechnical Commission
ISO	The International Organisation for Standardisation
ITU	The International Telecommunication Union
MPE	Market Power Europe
NPE	Normative Power Europe
SMEs	Small and Medium sized Enterprises
TPC	Trade Policy Committee
UN	The United Nations

# 1 Introduction: The agenda re-emergence of technical standardisation

Standardisation activities are essential to the deployment of the green and digital transition of European industry. Yet European standards are facing more intense competition at international level, in particular from China. [...] It is therefore essential that we strengthen standardisation governance in Europe, to prevent major industrial players from exerting excessive influence on the development of European standards.

*Thierry Breton on the future of European standardisation<sup>1</sup>*

In the beginning of 2022, the European Commissioner for the Single Market – Thierry Breton – gave a speech on the importance of a strong European industry. As modern times are changing rapidly, the European Commission has identified several areas where new, swift development needs to happen. One of these areas is standardisation, a policy area currently embedded in a context where global actors are providing the EU with increasingly intense competition. Several interesting factors are observable in the speech quoted above. Firstly, the communicated importance that standardisation activities have regarding the twin – green and digital – transitions and the future development of the EU. Secondly, the intensifying geopolitical competition that is now occurring and the challenges that come with it, mentioned this time specifically in relation to China. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly for this thesis, there is an observation expressed that the EU is lagging behind other global actors in its standardisation work compared to how the standardisation developments were proceeding thirty years ago, when the EU held a leading position in certain areas of expertise. With this speech, the Commission expresses that the standardisation work proves to be an important factor in the future developments of the EU, and that there is a strong will and ambition to get into the global lead once again. With these developments and strong expressions in the speech, standardisation has arguably become a priority to the Commission in a way it has not been during the past thirty years. The policy area of standardisation has re-emerged onto the agenda.

In light of recent events transforming the global system and Europe, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and Brexit, the EU has been encouraging the self-image of being a strong international actor that is capable of global leadership and

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<sup>1</sup> European Commission, 'Speech by Commissioner Breton at the Conference "a Stronger Industry for a More Autonomous Europe"', (Ec.europa.eu: European Commission, 2022a).

protecting the single market, acting on premises of Normative Power when dealing with third parties and forming its policies.<sup>2 3</sup> When the Commission issues new policy developments such as in the case of standardisation, it is interesting to see how and why these ambitions of Normative Power are expressed. This is especially the case in a policy area that is mostly focused on industry, economy, and market power within the single market as well as externally with third parties. Applying a Normative Power approach becomes important when considering the policy area of standardisation previously not having been examined through this lens to a large degree in the literature, and further considering the EU's claims to act on normative premises in general – posing the question of how it intends to implement Normative Power into practice. This practice could be this Standardisation Strategy. The Commission might, considering the EU's stance on being an advocate for Normative Power in the world, want to communicate elements of normative character such as human rights and democracy in the Strategy even though the policy area of standardisation is economically oriented and might stray towards containing communications of administration and governance to a larger degree.

## 1.1 Purpose, research question, and layout structure

Although a lot of research has been done on international standardisation and standard-setting institutions, little or no research has been done on international standardisation in relation to the EU in the global sphere, specifically within normative political theory. To problematise this, the literature is as of the present moment deemed *incomplete*<sup>4</sup> – there is a gap in current research in regarding international standardisation<sup>5</sup> from a Normative Power Europe theoretical point of view. This statement, resulting from an overview of the literature, provides this thesis's research question with a drive forward. The purpose is to identify, analyse, and explain the European Commission's usage of Normative Power discourse in the Standardisation Strategy, extending the view onto standardisation work internally as well as externally, as standardisation is a policy area that involves a global perspective when third parties are making an attempt to establish

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<sup>2</sup> Robert-Jan Bartunek, 'Eu to Be Strong Actor on World Stage after Brexit: Eu Foreign Policy Head', *Reuters.com*, 2016-06-24 2016.

<sup>3</sup> European Commission and Directorate-General For Communication, *The Eu as a Stronger Global Actor : Towards a More United, Stronger and More Democratic Union* (Publications Office, 2019).

<sup>4</sup> Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods* (Fifth edition edn.: Oxford University Press, 2016).

<sup>5</sup> Nils Brunsson, Andreas Rasche, and David Seidl, 'The Dynamics of Standardization: Three Perspectives on Standards in Organization Studies', *Organization Studies*, 33/5-6 (05 / 01 / 2012), 613-32.

themselves on the single market. Specifically, this thesis and the Commission's normative discourses will consider the nine norms<sup>6</sup> from the Normative Power Europe framework as they appear in the new Standardisation Strategy, and these norms will be operationalised using definitions and examples provided by the United Nations. Notes will further be made on standardisation as a re-emergent policy area partly resulting from an EU in crisis. The thesis will discuss the current standardisation developments in relation to the external action of the EU, particularly in exporting EU norms and values through regulation in accordance with Anu Bradford's *The Brussels Effect*.<sup>7</sup> The external action examples and discussion will be conducted in relation to China, this because of its recent developments within standardisation, producing a standardisation strategy of its own in 2021, and significant market power as well as it being a powerful global competitor to the EU. The purpose with this work is to shed light on a policy area that has previously been a technical success for the EU, and that now plays a strategic role in the global developments for the European industry. This work would prove useful when trying to understand the normative ambitions that the European Commission has for the future of the EU and for the world at large – now through the lens of EU standardisation policy, EU market power leverage in the global trading system and EU external action with norm diffusion at the core.

The Commission's Standardisation Strategy that Breton mentioned in his speech quoted above is publicly available since the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February, which makes the present moment an ideal time to pose initial research questions. The publication date also indicates that this thesis would be one of the first research projects to perform an analytical academic study on this text. The Strategy is thus a material that is both new and that bears ground in the context, being a direct communication from the Commission on what it wants the EU to achieve, and how it wants the policy to be executed. It is therefore a good starting point for a research-based conversation on this subject. Motivation for this type of research stems from different areas related to European integration. Firstly, as mentioned, Bradford's *Brussels Effect*,<sup>8</sup> followed by *European Union Trade Policy* as analysed by Sieglinde Gstöhl and Dirk De Bièvre,<sup>9</sup> and the *Normative Power Europe* theoretical framework developed by Ian Manners,<sup>10</sup> discussed together with the *Market Power Europe* framework developed by Chad Damro.<sup>11</sup> Secondly, the research motivation stems from researcher first-hand experiences within Trade Policy government work at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs Sweden, and with this a potential research gap as observed within the policy area of

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<sup>6</sup> Ian Manners, 'Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 40/2 (06/01/2002 2002), 235-58.

<sup>7</sup> Anu Bradford, *The Brussels Effect. How the European Union Rules the World* (Oxford University Press, 2020).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Sieglinde Gstöhl and Dirk De Bièvre, *The Trade Policy of the European Union* (The European Union Series: Red Globe Press, 2018).

<sup>10</sup> Manners, 'Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms', (*Journal of Common Market Studies*, 40 (2), 235-58.

<sup>11</sup> Chad Damro, 'Market Power Europe', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 19/5 (2012), 682-99.



standardisation. The Normative Power Europe theoretical framework would be interesting to apply to these recent developments within EU standardisation policy related to external action through regulation, as the framework suggests that “influence is exerted by norms”.<sup>12</sup> Assuming from Breton’s speech that the EU wants to form standards that are at the forefront of the green and digital transitions, other geopolitical actors globally will need to take these standards into account when for example trading and communicating with the EU to gain access to the economically powerful single market. The research question would then revolve around *how* the Commission chooses to communicate these efforts. How can a research project best explain what is observed in this official policy document? What norms are communicated; what normative ambitions does the Commission specifically express? And how are they explained and put into context with the work on standardisation as a strategic tool in EU international relations? With this motivation in mind, this thesis will seek to answer the following research question:

- How does the European Commission express ambitions of Normative Power in its 2022 Standardisation Strategy?

This thesis will be structured around the nine norms in the theoretical framework of Normative Power Europe within the policy area of standardisation, where the EU largely must deal with influences and actions taken by other international actors – bringing a perspective of foreign affairs and trade policy or economic leverage to the table. The thesis will be discussing crises as drivers of integration and EU policy action in relation to these developments, and other global actors, in the background section. The chapter on theory will be presenting and arguing for the Normative Power Europe framework as the appropriate framework to utilise in this thesis, and the chapter on methods will argue for a mixed methods approach with content analysis and discourse analysis as the preferred methods for this thesis. The analysis will consider both the directly visible contents of the Standardisation Strategy as well as the more hidden discourses, two textual methods of analysis that will complement each other in this thesis. Within the content analysis, operationalisations of the nine norms will be made in accordance with definitions and expressions provided by the United Nations, since the thesis subject has a clear global perspective in the standardisation policy area as mentioned previously and since the UN is an organisation encompassing the global perspective very well. The content analysis will provide the quantitative data on the norms from the Normative Power Europe framework for the discourse analysis to then analyse qualitatively, the discourse analysis drawing on quotes from the Strategy which have been identified as relevant through the content

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<sup>12</sup> Thomas Diez and Ian Manners, 'Reflecting on Normative Power Europe', in Felix Berenskoetter and Michael J. Williams (eds.), *Power in World Politics* (Routledge, 2007), 175.

analysis. Finally, concluding remarks will be drawn from the analysis findings and what has been brought to light by the thesis.

## 2 Background: Standards, trade, and crises

### 2.1 EU norms through trade and regulation and a perspective on crises

EU trade policy has in general been characterised by a liberal aspiration, and the EU shall according to Article 3:5 in the Treaty of the European Union promote its values and interests in its relations with the wider world by contributing to – among other things – free and fair trade.<sup>13</sup> Although there is tension between the *promotion of values* and the *identification of interests*,<sup>14</sup> this thesis will only aim to identify the norms and not interpret them as norms or interests respectively. Recent policy developments in the EU include the deepening of the Single Market during crisis, with the EU moving decisively into the services sector and continually presenting series of action plans, declarations, and reviews to the member states.<sup>15</sup> This thesis argues that the Strategy from the Commission is in part a crisis-driven policy development attempting to deepen Single Market integration through standards, with the potential of also diffusing norms globally through regulatory external action – establishing the EU as the global regulatory hegemon.<sup>16</sup> The single market has always been a jewel in the crown of EU regulation, and a driver behind integration. The development of harmonised EU regulations and elimination of inconsistent product standards have always been of critical importance, and harmonised standards a key goal for integration early on as they serve both specific substantive goals – such as protection of the environment – and broader political and economic goals of greater market integration.<sup>17</sup> The Commission has a central role in promoting integration through ambitious regulation and is spurred into action whenever it detects a risk that the

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<sup>13</sup> Gstöhl and De Bièvre, *The Trade Policy of the European Union.*, 26.

<sup>14</sup> Amelia Hadfield, 'European Neighbourhood Policy and the Migration Crisis', in Amelia Hadfield, Ian Manners, and Richard G. Whitman (eds.), *Foreign Policies of Eu Member States. Continuity and Europeanisation* (Routledge, 2017), 185.

<sup>15</sup> Michelle Egan, 'The Internal Market: Increasingly Differentiated?', in Ramona Coman, Amandine Crespy, and Vivien A. Schmidt (eds.), *Governance and Politics in the Post-Crisis European Union* (Cambridge University Press, 2020), 159-78.

<sup>16</sup> Bradford, *The Brussels Effect. How the European Union Rules the World.*, 7.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

single market is becoming increasingly fragmented<sup>18</sup> which is arguably visible also at this moment in time, as the Commission attempts to level the international playing field with the help of the Brussels Effect. This further helps the EU in becoming a global standard setter, which enhances the legitimacy and influence of its standards at home as well as abroad.<sup>19</sup> With the small budget of the EU it is not easy to exert power in traditional ways such as collecting taxes or waging war – instead, a way to maximise influence is through building an empire of laws and regulations, creating a market-based incentive for compliance with EU rules.<sup>20</sup> That is exactly what the Commission does in this case, as it recognises the ability to shape the global regulatory environment beyond the single market.<sup>21</sup>

Of further importance to this thesis is noting how trade policy works in the institutional landscape of the EU. It is mainly a question of competences, with significant trade and investment policy competence ‘spill-over’ occurring from national capitals to Brussels – a shift that has been further enhanced by the greater role of and open trade discussion in the European Parliament.<sup>22</sup> The EU Member States have agreed to negotiation with one voice through the Commission on trade policy because of the challenges posed by the expanding trade agenda, building the Commission’s trade negotiation expertise, capacity, and institutional memory.<sup>23</sup> This has led to the Commission progressively establishing its *de facto* competence for the wider, comprehensive trade agenda – also leading to other countries and bodies to recognise the Commission as the key trade interlocutor.<sup>24</sup> The 2009 Lisbon Treaty, brought on significant institutional changes which granted the Commission new, exclusive competence to negotiate all investment agreements – eliminating the last area of shared competence in trade.<sup>25</sup> The Commission’s draft mandate is discussed in the Trade Political Committee (TPC), and the Commission negotiates on the behalf of the EU with the ‘assistance’ of the MS through the regular TPC meetings.<sup>26</sup> The TPC assists and guides the Commission in the negotiation of trade agreements and advises on the common commercial policy.<sup>27</sup> This makes the Commission a suitable actor to analyse when dealing with the trade agenda of the EU.

