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Europeanization of National Public Spheres: Comparative analysis of the readers' online debate on European issues in German and Spanish newspapers

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The research is a comparative study of the Europeanization of the national public spheres in Germany and Spain applying content analysis of readers' comments in online newspapers Sueddeutsche Zeutung and El Mundo. In the paper, Europeanization is understood in three different ways: as an attentive structure where the same themes are discussed at the same time; a meaning structure where issues are framed in a similar way; and an interactive structure, where the participation level of different member-states' representatives in the discussion is estimated. In this connection, the content analysis uses four criteria: theme, actor, evaluation and framing, which allow the researcher to establish the type of Europeanization: supranational, vertical or horizontal.

In order to explain national peculiarities of Europeanization, the national political and media systems of both countries are analyzed. As a result, readers' comments showed a lower level of Europeanization than articles; the presence of vertical and horizontal Europeanization was revealed, and the latter appears to be stronger in Germany than in Spain. Some elements of interrelation between the national political and media systems and Europeanization were detected. Still, the national dimension prevails, especially in the spheres of national politics, the national welfare system and labor market.

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Introduction

Research into the European Public Sphere (EPS) has recently become very topical, each year several books are published on this theme. The idea of a common public sphere is actively promoted by the European Commission due to the democratic deficit problem: insufficient accountability of EU institutions to the people and the low legitimacy of the EU's institutions in the eyes of its citizens. Citizens of nation states are not ready to give up their national sovereignty to a sort of a supranational entity; both long-existing and more recent common problems, such as the debt crisis in the European Union, strengthen these fears. Thus, the future of the European project is today questioned more than ever, because the dissolution of the euro zone can lead to the dissolution of the Union itself. The European Commission is convinced that international communication within the EU, an open, transparent, and intensive dialogue between different member states and between citizens and officials can save the European project.

There are several **approaches in the analysis of the public sphere**. According to H.J. Trenz, the European Public Sphere can be regarded as an arena for communication between politicians and publics or as a sphere of discourses and framing of identities in the media[1]. The first approach has three dimensions: public communication, which can be represented by debates in parliament, protest movements, street demonstrations; mass mediation, media coverage; and public reception of discourse, represented by citizens' attitudes and opinions. There have been several large-scale cross-national studies which aimed at measuring or describing the European public sphere. They were mostly using the mass media, especially quality newspapers, as their research object. According to the German theorist Jurgen Habermas, the author of the public sphere theory as we know it today, in a multi-level society citizens and governance cannot communicate directly and therefore a mediator, an arena for their intercommunication is needed. The mass media are generally perceived as such a mediator, as they transmit the voice of both the civil society and the state. Though, we believe that public sphere is in the first place represented by the people, not by the mass media, which do influence the public opinion but not always reflect it. What then should we take as the research object?

The value of the present research is that the object of analysis is not only the media, as it was in previous scientific works, but also their audiences. Which media should be chosen for analysis? Where is the audience most active, where does a dialogue take place, as in the ideal public sphere? The media is a broad term including television, radio, the press and internet media, etc. It should be mentioned that, according to the Eurobarometer, the audience in Germany differs from the average European one, while in Spain it is close to the average. Television remains by far the most popular medium for Europeans- 87% watch it regularly, followed by the radio (51%), but in Germany the situation is different -

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1   Bee Cristiano, Bozzini Emanuela (2010). Mapping the European public sphere: institutions, media and civil society. Ashgate Publishing, p 22

radio listeners are numerous (71%)[2]. The press is read every day only by 36% of Europeans, while in Germany by 64%. With respect to Internet usage, Germany is close to the average, 48% of Europeans and 47% of Germans use it every day. Most of these media only deliver information, without establishing a two-way interaction with their audiences. Although radio stations receive calls from listeners, their time is limited and there is no direct interaction among listeners, they hear each other via radio; a similar situation is observed with readers' letters in the printed press. The Internet instead gives an almost unlimited space for nearly direct communication, which enables its users to have a dialogue. Where in the Internet do people inform themselves on European political matters? First of all, information websites are by far the most frequently used source (72%), followed by institutional and official websites (34%), online social networks (19%), blogs (9%) and video hosting websites (6%). Information websites or online newspapers usually have space for readers' comments. That is why we regard readers' comments in online newspapers as an appropriate object for our study on Europeanization. The mass media therefore are regarded as a platform where people, in this case readers, discuss issues with each other, and express their opinions.

As a large-scale work is not feasible in the framework of a master's degree thesis, it was decided to conduct a **case-study of two countries**. On the one hand, Germany is seen as a pivot of the European Union not only because of its good financial position, but also because German civil society appears to be more involved in the discussion of European issues. On the other hand, a contrasting case was searched for. In which country has the economic situation been heavily destabilized by the financial crisis and where do the austerity measures prescribed by the EU burden people, supposedly making their attitude towards the EU go down? The simplest answer is Greece, but unfortunately, we cannot regard this country as suitable for our analysis because our choice is limited by our linguistic competences. Other similar to Greece's cases are those of Portugal and Spain. As we checked the national online newspapers for comments on European topics, there were found practically no comments in the Portuguese media. Therefore, in this paper, along with Germany, Spain will be examined.

Germany and Spain, according to Hallin and Mancini, belong to two **different models of political and media systems** from those three defined by the scientists[3], meaning that their national public spheres differ significantly, and it is important for us to understand how Europeanization proceeds in each country and whether it is directly influenced by national political and media peculiarities.

The **aim of this research** is to describe the Europeanization of national public spheres on the basis of readers' comments and, if possible, to detect tendencies, using the data of media content analysis obtained as a result of our

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[2]   Standard Eurobarometer 76 Media use in the EU, autumn 2011
[3]   Hallin, D. C., & Mancini, P. (2004). Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press

empirical study. We are interested in finding out, whether readers' comments are an adequate object for analysis and what differences there are between Europeanization in readers' comments and in newspaper articles. It is also important to understand whether the specifics of national political and media systems influence the process of Europeanization. Our hypotheses are that national peculiarities do play an important role in the Europeanization of public spheres; the crisis damaged the image of the EU in Spain, due to austerity measures, while in Germany, where the national economy and social situation are in a good state, the perception of the EU remained the same; actually it is in line with Eurobarometer data which shows that Spanish voters are unlikely to consider that things are going in the right direction in the EU (46% in Spain versus 20% in Germany, see Figures 1 in Appendix)[4], the public debt and the condition of the member states' public finances being the major national concern for Germany, while for Spain it is unemployment and the country's economic situation. Finally, we suppose that readers' comments offer more material than articles in the measurement of public sphere Europeanization.

In this paper **Europeanization** will be understood in its multifaceted interpretations. H.J. Trenz distinguishes three perspectives in the analysis of Europeanization in the media: attentive structures (how frequently the media inform about European affairs, works of Koopmans and Erbe), meaning structures (usage of common frames of interpretations, works of Kantner and Risse), and interactive structures (participation of representatives from different countries in the dialogue)[5]. We will use all these dimensions in order to describe the process of Europeanization in as much detail as possible.

Thus, our **research questions** are the following: how can the Europeanization of national public spheres be described on the basis of readers' comments? Which tendencies can be detected? Is there a connection between the national political and media systems and Europeanization of the national public sphere? What characteristics in this perspective make the readers' comments different from the newspaper articles? Can readers' comments adequately reflect the public's attitude to currents processes?

In order to answer these questions the following **structure outline** is used: in the first chapter, the concepts of public sphere and the European public sphere will be explored, previous empirical findings will be examined, and the link between public sphere and the media will be traced. In the second chapter, the methodology and empirical base of the research will be described and the results of research will be presented. The findings are obtained with the help of the **method of content analysis**. We will analyze the publications of online newspapers and readers' comments on European issues. The material for content analysis is taken from the websites of two national newspapers - Sueddeutsche Zeitung (Germany) and El Mundo (Spain). The period of research covers two weeks in March 2012.

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[4]   Standard Eurobarometer 76 ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb76/eb76_media_en.pdf
[5]   Bee Cristiano, Bozzini Emanuela (2010). Mapping the European public sphere: institutions, media and civil society. Ashgate Publishing, p 22

It is important to understand the **limitations** of this paper. In order to reduce the large amount of data on Europeanization, we selected only two EU-countries and did not study non-EU countries; the studied papers are only one for each country, both of liberal and central orientation; and the analyzed period of time is also limited to two weeks.

The theory on the European public sphere uses different perspectives, such as normative (Eriksen) and empirical (Koopmans, Van de Steeg); Europeanization of public spheres (Koopmans, Erbe, Risse); public attitudes to European integration; media report on the EU-issues (Trenz); political communication (Koopmans); the EU communication policies (Brueggeman); and network interaction of the media, social actors and institutions (Trenz, Eder). The **literature** used in this paper includes works of philosophers Jurgen Habermas and Nancy Fraser, of the European public sphere researchers H.-J. Trenz and K. Eder, which were already mentioned at the beginning, J. Gerhards, C. Kantner, T. Risse, who identified conditions for the EPS, and R. Koopmans, who defined dimensions of public sphere Europeanization.

1. Europeanization of national public spheres: theoretical perspectives

1.1. Public sphere: modern interpretations

Which modern social theories could be useful for our research? Firstly, it is, presumably, the theory of German sociologist Jurgen Habermas on concepts of "communicative action" and "public sphere", because our research concerns itself with the public sphere; and the approach of Nancy Fraser to this question. Secondly, theories on virtualization explain the role of the mass media in modern society and, especially, that of the Internet, which we will consider later in this chapter. In further research, also theories on globalization can be examined, because integration of nation-states into one supranational organization, the EU, is a feature of globalization.

Jurgen Habermas's theory of the public sphere. Jurgen Habermas represents an integrative approach in sociology, together with Giddens and Bourdieu. This approach was intended to unite separate macro- and micro sociological approaches which existed in the 1970s, though it barely succeeded in achieving it. Habermas introduced the theory of communicative action and the concept of public sphere, which are important for our study as its theoretic basis.

The public sphere concept was developed in the work "The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere" (1962) and the theory of communicative action was elaborated later in "Theory of Communicative Action" (1981). We will describe them in chronological order.

Habermas introduced the concept of public sphere in his analysis of European history. He says that it appeared in the 18th century in bourgeois society, while before, in the Middle Ages, there was a representative public

sphere, where the monarchs represented the state. The famous definition of public sphere is the following: "The bourgeois public sphere may be conceived above all as the sphere of private people come together as a public; they soon claimed the public sphere regulated from above against the public authorities themselves, to engage them in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labor"[6]. In this broad description we can find some specific features of the public sphere: it is organized by private people in contrast to public authority, for debate on matters of general interest. Habermas underlines that access to the public sphere should be free for all[7]. Therefore, proper legislation is needed, which permits freedom of assembly, freedom to express and publish opinions. The public sphere is like a bridge between the private sphere (society) and the public authority (state). The means for debate is public discussion. The public sphere provides public opinion, that is, its task is to criticize and to control the state.

As in modern society public bodies have become extremely large, a face-to- face discussion is impossible. That is why the mass media play the role of an instrument which connects all the parts of the public sphere. This claim is important for my research because it explains why the mass media are chosen as an object of analysis. The answer is to maintain communication inside the public sphere. Looking at the content of mass media production, one can evaluate the situation in the public sphere. Habermas claims that in modern society, that is, in a social "welfare state" mass democracy, private and public spheres lose balance. With the rise of the mass media and propaganda, the public sphere has expanded beyond the bourgeoisie and competing interests have arisen, provoking conflict and leading towards a "refeudalization" of the public sphere.

Thus, the theory of the public sphere is useful for my research because it explains its main concept and gives a link between the public sphere and mass media, or the media sphere, which I intend to analyze. The concept of public sphere may still appear somewhat vague; in fact, Habermas is generally criticized for the vagueness and abstractness of his ideas[8]. Therefore, we will try to make his theory more concrete in order to facilitate our study. The public sphere can be defined as a feature of mass democracy, represented by discussion in the mass media among different social actors about socially relevant issues of general interest. Habermas described an ideal type but in reality it is impossible to make all citizens participate in discussion of politics, there are always excluded groups, such as prisoners or mentally ill people or politically indifferent ones.

