



# CATÓLICA

## INSTITUTO DE ESTUDOS POLÍTICOS

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LISBOA

## **THE EU'S POLITICAL COMMUNICATION:** Communicating achievements to citizens in a changing environment.

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*A cross-sectional-study involving Germany and Portugal*

### **Master thesis**

Governance, Leadership and Democracy Studies

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8.7.2019

## Abstract

In view of the significant developments that the European Union's (EU) political environment has undergone, this study aims at examining whether its institutions have adapted their political communication efforts credibly. The decade of 2008 to 2018 gave birth to fundamental environmental changes and major crisis confronting European liberal democracies and the whole Union. The digital transformation, the Eurozone and refugee crises and the rise of populist euroscepticism have changed the way citizens perceive the EU. The fact that most research in this field was conducted before this decade makes it urgent to examine the status-quo of the institutions communication and answer this study's research question: Are the EU's political communication actions up-to-date with the latest developments? To answer this, the study examines the developments in Germany and Portugal, that, being traditionally pro-European countries, were significantly affected by the different developments. Consisting of a two-step-analysis, the study includes a qualitative content analysis of the EU institutions' awareness campaigns in 2018/2019 and a SWOT-analysis for the mid- to long term perspectives. The central finding of this study is that although the EU institutions are using the right tools to communicate to citizens they have missed out to confront the main drivers for euroscepticism and therefore reach citizens who are not yet convinced of the European project.

# Table of content

|   |    |
|---|----|
| <b>Introduction</b>   | 5  |
| Relevance   | 7  |
| Research question   | 7  |
| Methodology   | 8  |
| Disposition and structure   | 9  |
| Choice of countries   | 9  |
| <br>  |    |
| <b>1. The message: The EU's impact on citizens</b>                | 11 |
| 1.1. Core ambitions: A union for citizens?                        | 11 |
| 1.2. Searching for impact: Funding                                | 12 |
| 1.2.1. The Social and Economic Cohesion policy                    | 13 |
| 1.2.2. Germany  | 15 |
| 1.2.3. Portugal   | 17 |
| <br>  |    |
| <b>2. The Input: Changing political environment (2008 - 2018)</b> | 19 |
| 2.1. EU-interest and political participation                      | 19 |
| 2.2. The role of the media  | 21 |
| 2.2.1. Mass media   | 22 |
| 2.2.2. New media  | 26 |
| 2.3. Drivers of euroscepticism                                    | 29 |
| 2.3.1. Crisis   | 30 |
| 2.3.2. The rise of populism                                       | 33 |
| 2.3.3. Uniformity and the lack of European identity               | 37 |
| 2.3.4. The role of national governments                           | 40 |
| <br>  |    |
| <b>3. The EU as political communicator</b>                        | 42 |
| 3.1. Theoretical Background: Political communication              | 42 |
| 3.2. Communication frameworks                                     | 45 |
| 3.3. The 2018/2019 awareness campaigns                            | 49 |
| 3.3.1. European Commission  | 50 |
| 3.3.2. European Parliament  | 54 |
| 3.3.3. Other EU actors  | 57 |

|   |    |
|---|----|
| <b>4. The evaluation: Is the EU communication up to date?</b> | 60 |
| 4.1. The Analysis   | 60 |
| 4.1.1. Analysis I: Content analysis                           | 60 |
| Evaluating the Findings                                       | 63 |
| Limitations   | 65 |
| 4.1.2. Analysis II: SWOT-Analysis                             | 65 |
| Evaluating the Findings                                       | 67 |
| Limitations   | 69 |
| <b>5. Concluding discussion and recommendations.</b>          | 72 |
| 5.1. Six recommendations                                      | 72 |
| 5.2. Summary and final remarks.                               | 76 |
| <b>Bibliography</b>   | 79 |
| Bibliography II   | 89 |
| Abbreviation index  | 90 |
| Appendix  | 93 |

## Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the Associação de São Bartolomeu dos Alemães de Lisboa (ASBAL) for the attribution of a scholarship. The encouragement of Professor Mónica Dias to apply for the scholarship motivated me to choose a field of research integrating Germany and Portugal as well as the European Union. The time I have spent in Germany, during and after the European pre-election campaigns in 2019, gave me fundamental insights for this study. My research included study visits to the Europa-Institut of the Universität des Saarlandes, the Institute for Political and Social Studies of the Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg, and the Representations of the European Commission in Berlin, Germany and Lisbon, Portugal.

Thanks to my supervisor Professor Sónia Ribeiro who immediately after our first reunion showed great interest in the field of study and supported me throughout the research and writing process. Professor Ribeiro was always available for our various reunions.

I extend my gratitude to all persons who have supported me, such as Professor William Hasselberger, at the Institute for Political Studies at the Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Dr. Carolin Rüger, from the Julius-Maximilians-University of Würzburg, the Director of the Jacques Delors Information Centre, in Lisbon, Regina Quelhas Lima as well as Dr. Hans Jörg Schrötter, author of EU monographs and encyclopedia, who cooperated with their fruitful opinions to this work.

## Introduction

"We will fail in our efforts to prosper if we do not learn a hard lesson: we have not yet convinced the people of Europe and the world that our Union is not just here to survive, but can also thrive and prosper."<sup>1</sup>

In 2015 the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, chose these words to recognize that the European Union (EU) had still not convinced European citizens that it really has an impact on people's lives. Previously, in both elections to the European Parliament, in 2009 and 2014, Europe had seen its lowest participation in a European Parliament election ever. The EU and its citizens have developed a challenging relationship throughout the years.

A challenging relationship which is vital because it is the basis of any democratic legitimization of the European project as a whole. Given this special intergovernmental and, to a certain extent, supranational character, it constitutes a particular triangle of relations: EU institutions - national governments - citizens. Whether in the European Commission, the European Council, the European Parliament or any other institutions, European politics shape this continent and affect member states as well as EU-citizens. Especially the years from 2008 to 2018 have shown how fragile the EU project can be in times of crisis: the financial and the debt crisis, so called "Eurozone crisis" affecting mostly southern member states, such as Portugal; and the refugee and migration crisis, affecting a variety of other EU countries, such as Germany. The first withdrawal of a member state<sup>2</sup> is also an undeniable symptom of this fateful decade for Europe, demonstrating how vulnerable the European project is to the rise of populist and Anti-European parties. If the EU really intends to convince citizens that it does not merely exist to survive but rather to make a difference in people's lives, it needs to tackle the most important "ingredient" of any liberal democracy: its 'heartbeat', the EU citizens.

How can European leaders improve the organization's connection with its heartbeat? "Winston Churchill is said to have observed that the principal difference between management and

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<sup>1</sup> Jean-Claude Juncker. State of the Union speech. In Strategic Plan 2016/2020. 2015: 3.

<sup>2</sup> Note: The Brexit referendum will not play an important role in this study seeing the situation is - by the time this thesis is being written - changing permanently.

leadership is communication.”<sup>3</sup> The former British prime minister gets to the core of what he identifies to make a decisive difference in political leadership: Communication. Communication creates a basis for European leaders and institutions to ensure a sustainable relation with citizens. As Niklewicz highlights:

“The general public evaluates the EU’s performance on the basis of what is communicated about its decision making and activities, and about the conduct of its representatives. In a time when many citizens have lost faith in governments and institutions, proper communication is more important than ever. Only authentic communication can reassure people that things are under control and restore trust and a good reputation.”<sup>4</sup>

In this study, I am not departing from the assumption that any evidence found on a possible detachment of people from the EU is necessarily only the consequence of unsuccessful EU communication. I am well aware of the fact that successful communication is just one of several possible factors which can bring citizens closer to the EU. Yet, it is an important one, which should not be neglected. During my recent academic courses at the institute for political studies at the Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg, Germany, and at the Institute for Political Studies at the Universidade Católica Portuguesa, I have often been confronted with the perception that the EU suffers from an increasing detachment of citizens because it does not communicate successfully. ‘The EU communication officials are nothing but technocrats who, sitting in their ‘Brussel-bubble’, have no clue of how to reach out to citizens’ credibly’<sup>5</sup>: This reflects the attitude of some colleagues who have drawn my attention to the issue.

Having in mind that there are several other factors involved and that communication alone will not be the sole solution to the problem, I hereby attempt to explore to which extent the EU is using all the potential means that political communication may offer to foster its relationship to citizens.

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<sup>3</sup> James G. Stavridis. *Strategic Communication and National Security*. Joint Force Quarterly. No. 45. Washington DC: National Defense University. 2007: 1.

<sup>4</sup> Konrad Niklewicz. *We Need to Talk about the EU - European Political Advertising in the Post-Truth Era*. Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies, 2017.

<sup>5</sup> Note: Symbolic example for what could be a common cliché on the EU’s communication.

## Relevance

From an academic perspective I am distinguishing three reasons that explain this study's importance for current research. First, a large part of political theorists in the field of political communication have primarily focused on strategies of partisan communication<sup>6</sup>. Analyzing the communication of an intergovernmental and supranational organization like the EU is a less common practice. Secondly, the majority of studies published have primarily concentrated on the general communication deficit of the European Union as well as on the existence of a potential European public sphere.<sup>7</sup> Authors have analysed the overall efforts of the main EU-institutions to communicate,<sup>8</sup> instead of doing a case-based analysis of the concrete impact of EU - communication on citizens' lives. Thirdly, most of these studies were published around the turn of the century.<sup>9</sup> However, in the meantime, the political environment in Europe has changed dramatically: the internet has given rise to different ways of communicating, major political and economic crisis have challenged the EU. Lastly, new political parties from the radical-right to radical-left with often openly anti-European programmes have increased their influence on citizens. I believe that these three reasons demonstrate that there is a considerable need for further studies.

## Research question

Departing from the assumption that engaging citizens and civil society, through efficient communication channels, and raising awareness on fundamental achievements can contribute to an increase of the organizations' legitimacy and taking into consideration what has previously been published: this study aims at qualitatively analyzing the latest efforts EU-institutions have made

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<sup>6</sup> Vera Gassen; Lutz Hofer; Eike Mark Rinke, Torsten Stollen. *Düsseldorfer Forum - Politische Kommunikation*. LIT Verlag Dr. W. Hopf, 2007: 38 ff; David M. Farrell. *Political Parties as Campaign Organizations*. In *Parties Without Partisans: Political Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies*. Oxford Scholarship Online, 2002.

<sup>7</sup> Ruud Koopmans. *Who inhabits the European public sphere? Winners and losers, supporters and opponents in Europeanised political debates*. *European Journal of Political Research*. Vol. 46, 2004: 183-210; Michael Brüggemann. *Information Policy and the Public Sphere - EU Communications and the Promises of Dialogue and Transparency*. *Journal of the European Institute for Communication and Culture*. Vol. 17, 2014: 5-21.

<sup>8</sup> Niklewicz, 2017: 1.

<sup>9</sup> Erik Oddvar Eriksen. *An Emerging European Public Sphere*. *European Journal of Social Theory*. Vol. 8, 2005: 341-361; Ruud Koopmans, 2004: 183-210; Christoph Meyer. *Political Legitimacy and the Invisibility of Politics: Exploring the European Union's Communication Deficit*. *Journal of Common Market Studies*. Vol. 34, 1999: 617-639; Philip Schlesinger. *Changing Spaces of Political Communication: The Case of the European Union*. *Journal of Political Communication*. Vol. 16, 2001: 263-279.



to respond to the developments that have changed the citizens attitudes. Has EU communication reacted to the changed realities? In particular: has it credibly incorporated this changing political environment in the way it communicates the specific EU impact and benefits of funding programmes? Leading us to the research question:

*Is the EU's political communication up to date with the changing environment?*

## **Methodology**

The study consists of two main parts: a descriptive and an analytical part. After considering the changing environment affecting citizens in their attitude towards the EU and describing several communication campaigns in the descriptive part, we will proceed with a content analysis<sup>10</sup> of political communication. This content analysis is a cross-sectional-study aiming at qualitatively analysing the main communication campaigns of EU institutions in 2018/2019. The analysis integrates a criteria catalogue which includes variables deriving from the analysis of literature within the descriptive part. This catalogue will be applied to several campaigns. I have chosen to employ such a content analysis because it enables us to draw qualitative conclusions on how the EU institutions have responded to the major political and technological developments and to answer whether the current policy of communication may be considered “up-to-date”. The EU support before and after the campaigns 2018/2019 will also be discussed, bearing in mind that support for the EU is generated by a variety of factors. Although the cross-sectional design of this study does not make it possible to find exact correlations between communication efforts and support throughout time, it will be essential to identify recommendations on the content and tools that need to be engaged to strengthen the organization's communication.

The data used to conduct this study is gathered through the analysis of primary sources. These may be strategic plans, general guidelines, decisions and directives emitted by the European Commission at the strategic level as well as campaigns including websites, social media, brochures, videos, TV or radio coverage. As far as data on political participation and support of citizens is concerned, this study uses mainly data gathered from the Eurobarometer, Eurostat and

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<sup>10</sup> Howard Berg. *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*. Pearson. Vol. 8, 2012: 338. ff.

national statistical agencies such as the Statistisches Bundesamt (StBA) and the Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE).

### **Disposition and structure**

This introduction will be followed by the main part with four chapters. The first chapter relates to the particular message of the communication that we will be focusing on: The EU-impact in citizens' lives through the funding programmes. The chapter will include a specification on how recent funding programmes had an impact on citizens in Germany and Portugal. The second chapter will discuss the changing environment, inputs and requirements that emerge for European leaders and responsible communication officers. The EU's specific political communication campaigns will be discussed in chapter 3 as well as the theoretical relevance of political communication in political systems. In the fourth and last chapter of the main part a two-step-analysis will be employed. In a first step, the content analysis will give insights about the quality and adaptivity of the previously discussed campaigns. In a second step the SWOT-analysis will offer future perspectives for the EU's political communication. The final chapter will discuss the content analysis' results in the context of both, the German and the Portuguese political reality. Moreover, readers will be provided with recommendations on how the EU could strengthen its communication in the future.

### **Choice of countries**

The EU is made of and for the citizens in its member states. Any case study on the EU should therefore take into account the different realities of its members and the triangle-relations emerging from the coexistence of EU institutions, the member states governments and the citizens. In the process of discussing and examining the EU's communication, I will therefore regularly refer to Germany and Portugal as practical examples, in order to exemplify an EU-wide issue.

There are mainly three reasons that made me choose the cases of Portugal and Germany. Firstly, due to my personal background, I am able to gather and evaluate German and Portuguese data having access to universities, their scientific databases, relevant institutions and studies within this area in both countries. Secondly, both countries offer a large number of differences, both political and economic, providing appropriate references to analyse a common European communication

policy. Their differences will contribute to provide answers and recommendations on how the EU can better deal with the heterogeneity of its member states. Thirdly, Germany and Portugal offer at the same time some EU-specific similarities. Both are similar in their degree of EU integration and their public support. They are fully integrated EU member states, both within the Euro- zone, the single market and the Schengen Area. Citizens in both countries, according to the European Parliament's Eurobarometer of 2019, rank high in their EU support: 76 percent of German and 69 percent of Portuguese citizens believe that their countries membership is a 'good thing', in both cases above the EU average of 61 percent.<sup>11</sup> This, together with the fact that governments of both states seem to traditionally have strong pro-European attitudes<sup>12</sup> creates similar structural parameters needed to compare two countries according to Lauth.<sup>13</sup> Especially the similar pro-European attitude both the citizens and the governments of Portugal and Germany provide an environment for this comparison in which the EU's communication efforts could be best evaluated. The analysis of this environment could deliver solutions on what the EU and other actors involved are doing right to achieve support as well as provide us with insight on what can still be improved.

As much as possible, I have used sources which allow an overview of both countries. But I did not abstain to refer to one or another study of special interest to our subject focusing one of these countries.

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<sup>11</sup> European Parliament. *Spring Eurobarometer 2019. Eurobarometer Survey 91.1 of the European Parliament*. 2019e: 15.

<sup>12</sup> Note: As we will see in chapter 2.3.3.

<sup>13</sup> Hans-Joachim Lauth. *Politikwissenschaft eine Einführung*. Ferdinand Schöningh, 2016: 114.

## 1. The Message: The EU's impact on citizens.

Any communication needs a message to convey. What is the message we focus on when looking at the several EU awareness campaigns? After contextualising the EU and its core ambitions, this chapter will proceed with examining what impact the EU has on member states, in this case Germany and Portugal. To do so, we will focus on the European Cohesion and Regional Funds in Portugal and Germany. Analysing these policies and their effect on people's lives is an important basis for the analysis of the Union's political communication.

### 1.1. Core ambitions: A Union for citizens?

In corporate communication it is fundamental that the employees identify themselves and know the company's core values to be able to credibly communicate. But what about in politics? It seems logical that political communication is more efficient if the sending entities are aware of their core values, constitutions or functioning: so what does the EU stand for?

When, in May 1950, one of the founding fathers of the EU, Robert Schuman, presented his famous “Schuman Declaration”, proposing the creation of a European Coal and Steel Community, few people would have imagined what this community would become more than half a century later. The French statesman proposed that the Franco-German production of coal and steel as a whole would be placed under a common High Authority, within the framework of an organization open to the participation of the other countries of Europe.”<sup>14</sup> A project which was still very distant from the EU we know today, but a significant step towards it: Schuman’s proposal quickly became reality with the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1951 binding Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Germany, Italy and France to an economic cooperation, at least in the sectors of coal and steel. What Schuman intended to achieve with his declaration went far beyond pure economic reasons. Schuman’s vision of an “organised and living Europe” was that peace would be established and maintained across the continent.<sup>15</sup> His ratio: peace through economic interconnection of countries.

Schuman's vision of a united Europe received a significant boost with the signing of the Treaty of Rome in 1957. As specified, the preamble of what many call the birth treaty of the European

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<sup>14</sup> Robert Schuman. *Declaration of 9th may 1950 delivered by Robert Schuman*. Fondation Robert Schuman. European Issue. No. 204. 10.5.2011. 1950: 1.

<sup>15</sup> Schuman, 1950: 1.

project, the six founding States were “Determined to establish the foundation of an ever closer union among the European peoples” as well as “directing their efforts to the essential purpose of constantly improving the living and working conditions of their peoples.”<sup>16</sup> Article 2 of the Treaty states:<sup>17</sup> “The Union's aim is to promote peace, its values and the well-being of its peoples”<sup>18</sup>. This proves that, since the beginning, the “European people” stand in the center of attention of the European integration.

Today, more than 60 years later, this legislative commitment is an integral part of the European legislation. It is important for this study because it aims at achieving a close relationship with the citizens. This can be achieved through democratic inclusion of citizens on the one hand but also through transparency and communication on the other. Of course, treaties can be interpreted in various ways. The general intention to improve people’s lives must be judged based on actual implementation of policies. This raises the question: What has the EU done to improve its citizens “living and working conditions”?<sup>19</sup>

## 1.2. Searching for impact: Funding

On the search for impact this study concentrates on a very important aspect of the EU policy: Why are funding programmes relevant to analyse the EU’s political communication? The wide field of projects funded by EU institutions represents 76 percent of the EU budget.<sup>20</sup> Like the freedom of movement and the single market, the funding programmes are fundamental for the EU’s impact on people's lives. Yet, citizens don't seem to be aware or to acknowledge the importance of this field. A look into the 2018 Eurobarometer shows that 58 percent of over 27 thousand<sup>21</sup> interviewed Europeans see the freedom of movement of people, goods, and services within the EU as one of the “most positive” results of the EU,<sup>22</sup> followed by the idea that the European project has

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<sup>16</sup> Treaties establishing the European Communities, 1957: 25.

