



MASTER THESIS

THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE INDIFFERENT

The portrayal of the European Union in Greek media.

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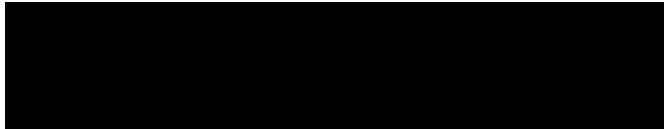
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Acknowledgements

When I first got into the process of searching for thesis topics in the spring 2019, I ran into several options revolving around the same curiosity question: what could possibly lag behind citizens' attitudes and emotions towards the European Union? The motivation to focus on European politics started growing during my bachelor studies in Greece. Inside the auditorium, the EU was discussed for its history, challenges and future but outside the open doors, there seemed to be a negativity surrounding Europe perceived to be an unpleasant reality with which citizens had to conform from fear of the worst. It was not until later during my master studies where I was introduced to communication processes and the link between news media and public attitudes began to grow.

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All in all, this thesis indicates the end of a beautiful journey of personal and learning growth. If there is one lesson after the thesis submission is that there is no ceiling in the learning process. Sometimes "it takes courage. Between the index finger of your hand and the edge of your notebook there are miles you need to traverse" (own translation from Elytis, 1999: 44). Eventually, new opportunities will come.

Abstract

The media coverage of EU news has been previously studied for its content (e.g., De Vreese et al., 2006; Schuck, et. al, 2006) and its possible effect on the public opinion formation and individuals' perceptions towards the EU (e.g., Lecheler et al., 2010; De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2003). The present study will explore the presentation of the EU in the media coverage of 2019 European Parliamentary elections by focusing on two elements of the media coverage; the content by means of frames and the tone referring to the explicit evaluations in the news articles. The study concentrates on the case of Greece as a country affected from the close relations with the EU while the EU was on the forefront of many crises the last decade but, to the best of my knowledge, there is no information or knowledge of how the EU is being portrayed. In doing so, 755 news articles were retrieved and analyzed from three national newspapers of a distinct political orientation (left-leaning, right-leaning, independent). Further, and given the event of EP elections, the study focuses on the last four weeks running to the EP elections. Then, both the content and the tone will be compared across time and between newspapers.

The results showed that the presentation of the European Union in the Greek media coverage was mildly positive. This result was based on explicit evaluations that referred to the EU as a political institution, including its policies or related attributes that point out the EU as a whole. By finding a mildly positive slant in the EU presentation, the results seem to be in line with the overall mildly positive attitude towards the EU that Eurobarometer reveals (European Commission & European Parliament, 2019). Next, the content of the media was measured by means of two deductive and one inductive frames. The deductive approach included the benefit and disadvantageous frame that was previously studied for their potential to influence the public support toward the European Union. The inductive frame referred to the indifference of citizens towards the political institution and EU politics. In line with the overall positive tone, the results revealed media coverage predominantly emphasized the benefits the European Union brings to one's country, followed by its disadvantages and the indifference of citizens. These patterns concerning the use of frames and tone of media coverage were also visible across most of the last four-week period heading to the EP elections. Chronological timelines depict the day-to-day differences in the content and tone showing that key events did not shift the use of frames but rather intensified the existing frame competition. The differences across the political orientation of the newspapers were marginal, although the left-leaning outlet was more likely to cover the EU in the negative compared to the right-leaning and independent outlets.

Keywords: European Union, framing, tone, newspapers, Greece, content analysis, 2019 European Parliamentary elections

Table of contents

Acknowledgements

Abstract

Keywords: European Union, framing, tone, newspapers, Greece, content analysis, 2019 European Parliamentary elections

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Greece and the EU and the role of media coverage
- 1.2. Research question and purpose of this study
- 1.3. Scientific and societal relevance

2. Theoretical framework

- 2.1. Media framing: definition, effect and types
- 2.2. Framing the European Union
 - 2.2.1. The benefit and disadvantageous frames
- 2.3. Tone
- 2.4. Key events and use of frames
- 2.5. Left-leaning versus right-leaning newspapers in Greece

3. Methods and data

- 3.1. Setting
 - 3.1.1. *The object described*
 - 3.1.2. *Period of study*
- 3.2. Corpus
 - 3.2.1. *Newspaper selection*
 - 3.2.2. *Article selection*
- 3.3. Coding procedure
 - 3.3.1. *Deductive and inductive coding*
 - 3.3.2. *Code book*
 - 3.3.3. *Analysis and coding procedure*

4. Results

- 4.1. Content of media coverage: The frames of benefits, disadvantages and indifference of EU citizens
- 4.2. Tone of media coverage in the article
- 4.3. Occurrence between frames and tone
- 4.4. Content and tone of media coverage across time
 - 4.4.1. *The news frames across time*
 - 4.4.2. *The tone of media coverage across time*
- 4.5. Content and tone per newspaper
 - 4.5.1. *The use of frames across newspapers*

4.5.2. The tone of the media coverage across newspapers

5. Discussion and conclusions

5.1. Main findings and interpreting the results

5.2. Limitations and suggestions for future research

5.3. General conclusions

References

1. Introduction

1.1. Greece and the EU and the role of media coverage

Remote, not efficient and with a pessimistic future; this is how Greeks currently view the European Union (European Commission & European Parliament, 2019). The relation between the EU and Greeks has been problematic for years and is especially tested in the last couple of years. The economic crisis, the memorandums of cooperation, and a referendum asking for the acceptance or the withdrawal of the financial package the EU creditors offered all contributed to this increasingly complex relationship (e.g., Hansen et al., 2017; Walter et al., 2018). Although the reported benefits from being part of the European Union may outweigh the losses, still in general, Greek evaluations toward the EU tend to be more negative than positive (KAS, 2019). But what are those evaluations based upon and how can they be influenced, if not improved? According to several studies, media coverage highly affects these public evaluations as the media's role is closely linked to the potential of influencing citizens' perceptions, attitudes, but also actual (voting) behavior as well (e.g., Schuck & De Vreese, 2006; De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2003; Vliegenthart et al., 2008; Wettstein, 2011; Van Spanje et al., 2014).

Although their role is primarily to inform and entertain (McCombs, 1977:90), empirical observations show us that citizens are likely to turn to news media to acquire the information they need to *make sense of* the political world (e.g., European Commission, 2017 a, b, 2019; Iyengar, 1987). That is because, as Maier argues (as cited in Lecheler et al., 2010), the EU and the EU integration alike are viewed as a remote and complex case and individuals have little to no direct experience (Iyengar, 1987; Nardis, 2015). So, we need the media to make sense. This, one could argue, makes the EU "dependent" on the media coverage as per how their affairs are communicated (Lecheler et al., 2010; Berganza, 2009). So, media coverage can be regarded as an important factor in public opinion formation (e.g., Lecheler et al., 2010; Iyengar, 1987; Nardis, 2015; De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2006).

How does media do that? One option that literature suggests is that the media have the ability to set the agenda by selecting which issue needs to be covered and which one not, hence giving some issues more attention than others (Carroll & McCombs, 2003; Chong & Druckman, 2007c:113). By increasing the number of news stories on a certain issue, people are more likely to think about it and consider it to be important (e.g., Chong & Druckman, 2007; Semetko, 2004). So, agenda setting informs us what people think about but it does not however seem to inform us *how* people think about it (Pan & Kosicki, 1993:70; Mutz, 1992:484). Based on agenda setting, but taking a next step, framing theory does state that media might also actually influence people's perceptions by "emphasizing some aspects of a problem [that] can put people in mind of a very different consideration" (Price et al., 1997) or "a moral evaluation" (Entman, 1993). On the basis that media coverage matters for its potential to influence public perceptions for the EU (e.g., Schuck & De Vreese, 2006:22; De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2003), many scholars investigated the media coverage of EU news across different countries (e.g., De Vreese et al., 2006) and different events across time (e.g., Peter et al., 2004; De Vreese &

Azrou, 2019). Because media coverage varies across time and countries, the potential role of media could be dependent on the particular context of time and country.

The current paper will focus on the way the media coverage in Greece presents the European Union during the 2019 European Parliamentary elections. With the economic recession started in 2008 and the humanitarian crisis in 2015, one could argue, the EU became an important actor in domestic politics (Cremonesi et al., 2019; Hutter & Kriesi, 2019; Federico & Lahusen, 2018). That is because the EU implemented new policies making the domestic governments less able to autonomously decide the implementation of the EU policies (Cremonesi et al., 2019). This loss of autonomous decision making, one might say, has increased the role of the EU in the public debates (Cremonesi et al., 2019; Hutter & Kriesi, 2019). Such features make it interesting to see how the EU has been currently presented in the media coverage and the current analysis will focus on the period of EP elections as the EU is the main actor (e.g. Van Spanje et al., 2014: 329).

The study will further concentrate on the case of Greece since the complex relations with the EU creditors were characterized by the loss of autonomous decision making. There were three financial packages with austerity measures that, one could say, made the domestic government to conform with the EU policies indicated (cf. Cremonesi et al., 2019) which, in turn, could play a role in public opinion formation for the European Union (Kritzing, 2003). We see precisely that during the economic recession the image of the EU was predominantly negative in the public perceptions (European Commission, 2014) and this negativity was also depicted in the media coverage of 2014 (De Vreese & Azrou, 2019). Then, after the last bailout program in August 2018 and the year after, the perceived image of the EU has shifted; steadily neutral and when evaluated, in 2018 it was more in the negative (European Commission, 2019) and the next year it was more in the positive (European Commission & European Parliament, 2019). Because the EU policies, be it the imposition of austerity measures, can play a role in the way citizens view the European Union (Cremonesi et al., 2019; Hutter & Kriesi, 2019), the current study will explore how the European Union has been currently presented in the media coverage.

1.2. Research question and purpose of this study

In order to find how the European Union has been currently portrayed, by means of performing a media analysis, this study will focus on two concepts of media coverage; the content and the tone. Concerning content, the study will use predefined frames stemming from previous framing literature known for their potential to influence public perceptions and support for the EU. More precisely, the current research will make use of the benefit frame that Vliegenthart et al. (2008) and Van Spanje et al. (2014) examined for their effect on people's support for the EU and, based on the work of Vliegenthart et al. (2008), the study will also include the disadvantageous frame that points to the disadvantages a country may experience from being part of the European Union. Additionally, the study will leave some space for other

aspects that emerged from the media analysis. Second, also following previous content analyses of EU news, the tone of the media coverage will be studied by means of explicit evaluations of the EU as tone could affect public attitudes (e.g., De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2006), the appraisal for a policy or political figure (e.g., McCombs et al., 2000; Price et al., 1997), but could as well mobilize voting intention (Banducci & Semetko, 2003) and voting choice (e.g., Van Spanje et al., 2014). Third, both the content and the tone will be compared across time as previous research has shown that key events tend to increase the number of articles in the news agenda (e.g., Peter & De Vreese, 2004; De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2006) and also play a role in the use of content frames (Scheufele, 2006; Geiß, Weber & Quiring, 2016) and tone (e.g., Gortner & Pennebaker, 2003). Fourth, both the content and the tone will be compared across news outlets of a different political profile as media, alike political parties, could mediate “cues” and play a role in the perceived costs and benefits of the EU and its evaluations (Carey & Burton, 2004:638; see Norris, 2000a). Then, the political profile of media outlets will be discussed for their potential to affect the content and tone of the media coverage for the EU. The main research question of this study is:

RQ: What is the content and tone of Greek media coverage describing the European Union during the 2019 European Parliamentary election period?

In investigating the media coverage, the study formulates four sub questions:

1. *What is the content of the media coverage of the EU?*
2. *What is the tone of the media coverage of the EU?*
3. *Do content and tone change across time due to key events?*
4. *Do content and tone differ per media outlet?*

1.3. Scientific and societal relevance

On the basis that media coverage matters for its potential to influence public perceptions for the EU (e.g., Schuck & De Vreese, 2006:22; De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2003), many scholars already investigated the actual content of media coverage of EU news across different countries (e.g., De Vreese et al., 2006), in times involving important events for the EU (e.g., Peter et al., 2004) and in routine coverage (Peter & De Vreese, 2004). While all this work offers a valuable understanding of how the EU is seen, to the best of my knowledge, there is no study focusing on the current presentation of the EU due to the challenges of economic and immigration crisis (with the exception of Cremonesi et al., 2019 who addressed the Europeanization of Italian media). As Hutter and Kriesi (2019) and Cremonesi et al. (2019) state, the policies implemented by the EU can increase the role of the EU in the public debates and can play an important role for its perceived evaluation. Those characteristics make the time and country setting important (e.g. De Vreese & Azrout,

2019). Drawing upon previous content analyses, the present study will aim to investigate the current presentation of the EU in the media coverage of 2019 by focusing on the case of Greece.

