MEDIA REPORTING PATTERNS IN EUROPE:

THE CASES OF CONSTRUCTION OF THE EU AND REFORM TREATY

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Abstract

The mass media are key social actors in the articulation of themes of common concern in the European public space, nowadays. Through mediation of messages, symbols and visions on important issues the media may influence on which themes to dominate the European public sphere. In this article we examine the patterns of media reporting on important EU-related issues, particularly the issues of Construction of the EU and Reform Treaty, in 16 European countries, incl. Turkey. We analyse the EU-related content of 77 print and broadcast media actors by focusing on two dimensions of media reporting: the frequency of reporting and the attitudes manifested by the media actors while reporting on EU-related issues. Our general findings suggest that at the time of data collection (May-October 2008) there was a prevailing country-specific, instead of a unified pattern of media reporting in Europe. Significant interdependencies between the types of state membership (old, new and non-member) and the articulation of both discussed cases, as well as other topics of the EU integration in media are outlined.

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Introduction

Media and media reporting patterns are of key research interest as they are among the public sphere's major aspects and one of citizens' basic means for obtaining information and for shaping representations, attitudes and opinions concerning various issues of EU enlargement, development and perspectives.

National media in Europe usually reflect issues of different scope and concern (national, regional, European, international) with varying frequency and preferences, depending on a number of factors – historical, sociopolitical, economic, etc. In this article, we discuss some results of an empiric research, which is a part of a larger study of media reporting on EU-related issues, carried out within the framework of the Eurosphere Project.[1] The overall objective of this article is to assess whether there is a *unified* or a *country-specific* pattern of media reporting in Europe. We will do this by focusing on two dimensions of media reporting: (1) the frequency of reporting on EU-related issues, particularly on the *Reform Treaty (RT)* and *Construction of Europe and the EU (CEU)*, and (2) the attitudes displayed by the media actors to European integration while reporting EU-related issues.

Despite the diversity of approaches in the field of mass communication, it seems not many studies relevant to the new EU realities and to the dynamic changes caused by the progress in EU integration have been published. Baisnee suggests some reasonable criticism concerning contemporary research in this field. He summarises his critical comments in three directions. First, media research confounds the European Public Sphere (EPS) and the mass media, moreover it is often confined to the press and even then only to the quality press. Second, the EPS is typically reduced to the media with regard to their geographical location, i.e. as national media of EU member countries. Third, the "normative liberal-democratic" viewpoint suggests that all EU citizens are participants in the EPS (Baisnee 2007).

Raising awareness is defined as an explicit function of the mass media with regard to EU-related issues. Still, regardless of their educational and awareness-raising function, which is undoubtedly beneficial to EU citizens (Baisnee 2007; Van Cauwenberge et al. 2009; Statham 2010b), it seems that the media have not obtained the information needed or at least some explicit indications of the content and implications of the Reform Treaty, "as the *lack of information* was one of the main reasons for the preference of a quarter of the 'no' voters" (Van Cauwenberge et al. 2009).

In spite of the continuously increasing number of studies of the EPS, the streamline of "denying" its existence (Kleinstüber 2001; Trenz2004; Wimmer 2005, quoted by VanCauwenberge et al. 2009) is salient both along and within them, as this standpoint is supported by arguments and facts about citizens' national identification and also about the media features regarded as prevailingly national and occupied by national-related issues and actors. All these together with the considerations of not a few authors, who argue that a common EU identity does not exist, limit the possibilities to develop and articulate a common EPS or a transnational media sphere.

At the same time, coverage on the same topic by different countries' media, within the same period, using identical news frames, is considered a basic requirement and indicator for the development of a European public sphere (Brüggeman 2005). In this research, we endeavour to outline topics reflected by the media in

several European states during a selected period, which could be utilised in future investigation in a transnational aspect.

Calhoun mentions that in spite of the latest communication developments, the mass media are still operating mainly on a national territory and scale. According to him, the operation of the mass media on a trans-national level may be arranged on the basis of similarity among spoken languages.

> *It is worth noting, though, that even English media are minimally organised on a European scale; they are national (in the fuzzy sense that includes both Britain and Scotland) or they are global* (Calhoun 2004, 14).

Still, it is promising that

> *… it is not trivial that there is increased reporting in most European countries of the public discussions that take place in others. This provides for links among democracies, and provides a supportive context for transnational social movements. These last play an important role in opinion-formation on a European scale* (Calhoun 2004, 14).

Splichal emphasises some possibilities for a more collective representation of community belonging and for interest in issues of common concern (Splichal 2011):

> *… the involvement of a greater number of civil society actors from different geographic, ethnic, cultural, social, and political environments in the processes of public deliberation and decision making related to media contents and management may contribute to the broadening of the social basis of democratic processes* (Splichal 2011, 104).

