IMPRESSIONS OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

A comparative analysis of the impact of EU news in European newspapers on European audiences

Peter ’t Lam
Impressions of European Integration

A comparative analysis of the impact of EU news in European newspapers on European audiences

ACADEMISCH PROEFSCHRIFT

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door

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geboren te Velp (Gld)
Impressions of European Integration
There is an island in the ocean where in 1914 a few Englishmen, Frenchmen, and Germans lived. No cable reaches that island, and the British mail steamer comes but once in sixty days. In September it had not yet come, and the islanders were still talking about the latest newspaper which told about the approaching trial of Madame Caillaux for the shooting of Gaston Calmette. It was, therefore, with more than usual eagerness that the whole colony assembled at the quay on a day in mid-September to hear from the captain what the verdict had been. They learned that for over six weeks now those of them who were English and those of them who were French had been fighting in behalf of the sanctity of treaties against those of them who were Germans. For six strange weeks they had acted as if they were friends, when in fact they were enemies.

Walter Lippmann (Introduction to ‘Public Opinion’, 1922)
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Abbreviations

- AD: Algemeen Dagblad (General Daily; NL)
- AT: Austria
- BRD: Bundesrepublik Deutschland (former West Germany)
- CBS: Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (Statistics Netherlands; NL)
- CO2: Carbon dioxide
- CS: Czech Republic
- DE: Germany (Deutschland)
- DDR: Deutsche Demokratische Republic (former East Germany)
- EB: Eurobarometer
- EC: European Commission
- ECSC: European Coal and Steel Community
- ECU: European Currency Unit
- EEC: European Economic Community
- EMS: European Monetary System
- EP: European Parliament
- ES: Spain
- EU: European Union
- Euratom: European Atomic Energy Community Agency
- FAZ: Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (DE)
- FR: France
- HIV: Human Immunodeficiency Virus
- IE: Ireland
- MLG: Multi-level Governance
- NGO: Non-governmental organization
- NL: the Netherlands
- NRC: Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant (NRC-Handelsblad; NL)
- PCM: Perscombinatie-Meulenhoff (Publishers; NL)
- PVV: Partij voor de Vrijheid (Freedom Party, NL)
- RAS: Receive-Accept-Sample (RAS-model, by Zaller)
- SCP: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau (Social and Cultural Planning Bureau; NL)
- TAZ: Tageszeitung (DE)
- TNS: Taylor Nelson Sofres (Research group)
- UK: United Kingdom
- UKIP: United Kingdom Independence Party
- USA: United States of America
- WRR: Wetenschappelijk Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid (Scientific Council for Government Policy; NL)
Introduction

This dissertation focuses on the effects of press coverage of the European Union (EU) on European audiences. Unlike the inhabitants of the island in the year 1914, described by Walter Lippmann, Europeans today do not have to wait for a mail steamer to bring the news only once in sixty days. Modern mass media deliver their news messages on a large scale, through various channels and in a continuous flow. And also unlike the first half of the 20th century, European states are not involved in destructive wars but they seek ways of constructive cooperation1 within the framework of the EU. The EU has strongly developed in both size and scope over the past two decades and nowadays affects half a billion European citizens in many aspects of their lives. The ongoing process of European integration is complex and often difficult to grasp. In present-day Europe, without newspapers and other mass media it would be quite impossible for the average European to understand what the EU is about and how it develops. This makes the question about the impact of media coverage on European citizens all the more relevant. Media are expected to perform important functions in democratic societies by informing and involving citizens in political matters and by contributing to the interpretation of developments and the formation of opinion (e.g., McQuail, 1992; Windahl et al., 2009). The process of European integration offers a challenging setting to study whether media are able to perform these tasks also in an international context and therefore contribute to the legitimacy and the democratic performance of the EU. This study, completed almost a hundred years after the start of World War I, seeks to find answers to the question about the effects of media reporting about the EU on European citizens. These answers might shed a light on the possibilities and limitations for media to perform their tasks within the context of European integration.

This introductory chapter sketches the contours of the research domain and the choices made to explore and study this domain. It presents the main concepts of the study, the central research question, the methodological and theoretical orientations and the set-up of the dissertation.

1 Each specific word that is used to indicate the development of the EU (e.g., integration, cooperation, unification) may reflect a certain perspective from which the EU is seen and validated. Van Middelaar (2009; pp. 21-27) states that these terms are ideologically driven and are an implicit or explicit expression of the various political or scientific outlooks on the development of the EU. For the sake of alternation, throughout this book terms such as cooperation, integration and unification are more or less randomly used without hinting at political or ideological angles. Yet, this book seeks to distinguish between Europe (= the continent) on the one hand and the European Union (= the organization in which many European states are involved) on the other. This distinction is further elaborated in Chapter 2.
General relevance and goal of this study

Compared with the year 1914, one might expect that Europeans nowadays are well informed about and involved in what is happening on in their continent. However, when looking at the **Commission** and the relationship between ‘Brussels’ and European citizens, there are various indications to the contrary, such as, for instance, the declining turnout during elections for the European Parliament, the rejection of reform plans and draft treaties in various national referenda, the meagre scores of EU support in opinion polls and the very low levels of basic EU knowledge as demonstrated in various studies (EC General Report, 2001, p. 9). This situation of a limited public understanding and lukewarm response has lead to political and scientific discussions about the democratic deficit of the EU and the so-called gap between ‘Brussels’ and European citizens (see for studies of this democratic deficit e.g., Lord & Harris, 2006; Hooghe & Marks, 2007; Koopmans, 2007). Hix described this situation as follows: “Public apathy is … increasing, as citizens feel isolated from the institutions of Brussels and see no way to influence European level decisions.” (Hix, 2008, p. 1). A continuation of this situation or a further deterioration will contribute to corrosion of both the legitimacy of the EU and the democratic fundamentals of European integration.

When a political organization raises the bar of ambitions and responsibilities as high as the EU has done over the past 15 years, it needs to be solidly grounded in deep layers of public consent. If citizens decline to demonstrate involvement and appreciation towards the EU, the process of European integration will be damaged and can finally come to a standstill. The blockage of the ratification process of the constitutional treaty by French and Dutch referendum voters in 2005 is a case in point. The European Commission has formally acknowledged this problematic situation and the need for better communication with its citizens by launching the Communication Policy and Action Plan (Plan-D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate) in 2005:

(1)This Commission has made communication one of the strategic objectives for its term of office, recognising it fully as a policy in its own right. A renewed commitment to communication with Europe’s citizens is of vital importance and this is a task that goes beyond the Commission’s remit. Its success depends fundamentally on a partnership with all other key players in European politics inside the EU, and particularly with Member-states’ governments. Politicians and institutional stakeholders at all levels have to gain Europeans trust through good policies and good communication about those policies.3

In Plan-D, the mass media are considered to play an important role in contributing to higher levels of public knowledge and appreciation concerning the EU among citizens. This latter group also points in the direction of the media to play a key role. Europeans repeatedly express their need for more information about the EU and for mass media as preferred sources of information.4 This call for media attention is furthermore echoed in the European Quarter in Brussels where one can often hear officials say: ‘If only the media would report more about the EU, then people would have a better understanding of the work that we do’.7 The Dutch liberal party D66 even introduced this topic in its party programme for the 2004 European Parliament (EP) elections by stating: “Dutch public television should start a ‘Brussels Today’ news programme”.8 Altogether, the European Commission, European citizens, politicians and EU representatives have high expectations with regard to the role of the mass media. These high expectations are the starting point of this study. The question asked here is whether or not media can indeed live up to those high expectations and play such a pivotal role in informing and involving European citizens in European affairs. This study primarily seeks to contribute to the assessment of the role of the media in the context of European integration and therefore to the determination of the extent to which media can play a part in bridging the gap between the EU and European citizens. Secondly, this study may provide politicians, civil servants, citizens and journalists with data and insights from which they can draw their own conclusions with regard to the interaction between politics, citizens and media in Europe.

Scientific leads and goals

The scope of this study relates to the scientific disciplines of international relations, political science and mass communication. Briefly put, political science deals with the state and government (Almond, 2002). Therefore it touches upon questions of power distribution,

2 The turnout during elections for the European Parliament displays a general downward trend, with a total score of 43% in 2009; see e.g., http://www.europarl.europa.eu/parliament/archive/elections/2009/en_hist_turnout_eu_en.html (retrieved in January, 2011). See Table 1.2 for a specified overview of turnout numbers per country.

3 Especially the French and Dutch ‘No’ to the constitutional Treaty in 2005 drew large-scale attention and constituted a serious setback in EU reform.

4 Only a slight majority of citizens in EU member states believes that their country’s membership of the EU is a good thing. See Chapter 3 for a presentation of general trends in public opinion towards the EU.


7 Similar remarks in this respect are also documented (see e.g., Doedens et al., 2001; Aalberts, 2008).

interest representation, public participation and the rule of law in nation states. Within this discipline, mass media are not only seen as intermediary sources of information but also as influential actors in their own right (McQuail, 1992). The discipline of international relations goes beyond the nation state and centers on the interplay of governmental and non-governmental actors and organizations on the international level. Mass communication and communication science focus on the role, content and effect of media in society. The studies of the effect of mass media, the central focus also of this study, seek to determine the impact of mass media on the way people think and behave both on the aggregate level (society) and in individual cases. The interface of the three disciplines above is the domain of international political communication. Within this domain, the role and influence of media are analyzed in relationship to governmental and non-governmental actors and organizations in a comparative international context. This interface provides an appropriate scientific entourage for studying the interplay of media, politics and publics in the European context. The growing size and importance of the European Union and the public preference of mass media as main sources of EU information have drawn the attention of a growing number of scholars. Some studies mainly focus on the EU and public opinion without encompassing the impact of mass media (e.g., Niedermayer & Sinnott, 1995; Tiemeijer, 2006). Other studies are devoted to media and the EU without including the possible effects on public opinion (e.g., Fundesco, 1996; Kevin, 2002). A limited but growing number of studies tries to integrate the three elements by focusing on the effects of media coverage of the European Union on European audiences. This dissertation relates to this field of study by building on the findings of pioneering research (e.g., Norris, 2002; de Vreese, 2003; Peter, 2003; Pfetsch, 2004; van Noije, 2007; Schuck & de Vreese, 2010) and by trying to open up more terrain that has until now been relatively unexplored. This dissertation is interdisciplinary in character by trying to determine media effects in a political context on an international level. In general, this study hopes to demonstrate the benefits of linking scientific disciplines in this respect. More specifically, the findings of this book might contribute to the work of researchers from various disciplines who seek to investigate and understand the interplay between politics, publics and media in the context of modern European integration.

Research questions and central concepts
The section above paints a broad, extensive and ambitious picture. It demonstrates the challenge and importance of assessing the impact of media coverage of the EU on the public knowledge and appreciation of the EU. This matter can only be addressed by narrowing down to and focusing on specific factors that serve as indicators for general effects and trends. The search for long-term trends and the use of survey data rule out a number of elements and objects that are relevant and of interest, but cannot be comprised in this research. In contrast to other mainstream mass media, only newspapers produce a substantive flow of reporting about the EU (Fundesco, 1997; Norris; Kevin, 2002; Pfetsch, 2004; Brüggeman & Kleinen-von Königsföw, 2009). TV, radio and the Internet have proven to be less systematic and constant in their reports about the EU (de Vreese, 2003; Peter, 2003; Trenz, 2004) and are therefore less suitable for content analysis within the scope of this book. Inspired by the typology of media systems of Hallin and Mancini (2004) and pragmatically driven by the availability of data and resources, a selection of member states and newspapers is made that is representative of various press cultures and various national outlooks on European integration. Mainly Western European newspapers are broadly available in news databases and only a few of them are archived over a longer span of time. Therefore this study is focused on newspaper reporting about the EU in, predominantly, Western European countries. The following central question serves as main guideline for the research of this dissertation:

To what extent does newspaper reporting about the European Union contribute to a better understanding of the EU by newspaper readers?

In this central research question the key-word understanding is intended to comprise both a cognitive and an affective component. The cognitive part refers to the formation of knowledge about EU affairs and the ability to comprehend the ‘what, how and why’ of the EU. The affective element concerns an evaluative statement about the way the EU is perceived and appreciated. Both components, knowledge and attitude, are key concepts in mass communication and play a central role in studies about the effects of mass media (Lavidge & Steiner, 1961) In this study, they constitute the leading indicators for public response towards the EU. The newspapers in this study are a representative selection of prominent national newspapers of various member states. The newspaper readers represent various audiences that can be directly or indirectly linked to newspaper titles. The central research question is approached in two ways with two sub-questions each.

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10 The typology of media systems of Hallin & Mancini is more extensively described in Chapter 5.
11 According to the Compact Oxford English Dictionary the noun ‘understanding’ has several meanings:
     “1/ the ability to understand something. 2/ the power of abstract thought; intellect. 3/ an individual’s perception or judgement of a situation. 4/ sympathetic awareness or tolerance. 5/ an informal or unspoken agreement or arrangement”; http://www.askoxford.com/concise_oed/understanding?view=uk (retrieved in January, 2011).
12 See Chapter 4 for a further elaboration of the concepts of knowledge and appreciation.
**Approach 1**

The first approach focuses on the volumes of EU news. It hooks on to the often-expressed need of European officials (as described in the first paragraph of this Introduction) for more media attention and the hope that this will make European citizens more insightful and involved in EU matters. Previous studies have indicated that generally the EU is marginally covered by the press (Peter, 2002), and that the volume of EU news varies per country and per newspaper (Kevin, 2002). This raises the question to what extent the volume of news in itself matters. To put it in concrete terms: if German newspapers report more about the EU than French newspapers do, does this lead to higher levels of knowledge and support in Germany as compared to France? And if in Germany the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung pays more attention to Brussels than Bild does, does this contribute to higher levels of EU knowledge and EU appreciation of FAZ-readers as opposed to Bild readers? This first approach relates to one of the oldest and most fundamental questions in mass communication research: to what extent does the amount of information impact the audience? To date, no study about EU news has broadly dealt with the volume of EU coverage and its cognitive and affective effects on media users. First it is of interest to determine whether more EU news leads to more EU knowledge. This is specifically relevant because the average European citizen demonstrates to know very little about the EU.14 Next, it is tempting to suppose, following along the lines of Zajonc (1968), that more information about the EU contributes to higher levels of familiarity and hence also to more appreciation of the EU, which is vital for the discussion about the legitimacy of the EU as described in the paragraph above.

In this first approach the two leading sub-questions are:

- to what extent does the mere volume of EU news articles affect the levels of EU knowledge of newspaper readers?
- to what extent does the mere volume of EU news articles affect the levels of EU appreciation of newspaper readers?

**Approach 2**

The second approach goes beyond the volume of news about the EU to study the effects of the content of EU news on news consumers. This approach seeks to determine the impact of the presentation of specific topics in the news about the EU. In which way do specific EU topics in press articles relate to the way people support and define the EU? In the words of de Vreese and Boomgaarden: “(I)f we assume that people indeed develop attitudes at least to some degree based on information from the news, we can expect that the way in which media report about the European matters would influence opinions about the EU and its policies” (de Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2005, p. 3). There is ample evidence that media throughout Europe have various ways of reporting about the EU (e.g., Fundesco, 1997; Kevin, 2002; de Vreese, 2003; Peter, 2003; Pfetsch, 2004; Brüggeman, 2009). Some media depict the EU in fairly positive terms; others reveal a more negative focus. Some media emphasize institutional affairs; others accentuate incidental events and personalised matters. This raises curiosity about the possible effects of these journalistic angles and about the contribution of the various reporting styles on variations in public opinion. Once more in simple terms: if the British press covers more negative issues concerning the EU than the Dutch press does, does this contribute to a more negative outlook on the EU by British readers as compared to Dutch readers? And if, in the UK, The Sun largely reports negatively about EU with articles about fraud and the lack of British influence and The Guardian reports more about positive aspects like welfare and stability, does this make the definition and appreciation of the EU by Sun readers more negative and that of Guardian readers more positive?

This second approach is also laid out in a more substantive and a more attitudinal way. The substantive aspect in this second approach is translated in terms of definition. It is quite relevant within the context of this study to determine whether European citizens define the EU in terms of the EU issues covered in the press. This would imply that media contribute to the associations with which the public perceives the EU. Therefore, Approach 2 first seeks to determine whether newspaper readers describe and define the EU in similar terms as those used by their newspapers. The second sub-study moves somewhat further by studying the possible effects of selected EU issues in the news on the way the EU is appreciated by European audiences. It thus tries to determine the impact of coverage of specific EU issues on the evaluation of the EU by European audiences.

The following two sub-questions serve as directives for Approach 2:

- to what extent does the selection of issues in EU news articles affect the definition of the EU by newspaper readers?
- to what extent does the selection of issues in EU news articles affect the levels of EU appreciation of newspaper readers?
Figure 1 is a graphical representation of the central research question and the four sub-questions. It sketches the two approaches that both seek to determine the possible contribution of EU news to the knowledge, appreciation and definition with regard to the EU. These factors are considered to serve as important building blocks for the general level of public understanding of the EU. The effect of media coverage on EU appreciation is analyzed in two separate sub-studies in order to be able to measure media impact on this vital indicator of general EU support in different ways.

Key players in this study: the European Union, European citizens, European media

This study seeks to determine the relative influence of media coverage of the EU on European audiences within the context of political developments related to the EU. This paragraph provides a first brief sketch of this European ménage à trois.

European Union

The first main element of this study, the European Union, represents the political enterprise that started a few years after World War II. The founding fathers of the EU dreamed of lasting peace and close cooperation among participating European nations. Over fifty years later, the track record of the EU is more impressive than the founding fathers could ever have thought. In contrast with the devastating years of war and poverty in Europe in the first half of the 20th century, the member states of the EU have experienced enduring internal peace combined with high levels of prosperity from the 1950s onwards. The EU has developed in such a way that it exerts a significant and growing impact on the lives of hundreds of millions of Europeans. Recent milestones such as the introduction of the Euro, the enlargement of the EU (from 15 to 27 member states) and the adoption of a new constitutional treaty (Treaty of Lisbon, 2009) highlight the ambitions and wide sphere of influence of the EU, whether it is through legislation and funding or through the European Central Bank and the on-going accession of new member states. The EU therefore constitutes a complex and interesting phenomenon. European integration might serve as a benchmark for those nation states that seek ways of democratic and peaceful cooperation in a world that is characterized by globalization and increasing interdependency. Yet, the process of European integration also produces shortcomings and flaws, such as the lack of whole-hearted involvement and support of the population of the participating countries.

European citizens

European citizens are both object and subject of the process of European integration. They are confronted with the political output of the EU on the one hand and they constitute the legitimization of the process of European cooperation with their political votes and public support on the other (Beetham & Lord, 1998; Niedermayer & Sinnott, 1995; Kritzinger, 2000; Richardson, 2001, Aalberts, 2008). Throughout the years, European public opinion research (Eurobarometer15, 1973 to present) shows meandering levels of knowledge, involvement and appreciation among European citizens between and within member-states. Public support for the EU has fluctuated strongly over time and has varied greatly from member state to member state. Also, within many E-countries the levels of support among various societal sub-groups reveal noteworthy differences, ranging from convinced Europhiles and supporters to Euroscps and outspoken anti-EU activists. Overall, the EU is not met with convincing levels of general appreciation and recognition on the part of the European citizens.

The matter of support and legitimacy is further complicated by the multi-level construction of the EU. The EU contains both national and supranational elements. The concept of

15 The standard Eurobarometer was established in 1973. Each survey consists of approximately 1000 face-to-face interviews per member state (except Germany (2000), Luxembourg (600), the United Kingdom (1300, including 300 in Northern Ireland). Reports are published twice yearly.

16 See Chapter 2 for a presentation of general trends in public opinion towards the EU.
legitimacy as developed by Beetham & Lord (1998) demonstrates the complexity of this situation. Beetham & Lord (1998) divided the matter of legitimacy into three aspects:

- Legality (political power is acquired and exercised according to established rules);
- Normative justifiability (rules are justifiable according to socially accepted beliefs);
- Legitimation (consent or affirmation on the part of subordinates and recognition from other legitimate authorities).

If we apply these aspects of legitimacy to the current situation within the EU, we see that support for the EU relates to questions of authority acceptance, justified rules and regulations, and performance recognition.

Due to the specific nature of the European Union, a hybrid organization with both supranational and intergovernmental traits, EU citizens can express their support and trust in a direct way (e.g., by participating in European elections and referendums) or indirectly (e.g., by supporting or denouncing their national political leaders and political parties). Given the multilevel character of the EU, a public evaluation of the EU may well be interwoven with opinions about national matters (see e.g., Gabel, 1998; Newman in Richardson, 2001; Hooghe & Marks, 2008). A ‘No’ in a referendum about a European matter might just as well be an expression of general disapproval of the national government’s policies. This implies that the analysis of the formation of public knowledge and appreciation of the EU should take into account both national and European developments.

European media

The third and final element of this dissertation concerns the media. Mass media constitute a vital link in the process of information exchange, image building and the expression of thoughts, ideas and feelings. Media contribute to democratic citizenship by offering information and providing platforms for debate and negotiations (McQuail, 1992). They play a large part in the connection between politics and people and have emerged as a forceful avenue for democratic involvement and providing platforms for debate and negotiations (McQuail, 1992). They play a large part in the connection between politics and people and have emerged as a forceful avenue for democratic involvement and providing platforms for debate and negotiations (McQuail, 1992). They play a large part in the connection between politics and people and have emerged as a forceful avenue for democratic involvement and providing platforms for debate and negotiations (McQuail, 1992). They play a large part in the connection between politics and people and have emerged as a forceful avenue for democratic involvement and providing platforms for debate and negotiations (McQuail, 1992). They play a large part in the connection between politics and people and have emerged as a forceful avenue for democratic involvement and providing platforms for debate and negotiations (McQuail, 1992). They play a large part in the connection between politics and people and have emerged as a forceful avenue for democratic involvement and providing platforms for debate and negotiations (McQuail, 1992). They play a large part in the connection between politics and people and have emerged as a forceful avenue for democratic involvement and providing platforms for debate and negotiations (McQuail, 1992). They play a large part in the connection between politics and people and have emerged as a forceful avenue for democratic involvement and providing platforms for debate and negotiations (McQuail, 1992). They play a large part in the connection between politics and people and have emerged as a forceful avenue for democratic involvement and providing platforms for debate and negotiations (McQuail, 1992). They play a large part in the connection between politics and people and have emerged as a forceful avenue for democratic involvement and providing platforms for debate and negotiations (McQuail, 1992). They play a large part in the connection between politics and people and have emerged as a forceful avenue for democratic involvement and providing platforms for debate and negotiations (McQuail, 1992).

There is still a very broad consensus on the main sources of information used by the general public to obtain information about the European Union. (…) Seven out of ten respondents look to television to obtain information about the European Union, almost half of the persons interviewed get their information from daily newspapers and a third listen to the radio. Discussions come in fourth place, followed by the Internet, which for the first time obtains a higher score than other newspapers or magazines as a source of information about the European Union.17

Yet, the political integration of Europe lacks an equivalent in the domain of mass media. Widely used pan-European mass media do not exist.18 For this reason, European citizens looking for information about the EU rely on national media. In this search they are confronted with various approaches and views with regard to European integration, both in quantitative and qualitative ways. A European summit meeting may well be thoroughly and prominently covered by one media outlet and (almost) completely neglected by the other (Peter, 2002). These different approaches to coverage of the EU occur both between member states and within member states (Kevin, 2002)19 This implies that a representative analysis of media coverage of the EU would have to include various media outlets from various member states.

Research design and methodological requirements

According to van Schendelen, the essence of the European Union is “the pacification of differences.” (van Schendelen, 2002, p. 22). European cooperation, in his view, represents a process of trial and error, debate and compromise in which Europeans seek to commonly meet challenges and threats despite numerous variations in backgrounds and points of view.

A comparative study of the EU as set out in this book, is in fact a study of various differences: between North and South, between tabloids and quality press, between Eurosceptics and Europhiles, between 1995 and 2005, between professors and plumbers, between the services directive and rulings about CO2 emissions, etcetera. This makes this research vulnerable to the pitfalls of chaos or commonplaces on the one hand and to useless or too complex comparisons on the other. In order to get a grip on this rich context of European cooperation and to avoid fruitless dwelling upon the European labyrinth, this study is bound by a basic framework. This framework encompasses the two approaches of this study (the volume of EU news; the issues in EU news) seen from the two perspectives (a longer-term limited cross-national scope; a shorter-term/wider cross-national scope). Each approach will be subject to analysis from a longer, yet narrower perspective and from a one-shot view with a wider range of countries involved. In this way, it is possible to study trends and effects of EU news reporting in the two approaches both over a longer period of time and in a wider cross-national set-up (Wester, 2006). The EU offers an inviting setting for making temporal and spatial comparisons. The longitudinal perspective opens the opportunity to include various developments and milestones in the process of European integration and the way in which these developments have been reflected over the years in press attention and the public eye. How did newspapers from year to year report about European matters such

18 There have been several initiatives to set-up pan-European media such as Euronews (TV) or European News (a weekly newspaper), but their audiences have always been limited to highly involved Europeans.
19 Chapter 4 further elaborates on this matter.
as ‘Maastricht’, the euro and the various enlargements of the EU and how did this affect their audiences? Is it possible to discover peaks and lows in press attention and do these fluctuations have an impact on newspaper readers? The short-term, cross-national scope focuses on a limited period in time and seeks to relate press reports in various countries to the national opinion climate towards the EU. How did newspapers within and between countries report about the EU in a specific period in time? Did they make similar choices or is the French press quite different from the British one? Are the EU reports in the German tabloid Bild more similar to the German Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung or to the British tabloid The Sun? And, last but not least, do newspapers in various European countries affect their audience groups in similar ways?

Table 1 General research design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perspective: Cross-sectional/ various member-states</th>
<th>Perspective: Longitudinal/ few member-states</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approach 1: Volumes of EU news</td>
<td>Approach 2: Issues in EU news</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-study 1 (Chapter 6)</td>
<td>Sub-study 2 (Chapter 7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the mere volume of EU news articles affect the levels of EU knowledge of newspaper readers?</td>
<td>To what extent does the mere volume of EU news articles affect the levels of EU appreciation of newspaper readers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-study 3 (Chapter 8)</td>
<td>Sub-study 4 (Chapter 9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the selection of issues in EU news articles affect the definition of the EU by newspaper readers?</td>
<td>To what extent does the selection of issues in EU news articles affect the levels of EU appreciation of newspaper readers?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 presents the general research design. It shows that this study is divided into four sub-studies. The design of this framework allows for comparative analyses over time, and between member states combined with two approaches concerning the volume of EU news and the issues in EU news. The section below introduces the direction and the dimensions of this study in general lines. A further elaboration of the choices made is presented in the methodology chapter (Chapter 5) and the pertaining research chapters of Approach 1 (volumes of EU news) and Approach 2 (issues in EU news).

**Explorative and testing research**

The complexity of the EU and the large amount of relevant media, member-states and audiences that could be included call for a further demarcation of relevant variables and measures to be encompassed in the design of this study. Therefore, first some explorations are made before addressing the research question in full.

Explorative studies can contribute to a better focus during later research phases. After the exploration of the objects within the study field, more specific choices and steps can be made concerning further testing of the objects at stake. In Part One of this book, some preliminary studies are presented that mark off and explore the terrain of the two main approaches of research. These explorations help to set up the design of the main strands of research, and also contribute to the understanding and interpretation of the findings of the research. For this purpose, the coming into being of the EU is chronologically sketched and analysed in terms of international political relations. These historical and theoretical sections help to put the developments of European integration into perspective. This may especially be insightful for those parts of the book with a longitudinal focus. Next, the main theoretical concepts and models concerning the drivers of public opinion and the role of the media within the European context are described and discussed. This contributes to the selection of contextual factors that may play a part in the basic relationship between media attention and public response. Finally, two qualitative studies are presented with the narratives of citizens who have been extensively interviewed about the EU within the context of their general outlook on life. Through discourse analysis some basic ways of talking about the European Union have been determined. These narratives about the EU among European citizens are used as references for the interpretation of research findings and for the construction of the sub-studies in Approach 2 (issues in EU news).

After these explorations, the two approaches of this study are subjected to further analysis and testing by linking data of survey studies to the outcomes of content analysis of selected media. In general and in line with the two main approaches, a content analysis centers on the volume of EU publicity and the representation of EU issues in selected newspapers: the independent variables. These data are related to indicators of public knowledge and appreciation derived from opinion polls: the dependent variables.

**Two comparative perspectives: longitudinal and cross-national**

Time and space are the main dimensions of comparative studies. This book ventures into both comparative areas by encompassing both longitudinal as well as temporal, cross-national and spatial strands of research. This offers opportunities for deeper and wider research, but also evokes limitations. The availability of solid data is often limited (as discussed above) and the found data have to be well comparable in order to make justifiable claims (Gurevitch & Blumler, 1990). Finally, it proves to be difficult to fully combine both dimensions in one strand of research. In this study, the parts that are more longitudinal generally have a more limited cross-national scope, whereas the wider cross-national sections are confined to a shorter period in time.
The longitudinal focus is rather imperative because of the major developments that the EU has experienced over the years. These developments may well have influenced the coverage of the EU by European media and the public perception of the EU by European audiences. Are media nowadays paying more attention to the EU than they did ten years ago? Are citizens gradually becoming less supportive of the EU? Are major events, such as the introduction of the euro, paralleled by noteworthy changes in media attention and public appreciation? These questions can only be answered from a long-term perspective. A longitudinal analysis allows for making more reliable claims about trends and causal effects, while it limits the risk that “inferences are based on coincidence due to sudden whims of MPs and journalists” (van Noije, 2007, p. 16). In this book, the longitudinal sub-studies focus on the time frame 1994-2006. The comparative, cross-national scope is relevant and compelling due to the specific character of the EU itself, with its (growing number of) different member states and the well-documented variations in media systems and public opinion between the member states (e.g., Kevin, 2002; Norris, 2002; de Vreese, 2003; van Noije, 2007). These differences are interesting, but also constitute difficulties when making comparisons. At least some common ground has to be found to be able to produce fitting outcomes and draw valuable conclusions (Pennings, Keman & Kleinjijnenhuis, 2006). By selecting a variety of member states it is possible to distinguish between general EU wide trends that apparently are not dependent on national circumstances and specific developments that are more nationally driven.

**Method: content analysis and survey data**

The two main approaches of this dissertation require a mixed-method study with a thorough registration and analysis of volumes of EU news and relevant topics in EU news reports through time and in various member-states. Content analysis will be the central research tool in this study. Content analysis refers to a systematic method of analyzing message content (Severin and Tankard, 2001). In the often-cited definition of Holsti, content analysis is described as “any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages” (Holsti, 1969, p. 14). Wester (2006) stated that content as such is not specific, as long as it is not analyzed from a selected perspective. Wester stresses the importance of a clear research question as he defines content analysis as “a selective reading of material directed by a specific question” (Wester, 2006, p. 16; my translation, PtL). As indicated in the previous paragraph, in this book the newspapers are analyzed on the basis of the volume of their EU articles and their selection of issues in EU coverage. Determining the volume of EU news is, within strict analytical boundaries and procedures, merely a quantitative, mathematical matter, since it does not imply interpretation or inference of meaning. It implies the selection of sufficient data of selected communicators in specific times and places. The analysis of issues in the news is quite different, because it not only involves merely quantitative registration of press coverage, but also looks for deeper structural meaning conveyed by the communicator (Berg, 2004). In the first strand of research of Approach 2 (Chapter 8) the topics are derived from a list in a public opinion poll, issued by the European Commission (Eurobarometer 65). In the second research part of Approach 2 (Chapter 9) the topics are determined a priori on the basis of my own preliminary field research and the analysis of relevant literature. These deductive methods enhance comparative reliability, especially in a longitudinal, cross-national set-up (de Vreese, 2003). Chapter 5 (Method) will further elaborate on the methodological choices made in this book.

**Theoretical orientation**

This dissertation incorporates theoretical models and concepts that have proven to be quite solid in decades of communication research. In each sub-study, the analysis is based on a specific theoretical concept that closely corresponds with the leading question of the sub-study. In Approach 1 the knowledge gap theory serves as the leading theoretical concept for the first sub-study concerning the impact of the volume of EU news on public knowledge levels. The second sub-study of Approach 1 concerns the effect of news coverage on the appreciation of the EU. This is related to the propositions of Zajonc and the RAS-model of Zaller. Approach 2 is founded on the theoretical concepts of agenda setting relating to the transfer of salience. The first part of Approach 2 (sub-study 3) seeks to link the selection of EU issues in the news to the public definition of the EU. This part is related to the second level agenda setting theory. The second section of Approach 2 (sub-study 4) studies the impact of EU issue coverage on EU appreciation and follows along the lines of the concepts of priming and compelling arguments.

**Outline of the dissertation**

This dissertation consists, after this Introduction, of four parts. Part One, with five chapters, serves as an explorative orientation of the European landscape and marks off the research terrain. The chapters of Part One focus on the exploration and the demarcation of the central concepts of this study (the EU, Europe, public opinion, the media). Chapter 1 provides a brief sketch of the development of the EU and its relation to the ‘old’ European continent. The EU and Europe are different entities, yet they are often equated. It is worthwhile to start the exploration by dwelling on these two concepts. Chapter 2 aims to unveil the way people express their thoughts and feelings about the EU through qualitative analysis. This section

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20 See Chapter 1 for an overview of the milestones of European integration.

21 A general answer to this question is provided in Chapter 3.

22 This selection will be specified in Chapter 5.
PART ONE

MARKING OFF THE TERRAIN

We know nothing about ourselves
at this moment amid history’s wind and dust
We know nothing about ourselves
We who come here from every country, church and slum, nooks and crannies,
We in Europe, we leave the mountains, visit the valleys, approach the villages,
Get lost in cities. We, yes, all of us, we entreat the citizens, listen, please, listen,
Now hear the worries, the fires, the snows of our stories.

(from the preamble of The European Constitution in Verse, fragment written by
Geert van Istendael, in van Reybrouck & Vermeersch, 2008)

presents the context for a better understanding and interpretation of the survey data used
in this book. Next, Chapter 3 presents general trends in and indications of public opinion
towards the EU, both from a long-term and from a cross-national perspective. This chapter
serves as the interpretative framework for the outcomes of public climate regarding the EU
in the various research chapters. Chapter 4 elaborates on the motives and drivers behind
the formation of knowledge and appreciation of the European Union and the role the media
play in these respects. This chapter deals with theoretical concepts on this matter, including
prominent views on and possible explanations for the role of the media in this respect. At
the end of Part One, Chapter 5 introduces the methods, data and measures of this study.
This way, Chapter 5 marks the transfer from the introductory, explorative section of this
study to the research parts of this book (Part Two and Part Three).

Part Two, with two chapters, is devoted to the first research approach of this book: the
volume of EU news. In Chapter 6 the knowledge gap theory serves as a theoretical basis.
The one-shot study comprises seven countries and 39 newspapers. In Chapter 7 a longitudinal
comparison is made between the volume of news in Dutch and British newspapers. The
propositions of Zajonc and Zaller serve as theoretical guidelines in this chapter.

Part Three, also with two chapters, focuses on the second approach of this book: issues in
EU news. Chapter 8 reports on a cross-sectional, short-term study of EU news reporting in
11 newspapers in Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. The outcomes are
used to determine possible effects along the lines of the concept of second-level agenda
setting. Chapter 9 offers a longitudinal extension of the analysis of Chapter 8. This final
research chapter seeks to determine whether priming effects can be determined in a long–
term analysis of EU reporting including the same three countries as studied in Chapter 8:
Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

In the conclusive part of this book, Part Four, Chapter 10 sums up the main outcomes of the
research chapters and tries to relate, weigh and compare the findings of the four sub-studies.
It also seeks to connect the practical and theoretical implications of this study and offers
suggestions for further research.
Chapter 1 Exploring the boundaries of Europe and the European Union

Introduction
The European Union, the central political object of this study, does not only stand for an international framework of cooperation among European states, but is also related to the historical, geographical, cultural, and political context from which it originates and in which it develops. The leading question of this chapter is: what is the context from which the process of European cooperation has evolved and can be understood? Europe and the EU are often equated but of course they are not the same. Yet, the EU cannot be seen separately from the continent that gives its name to it. Therefore, in section 1.1, this first chapter presents a brief demarcation of Europe in mythological and geographical terms. After this condensed presentation of the continent, the focus shifts to the development of the EU itself. The longitudinal design of this study necessitates paying attention to the chronological development of the process of European integration. Developments over time in the EU may well have evoked media attention and affected the public response towards the EU. Paragraph 1.2 presents the main developments of the EU from the 1950s up to the present. Next, in section 1.3 the main relevant theoretical approaches concerning international cooperation between nation states are addressed. These theoretical views represent the different perspectives from which the process of European cooperation can be interpreted. Politicians, media and publics might well reflect these perspectives in the way they depict the EU. Finally, section 1.4 resumes and discusses the main findings of this chapter. This first chapter thus provides an introduction into these contextual areas for a better understanding of backgrounds and developments concerning Europe and the EU. By dwelling on the polychrome context in which the EU has emerged and evolved, this chapter seeks to contribute to a better interpretation and explanation of the findings of the various sub-studies of the later parts of this book.

1.1 Europe and the EU: cultural and geographical settings
The European Union is by its nature and its constitution linked to the continent of Europe. In common speech, the EU and Europe are often treated as synonyms. Yet, the equivalence of the EU and Europe is not always accurate or justifiable. Indeed, some political movements seek to clearly distinguish between the two by idealizing the real Europe of culture and civilization and condemning the false Europe (the EU) as bureaucratic and corrupt (Adamson & Johns, 2008). Since this study deals with the way the EU is pictured in politics, media and among citizens, it is relevant and worthwhile to demarcate the boundaries of Europe and the EU.
The notion of Europe is rooted in Greek mythology. The great Roman poet Ovid rephrased the mythological stories from ancient Greece in his book ‘Metamorphoses’ and described the classical tale of the god Zeus who, disguised as a white bull, abducts the Phoenician princess Europe to the island of Crete (Ovid, Metamorphoses, book II, vv. 858-875).

The royal maid, unwitting what she did, at length sat down upon the bull's broad back. Then by degrees the god moved from the land and from the shore, and placed his feet, that seemed but shining hoofs, in shallow water by the sandy merge; and not a moment resting bore her thence, across the surface of the Middle Sea, while she affrighted gazed upon the shore--so fast receding. And she held his horn with her right hand, and, steadied by the left, held on his ample back--and in the breeze.

On Crete, Europe gives birth to Minos, the founding father of the oldest civilization on the European continent. The abduction of Europe by Zeus can be interpreted as the deliberate demarcation between Asia and what we nowadays call Europe. The story of Zeus and Europe is one of the most popular mythological subjects for painters and sculptors from ancient times to the Renaissance. Nowadays, the Greek 2 Euro coin depicts this story on its national side.

Etymologically, the term Europe is of disputed origin. The Arab-Semitic root of the term Europe is ereb, which means western or evening. In this sense, the word Europe stands for the evening land, the land of the setting sun (Doedens, Mulder & ‘t Lam, 2001). Another explanation points in the direction of the ancient Greek words ευρυ- (wide) and οπ– (eye), referring to the goddess Europe with her wide-open eyes or a broad face.

Geographically, Europe is the northwest part of the Eurasian continent, confined by the mountain ranges of the Ural and the Caucasus in the east and south and by the North Sea and the Atlantic Ocean in the west and north.

The cultural and geographical heritage of the European continent is to a certain extent reflected in the mission, domains and dimensions of the EU. The Treaty of the European Union states: “any European country which respects the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law may apply to become a member of the Union”. This implies that, principally, every country on the European continent can apply for membership. As a result of the recent rounds of enlargement of the EU, most of the European countries nowadays are member of the EU. The fall of the Berlin Wall and the eastern expansion of the EU have also changed the concept of East and West in Europe. The writer Dubravka Ugresic discovered, while traveling through Europe, that the question “where lies the West in Europe and where lies the East leads to far more and far more vague answers than questions about the location of the North and the South” (Ugresic, 2007, p. 100; my translation, PtL).

Still, Europe and the EU are not the same. Some European countries choose not to be a member of the EU (Iceland, Norway, Switzerland) or are not entitled to be a member yet (e.g., Balkan countries such as Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), or are subject to fundamental debate about the likelihood or desirability of membership (Turkey, Georgia, Ukraine). In one case, the EU has already crossed its continental borders by admitting Cyprus (geographically an Asian country) as a member of the EU. This might happen again with the accession of Turkey. Some politicians have even advocated the enlargement of the EU with countries on the south and east sides of the Mediterranean (e.g., Lagendijk & Wiersma (2007).

In short, whereas the boundaries of the continent are relatively clear, those of the European Union are not. This lack of geographical finalité turns the story of the EU into an open-end scenario, which is frustrating to those who want to determine today where the EU ends, but also allows for aspirations and speculations for those who want to consider tomorrow’s expansion of European integration.

1.2 Sixty years of European integration and public involvement, a brief overview

European cooperation started in the 1950s with six member states. These six states shared a cooperative focus on coal, steel, agriculture and the ambition of creating an internal market. Together with the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1952, the Treaties of Rome (1957) marked the formal start of European cooperation. More than fifty years later the EU comprises 27 member states and has developed a fully functioning internal market with a common currency. Furthermore, the EU engages into many policy areas, varying from environment and immigration to fishing and foreign affairs.

23 The Nice Treaty on the European Union sets out the conditions (article 6, article 49); http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/the-policy/conditions-for-enlargement/index_en.htm (retrieved in January, 2011)
24 West Germany, France, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxemburg.
Table 1.1 Chronology of milestones in the process of European Integration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Milestones</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>ECSC (6 founding member states: Belgium, West Germany, France, Italy, Luxemburg, the Netherlands)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>Treaties of Rome (EEC, Euratom)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>Customs Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Enlargement: Denmark, Great Britain, Ireland (9 member states)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>EMS/ECU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>First direct elections of the European Parliament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Enlargement: Greece (10 member states)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Schengen Treaty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Enlargement: Portugal, Spain (12 member states)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Single Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Treaty of Maastricht (establishment of the EU)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Single Market completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Enlargement: Austria, Finland, Sweden (15 member states)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Treaty of Amsterdam</td>
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<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Agenda 2002</td>
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<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Treaty of Nice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Introduction of the Euro (notes and coins)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Enlargement: Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia (25 member states)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>French and Dutch ‘NO’ in referendum about Constitutional Treaty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Enlargement: Bulgaria, Romania (27 member states)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Treaty of Lisbon (effective per December 1, 2009)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data and facts of Table 1.1 are derived from various sources; mostly used are Bache & George (2006) and http://europa.eu/abc/12lessons/lesson_2/index_en.htm (retrieved in January, 2011).

Table 1.1 offers a chronological overview of the milestones of the EU and its predecessors. It sums up the main achievements in the development of European cooperation. During the first decades (early 1950s to late 1970s) the process of European integration was strongly instigated by post-World War II and Cold War sentiments, with the Paris-Bonn axis as driving force. The forerunners of the EU (ECSC, EEC and Euratom) were created and directed by older statesmen and an elite of internationally oriented politicians and civil servants. Their motives reveal a mixture of pragmatism and idealism, with powerplay and self-interest on the one hand and compromise and reconciliation on the other (e.g., van Schendelen, 2002). During those years, the endeavor of European cooperation was subject to limited public debate. The European ‘man in the street’ was hardly interested and involved in European politics, despite some political and diplomatic clashes within the European elitist caste. Even more, the general public in this era did not have a democratic political vehicle to exert its influence, since there were no European elections and referenda in those years (Janssen, 2001). The influence of the masses on European affairs was at most indirect and limited to national elections. Yet, various studies indicate that there hardly is any evidence that EU issues played a part in the election behavior during national elections (Janssen, 2001). The 1970s and ‘80s represented an era of deepening and widening European integration, with a strong focus on monetary cooperation and the completion of the internal market. These years were also marked by the accession of the United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark, the first enlargement in twenty years. Especially the membership of the strongly opinionated British newcomer marked a new episode, with its challenge to the traditional influence of core members West Germany and France. From 1974 onwards, the European Summit meetings of heads of states and governments became a new and influential phenomenon, as a habitual platform for decision-making among European leaders. Nevertheless, these summits have no basis in any European treaty (Werts, 2008). Gradually, European politics becomes more democratically equipped with the introduction of direct elections for the European Parliament and the incidental occurrence of referenda. These referenda are all organized in single member states and mainly deal with matters of accession to the EU or the acceptance of new EU treaties (Janssen, 2001). Thanks to these developments, common knowledge about and public attitudes towards European affairs is becoming more relevant. In turn, politics and media start to devote more attention to the wants and needs of their publics. This became even more evident around the turn of the 21st century. The fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union marked the dawn of a new era. The map of Europe has been redrawn, with former Soviet republics becoming independent states and former Warsaw Pact states introducing a democratic political system and a free market economy. The unification of East and West Germany (DDR and BRD) opened up the way to further cooperation and rapprochement between East and West in Europe, culminating in the accession of twelve new EU member states, mostly from Middle and Eastern Europe, in the first decade of the 21st century.

In the aftermath of these dramatic changes, the Treaty of Maastricht (1993) symbolized the transfer from a more limited concept of European cooperation based on the Treaties of Rome (1957), to a new, more comprehensive post-Cold War framework for European integration, baptized ‘European Union’. The Maastricht Treaty set the pace for new milestones in the new millennium: the introduction of the Euro (2001), the concept of a new constitutional treaty (2003) and the enlargement of the EU, first with ten new member states (2004) and soon after with Romania and Bulgaria (2007). Since ‘Maastricht’, the European Union has rapidly developed not only in qualitative, but also in quantitative and institutional ways. The Treaty of Nice (2003) reflected this development with provisions for institutional reform and for further enlargement. This spirit of change and the ambition for further expansion seemed to be accompanied by increased media attention and louder, and often more critical, public debate. Political parties are now urged to take a clear stand...
in political matters as they feel forced to express themselves in favor of or against sensitive matters such as the accession of Turkey, the adoption of the constitutional treaty or European participation in the War on Terror. In recent years, now that the EU seems to accelerate, more and more voices urge Brussels to slow down. As a result, a growing number of politicians and analysts put the legitimacy question on the table (Bache & George, 2004): can the new ventures and ambitions be sufficiently and democratically anchored in the hearts and minds of the European citizens? One option for giving EU citizens direct means of exerting influence is to organize formal elections. From 1979 onwards, the members of the European Parliament have no longer been selected from national parliaments, but have been directly elected by national citizens in common rounds of European elections.

Table 1.2 Turnout of voters during EP elections, 1979-2009 (in percentages)

<table>
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<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>91.4</td>
<td>92.1</td>
<td>90.7</td>
<td>90.7</td>
<td>91.1</td>
<td>90.8</td>
<td>90.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>47.8</td>
<td>52.4</td>
<td>46.2</td>
<td>52.9</td>
<td>50.5</td>
<td>47.9</td>
<td>59.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>65.7</td>
<td>56.8</td>
<td>62.3</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>45.2</td>
<td>43.0</td>
<td>43.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>63.6</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td>68.3</td>
<td>44.0</td>
<td>50.2</td>
<td>58.6</td>
<td>58.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>60.7</td>
<td>56.7</td>
<td>48.8</td>
<td>52.7</td>
<td>46.8</td>
<td>42.8</td>
<td>40.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>85.7</td>
<td>82.5</td>
<td>81.1</td>
<td>73.6</td>
<td>69.8</td>
<td>71.7</td>
<td>65.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>88.9</td>
<td>88.8</td>
<td>87.4</td>
<td>86.6</td>
<td>87.3</td>
<td>91.4</td>
<td>90.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Netherlands</td>
<td>58.1</td>
<td>50.9</td>
<td>47.5</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>36.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>34.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>80.6</td>
<td>80.0</td>
<td>70.2</td>
<td>70.3</td>
<td>63.2</td>
<td>52.6</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>54.7</td>
<td>59.1</td>
<td>63.1</td>
<td>45.1</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>51.1</td>
<td>35.6</td>
<td>39.9</td>
<td>38.6</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>38.8</td>
<td>37.9</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>49.4</td>
<td>42.4</td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>40.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech republic</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>43.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>72.5</td>
<td>59.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>48.4</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td>41.3</td>
<td>53.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>36.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malta</td>
<td>82.4</td>
<td>78.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>39.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU total</td>
<td>62.0</td>
<td>59.0</td>
<td>58.4</td>
<td>56.7</td>
<td>49.5</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>43.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 1.2 shows the development of voters’ turnout during seven consecutive EP elections. The table clearly indicates a decline in turnout over the years. Overall, the general trend shows that, per round of elections, less and less European citizens have been inclined to vote for the European Parliament. If the level of democratic substance would be measured by a turnout of at least more than 50%, the situation for the European Parliament would be quite troublesome, in some member states even dramatic. Some governments choose to put their trust in the hands of their national voters by organizing referenda. Since ‘Maastricht’ many major issues are subject to rounds of referenda in various member states.26 These referenda are not about policy dossiers (the output of the European political process), but exclusively about institutional matters, i.e. the players and the rules (Gabel, 1998; Janssen, 2001). In many cases, the outcome of these referenda is ‘No’, thus creating blockages for further steps on the way to European integration. This most radical public rejection to date is the negative outcome of the French and the Dutch referenda on the new constitutional Treaty in the spring of 2005. The aspirations of the joint EU leaders were halted by the voters of two of the founding states of European integration, invoking a painful standstill. Not until two and a half years later, the reformulated Treaty of Lisbon was finally signed in December 2007 and became effective on December 1, 2009. This time, in order to prevent new impediments, no country dared to organize a national referendum about this treaty. This evoked many public reactions of disappointment and frustration of citizens who felt silenced and sidelined. The only exception was Ireland that was bound to organize a referendum by its constitution. The Irish vote turned out to be negative in the first round and positive in the second: a narrow escape.

1.3 The EU: interests, institutions and ideas
Since the early 1950s, European nation states have been creating an international system of governance in order to be able to address a wide variety of transnational issues. International relations theorists have analyzed this process of European cooperation in various ways, resulting in the development of various theoretical orientations. The realistic, intergovernmental orientation emphasizes the role of the nation states as the core units of international relations. In this view, European institutions are nothing more than arenas for negotiation and cooperation in which national governments determine the rules and seek to safeguard their interests.