Societally, because the EU policies, like the imposition of austerity measures, can play a role in the way citizens view the European Union (Cremonesi et al., 2019; Hutter & Kriesi, 2019), the fact that citizens of a country with complex relations with the EU, here Greece, tend to report different opinions across time makes the media coverage important to explore. Is the media coverage in line with the (low) positive image and attitude of Greeks toward the EU (European Commission & European Parliament, 2019)? The current paper will aim to fill this void by focusing on the presentation of the EU in the media coverage of the Greek media during the 2019 EP elections. Although the study focuses on one case study, the results are not less interesting. One could compare the findings from the current content analysis with previous studies focusing on a different time period so as to see if the patterns before and after the economic recession are similar; or the results could be compared with other countries where the EU had a central role in the public debates.

The present paper will be structured as follows: First, in the theoretical framework (chapter 2) framing will be addressed as a technique of the media to influence public opinion by providing templates of thought, followed by examples of how framing has been studied in the EU context. With this discussion of literature as background, the predefined frames of benefits and disadvantages, and the tone will be discussed. This is followed by two sections focusing on the key events and the political profile of newspapers for their potential to influence the content and tone of the media coverage. Next is the section of methods and data that were used for this study (chapter 3), followed by the results (chapter 4) and discussion (chapter 5).

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Media framing: definition, effect and types

Media coverage is likely to affect public opinion by the way news are framing a certain issue (Nelson et al., 1997:225). Framing refers to “emphasizing some aspects of a problem [that] can put people in mind of a very different consideration (Price et al., 1997)” in general or of “a [...] problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation” (Entman, 1993) in particular. Framing is acknowledged to “organize the world both for journalists who report it and, to some important degree, for us who rely on their reports” (Gitlin, 2003:7). That means there are two dimensions to take into account; what media (the journalists) do and how receivers perceive this information (cf. Valkenburg et al., 1999; De Vreese, 2005a). The first dimension reveals how journalists look at the world around them, what they consider as worth sharing (Chong & Druckman, 2007:100) and also the relationship between the issues that are discussed (De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2003:363). The second dimension refers to the audience of those media frames and how they respond to the presentation (De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2003). That does not mean that all

individuals reply to news information in the same way (e.g., Levin et al., 1998) neither that everybody is exposed to all frames that journalists use to present their issues. However, at an aggregate level, as Vliegenthart, Schuck, Boomgaarden and De Vreese (2008:418; Chong & Druckman, 2007b) assume, frames in communication are likely to influence individuals' opinions and attitudes.

With news frames, individuals are able to "locate, perceive, identify and label" (Goffman in Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000:94) an issue. Trying to provide a definition of media frames, the literature does not conclude to an overarching or most common definition (e.g., Druckman, 2001; Nelson et al., 1997). There are however two main angles that define media frames; their nature and their function. Nature could refer to what the frames are; in a broader definition they could be understood as "schemata" in general (Entman, 1991:7; Scheufele, 2006); or in particular, as "coherent packages of information" (Schuck et. al, 2006: 6) giving meaning to a certain event (Gamson et al., 1987, 1989). This information could be linguistic or audiovisual in format (e.g., words, metaphors, images) that might exist in a news story (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989; Tankard, 2001; Deetz et al., 2000). The "cold war" frame is a telling example, which was much used to indicate the conflict between two major superpowers but also to cover stories of international news involving polarization between friends and enemies (Hertog & McLeod, 2001; Norris, 1995). So, frames are not just the information they contain but also the way they classify the information and serve as patterns of interpretation (Gitlin, 2003; Scheufele, 2006:65; Gamson et al., 1989:3). As Gitlin (2003:7) states, frames are "organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world".

There are two broad categories of media frames; the generic and issue-specific frames (De Vreese, 2003, 2005a). The generic frames imply that the same schemata could describe different topics regardless of the nature or peculiarities of the topic or time (De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2003; De Vreese, 2005a). Their advantage is that their use can be compared across different topics, however, they lose in specificity (De Vreese, 2005a). Issue-specific frames, on the other hand, focus on the presentation of a certain object grasping on the details (De Vreese, 2005a; De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2003:363). In addition to the generic and issue-specific frames, stories can stress positive or negative aspects to describe an issue or object (De Vreese, 2005a: 60). To affiliate the reader with the use of the frames, the following section gives some examples of how frames were studied in the EU context.

2.2. Framing the European Union

The presentation of the EU might have been the topic of many researchers studying the content of its presentation (frames) and its effect on public opinion and EU support. The five frames of responsibility, economic consequences, conflict, morality and human interest that have been developed by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) are all examples of generic frames that have been studied in various topics. In the EU-related news, Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) found that news about Europe and European integration was covered more in terms of a problem mentioning its cause or solution (responsibility frame), or the economic consequences stemming from this problem or issue (economic

consequences frames). Other frames were identified through moral or emotional quotations (morality frame and human interest frame respectively) and conflicts between (groups of) people and institutions. In another content analysis around the period of the introduction of euro, De Vreese et al. (2001) explored the use of the two generic frames of conflict and economic consequences finding that the former was used more when the news was political or economic in general and less when the news was about the launch of euro. On a different note, generic frames could be also identified in relation to a particular event. De Vreese and Boomgaarden (2003), for example, first identified the frame of consequences of the EU summit at Nice and then clustered them by types of consequences (political-institutional, economic, social-cultural) so as to explore their effect on public support for EU enlargement.

Another group of generic frames concerns the strategic schemata (De Vreese, 2005 a, b) focusing on the political cynicism they could render. In a multimethod analysis, De Vreese (2005b) investigated their effect on cynicism toward EU politics after having identified their characteristics in the EU news: i) the use of war language, ii) winners and losers, iii) politicians' presentation and style, iv) polls and candidates standing and v) "performers, critics and audiences" (see also Jamieson as cited in De Vreese, 2005a). To further investigate their potential to boost the political cynicism toward EU politics, De Vreese and Elenbaas (2008) conducted two experiments examining three different types of strategy frames; the generic strategy, publicity and press strategy.

With issue-specific frames, on the other hand, studies gain on specificity (De Vreese, 2005a), hence getting a better insight into how the object at hand is described. In an experimental study focusing on the framing effect on the support of Serbia's EU candidacy, Lecheler et al. (2010) used two issue-specific frames while adding them a positive-negative valence; the tribunal frame and the economy frame. The economy frame referred to Serbia's EU candidacy as dependent on the country's (positive) economic growth, whereas the tribunal frame was related to the (lack of) cooperation between the country and the UN war crimes tribunal (p. 78, 92). To explain the arguments pro and against the use of issue-specific frames, both the tribunal and economy frames were associated with Serbia's particular status of EU candidacy making those schemata not applicable in other contexts. While their application aimed to understand the public support towards the EU enlargement, with the words of Hertog and McLeod (2001), it is "too easy [for researchers] finding evidence for what they are looking for".

In addition to the above groups of frames, research on the EU focused on aspects with an inherent valence aiming to explain the public attitudes toward the political institution. The inherent valence discusses if the object in question is positively or negatively presented (De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2003). In the work of Schuck et. al. (2006), for example, the frames were a dichotomy of opportunity and risk where evaluations, argumentation and feelings towards the EU are the items giving meaning to the risky or opportunity frame. The opportunity frame referred to the EU enlargement as a "good" scenario for Europe and the member states and vice versa when EU enlargement was presented as a risk. Similarly, in the study of De Vreese and Boomgaarden (2003), the consequences of the EU summit at Nice were first

identified and then coded in relation to their inherent valence creating the dichotomy of advantageous and disadvantageous consequences.

All in all, the above groups of frames describe the content of the media coverage in terms of how an object is described. In the current study, the focus is the content that could influence the public perceptions and attitudes towards the EU. Although generic and issue-specific frames might promote templates of thought (De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2003:362; Brugman et al., 2017) either in general or in association with a specific object, the current study will focus on the use of the benefit (and disadvantageous) frame as it was tested given their effect on public attitudes and voting behavior (Vliegenthart et al., 2008; Van Spanje et al., 2014; De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2003) and that the economic rationality matters for one's support toward the EU (e.g., Gabel & Palmer as cited in Van Spanje et al., 2014; Vliegenthart et al., 2008).

2.2.1. The benefit and disadvantageous frames

The benefit frame, alike the disadvantages, refers to those benefits that the EU brings to one's country (Vliegenthart et al., 2008; Van Spanje et al., 2014; also see Schuck, Xezonakis, Banducci, & De Vreese, 2010). By stressing the benefits, the frame underlines the gains of the EU for the receiver. According to the theory of self-interest, individuals might be driven by their personal interests when making decisions or forming behaviors (Miller, 1999). That practically means that where there is a benefit frame, an individual is likely to act economically rationally (Gabel & Palmer as cited in Van Spanje et al., 2014). That is because, as Inglehart (1970) argues, there is a type of feedback relationship between society and decision makers that makes people think and evaluate rationally the immediate benefits and disadvantages of this relationship. For Gabel (1998 a, b), in a different explanation, the difference between this calculation of costs and benefits comes from the different socio economic experiences an individual might have. In his work, he confirmed the importance of the utilitarian consequences alike Gabel and Palmer (cited in Vliegenthart, Schuck, Boomgaarden & De Vreese, 2008:417), for example, who also found that the personal expectations of benefits matter for one's support toward the EU.

Research reveals that the benefit frame does matter for the public support toward the EU. Based on Eurobarometer surveys, Vliegenthart et al. (2008) found that, at the aggregate level, the benefit frame did have a positive influence for peoples' benefit perceptions and EU support in general. Taking a next step, Van Spanje et al. (2014) conducted interviews before and after the 2009 EP elections showing that voters who were exposed to the benefit frame were less likely to vote a Eurosceptic party (p. 335). The disadvantageous frame, on the other hand, did not show any influence on the public support toward the EU, possibly because news tends to describe the EU in negative terms (Vliegenthart et al., 2008). Instead, it might be plausible that the often negative presentation of the EU in the news made the benefit frame to stand out and easier to be picked up (p.433; cf. Boomgaarden, 2007:173). All in all, the current study will focus on the benefit and disadvantageous frame (Vliegenthart et al., 2008) while it will also leave some room for other frames that could emerge in order to gain more insight of how the EU has been presented.

Evidence from previous studies form our expectations for the share of the frames of benefits and disadvantages. On the one hand, Vliegthart et al. (2008) found that both frames were almost equal present in the media coverage, alike Schuck et al. (2006) found for the opportunity and risk frames of the EU enlargement. On the other hand, the disadvantages outnumbered the advantages when De Vreese and Boomgaarden (2003) analyzed the presentation of the outcomes of the EU summit at Nice. Alike, the threats coming from the Turkey's EU membership were greater than the covered benefits (De Vreese et al., 2010). This evidence seems to couple with the argument media tends to share more negative information about the EU than positive (e.g., Norris, 2000b; Schuck & De Vreese, 2006; De Vreese et al., 2006). Based on this argument and previous evidence, it seems possible that negative information like the disadvantages to be more emphasized in the media coverage.

H1: The EU is more likely to be framed in terms of disadvantages than advantages.

2.3. Tone

In addition to the news frames, media coverage can also influence the way citizens view and evaluate an object by suggesting positive and negative cues (De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2003; De Vreese et al., 2006:483). The tone of media coverage refers to the evaluations and is often expressed as emotions or clear-cut positive and negative explicit references (synthesizing Kiousis, 2004; Schuck & De Vreese, 2006; De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2006:427). By suggesting a positive or negative evaluation, citizens assess the object based on the positive and negative cues that enter their minds about it (De Vreese et al., 2006: 483). In turn, citizens' evaluations are related to opinion formation, voting, or appraisal for a policy or particular candidate (Price et al., 1997:486). Van Spanje et al., (2014:341), for example, tested this hypothesis for the individuals' voting behavior and found evidence that the more negative a pro EU campaign was framed in, the more likely the voter was to go for a Eurosceptic party. Alike, in a study combining a content analysis and an experiment, De Vreese and Boomgaarden (2006) found that a consistently positive and extensive news media coverage was likely to influence respondents' attitude towards the EU enlargement.

