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Working Paper

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LEQS Paper, No. 62

Provided in Cooperation with:
London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), European Institute

Suggested Citation: Meijers, Maurits (2013) : The Euro-crisis as a catalyst of the Europeanization of public spheres? A cross-temporal study of the Netherlands and Germany, LEQS Paper, No. 62, London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), European Institute, London

This Version is available at:
https://hdl.handle.net/10419/303345

LSE 'Europe in Question' Discussion Paper Series

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LEQS Paper No. 62/2013

June 2013

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The Euro-crisis as a catalyst of the Europeanization of public spheres? A cross-temporal study of the Netherlands and Germany

Maurits Meijers*

Abstract

In this paper it is analysed whether the euro-crisis has induced a change in the degree of Europeanization of national public spheres. It is argued that 'mediatizing politics' on TV is a prerequisite for the accountability structures of liberal democracies. Examining the degree of Europeanization of public broadcaster news in Germany and the Netherlands in 2008 and 2011 this paper gauges the changes in terms of visibility of European issues and in terms of salience of items on European issues. Moreover it is analysed which news categories predominate, the tone of news items on European issues, and which explicit evaluations of European integration appear – and how these elements are affected by the euro-crisis. Finally, it is shown that although the Europeanization of public spheres increased as the euro-crisis developed, the EU was mostly portrayed negatively, focused predominantly on economic issues and political contestation was hardly visible.

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Acknowledgements
I would like to thank Jonathan White and Katjana Gattermann for their comments on earlier drafts of this paper. All possible inaccuracies are the author's sole responsibility.

The Euro-crisis as a catalyst of the Europeanization of public spheres? A cross-temporal study of the Netherlands and Germany

Introduction

The ambitious project of European integration is not faring well. While the members of the euro-zone initially believed they could get off scot-free, the rage of the financial markets in 2009 roared towards Europe, shaking the unstable fundaments of the monetary union, and the European Union (EU) in general. At the same time, Eurosceptic voices have become more pronounced questioning the EU's democratic legitimacy as well as its capacity for accountable decision-making. In this context, it is relevant to examine what the effect of this 'negative trend' in European affairs has had on the Europeanization of national public spheres. As will be discussed below, the Europeanization of the national public sphere refers to the extent to which 'European affairs' are (becoming) visible and salient in the national public spheres of European countries. Studying whether some form of European public sphere is emerging or not is especially significant as it is closely interwoven with the question of democratic credence of Europe's governance structures. As Kaelble remarked, 'the reinforcement of a European public sphere does not necessarily coincide with a more intensive European integration' (2010, 27). On the contrary, as a crisis of European integration invokes debate throughout European societies, it might even prove conducive

to the formation of a European public sphere. It is this line of thought this essay intends to follow and test empirically.

As three quarters of the Europeans watch television news daily (Norris 2000), TV news presents the most significant source of information on European affairs for most 'ordinary citizens'. This essay will examine how 'negative' political developments affect the Europeanization of public spheres by comparing the level of Europeanization in public broadcasting television news *before* the escalation of the European sovereign debt crisis in 2008 with the degree of Europeanization *during* this crisis in 2011 in two European countries, namely, Germany and the Netherlands. By coding over 1200 news items from over 100 news bulletins, the data allows us to make preliminary conclusions about each news item's *dimension*, its *news type*, its *salience*, and its overall tone. Moreover, it will be gauged to what extent explicit (opposing) *evaluations* of the EU were present.

Before elucidating the research design, the normative utility of a Europe-wide public sphere and how this might be observed empirically will be briefly discussed. Subsequently, the results will be discussed followed by a discussion of their theoretical implications.

The European Public Sphere and the Quality of Democracy

In the light of the debates on the enduring 'democratic deficit' of EU decision-making the significance of a common European public sphere for the quality of democracy in Europe is often emphasized. In normative terms it can be argued that open participation in public debate and the ability to challenge public authorities within the public sphere is a prerequisite for the creation of a legitimate political community that underpins liberal democracy (e.g.

Habermas 1962). Importantly, this focus on the need for free political communication is far from novel. As Jean Terrier and Peter Wagner have noted, already Adam Ferguson (1723-1816) observed that a free society is conditioned by the manifestation of a 'communicative flux' between a variety of individuals (2006, 16). Such a 'communicative flux' concerning political affairs is what is often referred to as 'political communication'. According to Jarren and Donges, political communication is the 'central mechanism for the formulation, aggregation, creation and implementation of collectively binding decisions' (2002:22). Thus, if we understand political communication as the imparting of politics in today's media-democracy (Schuppert 2008, 250), political communication denotes the process of making 'politics' public. This opens the possibility of politics being tried and questioned openly, as well as being either supported or rejected. Indeed, only by 'publishing politics' it can be monitored and reviewed critically (Korte & Fröhlich 2004). In this regard, contemporary politics can *only* be democratic insofar as it is mediatized. Ultimately, then, this comes down to the rule of thumb of *legitimation through communication* (Korte & Fröhlich 2004, 259; cf. Sarcinelli 1998, 11).

This definition of legitimate governance has significant implications. If democratic legitimacy does not solely depend on a legitimate governing process but also on the medial transmission of these governing processes, the locus of responsibility also lies with the news media. This, then, highlights once more the significance of studying the condition of political communication of European affairs. Recognizing this central role of the media for legitimate governance is in line with the observation that the opportunities for politicization of EU politics do not solely depend on the rearrangement of the institutional framework (cf. Hix 2008). Instead, successful politicization is contingent on multiple factors and an open, communicative public sphere seems one of them. Precisely, as White remarks, it is essential to realize that 'a

sense of a shared predicament with other Europeans can then be developed gradually in the unfolding political process rather than proclaimed (and perhaps rejected) at a decisive constitutional moment' (2010, 118).

Such a gradual formation of a common European communicative space has been deemed impossible due to the insurmountable obstacles of linguistic and cultural diversity among Europe's citizens (e.g. Smith 1992; Grimm 1997). From this perspective, democracy on EU level is inevitably deficient as there is no potential for a common public 'space' where the central practices of citizenship can take shape. In keeping with the presently predominant social constructivist approach, however, Adam Ferguson already emphasized that the 'spirit' (or 'national spirit') which potentially stems from the 'concern for common affairs' does not require a pre-political bond and, thus, does not need to exist before the interaction takes place (Terrier and Wagner 2006, 16). This is reminiscent of the much cited transactionalist account by Karl W. Deutsch (1957) on the potential for cross-border *rapprochement* of identities and the creation of a sense of a shared fate through social communication. In such Deutschian terms, a 'common' can be created though interaction, and interaction only. It is important to recognize that these reflections on how a political bond may be conceived is predominantly an ideological matter rather than primarily empirical as it is 'bound up in broader questions of the health of contemporary democracy', as White noted (2010, 119). Indeed, the 'essentialist' rejections of a European public sphere such as those from Grimm or Smith are strongly related to certain normative conceptions of democracy and of the nature of deliberation and debate (e.g. Habermas 1997; Trenz and Eder 2004).