Understanding that trade has never been more important for the European Union’s economy than in today’s difficult economic circumstances,<sup>28</sup> and the enormous agenda power that trade has within the EU, is also of importance to this

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>22</sup> Stephen Woolcock, 'Trade Policy: Policy-Making after the Treaty of Lisbon', in Helen Wallace, Mark A. Pollock, and Alasdair R. Young (eds.), *Policy-Making in the European Union* (Seventh, [revised] edition edn.: Oxford University Press, 2015), 389-406., 389.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 393.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Gabriel Siles-Brugge, *Constructing European Union Trade Policy. A Global Idea of Europe* (International Political Economy Series: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 161.

<sup>26</sup> Woolcock, 'Trade Policy: Policy-Making after the Treaty of Lisbon', 396.

<sup>27</sup> Gstöhl and De Bièvre, *The Trade Policy of the European Union*, 49.

<sup>28</sup> Siles-Brugge, *Constructing European Union Trade Policy. A Global Idea of Europe*, 1.

thesis. This thesis stresses, like many other works, that the EU is a trade power of systemic importance for the world trading system.<sup>29</sup>

Breton expresses that the EU cannot fall behind further in international standardisation, expressing what is here interpreted as a “crisis of regulation” where the EU needs to assert itself as a global actor to be reckoned with.<sup>30</sup> Interestingly, moments of crisis are argued to be instrumental in driving the European integration project forward.<sup>31</sup> Understanding the economic, social, and political processes of the EU becomes important to understanding the successes or crises of bold political projects of the EU.<sup>32</sup> In times of internal and external crises, there is a risk of open markets coming under pressure – which the EU has been facing in multiple ways in recent years.<sup>33</sup> Crises such as the Eurozone crisis in 2008, the refugee crisis in 2015, the Brexit situation after the referendum in June 2016, and the 2019 COVID-19 pandemic are examples of great challenges for the EU. And with the Russian government’s 2022 invasion war in Ukraine, a continuation of the illegal annexation of the Ukrainian peninsula Crimea in 2014, the theme of crisis on the European continent is and will regrettably remain relevant. The discussion of how the EU can best manage crises needs to go on.<sup>34</sup> Notably when discussing crises is that there is no constitutional architecture, legal basis, or guidance in the EU Treaties as of what constitutes a crisis or an emergency.<sup>35</sup> EU crises are commonly referred to as events or developments which constitute urgent threats to core community values and structure.<sup>36</sup> However, what can be discussed is the EU’s ‘crisis management capacity’, what makes a crisis an ‘EU crisis’, and what ‘core values’ must be threatened for it to be considered a crisis.<sup>37</sup> The thesis will not be discussing this, although these are important questions to pose. Further, policymakers need to present a narration and interpretation of a crisis, narratives which recruit the contradictions and failures of the system.<sup>38</sup> As failures are constructed and represented in crises, it matters how the policymakers define it – it means to frame the range of feasible or suitable coping strategies and interventions.<sup>39</sup> Here, the policymakers in the European Commission provide a narrative of perspectives and motivations for action within

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<sup>29</sup> Gstöhl and De Bièvre, *The Trade Policy of the European Union.*, 5.

<sup>30</sup> Commission, 'Speech by Commissioner Breton at the Conference "a Stronger Industry for a More Autonomous Europe"'.  
<sup>31</sup> Ian Manners, 'European Communion and Planetary Organic Crisis', in Nathalie Brack and Seda Gurkan (eds.), *Theorising the Crises of the European Union* (Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 2021).

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 160.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 160.

<sup>34</sup> Gstöhl and De Bièvre, *The Trade Policy of the European Union.*, 7.

<sup>35</sup> Göran Von Sydow, 'Preface', in Anna Wetter Ryde (ed.), *Eu Crisis Management* (SIEPS - the Swedish Institute for European Policy Studies, 2022), 3.

<sup>36</sup> Anna Wetter Ryde, 'Introduction: How Should the Eu Govern in an Emergency?', *ibid.*, 11-16., 14.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>39</sup> Astrid Séville, 'How to Do and Communicate Politics Beyond Routines: Reflections on Political Exceptionalism in the Covid-19 Pandemic', *ibid.*, 75-86., 80.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

the area of standardisation. However, it is crucial to understand that this thesis in no way is comparing a crisis-driven policy development of regulation character to a crisis involving human suffering. This distinction is important to make and is why it is important to define what a “crisis” is in the context of this thesis. Here, the (regulation) crisis will be “being left behind” and subsequently trying to “catch up” with competitors in order not to miss out on global influence, as expressed by Breton.

When understanding this subject, overarching research on standardisation as a concept<sup>40</sup> is important to take into account, as is the potential power of standards,<sup>41</sup> and effects of standardisation internationally – for example discussions on the operations of different standard-setting bodies and their abilities to solve problems of economic interdependence.<sup>42</sup> That standards not only are technical specifications and guidelines to support efficient risk governance, but also contain social, political, economic, and organisational aspects<sup>43</sup> speaks for their importance within EU affairs internally as well as externally. State influence over technical standards is further an important view for a study like this, as notes the consideration: “if you control an industry’s standards, you control that industry’s lock, stock and ledger.”<sup>44</sup> This explains that trade markets can be closed off without global standards. Standardisation can also be understood as a mechanism of political steering in an increasingly differentiated world.<sup>45</sup> Further, an understanding of how standardisation ties into trade policy and the EU Single Market is imperative when analysing the role of standardisation globally. This thesis argues that standards are significant for the EU’s “economic leverage” or regulatory power and market power when conducting international trade. When opting for standardisation, a corporation prefers to conform to the “leading standard”, ensuring compliance across all markets where the corporation operates<sup>46</sup> – implying that if the EU “leads” the standardisation work globally, it has a competitive advantage also within trade policy. The scope of what is commonly called ‘trade policy’ has gradually been expanded over time to cover other policy measures on regulatory affairs, such as to coordinate standards on for example public health, customs, or environment.<sup>47</sup> The role of the European Commission is pushing for deep integration in the face

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<sup>40</sup> Walter Mattli and Tim Büthe, 'Setting International Standards: Technological Rationality or Primacy of Power', *World Politics*, 56/1 (10/01/ 2003), 1-42.

<sup>41</sup> Jean-Christophe Graz, *The Power of Standards: Hybrid Authority and the Globalisation of Services* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

<sup>42</sup> Tim Büthe and Walter Mattli, 'International Standards and Standard-Setting Bodies', in David Coen, Graham K. Wilson, and Graham Wilson (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Business and Government* (Oxford University Press, 2010), 1-46.

<sup>43</sup> Odd Einar Olsen et al., *Standardization and Risk Governance. A Multi-Disciplinary Approach* (Routledge New Security Studies: Routledge, 2020).

<sup>44</sup> Julia Voo, 'State Influence and Technical Standards', *Harvard Kennedy School Review*, 19 (2019), 138-42.

<sup>45</sup> Alejandro M. Pena, 'Governing Differentiation: On Standardisation as Political Steering', *European Journal of International Relations*, 21/1 (2015), 52-75.

<sup>46</sup> Bradford, *The Brussels Effect. How the European Union Rules the World.*, 54.

<sup>47</sup> Gstöhl and De Bièvre, *The Trade Policy of the European Union.*, 8.

of domestic, internal resistance – framing the Single Market narrative as a key to European growth and prosperity.<sup>48</sup> The Commission also plays a key role in promoting Single Market initiatives to increase competitiveness and innovation, while monitoring compliance and implementation of Single Market obligations.<sup>49</sup> The Single Market remains a work in progress and is constantly changing through integration, as physical, fiscal, and technical barriers still very much exist. These technical barriers to trade – both internally in the EU and externally with third party global actors – are largely managed through establishing harmonised standards, which is where this thesis is located. The EU thus uses regulation to shape markets beyond its borders, providing for differentiation of Single Market authority and territorial integration – applying the effects of Single Market governance to non-member states who have sought market access and regulatory alignment with the EU.<sup>50</sup> Exerting influence in the global economy is hence correlated with the relative size of any given country’s internal market – including the EU, as it derives its power from its ability to offer conditional access to its large and valuable market.<sup>51</sup>

### 2.1.1 Understanding the standard-setting bodies and processes

The European Commission began to tackle the negative impact of divergent national rules on trade in the early 1960’s.<sup>52</sup> As a means of driving forward the general process of integration in Europe, the Commission used harmonisation – that is the adoption of detailed, identical rules for all the EU Member States. This harmonisation was pursued where it could be specifically justified, measures drafted by the Commission in cooperation with sector-specific expert working groups and European-level pressure groups. With the ‘Low-Voltage Directive’ in 1973, the Commission also incorporated the work of private standard-setting bodies into Community measures by ‘reference to standards’.<sup>53</sup> These bodies were primarily the Committee for European Norms (Standards) CEN and the Committee for European Electrical Norms (Standards) CENELEC. Thus, the process of technical harmonisation, or standardisation, became an integral part of what was becoming the EU Single Market through the European Commission’s work with private standard-setting bodies from an early stage. The Commission moreover advocates ‘expanding the regulatory space of the Single Market’ by

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<sup>48</sup> Egan, 'The Internal Market: Increasingly Differentiated?', 160.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 165.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 167.

<sup>51</sup> Bradford, *The Brussels Effect. How the European Union Rules the World.*, 26; 30.

<sup>52</sup> Alasdair R. Young, 'The Single Market from Stagnation to Renewal?', in Helen Wallace, Mark A. Pollock, and Alasdair R. Young (eds.), *Policy-Making in the European Union* (Seventh, [revised] edition edn.: Oxford University Press, 2015), 115-38., 118.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 118.

‘ensuring that European norms are a reference for global standards’<sup>54</sup>, which is a clear indication that the Commission does see standards as an important instrument for European norm diffusion globally. Standards play a central role to all regulatory regimes, making up the norms, goals, objectives, or rules around which to organise the regime.<sup>55</sup> Interestingly, some challenges of the state today include a lack of technical expertise and financial resources to deal with ever more complex and demanding regulatory challenges, and much greater involvement of transnational or private-sector rule-making organisations are present in global regulation.<sup>56</sup> This is visible also in the European standardisation process which is consensus-building and involves many players from different sectors, initiating market and industry needs in standard development through one of the three European Standards Organisations as explained in the following segment.<sup>57</sup> The European Committee for Standardisation (CEN) brings together the national standardisation bodies within 33 European countries, providing a platform for development of European standards and other technical documents. The European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardisation (CENELEC) is responsible for electro-technical standardisation and prepares voluntary standards which help facilitate trade between countries, access new markets internationally and support the development of the EU single market. The European Telecommunications Standards Institute (ETSI) produces and maintains standards for information and communications technology (ICT) which are globally applicable. The troika works together with the European Commission ever since a cooperation agreement was signed between the parties in 1984. Industry can get involved directly in the process only through ETSI – the only access to CEN and CENELEC is through the national standardisation bodies. Other important stakeholders involved in European standardisation are small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), consumer, trade union and environmental interest organisations, and public authorities.<sup>58</sup> This is the main road map for *European* standardisation. Internationally, there are other large organisations such as the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC).

The term “technical standard” refers to the specification resulting from the standardisation procedure, falling under the umbrella of the larger group of “regulatory standards”.<sup>59</sup> A “harmonised standard” refers to a (European) standard

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 138.

<sup>55</sup> Colin Scott, 'Standard-Setting in Regulatory Regimes', in Robert Baldwin, Martin Cave, and Martin Lodge (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Regulation* (Oxford University Press, 2010).

<sup>56</sup> Walter Mattli, 'Beyond the State?: Are Transnational Regulatory Institutions Replacing the State?', in Stephan Leibfried et al. (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Transformations of the State* (First edition. edn.: Oxford University Press, 2015), 1-19.

<sup>57</sup> European Commission, 'Key Players in European Standardisation', <[https://ec.europa.eu/growth/single-market/european-standards/key-players-european-standardisation\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/growth/single-market/european-standards/key-players-european-standardisation_en)>, accessed 10/05 2022.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Scott, 'Standard-Setting in Regulatory Regimes', 2.



developed by a recognised European Standards Organisation. i.e., the previously mentioned CEN, CENELEC, or ETSI, on the request of the European Commission.<sup>60</sup> Other economic operators can then use these harmonised standards to demonstrate that goods, services, or processes comply with the relevant EU legislation.

The setting of standards is characterised by a responsibility diffusion among national and supranational levels as well as state and non-state.<sup>61</sup> There are challenges of accountability associated with the process in which regulatory standard setting is ‘industrialised’, however the purpose of this thesis is not to discuss accountability in the process leading to an outcome, but instead to explain the aims behind the emerging top-end of the process, not from the standardisation organisations but from the European Commission.

### 2.1.2 “Strategisation” of EU assets in crisis?

The European Commission currently faces critique for conducting a too ‘offensive’ and interventionist industrial strategy, in part motivated by China’s rise to prominence in a number of industries backed by large state subsidies and protectionist measures.<sup>62</sup> Recent discussions on a “strategisation” of the European interest in the industrial sphere have concluded that the EU has created new rules and instruments to level the playing field between EU and non-EU firms, initiating cooperation between firms and other stakeholders, and by subsidising ‘important projects of common European interest’ in what are seen as “strategic industries.”<sup>63</sup> Interestingly, this recent discussion is rather critical regarding the Commission decisions for the industry and for which Member States really reap the direct benefits. The global industry with its numerous stakeholders and bodies is tightly linked to the processes of standardisation, making the problematisation of Commission decisions important to mention in this research project. Yet, by acting as a global regulator in a strategic manner, the EU can defend its social preferences without compromising the competitiveness of its domestic industries.<sup>64</sup> Although sometimes being accused of protectionism, the EU firmly denies that it has such an agenda. The agenda instead arguably aims to cultivate a regulatory environment that guarantees a level playing field where EU companies can compete with their foreign counterparts on equal terms.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> European Commission, 'Harmonised Standards', <[https://ec.europa.eu/growth/single-market/european-standards/harmonised-standards\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/growth/single-market/european-standards/harmonised-standards_en)>, accessed 10/05 2022.

