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**Political Journalism and Europeanization: Pressing Europe?**

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**Abstract**

The paper's central focus is on how journalism, including reporting and commentating, has responded to the perceived changes in the political environment that result from advancing European integration. It provides general answers on the press' contribution to the Europeanisation of political information. First, a contents analysis informs about newspapers' European coverage. Then, we examine journalists' perceptions, of their own performances, potential sources and readers, news production, journalistic practices and organisational aspects, from interview data. A key question is whether covering European affairs is similar or different to national politics, and whether journalists adopt a more passive 'neutral' informative-educative role, or see Europe as an opportunity for a more 'active' political role. The empirical data source is cross-nationally comparative covering seven countries (UK, F, D, NL, I, ESP, CH) based on contents analysis of four newspapers per country, and interviews with more than 100 journalists. Our main findings are that, with the exception of *The Sun* in Britain, there is little evidence for the press as a source of Euroscepticism, and covering Europe is really 'business as usual'. Most newspapers print pro-European positions. Journalists' advocacy over Europe is primarily intended to inform and educate the public by raising awareness. We find little evidence for journalists acting overtly as political actors.

## Introduction

The press' role and performance in covering European politics is commonly criticised as contributing to the European Union's perceived 'democratic deficit', its lack of visibility, resonance and legitimacy in the 'hearts and minds' of citizens. In addition, politicians seldom miss an opportunity to blame the press for not delivering the 'correct message', especially when they fail in their European integration objectives, such as the French and Dutch 2005 Constitution referendums. Likewise, British governments regularly blame the press for the salience of Euroscepticism which they see as a significant brake on the UK's participation in the EU. In this chapter, we direct attention at the intentions and efforts by journalists to shape the coverage of European affairs.

For Schlesinger (1999:276/7), the emergence of a 'European sphere of publics' requires the dissemination of a European news agenda, that becomes part of the every-day news-consuming habits of European audiences, and entails that publics come to understand citizenship and belonging as at least in part transcending the nation-state. Clearly, the supply of political information by the press is crucial in determining the possibility of any moves toward such a situation. The press acts both as a messenger who selects and reports on significant political events, and as a commentator, a political actor who advances specific opinions in the public sphere. Our central focus is on how journalism, including both reporting and commentating, has responded to the perceived changes in the political environment that result from advancing European integration. Instead of blaming the media with a call to 'shoot the messenger', we address the media's performance over European politics as an open research question that requires empirical investigation. If there are deficits in the media's performance, they need to be understood and explained within context of the relationship between media and political systems (Hallin and Mancini 2004) and the multi-levelling of politics.

We aim to provide general answers on the press' contribution to the Europeanisation of political information. Specifically, we examine the factors which drive the level and form of coverage of European affairs. First, our contents analysis informs about newspapers' European coverage. Then, we examine journalists' perceptions of different aspects of the political communication process over Europe, evaluating their own performances, their perceptions of potential sources and readers, news production, journalistic practices and organisational aspects. We attempt to establish whether covering European affairs is similar or different to national politics, and how journalists envisage their own roles, in particular, whether they adopt a more passive 'neutral' informative-educative role, or whether they see Europe as an opportunity for a more 'active' political role.

Such aspects may vary, cross-nationally, across newspaper type, or across different specialists and practices within journalism. Thus we adopt a comparative approach that covers seven countries, different types of daily newspapers, and different types of journalists. Our primary focus is on the press within nation-states, which given linguistic, cultural and commercial obstacles, is the most likely candidate for a 'European sphere of publics' compared to a European transnational mass media (Schlesinger 1999). Nonetheless, we include four examples of the small elite-oriented 'transnational press' to add an extra comparative dimension.

We now review research on journalism and Europe and outline a conceptual model for studying the media's 'dual role' as an institutionalised forum for political debate and as a political actor who advances its own positions in the public sphere. We then provide details on our comparative research design and methods. This approach structures the subsequent empirical analyses of news contents and journalists' perceptions. Finally, we relate our central findings to existing debates.

### **Conceptualising the Media's 'Dual Role' and Factors Shaping Coverage**

Research on the press and European affairs is an emergent, fragmented and underdeveloped field. There are a few studies on aspects of news production and journalism, evaluating EU correspondents on national papers (Morgan 1995, Baisnée 2002), and on the EU's communication performance (Meyer 1999, Tumber 1995). There are also some studies which combine contents analysis with interviews, applying cross-national comparison, though often -understandably given limited resources- restricted to specific issue events or short time-scales (de Vreese 2001; Gleissner and De Vreese 2005; Trenz 2005). Despite such advances, there is relatively little in the way of 'joined up' approaches, addressing both contents and news production processes, systematically and cross-nationally, at a general level. Donsbach and Patterson (2004:253) note this is generally a problem in communication studies on political journalism, 'Explanatory comparative analyses... are virtually nonexistent, even though the field is of high scientific interest.' Whereas Hallin and Mancini (2004:2) point out the resultant pitfalls: 'Most of the literature on the media is highly ethnocentric, in the sense that it refers only to the experience of a single country, yet is written in general terms, as though the model that prevailed in that country were universal.'

Noting such caveats, it is still possible to summarise that existing research emphasises press' characteristics that purportedly act as barriers to, or at least slow down, the emergence of 'Europeanized' news. These include: journalists' applying 'national' frameworks of interpretation, missing 'new' and different qualities of Europeanised politics; poor linkages of news gathering and production to EU institutions; journalists' poor language skills and knowledge deficits; remoteness of Brussels from domestic news rooms and editors' decisions; European politics' obscurity and lack of 'news values'; (Morgan 1995, Baisnée 2002); and newspaper organisation's and their proprietor's supposed Eurosceptic political agendas (Anderson and Weymouth 1999). Given the relative absence of systematic empirical evidence, however, much remains informed speculation. According to de Vreese (2001: 283), 'Further research should address the nature of media attention to EU affairs during routine periods that are not dominated by key events as well as investigate systematically the role of the EU in domestic political and economic news.' Moving in this direction, for our purposes of large-scale cross-national comparison it was necessary to develop a general model to examine the role of the press.

For this project, journalists in media organisations are conceived as fulfilling a 'dual function' (Koopmans and Statham 2002; Koopmans and Pfetsch 2003). First, they are seen as mediators of political information from external sources. Here their actions shape the information flows that are of crucial importance to polities -national, supranational and regional- which rely on a free flow of information as the basis of

democratic legitimisation, responsiveness, accountability and participation (Koopmans and Erbe 2004, Statham and Gray 2005). Secondly, journalists are actors in their own right, who contribute to processes of opinion-formation by commenting on political affairs (see chapter by Pfetsch et al). Figure 1 presents these two ‘outputs’ of journalism as: *media representations of claims-making over political events* and *media’s own claims-making*, respectively. To arrive at these ‘outputs’ of political information, it is first necessary to examine ‘inputs’, and the actor-relationships which produce them, both internal and external to the news production process.

**Figure 1: General Model for Factors that Potentially Influence Level and Form Of Coverage**

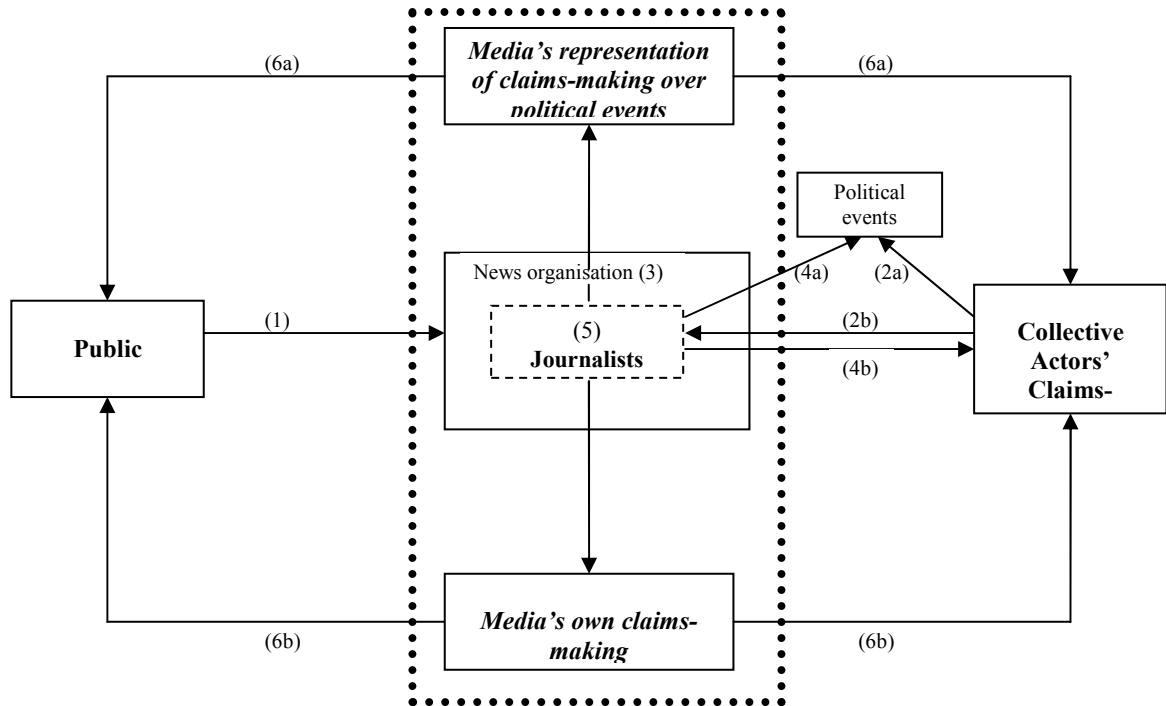


Figure 1 presents an overview of the relationships between **journalists** in media organisations who are *internal* to news production processes (represented by a thick dotted line), and **public individuals** and **collective actors** who are *external* to news production processes, but provide the sources of supply and demand for political information. The model identifies six factors which potentially influence the ‘outputs’ of news coverage by shaping the level and form of political information flows: 1. Readership’s demand; 2. Collective actors’ agenda-building (2a. campaigns; 2b. source strategies); 3. Newspaper’s organisational culture (editorial line); 4. Journalists’ information gathering (4a. investigative journalism; 4b. source relationships); 5. Journalists’ selection of news; 6. Media’s agenda-setting (6a. secondary agenda-setting; 6b. advocacy).

The model is constructed by combining several positions expressed in the related communications and social movement literatures. These have tended to be studied separately as distinct processes, with communications approaches criticised for being overly ‘media-centric’ (Schlesinger 1990), and social movement ones for underplaying the role of the media as an actor (Gamson and Wolfsfeld 1993).

Combining these positions produces an integrated general model that importantly allows us to examine different aspects of the process, and their influence relative to one another. Although this general approach requires a simplification of specific aspects of the political communication process that receive more a comprehensive and detailed scrutiny elsewhere, we justify this parsimony by the significant gains of an account that positions journalism within the overall process of political communication.

Here our topical focus is the European news. Stated simply, what drives European coverage? Before turning to the empirical study, we elaborate on the six factors in Figure 1, and specify how they potentially influence levels and forms of European coverage.

### *1. Readership's Demand*

A first relationship runs from the public to the media organisation. Publics interact with political information as a consumption process that can lead to opinion formation. Newspapers relate to readerships, both as a market of consumers, and as an audience and public constituency with whom it shares a cultural milieu of specific political values. Also newspapers are commercial enterprises that need to advance their market share relative to competitors, and establish loyalty among a readership who identify with the newspaper and buy it regularly. Indeed, Schlesinger (1999: 277) considers this market-seeking behaviour much more the driving force for media responses to Europeanisation than the search for a new public imagined in normative theory.