Among those that regard the emergence of a European public sphere as plausible, we can discern three different empirical approaches. First, we can identify those scholars who envisage a European public sphere essentially as

a replication of the national public sphere on a transnational, European level. These approaches conceive of the development of a European public sphere as the emergence of pan-European mass media such as the TV channel *Euronews* or the weekly *European Voice*. Scholars relying on this conceptualization come, understandably, with negative conclusions about its emergence (e.g. Schlesinger 1995). Unitary European transnational mass media is likely to remain a marginal and elitist phenomenon.

The two remaining empirical approaches argue that is more fruitful to study the process of the *Europeanization of national public spheres*, rather than assessing whether a single, unitary European public sphere will or can emerge. These approaches recognize the continuing centrality of national society for ordinary citizens, while at the same time acknowledging the pervasiveness of transnationalization in Europe as a result of European integration. The second kind of empirical approaches comprises those scholars that conceptualize the Europeanization of public spheres as the emergence of a single 'European perspective' as expressed in national media as well as the increasing relevance of common European symbols (e.g. Kaelble 2002; Diez Medrano 2009).

Thirdly, we can discern empirical approaches that operationalize the Europeanization of the public sphere as the visibility and presence of 'European issues' in the national media. These 'European issues' can be conceptualized as issues having an explicit EU focus. (e.g. Gerhards 2000; Peter et al. 2003) Or, alternatively, a less restrictive view of the Europeanization of public spheres focuses both on the presence of EU issues and issues on 'other European countries/actors' in national public discourse (e.g. Eder & Kantner 2000; Trenz 2010; Risse 2010; Koopmans & Statham 2010a; Wessler et al. 2008). The distinction between EU issues and issues on 'other European countries/actors is what Koopmans and colleagues have

labelled as 'vertical' and 'horizontal Europeanization' respectively (Koopmans and Erbe 2004, 101; Koopmans and Statham 2010b, 28). From the abovementioned approaches we can distil four main indicators for the Europeanization of national public spheres (cf. Machill et al. 2006, 63-4; Risse 2010, 116-119, Koopmans and Statham 2010b):

- Visibility of (and degree of interaction with) EU actors or policies in the national news (vertical and supranational Europeanization)
- Visibility of (and degree of interaction with) European actors or countries in the national news (horizontal Europeanization)
- Transnationally shared issue cycles (or synchronization): Transnational thematic convergence of news issues
- Same criteria of relevance: The same issues are equally salient transnationally.

A looming issue for the study of the Europeanization of public sphere is question of thresholds or benchmarks.[1] Indeed, one can ask what is the degree of Europeanization needed to be able call a public sphere Europeanized (cf. Risse and van der Steeg 2003, 20)? Machill et al. note "[t]o date no scale has been developed in international communication and media science by means of which the degree of Europeanization of national public spheres can be measured." (Machill et al. 2006, 79). I would argue that increase over time in the four abovementioned indicators is the determining factor for identifying Europeanization of national public spheres (see also Koopmans and Sthatam 2010b, 43). After all, 'Europeanization' refers to a (gradual) process in which 'Europe' becomes more visible and national news is to a greater extent synchronized thematically with other European countries' news.

As Chantal Mouffe stressed, democracy is unthinkable without a 'vibrant "agonistic" public sphere of contestation where different hegemonic political

[1] I owe this point to Katjana Gattermann.

projects can be confronted' (2005, 3). Mouffe's agonistic perspective of politics recognizes that in human sociability reciprocity and hostility are inherently intertwined concepts. Importantly, opponents should not be seen as enemies but as adversaries. The concept of 'agonism' in democratic theory emphasizes that although adversaries do engage in a confrontation trying to defeat one another, this defeat should never definite. For the sake of the principle of parity, conflict and confrontation must be continuous. In this regard, polarization and contestation should be seen as crucial preconditions for an emerging European public sphere (Risse 2010, 112). Therefore, the Europeanization of national public spheres might augment considerably when Europe's societies are confronted with a common crisis demanding contentious decisions. Indeed, in precarious times when weighty decisions on both substantive and institutional issues are taken a proliferation of contestation might be expected. For these reasons, it is of additional relevance to examine the extent to which television coverage on European affairs shows elements of adversarialism and agonistic politics.

In their meta-analysis of European public sphere studies, Machill et al. show that the generally shared conclusion for all states, also for Germany and the Netherlands, is that EU reporting only accounts for a small part of the total reporting (Machill et al. 2006). Nevertheless, Koopmans et al. show that as European integration deepened over the course of the 1990s, vertical Europeanization has increased (Koopmans, Erbe and Meyer 2010, 68-9). In a similar study, Koopmans and Erbe conclude that the extent of EU coverage by the German print media differs per issue area (2004). The authors argue that the German media 'adequately reflect the Europeanization of policy-making' by reporting more EU issues on those policy areas where the EU has acquired competences in (ibid.). Taking monetary policy as an example, Koopmans and Erbe argue that 'the most important determinant of patterns of mass media

coverage is simply where the decision-making power in a policy field is concentrated.' (ibid., 155). This responsiveness of (vertical) Europeanization to the EU's political development leads to the expectation to see an increase EU level news on economic-financial matters on as the euro-crisis unfolded. Moreover, Machill et al show that all European public sphere studies under discussion emphasize that EU reporting tends to augment at particular points in time, around particular events (Machill et al. 2006, 76). Indeed, '[t]he analysis shows that the intensity of EU reporting always increases rapidly when a topic that is of interest EU-wide or at least in several EU states is connected with a particular event.' (ibid.). Although the 'euro-crisis' is not exactly an 'event', it nevertheless qualifies as atypical circumstance compared to the progression of European integration before that is likely to increase the degree of Europeanization of national public spheres.

Research Design

Method and case selection

The focus of the empirical research in this essay lies on the Europeanization of televised news. A recent Eurobarometer survey revealed that for 79% of the respondents television was their main source of information on European political affairs. This stands in stark contrast with the 47% of respondents who designated the print media as their primary source of information on European political affairs (European Commission 2011, 17). The survey moreover revealed that the respondents regarded televised news more trustworthy than news in the print media. Thus, although the scope for deliberation and debate is much smaller in television news than in, say, broadsheet 'quality' newspapers, it is imperative to examine the actual level

of Europeanization the majority of the 'ordinary citizens' in Germany and the Netherlands are exposed to, and whether these have altered during the progression of the euro-crisis. To be sure, the limited sample size does not allow for making reliable conclusions about the (non-)existence of a European(ized) public sphere in general. However, this paper's explicit focus is to find whether there are indicators that signal a *cross-temporal change* in the extent of Europeanization of public broadcasting media before and during the European debt crises in Germany and the Netherlands.

