

The London School of Economics and Political Science

News about the European Parliament:
Patterns and Drivers of Broadsheet Coverage

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Declaration

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Abstract

This thesis is about broadsheet coverage of the European Parliament (EP). More precisely, it studies the amount and content of news referring to the EP as well as the professional attitudes of their producers. The main purpose of the thesis is to explain variation in the press coverage. Thereby it combines political communication research with the European integration literature discussing the legitimacy of the EP. It argues that cross-country and inter-temporal variation cannot be explained by factors internal to news production alone. Instead, national parliamentary traditions impact profoundly on the way EU parliamentary affairs are reported.

The thesis employs a mixed-methods research design. It conducts a quantitative content analysis of 18 broadsheets published in six European countries – Ireland, the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands, Germany and Austria – over three time periods: one is a routine period of two years; the remaining two datasets are oriented at key issues and events over time. In total, 3956 newspaper articles are analysed. In addition, 18 in-depth interviews with the respective Brussels correspondents and a director at the EP Directorate-General for Communication complement the findings.

While the EP receives regular coverage, the thesis finds that news are selected and presented according to the interest of the audience. Hence the domestic angle prevails in the news coverage and the EP's own prominence and potential to generate conflict attract media attention more often when major issues are at stake. However, domestic relevance is not the only explanatory factor. While newsmakers also respond to varying levels of public support for EU membership, the thesis identifies national parliamentary traditions as a strong external driver of EP news coverage. Here, procedural characteristics and public expectations shape the amount and content of EP news as well as newsmakers' attitudes – and more significantly so with the rising powers of the Parliament.

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List of Abbreviations

ALDE	Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
AN	Assemblée Nationale
AT	Austria
BS	Broadsheet
BT	Bundestag
BVerfG	Bundesverfassungsgericht (German Federal Constitutional Court)
BZÖ	Bündnis Zukunft Österreich
CP	Commission President
CDU	Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands (Christian Democratic Union of Germany)
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CSU	Christlich-Soziale Union in Bayern (Christian Social Union in Bavaria)
DÉ	Dáil Éireann
DE	Germany
EB	Eurobarometer
ECB	European Central Bank
ECR	European Conservatives and Reformists
EP	European Parliament
EPE	European Parliament election
EPP	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) (22 June 2009 to present, formerly EPP-ED)
EPP-ED	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats (used as a name 20 July 1999 to 22 June 2009)
EU	European Union
FAZ	Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung
FDP	Freie Demokratische Partei
FPÖ	Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs
FPTP	First-Past-The-Post
FR	France
FT	Financial Times
GB	Great Britain
GE	General Election
GUE/NGL	European United Left/ Nordic Green Left

HB	Handelsblatt
HoC	House of Commons
IE	Ireland
IE	Irish Examiner
II	Irish Independent
IT	Irish Times
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
MP	Member of (the national) Parliament
MS	Member state (of the European Union)
MS	Media system
NL	The Netherlands
NP	National Parliament
NR	Nationalrat
NRC	Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant/ Handelsblad (short: NRC Handelsblad)
OLAF	Office Européen de Lutte Anti-Fraude (European Anti-Fraud Office)
OLP	Ordinary Legislative Procedure
PES	Group of the Party of European Socialists, later Socialist Group in the European Parliament (21 April 1993 to 22 June 2009)
S&D	Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists & Democrats in the European Parliament (23 June 2009 to present, formerly PES)
SBP	Sunday Business Post
SN	Salzburger Nachrichten
STV	Single transferable vote
SWIFT	Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication
SZ	Süddeutsche Zeitung
TD	Teachta Dála (member of the lower house of the Irish Parliament)
TEU	Treaty of the European Union
TFEU	Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union
TFTP	Terrorist Finance Tracking Programme (of the United States)
TK	Tweede Kamer
UK	United Kingdom
VK	De Volkskrant
WB	Wirtschaftsblatt

Chapter 1

Introduction:

The European Parliament and the press

This thesis studies the amount, volume and content of news referring to EU parliamentary affairs as well as the approaches of their producers. The main purpose of the thesis is to explain variation in the news coverage of the quality press. Thereby it aims to link political communication research to the literature on European integration discussing the legitimacy of the European Parliament (EP). It argues that cross-country and inter-temporal variation cannot be explained by factors internal to the news production process alone. Instead, national parliamentary traditions impact profoundly on the way EU parliamentary affairs are reported alongside public opinion towards the EU.

To develop this argument, the thesis conducts a quantitative content analysis of newspaper articles published in the quality press of six countries, namely Ireland, the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands, Germany and Austria. In each country, three broadsheets have been chosen – one leaning to the political left, one to the political right, and a business-oriented or financial newspaper. A total of 3956 newspaper articles are analysed across three time periods. One is a two-year-long routine period between 1 October 2005 and 30 September 2007. The remaining periods are orientated at key events and issues. The investiture procedure of the European Commission in the years 1999, 2004 and 2009/10 and the study of the SWIFT case, later SWIFT agreement, between 1 June 2006 and 30 November 2010 serve to examine changes over time. 30 articles from three US newspapers are added to the latter dataset for comparison. Using a mixed-methods approach, the findings are complemented by 18 in-depth interviews with their respective correspondents in Brussels and with one director at the EP Directorate-General for Communication.

This chapter presents the research puzzle followed by the research agenda before it elaborates the argument of the thesis. The last section provides an outline of the thesis.

1.1 The research puzzle

On 7 July 2011 BBC News Magazine published an online article explaining the new EU law that simplifies and clarifies information on food packaging for European consumers (Winterman 2011). On the day before, the EP approved the draft legislation in its second reading under the Ordinary Legislative Procedure (OLP).¹ The legislative outcome was preceded by lengthy negotiations between the members of the Parliament and the Council who were themselves lobbied by both consumer groups and the food industry. In the end, the Parliament was able to steer through a compromise which entails ‘more information, choice and quality’ for European consumers (European Parliament 2011). However, the EP’s role was not mentioned at all in the BBC news article. The newsmaker here stressed the actual outcome rather than the preceding political battles leading to the compromise. While this is just one example – and although British dailies did not report anything from the EP on that day, other newspapers across Europe picked it up – the question of why the EP’s role was not granted greater consideration in this case remains unanswered.

Being a parliament one of the EP’s core functions is to generate publicity – which is according to Rush (1976: 28) ‘one of Parliament’s most important weapons’ when speaking of the House of Commons. Not only does the EP regularly meet in plenary sessions to debate European legislation, it also openly scrutinises the European Commission in its day-to-day business as well by means of the elective function – the Parliament has the right to vote the Commission both in and out of office. Further, the EP holds comprehensive legislative powers having gained the status of a ‘co-equal’ legislator alongside the Council (e.g. Tsebelis and Garrett 2000; Corbett, Jacobs et al. 2003; Kreppel 2003; Maurer 2003). Publicity is not only owed to institutional provisions, but also inherent to its special representative role in the EU political system as the only directly elected institution. Liebert (2007: 262) points out that the EP ‘fosters publicity and transparency in a range of activity spheres of the Union that otherwise would go completely unnoticed by the public’.

Despite the European Parliament’s relevant role in the EU political system, shooting a messenger upfront for not reporting about it is not supportive in understanding the EP’s legitimacy in public. As Statham (2006: 7) argues, the lack of visibility of

¹ Title: Provision of food information to consumers (repeal. Directives 90/496/EEC and 2000/13/EC), COD/2008/0028

European affairs is not necessarily due to a poor media performance but ‘could, and arguably is more likely to, result from inadequacies in the performances of the political system [...].’

In fact, the Parliament’s expanded powers are only one side of the coin. The other side is that the problem of the EU democratic deficit persists (see Follesdal and Hix 2006). Earlier proposals predicted an increase in democratic legitimacy of the EU once the Parliament would have been strengthened (e.g. Williams 1991; Lodge 1994) as has been the case with the Treaty revisions in the last few years. But the latter is still accused of being the European project’s ‘big failure’ (The Economist 2009b) in that it is unable to link to European citizens (see also The Economist 2009a). National parliaments may be closer, or even better at representing their citizens from a populist point of view. Nevertheless, the expansion of scrutiny rights of national parliaments by the Lisbon Treaty may lead to greater *de jure* legitimacy of EU politics; in practice however their direct influence in EU policy making is likely to have little or no effect (see, for instance, Raunio 2010).

European elections exemplify the peculiar relationship between EU citizens and their representatives. Research regularly supports the phenomenon of second-order elections which are not a contest about Europe, its candidates and parties but are dominated by domestic politics as low voter turnout and the success of national opposition and smaller parties suggest (e.g. Marsh 1998; Hix and Marsh 2007; Hix and Marsh 2011; Hobolt and Wittrock 2011). At the same time public awareness levels of how the European Union operates are not very high. Eurobarometer figures repeatedly highlight the lack of public knowledge about and understanding of the EU and its Parliament², despite presenting relatively high public trust levels towards the latter.³ Given the lack of awareness public opinion research is unable to answer

² The average figures for the number of EU citizens who ‘feel they understand the way the European Union works’ were 41% in 2005 (European Commission 2005b) and only slightly higher with 47% in 2010 (European Commission 2010b). According to a Special Eurobarometer published in 2008, the average for the self-perceived knowledge of the EP’s role in the EU was ranked by EU citizens at 3.7 on a scale between 1 (‘I know nothing’) and 10 (‘I know a great deal’) (European Commission 2008c).

³ In 2005, 51% of European citizens expressed that they ‘tend to trust’ the EP (European Commission 2005b). Five years later, this figure is slightly lower with 48% (European Commission 2010b). Throughout the years, these trust levels have been higher than for the European Commission or the European Council.

questions about citizens' evaluations of the day-to-day parliamentary business in the European Union.⁴

Yet, information gathered via mass surveys is not the only source of public opinion for the evaluation of perceptions about the European Parliament. In fact, one of the mass media's functions is to transmit news and information, impressions and interpretations from the European Union, its institutions and EU policy-making to European citizens (cf. Gerhards 2000; Baisnée 2004; Statham 2006). And indeed, EU citizens rely on both broadcast and print media as a source of information about European affairs.⁵ By providing information and news from Brussels journalists are able to raise public awareness of EU politics (cf. de Vreese and Boomgaarden 2006a). Peters (2005) suggests further that public discourse enables citizens to participate in the emerging European democracy. Hence if successful, media coverage has a legitimising function and thereby contributes to reducing the democratic deficit (see, for instance, Meyer 1999; de Vreese, Banducci et al. 2006; Bijsmans and Altides 2007). That is also why Trenz (2008: 303) claims that '[European] integration studies need to understand how media act as selective amplifiers of political information about the EU and how selected outputs are turned into news that shape the political reality of Europe'.

Thus, in order to comprehend the relationship between the European Parliament and EU citizens a study of the media becomes inevitable:

⁴ One exception is the publication of a Special Eurobarometer survey on the European Parliament in March 2008, with fieldwork conducted between September and November 2007 (European Commission 2008c). It tested knowledge and assessed self-perceived awareness of European citizens about the EP as well their opinions and expectations towards the latter. The thesis will elaborate on this in the conclusions.

⁵ In spring 2005 Eurobarometer reported that 70% would use television as a source of information about EU affairs, followed by 43% who also relied on daily newspapers. An additional 22% sought the internet for EU news among other sources (European Commission 2005a). Five years later (European Commission 2010b) these figures look only slightly different: 81% used television, 49% daily newspapers, and 26% the internet to keep themselves informed.

'Modern politics are largely mediated politics, experienced by the great majority of citizens at one remove, through their print and broadcast media of choice. Any study of democracy in contemporary conditions is therefore also a study of how the media report and interpret political events and issues; of how they facilitate the efforts of politicians to persuade their electorates of the correctness of policies and programmes; of how they themselves (i.e., editorial staff, management and proprietors) influence the political process and shape public opinion.'

(McNair 2000: 1)

In fact, European institutions have become increasingly aware of the media's role of conveying news and information from the EU to European citizens. The sixth EU parliamentary term (2004-2009) witnessed an implementation sequence of new communication strategies by the European institutions. The European Commission came up, among other things, with Plan D⁶ in 2005 handled by a new Commissioner for Communication and Institutional Relations, Margot Wallström, and issued a White Paper on Communication⁷ one year later. The European Parliament itself modernised its website in September 2005 with the aim to facilitate access to both citizens and journalists (European Parliament 2005) followed by the introduction of EuroParlTV, an online television channel covering parliamentary debates, in 2008.⁸

However, the media might be able to shape public opinion, but does not have exclusive control over it. Citizens form parts of their opinion on the ground of other impacts through their socialisation, such as the attitudes of their peers and long-established cultural pre-conceptions. This feeds back to the media as well (cf. Norris 2000). Thus, as “‘organizer’ of public opinion” (Negrine 1996: 110) newsmakers are also able to hold European representatives accountable by acting as a democratic watchdog on behalf of EU citizens (cf. Meyer 2002). In other words, correspondents in Brussels are able to ‘put at test the legitimacy of the EU’ (Trenz 2008: 294). Hence, both integrative roles of the media – that of a messenger and of a

⁶ European Commission (2005c): Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. The Commission’s Contribution to the Period of Reflection and Beyond: Plan-D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate, COM (2005) 494 final. Brussels, 13 October 2005.

⁷ European Commission (2006c): White Paper on a European Communication Policy, COM (2006) 35 final. Brussels, 1 February 2006.

⁸ For an overview of the communications activities by the European institutions see Bijlsmans (2011: 73-82).

commentator (Statham 2006) – in the relationship between represented and representatives deserve particular scholarly attention in order to understand the perceived legitimacy of the European Parliament.

1.2 The research agenda

While media studies in the European context have grown considerably in numbers over the last few years, the European Parliament or its members have seldom been the subject of political communication research (but see Sonntag 1983; Morgan 1999; Baisnée 2003; Anderson and McLeod 2004). Most of the literature that refers to the EP rather deals with the phenomenon of European elections (e.g. Blumler 1983; Blumler, Gurevitch et al. 1986; Leroy and Siune 1994; de Vreese, Banducci et al. 2006; Schuck, Xezonakis et al. 2011). Generally, communication research in the EU context can be distinguished by three purposes: one research stream studies the salience of EU affairs in the media, another one seeks to detect media effects, while a third one investigates drivers of media coverage as in the present study.

Studies related to the first stream compare media salience of European affairs across countries, various types of media (especially public and commercial broadcast as well as quality and tabloid print media) and over time. One concern here is to detect whether any form of Europeanisation of media coverage, content, tone or news angle has taken place across Europe. Thus far, researchers have observed that media coverage has risen over the years with the EU and European elections having become more visible in the news (e.g. Boomgaarden, Vliegenthart et al. 2010; Schuck, Xezonakis et al. 2011) although cross-country variation still prevails (e.g. de Vreese 2001a; de Vreese, Banducci et al. 2006). Not many studies, however, investigate media coverage during routine periods, i.e. during times not characterised by significant events at the EU level (but see Norris 2000; Peter, Semetko et al. 2003; Peter and de Vreese 2004; Brüggemann and Kleinen von Königslöw 2007). Nevertheless, the results constantly highlight that European affairs are generally not prominent in the news. Instead, they are said to be only marginally visible in the national media (e.g. de Vreese 2003; Peter, Semetko et al. 2003; Peter and de Vreese 2004; de Vreese, Lauf et al. 2007) and peak around key events (e.g. Norris 2000; de Vreese 2001a; Boomgaarden, Vliegenthart et al. 2010). However, some find that

once they are reported, they are granted greater consideration than other political news (as far as evening television programmes are concerned), which Peter et al. (2003) call the phenomenon of ‘invisible importance’.

Overall the findings imply that similar assumptions can be made with respect to media coverage of European parliamentary affairs. Little coverage can be expected here unless major decisions are at stake. Yet, we cannot be certain since little research has been pursued to examine the EP’s visibility in the press. Sonntag (1983) investigates the media coverage of the first Parliament across four countries (France, Italy, West Germany and the UK) and across media outlets (radio, television, and the press). He has found that between 1979 and 1981 highly salient events such as the first elections to the EP and the latter’s rejection of the draft budget trigger news coverage. However, Sonntag has provided a rather negative outlook for the future by having predicted a downward trend in media coverage. Even though the EP has gained more powers in the meantime by the Maastricht Treaty, Morgan (1999) draws similar conclusions from a study examining media coverage of the European Parliament in Britain during the year 1996. He contrasts the results with separate findings from media coverage in Belgium and Ireland. In all three countries the European Parliament reportedly receives only minor attention. Further, Koopmans (2007) for the period of 1990 to 2002 also finds that legislative and party actors at both national and EU level are generally granted less consideration in the print media than core state actors.

Criteria for the Europeanisation of news content are defined at the very least by corresponding media coverage in that ‘a European public sphere should reflect national media reporting on the same topic using common sources’ (de Vreese, Banducci et al. 2006: 479, following Risse and van de Steeg 2003). Peter et al. (2003) in this respect find convergence of the thematic structure by an analysis of television news in five EU countries. They identify three themes which have been covered to a similar extent and even presented in a similar light. Yet, other research discovers that during European elections a domestic angle prevails (e.g. Kevin 2003: 71ff; de Vreese, Banducci et al. 2006). Results also differ in terms of tone – here all varieties have been confirmed: an election study across 25 countries of television and print media finds the tone mostly neutral (de Vreese, Banducci et al. 2006); correspondents’ evaluations of European affairs have been identified as pro-

European with newsmakers following ‘business as usual’ (Statham 2006); while the opposite has been verified for a five country sample and television news during a routine period which tended to be negative (Peter et al. 2003). When returning to Morgan (1999) who investigates the media coverage of the EP, his results show that in the UK news was predominantly negative in its tone while in Ireland and Belgium the press coverage was reportedly mostly neutral and focussed on MEPs. Overall, the findings imply that variation in media coverage of EU parliamentary affairs is unlikely to be one-dimensional but diverges in several aspects, most notably across type of media, country, and by time period.

Considering this variation in media content, research has eventually concluded that the requirements for a single European public sphere are not (yet) met (see Machill, Beiler et al. 2006). These are, among others, a shared language and a common media system enhancing pan-European debate (see, for instance, Kielmansegg 1996; Gerhards 2000). However, many argue that due to the dominance of national perspectives in the media we at best find a Europeanisation of co-existing or interacting national public spheres whose extent varies according to issue salience, reference points, journalistic interpretation and timing (cf. Bijlsma 2011). One can distinguish here between three types of Europeanisation (Koopmans 2007: 185ff): supranational Europeanisation, whereby European-level actors have an increased role in the media; vertical Europeanisation by means of European issues becoming relevant for the national context; and, horizontal Europeanisation, indicated by references to other European countries and political events (see also Koopmans and Erbe 2004).

Little is known about how the European Parliament contributes to the development of a European public sphere, yet Liebert (2007: 260) argues that the shortcomings in the EP’s role of a ‘strong public’ lie in its representational function ‘since the liberal democratic link with constituencies reduces the EP’s potential for more deliberate forms of the European communicative space’. Hence following Liebert, it can be expected that vertical Europeanisation of media coverage is a more likely finding than a pan-European convergence of EP press coverage.

Another research stream tries to relate EU news coverage to turnout in EP elections in terms of visibility (Norris 2000; Schönbach and Lauf 2002; Banducci and Semetko 2003; Banducci and Semetko 2004) while others go further and investigate

impacts of news content on feelings of identity (e.g. Bruter 2009), support for EU integration (e.g. Banducci, Karp et al. 2002; Vliegenthart, Schuck et al. 2008) and levels of Euroscepticism (e.g. Norris 2000). Research, furthermore, finds that the intensity of campaigns, of which media coverage is a part, in the run up to EU referendums is linked to the degree of change in citizens' attitudes (Hobolt 2005). EU media coverage is also found to contribute to changes in public opinion about EU enlargement (de Vreese and Boomgaarden 2006b). In this kind of research news content is taken as the explanatory variable for political behaviour. This means that if the present research was to find an absence of media coverage about the EP, we would conclude that EU citizens would remain largely unaware of their representative body. Further, in the EU communications literature 'a lack of news regarding the EU and the EP are thought to contribute to a lack of legitimacy [...]' (de Vreese, Banducci et al. 2006: 478). However, without denying the media's role in shaping public opinion, any research of media effects would exceed the scope of this thesis which focuses on explaining variation in media coverage of EU parliamentary affairs.

This leads us to a third research stream which attempts to explain differences in media coverage of European affairs. This study area is still somewhat narrow compared to the previous streams (Peter and de Vreese 2004: 4). Quantitative studies identify key events and salient issues as drivers of EU news coverage in broadcast media (Peter and de Vreese 2004) and newspapers (Boomgaarden, Vliegenthart et al. 2010). Boomgaarden et al. (2010) even find that week-long meetings of the EP in Strasbourg and Brussels lead to more attention by the press. It can thus be expected that EU parliamentary affairs are actually newsworthy and covered by the press. Nevertheless, while the positive effect of parliamentary activities on their own press coverage would be a reasonable finding, it may not be a sufficient condition for explaining variation in EP media coverage. Quantitative research further finds that explanatory factors related to the financial structure of broadcasting companies – EU news is more prominent in public than in private broadcasting – and public opinion matter to the extent that higher levels of public satisfaction with democracy at the national level generate more prominent television news in five EU countries (Peter and de Vreese 2004). Others (Brüggemann and Kleinen von Königslöw 2007) reveal by regression analysis that the size of the country where news are distributed as well

as the interest of the editor in European affairs impacts on the extent to which newspaper coverage and content have Europeanised over 20 years' time.

As regards media coverage of the European Parliament, the exploratory study of Morgan (1999) suggests that factors related to historic developments, the electoral systems and benefiting positions in the EU alongside public support for EU membership would have an impact. Further, Morgan (1999) assumes that in the UK the latent dissent over the EU is responsible for the negative tone in the news, whereas in Ireland and Belgium citizens would be happy with EU membership and thus not be interested further. Hence mostly neutral stances towards the EP are expressed by newsmakers (*ibid.*: 91). This would mean that the European Parliament is equated with the EU as a whole, and its activities do not make a difference to the media. Remarkably, British MEPs have been interviewed revealing that in their eyes the general hostility towards EU institutions and attitudes of editors and publishers would contribute to these distortions. At this point though, the views and experiences of correspondents in Brussels and Strasbourg would have provided further explanations for the differences in media coverage.

That is where Baisnée's study (2003) ties in. He explores the relations of the Brussels press corps to the European Parliament, although he does not rely on interviews either. He argues that the changing numbers of correspondents registered with the EP would have to do with an absence of interest of the EU press corps in the institution. According to Baisnée some of this can be explained by the country specific journalistic culture. But the character of the institution itself would also make it difficult for the journalists to report. Anderson and McLeod (2004) evaluate the European Parliament communications strategy in this respect, concluding that both the European Parliament press directorates and the regional parliamentary offices would not provide sufficient support for journalists to cover EU parliamentary affairs satisfactorily. Moreover, MEPs are said to be even skilled and interested to a much lesser extent to cooperate with the media. Hence, Anderson and McLeod (2004) nickname the EP the 'great non-communicator'. These findings are in line with what has been concluded for the EU in more general terms: a lack of access (Kevin 2003: 122f) and of co-ordinated communications policies by the institutions (Gavin 2001) – especially by the European Commission amounting to a general communication deficit (Meyer 1999).

Interview or survey research (sometimes in combination with quantitative analysis) in general not only stresses the relationship of newsmakers to European institutions and actors as an explanation for varying press coverage (see Gleissner and de Vreese 2005: 227f), but find the organisation inside the newsroom including logistics and news routines as indispensable for explaining the correspondents' approach to EU news (e.g. de Vreese 2001b; de Vreese 2003). Interviews also reveal that the editor's interest is a decisive factor for the amount of EU news published in European dailies (e.g. Morgan 1995; Gleissner and de Vreese 2005). Others further investigate working conditions (e.g. Lecheler 2008), or the professional role understanding of correspondents (e.g. Gerhards 1993; Siapera 2004; Statham 2006).

Notwithstanding these relevant studies in the field, several questions remain unanswered: Under what particular conditions does the European Parliament receive media coverage? What precisely is reported about the EP, its members and their activities? In what way? And lastly, what explains the variation in media coverage across countries, media outlets and over time, if there is any?⁹ These require systematic investigation.

To sum up previous contributions in EU communication research, there are several things to be learnt for the study of EP press coverage. Firstly, there is reason to believe that media representations vary across member states. Thus, a systematic cross-country analysis allowing us to infer generalisations is inevitable. Secondly, variation was also found across various types of media outlets which research on EU parliamentary affairs should bear in mind. Thirdly, research thus far has primarily analysed EU media coverage over rather short time periods. Hence, news about the EP should be studied over a longer period of time and include both routine periods and key events. Fourthly, the drivers of this variation have to be investigated thoroughly. Previous research cited above has identified effects either internal or external to news production. A study of EP press coverage should draw them together. That means, alongside factors linked to the working conditions, editorial constraints and routines of newsmakers, public opinion which is a temporal factor, features of the domestic political system as well as media system characteristics have to be tested with respect to news content and coverage. Lastly, in order to

⁹ The last question, which cannot be addressed in this thesis, would ask: What effect has media coverage of EU parliamentary affairs on public opinion (towards the EP, and the EU)?

comprehend the whole picture it is advisable to apply a mixed-methods research design. Quantitative analysis should be complemented by interviews with EP news producers, i.e. the correspondents in Brussels, in order to investigate their stances towards EU parliamentary activities as well as their reflections of their role and profession.

1.3 The argument

Seeing that the literature has largely ignored the media coverage of the European Parliament and its members, the thesis therefore proposes the following research question:

**What explains variation over time and across country in the press
coverage of the European Parliament?**

In answering the research question the thesis distinguishes between three dimensions. The first one is the study of the extent of news coverage; the second one concerns the presentation of news content in terms of formal characteristics (but not by means of tone). Both these dimensions respond to the media's role of a messenger by transmitting news, impressions and information from the European Parliament to their audiences across Europe. The third dimension investigates the newsmakers' evaluations of the European Parliament. By that, the thesis also considers the media's role of a commentator on EU parliamentary affairs.

To this end, the thesis employs a mixed-methods approach. The quantitative analysis considers a total of 3956 newspaper articles published in the quality press of six European countries plus 30 articles from US broadsheets. The study stretches over a routine period and two time periods examining key events and issues. The findings are complemented by 18 in-depth interviews with the respective correspondents in Brussels as well as one director at the EP Directorate-General for Communication.

On the whole, the thesis identifies three main factors responsible for the variation in news coverage which affect all three dimensions of coverage, content and newsmakers' evaluations of EU parliamentary affairs: news values as impacts stemming from within the news production process, and public support for EU membership as well as the national parliamentary tradition as external factors. The

thesis finds that EP news is selected and presented according to the interest of the audience. Hence the domestic angle prevails in the news coverage and the EP's own prominence and potential to generate conflict attract media attention more often when major issues are at stake. However, domestic relevance is not the only explanatory factor. While newsmakers also respond to varying levels of public support for EU membership, the thesis identifies the national parliamentary tradition as a strong driver of EP news coverage. Here, respective procedural characteristics and public expectations shape the coverage and content of EP news as well as newsmakers' attitudes – and more significantly so with the rising powers of the Parliament.

News values represent an established notion of communication research maintaining that news is selected according to the interest of the audience. For political news stories, standard criteria comprise importance and conflict among others. For EU news a central news value is domestic relevance, which is characterised as having an impact for the domestic audience. The thesis argues that these standard criteria also become applicable for the news coverage of EU parliamentary affairs, albeit to a varying extent. News from the EP is primarily selected on the issue rather than on the importance of the institution, the prominence of its members or their ability to generate political conflict. Hence, the central news selection criterion is that the issues with which Europe's legislators are concerned, be they political or policy-related, have to be relevant for the domestic audience newsmakers are writing for.

Altering some contentions of the Europeanisation debate in that the domestic orientation of news hinders the development of a European public sphere, the thesis argues that this news value is responsible for the regular coverage of EU parliamentary affairs which follows the legislative cycle of the European Parliament. In addition, the thesis finds that EP news coverage rises in publication numbers during the run-up to general elections at the national level which serves as an indicator for EU parliamentary politics being relevant for their ability to permeate domestic politics. The domestic perspective in news content furthermore provides a mediated form of linkage between European representatives and their constituents by widely featuring prominent nationally elected MEPs.

The importance of the EP and its potential to stimulate political conflict, however, are decisive selection criteria at a pan-European level when the EP is actually able to

use its institutional powers. The SWIFT case witnesses a ‘Lisbon effect’ in news coverage in that the use of its new veto power on international agreements caused a significant rise in attention paid to the EP by the quality press. The example of the investiture procedure shows, however, that press coverage of the EP does not rise exponentially but reaches a satisfaction level once MEPs have demonstrated their powers already as in the case of 2004. Yet, following the increased parliamentary powers of the Lisbon Treaty the coverage of EU parliamentary affairs is expected to remain at a high level. The thesis argues that these are positive conditions for public awareness levels of the European representative body.

The thesis argues that two further, external effects drive the press coverage of EU parliamentary affairs. The thesis contends that the latter generate a specific type of political news – regardless of the issue they refer to a parliamentary institution and its actors, their attitudes, behaviour and decisions. Considering that the EU political system is very complex featuring lengthy decision-making processes influenced by a multitude of political actors, the European Parliament’s precise role therein is difficult to identify for European citizens.

This has two implications for the press coverage of European parliamentary affairs. The first one is that this lack of public knowledge contributes to an undifferentiated view onto European politics. The thesis therefore argues that the EP’s press coverage is probably dependent on public stances towards the EU in general. In particular, the thesis shows that higher levels of public support for EU membership are linked to greater attention to EU parliamentary affairs by the quality press. While Eurosceptic stances are less visible in the professional assessments of parliamentary politics by correspondents in Brussels, news content reflects negative stances towards EU integration by featuring respective Eurosceptic MEPs in countries where the public is less supportive of the European project.

The second implication is that newsmakers have to find an approach to reporting EU parliamentary politics which is comprehensible for their readers. The thesis argues that due to the public unawareness of the EP journalists use the domestic parliamentary tradition as a reference point. The thesis shows that the press reflects characteristics of procedures inherent to the national parliamentary tradition in the presentation of news content about EU parliamentary affairs. In particular, such reflections become apparent in the representations of individual MEPs and of the

hearings preceding the conformation of the Barroso II Commission. As regards the MEPs, news content reproduces cross-country differences by varying patterns of references to constituency focus, individual party membership as well as to the legislative and political role of individual EU representatives.

By taking the national parliamentary tradition as a standard, the findings provide room for the assumption that the European Parliament is perceived by the press as a rival to its national counterparts. Not only is the extent of news coverage of EU parliamentary affairs affected negatively by higher levels of public trust in the national parliament, but newsmakers' evaluations illustrate that the European Parliament is being criticised for not being like the respective national counterpart. The thesis argues that this is because the European Parliament has grown out of the parliamentary tradition commonly found at the national level and developed into an institution which is quite distinct in many respects, most notably concerning its elective function and its autonomous position in the EU political system providing it with considerable veto powers. Newsmakers experience difficulties in presenting the EP in a manner that is perceptible for their readers. Rather than representing it for what it is, they still draw comparisons to the national legislature which casts a damning light onto the European Parliament.

In consideration of these findings the thesis contributes to understanding the European Parliament's democratic legitimacy in public. In the end, it all comes down to the notion of one correspondent: the European Parliament is regarded as 'a serious joke' by Brussels correspondents in that it is relevant at the European level for it to receive press coverage, but it is not yet trusted to be as serious as national parliaments from a national point of view and hence not represented by its unique role in the EU political system.

1.4 Outline of the thesis

Chapter 2 lays out the theoretical framework of the thesis in order to answer questions about the drivers of EP news coverage. Thereby it builds on previous research regarding the production process of EU news. The chapter argues that news about EU parliamentary affairs generate political news stories which fall into two

categories. On the one hand, they belong to the category of EU news and thus a European dimension has to be considered when trying to explain the factors responsible for EP news coverage. It will be argued that news is selected on the newsworthiness of the issues involved. Thus, EP news coverage is driven by the need of a story to be relevant for a domestic audience. Other news values, particularly the importance of the EP and its ability to generate political conflict, are weighed against this criterion and are more likely to become applicable when major issues are at stake. Nevertheless, EU parliamentary affairs are a specific type of political news – regardless of the issue they refer to a parliamentary institution and its actors, their attitudes, behaviour and decisions. Given the complexity of the EU political system which makes it difficult to identify the European Parliament's role therein resulting in an undifferentiated view onto European politics, it is expected that, without neglecting an effect of media coverage onto public opinion, public stances towards EU integration in general impact on news coverage and content of parliamentary affairs as well as the newsmakers' evaluations thereof – alongside levels of party political contestation of the EU issue. In addition, it is argued that the national parliamentary tradition has an influence. Put differently, due to the public unawareness of the EP the coverage is aimed at the readers' familiarity with and appreciation of the domestic parliamentary culture. Firstly, the latter's trust in the national parliament determines the amount of coverage the European equivalent receives. The more people appreciate Parliament in general, the more likely they want to hear from the EP. Secondly, their understanding of how Parliament works at the domestic level shapes news content. It is likely that the press reflects characteristics in procedural terms of the national parliamentary tradition in the presentation of news about EU parliamentary affairs in order to make news better comprehensible. Thirdly, although the thesis does not investigate the tone of news it is expected that correspondents compare the European Parliament to the national equivalent when evaluating the former's role given the familiarity and expectations of their readers. The impact of the national parliamentary culture is arguably the strongest determiner of EP news coverage affecting coverage, content and evaluations by the press.

Chapter 3 presents the research design and methodological approach of the thesis. It argues that while broadsheets do by no means represent the general media landscape in a country, they provide political comment and analysis of European matters for

which they employ correspondents in Brussels. At the same time, cross-media variation is largely being controlled for in order to answer the research question. Further the investigation comprises six EU member states, namely Ireland, the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands, Germany and Austria. In each country three broadsheets have been chosen for analysis. Despite being a rather small sample, the cases are comparable on the key explanatory factors while controlling for effects related to the different media systems. Not only is the research able to detect the domestic relevance in the EP coverage, but also to determine external effects on the news production process. In all these countries the domestic political cycles are independent from each other. However, most importantly we find variation both in terms of public support levels towards EU membership and in characteristics of parliamentary tradition which cross-cut each other. The selection of time periods seeks to fill in some gaps in EU communication research which predominantly focuses on key events or issues. The first period serves as a routine period between 1 October 2005 and 30 September 2007 which was not severely interrupted by external events such as defeated referenda on the EU constitution. Yet, some far-reaching legislative decisions have been taken and during the period the EP was faced with many internal changes. The remaining two periods target crucial parliamentary and legislative decisions by the EP and consider possible before/after effects in the press coverage. Here, the investiture vote of Prodi, Barroso I and II serve as a measure of parliamentary scrutiny and media representations thereof. The case surrounding the SWIFT issue investigates the Lisbon-effect of parliamentary power and its impact on news coverage from the EP. The methodological approach of the study is mixed: The thesis first and foremost relies on a large-N quantitative analysis of broadsheet articles about EU parliamentary affairs; and secondly on expert interviews conducted with correspondents in Brussels. While it accounts for both the media's roles of a messenger and commentator, this combination also responds to the need in political science, and political communication in particular, to give full account to both quantitative and qualitative approaches. At the same time, the method serves to even out methodological weaknesses of either approach allowing for a sufficient amount of external and internal validity as well as reliability of the results.

Chapters 4 to 6 represent the empirical part of the thesis. The first empirical chapter investigates the drivers causing variation in the extent of EP news coverage during the first period chosen for investigation. It introduces the Tobit regression model

which is also used in the remainder of the empirical analysis. As regards the EU dimension of news stories, the chapter argues that news selection criteria applied to the salience of the issues involved matter for the press coverage. Here, the need to be relevant for a domestic audience represents a crucial driver which also becomes apparent in the fact that more news from the EP is being produced in the run up to general elections in the national context. The importance and potential for controversy of EU parliamentary activities have an impact as well, although these are subject to further circumstances related to the legislative process at the EU level. The chapter finds that the precise coverage of parliamentary affairs at the EU level is dependent on whether the EP is sitting in plenary session or not. Thereby the press coverage follows the ‘normal’ parliamentary cycle of the EP distributing more news during the winter months than during the summer break. The chapter furthermore argues that public opinion is indeed linked to EP news coverage. At times and in countries where citizens are more in favour of EU membership, the European Parliament receives more press coverage – a finding which underlines the EP’s dependence on public evaluations of the EU political system as a whole. Contrary to the initial assumptions however, trust in the national parliament has a negative effect on the attention the European press pays to the European equivalent which provides room for the assumption that the European Parliament is judged against its counterparts in the national context proposing some form of rivalry going on between the institutions in the public sphere. While this rivalry is being exemplified by the German and British cases, this phenomenon requires further investigation.

Chapter 5 studies characteristics and drivers of news content about EU parliamentary affairs. Thereby it concentrates on MEPs because their presentation provides a comparable and significant measure of news content across newspapers. The chapter essentially argues that, while MEP prominence matters to some extent, the way newsmakers in Brussels approach Europe’s legislators and present them in the news is influenced by features and procedures of the respective national parliamentary tradition in terms of electoral competition and resulting behaviour of political actors. This is not only apparent in the domestic focus of news content – a finding which does not hold for the French quality press though – but also identified by the varying patterns in references to constituency focus, individual party membership as well as to the legislative and political role of individual representatives in Strasbourg. In short, Europe’s representatives are conceived of as deputies for their domestic

colleagues. The wider conclusions of these findings underline the potential of the EP to be perceived as a rival to national parliaments. European legislators and their roles are not presented as unique or supranational, but as similar to those of national parliamentarians. This lends support to the assumption that MEPs and MPs as well their performances are directly compared, which provides implications for the analysis of newsmakers' evaluations of the EP in the next chapter. One exception is the French press which not only stresses European legislators more often than their counterparts in the remaining countries, but also reflect only few similarities to the role understanding of French MPs. A possible explanation can be related to the relative weakness of the French Parliament whose relevance is undermined by Presidential politics. French broadsheets might compensate this weakness by stressing the unique, supranational character of the European Parliament and its members. Here, a potential rivalry between the parliamentary institutions at the European and national level might go in favour of the former in that it is regarded as a somewhat better parliament as regards its functions of executive scrutiny and decision-making power.

Chapter 6 examines the coverage of key events: namely the SWIFT case and the investiture of the European Commission. The aim here is to explain variation over time as well as to examine newsmakers' evaluations of the EP's role during these events. By focussing on two most-likely cases, the research is able to hold events at the European level constant in order to test the main research hypotheses. The chapter argues that news coverage follows the growing importance of the European Parliament for EU politics over time. Broadsheet coverage rises significantly once the European Parliament is able to make use of its powers exemplified by the EP's threat to veto the incoming Barroso I Commission in October 2004 and the actual rejection of the SWIFT agreement in February 2010. However, given that news media respond to the news value of surprise, the chapter finds that press coverage after such climaxes is not an ever-increasing phenomenon. Instead, the press appears to become used to the Parliament's new powers by being more aware of the ongoing with the press coverage 'normalising' at a relatively high level. This has positive implications for levels of public awareness of the European Parliament and its members. However, news content and newsmakers' evaluations do not treat the EP as a 'normal' parliament. Instead, the EP is being criticised for not yet being as competent as its national counterparts in terms of efficiency and scrutiny of the

executive. Results from both the quantitative and qualitative analysis provide reason to believe that this is due to the precise fact that the EP does in reality not resemble parliamentary traditions at the national level, but, if anything, comes closer to the US American Congress. That is also why that the press have difficulties in presenting EU parliamentary affairs in a manner that is understandable for their readers. This argument integrates the findings of the previous two chapters: The EP is indeed perceived as an extension of the national parliamentary tradition in procedural terms, but since it grew institutionally stronger it is seen as a rival to its national equivalents, especially in countries where the latter are generally considered quite influential legislatures in the domestic context.

Chapter 7 is the concluding chapter. It draws together the main findings of the thesis and discusses the precise contributions to the existing literature, both empirically and theoretically. The chapter also highlights the limitations of the study but at the same time points at avenues for future research in the field of EU political communication in general, and EP coverage in particular. Lastly, the thesis provides an outlook for the Parliament's legitimacy in the public eye and possible implications for European democracy.

Chapter 2

News coverage of EU parliamentary affairs: A framework for analysis

The present chapter discusses the factors which are likely to impact on the news coverage of EU parliamentary affairs. Media studies generally differentiate between external and internal factors that determine news production. Accordingly, internal impacts stem from within media organisations and the professional understanding of journalists. These mainly comprise organisational governance, work routines, which include the application of news values, as well as personal principles and beliefs (see, for instance, Esser 1998; Shoemaker and Reese 1996; de Vreese 2001b; de Vreese 2003; Donsbach and Patterson 2004). Comparative research identifies external effects, on the other hand, as being outside of news organisations and individual news makers. These range from media ownership to media system dynamics, politics and even to broader cultural settings (see, for instance, Semetko, Blumler et al. 1991; Bennett 1996; Shoemaker and Reese 1996; Hallin and Mancini 2004; Schudson 2005). This chapter picks up on this distinction but develops the impact of external factors further by arguing that the domestic parliamentary tradition is expected to be a central driver of EP news coverage.

In doing so, the chapter suggests that news about EU parliamentary affairs generate political news stories which fall into two categories. To begin with, they belong to the category of EU news and thus a European dimension has to be considered first when trying to explain the factors responsible for EP news coverage. This entails that news referring to EU parliamentary affairs is not necessarily selected because the European Parliament and its members are deemed newsworthy by newsmakers, but because of the issues involved, be they political or policy-related. It will be argued that these issues are first and foremost likely to be selected, presented and discussed in light of their relevance for the domestic audience – a phenomenon which holds for EU news in general and thus can also be expected to be pertinent for EU parliamentary affairs. Other news values, particularly the importance of the EP and its members and their ability to generate conflict, which normally apply to political news, are likely to be weighed against this criterion, unless major pan-European

issues are at stake. Further, the concurrence of EU news with national events has to be considered. When highly salient events are at stake at the domestic level, EU parliamentary affairs are likely to receive less attention.

Nevertheless, EU parliamentary affairs are a specific type of political news – regardless of the issue they refer to a parliamentary institution and its actors, their attitudes, behaviour and decisions. Therefore, the chapter argues that news values, and especially domestic relevance, are not the sole explanatory factors for variation in EP press coverage and proposes two external effects. Given the complexity of the EU political system which makes it difficult to identify the European Parliament's role therein resulting in an undifferentiated view onto European politics, it is expected that, as part of the reciprocal relationship between the media and public opinion, public stances towards EU integration in general impact on news coverage and content of EU parliamentary affairs as well as the newsmakers' evaluations thereof. The latter are expected to respond to a Eurosceptic mood with less coverage, reactive news content and rather negative attitudes towards the EP, while the interest of somewhat more Europhile readers is likely to lead to the opposite effect. The chapter also introduces an alternative hypothesis of political contestation of the EU issue, whereby greater party polarization is likely to lead to more coverage.

In addition, and most importantly, it is argued that the understanding of the national parliamentary tradition impacts on the news coverage of EU parliamentary affairs. Put differently, the coverage is aimed at the readers' familiarity with and appreciation of the domestic parliamentary culture, which can be characterised as an external effect. Firstly, the latter's trust in the national parliament is expected to determine the amount of coverage the European equivalent receives. The more people appreciate Parliament in general, the more likely they want to hear from the EP. Secondly, their understanding of how Parliament works at the domestic level is likely to shape news content. It is likely that the press reflects procedures of the national parliamentary tradition in the presentation of news about EU parliamentary affairs in order to make them better comprehensible. Thirdly, although the thesis does not investigate the tone of news it is expected that correspondents compare the European Parliament to the national equivalent when evaluating the former's role given the familiarity and expectations of their readers.

These drivers related both to the newsworthiness of the issue involved and the relevance of Parliament in general are expected to be central. As such they complement each other since the news coverage of EU parliamentary affairs combines both aspects of EU news in general and the precise coverage of Parliament.

The remainder of the chapter proceeds as follows: It firstly discusses why one would expect media coverage of EU parliamentary affairs given that two elementary conditions are met – namely those of access to information granted by Parliament on the supply side and staff employment in Brussels by media outlets on the demand side of news (2.1). Given that the interests of newsmakers to report EU parliamentary affairs remain unanswered the chapter then proceeds to discuss the news coverage of EU parliamentary affairs under the umbrella of EU news which are determined by issue relevance and detects crucial news values (2.2). News selection criteria are also weighed against external effects. Here the impact of national events on EP news coverage is also briefly elaborated. Eventually, the chapter discusses external effects on news coverage under the aspect of parliamentary news items (2.3). Here, the impacts of public opinion towards the EU in general are briefly elaborated before the section presents the main argument about the impact of the national parliamentary culture on the news coverage of EU parliamentary affairs. The conclusions (2.3) summarise the argumentation and discuss possible contributions of this thesis to existing research on EU news coverage and to the democratic deficit debate.

2.1 Why one would expect media coverage of the European Parliament

When attempting to explain media coverage of EU parliamentary affairs, we need to differentiate the term media coverage further – that is between the amount and content of coverage, as well as newsmakers' evaluations.¹⁰ The first category refers to the visibility of the EP in the news and can be measured in terms of extent and volume of news items dealing with their activities. Although the thesis is not interested in investigating any effects of media coverage, the extent to which EU parliamentary affairs are covered tells us how relevant these are in the public eye. If there was no coverage at all, we would conclude that the EP is not a newsworthy

¹⁰ Note that the thesis does neither pursue a discourse analysis nor investigates the tone of news.

institution which has supposedly a negative impact on public awareness levels. Thus, questions about the drivers of news coverage also provide insight into the relevance of EU parliamentary affairs. Secondly, characteristics of news content provide us with clues about how the EP, its members and the decisions they take are represented in the news in order to make assumptions about the determinants of such media content. Further, a content analysis provides an understanding of the context in terms of political and policy-related issues in which EU parliamentary affairs are discussed. Thirdly, while the thesis does not evaluate the tone towards the EP and its members in the news, the interest not only lies in the media's role as a messenger of EP news. The role of a commentator can be examined through interviews with correspondents which provide another measure of assessment and allow us to extend the argument to the reporters' evaluations of EU parliamentary affairs.

Media coverage conditions content. And while media coverage itself is dependent on numerous factors, there are, besides normative motives related to parliamentary democracy, practical conditions which already indicate the likelihood for the European Parliament and its members to receive media attention. Put differently, one could argue that media coverage of EU parliamentary affairs is a self-evident finding given the public nature of the legislative body and the size of the EU press corps.

The European Parliament, like other parliamentary institutions, is a public house. Plenary sessions as well as committee meetings 'normally' take place in public (Rule 103 of the European Parliament Rules of Procedure of the 7th parliamentary term). Furthermore, according to Rule 104.1 of the same document:

'Any citizen of the Union and any natural or legal person residing or having its registered office in a Member State has a right of access to Parliament documents in accordance with Article 15 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, subject to the principles, conditions and limits laid down in Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council and pursuant to the specific provisions contained in these Rules of Procedure.'

These terms of accessibility and transparency are a positive condition for EP news coverage. However, there are nevertheless obstacles for the EP to become noticed in public. The media is a fast moving business and therefore proactive strategies of political institutions and actors are beneficial for newsmakers and consequently for media coverage. Anderson and McLeod (2004) discover obstacles for media

reporting in the Parliament's own instruments of public relations during the 5th Parliament. MEPs, as well as the EP press directorates and the regional offices would not provide sufficient support for the journalists to cover the European Parliament, their members and the affected decisions adequately. Furthermore, for EU correspondents the support of officials as well as the terminology of press releases provided becomes a crucial element when gathering information to be transmitted as news to their audience (cf. Gavin, 2001). Gleissner and De Vreese (2005: 227) allege that correspondents find press releases distributed by EU institutions rather boring and very complicated. This might also be linked to the rather long and complex decision-making processes at the EU-level competing with the actuality and ephemerality of news relevant for the audience (see de Vreese 2003: 63-64).

Others, however, argue that European political actors are increasingly responding to demands of the mass media by distributing press releases and organising conferences (cf. Bijsmans and Altides 2007). Further, the communications approach of the EU would have changed from being informative to a strategy of promoting EU policies and decisions (Caliendo and Napolitano 2008). Despite previous criticism by Anderson and McLeod (2004) it can therefore be expected that also the European Parliament and its members have improved their communications strategy in order to guide the media's attention. Parliaments in general increasingly rely on own public relations nowadays (Marschall 1999), especially in the breed of new media developments (such as online news and social media devices). The European Parliament responded to changes in the media market by, among other things, launching a new, user-friendly website in September 2005 in order to communicate more effectively to European citizens and provide better access to information for journalists (European Parliament 2005). Three years later, the Parliament's own web television channel was created providing citizens and the press with 'democracy on demand' (European Parliament 2008). These developments represent positive conditions for media coverage of EU parliamentary affairs.

Alongside the supply side of information, the signs are also rather positive on the demand side: The Brussels press corps is nowadays reportedly the largest one in the world, with even more foreign journalists accredited to the EU institutions than in Washington (Baisnée 2004). They can be characterised as 'pack journalism' (Schudson 2003) whereby a single source, here the EU, brings them together. In

2010, 935 journalists were registered in the common system of accreditation by the European Parliament, the Commission and the Council.¹¹ Yet, this number does not provide any clues about which media employ how many correspondents in Brussels for what purpose. Another crucial problem concerning adequate press coverage of the European Parliament is that it does not reside in one place only, but is involved in the EU decision-making process by gathering in two different cities. The plenary sessions take place in Strasbourg for one week once a month. However, the EP's permanent seat is in Brussels alongside the other key European political institutions. Here, MEPs have their main offices and follow their daily legislative business in party and committee meetings. EU correspondents, if not travelling on an ad-hoc basis from their home office (Bainsnée 2003), are normally stationed in Brussels and commute to Strasbourg when necessary – and supposedly whenever possible since many other political actors and institutions generate news such as decisions in the Council of Ministers, statements by the EU Commission or even meetings of the NATO who also resides in Brussels. Alongside this competitive environment in Brussels, in recent years problems have arisen in the outgrowth of the economic crisis. The print media is especially affected facing a switch of readers to online publications which advertisement revenues cannot compensate (The Economist 2010). This is not very supportive for EP news coverage. A then Brussels-based correspondent writes in 2009: ‘As media organisations pare costs, the inevitable result will be less coverage of EU affairs’ (Smyth 2009).

Despite being a positive condition for media coverage of EU parliamentary affairs, access to information is not able to provide sufficient explanations for when and why the EP and its members would receive media coverage or not. And although the media employs correspondents in Brussels to cover European affairs, we are unable to detect the precise interest of newsmakers to report EU parliamentary affairs. The very fact that European Parliament engages communication strategies in an environment of high concentration of EU institutions and political actors also calling for media attention allows us to derive that the European Parliament is not newsworthy per se. In other words, it does not receive media coverage just because it is the European Parliament as a representative and powerful institution of the European Union. Instead, the press corps supposedly trades information from and

¹¹ The number of registrations reached its peak at about 1,000 in 2007. These figures were obtained informally from the EP Directorate-General for Communication.

about the EP and its members against other news in the pool of European affairs. In fact, Gavin (2001: 305) claims that the EP's 'clear lack of power and the complexity of its political arrangements and processes almost make it inevitable that journalists will find it less attractive as a source of copy'. The fundamental question therefore is: which factors are decisive for EP press coverage?

2.2 The issue-dependence of EU news coverage

European parliamentary affairs predominantly generate political stories. They represent hard ('factual') news as opposed to soft news which aims at entertaining the audience. Yet, by falling into the wider category of EU news, for newsmakers 'there is an added dimension of developing an interest in European issues' (Kevin, 2003: 132). Journalists who produce EU news stories are themselves part of a wider news production process – and that is subject to the underlying economic logic whereby the media operates (McManus 1994): as regards the print media, the purpose is to attract the readers' attention and to suit their interest so that they (continue to) purchase a particular newspaper. Although some researchers doubt that journalists write to supply news for their readers only (cf. Shoemaker and Reese 1996: 116f), others claim that reporters in general, and foreign and EU correspondents in particular, mainly respond to what the readers want (cf. Street 2001; Hannerz 2004). 'If they do not cater well for that audience their very survival is at stake' (Negrine 1996: 101). This rationality ensures profits for the newspaper cooperation both from the selling price and the advertisement revenues. At the same time, the income of the individual journalist is secured as well. 'That emphasis on giving readers what they want to read, as opposed to what lofty notions of civic responsibility suggest they ought to read, is part of a global trend' (The Economist 2010) – especially in times of economic crisis which deeply affects the print market. In this cost-effective scheme based on exchange of information, public attention and profit (see Fengler and Russ-Mohl 2008) editors act as gatekeepers making sure that the EU coverage suits their consumers' taste and normally having the final say over the most important news of the day (eg. Gavin 2001: 303). Morgan exemplifies for many British EU correspondents that 'reporters write and rewrite to suit changing London demands' (1995: 324).

In the following, the relevance of news selection criteria as part of newsmakers' routines will be discussed. These apply to characteristics of news stories (2.2.1), and are weighed against the salience of other news (2.2.2).

2.2.1 The applicability of news values

In order to receive information about the interest of the whole readership, journalists and especially editors draw upon reader surveys and media consumption studies, or compare what other media report by scanning their products and considering the letters to the editor (cf. Shoemaker and Reese 1996; Street 2001). A reliable and established measure, however, is the application of news values which 'constitute an audience-oriented routine' of newsmakers and thereby lie within the news production process (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996: 111; see also Galtung and Ruge 1965). These are predictable selection criteria when journalists decide to cover a story or not, as well as to what extent. If an event or a piece of information possesses characteristics worth reporting, the likelihood for it to receive news coverage is affected positively.

Shoemaker and Reese (1996: 111) compile the following most applicable news values (from Stephens 1980): prominence/importance, human interest, conflict/controversy, the unusual, timeliness and proximity. These criteria are used because the reader only has limited time to inform herself, and thus is interested in the most relevant content.¹² The application of news values is inherently linked to the qualities a story, an event or a statement possesses in the eyes of news producers (De Vreese, 2003: 59) and translated into newsworthiness. That being said, it would be expected that EU correspondents in Brussels more or less evaluate the political on-goings in a similar way. In fact, 'pack journalism' is also characterised by the circumstance that the reporters on location 'adopt the same viewpoint' (Schudson 2003: 139). This implies that cross-media, let alone cross-country variation is not a likely finding in the media coverage of the European Parliament. Scholars of EU news production

¹² The application of news values is, however, also linked to the type of media and the market. Tabloids, for instance, generally prefer scandalous and emotional stories. Although in systems where the print media relies less on reader subscriptions but instead on direct sells, broadsheets are supposedly more aggressive in light of competition which is the case for the UK print market (see Esser 1999). Moreover, public service broadcasting is known to follow principles of education and balance in their programmes more strictly compared to commercial TV and radio stations.

would dispute that assumption however, as most correspondents generate bulletins for national media that employ them given the absence of a unitary European media system.

For journalists and correspondents reporting about foreign affairs, and European politics in particular, one principle becomes especially important when deciding what news are newsworthy: European news stories have to be relevant for a domestic audience (cf. Peter et al. 2003: 310). This phenomenon is not new and has been identified for international news in general where the media is dominated by the nation or state (Hafez 2007: 37-38). If an event is too far away both in terms of geography and scope, i.e. when the audience is unlikely to be affected directly, then it is considered not worth reporting – unless other news values have a great impact such as the unusual. Thus, this news value of domestic relevance is the equivalent of proximity which is understood as ‘local angles in national stories’ (Shoemaker and Reese 1996: 111).

Gleissner and de Vreese (2005: 228) go as far as to argue that editors would be generally less interested in EU affairs. The reason for that supposedly lies in the fact that ‘Europe’ is far away, and although the EU institutions, and the European Parliament in particular, take decisions which impact on European citizens, this is often not straightforwardly traceable in the complex and lengthy process of EU decision-making. Citizens are supposedly more aware of the heads of governments acting at the European stage. Here, chancellors, prime ministers and presidents are much more prominent in the news (see Koopmans 2007), which probably has to do with the fact that their ‘faces’ are already familiar from national politics. Kevin (2003: 125) furthermore underlines that ‘the integration process is viewed in the media as intergovernmental rather than ‘European’’ exemplified with European election campaigns.

This intergovernmental media perspective suggests that EU parliamentary affairs are deemed newsworthy according to the degree of national interests in a particular policy issue or legislative decision. Domestic relevance as such is not linked to European parliamentary affairs *per se*, but to the issue, with which the EP and its members are concerned. In other words, sheer importance of the latter is not decisive enough. Although it seems likely that news stories referring to the EP and its members are selected on their prominence and importance because ‘actions of the

powerful are newsworthy' (Shoemaker and Reese 1996: 111). And not only is the EP the only directly legitimised body at the EU level because it is elected by all European citizens. But also, over the past few years, alongside many treaty revisions and the development of informal institutional rules, the Parliament has become a strong player within the EU institutional layout. Yet, ‘‘Europe’ and the ‘EU’ are generally considered news stories on the basis of ‘newsworthiness’, rather than being issues that are considered a necessary part of the daily news agenda’ (Kevin, 2003: 127). Instead, the issue, be it political or policy-related, serves as a crucial determiner of news selection. The directive to liberalize port services (Port Package II)¹³, for instance, supposedly did not receive much media coverage in Austria in 2006 – a country which has neither a sea coast nor a maritime harbour, despite European dock workers’ boisterous protests in front of the EP in Strasbourg – the latter eventually rejected the legislation in January 2006. Consequently, with respect to the European Parliament’s news coverage it is more likely that the press reports about issues which are relevant for the domestic context. The following hypothesis derives:

Hypothesis H1-A:

Domestic relevance is likely to be the central news selection criterion for news referring to EU parliamentary affairs.

The importance of the EP and its members as well as their ability to generate conflict are likely to be weighed against the domestic relevance, unless major pan-European issues are at stake, which render these news values applicable on their own.

The centrality of the domestic relevance relativizes the remaining news values. Timeliness is an underlying criterion for most news and the unusual is always interesting for the curious human nature. Human interest, on the other hand, which according to Shoemaker and Reese (1996: 111) entails references to ‘celebrities, political gossip and human drama’, is rarely decisive for political, hard news. Other news values, especially importance and conflict, have supposedly more weight when EU parliamentary affairs imply consequences for (parts of) the domestic audience. Importance, for instance, becomes more applicable when the EP takes a decision which has a domestic impact. An example here is the services directive¹⁴ which was initially highly opposed by the French and German governments fearing ‘social dumping’ would diminish labour protection and workers’ rights. The political groups

¹³ Directive of the EU Commission on market access to port services (Port Package II, COM (2004) 0654)

¹⁴ Directive on services in the internal market (Directive 2006/123/EC)

in the EP having had the power to do so under the co-decision procedure finally agreed to pass a watered-down version of the directive in trade off additional measures to control member states' compliance with the law (Hix and Høyland 2011: 213). Thus, the news selection criterion of importance is reinforced by the domestic relevance of a news story, unless rare but highly salient European issues are at stake such as the ratification of an international agreement.

The services directive is furthermore an example for the news value of conflict being also weighed against that of domestic relevance. In fact, disputes and arguments between actors represent a crucial news selection criterion for political stories, as it would be boring and a waste of time for the audience to report about politics when everyone agrees with another and understands each other (see Shoemaker and Reese 1996: 111). Yet, one difficulty with the European Parliament, despite increasing intra-institutional party politics (Hix, Noury et al. 2007), is that due to the absence of a common work language, parliamentary debates appear to be rather technical and seem to serve voting procedures only lacking heated discussions and lively engagement by the members of the European Parliament (Shephard and Scully 2002). This diminishes the potential for political controversy to be a crucial factor for newsmakers to decide whether to report from the EP or not (see Baisnée 2003: 98-99). Occasional muscle flexing vis-à-vis the Commission as in the case of Santer's resignation in 1999 and Barroso's cabinet reshuffle in 2004 and 2009 however, has made the news value of conflict at an institutional level fairly applicable for several times in the past. The prospect for conflict has supposedly also increased with the extension of parliament's legislative rights, allowing for clashes between the EU institutions over policy decisions. However, political conflict is seldom a pan-European phenomenon. Given the nature of the EU political system in which the 27 member states still seek to preserve their national sovereignty, we more commonly find disputes between the European and the domestic level. Again, coverage of these controversies is issue-related and thus expected to vary across member states according to domestic relevance.

Nevertheless, if understood in Galtung and Ruge's term of negativity (1965) conflict can also be associated with stories that involve bad news. Franklin (1996), for instance, argues for the British case that the press is seemingly less interested in Parliament and its actors. Due to increased specialisation and privatisation (and

modernisation if one takes the rising role of the internet into account after 2000) in the media market resulting in fiercer competition, journalists would nowadays prefer news values such as scandal or personal misconduct of MPs. Mere informational and educational aspects of parliamentary news are seemingly not sufficient anymore. Thus, news stories of parliamentary politics and decision-making are only worth it, when they are sensational enough to sell the story (Oberreuter 2002). The recurring scandals about MEPs expenses and the accusation of wasting tax payers' money on the maintenance of the Strasbourg assembly here serve as examples for negative news worth reporting from the EP.

Given that the thesis' interest not only lies in determining factors that impact on news coverage of EU parliamentary affairs, we also have to enquire the effects on news content. As far as news selection criteria selection criteria are concerned, the answer to this specific part of the research question is relatively straight-forward. As Galtung and Ruge (1965: 71) put it: 'Once a news item has been selected what makes it newsworthy according to the factors will be accentuated (distortion).' Hence, the second part of the first hypothesis expects the following:

Hypothesis H1-B: The key news selection criteria, which are decisive for the selection of news, most notably domestic relevance as well as importance and conflict, are also likely to shape the presentation of news referring to EU parliamentary affairs.

Research on how European affairs are presented in the media detects specific frames in the news, which de Vreese (2003: 27) defines as 'an emphasis in salience of some aspects of a topic'. Such research usually aims at understanding the effect of media content on their recipients (see, for instance, Scheufele 1999; Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007). However, media effects on attitudes or behaviour are not subject of the research in this thesis. Rather, the focus lies on how we can explain variation in news content about the EP. Nevertheless, previous findings of this research stream are supportive for the argumentation of the influence on news values on media content about the EP and its members.

De Vreese (2003: 116) argues that EU news stories are 'framed heavily in terms of conflict' in the television coverage of EU politics in the Netherlands, Britain, and Denmark. Having identified the accompanying news selection criterion above, we can assume that especially the conflict frame can be found in the news content

referring to the EP. As discussed above, conflict in European parliamentary politics can take the form of institutional clashes between the EP, the Commission, the Council or other institutions; or battles can be fought on the grounds of ideological differences between political actors. News content might further be enriched by negativity: Legislators which are directly involved in any scandals, or those who have something controversial to say, such as Eurosceptic representatives, supposedly receive more attention than backbenchers. But again controversial situations of domestic relevance in terms of conflict between the EU and the individual member state level are most likely to be presented in the media given the intergovernmental perspective of the latter (Kevin, 2003: 125).

Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) also identify conflict to be among the most common news frames applied in newspapers and television programmes surrounding the Amsterdam summit in the Netherlands in 1997, especially in the rather serious news outlets. Being a single case study, however, any impact of the relevance for the domestic audience cannot be measured. D'Haenens (2005) tests the same news frames as her colleagues in a comparative study of quality newspapers from six EU member states and one newspaper from the US. Although she only relies on one broadsheet in each country, she finds significant variation in framing across the countries under her investigation. This implies that domestication matters as well, which Kevin (2003: 132) identifies as the 'national hook' of an EU story. 'To domesticate something means to transport it across a border, from an outside to an inside; from the outside of a nation state - into the nation state' (Slaatta 2006: 12).

The criterion of domestic relevance might thus also impact on the personification of news content. Personification helps selling stories as the audience has a 'face' in mind to (re-)identify actors, related actions and policy decisions (see Luhmann 1996: 66ff). Hence, it can be expected that some MEPs who were rather prominent in the national context beforehand, such as Guy Verhofstadt – former Prime Minister of Belgium and a new member of the 7th European Parliament – are more attractive for the Brussels press corps than other MEPs in order to link EU parliamentary affairs to the domestic political context.

The third objective of the thesis is to study newsmakers' evaluations in their role as a commentator (see Statham 2006). Given the centrality of news selection criteria, the next hypothesis follows naturally from what has been argued thus far:

Hypothesis H1-C: Newsmakers are likely to evaluate the European Parliament in terms of newsworthiness.

An alternative assumption to the domestic relevance arises from the Europeanisation debate. Although common findings do not support the existence of a European public sphere, some media research observes rising media interest over time (e.g. Boomgaarden, Vliegenthart et al. 2010, Schuck, Xezonakis et al. 2011), and the convergence of themes reported across countries (e.g. Peter et al. 2003). Trenz (2004), for instance, argues that a mediated European public sphere in terms of political communication would have emerged by quantitatively and qualitatively comparing newspaper articles from six EU member states of the year 2000. He particularly brings to light the Europeanisation of national qualitative press regarding political news exploring a plurality of European issues with journalists autonomously determining their articles. Some EU policies have obtained high levels of convergence among the different newspapers such as economic issues or institutional reform for which similar news frames have been applied. Hence, he ascertains that the independent press is well able to enhance common communication across the EU and that Europe is becoming ‘a taken for-granted reality’ (*ibid.*: 310). Thus, it can equally be expected that some news content about the EP might have adopted a European focus as opposed to a national angle giving preference to European actors. Similarly, correspondents are equally likely to provide commentary from a European perspective (see also Statham 2006). These assumptions relate to the news value of importance by which the EP can be described as a relevant political actor at EU level and might especially be true for highly salient European events and decisions as argued above. Nevertheless, Trenz admits that variation still prevails: ‘For obvious reasons, national newspapers pick those issues that seem most relevant for them from the national perspective’ (*ibid.*: 306). Again, the domestic perspective is expected to dominate in the news, and any other news values relevant for selection of EU parliamentary affairs as news are likely to be weighed against it.

In sum, as regards the work routines of journalists which are internal to news production, it has been argued that the interest by newsmakers in European affairs, of which news from the EP is a part, is driven by the relevance of news stories for the domestic context. Therefore, the relevance for the domestic audience is supposedly the strongest news selection criterion decisive for the news coverage of EU parliamentary affairs. Even though importance and conflict can be applicable too,

their weight for selection and in the presentation of news depends on domestic relevance. The attention the EP receives and the way the press discusses its activities is determined by national interests and therewith news coverage is predominantly expected to depend on issues rather than on the importance of the institution and its members per se, unless the latter generate personal, scandalous or prominent stories on their own. Newsmakers' evaluations should reflect these assumptions accordingly.

2.2.2 Concurring with national politics for visibility in the press

News values are not only linked to a certain story but have to be weighed in relation to other stories. As we have seen, the domestic context plays a significant role in news production. While the newsworthiness of the European Parliament increases if news producers consider a story relevant enough for the domestic audience, the external impact of national politics is expected to have the opposite effect on EP news coverage. National news has a more direct impact on the national audience in this case than news from far away in Brussels. The former demands space and attention which at the same time reduces the chances of the European Parliament and its members to receive media coverage (see also Boomgaarden, Vliegenthart et al. 2010: 510). In fact, correspondents believe that their readership is less interested in EU politics than in politics in general (Statham 2006: 18).

The phenomenon of EU elections' second-order nature underlines this assumption of EU parliamentary affairs being less important than national politics (see, for instance, Hix and Marsh 2007, 2011). At the same time, scholars attest the media a poor informative function surrounding EU polling days evoking a 'second-rate coverage' (de Vreese, Lauf, et al. 2007) compared to the attention national and other events receive. Thus, the following can be hypothesised:

Hypothesis H2: Highly salient national political events, such as election campaigns, are likely to lead to lower news coverage of EU parliamentary affairs.

The concurrence with national politics is supposedly less visible in the actual content of EP news since following this hypothesis the distortion towards less coverage implies that content is not a likely finding.¹⁵

Thus far, the chapter has discussed media-specific effects both internal and external to news production process which impact on the selection, presentation and evaluation of news referring to EU parliamentary affairs. Other effects directly linked to news production result from the competition in the media market, ownership regulations, or the political affiliation of a news outlet (see Shoemaker and Reese, 1996; Schudson, 2005) or are related to characteristics of the (domestic) journalistic culture (see Esser 1998; Baisnée 2003; Mancini 2005). Hallin and Mancini (2004) furthermore classify media systems according to the degree of state intervention in regulating the media, the degree of media partisanship, the historical development of media markets and the extent of journalistic profession within countries. The type of media system is as an external factor an important control variable which has to be considered in the research design. The next section, however, proposes specific hypotheses for the precise press coverage of parliamentary affairs at the European level.

2.3 Explaining press coverage of parliamentary affairs at the EU level

The chapter thus far has argued that while access to information and staff resources are an important condition of news coverage, the press coverage of EU parliamentary affairs is determined by news values. As such they generate political stories comparable to those in the national context. Nevertheless, a European dimension is added to the news coverage. Hence, domestic relevance is expected to be the main news selection criterion. Newsmakers select and frame European news that comprises EU parliamentary affairs according to domestic relevance of the issue involved rather than on the newsworthiness of the European Parliament and its members per se. However, political news stories contain more than just references to issues. Although it was argued above that importance of the EP is not the central

¹⁵ Even if we were to find news content, a discourse analysis might be the best tool to describe media content in relation to national events. But the thesis only looks at characteristics of news content. Thus, no further hypothesis will be presented here. Newsmakers' evaluations are furthermore captured by the previous hypothesis H1-C.

news value, political news and particularly news about EU affairs still tells the reader about political actors and institutions, as well as their attitudes, behaviour and decisions. Bainsnée (2003: 79) claims that the EP ‘is penalised by its esoteric functions and its not very newsworthy activities as well as by the anonymity of many of its members’. For the news coverage of EU parliamentary affairs, therefore, the questions here are: what determines the extent to which the audience wants to hear about Parliament and European legislators within EU news; and in what manner are EU parliamentary affairs presented and evaluated so that readers are able to make sense of news content? Gleissner and de Vreese (2005: 229) argue that ‘since most national political systems differ from the EU system, it is problematic for the journalist to cover issues adequately’. Here, the precise aspect of the domestic focus can be taken further and it will be argued that there are other external factors specific to the domestic political context that drive EP news coverage.

This section argues that the most significant effect on both news coverage and presentation of news content as well as on the professional attitudes of its producers derives from the national parliamentary culture. This impact will be discussed in detail in section 2.3.2. Beforehand, the effects of public opinion towards the EU (2.3.1) expected to bias EP press coverage will be discussed briefly to underline the main argument.