The neo-functional, supranational approach, on the other hand, underlines the transfer of sovereignty from national states to international bodies through a process of spillover from lower political levels to higher ones. This self-reinforcing mechanism of spillover leads to

26 E.g., Denmark and France issued national referenda about Maastricht; Ireland about Nice and Lisbon; and many member states about the Constitutional Treaty.
a process of European integration that increasingly escapes the control of national governments (Haas, 1970).

In trying to overcome the stalemate of these opposite approaches, in the 1990s the multi-level governance (MLG) orientation emerged with a mixture of elements from existing theories (e.g., Richardson, 2001; Bache & George, 2006). The MLG approach stresses the notion of negotiation and decision-making at all levels (supranational, national, regional and local) of governmental bodies as well as non-state organizations, such as NGOs and commercial enterprises (Marks & Hooghe, 2004). In this view, national governments are still important actors, but they are competing with other organizations that operate at multiple levels, serving various interests.

In the late 1990s, a new debate emerged in the domain of EU studies, creating a new dichotomy: rationalists versus reflectivists (Bache & George, 2006). The rationalists focus on the given interests of nation states and consider the EU as a product of deliberate choice and design by its member states. The reflectivists (or constructivists) see interests as social constructions and not as merely given. Their approach therefore focuses on the interplay between interests and identities on the one hand and the development of collective understanding and social environment and the other.

In his recent study, van Middelaar (2009) summarized decades of scientific, political and public discussions about European politics by extracting three main discourses. He distinguished between Europe of the States, Europe of the Offices and Europe of the Citizens.

The Europe of the States discourse largely coincides with the realistic, intergovernmental orientation as described above. It is confederative in nature and builds on the undisputed sovereignty of the member states. Europe of the Offices refers to a more rational, functional scope in which the dynamics of converging economic and social powers play a larger role than governments, parliaments and citizens do. The Europe of the Citizens discourse, finally, has a clear federative angle and promotes an active role of European political representation and a union-wide public opinion.27

Taking all the perspectives and angles together, it appears that the EU can be considered a deliberately designed product or a dynamic process, a sum that is not more than its parts or a synergy, a mere extension of national states or a new political top structure overarching various levels of regional and national interest. These fundamental orientations about interests, institutions and ideas may help understand trends and developments in attitudes of politicians, in media attention and in public opinion towards the EU. They are reflected in the news frames of the media, the programs of political parties and the feelings of support or critique of citizens. They are also expressed in names and terms that are used to define the process: cooperation, integration, community, union. The selection of those words and terms is not value-free, but reflects the political positioning of its users (van Middelaar, 2009). In times of elections and referenda, the approaches are sometimes simplified in two simple, opposite positions towards the EU, as translated in slogans: ‘more Brussels’ or ‘less Brussels’. Or, more formally put: a stronger supranational European Union vis-à-vis a minimum of European cooperation with as much sovereign power for member states as possible.

1.4 Conclusion and discussion

This chapter has demonstrated that, to some extent, it is difficult to precisely pinpoint both the geographical limits of the EU and its political goals. The demarcation and definition28 of the EU leaves room for various interpretations and visions, and therefore for discussion and debate. Section 1.3 indicates that the two most prominent, contrasting theoretical and public interpretations of the EU can be summarized with the terms ‘supranational’ (member states transfer decision-making power to central international institutions) and ‘intergovernmental’ (member states work together but keep their final say in decision-making). Van Middelaar (2009) has indicated that even the choice of words is already ideologically loaded. European integration sounds more supranational, whereas European cooperation has a more intergovernmental ring to it. Besides, the European treaties still leave plenty of room for further deliberations. There is, for instance, no fixed agreement on the degree of intergovernmental cooperation, nor is there a pre-set limitation of common policy areas or number of member states. In the first decades after World War II, the debate about the direction, shape and speed of European integration mainly took place between members of the international European elite. This situation is gradually changing. The general trend in the chronological section shows that the EU has grown in size and scope, with some dramatic steps around the turn of the 21st century. This development is paralleled by an increase of dissonance within the opinion climate and the political landscape of member states. In recent years, the EU is incidentally ranking on top of the political and the public agenda.

Fired up by major European events (such as the introduction of the Euro or the 2004 Enlargement) and facilitated by a range of referenda, the process of European integration has become more politicized (e.g., Hooghe & Marks, 2008). Political parties are forced to adopt a sharper profile on European matters. European citizens are invited to take a stand. The voice of the public is formally channeled only by elections for the European Parliament (once every five years). The turnout numbers of these elections clearly reveal a general declining trend. This might well serve as an indication that the European publics feel less

27 This latter part, public opinion, plays a prominent role in this dissertation. This study not only seeks to analyze the impact of media coverage on individuals, but also looks into the possible formation of a EU-wide public climate or ‘public sphere’ (see section 4.3 for a further elaboration of the term European public sphere).

28 Note that the word definition is linked to the Latin word finis, which means border, demarcation.
addressed by and involved in European affairs. In addition and in contrast, referenda constitute powerful tools to occasionally mobilize public attention and media coverage. In most instances, European citizens have used the occasion of a referendum to vent their discomfort with the EU. The outcomes of various referenda therefore are usually contrary to the preferences of European leaders and hence have been overruled more than once. Not a very motivating or promising basis for future public involvement and commitment.

Chapter 2 Exploring individual perceptions of the EU: what do Europeans say and feel?

Introduction

The previous chapter has indicated how drastically the EU has developed during the last decade and how this is paralleled by some remarkable manifestations of public response, such as intensified public debate, shifts in public appreciation and increasing non-supportive voting behavior. The developments within the EU are not isolated from global, national and regional affairs. Therefore, also the public climate towards the EU is likely to be interconnected with various personal, societal and political issues and trends, ranging from local levels to a global scale. This raises the question that is pivotal in this explorative chapter: how do Europeans express themselves with regard to the EU and what elements play a role in the formation of opinion concerning the EU? This chapter seeks to find clues for answering this question by way of a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research offers tools for a broader and deeper exploration of meaning and context. For this purpose, this chapter first focuses in section 2.1 on the analysis of narrative structures and discourses about the EU. Narratives are reflections of the way people express themselves concerning a specific theme. The search for narratives about the EU sheds light on self-selected words, associations, experiences and feelings of European citizens when talking about the EU. This provides an interpretative framework that is used in two ways in this book. First, it aims at contributing to a better understanding and interpretation of the quantitative survey data in the four sub-studies of this book. These data offer a vast amount of loose jigsaw puzzle pieces that might be linked into coherent ensembles with the help of the narrative structures of qualitative research. Secondly, it contributes to the set-up of the research of Part Two and Part Three of this study and the selection of relevant EU items that are used in the analysis of European press reporting about the EU. The narratives help to point the way to relevant items in press articles and opinion surveys. The following sections present the main findings of two qualitative studies in which the perception of the EU is the focal point. In section 2.2 the outcomes of a qualitative study of the European Commission are described and analyzed, in which citizens of 24 European states participated in group discussions about their hopes and fears for the future and their knowledge and perceptions of European integration. In section 2.3, the findings of two preliminary field studies are presented in which seventy Dutch citizens have participated in individual in-depth interviews. In the final section, section 2.4, the main findings of this chapter are resumed and discussed.

29 The group discussions were held in January 2001; the study report was published in June 2001: http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/quali/ql_perceptions_summary_en.pdf (retrieved in January, 2011).

30 These preliminary studies have been executed under the auspices of the author (’t Lam, 2005 and 2006).
2.1 The general relevance of the search for discursive patterns

In this book the connection between media coverage of the EU and the expression of feelings and opinions about the EU is the central focus. For the latter part, this raises the question about reality, the real world and the way this is represented. The French philosopher Michel Foucault, in his early work, used the term ‘discourse’ to relate to this question. In his view, a discourse is a way of talking about a certain subject with which the discourse is connected. Foucault defined discourse as any group of statements that belongs to a single system of formation (e.g., Foucault, 1972, p. 38). The structure of spoken and written words often shows certain patterns and forms of cohesion. The words and formulations that people use enable them to depict objects. In this way Foucault stated that reality is created by the discourse, not the other way around (Tiemeijer, 2006). Foucault introduced the concepts of discourse and discursive formation to be able to analyze the knowledge areas concerning specific phenomena such as sexuality, the economy or prisons systems. With his socio-historical approach, Foucault started a scientific discourse about the concept of discourse. Especially in France, various scholars have commented on the discourse concept by adding to it or by introducing alternative perspectives to Foucault’s analysis. Their work is often characterised by its complex and abstract nature. Since the late 1960s, a tradition of discourse analysis has developed in which insights and notions from various scientific disciplines (such as ethnography, cultural studies, sociology, political science, literary theory, etc.) have contributed.

For this study of the European Union, media and public opinion it is relevant to look for contributions to the discourse analysis tradition with a political-philosophical perspective. This may shed light on the way people express themselves about political objects and what lies behind these expressions. Tiemeijer (2006) has made a compelling case to resort to the discursive patterns (such as ethnography, cultural studies, sociology, political science, literary theory, etc.) have contributed.

This dissertation takes this line of thinking of Lacan and Tiemeijer to a European level, by studying the feelings and circumstances in the world he lives in. That could be a specific feeling (“I don’t feel safe in this street”, “I can’t make ends meet with my income”), but also an amorphous feeling of discomfort or a vague longing of which his does not know the cause. This mental reality is the raw material that could, potentially, be transformed into politically relevant demands, but has, for the time being, no political meaning, because it is not articulated as such.

* In the political domain the images of society and choices about ‘what to do’ are produced and disseminated (‘more cops on the streets’, ‘lower taxes’). Citizens link these to their longings, feelings and experiences, and develop a certain preference towards these policy options, that is, a certain will with regard to the acting of the state. Citizens take part in the political discourse (Tiemeijer, 2006, p. 39; my translation, PtL).

These two layers of feelings and expressions can be explored and linked by analyzing the way in which people openly express themselves. In the following sections, two such analyses are described that deal with the way Europeans perceive the European Union in conjunction with their deep-felt needs and concerns.

2.2 The qualitative study of the European Commission (2001)

Research set-up

At the request of the European Commission, 86 group discussions among European citizens have been carried out in January 2001. The goal of this qualitative study was to “identify and describe perceptions of the European Union” (EC General Report, 2001, p. 2). The group discussions took place in all fifteen member states of that time and in various candidate countries, both in major cities and in provincial towns. The participants, 694 in total, represented people of different age groups and of various walks of life.

Results

a) Definition of Europe

Europe was defined in geographical terms only in some instances of the group discussion. At those occasions, the geographical definition of Europe was used to exclude countries in the periphery, such as Russia, Belarus or Turkey. Yet, most of the participants in the group...
discussions defined and described Europe historically or culturally. Two dominant visions emerged from the discussions: one of respondents from a broad spectrum of countries in the South and one of people from a smaller group of countries in the North. Participants from southern, ‘Latin’ countries tended to describe Europe as “a historical entity of culture, a place of constant intermingling and exchange over the centuries between diverse peoples but with common roots” (EC General Report, 2001, p. 5). According to this outlook, Europeans share the same basic values and are quite different from the United States, where people have no long historic and cultural background and are more materialistic. In northern countries such as the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Sweden, a different outlook on Europe was disclosed. The participants in these northern countries mostly stressed the quality and superiority of their own national system or society and put less emphasis on common European roots and cultural values. In contrast with the southern vision, they displayed less empathy for other Europeans and actually tended to look down on southern and eastern Europeans for being less efficient and less hard-working.

b) Hopes and fears; loss and gain
Many participants said to be pessimistic about the future. Their concerns mainly deal with the high speed and great impact of various societal changes. They feel uncertain about the growing impact of technology on their lives, the sudden spread of diseases like HIV and mad cow disease, the introduction of genetically modified food, the influx of great numbers of immigrants, et cetera. They feel overwhelmed by the pace of all these changes. This is paralleled by a widespread concern about the loss of values and sense of belonging. Life and society are not what they used to be. Participants demonstrated to be wary of the dissolution of social coherence due to the forces of individualism, commercialism and globalization. People feared that economic liberalism would increase the gap between the rich and the poor and that this might pull down the quality of public services.

c) Knowledge and perception of the European Union
In general lines, the participants of the group discussions displayed low levels of knowledge about the EU. Knowledge about EU policies and influence spheres varies from country to country. The general knowledge of the EU is quite low, especially in larger member states. In smaller member states with a more positive outlook on European integration the knowledge levels are relatively high. Institutional knowledge about the EU is very low across-the-board. In the phrasing of the report: “the lack of knowledge about the institutions and the institutional system is startling” (EC General Report, 2001, p. 9).

The attitudes towards the EU appear to be linked to a North-South divide, as described above. In southern states and some other countries, like Ireland and Finland, the participants advocated closer forms of cooperation in Europe leading to a more federative and strong Union. The northern perception of the EU appeared to be more critical and skeptical. In the handful of northern member states the participants predominantly favored the EU as a useful tool for economic cooperation, but they showed little aspirations for further intensified integration. In the group discussions in these countries more critical remarks about the EU were expressed, including the frequent use of terms such as bureaucracy, corruption, and inefficiency.

2.3 In-depth interviews with Dutch citizens (2005-2006)

Research set-up
Between March 2005 and July 2006, seventy Dutch citizens33 have been individually interviewed in their own personal environment. The central research question of this preliminary and exploratory field study was: in which terms do individual citizens refer to the European Union? The goal of this study was to achieve a better understanding of the formation of knowledge and attitudes of Dutch citizens towards the EU. An in-depth interview in a trusted and familiar environment creates circumstances in which respondents feel as free as possible to speak their minds.

Each interview lasted between 40 to 75 minutes. The interviewers, all students34 of Communication at Hogeschool Inholland, introduced various topics, starting with everyday life and then via general political and societal issues, hopes and concerns, on to European integration and the European Union. This embedded set-up provides a wider context for talking about the European Union that makes it possible to put the knowledge about and attitude towards the EU in a broader perspective and context. The interviewees were given room to freely express their knowledge, feelings and experiences. Afterwards, the recorded interviews have been written out word-for-word and analyzed on frequently used and dominant words, phrases and themes. Next, these commonly expressed phrases and subjects have been ranked and condensed to a limited number of narrative structures and repertoires.

Finally, the narrative structures of all interviews were summed up and compared. The most commonly found narrative structures were selected as representations of the more general ways of talking about the EU.35 Each interview has been separately analyzed by both a student and a staff member and has been discussed in group meetings. The distillation of general narrative structures from all individual interviews has also been executed in groups meetings. In this way the chances of personal biases of the analysts were minimized.

33 These respondents were selected in two stages: first by geographical criteria (various provinces in the Netherlands) and next by demographic criteria (variation in gender, age, education, cultural background).
34 All participating students have been thoroughly trained and prepared to execute and analyze in-depth interviews.
Results
The search for opinions, pictures and feelings towards the EU is often tempered by individual remarks about a lack of knowledge. Many interviewees indicated that they hardly know anything about the EU. Worse still, this self-expressed lack of knowledge regularly caused candidate informants to refrain from participating in the interview. They contended that the absence of relevant knowledge made them unsuited to be interviewed about the EU. Thus, the first general impression from both arranging and conducting the interviews is that the knowledge factor is a very dominant theme when talking (or trying to talk) about the EU.

The following quotes are indications of what people generally said after being asked about their first associations with the EU:

-oowwhahaha nothing…..nothing at all!
(Hanneke, 34 years, cleaning lady)

Not much, to be honest. I know that there are European countries working together, but that’s all. I’m absolutely not involved in that matter.
(Saïd, 27 year, worker in ICT)

I don’t think that the EU matters to us personally, here in the Netherlands. It’s only relevant for our government and for our public officials.
(Henk, 42 year, company manager)

After talking about this knowledge issue, follow-up questions led to various reactions and associations. Most of these responses referred to cooperation, the naming of member states, the possible accession of Turkey, the Euro and the European Constitution. These items are not so much addressed in a larger story or from a broader perspective, but simply stated as loose words or isolated facts without strong positive or negative connotations.

If in some instances mention was made of favorable aspects of European integration, interviewees referred to matters like the support for weaker member states, the building up of a stronger position vis-à-vis the USA and China, or the freedom of traveling through Europe without having to change money.

With a strong, common economy in Europe the trading position of our continent will be strongly strengthened with regard to the other world powers.
(Ruben, 35 years, account manager)

I’m a citizen who can travel freely throughout Europe. That’s a wonderful feeling.
(Theo, 62 years, teacher)

On the other hand, there also were matters of concern or anger, such as the high prices after the introduction of the Euro, the large financial contribution of the Netherlands to the EU, the big influence of larger member states and a possible loss of jobs.

-Everything goes way too fast and things are imposed too much upon us.
(Laura, 24 years, student)

-The EU has betrayed us with its open borders and with the Euro.
(Miep, 67 years, former social worker)

-There are 25 member states now; how can they ever reach a common decision? I’m afraid that the bigger countries will have more to say than the smaller ones, so I fear to be overruled.
(Jenny, 57 year, housewife)

Four narratives
The sum of all individual interviews offers an inventory of how people talk and think about the European Union. Through thorough discourse analysis of all the recorded and written interviews, by ranking and grouping the answers into similar content categories, four general narratives have been distilled. These discursive structures, deducted from the interviews, do not reflect socio-economic status or political preferences, but show the most commonly used expressions and responses with regard to the EU. Some interviewees use two or more narratives, some others just one.

The basic and most dominant general perspective is the *no knowledge* narrative. People indicated to know nothing or hardly anything about the EU. They argued that it is a complex and faraway matter. If, despite this self-expressed lack of knowledge, they still tried to say one or two things about the EU, this was often very basic and single-worded, much like guessing the right answer in a multiple choice test. This narrative is so dominant that the other ones have to be understood and interpreted with this in mind. These remaining responsive perspectives are *institution*, *opportunity* and *threat*.

The institution narrative deals with factual knowledge. Interviewees stated names of politicians, member states and institutions, such as the European Parliament. They referred to the European Union as an organization, a bureaucracy, a large and distant political system. From the positive, opportunity point of view, people talked about the EU in terms of solidarity and solving problems together. The EU is a good vehicle to promote peace and welfare and to fight against environmental problems, poverty and inequality. Also the EU enables Europe to have a stronger voice in the world and to develop an alternative way of conducting international politics in opposition to the USA.

The negatively tuned threat narrative reflects the way many people feel nowadays: what
is this world coming to? Interviewees expressed their fears and anger about crime, inter-
cultural tensions, terrorism, unemployment, loss of income, et cetera. These expressions
of being afraid and threatened are often combined with feelings of being powerless and
frustrated about politics. From this perspective, the EU seems to have little relevance for
the daily needs and concerns. If the EU is related to daily problems, then the EU is seen as
adding to these problems in terms of increasing price levels (the Euro), opening borders for
cheap laborers from Eastern Europe or the possible accession of Turkey (fear of Muslims,
cultural tensions). Within this narrative structure, respondents also indicated that European
integration is moving too fast and that Brussels is interfering too much with national rules
and customs.

If individual respondents have specific thoughts and feelings about the EU at all, then these
are not very powerful or extreme, due to the self-expressed lack of knowledge and the ex-
perienced distance, but modestly favorable or negative. The more favorable narrative seems
to be incited by a somewhat progressive-romantic or idealistic general outlook on society,
whereas the threat narrative relates to a more fearful or cynical perspective.

The views and opinions towards the EU indicate that the European Union is hardly connected
with daily life matters. The EU does not evoke strong emotions, whereas the respondents
strongly express various great concerns and problems. The EU seems to give answers to
questions that are not posed by individual citizens. Or vice versa: the concerns and problems
of the respondents are not being related to the EU. All in all, there is no comprehensive story
being told about the EU. Respondents merely utter some loose terms, names and notions.

On this poor soil of knowledge and views, European developments are received and judged
without outspoken comments. In some instances the balance shifts to the positive, in others
to the negative side, but hardly ever with extreme visions and values. If there is a somewhat
more outspoken response, this can be divided into two categories. Either the respondents
see the EU as a useful extension of the national political system or as a nosy outsider, limit-
ing the possibilities of the home country and imposing on the national-cultural heritage.
Both categories are not so much seen as an improvement or deterioration of personal life,
but as an expansion or limitation of the national political system. The only exception to this
idea of an 'open society' originally stood for the self-determination of a free
society cherishing its openness, it now brings to most minds the terrifying experi-
ence of a heteronymous, hapless and vulnerable population confronted with, and
possibly overwhelmed by forces it neither controls, nor fully understands.

Respondents indicated to be sensitive to ‘hearsay’. Their views and feelings towards the EU
did not appear to be deeply rooted. The opinions of others matter: ‘what I hear from people
around me’. Many respondents indicate that they would like to hear and see more about the
EU through the mass media. Media reporting should be clear and understandable.

Many respondents have a critical attitude towards national politicians. This position is also
transferred to European levels: “politics is politics, whether it is at home or in Brussels. It is
all about self-interest, money and power”.

2.4 Conclusion and discussion

Although the Dutch field study is limited to one country and the group interviews issued by
the European Commission have a much wider scope, both studies in this chapter demonstrate
some striking commonalities. In terms of the two-layer analytical approach of Tiemeijer,
both studies accentuate a clear, fundamental layer of feelings of uncertainty and concern.
The second layer, that of the political domain, is less articulated due to a low level of
knowledge about the European Union. The sentiments of the interviewees towards the EU
and the preferences or choices to be made are not very outspoken.

Uncertainty

Many people in Europe feel overwhelmed and threatened by the speed and impact of various
modern developments. These findings are supported by similar studies (e.g., Anker, 2006)
and by publications of influential scholars and philosophers such as Beck (1992), Bauman
(2007), Sloterdijk (2007) and Kriesi, Grande & Lachat (2008). In various ways these scholar-
s describe the influence of modernity on the lives of people. Common elements in their
studies are the high speed of changes, the impact of new technological developments, the
forces of globalization and the dynamics of economical liberalization. People and societies
are on the move. These dynamics offer many new opportunities for those who know how to
adapt, but also creates threats to more traditional ways of life. As Bauman (2004, p. 7) puts it:

[I]f the idea of an 'open society' originally stood for the self-determination of a free
society cherishing its openness, it now brings to most minds the terrifying experi-
ence of a heteronymous, hapless and vulnerable population confronted with, and
possibly overwhelmed by forces it neither controls, nor fully understands.

Kriesi et al. (2008) indicate how, over the past 300 years, developments such as globaliza-
tion and denationalization have created both 'winners' and 'losers' in Europe. The winners
embrace each development that opens up new windows of opportunity for them. The
losers experience feelings of fear and loss. This might contribute to stronger expressions
of nationalism and anti-immigration, as we have witnessed in recent years, which is also
reflected in lower levels of support for the EU (McLaren, 2005). The Dutch study suggests
that, to some people, the EU is seen as an accessory to the developments they are anxious
about. Some people fear the opening up of borders for migrant workers from Eastern
Europe, or they complain about the loss of the national currency and the high prices in the
supermarket after the introduction of the Euro (e.g., Fornäs, 2007). This might explain the growth of Euroscepticism in various countries (McLaren, 2005; Hooghe & Marks, 2007) and the (relative) success of some anti-EU parties, such as the PVV (Party for Freedom) in the Netherlands and the UKIP (United Kingdom Independence Party) in Great Britain.36 In this respect, Adamson and Johns demonstrate how the Flemish right-wing party ‘Vlaams Belang’ strategically separates the notion of Europe from the EU: “while reinforcing a negative image of the EU, and its associations with an ‘immigration crisis’, the party is remarkably positive about Europe…. a romanticised ‘real Europe’ of culture and civilisation as opposed to the ‘false Europe’ (the EU) as a decadent and corrupt political artifice” (Adamson & Johns, 2008, p. 3) To others, and seen from a different perspective, European integration is a welcomed initiative to help cope with common threats and global challenges (environmental problems, the influence of world powers such as China and the USA)37 and to grasp possible opportunities, such as the freedom to travel, study and work anywhere in Europe.

Knowledge
Participants in both studies displayed low to very low levels of self-perceived knowledge of the EU.38 The Dutch study demonstrates that this lack of knowledge is paralleled by feelings of non-involvement. Many candidate-interviewees hesitated to participate in the interviews because they felt they knew too little about the EU. This is quite remarkable, because the study is executed in a time frame in which the EU drew much more political and media attention in the Netherlands than usual because of the referendum on the Constitutional Treaty in 2005. The group discussions of the European Commission study reveal that this general lack of knowledge is demonstrated more by respondents of larger member states.

Appreciation
The European Commission study affirms the general difference in appreciation of the EU between member states. The North-South divide reflects to some extent the theoretical approaches of scholars such as Hofstede (1994). In his well-known study of cultures and organizations Hofstede reveals relatively large differences in Europe between southern and northern cultures. The North is believed to be more individualistic and feminine, with smaller power distances and with values such as achieving, personal development and liberty. In contrast, the South represents more collective and more masculine traits, with larger power distances and more emphasis on leadership, family values and communal activities. These differences might correspond with the influence of Protestantism in Northern Europe and the widespread influence of Roman Catholicism in the South. Yet, this similarity with Hofstede also calls for a cautious interpretation of these findings. Hofstede is often criticized for being over-generalising and over-simplifying, with the risk of pegging people down to fixed cultural categories without paying attention for individuals differences and nuances (e.g., Jones, 2007). With this in mind, the findings of the EC study are here considered to be valuable indicators for relative differences, but not so much seen as depicting an absolute watershed between regions in Europe.

Final remarks
This chapter underlines the relevance to study the interplay of politics, media and publics in the European context. The two qualitative studies unveil the respondents’ need for more information about the EU through mass media. This fully corresponds with the findings of the standard Eurobarometer surveys, as described in the introduction of this book. This need for information may well be linked with the disclosed low levels of EU knowledge. Knowledge is the starting point of public involvement and participation in democratic societies. The general lack of knowledge in this respect constitutes a fundamental problem for the EU and its citizens. In addition, both studies reveal varying expressions of EU appreciation. The outcomes suggest a relationship between knowledge and appreciation of the European Union on the one hand and societal involvement and cultural values on the other. Cultural and national backgrounds seem to matter, but also the possible individual vulnerability for modern developments (such as migration, liberalization, digitalization) and one’s ability to adapt to societal changes. A person’s outlook on life (hopeful and optimistic, or fearful and pessimistic) plays a part, just as either a more cosmopolitan or a more traditional orientation does. Following along the lines of Lacan and Tiemeijer, one may wonder to what extent the EU will be able to adequately respond to the various manques as expressed by European citizens. In the concluding chapter, this question will be reiterated and answered. For now, it suffices to state that this book has to take all the considerations and conditions of this chapter into account in assessing the contribution of media coverage to the formation of knowledge and appreciation concerning the EU.

36 In the 2009 elections for the European Parliament, the Dutch PVV scored 17% of the Dutch vote and the UKIP 16.5% of the British vote. In contrast, the Polish, Danish and Swedish anti-EU parties lost their seats in the EP.
37 Also interesting in this respect is the non-European outlook on the EU; see e.g., Wintle (2008) and Lucarelli (2010).
38 Scharkow & Vogelgesang (2007) stressed the role and importance of knowledge as contributor to more public support for the EU. Chapter 6 further elaborates on the role and effect of knowledge with regard to general EU support.
Chapter 3 Exploring the development of public opinion towards the EU

Introduction

After exploring individual perceptions and expressions with regard to the EU in Chapter 2, the next question related to public opinion is of interest and relevant: how has public opinion regarding the EU generally developed over time and are public opinion levels similar in the various member states of the EU? If aggregate opinion levels are proven to be relatively stable over the years and also fairly comparable between member states, the setting for this study will be less challenging. If the opposite turns out to be true, this will be an invitation to search for explanatory factors (such as differences in political developments, media culture, couleur locale, demographics) that might account for the variations in time and place. This chapter first discusses the concept of public opinion, in section 3.1. Next, section 3.2 sheds some light on the way public opinion data are gathered and can be interpreted. Section 3.3 provides some general numbers and figures about the development of public opinion towards the EU based on Eurobarometer opinion polls. These figures serve as a general indication of the opinion climate throughout the years and also demonstrate some basic commonalities and differences between countries. This general perspective contributes to a better understanding and interpretation of the more specific outcomes and trends of the research chapters of Part Two and Part Three. Finally, section 3.4 dwells on the main outcomes of this chapter.

3.1 The concept of public opinion

Individual levels of appreciation can be aggregated to collective levels that are often labeled as public opinion, dominant opinion, or even opinion climate (Lazarsfeld, 1957). Still, the dominant opinion does not have to represent the quantitative majority of the population. Noelle-Neuman (1980) has demonstrated with her concept of the Spiral of Silence that fear of isolation may lead large groups of people (the silent majority) to conformation to certain ideas, especially when these ideas are promoted repeatedly and in striking ways. This underlines the risk of mistaking the aggregate score in an opinion poll for the standard general opinion of a whole population, without taking into account the division of opinions within the population. In this sense the term public opinion is often even treated as more than the sum of individual opinions. When media report that “public opinion has forced the minister of Agriculture to resign” it seems like public opinion has become a powerful, normative actor in its own right (de Boer & ‘t Hart, 2007). On the individual as well as the collective level, opinions and appreciation are considered to be more visible and temporary, whereas attitudes stand for more fundamental, longer-lasting orientations. Attitudes in their
3.2 Data about public opinion towards the EU: Eurobarometer

As stated in the previous chapters, most of the opinion data in this book are derived from the Eurobarometer surveys issued by the European Commission. The long-term, repetitious set-up of these polls makes them well fitted for the purpose of this study. Yet, Eurobarometer outcomes should not always be taken at face value. Adamson and Johns (2008) have demonstrated how the order of questions in the Eurobarometer questionnaire influences the response of the interviewees. Furthermore, it can be argued whether all the participants of Eurobarometer polls are representative for their national population. In preliminary research for this book it appeared that in EB 65 (spring 2006), the percentage of Dutch respondents reading quality newspapers NRC-Handelsblad and De Volkskrant are 15% and 14% respectively, whereas in 2006, the share of NRC in the Dutch press market actually was 3.7% and Volkskrant readership was 5.5%. Readers of both newspapers are relatively more appreciative of and knowledgeable about the EU than the average Dutch respondent, so the outcomes of general EB questions about knowledge and support for the EU in the Netherlands will be biased in a pro-EU way. Another finding indicates that per country, Eurobarometer respondents have quite different scores on levels of education. Eurobarometer polls always include a question about educational level (How old were you when you stopped full-time education?).

Table 3.1 Division of education levels among respondents of EB 63, per country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>United Kingdom</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>The Netherlands</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower education</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle education</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher education</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: data from Eurobarometer 63 (spring 2005)*.

Dividing the answering options into three categories (lower: up to fifteen years of age; middle: sixteen to nineteen years of age; higher: twenty years of age and older), it appears that the outcomes reveal large differences per country, as is shown in Table 3.1. These different scores between member states are larger than can be warranted by differences in national education systems or by outcomes of studies on educational participation. Again, these outcomes will bias the general scores per country on indicators about EU knowledge and appreciation, given the fact that higher educated Europeans tend to be more knowledgeable and supportive of the EU than their lower educated fellow citizens. Finally, the EU represents an abstract and peripheral subject, which contributes to the probability that respondents do not have fixed attitudes and well-founded opinions, but rather produce calculated guesses that are inherently unstable.

All the above implies that Eurobarometer data provide a rich source of useful information, but also that the data should be carefully scrutinized and interpreted.

3.3 General trends in public support for the EU

It is of interest to see how public opinion concerning the EU has developed over the past decades against the background of developments described in Chapter 2. Especially in the first decade of the 21st century, the rapid developments within the EU coincide with more outspoken responses in the public domain. There are indications that the classical pro-EU claims of prosperity, peace and stability are more and more countered by negative opinions about the loss of national sovereignty, increasing contributions to Brussels or a lack of transparency and efficiency of the complex European machinery (Bursens and Baetens, 2004). The growing size and influence of the European Union since ‘Maastricht’ seem not to be paralleled by an upward development in supportive feelings and acts, both on the side of member states and in terms of public support for the EU. The data of the consecutive
Eurobarometers can serve as global reflection for the opinion climate in Europe. Important indications for this matter are the Eurobarometer questions Do you think that your country’s membership of the EU is a good or bad thing? and Taking everything into account, would you say that your country has on balance benefited or not from being a member of the European Union? These questions are frequently used as key variable in various studies (e.g., Niedermayer & Sinnott, 1995; Janssen, 2001; de Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2005; CPB/SCP, 2007). They are standard questions that have featured for many years (the membership question since the early 1970s; the benefit question since the early 1980s) in Eurobarometer polls, making it possible to compare responses over time.

**The development of EU appreciation over time**

In a comprehensive report on the EU and public support, the Dutch Council for Government Policy (WRR) has reproduced the long-term trends in the aggregate scores of these two key questions for all EU member states involved.43 Figure 3.1 is a graphical representation of these trends on the basis of the aggregate scores of respondents of all EU member states concerning the two selected Eurobarometer questions with regard to the appreciation of the EU. These scores might be quite different per individual country, as is demonstrated in Figure 3.2, but taken all together they provide an indication of the aggregate opinion trend. Figure 3.1 clearly demonstrates that the general opinion climate towards the EU has changed over the years. The 1970s are rocky with some sharp highs and lows. The 1980s mark a decade of gradual increase of positive public sentiments towards the EU, with 1990-1991 as a peak. It suggests that the broadly felt optimistic sentiments after the fall of the Berlin Wall yielded a boost for the general support for European cooperation. Yet, the years after 1991 represent a period of a deep drop, with the lowest levels of evaluative attitudes towards the EU since the early 1970s. These are the years that were dominated by the ‘Maastricht’ negotiations, in which the contours of European integration in post-Cold War Europe were sketched. Apparently, the new ambitions of European leaders met with decreasing public appreciation. The peak of 1990 is followed by years of unprecedented decline in public support. The first years of the new millennium paint a volatile picture, with some ups and down and with a slight upward trend. From 1990 onwards, the citizens of Europe appear to become less enthusiastic and more critical about the EU (Niedermayer, 1997; Janssen, 2001; Hooghe & Marks, 2007). This is reflected by the declining turnout during elections for the European Parliament (the EP elections of June 2009 show a historic low turnout of voters44) and by the more negative opinions and attitudes expressed in the consecutive Eurobarometers.45 But then, from 2003 onwards, the general appreciation of the EU seems to gradually improve again and indicators of support for the EU demonstrate a slight upward trend.46

**EU appreciation among member states**

Another element of interest is the comparison of levels of EU support among member states. Data of public opinion research reveal strongly varying levels in this respect.

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43 Due to several rounds of enlargement, the number of member states included in the Eurobarometer surveys has grown over the years. Table 1 in Chapter 1 indicates the accession year of each new member state; from that year onwards the pertaining states have been included in the Standard Eurobarometer survey.

44 See Table 3 in Chapter 1.


Figure 3.2 reports very large differences per country, with the British and Austrians as the most critical respondents and inhabitants of Ireland and the three Benelux countries as the strongest supporters of the EU. The large differences within this single Eurobarometer (no 63; spring 2006) are fairly representatives for all other Eurobarometer surveys. The comparative positioning of EU appreciation per country is quite stable over time. Even if the general longitudinal trend displays upward or downward trends, as Figure 3.1 has indicated, in all instances the British will be in the lower section and the Dutch in the upper section. The opinion climate towards the EU therefore is highly influenced by the national context, but also partly driven by general trends throughout Europe.

At first glance, it is difficult to reduce the findings of Figure 3.2 to clear-cut country characteristics such as size of population or membership history. On all levels (higher-average-lower) of the support yardstick, smaller and larger countries as well as younger and older members are represented. Public opinion towards the EU proves to be a more complicated subject, which also shows in more specific matters. For example, the Danish, British and Swedish ‘No’ to the Euro (mid-1990s) and the more recent French and Dutch ‘No’ to the European Constitution (2005) indicate that not every member state embraces every new EU venture. The case of the Iraq war (2003) has shown how fundamentally deep the lines of division between European countries can be. Disagreement between member states is also visible during the ongoing discussions about the accession of Turkey and the future of the European Union. Indeed, from 2000 onwards it seems that there have been more controversial issues than before. Up to 2000, mostly institutional affairs, economic cooperation issues and foreign policy matters were widely debated within the EU, but nowadays also issues that used to be more consensual have increasingly become the subject of dispute and controversy: the internal market, protection of the national industry, the services directive, the reduction of CO2, the response to the financial crisis, et cetera. In a comprehensive study, two renowned Dutch research institutes, SCP and CBS, show how public opinion towards the EU has developed in the member states in various ways. European events in some cases evoke similar reactions in member states, whereas in other cases the effects are quite different. Besides, also additional factors, such as global developments and national events, may play a role. CBS and SCP come to the conclusion that “all in all, it is important not to overestimate the impact of European factors and not to underestimate the impact of other factors” (CBS and SCP, 2007, p. 39; my translation, PtL).

3.4 Conclusion and discussion

A long-term overview and a cross-national comparison of public opinion towards the EU, as depicted in figures 3.1 and 3.2, reveal a variety of opinion shifts over time and between member states. Time and country both matter. This means that it is worthwhile to take these two elements into account when studying media attention and public opinion in the European context.

This chapter has demonstrated that during certain periods of time, there have been clear upward and downward shifts in support concerning the EU. This implies that the formation of opinion is a dynamic process that is to some extent influenced by the chronology of developments. Apparently, as I have also described in Chapter 2, is seems that the Maastricht era (prelude, negotiations, ratification, aftermath) is one such major episode, serving as a catalyst in public response. Where the fall of the Berlin Wall represents a dream come true, the 1990s serve in the public eye as years of unwelcome awakenings, reflected in a steady decline in appreciation of the EU. The first years of the new millennium show some improvement in public support for the EU, but the level is still considerably lower than the average level of the decades before. A slightly positive EU-wide score of just over 50% expresses that just barely a majority of European respondents generally supports the EU. This gives rise to questions about the legitimacy of the EU and the so-called democratic
The Treaty of Lisbon emphasizes the democratic principles that serve as a foundation for the EU (Article 8). Yet, the general opinion figures of this chapter demonstrate that the pillars of the EU are built on thin layers of support. Chapter 2 has demonstrated that the EU is no longer the domain of European elites, but has become more broadly politicized and subjected to public debate. This is also reported by Hooghe & Marks (2008), who have indicated that especially oppositional parties (populist right; radical left) have fired up discussions on European integration. This chapter shows how this development is paralleled by a sharp drop in public support (1990-1998), followed by just a slight and volatile recovery (1998-2006). In short, major steps taken regarding further European cooperation appear to enhance public debate and evoke a more critical opinion climate. This leaves the policymakers in Brussels with a large challenge to improve the ties with the European citizen and fight the paradox that more ambitions and visibility go hand-in-hand with less public support.

Next to this general EU-wide development, the opinion climate towards the EU can be quite different from member state to member state. European countries differ greatly among themselves. This chapter demonstrates that the level of support for the EU is as diverse as the variety of member states itself. Yet, it is not possible to reduce differences in the levels of EU support to one or two country characteristics, such as size, population, economic resources or membership history. In general, the consecutive Eurobarometer polls demonstrate that the general opinion climate is subject to long-term trends, whereas the comparative opinion climate per country is quite solid. Member states with a low level of support, such as the UK or Austria, generate low levels of public support over time, whereas supportive nations such as Luxemburg or Ireland consistently rank high. It appears that every member state has a certain level of support, which can fluctuate quite a bit, due to various developments, but which will not undergo fundamental and dramatic changes. It is unlikely that the British will become very supportive overnight and the inhabitants of the Benelux countries will turn out to be very critical on short notice. In addition, it is obvious that not every EU member is equally involved in or affected by the directives of Brussels. Therefore, some EU developments may have a larger imprint on the one member state than it will have on the other. The only thing one can safely say in this respect is that some EU developments have some effects on some member states in some directions. But, just like in German grammar, there are always exceptions to the rule.

Chapter 4   Exploring the role of the media in the formation of EU knowledge and EU appreciation

Introduction

Despite the political relevance and the academic challenge, there is no long and outbalanced research tradition in the domain of the EU and the impact of European media. Remarkably enough, the interesting link between EU support and EU news has been the subject of scientific research only to a limited extent (with the exception of – among a few others - de Vreese, 2003; Peter, 2003; Pfetsch & Koopmans, 2004; Schakow & Vogelgesang, 2007; Brüggemann & Kleinen-von Königslöw, 2009; Schuck & de Vreese, 2009). In a modest, but growing number of studies, scholars have demonstrated that the content of EU news might contribute, under certain conditions, to changes in attitude of European audiences towards the EU. This chapter elaborates on the relation between public knowledge of and appreciation for the EU and the role of the mass media. The following question serves as a guideline for the exploration in this chapter: how have scholars analyzed and interpreted the relationship between EU news and public response and what are their main findings and conclusions?

The first section of this chapter, section 4.1, explores some general notions about the interplay between politics, media and publics. Section 4.2 presents various relevant studies on media and audiences in the context of the EU. Most of these studies are merely inventory researches, taking stock of how European media outlets report about the EU, varying from a focus on the amount of news and specific elements in the news (e.g., actors, topics, organisations) to more complex reconstructions of positions and arguments of actors in the news or in the tenor and frames of news reports. Some studies try to combine such an inventory with a determination of the effects on their audiences of the way in which the EU is presented by the media. Both types of studies are presented in this chapter. Section 4.3 elaborates on the frequently debated issue of the possible existence of a European public sphere. Section 4.4 discusses several contextual factors that might have an impact on the central relationship between media and audiences. Section 4.4, finally, presents a resumé and a discussion of the main elements of this chapter.

4.1 A general understanding of the interplay of politics, media and publics

4.1.1 Knowledge and appreciation: facts and values; individuals and groups; causes and effects

Lippmann (1922), the early 20th-century pioneer of opinion research, stressed the importance of analyzing the various factors that influence the perception of information by the
For a further elaboration of the RAS model, see Chapter 6.

The attitudinal element is less straightforward. On this level, facts are mixed with values; information mingles with predispositions (Zaller, 1992). This leads to an evaluative outcome (affective) that is often indicated as appreciation or support. The knowledge element (cognitive) is an indication of what people have learned from the information they have received. Does the dissemination of information contribute to higher levels of knowledge? These knowledge levels can be determined by testing factual knowledge (objective) or by gathering information about self-perceived knowledge (subjective). The score of individuals can be aggregated to determine a general level of knowledge. This collective score can be used as an indication of the general knowledge level about a certain topic in a specific population.

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For the goal of this study, it is relevant to consider the possible relationship between knowledge and appreciation, between cognitions and affects. The composition of this mixture may differ from case to case and from person to person. Socio-psychological theorists have developed various approaches to construe the interrelation between information, motivation and persuasion. They have developed different models in order to explain this cause-and-effect matter. Some have argued along linear lines of information processing, that a higher level of accumulated knowledge about a subject leads to more involvement into the given subject and finally to desired behavior (McGuire, 1972). Others (e.g., Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Chaiken, Liberman & Eagly, 1989; Zaller, 1992) have claimed, vice versa, that the accumulation of knowledge is dependent on the level of motivation or involvement towards the object or issue at stake. Zaller used four axioms as “quite plausible approximations of the processes that must actually occur as individuals acquire information” (Zaller, 2006, p. 42). These four axioms include statements about the processing of information in various stages: reception, resistance, accessibility and response. In essence, Zaller stated with his well-known Receive-Accept-Sample model that a person’s level of cognitive engagement, in combination with consistent and recently received information, is most likely to influence that person’s opinion. Pol (2007), in a critical reflection on both lines of theorizing, has contended that there is little evidence for the linear perspective. He found that involved and motivated target groups demonstrate a high need for cognition and will process information thoroughly, resulting in a probable lasting change of attitudes and/or behavior. People with low levels of involvement or limited opportunities, on the other hand, will only pick up bits and pieces of information with at most some temporary or incidental changes of attitudes and behavior.

Knowledge and appreciation: the role of the media agenda and the political agenda

Modern information society, with its rapid development of digital communication combined with commercialization and individualization, provides a fertile climate for the impact of mass media. During the past decades, the gradual influence of mass media and their dynamic relationship with both policymakers and citizens has been the subject of many studies. The agenda-setting paradigm has constituted a very fruitful theoretical foundation in this respect, by recognizing the impact of media attention on the agenda of the publics. Following in the footsteps of pioneer theorists such as Lazarsfeld (1957) and Cohen (1963), the renowned Chapel Hill study of McCombs and Shaw (1972) was the first successful test of the agenda-setting hypothesis. In this study, the most publicized political and societal issues in the news were positively connected to the most frequently expressed concerns and hopes of interviewed voters during the American presidential elections of 1968. Media prominence proved to affect the priorities of the audiences. Since the Chapel Hill study was executed within the context of political elections, it not only linked the media agenda to the public agenda, but also comprised to a certain extent the political agenda, as reflected by the news reports in the media and the answers of the voters. In this way, McCombs and Shaw were the first empirical explorers of the fascinating triangle of the political agenda, the media agenda and the public agenda. Their disclosing study on the effect of the prominence of certain news items on the public agenda has been repeated, refined and extended by many scholars ever since. Follow-up studies revealed the importance of contextual factors (such as real world cues) and the reliability of the sender or source. Since the 1980s and 1990s, two new, related concepts have developed and grown on the stem of the agenda-setting paradigm: framing and priming. Both conceptual models elaborate on specific aspects of the manifestation of the news agenda. The framing model combines the notion of the prominence of news items with the way certain issues are presented by the media. The chosen journalistic angle affects the perspective for the perception and evaluation of the issue by the audience (Scheufele, 1999; de Vries, 2003; Chong & Druckman, 2007). The priming concept focuses on the way media attention for certain issues contributes to the standards and criteria by which the audience evaluates political actors. The more specific issues are prominent in the news, the more the public will weight these issues in their assessment of political actors (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987).

With the recognition of the media as being not merely a service hatch from the political agenda to the citizens, but also an important player in its own right, the focus of research has changed with it. Not only the interrelation of the media agenda and the political agenda has now to be taken into account, but also the reciprocal influence of the political agenda and the media agenda. This requires a fuller theoretical framework to be able to account

50 The term real world cues refers to events and developments in society and their impact on public opinion.
for the interplay between the political agenda, the media agenda and the public agenda within the context of real world cues, active interest groups and other relevant actors. Political theory has to be combined with mass communication theory, public relations concepts and socio-psychological models.

Lang and Lang (1983) attempted to introduce such a comprehensive model with their introduction of the agenda-building concept. This concept refers to reciprocal processes involving journalists, politicians and citizens trying to influence each other by promoting and prioritizing specific issues. Their analysis stresses the importance of news frames, the deliberate choice of specific words and the prominence of opinion leaders. They conclude that it takes time to put complicated issues on the public agenda. Various researchers have followed the initiative of Lang and Lang, with various results.

Norris (2000) suggested that media, being the messengers of bad news, should not simply be blamed for causing cynicism. In her well-documented and fact-filled study of political parties, public opinion and media coverage, she finds no clear causal links, but convincingly concludes that:

\[ \text{[t]he public is not passively simply absorbing whatever journalists and politicians tell them at face value, rather with increased cognitive skills and greater diversification of media outlets the public is actively sifting, sorting and thereby constructing political messages in line with their prior predispositions (Norris, 2000, Ch. 14, p. 7).} \]

Van Noije (2007) disclosed a lack of consensus about the balance of agenda-building power. Some studies (e.g., Flemming, Wood and Bohle, 1999; Kleinijenhuis, 2003) demonstrated the influence of the political agenda over the media agenda. Van Noije referred to this as top-down agenda building. Other scholars (e.g., Wood and Peake, 1998; Soroka, 2002) stress the impact of the media on the policy agenda, allowing for bottom-up agenda building or a mediocratic approach. In Van Noije’s words:

\[ \text{[w]e must now draw up the balance of this dispersed collection of agenda-building results, with arguments and evidence both in favour of political control and in favour of media control. The conclusion should be that the debate about the distribution of power is still inconclusive (van Noije, 2007, p. 31).} \]

### 4.2 Media and the EU

**The main sources of information about the EU**

It is evident that the European audiences can only be reached by way of the mass media. Whatever ‘Brussels’ decides and whatever European institutions or representatives say or do, most of the people in Europe will only hear or read about it through the use of mass media. Consecutive Eurobarometers indicate that TV and newspapers are the most used and preferred sources of information about the EU (consecutive Eurobarometer surveys; Bursens & Baetens, 2004). Yet, only a few studies have devoted attention to the role of the media in this respect. As Vliegenthart (2008) has stated: “it is surprising that the news media are often-times neglected in their potential to have an impact on public support for European integration” (Vliegenthart, 2008, p. 5). It is common knowledge that media perform a vital role in democratic societies. The more independent, responsible and varied the media, the better they can perform their democratic function (McQuail, 1992). Yet, the EU and Europe lack genuine pan-European news media. The EuroNews TV channel and the European Voice newspaper are rare and relatively unsuccessful initiatives in this respect. Although some media (e.g., the International Herald Tribune, BBC World, the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung) manage to attract audiences across borders, they generally only reach members of the European business and political elite (Kevin, 2002). Therefore, one may safely conclude with Scharkow & Vogelgesang (2007) that the story of the EU is mainly told by national media and from a national perspective.

**The role of the media: how is the EU presented in European news coverage?**

The EU, with its ambitious agenda and its broadening influence, is subject to investigations in a vast number of studies. A growing number of recent studies deal with topics such as the democratic deficit, the European public sphere or the final destination of the EU. At times, they touch upon the role of the mass media in the whole process of European integration. Some studies have put this matter at the core of their research by asking how the European media present the EU. Several studies (e.g., Fundesco, 1996; Norris, 2000; Kevin, 2002; de Vreese, 2003; Peter, 2003, Pfetsch & Koopmans, 2004; Kleinijenhuis et al., 2005; Koopmans, 2007; Brüggemann & Kleinen-von Königslöw, 2009; Koopmans & Statham, 2010) specifically deal with this question and offer valuable information for the marking off of the research field of this book. This sub-section provides a brief overview of these studies.

Norris (2000) studied the effects of media coverage combined with the activities of political parties and used a broad framework and scope, including the US and European countries. She concluded that the media usually pay little attention to the EU in routine periods. And when there is more media coverage of certain European policies or events, the media provide a steady diet of bad news about Brussels. The extent of the bias was by no means large but it was consistent. When the public reads stories about the EU, they are more likely to form an impression of inefficiency, incompetency and failure than of European cooperation and good governance. Moreover, this influenced the public;
monthly fluctuations in the direction of news coverage of the euro were significantly related to public opinion on this issue. Negative news probably reduced public support for the new currency (Norris, 2000, Ch. 14, p. 4).