The empirical approach in this paper is based on the quantitative content analysis method presented by Peter, Semetko and de Vreese (2003), albeit in an adapted form on a few important points. The study by Peter et al. (2003) is a cross-national investigation of 'television news coverage of EU affairs' of five countries over an eleven month period in the year 2000. The study gauges the amount of EU coverage, its placement and duration in the bulletins, its thematic structure, its degree of domesticity and its tone/evaluation. Importantly, Peter et al.'s cross-national study solely focused on 'EU-ization' of political news in the national media, thereby disregarding levels of 'horizontal Europeanization'. The present study therefore will take horizontal Europeanization into account. Moreover, as the aim of the present study is to assess whether the extent and substance of 'European coverage' has changed during the euro-crisis, a cross-temporal element has been included. Another important difference with the measures of Peter et al. (2003) and the present study is that Peter et al. did not differentiate between the tone of a news item and the presence of explicit evaluations. In the present study, the tone of a news item refers to whether *public broadcasters* depicted the news item positively, negatively or neutrally. 'Evaluations', on the other hand, point to the presence of explicit assessments of European integration *voiced by political actors* in the news item.

Table 1. Research questions	
RQ_1	To what extent has the visibility of European Union increased in the evening television news over the course of the 'euro-crisis'?
RQ_2	To what extent has the visibility of (actors of) other European countries (horizontal Europeanization) increased in the evening television news over the course of the 'euro-crisis'?
RQ_3	Which types of news were predominant on the EU and on other European countries before and during the 'euro-crisis'?
RQ_4	How has the salience of European news changed over the course of the 'euro-crisis'?
RQ_5	How has the tone of EU news coverage changed over the course of the 'euro-crisis'?
RQ_5	To what extent has contestation on EU issues been visible?

The research questions are presented in Table 1. For both countries, two natural fourteen-day samples of public broadcasters' evening news (April and September) have been selected for coding.[2] In these samples, all news items have been coded for both 2008 and 2011.[3] As the temporal range for both years has been limited to a two-week sample in April and September, it was essential that no major European or domestic events had taken place during or around those weeks as this would reduce the reliability of the empirics and, consequently, obscure the validity of the conclusions. Germany and the Netherlands have been selected based on the fact that the style of political communication and the format of the public broadcasting news are relatively similar (Heinderyckx 1993; Peter et al. 2003, 311). Moreover, as Machill et al. (2006, 73) have demonstrated, both Germany and the Netherlands have a high 'overall tendency of the degree of Europeanization in comparison with other EU states'. Similarly Koopmans et al. have shown Germany and the Netherlands both have intermediary levels of Europeanization. More precisely, in Koopmans and Statham's (2010a) study, Germany and the

[2] Although sampling on the basis of natural weeks is not uncommon, it is far from an optimal sampling method. Yet, due to a lack of resources a 'constructed week' sampling has not been possible (cf. Wessler et al. 2010)
[3] For all bulletins the weather forecast has not been taken into account.

Netherlands demonstrate a degree of vertical Europeanization over 10 of the total newspaper coverage over the whole coding period (1990-2002) (Koopmans et al. 2010, 73). Thus, in terms of Europeanization of national public spheres Germany and the Netherlands are about equally Europeanized. Another compelling reason to select these countries is that the Netherlands and Germany are usually included in media analysis of EU coverage (see Machill et al. 2006, 73) thus increasing the comparability of my results.

Measures

Below, I will briefly clarify the different variables chosen. Where the purpose or nature of a category is in need of additional explanation this will given. A complete overview of the coding scheme can be found in the appendix.

Each news item's *dimension* will be coded as being either 'domestic', 'European Union', 'other European country'[4], or 'international'. The 'international' dimension is a rather broad category comprising both supranational institutions as other non-European countries. To be sure, often these four dimensions overlap. In such a case the predominant dimension has been coded. Every news item is labelled according to the *type of issue* it addresses. Each item was assigned one following eight categories: 'socio-political', 'economic', 'socio-cultural', '(common) foreign policy', 'armed conflicts', 'miscellaneous', 'sports' or 'trivial'. These categories are relatively broad in order to ensure concise results. Whenever the categories overlapped the predominant one was selected. 'Miscellaneous' refers to other newsworthy events like natural disasters and accidents. 'Trivial' stands for

[4] All EU members, EU member-candidates and members of Schengen are regarded as 'European'.

news stories meant for entertainment. The *salience* of each news item has been calculated on the basis of its relative duration. This relative duration was calculated based on the mean duration of a news item for each year for each country. An item has been attributed a 'low' salience when its duration was shorter or equal to 30% of the mean duration, high salience if it was equal to or higher than 70% of the mean duration, and intermediate salience for the 30% in between.

For items with a EU focus (that is, a 'European Union' dimension) its tone has been coded as positive, neutral or negative. Lastly, it has been recorded for EU items whether the political actors voiced in the coverage provided evaluations of the EU, and if so how. There were five possible categories: 'Eurosceptic', 'critical Europeanist', 'Europhile', 'opposing evaluations' and 'no evaluation'. An evaluation is 'Eurosceptic' when the functionality or the legitimacy of the EU or its policies is questioned. 'Critical Europeanist' stands for those voices that do not question or are supportive of the institutional status quo but engage in discussion over particular policies. 'Europhile' stands for those voices that defend the EU both in terms of policies and of institutional design. When multiple different evaluations were voiced, that is, when opposing opinions were included in the coverage the item received the label 'opposing evaluations'.

Results

Visibility

In Figure 1 the visibility of each news dimension for April and September 2008 for both countries are shown. As can be seen for both countries, domestic news in the evening news bulletin is predominant constituting more than half of all news stories. Peter et al. (2003, 314) demonstrated that in the year 2000 in Germany and the Netherlands the amount of coverage on the European Union was no more than 4% of the total coverage. In comparison, in 2008 in Germany EU coverage has risen by approximately 2%, while in the Netherlands a remarkable decline of EU coverage took place, within this sample at least. The decline is remarkable considering the surging Euroscepticism among political parties in the Netherlands since the ascendance of Eurosceptic politician Pim Fortuyn in 2002.

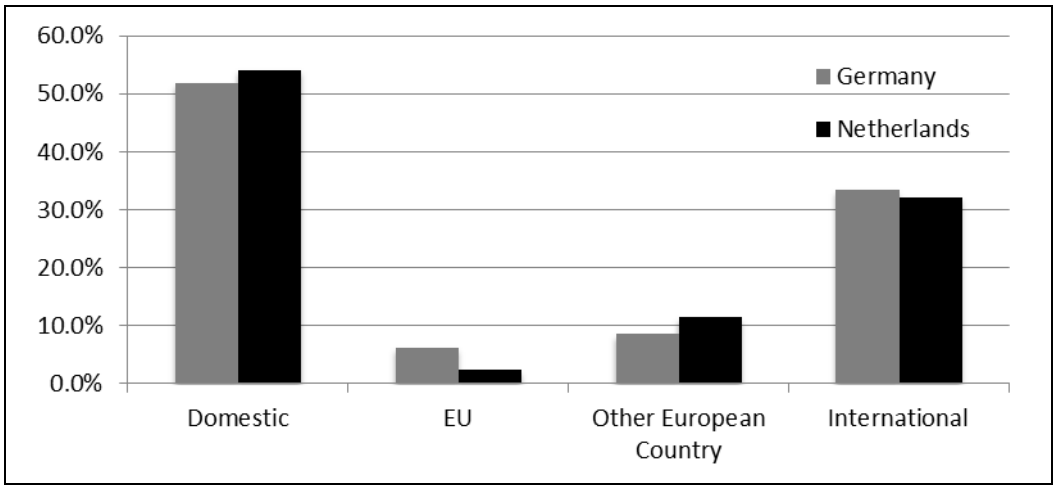

Figure 1. Visibility all news items April and September 2008

It is also surprising that the Germany's degree of vertical Europeanization is much higher than in the Netherlands. Yet, it should be noted that the overall tone and style of the *ARD Tagesschau* is more formal than the *NOS Journaal* and that the level of sophistication of political affairs tends to be higher in the German news than in the Dutch news. As the complexity of EU affairs is

