

This article was downloaded by: [UVA Universiteitsbibliotheek SZ]

On: 05 July 2011, At: 01:46

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954

Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK

## Journal of European Public Policy

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rjpp20>

### News on the move: exogenous events and news coverage of the European Union

Hajo G. Boomgaarden, Rens Vliegthart, Claes H. de Vreese & Andreas R.T. Schuck

Available online: 18 May 2010

To cite this article: Hajo G. Boomgaarden, Rens Vliegthart, Claes H. de Vreese & Andreas R.T. Schuck (2010): News on the move: exogenous events and news coverage of the European Union, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 17:4, 506-526

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13501761003673294>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

This article may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, re-distribution, re-selling, sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

# News on the move: exogenous events and news coverage of the European Union

Hajo G. Boomgaarden, Rens Vliegenthart, Claes H. de Vreese and Andreas R.T. Schuck

**ABSTRACT** News coverage about the European Union (EU) has the potential to inform citizens about and to involve them in matters of European integration. Investigations of factors that explain variation in EU news coverage, however, are rare. This study explains weekly variation in the visibility of EU news in newspapers from seven EU member states for the period 1990 to 2006. It identifies exogenous factors that relate to the EU polity, its policies and national politics. The descriptive results show that EU news visibility has increased overall and that weekly variation is rather similar in the seven member states. News visibility is substantially influenced by infrequent polity-related events such as European Parliamentary (EP) elections or Council summits but also by EP sessions. Also policy-related and national events affect visibility. The findings are discussed in light of the democratic deficit of the EU and the potential consequences of visible EU news coverage.

**KEY WORDS** Democratic deficit; European Union; key events; news coverage; time-series; visibility.

## INTRODUCTION

News coverage of European Union (EU) affairs is important, given its potential impact on citizens' support for future European integration efforts (e.g., Maier and Rittberger 2008). The alleged democratic and communication deficits of the EU (e.g., Anderson and McLeod 2004; Blondel *et al.* 1998; Eriksen and Fossum 2000; Katz 2001; Katz and Wessels 1999; Meyer 1999; Rohrschneider 2002; Scharpf 1999) call for a more informed and involved citizenry of the Union (e.g., Benz and Stutzer 2004; Bijsmans and Altides 2007; Karp *et al.* 2003). Furthermore, debates about a common European public space highlight the central role of news media – e.g., Kantner (2004); Koopmans (2007); Siffert *et al.* (2007); Trenz (2004); Van de Steeg (2006); for overviews, see de Vreese (2007) or Machill *et al.* (2006). Finally, EU news affects public knowledge about, attitudes towards, and support for European integration, enlargement or specific policies (e.g., Brettschneider *et al.* 2003; de Vreese 2003; de Vreese and Boomgaarden 2006a, 2006b, 2006c).

With citizens across Europe relying on the media as their primary source of information about EU matters (e.g., Eurobarometer 60, 61 – see European Commission (2003, 2004)) on the one hand, and further European integration being contingent upon public support on the other, public opinion dynamics are important to understand. This is evident, for example, in referenda on European matters concerning the adoption of EU policy (e.g., Hobolt 2006). Referenda outcomes can put a (temporary) halt to ratification processes. Moreover, it has been shown that public opinion about the EU is of increasing importance for voting in national elections and thereby indirectly affects national policy and party alignments (de Vries 2007; but see Hellström 2008). Last, the salience of issues in the public domain conditions the relationship between public policy responsiveness and policy output, with a high issue salience of EU politics leading to a stronger match between policy output and public preferences on European integration (Franklin and Wlezien 1997). All of this makes a focus on the media imperative. The importance of the media and public opinion is highlighted in several recent policy initiatives, most notably from the Wallström Cabinet, charged specifically with communicating Europe and engaging in citizen dialogues.

The Lisbon Treaty emphasizes the need for more transparency and better communication to citizens in order to improve the perceived legitimacy of the Union and also the *White Paper on a European Communication Policy* by the European Commission acknowledges the need for widely available information about the EU in, for instance, the mass media to increase citizen involvement (European Commission 2006: 4–6). Hüller (2007: 572–4), however, argues that EU strategies for promoting publicity for the EU in national mass media have largely failed so far. Hence, media coverage of the EU does matter but little is known about the factors or strategies that would increase media attention for EU issues. The present study deals with the visibility of the EU in national news coverage in seven member states over a period of up to 17 years. It explains variation in EU news visibility by considering EU-related events and developments, differentiating between those associated with polity or policy. The study deals with *how* the coverage of the EU differs between countries and across time and – more importantly – shows *why* these differences come about.

An increasing amount of scholarly work is directed at analysing whether and how news media cover issues of European integration and the European Union (e.g., de Vreese *et al.* 2006; de Vreese *et al.* 2001; Maier and Maier 2008; Peter *et al.* 2003; Schuck and de Vreese 2006; Sift *et al.* 2007; Trenz 2004). These studies look at both how newspapers and television news in several European countries cover EU affairs. In general terms it has been shown that EU news is only marginally covered, and that the coverage usually centres on important EU events (de Vreese 2001; Peter and de Vreese 2004). Some studies focus on factors endogenous to news organizations such as the role individual journalists play for the coverage of the EU (de Vreese 2003; Gleissner and de Vreese 2005; Lecheler 2008). Few studies systematically address possible *explanations* of the differences in coverage, both horizontally and vertically (e.g., Brüggemann and

Kleinen von Königslöw 2007; de Vreese *et al.* 2007; de Vreese and Boomgaarden, forthcoming). These, however, are only concerned with EU coverage during European Parliament (EP) election campaigns or are based on relatively small samples of routine coverage. The present study considers EU news visibility over a longer time period and adds new exogenous factors explaining visibility of EU news coverage to those that have been identified in previous research.

In general terms, researchers have addressed the question of why certain issues, politicians or countries are covered (or not) in the news (e.g., Altheide 1976; Beyers and Kerremans 2007; Carroll 1989; Gans 1980; Galtung and Ruge 1965; Harcup and O'Neill 2001; Lippman 1922; Schönbach *et al.* 2001; White 1950; Wu 2005). Prior research points towards the importance of key-events for news visibility (Brosius and Kepplinger 1990; Daschmann and Brosius 1999; Kepplinger 1992; Kepplinger and Habermeier 1995; Vastermans 2005; Vliegenthart and Boomgaarden 2007). In this study we propose three clusters of factors influencing the coverage. We investigate factors relating to the *EU as a polity*, factors driven by *EU policies* and factors relating to *national politics*. The first group relates to events that are part of the institutional design of the EU, such as summits or sessions in the European Parliament. The second group refers to important EU policy developments such as key treaties or the introduction of the euro. The final group includes national events with potential relevance to EU news coverage, such as national elections. The study concludes by highlighting the importance of certain types of events for creating news attention for the EU and thus contributing to a more informed and potentially more involved and opinionated citizenry.