<sup>61</sup> Scott, 'Standard-Setting in Regulatory Regimes'.

<sup>62</sup> Harry Flam, 'Eu Industrial Strategy: Bound to Fail?', (SIEPS - the Swedish Institute for European Policy Studies 2022), 1-7.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Bradford, *The Brussels Effect. How the European Union Rules the World.*, 23.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 242.

Relevant for this thesis in relation to the crisis narrative and the discussions on EU strategic interests is the most recent developments of the on-going war in Ukraine. Between the 10<sup>th</sup> and the 11<sup>th</sup> of March 2022, the EU heads of state or government met in Versailles, where they then issued a declaration on the Russian aggression against Ukraine.<sup>66</sup> The contents of this declaration would – besides most importantly condemn the unprovoked actions of the Russian government leading to immense human suffering in Ukraine – suggest that a realisation of vulnerability has struck the EU in these recent times of crisis, and that a ‘strategisation’ of assets in the EU indeed is a plausible scenario moving forward. In paragraph 7 in particular, the declaration expresses the need to take more responsibility for security in bolstering defence capabilities, building a European sovereignty, reducing energy dependencies, and designing a new growth and investment model for 2030 – a more robust economic base. In paragraph 21 the declaration specifies in which areas the strategic dependencies need to be reduced. These areas are critical raw materials, semi-conductors, health, digital technologies, and food. The global level of action is expressed in paragraph 23, where the pursuit of an ambitious and robust trade policy is expressed as well as the *promotion of European standards*, market access, sustainable value chains, and connectivity. The declaration also expresses in paragraph 8 that the EU reaffirms its intention to intensify support for the global rules-based order, with the United Nations at its core. The declaration thus further solidifies the central claim of this thesis, namely that European standards are increasingly important, and it also solidifies that relevance of the United Nations in this context as the importance of standards is mentioned alongside the UN and the global rules-based order.

### 2.1.3 China – the most prominent standardisation rival

For many years the EU has been the world’s largest market and trader, but China has been catching up fast.<sup>67</sup> China is challenging the EU’s status as a regulatory hegemon through emerging as a global power, which will gradually diminish the relative size of the EU market and challenge the *de facto* regulatory Brussels Effect.<sup>68</sup> China may also increasingly be in a position to offer alternative destinations for goods if European standards make it too costly for business to trade on the single market.<sup>69</sup> Further, there are now more standards in China than in any other country – over seven times more than in the EU.<sup>70</sup> With Breton

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<sup>66</sup> European Council, 'The Versailles Declaration, 10 and 11 March 2022', (Consilium.europa.eu: European Council, 2022), 1-10.

<sup>67</sup> Gstöhl and De Bièvre, *The Trade Policy of the European Union.*, 210.

<sup>68</sup> Bradford, *The Brussels Effect. How the European Union Rules the World.*, 265.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 266.

<sup>70</sup> Olivier Peyrat, 'China's Standardization Strategies', (Paris Innovation Review, 2012).

mentioning China in his speech,<sup>71</sup> he sheds light on what actor the Commission considers its most prominent rival in the current standardisation work. This is not unfounded, as shows the literature. An example of how China makes use of standards is its food safety and agro-industries, where the international trade is conducted with a standards-based approach.<sup>72</sup> Chinese food standards are arguably used as tools to protect domestic markets as well as tools to redesign the rules of the market and provide a competitive advantage to firms and national industries – that is, a politicisation of science. Arguably, China is using different strategies and methods – standards being one of them – to redesign the shape of international trade. This is only one example that makes for an incentive by the European Commission to meet these efforts with its own developments. Differentiating arguments on China’s role in standardisation suggest that the Chinese standardisation system should *not* be perceived as a threat to international Information and Technology (ICT) standardisation, and that the more relaxed attitude of the EU is the best way forward, based on a discussion of the European and Chinese standardisation systems in 2013.<sup>73</sup> Today, the European Commission evidently no longer holds that same relaxed attitude. Technical standards, which have long been treated as non-political product specifications, are now becoming the subject of power rivalry – here in the context of China and the EU.<sup>74</sup> When governing the world by means of technical standards, China’s state-driven approach to technical standardisation has a growing footprint in international standardisation organisations.<sup>75</sup> This development has encouraged the EU to attempt to re-claim the role as “first mover” in standards<sup>76</sup> and the Chinese development to becoming an even larger-scale global competitor is here considered to be of extra importance to shed light on why standards are becoming more important to the EU than perhaps ever before.

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<sup>71</sup> Commission, 'Speech by Commissioner Breton at the Conference "a Stronger Industry for a More Autonomous Europe"'.  
<sup>72</sup> Louis Augustin-Jean and Lei Xie, 'Food Safety, Agro-Industries, and China’s International Trade: A Standard-Based Approach', *China Information*, 32/3 (2018), 400-22.

<sup>73</sup> K. Jakobs and M. Gerst, 'How to Perceive the (Future) Role of China in Ict Standardisation - a European Perspective', (IEEE, 2013), 1-7.  
<sup>74</sup> Tim Rühlig, 'China, Europe and the New Power Competition over Technical Standards', (The Swedish Institute of International Affairs, 2021), 1-14.

<sup>75</sup> Tim Rühlig, 'Technical Standardisation, China and the Future International Order. A European Perspective', (Heinrich Böll Stiftung, Brussels, 2020).

<sup>76</sup> European Commission, 'An Eu Strategy on Standardisation - Setting Global Standards in Support of a Resilient, Green and Digital Eu Single Market ', (Ec.europa.eu: European Commission, 2022b).

# 3 Theory: Perspectives on Normative Power and Market Power

## 3.1 Literature review

The review has been executed in two separate parts: the empirical literature on international standards and the theoretical literature on Normative Power Europe (NPE). The reason for this is the discovery that the keywords needed to gain access to the two areas of interest are largely separated, i.e., not many works discuss both standardisation and NPE in a way that is not specific to a case study on a very specific subject not necessarily related to the larger picture on standards and norms and/or trade on a large EU regulatory level. There are however sometimes relevant notes to be taken from the works that include these specific case studies, and they will thus be included where relevant. Mostly, this has been discovered to take place within the discussion on trade and norm diffusion.

For the sake of replicability, the exact search phrases which have been used are: “international standards + normative power,” “international standards,” “normative power Europe”, and “international standardisation”. Oftentimes, the subject of “trade” or “market” is included in the results of these searches. Trade and market are both deemed to be relevant for the literature review because of the thesis’s notion of international trade being imperative for global EU norm diffusion. Databases used for the literature review are mainly the LUBcat library catalogue by Lund University (i.e., most content through the EBSCO host mentioned below) through the LUBsearch Discovery search tool, ePublications (EBSCO), Social Science Citation Index (SSCI: Web of Science Core Collection – All editions; All Databases), HeinOnline (EBSCO), Business Source Complete (EBSCO), JSTOR Journals (EBSCO), Political Science Complete (EBSCO), Scopus® (EBSCO), IEEE Xplore Digital Library (EBSCO), EconLit (EBSCO), Academic Search Complete (EBSCO) DocsRoom (European Commission), SAGE Knowledge (ebooks), Cambridge Core (Cambridge University Press), Google Scholar (pages 1-20), and Oxford Handbooks Online (ebooks).

The literature review is conducted as a narrative review<sup>77</sup> in order to gain an initial impression of the topic area that is to be understood through the research.

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<sup>77</sup> Bryman, *Social Research Methods*.

This process of reviewing the literature is thus a more wide-ranging, uncertain process of *discovery*.

## 3.2 Theoretical framework

### 3.2.1 Normative political theory as basis for analysis

The emphasis on normative theory in the study of the EU's Normative Power makes clear that analysis needs to account for how we judge and justify claims of empirical truths as well as making sure to engage in critique.<sup>78</sup> For the purpose of this thesis, institutions such as the European Commission are understood broadly as to include not only formal rules but also informal norms, which are expected to constitute actors' identities and preferences.<sup>79</sup> When developing the argument on the EU as a Normative Power, 'the most important factor shaping the international role of the EU is not what it does or what it says, but what it is'.<sup>80</sup> The EU is in this thesis to be understood as a particular *identity* with a normative basis, resting on nine norms, implying a constructivist theoretical approach aiming to understand how identities are constructed in social interaction processes of states or other actors.<sup>81</sup> Such constructivist approaches inspired by International Relations share an emphasis on the role of norms, values, ideas, identities, and discourse in the construction of the social world,<sup>82</sup> which ties constructivist theory together with identity formation, discourse, and the role of norms and values. As the knowledge and production of EU external actions and norm diffusion have been discussed at length in the academic field, far less consideration has been given to the field of policy-making – this thesis is however situating the concept of Normative Power and norm diffusion into the policy-field of standardisation,

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<sup>78</sup> Ian Manners, 'The European Union's Normative Power: Critical Perspectives and Perspectives on the Critical', in Richard G. Whitman (ed.), *Normative Power Europe. Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 228.

<sup>79</sup> Mark A. Pollock, 'Theorizing Eu Policy-Making', in Helen Wallace, Mark A. Pollock, and Alasdair R. Young (eds.), *Policy-Making in the European Union* (Seventh, [revised] edition edn.: Oxford University Press, 2015), 12-45., 21.

<sup>80</sup> Manners, 'Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms', (*Journal of Common Market Studies*, 40 (2), 235-58., 252.

<sup>81</sup> Bahar Rumelili, 'Constructivism and the Role of the 'Other' in Eu External Action', in Sieglinde Gstöhl and Simon Schunz (eds.), *The External Action of the European Union : Concepts, Approaches, Theories* (Macmillan Education, 2021), 197-212., 197.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

even though it is harder to trace and track normative power in the policy-making field.<sup>83</sup>

Expressions which entail EU values and norms are present in the Standardisation Strategy itself, arguably in accordance with how article 21 of the 2009 Lisbon Treaty describes how the EU's external action is 'guided' by its values.<sup>84</sup> This Treaty further vests the EU with an explicit mandate to project its internal norms and values externally, pushing for an emphasis on the importance of those values in the EU's relations with the wider world.<sup>85</sup> This highlights a connection between the theoretical framework on norm diffusion, standardisation as a policy area in development, and arguably also the EU's role within the global market and trade system through standards. If a normative discourse is to be used by the European Commission related to standardisation, there would further need to exist arguments of the positive effects of standards. Examples of such are elaborated upon in a study on spill-over effects of international standards regarding working conditions in Vietnamese SMEs<sup>86</sup>, where unexpected benefits from certification are revealed and pointing to standards being able to affect more than just economic factors. Noteworthy is however that this thesis will not be focusing on the potential negative effects of trade – it will only analyse the European Commission's discourses within the borders of the Standardisation Strategy, with an awareness of the external effects of the single market.

Since this thesis is going to engage in the analysis and discussion of both policy (standardisation), international political economy (the EU's economical leverage on the global market) and normative political theory, the main themes *could* be how the political processes within the EU can be explained – but perhaps it would be more fitting to describe the aim of the thesis to explain how European governance *is* conceptualised and how it *should be* conceptualised.<sup>87</sup> Theory as explanation or understanding is what this thesis will have as point of departure, as the research question asks *how* the European Commission expresses ambitions of Normative Power in its 2022 Standardisation Strategy.<sup>88</sup> Theory dealing with policy by reflecting on the normative underpinnings within a policy field<sup>89</sup> is also deemed fitting, since the thesis will be aiming at doing just that: examining normative underpinnings within a policy field (international standardisation).

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<sup>83</sup> Ian Manners, 'Sociology of Knowledge and Production of Normative Power in the European Union's External Actions', *Journal of European Integration*, 37/2 (02 / 23 / 2015), 299-318., 304-305.

<sup>84</sup> Max Roger Taylor, 'Inside the Eu–China Human Rights Dialogue: Assessing the Practical Delivery of the Eu's Normative Power in a Hostile Environment', *ibid.* 44/3 (2022/04/03 2022), 365-80., 366.

<sup>85</sup> Bradford, *The Brussels Effect. How the European Union Rules the World.*, 23.

<sup>86</sup> Neda Trifković, 'Spillover Effects of International Standards: Working Conditions in the Vietnamese Smes', *World Development*, 97 (2017), 79-101.

<sup>87</sup> Thomas Diez and Antje Wiener, 'Introducing the Mosaic of Integration Theory', *European Integration Theory* (3 edn.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 11; 21-22.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

The current statement on the theory's place in the thesis is that theory drives the research question forward *deductively*, however seeing that iteration of analysis is an *abductive* way of working, perhaps this would be a more fitting way of describing the work since this thesis will work with analysis carried out in multiple steps. Going back to the roots of the Normative Power Europe framework,<sup>90</sup> it is observable that research can better understand the international role of the EU through other means than civilian or military power lenses; the ideational impact of the EU's international identity/role as representing normative power could instead be the choice. Refocusing the analysis away from the empirical emphasis on the EU's institutions or polities, and towards the ability to shape what is considered 'normal' in global politics<sup>91</sup> is very much at the core of this thesis. Peace, liberty, democracy, rule of law, respect for human rights, social solidarity, anti-discrimination, sustainable development, and good governance are the fundamental distinctions of normative power values within the framework as of when it first came to be<sup>92</sup> – throughout this thesis referred to as the "nine norms". However, these concepts have later been extended to other formulations, meaning that *liberty* equals *freedom*, and that *anti-discrimination* equals *equality*.<sup>93</sup> This thesis will make use of these distinctions in order to identify these norms as well as different normative discursive expressions in the European Commission's Standardisation Strategy. The research agrees with the statement that "in the post-cold war era, it is no longer enough for the EU to present itself as 'merely' a form of economic government for the management of global economics."<sup>94</sup> Although the EU is in possession of solid economic power, this is not enough to analyse its political outreach internationally. This thesis aims to argue that the EU's economic power leverage is *combined with* the normative power aims of the European Commission in the Standardisation Strategy, with EU norms diffusing through *transference*<sup>95</sup> in technical (standardisation) and trade exchange with other actors on the international, global level. This potential change through transference would be the result of the Standardisation Strategy, exporting norms through regulation to the rest of the world in accordance with the Brussels Effect.<sup>96</sup> This thesis is however not intending to make any statements on actual effects, effectivity, or outcome.