generally high, this might serves as an explanation for the diverging degrees of vertical Europeanization. On the other hand, however, the Dutch public broadcaster, NOS, does allocate almost three per cent more broadcasting space to news stories on 'other European countries' than the ARD does. Thus, the image is more nuanced if we calculate the *overall degree of Europeanization*, that is, both 'vertical Europeanization' (items on the EU) and 'horizontal Europeanization' (items on other European countries). In this case, the overall percentage of Europeanized news coverage in 2008 for the Netherlands is 13.7% and for Germany 14.7%.

If we take a look at Figure 2, we see that the progression of the euro-crisis and an increase of Europeanized news coverage are strongly correlated. As Kaelble correctly remarked, Europeanization of the national public sphere is not necessarily linked to successful European integration (2010, 27). On the contrary, we see that a crisis of European scope tends to Europeanize the news of the public broadcasters both in Germany and the Netherlands. The degree of EU coverage has been doubled in Germany, while in the Netherlands the values have tripled. The overall level of Europeanization of news items (stories both on the EU and 'other European countries') in 2011 was 21.4% in Germany and 17.8% of the items in the Netherlands.[5] It is surprising that while the degree of domestic news in Germany dropped in 2011 as European news increased it remained stable in the Netherlands. Thus, whereas in Germany it seems that predominantly domestic items have 'given

[5] The fact that 'horizontal Europeanization' seems not have increased in the course of the euro-crisis might be explained by the method of coding news dimensions in a mutually exclusive way. A news item could be labelled with only one of the four news dimensions – 'domestic', 'EU, 'other European country', 'international'. As was to be expected, in almost all news items concerning the euro-crisis, other European countries had a prominent place in the item. Yet, since the news stories on the economic crisis mostly addressed the issues as 'European' issues – mentioning not only actors from the specific European country (in this case often Greece) but also from other European countries and EU officials – the news items were labelled as being 'European'
The political claims approach Koopmans and Statham (2010b) employ, is better capable of capturing these nuances. Yet, this approach requires a lot more resources. For our present purpose, this manner of coding seems sufficient.

way' to EU-related items, in the Netherlands domestic coverage declined only by 1%.[6]

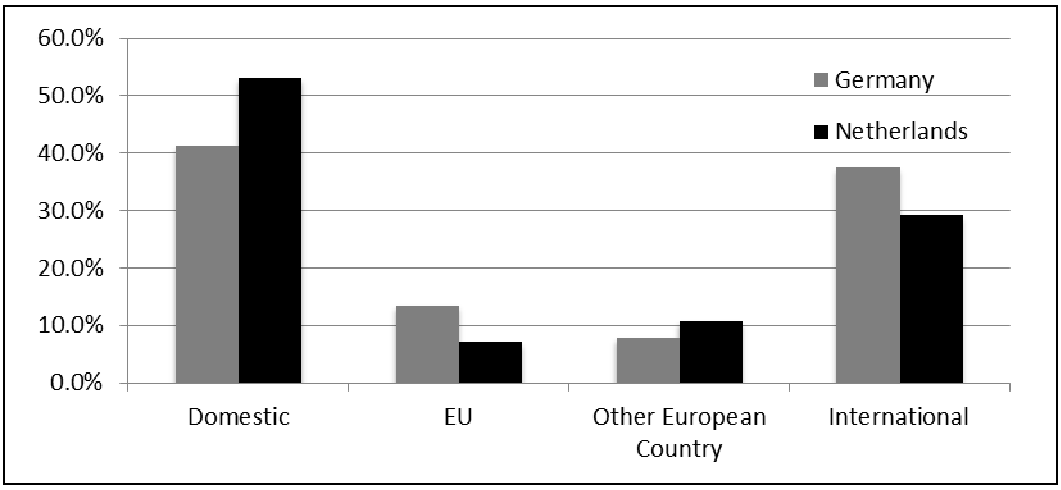

Figure 2. Visibility all news items April and September 2011

News categories

Having confirmed that vertical Europeanization has increased during the course of the euro-crisis, it is illuminating to see whether we can witness a change in the news categories of the Europeanized news stories. As the degree of vertical Europeanization was rather low in 2008 for both Germany and the Netherlands, the amount of observations was low. This is most clearly the case with the Netherlands. Notwithstanding, the present data indicates a relevant trend that should be tested further empirically in future research.

[6] Notably, in March 2011 both the German and the Dutch public broadcasters allocated a high degree of broadcasting time to the nuclear disaster around the Fukushima plant in Japan. This partly accounts for the high level of 'international' news items. Another reason for the high amount of 'international' news items is the fact that all NATO summits had to be coded as 'non-European international' as NATO includes prominent non-European members.

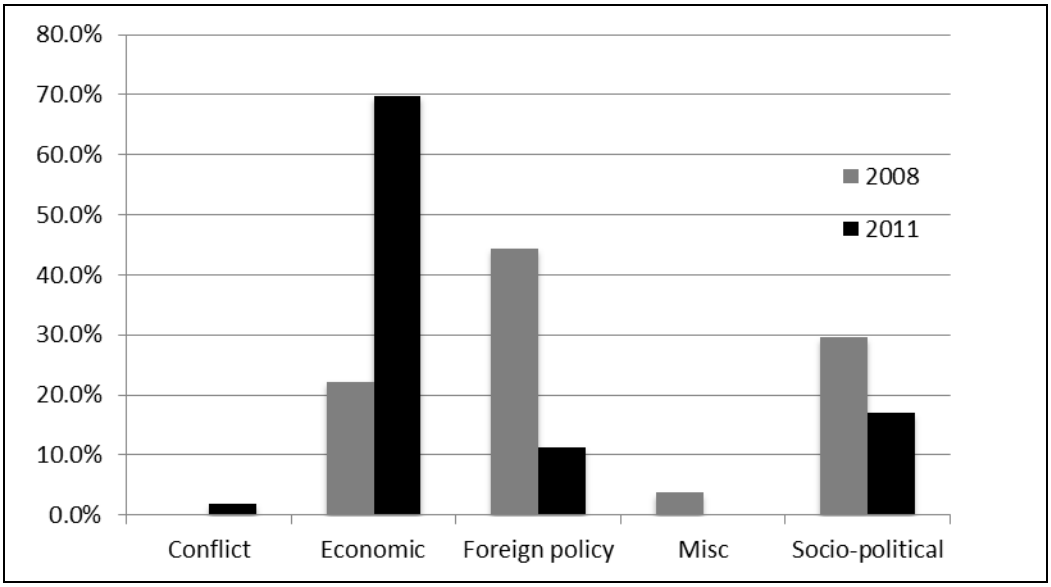

Figure 3. Germany and the Netherlands: News categories for EU news stories (sports and trivial news not taken into account)