<sup>17</sup> Note: Amended by the Treaty of Lisbon.

<sup>18</sup> Treaty on the European Union. *Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union*. Art 2a. 2010.

<sup>19</sup> Note: As the establishing treaties of the Union suggest. See: Treaties establishing the European Communities, 1957: 25.

<sup>20</sup> European Union. *About: EU Funding*. 2019a: 1. [https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/funding-grants\\_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/funding-grants_en) (last accessed: 13.4.2019 / 17:00).

<sup>21</sup> Standard Eurobarometer 90. *First results. Public opinion in the European Union*. 2018.

<http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/STANDARD/surveyKy/2215> (last accessed: 13.4.2019 / 18:00).

<sup>22</sup> Standard Eurobarometer 90, 2018: 34.

contributed to peace among member states. 54 percent believe this to be one of the greatest achievements.<sup>23</sup> Surprisingly, the EU funding programmes were not identified as a major impact by the citizens in the 2018 Eurobarometer. This makes more sense if we consider that many people are not even aware of several EU funded projects. Crossing Lisbon's Vasco da Gama bridge in Portugal, how many people are aware of the fact that, to a large degree, it was the EU which made it possible?<sup>24</sup> Or how many people taking their children and families out to one of Europe's biggest youth center and park, the FEZ Wuhlheide, in Berlin, are aware that it was the EU which made it possible to completely renovate and reopen its facilities? In fact, only very few. According to the Portuguese *Exame* magazine, in 2015 only 9 percent of the Portuguese population stated that they have benefited in their daily lives from the Regional<sup>25</sup> or the Cohesion Funds and only 26 percent have ever heard of any project financed or sponsored by the EU in their area.

For any study on communication of the EU it is therefore fundamental to consider this discrepancy between funding efforts and citizens awareness. Whether it is a bridge, the local Kindergarten, the local hospital or programmes to help unemployed young EU-citizens in applying for jobs: multiple programmes both in Germany and Portugal have a direct impact on people's lives.<sup>26</sup>

What are the concrete numbers of the EU's support for projects that benefited citizens lives? In the following, we will consider the EU funding in the case of its social and economic cohesion policy including the impact of funding both in Germany and Portugal.

### 1.2.1. The Social and Economic Cohesion policy

The Regional Fund was created in 1972, on the verge of the first enlargement. But it was following the second round of enlargement, that it became evident that new member countries like Greece,<sup>27</sup> Spain and Portugal,<sup>28</sup> as well as Ireland,<sup>29</sup> had structural regional weaknesses revealing a substantial increase in disparities within the Community. Together with the establishment of a Single European Market, the Single European Act of 1988 redefined the need for a social economic policy with a specific focus on improving the most backward or depressed regions: "In particular,

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<sup>23</sup> idem.

<sup>24</sup> Exame. *Investimento: Ninguém sabe dos fundos europeus*. 1.11.2015: 42.

<sup>25</sup> Exame, 2015: 42.

<sup>26</sup> Note: As we will see in chapter 1.2.

<sup>27</sup> Note: Became a member in 1981.

<sup>28</sup> Note: Became members in 1986.

<sup>29</sup> Note: Which had already become a member in 1973.

the Community shall aim at reducing disparities between the various regions and the backwardness of the least-favoured regions.”<sup>30</sup> The existing Structural Funds were integrated into a comprehensive framework based on the following key elements: focus on the poorest and most backward regions with a p.c. GDP inferior to 75 percent of the Community average<sup>31</sup> in the framework of a multi-annual programming; Strategic orientation towards investment; Active involvement of national, regional and local partners, through the principle of subsidiarity.

Following the sizeable enlargement of the EU to the east, welcoming ten countries in 2004 and two more in 2007, many of which included less developed regions, the Treaty of Lisbon, in 2007, reinforced the territorial focus of the cohesion policy to better achieve harmonious development, through the reduction of regional differences, development levels, and investment capacities, for the sake of an effective social, economic and territorial convergence.<sup>32</sup>

The enhanced financial instruments are referred to as the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF). The ESIF are the financial instruments of the Cohesion Policy, through which the EU invests in local and regional projects that contribute to employment creation and sustainable growth. They include the following funds:

- The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF),<sup>33</sup> provides support to regions facing structural problems aiming at correcting imbalances among regions. Presently it finances projects in several key priorities areas such as innovation and research, the “Digital Agenda”, support for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) or the low carbon economy.<sup>34</sup> The amount of support depends on the category of regions.

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<sup>30</sup> The Single European Act. Official Journal of The European Communities No L 169/9. Art. 130a, 1987.

[https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:a519205f-924a-4978-96a2-b9af8a598b85.0004.02/DOC\\_1&format=PDF](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:a519205f-924a-4978-96a2-b9af8a598b85.0004.02/DOC_1&format=PDF) (last accessed: 18.4.2019 / 15:00).

<sup>31</sup> Note: The so called ‘Objective 1’.

<sup>32</sup> Treaty of Lisbon. Official Journal of the European Union C306/1. Art. 130c, 2007.

[http://publications.europa.eu/resource/cellar/688a7a98-3110-4ffe-a6b3-8972d8445325.0007.01/DOC\\_19](http://publications.europa.eu/resource/cellar/688a7a98-3110-4ffe-a6b3-8972d8445325.0007.01/DOC_19) (last accessed: 10.3.2019 / 14:00).

<sup>33</sup> Note: The Portuguese translation is FEDER.

<sup>34</sup> European Commission. *EU regional and urban development - Information and communication technologies*. 2019j: 1. [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/policy/themes/ict/](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/themes/ict/) (last accessed: 27.6.2019 / 13:00).

- The European Social Fund (ESF), created already in 1957, invests in improving employment and education opportunities across the EU, and promotes investment benefiting the most vulnerable social groups.
- The European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) finances the implementation of the European fishing policy, supporting the investments in modernisation and restructuring of the fisheries sector.
- The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) supports the improvement in economic and social development, climate protection and sustainable management of natural resources in rural areas.
- The Cohesion Fund, set up in 1993, provides extra support for poorer regions whose GNP per capita is less than 90 percent of the EU average, co-financing up to 85 percent of investments in environment projects, including in energy saving and efficiency, as well as in trans-European transport networks.

How does this funding mechanism work in practice and what impact does it have on the member states and the citizens lives? In the following we will look into some of the above mentioned funding programmes implemented in Germany and Portugal.

### 1.2.2. Germany

Being the country with the highest contributions towards the EU budget, approximately 21 percent,<sup>35</sup> there is a tendency among some German citizens to refer to their country as Europe's “Zahlmeister”, (“paymaster”). Such a terminology might encourage criticism on the part of those citizens who, in general, are supportive of the European integration, but who feel that paying such a great share is unfair to Germany, while nevertheless ignoring the fact that, as stated by the German Ministry of Finance, the country receives a great payback of “numerous EU-services”: the ESIF for 2014-2020 foresee a total of 27,87 billion euros for Germany. This amount is composed by 10,77 billion euros from the Regional Fund (ERDF); 9,38 billion euros from the

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<sup>35</sup> Note: In august 2018 see: Bundesfinanzministerium. *Auf den Punkt. Informationen aus dem Bundesfinanzministerium*, 2018: 1. [https://www.bundesfinanzministerium.de/Content/DE/Downloads/Broschueren\\_Bestellservice/2017-08-25-auf-den-punkt-eu-haushalt.pdf?\\_blob=publicationFile&v=15](https://www.bundesfinanzministerium.de/Content/DE/Downloads/Broschueren_Bestellservice/2017-08-25-auf-den-punkt-eu-haushalt.pdf?_blob=publicationFile&v=15) (last accessed: 4.3.2019 /10:00).



EAFRD; 7,5 billion euros support to the integration in the labour market of long-term unemployed, of migrants and of disadvantaged youngsters (ESF); 220 million euros from the EMFF.<sup>36</sup>

According to the European Commission, EU support for Germany aims at i.a.: strengthening the competitiveness of small and medium sized businesses; supporting the innovation capacity of the economy, fostering research and development; reducing regional disparities in the labour market and strengthening its potentials; achieving social inclusion through education; reducing greenhouse gas emissions and strengthening climate protection; improving sustainability of aquaculture and fishing; boosting biodiversity and guaranteeing assistance in flood control.

One of the most important EU-projects is “Horizon 2020”, the biggest EU-research and innovation programme, with a total volume of almost 80 billion euros over a period of seven years. Although Germany is the biggest contributor, the country also receives the largest share: In seven research programmes, about 16.500 German researchers are participating in 8.000 EU projects, at a total cost of 6.4 billion euros.<sup>37</sup>

Due to the German political system, federal states have significant influence in a wide area of policies. Therefore, the different EU-programmes can be tailored to different regional conditions. Both national and regional authorities are also engaged in promoting the information and communication on the EU programmes and investments in the country. Specific regional programmes and projects affect people's lives directly. They could significantly help the Union to get closer to the hearts of German citizens and eventually contribute to a sustainable or even rising approval of the European project. It remains to be seen, however, to which extent this large and substantial scope of EU-funding has a positive effect on the German public opinion and whether it is able to convince those who consider their country a ‘paymaster’.

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<sup>36</sup> Bundesfinanzministerium, 2018: 4.

<sup>37</sup> European Commission. *Europäische Struktur- und Investitionsfonds*. 2016: 2. [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/policy/what/investment-policy/esif-country-factsheet/esi\\_funds\\_country\\_factsheet\\_de\\_de.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/policy/what/investment-policy/esif-country-factsheet/esi_funds_country_factsheet_de_de.pdf) (last accessed: 15.6.19 / 15:20).

### 1.2.3. Portugal

Portugal might be the contrary of a ‘paymaster’ in the German sense. In 2017 the country has contributed 1.375 million euros to the EU budget and received a total of 3.976 million euros.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, since accession in 1986, Portugal has benefited from all the EU financial instruments for structural improvement. In the framework of the Multiannual Financial Frameworks (MFF), Portugal has taken advantage of five financial packages: The QCA I, QCA II and QCA III,<sup>39</sup> the Quadro de Referência Estratégico Nacional (QREN) and the Portugal 2020. According to the estimates presented in the comprehensive analysis “25 Years of Structural Funds” from the Fundação Francisco Manuel dos Santos,<sup>40</sup> the total amount of the ESI Funds committed by the EU to Portugal between 1989 and 2013 surpassed 96 billion euros.<sup>41</sup> This amount, matched with 88 billion euros public (48 billion euros) and private (34 billion euros) Portuguese funds sums up to a total investment amount of 178 billion euros. This surpasses Portugal's GDP in 2012<sup>42</sup> and corresponds approximately to two times the GDP of Portugal in 1986, the year of accession to the EC. The EU inflow of funds for structural purpose represented between 2 and 3 percent of the Portuguese GDP up to 2006, and 1,3 percent in the period 2007 to 2013.

According to the above mentioned study, in the period 1989 to 2011, the regional distribution of the funds benefitted the seven main Portuguese regions in varying ways: The North benefited from an increasing percentage of 22 to 40 percent of the funds; the Center with an increase of 20 percent to 28 percent. Both regions, the North and the Center together received more than 50 percent of all EU funds provided to Portugal. However, the metropolitan area of Lisbon, decreased its share from 30 percent to 5 percent. In the period of 2007 to 2013 this region was “redesigned” and was phased out of EU-support, emancipating itself from the poorer regions of the Union. The autonomous regions of Madeira and Azores are also phasing out.

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<sup>38</sup> European Union. europa.eu. Sobre Portugal, 2019b. [https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/countries/member-countries/portugal\\_pt](https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/countries/member-countries/portugal_pt) (last accessed 14.3.2019 / 13:30).

<sup>39</sup> Note: Quadros Comunitarios de Apoio.

<sup>40</sup> Augusto Mateus. *25 Anos de Portugal Europeu*. Fundação Francisco Manuel dos Santos, 2013. <https://www.ffms.pt/FileDownload/db4da352-ef6a-4800-a7d7-a4d6b187a475/25-anos-de-portugal-europeu> (last accessed: 13.2.2019 / 14:00).

<sup>41</sup> Note: at 2011 constant prices.

<sup>42</sup> Note: Portugal's GDP in 210: 168.398 million euros. See Fundação Francisco Manuel dos Santos. *Base de Dados Portugal Contemporâneo*. [online] 2019. [https://www.pordata.pt/Europa/Produto+Interno+Bruto+\(Euro\)-1786](https://www.pordata.pt/Europa/Produto+Interno+Bruto+(Euro)-1786) (last accessed: 13.2.2019 / 14:20).

There has also been a shift of priorities during the mentioned period, from financing infrastructures<sup>43</sup> and productive investments to supporting employment creation, eventually related with the economic crises.<sup>44</sup>

For the period 2014 to 2020 and under the “Portugal 2020”- framework, 25,7 billion euros have been committed to Portugal. This amount will be consisting of 10,8 billion euros from the Regional Fund, 2,9 billion euros from the Cohesion Fund and 7,7 billion euros from the Social Fund.

In total, according to the National Association of Portuguese Municipalities,<sup>45</sup> Portugal will have profited over €100 billion through ESI Funds between 1986 and 2020. Initially these investments were focused in infrastructures and social equipment, which contributed visibly to the improvement of the basic conditions of living, water distribution, sewage systems, roads, schools. In all regions of Portugal, there has been an evolution to investments aimed at reinforcing local and urban competitiveness.<sup>46</sup> It is clear for all municipalities, the managing entities of the Funds closest to the citizens, that these funds have been crucial in building the country we know today. The municipalities have absorbed and managed about 30% of these Funds. Their efficiency from planning to managing the implementation of the supported investment has allowed Portugal to be considered a benchmark. Since investment in local infrastructure happens very close to the people, having a direct effect on their everyday life, it seems safe to assume that it generates considerable public support. Although much of the improvement carries a European flag, it remains to be seen whether these “PR”-benefits are efficiently used by the EU.

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<sup>43</sup> Note: 58 percent in the QCA I, through the Regional Fund.

<sup>44</sup> Note: The Social Fund having a share from 23% in the QCA I and 35% in the QREN.

<sup>45</sup> Associação Nacional de Municípios Portugueses. *XXIII Congresso, 9.12.2017, Quadro Comunitario Portugal 2020*, 2017: 1.

<sup>46</sup> Associação Nacional de Municípios Portugueses, 2017: 10.

## 2. The Input: Changing political environment (2008 - 2018)

The EU's political communication aims at reaching out to the people. Therefore it seems logical that to be successful and credible, communication needs to consider the changing realities of citizens. According to David Easton, understanding and acknowledging a constantly changing environment surrounding citizens is fundamental to understand any field of politics:

“Much light can be shed on the working of a political system if we take into account the fact that much of what happens within a system has its birth in the efforts of the members of the system to cope with the changing environment”<sup>47</sup>.

It seems therefore fundamental to ask what crucial developments or demands does this environment produce for the future communication? This chapter will look at relevant political changes that might have led to detachment and euroscepticism of citizens in the decade of 2008 to 2018. The EU's communication is not primarily concerned with those citizens who passionately defend European integration. Rather, it aims to foster support from those who seem detached from the Union and from those who are openly against the project as a whole. Acknowledging this provides a basis for the following chapters which are dealing with the question of how EU-institutions and their leaders can improve their connectivity with citizens living in this changed environment, which, in the end, constitutes an important tool for a vital democracy<sup>48</sup>.

### 2.1. EU-interest and political participation

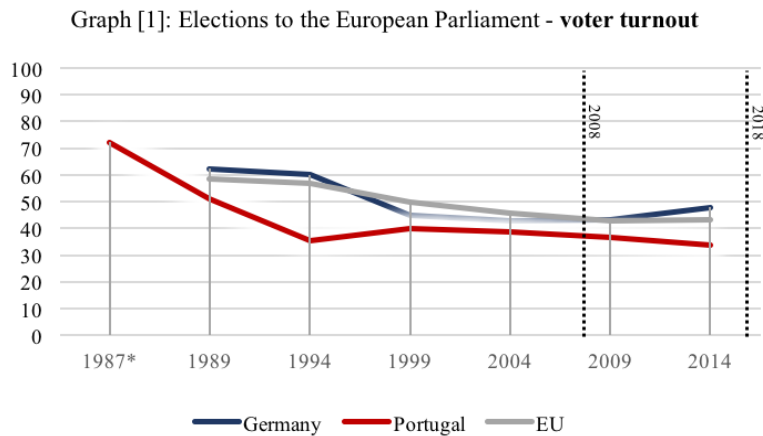
According to Hilke Rebenstorf: “a necessary precondition for the desired characteristics of a responsible and democratic citizen is: critical loyalty, ability and readiness for political participation”<sup>49</sup>. If this is true and political interest can be measured by the ability and readiness to participation, what can be said about the political participation in the 2008 - 2018 decade? Within this decade both Portuguese and German citizen reached a record-low level of political participation in the European Elections. While the voter turnout for the 2009 European Parliament

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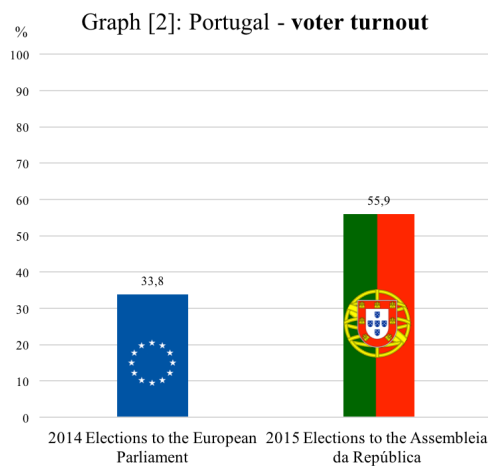
<sup>47</sup> David Easton. *An approach to the analysis of Political Systems*. The John Hopkins University, 1957: 386.

<sup>48</sup> John Hartley. *Communication, Cultural and Media Studies - The key concepts*. Routledge, 2002: 192.