In this competitive marketplace, it could be that newspapers respond to perceptions of *readership's demand* (1) for political information. The level and type of readership demand is likely to be a condition that influences coverage, because newspapers have incentives to appeal to the political tastes and understandings of their readers. For example, if public interest in European affairs is low, there are fewer incentives for newspapers to report them. If the public views European politics as a sub-issue of national politics, coverage is likely to try and meet readership expectations by promoting national interpretative frameworks, rather than multi-levelled, EU-supranational, or Europeanised ones. If the political institutions of the European Union come to be seen by its citizens as important to their lives, this would raise readerships' demand for information, and increase incentives for newspapers to cover European affairs. General changes in public understandings of the political world tend to be slow and lag behind institutional developments, in this case advancing European integration. Perhaps most effective in raising public interest and awareness and demand for information are key events, such as the introduction of the Euro, or responses to BSE, which affect people's everyday lives and demonstrate the European Union's political power and relevance. Overall, the level and type of readership demand remains a limiting condition that influences the media's decision-making over coverage.

### *2. Collective Actors' Agenda-building*

A second important relationship runs from collective actors to media organisations. Newspapers depend to a large extent on 'inputs' of information from the political

discourse which is produced by collective actors from political institutions, social and economic interest groups, and NGOs, making claims over events. In this view, the public sphere carried by the media is a competitive field of political discourse where collective actors engage in acts of 'strategic political communication' (Kriesi 2004) to make their demands visible to a wider audience, in the attempt to exert political influence. Given the limited carrying capacity of the media, collective actors try to influence each other by mobilising publicly visible information, demands, and arguments that compete for attention. In the literature, such attempts are referred to as 'agenda-building' or 'agenda-setting' (Hilgartner and Bosk 1988, Lang and Lang 1983, McCombs and Shaw 1972, Everett and Dearing 1986). For collective actors, public visibility is crucial because it allows a message access to wider publics. This gives it the potential for 'agenda-building' by resonating with the opinions of allies and opponents, and the public, in the attempt to gain legitimacy, as the most credible, reasonable and authoritative version of political reality.<sup>1</sup>

We distinguish two types of *agenda-building* activities. First, collective actors mobilise public *campaigns* (2a) in relation to political events (Kriesi 2004), sometimes explicitly staging 'pseudo' events to attract attention, and increase their chances of selection by journalists. Second, collective actors engage in '*source strategies*' (Schlesinger and Tumber 1994, Anderson 1991) (2b). These are purposeful attempts to target and 'symbolically package' (Gamson and Modigliani 1989) political information directly at journalists in order to shape coverage in a way that privileges specific opinions and interpretations of events. This distinction is really a continuum, with 'campaigns' targeting journalists indirectly through the construction of events which carry information, and 'source strategies' directly through the mobilisation of information.

Successful 'agenda-building' by collective actors influences the resources of political discourse and events that are available to journalists for selecting, reporting and commenting on. However, some collective actors have more resources to engage in agenda-building than others. Political institutional actors have routine channels of access to the news agenda through their publicity activities, such as press releases, which cross the threshold of public significance relatively easily, because their actions have important public consequences. Less powerful actors, such as protest groups, usually do not possess routine channels of access to the news agenda, and have to invest more efforts to make their claims appear publicly significant. As a consequence powerful institutional 'voices' tend to be more present in media discourse than those of civil society actors and social movements (Schlesinger and Tumber 1994).

With regard to European news coverage, the supply of available political information will depend on who makes claims about Europe, and how they mobilise and frame them. If actors representing national political institutions make more agenda-building efforts over Europe than European ones, their specific 'national' agenda of political claims will importantly shape the contents of the information resource-pool facing journalists. Conversely, if the European institutions do not attempt to advance their positions publicly, they will simply not be heard by journalists, and have fewer chances of reaching the news compared to actors who do. Meyer (1999) cites the

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<sup>1</sup> This conceptualisation follows the 'discursive opportunity structure' approach which specifies visibility, resonance and legitimacy as conditions which shape the possible outcomes of a mobilised claim. See Koopmans and Statham (2000), Koopmans (2004).

EU's lack of a co-ordinated communications strategy as contributing to a 'deficit' of information for citizens.

Generally one would expect institutional actors with their greater resources than civil society actors for agenda-building, to importantly shape the available contents of political discourse. However, given the advancing multi-leveilling of political actors' relationships, it could be that there are new opportunities for civil society actors to mobilise claims over Europe, when compared to the established setting of national politics. It also needs underlining that collective actors with different scopes and types have vested interests in shaping how political discourse represents European affairs. For example, national political actors will advance their own position relative to European institutions by promoting a political discourse where European affairs is viewed within an interpretative framework of 'national interests'. In addition, national governments sometimes seek to shift the blame for perceived problems 'up' onto the supranational level (Imig and Tarrow 2001). European institutions need to make themselves heard to counteract such tendencies.

The general point, which appears self-evident but is sometimes overlooked, is that journalists can only make their decisions over selection, reporting and commentating on public affairs, in relation to the political discourse that is visible to them (Koopmans and Pfetsch 2003). Thus the political discourse over Europe which results from competing actors' agenda-building is a crucial factor that limits and shapes journalists' decisions over coverage. The important point, is that any perceived or real 'deficit' in the public visibility of European affairs, is not necessarily -as is often claimed- due to the media's poor performance, but could, and arguably is more likely to, result from inadequacies in the performance of the political system, and the inability of political institutions and collective actors to present important problems to the public, thereby allowing wider deliberation processes.

### *3. Newspapers' Organisational Culture (Editorial line)*

News organisations operate within constraints and opportunities shaped by commercial and institutional factors, including ownership, market share, and a context defined by the specific relationship between the media and political system (Hallin and Mancini 2004, Blumler and Gurevitch 1995). Here we take these macro-contextual factors largely for granted and focus on the media organisation as an environment which provides specific constraints and incentives for journalists.

Journalists are people who take decisions directly affecting news contents (Donsbach and Patterson 2004). This definition covers editors and reporters, who participate in daily decisions that influence the gathering and selection processes for information, as well as interpreting and actually writing stories and commentaries that become 'news'. Journalists are professionals too. They belong to a social group sharing a common orientation and ethos that affects how they see their work (Weaver 2005; Tumber and Prentoulis 2005). According to McQuail (1994: 198), for journalists '(t)he height of professional skill is the exercise of a practical craft, which delivers the required institutional product, characterized by a high degree of objectivity, key marks of which are obsessive facticity and neutrality of attitude.' However, within professional journalism, there is variation between different news organisations and

newspaper types, and across different press cultures or national ‘models’ (Mancini 2005), in how journalists’ perceive their roles.

A first ‘internal’ factor to news production which shapes coverage is that journalists write on behalf of news organisations with an established institutional culture and editorial line for representing politics and advancing opinions. Newspapers usually have a clear relationship to institutional politics, and position themselves with an identity on the left or right of, or independently from, party politics. This collective identity derives from the position of a newspaper in the national media landscape which is based on the relationship between the media and political systems (Mazzoleni 1992, Hallin and Mancini 2004). In addition, newspapers address readerships with specific characteristics, for example, as broadsheets for educated elites, or as tabloids for mass general publics. The specific *organisational culture* (3) of a newspaper is a shared collective identity that finds expression in its ‘editorial line’.

Journalists work within this ‘organisational culture’, and their autonomy as individuals is relatively limited to writing within the established line, style, formats and genre of their newspaper. In general, most journalists see themselves as professionals who write on behalf of their newspaper and consciously identify with its ‘editorial line’. Seen as an internalised set of values, this factor shapes journalists’ decisions and thereby influences coverage, sometimes in direct and obvious ways. For example, journalists on newspapers closely linked with political parties, such as *L’Humanité* which is linked to the French Communist party, are more likely to report events in which this party is involved. This also impacts on the coverage of European affairs. For example, *L’Humanité*’s European coverage is likely to be influenced by Communist Party’s level of activism over Europe, and it is likely to portray European affairs in a way that fits the Communist Party’s Euroscepticism.

#### 4. Journalists’ information gathering

Another factor which influences news production is the gathering of political information by journalists. In general, the scope, capacity and resource base of the *infrastructure* of an organisation affects the flow and type of political information that is available as a potential resource for journalists. For example, a newspaper with a specialist correspondent based in Brussels is likely to receive better quality information on events in supranational European politics, than one that relies on a domestic reporter, or on news agencies. The newsgathering infrastructure of a newspaper is likely to depend on organisational factors such as available resources, the ‘editorial line’, and the need to provide information for a specific readership.

Within this organisational context, journalists also mobilise their own resources, networks and supply-lines for gathering information. Journalists sometimes gather information at their own initiative through *investigative journalism* (4a) about public affairs, and also through their established *source-relationships* (4b).<sup>2</sup> Such *news gathering* efforts and the ‘selection’ of information which it brings, compared to possible alternatives, is a factor that can influence coverage. First, the extent to which

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<sup>2</sup> Here investigative journalism and relationships with sources are seen as a continuum of news gathering rather than as distinct practices.

journalists actively set out to investigate and gather information on European affairs, is likely to depend on whether they perceive existing sources of political information provided by collective actors' agenda-building to be adequate. Thus, if journalists perceive deficits in the public visibility of or information provision by political institutions, such as the European Commission, they may consider it a public duty to collect information that allows them the opportunity to report and comment on such affairs. Second, journalists' relationships with their established sources can influence how they report on European affairs. For example, if journalists' established relationships with sources are with national political actors rather than European ones, it could be that when covering Europe they continue to use these sources rather than look for new ones. This would be likely to privilege the representation of national rather than supranational viewpoints on European affairs, as a direct result of journalistic news-gathering practices. Alternatively, journalists could see European integration as a topic that is inadequately supplied by their source-relationships, and seek out, and be receptive to, information from new sources. In this case, journalists' newsgathering practices open up opportunities to new actors as potential sources.

##### *5. Journalists' selection of news*

Journalists' decisions on how to represent public events and express opinions on behalf of the newspaper are clearly important factors that shape the specific constructions of political reality that appear as 'outputs'. Here, we focus on *news selection* (5) as an aspect of journalists' practices that potentially influences coverage.

When reporting and commentating, journalists make decisions to select which of the many public events and claims-making acts are 'newsworthy'. This selection process is crucial to the resultant 'outputs'. First, the media's limited carrying capacity necessitates choices about the public significance of competing events and claims-making. And second, journalists tend to impose a 'media logic' (Mazzoleni 1992) in their selection decisions which preferences the chances of specific types of events and actors appearing.

In general, journalists' selections of political events for coverage will be drawn from their perceptions of the political discourse and made from the perspective of their newspaper's organisational culture and editorial line. Although this salience in the political discourse shifts the media's attention onto specific events and issues which they must follow to maintain their reputation and standing as newspapers of public record, Galtung and Ruge's classic research (1965), identified that journalists also apply their own specific criteria of 'news values' to determine 'newsworthiness'. In this view, journalists' practices are considered a process of successive selections, and their perceptions of 'newsworthiness' a complex set of criteria where the characteristics of an event -prominence, human interest, conflict, 'the unusual', timeliness, cultural proximity (Shoemaker and Reese 1996)- can influence its likelihood of being selected. Thus the media's own 'logic' can potentially influence the selection and coverage of public affairs. For example, events with a high level of drama or conflict, or claims by important public figures and personalities have high 'news values', which is why collective actors often stage protest events with such qualities. If events related to European affairs do not fit the established 'media logic', for example, if journalists' 'news values' demand exciting conflicts between

personalities and European affairs tend to be technocratic debates between faceless bureaucrats, they are less likely to be reported or the subject of editorial commentary.<sup>3</sup>

#### 6. *Media's agenda-setting and advocacy*

Another important factor which potentially shapes 'outputs', is the extent to which journalists attempt to promote their own stances, and in which ideological direction they do so, when writing for a newspaper.