But Norris also put this general finding into perspective as she contended that, despite these effects, media attention in general does not lead to political cynicism or apathy. For those citizens who are active and engaged, it seems like media attention and political activity or societal engagement go hand in hand and reinforce each other. Norris did not discover causal effects but strong correlations to underline this conclusion. On the other hand, media attention seems to have no specific positive or negative influences on those individuals who are not active and engaged. According to Norris, there is no negative reinforcing spiral effect in this case. Citizens who are less engaged in society appear to be more or less immune for the media coverage of political news.

Kevin (2002) offered a comparative analysis of the news output of over fifty media outlets (public and commercial television; quality and popular newspapers) in eight European countries during two one-week periods in 1999. Her main findings were that:
- the quality press devotes more attention to the EU than popular newspapers do;
- economic news is a fundamental part of all EU reporting;
- media outlets present a national slant on European events;
- there are large differences between countries in the amount of EU news.

An important contextual factor in Kevin’s analysis is the difference in media systems per country. Kevin demonstrated that there are large variations in European countries in matters such as the presence of tabloid press, commercial television, regional media, et cetera. Another main element that Kevin pointed out is the different view per country of what European integration means. In the German media the European element is widely present in the German news, whereas in Italy the EU is almost absent in the news outlets. In the Swedish media the emphasis is on the democratic level of European integration. The news in Ireland about the EU is predominantly about economic affairs.

Peter (2003) focused on content analysis of TV news about the EU. One part of his research encompasses TV news about the EU in fourteen European countries during a two-week period. Another part highlights EU-related TV news in five European countries during eleven months. Peter concluded that EU news is usually not very prominent and has a slightly negative tone. He also found that public TV outlets pay more attention to the EU than commercial stations do. He also stated that in the news, EU developments are mostly linked to domestic developments.

In his dissertation, Framing Europe, de Vreese (2003) analyzed the production, content and effects of TV news about the EU in Denmark, the UK and the Netherlands and drew similar conclusions. He found that the volume of EU news in the three countries is the result of a combination of contextual factors, such as the presence of a strong anti-EU movement and

of factors that pertain to the journalistic EU approach of news organizations (coined by de Vreese as pragmatic or sacerdotal). In the words of de Vreese:

EU news can be characterized as hardly visible during routine periods and modestly visible during key events. The EU story is a primarily economic and technocratic news story, framed heavily in terms of conflict, more often domestically-rather than EU-focused, with a predominance of domestic political actors that are treated neutrally or evaluated negatively (de Vreese, 2003, p. 116).

The ambitious Europub.com project of Pfetsch and Koopmans (2004) searched to discover possible developments in the direction of the formation of a European public sphere. Pfetsch and Koopmans sought to determine whether the process of European integration is paralleled by transnational trends in the political mobilization and communication in Europe. In their third sub-project (WP3: Analysis of newspaper editorials), they studied the role of the media in the debate about European integration, stating that the media have a “dual role as communication channels of political actors and as actors in their own right” (Pfetsch, 2004, p. 60). The WP3 project of this Europub.com project contains an analysis of newspaper editorials concerning the EU in seven European countries. Per country two quality newspapers were selected for the years 1990 and 1995. Per two weeks one issue of those newspapers was analyzed. For the years 2000-2002, in each country a national newspaper and a popular newspaper/tabloid was added, while during these years one issue per week was studied. The analysis of the editorials focused on the position of the newspapers towards European integration, on the frames used in presenting EU news and on the evaluation of European issues and actors. The overall conclusion of Pfetsch and Koopmans was that the editorials show an open and welcoming scope towards European integration and a “remarkable level of European debate… and an even greater potential to further develop transnational communicative linkages within the public space of the European Union” (Pfetsch, 2004, p. 60). The newspapers in France and Germany displayed the strongest transnational perspectives and were most favorable towards European integration and European actors. Newspaper editorials in Spain and Italy also allowed for European scopes, but in Spain the process of integration was approached in a rather indifferent way, whereas Italian newspapers were more polarized vis-à-vis European integration. Newspaper editorials in the Netherlands and Switzerland (the only non-member state in their analysis) demonstrated a noticeable lower score on European perspectives. The Dutch press showed a stronger focus on national perspectives and a predominantly negative evaluation of European actors. The British editorials, in conclusion, exhibited the strongest national orientation and by far the most negative approach across the board towards the European
Union. Within the UK, the tabloids revealed the most outspoken negative scores on all the elements of the analysis.

Kleinnijenhuis et al. (in Aarts & van der Kolk, 2005) published a case study of the development of EU reporting in Dutch media in the advent of the Dutch referendum on the constitutional Treaty of 2005. They focused on the role of political supporters and adversaries in the news and on the arguments used. They found that, despite the convincingly expressed ‘No’ in the referendum (63%), the proponents of the Constitution (mainly the governmental coalition parties) dominated the news in the months before the referendum. Only in the last weeks of the campaign (when the amount of EU news doubled), the adversaries received almost as much attention in the media as the supporters did. They also demonstrated that the mentioning of arguments in favor of the constitution in the news clearly outnumbered the arguments against the constitution throughout the campaign. Yet, despite these numeric advantages on the pro side, the media also reported about the controversies among the proponents of the constitution and their critical remarks about the EU. These impressions of a divided and half-hearted pro side revealed that “the government certainly did not own the themes of the campaign” (Kleinnijenhuis et al. in Aarts & van der Kolk, 2005, p. 144; my translation, PtL).

Koopmans (2007) investigated the prominence of various public and political actors in EU news reporting. In a study of 28 newspapers from seven EU member states, and within the time frame 1990-2002, Koopmans collected and analyzed political claims concerning seven policy areas by distinguished collective actors such as (members of) government, political parties, trade unions, consumer organizations, media and scientists. The study indicates that the public debate about Europe in the media predominantly highlights the government and executive representatives and hardly pays attention to other actors:

“European integration has remained a project by political elites and, at least in as far as discursive influence is concerned, also to the benefit of political elites. Core state actors such as heads of state and government, cabinet ministers and central banks are by far the most important beneficiaries of the Europeanisation of public debates” (Koopmans, 2007, p. 207).

Brüggemann & Kleinen-von Königslöw (2009) performed a content analysis of quality newspapers in five member states of the EU in order to assess possible trends of Europeanization in the press. They hooked on to the notion of horizontal and vertical Europeanization as introduced by Koopmans & Erbe (2004). The label of horizontal Europeanization is used when national media or national politicians comment on or refer to actors and issues in other EU member states. In the case of vertical Europeanization, there is a focus in the media on the EU and the way EU policies are affecting domestic affairs. Within a time frame of twenty years, they selected four specific research years (1982, 1989, 1996 and 2003) with two routine weeks per year for analysis. They focused on articles representing a broad variety of political issues and debates, not just EU articles. Their main findings were that each newspaper has its own position in the horizontal-vertical matrix of Europeanization. The most influential factors with an impact on the level and direction of Europeanization proved to be the size and influence of the country (positively affecting horizontal Europeanization) and the editorial stance towards the EU (positively affecting vertical Europeanization). The researchers concluded that, despite some common trends in EU coverage in the European quality press, there are no indications of increasing convergence over time.

The role of the media: what are the effects of EU news coverage on European audiences?

Every communication theory textbook states that the hypodermic needle theory is a primitive and oversimplified model (Severin & Tankard, 2001). The dissemination of information doesn’t have the extreme mechanical, direct impact on individual members of the audience that is suggested in this early theory. Effects of mass communication are established in more complicated ways, depending on a number of variables such as personal characteristics of receivers and senders, societal context, and content of messages.

Applying the hypodermic needle theory to the case of news coverage about the EU would imply that people in Germany, a country with very high levels of EU publicity (Kevin, 2002), have the highest levels of EU knowledge and EU support, whereas the Dutch citizens would be the most unaware and negative about the EU, since the Dutch media pay relatively little attention to the EU. Clearly, this way of thinking does not hold. It might be tempting to link levels of knowledge and appreciation directly to amounts of press articles, but we have to dig deeper if we are to find more satisfying explanations. To date, a limited but growing number of studies have been executed to further explore this terrain, which up to the early 2000s was an academic terra incognita. Especially de Vreese and a group of researchers in his academic circle have executed some groundbreaking studies in this field, strongly emphasizing the effects of frames in EU news reports. This sub-section selects and summarizes some important studies in this field.

De Vreese (2003) focused on the effect of specific news frames with regard to the EU and public opinion. He found that the news frames are as important as the key facts of the story itself, when individuals rephrase news stories. The effect of the chosen news frame (e.g., an economic or strategy frame) thus is as important as the effect of the facts and figures of the story as such. As far as the evaluative effects of EU news are concerned, de Vreese disclosed in an experimental set-up, that respondents confronted with EU news that is strategically framed produced more negative comments on the EU than a comparative group of respondents subjected to a more neutral, issue-based news report did. De Vreese thus demonstrated how media reports may enhance political cynicism and negative connotations with political and economic issues, but in his view these effects are only temporary.

Peter (2003) could not discover direct media effects across the board in his study of TV...
news about the EU, but he discovered additional elements that play a part. Peter demonstrated how the amount of news does have an impact when political parties vent dissonant views on European matters. Increased political dissonance has a positive effect on the observed importance of European integration. Dissonance among the political elite in general is attractive for journalists in their search for tension and conflict, while it makes the audience wonder what is going on. Enhanced media and public attention therefore parallel political disputes. Peter also unveiled how the tone of media reports influences the opinions of the public. He found that when the national media outlets take a similar stand on European affairs, the chances of impact on the opinion climate are the largest. This goes for negative as well as positive EU reports in the media.

Sch Volksgesang (2007), studying the impact of domestic media use on EU attitudes in 25 member states, disclosed that media use leads to modestly positive effects on EU knowledge in most countries. Moreover, they found that EU knowledge is the most prominent predictor of EU support. They concluded, therefore, that more information about EU matters will contribute to public knowledge about and appreciation of the EU.

De Vreese (2007b), in his analysis of sources of Euroscepticism, found that media have the capacity to “fuel and reduce” feelings of support or cynicism towards European integration (de Vreese, 2007b, p. 271). The possible impact of media coverage depends on media content (strategic frames in the news enhance scepticism) as well as characteristics of audiences (higher political sophistication reduces media effects).

Vliegenthart (2008) sought to determine the effects of the visibility and the framing of EU news on support levels of European citizens at the aggregate level. He stated that media effects do not only have a rather short-term impact on individuals, but can partially cause swings in aggregate public opinion. In this study media content data are linked to indicators of aggregated public support for the EU. The findings suggest that ‘benefit frames’ enhance aggregate levels of public support, whereas conflict frames led to decreasing levels (Vliegenthart, 2008, p. 22). Vliegenthart advocated the use of news content as a contextual variable, since the media provide an information environment for European affairs. By conceptualizing EU news as contextual factor, Vliegenthart emphasized its importance as “an information environment for EU issues” (Vliegenthart, 2008, p. 6). This way of reasoning points in the direction of the broader concept of a European public sphere, as will be discussed in the next section.

4.3 In search of a European public sphere

Next to the studies about EU news coverage and its effects as described in the previous section, a more general line of research with a broader perspective has emerged: the search for the possibility of a European public sphere. A public sphere can be described as a virtual area, arena or domain in which a variety of views about matters of common concern can be openly expressed and exchanged (e.g., Tiemeijer, 2006, pp. 283-286). Various scholars have tried to determine whether the ongoing process of European integration by means of the EU is paralleled by an Europeanization of mass media and the surge of a pan-European public arena for discourse and debate (e.g., Koopmans, 2004/2007; Trenz & Eder, 2004; Erikson, 2005; de Vreese, 2007a; Koopmans & Statham, 2010). The question on the table being: do media develop a way of reporting about the EU from a supranational point of view and do European audiences discuss European cooperation from a similar perspective? The notion of a public sphere stems from the German political philosopher Jürgen Habermas. In 1962, Habermas published his renowned book Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit. The focus of Habermas in this book is not on Europe as such, but on the historical development of the public sphere in the three dominant countries in Western Europe: France, Germany and Great-Britain. Habermas described in a comparative set-up and along historical lines the political and economic developments in these countries and the extent to which the political realms are opened up for public debate and criticism. In the 1990s, Habermas prolonged and extended his views on the public sphere by publishing about public discourses and deliberative democracy. And in recent years, following along the lines of the public sphere concept of the 1960s, Habermas and others have posed the question about the desirability and feasibility of a European public sphere.
The growing number of studies in this field has to tackle at least two important issues. The first matter is the conceptualization of the philosophical term public sphere. The second challenge is the collection of sufficient relevant data about media news, other information sources and public debates. Scholars have proven to approach the notion of a European public sphere in different ways.

De Vreese (2007a), in commenting various related studies, distinguished between three types of research perspectives: utopian, elitist and realist. In the utopian approach, the European public sphere is defined (in the footsteps of Habermas) in terms of a pan-European arena of open exchange of information with full access to all participants. Obviously, most studies indicate that due to language barriers, differences in political and media structures, and large cultural variations, this idealistic approach does not hold in practice. The elitist outlook focuses on those media outlets and audience groups that seem to be most involved with the concept of European integration. Researchers of this approach concentrate mainly on internationally renowned quality news outlets and look for common topic selections and angles. Within this scope, the findings indicate evidence for a somewhat common European approach in the news, but the limitation to elitist news outlets makes it impossible to refer to a genuine, broadly experienced European public sphere. The realist research approach, finally, is geared to the Europeanization of national public spheres and not so much to a more idealistic pan-European one. In this approach, media are analyzed by looking at European actors and issues in national news outlets. De Vreese found no true evidence of a European sphere, but he stated that Europeanization has rather become part and parcel of national public spheres. In other words: there has been not so much a move from national spheres to a European public sphere, but rather the EU has become more integrated in the news coverage and public debate of member states. De Vreese advocated to “broaden the scope beyond the quality broadsheet newspapers” (de Vreese, 2007a, p 1) in order to be able to account for more than just the upper class of European societies. This implies that more media (tabloids, television, the Internet) and more levels of societal groups should be included in future public sphere studies.

Koopmans & Statham (2010) presented a broad overview of both theoretical notions and empirical studies concerning the EU and the public sphere with contributions of various expert scholars in the field of European political communication. They found that European newspapers and other media adequately cover and visibly present the EU and its pertaining policy domains. Within these reports, the representatives of the elites dominate the news. This domination is not so much a biased choice of journalists, but rather quite an accurate reflection and realistic representation of the elitist, technocratic nature of European politics. On the basis of extent field research and media analysis, Koopmans and Statham, concluded that the media can thus not be held accountable for causing the European democratic deficit. The European elites themselves are incapable of translating their technocratic approaches and choices into political messages that reach and touch the hearts and minds of European citizens.

4.4 Contextual factors that influence public opinion formation on the EU

Next to the impact of media and political drivers, several contextual factors may influence public opinion toward the EU. Various scholars and researchers have extensively studied the public appreciation of the EU and the driving forces behind the formation of these opinions and attitudes.
Niedermayer revealed three phases of development with a clear decline in the public climate since 1990:

- a tendency towards nationalisation at the end of the 1970s (1978-80); almost uniform Europeanisation in the first half of the 1980s (1981-5); and more differentiated developments in the second half of the 1980s (1986-90);
- In the early 1990s support for integration has been in decline in the European Union as a whole since 1991 (Niedermayer, 1995, p. 62).

Janssen, studying EU public opinion trends between 1952 and 1998, argued that changes in public opinion in the member states do not follow a common European trend. He concluded that this makes it less probable that the main cause for the changes in public support for the EU is to be sought in the development of the EU as such (Janssen, 2001).

The previously cited study of the two Dutch research institutes SCP and CBS (2007) demonstrated that the development of public opinion towards the EU does not follow a fixed course, but is situation-driven and depends on various factors, both related to the EU itself and to other factors like world events or national circumstances (SCP/CBS, 2007).

Despite the difficulty in assessing a solid general, overarching cause-and-effect pattern in European public opinion, it is possible to notice occasional shifts in the public appreciation of the EU. These shifts are more incidental and appear in some member states or among specific audience groups. This raises curiosity about the factors that cause these changes.

What are the change agents? Niedermayer & Sinnott (1995), who used four key questions of the Eurobarometer as indicators for attitudes towards the EU (unification, membership, dissolution and benefit), came to the conclusion that further explanations of changes in public opinion could be attributed to the fact that there are differences between national publics, between issues and between member states. All these differences may account for changes in public opinion and support vis-à-vis the EU. They connected these variables to three general sets of variables:

- variables related to country characteristics (size/inhabitants, EU benefits/costs, duration of EU membership);
- variables related to issue characteristics (economical, political, cultural, institutional);
- variables related to public/audience characteristics (elite/mass, political orientation; traditional/cosmopolitan; level of knowledge/involvement);


In more recent studies the conclusions of Niedermayer have been refined and altered. Looking at the growing number of studies on this subject, one can recognize various sets of explanatory factors.

**Demographic variables**

There is evidence that individual, socio-demographic elements play a part. The consecutive Eurobarometer polls regularly measure bivariate relationships between European attitude on the one hand and the variables education, age and gender on the other. The outcomes show that higher levels of education consistently correspond with higher levels of EU appreciation and that men tend to be more appreciative of the EU than women. The age or generation factor can be related to value orientations along the lines of the Silent Revolution theory of Inglehart (1971), according to which changing societal circumstances contribute to changes in cultural needs and value orientations. The post-war generation of the Western industrialized world, brought up without the experiences of poverty and war, lives in a secure welfare state, with ample access to education and work. Since all primary needs are accounted for, this generation demonstrates a post-materialist orientation in which freedom and personal development are more important than primary goods. In contrast, their parents, with their experiences of poverty and scarcity, have been more focused on economic growth and have developed a more materialistic outlook on life. The members of the former group are expected to be more supportive of the EU, because they have developed a broader perspective and see the EU as an extension of their opportunities and ambitions. Over the years, several researchers have tested Inglehart’s premise, but especially in more recent years (e.g., Gabel, 1998; Janssen, 2001) this generation theory is hardly supported. Also, the data from the Mannheim Eurobarometer Trend File 1970-2002 and of the SCP study of 2007 indicate that the age factor plays no decisive role in changes of public opinion towards the EU.

**Economic calculus**

The angle of this economic, utilitarian orientation (e.g., Gabel, 1998; McLaren, 2004) is the public perception of economic benefit or loss caused by the process of European cooperation. In this view, the European citizen is considered to be a *homo economicus*, who judges the EU by weighing the financial-economic consequences of EU policies in view of his own interests and perspectives and those of his home country. From this perspective, the role of the EU is evaluated with regards to matters like the Euro, employment, business opportunities, global trade relations, subsidies and contributions, the credit crunch, et cetera.

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Inclusive-exclusive identities

The third explanatory scheme focuses on the level of national pride and attitudes towards (people of) other countries and cultures (e.g., Hooghe and Marks, 2004; de Vreese, 2004). Against the background of increasing immigration and the aftermath of 9/11, widespread debates have developed all over Europe about issues such as national identity, cultural diversity and the relationship between Christians and Muslims. Two contrasting, dominating visions have evolved: a more cosmopolitan, inclusive outlook with an emphasis on the fruitful exchange of people and cultures, and a traditional-national, exclusive approach stressing the importance of national acquirements and the possible dangers of non-national influences. Bauman (2007) and Kriesi et al. (2008) have extensively argued that many citizens feel intimidated by the forces of globalization and immigration and how these matters have an impact on their outlook on society and politics. The EU, as an active international organization, operates at the core of these international and intercultural developments. It is therefore very likely that these issues (often highly opinionated, such as the possible accession of Turkey, the fight against terrorism and the influx of migrant laborers from new member states in older member states) also affect the appreciation of the EU (see e.g., Kleinijenhuis et al., 2005; Vliegenthart et al. 2008).

Country characteristics

Some scholars (e.g., Banducci et al., 2001; Peter, 2003; van der Brug & van der Eijk, 2005; Lubbers & Scheepers, 2010) stress the importance of country characteristics in combination with other factors as a "moderator of effect patterns" (Peter, 2003, p.13). From this perspective, various national elements may play a part in the formation of opinion towards the EU. Since 1995, the EU has more than doubled its membership from 12 to 27 participating countries. This relatively rapid growth has turned the EU into a more heterogeneous society than it used to be. The EU nowadays houses a great variety of states with large differences in size and inhabitants, economic characteristics, geographical position, duration of membership, cultural and traditional backgrounds, being net receiver or contributor to the EU, etcetera. This means that each country has a different status (influence, image, contribution) within the EU and that some member states are more touched by and involved in certain European policy matters than others are. France, for instance, is more vulnerable to cuts in agricultural subsidies than Sweden is, and Italy can benefit more from a common European immigration policy than Estonia can. It also implies that countries have various expectations and reservations towards the EU. Eurobarometer 63 (spring 2005) demonstrated that respondents from new member states have contrary feelings (see e.g., van der Vleuten et al., 2007).

A second element of country characteristics deals with the political and societal situation in each member state. The multi-level governance structure of the EU accounts for a close link between national and European politics. National government members are the most visible and recognized players not only at home, but also in the European arena. Various studies demonstrate that European elections and referenda (and opinion polls about the EU) only partly deal with European affairs, but often also reflect the evaluation of national issues and of political actors in the home country (e.g., van der Brug & van der Eijk, 2005; Kleinijenhuis et al., 2005; WRR, 2007).

Some studies (Gabel, 1998; Janssen, 2001; McLaren, 2004; Hooghe & Marks, 2004; Hooghe & Marks, 2007) have mutually compared and tested the explanatory factors mentioned above. In most cases, the economic/utilitarian perspective and the identity approach are selected as the two central and opposing groups of explanatory variables. Gabel (1998) has tested most of the theoretical models mentioned above in a longitudinal set-up, by analyzing the outcomes of fifteen years of consecutive Eurobarometer polls. He found various levels of evidence for all models, but the utilitarian factor proved to be the most convincing explanatory variable.

Janssen (2001) has studied the Silent Revolution premise of Inglehart and the RAS model of Zaller. He hardly found evidence for Inglehart’s generation theory, but concluded that Zallers RAS model on all aspects proves to stand the empirical tests. Janssen stated that the content of mass media and the elite discourse mostly play a decisive role in the explanation of attitudes towards the EU (Janssen, 2001). McLaren (2004) contended that the utilitarian cost-benefit explanation is more powerful than the impact of national identity matters. Within the economic perspective, she stated that considerations about possible national benefits or losses have a greater imprint on the opinion formation about the EU than calculations about personal circumstances. Hooghe and Marks (2004; 2007) demonstrated that identity matters are decisive in the evaluation of the EU. They argued that cosmopolitan European citizens find ways to combine national feelings with an international outlook and thus demonstrate multilayered identities, whereas people with a more exclusive sense of national identity develop negative feelings towards the EU. Hooghe & Marks indicated that the Treaty of Maastricht has been an important watershed: “[I]n the early decades of European integration, Euroscepticism was rooted in opposition to market integration. Since the Maastricht Treaty, Euroscepticism has taken on an additional dimension: defence of national community” (Hooghe & Marks, 2007, p. 119). The presentation of public opinion scores towards the EU, as presented in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, also points at ‘Maastricht’ as a turning point in public opinion towards the EU.

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67 The EU becomes mostly visible for Europeans citizens during so-called EU summit meetings where heads of state and government convene and discuss major issues of European integration; see e.g., Werts (2008).
4.5 Conclusion and discussion

The findings of this chapter indicate that European news and European audiences are the focal point of a limited, yet growing number of studies. The studies that take stock of the amount of news and elements in the news reveal great variations in the volume of EU news between member states. They also indicate that European news often has a national angle and a slightly negative tone. European news is predominantly related to economic matters. Research outcomes about the effects of EU news reporting contribute to an increasing body of evidence that framing of EU news and the tone of news contribute to changes in EU attitudes of audiences in the suggested direction. These results are demonstrated both on individual and on aggregate levels. These studies further indicate that the level of national consensus between political parties or the amount of consonance in media reports plays a role in determining the impact on audience groups. Studies concerning the possible existence of a European public sphere indicate little evidence of a pan-European, supranational public sphere, including various media types and large groups in society. Apparently, only in limited settings with quality newspapers and elite audience groups some trends of Europeanization have been traced. A European sphere has not replaced national spheres, but rather ‘Europe’ has become a more constant and prominent element in the national arenas of information exchange and debate. All in all, we may conclude that, as far as the EU is concerned, the political agenda may be the outcome of a mixture of both European and national interests, but the public and the media agenda are firmly nationally based. Thus, this study of the possible impact of EU coverage by mass media on audiences should not only take European developments into account, but also national interests and characteristics.

Next to the effects of media coverage, it appears that the impact of explanatory contextual factors fluctuates over time and corresponds with national and international developments. Generational factors seem to become less influential, as the years of the World War II lie farther behind us. Country factors seem to play an important role and have become more multicultural and varied with the recent waves of enlargement of the EU. Much more than in the first decades, the EU nowadays is composed of a large variety of states, differing in size and number of inhabitants, economic power, duration of membership, geographic position, political-historical background, etcetera. The identity and national pride factor, with its large imprint on the present opinion climate, appears to grow in importance (CPB/SCP, 2007; Hooghe & Marks, 2007; Vliegenthart, 2008; Adamson & Johns, 2008). Economic factors keep playing an important part, both on the personal level and in the national context. When people are satisfied with the life they lead and with the way their country develops, they usually tend to have higher levels of appreciation of the EU (CPB/SCP, 2007). Finally, education as a demographic variable steadily exerts its influence on the formation of opinions towards the EU. Education is not only an indicator for competences of acquiring and processing information, but also for socio-economic status (Gaziano & Gaziano, 1995). This makes education a valuable variable to encompass in this study.

Chapter 5 Method

Introduction

This chapter represents the transition from the explorative part of this study to the parts in which the hypotheses are tested and the leading research questions are answered. The focus in the present chapter will be on the methodology: the way that leads from collecting and connecting data to making generalizable statements and drawing sound conclusions. As stated in the Introduction, the research of this book will be divided into four sub-studies.

Table 5.1 Schematic set-up of the four sub-studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach 1: Volumes of EU news</th>
<th>Perspective: Cross-sectional/ various member-states</th>
<th>Perspective: Longitudinal/ few member-states</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the mere volume of EU news articles affect the levels of EU knowledge of newspaper readers?</td>
<td>Sub-study 1 (Chapter 6)</td>
<td>Sub-study 2 (Chapter 7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approach 2: Issues in EU news</td>
<td>To what extent does the selection of issues in EU news articles relate to the definition of the EU by newspaper readers?</td>
<td>Sub-study 3 (Chapter 8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1 reiterates the presentation of the research set-up as outlined in the Introduction. These four strands of research are set up to generate a broad and comprehensive understanding of possible media effects on the public climate. Volumes of EU news and issues in EU news will be matched with indicators of knowledge, appreciation and definition of the EU, both from longitudinal and cross-sectional perspectives. In each sub-study, survey data concerning the public climate towards the EU will be related to media data, derived from content analysis. The previous chapters have demonstrated that dealing with the EU as a central subject of study implies dealing with European history and culture, with international politics and the world economy, with the tensions between the global and the local. The EU furthermore demonstrates the dynamics of an international institution in development, with a growing number of members and an expanding policy agenda. These global and European developments are often subject to debates and deliberations within and between member states and therefore have an imprint on the relationship between the political, media and public agenda. Taking all these considerations and the relevant developments into full
This chapter deals with measures and methods in more general terms. The pertaining used to answer the research questions of the four sub-studies. Finally, section 5.6 presents of the main concepts in the research questions derived from the survey data: EU knowledge, choice of member states. Section 5.4 centers on the survey data and the operationalization of the media data. Hence it elaborates on the selection of specific newspaper titles and on the operationalization of the media data. Section 5.3 moves from the media data to the related choice of member states. Section 5.4 centers on the survey data and the operationalization of the main concepts in the research questions derived from the survey data: EU knowledge, EU appreciation and EU definition. Section 5.5 elaborates on the research models that are used to answer the research questions of the four sub-studies. Finally, section 5.6 presents the research design that can be completed on the basis built in the first sections of this chapter. This chapter deals with measures and methods in more general terms. The pertaining research chapters will elaborate more specifically on the choices made per sub-study.

5.1 Longitudinal time frame: 1994-2006
The first choice in this section entails the specification of the time frame in which news and opinion data will be collected. This books aims to determine media effects both in longitudinal and in cross-sectional settings. The history of European integration offers almost sixty years of development, which makes it necessary to set some boundaries, yet warrants a longitudinal approach. A logical starting point is the post-Maastricht era, from 1994 onwards. The key-word for this research, European Union (EU), is only in use since the summit of Maastricht in the early 1990s. At the end of 1993, the European Union formally came into existence after the signing and ratification of the Treaty of Maastricht. This Treaty on the European Union represents the new ambitions during the post-Cold War era to intensify European cooperation, to promote institutional reform and to open up the ranks and welcome new member states. The pillar model of Maastricht represents new areas of cooperation, with the completion of the internal market and the introduction of a common currency in Pillar 1 and new initiatives to cooperate in the fields of foreign and security policy (Pillar 2) and justice and home affairs (Pillar 3). The ambitions of Maastricht have been paralleled by upcoming and persistent debates about the legitimacy of the process of European integration: “a theme that had been largely neglected by governments and analysts until then” (Bache & George, 2004, p. 175). This makes Maastricht an excellent starting point for this study. It definitely marks a new phase in European cooperation, with many ambitious initiatives, but also with increasing debates, dissonance and controversies in the political, public and media arenas. On the practical level, the Treaty of Maastricht introduced the new name European Union as a label for the ensemble of European integration, thus allowing the use of this name as the central research and search term. Whereas the starting point of the time frame of this study can be relatively precisely drawn with the signing of the Treaty of Maastricht, the finish line for the research in this book is less easily determined. The EU has gone through dynamic and dramatic changes in the post-Maastricht era, as Chapter 1 has indicated, but it is difficult to demarcate, for the purpose of this book, a specific ending or logical capstone in this respect. For this reason, a more pragmatic choice is made based on the specific quality of the Eurobarometer survey of spring 2006, which actually and specifically registers the newspaper titles of respondents. The spring of 2006 is therefore not only the best setting for the broader, cross-national strands of research, as described above, but also serves as a fitting final stage of the longitudinal strands of research. This allows for designing a longitudinal research set-up from 1994 to 2006, encompassing 12.5 years of turbulent EU developments. By ending the research in June 2006, a longitudinal scope is warranted which allows for the assessment of trends over time during which the EU underwent many changes. Between 1993 and 2006, the number of member states more than doubled: from 12 to 25. This period of 12.5 years also comprises two and a half session terms of the European Commission and the European Parliament, as well as various session terms of national governments of member states. The chosen time frame furthermore includes several special EU milestones and controversies, such as the Treaty of Amsterdam, the resignation of the European Commission and its chairman Jacques Santer for alleged corruption, the introduction of the Euro, the controversy about the Austrian right-wing politician Jörg Haider, the Treaty of Nice, the 2004 enlargement (often referred to as the Big Bang) and the round of referenda about the Constitutional Treaty in 2005.
The period between 1993 and 2006 also encompasses various important and far-reaching global incidents and developments, such as the wars on the Balkans, the massacres of Rwanda and Darfur, the outbreak of mad cow disease, the killing of Israeli prime minister Rabin and the death of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, the enlargement of NATO, the presidency of Nelson Mandela in post-apartheid South Africa, the airplane attacks on New York and Washington (9/11), the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the tsunami in Southern Asia, the Danish cartoons, the Peace Treaty of Northern Ireland, the growing importance of China and India as new world powers, et cetera. These world events affect, directly or indirectly, the policies of the EU and its members and the agendas of the European media and their audiences.

Taken together, the time frame of 12.5 years represents an eventful era that allows for the portrayal of possible contextual influences of major incidents and structural developments, both within and outside the formal limits of the European Union.

5.2 Variety of member states

Chapters 3 and 4 have indicated that public opinion towards the EU differs from member state to member state and that feelings of national and European identity play a role in explaining EU support. This indicates that it is worthwhile to encompass various European countries in this study. On the basis of theoretical and more pragmatic reasons, a total number of seven countries (Austria, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Spain and the United Kingdom) figure in this book. The selected countries reflect all three models of press freedom, commercial interests and individualism. The political system is often bipolar and the government is organized by majority rule. European examples of this third model are the United Kingdom and Ireland. The Netherlands and the United Kingdom are represented in all four strands of research, thanks to the ample availability of various Dutch and British newspapers through time in LexisNexis. The two longitudinal sub-studies in this book are based on data of newspapers and respondents from these two countries. Germany and France are prominent in a couple of sub-studies. Some countries (Austria, Spain, Ireland) only play a part in one sub-study:

- the cross-sectional study of the volume of EU news (Chapter 6).
- the selected countries represent a mixture of the more individualistic northwestern part of Europe (Ireland, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom) and of the more communally-oriented southern part (especially Austria, France and Spain). The countries also differ in size (three smaller/middle-sized countries and four large member states), in membership history (three founding fathers: France, Germany, the Netherlands; and four members that acceded in later years) and in general public appreciation of the EU (Austria and the UK are traditionally very critical of the EU; Ireland, the Netherlands and Spain are high-ranking supportive member states and France and Germany hold a more average position).

As stated in the previous sub-section, new member states from the central and eastern parts of Europe are not included in this study. They might shed some interesting and comparative new lights on the central theme of this book, but their relatively recent membership and the lack of available and useful media data make it too difficult to incorporate them in this study.

5.3 Relevant news media: popular and quality newspapers

After the determination of the time frames and the countries comprised in the four sub-studies of this book, the next element in marking off the field of the research set-up is the selection of media outlets. Time and again, respondents of Eurobarometer polls indicate that they use and prefer mass media as sources of information about the EU. Television is the most preferred media type in this respect. Yet, the longitudinal and cross-national set-up of this study makes it almost impossible to compare the coverage of European integration by various television stations throughout Europe and over time. In a few studies scholars have been able to compare television reports about the EU, but only in cooperation with a large group of international researchers and for short periods of time (e.g., Peter, 2003; de Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2006). Furthermore, newspapers are the only media outlets with a constant display of EU news, whereas television, radio and the Internet are much more incidental in their EU coverage (e.g., Fundesco, 1997; Norris, 2002; Kevin, 2002; Pfetsch, 2004).
Media databases (LexisNexis is mainly used in this study) offer a selection of European newspapers that has steadily grown from a limited number of newspapers and countries in the early 1990s to a wide range at the end of the first decade of the 21st century. Television and radio data are not available in a similar fashion. The study of Kleinnijenhuis (2003) presents a relativistic perspective for not selecting television news, as it convincingly demonstrates the correspondence between press and television news. These considerations have led to the choice of newspapers as representatives of news media in this study.

With this choice, the next question relates to the selection of specific newspapers: which types of newspapers (from which member states) do qualify? Newspapers can be labeled in terms of distribution (national or regional), political position (left-wing, liberal, conservative), price (free newspapers - like the Sweden-based Metro - or paid/subscription) and editorial profile (quality, middle range, popular, tabloid) (Norris, 2000; Wester, 2006). In this book the last characteristic will serve as the main criterion for selecting newspapers. In all strands of research, at least one popular paper or tabloid and one quality title per country will be included. Most media studies concerning the EU tend to focus on quality media and therefore have an elitist bias. This study seeks to find a balance between the quality press on the one hand and popular newspapers and tabloids on the other for a better reflection of the actual media and audience landscape in Europe. In general, the quality-popular typology is well used in media research (e.g., Norris, 2000; Kevin, 2002; Kleinnijenhuis, 2003; della Porta, 2003; Pletsch, 2004) and also reflects a rough dichotomization of reader groups. Quality newspapers devote more attention to political and economic issues and world events. They provide ample background information and in-depth analyses. Tabloids and popular papers represent the news by emphasizing dramatic elements, visualizations, action and personalized stories. Sports, celebrities and scandals dominate their pages. With the selection of these two types of newspapers also an implicit selection of audience groups is made. The quality newspapers are expected to correspond with readers of higher educational and professional levels who generally display a wider interest in politics and society, whereas readers with opposite qualifications are more likely to be consumers of the popular and tabloid press. All in all, the selection of newspapers with these two editorial profiles allows for making comparisons between newspapers and audience groups not only between member states, but also within countries.

Which newspaper titles qualify?

Now that criteria for the newspaper selection are set, the next step involves the search for newspaper titles that can actually be submitted to content analysis and connected to survey data. As indicated in the Introduction of this book, LexisNexis serves as a rich source of newspaper data. However, newspapers from various European countries often have only started to appear in the LexisNexis database after 2001. In various instances this only concerns quality papers. Overall, the popular press is not well represented in LexisNexis, although this situation is gradually improving as years go by. This imposes limitations for the two longitudinal strands of research (one concerning the impact of volumes of EU news, in Chapter 7; the other aimed at issues in EU news, in Chapter 9). For the time frame 1995-2006, data from both popular and quality newspapers are only available from two EU member states, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. In the Netherlands, the popular Algemeen Dagblad (AD) and the quality paper NRC Handelsblad qualify. In the case of the United Kingdom a broader selection can be made, with The Sun and The Mirror representing the tabloid/popular segment of the British press and The Times and The Guardian as protagonists of the quality segment. As far as the two cross-sectional strands of research are concerned, LexisNexis holds a large number of European newspaper titles in the first six months of 2006. As stated before, Eurobaromenter 65 offers its respondents a broad selection of national newspapers among which all the main titles per country are represented. All the titles available in LexisNexis in the first six months of 2006 are also represented in Eurobarometer 65.

For the first sub-study (volume of EU news; cross-sectional test, in Chapter 6), a total number of 39 (popular and quality) newspapers of seven European countries were selected. For the last sub-study of this book (issues in EU news; cross-sectional test, in Chapter 9), eleven newspapers from three EU countries have been selected. This number is smaller than in the other cross-sectional sub-study, due to the fact that in the first cross-sectional study the mere volume of EU news is determined and the effect is individually measured. In the sub-study concerning issues in the news, the content of the news of both press segments (popular and quality) has to be equally represented and available in LexisNexis. This could only be warranted in the three countries indicated to have a balanced and representative set of newspaper titles.

All in all, the LexisNexis newspaper database sets boundaries to the selection of relevant press outlets. For this study, mainly newspapers from Western European member states are represented. This means that the news reports from recently acceded eastern member states

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62 De Vreese (2007a), in his article on the European public sphere, also stresses the importance of broadening the scope of media research to popular outlets.

63 These countries are Germany, France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Spain and Austria. For some popular titles, the volume of EU news is not available in LexisNexis but is derived from the archives of the newspapers themselves.

64 These countries are Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.
are not included in this study. Their non-availability combined with the short-term membership of these countries makes it unfeasible to encompass East European press in this study. The selection of predominantly western press titles does not imply that these newspapers represent a uniform news culture. Norris (2002), Kevin (2002), (Hallin & Mancini (2004) and Pfetsch (2006) offer some useful insights into the variations in the landscape of European newspapers. Brants (in Norris, 2002) contends that:

[T]he newspaper market varies greatly by country due to such factors as long-standing historical and cultural traditions in each region; levels of social development in terms of education, literacy, and income; the news industry’s organization, economics, production and distribution system; and the overall structure of public subsidies, government regulations, and national levels of democratization (Norris, 2000, p. 65).

In many countries the circulation of regional and local press outnumbers that of the national newspapers. The strongest regional dominance is found in Germany and Spain with kaleidoscopic regional titles and only a handful of national newspapers (Pfetsch, 2006). Some European newspapers are considered to be liberal or left-wing (Le Monde, El País, De Volkskrant), whereas others are seen as more conservative (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Le Figaro, De Telegraaf) (Kevin, 2002). The British press provides a mixture of internationally acclaimed quality papers (The Times, The Guardian) and various widely read red-top tabloids (e.g., The Mirror, The Sun). The quality press only represents 14% of the British newspaper circulation, whereas the tabloids dominate the press market with a share of more than 50% (Pfetsch, 2006). The same goes for the Irish case. The tabloid press in Germany is also relatively strong and mainly represented by the Bild Zeitung. Bild alone has a market share of 18% (Kevin, 2002). Conversely, the quality press in Germany only holds 7% of the market (Pfetsch, 2006). The Austrian newspaper culture resembles the German one. In Austria, the popular Kronen Zeitung dominates the market. In contrast with the other countries, France, the Netherlands and Spain are not familiar with tabloid newspapers. The French, Dutch and Spanish newspaper cultures are therefore more qualitative in character.

Operationalization of newspaper data

The central research concepts of this study relate to the presentation of the EU in the press in terms of volumes of EU news and issues in EU news. The news data will be matched with survey data concerning newspaper readership and public knowledge, appreciation and definition of the EU. In this sub-section, the measures of the two newspaper concepts (volumes of EU news and issues in EU news) will be presented.

- Volumes of EU news

The two strands of research of Approach 1 revolve around the possible impact of the mere volume of EU news in the press on the public climate. In both sub-studies, the amount of EU news is measured by registering every article of the newspapers concerned in which the European Union is mentioned at least one time. This method is referred to as ‘multi stage sampling’ (Pleijter, Renckstorf & Wester (2006, p. 50). Within the given time frame, all these articles were added up to constitute the sum of EU articles per newspaper or per newspaper section (quality/popular). In almost all instances, the LexisNexis newspaper database was used as source of information. For some tabloids, the volume of EU news was determined by using their own digital archives because they were not represented in LexisNexis during the selected research periods. As indicated in the previous sub-section, for a balanced overview of the entire press landscape it was necessary to include popular newspapers and tabloids next to the quality press. In all cases, the search term EU was used to detect and count relevant news articles with reference to the European Union. In a test setting, analyzing the presence of EU articles in the Dutch Algemeen Dagblad and the British Guardian during two separate months (in 1997 and 2004), several search terms were used to determine which term produced the most ample and reliable output. It proved that search terms such as Brussels, European AND Union, European AND Commission, European AND Parliament, or a combination of these terms, lead to an inadequate output with many inaccuracies and flaws. Not every article containing words such as Brussels or European appeared to refer to the European Union. The acronym EU delivered an output in which all articles actually referred to the European Union. Therefore, the search term EU (or its equivalent UE in French and Spanish newspapers) is used in the chapters dealing with volumes of EU news.

- Issues in EU news

The two strands of research of Approach 2 relate to specific issues in EU news coverage and the possible links of these issues with the public appreciation and definition of the EU. The selection of the issues itself was executed in two separate ways, in accordance with the pertaining research questions and the availability of relevant newspaper and survey data. The cross-sectional study of Chapter 8 takes survey data as its starting point. The specific question about the public definition of the EU is the rationale behind this operation. Eurobarometer data offer only incidental and varying indications for public definition of the EU. Eurobarometer 65 (spring 2006) was such an exceptional opinion poll in which respondents were asked to describe and define the EU by choosing from a list of pre-selected terms and issues. The options of question 14 in Eurobarometer 65 largely reflect the positive opportunity and negative threat narratives as described in Chapter 2. This indicates that

65 The argument to include tabloids prevailed over the risk of using the archives of these tabloids as a data source. By using one common database, such as LexisNexis, the probability of more uniform and comparative results is better warranted.

66 The pertaining question with regard to the definition of the EU is question 14: ‘What does the EU mean to you personally?’
the pre-selected issues, derived from Eurobarometer 65, relate to the way in which people generally talk about the EU. The issues are also similar to the selection of opportunity and benefit frames in the news made by Vliegenthart et al. (2008). This division of various issues into categories helps to summarise the various options, which makes it easier to link these options to actual reporting of comparable EU issues in the press. Two topics, Euro and Bureaucracy, are treated as neutral. Respondents have indicated to perceive the Euro as both a positive and a negative phenomenon (see also Chapter 2 and e.g., Fornäs, 2007). Bureaucracy was considered by some to be automatically negative, whereas others indicated Bureaucracy as something that naturally comes with larger organizations. Pfetsch (2004) referred to these general EU topics as meta-issues that are part and parcel of all reports about the EU, without a specific negative or positive connotation.

Table 5.2 Answering options Q14 (Eurobarometer 65) with added connotations: ‘What does the EU mean to you personally?’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answering options</th>
<th>Connotation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peace</td>
<td>Opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prosperity</td>
<td>Opportunity</td>
</tr>
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<td>Democracy</td>
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<td>Social protection</td>
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<td>Freedom to travel, etc.</td>
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<td>Cultural diversity</td>
<td>Opportunity</td>
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<td>Stronger say in the world</td>
<td>Opportunity</td>
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<td>Euro</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
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<td>Bureaucracy</td>
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<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>Threat</td>
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<td>Waste of money</td>
<td>Threat</td>
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<td>Loss of cultural identity</td>
<td>Threat</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crime</td>
<td>Threat</td>
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<tr>
<td>No border control</td>
<td>Threat</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
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</table>

Note: connotation added by the author.

Table 5.2 presents the various answering options of the relevant EU definition question of Eurobarometer 65. Respondents had the option to give more than one answer. This measure of the definition of the EU can be related to respondents’ actual readership of specific newspapers and to the way the EU was described in those newspapers during the early months of 2006. Each pre-selected issue holds a keyword that was used as search term in the analysis of EU newspapers. All newspaper articles were first selected using the acronym EU as catchword. Per newspaper, each EU article was screened for the presence of each of the given keywords that should occur in the article at least one time.

In contrast with this, Chapter 9 has a longitudinal set-up, with a selection of issues based on self-specified criteria. Eurobarometer polls offer continuing, long-term indices for public appreciation of the EU, which allows for a longitudinal approach in the sub-study concerning issues in EU news and EU appreciation. The appreciation of the EU can be related to various factors, as Chapter 4 has indicated. This requires an ample selection of EU attributes in the news in order to cover the various variables that help to constitute evaluative attitudes towards the EU. In this longitudinal sub-study, the issue selection is based on a combination of the public, the political and the media agenda during the time frame of 1995-2006, as explored in Chapters 1 through 4. This requires a balanced and realistic selection of relevant attributes, which have actually contributed to the three agendas that are central in this book. The public agenda is based on the two qualitative studies as described in Chapter 2. In-depth interviews were used to allow citizens to freely speak their minds about European matters. The outcomes were analyzed and brought together in a limited number of narratives or typologies. For each narrative some representative issues were selected. This set-up follows along the lines of the research of Neuman (1992). Neuman and others sought to build a typology of news frames in the American press during the late 1980s and the early 1990s. They found that in-depth interviews with citizens provide a sound basis for the selection and determination of viewpoints and perceptions. The media agenda is determined by analyzing various prominent studies concerning EU media coverage (e.g., Kevin, 2002; Norris, 2002; de Vreese, 2003; Peter, 2003; Pfetsch, 2004; Koopmans, 2007). These studies predominantly stress the prominence of economic and monetary topics, the dominant national angle, the overrepresentation of core political actors and the slightly negative tone in the press coverage of the EU. These findings are also represented in the selection of news issues in Chapter 9. Finally, the political agenda is included, by determining a variety of dominant and prominent events and policy matters in the European arena and on a global scale during the 12.5 years of this study. The combination of the three agendas in this longitudinal sub-study leads to a balanced list of relevant issues. These EU attributes are brought together in three categories (positive, neutral and negative) to be able to facilitate the linkage of EU issues in the news with EU appreciation (also in positive and negative terms) by European audiences.
Table 5.3 Selection of EU attributes for Chapter 9

Positive issues (opportunities/recognized policy areas)
- Welfare
- Peace
- Schengen
- EMU
- Employment
- Environment

Neutral issues (global affairs/meta-issues)
- Terrorism
- Iraq
- Refugees
- Bureaucracy
- Euro
- Referendum

Negative issues (threats/controversial matters)
- Waste
- Conflict
- Turkey
- Constitution
- Maastricht
- Enlargement

Table 5.3 presents the list of the three categories of EU attributes selected on the basis of the criteria mentioned above. In Chapter 9, the issues of this list will be matched with newspaper data. In the press, all EU articles are selected on the same basis as has been described in the sub-section above (with EU as search term). Within this set of EU articles, the presence of all selected issues is registered per newspaper within the given time frame. The registration of each issue is accounted for if the issue figures in an EU article at least one time.

5.4 Survey data concerning public opinion towards the EU

As indicated in the previous chapters, all data about public opinion towards the EU will be derived from the consecutive standard Eurobarometer polls issued by the European Commission. The Eurobarometer polls are the only opinion studies that have been consistently and regularly executed throughout the years in all member states of the EU. The European Commission started these polls in 1973 and has executed these surveys twice per year ever since. In each standard Eurobarometer poll, approximately 1,000 citizens per member state are interviewed in a face-to-face setting. Over the years, the Eurobarometer questionnaires have contained a number of fixed topics supplemented with more incidental questions regarding specific current issues. This set-up, with its repetitive nature, its cross-national character and its fixed topics, has made the standard Eurobarometer survey a rich and well-suited source of information and data concerning the opinion climate in Europe. With reference to the research questions of this book, various fixed Eurobarometer topics relate to the core research terms in this study. These questions are about general knowledge of EU matters, support for and appreciation of the EU and its institutions, associations and feelings towards the EU, involvement in society and politics in general, demographic variables, media usage and the like. The next section presents the way in which the main research terms are operationalized and measured on the basis of the most suitable Eurobarometer variables. The Eurobarometer surveys produce one important limitation with regard to newspaper readership. The standard question in this respect only asks whether, and how frequently, respondents read newspapers, but it does not enquire about the title of the newspaper people actually read. Section 5.2 reports how this challenge of pinpointing press readership is met by combining various related indicators. Eurobarometer 65 (spring 2006) offers a fortunate and unique exception with the addition of a specific item in which respondents indicate which daily newspapers they actually and regularly read. Given the fact that this book seeks to study the relationship between EU news coverage and public opinion, not only from a longitudinal (described below) but also from a broader, cross-sectional perspective, the Eurobarometer data of spring 2006 provide the best input for the cross-national strands of research that are limited to one period in time.

Operationalization of survey data

Similar to the end of section 5.2, on newspaper data, here too, the main concepts related to the survey data, i.e., newspaper readership and public knowledge, appreciation and definition of the EU, are operationalized.