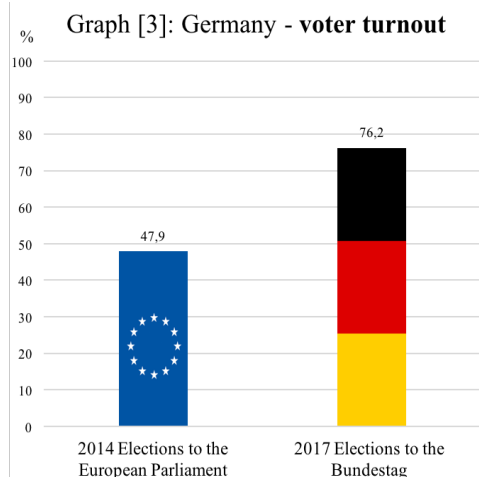
<sup>49</sup> Hilke Rebenstorf. *Political Interest - Its Meaning and General Development*. VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften: 2004: 89.



elections in Germany reached 43,3 percent, the second lowest turnout of any German election to the European parliament, Portuguese voters participated only with 36,8 percent, scoring their lowest EU participation in history. Although the rates changed only slightly in 2014, both countries experienced an opposite trend: While German voters



participated slightly more with 47,9 percent, the Portuguese turnout even decreased to 33,8 percent, reaching the lowest turnout of any election in Portugal since the Portuguese revolution in 1974. As shown in graph [1] the chosen decade represents a low point in political participation since the accession of Portugal to the EC and the following extraordinary elections to the European Parliament in 1987(\*). Moreover, both European elections falling into the given time frame show significant differences in the respective countries' participation in comparison to their national parliamentary elections, as depicted in graphs [2] and [3]. According to Regina Quelhas Lima from the portuguese Jacques Delors Information Centre, this large discrepancy between participation on a national level and relatively low participation in the European Parliament is worrying.<sup>50</sup> Citizens tend to have a much greater interest in their national politics than in EU affairs. But why? Some authors argue that citizens seem



<sup>50</sup> Regina Quelhas Lima. *Interview at the Centro de Informação Jacques Delors*. Direcção Geral dos Assuntos Europeus - Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros. Lisboa, Portugal, 11.4.2019.

to think that their vote is useless and unable to make a difference among 500 million European citizens<sup>51</sup>. Jason Brannen even goes one step beyond and argues that a political system incentivises this ‘ignorance’ by making it very costly to politically educate oneself in order to make a rightful decision or to vote at all.<sup>52</sup>

What makes the case of the EU so unique is the fact that, for many citizens, ‘Brussels’ seems farther away from their daily lives than Berlin or Lisbon. This detachment already starts with the frequent use of the word “Brussels” to refer to the EU and its institutions. Whoever refers to the Belgian capital when talking about the EU also emphasises - consciously or unconsciously - the distance between his or her own national or local concern and European politics. German political scientist Swantje Lingenberg reminds that some people in Germany even refer to the EU as a “spaceship”<sup>53</sup> The geographical and political distance a strong term like this implies, seems obvious. As we have seen in chapter 1, the EU has an impressive local and regional dimension which might be undermined and ignored by the use of such rhetoric.

## 2.2. The role of the media

Following Neidhardt, Eilders and Pfetsch<sup>54</sup> it can be assumed that the media, especially through commentaries, have a strong influence on public opinion and thus on politics. Yet, the problem authors have distinguished when analysing the effect of media on the citizens’ perception of the EU, is the lack of a public European sphere.<sup>55</sup> Koopmann even argues, that if one were to search for a “genuinely supranational public sphere on the European level, there is not much to be found.” In any case, media - whether or not a European public sphere exists - is a fundamental platform to connect the EU to its citizens.

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<sup>51</sup> Juvenal Rodrigues. *Umbilicalmente ligados à UE*. dnoticias.pt. 27.2.2019. <https://www.dnoticias.pt/opiniao/artigos/umbilicalmente-ligados-a-ue-KK4419927#> (last accessed: 13.3.2019 / 20:00).

<sup>52</sup> Jason Brennan. *Against Democracy*. Princeton University Press, 2016: 53.

<sup>53</sup> Note: German word: “Raumschiff”.

<sup>54</sup> Christiane Eilders; Friedhelm Neidhardt; Barbara Pfetsch. *Die Stimme der Medien. Pressekommentare und politische Öffentlichkeit in der Bundesrepublik*. Springer VS, 2004.

<sup>55</sup> Ruud Koopmans, 2004: 183-210.

### 2.2.1. Mass media

Although current times are placing the spotlight on new media and social networks as the innovative ways of communicating politics, mass media is still a key player in shaping European citizens' opinion.<sup>56</sup> Koopmans even argues that “more even than on the national level, the communication flow between the European Union (EU) and other European-level institutions and the public depends on the mass media.”<sup>57</sup> In 2004 the author doubted the existence of any relevant European-wide mass media. In his view, the few attempts to establish a transnational mass media, like the daily journal *The European*, were unsuccessful or insignificant, like the TV channel *Euronews* or the weekly magazine *European Voice*.<sup>58</sup> Many authors argue however, that this has changed since the 2010's. All the three examples referred to by Koopmans in 2004, have, in a certain way regained their significance by 2018: after its disappearance in 1998, *The European* magazine was reborn in 2009 under the directorate of the German journalist Alexander Görlach. *The European Voice* was reorganised by a joint venture of the American *Politico* and the German *Axel Springer SE* culminating in the creation of Europe's own *Politico* magazine starting in 2015.<sup>59</sup> The last example referred to by Koopmans, the TV channel *Euronews*, gained, according to Ferrari, an “increased audience”<sup>60</sup> in this decade. Ferrari states, that, by 2017, *Euronews* broadcasts 24 hours a day, seven days a week, reaching about 400 million households.<sup>61</sup> Koopmans argues, however, that although there are a variety of transnational media which are relatively successful, they “have a global rather than European profile.”<sup>62</sup>

It is true that, by 2019, these broadcasters are far from enjoying the relevance national news channels and journals do. Since the beginning of the EEC and later the EU and despite the increasing integration of member states in the economic, monetary, legal and social fields, neither the pro-European newspapers nor public service broadcasters, with the notable exception of

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<sup>56</sup> Niklewicz, 2017: 47.

<sup>57</sup> Koopmans, 2004: 184.

<sup>58</sup> idem: 185.

<sup>59</sup> Joe Pompeo. *Politico acquires European Voice, details Europe venture*. Politico [online], 12.10.2014. <https://www.politico.com/media/story/2014/12/politico-acquires-european-voice-details-europe-venture-003198/> (last accessed: 20.4.2019 / 19:00).

<sup>60</sup> Anna Ferrari. *Does a European Public Sphere exist? The new federalist*, 27.2.2017. <https://www.thenewfederalist.eu/does-a-european-public-sphere-exist> (last accessed: 20.4.2019 / 19:00).

<sup>61</sup> Ferrari, 2017: 1.

<sup>62</sup> Koopmans, 2004: 185.

*Euronews*, have been able to create an EU-wide media landscape dedicated to the concerns of the EU. One could therefore argue that European media shares - to a certain extent - the responsibility of the decline of popular support for the European idea. Any conclusion based on the relevance of trans-European mass media on the EU's communication without considering the national media, would therefore be incomplete.

In Germany, European policy concerns certainly play a role in the press comments. Nonetheless, most papers are clearly focused on national and regional issues. A European perspective is predominantly seen in the national and regional context or regarding the failure of "Brussels" to solve pan-European structural issues such as the public deficit and debt - crisis or the immigration challenge. Here newspapers are quick to criticize the lack of a common European policy, although they themselves do not always live up to their own standards.

An example for more radical and often eurosceptic reports is the German *BILD Zeitung* (*BILD*). Especially during the time of the eurozone crisis *BILD* was regularly criticised for its polarising, provocative and sometimes even offensive rhetoric towards the EU and countries like Greece<sup>63</sup>. Until today, Germany's biggest boulevard paper regularly emphasises a disproportionality of German contributions to "Brussels."<sup>64 65</sup>

Nonetheless and apart from the example of *BILD*, the project of European integration is generally rated positively by a great share of the German mass media. The emphasis lies, however, mostly more on the economic aspects of European integration. For example, one of the leading German papers, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (*FAZ*), understands the European model of freedom and success above all in an economic sense.<sup>66</sup> Another quality paper, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (*SZ*), regularly emphasizes that the EU is not just a free market, but also a community of values.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Anne Fromm. *Griechenlandberichterstattung der "Bild": Nationalistisch und Einseitig*. TAZ [online], 24.3.2015: 1. <http://www.taz.de/Griechenlandberichterstattung-der-Bild/!5015409/> ((last accessed: 20.4.2019 / 12:00).

<sup>64</sup> Note: How *BILD* often refers to the EU.

<sup>65</sup> Bild Online. *Neuer EU-Haushalt: Deutschland soll 15 Mrd. mehr an Brüssel zahlen*. Bild Online, 22.10.2018: 1. <https://www.bild.de/politik/inland/politik-inland/neuer-eu-haushalt-deutschland-soll-15-mrd-mehr-an-bruessel-zahlen-57980164.bild.html> (last accessed: 20.4.2019 / 18:00).

<sup>66</sup> See: Christian Geinitz. *Streit in Europa: Die EU sollte dem aufmüpfigen Osten zuhören*. Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung [online], 8.5.2019. <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/wirtschaft/wie-es-um-die-neuen-eu-mitglieder-im-jahr-2019-steht-16175642.html> (last accessed: 20.4.19 / 19:00).

<sup>67</sup> Matthias Kolb. *Das Fundament der EU ist bedroht*. Süddeutsche Zeitung [online], 9.4.2019. <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/eu-ungarn-polen-1.4400889> (last accessed: 20.4.2019 / 19:00).



However, the German communication scientist Kramp criticises the fact that newspapers did not achieve to convey their readers the regional and local relevance that the EU has.<sup>68</sup>

In the Portuguese media, European issues have also been at the center of attention in the last decade. Since 1974, the perspective of Membership has been of vital importance to Portugal. According to Teresa de Sousa and Carlos Gaspar, since its outset in the 70's, Portuguese democracy was inseparable from the EU.<sup>69</sup> The approach of mainstream media has been, accordingly, relatively pro-European, with extensive coverage of the generous treatment given by the European Community to Portugal, appreciation of the cooperation with European institutions and schemes. This includes co-financing of projects and structural improvement, seen as decisively enhancing the economic and social development of the country.<sup>70</sup> It is important to understand the particular position of the opinion makers in Portugal. With the establishment of democracy, there was a fresh start of the written press, with the edition of only a few national daily or weekly newspapers, non-ideological, pluralist, and with a broadly pro-European editorial line. José Paquete de Oliveira observes that, with the exception of the so called revolutionary period, there are no newspapers with left or right tendencies, like in other European countries.<sup>71</sup> Their commercial strategy is aimed at capturing the widest plural audience.<sup>72</sup> According to the above mentioned authors,<sup>73</sup> the confidence in Europe was unbroken until the two crises after 2008. Especially during the economic austerity program, between 2011 and 2014, a differentiated reporting expressed also the critical views of the opponents of economic and social reforms and voiced the social costs of the so-called Troika programme.<sup>74</sup> Like in previous pre-accession debt crisis, governments led by the leading parties PS or PSD, invested in complying with the pains of reform and attained the established

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<sup>68</sup> Leif Kramp. In René Martens. *EU-Berichterstattung. Sind Medien am schlechten Image der EU schuld?* Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk. 360G, [online], 24.5.2019. <https://www.mdr.de/medien360g/medienpolitik/europa-journalismus-berichterstattung-100.html> (last accessed: 30.6.2019 / 18:00).

<sup>69</sup> Teresa de Sousa; Carlos Gaspar. *Portugal, the European Union and the Crisis*. Portugal and Europe. Relações Internacionais. Special Issue, 2018: 1 ff.

<sup>70</sup> Exame, 2015: 1 ff; Graça Andrade Ramos. *Relançar a Europa 60 anos depois*. RTP Notícias [online], 25.5.2017. [https://www.rtp.pt/noticias/mundo/relancar-a-europa-60-anos-depois\\_es990975](https://www.rtp.pt/noticias/mundo/relancar-a-europa-60-anos-depois_es990975) (last accessed: 20.4.19 / 20:00).

<sup>71</sup> José Manuel Paquete de Oliveira. *Não há jornais de direita nem de esquerda em Portugal*. Público [online]. 6.6.2016 <https://www.publico.pt/2016/06/06/sociedade/opiniao/nao-ha-jornais-de-direita-nem-de-esquerda-em-portugal-1734159> (last accessed: 20.4.19 / 20:00).

<sup>72</sup> José Manuel Paquete de Oliveira, 2016: 1.

<sup>73</sup> Teresa de Sousa; Carlos Gaspar, 2018: 1 ff.

<sup>74</sup> Alexandre Abreu, Hugo Mendes. *A Crise a Troika e as Alternativas Urgentes*. Tinta da China, 2013: 1 ff.

aims with the general support of the citizens, having recently been congratulated for this attitude by Mario Draghi.<sup>75</sup>

The weekly *Expresso*<sup>76</sup> positioned itself from the outset as a democratic-social-liberal quality paper. The daily *Público*<sup>77</sup> assumes an expressly pro-European line and invests in profound news coverage and research. In fact, the *Público* describes itself in its editorial notice, as a “Europeanist”<sup>78</sup> journal. The weekly *Sol*<sup>79</sup> follows a similar line. These papers try to invest in quality and responsible journalism. *Correio da Manhã*<sup>80</sup> is the leading tabloid, with just over 150.000 copies and 40 percent of the daily circulation.<sup>81</sup> It has a general scope, with popular and investigative news. There are also other popular dailies, focused on sports, *Bola* and *Record*.

TV also plays an important role in the EU-perception of portuguese citizens. According to the Eurobarometer 90, the main source of information on European issues in Portugal is the TV, referred to by 81 percent of the inquired, 9 percent above the EU average. After the TV, the main sources are the written media, referred to by 35 percent, followed by radio and websites in a similar position, with 28 percent.<sup>82</sup>

To conclude, the study from Horta from 2010,<sup>83</sup> after analysing the four main newspapers, Eurobarometer and assessing interviews with citizens of different education, defends that there is a broad correspondence between the representation of the EU conveyed by Portuguese newspapers and the public opinion in the country.

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<sup>75</sup> Jornal de Negócios. Draghi: Portugal está no caminho do crescimento e é símbolo da integração europeia. [online] Lusa, 19.6.2019. <https://www.jornaldenegocios.pt/economia/europa/detalhe/draghi-portugal-esta-no-caminho-do-crescimento-e-e-simbolo-da-integracao-europeia> (last accessed: 10.6.2019 / 23:00).

<sup>76</sup> Note: Founded in 1973.

<sup>77</sup> Note: Founded in 1990.

<sup>78</sup> Manuel Carvalho; Amílcar Correia; Ana Sá Lopes; David Pontes; Tiago Luz Pedro. *Os compromissos da Direcção Editorial*. Público [online]. 16.8.2018, 2018. <https://www.publico.pt/2018/08/16/opiniao/noticia/os-compromissos-da-direccao-editorial-1841144> (last accessed: 10.6.2019 / 23:00).

<sup>79</sup> Note: Founded in 2006.

<sup>80</sup> Note: Founded in 1979.

<sup>81</sup> OberCom. *A Imprensa em Portugal. Setembro 2014*. [online] 2014: 5. <https://obercom.pt/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/A-Imprensa-em-Portugal---Performances-e-indicadores-de-gestao-consumo-procura-e-distribuição---Set2014.pdf> (last accessed: 13.5.2019 / 12:30).

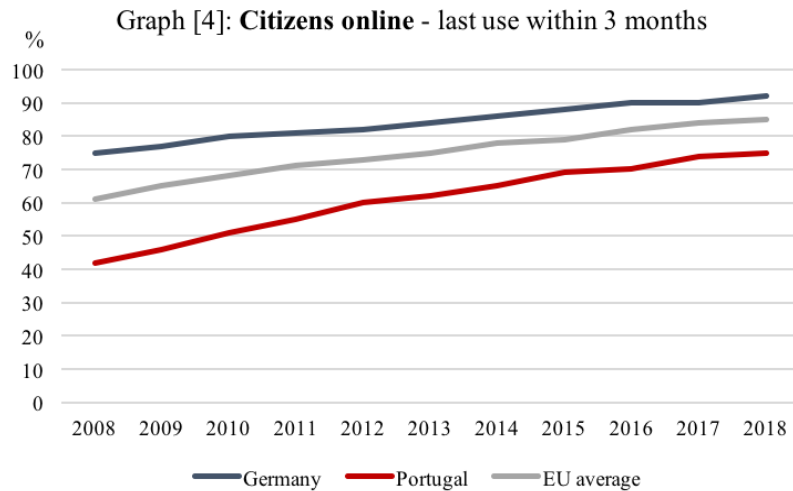
<sup>82</sup> Eurobarómetro Standard 90. *Portugal, Relatório Nacional, Outono 2018. Opinião pública na União Europeia*, 2018: 12-13.

<sup>83</sup> Ana Horta. *Representações sobre a UE: da informação mediática à opinião pública*. Instituto de Ciências Sociais da Universidade de Lisboa, 2010: 477 - 486.

### 2.2.2. New media

The decade under consideration has seen another major development: A technological shift. While in 2008 only 60 percent of all EU citizens frequently used the internet, this number increased to 85 percent ten years later. As graph [4] depicts, citizens of all ages both in Germany and Portugal

have had a strong increase of internet usage during the ten-year-period. With the internet on the rise in Europe, a large share of social media platforms such as Facebook (est. 2004), YouTube (est. 2005), Twitter (est. 2006), WhatsApp (est. 2009) or Instagram (est. 2010) where launched just in the beginning of the period we are



focusing on. This means that 2008-2018 was a time when most of the social media platforms and services we know today played an increasing role in our daily lives. By 2017, 54 percent of the 16 to 74 year old Europeans<sup>84</sup> participated in social media platforms.<sup>85</sup> This development is accompanied by a whole new dimension of social interactions and political communication while at the same time citizens - especially the younger generation - increasingly tend to rely on information obtained through social media.<sup>86</sup> According to Niklewicz, particularly the age group of 18 to 29 acknowledge social media as their primary source of information.<sup>87</sup> This dramatic increase of social media on people's lives including the threats, risk and opportunities this technological progress brings with it, should be considered by policy makers in order to improve their communication. So let us take a closer look on these risks: it was the pope Francis who stated that social media is "most exposed to disinformation and to the conscious and targeted distortion

<sup>84</sup> Note: EU-28 population.

<sup>85</sup> European Union. *Key Figures on Europe - 2018 edition*, 2018: 29

<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3217494/9309359/KS-EI-18-001-EN-N.pdf/0b8d8b94-541d-4d0c-b6a4-31a1f9939a75> (last accessed: 22.3.2019 / 17:00).

<sup>86</sup> Niklewicz, 2017: 13.

<sup>87</sup> idem.

of facts and interpersonal relationships.”<sup>88</sup> Which are the lessons we can learn for political communication? In the following, I am distinguishing three major effects of social media and their effect on the European political communication:

- First, the way we consume media and politics. The way citizens inform and consume news and politics has changed significantly according to Jamie Bartlett. In his “The People vs Tech”, Bartlett argues that, although the internet brings many benefits for citizens, it turns political culture anarchic: social media platforms, according to the author, give citizens an “endless, rapid flow of dissonant ideas and arguments”<sup>89</sup> without any structure or logical order. “Modern citizen is expected to sift through an insane torrent of competing facts, networks, friend requests, blogs, data propaganda, misinformation, investigative journalism, charts, different charts, commentary and reportage.” One main implication of this development is the change from a “win-the-day” mentality to a “win-the-minute” mentality of politicians involved in any discourse. Potential voters or citizens have to constantly be won and convinced because of the rapidness of information flows in social media and the internet.
- Second, the distortion of content. The rise of rapid, distorted, corrupt, non fact-based, anonymous or radical information, propaganda or content in social media posts, uploads, pictures, videos etc. is alarming. For Niklewicz it is preoccupying to see that social media platforms, unlike the conventional media and its media organizations, have no mechanism to decide whether certain ideas are too radical to be discussed publicly “since there are no gatekeepers”<sup>90</sup>.
- Third, the creation of ‘filter bubbles’ and ‘echo-chambers’. It is the idea that social media platforms create certain ‘filter bubbles’ which often represent a very specific group of people with a specific background. These bubbles create ‘echo chambers’ of opinions by strengthening existing points of view without providing a lot of space for new political

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<sup>88</sup> Pope Francis. In Lydia O’Kane. *Pope highlights pros and cons of internet and social media use*. Vatican news, 2019. <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2019-01/pope-highlights-pros-and-cons-of-internet-and-social-media-use.html> (last accessed: 10.6.2019 / 23:00).

