

## EURO-VISION

The Portrayal of Europe in the Quality Press

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**Abstract** / This article monitors news coverage on the European Union and EU-related matters in terms of news frames and news discourses adopted in online versions of seven quality newspapers (six European and one American) over a period of four months (December 2001–March 2002). During this period the EU Council Summit was held in Laeken, Belgium, on 14 and 15 December 2001. The selection of the national quality press outlets is carried out on the basis of a general, significant readership and centrality to the current media debate on European issues in the country. The seven countries are interesting cases in terms of their varying role in the history of European integration as well as their current attitude towards the EU. The research literature identifies five recurrent news frames (conflict, human interest, economic consequences, morality and responsibility): this article assesses the relative visibility of each of these news frames in the coverage on the EU and its institutions in the news outlets under study. Furthermore, it asks which discourse is more dominant when it comes to the shaping of European identity as portrayed in the news reporting. Four types of discourse (culture, expansion, in- and exclusion and power) are examined.

**Keywords** / EU institutions / Europe / news coverage / news frames / quality press / types of discourse

## The Mediation of the 'Community Model'

The EU is an institutional construction of interests, a master plan operating beyond the boundaries of the nation-state, gradually shaped thanks to a particular mindset and a set of goals in Western Europe in the aftermath of the Second World War, which led to three prominent decisions: the Common Agricultural Policy, the Single Market and the single currency. Or as argued by Craig Parsons (2003: 2): 'Without the causal drive of these ideas and their institutional consequences, Europe would have nothing close to these arrangements.'

Originally set up in 1951 with six countries, the EU is an expanding, institutionalized entity comprising 25 member states (27 by 2007), through a co-operative and integrative process. Major steps towards supragovernmental collaboration and integration within this 'community model' include the launch of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1952, the European Economic Community in 1957, the European Monetary System in 1979, the Single European Act in 1986 and the Maastricht Treaty in 1991; the legal establishment of the euro as currency and the decision made on participating countries;

the Amsterdam Treaty in 1997; the Nice Summit in December 2000; the full implementation of the euro as of January 2002; the writing of a new constitution for Europe; the Rome Declaration in July 2003; and the signing of the European Treaty in October 2004. The EU and its incorporation of Central and Eastern European countries has become a powerful entity through its population and economic strength, but the lack of a coherent and effective EU foreign and security policy has become evident after Europe's failure in dealing with the Balkans conflict and war in the 1990s or in its role in resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict. Another example of the disunity among the EU members is that Britain, Germany and Spain have taken extreme positions unilaterally in the Iraq War without turning to EU institutions for consensus. More recently the 'no' votes in referendums in France and the Netherlands have clearly shown that the 'European dream' has been shattered.

### *Role of the Media*

By bringing information to audiences, the media, and certainly the news media, play an important role in the discursive construction of Europe. One can wonder whether this public discourse on Europe matches the political, economic and social stability Europe is aiming to achieve. Moreover, information on the EU has never before been so vital for Europeans. Increasingly, decisions taken in Brussels have a direct impact on the daily lives of EU citizens.

And yet a postelectoral survey in 2004<sup>1</sup> showed an average attachment to the EU of about 70 percent in comparison to the 95 percent who feel attached to their country. Trust in the EU institutions proved to be rather low (on average 46 percent, but among the newcomers only 36 percent). Discordant levels of confidence were awarded to the European institutions in the new member states: much scepticism prevails, particularly in Poland, where only 29 percent stated a confidence in the EU institutions. Another criticism shared fairly consistently is the European Parliament's failure to take account of the concerns of European citizens. These concerns confirmed earlier surveys. By way of an example, we refer to the report published by the Dutch Council for Societal Development (RMO, 2003), which proposed a series of recommendations in an effort to remedy the growing indifference of Dutch citizens towards 'Europe'. The media can have a powerful effect in changing this 'indifferent' attitude by portraying the EU as a reality that impacts our everyday lives in numerous aspects, by emphasizing the urgency for active participation of citizens, and by focusing on social, cultural and political cohesion, addressing commonality especially now given the EU enlargement. Active participation could be fostered, according to the recommendations of the RMO report, by means of a common European educational programme providing pupils in the member states insight into their common history and institutions while maintaining cultural diversity. Moreover, 9 May could become a European-wide holiday, as one of several common symbols of unity such as a European soccer competition, a song contest, a flag, an anthem and a European passport with dual nationality. More importantly, Brussels could be brought nearer to its citizens by making members of the European Parliament more visible in the media.

Given Europe's institutional character and its complexities, it is often difficult for journalists in today's profit-oriented and downsized newsrooms to take the time to gather information on specific policy or background information from EU institutions that are far from transparent, or to write up a commentary on an EU-related subject in the newspapers. Europe is still considered an 'uninteresting' subject, and the discourse on Europe's constitution is seen as being far from mediagenic. De Vreese (2003) interviewed journalists and editors about the constraints encountered when covering European affairs: distance was often identified as a barrier, also the time span needed for complex EU decision-making to take place was considered problematic for the television news format. EU institutions are seen as difficult to have access to; and so is the bureaucratic language used. At times, European stories appear to be a hard sell among the peers in the newsroom, perhaps in part stemming from a (perceived) lack of knowledge among the audiences the journalists want to service. Increased competition among the media has led to a tendency towards sensationalism and trivialization, which explains why the crisis caused by the resignation of the discredited Santer-chaired European Commission in March 1999 attracted a lot of media attention. Much less attention was given to the difficult conception of the EU constitution, which required systematic attention, given its multiple social, economic, political and cultural implications.

But, one could wonder, what about quality newspapers? Do they not consider Europe as a subject of high importance? These quality newspapers can certainly not hide behind the 'excuse' of Europe being too complex a subject for their readers. That is precisely why the quality press is examined in this article.