As Figure 3 indicates, the escalation of the euro-crisis is expressed by the dramatically increasing degree of 'economic' news for EU-related items. In 2011, a great majority of EU-related news items in both countries dealt with issues regarding the economy. Consequently, the Europe, or the EU, an 'average citizen' in Germany or the Netherlands encountered on television in 2011, is an 'economic' Europe. This, then, means that other relevant policy areas of the EU are hardly televised. Of course, it seems problematic when the European Union is practically equated with the European Monetary Union (EMU). This reduces the potential scope of politicization of other substantive EU issues.

As can be seen in Figure 3, the percentage of news items on European common foreign policy is surprisingly high. The relatively high degree of items on 'foreign policy' in 2008 in Germany and the Netherlands can primarily be explained by the extensive coverage on the Russia-Georgia crisis 2008 – when France under Nicolas Sarkozy held the rotating presidency of the European Council. The leaders of the EU member-states were able to agree on a common position towards the crisis and this enabled Sarkozy to act on

behalf of all member-states. This allowed the items to be codified as 'EU' news. In comparison to these fluctuations in the predominant news categories for EU-related news, the news categories for domestic news remained relatively stable between 2008 and 2011.

For EU-related news, however, specific events or occurrences tend to determine what news categories were the most prevalent (cf. Machill et al. 2006, 76). The peaks in the specific news categories in 2008 and 2011 might indicate that televised news on the EU is predominated by 'exceptional issues', such as crises and conflicts (see also Peter et al. 2003; de Vreese and Schmitt 2007). This stands in contrast to the coverage of domestic political affairs where less exceptional, more routinized political processes are addressed.

Salience

Figure 4 shows the salience of EU and 'other European country' news stories in 2008 and 2011 for both countries. For both countries we can identify a significant increase of highly salient Europeanized news items between 2008 and 2011. This shows that as European sovereign debt crisis unfolded, 'Europeanized news' was not only more present (in terms of the number of items) it was also more prominent in the bulletins (in terms of length per item). Thus, not only were European matter discussed to a much greater degree their relative importance had increased considerably as well.

In the case of the Netherlands, the amount of news items with a 'high salience' has risen by 22%. Interestingly, however, also the level of news items with 'low salience' has risen, while the amount of intermediately salient news items has sharply declined. This indicates that the *NOS Journaal* offered both

longer and arguably more detailed news items as well as a higher amount of shorter news flashes on European affairs in 2011. In Germany, in comparison with the Netherlands, we see that the overall salience of Europeanized news items is higher. The amount of shorter items with low salience, however, did not increase as it did in the Netherlands. Overall, both in 2008 and 2011, the salience of 'European news items' is significantly higher in Germany than in the Netherlands. This is in accordance with the results concerning the visibility of the EU in German and Dutch news, suggesting that EU news, in general, is regarded as more significant in Germany than in the Netherlands. Figure 5 shows the salience of economic news stories in 2011 for both countries. Clearly, as approximately 90% and 70% of the economic news in Germany and the Netherlands respectively was 'highly salient', EU economic news in 2011 was very prominently placed in the news bulletins.

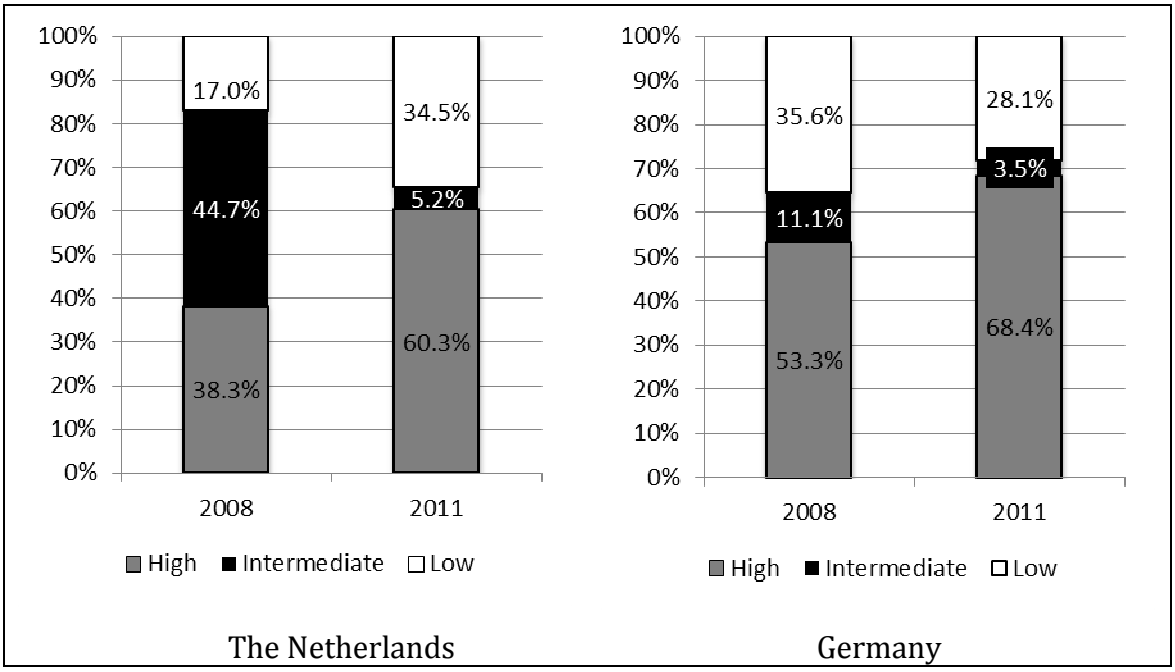

Figure 4. Salience for EU and 'other European country' news stories

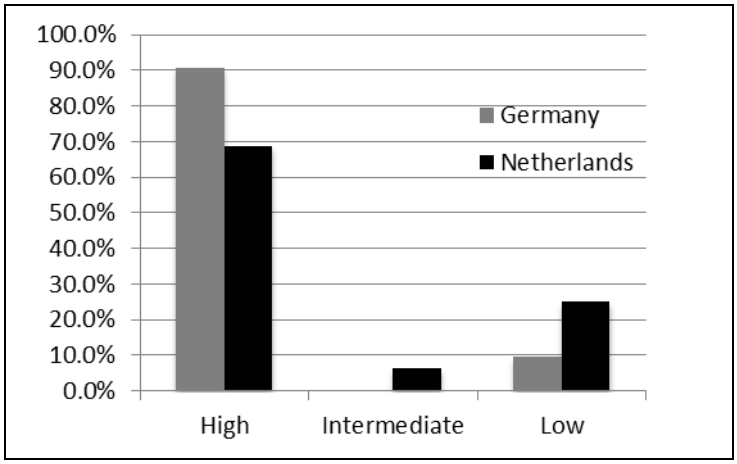

Figure 5. Salience of economic EU stories in 2011.