In the EU context, the evaluations of the EU could either be dependent on the performance of the national state or independent. The latter case implies that citizens can evaluate the EU on the basis of EU policies and events independently from the performance of their nation-state (Kritzinger, 2003). In methodological terms, the tone of the media coverage for the EU is measured as the explicit evaluations of the EU and its attributes, be it its policies for example (e.g., Van Spanje et al., 2014; De Vreese et al., 2006; De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2006, De Vreese & Azrout, 2019). Those evaluations could be indicated by suggesting whether the EU is "good or bad" or whether the EU "is failing or succeeding in doing something" (Eberl et al., 2015; Boomgaarden, 2007:59).

The importance of tone lies in those cases when media tend to overweight one perspective, party or candidate over the counterparts hence making media having a directional bias (Eberl et al., 2015; Norris, 2000a). According De Vreese et al. (2006), news tend to be mainly neutral, be it possibly the balanced reporting that shall characterize media (Norris,

2000a:27). The criticism towards media, however, is that they tend to share more negative information than positive (Kepplinger & Weissbecker as cited in Peter & De Vreese, 2004) for reasons that could relate to its genre (De Vreese et al., 2006; see Norris, 2000a). In the EU context, when the news is evaluative, they are more likely to be slanted towards negativity. The negative direction of EU news was found in the work of Norris (2000 a, b) who investigated the media coverage on issues related to EU, like euro, and was confirmed in later research (Schuck & De Vreese, 2006; De Vreese et al., 2006; De Vreese & Azrout, 2019)- with the exception of De Vreese and Boomgaarden (2006). Based upon the above arguments and evidence, the hypothesis formed is the following;

H2: The media coverage is more likely to cover the EU in the negative than in the positive.

2.4. Key events and use of frames

Media can use various frames for the same story (Wettstein, 2011; McCombs, 2014) hence making frames shift, be replaced or remade (Scheufele, 2006:69). This shift could be either slowly during routine periods or rapidly, for example, due to key events (Scheufele, 2006) creating competing arguments (Hansen, 2007; Wettstein, 2011). With competing frames available in the media coverage, evidence from previous research shows that their effect could be limited (e.g., Druckman, 2004; Wettstein, 2011; Sniderman & Theriault, 2004) and the individuals being exposed to these competing arguments can create their own side (Edy & Meirick, 2007:125). Drawing upon this concept, the present study will focus on the key events as a possible reason that could cause a rapid shift in their use (Scheufele, 2006).

Key events refer to a rare or unusual occurrence (Kepplinger & Habermeier, 1995:373) as they could be “extreme, rare and spectacular happenings” (Kepplinger & Habermeier, 1995:372; Critcher, 2006:227) or cultural events (Dayan and Katz, 1992 as cited in Stanyer, 2014:155; see for the distinction Katz & Liebes, 2007) like a bonfire or the Olympics respectively. By involving some sort of unexpectedness (p.372; Stanyer, 2014; Katz & Liebes, 2007), key events are observed to increase the number of news stories around them (Kepplinger & Habermeier, 1995; Stanyer, 2014). In the EU context, important key events could well be EU summits (e.g., Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000), the introduction of a new policy like euro (e.g., Semetko et al., 2000) or the EP elections (e.g., Peter et al., 2004). Likewise, previous research found evidence that EU stories seemed to receive more attention by peaking around the event periods and start fading again after the event (e.g., Peter & De Vreese, 2004; De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2006; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000; De Vreese et al., 2006). So, when the event comes closer, the media agenda gives more attention to the relevant matters.

Turning to the possible impact of the key events on the content frames and tone of media coverage, the evidence from previous studies is not clear. When studying the coverage after the bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers, Geiß et al. (2016) found that the way frames were used in the media was intensified, meaning that after the event the existing frame competition remained the same but increased. As explained, that could be because economic policies are related to different interests and political ideologies. In contrast, Scheufele (2006) focusing on key events related to xenophobia found that during routine coverage there was a consistency in the use of frames but shifts occurred after a key event.

After two events of xenophobic attacks, the competing frames were replaced by one predominant frame. A possible explanation for this low competition of media frames could be that the frame used might be in line with the majority of public opinions (Geiß et al, 2016: 474; Boesman et al., 2016). If, for example, events did not focus on right-wing extremism then there was a dominant frame in the news reporting. Each of those explanations might hold true in their own respect, but in the current context presupposing that the disadvantages of the EU will outweigh the benefits (see H1) because media tends to share more negative information (e.g., Norris, 2000a; Schuck & De Vreese, 2006), it might be plausible to expect a shift in the use of content frames;

H3: The content frames used by media will shift after important events related to the EU.

Concerning the tone, Gortner and Pennebaker (2003) studied the influence of a bonfire accident on the media coverage finding that the negative emotions peaked after the event and started to fade with time.

H4: The tone of the media coverage will shift after important events related to the EU.

2.5. Left-leaning versus right-leaning newspapers in Greece

With studies so far informing us that the media coverage matters for their potential to influence peoples' perceptions and attitudes towards the EU (Schuck & De Vreese, 2006; De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2003; Vliegenthart et al., 2008), media could be seen as third organizations that, alike political parties, could mediate "cues" and play a role in the perceived costs and benefits of the EU and its evaluations (Carey & Burton, 2004:638; see Norris, 2000a:28). Evidence from previous research showed that the political and biased press in Britain could shape the public views towards the EU, especially when receivers were primed with the same messages from both political parties and partisan biased press (Carey & Burton, 2004). Despite the limited literature on the way the political profile of newspapers could affect the framing of the EU (Carey & Burton, 2004; cf. Anderson & Weymouth, 1999), in practice we see this argument by the way relevant studies of media coverage of the EU (e.g., De Vreese & Azrout, 2019; Bijsmans, 2017) select their sample for their ideological leaning. So, where media coverage can influence public perceptions, the political profile of the media could be seen as playing a role in the frames used.

Before moving to the possible impact of the political profile, it would be useful to introduce the Greek media newspapers for their partisan colors and high concentration (Iosifidis & Boucas, 2015; Papathanassopoulos, 2001b). Concentration refers to the media ownership by businessmen active in shipping, telecommunications and other sectors who turned to strengthen their ties with the political elite and create a sort of clientelism (Iosifidis & Boucas, 2015; Papathanassopoulos, 2013; see Hallin & Papathanassopoulos, 2002; Leandros, 2011). As Trantidis argues (2016; see also Lanza & Lavdas, 2000), due to the strong ties between media and political elite, "politicians were more interested in securing and preserving the privileged relations with the press barons versus the political power [...] [and this] led leaders of the two

main political parties to express their desire to redefine their power relations between politics and the media". Instead of a "watchdog" (Papathanassopoulos, 2013; Iosifidis & Boucas, 2015), media's role was constrained by being more "careful in controlling the content they publish or broadcast" or being used for purposes (Iosifidis & Boucas, 2015:15). With the role, thus, as a "currency for negotiation among conflicting elites, rather than as a means of informing the public" (p.15; Papathanassopoulos, 2013:240), the media system could also be seen as competitive- as domestic politics are. Based on the importance of available information, both concentration and competition are important as they describe the available sources that the citizen has the choice to be informed from.

With respect to the distinct differences between media coverage and political parties, the study will take advantage of the ideological leaning of Greek media so as to see whether the content and tone of their media coverage differ per outlet. It is important to note, however, that their pro or anti EU stance of the media is not necessarily tied to their partisan colors (Carey & Burton, 2004); a newspaper could be pro-labor and anti-EU. The reasons behind the positions of the different parties might vary; ideology, transnational links, leadership influence, party competition, public opinion, the development of EU integration or factionalism (e.g., Johansson & Raunio, 2001). Recent evidence from the Greek party system revealed that left-leaning parties tend to have an anti-EU position and conversely, right-leaning parties to have a pro-EU position (far-right, extreme left parties and the party of PASOK that has collapsed are excluded; Katsanidou & Otjes, 2015; see also Gemenis & Dinas, 2010). Therefore, with respect to the differences between newspapers and political parties, it could be expected to find differences between the left-leaning newspapers and right-leaning newspapers;

H5: Left-leaning papers are more likely to frame the EU by emphasizing the disadvantages than the right-leaning papers.

H6: Left-leaning papers are more likely to frame the EU negatively than right-leaning papers.

3. Methods and data

To study the contents and tone of media coverage, a quantitative content analysis was conducted following the five steps described in the work of Chong and Druckman (2007a) and the media study developed by Piredeu (Schuck, Xezonakis, Banducci, & De Vreese, 2010). Both sources were selected as a practical and comprehensive guide so as to familiarize the researcher and reader with the coding procedure while minimizing potential mistakes, gaps in understanding or inaccuracies. In this chapter, the steps followed will be explained in the next three paragraphs. The first paragraph (3.1) will present the general setting of the object described and the period of focus. The second paragraph (3.2) will specify the sources and data used for the current study (corpus). The third paragraph (3.3) will explain

the code book used so as to identify the content and tone of the media coverage including a description of the coding process.

3.1. Setting

3.1.1. *The object described*

What is the “object” described, framed and evaluated? Entman (2004) explains that a frame is applied to an issue, an event or actor (e.g., individual leader, nation) restricting the nature of the object, while Carroll and McCombs (2003:37) specify that the object could be a public figure, corporation, institution or any “thing” there is an opinion about. In particular, the object of this thesis is the European Union as a political institution and political process. Previous research on framing the EU focused explicitly on the EU summits and their outcomes (De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2003), the EU enlargement (Schuck, et. al, 2006) or a country’s EU membership (e.g., for Turkey see Schuck & De Vreese, 2006:22). Vliegenthart et al. (2008), instead, examined the framing of the benefits of the EU as a process on public support and Van Spanje et al. (2014) took a step forward by examining both the benefits and the tone of the EU on voting behavior. Drawing upon the latter two studies on the EU separately, the current paper will approach the EU as a whole “institutional machinery [that] continues to produce directives, regulations and decisions” (Hooghe, 2007). That practically means that for finding the content (frames) and tone of the media coverage for the EU the analysis will take into account the descriptions of “Europe” and “European Union” (Schuck, Xezonakis, Banducci, & De Vreese, 2010: 45-46) encountering attributes of EU policies, treaties, agreements, initiatives, euro and so on. Particular events or institutions, though, were not pointed out (see Schuck, Xezonakis, Banducci, & De Vreese, 2010:51) because they are different actors. References to Troika (International Monetary Fund, European Commission and European Central Bank; for a review see Boukala & Dimitrakopoulou, 2016) or the country’s allies, for example, were not treated as mentioning the EU since the terms do not explicitly refer to it. Similarly, the portrayals of EU politicians were not counted as a possible evaluation of the EU because this study understands the evaluation as an attribution to the object described and not to different objects for which there might be a different opinion about.

3.1.2. *Period of study*

To gain insight into the portrayal of the EU in the media coverage, the study focuses on the campaign period of European Parliamentary elections since the European Union is the main actor, while the results could be compared to previous studies focusing on previous EP elections’ campaigns. That said, the content analysis was conducted for news items released within the four weeks running up to the election day and the two days after. That practically means that since the election day differs per country and for Greece it was the 26th of May, the material collected were news stories published from the 26th of April to the 28th of May 2019 covering the intensified campaign period.

3.2. Corpus

3.2.1. Newspaper selection

To study the use of frames and tone of the media coverage, the content analysis was carried out on three national newspapers (unit of analysis): *I Kathimerini* (The Daily; a newspaper with right-leaning political orientation), *Efsyn* (Efimerida twn Syntaktwn; a quality newspaper with left-leaning orientation) and *Naftemporiki* (economic newspaper with no ideological leaning). Their selection was based on their distinct political orientation, readership and articles' availability.

The political orientation of the newspapers was determined on the basis of how they are reported and studied in previous literature either focusing on EU matters or other topics. The current research included *Kathimerini* for the right-leaning newspaper as it is considered conservative-liberal and often studied as a center-right or right leaning newspaper (e.g., Doudaki & Boubouka, 2019:2020; Mylonas, 2014). *Efsyn*, on the other hand, was chosen for its left-leaning orientation given its alignment with the radical left coalition of Syriza (e.g., Hess, 2018:157; Georgiou & Zaborowski, 2017; Zaharopoulos, 2018). Alternatives of this choice, according to previous studies, were *Eleftherotypia* (Schuck, Xezonakis, Banducci, & De Vreese, 2010: 12; De Vreese & Azrout, 2019:6), *Ta Nea* or *To Vima* for their orientation to the left (Zaharopoulos, 2018:57), though the first went bankrupt during the financial crisis and the archive search of the last two newspapers made it difficult to retrieve the articles desired as only 5 pages related to the EU could be loaded starting from the search date and without a filter to restrict the date. Finally, a third source was added having no ideological leaning hence serving as a point of reference or control source for the rest two newspapers. The newspaper *Naftemporiki* was included, despite its mediocre readership, based on the rankings provided by the Online Publishers Association of Greece (OPA) (AT Internet, 2019) for the month of May 2019 and articles' availability (e.g., when an archive search was not available (newsit) or there was not a date-restriction to identify the date of interest (e.g., newsbomb, news247,cnn.gr)).