With the EU arguably being a normative powerhouse, there is a need to consider the 'rest of the world'. Scholars suggest that the normative power discourse establishes a particular identity for the EU through turning third parties into 'others', while simultaneously representing the EU as a positive force in

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<sup>90</sup> Manners, 'Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms', (

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ian Manners, 'The Normative Ethics of the European Union', *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)*, 84/1 (01/01/ 2008), 45-60., 46.

<sup>94</sup> Manners, 'Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms', (, 244.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 245.

<sup>96</sup> Bradford, *The Brussels Effect. How the European Union Rules the World*.

world politics.<sup>97</sup> This brings questions of identity formation to the table, which makes this type of research on discourse – having questions of identity at the basis of analysis later explained through the choice of Critical Discourse Analysis as a method – useful to the field.

### 3.2.2 Critique of the Normative Power Europe framework

In order to attain a productive, neutral view on the theoretical framework it is important to problematise the NPE framework, which has been criticised from a number of perspectives. The perspective which this thesis is using is the one of EU promotion of human agency abroad through the influence and promotion of fundamental civil, political, and economic rights – which is the argument that the NPE framework builds upon. However, this has been criticised from a Foucauldian perspective as instead serving the EU's self-styled mission for humanity which inscribes the agency of those it seeks to empower, and that the relations are characterised by violence, and the technologisation of politics.<sup>98</sup> This thesis does however not intend to measure intentions or effectiveness of the framework. A neorealist critique suggests that structural realist theory can shed light on the nature of EU foreign and security policy co-operation and suggests that the explicitly normative approach to the EU as an international actor is reductionist – at the same times as it is furthering the argument that the EU is used by its member states as a collective instrument for shaping its external milieu by a combination of hard and soft power.<sup>99</sup> As this thesis concentrates on Normative Power as a concept, these critiques are important to bear in mind, but it is also important to stress the relevance of continuous research within the area of Normative Power. There are also arguments suggesting that NPE fails to satisfy a number of important aspects in explanation of the EU in international crises – and that the concept is not founded on analysis of the economic resources held by the EU in international relations.<sup>100</sup> To meet some of the arguments in this critique, this thesis will make use of theorising both normative power and economic power in EU global affairs. The purpose of this thesis is however not to go into the question of effectiveness, or into levels of analysing the normative diffusion through transference. There have also been questions of whether the EU as a normative power really can live up to the ideal of meeting certain discursive

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<sup>97</sup> Thomas Diez, 'Constructing the Self and Changing Others: Reconsidering 'Normative Power Europe'', *Millennium-Journal of International Studies*, 33/3 (01/01/ 2005), 613-36.

<sup>98</sup> Michael Merlingen, 'Everything Is Dangerous: A Critique of 'Normative Power Europe'', *Security Dialogue*, 38/4 (12/01/ 2007), 435-53.

<sup>99</sup> Adrian Hyde-Price, 'Normative' Power Europe: A Realist Critique', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 13/2 (2006), 217-34.

<sup>100</sup> Anna Skolimowska, 'The European Union as a Normative Power in International Relations. Theoretical and Empirical Challenges', (18, 2015), 111-32., 117.



standards of representing others in a non-antagonistic, humble way – finding that the communication is conducted in different manners on different levels, but that the normative framework functions as a tool that can help normative powers ‘watch their language’.<sup>101</sup> Signifying that language is important is also relevant for the purposes of this thesis, as it analyses text.

### 3.2.3 Market Power Europe, norms, and standards

With norm diffusion through standards potentially taking place with the help of the market, and the EU having economic market leverage globally due to its market size, the EU can be conceptualised as ‘Market Power Europe’ (MPE)<sup>102</sup> – a statement which this thesis argues for and intends to utilise as an argument for the market power leverage that the EU holds, thus having influence on the global scale when setting standards which trading partners have to comply with. Even though the Normative Power framework emphasises the ability to use normative justification *rather than the ability to use material incentives* or physical force,<sup>103</sup> this thesis assumes that economics and norms are not existing in a vacuum and can be utilised together to help explain changing circumstances. The MPE conceptualisation includes emphasising not only the capitalist and neo-liberal aspects, but also the importance of interventions in the market via economic and social regulation. This recognises that economic and social agendas co-exist on the EU agenda – but does not entail certain normative claims.<sup>104</sup> Such claims are instead to be investigated in the analysis of this thesis. By utilising a normative framework together with an argument of economic power, this paper agrees that the EU is significantly (however not exclusively) constituted by economic liberalism, that its identity as a liberal market order is a significant determinant of its external policy and that a significant portion of the EU’s normative influence in world politics consists of the propagation of economic liberal norms.<sup>105</sup> This thesis argues that the understanding of the EU as a market power (MPE) does not entail a better understanding of the orientation and substance of EU external policy than normative power (NPE).<sup>106</sup> This thesis also agrees with the conclusion

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<sup>101</sup> Charlotte Wagnsson and Maria Hellman, 'Normative Power Europe Caving In? Eu under Pressure of Russian Information Warfare', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 56/5 (2018), 1161-77.

<sup>102</sup> Chad Damro, 'The European Union as 'Market Power Europe'', in Sieglinde Gstöhl and Simon Schunz (eds.), *The External Action of the European Union : Concepts, Approaches, Theories* (Macmillan Education, 2021), 54-68., 54.

<sup>103</sup> Manners, 'The European Union's Normative Power: Critical Perspectives and Perspectives on the Critical', 230.

<sup>104</sup> Damro, 'The European Union as 'Market Power Europe''.

<sup>105</sup> Ben Rosamond, 'Three Ways of Speaking Europe to the World: Markets, Peace, Cosmopolitan Duty and the Eu's Normative Power', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 16/1 (01 / 01 / 2014), 133-48., 134.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

that the EU is promoting a unique approach of good governance that combines economic and political aspects.<sup>107</sup>

When considering external perceptions and the effectiveness EU policy, this thesis will not intend to conduct an analysis. Instead, it will be sufficient to note that the EU according to previous research is seen as some kind of powerful economic actor by outsiders' perceptions.<sup>108</sup> This would suggest that third party actors outside of the EU would listen and potentially oblige due to economic incentives when the Commission issues new trade or market specific regulations which would affect trading partners, such as for example new regulation within standards. This thesis will because of this suggestion also agree with scholars arguing that an integrated perspective between Market Power Europe and Normative Power Europe where dynamics alternate and intervene, ultimately brings a Normative Market Europe to life.<sup>109</sup> The thesis will in relation to this make note of that one fundamental and characteristic process of EU external action is to project EU rules beyond EU borders,<sup>110</sup> further arguing for the potential significance for the Commission to indirectly impose EU standardisation regulation onto other global actors by pushing to be a leading actor within the work on standards.

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<sup>107</sup> Hendrik Huelss, 'A Force for Good Governance? The European Union's Normative Power and Standards of Appropriate Governing', *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 17/1 (2012), 93-112.

<sup>108</sup> Damro, 'The European Union as 'Market Power Europe'', 55.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>110</sup> Frank Schimmelfennig, 'Eu External Governance and Europeanization', in Sieglinde Gstöhl and Simon Schunz (eds.), *ibid.*, 117-33., 117.

## 4 Methodology: Identifying the normative political discourse

### 4.1 Research design: Case study and mixed methods

The best research design to address this thesis's purpose and research question – *How does the European Commission express ambitions of Normative Power in its 2022 Standardisation Strategy?* – would most likely be to conduct a case study, more specifically a single policy study as the ambition is to produce an extensive inquiry of a particular social case.<sup>111</sup> This because of the single policy that is to be studied (standardisation) and the proportionality wise limited analysis material (the Strategy). Had the Strategy turned out to be larger in extent than the ten pages it turned out to amount to, a comparative analysis between the different chapters or sections could possibly have been more beneficial to the research project. However, to study the Strategy in the whole of its compass is not an unrealistic project to conduct within the case study format, since the full extent of the Strategy *is* but ten pages. As this project has an existing, given policy activity that is to be studied, the type of research would be *explanatory*<sup>112</sup> instead of *exploratory*, which was initially considered. The latter alternative manages new policy developments, and standardisation *per se* is not a new development. Instead, an explanatory study *within* standardisation will be executed as to explain the recent developments. The overall approach to this research project would likely benefit from the use of a *sequential explanatory mixed methods approach*<sup>113</sup> as one of the purposes is to understand how and why data and theory are related. The diagram on the next page sheds light on the process of the explanatory sequential research design and which steps are to be taken in which order during the research process.

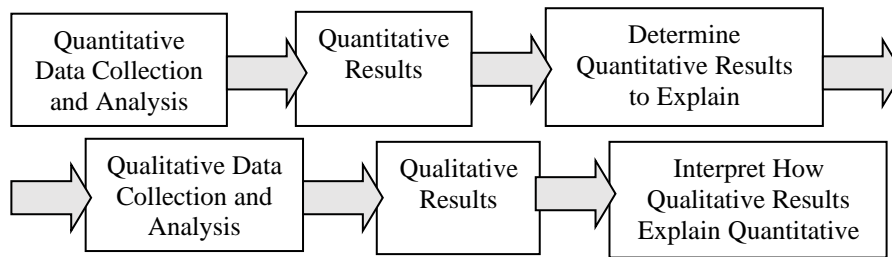
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<sup>111</sup> Bryman, *Social Research Methods.*, 66.

<sup>112</sup> Kennet Lynggaard, Ian Manners, and Karl Lofgren, *Research Methods in European Union Studies* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

**Figure 1. The Explanatory Sequential Design procedural diagram<sup>114</sup>**



The case study research design is assumed to be the best design in order to answer the research question posed in this thesis. The areas of standardisation, trade policy and geopolitics are vast, their literatures enormous. In order to properly delimit this study, some serious cuts to the possible research material have to be made in order to carry the study out within the given time frame, and in order to take the most relevant literature into account. Therefore, the single case of the standardisation Strategy will be delved into. A comparative design including for example the newest Chinese Standardisation Strategy is not the purpose of this project, since this comes with a clear language barrier and would generate a different set of questions. The study initially considered possibly looking into some secondary materials, such as the Questions and Answers section on standards that the European Commission has published in relation to the Standardisation Strategy publication – however this has to be another area encouraged for further research. These considerations do not change the assumption that the best design with which to answer the research question at hand, *How does the European Commission express ambitions of Normative Power in its 2022 Standardisation Strategy?*, would be a case study.

The stance in this thesis is that qualitative and quantitative methods represent different ends on a spectrum<sup>115</sup> instead of being viewed as rigid dichotomies. The mixed methods research approach involves collecting both qualitative and quantitative data, integrating the two forms, and using the distinct designs that may involve philosophical assumptions and theoretical frameworks – the core in this would be that the “mix” of qualitative and quantitative data in the analysis ultimately would lead to additional insight beyond the information provided by either of them alone.<sup>116</sup> This entails a pragmatic worldview not committed to any one system of philosophy and reality – working to provide the best understanding and/or explanation of the research problem.<sup>117</sup> This seems to be the best way in which to answer the research question at hand. The stance in this chapter will further be to look at mixed methods as being a *method* – with data collection, analysis, and interpretation at the centre stage – and to not look at it primarily as a

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<sup>114</sup> John W. Creswell, *A Concise Introduction to Mixed Methods Research* (SAGE, 2015), 56.

<sup>115</sup> John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Research Design : Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Fifth edition. edn.: SAGE, 2018), 3.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 10-11.

philosophical or methodological standpoint of the thesis.<sup>118</sup> The main argument for utilising this way of researching a subject is that the combination of quantitative statistical trends in a content analysis through the NVivo software with qualitative stories told through a Critical Discourse Analysis provides a collective strength and a better understanding of the research problem than either of the two data forms would have done alone.<sup>119</sup> The key is integrating these two sources of data and evaluating the outcome.

The rationale for conducting a mixed methods approach in this thesis is also the assumption that simply analysing the Standardisation Strategy with a critical discourse analysis only would not be enough to adequately eliminate researcher bias and fully understand the normative aspects of the European Commission discourse – a quantitative aspect to measure sheer numbers and identify the most common occurrences of words and expressions done by a software without previous experience and bias would be preferable in a combination with a qualitative analysis. There is however clear awareness of the process of coding being human,<sup>120</sup> and of the analysis software having to be programmed to some extent by the researcher. This thesis assumes that a content analysis in combination with a critical discourse analysis still is preferable to simply conducting a critical discourse analysis on its own.