Tone

Peter et al. (2003) demonstrated that in 2000 approximately 65% of the news stories in Germany and the Netherlands the EU were depicted neutrally. As mentioned above, Peter et al. did not distinguish between tone (by the broadcaster) and explicit evaluations (by the actors voiced), so one has to take the comparison with a grain of salt. Figure 6 depicts the changes in news tone between 2008 and 2011 in EU news items for Germany and the Netherlands. A striking difference between the two countries is the overwhelmingly degree of positive coverage in the Netherlands and the lack of negative reporting in 2008. This is primarily due to the coverage of Sarkozy's mediation attempt on behalf of the EU in the Russia-Georgia crisis that was generally received positively.

When comparing the values of 2008 with those of 2011 it is evident that in both countries negative reporting has increased enormously. Interestingly, the level of negativity in 2011 is very similar for the Netherlands and Germany. This suggests that we can witness a trend wherein the euro-crisis contributes to negative coverage of the EU and its policies. In line with this trend, a considerable change occurred in the issue negativity for EU items on

economic issues. For example, whereas in 2008 only approximately 30% of the 'economic' stories were accompanied by a negative tone, in 2011 over 80% were negatively portrayed in both countries (not shown).

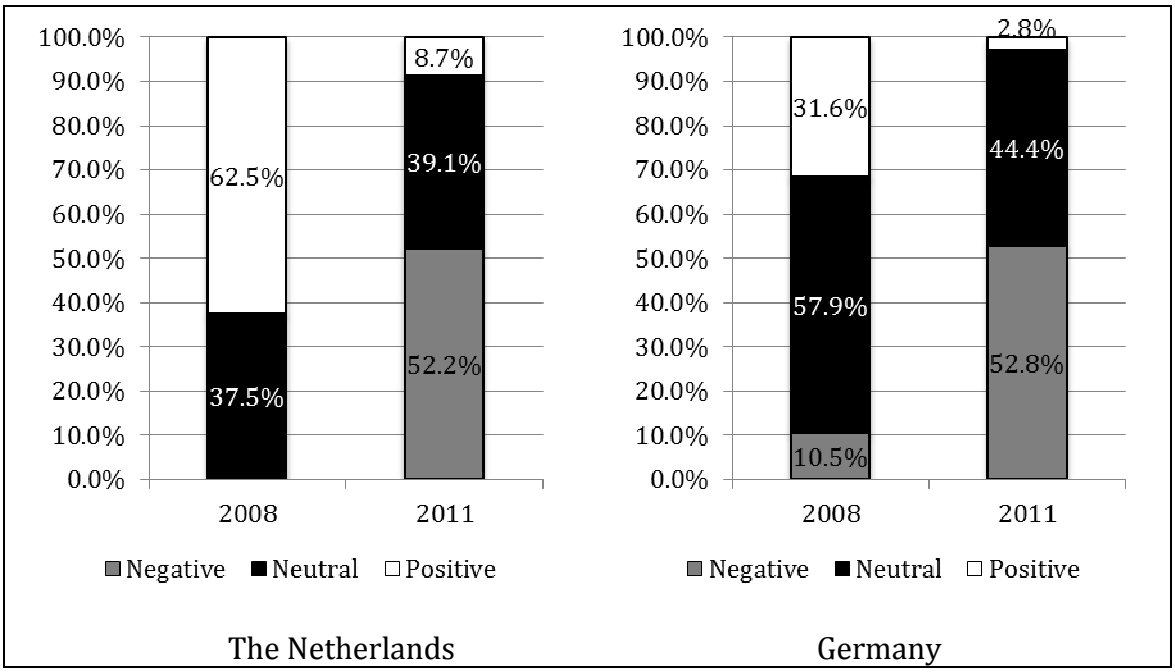

Figure 6. Tone of EU news stories

Evaluation

Surprisingly, in 2008 there were for both countries no instances of evaluations of the EU or of open contestation (i.e. 'opposing evaluations') in this sample. Although partly explained by the relatively small number of observations, another explanation might be the enduring 'permissive consensus' on specific EU policy issues despite the rise of Eurosceptic parties (in the Netherlands). This, we can speculate, has led the public broadcasters to think that political contestation of EU matters were not newsworthy enough to make the evening television news.

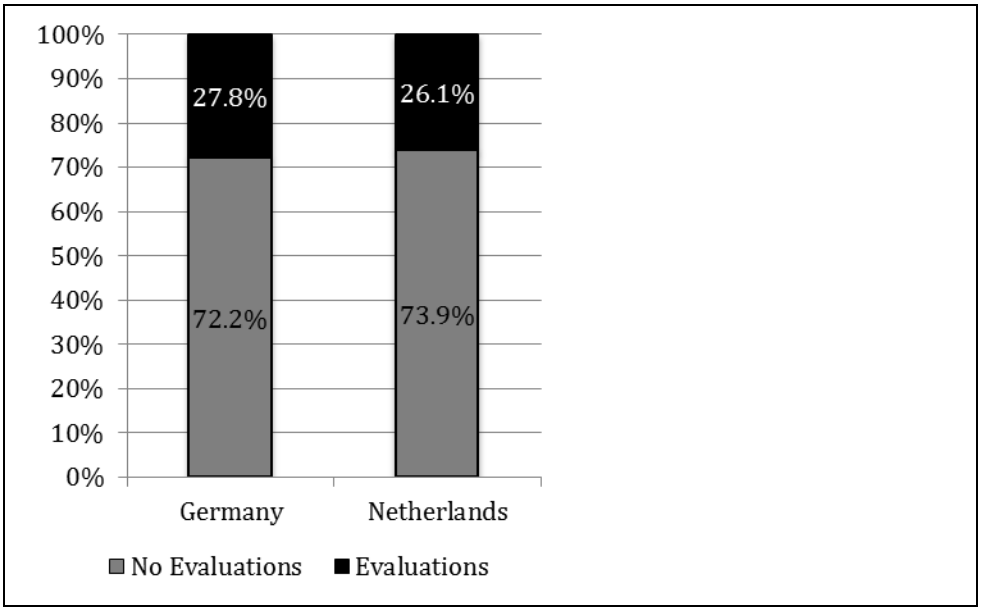

Figure 7. Percentage of news stories containing evaluations in 2011

Figure 7 shows the percentage of news items covering explicit evaluations of the EU and its policies in 2011. Thus, although the number of news stories containing explicit evaluations of the European Union has increased considerably in 2011 compared to 2008, the overall values are still extremely low. Of what kind of evaluations, then, are these respective 27.8 % and 26.1% for Germany and the Netherlands in 2011 comprised? In Germany, 10% of the news items with 'evaluations' were predominantly Eurosceptic. In the Netherlands, Euroscepticism in the evening news was more pronounced as more than 30% of the EU news stories containing 'evaluations' voiced Eurosceptic voices. In accordance with these results, 30% of the evaluative news items in Germany, compared to 16.7% of the stories with 'evaluations' in the Netherlands, contained 'critical Europeanist' positions on the EU. As briefly explained above, the 'critical Europeanist' evaluation stands for voices that in principle approve of and support European integration, yet criticise the status quo – either with regards to issues on institutionalisation or to substantive policy issues. In both countries the majority of the 'evaluations' fall under the category of 'opposing evaluations'. 60% of the news stories containing 'evaluations' in Germany and 50% of the items containing