### The EU in the news

With rising scholarly awareness of the importance of mediated information for the emergence of a common European public sphere or citizens' support for EU integration, studies of media coverage of EU affairs have proliferated considerably throughout the past decade. Research on news coverage of the European Union can be classified according to a number of dimensions, such as the *visibility* of EU news, the degree of *Europeanization* (or domestication) of the news (including the visibility of EU topics and EU level actors) (Koopmans 2007; McQuail and Bergsma 1983; Peter and de Vreese 2004), the *tone* of the news about European integration and news *framing* of EU affairs (de Vreese *et al.* 2006). While acknowledging that all of these factors present important indicators of EU reporting, this study focuses on the visibility of EU news only.

Most studies investigate news reporting around specific *EU events*, such as EU Council summits, European elections or EU-related referenda. Comparing news coverage around the introduction of the euro, the 1999 European Parliament elections and the Nice summit in 2000, de Vreese (2001) finds, for instance, that the visibility of the EU in news coverage was peaking during the event, but was almost non-existent before and after (see also Semetko *et al.* 2000). Norris (2000) comes to a similar conclusion analysing

press coverage between 1995 and 1997, finding that the EU was only marginally covered and that coverage peaked around EU summits.

Moving away from an event focus, Peter and de Vreese (2004) compare the amount of EU television news coverage during event and routine periods, showing that the EU was more visible in the news around summits of the European Council. Others consider EU news coverage during *routine periods*, i.e., periods in which no significant EU events took place. Peter *et al.* (2003: 321) describe an ‘invisible importance’, showing that the EU is generally hardly visible in the news; however, when it is covered, more prominence is attached to it compared to other issues. Often only specific issues related to the EU hit the agenda, e.g., economic and financial affairs, the ‘mad cow disease’ or EU enlargement (Fundesco 1997; Trenz 2005). This group of studies does indicate that EU news visibility is higher around certain events compared to non-event periods. It has not been systematically established, however, whether and what kind of events would increase the visibility of EU coverage.

A range of studies concentrates on media coverage during European Parliament election campaigns (e.g., Leroy and Siune 1994; Reiser 1994). Siune (1983) showed that ‘Europe’ played no role in the news before the 1979 (first) European Parliamentary election until the actual start of the election campaign, and was limited to the time of the campaign. Peter *et al.* (2004) showed that EU affairs were given prominence in the news when covered, and it has furthermore been shown that the visibility of EU news during the campaign period overall increased from 1999 to 2004 (de Vreese *et al.* 2006).

In conclusion, prior research suggests that the EU is not prominently covered, that visibility varies and increases when events take place, and that overall visibility appears to somewhat increase over time. Although some of the studies looking at EU news visibility take a longitudinal perspective, none of them has investigated EU news visibility over a period of several years in multiple countries and, more importantly, previous research so far has done little in terms of systematically addressing factors that explain variation.

### **Explaining issue news coverage – events and news values**

Prior research has looked at the impact of real world events on the visibility of news coverage (e.g., Brosius and Kepplinger 1990; Daschmann and Brosius 1999; Kepplinger 1992). For instance, Kepplinger and Habermeier (1995) showed certain key events leading to more coverage of similar events, even when the number of incidents had decreased compared to the period before the key event took place. Brosius and Eps (1993) suggested that these events serve as prototypes for journalists (see also Brosius and Esser 1995). Furthermore, regarding the issues of immigration and integration, it was demonstrated that specific events are considerably more important in explaining variation in newspaper coverage than socio-economic developments (Vliegenthart and Boomgaarden 2007). With regard to the visibility of EU news coverage, prior studies provided (tentative) evidence for the impact of a few exogenous factors.

The presence of political conflict about European integration, as characterized by the existence and electoral strength of euro-sceptic parties, was shown to lead to more EU news (de Vreese *et al.* 2007) and to increase the visibility of EU news between two EP elections (de Vreese and Boomgaarden, forthcoming). Extra-EU factors, such as country-specific characteristics, matter too, and it was demonstrated that media in larger countries tend to show less EU news (de Vreese and Boomgaarden, forthcoming).<sup>1</sup> This study takes an event focus to explain across-time variation in EU news visibility. We thereby add to our understanding of whether certain kinds of events do impact the visibility of EU news.

The range of events that are expected to influence the visibility of EU news coverage is summarized and presented in three clusters. The first cluster includes events that relate directly to the *EU polity and institutional* make-up of the EU, such as summits of the European Council, European Parliament elections, sessions of the European Parliament in Brussels or Strasbourg, newly installed European Commissions, and changes of the EU presidency from one member state to the next. Regarding summits of the European Council, we distinguish between summits held in the member states that held the presidency (i.e., all summits before 2002) and summits that were held in Brussels after the decision of the Nice treaty to stop the ‘road show’ (de Vreese 2003). We expect all institutional events to positively affect news visibility, i.e., generate more news coverage. Moreover, we expect that news is more visible when a country holds the presidency and is chairing a Council summit. Furthermore, important *EU-related policy* events are considered, such as the introduction of the common currency, enlargements of the Union with new member states, the signing of important treaties and the convention for a constitutional treaty. Again these policy events are expected to increase the visibility of EU news coverage. Moreover, we expect EU-related *national* events to bear relevance for EU news visibility. Referenda in a member state on an EU matter should increase the visibility also in other member states. The positive impact of an EU referendum should yet be stronger on the national news coverage of the country in which the referendum is held. Prior research on EU news visibility during EP election campaigns has found that co-occurring national elections decrease attention to European elections. Consequently we test whether this result holds in a more general context. Finally, with the EU being a significant world market and economic force, we control for the impact of a *continuous* variable – the exchange rate between the euro and the US dollar. We do not expect that, for instance, a stronger euro would increase EU news visibility, but rather that drastic *changes*, relating to either a stronger euro or a stronger dollar, would cause higher visibility.<sup>2</sup>

## DATA AND METHODS

### Country selection

The key focus of this study is to *explain* the visibility of media coverage of the European Union in various member states. We sampled a number of member

states and our country selection is guided by substantial as well as pragmatic concerns. We considered countries that were members of the EU in 1990 (since we are interested in developments over time; furthermore, a sufficient length of time is needed to conduct proper time-series analysis) and countries for which at least one national daily newspaper was available for a considerable period of time via the LexisNexis digital database (pragmatic criterion). Seven countries are included in our study: Denmark; Germany; Ireland; Italy; the Netherlands; Spain; and the United Kingdom (UK). These provide variation in terms of size, length of EU membership, and media as well as political systems (e.g., Hallin and Mancini 2004), and include Northern, Central and Southern European countries and founding members, as well as countries that joined the EU at a latter point (substantial reasons). We selected the following newspapers: *Politiken* (Denmark); *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (Germany); *Irish Times* (Ireland); *La Stampa* (Italy); *NRC Handelsblad* (the Netherlands); *El Pais* (Spain); and *The Guardian* (UK). Although we acknowledge that selecting one newspaper only per country might not provide a fully reliable picture of the news in that country, we believe that the approach is sufficient to consider the news environment and over-time changes and that one newspaper provides a satisfactory proxy for the general media landscape on the aggregate. We have substantiated in other studies that issue visibility strongly overlaps between (quality) newspapers when aggregated to weekly scores (Vliegenthart and Boomgaarden 2007).<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, we selected quality newspapers, which have been shown to act as agenda-setters for other news media (Kleinnijenhuis 2003). Not all papers are available for the entire period from 1990 to 2006, and we can only rely on the material at hand.<sup>4</sup>