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[6] Habermas J., The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society, Cambridge Massachusetts: The MIT Press, p.27

[7] Habermas J., The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article, in Media and Cultural Studies: Keyworks, ed. by Durham M. G., and Kellner D. Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishers, 2001, p. 102-107

[8] Brown R., Goodman D. Jürgen Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action: An Incomplete Project, in Handbook of Social Theory, ed. by G. Ritzer and B. Smart. London: SAGE Publications, 2001, Chapter 16, p. 215-16

The second concept of Habermas, that of communicative action, should also be mentioned, because it represents a revision of his old ideas. He focuses on the process of discussion and creates another ideal type. The communicative action theory is critical because Habermas criticizes the existing form of capitalism and the post-modernists who are skeptical toward reason. For Habermas, capitalism promotes the rationality of technical calculation of efficacious means, which leads to loss of meaning and bureaucracy. Habermas changes the typology of social action of Max Weber, adding communicative action, created by communicative reason to Weber's formal, instrumental action.

The difference between the two types of reason consists in their goals and use of language. While instrumental reason is aimed at self-interest, production of material needs, and the use of language does not conform to the goal because non-linguistic means are used for manipulation; communicative reason is aimed at reaching mutual understanding and agreement upon goals, and the use of language is inseparable from the goal. An example can be provided: if a state in order to make citizens vote gives them money for coming to elections or threatens them with some kind of punishment for abstaining, this would be a use of instrumental reason; but if the state tries to explain to the citizens why voting is so important for the wellbeing of the country, that people can change their future, can make decisions and be responsible, this is an example of a communicative reason.

The theory of communicative action divides society into two parts: the system and lifeworld. They should not be confused with Habermas' previous division of society into the private realm and public authority, which are less complex. The difference between system and lifeworld consists in the type of reason they use and the type of means by which they are integrated. While the system, the sphere of formal norms and roles, uses instrumental reason and integrates society by means of money (economic) and power (political); the lifeworld, the sphere of shared values and symbols, uses communicative reason and integrates society by means of language. Habermas introduces presuppositions of communicative action, which, summarizing, state that everyone should have a possibility of expressing any opinion, but that they ought to provide reasons.

System and lifeworld are not equivalent to public authority and private realm, because, for instance, system includes not only the state, as public authority does, but also the market economy. The subject of my research, the public sphere, lies between public authority and the private realm, but inside the lifeworld and outside the system, because it uses communicative reason.

Up to this point, we have described only one side of Habermas's critical theory, namely the theory of normalcy or a normal state of society. The second side is the theory of pathologies of modernity, which are symptoms of a social crisis, arising due to the conflict between system and lifeworld. The pathologies are, for example, loss of meaning, expansion of bureaucracy and alienation. The conflict between system and lifeworld is caused by the fact that system takes some of the functions of lifeworld, which are three: cultural reproduction for

mutual understanding, social integration for social solidarity and socialization to form personality. Lifeworld goes through rationalization, which means that it is less dependent on traditional norms and more on communicative action. But communicative action and consensus is a risky and unstable method of social integration and, therefore, the danger arises that the system will expand at the expense of the lifeworld. On the other hand, system becomes increasingly autonomous, as its steering media (money and power) can substitute traditional norms and communicative action, which leads to the "uncoupling" of system from lifeworld.

So, the system under capitalism is colonizing the lifeworld and thus is self-destroying. It can be seen in all elements of lifeworld: family, culture, local community, etc., which are affected by processes of bureaucratization and commercialization. But if lifeworld can not anymore fulfill its function of reproducing values, the system undermines its own legitimacy, forming a vicious circle.

The theory of communicative action is useful for our research, because it offers an ideal type of discussion in public sphere, it suggests how social actors should communicate in order to find consensus and live in a better world. Therefore, in the content analysis of readers' comments we will search for different and reasonable voices, which do not demonstrate any private interest.

Nancy Fraser's view on the public sphere. Habermas's model of the public sphere was criticized by Nancy Fraser, an American critical theorist, in her work 'Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy' (1990). Firstly, according Fraser, the bourgeois public sphere discriminates against women and the lower social strata of society because of male hegemony, which means that there is no real openness to universal participation. Moreover, it is impossible to gather all people in one space and have them discuss issues, they are too numerous. Fraser proposes a solution in the form of plurality of public spheres, or *Subaltern counterpublics*, that are "parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter discourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs"[9]. Secondly, Fraser criticizes the ideal of rational-critical discourse, because the notion of *common concern* is not objective; she gives the example of domestic violence, which for a long time was considered a matter of private concern, but through public discussion it became a matter of common concern. This means that common concern is not a condition for the existence of the public sphere, but the public sphere itself can create common concerns. Finally, Fraser claims that Habermas' public sphere is weak because it is too distant from the state and therefore, it remains unable to participate in decision making. The solution could be to replace the weak public by the strong one such as parliamentary systems, self-governed public institutions or other entities which participate in decision making.

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[9]   Fraser N. 1990. Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy, in Social Text, No. 25/26, Duke University Press p. 56-80

1.2 Approaches to the concept of the European public sphere

If the states have their national public sphere, why should not the European Union as a supranational organization have one of its own? The concept of the European public sphere has been widely discussed in theoretical and practical terms since the end of the 20th century and has attracted an ever-growing attention at the beginning of the 21st century, for example in the works of such researchers as H.J. Trenz, K. Eder, C. Kantner, R. Koopmans, T. Risse, M. Brüggemann, J. Downey, J. Gerhards and several others. They offer different perspectives on the concept of the European public sphere. A comprehensible definition of the concept was introduced by T. Risse: "The European public sphere is a transnational community of communication which creates a collective European identity in the process of arguing and debating the common European fate[10]".

Research on the European public sphere started in the 1990s and generally, at the beginning, its formation was seen as almost impossible or at least difficult because of a number of obstacles: socio-cultural, including linguistic diversity in Europe; lack of citizens' interest in European politics, lack of European reporting in the media and deficiencies of the EU political system, not allowing real participation of citizens in its formation; and lack of transparency. Early theoretical analyses had little empirical evidence; later, scientists started to conduct empirical media content analysis which focused on framing the EU in the national media.

Jürgen Gerhards reflected this development of thought, suggesting three ideal types of the public sphere in Europe[11]. The first model is *intergovernmental* with many public spheres confined to the nation states, as it was always considered to be. The second model is *federalist* with an encompassing European public sphere and Pan-European media system. The third model is *pluralist* with overlapping national public spheres, political discourses and public contestations. The author supposedly prefers the last model, because the first one supposes little in common between the national public spheres and the second one is unrealizable, because of significant diversity of languages, media cultures and traditions in Europe, as we have already mentioned.

Some researchers suggest that the English language is likely to become a *lingua franca* in Europe, giving a possibility to establish a direct transnational communication on a mass level, but in reality English is not so broadly spread in Europe, only 38% of EU citizens say that they have sufficient skills in conversational English, while 44% of Europeans admit not knowing any other

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[10] Risse, Thomas and Van de Steeg, Marianne 2003. An Emerging European Public Sphere? Empirical Evidence and Theoretical Clarifications www.userpage.fu-berlin.de/~atasp/texte/030624_europeanpublicsphere.pdf

[11] Gerhards, Jürgen. 2000. "Europäisierung von Ökonomie und Politik und die Trägheit der Entstehung einer europäischen Öffentlichkeit" [Europeanization of Economy and Politics and the Indolence of an Emerging European Public Sphere]. Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie 52(2):277–305

language except their mother tongue[12], which shows that, at least in the foreseeable future, Europe will have no common language for discussion. Moreover, some countries strongly resist Anglo-Saxon cultural homogenization: France for example, which would like to have French as the lingua franca, thus there is even a kind of competition which hinders the development of a common European language. It should be mentioned that the need for a common language is connected with the national concept of the public sphere, which presupposes a high degree of linguistic and cultural homogeneity and political centralization. Still, there are a number of countries where such features are not present, though their societies function very well, for instance, Belgium or Switzerland.

In fact, there were several attempts to create a Pan-European media, but some products rapidly disappeared, others tended to be less successful than it had been expected, for example, the television station Euronews and the newspaper the European Voice. Euronews has actually crossed the European borders and is watched also outside the European Union, in Russia, Turkey, Ukraine and Lebanon. There are also other European media, which have become international, for example, The Financial Times, BBC World, Deutsche Welle, Le Monde diplomatique, Spiegel international, etc.

The *pluralist* third model describes intercultural dialogue in accordance with conventions of mutual recognition, consent and cultural continuity, which means that national public spheres are neither isolated one from another nor constitute a common subnational public sphere, instead they interact actively, respecting each other. Of a similar opinion are Eder and Kantner, saying that "we do not need Europe-wide media based on a common language, as long as media report about the same issues at the same time"[13]. Ruud Koopmans described this phenomenon as parallelization of national public spheres. It is also being called Europeanization of national public spheres. In addition, issues should be regarded under similar criteria of relevance. What is understood by similar criteria of relevance? Does it mean that a European rather than a national perspective should be adopted, that speakers should identify themselves not just with their own country, but the whole European community, that they regard problems as common ones? Rather not. Gerhards (2000) was criticized by other researchers for adopting this perspective in his media content analysis of Kepplinger's[14] data, where he revealed only a very small increase in European themes between 1951 and 1995 and concluded that the lack of a European public sphere is caused by the democratic deficit and lack of accountability of officials to the electorate. Such a result could be explained by the fact that he used two criteria in examining Europeanisation of national public spheres: the proportion of coverage devoted to European topics and their evaluation not from

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[12]   Special   Eurobarometer   64.3   on   Europeans   and   languages   2005
         http://ec.europa.eu/languages/documents/2006-special-eurobarometer-survey-64.3-europeans-and-
         languages-report_en.pdf
[13]   Kantner, Cathleen 2004: Kein modernes Babel. Kommunikative Voraussetzungen europäische Öffentlichkeit.,
         Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften. P. 118-20
[14]   Kepplinger, Hans Mathias 1998. Die Demontage der Politik in der Informationsgesellschaft. Freiburg/München:
         Verlag Karl Alber.

a national, but from a European perspective. This second criterion is regarded by Eder, Kantner and Trenz (2000) as excessively restrictive and direct references to the EU as not a necessary precondition for the Europeanisation of public spheres. Having the same criteria of relevance means having similar meaning structures and patterns of interpretation, and it does not mean that participants have to similarly evaluate issues, they can agree or disagree, criticize or support, but still have a common understanding of the matter. They can defend their national interest in order to find a better solution for own citizens, but it is important that they acknowledge some basic principles of the European commonwealth, such as having EU institutions, the EU normative foundations, some collective identity and common good finality. At the same time, European nations can and should dispute about the creation of new institutions, introduction of new laws, and addition of new members through the EU enlargement or the concrete finality of the EU. That is how the public sphere works.

Koopmans proposed one more condition: the European dimension of the issue, and not any other one, should be made visible to the public.[15] Speakers can discuss a European issue only from their national perspective, then it will not indicate Europeanization of the national public sphere. They have to realize that the question touches not only their country, but also other member-states. Thomas Risse and Marianne van de Steeg mention this condition as well, along with another one, connected with Habermas's ideas. They consider that Europeanisation will be achieved: "If and when a transnational community of communication emerges in which participants not only observe each other across national spaces, but also contribute regularly to cross-border debates as legitimate speakers thereby recognizing that "Europe" constitutes a question of common concern"[16]. Here the importance of EU-international communication is emphasized, but the supranational level is left aside. The participants, according to this point of view, should recognize each other and communicate regularly.

Let us once more list the main conditions of the European public sphere formation:

- Same issues discussed in the same time period

- Similar criteria of reference

- the European dimension / Europe as a common concern

- Mutual recognition of participants

Along with the conditions, dimensions of Europeanization of national public spheres were introduced. Liebert and Trenz distinguish three of them, according to the actors who take part in the public sphere[17]. There are politicians,

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[15] Koopmans, Ruud, Erbe, Jessica 2004: Towards a European public sphere? Vertical and horizontal dimensions of Europeanised political communication, in: Innovation 17:2.

[16] Risse, Thomas and Van de Steeg, Marianne 2003. An Emerging European Public Sphere? Empirical Evidence and Theoretical Clarifications www.userpage.fu-berlin.de/~atasp/texte/030624_europeanpublicsphere.pdf

[17] Liebert, U, Trenz H.-J. 2010: Europeanization of the Mass Media: Normative Assessment and Empirical Analysis http://www.jhubc.it/ecpr-porto/virtualpaperroom/113.pdf

who generate proposals, decisions; there are intermediaries, the media, which transmit this information to broad public; and finally, there is the public, which receives information. On the basis of this distinction, three dimensions of Europeanization arise: Europeanization as public contestation, which can be represented by debates in parliament, protest movements, street demonstrations; Europeanization as mass mediation, the media coverage; and Europeanization as public opinion formation, represented by citizens' attitudes and opinions. The empirical analysis of the Europeanization of national public spheres is usually done in the framework of the second dimension of Europeanization - mass mediation. In our research, though, we are less interested in this dimension; our focus is, rather, on the formation of public opinion, namely, how civil society perceives European issues.