<sup>89</sup> Jamie Bartlett. *The People vs Tech - How the internet is killing democracy (and how we save it)*. Penguin Random House Groupe, 2008: 53.

<sup>90</sup> Niklewicz (2017) p.10.

ideas or debates.<sup>91</sup> A good example is twitter which is used extensively by journalists and politicians. A journalist that gathers information for coverage would, according to the concept of echo chambers, rather reflect opinions produced by other journalists and politicians then reflecting citizens' opinion on certain aspects of political life. For political communication it is therefore crucial to consider which social media platform or tool has the ability to reach which group of people and which groups would be left out by only focusing on certain platforms.

What does this mean for the EU's communication? In order to be successful in reaching out to its citizens, institutions have to incorporate answers in their communication strategies corresponding to an increasing 'social medialisation' of political communication. By being active on a variety of social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Youtube and Twitter, institutions may reach more citizens, including those who tend to be indifferent or hostile to EU subjects: Niklewicz recommends the EU should "gradually shift their focus from the old media to their new online counterpart, and especially social platforms", without losing the connection to conventional media like TV and newspapers, which are still fundamental to foster awareness for some citizens. Campaigns have to constantly adapt and evaluate the fast-changing trends in user behaviour<sup>92</sup>. This user behaviour may lead to shifts of the importance of certain social media platforms but also in the content engaged. Niklewicz predicts that from 2015 to 2020 the consumption of video content "will move from accounting 64% of all the internet traffic to more than 82%. This clearly suggests which type of online content should be prioritised in the internet".<sup>93</sup> Schrötter, however, argues that, although online campaigns are efficient tools to reach younger citizens, they often lack the ability to sensibilize viewers for the greater contexts and structures.<sup>94</sup> Any successful "instruction" on how to reach out to citizens must take the dramatically changed circumstances into consideration.

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<sup>91</sup> Axel Bruns; Gunn Enli. *The Routledge Companion to Social Media and Politics*. Taylor and Francis, 2016: 439.

<sup>92</sup> Niklewicz, 2017: 47.

<sup>93</sup> idem.

<sup>94</sup> Hans Jörg Schrötter. *Interview with the author*. Berlin / Lisbon, 6.7.2019.

### 2.3. Drivers for euroscepticism

For authors like FitzGibbon, Leruth and Startin,<sup>95</sup> euroscepticism as an opposition to the increase of power of the EU<sup>96</sup> had first emerged as a purely British phenomena in the 1980's.<sup>97</sup> Considering the EU-wide appearance of euroscepticism, the authors have no doubt that it was the Treaty of Maastricht which represented a “key turning point”.<sup>98</sup> What had been the European Community for many years now became the European Union. And what might have been just a symbolic act for some, marks a turning point for Usherwood and Startin: “The moment when divisions between European and domestic policy begin to become increasingly blurred in the areas of political, economic, social, legal, environmental and foreign affairs”.<sup>99</sup> In the following years, euroscepticism would become a regular factor in almost every field of EU politics. A peak was reached with the negative turnout of the Dutch and French referenda on a possible European constitution in 2005, which led the EU to officially recognize that its “connection with citizens had been severed”.<sup>100</sup> Braga da Cruz argues that these referenda are good examples for the fact that Europe has been excessively built by its political elites without taking enough consideration of its citizens.<sup>101</sup> This leads to a decreasing EU-affiliation and interest of citizens. What followed these referenda was a period of consecutive economic and political crisis contributing not only to a short termed euroscepticism but also to the mid to long term establishment of populist parties from both the radical left and right. This period also laid the ground - inter alia - for the Brexit-referendum which led to the first country ever leaving the EU.<sup>102</sup>

What are the main drivers for possible EU-scepticism of citizens and why was the decade under consideration so fundamental in shaping the EU's political environment? To answer this, we will

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<sup>95</sup> Simon Usherwood. *Modelling transnational and pan-European Euroscepticism*. In: John FitzGibbon; Benjamin Leruth; Nick Sartin. *Euroscepticism as a Transnational and Pan-European Phenomenon*. Routledge, 2017: 10.

<sup>96</sup> Robert Harmsen; Menno Spiering. *Party Politics, National Identity and European Integration*. Rodopi, 2004: 14.

<sup>97</sup> Simon Usherwood, 2010: 10.

<sup>98</sup> idem.

<sup>99</sup> Simon Usherwood. *Euroscepticism as a Persistent Phenomenon*. University Association of Contemporary European Studies 41st Annual Conference. Robinson's College, Cambridge, 2011: 4. See also in: Simon Usherwood, 2010: 10.

<sup>100</sup> European Commission. White Paper on an European Communication Policy, COM, 1.2.2006. See also: Niklewicz, 2017: 21.

<sup>101</sup> Manuel Braga da Cruz. *Portugal, a Europa e a Crise*. In *Portugal, a Europa e a Crise - Seminário de Jovens Cientistas*. Atlas do Colóquio de 26 de Maio de 2015, 2015: 5.

<sup>102</sup> Note: This study does not focus on the Brexit as implication on the communication seeing we are mainly considering Germany and Portugal.

consider the two major political crisis between 2008 and 2018 as well as the rise of populism and how both developments affected citizens attitudes towards the EU, especially in Portugal and Germany.

### 2.3.1. Crisis

The decade of 2008 to 2018 will most likely be associated with a variety of economic and political crisis in European history books. Within these ten years major political and economical crisis have shaken up the fundament of the organization: The financial crisis of 2008 which, according to the European Commission “hit Europe hard”<sup>103</sup> and was followed by the public-debt crisis in Greece as well as economic recessions in several European countries; The annexation of Crimea followed by the military conflict in eastern Ukraine, the doorsteps of the EU constituted a huge challenge to the EU’s common foreign and security policy; The migration crisis with millions of refugees fleeing from wars in Syria and Afghanistan together with other migrants from the Middle East and Africa seeking a new life in Europe put a strain on solidarity of member states. And, of course, the Great Britain’s vote to leave the European Union raised questions and doubts as to the sustainable coherence of the Union.

Especially the eurozone crisis and the migration crisis did not only have an impact in the lives of many Europeans but consequently on the way they perceive the EU and politics in general. Both crisis exemplify contrast of citizens expectations about the EU’s ability and readiness to cope with crisis and how the EU responded to the crisis in reality.<sup>104</sup>

Let us start considering the crisis of the eurozone. Following the international financial crisis of 2008 and the collapse of Lehman Brothers on September 15 in 2008, the so-called “eurozone crisis” hit several European countries hard. EU members such as Greece, Portugal, Ireland or Spain faced severe difficulties or were unable to pay back their state debts without the interference of third parties, such as the EU member states, the International Monetary Fund or the European Central Bank. Although Portugal was one of the countries that made strong efforts to regain its

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<sup>103</sup> European Commission (2018). *Cordis - EU research results. A post-crisis new deal for Europe*. 2019: 1. <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/rcn/194562/brief/en> (last accessed: 5.4.2019 / 18:00).

<sup>104</sup> Note: Be it due to a sentiment of inaction, or due to lack of competences attributed from the member states to the EU in the area.

financial autonomy, and consequently managed to exit the so called Troika Programme in May 2014, citizens' opinions about the crisis management competence of the EU institutions in these turbulent economic times suffered: a comparison of the citizens' trust in the European Union, before and after the outbreak of the crisis, show a clear trend: while 58 percent of the portuguese tended to trust the EU in early 2008<sup>105</sup> this number would shrink to 44 percent in 2011<sup>106</sup> and even reach only 28 percent in 2014,<sup>107</sup> the year when the Troika left the country. These figures speak for themselves: the EU's image in Portugal has been damaged throughout the eurozone crisis.

The second crisis worth taking a look at is the refugee crisis. Mainly caused by different kinds of interstate wars, civil wars or terrorism as in Syria, Afghanistan or Iraq or due to economic misery and political persecution. It resulted in a significant increase of refugees and migrants coming to Europe having 2015 as a peak year. One year after the start of this crisis a large share of German citizens had the impression that the EU did not provide efficient solutions, a situation which accelerated euroscepticism in the country.<sup>108</sup> While some authors criticised the EU's inability to distribute refugees and migrants among member states<sup>109</sup> other observers argue that the EU did not manage to protect its external borders.<sup>110</sup> Although some countries like Portugal clearly expressed their willingness to apply the EU's Dublin Regulations,<sup>111</sup> the overall lack of compliance of the Dublin Regulations contributed towards eurosceptic tendencies in the whole of the EU and

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<sup>105</sup> Eurobarometer 69. *First results. Public opinion in the European Union, 2008*: 31. [http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/eb/eb69/eb\\_69\\_first\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/eb/eb69/eb_69_first_en.pdf) (last accessed: 20.4.2019 / 18:00).

<sup>106</sup> Eurobarometer 75. *First results. Public opinion in the European Union, 2011*: 44. [http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/eb/eb75/eb75\\_publ\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/eb/eb75/eb75_publ_en.pdf) (last accessed: 20.4.2019 / 18:00).

<sup>107</sup> Eurobarometer 81. *First results. Public opinion in the European Union, 2014*: 94. [http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/eb/eb81/eb81\\_publ\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/eb/eb81/eb81_publ_en.pdf) (last accessed: 20.4.2019 / 18:30).

<sup>108</sup> Zeit Online. *EU-Skepsis: Deutsche sehen EUropäische Union auf falschem Weg*. Zeit Online, 29.11.2016. <https://www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/2016-11/eu-skepsis-deutschland-umfrage-brexite-usa> (last accessed: 21.4.2019 / 17:00).

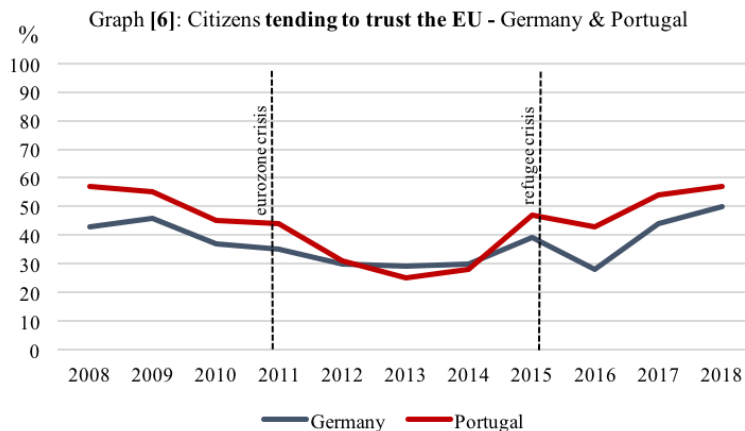
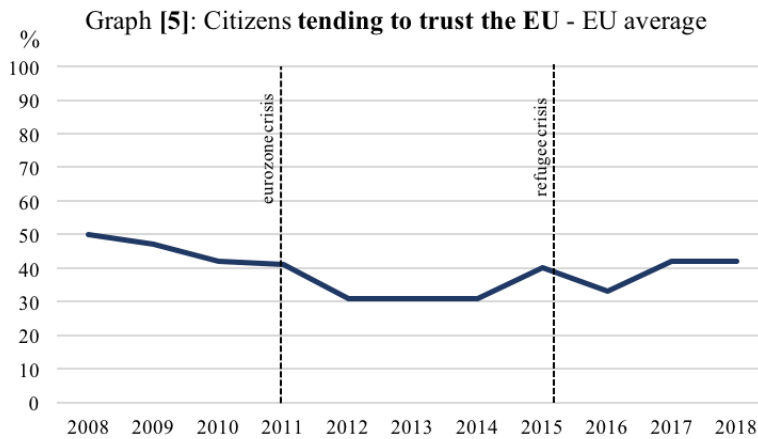
<sup>109</sup> Thomas Kirchner. *EU-Flüchtlingspolitik: Die Verteilungsdiskussion in der EU stockt*. Süddeutsche Zeitung [online], 8.2.2019. <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/fluechtlinge-eu-verteilung-1.4321726> (last accessed: 21.4.2019 / 17:00).

<sup>110</sup> Erich Vad. *Europäische Grenztruppe: Warum wir ein funktionierenden Schutz der EU-Außengrenzen brauchen*. Cicero [online], 6.4.2018. <https://www.cicero.de/aussenpolitik/Grenzen-EU-Aussengrenze-Europaeische-Grenztruppe-Grenzkontrolle-Frontex> (last accessed: 22.4.2019 / 14:00).

<sup>111</sup> European Union. *Regulation (EU) No 604/2013 Of the European Parliament and of the Council*. Official Journal of the European Union, 26 June 2013. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2013:180:0031:0059:EN:PDF> (last access: 3.4.2019 / 17:00).



especially in Germany.<sup>112</sup> This eventually led to a similar impression citizens had after the eurozone crisis: the EU institutions were not seen as efficient and fast in their crisis reaction and management as the citizens expected, while, on the other hand, they were bound by the decision making of the European Council, representing the lowest common denominator of 28 countries. A communicational trap, that had a negative effect on the EU's image.



The graph [5] shows how the two above mentioned crisis affected the overall trust of citizens in the EU. Both countries in consideration experienced significant decreases in their trust to the EU. The variability of the trust to the organization shown by German and Portuguese citizens can be seen in Graph [6]. Although the EU's reputation in both countries suffered from both crises, citizens trust in Portugal decreased especially in the aftermath of the eurozone crisis, while the German trust shrank after the outbreak of the refugee crisis. At the end of the 2008 -

2018 decade trust levels both in Germany and in Portugal regained strength.

A possible interpretation of this given data could be that citizens trust both in Germany, Portugal and EU-wide correlates with the performance of the EU during crisis times. Germany and Portugal clearly highlight that citizens in member states can be economically or socially affected for different reasons. Acknowledging this correlation as well as citizens' fears of future crisis would

<sup>112</sup> Jenz Jacobsen. *Europäische Union: Der Skandal heißt Dublin*. Zeit Online, 23.3.2017. <https://www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/2017-03/europaeische-union-asylopolitik-fluechtlinge-griechenland-dublin-vertraege> (last accessed: 3.4.2019 /17:00).

be a first obligation for the EU's communication departments. But, as we have seen, the crisis may often be a result from the lack of competences attributed to the EU institutions themselves. To openly communicate this paradox and to make citizens aware of the constraints of intergovernmental cooperation at the EU level during crisis compared to unilateral approaches could eventually be a way to manage future image-crisis. It would also be a way to confront, and possibly contain, populist euroscepticism through communication.

### 2.3.2. The rise of populism

The decade of 2008-2018 paved the way for a rise of political parties representing populist and often openly anti-European positions.

How did these parties and movements affect the EU's relation to its citizens? A considerable number of EU member states such as France, Italy, Austria, the Netherlands, Sweden, Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Slovakia, Spain, Great Britain or Germany have experienced boosts of populist parties. Of course, populist positions of the right and the left of the political spectrum have different ideological backgrounds. Yet, authors like Eiermann, Mounk and Gultchin argue that it were especially the previously discussed European crisis that united these parties<sup>113</sup>: “ twin legacies of the Eurozone crisis and mass migration have increasingly challenged the rigid distinction between them.”<sup>114</sup> Both the German and Portuguese reality allow us to depict two different types of anti-European tendencies that have increasingly made their way into public opinion: the far-left and far-right populism.

Firstly, the far-left populism has experienced some increases in support in the aftermath of the eurozone crisis in Portugal: while voters of the Bloco de Esquerda (BE) and Coligação Democrática Unitária (CDU) only reached a total of 13,89 percent<sup>115</sup> in the 2005 Portuguese

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<sup>113</sup> Martin Eiermann; Yascha Mounk; Limor Gultchin. *European Populism: Trends, Threats and Future Prospects*. Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, 2017: 1. <https://institute.global/insight/renewing-centre/european-populism-trends-threats-and-future-prospects> (last accessed: 4.2.2019 / 19:00).

<sup>114</sup> Martin Eiermann; Yascha Mounk; Limor Gultchin, 2017: 1.

<sup>115</sup> Ministério da Administração Interna. *Eleições Legislativas 2015 4 Outubro. Resultado Global*, 2015. <https://www.eleicoes.mai.gov.pt/legislativas2015/resultados-globais.html> (last accessed: 13.5.2019 / 12:00).

legislative elections,<sup>116</sup> this number would reach 18,44 percent<sup>117</sup> in 2015 - after the outbreak of the refugee and migration crisis.

Both parties have in some cases won decisive support because of their promise to hold financial markets accountable for the recession which broke out in several EU countries. Although the Portuguese Bloco da Esquerda (BE), the Partido Comunista Português (PCP) and the German Die LINKE are parties which were founded before the outbreak of the European financial and debt crisis, they all aim at projecting potential worries and fears of citizens related to the eurozone crisis into concrete anti-European positions.

In the case of both BE and PCP, euroscepticism and anti-europeanism is often incentivised by blaming “Brussels” and other member states’ governments to impose measures on their own country: while BE, in its programme for the portuguese legislative elections of 2015, directly refers to the EU adjustment programmes as the “criteria of Merkel”<sup>118</sup> and argues that in the EU, “Berlin” and it’s dictations are the only rules,<sup>119</sup> PCP argues that the EU submisses Portugal to its own interests and consequently opposes the forces who “rule”<sup>120</sup> the organization. The BE also sees a real dilemma in the “impossibility”<sup>121</sup> of the Portuguese public to control its own banking system, its own industries and the labour market, without disobeying EU institutions “in the name of sovereignty.”<sup>122</sup>

The German case of the far-left Die LINKE shows that the aftermath of the eurozone crisis is used to incentivise eurosceptic tendencies by turning the spotlight on the “wrong neoliberal orientation”<sup>123</sup> of the EU since the Treaty of Maastricht<sup>124</sup>. This reconfirms the theory, previously mentioned of FitzGibbon, Leruth and Startin, that Maastricht represents a major turning point of

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<sup>116</sup> Note: before the start of the crisis.

<sup>117</sup> Ministério da Administração Interna, 2015: 1.

<sup>118</sup> Bloco de Esquerda. *Manifesto Eleitoral - Legislativas 2015*, 2015: 4.

<http://www.bloco.org/media/manifestolegislativas2015.pdf> (last accessed: 13.5.2019 / 12:00).

<sup>119</sup> Bloco de Esquerda, 2015: 3.