## Measures

Our *dependent* variable is news media attention for the European Union and its institutions. To obtain data for the visibility of EU news, we conducted a two-step computer-assisted content analysis. First, from the seven newspapers we selected all articles that included at least one reference to the European Community, the European Union or any of its institutions (e.g., European Commission, European Parliament). This resulted in a total of 329,746 articles for all countries and time periods. In a second step, articles were weighted to account for their prominence within the newspaper and for the prominence of the European Union within the articles: (1) articles on the first page are counted twice as important as articles in the remainder of the newspaper; (2) articles that include more references to the European Union in general or to EU institutions in particular are assigned a higher prominence score based on the formula:

$$\text{Prominence} = 1 + \ln(\text{number of referrals}) \quad (1)$$

This formula is based on the idea that prominence increases with the number of referrals, but that this increase is sub-linear, meaning that the more referrals an article includes, the less an additional referral contributes to the prominence score (see Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart 2007); (3) referrals in the headline

are counted twice as important as referrals in the rest of the article. Based on these criteria, each article gets assigned a score. For each newspaper, these scores are aggregated to a weekly level.<sup>5</sup> Since our substantial interest is in explaining *changes* in visibility, we use the differenced values of those weekly scores in the final analysis, i.e., the change in scores from one week to the next.

Our *independent* variables are dummy variables signifying the occurrence of a relevant event in a given week. Data on the occurrence of the different events outlined above was gathered from various sources, such as the websites of the European Commission or the European Parliament. Detailed information on the coding of the events is found in the Appendix. Summits of the European Council take place at least bi-annually and often three to four times a year. All Council summits before mid-2002 (when the Nice treaty took effect) and summits after 2002 that were held outside Brussels are coded as ‘summit abroad’, whereas all summits held in Brussels after mid-2002 are referred to as ‘summit Brussels’. European Parliament elections take place every fifth year and the European Parliament meets in Brussels or in Strasbourg about 18 times per year. European Commissions changed five times during the research period, with four different Commission presidents. The EU presidency rotates between countries every six months. Between 1990 and 2006, countries included in this research held the EU Presidency in total 15 times, and a dummy variable stretching over the half-year period indicates that a country held the presidency. In order to see whether news coverage increases significantly when a Council summit is taking place, which is chaired by a country that is holding the presidency and is included in this study, interaction terms between the presidency and the summit variables are included.

Turning from the institutional to the extraordinary events, the euro was introduced on 1 January 2002, and enlargements include the 1995 enlargement with Austria, Sweden and Finland, and the 2004 enlargement with 10 Central Eastern European (CES) countries and Malta and Cyprus. Important treaties were signed in 1992 (Maastricht), in 1997 (Amsterdam), and in 2001 (Nice). Important meetings of the Convention on the EU constitutional treaty were held in February 2002, July 2003 and November 2004. National events include referenda on EU matters – 17 referenda in total, largely following De Vreese and Semetko (2005). Data on the times when national elections were held in the countries studied here was gathered, and in total 25 national elections and their campaigns are included.

Finally, we include the *lagged dependent variable* in our analysis. We expect this variable to have a moderately negative influence, because of the specific dynamic of media attention: after a peak in attention (high positive change value) attention tends to move back towards its mean (negative change value) (Hollanders and Vliegthart 2008).

## Analysis

Our dataset has a pooled structure (periods within countries), which requires specific attention to autocorrelation and panel differences (i.e., countries).

The first question that needs to be addressed is whether the series are stationary, i.e., whether the mean of each country-level series is unaffected by a change of time origin and thus whether the expected values are the same for all time points. It is highly unlikely that the *differenced* attention scores resemble an up- or downward trend. To test this empirically, we conduct augmented Dickey–Fuller tests for each country series. Results indicate that for our dependent variable the null hypothesis of non-stationarity can indeed be rejected.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, the series do not have to be differentiated (again).

To establish the preferred type of analysis, it is generally recommended to first check for heterogeneity (e.g., Kittel 1999; Wilson and Butler 2007). The presence of heterogeneity indicates the presence of country-specific differences in the value of the dependent variable that are not captured by the independent variables in the model. Fixed-effect analyses including all our independent variables suggest no fixed effects,  $F(6, 4318) = 0.00, p = 1.00$ . This makes sense from a substantial point of view as well: it is unlikely that countries differ in their mean level of change in media attention.

However, they might differ in the absolute levels of change. Higher absolute levels of change indicate that a series fluctuates more heavily and demonstrates a higher variance, which indicates the presence of heteroscedasticity. The error-structure resulting from the fixed-effects analyses indeed indicates panel-heteroscedasticity for our dependent variable (Wald  $\chi^2(7) = 3657.84, p = 0.00$ ). Additionally, the data shows contemporaneous correlation across panels (Breusch-Pagan LM test:  $\chi^2(21) = 1153.97, p = 0.00$ ). The absence of fixed effects, combined with the presence of heteroscedasticity and the contemporaneous correlations combined with the structure of our data (small N of countries, comparatively large  $t$  of time points) makes ordinary least squares regression (OLS) with panel-corrected standard errors (PCSE) a viable option (Beck and Katz 1995).

Within this OLS–PCSE framework, we test whether our model with the differenced visibility value as the independent variable and including a lagged dependent variable resulted in models without autocorrelation. Autocorrelation occurs when the value of the residuals of the series at time  $t$  is correlated with the value at time  $t_{+1}$ . Inspection of the residuals showed the absence of autocorrelation, and we therefore could decide to keep the model as proposed. Mathematically, this model can be expressed as:

$$\Delta y_{i,t} = c + a \Delta y_{i,t-1} + \sum b \Delta x_{i,t-1} + \varepsilon_{i,t} \quad (2)$$

where  $\Delta y_{i,t}$  is the value of country  $i$  on time  $t$  on the dependent variable (change in visibility),  $c$  the constant,  $\Delta y_{i,t-1}$  the lagged value of the dependent variable,  $\Delta x_{i,t}$  the value of country  $I$  on time  $t$  on an independent variable (changed scores) and  $\varepsilon_{i,t}$  the error term.