The conditions and dimensions of Europeanization of national public spheres are complemented with the types. Koopmans speaks about three of them: supranational, vertical and horizontal[18]. The supranational European public sphere is characterized by interaction among European-level institutions and collective actors on European themes. Vertical Europeanization is characterized by communication between the national and the European level and it can be divided into two variations: bottom-up vertical Europeanization, where national actors address European actors, and top-down vertical Europeanization, where European actors interfere with national policies and public debates, introducing European regulations in order to defend common interests. Horizontal Europeanization is characterized by communication between different EU-member states and it can be divided into two variations: the weak and the strong one. In the weak horizontal Europeanization, the media from one country report on debates in another county, while in the strong horizontal Europeanization, actors from one country directly address actors or policies in another county. Policy changes in one country can become relevant in another country, going beyond traditional international relations.

In his other work Koopmans uses a slightly different typology of Europeanization of public spheres[19]: supranationalisation (the same as in the previous typology), increased national focusing on Europe (similar to bottom-up vertical Europeanization), vertical convergence from above (similar to top-down vertical Europeanization), horizontal convergence through cross-national diffusion (similar to horizontal Europeanization), and Europe as a new conflict dimension in public spheres. In effect, the two typologies describe the same situations in different words, which does not change their essence, - all situations except one, the last type. Europe as a new conflict dimension in public spheres is the only development in the negative direction, moving away from the positive understanding of European integration, which can create a new political cleavage between different social groups. Some social groups which were protected from competition by national trade barriers, immigration controls and the welfare state

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[18] Koopmans, Ruud/ Erbe, Jessica 2004: Towards a European public sphere? Vertical and horizontal dimensions of Europeanised political communication, in: Innovation 17:2.
[19] Koopmans, Ruud & Statham, Paul 2010. The Making of a European Public Sphere: Media Discourse and Political Contention. Cambridge University Press

may lose their protection as a consequence of European integration. Such conflicts of interest threaten to develop into a new pro- and anti-integration cleavage in national public spheres, for example, there is already a rise of xenophobic and anti-European parties in many EU-countries. Still, Europe as a conflict is a dimension of a different level, unlike other dimensions it refers to the consequence of Europeanization, rather than to its form. Any of the four previously mentioned dimensions may cause conflicts. Probably, Koopmans has himself realized this inconsistency and cancelled the last dimension in his more recent typology.

Figure 2 (see Appendix) contains a model, constructed by Koopmans and Erbe in order to better explain their three types of Europeanization. There are a number of concentric spheres, which limit various political spaces; in the centre, there is the political space of Germany (because the model shows the German perspective). Other small spheres around it represent national political spaces of the other EU member countries. The larger sphere, which contains the previous ones, stands for the transnational European political space where the European institutions and policies are located. The next sphere includes all other countries, which are not members of the EU, and their national political spaces. Lastly, the external sphere includes global supranational institutions, for example, the United Nations (UN), NATO, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), etc., and international legal agreements. Koopmans decided not to include smaller political spaces, such as regional and local ones, though in some cases these levels are of high significance. The researcher admits that the model is extensively simplified, for instance, the circles in reality can overlap. Depending on the way we understand it, the European public space can include different territories, such as the European Union, the euro zone, the European economic area, or the Schengen area.

On the basis of this model we will try to establish which type of Europeanization is present in the discussions in readers' comments.

As Habermas argued, in a large societal body, the people cannot directly communicate with the state and that is why the mass media become their mediator. Therefore, when the European public sphere is to be measured, usually the object of the measurement is the national mass media. What criteria are used for the measurement? In the next paragraph we will explore previous empirical findings of the media content analysis.

Empirical findings of the Europeanization of public spheres

One of the most large-scale recent projects, "The transformation of Political Mobilization and Communication in European public"[20], was conducted in 2001-2004 under coordination of Ruud Koopmans; it examined the role of intermediary public spheres, the mass media and collective mobilization in the process of European integration. The project was funded by the European Commission and conducted in order to explain the problem of democratic deficit connected with the increasing Europeanization of governance structures, on the

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[20]   http://europub.wzb.eu/

one hand, and the slow development of an active European form of citizenship, on the other. The object of analysis were political claim-making, editorials in newspapers, and structured interviews with institutional representatives, civil society actors, and mass media professionals in seven European countries. In the analysis of newspaper editorials four aspects were studied: the topic or issue of the news (for example, debt crisis, migration, elections); the addresses or actors (they can be national, European and international); evaluation (from positive to negative); and framing (what aspect of Europe is touched, for example, identity, finality, history, integration).

It is noteworthy that as a result it was found that in Germany there is more European news, but the researchers suggested the reason was that Germany, in general, produces more news than other European countries. The general findings indicate a remarkable level of European debate in the national media, and researchers claim that further development of transnational communicative linkages is likely to take place[21]. Such a conclusion is based on the observed salience of the discussion of European integration, European scopes in media claim-making, positive evaluations of European issues and actors, and less negative ones in comparison with national political actors. The German media tend to use transnational EU perspectives and in general they support European integration, but there is a negative evaluation towards political actors of all levels, though EU actors are treated less critically than national ones. European integration is usually framed in terms of identity (values and governance) or economics.

In the Spanish case, European perspectives are also frequent, but the evaluation of EU issues varies: European integration is regarded indifferently or with mixed feelings, while EU actors are evaluated better than the national ones. Spain was also considered under a multilevel approach to the emergence of the European public sphere, in comparison with Switzerland, in order to understand the importance of regional public spheres, and it was found that regions are as Europeanized (or even more Europeanized) as the national public spheres, developing specific patterns of Europeanization, which respond to particularities of each region and its role in the complex supranational and national context[22].

1.3. European Public Sphere and the Media

Even if we are not going to focus our empirical research on the media, but on readers' comments, still we take into consideration that the media play an important role in the process of opinion formation. The fact is that the people who comment on articles, they first read those articles. The media play the role of a filter; they select information in order to deliver it to readers; this is why readers

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[21] Pfetsch Barbara 2004: The Voice of the Media in European Public Sphere: Comparative Analysis of Newspaper Editorials http://europub.wzb.eu/Data/reports/WP3/D3-4%20WP3%20Integrated%20Report.pdf

[22] de Miguel Carolina G. and Tresch Anke (2003) Europeanisation of Public Spheres: a regional perspective http://europub.wzb.eu/Data/Conference%20material/Europub%20papers/Anke%20Tresch%20and%20Carolina%20de%20Miguel.doc

are not totally independent in their perception of reality. On the other hand, the media are not the only filter on news, filtering is also done by readers themselves, because each newspaper has its own particular circle of readers with specific political views. At this point it seems relevant to speak in greater detail about the media and their relations with society.

1.3.1 Media sphere theories

Virtualization theory. Our research deals with the mass media which play an important role in virtualization of reality, according to the virtualization theory. From the late 20th century, the mass media were developing intensively, covering the whole planet with networks. We know what is happening in a distant country without being there simply by watching TV, listening to the radio, reading news in newspapers and on the Internet. These are the mass media that create our vision of the world. There are two different approaches explaining these tendencies: theory of information society and theory of virtualization. The former emphasizes the role of knowledge in the intellectualization of work and political power, while the latter focuses on simulation and communication of images.

The theory of virtualization is divided into two approaches: techno-centric and socio-centric[23]. As it can be seen from the name, the techno-centric approach of virtualization is close to Marxism, because it argues that a new mode of production has appeared, the virtual one, and that capitalism has stepped into a new stage, cyber-capitalism. The masses are now exploited by a new, virtual class which possesses software capital.

The socio-centric approach of virtualization focuses on values and argues that modern values are virtualized, together with products, services and politics. New professions arise - those of managers, public relations managers and advertisers. They create images of real items. Virtualization takes place not only in the market economy, but also in politics. Election campaigns can hardly be imagined without the mass media which create the "brands" of parties and politicians. Actually their programs are very similar, but one party can have a more charismatic leader and win. A clear example of an image which is far from reality is the peaceful president of the USA Barack Obama, who won the Nobel peace prize for his passionate speeches and afterwards conducted war in Libya.

The theory of the mediatization of politics. The concept of mediatization of politics is closely connected with virtualization. The concept of "mediacracy" means the highest stage of mediatization of politics, where mass media have considerable amount of power. There are two approaches to mediacracy: the etymological and the marketing approach[24]. The first approach considers mediacracy as absolute power of the media. McCombs and Shaw underline the

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[23] Ivanov D. Virtualizatsia Obschestva. Versia 2.0 (Virtualization of Society. Version 2.0), Sankt-Peterburg: Peterburgskoe Vostokovedenie, 2002

[24]   Бодрунова С. С. Медиакратия: атлантические подходы к определению термина // http://www.intelros.ru/pdf/mediafilosofia_2/13.pdf

agenda-setting function of the mass media, that is, the selecting of news, and framing function, which stands for providing specific interpretation of news.

The second approach from the marketing perspective compares politics with the market economy, where the electorate are consumers, and parties with their programs are products. The mass media in this approach play the role of a medium of politics, and media institutions fuse with political ones. As a result, the mass media become an instrument of politics. Mediatization of politics is characterized by a shift of politics from the real realm to the virtual one, where the struggle for creation of reality through the manipulation of public opinion takes place.

The Russian professor Resnyanskaya, following the ideas of Habermas, divides the mediatization of politics into two types: interactive and strategic[25]. The interactive type is equivalent to Habermas' public sphere, while the strategic one stands for Habermas' refeudalisation of the public sphere.

This paper will examine Internet sources which play an important role in the social processes of modern society[26]. Researchers Ester and Vinken argue that the Internet provides new forms of political and civic engagement, such as mass sending of emails (or mass joining groups in Facebook), maintaining political websites, launching mass demonstrations, etc. Still, the Internet offers not only the possibilities of action, but is also a new tool for forming public opinion. The Internet as a meta-medium has not undermined the role of the traditional media, which expanded in its space. This can be proved by looking at the most viewed sites in the Internet. At least in Italy, France and Germany one traditional mass medium enters into the top-ten[27].

1.3.2 Models of political and media systems

As we compare cases of two different countries, we should more closely look at each of them and take into consideration that differences can be caused by dissimilarity of their political systems and their historical development. Since the focus of our attention is the media, variations in the national media systems may also influence the process of Europeanization, according to the effectiveness of the media in playing the role of an arena for public debate. Regardless of globalization, the role of the nation state still remains very important, and people's lives and perceptions tend to be limited by the framework of their nation state. The relationship between national political and media systems was studied by two scientists, American Professor Daniel C. Hallin and Italian Professor Paolo Mancini in their common work "Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics"[28]. As a result of the survey of media institutions in eighteen West European and North American democracies

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[25] Реснянская Л.Л. СМИ и политика. М.:Аспект-Пресс, 2007. С. 89-102

[26] Ester P., Vinken H. Debating Civil Society: On the Fear for Civic Decline and Hope for the Internet Alternative, in International Sociology. 2003, N4, p. 659-680

[27] www.alexa.com

[28] Hallin, D. C., & Mancini, P. (2004). Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press

they identified three major models of relations between the media and the political system: the Mediterranean or Polarized Pluralist Model, Northern European or Democratic Corporatist Model and North Atlantic or Liberal Model. The first Mediterranean one, includes France, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain; the second model, the Northern European one, includes Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland; and the third one, North Atlantic, is represented by Britain, the United States, Canada and Ireland. As we can see, the countries of our case-study represent two different models, Germany represents the Northern European model and Spain belongs to the Mediterranean one. This means that their political and media systems differ substantially, which can influence the way their national public spheres undergo Europeanization.

The categorization into three models is based on nine criteria used by the researchers: four of them deal with the characteristics of their media systems and five are connected with the characteristics of different political systems. The media system has the following characteristics: newspaper industry, political parallelism, professionalization, and the role of the state in the media system. The characteristics of the political system are: political history; patterns of conflict and consensus, consensus or majoritarian government, role of the state and rational legal authority. Below we will explain the meaning of each characteristic and describe the situation in Germany and Spain.