2.3.1 Public opinion towards the EU as a driver of EP news coverage

The European dimension of news stories about EU parliamentary affairs identified above allows us to also discuss the readers’ interest in political news beyond the context of the nation state. The European Parliament is the only directly elected democratic institution at the EU level and therefore also subject to public opinion. EU citizens in general trust the EP more than any other EU political institution as Eurobarometer surveys regularly point out.¹⁶ Seeking to explain the variation in the public trust levels towards the European Parliament in the EU-15, Gabel (2003) actually finds that the strongest predictor in an analysis of Eurobarometer data would

¹⁶ According to the Autumn Eurobarometer in 2005 51% trusted the EP, compared to 46% for the European Commission, and 40% for the Council (European Commission 2005b). Five years later, trust levels were reported as 48%, 44% and 40%, respectively. Furthermore, according to this latter survey, 43% of European citizens trusted the ECB (European Commission 2010b).

be public support for EU membership. This suggests that the approval of the European Parliament primarily increases with the rising levels of support for the political union alongside other weaker impacts. Although Gabel only investigates the trust in the institution and not the actual awareness and perceptions of the European Parliament, it can be derived that support for EU membership and appreciation of the European Parliament are in fact interlinked. This makes sense given the absence of comprehensive public knowledge about the European Union.¹⁷ At this stage, support for the EU can be equated with general interest in EU affairs since the greater the public acceptance of the supranational political system, of which the European Parliament is a key part, the supposedly more welcomed are EU news. That is also why it is proposed here:

Hypothesis H3-A: News coverage of EU parliamentary affairs is likely to be more comprehensive in countries and at times, when/where the public is more supportive of EU membership.

Although this assumption about the explanatory power of public opinion towards the EU is not a novel one in the general area of EU news coverage (cf. de Vreese 2001a: 287), the relationship between the public opinion towards the EU and the media is of reciprocal nature. Previous studies have shown that EU news coverage can also have an effect on public opinion and political behaviour: Vliegenthart et al. (2008), for instance, show by time-series analysis that the way EU news are framed has an impact on aggregate levels of public opinion, where positive frames lead to higher levels of public support for the EU and negative frames to the opposite effect. Similarly, exposure to EU media coverage coupled with high visibility and a positive tone is also found to contribute to more positive public evaluations of EU enlargement (de Vreese and Boomgaarden 2006b). Visibility of the EP elections in the news is furthermore found to impact on the turnout at the polls (see, for instance, Banducci and Semetko 2003; 2004).

Other studies, however, allow us to derive that the media also respond to the interest of the audience in European affairs. Norris (2000), for instance, seeks to find a connection between the messages communicated by the media and the abstention from voting in European Parliament elections. Drawing on Eurobarometer data as well as on content analyses of newspaper articles and television programmes during the mid-

¹⁷ See footnote 2 in chapter 1.

1990s in the EU-15 member states, she affirms her hypothesis that the use of media is positively related with knowledge and trust in EU integration as well as with participation in EU elections. However, she herself is not convinced that the former has any causally significant impact on the electorate as the media was only reinforcing the existing divides between the ones who are politically interested and the ones who are generally less likely to participate. Thus, she concludes that media content and voter participation would be caught in a ‘virtuous circle’ because of a two-way relationship whereby media and party campaigns activate the active who consume the media, participate in politics and thus provide again reason for the former to report and discuss politics. Consequently, a similar circular relationship can be assumed regarding the relationship between news coverage of the European Parliament and public interest in European affairs. Indeed, the research here is not interested in the effects of media coverage of EU parliamentary affairs on public opinion or awareness levels. But we can assume that the press adapt their style of reporting of EU news, of which the EP, its members and their activities are a part, to the audience’s openness to hear from the EU. In short, the attention EU parliamentary affairs receive within EU news is likely to depend on the public support levels towards EU membership.

However, some argue that the impact of public opinion is not necessarily clear cut: Morgan (1999: 91) explains low news coverage during 1996 in the UK, Ireland and Belgium with different assumptions: Citizens of the latter two countries would support EU membership and thus not be interested further, while the British are not interested because they are rather hostile towards the EU. Anderson and Weymouth (1999) in fact attest British correspondents in Brussels a lack of interest in EU politics per se due to the media management in London, possibly resulting from the fact that the public in the UK is rather hostile towards EU integration (e.g. Gavin 2001: 303).

Peter and de Vreese (2004), on the contrary, anticipate an effect of public support for EU membership opposite to H3-A: ‘we expect that less support of the EU leads to more emphasis on contentious and controversial, in other words, negative aspects of the EU and, consequently, to more coverage’ (*ibid.*: 8). Even though they do not find a significant impact of this factor in a study testing the variable of support for EU membership in a multivariate regression model on the amount of EU coverage in

television news, their assumptions point at an alternative hypothesis which must not be ignored in the subsequent analysis. This specifically concerns the political contestation of the EU in the domestic context. Schuck et al. (2011) argue that the news coverage of the 2009 EU election is higher in countries where the EU as an issue itself is subject to greater party political contestation – measured by the extent of polarization. In particular, they find a curvilinear relationship whereby low levels of party political contestation have a negative effect on the visibility of EU elections in the media, assuming that mainstream parties try to keep the issue off the agenda. A positive effect, on the contrary, is found when party polarization over European integration is considerably high, such as when anti-European parties take part in the election campaigns. Thus, we can expect that higher levels of political contestation of the EU in a country are likely to lead to more news coverage of EU parliamentary affairs. This assumption cuts across the previous hypothesis as public opinion and elite views of EU integration do not necessarily correlate. This has to be tested in the analysis to come.

In fact, the media itself, being considered part of the (domestic) elite, might have different stances towards the European Union in general than the mass public. And thus, one would expect that the media reports from the European Parliament irrespective of the public mood towards EU membership or levels of political contestation by evaluating the newsworthiness of EU parliamentary affairs solely on the grounds of news values. In fact, domestic and European elites are generally said to be somewhat more open towards European integration than the mass public. This was revealed by a survey published by Spence (1997) and conducted by EOS Gallup Europe in 1996 relying on data of 3700 respondents of the political, administrative, socio-economic, media and cultural elites in the then-fifteen member states. Hooghe and Marks (2006) go further and directly compare elite and public opinion. Their findings show that both the net support for EU membership and the net support for the statement that one's own country is benefiting from the EU membership is significantly higher for elites than for the mass public.¹⁸ Nevertheless, among the members of the elite, journalists are said to be most sceptical according to Spence

¹⁸ Yet, Hooghe (2003) claims that the divisions in opinion by elites and the public towards European integration have to be examined with caution. She is convinced that away from the surface, one has to look more thoroughly at particular EU policies. Here, she declares, opinions are, for instance, similar regarding EU decisions associated with high spending: both elites and mass public would be less in favour of that.

(1997). This implies that the media's opinion is closer to that of the public and thus a sign that the newsmakers indeed respond to the public mood in their EU coverage and therewith coverage of EU parliamentary affairs.

Diez Medrano (2003), who examines the framings of both regional elites and citizens towards European integration in Spain, Germany and the United Kingdom, states in this respect that 'even if it were true that members of the elite always initiate the framing of a particular problem in a particular way, the frames they use would necessarily reflect cultural themes they by and large share with the rest of the population' (*ibid.*: 257). Thus, being part of a domestic political and social culture, one may assume that EU-correspondents address a notably Europhile or Eurosceptic readership in a particular way. Provided they report from the EP in the first instance, correspondents who respond to a Eurosceptic audience are expected to more often frame news content of EU parliamentary affairs in terms of the news value negativity identified above than their colleagues writing for a Europhile readership. Thus, the following hypothesis derives:

Hypothesis H3-B: In countries where the public is less supportive of European integration Eurosceptic actors are likely to be featured more often in the news than in countries where citizens are rather pro-European.

Furthermore, journalists act as "organizer" of public opinion' (Negrine 1996: 110). That means newsmakers are not only messengers of news, but also act as commentators. Hence, newsmakers' attitudes towards the EP may also express the variation in public support for EU membership. In line with the former two propositions, it can thus be hypothesised:

Hypothesis H3-C: In countries where the public is less supportive of European integration, correspondents are likely to evaluate the activities of the European Parliament and its members more negatively than in countries where citizens are reasonably in favour of European integration.

It remains to be seen however, if also levels of political contestation are reflected in news content and newsmakers' evaluations. Again and following the brief discussion above, the alternative hypotheses would expect that greater party contestation of the EU issue is likely to have a similar effect on news content and newsmakers' stances towards the EP as hypothesised in H3-B and H3-C, respectively. However, these effects are difficult to measure and thus not subject to testing in this thesis.

In sum, and without neglecting the reverse effect of media coverage onto public opinion, it has been argued here that for the news reporting of European Parliament affairs it matters whether the public in one country is rather supportive of EU integration or rather against it. Low levels of public support for EU membership are supposedly linked with lower coverage, responsive news content and negative stances of correspondents towards EU parliamentary affairs, whereas the opposite is expected to be true in countries where citizens are highly supportive of EU politics. The alternative hypothesis expects higher levels of political contestation of the EU to have a positive impact on news coverage, and a similar effect on news content and newsmakers' evaluations. These hypotheses address the European dimension of news dealing with parliamentary affairs at the EU level. News coverage of the EP is constrained by public support for the EU if we assume that the EP is understood as a part of the EU political system – as a European institution. Yet, the EP is at same time a Parliament, albeit a very specific type thereof. Therefore, further hypotheses apply that address the characteristics of parliamentary democracy at the European level.

2.3.2 The impact of the national parliamentary tradition

Public opinion towards the EU and the European Parliament cannot per se be linked to an understanding of supranational affairs. Even if issues are selected and framed in terms of domestic relevance, given the complex institutional layout at the EU level which differs from that of the domestic political system, it is allegedly very difficult for citizens to comprehend the political processes. This would explain why knowledge of EU politics is not very high among EU citizens according to self-evaluations gathered by Eurobarometer surveys.¹⁹ Gelleny and Anderson (2000) show that with respect to the public assessment of the performance of the EU Commission President only half of the respondents were able to formulate an opinion – the ones that had at least some knowledge about the European executive. Anderson (1998), in contrast, claims that when evaluating their support for EU membership, citizens would use proxies that they derive from their stances towards characteristics

¹⁹ The average figures for the number of EU citizens who 'feel they understand the way the European Union works' were 41% in 2005 (European Commission 2005b) and 47% in 2010 (European Commission 2010b).

of the domestic political system. This is precisely because they would largely be unaware and uninformed about European politics and institutions. In his regard, satisfaction with democracy at the domestic level would have the most powerful effects on attitudes towards the EU, followed by support for establishment parties especially in countries where anti-establishment parties are prominent. McLaren (2007) takes up these arguments in a study about the conditions for Euroscepticism in the EU-15, despite acknowledging the fact that the overall knowledge about the EU had grown over the last ten years. As a by-result, and in line with her previous colleague, she is able to confirm that trust and distrust, respectively, in national institutions, also drive the views on European institutions such as the European Parliament, the Commission or the Council.

In the absence of comprehensive knowledge about how the EU, and especially the European Parliament, works, one may assume that citizens also use proxies in order to make sense of the European legislative body. And these proxies are likely to derive from the national parliamentary tradition. National parliamentary tradition is understood here as comprising two essential elements relevant for the analysis of the press coverage of EU parliamentary affairs. Thereby, it approximates to the approach of Patzelt (2003: 83ff), who conceptualises Parliament as a system which by its various functions is embedded in a particular environment that includes other political, legal and societal actors. The first element which becomes relevant for the present analysis refers to the way in which the national parliamentary system works in procedural terms. These procedures include parliamentary functions in broader terms, but more specifically parliamentary elections, working modes of Parliament, political party organisation and legislative behaviour of individual members of Parliament. The second element important for this thesis involves the public experience with Parliament, which includes public trust towards the institution, knowledge and political awareness as well as citizens' expectations towards Parliament and its members. Both the procedures and the public experience are interlinked and determine each other reciprocally – public expectations, for instance, can affect legislative behaviour and vice versa the latter can shape attitudes of citizens towards their representatives. In this relationship, as initially outlined, the media plays an important role since according to McNair (2000: 1) 'modern politics are largely mediated politics'.

The media, as argued in thesis, becomes crucial for the relationship between the European Parliament and its citizens as well. However, with the EU being only marginally visible in the national news (e.g. de Vreese 2003; Peter, Semetko et al. 2003; Peter and de Vreese 2004; de Vreese, Lauf et al. 2007), the direct influence of parliamentary procedures at the EU level onto public opinion is supposedly weaker – although this remains to be tested in empirical research. The national audience, nevertheless, can be expected to largely remain the same as would be for the press reportage of the national parliament. It follows that the public experience with the national parliament serves as an explanatory factor for the broadsheet coverage of the EP. This rests on the assumption that the press respond to a readership which is more familiar with the way the national parliament works.

Hence, following the application of proxies by the public to evaluate the EU and its institutions (see Anderson 1998; McLaren 2007), a similar effect can be expected with respect to the relationship between public trust levels towards the national parliament and news coverage of the European equivalent. Peter and de Vreese (2004), for instance, find that greater levels of public satisfaction with domestic democracy contribute to a greater relevance of EU news in television in terms of prominence. It can be argued in a similar vein as before that trust in the national representative body has a positive impact on the extent to which media consumers are interested to hear or read about parliamentary affairs at the EU level. And newsmakers respond to the varying levels of interest. Thus, it can be hypothesised here that trust in the national parliamentary institution has a positive effect on the amount of news coverage of the EP.

Hypothesis H4-A: The higher the public trust in the national representative body, the higher and more comprehensive the news coverage of EU parliamentary affairs.

As regards the content of news, when journalists report about EU parliamentary affairs they too have to consider that their audience might only have little knowledge. Statham (2006) finds from surveys with EU correspondents that those working for national newspapers as opposed to transnational ones believe their readers lag behind in the understanding of how the European Union works. Low levels of awareness of European politics can be addressed, as argued above, by delivering a news story through a domestic frame. However, the domestic angle was related to issue relevance for the national audience rather than making sense of specific EU

parliamentary characteristics and developments. Here, the concept of domestic relevance as dominant news value can be taken further to explain the presentation and discussion of news content.

Gleissner and de Vreese (2005) argue that correspondents would experience difficulties in presenting news stories given the unique political system of the EU. That is why ‘often they see themselves simply forced to approach a topic from the basics’ (*ibid.*: 229). These ‘basics’ are supposedly derived from the national context with which EU citizens are more familiar. Similarly, Schmidt (2006) argues that national conceptions of democracy and political institutions would still prevail in the heads of citizens despite on-going Europeanisation processes. The national parliamentary culture has evolved over a longer time than that of the EU. Hence EU correspondents are expected to respond to the knowledge and expectations of their audience in their news coverage of the European Parliament, its members and their actions. Put differently, news about the EP is presented in a manner which is comprehensible for the national audience:

Hypothesis H4-B: News content about EU parliamentary affairs is likely to reflect characteristics of procedures from the national parliamentary tradition.

It can furthermore be anticipated that because national parliamentary traditions differ from each other across Europe, also the perceptions towards and respective media representations of the European Parliament vary due to familiarity with the respective domestic political system. As Diez Medrano (2003: 6) points out, ‘because national states remain a key socialization agency and the bounded space within which individuals spend most of their lives, worldviews and thus framing processes differ across nations.’ Significant and comparable characteristics of the national parliamentary culture across countries comprise the way national legislators are elected, which impacts on the latters’ representative behaviour; the importance of political parties; decision-making processes and legislative organisation. The media representations of respective features of European parliamentary politics therefore should vary according to the national context.

The experience with parliamentary practice at the national level also shapes particular expectations towards parliamentary democracy in general since ‘institutions do not just constrain options; they establish the very criteria by which

people discover their preferences' (DiMaggio and Powell 1991: 11). Goetze and Rittberger (2010: 51), in line with the sociological institutionalism, propose that the EP derives its legitimacy (in cognitive terms) from experiences with parliamentarism at the national level since 'a high degree of legitimacy of existing practices and procedures makes it increasingly difficult to conceive of alternative modes of democratically legitimizing the EU 'off the beaten track'.' The EP is therefore not distinct from its national equivalents but follows their footsteps. In fact, Farrell and Scully (2007: 198) conclude from the analysis of Eurobarometer surveys and the role understanding of MEPs themselves that 'there is strong evidence, albeit fragmentary in nature, of a public desire for representatives with whom they can identify and see as linking the structures of the EU and themselves to their communities'. Given the public unawareness of parliamentary democracy at the European level, this 'public desire' can supposedly be explained by expectations towards representation at the national level with which citizens are more familiar. It can therefore be assumed that people have similar expectations towards the European Parliament as to their national representative body which impacts on the press coverage of EU parliamentary affairs. These are supposedly reflected in the way correspondents assess parliamentary democracy at the EU level. The following hypothesis derives:

Hypothesis H4-C: Correspondents are likely to compare the EP to the respective national parliament when evaluating the former's powers and competences.

Hence, it is anticipated that to the same extent to which news coverage depends on the interest in national parliamentary affairs and news content resembles characteristics of the domestic parliamentary culture, public expectations towards the role of national parliaments and legislative behaviour spread to the EU level. Should this hypothesis hold, two scenarios are likely to evolve: seeing that the European Parliament has comprehensive powers it can be either be held in high regard as a substitute to parliamentary democracy in the domestic context; or considered less capable of fulfilling parliamentary functions when taking national parliaments as a standard.

Parliaments in Europe have a long-standing history. The revolutions starting in the 18th century across Europe witnessed the desire for the representation of citizens' interests by a common body that is opposed to the powerful head of state – the King or Queen. However, the role of parliaments across Europe has changed over time.

The conception of independent parliamentarians that would act at their own discretion in the interest of the whole people (Mill 1865; Burke 1942) soon gave way to the necessity of party organisations within Parliament (Bagehot 1936[1867]). Especially since the introduction of mass suffrage at the beginning of the last century and the resulting change in party government, single legislators have to stick together with their party colleagues to some extent to assure stable and efficient government. This may not be a threat to the representative function of Parliament though, as the individual legislator is still obliged to act in its own conscience. Parties, on the other hand, anyway aim to follow the interest of the citizens not least because they want to become re-elected.

But conversely to the notion of effective government, citizens across Europe by appealing to the representative functions of Parliament still prefer their delegates to act on their behalf only. Electorates generally dislike party alliances and parliamentarians with strong ties to private businesses which, in their eyes, constrain the parliamentarians to represent constituents' interests. Many think that Parliament as a whole should oppose the government, ignoring the predominant forms of parliamentary government in Europe nowadays, whereby the majority in Parliament is intertwined with the government (see Strøm 2000). Patzelt (1996), for instance, demonstrates for the German case, that when asked about the functions of the Bundestag, people hold the control of the government as most important duty. Many believe it is important for parliamentarians to introduce the views and demands of the people, while most would like that decisions follow the majority of the public opinion. Moreover, not many believe that it is important to maintain a stable government majority. It appears that the German people have a distinct view of the Bundestag as counterpart of the government that must defend the interests of the citizens. That seems to relate back to the beginnings of parliamentarism and is a clear misunderstanding of the German parliamentary system. Regretting the miscomprehension of the German parliamentary system, Patzelt (1996) is convinced that the media share a great burden of the lack of knowledge and the misperceptions about the Bundestag.

However, in the public eye the European Parliament might benefit from this kind of public desire for representation given that it is independent of the executive. The European Commission does not emanate from the EP after European elections are

being held. Instead, the 27 governments propose candidates which then have to be approved by Parliament. While the EP cannot be dissolved by the Commission, the electoral independence of the legislature facilitates the censure of the executive. The EP demonstrated in 1999 that it is not afraid to vote the Commission out of office by threatening to table a censure motion which eventually led to Santer's resignation. This kind of relationship between the executive and the legislature at the European level is closer to the initial concepts of parliamentary democracy elaborated above – although party politics have become increasingly important (see Hix, Noury et al. 2007).

But one scenario could be that the press value the EP's independence of the executive in their assessment of its powers and competences when comparing it to national parliaments. This could become even more likely considering that national parliaments are said to have lost competences amid advancing European integration. Despite concessions by supranational institutions and the EU treaties, of which Lisbon significantly acknowledges the role of national parliaments within the EU²⁰, some scholars argue that national parliaments in the EU have lost (see Goetz and Meyer-Sahling 2008) and are still losing parliamentary powers due to the on-going Europeanisation processes. ‘Constitutionally, policy-making powers previously held by the national legislatures have been transferred upwards to the European level’ (Raunio 2009: 327). Further, the ‘early-warning mechanism’ which provides national parliaments with a direct veto instrument regarding EU legislative initiatives that do not comply with the subsidiarity principle is a ‘relatively harmless procedure, established primarily to inject legitimacy to EU governance’ (Raunio 2010: 11). Hence, given the EP’s ability to step in where national parliaments do not have competences (any more), citizens and therewith their public voice might express gratitude to the EP for representing their interests.

The other scenario could be that journalists hold the respective national parliament in higher regard than the EP. Some attest the EP an underdeveloped linkage function, whereby citizens are able to identify with their elected MEPs and the latter being

²⁰ Article 12(b) TEU, for instance, states that ‘national Parliaments contribute actively to the good functioning of the Union’ by, among other things, being informed by the EU institutions, respecting the principle of subsidiarity and co-ordinating with other parliaments, including the EP. The subsidiarity principle is specified in a protocol of the Treaty (‘Protocol (no 2) on the Application of the Principles of Subsidiarity and Proportionality’) stating that national parliaments generally have the right to object any legislation that, in their eyes, does not conform to the principle.

responsive in their legislative behaviour to the electorate, and see the weakness of any electoral and resulting representational link between MEPs and EU citizens as the Parliament's 'big failure' (The Economist 2009b). The phenomenon of EP elections being ranked second-order after national ones exemplifies this weakness (cf. Reif and Schmitt 1980; Marsh 1998; Hix and Marsh 2007). National parliaments are still somewhat closer to European citizens both in geographical and representational terms.

Moreover, national parliaments are at a disadvantage compared to their European counterpart given their limited powers of direct influence on EU politics.²¹ The latter is however able to affect EU policy-making directly. Hence, when comparing the EP to its national counterparts, newsmakers might evaluate the former in rather negative terms. This might be especially true for countries where the national parliament is considered a supreme institution such as in the UK; or even in Germany where the Constitutional Court has underlined with its so-called 'Lisbon judgement'²² in June 2009 that the Bundestag must not be undermined in European affairs.

2.4 Conclusions

The chapter has shown that some explanations for variation in the news coverage of EU parliamentary affairs exceed the assumptions of previous research. The chapter has contended that, although there are positive conditions in terms of access to information provided by the EP and numbers of staff deployed in Brussels to cover EU affairs, the interest of newsmakers in reporting EU parliamentary affairs is determined by the audience and is dependent on several factors, both internal and external to the EU news production process. Distinguishing EU parliamentary affairs

²¹ However, some argue that politics and policy-making in the EU have a reverse effect on parliaments within their domestic context: their scrutinising power towards the executive would have been expanded by means of new monitoring and information gathering mechanisms including revised parliamentary standing orders, established European affairs committees, extraordinary debates on European Union matters, co-operation with other parliaments, their committees and their parties, or parliamentary delegations in Brussels (see, for instance Raunio and Hix, 2000; Maurer and Wessels, 2001; Auel and Benz 2005; O'Brennan and Raunio 2007; Tans et al. 2007; Barrett 2008).

²² BVerfG, 2 BvE 2/08 of 30/6/2009, Paragraph No. (1 - 421),

http://www.bverfg.de/entscheidungen/es20090630_2bve000208en.html; for an interpretation of the judgement see Kiiver (2010)

by issue relevance and parliamentary stories helps to disentangle the net of possible explanatory factors.

The chapter has argued that news about EU parliamentary affairs fall into the category of political news stories which follow principles of actuality and factuality. What makes these stories particularly newsworthy is the importance of the subject and the actors involved, controversy and (political) consequences for the audience. However, they have an added European dimension which distinguishes them from common domestic political news stories. These have to be relevant for the domestic audience in order to receive coverage. At the same time, newsmakers are likely to present the issues at stake through a domestic lens. That being said, stories about EU parliamentary affairs are anticipated to be only relevant if the issues involved have an impact for the domestic audience. The European Parliament is unlikely to be newsworthy *per se* unless major issues are at stake. However, the European dimension of EU news further requires that external factors related to the domestic context are taken into account. Here, the salience of national events supposedly biases EP coverage. Newsmakers' evaluations will tell whether the EP is assessed in terms of newsworthiness.

News values represent classic drivers of EU news coverage and have been addressed in previous studies (see, for instance, Semetko and Valkenburg 2000; de Vreese 2003; Kevin 2003; d'Haenens 2005) – even the biasing effect of national events was discussed elsewhere (see Boomgaarden, Vliegenthart et al. 2010). The interesting question here is that if we find that common news values apply for the selection and presentation of news from the EP, what does it mean for European democracy? The domestic focus is unlikely to overcome given the need to make news attractive for a domestic audience. And if this news value was found to be responsible for regular coverage from the EP positive conclusions could be drawn for the levels of public awareness of the EU representative body. But a worrying finding would be if there was no convergence across different countries. If the EP was not worth reporting when highly salient, pan-European issues are at stake, which can be characterised by importance and conflict, then the European Parliament would not be understood for its political role in the European political system. Similarly, if the research found that national elections constrain the press coverage from the EP this would be an indicator for the EP not (yet) being relevant enough in the public eye. In this case,

EU parliamentary politics are unlikely to contribute to political discourse at the national level and further erode the democratic deficit by not drawing any linkage to European politics.

The second dimension of EU parliamentary affairs is that they generate a specific type of political news – that is parliamentary politics. However, considering that the EU political system is very complex featuring lengthy decision-making processes influenced by a multitude of political actors, the European Parliament's precise role therein is not facilitating to identify for European citizens. Hence, this lack of public knowledge supposedly contributes to an undifferentiated view onto European politics. This chapter has contended that higher public support levels towards the EU are expected to lead to more comprehensive coverage, fewer references to Eurosceptic actors and more positive evaluations of EU parliamentary affairs by EU correspondents. While the chapter does not dispute the reciprocal effect of news coverage onto public opinion, the impact of public opinion onto news coverage is not an entirely novel assumption (see, for instance, Anderson and Weymouth 1999; Morgan 1999; de Vreese 2001a; Gavin 2001; Diez Medrano 2003; Peter and de Vreese 2004), but, if rendered valid, has further implications for the democratic deficit. On the one hand, variation in public opinion is a healthy part of European democracy as it allows for public discourse. But if the press coverage of the EP was found to be entirely dependent on public evaluations of the EU as a whole, then the EP is unlikely to be publicly identified as an independent institution and political actor which represents all European citizens, even those more prone to Euroscepticism.

The chapter has also introduced an alternative hypothesis about political contestation of the EU issue, whereby greater party polarization is likely to lead to more coverage. Yet, the novel contention of this chapter is that due to the complexity of the EU decision-making process the strongest impact on EP news coverage is expected to derive from the national parliamentary tradition. Given the public unawareness of European political processes it is argued that proxies from the national parliamentary tradition are being employed by newsmakers for the news coverage of EU parliamentary affairs. The national tradition of parliamentary democracy is expected to drive the interest of the readership in reading news about the EP, the precise understanding of EU parliamentary activities, and the respective

evaluations by newsmakers. In short, news values, and especially the requirement of domestic relevance which apply to EU news in general, are not sufficient explanatory variables for variation in the press coverage of the European Parliament, its members and their actions. These particular news stories, as regards coverage and the presentation and discussion of news content, are also determined by the parliamentary tradition of the nation state with which citizens are familiar.

This familiarity is helpful for understanding the EP for what it is – a Parliament. However, if these assumptions are rendered true, then the EP would not be understood in public for its unique supranational character which unites the European people within one representative body. Further, if it is being criticised for being not like – in the worst case not as good enough as – the respective national parliament, then the EP would not necessarily have an added value to European democracy in the public eye. In fact, the media's role in this case would be rather that of a disconnector between the European Parliament and its represented.

Nevertheless, the research in this thesis adds to the existing literature in communication research by arguing that the national parliamentary tradition is a central driver for the press coverage of EU parliamentary affairs. In doing so, the hypotheses presented here go beyond previously identified factors by arguing that features and procedures of the domestic political system matter. Yet, several other possible influences have not been addressed any further here, since their impact is expected not to be as crucial as that of the factors presented in this chapter, albeit relevant. These especially concern differences in journalistic cultures and variation of media systems across countries, as well the political affiliation of a newspaper and the number of staff they employ in Brussels. These factors are being controlled for in the analysis to come and given further consideration in the next chapter which presents the research design and methodological approach of the thesis.

Chapter 3

Tackling the research question: A mixed-methods approach to the broadsheet coverage of the EP

The previous chapter has argued that variation in the news coverage of EU parliamentary affairs can be explained by factors both internal and external to the news production process. On the internal side it has been contended that EU news stories are selected on the issue itself whereby news values, most notably the requirement of domestic relevance, are responsible for both the selection and presentation of EU news referring to Parliament and its members. While the coverage of the latter is also affected by events occurring in the national context, two further external effects impact on the precise coverage of parliamentary affairs at the EU level. Here, the previous chapter has argued that given the public unawareness of EU politics, and Parliament in particular, the public salience of the national parliamentary culture determines the coverage alongside public opinion towards the EU in general.

In order to test these hypotheses, this chapter proposes a mixed methodological approach. The thesis first and foremost relies on a large-N quantitative analysis of newspaper articles referring to EU parliamentary affairs and secondly on expert interviews conducted with correspondents in Brussels. This combination responds to the need in political science, and political communication in particular, to give full account to both quantitative and qualitative approaches. At the same time, the method serves to even out methodological weaknesses of either approach. While the quantitative analysis provides insight to the broader picture and enables the research to specifically test external effects, the qualitative study addresses cross-media and cross-country variation more closely and particularly answers questions related to the media's role of a commentator. Thus, a sufficient amount of external and internal validity as well as reliability of the results is ensured.

The present chapter argues that broadsheets provide an appropriate media to investigate the parliamentary coverage precisely because they provide political comment and analysis of European matters for which they have correspondents employed in Brussels. This relates to the essential condition of the newsmakers'

implicit interest in EU parliamentary affairs elaborated in the previous chapter. At the same time, cross-media variation is largely being controlled for in order to answer the research question. Further the investigation comprises six EU member states, namely Ireland, the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands, Germany and Austria. In each country three broadsheets have been chosen for analysis. Despite being a rather small sample, the cases are comparable on the key explanatory factors while controlling for effects related to the different media systems. Not only is the research able to detect the news value of domestic relevance in the EP coverage, but with this selection it is also able to determine the external effects on the news production process. In all these countries the domestic political cycles are independent from each other. However, most importantly we find variation both in terms of public support levels towards EU membership and in characteristics of parliamentary tradition which by cross-cutting each other enables the research to determine which of the external factors have a stronger impact, or whether they complement one another.

The research relies on three time periods. The first one serves as a routine period between 1 October 2005 and 30 September 2007 which was not severely interrupted by external events such as defeated referenda on the EU constitution. Yet, some far-reaching legislative decisions have been taken and during the period the EP was faced with many internal changes. The remaining two periods target key events and their development over time. Here, the investiture vote of Prodi, Barroso I and II serve as a measure of parliamentary scrutiny and media representations thereof. The case surrounding the SWIFT agreement investigates the Lisbon-effect of parliamentary power and its impact on news coverage of the EP. The combination of different time periods serves to control for unexpected effects and to produce robust findings which at the same time allows the research to infer generalisations of the results, provided the research hypotheses presented above hold.

The chapter sets out by justifying the case selection (3.1). It proposes the use of broadsheets to allow for a systematic examination of news coverage about the EP (3.1.1). Section 3.1.2 substantiates the country selection and explains in what way these are appropriate to test the explanatory factors external to news making. After that, the chapter presents the data (3.2) comprising both newspaper articles (3.2.1) as well as interviews (3.2.2) and explains why these have been chosen as well as how

the data will be analysed and interpreted in the empirical chapters to come. The chapter eventually summarises the main implications and discusses the strengths and weaknesses of the research design (3.3).

3.1 Case selection

According to Geddes (2003: 95) ‘the theory or hypothesis being tested determines the appropriate unit of analysis and the universe of potential observations’. Thus, in order to test the hypotheses presented above, the case selection has to allow for a sufficient amount of variation both regarding internal and external effects. That means the research has to account for balance across media outlets in order to make assumptions about the applicability of news values with respect to the coverage of EU parliamentary affairs. At the same, and in order to detect the external effects including the salience of the national parliamentary culture, public opinion towards the EU and the concurrence with highly salient national events, a sufficient amount of cross-country variation is required. The following two subsections first address the question of media selection before the country selection is being justified.

3.1.1 The choice of national broadsheets

EU citizens are predominantly exposed to domestic media which, on the other hand, also mainly responds to the domestic audience not accounting for other viewers, readers, or listeners across Europe.²³ The selection of news items from the national

²³ The media as such is still mainly organised domestically in the EU. There is no pre-existing European media system although there are some transnational types of co-operation in both the television sector and press divisions. In this regard, the German newspaper *die tageszeitung* serves as an example of newspaper collaboration as it publishes the French monthly paper *Le Monde Diplomatique* as a supplement; and there is, for instance, *ARTE* as joint television channel of French and German public broadcasters. But these forms of co-operation do not account for any overall ‘European’ view. Concerning this matter, a few newspapers have been established such as the *European Voice* in 1995, or the *European Daily* in 2010. However, these sheets have small circulation numbers, attract special target groups of higher education and income, and circulate mostly only in the European capitals. Apart from that, a few European-wide channels have been set up since the beginning of the 1980s. But, the only two channels that have survived thus far are *Eurosport* and *Euronews* both having only marginal shares in national audience attentions. Some scholars investigate the phenomenon of European-wide television channels and conclude that citizens are not very interested in such projects (Sepstrup, 1990). The audience is said to prefer domestic programmes in their own language and of relevance regarding national culture.

media therefore becomes inevitable for a study of the news coverage of EU parliamentary affairs. However, one also has to account for the various media outlets which target different groups. Media studies in the EU context have revealed differences in the coverage of EU affairs across a range of media. Peter and de Vreese (2004), for instance, find that public broadcasting channels cover EU topics more prominently than private television programmes. Kevin (2003) also discovers that ‘Europe’ is not a prime-time topic on television by comparing press and television coverage in eight countries. Moreover, public broadcasting companies cover Europe and the EU more often and more comprehensively than the commercial ones. But still, according to Kevin, the quality newspapers report most often about the EU (see also Trenz 2004).

An examination of national newspapers therefore becomes plausible, since a sufficient supply of news referring to the European Parliament can be expected here. Further, it has been argued above that such news mainly belong to the category of political news stories. And, ‘newspapers generally have more political news than does television news, because they have far fewer constraints in terms of space and production costs’ (de Vreese, Banducci et al., 2006: 483). At the same time, EU citizens substantially rely on daily newspapers as a source of information about EU affairs – and still more so than on the internet in general. According to Eurobarometer surveys published over the last few years, only television is more attractive for them in this respect.²⁴ Although the thesis will not investigate any effects of media coverage about the EP, newspapers are a valuable source to answering the research question.

Within the range of newspapers available in the European member states, due to their role of providing political analysis and enhancing political debate broadsheets represent an adequate sample for the investigation of the EP press coverage.²⁵ Obviously tabloids report about EU affairs as well, but their journalists are less likely

²⁴ In spring 2005 Eurobarometer reported that 70% would use television as a source of information about EU affairs, followed by 43% who also relied on daily newspapers and only an additional 22% searched on the internet for EU news among other sources (European Commission 2005a). Five years later (European Commission 2010b) these figures look only slightly different: 81% relied on television, 49% daily newspapers, and 26% the internet to keep themselves informed on EU political affairs.

²⁵ Trenz (2004: 312) even argues that European broadsheets bear the potential to establish a unified European media system: ‘It is a self-regulating and largely autonomous system that is specialized in observing and selecting European political communication and that applies similar standards and selection procedures to build political news from it.’

to be found in the EU capitals, which has been identified in the previous chapter as an important condition for press coverage of EU parliamentary affairs. Even though the total number of staff in Brussels per news outlet is expected to vary across quality newspapers, only the largest yellow press companies receive their information first-hand from their own correspondents registered with the EU institutions. The others, and this also holds for regional and local newspapers, simply incorporate the facts and reports spread by the common newswires and press agencies into their news coverage. Trenz (2004) however, claims that quality newspapers address distinct target groups rather than the general public and do not necessarily take the same ‘national’ perspective. This is plausible. But elite journalists nevertheless act as opinion leaders in their national context and are able to shape other media content as well as influence political actors and public opinion directly (cf. Trenz 2004; d’Haenens 2005; Bijmans and Altides 2007). This in turn allows for some generalisation of the results.

At the same time, cross-media fluctuation is largely being controlled for. ‘The privileged newspapers in each national context should be expected to produce more or less the same quantity and quality of news, and the same (but nationally different) elite perspective.’ (Slaatta 2006: 13). Thus, a sample of broadsheets serves us to assess the weight of news selection criteria for EU news stories, and for EU parliamentary affairs in particular. The previous chapter has argued that domestic relevance is likely to be the dominant news selection criterion (Hypothesis H1-A) which responds to the ‘nationally different elite perspective’. At the same though, importance and conflict are likely to become applicable as well since the notion of ‘the same quantity and quality of news’ implies that correspondents working for broadsheets apply similar news values at a pan-European level when evaluating the newsworthiness of EU political stories. This assumption can also be linked to the ‘universal experience’ Statham (2006: 35) claims journalists in Brussels to have when following their work of reporting about EU affairs.

However, some variation within the national media landscape can be expected since they have different audiences. Hence, in order to control for (at least) some variation within member states, three major broadsheets have been chosen per country – two political ones, one to the centre-left and one to the centre-right of the political spectrum, as well as one sheet known as financial or business newspaper. All

selected quality papers are distributed at the respective national level²⁶, and represent some of the most commonly studied broadsheets in the field of EU political communication research (see, for instance, Trenz 2004; de Vreese, Banducci et al. 2006; Statham 2006; Bijsmans and Altides 2007; de Wilde 2011). A detailed data overview will be provided further below.

3.1.2 Country selection

In order to determine whether we find cross-country variation in the news coverage of EU parliamentary affairs explained by the external factors proposed in the previous chapter – comprising the public salience of the national parliamentary culture (Hypothesis H4), the concurrence with national events (H2) and public opinion towards EU membership (H3), the cases need to be selected carefully.

The comparative method serves as suitable approach to the research question by selecting only a small number of cases. Ragin (1987: 16) in fact suggests that applications of this method ‘produce explanations that account for every instance of a certain phenomenon’. However, the accompanying problems are those of too many independent variables that are able to explain differences in the press coverage about the EP – as well as possible over-representation of deviant cases (Lijphart 1971: 685-6). In order to circumvent these problems Lijphart (1971) suggests, among other things, to focus on ‘comparable’ cases which share important characteristics, and to only consider ‘key’ variables. With these requirements in mind, six countries, namely Ireland, the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands, Germany and Austria, have been selected. EU member states from the North, the South, or the East are not considered precisely because they would bias the comparability of the countries by adding more explanatory variables. In fact, the selected countries share a long- to medium-term membership of the European Union. Among them are three founding members; the UK and Ireland joined in 1973; and only Austria is the youngest EU member since 1995. Experience with EU membership also entails (some degree of) familiarity with EU politics and policy-making by the respective citizenry. Public awareness of the European Parliament in all these member states should thus be

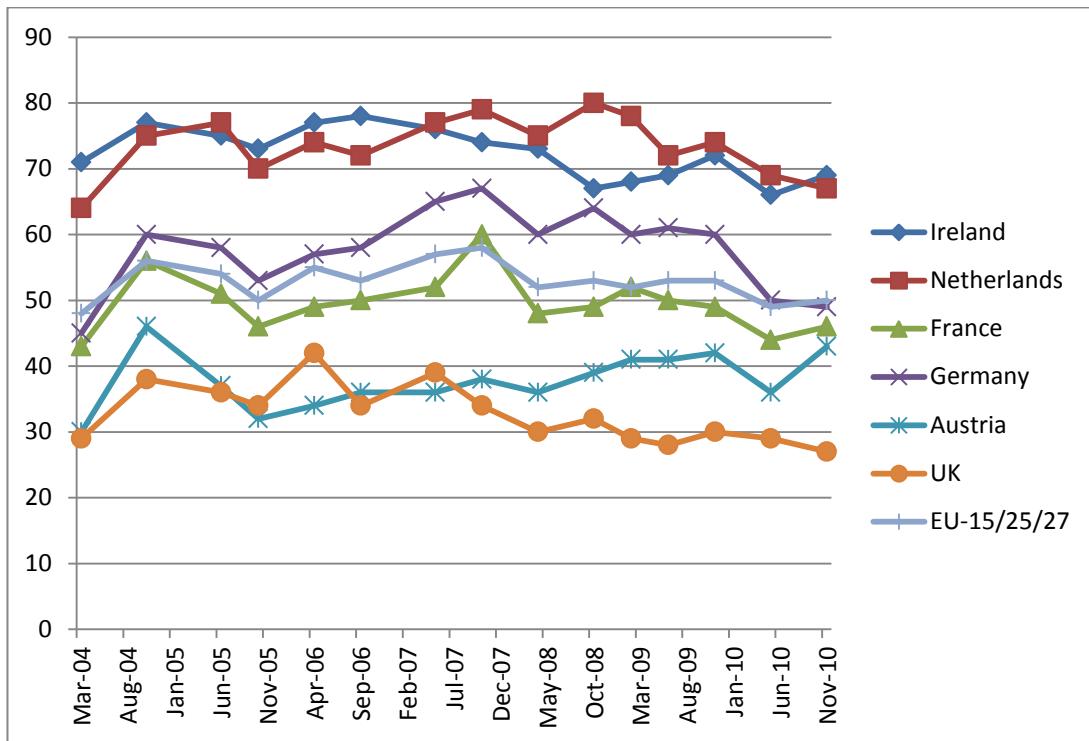
²⁶ The German print market is characterised by a strong regional orientation of newspapers. However, the dailies included in this sample are commonly read at a nation-wide level.

reasonably high as opposed to countries which joined the EU in or after 2004. All selected countries represent established democracies, unlike the newer or some of the Mediterranean member states.

The case selection reveals sufficient variation with regards to the key explanatory variables which respond to the hypotheses referring to external effects on news production. As regards Hypothesis H2, we find indeed six independent national political cycles among the chosen member states which depend on general elections, government behaviour and constitutional arrangements. That is to say, general (parliamentary or presidential) elections in these countries do not occur simultaneously but are subject to the domestic context. Nevertheless, the previous chapter identified public opinion towards the EU and the public salience of the national parliamentary culture as the most significant external drivers on the precise news coverage of parliamentary affairs at the EU level. In fact, the countries have been selected carefully on these two hypotheses, H3 and H4 respectively, in order to determine any or either effect.

Figure 3.1 provides the distribution of public support levels across country. A close look reveals that, taken as pairs, Ireland and the Netherlands, Germany and France, the United Kingdom and Austria score similarly on the public attitudes towards the membership of the EU (high, medium, and low respectively).

Figure 3.1: Support for EU membership, 2004-2010



Legend: % 'EU membership is a good thing'; **Source:** Eurobarometer

To begin with the first pair, in the United Kingdom and in Austria citizens and some government elites (the Conservatives in Britain and the FPÖ in Austria) are both highly sceptical towards the EU compared to the other countries. Yet, public support in the latter country has recently increased slightly. Ireland and the Netherlands both demonstrate some of the highest support rates among all EU member states for EU membership over time. And this is despite defeated referenda over the EU Constitution and the Lisbon Treaty, respectively in each country. Franklin et al. (1995) in fact suggest that referenda on European issues are mainly a popularity contest for the respective domestic government rather than assessment tools for the EU.²⁷ The citizens of France and Germany generally express medium-level support for the EU ranging around the average support for EU member states by 15, 25 and 27 countries respectively with German rates being slightly higher. But the figures for France are still comparable, despite having rejected the EU Constitution in 2005 in a referendum. Nonetheless, both member states are highly influential founding members of the EU with the elites being strongly in favour of the EU (with some

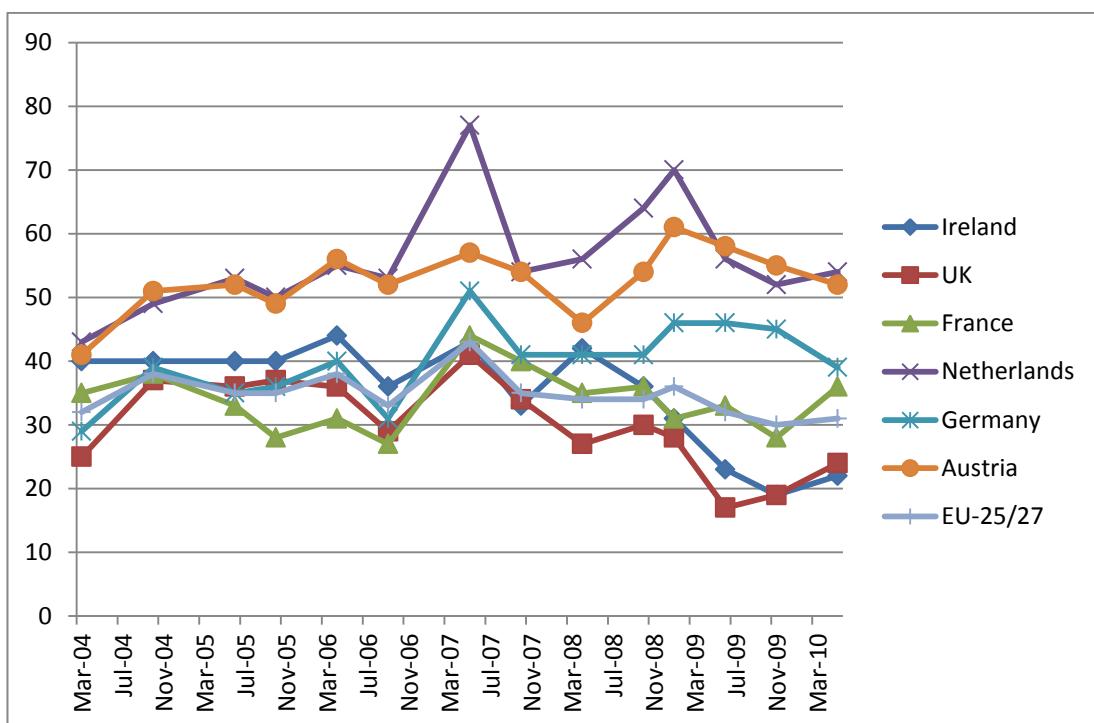
²⁷ More recent research (Hobolt and Brouard 2010), however, shows that attitudes towards the EU Constitution are multi-dimensional and voters would, among other things, also express their concerns over aspects of European integration in referenda. Nevertheless, support for European membership, as shown in Figure 3.1. has not been severely affected over time, allowing us to categorise the six countries into three pairs according to support levels.

exceptions in France) and hold close friendship with one another at the political level.

As regards the remaining key explanatory variable, within these three pairs the parliamentary traditions differ considerably from each other, all of them being special in their own way. Although, and importantly, the research will not structure the empirical findings in terms of paired comparisons, occasional paired contrasts are still useful to underline the argumentation of the thesis.

Figure 3.2 provides an overview of public trust levels towards the national parliament. It shows that the figures vary across country – trust levels are considerably higher in the Netherlands and in Austria; but these figures also fluctuate significantly over time in most countries.

Figure 3.2: Trust in the national parliament, 2004-2010



Legend: % 'tend to trust'; Source: Eurobarometer

The comparable features of the national parliamentary culture within the three pairs detected above become particularly important for the analysis of the press coverage of EU parliamentary affairs. These include the diverse characteristics of the electoral system and the party system which lead to distinct legislative behaviour of MEPs and political parties; variation in decision-making structures; as well as differing levels of scrutinising activity towards the executive. While a detailed operationalization of the

explanatory variables will take place in the subsequent empirical chapters, the key features can be briefly contrasted within the pairs.²⁸

3.1.2.1 French and German particularities in parliamentary traditions

In terms of parliamentary traditions both cases of France and Germany could not be more distinct from each other: France is a true semi-presidential system with a strong double executive which undermines the French Parliament. This becomes especially apparent in times when the directly elected President and the Prime Minister are from the same political party, although the Assemblée Nationale elects and controls the latter formerly. Further, the French Parliament is handicapped by constitution which restricts the legislative powers of both houses. Its committee system is also quite underdeveloped and the standing orders in general are rather limited (see Frears 1990; Bell 2004). It is therefore relatively weak in comparison to the German Parliament. Although the Bundestag faces a strong second chamber due to the complex federal system, it has been referred to as an exclusive example for a policy-making or so-called working parliament with strong influences, even in European matters (cf. Norton 1996; Maurer 2002), manifested in the German Basic Law. That said, most of the parliamentary work takes place in the committees rather than in the plenary.

Both political systems also differ in their electoral rules which has representational consequences. The German electoral system for the Bundestag is regionally split and termed Mixed-Member-Proportional system (MMP). While half of the members are elected directly by plurality mode, the other half enters the Bundestag via the list-system of their party rendering close voter links less necessary. Needless to say, political parties play an important role in the selection and promotion of individual candidates (see Saalfeld 2002). General elections in France follow the plurality mode and thus allow for some direct campaigns of individual candidates. French delegates are furthermore allowed to hold a second mandate which is usually a major local or regional office. The importance of the ‘cumul de mandats’ has grown in recent years (Costa and Kerrouche 2009: 340f). As a consequence, French legislators are publicly

²⁸ Note that while in all countries the parliament is bi-cameral, the focus of this thesis lies on the second chamber, i.e. the one that directly holds the government to account, as it is comparable to the EP.

regarded as valuable intermediaries between citizens and the political government (Frears 1990; Rizzuto 1997). Furthermore, the party system in France is defined by two blocs while the German party system is rather characterized as moderate with two small parties (the Greens and the FDP) being accepted as possible coalition partners in government at the federal level. In sum, the different features should become apparent in the news coverage about the EP of the respective national newspapers despite the fact that public support levels towards the EU are similarly high.

3.1.2.2 Parliamentary cultures of Austria and the UK

In the unitary state of the UK, the British House of Commons is often being referred to as the ideal type of parliamentary government (see Strøm 2000) by which a single party majority resulting from the first-past-the-post (FPTP) electoral system holds the government accountable. Given the geographical fragmentation of political parties on the ballots however, single party governments become less likely in the future and increasingly give way to coalition governments (cf. Hix, Johnston et al. 2010). The electoral system with its single-member constituencies also allows for a strong link between the represented and the representatives (Norton 2002a). The opposition of the resulting predominant two-party system is weak which is not least due to the absence of comprehensive parliamentary rights. As in the other countries, the lower chamber in Britain faces a second chamber, the House of Lords.

By contrast, in the much smaller and federal state of Austria the lower chamber, the Nationalrat, is a ‘light version’ of the German Bundestag. It also faces a second chamber which is composed of regional representatives. Its committee system is much better developed than that of the House of Commons which favours many ad hoc committees over established ones (see Mattson and Strøm 1995). And, although there has been a two-party system as well for many years²⁹, one may speak of a two-and-a-half party system now. The smaller coalition partners FPÖ and BZÖ have been seriously involved in the government after 1999 seeking to break the traditional Proporz system in which party-related interests of all (respected) sectors participate

²⁹ In Austria, three socio-political *Lager* (blocs) have been dominant until recently. However, until 2000 the socialists and the conservatives have excluded the nationalistic *Lager* from government.

evenly in political decision making. Still, the electoral system is proportional. That is why coalition governments, especially Grand coalitions due to restricted options, and extensive negotiations have always been necessary as no party has received an absolute majority yet. Similar to the German system, parties play a significant role in the selection of individual candidates, even though the electoral system allows for some preferential voting at the local and regional level (Müller 2008). But according to Müller and Scheucher (1994: 178ff), only about a third of voters make use of their electoral right to choose individual candidates. The nature of constituency service is thus different from the British political system.

To contrast the cases even further, Austria is by constitution a semi-presidential democracy with its Head of State being directly elected by the people (see Duverger 1980: 167). In reality though, the president rather fulfils representative tasks than influencing Austrian politics – a role comparable to that of the British Queen.

3.1.2.3 Differences between the Irish and Dutch parliaments

Although public support levels for EU membership are similarly high in both Ireland and the Netherlands, the two countries differ in their parliamentary culture. Certainly, none of these parliaments are ideal types in any sense although the Dáil Éireann was largely influenced by the Westminster model. But both systems have some interesting features which are expected to shape the media view onto the European Parliament and its members in particular. The most striking one of the Irish parliamentary culture is the candidate-centred STV electoral system which is also used for the European Parliament elections. It forces the Irish members of the Dáil (TDs) to act highly responsively towards their constituents since the candidates not only compete with members of other parties but also with their own party colleagues (cf. O’Halpin 2002). Dutch voters can also express their candidate preferences on national ballots, but de facto everyone just votes for parties in general. Moreover, in the Netherlands the electoral system, being proportional, defines the electoral district size as the whole country. It results that the members of the Tweede Kamer do not have close contacts to the voters as there is no distinct geographical constituency to be accountable to (cf. Gladdish 1990; Andeweg 1997). That is especially why these

two parliamentary traditions are interesting to contrast in terms of their electoral systems controlling for EU support.

However, the other consequence of the Dutch electoral system is the multi-party system as there is literally no threshold to enter the Tweede Kamer.³⁰ This results in a seat share by a large number of parties in Parliament (currently ten) and consequently leads to multi-party coalition governments. In Ireland, one finds coalition governments as well with Fianna Fáil being the largest party almost always forming a coalition with one or two smaller parties. Similarly to the Austrian Constitution, the Irish system is also semi-presidential (see Duverger 1980: 167), but weakly performed in reality, while the Netherlands draw on their constitutional monarchy. In general, the Dutch Tweede Kamer, being considered a policy-making chamber, is somewhat better equipped in terms of its committee system (see Mattson and Strøm 1995). The Dáil, on the other hand, given its assimilation to the House of Commons is comparatively a rather weak law-making chamber (see Murphy 2006).

Given the cross-cutting variation in the two explanatory factors of parliamentary tradition and public opinion towards the EU, the country selection increases the internal validity of the research precisely because we are able to determine which of the two external effects matter for the news coverage of EU parliamentary affairs – the national parliamentary culture, public support for EU membership or both. At the same time it provides for an insightful comparison across countries and allows for the generalization of the findings.

Taken together, the country selection also allows us to control for other, media-specific impacts. In fact, across the countries we find differences in the characteristics of the media system and journalistic culture. Hallin and Mancini (2004) classify media systems according to the degree of state intervention in regulating the media, the degree of media partisanship, the historical development of media markets and the extent of journalistic profession with countries. They propose three different ideal types of media systems. The liberal one found in the Anglo-Saxon countries including the UK, Ireland, the US and Canada is characterised by an autonomous press. ‘Commercial newspapers dominate, political parallelism is low,

³⁰ The threshold is as low as 0.067 percent of the overall vote.

and internal pluralism predominates – with the exception of the highly partisan British press’ (*ibid.*: 75). In the Mediterranean or polarised-pluralised model of a media system, which also includes France, ‘the state plays a larger role as an owner, regulator, and funder of media’ and ‘the press is marked by a strong focus on political life’ (*ibid.*: 73). The democratic-corporatist model, dominating in Austria, Germany and the Netherlands, can be found somewhat in between the two other types with moderate levels of political parallelism, and a moderate degree of state intervention. In the absence of a unitary European media system, the characterisation of national media systems play an important role with regards to expected variation in the news coverage of the EP. The country selection allows us to control for that in the analysis to come.

Furthermore, one has to control for country-specific journalistic cultures. Although EU correspondents are said to have socialised with the particular Brussels beat by ‘going native’ with the European Union elites (Morgan 1995) and thereby share a ‘universal experience’ with respect to their work in the European capital (Statham 2006: 35), one can assume that differences in understanding of journalistic professions still persist. Esser (1998) compares the work experience of British and German journalists (in their home office) and finds that while in the UK a division of labour is common in the newsrooms, the journalistic autonomy is much higher in Germany. That would lead to personal biases in the German press offices, and organisational biases in the British counterparts in news content. Other scholars suggest a broad distinction between a Continental, rather opinionated model – journalists of this culture interpret news and provide comment; and the Anglo-American type of journalism which is relatively fact-oriented and neutral (see Köcher 1986; Donsbach and Patterson 2004; Mancini 2005).

In sum, by considering six countries and 18 newspapers, we can expect sufficient variation as regards both internal effects of news production with respect to news values and external effects related to the national parliamentary tradition, public opinion towards the EU and the occurrence of highly salient domestic events. The case selection furthermore allows us to control for the country-specific differences in media systems and journalistic cultures.

3.2 Methodology and data

Small-N comparisons are often criticised for their limited ability to generalise explanations for occurring phenomena. According to Lijphart (1971: 684) the most appropriate method to establish ‘reliable general laws’ is the statistical approach. However, critics of Lijphart’s suggestion argue that an increase of the number of cases would lead to a decrease of comparable, similar cases but at the same time increase the number of causal explanations (see, for instance, Przeworski 1987: 44; Ragin 1987: 50; Collier 1991: 14-16). The present research project tackles this problem by increasing the number of observations within cases and over time (see Mair 1996). The content analysis therefore comprises a large-N of newspaper articles selected from the overall 18 newspapers (plus one substitute) that have been collected for various time periods between 2004 and 2010. These news items will be analysed quantitatively. In addition to the extensive and periodical content analysis, the research aims at methodological triangulation (see Denzin 1989) of the results by combining the statistical method with qualitatively conducted interviews with the respective correspondents in Brussels. This approach responds to scholarly claims about a greater need in political science for a combination of methods, as Tarrow points out:

‘Whenever possible, we should use qualitative data to interpret quantitative findings, to get inside the processes underlying decision outcomes, and to investigate the reasons for the tipping points in historical time-series. We should also try to use different kinds of evidence together and in sequence and look for ways of triangulating different measures on the same research problem.’

(Tarrow 1995: 474)

Especially in the field of European political communication research there is according to Statham (2006: 3) ‘relatively little in the way of ‘joined up’ approaches, addressing both contents and news production processes, systematically and cross-nationally, at a general level’ (but see de Vreese 2001b, de Vreese 2003, Gleissner and de Vreese 2005, Statham 2006). The empirical contribution of the present research design is therefore expected to be welcomed by this school. However, rather than following the model of a ‘nested analysis’ (Lieberman 2005) whereby cross-unit and case (small-N) studies determine each other, the mixed-methods approach here seeks to explain the same phenomenon of EP news coverage simultaneously

investigating the very same cases. Therewith the qualitative approach serves best to answer questions about the internal factors of news production which are expected to have an effect on the press coverage of the EP. Furthermore, interviews can also provide insight into the newsmakers' evaluations of the EP and its members, while complementing the interpretation of the statistic results. The quantitative analysis provides the dependent variables of broadsheet coverage and allows for testing external effect of news making. This methodology serves to increase the external validity as well as the reliability of the key research findings given the rather small number of cases, i.e. countries, included in this study. Both methodological approaches have their limits, which cannot be fully evened out by their simultaneous applications. Nevertheless, the analysis aims at producing robust and consistent findings. The following sub-sections provide a detailed overview of the data by explaining the use of newspaper articles and the selection of interviews for the analysis.

3.2.1 Quantitative content analysis of newspaper articles

The method of quantitative content analysis selected for this thesis has several implications. In the following, the time periods of investigation will be justified. Then the actual article selection will be briefly elaborated before particularities of some newspapers will be presented. Lastly, the coding scheme will be explained in more detail.

3.2.1.1 Time periods selected

Media content analyses in the context of EU news have thus far predominantly focussed on the analysis of key events, such as EU elections, referenda, or European summits accompanied by rather short time-scales, which is understandable given different research interests and limited resources (see Statham 2006: 3). The present research project seeks to fill part of this gap with regards to the news coverage of the EP and its members. In fact, the newspaper article collection consists of three

datasets, including both pure news and commentaries.³¹ The first and core one contains 2155 newspaper items published between 1 October 2005 and 30 September 2007. The second dataset comprises 1320 articles which have been published during the days surrounding the formal investiture procedure of the European Commission by Parliament (both the President and the cabinet). These specifically affect the days between the nomination or presentation of the candidate(s) until one week after the vote for the Prodi Commission (24/03/1999-12/05/1999 & 21/07/1999-22/09/1999), Barroso I (30/06/2004-29/07/2004 & 12/08/2004-25/11/2004) and Barroso II (19/06/2009-23/09/2009 & 27/11/2009-16/02/2010). The hearings for the Barroso II Commission have been investigated in more detail. The number of articles for this particular sub-dataset comprises 167 news items in total. The third and last dataset represents a longitudinal study including all articles published on the SWIFT case and involving the European Parliament directly (N=286) between 1 June 2006 and 30 November 2010.

The main dataset, which will be subject to chapters 4 and 5, refers to a routine period which was largely unaffected by political or economic crises. It covers two legislative annual cycles of the sixth Parliament and thus allows for a comprehensive analysis with a reasonably large N. Despite being considered a routine period, during its sixth legislative term the European Parliament encountered many external and internal challenges. When the new and returning MEPs took office on 20 July 2004 the deliberation on the European Constitution was one of the main concerns among the actors, institutions and citizens across Europe resulting in its defeat with the negative referenda in France and the Netherlands in spring 2005. The solution finding phase then had actually involved MEPs until the end of 2009 (in the seventh legislative term) when the revised constitutional agreement, the Lisbon Treaty, came into force. Related to this debate was the question of the institutional siege of the European Parliament, with many MEPs preferring the abandonment of Strasbourg in favour of Brussels, as well as a revised distribution of parliamentary seats among the member states. Legislatively the European Parliament took some far-reaching

³¹ In total, 83.85% of the articles selected were news items. Please refer to Appendix A3.1 for further details. Since the thesis is not interested in how EU parliamentary affairs are being evaluated in the news, but investigates the amount of coverage and volume measuring visibility as well as characteristics of news content, the remainder of the thesis will not draw any distinction between the types of newspaper articles. Furthermore, the incorporation of the so-called zero observations (see further below, page 84) would not allow for such a distinction.

decisions concerning REACH³², the services directive³³, and the Port Package II³⁴ involving consequences for the Single Market; issued reports and resolutions in the fields of security regarding the data exchange with the United States and passenger regulations at European airports³⁵, on car emissions in the field of environmental policy³⁶, as well as with respect to liberalisation plans for postal services³⁷ and train transport³⁸; and enquired the affairs around Equitable Life³⁹ and CIA-related actions in Europe⁴⁰ enacting special committees affecting consumer, citizen and human rights. Furthermore, on the political side, MEPs were faced with the threat of the UK Tories to leave the biggest European parliamentary party, the EPP, as well as the actual foundation of the group ‘Identity, Tradition and Sovereignty’ comprising anti-EU and extreme rightist parties in the European Parliament. While these events and developments provide the press with a lot of substance for news stories about EU parliamentary affairs, whether these proceedings translate into news coverage from and about the EP remains to be seen and will be investigated in Chapter 4, the first empirical chapter.

Although the newspaper articles of this sample refer to one parliamentary term only, there was a major turnover of parliamentary and political posts within the EP at the beginning of 2007. The reshuffle concerned the office of the EP President, the party leader of the EPP-ED as well as many committee chairs. Furthermore, the chosen period starts just after the European Parliament launched its new website in September 2005 whose purpose was among others to provide better access to information for journalists as laid out in the previous chapter.

The remaining data are case studies and serve to investigate developments over time and also consider possible before/after effects in the press coverage of the EP and its

³² Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (Regulation (EC) No 1907/2006)

³³ Directive on services in the internal market (Directive 2006/123/EC)

³⁴ Directive of the EU Commission on market access to port services (Port Package II, COM (2004) 0654)

³⁵ E.g. ‘Resolution on SWIFT, the PNR agreement and the transatlantic dialogue on these issues’ (RSP/2007/2503)

³⁶ ‘CARS 21: A Competitive Automotive Regulatory Framework’ (2007/2120(INI))

³⁷ ‘Application of the Postal Directive’ (Directive 97/67/EC as amended by Directive 2002/39/EC) (2005/2086(INI))

³⁸ ‘Railway transport: implementation of the first railway package’ (2006/2213(INI))

³⁹ In May 2007 the MEP Dianna Wallis issued a report on the crisis of the Equitable Life Assurance Society (2006/2199(INI)) following a 15-month enquiry. The society was accused of mismanagement leading to disadvantages for policyholders.

⁴⁰ ‘Alleged use of European countries by the CIA for the transportation and illegal detention of prisoners. Interim report’ (2006/2027(INI))

members by selecting appropriate articles. All told, the data provides a ‘reasonably representative’ sample of the material for content analysis. “Reasonably representative” here is taken to mean a sample which is not skewed or biased by the personal preferences or hunches of the researcher, by the desire to ‘prove’ a particular preconceived point, or by insufficient knowledge of the media and their social context’ (Hansen et al. 1998a: 102-103). Table 3.1 provides an overview of the data.

Table 3.1: Data overview

Newspaper	Country	Affiliation	average circulation ^b	No of correspondents	Correspondents interviewed	Dataset I	Total by Country	Dataset II	Total by Country	Dataset III	Total by Country	Total N
Irish Times	IE	centre-left	116000	1	1	230		99		9		
Irish Independent		centre-right	163000	1/0 ^c	0	138		– ^e		– ^e		
Irish Examiner		centre-right	57217	1	1	– ^e		42		2		
Sunday Business Post		business/financial	53000	0	0	17	385	6 ^f	147	0	11	546
The Guardian	GB	centre-left	382000	2/1 ^c	1	53		39		5		
The Times		centre-right	654000	1.5 ^d	1	47		45		1		
Financial Times		business/financial	140000	4	1	104	204	85	169	11	17	390
Le Monde	FR	centre-left	317000	4/3/2 ^c	1	158		89		19		
Le Figaro		centre-right	328000	2/1.5 ^{cd}	1	50		61		7		
Les Echos		business/financial	140000	1	0	128	336	71	221	23	49	609
De Volkskrant	NL	centre-left	287000	2	0	107		73		4		
Trouw		centre-right ^a	105000	2	1	99		72		10		
NRC Handelsblad		business/financial	241000	2	1	114	320	86	231	12	26	579
Süddeutsche Zeitung	DE	centre-left	433000	3/2 ^c	1	191		111		38		
Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung		centre-right	363000	4	4	301		160		42		
Handelsblatt		business/financial	144000	3	1	149	641	129	400	57	137	1156
Der Standard	AT	centre-left	100000	1	0	118		60		22		
Salzburger Nachrichten		centre-right ^a	84000	1	1	96		75		20		
WirtschaftsBlatt		business/financial	38000	1	1	55	269	17	152	4	46	472
US broadsheets	US	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	– ^e	0	– ^e	0	30	30	30
Total of articles collected					17		2155		1320		316	3791
Non-EP articles							–		–		165	3956
Zero observations added							8692		–		–	8692
Total N												12648

Legend: ^a some would also categorise Trouw as centrist; ^b Source: World Association of Newspapers (2007) and newspapers' own information for advertisers; figures are indicative for the year 2006; ^c The number of correspondents changed over the time of the investigation; ^d 0.5 means that the permanent staff is supported by a freelancer on location; ^e not considered in the particular selection; ^f no data available for 1999

In addition, the first and third dataset have been complemented by a certain amount of zero observations. As regards the first data set, for every day (excluding domestic bank holidays and Sundays) a newspaper has not published anything on the European Parliament that would comply with the selection criteria described below, the date has been entered and article length has been coded as 0. By creating artificial articles, this method enables the researcher to examine the total variation of EP press coverage by accounting for days and periods when no news (according to the selection criteria) from or about the institution, its members or their actions was produced. Similarly, the third dataset has been amended by 165 articles which only refer to SWIFT but not the EP. Problems which arise due to the bias by zero observations will be tackled in each particular analysis in the respective empirical chapters. The SWIFT case also considers publications in US broadsheets to contrast the results given that the US authorities were considerably involved in the negotiations of the international agreement. Here, for the entire period 12 newspaper articles were selected from the International Herald Tribune, and each six for the New York Times and The Washington Post. Chapter 6 will elaborate more on the use of the precise data.

3.2.1.2 Newspaper article selection

The actual selection of newspaper articles has been restricted to certain criteria. The most important one is the self-proclaimed ‘1+2’ rule.⁴¹ It prescribes that an article has to clearly mention the European Parliament or any equivalent (e.g. current MEP(s), committee(s), report(s), etc.) in the title, the highlight section or the first paragraph, plus twice independently in the text, i.e. not in the same sentence. If the first paragraph is short, then the second paragraph also counts towards the ‘1’ part of the rule, unless the title/highlight is long. In case where the newspaper article only consists of a single paragraph, the title and/or the first three sentences should include a reference to the EP as well as the remainder of the text in two instances. These selection criteria premise that the EP, its members and their activities receive a minimum amount of attention. There are, for instance, many more articles on the selection of individual commissioner candidates regarding dataset II. But here, the

⁴¹ Note that the idea for this rule has been instigated by the selection criteria applied by Jasson (2009).

EP does not receive sufficient attention. Some articles do not mention it at all, or only make a brief reference such as ‘the candidate will appear before a European Parliament committee next week’.

The search for most articles, including the ones from the US broadsheets, was conducted via Nexis UK, an online newspaper database. Some newspapers are not represented in that database, or have missing volumes, and have been accessed via their own online archives. This affects the Sunday Business Post, The Irish Examiner and Irish Independent, as well as the German and Austrian newspapers. A detailed list of the keywords used can be found in the appendix.⁴² The minimum word count required for the selection is 100 excluding the title and any subtitles. Further, articles had to be written by the respective newspaper’s *own* correspondents, journalists or editors, which means that all articles distributed by newswires or contributed by experts and other outsiders, have been excluded. The same holds for any articles published in supplements, summaries, outlooks of the week, and interviews with either MEPs or any other person. One exception is that the third dataset on SWIFT also contains interviews with various people, and commentaries of third persons to increase N.⁴³ The ‘1+2’ rule does not apply here either for the same reason. It is important to mention these selection criteria since they imply that ‘there is more out there’. Everything presented in this research does not necessarily stand for the whole coverage of the European Parliament by a particular newspaper. It could be possible, that there are more, other, or more distinct articles about the European Parliament, MEPs and European parties respectively than actually included in this particular analysis. They have not been selected, because they do not comply with the initial selection criteria. Thus, the results to follow have to be interpreted with a pinch of caution.

In order to ensure that unitizing complies with reliability requirements (see Krippendorff 2004: 251ff), two independent coders were recruited to sample newspaper articles consistent with the selection criteria. Coders were recruited according to language skills and are recent postgraduates of communication science. They were given detailed instructions and had to select relevant articles from the downloaded raw material for the period between 1 October and 31 December 2006

⁴² Please see appendix A3.2.