## RESULTS

Before turning to the explanatory models of EU news visibility, we provide information with regard to over-time trends and across-country variation in our dependent variable. Figure 1 displays the weekly mean scores of EU news visibility in all seven member states under analysis (thin line). We see strong variation in visibility over time, with clear peaks and dips in the data, sometimes increasing or dropping considerably from one week to the next. Our attempt is to explain these differences in visibility between the different weeks. Substantially interesting, we find an overall increase in EU news visibility from about 1997 onwards, with visibility reaching the highest levels in late 2004 and early 2005. Recently visibility has dropped again to the level it had in the early 2000s (thick line, moving average).<sup>7</sup>

Table 1 suggests that this trend is largely similar across countries. The bivariate correlations between the visibilities of EU news in the different countries on a weekly level are all positive and substantial. We find the strongest overlap in the variation of EU news visibility between the Dutch and the Irish news outlets, whereas this was lowest for the UK and the Italian papers. Generally, the Dutch paper corresponds most strongly with news in other countries, whereas the Italian paper shows the most deviant picture in terms of EU news visibility. Overall the

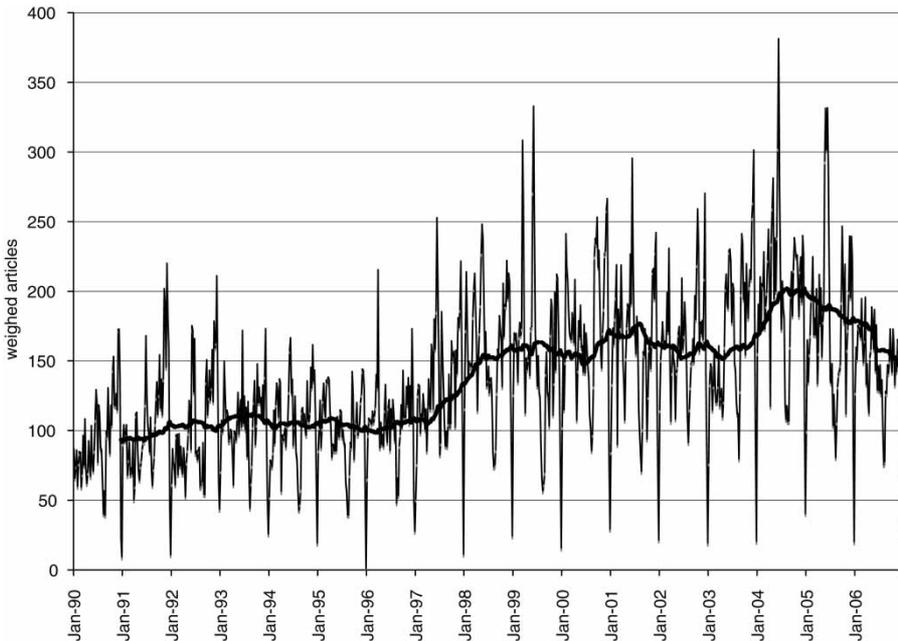


Figure 1 Visibility of EU news in seven member states

Note: The lines represent the weekly mean values (thin line) and the yearly moving average (thick line).

Table 1 Correlations between newspapers

	<i>Politiken</i>	<i>SZ</i>	<i>Irish Times</i>	<i>La Stampa</i>	<i>NRC</i>	<i>El Pais</i>
<i>SZ</i>	0.383					
<i>N</i>	521					
<i>Irish Times</i>	0.334	0.361				
<i>N</i>	523	763				
<i>La Stampa</i>	0.306	0.308	0.317			
<i>N</i>	512	773	750			
<i>NRC</i>	0.435	0.459	0.473	0.338		
<i>N</i>	511	818	750	761		
<i>El Pais</i>	0.318	0.361	0.435	0.259	0.434	
<i>N</i>	509	546	548	537	536	
<i>Guardian</i>	0.356	0.358	0.434	0.233	0.443	0.401
<i>N</i>	521	830	761	771	876	544

Notes: All correlations are significant at  $p < 0.001$ . The *N* refers to the number of coded weeks per pair of newspapers.

table suggests that the same exogenous factors might account as determinants of issue visibility in the different countries, since the development over time shows a strong overlap between countries. When looking at yearly data from the various countries we do find a few interesting differences (see Table A2 in the Appendix). Whereas news coverage in 2004 was most visible in Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain, in Germany and Denmark visibility reached its high point around the year 2000. In the UK, the early 1990s had the highest visibility of EU news. These differences are also reflected in a regression analysis using the number of observations as a predictor for EU news visibility. In five out of the seven countries attention to EU news increases. We report a decrease only for Denmark and the UK (marginal). For Denmark, the decrease could be a correction after a series of referenda on EU matters in the 1990s (of which 1998 and 2000 fall in the research period as well as 2002, when Denmark held the EU Presidency and the 2004 enlargement deal was made during the Copenhagen summit). The overall positive trend in EU news visibility, however, reflects the process of a deepening and widening Union with increasing and increasingly relevant competencies. The Eastern enlargement and the introduction of the euro have probably sparked the peak in 2004, and the treaty of Amsterdam resulting in more political competencies for Brussels might relate to increasing coverage after 1997.

Can we explain the across-time variation that is shown above by means of the exogenous events that were identified? We present four regression models in which we consider the impact of the different kinds of events separately and finally in combination. With regard to the direct effects of the polity-related *institutional* events (Model I, Table 2) we see all our expectations confirmed as all contribute significantly to increases in EU news coverage. Elections for

the European Parliament and installations of a new European Commission have the strongest effect on visibility, causing an increase in the change of EU visibility of more than 50 weighed newspaper articles.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, there is a higher visibility of EU news in countries that hold the presidency of the EU. Furthermore, European Council summits are important for EU news visibility. Both summits held in Brussels (from 2003) and those held abroad have a positive effect. However, we find an interaction effect of summits with presidency only for those summits that were held abroad, i.e., in the country holding the presidency. If the country holding the presidency organizes an EU summit in Brussels, as is the case from 2003 onwards, this does not cause a significant increase of EU news visibility in that country. Although the impact of plenary sessions of the Parliament, both in Brussels and in Strasbourg, is rather weak, we still see a substantial effect increasing visibility. These regular legislative events are thus picked up by the news media and cause more extensive coverage of the EU. Finally, as expected, the lagged variable has a negative impact, and the continuous control variable euro-dollar exchange rate does not show a relationship with the dependent variable. This model including the institutional events explains almost 9 per cent of the dependent variable.

Of the key EU policy events, we find most but not all of our expectations confirmed (Model II, Table 2). Enlargement rounds with new member states entering the Union and the signing of new EU treaties increase EU news visibility. The introduction of the euro and events around the Convention for a common European Constitution, however, did not affect issue news visibility. Turning to the *national* events (Model III, Table 2), we see that referenda on EU affairs increase EU news visibility. The effect, however, is considerably stronger for news media in the country that actually holds the referendum. Nevertheless, also news coverage in non-referendum countries is affected. National elections, contrary to our expectations, did not significantly decrease the visibility of EU news coverage. The explanatory value of the models including extraordinary or national events is considerably lower than that of the model with institutional events. Substantially these findings all hold when the three types of events are entered into one model (Model IV, Table 2). The effect of the treaty variable is somewhat reduced, whereas the general referendum variable increases in importance. This last model explains 10 per cent of weekly variation in EU news visibility.