Europe's ongoing 'search' for an identity – frequently associated with the collapse of the nation-state and globalization – is a constant characteristic in the relevant literature (Delanty, 1995). Nevertheless, few studies on frames in the news offer firm evidence of, for example, Europe's identity crisis based on systematic cross-national comparisons of media coverage on EU-related issues (Gavin, 2001; Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000). Apart from the research by de Vreese (2003), comparing the frames adopted in EU-related television news coverage throughout a 15-month period in Britain, the Netherlands and Denmark, and Kevin's (2003) comparison of visions on Europe and Europe's visibility in both the television programme schedules (in terms of genres and broadcast hours) and in the national press in six EU countries, we came across very little substantial empirical investigation of media output.

De Vreese's (2003) television news content analysis clearly showed that EU-related news is modestly visible, mostly covered from a domestic angle, often dealing with economic issues and heavily framed in terms of conflict. Deirdre Kevin's (2003) study was interesting in that she did not limit her television analysis to news and current affairs. The entire programme output was submitted to questions such as 'Was a multifaceted picture given of Europe's complex reality?' or 'Was the emphasis on (often ironic) stereotyping images and clichés about the lives and cultures of other Europeans?' In a nutshell, as to the overall television output it was found that coverage of EU topics was comparatively sparse and that 'Europe' was rarely a topic during prime-time television. Where Europe or European integration was indeed covered, this

mainly occurred on public service television. In terms of formats, apart from non-political information, travel programmes and historical documentaries focusing on Europe's culture, geography and history were quite frequent in all countries under study. When dealing with conflictual or controversial issues, the approach adopted and tone used were neutral. In a number of television programmes ironic stereotyping of European countries and peoples and the portrayal of clichés were common practice (e.g. *Eurotrash*, UK's Channel 4). Moreover, the perspectives were frequently predominantly national. Nevertheless, in some other cases serious efforts were made to present a multifaceted picture of the complexities of Europe and the way in which Europeans live together (e.g. in the documentary series *Eutopia*, coproduced by several European broadcasters). When looking into the recurrence of European news in routine reporting of newspapers, it became crystal clear that the number of news stories in the press hugely outweighed that of television news. The attention paid to European news in the quality press outweighed all other newspaper types (both regional and national), only to increase dramatically during the European parliamentary elections.

The present research does not offer a cross-medium comparison (e.g. press vs television), but aims at a cross-national design. Although I am aware of television's currently much greater impact in shaping public opinion, newspaper output, and quality newspaper output in particular, should not be ruled out completely: television and newspapers remain the preferred methods of gathering information about the EU. Moreover, from Eurobarometer data collected in 1999,<sup>2</sup> it became apparent that people express higher levels of trust in the press in the Netherlands and Finland, two countries included in our study.

## Theory: Framing and Discourse

### *Framing of Europe in the Press*

Gamson and Modigliani (1989: 3) illustrate the original meaning of frames as used in cognitive psychology: they consider frames as a perspective or an 'interpretative package' from which meaning can be attributed to a subject. The core of this package consists of 'a central organizing idea, or frame, for making sense of relevant events, suggesting what is at issue'. This vision, applied to the media, states that the latter have a number of means at their disposal to influence public opinion and with it, the public agenda. One of these tools is 'news framing', defined as follows by Entman (1993: 52): 'To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular definition of a problem, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described.' By 'framing' something in a certain way, reporters and editors can increase the agenda-setting effect. Frame- and agenda-setting have in common that both are oriented towards the media agenda as well as the public perceptions of the latter (i.e. the public agenda). Frame-setting goes beyond agenda-setting, assuming that the media not only put certain issues on the agenda, but are also able to 'frame' a certain issue: that is, they suggest how

the issue or the problem should be conceptualized. A review of the literature reveals that a clear-cut definition of 'frames' is hard to find. Thompson (1990: 289) defines 'frames' as follows: 'A series of claims or assertions, topics or themes, strung together in a more or less coherent way, and seeking, often with the aid of rhetorical flourishes, to persuade an audience.' Vasterman (2004: 42–3) sums up a series of commonly recurrent characteristics of collective frames: they are mostly recognizable by all-encompassing terms or metaphors (catchphrases) that play a central role in argumentations; they exist independently from specific current problems and can be applied to a great number of problems or conditions; frames prove to be rather stable, although new events or unexpected developments may lead to the 'reframing' of the original frame. By explicitly giving prominence to a certain frame, the media can co-determine the construction of a given issue or problem.

Although research may identify different sets of frames, a twofold division can be applied: in addition to generic news frames, there are subject-specific news frames. Research on subject-specific news frames deals with frames related to one specific issue. Such a limitation makes this kind of research almost impossible to compare and may explain the reason why researchers tend to find what they were looking for. According to Hertog and McLeod (2001: 150–1) this has contributed to one of the most frustrating tendencies within the framing research strand. Hence we believe that the identification of generic news frames that are not bound to one subject is more valuable. Such research aims at detecting the relative visibility of a set of news frames, irrespective of the news subject under study.

Although it is evident that journalists can report news in different ways, Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) indicate that the following five generic news frames are commonly used: (1) conflict frame; (2) human interest frame; (3) economic impact frame; (4) morality frame; and (5) responsibility frame. The conflict frame emphasizes conflicts between individuals, groups or institutions. This news frame is used frequently during electoral campaigns, for instance. The conflict frame is related to winning and losing. Emphasis is put on the performance and style of a party or an individual. In the human interest frame, the emphasis is placed on the personal, emotional side of an event, issue or problem. The personalization of an issue adds to the narrative character of the news. Reporting news from within a human interest frame is a way to personalize, dramatize and give emotional content to the news. Its aim is to capture and hold the audience's attention. The economic impact frame shows the economic impact an event, problem or issue will have for an individual, group, institution, region or country. This frame is often used to make the potential economic impact of an event clear to the public. The economic impact has important news value and it is often suggested that news producers use this frame to make an issue relevant to their audiences. The morality frame adds a religious or moral charge to an event, problem or issue. Because professional journalistic standards require objectivity, journalists often refer indirectly to moral perspectives, for instance by quoting someone. The responsibility frame presents an issue or a problem in such a way that the responsibility for causing or solving a problem is attributed to a specific agent.