In fact, studying and herein presenting some of the main media thematic interest in EU-related issues through their visibility (reporting frequency) and through the expressed media preferences (attitudes), we indirectly reach out to some important issues concerning the role of EU integration for its media coverage and reflection. According to Statham, journalism faces not a few challenges, which hinder the relevant reflection of topical EU-related information. Some of them stem from the features of EU policy communication, but not from the lack of interest and professionalism of journalists (Statham 2010b).

It seems that media reporting features a two-sided pattern. On the one hand, the thematic interest in national issues prevails, which should make it easy to distinguish between media content from different countries. Yet, on the other hand, the journalists themselves are characterised by more differences than countries with regard to media reporting on EU issues. A study of the representations of journalists from four countries revealed that they considered the provision of information as a better option than political communication performance. With regard to commentating decisions, Statham found that journalists are concerned mainly with information aspects and less with political aspects of the EU, i.e. they are rather educationally centred (ibid.).

One of the key dimensions studied with regard to the EU media reality is *visibility*. Adam's study appears to be rather close to and relevant for our study, as it also examines both EU integration and the Reform Treaty. Furthermore, Adam suggests three criteria for assessment of the media "integration potential" and of their contribution to both portrayal and enhancement of citizens' representations of the EU as a community. These three criteria are, as follows: (1) whether the media

make topics and actors in Europe visible, (2) whether they show interdependencies, i.e. interconnectedness between these actors and (3) whether they formulate positive and negative preferences of European integration "without fencing off traditional entities" ("dispute constellation") (Adam 2008). Adam's study examines the quality press in two EU countries. Our study is focused on the first and the third criteria, i.e. *visibility* and *dispute constellation*, with the purpose to analyse media reporting patterns in numerous European countries with regard to their similarities and differences and in the perspective of their integration potential and contribution to development of an EPS.

Analyses carried out by many researchers in the field come to support the most common conclusion that there is a considerable gap between EU elites and citizens. In other words, although involvement of the mass media in EU-related issues is rather high, the media actors still report on decisions, procedures and processes, which are made and implemented at the top, yet remain hardly comprehensible and acceptable by the EU citizens (Mittag and Wessels 2003, quoted by Adam 2008; Statham 2010c).

We are hopeful that our study contributes to casting a stronger light on the aspects, which have remained in the background so far, as, in contrast to most of the latest studies, we encompass a large number and different type of media actors – both print and broadcast and we also examine the patterns of media reporting on EU-related issues in 16 European countries, incl. Turkey.

At the same time, the focus of our attention is shifted to both the *frequency* of media reporting, i.e. visibility of EU-related themes, particularly of CEU and RT and media *attitudes*, i.e. positive and negative connotations of their preferences on the issues, also taking into consideration the country of origin of the media. Analysing these dimensions, we continue the tradition in this area (see Adam, 2008; Statham 2010c). As the Eurosphere provided media content analyses of 4-5 national print and broadcast media actors from 16 different European countries, i.e. the content analyses of a total of 77 media actors around Europe, our data appear to represent almost "half of the EU."

One of the main objects of our research is the analysis of the Lisbon Treaty media coverage. The Lisbon Treaty ratification is a whole process that represents a large-scale indicator of how the EU "project" is perceived by journalists, commentators, scientists and citizens. During the years-lasting process of acceptance of the Treaty in different countries, a number of sceptical assessments, analyses and expectations have accumulated both in the press and in scientific publications – addressing the whole EU and not only the Lisbon Treaty.

If the long process of ratification of the Treaty in the different Member States normally provoked the interest of media and the scepticism of observers, editors and politicians, as well as citizens, its acceptance consecutively by the Irish people and the Polish and Czech presidents, should have evoked a much more serious reverberation in all countries, followed by dozens of publications regarding the new perspectives faced by the EU project (see detailed analysis in Piris 2010).

Research Design and Methods

To achieve our objective, i.e. to assess the media reflection pattern in Europe, we focused on two dimensions of media reporting: the *frequency* of reporting and the *attitudes* manifested by the media actors while reporting EU-related issues. We consider both (frequency and attitude) dimensions measures of the structure of the mediated EPS. Whereas the frequency dimension can be a measure of the *thematic interest structure* of the mediated EPS, the attitude dimension can be interpreted as the *discursive structure* of the EPS. Assessment of the pattern of media reporting on the key EU-related issues through measurement of both dimensions of reporting will help us establish whether and how the national media actors in Europe contribute to articulation of an EPS, and the question of do they mediate a common or fragmented EPS.

The Eurosphere's media content data collection was carried out from 9 May-10 October 2008 in all 16 partner countries involved in the project. The Eurosphere's database contained media content data for this period from 77 pre-selected print and broadcast media actors from all partner countries. The content analysis was focused on news stories/items that had an explicit or implicit "clear European dimension" and referred to different topics: EU institutions, Constructing Europe and the EU, Reform Treaty, Enlargement, Minorities or minority policies, Immigration or migration policy, Free movement or mobility, Gender and gender policy. Two of these topics (represented by a total of 2645 news items) were subjected to qualitative case study analysis and discussed herein – *Constructing Europe and the EU (CEU),* i.e. stories creating a certain European culture/identity, or talking about other European states' national identities or traditions, often resorting to national and cultural stereotypes, and *Reform Treaty (RT)*, incl. European Constitution, Lisbon Treaty, etc. Both broadcast news items from the primetime news programmes and print news items from the news columns of the studied media actors were subjected to analysis.