<sup>120</sup> Partido Comunista Português. *Política Patriótica e de Esquerda. Soluções para um Portugal com Futuro*, 2015: 23. [https://www.pcp.pt/sites/default/files/documentos/programa\\_eleitoral\\_pcp\\_legislativas\\_2015.pdf](https://www.pcp.pt/sites/default/files/documentos/programa_eleitoral_pcp_legislativas_2015.pdf) (last accessed: 13.5.2019 / 12:30).

<sup>121</sup> Bloco de Esquerda, 2015: 3.

<sup>122</sup> idem.

<sup>123</sup> Die Linke. *Wahlprogramm zur Bundestagswahl 2013*, 2013: 49. [https://www.mehr-demokratie.de/fileadmin/pdf/DIE\\_LINKE-Wahlprogramm\\_2013.pdf](https://www.mehr-demokratie.de/fileadmin/pdf/DIE_LINKE-Wahlprogramm_2013.pdf) (last accessed: 13.5.2019 / 12:30).

<sup>124</sup> Die Linke, 2013: 49.

increasing euroscepticism.<sup>125</sup> Interesting, however, is the fact that Die LINKE also sees a problem in economically stronger performing countries taking the lead in the EU, thus blaming Germany for ruling over other EU states. The case of Die LINKE also shows that the refugee crisis may represent a further reason for far-left parties to foster euroscepticism among citizens, seeing that, according to this party, the EU has failed to prevent thousands of deaths in the Mediterranean Sea.<sup>126</sup> This euroscepticism of Die LINKE might at some stage even turn into full scale anti europeanism, as leading politicians like Sarah Wagenknecht demonstrated, by stating that the EU is a “handle to destroy democracy.”<sup>127</sup>

Secondly, there has been a remarkable increase of far-right populist parties in the period of 2008 to 2018. As regards this phenomenon, there is a decisive difference between both countries: Portugal has not seen any relevant increase of such far-right populism during the given time. Moreover the highest performing far-right party in the country, Partido Nacional Renovador (PNR) scored its highest support of any country-wide election between 2008 and 2018 attracting merely 0,5 percent of the votes in the legislative elections of 2015,<sup>128</sup> which makes it unnecessary to consider a possible partisan influence of the far-right on Portuguese citizens.

In Germany, the entrance of the far-right Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) into the political sphere has shaped the political discourse in the country during the years in focus. The AfD was founded in the aftermath of the eurozone crisis<sup>129</sup> and gained an essential boost with the outbreak of the refugee crisis in Germany.<sup>130</sup> How does the party see the EU? According to Lehne, radical-right populism is inevitably connected to euroscepticism “because it is inherently against the idea of supranational authority that overrides the will of the people.”<sup>131</sup> From this point of view, it is

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<sup>125</sup> Simon Usherwood, 2010: 10.

<sup>126</sup> Die Linke. *Langfassung des Wahlprogramms zur Bundestagswahl 2017*, 2017: 8. [https://www.die-linke.de/fileadmin/download/wahlen2017/wahlprogramm2017/die\\_linke\\_wahlprogramm\\_2017.pdf](https://www.die-linke.de/fileadmin/download/wahlen2017/wahlprogramm2017/die_linke_wahlprogramm_2017.pdf) (last accessed: 13.5.2019 / 20:00).

<sup>127</sup> Lisa Nienhaus. *Europa bei der Arbeit*. Zeit Online, 10.4.2019. <https://www.zeit.de/2019/16/eu-verwaltung-emily-o-reilly-ombudsfrau-buergerinteressen-gesetze> (last accessed: 13.5.2019 / 20:00).

<sup>128</sup> Ministerio da Administração Interna, 2015: 1.

<sup>129</sup> Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung. *Kurz und bündig: Die AfD*. BpB [online], 2019. <http://www.bpb.de/politik/grundfragen/parteien-in-deutschland/211108/afd> (last accessed: 13.5.2019 / 20:00).

<sup>130</sup> Tobias Heimbach. *Allein die AfD profitiert von der Flüchtlingskrise*. Welt Online, 12.7.2018. <https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article179136332/Wahlumfragen-Allein-die-AfD-profitiert-von-der-Fluechtlingskrise.html> (last accessed: 13.5.2019 / 20:10).

<sup>131</sup> Heather Grabbe; Stefan Lehne. *Can the EU Survive Populism?* Carnegie Europe [online], 14.6.2016. <https://carnegieeurope.eu/2016/06/14/can-eu-survive-populism-pub-63804> (last accessed: 13.5.2019 / 20:10).

not surprising that the AfD often criticizes the EU by resorting to the image of an ever growing “superstate”.<sup>132</sup> The AfD considers the EU to be an “undemocratic construction”; “occupied by European political actors” who make politics in an “intransparent” and “uncontrollably bureaucratic”<sup>133</sup> way. It also warned citizens in its electoral programme for the German elections of 2017 that the EU will, in the long run, “destroy national states”<sup>134</sup> in their entirety. Moreover, the AfD considers any further European integration to be inevitably unsuccessful because, according to the party’s programme, there is no way Europe could ever claim to have a united people.<sup>135</sup> This rather negative image of the EU was supported by an increasing number of German citizens: although the AfD did not manage to enter the German Bundestag in the 2013 elections<sup>136</sup> it successfully managed to enter all the parliaments of the 16 federal states of Germany by 2018<sup>137</sup> and, in 2017 was voted into the Bundestag with 12,6 percent.<sup>138</sup> Of course one can argue that the main reason for the support of the AfD was not necessarily its EU-programme but rather its position to the refugee crisis which affected Germany. However, a party representing such a percentage of the German population<sup>139</sup> constituting the main opposition in the Bundestag, definitely has an impact on the political discourse in the country.

Which are the lessons to be learned? The rise of populist tendencies may have its roots in the sentiment of parts of the population of feeling overruled, not heard and left-out by the so called European elites developed in the aftermath of the depicted European crisis. To fix this relationship and lack of trust, the EU’s political elites will have no other choice as to take into account the programmes of EU-opposing parties, analysing the development and crisis that helped them grow in order not to lose a considerable share of citizens.

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<sup>132</sup> Alternative für Deutschland. *Europawahlprogramm - Programm der Alternative für Deutschland für die Wahl zum 9. Europäischen Parlament 2019, 2018*: 11. [https://www.afd.de/wp-content/uploads/sites/111/2019/03/AfD\\_Europawahlprogramm\\_A5-hoch\\_web\\_150319.pdf](https://www.afd.de/wp-content/uploads/sites/111/2019/03/AfD_Europawahlprogramm_A5-hoch_web_150319.pdf) (last accessed: 13.5.2019 / 20:10).

<sup>133</sup> Alternative für Deutschland, 2018: 11.

<sup>134</sup> idem: 7.

<sup>135</sup> ibidem.

<sup>136</sup> Note: Due to the German Bundestag electoral threshold of five percent.

<sup>137</sup> Marie Fiedler. *Die AfD sitzt jetzt in allen Landtagen*. Der Tagesspiegel, 28.10.2018: 2.

<sup>138</sup> Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk. *AfD zieht erstmals in Bundestag ein*, MDR Online, 2017. <https://www.mdr.de/wahl2017/video-140848.html> (last accessed: 13.5.2019 / 20:30).

<sup>139</sup> Note: In the Bundestag election of 2017 the AfD became the largest opposition party.

Having said that the Union will need to adjust the way it communicates to citizens in order to tackle the criticism, that it only serves a small group of ‘elites’, Lehne argues, that the EU has to “become stronger in defending its core project and more flexible in adjusting to new ways of doing politics. To do this, the Union has to engage citizens directly, refocus on their legitimate grievances, and strengthen the consensus around its values base.”<sup>140</sup> Also, in “the face of political turmoil and public anger”<sup>141</sup> the EU will not be successful by only relying on a technical approach in communication. Instead, it needs a new approach in communicating with citizens convincingly.<sup>142</sup> Understanding the cases of far-left to far-right populist parties emphasising euroscepticism in different realities such as Germany and Portugal may be crucial for the EU and its leaders to strengthen political communication.

### 2.3.3. Uniformization and the lack of European identity

Examining possible reasons for citizens’ discontent concerning European integration may not exclude the dimension of identity. A potential lack of European identity among citizens and, at the same time, an increase of political, economic and cultural uniformization are often target of criticism. Scholars debating this aspect on a European level generally have two main concerns. First, the assumption that there is no such thing as a common European identity among citizens from Helsinki to Lisbon. Second, the assumption that European integration may progressively promote uniformity among member states without really protecting the kind of plurality which could be crucial for its political survival.

In either way, both aspects are closely linked to each other and scholars rarely examined uniformity without considering the lack of European identity. However, there is a crucial difference between studies conducted around the turn of the century and studies conducted around the 2010’s.

At the turn of the century scholars were influenced by the fast moving integration process which expressed itself through the ratification of the Treaty of Maastricht, the Treaty of Amsterdam, the birth of the Euro, the 2004 enlargement and the debates about a possible European Constitution. This contributed to the fact that authors were at the same time divided between “the proponents of

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<sup>140</sup> Lehne, 2016: 1.

<sup>141</sup> idem.

<sup>142</sup> idem.

a federal Europe and those of an intergovernmentalist one.”<sup>143</sup> For Goldman, this debate emerged due to the increasing use of the “European Nation-State”<sup>144</sup> as an image for possible future EU developments.<sup>145</sup> Cedermann also argued in 2001, that “there cannot be a European identity in the singular but only a plurality of European identities that will clash and reconstruct one another in the process that is identity politics”.<sup>146</sup> The debate on creating a Nation-State was clearly too radical and progressive for many authors and started a wave of criticism.

In the 2010’s, the academic debate changed slightly due to a certain slowdown of the process of European integration. With its last major reform in the form of the Lisbon Treaty in 2007, the EU has experienced rather modest steps of integration and, with the accession of Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia, between 2008 and 2018 the pace of enlargement was reduced. As the *Economist* argues,

“the decade of living dangerously seems to have shaped European politics into something a bit more cohesive if not coherent. Europe is no longer in the business of expansion or of integration come what may. It is in the business of protection.”<sup>147</sup>

This development led to the replacement of a more nation-state based paradigm in debates by the question of whether it is the impossibility to achieve a European identity among citizens that stops the EU from further integrating. In 2015, Espada defended that pluralism is indispensable for the EU to survive and that monistic approaches would eventually lead to the “destruction”<sup>148</sup> of the European project.<sup>149</sup>

Publications of both decades, the 2000’s and 2010’s, tend to agree that European identity is only possible through pluralism of different identities. A “mosaic of nation states of widely varying size

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<sup>143</sup> Lars-Erik Cederman. *Constructing Europe’s Identity: The External Dimension*. Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001: 2.

<sup>144</sup> Kjell Goldmann. *Transforming the European Nation-State: Dynamics of Internationalization*. SAGE Publications, 2001: 56.

<sup>145</sup> See Alan Milward. *The European Rescue of the Nation-State*. Oxford University Press, (4), 1993.

<sup>146</sup> Cedermann, 2001: 160.

<sup>147</sup> The Economist. *Changing parliamentary perspectives*. The Economist, Vol. 431, N. 9143, 2019: 19.

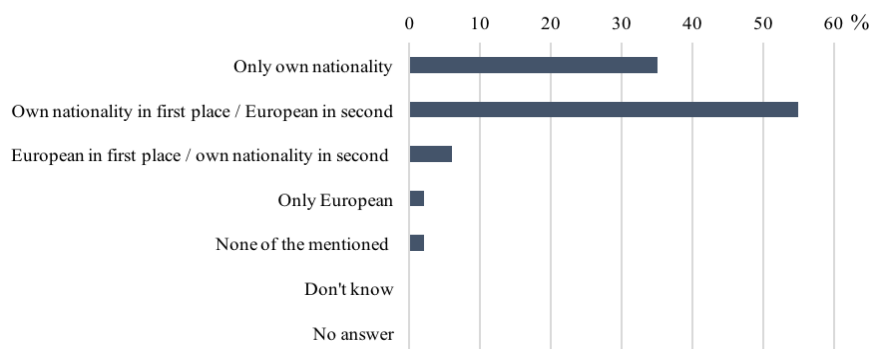
<sup>148</sup> Joao Carlos Espada In: Braga da Cruz, 2015: 6.

<sup>149</sup> idem.

and boasting different languages, cultures, histories and temperaments”<sup>150</sup> as the *Economist* argues, is fundamentally hindered by the lack of a European people.<sup>151</sup> Yet, a potential tendency of European integration to merge several aspects of the society, might only be mirroring a global development on the macro level. Brown argues, that it is the whole process of globalization that “potentially creates a uniform world with global production and consumption patterns gradually ironing out the differences between peoples and societies.”<sup>152</sup> Also, the EU institutions must be aware of the important role nation States play. As Münkler argued, an “EU without a nation-state substructure would be a house built on the quicksand of globalisation.”<sup>153</sup>

Several ambitious projects of the EU institutions such as the creation of Erasmus+, co-financing Interrail-tickets, introducing several symbols like the European anthem, flag or a new slogan might have attracted a certain generation of Europeans extensively profiting from the freedom of movement and somehow feeling more European than their own nationality. But the Eurobarometers<sup>154</sup> shows: these people are in a minority.

Graph [7]: How EU citizens see themselves - **Identity**



As shown in graph [7], only 2 percent of the interviewed consider themselves exclusively European and 6 percent European in the first place with their home countries nationality in

second place. A majority of 55 percent define themselves as having their home countries nationality in the first place and being European in second place, while 35 percent see themselves as exclusively having their countries nationality.

<sup>150</sup> The Economist, 2019: 19.

<sup>151</sup> idem.

<sup>152</sup> Chris Brown. *The International Politics of Identity*. In *Understanding International Relations*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, (3): 208.

<sup>153</sup> Herfried Münkler. In Hans Jörg Schrötter. *Kleines Europa-Lexikon: Geschichte, Politik, Recht*. C. H. Beck, 2015: 7.

<sup>154</sup> Eurobarometer 89. *Standard Eurobarometer 89 - Frühjahr 2018*. European Commission, 2018: 35.



These numbers of spring 2018 show that the EU is far away from the idea of a genuinely, majoritarian European Identity. If EU institutions and leaders aim to foster a progressive and constant uniformization of societies they must be aware of these numbers and the mentioned studies. And they must take into account that such a development could be seen as adding fuel to the fire. A fire which can strongly contribute to an increase of euroscepticism and anti-Europeanism.

What lessons could be taken for the EU's communication in this field? It seems clear that not everyone between the Azores and the Baltics feel as European as young Erasmus+ academics might suggest. The 2018 numbers have shown that a total of 90 percent<sup>155</sup> of citizens in Europe do not feel European in the first place. The EU should therefore communicate accordingly. Institutions and their campaigns should give special attention to the specific countries and regions where the potential recipients of their messages live while avoiding the exhaustive use of a EU-uniformal approach. This does not mean the EU should not communicate as a EU, but it should, however, respect the fact that the citizens it wants to reach are somewhere else then in the European sphere. A possible way of achieving this would be by making use of practical country specific examples and by employing means of storytelling to reach citizens in their local sphere.<sup>156</sup>

#### 2.3.4. The role of national governments

Lastly, we have to consider actors who also have a strong influence on the way citizens view the EU: national governments. We are arriving at a real dilemma: The plurality of representations and interests of European leaders. Although leaders of both Germany and Portugal have proven to constantly defend pro-European attitudes and often even expressed their will for further integration of the EU, it seems logical that, due to the need of being re-elected and due to the national responsibility they hold, that their national reputation would rank higher than that of the EU. This very logic significantly challenges EU communication, seeing EU achievements and successes are often presented as achievements of the governing coalition in capitals. A look at the practice of many members of the European Council exemplifies this communicational challenge: all too often

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<sup>155</sup> Note: Adding 55 percent that define themselves as having their home countries nationality in the first place and being European in second place with 35 percent see themselves as exclusively having their countries nationality.

<sup>156</sup> Niklewicz, 2017: 49.

ministers of the member states, which integrate the Council, do not communicate their achievements primarily in the name of the Council. Instead, ministers and prime ministers often return to their countries presenting Council achievements as their own.<sup>157</sup> Barroso provides an example of his practical experience as President of the Commission: “Whenever the Council had reached an agreement, you were able to hear the sentence ‘I have reached this for my country’ in 23 different languages. Whenever there was no agreement reached, it was due to the incompetence of the European Union.”<sup>158</sup> Valentini and Nesti believe that one main reason for this “self-praise” of national leaders is, that the Council meets behind closed doors. This makes it possible for governments to “cheat” about the policies they pursue in Brussels, using the EU as a scapegoat for everything that went wrong in Europe while claiming all the benefits or the national government.<sup>159</sup>

Laura Shields, who works as an advisor for leading European policy makers, has introduced a term for this phenomenon: “EU-blaming”,<sup>160</sup> going further than just avoiding communication about possible EU-related achievements. It means, that countries’ representatives blame the EU for malfunction and ineffectiveness. According to Shields, a scapegoat is created for national problems for which governments hold the EU accountable for.<sup>161</sup>

This paradoxon of the communication of national leader shows that EU institutions have to acknowledge that member states’ representatives, although basically pro-european, as in the case of both countries considered, have a high interest in awarding potential EU-victories as their own. According to EU Regulation No 1303/2013<sup>162</sup> member states, together with EU institutions are responsible for communicating EU benefits to citizens. Currently member states do not seem to live up to this responsibility.

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<sup>157</sup> Chiara Valentini; Giorgia Nesti. *Public Communication in the European Union - History, Perspectives and Challenges*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010: 75.

<sup>158</sup> José Manuel Durão Barroso. In Thomas Otto. *EU-Berichterstattung - Durch die nationale Brille*. Deutschlandfunk [online], 17.5.2014. [https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/eu-berichterstattung-durch-die-nationale-brille.2024.de.html?dram:article\\_id=285705](https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/eu-berichterstattung-durch-die-nationale-brille.2024.de.html?dram:article_id=285705) (last accessed: 14.5.2019 / 10:00).

<sup>159</sup> Valentini; Nesti, 2010: 75.

<sup>160</sup> Laura Shields. In Thomas Schmelzer. *Europäische Union: Mieses Image dank schlechter Kommunikation*. Euractiv / Wirtschaftswoche [online]. , 24.3.2017. <https://www.euractiv.de/section/europakompakt/news/europaeische-union-mieses-image-dank-schlechter-kommunikation/> (last accessed: 14.5.2019 / 10:00).

<sup>161</sup> Shields, 2017: 1.

<sup>162</sup> European Union. *Regulation (EU) No. 1303/2013. Of the European Parliament and the European Council, 17.12.2013, 2013*. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013R1303&from=EN> (last accessed: 20.5.19 / 13:00).

### 3. The EU as political communicator

We have seen the concrete impact the EU has on its citizens through funding. We have also seen how political circumstances affecting EU institutions and its citizens changed between 2008 and 2018. After considering the theory on political communication and its relevance for political science, this chapter will examine the communication activities of the European Commission, the European Parliament and other institutions including the European Council and the European Investment Bank (EIB) in a changed environment. Seeing the study's design is cross-sectional and it aims at giving recommendations on the basis of the recent communication efforts of the EU, we are considering campaigns running between may 2018 and may 2019.<sup>163</sup> This enables us to examine campaigns in the wake of the 2019 European Elections. Knowing how the EU's institutions reach out to the citizens in practice permits us to evaluate these actions and provide recommendations on how the EU can improve.