When reporting, journalists act as 'mediators' who produce a representation of the 'external' political discourse constructed by collective actors' claims-making acts in relation to events. When commentating, journalists are claims-makers who advance opinions and evaluations in the political discourse. This dual function is clearly expressed in the structure of newspapers, which have distinct sections for news reports on public affairs, and editorials advancing the newspaper's position. However, there is a degree of overlap, in that some newspapers allow scope for commentating within news reports, and editorials are usually selected and written in response to 'external' political events. Also, roles vary within the organisation: editors, leader writers and commentators have more say over what events to select and how to portray them than beat reporters.

Operating within their newspaper's organisational culture, journalists have opportunities for moving beyond 'neutral' or 'objective' factual coverage of events and taking up an 'advocate' (Janowitz 1975) or politically 'partisan' stance (Donsbach and Patterson 2004). They may actively attempt to promote opinion-formation processes among their readerships by the way they construct political reality. Such acts of advocacy are contained in the contents of 'outputs': *media representations of claims-making over political events*; and the *media's own claims-making*. These are the journalists' own 'agenda-setting' (McCombs and Shaw 1972) efforts to influence public deliberation and opinion formation, as well as collective actors and political institutions, and appear in Figure 1 as a 'feedback loops' from their 'outputs'.

First, coverage that represents the political discourse requires placing events and opinions within a context, which is likely to privilege specific actors and opinions, over others. Such effects have been called '*second-level agenda-setting*' (6a) (Eilders and Voltmer 2003) and are often referred to in discussions of the media's 'bias' and 'framing' when representing public affairs. Second, the media's own claims-making or *advocacy* (6b) is a direct attempt at agenda-setting and framing the political discourse over public affairs. Here journalists focus public attention on issues and make attempts to influence the way they are politically understood, which may lead to opinion formation, consensus and dissent building, and possibly collective mobilisation. Such efforts are discussed in literature on the media's political influence, including its role as a 'political actor' (Page 1996), 'advocacy', and 'media framing' (Iyengar 1993). However, it is necessary to elaborate on the possible dimensions of 'advocacy'.

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<sup>3</sup> From the viewpoint of claims-makers, news coverage is a 'discursive opportunity structure' that offers specific incentives and constraints for entering the mass-mediated political discourse defined by a 'media logic' for claims-making.

News coverage may be *informative-educative*, and attempt to raise public awareness and knowledge about a perceived problem, or it may be *partisan* and advance a specific ideological stance in the attempt to build a constituency of supporters. These dimensions are not mutually exclusive: the ‘informative-educative’ attempts to promote an issue through raising awareness; whereas the ‘partisan’, attempts to intentionally attribute it with a specific ideological ‘bias’. Another variable dimension is the *autonomy* of journalists to engage in advocacy, which can be measured by the extent to which journalists’ claims-making efforts over an issue vary from the political line of the newspaper’s established organisational culture.<sup>4</sup>

Europe may be an issue over the media engages in advocacy. For example, given that ideological cleavages over Europe largely cross-cut left-right cleavages, the resultant lack of clear cues from political actors, could impact on whether journalists adopt an advocacy role. It could affect the extent to which they engage in advocacy over Europe, the ideological position they take, and their autonomy. First, the media’s advocacy could be informative-educative but not ideologically partisan. Here its coverage would raise public understandings of perceived problems but without taking a partisan Eurosceptic or pro-European stance, for example, by blaming the ineffectiveness of either European or national politicians to address concerns adequately. Alternatively, advocacy over Europe may be less than one might expect for an important topic, for example, if journalists decide to mobilise opinion only on issues where they receive clear cues from their allies in the political system. Third, journalists could see European affairs as an opportunity to push their own agenda, and advance a ‘partisan’ political stance, underlining their autonomy from those positions expressed in the political system. This pro- or anti-European stance could be independent, or follow that of a specific political party or faction. Newspapers could even institutionalise this role by running their own pro-European or Eurosceptic campaigns and making Europe a key element of their ‘editorial line’. Much depends on journalists’ perceptions of their role relative to the political system, which may vary across newspaper or journalist type, or national setting.

### **Research Design: Cross-national, Cross-newspaper, Cross-journalist**

Others emphasise television (de Vreese 2001), but our study takes newspapers as a mass medium of public record that allows a higher level of discursive elaboration over political events. Newspapers also allow for a clearer distinction between the reporting (reports) and commentating (editorials) functions. We cover seven countries, undertaking a contents analysis of 32 newspapers, and detailed structured interviews with 110 journalists. This makes ours one of the most extensive comparative studies of journalism.

It was not logistically feasible to cover all newspapers. We selected four newspapers per country which together were seen as ‘best fit’ functional equivalents for ‘representing’ their national media landscape. Our selection criteria also required variation by four types of newspaper per country (left-broadsheet, right-broadsheet, tabloid or popular, regional) and four types of journalist per newspaper (Editor/lead

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<sup>4</sup> This is an important methodological consideration because studies of ‘media bias’ based on content analyses often conflate the media’s representation of politics with its own political advocacy. We distinguish between these two separate functions (below) in order to show to what extent the media’s own political position varies from its representation of political reality.

writer, EU correspondent, journalist covering agriculture, journalist covering immigration). Overall, this research strategy allows the flexibility to compare across countries, newspaper types, and journalist types.

We selected two broadsheets considered newspapers of public record with nationwide distribution, varied by political affiliation (centre-left v. centre-right). This allowed investigation of a possible ‘left-right’ cleavage by newspapers over Europe. We added a mass circulation popular or tabloid newspaper, to allow for investigation of variation by whether a newspaper addressed elite (broadsheet) or general (tabloid/popular) publics, given that Europe tends to be an elite issue. Last, we took a regional newspaper, to examine variations between national and sub-national media, in the light of the special emphasis that Europe has given to regions and their cultures. Our selection of journalist types was governed by three requirements, to be able to: vary across different professional roles within the media organisation; distinguish between journalists who ‘report’ on political events, and those who ‘commentate’; and distinguish between journalists who are EU specialists and those who working on ‘normal’ beats (immigration and agriculture) where Europe is sometimes and sometimes not relevant.

Finding cross-national functional equivalents among newspapers is not straightforward, largely due to the nature of the subject matter. As the seminal research by Hallin and Mancini (2004) demonstrates, cross-national variations in newsprint landscapes are to a large extent shaped by, and constitutive of, differences in the political systems of those countries. Specific media systems, their media landscapes and press cultures, are products of, derived from, and constitutive of specific types of liberal democracies, and reflect their important political cleavages. For this reason, it is not adequate simply to fill the cells constituting our four ‘ideal’ functional equivalents for newspapers, but selection needed to allow for additional variation in specific countries, to more accurately represent the key political cleavages, which are also reflected in their newsprint landscapes.

Our final newspaper selection was taken in consultation with national experts and is shown in Figure 2. Selection of centre-left and centre-right broadsheets was relatively straightforward. Although countries with federal political systems and/or important regionalist governments, such as Germany and Italy, have newspapers originating from specific regions, some of these can be considered to address national readerships. Thus *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* have their regional origins expressed in their titles, and retain a limited regional bias, as does the Milan-centred *Corriere della Sera*, but they can be broadly considered as newspapers of national record. Selection of regional newspapers was also relatively unproblematic. Here we took newspaper which covered a sizeable region, with a distinct political, cultural and/or linguistic heritage. For example, in Spain, we selected *La Vanguardia* which serves Catalonia, the *Scotsman* for Scotland in the UK, and a newspaper from the east, the *Leipziger Allgemeine Zeitung*, for Germany.

**Figure 2: Selected Newspapers**

	UK	F	D	CH	ESP	I	NL
<b>Left Broadsheet</b>	<i>The Guardian</i>	<i>Le Monde</i>	<i>Süddeutsche Zeitung</i>		<i>El País</i>	<i>La Repubblica</i>	<i>De Volkskrant</i>
<b>Right Broadsheet</b>	<i>The Times</i>	<i>Le Figaro</i>	<i>Frankfurter Allgemeine</i>	<i>NZZ (D) &amp; Le Temps (F)</i>	<i>Abc</i>	<i>Il Corriere della Sera</i>	<i>Algemeen Dagblad</i>
<b>Popular</b>					<i>El Mundo</i>		<i>De Telegraaf</i>
<b>Tabloid</b>	<i>The Mirror</i>		<i>Die Bild</i>	<i>Blick (D) &amp; Le Matin (F)</i>			
<b>Regional Paper</b>	<i>The Scotsman</i>	<i>Ouest-France</i>	<i>Leipziger Volkszeitung</i>		<i>La Vanguardia</i>	<i>La Nazione (N) &amp; Il Mattino (S)</i>	<i>Leeuwarder Courant</i>
<b>Other</b>		<i>L'Humanité</i>					

**Transnational Newspapers:** *Financial Times (Europe)*, *International Herald Tribune*, *Wall Street Journal (Europe)*, *European Voice*.

In contrast, selection of popular or tabloid format newspapers was more difficult. In countries, with mass circulation tabloids, such as *Bild* in Germany and *The Sun* in the UK, these were taken. In countries, without tabloids but with newspapers with a high circulation and a format that was more popular-oriented than the broadsheets, we took these, such as *De Telegraaf* in the Netherlands and *El Mundo* in Spain. Another selection problem with regard to tabloid/popular and regional newspapers came from France. In France, *Ouest-France*, our chosen regional newspaper is actually the largest circulation newspaper nationally, overall, and could have been our popular newspaper, for which there is no clear candidate. In the end, we took *L'Humanité* as a fourth paper, which is distinct from broadsheet newspapers, but has a low circulation, and is politically close to the Communist Party. Due to this specificity *L'Humanité* was not included categorised as a tabloid/popular for the cross-newspaper analyses.

A few country-specific problems remained. For Italy, where regional North/South divisions are a key political cleavage, and where there were no clear candidates for mass circulation popular newspapers, we decided that it would be more representative of the newsprint landscape to select two regional papers (one northern *La Nazione* from Tuscany, and one southern *Il Mattino*). More problematic still was Switzerland, where politics is strongly regionalised at the cantonal level, and there is a language-based cleavage. To represent the Swiss newsprint landscape, we selected the two main official language communities, French-speaking and German-speaking, and took a broadsheet from each of centre-right affiliation *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* and *Le Temps*, and two popular newspapers, *Blick* and *Le Matin*.

In addition to these national and sub-national newspapers, we added four transnationals, targeted largely at elite and business readerships. Here we selected the *Financial Times (Europe)*, the European versions of two American transnational newspapers, the *International Herald Tribune*, and the *Wall Street Journal Europe*. In addition, we took the weekly *European Voice* which has a limited circulation, but is

directed specifically at a readership among the EU-level Brussels elite. All four transnationals are in English. Interviews were made with only the editors/leader-writers and EU correspondents for the transnational papers, as the other categories of journalist were not relevant. Plus the transnationals were included only at the interview stage.

A further alteration was necessary from our original plan with respect to the UK. For Britain we originally selected and coded *The Sun*. However, *The Sun* took an editorial-level decision not to collaborate with our project, even refusing to allow its journalists to speak with us. It is, of course, a finding that the newspaper considers its own stance on Europe to be so politically sensitive, that it refuses to collaborate with academics, particularly when it has collaborated in previous projects on sensitive public issues such as immigration. However, this was not helpful to the comparative aims of our study. We therefore replaced *The Sun*, with its mass circulation tabloid rival *The Mirror*, which is traditionally more left-leaning politically, and often takes the opposite stance. Such a decision allowed us to include a UK tabloid for the interviews.