The two types of data and data collection do differ and play equally important roles. The research will conduct systematic quantitative analysis to observe trends in contents, and then move forward with these data – which, to clarify, shed light on the observable discourses in sheer numbers – as the basis of the purposeful qualitative analysis (or explanation) of these discourses. The quantitative analysis is thus integrated with the qualitative ditto in such a way that it is impossible to separate the two and still conduct the research as intended – the thesis will thus make use of an *explanatory sequential design* in which the quantitative data are explained through a sequential qualitative method – here critical discourse analysis.<sup>121</sup> Instead of *merging* the data as within a convergent design, this thesis will work to *connect* the data. Starting out with a basic, simpler mixed methods design like the explanatory sequential design rather than an advanced design allows this project to put more time towards the analysis within the given time frame. If the analysis were to prove that it would be beneficial to utilise a more complex mixed methods design, this would be elaborated upon in the concluding discussions and encouraged for future research projects in the area. Otherwise, this would not be mentioned.

The theory on Normative Power Europe will inform the quantitative side of this research<sup>122</sup> and is further also intended to function as the basis of the qualitative side of the research.

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<sup>118</sup> Creswell, *A Concise Introduction to Mixed Methods Research.*, 2.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> Klaus Krippendorff, *Content Analysis : An Introduction to Its Methodology* (3rd edn.: SAGE, 2013), 41.

<sup>121</sup> Creswell, *A Concise Introduction to Mixed Methods Research.*, 6.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

## 4.2 Content analysis

Since the European Commission communicates its strategies and policy decisions to the wider public, this may count to the archetypal domain of content analysis – mass communication.<sup>123</sup> Researching communication through content analysis can shed light on how certain values and constructions of reality are distributed in society. This requires a vocabulary and a theoretical framework, which is to be applied during the process of analysis in this thesis. The intention is to first conduct a *sign-vehicle analysis* which means counting the number of times a certain word or phrase appears – procedures which classify content according to the psychophysical properties of the signs.<sup>124</sup> This is to be combined with conducting a *semantic content analysis* – counting the number of times that a certain word or phrase is referred to *irrespective of the words in particular that may be used to make the reference* – that is, procedures which classify signs according to their meanings.<sup>125</sup> As the descriptions of the two are rather similar, it is important to stress that these two modes of analysis provide the research with very different data. This thesis, being problem-driven, will naturally conduct a *problem-driven content analysis*<sup>126</sup> to find content analysis data to then analyse further through critical discourse analysis.

## 4.3 Discourse analysis

A *discourse* is a way of signifying a particular domain of social practice from a particular perspective<sup>127</sup> – putting the world into words.<sup>128</sup> Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) makes use of micro-level analysis of discourse, such as words, phrases, and conceptual metaphors in order to uncover the processes by which ideologies of power are created and “naturalised” in social life.<sup>129</sup> The aims of CDA-based work are to uncover and explain these practices – oftentimes in order to encourage resistance against them.<sup>130</sup> CDA combines critique of discourse and explanation of how discourse figures in existing social reality as a basis for action to change reality – without explanatory understanding of social reality between

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<sup>123</sup> Krippendorff, *Content Analysis : An Introduction to Its Methodology.*, 33.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 355.

<sup>127</sup> Ruth Wodak and Gilbert Weiss, *Critical Discourse Analysis : Theory and Interdisciplinarity* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 22.

<sup>128</sup> Susan G. Strauss and Parastou Feiz, *Discourse Analysis : Putting Our Worlds into Words* (Routledge, 2014), 1.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 312-313.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 313.

discourse and other elements of social life we cannot know what *needs* to be changed, what *can* be changed, and *how*.<sup>131</sup> This thesis will work with CDA assuming that language has a role in the construction of social reality<sup>132</sup> and that the social environment defines or constitutes social identities.<sup>133</sup> This thesis will however not necessarily argue that CDA works to *change reality* within this project, but will instead aim to uncover in what way language and norms from the Normative Power Europe framework constitute part of new EU policy developments within standardisation.

The plurality of theory and methodology within the school of CDA can be seen as a positive phenomenon and a specific strength, making it dynamic – considering especially social and linguistic theories.<sup>134</sup> Working with CDA as a method of research in mixed methods work can be seen as a suiting choice, since one aim of mixed methods research is to take many different views into account in the same project – ultimately making the result more dynamic and explanatory than what would have been possible using methods focusing in one direct line of sight. The theoretical constructions of discourse that CDA tries to operationalise can thus come from various disciplines – working inter/trans-disciplinarily across the logics of different disciplines (for example sociology and linguistics).<sup>135</sup> Plurality of theory *is* a strength, which this thesis will argue at every stage of the process. The interrelations between discourse and society are too complex not to be analysed adequately unless linguistic and sociological approaches are combined,<sup>136</sup> accomplishing a mediation between discourse and society. There is pragmatism involved in CDA as within the mixed methods approach, where criteria of utility are preferred when up against the concept of truth. This pragmatic approach would not seek to provide generalisations and context-less propositions, but to instead relate questions of theory formation and conceptualisation closely to the specific problems that are to be investigated in the specific research problem at hand.<sup>137</sup>

CDA has never claimed to be or provide one specific theory or methodology – studies instead derive from different theoretical approaches – with the particular interest in the relationship between language and power.<sup>138</sup> According to the CDA school, discourse is a form of social practice, helping to sustain and reproduce the social status quo and contributing to transforming it – giving rise to important issues of power. Thus, discursive practises can help produce and reproduce

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<sup>131</sup> Norman Fairclough, 'Cda as Dialectical Reasoning', in John Flowerdew and John E. Richardson (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Critical Discourse Studies* (Routledge, 2018), 13-26.

<sup>132</sup> Senem Aydin-Düzgit, 'Unravelling European Union Foreign Policy through Critical Discourse Analysis: Guidelines for Research', in Caterina Carta and Jean-Frederic Morin (eds.), *Eu Foreign Policy through the Lens of Discourse Analysis. Making Sense of Diversity* (Ashgate, 2014), 158-76., 158.

<sup>133</sup> Pollock, 'Theorizing Eu Policy-Making', 21.

<sup>134</sup> Wodak and Weiss, *Critical Discourse Analysis : Theory and Interdisciplinarity.*, 6.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

unequal power relations through the ways they represent things and position people.<sup>139</sup> Perhaps especially important for CDA and this thesis is to ‘demystify’ discourses by deciphering ideologies, with language gaining power by the use that powerful people make of it in their exercise of power – “critical” implying showing connections and causes that are hidden.<sup>140</sup> This thesis is working with CDA in such a way that it aims to uncover hidden expressions of the Normative Power Europe framework in the language of the Standardisation Strategy. Language can be used to challenge, subvert, or alter distributions of power, and CDA takes an interest in how linguistic forms are used in expressions and manipulations of power.<sup>141</sup> Since nothing in discourse is neutral and since every instance of discourse is motivated by perspective,<sup>142</sup> it is important to analyse and consider how certain expressions situate and structure society, which is what this thesis does. One main claim of CDA is that texts play a constitutive role in social structuration<sup>143</sup> – construction of ideology and power.<sup>144</sup> For the context of this thesis, the understanding of technical standards is thus moving away from being merely a technical set of tools and descriptions towards also becoming a strategic instrument of EU interests – suggested as being expressed through the Normative Power discourse of the European Commission.

Studies employing discourse analysis in EU foreign policy has at a general level opted for the Derrida- and Foucault-inspired poststructuralist tradition, focusing on for example deconstruction or analyses of key foreign policy notions such as the ‘state’ and ‘nation’ as macro methods of approaching texts.<sup>145</sup> Since post structural discourse theory – while useful in showing the dominant representations of the social world as well as its alternative representations – still pays very little attention to the ‘linguistic’ dimension through which subject identities are created.<sup>146</sup> That is why this thesis will instead make use of critical discourse analysis rooted in the social constructivist framework elaborated on previously in this section, thus being able to analyse texts in the context of EU policy with linguistic and argumentative tools.

One certain strand of CDA is *Discourse-Historical Approach* (DHA), which has a specific emphasis on identity construction – often with clear notions of ‘othering’ as the basic fundament of discourses of identity and difference.<sup>147</sup> DHA is further the only strand of CDA that so far has been used in European integration studies,<sup>148</sup> which would suggest that this is a preferred strand by several experienced researchers in the field, suggesting that it is a good choice also for

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 14; 36.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>142</sup> Strauss and Feiz, *Discourse Analysis : Putting Our Worlds into Words.*, 3.

<sup>143</sup> Wodak and Weiss, *Critical Discourse Analysis : Theory and Interdisciplinarity.*, 130.

<sup>144</sup> Strauss and Feiz, *Discourse Analysis : Putting Our Worlds into Words.*, 3.

<sup>145</sup> Aydin-Düzgit, 'Unravelling European Union Foreign Policy through Critical Discourse Analysis: Guidelines for Research', 158.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 159.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 161.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.



this thesis. Another argument for using the DHA approach in this thesis is that there are certain texts which can be subject to such analysis, including official declarations and foreign policy documents<sup>149</sup> – which includes European Commission decisions and strategies. However, looking to the previous comment on the relevance of identity to this thesis, a policy document could score low in articulating identity discourse since these documents are situated at the end of multiple party negotiations – therefore needing combination of another genre of text to see the full picture.<sup>150</sup> This is not what this thesis intends to do. Instead, this project could be better suited in analysing argumentation strategies, identifying the ‘type’ of foreign policy actor that the EU is (presumably normative) – as well as explaining the values that it is based on.<sup>151</sup> This may include the predication of the EU being an upholder of certain mechanisms which can be considered helping constitute the Normative Power Europe discourse. This is what this thesis intends to analyse. Since argumentation strategies are used within the DHA strand of CDA,<sup>152</sup> this will be the path to pursue in this work. Thus, the interpretation of the data derived from the content analysis will be conducted in line with the DHA strand of CDA. The purpose of this would be to interpret what type of values the European Commission expresses in order to pinpoint how the NPE-framework is represented and expressed within the Standardisation Strategy.

#### 4.4 Considering methodological challenges

Conducting a rigid three-step analysis within a six-month timeframe is a challenge. It is also a challenge to consider every aspect of every method that could have *possibly* been utilised for the best, most purposeful results. However, with the argumentation in the previous section, this research aims to conduct a solid case study within the means that are at hand and encourage further research throughout where different perspectives have the opportunity of being considered.

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 164.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 166.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 167.

## 4.5 Material and delimitations

### 4.5.1 The Standardisation Strategy as the sole material of analysis

There are several documents issued on the topic of the Standardisation Strategy, such as its surrounding explaining and complementary documents. This includes a Questions and Answers section on the Standardisation Strategy, the 2022 annual Union work programme for European standardisation, the annex for ditto, the roadmap (ARES) that covers the Strategy in its initiative phase, and a factsheet on standardisation. However, the purpose of this project is to directly analyse the core document, the Standardisation Strategy itself. The reason for this is that it is the most central steering document which the Commission communicates its efforts through. It is under ten pages long, and while such a small material does pose a challenge to a research project sample size, the purpose is not generalisability on the area of standards and norms in the EU, but a specific analysis on this particular document as it represents a new development. Using the surrounding documents as to open up the sample size would be a possibility for a future project, or a future extension of this project.

# 5 Analysis: Explaining the Normative Power ambitions in the Strategy

## 5.1 Content analysis

The quantitative content analysis will be conducted in two different steps, first counting the number of times that exact words from the nine norms occur in the Strategy, followed by a context-based analysis which takes proximity into account and measures the number of times that the expressions in the norms have occurred *or been referred to irrespective of which exact words are used in the Strategy text*. The two analysis modes are different in the respect that the sign – vehicle analysis is de-contextualised and only looks at the exact words as they appear irrespective of their proximity to any particular context. The semantic analysis will also count occurrences of the norms but will do so in context with surrounding sentences and contexts to acquire a deeper, more qualitative understanding as a second step to the content analysis, before completely moving to the deep qualitative mode of analysis that is Critical Discourse Analysis. Lastly in this section, the results from the two parts of content analysis will be evaluated and connected with the purpose of the thesis – to find out how the European Commission expresses ambitions of Normative Power in its 2022 Standardisation Strategy – and will also be operationalised in order to continue the process and begin the qualitative discourse analysis.

### 5.1.1 Sign – vehicle analysis

This first, rather simple, part of the analysis is making use of Klaus Krippendorff's *sign – vehicle analysis*, counting the number of times a word is occurring in the Standardisation Strategy irrespective of the *context* in which it appears.<sup>153</sup> It is thus de-contextualising the words, counting them no matter what they refer to. Using the software NVivo to perform a word frequency query and count has resulted in a list of the most frequently occurring words irrespective of their length in the Strategy. This short analysis will observe the word frequency list as well as perform free text searches in the Strategy PDF file to find the exact

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<sup>153</sup> Krippendorff, *Content Analysis : An Introduction to Its Methodology.*, 33.

number of times (“occurrences”) that the words used from the nine norms are represented within the Strategy. This is what is visualised using Figure 2.

**Figure 2. Table of sign – vehicle analysis occurrences in the Strategy**

<b>Norm</b>	<b>Exact occurrences in the Strategy</b>
Anti-discrimination/equality	0
Democracy	0 (2 for “democratic”)
Good governance	2 (4 for “governance” only)
Human rights	0
Liberty/freedom	0
Peace	0
Rule of law	0 (4 for “EU law”)
Social solidarity	0 (4 for “social” only)
Sustainable development	0 (2 for “sustainable” only)

*Source: author*

From Figure 2 it is clear that the Strategy holds very few explicit and exact mentions or occurrences of the nine norms as they are formulated in the original article<sup>154</sup> and the later reformulations or added formulations of equality and freedom. This is expected at this point considering the short length of the Strategy; however, this will be built upon with the implicit mentions of the norms through other formulations and references during the next part of analysis.