- Newspaper readership

As stated in the previous section, only one Eurobarometer in the selected time frame (Eurobarometer 65 of spring 2006) holds a specific question about the actual newspaper readership of respondents, including a broad list of national and regional newspaper titles

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Footnotes:
68 The Eurobarometer surveys have consecutive numbers, starting with 1 in the spring of 1973 and progressing to 65 (spring 2006) and up. The European Commission often refers to these twice-yearly Eurobarometer reports as the spring report (the first six months) and the fall report (the last six months). E.g., the spring 2006 report presents the fieldwork of Eurobarometer 65, which was executed during the spring months of 2006.
Therefore, this specific survey qualifies well to be used in the two cross-sectional strands of research in this book and as a closing term for the two longitudinal sub-studies. This implies that the two cross-sectional studies can specifically pinpoint the actual newspaper readership of all respondents concerned and can relate their readership to all other relevant variables of the survey and to the data of the newspapers they have indicated to read regularly. For the two longitudinal sub-studies (both confined to the Netherlands and the United Kingdom), an indirect indicator of newspaper readership was used, due to the absence of a specific indicator in the Eurobarometer polls up to 2006. In both instances the variable indicating educational background was selected as a representative, yet indirect factor. Throughout this book a distinction is made between regular readers of quality newspapers on the one hand and the readership of the popular press on the other. It is commonly recognized that higher educated people are more inclined to read quality newspapers, whereas their lower educated counterparts usually prefer to read popular newspapers and tabloids (e.g., Kevin, 2002). Therefore, in the two longitudinal sub-studies, the higher educated respondents of the Eurobarometer surveys represent the audience of the quality press, while the lower educated respondents are equated with the readership of popular and tabloid titles. This choice can be substantiated in reverse by relating the relevant education and readership data of Eurobarometer 65 (spring 2006). Spring 2006 is the last term of both longitudinal sub-studies and specifically registers actual newspaper readership. These data can be compared with the data of educational levels in the same survey for both member states involved. In the case of the UK, Eurobarometer 65 indicated that 82% of the readership of popular newspapers had lower levels of education and 18% was higher educated. In the case of the quality press the percentages were 40% lower educated and 56% higher educated, respectively. In the Dutch case, it is assumed that the average reader of the popular AD was predominantly lower educated, while the reader of the quality newspaper NRC had higher levels of education. This assumption is supported by data from the Dutch PCM newspaper group pointing in this direction as well: 70% of all AD readers have lower levels of education and 71% of all NRC readers have higher levels of education. These outcomes indicate that although the level of education cannot be fully equated with newspaper readership, it serves as a fairly accurate indicator of newspaper preference.

- EU knowledge
The first sub-study deals with the volume of EU news in relation to the knowledge levels of respondents with regard to the EU (Chapter 6). The best measure of EU knowledge would be a reliable, well-balanced test including the various aspects of the EU (such as history, institutions, specific policies, procedures). Yet, the questionnaires of the Eurobarometer surveys do not venture into specific assessments of actual EU knowledge. Some editions of Eurobarometer contain a handful of quiz-like questions about the EU that might serve as indicators of knowledge levels. However, these questions are too limited and incidental to really grasp the actual level of EU knowledge of respondents. They merely generate a rough estimation of knowledge about two or three topics. Besides, this small knowledge quiz is not represented in all Eurobarometer surveys and when it does, it often consists of different topics, which makes it difficult to consistently assess the development of EU knowledge over time. The only alternative indicator of general EU knowledge is the Eurobarometer question about subjective, self-perceived knowledge. Since the fall of 1997, the consecutive standard Eurobarometer questionnaires contained the following question: ‘Using this scale, how much do you feel you know about the European Union, its policies, its institutions?’ The answering options of this question range from 0 (‘nothing at all’) to 10 (‘know a great deal’). The subjective character of this variable may cause inaccurate measurements, with respondents using their own standards to assess their knowledge of the EU. Respondents may well underestimate or exaggerate their actual and factual knowledge level. Park (2001) has indicated that, in general, especially more knowledgeable respondents have a tendency to underestimate their knowledge level. The preliminary qualitative studies described in Chapter 2 indicate that potential respondents repeatedly refused to participate in interviews due to a self-expressed lack of knowledge about the EU. This makes one wonder whether the respondents of Eurobarometer research represent the whole population, or mainly those segments that feel comfortable and knowledgeable enough to participate in the research. Despite these impediments and shortcomings, the subjective knowledge question of the consecutive Eurobarometer polls allows for the best possible indicator of the general knowledge level of European respondents over time.

- EU appreciation
The next concept derived from survey data relates to the evaluative attitudes of respondents towards the EU. This indicator of public appreciation is used in both approaches in this book. It is related to ‘volumes of EU news’ in Chapter 7 and to ‘issues in EU news’ in Chapter 9. Both sub-studies are longitudinal in scope. The consecutive Eurobarometer questionnaires have held various questions relating to the way Europeans appreciate the EU. For the selection of indicator questions two criteria were used. First of all, indicators have to be available during the entire time frame of Chapters 7 and 9 (1994-2006) to be 71. This would be quite similar to the concourses and tests that candidates have to take part in when they apply for fixed positions within the European apparatus.

72 Chapter 2 elaborates on the matter of low levels of EU knowledge.
able to make long-term comparisons. A number of possible questions do not qualify in this respect, because they only appeared in some Eurobarometer polls, but not in all.\(^7\) The second criterion deals with the portrayal of the general attitude towards the EU. Indicators should sketch the appreciation of the EU in general, to be able to make reliable comparisons between countries and between audience groups. Some of the Eurobarometer questions had to be ruled out because they were not related to the EU in general, but to specific policy areas, to specified EU institutions or to certain interests. With the application of these criteria, only one variable stands out as a reliable measure of EU appreciation, both over time and in a general sense. This variable is:

‘Do you think that our country’s membership of the EU is a good or bad thing?’ This standard question has featured in all Eurobarometer polls, making it possible to compare responses over time. This question has been widely used as key indicator of EU appreciation in various studies concerning the EU and public opinion (e.g., Niedermayer & Sinnott, 1995; de Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2005; CPB/SCP, 2007).

- EU definition

In this book, next to their EU knowledge and EU appreciation, the way in which people define the EU is the third indicator of the public climate towards the EU in which possible effects of media coverage may be reflected. Where knowledge and appreciation relate to the impact of news on the levels of cognition and affection of audiences, respectively, the definition of the EU refers to the characteristics and associations related to the EU. It is of interest to see whether the accentuation of specific issues in EU reports is reflected in the way audiences describe and define the EU. Chapter 8 of this book elaborates on this matter. The consecutive Eurobarometer surveys have held no standard question about the way respondents define the EU. On a regular basis, Eurobarometer polls inquire about the importance or priority of specific issues or about specific associations of respondents when the EU is at stake. These questions always have a closed category of possible answers. Also, these questions are not included in each Eurobarometer survey and if they do, the issues and associations alternate over time. The best option is, therefore, to resort to one specific Eurobarometer poll with a relevant question holding a wide range of answering options. As indicated before, Eurobarometer 65 (spring 2006) serves as a well-suited survey because respondents were asked to specifically indicate which newspapers they read. Each variable can thus be related to newspaper readership. The most fitting question with regard to the definition of the EU is question 14: ‘What does the EU mean to you personally?’ The answers to this question are conceived as operationalizations of the second-level agenda or attribute agenda concerning the EU. The list of these issues has already been presented in section 5.2 (Table 5.2).

5.5 Research methods

This last section presents the analytical ways of collecting and connecting the research data in the four sub-studies that lead to the testing of the pertaining hypotheses and hence contribute to the answering of the central research question. The section below is divided into two parts, since the methodology used in Approach 1 (volumes of EU news) is distinct from the one used in Approach 2 (issues in EU news).

Research method in Approach 1: volumes of EU news

Both strands of research of Approach 1 deal with the volume of EU news and its impact on knowledge levels (Chapter 6) and appreciative attitudes (Chapter 7) of respondents with regard to the EU. The knowledge gap proposition and the concepts of Zajonc and Zaller serve as the theoretical fundamentals on which the hypotheses of this approach are based. These theoretical models imply a causal relationship between the news supply as independent variable on the one hand and audience effects as dependent variable on the other. The measure of the volume of EU news is quite unambiguous and serves well as independent variable. The volume of EU news is a solid, quantitative concept that can be straightforwardly calculated and summed up per newspaper and per period in time. The measures of EU knowledge (Chapter 6) and EU appreciation (Chapter 7) represent the dependent variables. In addition, and in accordance with the theoretical models, socio-economic and motivational factors are introduced as covariates. These additional variables might enhance or limit the basic relationship between media, public knowledge and appreciation. In general, public opinion can be evaluated as an outcome of a mix of influences, such as information, experiences, values, events, and so on (e.g., Zaller, 1992; Tiemeijer, 2006; Pol et al., 2007). The size and the direction of the impact of the volumes of EU news are determined by means of regression analysis. In both sub-studies of Approach 1, a multimodel regression analysis is executed, in which the effect of the volumes of press coverage on audience groups is calculated step-by-step, controlling for the factors mentioned above. In both sub-studies, the first regression model deals with the basic relationship between the independent and the dependent variable. The consecutive models add covariates and interaction terms to the basic model in order to assess the contribution of each added factor or condition. The regression analysis in both strands of research is executed on the individual level in order to determine the effects of news coverage as precisely as possible.

\(^7\) Some of these more irregular variables of Eurobarometer polls are:

- ‘What would your feelings if the European Union were to be scrapped?’
- ‘In general, does the European Union conjure up for you a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative or very negative image?’

98 Chapter 5  Method 99
**Research method in Approach 2: issues in EU news**

The two sub-studies of Approach 2 analyze the relationship between issues in the press coverage of the EU and the way the EU is appreciated and defined by European audiences. The agenda-setting theory and the concept of priming figure as theoretical basis for these two strands of research. Research in this field generally struggles with the matter of causality. Ideally, in both sub-studies the introduction of a control group could serve as a yardstick to account for differences between audiences that are and are not exposed to press coverage within the given time frame. Both the longitudinal and the cross-sectional set-up of the two strands of research in this approach make it rather difficult to isolate representative groups who have not been confronted with EU news over the years and in various countries. Yet, the comparative design of the sub-studies, with distinct segments of newspapers and newspaper readers, allow for disclosing and describing differences and commonalities. By distinguishing between popular and quality newspapers on the one hand and by reader groups of both newspaper groups on the other, two media agendas and two public agendas are created that can be mutually related and compared. As a next step, also in the two sub-studies of Approach 2 a multi-model regression analysis is executed with news data as independent variable and survey data as dependent variable in order to assess the effects of news coverage on audiences.

### 5.6 Research design completed

This chapter demonstrates that the choices made in selecting newspapers, survey data, time limits, audience groups and countries are strongly interdependent. The longer the time frame, the fewer the number of available and eligible newspapers and the lower the number of member states. The combination of a longitudinal scope with a cross-national perspective forces this study to some inevitable selections. In the two strands of research with a longer time frame, the cross-national perspective is limited, whereas wider comparisons of newspapers and countries can be made in the two strands with a cross-sectional set-up.

Table 5.5 elaborates on the basic set-up of this book’s research as presented in the Introduction (Table 1) and at the start of this chapter (Table 5.1). It presents the research design on the basis of the choices made in this section. Both approaches (volume of EU news and issues in EU news) will be studied from a longitudinal and a cross-sectional perspective, so as to be able to make comparisons over time and between countries. This results in a design of the four strands of research with varying numbers of included newspapers and member states. In each sub-study a selection of quality and popular newspapers has been made. The two longitudinal sub-studies, on the one hand, are confined to a limited number of newspapers from two EU member states: the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. Both cross-sectional studies, on the other hand, allow for a broader representation of newspapers and countries.

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<table>
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<th>Perspective: Cross-sectional/ various member-states</th>
<th>Perspective: Longitudinal/ few member-states</th>
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<td><strong>Approach 2: Issues in EU news</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
<td>Chapter 8</td>
</tr>
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<td>To what extent does the selection of issues in EU news articles relate to the definition of the EU by newspaper readers?</td>
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<td>Time frame: spring 2006</td>
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<td>Member states: DE NL UK Newspapers: 11 (qual. &amp; pop.)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Chapter 9</td>
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<td>To what extent does the mere volume of EU news articles affect the levels of EU appreciation of newspaper readers?</td>
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<td>Member states: NL UK Newspapers: 6 (qual. &amp; pop.)</td>
<td>Member states: NL UK Newspapers: 6 (qual. &amp; pop.)</td>
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PART TWO

APPROACH 1: VOLUMES OF EU-NEWS

No one understands (Europe's) institutions and no one's interested in them. Even I don't. When Europe can't do anything about high oil prices, Europeans are not bothered about another reform treaty.

former French Secretary of State Bernhard Kouchner
(The Guardian, July 1, 2008)
Chapter 6  EU news volumes and public knowledge about the EU

Introduction

The focus of Approach 1 of this study is on the amount of news about the EU rather than on the content of the news. This first chapter of Approach 1 in this respect addresses a basic question: does more EU news generate more knowledge about the EU among European citizens?

Knowledge about the political system is an indispensable ingredient for citizenship in a democratic society. Political knowledge contributes to the formation of political opinions and facilitates political engagement. Part One of this study has demonstrated that the knowledge question plays a key role in the interplay between politics, media and publics in the European context. Politicians, officials, journalists and the like are concerned about the low levels of knowledge about EU matters among European citizens. They seek to improve public knowledge and often turn to mass media as the most suited channels of information. Citizens, too, express their need for more information about the EU and their preference for mass media as sources of information. This makes it relevant to study the possible contribution of mass media to the formation of knowledge about EU affairs among Europeans. The basic question to be addressed in this chapter is:

to what extent does the mere volume of EU news articles affect the levels EU knowledge of newspaper readers?

In order to find an answer to this central question, a solid theoretical approach will be explored and tested: the Knowledge Gap concept as developed by Tichenor, Donohue and Olien (1970). In an overview of decades of Knowledge Gap research, Gaziano & Gaziano (1995) come to the conclusion that this concept has proven to be a solid foundation for the study of the effects of mass communication on knowledge levels, with the inclusion of socio-economic and personal factors. Tichenor, Donohue and Olien (1970) indicate that there are two main set-ups for testing the Knowledge Gap hypothesis:

a) a cross-sectional study focusing on a specific moment in time; this kind of testing assesses the possible difference between knowledge levels of groups that are confronted with a specific amount of information during one measured moment in time.

b) a time-trend study focusing on developments over a longer period of time; this type of research assesses possible developments in knowledge levels of groups that are confronted with differing amounts of information, measured at several moments in time.

The Knowledge Gap theory was first described by Tichenor, Donohue & Olien in “Mass Media Flow and Differential Growth in Knowledge”, an article published in Public Opinion Quarterly in 1970.
In this chapter, the Knowledge Gap theory will be tested in a cross-sectional setting in which the possible causal effect of volumes of EU news are tested on the individual level by means of a regression analysis. This test is executed with media and survey data from the first six months of 2006. As indicated in Chapter 5, Eurobarometer 65 (spring 2006) allows for an exact assessment of the actual readership of respondents. This makes it possible to directly relate their responses to the volume of EU news in the newspapers they read. As a prelude to this cross-sectional test, first a long-term inventory is made of the developments of EU knowledge levels and of volumes of EU news. This analysis is preliminary in nature. It seeks to determine to what extent news volumes and levels of EU knowledge generally undergo similar developments over time and thus whether there is enough ground for testing the Knowledge Gap theory. This prelude involves four EU member states and thirteen daily newspapers within the time frame of fall 1997 to spring 2006. The subsequent actual test study of the Knowledge Gap hypothesis has a limited time frame of six months (January-June 2006). It includes 39 newspapers from 7 member states. In this analysis, the size and direction of the relationship between EU news as an independent variable and EU knowledge as a dependent variable will be tested by way of a regression analysis. Section 6.1 of this chapter dwells on the development of the Knowledge Gap theory and ends with the hypothesis that will be tested in this chapter. Section 6.2 is devoted to the preliminary analysis. In section 6.3 the regression analysis and the testing of the Knowledge Gap hypothesis is presented. Finally, section 6.4 presents the main conclusions of this chapter and discusses the main outcomes of this sub-study.

6.1 Theoretical orientation: the Knowledge Gap theory

“As the infusion of mass media information into a social system increases, segments of the population with higher socio-economic status tend to acquire this information at a faster rate than the lower status segments, so that the gap between these segments tends to increase rather than decrease” (Tichenor, Donohue & Olien, 1970, pp. 159-160). This basic assumption is the core of the Knowledge Gap theory. People with higher levels of education and knowledge are supposed to have a greater range of possibilities to sample and process information. This implies that news messages will be more likely to reach those individuals of higher societal status than audiences with lower levels of education and knowledge. This allows for a growing gap between these two groups: the well-informed and the poorly informed. In the original set-up of Tichenor and his colleagues, the Knowledge Gap hypothesis was tested by determining the difference in knowledge levels concerning two news topics: one with relatively low media coverage and one that was the subject of a lot of media attention. Tichenor et al. found that the correlation between knowledge and education was stronger for the news item with high media publicity than for the less publicized topic. Hence their conclusion that more frequently covered news topics produce stronger knowledge gap effects.

The Knowledge Gap theory focuses on the unequal distribution of information in society and reflects the critical discourse of that time about the haves and the have-nots (Childers & Post, 1975). Critical social scientists in those years pointed out the differences in material means and opportunities between the various socio-economic groups in society. The Knowledge Gap theory emerged as a mass communication equivalent. Its proposition contends that there is also inequality in the realm of information distribution and knowledge acquisition. Thus, the income gap is paralleled by a knowledge gap between a broadly informed and deeply involved upper class and a less engaged and less knowledgeable underclass. In the development of communication theory, this paradigm can be situated in the period of limited effects. The Knowledge Gap hypothesis is confined to the impact of information on knowledge levels and is related to the socio-economic status of information receivers. Usually, education is selected as the pivotal variable in Knowledge Gap studies. Jerit, Barabas and Bolsen (2006) claimed that education is “the strongest and most consistent predictor of political knowledge” (Jerit et al., 2006, p. 266), since it not only reflects the socio-economic position of individuals, but also relates to the ability to receive an understand information. Kleinnijenhuis (1991) indicated how the occurrence of knowledge gaps relates to the capacity of processing information. Higher educated people are better equipped to digest complex and compact information than their lower educated counterparts. Kleinnijenhuis therefore advocated the use of television for the distribution of political news among lower educated audiences, since this medium offers an easier way of understanding political information than the compactly written newspapers do. The basic proposition of Tichenor et al. has been tested in many studies, which has led to a confirmation of the hypotheses in a convincing majority of cases (Gaziano & Gaziano, 1995). Gaziano and Gaziano showed that many studies have affirmed the propositions of the Knowledge Gap theory, but also reported about various studies in which the expected relations were not demonstrated. Most of the studies were executed at one point in time; the longitudinal perspective has only been used in a more limited number of Knowledge Gap studies. The original concept of Tichenor, Donohue & Olien focused on the unequal acquisition of knowledge within a collective, social structure (Tichenor et al., 1970, pp. 159-170). In later research, the basic Knowledge Gap model was refined, when researchers contended that social variables alone were not able to account for differences in knowledge development. They introduced individual elements such as personal needs, circumstances or motivations to improve the reliability of the model (Gaziano & Gaziano, 1996). Genova and Greenberg (1981) demonstrated how matters of social and personal interest might play a larger role in enhancing knowledge than socio-economic status does. This effect occurs when information is considered to be useful for oneself or one’s social environment. Weenig (2000) drew similar conclusions. Following along the lines of the Knowledge Gap theory, Weenig demonstrated in several studies how the basic relation between the information supply and knowledge formation could be enforced with additional factors that account for levels of
interest and relevance. She stipulated that news messages are only likely to reach the audience if the issue at stake is to some extent meaningful or important to the audience. Weenig therefore also stressed the importance of involvement as an additional factor.

Another interesting element in some Knowledge Gap studies is the so-called ceiling effect. The level of knowledge can, after an increase of knowledge as a result of exposure to information, reach a point of saturation. At this point, additional information no longer contributes to the further development of knowledge (Gaziano & Gaziano, 1996). The audience is not able or willing to absorb and process more information.

A crucial matter to be discussed at this point is the measurement of news coverage. Gaziano (1997) found that many studies are based upon self-reported measures of media exposure and not on actual data concerning media coverage. This subjective measure limits the possibility of accurately determining the impact of media coverage on knowledge levels.

Jerit et al. (2006) followed along these lines and added that many Knowledge Gap studies suffer from being static, as they mainly include fully fixed or rather stable characteristics, such as gender, race, education or income. For this reason, they fall short in embracing the dynamics of media, society and politics. Jerit et al. (2006) therefore promoted the use of actual measures of media coverage as a more reliable reflection of the dynamics of politics and a solid basis for the actual determination of the size and direction of media impact on knowledge levels.

This chapter hooks on to the findings and considerations described above. It seeks to unveil possible knowledge gaps on the European level. The Knowledge Gap theory generally suggests that the distribution of mass media information about a certain topic is related to knowledge levels about that topic among different segments of the population, in such a way that people with higher levels of education and socio-economic status are likely to acquire more knowledge than their counterparts with lower societal status do. Translating the assumptions of the Knowledge Gap theory to the setting of this study, it is expected that the link between EU knowledge and education/socio-economic status is stronger for newspaper readers confronted with higher amounts of EU news than for those hit by lower amounts of EU coverage. In addition, it is expected that also motivational variables (interest, involvement) contribute to differential knowledge acquirement. Citizens with higher levels of social engagement and political involvement are expected to demonstrate higher knowledge gains.

All the consideration above lead to the following overarching hypothesis for this chapter:

**Hypothesis 1**

The volume of EU news contributes to higher levels of EU knowledge in such a way that more involved and higher educated newspaper readers gain relatively more knowledge than less engaged and lower educated newspaper readers.

### 6.2 Preliminary analysis: development of news volumes and knowledge levels over time

As indicated above, the Knowledge Gap hypothesis will first be approached in an explorative, longitudinal way, to determine whether the development of news volumes and knowledge levels concerning the EU develop in similar ways over time and thus provides a suitable context for studying knowledge gap effects. This section elaborates on this matter.

It comprises media and survey data of four member states (France, Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom) from 1997 to 2006. The focus of this preliminary analysis is on describing and analyzing general developments in EU news distribution on the one hand, and the development of EU knowledge on the other. Furthermore, it seeks to determine to what extent these developments coincide and correlate. Section 6.3 will consecutively seek to determine to what extent the development of EU knowledge can be ascribed to the trends in the volumes of EU publicity.

#### Data, method and measures

In Chapter 5 (Method), the general method and measures of the research in this book have been described. This sub-section refers to the choices made in Chapter 5 and translates them to the specific context of the strand of research in the present chapter.

#### Volume of news, the selection of newspapers

For this part of the analysis, the availability of news data from databases is a crucial, yet pragmatic criterion. EU member states of which at least two or more newspapers are recorded and accessible in the LexisNexis digital news database from fall 1997 up to spring 2006, the time frame of this preliminary study, are limited in number. With the choice of more than one newspaper per country and the selection of various newspapers, the development of the general coverage of the EU in the national press will be reflected. For the time frame 1997-2006, it was possible to make a selection of thirteen prominent newspapers in four member states of the EU.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member state</th>
<th>Quality newspaper</th>
<th>Popular newspaper</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>Le Monde, La Tribune, Le Figaro</td>
<td>The Guardian, The Times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung</td>
<td>The Daily Mail, The Mirror</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Netherlands</td>
<td>NRC Handelsblad, Trouw, De Volkskrant</td>
<td>Algemeen Dagblad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>The Guardian, The Times</td>
<td>The Daily Mail, The Mirror</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the case of Germany and France, it was not possible to select popular national newspapers due to their absence in LexisNexis in the selected research period. See Chapter 5 for a motivation of the selection of newspapers.
Table 6.1 presents the selected newspapers. With this selection, not only a longitudinal set-up is constructed, but also a cross-national layout is formed to be able to determine trends over time and to discover possible similarities and differences between EU member states. Kleinnijenhuis (2003) indicated that quality newspapers often set the news agenda for other news outlets. In line with this reasoning, per country at least some quality papers are included.

The selection of some popular newspapers in addition to quality press titles (only possible in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom) ensures the representation of more man-in-the-street views in press and population (Kevin, 2002; Norris, 2002). All in all, the sum of EU news in several newspapers per country is expected to be a good indicator for the general development of EU news in that country. The four countries represent the three most dominant member states of the EU (France, Germany and the United Kingdom) and the Netherlands. Also, three out of four countries (the UK is the exception) belong to the group of founding fathers of the EU. This mixture of dominant positions and long historical ties indicates that this selection of member states comprises key players at the heart of the EU. Beside these similarities, the four countries also display some differences. The general attitudes towards the EU greatly vary per country, as is demonstrated in Chapter 2. The Netherlands usually ranks relatively high in this respect, whereas the British consistently demonstrate very low levels of EU support. France and Germany generally display average scores. Also, the national newspaper culture is quite different in the four countries concerned. France and Germany both have a combination of a limited number of national newspapers together with a strong regional press. Germany and the UK share a mixture of quality press and tabloid press, with a domination of the Bild tabloid in Germany and a larger variation of tabloid titles in the UK. France and the Netherlands lack this kind of tabloid tradition. The Netherlands has a range of national titles, mostly in the quality segment; yet, the two popular newspapers have the largest circulation in the chosen time frame.75

Volumes of EU news

For the purpose of this sub-study, all those articles of the newspapers are selected and counted in which the European Union is mentioned at least one time. Per member state the amount of EU news has been measured by adding up the total number of EU articles in the available newspapers. From these newspapers, the number of EU articles were counted by using the acronym EU (or its equivalent in national languages) as search term. The adding up of news articles was done per six months in such a way, that the total number of EU articles could be compared with the outcomes of the consecutive Eurobarometer surveys that are measured every six months.


Newspaper readership

The regular Eurobarometer surveys do not contain questions about which newspapers people read, so one has to look for indirect indicators as circumstantial evidence. In this case, educational background was selected as a representative, yet indirect factor. It is assumed that higher educated respondents reflect the readership of the quality press, whereas their lower educated counterparts are more likely to read popular newspapers. This assumption can be tested ‘in reverse’ by investigating the education scores of readers of the selected newspapers in Eurobarometer 65 (spring 2006)77, the exceptional Eurobarometer survey in which actual newspaper readership was assessed. In the case of the UK, Eurobarometer 65 indicated that the percentage of lower educated readers of popular newspapers is 82%, with 18% higher educated readers. In the case of the quality press, the percentages are 40% lower educated and 56% higher educated, respectively. In the Dutch case, given the difference in character of both newspapers, it is assumed that the average AD reader is predominantly lower educated while the NRC reader has higher levels of education. This assumption convenes with data from the Dutch PCM newspaper group pointing in this direction as well: 70% of all AD readers have lower levels of education and 71% of all NRC readers have higher levels of education.78 In the British case, it can also be assumed that respondents of lower educational levels are more likely to read popular newspapers and that higher educated respondents can be linked to the quality press outlets.

Knowledge about the EU

The one variable in the consecutive Eurobarometer surveys that comes closest to assessing general levels of knowledge about the EU is formulated as follows:

‘Using this scale, how much do you feel you know about the European Union, its policies, its institutions?’

The answering options range from ‘know nothing at all’ (score: 0) to ‘know a great deal’ (score 10). This variable measures subjective, self-perceived knowledge and offers the only available indicator for EU knowledge at the absence of reliable, longitudinal survey results of more objective EU knowledge. The subjective knowledge question of the Eurobarometer survey first appeared in the fall of 1997 poll (hence the starting period of this test) and has been maintained ever since. This allows for analyzing the level of knowledge every six months, the fixed frequency of Eurobarometer research, over almost ten years of time.

77 This Eurobarometer survey is an exception to the rule. It specifically asks respondents to indicate which newspapers they read and therefore makes it possible to directly link readership to other questions concerning the EU. The actual readership of newspapers is studied in the regression analysis in the following part of this chapter, where this will be directly linked to levels of EU knowledge.

Spring 2006 is the last research period of this study, because in these months a Eurobarometer survey was held in which respondents were, as an exception to the rule, asked about their actual readership of newspapers. This serves as a valuable closing term for this first test and a good opportunity for the actual testing of the Knowledge Gap hypothesis in section 6.3.

Results of the preliminary analysis: developments in EU news and EU knowledge
In the following sub-sections, first the developments of EU publicity in the newspapers of the four countries concerned will be described. Next, the trends in self-perceived EU knowledge among citizens of the four member states will be presented. Subsequently, in section 6.2.3, it is assessed whether the development of volumes of EU news and self-perceived EU knowledge offers enough grounds for a subsequent test of the Knowledge Gap hypothesis.

Developments in the volumes of EU news in four member states during ten years
As a first step, in this section the volume of EU publicity is determined. Those articles of the pertaining newspapers are included and counted in which the EU is mentioned at least once. Next, all scores are added up per country in order to determine the volume of EU news per country. This is done per six months, in order to match the interval period of the Eurobarometer surveys.

The distribution of EU news over time in the four selected EU member states is presented in Table 6.2, with absolute numbers of the amounts of EU articles and with indexed numbers (for comparative reasons). The indexed scores are also represented in Figure 6.1. In each country case, the score of fall 1997 is set to 100 while the consecutive scores are calculated as percentages of this point of reference.

Table 6.2 Volumes of EU news in four EU member states (fall 1997-spring 2006); number of EU articles (absolute and indexed)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Year half</th>
<th>NL EU News in 4 newspapers</th>
<th>NL EU News index</th>
<th>DE EU News in 2 newspapers</th>
<th>DE EU News index</th>
<th>UK EU News in 4 newspapers</th>
<th>UK EU News index</th>
<th>FR EU News in 3 newspapers</th>
<th>FR EU News index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>1,627 100</td>
<td>2,376 100</td>
<td>1,713 100</td>
<td>2,045 100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>1,597 98</td>
<td>3,019 127</td>
<td>2,432 142</td>
<td>2,661 130</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>1,642 101</td>
<td>3,338 140</td>
<td>2,238 131</td>
<td>2,051 100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>2,063 127</td>
<td>3,805 160</td>
<td>2,784 163</td>
<td>2,992 146</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>1,802 110</td>
<td>3,443 145</td>
<td>2,568 150</td>
<td>2,499 122</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>2,061 127</td>
<td>3,961 167</td>
<td>2,896 169</td>
<td>3,849 188</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>2,161 133</td>
<td>4,163 175</td>
<td>3,255 190</td>
<td>4,585 224</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>2,186 134</td>
<td>5,658 238</td>
<td>3,247 190</td>
<td>4,163 204</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>2,100 129</td>
<td>4,029 170</td>
<td>2,563 150</td>
<td>3,703 181</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>2,271 140</td>
<td>4,404 185</td>
<td>3,334 195</td>
<td>4,147 203</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>2,330 143</td>
<td>4,173 176</td>
<td>3,428 200</td>
<td>4,114 201</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>2,542 156</td>
<td>4,330 182</td>
<td>3,642 213</td>
<td>3,790 185</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>2,462 151</td>
<td>4,712 198</td>
<td>3,640 213</td>
<td>3,335 163</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>3,088 190</td>
<td>6,015 253</td>
<td>4,237 247</td>
<td>4,804 235</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>3,096 190</td>
<td>5,258 221</td>
<td>3,227 188</td>
<td>3,575 175</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>3,297 203</td>
<td>5,517 232</td>
<td>3,879 226</td>
<td>4,632 227</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>2,567 158</td>
<td>4,786 201</td>
<td>3,858 225</td>
<td>3,483 170</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>2,489 153</td>
<td>5,034 212</td>
<td>3,407 199</td>
<td>3,772 184</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean 141 182 183 174

NL = the Netherlands; DE = Germany; UK = United Kingdom; FR = France.
N = 18 (periods of six months; parallel to the biannual Eurobarometer surveys)

Table 6.2 and Figure 6.1 report a clear growth of the number of EU-related articles in all countries over time. Some common lows (e.g., fall 2001, fall 2004, fall 2005) and highs (e.g., spring 2004, spring 2005) are visible. The lows (usually in the fall) follow upon a peak of attention caused by special events like the introduction of the Euro (January 2001), the 2004 enlargement of the EU and the election of the European Parliament (both in spring 2004) or the French and Dutch referenda about the EU Constitutional Treaty in spring 2005. The numbers also show that the amount of EU news in newspapers is quite different between countries. The German quality paper Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung alone publishes...
almost as much EU news as the sum of all EU articles of the selected newspapers in any other country. This concurs with the findings of Kevin (2003), who reveals a “large quantitative difference in coverage of Europe between the German sample and the rest” (Kevin, 2002, p. 56). She draws this conclusion for both the quality and the regional press in Germany.

The indexed scores of Table 6.2 also show that the growth rate of EU news in the UK and Germany is higher than that of France and the Netherlands in this ten-year period of time. This may be partly due to the referendum effect in France and the Netherlands. After a common peak in EU publicity during the spring of 2004 (enlargement; EP election) and the spring of 2005 (French and Dutch referenda), the amount of EU news decreased, but this tendency was stronger in France and the Netherlands than in the UK and Germany. Clearly, the attention peak in the advent of the referendum, ending with a solid Non and Nee, was followed by a sharp drop in publicity in France and the Netherlands. In Germany and the UK, the news peaks apparently are less incidental and allowed for a milder drop after the special EU events of 2004 and 2005. The calculation of the mean score of EU news distribution in the four countries shows a remarkable increase in volumes of EU news across the board. The mean volume of EU news is highest in the UK and Germany, closely followed by France, with the Netherlands following at some distance. All in all, this inventory of the development of EU news (with clear growth rates in all cases) offers sufficient possibilities for testing the Knowledge Gap hypothesis. In other words: now that it is evident that there has been a clear overall increase in EU news in all four countries concerned, is a clear change in EU knowledge of the publics in those countries also noticeable?

Developments in the levels of EU knowledge among citizens of four member states during ten years

After the assessment of the development of EU news over time, I will now subject the levels of EU knowledge in the four countries concerned to further analysis. This second step involves the Eurobarometer subjective knowledge variable ‘Using this scale, how much do you feel you know about the European Union, its policies, its institutions?’ For the purpose of this analysis, the mean score of all respondents is calculated per country. The scores of this variable (the indicator for EU knowledge) and the indexed scores are shown in Table 6.3, and the trends are visualized in Figure 6.2.

Table 6.3  Self-perceived EU knowledge in four EU member states (absolute and indexed scores; fall 1997-spring 2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Year half</th>
<th>Eurobarometer</th>
<th>NL knowledge</th>
<th>NL index</th>
<th>DE knowledge</th>
<th>DE index</th>
<th>UK knowledge</th>
<th>UK index</th>
<th>FR knowledge</th>
<th>FR index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997 Fall</td>
<td>EB48</td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>4.97</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998 Spring</td>
<td>EB49</td>
<td>4.72</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>5.03</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>107</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>EB50</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>5.07</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>101</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999 Spring</td>
<td>EB51</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>4.94</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>105</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>EB52</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>4.98</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>106</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000 Spring</td>
<td>EB53</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>5.06</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>4.34</td>
<td>106</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>EB54</td>
<td>4.80</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>5.37</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>4.61</td>
<td>113</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001 Spring</td>
<td>EB55</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>99</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>EB56</td>
<td>4.66</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>5.26</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>4.72</td>
<td>115</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002 Spring</td>
<td>EB57</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>5.01</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>4.34</td>
<td>106</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>EB58</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>4.88</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>4.56</td>
<td>111</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003 Spring</td>
<td>EB59</td>
<td>4.59</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>104</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>EB60</td>
<td>4.61</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>4.89</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>107</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004 Spring</td>
<td>EB61</td>
<td>4.87</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>4.95</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>108</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>EB62</td>
<td>5.08</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>4.96</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>103</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005 Spring</td>
<td>EB63</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>4.98</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>106</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>EB64</td>
<td>4.81</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>4.84</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>99</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006 Spring</td>
<td>EB65</td>
<td>5.46</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>5.09</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>4.49</td>
<td>110</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean 4.68 104 4.98 100 3.68 104 4.33 106
Table 6.3 and Figure 6.2 show that there is a clear increase of EU knowledge in all countries, except for Germany. The German numbers stay relatively stable over time. The explanation of the German exception could be that, overall, the volume of EU news in this country is much higher than in the other three EU member states. This might account for a situation of saturation of the German audience, also known as the ceiling effect (Gaziano & Gaziano, 1995). This effect indicates that, after a certain point, further increases of the amount of information do not contribute to the growth of knowledge anymore. The audience has received enough information and developed a satisfying level of knowledge. Apart from Germany, the Dutch and UK cases demonstrate the most convincing upward trend in EU knowledge, whereas the French case indicates a more modest increase.

Table 6.3 shows mean scores of EU knowledge that are slightly higher than 100 in France, the Netherlands and the UK. The mean difference score in the German case remains stable at the 100 level.

Similar to the results of amounts of EU news shown in Table 6.2, also here in Figure 6.2, some common trends are visible with highs (e.g., fall 2000, fall 2001, spring 2006) and lows (e.g., spring 2000, fall 2005).

Concluding remarks about the preliminary analysis
The determination and description of the development of both the volumes of EU news and self-perceived EU knowledge seem to support the idea that more EU news coincides with a gain in EU knowledge. In general terms and on an aggregate level, this appears to be the case in all countries with the exception of the German case, which shows no real increase or decrease of EU knowledge over time. In the Dutch, British and French cases, there are clear overall upward trends in EU publicity in the national press and also increases in self-perceived EU knowledge levels of citizens. In the German case, there is also a noticeable growth of the amount of EU news, but the knowledge levels stay relatively stable, which could be explained by the previously mentioned notion of saturation. All in all, the volumes of EU news and the levels of EU knowledge develop in the same direction, which is conditional for a further test of the Knowledge Gap hypothesis. Undoubtedly, the increase in the amount of EU news is much larger than that of EU knowledge, but this is quite common in Knowledge ap research (Gaziano & Gaziano, 1996). In general, it takes multiple units of publicity to contribute to an increase of knowledge by one unit. The next section will take the outcomes of this preliminary section to a higher level by moving from aggregate to individual levels, by including a wider variety of newspapers and readers, and by assessing a causal relationship through regression analysis.

6.3 Testing the Knowledge Gap hypothesis
After the preliminary analysis, resulting in outcomes that indicate both increases in EU news volumes and in self-perceived EU knowledge, it is now time to thoroughly test the Knowledge Gap hypothesis.

Data, method and measures
The subsequent test entails a cross-sectional study that enables us to make an in-depth analysis of factors that contribute to the level of knowledge achieved by several segments of the population. As indicated in the introduction to this chapter, this test has a wider cross-national range than the preliminary analysis does, with a selection of 39 newspapers from six EU member states, but its time frame is more limited: six months (January-June 2006). This test searches to go beyond the mere determination of common developments of volumes of EU news and levels of EU knowledge. Rather, it seeks to calculate the size and direction of the causal relationship between these two factors, with the volume of news serving as independent variable and the level of EU knowledge as dependent variable. This relationship will be assessed and tested step-by-step in four phases. First, the volume of EU publicity in the newspapers of the seven selected countries will be determined. Secondly, the level of self-perceived EU knowledge among citizens of the seven member states will be calculated. Next, the level of correlation between these two variables will be determined, and finally, a regression analysis will be made to determine if and to what extent the levels of EU knowledge can be ascribed to the volume of EU news. In this regression analysis, the co-variables education, interest and motivation will also be incorporated.
Volume of EU news and newspaper readership (independent variable)
The media data are derived from the newspaper database LexisNexis, as described in Chapter 5 (Method). A total number of 39 popular and quality newspapers from seven EU member states could be selected for this test. These newspapers are both available in LexisNexis and in the data of Eurobarometer 65 (variable D49C). The amount of EU articles of these 39 prominent newspapers represents the quantitative indication of EU news coverage from January to June 2006 (the independent variable). Similar to the preliminary analysis, all those articles have been selected in which the EU is mentioned at least once time.
The newspaper readership is determined by the following specific question of Eurobarometer 65 (spring 2006): Question D49C: ‘Can you tell me the daily newspapers, if any, that you regularly read, meaning at least three times a week?’. Eurobarometer 65 is an exceptional EB poll, in that it specifically asks what newspaper people regularly read. This allows for a direct determination of newspaper readership per respondent, linking this to all relevant variables in that survey, including the EU knowledge variable as described below. The selection of the total readership of the 39 newspapers yields a dataset of 3,243 respondents from seven EU member states, with an average representation of some 465 respondents per country.

EU knowledge (dependent variable)
The dependent variable is the level of EU knowledge of newspaper readers. For this analysis, the same variable is used as in the preliminary analysis (question D19 of Eurobarometer 65): ‘Using this scale, how much do you feel you know about the European Union, its policies, its institutions?’ As has been explained before, this knowledge factor is an indicator of self-perceived knowledge, not one of actual and factual knowledge. This variable is recoded into four categories, in order to eliminate indecisive answers and to reduce the amount of answering options (a scale from 0 to 10):
very low knowledge (scores: 0, 1, 2; N: 156);
fairly low knowledge (scores: 3, 4, 5; N: 1,089);
fairly high knowledge (scores: 6, 7, 8; N: 1,714);
very high knowledge (scores: 9, 10; N: 284).
The division of respondents among these four categories reveals that a large number of respondents position themselves in the two middle categories, whereas only a limited number of people ascribed themselves to be very knowledgeable or not knowledgeable at all. It appears that respondents find themselves to be more knowledgeable about the EU than is indicated by the outcomes of qualitative research as has been presented in Chapter 2. It seems that the self-determination of EU knowledge contributes to a more positive outcome than more objective, factual measurements would provide. The scores on the EU knowledge of Eurobarometer-respondents can be directly linked to newspaper readership and hence to data of the relevant newspapers about the amount of EU articles, as is promoted by Jerit et al. (2006).

Education/socio-economic status
The important co-predictive factor socio-economic status is accounted for by introducing the education variable. As indicated in section 6.1, education is regularly used in Knowledge Gap studies to account for both the ability to process information and for socio-economic status. In this test, Question D8 of Eurobarometer 65 is used: ‘How old were you when you stopped full-time education?’. This variable is divided by three values for educational level, as is suggested by Gaziano & Gaziano (1995):
lower educational level: stopped full-time education up to 15 years of age or has no full time education or does not know (N: 679);
middle educational level: stopped full-time education between the ages of sixteen and nineteen (N: 1,456);
higher educational level: stopped full-time education until older than 20 years of age or is still studying (N: 1,108).

Interest and motivation
Since scholars in their elaboration of the Knowledge Gap theory contend that motivational factors help improve the predictive power of the model, two variables are included in the model. They both function as indicators for engagement and motivation with regard to EU matters and politics in general. First, the Opinion Leadership Index of Eurobarometer 65 is selected. This index variable indicates how often and persuasively respondents engage in political discussions, combining the following two questions (variable C1):
‘When you get together with friends, would you say you discuss political matters frequently, occasionally, or never?’
‘When you hold a strong opinion, do you ever find yourself persuading your friends, relatives or fellow workers to share your views? Does this happen...?’
Both questions reveal the level of political involvement and interest that may in all probability also be present when the EU is at stake. The frequencies of the four values of this index variable are:
- very low Opinion Leader Index score (N: 490);
- fairly low Opinion Leader Index score (N: 968);
- fairly high Opinion Leader Index score (N: 1,267);
- very high Opinion Leader Index score (N: 518).
As a relevant second variable, the ‘access to information’ question 20 of Eurobarometer 65 is selected:
‘When you are looking for information about the European Union, its policies, its institutions, which of the following sources do you use? Daily newspapers?’ (variable 20.3)

79 A direct question about the self-expressed importance of the EU is not available in Eurobarometer 65. The two selected variables serve as indirect indicators.
This question displays the respondents’ preference for newspapers in search for EU news and expresses the weight that the respondents ascribe to the EU coverage by newspapers. The majority of the interviewees positively responded to this question, 1,949 in total (60%).

Assessing EU news and EU knowledge

In the following sub-sections, first the amount of EU publicity in all selected newspapers will be presented, with a distinction between newspapers with relatively high and relatively low volumes of EU news. Next, the correlation between volumes of EU news of the press and levels of EU knowledge of its readers will be calculated. Finally, a regression analysis is executed in which the size and direction of the possible impact of volumes of EU news on EU knowledge of newspaper readers is determined.

The amount of EU news in seven EU member states during spring 2006

The first step of this analysis results in a list of newspapers and their number of EU articles. The scores per newspaper show a large variation (see also Tables 6.4 and 6.5): from forty articles in the Dutch version of the free Metro to more than 3,400 articles in the German Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung. The list also reveals that the average score in one country can be quite different from that of another country. These findings correspond with the analysis of Kevin (2002), Norris (2002) and Pfetsch & Koopmans (2006), who point out that every country has its own media system and its own way of reporting about the EU. In order to weigh the influence of national EU reporting, an average score per country is made and newspapers are scored in a dichotomized way: above or below the national average. Along these lines, two lists are made.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>EU articles January - June 2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Netherlands</td>
<td>Telegraaf</td>
<td>480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Algemeen Dagblad</td>
<td>296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parool</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Metro</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>BILD</td>
<td>292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The United Kingdom</td>
<td>Daily Express</td>
<td>324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Sun</td>
<td>563</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Mirror</td>
<td>411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>L’Humanité</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ouest France</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>ABC</td>
<td>673</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>La Verdad</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>El Norte de Castilla</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>Irish Examiner</td>
<td>642</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Daily Star</td>
<td>650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>Kronen Zeitung</td>
<td>647</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.4 shows the absolute number of EU articles in European newspapers with relatively low levels of EU reporting. The newspapers are presented per country of origin. For example, the score of the Dutch Telegraaf of 480 means that, between 1 January 2006 and 30 June 2006, the Telegraaf has published 480 articles in which the EU was mentioned at least once. The total of 480 EU articles in six months can be equated with an average of eighty EU articles per month or around three articles on an average day. Most of the newspapers in Table 6.4 are tabloids, popular or middle-market newspapers. The EU news volumes indicate a tendency of popular titles in all countries to pay relatively little attention to the EU. Still, within this group with lower volumes of EU news there are noticeable differences between newspapers both within and between countries. The Irish and Austrian press and titles like ABC in Spain and The Sun in the UK display relatively high volumes of EU news in this category.
Table 6.5 Amount of EU articles in European newspapers with higher national volumes of EU news (January-June 2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>EU art. Jan-June 2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Netherlands</td>
<td>Volkskrant</td>
<td>637</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NRC Handelsblad</td>
<td>882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trouw</td>
<td>675</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Financieel Dagblad</td>
<td>1,071</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>TAZ</td>
<td>1,816</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Die Welt</td>
<td>2,744</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Süddeutsche Zeitung</td>
<td>2,323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fr. Rundschau</td>
<td>2,448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fr. Allgemeine Zeitung</td>
<td>3,425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The United Kingdom</td>
<td>Daily Telegraph</td>
<td>829</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Times</td>
<td>1,185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Guardian</td>
<td>953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Independent</td>
<td>901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Daily Mail</td>
<td>972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>Le Figaro</td>
<td>817</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Le Monde</td>
<td>545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Libération</td>
<td>863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>La Tribune</td>
<td>632</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>El País</td>
<td>2,522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>El Mundo</td>
<td>1,242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>Irish Independent</td>
<td>1,037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Irish Times</td>
<td>1,963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>Die Presse</td>
<td>1,959</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 23

Table 6.5 shows a picture similar to Table 6.4, but here it presents a selection of European newspapers with a relatively high amount (above average in the national context) of articles about the EU. Quality newspapers now dominate the chart. Compared with Table 6.4, the outcomes demonstrate that, across the board, the quality press in Europe devotes relatively more attention to the EU. This is a confirmation of findings of several other studies on this subject (e.g., Fundesco, 1996; Kevin, 2002; Pfetsch & Koopmans, 2006). Yet, the differences in volumes of EU news are large. The Dutch, French and British press score relatively low within this group compared to the German press and some other titles, such as El País in Spain, Die Presse in Austria and the Irish Times, which have numbers of EU articles that are two to three times higher.

A comparison of Tables 6.4 and 6.5 also demonstrates that the volume of EU news in some newspapers of Table 6.4 (relatively low volumes of EU news measured by national averages) surpasses the volume of EU news of some papers in Table 6.5 (the category of relatively high-scoring newspapers). Again, this indicates that the quantitative approach of EU news differs greatly from country to country: the number of EU articles in a popular Irish newspaper can be similar to the number of EU articles in a Dutch quality paper.

Connecting the volume of EU news to levels of EU knowledge (correlation analysis)

Now that the volumes of EU news per newspaper have been assessed, as a next step, these volumes can be linked with the levels of EU knowledge of newspaper-reading respondents. The step entails the analysis of the scores of individual respondents of Eurobarometer 65 instead of using aggregated scores. This should provide a more exact picture of the relationship between readership and EU knowledge. All respondents who indicate to be regular readers of the selected 39 newspapers are counted individually, allowing for the possibilities of reading more than one newspaper and being confronted with the sum of EU articles of several newspapers. This test uses a list of some eighty sets of possible confrontations with EU articles by readers of one or more selected newspapers, with a lowest score of 38 possible articles (respondents who only read the Dutch Metro) and a highest score of 8,169 EU articles (readers of various quality newspapers in Germany). For the sake of clarity, the eighty possible positions are reduced to four main groups of amounts of EU articles. In addition, the EU knowledge variable is dichotomized by dividing respondents into two categories: those with lower (very low and fairly low) and those with higher (very high and fairly high) levels of EU knowledge.

With four levels of EU news volumes and two categories of EU knowledge, eight possibilities for measuring the connection of ‘EU news’ and ‘EU knowledge’ through cross-tabulation are created. Following along the lines of the Knowledge Gap theory, it is expected that the exposure to EU news positively relates to levels of EU knowledge.

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1 In this way, the Dutch Metro respondent is ascribed to have possibly been exposed to 38 EU articles from January to June 2006, whereas the German reader of the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung is accredited with potential access to 3,425 EU stories in his preferred newspaper in the same period of time.
be quite knowledgeable about the EU. This percentage rises to 77% in the case of readers of newspapers in the section with the lowest news volumes indicates to conversely demonstrate a downward trend as EU publicity increases. A slight majority of respondents with lower levels of EU knowledge, the percentages are going up as the level of exposure to EU news increases. In the row of respondents with low EU knowledge, the percentages are higher educated newspaper readers benefit more than lesser engaged and lower educated respondents with middle or higher levels of education. The variable encompassing all includes only those respondents with higher levels of education.