The research literature reveals conflicting hypotheses on the influence of news frames on audiences' attitudes and perceptions. In some studies it is argued that the news framing of political subjects has no visible effect on the perceptions of the public with regard to the government or the media. Others think that news framing does have an important effect on the public. For example, it is argued that the conflict frame in the news activates public cynicism and mistrust (Cappella and Jamieson, 1997) and that this form of reporting diverts attention from political processes (Patterson, 1993). Although news frames are not unanimously seen as having an impact on the public one way or the other, the present research nevertheless assumes that they are not without importance. News reporting in terms of conflict, human interest, morality, responsibility and economic impact does influence the way in which the public thinks about topics and how these topics are recalled and reflected upon (Valkenburg et al., 1999). The media agenda can therefore act as an important contextual factor that may co-determine the public agenda and influence how the public thinks and acts by framing the news in certain ways, i.e. by attributing more or less visibility to a certain news frame. In our research, a content analytical tool developed by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) was used for a systematic analysis of the news frames in the study material.

### *Discourse and the Construction of a European Identity*

According to the cultural studies school of thought, the media are not merely representing reality, but are rather defining, creating and shaping it. Information originating outside one's personal experience (e.g. domestic politics, even more so European politics) is constructed by the media and is seen as the apparent, true state of reality. The media, including news outlets, are not unbiased representers, but generally portray the dominant definition of reality. In other words, media are the carriers of the dominant set of rules, attitudes, norms and values in a community. Therefore, the media transmit the ideology of the community to the interest of the dominant group, which is always looking for ways to establish, maintain and expand its power base. One efficient way to do this is through the mass media. Van Dijk (1995) proposes that groups create a 'group self-schema' in an effort to represent their basic interests: ingredients such as identity/membership, tasks/activities, goals, norms, values, position and resources all contribute to the ways in which different groups deal with one another in real life. The ideologies of those different groups may coexist, however, because of shared common values, such as democracy. The media have the possibility to define and secure those shared ideological values.

Dominant ideologies are imbedded in the language used by, for instance, media professionals. Fowler (1991: 42) explains: 'Ideology is already imprinted in the available discourse. A discourse provides a set of possible statements about a given area, and organises and gives structure to the manner in which a particular topic, object, process is to be talked about. In that it provides descriptions, rules, permissions and prohibitions of social and individual actions.' In other words, discourse represents a complex of meanings that support ideology. Language is the tool that determines the dominant discourse.

Nevertheless, linguistic complexity enables multiple, even conflicting discourses that are struggling for dominance to coexist.

We argue that the EU, in its effort to strive for a common collective identity, is experiencing conflict. In order for the EU to shape its collective identity, it needs to establish a dominant ideology. Melucci (1989) formulates four building blocks for a collective identity. The first one consists of 'signs provided by culture': identity has to deal with the identification of a community on the basis of signs grounded in their culture. Second, he refers to 'in- and exclusion of groups': this process is based upon the notion that people define themselves as being, at least partially, different from others. 'Time' is a third and crucial factor in the recognition of a collective identity in that throughout time things change and history is important in the creation and understanding of a collective identity. With the fourth building block, Melucci (1989) points out that this process needs to be 'located in space'. The process of creating a collective identity needs to take place in a limited setting. This can be geographical, but it may also be in a limited political, economical or cultural setting.

In discussions about collective identity, *cultural identity* is a recurrent concept: applied to Europe, it refers to a shared common cultural background binding the different nation-states. Servaes (1989) sums up three factors that are related to cultural identity: not just the cultural referential frame, the balance between the power and the interests of the community, but also the ideological background against which everything is transmitted, define the cultural identity of a nation, or in our case, the EU. In short, the commonalities in Servaes's (1989), Melucci's (1989) and van Dijk's (1995) definitions provide the ingredients for our operationalization of the recurrent discourses about Europe in the quality press outlets under study. The *in- and exclusion discourse* is defined as the position people take towards others: it sets political, economical, cultural or geographical limitations. The *development discourse* assumes that an identity is continuously in the making: not only does shared history define it, but also the goals set for the future determine the definition of a collective identity. The *culture discourse* underlines the fact that the significance and the perception of reality, the norms and values ruling in a community set the basis for a collective identity. The *power discourse* starts from the principle that every community wants to achieve power and therefore needs to serve certain political interests.

These four discourses will be assessed in terms of their relative visibility in the news coverage of Europe. We ask ourselves which various roles the quality newspapers play in the countries under scrutiny when defining the EU's collective identity: in doing that, they have a choice between emphasizing the differences between 'us' and 'them' or focusing on the binding elements between the nation-states. In its efforts to propagate itself, the EU has made numerous policies to strengthen or support a collective identity, one well-known example being the Green Paper *Television without Frontiers* (European Commission, 1984: 2) in which the flow of information is considered paramount: 'Information is a decisive, perhaps the most decisive factor in European unification. . . . European unification will only be achieved if Europeans want it. Europeans will only want it if there is such a thing as a European identity. A

European identity will only be developed if Europeans are adequately informed.<sup>7</sup> The media are important transmitters of information in that they proclaim the dominant discourse and as such define the parameters of a collective, European identity. A content analytical tool constructed around the aforementioned ingredients (in- and exclusion, power, culture and expansion), tested by van der Schoot<sup>3</sup> (2002), was used for the analysis of the discourse in the study material.