Interviews of one hour duration were undertaken in 2003/4, initially face-to-face and where not feasible by telephone. All were recorded and stored. Each national team undertook their interviews and coding, meaning that interviewees were addressed in their own language and cultural context. Teams were very diligent in their recruitment attempts achieving 110 interviews out of a total possible of 120 (112 national and regional, 8 transnational). Our interview schedule is systematically structured: it contains many questions with closed answers, but also spaces for the interviewee to expand more openly on the given answer. Due to time constraints not all interviewees answered all questions, plus not all questions were relevant for all types of journalist, which account for the varying 'n' in presented tables. Questionnaires for transnational actors were modified where necessary (more details and questionnaires available at <http://europub.wz-berlin.de/>). Responses to closed questions were coded numerically into a data-base for comparative analyses, in a way that is linked to relevant qualitative information from open ones. This strategy allows us to retrieve linked quantitative and qualitative information, selected by country, or newspaper or journalist type.

We acknowledge the limitations in selecting four newspapers to represent a national newsprint landscape, and four journalists to represent political coverage by a newspaper, however, decisions were taken by experts within each country to provide a selection that best fitted our categories for functional equivalents, and allow comparative analysis across three dimensions. Overall, we consider the explanatory benefits of undertaking cross-national, cross-newspaper, cross-journalist analysis outweigh the limitations due to logistically necessary restrictions.

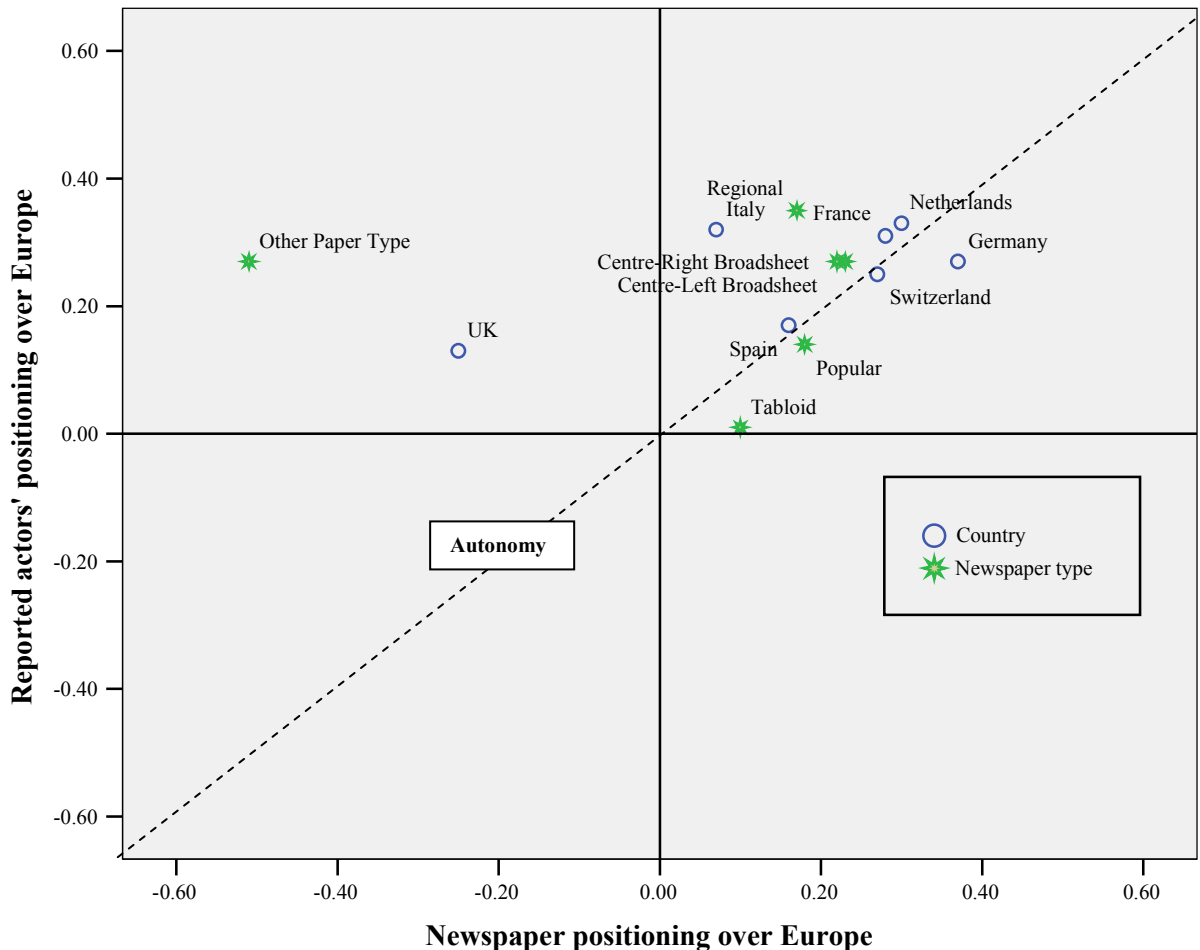
### **Newspapers and Claims-making over Europe: An Overview**

Before examining factors which potentially drive coverage over Europe, it is necessary to build an empirical picture of the similarities and differences between newspapers, newspaper types, and countries. For this we use our contents analyses of

journalists' claims-making acts in commentaries, and on claims-making acts in news reports.<sup>5</sup>

First, for the *media's representation of claims-making over political events*, it is possible to calculate an overall position over Europe (ranging from -1 to 1) for 'all reported claims-makers', i.e. the claims and demands made by collective actors as 'third parties' reported in the news. Second, for the *media's own claims-making*, it is possible to calculate an overall 'position' score for each newspaper's own claims-making within commentaries with regard to Europe (ranging from -1 to 1). By combining these dimensions we arrive at a political space with four possibilities for newspapers' *positioning* over Europe: pro-European representation and claims-making (top-right); Eurosceptic representation and claims-making (bottom-left); pro-European representation and Eurosceptic claims-making (top-left); and Eurosceptic representation and pro-European claims-making (bottom-right). This is shown for the newspapers aggregated by country and newspaper type in Figure 3.

**Figure 3: Media's representation of and claims-making over European affairs, by country and newspaper type**



<sup>5</sup> The samples and analytic logic for these two systematic data-bases of newspapers' contents are from Europub.com

A third dimension in Figure 3 is the diagonal line where the media's representation and own claims-making are equivalent. We consider the perpendicular distance from this equilibrium to be an indicator for the extent of the media's *autonomy*, i.e., the extent to which a newspaper makes efforts to express a stance over Europe that is independent from the position which derives from its established organisational culture within the newsprint landscape. In addition, the media's autonomous 'voice' pushes in a pro-European (below the line) or Eurosceptic (above the line) direction relative to its representation of political affairs.<sup>6</sup>

Figure 3 shows that newspapers from all countries except Britain, and all types of newspapers except for *L'Humanité* (other), cluster in the top-right political space, which indicates pro-European representation and claims-making. Cross-nationally, we see that there is relatively little difference in the ways that claims-makers are represented (vertical distance) which is with an aggregate pro-European stance. The main differences are in the stances taken by newspapers over Europe (horizontal distance). Here the German press comes across as the most pro-European, followed by the Netherlands, France, Switzerland and Spain which are pro-European but exhibit less autonomy than the Germans in advocating pro-European stances. At the other pole, the British press exhibits considerable autonomy to advocate Eurosceptic stances relative to other countries. The Italian press is intermediary in that it exhibits autonomy and advocates a stance that is more Eurosceptic than its representation of political affairs, but overall remains favourable to Europe.

In summary, for advocacy over Europe there seems to be a difference in national press culture between Britain at one pole, which exhibits more autonomy of expression and a Eurosceptic tendency, and Germany, at the other, followed by the rest, which have a clear pro-European stance but are relatively less assertive. Italy comes between.

Interestingly, leaving aside *L'Humanité* (below), we find few cross-newspaper-type variations in the way that newspapers make claims over Europe (horizontal distance), and they are all mildly pro-European. The limited differences we find are that broadsheets are more pro-European in their representation of claims-makers than popular and tabloid formats (vertical distance). This is likely to be an outcome of the greater space their formats give to elite actors, and that advancing European integration is an elite-driven project. Regional newspapers which are more likely to give space to collective actors from two policy fields that are central to advancing Europe, agriculture and regionalism, are the most pro-European newspaper type in their representation of political discourse. Finally, centre-left and centre-right broadsheets are virtually identical in their claims-making and representation of claims-making over Europe, which implies that a broadsheet's political affiliation on the left/right axis is not decisive in shaping its European coverage.

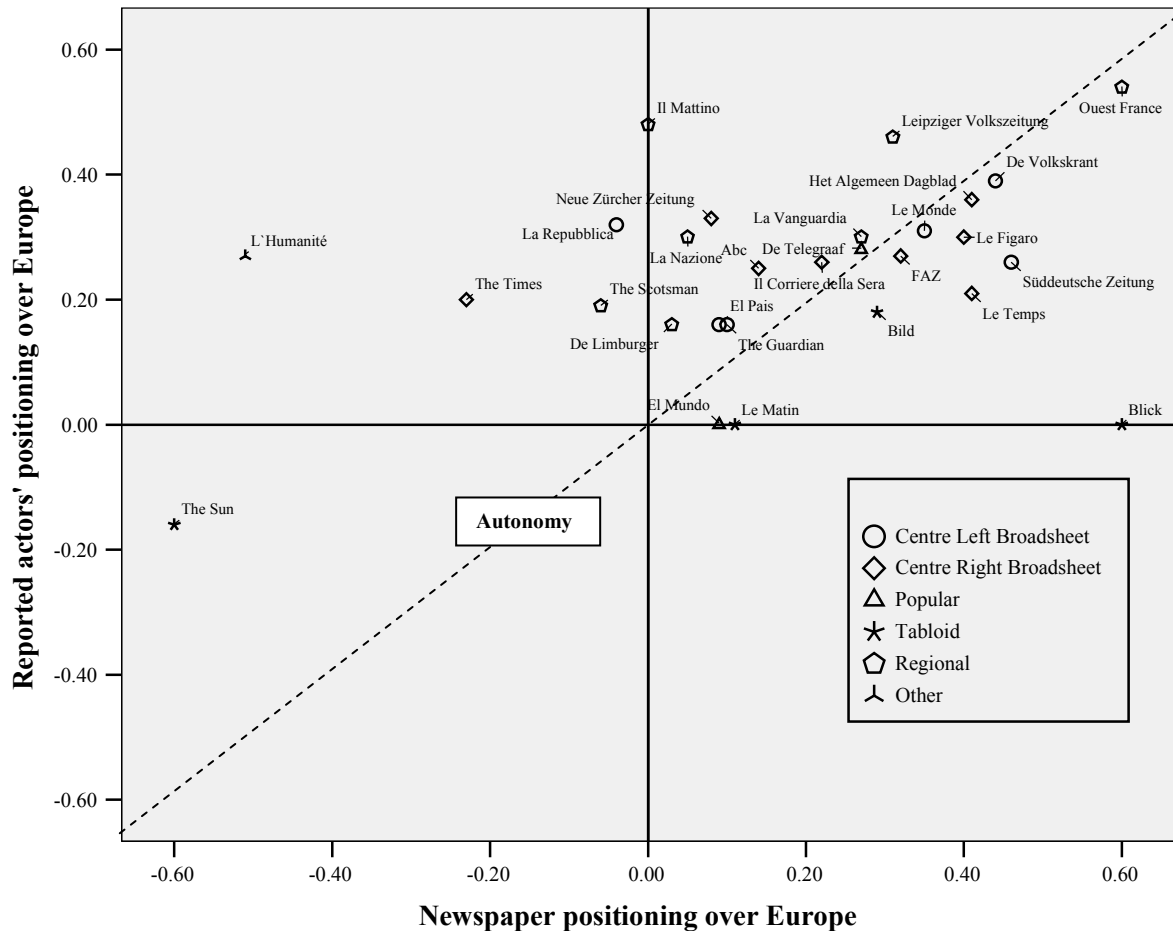
Figure 4 adds detail to the picture by showing all newspapers. The only newspaper which represents the political discourse in a way that gives an overall Eurosceptic position is the British tabloid *The Sun*, whereas the only ones that take an aggregate

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<sup>6</sup> Many studies on 'advocacy' tend to conflate aspects of journalists' *autonomy* with aspects of their *positioning* as a political actor (Donsbach and Patterson 2004). We consider the analytic separation of the dimensions (Figure 3) to be an advance in contents analysis, because it prevents conflation of these different dimensions, as well as including the media's 'dual function'.

claims-making stance which is at all Eurosceptic are, in order of their Euroscepticism: *The Sun*, *L'Humanité*, *The Times*, *The Scotsman*, and *La Repubblica*. This underlines that in general newspapers tend to commentate over and report on political affairs in a way that is more likely to promote pro-European rather than Eurosceptic positions.