Table 6.6 displays the outcomes of the cross-tabulation test. In the rows of respondents with higher levels of EU knowledge, the percentages are going up as the level of exposure to EU news increases. In the row of respondents with low EU knowledge, the percentages conversely demonstrate a downward trend as EU publicity increases. A slight majority of 55% of the readers of newspapers in the section with the lowest news volumes indicates to be quite knowledgeable about the EU. This percentage rises to 77% in the case of readers of the section with the highest amounts of EU articles. This trend, displayed in all four columns, is very consistent. The results convincingly underline the assumed connection between EU news and EU knowledge. The correlation score of this test is .402 (Eta² = .16) and indicates a large effect. All in all, the outcomes of this step convincingly support the assumption that levels of exposure to EU news positively correlate with levels of EU knowledge.

Calculating the size and direction of the impact of the volume of EU news on knowledge levels (regression analysis)
In the previous section, the development of the volume of EU press coverage and trends in the formation of EU knowledge among audiences in various member states were presented. In general, the results indicate that the volumes of EU news concur with the levels of EU knowledge. Yet, a clear causal relationship still has to be ascertained. For this purpose, in the final stage of this test of the Knowledge Gap analysis, the central relationship between the volume of EU news in European newspapers and the levels of EU knowledge among European newspaper readers is tested by means of a regression analysis. Following along the lines of the Knowledge Gap proposition, it is expected that EU news coverage enhances the levels of knowledge among news consumers in such a way, that more involved and higher educated newspaper readers benefit more than lesser engaged and lower educated newspaper readers do in terms of achieving higher levels of EU knowledge. By means of a regression analysis, it is possible to calculate the size and the direction of the impact of volumes of EU news on the knowledge levels of newspaper readers. Besides, it is possible and relevant to include additional variables in order to determine whether the central relationship between EU news and EU knowledge, controlled for level of education, is enhanced by covariates. As indicated in section 6.1, new developments in Knowledge Gap research have determined that additional factors with reference to political involvement and information-seeking behavior contribute to a better assessment of Knowledge Gaps (Gaziano & Gaziano, 1995). On the basis of the media and survey data described in the introduction of Test 2, the set-up for the regression analysis is made with an indicator for EU knowledge (dependent variable), the volume of EU news (independent variable), and the level of education as controlling variable. In addition, indicators for political involvement and information-seeking behavior are included as additional variables.

The basic proposition of this chapter is that the volume of EU news in newspapers contributes to the general level of knowledge of the EU among newspaper readers and that the knowledge levels of higher educated and more involved readers will increase more strongly than those of their lower educated counterparts. These assumptions are tested by means of a three-model regression analysis that enables us to calculate the relative impact of each of the variables and their interaction effects.

(1) Model 1: basic model with EU knowledge and volume of EU news

Regression equation: \( EU \text{ knowledge}_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{volume of EU news}_i) + \epsilon_i \)

First, the basic relationship between the amount of EU news and the level of EU knowledge is tested. This model determines the contribution of the mere volume of EU news by itself to the level of EU knowledge. It is expected that individual, subjective knowledge of the EU is positively related to the volume of EU news.

(2) Model 2: basic model with education and the interaction term EU news*education

Regression equation: \( EU \text{ knowledge}_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{volume of EU news}_i) + \beta_2(\text{education}_i) + \beta_3(\text{interaction term of EU news x level of education}) + \epsilon_i \)

In model 2, the basic relationship between EU news and EU knowledge is controlled for education. In addition, the interaction effect of the volume of EU news with education is tested. The introduction of the education factor is essential for the testing of the Knowledge Gap theory, as this theory presupposes a variety of information effects for audiences with different educational levels. This second model determines to what extent the level of education contributes to the link between EU news and EU knowledge. It is expected that higher educated respondents demonstrate relatively larger knowledge benefits from increases of EU news. In this analysis, two dummy variables are created. With respondents of lower levels of education set to zero, the variable education midhigh encompasses all respondents with middle or higher levels of education. The variable education high includes only those respondents with higher levels of education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EU Knowledge</th>
<th>EU articles 38-749</th>
<th>EU articles 750-1,499</th>
<th>EU articles 1,500-2,999</th>
<th>EU articles 3,000-8,169</th>
<th>TOTAL (in %)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very and fairly low EU Knowledge</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly and very high EU Knowledge</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total EU Knowledge</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eta score = .206 (EU Knowledge Dependent); Eta² = .16.
(3) Model 3: basic model, education levels as controlling variables and two motivational variables

Regression equation: \( \text{EU knowledge}_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{volume of EU news})_i + \beta_2(\text{education})_i + \beta_3(\text{interaction term of EU news x level of education})_i + \beta_4(\text{opinion leadership & press information})_i + \epsilon_i \)

In the third and final model, the two motivational factors are inserted in order to establish the contribution of these additional variables to the model. It is assumed that these indicators for involvement and motivation enhance the effects of the basic model.

Results of the three-model analysis
(1) Model 1: basic model with EU knowledge and volume of EU news.
The outcomes of the first model (see Table 6.13 for a comparative presentation of the outcomes of the three-model regression analysis) demonstrate that only 3% (R\(^2\) = .032) of the variance of the dependent variable (EU knowledge) can be explained by the independent variable (EU news). This low score may be due to the large number of respondents (N: 3,243) that enhances a large spread. The coefficient of the volume of EU news (\(\beta: .178; p < .001\)) shows that the amount of EU news positively and significantly influences the level of EU knowledge, albeit to a modest extent. This positive effect demonstrates that, in general terms, the volume of news does matter when knowledge about EU affairs is at stake.

(2) Model 2: basic model with education and the interaction term EU news*education.
In the second model, the education factor, crucial for Knowledge Gap research, is introduced. The predictive power increases to almost 7% (R\(^2\) = .069) with this model, but remains at a limited level. The independent variable, volume of EU news, enhances some of its influence (\(\beta: .217; p < .001\)). The two dummy variables of education (mid-high and high) indicate that the level of education does make a difference. With the respondents with lower levels of education set to zero, the coefficient of all other respondents with middle and higher levels of education, indicates an additional effect (\(\beta: .120; p < .001\)). If only the higher educated respondents are taken into account, this coefficient rises somewhat more (\(\beta: .131; p < .001\)).

These outcomes fully concur with the Knowledge Gap theory and the expectations of Hypothesis 1. The interaction terms of the volumes of EU news with both educational variables produce a negative and significant coefficient for people with middle and higher education, and a very modest positive, yet insignificant effect for higher educated respondents. The combined impact of volumes of EU news and educational levels yields no solid, noteworthy contribution to levels of EU knowledge.

(3) Model 3: basic model, education levels as controlling variables and two motivational variables.

As a final step, the two motivational factors, opinion leadership and press information, are added in the third model. Both variables help to enforce the predictive power of the model, which displays an explained variance of 17% (R\(^2\) = 174). The independent variable (EU news) demonstrates some loss of effect, but remains positively and significantly related to EU knowledge (\(\beta: .178; p < .001\)). Also the education factors and the interaction terms of EU news and educational levels play a slightly smaller role in this third model. The two motivational factors demonstrate to have the largest impact. Opinion leadership proves to be the strongest predictor of knowledge about the EU (\(\beta: .263; p < .001\)), followed at some distance by press information (\(\beta: .154; p < .001\)), the variable that indicates preference for newspapers when seeking information about the EU. The relatively large impact of these two motivational factors is in accordance with additions to the original model of the Knowledge Gap theory. In later studies, various researchers have concluded that personal motivations and circumstances may contribute to knowledge effects of the volume of information and of educational backgrounds. The outcomes of this analysis confirm these assumptions.

Table 6.7 Three-model regression analysis (standardized Bèta regression coefficients)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1 (basic model)</th>
<th>Model 2 (with education and interaction terms)</th>
<th>Model 3 (with two motivational factors)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Volume EU news</td>
<td>.18***</td>
<td>.22***</td>
<td>.18***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-High education</td>
<td>.12***</td>
<td>.10**</td>
<td>.10**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High education</td>
<td>.13***</td>
<td>-.11*</td>
<td>-.10*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EUnews*Mid-High educ.</td>
<td>-.11*</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.26***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EUnews*High educ.</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinion leadership</td>
<td></td>
<td>.26***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Press information</td>
<td></td>
<td>.15**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R²</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>3,243</td>
<td>3,243</td>
<td>3,243</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001.

Dependent variable: EU knowledge.

Table 6.7 shows an overview of the main outcomes of the three-model analysis. All in all, the three-model analysis shows mostly significant and positive effects of the explanatory variables involved. The total number of EU articles turns out to positively affect the level of EU knowledge, although the explanatory value in the third model (\(\beta: .18\)) is modest. Education also matters. With the level of low education set to zero, the two dummy variables mid-high education and high education both add an extra effect on knowledge levels. Looking at the basic variables of the Knowledge Gap hypothesis (knowledge, education and supply of information), the outcomes indicate that the level of knowledge about the EU is influenced both by the number of EU articles and by the level of education, which is supportive of the Knowledge Gap theory. The interaction terms of EU news and levels of education display less convincing and clear outcomes. The coefficients are partly negative and/or not significant. The most convincing elements in this final model are the motivational
factors information-seeking behavior and opinion leadership. The third model explains only 17% ($R^2 = 0.17$) of the variance in the dependent variable, which accounts for a smaller size effect. The unstandardized coefficient of the independent variable (volume of news) of 0.00005 (4.87E-005) indicates that when an average newspaper reader would read 1,000 extra EU articles per six months, his knowledge level about the EU would increase by 5% (0.05). An increase of one percent would demand some 200 extra articles in six months or 33 per month (just over one article per day). In other words, if the average European newspaper would publish an additional 33 EU articles per month or 200 articles per six months, this would help increase the level of EU knowledge of the average reader by one percent.

The regression equation per educational group

In a conclusive calculation, all unstandardized coefficients of the third model of the regression analysis are added up for all respondents according to their levels of education (lower-middle-higher). The coefficients of the EU news variable and of the interaction terms of EU news and levels of education are multiplied in this calculation by four (increasing) volumes of EU news. As indicated earlier in this paragraph, the respondents of Eurobarometer 65 may have been exposed to at least 38 and at most 8,169 EU articles in the selected 39 newspapers during the spring of 2006. This allows for eighty sets of possible confrontations with EU articles. For the purpose of calculating the regression equation for three groups with various educational levels, this large list is condensed to four volumes of EU news:

- low: 500 EU articles;
- low-mid: 1,000 EU articles;
- mid-high: 2,250 EU articles;
- high: 5,000 EU articles.

With three educational levels and four volumes of EU news, the calculation of the regression equation is executed twelve times. Following along the lines of the Knowledge Gap theory, it is expected that higher volumes of EU news yield a stronger effect on levels of EU knowledge of respondents with higher levels of education than on those of their lower educated counterparts.

Table 6.8 Calculation of the regression equation per level of education and volumes of EU news

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low EU news (500 articles)</th>
<th>Low-Mid EU news (1,000 articles)</th>
<th>Mid-High EU news (2,250 articles)</th>
<th>High EU news (5,000 articles)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>lower education</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>middle education</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>higher education</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table entries are aggregated coefficients of the regression equation; value range: -1.00 – 1.00.

Table 6.8 displays the outcomes of the calculations for the twelve described combinations of volumes of EU news on the one hand and level of education on the other. In all instances, an increase in the amount of EU news yields a higher level of EU knowledge. This means that all respondents, regardless of their educational background, benefit from more EU news when it comes to acquiring more EU knowledge. Yet, the lower educated respondents tend to benefit more than their middle and higher educated counterparts. Contrary to the expectations, lower educated respondents demonstrate the strongest increase in general knowledge about the EU when exposed to higher levels of EU news.

Figure 6.3 Impact of the volume of EU news on EU knowledge of three educational groups

Figure 6.3 shows how the increase in the volume of EU news clearly evokes a positive effect on the levels of EU knowledge of all three groups, with the largest effect in the case of lower educated respondents.
6.4 Conclusion and discussion
This chapter addresses the question to what extent the volume of EU news in the press has an impact on the levels of EU knowledge of newspaper readers. On the basis of the Knowledge Gap theory, it is expected that the volume of EU coverage in newspapers contributes to knowledge levels of newspapers readers and relatively more so in the case of higher educated readers. This expectation has been formulated in Hypothesis 1 in the following way:

Hypothsis 1
The volume of EU news contributes to higher levels of EU knowledge in such a way that more involved and higher educated newspaper readers gain more knowledge than lesser engaged and lower educated newspaper readers do.

In general, the findings of this chapter render support for the Knowledge Gap hypothesis. The preliminary analysis, with a longitudinal set-up and newspaper data from four member states, showed a clear and strong increase in the volumes of EU news in all cases. In addition, this test also revealed noticeable differences in press attention towards the EU within and between member states. The quality press overall produces larger volumes of EU news than the popular press does, while within these two groups there are also remarkable differences. The German quality press is by far the most ample reporter of European affairs. The UK acts as runner-up, while France and the Netherlands demonstrate modest scores. These findings concur with the outcomes of other studies (e.g., Kevin, 2002; Norris, 2002; Pfetsch & Koopmans, 2004) that indicate that the prominence of the EU in the media is strongly influenced by the media structure and press culture of each individual country.

Next to news volumes on EU affairs, also the level of EU knowledge has generally increased over time, although the increase in EU knowledge lags behind the increase in EU publicity in the press. Given the similar direction of developments of news volumes and EU knowledge, the findings of the preliminary analysis indicate that the context of European media and audiences offers enough grounds for a proper test of the Knowledge Gap theory. The various findings of the subsequent regression analysis reveal supportive evidence for the Knowledge Gap hypothesis. The outcomes of the first model regression analysis are modest when it comes to the two basic elements of the Knowledge Gap theory: the impact of the volume of news and the influence of education.

In addition, the outcomes of Model 2 demonstrate that higher levels of education yield higher effects on EU knowledge, as is assumed by the Knowledge Gap proposition and Hypothesis 1.

The most convincing elements in the regression analysis are the scores of the motivational factors information-seeking behavior and opinion leadership. The added motivational variables contribute to the explanatory value of the model. Opinion leadership accounts for the highest score in the shown model. It indicates that an active political attitude with a persuasive presence in discussions is the strongest predictor of the EU knowledge variable. Information-seeking behavior turns out to be a more moderate predictor. Respondents who actively look for information about the EU in daily newspapers tend to have higher levels of EU knowledge. The scores of opinion leadership and information-seeking behavior both support the findings of more recent Knowledge Gap research settings. In those studies, additional factors indicating levels of motivation and information seeking tend to contribute to the explanatory power of Knowledge Gap models. These findings are confirmed by the outcomes of this study.

The final calculation of the regression equation per educational group sheds a different light on the outcomes of the three-model regression analysis. The general outcome of the regression analysis points in the direction of stronger effects in case of higher levels of education. This fully concurs with the basic proposition of the Knowledge Gap theory. The results of the calculation per educational groups, however, unveil that lower educated respondents have the potential to gain relatively more EU knowledge when exposed to higher volumes of EU news. Although most citizens of lower educational backgrounds are not likely to read newspapers with high volumes of EU news, and therefore display lower levels of EU knowledge, their knowledge of EU matters would relatively increase a great deal if they would be confronted with larger volumes of EU news. The unstandardized coefficient of the independent variable (volume of EU news) indicates that it takes 200 extra EU articles per 6 months to increase the level of EU knowledge of respondents with 1% (as can be concluded from Test 2). Table 6.6 shows the numbers of EU articles of sixteen newspapers with lower volumes of EU news (mostly popular papers and tabloids, the probable sources of information for lower educated respondents). These newspapers have an average of around 400 EU articles per 6 months. If an average increase of 200 EU articles is needed to promote an increase of EU knowledge of 1%, this implies that popular newspapers would have to increase their amount of EU news by 50%. If the popular press really wants to contribute to higher levels of EU knowledge among its readership, e.g. an increase of 10%, then their volume of EU news should have to rise to 500%. This requires levels of reporting similar to those of the German quality press. It is not very likely that the popular press in Europe will have the intention to increase its EU coverage in such a way. In other words, lower educated newspaper readers have the potential to become relatively more knowledgeable about the EU when confronted with more EU news, but is takes a very large increase of EU news to realize this objective. The outcomes of the regression analysis also tell us that the effect of printing more EU news is strongly enhanced by motivational factors. The findings of this chapter imply that the crucial question is not simply how to print more EU news, but how to get Europeans more interested in the EU. Part One of this book has reported that European citizens often claim that, concerning the EU, they ‘don’t know’ and ‘don’t care’. Many Europeans display low levels of involvement and engagement in EU matters. In other words, Europeans will start to read and know more about the EU as soon
as they care to read and know more about the EU. What is needed is an increased sense of involvement and motivation in European affairs. If this is warranted, an increased level of EU coverage in the press can address the knowledge potential of especially lower educated citizens.

Chapter 7 EU news volumes and public appreciation of the EU

Introduction
Volumes of EU news do matter in the case of knowledge acquirement, as the previous chapter has demonstrated. In the present chapter, a second exercise will be done to explore the effects of volumes of EU news on European audiences. This time, the focus will move away from effects on knowledge levels, to impacts on the evaluative attitudes and opinions of audiences. Does the volume of newspaper coverage of the EU also affect the way European newspaper readers feel about the EU? This question is relevant when looking at the troublesome development of public support for the EU throughout Europe. Chapter 3 has reported how this development seems to counter the ambitions of the policymakers in Brussels. Declining public support may cause serious impediments for the future process of European integration.

As indicated in Part One, the theoretical propositions of Zajonc and the RAS model of Zaller are well-suited points of departure for exploring the impact of the mere volume of EU news on EU attitudes of European citizens. Both concepts explicitly deal with the question of exposure to information about a subject and the inclination to become more familiar with and appreciative of that subject. Janssen (2001) finds that the RAS model is well applicable in the European context and yields solid results. He therefore states: “Zallers RAS model should in our view serve as an important source of inspiration for future study of the public opinion concerning the EU” (Janssen, 2001, pp. 264-265; my translation, PtL). The research in this chapter follows this lead and is guided by the following question: to what extent does the mere volume of EU news articles affect the levels of EU appreciation of newspaper readers?

In this chapter the concepts of Zajonc and Zaller are tested in a longitudinal, comparative research set-up, ranging from 1994 to 2006 and including two country cases: the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. For both countries, public opinion data concerning the EU (Eurobarometer) will be analyzed and related to news data, representing the volumes of EU news in a set of prominent national newspapers. The test of the concepts of Zajonc and Zaller will be executed in two steps. The first step is descriptive and pertains to the data of the two separate country cases. The data are collected on an aggregate level and presented per country. The amount of EU articles per newspaper is summed up per six months in order to be able to compare newspaper data with Eurobarometer data that are published twice yearly. On this basis, it will be possible to draw conclusions about the extent of congruence between the two main variables per country: the volume of EU news on the one hand and the appreciation of the EU on the other. In the second step, the Dutch and British data are brought together in a joint database for the execution of a regression analysis, with the volume of EU news as independent variable and appreciation of the EU as dependent variable.
The relationship between both variables is tested on an individual basis and controlled for educational levels of respondents and for nationality. Education is relevant here, similarly to the previous chapter, as an indicator of socio-economic status and the competence to process information. When we aim to explain media effects on publics, the nationality variable sheds light on the possible impact of the national context.

In this chapter, section 7.1 discusses the main elements of the theoretical concepts of Zajonc and Zaller and introduces the hypothesis to be tested in this sub-study. Section 7.2 presents the research set-up of this chapter with the selection of data, methods and measures. In section 7.3, first the trends in EU coverage in the Dutch and British press are described and compared with the development of the public appreciation of the EU in both countries. Next, in section 7.4, the hypothesis is tested by means of a regression analysis. The final section, section 7.5, sums up the main findings of this chapter and presents the conclusion and a discussion with regard to the leading question and the testing of the hypothesis.

### 7.1 Theoretical orientation: Zaller and Zajonc

The RAS model of Zaller provides a prominent and often cited, but relatively sparsely tested theoretical concept about the way in which people arrive at the formation of opinions. Zaller (1970) stated that mass media reflect the elite discourse on politics and feed the public with political information. The model assumes that political systems often are complex and difficult to comprehend. Ordinary citizens generally depend heavily on mass media as their main source of information about relevant political systems. The professional elite of journalists, analysts, researchers, politicians and the like supplies the content of the media. The public subsequently develops considerations about political issues based on this informative input. These considerations include a cognitive and an affective component: a level of awareness and knowledge about a certain object and an evaluation. Zaller expected that citizens who are well-informed and engaged develop more stable political considerations, whereas less-informed and little involved people are liable to demonstrate more unstable attitudes. As Zaller put it: “highly aware people tend to be little affected” (Zaller, 1992, p. 19). And he concluded that “the moderately aware (are) most susceptible to influence” (Zaller, 1992, p. 281). These assumptions of Zaller’s constitute an elaboration of the work of Converse (1962, 1964). Converse’s study of the individual political attitudes of citizens displayed the use of an ideologically-based political belief system among the members of the political elite. Political concepts are evaluated and conceptualized in terms of ideological positions. Yet, these ideological positions are hardly reflected in the minds of the average (American) citizen when evaluating political matters. The general American public is segmented in various levels of conceptually-based political attitudes and opinions, ranging from citizens with a wide display of ideological concepts to citizens demonstrating a complete absence of an ideological analysis. In addition, Converse stated that the average citizen is only interested in a limited number of political matters and persons (institutes, issues, politicians). This implies that this citizen can be counted on to be part of the so-called issue public only in a limited number of cases, in which he is highly involved and which are considered to be of direct relevance. In those cases, the members of the issue public display more stable and well-motivated political attitudes and opinions with regard to the issue at stake. But for the most part and in most cases, citizens will belong to the large rest group, whose members are generally non-involved. Converse’s study demonstrated that members of the rest group produce unstable and less motivated attitudes.

The finding of Converse shed an interesting light on the question how to interpret the outcomes of political surveys. Which answers are related to fundamental beliefs and stable attitudes and which ones are merely ad hoc opinions? And if some expressions are basically ad hoc, are they also randomly given or are they constrained and expressed with (some) reference to other political matters, like party preferences or related political issues? This is where Zaller’s theoretical concept of the RAS model steps in. Zaller introduced the term opinion statement, which includes both more stable and more volatile opinions. Zaller promoted the idea that even unstable, ad hoc opinions are to some extent the outcome of a cognitive process. The process is started by the dissemination of news by the mass media, which is in turn fed by the elite discourse. According to Zaller, the audience members distinguish between accepted arguments or cues and not-accepted ones. The accepted arguments and cues will be remembered and stored as considerations. The non-accepted ones will be mentally deleted. Zaller developed four axioms for the construction of his theory (Zaller, 1992, p. 42):

**A1: Reception Axiom**

The greater a person’s level of cognitive engagement with an issue, the more likely she or he is to be exposed to and comprehend (i.e. “receive”) political messages concerning that issue.

**A2: Resistance Axiom**

People tend to resist arguments that are inconsistent with their political predispositions, but they do so only to the extent that they possess the contextual information necessary to perceive a relationship between the message and their predispositions.

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1 See e.g., Golbe (2006), who claims that “there is surprisingly little empirical research where the main purpose is to directly test Zaller’s theoretical framework”, p 2.

In socio-psychological studies, it is demonstrated that steady and frequent exposure to information as such may promote supportive attitudes towards the subject at stake (Zajonc, 1968; Bornstein, 1989). Zajonc executed several experiments in the 1960s in which people were exposed to unknown objects or other stimuli. After being exposed, the tested individuals were inclined to be more positive about the presented stimuli than they were about items that were similar but not presented. These tests demonstrated how mere exposure enhances familiarity. In following experiments with subliminal testing conditions the same effect was found. Zajonc therefore concluded that the mere exposure effect also takes place without people consciously knowing it. Following the principles of Zaller and of Zajonc, Meijer (2004), in her study of corporate reputations, found evidence that the amount of news coverage not only has an impact on the stability of attitudes, but also on the direction of the attitudes.

Translating all the above to the domain of opinion formation towards the EU, it should be noted that the EU is not a very familiar subject for European citizens, nor is it amply publicized by European media, as has been demonstrated in Part One. These circumstances are well-suited for testing the mere exposure effect. In this context of a “poor soil”, every drop of information could be of value. Following along the lines of Zajonc, it is expected that more EU news will contribute to more acceptance and appreciation of the EU. Furthermore, it is assumed, on the basis of the first axiom of the RAS model of Zaller, that Europeans with higher levels of knowledge of and involvement in the EU are more likely to receive and process EU news. This will contribute to more stable, less incidental attitudes towards the EU. Conversely, less informed and engaged individuals, who haphazardly consume EU information, will be prone to demonstrate more incidental, momentary opinions towards the EU.

In sum, the translation of the propositions of Zaller and Zajonc to the context of this study leads to the expectation that the quantitative supply of EU news is positively related to levels of EU appreciation of European newspaper readers. This effect is expected to be larger for those people who are less involved in and knowledgeable about the EU than of those who are more engaged and well-informed. This line of thought of Zaller and Zajonc is reflected in the following hypothesis, which is tested in this chapter:

**Hypothesis 2**
The volume of EU news in newspapers positively relates to appreciation of the EU by readers of these newspapers. This effect will be stronger for readers with lower levels of EU knowledge and involvement.
7.2 Data, method and measures

This section describes the research method and measures applied in this chapter. It relates to the general methodological framework as presented in Chapter 5 (Method). The time frame of this study is January 1994 up to and including June 2006. This longitudinal scope allows for discovering trends over time. The analysis starts in 1994 because from that year onwards, the name European Union became official, which makes it possible to use this name as a search term while selecting relevant articles from the newspaper database LexisNexis. LexisNexis only holds data of a limited selection of newspapers from the Netherlands and the UK in the chosen time frame. In both countries quality newspapers and popular newspapers were selected for the same purpose as has been described in Chapter 5: to represent both the more elitist and the more man in the street perspectives.

As indicated in the introduction of this chapter, the test of Hypothesis 2 will be executed in two steps. In the first, descriptive part, the news and survey data are collected per country and on an aggregate level. The development of the volume of EU news is compared with and linked to trends in public EU appreciation. Hence, the extent of congruence between the two variables is assessed in order to determine whether there is enough ground for a more specific test of this relationship. In the second step, the size and direction of this relationship is calculated on the individual level through the execution of a regression analysis, with the volume of EU news as independent and EU appreciation as dependent variable.

Volume of news, the selection of newspapers (independent variable)

In the case of the Netherlands, two newspapers are available in the given time frame: Algemeen Dagblad (a popular newspaper) and NRC Handelsblad (a quality newspaper). For the United Kingdom, a larger selection could be made thanks to the greater availability of newspapers that qualify. In contrast with the Dutch case, the UK case has a larger representation of newspapers in the chosen time frame in LexisNexis, although the availability of these four newspapers together is from1995 onward (one year later than the Dutch case). In the case study of the United Kingdom, two newspapers represent each category of newspaper (popular and quality). The Mirror and The Daily Mail both stand for the popular section of the British newspaper market. The Times and The Guardian do so for the quality segment. All those articles of the newspapers were selected and counted in which the European Union is mentioned at least once.

Readership of newspapers

Similar to the set-up of Chapter 6 and for the same reasons, the education variable is used here as well to serve as an indicator of readership in such a way, that lower educated respondents represent the readers of the popular press while their higher educated counterparts constitute the readership of the quality press.

EU appreciation (dependent variable)

Data about public opinion towards the EU were gathered from the consecutive Eurobarometer polls issued by the European Commission. The Eurobarometer poll takes place every six months, allowing for 25 polls in the chosen time frame January 1994 – June 2006. An important indicator for EU appreciation is the Eurobarometer-question ‘Do you think that our country’s membership of the EU is a good or bad thing?’ This question is frequently used as key indicator of EU appreciation in various studies (see e.g., Niedermayer & Sinnott, 1995; de Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2005; CPB/SCP, 2007). It is a standard question that features in all Eurobarometer polls, making it possible to compare responses over time. This question counts four answering categories: good thing, bad thing, neither good nor bad and don’t know. In the descriptive analysis, only the opposing options good thing and bad thing were used and the sum of these two scores was calculated, resulting in a difference score. This difference score was used as indicator for the level of appreciation of the EU. This indicator of appreciation of the EU has to be specified in scores for readers of the quality press on the one hand and readers of the popular press on the other.

7.3 Assessing and comparing developments in EU news and EU appreciation

In the following sub-section the Dutch case will be presented, followed by the case study of the United Kingdom. In both case studies, first the longitudinal development of the volumes of EU news are charted. Next, the developments in EU appreciation are depicted. Finally, both long-term trends are compared for congruence and grounds for a more specific and detailed test of the concepts of Zajonc and Zaller.

The Dutch case: the volume of EU news in Dutch newspapers and public opinion towards the EU in the Netherlands

Volume of EU news

Between January 1994 and June 2006, the two selected Dutch newspapers together produced over 30,000 articles in which the European Union was mentioned at least once.

4 See Chapters 5 and 6 for a more elaborate description of the selected newspapers.
Table 7.1 shows the volume of EU articles per newspaper for each period of six months and displays in the bottom the total numbers of articles per newspaper. The NRC newspaper published 22,682 EU articles; the AD newspaper 8,785 articles. The AD numbers show a gradual, clear decline in the amount of EU articles, whereas the NRC reveals some sharp ups and downs, but no apparent overall increase or decrease over time.

Table 7.2 displays the appreciation levels of higher and lower educated Dutch respondents over time. The EU appreciation scores of Table 7.2 show a relative stable average during the first years and a more volatile picture with clear ups and downs from 2000 onwards. Obviously, the start of the 21st century represented a period with extremely strong political and societal upheaval in the Netherlands relating to themes like immigration and the gap between politics and citizens. This period is tragically marked by the assassinations of the flamboyant political phenomenon Pim Fortuyn in 2002 and of film director Theo van Gogh in 2004.

Figure 7.1 is a graphical presentation of the numbers of Table 7.1. It shows that the discrepancy between both newspaper increases over time. Both newspapers share, however, some common ups and downs, most clearly during the spring of 1997, probably due to the fact that this was the time of the Dutch EU presidency, which ended with the signing of the Treaty of Amsterdam.

Appreciation of the EU
For the determination of the level of EU appreciation, the Dutch respondents of all Eurobarometer polls between January 1994 and June 2006 are divided into two educational groups (lower education and higher education) to be able to link them to newspaper data in a later instance. With this division, the lower educated respondents represent the readership of the popular press, whereas the higher educated respondents are labeled as readers of the quality press.

Table 7.2 displays the appreciation levels of higher and lower educated Dutch respondents over time. The EU appreciation scores of Table 7.2 show a relative stable average during the first years and a more volatile picture with clear ups and downs from 2000 onwards. Obviously, the start of the 21st century represented a period with extremely strong political and societal upheaval in the Netherlands relating to themes like immigration and the gap between politics and citizens. This period is tragically marked by the assassinations of the flamboyant political phenomenon Pim Fortuyn in 2002 and of film director Theo van Gogh in 2004.
Table 7.2 Appreciation of EU membership in the Netherlands per educational level, per six months (January 1994-June 2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Year half</th>
<th>Euro-barometer</th>
<th>EU appreciation Lower education</th>
<th>EU appreciation Higher education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>EB41</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>EB42</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>EB43</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>EB44</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>EB45</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>EB46</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>EB47</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>EB48</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>EB49</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>EB50</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>EB51</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>EB52</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>EB53</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>EB54</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>EB55</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>EB56</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>EB57</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>EB58</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>EB59</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>EB60</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>EB61</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>EB62</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>EB63</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>EB64</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>EB65</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>62</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Spring = January – June; Fall = July – December.
N = 25 (periods of six months).

These years of unprecedented national turmoil were paralleled by important and influential events on the European level, such as the introduction of the Euro, the 2004 enlargement and the 2005 referendum about the constitutional treaty. The confluence of these far-reaching and important societal and political events might well explain the zigzag development of appreciation scores.

Figure 7.2 Appreciation of EU membership in the Netherlands (January 1994-June 2006)
s94 = spring of 1994, etc.

Figure 7.2 transfers the numbers of Table 7.2 to a graphical presentation. It clearly displays the more stable phase from 1994 to 2000 and the years marked by volatile developments after 2000.

Calculating means and correlations of the Dutch case
The final step of this section entails the calculation of means and standard deviations of the news and appreciation data and the linkage of these data through a correlation analysis. This analysis will provide insight into the extent of fluctuations in EU news coverage and in EU appreciation over time in the Netherlands. Also, it will demonstrate whether and to what extent the two newspapers display a similar development in EU news attention over time, and whether this can be related to developments in EU appreciation of the two selected audience groups.
Table 7.3  Mean scores, standard deviation and spread of EU news per two newspapers and EU appreciation per two audience groups in the Netherlands (1994-2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>SD % (SD / Mean)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AD articles (popular)</td>
<td>351</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRC articles (quality)</td>
<td>907</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU appreciation lower educated</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU appreciation higher educated</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 25 (25 periods of six months).

Table 7.3 shows the mean scores and standard deviations of the four selected indicators. The column with the standard deviation in percentages shows the relative fluctuation per indicator, which allows for making comparisons. It displays that the EU news volume in the popular *AD* fluctuations more over time (31%) than that of the quality newspaper *NRC* (17%). Next, the level of EU appreciation of lower educated respondents is more volatile (16%) than that of higher educated interviewees (9%). All in all, the combination of the *AD* with lower educated respondents as their audience group proves to paint a less stable picture over time than does the other segment of this study, the *NRC* with higher educated respondents.

The British case: the volume of EU news in British newspapers and public opinion towards the EU in the United Kingdom

**Volume of EU news**

Between January 1995 and June 2006, the four selected UK newspapers produced 64,994 articles in which the European Union was mentioned at least one time. For this analysis the number of articles of *The Mirror* and *The Daily Mail* were added up to represent the amount of news about the EU of the popular/tabloid press in the UK. For the same reason the scores of *The Times* and *The Guardian* were added up to represent the volume of EU reporting of the quality press in the UK.

Table 7.4  Number of EU articles in four UK newspapers, summed up in two groups (popular and quality press) per six months (January 1995-June 2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year half</th>
<th>Mirror</th>
<th>Daily Mail</th>
<th>UK popular</th>
<th>Times</th>
<th>Guardian</th>
<th>UK quality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>424</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>653</td>
<td>689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>823</td>
<td>738</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>964</td>
<td>756</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>407</td>
<td>606</td>
<td>703</td>
<td>923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>526</td>
<td>912</td>
<td>1,017</td>
<td>755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>546</td>
<td>896</td>
<td>1,119</td>
<td>881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>541</td>
<td>642</td>
<td>1,183</td>
<td>1,141</td>
<td>923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>529</td>
<td>598</td>
<td>1,127</td>
<td>1,250</td>
<td>947</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>510</td>
<td>630</td>
<td>1,140</td>
<td>1,568</td>
<td>934</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>526</td>
<td>570</td>
<td>1,096</td>
<td>1,632</td>
<td>922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>857</td>
<td>713</td>
<td>1,570</td>
<td>1,601</td>
<td>1,056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>466</td>
<td>565</td>
<td>1,031</td>
<td>1,336</td>
<td>860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>571</td>
<td>635</td>
<td>1,206</td>
<td>1,541</td>
<td>1,132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>557</td>
<td>595</td>
<td>1,152</td>
<td>1,601</td>
<td>1,105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>407</td>
<td>804</td>
<td>1,211</td>
<td>1,220</td>
<td>966</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL** 8,564 11,021 19,585 25,892 19,517 45,409

Mean 372 479 851 1,126 848 1,974

Spring = January – June; Fall = July – December
N = 23 (periods of six months).

Table 7.4 offers an overview of the volumes of EU news in the two British press segments between 1995 and 2006. The two popular papers published a total of 19,585 EU articles; the quality newspapers produced 45,409 EU articles. Divided in intervals of six months, both categories of newspapers show a gradual growth on the amount of EU articles over time. Both groups of newspapers share some common ups and down in EU attention. The first period with a clear common low amount of EU attention is the fall of 2001, probably due to the fact that the news of the 9/11 attacks in the United States overwhelmingly dominated the newspaper columns of those months.

Later on, the spring of 2004 (big bang EU enlargement, EP elections) shows a peak in publicity, followed by a drop in the fall of 2004. Although the gap between quality press...
and popular press is smaller in some instances and wider in others, overall, the discrepancy between the two categories (with quality press paying considerably more attention to the EU than popular newspapers) stays intact.

Figure 7.3 Number of EU articles in two popular and two quality UK newspapers per six months (January 1995-June 2006)

Figure 7.3 is a graphical representation of the numbers of Table 7.4. It clearly displays the general upward trend of the amount of EU news in both press segments in the UK.

Appreciation of the EU

Also in the UK case, the trends in volumes of EU publicity are related to developments in public appreciation of the EU. Similar to the Dutch case, UK respondents of the Eurobarometer polls between January 1995 and June 2006 are divided into two educational groups (lower education and higher education). The scores of EU appreciation per educational level in the UK are remarkably lower than they are in the Dutch case, as Table 7.5 demonstrates.\(^5\)

Table 7.5 Appreciation of EU membership in the United Kingdom per educational level per six months (January 1995-June 2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Year half</th>
<th>Eurobarometer</th>
<th>EU appreciation Lower education</th>
<th>EU appreciation Higher education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>EB43</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>EB44</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>EB45</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>EB46</td>
<td>-6</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>EB47</td>
<td>-7</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>EB48</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>EB49</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>EB50</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>EB51</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>EB52</td>
<td>-0.3</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>EB53</td>
<td>-6</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>EB54</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>EB55</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>EB56</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>EB57</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>EB58</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>EB59</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>EB60</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>EB61</td>
<td>-5</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>EB62</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>EB63</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>EB64</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>EB65</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean 4 40

\(^{*}\) In some cases the score is below zero, because a balanced score is calculated with negative scores subtracted from positive scores. In the case of the UK, sometimes the negative appreciation score outbalances the positive one.
The common high scores all appear after sharp falls in the public appreciation of the EU. Apparently, the opinion climate in Britain can easily be affected in a very negative way, but this only happens occasionally, because every sharp drop is outbalanced by a strong restoration to previous levels of EU appreciation within a couple of months. Figure 7.4 visualizes the numbers of the indicators of Table 7.5.

Calculating means and correlations of the British case

Similar to the Dutch case, as a final step a calculation of the means and standard deviations of the British indicators (summarized in Table 7.6) is made.

Table 7.6 Mean scores and standard deviation of EU news per two press groups and EU appreciation per two audience groups in the UK (1995-2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
<th>SD % (SD / Mean)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EU articles popular press</td>
<td>851</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU articles quality press</td>
<td>1,974</td>
<td>465</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU appreciation lower educated</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>175%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU appreciation higher educated</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Table 7.6, the column with the standard deviation in percentages demonstrates a larger volatility in the EU coverage by the popular press (44%) than in the EU news of the quality press (24%). As far as the development of EU appreciation is concerned, the attitudes of

the lower educated respondents sharply fluctuate over time (175%), whereas their higher educated counterparts display more modest shifts throughout the years (25%). The combination of EU news in the popular press with the audience group of EU appreciation of lower educated respondents displays a very unstable picture over time, in contrast with the relatively stable development of the opposing combination of quality press with higher educated respondents.

Resuming the outcomes of the descriptive analysis

The unveiled developments of the volumes of EU news and the levels of EU appreciation in the Dutch and in the British case display some differences and commonalities. In both countries, the popular press had a considerable lower volume of EU news than the quality press in both countries does. Yet, over time, the UK press displayed a clear and similar increase of EU news of both newspaper groups, whereas the Dutch case was quite different, with a relatively stable supply of EU news of the NRC quality newspaper and a clear decrease in attention of the popular AD. In other words, the ‘gap’ in the volume of EU news between the popular and the quality press in the UK remained roughly the same over time, but increased in the Dutch case. The AD was the only newspaper in this study with a clear downward development in the supply of EU news. As far as the levels of EU appreciation are concerned, in both countries the scores of the higher educated respondents were much higher than those of their lower educated counterparts. The appreciation scores of both groups in the UK were quite volatile throughout the analysis period. In the Netherlands, these scores were relatively stable until the year 2000 and tended show more fluctuations in later years. The calculation of means and standard deviations demonstrates that in both countries, the quality press showed relatively more stability in the volumes of EU news than the popular press did. Similarly, the higher educated respondents displayed relatively more stable levels of EU appreciation than their lower educated compatriots did. Summarizing all these results, it is possible to draw a first tentative conclusion on the basis of the descriptive analysis with regard to Hypothesis 2. The findings discussed above and reported in Table 7.7 appear to be inconclusive towards the assumptions of the first part of the hypothesis (the volume of EU news contributes to supportive attitudes towards the EU). In both countries, the trends of volumes of EU coverage per press group display some similarities and some differences with the development in levels of EU appreciation of the corresponding reader groups. The only clear and positive link between the amount of news and audience attitudes in this respect is that of the Dutch AD and its lower educated Dutch respondents, with both developing in a negative direction.
This calculation will not be on the aggregate but on the individual level, for a more precise determination of effects. This study seeks to measure the impact of the volume of EU news on the appreciation of the EU among European audiences (dependent variable). As a concluding test of this chapter, the central relationship between EU news supplies and levels of EU appreciation will be tested by means of a regression analysis. The central proposition of this chapter is that the volume of EU news in newspapers contributes to the general level of appreciation of the EU among newspaper readers. It is expected on the basis of the propositions of Zaller and Zajonc that the volumes of EU news positively relate to the levels of EU appreciation of newspaper readers. It is also expected that lower educated respondents will demonstrate a larger impact of EU news on their levels of EU appreciation and that higher educated respondents display more stability in their EU attitude over time.

### Set-up and measures

The regression analysis is made on the basis of survey and media data of two countries: the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. To be able to test Hypothesis 2, the survey data of 25 consecutive Eurobarometers (nos 41 – 65; January 1994 – June 2006) of both countries are brought together into one database, with a total of 49,791 respondents. The measure for EU appreciation, the dependent variable in this analysis, is the EB variable that indicates whether respondents think that their country’s membership of the EU is a good or bad thing. In the previous sections the same variable has been used and a difference score has been calculated. Now, for the purpose of the regression analysis, the scores of the appreciation variable are recoded into −1 (EU membership is bad thing; frequency: 8,260), 0 (indecisive or no answer; frequency: 14,867) and 1 (EU membership is good thing; frequency: 26,664). Two additional variables from the consecutive Eurobarometer polls are selected that might affect the relationship between EU news and EU attitude: nationality and education. The scores for the comparative nationality variable are 1 for the Netherlands (25,282 Dutch respondents) and 0 for the United Kingdom (24,509 British respondents). The education variable is included on the basis of the assumptions of Zaller, that lower informed and involved respondents will be more affected by news information than their higher informed counterparts. The education measure is in some Eurobarometer studies recoded into a limited number of categories; in others there is a larger set of response options, ranging from 15 years, 16 years, 17 years, et cetera to older ages. For this analysis, the level of education is recoded into three scores: 0 for lower educated respondents (up to 15 years of age; frequency: 14,867); 0.5 for middle levels (16-19 years of age; frequency: 22,624) and 1 for higher educated respondents (20 years of age or older; frequency: 15,550). In addition, the volume of EU news, the independent variable, is gathered in a dataset on the

### Table 7.7 Summary of developments of EU news coverage and EU appreciation in both country cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coverage of EU news 1994/5-2006</th>
<th>EU appreciation readers 1994/5-2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>NL popular (AD)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volume: relatively low</td>
<td>Level: relatively low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trend: decreasing EU coverage</td>
<td>Trend: decreasing appreciation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(relatively volatile)</td>
<td>(relatively volatile)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NL quality (NRC)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volume: relatively high</td>
<td>Level: relatively high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trend: no clear increase or decrease in EU coverage (relatively stable)</td>
<td>Trend: decreasing appreciation (relatively stable)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>UK popular</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volume: relatively low</td>
<td>Level: relatively low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trend: increasing coverage</td>
<td>Trend: no clear increase or decrease in appreciation (relatively volatile)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(relatively volatile)</td>
<td>(relatively volatile)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>UK quality</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volume: relatively high</td>
<td>Level: relatively high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trend: increasing coverage</td>
<td>Trend: no clear increase or decrease in appreciation (relatively stable)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(relatively stable)</td>
<td>(relatively stable)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More promising is the finding that the supply of relatively higher and more stable levels of EU news coincides with relatively more stable EU attitudes of corresponding reader groups, as is stipulated in the second part of Hypothesis 2. These outcomes call for a more detailed and exact calculation of the basic relation between the volume of EU news and EU attitudes, which will be executed in the next section.

### 7.4 The impact of the volume of EU news on appreciation levels

The previous section has descriptively presented the development of EU press coverage and EU appreciation in the Netherlands and the UK within a time span of 12.5 years. Some clear developments in the selected indicators have been unveiled and described. In both country cases, the calculation of the standard deviations and correlations demonstrates some common links in the development of the indicators per country. This indicates that, on the aggregate level, there are some links between EU news and EU appreciation, which point in the direction of the propositions of Zajonc and Zaller, but not in all segments of the two cases. In addition to the preliminary descriptive test of the previous section, in this section the size and direction of the relationship of the main variables will be calculated. This calculation will not be on the aggregate but on the individual level, for a more precise determination of effects. This study seeks to measure the impact of the volume of EU news (independent variable) on the variations in appreciation of the EU among European

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6. Indicator question: ‘Do you think that our country’s membership of the EU is a good or bad thing?’ This question appears in all 25 Eurobarometer polls.

7. Indicator question: What is your nationality? Please tell me the country(ies) that apply(y).

8. The education variable is included on the basis of the assumptions of Zaller, that lower informed and involved respondents will be more affected by news information than their higher informed counterparts. The education measure is in some Eurobarometer studies recoded into a limited number of categories; in others there is a larger set of response options, ranging from 15 years, 16 years, 17 years, et cetera to older ages. For this analysis, the level of education is recoded into three scores: 0 for lower educated respondents (up to 15 years of age; frequency: 14,867); 0.5 for middle levels (16-19 years of age; frequency: 22,624) and 1 for higher educated respondents (20 years of age or older; frequency: 15,550). In addition, the volume of EU news, the independent variable, is gathered in a dataset on the
basis of the calculation made in the previous sections. This dataset contains the number of EU articles per newspaper group (quality and popular) per country and per six months (the frequency of Eurobarometer polls). The volumes of EU news in the Netherlands range from the lowest amount of 158 to the highest number of 1,305 EU articles (a mean amount of EU articles: 704 per newspaper per six months). In the United Kingdom, the lowest and the highest numbers of EU articles are 181 and 2,706, respectively, with an average amount of EU articles of 1,362. Consecutively, the Eurobarometer data are combined with this news dataset. Similar to the previous sections of this chapter, the readership of the quality press is represented by higher educated respondents and that of the popular press by lower educated respondents. In this analysis, the respondents are linked (per country and per six months) to the pertaining volumes of EU articles of newspapers in such a way, that higher educated respondents are related to the amount of EU news of quality newspapers and lower educated respondents to the volume of EU coverage of popular newspapers. This way, for the two main groups of respondents (higher and lower educated individuals) the volume of EU news is determined to which they are potentially exposed in six months time. The merging of 25 Eurobarometers polls with the newspaper data makes it possible to test the relationship between EU news and EU appreciation on the individual level.

The regression analysis is executed in four models, in order to determine the relative impact of each of the variables and their interaction effects.

(1) Model 1: basic model with EU appreciation and the volume of EU news.
Regression equation: EU appreciation = β0 + β1 (volume of EU news) + ε
The first model entails the basic relationship between the independent variable volume of EU news and the dependent variable EU appreciation. This test is about determining whether EU news by itself matters at all. It is expected that individual appreciation of the EU is positively related to the volume of EU news.

(2) Model 2: basic model with two control variables:
Regression equation: EU appreciation = β0 + β1 (volume of EU news) + β2 (education) + β3 (nationality) + ε
In the second model, the basic relationship is controlled for nationality (does country context matter?) and for education (does the level of education and cognitive ability matter?) in order to determine if and to what extent this basic relationship is influenced by these two variables. The nationality variable allows for the possibility to also make cross-national comparisons within the international context of the EU. The education variable is relevant for the determination of variation of effects between higher and lower educated respondents. The second part of Hypothesis 2 states that people with lower levels of cognitive involvement are expected to be more susceptible to the effects of volumes of news. To be able to test this assumption, the education variable is split into three levels: respondents with lower, middle and higher educational backgrounds.

(3) Model 3: basic model, control variables and interaction effect volume of EU news* education:
Regression equation: EU appreciation = β0 + β1 (volume of EU news) + β2 (education) + β3 (nationality) + β4 (volume of EU news*education) + ε
The interaction effect of volume of EU news with the educational levels is tested in Model 3, which deals with the combined effect of reception of information with cognitive levels. This interaction effect relates especially to the first axiom of the Zaller’s RAS model, according to which cognitive predispositions are linked with the reception of information. Thus, it is expected that the interaction of news and education will yield an extra increase in the size of the coefficient of interaction term with higher educated respondents.

(4) Model 4: basic model, control variables, interaction terms and lagged appreciation:
Regression equation: EU appreciation = β0 + β1 (volume of EU news) + β2 (education) + β3 (nationality) + β4 (volume of EU news*education) + β5 (11. EU appreciation) + ε
A lagged analysis (lagged EU appreciation) is made as a fourth test, to analyse the effect of previous attitudes on the present EU attitude. This serves as an indicator of the volatility of the respondents in their appreciation of the EU. This also relates to the assumptions of Zajonc and Zaller, who both expect people with higher educational level to display a more stable attitude, as is stipulated in the second part of Hypothesis 2.

Results of the four-model analysis
(1) Model 1: basic model with EU appreciation and the volume of EU news.
The findings of the first basic model (Table 7.8 reports the comparative display of the results of the four-step analysis) indicate that the predictive power of this model is quite weak, with a low explained variance of 2% (R² = 0.020).
This relatively low score is not uncommon in an analysis with only one variable and a large frequency score (N: 49,791), which accounts for a large spread. The coefficient of EU news, the independent variable (β: -.014; p < .001), shows that the amount of EU news does contribute to the level of EU appreciation (dependent variable), but only to a limited extent. Besides, this effect is negative, implying that an increase in the amount of news lowers a fraction of EU appreciation. The effect is in accordance with the proposition of Hypothesis 2 that EU news affects EU attitudes, but its negative direction is in contrast with the expectations.