⁴³ The respective chapter will elaborate further.

as well as for a pre-selection of dataset II (the hearings for the Barroso II Commission) and the entire period of dataset III. The reliability scores for Krippendorff's α are reported in the appendix and overall range from .65 to 1 (see Appendix 3.3).⁴⁴

3.2.1.3 Newspaper particularities

There are a few implications which have to be accounted for when interpreting the data: firstly, the profile of the Irish Independent is somewhat mixed in a sense that the newspaper provides news which is both informative and fact-oriented and articles which much rather fall into the category of tabloids. That is why this newspaper has been substituted by the Irish Examiner for datasets II and III. Secondly, the here investigated Irish business-focussed newspaper, the Sunday Business Post, is as the name suggests a Sunday newspaper, and thus provides much fewer articles in total than the other sheets in this study. In the case of SWIFT it in fact did not produce any articles at all. However, this might also have something to do with the fact that this broadsheet has no correspondent registered with the EU institutions. However, most calculations of the descriptive and explanatory analyses in the empirical chapters will be based on proportions. In other cases, the possibility of a bias will be discussed. Thus, the underrepresentation of the Irish business press does not threaten the analysis.

Thirdly, for the very same media, as well as for the Irish Examiner and the Austrian business-focussed broadsheet, the WirtschaftsBlatt, only articles which were published online were available for data collection. At this point, the researcher has to trust that the content of both the paper and online version does not differ enormously, relying on the findings of Neuberger et al. (1998) that the news items published online mainly duplicate the news of the respective print version.⁴⁵ Fourthly, the NRC Handelsblad is an evening newspaper. In the analysis to come this is being accounted for by tying independent variables to the respective publication dates. Lastly, the British business-focussed newspaper is, being the Financial Times, a European newspaper and focuses less on pure British politics, although for the

⁴⁴ The calculations are based on the instructions of Hayes (2005).

⁴⁵ Further, d'Haenens et al. (2004) even argue from a recipient perspective that readers of online and print versions of newspaper articles would not consume news in a different way.

analysis here only the London editions have been included (as opposed to the USA, Asia and European editions). Some other newspapers, especially the German ones also have daily editions at the regional level, which have been discarded. Given the variation in newspaper content, the standard errors of the multivariate analysis to come are clustered according to newspaper.

Further, it is important to note that there is variation in numbers at first sight – across country, newspaper and over time, which provides the ground for thorough empirical investigation. Looking at Table 3.1 and especially the main dataset I, the German newspapers issue by far the most articles on EU affairs involving the European Parliament with 642 articles published in the two year period. The Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung tops this amount with a figure of 301 articles to which only the Irish Times comes closest with 230. However, this finding cannot be linked to a greater interest of German broadsheets in EU parliamentary affairs per se. In fact, previous research has also found that these newspapers, and especially the FAZ, publish by far more political stories on EU affairs than others (Kevin 2003: 56; Bijsmans 2011: 131). This of course correlates with the total number of correspondents these newspapers employ in Brussels as shown in Table 3.1.

The Irish, French and Dutch newspapers follow the German ones with a total range of 320 to 385 news items. Solely the broadsheets published in Britain and Austria provide less than 300 articles for that particular period, with The Times publishing the least on the EP (47 articles) of the European dailies. Not only does this first overview alter the allegations of Slaatta (2006) who, as cited above, claims that elite newspapers would not differ much in coverage and content. But, more specifically, it also suggests that the variable of public opinion towards EU membership might have an impact here, as the UK and Austria bear the lowest support levels. A systematic relationship has yet to be verified in the empirical chapters to come. This pattern furthermore looks different for the remaining datasets, which will be investigated in detail in the respective chapters. The cross-country and cross-newspaper bivariate correlations between the numbers of publications of the three datasets are statistically significant and producing at least $r = 0.625$ which underlines the reliability of the newspaper article collection across datasets.⁴⁶ At the same time, the high correlations provide reason to believe that the various newspapers during periods of key events

⁴⁶ See appendix A3.4

raise their coverage proportionally to their day-to-day coverage. It can therefore be assumed that the Germans always publish more than the British, regardless of the occasion. This phenomenon will be subject to further investigation in chapter 6.

3.2.1.4 Coding scheme

Given that ‘content analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication’ (Berelson 1952: 18) the essential purpose of the statistical analysis is to count frequencies by classifying content in numerical terms. The research is as such replicable. All newspaper articles have been coded by hand and captured systematically in a statistical database (SPSS). The unit of analysis is defined by the individual news item. The coding categories have been specified according to the research interests and orientate themselves at the common standards applied in quantitative content analyses (see Hansen 1998a: 106 et seq.). A coding pilot has been applied, and some of the categories and their measurement have been adjusted throughout the course of coding.

All coding was conducted by the author. However, in order to test intercoder reliability (see Krippendorff 2004), 10% of dataset I and each 20% of the remaining datasets were randomly selected from each newspaper sample and coded by three additional, independent coders. These were recruited according to language skills and knowledge of European politics: One coder is a former postgraduate, one a former PhD student and the other one a current PhD student of European affairs. Coders were provided with a detailed codebook⁴⁷ and instructed accordingly. Krippendorff’s α was calculated for all relevant variables producing satisfactory scores (see Appendix A3.5).⁴⁸ Individual values for Krippendorff’s α will be provided in the respective analyses of the empirical chapters.

The main coding categories comprise formal characteristics of the article, such as length, words spent on reporting specifically about the EP within the articles, date of publication, author name, article type, location, and page number; the themes of the articles both in structural (e.g. constituency matters, EP debates or institutional

⁴⁷ The codebook is available from the author upon request.

⁴⁸ The calculations are based on the instructions of Hayes (2005).

disputes) and topical (e.g. the services directive or REACH) terms; variables that respond to the linkage function of Parliament, such as the number and names of MEPs cited, their party affiliation, legislative office and constituency origin provided in the articles; and more specific factors regarding dataset II and III, such as comparisons drawn to the US Congress and focus of the article (in terms of persons and topics). A detailed coding scheme can be found in the appendix.⁴⁹

Other commonly applied categories in media research address the tone in a given news story or editorial comment. These may target the opinions of actors cited, or the stances of the writer towards a person, an institution or an issue (see Hansen 1998a: 114 et seq.). This would have provided further interesting insights into the press coverage of the EP. But due to lack of resources such value dimensions have not been considered.⁵⁰ At the same time, it can be expected that the variation in tone is not significantly large as most articles (83.85%) represent pure news items which are, unlike commentaries, hardly evaluative.⁵¹

The internal validity of the statistical analysis is rather limited due to the restricted ability to causally infer within the data (see Neuman, Just et al. 1992). While qualitative analysis in form of in-depth interview evaluation can iron out this weakness to some extent, as will be explained in the next subsection, explanatory variables gathered from secondary sources will be applied in order to derive causal explanations for the variation in the press coverage about the EP. These factors are oriented at key features of the data, namely publication dates, country and newspaper. They describe newspaper characteristics, news values, public opinion, political contestation over the EU, specifics of national parliamentary traditions and dates related to the domestic political cycle among other, controlling variables. They will be operationalized in the corresponding chapters of investigation.

⁴⁹ See appendix A3.6

⁵⁰ Yet, regarding the smaller two datasets II and III the research investigates the newsmakers' evaluations of the Parliament's role towards the European Commission and during the negotiations of the SWIFT agreement.

⁵¹ See appendix A3.1. Krippendorff's, however, ranges from 0.23 to 1 for the type of article (see Appendix A3.5).

3.2.2 Qualitative approach: interviews with correspondents

The content analysis is of quantitative nature and thus limited to quantifiable explanatory variables. In order to enrich the results with newsmakers' evaluations and explanations especially relevant for testing the hypotheses about the internal factors of news production, interviews with the respective EU press correspondents have been conducted in June 2010 – after the content analysis of the main dataset was completed. The reason for this methodological choice is two-fold: Firstly, Table 3.2 shows that most news items (51.4%) considered in the analysis have actually been written in one or more of the EU capitals, namely Brussels, Strasbourg and Luxembourg.⁵² Only a small amount of articles for which the location was provided (8.1%) has been distributed by staff stationed in domestic cities, or elsewhere abroad from the home office.⁵³

Table 3.2: Location of the articles

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cum. Percent
EU capital(s)	1341	51.4	51.4
Domestic capital or city	159	6.1	57.5
Other city	53	2.0	59.5
No location provided	1055	40.5	100.0
Total	2608	100.0	

Note: N comprises N=2155 of dataset I, N=167 of dataset II and N=286 of dataset III

Secondly, it is plausible to interrogate only the newsmakers responsible for the precise content examined in the broadsheets of this study rather than journalists who work for different media. Put differently, this methodological approach increases the internal validity of the study. Yet, it renders the sample non-random and rather small. Some of the correspondents who contributed to newspaper articles published prior to the interviews in Brussels have been succeeded by colleagues. Nevertheless, the latter follow the editorial line of the same print media, especially since most of them have been working elsewhere for the same broadsheet beforehand (see Table 3.3).

A few relevant studies have incorporated interviews with correspondents in Brussels aiming at several discoveries. Some focus on the constraints the journalists on location receive during the news production process (e.g. de Vreese, 2003; Kevin, 2003; Gleissner and de Vreese, 2005; Statham 2006), others reflect on their abilities

⁵² This category also includes possible collaboration with colleagues in other cities.

⁵³ Note that overall Krippendorff's α ranges from 0.33 to 1 (see Appendix A3.5)

to contribute to a European public sphere (e.g. Gerhards, 1993; Lecheler, 2008) and yet others investigate the newsmakers self-perceived identity in the light of European integration (Siapera 2004). While touching on previous questions such as the work experience on location, the main purpose of this study, however, is to understand why the European Parliament, its members and their actions are reported in a certain way. Thereby the research method falls into the category of elite interviewing whose function it is ‘to provide the political scientist with an insight into the mind-set of the actor/s who have played a role in shaping the society in which we live and an interviewee’s subjective analysis of a particular episode or situation’ (Richards 1996: 200). The Brussels press corps is not only able to explain their own approach to EP news coverage, but at the same time they are an ‘over-informed social group which is aware of every single (political) fact that happens in the EU political world’ (Bainsnée 2002: 110). They see the broader picture of the on-goings in Brussels, can evaluate the implications of political actions and decisions; and importantly, they are capable of reflecting on their own role within the ‘EU political world’. The interviews are therefore expected to embed the results in the broader context of news making in Brussels and the public perceptions of the European Parliament. Their comments have to be interpreted with some caution however, as their expertise and opinion not necessarily translates into news content or tone. Their professional attitude might further differ from personal beliefs.

3.2.2.1 Interviewee sample

As shown in Table 3.1, 17 reporters have been interviewed in total. The interviewee selection accounts for some variation both in terms of the length they have been employed in Brussels by their newspaper at the time of the interview and by means of their professional occupation immediately beforehand. In fact, the work experience of correspondents is particularly relevant for the Brussels news beat and has to be controlled for in the analysis to come in terms of the years spent working as a journalist in the EU capital. Journalists who arrived in the 1990s or even earlier are said to follow a model of ‘institutional journalism’ whereby they act as experts of the EU. The newer ones, on the other hand, have reportedly a much more critical approach towards the EU and the politics going on there by pursuing roles of

‘investigative reporting’ and do not show a ‘reaction of protection towards the institution’ unlike their senior colleagues (Bainsée 2002: 122). The latter ones are not necessarily Eurosceptic but maybe more critical towards EU politics and the European Parliament in general which might be reflected in their evaluations. Similarly, the experience they made prior to their arrival in Brussels during their journalistic career regarding expertise and experience, be that in their home country or as a foreign correspondent elsewhere in the world, supposedly matters too. A journalist who has covered national parliamentary affairs beforehand, for instance, might take a different approach to the EP than somebody who previously reported about foreign affairs from South East Asia.

Table 3.3: Interviewee details

Interviewee	Date of interview	Interview language	Interview length (mins)	Duration in Brussels ^a	Occupation imdt. beforehand
IE-1	22/06/2010	English	42	> 5	Freelancer at home and abroad
IE-2	16/06/2010	English	41	< 1	Home Office
GB-1	15/06/2010	English	38	> 3	Home Office
GB-2	16/06/2010	English	36	> 3	Foreign Correspondent
GB-3	21/06/2010	English	38	> 1	Diff. Newspaper
FR-1	21/06/2010	English	42	> 1	Foreign Correspondent
FR-2	18/06/2010	English	71	> 5	Foreign Correspondent in European country
NL-1	23/06/2010	English	44	> 1	Home Office/ Foreign Correspondent
NL-2	16/06/2010	English	56	> 3	Home Office
DE-1	24/06/2010	German	32	> 5	Home Office/Foreign Affairs
DE-2	21/06/2010	German	47	> 5	Home Office
DE-3	23/06/2010	German	34	> 10	Home Office/ Foreign Correspondent (diff. newspaper)
DE-4	15/06/2010	German	65	> 10	Freelancer in Brussels
DE-5	16/06/2010	German	28	> 5	Home Office
DE-6	14/06/2010	German	25	> 5	Home Office
AT-1	15/06/2010	German	56	> 3	Home Office
AT-2	24/06/2010	German	43	> 5	Other
EP press official	22/06/2010	English	30	n/a	n/a

Legend: ^a categories: < 1 = less than one year; > 1 = more than one year; > 3 = more than three years; > 5 = more than 5 years; > 10 = more than 10 years

Table 3.3 shows that nine out of 17 correspondents of this sample have been in Brussels for more than five years. Two of them even arrived before 2000. The majority furthermore has worked for the same newspaper immediately preceding their arrival in Brussels, in most cases at the home office.

The interviewee selection sought to include at least two different journalistic perspectives per country. One exception is the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung for which all members of the Brussels office have been interrogated. This is firstly due to practicality – all of them were pleased to provide their opinion; and secondly, given the large size of the office compared to other newspaper corporations on location, there is considerable variation among the staff which is not least due to their arrival date in Brussels. Moreover, these journalists all specialised in different areas. Thirdly, the higher number of German interviewees considered here correlates with the larger sample of newspaper articles referring to EU parliamentary affairs compared to the other countries' number of published news items. The analysis to come will account for the over-selection of German correspondents to avoid any bias towards a German perspective.

Most of the interviewees were men (15), and only two female. In addition, one of the directors at the EP Directorate-General for Communication has been asked similar questions in order to understand the other side of the coin. However, these latter findings are not crucial for the analysis, yet helpful to receive a comprehensive picture about the variation in EP news coverage.

3.2.2.2 Interview procedure

The interviews themselves were conducted by the author face-to-face in Brussels, and lasted in between 25 and 71 minutes. All interviews have been held in either German or English (see Table 3.3). The respondents gave their consent to the audio-recording of each meeting and have been promised to remain anonymous in the analysis.⁵⁴ In order to obtain further consent in the aftermath, all of the interviewees have later been provided with conference papers related to the thesis which report some of the findings from the interviews.

⁵⁴ For the purpose of anonymity, in the remainder of the thesis the correspondents are being referred to as IE-1, IE-2, GB-1, etc. The order does not result from table 3.1.

All interviews followed a semi-structured questionnaire to allow both for open answers and some form of standardisation in order to better compare the stances of EU correspondents.⁵⁵ The questionnaire was slightly amended for the conversation with the director at the parliamentary Directorate-General for Communication. Given that the qualitative research was conducted after the main part of the statistical analysis had been completed, the interviews were guided by the researcher's hypotheses. Hypotheses-directed questions serve, following Flick (2009: 157), 'the purpose of making the interviewee's implicit knowledge more explicit'. The general aim here was to gather explanations for the observed phenomena in the news data. Therefore some questions referred to broad findings in the news related to the particular newspaper the interviewee was working for at that time.

All respondents were informed about the research interest in the European Parliament given the complexity of their work experience in Brussels and Strasbourg, but no hypotheses were explicitly disclosed until after the respective conversation.⁵⁶ The main themes covered in the interviews comprise: background information related to their occupation in Brussels and previous career path; the relationship with the home office and the editor; access to information about the EP; assumptions about the readers' interest; work relations to the EP's seat in Strasbourg; the newsworthiness of the EP and its representations in the news; the relationship to individual MEPs and their representation in the news; the representation of political parties and/or party politics inside the EP; the professional opinion about the EP; references to other members of the Brussels press corps or other newspapers; experience and evaluations of the examples of SWIFT and the investiture of the Commission in 2009/10, and where possible in the previous years; assessment of future developments in the press coverage. The sequence of questions posed varied with each individual interview. Rather, the researcher sought to let the respondent develop the conversation by carefully directing the flow of information. An overview of the topics covered in each interview is provided in the appendix (A3.8).

⁵⁵ The interview guide can be found in the appendix (A3.7a and A3.7b).

⁵⁶ Although the researcher sought to follow and apply criteria of objectivity in order to avoid bias in the responses, in some interviews specific prompt questions can ex post be interpreted as leading to certain answers. These have been excluded from the empirical analysis.

3.2.2.3 Analysis of the interview material

One problem, which arises from the analysis of in-depth interviews, is that ‘it is difficult for readers to understand *how* certain materials are chosen over others and *why* certain quotes take precedence over those which never appear’ (Schlesinger et al. 1992: 31). Thematic coding is an appropriate method for analysis, especially since the researcher is interested in the variation across pre-defined groups, i.e. countries (see Flick 2009: 323). This is in line with general standards in qualitative research: ‘The researcher does not search for the exhaustive and mutually exclusive categories of the statistician but, instead, identifies the salient, grounded categories of meaning held by participants in the setting’ (Marshall and Rossman 2010: 215).

Interviews were recorded and transcribed afterwards. All interview transcripts were coded by hand by the researcher.⁵⁷ The interviewee statements were carefully categorised according to the predefined themes mentioned above (see Appendix A3.8). These were further classified as informational, analytical and evaluative comments. Informational statements comprise, for instance, descriptions of the relationship to the home office or the access to information. Analytical comments are used to explain certain phenomena such as the representations of MEPs in the press, while evaluative comments give insight into the newsmakers’ opinion towards the EP, its members and their activities.⁵⁸ These latter comments are especially relevant for the case study of SWIFT and the investiture procedure dealt with in chapter 6. Analytical statements represent a key element of the subsequent chapters 4 and 5, while descriptive comments become particularly applicable in the next, introductory empirical chapter.

In the analysis, the thesis reports ‘representative illustrations’ (Hansen et al. 1998b: 281) of correspondents’ experiences and evaluations of EP press coverage. In order to ensure this representativeness, the author has sought to cross-reference individual statements accounting for cross-country and individual variation and providing a comprehensive analysis. In particular, the author has picked those interviewee quotes which consider both the majority of statements – where appropriate underlined with several citations – as well as opposing opinions, especially those that contradict the

⁵⁷ The interview transcripts can be obtained from the author upon request.

⁵⁸ Note that for the director at the EP Directorate-General for Communication only analytical comments have been selected.

research hypotheses. This becomes most apparent in the British sample, where one journalist (GB-3) had a different approach from his two colleagues to many topics covered in this thesis, which is reflected in the empirical chapters.

3.3 Conclusions

The present chapter has presented the research design of the thesis. It has argued, firstly, that the analysis of articles published in national broadsheets is appropriate. This is due to the fact that these provide political analysis and employ staff in Brussels to cover European news stories. An interest in EU parliamentary affairs can therefore be expected. One can be accused here that the analysis does not account for much variation in media content given the quality newspapers' similarity across countries. Yet, the sample is sufficient enough to determine the crucial news selection criteria, most notably domestic relevance as well as importance and conflict. At the same time, variation in media systems and journalistic cultures is going to be controlled for by the country selection. The countries considered are Ireland, the UK, France, the Netherlands, Germany and Austria. This selection enables the research to determine to what extent the national political cycle, public opinion towards the EU and the salience of the national parliamentary tradition impact on the broadsheet coverage of EU parliamentary affairs given the cross-country variation on these variables.

Albeit a rather small sample, the amount of observations within cases is being increased by the selection of three time periods. The first one refers to a routine period covering two annual legislative cycles of the EP between October 2005 and September 2007; the other two serve to investigate case studies surrounding the investiture of the European Commission in 1999, 2004 and in 2009/10 as well as the SWIFT case, later called SWIFT agreement, in the period between June 2006 and November 2010. By this combination of time periods, the research considers both rather quiet times and highly salient issues. However, it would be also interesting to contrast two different parliaments directly, such as 6th and the 7th term and investigate the steady changes over time which might be affected by the new elections in between the two terms. Further, although the 'Barroso crisis' serves as an example of a salient pan-European event, other developments, such as the 'Greek

bail-out', or the rejection of the Constitution and the Lisbon Treaty respectively by referenda held in France and the Netherlands in 2005 and Ireland in 2008, might have shown a different media approach to EU parliamentary affairs.

Other limitations of the research design concern the media selection due to the restricted amount of resources available to the researcher. A full picture of media coverage of EU parliamentary affairs can only be provided if we also consider tabloids or regional dailies as well as television programmes and content of new media devices. Future research should consider these, especially since citizens would prefer television news over other media content as a source of information about EU affairs. Broadsheets nevertheless provide a link between EU politics and citizens. It was argued above that they serve as opinion leaders in the national context with the potential to impact on other media coverage and content. At the same time, it is rather unlikely that elite journalists would publish news that utterly refutes the views of the general public. To say it with the words of Diez Medrano (2003: 257): elites would use frames that 'would necessarily reflect cultural themes they by and large share with the rest of the population'.

Further, the country selection focuses on Western Europe and established democracies. While this is useful given the small number of countries considered here and the need to limit the pool of other explanatory factors, future research might seek to contrast the findings of this thesis with an analysis in the newer, especially Central and Eastern European member states. Due to lack of resources, the research presented here is unable to test the research hypotheses for different countries and is thus subject to falsifiability. Nevertheless, the research design provides sufficient ground for the thesis to be able to generalise the findings for the precise case selection and methods applied given the account for internal and external validity as well as reliability of the results.

The mixed-methods approach to the study of EP news coverage aims at triangulation of the results and thereby seeks to even out weaknesses of either method. While the quantitative content analysis of 3956 articles provides us with a description of both coverage and content of the particular variation across country, over time and cross-broadsheet, we are also able to determine external effects on broadsheet coverage by multivariate statistical analysis in the empirical chapters to come. Indeed, while being a common method in political communication research the content analysis is

limited to quantitative methods addressing questions of *how much*, *what* and *why* with respect to the press coverage of European parliamentary affairs. Thereby it studies the media's role of a messenger. A qualitative approach would have provided answers about *how* the EP, its members and their activities are being represented (e.g. Bijsmans, 2011) or about *in what way* parliamentary actors contribute to public discourse by claims-making analysis (see Koopmans and Statham 1999). These would have provided further answers to questions about the development of a European parliamentary public sphere, but resources of this research project are limited.

Here, interviews with correspondents allow us to gain further insight into how EU parliamentary affairs are being evaluated by the press. However, the thesis does not conduct interviews with MEPs in order to understand their motivations (or lack thereof) to receive media coverage and/or to be portrayed by the press in a particular way. This at the same time would provide a more comprehensive picture of the supposed reciprocal relationship between newsmakers and Europe's representatives. Such an investigation would exceed the scope of this research. However, the interview with the director from the EP Directorate-General for Communication serves as a control for the European Parliament's perspective onto its press coverage.

The interviews account for the media's role as a commentator. In fact, the quantitative results will be simultaneously discussed with the findings from the interviews. These can not only explain internal motives of the quality press in reporting from the EP, but also clarify explanatory factors related to public opinion and the public salience of the national parliamentary culture – the two external effects the thesis is mostly interested in. It follows that the remainder of the thesis is organised in the following way: Chapter 4 examines the amount of press coverage. Chapter 5 investigates news content. Both chapters, alongside the content analyses, largely draw on the interviews in order to seek explanations for the prevailing variation in the press coverage. Chapter 6 uses the interviews primarily to assess newsmakers' evaluations, although variation in the extent and content of press coverage will also be explained in part by their comments. All empirical chapters are structured in a similar way: the analysis firsts concentrates on broader findings, before it investigates occurring phenomena in more detail.

A last note can be provided as regards the timing of the thesis. By the date of its completion, the Lisbon Treaty has just been in force for two years. Thus, the current press coverage might be different from the previous years covered in this thesis considering the Parliament's more comprehensive powers and politicisation of EU policies. The case study on SWIFT will provide an outlook, however, on the relationship of the press towards the EP in the future.

Chapter 4

The European Parliament's visibility in the press: Newsworthy, yet constrained

Previous research in the field of EU news has underlined the ability of EU news coverage to impact on public awareness levels (de Vreese and Boomgaarden 2006a), electoral behaviour (see Banducci and Semetko 2003; Banducci and Semetko 2004) or public opinion (de Vreese and Boomgaarden 2006b). While it is not the purpose of the thesis to study the effects of media coverage about the EP on public opinion or awareness levels, understanding why the European Parliament receives a certain amount of media attention as well as under what conditions contributes to addressing the question of its democratic legitimacy. At least we would be able to conclude that if there was no coverage of the institution at all the EP is not a newsworthy institution and thus not important in the public eye. Similarly, given that the research rests on broadsheets and therewith opinion leading media, the possibility of stimulating political debates in other media would diminish and thus render public awareness of Europe's central representative body non-existent. A regular coverage of EU parliamentary activities, on the other hand, allows for a thorough investigation of the factors responsible for variation in visibility over time, across countries (and newspapers) in order to understand what makes it a newsworthy institution. At the same time, a steady amount of news about the EP furthers the interest in the examination of patterns in news content.

Hence the present chapter explores the visibility of the European Parliament in the European quality press by investigating patterns in coverage and volume of news referring to the institution, its members and their activities. Thereby it answers parts of the research question by asking: What explains variation across country (and over time) in the extent of press coverage of the European Parliament?⁵⁹ The time of investigation comprises a period between 1 October 2005 and 30 September 2007 within the EP's sixth legislative term – a routine period which has not been severely affected by effects related to the economic crisis, pan-European scandals, European

⁵⁹ While the routine period also allows us to study changes within legislative cycles, Chapter 6 accounts for inter-temporal variation over a longer period of time.

elections or referenda; yet marked with salient decisions taken by and important developments within the European Parliament during its sixth legislative term which provided the European press with many reasons to report about and from the EU institution.⁶⁰

It will be investigated here to what extent EU parliamentary affairs have been covered by the press – and what accounts for variation in their visibility. It has been argued above that there are several factors responsible for the amount of coverage the EP and its members receive. The precise press coverage of parliamentary affairs is likely to be driven by public support levels for EU membership (H3-A) and the interest of readers in parliamentary affairs at a general level expressed by public trust in the national Parliament (H4-A). Given that EU parliamentary affairs are part of broader political stories, it was argued that the issue involved matters. Here, common news selection criteria are likely to apply, most notably the domestic relevance as well as importance and conflict (H1-A), while H2 claims that other, here domestic, events have a negative effect on the amount of media attention EU parliamentary actors receive.

The chapter argues that the precise coverage of parliamentary affairs at the EU level is actually dependent on whether the EP is sitting in plenary session or not. Thereby the press coverage follows the ‘normal’ parliamentary cycle of the EP distributing more news during the winter months than during the summer break. The steady amount of news produced demonstrates that the activities of the EP matter per se for European broadsheets, albeit dependent on several other factors as well. The chapter finds that public opinion is indeed a probable driver. At times and in countries where citizens are more in favour of EU membership, the European Parliament receives more press coverage – a finding which has the potential to underline the EP’s dependence on public evaluations of the EU political system as a whole, without ignoring that the causal relationship could also go into the other direction from the media onto public opinion. Contrary to the initial assumptions however, trust in the national parliament has a negative effect on the attention the European press pays to the European equivalent. While the reason for this phenomenon cannot be fully investigated here, and will be subject to the subsequent chapters, the findings provide room for the assumption that the European Parliament is judged against its

⁶⁰ Please refer to Chapter 3 for the justification of selecting this time period.

counterparts in the national context proposing some form of rivalry going on between the institutions in the public sphere.

The chapter further argues that because EU parliamentary affairs are part of broader political stories, news selection criteria applied to the salience of the issues involved matter for the press coverage. Here, the relevance for the domestic context represents a crucial driver which also becomes apparent in the fact that more news from the EP is being produced in the run up to general elections in the national context. The importance and potential for controversy of EU parliamentary activities have an impact as well, although these are also subject to further circumstances related to the legislative process at the EU level.

The chapter is divided into three main parts. It first provides an overview of patterns in the press coverage the European Parliament receives both at a pan-European level, across and within country, i.e. across different types of broadsheets (4.1.). Here it specifically asks: How much coverage do the European Parliament, its members and their activities receive? Next, the chapter proceeds to investigate the drivers of the variation in the precise press coverage of parliamentary affairs at the EU level in multivariate regression models (4.2). After that, a closer look is paid at what makes EU parliamentary affairs particularly newsworthy by analysing the issues involved in the news coverage (4.3). The conclusions summarise the main findings and present implications for the empirical chapters to follow (4.4).

4.1 Patterns in the extent of press coverage

The patterns in the press coverage can be described in several ways in order to provide clues for the analysis of the variation. The first interest is to examine the net attention EU parliamentary affairs receive during the two-year period. Then, these figures are distinguished by countries and type of newspapers.

4.1.1 Regular coverage at a pan-European level

Figure 4.1 describes the total distribution of articles over the two-year period of investigation – October 2005 to September 2007 (24 months). It shows that the

overall newspaper coverage of the European Parliament seems to follow what can be termed as a ‘normal’ parliamentary period with increasing coverage during the winter months since the EP is, like most national parliaments, most active and productive in the time after the legislative summer break. The accompanying descriptive statistics also reveal that slightly more articles referring to the European Parliament have been published for the first year than for the second year of the investigation with the median of the distribution being 11.28 (if it was 12, there would have been no difference over the years). This is possibly due to the fact that in the winter of 2005/06 the European Parliament was dealing with some influential legislative issues such as the services directive⁶¹, REACH⁶² and the Port Package⁶³ providing reasons for extensive political and societal battles to cover in- and outside the Parliament. European political affairs have often been criticized for being lengthy, complex or irrelevant and thus would not receive regular attention but rather depend on newsworthiness per se (see, for instance, de Vreese 2003; Kevin 2003). That is presumably also why media research most often focuses on particular events and issues such as elections, referenda or specific policy fields. In fact, research has shown that media attention is not linked ‘to regular decision-making processes in the EU’ (Trenz 2008: 306). Figure 4.1, however, demonstrates that there is a steady and predictable supply of news involving EU legislative politics which implies that EU parliamentary affairs are newsworthy and an essential part of EU news coverage. While the results might prompt surprise to some scholars who do not believe that the media regularly cover EU parliamentary affairs (see, for instance, Shephard 1997: 439; Shephard and Scully 2002: 153f), they indeed provide founded reasons for further media research about the day-to-day political business at the EU level.

⁶¹ Directive on services in the internal market (Directive 2006/123/EC)

⁶² Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (Regulation (EC) No 1907/2006)

⁶³ Directive of the EU Commission on market access to port services (Port Package II, COM (2004) 0654)

Figure 4.1: Total distribution of newspaper articles over time

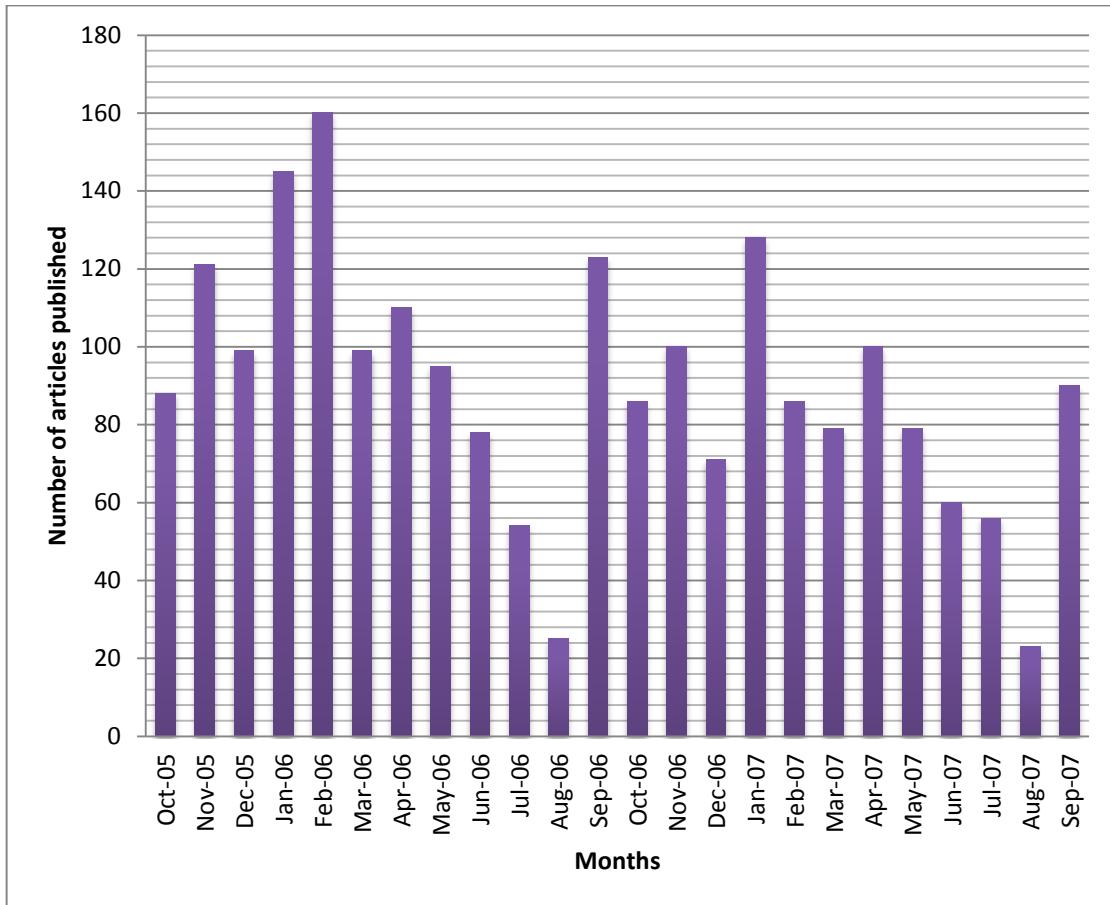


Table 4.1: Descriptive statistics for Figure 4.1

N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Median	Mode
2155	11.28	6.81	12	5

The steady amount of news distributed over the months also allows deriving that the access to sources and information about the EP and its activities is granted to newsmakers in Brussels and Strasbourg. Contrary to some allegations (e.g. Anderson and McLeod, 2004), correspondents stated the European Parliaments and its members are very accessible nowadays. In fact, ‘their communications has improved out of all recognition’ one Irish correspondent, who has followed the parliamentary business in Brussels and Strasbourg for a long time, observed (IE-1). Additionally, ‘they [the Parliament’s administration] have improved their website a lot, and the press people are very responsive’ (GB-3). In line with previous research (see Gleissner and de Vreese 2005; Statham 2006), correspondents stated that the EP would be very transparent, as opposed to the meetings of the Council allowing ‘no transparency’, or the Commission which is ‘very technical’ in its communication

(FR-1). This can be exemplified by the surprise of one correspondent on his arrival in the sixth legislative term:

'In the beginning I found it rather embarrassing how easy it is to get access to MEPs. No other political group is so accessible [...]. Everyone is running around openly, and wants to discuss the issues duly.' (NL-2)

And an Irish newsmaker expressed that ‘even though rapporteurs are very busy, I usually get information’ (IE-1). Furthermore, parliamentary parties would employ certain communication strategies, which provide the journalists with comprehensive information and in turn leads to news coverage as one correspondent ascertained: ‘The [German] CDU uses more resources for communication services than the social democrats do, and that has positive implications [...] Mailing lists are worth it, because we sometimes take the first news that’s available.’ (DE-4). Transparency and access accompanied by supportive communication offices are therefore a positive condition for news coverage about the institution and its members. Hence, one would expect not much variation across country or newspaper given that the circumstances accompanying the availability of information in Brussels and Strasbourg are by and large the same for every correspondent on location.

Yet, the EP’s seat in Strasbourg is considered a double-edged sword: On the one hand, journalists find it very ‘expensive and exhaustive’ (GB-3) to travel to Strasbourg. However, given the new technologies such as Europe by Satellite (EBS) and the EP’s own television coverage (EuroParlTV), a journey to Strasbourg is ‘not always necessary’ (DE-4). In fact, ‘the most important means of communication is the telephone’ (DE-6). On the other hand, some reporters appreciate the time spent there because they can closely follow everything that is going on there and are overwhelmed by the attention they receive by MEPs themselves in Strasbourg. A French correspondent stated in this respect:

'The good thing about Strasbourg is that there are all people together – like in the US Congress, or in the Assemblée Nationale. They [the MEPs] come out after the vote – you can pick and choose, and talk to them, feel the political heat [...]' (FR-1)

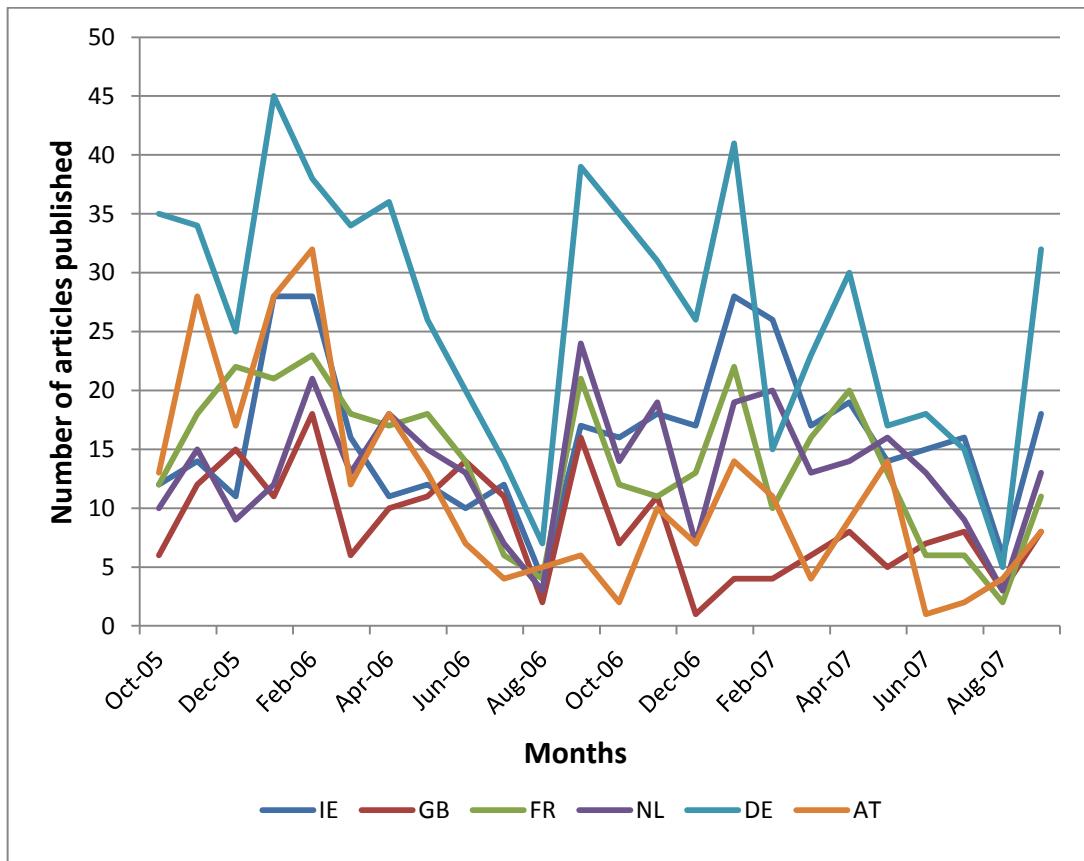
Another one criticises that this would only be a political show, and the ‘real thing’ would take place in the European capital (NL-2). But, back in Brussels the European Parliament would compete with all other kinds of actors, institutions and events going on at the same time. Thus, the European Parliament would ‘bite the dust very often when it is in Brussels’ (DE-4). Some of the correspondents are even obliged to cover themes related to the NATO or Belgian politics, with which the Parliament is ‘competing’ (IE-2) in terms of news importance. This lends support to the conclusions of Baisnée (2003) who asserts that the EP in general receives far less attention by journalists given its limited powers, lengthy decision-making procedures and the lack of popularity of its members compared to the Council or the Commission. This would imply that, contrary to the previous assumption about expected similarities in the press coverage due to equal access to information, newsmakers evaluate the newsworthiness of EU parliamentary affairs on the grounds of other factors. Chapter 2 has hypothesised that these are primarily linked to news values and external aspects related to domestic politics, the interest in EU affairs per se, and the salience of the national parliamentary culture. However, before the effects of these factors are investigated it is useful to enquire whether we actually find variation across and within country.

4.1.2 Variation across and within countries

Figure 4.2 depicts the variation of newspaper articles published across countries within the two-year period of interest. While the same trough points of coverage as above can be identified for the summer months around August, the number of publications in each country throughout the years differs considerably. Together with Table 4.2, one can see that the cross-country variation is biased towards the German sample, in which publications referring to the EP are higher in numbers (641) than those distributed by the other broadsheets in this study. British (204) and Austrian newspapers (269) distribute the least amount of articles in this respect compared to the rest. Although we cannot draw a comparison to the overall amount of EU news, or political and business affairs in general, these figures are as such comparable. All but the Sunday Business Post (SBP), which only comprises 17 articles in the current dataset, are published on a daily basis. And, given that the communications strategies

of the European Parliament are aimed at most media, one would expect a similar amount of newspaper articles across the sheets. If we were to divide the number of total publications (minus the SBP ones) by 17, then we would expect about 125 news items per paper – that makes 250 articles for the Irish sample, and 375 for the rest. However, the observed figures vary considerably from the average expectation and provide founded reasons to investigate the drivers of this variation.

Figure 4.2: Total distribution of newspaper articles over time and by country



This variation is furthermore of another nature when looking at the overall length of newspaper items in Table 4.2.⁶⁴ It turns out that once Huber and Shipan's (2002: 179) verbosity multiplier has been considered (see column 'Revised Mean'), British (449) and Irish articles (396) are longer than their counterparts; and the Austrian ones are shortest (238 words on average).⁶⁵ These particularities already imply that explanations for this variation in numbers and length are not necessarily clear cut: The contrasts in the British and Austrian cases at first glance do not yet allow us to

⁶⁴ Krippendorff's α ranges from 0.9968 to 1 for this variable (see Appendix A3.5).

⁶⁵ The reason for the inclusion of the verbosity multiplier lies in the particularities of each language requiring a different amount of words to deliver the exact same message. For instance, Huber and Shipan (2002: 179) estimate that for every word used in the English language, 1.22 words are used in German to express the same information.

infer that public opinion towards the EU is responsible for the extent of press coverage of the EP in these countries. While support for the EU is low in both member states, British news published in the respective broadsheets are much longer (with about 211 words on average) than their Austrian counterparts.

Table 4.2: Mean article length by country (word count)

Country	N	Actual Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	Verbosity Multiplier	Revised Mean	Std. Deviation
IE	385	395.66	193.58	103	1420	1	395.66	193.58
GB	204	449.00	209.15	102	1271	1	449.00	209.15
FR	336	420.86	240.47	101	1930	1.13	372.45	212.80
NL	320	381.58	200.22	102	1872	1.16	328.95	172.60
DE	641	428.12	211.16	100	1887	1.22	350.92	173.08
AT	269	290.28	115.06	103	734	1.22	237.93	94.31
Total	2155	399.05	206.67	100	1930		354.19	187.78

The overall article length, on the other hand, tells us little about to what extent these news items deal with parliamentary activities at the EU level. In fact, the European legislature is seldom the sole subject of these articles, but the latter refer to the institution and its members when reporting about a certain topic. That means, other institutions and actors at either level, be that domestic or European, are mentioned and cited as well. When considering how much of these articles actually concern the European Parliament, its members, functions, and actions (Table 4.3), then one can see that German and British articles devote far less attention to these than others with each about 57% of the articles covering parliamentary activities at EU level. The total average is 62%. Articles of the French and Austrian broadsheets, on the contrary, contain more about EU parliamentary affairs (68.53% and 66.99%, respectively).⁶⁶ It seems like that these newspapers publish more articles which predominantly deal with the European Parliament, whereas their counterparts in the United Kingdom and Germany produce longer articles that refer more often to other actors and issues as well.

⁶⁶ The amount of attention the EP perceives within articles has been measured as a total count of words of all sentences that contain references to the EP, MEPs, a legislative report, a committee or any equivalent irrespective of whether these are treated as the grammatical subject or object in a given sentence. This figure is then calculated as percentage, relative to the overall article length. For the variable 'EP wordcount' Krippendorff's α ranges from 0.87 to 0.96 (see Appendix A3.5).

Table 4.3: Average share of EP news within articles by country (%)

Country	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
IE	64.64	385	25.42	6.76	100.00
GB	57.60	204	26.56	7.45	100.00
FR	68.53	336	26.83	8.38	100.00
NL	60.85	320	25.90	6.36	100.00
DE	57.79	641	27.26	5.67	100.00
AT	66.99	269	25.91	11.46	100.00
Total	62.27	2155	26.75	5.67	100.00

The distribution of EP news within articles looks slightly different for the type of newspaper publishing such items (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.4: Average share of EP news within articles by newspaper affiliation (%)

NP affiliation	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
centre-left	64.53	857	26.62	7.45	100
centre-right	63.69	731	26.57	5.67	100
financial/business	57.04	567	26.52	6.36	100
Total	62.27	2155	26.75	5.67	100

The financial newspapers have on average about six to seven percentage points less on EU parliamentary affairs in their news. The chapter will analyse this phenomenon more closely when assessing the newsworthiness of EU parliamentary affairs in section 4.3. For now, the chapter investigates the factors responsible for the variation across country and over time. However, variation by newspaper type will be controlled for.

4.2 Explaining variation in the press coverage

Although it is not assessed here how the EP's press coverage relates to the coverage of other institutions or political actors in terms of news prominence at either level – be that European or domestic, we can account for the instances in which the European Parliament has not received any coverage. This helps us to address the question of the drivers of its coverage by the press. For that, the quantitative data sample has been extended by so-called 'zero observations'. Precisely, for every day a

newspaper has not published anything on the European Parliament that would have been captured by the initial selection criteria, article length and the respective share of news dealing with EU parliamentary activities have been coded as zero.⁶⁷ This increases the sample size to a total N of 10847 over the two-year period.

The dependent variable describes the percentage of news within articles referring to EU parliamentary affairs as seen in Tables 4.3 and 4.4. Thereby all other news references have been omitted from the analysis. That is to say that the multivariate analysis only tests effects on the precise coverage of parliamentary affairs at the EU level as opposed to effects on the complete stories in which these news are embedded. The newsworthiness of the stories will be subject to the next section (4.3). Methodologically, the dependent variable captures the extent of EP news coverage both within newspaper as well as across the 18 broadsheets included in this sample.⁶⁸

Consequently, the prospective regression analysis does not rely on Ordinary Least Square (OLS) models but uses a Tobit model instead, which was invented by Tobin (1958). That way one can account for biased variation caused by the large proportion of zero observations in the otherwise continuous dependent variable. This model, however, prevents us from including country fixed-effects as robustness checks since the requirement of a normal distribution of the dependent variables is not met. While the effects are probably automatically random if we assume that the selected characteristics do not skew the models, the inclusion of country dummies leads to multicollinearity since a lot of variation can be found across country – especially manifest in the variable of *EB support for EU* (see below). Furthermore, Plümper et al. (2005: 330) argue that ‘the inclusion of unit dummies makes it impossible to estimate the effect of time invariant exogenous variables (Wooldridge 2002)’. To circumvent these problems the models are re-estimated separately with standard errors clustered by broadsheet (BS) and country. This allows us to account for the nested structure of the data. In addition, a jack-knife test is conducted, whereby the main model is run again separately by excluding each country one by one. All main effects should remain significant in this case; if not, a particular (outlier) country

⁶⁷ Sundays and bank holidays have been accounted for as regards the daily press. Obviously, far fewer ‘zero observations’ have been recorded for the SBP. At the same time, this consideration relativizes the weight of this particular newspaper in the analysis to come. See Appendix A4.1 for the number of observations per country.

⁶⁸ See Appendix A4.1 for the descriptive statistics of the dependent variable.

sample may bias the results. The Tobit coefficients can be interpreted in a similar way to those of OLS models.⁶⁹

Before the models are being presented, the next section briefly describes the operationalization of the variables.

4.2.1 Operationalization of the independent variables

The thesis argues that there are two main explanatory factors which impact on the precise news coverage of parliamentary affairs at the EU level. It is on the one hand contended that, given the public unawareness of the EU political system and therein the role of the European Parliament and its members, public support for EU membership in general probably determines the extent to which the audience is interested in EU affairs, and parliamentary stories in particular, which eventually impacts on the coverage of EP activities. In short, the higher the public support, the greater the coverage as laid out by Hypothesis H3-A. The second part of the argument highlights the importance of the national parliamentary tradition. It is assumed that trust levels towards the national parliament predict the extent to which the audience is interested in reading about Parliament in general. Put differently, higher levels of trust in the national equivalent are associated with a greater coverage of EU parliamentary affairs (Hypothesis H4-A). In order to test these effects, the models include two variables from the Eurobarometer. For the period between October 2005 and September 2007, five bi-annual surveys have been considered (EB 64 – EB 68).⁷⁰

The first independent variable measures the support levels for EU membership (*EB support for EU*). The precise Eurobarometer question asks ‘Generally speaking, do you think that (OUR COUNTRY’S) membership of the European Union is/would be...?’ and provides the following options to answer: ‘a good thing’, ‘a bad thing’, ‘neither good nor bad’. For the analysis to come, only the percentage falling into the first response category has been considered. It has also been shown above that the

⁶⁹ An example for the application of a Tobit model in political science can be seen in Bouvet and Dall’Erba (2010).

⁷⁰ The fieldwork for EB68 started in September 2007. Thus, the respective results are applicable for the last month of the investigation.

variation of this public opinion variable is greater across country than over time, with the Netherlands and Ireland expressing most appreciation for EU membership, and citizens of Austria and the United Kingdom lowest levels of support whereas positive attitudes in France and Germany represent average levels of support across the EU25/27 member states. While limited variation over time means the variable conforms to a country dummy, it is one of the best measures of public evaluation towards the EU to date given that it has been gathered by Eurobarometer since 1973 and hence also been widely used in public opinion research. Further, it has been applied in previous research, namely in the study conducted by Peter and de Vreese (2004) testing its effect on the amount of television coverage of EU affairs.

In order to assess whether the alternative hypothesis about the likelihood of levels of party political contestation over European integration (see Schuck et al. 2011) to impact on the amount of attention EU parliamentary affairs holds, the models include the weighed party system dispersion employed by Schuck et al. (2011) who themselves rely on Alvarez and Nagler (2004):

$$WPSD = \sqrt{\sum_{j=1} VS_{jk} (P_{jk} - \overline{P}_k)^2}$$

Where VS_{jk} is the vote share of party j in country k . P_{jk} is the position of party j in country k on the question of European integration, while \overline{P}_k is the weighed mean of all party positions in country k . Information for party attitudes towards the EU has been gathered from the Chapel Hill expert survey of 2002 and 2006 (Hooghe et al. 2010) where the overall orientation of the party leadership towards European integration in 2010 ranges from 1 'strongly opposed' to 7 'strongly in favour'. Since this measure is weighted by vote share, the independent variable is adapted after each domestic legislative election for the period under study.

The second main variable of interest describes the public trust levels for the national parliament in a given country (*EB trust in NP*). Here, the Eurobarometer question is phrased: 'I would like to ask you a question about how much trust you have in certain institutions. For each of the following institutions, please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it.' The respective measure in the models to come includes the percentage of people who 'tend to trust' their national parliament. This variable varies both over time and across country, as seen in the previous chapter.

Although taken from the same survey, the extent to which these two variables correlate is not too strong.⁷¹

In order to test whether the news coverage of EU parliamentary affairs is affected by any of the other two explanatory factors – news selection criteria (H1-A) and the concurrence with domestic politics (H2), the Tobit models are complemented by further variables. While it was argued above that news covering EU parliamentary affairs are selected on the issue, we can test whether the EP's activities matters for the press coverage. The variable which responds to the newsworthiness of the European Parliament measures whether the EP was sitting in plenary session in Strasbourg (or, in rare cases, in Brussels) on or the day before the respective publication dates of newspaper articles and zero-observation days.⁷² It has been coded as a dummy variable. Although the variable does not tell us what was going on in Parliament at a given day in order to identify the respective news values, i.e. whether the plenary debates express the parliamentary actors' importance by a decisive vote, or a heated discussion (conflict) over an issue relevant for the domestic context involving prominent actors, the likelihood that (one of) these news selection criteria occur is captured by this variable (*EP sitting*). Thereby it reflects the newsworthiness of EU parliamentary activities at a general level. If the institution and its members are considered newsworthy enough by the newsmakers for whichever news selection criterion, then this crude measure should have a positive and significant effect on the amount of coverage the former receive in the quality press (H1-A), controlling for the other variables.

A similar variable, namely *NP sitting*, which is coded and measured in the exact same way as *EP sitting* for each national parliament, investigates the effect of the national political cycle. Though it does not serve as a measure of *highly* salient events, one can assume that at times the national parliament is sitting it is likely to take political and legislative decisions which affect politics in the domestic context. If we find a significant and negative effect of this variable, then we would conclude

⁷¹ The Pearson correlation coefficient is 0.2495 with an associated p-value of $p < 0.000$ (see Appendix A4.3).

⁷² Note that the SBP is a special case as a Sunday newspaper. No parliamentary sessions could be linked to the publication dates. The effect of this independent variable is thus expected to be slightly weaker in the general model, although the number of observations is considerably lower than for the other newspapers (see Table 3.1). The particularities of the NRC as an evening newspaper are not affected. Note also, that all remaining date variables are coded accordingly.

that the salience of domestic politics bias the press coverage of EU parliamentary affairs similar to what has been hypothesised in H2 by assuming that domestic politics are deemed more newsworthy than EU parliamentary affairs. *NP sitting* and *EP sitting* are indeed significantly correlated with each other, but this correlation does not exceed 0.219 given the particularities of parliamentary activity at each national level.⁷³

Further, another dummy variable (*EU Presidency*) measures whether a respective country was holding the EU presidency at a time. It serves both as a controlling variable and as an estimate for the news value of proximity/domestic relevance. In fact a higher coverage can be expected in a country that holds the EU Presidency at a given time (cf. Boomgaarden, Vliegenthart et al. 2010), because the governmental actors are better recognisable for the audience and the issues supposedly more relevant due to the agenda-setting power of the European Council Presidency. Chancellor Schüssel from Austria was the Head of the Council between July and December 2006, directly preceded by Chancellor Merkel of Germany until 30 June 2007. The British government was responsible for the second half of 2005, but the data only include articles published after 1 September that year.

In addition, the consideration of the *GDP growth rate* per capita in the models to come serves as a control of the economic state in each country included in this analysis, as there might be some unexpected effects which potentially affect news coverage.⁷⁴ Its measure is changing quarterly compared to the previous one.⁷⁵

The appendix provides the correlations for all independent variables included in the models.⁷⁶ The remaining controlling variables comprise the circulation numbers in 10000s of each broadsheet which represent an estimate for 2006 (*BS circulation (10000s)*), as well as the type of newspaper coded as a dummy of which the categories of left-leaning political broadsheets (*Centre left BS*), and business or

⁷³ The Person correlation coefficient is 0.219 with an associated p-value of $p < 0.000$ (see Appendix A4.3).

⁷⁴ Similarly, Boomgaarden et al. (2010: 510) in their analysis of EU news visibility include the exchange rate between the Dollar and the Euro in order to control for drastic changes in the economy able to have an effect on news coverage.

⁷⁵ Data obtained from *OECD.StatExtracts*, website:

<http://stats.oecd.org/index.aspx?queryid=350> (last accessed on 5 December 2011)

⁷⁶ See Appendix A4.2 for the descriptive statistics and A4.3 for the correlations of the independent variables.

financial newspapers (*Business BS*) are included.⁷⁷ The variable *BS No of staff* controls for the number of correspondents a newspaper employs in Brussels. Here, it is expected the staff number contributes positively to the press coverage of the EP – with higher numbers of staff distributing more news (see also Brüggemann and Kleinen von Königslöw 2007: 6-7).

The media system is being controlled for by including two dummies (*MS liberal* and *MS polarised-pluralist*, reference category: *MS democratic-corporatist*) once in the general model. Time dummies have not been included in any of the models to come, precisely because these are responsible for multicollinearity as most of the previous variables are also time dependent, either measured bi-annually or daily. Instead, the variable *EP sitting* captures time effects as the variation over time follows the legislative cycle (see Figure 4.1).

4.2.2 Findings

Table 4.5 shows the Tobit regression models, testing whether the independent variables presented above have a statistically significant effect on the amount of news dealing with EU parliamentary affairs. Models 1A and 1B represent the basic model, while models 2A to 3B add additional and controlling effects. Models 4A and 4B control for the media system. Models 5A and 5B represent a separate test of the interaction between *EB trust in NP* and *EB support for EU* and will be elaborated later. The remaining models 6A to 7B include the effect of the political contestation variable(s). The models in Table 4.6 include the jack-knife tests, i.e. in each model a different country sample has been removed from the analysis.

First and foremost, the European Parliament itself is driving its own news coverage by meeting in plenary sessions. When the Parliament gathers in Strasbourg, the visibility of EU parliamentary activities increases by about 59.42 to 62.41%. This shows that plenary debates and votes by parliamentary members matter for the press coverage of EU parliamentary affairs – and that despite accusations of plenary sessions lacking heated discussions and focussing on technical details as opposed to political issues (see Baisnée 2003). Liebert (2007: 266) even contends that ‘EP

⁷⁷ For the sources of circulation figures and the categorisation of newspapers please refer to the previous chapter.

plenary debates are hardly ever transmitted by the national mass media'. But the findings here suggest the opposite to be the case. Although we are unable to say here what it is about the Strasbourg meetings that makes these newsworthy enough to report about them, we can be certain that they have a positive impact on the press coverage. This resonates with the findings of Boomgaarden et al. (2010), who find that EP plenary sessions trigger EU news coverage. While Shepard (1997: 439) postulates that 'media coverage [will] tend to focus on the limited days when there is voting' in the European Parliament, the next section will investigate which particular news selection criteria are crucial for EU parliamentary affairs to receive attention by the Brussels press corps. For now, the external effects of public stances towards the EU, trust in the national parliament, and the domestic political cycle produce very interesting results worth discussing.

Table 4.5: Tobit models, predicting variation in the volume of news referring to EU parliamentary affairs

	Model 1A	Model 1B	Model 2A	Model 2B	Model 3A	Model 3B	Model 4A	Model 4B	Model 5A	Model 5B	Model 6A	Model 6B	Model 7A	Model 7B
EB support for EU	.93*** (.33)	.93** (.42)	.83*** (.25)	.83** (.35)	.91*** (.23)	.91*** (.31)	.92*** (.21)	.92*** (.26)	3.21** (1.37)	3.21** (1.39)				
EB trust in NP	-1.07*** (.38)	-1.07*** (.38)	-1.05*** (.35)	-1.05*** (.17)	-1.12*** (.34)	-1.12*** (.10)	-1.92*** (.42)	-1.92*** (.33)	1.97 (1.83)	1.97 (1.80)				
EP sitting	62.41*** (3.63)	62.41*** (4.32)	61.19*** (3.21)	61.19*** (3.91)	60.67*** (2.99)	60.67*** (3.68)	59.42*** (3.15)	59.42*** (4.01)	60.18*** (3.08)	60.18*** (3.85)	59.58*** (2.98)	59.58*** (3.69)	59.59*** (3.02)	59.59*** (3.67)
NP sitting	5.58 (3.98)	5.58 (5.59)	6.78* (3.84)	6.78 (4.86)	6.36 (3.87)	6.36 (5.06)	7.94** (3.45)	7.94** (3.73)	8.87*** (3.07)	8.87* (4.59)	12.07*** (3.38)	12.07*** (3.50)	11.99*** (3.30)	11.99*** (3.86)
BS No of staff		11.63** (5.55)	11.63** (4.63)	11.29** (5.16)	11.29*** (4.25)	7.72** (3.87)	7.72*** (2.41)	12.74** (4.99)	12.74*** (3.96)	5.32 (4.14)	5.32 (3.88)	5.43 (3.78)	5.43 (3.66)	
Centre left BS		7.06 (14.65)	7.06 (10.40)	7.3 (13.24)	7.3 (10.43)	9.4 (10.82)	9.4 (11.02)	7.41 (10.92)	7.41 (9.58)	9.47 (12.78)	9.47 (11.87)	9.42 (12.78)	9.42 (11.89)	
Business BS		-17.81 (14.34)	-17.81 (17.76)	-16.61 (13.66)	-16.61 (18.04)	-16.75 (12.46)	-16.75 (17.84)	-10.42 (11.67)	-10.42 (16.31)	-21.04 (13.00)	-21.04 (17.53)	-20.98 (12.94)	-20.98 (17.25)	
BS circulation (10000s)		-.00*** (.00)	-.00*** (.00)	-.00*** (.00)	-.00*** (.00)	-.00*** (.00)	-.00*** (.00)	-.00** (.00)	-.00** (.00)	-.00* (.00)	-.00*** (.00)	-.00*** (.00)	-.00*** (.00)	
EU Presidency			25.39*** (8.76)	25.39** (12.23)	19.14** (8.29)	19.14 (13.20)	20.01** (9.12)	20.01 (14.64)	20.01 (6.88)	7.76 (6.70)	7.76 (6.73)	7.79 (6.53)	7.79 (6.53)	
GDP growth rate				5.30*** (1.47)	5.30*** (1.83)	4.50*** (1.11)	4.50*** (1.54)	4.58*** (1.27)	4.58*** (1.66)	7.79*** (1.71)	7.79*** (2.33)	7.79*** (1.71)	7.79*** (2.33)	
MS liberal					-25.88*** (8.4)	-25.88*** (8.98)								
MS polarized-pluralist						-27.95** (14.24)	-27.95*** (7.23)							
Interaction of EB trust in NP & EB support for EU								-.05* (.03)	-.05* (.03)					
Political Contestation										-5.37*** (1.10)	-5.37*** (.55)	-4.65 (6.36)	-4.65 (4.74)	
Squared Political Contestation												-.03 (.25)	-.03 (.21)	
SE clustered by	BS	Country	BS	Country	BS	Country	BS	Country	BS	Country	BS	Country	BS	Country
Constant	-102.97*** (26.71)	-102.97*** (37.93)	-98.30*** (28.03)	-98.30*** (27.84)	-106.99*** (26.47)	-106.99*** (27.03)	-52.35* (3.44)	-52.35* (93.79)	-256.48*** (88.81)	-256.48*** (27.20)	-25.79 (26.62)	-25.79 (41.97)	-30.03 (17.20)	
Sigma Constant	91.35*** (4.56)	91.35*** (7.33)	90.17*** (4.56)	90.17*** (7.34)	89.73*** (4.48)	89.73*** (7.15)	89.32*** (4.54)	89.32*** (7.18)	89.49*** (4.57)	89.49*** (7.28)	89.63*** (4.43)	89.63*** (7.00)	89.63*** (4.43)	89.63*** (7.00)
N	10847	10847	10847	10847	10847	10847	10847	10847	10847	10847	10847	10847	10847	10847
Pseudo R Squared	.0253	.0253	.0297	.0297	.0314	.0314	.0334	.0334	.0324	.0324	.0322	.0322	.0322	.0322

Legend: * p<.1; ** p<.05; *** p<.01; adjusted standard errors in brackets; dependent variable: amount of news dealing with EU parliamentary affairs (%)

Table 4.6: Tobit models, predicting variation in the volume of news referring to EU parliamentary affairs (Jack-knife tests)

	Model 1A	Model 1B	Model 2A	Model 2B	Model 3A	Model 3B	Model 4A	Model 4B	Model 5A	Model 5B	Model 6A	Model 6B
EB support for EU	.76** (.38)	.76 (.52)	.54* (.28)	.54 (.35)	.83*** (.25)	.83** (.36)	1.00*** (.27)	1.00*** (.35)	.92*** (.21)	.92*** (.11)	2.23*** (.36)	2.23*** (.23)
EB trust in NP	-.94* (.55)	-.94*** (.31)	-1.16*** (.32)	-1.16*** (.26)	-1.12*** (.40)	-1.12*** (.23)	-.96* (.53)	-.96** (.39)	-1.14*** (.32)	-1.14*** (.22)	-1.95*** (.28)	-1.95*** (.10)
EP sitting	60.82*** (3.69)	60.82*** (4.75)	59.48*** (3.19)	59.48*** (3.86)	60.61*** (3.67)	60.61*** (4.87)	58.25*** (3.19)	58.25*** (3.14)	63.66*** (2.79)	63.66*** (2.30)	58.10*** (2.92)	58.10*** (4.35)
NP sitting	8.06* (4.43)	8.06 (6.25)	10.98*** (3.89)	10.98** (5.05)	3.64 (4.13)	3.64 (5.44)	3.98 (3.36)	3.98 (4.44)	10.24** (5.06)	10.24 (6.82)	10.41*** (3.03)	10.41** (4.47)
BS No of staff	12.92* (6.77)	12.92*** (4.68)	10.38 (7.81)	10.38*** (2.75)	13.89*** (4.74)	13.89*** (4.70)	12.76** (4.99)	12.76*** (3.96)	2.56 (3.78)	2.56 (2.11)	16.15*** (4.92)	16.15*** (3.93)
Centre left BS	3.46 (15.46)	3.46 (11.38)	10.25 (14.35)	10.25 (12.08)	3.77 (10.17)	3.77 (7.68)	3.66 (13.79)	3.66 (10.71)	22.05** (9.02)	22.05** (11.13)	6.06 (10.95)	6.06 (10.36)
Business BS	-16.57 (15.67)	-16.57 (21.39)	-11.38 (10.97)	-11.38 (15.77)	-28.90** (13.52)	-28.9 (18.25)	-26.41* (15.79)	-26.41 (21.80)	-.19 (10.05)	-.19 (14.12)	5.57 (12.13)	5.57 (16.23)
BS circulation (10000s)	-.00** (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	-.00*** (.00)	-.00*** (.00)	-.00*** (.00)	-.00*** (.00)	-.00*** (.00)	-.00*** (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)
EU Presidency	26.91*** (8.68)	26.91** (11.65)	24.90** (10.52)	24.90 (15.99)	21.54** (8.70)	21.54 (14.11)	22.84*** (8.76)	22.84 (14.09)	31.81*** (7.02)	31.81*** (7.85)	6.95 (8.00)	6.95 (10.24)
GDP growth rate	13.22** (5.19)	13.22*** (3.59)	5.81*** (1.72)	5.81** (2.54)	4.69*** (.95)	4.69*** (1.34)	4.56*** (1.27)	4.56*** (1.18)	4.34*** (.71)	4.34*** (.78)	3.81*** (1.03)	3.81*** (1.05)
Country excluded	IE	IE	GB	GB	FR	FR	NL	NL	DE	DE	AT	AT
SE clustered by	Newspaper	Country	Newspaper	Country	Newspaper	Country	Newspaper	Country	Newspaper	Country	Newspaper	Country
Constant	-121.30*** (36.79)	-121.30*** (28.13)	-87.05*** (31.54)	-87.05*** (33.10)	-96.26*** (29.47)	-96.26*** (36.26)	-107.25** (43.95)	-107.25** (42.35)	-109.66*** (23.99)	-109.66*** (20.53)	-189.17*** (34.26)	-189.17*** (17.61)
Sigma Constant	91.15*** (5.18)	91.15*** (9.11)	87.77*** (4.71)	87.77*** (7.58)	86.67*** (4.88)	86.67*** (7.77)	88.92*** (5.27)	88.92*** (8.56)	96.48*** (4.32)	96.48*** (4.91)	86.60*** (4.69)	86.60*** (7.51)
N	9447	9447	8990	8990	8958	8958	8961	8961	8885	8885	8994	8994
Pseudo R Squared	.0311	.0311	.0306	.0306	.0346	.0346	.0322	.0322	.0322	.0322	.0339	.0339

Legend: * p<.1; ** p<.05; *** p<.01; adjusted standard errors in brackets; dependent variable: amount of news dealing with EU parliamentary affairs (%)

4.2.2.1. The response of the press coverage to the EU mood

Turning to the effects of public opinion, the results show that support for EU membership as hypothesised above has a significant and positive relation to the amount of press coverage EU parliamentary activities receive. While the causal direction of the relationship between both variables is not entirely clear, the coefficient implies that every percentage point increase in support levels is associated with an increase of 0.83 to 3.21 per cent more news about the European Parliament. Compared to the previous factor of plenary debates, this effect on press coverage is rather small, yet remains significant and positive throughout the models. The results lend support to Hypothesis H3-A. Thereby, we can assume that given that citizens have difficulties disentangling political institutions and actors' responsibilities at the EU level, the European Parliament is seen as part of the whole and evaluated accordingly. This builds on Gabel's (2003) findings in that the EU citizens' trust towards the EP can be explained by general public support for EU membership. Here, we can derive a similar relationship between the extent to which citizens approve of the whole, i.e. one country's EU membership, and the degree of interest they express in EU parliamentary affairs. The more pro-European the readership, the more open they are to receiving news about their EU representative body. Eventually, newsmakers supposedly respond to this interest by devoting greater attention to the role of the latter in EU politics and policy making. One correspondent stated in this respect: 'our concept is that we do what is important in the public debate' (DE-5). The results, however, should be interpreted with caution as following previous research (e.g. de Vreese and Boomgaarden 2006b) EP news coverage could also lead to a change in public opinion towards the EU.

These results could nevertheless also imply that at times when and in countries where the public mood is more open to news about the EU, editors at each home office who oversee their correspondent's news production in Brussels and Strasbourg provide the latter with more autonomy. Previous research has underlined the central role of the editor at the home office in the selection of EU news (e.g. Morgan 1995; de Vreese 2003; Gleissner and de Vreese 2005). The interviews with the respective journalists reveal that especially the ones writing for the large broadsheets are granted a lot of space, in some cases given 'special pages' (NL-2) by their editor back home for their 'daily coverage' from the EU (DE-3) with 'actually few

guidelines' (DE-2). Another Dutch correspondent stated to 'have the feeling that we are quite free to do what we like' (NL-1). The French and Irish reporters of this sample feel similar relying on the freedom to propose and write about the issues they deem important, although especially the latter are reportedly sometimes restricted to space and importance of other news. This finding also corresponds to Lecheler's analysis of the relations of EU correspondents from the new member states to their editors (2008: 456). An Austrian correspondent also mentioned that some stories are difficult to sell to the editor, for similar reasons. But headlines such as 'Brussels against Austria' would always work (AT-2). This implies a negative image of the EU, but can also be affiliated with the size of Austria and the corresponding impact in Brussels negotiations since other countries, such as France, Germany and the UK are considered much more influential at the EU level.