3.2.2. Article selection

A content analysis was performed on all the material published in the Greek language by the newspapers mentioned above (3.2.1) during the predefined period (28th of April to 28th of May 2019). This material was retrieved directly from the broadcaster's website and selected following and adding to the guidelines of the documentation provided by Schuck, Xezonakis, Banducci and De Vreese (2010: 27-28; 44). See Table 1 for the detailed criteria of the articles' selection.

First, a keyword sketch of explicit and implicit lemmas referring to the EU was constructed based on the documentation of Schuck, Xezonakis, Banducci and De Vreese (2010). Lemmas included references related to the European Union either explicitly (e.g., Europe, Brussels, EU institutions) or implicitly (e.g., EU policies, EU treaties, European elections). Because

this study focuses on the presentation of the EU as a political institution, excluded from the keyword sketch were mentionings to the EU as a geographical term (p. 51), and broad terms not necessarily referring to the political institution (e.g., the term “elections” without describing whether they are European or not because there were four parallel ballots on the day of the EP elections in Greece).

Second, articles with the identified keywords were filtered by the thematic section. The news articles could appear in any column and could be all types of news (e.g., speeches, reportage, letters to the editor), with the exception of the ones traced in the section of leisure, fashion, culture and other related topics (Schuck, Xezonakis, Banducci & De Vreese, 2010:27). Cartoons and pictures that are not related to the EU and do not have accompanying text were also excluded because the current study looks at the presentation of the EU as a political institution and therefore, the focus is on news published in relevant or related sections. Finally, to make sure that the EU is not peripherally covered, the current study adapted the criteria from Vliegenthart et al.’s research (2008:23) that defined at least two EU references for the inclusion of an article, whereas the current paper considered at least three due to the initial large sample collected. By applying such criteria, the implication is that some data might be missing, though, the criteria ensure that articles do not cover the EU with one or two phrases for example. See Table 1 below describing the criteria for the articles selection.

Based on the inclusion criteria described, the dataset consisted of 755 articles (duplicates excluded); 299 published in Kathimerini, 232 in Naftemporiki and 224 in Efsyn. The data was downloaded digitally and for each article a unique number in ascending order was allocated to enable its identification during the coding process.

Table 1: *Criteria for article selection.*

Criterion	Explanation
Time of publication	From the 26th of April to the 28th of May 2019
Language	Greek
Types of news article	All articles were included regardless of the format <div> Articles excluded: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● cartoons ● If only audiovisual or live streaming </div>

Lemmas related to the EU

Examples of keywords that were included:

- the European Union or EU
(EL: Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση and ΕΕ),
- Brussels (EL: Βρυξέλλες),
- European Parliament
(EL: Ευρωπαϊκό Κοινοβούλιο and ευρωβουλή),
- Commission
(EL: Κομισιόν and Ευρωπαϊκή Επιτροπή).
- European Central Bank (ECB),
- references to other institutions or specific EU policies

Lemmas excluded:

- Europe or the EU as a geographical term
- as a part of a regulation identification
- Broad terms like;
-the reference to “elections” (in general) as there were four parallel ballots on the day of the EP elections in Greece.

Thematic section

All except:

- leisure, fashion, culture, and alike.

Position of the keywords

Keywords presented:

- in the headline (or subheading or lead image) or the lead paragraph and;
 - at least twice in the rest of the article.
-

3.3. Coding procedure

3.3.1. Deductive and inductive coding

In order to explore the tone and contents of the media coverage for the EU, a coding scheme was developed in line with the literature discussed in the previous sections (2.2.1 and 2.3). The current study used both a deductive and an inductive approach so as to gain a better insight of how the EU has been described (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). The first approach concerns frames that are retrieved from theory making the analysis easily replicable and comparable (p.94). Here, the predefined frames are retrieved from the media study of Schuck, Xezonakis, Banducci and De Vreese (2010) that were also found and analyzed in other research projects (e.g., Vliegthart, Schuck, Boomgaarden & De Vreese, 2008; Van Spanje et al., 2014). Further, the internal validity is raised because the frames are predefined and coded with

closed yes-no questions that leave little space for interpretation making the coding procedure consistent, the frames easily replicable and the results comparable and thus, the validity raised.

The second approach concerns an inductive process dealing with frames that are not derived from literature but emerged during the coding. At the point where precise frames were repeatedly present in the news articles, the options were either to overlook them or to include them in the code scheme so as to gain a better insight. By integrating such frames, the advantage is to get a better feel of how the EU was presented while the external validity decreases as those frames lack comparability and replicability. To solve this problem, aspects that were subcategories of the evaluations were merged in the main categories while there is one frame that was repeated hence addressed separately. Thus, as the inductive frame is not retrieved from the literature, the study developed a close-ended question to identify its presence.

3.3.2. Code book

All news articles were coded with the same codebook consisting of three parts; (1) the descriptive information of the article (date of publication, newspaper); (2) the content consisting of deductive and inductive frames; and (3) the tone of media coverage in the article (see Table 2 for the complete code book).

The first part of the code manual covered the descriptive information of the data collected including the name of the newspaper and the release date of the news article.

The second part of the codebook concerns the content of the media coverage consisting of two deductive and one inductive frames. Before turning to these frames, it would be useful at the outset to introduce that, in line with their definition as emphasized aspects (Price et al., 1997), the current study uses the frames as the unit of observation giving us the opportunity to add precision and observe how highlighted the news frames are in the media coverage. The deductive frames are retrieved from previous studies (Vliegenthart, Schuck, Boomgaarden & De Vreese, 2008; Van Spanje et al., 2014) and refer to the benefit and disadvantageous frames asking whether a country has had (or it is expected to have) any kind of benefits or losses from (being part of) the European Union. In line with the theoretical framework (2.2.1), benefits could imply both country and personal gains making receivers calculate the direct cost and benefits of the EU. Likewise, on the basis that frames are defined organizing patterns (Gitlin, 2003:7), the current study also coded the indirect benefits from the EU. To illustrate, an example could be: “the euro is first and foremost a necessity. [...] Without it [...], Europe would have returned to its divided nature, war games [and] EU member states would have been subservient to the old and new world powers like US and China respectively”. Similarly, the disadvantageous frame was identified: “the strong Europe, based on Germany, colonizing [...] Balkans and of course Greece, which was used for their experimental purposes with great success”, “threatened by sanctions imposed by the EU partners [...] is Greece”. Excluded from coding were hypothetical scenarios: “the EU needs a finance minister having the responsibility of investing and supporting small and medium-sized enterprises across Europe. Having the funds [...]”.

Next to these two frames, a third inductive frame emerged during the coding process through its frequent presence in the media coverage. It refers to the apathy and indifference of EU citizens for the political institution and its policies. In particular, the frame of indifference implies that the media coverage refers to the apathy of citizens, as well as their unawareness and hostility towards EU politics: “it is difficult to inspire the public opinion disgusted from the [EU] politics”, “the interest [for the EU] had waned at a time when the European Parliament gained more and more power” and “the growing indifference to what is happening in Europe is statistically measured”. These examples are all aspects referring to the lack of interest and apathy toward the EU and were summarized under the inductive frame of indifference. It is important to mention, though, that this frame is not the result of a qualitative analysis and does not represent all possible aspects that could be found in the media coverage of the three national newspapers. Instead, the indifference frame popped up due to its frequent use that was observed by the author. A subsequent review of the documentation of Schuck, Xezonakis, Banducci, & De Vreese (2010:56) revealed a frame focusing on any distance from and to the EU and its citizens, whereas the current frame of indifference aims to identify the attitude of citizens towards the EU and not the other way around. To identify the presence of the frame, a binary yes-no question was developed drawing upon the documentation of Schuck, Xezonakis, Banducci, & De Vreese (2010).

The third part of the code book deals with the tone of the media coverage for the EU. To measure the tone, the study uses the explicit evaluations for the EU as a standard indicator because it was used in previous studies (Van Spanje et al., 2014; De Vreese et al., 2006; De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2006, De Vreese & Azrout, 2019) making hence the results of this study comparable. Following, thus, previous literature and the guidelines of the documentation of Schuck, Xezonakis, Banducci, & De Vreese (2010:51), the tone asks whether the story evaluates the EU and how, if this is the case. Explicit evaluations could be expressed as valence adjectives (e.g. promising, successful, disappointing, ugly, dangerous), metaphors with an inherent valence (e.g., “the European politics have the taste of hospital food. Necessary for one’s treatment, but with a bad taste”) or aspects that explicitly evaluate the EU when, for example, there is an issue stating as a problem and the EU takes action (e.g., “the extra-territorial application of unilateral restrictive measures [is] contrary to the international law and the EU will draw on all appropriate measures”). The rise of Euroscepticism, the turnout to the EP elections or critical arguments (e.g., the EU shall have raised its voice or needs to become more democratic) were not counted as explicit evaluations for the EU as a political institution because they are not well specified; does “more democratic” mean that the EU is already democratic and needs to be improved or it is not at all? To find the tone in the article, first the quotations were quantified within the text and then, the sum of the evaluative arguments was expressed in a five-item scale ranking from rather negative and negative to mixed, rather positive and positive. In practical terms, articles of a positive tone consist of only positive evaluations, even when there is only one relevant reference to the EU, whereas the rather positive tone signifies that the article includes positive and negative evaluations, but the positives exceed. Similarly, the negative and rather negative tone was measured. In an analogy, the mixed tone means that there is not a bias in the article and the evaluations of the EU are equal in number (Schuck, Xezonakis, Banducci, & De Vreese, 2010:47).

Table 2: *The code book as it was based and adapted from Schuck, Xezonakis, Banducci, & De Vreese (2010).*

Category	Sub-category	Explanation
(1) Descriptive		
	Date of release	26-30 of April 1-28 of May
	Newspaper	Kathimerini Efsyn Naftemporiki
(2) Content frames		
	Benefits	Does the author or any kind of actor mentioned in the article express/argue that one's country has benefited from the EU/EC either generally, or specifically (or that the situation in one's country has improved or will [potentially] improve because of the EU/EC)? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No
	Disadvantages	Does the author or any kind of actor mentioned in the article express/argue that one's country has had disadvantages from the EU either generally or specifically (or that the situation in one's country has been negatively affected or will [potentially] be negatively affected because of the EU/EC)? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No
	Indifference	Does the story make any kind of reference to the indifference of individuals toward the EU? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No
(3) Tone of media coverage		
		Does the story evaluate the EU? (the "EU" refers to the EU as a political institution as such, no to single, more specific institutions such as the EP or EC) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative • Rather negative • Balanced/mixed • Rather positive • Positive

3.3.3. Analysis and coding procedure

To analyse the data, all 755 articles collected were coded by using the software of Atlas.ti. and the coding procedure was divided into two parts: (1) a preliminary analysis to affiliate the author with the coding process and to determine the code system; (2) an analysis of the entire corpus.

The preliminary analysis dealt with the development of the code book. For this task, first a random sample of approximately 50 articles per newspaper were selected so as to familiarize the author with the coding procedure. Then, all articles were reviewed so as to decide which information would be part of the final code book, which aspects would be coded or not as a frame and tone of the article for the EU, and what would consist of the inductive frame of the indifference towards the EU. Since there is only one coder, more rounds or samples might have not been practical. Once the code book was finalized, the next step was to proceed with the analysis of the entire corpus.

4. Results

The goal of this study is to explore the framing content and tone of media coverage by means of frames and explicit evaluations for the EU as a political institution. The following sections report the results of the analysis per sub-question. First, the frames will be presented (4.1), followed by the tone of the EU stories (4.2) and the occurrence between frames and tone (4.3). After that, the analysis of the use of frames and tone across time (4.4) and between newspapers (4.5) will be discussed.

4.1. Content of media coverage: The frames of benefits, disadvantages and indifference of EU citizens

The content of media coverage was expressed by means of three frames, both deductive and inductive, as they were introduced in the literature (2.2.1) and explained for their operationalization (3.3.2). The deductive frames consist of benefits and disadvantages the EU brings to a country and cover the current or future gains (or losses) a country or an actor within the country (individual, community) may receive due to its EU membership. The inductive frame deals with the indifference and unawareness of the EU citizens toward the EU and their politics. All frames were coded in terms of their frequency within the article so as to gain more precision and information of what has been emphasized.