Along with the analyses of thematic and discursive structure of the mediated EPS "by country," we also carried out analyses by "country type," whereas we grouped the participating countries into three groups: *old, new* and *non-EU members*, regarding the legal criteria as per the year of EU accession (see Table 1). Our objective was to find whether and how the type of countries' EU membership was related to the structure of the mediated EPS and whether it was a stronger or a weaker predictor of the mediated EPS structure in comparison with the country of origin of the media.

To carry out the case studies on the CEU and RT themes we employed both qualitative and quantitative methods (incl. correspondence analysis, descriptive statistics and Chi-square distance measure). We grounded on the argument that qualitative analysis does not reject any form of quantification (Shoemaker and Reese 1996). Furthermore, we added the perspective of classification of the countries participating in Eurosphere according to their EU membership status. Along with the cross-national comparisons of attitudes towards both themes, the latter made feasible the comparisons by membership/country type and revealed whether sub-European spheres of countries' media sharing similar attitudes exist.

Table 1: Type of Country: Old, New and Non-EU Members

Old member countries	New member countries	Non-member countries
United Kingdom Year of EU accession: 1973	Bulgaria Year of EU accession: 2007	Norway
France Founding member	Czech Republic Year of EU accession: 2004	Turkey
Italy Founding member	Hungary Year of EU accession: 2004	
Spain Year of EU accession: 1986	Estonia Year of EU accession: 2004	
Austria Year of EU accession: 1995		
Belgium Founding member		
Germany Founding member		
Finland Year of EU accession: 1995		
Denmark Year of EU accession: 1973		
The Netherlands Founding member		

CEU and RT in the Context of Other EU-related Themes: Cross-national Comparisons

To discover whether the media in the different European countries employed a unified or a country-specific approach to reporting on key EU-related issues, particularly on Construction of Europe and the EU (CEU) and on Reform Treaty (RT), our first step was to measure the "frequency" dimension of the media reporting pattern. By using dimension reduction tools (correspondence analysis and Chi square distance measure), we measured the location of CEU and RT (as the first most important theme "first MIT") and the relative frequency of their media reflection in the context of other EU-related issues discussed in the national media spaces.[2]

Correspondence analysis results revealed that the country of origin of the media and the 1st MIT variables were strongly correlated (See Table 2). Hence, some convincing generalisations could be made about the association of categories.

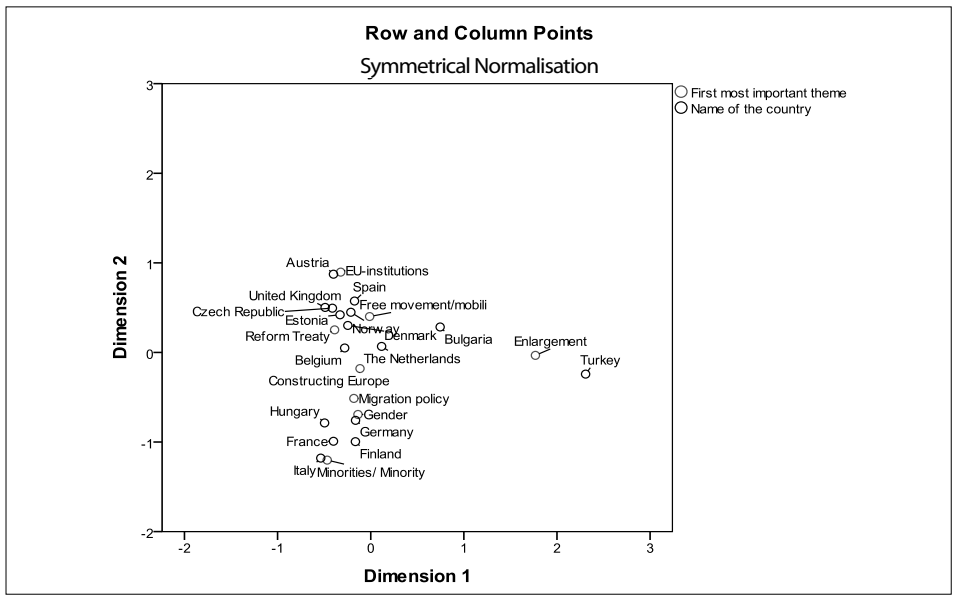
Table 2: Correspondence Analysis Summary for the Correlation between First MIT and Country (of Origin of the Media)

Summary								
Dimension	Singular Value	Inertia	Chi Square	Sig.	Proportion of Inertia		Confidence Singular Value	
					Accounted for	Cumulative	Standard Deviation	Correlation 2
1	.531	.282			.399	.399	.012	.055
2	.460	.211			.299	.698	.009	
3	.305	.093			.131	.829		
4	.229	.053			.074	.903		
5	.210	.044			.062	.966		
6	.146	.021			.030	.996		
7	.056	.003			.004	1.000		
Total		.708	5957.945	.000[a]	1.000	1.000		

a. 240 degrees of freedom

The biplot correspondence map below reveals the inter-category distances among countries and the first MIT in the space of yielded dimensions (see Figure 1).