## Research Question

Our aim is to investigate the nature of the recent news coverage on Europe in seven online quality newspapers (six European and one US) during a four-month period, December 2001–March 2002, during which the EU Council Summit was held in Laeken, Belgium, on 14 and 15 December 2001. This period was decisive in that the Summit produced the Laeken Declaration, which spelled out in greater detail the issues raised in Nice, and was intended to work towards a simpler, more transparent and more efficient Union, one that is more present in a new, multipolar world as well as in the minds of its citizens, particularly the young. In Laeken it was also decided to appoint former French president Valéry Giscard d'Estaing as chair of the European Convention, envisaged to work on a blue print for reforming the Union (on issues as important as subsidiarity, the incorporation of the EU's Charter of Fundamental Rights into the treaties, the reform of the EU institutions, etc.) and calling for a deeper and wider public debate about the EU's future development (Norman, 2003). After over 16 months' work, the Convention produced a draft constitutional treaty that was handed to the Italian presidency on 18 July 2003. Negotiations ended in an agreement about the European Constitution among the European government leaders in Brussels on 18 June 2004. On 29 October, the European Treaty was signed in Rome by the 25 member states as well as Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey. The recent outcomes of the EU referendums in France and the Netherlands as well as the failed June summit in Brussels put the ratification process on hold by scrapping a 2006 deadline.

We want to assess the relative visibility of each of the generic news frames identified in the literature in the coverage of the EU and its institutions in the news outlets under study. Furthermore, we ask ourselves which discourse is more dominant when it comes to the shaping of European identity as portrayed in the news reporting. Four types of discourse (culture, expansion, in- and exclusion and power) are examined. Apart from the general trends and similarities characterizing the newspaper sample as a whole, we looked for differences between the different countries: how does the news reporting on Europe differ between the European newspapers in terms of the relative importance attributed to news frames and the dominance of discourses? For instance, what about the news coverage of 'newcomer' Poland or EU-sceptic Spain? Or what about the prominence of news frames and dominant discourses related to the EU in the press of 'outsider' US? We also looked for differences in the news coverage in traditional Europhile countries such as Germany and the Netherlands on the one hand, and a more reticent Finland that neighbours Scandinavian



countries that are not part of the Euro-zone, and are likewise half-hearted about becoming part of it.

In light of the dizzying expansion plans of the EU, we expect significant differences in the political stances among the various countries and consequently key differences in the rhetoric of their quality newspapers. First, because of obvious differences in history, language, position and role within the EU; second, we presume that the extent to which the separate nation-states still prove to be resilient will determine their 'solution' for functioning in a post-national (con)federation. During the Summit in Laeken, the prime ministers discussed the future plans of the EU. This topic is obviously closely linked to the in- and exclusion discourse as well as the development discourse. Decisions made within the EU about the expanding borders of Europe will have an impact on the sense of belonging to one group (i.e. a changing notion of 'us' vs 'them'). Topics such as defence or security policy measures may also strengthen this feeling. One of the candidate countries eager to enter the EU is Turkey. The cultural differences between the latter and the EU were one of the central topics of discussion during the Summit: this issue of Turkey as a potential candidate in the long run is not only an example of in- and exclusion, but we also expect this subject to be looked upon in the press from a cultural discourse perspective (e.g. the EU with its Judaic-Christian heritage vs Muslim Turkey). In short, we expect that a number of subjects related to Europe such as the introduction of the euro and the enlargement of the EU will make the differences in press coverage among the European countries more apparent. Hence, we assume that the diverging positions in the respective political agendas will be reflected in the media agendas and consequently made visible through the news frames and discourses adopted to varying degrees.

## Research Method

### *News Sample and Analysis Instrument*

Our sample consisted of the online versions of seven quality newspapers (six European and one US). The selection of the national quality newspapers is carried out on the basis of a general, significant readership and centrality to the current media debate on European issues in the country. The selection of the countries was based upon the position or assumed position that each country takes in the EU: Spain (*El Mundo*) and Italy (*Corriere della Sera*) represent the Mediterranean countries within the EU, on the understanding that Spain is definitely more Euro-sceptic than Italy. Germany (*Der Tagesspiegel*) is undoubtedly one of the key players and 'locomotives' within the EU. The Netherlands (*de Volkskrant*) is a midsize country, which stands in general positively towards the EU. Finland (*Turun Sanomat*) as a smaller participant in the EU is a representative of the Scandinavian, more half-hearted countries towards the EU. Poland (*Rzeczpospolita*) can be considered as representing all future member states and can be expected to take a generally positive attitude towards the EU. Last but not least, the US with *The Boston Globe* was chosen to illustrate a non-European point of view of a superpower on subjects related to the EU.

Each media outlet has an online version with an easy-to-access database and archive. A search for the keywords ‘Europe’, ‘European Union’ and ‘European institutions’ in the online newspaper database, both in the lead and in the article itself, published within the given period of time (December 2001–March 2002), resulted in a total of 1400 article titles. The *Corriere della Sera* (Italy) with its 410 articles was obviously the newspaper with the most Europe-related articles, including many short articles without any in-depth coverage (Table 1). In an effort to make the news frame and discourse analysis feasible and to compare equal numbers of articles per newspaper, 50 articles from each country were randomly selected.<sup>4</sup>

The total sample of 350 articles were subjected to an analysis instrument that contained 35 mainly closed and some open questions concerning format and content characteristics such as article size, timeliness, tone of the article, etc. Integrated in this analysis instrument were the 20 questions developed by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) and the 12 questions by van der Schoot (2002) in an effort to assess the relative prominence of the news frames and discourses under study. Furthermore, the relative presence of these news frames and discourses was related to the aforementioned newspaper article characteristics such as country of origin, article size, etc.

## Results

### *Format and Content Characteristics*

Our total sample included 350 newspaper articles. The whole sample consisted mostly ( $N = 205$ ) of midsize articles (i.e. between 100 and 300 words) written by the newspapers’ own journalists; 51 articles were long (over 300 words). The relatively low number of illustrations (72 of all articles had some sort of illustration, either a photograph or a graphic) was remarkable. Most online quality newspapers (in Spain, Italy, Germany and the Netherlands) chose not to use an illustration at all, nor did the online version provide information whether in the printed newspaper version an illustration was added. *The Boston Globe* was the exception to this rule: although the online version did not include

TABLE 1

#### Number of Articles per Country

Countries	Newspapers	Total Number of Articles in Period
Spain	<i>El Mundo</i>	192
Italy	<i>Corriere della Sera</i>	410
Germany	<i>Der Tagesspiegel</i>	289
Netherlands	<i>de Volkskrant</i>	145
Finland	<i>Turun Sanomat</i>	189
Poland	<i>Rzeczpospolita</i>	150
USA	<i>The Boston Globe</i>	51

illustrations, it did provide details about the kind of illustration printed in the traditional newspaper version. In general, most illustrations were photographs accompanying the text: most photos were images of politicians and high officials shaking hands or signing documents. Other photographs accompanying the news stories are 'talking heads', that of the journalist or the interviewee. Hardly any other photographs were found.