'evaluations' in the Netherlands voiced multiple actors holding diverging positions on the European Union. This points to some presence of political contestation in the public broadcasting news media.[7] It seems to be a postive thing that when the public broadcasters voice opinionated actors they mostly present a balanced picture giving voice to opposing positions. The overall picture, however, is particularly bleak. Merely about 15% of the news items on the EU in 2011 show some degree of debate amongst political actors. Remarkably, in none of the instances where 'evaluations' were present 'Europhile' voices were predominant. This means that for both years in both Germany and the Netherlands, no actors were voiced that were outspokenly positive on the EU (in this sample).

Discussion

To recapitulate, this paper examined the changes in the degrees of Europeanization in the television broadcasting news in Germany and the Netherlands over the course of the euro-crisis. The results shown above imply that the escalation of the euro-crisis has positively affected the visibility of European affairs. However, news coverage on 'other European countries' had slightly decreased. Furthermore, the data indicates that in this period of crisis the salience of European news items has increased. In particular, the results imply that the controversy over the national sovereign debt crises has led to a predominance of economic and financial news with regards to the EU. Yet, the data suggests that this increase 'vertical Europeanization' comes at a cost as it is accompanied by a considerable increase in issue negativity of EU affairs. Finally, the empirical findings suggest that the presence of some

[7] For future empirical research it would be illuminating to examine by detailed content analysis of television news which actors from which political backgrounds make the different evaluations.

Table 2. Concise overall results (results of both countries combined, mean results)		
RQ_1	To what extent has the visibility of European Union increased in the evening television news over the course of the 'euro-crisis'?	Increased by 5.7 %.
RQ_2	To what extent has the visibility of (actors of) other European countries (horizontal Europeanization) increased in the evening television news over the course of the 'euro-crisis'?	Decreased by 0.6 %.
RQ_3	Which type of EU news was most predominant before and during the 'euro-crisis'?	2008: Foreign policy* 2011: Economic news.
RQ_4	How has the salience of European news changed over the course of the 'euro-crisis'?	EU news became three times more 'highly salient'
RQ_5	How has the tone of EU news coverage changed over the course of the 'euro-crisis'?	EU news became more negative. More than 50 % of the messages were negative.
RQ_5	To what extent has contestation on EU issues been visible?	Lack of deliberation.
* Due to Sarkozy's involvement in the Russia-Georgia crisis.		

degree of 'socializing conflict' and adversarialism was extremely low. Table 2 briefly summarizes the results by providing succinct answers to the research questions.

As Machill et al (2006) remark, scholars studying the Europeanization of public spheres account for national differences in their data by referring to the particular predominance of a domestic event or of particular national actors. Arguably, the emergence of pressing issues on a European level would remove or reduce such cases of national specificity. This is indeed what the data has shown. Nevertheless in line with previous studies (Peter et al. 2003, Machil et al. 2006, Koopmans and Statham 2010a) coverage of 'European affairs' still accounts only for small part of the total reporting. Yet, as the study by Koopmans and Statham has shown, the 'European level is visible in fields in which it is influential.' (Statham 2010a, 285). The findings presented in this paper also underline this thesis. Once decisions taken on EU level (albeit predominantly through intergovernmental negotiation) have significant repercussions for its members, the EU's visibility augmented.

Thus, Kaelble's suggestion that the formation of some form of a European public sphere does not have to coincide with successful European integration seems to be confirmed. The results suggest that an increase in 'EU' news and the emergence of the euro-crisis are strongly correlated. Thus, the *visibility* of the European Union has augmented considerably to the escalation of the financial crisis in Europe. Peter et al. (2003) were scepticism about the emergence of a European public sphere in the beginning of this century as according to their results merely four per cent of the television news coverage dealt with the EU. By taking into account 'horizontal Europeanization', that is, news stories on other European countries, this empirical research has nuanced this image. Furthermore, the economic crisis in Europe has effectuated a 'parallelization of issue cycles' in the media across national borders. The extensive coverage of news on the economy, both in Germany and in the Netherlands, suggests a thematic synchronization of both countries' public broadcasting news. Moreover, as 'Europeanized economic news' became more salient in both countries this also indicates that both countries increasingly share the same 'criteria of relevance'.

The Eurobarometer survey "Les habitudes médiatiques dans l'UE" revealed that there was a substantial change in the sentiments among EU citizens on whether the national media address the political affairs of the EU sufficiently or not. The survey demonstrated that the sentiment that the television media concentrate sufficiently on EU issues rose impressively by 15% between 2007 and 2011 (Eurobarometer 2011, 34). Interestingly, this corresponds with the increase of vertical Europeanization in the German and Dutch national television news this essay has demonstrated. Also in the perception of Europe's citizens, then, has Europe become increasingly present in the national public sphere.

This increase in 'vertical Europeanization', however, does come at a price. The great emphasis on economic issues has significantly limited the potential for coverage on other substantive EU issues. Dominated by negative news on economic issues, coverage on the EU tends to underexpose issues on non- or less contentious EU decision-making. Indeed, exceptional events or themes tend to dominate 'EU' news. This inevitably means that, at least in public broadcasting television news, other areas of EU policy-making are scarcely addressed. Consequently, if we recognize the central role the media plays in legitimate governance by addressing the relevant political issues and transmitting them to the citizens, it could be said that the public broadcasters in Germany and the Netherlands fail to fulfil their democratic duty. As noted above, the question whether a European public sphere is emerging is intrinsically linked with the issue of democratic legitimacy of the European Union and its policies. Indeed, '[t]he news media are thought to play a particularly important role in system support by priming citizens about the criteria that are most appropriate for evaluating the quality of democratic governance, as well as by framing whether the performance of the government is perceived positively or negatively against these standards', Pippa Norris has stated (2011: 170).

Norris suggests that the 'democratic deficit' in Europe results from a combination of three elements: 'growing public expectations' ('demand-side theories'), negative news ('intermediary accounts'), and/or failing government performance' ('supply-side theories') (2011, 5-7). Intermediary accounts focus on the role of political communication in how citizens perceive governance performance. Indeed, according to de Vreese, 'Euroscepticism is, at least partially, a function of the diet of information that citizens consume about European affairs' (2007, 280). What, then, are the implications of the results above, showing increasing levels 'issue negativity' on EU stories?