Figure1: First Most Important Themes in the National Media Spaces



At the time of media data collection (May-October 2008), "Construction of Europe and the EU" (CEU) as the first MIT was an issue of prior importance, i.e. most frequently discussed by the French, Dutch and UK media and less frequently reflected by the other national media.

"Reform Treaty" (RT) was most frequently found in the spaces of Danish, Czech and Norwegian media and least, in the spaces of Turkish, Bulgarian, Hungarian and Dutch media. Generally, RT was among the most prominent EU-related themes, together with the issues of EU institutions, Minorities and Migration Policy and EU enlargement.

The Italian, Finnish and German media were much more concerned with the issues of Minorities and Migration Policy; Hungary – with Minorities/Minority Policy; the Turkish and Bulgarian media – with EU Enlargement; and the Austrian, Spanish, UK and Estonian media – with the EU institutions theme, rather than with CEU and RT.

Although both CEU and RT as first most important themes were present in all national media spaces, they were discussed with varying frequency in the context of other EU-related issues. Obviously, the current and common sociopolitical circumstances in the process of ratification of the Lisbon Treaty premised more frequent media reflections of the RT issue in most European countries at the time of media data collection. Still, country-specific patterns with regard to the frequency dimension of media reporting on both themes were also prominent. Similar were de Vreese's findings in a study, which suggested the existence of cross-national differences in media reflection of EU issues and also higher frequency of reporting

on current events – EP elections in this case (de Vreese 2008). It is also applicable to our results, as long as the RT issue concerned a set of certain integration events, while CEU was a combination of subthemes as most of them were continual and not so prominent as current events.

CEU and RT in the Context of Other EU-related Themes: Comparisons among Old, New and Non-members

Our next step was to find whether the type of countries' EU membership (old, new and non-members) was related to the "frequency" dimension of media reporting on key EU-related issues and whether the "country type" was a stronger or a weaker predictor of the thematic structure of the mediated EPS in comparison with the country of origin of the media (see above).

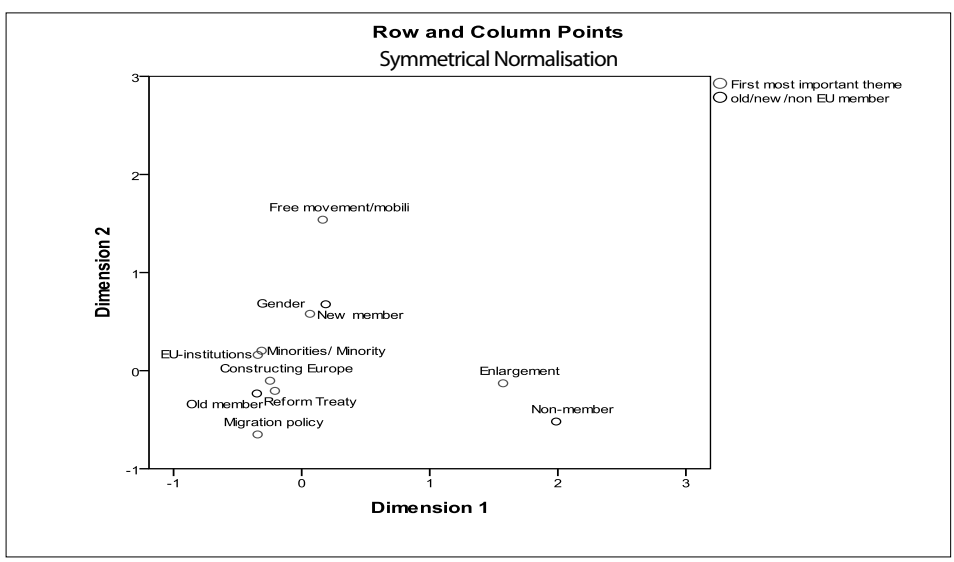
Correspondence analysis results showed that the recoded variable, grouping the countries of origin of the media into three types (old, new and non-EU members) was significantly, yet weakly correlated with the first MIT (see Table 3 and Figure 2).