(2) Model 2: basic model with two control variables.

In the second model, the addition of two covariates, nationality and education, enhances the level of explained variance. This model explains 16% (R²: 0.159) of the variance in the dependent variable (EU appreciation). The independent variable, volume of EU news, loses much of its predictive power and becomes much less significant with a standard error of .097 (β: -.012). In addition to the volume of news, the covariates education and nationality play a larger role in explaining the variation of the dependent variable EU appreciation in the second model. Both variables significantly and positively affect the level of EU appreciation. Nationality is the most influential factor in this model (β: .320; p < .001). The coefficient indicates that respondents with a Dutch nationality tend to be considerably more supportive of the EU than their counterparts from the United Kingdom are (UK respondents set to zero). Although this is not stipulated in Hypothesis 2, the general set-up of this study is to also look for variation among member states and analyze the impact of national factors.

Here, the national element clearly plays a role. The education variable also proves to be a significant predictor. A higher educational level of respondents yields a higher impact on the level of EU appreciation. With the coefficient of lower educated respondents set to zero, Model 2 indicates that the coefficient for people with a middle and higher educational level reveals a positive effect (β: .079; p < .000), where the coefficient for only higher educated news consumers adds an extra effect (β: .121; p < .000). This demonstrates that a higher level of education generally generates a higher level of EU appreciation. Model 2 shows, in accordance with the propositions of Zaller, that educational levels co-influence the level of impact of information.

(3) Model 3: basic model, control variables and interaction effect ‘volume of EU news*education’.

In the third model, with the inclusion of the interaction term volume of EU news*education the explained variance increases only slightly (R²: .161). In comparison with the second model, the predictive value of the independent variable EU news ameliorates somewhat, while its significance also increases with a standard error of .062 (β: -.025). The nationality variable loses a fraction of its predictive power (β: .314; p < .001). The coefficient of the educational level indicators develops in different directions. Middle-high education becomes slightly stronger as covariate (β: .115; p < .001). The coefficient of higher education indicates a lower addition of effect when compared with Model 2 (β: .026; p < .05). The coefficients of the interaction terms of volume of EU news with the education factors display results in different directions. The interaction term EU news*mid-high education contributes in a limited and negative way (β: -.048; p < .01), whereas the interaction term EU news*higher education reveals a noteworthy positive effect (β: .121; p < .001).

(4) Model 4: basic model, control variables, interaction terms and lagged appreciation.

The fourth model introduces the impact of lagged EU appreciation to determine whether previous attitudes towards the EU play a role in predicting present supportive attitudes. This can be seen as an indication for the (in)stability of levels of EU appreciation among Europeans. The coefficients of Model 4 show that this lagged term is by far the strongest predictor in the model (β: .251; p < .001), followed by nationality (β: .126; p < .001) and educational levels. The coefficients for volume of EU news and the two interaction terms of news and educational level display very limited and insignificant levels of predictive power.

Table 7.8 Regression analysis with EU appreciation as dependent variable (outcomes: standardized Bèta regression coefficients)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1 (basic model)</th>
<th>Model 2 (with covariates)</th>
<th>Model 3 (with interaction term)</th>
<th>Model 4 (with lagged EU appreciation)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Volume EU news</td>
<td>-.14***</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationality NL</td>
<td>.32***</td>
<td>.31***</td>
<td>.13***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Higher education</td>
<td>.08***</td>
<td>.12**</td>
<td>.04**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher education</td>
<td>.12***</td>
<td>.03*</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EUnews*Mid-HighEduc</td>
<td>.05**</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EUnews*HighEduc</td>
<td>.12***</td>
<td>.04**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lagged EU appreciation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.25***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R²</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>49,791</td>
<td>49,791</td>
<td>49,791</td>
<td>49,791</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*: p < .05; **: p < .01; ***: p < .001.
Dependent variable: EU appreciation.

For education two dummy variables are used: mid-high education includes all respondents with middle and higher levels of education; higher education includes all respondents with higher levels of education.

Nationality is a dummy variable; Dutch respondents are coded 1 and British respondents are coded 0.
The regression equation per educational group in both countries

On the basis of the coefficients of Table 7.12, a final calculation is made in which for both countries, The Netherlands and the United Kingdom, all respondents are divided into groups with three levels of education (lower-middle-higher). Also, per country, three levels of EU publicity (minimum-average-maximum) are calculated on the basis of the descriptive inventory of this chapter. Finally, all unstandardized coefficients are aggregated in the regression equation in such a way, that for each educational level the unstandardized coefficient of the EU news variable and the interaction terms of news and educational level are multiplied by the minimum, average and maximum volume of EU news, resulting in nine possible combinations per country. This exercise demonstrates how individuals with various levels of education respond when confronted with varying levels of EU news. This enables us to calculate what the effect will be when, for instance, lower educated respondents, predominantly readers of newspapers with lower amounts of EU news, are exposed to higher levels of EU publicity.

Table 7.9 and Figures 7.5 and 7.6 summarize and visualize these outcomes.

Table 7.9 Calculation of the regression equation per level of education and EU news volumes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NL Min. EU news</th>
<th>NL Mean EU news</th>
<th>NL Max. EU news</th>
<th>UK Min. EU news</th>
<th>UK Mean EU news</th>
<th>UK Max. EU news</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>lower educated</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>middle educated</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>higher educated</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table entries are aggregated coefficients of the regression equation; value range: -1.00 – 1.00.

NL = the Netherlands.
UK = United Kingdom.

In both countries, the higher educated respondents display a slightly upward trend in supportive attitudes towards the EU when exposed to increasing levels of EU news (from minimum via average to maximum). Lower and middle educated respondents demonstrate a decrease in EU appreciation when confronted with more EU news.

Figures 7.5 (the Netherlands) and 7.6 (United Kingdom) display that the general tendency per educational group in both countries is similar, although the average level of EU appreciation in the Netherlands is considerably higher than it is in the UK.
The completion of the regression equation per educational group and level of EU news coverage partly confirms and partly rejects the expectations of Hypothesis 2. The confirmation is that higher educated respondents in both countries show more limited changes in appreciation than their middle and lower educated counterparts do. This difference in levels of attitudinal change is in accordance with the second part of Hypothesis 2 (higher educated people are expected to demonstrate more stable attitudes). Yet, the negative direction of attitudinal change of middle and lower educated respondents undermines the expectations of Hypothesis 2. Respondents of these latter groups respond negatively to an increase of news, where a positive effect was expected. The calculations confirm the earlier findings of this chapter that more EU news enhances the level of EU appreciation among higher educated respondents. Conversely and in contrast with Hypothesis 2, respondents of lower and middle levels of education display lower levels of EU appreciation when confronted with higher volumes of EU news.

7.5 Conclusion and discussion
This chapter focuses on the question whether the volume of EU news in the press affects the supportive feelings of the newspaper readers. Following along the lines of the RAS model of Zaller and the assumptions of Zajonc, it is expected that the volume of EU coverage in newspapers contributes to appreciative EU attitudes of newspapers readers, and relatively more so in the case of lower educated readers.

**Hypothesis 2**
The volume of EU news in newspapers positively relates to appreciation of the EU by readers of these newspapers. This effect will be stronger for readers with lower levels of EU knowledge and involvement.

In general, the findings of this chapter demonstrate effects of the volume of EU news on the public EU appreciation, but in a different way than was expected.

**Descriptive analysis**
The first, descriptive analysis demonstrates that the quality press in both countries devotes more attention to the EU than the popular press. These findings concur with the results of other studies on this subject (e.g., Fundesco, 1996; Kevin, 2002). Furthermore, both the quality and the popular segment of the press in the UK display a clear increase in EU coverage over time. The Dutch quality paper NRC shows a modest average increase in EU news in 12.5 years time, whereas the popular Dutch AD is the only newspaper in this chapter with a decrease in EU coverage. There was a clear peak in EU attention in most newspapers in the years 2004-2005 with the confluence of several major EU developments, such as the 2004 enlargement, the 2004 EP elections and the wave of referenda on the Constitutional Treaty in 2005. De Vreese (2003) and Peter (2003) also documented peaks in attention for EU affairs during eventful episodes. Surprisingly enough and in contrast with the other newspapers, the AD’s coverage of the EU demonstrates an opposite trend by falling back from an average of 75 EU articles per month in the mid-1990s to a mere thirty articles around 2005. In comparison, The Times in Britain climbed from 100 EU articles per month in 1995 to more than 250 in 2005. All in all, the EU has become more prominent in the British press, whereas the development of EU coverage in the Dutch press paints a blurred picture, with only a slight increase in the case of the NRC and a clear decrease in the case of the AD. Despite the common EU agenda of Brussels, newspapers editors between and within the two countries show different levels of interest and attention when responding to and reporting about EU matters. This relates to the findings of de Vreese, who found that news coverage of the EU is challenged by “the perceived complexity of the issue, the lack of interest from peers and editors internally and the audience externally” (de Vreese, 2003, p. 74). Each newspaper makes its own choices in publishing less or more EU articles and in following the EU agenda more punctually or more casually.

The attitudes towards the EU in both countries are clearly more positive among higher educated respondents (the target group of the quality press) than they are among lower educated people (popular press). This outcome corresponds with general findings as described in Chapter 3: generally, higher educated respondents in Europe demonstrate more supportive attitudes towards the EU than their lower educated counterparts do. None of the selected audience groups per country displays a clear increase of EU appreciation over time. The trends in EU attitudes are generally more stable among higher educated respondents and more volatile among their lower educated counterparts. This finding completely concurs with the statement of Zaller that “highly aware people tend to be little affected” (Zaller, 1992, p. 19). Zaller’s statement relies on the axiom that people with higher levels of education and involvement sample from a richer and wider supply of news and develop more stable political attitudes.

**Regression analysis**
The outcomes of the regression analysis demonstrate that (with all the Dutch and British data combined and individually measured) the impact of the volume of news on levels of EU appreciation is visible, yet modest, and points overall in a negative direction. In other words, an increase in EU news by and large contributes to a moderate decrease in EU appreciation among newspaper readers. This general outcome goes against the common assumption that more publicity as such leads to more acceptance of the news item at stake. The two controlling variables, nationality and educational backgrounds, tend to have far stronger explanatory power. The outcomes of the regression analysis implicate that individual opinions towards the EU are strongly influenced by the national opinion climate.
The main conclusion of the regression analysis is that the amount of EU news does affect all reader groups, but the size and the direction of the effect vary. Lower and middle educated readers are more affected, and in a negative way, than higher educated readers are, who display a limited positive effect. These findings are partly supportive of the assumptions of Zajonc and the RAS model of Zaller. Only the higher educated respondents completely live up to the expectations by demonstrating both a positive and a modest response to the EU news coverage. Contrary to the first part of Hypothesis 2, people with middle and lower educational backgrounds display a decrease in EU appreciation when confronted with more EU news. Following along the lines of the work of Zajonc and Zaller, a positive effect was foreseen for all audiences, with even a larger positive effect for people with lower and middle levels of education. For the latter groups, the effect is indeed stronger than it is for their higher educated counterparts, but the direction is negative. This constitutes a refutation of the first part of Hypothesis 2 (direction of the effect) for those two educational groups and a confirmation of the second part (size of the effect) for all three groups.

The testing of the hypothesis suggests that appreciation and levels of stability in EU appreciation over time can be related to trends in EU news coverage, but to a limited extent. Education, as indicator of individual comprehension and information processing competence, and the collective factor of nationality seem to constitute an individual-collective combination with far stronger explanatory potential. And last but not least, the lagged term of EU appreciation proves to have the strongest predictive power for present EU appreciation. All in all, the volume of EU news does matter, but only in a modest way and in various directions.

**Levels of education as crucial factor**

Education proves to be the crucial factor for determining the size and direction of attitudinal effects in relation to volumes of EU news. In concurrence with the RAS model of Zaller, the higher educated reader is used to digest a higher and more constant flow of EU news than the lower educated newspaper reader. This makes his outlook on the EU more stable than the outlook of his lower educated countrymen, against the background of a collective, national level of EU appreciation.

People with lower and middle levels of education become less supportive of the EU when confronted with more EU news. Here, the assumptions of Zajonc and Zaller fall short. These two audiences display no increase in positive attitudes and familiarity towards the EU in response to more EU news. Despite the general and profound lack of knowledge about the EU (as described in Chapter 2), an increase in the volume of EU news does not lead to more familiarity and appreciation. The reason behind this may be that the tests of Zajonc involve rather simple and neutral topics, such as symbols and signs (Zajonc, 1968), whereas the EU is considered to be a complex and peripheral subject (Janssen, 2001) which does not allow easy familiarization. Apparently, an increase in EU news does not encourage people to learn more about the EU and to become more appreciative. It rather seems to make them feel and think that there is something wrong with the EU. These outcomes point in the direction of the Elaboration Likelihood Model of Petty and Cacioppo (1986). According to this model, two routes can lead to attitudinal change: a central route in which the receiver actively and rationally weighs information, and a peripheral route in which circumstantial factors and cues (emotional elements, formats, attention cues) play a key part. Higher educated and more involved people display a central, substantive evaluation of information and display more solid attitudes, whereas lower educated audiences react in a peripheral way, demonstrate a lower need for cognition and display more temporary, volatile attitudes (Pol et al., 2007). The confrontation with publicity of a complex and unpopular news item such as the EU more likely leads most people to criticize and reject the EU rather than to study and embrace it.

In addition, it should be noted that the effects of news as described above may not only be caused by the amount of news, but also by the content of the news. If the volume of EU news increases and the content is generally negative (as is conferred by scholars such as de Vreese, 2003 and Norris, 2002), then this might contribute to the explanation why many groups in society respond in a negative way to EU news. The influence of news content on European audiences will be further addressed as main topic in the next two chapters.

**Final remark: attitude gap**

Remarkably, the main effects disclosed in this chapter are quite similar in the Netherlands and in the United Kingdom, despite the vast difference in general outlook on the EU between these countries. Dutch respondents consistently demonstrate high levels of EU appreciation, whereas their British counterparts are generally fairly negative (as is also demonstrated in Chapter 3). The development of volumes of EU news does not enhance the positive perspective of the Dutch or the negative view of the British. The size and direction of the effects are quite similar in both countries and therefore less nationally based, but strongly linked to the level of education. If one considers the level of education to be an indicator of socio-economic status and involvement in society (in accordance with Zaller, 1992; Gaziano, 1995), this chapter demonstrates that the volume of EU news enhances the
supportive feelings of the higher strata in society and deteriorates the EU appreciation of lower and middle groups. Therefore, in addition to the Knowledge Gap as described in the previous chapter, there also seems to be an Attitude Gap. More EU news enlarges the gap in EU attitudes between the higher educated audiences on the one hand and audiences with lower and middle levels of education on the other.

The practical implication of the findings of this chapter are, that if European officials, national politicians, journalists and editors wish to reach out to European citizens by means of a mere increase of the volume of EU news, they may paradoxically cause the counter-productive effect of lower levels of EU appreciation, especially among those groups they want to reach out to the most.

PART THREE

APPROACH 2: ISSUES IN EU-NEWS

With a flourish of a silver fountain pen yesterday, Gordon Brown signed away Britain's sovereign right to set its own laws. At 3.26pm the PM added his name to the new Treaty of Lisbon. And in the blink of an eye, a proud nation was betrayed. His signature - and that of sidekick David Miliband - handed huge chunks of our lawmaking powers to gleeful unelected EU bureaucrats in Brussels.

(The Sun, December 14, 2007)
Chapter 8  Issues in EU news and public definition of the EU

Introduction

The conclusions of the two previous research chapters of Approach 1 indicate that the volume of EU news does matter. More EU news makes the reader of quality newspapers more knowledgeable as well as more appreciative of the EU, whereas the popular readership reports only a slight increase in knowledge, but yet a noticeable decrease in EU appreciation. It may not be quite unexpected that more news leads to more knowledge, albeit at various levels per reader group, but how to further explain the opposite effects for both audiences when the volume of news is linked to appreciation? This difference in impact of news on the affective levels of the two reader groups is intriguing and calls for further investigation. It invites to go beyond the mere amount of news and study the content of EU news as additional explanatory factor. Chapter 4 has reported that various inventory studies of EU news coverage indicate that newspapers all over Europe present the EU in different ways. The topics and issues that are addressed by European newspapers in their reports about the EU may well yield fruitful information for a deeper understanding of the different effects of the press agenda on the two main reader groups.

For this reason, the emphasis of Approach 2 in this book is on the selection of EU issues by the European press and its effects on European audiences. The effects of issue news are studied from two related theoretical points of views: second-level agenda setting in Chapter 8 and priming in Chapter 9. Both orientations are based on the assumption that the selection and presentation of specific attributes of an object in the news affect the perception of that news object by audiences. The concept of second-level agenda setting focuses on the transfer of salience from the media agenda to the public agenda in such a way, that the more specific aspects and attributes of a news object are reported about in the media, the more those attributes are reflected in the way the public describes and defines that news topic. The priming concept takes this assumption one step further by ascribing an affective, evaluative influence to issue news. The concept of priming states that issues and attributes related to a news topic also have an impact on the evaluation of the news object at stake. This set-up of Chapters 8 and 9 furthermore relates to the concept of compelling arguments of McCombs and Ghanem (2003). According to this concept, some attributes of news objects are so influential that they not only affect the way the audience defines the topic in terms of attributes and associations (second-level), but also affect the public outlook on the topic in the news as such (first-level).
Two levels of the transfer of salience from media agenda to public agenda

Figure 8.1 is a schematic presentation of the possible effects of the media agenda on the public agenda.

Translated to the setting of this book, Chapter 8 studies the extent to which the selection of EU issues by newspapers affects the way in which the EU is described and defined by newspaper readers. It is focused on assessing possible second-level effects. The term EU definition refers to the associations of the public with regard to the EU. It sheds light on the way the EU is described by audience groups, which may be induced by the presentation of the EU in the press. The Introduction of this book and Chapter 5 have already indicated how EU definition serves well, next to EU knowledge and EU appreciation, as an indicator for the public climate towards the EU. This first chapter of Approach 2 analyses the relationship between the press agenda and the public agenda in a more limited, cross-sectional setting. Chapter 9 goes beyond the scope of Chapter 8 by moving from the impact of EU issues on the EU definition towards the impact on the general appreciation of the EU by reader groups. Chapter 9 deals with the question to what extent does the selection of issues in EU news articles affect the definition of the EU by newspaper readers?

This leading question is approached in this chapter in a cross-sectional setting. In a six-month period of time, from January to June 2006, eleven newspapers in three EU member states have been analysed. The three countries, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, represent countries with different newspaper cultures and a divergent public opinion climate towards the EU. LexisNexis provides ample data of both popular and quality newspapers in the three countries. Similar to the previous research chapters, these two press segments are selected to represent opposing journalistic approaches as well as different social strata in society. The selection of European news issues in the press segments is related to data about the public definition of the EU derived from Eurobarometer 65 (survey of spring 2006).

Section 8.1 presents an introduction to the agenda-setting theory and elaborates on the distinction between first- and second-level effects. This theoretical orientation aims at clarifying the expected connection between press selections and public response and hence the set-up of the research in this chapter. Section 8.2 describes the data, method and measures of this sub-study. Next, as a first stage of the research, section 8.3 offers an overview of the presentation of EU issues and their prominence in the selected European newspapers. This inventory assesses the press agenda of the newspaper segments in the three countries. Subsequently, section 8.4 depicts the description and definition of the EU by European publics. This section thus offers an overview of the public agenda towards the EU, determined per reader group in Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. In section 8.5, the data of issue coverage (press agenda) and public definition (second-level public agenda) are brought together in an attempt to determine their interconnection. Finally, section 8.6 summarizes the main findings of this chapter and draws conclusions with regard to the leading research question and the hypothesis of this chapter.

8.1 Theoretical orientation: second-level agenda setting

Approach 2 of this book follows along the lines of the related theoretical concepts of
agenda setting and priming. These concepts deal with the matter of the transfer of salience from mass media to audiences and therefore fit well into the second approach of this book. This section will first present a brief sketch of the agenda-setting theory that has laid the foundation of other related concepts, such as framing and priming.

**Agenda setting**

The well-known statement of Bernard Cohen (1963): “If the press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about” summarizes the way in which agenda-setting theory should be interpreted. After a time in which studies of limited effects were dominating communication theory, a new way of analyzing media effects was introduced in which media were not thought to have a direct impact on people’s minds, but rather a subtler, indirect influence. This new line of thinking was instigated by shifts in theoretical paradigms in social psychology with the emergence of cognitive psychology (Severin & Tankard, 2001). Both the agenda-setting hypothesis and cognitive psychology are concerned with the way in which people actively construct images and representations of the world. McCombs and Shaw (1972) introduced the concept of agenda setting in their famous Chapel Hill study. By comparing the outcomes of both a media content analysis and a public survey, McCombs and Shaw tried to assess the relationship between the media agenda (what are the most important issues in media coverage) and the public agenda (what are the most important issues in public opinion). McCombs and Shaw found positive correlations between both agendas and concluded that the mass media exerted a significant influence on what their audience considered to be the major issues. They denoted this effect with the term agenda setting. Since the Chapel Hill case, many studies have taken this concept as a starting point and contributed to the broadening and deepening of the concept of agenda setting. All with a common denominator: the transfer of information and salience. According to Dearing and Rogers (1996), a majority of these studies show positive results, affirming the agenda-setting effect.

**First- and second-level agenda setting**

The object under observation in agenda-setting research (and the selection of relevant news documents) can be either a set of relevant news issues or a single news issue. In the case of multiple news issues, the emphasis lies on determining and comparing the relative prominence and weight of the issues in news coverage and linking those outcomes with the awareness and weighted (order of) importance of these issues in public opinion. Single news issue analysis focuses on the way in which an issue is described and presented by the use of specific issues or attributions, such as frames and angles, the tenor of the message, occurrence of actors, aspects and attributes of the issue, et cetera. The results of the issue analysis are linked to the way the audience defines and/or evaluates that specific issue. Effects in multiple issue analysis are labeled first-level agenda setting: media have the capability of determining and prioritizing the topics that people think about. Second-level agenda setting occurs in the case of a single issue analysis. It allows for the media to exert a higher level of impact on the audience by influencing the way in which the audience defines and evaluates an issue. In the words of McCombs and Estrada (1997, p. 23):

> Beyond the agenda of objects, there is also another dimension to consider. Each of these objects has numerous attributes – those characteristics and properties that fill in and animate the picture of each object. Just as objects vary in salience, so do the attributes of each object.

The second-level agenda-setting theory represents a further elaboration of the agenda-setting hypothesis. This second-level focus states that certain attributes or characteristics of a topic are more prominent in the news than others and that this prominence is reflected in the associative mindsets of the public. By their selection of attributes, the media influence the way in which the topic or object is defined by the public: the more salient certain attributes in the news, the more these attributes are used in the public definition of this issue. In this way, the media not only have an impact on what the man and woman in the street think about, but also on how they ought to think about a specific news object.

Since this study only deals with news about the EU and not with comparative news about other objects, an analysis of second-level agenda setting is opportune. Translated to the setting of the EU and following along the lines of the concept of second-level agenda setting, it is assumed that e.g., a flow of news articles about fraud of EU officials might thus lead to public associations of the EU with corruption, whereas the accentuating of economic topics in EU news contributes to a public definition of the EU in economic terms. This way of thinking is conveyed to the hypothesis that pertains to the strand of research of this chapter:

**Hypothesis 3 (second-level agenda setting)**

The amount of coverage of specific EU attributes in newspapers is positively related to the impact of these attributes on the definition of the EU by the readers of the newspaper.

**8.2 Data, method and measures**

Chapter 5 (Method) has extensively elaborated on the rationale behind different ways of selecting specific EU issues in Approach 2 of this study. In the next chapter (Chapter 9), a pre-selection of EU issues will be made within the context of a longitudinal set-up, allowing for covering trends in reporting and public opinion over time. The present chapter
revolves around second-level agenda setting and the public definition of the EU. This point of departure requires data that indicate how European audiences define the EU. For the same reason as discussed in the Chapter 5, Eurobarometer 65 (spring of 2006) proves to be a well-suited survey, since it contains exceptional measures of the actual readership of newspapers. This implies that newspaper data can be directly related to the survey data of those respondents who indicate to regularly read the pertaining newspaper. Similar to the previous sub-studies, also in this chapter a division is made between popular and quality newspapers and their reader groups. Readers who indicate not to read any of the presented newspapers are excluded from the analysis. Readers who read a popular newspaper in addition to a quality newspaper are ranked in the quality segment, because they are confronted with more substantial coverage of the EU, which is a characteristic of the quality segment. Furthermore, Eurobarometer 65 includes a specific variable with various options for describing and defining the EU. This allows for a one-shot study (January-June 2006) in which survey data related to EU definition and newspaper readership can be directly linked to the actual coverage of EU issues by the newspapers that are read by Eurobarometer respondents.

Selection of newspapers and relevant articles
In order to match the survey period of Eurobarometer 65, a selection of European newspapers and EU articles is made that covers the time frame of January to June 2006. The selection of newspapers is made on the basis of their availability in database of LexisNexis, their representation in Eurobarometer 65 and their classification as popular or quality newspaper (as has been done in the previous chapters). Only three EU member states could meet these criteria: Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. Table 8.1 shows the selected newspapers per country and per segment. For Germany, only one popular newspaper is selected due to the absence of a second national popular newspaper. The two Dutch popular newspapers are the most widely read subscription papers in the Netherlands, yet they are less sensation-driven than the German Bild and the British Mirror and Sun are. This is due to the fact that there is no genuine tabloid press culture in the Netherlands.93 All articles in these selected newspapers have been identified in which the EU is mentioned at least once. Furthermore, Eurobarometer 65 includes a specific variable with various options for describing and defining the EU. This allows for a one-shot study (January-June 2006) in which survey data related to EU definition and newspaper readership can be directly linked to the actual coverage of EU issues by the newspapers that are read by Eurobarometer respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Press segment</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>The Netherlands</th>
<th>United Kingdom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Popular press</td>
<td>Bild</td>
<td>De Telegraaf</td>
<td>The Mirror</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>292 EU articles</td>
<td>480 EU articles</td>
<td>411 EU articles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3,425 EU articles</td>
<td>882 EU articles</td>
<td>953 EU articles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Die Welt</td>
<td>De Volkskrant</td>
<td>The Times</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2,744 EU articles</td>
<td>637 EU articles</td>
<td>1,186 EU articles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.1 reports a large variation in the number of EU articles between newspapers. These clear differences appear in and between countries. Quality newspapers in all three countries pay more attention to the EU than popular papers do. These differences are especially very prominent in Germany. This is mainly due to the very large numbers of EU articles in the German quality press. All these findings concur with the quantitative results of press reporting of the two qualitative strands of research of Approach 1 of this book. For this strand of research, all the EU articles of the selected newspapers in Table 8.1 are screened for the possible presence of one or more of the optional descriptive terms of the EU definition question of Eurobarometer 65 (see Table 8.2). Many of the options are formulated with just one keyword, which is literally used as search term within the corpus of EU articles. For other options that are phrased with a couple of words, one or two most appropriate catchwords are used in the search. In all instances, the given keywords are registered and accounted for if they occur in a press article at least one time.

Describing and defining the EU: issue selection
For the purpose of this chapter, those questions in Eurobarometer 65 are relevant that relate to meanings and associations of the EU among respondents. Question 14 serves this purpose most closely with the following formulation: ‘What does the EU mean to you personally?’ This closed question has the answering options as shown in Table 8.2. The respondents are allowed to select more than one topic.94 The answering options display a remarkable resemblance with some of the narratives of the qualitative studies as described in Chapter 2. The top half of Table 8.1 displays issues that correspond with the opportunity narrative. Respondents are likely to select these topics if they associate the process of

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93 Della Porta (2003) has stated in a comparative study of press cultures in Western Europe: “the United Kingdom has a clear tabloid culture within the newspaper market. More than 50% of the circulation of daily newspapers can be regarded as boulevard press. This is only contrasted by a circulation share of 14,1% of the quality press. (...) Germany ranks second regarding the tabloidization of its newspaper culture. Tabloid papers have a share of 22,1% of the total circulation, quality papers of 7,11% (…) The Netherlands (…) do not have a boulevard press at all”.

94 Respondents have selected 3 to 4 topics on average.
European cooperation with benefits or chances. The bottom half reflects the threat narrative, with topics that highlight some problematic and negative aspects of the EU.

Table 8.2 Answering options Q14 (Eurobarometer 65) with added connotations: ‘What does the EU mean to you personally?’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answering options</th>
<th>Connotation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peace</td>
<td>Opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prosperity</td>
<td>Opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy</td>
<td>Opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social protection</td>
<td>Opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom to travel, etc.</td>
<td>Opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural diversity</td>
<td>Opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stronger say in the world</td>
<td>Opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Euro</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bureaucracy</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>Threat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waste of money</td>
<td>Threat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of cultural identity</td>
<td>Threat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime</td>
<td>Threat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No border control</td>
<td>Threat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: connotation added by the author.

The Euro and the Bureaucracy issues are labeled as neutral, because these topics reflect various sentiments, as has also been demonstrated in Chapter 2. Some people associate the Euro with high prices and loss of influence; others see the common currency as very practical when travelling and as a contribution to economic stability. The recent Euro-crisis (2011), which has put the Euro in a more negative and contested position, reveals that the connotation of an issue can change over time. By the same token, Bureaucracy is considered by some to be automatically negative, whereas others indicate Bureaucracy as something that naturally comes with larger organizations. Chapter 2 indicates that the Bureaucracy issue relates closely to the institutional narrative, which is not necessarily negative or positive. Therefore, as is also indicated in Chapter 5, in this analysis this topic is seen as a meta-issue (Pfetsch, 2004), i.e. an inevitable topic that is part and parcel of the EU without a specific positive or negative connotation. This division into three groups of associative issues (opportunity, threat, neutral) constitutes categories of issues that will help to relate the meaningful associations towards the EU to similar representations of the EU in the press.

Linking the selection of EU issues to the definition of the EU by newspaper readers

As discussed in Chapter 5 (Method) the matter of causality is difficult to tackle in this line of research. A comparison of respondents who have been exposed to EU news with respondents who have not, might produce different outcomes that may be interpreted as agenda-setting effects. This sub-study tries to approximate this situation by means of a cross-sectional analysis, in which a distinction is made between the popular and the quality press on the one hand and between readers of both newspaper groups on the other (e.g., de Boer & Brennecke, 2003, pp. 202). Thus, two media agendas and two public agendas can be linked and compared. However, due to the one-shot set-up of this analysis, it is not possible (e.g., through autoregression) to relate possible outcomes to developments in the past. Figure 8.2 contains a graphical representation of the test set-up of this chapter. It is expected that, per press segment, the EU issues in the press coverage are positively related to the EU associations of its reader group (popular segment: relation B; quality segment: relation C in Figure 8.2). In addition, it is assumed (i.a. on the basis of the findings of Chapter 4 indicating that European media present their EU news in various ways) that the popular segment produces different EU attributes than the quality segment does. This difference might

Figure 8.2 Graphical presentation of the research set-up of this chapter

contribute to explaining why popular press readers respond differently to EU news than quality press readers do. These expectations will be tested for the selected issues in all three countries. As a final remark, it should be stressed that possible strong interconnections between the EU issue selections of both press segments (relation A) would limit the explanatory room for second-level agenda-setting effects.
8.3 Second-level media agenda: prominence of Eurobarometer topics (EU attributes) in European newspapers

This section assesses the frequencies of press coverage of the topic options of Eurobarometer 65 (question 14) in the selected newspapers. The findings are presented per country and per press segment (popular and quality newspapers). For an impression of each category (Opportunity, Neutral and Threat), also the sums of all opportunity, neutral and threat issues are calculated. The percentages are added as well for comparative reasons.

Table 8.3 reveals that there are large differences in issue prominence within and between countries. Some topics are quite prominent in all three countries (there is a clear and common Top 3: Euro, Waste, No border control) and some topics have low frequencies across the board (Prosperity, Social protection, Cultural diversity, Bureaucracy). Within the Top 3, there are still remarkable differences per country for the topics Euro and Waste. The Euro has a very high score in Germany, a high frequency in the Netherlands, but a relatively low score in the UK, probably because the UK is not a member of the Euro-zone. The topic Waste is far more prominent in the UK press than it is in German and Dutch papers. With regard to the other issues, the relatively high score of Crime in the UK is noticeable. The same goes for the Freedom to travel topic in the Netherlands.

The comparison between the quality and the popular press, based on the overview of Table 8.3, reveals some interesting findings. Quality papers in all three selected countries publish more EU articles with reference to the topics Peace, Democracy and Stronger say (all opportunity issues). Popular newspapers pay more attention to the topics Euro and Crime. The other nine topics do not show clear differences in prominence between popular and quality newspapers (issues: Prosperity, Social protection, Cultural diversity, Bureaucracy) or they show a mixed picture (issues: Freedom to travel, Unemployment, Waste, No border control, Loss of cultural identity).
The aggregation of topics into three categories (opportunity, neutral, threat) yields a more solid outcome. A loglinear analysis of the percentages of the rows in bold of Table 8.3 demonstrates a significant interaction effect between the press segments on the one hand and the connotation of the selected attributes in their EU coverage on the other. In other words, the editorial profile of the newspaper (popular or quality) significantly relates to the selection of specific EU attributes (opportunity, neutral or threat). This effect is more or less similar in each country. In all three countries, quality newspapers pay relatively more attention to opportunity issues than the popular press does. Popular newspapers put a larger emphasis on neutral topics and on threat topics. Interestingly enough, the German quality press pays relatively more attention to threat EU topics than the popular press does. This last outcome may be affected by the extremely high score of the Euro issue in the German popular press, which is labeled as neutral in this chapter but which has over the years been covered in an increasingly negative way by the Bild tabloid in Germany.

Correlations
The concluding step of this section is the search for correlations between the prominence of EU issues in the two newspaper groups of the three selected countries. In this analysis, the amount of selected EU issues of each press segment per country, as presented in table 8.3, is compared with and related to the issue selections of the other segments in all three countries. This step might disclose the amount of consonance of European newspapers in their selection of issues related to the European Union and therefore serves as an indication of the strength of relationship A in Figure 8.2. In short: to what extent do newspapers display a common media agenda with regard to the EU and EU issues?

Figure 8.3 visualizes the assessed correlations. The thicker lines indicate a strong significant relation (significant at the 0.01 level) and the thinner lines a moderate significant relation (significant at the 0.05 level). Figure 8.3 shows that in all three countries the coverage of the mentioned EU issues in the popular and the quality are strongly correlated. This indicates a firmly consonant press agenda per country. The Dutch popular press is the only newspaper group with strong significant correlations with all other five groups. Apparently, the Dutch popular press represents a middle position in between the quality press in the three countries on one hand and the tabloid press (in the UK and Germany) on the other. This coincides with the findings of della Porta (2003) and Kevin (2002). The correlations between the Dutch quality newspapers and the two German press groups are strongly significant, whereas their relation with the UK news groups is moderately significant. Both UK newspaper groups have moderately significant links with the Dutch and German quality press. The consonance of the EU issue selection of the Dutch and the German press is stronger than the link of the UK press with either the Dutch or the German press is.
The only non-significant relations in Figure 8.3 are the one between the German popular press and the British quality press and the one between the British and German popular press. The first mentioned non-significant relation highlights the large contrast in approach and media culture between the two mentioned exponents (UK vs Germany; quality vs tabloid press). The second non-significant relation entails the two tabloid segments of this analysis. Apparently, tabloids across borders have no common approach towards the EU, but make their own non-related choice of EU topics.

**Overall impression: newspapers and their coverage of EU issues**

All in all, the analysis of the presence and prominence of the Eurobarometer topics in European newspapers presents some interesting outcomes. First, there is large variation in the amount of news about the EU both within and between countries. Secondly, despite this variation, there is a clear Top 3 of EU topics in all newspaper groups: Euro, Waste and No border control. These three topics can be categorized as neutral or more negative. Next, apart from the more negatively labeled Top 3, the opportunity EU topics are relatively more prominent in quality newspapers than they are in popular outlets. And finally, the selection of EU issues in all newspaper groups appears to be strongly interrelated, with the exception of the two tabloid groups: there is no significant link between the German and the British popular press. This implies that relation A in Figure 8.2 can be interpreted as fairly strong, but the widely read tabloids in the UK and Germany mark a strong, not negligible exception.

### 8.4 Second-level public agenda: readers of the selected newspapers and their definition of the EU

After the assessment of the press agenda regarding the EU in the previous section, the focus of this section is on the defining EU associations of readers of the selected newspapers (second-level public agenda). Eurobarometer 65 (spring 2006) makes it possible to distinguish between respondents who indicate to be regular readers of certain newspapers. This allows us to ultimately link their response to the representations of the EU in the newspapers they frequently read. In this section, the EU associations of respondents are presented per country and per press segment, similar to the division made in the previous section. In this way, the two agendas of the reader groups can be related to the media agendas of the two press segments in the following sections of this chapter. The issues are presented individually as well as in categories of opportunity, neutral and threat associations.

#### EU definitions per country and per press segment

All respondents of Eurobarometer 65 are selected who indicated to be regular readers of the selected newspapers of the three countries at stake. The outcomes of question 14 of Eurobarometer 65 of all the selected respondents are registered.

Table 8.4 offers an overview of the scores per EU topic of the readers of popular and quality newspapers per country. Here also, the sums of all opportunity, neutral and threat issues are included in absolute numbers and in percentages (presented in bold). The scores in Table 8.4 show a fairly even spread of answers across the board. There is no clear overall Top 3 of issues. The topic Freedom to travel marks the relatively highest score, whereas Social protection has the lowest total percentage. Per country only a few topics indicate a relatively higher or lower score in comparison with the other two countries. In Germany, Unemployment and Crime (two threat topics) are more prominent, while Freedom to travel presents a relatively low score. In the Netherlands, the issues Prosperity and Stronger say are mentioned more often. This might be caused by the fact that the Netherlands is economically and politically less strong than Germany and the UK are, possibly causing public weariness of the influence of larger member states to play a role. The Dutch respondents.
also pay relatively less attention to the Waste topic. The UK respondents do not show a relatively lower score on any of the topics, compared with the German and Dutch respondents. The most outstanding comparative UK score is found for the topic Loss of cultural identity. This outcome coincides well with the frequently described critical and reluctant position of the British vis-à-vis Europe. The aggregation of topics into categories of opportunity, neutral and threat issues paints a more distinctive picture. Similar to the previous section, also here a loglinear analysis of the combined data of the three categories (in the bold rows of Table 8.4) indicates a significant interaction affect between readers of newspapers groups and their EU associations. In each country, quality press readers have a higher score on positive associative topics than readers of the popular press have. Vice versa, popular newspaper readers in each of the three countries display a higher score on threat issues than their quality news reading counterparts. The neutral category hardly allows for differences between the press segments per country.

Finally, in this section the correlation analysis of the defining associative scores of all reader groups is executed. This step parallels the correlation of newspaper selections as made in the previous section. Here, the amount of EU issues, reported by newspapers readers in Eurobarometer 65 divided into press segment per country, are related among each other. The analysis is based on the data of Table 8.4. The outcomes are presented in Figure 8.4.

Figure 8.4 shows that the strongest significant links are those between the groups of quality press readers in all three countries supplemented with the Dutch readers of the popular press. The popular newspaper readers of Germany and the UK have no significant inter-relation and display only moderately significant links with the other reader groups. In each country the EU definitions of quality and popular reader groups are significantly related, with moderate scores in the German and British cases and a strong link in the Dutch case.

**Overall impression: newspaper readers and their EU associations**

In this section, meaningful associations of reader groups in three countries are compared in two ways: per country and per type of reader group. The findings of this section indicate that the comparison per country does not produce large differences. The scores per country have a similar tendency, with the greatest similarities being those between the UK and Germany. In both countries there is a balanced score of opportunity and threat associations of the combined reader groups. The Dutch readers overall tend to produce more positive EU associations than their German and British counterparts do.

The second comparison, between reader groups, reveals greater differences than the first one, with quite a clear and solid outcome. The EU associations of readers of quality news-
papers in the three countries are far more opportunity- than threat-related. The EU associations of the popular press reader groups tend to be more threat-related. In the UK and the Netherlands, this is a relative outcome: the sum of the threat issues of readers of the popular press is still lower than their aggregate opportunity score. Only in the German case, the score of the threat topics of popular press readers is absolutely higher than their score of the opportunity associations. The correlations of Figure 8.4 demonstrate that the interconnection of the way in which newspaper readers describe and define the EU is generally modest with strong variations. The readers of the quality press segment in the three countries are quite strongly interrelated in their definition of the EU. The readers of the German and British popular press appear to be mutually not connected and weakly connected with other reader groups.

8.5 The impact of issue selection by newspapers on the definition of the EU by newspaper readers

The previous sections have separately presented the selection of EU issues by European press outlets and the associative descriptions of the EU by European newspaper readers. Now it is time to assess the extent to which both elements can be related to each other. The theoretical proposition of second-level agenda setting entails that media exert their influence on audiences via a transfer of salience. Those aspects of a topic that are highlighted in the news will be reiterated and reflected by news consumers when expressing themselves about that topic. Thus, it is expected that the accentuation of specific EU issues in the news will have an imprint on the way European audiences describe and define the EU. In order to facilitate the linking of the public agenda to the media agenda, this chapter has made a division of issues into three categories: opportunity, neutral, and threat, both for the issues selection by newspapers and for the EU definition by readers. If, e.g., newspapers produce more opportunity-related issues, then their readers are expected to reproduce more opportunity issues. In this section, the outcomes of the two previous analyses of this chapter are combined and compared. In addition, the direction and size of the impact of the news selection on the way in which newspaper readers describe and define the EU is generally modest with strong variations. The readers of the quality press segment in the three countries are quite strongly interrelated in their definition of the EU. The readers of the German and British popular press appear to be mutually not connected and weakly connected with other reader groups.

Descriptive analysis

An overview of the selection of EU issues by newspapers and their readers, both divided into a popular and a quality segment in all three countries, should reveal whether there is a common pattern between press presentations and readers’ definitions of the EU. Table 8.5 presents the joint data of Tables 8.3 and 8.4. For the sake of clarity and comprehensibility, the fourteen EU issues are summarized in three categories (opportunity, neutral, and threat) in order to reduce the scale of the comparisons made. With three countries, two press groups, two reader groups and three categories of EU issues, still a large general overview emerges. This overview allows for making comparisons and discovering commonalities and differences in the selection of EU issues among press groups and their pertaining reader groups.

First, when looking at the ensemble of all press groups on the one hand, and all reader groups on the other, it becomes clear that the press outlets generally are less opportunity-focused in their selection of EU issues than the reader groups. In the first row of Table 8.5, all press groups present a lower score on opportunity issues than their pertaining reader groups. Apparently, all European reader groups describe and define the EU more in terms of opportunity-related issues than their daily newspapers do. This outcome is paralleled in the third row by a higher score on threat issues of press outlets compared with their reader groups, with the exception of the German popular segment. This last outcome is probably caused by the very high frequency of the Euro issue in the German popular press. This issue is labeled as neutral in this chapter, but the Bild tabloid in Germany usually presents the Euro topic in a negative way. The neutral issue, the Euro, is strongly represented in all newspapers, especially in Germany, when compared with the way in which newspaper readers report on the Euro issue. For all press reader groups, the Euro ranks among the most mentioned EU issues, but not as overrepresented as it is in the newspapers. All in all, these first findings indicate a remarkable difference in approach of and outlook on the EU between newspapers and their reader groups.

Secondly and directly related to the research set-up as presented in Figure 8.2, when differentiating between the popular and quality segments of newspapers and reader groups in each

| Issues in EU news and public definition of the EU 183 |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 8.5 Second-level media and public agendas: frequencies of EU issues in three categories (with reference to Eurobarometer 65, issues of Question 14) in popular &amp; quality newspapers and among popular and quality reader groups in three countries (January-June 2006)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>DE:</strong> Germany; <strong>NL:</strong> the Netherlands; <strong>UK:</strong> United Kingdom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Opport. issues</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threat issues</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| N | 236 | 1,053 | 2,430 | 290 | 233 | 1,270 | 1,728 | 1,023 | 540 | 1,013 | 1,832 | 425 |

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that cognitions do play an important role in the way audiences respond to the EU. Following along the lines of the RAS-model of Zaller (1992)\(^9\), the level of education is seen as a possible predicting factor for assessing cognitive abilities. From the present analysis it is of interest to see if education not only plays a role in the formation of knowledge and appreciation of the EU (as is demonstrated in Chapters 6 and 7), but also in enhancing the impact of press issues on the way newspaper readers describe and define the EU. For this purpose and similar to the previous chapters, the level of education (question D8: ‘How old were you when you stopped full-time education?’) is recoded into three scores: 0 for lower educated respondents (up to 15 years of age or no full-time education; frequency: 931); 0.5 for middle levels (16-19 years of age; frequency: 1,683) and 1 for higher educated respondents (20 years of age or older or still studying; frequency: 1,219). As a last element, the interaction effect of education and the EU issue selection by newspapers is incorporated in the analysis. In order to be able to calculate the relative effect of each factor, a two-model regression analysis is set up.

\(\hat{\text{EU definition readers}}_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{issues newspapers})_i + \varepsilon_i\) 

The first model demonstrates that a mere 1.3% (\(R^2 = .012\)) of the variance of the dependent variable (EU definition by newspaper readers) can be explained by the independent variable (EU issue selection by newspapers). This score may be related to the large number of respondents (N: 3,833), allowing for a large spread. Yet, the outcome is in the expected direction and the effect affirms the expected impact of press selections on their audiences.

\(^9\) See Chapter 7 for a presentation of the RAS-model of Zaller.
The coefficient of the independent variable ($\beta: .113; p < .001$) indicates that the selection of EU issues in the news positively and significantly influences the way in which the EU is described and defined by newspaper readers. The real effect might even be larger when controlling for more factors or for previous developments (e.g., through autoregression).

(2) Model 2: basic model with education and the interaction term EU issue selection*education
The second model presents the basic model, with the controlling variable of education and the interaction term of education and issue selection by newspapers. With these additions, the predictive explanatory impact increases to 5% ($R^2 = 0.47$), but remains quite modest. The selection of EU issues by the press, the independent variable, loses some of its impact ($\beta: .034; p < .05$). The education variable has the largest effect in Model 2 ($\beta: .215; p < .001$). The interaction term is not significant.

Table 8.6 Two-model regression analysis (standardized Bèta regression coefficients)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1 (basic model)</th>
<th>Model 2 (with education and interaction term)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper selection EU issues</td>
<td>.11***</td>
<td>.03*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.22***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education*Newspaper issues</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted $R^2$</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$N$</td>
<td>3,833</td>
<td>3,833</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*: $p < .05$; **: $p < .01$; ***: $p < .001$.
Dependent variable: EU definition by newspaper readers.

Table 8.6 presents the main findings of the two-model regression analysis. The variables demonstrate positive effects. The explained variance is modest, but in the expected direction. Education proves to largely contribute to the news impact. All in all, the outcomes indicate that the EU issue selection by newspapers does contribute, albeit to a limited extent, to the definition of the EU by European audiences.

8.6 Conclusion and discussion
This chapter seeks to find additional clues that might help explain the difference in effects of EU news on European audiences, as has been disclosed in Approach 1. Chapter 7 has demonstrated that the amount of EU news affects both reader groups in different ways. The readers of the quality press tend to become slightly more positive towards the EU when confronted with more EU news. Popular press readers present a stronger, negative effect. The present chapter has moved from the mere volume of EU news to the issue selection in EU news, to study the possible contribution of the content of the press reports about the EU on European reader groups.

Following along the lines of the second-level agenda-setting theory, the focus of this chapter has been on the possible connection of specific attributes in EU news with the way in which the EU is depicted and defined by European audiences. The second-level agenda-setting theory postulates that the prominence of specific attributes concerning an object in the news corresponds with the salience of these attributes in the way in which the audience defines the object at stake. From this perspective, the following hypothesis is formulated and tested:

Hypothesis 3 (second-level agenda setting)
The amount of coverage of specific EU attributes in newspapers is positively related to the impact of these attributes on the definition of the EU by the readers of the newspaper.

This hypothesis is tested in a cross-sectional set-up, including popular and quality newspapers and their reader groups in Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom during the spring of 2006.

Second-level press agenda: EU issues in newspapers
The findings of section 8.3 (EU issue selection by newspapers) indicate that in all three countries, the coverage of EU topics in the popular and the quality press is strongly correlated. This is an indication of quite a consonant EU news agenda per country. When comparing between countries, it appears that quality and popular newspapers in all three countries mainly concur in their selection of three dominant topics: Euro, Waste and No border control. Otherwise, there are some clear differences between the two press groups. The popular press tends to put less emphasis on opportunity topics than the quality press does. This general conclusion confirms the results found by other researchers such as Kevin (2002), de Vreese (2003) and Pfetsch (2004). They all found that, in general, the popular press has a more critical approach towards the EU than the quality press has. Looking at the three selected countries, the links between the German and the Dutch press are the closest. The two tabloid groups in Germany and the UK are the least related media outlets. The selection of EU issues by newspapers shows strong links on national levels in all three countries, but also many strong and moderate relations across borders. This might indicate the presence, to some extent, of a European public sphere in the media, especially in the quality segments of the European press. This coincides with the findings of Koopmans & Erbe (2004) and de Vreese (2007), who found some evidence for a European public sphere among elite media outlets and audiences in Europe. Yet, de Vreese advocated to "broaden

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96 The issue of a European public sphere is subject to many studies and conferences, often with many different views and outcomes.
the scope beyond the quality broadsheet newspapers” (de Vreese, 2007, p. 1). Following his call, the analysis of this chapter reveals that the tabloids in Germany and the UK have quite different news agendas when it comes to the EU. These tabloids clearly make their own editorial choices, which are not only not closely related to the quality press, but also not with other tabloids across national borders. Given the high volumes and the enormous readership of the tabloid press in Germany and the UK and the decreasing numbers of readers of quality newspapers, the realization of a common European public sphere, whether welcomed or feared, is not at all warranted.