Figure 1 below shows the share of frames expressed in frequency. The results reveal that the media coverage was more advantageous (N=278) than disadvantageous (N=84) towards the EU. In particular, approximately seven out of the ten frames indicated within the media coverage concerned the benefits, either general or personal ones. The inductive frame indicating the indifference and unawareness of EU citizens for EU politics appeared the least in the media coverage (N=54).

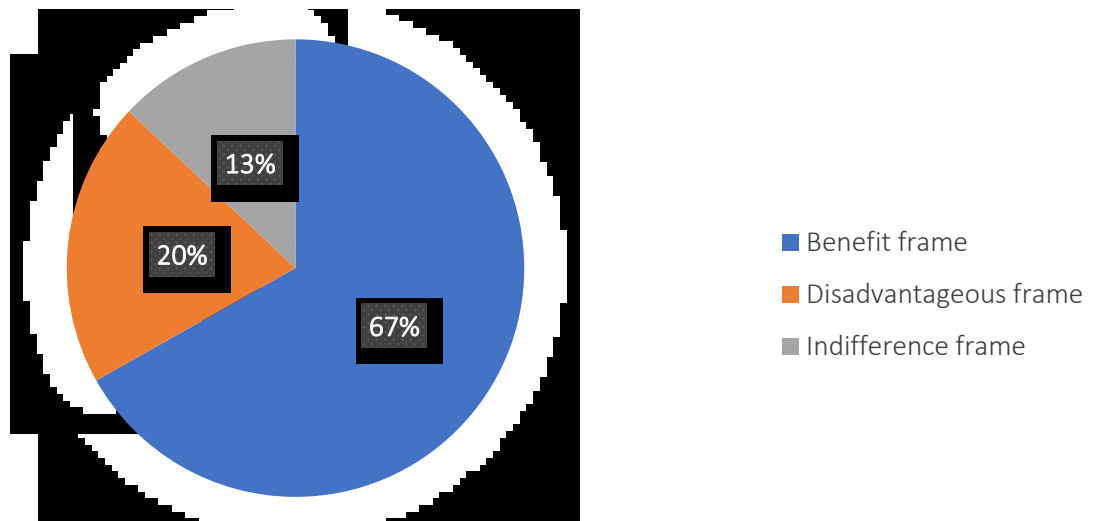


Figure 1: *The percentage of each frame in a total of the national newspapers*

What do those results mean in practice? The higher the number of a frame the higher the emphasis it receives within the media coverage making the benefit frame the most dominant frame of the analyzed newspapers. By these terms, the media coverage emphasizes that Greece has more to gain than to lose from its EU membership. Oftentimes, these gains are expressed in general terms. In a rather negative article discussing if “more Europe” is desirable, the EU was covered in terms of the issues that need to be further addressed but countries were more benefited compared to the scenario of standing alone in the political arena; “The EU integration increases the collective benefits for all EU member states”. Other topics in general might concentrate on welfare or social issues such as “the right to study in any European country” or “the free movement of products, services and people”. Other times, the benefits were more precise and dealt with what Greece has gained or is expected to gain in the future from the EU. Not surprisingly, there were stories that discussed the economic aspect of these benefits; for example, “1.3 billion for measures of adaptation and prevention against the threat of climate change”. On the other hand, disadvantages could discuss the difficulties that overweight countries faced because of the EU measures; “the burden for the [Greek] people was great due to the reforms”, “the ECA products [...] displaced our owns”, “[the national politicians] would not have gone for cuttings if Europe had not told [them] so”. Despite the economic nature, the disadvantages covered cultural issues; the EU “[has made] a culture by looting ours [the Greek culture]”. Further to that, the media also seems to cover the indifference of individuals for the EU when saying that “the issue of Europe does not seem to excite the European voters” or “[they] feel that the EU has left them and that they are [...] to help the banks rather than their people”. Overall, however, the Greek media were more advantageous towards the EU suggesting that “Greece has learned the benefits of the EU in a tough way”.

4.2. Tone of media coverage in the article

In line with previous research (2.3), the tone of the news stories was measured as the sum of explicit evaluations of the EU and its attributes (e.g., policies, euro, EU agreements) ranking from negative to rather negative to mixed, rather positive and positive. Articles with a clear positive tone, like the clear negative one, were identified when all evaluative references were positive even if there is only one such reference. The rather positive (rather negative) tone implies that both positive and negative evaluations for the EU are present within the article but the positives outweigh, whereas the mixed tone means that slanted evaluations are in balance and equal in number within the article (Schuck, Xezonakis, Banducci, & De Vreese, 2010:47).

The findings show that the explicit references evaluating the EU were low, and in those cases where the EU was evaluated the tone was mostly positive. Namely, in the total of 755 articles analyzed, the EU was evaluated in 33% of the news stories (N=251). When the political institution was mentioned and evaluated, the media coverage seemed to cover the EU predominantly in the positive (rather positive + positive= 4% + 11% of the 755 articles) resulting in 111 news stories of positive slant. The negative slant, in contrast, was present in 13% of the total articles (rather negative + negative= 5%+ 8%= 13%). A mixed evaluation was present in 5% (N=41 news stories) where the negative and positive explicit evaluations were equal. See Figure 2 for an overview.

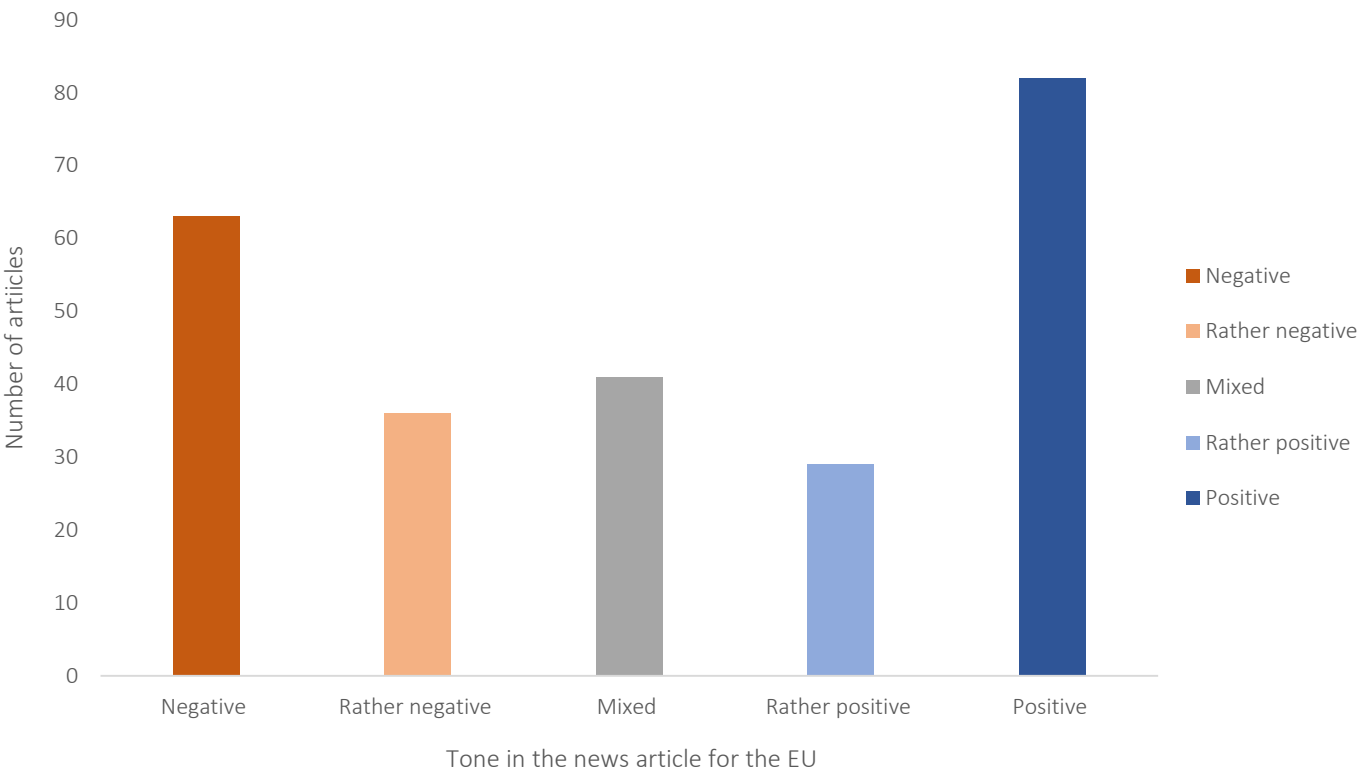


Figure 2: *The tone of the news articles for the EU as a political institution measured in a (rather) negative, (rather) positive and mixed scale.*

“Attractive”, “powerful” but “ugly, repulsive and dangerous”; these attributions are all examples evaluating the EU retrieved directly from the news stories so as to affiliate the reader with the nature of evaluations mentioned in the media coverage. For example, in an article published on the 1st of May discussing the EU employment policy, the commissioner Maryan Tissen favored the EU for its “significant progress in strengthening workers’ rights”. In an article of a rather positive evaluation, the guest editor questioned if the euro succeeded and made it through the challenges of the last decades. With his words, “the crisis management of the last decade was not a model of success neither for Greece nor for Europe”, however “the strong common currency” and Eurozone “succeeded in preventing the worst but at the heaviest cost”. On the other hand, given the many challenges the EU has to deal with, another guest editor discussed the top of the EU by characterizing it as “disappointing because [EU leaders] have moved the EU elections for a later time”. With a clear negative evaluation, the leader of the Communist party in Greece highlighted his opposition with the EU by stating that Europe is not the answer for combatting far-right phenomena because the core values of the EU as such have an inherent anticommunist nature and had gone hand-by-hand with fascism. Finally, an example to distinct the (negative) evaluation with the disadvantageous frame is an article stating the losses and bads coming out of the EU (e.g., over-taxation, over-indebtedness, economic dependence, nationalism) and portraying it as “ugly, repulsive and dangerous”.

4.3. Occurrence between frames and tone

To better understand the content of the news coverage, the current section will take a closer look at the findings of the earlier paragraphs (4.1 and 4.2) by asking whether there is an occurrence between the use of frames and the tone of news articles. In doing so, the frequency scores of the frames used were related to the tone of news stories towards the EU at the article level. Figure 3 shows that overall articles having a more positive tone tend to emphasize the benefits more than the disadvantages and alike, articles of a more negative tone are more likely to emphasize the disadvantages than the benefits of the EU. In those cases, however, where an article has a mixed tone towards the EU, meaning equal numbers of positive and negative evaluations, the pattern is less clear but still shows the tendency to emphasize more the benefit than the disadvantageous frame compared to articles with a negative tone. As for the indifference frame pointing the apathy, there does not seem a clear pattern: articles having a rather positive, rather negative or clear negative tone indicate approximately the same emphasis on this frame.