Table 3: Correspondence Analysis Summary for the Correlation between First MIT and Country Type (of Origin of the Media)

Summary								
Dimension	Singular Value	Inertia	Chi Square	Sig.	Proportion of Inertia		Confidence Singular Value	
					Accounted for	Cumulative	Standard Deviation	Correlation 2
1	.422	.178			.837	.837	.014	.051
2	.187	.035			.163	1.000	.011	
Total		.213	1793.823	.000[a]	1.000	1.000		

a. 32 degrees of freedom

Figure 2: Media Reflection of the First MITs in the Old, New and Non-EU members



In the context of other EU-related themes, CEU and RT seemed to be reflected more frequently by the media in the old member countries and less frequently by the media in the new and non-members. While RT as first MIT appeared to be among the most prominent themes mediated in the old member countries, together with EU institutions, CEU as first MIT was not among the most prominent themes for any country type. The non-members' media seemed to be concerned mostly with the Enlargement theme (Turkey) and with Reform Treaty (Norway), the new members' media – with EU institutions, and those in the old members – with Migration and Minority Policies and EU Institutions (together with the Reform Treaty theme).

It is important to note that although both Turkey and Norway were included in the analysis as non-members, the results of cross-national comparisons (see the previous paragraph) reveal important differences between these two countries with regard to the media reflection of RT. While RT proved to be a theme of prior importance for the Norwegian media, it was not among the prominent themes for the Turkish media studied. The latter result was an important insight, revealing the closeness of Norwegian media concerns with RT to those of the old members. Furthermore, although CEU and RT were found mainly in media spaces of the old member countries, still, media actors in some new and non-member countries were also found among those highly concerned with RT (see the paragraph above).

On the one hand, our findings revealed that the media actors' classification by country type (old, new and non-EU members) proved to be a weaker predictor of the thematic interest structure of the mediated EPS in comparison with the country of origin of the media. On the other hand, classification of the national media by country type also proved to play an important role for differentiation within the thematic interest structure of the mediated EPS.

Attitudes towards CEU and RT: Cross-national Comparisons

Although the frequency of reflection of both CEU and RT themes may be regarded as a high concern and good knowledge of the media actors about the EU family's prior issues, their contribution to the EPS and to the process of Europeanisation is much more contingent upon the attitudes/preferences they channel through the reflections of these issues.

Preferences or attitudes of the media while reporting on key EU-related issues constituted the second dimension of their approach to EPS, i.e. the discursive dimension of the mediated EPS that we measured by descriptive statistical tools and Chi-square distance measure. Our next step was to find whether the national media in Europe manifested similar or country-specific attitudes while reporting on key EU-related issues, particularly on the issues of Construction of Europe and the EU (CEU) and Reform Treaty (RT) as the first most important themes (first MIT). These analyses provided the opportunity to assess how the national media contributed to the discursive structure of the mediated EPS.

Results of the descriptive statistical and Chi-square analysis revealed a significant and moderate correlation between the media actors' preferences on both CEU and RT as first MIT and the country of the media (see Table 4).

Table 4: Chi-square Tests for the Preferences on CEU and RT as First MIT by Country (of Origin of the Media)

First most important theme		Value	df	Sig. (2-sided)
Constructing Europe and the EU	Pearson Chi-Square	388.603	60	.000
	Likelihood Ratio	356.240	60	.000
	Linear-by-Linear Association	.001	1	.977
	N of Valid Cases	878		
	Contingency Coefficient	.554		.000
Reform Treaty	Pearson Chi-Square	609.693	60	.000
	Likelihood Ratio	581.511	60	.000
	Linear-by-Linear Association	8.602	1	.003
	N of Valid Cases	1513		
	Contingency Coefficient	.536		.000

The tables below illustrate the media attitudes towards CEU and RT as first MITs in the different countries (see Tables 5 and 6).

Table 5: Attitudes towards CEU as First MIT by Country (of Origin of the Media)

Country	Preferences on Constructing Europe and the EU as 1st MIT (count)					Total
	None/ Not applicable	Only positive	More positive than negative	More negative than positive	Only negative	
Austria	36	9	5	12	19	81
Belgium	12	0	0	0	0	12
Bulgaria	42	26	33	35	6	142
Czech Republic	13	5	3	2	2	25
Denmark	5	3	2	4	4	18
Estonia	9	2	1	5	0	17
Finland	0	13	0	1	0	14
France	65	69	6	10	3	153
Germany	9	6	4	0	0	19
Hungary	17	5	13	0	0	35
Italy	42	8	9	11	4	74
Norway	5	0	3	3	1	12
The Netherlands	47	12	12	15	6	92
Spain	19	0	9	29	2	59
Turkey	13	2	1	0	14	30
United Kingdom	46	6	14	20	9	95
Total	380	166	115	147	70	878

Obviously, in most national media the "none/not applicable" preference, i.e. neutral attitude dominated the reflection of both CEU and RT as first MIT, particularly in Belgian media. It was explicable by the principle of impartiality claimed by most media actors. Finnish, German and Dutch media were found to be more positive than negative (besides neutral) towards both themes, and Danish, Spanish and UK media actors were more negative than positive. Austrian media (besides neutral) were more negative about CEU and neutral-to-positive about RT, while Italian media were more positive about CEU and more negative about RT. Bulgarian, Czech and Hungarian media actors were more positive (besides neutral) about both CEU and RT, while Estonian media manifested more positive attitudes to RT, but also more negative preferences on CEU. The media actors in both Turkey and Norway reported on CEU and RT in a more negative than positive manner. It is