The effect of the alternative hypothesis, party political contestation over EU integration, is negative in models 6A and 6B (Table 4.5). Schuck et al. (2011: 49) report a similar finding for the levels of party polarization on news coverage of the 2009 EU elections. Only when they include the squared effect of dispersion in the model does the impact change. In particular, they find a curvilinear relationship: when party polarization over European integration is considerably high, visibility of EU news increases significantly. A squared term has been entered into the model as well (see Models 7A and 7B) but both the simple and squared effects remain negative, although the coefficients do not comply with standard thresholds of statistical significance. These findings do not provide sufficient support for the alternative hypothesis that higher party political contestation over the EU leads to higher news coverage of EU parliamentary affairs. While a reciprocal effect must not be ruled in this case either, it nonetheless demonstrates that public opinion and party stances have different effects onto the broadsheet coverage of the EP and its members. On the other hand, the absence of any positive effect is surprising as domestic party contestation extends towards the European level via party channels. One prominent example is the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) which is not represented in the House of Commons but in the EP while at the same time making a lot of noise at the domestic level.

EU coverage is also linked to the type of media system at home. Although this controlling variable does not interfere with the main independent variables in Models

4A and 4B, its effects are statistically significant. The results demonstrate that articles published in the democratic-corporatist media systems of this sample, i.e. the Netherlands, Germany and Austria, are on average 27.95% longer than those produced for the French audience, and 25.88% longer than those distributed in the liberal media systems of Ireland and the UK. A British correspondent underlined why ‘differences in media culture’ are responsible for variation in EP press coverage:

'German and French newspapers are much more deferential towards national politics. They are much more dutiful. The story might not be very interesting, but [they say] we really feel we should be reporting this.' (GB-2)

Consequently, if we assume that a fact-oriented and neutral approach to politics produces less words, the differentiation between the Anglo-American and the Continental journalism (see Köcher 1986; Mancini 2005) would explain why news about EU parliamentary affairs in the Irish and British press are significantly shorter than the rest.

Nevertheless, the British press corps represents the best example for the impact of public opinion towards the EU and news coverage. For them the editor has a more central role, especially since ‘the sense is that a lot of people in the UK are hostile to Europe, just not interested’ (GB-3) which lends evidence to allegations of Anderson and Weymouth (1999) and Gavin (2003) about the relationship between negative attitudes towards the EU and a strict media management in London. One journalist admitted that he would not have ‘much time for the EP’ (GB-2), while another one said that it would be sometimes difficult to talk the editor into a particular story especially when MEPs are involved: ‘you can see their eyes rolling over the phone, trying to convince them’ (GB-3). This finding corresponds to Morgan’s observation of the British press corps in Brussels stating that ‘reporters write and rewrite to suit changing London demands’ with only few of them able to convince their editors of their stories (1995: 324). In a sense, and taken together with the statements of the other correspondents, the extent to which editors constrain their staff in Brussels seems to correlate with the weight of the domestic relevance since not EU correspondents but home editors decide about what is being reported about the EP. Whether this assumption holds with regards to news content will be investigated in more detail in the subsequent analysis.

Furthermore, despite high circulation figures British newspapers employ only a small number of staff in Brussels which can be linked to the lack of interest in EU affairs. In contrast, German broadsheets in this sample are much better represented in the EU capitals which coincides with greater public support levels for EU membership. This large difference in staff numbers supposedly also explains why the positive impact of the number of staff is not significant anymore in Table 4.6 once the country samples of the UK (Model 2A) and Germany (Models 5A and 5B) are removed.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, some correspondents in Brussels claimed that ‘the fewer journalists you have here, the less comprehensive the news reporting’ (DE-3). One has to be cautious however, not to link the number of staff employed in the EU capital per se to the interests of the home office in Brussels affairs. A French news producer explained why:

'After the NO to the constitution, at that time I feared that it was going to be more difficult because French readers would turn very Eurosceptical and so on, and also my paper. But it did not happen, my paper is very in favour of European integration – the interest is very high still. The size of the office [in Brussels] is only linked to the financial difficulties rather than the interest of the paper. '(FR-2)

The financial crisis is therefore a problem for the press coverage of EU affairs and parliamentary activities therein. Table 4.5 shows that the GDP growth rate bears a positive and significant effect on the press coverage of the EP throughout the models. Put differently, in wealthier times more news about EU parliamentary affairs is being published. This is not necessarily linked to the public mood, but can also be explained by economic reasoning of newspaper corporations which supposedly invest more resources (staff, paper volume and/or special editions) in times of economic growth. When newspapers have to cut on resources however, the European Parliament is threatened by lower press coverage. And lower press coverage is not necessarily supportive for the levels of awareness of EU citizens. This shows again how important the Parliament’s own communications instruments are in this respect, as a supportive manner can work against a possible downward trend of news coverage – especially in times of economic crises.

⁷⁸ Note that the other controlling variables referring to the type of newspaper and respective circulation numbers are not statistically significant throughout the models. Given the absence of any effects no further elaboration is required. It simply demonstrates that cross-country variation is greater than cross-media variation.

4.2.2.2 Competing with the appreciation of the national parliament

While the previous hypothesis H3-A (support for EU membership) has by and large been supported here, the effect of public trust levels towards the national parliament bears a peculiar finding. It has been argued above that citizens use proxies derived from the domestic context in order to make sense of the political ongoing at the EU level (see Anderson 1998, Gelleny and Anderson 2000, McLaren 2007). Given that public awareness of the EU and therewith the EP is rather low, it is expected that trust levels towards the national Parliament predict the extent to which citizens are interested in Parliament in general. According to H4-A it is assumed that higher trust levels therefore forecast a higher coverage of EU parliamentary affairs, because readers appreciate parliamentary democracy in the domestic context and thus should also express more interest in receiving news from the EP. This assumption is in line with Peter and de Vreese's findings (2004). According to them, greater levels of public satisfaction with domestic democracy are linked to a greater relevance of EU news in television in terms of prominence.

The findings from the models 1A to 4B in Table 4.5 reveal, however, that here the contrary is the case: with every percentage point increase in the levels of trust towards the national representative body, the visibility of the European counterpart diminishes by about 1.05 to 1.92 per cent. Again the impact is small, yet significant even when the jack-knife tests are considered (Table 4.6). And it even holds once controlling for different type of media systems (Models 4A and 4B). The findings imply that the EP seems to be losing out on its national equivalents. In fact, in the public eye it might be perceived as a rival to the national parliament since newsmakers respond to their reader's appreciation of the latter by distributing slightly fewer news about EU parliamentary affairs. Given that the legislative competences of the European Parliament have expanded considerably over the last two decades, citizens might fear that their national representative body, which is still somewhat closer to them, is being increasingly undermined. In fact, despite the formal acknowledgement of their participation in EU policy-making by the Lisbon Treaty, national parliaments themselves are alarmed about losing out in the process of further European integration (see, for instance, Maurer and Wessels 2001; Benz 2004; Auel and Benz 2005; Raunio 2005; O'Brennan and Raunio 2007b). And although 'the EP's role in providing democratic legitimacy has become (largely)

unquestioned by political elites' (Goetze and Rittberger 2010: 50) especially as the EP grew stronger politically, the results hint at the circumstance that the EP and their members are still judged by the public and the press by means of comparisons to the national standard of parliamentary democracy.

This assumption becomes especially apparent in Models 5A and 5B of Table 4.5 where an interaction term of *EB support for EU* and *EB trust in NP* has been included. The beta coefficient is rather small with -0.05, yet significant. The most important finding is that it is negative, implying that for a given level of EU support an increase in trust towards the national parliament will mitigate the (positive) impact of EU support. That means that regardless of the public stances towards EU membership, the appreciation of the national equivalent shortens the press coverage of EU parliamentary affairs, albeit marginally only. Jack-knife tests were conducted for this model as well.⁷⁹ It turns out, however, that the precise effect is not statistically significant anymore once the country samples of the UK, Germany and Austria are each omitted from the model. It means that these samples are supposedly driving the interaction effect and thus in these countries the allegation of a rivalry between the national and the European Parliament is most likely to be true. In fact, in the German case, the 'Lisbon ruling'⁸⁰ provided by the German Constitutional Court in 2009 with respect to the role of the German Bundestag in EU affairs underlines this enmity of competences between the legislatures. And a German journalist went even further to compare the democratic legitimacy of the two institutions by claiming that '[the representativeness of the EP] is not comparable to the understanding we have of parliamentary democracy in the Bundestag' (DE-5).

In the British case, Parliament is the true sovereign of the British political system. As such it is no surprise that, coupled with the public hostility towards the EU, the European Parliament is not held in high regard but seen as a threat to the role of the House of Commons. A quotation from a British correspondent serves to underline this assumption. When asked in a follow-up question about what explains the lower interest of the UK press in EU parliamentary affairs, he stated:

⁷⁹ See appendix A4.4

⁸⁰The so-called 'Lisbon ruling' underlines the privileges of the national legislature vis-à-vis the executive in European ratification procedures (see BVerfG, 2 BvE 2/08 of 30/6/2009, Paragraph No. (1 - 421), http://www.bverfg.de/entscheidungen/es20090630_2bve000208en.html).

'It does have something to do with the esteem of the EP in the eyes of the newspaper. It's not regarded – maybe this is wrong – as being as relevant as the British Parliament; although there is a lot of EU legislation and the EP is obviously part of that process...' (GB-1)

Although the particular finding of the negative impact of public trust towards the national parliament on EP news coverage is significant throughout the jack-knife tests in Table 4.6, a thorough investigation of news content as well as of the professional opinion of the elite newsmakers towards the EP's competences in legislation and scrutiny of the executive is required. Such an analysis will be subject to the following two chapters.

4.2.2.3 Domestic politics as a driver of press coverage

Contrary to this negative impact of the trust in the national Parliament the effects of the variables describing the importance of domestic politics tell a different story here. In fact, the legislative cycle of the national parliament is not statistically significant throughout the models and thus whether it is sitting or not does not severely bias the coverage of the EP. It seems that the press rather follows the particular legislative cycle of the European Parliament, regardless of the state of national parliamentary affairs. This is actually a good finding for EU politics, as the reporting is unlikely to be interrupted by the day-to-day political business at the national level. It shows that EU politics, and therewith EU parliamentary affairs, represent an important part on the news agenda of the European quality press.

Similarly, the factor of the EU Presidency is only driven by the Austrian newspapers which distributed more news when the Chancellor paid regular visits to the EU capitals as Council President (Models 6A and 6B in Table 4.6). The results imply that this was not the case when the German or British government held the Council Presidency. However, this might be linked to the fact that British newspapers in general distribute less news about EU affairs due to the lower interest of the public in EU parliamentary affairs as discussed above, whereas their German counterparts publish many more news stories throughout the year. In the latter case, it might be difficult in practical terms to extend the coverage even further. Another implication

arises with the Austrian Presidency. As a matter of fact, under the precise Presidency, the EU multi-annual budget for 2007-13 was negotiated. Many arguments were exchanged among the European institutions and member states over the size of the budget and its spending purposes (BBC News 2005). This supposedly increased the coverage in the other countries as well. All told, as far as the European Council Presidency is concerned the findings do not yet provide sufficient evidence to support Hypothesis H1-A, and suggest that the news selection criterion of domestic relevance does not necessarily always hold. Furthermore, the findings contradict previous research which finds key events, such as EU summits to be a driver for EU news coverage (see Peter and de Vreese, 2004; Boomgaarden, Vliegenthart et al. 2010). Instead, and again, the results imply that the European Parliament with its members and their activities is able to raise media attention on their own.

Although these two factors of the national parliamentary cycle and incumbent EU President bear a tendentious, even partially positive impact on the news coverage, the results are not very telling. Thus, a different test is carried out in order to measure the effect of national politics on the press coverage of the EP. As a reminder, Hypothesis H2 states that national politics are able to bias the visibility of the EP in the press by devoting less attention to the latter when highly salient issues are at stake. For this, the actual distribution of newspaper articles over time ($N=2155$) is plotted against the difference of the articles' date to national general elections in terms of months. The date of each national election is either before or after the publication date of a newspaper article in each country.⁸¹ General elections in France⁸², the Netherlands, Ireland, and Austria fell into the period of investigation and are taken as a before-and-after measure. For the remaining two countries, the previous election date has been chosen because it is closest in the German case as opposed to the next set date in 2009, or at the time of each article publication in the UK then unknown, since the Prime Minister calls for new elections which took place in 2010.

Figure 4.3 displays the distances between the publication dates of newspaper articles dealing with parliamentary affairs at the EU level and the date to the closest domestic

⁸¹ Note that, in order to calculate the difference, each publication date has been subtracted from the actual election date.

⁸² In the case of France both dates of the respective second round of Parliamentary election (06/05/2007) as well as the Presidential election (17/06/2007) have been considered (see Appendix A4.2).

general election (recent or forthcoming). With the mean situated at -1.31 months and the mode at -2.0 months as provided by table 4.7, the graphic shows that more articles are generally distributed just before the next polling day in the countries under study.

Figure 4.3: Distribution of newspaper articles over time according to distance to general elections at the national level

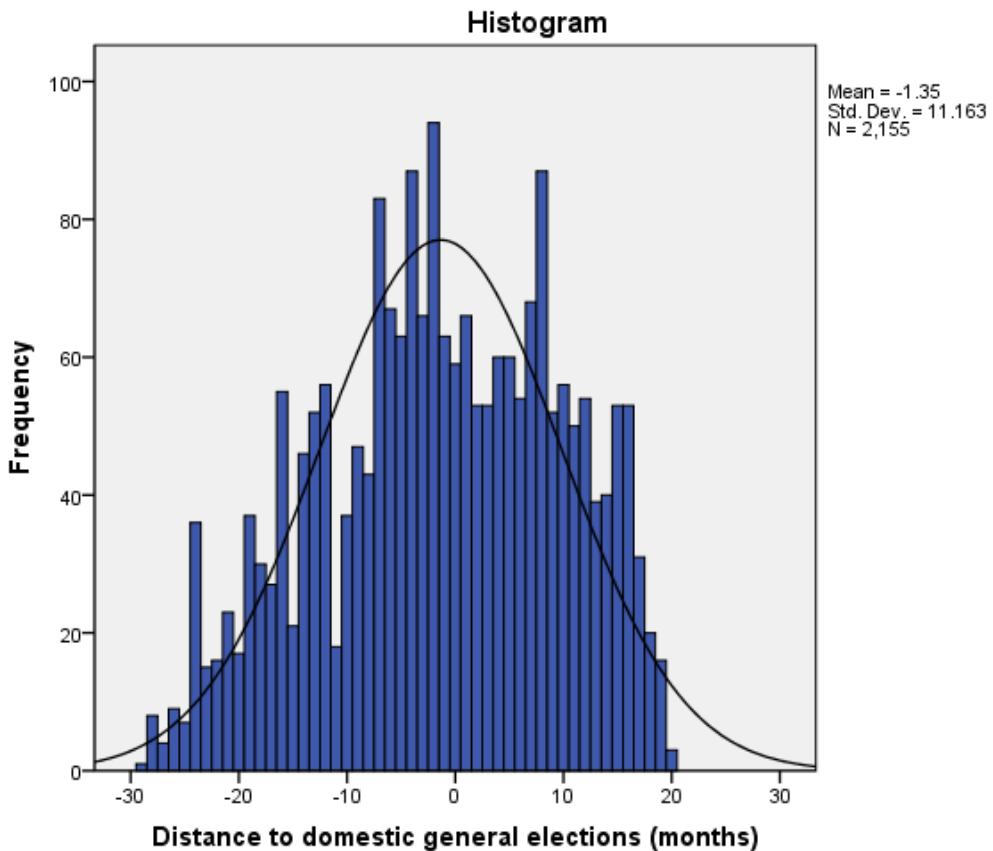


Table 4.7: Descriptive Statistics for the distance to domestic general elections

	N	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation	Range	Minimum	Maximum
Distance to domestic GE (months)	2155	-1.35	-1.00	-2.00	11.16	49.00	-29.00	20.00

Further, the distribution follows the normal distribution which can be interpreted as a sign that domestic parliamentary general elections (and presidential ones in the case of France) do actually play a role for the press coverage of the European Parliament – but not in the way as previously assumed. In fact, politics taking place inside as well as political consequences from the European Parliament matter for the domestic context. While the analysis of news selection criteria is subject of the next section, these findings infer that the European Parliament is a relevant institution in the

national media, as far as broadsheets are concerned, and therewith for domestic politics. This is a positive outcome for scholars studying the emergence of a European public sphere. In particular the results imply that national election campaigns experience Europeanisation effects (see de Vries 2007). In fact, EU parliamentary affairs matter in the run-up to general elections – a finding which might be welcomed by some who have previously regretted the lack of contestation over European issues in national elections (see Mair 2001). Supposedly, MEPs of the respective parties competing for votes become involved in the campaigns and are thus referred to and cited more often. However, it also shows that the visibility of the EP in the news depends on the domestic political context as more references to the European body are being made during national election campaigns. During non-election times the European Parliament receives less coverage and is thus not as salient as in the run up to domestic general elections. This underlines the news selection criterion of domestic relevance – when highly salient events are coming up in the domestic context, such as general elections, EU parliamentary affairs are supposedly supportive for the broadsheets' news agenda.

Thus far, however, we do not know which issues are newsworthy, and especially whether the news value of domestic relevance holds throughout the period of investigation. We can be certain though that the precise coverage of parliamentary affairs at the EU level is driven by the plenary sessions of the EP in Strasbourg themselves and public support for EU membership, while the public trust in the national parliament has a negative impact on the amount of coverage the EP and its members receive. The extent to which news values apply to the selection of news referring among other things to EU parliamentary activities, and under which circumstances these are likely to hold, will be investigated in the following section.

4.3 A closer look: What is newsworthy?

The previous section has answered questions about the drivers of the precise press coverage of parliamentary affairs at the EU level. This section will look more specifically at what makes these stories newsworthy in the wider context. In particular, it tests whether Hypotheses H1-A holds, which proposes that news about the EP is primarily chosen according to domestic relevance. It has been shown above

that parliamentary affairs are rarely the sole subject of political stories (Tables 4.3 and 4.4). Instead, news also refers to other political actors and institutions. Further, it Chapter 2 has argued that news stories are mainly selected on the issue with which politics are concerned at a given time. The period of investigation between 2005 and 2007 witnesses many legislative decisions, most notably on the services directive, REACH, or the Port Package. This section therefore asks which topics are newsworthy in order for EU parliamentary affairs to receive press coverage, and why. Further, given the legislative process is very lengthy and complex, at what stage does the role of the EP in this process become valuable to report for the newsmakers on location? Put differently, when are the activities of the EP newsworthy? And on what grounds, i.e. news values, do newsmakers decide to report from Strasbourg? To answer these questions, the analysis here again relies on both the quantitative method by presenting descriptive statistics, and the qualitative investigation of expert interviews with correspondents. The section proceeds by analysing the newsworthiness of the EP's activities followed by the investigation of the issue-dependence of stories reporting EU parliamentary affairs.

4.3.1 The newsworthiness of the European Parliament's activities

The European Parliament is the only directly elected institution in the EU political system, and being a parliament, the only institution which provides a forum for public debate. Although these characteristics are newsworthy enough in the eyes of some newsmakers – as one French correspondent put it ‘[The EP is] quite interesting because that is the only way we have a bit of democracy in Brussels’ (FR-2) – its newsworthiness is expected to be dependent on several factors internal to the news production process, namely common news selection criteria (according to Hypothesis H1-A). Here, news content serves as a retrospective measure of news selection criteria. Hence, at the same time, H1-B can also be addressed (it states that news values matter for the content of EP news).

Figure 4.4: Type (by article theme) of news content by country

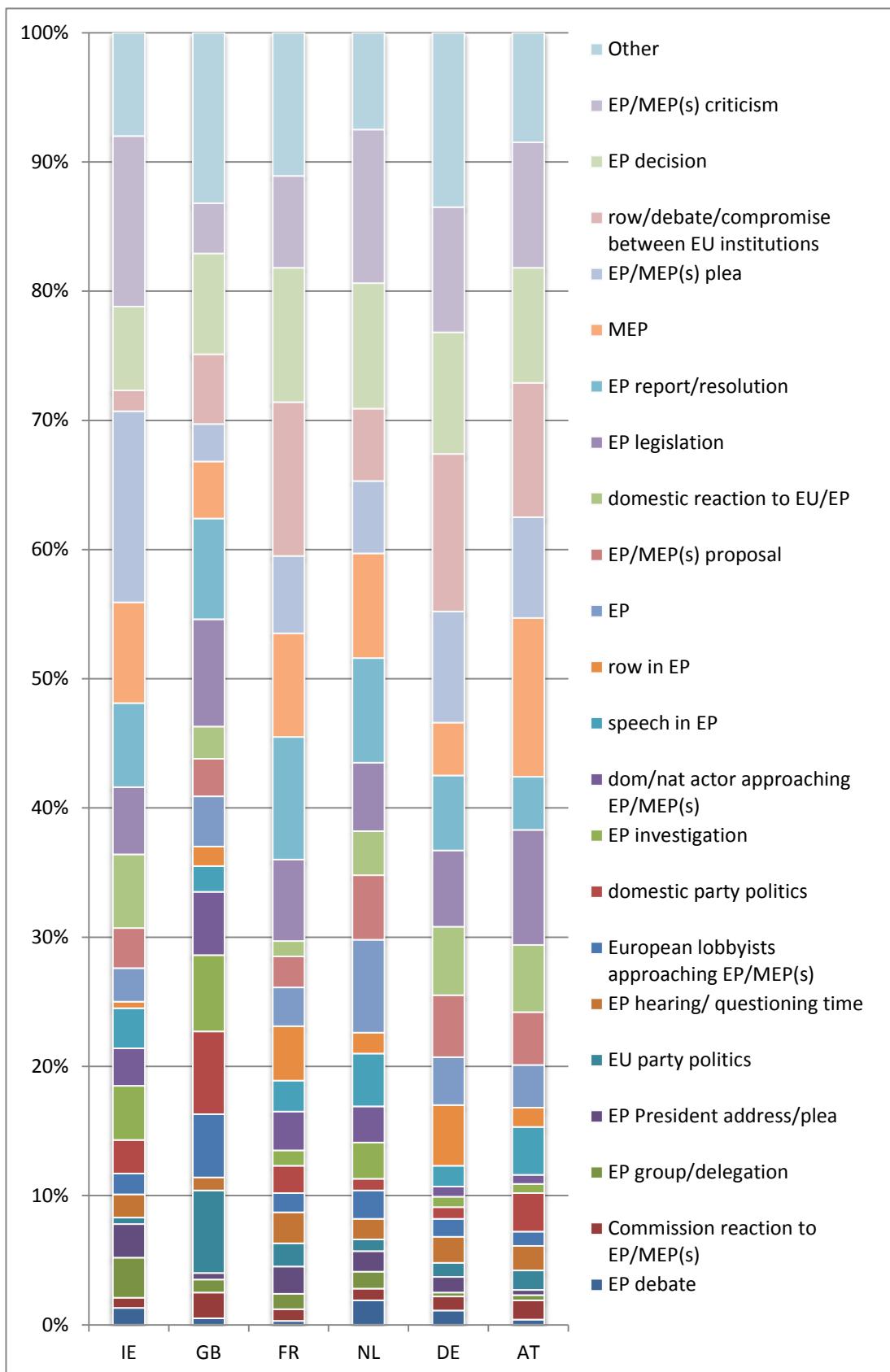


Figure 4.4 depicts the type of news content in each country in terms of (non-) parliamentary actions reported. Krippendorff's α , however, is rather small for this variable, ranging from 0.14 to 0.40 (see Appendix A3.5). Hence the results have to be interpreted with caution.

The figure shows that the common news selection criteria are reflected in the classifications, although their application varies across country. The news value of importance, for instance, can be found in the categories of 'EP decision', 'EP/MEP(s) plea', 'EP report/resolution', 'EP legislation', 'domestic reaction to EP/EU' and 'domestic/national actor approaching the EP/MEP(s)',⁸³ which rank among the most common types of EP news.

However, there is variation across country. 'EP legislation' is more often worth a topic in the UK (8.30%) and in Austria (8.90%), whereas Irish newspapers often include a plea by MEPs or the whole Parliament in their news (14.80%). And lobbyists from the national level are more often subject in Irish (2.90%) and British broadsheets (4.90%) than in the rest of the newspaper sample. A report or resolution tabled by the EP and its members, on the other hand, is a common topic in the French (9.50%) and Dutch quality press (8.10%).

As regards the news value of conflict which relates to categories of 'EP/MEP(s) criticism', 'row/debate/comprise between EU institutions' and 'row in EP', the French and German newspapers include more news of that type in their papers. Controversies between institutions, for instance, comprise 11.90% in French broadsheets and 12.20% of the German news about the EP, and arguments inside the EP 4.20% and 4.70% of their articles respectively. Yet, 'EP/MEP(s) criticism' receives 13.20% of the share in the Irish news about EU parliamentary affairs.

Related to the news value of personification, individual MEPs are most often a subject of their own in Austrian broadsheets (12.30%), where prominent figures such as Hans-Peter-Martin, also known as a whistle-blower, and Ursula Stenzel who quit as an MEP to accept a renowned political post in Vienna (as *Bezirksvorsteherin*), received a lot of attention. MEPs are least often the sole interest of the German counterparts (4.10%). On the other hand, pure domestic issues can be found in the

⁸³ Note that the difference between 'domestic' and 'national' here is that 'domestic' refers to a country's own actors and institutions, whereas the national ones are from a different national country than where the respective news is published.

British press under the umbrella of ‘domestic party politics’ (6.40%). These news items comprise, among other things, the debate around the Tories’ intention to leave the EPP. The Austrian newspapers also have more news in this category than the rest (3.00%), followed by the Irish press with 2.60%. It shows at the same time that some news stories cannot be considered as EU affairs, but technically, they belong to the category of national news.

These common topics identified thus far are also reflected when considering under which legislative procedure the EP receives attention by the quality press (see Table 4.8). The category of ‘other’ here primarily includes domestic issues, which underlines the applicability of the respective news selection criterion since it comprises a large amount of news items (N=490) and is significantly longer than the rest as the t-test reveals. The co-decision procedure, on the other hand, which entails both news values of conflict and importance, is subject to most articles (N= 626). Since the introduction of the co-decision procedure with the Maastricht Treaty in 1993, the legislative powers of the EP have grown in a wide range of policy areas. Morgan (1999) though finds that in 1996 the overall media attention paid to the EP was still rather low in the country selection of the UK, Ireland and Belgium. However, this was before the Treaty of Amsterdam was introduced in 1999 and with it Co-decision II granting the European Parliament complete co-equal legislative powers shared with the Council (e.g. Tsebelis 2002: 264). Since then the EP took many noticeable and far-reaching decisions such as on roaming tariffs for mobile phone users⁸⁴, or the labelling of food packaging⁸⁵. Before 2007 the Treaty of Nice in 2003 expanded the application of the co-decision procedure to more EU policy fields. Table 4.8 shows that the press has picked up on the growing powers of the EP by publishing a higher number of articles reporting about policy issues decided under co-decision than those steered through parliament under other legislative procedures.

⁸⁴ Regulation (EC) No 717/2007 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 June 2007 on roaming on public mobile telephone networks within the Community and amending Directive 2002/21/EC

⁸⁵ Regulation 1924/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on nutrition and health claims made on foods (amend. Directive 2000/13/EC)

Table 4.8: Mean differences in 'Share of 'EP news' within article/ percentage' across legislative procedures

Legislative Procedure	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	t-test
other	73.5785	490	26.91106	'Other' vs. the rest (M=58.9481): t= 10.93; df: 2153; p<0.000, 95% Confidence Interval: 12.00545/ 17.25541
assent	63.4219	104	26.10893	
consultation	55.3669	91	26.15075	
co-decision	54.8749	626	23.60125	
budget	58.9404	106	24.27975	
initiative/report/resolution	56.1211	175	26.11108	Co-decision vs. other procedures (assent, consultation, budget, initiative/resolution) (M=58.1999): t= -2.224; df: 1100; p=0.026, 95% Confidence Interval: -6.25844/ -0.39156
EU treaties/institutional reform	65.1743	241	28.32055	
other scrutiny (Presidency, ECB, OLAF, MS behaviour, Commission)	64.3274	273	25.73877	
administration	60.9864	11	26.93641	
opinion third country/person	56.6976	38	30.0393	
	2155			

Source: Own research

Yet, articles dealing with this decision-making procedure are significantly shorter than those of the other procedures – by about 0.39 to 6.26 percentage points as reported by the t-test statistic of Table 4.8. Here the assent procedure, used, among other things, to confirm the European Commission and its President or the ECB President as well as for EU enlargement, receives a lot of attention too – and that despite the fact that the EP only had to approve two Commissioners from Bulgaria and Romania in December 2006, as opposed to the whole cabinet at the beginning of the legislative term. Overall, the findings lend support to the assumptions of Shepard (1997: 439) who asserts that the media ‘will also tend to focus on those policy issues where the Parliament has been able to exercise most muscle’ alongside the days when the EP is taking decisions by vote.

A German correspondent explained what kinds of decisions are newsworthy in this respect:

'The European Parliament is important for our newspaper as a power factor for the investiture vote of a new Commission, and then for legislative activity. There, we even go into the specialised committees and accompany their work. If it is an important issue, such as REACH, then it's worth an article. If it reaches the plenary stage, we even travel to Strasbourg.' (DE-1)

In fact, the stage of the decision-making process is crucial when deciding to cover a story about EU parliamentary affairs or not. One correspondent admitted ‘I do less than I think I should because it’s complicated’ (NL-1); while another one evaluated the EU legislative process as rather lengthy and boring:

‘The ordinary day-to-day business of legislation, of passing legislation, is significantly more procedural, process-oriented – [generating] no dramatic stories, [especially] when there is something else going on.’ (IE-2)

That is also why:

‘The media reports when something new comes up, when the Commission makes a proposal. The big outcry follows, and all report about that. After that again, when the next big steps follow.

(AT-2)

A British correspondent drew a direct comparison to the national legislative business:

‘Normally we ask: What is news? [The answer is] if it’s new and has a direct impact on our readers. The problem is, new stuff normally comes out of the Commission; and the direct impact [becomes visible] at the very end of the process. [...] I used to work in the British Parliament for five years, and I can see that there is a lot less interest in the day to day process – incremental process – here than there is in London or British legislation. Each subject does only get in the papers once or twice; maybe when it’s proposed, maybe when there is a big debate, maybe when it’s agreed. And so you don’t cover every committee or Parliament, when it changes a little, or when there is a new proposal – it’s too much detail! [...]’ (GB-1)

On the other hand, the European Parliament’s legislative behaviour also bears potential for suspense, as one correspondent described: ‘If I follow something well, the best moment is [just] before a plenary decision – the most interesting thing is to wait for a vote’ (NL-1).

Thus far, we can see that the selection of news about the activities of the European Parliament, as hypothesised above (H1-A), comply with common news selection criteria, especially those of domestic relevance, importance, and conflict:

'It's the same like everywhere in the world. If the Parliament is involved in the decisions, and if that is of general interest, or if it makes itself visible by being particularly stupid, then it gets reported' (DE-5)

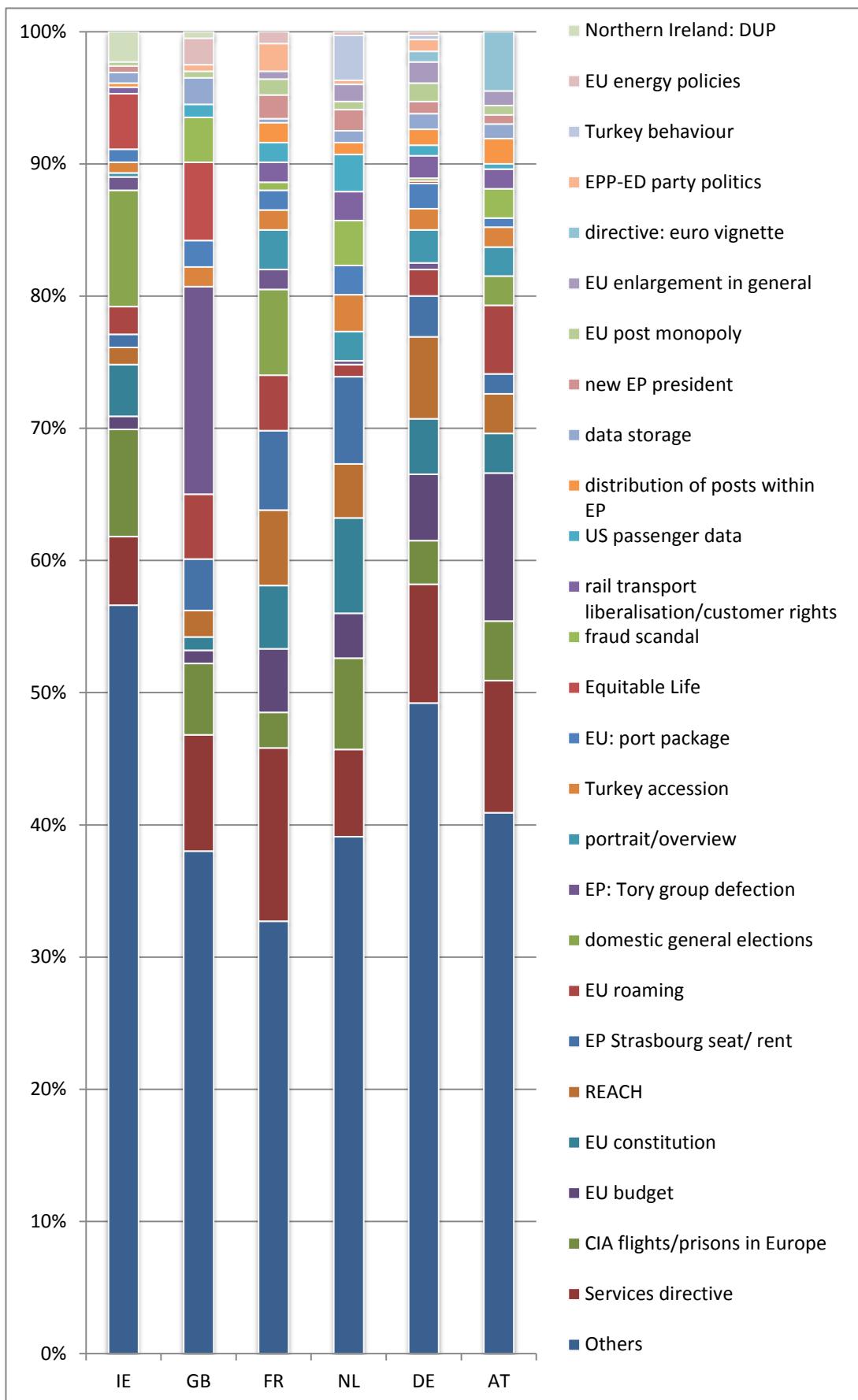
However, some of the correspondents' statements also imply that the attention the EP receives is not only tied to its powers or its members' attributes per se, but also issue-dependent. In fact, 'the topic is always decisive [for news reporting]' (AT-1). Another correspondent even went further and explained that 'the EP is not being covered because everyone thinks it's important' (IE-2).

4.3.2 Selecting issues for a domestic audience

The next question therefore is which issues are relevant for the press. Figure 4.5 shows what issues were reported in the news in each country of this study. Even though intercoder reliability scores are not perfect with Krippendorff's α ranging from 0.52 to 0.69 for this variable (*topic detail*) with more than 400 categories to choose from (see Appendix A3.5), the colourfulness demonstrates the great variety of issues relevant for the newsmakers. It reflects the European Parliament's activity in many policy areas and its role in European politics. The category of 'others' here especially refers to specific domestic issues which hardly overlap with news content in other countries. More than half of the Irish news coverage (56.60%) is concerned with this kind of news, while only 38.00% of the British broadsheet and 32.40% of the French press refer to such topics. Yet, topics which appeal to all newspapers do not always receive the same amount of attention across countries. A major issue in the British newspapers, for instance, was the intention of the Tories to break apart from the EPP-ED (15.70%, classified under 'EPP-ED Party politics'), which hardly received coverage elsewhere. This finding especially exemplifies domestic relevance as a news value. One correspondent explained that this topic was reported because it demonstrated 'Cameron's policies on Europe' (GB-2).⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Note: David Cameron has been leader of the British Conservative Party since the end of 2005.

Figure 4.5: Issues reported in the news by country



Broadsheets in Austria instead often referred to the EU budget (11.20%) which was especially debated under its EU Presidency in the second half of 2006. The investigation of Equitable Life which affected Irish and British citizens almost only received coverage in the respective countries, contributing to a share of 4.20% in the Irish news and 5.90% in the British press. The REACH directive, on the other hand, received more coverage in the remaining countries, with especially French and German newspapers devoting many articles to this issue (5.70% and 6.20%, respectively). The services directive, another issue decided under the co-decision procedure like REACH, was especially prominent in the French papers (13.10%), followed by the Austrian (10.00%) and German press (9.00%). This coincides with the fact that the German and French governments were initially opposed to the directive, which provided reasons for the respective press to report more extensively about it. The investigation of CIA flight and respective allegations of CIA prisons across Europe, on the other hand, was a hot topic in the Dutch (6.90%) and Irish news (8.10%).

We could go on about the varying salience of each topic in the national context, but the figure speaks for itself. At the same time, the findings show that domestic relevance as a news selection criterion matters considerably. They demonstrate that news about EU parliamentary affairs is selected according to their relevance for the domestic audience, measured in terms of impact or consequences for the latter. In fact, according to one of the directors at the EP Directorate-General for Communication interviewed for this study, the EP would prepare targeted press releases which speak to ‘what is newsworthy for the national public opinion’.

Correspondents indeed justify the importance of this news selection criterion with the need of a direct impact for their readers when asked ‘When do you report about the EP?’ An Irish journalist replied: ‘If it is a major story of particular interest from an Irish perspective – or a major story which is significant in an EU context’ (IE-2). This statement implies that domestic relevance is not always applicable. Instead, it provides room for the assumption related to Hypothesis H1-A that, once major political issues are at stake, other news values, e.g. importance and conflict, become more applicable. Nonetheless, the domestic relevance matters to a great deal as seen in the previous figure. And other correspondents support this assumption. Even the British correspondent who previously complained about the lengthy decision-making

process admitted: ‘Sometimes, such as the alternative management fundraising directive, when it’s more interesting to our readers to know the week to week process, we cover more [...]’ (GB-1).

At the same time the impact on the readership has to be sufficiently concrete in order for a story involving the European Parliament and its members to receive news coverage.

When it becomes more perceptible, then it’s interesting [to report].

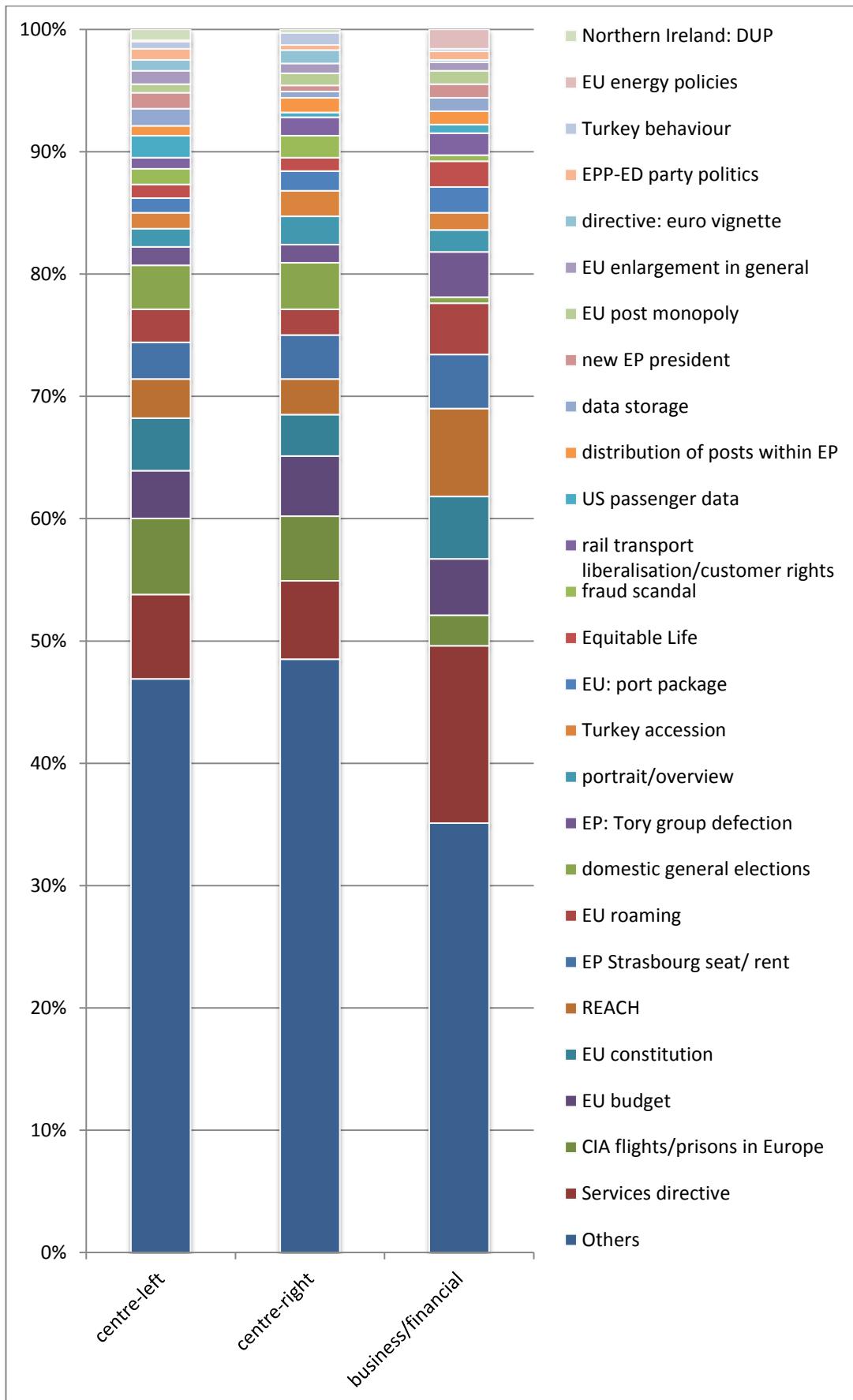
An example is the traffic light system [for food labels] which has been rejected this spring [by the EP]. This was indeed worth an article because it was a surprise that they took this direction [...] Else I don’t want to bother the reader with everything’ (AT-1)

(emphasis of the interviewee)

The reader, on the other hand, is not only characterised by her national citizenship. Instead, different newspapers have different types of readers. The distinction becomes especially apparent when comparing the most newsworthy issues across newspaper type.

Figure 4.6 shows that the business press concentrates more on policy making, such as on the REACH directive (7.20%), the service directive (14.50%), and roaming (7.20%) compared to the political newspapers, for which hardly any difference can be detected in terms attention paid to the various issues prominent in the press. Here, the business or financial press decide to cover a story if they ‘show a clear impact for an industry’ (GB-3).

Figure 4.6: Issues reported in the news by newspaper type



The findings demonstrate that the press indeed responds to the particular demands of their readership when reporting parliamentary politics from Brussels. And the press directorate of the EP is very aware of that too as the official interviewed for this research project exemplified:

'It works for all political institutions in the world: human touch works much better. The most interesting discussion of a session is when on Wednesday morning the heads of political groups discuss the next or last EU Council meeting. At the end you see they [the journalists] are more interested in 'meat glue' which is not relevant for the future of the EU but is perfectly relevant for everybody.... For the Butcher, and it's about meat and the concern with glue.... Journalists choose the angle to what is interesting for the citizens.'

4.4 Conclusions

The chapter has shown that the European Parliament and its member receive regular coverage, which is particularly driven by their activities in Strasbourg when gathering in plenary session. Although access to information and resources of media outlets are a crucial condition for news coverage, parliamentary affairs at the EU level are deemed newsworthy when the stories they are embedded in comply with common news selection criteria. Domestic relevance is a highly relevant criterion: news from Strasbourg need to have an impact on readers, both in a domestic context and in terms of political and business interests, in order to make it into the quality press. That is also why the coverage is largely issue-dependent, and reaches its peak during national election campaigns. Yet, other news selection criteria, especially the importance of the EP and its ability to generate conflict play a crucial role as well, albeit dependent on further circumstances such as the stage of legislative process. The findings have nevertheless shown that decisions under the co-decision procedure are worth many articles in the European broadsheets.

In short, EU parliamentary affairs are relevant, but this relevance is weighed according to domestic interests. It has been argued above that domestic relevance is an indispensable news criterion for European affairs. However, it also responsible for regular coverage from the EP, which is a positive condition for raising public

awareness levels. The fact that EU parliamentary affairs become especially relevant for general election campaigns at the national level suggests furthermore that, contrary to initial assumptions, a form of Europeanisation of domestic politics via representative links with the EP has taken place. Again, this is supportive for developing and strengthening linkages between citizens and their representatives at the EU level. This has implications for the analysis in the next chapter which looks at news content and the way MEPs are represented in the news. Given the applicability of the news values domestic relevance, importance and conflict, it can therefore be expected that EU legislators from the country in which a newspaper is distributed are featured more often than other European legislators. Their salience in the news is furthermore expected to be conditional upon their status and potential to initiate controversies. The next chapter will test whether these assumptions hold, or whether we find variation in their representations to be due to the other two factors presented in this chapter.

When considering the precise press coverage of parliamentary affairs at the European level, public opinion is found to be significantly correlated to the amount of news on the external side of the news production process. Here, high support levels for EU membership are associated with more coverage of EU parliamentary affairs which is in line with what has previously been hypothesised. That allows us to derive that once the EU is more appreciated, the more welcomed are news about EU parliamentary affairs which demonstrates that the EP's public evaluation is probably dependent on attitudes towards the EU in general – although the causal direction of this relationship is not clear. Nevertheless, it is unlikely that awareness levels of the EP are high where public support for EU integration is low. This is a rather bad certificate for European democracy, as negative stances are unlikely to overcome by broadsheet coverage from the European Parliament. EP coverage must not be understood as propaganda, but citizenry that is better informed by the publicity the EP generates might reflect on their attitudes towards the EU and consequently its Parliament (cf. Hobolt 2005).

The impact of public trust levels towards the national legislative body runs counter initial expectations, however. Here, greater public confidence in the national parliament impacts negatively on the press coverage of the European counterpart and its members. The chapter therefore has introduced the argument of a perceived

rivalry in the public sphere. While this rivalry has been exemplified by the German and British case, the chapter is not able to provide further reasons for this phenomenon at this stage. Chapter 6 will give answers to this question by studying the press evaluations of the EP's role in two case studies over time. It tests whether the EP with its rising powers has become more relevant, i.e. newsworthy, for the press to report about it over the years. Further, the interviews with the correspondents provide insight as to how they assess its political role in the European Union. Following the findings of the present chapter, Chapter 6 investigates whether the press actually perceives and/or represents the European legislative body as rival to its national counterparts.

This last question will also be addressed in the following chapter. It will assess to what extent characteristics of the national parliamentary culture are reflected in the news content referring to parliamentary affairs at the EU level. This provides insight into how the EP is perceived in public and again adds to answering questions about its legitimacy in the EU political system.

Chapter 5

MEPs in the news:

Deputies for domestic parliamentarians?

The previous chapter has argued that news stories containing references to EU parliamentary affairs are primarily selected on the newsworthiness of the issues involved by applicability of domestic relevance, conflict and importance. The precise visibility of the EP and its members is found to be enhanced by their activities, rising public support levels for EU membership and proximity to general elections in the domestic context. It is, furthermore, particularly contended that public trust in the national parliament constrains the press coverage of EU parliamentary affairs to the extent that higher appreciation of the former leads to less attention paid to the activities of the European equivalent. Whether this is an expression of a perceived rivalry between the institutions requires further investigation.

This chapter examines the impacts on news content of EU parliamentary affairs and seeks to provide answers to the following specific part of the research question: What explains variation across country in the content of press coverage of the European Parliament? It has been hypothesised earlier (Hypothesis H4-B) that news content is likely to reflect procedures of the national parliamentary tradition with the purpose of making EU parliamentary affairs better comprehensible for the national audience. In order to assess to what extent the salience of the national parliamentary culture impacts on news content, the chapter concentrates on the media representations of MEPs investigating how salient they are in the news, what makes them newsworthy, and what characteristics accompany representation at the EU level in the quality press. All told, it answers the question in the title of this chapter by asking whether MEPs are represented in the press as deputies for national parliamentarians.

Although, technically the attention MEPs receive by European broadsheets can be defined in a similar way as to the amount of news coverage, the previous chapter revealed that the publication of most news items is issue-dependent and rarely selected on individual EU legislators. Thus, references to individual MEPs as well as the measure of their salience in terms of quotation length can be categorised into news content. The reason for the focus on Europe's legislators is twofold: First, this

measure is comparable across newspapers since mentions of individual MEPs are a likely finding if we assume that journalists use ‘faces’ to sell their stories to the editor and the reader. Second, the presentation of MEPs offers further insight into how Europe’s newsmakers perceive their parliamentary roles, their constituency ties and their party membership. At the same time we are able to assess whether the other two research hypotheses related to news content also hold. It is contended that news selection criteria become visible in the presentation of news. Therefore, we would expect that the main news values identified in the previous chapter, domestic relevance, conflict and importance, also shape the extent to which individual MEPs are being referred to in the news (Hypothesis H1-B). Furthermore, and following the results of the previous chapter, it is argued that Eurosceptic parties and MEPs are likely to be granted greater consideration in the news in countries where the public is less supportive of the EU than in other countries (H3-B).

The chapter essentially argues that the way newsmakers in Brussels approach Europe’s legislators and present them in the news is influenced by procedures of the respective national parliamentary tradition in terms of electoral competition and resulting relevance of political actors. This is not only apparent in the domestic focus of news content – a finding which does not hold for the French quality press though – but also identified by the varying patterns in references to the constituency, individual party membership as well as to the legislative and political role of individual representatives in Strasbourg. In short, Europe’s representatives are conceived of as deputies for their domestic colleagues. The wider conclusions of these findings underline the potential of the EP to be perceived as a rival to national parliaments. European legislators and their roles are not presented as unique or supranational, but as similar to those of national parliamentarians. This lends support to the assumption that MEPs and MPs as well their performances are directly compared, which provides implications for the analysis of newsmakers’ evaluations of the EP in the next chapter.

Nevertheless, the chapter also finds that MEP prominence matters to some extent for the attention individual legislators receive by the press. Although one has to distinguish between status gained from either European or national-level office. Most newspapers rank the latter standing more prominently. And, as anticipated above, public attitudes towards European integration are commonly reflected in the news –

the French feature other European legislators more often than their own ones which is an indicator for their interest in the common European project. The British and Austrian dailies, on the other hand, also give considerable voice to some Eurosceptic MEPs. Other newspapers do not, even though Eurosceptic MEPs have been elected in their respective countries.

The chapter is divided into two main parts. It sets out by providing multivariate models investigating the salience of MEPs in the quality press (5.1). The models' purpose is to assess whether characteristics of national electoral systems, here measured by the centrality of electoral modes on either parties or individual candidates, matter for the attention Europe's representatives receive by the press as opposed to individual characteristics deemed newsworthy by news producers. Given the crudeness of the results, the chapter proceeds to provide a descriptive analysis of news content enriched by the interview findings with the correspondents in Brussels (5.2). Here the interest lies firstly on answering questions about who receives media attention and why (5.2.1), and eventually on the characteristics that accompany the presentation of individual legislators at the EU level (5.2.2). The conclusions (5.3) underline the main findings and propose further questions to be addressed in the next empirical chapter.

5.1 A model for explaining the salience of MEPs in the news

Europe's legislators are the direct link between EU citizens and politics in Brussels/Strasbourg. From a media perspective, they provide a face to EU legislative politics and thus their attitudes and activities should be especially interesting for newsmakers in the EU capitals to communicate to their readers. This section analyses firstly, to what extent they do so providing descriptive statistics. Then specific hypotheses are being presented able to explain cross-country variation. Thirdly, the factors that supposedly impact on the salience of individual representatives in the news are being tested in multivariate regression models.

5.1.1 Varying attention for MEPs

Table 5.1 provides an overview of the percentage of articles that mention individual MEPs by country and newspaper.⁸⁷ The general pattern is that broadsheets which fall into the category of business or financial newspapers refer less often to individual MEPs than their political counterparts; although in the Netherlands and Germany these particular figures are slightly higher compared to the centre-right press, yet still lower in contrast to the centre-left affiliated print media. The previous chapter has argued that business-oriented and financial newspapers are likely to focus more on policy outcome rather than on politics. Therefore, a lower number of references to political actors, and European legislators in particular, seems plausible. Businessmen and lobbyists are likely to receive more attention in these kinds of broadsheets instead. Given that this pattern is by and large similar across country and the fact that MEPs are elected on a national basis, the remainder of the analysis in this chapter will provide descriptive statistics as a measure of variation across country. The table shows in this respect that British newspapers in general least often mention Europe's representatives, while the Irish press features single MEPs most often compared to the rest – although the Austrian and the German broadsheets follow closely.

Table 5.1: Instances in which individual MEPs are mentioned (%), per country and newspaper (N = 2155)

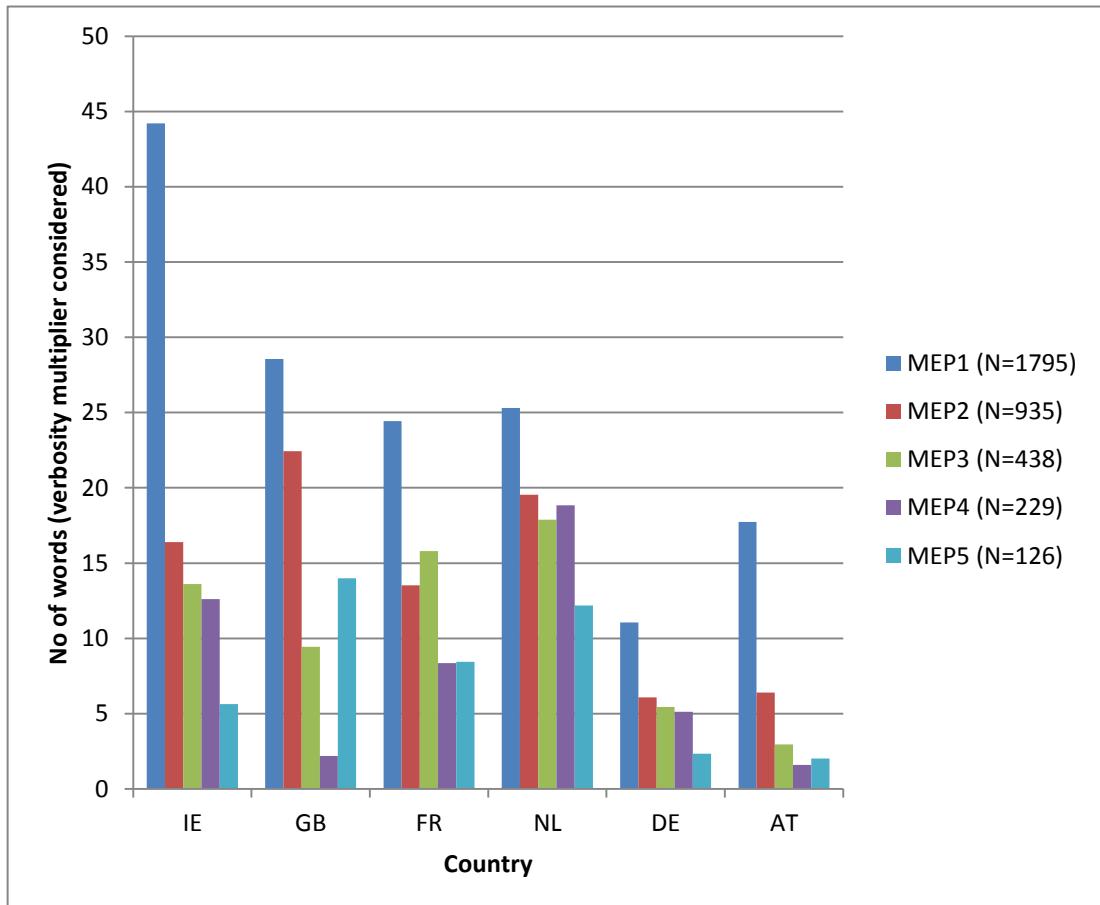
	IE	GB	FR	NL	DE	AT	Total
centre-left	84.35	71.70	89.24	89.72	88.48	89.83	86.71
centre-right	94.20	72.34	90.00	76.77	83.44	85.42	84.56
business/financial	82.35	69.23	62.50	79.82	84.56	81.82	75.49
Total	87.79	70.59	79.17	82.19	85.20	86.62	83.03

The number of references to individual MEPs, however, provides little information about how much attention they receive within articles. Direct quotations instead serve as a measure for salience. Indeed, not all MEPs are cited directly and often news items simply reference an individual's behaviour or judge what a European legislative actor has said. But quoting MEPs directly implies that information and comment was actively sought by the news producer either via news channels, press conferences and official press releases or actual interview with the respective

⁸⁷ Krippendorff's α for references to MEP1 to MEP5 ranges from 0.64 to 1 (see Appendix A3.5).
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individual. It also suggests that the author of a given story has made a decision whether or not to seek such information, and how much attention the individual is being granted in respect of other news and actors. These decisions are influenced by several factors which will be investigated below. Beforehand, Figure 5.1 provides an overview of the extent to which MEPs are cited within newspapers across country.⁸⁸

Figure 5.1: Mean actual number of word used for direct quotations of MEPs, by country



Note: Huber and Shipan's (2002: 179) verbosity multiplier has been considered; overall N for each MEP provided in brackets

The verbosity multiplier has been accounted for here in order to draw comparisons across country rather than within articles.⁸⁹ The distribution shows that while less than half of the newspaper articles mention at least two MEPs, the first MEP cited in

⁸⁸ Appendix A5.1 provides more detailed information about the number of MEPs cited in each country as well as the standard deviations for each mean. Note that there are a few articles left which mention more than five MEPs in total. The largest number of references to individual MEPs was found in one article of the Irish Times, which mentioned all 14 MEPs from Ireland and Northern Ireland respectively. Krippendorff's α ranges from 0.62 to 1 for *MEP1ownwords* to *MEP5ownwords* (disregarding one outlier – see Appendix A3.5).

⁸⁹ As a reminder, the verbosity multiplier was derived from Huber and Shipan (2002) and has also been used in chapter 4, Table 4.2

each news item receives most attention on average. Though there are considerable differences across country. MEPs, if mentioned first among others, in the Irish press are granted on average about 44 words, but only 11 in the German broadsheets. The figures for the respective individual quotations are close to each other in the British, French and Dutch sheets with about 24 to 28 words. European legislators in the Austrian quality press are quoted with about 17 words on average if they rank first in the respective news item. The rest of MEPs cited in the news in each country generally receives far less attention, although the second MEP quoted in British broadsheets still receives a decent share with about 22 words of his/her own cited in the respective news. The Dutch press also allow individual legislators on the second to fourth ranks about 17 to 19 words per article. Only German and Austrian newspapers quote the remaining MEPs with hardly more than 5 words.

The next question therefore is why do we find this particular variation across country? At first glance, public support for EU membership is unlikely to be a plausible explanation. Newspapers in countries which have similar support levels do not pay a similar amount of attention to MEPs. The difference is strongest between the Irish and the Dutch press whose national audiences are very in favour of EU membership. It does also not explain why the British devote more attention to single legislators than the French, the Dutch and the German broadsheets. One might put forward that the size of the national delegation matters and assume that broadsheets of countries which have only a small number of representatives in Brussels also concentrate more on the individual voice. That would explain, why in Germany where the largest number of MEPs are elected (99), they receive only little attention in the press. However, Austria elected only 18 representatives to the 6th European Parliament while the respective newspapers devote a comparably low amount of attention to these. All told, these assumptions, albeit plausible, are not satisfactory and other explanations need to be particularised.

5.1.2 Factors determining the salience of MEPs in the news

Given the variation in the attention MEPs receive in the news across countries, the next question is to identify factors that are responsible for this phenomenon. In essence, the visibility of individual MEPs in the press is a crude measure of the

extent of interaction between the latter and the newsmakers. Both journalists and politicians are mutually dependent on each other: the former receive information and expertise while the latter are provided with publicity (see, for instance, Neveu and Kuhn 2002: 6ff; Kepplinger 2007). This section first investigates the interest of newsmakers to pay attention to individual MEPs before the incentives of the latter are theorised.

5.1.2.1 The newsmakers' approach to MEPs

Scholars of EU politics repeatedly highlight the fact that citizens are largely unaware of the role of the European Parliament in the EU political system (see Shepard 1997, Shepard and Scully 2002, Farrell and Scully 2007). Eurobarometer figures describing the self-perceived knowledge of EU citizens underline this assumption.⁹⁰ The reasons for the widespread lack of awareness are commonly linked to the complexity of the EU legislative process and the number of political institutions and actors involved, to the fact that the EP resides in three different cities (although technically political deliberation, executive scrutiny and legislative decision-making is mainly located in the parliamentary buildings in Strasbourg and Brussels), and not least to the geographical distance of the EP to many of its represented. The media is furthermore often accused of ignoring the EP and its members. Often however, this contention lacks empirical proof. The previous chapter has found that the EP indeed receives regular press coverage. Although we are unable to say how this coverage relates to that of other political actors and institutions at either the national or the European level, we are certain that EU parliamentary affairs are visible in the European quality press. Further, this visibility is especially driven by the European Parliament itself with its gatherings in Strasbourg. Therefore, we cannot only blame the institution and its members themselves.

The question here, however, is not how the media contribute to the lack of public awareness of EU parliamentary affairs. Rather, the research is interested in how the press responds to these (low) awareness levels. The previous chapter has established

⁹⁰ According to a Special Eurobarometer published in 2008, the average for the self-perceived knowledge of the EP's role in the EU was ranked by EU citizens at 3.7 on a scale between 1 ('I know nothing') and 10 ('I know a great deal'). The average figure on this scale was even lower concerning the self-perceived knowledge about MEPs with 3.3 (European Commission 2008c).

that the quality press regularly reports about EU parliamentary affairs. But how do they sell the stories to their audience? ‘Citizens with some comprehension of the operation of their own national systems are often perplexed by the very different arrangements that exist at the EU level’ (Shepard and Scully 2002: 155-156). The precise difficulty for newsmakers reporting EU parliamentary affairs then is to make news comprehensible for their readers. Gleissner and de Vreese (2005: 229) argue that in order to do so correspondents are ‘simply forced to approach a topic from the basics’. Thus, if we assume that practices of parliamentary democracy at the EU level are perceived as ‘a matter of habit’ derived from the national parliamentary tradition (Goetze and Rittberger 2010), we can expect that newsmakers also treat the European Parliament as an extension of the respective national equivalent.

Specifically, hypothesis H4-B posits that newsmakers reflect characteristics of the national parliamentary culture in news content of EU parliamentary activities in order to make these more perceptible for the reader. With respect to the precise press coverage of MEPs, we can therefore expect that journalists supposedly treat MEPs more or less like MPs, i.e. as deputies for national members of Parliament. The underlining assumption is that correspondents in Brussels believe that their readers are more familiar with representation at the national level. They have specific expectations towards their national representatives which are by all accounts determined by the way they are elected (cf. Norton 2002b; Gallagher and Mitchell 2008).

A cross-country distinction of electoral politics is whether votes are given to parties or individual candidates (see Bowler and Farrell 1993). This difference is manifest in the electoral incentives of candidates. Those who seek (re-) election in a candidate-based electoral system, i.e. where voters have the opportunity to choose between individual contenders of different parties or even the same parties, court constituents directly in order to be selected for office in Parliament. Such electoral systems employ either an open or an ordered ballot structure. In an open ballot structure, voters can choose between individual candidates of the same party, whereas ordered lists provide voters with pre-defined ranks to select from if they wish to. In party-based electoral systems, the party organisation at national or regional level determines the ranking of candidates on the ballots. This closed ballot structure presents voters with the least choice – that is only to decide between parties and not

nominees. The consequence is that candidates have to please their party leaders first in order to be placed towards the top of the list, rendering close voter links less necessary. To phrase the relation between voters, parties and MPs in the words of Gallagher and Mitchell (2008: 11): ‘In ‘principal-agent’ terms, MPs are the agents; closed list systems seem to assume that parties are the sole principal, while open list systems assume that MPs have two principals, parties and voters.’

Scholars of electoral institutions claim that citizens who choose between individual candidates at the polls have more direct contacts with their MPs than those who elect political parties as a whole (see Norton 2002b). Here, district magnitude and whether elections follow proportional rules as opposed to plurality modes reinforce the effects of the centrality of the electoral structure.⁹¹ The effect of electoral institutions on the relationship between constituents and MPs and between the latter and their parties can be illustrated by the country samples of this study. The electoral systems of Ireland, the UK, and France can be categorised as candidate-based. Irish elections operate under single transferable vote (STV) whereby voters can choose between individual candidates of the same party in multi-member districts. Consequently, constituency service is a strong characterisation of the role of Irish MPs, which is even enhanced by constitutional arrangements facilitating to carry out this particular role. The other side of the coin is that the Irish Parliament is rather weak given the preoccupation of MPs with constituency affairs (O’Halpin 2002). Elections in the UK and France are held under plurality and majority-plurality formulas respectively focussing on the individual candidate in single-member constituencies. In both countries, Parliament is also rather weak, although dominated by the opposition of two main political parties on either side of the political left-right spectrum. MPs compensate their lack of influence in Parliament with the devotion to constituents’ grievances. In Britain, ‘today, being a good constituency member is seen largely as a necessary condition of service for all MPs’ (Norton, 2002b: 20). French MPs are also known for ‘spending more time on local issues than being a national legislator’ (Frears, 1990: 44). Further, this constituency role is underlined by the fact that the majority of French MPs hold another, local office such as that of a Councillor or

⁹¹ Carey and Shugart (1995: 431) propose a relationship, albeit non-linear, between district size and ballot structure decisive for electoral campaigning: the larger the district size under an open ballot structure, the more important the personal reputation of individual candidates competing for votes, while this need to distinguish themselves from electoral competitors decreases with the rising district magnitude in closed ballot systems.

Mayor – a phenomenon known as ‘cumul des mandats’ (accumulation of political mandates).⁹²

In the remaining countries the electoral system can be categorised as party-based. The Dutch can choose individual candidates on predefined party lists, but de facto vote for parties in proportional elections (cf. Andeweg 1997: 112). Further, ‘the electoral system does not result in any form of geographical representation’ (Andeweg 2008: 494), rendering close constituency links unnecessary. Instead, the electoral system produces a multi-party system with a low threshold of 0.67 per cent of the vote for parties to enter Parliament necessitating coalition governments. Germany uses a Mixed-Member-Proportional system. While half of the members are elected directly by plurality mode, the other half enters the Bundestag via the list-system of their party. Nevertheless, party organisations at local and regional level have a strong impact on the selection of candidates. Saalfeld (2002: 55) claims that ‘for a large number of MPs, the extra-parliamentary party organisation is still the most important link with their constituents’. While constituency service is not irrelevant in the German parliamentary tradition, ‘it has to be emphasised that the German system of administrative courts and other institutions serve as functional equivalents to the British constituency member’s role as ‘grievance chaser’’ (ibid.: 61). One could furthermore argue that since parties only put one candidate forward in the first tier of the national ballot, voters de facto choose between parties, and not between individual contenders (see Saalfeld 2008). These characterisations of the German electoral system provide sufficient reasons to classify it as party-based.

The Austrian electoral system is characterised by proportional representation which was reformed in 1992 (see Müller 2008). While voters ‘can indicate their party preference and/or one preferred candidate at the regional and the Land levels’ (ibid.: 402)⁹³, in the third tier they only have the choice between parties and not individual contenders of 183 seats of the Nationalrat. Similar to the German system, parties play a significant role in the selection of individual candidates, even at the regional and Land level where they ‘de facto decide on the candidate lists’ (ibid.: 408). Furthermore, according to Müller and Scheucher (1994: 178ff), only about a third of

⁹² For an overview of French MPs’ various mandates in the current, 13th Parliament see http://www.lemonde.fr/politique/visuel/2009/10/06/cumul-des-mandats-notre-classement-des-deputes_1247998_823448.html (last accessed on 27 October 2011)

⁹³ There are 43 electoral districts distributed among the nine Austrian Lander.

voters show their preference for individual nominees in reality – the rest make their cross behind parties. That is why we should rather classify the electoral system as party based, even though the relatively small number of regional MPs elected to Parliament pursue a more constituency-oriented role than their colleagues recruited via the Land or national tier (see Müller, Jenny et al. 2001).

Given that the media can be understood as a watchdog by holding political representatives publicly accountable as “organizer’ of public opinion’ (Negrine 1996: 110), in countries where individual candidates are elected newsmakers supposedly pay more attention to these, whereas political parties as a whole become more interesting for journalists where electoral systems are party-based. To the knowledge of the author, there has been no comparative research on the impact of electoral rules on the relationship between the media and parliamentary actors at the national level. Following the derivations above, the precise hypothesis here nevertheless suggests that MEPs from countries where the electoral system favours individual candidates at the national polls should receive more media attention than those from member states whose voting systems are based on political party competition – because citizens and therewith readers are more familiar with their MPs’ behaviour at the national level.

Besides the facilitation of news content, the interest of newsmakers is also driven by newsworthiness as outlined in hypothesis H1-B. Here, the news values of prominence and importance come into play. The more influential an individual legislator within the European Parliament by political or parliamentary office, the supposedly more attractive she is for the media. Van Aelst et al. (2010) find that parliamentary experience and professional status matter for the number of personal contacts MPs have with the media in five European countries. Long-serving MEPs and those who have important posts such as the EP President, chairmen of committees and leaders of political groups are therefore expected to have built a stable and large network with the EU press corps which on the one hand ensures reliability of information for journalists (cf. Niven 2005) and in turn enhances the formers’ chances to receive coverage. Another personal auxiliary is the expertise certain MEPs possess in terms of committee memberships and rapporteurships. Especially since legislative processes at the EU level are said to be very complex,

parliamentary experts for various policy issues are supposedly a valued source for correspondents in Brussels.

5.1.2.2 MEPs' incentives to become cited in the press

The other side of the coin is that MEPs have to provide information for newsmakers to publish news stories. The extent to which the European Parliament and groups of political actors are open to media approaches has been discussed in the previous chapter which has by and large concluded as providing good conditions for access to information. At an individual level however, the MEP's willingness to cooperate with the media depends on their career goals. Europe's legislators in general have become increasingly career-oriented (Scarrow 1997). Nowadays, the European Parliament is not necessarily a retirement domicile for domestic politicians anymore, but a stepping stone to many members for a longstanding career in Europe or elsewhere. Recent examples include Nick Clegg who served as a British Liberal Democrat MEP until 2004 before becoming national party leader and deputy Prime Minister in 2007 and 2010, respectively; or Cem Özdemir, the incumbent co-chairman of the German Green party, who was member of the European Parliament between 2004 and 2009. In general, MEPs are therefore expected to actively seek media attention to make themselves noticeable in public assuming that their main goal is to become re-elected or to be considered for another office (cf. Downs 1957).