### 5.1.2 Semantic analysis – including operationalisation of the norms

This part of the analysis is making use of Krippendorff’s semantic analysis, where the purpose is to analyse the number of times a word, phrase or theme is occurring *no matter which words are used to make the reference*.<sup>155</sup> This is necessary as a complement to the sign – vehicle analysis since it considerably extends the list of occurrences for the nine norms in the Strategy text, as not all occurrences referring to them are using the specific words as seen within the sign – vehicle analysis. An example of this would be that the word “green” clearly in this context is referring to the norm “sustainable development”. However, “green” is not a part of the physical denomination “sustainable development” and is hence not considered in the sign – vehicle analysis while it still very clearly belongs to the norm or value. This is what the semantic analysis will shed light on in Figure 3. When performing this semantic analysis, it will be increasingly important to know what is being identified since this type of analysis is not “blindly”

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<sup>154</sup> Manners, 'Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms', ( *Journal of Common Market Studies*), 40 (2), 235-58.

<sup>155</sup> Krippendorff, *Content Analysis : An Introduction to Its Methodology.*, 50.

quantitative in the way that the sign – vehicle analysis is; printing a list with little-to-no researcher involvement. The semantic analysis demands more manual work and involves researcher interpretation to a greater extent. In order to motivate what to identify as an occurrence of each norm in the Strategy during this part of the analysis, the norms will need to be properly operationalised – their inner meanings explained, and the researcher’s understanding of them explicitly uncovered. Therefore, the following section will make use of expressions and explanations provided by the United Nations on these nine norms and values. The advantage of using the UN and not for example the EU Treaties in this analysis is that the UN provides definitions and descriptions of these norms which are widely accepted by numerous states and organisations. Considering the foreign policy element of this thesis and the wider global world, the UN system is relevant by functioning as the inner core of the mandated multilateral machinery in the global governance architecture.<sup>156</sup>

Moving to the operationalisation of the norms, it is important to note that these norms are broad and that each one could be discussed at length. However, they will only be briefly explained in order to bring forth the types of contents that can be associated with them from a UN perspective. They will each be presented below in separate sections, in alphabetical order.

Regarding anti-discrimination or equality, the UN expresses it as being part of the foundation of the rule of law – and that all persons, institutions, and entities including the State itself have dedicated themselves to respect the equal rights of all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion. This ties into the international human rights legal framework with tools to combat specific forms of discrimination.<sup>157</sup> For the purposes of this thesis and according with this definition of anti or non-discrimination, discrimination against for example stakeholders on the market will not be considered belonging to the anti-discrimination or equality norm and will thus not be included in the norm occurrences in this analysis should they appear in the Standardisation Strategy. This now defined type of anti-discrimination instead falls under the human rights umbrella.

Democracy, being a largely discussed concept, is not easily defined. However, the UN expresses that the will of the people through free and fair elections, free and pluralistic media, transparent public administration, and freedom of expression, association and opinion are important aspects in order to foster democracy.<sup>158</sup> Again, democracy in this sense is human rights oriented. Therefore, the encouragement of civil society to have a say in the standardisation process will, for example, be considered as fostering democracy.

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<sup>156</sup> Ramesh Thakur, 'An International Organisation for Keeping the Peace', in Ramesh Thakur (ed.), *The United Nations, Peace and Security: From Collective Security to the Responsibility to Protect* (2 edn.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 27-76.

<sup>157</sup> United Nations, 'Equality and Non-Discrimination', <<https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/thematic-areas/human-rights/equality-and-non-discrimination/>>, accessed 28/04 2022.

<sup>158</sup> United Nations, 'Global Issues: Democracy', <<https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/democracy>>, accessed 28/04 2022.

Good governance is tightly linked to the rule of law, according to the UN.<sup>159</sup> More specifically, good governance is expressed to contain accountability, transparency, responsiveness, equitability and inclusivity, effectiveness and efficiency, participation, and consensus.<sup>160</sup> Good governance applies directly to the steering state and governing institutions such as the European Commission – where transparency, publication, inclusion, urgency, and oversight are also important. This will possibly be much reflected on in the analysis since the Standardisation Strategy is a steering document from a governing institution.

The human rights norm encompasses elements of other norms such as anti-discrimination and is a cross-cutting theme in many policy areas. The UN defines human rights as inherent to all human beings, including the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work and education, and many more spanning the areas of civil, cultural, economic, political, and social rights.<sup>161</sup> It could be difficult to decide what belongs where in this analysis. For the purposes of reading the text as literally as possible, meaning looking at the norms and values as they appear and not necessarily as what they *can entail* if interpreted, the term “democracy” should be filed under the *democracy* norm and not under *human rights*. Instead, the “respect for human rights” as expressed in the original article<sup>162</sup> will be counted as an occurrence if this respect is expressed as a general aim connected to people in formulations such as “the safety of EU citizens” instead of an occurrence being counted every time a human rights oriented normative element – such as anti-discrimination – is mentioned.

Liberty or freedom also falls under the human rights umbrella since the UN expresses human rights as containing the right to *life and liberty*.<sup>163</sup> As noted with the human rights category, liberty or freedom will only be counted as occurring if it explicitly occurs in the Strategy in a context where it is clear that the purpose is to express the norm of liberty or freedom, and will thus not be counted in as a part of the respect for human rights norm every time that an element of human rights would be mentioned.

Peace is, according to the UN, to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and preventing disputes from escalating into war.<sup>164</sup> This thesis is taking place within the field of industry and policy discussion, but the normative concept of peace is never far away, especially in times of crisis. Even though the concept of peace perhaps is less visible on a larger scale within the Strategy, it is

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<sup>159</sup> United Nations, 'Good Governance', <<https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/thematic-areas/governance/good-governance/>>, accessed 28/04 2022.

<sup>160</sup> Yap Kioe Sheng, 'What Is Good Governance?', <<https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/good-governance.pdf>>, accessed 28/04 2022.

<sup>161</sup> United Nations, 'Global Issues: Human Rights', <<https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/human-rights/>>, accessed 02/05 2022.

<sup>162</sup> Manners, 'Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms', ( *Journal of Common Market Studies*), 40 (2), 235-58.

<sup>163</sup> Nations, 'Global Issues: Human Rights',

<sup>164</sup> United Nations, 'Global Issues: Peace and Security', <<https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/peace-and-security/>>, accessed 02/05 2022.

always relevant to the global context – peace is relevant to the bigger picture of also the new industrial policy developments like the one within standards. This “bigger picture”-discussion is an important one to have in a concluding section, no matter if it exists within the physical attributes of the Strategy that is to be analysed in this thesis or not.

The rule of law is according to the UN in many ways the principle which supposedly should govern all public and private persons, institutions, and entities – including the state itself – making them accountable to laws that are publicly promulgated, equally enforced, and independently adjudicated, laws which also are consistent with international human rights norms and standards.<sup>165</sup> The rule of law further requires adherence to the principles of supremacy of the law, accountability to the law, equality before the law, fairness in the applications of the law, separation of powers, participation in decision-making, legal certainty, avoidance of arbitrariness, and procedural and legal transparency.<sup>166</sup> The rule of law is fundamental to the stability of international peace and security, in order to achieve economic and social progress and development, and protect people’s rights and fundamental freedoms. This principle is highly relevant to the EU, where it has been debated in relation to the concerning developments of decreasing respect for the rule of law in several EU member states.<sup>167</sup> Therefore, the Commission would presumably want to stress the importance of EU law in the policy developments. If these mentions or occurrences of EU law would occur, the analysis will consider if it is relevant to the rule of law principle.

Considering social solidarity, the UN expresses its own very creation as drawing the peoples and the nations of the world together to promote peace, human rights, and social and economic development – aiming for unity and harmony, collective security relying on the solidarity of its members to maintain international peace and security.<sup>168</sup> Global cooperation and solidarity determines this norm, where those who benefit least deserve help from those who benefit most – for example in combating poverty. This analysis will therefore look at social solidarity from the standpoint of helping other actors globally in a solidary manner, and when the Strategy mentions social ambitions.

Finally on sustainable development, the UN sheds light on it requiring an integrated approach considering environmental concerns along with economic development, meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.<sup>169</sup> Outside of the UN definition, a note must be made on this particular norm. It is not equal to sustainability, and it

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<sup>165</sup> United Nations, 'What Is the Rule of Law', <<https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/what-is-the-rule-of-law/>>, accessed 23/04 2022.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Pech Laurent and Kochenov Dimitry, 'Respect for the Rule of Law in the Case Law of the European Court of Justice: A Casebook Overview of Key Judgments since the Portuguese Judges Case', (SIEPS - the Swedish Institute for European Policy Studies, 2021), 1-234.

<sup>168</sup> United Nations, 'International Human Solidarity Day 20 December', <<https://www.un.org/en/observances/human-solidarity-day>>, accessed 02/05 2022.

<sup>169</sup> United Nations, 'Sustainability', <<https://www.un.org/en/academic-impact/sustainability>>, accessed 02/05 2022.

is not entirely clear as to what the EU’s commitment to sustainable development actually entails. It is a problematic concept for the EU to approach because of it not falling neatly into its traditional bureaucratic competencies.<sup>170</sup> What is clear, however, is that there are three pillars to sustainable development; the environmental, the social, and the economic.<sup>171</sup> Thus, this thesis will analyse when sustainable development aims are expressed in relation to these three pillars. For example, the increasing threat of climate change is a large push for the sustainable development initiatives globally, and the Commission would likely express such aims in the Standardisation Strategy perhaps in relation to the Green Deal. These would thus be counted as belonging to the sustainable development norm if they contain environmental, social, or economic parameters.

**Figure 3. Table of semantic analysis norm occurrences in the Strategy**

<b>Norm</b>	<b>Occurrences in the Strategy</b>
Anti-discrimination/equality	1
Democracy	9
Good governance	84
Human rights	3
Liberty/freedom	0
Peace	0
Rule of law	5
Social solidarity	11
Sustainable development	34

*Source: author*

Explaining Figure 3: firstly, an “occurrence” in this semantic analysis refers to one mention in the text that can be attributed to the respective norm or value. Such a mention will be counted per sentence, i.e., if one paragraph would refer to a norm in two different sentences, this would be counted as two separate occurrences. This would be motivated through the separate formulations being separate mentions, thus “occurring” twice in the text.

There is one occurrence of anti-discrimination or equality within the Strategy. “[...] ensure that European standardisation activities meet the needs to make the EU economy more green, digital, fair and resilient.” The word “fair” is in this sentence interpreted in the meaning “on equal terms”. Otherwise, the Strategy is an economically oriented policy document and thus does not speak of groups of

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<sup>170</sup> Simon Lightfoot and Jon Burchell, 'The European Union and the World Summit on Sustainable Development: Normative Power Europe in Action', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 43/1 (03/01/ 2005), 75-96., 83.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.



people or individuals on a basis of for example sex, ethnicity, or religion. This entails that occurrences of this type of norm would be rare, as has been shown.

Democracy is a norm that is expressed more often in the Strategy. These occurrences include the literal mention of the word “democratic” on two occasions as demonstrated in Figure 2. Democracy is further occurring through encouraging the involvement of the democratically elected European Parliament as well as the Council in the EU standardisation discussion. The Commission also expresses concern for the decision-making process within ETSI allowing an uneven voting power to some corporate interests – democracy is about fostering equal and even voting power for the people. The Commission also expresses that “[...] administrative and good governance principles need to be put in place when the European standardisation organisations act upon European standardisation requests and develop standards used to show compliance with rules imposed in the interest of EU citizens.”, which sheds light on a democratically anchored interest of the citizen in the Strategy. “Civil society” is mentioned in similar ways and contexts.

Good governance turns out to be a large part of the normative framework within the Strategy. As expressed by the UN, good governance contains accountability, transparency, responsiveness, equitability and inclusivity, effectiveness and efficiency, participation, and consensus. An argument could be made to state that this policy development is in part a *response* to the recent developments on a global scale, making the Strategy in its entirety and the Commission initiative behind it part of the good governance norm, pushing for timely development in this policy area. Therefore, sentences such as “Setting global standards in support of a resilient, green and digital EU single market” will be counted as an occurrence of the good governance norm when considering responsiveness. Much of the Strategy is focused on including stakeholders, fostering values, and considering education on standardisation on a large scale. All of these are different aspects of good governance, and that is the reason why there are so many occurrences in the Strategy.

Human rights are considered where the Strategy mentions the protection and care for people. This appears three times in the Strategy, firstly in the formulation “[...] plus many more European standards and technical specifications to promote inter-operability, the safety of EU citizens and protection of the environment.” Secondly, it appears here: “As standards do not only regulate the technical aspect of a product, but *can have an impact on people, workers and the environment*, an inclusive and multi-stakeholder approach can bring important check and balances to standards-making.” Thirdly, “They [standards] are embedded in policy objectives geared towards [...] *safety, consumer, worker and environmental protection* [...].” The italics are added by the researcher to highlight the suggested elements of human rights.

Liberty or freedom as a norm or concept is not explicitly referred to in the context of this policy area but could well be implicitly referred to in the many mentions of “EU values” throughout the Strategy. The same can be said about the peace norm. The formulation “EU values” will however not be interpreted in this

analysis – but the formulation is interesting enough to be mentioned and will be elaborated upon at a concluding stage in the thesis.

Regarding the rule of law, the Strategy communicates this norm through stressing the importance of compliance with EU law, as in “[...] the European Standardisation System has delivered more than 3600 harmonised standards allowing companies to demonstrate compliance with EU law [...]”. There is a total of five times where this occurs in the Strategy.