#### 3. 1. Theoretical background: Political communication

What is political communication and how does it work in theory? Etymology might give us first clues. The word communication derives from the latin word “communis”, meaning the common or the public.<sup>164</sup> Similarly, the word politics has its roots in the latin word “polis”, referring to a state or the community as a whole.<sup>165</sup> Both terms are referring the general public and the community. Political communication scientist Brian McNair argues that everyone dealing with political communication should “begin by acknowledging that the term has proved to be notoriously difficult to define with any precision, simply because both components of the phrase are themselves open to a variety of definitions, more or less broad.”<sup>166</sup> Problems concerning this matter could be seen from a political science, communication science or sociological perspective. In this study we are considering the political science approach. The concept of Graber and Smith strikes me to be one which includes many facets of a very diffuse field of study:

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<sup>163</sup> Universidade Nova de Lisboa. *Comunicação política. Dicionário de Filosofia Moral e Política*. Instituto de Filosofia da Linguagem, 2019: 1. <https://www.ifilnova.pt/file/uploads/3b577510d120a9ad7a88d3df2ff06f72.pdf> (last accessed: 20.5.19 13:00).

<sup>164</sup> Universidade Nova de Lisboa, 2019: 1-2.

<sup>165</sup> idem.

<sup>166</sup> Brian McNair. *An Introduction to Political Communication*. Routledge, 2011: 3.

“The field of political communication (...) encompasses the construction, sending, receiving and processing messages that potentially have a significant direct or indirect impact on politics. (...) The key element is that the message has a significant political effect on the thinking, beliefs, and behaviours of individuals, groups, institutions, and whole societies and the environments in which they exist.”<sup>167</sup>

Graber and Smith define the scope of possible functions of political communication for the actors involved. Due to the key elements provided, this definition is particularly interesting from the EU point of view: Following the authors argumentation, political communication aims at influencing thinking, beliefs and behaviour of citizens. Applied to the EU, this would mean that EU communication professionals produce communication policies to achieve a direct impact on EU citizens’ minds and opinions. And what impact would be more favourable than an increasing support for European integration among citizens as a counterbalance to increasing eurosceptic opinions?<sup>168</sup>

So how can political communication influentiate the citizens’ opinion? For Donges and Jarren the answer is political public relations (political PR).<sup>169</sup> The authors argue that actors in political PR pursue their goals intentionally, they conduct their PR by themselves, or - more commonly - through their political organization and their own specialised staff e.g. spokesmen or women and PR-consultants. One of the main functions of political PR according to Donges and Jarren is to identify “zones of uncertainty” as well as allocating resources for “informational solutions” - if necessary - by including affected citizens and associations within the specific phases of the political process.<sup>170</sup> A good example for this would be the European Parliament’s invitation of 16 year old climate activist Greta Thunberg.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Doris A. Graber ; James M. Smith. *Political Communication Faces the 21st Century*. In Journal of Communication. Vol. 55, 2005: 479. See also Patrick Donges; Otfried Jarren. *Politische Kommunikation in der Mediengesellschaft - Eine Einführung*. Springer VS, 2017: 7.

<sup>168</sup> Note: Which have been discussed in chapter 2.3.

<sup>169</sup> Patrick Donges; Otfried Jarren, 2017: 144.

<sup>170</sup> idem.

<sup>171</sup> Greta Thunberg. In Jennifer Rankin. *Forget Brexit and focus on climate change, Greta Thunberg tells EU*. The Guardian [online], 16.4.2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/apr/16/greta-thunberg-urges-eu-leaders-wake-up-climate-change-school-strike-movement> (last accessed: 20.5.19. / 18:00).

Another method to pursue successful communication in politics is the concept of political Media Relations (MR):<sup>172</sup> A systematic, planned, intentional and mutual relation between journalists, mass media and political PR actors.<sup>173</sup> The aim of this relation is to establish trust, comprehension and respect for both groups.<sup>174</sup> From an EU-point-of-view, this relation is both important and particular. As an intergovernmental organization the EU has to primarily address the media on a national level. This is where this relation gets delicate: National Media, tend to have a greater interest for topics which are considered to be closer to the people.<sup>175</sup> Following a clear rationale: national politics over European.

Besides MR there are other ways for political actors like EU representatives to convey messages which might eventually foster support: While political PR promotes public interest exclusively through self-projection,<sup>176</sup> there is also a type of political marketing, which includes non-personal and sometimes paid marketing means. The latter is often referred to as political advertisement.<sup>177</sup> Political advertisement operates with means known from the business world, such as a product and image advertisement and aims at creating a certain PR - outcome in the short term as well as an image improvement on the long term. Yet, for McNair, one “fundamental weakness” of political advertisement, is the fact that its message “is perceived as being, if not necessarily ‘propaganda’ (in the negative sense of that term), then ‘biased’ and partial.”<sup>178</sup>

This perception produces the risk that receivers might develop a tendency to be distant from the sending entity, eventually even refusing it, because they know the message is “committed.”<sup>179</sup> Although McNair believes that this is the reason why the “effectiveness of political advertising as

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<sup>172</sup> Juliana Raupp; Jan Niklas Kocks. *Regierungskommunikation und Staatliche Öffentlichkeitsarbeit*. Springer VS 2018. See also Patrick Donges; Otfried Jarren, 2017: 144.

<sup>173</sup> Dustin W. Supa; Lynn M. Zock. *Maximizing media relations through a better understanding of the public relations-journalist relationship: A quantitative analysis of changes over the past 23 years*. Public Relations Journal 3(4), 2009: 2.

<sup>174</sup> Patrick Donges; Otfried Jarren, 2017: 144.

<sup>175</sup> Note: As we have seen in chapter 2.

<sup>176</sup> Michael Kunczik. *Politische Kommunikation als Marketing*. In Otfried Jarren. *Politische Kommunikation in der demokratischen Gesellschaft. Ein Handbuch mit Lexikonteil*. Opladen.1998: 330. See also Patrick Donges; Otfried Jarren, 2017: 149.

<sup>177</sup> Note: A subordinate of political marketing.

<sup>178</sup> McNair. 2011: 118.

<sup>179</sup> idem.

a means of persuasion will always be limited”<sup>180</sup>, he acknowledges the increasingly important role it plays in the political process.

Another form of political communication relevant for the EU is a ‘hybrid’-form, between political PR and political advertisement: the use of what McNair refers to as “free media”<sup>181</sup> is categorised as a type of media through which political actors can achieve public coverage without having to pay for it.<sup>182</sup> However, there are cost worthy exceptions within the free media: Digital agents that are accessible free of charge and offer possibilities to enhance the degree of the message’s range in return of payment. Best examples are the social media platforms Instagram or Facebook which offer political actors the option of a sponsored advertisement. In fact, as I will point out, a large share of the 2018/2019 EU’s political communication engaged the internet and the “free media.”

From the European Commission to the European Parliament, European institutions reach out to citizens in many ways. There is no unique and omnipresent form of EU political communication. Although the general mechanism for their communication is political PR, institutions also integrate political marketing and advertising to convey their messages. Yet, EU communication primarily aims at improving its self-appearance and encouraging people’s constructive reasoning of the content of politics: according to Monaghan, the EU’s communication strategy is at its core “an attempt to strengthen the democratic legitimacy of EU governance by bringing EU institutions and governance structures closer to citizens”<sup>183</sup>: typical characteristics for political PR.

### 3.2. Communication frameworks

The amount of regulations, frameworks, guidelines, decisions and recommendations on communication of the EU institutions is enormous. Seeing that the communication of the EU has regularly been targeted by authors<sup>184</sup> the institutions have responded producing a variety of documents declaring various intentions. In the following chapter, I intend to shed light on this

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<sup>180</sup> idem.

<sup>181</sup> idem: 119.

<sup>182</sup> idem.

<sup>183</sup> Elizabeth Monaghan. *‘Communicating Europe’: The Role of Organised Civil Society*. University of Nottingham. 2008: 1-2.

<sup>184</sup> Schmelzer, 2017: 1.

complex issue by considering the most relevant ones in order to pave the way for the analysis of the EU communication activities in 2018/2019.

What is the legal framework of the EU's communication policies? According to the REGULATION (EU) No 1303/2013<sup>185</sup> of the European Commission and the European Parliament of December 2013,

- “Member States and managing authorities shall be responsible for
- (a) drawing up communication strategies
  - (b) ensuring the establishment of a single website or a single website portal providing information on, and access to, all operational programmes in that Member State (...)
  - (c) informing potential beneficiaries about funding opportunities under operational programmes” (Article 115 / REGULATION (EU) No 1303/2013)<sup>186</sup>

Almost all major communication campaigns are organized by the Commission's or the Parliament's respective Directorate-General (DG). For the purpose of this study of the EU-Impact on citizens, the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG -Regio) plays a key role. The DG-Regio is responsible for “Informing potential beneficiaries about funding opportunities; publicising the achievements of cohesion policy to citizens; carrying out one major annual information activity”<sup>187</sup> and “carrying out one major annual information activity.”<sup>188</sup> Further, according to the “Communication Handbook for the EU Agencies”<sup>189</sup>, the DG is in charge of establishing guidelines and of converting the received input into concrete output.

The Strategic Plan 2016 - 2020 is, according to the EU Commission, the central plan in the area of communication for the years 2016-2020.<sup>190</sup> The Plan was confirmed in 2015 by the Director-

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<sup>185</sup> European Union, 2013: 1.

<sup>186</sup> idem: Art. 115.

<sup>187</sup> European Commission. *Regional Policy / Communication / Legislation*. 2019c. [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/policy/communication/legislation/](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/communication/legislation/) (last accessed: 24.5.19 / 15:20).

<sup>188</sup> European Commission, 2019c: 1.

<sup>189</sup> European Union. *Communication Handbook for the EU Agencies*. 10.12.2013. [https://europa.eu/european-union/sites/europaeu/files/docs/body/2013-12-10\\_communication\\_handbook\\_en.pdf](https://europa.eu/european-union/sites/europaeu/files/docs/body/2013-12-10_communication_handbook_en.pdf) (last accessed: 24.5.19 / 15:25).

<sup>190</sup> European Commission. *Strategic Plan 2016 - 2020*. DG Communication, 19.4.2016. [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/strategic-plan-2016-2020-dg-comm\\_april2016\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/strategic-plan-2016-2020-dg-comm_april2016_en.pdf) (last accessed: 21.5.2019 / 12:00).

General Communication (DG-Comm).<sup>191</sup> Its main objective is to reform the way communication is done in the European Commission and to adapt the content to changing realities.

According to the plan, the Union “should be bigger and more ambitious on big things, and smaller and more modest on small things”.<sup>192</sup> Communication should prioritize the main policy areas of the EU: jobs, growth and investment; the digital single market; the energy union and climate; the internal market; the economic and monetary union; justice and the fundamental rights; migration; the EU as a stronger global actor and democratic change.<sup>193</sup> In order to achieve a higher effectivity and reach out to people, “communication has to be sustained throughout the policy making cycle and has to illustrate how EU policy making affects citizens in their daily lives.”<sup>194</sup> The plan identifies three types of functions for the DG-Comm. First, the “executive service” to colleagues and cabinets using political reports and analysis, results obtained from the Eurobarometer, media analysis and the feedback obtained from citizens on past communication,<sup>195</sup> recalling the “intervention logic of DG-Comm services”<sup>196</sup>: “Listen”, “Advise” and “Engage”.<sup>197</sup> Second, the “corporate service”<sup>198</sup> to achieve digital transformation; make citizens aware of the 10 political priorities - with a particular focus on “jobs, growth and investment” as the overarching priority; “exchange best practices” on communication as well as “receive technical assistance” for communication tools and services and “align their sectoral communication strategies/ plans to the corporate messaging”,<sup>199</sup> gaining more effectiveness and saving costs. Lastly, the “communication service”<sup>200</sup> of DG-Comm aims at: Achieving targeted bonds with media and at fostering media coverage, achieving higher awareness of the citizens on the EU and their role and rights while fostering dialogues with citizens.<sup>201</sup>

The strategic plan also implemented a mechanism to monitor ongoing communication campaigns about awareness-raising on the benefits of EU-funding. To achieve this, the plan identifies an

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<sup>191</sup> European Commission, 2016: 3.

<sup>192</sup> *idem*: 6.

<sup>193</sup> European Commission. *10 Commission priorities for 2015 - 2019*. 2019. [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities_en) (last accessed: 25.5.2019 / 14:00).

<sup>194</sup> European Commission, 2016: 6.

<sup>195</sup> *idem*: 15.

<sup>196</sup> *ibidem*: 4.

<sup>197</sup> *ibidem*: 4.

<sup>198</sup> *ibidem*: 16.

<sup>199</sup> *ibidem*: 17.

<sup>200</sup> *ibidem*: 18.

<sup>201</sup> *ibidem*: 18-19.



indicator which will be controlled on a constant basis to monitor the progress made: “Result indicator 1: Cumulative number of people having been able to recall the messages of corporate actions 2016 - 2020”. According to the paper, the indicator serves to verify whether the commission's corporate communication has successfully achieved that citizens “recall” the “success stories” and “projects” promoted by the EU.<sup>202</sup> Does the plan acknowledge the inputs discussed and converts them into guidelines? In fact, DG-Comm’s strategic plan draws the attention to the changes the world and the countries of Europe have been going through and would eventually go on dealing with. The paper explicitly recalls that “Communication typically is a flanking measure, subject to externalities of two types”,<sup>203</sup> the influence of both content and substance of the dossiers to be communicated<sup>204</sup> being the first type and the complex environment of “28 national public spaces and an emerging public sphere”<sup>205</sup> on the other side. The framework considers the latter type of externalities to be mainly influenced by the following factors: “International, national and regional political factors; International, national and regional economic factors; Level of trust in political institutions (international, national) and in media; Media habits / practice / attitude” and “Technological developments, notably in the information and communications technologies”.<sup>206</sup>

Lastly, when referring to European communication on a strategic level, one should take the “INFORM”-network into consideration. The Network was launched by the DG-Regio in 2008.<sup>207</sup> The network is especially relevant for this study, because it targets the communication of the ERDF and Cohesion fund in member states.<sup>208</sup> According to the DG-Regio “it is essential to make potential beneficiaries aware of existing funding opportunities and to communicate to citizens the results of these investments.” INFORM is a network of officials in charge of communication all over the EU.<sup>209</sup> The Network aims at exchanging results, best practices and evaluations on past

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<sup>202</sup> ibidem: 16.

<sup>203</sup> ibidem: 4.

<sup>204</sup> ibidem: 4.

<sup>205</sup> ibidem: 4.

<sup>206</sup> ibidem: 4.

<sup>207</sup> Regional Policy Inforegio. *Information & Communication - Inform Network*. 2019. [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/archive/country/commu/inform\\_meeting07062008\\_en.cfm?nmenu=4](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/archive/country/commu/inform_meeting07062008_en.cfm?nmenu=4) (last accessed: 25.5.2019 / 14:00).

<sup>208</sup> European Commission. *INFORM network*. 2019d. [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/policy/communication/inform-network/](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/communication/inform-network/) (last accessed: 25.5.2019 / 15:00).

<sup>209</sup> European Commission, 2019d: 1.

communication actions, coordinating communication between national governments and the Commission, evaluating and debating the effectiveness of communication actions and proposing recommendations to strengthen the range and added value of the campaigns.<sup>210</sup> Although being just a network and framework of exchange, INFORM, by way of regular meetings<sup>211</sup> to discuss and evaluate what has been done so far, generates important information and suggestions for the DG-Regio.

The often complex and extensively amended plans like the Strategic Plan 2016-2020 and the DG Regio's INFORM provide useful references for finding out what EU policy intends to achieve in the area of communication in recent years.

### 3.3. The 2018/2019 awareness campaigns

By the time this study is being conducted, the EU institutions are recurring to numerous awareness campaigns to convey citizens the message that the EU and its funding programmes are part of their daily lives. Due to the fact that especially online communication through social media platforms is deleted, modified and unavailable after a short period of time, this study is qualitatively examining the most recent 2018/2019 campaigns. The chosen time frame enables us to analyse some of the most striking and innovative campaigns of the last years with a particular focus on conveying the positive impact on citizens through EU-funds. Additionally, only by analysing the 2018/2019 communication, are we able to take into account both great crisis: The eurozone crisis and the refugee crisis, affecting both Germany and Portugal. Finally, the 2019 European elections have been distinguished by many political actors, such as French President Emmanuel Macron, as “Undoubtedly the most important”<sup>212</sup> elections for the future of the EU, making it even more important to have a look on the EU's communication actions.

The data used to characterise these campaigns was gathered both from primary and secondary sources such as official press releases, institutions websites, online content, social media activity and leaflets etc. In order to better analyse these recent communication activities, we will consider

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<sup>210</sup> idem.

<sup>211</sup> Note: Twice a year.

<sup>212</sup> Emmanuel Macron. In Alastair Macdonald. *Europe holds “most important” EU vote*. Reuters Online, 22.5.2019: 1. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-eu-election/europe-holds-most-important-eu-vote-idUSKCN1SS1KE> (last accessed: 12.4.19 / 16:30).

the campaigns and activities by the sending entity: The European Commission, the European Parliament and the other EU institutions.

### 3.3.1. European Commission

Considering the Commission's communication activities, the *EU in my region* campaign might be the most relevant. Although the campaign received great support from the DG-Comm, it was mainly DG-Regio that had initially launched the sequence of campaigns in 2016. According to the European Commission, it is its first general campaign directly aiming at creating awareness of the EU-funds and their impact on citizens and the region they live in. Under the motto "Getting citizens closer to the EU"<sup>213</sup> it involves events in numerous member states, among them Germany and Portugal. In 2018/2019 the campaign integrated four different actions: An "EU Open Project Days", a "treasure hunt", a "photo competition" and a "blogging campaign".<sup>214</sup> On the campaigns' own website, the viewer is welcomed with a short promotional video explaining the campaigns' core ambition: "We invite Europeans to look around, and notice that the EU is not in Brussels but everywhere."<sup>215</sup> According to the responsible entity, the main aim of these actions was to incentivize citizens all over Europe to visit EU-funded projects. This was based on the rationale that citizens would share their experiences through posting images and impressions on social media platforms and tell their relatives, friends and colleagues about the interesting experience.<sup>216</sup> Several EU Open-project -days were designed to raise citizens' awareness that the visited "Schools, hospitals, modern public transport"<sup>217</sup> behind their backyard might have been funded by the EU. A practical example is the "treasure hunts" that took place at the new fire station in Covilhã

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<sup>213</sup> European Commission. *Getting citizens closer to the EU: Commission launches first "Europe in My Region" campaign*. 29.4.2016. [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/newsroom/news/2016/04/29-04-2016-getting-citizens-closer-to-the-eu-commission-launches-first-europe-in-my-region-campaign](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/newsroom/news/2016/04/29-04-2016-getting-citizens-closer-to-the-eu-commission-launches-first-europe-in-my-region-campaign) (last accessed: 12.4.19 / 16:30).