Table 6: Attitudes towards RT as First MIT by Country (of Origin of the Media)

Country	Preferences on Reform Treaty as 1st MIT (count)					Total
	None/ Not applicable	Only positive	More positive than negative	More negative than positive	Only negative	
Austria	114	73	9	17	60	273
Belgium	32	0	0	0	0	32
Bulgaria	27	6	23	14	2	72
Czech Republic	113	11	24	11	8	167
Denmark	110	12	3	16	42	183
Estonia	38	4	13	8	0	63
Finland	42	31	2	6	3	84
France	45	0	5	2	3	55
Germany	108	8	30	12	11	169
Hungary	31	10	4	1	1	47
Italy	42	0	4	5	6	57
Norway	44	1	2	3	4	54
The Netherlands	20	1	5	3	0	29
Spain	30	0	15	30	4	79
Turkey	30	1	0	2	2	35
United Kingdom	30	2	13	24	45	114
Total	856	160	152	154	191	1513

important to note that the approach to media reflection on CEU and RT is quite different in each country's media. These findings first came to support the notion of a country-specific "attitudinal" dimension of media reporting and respectively of a discursive structure of the mediated EPS. The picture of quite varied attitudes – from positive to negative along with the prevailing neutral preferences – suggested that the national media had already been Europeanised or were in a process of Europeanisation. Yet, by October 2008, it was too early to visualise a common European media space in concern to key EU-related issues.

Attitudes towards CEU and RT: Comparison among Old, New and Non-members

Again, to enrich our findings with regard to the discursive dimension of media approach to reporting on key EU-related issues, we decided to check how the country type (old, new and non-members) was related to the media preferences on both CEU and RT and whether the "country type" variable would be a stronger or a weaker predictor of the mediated EPS structure in comparison with country of origin of the media (see above).

Chi-square analysis revealed that the country type was significantly, but weakly related to the media actors' attitudes towards CEU and RT as first MIT (see Tables 7, 8, and 9).

Similarly to the results above, in all country types the "none/not applicable" preference dominated the reflection of both CEU and RT. Besides the neutral attitude, the attention was drawn on the prevailing positive attitude toward CEU of the media in the old and in the new members and also on the "more negative" preferences of the media in the non-members. Generally, the media actors in the old and in the new members appeared to be (besides neutral) much more pro-integration in comparison with the media actors studied in the non-members

– Turkey and Norway, although the media reflections in the old and in the new members were also far from being only neutral and positive about CEU as some ambivalence and negative attitudes were also observed in this regard. It is worth noting that the prevailing positive attitudes towards CEU of the old members' media are mostly due to the Finnish, French and German media's preferences and those of the new members – mostly due to the Bulgarian and less to the Czech and Hungarian media.

Table 7: Chi-square Tests for the Media Preferences on CEU and RT as 1st MIT in the Old, New and Non-EU members

First most important theme		Value	df	Sig. (2-sided)
Constructing Europe and the EU	Pearson Chi-Square	78.187[a]	8	.000
	Likelihood Ratio	60.838	8	.000
	Linear-by-Linear Association	8.847	1	.003
	N of Valid Cases	878		
	Contingency Coefficient	.286		.000
Reform Treaty	Pearson Chi-Square	96.131[c]	8	.000
	Likelihood Ratio	106.385	8	.000
	Linear-by-Linear Association	32.731	1	.000
	N of Valid Cases	1513		
	Contingency Coefficient	.244		.000

Table 8: Attitudes towards CEU as First MIT of the Media Actors in the Old, New and Non-EU member Countries

Country Type	Preferences on Constructing Europe and the EU as 1st MIT (count)					Total
	None/ Not applicable	Only positive	More positive than negative	More negative than positive	Only negative	
Old member	281	126	61	102	47	617
New member	81	38	50	42	8	219
Non-member	18	2	4	3	15	42
Total	380	166	115	147	70	878

Table 9: Attitudes towards RT as First MIT of the Media Actors in the Old, New and Non-EU Member Countries

Country Type	Preferences on Reform Treaty as 1st MIT (count)					Total
	None/ Not applicable	Only positive	More positive than negative	More negative than positive	Only negative	
Old member	573	127	86	115	174	1075
New member	209	31	64	34	11	349
Non-member	74	2	2	5	6	89
Total	856	160	152	154	191	1513

With regard to the Reform Treaty (RT), while the "more positive than negative" attitude dominated the scene in the new EU members, negative preferences dominated the media actors' attitudes toward RT in the old and non-members.

While analysing the data on reported media attitudes one should not miss the fact that the media actors still reflect actual events and governmental policies.

Hence, it is not only about the influence of EPS and not even about current issues of transnational concern, which is of key importance for both print and broadcast media actors, but it is also about the whole configuration of factors at the information-political level (Statham 2010a).