**Figure 4: Media's representation of and claims-making over European affairs, by newspaper**



Overall, regarding newspapers' autonomy, we find relatively limited levels, with the newspapers' own claims-making in most cases remaining close to its representation of other actors' claims-making. We interpret this to mean that in most cases newspapers remain within their organisational culture and make only limited additional efforts to take a stance over European issues. There are notable exceptions. The Swiss tabloid *Blick* is an unequivocally strong pro-European advocate, followed to a lesser extent by the German broadsheet *Süddeutsche* and French *Le Temps*. Others which are pro-European but not in a way that is autonomous from their overall representation of reported political reality are, in order of their pro-Europeanism: *Ouest France*, *De Volkskrant*, *Het Algemeen Dagblad*, *Le Figaro*, *Le Monde*, *FAZ*, *Bild*, *La Vanguardia*, *De Telegraaf*, and *Il Corriere della Sera*.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> *Die Leipziger Volkszeitung* is atypical: its own voice has some autonomy in the direction of Euroscepticism but from a strongly pro-European organisational culture.

At the other end of the scale, the Communist newspaper *L'Humanité* has a lot of autonomy and is a strong Eurosceptic advocate. *L'Humanité* represents the political discourse in a way that is no more Eurosceptic than other French newspapers, but its own claims-making advocates the Euroscepticism of the Communist party with which it is strongly affiliated. *The Sun* is also a strong Eurosceptic advocate. It is the strongest Eurosceptic claims-maker even going beyond its own strongly Eurosceptic organisational culture. Given that *The Sun* decided at the editorial level that none of its journalists could participate in our study because of the issue's sensitivity, we suggest that *The Sun* is exceptional in that it deliberately promotes Euroscepticism, both by political advocacy and in the way that it represents political discourse, which is considerably more Eurosceptic than the other British newspapers. Another newspaper from the Rupert Murdoch stable, *The Times*, is also strong Eurosceptic advocate, but as a newspaper of public record, it represents the political discourse in a similar way to *The Guardian*. Overall, *The Sun* and *The Times* and to a lesser extent *The Scotsman* make our British sample exceptional cross-nationally in that, as Figure 4 shows, their own claims-making is significantly more Eurosceptic than other papers. However, apart from *The Sun*, their representation of political reality with regard to European affairs does not greatly vary from other countries. Finally, perhaps surprisingly, the Italian *La Repubblica* and *Il Mattino* exhibit autonomy and advocate positions that are more Eurosceptic than their coverage of claims-makers. In general, it is difficult from contents analysis to infer what may account for observed variations that are produced by actors, which is why we also undertook systematic interviews. An answer to this Italian puzzle came from our interviews (see below).

## **Interview Findings: Driving European Coverage?**

### *Readership's Demand*

To address the impact of *readership's demand* for information on European coverage, we asked journalists from national and regional newspapers to assess their readerships' interest and understanding of European politics compared to politics in general. On a four point scale (not at all = 0, a little = 1, moderately = 2, greatly = 3), journalists consider their readerships to be less interested in European politics (1.5) than politics in general (2.2), and that readers have a low understanding of the workings of European politics (1.1).<sup>8</sup> This perception holds cross-nationally, and across newspaper and journalist type.<sup>9</sup> The perceived reasons for low readership interest are the complex nature of European politics, that readers' interpretative frameworks for 'national' politics are strongly established, and due to deficits in the supply of political information over Europe. These are considered important barriers to readerships' comprehension. Typical responses are: 'They are still more interested in national politics: there the frontiers are stronger clear-cut, the conflicts more controversial, the actors better-known and the impact on their own life is bigger.' (Home Affairs Journalist, *FAZ*). '(Interested in European politics?) 'Not very much. Not as much as they should be, but that's cause they're not told much about it.'

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<sup>8</sup> The figures are aggregated scores based on 97 responses weighted across seven countries. Questions: 'How interested do you think your readership is in politics?'; 'How interested do you think your readership is in European politics?'; 'To what extent do you think your readership understands how European politics works?' Interviewees' responses were scored, and they gave open comments.

<sup>9</sup> Spain was the only exception to this ranking, with the public thought to have a higher interest in European politics.

(Martin Kettle, Chief Leader Writer, *Guardian*). ‘They are too complex to become popular. It is a complex process of institutionalization that escapes most people’s understanding.’ (José Antonio Zarzalejos, Director, *ABC*).

The journalists’ comments demonstrate that they think readerships lag behind in their understanding of the importance of Europe in political affairs. On these findings, readership’s demand for political information is likely to reduce rather than increase the extent to which newspapers cover Europe, and readership preferences for national politics and interpretative frameworks will restrict the potential for journalists to produce ‘multi-leveled’ or supranational accounts.

By comparison, the eight journalists from transnational newspapers felt their readerships had a greater interest in politics (2.8), and especially European politics (2.8), and a higher understanding of the workings of EU politics (1.9), compared to the national and regional press. This difference is attributed to the specialist nature of their readerships, which for the *FT* and *European Voice* are political and economic elites who have more international outlooks and need to keep informed about global affairs: ‘The FT’s big strength... is the emphasis we put on the relationship between business and politics. That is something that our readers (mainly business people) prize very highly.’ (Brian Groom, Editor, *FT Europe*)

#### *Collective Actors’ Agenda-Building*

To address the supply-side influence of *collective actors’ agenda-building* on European coverage, we asked journalists about the frequency with which they are confronted by the ‘source strategies’ by political actors. We aimed to establish the scope and type of collective actors targeting information at journalists. Table 1 shows an overall aggregated score and ranking on a four point scale for the frequency of ‘source strategies’ received by journalists. In addition, sub-category columns differentiate by journalist type where some differences are apparent. Rankings show strong similarities across countries and newspaper types.

**Table 1: Journalists' perceptions of the frequency of 'source strategies' by collective actors, by journalist type**

	Rank	All	EU correspondents/ journalists covering EU affairs	National newspaper journalists, specific policy fields	Regional newspaper journalists, specific policy fields
National government	1	2.0	1.9	2.0	2.1
National interest groups (e.g., Trade Unions, employers associations)	2	1.8	1.3	2.1	2.2
Political parties (national)	3	1.7	1.3	1.9	2.1
European Union institutions/Commission	4	1.4	2.3	0.8	1.1
National campaign and protest groups	5	1.3	0.7	1.6	1.9
Regional/local government	6	1.2	1.0	1.1	2.0
Regional or local interest groups (e.g., Trade Unions, employers associations)	7	1.2	0.6	1.4	1.9
Scientific experts/policy think tanks working in this field	8	1.1	1.1	1.2	0.8
Supranational or transnational institutions (WTO, World Bank, UNHCR etc.)	9	0.9	1.1	0.9	0.5
Regional or local campaign and protest groups	10	0.9	0.6	1.0	1.3
European interest groups (e.g., Trade Unions, employers associations)	11	0.8	1.3	0.6	0.5
International or transnational campaign and protest groups	12	0.7	0.8	0.7	0.5
International or transnational interest groups (e.g., Trade unions, employers associations)	13	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.6
European campaign and protest groups	14	0.6	0.9	0.5	0.5
<b>All</b>		<b>1.2</b>	1.1	1.2	1.3
<b>N</b>		<b>73</b>	26	34	13

Scale: never = 0, from time to time = 1, regularly = 2, always/very often = 3.

**Question:** 'Some public actors and organisations take 'active' initiatives to get their message across by supplying news stories, for example, through organising press statements, publicity stunts or other campaign activities. How often do the following types of organisation target you with such publicity activities?'<sup>10</sup>

Our key finding is that journalists face communication strategies from national actors, who, as we discussed earlier, have vested interests in advancing national interpretative frameworks. Four 'national' collective actors are ranked in the top five source strategists. 'National' governments are the only actor who 'regularly' (2.0) targets journalists whereas 'national' interest groups (1.8), political parties (1.7) and campaign and protest groups (1.3) come second, third and fifth, respectively. This underlines the importance of agenda-building attempts by national actors compared to regional, European and (non-European) supra-, transnational and international ones.

<sup>10</sup> This question was not asked for editors because 'source strategies' are directed at news reporting.

Overall we see a hierarchy by scope of national actors, followed by regional, and then European and international ones. Within the different levels of politics, our findings confirm expectations that institutionalised and powerful actors target journalists more than non-institutional, independent and less conventional types. However, from the perspective of national and regional newspapers, EU and international actors make feeble attempts to directly influence coverage. The European Union institutions (1.4) are the only actor above the nation-state who makes noteworthy communication efforts. This makes the EU a source strategist only on a par with national campaign and protest groups (1.3), and regional and local governments (1.2) and interest groups (1.2). European interest groups (0.8) and protest groups (0.6) make very few efforts to influence the national and regional domestic press by mobilising information at all. This means that even the limited information targeted at journalists from Europe will promote ‘institutional’ rather than wider ‘public’ or ‘civil society’ perspectives.

Looking at differences between journalist types, we see that European institutions target EU correspondents considerably more often (2.3) than they do ‘normal’ journalists (national 0.8; regional 1.1). This shows that the EU directs its communications at the topical specialists more than the mainstream. The low extent to which the EU addresses agriculture and immigration reporters is perhaps surprising, given that the EU is an influential actor in both policy fields, especially agriculture. By contrast, national governments target EU correspondents (1.9) and normal journalists (national 2.0; regional 2.1) at similar levels. Overall, it seems the EU makes little effort to compete with national actors to influence ‘normal’ beat journalists.

Generally, we find only a limited development of European ‘source strategies’ targeting the national and regional press, and these are from the EU institutions. Our enquiries with journalists from the transnational press reveal interesting variations. These journalists receive more information mobilised by European institutions and political parties, and international institutions, than from national and regional ones. In addition, there is some limited evidence for source strategies by European interest groups and protest and campaign groups. Such findings support the idea of a ‘restricted’ Europeanisation of the public sphere, catering for specialised transnational political and economic elites (Schlesinger 1999), that is provided by transnational newspapers and to a limited extent within national and regional newspapers by specialist European correspondents.

### *Organisational Culture*

To assess the influence of *organisational culture*, we offer some general findings from our interviews, and inquire specifically about journalists’ self-perceptions about the media’s role.