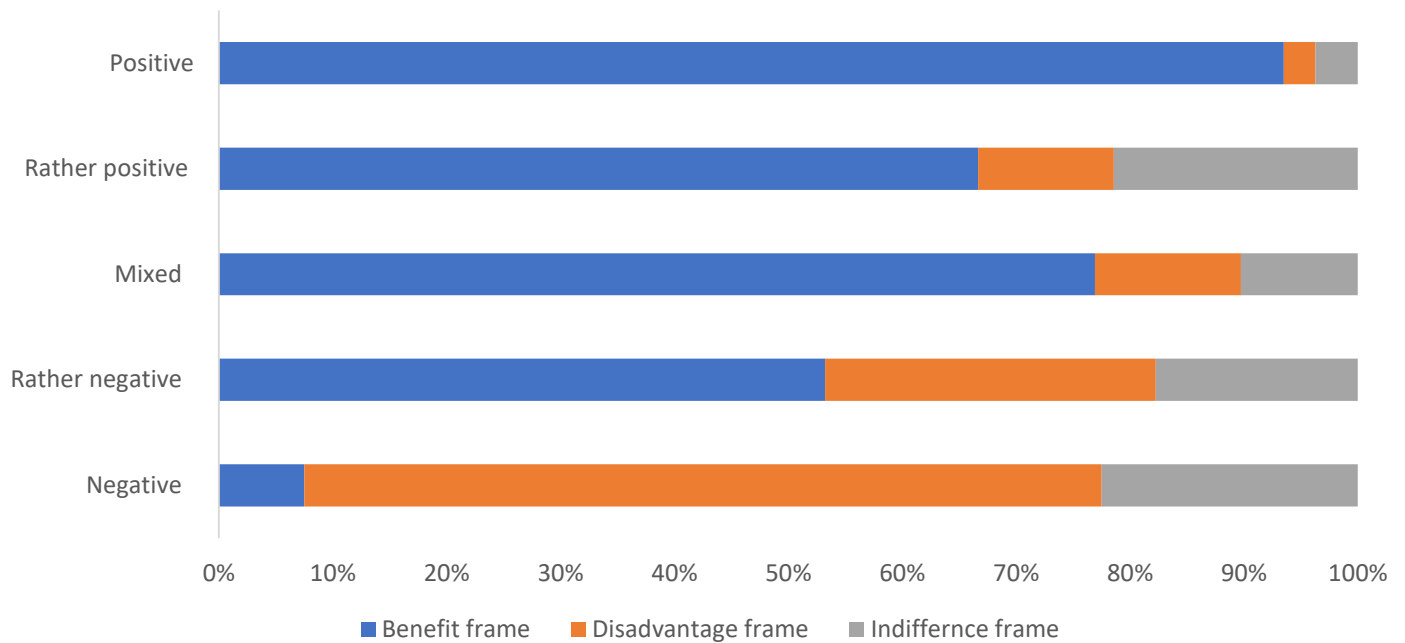


Figure 3: *The occurrence between tone and frames in the news articles.*

4.4. Content and tone of media coverage across time

The third sub question asks whether the use of frames and tone of news articles differ throughout the four-week coverage due to the presence of key events. To answer this question, first, the key events were marked by observing the peak periods of published articles. Figure 4 below shows the development of news stories across time. It appears that the number of articles was low in the first week of the period of study, increasing throughout the campaign period and peaking in four instances during the month of May: between the 7th-9th, the 13th-16th, 20th-24th, 26th-27th.

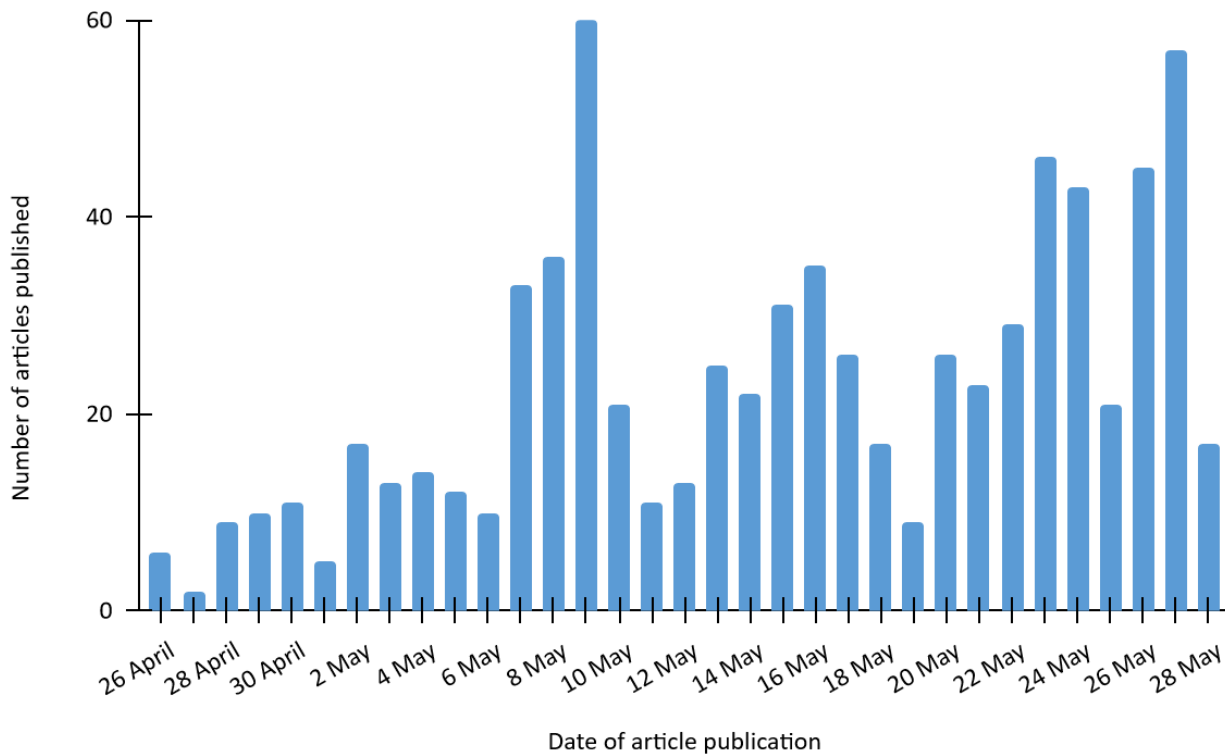


Figure 4: *The number of publications that refer to the EU across the four-week media coverage.*

This study draws upon previous research in the EU context finding that EU stories tend to receive more attention by peaking around the event periods and start fading again after the event (e.g., Peter & De Vreese, 2004; De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2006; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000; De Vreese et al., 2006). So, the study understands that when the event comes closer, the media agenda gives more attention to the relevant matters where the EU is the main actor. Looking at the news stories published in the indicated peak days revealed four events related to the EU. The first event concerns the informal meeting in Sibiu, Romania, which took place on the 9th of May. During the event, heads of states discussed the goals and priorities for the future of the Union, while a prominent issue was the Turkish threatening behavior within the exclusive economic one of Cyprus (see European Council, 2019). A second event that was identified is the debate of the candidates for the Commission presidency on the 15th of May which was an opportunity for the candidates to express their views on the next steps for the EU. Third, there was a report of the Hellenic Federation of Entreprises (SEV) emphasizing the benefits for Greece from its EU membership (see Hellenic Federation of Entreprises, 2019). Although the report of SEV does not seem an event itself because it is not a spectacular happening that the definition of the key events implies (Kepplinger & Habermeier, 1995; see section 2.4), the publication addresses the importance of the EU and the benefits of the country’s EU membership. Finally, the fourth event of the last days of investigation could be the EP elections itself.

In order to answer the question, the study divided all news articles by their date of publication allowing us to see the day to day differences of the use of frames (4.4.1) and tone (4.4.2) across the period of study.

4.4.1. The news frames across time

Figure 5 provides an overview of the day to day differences in the use of frames. In line with the definition of news frames as emphasized aspects, the total number of frames indicated in an article determined the content emphasized in that date of publication. So, the presence of frames per day is expressed as the sum of frames used in the articles published on that particular day.

The results depict the consistency in the development of frames, with the exception of a few cases. It appears that there are four different peak periods where frames are emphasized in the media coverage and all four occurred during the coverage in May; the 8th-10th, the 15th-17th, 20th-23th, 26th-28th. In particular, on the days between the 8th and the 10th of May, for example, 15% of the frames were present. Alike is their share on the 26th-28th of May (13,7%) and the days after presidential debate on the 15th-17th of May (12,7%). A sharp increase in the use of frames is observed in the days prior to the EP elections when the report of SEV was covered. If we consider these occurrences as key events, it could be possible to explain the increase of the use of frames during these periods given that previous evidence reveals that events could influence the content of the media coverage (see the section 2.4).

Descending to each frame separately, the results reveal that the benefit frame was present throughout the period of study but was emphasized in different degrees. Particularly, alike the disadvantageous frame, the benefit frame was concentrated around key events by being more emphasized in the beginning of the campaign period, in the middays of 13th-16th of May and then peaking around the Sibiu summit and the days running up to the EP elections.

While the benefit frame is predominant, as expected from the results in the previous section (4.1), there is an interplay between benefits and disadvantages the days before the EP elections where also the indifference frame was more present. Overall, the results reveal that the change in the use of frames was not a shift from benefits to disadvantages and conversely, but rather a matter of emphasis. In line with the hypothesis (H3), key events did not play a role in the use of frames- with the exception of the EP election day.

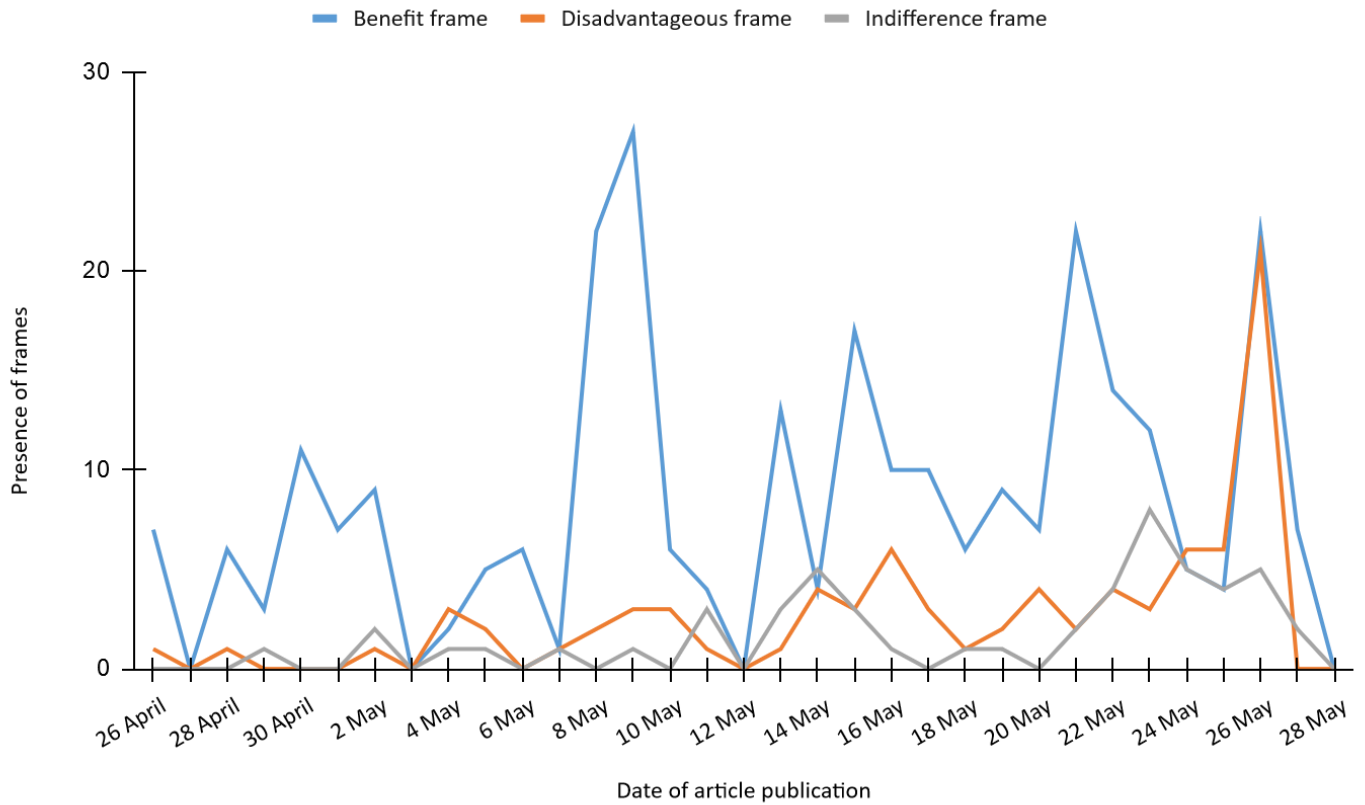


Figure 5: *The emphasis of content frames (benefits, disadvantages and indifference) across the four-week media coverage.*

4.4.2. *The tone of media coverage across time*

To observe the differences of the evaluations of the EU in the media coverage, Figure 6 shows how the categories of mixed, total positive (rather positive + positive), total negative (rather negative + negative) developed across time. The results reveal that news stories were predominantly positive with few occurrences of clear negative or mixed articles across time (e.g., 29.4, 5.5, 19.5, 22.5). Where the favorable news stories peaked on the 9th of May, they presented fluctuations across time ending up being equal (low) with the unfavorable news stories on the day of EP elections. Unlike, the share of news stories with a clear unfavorable evaluation was lower, yet there was a U curve between the Sibiu meeting and EP elections day.