<sup>214</sup> European Commission. *EU in my Region campaign kicks off: thousands of EU projects will open their doors to citizens*. 30.4.2018, 2018a. [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/newsroom/news/2016/04/29-04-2016-getting-citizens-closer-to-the-eu-commission-launches-first-europe-in-my-region-campaign](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/newsroom/news/2016/04/29-04-2016-getting-citizens-closer-to-the-eu-commission-launches-first-europe-in-my-region-campaign) (last accessed: 12.4.19 / 16:00).

<sup>215</sup> European Commission. *What is #EUinmyRegion all about?* [video source] 2019f [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/policy/communication/euinmyregion2018/](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/communication/euinmyregion2018/) (last accessed: 2.6.19 / 19:00).

<sup>216</sup> European Commission, 2018a: 1.

<sup>217</sup> Corina Crețu. In European Commission 2018a: 1.

in Portugal<sup>218</sup> and guided participants through emblematic EU-funded projects.<sup>219</sup> The 2018 campaign has managed to co-organise more than 2.500 local events mobilizing about 450.000 people to discover regional projects.<sup>220</sup>

The photo competition also aimed at spreading information on EU-funded projects by the people. Casual photographers were asked to photograph examples of concrete EU-funded projects all over Europe.<sup>221</sup> The competition was advertised via all major social media platforms and included video content to motivate citizens to participate and share their views on regional EU-funded projects with others. In the 2018's edition, 530 photos were sent into competition by participants, which included a winner from Germany<sup>222</sup> and two from Portugal.<sup>223</sup> From October 2018, the winning pictures were then shown in an exhibition travelling throughout the whole EU. Another part of the 2018 *EU in my region* campaign included a bloggers' contest which allowed bloggers from all over Europe to conceive and write a blog post and forward it to the DG-Regio. An independent jury chose three winners out of the 120 submitted posts.<sup>224</sup> Their scores involved the blogs public votes and social media activities.<sup>225</sup> Winning blogs were published on the European Commission's own blog-website BlogActive.eu and on the Commission's web page. While Radu Dumitrescu from Romania wrote a piece about the European Youth Weeks, Amaury Bisiaux from France dedicated his article to the EU co-funded Interrail pass and Mari Trini Giner from Spain presented the *Medicsen* Startup which "seeks to increase the quality of life for diabetes patients and also received EU funding."<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> Incubator Europe. *EU Innovation Trends. Kick-off of the EU in My Region 2019 campaign*. 3.5.2019. <https://www.innovationtrends.eu/news/kick-eu-my-region-2019-campaign-thousands-eu-funded-projects-spotlight-additional-tools> (last accessed: 20.5.19 / 18:30).

<sup>219</sup> Barlavento. *Quantos projetos financiados pela União Europeia consegue identificar na sua região?* Barlavento [online]. 8.5.2016. <https://www.barlavento.pt/opiniao/quantos-projetos-financiados-pela-uniao-europeia-consegue-identificar-na-sua-regiao> (last accessed: 20.5.19 / 18:30).

<sup>220</sup> Barlavento, 2016: 4.

<sup>221</sup> European Commission. *#EUinMyRegion 2018 photo competition: the 30 winners*. 11.9.2018. 2018b. [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/newsroom/news/2018/09/09-11-2018-euinmyregion-2018-photo-competition-the-30-winners](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/newsroom/news/2018/09/09-11-2018-euinmyregion-2018-photo-competition-the-30-winners) (last accessed: 20.5.19 / 18:30).

<sup>222</sup> Note: Michael Lamla.

<sup>223</sup> Note: Eduardo Pedro Ventura; Hugo Alexandre dos Santos Couto.

<sup>224</sup> European Commission. *#EUinMyRegion 2018 blogging contest: and the winners are...* 2018e. [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/newsroom/news/2018/09/09-12-2018-euinmyregion-2018-blogging-contest-and-the-winners-are](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/newsroom/news/2018/09/09-12-2018-euinmyregion-2018-blogging-contest-and-the-winners-are) (last accessed: 20.5.19 / 18:00).

<sup>225</sup> European Commission, 2018e: 1.

<sup>226</sup> Radu Dumitrescu. *European Youth Weeks - The best 14 days of summer*. European Commission. 2018. [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/blog/detail.cfm?id=144](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/blog/detail.cfm?id=144) (last accessed: 21.5.19 / 10:30); Amaury Bisiaux. *Miroirs d'Europe*. European Commission. 2018 [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/blog/detail.cfm?id=190](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/blog/detail.cfm?id=190) (last accessed: 21.5.19 / 10:30); Maia Trini Giner. *Medicsen, the startup that helps people with diabetes. Interview with*

The 2018 *EU in My Region* campaign was advertised in a large number of social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Youtube. Promotional videos were shared and an online “communication toolkit”,<sup>227</sup> which included a variety of promotional posters and videos free of charge, was made available.

Apart from the DG-Regio’s *EU in my Region*- campaign, another communication action of the Commission and it’s DG worth mentioning is the *REGIOSTARS* campaign: Since 2008 the “Commission hands out annual “*REGIOSTARS*” awards to EU-funded projects which demonstrate excellence and new approaches in regional development.”<sup>228</sup> The projects are awarded in a variety of categories such as “smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, urban development and a topic of the year.”<sup>229</sup> In this campaign, the Commission uses country specific cases to increase the awareness on EU-funds: in the context of *REGIOSTARS* awards of 2018, one of five awards attributed to all 28 EU countries went to the city of Fundão. In the category “Supporting smart industrial transition” the city won the award “with it’s Business and Shared Service Centre”,<sup>230</sup> which, according to the Portuguese broadcasting company Rádio e Televisão de Portugal (RTP) and the news agency LUSA, is expected to contribute to the creation of 500 jobs in the area of new technologies in the region.<sup>231</sup> The *REGIOSTARS* campaign did not include a presence on all social media platforms. Only some video contents, displaying the winning projects and the relevant data on the EU-funding, were shared through the *EU in my Region* Youtube-account as well as through several posts on the European Commission’s Instagram account. Winners were awarded in the context of a prize-giving ceremony which, in 2018, included over 1.200 participants coming from

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*its founder, Eduardo Jorgensen.* European Commission [online] 2018.

[https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/blog/detail.cfm?id=202](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/blog/detail.cfm?id=202) (last accessed: 21.5.19 / 10:30).

<sup>227</sup> European Commission. *What is #EUinmyRegion all about?* 2019f [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/policy/communication/euinmyregion2018/](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/communication/euinmyregion2018/) (last accessed: 2.6.19 / 19:00).

<sup>228</sup> European Commission. *Communication Campaigns.* DG Communication. 2019e.

[https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/policy/communication/campaigns/](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/communication/campaigns/) (last accessed: 2.6.19 / 19:00).

<sup>229</sup> European Commission, 2019e: 1.

<sup>230</sup> Sofia Elanidou. *Portugal dominates RegioStars Awards with innovation, culture projects.* Euractiv [online], 12.10.2018. <https://www.euractiv.com/section/economy-jobs/news/portugal-dominates-regiostars-awards-with-innovation-culture-projects/> (last accessed: 2.6.19 / 19:00).

<sup>231</sup> Lusa. *Fundão conta atrair mais 500 postos de trabalho qualificados nos próximos três anos.* RTP Notícias [online], 29.10.2018. [https://www.rtp.pt/noticias/mundo/fundao-counta-atrair-mais-500-postos-de-trabalho-qualificados-nos-proximos-tres-anos\\_n1103906](https://www.rtp.pt/noticias/mundo/fundao-counta-atrair-mais-500-postos-de-trabalho-qualificados-nos-proximos-tres-anos_n1103906) (last accessed: 2.6.19 / 20:00).

local politics, media and civil society.<sup>232</sup> This face-to-face approach surely contributed to targeting a more diverse audience.

A concrete example for a purely new-media-focused communication, targeting younger EU-citizens, is the 2019 *Road Trip Project* campaign by both DG-Regio and DG-Comm. According to the Commission, it is aimed at a target group of 18-24 year old Europeans.<sup>233</sup> The initiative consists of a sequence of short clips of about five to six minutes each. Four groups of young Europeans take viewers along in their different experiences throughout Europe.<sup>234</sup> In the Episode “Road Trip Project Chaves Verín Challenge” Yloa, from the Netherlands, and Fabio, from Spain, take the viewer through a trip to the cities of Chaves, Portugal and Verín, Spain.<sup>235</sup> In the clip, both protagonists introduce the spectator to the Eurocity partnership of both cities. Both are given a Eurocity / “Eurocidade” Chaves-Verín card that allows citizens to benefit from a variety of services and promotions in both cities of the “eurocity” region. In the clip, the viewer is able to accompany both Europeans through their visit of several places in both cities such as the SPA “Termas de Chaves” or the Museum of the Flaviense Region in Chaves or the municipal library, the wine museum and the swimming pool in Verín.

The clip about the eurocity-region of Chaves-Verín is just one of the many episodes of the campaign. At the end of the episode all participants of the four different routes meet in the city of Berlin and visit a variety of attractions built and financed with the support of the EU-funds<sup>236</sup>. Although the campaign was present in some social media platforms like Instagram and Youtube, its reach and media coverage were relatively poor. Over 8 months after its first publication, the clip about the Eurocity Chaves-Verín had totaled only 451<sup>237</sup> views and the clip about the reunion in Berlin only 201<sup>238</sup> views. The google data-bank for online news had only registered a total of 8 posts covering “The Road Trip Project” and 6 for “EU Road Trip Project”.<sup>239</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> European Commission. *REGIOSTARS Awards*. 2019g. [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/regio-stars-awards/?Allnews=true#1](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/regio-stars-awards/?Allnews=true#1) (last accessed: 2.6.19 / 20:00).

<sup>233</sup> European Commission, 2019e: 1.

<sup>234</sup> Note: Along the Baltic; the Danube river; the Mediterranean and the Atlantic.

<sup>235</sup> European Commission. *Road Trip Project / Chaves-Verín Challenge*. [video source] 2019i.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kdtVOBexrcY> (last accessed: 3.6.19 / 12:00).

<sup>236</sup> European Commission. *Road Trip Project / Reunited in Berlin*. EUinMyRegion. [online video content], 3.9.2018. 2018c. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=59pBVLub5wo&t=237s> (last accessed: 3.6.19 / 12:00).

<sup>237</sup> Note: Exact date and time of elevation: 13th of May 2019 / 18:22.

<sup>238</sup> Note: Exact date & time of elevation: 13th of May 2019 / 18:29.

<sup>239</sup> idem: 13th of May 2019 / 18:40.

Lastly, one should consider the sequence of debates that the Commission and its Directorate-Generals have launched throughout the last five years. Only in 2018 over 60 local and regional dialogues were organised in 8 different countries including the German cities of Leipzig, Karlsruhe, Stuttgart and Greifswald.<sup>240</sup> According to the Commission, these debates aim “to discuss the impact of EU actions in territorial contexts”<sup>241</sup> bringing “together a variety of local stakeholders and interested citizens, engaging them in open exchanges about the benefits and challenges linked to the delivering of EU funding”.<sup>242</sup> A suitable example is the “Europe-week” taking place every year in the Federal State of Saarland, Germany, which aims at communicating to citizens the “European idea” through several debates and round tables.<sup>243</sup> This debate mechanism is not only a way to inform and to incentivize the public on thinking and talking about EU-funded projects but also a way for decision makers to rethink the EU-funding and its acceptance among the citizens with consequences for the Union’s next financial framework, starting in 2021.

### 3.3.2. European Parliament

Maybe the most suitable example of the European Parliament’s communication on EU-funds and their benefits for citizens within the given time frame, is the *What Europe does for me* - campaign. This campaign launched in early 2019 by the European Parliament’s Research Service (EPRS) in partnership with the parliament’s DG for Communication, is an online campaign designed to demonstrate “the EU’s positive impact on individual citizens and local communities.”<sup>244</sup> To achieve this, the campaign uses a variety of tools such as a website and a newly created application for mobile devices. Under [www.what-europe-does-for-me.eu](http://www.what-europe-does-for-me.eu) viewers find an interactive website available in all official languages of the EU.<sup>245</sup> The viewer may then choose from the categories

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<sup>240</sup> European Commission. *Local Debates. 2019h: 1.* [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/informing/debates\\_planning.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/informing/debates_planning.pdf) (last accessed: 5.6.19 / 10:00).

<sup>241</sup> European Commission, 2019e: 1.

<sup>242</sup> idem.

<sup>243</sup> Ministerium für Finanzen und Europa - Saarland. *Europawoche 2018 - der europäische Gedanke wird weiter getragen.* 24.4.2018. <https://www.saarland.de/235685.htm> (last accessed: 5.7.19 / 9:00).

<sup>244</sup> European Parliament. *What Europe does for me - Press.* 20.5.2019. 2019a: 1. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/elections-press-kit/6/what-europe-does-for-me> (last accessed: 5.6.19 / 10:00).

<sup>245</sup> European Parliament. *What Europe does for me.* 2019b <http://www.what-europe-does-for-me.eu> (last accessed: 5.6.19 / 11:00).

“In my region”, “In my life” or “In focus”. The “In my region” category presents a search field and an interactive map of the EU which allows users to find any European region or city. Taking the “Lisbon Metropolitan Area”, the website lists a variety of projects financed or co-financed by EU-funding programmes: such as the hospital of Carnaxide with new units focusing on treating chronic diseases. The website informs the viewer that it “was financed to the tune of 50% from EU funds and aims to end inequalities in health, improve access to social services and foster social inclusion.”<sup>246</sup> The same ‘infobox’ of the website also refers to the Portugal 2020<sup>247</sup> framework, enabling viewers to get access to the external website of this framework. If we now insert “Berlin” in the search field as another example, the website displays a similar list of practical examples of funded projects and overall financial support for the region. Be it the 635 million euros received from the ERDF or the 215 million euros received from the ESF, both part of the EU financial framework 2014-2020, or be it the over 4.000 medium to small size companies that have received a total funding of 1,4 billion euros over the last 20 years by the European Investment Bank, the website’s visitor is informed about what the EU has done for people in the Berlin area.<sup>248</sup>

In the section “In my Life” visitors are able to choose a specific subject that directly affects their daily lives and lifestyle: From “Cyclists” and “Hairdressers” to “Undeclared workers” and “People living in remote areas” and from “people who want to avoid using plastic bags” and “Masters students” to “people concerned about terrorism” and “young unemployed people”, this category offers a huge variety of branches for visitors to click on. Each of these “branches” provides viewers with vast information and external links on topics directly or indirectly linked to the chosen aspect. When clicking on the branch for “hairdressers”, for instance, the website provides the viewer with detailed information on a variety of aspects concerning this profession. The viewer receives information gathered by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA), on how the frequent contact of chemicals can harm the hairdresser’s skin and health as well as information on two projects funded by the EU for the prevention of occupational skin diseases in the hairdressing sector – SafeHair 1.0 (2010) and SafeHair 2.0 (2011).<sup>249</sup> One more example: When clicking on the branch “Old workers” the website viewer receives information about the allocation of ESF funds for the participation of “Around 576.000 older people” who benefited from “ESF

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<sup>246</sup> European Parliament, 2019b: 1.

<sup>247</sup> Note: See chapter 1.

<sup>248</sup> European Parliament, 2019b: 1.

<sup>249</sup> idem.



lifelong learning support across the EU between 2007 and 2010”<sup>250</sup>. The programme encourages citizens over 55, who think that their working potential is not “fully used”<sup>251</sup>, to participate in continuing professional education programmes. Visitors get specific information and access to external links to apply for these programmes. The last section *In Focus* depicts trends and topics of EU policy making and current “construction sites” of the EU integration. Ranging from the “Fight against tax fraud”; “Migration”; “the fight against unemployment”, “Environmental protection”, “Fisheries”; “Digital Transformation” to “Future of the EU”,<sup>252</sup> <sup>253</sup> this branch provides the viewer with a variety of current and controversial topics concerning the EU.

Another important part of the *What Europe does for me* - campaign was the release of the *Citizens’ App* (2019). This Application provides citizens with latest news of European concern, taking the user's location and home region into special consideration. As in the *What Europe does for me* - website, the user is able to search for any region and find concretely funded projects in an interactive map of the EU. The app also provides an agenda which, if previously agreed upon by the users, synchronises major events of European interest with the users’ personal calendar, e.g. enabling users to be informed about upcoming debates of European parties’ “Spitzenkandidaten”<sup>254</sup> or the next nearest European “Open Day”. The app also features a variety of current topics including different views while also providing mechanisms for users to give their feedback and evaluate articles and debates. Although the application might be a different tool used to reach out to citizens, its content does not vary significantly from the content provided in the previously discussed website. A particularly interesting way of the *What Europe does for me* campaign is the approach to reach citizens through social media platforms providing them with practical cases of European citizens experiencing the benefits of the EU. Finally, the campaign also includes the series “*Do you know what EU does in...?*”<sup>255</sup> This series of videos published through the parliament’s instagram account use the feature of storytelling to raise awareness on specific impacts in member states.

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<sup>250</sup> ibidem.

<sup>251</sup> ibidem.

<sup>252</sup> ibidem.

<sup>253</sup> Note: Among many more.

<sup>254</sup> Note: German term increasingly used in european politics for the head of a european party’s list.

<sup>255</sup> European Parliament. *Official Instagram account of the European Parliament*. 2019c: 1.

<https://www.instagram.com/europeanparliament/> (last accessed: 5.6.19 / 11:00).

Apart from these very specific examples of the latest outputs of the EP's communication policy, the DG for Communication continues in pursuing its general agenda of bringing the European Parliament closer to the people. Especially the pre-election campaign of 2019 has shown how the Parliament made an effort to communicate its functions and its significance as the democratic pillar of the EU. To this end, the parliament used a variety of tools such as the free media, including social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter in order to mobilise people to take advantage of their right to vote. Programmes like *#histimeiamvoting* were implemented all over Europe to raise awareness on European elections. Also, as mentioned in previous chapters, the European parties themselves launched their own campaigns previously to or even within a legislative period of the European parliament. Some parties might follow a pro-European approach of communicating with citizens, underlining the EU efforts through funds and other advantages. As we have seen in chapter 2, others might do the contrary.

In general terms, the DG-Comm of the European Parliament regards “going local and reaching out to people through the European Parliament Liaison Offices (EPLOs) in the 28 EU Member States and in Washington”<sup>256</sup> as well as “increase the awareness on the European Parliament among citizens, stakeholders and opinion leaders through bespoke communication and information campaigns and online channels”<sup>257</sup> as its most important goals in 2019.

### 3.3.3. Other EU Actors

At this point, I want to pay attention to other important EU actors, and look at the role they play in producing awareness of the benefits of the EU, starting with the European Council. In the previous subchapter about the EU's communication, we have seen that the members of national cabinets have their own - often partisan - dynamic of communicating EU - relevant issues. However, one great producer of communication output of the European Council in recent years has been the president of the European Council himself. Donald Tusk has shaped his post as president with a new approach in communicating with citizens, especially through his activities and presence in social media platforms. He is the representative of a EU-institution with the highest

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<sup>256</sup> European Parliament. *Directorate-General for Communication*. 2019d: 1. <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/the-secretary-general/en/directorates-general/comm> (last accessed: 5.6.19 / 11:00).