With social solidarity, the Commission expresses an aim to share the EU’s experience within standardisation with other regions of the world, supposedly in a spirit of global economic and social cooperation. The Commission also expresses “social ambitions”. These are referred to 11 times throughout the Strategy.

Sustainable development includes the environmental, the economic, and the social pillars as previously mentioned. Therefore, this analysis will consider these three when the norm is occurring. The environmental aspect is relevant where the Commission expresses aims to promote sustainability including the European Green Deal, and the economic and social pillars are considered where the Commission expresses aims to cooperate with other regions of the world on standards and economics. Much like good governance, sustainable development turned out to be a largely prioritised norm with 34 occurrences throughout the Strategy.

### 5.1.3 Operationalisation of data in preparation for discourse analysis

To continue the analysis in accordance with the purpose of the thesis – to uncover how the European Commission expresses ambitions of Normative Power in its 2022 Standardisation Strategy – the content analysis data as presented in Figures 2 and 3 will need to be further operationalised and explained. In purpose of refreshing the memory, the nine EU norms (or values) are: peace, liberty/freedom, democracy, rule of law, respect for human rights, social solidarity, anti-discrimination/equality, sustainable development, and good governance.<sup>172</sup> To operationalise the data – word and formulation occurrence counts as seen in Figures 2 and 3 – this will be the foundation for the aim to explain the different normative discourses and their frequency within the Strategy. The discourse analysis will be conducted through presenting and discussing the two most prominent discourses – good governance and sustainable development – and then together discussing the other seven considering the very small number of occurrences uncovered by the content analysis. The analysis will be making use of quotes from the Strategy, exemplifying the Commission’s normative aims.

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<sup>172</sup> Manners, 'Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms', ( *Journal of Common Market Studies*), 40 (2), 235-58.

## 5.2 Discourse analysis: The Commission's Normative Power ambitions

This discourse analysis is based upon the previous two-part content analysis of this thesis, where different normative discourses have been operationalised and uncovered. Through using quotes from the Strategy, this discourse analysis will shed light on what the Commission's ambitions are, in accordance with the research question of uncovering how the Commission expresses ambitions of Normative Power in the Strategy. *All* quotes throughout this analysis are directly obtained from the Strategy.

### 5.2.1 84 occurrences in the Strategy: good governance

Good governance is a norm expressing the importance of accountability, transparency, responsiveness, equitability and inclusivity, effectiveness and efficiency, participation, and consensus according to the United Nations. Some elements of this norm proved to be quite prominent in the Strategy, in the form of different discourses. The good governance norm was therefore broken down into its discourses, and these were found out to be the efficiency discourse, the inclusivity/participation discourse, the leadership/responsiveness discourse, and the transparency discourse. The analysis below will make use of quotes from the Strategy which showcase these discourses.

Firstly, the Commission stresses efficiency as part of good governance in the development of standards. The Commission also goes further by expressing that there are critical standardisation *urgencies* that need action in a *timely manner*. This is a reoccurring theme throughout the Strategy and is exemplified by the quotes below in the Commission's encouragement of ESOs to prioritise the delivery of standards without delay.

Therefore, on top of the ongoing standardisation work across the industrial ecosystems, the European Union faces today critical 'standardisation urgencies', areas in which standards are needed in the coming years in order to avoid strategic dependencies and to manifest the EU's global leadership in green and digital technologies.

[...] an urgent need for the development of standards has been identified [...] In order to address these standardisation urgencies and better identify and anticipate future urgencies and needs, the Commission will put forward a range of measures. [...] the Commission will imminently act on the standardisation urgencies listed above [...] The Commission will launch standardisation requests, engage with the respective stakeholder communities in a timely manner and back up the work also with financing. The Commission calls upon the European Standardisation Organisations

(ESOs) to prioritise the delivery of this work without delay. [...] fosters timely standards.

Regarding inclusivity or participation, the Commission expresses the importance of including other stakeholders and entities such as the European Parliament in the discussions on standardisation priorities, as expressed through “The involvement of the European Parliament and Council in the discussion on the priorities for EU standardisation is key to ensure political concertation.” The Commission also holds the process accountable through expressing the aim to “launch a process of reviewing existing standards, to identify needs for revisions or development of new standards to meet the objectives of the European Green Deal and Europe’s Digital Decade and support the resilience of the single market.” To further encourage oversight and responsiveness, the Commission expresses the aims which will be executed on a technical level as follows, including creating the function of a chief standardisation officer to steer the work.

[...] on a technical level, the Commission will establish an EU excellence hub on standards to better coordinate and leverage the existing standardisation expertise scattered within the Commission, EU agencies and Joint Undertakings. In close collaboration with Member States, the hub will work on the anticipation of future standardisation needs, support the work in priority standardisation areas, and monitor international standardisation activities. The hub will make it possible to better respond to public sector requests for the development of guidelines and specifications in areas like eID, eGovernment or the European Blockchain Service Infrastructure. The Commission will create the function of a Chief Standardisation Officer to steer the work of the excellence hub and ensure overall oversight and coordination of the various standardisation activities across the Commission.

Further regarding inclusivity, the Commission aims to include EU Member States, civil society, and SMEs in the process to a higher degree in order to improve the access to standardisation development and standards themselves. This is mentioned both partly in the previous and in the following quotes.

[...] the Commission will launch a peer review process between EU Member States and national standardisation bodies to exchange good practices and foster new ideas on how to facilitate SME-friendly conditions and the involvement of civil society and users across the Union. In addition, the Commission will leverage existing networks – including the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN), to reach a broader SMEs audience and organise trainings, information sessions and guiding material. [...] Will launch a peer review process amongst Member States and national standardisation bodies by the end of 2022 to achieve better inclusiveness, including of civil society and users, and SMEfriendly conditions for standardisation.

Upholding the integrity, inclusiveness and accessibility of the European standardisation system – putting good governance principles in place [...]

Including the standardising bodies to a greater degree and building inclusivity bridges between science and industry are measures of good governance expressed below. As are further inclusivity expressions and encouragements of the participation of Member States and civil society. The important mention of technical barriers to trade further points to the incentive that markets have on the development and adoption of standards. The third quote stresses the importance of stakeholder participation and international cooperation.

[...] The Commission’s annual ‘foresight on standardisation’ action under the Putting (more) Science into Standards (PSIS) initiative, in cooperation with CEN and CENELEC, is an important exercise to identify future standardisation opportunities early on and build important bridges between the research, innovator and standardiser communities.

The Commission encourages EU Member States to support the participation of civil society, SME experts, trade unions and consumer representatives in international standardisation activities. As standards do not only regulate the technical aspect of a product, but can have an impact on people, workers and the environment, an inclusive and multi-stakeholder approach can bring important check and balances to standards-making. [...] In trade agreements concluded by the EU, chapters on technical barriers to trade and good regulatory practices already play a role in promoting EU standardisation objectives, notably by fostering the adoption of international standards by trading partners and through cooperation between the respective standardising bodies.

Promote international cooperation on standardisation and EU standards with the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe (NDICI-GE) and Horizon Europe, also with a view to support stakeholder participation in international standardisation (SMEs, civil society, academics).

The Commission then moves on to stress the importance of taking leadership in this policy development, responding to the recent increases in global competition, and listening to the democratic interests of EU citizens.

With this strategy, the Commission underpins the EU’s role as a global frontrunner in the development of standards, supporting EU values and providing industries with a competitive edge.

The Commission is concerned that today's decision-making processes within the European standardisation organisations, in particular in ETSI, allow an uneven voting power to certain corporate interests: some multinationals have acquired more votes than the bodies that represent the entire stakeholder community [...] the Commission believes that administrative and good governance principles need to be put in place when the European standardisation organisations act upon European standardisation requests and develop standards used to show compliance with rules imposed in the interest of EU citizens.

[...] the Commission, in close cooperation with other key stakeholders, will present a plan to promote the use of existing hybrid civil/defence standards and take leadership in the development of new standards at international level. [...] The role of international research and innovation cooperation is equally important to promote the EU's leading role as a global standardssetter.

The principle of good governance further includes transparency, which is also elaborated upon by the Commission in this Strategy. This too ties into the inclusivity discourse mentioned previously, as transparency is discussed in connection with stakeholders. Efficiency is also relevant in this aspect.

Through a balanced representation that includes societal stakeholders in national standardisation bodies, this will enhance the openness, transparency and inclusiveness of the process. SMEs are important drivers of innovation and users of standards. However, their access to standard development processes and to standards needs to be improved.

The Commission expresses aims of transparency also in relation to the European standardisation organisations (ESOs) and the WTO – which automatically makes inclusivity relevant in this context as well. Within transparency, there is a mention of the modernisation of governance, which may well suit the narrative of a transparent organisation. There is also a mention of effectiveness in the same transparency context, as seen in the second quote below, where the Commission notes that the coordination between member states, standardisation bodies and industries is ineffective regarding international standardisation. In the third quote below, the Commission expresses the benefits of transparency to the system.

[...] the Commission calls on the ESOs to make proposals by the end of 2022 to modernise their governance. This should include addressing uneven and intransparent representation of industrial interests and increasing the involvement of SMEs, civil society and users. [...] Calls on the European standardisation organisations to make proposals by the end of 2022 to modernise their governance to fully represent the public interest and interests of SMEs, civil society and users and to facilitate access to standards.

EU Member States, EU standardisation bodies and EU industries do not effectively coordinate and share resources in support of international standardisation processes and principles of the World Trade Organization (WTO), such as openness, transparency and consensus. [...] Coordination between EU Member States, national standardisation bodies and EU stakeholders must be improved to strengthen the EU's voice in global standardisation.

Transparency in the standards making process will contribute to removing bottlenecks in the standards-development process and making the European standardisation system more efficient. Transparency will also allow public and private actors to have a better grasp of the current gaps and future needs of standards. The engagement and regular contribution of all relevant actors – including the inter-institutional partners, European standardisation organisations, civil society, industry and academia – and the effectiveness of checks and balances will be critical for the success of the European standardisation system.

To summarise the analysis of the good governance discourses, the Commission is aiming to set “[...] global standards in support of a resilient, green and digital EU single market”, thus aiming to create “Standards to foster EU values, policy objectives and regulatory implementation”, strengthening the EU and making it more resilient through a responsive Strategy on Standardisation. Through the good governance glasses, it is observable that “creating a level-playing field in the single market for businesses and increasing consumer confidence” is an ambition in the spirit of inclusivity at the same time as it aims to strengthen business competitiveness on the single market. The following quote exemplifies the discourses on efficiency and combines it with participation/inclusivity, at the same time as it clearly expresses environmental ambitions and ambitions to reduce dependencies. These discourses plus transparency all showcase the Commission's aim to be a political institution that practices good governance in this policy development, and that wishes to do so by connecting several aspects of this norm.

Europe's competitiveness, technological sovereignty, ability to reduce dependencies and protection of EU values, including our social and environmental ambitions, will depend on how successful European actors are in standardisation at international level. [...] At the same time, European standardisation must respond to an increasingly rapid innovation pace and needs to deliver standards fast, while preserving high-quality outputs. [...] In particular in new and emerging technologies, the European standardisation system often fails to deliver in a timely manner and hence loses the important ‘first mover’ advantage through standardisation.

Findings of the good governance discourse analysis show that much of the Strategy is about the Commission taking control of the situation with standards, putting the EU on top of the global scene with the goal of achieving a regulatory advantage, moving first in international standardisation and gaining advantages in purpose of securing a resilient single market at home in the EU. This is communicated with a clear focus and central arguments from good governance, repeatedly stressing inclusion of Member States and stakeholders, increasing transparency and oversight of voting powers in the standardisation organisations, as well as increasing the efficiency of the system and the deliverance of standards in a timely manner. Findings also show that much of the contents in these discourses prove to appear indivisible, by that the Commission stresses several aspects of good governance in different parts of the Strategy, binding them together with one another in ways that implicitly suggest that to achieve one, the work must also be including another – as seen above with for example transparency and inclusion of stakeholders.

## 5.2.2 34 occurrences in the Strategy: sustainable development

Within sustainable development, there are aspects of economic, social, and environmental character. This norm, although less frequently occurring in the Strategy, still occurs often enough to have its own section in this analysis. Exerting influence through standards can come with specific aims, as expressed in “Setting global standards in support of a resilient, green and digital EU single market”, where “protection of the environment” plays a part for the Commission. The sustainable development aims are multiple times expressed through competitiveness combined with environmental ambitions, as in the quote below.

[...] creating a level-playing field in the single market for businesses and increasing consumer confidence. [...] Europe’s competitiveness, technological sovereignty, ability to reduce dependencies and protection of EU values, including our social and environmental ambitions. [...] standards do not only have to deal with technical components, but also incorporate core EU democratic values and interests, as well as green and social principles. [...] Europe needs the best standardisation experts to successfully pursue its global ambitions and support a digital, green and resilient single market.

The Commission also expresses its sustainable development aims *through* leveraging the standardisation system and the single market, thereby achieving success in the twin transitions as well as supporting for example recycling and the clean hydrogen value chain as seen in the quotes on the next page. This also holds the good governance element of inclusivity, as the Commission again expresses the need for stakeholder involvement.