On *organisational* culture, our interviewees emphasise the importance of ‘editorial line’ within newspaper organisations. This is not openly discussed, but ‘internalised’ as a set of implicit professional norms and organisational practices into which journalists are socialised. This editorial line defines the limits of political expression and influences the level and style of coverage over Europe. *The Guardian*’s Chief leader-writer’s comments are illustrative: ‘I am the custodian of the *Guardian*’s institutional position that has evolved over decades. The *Guardian* is historically an

internationalist paper and pro-European. It is sympathetic to moves which involve Europe. That's where we're coming from. If I believed, which I don't, that Britain should have nothing to do with Europe, then I couldn't write those leaders.'

To examine journalists' general view of what the media's role on Europe should be, we asked them about the EU's perceived 'democratic deficit' and whether the media should aim to reduce this by informing and educating the public.<sup>11</sup> On a four point scale (from 'no role at all' 0 to 'an important role' 3), our 94 respondents considered the press have a 'moderate role' (2.0) to play in reducing the 'democratic deficit'.

Some are critical of the media's performance: '(The) Media can do it a lot but the problem is how they do it. They are a little behind, they don't give much importance to the EU and they are not clear about EU.' (Paolo Garimberti, Co-Director, *Repubblica*). However, comments indicate that journalists perceive the 'democratic deficit' to be a problem within institutional politics, i.e., the political system and not the media system. They think the media should expose such perceived 'deficits', but are clear that this is an informative not a political role. Journalists tend not to see the 'democratic deficit' as their responsibility, nor do they adopt 'pioneering' normative stances over it: 'The media are no substitute for Parliamentary control' (EU Political Journalist, *FAZ*), 'To discuss, explain, verify (journalists) can help people to understand the importance of the EU. Nevertheless, EU decision-making lacks transparency. EU Commissioners are perceived as not politically responsible because they are not elected.' (Paolo Garimberti, Co-Director, *Repubblica*). '(On perceived role re: democratic deficit) We're a commercial organisation so it's not our job. I do believe there is a democratic deficit, and it's an interesting topic and we try and cover it.' (George Kerevan, Associate Editor, *Scotsman*). 'There's generally a low understanding of the functioning of EU institutions, only the newspapers can fill this gap.' (Sgnr. Yarnuz, Correspondent, *El Pais*). Overall, the 'democratic deficit' is seen as an important topic but not as a justification for transforming existing journalistic practices and norms, nor as an opportunity for an enhanced political role.

The transnational papers share this stance with the exception of the European Voice, which acting as the paper for the transnational Brussels elite is more proactive on the transparency of the EU, but this is within its editorial line. '(W)e to try and make up for the fact that EU institutions, generally speaking, aren't exactly models of transparency, by trying to put as much information that the people in important positions want to keep secret, in the public domain.' (David Cronin, *EV*, Political Correspondent).

### *Infrastructure, Information Gathering and Selection*

First, with regard to *infrastructure* we find very little evidence for organisational efforts to transform news production processes and journalist practices specifically to enhance European coverage. Newspapers have responded to the challenge of reporting European affairs in an 'ad hoc' way. They try to incorporate Europe as a 'topic' into pre-existing news gathering and reporting practices. New posts for European correspondents tend to occur as a branch of foreign affairs. Changes within

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<sup>11</sup> Question: 'Much is made of the 'democratic deficit' of the EU, what role do you see the press having in reducing this deficit by informing and educating the public?' Scale: no role at all=0, a small role = 1, a moderate role =2, an important role=3.

the organisation to cover Europe are usually at the initiative of a few key individuals and not a response to an institutional concern. Overall the limited innovations by national and regional dailies have been responsive and evolutionary rather than pro-active and transformative. Even the transnational press are less pro-active in generating European transnational perspectives than one might expect, as Brandon Mitchener *WSJE* outlines: ‘With the notable exception of the Wall Street Journal and the European Voice, all other major media tend to treat Europe as a collection of nation-states, and EU affairs do not get as high a profile as national news... most journalists ... they’ll only write about it if it’s important to their country.’”

Journalists’ *information gathering* and *selection* practices are also likely to be influential factors for European coverage. First, there may be special considerations in gathering information for European affairs, such as the availability of organisational resources for research and investigation, or a journalist’s own knowledge, or alternatively, access to official documents, experts’ knowledge, or citable public figures. Second, Europe may be difficult to fit within existing ‘news values’ and formats, because of its ‘difference’ as a complex, technical issue, or as an emergent type of event with a multi-levelled scope, or because of its perceived incommunicability, due to lacking charismatic spokespersons, or clear cues from politicians. Thirdly, there may be special ‘news desk’ concerns over Europe, such as competition for news space or the pressure of deadlines, or Europe could be an issue over which journalists face pressures from editors, or the news organisation’s management to advance a specific position.

To construct a general picture of the relative importance of these factors facing journalists, we asked them whether those listed in Table 2 are specifically relevant concerns/considerations/difficulties when reporting on Europe. Table 2 shows an overall score and ranking for their responses, weighted cross-nationally. These were supported by open comments.

**Table 2: Particular concerns/considerations/difficulties of journalists when reporting on Europe, by country**

	Rank	All	UK	F	D	CH	ESP	I	NL
Availability of news space	1	2.5	2.8	2.3	2.6	1.5	2.8	2.8	2.7
Necessity to capture audience attention	2	2.0	2.8	1.6	2.4	2.1	1.7	1.8	1.9
Access to important public figures	3	1.6	1.8	1.4	2.1	2.1	2.1	0.7	1.1
Availability of resources for research/investigation	4	1.5	1.4	1.8	2.4	1.8	1.7	0.2	1.0
Pressure of deadlines	5	1.4	1.8	1.4	1.7	0.6	2.0	1.4	1.6
Lack of expert knowledge on topic	6	1.2	1.2	1.6	0.9	1.5	0.4	1.2	2.3
Access to official documents	7	1.2	1.6	1.4	1.1	0.9	1.7	0.5	0.8
Lack of clear cues and positions from politicians	8	1.1	0.9	1.0	1.4	1.5	1.1	0.2	2.3
Own lack of understanding of topic	9	1.0	1.2	0.7	0.9	0.9	0.9	1.4	1.7
Pressure from senior editors/journalists	10	0.7	0.5	0.7	1.1	0.9	0.9	0.2	0.7
Pressure from management/organisational pressure	11	0.4	0.0	1.4	0.2	0.0	0.6	0.5	0.0
All		1.3	1.4	1.4	1.5	1.3	1.4	1.0	1.4
N		87	13	13	14	10	15	13	9

Scale: No=0, Yes =3.

**Question:** ‘News reporting is a pressurised and sometimes difficult task. Please mention whether any of the following are a concern/consideration/difficulty for you when reporting a story relating to Europe.’

Generally, we see strong cross-national similarities showing that journalists from different countries see themselves as facing similar problems. Journalists are especially concerned about the availability of news space (2.5) and the necessity to capture audience attention (2.0). This holds across newspaper and journalist type. Journalists’ comments assist interpretation. Overall, they emphasise difficulties fitting ‘European’ stories within existing ‘news values’, formats and space requirements. Such news selection problems arise from the type of political events, their complexity, and from the flow and type of information ‘sources’ from Brussels, which are obscure, remote from domestic politics, and lacking in the qualities –e.g., few ‘conflicts between personalities’- that would increase ‘news values’ and enhance their perceived relevance and communicability to readerships. Problems of limited space also result from the nature of the issue, as one interviewee explains, ‘The main problem regarding stories of the EU is the complexity of the EU issues. A journalist has to explain much more. This results in problems of space.’ (Agricultural Correspondent (Brussels), *FAZ*).

Most journalists share such views: ‘When writing stories about Europe it is even more difficult and complicated to break down the issue into an understandable form’ (Chief Editor, *Blick*); ‘It’s difficult to get anything in about the Common Agricultural Policy. CAP is mainly figures, if you could make it into personalities or have an element of conflict then that would help. All the newsdesk are interested in is ‘are they having a fight or not?’’ (Fordyce Maxwell, Rural Affairs Editor, *Scotsman*); ‘In general it is difficult to get an item on Europe in the paper, as it is regarded as boring, and there is too little debate about it.’ (Hetty Van Rooij, European Correspondent, *Leeuwarder Courant*); ‘The space is not sufficient for EU issues. Because of that we don’t deal on a daily basis with EU issues. It is necessary to be able to explain things well to the reader. Extreme synthesis cannot be made on very technical and complex things’ (Roberto Giardina, EU Correspondent, *Nazione*).

Within this common viewpoint, we find some cross-newspaper variation. Journalists from popular (3.0), tabloid (2.7), and regional (3.0) newspapers find the news space factor especially problematic compared to the broadsheets (centre-left 2.4; centre-right 2.0). In addition, tabloid journalists (2.4 compared to 2.0 for all) find it harder than other types to capture the audience’s attention for Europe. On this *Bild*’s political editor elaborates: ‘It is difficult to access the relevant actors and it is difficult to convert European issues into the language of BILD. There are no photos of Europe because the actors are unknown.’ Even journalists from transnational newspapers concur: ‘I think it’s the language and understanding issue. Europe is constructed in such a way that ... is too complex for the average European. It doesn’t resemble anything on the national level, and the decision-making is opaque.’ (Thomas Fuller, *IHT*.)

At the other end of the scale, institutional pressures from within the news organisations are clearly not especially problematic. Pressure from the management and the organisation (0.4), and pressure from senior editors and journalists (0.7), rank lowest.

Between these poles, some but not all journalists mention *information gathering* issues, such as, access to ‘sources’ of expert knowledge, and official documents and public figures, and to resources for investigative research. For example, ‘we cannot do investigations, we do not have not enough resources to have someone working for a week on an issue’ (Socio-Economic News Editor, *L’Humanité*). ‘Access: I can’t cover the Justice and Home Affairs council of the EU because it is closed to the media. I can’t even get hold of the papers until several months after they’ve been discussed.’ (Alan Travis, Home Affairs Editor, *Guardian*), ‘EU institutions based in the UK don’t go out of their way to make themselves known and amenable to journalists. The Commission office in London was "exceptionally unhelpful" in a query about the possible change to the EU flag.’ (Alison Hardie, Political Correspondent, *Scotsman*).<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Here the EU correspondents’ distinctiveness from other journalists is again apparent. They find a lack of clear cues and positions from politicians (0.9) and a lack of expert knowledge (0.9) to be less problematic than leader-writers (political cues 1.4; expert knowledge 1.6), with the ‘normal’ journalists coming in between (political cues 1.1; expert knowledge 1.1). This underlines that EU correspondents tend to be a distinct professional group, with a knowledge base and specialist position in the news organisation.

One important aspect of information gathering is journalists' relationships with EU institutions as a 'source'. Here we examined the perceived quality of the EU's communication strategies compared to national political actors, with whom they compete to attribute meaning to events. Specifically, we asked about the EU's information supply with regard to: its *information-provision performance*, its 'objective' or neutral qualities of suitability for news, such as providing usable material for news copy, accurate information, or specialist knowledge expertise; and its *political-communicative performance*, its 'political' qualities of suitability for news, such as providing a clear political line, political transparency, and opportunities for discussion. Table 3 shows an overall ranking and score (from +1 'better' to -1 'worse'), weighted by country, comparing the EU's communication strategies to national actors.

**Table 3: Assessment of European institutions' communication strategies with journalists compared to national actors**

	Rank	All
Providing specialist knowledge/expertise	1	0.1
Providing material that is accurate	2	0.0
Providing material which is usable news copy	3	-0.1
Overall professional standards	4	-0.2
Being open to discussion	5	-0.2
Being transparent	6	-0.3
Having a clear political line	7	-0.4
<b>All</b>		<b>-0.1</b>
<b>N</b>		<b>54<sup>13</sup></b>

Scale: better = +1, no different = 0, worse = -1.