Discussion

The media are not the only "bridge" to articulation of EPS. Still, they are an important channel for enhancement of common European communication space(s). Our findings suggest that at the time of media data collection (May-October 2008), there was a prevailing *country-specific*, instead of a unified pattern of media reporting in Europe with regard to key EU-related issues, studied under the Eurosphere Project, and particularly with regard to the cases of *Reform Treaty (RT)* and *Construction of Europe and the EU (CEU)*. At the same time, the data analysis demonstrates that the type of the EU state – old, new or non-members – also exerts a certain, although weaker influence on the media content on both cases discussed here. In fact, a typology here completes the clarification of national "positions" in the media reporting, for the type of the state furthers the direction of politics, as well as its media reflection.

Hence, our findings are completely consistent with the current state of EPS, which has not been common for all EU members so far, i.e. the more common categories we study as independent variables (such as old/new/non-members), the weaker determinants of EPS's dimensions they turn to be. Anyway, the general impression is that the issues are outlined on a national level and even key questions such as the constitutional, are reflected briefly and superficially (Metykova and Preston 2009).

Some other EU-related themes studied under the Eurosphere Project (EU institutions, EU enlargement, migration and minority policies) were also prominent and relevant to the classification of the media by country type.

Fragmentation of media reporting on EU-related issues along national lines is considered one of the important factors causing deficits in communication. News is presented in the light of the national interpretative schemes and models of thinking, of actuality in a given socio-economical and political context in a certain country and in the EU. To manage this situation, Statham suggests, as follows, that:

> *Following Schlesinger (1999, 276-277; quoted by Statham), the emergence of a 'European sphere of publics' requires the dissemination of a European news agenda, that becomes part of the every-day news-consuming habits of European audiences, to an extent that publics come to understand citizenship and belonging as at least in part transcending the nation-state* (Statham 2010a, 117).

Our findings also suggested interesting and even unexpected further inferences on the *contribution* of each country's media actors in the mediation of the EPS. In the table below we have tried to summarise both dimensions (frequency and attitudes) of the pattern of media reporting on CEU and RT in all the studied European countries (see Table 10).

Table 10 suggests that some media such as the Hungarian and Bulgarian media (which discussed RT as the first MIT with comparatively low frequency), still enhanced mainly positive (besides neutral) attitudes towards both EU-related themes. The Finnish, French, German and Czech media also promoted mainly positive (besides neutral) attitudes towards both themes, combined even with a medium-to-high frequency of reflection. And although some other national media such as Austrian, Turkish, Norwegian, Estonian media and particularly the UK, Spanish and Danish media, reported on both CEU and RT with moderate or even high frequency, they also manifested mainly negative (besides neutral) preferences on these themes. Interestingly, Austrian media displayed mainly positive attitudes towards RT along with negative preferences on CEU. Some other media actors such as the Italian and Dutch ones manifested rather ambivalent attitudes towards both CEU and RT themes contingent upon their importance. While in the case of Belgium media, high indicators of neutrality of preferences were observed for both themes.

Table 10: Typology of the Media Reporting Patterns by Country

Country of the media	Construction of Europe/EU (CEU)		Reform Treaty (RT)	
	Frequency	Attitudes (besides neutral)	Frequency	Attitudes (besides neutral)
	1st MIT	1st MIT	1st MIT	1st MIT
Austria	Medium	Negative	Medium	Positive
Belgium	Medium	Neutral	Medium	Neutral
Bulgaria	Medium	Positive	Low	Positive
Czech Rep.	Medium	Positive	High	Positive
Denmark	Medium	Negative	High	Negative
Estonia	Medium	Negative	Medium	Positive
Finland	Medium	Positive	Medium	Positive
France	High	Positive	Medium	Neutral
Germany	Medium	Positive	Medium	Positive
Hungary	Medium	Positive	Low	Positive
Italy	Medium	Positive	Medium	Negative
Norway	Medium	Negative	High	Negative
Netherlands	High	Positive	Low	Positive
Spain	Medium	Negative	Medium	Negative
Turkey	Medium	Negative	Low	Negative
UK	High	Negative	Medium	Negative

Obviously, although all countries' media actors discussed the key issues of CEU and RT, their reporting pattern was characterised by quite varied frequency and preferences. Hence, we have tried to outline a *typology of the national media by the frequency-attitude combination with regard to both CEU and RT themes:*

1. Media actors combining a *high frequency* of reflection with *neutral-to-positive attitudes* to CEU and RT: *French, Czech, Finnish* and *German* media.

2. Media actors characterised by *medium-to-low frequency* of reporting and *neutral-to-positive attitudes* to CEU and RT: *Bulgarian* media.

3. Media actors combining *medium frequency* of discussion with *neutral attitudes* to CEU and RT: *Belgian* media.

4. Media actors characterised by *low-medium-high frequency* of reporting and prevailing *neutral-to-positive preferences* at least on the first MIT (for both CEU and RT): *Hungarian* and *Dutch* media.