**Second-level public agenda: EU definitions of newspaper readers**

The outcomes of section 8.4 (EU definition by newspaper readers) reveal that readers of quality newspapers describe and define the EU considerably more in terms of opportunity than is demonstrated by readers of the popular press. In the comparison of the three countries, the Dutch readers have the lowest scores on threat issues. This outcome concurs with the results of consecutive Eurobarometer surveys in which the Dutch rank among the most fervent supporters of the EU.97 The outcomes of this part of the study show strong interrelations among quality press readers. Quality press readers are related more closely in their outlook on the EU to their fellow quality newspaper readers in other countries than to their popular news compatriots. There appears to be a common elitist view on the meaning of the EU in the three selected member states.98 The popular newspaper readers in the three countries display a less coherent picture. The German and British popular readers demonstrate comparable scores on threat issues, whereas the Dutch popular press readers appear to be less negative. The German Bild and the British Sun are widely read and especially the British tabloids are known for being highly critical towards the EU. This may well be reflected in the outlook on the EU of their readers. The exceptional position of the popular readership in the Netherlands may be due to several reasons, but most striking in the context of this chapter is the absence of a Dutch tabloid culture.

**Correspondence between the media and the public agenda on the attribute level: testing the second-level agenda-setting hypothesis**

This chapter seeks to compare and link the media and the public agenda on the level of EU attributes. The findings of section 8.5, in which the media and the public agenda are brought together, produce evidence in favor of the second-level agenda-setting hypothesis (Hypothesis 3). The descriptive analysis demonstrates different tendencies in the two segments of newspapers and readers. The presented data report that the popular press and the readers of popular newspapers both display relatively more EU issues that are labeled as threat topics, whereas the quality press and the readers of the quality press display relatively more opportunity issues.

![Figure 8.5 Research set-up with main findings](image)

Figure 8.5 summarizes the main findings of the descriptive analysis by reproducing and filling in the research set-up of Figure 8.2.

The difference in issue selection of the two press groups is reflected in the diverging EU definitions of the two reader groups. This is indicative for a second-level agenda–setting effect. It does matter how the EU is presented by newspapers, because newspaper readers tend to describe and define the EU in accordance with the way the EU is covered in their newspapers. The more critical outlook on the EU by popular press readers can be related to a similar approach of the EU in the popular press, whereas quality readers and their newspapers display a common, more favorable outlook on the EU. The moderate to strong links between the two press segments (relation A) produce a noticeable relativization for the correspondences found in relation B and C. European newspapers display some remarkable parallels in their selection of EU issues, which calls for modesty when linking distinct press agendas to pertaining public agendas. As such, the relations between press agendas and public agendas as reported in relations B and C have to be interpreted as relative, not as absolute outcomes. As a second relativizing remark, it must be stated that European audiences obviously do not rely on newspaper coverage alone for their associations and definitions of the EU. The relatively high frequency of the Freedom to travel issue illustrates that some popular associations among EU citizens do not necessarily have to coincide with high levels of media attention. Many Europeans personally experience the possibility of freely crossing European borders for reasons of work or leisure. This aspect of European cooperation is highly appreciated, although it is not a hot topic on the political agenda of Brussels or in the media.

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97 See e.g., Figure 3.2 in Chapter 3.

98 Again, this seems to support the elitist outlook on a European public sphere, as described by de Vreese (2007).
The regression analysis enables us to also quantify the impact of the media agenda on the public agenda. The outcomes indicate that this impact is positive, yet modest. They also present the noticeable influence of the education variable in this respect. Overall, the regression analysis is supportive of the notion of a transfer of salience as indicated by the second-level agenda-setting theory. Media attributes have an impact on public attributes. Opportunity topics in EU news yield opportunity topics among newspaper readers when asked to describe and define the EU. The same goes for threat issues. This conclusion contributes to explaining the differences in the two press and reader segments in the descriptive analysis. The quality press tends to accentuate opportunity issues somewhat more, whereas the popular press produces relatively more threat issues. The two pertaining reader groups reflect these tendencies in their definition of the EU. The media agenda thus plays a role in determining the public agenda through a transfer of salience on the second attribute level. The next chapter will examine whether the transfer of salience also takes place from the second (attribute) level to the first level on which the object of media attention is evaluated.

Chapter 9 Issues in EU news and public appreciation of the EU

Introduction

The main conclusion of the previous chapter is that the audience of each newspaper segment presents a similar description of the EU as the newspaper they regularly read, with a more favorable EU approach in the quality and a more adverse outlook in the popular segment. These positive findings, found in a limited time frame for some basic categories of substantive EU attributes, give rise to the question whether effects of attribute agenda setting can also be established on an affective level and in a longitudinal set-up. In other words, does a transfer of salience also invoke a transfer of appreciation over time? This is the focus of the present chapter, the second sub-study of Approach 2 in this book. Specifically, this chapter seeks to assess the way in which public appreciation of the EU is affected, when newspapers emphasize specific topics in their EU articles, such as the Euro, the possible membership of Turkey, agricultural funds or border control. Chapter 4 has demonstrated that the European press covers a large variety of EU issues. Also, within and between member states, European newspapers are not consonant in their coverage of the EU. This makes one wonder whether the presentation of various EU topics can be connected to the way in which the EU is appreciated by newspaper readers. The appreciation of the EU is an evaluative term referring to the attitude of Europeans towards the EU. The concept of priming serves as a well-fitting theoretical basis when searching for a possible answer to this question. The notion of priming stresses the importance of highlighted issues in the news that are more likely to catch the eye of the public than less prominent issues. The priming concept states that audiences will specifically include these prominent issues in their assessment of political priorities and their evaluation of political actors. From this perspective, mass media influence the standards by which political actors and institutions are evaluated. In this chapter, the prominence and dominance of various issues in EU news coverage are assessed and an attempt is made to study their effect on the public evaluation of the EU. Translated to the settings of this study, this chapter seeks to find an answer to the following leading question: to what extent does the selection of issues in EU news articles affect the levels of EU appreciation of newspaper readers? Similar to the set-up of Chapter 7, the research in this chapter involves a longitudinal analysis with a comparative context, including a Dutch and a British case and a time span of almost a dozen years: 1995 to 2006. The two countries are selected on the basis of the availability of long-term newspaper data of various types of newspapers. Popular as well as quality newspapers are analyzed in order to be able to account for different outlooks on reporting and also to reflect reader groups from different
segments of society. The selection of European news issues in the press segments are linked with data about public opinion derived from Eurobarometer polls in order to assess possible significant correlations.

The set-up of this chapter is as follows: section 9.1 focuses on the concept of priming and presents the hypothesis that is tested in this chapter. This theoretical section elaborates on the expected relationship between the media agenda and the public agenda on the affective, evaluative level. Section 9.2 deals with the method and measures of this strand of research. In section 9.3, first the coverage of EU issues in the Dutch and British press is described, as well as the development of the public appreciation of the EU in both countries. In the final part of section 9.3, all the data of the Dutch and British cases are brought together in order to test the hypothesis of this chapter through regression analysis. Section 9.4 summarizes the main findings of this chapter and presents the conclusion and discussion concerning the testing of the priming hypothesis.

9.1 Theoretical orientation: priming and compelling arguments

Similar to Chapter 8, this chapter also selects the concept of attribute agenda setting as theoretical point of departure. Both chapters represent Approach 2 of this book, which revolves around the analysis of the effects of the selection and coverage of EU issues in the news. The previous chapter has already dwelled upon the agenda-setting theory. This section is confined to the related theoretical notion of priming. The concept of priming stems from research of the memory function of the human brain and refers to the reaction to a repeated stimulus. It is assumed that people are likely to recognize and respond more readily to a stimulus that they have experienced before. The repetition of the stimulus or the semantic value of a previously encountered word or symbol has activated the brain and increased its sensitivity for the object at stake. In contrast with repetition of the stimulus or the semantic value of a previously encountered word or symbol recognize and respond more readily to a stimulus that they have experienced before. The concept of priming later was extended to other news issues beside elections (Jo & Berkowitz, 1994). Priming deals with the co-occurrence of specific news issues. The priming assumption states that the more certain issues are prominent in news coverage, the more the audience will take these issues into account in their evaluation of certain other issues or actors. For example, if immigration becomes more prominent in news coverage, then the issue of immigration will put in more weight in the overall performance rating of political actors. As stated in Part One, this study focuses solely on news about the EU, without making a comparison with news about other political phenomena. This implies that the EU will not be compared with other subjects in national press outlets; therefore, the relative prominence of the EU as news topic in relation to other topics is not under study here. This chapter limits itself to EU-related press articles and hence to the specific topics and issues that dominate those articles. Therefore, this strand of study seeks to find priming effects within the subject of the EU itself and thus focuses on EU attributes in press coverage (second-level), analogous to second-level agenda setting. The impact of these EU attributes however, will be measured on the first level: the appreciation of the EU overall. In this respect, it is assumed that the second-level EU attributes in press coverage not only affect the newspaper readers on the attribute level (as is demonstrated in Chapter 8), but also on the first level. This second- to first-level effect relates to the compelling arguments hypothesis of McCombs and Ghanem (2003). This hypothesis states that some object attributes in media coverage are so influential that they affect the accessibility of that object as such to the public. Yet, once again, since this study only focuses on the EU as news object, the accessibility of the EU as news object cannot be compared with other news objects. What will be assessed is to what extent EU attributes in the news have the capacity to function as compelling arguments by directly influencing the appreciation of the EU on the whole. This largely corresponds with Sheafer’s notion of affective compelling arguments. Sheafer distinguishes between direct and indirect attribute affects. Indirectly, prominent attributes affect the criteria by which political actors are evaluated. This concurs with the classical priming thesis. Direct effects of the media agenda relate not to the criteria (the primed attributes) used for political evaluation, but to the general evaluation of the political

101 See Chapter 8 for a more elaborate discussion of second-level agenda setting.
102 Sheafer (2007).
actor itself. Translated to the EU context, the (indirect) notion of priming implies that if European newspapers stress e.g., monetary matters in their EU articles, then European audiences are more likely to evaluate and appreciate the EU on the basis of its monetary performance. The direct impact approach of affective compelling arguments, analyzed in this chapter, assumes that a representation of predominantly negative EU topics in the press would enhance a relatively negative evaluation of the EU by newspaper readers. Figure 9.1 presents the direct and indirect effects of the media agenda.

Figure 9.1 The two levels of the transfer of salience from media agenda to public agenda

In Figure 9.1, the green arrows represent the indirect way in which the attribute agenda of the press may affect the evaluation of a political actor, through influencing the criteria of evaluation. The red arrow represents the direct impact of the media agenda on the overall evaluation of the object at stake. This chapter follows along the lines of the direct effect approach (red arrow).

The following hypothesis will be tested in this strand of research:

Hypothesis 4 (direct attribute effects)
The selection of EU attributes in newspapers affects the general appreciation of the EU by readers of these newspapers. This effect will be stronger for readers with lower levels of EU knowledge and involvement.

9.2 Data, method and measures

The selection of EU attributes in newspapers

The longitudinal scope of this chapter, with a time frame running from 1995 to 2006, allows for unveiling trends over time. Similar to Chapter 7, the analysis starts in 1995, just after the formal introduction of the European Union. The newspaper data are derived from LexisNexis, holding data of a limited number of newspapers from the Netherlands and the UK within the given time frame. In both country cases, quality and popular newspapers are selected to represent different editorial views and various reader groups. All those articles of the newspapers are selected and counted in which the European Union is mentioned at least once.

In this chapter, the same Dutch and British newspapers are selected as in Chapter 7, and for the same reason: long-term availability of various segments of the press in LexisNexis. For the Dutch case, two newspapers are available within the given time frame: the Algemeen Dagblad (a popular newspaper) and NRC Handelsblad (a quality newspaper). The UK case presents a larger choice of newspapers within the chosen time frame. The Mirror and The Daily Mail represent the popular section of the British press. The Times and The Guardian are quality newspapers.

Selection of EU attributes

For this part of the study, the selection of EU issues in the chosen newspapers is of crucial importance. In the previous chapter, the EU attributes have been derived from a given list of EU topics in Eurobarometer 65. These topics represent optional keywords for public description and definition of the EU by respondents. This set of optional topics, however, is not included in all consecutive Eurobarometer polls between 1995 and 2006. For this reason, a new set of EU attributes has to be created. This new set of EU attributes should meet several criteria derived from the three main agendas in media and audience research: the public, the political and the media agenda, all in relation to relevant EU matters, as has been discussed in Chapter 5 (Method).

As far as the public agenda is concerned, the selection of issues would have to connect to the findings of the two preliminary qualitative studies, as described in Chapter 2 of Part One, in which respondents have been interviewed about the way in which they describe the European Union. These two qualitative studies help to mark off the terrain of further research on the EU agendas of media and audience groups. The findings of Chapter 2 point in the direction of low knowledge levels concerning the EU and a widespread feeling of anxiety about various developments in this age of globalization and modernity. The four narrative structures (knowledge, opportunity, threat and institution) reflect the various angles, factual and evaluative, from which the EU is seen and described. The knowledge element has been extensively studied in Part Two of this book. The other three narrative structures will be represented in the selection of issues in this chapter by those search terms that relate to the discursive domain of each narrative. For example:

103 For a more elaborate description of the selected newspapers, see Chapter 5.
- issues that reflect the positive opportunity outlook on European matters, such as Welfare and Peace;
- issues that reflect the negative threat view of European integration, such as Waste and Conflict;
- issues that reflect the institution narrative, such as Referendum and Bureaucracy.

The next criterion for the selection of relevant issues relates to the media agenda. As has been indicated in Chapter 4, the press story of the EU can be characterized as being predominantly economically and nationally orientated with a slightly negative tone and a focus on conflicts (see e.g. Kevin, 2002; Norris, 2002; de Vreese, 2003). Pfetsch (2004) stresses the importance of the meta-issues of integration and monetary cooperation as dominating European elements in the news. These observations suggest that the issue selection from this perspective of media prominence should comprise topics such as EMU, Environment and Employment.

The political agenda can be derived from the main topics that have been dealt with by EU institutions and national governments within the time frame of 1995 to 2006. Due to the vast number of topics, a selection is made that highlights the most domineering and eventful policy matters and events in recent EU history. For this purpose, the following issues have been selected: Maastricht,104 Euro, Schengen,105 Enlargement and Constitution. As a last selection, some major global topics are included, because they also affect the EU and can be seen as challenges for the EU and its role as a global player. In this category, the following issues have been selected: Terrorism, Iraq and Refugees.

Finally, in view of the fact that the analysis of this chapter is focused on the impact of EU attributes in press coverage on EU appreciation, the selected EU attributes are brought together in groups with distinctive appreciative connotations: positive, neutral and negative. By ascribing these connotations to the selected EU issues, the press agenda can be more directly linked to the appreciative attitudes of European citizens that are also expressed in positive, neutral and negative terms. The connotations are not derived from the tone or tenor of the EU articles (not under study in this book, because the concept of priming does not focus on positions and argumentations) but from the fact of the issues being either more positive and accepted in nature or more negative and controversial. In this chapter, those EU attributes are marked as positive that relate to opportunities or recognized policy areas of the EU. Negative issues are related to threats and controversial, broadly debated matters. Global real-world cues and meta-issues are labeled as neutral.

All the above considerations result in the selection and categorization of EU issues as presented in Table 9.1.

### Table 9.1 Selection of EU attributes (1995-2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive issues (opportunities/recognized policy areas)</th>
<th>Negative issues (threats/controversial matters)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Welfare</td>
<td>Waste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace</td>
<td>Conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schengen</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMU</td>
<td>Constitution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>Maastricht</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Enlargement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9.1 shows the list of eighteen EU attributes in three categories that represent the various attributes and characteristics of the EU from 1995 to 2006. The issues of this list will be used as search terms in the analysis of EU coverage by the selected Dutch and British newspapers.

**Appreciation of the EU**

The data on appreciative attitudes towards the EU are gathered from the Eurobarometer polls issued by the European Commission. The standard Eurobarometer survey takes place every six months and thus allows for 22 polls in the chosen time frame of June 1995 – June 2006.

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104 Maastricht refers to the Treaty of Maastricht (1994) from which the term EU originates. The Treaty of Maastricht can be considered to be the starting point for increased European integration via e.g. eastward enlargement and the introduction of the Euro.

105 Schengen is a town in Luxemburg that gave its name to a European Treaty (1984), which regulates the free travel of persons in all countries that signed the Treaty.
The Eurobarometer question ‘Do you think that our country’s membership of the EU is a good or bad thing?’ is, similarly to the previous chapters, used as main indicator for evaluative attitudes towards the EU. This standard question has four answering categories: good thing, bad thing, neither good nor bad and don’t know. In the descriptive analysis, only the opposing options good thing and bad thing are used and the sum of these two scores is calculated, resulting in a difference score. This difference score is used as indicator for the level of general appreciation of the EU. Appreciation of the EU will be specified in scores for readers of the quality press on the one hand and readers of the popular press on the other. Higher educated respondents (readers of quality newspapers) and lower educated respondents (readers of popular newspapers) will represent the two reader groups in a similar way and for the same reasons as has been done in Chapters 6 and 7.

**Linking the media agenda (selection of EU attributes) to the public agenda (appreciation of the EU by newspaper readers)**

As indicated in Chapter 5 (Method) and similar to the research set of Chapter 8, in both countries under study here, two segments of the national press are selected: the popular press and the quality press. Per segment, the coverage frequency of selected EU issues is established. Also, per press segment, two groups of newspaper readers are identified. This will be presented in the descriptive analysis below. In addition, the test of the interconnection between the selection of EU issues by newspapers and their imprint on the appreciative attitudes of their readers is executed by means of a regression analysis. It is expected that EU attributes in the news with compelling arguments in favor of the EU will enhance EU appreciation, whereas negative EU issues will contribute to less supportive attitudes towards the EU. Direct attribute effects can be demonstrated if the selection of EU attributes by newspapers (second-level) is positively related to the EU appreciation of newspaper readers (first-level).

### 9.3 Assessing and comparing developments in coverage of EU issues in newspapers and EU appreciation

In the following sub-sections the Dutch case will be presented, followed by the case study of the United Kingdom. In both case studies, first the longitudinal development of the reporting on EU issues in the news will be described. Next, the developments in EU appreciation are presented. Finally, both long-term trends are compared for congruence and clues for a more specific and detailed test of the theoretical concepts of priming and compelling arguments.

**The second-level media agenda in the Netherlands: prominence of EU attributes in the news**

In the NRC, 21,030 EU articles have been published between 1995 and 2006. The 18 selected issues occur 23,467 times in these articles. Each count represents EU articles in which the item is mentioned at least once. The total sum of issue articles is larger than the total number of EU articles as such, which indicates that regularly more than one issue is mentioned in a single EU article (e.g., the co-occurrence of the issues Fraud and Bureaucracy, or Referendum and Constitution). In those cases, one article produces multiple issue listings. The AD has produced a total number of 7,790 EU articles between 1995 and 2006, with 6,514 references to the 18 pre-selected issues. In the cases of the NRC and the AD, the sum of the issue scores is about 112%, respectively, 84% of the sums of all EU articles per newspaper. These numbers show that the NRC produces more EU news than the AD and that the NRC also covers more of the selected EU issues per article (an average of 1.12) than the AD does (0.84). They also show that the pre-selected EU attributes are well-represented in the general coverage of the EU by the Dutch press. Table 9.2 shows that the NRC pays well over three times more attention to specific issues related to the EU than the AD does. In absolute numbers, the NRC greatly surpasses the AD on every item and every category (positive, neutral and negative). The AD pays relatively more attention to specific policy issues, such as EMU and Employment, whereas the NRC puts relatively more emphasis on institutional matters (Constitution, Enlargement) and world affairs (Iraq, Terrorism).
Table 9.2  Prominence of EU attributes per category in EU articles of the AD and NRC (1995-2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive issues (recognized policy areas)</th>
<th>AD</th>
<th>NRC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Welfare</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>665</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>1,375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schengen</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMU</td>
<td>566</td>
<td>1,207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>391</td>
<td>1,088</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>409</td>
<td>1,230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total positive attributes</td>
<td>1,976</td>
<td>5,777</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neutral issues (global affairs/meta-issues)</th>
<th>AD</th>
<th>NRC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Terrorism</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>1,221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugees</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>736</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bureaucracy</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Euro</td>
<td>1,292</td>
<td>4,338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referendum</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>1,307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total neutral attributes</td>
<td>2,403</td>
<td>8,886</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative issues (controversial matters)</th>
<th>AD</th>
<th>NRC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Waste</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>1,362</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>494</td>
<td>1,867</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constitution</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>1,718</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maastricht</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>1,260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enlargement</td>
<td>688</td>
<td>2,546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total negative attributes</td>
<td>2,135</td>
<td>8,804</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total articles                             | 6,514| 23,467|

The composition of a rank order of most publicized issues in the Dutch case reveals many parallels in the two press segments. Table 9.3 displays the ranking of the ten most prominent issues in the two newspapers. Eight EU issues figure in the two Top 10 columns of both newspapers. This indicates a fairly common selection of EU attributes of the Dutch press as far as the EU is concerned. The policy issues Employment and Refugees are only represented in the AD list of most prominent issues. The institutional issues Referendum and Constitution only figure in the Top 10 list of the NRC. All in all, these findings point in the direction of a relatively comparable press agenda of both newspapers.

Table 9.3  Top 10 of most publicized EU issues in AD and NRC (1995-2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AD</th>
<th>NRC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Euro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Enlargement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>EMU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Peace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Maastricht</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Refugees</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Prominence of EU issues in the Dutch press over time

The scores of EU issues in Tables 9.2 and 9.3 are the sums of publications in the two newspapers in the Dutch case between 1995 and 2006. Given the longitudinal set-up of this part of the study, it is also relevant to investigate whether there have been shifts in attention over time. For this purpose, all selected issues are registered and counted per interval of six months (parallel to the biannual Eurobarometer research) and summed up into the three categories of positive, neutral and negatives issues. Figures 9.2 and 9.3 present the graphs in which the development of EU issue news is depicted.

Figure 9.2 Development of the coverage of categories of EU issues in the Dutch popular press (AD), (January 1995-June 2006)

Figures 9.2 and 9.3 demonstrate a clear and steady decrease of positive EU issues in both press segments over time, paralleled by an irregular, increasing trend in neutral issues. The selection of negative EU attributes in both newspapers shows some clear ups and downs,
especially in the second half of the time frame, but presents no convincing upward or downward trend. It appears that, after the year 2000, news coverage has become more volatile as far as negative and also neutral issues are concerned. The clearest conclusions at this stage are that EU news in the Netherlands has become predominantly negative or neutral, whereas positive EU attributes are receiving less and less coverage over the years, with a share of less than 20% in the last years. These tendencies are quite similar for the two newspapers at stake, with only slight differences in the accentuation of positive, neutral and negative attributes in EU news.

**Appreciation of the EU**

In Chapter 7 the scores of EU appreciation of Dutch newspaper readers have already been determined, indicating a relatively stable score in the first years and a more volatile development since the year 2000. Throughout the years, respondents with higher educational levels (more likely to read quality newspapers) demonstrate more positive attitudes towards the EU than respondents with lower educational levels (the target group of the popular press) do.

![Figure 9.3 Development of the coverage of categories of EU issues in the Dutch quality press (NRC), (January 1995-June 2006)](image)

**Figure 9.3 Development of the coverage of categories of EU issues in the Dutch quality press (NRC), (January 1995-June 2006)**

positive EU attributes are receiving less and less coverage over the years, with a share of less than 20% in the last years. These tendencies are quite similar for the two newspapers at stake, with only slight differences in the accentuation of positive, neutral and negative attributes in EU news.

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![Figure 9.4 Appreciation of EU membership in the Netherlands (January 1994-June 2006)](image)

**Figure 9.4 Appreciation of EU membership in the Netherlands (January 1994-June 2006)**

Figure 9.4 depicts the development of EU attitudes of the two respondent groups (see also Table 7.2 and Figure 7.2 in Chapter 7). Despite the difference in EU appreciation of lower and higher educated Dutch respondents, the general trend of both groups is very similar, which is also demonstrated in a high positive and significant correlation of .849 (**).

**Comparing developments in news and opinion in the Dutch case**

The outcomes of the Dutch case study concerning trends in press attention towards specific EU issues on the one hand and the development of public appreciation of the EU on the other, lead to various findings. Despite the fact that the NRC devotes much more attention to the EU than the popular AD does, the two newspapers produce to a large degree comparable trends in the three categories of selected EU attributes. The same goes for the development of EU appreciation among the two selected audience groups. Both groups present a similar downward development, although higher educated respondents are clearly more appreciative of the EU than their lower educated counterparts. Comparing both variables (EU attribute selection and EU appreciation), the Dutch case shows clear congruence between the two. The decrease of positive EU issues and the dominance of increasing neutral and volatile negative EU issues, especially after the year 2000, are paralleled by a demonstrable downward trend in EU appreciation of both audience groups. In short, less good news goes hand in hand with less support. This correspondence in the Dutch case is indicative for the theoretical concepts of priming and compelling arguments tested in this Chapter, and give grounds for further testing (by means of a regression analysis in section 9.4).

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106 See section 7.3 for an elaborate description and analysis.

107 Pearson’s correlation score; **: correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
The UK case: linking EU issues in British newspapers to the public opinion towards the EU in the United Kingdom

In the case of the UK, the selection of newspapers is broader, thanks to a larger long-term availability of relevant newspapers in LexisNexis. In this section, The Mirror (tabloid) and The Daily Mail (middle market) represent the popular press in Britain, whereas The Guardian (left-liberal) and The Times (traditional) qualify as quality newspapers. Similar to the Dutch study, here also, all EU-related articles have been selected. Chapter 7 has already demonstrated that the amount of EU news varies per newspaper title. The first period of time in which all four newspapers are registered in LexisNexis was during the second half of 1995, so the analysis of the eighteen EU attributes starts in July 1995.

The second-level media agenda in the United Kingdom: prominence of EU attributes in the news

From July 1995 to June 2006, the count of EU articles per newspaper\(^\text{108}\) is as follows:

- **The Mirror**: 8,564
- **The Daily Mail**: 11,021
- **The Times**: 25,892
- **The Guardian**: 19,517

**Total Popular press**: 19,585

**Total Quality press**: 45,409

The number of EU articles with reference to the eighteen selected EU issues in the British press is quite similar to the total amount of EU articles: 46,694 issue articles in the quality press and 18,021 in the popular newspapers. This implies that, on average, each EU article covers one EU attribute (1.03 EU issues in the quality papers and 0.92 EU issues in the popular press). Similar to the Dutch case, the quality press in Britain devotes more attention to the eighteen EU attributes than the popular press does. Overall, also in the British case, the pre-selected EU attributes are represented well in the general press coverage of the EU.

\(^{108}\) Here also, any article is registered and included in which the EU is mentioned at least once.

**Table 9.4 Prominence of EU attributes per category in EU articles in British popular and quality press (1995-2006)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EU Attributes</th>
<th>Popular Press</th>
<th>Quality Press</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Positive issues (recognized policy areas)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welfare</td>
<td>815</td>
<td>1,704</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace</td>
<td>1,024</td>
<td>2,878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schengen</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMU</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>1,426</td>
<td>3,465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>1,256</td>
<td>3,483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total positive attributes</strong></td>
<td>4,680</td>
<td>12,793</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Neutral issues (global affairs/meta-issues)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrorism</td>
<td>1,011</td>
<td>2,234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>1,143</td>
<td>3,299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugees</td>
<td>692</td>
<td>1,255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bureaucracy</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>824</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Euro</td>
<td>4,405</td>
<td>9,049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referendum</td>
<td>1,605</td>
<td>3,602</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total neutral attributes</strong></td>
<td>9,238</td>
<td>20,263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Negative issues controversial matters)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waste</td>
<td>598</td>
<td>1,208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>1,005</td>
<td>3,462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>537</td>
<td>2,135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constitution</td>
<td>1,384</td>
<td>3,088</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maastricht</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>1,788</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enlargement</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>1,957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total negative attributes</strong></td>
<td>4,103</td>
<td>13,638</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total articles</strong></td>
<td>18,021</td>
<td>46,694</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9.4 demonstrates that the quality press in the UK reports over 2.5 times more about the selected EU issues than the popular press. The absolute numbers for the quality press are higher on every issue and on all three categories. The popular press devotes relatively more attention to the issues in the neutral category. The quality newspapers put a relatively larger emphasis on institutional matters (e.g., Maastricht, Enlargement). The ranking of the most publicized EU issues in the two press groups in Britain is very similar. Table 9.5 represents the ten issues that have been most prominent in the two press segments in the period under investigation. The first nine issues in both columns are identical, with only some slight changes in the order of the issues.
Table 9.5 Top 10 of most publicized EU issues in UK popular and quality press (1995-2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Popular press</th>
<th>Quality press</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Euro</td>
<td>Euro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Referendum</td>
<td>Referendum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Employment</td>
<td>Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Constitution</td>
<td>Employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Environment</td>
<td>Conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Iraq</td>
<td>Iraq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Peace</td>
<td>Constitution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Terrorism</td>
<td>Peace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Conflict</td>
<td>Terrorism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Welfare</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only item 10 in both press groups is unique and different. This indicates a strong common representation of EU attributes in both British newspaper segments, with only some minor different accents.

**Prominence of EU issues in the British press over time**

A longitudinal presentation of the eighteen EU attributes in the two British press segments sheds light on developments over time. Similar to the Dutch case study, the three categories of selected attributes are registered per six months (parallel to the biannual Eurobarometer research).

Figures 9.5 and 9.6 portray the development of EU issue news selections in the British popular and quality press. In the popular press, neutral and positive news demonstrate remarkable, opposite developments. The trend in negative EU attributes is clearly upward. There is a noticeable rise of positive EU attributes in the last two halves years. The graph of the quality newspapers displays, somewhat similar to both Dutch press segments, an increase in neutral attributes, a volatile development of negative news and a decrease of positive EU issues. Positive and negative news demonstrate opposing, alternating trends in this segment. Overall, despite differences in the development of categories of EU attributes per press segment, EU news in Britain contains mainly neutral issues with alternating complements of positive or negative selections.

**Appreciation of the EU**

The indications of EU appreciation determined in Chapter 7 are also used here in the British case. Chapter 7 has already revealed how, according to the consecutive polls of Eurobarometer, these attitudes have developed (see Table 7.5 and Figure 7.5). Figure 9.3 reiterates these findings.
**Figure 9.7** Appreciation of EU membership in the United Kingdom (January 1995-June 2006)

$s94 = Spring of 1994, etc.$

Figure 9.7 shows clearly higher EU appreciation scores for readers with higher educational levels. Also, the development of the attitude levels of both groups demonstrates some sharp highs and lows, leading to a volatile and unstable picture. It is not possible to deduce a clear upward or downward trend over time. Despite the indicated difference in levels between both groups, the general development of appreciative scores is quite similar, which is also reflected in a high positive and significant correlation of $0.756 (**)$.

Comparing developments in news and opinion in the British case

The British case study produces volatile developments, both in the selection of specific EU issues in the press and in public appreciation of the EU. It is difficult to distinguish clear, solid trends per variable and therefore one cannot easily detect synchronicity between the two variables (EU attribute selection and EU appreciation) at first sight. Yet, the volatile picture of EU appreciation might well be related to the volatile and alternating coverage of positive and negative EU attributes in the British news. The next section seeks to calculate and determine the impact of EU news reporting on levels of EU appreciation by means of a regression analysis in which the data of the Dutch and British case studies are combined.

9.4 The impact of news selections of EU attributes on appreciation levels

After the description of the development of both the coverage of EU attributes in the news and public appreciation of the EU in general terms and on an aggregate level per country, this section moves towards calculating the specific impact of EU issue coverage (independent variable) on individual levels of EU appreciation (dependent variable) through regression analysis. This section therefore centers on the actual testing of the proposition of this chapter, stating that the selection and coverage of specific EU attributes in newspapers affects the general level of appreciation of the EU among newspaper readers. It is expected, in accordance with the theoretical concepts of priming and compelling arguments, that EU attributes in the news affect the way in which the EU is generally appreciated by newspaper readers, in such a way that priming issues providing compelling arguments in favor of the EU will enhance positive feelings towards the EU and vice versa.

Set-up and measures

Similar to Chapter 7, the regression analysis of this chapter is based on survey and media data of the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. The survey data of 22 consecutive Eurobarometers (nos. 44 – 65; July 1995 – June 2006) of both countries are brought together in one database, with a total of 45,624 respondents. The dependent variable, EU appreciation, is the same EB variable as described and used in Chapter 7: membership of the EU. In the previous sections, the difference score of this variable was calculated. In this section, the membership variable is recoded into $1$ (EU membership is a bad thing; frequency: $7,885$), $0$ (indecisive or no answer; frequency: $13,952$) and $1$ (EU membership is a good thing; frequency: $23,787$).

For the same reasons as indicated in Chapter 7, here also two additional Eurobarometer variables are included that might contribute to the relationship between EU attributes and EU appreciation: nationality and education. Nationality (does being Dutch or British affect the basic relationship?) is included for comparative reasons, since we are dealing with two countries that greatly differ in general public outlook on the EU. The Dutch respondents are labeled with score $1$ on the comparative nationality variable (22,215 Dutch respondents) and their British counterparts with score $0$ for the United Kingdom (23,409 British respondents). The education variable (does educational level make a difference?) is an indication for readership and also relates to the theoretical expectation formulated by Zaller, that respondents with lower levels of education are more impressionable by news and easier affected by compelling arguments reporting than higher educated and better informed respondents are. In conformity with previous chapters, the education variable is recoded into three scores: $0$ for lower educated respondents (up to 15 years of education), $1$ for average educated respondents (16-18 years of education) and $2$ for higher educated respondents (19 years of education or more).

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**

109 Indicator question: ‘Do you think that our country’s membership of the EU is a good or bad thing?’ This question appears in all 25 Eurobarometer polls.

110 Indicator question: ‘What is your nationality? Please tell me the country(ies) that applies(y).

111 Indicator question: ‘How old were you when you stopped full-time education?’

112 See Chapter 7 for a further elaboration on Zaller’s work.
Results

The results of the regression analysis, summarized in Table 9.6, indicate that the predictive power of the model is modest, with an explained variance of 16% ($R^2 = 0.16$). This relatively modest score can be explained by the large frequency of respondents (N: 45,624) accounting for a probable large spread. The coefficients of the three categories of EU attributes (the independent variables) indicate priming effects in the expected direction. Positive EU news (EU attributes with compelling arguments in favor of the EU) causes respondents to think more positively about membership of the EU ($\beta$: 0.05; $p < .001$). Neutral EU news, that provides neither compelling arguments in favor nor against the EU, has an insignificantly effect on respondents ($\beta$: 0.02). Priming EU news issues with compelling arguments against the EU (negative attributes) causes respondents to think more negatively about EU membership ($\beta$: -0.03; $p < .05$).

### Table 9.6 Regression analysis with EU appreciation as dependent variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standardized Beta regression coefficients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive attributes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral attributes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative attributes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationality UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationality NL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LowEduc*PosAttrib.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MidEduc*PosAttrib.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HighEduc*PosAttrib.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LowEduc*NegAttrib.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MidEduc*NegAttrib.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HighEduc*NegAttrib.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lagged EU appreciation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted $R^2$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Dependent variable: EU appreciation.

It is also demonstrated that the two controlling variables nationality and education exert their influence on the basic relationship between EU attributes and EU appreciation. In general, British respondents display a more negative attitude towards EU membership ($\beta$: -0.21; $p < .001$) than their Dutch counterparts (reference category of nationality). The outcomes for the three levels of education demonstrate that respondents with a medium level of education generally display somewhat lower levels of support for EU membership ($\beta$: -0.03; $p < .05$) than higher educated respondents (reference category of education) do. Most critical towards EU membership are the respondents with lower levels of education ($\beta$: -0.8; $p < .001$). The results of the interaction terms of positive and negative categories of EU attributes and levels of education, again with higher education as reference group, are not significant, with the exception of respondents with middle levels of education who are confronted with EU attributes with negative arguments towards the EU ($\beta$: -0.05; $p < .001$). This substantial group, representing 46% of all respondents, proves to become less appreciative of the EU when confronted with negative EU issues. Finally, the lagged term for EU appreciation presents a noticeable influence on EU appreciation ($\beta$: 0.18; $p < .001$). This implies that
previous appreciative attitudes of respondents have a positive effect on the individual appreciation of the EU.

9.5 Conclusion and discussion

The main angle of this chapter is to study possible priming effects of EU news on newspaper readers. In accordance with the theoretical notions of priming and compelling arguments it is expected that positive EU attributes in the news, with compelling arguments in favor of European integration, will enhance public appreciation of the EU, whereas negative issues in the press will tend to make European audiences less appreciative of the EU. In addition and with reference to the RAS model of Zaller and the assumptions of Zajonc, as has been described in Chapter 7, it is expected also in this sub-study that the impact of EU news coverage is larger on lower educated newspaper readers (the readership of the popular press) than on their higher educated counterparts (quality press readers).

Hypothesis 4 (direct attribute effects)
The selection of EU attributes in newspapers affects the general appreciation of the EU by readers of these newspapers. This effect will be stronger for readers with lower levels of EU knowledge and involvement.

Generally speaking, the findings of this chapter point in the expected direction, indicating support for the notions of priming and compelling arguments as translated in the hypothesis above.

Descriptive analysis

The exploration of trends in EU reporting in both countries has revealed that the quality press in both countries devotes much more attention to EU affairs than the popular press does. However, in relative terms, both press segments demonstrate great similarities in their selection of EU issues and attributes. The comparison of the frequencies of positive, neutral and negative EU attributes in the Dutch and British press reveals that neutral issues dominate coverage of the EU in both countries. This goes for the UK for the whole time frame under study here, and for the Netherlands especially since the year 2000. Positive issues have become less and less prominent over time, whereas negative issues display volatile frequencies over the years. The general development of EU coverage over the years thus demonstrates that the average Dutch and British newspaper reader will be most frequently confronted with neutral EU attributes, followed by negative issues, and in the third place by positive EU topics. These findings do not fully concur with the conclusion of Norris, who stated that the media “provide a steady diet of bad news about Brussels” (Norris, 2000, p. 4). The outcomes come closer to the conclusion of de Vreese (2003) with regard to the portrayal of domestic political actors in EU reports, who are treated in neutral or slightly negative ways. In short, EU news has not so much grown more negative; it has become more neutral and less positive.

Within this development, and especially since the year 2000, quality newspapers in both countries tend to cover relatively more positive issues than the popular press. Remarkably, the quality press in both countries also pays relatively more attention to negative attributes. Popular newspapers have relative higher scores in covering neutral EU issues.

The development of EU appreciation in both countries has already been discussed in Chapter 7. Here, the main conclusion is that, on aggregate levels, trends in EU appreciation and in the coverage of more positive and more negative EU attributes in the press present clear similarities in the Dutch case and some parallels in the British one.

Regression analysis

The findings of the regression analysis indicate that, on the whole, priming effects do occur in such a way that EU news with compelling arguments in favor of the EU contributes to higher EU appreciation, while EU articles reporting negative issues enhance less appreciative attitudes among readers. Neutral EU issues reveal no significant effects. Relating these findings to the results of the descriptive analysis, with a demonstrated decrease of positive issues and an increasing dominance of both negative and neutral categories of EU attributes in the news in both countries, one may conclude that EU news has generally contributed to a decline in EU appreciation over the years.

The outcomes of the two covariates, education and nationality, are consistent with the findings of Chapters 2, 3 and 4, in which demographic variables and country characteristics are presented as contextual factors influencing public opinion towards the EU. Throughout the years and in various opinion polls, the Dutch have indicated to be more supportive of the EU than the British are.\(^{114}\) By the same token, higher educated people generally tend to be more in favor of European integration than their lower educated counterparts. Thus, the contextual variables of education and nationality make a noticeable imprint on the individual appreciation of the EU. The findings of this sub-study confirm the influence of these contextual characteristics. The combination of the two variables (not presented in Table 9.6) corroborates that middle and lower educated British display the lowest levels of EU support among all respondents in this sub-study.

The lagged term of EU appreciation presents the largest effect on EU appreciation. Previous levels of EU support are echoed in later expressions of EU appreciation. This indicates a (modest level of) continuity in the development of EU appreciation.

The results of the interaction terms of education and news attributes add few additional insights in the relationship between EU news coverage and EU attitudes. Only individual

\(^{114}\) See e.g., Figure 3.2.
respondents with middle education levels are significantly impressionable by EU news with compelling arguments against the EU (negative attributes). The other combinations yield no significant outcomes. This makes it difficult to express support for the RAS model of Zaller, in which better informed and more highly involved people are expected to develop more stable attitudes (Zaller, 1992, p. 44). Respondents with middle levels of education are the only group that is significantly influenced by negative EU attributes. This goes against the basic presumption of Zaller as described above, but rather coincides with the expectation of Tiemeijer, introduced in the first part of this chapter, that the effect of priming effects will especially occur in this middle category of respondents who are ‘sufficiently aware’, as opposed to unaware people with quite volatile opinions or highly aware people with solid opinions. However, this significant effect for respondents with middle levels of education is only found in combination with negative attributes and not in combination with positive attributes. All other interaction terms of education levels with EU attributes do not display significant outcomes. Therefore, in general, there is no additional support for the concept of Zaller and only partly for the position of Tiemeijer. This goes against the second part of Hypothesis 4, in which lower educated respondents are expected to be more susceptible to news effects than their higher educated counterparts.

All in all, this sub-study produces positive, yet modest, supportive findings for the main expectation of this chapter, as formulated in Hypothesis 4. Specific EU attributes, divided into categories of compelling arguments in favor of or against the EU, do make an imprint on the general appreciation of the EU. Positive attributes enhance EU support; negative issues evoke more critical outlooks on the EU. Thus, in accordance with the model of McCombs and Ghanem (2003), compelling arguments on the attribute level (second-level) affect general attitudes towards the EU (the first level). The second part of the hypothesis, indicating that priming effects will be stronger with middle and lower levels of education, can only partly be confirmed. Respondents with middle levels of education display results in the expected direction by being more susceptible to negative priming effects, but this does not go for positive attributes.

**Final remark**

This chapter has demonstrated that the press tends to pay less and less attention to positive EU issues. This implies that, because positive EU attributes in the news contribute to a more favorable outlook on the EU, the press provides less and less impulses for strengthening the levels of EU appreciation of newspaper readers. EU news has become predominantly neutral and negative over time. According to the priming hypothesis, supported by the findings of this chapter, the level of EU appreciation will therefore be more negatively affected. This negative development of EU appreciation will be enhanced by the relatively strong effect of the lagged term of EU appreciation. In addition, the only significant interaction term in the regression analysis, found in the case of negative attributes and the large group of middle educated respondents, also adds to the downward trend in EU appreciation. Overall, the outcomes of this chapter indicate that the press generally does not contribute to ameliorating the opinion formation with regard to the EU in an upward direction. On the other hand, the findings also demonstrate that prominent coverage of positive compelling arguments in the news has the potential to strengthen public EU appreciation.

115 "Priming effects will most often and most strongly be demonstrated for people who are on the one hand sufficiently 'politically aware' to receive a media message, but who are on the other hand not so much 'politically aware' that their opinions are cast in concrete" (Tiemeijer, 2006, p. 364; my translation, PtL).
PART FOUR

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

It cannot be enough said: Europe is at its apex when it is being missed or threatened, Europe is a form of missing,… What I think is important now is that the imagination of Europe does not benefit from abstractions, but from specific memories and ambitions, from well outlined dreams and longings.

Michael Zeeman, Dutch writer and journalist
(May, 2007; from the opening speech of the EuroPlaza festival)
Chapter 10 Conclusions and discussion

Introduction

The European Union seeks ways to strengthen its bonds with European citizens. Various developments and incidents have demonstrated that the ongoing construction of European cooperation suffers from severe weak spots in its public foundation. Hix negatively portrayed this situation as follows: “citizens feel isolated from the institutions of Brussels and see no way to influence European level decisions” (Hix, 2008, p. 1). The EU needs ample involvement and engagement on the part of European civil society in order to safeguard its democratic viability and legitimacy, now and in the future. The point of departure of this study is the frequently expressed and broadly proclaimed expectation that media can play a crucial and salutary role in improving the connection between the EU and European citizens. This book has sought to test this assumption by exploring the possible contribution of media coverage of EU affairs to a better understanding of the EU among European audiences. The research has been executed within the European context, which provides a fascinating research landscape with a large variety of member states, cultures, audience groups, media outlets, political systems, et cetera. It has proven to be a rich and challenging setting for executing comparative studies, but also a luring labyrinth, from which it is difficult to find a clear way out with the help of sound, general conclusions. In addition, the focus on the interplay of politics, media and publics has required an interdisciplinary approach in which notions and concepts from political science, communication science and social psychology had to be connected. The lack of a solid research tradition on politics and audiences in the European Union (despite some excellent pioneering studies in this field) has provided the opportunity of discovering new land, but has also posed the threat of going astray. In order to keep a steady grip within this domain of challenges and pitfalls, the research of this dissertation has been set up in a straightforward way, by distinctly focusing on volumes of EU news and issues in EU news in a comparative, cross-national setting, with both a longitudinal and a cross-sectional perspective. Thus, with two main objects of study, seen from two perspectives, four sub-studies have been designed and executed. Each sub-study has contributed to answering the main question:

To what extent does newspaper reporting about the European Union contribute to a better understanding of the EU by newspaper readers?

This final chapter aims at formulating the conclusive, overarching answer to this question. It also discusses the limitations and the theoretical and practical implications of this study. Section 10.1 reiterates and summarizes the main outcomes of the research parts of this book. In addition, it seeks to connect and discuss these findings in order to reach an
overarching conclusion with regard to the central question of this dissertation. Next, section 10.2 deals with the limitations and shortcomings of this study. Subsequently, section 10.3 will elaborate on the theoretical lessons learned in this study and the possible implications for future research in this field. Some final remarks related to the more practical implications of this study are presented in section 10.4.

10.1 Main findings

This section will first present separately the key outcomes of the research parts of this book. Next, it seeks to compare and connect these outcomes in view of answering the central research question.

**Part One: Marking off the terrain; more European integration coincides with less public support against a background of low knowledge levels**

The first and explorative part of this book has been devoted to the demarcation of the research domain. It has sketched the highlights of European cooperation in terms of achieving peace, welfare and stability. For decades, the legacy of the founding fathers yielded an ample (economic) harvest for succeeding generations. The political and economic elites of the member states performed their European wheeling and dealing behind closed doors, without encountering broad public debates or engagement by the European masses. Chapter 1 has depicted how this situation has gradually changed over the past twenty years. The main finding here is that the ambitious integrative plans of the post-Cold War era, documented in the Treaty of the European Union (Maastricht), marked a new phase of European cooperation, in which the growing size and scope of the EU is counter-balanced by increasing political and public dissent. In short, more European integration coincides with less public support. Clearly, the creation of a stronger, larger and more influential EU requires a broad public involvement and ample democratic legitimacy. Yet, in these crucial matters the EU falls short. Europeans are less engaged in and enthusiastic about the EU than Brussels wants and expects them to be. Chapters 2 and 3 have presented the feelings and opinions of European citizens, as expressed in various qualitative and quantitative studies. The general opinion climate towards the EU has undoubtedly become less favourable since the early 1990s, although in recent years, this downward development seems to have halted and even shows signs of slight improvement. This general picture has proven to have various shades when we look at separate member states of the EU. Some countries display a strongly negative opinion climate towards European cooperation, whereas others are quite positive or rank among middle-range supporters. It has not been possible to pinpoint the level of support to one or two specific country characteristics. This means that if the general opinion climate towards the EU can be characterized as lukewarm and not solid, in some countries the opinion figures are alarming for Brussels, whereas in others the sentiments are quite satisfactory. This implies that there is not one common, pan-European solution to address the matter of public involvement and support. Policies in this direction have to be tailor-made to fit the profile of each member state and the various audiences within these member states. Furthermore, they have to take into account the basic perceptions of the EU among Europeans. Chapter 2 has presented the way people talk and feel about the EU. A very fundamental finding in this respect is the demonstrated and expressed lack of knowledge about EU matters. Europeans know very little about the EU. This suggests that their outlook on the EU is not so much based on a cognitive, rational weighing of facts and figures, but is more likely to be driven by peripheral and incidental judgements, fuelled by general hopes and fears. Their view on European cooperation is associated with various sentiments. A dominant feeling among European in this respect is a general sense of uncertainty. Many people feel threatened and alienated by the dynamics of modern developments, such as globalization, migration and liberalization. They sense a feeling of loss, fear and threat. In their view, the EU tends to contribute to these threatening developments by opening up borders to foreigners and migrants or by increasing prices and imposing large contributions for non-descript European funds. On the other end of the scale, there are Europeans who welcome the building of a larger, open common space and the possibility to freely travel, work and study, or the opportunity to respond better to common challenges, such as climate change or the global competition with China and the USA. Again, there is no uniform European sentiment towards the EU and the disclosed associations and expressions are rooted in more general concerns and expectations related to modernity. Chapter 4 has presented an overview of theoretical concepts and studies with regard to politics, media and audiences, both in general and in the European context. Through reciprocal processes, these three agents influence each other, a process in which media play a powerful role as connector between politics and publics. Public opinion was interpreted as a melange of cognitions and attitudes. This was translated into the leading questions of the four sub-studies of this book, in which the relation of media coverage and public response is measured in terms of knowledge and appreciation. Also, the importance of additional factors such as involvement and motivation was stressed in order to explain the way in which people receive and process information. A limited but steadily growing number of studies has transferred this fascinating interplay of mutual powers and influences to the European level. Some of these studies are merely inventories of the way in which European media report about the EU and other relating matters. Volumes of news, the tenor of articles and subjects in the news are described and compared. These studies have displayed a national slant in coverage. This is not surprising, given the absence of truly pan-European media. European media and audiences are predominantly nationally orientated and therefore present a national perspective. Furthermore, economic issues dominate the news about the EU. The core business of the EU is reflected in the reports of European media: the common market, the Euro, employment and funding. In general, the tone of EU news is slightly
negative. Quality and public media have demonstrated to pay more attention to the EU than popular and/or commercial media do. Other studies go beyond taking stock of EU news by trying to assess the impact of EU news on European audiences. They have demonstrated effects for specific issues, frames and tones in EU coverage. These effects have proven to be larger in a situation of political dissent and media dissonance. Antagonism in society seems to enhance media effects. This relates to additional factors that contribute to the relationship between politics, media and publics. The literature discussed in Chapter 4 suggests that feelings of national identity, together with economic expectations and levels of education, seem to have the strongest confounding influence when assessing the impact of EU news on European audiences. These findings correspond with the suggestions of Chapter 2 and 3 that opinions towards the EU are interwoven with individual circumstances and societal developments. This study of the impact of EU news on European audiences therefore has encompassed these additional factors in its research set-up.