## DISCUSSION

This study set out to explain *why* the EU is more prominently covered at certain times than at others, and which exogenous factors account for such variation in news coverage. We differentiated between polity/institutional and policy-related EU events and relevant national events to explain EU news visibility. Drawing on weekly time series data allowed us to concisely model the impact of different kinds of events in a conservative model.

Table 2 Predicting changes in EU news visibility

	Model I		Model II		Model III		Model IV	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Constant	-0.15	0.994	-0.03	0.913	-0.03	0.914	-0.13	0.987
Lagged change in attention	-0.14***	0.022	-0.16***	0.021	-0.16***	0.021	-0.13***	0.022
Euro-dollar rate	-76.13	82.413	-94.69	65.525	-77.71	65.320	-94.55	82.247
Summit abroad	29.46***	3.152	-	-	-	-	30.09***	3.165
Summit Brussels	26.29***	4.844	-	-	-	-	26.73***	4.816
EP elections	51.83***	12.743	-	-	-	-	52.03***	12.650
Commission change	56.58***	9.958	-	-	-	-	60.63***	10.419
EP Brussels meeting	10.69***	1.522	-	-	-	-	10.30***	1.515
EP Strasbourg meeting	11.30***	2.081	-	-	-	-	11.72***	2.090
Presidency	27.85*	11.876	-	-	-	-	28.59*	11.815
Presidency * summit abroad	36.84**	11.000	-	-	-	-	37.57***	10.948
Presidency * summit Brussels	21.54	14.941	-	-	-	-	22.24	14.815
Intro euro	-	-	18.66	17.971	-	-	24.04	17.527
Enlargement	-	-	39.02***	11.990	-	-	40.72***	11.615
Treaty	-	-	40.34***	10.645	-	-	21.12(*)	12.746
Convention	-	-	5.55	10.442	-	-	-10.16	10.770
Referendum	-	-	-	-	14.66***	3.521	21.52**	3.999
Referendum national	-	-	-	-	59.66**	20.714	67.70***	21.435
National elections	-	-	-	-	-6.10	8.582	-9.33	10.359
N	4,289		5,243		5,243		4,289	
R-square	0.088#		0.031		0.032		0.100#	

Notes: Cell entries are unstandardized regression coefficients and Standard Errors. The number of cases differs between models because detailed data on EP meetings is not available for the period before 1994. We note that results of Models II and III do not substantially change if they are estimated for the period after 1994 only.

(\*)  $p < 0.10$ ; \*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$  (two-tailed); # change in R squared is significant compared to Models I and IV not including interaction terms ( $p < 0.01$ ).

On the descriptive level, we find an overall increase in the amount of EU news coverage throughout the 17-year period. Since we know that news is most often negative, more news does not necessarily mean 'good news' for the EU in terms of its potential impact on public support. However, more news is certainly conducive to increased public awareness of and debate about European politics. Prominent and visible coverage of EU issues increases citizens' knowledge about the EU and consequentially contributes to their likelihood to participate in European referenda or elections (e.g., Banducci and Semetko 2003; de Vreese and Boomgaarden 2006a). We find that all policy-related, institutional events matter for EU news visibility, thereby providing strong empirical evidence in line with earlier studies that showed visibility to be higher during certain key events like summits, referenda or elections (e.g., Peter and de Vreese 2004). Of these events, in particular those that do not occur with great frequency such as EU elections, installations of a new European Commission or changes in the Presidency have a particularly strong impact. The effect of parliament meetings is substantial but weaker, which is likely due to the fact that they occur with greater frequency and are less consequential. Council summits do affect news visibility, both when taking place in Brussels or elsewhere in the Union. However, we find that summits outside Brussels cause a substantially higher increase in news coverage in the country that holds the EU presidency (thus, where the summit is held) than in any other country. This is not the case for when the summit takes place in Brussels, not even for the country that holds the presidency.

Regarding the important *policy* events, we find only some of our expectations confirmed. Referenda matter for EU news visibility, both domestically and internationally. When a referendum takes place, we find visibility to be increasing significantly in non-domestic news coverage. Domestically, a referendum causes the highest impact on visibility of all variables under consideration. National elections, contrary to our expectation, did not decrease the visibility of EU news. It might actually be that the EU as a topic is important for (at least some) national election campaigns (de Vries 2007).

We take two lessons to be particularly important. In terms of theorizing, our research helps to understand why some events become news and others do not. The news values approach considers which features provide that an event makes it into news, i.e., factors that contribute to the newsworthiness of an issue or event (Galtung and Ruge 1965; Harcup and O'Neill 2001). Infrequent and extraordinary events, such as EP elections, changeovers of the Commission or referenda on EU matters were shown to have the greatest impact on news visibility. This is not in line with prominent news factors such as frequency, unexpectedness or continuity – see Harcup and O'Neill (2001) for a critical discussion of news values. Yet, it does point to more recent research showing how specific *events* can indeed spark significant media coverage (e.g., Vliegenthart and Boomgaarden 2007). Our research does, however, concur with news value research in the sense that elite actors, such the EU institutions, matter for news coverage and can be successful in generating coverage.

This brings us to the second lesson. It can be argued that the more the EU does, the more likely it is to get on the news agenda. In this light, a rotating presidency with summits outside Brussels is important, and referenda do no harm. However, this is not a straightforward conclusion. EU news is often dominated by national political actors (e.g., de Vreese *et al.* 2006), so while EU news might be increasing this is not *per se* to the advantage of EU political actors. It is important to distinguish that an increase in visibility in the news – and thereby a further Europeanization of the national public spheres (e.g., Kantner 2004) – might be good for the democratic nature of the EU, but may not necessarily result in increases of support for the Union and its policies.

Our article is a first attempt to explain temporal variation in change in EU coverage. We fully acknowledge a number of challenges that emerge at the price of spanning across a long period and several countries. One is the choice to focus on newspapers only (and one outlet per country) while several scholars have repeatedly pointed to the fact that television news is the most important source of information for many Europeans. However, we have argued earlier that we believe it is possible to generalize from the coverage of one newspaper to coverage in more general terms. On television it was shown that the EU is much more invisible than in newspapers (e.g., de Vreese *et al.* 2006), so we would expect fewer events to be covered at all, and therefore would expect weaker effects of low-impact events and potentially stronger effects of the high-impact events, such as enlargements. This would be interesting to address in a future study; however, including more newspapers and television content is beyond the scope of the current study. Furthermore, including more specific media content characteristics that go beyond sheer EU news visibility would add potentially interesting facets to the relationship between EU events and news coverage.