**Question:** 'In comparison to the national political actors that you deal with, please rate whether the following aspects of European institutions' communication are better, no different, or worse.'

Generally, journalists consider the EU's overall professional standards (-0.2) to be slightly worse than national actors. Also the EU's information-provision performance is clearly better than its political-communicative one. The EU's specialist knowledge/expertise provision (0.1) is rated 'better' than national actors, compared with openness to discussion (-0.2), transparency (-0.3), and having a clear political line (-0.4) that are 'worse'.

Journalists' comments clarify that the EU's communication is substantially different from national actors. On information-provision performance, many journalists mention the EU's technocratic style, its complexity due to the number of countries and issues involved, and the remoteness of EU actors and their press office. A typical remark is: '(It is) Worse because there is a huddle of competences in Brussels, where different nations follow their different interests. Additionally the way of life in

<sup>13</sup> The sample is reduced because the question was only asked to journalists who had experience of EU Communication strategies.

Brussels is not very conducive: It seems many have lunch between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. and then go home.’ (Bonn Correspondent, *Bild*). Some criticise the suitability of information received, ‘The most stupid are the service of spokesmen and Eurostat that fax 30 pages of numbers as if we have time to figure it out’ (EU Correspondent, *Ouest France*). ‘They (European institutions) say ‘take the whole thing and look for the focus’, the national ones say ‘take 2 sheets, it’s our focus, and if you like I’ll then give you the whole thing’.’ (Pedro Simón, Editor, *El Mundo*). Others appreciate the expertise of the information, especially on agriculture, and that it is less likely to be delivered with ‘political spin’: ‘They try to give a lot of info and they try less than national governments to dodge issues by using "stiff talk" (langue de bois).’ (Socio-Economic News Editor, *L’Humanité*). ‘Less spinning here.’ (Rory Watson, Brussels Correspondent, *Times*).

Apart from this, most aspects of the EU’s political-communicative performance compared to national politicians are seen as problematic, especially transparency and the absence of a clear political line. Typically, one journalist remarks: ‘(T)here is less openness, less transparency and I cannot see a clear political line.’ (Editor, *Leipziger Volkszeitung*). This general negative view holds more for the Commission than the European Parliament, where the existence of political cleavages and party politicians, helps journalists to report political messages: ‘The people (means MEPs) who are motivated and understand how to sell politics, who are operating through the Parliament are very good. The (EU) institutions are bad.’ (Lorraine Davidson, Brussels Correspondent, *Mirror*).

Transnational journalists share the views of their colleagues from national and regional newspapers over the EU’s communicative performance. For example, Brandon Mitchener (*WSJE*) criticised the Commission but respected the press officers representing political parties and lobby groups in the European Parliament: ‘The main thing is that the Commission tends to ... hire experts, who are very good at their subjects, but have zero idea how the press works, and which strings to pull to get a good quote or a good spin on a story in a newspaper or a radio interview.’

### *Media Agenda-setting and Advocacy*

Another important factor potentially influencing European coverage is journalists’ own agenda-setting efforts. Here we sought to underpin the findings from our contents analysis. Specifically, we focussed on commentating as the journalistic practice which allows most scope for directly advancing opinions and evaluations in the attempt to exert political influence (Eilders and Voltmer 2003).

First, we aimed to determine the extent to which journalists attempt to influence actors external to news production processes, when commentating on politics, and second, the type and scope of these actors. Table 4 shows an overall score and ranking for the frequency that journalists attempt to influence specific types of actors through political commentating. We take this as a general indicator for *advocacy*.

**Table 4: Actors who journalists try to influence when commentating on public affairs**

	<b>Rank</b>	<b>All</b>
<b>Governments &amp; political parties</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1.1</b>
National government	1	1.6
Political parties (national)	2	1.3
Regional/local government	3	1.2
European Union institutions/Commission	4	0.9
Supranational or transnational institutions (WTO, World Bank, UNHCR etc.)	5	0.7
<b>Interest groups</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0.8</b>
National interest groups (e.g., trade unions, employers associations)	1	1.3
Regional or local interest groups (e.g., trade unions, employers associations)	2	0.9
European interest groups (e.g., trade unions, employers associations)	3	0.7
International and transnational interest groups (e.g., trade unions, employers associations)	4	0.5
<b>Campaign and Protest groups</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0.6</b>
National campaign and protest groups	1	0.8
Regional and local campaign and protest groups	2	0.7
European campaign and protest groups	3	0.5
International or transnational campaign and protest groups	4	0.4
<b>Publics</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1.4</b>
Your readership	1	2.3
National public opinion	2	1.7
Informed political opinion – ‘the chattering classes’	3	1.7
Scientific experts/policy think tanks working in this field	4	0.8
Journalists from other newspapers	5	0.6
<b>N</b>		<b>86</b>

Scale: never = 0, from time to time = 1, regularly = 2, always/very often = 3.

Generally, journalists seem to have only limited advocacy ambitions, and target their public audience more than political institutions and collective actors. Their own readerships (2.3) are the only constant target, followed by national public opinion (1.7), and informed public opinion, ‘the chattering classes’ (1.7). After this, national political actors are the next most significant: national government (1.6), national political parties (1.3), and national interest groups (1.3). The findings show clear hierarchies for the addressees of journalists’ advocacy, by actor type and scope. First, overall they are more likely to try to influence institutional actors (1.1), than interest (0.8) and campaign and protest groups (0.6). Second, within this, journalists target national, then regional, followed by European and international actors. Again, this underlines our previous findings, that journalists see national institutionalised politics as the most important. It is striking that journalists attempt to influence the European Union institutions only ‘from time to time’ (0.9), to the same extent as regional and local interest groups, and even less than regional governments (1.2). Even the newspapers’ specialists on European affairs, EU correspondents, attempt to address national governments (1.3) and political parties (1.3) more than EU institutions (1.1),

which have the same score as regional governments (1.1). In sum, we find limited political advocacy efforts by national and regional newspapers toward political actors and these attempts prioritise national over supranational European politics.

Transnational newspapers are similar in the limited extent to which their advocacy addresses the political system, and deviate slightly from national and regional papers in that European institutions are targeted to the same extent as leading national governments. The only exception is the European Voice which makes concerted advocacy efforts with regard to European supranational actors.

A second thrust of our inquiry was to gauge whether and how journalists' political commentating differed when covering European affairs in comparison the national affairs. Here we examine the nature of the media's own advocacy, specifically, whether it has *informative-educative* or *partisan* qualities, and whether it has the potential to shape European affairs.

To address this, we constructed a set of possible differences that could vary when journalists commentate over European rather than national affairs. Some differences were 'internal' to journalists' writing, such as whether 'national interest' becomes more prominent as an issue, whether the educative role relative to the readership is enhanced due to limited public knowledge over the topic, whether independence to express a political stance increases, and whether more effort is made to influence political elites. Others were 'external', such as, whether newspapers are more likely to follow an established party political line, or that of the proprietor, or that of national public opinion. After establishing an overall aggregate picture of differences, we drew from journalists' open comments on the most important difference to add qualitative contextual detail.

Table 5 shows the rankings and overall aggregated scores for journalists' perceived differences when commentating on European compared to national affairs, on a scale from 0 for the lowest, to 3 for the highest difference. Differences by subcategories of journalist type are also given, as these are more striking than cross-national or cross-newspaper differences.

**Table 5: Journalists’ perceived differences when commentating on European compared to national affairs (by journalist type).**

	Rank	All	Editors/ Leader Writers	EU correspon dents/ journalists covering EU affairs	National newspaper journalists, specific policy fields	Regional newspaper journalists, specific policy fields
Newspaper is more likely to defend what it sees as the national interest	1	1.7	1.4	2.0	1.8	1.8
Newspaper has more of a duty to improve public knowledge	2	1.6	1.3	2.1	1.2	2.1
Newspaper is more likely to express its own position, independently from other actors	3	1.4	1.2	1.7	1.5	0.8
Newspaper is more likely to try to influence the positions of political elites	4	1.3	1.3	1.6	1.5	0.5
Newspaper is more likely to follow the perceived position of the proprietor	5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Newspaper is more likely to follow the line of the political party with which it is most closely associated	6	0.4	0.1	0.6	0.6	0.5
Newspaper is more likely to follow the line indicated by national public opinion polls	7	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.5
<b>All</b>		<b>1.0</b>	0.9	1.3	1.1	0.9
<b>N</b>		<b>87</b>	26	21	27	13

Scale: 0 = no, 3=yes.

**Question:** ‘When the newspaper comments on political affairs relating to Europe, such as the Convention on the Future of Europe, is the newspaper’s role in any way different than when giving an opinion on national affairs, with respect to the following statements?’.<sup>14</sup>

In general, journalists do not see considerable differences in commentating on Europe, with the highest perceived difference being 1.7 on a scale from 0 (no) to 3 (yes). In addition, we have a clear negative finding with regard to differences that are ‘external’ to journalists’ writing practices. The political stances of proprietors (0.5), political parties associated with the newspaper (0.4), and general public opinion (0.3), are not more of a consideration when commentating on Europe. From this we deduce that the way that journalists comment over European affairs is not an outcome of extra pressures placed on them to follow their proprietors’, political allies’, or general public’s position over Europe. In Table 5, we also see that journalists are more likely to take up an independent stance from other actors (1.4) and to try and influence political elites (1.3), than they are to be influenced by proprietors (0.5), political parties (0.4), or the public (0.3). This indicates that when commentating, the

<sup>14</sup> The question was varied slightly to allow journalists to comment on their own field: editors/leader-writers and EU correspondents were asked about the Convention, whereas journalists covering immigration and agriculture were asked about ‘asylum’ and ‘subsidies’, respectively.

perceived flow of opinion-leading is from journalists to external political actors, i.e. from the media system to the political system.

It is also worth noting that this holds especially for journalists writing for popular (express own position 2.1, mean 1.4; influence political elites 2.1, mean 1.3) and tabloid newspapers (express own position 2.3, mean 1.3; influence political elites 1.7, mean 1.3) than for broadsheets and regionals. However, this is more likely to be an outcome of the generally more assertive commentating style of popular and tabloid newspapers, than a factor specific to commentating on Europe. One cross-national variation concerns Britain, however, where journalists are more inclined to follow the proprietor's position over Europe than elsewhere (1.0 compared to 0.5 mean). This 'exception' comes from the Times' journalists, which as a member of the Murdoch group appears to have a clear editorial line over Europe that is enforced within the organisation, to a greater extent than other newspapers.<sup>15</sup> Overall though, journalists seem to be as free to write in their political commentaries over Europe as they are over national affairs.

Turning to the limited differences between commentating on European and national affairs that are apparent from Table 5, these are 'internal' to writing practices for political commentary. These give us an indication of the type of advocacy by journalists over Europe. First, journalists mention their likelihood for promoting opinions that defend 'national interest' (1.7), which is again evidence for journalists' national interpretative frameworks over Europe. Second, they emphasise that they have an informative and educational role and duty to improve public knowledge (1.6), which is stressed more than attempting to influence political elites (1.3). Overall this points in the direction of *informative-educative* advocacy and raising awareness over Europe, more than *partisan* advocacy and ideologically-based activism.