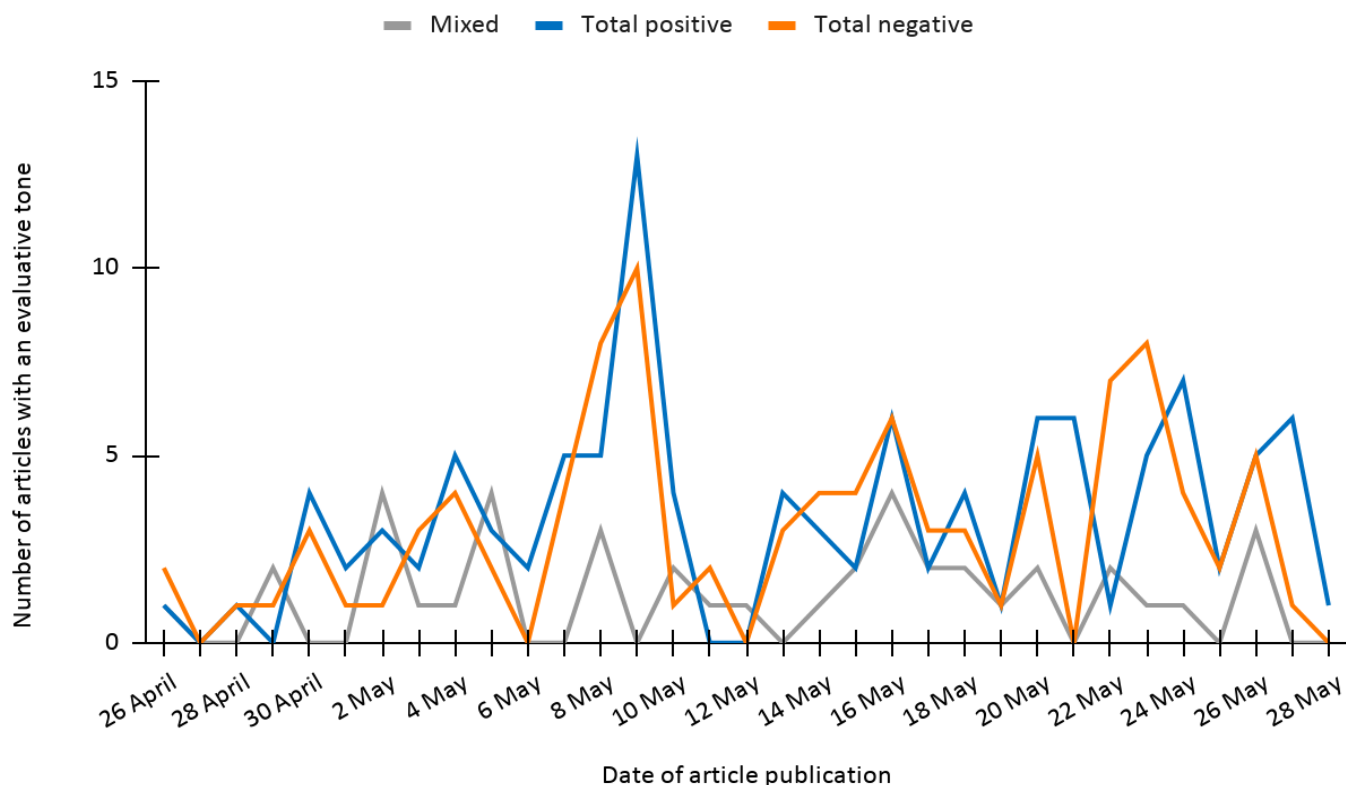


Figure 6: *The number of news stories evaluating the EU in the mixed, total positive (rather positive + positive) and total negative (rather negative and negative) across the four-week coverage.*

4.5. Content and tone per newspaper

The findings up to this point showed the share of news frames in the media coverage and the share of the positive and negative evaluations of the EU for the last four weeks leading to the EP elections. This section will focus on the distribution of the content and tone across newspapers with different political orientations. At the outset, it might be important to recall that the political orientation of the newspapers was based on left-right lines lying on their party-leaning as it is a standard indicator that was used for the newspaper selection in previous studies (e.g., De Vreese & Azrout, 2019; Bijsmans, 2017). To compare the content and tone of media coverage across newspapers, the section will be split into two parts discussing each topic separately.

4.5.1. The use of frames across newspapers

Figure 7 displays the commonalities and differences of the use of frames across the different newspapers. The first commonality is that all three newspapers covered the EU first in terms of benefits, second in terms of the disadvantages and then, followed the frame of citizens' indifference. The second commonality is the almost equal and low emphasis of

the disadvantageous and the indifference frames. For all three papers, the disadvantageous frame had almost the same sheer number of references with the indifference frame, yet it was more visible in the news coverage. The pattern was slightly different in the case of Efsyn where the disadvantages were clearly more emphasized (n= 45 disadvantages versus n=19 for the indifference frame).

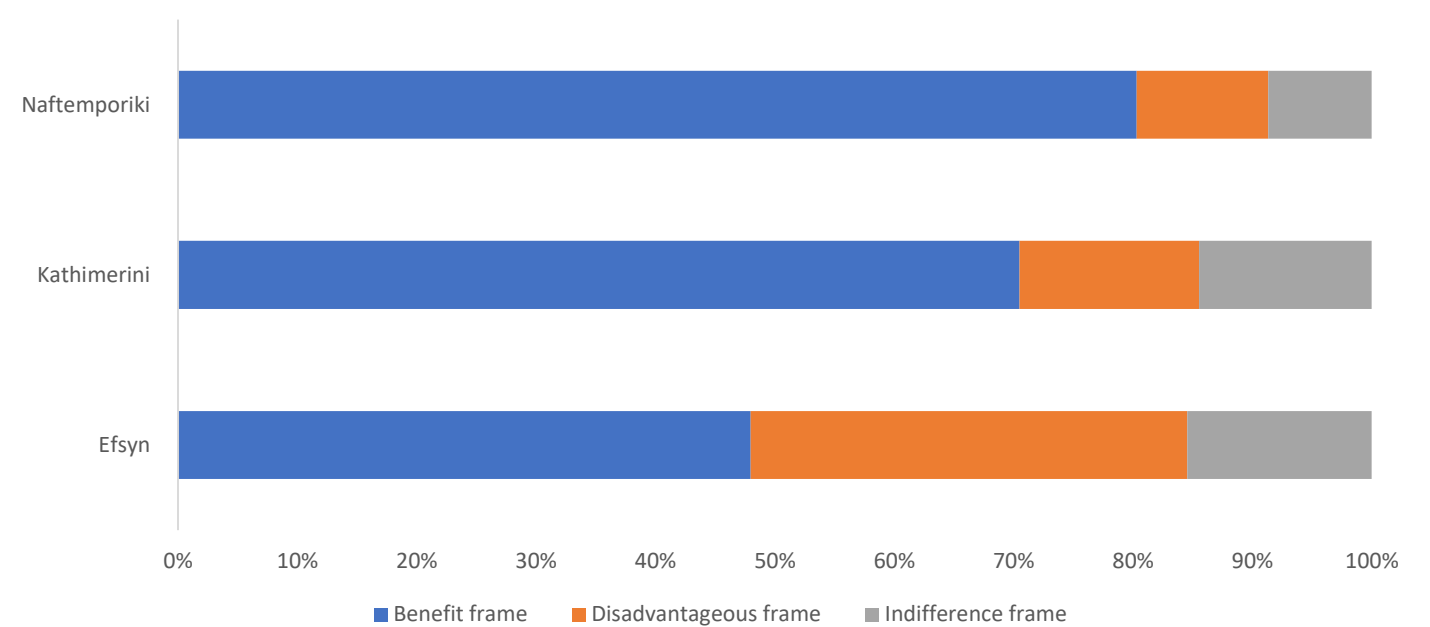


Figure 7: *The emphasis of content frames (benefits, disadvantages and indifference) compared by newspaper.*

The differences concern the in-between distribution of the frames for each newspaper. The first difference is that the current or future gains of the EU for a country appear more in the articles of Kathimerini and Naftemporiki than in Efsyn. Although the alike share of frames in the former two newspapers (n=166 and 127 respectively), the sheer number of frames indicated show that Naftemporiki is likely to emphasize the benefits of the EU approximately seven times more than its disadvantages (n= 102 and n= 14 respectively), while in Kathimerini benefit frames are five times more with respect to the total number of the emphasized frames in this newspaper (n=117 for the benefits and n=25 for the disadvantages). In Efsyn, on the other hand, the analogy benefit-disadvantages is less than two to one (n=59 versus n=45). By these means, it is more likely to find an article presenting the benefits in Naftemporiki or Kathimerini rather than in Efsyn. Finally, the indifference of individuals for the EU and its attributes was the least emphasized, yet it was more visible in Kathimerini (n=24), followed by Efsyn (n=19) and Naftemporiki (n=11).

4.5.2. The tone of the media coverage across newspapers

Turning to the tone of the news articles, the results reveal that two out of the three newspapers covered the EU more in the positive, followed by the negative slant and then in the mixed. In the total of 755 articles, the number of articles with a total positive tone of the independent Naftemporiki (positive + rather positive = 4% + 1%) was higher than the total negative (negative + rather negative = 2%+1%); this pattern was also found in the right-leaning Kathimerini (positive + rather positive= 5%+ 1%). The left-leaning, Efsyn, on the other hand, deviated by emphasizing more the negative aspects describing the EU (negative + rather negative= 4% + 2%). Figure 6 offers an overview of the distribution of the articles with an evaluative tone toward the EU. Finally, it seems that mixed articles that consisted of equal positive and negative evaluations were low and approximately equal in number across all newspapers.

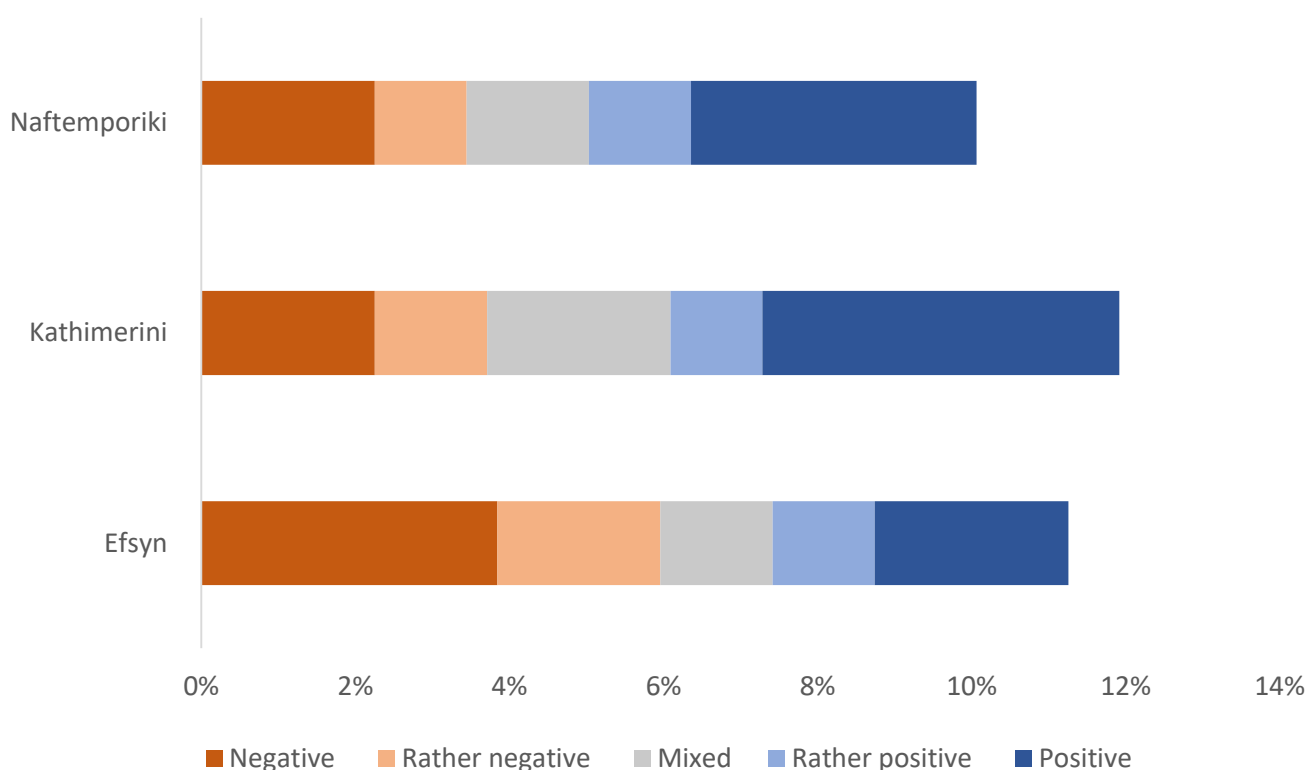


Figure 8: The percentages of news stories evaluating the EU in the (rather) negative, mixed, and (rather) positive per newspaper.