Moreover, we realize that our study has paid attention only to factors that are exogenous to the journalistic process. Future research may further contribute to our knowledge in this area by also addressing aspects that are located within journalism and news organizations. It might also be interesting to assess the effect of the amount of EU legislation or EU policy output on EU news coverage. These data, however, are currently not available in a way that would allow us to incorporate them into our analysis. These limitations notwithstanding, we have taken important steps to identify the conditions under which the EU can emerge on national news agendas and contribute to shared moments of news coverage. This is not to say that the EU, by definition, is better off with an increased amount of attention from its member states' media. Even though visible news is potentially beneficial from a democratic point of view, perhaps 'no news' is better news for the EU, if we consider the potential impact of news coverage on public perceptions of the EU, than news that contributes to an informed and critical citizenry that may not like what it reads and hears about the Union.

**Biographical notes:** Hajo G. Boomgaarden is Assistant Professor for Political Communication at the Amsterdam School of Communication Research,

University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Rens Vliegthart is Assistant Professor for Political Communication at the Amsterdam School of Communication Research, University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Claes H. de Vreese is Professor and Chair of Political Communication and Scientific Director of The Amsterdam School of Communications Research, University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands, and Adjunct Professor of Political Science and Journalism at the University of Southern Denmark. Andreas Schuck is Post-doc Researcher at the Amsterdam School of Communication Research, University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

**Address for correspondence:** Amsterdam School of Communication Research, University of Amsterdam, Kloveniersburgwal 48, 1012 CX Amsterdam, The Netherlands. email: h.boomgaarden@uva.nl/r.vliegthart@uva.nl/a.r.t.schuck@uva.nl/c.h.devreese@uva.nl.

## NOTES

- 1 It is also consistently shown that EU news is more visible on public broadcasting news and in broadsheet papers. Since our analysis includes only the latter, we are not able to include media-specific variables here.
- 2 EU scandals and other forms of politicization are not included as independent variables in the models explaining visibility (e.g., Trenz 2005). The problem with these events is the criterion for inclusion. When is a scandal a scandal; what makes a scandal? Media coverage plays a considerable role in the construction of scandals. It would be a highly circular/tautological argument if we would say that we test for the effects of events that were highly visible in the media. We therefore refrain from testing these kind of 'events' in our models.
- 3 Due to practical reasons, we had to limit ourselves to selecting one newspaper per country. For three countries (Germany, the Netherlands and the UK) we looked at two other newspapers to see whether *visibility* scores were similar. In all cases, the correlation between the newspapers included in the analysis presented here and the other two newspapers was above  $r = 0.90$ , indicating that the selected newspapers in terms of visibility of EU news reflected trends that could also be found in other newspapers.
- 4 Newspapers were available from 1990 (*NRC Handelsblad* and *The Guardian*), 1991 (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*), 1992 (*La Stampa*), 1993 (*Irish Times*), 1996 (*El País*) and 1997 (*Politiken*).
- 5 The calculation of prominence scores based on article placement in the newspaper, referrals to the keywords in headline and total number of referrals was done in the absence of clear guidance from previous research as to how these factors precisely contribute to the prominence scores. It should be emphasized, however, that the weighing procedure results in only very minor shifts in visibility scores. The correlation between our weighted weekly measures and on the raw count of articles is  $r = 0.87$
- 6 For the Netherlands,  $Z = -36.65$  ( $p = 0.00$ ); Germany,  $-33.62$  ( $p = 0.00$ ); UK,  $-36.30$  ( $p = 0.00$ ); Ireland,  $-34.84$  ( $p = 0.00$ ); Italy,  $-39.80$  ( $p = 0.00$ ); Spain,  $-27.89$  ( $p = 0.00$ ); and Denmark,  $-25.50$  ( $p = 0.00$ ).
- 7 The data show seasonal variation, mostly caused by the month of August, during which the EU institutions are closed for summer holidays and thus low on activities.
- 8 The interpretation of the coefficient needs to take into account that the dependent variable does not represent raw article scores. An increase of 100 weighted articles

could mean that indeed 100 articles more are published in all seven newspapers together in which the EU is mentioned only once, not in the headline and not on the front-page. It could also mean that some 20 articles more were published in all seven newspapers together that appear on the front-page and mention the EU in the headline and once in the article. Furthermore, it should be noted that these changes in visibility are temporary only, since our variables are differenced. That means an increase of 50 more articles in one week will be followed by a decrease of 50 articles in the next week, and thus visibility levels would have moved back to their initial value.

## REFERENCES

- Altheide, D. (1976) *Creating Reality: How TV News Distorts Events*, Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Anderson, P. and McLeod, A. (2004) 'The great non-communicator? The mass communication deficit of the European Parliament and its Press Directorate', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 42(5): 897–917.
- Banducci, S.A. and Semetko, H.A. (2003) 'Media, Mobilization and European Elections', Fifth Framework Research Programme (1998–2002) Democratic Participation and Political Communication in Systems of Multi-level Governance, available online at <http://www.ucd.ie/dempart/workingpapers/media.pdf> (accessed 16 August 2008).
- Beck, N. and Katz, J. (1995) 'What to do (and not to do) with time-series cross-section data', *American Political Science Review* 89(3): 634–47.
- Benz, M. and Stutzer, A. (2004) 'Are voters better informed when they have a larger say in politics? Evidence for the European Union and Switzerland', *Public Choice* 119: 31–59.
- Beyers, J. and Kerremans, B. (2007) 'The press coverage of trade issues: a comparative analysis of public agenda-setting and trade politics', *Journal of European Public Policy* 14(2): 269–92.
- Bijsmans, P. and Altides, C. (2007) 'Bridging the gap between EU politics and citizens? The European Commission, national media and EU affairs in the public sphere', *Journal of European Integration* 29(3): 323–40.
- Blondel, J., Sinnott, R. and Svensson, P. (1998) *People and Parliament in the European Union: Participation, Democracy, and Legitimacy*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Boomgaarden, H.G. and Vliegthart, R. (2007) 'Explaining the rise of anti-immigrant parties: the role of news content in the Netherlands, 1990–2002', *Electoral Studies* 26(2): 404–17.
- Brettschneider, F., Maier, M. and Maier, J. (2003) 'From D-mark to euro: the impact of mass media on public opinion in Germany', *German Politics* 12(2): 45–64.
- Brosius, H.-B. and Eps, P. (1993) 'Verändern Schlüsselereignisse journalistische Selektionskriterien? Framing am Beispiel der Berichterstattung über Anschläge gegen Ausländer und Asylanten', *Rundfunk und Fernsehen* 41: 512–30.
- Brosius, H.-B. and Esser, F. (1995) *Eskalation durch Berichterstattung. Massenmedien und fremdenfeindliche Gewalt- und Straftaten*, Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag.
- Brosius, H.-B. and Kepplinger, H. (1990) 'The agenda-setting function of television: static and dynamic views', *Communication Research* 17: 183–211.
- Brüggemann, M. and Kleinen von Königslow, K. (2007) 'Let's talk about Europe. Explaining vertical and horizontal Europeanization in the quality press', TranState Working Papers, 60, Bremen.
- Carroll, R. (1989) 'Market size and TV news values', *Journalism Quarterly* 66(1): 49–56.