Leveraging the European standardisation system – to deliver on the twin green and digital transition and support the resilience of the single market. The digital and green transition of EU industries and a well-functioning and resilient single market rely on a standardisation system that adequately reflects EU policy priorities. The EU’s ambitions towards a climate neutral, resilient and circular economy cannot be delivered without European standards on testing methods, management systems or interoperability solutions. [...] In short, the EU’s policy ambitions on a resilient, green and digital economy will fall short if the accompanying standards are defined by other regions in the world. [...] in order to avoid strategic dependencies and to manifest the EU’s global leadership in green and digital technologies.

[...] standards to support the recycling of critical raw materials (CRM); standards to support the roll-out of the clean hydrogen value chain; standards supporting low-carbon cement given the significant emissions-saving potential [...]

[...] ensure that European standardisation activities meet the needs to make the EU economy more green, digital, fair and resilient [...] new standards to meet the objectives of the European Green Deal [...] Public procurement as a tool to promote the uptake of standards for innovative, green and digital products is another area that the Commission will assess together with stakeholders.

The Commission also includes some concrete measures that are to be taken within the field of sustainable development, as seen below.

The introduction of sustainability requirements under Ecodesign and the forthcoming Sustainable Products Initiative will require the development of standards for the European market. [...] The Commission also monitors international standardisation on space traffic management and is developing an EU approach, given its direct impact on the safe and sustainable use of outer space [...]

In relation to sustainable development, the Commission further stresses the importance of cooperation, possibly in the spirit of all three pillars (social, economic, and environmental).

The Commission will continue its dialogue with other countries such as China and explore possible areas of cooperation, for example in support of the European Green Deal. To strengthen the economic relationship of the Union with neighbourhood countries and other important partner regions like Africa or Latin America and the Caribbean, it is necessary to promote and facilitate the adoption of European and international standards by these countries, as well as their participation in standardsetting.

For the final example quote on sustainable development, the Commission stresses the purpose of the “bigger picture” when considering standards, again including environmental protection as well as a climate-neutral, resilient and circular economy.

Standards are not a purpose in itself. They are embedded in policy objectives geared towards industrial competitiveness, free movement of goods and services in the internal market, innovation, safety, consumer, worker and environmental protection as well as open strategic autonomy and a climate-neutral, resilient and circular economy.

Findings of the sustainable development discourse analysis show that the Commission has several perspectives and discourses around this norm. This is communicated with a clear focus and central arguments on good governance, repeatedly stressing the ambition of making the EU economy greener through standards. Findings also show that much of this is indivisible, by that the Commission stresses several aspects of sustainable development in different parts of the Strategy, binding them together with one another and with the formulation “EU values” as well as with mechanisms of good governance such as inclusivity.

### 5.2.3 The less frequently occurring norms plus a noteworthy discovery

As the seven remaining norms have significantly fewer or no mentions in the Strategy, they hold less total power over the analysis of the Commission’s normative ambitions compared to good governance and sustainable development, as there simply is less material to analyse. However, the interesting thing in this analysis is to note that they are mentioned *at all*, considering the economic and market power nature of this policy document and development. The occurrences of these norms have largely been mentioned and quoted in the explanations following Figure 3, however for the purpose of exemplifying, the below quote sheds light on how competitiveness, the public interest, sustainability, and democratic values ultimately are tied together in this policy document.

[...] the Commission is committed to making the European standardisation system more functional and agile, to deliver on the standards that make our industries more competitive, serve the EU’s public interest, promote sustainability, and preserve and reinforce democratic values.

Besides the seven very specific norms occurring throughout the Strategy, one noteworthy mention must be made. The Commission's frequent mentions of "The fostering of EU values and interests", is a normatively coded expression or discourse that appears of some importance to the Strategy. It appears for the first time in the first heading on page one, and later 10 more times throughout the Strategy. It is a diffuse discourse, where it is difficult to analyse what is actually being referred to as important EU values and interests. This analysis does not intend to elaborate on this, but still finds it interesting enough to mention. Further noteworthy is the discovery of the Commission's ambition to promote a more *strategic approach* in order to secure EU competitiveness at home. This analysis does not wish to file this expression under a particular norm, but the discourse is particularly important to take into consideration when analysing this policy area considering the developments of crises in Europe and beyond. This thesis does not aim to answer whether this discourse has been more prominent in this policy development than in other EU areas at different times but will exemplify the occurrences in the Strategy with quotes below as to shed light on a discussion that would be beneficial to have.

The EU and its Member States must promote a more strategic approach to international standardisation activities [...] in order to ensure the EU's global competitiveness, security and open strategic autonomy, as well as the ability of the EU to promote its values.

Monitor the effective implementation of existing commitments on standardisation in EU trade agreements and use such trade agreements, as well as regulatory dialogues and digital partnerships, to cooperate on standardisation with like-minded partners in strategic areas and coordinate positions in international standardisation bodies.

They anticipate standardisation needs and link strategic priorities with pre-normative research. [...] A consistent approach to facilitate standardisation activities and raise strategic awareness among researchers and innovators will be promoted by a dedicated European Code of Practice for researchers on standardisation.

They [standards] are embedded in policy objectives geared towards industrial competitiveness, free movement of goods and services in the internal market, innovation, safety, consumer, worker and environmental protection as well as open strategic autonomy and a climate-neutral, resilient and circular economy.

### 5.3 Analysis findings

The previous section has conducted a content analysis which provided data for a discourse analysis. Through these, the analysis has found that the Strategy contains occurrences of seven of the nine norms as expressed by the Normative Power Europe framework – peace and liberty or freedom were both absent. Two of the seven occurring norms stand out and are surprisingly particularly prominent. These two are the good governance and sustainable development norms. The discourse analysis found that the Strategy is a means for the European Commission to communicate what it wants the standardisation policy area to develop into, mainly through measures of good governance, and sustainable development. This is to be attained through several measures, often claiming to consider normative values and interests in the process, with discourses on good governance elements such as transparency, inclusivity, and efficiency. Considering the economic and market power nature of the standardisation policy area it is perhaps even more surprising that other values such as democracy, anti-discrimination/equality, human rights, rule of law, and social solidarity in fact *are* mentioned in this very specific administratively, economically, and industrially fuelled policy document. This shows that the EU *does* wish to include its Normative Power while developing this policy area, not only through administrative norms such as good governance, but also through norms of human rights such as democracy and social solidarity – although to a visibly lesser degree. The analysis further shows that many of the discourses derived from the norms are indivisible in this context, meaning that the Commission expresses one in connection with another combining multiple aims. This was surprising to note during analysis, as every norm was coded separately in the content analysis according to the UN definitions.

The suggested “indivisibility” has not been elaborated upon during analysis. The discourses on “EU values” and strategic dependencies earned a special mention in the very last part of the analysis – they are quite prominent when reading carefully, but shall only be mentioned out of interest as it is not the purpose of analysis to define these expressions. They do however bear grounds for further interesting and important discussions.

This analysis is to be put into context with the recent developments in global affairs – and the Commission repeatedly states that the EU’s aims to “catch up” with other big international players to become a world leading actor in forming international technical standards. Attaining the “first mover” privilege of having a fast-moving standardisation process is now very much a priority to the Commission in this re-emergent policy area. To explicitly answer the research question, *How does the European Commission express ambitions of Normative Power in its 2022 Standardisation Strategy?*, the *how* has been explained through the sequential analysis, showcasing in what ways the norms are mentioned, and deepening the discussion by including the discourses in the largest occurring norm that had a material large enough to allow for analysis. As previously cited in this thesis, although the Normative Power framework emphasises the ability to use

normative justification *rather than the ability to use material incentives* or physical force,<sup>173</sup> this thesis has argued that economics and norms are not existing in a vacuum and can be utilised together to help explain changing circumstances. The Market Power Europe conceptualisation includes emphasising not only the capitalist and neo-liberal aspects, but also the importance of interventions in the market via economic and social regulation. This recognises that economic and social agendas co-exist on the EU agenda – but does not entail certain normative claims.<sup>174</sup> This analysis has, as a complement to these citations, provided a perspective on such normative claims existing in a Market Power sphere, arguably of strategic importance to the developments of the European industry today.

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<sup>173</sup> Manners, 'The European Union's Normative Power: Critical Perspectives and Perspectives on the Critical', 230.

<sup>174</sup> Damro, 'The European Union as 'Market Power Europe''.

## 6 Conclusion

The following conclusion will be based on the findings in this thesis and the process of the work. The analysis above sought to identify the ambitions of Normative Power that the European Commission has expressed in the 2022 Standardisation Strategy, belonging to a policy area recently brought up on the agenda after decades of low activity priority. The findings show that the multitude of good governance and sustainable development norm occurrences in the Strategy compared to the other norms was surprising. The thesis was adapted to this because of the discussion on these two norms needing more space in comparison to the other seven norms once it was clear that they were so much more frequently occurring in the Strategy and thus providing significantly more material to analyse. However, it was also surprising that other norms with a focus on human rights such as democracy were mentioned at multiple occasions. These two perspectives were interesting to uncover, although no in-depth discussion on the potential that some norms are economic, and others have more elements of human rights has taken place in this thesis. That will have to be encouraged for future research.

Looking at the discourse analysis, it must be mentioned that it is quite quote heavy. This is here considered a “necessary evil” when analysing discourse; describing and explaining discourse craves quite hefty samples of text where the discourse appears in order to exemplify and argue appropriately. This is also the case in this thesis. Regarding the formulation of the research question, the sub-question *What are the geopolitical strategical drivers and contexts for these formulations?* was initially considered as a complement to the main question but was later removed because of the time frame and the too many focal points. The original question, that was kept, proved to provide a significantly more complex discussion than anticipated and supposedly enough material for an analytical project. However, the geopolitical and strategical drivers and contexts are briefly explained in the background section, to give an idea of what the developments look like on the global scale and what the challenges there are for the EU. In the end, this did not need to be part of the analysis. However, questions on the topic of geopolitical strategic drivers are very interesting and would have been elaborated upon if provided with more time allowing for the incorporation of more material. Another small change was almost included in the main question; *How and why does the European Commission express ambitions of Normative Power in its 2022 Standardisation Strategy.* The observant reader notices that the *why* was removed in the final research question. This once again because of the *why* being more of a question that can be explained in connection to a discussion on the background. Including these two changes would make the final question less focused, which possibly would have been a con for the overall structure of the

thesis. Other ideas for sub-questions and discussion included *What is the relationship between standardisation and the twin transitions?*, and ideas briefly touched upon strategic autonomy. The latter proved to be quite present in the Strategy and would have been very interesting to look further into – especially considering the Versailles declaration where standards are mentioned as strategically important. However, this too must have its own research project, or would have been considered if provided with more time.

When reflecting on the theoretical material, there is more to say on the Brussels Effect. During this process the research has been focused on the Normative Power Europe framework since it provides the point of analysis. However, since the Brussels Effect is a large part of what the thesis argues, with norm diffusion through regulation, the thesis would potentially have benefitted from making use of it to a greater degree – possibly having a separate theoretical section on it instead of complementing citations in different parts of the text whenever argumentation occurs. The current state will however need to be seen as sufficient for this particular project. Encompassing multiple large theoretical frameworks is encouraged as a task for future, larger projects in this area. This could also be said about the literature on “othering” as an aspect of the DHA – however in that case, it could be discussed as to what extent this would be applicable, considering that this thesis does not draw conclusions on external perceptions as much as it draws on argumentation and policy developments.

Further on theory, applying a Normative Power approach to an economically coded policy area is not very common in the literature. It is exactly that which makes it interesting for a project like this, especially when considering the surprising findings of the two quite frequently occurring norms of good governance and sustainable development. Even though the Normative Power Europe framework was operationalised and clearly defined through expressions provided by the United Nations, there are other actors and international organisations that could provide these definitions, such as basing the operationalisation more in the EU Treaties. As mentioned previously in the thesis, the decision to utilise the UN was made in order to encompass the global perspective.

A seemingly straight-forward thesis idea turned into a much more complex web of thoughts – the integration through crisis strand of this thesis was initially not considered, the same goes for Market Power Europe. The material kept expanding as more potentially relevant and definitely interesting areas were uncovered along the way. Many parameters of this kind made the small initial question into a large project with many branches, perhaps suited for a larger study involving more material, supporting document, and time as mentioned throughout the reflections. This thesis is only scratching the surface of a hugely important policy area and its recent developments, but by doing this, the prospect is to shed some light onto the importance of trade and standards for the EU and the world in the near and far future, and to encourage further studies in this area – especially related to norm diffusion.

The possibility to *understand* this policy area is briefly provided through this thesis. The knowledge on standards and their role in the global and European

spaces is largely limited in the public – even more so regarding the standardisation process and organisations. Through making use of the Normative Power Europe framework in a comprehensive, illustrative way with the nine norms as basis of analysis, the thesis provides a narration and “red thread” that is hopefully relatively easy to understand and follow. The ambition is to make this subject more available to those who may be interested and to spur interest and discussion.

The standardisation policy development is perhaps crisis-driven, depending on the definition. What is clear is however that the Commission has ambitions for quite radical changes to the system, stressing that the EU is left behind on the global arena and has to regain the leadership role. Is this, then, the result of Europe long having been situated in a context of crisis? Not in a direct line of sight, perhaps – however crises come in many forms, and when global competitiveness increases, so does incentives to change ineffective policies like in this case. While this research does not elaborate on crisis developments in the analysis, this thesis assumes and argues that it *may* well be the case, as crises tend to encourage European integration and that the policy area of standardisation has not been prioritised for a very long time – until now. Trying to catch up with the rest of the world in a time largely influenced by one crisis after another combined with increased competitiveness is not an easy task. That will, however, not deter the European Commission from trying every Strategy to reassert the EU on top, expanding its empire of regulation with a Normative Power core along the way.



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