However, the strategies they employ to become cited in the press supposedly vary among the members. MEPs are first and foremost elected on a national basis. Thus it is likely that they especially target national media outlets whereas they are less interested to be cited by other European media. Secondly, although European Parliament elections operate under Uniform Electoral Procedures laid out in legislation from 2002 whereby electoral rules have to be proportional in all EU member states, ballot structure and district size still vary across countries (Farrell and Scully 2005). The district size measures the number of MEPs to be elected in a district and is either defined by the whole country, as in the case of Germany, the Netherlands and Austria, where all MEPs are elected on a nation-wide basis, or by smaller regions within a country.

Previous research has shown that these two characteristics, ballot structure and district magnitude, are crucial when it comes to individual behaviour of Europe's legislators. Hix and Hagemann (2009) argue that electoral rules impact on the strength of the electoral connection between voters and candidates for the EP exemplified by the 2004 European polls. According to them citizens were more likely to be contacted by candidates or parties in countries which employ an open ballot structure in European elections. This implies that if individual candidates compete for votes with colleagues from the same party, these pursue a more proactive electoral strategy than candidates on pre-selected party lists. Their results further also 'suggest that candidates in larger districts are less likely to campaign directly to voters than candidates in smaller districts'. (*ibid.*: 37). Similarly, Farrell and Scully (2010) argue that electoral rules also shape the representational role understanding and behaviour of legislators once elected to the European Parliament in the sense that 'more 'open' systems are associated with a greater constituency focus by elected representatives' (*ibid.*: 51). Again, this reflects the individual representative's incentives to distinguish herself from fellow MEPs in order to secure more votes in the next election and regain the personal seat in Parliament.

As regards their representations in the quality press, MEPs elected in small districts and those chosen under an open-ballot structure are therefore also expected to pursue a more pro-active media strategy than their colleagues elected in larger districts or under closed or ordered ballots in order to receive credit in public for their parliamentary actions aimed at their personal re-election. And a more active communications approach potentially leads to more attention in the media since newsmakers do not have to spare many efforts when time is scarce to gain access to sources and information (see Niven 2005). Indeed, MEPs elected via party lists also seek media attention to raise their public profile. But since their strategies for re-election are primarily addressed at party elites they supposedly rather focus on other tools for recognition, e.g. voting cohesion and provision of expertise (cf. Hix 2002b; Hix 2004).

To sum up the hypotheses, the main research assumption posits that the way national MPs are elected matters for the salience of MEPs in the news in that the press of countries where candidate-based electoral systems prevail pay more attention to the latter. The alternative hypothesis suggests that electoral procedures relevant for the

European polls play a significant role as well. At the individual level, it is expected that expertise and parliamentary experience contribute considerably to the amount of attention single legislators in Europe receive by the quality press.

5.1.3 Operationalization of the variables

In order to explain the variation in attention individual MEPs receive by broadsheets, the amount of words used for MEP quotations has been recoded into a variable indicating the percentage of these words in relation to the overall article length.⁹⁴ That way, the measure accounts for the space newsmakers are granted by their editors for EU news. Since both country-level, time variables, and factors at the individual level are going to be included in the models to come, only the first MEP mentioned in each article has been considered.⁹⁵ But the total number of single representatives mentioned in the respective articles is being controlled for (*No of MEPs in article*).⁹⁶ N is also largest for the first MEPs with 1795 observations in total ensuring robust results.⁹⁷ Appendix A5.2 provides the descriptive statistics for the dependent variable. Given that in 548 cases these MEPs have not been cited directly and thus for these the dependent variable is zero, the chapter employs Tobit models as before.

The first independent variable of interest is a dummy indicating whether the respective national ballot system is candidate-centred as opposed to party-centred (*GE candidate-centred*). Hypothesis H4-B states that the procedures of the national parliamentary tradition are likely to be reflected in the news content. By measuring electoral structures at the national level the variable itself is a rather abstract and crude measure, but serves well as an indicator about how the representative function in the domestic parliament is performed. The underlining assumption is that national

⁹⁴ Note that Krippendorff's α is at least 0.95 for the original variable *MEP1ownwords* (see Appendix A3.5).

⁹⁵ It is furthermore plausible that only the first MEP is being considered, since news generally report the most important information first. Hence, we can assume that other MEPs are comparatively less relevant for the newsmakers.

⁹⁶ The models have been re-run for the second and third MEP respectively. The Tobit regressions can be found in Appendix A5.5a and A5.5b. However, the main effect of GE candidate-centred is not statistically significant throughout the models given the decreasing size of N. Appendix A5.5c informs about the descriptive statistics of the respective dependent variables.

⁹⁷ Please note that some independent variables have missing values. That is why N varies across the models.

parliamentarians receive more media attention when the electoral system is candidate-centred. It follows that MEPs from countries in which MPs are elected via candidate-based ballots are likely to receive more attention by the respective quality press. At the same time we do not have comparable survey data that informs about the expectations of represented towards their representatives in the respective countries under studies. European-wide surveys such as Eurobarometer or the European Election Survey do not comprise such measures. A few surveys exist at the national level (e.g. Patzelt, 1996; Anker, 2000; Irwin et al. 2005; Houses of Oireachtas Commission, 2007; The Electoral Commission and The Hansard Society, 2007; Ulram, 1997; Ulram & Feistritzer, 1998). But their questions and survey phases differ considerably which prohibits the comparability as to include the respective responses into the models.

The other main independent variables are related to the electoral procedures at the EU level. These measure firstly whether the ballot structure is open, ordered or closed in a given country and are coded as dummies (*EPE Ordered Ballot* and *EPE Open Ballot* included in the models). Closed ballot systems can be found in France, Britain and Germany, whereas the Dutch and Austrians employ an ordered ballot structure. Irish elections use open ballots for European polls. The second measure (*AVG district size (EPE)*) refers to the electoral district size and is included as a continuous variable, ranging from 3.3 for Ireland to 99 for Germany where the whole country serves as the district (data obtained from Hix and Hagemann 2009). The effects of the European Parliament electoral factors are tested separately given the high correlations with the previous variable at the national level. According to the alternative hypotheses presented in this chapter, MEPs elected under an open ballot structure and/or in small districts are expected to be cited more extensively in the press.

The variables relating to the alternative hypotheses for individual factors were obtained from two external datasets. One variable measures the number of reports, irrespective of which legislative procedure, authored by a respective MEP during the whole legislative term of the 6th European Parliament (*MEP1: No of reports*) and has been obtained from Hurka and Kaeding (2011). Although measured for the whole legislative term, it serves as an indicator of expertise. It is expected that a higher number of rapporteurships impacts positively on the amount of attention an

individual MEP receives. *MEP1: No of terms* measures the parliamentary seniority of a European legislator, i.e. the length of time in office, ranging from 1 to 6 and is also expected to have a positive effect on the dependent variable the more experience a legislator has in the EP. This variable as well as the following controlling variables have been gathered from the same dataset by Hurka and Kaeding (2011): Attendance patterns (*MEP1: attendance*) is a continuous variable ranging from 0 to 1 and indicating the percentage of plenary sessions attended during the 6th term; and *MEP1: accession state* is a dummy specifying whether the individual is from one of the 12 new member states.

Information about parliamentary and political posts in the European Parliament has been collected from Høyland et al. (2009). Here, three dummies are included measuring whether the referenced MEP is the EP President (*MEP1: EP President*), a chairman of a parliamentary committee (*MEP1: committee chair*), or a (co-) party leader of a European political group (*MEP1: EP party leader*). These offices combine both seniority and expertise. Consequently, MEPs holding such a position during the time of investigation are expected to be especially attractive for the European press which in turn should boost their coverage in the news.⁹⁸

Another controlling variable is a dummy measuring whether an MEP's political party is a major opposition party in the national government (*MEP1: dom. opposition*). For purposes of simplicity and comparability, only MEPs of the two largest European parties, the EPP and PES, have been considered here. In countries and at times where/when the Christian Democrats/Conservatives were forming a government (with other coalition partners), the Social Democrats were in the opposition and their MEPs (irrespective of their country of origin) have been coded as opposition members accordingly, and vice-versa if the reverse was found to be the case.⁹⁹ The reason for including this variable derives from the literature: Slapin and Proksch (2011) discover that MEPs from national opposition parties are more likely to schedule parliamentary questions to the European Commission. These interpellations are generally known as a tool of public scrutiny aimed at media attention. Legislators seek to raise their own profile in public reflecting the desire of the opposition parties

⁹⁸ Note that the major overturn of parliamentary offices at the beginning of 2007 has been considered for all individual MEPs.

⁹⁹ Note that the governments in Austria and Netherlands changed at the beginning of 2007 comprising both Christian Democrats and Social Democrats. The respective MEPs have thus not been coded as national opposition members.

to (re-)gain executive office after the next elections. In fact, Vliegenthart and Walgrave (2011) find, among other things, that in the national context opposition MPs ask more parliamentary questions than those supporting the government and especially on issues the media has already paid attention to. Thus, here a positive effect is expected on the dependent variables: if an MEP is member of the major national opposition party, she should be quoted more extensively. If we find a significant impact, it not only implies that the news value of domestic relevance applies here, but that pan-European party ideology has an effect on the domestic public sphere.

The only control the analysis is unable to consider since no records are available is the amount of resources individual MEPs have at hand to employ public relations strategies. The remaining controlling variables have already been used in the previous chapter and require no further introduction. These comprise: *EP sitting*, *BS circulation*, *No of correspondents*, *Centre-right BS*, *Business BS*, and *EU support for EU*.¹⁰⁰ As before, the dummies referring to the type of media system (*MS liberal* and *MS polarised-pluralist*) are included once in the general model. Time dummies have been included this time. The analysis will show that the results hold even when controlling for monthly effects. Standard errors clustered by newspaper and by country again serve as robustness checks (see Chapter 4). Jack-knife tests are also conducted this time but the findings are reported in the appendix (A5.6).

5.1.4 Findings: the impact of the national electoral system

Table 5.2 shows the Tobit regressions for the models explaining the effects on the attention MEPs receive by the press in terms of direct quotations. The main purpose of the models is to detect whether there is any effect of the national electoral system on the extent to which MEPs are cited in the respective broadsheets. Models 1A to 3A show that this effect is indeed statistically significant controlling for all other independent variables and time effects. That is to say, in countries which employ candidate-centred ballot systems in national general elections, MEPs receive about three per cent more attention in the press through direct quotes than in countries

¹⁰⁰ The descriptive statistics and correlations for the independent variables can be found in Appendix A5.3 and A5.4 respectively.

where political parties dominate in elections. This effect still holds when conducting the jack-knife tests (Appendix A5.6). The problem with this variable is however, that it is a dummy dividing the country selection into two groups (Ireland, Great Britain and France vs. the Netherlands, Germany and Austria). In fact, we cannot be sure whether another system related effect is driving the results.

Models 5A and 5B shows that if categorised by type of media system, MEPs quoted in newspapers which are distributed in liberal and polarised-pluralist media systems receive more attention than in in the democratic-corporatist systems which happen to be the three latter countries (by 2.98% and 3.98% respectively). So, what is it that divides the countries into these two groups? Although the previous chapter identified differences across types of media systems to impact on the variation in news coverage, here it is difficult to accept as an explanation since when looking at the relationship between politicians and newsmakers in liberal and polarised-pluralist systems we find severe differences (see Hallin and Mancini 2004). Journalists in the former are much more autonomous than their colleagues in the latter type of system where a strong political parallelism prevails and the news media is often subject to instrumentalisation by their owners. Therefore, newsmakers have a different approach to politicians. In the polarised-pluralist system, here exemplified by France, it is likely that certain politicians and reporters have a much closer relationship depending on their political affiliation. Although the British press is highly partisan – unlike the Irish print media, newsmakers are much more prone to investigative journalism (see also Donsbach and Patterson 2004). Further, there is reason to believe that we also find variation of professional role understanding in the democratic-corporatist type of media system. German newspaper journalists are known for their interpretative and opinionated role which they pursue with a decent degree of autonomy (see Donsbach and Patterson, 2004; Esser 1998). Evidence from the interviews however, suggests that Dutch newsmakers have a different approach to politics. One stated: ‘We are on the Anglo-Saxon side (which emphasised facts); I never try to show my opinion. The French have them of course, but we focus on news’ (NL-2).¹⁰¹ All told, given the severe differences between the journalistic

¹⁰¹ Deuze (2002: 65ff) finds that Dutch journalists are especially motivated by delivering news quickly to the public. Still, analysis and interpretation as the voice of the people is another important criterion for newsmaking in the Netherlands. However, according to Deuze journalists understand themselves as advocates of public opinion more often than their German colleagues.

professions and subjective role understanding across the countries of this study, it is unlikely to expect that the cross-country differences in the salience of MEPs in the news can be explained by different characterisations of media systems.

One could be accused here that the varying manner of direct quotations is due to differences in journalistic styles. However, even if that was the case, it could in turn be argued that such styles root in the domestic political communication systems. The bottom-line then is that newsmakers apply the same quotation criteria for parliamentarians in the domestic context. Hence, an effect of the electoral system employed for national parliamentary elections is much more reasonable instead – especially when interpreting the effects of the remaining variables (or rather lack thereof).

Table 5.2: Tobit models, predicting variation in quotation length of MEPs

	Model 1A	Model 1B	Model 2A	Model 2B	Model 3A	Model 3B	Model 4A	Model 4B	Model 5A	Model 5B
GE candidate-centred	3.23*** (1.03)	3.23*** (.73)	3.35*** (.93)	3.35*** (.75)	3.39*** (.98)	3.39*** (.72)				
No of MEPs in article	-1.80*** (.43)	-1.80*** (.69)	-1.71*** (.44)	-1.71** (.68)	-1.65*** (.44)	-1.65** (.68)	-1.66*** (.44)	-1.66** (.68)	-1.66*** (.45)	-1.66** (.69)
EP sitting	-1.22*** (.44)	-1.22*** (.38)	-1.26*** (.39)	-1.26*** (.36)	-1.14*** (.41)	-1.14*** (.34)	-1.24*** (.42)	-1.24*** (.36)	-1.14*** (.41)	-1.14*** (.34)
BS circulation (10000s)	-.00* (.00)	-.00** (.00)	-.00* (.00)	-.00** (.00)	-.00** (.00)	-.00** (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	-.00** (.00)	-.00** (.00)
BS No of staff	-1.31*** (.42)	-1.31*** (.49)	-1.29*** (.40)	-1.29*** (.47)	-1.33*** (.38)	-1.33*** (.46)	-.93** (.36)	-.93** (.45)	-1.40*** (.40)	-1.40*** (.48)
Centre right BS	-1.57 (1.20)	-1.57 (1.47)	-1.64 (1.10)	-1.64 (1.33)	-1.71 (1.12)	-1.71 (1.37)	-1.48 (.96)	-1.48 (1.38)	-1.65 (1.10)	-1.65 (1.40)
Business BS	-3.48*** (1.17)	-3.48*** (1.27)	-3.44*** (1.12)	-3.44*** (1.13)	-3.38*** (1.15)	-3.38*** (1.16)	-3.20*** (1.20)	-3.20** (1.62)	-3.41*** (1.12)	-3.41*** (1.17)
EB support for EU	.07* (.04)	.07*** (.02)	.07* (.04)	.07*** (.03)	.07* (.03)	.07*** (.02)	.11** (.04)	.11*** (.03)	.07** (.03)	.07*** (.03)
MEP1: No of reports			-.04 (.04)	-.04** (.02)	-.05 (.04)	-.05** (.02)	-.04 (.04)	-.04*** (.02)	-.04 (.04)	-.04*** (.02)
MEP1: attendance			-5.16 (5.72)	-5.16 (8.10)	-4.73 (5.60)	-4.73 (7.66)	-3.76 (5.70)	-3.76 (8.03)	-4.8 (5.65)	-4.80 (7.68)
MEP1: No of terms			.20 (.25)	.20 (.26)	.31 (.26)	.31 (.26)	.35 (.27)	.35 (.27)	.30 (.26)	.30 (.26)
MEP1: EP President			-5.15** (2.28)	-5.15*** (1.80)	-5.25** (2.23)	-5.25*** (1.84)	-5.47** (2.25)	-5.47*** (1.85)	-5.34** (2.24)	-5.34*** (1.86)
MEP1: committee chair			-3.04* (1.69)	-3.04 (1.90)	-3.03* (1.68)	-3.03 (1.85)	-2.74 (1.69)	-2.74 (1.86)	-3.05* (1.70)	-3.05 (1.86)

Continued on the next page...

<i>... continued</i>	Model 1A	Model 1B	Model 2A	Model 2B	Model 3A	Model 3B	Model 4A	Model 4B	Model 5A	Model 5B
MEP1: EP party leader			-2.25*** (.70)	-2.25** (.92)	-2.20*** (.78)	-2.20** (1.06)	-2.27*** (.79)	-2.27** (1.09)	-2.19*** (.79)	-2.19** (1.07)
MEP1: dom. opposition			1.35 (1.02)	1.35 (1.18)	1.42 (.90)	1.42 (1.05)	1.54* (.89)	1.54 (1.02)	1.42 (.90)	1.42 (1.05)
MEP1: accession state			-2.92* (1.75)	-2.92* (1.71)	-2.58 (1.92)	-2.58 (1.64)	-2.74 (1.87)	-2.74* (1.62)	-2.63 (1.87)	-2.63 (1.63)
EPE Ordered Ballot							-1.71 (1.44)	-1.71 (1.67)		
EPE Open Ballot							-1.84 (2.89)	-1.84 (2.79)		
AVG district size (EPE)							-.07*** (.01)	-.07*** (.00)		
MS liberal									2.98** (1.35)	2.98*** (1.11)
MS polarised-pluralist									3.98*** (.98)	3.98*** (.45)
Time Dummies	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
SE clustered by	Newspaper	Country	Newspaper	Country	Newspaper	Country	Newspaper	Country	Newspaper	Country
Constant	9.59*** (2.43)	9.59*** (.60)	14.30** (5.57)	14.30** (7.03)	14.25*** (5.40)	14.25** (6.87)	13.97*** (4.89)	13.97** (5.46)	14.18*** (5.40)	14.18** (6.88)
Sigma Constant	12.70*** (1.53)	12.70*** (2.29)	12.59*** (1.50)	12.59*** (2.24)	12.52*** (1.48)	12.52*** (2.20)	12.48*** (1.48)	12.48*** (2.20)	12.52*** (1.48)	12.52*** (2.20)
N	1794	1794	1765	1765	1765	1765	1765	1765	1765	1765
Pseudo R Squared	.0182	.0182	.0213	.0213	.0230	.0230	.0240	.0240	.0231	.0231

Legend: * p<.1; ** p<.05; *** p<.01, adjusted standard errors in brackets; dependent variable: Percentage of cited words for the first MEP per article

On the other hand, when countries are categorised into different electoral procedures at the European level (Models 4A and 4B) the ballot structure is not a significant factor able to explain the differences across countries. This could potentially be due to the small number of countries included in the sample of which the British case might be an outlier as they only recently (in 1999 for the 5th legislative term of the EP) changed their electoral system from plurality mode to proportional representation under a closed ballot structure. Only district magnitude serves as a plausible explanation for variation in the dependent variable. In fact, the larger the district the slightly shorter – by about 0.07% – the quotations of individual MEPs relative to the total article length. This partially lends support to the alternative hypothesis presented above deriving that MEPs in smaller districts have supposedly a more pro-active media approach for their purpose of re-election than MEPs elected in larger districts. However, the ballot structure is not decisive and the effect of district size only marginal. The results could therefore equally be interpreted in terms of country size. Given that Austria, for instance, has only one electoral district for the EP elections, but it only comprises 18 candidates, the fact that there are fewer MEPs to pay attention to by the domestic quality press than in Germany with 99 MEPs might here also serve as a probable reason.

Despite the crude result, the impact of the national electoral system, by the extent to which it is based on the vote for parties or individual candidates, seems the most plausible explanation for the variation in the dependent variable. The effects become even more reasonable in light of the alternative hypotheses: when looking at the weight of individual-level variables, parliamentary expertise and seniority of parliamentary membership do not contribute significantly to the attention MEPs receive by direct quotations. In fact, these impacts are at best negative. If a respective MEP is the EP President or leader of a European political group, the quotations are significantly shorter by about 2.19 to 5.47 percentage points across all models. It shows that the news value of prominence is unlikely to be a decisive criterion for newsmakers in Brussels to cite individual MEPs, although these findings might simply imply that the more senior and powerful MEPs are not easily accessible for journalists and hence are quoted less often directly.¹⁰²

¹⁰² Remarkably however, Appendix A5.5b reveals that attendance rates and the number of terms served matter for the attention the third MEP receives in the respective articles. The models

In addition, the total number of MEPs mentioned in an article impacts negatively on the dependent variable meaning that the more MEPs are referred to the less attention a single one receives – which is not a contradictory finding. The fact that European Parliament is meeting for plenary sessions has negative consequences for the visibility of MEPs in the news. On days when the EP meets in Strasbourg, its members are cited less comprehensively (-1.14% in Models 3A and 3B). This demonstrates that EP plenary sessions do not have a publicity effect by means of the activities and stances of individual MEPs. It shows that the press does not necessarily cite MEPs while actively contributing to parliamentary debates. Instead, MEPs receive more attention when they are in Brussels (or elsewhere). Given the advanced communication technologies, it is unlikely that this finding is due to the lack of information in case correspondents do not travel to Strasbourg. Rather, it shows that MEPs' opinions are not limited to their debating roles. But their expertise and advice matter more in the day-to-day Brussels political affairs.

The number of correspondents employed in Brussels by a particular newspaper also contributes negatively to the length of MEP quotations (-1.33% in Models 3A and 3B). While this finding might be peculiar, there is a plausible explanation seeing that once the German sample is removed the effect is not statistical significant anymore (see Appendix A5.6 – Models 5A and 5B). German broadsheets employ the highest number of staff in this selection which coincides with the fact that these quote MEPs less comprehensively. Further, the models comply with the descriptions above: business or financial broadsheets provide about 3.38% (Models 3A and 3B) shorter direct quotations of MEPs compared to political papers.

In most models, the controlling variable describing public support for EU membership also has a statistically significant effect. It is line with what has been identified in the previous chapter: the higher the public support, the slightly more comprehensive the direct quotations of MEPs in the news (0.07% in Models 3A and 3B) – without ignoring a possible reciprocal effect. However, we do not know whether pro-European MEPs receive more attention in this case. In the following part of this chapter it will be examined whether, according to H3-B, Eurosceptic

show that those MEPs who more frequently attend plenary sessions are cited more comprehensively. Those longer in office, on the other hand, slightly receive less attention by the quality press.

actors are more prominent in the news in countries, where support levels are rather low.

Overall, the models do not provide much support for the characteristics of individual MEPs as a positive means for being granted a voice in the news. Electoral rules for European elections are not a strong predictor of variation in attention Europe's legislators receive either. And the effects of media systems are not convincing in this respect. Nevertheless, the most significant and plausible effect we find is across countries, dividing Ireland, Britain and France on the one side, and the Netherlands, Germany and Austria on the other side. Given the crude measure, it has to be verified though whether this division is due to the electoral system. A large country sample could offer a more robust explanation. Alternatively, a thorough analysis of the actual content of news enriched by the comments of the correspondents delivers more comprehensive answers to the research question addressed in this chapter.

5.2. Representations of MEPs

The previous analysis only provided few cues about the factors responsible for the presence of parliamentary actors in the news while contending that electoral rules used for national elections supposedly impact on the amount of attention MEPs receive in the news. The next question therefore has to be, which MEPs are referenced in the news? Such an analysis also offers explanations why these particular legislators receive attention and not others. The question here is whether, according to hypothesis H1-B, the domestic perspective as a news frame followed by conflict and importance is an appropriate description for news content about MEPs.¹⁰³ H3-B will also be tested in terms of references to Eurosceptic MEPs in countries less supportive of EU integration. The enquiry then moves on to investigate whether any of the individual-level hypotheses presented above hold when examining the data more closely. The next sub-section (5.2.1) will answer these questions. A second step (5.2.2) is to look more closely at the characteristics which accompany the presentation of parliamentary actors in the press. These specifically address references to their parliamentary roles as well as questions of party

¹⁰³ Note that the previous chapter has already addressed H1-B by a measure of prominent issues in the news.

membership and voter representation. Here, the specific interest of the chapter is to investigate whether characteristics of the national parliamentary culture are actually reflected in news content about EU parliamentary actors as hypothesised in H4-B which would lead to the conclusion that MEPs are perceived as deputies for MPs; or whether the EU parliamentary culture by means of representatives is by and large presented in a similar way across countries.

5.2.1 Personal attributes of MEPs as a driver for news coverage

The previous chapter has identified the news value of domestic relevance as one of the crucial determiners of EP press coverage. Building on Galtung and Ruge's (1965: 71) proposition that news selection criteria, once applicable, also shape the content of news in its presentation, it can be therefore expected here that domestic parliamentary actors are given preference in the news as opposed to other, European legislators.

Table 5.3 provides a ranking of the most popular MEPs in the news of each country.¹⁰⁴ In the British case, the number of references is lower since there were comparatively fewer articles published mentioning the EP, let alone MEPs as seen in Table 5.1. Strikingly, in all countries except France, the own domestic MEPs (indicated in bold letters) are mentioned most often.

¹⁰⁴ Note that Krippendorff's α for references to MEP1 to MEP5 ranges from 0.64 to 1 (see Appendix A3.5).

Table 5.3: MEPs mentioned in the press across country, ranked by the number of references

Ireland	Great Britain	France	Netherlands	Germany	Austria
Mairead McGuinness (54)	Sarah Ludford (11)	Hans-Gert Poettering (37)	Sophia in't Veld (26)	Martin Schulz (75)	Othmar Karas (43)
Proinsias De Rossa (49)	Chris Heaton-Harris (8)	Josep Borrell (36)	Kathalijne Buitenweg & Dorette Corbey (24)	Hans-Gert Pöttering (64)	Hannes Swoboda (39)
Gay Mitchell (45)	Daniel Hannan & Hans-Gert Poettering (7)	Martin Schulz (27)	Hans-Gert Poettering & Joost Lagendijk (23)	Elmar Brok (47)	Hans-Peter Martin (29)
Simon Coveney (44)	Josep Borrell (6)	Daniel Cohn-Bendit (24)	Jan Mulder, Camiel Eurlings & Jan Marinus Wiersma (17)	Markus Ferber (44)	Johannes Voggenhuber (27)
Eoin Ryan (41)	Martin Schulz (5)	Graham Watson (19)	Max van den Berg (16)	Evelyne Gebhardt (40)	Paul Ruebig (22)
Avril Doyle (35)		Alain Lamassoure (15)	Josep Borrell (13)	Georg Jarzemowski (32)	Maria Berger (18)
Jim Higgins (29)		Bronislaw Geremek, Bruno Gollnisch & Malcolm Harbour (12)	Jules Maaten (12)	Karl-Heinz Florenz (29)	Josep Borrell (17)
Brian Crowley (26)		Guido Sacconi (11)	Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, Ria Oomen-Ruijten, Joop Post (10)	Hiltrud Breyer (27)	Reinhard Rack (15)
Kathy Sinnott (22)		Pervenche Beres, Benoit Hamon, Francis Wurtz (8)	Giovanni Claudio Fava (9)	Josep Borrell (26)	Herbert Boesch (14)
Sean O Neachtain (20)		Pierre Moscovici (7)	Bert Doorn (8)	Hartmut Nassauer (25)	Hans-Gert Poettering & Martin Schulz (13)
Josep Borrell (18)				Alexander Radwan, Werner Langen (24)	Joerg Leichtfried (12)

Legend: Actual number of references in brackets; MEPs elected in the respective countries are indicated in bold letters; the table considers all MEPs mentioned in the articles, regardless of whether they have been cited, or whether they have been mentioned first or last

In fact, most correspondents affirmed that the angle of reporting would predominantly be national which underlines previous findings in this field as well as the hypothesis which states that the news value of domestic relevance matters here: ‘When was the last time Martin Schulz¹⁰⁵ said something of relevance for the British readership?’, alleged a reporter from the UK (GB-1) implying that any pan-European

¹⁰⁵ Note that Martin Schulz was the leader of the PES/S&D since 2004 until he got elected President of the European Parliament in January 2012.

linkage between representatives and represented is very weak. In that sense ‘all what happens here [in Brussels], especially in Parliament, gets distilled into the national [perspective]’ (DE-6).

‘If you have an Italian Socialist against a Conservative ... nobody cares in Germany. Who knows them anyways? It doesn’t have any meaning for German politics. As long as there is no European public sphere, nothing much will happen in that respect [...]’ (DE-2)

Most prefer their own national MEPs since ‘it’s easier to connect to Austrian delegates, especially regarding regional topics such as transport’ (AT-1) and, in the Irish case, an Irish MEP would ‘know the audience’ (IE-1) and was able to relate to them. Furthermore, ‘delegates complain that they not often get cited’ which is another reason why journalists in Brussels would talk to their own nationals first when required (AT-2). In fact:

‘German press officers want to place MEPs in German newspapers. [Werner] Langen doesn’t get anything out of being reported in Le Monde.’ (DE-3)

Yet, another one stated that domestic relevance is not always applicable:

‘We focus more on the outcome [than on people], what the law is going to be. In the food labelling case it happened to be German rapporteur, one of the most important people to talk to. (GB-3)

The French newspapers of this study are the only ones which prefer MEPs who hold important posts in the European Parliament, such as European Party leaders (Schulz, Pöttering until December 2006, Cohn-Bendit, Watson), and President of the European Parliament (Borrell, Pöttering from January 2007) regardless of their nationality. This reflects the regression results of the jack-knife test in Appendix A5.6 – Models 3A and 3B: When the French newspapers are omitted from the statistical analysis the effect of the origin of an individual MEP becomes statistically significant indicating that MEPs from newer member states receive less attention in the press (-4.28%) than those from the old-15 to which all countries of this sample belong. That is to say that the news value of domestic relevance does not necessarily hold for the French quality press with respect to the representations of MEPs. A correspondent explained why this is the case:

'Sometimes it is interesting not to have contacts with your own nationals; because sometimes it is interesting to understand the point of view of different countries, different nationalities.' (FR-2)

A stark contrast can be found in the German broadsheets which stress German MEPs more than other legislators in general. However, this finding also coincides with the fact that these are important office-holders in the European Parliament such as party leaders (Schulz, Pöttering), committee chairs (Brok, Florenz) and rapporteurs (e.g. Gebhardt for the services directive, and Ferber for budgetary reports and amending Directive 97/67/EC on postal services). In fact, prominence matters here as a news value. 'We don't speak to backbenchers!' a German journalist claimed (DE-1); and a French one underlined the news value of importance:

'I know a few MEPs, the most important ones, the most powerful and influential, but I am not very interested in one MEP who is not influential, trying to have contact with me, because he has nothing to say' (FR-2)

These findings contradict the results from the regressions to the extent that office and parliamentary seniority indeed matter as regards the attention different MEPs receive – at least in the French and German case and in terms of references to these individuals (and not length of quotations) as most of the high-ranked European legislators in these two countries also happen to be long-serving members of the EP. This might have something to do with the fact that both countries are major founding members of the European Union and their elites are in favour of European integration promoting European values as opposed to mere domestic interests. A French reporter underlined this point when asked about the French reader:

'Maybe, we [the French] are a bit more interested in Europe. But I would not say that is the main ground. We are more concerned by EU integration, but [in terms of being] a political project. I think it's the same in Germany: it's not only about the free market, but also a political project to unify Europe, with a bit of democracy which is interesting in this very technical construction.' (FR-2)

In the British press, on the contrary, European legislators are not deemed very important at all regardless of their parliamentary or political office:

'It's a difference when you say 'some powerful US-Congressman said this yesterday'... you can tell an editor that - it resonates with them. Whatever he [the Congressman] says, it's going to be significant. Graham Watson?¹⁰⁶ You have to explain who he is, why he is important, trying to make the case...' (GB-3)

While this underlines once more the central role of the editor at home in deciding what the national audience is going to read – in this case who they are going to read about – others give precedence to governmental actors. Here, the opinion of MEPs is at times deemed less relevant than that of the heads of government as one Austrian correspondent explained:

'Sometimes [I tell MEPs]: sorry, [I am not interested in] what you think about the Euro regime. I just have space for Merkel and Sarkozy¹⁰⁷... Other opinions are sometimes more important.' (AT-2)

Nevertheless, the Irish quality press is the most extreme in terms of referring to own MEPs only. Josep Borrell as EP President received only 18 hits as the most prominent European MEP on rank 11 compared to Mairead McGuinness who was referred to 54 times out of 385 articles.¹⁰⁸ Although Irish correspondents are aware of other European legislative characters such as Daniel Cohn-Bendit, who is a ‘major international figure’ and ‘always being footed’ according to an Irish correspondent (IE-2), Irish MEPs receive the most attention in the respective press. According to the same correspondent most of them are ‘political figures who made their name in domestic politics beforehand’ (IE-2).

The findings from Table 5.3 also provide insight into another phenomenon: In the two countries where the public is least in favour of EU membership (as seen in chapter 3 – Figure 3.1), namely the UK and Austria, two prominent soft-Eurosceptic MEPs rank third in the respective newspapers. According to Taggart and Szczerbiak (2002: 7) soft-Eurosceptic MEPs do not have ‘a principled objection to European

¹⁰⁶ Note that Graham Watson is a Briton and was serving as a party group leader of the ‘Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe’ in the 6th legislative term of the EP.

¹⁰⁷ Angela Merkel has been Chancellor of Germany since 2005 and Nicolas Sarkozy President of France since 2007. Both have taken the lead in finding solutions to tackle the so-called Euro crisis.

¹⁰⁸ The reader might raise her concerns with regards to a possible bias in the Irish press since only few observations have been included here for the Sunday Business Post. Appendix A5.7 shows, however, that this paper also prefers Irish MEPs over European legislators from other countries.

integration or EU membership but [...] concerns on one (or a number) of policy areas [which] lead to the expression of qualified opposition to the EU'. This qualified opposition appears to be attractive material for controversial news and represents an indicator for the applicability of the conflict news value. Daniel Hannan is a prominent member of the European Tories and actually left the EPP-ED after rows with his fellows in 2008 and sat as a non-attached member before he was re-elected to the EP in 2009. He and his party are now member of the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR). According to one British correspondent, many MEPs, among them Daniel Hannan, would 'use the EP as a stage [...] for theatrical purposes to get noticed' (GB-2). Hans-Peter Martin from Austria was a non-attached MEP in the sixth legislative term, also known as a whistle blower demanding more transparency of EU politics. He got into several arguments with many of his previous party colleagues in the SPO and his own party list especially about MEPs' expenses. In 2005 he also established together with the Dutchman Paul van Buitenen and the Brit Ashley Mote the Platform for Transparency, a quasi-group in the EP.

However, Paul van Buitenen, MEP between 2004 and 2009, is not among the most often referenced legislators in the Dutch press which might reflect the positive attitudes of Dutch citizens towards EU membership and the resulting lower interest in the former's particular opinion. Similarly, Kathy Sinnott, an Irish independent MEP critical of the European Union, does not receive as much attention by the press in the pro-European country as many of her Irish colleagues. This implies that conflict and controversies furthered by negative attitudes of individual MEPs towards the EU and dismissive behaviour inside the European Parliament leads to more coverage of their respective stances – but only in the countries where the public is receptive enough because many citizens share such positions as was hypothesised in H3-B. However, 'personalisation and scandalisation' (DE-4) also matters in other countries. Remarkably though, one Dutch correspondent alleges that members of the Dutch Eurosceptic PVV (Partij voor de Vrijheid – Party for Freedom) would neither seek nor receive much media attention.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ Note that they got elected to the EP for the first time in 2009 and thus are not part of the news content investigated here. Further at the time of the interview, the PVV was not yet tolerating the Dutch minority government under Mark Rutte (CDA) who resumed office as Prime Minister on 14 October 2010.

'The PPV is a strange party, very a-typical. Geert Wilders more or less tries to ignore me here. He hardly gives any interviews. All the others love to talk. I don't know what they are doing, although I have been trying to follow them for a year now. They must be quite frustrated, the way the systems works, they don't get anything done. In national politics, the parliament serves as a podium [...] But if someone here does that, no-one notices [...]' (NL-2)

This shows, on the other hand, that some European representatives do not see much of a chance in communicating their objectives responsively to their represented and supposedly pursue different political strategies at home and in the European arena. In this case, the messenger cannot be blamed as such.

Nevertheless, the messengers, i.e. the newsmakers in Brussels, apply several rules in order for MEPs to be referenced in the news. We have learnt thus far that a domestic angle prevails in the presentation of European legislators in the press; European actors are only deemed newsworthy in the French press. While the importance of the individual legislators in terms of expertise and parliamentary seniority matter in some broadsheets, most notably in the French and German papers, other newspapers also feature some soft-Eurosceptic MEPs more prominently than the rest which is especially true for the British and Austrian press. They probably respond to a rather hostile readership given the low public support levels in these countries for EU membership. This lends support to hypothesis H-3B in that attitudes towards the European Union also matter for the presentation of news content. At the same time, party polarization over EU integration is considerably high in Austria and Britain which would lend partial support to the alternative hypothesis of political contestation (see Schuck et al. 2011). Yet, it reaches similar levels in France and the Netherlands, which do not feature prominent Eurosceptic MEPs in the press (see Appendix A4.2). But the findings also provide support to the verification of hypothesis H1-B in the sense that news values of domestic relevance, importance and conflict are commonly applied.

The next section looks at what characteristics accompany the presentation of parliamentary activities at the EU level in order to determine whether the national parliamentary culture is reflected in the news or not. The question is whether explanations for the dominance of certain actors can be linked to the way national MPs and/or MEPs are elected.

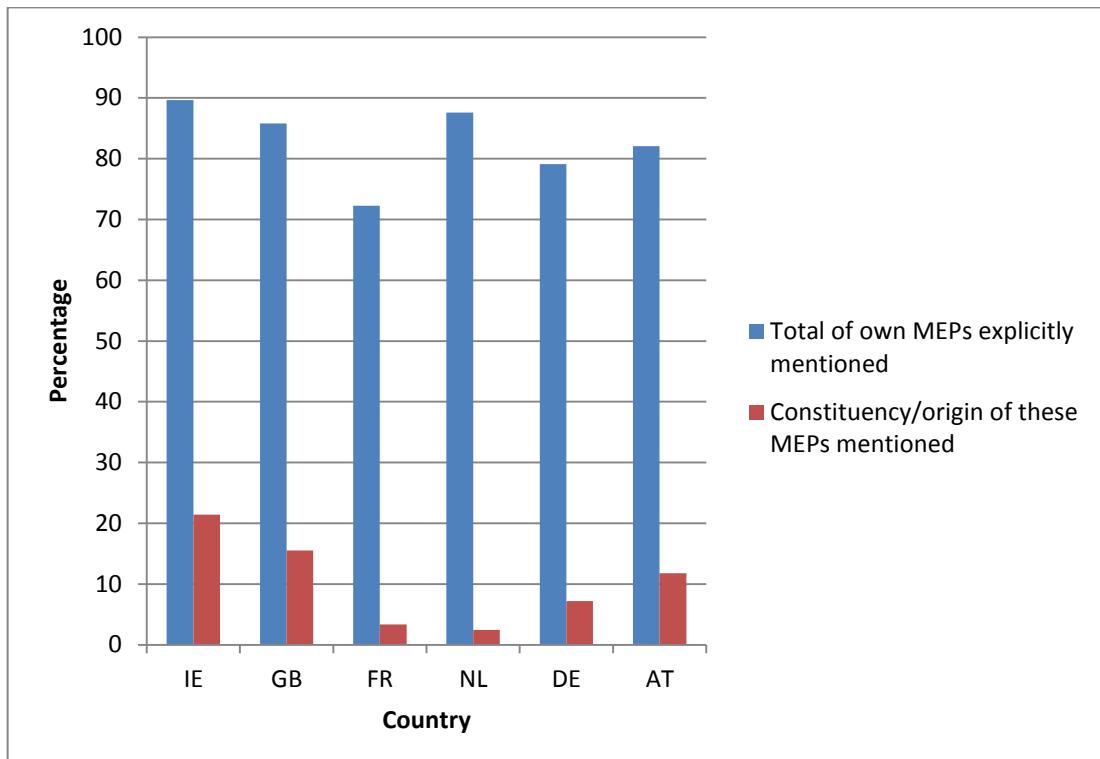
5.2.2 Similarities in the presentation of MEPs with attributes of MPs

The readership is central to the presentation of news. In line with previous expectations (see Gleissner and de Vreese 2005, Statham 2006) many correspondents believed that their readers do not have much knowledge about how the EU works. They would perceive the EU with its institutions, political processes and actors ‘fairly often undifferentiated as one unit, as all the same’ (DE-2). In fact, as one reporter put it: ‘even though my newspaper has the most educated readers in the Netherlands, as the most serious newspaper, [...] I assume they know nothing!’ (NL-2). Thus, news from Brussels and the European Parliament in particular is not facilitating to communicate, especially since ‘even political editors [at the home office] confuse the issues’ (DE-2) – a statement which underlines once again that correspondents have to anticipate the editor’s taste at the home office. At the same time, being part of the elite in Brussels, some journalists also aim at refining their reader’s knowledge of the European Union, and especially the European Parliament one having claimed that ‘you do hope to educate your readership at least a little bit’ (NL-2). Nevertheless, ‘citizens don’t know very much about politics in general’ and therefore ‘everyone tries to bring the process much closer to the reader, the same holds for the correspondent in Berlin’ (DE-5). The later statement though implies that national politics are also not easy to follow for citizens and thus EU (parliamentary) politics would not be a different phenomenon. The final question to answer therefore addresses the actual characteristics of news content about EU parliamentary affairs which supposedly help the reader understand EU parliamentary affairs better.

Figure 5.2 shows the number of instances in which the constituency or origin of individual MEPs was mentioned in the news.¹¹⁰ Indeed, some domestic MEPs do not have geographic constituencies in countries where nation-wide lists systems for the European elections prevail, which is the case for Germany, Austria and the Netherlands. Here, the reference to the region of origin (e.g. Bavaria) or home town of an MEP counts towards this particular investigation. In France, Ireland, and the United Kingdom, some greater regions (8, 4 and 12 respectively) define the electoral districts for European elections.

¹¹⁰ Krippendorff’s α for references to the constituency or origin of MEP1 to MEP5 ranges from 0.67 to 1 (see Appendix A3.5).

Figure 5.2: Instances in which the constituency/origin of MEPs is mentioned



Remarkably, for more than a fifth of Irish MEPs the electoral constituency was explicitly mentioned (21.45%). Similarly, for 15.53% of MEPs referred in the British press, the information of their electoral district was provided to the reader. The explanation can be based on the characteristics of the two electoral systems. Firstly, the average district size for European elections is rather small in both countries (3.3 in Ireland and 6.8 in the UK) and thus the constituency as such is identifiable for the reader. Secondly, readers are probably used to knowing the regional affiliation of their representatives. British MPs are recruited from single-member constituencies. That is why one correspondent suggests that ‘MEPs should do more in their local areas to become better known’ (GB-1) which again resembles expectations towards representation in the national context since representation of citizens’ interest is largely focussed on the geographic constituency (Norton 2002a). Plus Ireland despite having multi-member constituencies is a rather small country, where members of the Dáil are elected in open ballots by STV with voters being left with a choice between individual candidates. And STV is even used in European elections, which explains why Irish MEPs are furthermore known to ‘also display considerable attachment to the idea of constituency service’ (O’Halpin 2002: 114, following Katz: 1997: 218). An Irish correspondent underlined that MEPs would be ‘overly accessible like Irish politicians’ by keeping a ‘very personal’ relationship with voters (IE-2). And another

one added that the own national MEPs are much better known since ‘Irish politics are very much personality’ (IE-1).

However, in Britain where the electoral system only changed in 1999 from a majority vote similar to the one in national elections towards proportional representation, MEPs are reportedly hardly known. Additionally, ‘there isn’t a fantastic dialogue between MEPs and the media, occasionally, yes, but very few get in touch with the national media’ (GB-1) which might be due to the fact that after 1999 the ballot structure changed to closed party lists. As hypothesised above, MEPs elected via party lists are supposedly less inclined to pursue a pro-active media approach but seek to reach their goals of re-election by their party political behaviour.

The small country size as in Ireland is probably also a reason why the geographic origin of MEPs matters still considerably in the Austrian quality press (11.78% of instances). Although Austria – like Holland and to some extent Germany – can be characterised by a party-based electoral system, an Austrian journalist says that ‘half of them [the Austrian representatives] are certainly popular’ (AT-2):

‘The reader knows someone like Mister Karas, is interested in the person as well; he elected him or not, and he is the contact person for the industry if they want pursue some lobbying.’ (AT-2)

This corresponds to the findings in Table 5.3 demonstrating that Othmar Karas receives more attention than his Austrian colleagues in the respective press. It also underlines the particularities of the electoral system used in Austrian general elections which allows for some preferential voting. Constituency service is therefore not unfamiliar to Austrian citizens and provides a plausible explanation for why the respective press often refers to the local origins of their MEPs. However, experiences with the electoral system used in the domestic context are not the only explanation for a greater popularity of European legislators. Instead, and as shown in Table 5.2 – Models 3A and 3B, the district size for European elections matters as well as Austria only elects 18 MEPs on a national basis. Therefore, both factors taken together can be summarised with the words of a reporter from Germany, where the EU district size is the largest among all European electoral systems (99) coupled with a party dominance during national elections, who believes that MEPs would receive ‘no pressure from voters’ (DE-5).

French and German broadsheets, however, are the odd ones out again. According to the hypotheses about the impact of electoral rules, relatively to the other newspapers, the French press should refer to the individual's constituency much more often, given the relatively small district size used for European elections (9.8) and the candidate-centred focus of national elections; the German sheets, on the other hand, are expected to neglect the regional affiliation more often given the party-based ballots at the national level. The latter phenomenon though could be related to the strong federalist structure of the German state – Shepard and Scully (2002: 170) argue that for EP elections ‘there are elements in the German electoral system which suggest a regional approach’. According to these authors, parties have the option to select candidates for EP office by Land which is most probably due to the federal structure of political party organisations in Germany. Further, ‘successful candidates are grouped by Land and national party affiliation on the German EP Information Office site’ (*ibid.*: 170). Therefore, also for the quality press it is a cultural, political and economic difference and thus crucial in some cases whether a politician is from Bremen or Munich – and given that the political newspapers have a large regional readership, the frequent references to the MEPs’ local origin are actually plausible. Similarly, German MPs maintain according to Saalfeld (2002: 55) close regional contacts with their voters, although the regional party organisation is still somewhat more important for MPs for purposes of reselection for the next election. Thus the above findings can still be explained with the understanding German citizens have of their domestic parliamentary culture.

The findings for the French press, on the other hand, cannot necessarily be explained by the domestic parliamentary tradition. Despite the fact that the French Parliament’s public significance is undermined by the importance of presidential politics (Bell 2004), French MPs are known for their constituency role by acting as intermediaries between the local people and the national level communicating their grievances to the central government (Frears 1990; Rizzuto 1997). The phenomenon of the ‘*cumul des mandats*’ can furthermore also be observed with MEPs. The majority of French MEPs also hold a local mandate, and even more often than European legislators of any other country (Dewoghéläëre, Berton et al. 2006). So, if not for the constituency role of national MPs, one would expect that references to constituencies of MEPs in the French press are higher in number than actually observed given their strong ties to their local base. Yet, the French press did not pick up on their special role. One

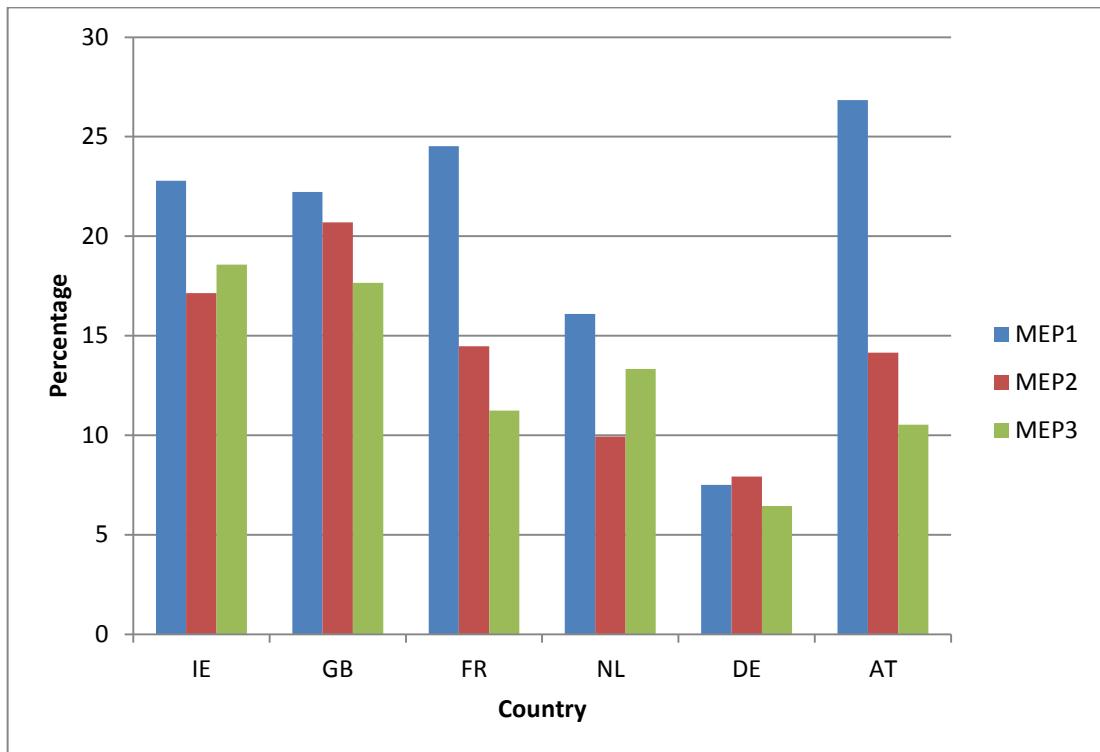
implication is however, that references to other mandates have not been coded by the researcher – this will have to be investigated in a follow-up study. For now, we are able to underline the above findings which highlight the European perspective of the French press. They might actually be the only broadsheets which conceive of the European Parliament as a unique supranational institution distinct from the French Assemblée Nationale. Whether this assumption is supported by evidence of correspondents' evaluations of the performance by the EP and its members remains to be seen and will be examined in the next chapter to come.

The origin of Dutch MEPs was only mentioned in 2.44% instances, which is in line with the previous hypotheses regarding nation-wide party lists at both levels. One correspondent explained: 'You have the same list of candidates when you vote; we don't have local candidates; everyone votes for the same people' (NL-1).

Similarly, as Figure 5.3 reveals, party membership is an important criterion for references to European representatives from Holland which employs a party-based system for elections.¹¹¹ Not so for the first MEP mentioned in the quality press of Ireland, the UK and France where the national electoral systems are candidate-centred. Regarding the latter, it is the first finding for the French press which lends evidence to Hypothesis H4-B. Although, here Austrian news are an exception which least often mention the political party for the first MEP. But the findings underline the relevance of individual personalities of Austrian MPs elaborated above which is put over MEPs.

¹¹¹ Note that Krippendorff's α for references to the party affiliation of MEP1 to MEP5 ranges from 0.72 to 1 for the first party cited (see Appendix A3.5).

Figure 5.3: Instances in which party membership *not* mentioned for an MEP

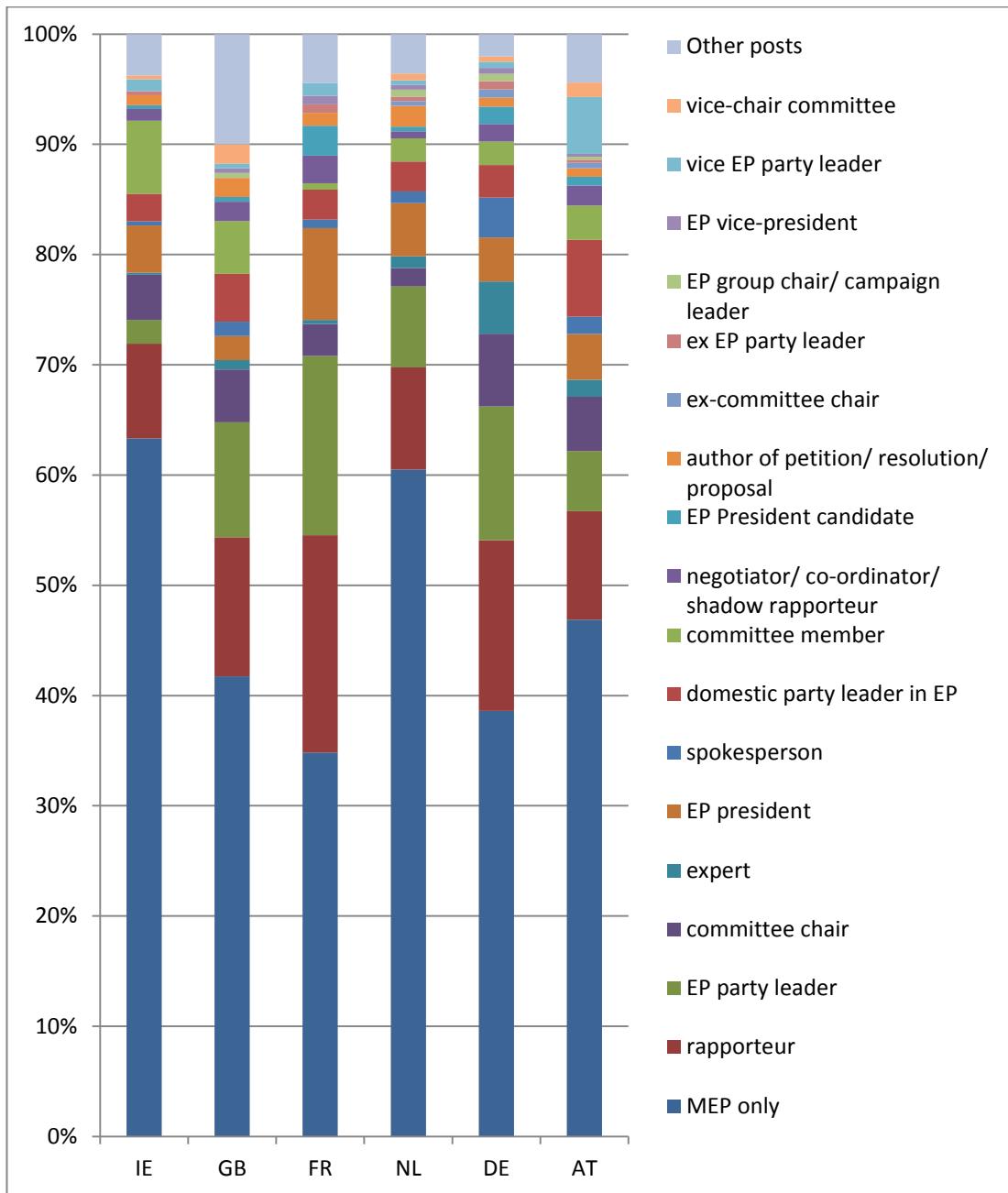


The German broadsheets, on the contrary, most often provide a legislator's political affiliation as Figure 5.3 demonstrates. Only in less than 8% of instances was the respective party membership not mentioned. And the German newsmakers in Brussels had plausible explanations for that:

'The party [reference] is an absolute must-have in Germany. I have been working in Germany for a long time. You always provide the party acronym after the name.' (DE-3)

Others stated that it would be 'self-evident, basic information [...] because the German reader understands that a Social Democrat stands for different things than a Christian Democrat or a Liberal, although they are rather close regarding European policies' (DE-4). Again this underlines the similarities to the German parliamentary culture where party organisations as opposed to individual politicians dominate political life (see Saalfeld 2002). The newsmakers explicitly mention party membership because their readers are familiar with the relevance of party politics at the national level lending support to the major research hypothesis (H4-B).

Figure 5.4: Reported roles of MEPs



Note: several roles possible per MEP

Lastly, Figure 5.4 reveals which roles were reported for individual MEPs.¹¹² The main distinction is whether they were just referenced as plain legislators, delegates, deputies, representatives or the like (category: MEP only), or whether they were actually cited with their parliamentary or political role in the news. Some news articles even assigned ‘shadow-rapporteurships’ or other sorts of experts, especially the German broadsheets (in 6.5% and 4.7% of the cases respectively). In fact, one

¹¹² Krippendorff’s α for references to the legislative/political role of MEP1 to MEP5 ranges from 0.41 to 1 for the first role cited (see Appendix A3.5).

reporter explained that the reason for highlighting an MEP's expertise would be that it 'codifies the source for the reader' and the latter would know 'that it has more weight if [an expert] says so' (DE-3). On the other hand, such references do not diminish the legislators' party membership as one put it:

'If it's not the opinion of the faction, I don't cite them [...] I only let people speak who are spokespersons for something, rapporteur or the like. When it's clear that what he or she says is actually the faction's opinion, and not their personal attitude.' (DE-5)

It is worthy to note here that Oberreuter (1990) finds a similar phenomenon at the national level. In a news evaluation of the German Bundestag he concludes that German parliamentarians would become less interesting for journalists as the Bundestag would increasingly organise itself in terms of groups and factions. Again, it serves as an implication for the similarity in the depiction of legislative actors at the EU level and expectations deriving from the national parliamentary context. 'German MPs are also not prominent' a reporter stated actually comparing their popularity to national representatives (DE-4).

Figure 5.5 also demonstrates again that there are considerable differences across countries. The Irish broadsheets most often do not highlight their office, in more than 63% of the cases, followed by the Dutch press which in more than 60% of all instances did not report any specialisation of individual representatives. While for the Irish again, a specific role might be less appealing since the constituency service of MEPs matters most, the Dutch exemplify the assumptions of the impact of electoral procedures, most notably the party-based voting system. Contrary to the German case, where both party membership and expertise are complementary, if not indispensable for an MEP to make it into the news, a Dutch correspondent explained the lack of popularity of MEPs in the Dutch public eye with the parliamentary culture people in Holland are familiar with:

[...] I guess it has something to do with Dutch politics where [...] personalities aren't that important in a sense [...]. Most Dutch members of parliament are very anonymous, they belong to the party, people know the party, they know the party leaders but not many people would know other parliamentarians. [...] Here: we write about them, but Dutch MEPs are not very well known. So if

*we put a label on them, people can identify at least who they are.
[The Party] means more than the person.* (NL-1)

Yet, another Dutch correspondent stated that the undifferentiated treatment would be due to the fact that each party delegation only comprises ‘two or three people’ and that he sometimes sees them ‘as experts, because you need someone who can explain the technicalities to the reader which is not always fair as they are politicians’ (NL-2).

British and Austrian newspapers more often than not (41% and 46% respectively) assign a political or parliamentary office to the referenced legislators. But MEPs in the French press are most often quoted together with their status – in more than 65% of the cases. The rapporteur is a very prominent role in the respective broadsheets (with 19.73%) which probably derives from the fact that it is actually a French word and easily comprehensible for the readers. This finding lends support to the assumption the also French press borrows attributes from national representatives in order to make EU parliamentary affairs more perceptible – a notion which has been by and large rendered a valid one for the other broadsheets in the remaining countries of this study.

The findings from the section can be summarised with the impressions the director at the EP Directorate-General for Communication provided during the interview:

'There are countries and journalists, who are more aware of what happens in the EP and about the importance of the EP. Sometimes it's also related to the weight of their own national parliament in the countries. There are countries where their own parliament is not very relevant when they cover politics and all the weight is in the government and very, very [little] in the Parliament. And there are countries in which you cannot explain politics without references to what's happening in the Parliament. In some way this is in the mind of the journalists when they are in Brussels.'

5.3 Conclusions

The chapter has shown that for the most part, MEPs are perceived by the press as deputies for their domestic colleagues. Thereby it lends support to the allegations laid out in chapter 2 in that the reason for this lies in the necessity to make news about EU parliamentary affairs better comprehensible for the domestic audience. It shows that features of the national parliamentary tradition, here characterised by constituency focus, individual party membership as well as legislative and political roles, are reflected in the majority of news content across countries.

The results in the countries of Ireland, the UK, the Netherlands, Germany and Austria clearly demonstrate that newsmakers draw comparisons in their representations between the parliamentary and representative role of MEPs and MPs. Put differently, the quality press hold Europe's representatives accountable in a way that is comparable to public expectations towards the corresponding colleagues in domestic parliaments. This outcome implies that the representational relationship between MEPs and voters is not something with which any of the latter is unfamiliar. Yet, press coverage of representation at the EU level is not unitary across Europe but fragmented into expectations that vary across countries. Instead, the research infers that in countries where electoral systems favour individual candidates over party lists individual MEPs receive far greater attention by the quality press than in the other countries. Consequently, although this assumption exceeds the research scope of this chapter, some European citizens who as voters choose national candidates from party lists are supposedly less aware of their representatives, which is not necessarily supportive in the formation of European democracy.

However, some results also indicate that most broadsheets draw a linkage between Europe's representatives and their represented. This is demonstrated by the emphasis in all countries but France on nationally elected MEPs in the news which underlines the applicability of the news value domestic relevance. Scandalous, Eurosceptic MEPs are furthermore especially attractive for the press in countries where support for EU membership is not very high as in the UK and Austria. It is also shown that conflict as a news value shaping news content of EU parliamentary affairs is not linked to parliamentary debates, as single representatives receive more attention outside Strasbourg. This allows us to derive that the traditional debating role of

Parliament for which the British House of Commons is especially famous, is not something with which the Brussels press corps would describe the EP. This provides further implications for the next chapter which will investigate how the EP's parliamentary functions are evaluated in the light of the domestic parliamentary tradition. The question here is to what extent the EP's role is rendered legitimate compared to the national parliament. This would also answer the question of a perceived rivalry between the legislative institutions at European and national level.

Taken together the findings are in line with what has been contended in chapter 2 and empirically supported in the previous chapter. News values, most notably domestic relevance, importance and conflict play a role for the presentation of news content. This shows that EP broadsheet coverage is not different from any other political news story since common news values also apply here; and that the EP is part of what Trenz (2004: 310) calls 'a taken for-granted reality'. This is a positive finding for parliamentary democracy at the European level. And the fact that newsmakers respond to sceptic views in their country is not negative. But by referring to the respective legislators demonstrates in public that different opinions are represented in Parliament, which is an indicator of a functioning democracy (cf. de Wilde 2009) and a positive condition for an emerging European public sphere withering the elite consensus (Risse and van de Steeg 2003). It allows MEPs to demonstrate their responsiveness towards their constituents via the media even though there is no conformity across country. But the chapter has shown that this is a plausible finding given the absence of a European electoral system. As long as national rules prevail for European elections, the media is unlikely to change their approach to reporting about MEPs.

One exception is the French press which not only stress European legislators more than their counterparts in the remaining countries – an indicator for the supranational Europeanisation of news content (see Koopmans 2007), but also reflect only few similarities to the role understanding of French MPs. A possible explanation can be related to the relative weakness of the French Parliament whose relevance is undermined by Presidential politics. French broadsheets might compensate this weakness by stressing the unique, supranational character of the European Parliament and its members. The next chapter will have to provide further insight into how EU parliamentary affairs are evaluated in the eyes of the newsmakers. A

potential rivalry, as suggested by the findings in the previous chapter, between the parliamentary institutions at the European and national level might go in favour of the former in that it is regarded as a somewhat better parliament concerning its functions of executive scrutiny and decision-making power. For the rest of the broadsheets, it is expected that a rivalry is likely to be interpreted in a negative light for the EP if they draw direct comparisons to the national parliament following the domestic focus in their news.

Chapter 6

A *SWIFT* change after Lisbon? The press coverage of the European Parliament's powers

Chapter 4 has argued that the EP's institutional relevance and its influence in enhancing political conflict in the EU political system bear the potential to raise the interest of the quality press during the chosen routine period. We have seen that both the co-decision as well as the assent procedure, known as the consent procedure after Lisbon, comprise a large share of news published about EU parliamentary affairs. This implies that, alongside the domestic relevance, news selection criteria of importance and conflict are applied to the news coverage of EU parliamentary affairs. The first purpose of the present chapter is to examine whether importance and conflict become relevant news criteria on their own at a pan-European level when highly salient issues are at stake as was put forward by hypothesis H1-A.

Apart from expanding once more the competences of the legislature – under the ordinary legislative procedure (OLP), the Council of Ministers and the Parliament decide co-equally in most social and economic policy areas to count just the most important ones – the Lisbon Treaty also manifested its rights to scrutinise the incoming European Commission. At the same time, the EP has also been granted the right to give consent to international agreements, among other things. Given that some proposals to tackle the European democratic deficit comprise the strengthening of the European Parliament (Williams 1991) this increase in parliamentary power implies that public awareness has also risen accordingly. The media play an important role in raising public awareness by transmitting news and information from the EU (cf. de Vreese and Boomgaarden 2006a); and previous research has observed that news coverage of EU affairs and European elections in particular has risen over time (e.g. de Vreese, Banducci et al. 2006; Boomgaarden, Vliegenthart et al. 2010, Schuck, Xezonakis et al. 2011). Here, the chapter seeks to assess whether the European quality press follow the actual decision-making power of the European Parliament over several years – by devoting more attention to the legislative body. Put differently, the chapter seeks to identify a ‘Lisbon effect’ in the variation of news coverage over time. Thereby it provides answers to the following question: What

explains variation over time in the extent of press coverage of the European Parliament?

Furthermore, the chapter is interested in how the press presents and evaluates the parliamentary powers in its coverage. While their assessment of the changing powers over time is expected to be in line with Hypothesis H1-C, which contends that newsmakers evaluate the EP in terms of newsworthiness, two other factors become important for the cross-country variation. The previous chapters have contended that while public stances towards the EU have an impact, the national parliamentary tradition is a dominant driver of both news coverage and content. The findings of Chapter 4 imply a perceived rivalry between parliamentary institutions at both levels, whereas Chapter 5 argues that most representations of MEPs resemble those of national legislators. Thus, here the chapter seeks to determine how both these findings relate to the (new) powers of the EP. Hypothesis H4-C puts forward that the press compare the EP to the respective national representative bodies in their evaluations. Furthermore, hypothesis H3-C expects that newsmakers evaluate European parliamentary affairs more critically if their domestic audience is rather hostile towards European integration. Here, the following parts of the research question are being addressed: What explains variation across country in the content of press coverage and newsmakers' evaluations of the European Parliament?

In order to answer these questions, the chapter conducts a study of two most-likely cases, namely the SWIFT case, later called SWIFT agreement, and the parliamentary confirmation of the European Commission, which enable the research to hold events at the European level constant in order to test the main research hypotheses. In short, we control for the issue and concentrate on EU parliamentary affairs. Methodologically, the chapter relies on a quantitative content analysis of 316 broadsheet articles published between 1 June 2006 and 30 November 2010 in six EU countries and the US for the SWIFT case as well as on 1320 newspaper articles selected for the analysis of the investiture procedure in the years 1999, 2004 and 2009/10. 167 articles were taken of the latter sample in order to provide a closer analysis of the investiture of the second Barroso cabinet. Given the limited explanatory power of the quantitative analysis, the findings from the interviews provide explanations for variation over time and across countries.

The chapter argues that the use of its powers boosts the press coverage of the European Parliament. Here, the novelty of such occurrences is a positive determiner of news coverage exemplified by the EP's threat to veto the incoming Barroso I Commission in October 2004 and the actual rejection of the SWIFT agreement in February 2010. However, given that news media respond to the news value of surprise, the chapter finds that press coverage after such climaxes is not an ever-increasing phenomenon. Instead, the press appears to become used to the Parliament's new powers by being more aware of the ongoing with the press coverage 'normalising' at a relatively high level.

Notwithstanding the normalisation of press coverage, the second part of the chapter finds that the European Parliament is not yet seen as a 'normal' parliament. The press have difficulties in presenting EU parliamentary affairs in a manner that is understandable for their readers. The chapter argues that this is precisely because the EP has grown out of the national parliamentary tradition with particularly scrutinising powers more akin to those of the US Congress (cf. Hix 2009). Instead, the EP is being criticised for not yet being as competent as its national counterparts in terms of efficiency and scrutiny of the executive. This argument integrates the findings of the previous two chapters: The EP is indeed perceived as an extension of the national parliamentary tradition in procedural terms, but since it grew institutionally stronger it is seen as a rival to its national equivalents. And this holds especially in countries where the latter are generally considered quite influential legislatures in the domestic context.

The importance of the national parliamentary tradition is also underlined by the fact that contrary to the initial assumptions public opinion towards the EU does not appear to be a decisive factor for the correspondents' evaluations of EU parliamentary affairs. Critical observations can in most cases be traced back to the incompatibility of EU parliamentary politics with the understanding of national parliamentary culture.

The chapter proceeds by directly going into the analysis of the Parliament's broadsheet coverage over time (6.1.) evaluating whether parliamentary power is an indicator for increasing media attention. In the second part, the chapter investigates the variation across country identifying the impact of the national parliamentary

tradition (6.2.). Within the first section, the news coverage of the SWIFT case is being examined before the press coverage of the investiture procedure. The then following section analyses both cases in the reverse order. The conclusions (6.3) summarise the findings and review the argument.

6.1 Power as a determiner of EP press coverage

In order to assess the response of the quality press to the rising powers of the European Parliament, it is necessary to return to the newsmakers' routines when reporting about EU parliamentary affairs. Chapter 2 has contended that the media apply, among others, the news value of importance to the news selection since 'actions of the powerful are newsworthy' (Shoemaker and Reese 1996: 111). Given the rise in EP powers in the case of the consent procedure, formerly called assent procedure, one would therefore also expect a 'Lisbon effect' in the news coverage over time – both in terms of extent of coverage and newsmakers' evaluations. Power furthermore implies conflict which is another relevant news value of political stories. In the case of the SWIFT agreement and the investiture procedure of the Commission political battles are likely to occur at the European level between EU institutions and actors – in the former case even between the EU and the US. Thus, on days when tension is high the news coverage is likely to be further triggered by clashing interests. This section examines how the quality press reacts to the Parliament's (new) powers in terms of attention paid to the institution by conducting each a case study on SWIFT and the investitures of Commissions lead by Prodi, Barroso I and Barroso II.

6.1.1 The 'Lisbon effect' in the coverage of the SWIFT agreement

SWIFT stands for the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication which provides a worldwide financial messaging service co-ordinated from its headquarters in La Hulpe, just outside Brussels. After the terrorist attacks in 2001, the United States (US) Treasury gained access to the transfer data in order to receive information about international money transactions as part of their Terrorist Finance Tracking Programme (TFTP). European data also fall under the TFTP, but

the data exchange only became public in June 2006. Data protectionists and the European Parliament immediately raised their concerns about privacy. At that time the EP did not even have co-decision rights in the field of Freedom, Security and Justice. Yet, it immediately adopted a resolution on 6 July 2006¹¹³ followed by a second one on 14 February 2007¹¹⁴ criticising both the Passenger Name Record (PNR)¹¹⁵ and SWIFT. In both these resolutions, the EP explicitly demanded the respect of data protection rights. However, its voice remained largely unheard since the European Union did not have a legal base to intervene or participate, although the EP later claimed that ‘[f]ollowing pressure by the European Parliament, guarantees regarding privacy were given to ensure that the data collected was used purely for anti-terrorist purposes’ (European Parliament 2009).