Newspaper Industry. This criterion is connected with the development of the mass circulation press. In the Mediterranean model, there is low newspaper circulation and elite politically oriented press, because historically newspapers were not profitable business enterprises, and were often subsidized by political actors; another feature is large gender differences in newspaper readership. The Northern European model is characterized by high newspaper circulation and early development of mass-circulation press. In the North Atlantic model newspaper circulation developed early and it is distinguished by the development of the mass circulation commercial press. In South European countries, where mass circulation newspapers are non-existent, the mass public uses more electronic media in order to get political information.

In Germany both the aristocracy and the absolutist state remained strong for a long time and the transition to a liberal system similar to the Southern countries was long and conflictual, though the development of a commercial and industrial middle class was sufficient to support the formation of new institutions, including a strong mass-circulation press. The first daily newspaper in Germany Einkommende Zeitungen appeared in Leipzig in 1650. The early birth of press is due to the development of literacy, connected with the Protestant Reformation, which also divided society into different political groups. In Germany, like in other Northern European countries, an important role in cultural formation was played by Luther's challenge to the Catholic Church.

The division into many political and cultural subcommunities is called segmented pluralism. Afterwards, the German press developed a highly complex structure composed of many sectors: the independent quality press (Allgemeine

Zeitung and Frankfurter Zeitung), the party press, started in 1810 by the Conservatives with the Berliner Abendblatter and followed by the liberal and socialist press; the mass-circulation press, which appeared in 1870s-1880s, and a strong regional and local press.

Spain, like other Southern countries, had an economically and socially backward and conservative society, engaged primarily in agriculture, with cultural life dominated by the Church. Spain's transition to democracy started in 1975 with the death of Francisco Franco, who had ruled the country since 1939; this long period of dictatorship undermined the development of mass parties and the party press. Liberal institutions in Spain were developing differently, with stronger ones in the Basque country, Madrid, and Catalonia than in the rest of the country, which made scientists invent the term "two Spains".

Newspaper markets in Spain and Germany have different combinations of local, regional, and national newspapers, Spain is dominated by the national press, while in Germany all the levels are equally widespread. Church-linked media have played a significant role in Spain, the Catholic-owned paper Ya had the highest circulation in Spain in the 1970s. Attempts to establish sensationalist papers in Spain by the German publisher Axel Springer and by the Daily Mirror have failed, instead the role of the popular press is occupied by sports newspapers and the prensa del corazon (weekly publications for women about celebrities).

Political Parallelism. Political Parallelism describes the level of proximity of connections between the media and political actors, and the balance between advocacy and neutral informational traditions of political journalism. Another concept closely related to political parallelism is internal and external pluralism. External pluralism is pluralism at the level of the media system as a whole, where different media represent various points of view of different groups and it is connected with a high level of political parallelism. Internal pluralism, on the other hand, is pluralism within each individual media. Hallin and Mancini paid special attention to the question of political parallelism in the governance of public broadcasting and distinguished four types of media: those controlled by the government, the independent professional model, the parliamentary model with proportional representation of political parties, and the civic/corporatist model - similar to the parliamentary one with the difference that not only parties are represented, but also other social groups, such as trade unions, various associations. In the Mediterranean model there is high political parallelism with external pluralism and commentary-oriented journalism, and the parliamentary model of broadcast governance. The Northern European model is characterized by external pluralism especially in national press, historically strong party press, a shift towards neutral commercial press, and the civic model of broadcast governance with substantial autonomy. The North Atlantic model is distinguished by neutral commercial press, information-oriented journalism, internal pluralism (but external pluralism in Britain), and the professional model of broadcast governance. German journalists, similar to the Mediterranean case, are concerned with expressing ideas and shaping opinions, though German

newspapers do not openly campaign for political parties during election campaigns. The German broadcasting system is complex because Germany is a federal system, and broadcasting is under the authority of the Lander governments where different political majorities have power. Public broadcasting organizations are governed by independent boards consisting of representatives of political parties, appointed by proportional representation, and socially relevant groups, for example, trade unions, churches, industrial and professional associations, etc. Moreover, the Federal Constitutional Court plays a significant role in the supervision of broadcasting.

The Spanish transition to democracy was gradual, and in the absence of mature democratic institutions, the media served as platforms for the articulation of political demands. In the last decades of the 20th century a division of most of the media into two rival camps took place in Spain: the media conglomerate PRISA, including the national newspaper El Pais, was closely aligned with the ruling Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE), while the newspapers ABC and El Mundo supported the opposition of the conservative Partido Popular (PP) and Izquierda Unida (IU, the United Left). Among the major national media only the private television channel Tele 5, owned by foreign capital, remained outside of political alignments. Regional media also reflect political grouping in the autonomous regions, for example, the newspaper La Vanguardia from Barcelona is close to the Catalan Nationalist CiU. As for parallelism in broadcasting, in Spain the governing body of the Grupo Radio Television Espanola (RTVE) is appointed by the parties in Parliament and has to be approved by a two-thirds majority, but as Spain is essentially a majoritarian system, proportional representation means the majority control.

Professionalization. Professionalization in journalism, according Hallin and Mancini, consists of the following conditions: autonomy, professional norms (a code of ethics, for example), and public service orientation. As opposition to professionalization, the researchers use the word instrumentalization, when the media are controlled from outside and used as an instrument to influence other groups. The Mediterranean model is characterized by instrumentalization and weaker professionalization, the Northern European model - by strong professionalization and institutionalized self-regulation. The North Atlantic model has strong professionalization and non-institutionalized self-regulation.

There was a period of media instrumentalization also in Germany in the period of the media empire of Alfred Hugenberg, the supporter of the Nazis and a member of the extreme right-wing German National People's Party (DNVP). His multimedia conglomerate, the first in Europe, included mass-circulation newspapers, a news agency, an advertising agency, and cinemas. Still, unlike the media in Southern Europe, his newspapers were also commercially successful. Now Germany has a strong central journalists' organization, the Verband deutscher Journalisten- und Schriftstellervereine, formed in 1895. The Bundespressekonferenz organization conducts press conferences and establishes rules for relevant political and parliamentary reporting. The culture of German journalism, with its emphasis on the value of autonomy, is shaped by the

experience of totalitarianism. In Spain, professional organizations and unions of journalists are weak, the trade unions are affiliated with political parties, union membership among journalists is limited. In Spain, in contrast to Italy or Greece, the ownership of the media belongs mostly to media conglomerates rather than companies based in other industries, still banks play an important role as investors.

Role of the State in the Media System. The role of the state can vary from media ownership, funding, and regulation, to the role of serving as a source of information. Some authors use the term "savage deregulation", to signify the failure of the political system to establish media policy. In the Mediterranean model there is strong state intervention, press subsidies in France and Italy, periods of censorship and "savage deregulation" (except France). The Northern European model is characterized by strong state intervention but with the protection of freedom of the press, press subsidies, particularly strong in Scandinavia, and strong public-service broadcasting. The North Atlantic model is market dominated (except for strong public broadcasting in Britain and Ireland).

Germany combines strong protection of press freedom with a significant level of regulation. There are no direct state subsidies for the press. In Spain the authoritarian government of Franco had state-owned newspapers, in the 1970s and early 1980s legal actions against journalists were common. The Spanish news agency EFE is primarily state owned. Press subsidies existed in Spain in the 1980s, though not currently, however government advertising remains a significant form of subsidy for small local newspapers. There is an increased tendency for journalists to present themselves as speaking for an outraged public against the corrupt political elite, which is reflected in investigative reporting, though the revealed scandals are usually connected with political rivalry.

Political system characteristics

Political History; Patterns of Conflict and Consensus. Among different historical events special attention is paid to the industrial revolution, the democratic revolution, and the formation of the nation-state. As for the patterns of conflict, two types of pluralism are distinguished: in polarized pluralism the political spectrum is broad, and parties tend to have sharply opposed ideologies, while in moderate pluralism, parties are situated around a central consensus and ideological differences among them are less strong. The Mediterranean model is characterized by late democratization and polarized pluralism. In the Northern European model there was early democratization and moderate pluralism (except Germany, Austria pre-1945). The North Atlantic model is similar in this case to the North European one.

The polarized pluralism in Germany was particularly intensive during the Weimar Republic, when about a third of the press was linked to political parties (Catholic with 400 newspapers, the Social Democrats around 200, and the Communists around 50). After World War II, the rehabilitation of the West German media was dual, on the one hand, the Americans tried to introduce their model of a neutral commercial press, on the other hand, they supported editions

with clearly anti-Nazi ideology. The polarization in Spain was connected with the resistance of conservative forces to liberal modernization. Though, as the authors argue, the two biggest parties are catch-all parties with similar policies, the antagonism between them is very high; citizens identify themselves with parties subjectively, and not objectively considering their policies.

Consensus or Majoritarian Government. Hallin and Mancini use Lijphart's classification of democracy into consensus and majoritarian with the following features: in a majoritarian system the winning party concentrates power, there is cabinet dominance with a two-party system, plurality voting system and clear distinction between government and opposition; a consensus system is characterized by power sharing, separation of power between legislative and executive, multiparty system, proportional representation and compromise and cooperation between opposing forces[29]. In the Mediterranean model the government is both consensus and majoritarian (in Spain majoritarian). The Northern European model is characterized by predominantly consensus government. The North Atlantic model has predominantly majoritarian government.

Individual vs. Organized Pluralism. The political role of interest groups in a country can be different: in individual pluralism there are governing institutions, individual citizens and various special interests, while in organized pluralism organized social groups are active in the political process, where formal integration of social groups into the political process is called corporatism. The Mediterranean model has organized pluralism and strong role of political parties. The Northern European model has organized pluralism, with a history of segmented pluralism and democratic corporatism. The North Atlantic model has individualized representation rather than organized pluralism (especially United States)

Role of the State. The role of the state is divided into two types: welfare state and liberal democracy. The Mediterranean model is characterized by dirigisme, strong involvement of state and parties in economy, periods of authoritarianism and strong welfare state in France, Italy. The Northern European model has strong welfare state and significant involvement of the state in the economy. The North Atlantic model has liberalism and weaker welfare state particularly in United States.

Democratic corporatism in Germany was formed in the process of bargaining among different social interests, including capital, labor, and agrarian interests and resulted in expansion of the welfare state. In Spain the welfare state is weak, because of limited resources and a later transition, taking place at a time when neoliberalism was globally on the rise.

Rational Legal Authority. What is meant here is the rule of law in general and, in particular, autonomous public administration, or bureaucracy, which acts according to established procedures and is conceived as serving society, along

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[29] Lijphart, Arend 1999: Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries. New Haven: Yale University Press

with an autonomous judicial system. The opposite situation is termed clientelism, which means a pattern of social organization, where formal rules are less important in comparison with personal connections and particular interests dominate public ones. The Mediterranean model is distinguished by weaker development of rational legal authority (except in France) and clientelism. The Northern European model has strong development of rational-legal authority, as does the North Atlantic one.

In Germany, journalistic professionalism is related to the ideology of the "social partnership" tradition of rational-legal authority. The Federal Constitutional Court plays an important role in protecting the independence of public broadcasting.

To sum up, Germany and Spain have rather different political and media systems, but in some cases they have also similarities. Both are late democracies with experience of authoritarian regimes, both have polarized and organized pluralism and political parallelism. Germany differs from Spain in its ability to combine strong mass-circulation commercial media with political media, journalistic professionalism with political parallelism, and the liberal traditions of press freedom and with strong state intervention in the media. Moreover, the welfare state in Germany, along with rational legal authority, is much stronger than in Spain. Finally, Spain has majoritarian government, while Germany has a hybrid one. We will take into consideration these specific characteristics of the two countries, while interpreting the data of content analysis in the empirical part of the present paper.

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On the basis of the described differences in political and media systems between Germany and Spain we can try to make some hypotheses about our coming findings. It was found that, although Germany and Spain belong to different models, they have many similarities. Due to polarized pluralism, speakers will supposedly mention many different actors, while political parallelism should make the readers of particular newspaper have similar opinions. The tradition of press freedom in Germany should be seen in the low level of comments' moderation, while relevance of rational legal authority should make the German discussion more argumentative.

2. Readers' comments in the process of Europeanization of national public spheres in Germany and Spain

2.1. Research methods

2.1.1. Argumentation and discussion of the chosen methodology

In order to analyze communication on the subject of the EU, the method of content analysis will be used. Media articles and readers' comments will be examined, to be more precise, the articles and comments on the websites of Sueddeutsche Zeitung (SZ) and El Mundo. These two newspapers were selected because they both are among the most read in paper and online versions in Germany and Spain and they have similar political orientations: El Mundo liberal, centre-right and SZ centre, progressive liberalism. SZ is the largest German national subscription daily newspaper; its website is the fourth most read among German online newspapers, after Spiegel, Bild and Welt[30]. El Mundo is the second largest printed and the largest digital[31] (elmundo.es) daily newspaper in Spain.