5. Discussion and conclusions

5.1. Main findings and interpreting the results

The goal of the current study was to explore the presentation of the EU in the media coverage of 2019 European Parliamentary elections by focusing on two elements of the media coverage; the content by means of frames and the tone referring to the explicit evaluations of the EU in the news articles. The study concentrates on the case of Greece as

a country where the EU, one could argue, was a main actor. Since, to the best of my knowledge, there is no information about the current portrayal of the EU the current study aimed to fill this void. In doing so, 755 news articles were retrieved and analyzed from three national newspapers of a distinct political orientation (left-leaning, right-leaning, independent). Further, and given the event of EP elections, the study focuses on the last four weeks running to the EP elections day including four EU events; the informal meeting at Sibiu, the presidential debate, the report published by the Hellenic Federation of Entreprises (SEV) highlighting the gains of the country from its EU membership, and finally the European Parliamentary elections day.

Following prior research, the study investigated the content of the media coverage by using the frames of benefits and disadvantages (Vliegenthart, Schuck, Boomgaarden & De Vreese, 2008) while adding the inductive frame of the indifference of citizens towards the EU. The content frames were measured as emphasized aspects in line with the definition of Price et al., (1997) and therefore, were coded in terms of their frequency within the article. Our expectation (H1) was based on previous results (e.g., De Vreese et al., 2010, De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2003) while hypothesizing that a negative tone that would be predominantly present would drive the negative frame of disadvantages. The results, however, inform us that the benefits reported clearly outweighed the disadvantages making the hypothesis (H1) to be rejected. A possible explanation could be contextual and national factors (e.g., Anderson, 2017) that could influence the framing of the EU. To illustrate, during the economic recession that started in 2008, three financing packages were offered by EU creditors so as to improve the financial situation in Greece. It might be that, despite the imposition of austerity measures, the benefits were greater to handle and improve the economic situation in Greece.

Concerning the evaluations of the EU, the share of the news articles with an evaluative tone in the media coverage was low. Specifically, the EU was explicitly evaluated in 33% of the 755 articles making the result in line with the findings of prior studies (De Vreese et al., 2006; Van Spanje et al., 2014). One could argue that clear statements of whether an actor, be it the European Union in this study, is good and performs well, or badly, might not be easy to find (Boomgaarden, 2007:59) compared to evaluations of a process (cf. Schuck et. al.; 2006). Looking at the tone for the EU, the results do not conform with the second hypothesis (H2) revealing an overall balance between positive and negative evaluations, yet slightly tilted towards the positive. Our expectation was that the evaluations for the EU would follow the argument of negative news (Kepplinger & Weissbecker as cited in Peter & De Vreese, 2004) and the findings from prior studies (e.g., Norris, 2000a; De Vreese et al., 2006; De Vreese & Azrout, 2019), however our results were contraire. The fact that there was a balance between the positive and negative evaluations and not a clear bias seems to confirm that the media tend to be neutral (De Vreese et al.; 2006). In practice, that means citizens are exposed to a roughly balanced reporting. Interestingly, if we compare the tone for the EU and the use of frames (see for example sections 4.4.1 and 4.4.2 for the figures 5 and 6). On the one hand, there is a clear bias in terms of the use of benefit frame and on the other hand, the tone is roughly mixed, with positive evaluations to be almost equal in number as the negative ones. The figure 3 showing the occurrence between frames and tone (section 4.3) informs us that articles with a positive tone might emphasize the benefits, and vice versa for the negative tone and disadvantages. These findings suggest that the evaluations for an actor

might be possibly different, or one could say, to some extent independent from the frames and future research might clarify whether this observation holds true.

The third and fourth hypotheses were of a clear exploratory nature since there is limited information on frames and tone of media coverage developed across time due to EU key events. Previous research on EU news demonstrated that the number of articles was increased when EU events were close (e.g., Peter & De Vreese, 2004; De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2006; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). Drawing upon this indicator, the study marked four events related to the EU in order to show whether the content frames and tone could shift when there is a preceding event. In the case of framing content, our hypothesis was built upon evidence from previous research suggesting that after an event occurrence there would be a low competition and a shift (Scheufele, 2006). Our findings indeed indicate a low competition showing the predominance of the benefit frame however this low frame competition was also present before the EU happenings, hence there was no shift in the use of frames after an EU event. Instead, the news stories seemed to emphasize more the frame already used. Exception to this was the news of the days before and after the EP elections (the 25th-27th of May) where both benefits and disadvantages were almost equally present and the frame of indifference was more emphasized. These observations stand in the middle of our expectations hence partially confirming our hypothesis (H3). One possible explanation might be that media does not necessarily reframe or replace the frames already used (cf. Scheufele, 2006) but they could rely on them because they are more familiar to their audiences or because their sources of information also use these frames to describe a certain issue or object (cf. Boesman et al., 2016).

In the case of tone, the hypothesis (H4) was confirmed for all four marked events despite the different volume of evaluative articles. We see, for example, that at the time of the meeting in Sibiu where heads of states discussed the goals and future of the European Union, the tone was clearly positive but the next couple of days was replaced by a (low) volume of negative articles. The opposite was observed before and after the EP elections where the tone was clearly negative on the 26th of May and then has shifted to positive. Similar shifts were observed on the days of the candidates' debate and the publication of the report of SEV. This finding indicates that the key events could possibly play a role in the way journalist evaluate an actor. However, there is limited evidence from previous studies to support such an argument and more data need to be collected and more research around the tone and use of frames in relation with EU events.

Finally, content and tone were compared across newspapers of a different political profile. Our expectation (H5) was that the use of frames would differ between left-leaning and right-leaning newspapers and indeed the results confirmed this hypothesis: the left-leaning newspaper of Efsyn emphasized more the disadvantages of the EU than the newspapers of the independent Naftemporiki and right-leaning Kathimerini. Similarly, the news stories of Efsyn were more likely to cover the EU in the negative than the right-leaning and independent newspapers confirming our expectation (H6). These findings suggest that the political profile of a media outlet could play a role in the framing of the EU compared to outlets of a different political orientation, but they do not explain however the similar patterns of tone and framing content in

all newspapers. For example, the left-leaning Efsyn tends to use more frequently the losses to discuss the EU compared to other newspapers but did not emphasize more the disadvantages than the benefits. That practically means that the left-leaning newspaper shared the same pattern with the other newspapers in terms of the emphasized frames, though to a lesser extent. The right-leaning Kathimerini and independent Naftemporiki also share the same patterns regarding the tone and frames. A reason to explain this result might be that a predominant frame, like in this case the benefit frame, might be already familiar to the newspapers and socially established (cf. Boesman et al., 2016) so media might rely on previously used frames to report and frame the EU. Future research could investigate which factors could possibly explain the reason why media tend to frame the EU in a certain light.

5.2. Limitations and suggestions for future research

Although this study draws upon previous research to explore the media coverage of the EU, it would be important to take into consideration some limitations before interpreting the current results. First, concerning the object of focus as such, the current study focused on the media coverage discussing the EU as a political institution without pointing out a single institution or EU leader. In methodological terms, that means that the EU needed to be explicitly mentioned otherwise the evaluation could well be for a topic related to the EU but not for the EU as such. That is because, as discussed in previous sections (3.1.1), different actors might render different evaluations and perceptions not necessarily in relation to the object they are attached to. However, by approaching the EU as a whole, the study might lose some data in the expense of being more focused on the main objective. Future research could differentiate and explore the portrayals of different actors that are related to the European Union.

Second, looking at the means used to explore the media coverage, the study focused on the tone by means of evaluations of the EU and on two deductive and one inductive frame. The benefit (and disadvantageous) frame was selected for the reason of its possible effect on public attitude and voting behavior (Vliegenthart et al., 2008; Van Spanje et al., 2014; De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2003) but it does not take into account other aspects that could sketch the portrayal of the European Union. To the best of my understanding, other aspects or attributes bearing a certain evaluation for the EU are largely unexplored and thus, by no means, these frames reveal all possible reasons for giving a positive or negative evaluation to the EU. To dissolve this, a possible approach could be an inductive analysis for all news articles in order to identify the aspects or argumentation that are used to describe the EU.

A third limitation concerning the content frames is that the current study focused on reporting which aspects were more and less emphasized but neglected the content of the frames discussed. Future research could further investigate the content of the frames used by asking: what are the benefits and disadvantages discussed in the EU news? Are the economic outcomes the benchmark or there are other types of benefits and drawbacks greatly emphasized? Do those benefits (and disadvantages) apply more to countries, EU citizens or other entities like firms? The same argument also holds true for the tone and future research could go a step forward by investigating what the positive and negative

evaluations explicitly referring to the EU. Another possible investigation is to explore whether the use of frames is related with the tone of the article: Could it be that articles emphasizing benefits are also evaluating the EU positively?

A fourth limitation stems from the methodological approach as there were only three newspapers investigated for their content frames and tone. Initially, newspapers are just one source of information with a declined readership making the assumed role of the media on public perceptions and attitudes limited. However, the data selected enabled the comparison of the current findings with previous research. Additionally, having three papers as database might limit the generality of the results but the goal of the current study was exploratory and aimed to see whether the political profiles of the newspapers could play a role in the portrayal of the EU in the media coverage. Future research could further expand the dataset to other information providers, public and private commercial outlets, whether those could be newspapers, television programs, radio or social media.

Part of the methodological limitations is also the identification of the key events. In particular, four events related to the EU were found after having first marked the peak periods of the media coverage. If the EU news tend to be cyclical by peaking around important events related to the EU as previous evidence suggested (e.g., Peter & De Vreese, 2004; De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2006), then each of the events identified in this study could logically make sense for driving the attention of the media coverage. However, it could well be possible that there are other reasons or other events that could play a role in the attention of the media coverage. Future research could as well identify the key events by conducting a qualitative analysis independently from the data collected. This, in turn, would help us to see whether there is a causal relationship between key events and the use of content frames and tone.

Another limitation worth mentioning is that the results are built upon the media coverage of a single country and one case study cannot draw a conclusion as per how the EU has been presented. The advantage of focusing on a country with complex relations with the EU, though, is that findings could be compared to other countries that have been bailed out or were not affected by the financial crisis.

Finally, it is important to note that the current research focused on the content frames and tone of media coverage due to its potential to influence public perceptions but did not go further to the effect of this media coverage to the receivers of the EU news. The current findings suggested that there is a mildly positive tone throughout most of the period of study, while the benefit frame is predominant and consistent. We do not know however if the media coverage did play a role in the perceived (low) positive image of EU (European Commission & European Parliament, 2019). Based on previous studies finding that the most prominent frame in the media coverage tended to affect the public opinion (Schuck & De Vreese, 2006:22; see also Levin, Schneider & Gaeth, 1998:164; Levin, 1987), future research could investigate the predominant benefit frame, alike the mildly positive tone, is also apparent to public perceptions when receivers are exposed to such framing.

5.3. General conclusions

By asking the content frames and tone of the media coverage, the current paper reveals some interesting and some intriguing results. The first general conclusion is that the media coverage can indeed change across time between different time periods (see De Vreese & Azrout, 2019:20). Previous studies looking at the presentation of the European Union during the EP elections found that the Greek news were predominantly negative (De Vreese et al., 2006; De Vreese & Azrout, 2019) but this study showed an overall balanced, yet mildly positive media coverage. This finding seems to be in line with the low positive attitude of Greeks towards the EU and the shift of its perceived image from negative to positive that Eurobarometer reveals (European Commission & European Parliament, 2019; European Commission, 2019).

The second interesting result concerns both the tone and content frames. Where the study found few articles that explicitly evaluate the European Union and their slant was mildly optimistic, the media coverage showed that the benefits of a country, either current or future ones, clearly outweigh any possible disadvantages. Frames of losses and the apathy and indifference of citizens towards the institution are low in emphasis making the benefit frame predominant. Interestingly, these patterns concerning the use of frames and tone of media coverage were also visible across most of the last four-week period heading to the EP elections. Chronological timelines depict the day-to-day differences in the content and tone showing that key events did not shift the use of frames but rather intensified the existing frame competition. That practically means that, if one looks only in the campaign period, the media highlight that Greece has more to gain than to lose from the EU membership and this could be seen as a statement worth emphasizing.

Finally, the study found the political profile of the newspapers used might play a role on the way the media reported and evaluated the European Union. We see, for example, that the differences between the independent and right-leaning papers were marginal, but the left-leaning outlet was more likely to cover the EU in the negative and emphasize the losses coming from the European Union.

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