- Daschmann, G. and Brosius, H.-B. (1999) 'Can a single incident create an issue? Exemplars in German television magazine shows', *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 76: 35–71.
- de Vreese, C.H. (2001) 'Europe in the news: a cross-national comparative study of the news coverage of key EU events', *European Union Politics* 2(3): 283–307.
- de Vreese, C.H. (2003) *Framing Europe. Television News and European Integration*, Amsterdam: Aksant Academic Publishers.
- de Vreese, C.H. (2007) 'The EU as a public space. Living review in the CONNEX series in Governance, available online at', <http://europeangovernance.livingreviews.org/Articles/lreg-2007-3/> (accessed 8 August 2008).
- de Vreese, C.H. and Boomgaarden, H.G. (2006a) 'How content moderates the effects of television news on political knowledge and engagement', *Acta Politica. International Journal of Political Science* 41: 317–41.
- de Vreese, C.H. and Boomgaarden, H.G. (2006b) 'Media effects on public opinion about the enlargement of the European Union', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 44(2): 419–36.
- de Vreese, C.H. and Boomgaarden, H.G. (2006c) 'Media message flows and interpersonal communication: the conditional nature of effects on public opinion', *Communication Research* 33: 1–19.
- de Vreese, C.H. and Boomgaarden, H.G. (forthcoming) 'Explaining cross-national and over-time patterns in news coverage of European Parliamentary election', in F. Esser and T. Hanitzsch (eds), *Handbook of Comparative Communication Research*, New York: Routledge, forthcoming.
- de Vreese, C.H., Banducci, S., Semetko, H.A. and Boomgaarden, H.G. (2006) 'The news coverage of the 2004 European Parliamentary election campaign in 25 countries', *European Union Politics* 7(4): 477–504.
- de Vreese, C.H., Lauf, E. and Peter, J. (2007) 'The media and European Parliament elections: second rate coverage of a second-order event?' in W. van der Brug and C. van der Eijk (eds), *European Elections and Domestic Politics. Lessons from the Past and Scenarios for the Future*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, pp. 116–130.
- de Vreese, C.H., Peter, J. and Semetko, H.A. (2001) 'Framing politics at the launch of the euro: a cross-national comparative study of frames in the news', *Political Communication* 18(2): 107–22.
- de Vreese, C.H. and Semetko, H.A. (2005) *Political Campaigning in Referendums: Framing the Referendum Issue*, London: Routledge.
- de Vries, C. (2007) 'Sleeping giant: fact or fairytale? How European integration affects national elections', *European Union Politics* 8(3): 363–85.
- Eriksen, E. and Fossum, J. (2000) 'Conclusion. Legitimation through deliberation', in E. Eriksen and J. Fossum (eds), *Democracy in the European Union Integration through Deliberation?*, London: Routledge, pp. 256–69.
- European Commission (2003) *Eurobarometer 60*, Brussels: DG Press and Communication, European Commission.
- European Commission (2004) *Eurobarometer 61*, Brussels: DG Press and Communication, European Commission.
- European Commission (2006) *White Paper on a European Communication Policy* (COM(2006)35), Brussels: DG Press and Communication.
- Franklin, M.N. and Wlezien, C. (1997) 'The responsive public: issue salience, policy change, and preferences for European unification', *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 9(3): 347–64.
- Fundesco, A.E.J. (1997) *The European Union in the Media 1996*, Madrid: A.E.J. Fundesco.
- Galtung, J. and Ruge, M. (1965) 'The structure of foreign news', *Journal of Peace Research* 2(1): 64–91.

- Gans, H. (1980) *Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek and Time*, New York: Vintage.
- Gleissner, M. and de Vreese, C.H. (2005) 'News about the EU Constitution. Journalistic challenges and media portrayal of the European Union Constitution', *Journalism* 6(2): 221–42.
- Hallin, D.C. and Mancini, P. (2004) *Comparing Media Systems. Three Models of Media and Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Harcup, T. and O'Neill, D. (2001) 'What is news? Galtung and Ruge revisited', *Journalism Studies* 2(2): 261–80.
- Hellström, J. (2008) 'Who leads, who follows? Re-examining the party-electorate linkages on European integration', *Journal of European Public Policy* 15(8): 1127–44.
- Hobolt, S.B. (2006) 'Direct democracy and European integration', *Journal of European Public Policy* 13(1): 153–66.
- Hollanders, D.A. and Vliegenthart, R. (2008) 'Telling what yesterday's news might be tomorrow. Modelling media dynamics', *Communications, the European Journal of Communication Research* 33(1): 47–68.
- Hüller, T. (2007) 'Assessing EU strategies for publicity', *Journal of European Public Policy* 14(4): 563–81.
- Kantner, C. (2004) *Kein modernes Babel. Kommunikative Voraussetzungen europäischer Öffentlichkeit*, Wiesbaden: VS Verlag.
- Karp, J., Banducci, S. and Bowler, S. (2003) 'To know it is to love it? Satisfaction with democracy in the European Union', *Comparative Political Studies* 36(2): 271–92.
- Katz, R. (2001) 'Models of democracy: elite attitudes and the democratic deficit in the European Union', *European Union Politics* 2(1): 53–80.
- Katz, R. and Wessels, B. (eds) (1999) *The European Parliament, the National Parliaments, and European Integration*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kepplinger, H.-M. (1992) 'Theorien der Nachrichtenauswahl als Theorien der Realität', *Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 15: 3–16.
- Kepplinger, H.-M. and Habermeier, J. (1995) 'The impact of key events on the presentation of reality', *European Journal of Communication* 10: 371–90.
- Kittel, B. (1999) 'Sense and sensitivity in pooled analysis of political data', *European Journal of Political Research* 35(2): 225–53.
- Kleinnijenhuis, J. (2003) 'Het Publiek Volgt Media die de Politiek Volgen', in Raad Voor Maatschappelijke Ontwikkeling (ed.), *Medialogica*, The Hague: SDU, pp. 151–212.
- Koopmans, R. (2007) 'Who inhabits the European public sphere? Winners and losers, supporters and opponents in Europeanised political debated', *European Journal of Political Research* 46: 183–210.
- Lecheler, S. (2008) 'EU membership and the press: an analysis of the Brussels correspondents from the new member states', *Journalism* 9: 443–64.
- Leroy, P. and Siune, K. (1994) 'The role of television in European elections. The cases of Belgium and Denmark', *European Journal of Communication* 9: 47–69.
- Lippmann, W. (1922) *Public Opinion*, New York: Free Press.
- Machill, M., Beiler, M. and Fischer, C. (2006) 'Europe-topics in Europe's media. The debate about the European public sphere: a meta-analysis of media content analyses', *European Journal of Communication* 21(1): 57–88.
- Maier, J. and Rittberger, B. (2008) 'Shifting Europe's boundaries: mass media, public opinion and the enlargement of the EU', *European Union Politics* 9(2): 243–67.
- Maier, J. and Maier, M. (2008) 'News coverage of EU Parliament elections', in J. Strömbäck and L. Lee Kaid (eds), *Handbook of Election News Coverage around the World*, Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum Publishers, pp. 403–20.