The material will be selected by searching in a search engine such words as "Europe", "EU" and "The European Union". It is interesting to know if different meanings are attached to these two notions, Europe and the EU. Readers' comments will give a very significant data for our analysis, because they seem to be the unique citizens' voice in the communication on Europe, since the newspapers' articles are supposed to influence public opinion, rather than to build a dialogue.

The criteria are a prominent part of content analysis and they depend on the aim of this research. We are interested in clarifying, what role do the readers play in the European public sphere? In order to answer this question, it seems to be useful to use the list of criteria already developed by R. Koopmans and P. Statham, which they introduced in the book *The Making of a European Public Sphere: Media Discourse and Political Contention.* The criteria that we already mentioned in the theoretical part of our work are four: main topics, actors, evaluation and framing. Firstly, the main topics, covered in each text or event, will be considered, be it economy, finance, enlargement, immigration, ecology, aging, etc. Secondly, the actors, namely, mentioned persons or institutions, for example, classified on the basis of the level on which they operate (local, regional, national, European, international) or on the basis of the type of power they relate to (administration, party, foundation, NGO, individual). Thirdly, evaluation by the author, his attitude towards the EU will be identified as positive, negative or neutral. Fourthly, the framing will be distinguished through answering the question "What is Europe/the EU?", the possible answers can be: Europe/the EU is something about identity, collective consciousness; instrument for

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[30]   Alexa.com ranking http://www.alexa.com/topsites/countries/DE
[31]   Alexa.com ranking http://www.alexa.com/topsites/countries/ES

achieving some goals; history, how it formed; normative foundations, the role of law; geography; organization with a particular structure. In addition, as variants of framing the Eurobarometer data about meaning of the EU can be used (see figure 3 in Appendix): economic prosperity; bureaucracy; freedom to travel, study and work; peace; euro; waste of money; unemployment; democracy; loss of cultural identity, and lack of control at external borders[32]. Additionally, attention will be paid to the terms, used to describe the notion of common space, for example, Europe or the European Union, and to the synonyms and opposing notions.

In order to reduce the data to be researched, the analyzed period is restricted randomly to first two weeks of the month of March 2012. In the process of articles' selection attention will be paid, how closely the theme of article is related to Europe and how many comments are written. The preference will go to the most commented articles, because it shows the greater interest of readers in a particular topic.

Using the chosen criteria, we will try to categorize Europeanization with reference to the conditions of formation of a European public sphere, introduced by Eder, Kantner and Risse: same issues discussed in the same period of time, similar criteria of reference, European dimension / Europe as a common concern, and mutual recognition of participants. We will try also to establish, which dimension of Europeanization introduced by Koopmans (supranational, vertical bottom up, vertical top down, horizontal weak, horizontal strong) is present.

How exactly can the chosen criteria for content analysis help us to categorize Europeanization according to different dimensions? Let us relate each of four criteria with a respective dimension. Topics refer to the attentive structure, introduced by H.J.Trenz, and to Kantner's condition of the European public sphere - the same issues in the same time. Actors refer to both attentive and interactive structures, to Risse's conditions of mutual recognition and European dimension, and to Koopmans' dimensions of Europeanization (supranational, vertical, horizontal). Evaluation refers to the meaning structure, but it does not correspond with any dimension, still it is a significant criterion in measurement of Europeanization. The last criterion, framing, refers to meaning structure and to the Kantner's condition of the same criteria of relevance.

The use of a form of content analysis already employed by other researchers permits us to make a comparison of new results with previous findings and to identify a tendency. Moreover, as the object of the present study is wider, it includes not only media articles, but mostly readers' comments, we will be able to compare Europeanization in the media with Europeanization among people.

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[32]   http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/index_en.htm

2.1.2. Description of the research empirical base. Sueddeutsche Zeitung and El Mundo as actors in the Europeanization of national public spheres

On the whole, 18 articles and over 800 comments in Sueddetsche Zeitung and El Mundo were analyzed. We will describe the data in turn, first the German case and then the Spanish one.

Sueddetsche Zeitung. 14 articles of Sueddetsche Zeitung were analyzed, published in the period between 1 and 14 March 2012, where the central issue is a European one, and 317 comments were examined. The result of analysis you can see in Table 1 (see Appendix).

The topics of the articles are law (sanctions, norms, regulations and rights), foreign affairs, labor market, welfare and immigration, and finance. There are also publications on sports, to be more precise, football, but it does not make sense to analyze them, because the main issue is the match, its technical parts, rather than international relations. What is important to point out is the context of UEFA championships (Union of European Football Associations), in its title we have the word *European*, which indicates that the participating teams are from Europe, though among them are teams from such countries, which are usually considered as not European: Russia, Belorussia, Ukraine, Turkey, Israel, etc. This different perception of Europe must influence the group identification of people, adding a new dimension of Europeanness.

The most commented articles report on welfare and immigration, and finance, then follow gender equality and labor market, and politics. The readers are the most active, when budget spending is at issue, how the taxpayers money is used, be it the question of social benefits for unemployed EU-immigrants or financial help for indebted EU-states. Many Germans believe that people who work hard are rewarded and do not understand, why those who do not work properly, should get money from those who do work. Though, as not every German shares this opinion, the comment-discussion breaks out. As for topics connected with politics and foreign affairs, the readers tend to focus their attention on national politics, or rather, on national politicians. In two of the most commented articles the main object of discussion is the German chancellor Angela Merkel; even when the French president Sarkozy is criticized, it is usually underlined that he is Merkel's friend and therefore she is also indirectly criticized.

Commentators. Altogether, 317 comments written by 162 persons were analyzed, 68 of whom do not have a profile (in our table it is signed as n/a, not available), 16 profiles are not public, 2 profiles are cancelled. The rest of 76 profiles were examined by such parameters as age, gender, period of registration and the number of comments. It was found out that most commentators are aged from 40 to 70 years with the exception of a couple aged 30 and 21. Among the participants there are more men than women among commentators even if the gender is usually not publicly named, judging from nicknames, profile and the way of writing, one can assume that the overwhelming majority of commentators are men. Only 11 contributors are presenting themselves as women by names, photos or mentioning it verbally, while at least 20 people demonstrate that they

are men. Obviously in the internet one can never be sure about someone's personality, because one can play a role, pretend to be someone else, experiment with identities. The period of registration varies from 2007 to 2012 (mostly in 2007 and 2008), the number of comments is between 14 and 12000 (mostly 200-3000), and there seems to be no direct correlation between the two parameters, because some early registered have few comments and some recently registered have more comments.

Usually the first comments express disagreement with something written in the article, be it a proposal or a decision of a politician or institution or their actions, while the following comments express their support for it and in such way a debate starts. There are commentators who write their opinion only once and those, who begin to argue with other participants, providing arguments in support of their position. Often comments just criticize the style of other contributions or personally attack other commentators, not giving new arguments to the topic.

There could have been much more contributions to each article if there was no control from the side of the www.sueddeutsche.de. The fact is that the moderators freeze comments from 19 to 8 o'clock the following day and also during weekends (Friday 19 to Monday 8 o'clock) and holidays in order to better moderate the quality of the user discussions. Therefore, even if a heated discussion breaks out, as soon as the clock strikes 19 and no one can add comment, people just lose their passion for arguing during the evening and read new interesting articles, which wait for comments. As a result of moderation, one can see that several comments, to be more precise 15, are censured due to not having observed the etiquette and terms and conditions of the online newspaper. Actually, not everyone agrees with such a policy and some claim that their freedom of speech is being limited.

An important feature of the examined debates is that different points of view are always present and various groups of society have their voice. For example, opinions from other EU-countries were expressed by German students studying in Netherlands and Spain, several commentators from France told their view on a topic, as well as a person with East-European roots, who classified European countries according to the role of women in bringing up of children. Unfortunately, such participation of other EU-states' members, which share their knowledge and experience about the realities in other member states, is rather small. Even if in Germany there is a considerable community of Greek immigrants, no Greek commentator contributed to the discussion about the debt crisis and financial help in the EU. Not only groups of different nationalities participate in discussion, but also different social groups, such as students, professors, entrepreneurs, etc.

Terms describing the EU. What do Sueddeutsche Zeitung readers associate the European Union with? Which terms do they use, which names do they mention? The most frequently occurred word is the adjective *European* (34 times), which is used with different notions (here the word combination European Union is not counted), such as states, law, regulations, Council, affairs,

immigrants, policy, politicians, borders, integration, family, level, heads of state, citizens, enterprises, banks and social/tax system. This word tends to be rather neutral and it refers to both institutions and common space. The other frequent word is also adjective; it is *EU-* (here the word combinations EU-state and EU-Commission are not counted). This adjective appears 28 times accompanying such words as agreements, member, membership, partners, diplomats, summit, level, politicians, immigrants, citizens, candidate, law and unemployed. Evidently, the two adjectives are in many cases interdependent.

The next terms are *Europe* (28 times), which tends to describe the integrity of the Union, shows its non-political side, it is about Europe of peoples, for instance, it is often present in sports publications in such word combinations as Europe League, Europe Cup; on the other hand, the term *EU-states or EU-countries* (15 times) or also *member-states* (8 times) tend to underline the divisions which exist inside Europe, for example, the word combination *EU-states* is often used together with a number (25 states, which signed a treaty supposes that there are two states, which in contrast to others did not sign it) or with such descriptions as Southern states, South-Eastern states, most states, in debt states, PIIGS states, working states, which are usually negative. Still, there are exceptions, which show that Europe is not always about integrity, such as word combinations Western Europe, Southern Europe and Core Europe. The Core Europe appears to be one of the strongest oppositions to the European Union and its spirit of unity and willingness to integrate. The Core Europe actually means inequality of member states and concentration of integration among 5 countries: Germany and France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg.

The term *the European Union* (12) is mostly used in journalists' articles, rather than in readers' comments, who prefer to use the abbreviation *the EU* (19 times), which in contrast to previous two terms, Europe and EU-states, tends to describe the central institutions of the Union, rather than peoples, and like the term Europe it indicates the integrity, while like EU-states it emphasizes the political nature.

Which actors are the most frequently associated with the European Union? These are the *European Commission and commissars* (14 times), the *European Court of Justice* (6 times), the *European Central Bank* (5 times), and a half of the references to the first two institutions are present in the journalists' articles, while the ECB was mentioned only in comments and always with negative attitude. The European Commission also tends to receive negative evaluation, while the ECJ is mentioned neutrally or positively by the readers. It should be pointed out that there are much more institutions in journalists' articles than in readers' comments, journalists are inclined to give names of the European commissars and other officials, whereas the readers prefer to generalize, omit concrete names and not to repeat those mentioned in articles. Only journalists, for instance, refer to the *European Council* (8 times, including expressions *Heads of state or government* and *EU-summit*).

The *Euro* (12 times) is seen mostly negatively because of the financial crisis; still no one was proposing to return to previous currencies. In this

connection, two objects of criticism arise, either the EU indebted states, which do not work properly, or the banks, which get taxpayers' money.

Brussels (8 times) considered as the capital of the European Union, hosting its major political institutions, is mentioned in both articles and comments with the difference that journalists name it neutrally, while for most commentators Brussels has negative connotation as a symbol of bureaucracy.

Two notions were cited because they represented the main issue of articles; they are the *European Stability Mechanism* (6 times) and the *Schengen area* (4 times) with its free movement (6 times) and no borders (3 times). The ESM has a constantly negative connotation as connected with financial crisis, while the Schengen area is seen both positively and negatively, because people associate it not only with opportunities, but also with the spread of criminality.

Interestingly, readers often do not single out the EU from other parts of the world, using the word *Abroad* (7 times), when speaking about work or studies. Another word is *West* (5 times), which has both positive/neutral or negative connotations, used in context of foreign affairs or finance as a synonym of democracy and capitalism.