Part Two: Volumes of EU News (Approach 1); more EU news enhances knowledge and appreciation gaps
The main findings of chapters 6 and 7 indicate that the volume of EU news contributes to both a knowledge gap and an appreciation gap among European audiences. The amount of EU news does affect newspaper readers, although its impact varies per newspaper segment. Readers of the quality press respond in positive ways to more EU news. They become more knowledgeable about and appreciative of the EU. Readers of popular newspapers also gain additional knowledge about the EU when confronted with more EU news, yet to a lesser extent than quality press readers do (the knowledge gap). In addition, more EU news has a negative impact on the EU attitudes of popular press readers. This is the only negative effect found in both sub-studies. Its negative direction increases the distance in EU appreciation of the two reader groups (the appreciation gap).

Table 10.1 Presentation of the main findings of Approach 1 (Chapters 6 and 7)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect of volumes of EU news on EU knowledge levels (Chapter 6)</th>
<th>Effect of volumes of EU news on EU appreciation levels (Chapter 7)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Higher educated quality press readers: larger positive knowledge effect; and the potential to gain more knowledge when EU news increases.</td>
<td>• Higher educated quality press readers: smaller, positive appreciation effect;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lower educated popular press readers: smaller, positive knowledge effect;</td>
<td>• Lower educated popular press readers: larger, negative appreciation effect.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The volume of EU news enhances the Knowledge Gap
The volume of EU news enhances the Appreciation Gap

Table 10.1 presents the most prominent findings of Chapters 6 and 7. It suggests that printing more EU news in the quality press would have a beneficiary effect on the levels of knowledge and appreciation towards the EU among its readers. Briefly put, more news is good news in the quality press segment. The popular newspapers and their readers, however, display a paradoxical picture. An increase in EU news would have opposite effects: the limited gain in EU knowledge will be outweighed by the noticeable loss in appreciative EU attitudes.

In addition to these main findings, the two chapters concerning volumes of EU news have clearly demonstrated large differences in volumes of EU news between the two selected segments of the press. In both sub-studies, the quality newspapers devote much more attention to the EU than the popular press does. Next to this general difference, which has been assessed within each selected member state, it has become apparent that volumes of EU news are also quite different between EU countries. The German quality press has produced extremely high volumes of EU coverage. The Dutch press has displayed relatively low scores, both in the quality and in the popular segment. The French and the British press are positioned in the middle ranges. Taking these two findings together, one may safely expect to find more EU articles in the quality press than in the popular press in each country, but a relatively high number of EU articles in one member state may well prove to be relatively low when compared with the same newspaper segment in another country. This conclusion strongly corresponds with the findings of other studies in this field (e.g., Kevin, 2002; Norris, 2002; Pfetsh & Koopmans, 2004) that underline the influence of differences in national political cultures and media landscapes. These findings are quite similar to the outcomes of Part One, as has been described above. Although the EU is a common subject for newspapers and audiences throughout Europe, domestic elements play an important role in media coverage and public response concerning the EU.
Chapter 6 (knowledge effects) has revealed that an increase in the volume of EU news positively affects the knowledge level of quality press readers. Readers of popular newspapers have also demonstrated a positive, yet more limited effect on EU knowledge. These outcomes largely coincide with the findings of Scharkow and Vogelgesang (2007), who disclosed in an analysis of media usage in 21 European countries, that media use has a positive effect on knowledge of EU matters and that education is an important confounding predictor of this knowledge formation. Chapter 6 also indicates that additional, motivational factors play an important role in the relationship between volumes of EU news and knowledge effects. All these findings fully concur with the basic notions of the Knowledge Gap theory. However, popular press readers have also demonstrated the potential to gain relatively more EU knowledge than their counterparts of the quality press when confronted with large amounts of EU news. Yet, it is not likely that the popular press will start to pay as much attention to the EU as the quality press does, nor is it expected that the reader of popular newspapers would be motivated to read as much about the EU as the quality press reader does.

Chapter 7 (appreciation effects) has disclosed various effects of volumes of EU news on the level of EU appreciation of newspaper readers. Popular press readers have demonstrated noticeable effects in a negative direction. Readers of quality newspapers have displayed more limited effects, but in a positive direction. Nationality and education have proven to be important conditional variables. The size of the effect fully corresponds with the theoretical assumptions of Zaller (1992). Less informed and lower educated respondents are expected to be less able to receive and process information and therefore are less stable in the formation of political opinions and attitudes. In other words, they are more likely to be affected by the media. This effect is also stipulated by Tiemeijer (2006), who stresses that political awareness contributes to more stability in opinions. Yet, the direction of the found effects has generated opposite outcomes. Readers of the quality press are positively affected in their EU attitudes when confronted with more EU news, whereas popular press readers display a negative effect on EU appreciation. Zajonc (1968) has contended that more exposure contributes to more familiarity and therefore to more acceptance. This expectation is warranted in the quality segment, but the popular press has yielded an effect in the opposite direction. These outcomes imply that increasing volumes of EU news contribute to a growing distance in EU appreciation between readers of the quality press on the one hand and quality press readers on the other. The former tend to become substantially more knowledgeable, whereas the latter become slightly more positive. As such, Chapter 7 has also revealed a gap: an appreciation gap. The concepts of Zaller and Zajonc fall short when it comes to explaining the occurrence of this appreciation gap. Approach 2 is designed to provide additional explanatory information to account for this outcome. It is clear from the first chapters of this book that European politicians, officials and the like should be most concerned about the less involved and less informed European citizens. They generally display the lowest levels of knowledge and support with regard to the EU. They also represent the main audiences of the highly read popular newspapers and tabloids in Europe. The key findings of Chapters 6 and 7 (Approach 1, Volumes of EU news) have indicated that simply printing more EU news is not the right solution for these readers. Only if the popular newspapers would double their amount of EU news (quod non) and if their readers would be motivated to consume and process great volumes of EU news (quod non), a situation of substantial knowledge gain would be created. Yet, the confrontation with large amounts of EU news would be quite harmful to their appreciation of the EU. Therefore, increasing the mere amount of EU news does not warrant the promotion of a better understanding of the EU among popular press readers.

Part Three: Issues in EU News (Approach 2; Issue news affects definition and appreciation)

The two sub-studies concerning the volume of EU news (Approach 1) have revealed both a knowledge gap and an appreciation gap. The former is convincingly in accordance with and supportive of the Knowledge Gap hypothesis. The latter cannot be fully accounted for by the tested theoretical concepts. Approach 2 (Issues in EU news, Chapters 8 and 9) therefore goes beyond the mere volume of EU news, by studying the effects of the selection of specific attributes and issues in the news. Analyzing the impact of the content of EU news might help to explain why EU news leads to differing directions of EU appreciation among various press reader groups. Approach 2 revolves around the possible congruence between the selection of specific EU issues in the news on the one hand and the public definition (Chapter 8) and appreciation (Chapter 9) of the EU on the other. The most important outcomes of Chapters 8 and 9 demonstrate that coverage of specific attributes in EU news leads to a transfer of salience, both on the second level and from the second to the first level. Both sub-studies indicate congruence between the presentations of issues and attributes in EU news and the ways of defining and appreciating the EU among newspaper readers.
Table 10.2 Presentation of the main findings of Approach 2 (Chapters 8 and 9)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect of selection of EU issues on EU definition (Chapter 8)</th>
<th>Effect of selection of EU issues on EU appreciation levels (Chapter 9)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Opportunity attributes in the press enhance EU definition in terms of opportunity by readers;</td>
<td>• Positive attributes in the press enhance EU appreciation by readers;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Threat attributes in the press enhance EU definition in terms of threat by readers;</td>
<td>• Negative attributes in the press diminish EU appreciation by readers;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The quality segment (press and readers) accentuates relatively more opportunity issues;</td>
<td>• A strong decrease of positive attributes in press over time;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The popular segment (press and readers) accentuates relatively more threat issues.</td>
<td>• Middle educated people are extra impressionable by negative attributes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

EU issue news produces a transfer of salience on the attribute level (second level)
EU issue news produces a transfer of salience on the appreciation level (second to first level)

Table 10.2 presents the main outcomes of Approach 2. These findings demonstrate that the selection of specific issues and attributes in EU news does affect newspaper readers. The exposure to specific media content has an impact on the definition and appreciation of the EU by European audiences. The findings also suggest that the press has the potential to enhance public support for the EU by selecting and emphasizing favorable attributes and positive issues. In practice, however, the promotion of a better understanding of the EU by the press is not warranted, considering the dominant share of popular newspapers and tabloids in all national news markets studied, their less favorable coverage of the EU, and the decreasing amount of positive attributes in EU news. In addition to these main conclusions, both sub-studies disclose that quality newspapers pay relatively more attention to specific, tangible policy areas. Within member states, the selection of EU issues in the quality press is strongly connected with that of the popular segment. Despite the fact that the quality press produces a greater volume of EU news and a slightly more favorable approach to the EU, both press segments (quality and popular) in each country produce a largely similar selection of EU attributes. Across European borders, quality newspapers show strong interconnections in their selection of EU issues. This might be an indication of a common European media agenda among the elite titles of the European press. The popular segment of the European press has demonstrated less cohesion. Especially the British and German tabloids could not be mutually linked in their selection of EU issues. A similar conclusion can be drawn for newspaper readers and their public appreciation and definition of the EU. Readers of the quality press in the selected countries have displayed a more common attitude and view towards the EU than their compatriots, who read popular titles. Again, the German and British readers of the popular press, dominated by the tabloids, could not be mutually related. If there is a European public sphere, as is claimed by Habermas (1992), denied by Peter (2003) and discussed by de Vreese (2007a) and Koopmans & Statham (2010), it will be confined to strata of the higher educated, more informed Europeans who regularly read quality newspapers. This corresponds with the findings of Koopmans and Erbe (2004), who found evidence for a common media and public agenda in the elite sections of European society. All in all, both chapters of Approach 2 have shown that the quality segment (newspapers and readers) has presented a more voluminous and a slightly more favorable coverage of the EU than the popular segment, in which the British and German tabloids and their readers represent the least connected elements. Chapter 8 (definition effects) has demonstrated that European newspapers generally portray the EU relatively more often with unfavorable attributes than their readers do. This may be partly explained by the fact that some associative definitions of European respondents are not directly linked to the press. Freedom to travel and work is a very popular and positive issue among respondents; yet, this issue is very likely to be chosen on the basis of personal experience and not through newspaper coverage. On the whole, in all three countries of Chapter 8 the connection between press issues and public definitions has been clearly demonstrated. Also the impact of the press selections on reader groups has been positively determined, albeit on a modest level. Thus, Chapter 8 is supportive of the second-level agenda-setting theory, in which the transfer of salience on the attribute level of media to target groups is the central concept. This transfer is distinctly visible in the case of the coverage of EU attributes by the two press segments in the three countries and their respective reader groups. The large market share of the popular and tabloid press in those countries suggests that the more unfavorable approach of the EU in this press segment has a wider reach among the population than the more favorable EU coverage of the quality press. The findings of Chapter 9 point in a similar direction but in a less straightforward, more subtle way. Here, the coverage of EU attributes by the press is divided into categories of negative, neutral and positive issues, determined by the extent to which these issues convey compelling arguments in favor of or against membership of the EU. On the whole and over the years, neutral issues are most dominant in press coverage of the EU, followed by negative attributes; positive issues are last in rank and their share in EU news is clearly decreasing over time. When distinguishing between quality and popular newspapers, the popular press pays relatively more attention to neutral topics, whereas the quality papers are covering relatively more negative and positive attributes. The regression analysis indicates that, generally, more positive EU coverage enhances EU appreciation and that the accentuation of negative compelling arguments contributes to less EU support. These findings are
supportive of the concepts of priming and compelling arguments. Furthermore, interaction effects reveal that respondents with middle levels of education (46% of the respondents) are additionally affected by negative issues in the news. Higher and lower educated people demonstrate to be less impressionable. This effect may be explained by the fact that people with middle levels of education may well be characterized as ‘half-thinkers’: receivers with enough basic knowledge to digest and retain the information, but with insufficient knowledge to consistently argue against it. Therefore, this group is more susceptible to media influence than those who know very much, or very little (Tiemeijer, 1996; Kleinnijenhuis et al., 2007). The diminishing amount of positive issues in EU news and the significant outcome of the interaction term of the large group of middle educated respondents with negative issues indicate that, overall, the selection of attributes in EU news will tend to influence the general level of EU appreciation in a negative way. All in all, the findings of Approach 2 (Issues in EU news) also contribute to the explanation of the appreciation gap, as determined in Approach 1. Readers of the popular press are more sensitive to news coverage. Popular newspapers portray the EU with relatively more unfavorable issues. In addition, all European newspapers have provided decreasing amounts of positive EU news and therefore less compelling arguments in favor of the EU.

**Answering the central question: EU news leads to more knowledge and less support**

This study centres on the interplay between the European Union, European citizens, and European media. The explorative chapters of this dissertation (Part One) have described that, in the post-Maastricht era, the EU has demonstrated ambitions for a further and deeper European integration. European citizens have countered these ambitious plans with decreasing levels of public support and appreciation. On average, European citizens display low levels of EU knowledge and demonstrate increasing signs of Euroscepticism. Subsequently, the four sub-studies have disclosed that on the whole, European newspapers have gradually devoted more attention to the EU, but also tend to portray the EU less and less with positive attributes and issues. Thus, the descriptive analysis leads to the conclusion that more EU ambitions go hand in hand with less public support, and with more EU news containing less positive issues. This dissertation seeks to disclose the impact of the media within this context. Is media coverage of EU affairs merely coincidental with these developments or do media play a role in determining the size and direction of the public climate towards the EU?

All sub-studies have indicated that press coverage of the EU does play a part in influencing the way in which the EU is known, appreciated and defined by newspaper readers. Therefore, the final answer to the central research question can be formulated by integrating and synthesizing the main findings of the four sub-studies. This question, once more, is as follows:

**To what extent does newspaper reporting about the European Union contribute to a better understanding of the EU by newspaper readers?**

The general, overarching answer to the central question would be that the European press contributes to a better cognitive understanding of the EU among newspaper readers, but by the same token has a mostly negative affective impact. These contrasting media effects get more perspective when we distinguish between the quality and the popular segments of the press and their readership. The distinction made in this study between editorial profiles of newspapers and their respective reader groups has proven to be relevant and insightful. The quality press, with a small market share in all countries, produces relatively large amounts of EU news with a wide variety of issues and perspectives. Its readership responds positively by demonstrating a relatively larger cognitive and a more modest affective effect. The popular and tabloid press, with a dominating quantitative position in the press landscape, produces low to medium levels of EU reporting and a more unfavorable outlook on the EU. Readers of the popular press demonstrate a relatively small gain in EU knowledge when confronted with more EU news. In addition, they are relatively more affected by EU news in their evaluation of the EU, and these effects develop in a negative direction. Given the large market share of the popular and tabloid press and its negative effect on EU appreciation, one may conclude that, for the average European, the larger negative appreciation effect of the omnipresent popular press overshadows the modest positive affective impact of the small-sized quality segment. Therefore, the overall impact of media on the affective level (EU appreciation) has to be considered as negative. And thus, this leads to the conclusion that the press generally contributes to widening the gap between ‘Brussels’ and the average European citizen by its predominantly negative effect on EU appreciation.

**Additional conclusions**

This study also demonstrates that, in some instances, newspapers can enhance the level of EU knowledge and EU appreciation among their readers. This outcome fully concurs with the findings of Boomgaarden et al. (2010), who displayed the potential of the media to inform and involve citizens in matters of European integration. The present study shows that more prominent and more favorable EU coverage by the press can contribute to higher levels of EU knowledge and EU appreciation across the board. However, the European press has not lived up to this potential. Although most newspapers have increased their quantitative coverage of EU news over the years, they also display a steady decline in their selection of positive, favorable issues and attributes. In this respect, this study confirms the conclusion of de Vreese, that “media can fuel and reduce” general support for the EU, depending on media content and individual characteristics” (de Vreese, 2007b, p. 271). In order to put the above conclusions in a relative perspective, it should be noted that the media effects in all sub-studies are modest. The press does play a role in the formation of
The collective and individual variables of national context, motivation and education have been shown to influence newspaper reporting and public response. This dissertation has demonstrated that the size and direction of the link between newspapers’ reporting and public response is depending on various conditional variables. Each national context is unique and therefore the interplay of politics, media and publics in each country is unique, also when the EU is at stake. For example, the UK, with a tradition of Euroscepticism and a large-scale tabloid culture, constitutes a different context than the Netherlands, which has a favorable public climate towards the EU and a wide range of quality and middle market newspapers. Germany and France both present still different circumstances. These two countries report average scores on EU support and have a strong regional press. In addition, Germany possesses a small quality press segment with a vast market share. In contrast to the German case, the French press landscape lacks genuine tabloid papers and the French quality press only covers the EU in modest volumes. These found differences in national contexts largely concur with findings of related studies in this field (e.g., Fundesco, 1997; Kevin, 2002; Norris, 2002; Pletsch & Koopmans, 2004; Lubbers & Scheepers, 2010). The displayed confounding influence of these different domestic settings, which contributes to the lack of uniform, homogeneous effects across all selected member states, concurs with the outcomes of Part One and Part Two, and also with related studies in which the impact of specific national characteristics is stressed (e.g., de Vreese, 2003, Peter, 2003).

Secondly, motivational factors are significant. No matter what the amount of EU articles or the content and tenor of the news is, audiences will only consume and process EU news if they are motivated to do so. Various scholars have stressed the importance of motivation and involvement when studying possible media effects (e.g., Zaller, 1992; Tiemeijer, 2006; Pol, 2007). The findings of this study underline the importance of motivational conditions. The general lack of knowledge and involvement in EU matters, as described in Part One, hardly offers room for a widespread interest in EU news. To most Europeans, the EU is far away, incomprehensible, complex and unattractive. People will start to read about the EU only if they care to read about the EU. The prominence of rather technical economic and institutional elements in EU articles, as portrayed in Chapter 4, will not easily encourage them to intensify or expand their reading of EU news.

A third element to take into consideration is the level of education. This variable, which serves as an indicator of both information-processing skills and socio-economic status, has proven to be an important conditional factor. Higher educated people are generally more involved in and knowledgeable about political and societal matters. They also have better skills to digest information that contributes to a more stable formation of opinions. In conformity with Inglehart’s cognitive mobilisation concept (1971) and the RAS-model of Zaller (1992), this study reiterates the importance of education as confounding variable. It also concurs with the outcomes of a related analysis executed by Scharkow & Vogelgesang (2007). The lessons to be learned here are that European citizens should be educated and motivated to gain higher levels of knowledge and awareness of European matters. Their life and future have become more dependent on decisions made by European institutions and officials. Yet, they have insufficient understanding of and a grip on European decision making.

A final remark: in democratic societies, media play an important role, not only as sources of information, but also as platforms for debate and the exchange of different views (McQuail, 1992) and as drivers of social consensus and public agenda building (McCombs & Reynolds, 2009). The present European context, in which politics, economics, culture and communication are no longer confined to and defined by national borders, media are still predominantly nationally based. With the absence of genuine European media, national media in Europe are the first in line to develop ways of performing their important democratic role in society by fully encompassing European news and discussions in their reports and columns. This is all the more urgent, now that large parts of national legislation and decision making have moved from national capitals to Brussels and Strasbourg. However, Koopmans & Statham (2010) concluded that the elitist-technocratic character of European decision-making and EU communication makes it difficult for journalists to get the European message across to their audiences. In addition, de Vreese (2003) and Lecheler (2008) found that European correspondents and reporters are confronted with limited room to provide a steady and substantive flow of EU news to their national media outlets, due to a limited interest in EU affairs both on the part of their editors and publishers and among their audiences. The findings above and the outcomes of the present study all imply that, on the European level, media and journalists cannot fully play their part in the public domain as they usually do in the national political context. On the national level, politics, media and public opinion are players on the same pitch. On the European level, there is no matching playground, no political Champions League that warrants both thorough press attention and public popularity. Rather, the EU displays a situation of different realms and levels with an increasing distance between politics and publics, forcing the media in an uncomfortable split position. If this situation is not solved, further increases in European political integration will lead to further decreases in public support and legitimation. Positively put, the EU should look for ways of addressing the concerns and hopes of European citizens. If the EU succeeds in establishing added value for Europeans above and beyond national politics,
interpreting the findings of this study. In this respect, the study of Lecheler (2008) is of East European member states. More country cases would have provided a better representation and qualitative aspects of news reports of these media as straightforwardly as can be done with newspaper coverage. Yet, television is a very influential medium and is repeatedly indicated as the most preferred source of information about the EU by European respondents. Still, television does not offer a constant flow of EU news, which makes it difficult to systematically analyze its content and its possible impact on audiences. Peter (2003) has demonstrated that TV news about the EU does matter in certain circumstances. As such, television might provide an important tool for future communication about the EU, especially for those European citizens who are not likely to read quality newspapers. The Internet may provide an interesting communication platform for the exchange of information about the EU in the future, and therefore also is a challenging object for future research. The Internet is less bound by national borders and domestic rules and constraints than the traditional media are. On the other hand, those citizens who are less likely to be informed about and involved in EU matters are also less likely to actively engage in a communication exchange about the EU on the Internet.

With the selection of newspapers, the availability of newspaper data evoked subsequent limitations. For the longitudinal sub-studies of this book, only for two countries (the Netherlands and the United Kingdom) a set of newspapers from both segments (popular and quality) have been available. The two cross-national strands of research have been executed on the basis of a larger range of newspapers and countries. Still, even in these cases the selection has been limited, due to a lack of suitable titles in newspaper archives. It would have been interesting to include a set of papers from Scandinavian, South European and East European member states. More country cases would have provided a better representation of the actual European context and also a better comparative setting for testing and interpreting the findings of this study. In this respect, the study of Lecheler (2008) is of interest, as it sheds light on the work of correspondents in Brussels from various new EU member states, who generally feel limited by the dominance of journalists of older and larger member states and by the lack of interest on the home front.

Another important choice has been the selection of relevant survey data. The choice of Eurobarometer surveys as the main source of information has yielded a rich and vast reservoir of useful data. However, Eurobarometer data cannot always be interpreted at face value, as Chapter 3 has demonstrated. Moreover, not all variables are constantly or directly available in all consecutive Eurobarometer polls. Some variables had to be ruled out, because they only figure occasionally in Eurobarometer polls and therefore are unfit for long-term research. The main handicap in this respect has been the absence of a direct measure of newspaper readership in Eurobarometer polls. With the pleasant exception of Eurobarometer 65 (spring 2006; data used in both cross-national sub-studies), the standard Eurobarometer survey does not contain a specific question that pinpoints actual newspaper readership of respondents. For this reason, in both longitudinal strands of research, the level of education variable has been used as an indicator for readership of popular or quality newspapers. This indirect measure only provides an approximation of media usage and readership. Another matter of interest in this respect relates to the selection of the dependent variables: EU knowledge, EU appreciation and EU definition. All variables have proven to be approximations, whereas more specific measures would have been more suitable and desirable. Yet, these measures have not been available. EU knowledge is measured by using indications of subjective knowledge, with the risk of including scores of respondents who over- or underestimated their factual cognitions. The measure of EU definition has been based on a given list of attributes, which excludes the option of encompassing additional defining clues suggested by respondents themselves. EU appreciation, finally, has been conceptualized by using the support for EU membership question on the basis of its long-term and constant availability in Eurobarometer polls. Vliegenthart et al. (2008) demonstrated that the impact of benefit frames in the news was larger for the specific perception of benefit of the EU than for the general measure of EU support. He therefore concluded that this “underlines the importance of considering the match between news content analytical indicators and the dependent variable they are assumed to affect” (Vliegenthart et al., 2008, p. 433).

The selection of issues in the news has also constituted limitations. The issues of Approach 2 are derived from an issue list in Eurobarometer 65 (Chapter 8) and from a preselection of issues (Chapter 9). These selections have been linked to and compared with newspaper data. Possibly and probably, newspapers have also reported on other EU topics outside these selections of issues. Yet, working the other way around by first analyzing the selection of all possible issues in the press and then comparing these issues with survey data, would have generated other problems and limitations. First of all, this study has included tens of thousands of EU articles. It is virtually impossible to thoroughly screen all those articles on the presence of all possible issues and topics. Secondly, even if this screening had been feasible, it would have not been possible to match all these issues to the given survey data.

10.2 Limitations
The set-up of this study is based on many choices that had to be made in order to mark off the terrain and keep a grip on the rich and vast context of the study object. Each choice implicates a limitation.

An important decision in this respect has been the focus on newspapers. This choice has ruled out the option of including EU reports of media outlets such as television, radio, magazines and the Internet. Most of these media do not report about the EU on a regular basis and/or for large audience groups, nor is it possible to register and analyze the quantitative and qualitative aspects of news reports of these media as straightforwardly as can be done with newspaper coverage. Yet, television is a very influential medium and is repeatedly indicated as the most preferred source of information about the EU by European respondents. Still, television does not offer a constant flow of EU news, which makes it difficult to systematically analyze its content and its possible impact on audiences. Peter (2003) has demonstrated that TV news about the EU does matter in certain circumstances. As such, television might provide an important tool for future communication about the EU, especially for those European citizens who are not likely to read quality newspapers. The Internet may provide an interesting communication platform for the exchange of information about the EU in the future, and therefore also is a challenging object for future research. The Internet is less bound by national borders and domestic rules and constraints than the traditional media are. On the other hand, those citizens who are less likely to be informed about and involved in EU matters are also less likely to actively engage in a communication exchange about the EU on the Internet.

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A last remark in this respect is related to the chosen time frame. Chapter 5 has explained why ‘Maastricht’ is well suited as a starting point and how the 12.5 years of the post-Maastricht era in this book cover an interesting, dynamic period in which the EU has dramatically and ambitiously expanded its agenda and membership. The end line of all sub-studies is drawn in July 2006, with the spring edition of the Eurobarometer (EB 65), which offered exceptional survey data about actual newspaper readership. This produced a logical time boundary for collecting and comparing media and survey data. This does not imply that the years after 2006 have not been interesting and exciting to study, yet those years have not been incorporated in the sub-studies. The EU has continued to develop since 2006 with e.g., the accession of Romania and Bulgaria (2007), the adoption of the Treaty of Lisbon (2009), the appointment of the first ‘European president’, van Rompuy, (2009) and the ongoing Euro crisis in recent months. All these topics have caused substantive media and public attention. This study has made use of recent studies and literature to cover trends in and the interplay between the political, media and public agenda during the past five years. Where possible and relevant, these findings are used for comparative reasons in the discussion of the outcomes of the studies of this book.

10.3 Theoretical implications

This study has sought to determine the possible impact of media coverage on various audiences in various countries, on various levels (cognitive and affective), in long-term and short-term settings, and distinguishing between volumes of news and issues in news. No single theory in communication science or in related academic disciplines fully covers the broad set-up of this research. Therefore, this study had to hook on to multiple theoretical views and concepts in order to approach and comprise the research terrain. With the triple relationship between politics, media and public at stake here, the most crucial question of this study and these theoretical concepts is the matter of causality. Who affects whom, to what extent and under which circumstances? Each theoretical perspective has added in its own way to answering this fundamental question.

The Knowledge Gap theory proved to be fruitful in unveiling cognitive effects, both in the longitudinal and in a short-term setting (Chapter 6). In the context of the EU, the cognitive element is very relevant in view of the relatively extensive lack of general knowledge about the EU among European citizens. The Knowledge Gap proposition also relates to the discussion (as discussed in Chapter 2) about the effects of globalization and digitalization, and the creation of a growing gap between people who know to adapt to and take advantage of these developments on the one hand, and those who fail to do so on the other. An important aspect in the Knowledge Gap tradition is the notion of knowledge itself (Gaziano & Gaziano, 1995; Scharkow & Vogelgesang, 2007). What kind of knowledge is actually measured? Chapter 6 has been limited to the subjective measure of self-perceived knowledge of the EU. This leaves room for broad interpretations of knowledge levels, ranging from superficial awareness to in-depth knowledge. It would be preferable to determine EU knowledge more objectively. But then, which types of cognitions would be accurate indicators of EU knowledge? Names of officials and institutions, awareness of dossiers and procedures, historical facts and figures? Should we expect the media to cover these topics, or should governments inform their citizens through education and public information? With different sources of information, it might become difficult to pinpoint the impact of media. Previous studies have indicated that the visibility of the EU in the news is limited (see e.g., Peter, 2003; Lecheler, 2008) or, at most, slowly increasing (Boomgaarden et al., 2010). Knowledge Gap effects are therefore limited to the attention paid to the EU by the media. In future research, it would be interesting to compare news coverage of the EU with the efforts made per member state to inform and involve citizens via education and public information programs about the EU. The Knowledge Gap theory stresses the importance of education and motivation as confounding variables. The findings of Chapter 6 affirm this proposition. A study of various information sources and their imprint on knowledge levels will help achieve a more accurate assessment of interdependent relationships. This may contribute to determining whether media exposure enhances differences in education and societal orientation, or whether distinctive features among audience groups enhance different effects of media exposure.

Where the Knowledge Gap theory is sociologically based and focused on cognitive effects, the concepts of Zajonc and Zaller (Chapter 7) are more socio-psychologically in nature, with an accentuation of opinion formation. Both concepts explain the way in which people tend to process information. The assumption of Zajonc, that more information as such leads to more familiarity and thus contributes to a more positive attitude, has proven to be too simple for the complex European context. More news about the EU did not enhance a more favorable public sentiment towards these issues, especially not among those who have been least familiar with EU matters. The RAS model of Zaller, with its solid position in public opinion research (Tiemeijer, 2006), has been a better applicable concept in this respect. This concurs with the conclusions of Janssen (2001), who found strong empirical evidence for the RAS model in his study of the EU and public opinion. Yet, the findings of this study are less convincing. This may be due to changes in the political and public climate over the past decade. The RAS model and its four axioms hinge on a combination of cognitive engagement, political predispositions and recently acquired information. The part of cognitive engagement (first axiom) is quite straightforward and comparable with the assumptions of the Knowledge Gap theory. It stresses the differences in skills among people to receive and process information. The element of political predispositions offers both an academic opportunity and a threat at the same time. Political parties in Europe have become more and more outspoken in their positioning towards the EU (see e.g., Adamson & Johns, 2008). There is less of a consensus among political elites and this provides the European
electorates with a broader political spectrum to adhere to, ranging from strongly anti-EU parties to full supporters of European integration. Hooghe & Marks (2008) found that mainstream political parties, generally in favor of European integration, are increasingly challenged by “oppositional parties or fractions, particularly those on the populist right and radical left” (Hooghe & Marks, 2008, p. 23). This development gives more color and depth to the concept of political predispositions when the EU is at stake. Voters of pro-EU parties may be expected to evaluate EU issues in the news in more benevolent ways than voters of parties that tend to strongly criticize European cooperation. On the other hand and with an opposing effect, European voters tend to become less affiliated to one particular party. The growing number of swing (or floating) voters may well contribute to more volatile political predispositions, which makes it more difficult to uphold the resistance axiom of Zaller.

The last element discussed here relates to the third (accessibility) and fourth (response) axiom of Zaller’s RAS model. These axioms are closely related to the last two theoretical notions of this book: the second-level agenda-setting theory and the concept of priming. Agenda setting, priming and also the concept of framing rank among the most studied and discussed theoretical concepts in contemporary political communication science. Some scholars tend to emphasize the similarities between these theoretical notions (e.g., McCombs & Estrada, 1997), whereas others stress the importance of the distinct features of each concept (e.g., Scheufele, 2000). Cumulative research has not lead to a general and consistent theoretical framework that encompasses important aspects of agenda setting, framing and priming (de Vreese, 2003). The agenda-setting theory is an exponent of the paradigm switch in communication science from powerful to limited effects. Mass media were no longer expected to directly influence the hearts and minds of people, but they were assumed to exert their influence in more subtle, indirect ways. Agenda-setting research over the years collected evidence for the proposition that media do not determine what people think, but what people think about. The axioms of Zaller and the concepts of the priming and compelling arguments can be considered to have added a psychological foundation to the notion of agenda setting (Tiemeijer, 2006). These theoretical concepts stress how information activates mental processes and how activated elements in people’s minds play a part in the processing of information and in opinion formation. In this respect, the media indirectly evoke cognitive and affective responses. They do so indirectly, because the media impact depends on what is already present in peoples’ minds. The present academic discussions concerning these theoretical concepts revolve around various aspects of the central stimulus-response proposition. They involve questions about immediate and subsequent effects, about effects on cognitive and on affective levels, and about the issue whether media coverage is subject to specific interpretations by individuals or that media produce the interpretative frames that individuals use when processing information.

Future studies should bring more clarity about these questions of causes and effects, and more firmness in the building of theory. This will undoubtedly also contribute to the cause of studying media effects in the European context. This study found evidence for the presence of media effects but in various directions, and to a modest degree. A very important aspect in this respect is the general lack of knowledge about the EU (see Chapter 2 and also e.g., Scharkow & Vogelgesang, 2007)) and the limited and infrequent way of reporting about the EU by most of the media outlets (see e.g., Peter, 2003; de Vreese & Boomgaard, 2006). Taking these two circumstances together, many European citizens will have only very limited mental faculties to activate when confronted with (scarce) news about the EU. Although Zaller contended that also unstable and ad hoc opinions are the outcomes of cognitive processes, one may expect that people need at least a minimum of knowledge units and a minimum amount of recently received information to fulfill the theoretical conditions laid out by the concepts of agenda setting and priming. The European context calls for the elaboration of these theoretical concepts in order to be able to account for situations of very scarce knowledge and limited media coverage. This is all the more relevant, because this study has demonstrated that the situation is most critical for the public understanding of the EU.

10.4 Practical lessons

The introduction of this study has sketched how the initiatives and ambitions of the EU are paralleled by a lukewarm public response and how they are based on thin layers of democratic support. The broadly expressed need for more information and media attention is often assumed to be one of the key solutions to this problem. This assumption has been an important motive for setting up this study. The main conclusion of this book is that, indeed, EU news does matter. In certain circumstances, newspapers are able to affect the hearts and minds of their readers with their reports about the EU. Yet, overall, the press demonstrates that it contributes to widening this gap. The findings of this study indicate that the ambitious policies of the EU in the post-Maastricht era have been countered by a steady decline in public support and a gradual increase in media attention. In other words, the further the EU seeks to develop and integrate, the more media attention this evokes, but the less enthusiastic and supportive the public reaction becomes. Brussels steps on the brake, while enthusiastic and supportive the public reaction becomes. Brussels steps on the brake, while
outlook on the EU is relatively positive. On the other hand, the popular segment represents a combination of a larger selection of unfavorable attributes in the press, a higher level of impressionability of its readers, and a vast and growing market share of popular titles and tabloids. This critical combination of limited and unfavorable coverage, easily impressed readers and growing market shares may well dominate the public climate in the near future. Not a comforting and reassuring situation to look forward to for European officials and EU supporters. How should EU officials, politicians and journalists go from here?

The introduction of this book has indicated how the EU has launched an action plan (Plan D) in 2005, in which the media are attributed a large role in bridging the gap between the EU and its citizens.117 The findings of this study indicate that media do play a role, but this role is modest. Besides, the size and the direction of this role depend on various conditioning factors. The solution for bridging the gap between the EU and its citizens therefore depends on a many factors and instruments, one of which is constituted by the media. First of all, more and better education about European history and European integration would contribute to a much-needed higher level of general information about the EU. Media alone are not able and equipped to perform this basic task. Education would render European citizens more informed about European integration and more competent to receive and digest news about the EU (Scharkow & Vogelgesang, 2007; Fraile, 2010). Secondly, the relevance of the EU should be subject to constant public and political debate. Officials, politicians and journalists can and should contribute to this with the purpose of engaging and motivating European citizens in discussions about the goals and the limitations of European cooperation. Not just to promote positions in favour or against the EU, but to facilitate the balanced weighing of possible losses and gains of European cooperation. Engagement and motivation should hence be rewarded by a considerable say in crucial European matters, which in turn would encourage further engagement and motivation. Journalists and editors can play a vital role in this process. Not by acting as porte-paroles or PR-instruments of Brussels, but by providing multicolored platforms of information, opinion formation and debate. To date, the main decisions about the future development and architecture of the EU are made by the European Council in an atmosphere of compromise and with a lack of democratic control and public transparency (Werts, 2008). The recently adopted Treaty of Lisbon (2009) would probably have been rejected in many member states if this treaty were subjected to national referenda, as Ireland did.118 This discrepancy between centralized decision making and local and national feelings of discomfort, fear or resentment represents the core of the legitimacy problem of the EU. Chapter 1 has depicted that the setting of international, multilevel governance is by nature complicated. By the same token, European leaders and officials should be urged by the complexity of European cooperation to tune their ambitions to the pace and understanding of their citizens. As Hix (2008) put it: “More open politics could enable the EU to overcome policy gridlock, rebuild public support, and reduce the democratic deficit” (Hix, 2008, p. 10). This study has revealed how, in the first years of the 21st century, policymaking with regard to vital EU issues, such as the ongoing enlargement of the EU, the possible accession of Turkey, institutional reform and monetary cooperation and stability (the Euro) has been countered by decreasing public and democratic support. This study has also indicated that European media have, by and large, increased their volumes of EU reporting over the years, accompanied by a decreasing selection of favorable EU issues. Given the demonstrated impact of European media on levels of cognition and affection of European audiences, one may safely state that the media have contributed to making the average European citizen more knowledgeable and less supportive of the EU. Thus, both the media and the public agenda have been demonstrated to steadily develop in a less supportive direction towards the EU. This should give rise to great concern to all those responsible for the political agenda: the leaders, representatives and officials of the EU.


118 The Irish institution requires referenda on matters that relate to the national constitution. The Irish vote first turned out negative, but later, a majority of Irish voters said ‘Yes’ in a second referendum.
References


Samenvatting

Impressies van Europese Integratie

Een vergelijkende analyse van de invloed van EU nieuws in Europese dagbladen op Europese publiekgroepen

Deze dissertatie richt zich op de effecten van berichtgeving over de Europese Unie op het lezerspubliek in Europa. De studie haakt in op het vraagstuk van de veelbesproken kloof tussen ‘Brussel’ en de Europese burger en de mogelijke rol die de media kunnen spelen bij het verkleinen van deze kloof. Een van de kernproblemen van de Europese Unie is het toegenomen gebrek aan publieke betrokkenheid en waardering. Uit opinie-onderzoeken, verkiezingen en referenda blijkt dat de gemiddelde Europeaan zich steeds kritischer opstelt ten opzichte van het proces van Europese integratie. In een tijdperk waarin de omvang en invloed van de EU flink zijn toegenomen, lijken de burgers van de lidstaten juist af te haken. Daardoor beginnen het democratische draagvlak en de legitimiteit van de EU flinke slijtageplekken te vertonen. Geen wonder dat er naar oplossingen wordt gezocht om deze situatie te verbeteren.

Veelen dichtten de massamedia een belangrijke rol toe in het versterven van de banden tussen de EU en de Europese burgers. Media spelen immers een belangrijke rol in democratische samenlevingen door het aanbieden van informatie en het fungeren als platform voor debat en meningsvorming. Menigeen verwacht of hoopt dat de media die rol ook op Europees gebied kunnen vervullen. In de Europese wijk in Brussel kan men regelmatig de verzuchting horen: ‘als de media wat meer aandacht aan de EU zouden besteden, zou er meer begrip ontstaan voor wat wij hier doen.’ Brusselse correspondenten zouden hun bijdragen wat vaker en uitgebreider in hun kranten terug willen vinden. En ten slotte geven ook burgers steeds in opinie-onderzoek aan dat ze vooral via de media over de EU willen worden geïnformeerd. Er wordt klaarblijkelijk veel van de media verwacht, maar kunnen de media die verwachtingen waarmaken? Deze probleemsituatie vormt het uitgangspunt van dit onderzoek, waarin de effecten van de EU berichtgeving in Europese dagbladen centraal staan. Het onderzoek richt zich op de vraag in welke mate deze berichtgeving leidt tot meer publiek begrip (zowel cognitief als affectief) voor de EU.

Deze dissertatie beantwoordt deze kernvraag aan de hand van twee benaderingen met elk twee deelstudies. De eerste benadering neemt de hoeveelheid berichtgeving als uitgangspunt. Zowel tussen als binnen landen bestaan grote verschillen in de hoeveelheid EU nieuws die de diverse dagbladen aanbieden. Daarmee rijst de vraag of de kwantitatieve verschillen in berichtgeving ook leiden tot uiteenlopende effecten op de lezersgroepen. De twee deelonderzoeken binnen deze benadering beschrijven de effecten van aantallen
De tweede benadering gaat een stap verder met het centraal stellen van de door de dagbladen gekozen en beschreven issues en aspecten in het EU nieuws. Dagbladen in Europa schrijven niet alleen in verschillende volumes over de EU, maar selecteren ook uiteenlopende onderwerpen en thema’s met betrekking tot de EU. De vraag is welke invloed het belichten van specifieke thema’s heeft op de publieke opinie ten aanzien van de EU. De twee deelstudies binnen deze tweede benadering relateren deze EU issues aan de manier waarop lezers de EU definiëren en waarderen. Hiermee wordt vastgesteld wat de invloed van de pers is op de publieke perceptie en beoordeling van de EU. Alle vier deelonderzoeken knopen aan bij theoretische concepten die het meest geëigend zijn voor de gehanteerde invalshoek. De gekozen opzet biedt ruimte aan zowel de kwantitatieve en kwalitatieve wijze van berichtgeving door Europese dagbladen als de cognitieve en affectieve respons van de lezer van het Europese lezerspubliek. Bovendien omvatten beide benaderingen een deelstudie met een longitudinale opzet, en een deelstudie met een cross-sectionele invalshoek. Door deze comparatieve opzet kunnen de effecten van EU berichtgeving niet alleen door de jaren heen, maar ook tussen en binnen meerdere lidstaten geanalyseerd en geduid worden. Ieder deelonderzoek, ten slotte, kent een selectie van kwaliteitskranten en populair dagbladen/tabloids om daarmee de belangrijkste segmenten van de pers en het lezerspubliek af te dekken. Door deze meerzijdige opzet, met ruimte voor ontwikkelingen in de tijd, met een internationale focus en met aandacht voor verschillende typen dagbladen en doelgroepen, kan de kernvraag vanuit verschillende perspectieven worden bestudeerd om te komen tot een zo evenwichtig en betrouwbaar mogelijke beantwoording. De deelonderzoeken worden voorafgegaan door een aantal verkennende hoofdstukken met aandacht voor de ontwikkeling van de EU, trends in publieke opinie, een schets van EU berichtgeving door Europese media en een overzicht van theorievorming en onderzoek binnen dit domein.

Uitkomsten verkennende hoofdstukken

De eerste hoofdstukken die vooruitlopen op de vier deelstudies bieden een oriëntatie op en verkenning van het onderzoeksdoel. Zij laten een beeld zien van de EU die de afgelopen twee decennia sterk is gegroeid, zowel in omvang (van 12 naar 27 lidstaten) als in invloed (van enkele kerndossiers naar een brede beleidsagenda). Tegenovergesteld aan deze ontwikkeling laat opinie-onderzoek zien dat de publieke steun voor de EU in diezelfde periode in het algemeen juist fors afgenomen is. Daarbij laten de cijfers grote verschillen per lidstaat zien. Verder tonen onderzoeken aan dat de gemiddelde Europese burger nauwelijks beschikt over parate EU kennis.

Het perslandschap in Europa kent grote nationale verschillen (wel of geen tabloids; regionale versus landelijke dagbladen, etc.). Er zijn geen aanwijzingen voor een grensoverstijgende Europese publieke sfeer. De nationale optiek en het nationale debat voeren overal overal de boventoon.

Uitkomsten deelstudies

De deelstudies in de eerste benadering (effecten van de hoeveelheid EU nieuws; hoofdstuk 6 en 7) laten zien dat de hoeveelheid EU nieuws zowel een kennis- als een appreciatie-effect veroorzaakt, al zijn de effecten relatief bescheiden. In hoofdstuk 6 wordt het effect van de hoeveelheid nieuws op kennisniveaus vastgesteld. Dat effect is voor beide perssegmenten en hun lezersgroepen positief, al laat de hoger gepleegde lezer van kwaliteitskranten een relatief groter kennis-effect zien dan de lager gepleegde lezer van de populaire pers. Laatstgenoemde heeft wel de potentie om relatief meer kennis te verwerven, onder de voorwaarden dat zijn krant de hoeveelheid EU nieuws gaat verdubbelen en hijzelf twee keer zoveel EU nieuws gaat consumeren. Beide zaken liggen niet voor de hand. Al met al bevestigen de resultaten dat de hoeveelheid EU nieuws de kenniskloof tussen lezers van kwaliteitskranten en lezers van de populaire pers groter maakt.

In hoofdstuk 7 wordt de hoeveelheid nieuws in verband gebracht met de publieke waardering van de EU. De resultaten wijzen uit, dat meer EU nieuws onder lezers van de kwaliteitspers leidt tot een lichte toename van de appreciatie van de EU. Bij mensen die populaire kranten lezen is een wat groter, maar negatief effect gemeten. Ook in deze deelstudie laat het kwaliiteitssegment dus een ander effect zien dan het populaire pers. Dit keer niet alleen in omvang, maar ook in richting. Het licht positieve effect op de kwaliteitskrant-lezer en het sterkere, negatieve effect op de lezer van de populaire pers wijst er op dat de hoeveelheid EU nieuws ook bijdraagt aan een appreciatie-kloof. Uit de conclusies van hoofdstuk 6 en 7 blijkt dat meer EU nieuws bij de lezer van de kwaliteitspers tot zowel meer kennis als (in lichte mate) meer waardering leidt, terwijl de lezer van de populaire pers door meer berichtgeving een lichte kennis toename laat zien, maar ook een sterkere negatieve houding ten aanzien van de EU.

In de tweede benadering (Issues in EU nieuws) tonen beide deelstudies (hoofdstuk 8 en 9) aan dat ook de keuze van onderwerpen en aspecten in het EU nieuws tot effecten leidt. Er vindt, ook weer op relatief bescheiden wijze) een ‘transfer of salience’ plaats. Hoofdstuk 8 laat zien dat de beide perssegmenten (kwaliteit en populair) een groter accent leggen op negatieve threat issues groter in hun EU berichtgeving dan hun lezersgroepen wanneer deze aangeven met welke zaken zij de EU associëren. Daarbij zijn kwaliteitskranten minder negatief dan de populaire pers en definiëren de lezers van kwaliteitskranten de EU in meer positieve termen (opportunities) dan mensen die populaire kranten lezen dat doen. Het totaalbeeld wijst op een meer kritische, negatieve toonsetting bij de populaire pers en haar lezers, dan in het kwaliteitskamp. Deze uitkomst biedt een aanknopingspunt voor de
verklaring waarom in hoofdstuk 7 de waardering van de lezers van de populaire pers zich negatief ontwikkelt en die van de kwaliteitslezer licht positief. De populaire dagbladen benadrukken namelijk relatief vaker de negatieve aspecten van Europese samenwerking. Hoofdstuk 9 haakt op de conclusies van hoofdstuk 8 in door te onderzoeken of de issue-selectie van dagbladen ook van invloed is op de algemene waardering van de EU onder het lezerspubliek. Daarbij wordt gekeken of een bredere selectie van issues over een langere periode ook tot eindresultaten leidt. De eerste belangrijke uitkomst van deze deelstudie is dat door de jaren heen de selectie van positieve issues door dagbladen over de gehele lijn flink is teruggelopen. Daarnaast laat de analyse zien dat positieve issues de houding ten opzichte van de EU versterken en dat negatieve issues juist leiden tot minder publieke steun voor de EU, waarbij respondenten met een opleiding op midden-niveau juist het meest gevoelig blijken voor negatieve issue-keuzes.

Conclusie
Op grond van de verkennende hoofdstukken en de vier deelstudies rijst het beeld op van een Europees landschap waarbinnen de EU de afgelopen 20 jaar ambitieuze en ingrijpende plannen voor verdere integratie heeft ontvouwd en geïmplementeerd. De Europese burgers hebben deze ontwikkeling beantwoord met toenemende scepsis, angst en afwijzing. Daarbij hebben de media de hoeveelheid EU nieuws geleidelijk opgevoerd, waarbij de keuze van positieve EU thema’s beduidend is teruggelopen. Binnen deze context laten de vier deelstudies zien dat media-berichtgeving daadwerkelijk cognitieve en affectieve effecten genereert.

De centrale probleemstelling stelt de vraag in hoeverre aandacht voor de EU in de pers bijdraagt aan meer begrip voor de EU onder Europese burgers. Het omvattende antwoord luidt dat de berichtgeving over het algemeen bijdraagt aan een toename van kennis over de EU, maar ook tot een afname van publieke steun. De in de deelstudies toegepaste indeling in kwaliteitspers en populaire kranten werpt een nader licht op deze algemene uitkomst. De kwaliteitsdagbladen, met een klein marktaandeel in alle lidstaten, besteden relatief veel aandacht aan de EU en berichten over een brede waaier aan EU issues. Hun lezers worden door deze kranten positief beïnvloed, zowel op kennisniveau (relatief hoog) als op affectief niveau (bescheiden toename). De populaire bladen en de tabloids, met een dominante positie in iedere nationale krantenmarkt, besteden relatief weinig aandacht aan de EU met een licht negativeren benadering van de EU dan de kwaliteitspers. Hun lezers laten een bescheiden kenniswinst zien onder invloed van EU berichtgeving, maar tonen zich, meer dan de lezers van de kwaliteitspers, vooral beïnvloedbaar op affectief niveau en dan in negatieve richting. Gezien de omvangrijke lezersmarkt van de populaire pers, de relatief sterke, negatieve beïnvloeding van lezers van de populaire pers op affectief niveau en de algemene afname van positieve issues in EU berichtgeving, kan worden gesteld dat media-effecten op afecttief gebied overwegend negatief zijn.

Al met al bevestigt deze studie het bestaan van de eerder beschreven kloof tussen ‘Brussel’ en de Europese burgers. Deze kloof is in de onderzoeksperiode van deze studie groter geworden. De berichtgeving in de pers draagt bij aan de verdere vergroting van deze kloof, niet zozeer op kennisgebied, als wel op het gebied van algemene steun voor Europese integratie.

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