Slightly more articles dealing with the EU were time-related than not (185 vs 165). This is an interesting finding, meaning that Europe as a news topic is not only interesting for newsmakers if the subject is current. Rather it seems that Europe is an issue even without an explicit event related to Europe and its institutions taking place. Looking at the tone of the article, it shows that the overall tone of the news stories is either neutral (189 of the 350) or positive (117). A clearly negative tone was only observed in 44 EU-related articles. Concluding from this sample, the thought that the media in general tend to deal with events from a negative point of view (i.e. news is bad news) is incorrect when referring to news coverage of Europe.

In two-thirds of the sample (201 articles) the link between the EU and the own country was explicitly mentioned in the news stories: either considering their country as an integral part of the EU or from a more specific 'us vs them' perspective. In the case of the US newspaper, it should be mentioned that the 'us vs them' perspective is mostly adopted when referring to some collaboration between the USA and the EU in their fight against terrorism or involving other ways of international cooperation. When no explicit link between the EU and the country was made explicit in the article, a more international, inclusive approach was taken in the articles rather than a more national perspective.

Not surprisingly, the dominant themes during this period of time were related to repercussions of the introduction of the euro (since 1 January 2001) as well as the cooperation between the EU and the US against terrorism and the particular stance in this of the EU in the aftermath of September 11. Furthermore, the Polish news agenda was characterized by agricultural issues, whereas the Dutch press exhibited a greater variety on subjects related to the EU and its institutions. The introduction of the euro would create 'unity', but the policy of the EU was dealt with with scepticism and mistrust: 'The euro is the beginning of a new era' (*Corriere della Sera*, 31 December 2001); 'If money talks, the euro speaks of unity' (*The Boston Globe*, 20 January 2002); 'Critical attitude toward the EU rises in Finland' (*Turum Sanomat*, 26 February 2002). Italy also shows a critical stance towards the EU and mentions the 'fear of the EU becoming a Superstate' (*Corriere della Sera*, 8 December 2001 and 5 March 2002). Notwithstanding, more positive sounds toward the EU are also heard: 'Europe as a ministry for people' (*El Mundo*, 14 March 2002); 'The Union of Values' (*Rzespospolita*, 21 March 2002); 'Europe is becoming one big family' (*Turum Sanomat*, 16 December 2001).

Hardly any opportunity is given to the 'people in the street' to express their opinion on the matter. Whenever the 'vox populi' is heard, it represents a particular group such as students or farmers protesting against EU policy. The main actors in the articles are politicians or other officials from the country itself or spokespersons of the European Commission or members of the European

Parliament. The Polish newspaper under study quotes more European officials and politicians than Polish politicians. This in contrast with Spain, which quotes more Spanish officials than European. The Polish enthusiasm can perhaps be explained by the fact that Poland was a candidate country eager to enter the EU during that period. A great deal of the EU-related articles are opinion pieces and could therefore be interpreted as an indirect way for the public to shape and express its opinion by means of the journalists' or experts' opinions published.

After having drawn the overall picture of format and content characteristics of the entire newspaper sample, let us now look at the relative attention paid to news frames as well as to the discourses adopted.

### *News Frames*

A list of five sets of questions (20 in total) compiled by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) was employed to determine the extent to which the news frames were recurrent in the study material. Each set of questions was intended to capture one of the five news frames: conflict, human interest, economic impact, morality, responsibility. The extent to which the 20 questions reflected the underlying frames was examined with the aid of principal components analysis with varimax rotation. Factor analysis results of the recurrent news frames in the overall sample of news articles ( $N = 350$ ) under scrutiny showed the identification of five frames explaining 61.10 percent of the total variance, as presented in Table 2.

By and large, the factor solution reflects the five news frames that were proposed by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000); tests were carried out on the factor scores in order to see which similarities and differences could be detected in the adoption of frames in the various media outlets of the seven countries. Factor scores were calculated on the basis of which regression analyses (one-way ANOVA) were conducted.

Looking at the recurrence of the news frames in the outlets in the seven countries, the relative presence of all news frames in the material proved statistically significant, in that these various newspapers portrayed Europe and European-related matters very differently (Table 3). The mean scores identified the relative importance attached to the different frames in the different countries: the human interest frame appeared to be peripheral in the Spanish, German and Finnish newspapers under study, whereas in the Polish and US newspapers this news frame was revealed to be much more prominent. When looking at the conflict frame, it seems that the latter is more present in the German and Spanish newspapers, present to a lesser degree in the Dutch newspaper, whereas in the other newspapers this news frame does not appear at all. The distribution of the relative importance attached to the news frames shows that the economic consequences frame appears in the Polish and American newspapers. The morality frame seems to play a very prominent role in the American newspaper and a much smaller but positive one in the Italian newspaper, however it is peripheral in the Spanish, German and Polish newspapers. In three countries, Spain, the Netherlands and Poland, the responsibility frame seems to be particularly prominent.