A couple of years later, SWIFT decided to move its server from Virginia in the US to Switzerland in 2010 which changed the legal base for the access of data records. The European governments had no objection to continue the data exchange of personal information provided via the SWIFT system in order to combat terrorism; however they demanded an international agreement. That request was supported by MEPs. The EU and the US signed an interim accord on 30 November 2009. But the Parliament, having gained the right to give its consent to international agreements with the Lisbon Treaty a day later (Art. 188 N TFEU), insisted they were being considered in the decision-making. The Parliament already adopted a resolution on 17 September 2009 which was brought forward by the three large groups in the EP – the Conservatives, the Socialists and the Liberals – as well as the ECR. In their resolution MEPs demanded public access to the text of the agreement and its renegotiation in order to guarantee EU citizens’ privacy rights by implementing appropriate measures of oversight.¹¹⁶ With the European Commission having acted as a mediator, the Council finally respected that the Parliament had to give its consent. However, since the provisional agreement was meant to take effect on 1

¹¹³ ‘Interception of bank transfer data from the SWIFT system by the US secret services’ (RSP/2006/2594). Appendix A6.1 provides an overview of the resolutions related to SWIFT.

¹¹⁴ ‘Resolution on SWIFT, the PNR agreement and the transatlantic dialogue on these issues’ (RSP/2007/2503)

¹¹⁵ The PNR is closely related to the latter issue as it concerns the provision of personal data of airline passengers to US authorities.

¹¹⁶ ‘Resolution on the envisaged international agreement to make available to the United States Treasury Department financial payment messaging data to prevent and combat terrorism and terrorist financing’ (RSP/2009/2670)

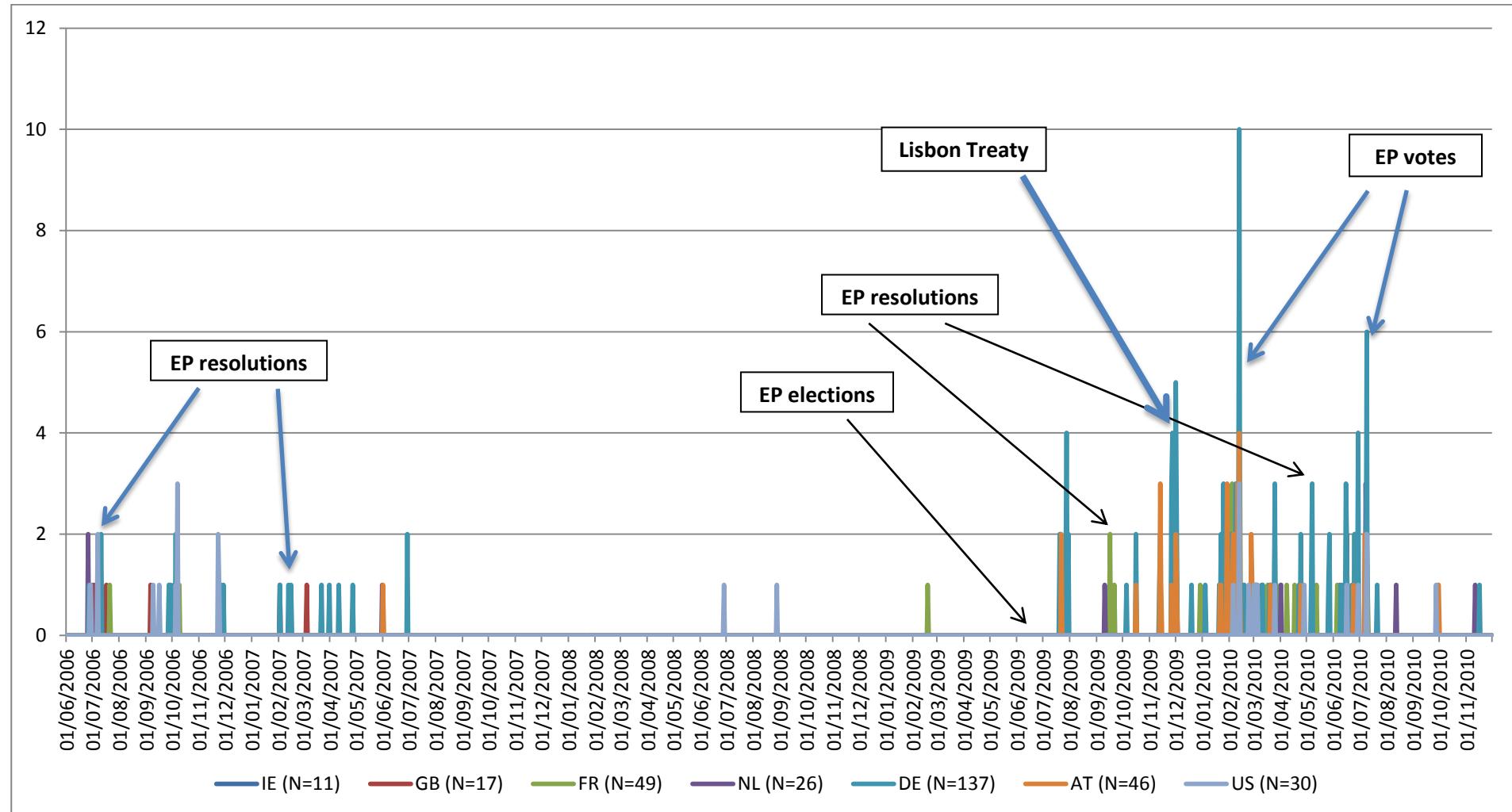
February for nine months, MEPs complained about the inappropriateness of a retrospective approval (European Parliament 2010).

Eventually, the EP rejected the accord on 11 February 2010 on the grounds of civil rights and data protection by 378 votes to 196, with 31 abstentions. Informal negotiations between the three main institutional actors followed and led to a new agreement which the Parliament approved on 8 July that year. It included the EP's demands for, among other things, the active oversight by Europol and the creation of an own European tracking system mirroring the TFTP in order to avoid that large bulks of data are being sent to the US in the long run.

Given the evident use of its powers, the question now is: how did the press respond to the European Parliament's persistence on securing data protection rights for European citizens? Figure 6.1 depicts the press coverage between 1 June 2006 and 30 November 2010 in the six countries under study and the US.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ Note that the dataset comprises all articles, including interviews and commentaries published by third persons, mentioning SWIFT and the EP (or any equivalent) irrespective of the '1+2' rule previously applied (see Appendix A6.2 for an overview). These have been considered in order to increase N for the statistical analysis. Regarding commentaries published by persons not employed by a respective newspaper, the reader might question the validity of the argument. However, only 9 out of 286 articles of the European sheets fall into this category. Further, they are likely to be subject to similar selection criteria as articles from a newspaper's own staff because the ultimate decision for publication rests with the editor. Taken together, all types of articles serve as a measure of salience.

Figure 6.1: The press coverage of the EP dealing with the SWIFT case



The figure shows that few articles were published when the EP first tried to raise attention with a resolution in July 2006 up to its second resolution in February 2007. After that, the press coverage was almost non-existent, despite the fact that the EP issued eight other resolutions which referred to SWIFT, though primarily dealt with other concerns. One of them was combined with a report on the role of the European Central Bank requesting the institution to act as an overseer of the data exchange under SWIFT on 12 July 2007.¹¹⁸ There was no coverage in 2008 at all by the European newspapers. As seen in the figure, the Parliament's next major resolution on 17 September 2009 dedicated solely to SWIFT, did not attract much attention by the quality press either. In fact, it was not until the official enactment of the Lisbon Treaty, that the press coverage picked up on the Parliament's claims to become involved in the negotiations.

As the figure shows, in December 2009, the press started debating the stance of the EP in the negotiations. 'We saw it coming late December', stated one correspondent referring to the No-vote of the Parliament in February 2010, because it eventually had got 'powers since the 1st of December [2009]' (FR-1). Yet, many other interviewees did not regard the rejection as imminent. 'We did write a bit [about the Parliament's position on SWIFT], commented on that [...] – we actually thought the item would go through' (DE-3). In 2009 still, it was also not clear that the EP received the opportunity to vote on the issue so soon as it was due to enter into force on 1 February 2010. Hence, 'it was on news value surprise' (GB-1) and newsworthy because 'the European Parliament for the very first time and deliberately overrode an international agreement and the European Commission' (DE-1). That is to say, that the powers of the EP at this point were actually highly decisive news factors. The figure shows that the most significant peak in the press coverage is in February 2010.

It was the first noteworthy decision the Parliament had taken since the expansion of its scrutiny rights with the Lisbon Treaty. In fact, 'it could have been anything, but they [the parliamentarians] are using it to show that you have to listen to them' (GB-2). The correspondents interviewed here noticed that there has been a change affecting the decision-making of the European Parliament stating that 'beforehand it was largely a talking shop' (IE-1). But Lisbon would have been the 'turning point' (GB-3). This shows that, as far as the SWIFT issue is concerned, the news value of

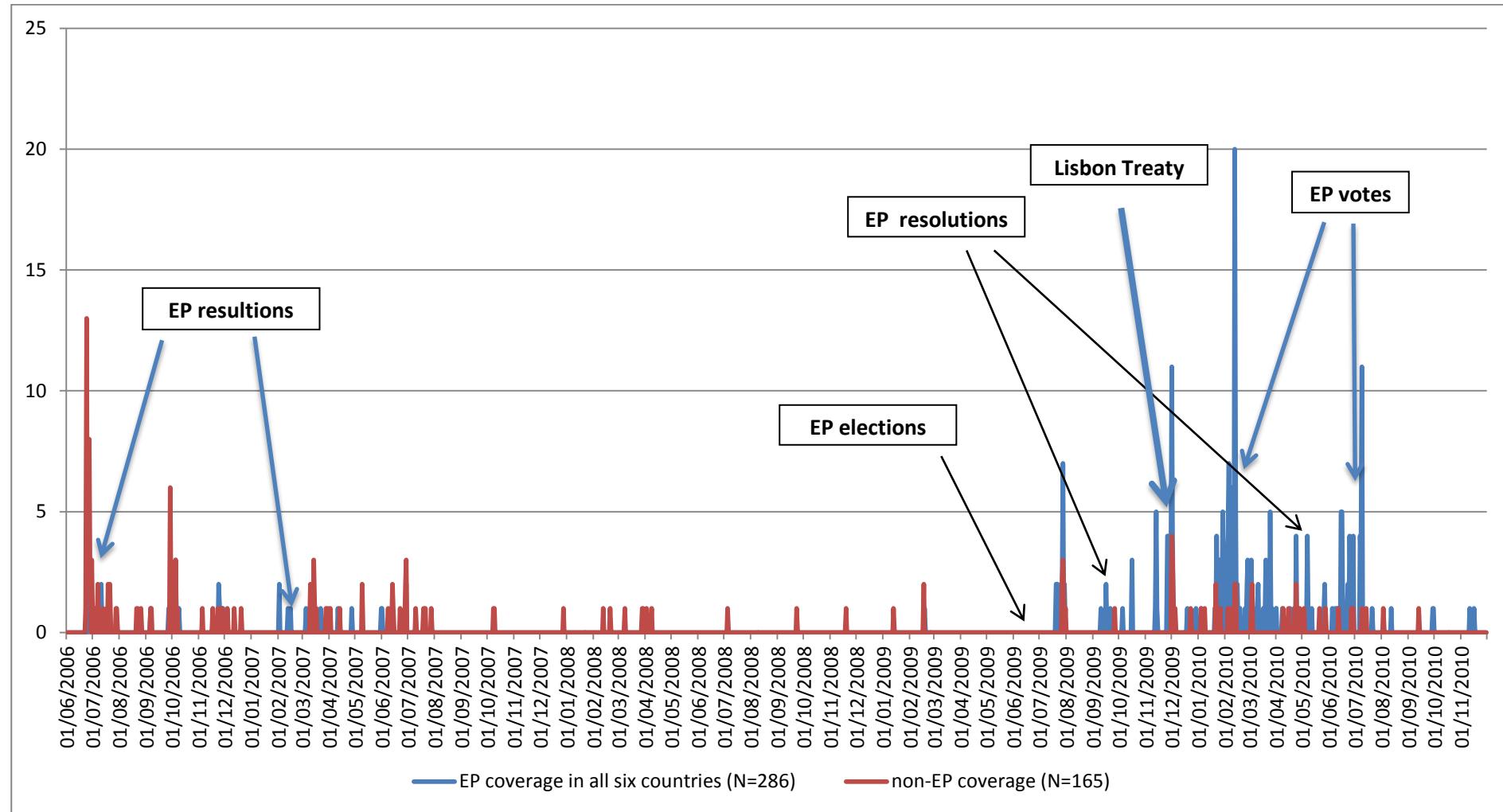
¹¹⁸ 'ECB annual report for 2006' (INI/2007/2142)

importance applies here lending support to hypothesis H1-A, which listed importance as one of the news selection criteria decisive for press coverage when highly salient issues are at stake. Put differently, when the Parliament did not have any powers in this area which combines international security concerns with data protection, the attention it received by broadsheets was rather meagre as exemplified in Figure 6.1. When the MEPs attained the competences by the Lisbon Treaty to influence the outcome by rejecting the interim agreement and requesting amendments to be made in order to approve it, the Parliament finally became relevant, i.e. newsworthy, enough as an institution to be reported comprehensively in the European quality press: ‘it matters more so it gets more coverage’ (GB-2).

These findings are once more underlined by the fact that before the EP got the power to have a say on the interim agreement, the discourse on the SWIFT issue was almost not related at all to the EU Parliament. Figure 6.2 compares the coverage of the EP’s involvement in the SWIFT case in all six countries under study with the 165 articles published without making reference to the EP.¹¹⁹ In the years 2006 and 2007 the data exchange as part of the TFTP was predominantly reported as a non-EP issue. It appears that prior to the Lisbon Treaty EP debates and resolutions did not have any effect on the coverage. As figure 6.2 demonstrates, SWIFT was a highly salient issue at the national level right after it had become public, but before the EP issued its first resolution on 6 July 2006. The non-EP coverage hardly rose again after that. Instead, the press coverage referred to the EP more often with rising levels of media attention in the run-up to the enactment of the Lisbon Treaty. Scholars of Europeanisation would welcome these findings since they demonstrate that the EP was able to stimulate the public discourse across the national broadsheets after the Lisbon Treaty came into force.

¹¹⁹ See Chapter 3 (and especially Table 3.1) for the selection criteria of the 165 articles selected on SWIFT but not referring to the EP.

Figure 6.2: The press coverage of the SWIFT case, by EP news coverage and domestically



However, while the change after Lisbon might have been swift causing a sudden rise in press coverage, the attention the EP receives is not only tied to its powers per se, but also issue-dependent. The case of SWIFT itself is loaded with highly salient news values as it ‘is about privacy and direct consequences’ (NL-2). In that sense, the issue would be an ‘easy story to report as it relates to everybody, everybody understands’ (IE-1). That is where the news factor of proximity comes into play.

The other highly relevant news factor is that of conflict. But contestation is here not interpreted in terms of party political battles, as a French correspondent explained:

‘SWIFT is a civil liberty problem, but wouldn’t have been vetoed without the Conservatives. They felt: We are the liberal Europeans together with the other groups. In a normal parliament that would be red against blue or whatever, but on such a fundamental issue, they tend to stick together. It has a different dynamic, which makes it interesting. SWIFT was a total surprise for the Council and the Commission.’ (FR-1)

That is to say that the institutional contestation gave the issue a different light when ‘Parliament [was] flexing its new muscles’ (IE-2). As one correspondent put it: ‘Just the fact the EP takes a decision, doesn’t mean I write about it [...] I get interested when the institutional balance between the Council and the EP is changing’ (NL-2). In the eyes of the experts in Brussels, the European Parliament with the rejection of the SWIFT agreement demonstrated to the Council that ‘we have arrived and you have to deal with us’ (IE-1). For a German correspondent it was furthermore a struggle ‘against the Commission and the Americans’ (DE-2). And the very fact that ‘the EP is also getting involved in international affairs for the first time’ (GB-1) probably contributed to the rising attention by the press. Hence, at the time of the interview in June 2010, everyone was edgily looking forward to the second vote on 8 July 2010 and not certain about how the outcome would look like. Figure 6.1 shows another increase in press coverage just before that date.

In the end, the institutions reached a compromise and the EP approved the SWIFT agreement by 484 to 109 on 8 July 2010. Attention has faded since. The issue has hardly been debated in public – at least until the end of November 2010 as shown in Figure 6.1. Meanwhile, ‘the main problem persists, in that it has to stand up to the Council’ (DE-2). Yet, the case study here demonstrates that when the Parliament has

got the power to influence a highly salient decision at the EU level, it eventually receives comprehensive news coverage.

'SWIFT definitely got a lot of attention. It's hard to say whether the EP receives more attention in general. In Strasbourg last week the press room was not that full. Months ago it was hard to find a place to sit down.' (GB-3)

The question is whether the EP ‘will be able to use the Lisbon Treaty to push into its new limits of its powers’ (GB-1).

'The Parliament is revelling a lot at the moment by always referring to Lisbon. It makes a lot of noise. It is right to do that, of course. But it is too early to evaluate its influence.' (DE-6)

The director at the EP Directorate-General for Communication explained why a rising media interest can be expected: ‘With Lisbon the Parliament touches areas which are more sensitive and which are more political; less technical, and more interesting for the journalists.’ The correspondents anticipated that. Other significant areas, such as foreign policy (the EP has sought to have a say over the budget of the External Action Service), the ‘supervision of economic governance’ (FR-2), or Common Agricultural Policy which now is decided upon co-equally by the Council and the EP under OLP, would be thus ‘worth to keep an eye on’ (GB-1). ‘There are going to be a couple of fights in the coming months’ (FR-1), which were expected to show in the press coverage:

'The EP is more powerful due to Lisbon. That will probably show in the news coverage because the EP has a say on important issues. We will report more often about the Parliament.' (AT-2)

It can be derived therefore that, despite being a single yet crucial case, the treaty revisions bear the potential to enhance the European Parliament’s visibility in the European quality press, having shown less interest beforehand even when major issues were at stake (Baisnée 2003: 96). These are positive conditions for democracy at the European level, as chances are that an increase in coverage generates greater awareness of the European Parliament among EU citizens in the long run.

6.1.2 The normalisation of the press coverage during the investiture procedure

Although the European Parliament cannot propose any candidate, it has the formal right to approve the Commission and its President and can also vote it out of office by a majority of its members. The Maastricht Treaty (1993, Art. 158 TEU) already prescribed that the EP is being consulted on the choice of the Commission President, but the Parliament interpreted this right as a means of providing its opinion by a formal vote on the President and the Commission cabinet as a whole (see Hix 2002a). Thus, the consent or confirmation procedure was already established with the approval of the Santer Commission in 1994 since ‘Jacques Santer made it plain that he would withdraw if the vote in Parliament went against him’ (Westlake 1998: 439). It is due to the success of this informal interpretation that the Amsterdam Treaty (1999, Art. 214.2 TEC) then stated that the ‘nomination [of the President of the Commission] shall be approved by the European Parliament’ (see Hix 2002a). Eventually, the Treaty of Lisbon now recognises that the EP formally elects the President of the Commission as the Council members shall consider their choice in light of majority constellations in the assembly before putting their candidate forward to approval by the latter (Article 17.7 TEU):

‘Taking into account the elections to the European Parliament and after having held the appropriate consultations, the European Council, acting by a qualified majority, shall propose to the European Parliament a candidate for President of the Commission. This candidate shall be elected by the European Parliament by a majority of its component members. [...]’

Given that the practice existed beforehand, a possible ‘Lisbon effect’ however is expected to be much weaker than in the case of SWIFT.

It is not only the candidate for Commission President who has to appear before Parliament in order to receive approval. But the EP has after Maastricht also institutionalised hearings of the individual commissioner-designates in the respective committees matching the candidates’ portfolios before it would vote by simple majority for a second time on the investiture of the whole Commission. The Parliament thus far has criticised the choice of nominated commissioners twice during its hearings which led the President-designate Jose Manuel Barroso to reshuffle his cabinet preference in 2004 and in 2010. In October 2004 Barroso was

going to go ahead with his cabinet despite explicit criticism from the PES, GUE/NGL, the Greens and the Liberals in the Parliament against the controversial views on gender equality and rights of homosexuals of Rocco Buttiglione who was chosen as Commissioner for Justice, Freedom and Security. On the day of the vote, facing a rejection by Parliament, Barroso withdrew and told MEPs that he would seek a substitute. The new Commission cabinet was then approved by the EP in November that year with Franco Frattini as the new Italian Commissioner for the portfolio in question (and two other new candidates). In January 2010, after having heard Rumiana Jeleva, the Bulgarian Commissioner-designate for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response, the Socialists, Liberals and Greens again raised their voice against the former Christian-democrat MEP due to allegations of her husband's connections to organised crime. She was replaced by Kristalina Georgieva before the EP formally approved the Commission.

Given the increase in scrutinising powers of the EP, and the recurrent use thereof, it can be predicted that the press coverage of the investiture procedure has risen between 1994 and 2010. Table 6.1 provides an overview of the periods of investigation for the investiture of Prodi, Barroso I and Barroso II. Each data period begins with the day the Commission President was nominated by the governments and the presentation of the designated cabinet respectively, and ends on the 7th day after each confirmatory vote.¹²⁰

Table 6.1: Overview of events during the investiture procedures

	Prodi	Barroso I	Barroso II
Commission President nomination	24 March 1999	30 June 2004	19 June 2009
Commission President hearings	8 and 13 April 1999	13, 14 and 21 July 2004	9, 10 and 15 September 2009
Commission President vote	5 May 1999	22 July 2004	16 September 2009
Cabinet Presentation I	21 July 1999	12 August 2004	27 November 2009
Commissioner-designates hearings I	30 August until 7 September 1999	27 September until 8 October 2004	11-19 January 2010
Vote planned	n/a	27 October 2004	26 January 2010
Commissioner-designates hearings II	n/a	15-16 November 2004	3 February 2010
Final confirmation vote	15 September 1999	18 November 2004	9 February 2010

¹²⁰ Note that for the dataset on the investiture procedure the '1+2' rule has been applied again following the same criteria as with the main dataset.

While the analysis to come does not include the investiture of Santer for which the EP made use of its elective function for the first time, we can expect that the news coverage of the hearings and the approval votes for Prodi and his Commission received a significant amount of media attention due to the relative novelty of the procedure manifested in the Amsterdam Treaty. Figure 6.3 showing the press coverage of the Prodi Commission's investiture procedure lends support to this allegation.¹²¹ The press was particularly interested in the parliamentary approval of Commission President (CP) Prodi followed by the presentation of his new cabinet members and the final vote on the whole Commission. The hearings in between the two confirmatory votes received a sizeable amount of attention as well. This might be further due to the fact that earlier in 1999, the EP threatened to censure the Santer Commission before the latter resigned over allegations of fraud and financial mismanagement. The director at the EP Directorate-General for Communication claimed that the EP's role in the resignation of the Santer Commission 'gave us probably the first cover pages in the history of the EP'. With the EP having shown its teeth, the press was supposedly particularly interested in how the Parliament evaluates the incoming Commission. This can be expected since the EP made its approval conditional upon Prodi's agreement to sack individual Commissioners should they not be trusted by Parliament anymore as a consequence of the criticism against the previous Commission which had focussed on Edith Cresson, the Commissioners for Research, Science and Technology (see Hix, 2002a). The longest serving Brussels correspondent interviewed for this study remembered in this respect:

'The [Parliament's] part in the resignation of the Santer Commission has indirectly contributed to a change in public perceptions of its political and legislative role.' (DE-4)

¹²¹ No data was available for the SBP in 1999.

Figure 6.3:The press coverage of Prodi's investiture

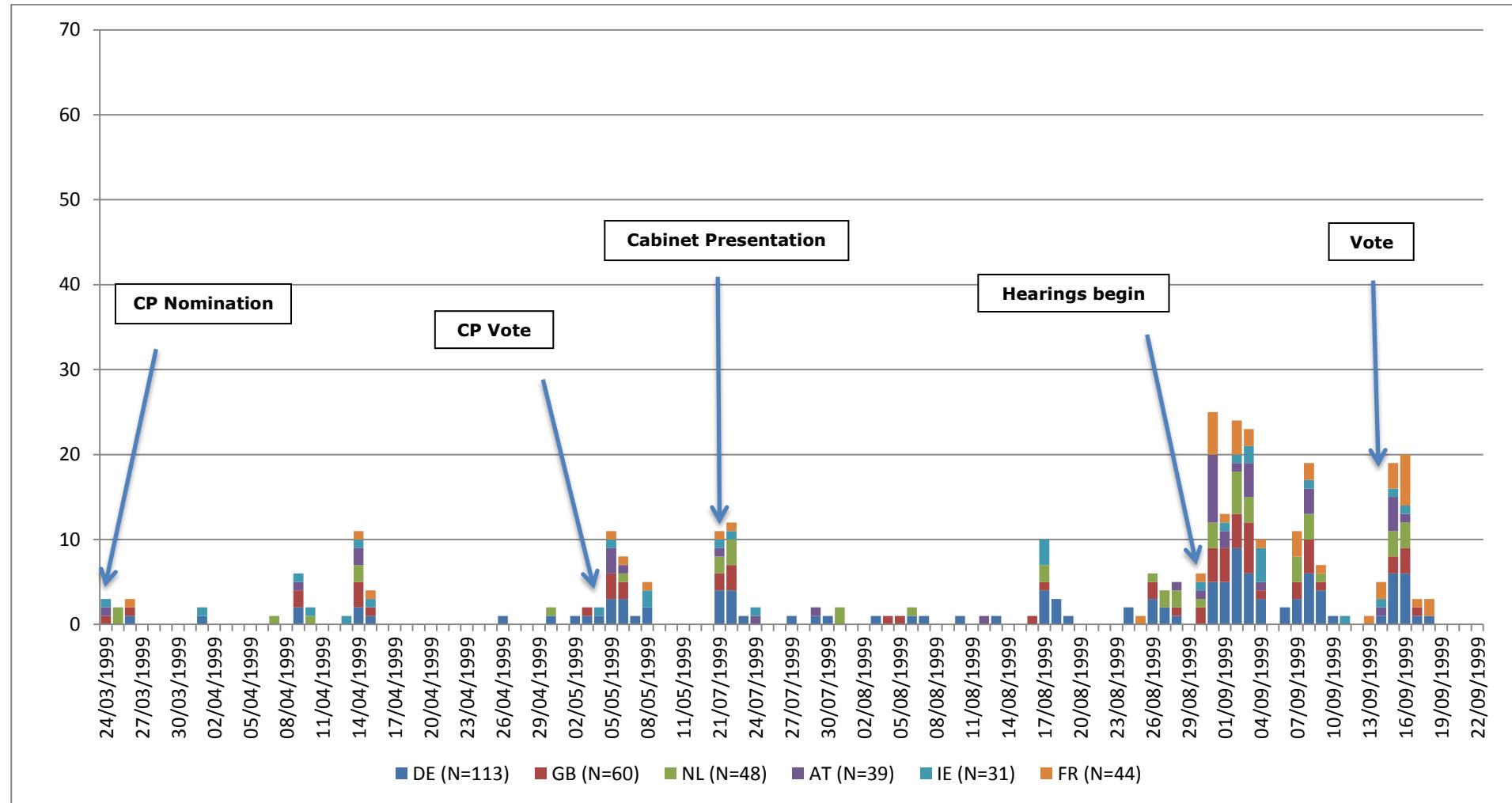
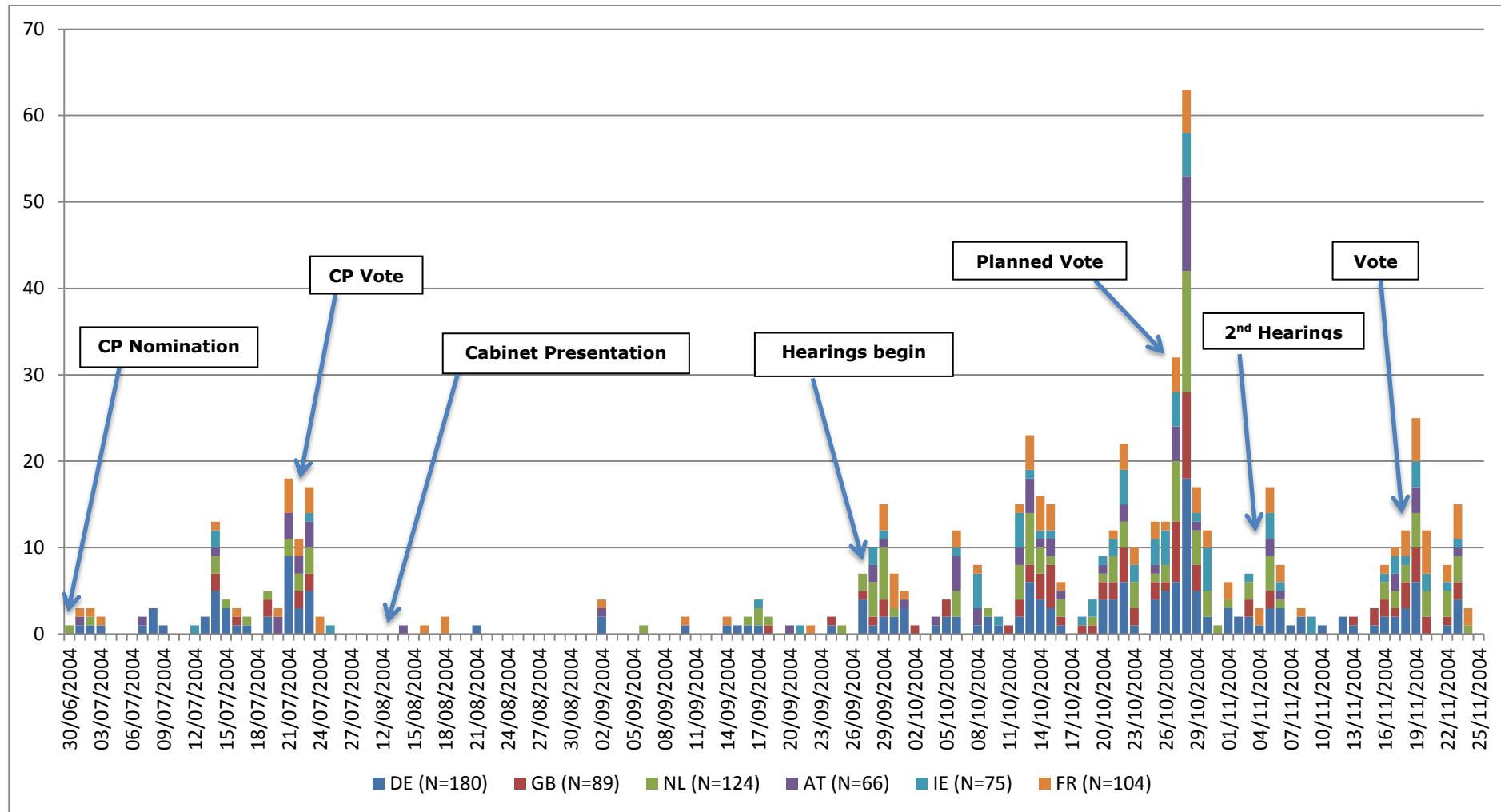


Figure 6.4: The press coverage of Barroso I's investiture



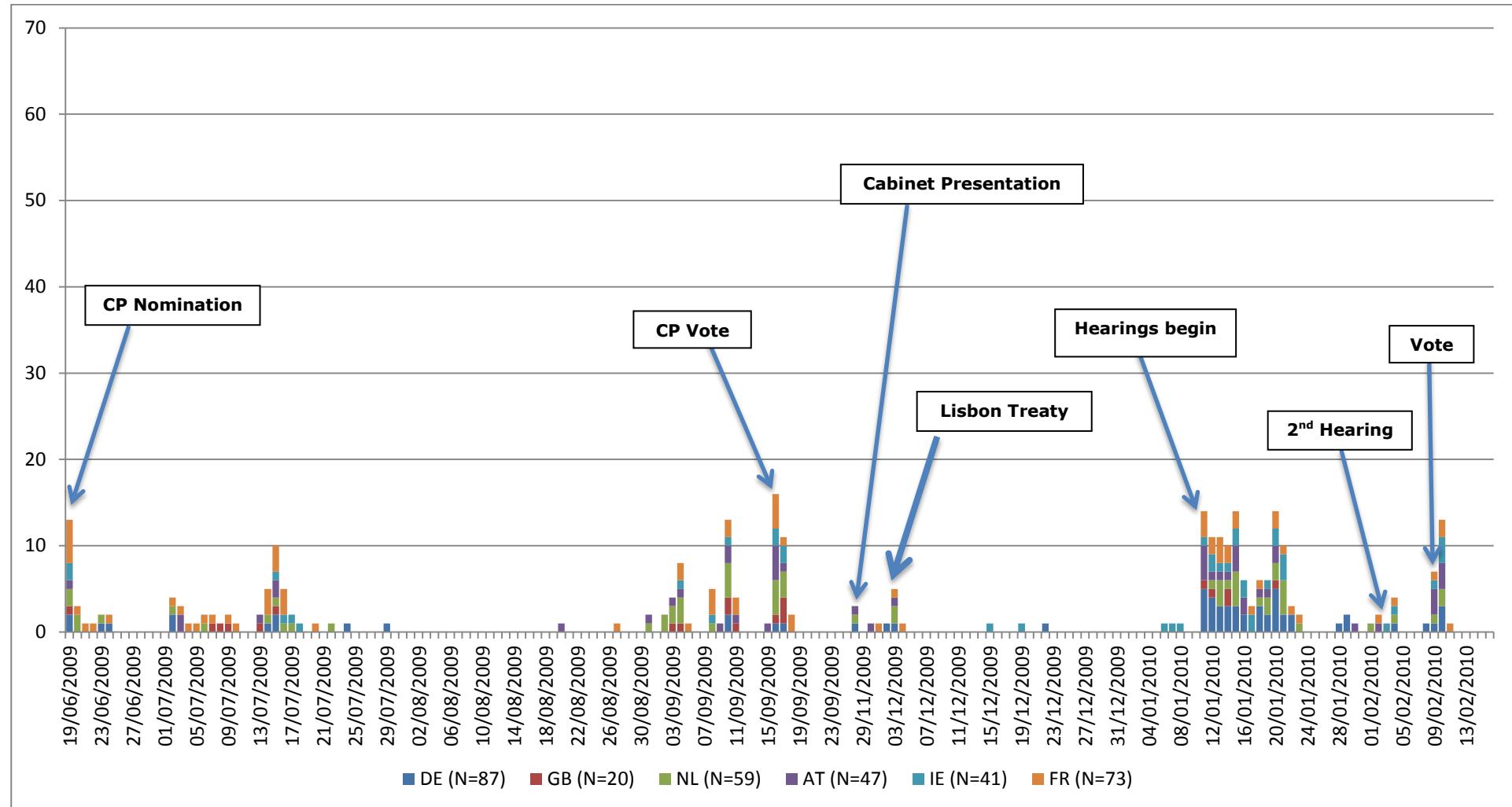
In 2004, the press coverage is expected to have been even more comprehensive given the clashes between the EP and Barroso over Buttiglione. The news coverage reported in figure 6.4 underlines these assumptions. While Barroso's nomination and the initial presentation of his team received relatively little attention in the quality press, the fact that Barroso was going to go ahead with his cabinet before he withdrew in the last minute created a theatrical suspense on the European stage. The hearings were reported comprehensively and the press coverage rose considerably before the day the vote was supposed to take place in the European Parliament. Eventually, the day after, on 28 October, more than 60 newspaper articles were published across all six countries reporting Barroso's withdrawal and referencing the powers of the EP. One correspondent remembered why the procedure received a great deal of attention by the press, 'because Barroso was very new – he was surprised by the candidate and surprised by the game of the Left in the EP' (FR-2). Further the case of Buttiglione would have been a 'morally difficult' issue (DE-3), which supposedly scored on the news value of human interest (see Shoemaker and Reese: 111).

Tension remained high during the second round of hearings up until the final vote which was reported on the day after 18 November 2004. Even after the European Commission was approved further criticism raised by Nigel Farage, leader of the Independence/Democracy group in the EP, against Jacques Barrot and Siim Kallas, Vice-Presidents of the Commission, over alleged criminal records, was highly visible in the press. Using the same scale (1-70) as in the previous figure, figure 6.3 demonstrates that the coverage of the investiture procedure in general was much higher than in 1999. It started off at a comparable level, but clearly news factors of importance, expressed by the EP's veto power, and conflict (between Barroso and the EP) are identifiable as drivers of EP news coverage. Whether this spectacle was a one-off event in the press coverage, or whether a similar dramaturgy was visible when the EP forced Barroso for the second time to reshuffle his cabinet is subject to the next partial analysis. The events in 2004, however, were not without consequence for the next investiture of Barroso II in 2009/10:

The Parliament revolted at the first election of the Barroso Commission. [...] But it was unsuccessful because Barroso got elected in the end. He was only forced to abdicate one or two commissioners. This had implications for the new Commission, since Jeleva was replaced. (DE-1)

Figure 6.5 shows the broadsheet coverage of Barroso II's investiture. Contrary to the above findings, Barroso's second nomination by the governments received a relatively high amount of coverage. After that, the press coverage rarely exceeded that peak in terms of publication numbers and their total number is comparable to 1999 even though the time period in this third case is much longer (by about two months). Nevertheless, figure 6.5 also shows that the hearings received more regular, albeit less comprehensive, coverage than in the previous years. In fact, 'we certainly go to Strasbourg for the hearings because they are an important moment in European decision-making' (NL-1). This demonstrates that the news value of importance clearly applies for the EP's investiture procedure.

Figure 6.5: The press coverage of Barroso II's investiture



Remarkably however, despite the fact the Lisbon Treaty has just come into force on 1 December 2009 the power factor of the Parliament did not show in the coverage. Thus, neither the previous experience of 2004 nor the ‘Lisbon effect’ as in the example of SWIFT were able to boost the coverage of the investiture procedure in 2009/10 to higher levels than in 2004. Why is that the case? One correspondent compared the events of 2004 and 2010 directly:

'The Buttiglione case was much more seen as a signal of strength [by] the EP, it was a big surprise [...]. Jeleva was something different. [There weren't that] many stories this time when the EP showed its muscles. It's not a defeat for the EP, but it was seen as a very strange story [in which] Barroso played his own card trying to instrumentalise the EP to have her out of his way. It wasn't so much a [demonstration] of influence. And it was a very long process this time. The press was a little bit fed up by the project – the pressure on Jeleva and Barroso was seen with a little bit of fatigue. Buttiglione was quick and surprising. Both cases were not interpreted in the same way, at least by us.' (FR-2)

Following this perception, the lower press coverage was due to the absence of severe clashes between the institutions, to strategic games and the lengthy process which did not produce much suspense in order for the press corps to report more news stories from the EP. The ‘surprise’ factor of Parliament flexing its muscles, especially against the same President-designate, was seemingly not applicable anymore. There was another peak in the press coverage when Parliament decided not to approve Rumiana Jeleva on 20 January 2010 and forced Barroso once more to reshuffle his cabinet. This time however, Barroso acted rather swiftly and had her replaced before the EP tabled the vote which supposedly did not create as much tension as in 2004. Barroso furthermore signed the inter-institutional agreement between the EP and the Commission, allowing the former among other things to ask the latter to introduce legislation on behalf of MEPs.

Moreover, to many correspondents the investiture procedure in 2009/10 was a put-up affair lacking sincere politics as the tactic of the European Parliament against the incoming Barroso II Commission was profoundly criticised. According to them Parliament was out there to deliberately show its muscles by deciding beforehand to

get ‘a scalp’ (IE-2) after the successful withdrawal of Buttiglione in 2004 with the Parliament ‘showing who is the boss’ (GB-2):

‘After Barroso’s nomination last summer, there was a [certain] atmosphere in the EP. They even admitted 6 months before the Commission [came into office] that ‘we should get at least two this time’. [...] Sometimes they do show their power just to show that they have it.’ (NL-2)

And, in the end, many correspondents complained that this power struggle of the EP would have been only ‘storm in a teacup’ because ‘first they cry out loud, but then they agree anyways’, although ‘it was good that they finally did, because it would have been delayed even more’ (AT-2). Some said it was a bit of a ‘dirty game’ and ‘not very constructive’ (FR-2); another one thought of the hearings as ‘window-dressing’ since normally ‘Commissioners work really well with the EP – they are always available for rapporteurs and chairs of committees’ (IE-1). Instead, it would just be that ‘MEPs playing politics on particular issues to attract attention to themselves’ (IE-2),

To sum up, the findings not only lend support to H1-C in that the newsmakers evaluate the EP in terms of newsworthiness. The section has shown that power as such is a news trigger for the European Parliament, as long as MEPs do not overstretch both their self-esteem and the time to arrive at a decision. The news factor of surprise plays a significant part for the news selection of EU parliamentary affairs, but the recurrent use of powers by the EP bears the potential for tiring the press corps’ interest. While the press coverage of the investiture procedure remained high, it has not risen exponentially over time. This might be an indicator for the fact that parliamentary politics have normalised in the press as the latest coverage is of regular nature and relatively high in numbers. A British correspondent actually admitted that given the greater competences of the EP after Lisbon ‘we try to normalise it [the EP] more’ (GB-3).

6.2 Variation across country and the national parliamentary tradition

The findings from the figures above do not only show variation over time, but also across country. The German newspapers again feature most stories regarding SWIFT in relation to the EP with an overall N of 137, while the US American newspapers have published more articles (30) than the British (17) and Irish broadsheets (11) together (see Table 6.2). These proportions look similar for the investiture procedure as Table 6.3 below reveals, although here the British newspapers devoted more attention than one would expect to the Prodi Commission investiture by the EP.¹²² As elaborated in Chapter 3, the correlations between the country samples across all datasets are high and statistically significant.¹²³ Despite the fact that the SWIFT sample has been subject to more lenient selection criteria in order to increase N, one may derive that the interest of European broadsheets rises proportionally to their regular coverage when highly salient issues are at stake, but the different levels of interest in EU parliamentary affairs prevail. This implies that variation in EP press coverage is likely to be explained by the same factors identified for shaping news coverage and content during the routine period: most notably by the news value of domestic relevance, public stances towards the EU and the appreciation of the domestic parliamentary culture. Hence, the two case studies serve well to detect which of the cross-country effects prove most plausible since we are able to control for the events at the supranational level.

¹²² One explanation could be that in 1999, the British press might have had a higher number of staff in Brussels (cf. Baisnée 2003:87f), which following the partial results in chapter 4, might have a positive effect on press coverage.

¹²³ See Appendix A3.4.

Table 6.2: Number of articles selected for dataset II and its sub-dataset by country and newspaper affiliation

	Prodi			Barroso I			Barroso II			Total	Barroso II hearings ^e			Total
	centre-left	centre-right	business/financial	centre-left	centre-right	business/financial	centre-left	centre-right	business/financial		centre-left	centre-right	business/financial	
Ireland	24	7	— ^d	46	26	3	29	9	3	147	20	5	3	28
Britain	13	20	27	21	21	47	5	4	11	169	2	1	2	5
France	15	11	18	45	32	27	29	18	26	221	9	8	11	28
Netherlands	13	16	19	39	40	45	21	16	22	231	8	10	9	27
Germany	23	55	36	50	68	62	38	37	31	400	19	17	16	52
Austria	25	8	6	38	25	3	12	27	8	152	6	16	5	27
	113	117	106	239	212	187	134	111	101	1320	64	57	46	167

Legend: ^d data not available; ^e period of investigation: 27/11/2009 – 16/02/2010

Table 6.3: Number of articles selected for dataset III by country and newspaper affiliation

	EP & SWIFT ^b				SWIFT only ^b				Total
	centre-left	centre-right	business/financial	Total	centre-left	centre-right	business/financial	Total	
Ireland	9	2	0	11	4	1	0	5	16
Britain	5	1	11	17	1	1	8	10	27
France	19	7	23	49	13	2	16	31	80
Netherlands	4	10	12	26	3	4	16	23	49
Germany	38	42	57	137	25	25	23	73	210
Austria	22	20	4	46	14	9	0	23	69
United States ^a	—	—	—	30	—	—	—	— ^c	30
	97	82	107	316	60	42	63	165	481

Legend: ^a International Herald Tribune: 12, New York Times: 6, The Washington Post: 6; ^b period of investigation: 01/06/2006 – 30/11/2010; ^c not considered

Public stances towards EU membership represent one plausible explanation for the variation across countries, as argued in the previous chapters. H3-C suggested that newsmakers' evaluations of EU parliamentary affairs vary with the degree of public support for EU membership. But Baisnée also contends that 'as the EP grows stronger politically, journalists have been motivated to pay more attention to it, as it tends to produce news stories closer to those in national politics' (*ibid.* 2003: 87). Alongside the comparability of politics, it implies that the EP and its role is more facilitating to portray by the press in a way that is comprehensible for their readers, i.e. as a resemblance of the national parliament, as brought forward above (H4-B) and underlined with evidence in Chapter 5. However, Chapter 4 has raised the question of whether the EP is perceived as a rival to its national counterparts, since more stories about EU parliamentary affairs are being published when public trust in the latter is lower. Hence, following hypothesis H4-C, the purpose here is to examine how the European Parliament's improved institutional role compares to that of national parliaments in the eyes – and hands – of newspaper correspondents in Brussels.

Many scholars studying the participation of national parliaments in European politics suggest that even though the Lisbon Treaty has explicitly expanded their participation rights specifying that 'national parliaments contribute actively to the good functioning of the Union', in reality they are not necessarily very influential (see Goetz and Meyer-Sahling 2008; Raunio 2010; Kaczyński 2011). Some argue though, that such influence depends, among other things, on national institutional provisions and national parliamentarians' strategies to become involved leaving some parliaments more successful than others (see, for instance, Benz 2004; Auel and Benz 2005; Raunio 2005; O'Brennan and Raunio 2007b). The varying levels of actual policy influence and different parliamentary competences at both levels suggest some form of rivalry between parliamentary institutions of the national and European level in European affairs. Matarazzo (2011: 60) describes the relationship between the institutions as problematic with the Lisbon Treaty having 'expanded the room for competition, in particular the power of scrutiny of sensitive topics'. Hence, given that the powers of the EP have increased over time, in the public eye the EP might not find approval precisely because it grew into a kind of legislature which is distinct from its equivalents in the domestic context. Its function to control the executive by means of its elective function and veto power exceeds those of typical

working and debating parliaments (see Dann 2003). The alternative hypothesis, on the other hand, would propose that the EP is evaluated in a better light since it is able to compensate the lost powers of its national counterparts, or absence thereof.

The next subsection draws on descriptive statistics and interview findings to explain the variation in media stances towards the EP's role during the investiture procedure of Barroso II.¹²⁴ The then following section deals with the SWIFT case analysing press evaluations by presenting multivariate regressions, descriptive statistics and interview findings.

6.2.1 The press coverage of the Barroso II investiture

With respect to the European Parliament's elective function 'the procedures for selecting and deselecting the Commission have become a hybrid mix of the parliamentary and presidential models' (Hix and Høyland 2011: 45). Although in the supranational mode the Commission acts as the executive of the EU with the European Parliament and the Council being the legislative chambers, the Parliament does not have the right to choose its own preferred cabinet led by the Commission President. The parliamentary parties competing in European elections are up until now not able to put forward their own candidates. Instead, these are proposed and agreed on by the national heads of government in the European Council. As a consequence, there is no 'inbuilt government majority in the European Parliament' (Hix, Noury et al., 2007: 21). Yet, party politics play an important role which the Lisbon Treaty acknowledges by asking governments to consider majority constellations in the EP in their selection of the executive (Article 17.7 TEU). Nevertheless, as seen above the investiture procedure of the European Commission provides the EP with comprehensive powers regarding the selection of the executive.

¹²⁴ Here, the present chapter only relies on the descriptive quantitative analysis because unlike the previous datasets the sub-sample of the investiture procedure is too small in order to produce statistically significant correlations and regressions. A future study should cover more legislative and other parliamentary decisions in order to test the main argument.

6.2.1.1 Expected coverage: Following the national parliamentary tradition

Chapter 5 has detected the procedures of the national parliamentary tradition as a central driver of EP press coverage. Thus we can hypothesise here too that variation in the national dealings of executive confirmation is reflected in the coverage of the EP investiture procedure. In the absence of indicators for the public experience of the investiture procedure at the national level, the procedures themselves and the actual legislative-executive relations serve as an indicator for the national parliamentary tradition. The phenomenon of confirmation hearings is unknown in all parliaments of the countries under study. This procedure resembles the confirmation hearings the US Senate conducts with the candidates for the President's cabinet, and quite consciously so according to Westlake (1998: 434). Therefore, the alternative hypothesis would posit that cross-country variation of media presentations is not a likely finding.

Yet, some traditions in national parliaments might have an influence on how the EP's investiture procedure is presented by the press. The Dutch 'investiture debate' comes closest which follows the 'governmental declaration, itself a synopsis of the coalition agreement' (de Winter 1995: 134). But the Dutch Tweede Kamer has no right to vote on the investiture of the executive although the possibility of censure exists. The German Bundestag and the Dáil Éireann, on the other hand, are granted the right to approve the executive before it takes office. In the former an absolute majority is required to elect the Chancellor 'without debate' (German Basic Law, Art. 63), while a simple majority is sufficient in Ireland to approve the members of government. The Dáil further nominates the Taoiseach, i.e. the Prime Minister (Art. 13.1 of the Irish Constitution). In the semi-presidential systems of France and Austria the parliament has no say over the investiture of the executive. The latter is appointed by the directly-elected President, although the majority constellations in the legislature are being considered. In the UK the party with the most seats returned after a general election decides internally who is going to be Prime Minister who is then appointed by the Queen.

Another criterion regarding legislative-executive relations varies across countries: that is the combination of the ministerial office and a parliamentary seat. This is neither allowed at the European level, nor in France and the Netherlands. Irish and

British members of government, on the other hand, are required to be members of Parliament at the same time. In these countries, it might be particularly difficult to explain the reader the separation of posts at the European level. In the remaining political systems of Austria and Germany, such a combination is allowed but not compulsory (see Andeweg and Nijzink 1995).

Table 6.4 draws together the specific assumptions that can be derived with respect to the impacts of the national parliamentary tradition on the press coverage of the investiture procedure. Given that party politics matter for the inauguration of the executive in Ireland, Germany and the Netherlands, we can expect that these are also often highlighted in the press coverage of the confirmation hearings. In the UK, although neither a vote nor a debate takes place, the games between majority and opposition in Parliament are also rather likely to be reflected in the news given the polarization of political parties in the House of Commons. However, such news depictions of party political battles in the EP are rather unlikely in the remaining two countries' newspapers (France and Austria), because the respective parliament has no influence at the national level in the appointment of the executive.

On the contrary, in these broadsheets the separation of powers between the EP and the Commission are likely to be featured more often, given their semi-presidential systems. Although, since in Austria a combination of ministerial and parliamentary office is possible, the cell only predicts a 'rather likely'. Stressing the separation of powers is also rather unlikely in the Dutch press, despite post separation between the Tweede Kamer and the government, because of the parliamentary government, which can be also found in the UK and Germany. Irish ministers have to be members of parliament. Hence, a separation of powers between the EP and the Commission is unlikely to be visible in the Irish press.

Table 6.4: Assumptions regarding the press coverage of the investiture procedure

	IE	GB	FR	NL	DE	AT
Party politics of majority and opposition visible	Likely	Rather likely	Rather unlikely	Likely	Likely	Rather unlikely
Separation of powers visible	Unlikely	Unlikely	Likely	Rather unlikely	Unlikely	Rather likely

The extent to which these assumptions hold when explaining cross-country variation in media content will be evaluated next.

6.2.1.2 Actual coverage: Difficulties in representing the EP's powers

The hearings the EP conducted with the individual Commissioner-designates were treated by the press in same fashion as before: the news value domestic relevance prevailed in the coverage. Figure 6.6 shows that the broadsheets devoted a lot of attention to the candidate from their respective country.¹²⁵ These are Geoghegan-Quinn in Ireland, Ashton in the UK, Barnier in France, Kroes in the Netherlands, Oettinger in Germany and Hahn in Austria. Only Catherine Ashton, as the incoming High Representative, and Rumiana Jeleva received attention in all newspapers across countries, while the hearing of the French Commissioner-designate was also subject to the British press. The results are not surprising given what we have learnt thus far about the centrality of the domestic relevance. However, the questions of how the press portrayed party politics surrounding these hearings and whether they treated the EP as an independent institution prevail. Following Hix et al. (2007) who find that intra-institutional party politics have developed in recent years, in reality, the opposition parties, comprising the Socialists (S&D), the Liberals and the Greens, in the EP expressed their criticism against Rumiana Jeleva while the EPP was defending her until she withdrew from the post. Yet, some Conservatives raised their doubts with respect to the candidacy of Social-Democrats, especially Catherine Ashton and the Slovakian designate for inter-institutional relations and administration, Maroš Šefčovič.

¹²⁵ Krippendorff's α ranges from 0.52 to 0.81 for the variable of *Commission Topic* (see Appendix A3.5).

Figure 6.6: Topics of the articles referring to the investiture procedure

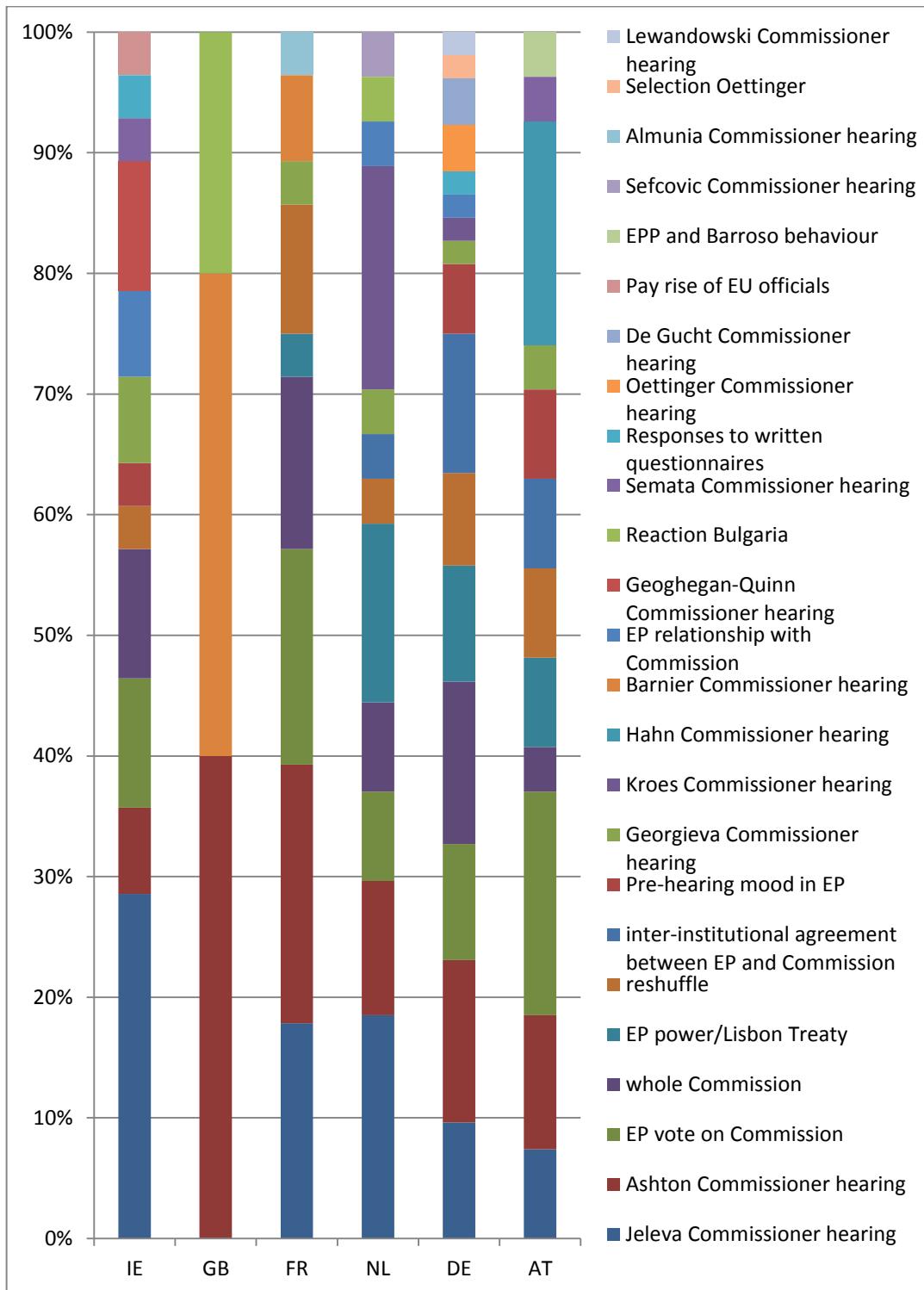
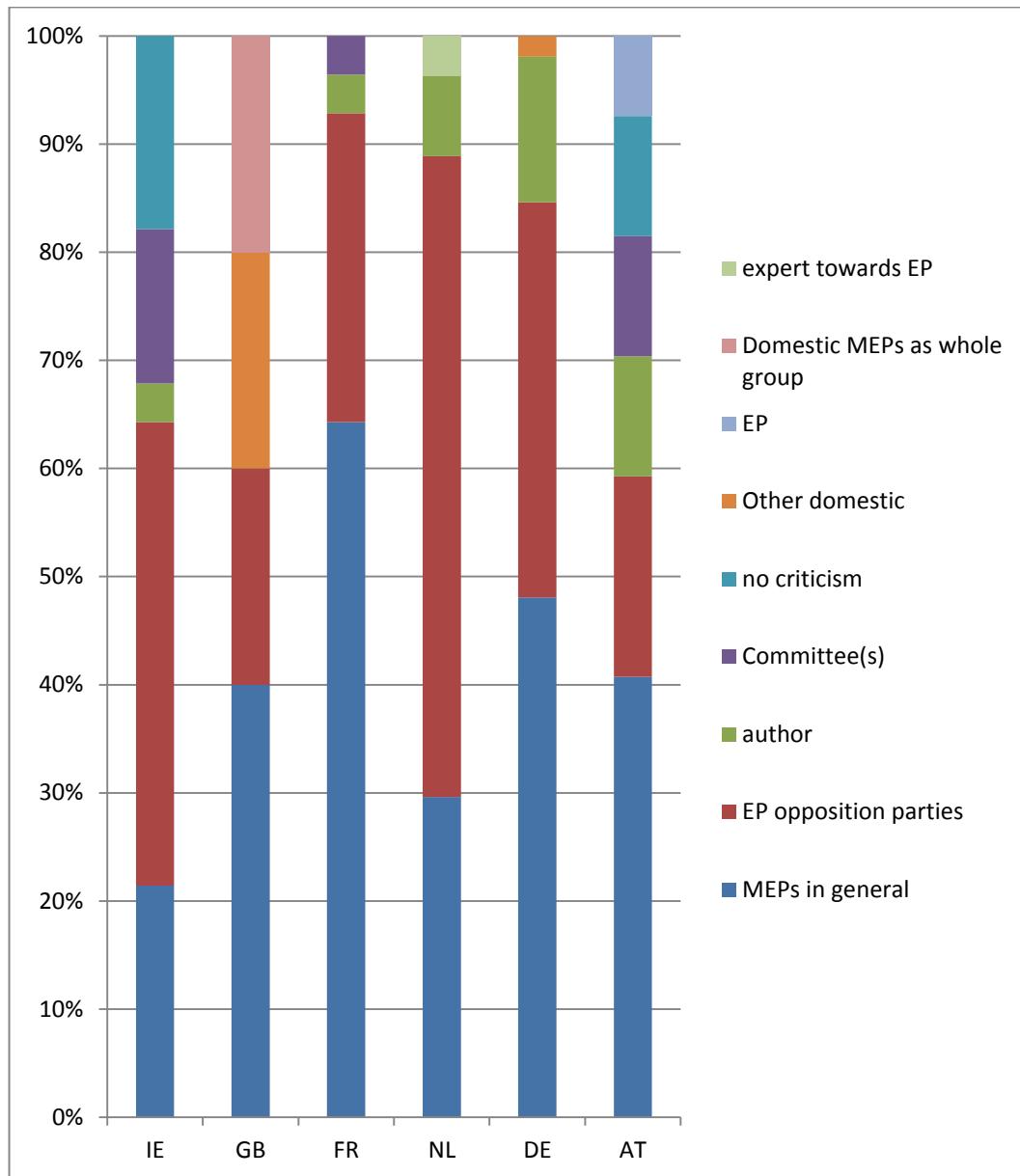


Figure 6.7 depicts how the European press reported the criticism raised towards the incoming executive. The interest here lies to detect whether the press portrayed the political battles in terms of party politics (category: *EP opposition parties*) or whether it was represented as an argument between institutions (*MEPs in general* and *EP*) which can be identified as a separation of powers (see Table 6.4).

Figure 6.7: Reported criticism towards the European Commission



As expected, the Dutch press most often frames the political battles in terms of party politics between the majority and the opposition – in almost 60% of their news. However, according to Dutch correspondents such battles are not facilitating to describe for their readers: ‘There are political groups, but they don’t form coalitions to which people in the Netherlands are used too...’ (NL-1). Further,

‘It’s a bit difficult, because if you cover stories in national politics you would like to say this party was in favour of a decision, this party was against it. But if there is a vote in the EP which is the same, but then you have to talk about national parties, and also European parties [...]’ (NL-2)

Yet, as predicted the separation of powers between the institutions expressed by references to the opposition of MEPs in general is less visible in the press. Rather, it seems that the Dutch follow their parliamentary tradition in holding an investiture debate by stressing party politics in the EP. One even admitted that he saw ‘quite a lot of politics behind’ the hearings (NL-1). The Irish broadsheets also stress political conflict more often than criticism by MEPs in general (about 40%). This is in line with the expectations above as in the Irish context a confirmation vote by Parliament is necessary component of the investiture of the executive. These two findings have to be interpreted carefully however as Krippendorff’s α is only 0.49 for the Dutch case and 0.41 for the Irish newspapers (see Appendix A3.5).

It was furthermore expected that the British papers stress party politics more often than anything else. This is not the case.¹²⁶ Instead domestic (party) politics and the opposition of MEPs in general are more prominent in the news. One explanation is that Lady Ashton’s hearing was often reported, as seen in Figure 6.6, in which she was grilled by fellow nationals. The other explanation can be linked to the lack of interest of the British public as contended in Chapter 4 which coincides with the little coverage of the events in the EP. Nevertheless, one British interviewee claimed that the EP’s procedure by holding hearings would be a ‘very healthy part of the process’ as it ‘shows the good use of parliamentary powers’ (GB-1).

In line with the expectations above, the French and Austrian newspapers depict the investiture procedure more often than not as a battle between MEPs or the EP as a whole against Barroso and his Commissioner-designates. For an Austrian correspondent the procedure itself would be ‘too complicated’ with thematic switches lacking debates (AT-1). According to the latter the hearings have ‘a good purpose, but in practice they are bad’, while another one claimed the Parliament would not have any power in this respect:

‘These things [the hearings]... Sometimes you don’t know whether the Parliament is too fond of itself, or whether they just pretend before the media [that they have power] in the hope that you forget that they don’t have competences but you write about them.’
(AT-2)

¹²⁶ Krippendorff’s α is 1 for the British sample (see Appendix A3.5).

While these negative connotations can be linked to the rather Eurosceptic mood of their readership, the Austrian correspondents' evaluations resemble experiences with the Nationalrat which does not have a formal say over the executive in the semi-presidential system of Austria. Similarly, a French correspondent explained that 'sometimes [we are] rather interested in the EP position on a proposal', although 'sometimes we look at positions inside [the EP]' (FR-2) underlining the findings of Figure 6.7. Another one admitted that the political groups in the EP 'are equivalent to national assemblies with their political affinities' but some decisions would be not always 'left against right' (FR-1). Again, intercoder reliability checks reveal that while for the Austrian sample Krippendorff's α produces a satisfactory score of 0.64, the French newspaper sample only has a score of 0.51 of agreement between coders (see Appendix A3.5).

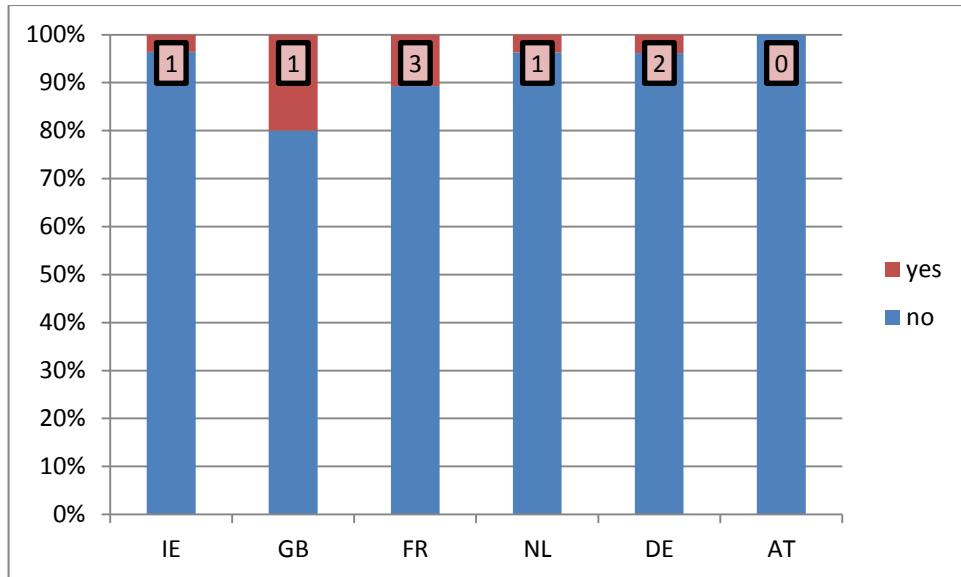
In the German newspapers, however, the separation of powers is much more visible in the press, although party politics are also considered in the press coverage. These findings, however, do not allow us to draw generalizable conclusions as Krippendorff's α as a measure of intercoder reliability is not particularly high in this case with a score of 0.33 (see Appendix A3.5). Nevertheless, similar to the Dutch and other correspondents German interviewees stated that they also have difficulties in portraying party battles in the EP. It would not be so facilitating to present 'like it would be at the national level' (DE-2). Due to the electoral independence of the executive and the majority in the EP which is a common attribute of presidential systems, many correspondents regret that there is no clear government party within the parliament that is contesting an identifiable opposition and traditionally serves to assure stable and efficient government (cf. Bagehot 1936[1867]).

'I have never belonged to those who claim that the [European] Parliament is now a real Parliament because there is, like in national parliaments, also a majority and a minority; because I still see that you still need a broad coalition in the EP.' (DE-4)

Yet, this correspondent also stated that during the investiture procedure 'one could feel very intensely how significant a role the political affiliation plays with the three institutions' (DE-4). Nevertheless, '[the Parliament] does not hold a government to account in a *classic* way – honestly speaking it is much closer to the American Congress than to the Bundestag or British Parliament' (DE-5) (emphasis of the

interviewee). In the actual press coverage, as Figure 6.8 shows, few comparisons were drawn to the US Congress in terms of the hearing procedure which imitates the Senate's hearings (see Westlake 1998: 434).¹²⁷

Figure 6.8: Number of comparisons to the US Congress



It underlines once again that the EP is presented as a parliament which follows the national tradition – and with which readers are familiar in the domestic context, rather than as an institution that operates under a distinct parliamentary practice. In fact, national parliaments serve as a measure of the European Parliament's legitimacy for the European quality press as anticipated above (hypothesis H4-C).

'Perceptions of legitimacy depend on where you are coming from, how secure, sovereign, old and ancient your own democratic traditions are as opposed to the Strasbourg variety' (GB-2)

It is due to the distinct experience with the national parliamentary tradition that correspondents have difficulties in presenting the EP in a way that is understandable for their readers. The EP is different from its national counterparts. Correspondents are aware of that and do in fact draw comparisons to the national parliamentary culture to make it more perceptible for their readers as shown in Chapter 5. But their evaluations also imply, that national parliaments are somewhat better equipped to scrutinise the executive in the eyes of the journalists.

¹²⁷ Krippendorff's α for this variable is 1 when applicable (see Appendix A3.5).

6.2.2 Press evaluations of the EP's role during the SWIFT negotiations

The Lisbon Treaty granted the EP with the right to formally approve international agreements. The consent procedure becomes valid since the SWIFT agreement does not ‘relate exclusively to the common foreign and security policy’ (Art. 188 N TFEU), but affects the area of Freedom, Security and Justice (the former third pillar of the Maastricht Treaty). However, given that the US were an active partner in the data sharing deal, the SWIFT accord also had implications for the EU’s foreign policy which, as seen above, was one reason why the press showed interest in EU parliamentary affairs.

National parliaments, on the other hand, are normally also entitled to ratify international treaties and agreements exemplified by the national ratification procedures of the Lisbon Treaty. However, the difference is that the majorities of the lower houses of the countries included in this study (the Dáil Éireann, House of Commons, Assemblée Nationale, Tweede Kamer, Bundestag, and the Nationalrat) are intertwined with the executive, i.e. the Prime Minister/Chancellor and his or her cabinet. The European Parliament, as elaborated above following the elective function of the Commission, is independent of the executive – like the Congress is in the United States. That means neither the Commission nor the Council can dissolve the Parliament. And therewith, they do not have a tool to pressure MEPs in order to approve an agreement, whereas the domestic executives, even in the semi-presidential systems of Ireland, France and Austria, can threaten the legislature to call for new elections if the majority hesitates to support the government. Hence, the EP is in a much stronger position than its national counterparts. And even though the consent procedure is de jure only a veto instrument – Parliament is not allowed to amend any text – the de facto powers are quite comprehensive due to the lack of executive control over Parliament. As seen above, with the Parliament rejecting the interim accord on SWIFT the Commission and the Council were forced to negotiate a compromise with the EP in order to receive the latter’s consent. The national parliaments, on the other hand, did not have a say at all as the agreement fell under exclusive EU competences. Yet, these circumstances did not prevent most of them to debate the issue in plenary sessions.

Thus, and following the results of Chapter 4, a jealousy of national parliaments is likely to be expressed in the broadsheet coverage of the EP's role. In order to test this hypothesis, the next sub-section demonstrates the cross-country variation of news content of the SWIFT issue before it conducts a regression analysis of press coverage complemented by the analysis of interview findings.

6.2.2.1 The domestic relevance of the SWIFT issue

Following the dominance of the domestic angle, the salience of the SWIFT case supposedly varies *per se* across countries given its divisiveness between the improvement of security standards to fight international terrorism and civil liberties in terms of ensuring data protection. For instance, after the terrorist attacks in London in July 2005, British citizens are expected to be more lenient towards improving security standards at the expense of some privacy rights. An alternative example is the public outrage over privacy rights in Germany in 2010 when Google announced to introduce its 'Street View' by publishing photographs of streets and buildings on the internet. Hence, despite the increase in EP powers, some variation in the coverage is a plausible finding across country.