5. Media actors combining *medium frequency* of reporting with prevailing *neutral-to-negative (or ambivalent) attitudes* towards either CEU or RT as first MIT: *Austrian* and *Italian* media.

6. Media actors characterised by *low frequency* of reflection and *neutral-to-negative attitudes* to both themes: *Turkish* media.

7. Media actors combining *high frequency* of discussion with *neutral-to-negative preferences* on both themes: *UK* and *Norwegian* and *Spanish, Estonian and Danish media.*

The classification above suggests some important implications about each country's media contribution to EPS. We have good reasons to argue that the media actors from the countries mentioned in points 1-4 were relatively well-disposed and supportive with regard to European integration, as the level of constructiveness was gradually decreased from point 1 to point 4. Furthermore, the national media indicated in points 5-7 demonstrated much or less ambivalence, non-acceptance and even negativity towards issues related to further European integration, as the level of disapproval was gradually increased from point 5 to 7. Hence, the French, Czech, Finnish, German and Bulgarian media were characterised by the most constructive pattern of reporting on key EU-related issues, while the UK, Norwegian, Spanish, Estonian, Danish and Turkish media – by the least constructive approach to mediation of EPS. The findings for some countries' media such as those of Denmark are surprising to some extent, as far as some other research data suggest advanced Europeanisation of the media in Denmark (Orsen 2008).

Comparison of our research data with some data obtained by other researchers, particularly with regard to ratification of the Lisbon Treaty, outlines a dynamic and irregular process of changing media attitudes in the course of time, as the general trends have been obviously preserved. In Trenz's study of how the ratification process was mediated during the period 2004-2005, some national media were apparently changing their preferences on discussion of the Treaty to a more positive, or at least to neutral ones (French media are an example in this regard). Still, the tendency has remained quite similar to the one described by the researchers for the period some years ago.

> *Although it remains clear that the majority of the journalists in our sample were supportive of the European integration project and by and large also of the Constitutional Treaty, the way the EU and the member states handled the constitutional ratification process was subjected to rather massive criticism* (Trenz et al. 2007, 15).

Similarly to some other cross-country comparisons, the results of our study also suggest salient differences between the national media from various countries. Still, the results emphasise that the large number of different countries' media introduces similar, even common tendencies of the discourse on some crucial events and processes in today's Europe.

Conclusion

Our media typology is, of course, tentative and can serve as an assumption, rather than as a convincing generalisation, since the number of the media studied and news items coded in the different countries/country types was largely different, which inevitably affected the lower or higher frequency/attitude indicators of some countries' media. Still, one should take into consideration some important remarks with regard to our findings and their implications. Definition of the countries' media attitudes to CEU and RT as either positive or negative is quite simplified due to the large number of coded news items. In fact, the media attitudes contained many more lights and shades, particularly with concern to the CEU theme, which encompassed a great diversity of sub-themes, meanings, comments, opinions, ideas, etc. Hence, the CEU content can be subjected to further recoding and analysis that may outline many more differences/similarities among the national media. The fact that contemporary media discourse is focused on similar themes at the same time is at least an indicator for Europeanisation (Bruggemann 2005) of the national media and for "their openness to the idea of a European public sphere" (Sicakkan 2008, 10).

However,

> *The reduction of empirical concept of the public sphere to what one can find in the mass media ... cannot eliminate any "peril" of theoretical uncertainty that would be greater than the reduction itself. For the same reason that "public opinion" should not be confused with polling results, the "public sphere" (and also "public opinion," for that matter) should not be confused with the results of media analysis* (Splichal 2006, 706-707).

On the one hand, according to Splichal, media content is not and should not be considered statistically representative of what and how something is perceived by the general public (ibid.). In fact, the general public has access to various sources of information, incl. the Internet, where official and unofficial information are blended on many occasions and in various ways.

On the other hand, the media are the actors who provide the EU with the opportunity to obtain "a unitary international image, representing it as an actor in a variety of global contexts, making clear its distinctive collective values" (Calhoun 2004, 19).

And since the situation in Europe has been dynamically changing ever since the media data collection, it is quite possible that the pattern of media reporting, the structure of the mediated EPS, as well as the themes of key EU concern have been constantly changing too. This dynamically changing nature of the EU-related issues was well-illustrated by the fact of successful ratification of the Reform Treaty by the 27 EU member countries, in spite of the rather pessimistic expectations of politicians, journalists, academicians, etc. in this regard. Nowadays, after the RT ratification, new EU-related issues come to the fore and the EU project attains new dimensions.

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Notes:

1. The research results presented and discussed in this paper are a part of a larger media study carried out under the project: "Diversity and the European Public Sphere: towards a Citizens' Europe – EUROSPHERE" – Integrated Project under the Sixth Framework Programme of the EC.

2. We analyse both CEU and RT as first and second most important theme (first and second MIT) in the examined media content. Herein, we present and analyse only part of the results obtained for CEU and RT as first MIT.

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