TABLE 2

Factor Analysis of All Newspaper Articles (N = 350) (Principal Component Analysis – Varimax with Kaiser Normalization)

Framing Items	Human Interest	Conflict	Economic Consequences	Morality	Responsibility
Responsibility					
1. Does the story suggest that some level of the government has the ability to alleviate the problem?		.136			<b>.821</b>
2. Does the story suggest that some level of the government is responsible for the issue/problem?	.122	.347			<b>.647</b>
3. Does the story suggest solution(s) to the problem/issue?			.182		<b>.681</b>
4. Does the story suggest that an individual (or group of people in society) is responsible for the issue/problem?	.362	.372		.157	
5. Does the story suggest that the problem requires urgent action?	.154	.319	.187	.390	.416
Human interest					
6. Does the story provide a human example or place a ‘human face’ on the issue?	<b>.749</b>	.108		.138	.184
7. Does the story employ adjectives or personal vignettes in order to generate feelings of outrage, empathy/caring, sympathy, or compassion?	<b>.697</b>	.149		.369	
8. Does the story emphasize how individuals and groups are affected by the issue/problem?	<b>.539</b>	.279	.268		
9. Does the story delve into the private/personal lives of the individuals it focuses on?	<b>.839</b>				
10. Does the story contain visual information that might generate feelings of outrage, empathy/caring, sympathy, or compassion?	<b>.680</b>		.168		

*continued*

TABLE 2

**Continued**

Framing Items	Human Interest	Conflict	Economic Consequences	Morality	Responsibility
Conflict					
11. Does the story reflect disagreement between parties/individuals/groups/countries?		<b>.849</b>		.109	.160
12. Is there some form of antagonism towards one party/individual/group/country on the part of another?	.101	<b>.838</b>		.148	.167
13. Does the story refer to two sides or to more than two sides of the problem or issue?	.134	<b>.608</b>	.258	-.182	
14. Does the article refer to 'winners' and 'losers'?	.140	<b>.555</b>	.326	.180	
Economic consequences					
15. Is there a mention of financial losses or gains now or in the future?			<b>.881</b>		
16. Is there a mention of costs/degree of expense involved?			<b>.803</b>		.119
17. Does the article refer to the economic impact of the continuation or termination of action?		.167	<b>.861</b>		
Morality					
18. Does the article contain specific social precepts on how to behave?	.151	.267		<b>.793</b>	
19. Does the article contain a moral message (presentation of good and bad)?	.202			<b>.801</b>	
20. Does the article refer to morality, God or other religious leaders/concepts?	.347			<b>.552</b>	.317

TABLE 3

## Factor Scores – News Frames by Article Characteristics

		Human Interest	Conflict	Economic Consequences	Morality	Responsibility
Countries	<i>p</i>	<b>.00</b>	<b>.00</b>	<b>.00</b>	<b>.00</b>	<b>.00</b>
Spain		-.59	.35	-.21	-.16	.26
Italy		.36	-.63	-.66	.25	-.12
Germany		-.54	.60	.27	-.36	-.44
Netherlands		-.37	.11	-.49	.05	.50
Finland		-.56	-.55	-.23	-.12	-.31
Poland		.89	.03	.70	-.78	.20
USA		.81	.09	.62	1.12	-.09
Length	<i>p</i>	<b>.00</b>	<b>.00</b>	.21	.13	.07
Short		-.07	-.18	.02	-.17	-.20
Medium		-.10	-.02	-.06	.08	.08
Long		.56	.40	.21	-.04	.05
Origin	<i>p</i>	.17	.26	.40	<b>.00</b>	.75
Own editors		-.11	-.24	-.04	.26	.17
Own journalists		.02	.06	-.04	-.14	-.02
Other journalists		.28	.05	.28	.58	.00
Other		-.21	-.17	.05	.15	.06
Illustration	<i>p</i>	<b>.00</b>	.14	<b>.00</b>	.96	.36
Illustration		.49	-.15	.46	.04	-.09
No illustration		-.13	.04	-.12	-.01	.03
Timeliness	<i>p</i>	.82	<b>.00</b>	.31	.06	.66
Timeliness		-.02	.17	-.05	.09	.02
No timeliness		.01	-.19	.06	-.11	-.02
Tone	<i>p</i>	<b>.01</b>	<b>.02</b>	.33	<b>.04</b>	.08
Positive		.18	-.21	.05	.09	.11
Neutral		-.16	.08	.02	-.12	-.11
Negative		.20	.21	-.21	.25	.17
Link EU	<i>p</i>	.98	.28	<b>.00</b>	<b>.00</b>	.36
Explicit		-.00	.05	.20	-.15	.04
Not explicit		.00	-.07	-.27	.21	-.05

The *p* values result from ANOVA tests. Bold values are significant.

One obvious problem in analysing the occurrence of frames was that framing is dependent on more variables than just the country where the coverage on Europe took place. For instance, long articles will be more likely to frame news than short articles. A similar argument can be made for the topic of the story. An article on the euro is likely to be framed differently than an article about European expansion or Europe's struggle against terrorism, and these types of articles may be spread unevenly through the different types of outlets. Therefore, analyses of variance were performed controlling for the format variables 'article origin', 'article length' and 'presence of illustration'. Looking at the recurrence of the news frames, it showed that articles that were written by own editors appeared to have the morality frame present ( $p = .000$ ).

The assumption that long articles will more likely frame news than short articles was consistent with our data. It showed that long articles used the human interest ( $p = .000$ ) and conflict frame ( $p = .004$ ) significantly more. By looking at the recurrence of news frames it appeared that the presence of an illustration (in this case a photograph) showed a stronger presence of the human interest ( $p = .000$ ) and the economic consequences frame ( $p = .000$ ) (here a graph would be more frequently used). As mentioned earlier, most of the illustrations used in articles were personal or emotional pictures of events or graphics to support the article. This was consistent with the presence of both of the frames.

Alongside the impact of format elements on the recurrence of news frames, content-related variables such as tone, timeliness and the explicit link between the own country and Europe were also subject of analysis. The way in which Europe and its institutions were presented (positively, negatively or neutrally according to the coders' assessment) had the following impact on the recurrence of news frames: the conflict ( $p = .016$ ), the morality ( $p = .044$ ) and the human interest frames ( $p = .006$ ) seemed most prominent. All frames appeared in articles when the tone was more negative. Timeliness or a less time-related character of the articles showed significant impact on the prominence of the conflict frame ( $p = .001$ ). The recurrence of the morality frame was, when related to timeliness, almost significant ( $p = .058$ ) and therefore worth mentioning. Apparently, news that is not time-related will tend to be negatively framed and seen from a moral perspective.