This interpretation is strongly supported by journalists' comments on the greatest difference when commentating over Europe. As they did for reporting, journalists emphasise difficulties that are specific to communicating about Europe as topic, much more than any perceived difficulties in attributing it a specific ideological bias. By far the overwhelming difference that journalists mention is the need to explain and express more clearly, and in more detail, because of the lack of public and readership knowledge about European compared to national affairs: 'There's an attempt to explain things better when the EU level is spoken of, it's a task of giving more clarity, knowing that the reader isn't as familiarised with the EU's functioning compared to national politics.' (Andrés Ortega, Editor, *El Pais*). 'On European issues (we) have to be a lot more informative since more explanations are needed for the reader to understand the opinion piece.' (Pedro Cuartango, *El Mundo*) 'The public does not know much about the subject so the paper has the duty to inform.' (Rimmer Mulder,

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<sup>15</sup> It seems that newspapers owned by Rupert Murdoch including the Times and the Sun have a stronger direct editorial control over their commentating on Europe than others. However, it seems overly simplistic to claim a 'direct' link between the proprietor and the newspaper's commentating as some have done (Anderson and Weymouth 1999). This is a conspiracy theory which unsurprisingly has salience among the Times' competitors. Instead, we consider proprietorial influence is more likely to be 'indirectly' mediated through the organisational culture of the newspaper and as an element of its editorial line. Thus the Times is not Eurosceptic *because of* Murdoch ownership. Murdoch ownership is part of the Times' organisational culture, just as being linked to a Eurosceptic Conservative Party, and a readership with Eurosceptic views, all of which adds up to a stricter editorial line over Europe than other papers.

Editor, *Leeuwarder Courant*). ‘The newspaper sees itself as pro-European, internationalist, it feels it has duty to inform and explain because of levels of ignorance of the subject and the failings of government over the EU.’ (Ian Black, European Editor, *Guardian*). These examples, selected from many, underline that journalists see the key difference when commentating on European affairs to be the need to inform and educate the public and their readerships. It emphasises the *informative-educative* much more than the *partisan* dimension of journalists’ advocacy over Europe.

However, an important difference is that journalists consider they have a greater scope to comment more openly over European politics, because political cleavages are not as clearly established in the political system and public imagination as they are for national politics: ‘(There is) bigger freedom to express opinion because there is less conditioning from national political actors or political groups.’ (Alessandro Farruggia, Agriculture Correspondent, *Nazione*). ‘At the national level, there is more interest in the standpoints of the political parties, which can be overcome at the European level, (thus we are) less partisan concerning Europe.’ (Sgnr. Gonyáley, *El Mundo*). ‘European affairs are commented on with more freedom as party politics is not important. On a national level, trenches of party politics dominate. There are a lot of prejudices.’ (EU Correspondent, *FAZ*). For the most part, this greater independence for political expression over Europe is an outcome of the lack of established cues and clear positions from the political system, and is not perceived as an opportunity by journalists to give ideological leadership in political debates over European affairs. In the large majority of cases, they see themselves as responding to a political void by raising awareness.

One exception to this overall trend is the Swiss tabloid *Blick* which takes up an educative-informative and partisan stance to the extent that it even goes against its understanding of its own readership’s position over Europe: ‘The most important thing is that the *Blick* writes against its public when it comes to European politics; it does it consciously, rather than writing as its public thinks’ (Chief Editor). This underpins our contents analysis’ findings with regard to *Blick*’s exceptional pro-European advocacy. Apart from this, however, the greater assertiveness of popular and tabloid journalists remains within the same norms and parameters as it does for commentaries on national affairs. As a *Mirror* journalist states: ‘I don’t think there is much of a difference (between Europe and national), (we are) fairly strident on both UK and European issues. We would rant and rave about foundation hospitals as well as rant and rave about why we need to get into Europe.’ Thus even tabloids and popular newspapers are mostly *informative-educative* about Europe, raising awareness for understandings within their own established organisational culture, rather than being *partisan* ideologues over Europe.

On the Italian press, our contents analysis showed a surprisingly high level of autonomy for advocacy that overall is favourable to Europe, but more Eurosceptic than newspapers’ representations of political affairs. From our interviews it seems that this apparent ambivalence toward Europe derives from the Italian press advocating pro-Italian interests within European affairs -which may be either for or against European integration- rather than simply advocating pro-European positions. As one journalist states: ‘In commentating on national politics, we take positions without prejudices. On EU politics there is the tendency to bring to the European level Italian

reasons for wishing that a common Italian position is brought in,' (Mario Orfeo, Director, *Il Mattino*). Thus the Italian press consciously push for an Italian version of Europe, but this may go either for or against different aspects of European integration.

Turning to cross-journalist variations in Table 5, we see that all four highest perceived differences are more distinctly expressed by EU correspondents than either editors/leader-writers or national and regional journalists (defend national interest 2.0, mean 1.7; improve public knowledge 2.1, mean 1.6; express own position 1.7, mean 1.4; influence political elites 1.6, mean 1.3). Again, the duty for improving public knowledge is especially strongly emphasised. This indicates that European correspondents appear to be a distinct group among journalists with a specific set of norms. They take on a specialist role as pioneers commentating on Europe but once more this advocacy role is perceived as informative-educative and raising public awareness for European issues.

Findings on the transnational newspapers go in a similar direction. In general, journalists feel they have fewer constraints than their national and regional colleagues for commentating due to being located transnationally, rather than being tied to national politics, and by virtue of having a diverse readership: "We don't have an owner who has an agenda, we don't have an editor who has an agenda, we have a peculiar purpose which is to be the forum for all sorts of different views, which a national newspaper sometimes can't afford because their role is to address a certain constituency within a national system, and we don't have, our constituency is so broad that we'll give them all the views." (Thomas Fuller, Brussels Correspondent, *IHT*). For the *FTE*, *WSJE* and *IHT*, this perceived independence for expression does not lead to *partisan* advocacy, but remains *informative-educative*. Editorials on Europe are often written at the domestic newsdesk, even in the US or Britain.

By contrast, the weekly *European Voice* operates more like a national newspaper for the supranational EU politics and serves Brussels. This organisational culture promotes an editorial line for independent and critical views directly addressing European Union affairs: '(E)ditorial policy has definitely changed... the paper was a little bit too cosy with the European Commission... I think people now know what we are about. So, for instance, whistleblowers come to *EV* now, which they might not have in the past, but then so do prime ministers and presidents, when they want to write an op-ed, which they didn't in the past. If you come across as a serious independent-minded newspaper, more people are likely to take it seriously.' (Dennis Abbott, Editor, *EV*). Again, although the *European Voice* promotes Europe, it acts as a forum for opinions from a range of views, and is directed more at informing than contesting.

In summary, we find little evidence for journalists using commentaries for partisan purposes over Europe. This is underlined by the overwhelmingly negative responses to our questions about whether the newspapers ran political campaigns over Europe. In the few cases of media campaigns, these tended to be one-off issue-specific attempts and not the adoption of a consistent ideological position over Europe, such as the *Bild*'s and *Il Mattino*'s attempts to raise awareness about price rises resulting from adopting the Euro currency. Generally, commentating on Europe and the scope for journalists to express overt political positions seems to operate within the limits set by the perceived editorial line and the newspaper's organisational culture. It is mainly

knowledge deficits and the emergent and relatively undefined nature of European politics which allows journalists the freedom to express opinions, not that they see themselves as advocates with a political axe to grind.

## Conclusion

To our knowledge this chapter presents one of the first attempts to study the contribution of journalism to 'Europeanization' by recourse to systematic empirical evidence on factors external and internal to the news production process, ranging across seven countries from the European region. Much remains to be done, but we hope that these findings present a general base-line from which others can undertake more detailed studies on specific countries, or types of journalism, or aspects of the news process. Thus we highlight some main findings.

Our contents analysis shows that most newspapers produce pro-European positions, both in the way they represent the political discourse and contribute to it through commentary. On this aggregated evidence, it is hard to see the press as a source of Euroscepticism, as it is often accused of being by politicians. On the contrary, to the extent that opinions are shaped by mediated discourse, the press can be considered to be generally supportive of European integration. *The Sun*, of course, is an exception, but was the only newspaper to be an outright advocate of Euroscepticism to the extent that this also shaped its representation of politics. Also, the British press' commentating at one pole, is to a limited extent more Eurosceptic than the German press', at the other, though there are overall few differences in the way that countries represent political reality, which is perhaps surprising given that Euroscepticism is more salient in British politics. Also we generally find relatively low levels of media 'autonomy', where a newspaper's own position varies from its representation of politics, the exceptions are the Eurosceptic *Sun*, Pro-European Swiss tabloid *Blick*, and the French Communist Party's Eurosceptic *L'Humanité*. Overall, newspapers seem not to wander from their established organisational culture over Europe.

The cumulative evidence from our interviews adds detail and gives explanatory support to this perspective. Outside the news production process, readership's preferences for national politics and low understandings of Europe act as a restricting condition for journalists' efforts to present 'multi-leveled' or supranational interpretative frameworks. Also the feeble efforts of EU-level collective actors to target information at the press, compared to their strong national competitors' agenda-building activities, again limits the possibilities for 'Europeanised' coverage.

Factors within news production processes tell us about the media's response to the political changes brought by advancing Europeanisation, and journalists' self-perceptions of their practices, and the media's obligations and role. Regarding organisational responses, overall the limited innovations by national and regional dailies are 'ad hoc' and evolutionary rather than pro-active and transformative. Even the transnational press are less pro-active in generating European transnational perspectives than one might expect. 'Europe' is basically incorporated as a topic into pre-existing news gathering and reporting practices. Thus the 'democratic deficit' is important as a topic to journalists, but not as a motivation for transforming the media's role. Responsibility for remedying any such shortfalls in political communications is left squarely on the shoulders of elected politicians. Journalists

quite consciously distinguish between the media and political systems and do not see Europe as opportunity for extending their own political role.

Nonetheless, clear differences and challenges exist in covering European affairs from the perspective of the journalist as a practitioner. These mostly arise from the nature of the subject matter which does not fit easily into established news values and reporting practices. Journalists have problems with the political-communicative qualities of the EU's information rather than its supply. EU politics is hard to fit into the immediate, visible, personalised, conflict-based narratives that cover national politics, and so finds space harder to come by. Thus EU actors suffer relative to their national counterparts within European coverage and nationalised viewpoints tend to predominate.

Interestingly, these same particularities of European politics, give journalists more individual freedom to express opinions when writing commentaries, compared to national affairs. However, this is an outcome of a lack of established cues and positions from the political system, and not perceived as an opportunity for giving ideological opinion-leading. Journalists mostly see themselves as responding to a political void by raising awareness. We find their own agenda-setting efforts targeting their own readers, and to a lesser national governments, with the EU hardly registering. Overall, journalists see their advocacy over Europe as a way of informing and educating the public by raising awareness. There is very little evidence for ideologically motivated advocacy, or the media seeing itself as a political actor. For the most part, advocacy remains within the limits of a newspaper's established editorial line in the media landscape. This means that newspapers' positions tend to reflect similar levels of uncertainties and inconsistencies to those built around the cleavage structure over Europe in national political systems. Stated simply, the media system tends to follow the political system over Europe, it 'represents' much more than it 'leads' political debate.

In general, we find strong cross-national similarities in journalists' perceptions. This indicates that Europeanisation is experienced as impacting on different national press cultures in similar ways. There appears to be a 'universal' experience of Europeanisation within journalism. Among journalists, EU correspondents are pioneers, who create a possible forum for more Europeanised viewpoints within the limits set by their restricted structural location in the newspaper. Among newspapers, the transnationals have a similar limited emergent role within structural restrictions. Such findings support the idea of a 'restricted' Europeanisation of the public sphere (Schlesinger 1999), catering for small transnational political and economic elites, mediated by transnational newspapers, and to a limited extent within national and regional newspapers by European correspondents. Any further future Europeanisations of political journalism are likely to start from there.

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