Table 6.5 below shows that newspapers in the countries under study pay a different amount of attention to the European Parliament's role in the SWIFT case.¹²⁸ The Irish and German broadsheets pay the least attention to the EP, although for the latter publication numbers are higher, while the French devote the largest share of their news coverage to EU parliamentary politics.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ Krippendorff's α is close to 1 or 1 for both variables *Article length* and for *Epsshare wordcount* used to calculate the percentage of words about EU parliamentary activities in each article (see Appendix A3.5).

¹²⁹ Note that the US newspapers have not been included in this table since no data was collected to control for the instances which mention SWIFT but not the EP. A comparison of this variable between broadsheets of the US and European countries is thus not possible.

Table 6.5: Percentage of words about EU parliamentary activities in the articles, by country

Country	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Ireland	20.02	16	25.58	0	72.91
Britain	28.78	27	35.80	0	100
France	30.38	80	35.07	0	100
Netherlands	24.42	49	28.63	0	89.70
Germany	21.52	210	26.89	0	100
Austria	29.30	69	31.07	0	100
Total	24.98	451	29.94	0	100

Thus, we can assume that journalists have different motivations for reporting from the European Parliament in relation to the SWIFT issue. The interviews with the correspondents from the European print media lend support to this assumption. For example, it was a ‘sensitive issue’ in both Germany and the Netherlands as regards data protection (NL-2). ‘Germans hold more debates [on the issue] because they are interested in data protection; the other countries rather perceive it as a transatlantic topic’ (DE-5). A British correspondent underlined this particular reason. Accordingly, the domestic readership was interested in the EP’s rejection of the international agreement because of the UK’s close ties with the US: ‘When it takes a decision that affects Brit... you know ... Europe’s relations with the United States – that’s a big deal!’ (GB-1). In the Dutch case, personification also contributed to the attention from the quality press given the nationality of the main rapporteur, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert:

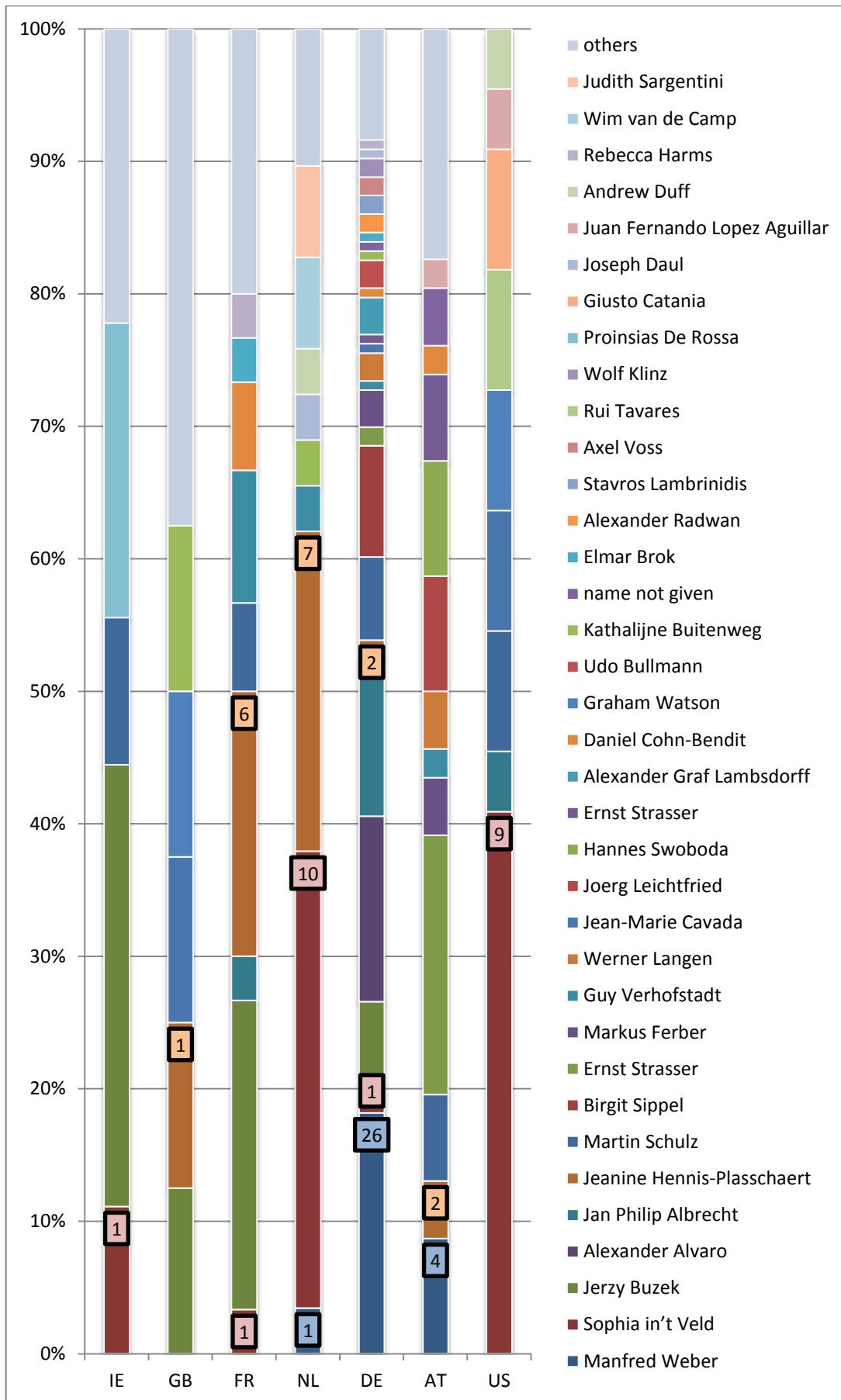
'It's always very nationalistic of course. So, for us it's interesting that the liberal Dutch MEP was quite active on SWIFT [...] She was the leader of the move by the Parliament not to accept the deal. It was her moment of glory.' (NL-1)

Figure 6.9, which depicts the attention paid to individual legislators¹³⁰, supports this interest by the Dutch newspapers. Both Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert and Sophia in’t Veld were the most prominent MEPs in the press. The latter was the rapporteur for the PNR and also most prominent in the US sheets. The German broadsheets however, feature Manfred Weber more often than anyone else, followed by other German MEPs. Although not a rapporteur on any related issue such as the PNR, he

¹³⁰ Note that the category of 'others' includes references to MEPs who were only mentioned once across all countries. Krippendorff's α ranges from 0.62 to 1 for references to individual MEPs, where applicable (see Appendix A3.5).

was cited as an expert on SWIFT: ‘Because you are bombarded with press releases throughout the day, it is easier than calling some Dutch person’ (DE-5). With the exception of the Austrian press, the rest of the newspapers reference European MEPs more prominently than their own nationals. Contrary to the findings in Chapter 4, where most newspapers especially feature their own MEPs, these findings show that when highly relevant issues are at stake, such as the SWIFT agreement, some national broadsheets, even the British ones, Europeanise their content in terms of references to individual legislators not elected in their country of news distribution. This finding might be interesting for scholars studying the phenomenon of supranational Europeanisation of news content (see Koopmans 2007) given the dominance of pan-European actors in this case. However, a simple explanation might also derive from the likelihood that the press was unable to find experts on the issue from their national EP delegation.

Figure 6.9: Number of references to individual MEPs



6.2.2.2 The EP's undermined powers in the press coverage

In order to test whether the European Parliament is perceived as a rival to the national counterparts, a Tobit model is being set up in a similar way as before. The number of articles considered comprises only the samples of the European newspapers, but includes both publications on SWIFT only and those referencing EU parliamentary politics in combination with the issue (N=451). Again, the dependent variable measures the amount of words per articles dealing with parliamentary affairs relative to the overall articles length (as seen in Table 6.5).¹³¹ The main independent variables of interest are: a dummy measuring whether the Lisbon Treaty was enacted on the day of publication (*Lisbon Treaty*); another dummy determining whether the European Parliament has debated the SWIFT issue or agreement on the day before or on the publication date of the respective articles (*EP debate on SWIFT (days)*); and finally a continuous variable quantifying the total number of parliamentary debates at the national level that dealt with SWIFT during the time of investigation (*No of SWIFT debates in NP*).¹³² The latter variable serves as an indicator for a national Parliament's motivation to participate in the decision-making process of the SWIFT agreement. Indicators for the public experience with how the national parliament dealt with the SWIFT agreement, if at all, are not available. Here, we can only assume that the way the national parliament got involved is more or less representative of its general activities in EU affairs and hence somehow conceivable by the public. Although other measures such as reports and committee meetings could have been considered as well, plenary debates are used as a tool for generating publicity and can be thus understood as a specific, open type of scrutinising power (see de Wilde 2011: 131). Hence, if the regressions return a significant and negative coefficient, then one could conclude that the more active – or rather willing to act – national parliaments are on this issue, then the European Parliament receives less attention. Vice versa, it would also mean that where national parliaments do not express the willingness to participate in the debate, the European Parliament is accepted as stepping in by scrutinising the SWIFT agreement. In order to detect this effect, the variable *EP sitting* is being included again. It controls for the timing of

¹³¹ See Appendix A6.3 for the descriptive statistics.

¹³² Parliamentary archives via their websites have been scanned to identify debates on SWIFT. For each lower house, the following total number of debates were found: BT: 22; TK: 8; NR: 4; HoC: 2; AN: 1; DÉ: 0 (see Appendix A6.4).

debates since one explanation might be that national parliaments debated the issue when the EP was unable to do so in the absence of a plenary session.

The remaining controlling variables have also been considered in the models of the previous two chapters and require no further introduction. These are the affiliation of a given newspaper (the dummies *Centre left BS* and *Business BS*, reference category: *Centre right BS*) and its circulation number in 10000s (*BS circulation 10000*) as well the public opinion variables measuring support for EU membership and trust towards the national parliament. Regrettably, there are no time-variant data available which would provide insight into public opinion towards issues of national and/or European security or data protection. But in order to test the alternative hypothesis considered above regarding party polarization over European integration, models 4A and 4B also include the *political contestation* variable which was introduced in Chapter 4 (see Appendix A4.2 for more information).

As before, the dummies referring to the type of media system (*MS liberal* and *MS polarised-pluralist*) are included once in models 5A and 5B. Time is being controlled for by the *Lisbon Treaty* dummy, and the *EP debate on SWIFT*. Possible country biases are being controlled for by conducting jack-knife tests as before. Standard are either clustered by newspaper or by country and serve as robustness checks (see chapter 4).

Table 6.6 presents the regression results from the Tobit models. Table 6.7 shows the jack-knife tests of the main models 3A and 3B. The results are very clear throughout the models in Table 6.6. Controlling for other effects, when the Lisbon Treaty was enacted the press paid considerably more attention to the EP by prolonging its articles by about 40 to 43 percentage points. This lends support to the finding of a ‘Lisbon effect’ in the news coverage identified in the previous section. Similarly, when the EP held a debate on the SWIFT issue or agreement the press coverage increased by about 9 per cent.

As expected, the number of debates tabled in national parliaments has a negative effect on the press coverage. With every more parliamentary agenda dealing with SWIFT, the attention EU parliamentary activities received by broadsheets was about 0.48 to 0.93 per cent less comprehensive holding all other independent variables constant. Once the country samples of the Netherlands and Germany are removed

however (Table 6.7), the coefficient is still negative, but it does not reach the levels of conventional statistical significance. There is a plausible reason for that: both country samples are responsible for the variation in the independent variable with values of 8 debates in the Tweede Kamer and 22 debates in the Bundestag, respectively. At the same time, the quality press in these countries paid a considerable amount of attention to the SWIFT issue alone as seen in Table 6.3. Some German correspondents, in fact, ‘promoted the issue from the beginning, regardless of the parliament’ (DE-5). Coincidentally, the Irish press covered the SWIFT issue least often which correlates with the fact that national politics did not get involved – it did not appear on any parliamentary agenda during the time of investigation.

Most controlling variables, including newspaper-related effects, do not have any statistically significant effect on the amount of coverage about the EP’s involvement in the SWIFT case. And the results hold when controlling for *EPsitting* throughout the models. The effect of national parliamentary debates, however, is not significant anymore albeit still negative, once the effect of political contestation is included in the models (4A and 4B). The latter presents a positive coefficient, implying that higher levels of party political polarization of the EU issue are associated with greater press coverage of the EP and the SWIFT case. But its effect does not comply with conventional levels of statistical significance. The same holds for the inclusion of the squared term (see Appendix A6.6) which points at the results of Schuck et al. (2011) who find a curvilinear relationship between contestation and EU news coverage, whereby coverage increases with high levels of party polarization. The findings suggest however, that party political contestation does not necessarily represent the best indicator for explaining variation in the SWIFT case. Rather, public or party contestation over the issue itself might have had a significantly positive effect onto the press coverage of EU parliamentary affairs. But we are unable to test this. Similarly, public support for EU membership is also not statistically significant in Table 6.6. Trust towards the national parliament, on the other hand, again has a negative and significant effect – at least in Model 3B: with every one per cent increase in this variable, the EP receives about 0.24 percentage points less attention. This underlines once more that the press respond, also in the SWIFT, case to the public appreciation of the national parliament by generating less coverage about the EP.

Table 6.6: Tobit models, predicting variation in the volume of news referring to EU parliamentary affairs for the SWIFT case

	Model 1A	Model 1B	Model 2A	Model 2B	Model 3A	Model 3B	Model 4A	Model 4B	Model 5A	Model 5B
Lisbon Treaty	42.54*** (6.59)	42.54*** (9.05)	42.58*** (6.52)	42.58*** (8.89)	42.37*** (6.41)	42.37*** (8.35)	40.13*** (6.73)	40.13*** (9.86)	42.81*** (6.77)	42.81*** (8.45)
EP debate on SWIFT (days)	9.18** (4.45)	9.18*** (2.98)	8.94** (4.44)	8.94*** (3.02)	9.33** (4.49)	9.33*** (3.21)	9.51** (4.54)	9.51*** (3.31)	9.43** (4.46)	9.43*** (3.05)
No of SWIFT debates in NP	-.48*** (.15)	-.48*** (.08)	-.58*** (.19)	-.58*** (.15)	-.48** (.22)	-.48*** (.14)	-.26 (.21)	-.26 (.21)	-.93** (.41)	-.93** (.46)
Centre left BS			-3.84 (3.00)	-3.84 (3.89)	-3.66 (2.92)	-3.66 (3.67)	-3.94 (3.38)	-3.94 (4.10)	-3.78 (2.89)	-3.78 (3.85)
Business BS			1.08 (2.80)	1.08 (1.77)	-1.11 (3.62)	-1.11 (2.44)	3.53 (3.96)	3.53 (3.65)	1.33 (4.14)	1.33 (1.49)
BS circulation (10000s)			.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)
EB support for EU					.03 (.15)	.03 (.11)			.06 (.15)	.06 (.09)
EB trust in NP						-.24 (.19)	-.24** (.09)		-.50 (.42)	-.50 (.33)
Political Contestation							1.18 (.78)	1.18 (.85)		
MS liberal									-6.44 (13.54)	-6.44 (9.80)
MS polarised-pluralist									-15.02 (12.13)	-15.02 (12.44)
EP sitting	6.88** (3.10)	6.88* (3.98)	6.94** (3.18)	6.94* (4.01)	6.55* (3.49)	6.55 (4.44)	5.94* (3.13)	5.94 (3.99)	5.64 (3.74)	5.64 (4.97)
SE clustered by	Newspaper	Country	Newspaper	Country	Newspaper	Country	Newspaper	Country	Newspaper	Country
Constant	-6.37 (5.35)	-6.37 (5.81)	-6.79 (5.78)	-6.79 (5.96)	3.96 (14.61)	3.96 (8.99)	-27.46* (16.07)	-27.46* (15.65)	18.73 (27.18)	18.73 (17.75)
Sigma Constant	34.92*** (2.23)	34.92*** (1.85)	34.83*** (2.25)	34.83*** (1.83)	34.83*** (2.28)	34.83*** (1.84)	34.77*** (2.23)	34.77*** (1.85)	34.72*** (2.27)	34.72*** (1.76)
N	451	451	451	451	451	451	451	451	451	451
Pseudo R Square	.0491	.0491	.0494	.0494	.0498	.0498	.0499	.0499	.0505	.0505

Legend: * p<.1; ** p<.05; *** p<.01; adjusted standard errors in brackets; dependent variable: amount of news dealing with EU parliamentary affairs (%)

Table 6.7: Tobit models, predicting variation in the volume of news referring to EU parliamentary affairs for the SWIFT case (Jack-knife tests)

	Model 1A	Model 1B	Model 2A	Model 2B	Model 3A	Model 3B	Model 4A	Model 4B	Model 5A	Model 5B	Model 6A	Model 6B
Lisbon Treaty	42.50*** (6.84)	42.50*** (9.11)	42.51*** (7.05)	42.51*** (9.24)	38.90*** (6.52)	38.90*** (8.01)	40.78*** (6.78)	40.78*** (8.43)	54.53*** (4.25)	54.53*** (3.34)	40.40*** (6.95)	40.40*** (8.89)
EP debate on SWIFT (days)	9.48** (4.74)	9.48*** (3.55)	7.19* (4.10)	7.19*** (2.23)	10.64** (5.01)	10.64*** (3.80)	9.56** (4.56)	9.56** (3.80)	11.80* (6.48)	11.80*** (3.05)	8.29* (4.64)	8.29*** (3.13)
No of SWIFT debates in NP	-.48** (.22)	-.48*** (.14)	-.41** (.20)	-.41*** (.09)	-.69** (.27)	-.69*** (.19)	-.44 (.43)	-.44 (.45)	.37 (2.16)	.37 (2.49)	-.40* (.21)	-.40*** (.09)
Centre left BS	-4.43 (3.35)	-4.43 (4.10)	-3.83 (2.91)	-3.83 (4.00)	-2.01 (2.89)	-2.01 (4.44)	-5.98** (2.84)	-5.98** (2.97)	-4.07 (5.79)	-4.07 (7.93)	-2.04 (3.95)	-2.04 (4.70)
Business BS	-1.13 (5.48)	-1.13 (2.51)	-1.88 (4.02)	-1.88 (2.31)	1.45 (3.78)	1.45 (1.46)	-3.01 (7.22)	-3.01 (7.25)	-3.45 (5.93)	-3.45 (4.99)	.96 (2.67)	.96 (.70)
BS circulation (10000s)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	-.00*** (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)
EB support for EU	.02 (.27)	.02 (.21)	.16 (.17)	.16*** (.06)	.03 (.14)	.03 (.09)	.02 (.23)	.02 (.30)	-.07 (.23)	-.07 (.24)	.13 (.21)	.13 (.18)
EB trust in NP	-.22 (.28)	-.22** (.10)	-.17 (.20)	-.17* (.10)	-.26 (.21)	-.26** (.13)	-.29 (.35)	-.29 (.38)	-.31 (.45)	-.31 (.50)	-.42 (.36)	-.42** (.20)
EP sitting	6.69* (3.74)	6.69 (4.82)	9.47*** (2.75)	9.47*** (2.54)	5.19 (4.20)	5.19 (6.14)	7.32* (3.98)	7.32 (4.97)	1.97 (4.50)	1.97 (5.39)	6.02 (4.18)	6.02 (5.32)
SE clustered by	Newspaper	Country	Newspaper	Country	Newspaper	Country	Newspaper	Country	Newspaper	Country	Newspaper	Country
Country excluded	IE	IE	GB	GB	FR	FR	NL	NL	DE	DE	AT	AT
Constant	3.29 (15.51)	3.29 (9.10)	-5.13 (16.82)	-5.13 (4.66)	8.09 (15.84)	8.09 (7.22)	10.12 (28.82)	10.12 (30.67)	1.38 (22.52v)	1.38 (27.93)	1.83 (12.61)	1.83 (11.86)
Sigma Constant	35.41*** (2.34)	35.41*** (1.93)	34.52*** (2.41)	34.52*** (1.99)	33.20*** (2.38)	33.20*** (1.09)	34.46*** (2.43)	34.46*** (1.96)	35.49*** (2.61)	35.49*** (2.97)	35.44*** (2.79)	35.44*** (2.23)
N	435	435	424	424	371	371	402	402	241	241	382	382
Pseudo R Square	.0484	.0484	.0497	.0497	.0479	.0479	.0477	.0477	.0727	.0727	.0445	.0445

Legend: * p<.1; ** p<.05; *** p<.01; adjusted standard errors in brackets; dependent variable: amount of news dealing with EU parliamentary affairs (%)

Overall, the results underline the relevance of the national parliament: the more debates were being held in the national parliament, i.e. the greater national parliaments got involved in the SWIFT issue which was also the case in Austria, the lower the coverage of the European Parliament's activities in this regard. The results furthermore hold when including the crude measure of media system type in Models 5A and 5B, which is similar to a country dummy (see discussion in Chapter 5). Thus, in the SWIFT case the press probably respected the national parliament's sovereignty more than the powers of the EP, although the former had hardly any competences to intervene (other than holding their own government to account and raising media attention).

Here, the German and Dutch broadsheets therefore represent not an outlier but an example of perceived rivalry of parliamentary competences at EU and national level. In fact, the main rapporteur, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, left the EP in June 2010 to take up a seat in the Dutch Tweede Kamer, where she immediately steered through a motion demanding, among other things, the government to inform the chamber instantly and comprehensively about the new text of the SWIFT accord (Tweede Kamer 2010). Further, the opposition parties in the German Bundestag explicitly called for more influence in the negotiations of the SWIFT agreement. The social democrat Gerold Reichenbach claimed in plenary session that the involvement of the German Parliament would be 'absolutely essential' following the increased responsibility through the Lisbon Treaty and the judgement by the German Constitutional Court in 2009 underlining the sovereignty of the Bundestag in EU affairs (Deutscher Bundestag 2010)¹³³. Further, many German correspondents did not approve of the EP's role in the SWIFT negotiations as it would 'paralyse the political culture' (DE-2).

'I find that ridiculous and it has nothing to do with the voter mandate [...] Some decisions are not necessarily better when taken against the will of the Council [...] You and I as citizens have the right that decisions are being taken according to objective criteria and not whether the Parliament wants to prove its strength and feels treading on its toes.' (DE-5)

¹³³ BVerfG, 2 BvE 2/08 of 30/6/2009, Paragraph No. (1 - 421),
http://www.bverfg.de/entscheidungen/es20090630_2bve000208en.html

Another German correspondent, who was in favour of the EP's proposals to improve the SWIFT deal, was even more concrete and compared the EP directly to the Bundestag, however undermining the role of the former as being not as influential yet as its national counterparts:

'It got strengthened by the Lisbon Treaty but it is not yet comparable to the Bundestag or the lower house in London or the like. It will give in in the end. Frankly, the parliamentarians always prance tremendously before the press. But if you look at the outcome at the end, there is nothing much left of it. [...] Just in this very moment, the negotiations going on in the background aim at the approval [of the agreement]. There is a new proposal, which takes some of [the EP's] objections into account. But the EP lets itself get under pressure and there will be an arrangement today or on Monday. (DE-1)

One Austrian correspondent even went further and stated:

'I hope for every EU parliamentarian who voted against it, that there will never be a terrorist attack which can be traced back to that [decision]. Everyone wanted the data exchange, but the EP has delayed it.' (AT-1)

Put bluntly, if there was no data exchange in the future, 'then there is no added value of the Parliament' (DE-5); 'it was also data from the Middle East, which the Parliament swept under the carpet' (AT-2). Again, the Austrian newsmakers who write for an audience less supportive of the EU are rather negative towards the EP. Yet, we are unable to say whether this is actually linked to the attitudes of Austrian readers, or whether their opinion derives from their personal or professional beliefs¹³⁴; or whether the attitudes actually derive from a sense of jealousy, given the inability of the Nationalrat to influence the outcome on the accord. A Dutch correspondent, on the other hand, was more positive towards the European Parliament, which is probably due to the fact that two Dutch MEPs were prominently involved in the negotiations on data exchange with the US: It was a 'good thing, if it

¹³⁴ Note that their socialisation over time – as suggested by some (Bainsée 2002: 122) – is unlikely to have affected their opinion given the different duration as a member of the Brussels press corps of the two Austrian newsmakers (see Table 3.3).

[the Parliament] is acting like a political institution – in the past, it was more like a decision-making machine' (NL-2).

The results also reveal another phenomenon: In the countries where the national parliament got hardly involved in the SWIFT issue, if at all, as in the case of Ireland, the UK, and France, newspapers more often than not referred to MEPs who did not get elected in the national context, such as the two Dutch rapporteurs and other senior and influential members of the EP (see Figure 6.9). This demonstrates that in countries where the executive is a powerful agenda setter facing a rather weak parliament (cf. Tsebelis 2002), the European legislators were enabled by the quality press to step in where national politicians were not able to offer any expertise. In the remaining countries, where political consequences were discussed (more) frequently in the national legislature, own national MEPs were more prominent in the news underlining the issue relevance for the respective domestic context. These findings serve as an indicator for intra-party communication between the national and European level (see Miklin and Crum 2011) – or absence thereof – which explains why European legislators were cited as experts in the respective press. This was especially likely in the German case: In the EP, 'the German CDU-CSU voted against [the accord]; they were not sure, and the Federal Ministry of the Interior had called them [...]' (DE-5)¹³⁵. At the same time, these findings also suggest that political contestation over the SWIFT issue matters as elaborated above. However, the effect is supposedly negative for EP press coverage since in countries where political contestation was high, the debate largely remained in the domestic context with the EP receiving less attention by the quality press.

Indeed, after the Lisbon Treaty came into force a French correspondents described the EP as a 'real parliament, not a perfect parliament, but it's real that it is working' (FR-1). Another colleague added, that the EP's role in the SWIFT negotiations, among others, would have been interesting because it 'is trying to defend the communitarian approach' (FR-2). 'Personally I think it had some points to make' (IE-1) while according to this Irish interviewee others were just criticising the (mal-) use of powers by the EP. A British correspondent highlighted the persisting negative stances of the British press towards the EU when describing the role of the EP in the press after December 2009:

¹³⁵ Note: Thomas de Maizière of the CDU was Federal Minister of the Interior at that time.

'Unfortunately in the British press, it has been treated as a butt of jokes, [as a] kind of a laughing stock ... the MEPs and the gravy train. [We try to show that it is a] normal, powerful and relevant institution, and just not like 'if you want to make fun of Brussels, there is the European Parliament, MEPs, expenses and perks and so forth'. (GB-3)

Yet, this particular correspondent's perspective was rather exceptional compared to his other national colleagues as the increase in policy influence was not always appreciated: 'It's bad news for efficient policy making [as it] slows down and delays' (GB-2) which clashes with the processes of the British majoritarian system favouring speedier policy decisions (cf. Lijphart 1999). Further, the EP was also not seen as influential as its national counterparts since it 'doesn't have any role in international affairs, not like a *proper* Parliament' (GB-1) (emphasis added); although the power of national legislatures in this respect is questionable.¹³⁶ Here, again, the British Eurosceptic mood comes through as well.

At the same time, the results also suggest that the correspondents' relationship to the editor changes at times highly salient decisions of the EP are at stake. Following the discussion of the findings in chapter 4, the editor at home has a central role in the selection of EU news, and especially in Britain and also Austria as well as in case of small broadsheets which are restricted by space underlining the probability of an 'inward orientation' (Gleissner and de Vreese 2005) of news. However, the SWIFT case implies that when the EP exerts its powers, some correspondents might receive the chance to report more autonomously from Brussels since more news from the EP with more references to European actors have been produced in countries where the national discourse was not triggered by the national parliament and almost absent. However, in the absence of interviews with the respective editors, this claim only remains an assumption.

Nevertheless, the findings underline once again that journalists compare parliaments in terms of strengths – even though they acknowledge the fact that the European Parliament has increased powers after the Lisbon Treaty. A French correspondent

¹³⁶ In fact, national parliaments' competences in the area of pure foreign affairs – as opposed to European affairs – rarely exceed the scope of international treaty ratifications (von Beyme, 1998). And given the electoral interdependence of the executive and the legislature elaborated above, parliamentary majorities are unlikely to oppose a government's position in this respect.

picked up on the ‘joke’ with which his British colleagues described the European Parliament:

‘For me, it is a ‘serious joke’. It is still improving, gaining powers, has some interesting MEPs and speakers, playing a real role, but sometimes not as serious as national parliaments, like the Bundestag, the House of Commons or Assemblée Nationale’ (FR-2)

Here, the press again underestimate the powers of the EP which have developed beyond the parliamentary competences in the national tradition. The correspondents’ criticism is therefore an indicator for the jealousy of national parliaments, which cannot exert their powers like the EP does.

To sum up the results of this section, we have learnt that the domestic media perspective merged with the degree of involvement by the respective national parliament over the debate of the SWIFT issue/agreement. In countries where the national legislature enhanced a domestic debate the EP’s role in the negotiations was seen with critical eyes (especially in Germany and Austria) – and lead to less comprehensive attention by broadsheets. Here, a sense of parliamentary rivalry was visible in some of the newsmakers’ evaluations. British correspondents, however, were also rather sceptical of the EP’s new powers in the ratification of international agreements, although the House of Commons did only little to become actively involved by their traditional debating function; although MPs later expressed their disappointment about not having been informed earlier and given time for scrutiny by their government (House of Commons 2010). Euroscepticism and the highly regarded sovereignty of Parliament supposedly contributed to this perception. Nevertheless, in Ireland and France a European perspective prevailed combined with no or very little parliamentary activity at the national level. Here, seemingly the European Parliament’s new role was accepted in the press as complimentary to the (rather few) existing competences of the respective national parliament. In the Irish case, the findings provide furthermore evidence to H3-C in that they evaluate the EP more positively which is linked to a rather Europhile readership. Yet, the French press also compared the EP to its national counterparts, rendering the former less ‘serious’. Hence, we cannot rule out the rivalry hypothesis for the French.

6.3 Conclusions

The chapter has shown that the press follows the European Parliament's rising powers over the years. The findings are in line with what has been expected initially with respect to news values, and demonstrated at the collective and individual levels in the previous chapters. The importance of the EP's role and its ability to stimulate political conflict are relevant for the print media to report from the EP once highly salient issues are at stake such as the investiture of the European Commission or the SWIFT agreement. The chapter has also shown that EU parliamentary coverage was able to take over public deliberation in the news, once the EP exerted its veto power over the SWIFT agreement. Hence, the empowerment of the EP bears the potential to enhance pan-European discourse of EU political affairs. However, press coverage of the EP does not rise exponentially but reaches a satisfaction level when MEPs have demonstrated their powers already once. Yet, following the increased parliamentary powers of the Lisbon Treaty the outlook provided by correspondents is positive in that they expect coverage of EU parliamentary affairs to remain at a high level. This finding is particularly interesting in light of research that observes a decline in media interest for parliamentary politics at the national level (see, for instance, Negrine 1999). It demonstrates that the EP, bearing the potential to continue to attract media attention, is able to draw publicly together parliamentary power in Europe.

As a matter of fact, the European Parliament has grown out of the parliamentary tradition commonly found at the national level into an institution that is, as far as its competences in the consent procedure are concerned, rather comparable to the US Congress, as a strong supranational legislature. However, the US Congress is not a model any of the European citizens are familiar with. It is that problem, no matter how powerful the EP becomes, that citizens cannot understand its role, unless it 'behaves' like a type of parliament more akin to the respective national one. That is why the press has difficulties in representing it in a way that is perceptible for its readers, although similarities to the national parliamentary tradition were still drawn in the case of the investiture procedure of the second Barroso Commission in 2009/10, especially by the Dutch, French and Austrian press – even though these findings have to be interpreted with caution as some of the intercoder reliability scores are not very high. We can nevertheless derive that, as initially hypothesised, newsmakers take the national parliament as a standard for their evaluations – but, as

shown above, not only to highlight similarities between the institutions in the news, but also to contrast their differences.

The domestic parliamentary tradition therefore also serves as an explanation for why the EP is being criticised in its (new) institutional powers – because it overtakes parliamentary scrutiny functions at the national level (and less so because of negative public stances towards the EU to which newsmakers were initially expected to respond). Regardless of their seniority as a member of the Brussels press corps, correspondents claimed that the EP would not be as ‘serious’ as its national equivalents yet. Even the French press considers the EP somewhat less legitimate than the Assemblée Nationale, although the findings of the previous chapter have suggested that French broadsheets are more likely to evaluate the EP in positive terms given the relative weakness of their Parliament in the French Presidential system. But actually, most newsmakers ignore the fact that national parliaments are losing out after Lisbon: Their ability to scrutinise policy making at the EU level directly is rather limited (see Raunio 2010).

Even though some news feature MEPs from other European countries more often, the chapter has argued that this serves as an indicator for the absence of parliamentary, and thus party political, expertise at the national level. This was the case in Ireland, Britain and France. While this is a positive finding for the emergence of a European public sphere, the European Parliament and its members are not per se deemed more capable of taking important decisions, such as on the SWIFT agreement.

The problem is that the EP is not understood for its precise political role in the EU political system, but its legitimacy is assessed by applying standards of parliamentary culture and functions derived from the national context. Hence, it is not perceived as a common and powerful European Parliament. Yet, even if the EP developed into an institution that compares best to, say, the German Bundestag, the Irish, British, and French are least likely to make sense of its role and accept its position in the EU political system as a representative body since, as the chapter has shown, we find variation at the national level between weaker and stronger types of legislatures. What is left is the hope for greater awareness levels of the EP following a probable rise in press coverage after Lisbon.

Chapter 7

Conclusions:

Understanding broadsheet coverage of the European Parliament

The objective of this thesis was to explain variation in the press coverage of EU parliamentary affairs. It has been contended that news values and selection criteria are not the only factors responsible for differences in the news coverage and content across country and over time. Instead, the thesis argues that national parliamentary traditions impact on the broadsheet coverage of the EP. Higher public trust towards the national parliament leads to lower coverage of EU parliamentary affairs. Procedural characteristics of national parliamentary traditions, on the other hand, shape the representations of news content. And lastly, newsmakers compare the EP to its national counterparts in their evaluations of the former's role in the EU political system. Public opinion towards the EU plays an important role as well, although its effect has been found to be less influential than other factors.

The research in this thesis has been designed to study the amount, volume and content of news referring to the European Parliament as well as the evaluations of their producers. To this end, the thesis has employed a mixed methodological approach. A quantitative content analysis of the quality press in six European countries has been conducted. Interviews with the respective correspondents in Brussels (17 in total) and one of the directors at the EP Directorate-General for Communication complement the findings by means of qualitative analysis. The selection of three different time phases has served to consider both routine periods and key events and issues.

This chapter first draws together the findings from the thesis and then elaborates its contributions to the existing literature in the fields of communication research and European integration. After that the limitations of the study are discussed followed by some guidance for future research. Finally, the thesis assesses the prospects for public legitimacy of the European Parliament.

7.1 The findings

The thesis demonstrates that the European Parliament and its members are a relevant subject of the ‘Brussels news beat’. This is not only due to its institutional function of generating publicity. The Parliament itself has taken efforts to improve its public relations by providing comprehensive press services as well as by pursuing direct communications with EU citizens through digital and social media. Contrary to some previous allegations in the communications literature, correspondents find MEPs very accessible and the EP’s internal processes more transparent than those of the other major political institutions in Brussels. Nevertheless, the thesis finds that variations in news coverage, content and professional attitudes of newsmakers in Brussels persist. It is argued that this variation can ultimately be explained by the interest of the readership in EU parliamentary affairs. The thesis shows that even though some correspondents believe themselves to be more autonomous in their relationship with the home office than others, journalists are concerned about the interest and awareness of their readers with regards to EU parliamentary affairs. Consequently, the thesis identifies three crucial factors responsible for the variation in press coverage: the prevailing relevance of news values, national parliamentary traditions and public support for EU membership.

Chapter 2 has argued that ‘standard’ criteria of news coverage apply to European parliamentary affairs. Since the majority of news from the EP comprises hard, ‘factual’ news importance and conflict are central news values. It is, however, contended that the EP’s prominence as well as its ability to generate political controversy are less likely to be decisive selection criteria in the day-to-day legislative business. Instead, they are likely to become decisive when major decisions are at stake. It follows that news referring to the EP and its members are predominantly selected on the issue. Hence, the dominant criterion is arguably that news has to be relevant for the domestic political context, given the supranational character of EU parliamentary activities.

The findings from all three empirical chapters lend support to these allegations. Chapter 4 shows that news about the daily business of EU parliamentary affairs is primarily selected on the issue which has to resonate with the domestic readership. While cross-country differences in news coverage and volume lend further support to

the criterion of domestic relevance, news content serves as an indicator for the applied selection criteria. Domestic issues comprise the largest share of news from the EP. And even though business and financial newspapers feature pan-European issues more often, varying attention is paid across country to prominent EU affairs, such as the negotiations of the EU budget, the services directive, or the investigations of alleged CIA flights and prisons in Europe. Similarly, chapter 6 shows that even when highly salient issues are at stake, such as the investiture procedure and the international agreement on SWIFT, the press reports from a domestic lens. This has been exemplified by findings which suggest that the press feature ‘their’ Commissioner-designate’s hearings and largely rely on their own MEPs for expertise (where applicable) regarding SWIFT.

The dominance of the domestic perspective is not an entirely novel contention in the history of EU communication research. But the findings demonstrate that the EP nevertheless receives regular coverage as shown in chapter 4 – the volume of news is found to rise significantly at times when the EP gathers in Strasbourg for plenary sessions. Thereby, the press follows the ‘normal’ parliamentary cycle of the EP by distributing more news in the winter months, and less when the Parliament is in recess during the summer. Put differently, the applicability of the news value of domestic relevance is responsible for a regular supply of news from the EP. Chapter 5 also shows that own national MEPs receive far more attention in the news than legislators from other countries, with the exception of the French press however. It is argued here that domestic relevance is a positive condition for building links between representatives and represented considering the informative function of the media.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that EU parliamentary affairs matter for domestic politics. In the case of SWIFT, as chapter 6 demonstrates, the EP was able to stimulate national public debates once it had received a veto power over the interim accord with the Lisbon Treaty – even though it concurred with national parliaments for media attention in the Netherlands, Germany and Austria. Chapter 4 finds that EU parliamentary affairs receive greater attention by the press in the run-up to national general elections. Here, salient domestic politics represent a driver of EP press coverage. But this finding also implies that EU parliamentary politics are able to fuel domestic politics. Although the research has not scanned media content in terms of claims made by MEPs, it is likely that European parliamentary actors are

sought by the media as reference points during election campaigns at the national level.

The Parliament's own importance in the EU political system and its ability to generate political conflict are, as expected, further drivers of press coverage. During the routine period, however, the findings from chapter 4 imply that these news values are weighed against that of domestic relevance. News about the EP is often visible when the co-decision (now OLP) or the then-called assent procedure applies, but other issues, i.e. domestic politics, receive more attention. Similarly, the findings suggest that European issues do not receive the same amount of attention across countries. Examples include the negotiations over the EU multi-annual budget for 2007-13, which was most prominent in the Austrian press since the Austrian presidency took the lead in the consultations, and the REACH regulation, which received most coverage in the German and French print media. In short, the EP is relevant but the domestic impact matters more for it to get coverage in the day-to-day political business at the European level. This is also reflected in news content as shown in chapter 5. Here only the French and the German press feature senior and powerful MEPs as opposed to nationally prominent representatives more often than the rest – although in the latter case their office in the EP coincides with the German nationality (many prominent European legislators in the EP are actually from Germany).

However, chapter 6 demonstrates that importance and controversy become applicable news selection criteria when major decisions are at stake at the European level, here the investiture procedure of the European Commission and the negotiations of the SWIFT agreement. The findings show that the press follow the European Parliament's rising powers over the years. However, press coverage of the EP does not rise exponentially but reaches a satisfaction level when MEPs have demonstrated their powers already once, as in the case of Barroso's withdrawal in 2004. Yet, following the increased parliamentary powers of the Lisbon Treaty the outlook provided by correspondents is positive in that they expect coverage of EU parliamentary affairs to remain at a high level. Taken together with the regular press coverage during the routine period, the findings demonstrate that it has become rather normal for the Brussels press corps to report about EU parliamentary affairs.

These are positive conditions for public awareness levels of the European Parliament.

Notwithstanding the normalisation of press coverage, however, the European Parliament is not (yet) treated as a ‘normal’ parliament by the press. The reasons for that lie in differing traditions of the national parliamentary culture. The thesis finds that its impact on the press coverage of EU parliamentary affairs is rather complex. It has been hypothesised in chapter 2 that trust in the national parliament is a positive determiner of news coverage because citizens and readers respectively are expected to be more interested in parliamentary affairs in general the more they appreciate their own representative body. However, chapter 4 finds the opposite to be the case. The Tobit models have returned a negative impact of public trust levels towards the national parliament on the volume of news dealing with the EP. This effect has remained significant even when controlling for type of media system, and public opinion towards the EU. The statistical significance of the interaction effect of the latter with the variable of trust in the national parliament further demonstrates that regardless of public stances towards EU membership, the appreciation of the national equivalent shortens the press coverage of EU parliamentary affairs, albeit marginally only.

The findings imply that there is a perceived rivalry between parliamentary institutions at both levels, which has been exemplified by the German and British case. Both parliaments have a high esteem in the respective society. The UK parliament is the true sovereign in the British political system, and the German Bundestag is a strong defender against the erosion of parliamentary rights amid increasing European integration. That is also why, as chapter 6 finds, the European Parliament received less attention by the German press during the SWIFT negotiations – because the Bundestag insistently sought to become involved as well. Similar findings are reported for the Austrian and Dutch broadsheets following the results from the Tobit regression. In the latter case, the rivalry between parliaments was particularly triggered by the fact that the main rapporteur of the SWIFT case, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, left the EP during the peak of the inter-institutional negotiations in order to take up a seat in the Tweede Kamer in June 2010. Nevertheless, in Ireland and France a European perspective prevailed combined with no or very little parliamentary activity at the national level. Here, seemingly the

European Parliament's new role was accepted in the press as complimentary to the (rather few) existing competences of the respective national parliament.

The findings nevertheless lend evidence to the assumption that the national parliamentary tradition is taken as a standard for the presentation of news content. It has been argued in chapter 2 that newsmakers use proxies derived from the domestic context in order to make news about the European Parliament better comprehensible for their readers. The results reported in chapter 5 lend support to this allegation. It is shown that features of the national parliamentary system, here characterised by constituency focus, individual party membership as well as legislative and political roles, are reflected in the news content referring to individual MEPs across countries (with some exceptions in the French case). Furthermore, results from the Tobit regressions illustrate that in countries where national electoral systems favour individual candidates over party lists individual MEPs receive far greater attention by broadsheets in terms of direct quotes than in the other countries. Assuming that also in the national context the media attention individual candidates receive is determined by the way they are elected, the findings underline the similarity between MPs and MEPs drawn by the press. Put differently, the press hold Europe's representatives accountable in a way that is comparable to public expectations towards their corresponding colleagues in domestic parliaments by treating them as deputies for their domestic colleagues. This outcome implies that the representational relationship between MEPs and voters is not something with which any of the latter is unfamiliar. Yet, news coverage of representation at the EU level is not unitary across Europe but fragmented into expectations that vary across countries which is not necessarily supportive for the emergence of European democracy.

Similarities to the procedures of the national parliamentary tradition are also found in the coverage of the investiture procedure of the second Barroso Commission in 2009/10 (Chapter 6). Although the procedure does not exist in this form in the countries under study, the prevailing cross-country variation in news content indicates that practices at the national level are reflected in the coverage. While the British case represents an exception in this case, because the news value of domestic relevance appears to be more decisive, the results suggest that the Dutch and Irish newspapers often featured party politics between majority and opposition during the investiture, as they would likely do at home. Similarly, the findings suggest that in

the French and Austrian press political battles were rather depicted as battles between two independent institutions which resemble characteristics of both semi-presidential systems. However, given that the procedure at the European level is distinct from what is commonly found at the national level, correspondents, especially the German ones, stated that they have difficulties in presenting it in an accurate yet perceptible way to their readers.

Taken together, the findings demonstrate that the EP is indeed perceived as an extension of the national parliamentary tradition in procedural terms. But since it grew institutionally stronger than its national counterparts as far as the consent procedure is concerned, it becomes more difficult for readers and citizens alike to comprehend the EP's powers. Due to the public inability to make sense of the EP's role as complementing national parliaments, it is perceived as a rival to its national equivalents. These assumptions are underlined by the fact that it becomes increasingly difficult for national parliaments to influence decision-making at the EU level directly, despite concessions by the Lisbon Treaty. Thus, the findings lend support to the assumption presented in chapter 2 in that correspondents evaluate the EP by drawing comparisons to the respective national parliament. Since the EP is unable to fulfil traditional parliamentary functions in the eyes of the newsmakers, the EP is regarded as 'less serious' compared to the national counterpart. The problem here is that the EP is not understood for its precise political role in the EU political system, but its legitimacy is assessed by applying standards of parliamentary culture derived from the national context. Hence, it is not perceived as a common and therewith powerful European Parliament.

The domestic parliamentary tradition therefore not only serves as an explanation for variation in the extent and content of news coverage but also for why the EP is being criticised in its (new) institutional powers – because it overtakes parliamentary scrutiny functions at the national level. This is furthermore supported by the fact that the research in chapter 6 has been unable to draw a clear causal relationship between the newsmakers' criticism and their varying forms of socialisation in Brussels. Moreover, public stances towards the EU, to which newsmakers were expected to respond, do also not serve as a convincing explanation for the differing attitudes of the reporters in Brussels. The fact that some British and Austrian correspondents evaluated the EP in negative terms is arguably related to the incompatibility of the

latter's competences with the role of Parliament in the respective domestic context. This is furthermore underlined by the fact that even though the French press expresses a rather pan-European perspective in the news, some newsmakers still criticise the EP for not yet being as 'serious' as national parliaments.

Nevertheless, public support for EU membership is not inconsequential for EP press coverage. The hypothesis, put forward in Chapter 2, that lower levels of public support for the EU in a country lead respective newsmakers to evaluate the EP more negatively is not convincingly supported by evidence. But the chapter has also proposed a positive effect of public support levels on EP news coverage – without ignoring the effect of media coverage onto public opinion. The research conducted in chapter 4 is able to lend support to this allegation: greater levels of public support are associated with more comprehensive coverage of EU parliamentary affairs. This is arguably due to that fact that citizens are hardly able to distinguish between political responsibilities at the EU level and thus have an undifferentiated view onto the whole. Hence the more they appreciate EU membership probably the more interested they are in reading about the EP. The findings are furthermore relevant when considering that the alternative hypothesis that higher party political contestation over the EU leads to higher news coverage of EU parliamentary affairs can only be partially supported in the analysis of chapter 6 – without ignoring a reciprocal effect of news coverage onto party polarization. It nevertheless shows that opinion and party stances have different effects onto the broadsheet coverage of the EP and its members. However, on the downside it means that those citizens who are rather sceptical towards the EU are unlikely to receive a similar amount of news coverage as in the other countries. Consequently, we observe a kind of a vicious cycle in that the sceptics are unlikely to become more aware of the EP and in return unlikely to develop greater interest in EU parliamentary affairs.

Newsmakers respond to the varying levels of public support for the EU also in their presentation of news content, as hypothesised in chapter 2. Chapter 5 demonstrates that the press in the UK and Austria, where the least pro-European citizens of this sample are at home, feature prominent soft-Eurosceptic MEPs, namely Daniel Hannan and Hans-Peter Martin, respectively. Although Eurosceptic MEPs are also elected in the other countries, none of the corresponding newspapers pays a considerable amount of attention to them. However, the fact that newsmakers

respond to sceptic views in their country is not negative, but by referring to the respective legislators it shows citizens that different opinions are represented in Parliament, which is an indicator of a functioning democracy.

Taken together, the findings demonstrate that variation in EP press coverage cannot be explained by factors internal to the news production process alone. Instead the external factor of the national parliamentary tradition is a central driver of the broadsheet coverage alongside public opinion towards the EU. These factors become visible in the functions the media fulfil for the development of European democracy. In its role as a messenger the press regularly reports about the EP and transmits news to Europe's citizens. As a commentator, however, the press view the Parliament with a rather critical eye. Put differently, the findings can be summarised by the notion of a 'serious joke' by one correspondent: the EP is relevant at the European level for it to receive coverage by the European quality press, but not regarded as serious as national parliaments (yet), in order to be represented by its unique role in the EU political system.

7.2 Broader contribution

The research of this thesis has several implications for the literature in the field of European integration and political communication. The first one is empirical. Firstly, in explaining broadsheet coverage of the European Parliament the thesis pursues a cross-country comparative approach speaking to a notion of Taggart (2006: 8) in that 'we can no longer understand the process of European integration in isolation from domestic politics'. The countries have been selected carefully in order to control for differences in media systems – the research considers the categorisation of Hallin and Mancini (2004) by which Ireland and the UK fall under the type of liberal media system, France is identified as pluralist-corporatist, and the Netherlands, Germany and Austria classified as democratic-corporatist media systems. This country selection allows the researcher to distinguish between effects from the national parliamentary culture and levels of support for EU membership. Here, citizens of Britain and Austria express the least support and those of Ireland and the Netherlands the highest, while German and French citizens are somewhere in between. Their parliamentary traditions, on the other hand, can be distinguished by two groups

which cross-cut the previous categorisations. The first one comprises Ireland, the UK and France which can be characterised by rather weak parliaments or legislatures and candidate-centred electoral systems; the second group includes the Netherlands, Germany and Austria which are known for their working parliaments and party-based electoral systems. That way, the research design allows for generalisations of the findings.

Secondly, the research design addresses a shortcoming in the existing literature by combining the study of a routine period stretching over two years with two case studies which investigates key events and issues over a longer period of time, namely the SWIFT case and the investiture of the European Commission. Thirdly, by employing a mixed-methods approach, the research aims at methodological triangulation of the results. The findings from the quantitative and qualitative analyses have been discussed simultaneously rather than one after another. That way the study has aimed at combining statistical rigor with in-depth research in order to explain the phenomenon of broadsheet coverage from the European Parliament. Fourthly, the regression analysis has been conducted by Tobit models, which is rather rare in political science and communication research, in order to control for biases against zero observations. Hence, although the research is unable to compare the findings with media coverage of other political actors at the EU level or in the domestic context – and thereby assess the EP's prominence in the news, the statistical analysis is able to account for conditions under which the EP does not receive any press coverage. Lastly, the interviews have not only been conducted with the respective news producers. But the research also considers the European Parliament's point of view by considering the experience of one of the directors at the EP Directorate-General for Communication.

The theoretical contributions speak to several literatures. While the relevance of news values for EU news coverage is not an entirely novel contribution, the thesis demonstrates that, contrary to allegations arguing that the media's 'inherent nationalism' (Slaatta 2006) would hinder the emergence of a European public sphere, the news value of domestic relevance is responsible for regular coverage of EU parliamentary affairs. Indeed, national differences prevail, but the research has shown that EU parliamentary politics are relevant for the domestic context. They matter for general election campaigns. Thereby, parliamentary politics at the EU

level are able to contribute to Europeanisation of news coverage, although it lies outside the scope of the thesis to answer questions about the extent to which such Europeanisation takes place. However, Liebert (2007) argues that the European Parliament's function of representation, which is fragmented into national and regional constituencies, constrains the emergence of a more deliberative form of pan-European communication. It could be argued here that given the weakness of the electoral link between represented and representatives a focus on nationally elected representatives in the news is more imperative in tackling the European democratic deficit for the time being. This becomes even more plausible considering the unlikely change of the European electoral system(s) in the near future. Hence a vertical Europeanisation of news content (see Koopmas 2007: 185ff), as in this case, is not necessarily a bad condition in the formation of European democracy. It provides opportunities for citizens to identify 'their' representatives in Europe. Correspondents' speculations hinted at the likelihood for the press coverage about the EP to increase in the long run after Lisbon. Thus, positive conditions for public awareness levels are expected. That is to say, if citizens became more aware of their representatives, this would be beneficial for Europe's representative democracy.

Nevertheless, the research in this thesis also finds that cross-references to other European legislators not elected in the country of news distribution become more eminent. The French press is the best example for featuring other European MEPs. But the SWIFT case has demonstrated that also the British and the Irish quality press rely on information provided by other MEPs, most notably the respective rapporteurs in the EP, when their own nationals are unable to provide expertise on a given matter. The findings indicate that some degree of supranational Europeanisation has taken place as far as news content is concerned (see Koopmans 2007). The findings are even more telling when considering the EU as a 'multilevel parliamentary field' (Crum and Fossum 2009) whereby representation of EU citizens follows two channels – via the national and the European Parliament. The findings from the content analysis show here that the parliamentary competences are able to complement each other under certain circumstances. It happened that in the countries of Ireland, Britain and France, the national parliaments merely sought to become involved in the SWIFT negotiations. Parliamentary expertise was therefore absent at the national level and supposedly no communication of policy preferences was channelled via parties to the respective national representatives at the European level.

Here, the quality press took European parliamentary experts as surrogates in addressing public concerns during the debate.

Another positive condition for the emergence of a European public sphere – or a ‘European sphere of publics’ (Schlesinger and Kevin 2000) – is that traditional news values of importance and conflict are able to trigger the coverage of EU parliamentary affairs across country. The attention paid to the EP by the quality press is able to substitute public debate in the domestic context once the European Parliament has considerable decision making power as in the case of SWIFT, where it exerted its veto rights. The findings from the interviews with correspondents suggest that there are more instances like these to come in the future given the Parliament’s new powers. Hence, the EP’s ability to contribute to public debates might become more relevant in the future. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to predict the emergence of a European public sphere based on the EP’s role in this regard, especially since the literature does not agree on its definitions and empirical measurements. Nevertheless, De Vreese et al. (2006: 479, following Risse and van de Steeg 2003) contend that ‘a European public sphere should reflect national media reporting on the same topic using common sources’. Hence, it can be argued that the minimum requirements for a transnational communicative space are met with regards to the European Parliament since the thesis identifies a Europeanisation in the extent and content of EP news coverage over time, albeit cross-country variation still exists.

Adding to the existing literature on EU news coverage, the thesis has also shown that much of the domestic focus can ultimately be explained by the interest of the audience, which is not least channelled by the demands of the editors at the home offices (see, for instance, Morgan 1995; Gavin 2001; de Vreese 2003; Gleissner and de Vreese 2005; Lecheler 2008). Even though some correspondents are reportedly granted a greater degree of autonomy than others, they repeatedly have to convince their editors about the way they select news stories about the EP and its members and the manner they report EU parliamentary affairs. This moderates the chances for a truly European press coverage produced by direct observers on location, having socialised with the ‘Brussels beat’, because the home office has the final say. The thesis has nevertheless suggested that when the EP exerts its powers as in the case of SWIFT, some correspondents supposedly receive the chance to report more autonomously from Brussels since more news from the EP with more references to

European actors have been produced in countries where the national discourse was not triggered by the national parliament and almost absent – although the motives of the editors have not investigated in this case.

While little has been done in media research to explain variation in media coverage of EU affairs more generally, the thesis has sought to identify external effects on the press coverage of the EP that go beyond mere country variables. The broadsheet coverage turns out to be significantly different across types of media system following the classifications of Hallin and Mancini (2004) as far as the extent and content are concerned during the routine period. However, the thesis argues that variation in media system dynamics as such is not a sufficient explanation. This is not only due to the fact that their effect is not statistically significant for the amount of attention the EP received during the SWIFT negotiations. The thesis does not seek to challenge their typology. Rather, the thesis proposes for the precise coverage of EU parliamentary affairs that definitions of media systems are extended to including somewhat broader descriptions of political communication systems (cf. Esser and Pfetsch 2004). Hallin and Mancini (2004) classify media systems according to the degree of state intervention in regulating the media, the degree of media partisanship, the historical development of media markets and the extent of journalistic profession within countries. Nonetheless, the thesis shows that the national parliamentary tradition proves to be a crucial determiner of broadsheet coverage about the European Parliament alongside public opinion towards the EU in general. Indeed, the variation is greatest across country, but the research also finds inter-temporal effects of these factors – especially since trust levels towards the national parliament fluctuate considerably within country over time. Hence, a typology of political communication systems might want to take political factors and political system dynamics into account in addition to media system characteristics when studying variation in EU news coverage.

The thesis has argued that the prevalence of national parliamentary traditions in the news coverage is due to high levels of public unawareness about how the EU political system works. Hence, the national tradition serves as a proxy for understanding and appreciating parliamentary democracy at the European level (see Schmidt 2006, Diez Medrano 2003). While according to Goetze and Rittberger (2010) the European Parliament has evolved out of a ‘matter of habit’ at the national

level, the thesis amends their notion that policy makers would regard the EP as a ‘normal’ parliament. This is not the case with the press elites. The thesis has shown that publicly the EP is considered a rival to national parliaments precisely because the EP has grown out of that habit with comprehensive powers not comparable anymore to those of national parliaments in the European decision-making process.

Thereby, the thesis adds to existing research on the interplay of national parliaments and the European representative body by means of their ‘dual legitimacy’ (Benz 2004) in the EU polity. Little has been done on the question of whether national parliaments and their European counterpart compete in terms of influence in EU policy-making. Yet, some research on cross-level inter-parliamentary cooperation suggests that parliamentary actors have different incentives for co-ordinating their interests (see Costa and Latek 2001; Neunreither 2005). The thesis is not able to identify the motivations of parliamentarians in the EU for seeking media attention. Yet, the findings suggest that given the media’s role as a messenger, parliamentary communications tools can be used as a strategic means for increasing public legitimacy. The findings from the interview with one of the directors at the EP Directorate-General for Communication underline this assumption in that the EP provides the Brussels press corps with carefully selected information. The media, however, are arguably not a silent recipient of information which they communicate plainly. Instead, as a commentator they are able to fuel any perceived rivalry of parliamentary competences in the EU. Hence, as research on the relations between the EP and national parliaments becomes more imminent after Lisbon, the thesis advises not to overlook the media’s role in this regard.

The conclusions of the perceived rivalry between parliamentary institutions, however, are that the EP is not yet a fully legitimate institution in the public eye because it is not regarded as ‘serious’ yet as its national equivalents. Consequently, the thesis also adds to the literature on the role of national parliaments in the EU political system. Some argue that EU media coverage provides national parliaments and especially domestic opposition parties with a ‘weapon of the weak’ vis-à-vis their governments in EU policy-making (de Wilde 2011). This thesis further points out that even if they are threatened to loose parliamentary oversight in EU politics (see Goetz and Meyer-Sahling 2008; Raunio 2010; Kaczyński 2011), the public eye holds them still in high regard compared to the European Parliament.

Ultimately, the thesis seeks to provide a bridge between communication research and the literature on EU integration by arguing that we are unable to understand the phenomenon of EP press coverage without considering parliamentary traditions at the national level.

7.3 Limitations of the study

Despite the merits of the empirical contribution by this study, there are several limitations due to the lack of resources and scarcity of time. These especially concern the objectives for generalizability and falsifiability. While the mixed-methods approach was taken to increase the internal validity of the results, not all variation could be explained by the national parliamentary tradition. This is especially true for the French press which reflects only few characteristics of the domestic representative democracy in their presentation of news content. Nevertheless, the findings from the multivariate analyses do not expose France as an outlier. And, in the end, French newsmakers also draw comparison to the national legislature in their evaluations.

Further, the research, despite being cross-national, only comprises six countries from Western Europe. While this is useful given the small number of countries considered here and the need to limit the pool of other explanatory factors, future research might seek to contrast the findings of this thesis with an analysis in the newer, especially Central and Eastern European member states. Here, we might, for instance, find a different approach to the EP – maybe one that treats it as a rather unique institution given that many of the respective parliamentary cultures have unfolded only after the Iron Curtain came down. Nonetheless, one might still find an impact of the national parliamentary tradition, perhaps alongside more numerous other explanatory factors. The Polish Sejm, for instance, still had an important role in society under the Communist regime. Due to lack of resources, the research presented here is unable to answer such questions and is thus subject to falsifiability. Hence, the external validity of the findings is rather limited to the countries under study and those which possess similar characteristics in the main independent variables.

The research design nevertheless has sought to tackle this problem by increasing the number of observations both over time and within country. The high and statistically significant correlations between the datasets demonstrate that the internal validity of the results holds. This means that the results are relatively consistent across the three datasets.

Another problem concerns the type of media chosen for analysis. Broadsheets do by no means represent the comprehensive media landscape in a country. Thus the generalizability of the findings is limited. Trenz (2004) argues that quality newspapers do not per se represent a national perspective. Instead they provide elite views onto politics and also address specific target groups only. This is underlined in the present research as well. While the political sheets are found to be rather similar in their coverage and content patterns, the business and financial broadsheets slightly differ. However, differences in media type have been controlled for in all models without producing statistically significant effects throughout the thesis.

A full picture of media coverage of EU parliamentary affairs can, nonetheless, only be provided if we also consider tabloids or regional dailies, online news content as well as television programmes, especially since European citizens would prefer television news over other media content as a source of information about EU affairs. Due to lack of resources the research has been unable to investigate other media content. Nevertheless, it has been argued above that broadsheets serve as sufficient media type for explaining cross-country and inter-temporal variation in EP news coverage since broadsheets provide a link between EU politics and citizens. They serve as opinion leaders in the national context and are likely to impact on other media coverage and content (cf. Trenz 2004; d'Haenens 2005; Bijmans and Altides 2007) – even though this does not necessarily imply that news producers of television programmes, other print media or online news outlets have a similar approach to EP news coverage.

And while the thesis assumes that they are more likely to report about EU parliamentary affairs than other media, some findings show that correspondents of the quality press are constrained by the editor's interest in European parliamentary affairs, and ultimately that of the reader – as would likely be case with any other journalist in Brussels. The interviews furthermore reveal that even though their

readership is said to be somewhat better educated and politically more aware than the average media consumer, journalists nevertheless experience difficulties in presenting news content in a comprehensible manner. It can therefore be expected that some of the research hypotheses regarding news content, and especially the argument about the importance of features borrowed from the national parliamentary culture, are even more likely to hold with other media, despite the fact that the EP may be less visible in the news following previous research (cf. Kevin 2003). Future research should address these assumptions.

The research interest itself bears several limitations. Indeed, while being a common method in political communication research the content analysis is limited to quantitative methods addressing questions of *how much*, *what* and *why* with respect to news coverage of European parliamentary affairs. An analysis of the tone used in the content of news about European parliamentary affairs, for instance, would have provided more comprehensive answers to whether public opinion towards the EU in general is reflected in the news. However, due to lack of resources such questions could not be addressed. Future research might want to investigate the tone for a routine period of EP news coverage. Similarly, although the thesis identifies a relevant role of the European Parliament for domestic politics, the research is unable to assess how exactly news about the EP impact on domestic politics. A discourse analysis would have provided further insight.

The focus of the research is on news stories referring to the EP only investigating its visibility. Hence, we are unable to draw comparisons to the EU coverage in general, to media representations of other European actors or to the media attention national parliaments receive. While the regression analysis by use of Tobit models and consideration of the so-called zero observations has sought to circumvent these problems, we are unable to assess the relative attention the EP and its members receive compared to other actors. This would have provided clues about the prominence of EU parliamentary affairs in the news. Future research might want to compare the coverage of the EP to the actual coverage of other political stories and actors within media.

Given the timing of the thesis, the research is only able to provide an outlook for the broadsheet coverage post-Lisbon. Future research might find different patterns in

coverage and content of EU parliamentary affairs especially at times of the Euro crisis.

7.4 Avenues for future research

Following the limitations of the research, the thesis proposes possible avenues for future research. The first one concerns the extension of the research hypotheses not only to different countries, as discussed above, but also to different types of media. Apart from testing whether the research hypotheses presented in this thesis hold with other media coverage, an interesting question here would ask about the ‘pictures’ television programmes deliver from the parliamentary debates in Strasbourg. Would we find similarities to the angles from which national parliamentary debates are reported? Further, tabloids would provide an interesting case for the study of tone towards European representatives – are news really about MEP expenses and scandals only, or do we find more substantive news as well, bearing in mind the ability of the media to affect public opinion? Regional or local newspapers are expected to take a different perspective too. One question here would be whether they inform readers better about the linkage function of the European Parliament by featuring locally elected MEPs.

Considering the linkage function, future research might want to investigate the communication strategies of MEPs, possibly by means of a survey. The thesis has suggested that they are not mere objects of media representations, but they are active players in the Brussels news beat as well which was underlined by correspondents’ experiences with press officers of MEPs and political parties. Although the effect of the ballot structure is not statistically significant in the respective models, the MEPs might still have different communications strategies according to the way they are elected. Whether the press picks up on their activities, is a different question and has been addressed in this thesis. Bennett et al. (2007) show, for instance, that US politicians have taken the lead in the tango with journalists in recent years. Following the assumptions of the thesis, MEPs should have different communication strategies according to the way they are elected. Although all electoral systems across Europe comply with the rules of proportional representation, previous research finds that the ballot structure and the size of the electoral district have an impact on the campaigns

of individual candidates and political parties (Hix and Hagemann 2009). Similarly, Farrell and Scully (2010) argue that MEPs elected under more open electoral rules tend to focus more on their constituency. Hence, one would expect that MEPs elected in an open ballot structure and in smaller districts employ more pro-active communications strategies than their colleagues who enter the EP via country-wide party lists. One question could then also ask about the extent to which MEPs respond publicly to the concerns of their constituents.

Further, the experience of one Dutch correspondent with representatives of the PVV (they reportedly try to avoid the media in Brussels) implies that political parties employ different strategies dependent on the parliamentary arena. Future research might want to compare public relations of Eurosceptic parties in the domestic context with media strategies pursued at the EU level. One hypothesis could be that despite the fact that fringe Eurosceptic parties tend to gain more seats at the EU level and Euroscepticism is central to their ideology, thus have increased incentives to address their communication strategies towards journalists working in Brussels, they prefer communication strategies in the domestic arena. Such a study would not only add to our knowledge of Europeanisation effects, but also answer questions about representation and responsiveness at the EU level – especially since we are able to control for the same national audience.

The thesis has not addressed questions about the visibility and representations of political parties at the EU level. In modern democracies political parties provide a linkage between government and citizens. And even though this linkage is allegedly weaker in the EU political system which is thereby characterized by a democratic deficit, research suggests that political parties matter for EU parliamentary politics (e.g. Hix, Noury et al. 2007). Hence, a future study should investigate the salience of national parties and European party groups of the European Parliament in the news and explain varying representations across countries. Following the findings of the thesis, variation is likely to occur. Accordingly, such research is likely to draw similar conclusions as in this thesis: Given the prevalence of the domestic angle in the national media, national party politics are expected to be a crucial driver of media coverage. However, domestic politics are unlikely to be the only explanatory factor for variation. Representations might again also depend on the dynamics of national party systems.

Following some findings of this thesis which imply that European parliamentary politics matter in the run up to national general elections, a claims-making analysis could provide answers as to how European parliamentary actors contribute to the electoral campaigns in the media. Such a study would answer questions about the extent to which national election campaigns become Europeanised by linkage to European party politics.

Another research idea would be to study the effect of news coverage and content about EU parliamentary affairs onto public awareness and public opinion of European citizens. At the end of the routine period chosen for this research, a Special Eurobarometer was conducted on the European Parliament (European Commission 2008c). It tested the knowledge of EU citizens, and asked about their self-assessed awareness and opinion about the EP. Interestingly, for instance, on average only 35% knew that MEPs sit according to their political party affiliation, and not with their national delegation. This implies that awareness levels are still quite low despite regular coverage of EU parliamentary affairs. In fact, only 48% were able to recall that they had heard anything from the EP in the media in recent times. Remarkably these figures are below average for citizens of France, the UK, and Ireland; and above average for the remaining three countries of this research sample. This implies that the research hypotheses are likely to resonate with media effects of EU parliamentary affairs: In countries where the national parliament is rather strong, citizens are more likely to have heard or read about the EP in the media – perhaps another indicator for the perceived rivalry of parliamentary competences in the public sphere.

The allegation of a perceived rivalry between parliaments also deserves further attention in future research. In order to investigate a publicised competition of parliamentary competences in the EU, one study should compare the media coverage of parliaments across levels. A different study of the SWIFT case could, for instance, answer questions about which parliament receives what kind of attention. A claims-making or discourse analysis might even find a public battle between parliaments of different levels. It is, furthermore, likely that parliaments receive a different amount of attention depending on the issue, and ultimately on their competences. The SWIFT case has shown that news featured the EP more often than not. However, other issues might involve national parliaments more prominently in the news, such

as those related to the principle of subsidiarity. Recent examples here include the seasonal workers directive¹³⁷, or the new Schengen agreement¹³⁸. Comparing media coverage of parliaments across different levels would also assess the ability of legislatures to generate publicity – one of the core parliamentary functions – which has implications for public awareness levels. Another cross-level analysis could address questions about the prominence of individual parliamentary actors in the news, and their claims with regards to parliamentary competences post-Lisbon. A qualitative content analysis of tone could also study possible criticism towards European parliaments in the news.

All told, the thesis offers a wide range of further research questions. While future research should continue studying the European Parliament's representations in the media after Lisbon and extend the research to different legislative terms, the research hypotheses also provide cornerstones for other media research of European politics. Given the recent calls for a direct election of the Commission President or the President of the European Council (see, for instance, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung 2011), one might, for example, want to investigate by a study of the media whether the legitimacy of other political actors at the European level also depends on preconceptions of political power and competences derived from the national context.

7.5 Towards a ‘serious’ European Parliament?

The research in this thesis demonstrates that the European Parliament is relevant for it to receive coverage by the quality press, especially given its increased powers after Lisbon. However, the press, as correspondents elaborated, do not regard it (yet) as a ‘serious’ parliament comparable to those at the national level. Its role and powers are compared to the national standard and deemed ‘less’ democratic, as far as the representation of interests in the scrutiny function as well as the interplay of opposition and majority parties are concerned; and less efficient by the press. This

¹³⁷ Title: Seasonal employment: conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals (2010/0210(COD))

¹³⁸ Title: External and internal borders: rules on movement of persons across borders (Schengen Borders Code) (amend. Regulation (EC) No 562/2006 and Convention implementing the Schengen Agreement) (2011/0051(COD))

thesis nevertheless defends the relevant role of the European Parliament in the European decision-making process. Hence, what we have learnt from this research can be expressed by the words of Trenz (2008: 292): ‘media call for more democracy in Europe but media also restrain democratic procedures and practice’. The question therefore is whether any change of this perception is likely in the future and what conditions have to be met for it to be the case.