The explicit link between the own country and Europe and its institutions seemed to explain the recurrence of the economic consequences ( $p = .000$ ) and the morality frames ( $p = .001$ ). On the one hand, if the link was positively made explicit between the own country and Europe or its institutions, the economic consequences frame was dominant. On the other hand, if the link was not made explicit, the recurrence of the morality frame was prominent. In other words, news that is related to Europe but not linked to the own country, so it seems, will be reported from a moral standpoint.

In terms of the significance of the appearance of the frames by the different countries, our analysis showed that this significance stays. By controlling the sample for 'country' as variable as well as for all other variables combined, the significance for the variable 'country' remained.

### *Discourse Analysis*

In van der Schoot's (2002) instrument for the analysis of the four discourses, four sets of three questions were compiled to determine the extent of the presence of a discourse. Each set was intended to capture one of the four discourses: in- and exclusion, culture, power and development. The extent to which the 12 questions reflect the underlining discourses was examined by means of principal components analysis with varimax rotation. After the initial analysis, one of the 12 questions – 'Did the article speak of the future (plans) of the own country?' – scored so low that it was decided to remove the question from the instrument. The discourse analysis explaining 63.6 percent of the total variance in framing items is visualized in Table 4.



By and large, the factor solution reflected the four discourses and tests were carried out on the factor scores in order to see which similarities and differences could be detected in the adoption of the discourses in the various media outlets in the seven countries. Factor scores were calculated on the basis of which regression analyses (one-way ANOVA) were conducted (see Table 5).

Looking at the presence of the four discourses in the output of the seven countries, all four proved statistically significant, meaning that the dominant discourses adopted in the quality newspapers of the countries under study were very different. The mean scores identified the relative importance attached to the different discourses in the different countries: while the culture discourse seems more peripheral in Spain and Italy, references to cultural activity in Europe occupy a pre-eminent place in the US newspaper under study. If we look at the power discourse, it seems that this discourse is strongly present in the Spanish press and, although far less, also prominent in the German and Polish media. As for the in- and exclusion discourse, the US and Dutch newspapers seem to attach relative importance to this discourse, where the US does so more strongly. The development discourse plays a strong role in the Italian and Finnish newspapers.

Parallel to the news frame analysis, analyses were also performed in order to show the impact of format elements on the recurrence of the discourses (see Table 5). Analysis was conducted with format characteristics such as 'origin of article', 'article length' and 'presence of illustration'. The data show that the recurrence of the discourses is not significantly present for the variable 'type of article'. On the characteristic 'article size' it appeared that the assumption that long articles are more likely to portray the news from a perspective seems also to hold for the discourses. The data show that long articles adopt the culture ( $p = .002$ ), power ( $p = .024$ ) and development discourses ( $p = .004$ ). By looking at the recurrence of the discourses, it appears that the development discourse ( $p = .000$ ) is present when an illustration accompanies the news story. But remarkably, when looking at the different types of illustrations, it appears that when photographs accompany the article, the culture discourse ( $p = .007$ ) is the most recurrent discourse, and that when graphics are shown, the power discourse ( $p = .003$ ) is predominant.

Analyses of content-related variables such as tone, timeliness and the explicit link between the country and Europe showed various outcomes. The tone of the article (positive, negative or neutral) showed the presence of all four discourses: the culture ( $p = .005$ ), the power ( $p = .002$ ), the in- and exclusion discourse ( $p = .001$ ) and the development discourse ( $p = .036$ ). When the tone of the article was negative, the culture and power discourse seemed prominent, and where the tone was positive, the other two discourses showed prominence. News related to Europe viewed from a cultural or power perspective seemed to be addressed in a negative way. Timeliness or a less time-related character of the article demonstrated significantly the prominence of the culture ( $p = .008$ ) and the in- and exclusion discourses ( $p = .003$ ). It seems that news that is not so time-related explains the prominence of the culture discourse. The presence of the in- and exclusion discourse is negative when it comes to news that is not time-related. Finally, when looking at the variable 'explicit link' with the own

TABLE 4

**Factor Analysis of All Newspaper Articles (N = 350) (Principal Component Analysis – Varimax with Kaiser Normalization)**

Discourse Items	Culture	Power	In- and Exclusion	Development
<b>In- and exclusion</b>				
1. Does the article discuss the position of Europe/the EU/European institutions in the world?		.120	<b>.746</b>	.300
2. Does the article address the borders of Europe?	.308		<b>.543</b>	.292
3. Does the article discuss a conflict situation between Europe and another country or continent?	.228	.194	<b>.711</b>	-.291
<b>Culture</b>				
4. Does the article mention the national culture of the country or of another European country?	<b>.859</b>			
5. Does the article mention the culture of (various) European countries?	<b>.804</b>		.178	
6. Does the article address cultural norms and values?	<b>.607</b>	.204	.225	.132
<b>Development</b>				
7. Does the article address the history of Europe and/or the EU?	.392	-.105	.128	<b>.628</b>
8. Does the article address the future (plans) of Europe and/or of the EU?		.351	.103	<b>.752</b>
<b>Power</b>				
9. Does the article mention the relationship of one or more EU states with one or more states (EU or otherwise)?		<b>.540</b>	.379	.217
10. Does the article mention the power of one state within the EU regarding decision-making?	.126	<b>.860</b>		.126
11. Does the article mention relative power?		<b>.812</b>	.238	