Actors. Which actors are mentioned in journalists' articles and readers' comments? Leaving apart the EU-actors, which were already mentioned above (the European Union, the Commission with commissioners, the Council, the ECJ, the ECB), the most frequent actors are the *EU-states or EU-countries*, usually in the sense of national governments: Germany (79 times), France (27), Greece (17), Spain (14), USA (10), Netherlands (9), Czech Republic (8), Scandinavia (7), the UK (6), Switzerland (5), etc. Evidently Germany, as their "homeland", interests the readers most of all, and journalists always give a voice on each issue to German representatives. If we count not only the word Germany, but also the adjective German, the total number amounts to 152 times. With regard to France, readers often provide some practical information, facts about the life in this German neighbor country, it is supposed that some of the commentators live in France. The attention to France can also be explained by the presidential election campaign, which was taking place in the country during the period of the study. Another source of good practice is Scandinavian countries with their social democracies, mentioned during the discussion, inter alia, in connection with the role of parents in child-rearing. Greece and Spain are objects of criticism because of their debts and the expenditures of Germany to assist them, still some commentators try to defend the two countries, accusing the banks and Germany itself of profiting from the financial crisis. The Czech Republic is also generally seen in negative colors, being associated with criminality and, in addition, due to its refusal to subscribe to the Fiscal Compact along with the UK, which shows the Euroscepticism of both countries. The USA have generally negative connotation as a symbol of capitalism and source of the financial crisis, opponents to the euro with their dollar, and war-makers. The word *Government* appears rarely (23 times), but it seems generally to be implied, when a country is named, it is the entity, which performs decision making and is responsible for actions.

Besides countries, *head of states* are frequently mentioned too, they personify the governments and decision making on the national level. For example, Angela Merkel is named in 154 comments, mostly critically, inter alia because of her supposedly little intelligent refusal to meet French presidential candidate François Hollande, then follows Nicolas Sarkozy (20 times) also with negative attitudes because of his populist proposal to reestablish borders in the Schengen area. The British Prime Minister David Cameron (4 times) tends to have an image as a politician who creates obstacles in European affairs and is inclined to make wars. Politicians in general (9 times) are sharply criticized as opposed to citizens; they are ready to promise anything in order to get votes. A similar picture is painted with parties (15 times), which are mostly German ones and mainly criticized for their policies. The state (6 times) is mentioned in opposition to business in the topic about female quotas for managerial positions, where most commentators believe that the state should leave the companies alone and not to dictate new rules. Courts (6 times) are spoken of with positive/neutral connotation as grantors of law observance.

An important group of actors are citizens (21 times), described also with such words, as people (15), voters (7), society (6), tax-payers (5) and names of nationalities: Germans (16), French (6), Polish (3), etc. They are usually described as oppressed, deprived or deceived by politicians or banks. Enterprises, discussed in connection with the theme of a quota for recruitment of women in management, are mainly supported by readers and their internal independence is considered as an important condition of a well-functioning market. Unemployed citizens (6) are sometimes criticized, but justified as well, like immigrants (11), who are divided into two groups: skilled and unskilled, the latter being supported by some commentators as victims of bad states.

The last group of actors is the financial powers, who tend to manipulate people's money, and are, for some reason, protected by the EU. They are banks (16), concerns (3) and the rich (9), who, according to some opinions, have caused the financial crisis and now benefit from it. A similar negative attitude receive media (11), which are accused of information manipulation, though several commentators put links to other news-sites as a source of additional information.

The named actors are representing European and, most frequently, national levels, while the international level is almost not mentioned, with a couple of exceptions, such as the UN and the International Criminal Court. As regards the local level, it is also nearly absent, appearing in the topic of borders, where Brandenburg and Saxony show up, or of welfare, with the reference to the Minister-President of Bavaria.

<u>Evaluation</u>. What is the general picture of readers' attitude towards Europe? 26 comments can be considered as EU-positive, which means positive to the whole notion of the European Union and its institutions, while 50 as EU-negative; regarding the evaluation of particular states of the EU, 24 are positive, whereas in 46 comments other EU-states are negatively evaluated. As regards the attitude toward the homeland, in 32 comments Germany is seen positively

and in 71 negatively. Looking at these numbers, one can see regularity: the negative evaluations occur twice as often as positive ones in each case. Even if there are more positive comments about Germany, than the EU, there are also more negative comments about this country. Though, there seems to be no question of whether German politicians, together with Angela Merkel, should resign or not. Therefore one can make several assumptions. Firstly, people prefer to write criticisms, rather than express consent. Secondly, the fact that something is much criticized does not mean that it is being rejected. One can suppose that criticism is a sign of involvement, and interest in a subject.

Framing. How is the European Union framed in the journalists' articles and readers' comments? We have distinguished two major dimensions, the political and economic one. The most frequent view is the one of an instrument for order, justice and stability through common norms, regulations and sanctions. This idea arises in discussion of the Hungarian constitution, national budgets and women's quota in management. This framing sometimes is negatively reversed and the EU is seen as *dictatorship, instrument for oppression, torture union, hypocritical lie union of cheaters, trash-talkers, suppressor of national sovereignty, Absurdistan (EUdSSR), ruled by not-democratically-elected Eurocrats*. Here can be traced an opposition between the EU and the nation state with its democratically directly-elected institutions. Commentators believe that the EU has too much power, and at the same time, it talks more than it acts, inter alia because of bureaucracy. Still, accusations of hypocrisy and idle talk are usually addressed to national politicians too.

Another framing is connected with economic and financial issues and sees the EU in the first place as a common market and monetary union with free movement of goods, services, capital and labor, as well as common social security space with rights to welfare access, including medicine and unemployment benefits, which is near to the previous framing of a justice instrument. The opposite view inside this second framing perceives the EU as a *financial dictatorship, European financial fascism, an instrument to save banks* (also called United Banks-Europe) and a *transfer union*, where German money flows to indebted countries. Here the European Union is understood as a mechanism, which is aimed at helping private banks or poor member-states to the detriment of Germany and its population.

Moreover, there is a framing, under which the EU is understood as a segmented entity. Generally, the less successful states are separated from others, constructing a union of indebted states, or Southern Europe or Mediterranean countries. There are also Eastern bloc states, described with such features as poverty and criminality (Poland, Czech Republic, Romania. Hungary). Then we have Western Europe, where it is difficult to say, whether the United Kingdom is a part of it or not, because the latter tends to isolate itself from European affairs. Finally, there is Scandinavia, which gives some examples of good practice, but is somehow withdrawn from European affairs and lives its own life.

To sum up the main results of the analysis of journalists' articles and readers' comments in Sueddeutsche Zeitung: the topics of the articles covered the spheres of law, foreign affairs, labor market, welfare and finance, while the most commented touched financial issues and national politics. The commentators are mainly men aged between 40-70 years, who just express their opinion or participate in a discussion, where they often criticize the style of other comments, that is, write off the topic. There are present several voices, representing other EU-countries (France, Netherlands and Spain). The most frequently used terms to describe the EU are non-political: *European* and *Europe,* followed by political ones *the EU* and *the European Union*, while *EU-states* are often used to divide the union into parts. The mentioned actors representing the EU are the European Commission, the European Court of Justice and the European Central Bank. Journalists tend to give more names and institutions, while commentators are inclined to generalize. Interestingly, for some readers, Europe is just "abroad", in the same way as America or Asia. Other mentioned actors are mainly states, their governments and heads, with a prevalence of German ones. An important group of actors are citizens, cheated by banks and hypocritical politicians. The international level, as well as the local one, is poorly represented. The comments are generally critical; the negative evaluations appear twice as often as the positive, and the readers evaluate their own countries more often than the EU or the member-countries. Regarding framing, two major dimensions were distinguished: the political, as either an instrument for order and justice or a non-democratic dictatorship, and the economic, as either a transfer union or a common market. There is also a segmenting view on the EU, which divides it into several areas (South, West, East and Scandinavia).

Now we know, how the media are talking about the EU and what people are interested in. What does the EU offer to the citizens, what kind of information does it provide? Does it correspond to the people's interests? In order to answer these questions, newsletters of European information center will be examined with the focus on the topics of both news and events on agenda.

El Mundo. 4 articles of El Mundo were analyzed, published in the period between 1 and 14 March 2012, where the central issue is a European one, and 498 comments were examined. The result of analysis you can see on the Table 2 (see Appendix). In contrast to the previous analysis of the Sueddeutsche Zeitung fewer articles and more comments were taken, because the Spanish tend to write more comments to each article. Those articles which were focused on European issues but had no comments were not examined.

The topics of the articles are similar to those of the Sueddeutsche Zeitung: law (sanctions, norms, regulations and rights), labor market, welfare and immigration, and finance.

The most commented article (226 comments) is dedicated to the financial crisis in the European Union and regulations regarding the national Spanish budget. The Spanish have different opinions on this and other subjects, but there is less debate compared with the Germans, because readers tend to write just

one comment, often without providing arguments, they usually express their opinion about the article and not about opinions of other readers. Some contributors, who interact with others, do it in a rude way, treating each other with a high degree of familiarity. Among the contributions to the article on the rejection of an appeal to the European Court of Justice to register an offensively named brand, several readers stated their view against the "political correctness", which rules in Europe. Such non-recognition of political correctness can be easily observed while reading the comments. The most readers are not ashamed of criticizing women, convinced of their inferiority as compared with men, or immigrants supposing them to be criminals and barbarians.

The voices of other member states can be barely heard in the comments, as it seems to be only native Spanish who appear here. There is information on practices in Austria from a Spanish citizen who lived there, in France from a Spanish tourist, and in Greece and Germany, but such reports are not limited to Europe, because one reader tells about his impressions from a journey to Latin America, which is generally highly present in the discussion, and the other tells about the practices in the USA, while the third one lives in Canada. Experiences are related not only with other countries, but even with Spanish regions, which underlines strong internal divisions in the country. Thus, Spain appears to be not purely a European country, as it might be Germany, being situated in the middle of the Union, Spain can be seen in the middle between Europe and America. On the other hand, such a description as "Spain is different", used in many comments, emphasizes its special status, its uniqueness and desire for isolation.

The commentators in El Mundo remain more anonymous than in Sueddeutsche Zeitung due to the kind of profile created on the website, which is not designed to include personal information, such as gender, age, political views, etc. They also tend not to use real names, not to have photos, and it is difficult to establish one's gender just on the basis of a nick name. Still, one can assume that there are much more men, for instance, if we take the discussion on a recruitment quota for female managers, we can see an absolute predominance of the male point of view in attacking feminists.

The moderation of comments appears to be not strict, because swear words are abundant. On the other hand it is difficult to judge the level of censorship in El Mundo, because the censorship is not made public, while the censured comments in Sueddeutsche Zeitung do not disappear, instead their text is not shown, being substituted by a formal notification on censorship.

Terms describing the EU. The most frequent word is the *EU* (41 times), while the word *Europe* occurs 26 times, which is the opposite in the case of Sueddeutsche Zeitung. It can be assumed that the Spanish tend to see the union more from formal perspective. The *European Union* is mentioned 5 times, but in Spanish there is also another term to describe it, the Community (10 times). The assumption about the formal perception of the union is supported by the fact that the term Brussels is used more often (16 times), than in the German case. Brussels normally symbolizes the bureaucratic side of the community. In El Mundo the term *EU-countries* is less mentioned (11 times), generally particular

countries are named. It is difficult to say, which terms tend to indicate the integrality of the union, because both the EU and Europe are accompanied with specifying words, for example: majority of the EU, all countries of the EU, whole EU, big parts of Europe, whole Europe, Central Europe, Southern Europe, and regions of the community.

Interestingly, the EU-institutions are more rarely mentioned in El Mundo. The European Commission and commissioners are referred to 10 times, mostly because of a funny photo in the article with a European commissioner. The *European Central Bank* and the *European Court of Justice are only named twice*. This can be explained by the assumption that the Spanish tend to generalize, using a more broad term "the EU" instead of specifying its particular institutions.

As regards the term *Euro* (9 times), it is commonly used not in the context of the Euro area, but speaking about a sum of money, which may indicate a high level of integration of the currency into the life of people. What is more, Spanish readers use often the term *Europeans* (4 times), which the Germans do not do. This admission of existence of such a group of people indicates that the Spanish are more inclined in comparison with the Germans to have a European identity. Still, Europe is also seen by the Spanish as *Outside* (4 times), together with other parts of the world, similar to the German *Abroad*.

Actors. The types of actors in El Mundo are similar to those of Sueddeutsche Zeitung. The most frequently mentioned actor is the native country Spain (90 times). The other *countries* are Greece (18 times), which is generally seen negatively as an example, which can also happen with Spain itself, France (13 times), mentioned in the article about Sarkozy's proposal, Germany (12 times), seen as either the leader of the EU, or an example of good practice, and Latin America (7 times), mentioned mostly negatively in connection with its immigrants.