Intermediary accounts on the so-called 'democratic deficit' suggest that the media stimulate public disaffection with politics by their emphasis on negative news (e.g. Capella and Jamieson 1997; Patterson 2002; Putnam 2000; Robinson 1975). From this perspective, the emergence of Europeanized public spheres can be detrimental to support for the EU, as rising levels of issue negativity accompanied the increase in Europeanization in 2011 of TV news. Others, however, have countered the idea that issue negativity inevitably reduces political support and stress the potentially positive functions of negative news. Martin, for example, argues that 'when the media tell citizens that all is relatively well, the incentive to act in politics is weaker; if the media tell citizens that the country is in turmoil, then the incentive to act becomes stronger. In short, bad news about issues is good news for participation.' (Martin 2008, 181). Indeed, reporting on problems and conflicts is capable of keeping the audience interested in the political affairs (see also Newton 1999; Norris 2000; Kleinnijenhuis et. al. 2006). Furthermore, De Vreese and Semetko have confirmed that although negatively framed news is capable of causing some degree of public cynicism and embitterment, it does not necessarily affect the level political participation (2002). This would mean that 'negative news' on the EU could be instrumental in forming responsive, critical European citizens.

Paul Statham challenges the idea of rising public dissatisfaction with the EU due to a 'communication deficit' (2010b). According to Statham, the media 'tends to follow the political system in Europe' and represents the political debate more than leading it (ibid., 139). On the one hand this seems plausible. The news media of course cannot be held responsible for this 'wave of negativity' as they are merely reporting such negative developments like the sovereign debt crises. On the other hand, however, such a perspective fails to recognize the role the media play as intermediary agents in the political

communication. Even only by selecting on which issues they will report or not, the news media inevitably influence the citizens' perception of the political processes. The disproportionally high degree of domestic news items in the Dutch and German news bulletins in both years despite the increasing relevance of EU-level decision-making is an example of the conscious choices public broadcasters make with the selection of news issues.

Furthermore, the remarkably low degree of evaluations of the EU and lack of coverage of conflict and adversarialism with regards to European affairs in the public broadcasting news has serious implications. As the results have shown, merely a quarter of the news items in 2011 on the EU contained some degree of 'evaluation' of the EU. And, only a small number of EU news items contained some instance of political debate where multiple actors with varying positions were voiced.

This is problematic as openly publicised conflict over substantive issues is highly significant for the health of a (European) democracy as well as for the processual formation of a conception of a political bond. Indeed, we should understand conflict not necessarily as a negative phenomenon, but far more as a 'ubiquitous social phenomenon of modern societies' (Schuppert 2008, 465). Georg Simmel has demonstrated how conflict is a central component of the process of socialization of a society or a 'common'. 'Conflict itself', Simmel wrote, 'is the resolution of the tension between the contraries' (1904, 490). Conflict is a social tool to cope with (societal) discord and is instrumental in restoring or creating unity. In this sense, 'conflict' is a central element of social interaction that has an integrative and even stabilizing function (cf. Schuppert 2008, 465). Moreover, as Nollmann notes, conflicts are 'productive' in the sense that they have the ability to redefine norms and rules and should for this reason be seen as a 'source of social change' (Nollmann 1997, 20; cf. Schuppert 2008, 468).

The results above, however, suggest that these conflicts with regards to the European Union are not recognized sufficiently by the Dutch and German public broadcasters. At least, adversarialism on European affairs is not given a platform on the most important stage of national politics, namely the evening television news. The fact that adversarialism is not covered in television news, however, does not mean it does not exist. Yet, it seems that the platform for contestation is elsewhere. The print media, by virtue of its format, is more suitable to reflect and give platform to diverging political positions. The public broadcasters, however, fail to cover and represent political debate and contestation in their most prominent news bulletins. This is problematic since the mass media have by virtue of their democratic responsibility a 'postulate of reflectance' ('Widerspiegelungspostulat') (Detjen 1998, 276; cf. Schuppert 2008, 264). It is therefore not only their task to address all relevant issues but also to reflect the existing political pluralism. As the public broadcasters fail to fulfil this postulate, the task of 'pluralistic reflectance' is left to the written media only. Thereby, a majority of the citizens – who designate TV as their main source of information on political affairs – will be bypassed.

Being hardly confronted by substantive political debate on EU affairs, and yet overwhelmed by negative coverage on the EU, it seems unlikely that citizen's engagement in European affairs will be fostered. Nevertheless, the results above suggest how quickly national public spheres can 'Europeanize'. Whether this shift in the level of Europeanization of national public spheres is a temporary phenomenon or a persisting alteration however remains uncertain. On the one hand, the extensive focus on EU news stories of extraordinary high news value might suggest that as the euro-crisis wanes, the levels of Europeanization will drop to 'normal'. On the other hand, if the assumption is correct that the current sovereign debt crises can only be solved

by a closer union, sharing sovereignty on fiscal matters, this European economic crisis may have effectuated a change in the levels of Europeanization that is here to stay. If this is the case, this development is likely to have significant implications for legitimate governance in the European Union. Indeed, increasingly Europeanized national public spheres present promising avenues of politicization (cf. Statham and Trenz 2013). This is especially the case when also the television news media attempt to fulfil their 'postulate of reflectance', bringing substantive political debate on European affairs increasingly to Europe's living rooms.

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Appendix

Coding categories

Category	Code	Substantive meaning
Year	2008	News items from 2008
	2011	News items from 2011
Country	germany	German news items
	netherlands	Dutch news items
News dimension	domestic	News (predominantly) on domestic issues
	eu	News (predominantly) on EU affairs
	other_european_country	News (predominantly) on other European countries [EU MS, candidate states and Schengen members]
	international	News on other non-European countries, or international organizations
News type	socio_political	News on issues on political and social matters
	economic	News on economic and financial issues
	socio_cultural	News on issues concerning culture, folklore etc.
	foreign policy	News on domestic or EU foreign policy
	sports	News on sport events
	conflict	News on armed conflicts
	misc	News on miscellaneous topics such as natural disasters and accidents
	trivial	News on trivial matters meant for entertainment
Prominence	high	<= .3*[mean value of news item per country and year]
	intermediate	>=.3*[mean value] AND <=.7*[mean value]
	low	>=.7*[mean value]
Framing	positive	Broadcasters use positive / optimistic framing
	negative	Broadcasters use negative / pessimistic framing
	neutral	Broadcasters neutral framing
Evaluation	no_evaluation	No evaluations voiced by (political) actors
	eurosceptic	Only actors voiced that question the functionality or the legitimacy of the EU or its policies.
	critical_europeanist	Only actors voiced that do not question EU's legitimacy, but engage in debate on certain EU policies or institutional scope.
	europhile	Only actors voiced that are positive towards EU's institutional design and substantive policies
	varied	Multiple, opposing evaluations of EU voiced

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