TABLE 5  
Factor Scores – Discourses by Article Characteristics

		Culture	Power	In- and Exclusion	Development
Countries	<i>p</i>	<b>.00</b>	<b>.00</b>	<b>.00</b>	<b>.00</b>
Spain		.29	.62	-.34	-.22
Italy		.22	-.29	-.27	.24
Germany		-.99	.24	-.13	-.20
Netherlands		-.09	-.32	.32	-.26
Finland		-.06	-.55	-.24	.35
Poland		-.42	.38	-.01	.07
USA		1.05	-.08	.67	.01
Length	<i>p</i>	<b>.00</b>	<b>.02</b>	.06	<b>.00</b>
Short		-.31	-.17	-.11	-.27
Medium		.11	.00	-.02	.06
Long		.15	.31	.30	.26
Origin	<i>p</i>	.12	.16	.16	.54
Own editors		.24	-.33	.04	.21
Own journalists		-.01	.04	-.03	-.04
Other journalists		.21	-.18	.36	.06
Other		-.24	.12	-.11	.05
Illustration	<i>p</i>	.08	.99	.17	<b>.00</b>
Illustration		.18	-.00	.14	.38
No illustration		-.05	.00	-.04	-.09
Timeliness	<i>p</i>	<b>.00</b>	.13	<b>.00</b>	.36
Timeliness		-.13	.07	.15	-.04
No timeliness		<b>.15</b>	-.08	-.17	.05
Tone	<i>p</i>	<b>.00</b>	<b>.00</b>	<b>.00</b>	<b>.04</b>
Positive		.05	.03	.28	.19
Neutral		-.13	-.13	-.14	-.12
Negative		.40	.47	-.16	.06
Link EU	<i>p</i>	.43	<b>.00</b>	.07	<b>.04</b>
Explicit		.03	.21	-.08	.09
Not explicit		-.05	-.28	.11	-.13

The *p* values result from ANOVA tests. Bold values are significant.

country, the data show the prominence of the power discourse ( $p = .000$ ) and the development discourse ( $p = .044$ ). Both discourses correspond negatively with the link with the own country. News that does not make an explicit link between the own country and Europe will not be viewed from a power or development point of view. The strong correlation between the presence of the four discourses and the seven countries remained significant after combining the variable country with the other intervening variables.

## Conclusions and Discussion

The media are undoubtedly essential in raising public awareness and disseminating knowledge on European integration, both in the founder, newcomer and applicant countries. Also the media in countries in other parts of the world may play a significant role in unravelling the complexities of European integration. By choosing news frames, tone and continuous concern for accurate facts and figures, the media may act as catalysts for integration and aid European citizens to actually think of themselves as European citizens. Foreign media may also have interesting things to say about the European construction, its characteristics, its assets, but also its shortcomings and how to remedy them. When it comes to issues of social responsibility and responsiveness of the media, the newspaper market, as part of the free market, has given in to modern entrepreneurship and 'shareholder value', trading accuracy for immediacy in the speeded-up world of digital and 24-hour news. According to many scientific observers, the societal transformations that have contributed to a predominantly commercial management of the media are of such nature that the traditional legal and market-oriented accountability mechanisms alone are no longer sufficient. One should wonder to what extent such a highly competitive newspaper market allows for enough accurate and adequate accounts of the ever changing complexities of EU integration.

Our cross-country study of elite newspapers revealed that Europe-related issues are considered newsworthy when the subject is current and also without an explicit event related to it (or to its institutions). The domestic angle or the explicit link between the own country and the EU proved to be paramount: this was also one of the outcomes of de Vreese's (2003) study. Two dominant themes during the research period included the news related to the repercussions of the introduction of the euro as well as the stance of the EU in the aftermath of September 11. Some format characteristics of newspaper articles did have an impact in that longer articles and the use of illustrations tended to foster framing and orient it in specific directions. More specifically, as to the frame-setting and the various discourses adopted, it became clear that the quality newspapers under study portrayed Europe and Europe-related matters very differently from country to country. Hence, Europe's construction in the news coverage differed according to the intended audiences. This is potentially dangerous for two reasons: first, these different news constructions may cause different conceptions and expectations of Europe in different countries. Second, as communicators generally adapt their message to their audiences, the differences in news frames and discourses of Europe may signal a priori differences in conceptions and expectations of Europe that in turn are reinforced through this type of news coverage. Both may constitute a serious brake-block for the progress of 'project' Europe.

In view of future research, ideally an integrated approach should be adopted, including longitudinal message analysis on the basis of strategically chosen moments of measurement, inspired by major EU-related events. A validated coding instrument exploring more in-depth the notion of identity-building should be applied. The selection of the news items should ideally be built around 'key moments' that may have had an impact on EU-related news

making. The purely quantitative monitoring exercise of press coverage on Europe could also be complemented with qualitative, in-depth interviews with past and current key media practitioners (editors in chief, foreign correspondents, etc.) involved in European matters in the countries under study. These interviews would provide us with an insight into the past and present 'news production ecology' and the contextualization of content analysis results. Elite interviews with such media professionals could be conducted in an effort also to get to know their inside views on external, newsroom-related, profession-related, etc. determinants that would explain the trends in news making in Europe, the constraints and challenges for newsmakers when reporting on EU-related matters, and to detect changes in context, format and content characteristics and in editorial policies in terms of visibility of the EU news on the respective national agendas that are felt crucial over the years by the media professionals themselves. Complementary to the press content monitoring exercise, the European debate in the media, and the coverage of political and cultural issues in the country under study could be analysed. A cross-national (both in- and outside the EU), cross-medium and longitudinal message analysis, both focusing on the news output through systematic content analysis and on the production process through in-depth interviews, would enable one to explain trends in coverage of the EU and its institutions in terms of relative attention to news frames, news discourses, identity formation fostering vs inhibiting elements in the news coverage of the countries under study, and would therefore enrich the research conducted so far.

## Notes

1. The results of this past European elections 2004 survey can be found at [europa.eu.int/comm/public\\_opinion/flash/FL162en.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/flash/FL162en.pdf)
2. Eurobarometer 51, July 1999 (fieldwork March–April 1999). Also a more recent study revealed similar trends (Eurobarometer 55, October 2001).
3. Anne van der Schoot developed the coding instrument under the supervision of the author for her master's degree thesis in Communication Studies at Radboud University Nijmegen.
4. The very short articles were left out before the random selection of the articles to be analysed, since analysis of the news frames and discourses adopted would have been impossible anyhow.

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