Other important group of actors are national *politicians*: the present prime minister Mariano Rajoy (48 times), its party People's Party (53), former prime minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero (31), its party Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (32), Spanish politicians (27), and politicians in general (24). Commenters both criticize and support them, initiating a heated discussion. Politicians from other countries are mentioned less frequently: Nicolas Sarkozy (24) due to the topic of the article and Angela Merkel (3).

In El Mundo as in Sueddeutsche Zeitung *people* are a significant actor. Firstly, national groups, such as the Spanish (34 times), followed by Germans (7), the French (6), Latin Americans (3), Greeks (2), Moroccans (2), and Romanians (2). Those who represent immigrant groups are seen mostly negatively. Immigrants in general are often mentioned (30), because of social and economic problems in Spain. In the same context labor groups are mentioned: workers (7) and the unemployed (15). Finally, citizens (11) and voters (15) are named in opposition to untruthful politicians.

Interestingly, the market (10) is regarded by the Spanish not only negatively, as in the German case, but also in neutral way, as an arena, where

their country is not successful, but should change the situation. As for the media (6), they are also criticized because of low cultural standards.

What constitutes a particular Spanish feature is the role of regional divisions. The autonomous communities are mentioned 67 times, both generally and with specific names. Strong subnational divisions supposedly change the citizens' perception of the national level and also European level issues. As more attention is directed to the subnational level, less attention remains for the other two levels and if we consider, how involved the Spanish are in discussing national politics, the third level, to be more precise the European one, tends to be left aside.

Evaluation. It was not easy to establish a certain attitude in the comments; often there was no attitude present towards the subject of our interest, especially regarding the national political issues. Europe was regarded negatively 67 times, while positively 25 times, similar to the German evaluations. Spain got a negative evaluation 109 times, while positive only 17 times; in comparison with the German case the "homeland" here is more criticized. As for the other EU-countries, the relation is 20 negative, 14 positive; altogether other member-states are referred to 63 times, which is slightly less as against Sueddeutsche Zeitung. All in all, similar to the German case, we have in general more criticism, than support towards all levels, national and European, however more attention is dedicated to the national level, which is highly criticized.

Framing. Several types of framing can be observed, but they are slightly different in comparison with the German case. Here we have less of a financial point of view, instead the cultural one is emphasized, while the political one appears in both cases.

From a political perspective, the EU is regarded as a body or instrument, which establishes order and justice, one the one hand, and on the other hand, it is composed of technicians-politicians, bureaucrats, censors, thieves, who are not democratically elected and, under the rule of Germany, suppress national sovereignties. One commentator even joked, comparing the EU-representatives with Martians willing to eliminate terrestrials through famine. In this joke the allusion to real political oppression is present.

From the cultural perspective, the EU is considered to be an instrument of destruction of regional cultural peculiarities, it is called *Decadent Europe.* In connection with the theme of migration such a term as *Eurabia* appears, alluding that the EU has too liberal policies towards Muslim immigrants, who do not integrate, but conserve own identity, which is seen as a threat to European traditional culture. This culture is distinguished from the Spanish one through the denomination *Babylonians Judeo-Calvinists* as opposed to the Catholicism.

The financial perspective tends to be less present. The EU is seen as a creditor, providing European funding to the state, and it is also called *Foreign homeland savers*, which emphasizes the separation between the country and the Union. Interestingly, in the discussion a doubt has arisen, whether Spain is in the first or the third world and whether the Spanish migrants as EU-migrants are

equal to the non-EU-migrants, when they migrate to another EU-state. This doubt contradicts the identification of some readers with the group of Europeans. What is more, the Spanish often use the expression *Spain is different* in order not to explain the reasons for national differences, but just to state that their country is different from others. Thus, on the one hand, the commentators show a deep level of European integration, and on the other hand they doubt in the basic achievements of the integration.

As in the case of Sueddeutsche Zeutung, in El Mundo, the readers also tend to see the Union as a segmented entity, dividing it into Northern and Southern countries, where the Northern ones are evaluated negatively as consumers of the food, produced in the South. In another model the EU stands for Germany and France with the rest peripheral countries. Spain is also described as the door of Europe in connection with immigration. The role of a world player is ascribed to the EU only in one comment, though it is usually seen as the main reason for the union's existence.

To sum up, here are the main results of the analysis of journalists' articles and readers' comments in El Mundo. The topics of the articles covered almost the same spheres as Sueddeutsche Zeitung: law, labor market, immigration, welfare, but there is more stress on national politics, than on finance. The commentators are more anonymous than in SZ, still one can suppose that in both cases the majority is constituted by men. The style of interaction is often ruder, than the German one; most readers leave just one comment without continuing discussion, there are less arguments present, but more pure opinions. The voices, representing other EU-countries are almost absent, with exception of several reports on practices in Germany, France and Greece, while Scandinavia or Eastern European members are not mentioned. The most frequently used term to describe the union is the formal *the EU*, while *Europe* appears less frequently together with *the EU-countries*, as opposed to the SZ case, which indicates its prevailing formal perception by the Spanish. The actors representing the EU are rarely mentioned, unlike in SZ. Again journalists tend to give more names and refer to specific institutions, while commentators are inclined to generalize. Other mentioned actors are mainly politicians with a prevalence of Spanish ones, which is similar to the German case. Another similarity is connected with the distinction of such a group of actors as people, citizens and voters. The difference between the two countries lies in the unequal presence of three levels of actors, in Spain along with the national level, the subnational level is extremely relevant, while the international level is also less frequently present. As for the evaluation, it tends to be negative too, especially of the national issues. Regarding framing, the union is generally seen as a political instrument for order and justice or for destruction of national sovereignty, whereas the economic framing is less stressed, giving place to the cultural framing. There is, in both cases, a segmenting view on the union, but the division is smaller, including only North and South, which can be explained by the geographical situation of each country and its neighbors. The specifics of Spain's disposition and historical legacy connect it with another international entity, Latin America. The Spanish show a controversial relationship with the European Union,

because, on the one hand, they associate themselves with Europeans, but, on the other hand, they believe they have the same rights as non EU-citizens when migrating to another EU-country.

2.2. Results of the research

In the first chapter we spoke about the conditions for the European public sphere, introduced by Eder, Kantner, and Trenz and amplified by Ruud Koopmans, which are also described as parallelization of national public spheres: the same themes should be discussed in the same time and under similar criteria of relevance. However, according to Koopmans, the European dimension of the issue should be made visible to the public and there should be mutual recognition. Thus, four elements are to be considered: time and themes, criteria of relevance, mutual recognition and dimension. Along with conditions, dimensions of Europeanization, introduced by Koopmans (supranational, vertical bottom-up, vertical top-down, horizontal weak and horizontal strong) will be taken to categorize our data.

As for the time, this condition is met, because our research limits the time of articles' publication. The articles' **topics** in the two newspapers have several times coincided. Firstly, both SZ and El Mundo reported on the actions of the EU to tackle the financial and debt crisis in Europe, in SZ the main issue was the Fiscal Compact, while in El Mundo the inspection of national budget. Secondly, the theme of the proposal for a quota on recruitment of female managers was reported by both newspapers. Thirdly, the French presidential election campaign was another theme, the SZ focused on Sarkozy's proposal to reform Schengen agreement, whereas in El Mundo the interest was attached to another proposal to toughen French migration policies. While the first two topics deal with EU-transnational level and indicate **vertical top-down** Europeanization, this third one is connected with EU-international level and indicates elements of **strong horizontal** Europeanization in the German case (because national actor, Angela Merkel, is present) and **weak horizontal** Europeanization in the Spanish case, because national actors did not participate. There were also themes which did not overlap, such as German welfare policies towards EU-migrants in SZ and registration of a Spanish brand in Europe in El Mundo. On the whole, one can state that the same themes are discussed in Spain and Germany.

In respect to the **criteria of relevance**, they tend to be rather different. The actions of the EU to tackle the financial and debt crisis in Europe are viewed mainly negatively by Germans because they believe that German tax payers' money should not go to other countries, which are themselves to blame for their own problems and the EU is seen as an instrument for financial transfer of German money to indebted states, while the Spanish tend to see these measures as necessary to cope with the national government's mistakes. The EU is seen as, on the one hand, an instrument for order and justice, but on the other hand, it threatens the country's sovereignty. The issue of the female managers' quota is criticized by both nations, but the arguments are not always

the same, in El Mundo along with the opinion that the market is liberal and free, the proposal only leads to positive discrimination and that it is not gender, that matters, but individual capacities, there was also widespread discriminatory opinion that women are inferior to men. Sarkozy's proposals in the French presidential election campaign were similarly observed as populist, but while the Germans were interested in the Schengen area, right of free movement, the election campaign itself and national borders, the Spanish discussed mostly their own national borders and national migration policies. On the whole, the criteria of relevance are inclined to be mixed, sometimes overlapping and sometimes different.

The elements of **mutual recognition** are present because, for example, both Germans and Spanish speak about French politics, they often refer to each other's country, though mostly with negative connotation; the voices from other member states can be heard, for instance, from Greece, France, Netherlands and Scandinavia. But in this matter the geographical location of a country plays a significant role, because it tends to interact more with its own neighbors. Germans, for instance, referred to the Poles and the Czech, and the Spanish to Latin Americans. Still, Europe is usually presented as a segmented unity: the Eastern European countries, Scandinavia, UK, Ireland, and Italy, all these countries seem to stay aside in the discussion. An international discussion has as obstacle the language problem; people prefer to communicate in their native language, they rather read national newspapers, than foreign ones. As a result, they are dependent on the media, which report on the issues and feelings in other member-countries.

The **dimension** of the described issues tends to be more national than European. Even if the initiative comes from the European level, for example, tackling the debt crisis or fixing a quota for female managers or brand registration, the focus moves to the national dimension. In the Spanish case, people are interested in national politics, policies, national welfare system and labor market, national culture. In the German case, the main concern is the national welfare system and budget.

Returning to the three **models of political and media systems** by Hallin and Mancini, we believe that national differences in discussion of European issues are in some ways caused by national political and media variations. Polarized pluralism is reflected in the fact that Germans and the Spanish refer to different national political actors, and, as in Spain there is majoritarian government, references are mostly directed to one (or both) of the two major parties. Such polarization, probably, switches readers' attention away from the EU, because they have enough food for discussion on the national level. In the Spanish case, a significant part of attention is dedicated to the regional level. Interestingly, although the welfare state is strong only in Germany, it is also energetically discussed among the Spanish, due to migration and economic problems. As for the rational legal authority, its strong position in Germany is reflected in comments, because Germans more tend to refer to courts as actors

and, in addition, they are more inclined to use argumentation in their contributions, what makes the discussion come closer to the Habermas ideal.

The difference between Europeanization in **articles and readers' comments** can be seen, when the previous findings on editorial articles are compared with our data on both news articles and comments. In the news articles, the evaluation is usually neutral (with two exceptions: an article about Merkel ignoring Holland in SZ and another about budget inspection in El Mundo, where the photo is ambivalent), while comments are inclined to be critical, like editorials. Journalists tend to name various European actors, while readers tend to generalize, talking simply about the EU, for example. The German editorials can be described as supporting the European integration while, in comments, economic integration is strongly criticized. In both articles and in comments, studied in this paper, the EU actors are treated less critically than national ones, and authors state that this is a positive sign for the EU, but as our data show, the EU in general tends to be less evaluated and mentioned than national actors, that is why, in our opinion, there is no positive sign for the EU in this sense.

It seems that Europeanization in the reader's comments is less evident than that observed in the newspaper editorials, especially in the Spanish case. Readers do not distinguish between particular European institutions, often criticize the EU and tend to look at issues from a national perspective. On the other hand, it is difficult to speak about a public sphere in the Spanish case, because there is less dialogue than in the German comments, and instead of arguments, emotions are often used.

Conclusion

In the first chapter of this paper we explored the concept of public sphere using the works of philosophers Jurgen Habermas and Nancy Fraser and the concept of European public sphere with its conditions and dimensions developed by H.J. Trenz, K. Eder, C. Kantner, R. Koopmans, T. Risse, J. Gerhards and some others, and got acquainted with previous findings on Europeazation in media. Then we considered Hallin and Mancini's three models of national political and media systems, focusing on the cases of Germany and Spain. In the second chapter, the research methodology and empirical base were described and the results of content analysis of publications and readers' comments on European issues in online newspapers Sueddeutsche Zeitung and El Mundo were presented.