The answer is twofold. Given the current situation with the Euro crisis, the European Union is subject to severe criticism by European citizens, especially in the old and large member states. Further integration is viewed with a sceptical public eye and decisions over greater funds for debtors fought by fierce intergovernmental battles. Following some findings of the thesis showing that support for the EU is a driver of news coverage from the European Parliament, the odds for the media to pay increasing attention to it, or even maintaining its current levels of coverage, are rather questionable. The second implication is that national parliaments seek a say over the size of the bail-out as recently demonstrated by the German Bundestag and the Slovak Parliament. In the debate about further integration The Economist claimed that ‘the European Parliament is a poor substitute for national legislatures’ (2011). Consequently, the public rivalry between parliamentary competences at the national and European level is likely to continue, if not to rise, in the future.

Such a scenario is unfavourable for the EP’s legitimacy in public. However, much attention is paid to the European level these days. Therefore, the European Parliament is likely to receive media coverage too, especially since journalists contended that it would be more interesting given its new powers after Lisbon. Nevertheless, the media should stop comparing the EP to its national predecessors. Rather, they should clearly distinguish between parliamentary competences at either level. Further integration would then be a chance for the EP to demonstrate that its powers are complementary in that it is able to step in where national parliaments have lost competences. If the media understood it for the unique institution it is, the European Parliament’s legitimacy is likely to increase.

Nevertheless, press coverage will continue to be provided through a domestic lens. This is hard to overcome for two reasons. One derives from the way European elections are organised. Up until now, national candidates and parties compete for

legislative office at the EU level. Indeed, there are propositions to enhance political contestation by means of European parties putting forward a candidate for the office of the Commission President in 2014 (see Party of European Socialists 2011). And more contestation would arguably lead to a greater interest of the media (see also Schmitt 2005). But until the scattered electoral system does not allow for cross-country campaigning of political parties, a pan-European understanding of the European Parliament is unlikely to emerge in the media coverage. The second reason for the domestic perspective onto parliamentary politics at the European level is the dominance of national publics. In the absence of a European media system and a shared language, national public spheres are likely to prevail. What is left is the hope for rising awareness levels of the European Parliament in the public eye bearing a positive condition for the emergence of European democracy.

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Appendices

Appendix – Chapter 3

A3.1: Descriptive statistics for the type of article

	N	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum. Percent
News	2212	83.85	83.92	83.77
Comment	351	13.30	13.30	97.15
Other comment	11	0.42	0.42	97.57
Interview	6	0.23	0.23	97.80
Portrait	58	2.20	2.20	100
Total	2638	100		

Note: N comprises N=2155 of dataset I, N=167 of dataset II and N=316 of dataset III

A3.2: Keywords used for the collection of articles

Language	Dataset I	Dataset II	Dataset III
English	*EU AND Parliament *EU AND Legislature *Euro-Parliament *European AND Parliament *Brussels AND Parliament *Strasbourg AND Parliament *European AND Parliamentarian *EU AND Parliamentarian *Euro-MP *MEP	Same as in dataset I, plus: *European Commission *Commissioner *Hearing *Ashton OR Geoghegan-Quinn *Barroso *Prodi	Same as in dataset I, plus: *SWIFT *SWIFT (on its own) AND financial AND data OR Belgian * Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunications
French ^a	*Europarlement *Parlement AND Européen *Parlement AND Bruxelles *Parlement AND Strasbourg *Député AND européen *Eurodéputé *Europarlamentaire *Parlementaire AND Européen	Same as in dataset I, plus: *Commission Européenne *Commissaire *Audition *Barnier *Barroso *Prodi	Same as in dataset I, plus: *SWIFT *SWIFT on its own

Language	Dataset I	Dataset II	Dataset III
Dutch ^a	*EU-Parlement *Europarlement *Europees AND Parlement *Brussel AND Parlement *Straatsburg AND Parlement *Europarlementarier *Europeese Parlementarier *EP-leden *EU-Parlementarier *Europeese AND afgevaardigde	Same as in dataset I, plus: *Europese Commissie *Commissaris *Eurocommissaris *Hoorzitting *Kroes *Barroso *Prodi	Same as in dataset I, plus: *SWIFT *SWIFT on its own
German ^a	*Europäisches Parlament *EU-Parlament *Brüssel AND Parlament *Straßburg AND Parlament *Euro-Parlament *Europaparlamentarier *Europaabgeordnete *Europäische AND Abgeordnete *Europäische AND Parlamentarier *Europäische AND Mandatare (<i>Austrian German only</i>)	Same as in dataset I, plus: *Europäische Kommission *Kommissar *Anhörung *Oettinger OR Hahn *Barroso *Prodi	Same as in dataset I, plus: *SWIFT *SWIFT on its own

Legend: ^a Grammar changes, plural and female versions have been accounted for.

A3.3: Intercoder reliability (Krippendorff's α) for the selection of articles

	Coder A			Coder B			
	FR	GB	AT	DE	IE	NL	US
Dataset I	<i>N=148</i> .8699	<i>N=93</i> .8612	<i>N=59</i> .9230	<i>N=184</i> .8699	<i>N=104</i> .8657	<i>N=80</i> .8261	-
Dataset II ^a	<i>N=36</i> .6475	<i>N=7</i> 1	<i>N=37^b</i> .9452	<i>N=60</i> .8570	<i>N=33</i> .7994	<i>N=31</i> 1	
Dataset III	<i>N=265</i> .9034	<i>N=445</i> .9239	<i>N=136</i> .8083	<i>N=234</i> .8902	<i>N=138^{cd}</i> .9638	<i>N=106</i> .9381	<i>N=118^d</i> .9381

Legend: ^a only a pre-selection has been provided for the check; ^b selection excludes DER STANDARD;
^c selection excludes Sunday Business Post; ^d selection does not comprise articles referring to SWIFT only.

Note: All calculations are based on the SPSS instructions by Hayes (2005) by calculating with two dummy variables (1-selected, 0-not selected).

A3.4: Bivariate correlations between datasets

	Correlations across country (N=6)			Correlations across newspaper (N=18) ^a		
	Dataset I	Dataset II	Dataset III	Dataset I	Dataset II	Dataset III
Dataset I	1	.870**	.855**	1	.854***	.625***
Dataset II	.870**	1	.918**	.854***	1	.803***
Dataset III	.855**	.918**	1	.625***	.803***	1

Legend: Pearson coefficients; ** p<.05; *** p<.01; ^a the Irish Independent and Irish Examiner have been merged.

A3.5: Inter-coder reliability (Krippendorff's α) for individual variables

Variable Name	Coder I		Coder II		Coder III			
	Newspaper sample	NL	DE	AT	IE	GB	FR	US
<i>Dataset I</i>		N=33	N=66	N=28	N=38	N=22	N=34	
Date	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
NPaffil	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
NPname	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
Country	-*	-*	-*	-*	-*	-*	-*	
Location	.8972	.9287	.9395	.7148	.8530	.8738		
Articletype	.5285	.3093	.4712	.2331	.3385	.1651		
length	1	.9998	.9987	.9968	1	1		
EPsharewc	.9323	.8749	.9144	.9620	.9385	.9419		
Theme	.2907	.2534	.3968	.1389	.2777	.1972		
Topicdetail	.6858	.5325	.5603	.5179	.6269	.5434		
MEP1	1	1	.9190	.9709	1	1		
MEP1role	.7322	.8954	.8324	.7871	.6643	.8200		
MEP1role2	1	.6957	.0000°	-*	.6560	-*		
MEP1nat_a	.9377	.5670	.8205	.7304	.8784	.6560		
MEP1nat_b	.9451	.6812	.9403	.9497	.8297	.8731		
MEP1partyinEP	.8146	.7410	.8092	.8358	1	.8483		
MEP1partyinEP2	-*	1	.0000°	1	-*	.7873		
MEP1ownwords	.9953	.9878	.9626	.9609	.9839	.9491		
MEP1const	.8277	.6857	.8068	.8190	.9052	.6697		
MEP2	1	1	.7731	1	.6393	1		

MEP2role	1	.9180	.6318	.7339	.5000	1
MEP2role2	-*	.2308	-*	.6606	-*	-*
MEP2nat_a	.8503	.8501	.8831	.4669	.4634	.8619
MEP2nat_b	.8588	.8750	.8643	.7979	.7027	1
MEP2partyinEP	.8276	.7526	.6776	.8466	1	.9117
MEP2partyinEP2	-*	1	-*	-*	-*	.0000°
MEP2ownwords	.9896	.9958	.9481	.9353	.6196	.9972
MEP2const	1	.7529	.8421	.7661	1	1
MEP3	1	.9277	.6452	1	-*	1
MEP3role	1	.8708	.4054	1	-*	.8496
MEP3role2	-*	-*	-*	-*	-*	-*
MEP3nat_a	1	1	.7317	.5313	-*	.5750
MEP3nat_b	1	.9024	.7317	.7619	-*	1
MEP3partyinEP	1	.9231	.8197	1	-*	1
MEP3partyinEP2	-*	-*	-*	-*	-*	.0000
MEP3ownwords	1	.8504	.9952	.9398	-*	.6286
MEP3const	1	.8688	.7317	.8000	-*	1
MEP4	-*	.8471	.7568	1	-	1
MEP4role	-*	1	.6667	-*	-	.6140
MEP4role2	-*	-*	-*	-*	-	-*
MEP4nat_a	-*	1	.6897	-.1667	-	1
MEP4nat_b	-*	.8116	.7273	1	-	1
MEP4partyinEP	-*	1	.7568	1	-	.8136
MEP4partyinEP2	-*	-*	.0000°	-*	-	-*
MEP4ownwords	-*	.8630	1	.9912	-	.8058
MEP4const	-*	1	1	1	-	1
MEP5	-	.7200	1	1	-	-
MEP5role	-	1	1	-*	-	-
MEP5role2	-	-*	-*	-*	-	-
MEP5nat_a	-	.6316	1	.0000°	-	-
MEP5nat_b	-	.6667	1	-*	-	-
MEP5partyinEP	-	1	.7200	1	-	-
MEP5partyinEP2	-	-*	0°	-*	-	-

MEP5ownwords	-	1	0°	1	-	-	
MEP5const	-	1	.8593	-*	-	-	
<hr/>							
<i>Dataset II</i>	<i>N=6</i>	<i>N=12</i>	<i>N=7</i>	<i>N=6</i>	<i>N=3</i>	<i>N=7</i>	
Date	1	1	1	1	1	1	
NPaffil	1	1	1	1	1	1	
NPname	1	1	1	1	1	1	
Country	-*	-*	-*	-*	-*	-*	
Location	1	.7579	1	-*	1	.4583	
Articletype	.5926	1	1	-*	1	1	
length	1	.9902	1	1	1	1	
EPsharewc	.6461	.9460	.9273	.9345	.9726	.9395	
CommissionTopic	.8070	.6052	.6667	.7027	1	.5244	
CriticismByX	.4884	.3268	.6389	.4054	1	.5094	
ComparisonUS	-*	-*	-*	-*	1	1	
<hr/>							
<i>Dataset III</i>	<i>N=6</i>	<i>N=29</i>	<i>N=10</i>	<i>N=3</i>	<i>N=5</i>	<i>N=11</i>	<i>N=8</i>
Date	1	.9647 ⁺	1	1	1	.9050 ⁺	.8673 ⁺
NPaffil	1	1	1	1	1	1	n/a
NPname	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Country	-*	-*	-*	-*	-*	-*	-*
Location	1	1	1	-*	.3333	1	.8148
Articletype	1	.8707	1	-*	1	.7529	.7541
length	1	.9971	1	1	1	1	1
EPsharewc	.9949	.9677	.9373	.9758	.9909	.9393	.9908
MEP1	1	.9091	1	1	1	1	1
MEP2	1	1	1	1	-*	-*	-
MEP3	.6207	1	-*	-	-	-	-
MEP4	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
MEP5	-	1	-	-	-	-	-

Legend: * SPSS cannot calculate Krippendorff's α when the variables exhibit no variation. In essence, however, the inter-coder agreement is perfect. ° Only one disagreement with only one case entered. + All dates were double-checked again for this dataset and corrected afterwards for the analysis.

Note: N is decreasing for MEPs and their characteristics. Most articles mention one MEP, but few mention more than one and beyond. Hence, Krippendorff's α is more sensitive in these cases. All calculations are based on the SPSS instructions by Hayes (2005).

A3.6: Coding Scheme for the quantitative content analysis

Variable Name	Description	Variable type	Coding categories
<i>All datasets</i>			
ArticleName	Name of the article	String	Own codification
Date	Publication date	Date	Continuous
NPaffil	Political affiliation of newspaper	Categorical	1=centre-left 2=centre-right 3=business/financial
NPname	Name of the newspaper	Categorical	By newspaper name
Country	Country of newspaper	Categorical	By country name
Location	Location where the article was written	Categorical	By city/cities
Articletype	Type of article	Categorical	1=news; 2=comment; 3=other comment; 4=interview; 5=portrait
length	Total length of article body	Numerical	Continuous
EPsharewc	Total amount of words of all sentences that mention the EP or any equivalent	Numerical	Continuous
EPsharepc	Share of EP within article/percentage (calculated by the previous two variables)	Numerical	0.00 to 100.00
MEP1^a	Name of the first MEP mentioned in the article	Categorical	By name (0=no name given; 999=n/a)
MEP1role	Role cited for MEP1 (e.g. rapporteur)	Categorical	By assigned role
MEP1role2	Second role cited for MEP1 (if applicable)	Categorical	By assigned role
MEP1nat_a	Nationality mentioned of MEP1	Categorical	1=not mentioned 2=not explicitly mentioned but clear from the article 3=explicitly mentioned; 99=n/a
MEP1nat_b	Nationality of MEP1	Categorical	By Nationality
MEP1partyinEP	First party mentioned for MEP1	Categorical	By party name (either European or national party group) 0=name not given
MEP1partyinEP2	Second party mentioned for MEP1 (if applicable)	Categorical	By party name (either European or national party group) 99=n/a

Variable Name	Description	Variable type	Coding categories
<i>All datasets</i>			
MEP1ownwords	Number of words cited for MEP1	Numerical	Continuous
MEP1const	Constituency or origin mentioned for MEP1	Categorical	1=not mentioned; 2=mentioned; 3=n/a (if from different country than newspaper origin)
<i>Dataset I only</i>			
Theme	Structural theme of the article (e.g. domestic party politics, speech in EP; ECJ ruling)	Categorical	By theme
Topicdetail	Policy issue or more detailed topic of the article (e.g. services directive, Turkey accession, Oeger: kidnapping case)	Categorical	By topic
<i>Dataset II only</i>			
CommissionTopic	Topic of the article (e.g. Barnier Commissioner hearing)	Categorical	By topic
CriticismByX	Who expressed criticism towards the Commission? (e.g. author, other domestic, MEPs in general)	Categorical	By subject
ComparisonUS	Comparison drawn to the US Congress regarding the hearing procedure	Categorical	0=no; 1=yes

Legend: ^a all MEP1 variables were replicated for MEP2 - MEP14 where appropriate

Note: Many more variables were coded, such as the author's name, page numbers, newspaper categories, whether the EP was mentioned in the headline, whether vote results were reported, which parties and committees were mentioned etc. These are not of interest in this thesis but information about them can be obtained from the author, if needed.

A3.7a: Interview guide for correspondents

1. Personal information

- How **long** have you been in Brussels?
- What did you do beforehand?
- What is your **specialization** (if several correspondents)?
- How many correspondents are employed here by your newspaper?
- What are your career prospects? Why have you come to Brussels?

2. Reporting about the EP

- Why are you not in **Strasbourg**? /Have you been to Strasbourg last week?
- **Editors**
 - o Do they have **specific ideas** about EP coverage?
 - o What are they interested in?
 - o What is the procedure? Do editors tell you what they want or do you approach them? What happens then?
 - o What are the **technical constraints** (deadlines etc.?)?
 - o What is **newsworthy**? At what time is there more **coverage** (→ examples)?
 - o **Editorial line**? Politicized Newspaper? In favor of certain actors?
- **Readers**
 - o Do you think they are **interested**?
 - o How much does the readership **know**?
 - o **Distance?/Relevance?**
 - o Is it difficult to cover the EP?
 - o **Which stories are easier to cover?**
 - o What is **newsworthy**? What do you think is of interest to them?
 - o How do you cover the EP? What do you explain when drawing references?
- **Access**
 - o Who are your **sources/contacts** with respect to the EP?
 - o Press conferences, press releases, MEPs, assistants? How useful?
 - o **Special relations?**
 - o **Working modus of Parliament – constraining?**
 - o **Other institutional constraints** (decision making process, plenary votes & debates, committee work etc.)
 - o other **topical constraints/events**
 - o Some better access to EP than others?
- **Examples**
 - o SWIFT
 - o Power towards EU Commission, esp. investiture procedure

3. Opinion

- **What do you think about the EP?**
 - o How **important** is the EP? Criticism with it?
 - o How do you see the **powers**?
 - o **Change of coverage over time?** Prospects for the future, i.e. after Lisbon?
 - o What is better/ worse?
 - o Which institution is most visible? Why?
 - o How do **others** cover the EP? Can you see differences? Is there a competition?
- **Personal role?**
 - o How do you see your role? As a '**foreign**' correspondent?

A3.7b: Interview guide for the director at the EP Directorate-General for Communication

- The EP Press office

- How is it organized?
- What is the communication strategy of the EP? Does the information you distribute vary across media type and/or country?
- What is the information/news routine?

- The press corps

- What is your impression of the press corps?
- What is **newsworthy**? Have you adapted your **strategy**?
- How do they cover the EP? Can you see differences? Is there a competition?
- Who is interested?
- Some better access to EP than others?
- Special relations to some MEPs?
- **Who** do correspondents approach?
- Why do you think are some more interested than others?

- The EP's picture in the media?

- What are the weaknesses of the EP?
- How do you see the **powers**?
- **Change of coverage over time?** Prospects for the future, i.e. after Lisbon?
- What is better/ worse?

- Examples

- SWIFT
- Power towards EU Commission, esp. investiture procedure

Note: These questions were not disclosed to the interviewees. They served as a guide for the interviewer, and were not posed in the way presented here in order to avoid leading the interviewee to certain answers.

A3.8: Themes covered in each interview

	IE-1	IE-2	GB-1	GB-2	GB-3	FR-1	FR-2	NL-1	NL-2	DE-1	DE-2	DE-3	DE-4	DE-5	DE-6	AT-1	AT-2
Career related information	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Newspaper particularities					x		x	x		x		x	x				
Relationship to the editor/home office	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x
Assumptions about the reader	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x
EP access to information	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x			x	x		x		
Relationship to Strasbourg seat of EP	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x		x		x		x	x	x
Newsworthiness of EP	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Representation of EP in the news	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x
Relationship to MEPs	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x		x		x	x	x
Representation of MEPs in the news	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Representation of parties/party politics	x		x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Press coverage of European elections					x				x						x	x	
Professional opinion towards EP	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Comparison to colleagues/other newspapers	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	
Coverage of SWIFT	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x		x	x
Coverage of the Barroso Commission	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x		x	x		x	x	
Coverage of previous investitures	x				x		x		x	x		x	x			x	x
Future EP press coverage	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x

Appendix – Chapter 4

A4.1: Descriptive Statistics for the dependent variable 'Share of EP within article /percentage'

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
EPsharepc	10847	0	100	12.37	27.56
Valid N (listwise)	10847				

Number of observations in each country

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum.Percent
Ireland	1400	12.9	12.9	12.9
Netherlands	1857	17.1	17.1	30
France	1889	17.4	17.4	47.4
Germany	1886	17.4	17.4	64.8
Austria	1962	18.1	18.1	82.9
UK	1853	17.1	17.1	100
Total	10847	100	100	

A4.2: Descriptive statistics for the independent variables

Plenary dates for parliaments

Sitting	EP sitting			NP sitting		
	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
no	7957	73.4	73.4	6292	58	58
yes	2890	26.6	100	4555	42	100
Total	10847	100		10847	100	

Dates for general elections considered for the data analysis

Ireland	24 May 2007
United Kingdom	5 May 2005
France	22 April & 6 May 2007 (presidential elections) 10 & 17 June 2007 (parliamentary elections)
Netherlands	22 November 2006
Germany	18 September 2005
Austria	1 October 2006

Political contestation over the EU by country and election

Country	Election dates		
<i>Ireland</i>	<i>17 May 2002</i>	<i>24 May 2007</i>	
	14.01	13.33	
<i>United Kingdom</i>		<i>5 May 2005*</i>	<i>6 May 2010</i>
		15.81	16.44
<i>France</i>	<i>9 & 16 June 2002</i>	<i>10 & 17 June 2007</i>	
	8.95	14.84	
<i>Netherlands</i>	<i>22 January 2003</i>	<i>22 November 2006</i>	<i>9 June 2010</i>
	11.94	14.65	16.40
<i>Germany</i>	<i>18 September 2005</i>	<i>27 September 2009</i>	
	6.81	9.96	
<i>Austria</i>	<i>24 November 2002</i>	<i>1 October 2006</i>	<i>28 September 2008</i>
	13.16	18.84	19.50
Calculations based on	Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2002	Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2006	Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2010

Legend: * includes the BNP and UKIP and hence data from the 2006 Chapel Hill Expert Survey were used for the calculations

Sources: Own calculations based on Chapel Hill Expert Surveys 2002, 2006, 2010

EB Support for EU membership (% EU membership is a good thing)

	2005.2	2006.1	2006.2	2007.1	2007.2	2008.1	2008.2	2009.1	2009.2	2009.3	2010.1	2010.2
Ireland	73.00	77.00	78.00	76.00	74.00	73.00	67.00	68.00	69.00	72.00	66.00	69.00
Netherlands	70.00	74.00	72.00	77.00	79.00	75.00	80.00	78.00	72.00	74.00	69.00	67.00
France	46.00	49.00	50.00	52.00	60.00	48.00	49.00	52.00	50.00	49.00	44.00	46.00
Germany	53.00	57.00	58.00	65.00	67.00	60.00	64.00	60.00	61.00	60.00	50.00	49.00
Austria	32.00	34.00	36.00	36.00	38.00	36.00	39.00	41.00	41.00	42.00	36.00	43.00
UK	34.00	42.00	34.00	39.00	34.00	30.00	32.00	29.00	28.00	30.00	29.00	27.00

EB Trust in the national parliament (% tend to trust)

	2005.2	2006.1	2006.2	2007.1	2007.2	2008.1	2008.2	2009.1	2009.2	2009.3	2010.1	2010.2
Ireland	40.00	44.00	36.00	43.00	33.00	42.00	36.00	31.00	23.00	19.00	22.00	12.00
UK	37.00	36.00	29.00	41.00	34.00	27.00	30.00	28.00	17.00	19.00	24.00	27.00
France	28.00	31.00	27.00	44.00	40.00	35.00	36.00	31.00	33.00	28.00	36.00	28.00
Netherlands	50.00	55.00	53.00	77.00	54.00	56.00	64.00	70.00	56.00	52.00	54.00	55.00
Germany	36.00	40.00	31.00	51.00	41.00	41.00	41.00	46.00	46.00	45.00	39.00	40.00
Austria	49.00	56.00	52.00	57.00	54.00	46.00	54.00	61.00	58.00	55.00	52.00	49.00

Sources: Eurobarometer

Party contestation over EU integration

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Party Contestation	10847	6.81	18.84	12.45	3.71
Valid N (listwise)	10847				

Sources: Own calculations based on Chapel Hill Expert Surveys 2002, 2006, 2010

A4.3: Bivariate correlations of the independent variables

	EB support for EU	EB trust in NP	EP sitting	NP sitting	BS No of staff	Centre left BS	Business BS	BS circulation (1000s)	EU Presidency	GDP growth rate	MS liberal	MS polarized-pluralist	Interaction	Political Contestation	Squared Political Contestation
EB support for EU	1														
EB trust in NP	.2495***	1													
EP sitting	-.0016	-.034***	1												
NP sitting	-.0037	-.2148***	.219***	1											
BS No of staff	-.0239**	-.296***	.0168*	.1594***	1										
Centre left BS	.0502***	-.0097	.0155	.0056	.0549***	1									
Business BS	-.0984***	.0188*	-.0164*	-.0036	.0307***	-.4801***	1								
NP circulation (10000s)	-.1019***	-.3546***	.0072	.2091***	.3327***	.1656***	-.4077***	1							
EU Presidency	-.2058***	.0631***	.0196**	-.0046	.0501***	-.0105	.0212**	-.0056	1						
GDP growth rate	.1295***	.0034	.014	.041***	-.0883***	.0181*	-.0344***	-.0778***	-.0962***	1					
MS liberal	-.01	-.3259***	-.0104	.1582***	-.1513***	.0565***	-.1056***	.185***	-.0773***	.0708***	1				
MS polarized-pluralist	-.1255***	-.4315***	-.0007	.0344***	.1111***	-.0098	.0359***	.0753***	-.1608***	-.1102***	-.3008***	1			
Interaction of EB trust in NP & EB support for EU	.8106***	.7465***	-.0213**	-.0911***	-.1339***	.0209**	-.0415***	-.2062***	-.1228***	.0726***	-.1819***	-.3099***	1		
Political Contestation	-.2656***	.3636***	-.018*	-.0455***	-.4963***	.0166*	-.0214**	-.2112***	-.1224***	.0609***	.4485***	-.3228***	.0335***	1	
Squared Political Contestation	-.3145***	.3532***	-.0172*	-.055***	-.459***	.011	-.0134	-.1998***	-.1189***	.0553***	.4094***	-.3405***	-.0096	.9894***	1

Legend: Pearson coefficients, N=10847, * p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

A4.4: Tobit models, predicting variation in the volume of news referring to EU parliamentary affairs (interaction effect and jack-knife tests)

	Model 1A	Model 1B	Model 2A	Model 2B	Model 3A	Model 3B	Model 4A	Model 4B	Model 5A	Model 5B	Model 6A	Model 6B
EB support for EU	3.17** (1.38)	3.17* (1.74)	1.49 (1.75)	1.49 (1.60)	3.55*** (1.26)	3.55** (1.49)	5.08*** (1.44)	5.08*** (1.88)	1.06 (1.42)	1.06 (1.76)	2.98*** (1.04)	2.98*** (.89)
EB trust in NP	2.06 (1.85)	2.06 (1.85)	.08 (2.27)	.08 (2.15)	2.71* (1.63)	2.71 (2.02)	3.73* (1.92)	3.73 (2.42)	-.95 (1.90)	-.95 (2.33)	-.46 (1.36)	-.46 (1.12)
EP sitting	60.24*** (3.79)	60.24*** (4.94)	59.32*** (3.28)	59.32*** (3.99)	59.96*** (3.70)	59.96*** (4.88)	57.54*** (3.30)	57.54*** (3.57)	63.64*** (2.79)	63.64*** (2.28)	58.16*** (2.90)	58.16*** (4.31)
NP sitting	10.88*** (3.06)	10.88** (4.76)	11.76*** (3.39)	11.76** (4.94)	6.47* (3.37)	6.47 (5.10)	5.32* (3.15)	5.32 (4.27)	10.36** (4.57)	10.36 (6.47)	10.73*** (2.95)	10.73** (4.33)
BS No of staff	13.49** (6.31)	13.49*** (4.40)	10.9 (7.93)	10.90*** (2.84)	16.47*** (3.53)	16.47*** (3.11)	13.62*** (4.76)	13.62*** (3.97)	2.78 (4.55)	2.78 (2.50)	15.93*** (4.79)	15.93*** (3.72)
Centre left BS	3.69 (12.76)	3.69 (10.76)	9.97 (13.44)	9.97 (11.97)	4.62 (7.23)	4.62 (6.79)	4.85 (12.01)	4.85 (9.97)	21.97** (9.06)	21.97* (11.37)	6.20 (10.65)	6.20 (10.36)
Business BS	-11.65 (13.39)	-11.65 (18.75)	-9.46 (11.30)	-9.46 (16.56)	-22.36** (10.69)	-22.36 (15.13)	-17.58 (14.90)	-17.58 (21.91)	.16 (10.77)	.16 (15.97)	5.59 (11.98)	5.59 (16.47)
BS circulation (10000s)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	-.00* (.00)	.00 (.00)	-.00*** (.00)	-.00* (.00)	-.00*** (.00)	-.00** (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)
EU Presidency	21.81** (9.20)	21.81 (14.65)	22.73** (10.8)	22.73 (17.96)	16.23* (8.84)	16.23 (14.94)	20.27** (8.98)	20.27 (14.80)	31.60*** (8.10)	31.60*** (10.21)	5.78 (7.52)	5.78 (9.50)
GDP growth rate	12.18** (4.80)	12.18*** (3.15)	5.44*** (1.52)	5.44** (2.38)	4.29*** (1.00)	4.29*** (1.54)	3.32*** (1.15)	3.32*** (1.21)	4.31*** (.68)	4.31*** (.88)	3.68*** (.98)	3.68*** (1.10)
Interaction of EB trust in NP & EB support for EU	-.05* (.03)	-.05 (.03)	-.02 (.03)	-.02 (.03)	-.06** (.03)	-.06** (.03)	-.10*** (.03)	-.10** (.04)	.00 (.03)	.00 (.04)	-.02 (.02)	-.02 (.02)
SE clustered by	Newspaper	Country	Newspaper	Country	Newspaper	Country	Newspaper	Country	Newspaper	Country	Newspaper	Country
Country excluded	IE	IE	GB	GB	FR	FR	NL	NL	DE	DE	AT	AT
Constant	-267.36*** (94.71)	-267.36*** (90.09)	-148.59 (121.48)	-148.59 (108.35)	-284.91*** (85.97)	-284.91** (111.30)	-321.87*** (99.59)	-321.87*** (118.89)	-119.54 (96.79)	-119.54 (124.18)	-239.76*** (73.36)	-239.76*** (50.69)
Sigma Constant	90.88*** (5.27)	90.88*** (9.23)	87.75*** (4.73)	87.75*** (7.63)	86.29*** (4.89)	86.29*** (7.76)	88.55*** (5.36)	88.55*** (8.70)	96.48*** (4.32)	96.48*** (4.92)	86.60*** (4.69)	86.60*** (7.50)
N	9447	9447	8990	8990	8958	8958	8961	8961	8885	8885	8994	8994
Pseudo R Squared	.0322	.0322	.0307	.0307	.0361	.0361	.0335	.0335	.0322	.0322	.034	.034

Legend: * p<.1; ** p<.05; *** p<.01; adjusted standard errors in brackets; dependent variable: amount of news dealing with EU parliamentary affairs (%)

Appendix – Chapter 5

A5.1: Means of quotation length and N for each MEP cited across countries

Country		MEP1	MEP2	MEP3	MEP4	MEP5	MEP6	MEP7	MEP8	MEP9	MEP10	MEP11	MEP12	MEP13	MEP14
IE	M	44.1982	16.3972	13.6164	12.6098	5.6364	17.33	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	N	338	141	73	41	22	12	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	SD	57.7046	24.75505	19.05375	20.33701	10.92636	38.146	0	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
GB	M	28.5548	22.4407	9.4444	2.1818	14	34	10.5	29						
	N	146	59	18	11	4	3	2	1						
	SD	35.72887	22.52759	20.53755	7.23627	18.11077	56.294	14.84924	.						
FR	M	27.6045	15.2941	17.8636	9.4545	9.5455	41.09	15	25.4444	4	23	27.6	68.5		
	N	268	153	88	55	33	22	15	9	5	5	5	2		
	SD	39.66716	16.81356	27.23975	13.66235	14.42673	49.317	26.52223	43.78102	8.94427	36.64696	39.3103	96.87363		
NL	M	29.365	22.6573	20.7419	21.8621	14.1333	17.33	0	2	49					
	N	263	143	62	29	15	6	2	1	1					
	SD	40.03143	28.1022	27.12203	26.42878	18.68486	40.008	0	.	.					
DE	M	13.5009	7.4157	6.6415	6.2533	2.8649	10.52	3.6429	3	10.1667	1.6667	0	10	11	
	N	547	332	159	75	37	21	14	10	6	3	2	2	1	
	SD	22.26977	10.37523	9.6261	8.21846	5.67236	29.417	6.46419	4.54606	11.44407	2.88675	0	14.14214	.	
AT	M	21.6266	7.8037	3.6053	1.9444	2.4667	33.78	3	0						
	N	233	107	38	18	15	9	4	1						
	SD	34.31111	12.20071	7.36515	4.65861	5.86596	48.918	3.55903	.						
Total	M	25.9905	13.3829	11.9064	9.6026	6.746	25.25	7.9231	12.6087	10	13.3333	17.25	31.4	5.5	0
	N	1795	935	438	229	126	73	39	23	13	9	8	5	2	1
	SD	40.18912	19.52001	19.994	16.12789	12.2722	42.486	17.78436	29.09661	15.20965	28.37693	32.97077	59.66406	7.77817	.

Legend: M= mean; SD= standard deviation; verbosity multiplier not considered

A5.2: Descriptive statistics for the dependent variable 'MEP1 words/pc'

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
MEP1 words/pc	1795	0	88.86	7.2898	10.70142
Valid N (listwise)	1795				

A5.3: Descriptive statistics for the independent variables

Ballot structure and district size in the 2004 EU elections in each country

Country	Ballot structure	Average district size
Ireland	Open	3.3
UK	Closed	6.8
France	Closed	9.8
Netherlands	Ordered	27
Germany	Closed	99
Austria	Ordered	18

Source: Hix and Hagemann (2009)

Individual characteristics of MEP1, MEP2 and MEP3

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
MEP1: No of reports ^a	1767	0	51	4.5	6.834
MEP1: attendance ^a	1767	0.52	1	0.8858	0.083
MEP1: No of terms ^a	1767	1	6	2.42	1.426
MEP2: No of reports ^a	913	0	51	3.61	5.742
MEP2: attendance ^a	913	0.09	1	0.8891	0.084
MEP2: No of terms ^a	913	1	6	2.4	1.376
MEP3: No of reports ^a	425	0	51	3.22	5.575
MEP3: attendance ^a	425	0.47	1	0.8708	0.102
MEP3: No of terms ^a	425	1	6	2.49	1.442

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MEP1: EP President ^b			MEP1: committee chair ^b			MEP1: EP party leader ^b			MEP1: accession state ^a			MEP1: dom. opposition ^c			
	N	Valid %	Cum. %	N	Valid %	Cum. %	N	Valid %	Cum. %	N	Valid %	Cum. %	N	Valid %	Cum. %
No	1695	94.4	94.4	1615	90	90	1675	93.3	93.3	1713	96.9	96.9	1181	66.84	66.84
Yes	100	5.6	100	180	10	100	120	6.7	100	54	3.1	100	586	33.16	100
Total	1795	100		1795	100		1795	100		1767	100		1767	100	

MEP2: EP President ^b			MEP2: committee chair ^b			MEP2: EP party leader ^b			MEP2: accession state ^a			MEP2: dom. opposition ^c			
	N	Valid %	Cum. %	N	Valid %	Cum. %	N	Valid %	Cum. %	N	Valid %	Cum. %	N	Valid %	Cum. %
No	897	95.9	95.9	896	95.8	95.8	830	88.8	88.8	871	95.4	95.4	623	68.2	68.2
Yes	38	4.1	100	39	4.2	100	105	11.2	100	42	4.6	100	290	31.8	100
Total	935	100		935	100		935	100		913	100		913	100	

MEP3: EP President ^b			MEP3: committee chair ^b			MEP3: EP party leader ^b			MEP3: accession state ^a			MEP3: dom. opposition ^c			
	N	Valid %	Cum. %	N	Valid %	Cum. %	N	Valid %	Cum. %	N	Valid %	Cum. %	N	Valid %	Cum. %
No	427	97.3	97.3	419	95.4	95.4	373	85	85	410	96.5	96.5	291	68.5	68.5
Yes	12	2.7	100	20	4.6	100	66	15	100	15	3.5	100	134	31.5	100
Total	439	100		439	100		439	100		425	100		425	100	

Sources: ^a Hurka and Kaeding (2011), ^b Høyland, Sircar et al. (2009), ^c own calculations.

Note: The descriptive statistics for 'EP sitting' and 'EB support for EU' have already been provided in A4.2.

A5.4: Bivariate correlations of the independent variables

	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V6	V7	V8	V9	V10	V11	V12	V13	V14	V15	V16	V17	V18	V19	V20	V21
V1	1																				
V2	-0.03	1																			
V3	-0.03	0.01*	1																		
V4	-0.11***	0.08***	0.01	1																	
V5	-0.23***	0.09***	0.02*	0.33***	1																
V6	-0.16***	-0.03	0.00	0.22***	-0.08***	1															
V7	0.01	-0.10***	-0.02*	-0.41***	0.03***	-0.48***	1														
V8	0.04*	0.04	0.00	-0.10***	-0.02**	0.04***	-0.10***	1													
V9	-0.07***	-0.01	0.03	0.03	0.05**	0.04	0.01	-0.10***	1												
V10	-0.05**	0.05**	0.03	-0.04	0.00	0.02	0.07**	-0.16***	0.10***	1											
V11	-0.22***	0.15***	0.05**	0.11***	0.20***	-0.01	0.06**	-0.16***	0.16***	0.17***	1										
V12	0.05*	0.07***	0.03	-0.03	-0.02	-0.03	0.01	0.01	-0.14***	0.15***	0.09***	1									
V13	0.02	0.01	-0.03	0.04	0.02	0.03	-0.03	0.02	0.43***	-0.01	0.11***	-0.08***	1								
V14	-0.01	0.10***	0.02	0.09***	0.11***	-0.05**	-0.01	-0.05*	-0.15***	0.09***	0.33***	-0.07**	-0.07***	1							
V15	0.13***	0.11***	0.13***	-0.01	0.03**	-0.01	-0.03***	0.06***	-0.10***	0.02	-0.09***	0.11***	0.10***	0.03	1						
V16	0.05*	0.07***	-0.03	0.03	0.05*	-0.04	-0.01	0.01	-0.06**	-0.01	-0.18***	-0.04*	0.05**	-0.05**	-0.08***	1					
V17	-0.69***	0.07	0.01	0.19	0.52	-0.01	0.05	0.17	0.08	0.03	0.25	-0.05	0.06	0.06	0.04	-0.02	1				
V18	-0.53***	-0.03	0.00	-0.43***	-0.38***	-0.03**	0.05***	0.01	-0.01	0.02	0.00	0.00	-0.10***	-0.06**	-0.07***	-0.04	-0.14***	1			
V19	0.54***	-0.01	-0.01	-0.26***	-0.40***	0.08***	-0.19***	0.53***	-0.08***	-0.09***	-0.26***	-0.01	0.04*	-0.07**	0.10***	-0.01	-0.29***	-0.28***	1		
V20	0.71***	-0.08***	-0.01	0.19***	-0.15***	0.04***	-0.11***	-0.01	-0.05**	-0.09***	-0.24***	-0.03	0.01	-0.04*	0.02**	0.00	-0.46***	-0.48***	0.59***	1	
V21	0.50***	0.05**	0.00	0.08***	0.11***	-0.02**	0.04***	-0.13***	-0.03	0.04*	0.00***	0.10***	0.02	0.04*	0.01	0.07***	-0.26***	-0.33***	-0.18***	-0.30***	1

Legend: Pearson coefficients; N=1795 max; * p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01; variable codes on the next page

Variable codes for A5.4

V1: GE candidate-centred
V2: No of MEPs in article
V3: EP sitting
V4: BS circulation (10000s)
V5: BS No of staff
V6: Centre right BS
V7: Business BS
V8: EB support for EU
V9: MEP1: No of reports
V10: MEP1: attendance
V11: MEP1: No of terms
V12: MEP1: EP President
V13: MEP1: committee chair
V14: MEP1: EP party leader
V15: MEP1: domestic opposition
V16: MEP1: accession state
V17: EPE Ordered Ballot
V18: EPE Open Ballot
V19: AVG district size
V20: MS liberal
V21: MS polarised-pluralist

A5.5a: Tobit models, predicting variation in quotation length of MEPs (MEP2)

	Model 1A	Model 1B	Model 2A	Model 2B	Model 3A	Model 3B	Model 4A	Model 4B	Model 5A	Model 5B	Model 6A	Model 6B	Model 7A	Model 7B
GE candidate-centred	1.36 (.97)	1.36 (1.56)	4.42*** (.67)	4.42*** (1.08)	.42 (1.18)	.42 (2.00)	.31 (1.70)	.31 (2.55)	3.18*** (.24)	3.18*** (.23)	-1.56* (.85)	-1.56** (.66)	-.18 (2.05)	-.18 (2.63)
No of MEPs in article	-.86*** (.19)	-.86*** (.17)	-.69*** (.18)	-.69*** (.12)	-.79*** (.18)	-.79*** (.18)	-.95*** (.21)	-.95*** (.26)	-.87*** (.21)	-.87*** (.18)	-.84*** (.25)	-.84*** (.26)	-.88*** (.20)	-.88*** (.18)
EP sitting	.82 (.53)	.82 (.64)	.47 (.43)	.47 (.60)	.51 (.49)	.51 (.53)	.85 (.66)	.85 (.76)	.63 (.65)	.63 (.68)	1.34** (.67)	1.34* (.72)	1.00* (.57)	1.00 (.73)
BS circulation (10000s)	.00 (.00)	.00** (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00*** (.00)	.00*** (.00)	.00*** (.00)	.00*** (.00)	.00*** (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)
BS No of staff	-.62 (.39)	-.62** (.30)	-1.29*** (.37)	-1.29*** (.21)	-.42 (.66)	-.42 (.37)	-.92 (.68)	-.92* (.48)	-.47*** (.11)	-.47*** (.11)	.46 (.42)	.46 (.53)	-1.18* (.65)	-1.18** (.54)
Centre right BS	-1.74 (1.27)	-1.74*** (.39)	-1.17* (.60)	-1.17*** (.35)	-2.20* (1.23)	-2.20*** (.39)	-1.51 (1.36)	-1.51*** (.44)	-1.62*** (.34)	-1.62*** (.42)	-.71 (1.13)	-.71 (.93)	-2.01 (1.36)	-2.01*** (.52)
Business BS	-.25 (.96)	-.25 (.90)	-1.82** (.83)	-1.82* (1.10)	-1.32 (1.29)	-1.32 (1.04)	.03 (1.03)	.03 (1.00)	.15 (.31)	.15 (.36)	.25 (1.15)	.25 (1.55)	-1.87 (2.11)	-1.87 (1.37)
EB support for EU	.01 (.03)	.01 (.04)	.13*** (.03)	.13*** (.04)	.04 (.03)	.04 (.05)	.03 (.03)	.03 (.05)	-.05*** (.01)	-.05*** (.00)	.05** (.02)	.05*** (.01)	-.08 (.08)	-.08* (.04)
MEP2: No of reports	.03 (.07)	.03 (.07)	-.01 (.05)	-.01 (.05)	.03 (.08)	.03 (.07)	.02 (.09)	.02 (.08)	.06 (.07)	.06 (.07)	.10 (.08)	.10 (.06)	.05 (.08)	.05 (.07)
MEP2: attendance	2.97 (2.77)	2.97 (2.24)	3.27 (2.65)	3.27* (1.80)	2.15 (2.86)	2.15 (1.99)	2.87 (3.48)	2.87 (2.94)	5.68** (2.40)	5.68** (2.65)	2.47 (3.07)	2.47 (2.27)	4.91* (2.62)	4.91*** (1.80)
MEP2: No of terms	.03 (.21)	.03 (.18)	.05 (.20)	.05 (.16)	.03 (.23)	.03 (.21)	-.05 (.26)	-.05 (.24)	.15 (.19)	.15 (.08)	-.07 (.29)	-.07 (.32)	.02 (.23)	.02 (.22)
MEP2: EP President	-4.89*** (1.22)	-4.89*** (1.74)	-5.30*** (1.36)	-5.30*** (1.98)	-4.43*** (1.15)	-4.43*** (1.62)	-5.13*** (1.67)	-5.13* (2.64)	-3.52*** (.78)	-3.52*** (.71)	-6.20*** (1.88)	-6.20** (2.72)	-5.48*** (1.33)	-5.48*** (1.90)
MEP2: committee chair	-1.81 (1.75)	-1.81 (1.96)	-.22 (1.79)	-.22 (1.91)	-3.52** (1.75)	-3.52* (1.89)	-.95 (1.69)	-.95 (1.81)	-.87 (1.64)	-.87 (1.60)	-1.49 (2.46)	-1.49 (3.11)	-1.98 (1.94)	-1.98 (2.18)

Continued on the next page...

<i>... continued</i>	Model 1A	Model 1B	Model 2A	Model 2B	Model 3A	Model 3B	Model 4A	Model 4B	Model 5A	Model 5B	Model 6A	Model 6B	Model 7A	Model 7B
MEP2: EP party	-.25	-.25	-.91	-.91**	-.06	-.06	-.44	-.44	-.08	-.08	1.12	1.12	-.55	-.55
leader	(.80)	(.91)	(.62)	(.46)	(.87)	(1.07)	(.83)	(1.00)	(.86)	(.98)	(1.62)	(1.22)	(.77)	(.86)
MEP2: dom.	.26	.26	.53	.53	.21	.21	-.39	-.39	.93	.93	1.06	1.06	.29	.29
opposition	(.73)	(.74)	(.70)	(.64)	(.76)	(.67)	(.85)	(.49)	(.70)	(.72)	(.71)	(.68)	(.78)	(.78)
MEP2: accession	-.79	-.79	-1.73	-1.73	-.68	-.68	-2.06	-2.06*	-.11	-.11	.66	.66	-.99	-.99
state	(1.64)	(1.51)	(1.64)	(1.47)	(1.71)	(1.67)	(1.77)	(1.05)	(1.66)	(1.93)	(2.18)	(2.37)	(1.65)	(1.64)
Time Dummies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
SE clustered by	Newspaper	Country	Newspaper	Country	Newspaper	Country	Newspaper	Country	Newspaper	Country	Newspaper	Country	Newspaper	Country
Country excluded	None	None	IE	IE	GB	GB	FR	FR	NL	NL	DE	DE	AT	AT
Constant	1.15	1.15	-2.61	-2.61*	1.13	1.13	1.00	1.00	.15	.15	-.35	-.35	9.96	9.96
	(2.67)	(1.32)	(3.13)	(1.44)	(2.58)	(1.39)	(3.27)	(1.92)	(3.05)	(3.09)	(4.15)	(2.29)	(9.88)	(7.84)
Sigma Constant	7.05***	7.05***	6.33***	6.33***	6.94***	6.94***	7.14***	7.14***	6.52***	6.52***	7.68***	7.68***	7.05***	7.05***
	(.65)	(.92)	(.57)	(.72)	(.69)	(1.00)	(.77)	(1.14)	(.72)	(1.00)	(.56)	(.67)	(.68)	(1.01)
N	913	913	772	772	860	860	765	765	772	772	587	587	809	809
Pseudo R Squared	.0259	.0259	.0369	.0369	.0278	.0278	.0271	.0271	.0363	.0363	.0355	.0355	.0282	.0282

Legend: * p<.1; ** p<.05; *** p<.01, adjusted standard errors in brackets; dependent variable: Percentage of cited words for the second MEP per article

A5.5b: Tobit models, predicting variation in quotation length of MEPs (MEP3)

	Model 1A	Model 1B	Model 2A	Model 2B	Model 3A	Model 3B	Model 4A	Model 4B	Model 5A	Model 5B	Model 6A	Model 6B	Model 7A	Model 7B
GE candidate-centred	1.29 (.87)	1.29 (1.02)	3.23*** (.89)	3.23*** (.48)	1.09 (.82)	1.09 (1.09)	-1.59 (1.06)	-1.59 (1.51)	2.57*** (.72)	2.57*** (.36)	-.75 (.52)	-.75 (.61)	.16 (1.42)	.16 (1.47)
No of MEPs in article	-.73*** (.20)	-.73*** (.16)	-.75*** (.22)	-.75*** (.22)	-.74*** (.20)	-.74*** (.19)	-.67*** (.25)	-.67*** (.16)	-.66*** (.21)	-.66*** (.16)	-.93*** (.22)	-.93*** (.12)	-.74*** (.22)	-.74*** (.19)
EP sitting	.28 (.58)	.28 (.31)	.28 (.64)	.28 (.36)	.13 (.58)	.13 (.31)	.06 (.69)	.06 (.55)	.44 (.53)	.44 (.36)	-.09 (.62)	-.09 (.29)	.30 (.62)	.30 (.33)
BS circulation (10000s)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00*** (.00)	.00*** (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)
BS No of staff	.21 (.42)	.21 (.49)	-.26 (.43)	-.26 (.52)	.87* (.45)	.87** (.36)	-.12** (.48)	-.12** (.51)	.06 (.32)	.06 (.40)	.46 (.38)	.46 (.48)	-.25 (.64)	-.25 (.70)
Centre right BS	-2.19* (1.15)	-2.19*** (.48)	-2.33*** (.80)	-2.33*** (.46)	-2.48** (1.16)	-2.48*** (.89)	-1.22 (.96)	-1.22* (.70)	-1.61** (.64)	-1.61*** (.35)	-1.50* (.81)	-1.50** (.61)	-2.32* (1.34)	-2.32*** (.80)
Business BS	-.58 (.90)	-.58 (1.04)	-2.30** (.99)	-2.30** (.95)	-.64 (.89)	-.64 (1.01)	1.00 (1.17)	1.00 (1.65)	-.15 (1.21)	-.15 (1.39)	-.15 (.76)	-.15 (.77)	-1.94 (1.74)	-1.94 (1.23)
EB support for EU	.05 (.03)	.05 (.04)	.14*** (.03)	.14*** (.03)	.06* (.04)	.06 (.04)	.10*** (.03)	.10** (.04)	.00 (.03)	.00 (.02)	.06** (.03)	.06*** (.02)	-.03 (.07)	-.03 (.03)
MEP3: No of reports	.04 (.05)	.04 (.03)	.04 (.05)	.04 (.03)	.05* (.04)	.05* (.03)	.04 (.07)	.04 (.05)	.07* (.04)	.07*** (.02)	.02 (.08)	.02 (.09)	.05 (.05)	.05* (.03)
MEP3: attendance	10.92*** (3.67)	10.92** (4.66)	10.07*** (3.48)	10.07* (5.26)	10.75*** (3.77)	10.75** (4.52)	11.30** (4.78)	11.30* (5.89)	7.16*** (2.73)	7.16** (2.79)	15.88** (6.82)	15.88*** (5.82)	10.46*** (4.02)	10.46** (5.02)
MEP3: No of terms	-.66** (.27)	-.66*** (.20)	-.76** (.30)	-.76*** (.25)	-.59** (.26)	-.59*** (.18)	-.60 (.36)	-.60** (.24)	-.68** (.27)	-.68*** (.25)	-.88** (.42)	-.88** (.42)	-.59** (.30)	-.59*** (.19)
MEP3: EP President	-9.06*** (3.22)	-9.06*** (2.03)	-9.10*** (2.99)	-9.10*** (2.26)	-9.11*** (3.26)	-9.11*** (1.92)	-35.57 (.00)	-35.57 (.00)	-7.69*** (2.96)	-7.69*** (1.70)	-8.26** (3.70)	-8.26*** (2.89)	-8.43** (3.57)	-8.43*** (2.06)
MEP3: committee chair	.50 (2.11)	.50 (1.38)	.72 (2.23)	.72 (1.74)	.13 (2.16)	.13 (1.34)	1.14 (2.72)	1.14 (1.07)	1.38 (1.92)	1.38* (.83)	-.99 (3.81)	-.99 (2.46)	.36 (2.22)	.36 (1.45)

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<i>... continued</i>	Model 1A	Model 1B	Model 2A	Model 2B	Model 3A	Model 3B	Model 4A	Model 4B	Model 5A	Model 5B	Model 6A	Model 6B	Model 7A	Model 7B
MEP3: EP party	-.17	-.17	-.22	-.22	.00	.00	.21	.21	.41	.41	-1.26	-1.26	-.07	-.07
leader	(1.06)	(.97)	(1.11)	(.98)	(1.04)	(.96)	(1.46)	(1.35)	(.96)	(.64)	(1.17)	(.88)	(1.12)	(1.04)
MEP3: dom.	-.18	-.18	.2	.20	.01	.01	-.93	-.93	-.21	-.21	-.79	-.79	-.18	-.18
opposition	(.74)	(.72)	(.68)	(.41)	(.75)	(.72)	(.96)	(.97)	(.64)	(.72)	(1.00)	(1.14)	(.78)	(.76)
MEP3: accession	-2.07	-2.07	-2.55	-2.55	-2.05	-2.05	-5.92**	-5.92**	.03	.03	-3.03	-3.03	-1.92	-1.92
state	(2.07)	(3.00)	(2.46)	(3.53)	(2.01)	(2.98)	(2.29)	(2.87)	(1.31)	(1.68)	(3.04)	(4.09)	(2.13)	(3.11)
Time Dummies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
SE clustered by	Newspaper	Country	Newspaper	Country	Newspaper	Country	Newspaper	Country	Newspaper	Country	Newspaper	Country	Newspaper	Country
Country excluded	None	None	IE	IE	GB	GB	FR	FR	NL	NL	DE	DE	AT	AT
Constant	-8.35**	-8.35*	-9.51***	-9.51**	-1.88**	-1.88**	-9.13*	-9.13*	-3.74	-3.74**	-13.31**	-13.31***	.51	.51
	(3.88)	(4.41)	(3.25)	(4.10)	(4.41)	(4.71)	(4.71)	(4.89)	(3.00)	(1.56)	(5.94)	(4.85)	(7.94)	(5.80)
Sigma Constant	5.63***	5.63***	5.15***	5.15***	5.53***	5.53***	5.57***	5.57***	5.00***	5.00***	5.99***	5.99***	5.70***	5.70***
	(.55)	(.73)	(.52)	(.68)	(.57)	(.78)	(.68)	(.90)	(.62)	(.72)	(.41)	(.56)	(.57)	(.78)
N	424	424	351	351	409	409	339	339	364	364	269	269	388	388
Pseudo R Squared	.0475	.0475	.0687	.0687	.0504	.0504	.0594	.0594	.0553	.0553	.0679	.0679	.0404	.0404

Legend: * p<.1; ** p<.05; *** p<.01, adjusted standard errors in brackets; dependent variable: Percentage of cited words for the third MEP per article

A5.5c: Descriptive statistics for the dependent variables 'MEP2 words/pc' and 'MEP3 words/pc'

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
MEP2 words/pc	935	.00	30.04	3.4243	5.06794
MEP3 words/pc	438	.00	30.50	2.6323	4.13353

Table 5.6: Tobit models, predicting variation in quotation length of MEPs (MEP1) (Jack-knife tests)

	Model 1A	Model 1B	Model 2A	Model 2B	Model 3A	Model 3B	Model 4A	Model 4B	Model 5A	Model 5B	Model 6A	Model 6B
GE candidate-centred	4.85*** (1.00)	4.85*** (1.01)	3.11*** (1.10)	3.11*** (.98)	2.71* (1.43)	2.71** (1.26)	4.19*** (.81)	4.19*** (.28)	1.98** (.87)	1.98*** (.23)	3.56** (1.77)	3.56* (2.01)
No of MEPs in article	-1.17*** (.25)	-1.17*** (.37)	-1.63*** (.47)	-1.63** (.73)	-1.81*** (.62)	-1.81* (.97)	-1.62*** (.51)	-1.62** (.79)	-2.34*** (.53)	-2.34*** (.78)	-1.54*** (.47)	-1.54** (.73)
EP sitting	-1.25*** (.43)	-1.25*** (.35)	-1.28*** (.45)	-1.28*** (.34)	-1.04** (.45)	-1.04** (.42)	-.98** (.42)	-.98*** (.37)	-1.03 (.63)	-1.03* (.55)	-1.34*** (.45)	-1.34*** (.36)
BS circulation (10000s)	-.00*** (.00)	-.00*** (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	-.00* (.00)	-.00* (.00)	-.00*** (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)
BS No of staff	-1.47*** (.34)	-1.47*** (.17)	-1.65*** (.62)	-1.65** (.72)	-1.85*** (.56)	-1.85*** (.68)	-1.38*** (.29)	-1.38*** (.37)	-.27 (.34)	-.27 (.32)	-1.25** (.56)	-1.25* (.70)
Centre right BS	-3.06*** (.67)	-3.06*** (.87)	-1.67 (1.28)	-1.67 (1.63)	-1.20 (1.21)	-1.20 (1.55)	-1.78* (1.04)	-1.78 (1.51)	-.31 (1.34)	-.31 (1.99)	-.94 (1.18)	-.94 (1.31)
Business BS	-5.17*** (1.02)	-5.17*** (1.01)	-3.54*** (1.35)	-3.54** (1.55)	-2.21 (1.36)	-2.21 (1.54)	-3.11** (1.21)	-3.11*** (1.08)	-3.01*** (.93)	-3.01*** (1.07)	-3.41* (1.92)	-3.41 (2.34)
EB support for EU	.12*** (.04)	.12*** (.04)	.07* (.04)	.07* (.04)	.08** (.03)	.08*** (.03)	.03 (.03)	.03*** (.03)	.09*** (.01)	.09*** (.03)	.07 (.01)	.07 (.07)
MEP1: No of reports	-.03 (.05)	-.03 (.03)	-.06 (.04)	-.06*** (.01)	-.05 (.03)	-.05*** (.01)	-.04 (.04)	-.04* (.02)	-.06 (.06)	-.06* (.03)	-.04 (.04)	-.04** (.02)
MEP1: attendance	-1.00 (6.28)	-1.00 (9.34)	-3.36 (6.37)	-3.36 (8.58)	-.66 (5.86)	-.66 (7.89)	-11.49*** (4.35)	-11.49** (5.52)	-4.51 (7.41)	-4.51 (10.05)	-4.85 (6.41)	-4.85 (8.92)
MEP1: No of terms	.45 (.28)	.45* (.25)	.35 (.28)	.35 (.29)	.14 (.29)	.14 (.24)	.42 (.29)	.42 (.27)	.55 (.39)	.55 (.36)	.15 (.20)	.15 (.26)
MEP1: EP President	-5.81*** (2.11)	-5.81*** (2.05)	-5.38** (2.36)	-5.38*** (1.98)	-4.52* (2.68)	-4.52* (2.39)	-4.28* (2.41)	-4.28** (1.79)	-7.06*** (2.58)	-7.06*** (1.22)	-4.61** (2.31)	-4.61** (2.07)
MEP1: committee chair	-2.33 (1.79)	-2.33 (2.00)	-3.02* (1.83)	-3.02 (2.16)	-1.83 (1.69)	-1.83 (1.66)	-2.73 (1.72)	-2.73 (1.84)	-4.34* (2.35)	-4.34 (2.65)	-4.06** (1.84)	-4.06* (2.09)

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<i>... continued</i>	Model 1A	Model 1B	Model 2A	Model 2B	Model 3A	Model 3B	Model 4A	Model 4B	Model 5A	Model 5B	Model 6A	Model 6B
MEP1: EP party leader	-2.09*** (.73)	-2.09** (1.04)	-2.79*** (.95)	-2.79** (1.27)	-1.40* (.79)	-1.40* (.81)	-1.89** (.83)	-1.89 (1.17)	-3.20*** (.94)	-3.20** (1.26)	-2.06** (.85)	-2.06* (1.16)
MEP1: dom. opposition	.68 (.93)	.68 (.88)	1.41 (.92)	1.41 (1.20)	1.17 (1.02)	1.17 (1.34)	1.73* (.95)	1.73 (1.18)	2.38** (1.00)	2.38*** (.74)	1.46 (.99)	1.46 (1.19)
MEP1: accession state	-2.38 (1.73)	-2.38 (1.61)	-2.00 (1.94)	-2 (1.68)	-4.28** (2.10)	-4.28*** (1.55)	-3.26 (2.11)	-3.26* (1.93)	-1.8 (2.46)	-1.8 (2.28)	-2.25 (2.05)	-2.25 (1.60)
Time Dummies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
SE clustered by	Newspaper	Country	Newspaper	Country	Newspaper	Country	Newspaper	Country	Newspaper	Country	Newspaper	Country
Country excluded	IE	IE	GB	GB	FR	FR	NL	NL	DE	DE	AT	AT
Constant	9.13 (6.08)	9.13 (8.82)	13.14** (6.24)	13.14 (8.13)	11.08* (5.82)	11.08 (7.32)	21.08*** (4.41)	21.08*** (4.18)	10.55 (6.44)	10.55 (7.95)	14.11** (6.97)	14.11*** (3.21)
Sigma Constant	10.41*** (1.01)	10.41*** (1.53)	12.74*** (1.58)	12.74*** (2.40)	12.52*** (1.73)	12.52*** (2.63)	12.52*** (1.74)	12.52*** (2.66)	14.14*** (1.37)	14.14*** (1.75)	12.40*** (1.71)	12.40*** (2.60)
N	1431	1431	1626	1626	1503	1503	1507	1507	1223	1223	1535	1535
Pseudo R Squared	.0222	.0222	.0239	.0239	.0245	.0245	.0255	.0255	.0190	.0190	.0256	.0256

Legend: * p<.1; ** p<.05; *** p<.01, adjusted standard errors in brackets; dependent variable: Percentage of cited words for the first MEP per article

A5.7: MEPs mentioned in the SBP, ranked by the number of references

MEP	No. of references
Eoin Ryan	8
Proinsias De Rossa	3
Simon Coveney	2
Sean O Neachtain	1
Mairead McGuinness	1
Jim Higgins	1
Gay Mitchell	1
Marian Harkin	1
Liam Aylward	1
Kartika Tamara Liotard	1
Pervenche Beres	1

Legend: Total number of articles = 17; Irish MEPs are indicated in bold letters; the table considers all MEPs mentioned in the articles, regardless of whether they have been cited, or whether they have been mentioned first or last

Appendix – Chapter 6

A6.1: EP resolutions linked to SWIFT

Date	Title of the resolution	Procedure	Document
06/07/2006	Resolution on interception of bank transfer data from the SWIFT system by the US secret services	2006/2594(RSP)	T6-0317/2006
14/02/2007	Resolution on SWIFT, the PNR agreement and the transatlantic dialogue on these issues	2007/2503(RSP)	T6-0039/2007
14/02/2007	Resolution on the alleged use of European countries by the CIA for the transportation and illegal detention of prisoners	2006/2200(INI)	T6-0032/2007
15/03/2007	Report on compliance with the Charter of Fundamental Rights in the Commission's legislative proposals: methodology for systematic and rigorous monitoring	2005/2169(INI)	T6-0078/2007
24/04/2007	Resolution on the proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on payment services in the internal market and amending Directives 97/7/EC, 2000/12/EC and 2002/65/EC	2005/0245(COD)	T6-0128/2007
25/04/2007	Resolution on transatlantic relations	2007/2530(RSP)	T6-0155/2007
21/06/2007	Resolution on an area of freedom, security and justice: Strategy on the external dimension, Action Plan implementing the Hague programme	2006/2111(INI)	T6-0284/2007
11/07/2007	Resolution on Financial services policy (2005 - 2010) - White Paper	2006/2270(INI)	T6-0338/2007
12/07/2007	Resolution on the ECB annual report for 2006	2007/2142(INI)	T6-0349/2007
05/06/2008	Resolution on the forthcoming EU-United States summit (Ljubljana, 9-10 June 2008)	2008/2530(RSP)	T6-0256/2008
04/09/2008	Evaluation of EU sanctions as part of the EU's actions and policies in the area of human rights	2008/2031(INI)	T6-0405/2008
17/09/2009	Resolution on the envisaged international agreement to make available to the United States Treasury Department financial payment messaging data to prevent and combat terrorism and terrorist financing	2009/2670(RSP)	T7-0016/2009
22/10/2009	Resolution on the upcoming EU-US Summit and the Transatlantic Economic Council Meeting	2009/2697(RSP)	T7-0058/2009
25/11/2009	Resolution on the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council - An area of freedom, security and justice serving the citizen - Stockholm programme	2009/2534(RSP)	T7-0090/2009
05/05/2010	Resolution on the Recommendation from the Commission to the Council to authorise the opening of negotiations for an agreement between the European Union and the United States of America to make available to the United States Treasury Department financial messaging data to prevent and combat terrorism and terrorist financing	2010/2649(RSP)	T7-0143/2010
05/05/2010	Resolution on the launch of negotiations for Passenger Name Record (PNR) agreements with the United States, Australia and Canada	2010/2657(RSP)	T7-0144/2010

Source: Legislative Observatory of the European Parliament

A6.2: Article type by country

	News	Comment	other comment ^a	Interview ^b	Total
Ireland	10	1	0	0	11
UK	12	0	5	0	17
France	44	4	0	1	49
Netherlands	19	2	2	3	26
Germany	110	25	1	1	137
Austria	39	5	1	1	46
US	27	1	2	0	30
	261	38	11	6	316

Legend:

^a UK: FT = 3, Guardian= 1, Times =1; NL: Trouw =1, NRC =1; DE: SZ =1; AT: Standard = 1; US: Washington Post = 2;

^b FR: Les Echos = 1; NL: VK = 2, NRC = 1; DE: FAZ =1; AT: SN =1

A6.3: Descriptive statistics for the dependent variable 'Share of EP within article /percentage' (SWIFT case)

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
EPsharepc	451	0	100	24.9802	29.9404
Valid N (listwise)	451				

A6.4: Descriptive statistics for the independent variables

Lisbon Treaty			EP debate on SWIFT (days)			No of SWIFT debates in NP			
	N	Valid %	Cum. %	N	Valid %	Cum. %	N	Valid %	Cum. %
No	212	47	47	354	78.5	78.5	415	92	92
Yes	239	53	100	97	21.5	100	36	8	100
Total	451	100		451	100		451	100	

Note: Descriptive statistics for 'EB trust in NP' , 'EB support for EU' and 'Political Contestation' have already been provided in A4.2.

Party contestation over EU integration

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Party Contestation	451	6.81	19.50	12.36	4.05
Valid N (listwise)	451				

Sources: Own calculations based on Chapel Hill Expert Surveys 2002, 2006, 2010 (see also A4.2)

Dates of parliamentary debates on SWIFT

DÉ	HoC	AN	TK	BT	NR	EP
	12/02/2009 04/02/2010	27/04/2010	27/07/2006 13/03/2007 23/05/2007 04/07/2007 15/10/2009 01/12/2009 08/12/2009 17/12/2009 17/12/2009 19/01/2010 24/02/2010 03/03/2010 04/03/2010 18/03/2010 26/03/2010 22/04/2010 06/05/2010 01/07/2010 08/07/2010 16/09/2010 28/10/2010 16/12/2010	28/09/2006 22/03/2007 29/03/2007 28/05/2009 11/11/2009 25/11/2009 02/12/2009 03/12/2009 17/12/2009 19/01/2010 24/02/2010 03/03/2010 04/03/2010 18/03/2010 26/03/2010 22/04/2010 06/05/2010 01/07/2010 08/07/2010 16/09/2010 28/10/2010 16/12/2010	03/05/2007 03/09/2009 20/10/2010 05/11/2010 11/10/2006 14/11/2006 13/12/2006 31/01/2007 13/02/2007 14/02/2007 14/03/2007 23/04/2007 24/04/2007 25/04/2007 20/06/2007 05/09/2007 13/01/2009 24/03/2009 16/09/2009 17/09/2009 21/10/2009 11/11/2009 23/11/2009 24/11/2009 25/11/2009 15/12/2009 16/12/2009 19/01/2010 20/01/2010 08/02/2010 09/02/2010 10/02/2010 11/02/2010 24/02/2010 09/03/2010 10/03/2010 19/04/2010 20/04/2010 21/04/2010 05/05/2010 18/05/2010 15/06/2010 06/07/2010 07/07/2010 08/07/2010	03/07/2006 05/07/2006 06/07/2006 07/09/2006 11/10/2006 14/11/2006 13/12/2006 31/01/2007 13/02/2007 14/02/2007 14/03/2007 23/04/2007 24/04/2007 25/04/2007 20/06/2007 05/09/2007 13/01/2009 24/03/2009 16/09/2009 17/09/2009 21/10/2009 11/11/2009 23/11/2009 24/11/2009 25/11/2009 15/12/2009 16/12/2009 19/01/2010 20/01/2010 08/02/2010 09/02/2010 10/02/2010 11/02/2010 24/02/2010 09/03/2010 10/03/2010 19/04/2010 20/04/2010 21/04/2010 05/05/2010 18/05/2010 15/06/2010 06/07/2010 07/07/2010 08/07/2010
0 debates	2 debates	1 debate	8 debates	22 debates	4 debates	45 debates

A6.5: Bivariate Pearson correlations of the independent variables

	Lisbon Treaty	EP debate on SWIFT (days)	No of SWIFT debates in NP	Centre left BS	Business BS	BS circulation (10000s)	EB support for EU	EB trust in NP	MS liberal	MS polarised-pluralist	Political Contestation	Squared Political Contestation	EP sitting
Lisbon Treaty	1												
EP debate on SWIFT (days)	.2938***	1											
No of SWIFT debates in NP	.0652	.0521	1										
Centre left BS	.02	-.0577	-.1259***	1									
Business BS	-.1532***	-.0215	.016	-.5469***	1								
BS circulation (10000s)	.1098**	.0025	.4532***	.3573***	-.4753***	1							
EB support for EU	-.1405***	-.0088	.3633***	-.0919*	.0958**	.1732***	1						
EB trust in NP	-.0563	.0194	.1114**	-.0008	-.1221***	-.2106***	.2339***	1					
MS liberal	-.1617***	-.0246	-.3671***	.1421***	-.0265	-.1267***	-.1284***	-.3929***	1				
MS polarised-pluralist	.0556	-.0758	-.5376***	.0211	.1095***	-.0113	-.2256***	-.4961***	-.1978***	1			
Political Contestation	.2251***	.0687	-.7782***	.0626	-.1275***	-.4762***	-.441***	.2675***	.1674***	.1306***	1		
Squared Political Contestation	.1891***	.0576	-.7444***	.0558	-.1356***	-.4999***	-.4744***	.3031***	.1217***	.0846**	.9892***	1	
EP sitting	.1399***	.6779***	.0236	-.0417	.0239	-.0363	-.0674	-.0371	.0353	-.0884*	.0941**	.0895*	1

Legend: Pearson coefficients; N=451; * p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01

A6.6: Tobit models, predicting variation in the in the volume of news referring to EU parliamentary affairs for the SWIFT case (including Squared Political Contestation)

	Model 1A	Model 1B
Lisbon Treaty	41.93*** (6.58)	41.93*** (1.07)
EP debate on SWIFT (days)	9.56** (4.40)	9.56*** (3.27)
No of SWIFT debates in NP	-.45 (.29)	-.45 (.38)
Centre left BS	-4.35 (3.75)	-4.35 (4.27)
Business BS	5.30 (4.34)	5.3 (5.18)
BS circulation (10000s)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)
EB support for EU		
EB trust in NP		
Political Contestation	-3.60 (5.03)	-3.60 (4.81)
Squared Political Contestation	.17 (.17)	.17 (.17)
EP sitting	6.15** (3.10)	6.15 (3.95)
SE clustered by	Newspaper	Country
Constant	34.69*** (34.25)	34.69*** (26.42)
Sigma Constant	34.69 (2.29)	34.69 (1.84)
N	451	451
Pseudo R Square	.0504	.0504

Legend: * p<.1; ** p<.05; *** p<.01; adjusted standard errors in brackets; dependent variable: amount of news dealing with EU parliamentary affairs (%)