- McQuail, D. and Bergsma, F. (1983) 'The European dimensions of the campaign', in J.G. Blumler (ed.), *Communicating to Voters: Television in the First European Parliamentary Elections*, London: Sage, pp. 258–83.
- Meyer, C. (1999) 'Political legitimacy and the invisibility of politics: exploring the European Union's communication deficit', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 37: 617–39.
- Norris, P. (2000) *A Virtuous Circle: Political Communications in Postindustrial Societies*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Peter, J. and de Vreese, C. (2004) 'In search of Europe in search of Europe – a cross-national comparative study of the European Union in national television news', *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 9(4): 3–24.
- Peter, J., Lauf, E. and Semetko, H.A. (2004) 'Television coverage of the 1999 European Parliamentary elections', *Political Communication* 21(4): 415–33.
- Peter, J., Semetko, H.A. and de Vreese, C.H. (2003) 'Politics on television in Europe: how European is it?' *European Union Politics* 4(3): 305–27.
- Reiser, S. (1994) *Parteienkampagne und Medienberichterstattung im Europawahlkampf 1989: Eine Untersuchung zu Dependenz und Autonomieverlust im Verhältnis von Massenmedien und Politik*, Konstanz: Ölschläger.
- Rohrshneider, R. (2002) 'The democracy deficit and mass support for an EU-wide government', *American Journal of Political Science* 46(2): 463–75.
- Scharpf, F. (1999) *Governing in Europe: Effective and Democratic?* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Schönbach, K., de Ridder, J. and Lauf, E. (2001) 'Politicians on TV news: getting attention in Dutch and German election campaigns', *European Journal of Political Research* 39: 519–31.
- Schuck, A.R.T. and de Vreese, C.H. (2006) 'Between risk and opportunity: news framing and its effects on public support for EU enlargement', *European Journal of Communication* 21(1): 5–32.
- Semetko, H.A., de Vreese, C.H. and Peter, J. (2000) 'Europeanised politics – Europeanised media? European integration and political communication', *West European Politics* 23(4): 121–41.
- Sifft, S., Brüggemann, M., Kleinen von Königslöw, K., Peters, B. and Wimmel, A. (2007) 'Segmented Europeanization: exploring the legitimacy of the European Union from a public discourse perspective', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 45(1): 127–55.
- Siune, K. (1983) 'The campaigns on television: what was said and who said it', in J.G. Blumler (ed.), *Communicating to Voters: Television in the First European Parliamentary Elections*, London: Sage, pp. 223–40.
- Trenz, H.-J. (2004) 'Media coverage on European governance. Exploring the European public sphere in national quality newspapers', *European Journal of Communication* 19(3): 291–319.
- Trenz, H.-J. (2005) *Europa in den Medien: Die Europäische Integration im Spiegel nationaler Öffentlichkeit*, Frankfurt aM: Campus.
- van de Steeg, M. (2006) 'Does a public sphere exist in the European Union? An analysis of the content of the debate on the Haider case', *European Journal of Political Research* 45(4): 609–94.
- Vastermans, P. (2005) 'Media-hype. Self-reinforcing news waves, journalistic standards and the construction of social problems', *European Journal of Communication* 20(4): 508–30.
- Vliegthart, R. and Boomgaarden, H.G. (2007) 'Real-world indicators and the coverage of immigration and integration issues in Dutch newspapers', *European Journal of Communication* 22(3): 293–314.
- White, D. (1950) 'The "gate keeper": a case study in the selection of news', *Journalism Quarterly* 27: 383–90.

- Wilson, S. and Butler, D. (2007) 'A lot more to do: the sensitivity of time-series cross-section analyses to simple alternative specifications', *Political Analysis* 8: 367–80.
- Wu, D. (2005) 'Systemic determinants of international news coverage: a comparison of 38 countries', *Journal of Communication* 50(2): 110–30.

## APPENDIX

Table A1 Coding of the independent variables

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Coding information</i>
Euro-dollar rate	Obtained from Eurostat
Summit abroad	1 = week in which an EU summit takes place outside Brussels; 0 = else
Summit Brussels	1 = week in which an EU summit takes place in Brussels; 0 = else
EP elections	1 = week of EP election and three preceding weeks; 0 = else
Commission change	1 = week in which new commission takes office; 0 = else
EP Brussels meeting	1 = week in which EP meeting takes place in Brussels; 0 = else
EP Strasbourg meeting	1 = week in which EP meeting takes place in Strasbourg; 0 = else
Presidency	1 = weeks in which country holds presidency; 0 = else
Intro euro	1 = week of introduction of Euro; 0 = else
Enlargement	1 = week in which one or more countries joined EU; 0 = else
Treaty	1 = week in which important Treaty is signed (incl. Treaty of Maastricht, Treaty of Amsterdam, Nice Treaty); 0 = else
Convention	1 = week in which agreement on European Convention takes place; 0 = else
Referendum	2 = weeks in which two referendums on EU issues take place; 1 = week in which a referendum takes place on an EU issue; 0 = else
Referendum national	1 = week in which a referendum on an EU issue takes place in a country and three preceding weeks; 0 = else
National elections	1 = week in which country holds a national election and three preceding weeks; 0 = else

*Note:* European Parliament elections are modelled with a four-week period to reflect the election campaign (e.g., De Vreese *et al.* 2006; Siune 1983). We have analysed the data using four-week periods for all events, and there is not much evidence for an anticipatory effect.

Table A2 Yearly visibility of European Union in newspapers

Year	<i>Politiken</i>	<i>SZ</i>	<i>Irish Times</i>	<i>La Stampa</i>	<i>NRC</i>	<i>El Pais</i>	<i>Guardian</i>
1990					4,584		5,059
1991					7,021		6,861
1992		3,689		745	6,819		8,271
1993		6,036	9,014	686	5,764		6,460
1994		6,886	8,543	1,190	4,822		6,047
1995		7,853	8,018	1,295	4,680		4,832
1996		7,960	9,285	1,740	4,991		5,115
1997	13,881	8,666	7,949	1,965	5,931	4,326	4,647
1998	17,754	11,645	9,541	2,428	4,282	7,056	5,292
1999	15,433	10,797	8,620	3,089	5,097	9,218	4,554
2000	18,868	11,784	8,070	3,321	5,566	10,229	5,050
2001	14,081	12,877	9,294	3,519	5,192	10,209	4,333
2002	17,945	5,933	9,936	3,524	5,646	11,123	4,958
2003	13,987	6,010	10,671	4,064	7,835	14,210	4,869
2004	16,798	6,867	13,200	5,014	8,827	17,915	5,215
2005	15,797	6,514	9,778	2,553	7,569	16,444	5,625
2006	11,916	6,262	9,254	2,935	5,585	13,468	4,683

Note: Numbers are weighted article scores. Only those years that have been fully analysed per newspaper are included in the table.