The findings of the present paper are the following: **Firstly**, there are substantial elements of Europeanization of discussion in online newspapers, in Germany stronger than in Spain. Horizontal Europeanization, or mutual recognition is present, because similar themes are discussed in the same time period, though the criteria of reference rarely coincide; and the news from other member states is discussed with small presence of opinions of representatives of other EU-states. Vertical Europeanization is present, because EU interference in national matters is often discussed. But still the national dimension prevails, especially concerning the spheres of national politics, national welfare system and labor market. The tendency appears not to be changing, if we compare our results with previous research: in both countries the EU is less mentioned and criticized in contrast to national actors, in Germany the focus is mostly on the economic dimension and in Spain the presence of complex multi-level governance makes the public spheres also more complex. The assumption that the debt crisis has more negatively influenced the image of the EU in Spain than in Germany has been proven false or better reversed, because in Spain there is a rather high level of support for EU-measures, while in Germany these measures are more criticized. The crisis, even if it seems to create more negative attitudes in Europe, at the same time it stimulates more discussion among countries.

Secondly, an interrelation can be traced between national political and media systems and the Europeanization of national public spheres. The importance of rational legal authority in Germany is reflected in the online discussion, because Germans often refer to courts as actors and use argumentation, which makes the discussion resemble the Habermas ideal of rational discourse, while the Spanish interact less with each other and tend to express emotions rather than arguments. Probably, the high level of polarized pluralism in both Germany and Spain, which is apparent in the way the readers discuss national politics, hinders the process of Europeanization, because people are paying a lot of attention to national arguments. In order to check this hypothesis one should include one more country with moderate pluralism in the comparison. The political parallelism does not result in similar opinions of the

readers because, on each issue, opposite opinions are expressed. The question of the tradition of press freedom is difficult to estimate, because in the German case a number of comments were publicly censored, while in the Spanish one, even if censorship exists, it is not made public. In any case, swearwords are apparently not considered a motive for censorship in Spain.

Thirdly, the readers' comments are proven to be an appropriate object of analysis in addition to newspaper articles, because they have their own particularfeatures, which are near to the common public, for example, the tendency to generalize and not to name specific institutions. The comments represent a discussion in contrast to articles; they provide an additional material in analysis of Horizontal Europeanization and interactive structures in Europe. In further research, one can compare more countries, belonging to different models of political and media systems. European integration is a dynamic process, and nowadays, in a time of financial and debt crises in Europe, of uncertainty about Greece's membership in the euro zone, the research of the European public sphere promises interesting findings. Will the common problems stimulate European integration or will they undermine the European project?

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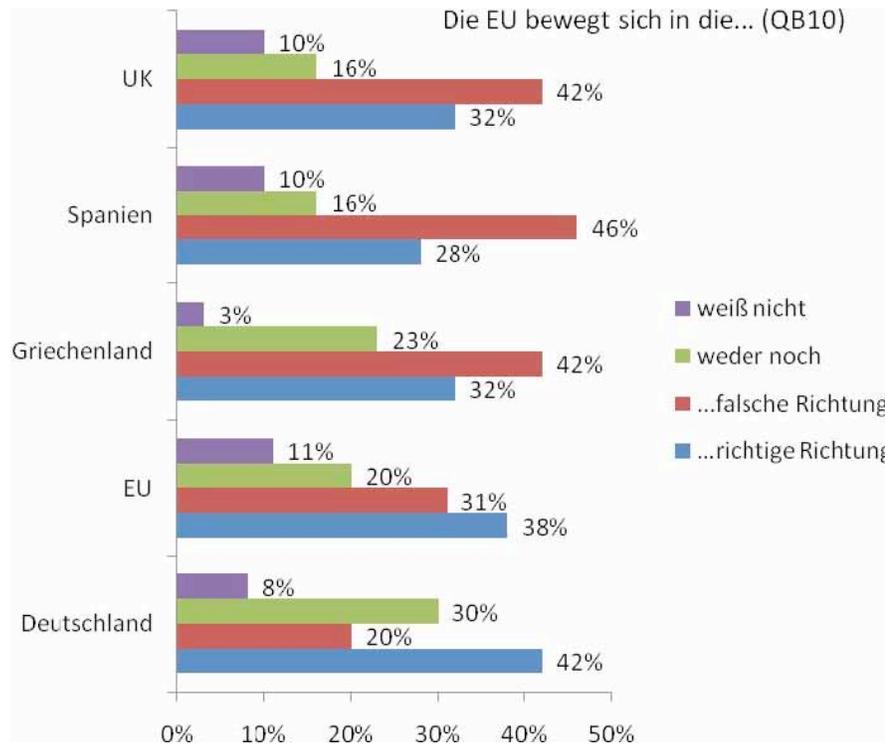
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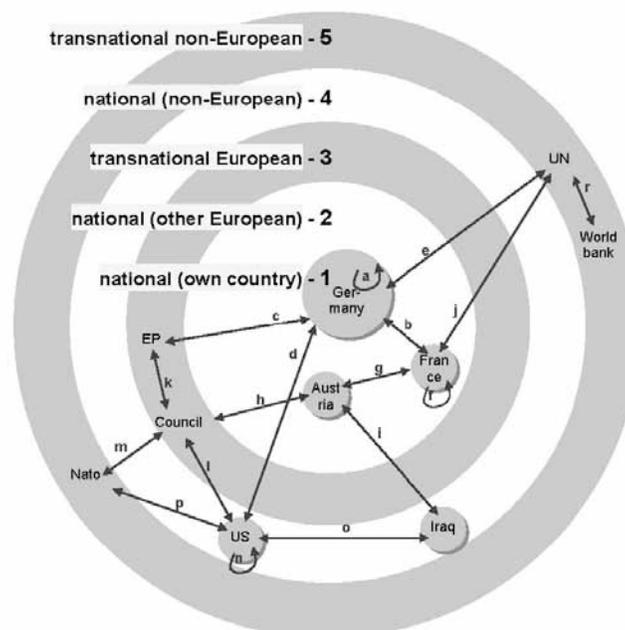
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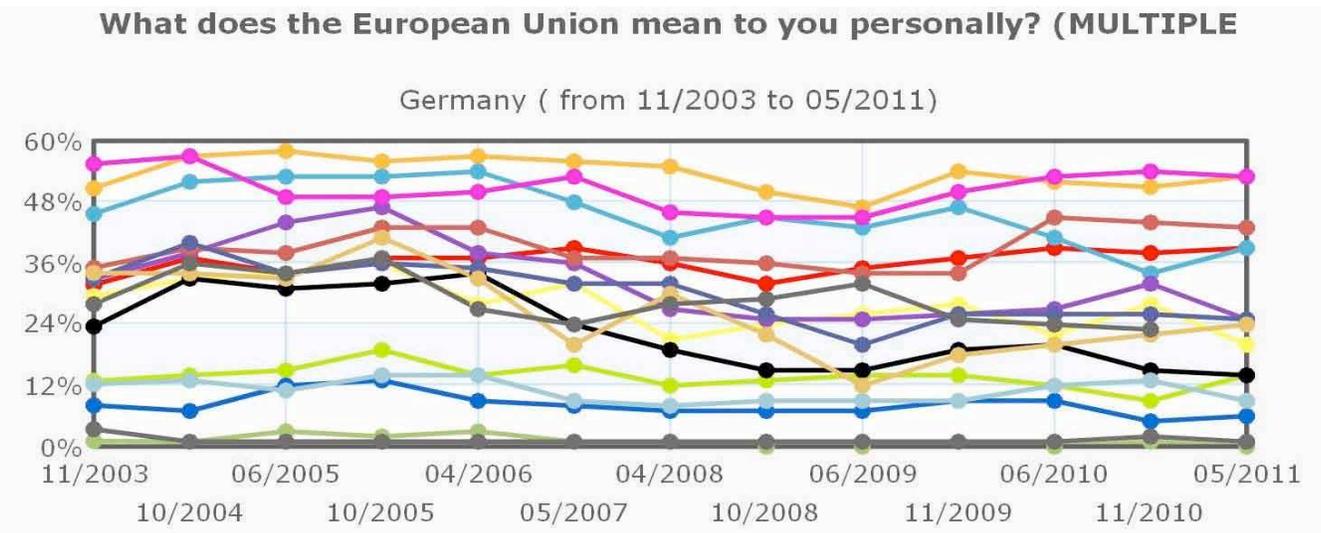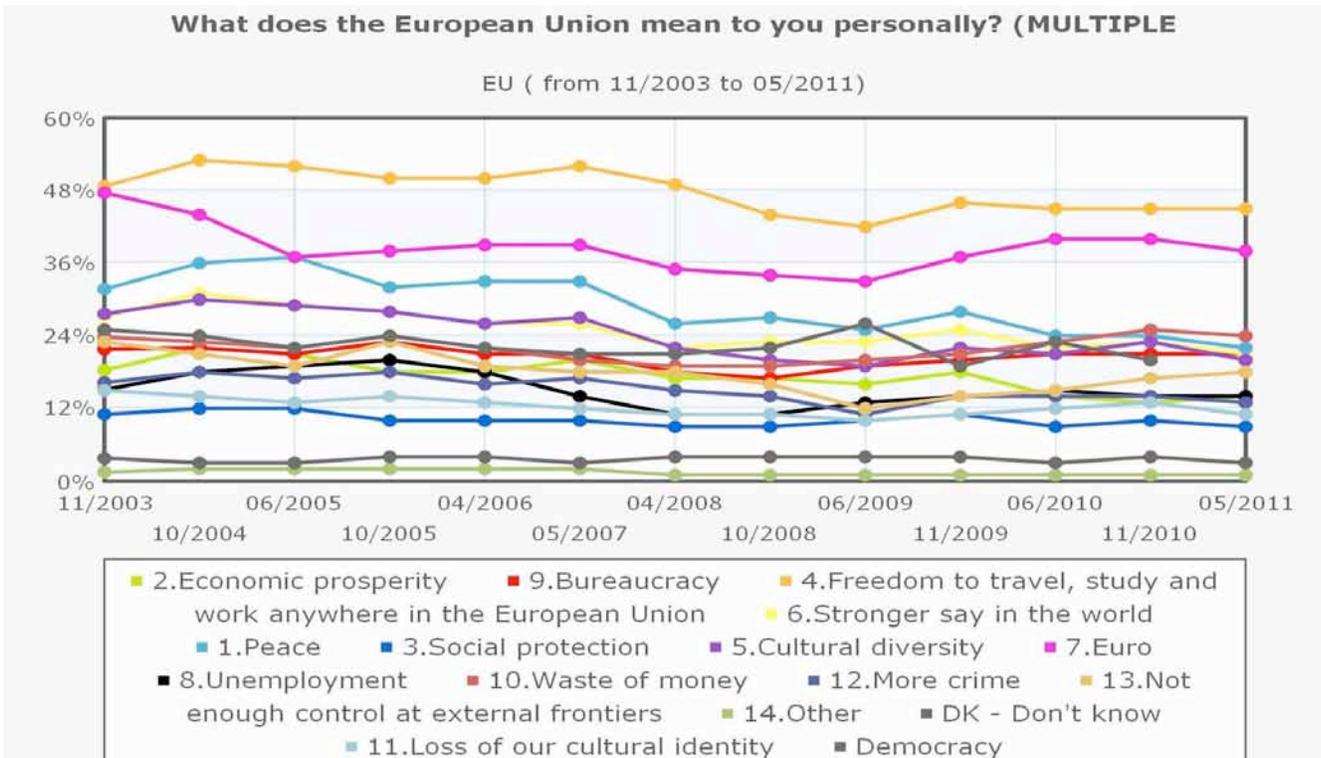
Appendix

Figure 1: Is the EU going in the right direction, Standard Eurobarometer 76, autumn 2011

Figure 2 Koopmans' model of Europeanization of public spheres

Figure 3

What does the European Union mean to you personally? (MULTIPLE

EU (from 11/2003 to 05/2011)

2.Economic prosperity · 9.Bureaucracy · 4.Freedom to travel, study and work anywhere in the European Union · 6.Stronger say in the world · 1.Peace · 3.Social protection · 5.Cultural diversity · 7.Euro · 8.Unemployment · 10.Waste of money · 12.More crime · 13.Not enough control at external frontiers · 14.Other · DK - Don't know · 11.Loss of our cultural identity · Democracy

What does the European Union mean to you personally? (MULTIPLE

Germany (from 11/2003 to 05/2011)

What does the European Union mean to you personally? (MULTIPLE

Spain (from 11/2003 to 05/2011)

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