<sup>257</sup> European Parliament, 2019d: 1.

reach on social media: With 1,05 million followers on twitter he is ranking first in the amount of followers which may be an indicator for the influence he has.<sup>258</sup>

One particular interesting campaign of the European Council is the online campaign entitled *#EUropeans*. This 2019-launched campaign consists of a sequence of clips. In the clips, never longer than three minutes, the viewer is told a personal story of an european citizen. Be it the 11 year old Maria Coutinho from Lisbon suffering from cerebral paresis who enrolled in an adapted surf course, “surf adaptado”<sup>259</sup>, which was co-organised by the EU in the beach of Carcavelos, or be it Anne Goldhammer-Michl who, thanks to the EU-funded “guide”<sup>260</sup> consultancy, specialised in business planning, managed to start her own business as a nutrition consultant after having constantly suffered from migraine due to nutrition issues.<sup>261</sup> Interesting about most of the clips is that the viewer is not permanently informed about EU-funding efforts. Only after a closer look and further research one can find out that programmes and projects like the “adapted surf”- courses and “guide” receive support from the EU.

Finally, one should also consider the EU as an autonomous entity in political communication. The 2019 *EU and me* - campaign was launched as a joint venture of the Commission, the Parliament and the Council. The campaign is not linked to any specific EU-institution and is available online under the overall europa.eu - domain. The campaign consists of several activities that aim at promoting citizens awareness. First, an informational campaign which uses tools like the “europa.eu/euandme” website, social media channel’s of the European institutions as well as informational brochures available at any “Europe direct space” all over Europe.<sup>262</sup> Second, the *#EUandMe* story campaign, in which, similar to the *#EUropeans* campaign launched by the European Council, a variety of citizen’s success stories dealing with EU-funding of any kind are

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<sup>258</sup> Donald Tusk. *Official Twitter account*. @eucopresident. 2019. <https://twitter.com/eucopresident> (last accessed: 5.6.19 / 14:00).

<sup>259</sup> European Council. *#EUropeans: A very special surfer girl*. [video source] Council of the EU, 19.4.2019. 2019a. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xi8jDX2kKiE> (last accessed: 5.6.19 / 14:00).

<sup>260</sup> European Council. *#EUropeans: Reinvent yourself*. [video source] Council of the EU, 29.5.2019. 2019b. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gd0-bFkIEec> (last accessed: 29.6.19 / 14:00).

<sup>261</sup> European Council, 2019b.

<sup>262</sup> European Union. *My Working Rights. My Life*. 2019c. [https://europa.eu/euandme/passion/social-rights\\_en](https://europa.eu/euandme/passion/social-rights_en) (last accessed: 5.6.19 / 18:23).

told and further developed. Third, and finally a “Young Filmmakers Competition” was launched.<sup>263</sup>

Another campaign which was aimed to be representing the EU as a whole is *InvestEU*. The European Investment Bank together with the European Commission play a central role in promoting this campaign. The campaign is aimed at creating awareness about “success stories of real people who have benefited from EU investments or whose projects have been enabled by EU support.”<sup>264</sup> Having its own website<sup>265</sup> dedicated to the investment done by the EU, it provides visitors with a variety of success stories on how EU investment and funding affects the lives of people. Similar to the “What Europe does for me”- website, the visitor is able to search through a variety of regions and cities to find projects in his or her own neighborhood.<sup>266</sup> If one happens to search for projects in Germany, the website provides a total of 21 recent examples on EU-funding in the country, such as a project involving 3,1 million euros of funding provided by the ERDF in the period from 2016-2019. The “AUXILIA”-project<sup>267</sup> created a research group within the Technical University of Chemnitz that is currently developing smart and innovative solutions for patients suffering from dementia, that allows them to stay in their own home the longest possible time without having to move to a clinic or other care establishments. According to the “InvestEU”- website, this investment has the potential of clearly improving the lives of dementia patients, 1,6 million of them living currently in Germany. When searching for Portuguese projects, the website provides just 4 projects. One of which explains the viewer how the infrastructure of the business-faculty of the Universidade Nova SBE of Lisbon was co-financed with 25 million euros of the EU budget including a 16 million loan of the European Fund for Strategic Investment (EFSI) for 2014-2020. On its website, the “InvestEU”- campaign states that the funding contributed to making the university and the city of Lisbon more “future oriented” and “global”.<sup>268</sup>

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<sup>263</sup> European Union. *Young Filmmakers Competition*. 2019d. [https://europa.eu/euandme/winners\\_en](https://europa.eu/euandme/winners_en) (last accessed: 5.6.19 / 18:23).

<sup>264</sup> European Union. *Materials for Partners*. 2019e. [https://europa.eu/investeu/content/materials-partners\\_de](https://europa.eu/investeu/content/materials-partners_de) (last accessed: 5.6.19 / 18:25).

<sup>265</sup> European Union. *InvestEU*. 2019f. [https://europa.eu/investeu/home\\_en](https://europa.eu/investeu/home_en) (last accessed: 5.6.19 / 18:50).

<sup>266</sup> European Union. *InvestEU - projects*. 2019g. [https://europa.eu/investeu/projects\\_de](https://europa.eu/investeu/projects_de) (last accessed: 5.6.19 / 18:52).

<sup>267</sup> European Union. *InvestEU - AUXILIA*. 2019h. [https://europa.eu/investeu/projects/help-dementia-patients\\_de](https://europa.eu/investeu/projects/help-dementia-patients_de) (last accessed: 5.6.19 / 19:00).

<sup>268</sup> European Union. *InvestEU - Nova SBE*. 2019i. [https://europa.eu/investeu/projects/unique-seat-learning\\_de](https://europa.eu/investeu/projects/unique-seat-learning_de) (last accessed: 5.6.19 / 19:00).

## 4. The evaluation: Is the EU's communication up to date?

We have seen how the political environment in both countries and the EU has changed between 2008 and 2018. We have also seen how the EU institution reacted to these changes through communicating to citizens how EU- projects and funds affect their daily lives. However, we have not yet evaluated these communication efforts. This chapter will therefore include a two-step-analysis to qualitatively examine the adaptivity and relevance of the 2018/2019 communication campaigns on the one hand and the future perspectives for the EU's political communication on the other. The 2019 European Elections will also be considered in a short excursus at the end of this chapter.

### 4.1. The Analysis

In the past, scholars have used different approaches to analyse the multidisciplinary field of political communication. Many analyses have been conducted from a sociological point of view, such as the system theory approaches of Luhmann or Parson<sup>269</sup> or approaches focusing on the system of social actions, as done by Münch.<sup>270</sup> However, in this study we are interested in the political science point of view on political communication. These political science approaches are, according to Jarren and Donges, characterised by putting the actors producing political communication and their surrounding political environment in the center of the analysis.<sup>271</sup>

Following this approach, this study combines both a qualitative multi-criteria analysis of the discussed 2018/2019 campaigns,<sup>272</sup> engaging a content analysis of political communication, and a qualitative SWOT-analysis to determine perspectives for future developments for the EU's communication while considering the environmental system.

#### 4.1.1. Analysis I: Content analysis

The first part of the analysis aims at examining the campaigns' designs, content and messages and whether they are 'successfully' conveying the impact of EU-measures to citizens and whether they are responding to environmental changes. I have distinguished three central questions deriving

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<sup>269</sup> Jarren; Donges, 2017: 41. *See also:* Niklas Luhmann. *Organisation und Entscheidung*. Opladen, 2002: 1.

<sup>270</sup> Richard Münch. *Dialektik der Kommunikationsgesellschaft*. Suhrkamp, 1991: 1.

<sup>271</sup> Jarren; Donges, 2017: 41.

<sup>272</sup> Note: Which will include a quantitative operationalisation of criteria.

from this study's context: First, does the campaign convey the message of EU impact in citizens' lives presented in chapter 1? Second, is this message conveyed in an innovative way to cope with a possible EU-detachment of citizens? And third, are the tools used for the campaigns effective to cope with the changing media environment?

I have operationalised these questions into three main hypotheses:

**H1:** Campaigns convey the importance of EU-impact in citizens' lives

**H2:** The campaigns' content responds to changes in citizens EU-attachment

**H3:** The campaigns' tools respond to changes in the media environment

The three hypotheses - H1, H2 and H3 - will be verified by recurring to the so-called content analysis of political communication. This "extremely important method for research into political communication"<sup>273</sup> is, according to Lombard, Snyder-Duch, and Bracken, especially appropriate for a great share of political communication studies and in particular for the analysis of political messages.<sup>274</sup> To be able to provide differentiated answers, the primary sources of the campaigns have been analysed according to their sending institution.<sup>275</sup>

The content analysis of the EU campaigns consists of different analytical steps all guided by the "general order of analytical activities" by Berg and Lune.<sup>276</sup> To begin with, the available data and primary sources - both written and visual or audiovisual<sup>277</sup> - such as EU campaigns, websites, posts<sup>278</sup> and event description were collected through the internet and the EU databases of their websites. In the following, the data was transcribed into written text and explained<sup>279</sup> and the materials' messages were inductively<sup>280</sup> identified. Thirdly, the codes and messages were transformed into "categorical labels or themes."<sup>281</sup> Berg and Lune argue that the chosen categories

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<sup>273</sup> William L. Benoit. *Content Analysis in Political Communication*. 2010: 268.

<sup>274</sup> Matthew Lombard; Jennifer Snyder-Dutch; Cheryl Campanella Bracken. *Content Analysis in Mass Communication: Assessment and Reporting of Intercoder Reliability*. In *Human Communication Research*, Vol.28, 2002: 587-604.

<sup>275</sup> Note: See chapter 3.3.

<sup>276</sup> idem.

<sup>277</sup> Note: Such as "field notes, transcripts, image sequences, news reports" Bruce L. Berg; Howard Lune. *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*. Pearson, 2016: 184. and also "visual materials, such as photographs, drawings, cartoons, cartoon strips and graphic novels, film, or architecture." Berg; Lune, 2016: 184.

<sup>278</sup> Note: on social media platforms.

<sup>279</sup> Note: As depicted in chapter 3.3.

<sup>280</sup> Berg; Lune, 2016: 184.

<sup>281</sup> idem.

should mirror the “categories of meaning used by the study subjects or in the context of the study site”.<sup>282</sup> The deriving categories then form a so-called criteria catalogue.<sup>283</sup> Table [1] shows the three hypotheses with their specific criteria catalogues. The depicted criteria derives from what this study has identified, mainly throughout chapter 1 and 2 as being fundamental for an effective communication of EU-Impact in citizens’ lives. To continue, the campaigns were analysed according to the established pattern and results were codified. EU campaigns in which the criteria was applicable were coded with a “1”, in the opposite case a “0”. This way campaigns could be evaluated specifically on their performance concerning the specific hypothesis. Detailed findings of the criteria catalogue and content analysis may be found in table [2], displayed in this study’s appendix.

Table [1]: Hypotheses and specific criteria catalogues

| <b>H1:</b> Campaigns convey the importance of EU-impact in the citizens lives   | <b>H2:</b> The campaigns’ contents respond to changes in citizens EU-attachment   | <b>H3:</b> The campaigns tools respond to changes in the media environment  |
|---|---|---|
| A) Mention concrete funding?<br>B) Use practical examples?<br>C) Use specific German or Portuguese cases?<br>D) Use Storytelling?<br>E) Use concrete data?<br>F) Appeal to different generations? | A) Messages conveyed in a simple way and avoiding technical language?<br>B) Messages encourage different perspectives on the EU?<br>C) Are emotions used to trigger interest?<br>D) Content confronts euroscepticist concerns?<br>E) Campaigns advertise the Union not the Institutions?<br>F) Messages Incentivise political participation and interest? | A) Does the campaign have its own website?<br>B) Social media activity:<br>- Facebook?<br>- Instagram?<br>- Twitter?<br>- Youtube?<br>- Posts include video content?<br>C) Face to face campaigns?<br>D) Use of ‘conventional media’ (e.g. radio, tv, posters, brochures etc.)? |

<sup>282</sup> ibidem: 183.

<sup>283</sup> Note: A method also used in analysing corporate communication. *see also:* Alina Seidel. *Kundenorientierte Kommunikation. Konzeptionalisierung und empirische Analyse im Dienstleistungsbereich*. Hallesche Schriften zur Betriebswirtschaft. Vol. 21, 2006: 110.

## Evaluating the findings

After having applied the criteria to the content of the different campaigns of the European Commission, the European Parliament and other institutions, several observations should be considered: When it comes to making citizens aware of the impact the EU has in their lives and on specific regions (H1) all nine campaigns under consideration scored an average of 68,5 percent in accordance to the established conditions. H1 was the hypothesis under which the campaigns scored the most, followed by the campaigns' adaptation to a differentiated (digital) media environment (H3), where campaigns scored an average of 54,5 percent. Finally, the campaigns' response to the citizens' changing view on the EU (H2) reached only about 53 percent.

What are the reasons for a relatively low score of the campaigns on adapting with the changing perceptions of citizens (H2) and the digital transformation (H3)?

As regards the lower performance of campaigns on H3, a possible reason could be found in the campaigns' strong prioritisation of online media. What might sound paradox at first, seeing the online usage of both Portuguese and German citizens has dramatically increased from 2008 to 2018,<sup>284</sup> can be explained by the fact that the 'old'<sup>285</sup> media is "still considerable" as Niklewicz argues.<sup>286</sup> The exclusive focus of many campaigns like the *#EUropeans*, the *Road Trip Project* or the *#EUandMe* - campaign on social platforms and the new media, restrained these campaigns from a better compliance with the chosen criteria. Of course, some of these campaigns were specifically conceived for the online sphere. But policy makers must take into account that still today, online media does not reach all sectors of the population in Europe. Particularly, many older people might be less focused on the digital world. Also, an extreme prioritisation on online media makes the campaigns vulnerable to threats and risks.<sup>287</sup>

Regarding the increasing detachment of some citizens from the European elites, which, as we have seen in chapter 2, leads to a shift in the citizens' EU perceptions (H2), the reasons for the low performance of campaigns might be several: however, only one third of the campaigns engaged content which, directly or indirectly, confronts or mentions euroscepticism or responds to the

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<sup>284</sup> Note: See chapter 2.2.2.

<sup>285</sup> Note: Meaning more conventional media.

<sup>286</sup> Niklewicz, 2017: 46.

<sup>287</sup> Note: See chapter 2.2.2.



perceived loss of trust in the EU crisis-management. Also, more than half of the campaigns were conceived to advertise the specific institutions of the EU. Therefore, according to Niklewicz, they lose an important opportunity to connect to citizens through one 'EU voice'.<sup>288</sup>

If we consider the total performance within the respective institutional categories under the three working hypotheses (H1; H2 and H3), it seems surprising that neither the European Commission nor the European Parliament performed highest. Instead, the group of 'other EU actors',<sup>289</sup> such as the *EU and ME* - campaign, accomplished the most criteria of the catalogue,<sup>290</sup> followed by the European Parliament's campaigns<sup>291</sup> and the European Commission's campaigns.<sup>292</sup> This shows how campaigns implemented as joint-ventures of the different EU institutions could be the answer for successful future campaigns in the area.

The one out of nine campaigns performing the best on all of the categories of this analysis was the *EU in my Region* - campaign by the European Commission. This campaign verified almost all established criteria of conveying the message of impact through EU-funding. Integrating a variety of practical examples, with a specific approach for both Portugal and Germany, using "storytelling" as a method to capture people's awareness, were important assets distinguishing this campaign. Also, the fact that it not only involved a prominent presence of the new media but also involved face-to-face approaches such as the organization of several "treasure hunts" leading citizens through EU-funded projects in Germany, Portugal and the whole EU, explains part of the success. On the other side, the lowest performing campaign was the *REGIOSTARS* - campaign which performed relatively weak, only corresponding to 16,7 percent of the criteria (H2). A reason could be a certain degree of exclusivity of the project that does not foresee any mechanisms to reach people who really need to be convinced on the EU's performance by transmitting clear and simple messages and encouraging different perspectives.

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<sup>288</sup> Niklewicz, 2017: 48.

<sup>289</sup> Note: which includes the joint-venture campaign of European Commission, Parliament and Commission.

<sup>290</sup> Note: 61,8 percent.

<sup>291</sup> Note: 52,2 percent.

<sup>292</sup> Note: 50,8 percent.

## Limitations

When establishing such a content analysis as well as a criteria catalogue, one must be aware that the chosen criteria is - however objectively - constrained by the subjectivity of the researcher. Although the method used by Berg, Lune and also Seidel<sup>293</sup> is commonly used in the research of political communication, it bears some risks that the reader needs to take into account. The formulation of criteria resulted from the argumentation and recommendations of the previous chapters. It mirrors - to a certain extent - what researches in this field believe is needed to strengthen the EU's political communication in times of change. However, any decision in favour of a certain criteria in political science is also a decision against some other categories and criteria. Because of this restriction, I have chosen to combine this first, highly specific<sup>294</sup> and possibly subjective step of the analysis, with a second step which takes into account the perspectives and overall potential of the EU's political communication.

One has to bare in mind that the EU's campaigns are designed for a variety of purposes aiming at informing citizens about completely different fields including those, which are not considered in this analysis' criteria catalogue. Although some campaigns scored relatively low results through the specific content analysis they may be achieving their aim in other aspects. The criteria implemented in this first analysis enables us to evaluate the campaigns efforts to cope with a changing environment on the basis of what has been discussed in the previous chapters.

### 4.1.1. Analysis II: SWOT-analysis

After having examined the status-quo of the 2018/2019 campaigns, the focus of the second part of this study's analysis is dedicated to future possibilities of the EU's political communication. The SWOT-Analysis<sup>295</sup> is a tool often used in the business world to examine the future potential of a project. The analysis, first developed by Learned, Christensen, Andrews and Guth<sup>296</sup> in 1965, allows decision makers to investigate "the current situation of an organization at a given time, in

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<sup>293</sup> Seidel, 2006: 110.

<sup>294</sup> Note: Due to the thematic variety of criteria that derive from the study's main body.

<sup>295</sup> Note: abbreviation for: strength, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

<sup>296</sup> Edmund P. Learned; Roland C. Christensen; Kenneth R. Andrews; William D. Guth. *Business Policy: Text and Cases*. Harvard Business School, 1965: 1.

a forward looking manner”.<sup>297</sup> It remains one of the most relevant tools for strategic planning in the corporate world and may be considered a “valuable technique for planning and decision making.”<sup>298</sup> Although the EU is far from being a profit oriented enterprise and its communication strategy cannot be considered a business plan, integrating a SWOT-analysis could be considered an efficient way to identify possible strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the EU’s communication. Some authors criticise the lack of efficiency of decision makers in the EU and argue that “EU institutions should follow best practices from the business sector since these have proved to be more effective in the current communication environment.”<sup>299</sup> In business, companies are pressured by their competitors to constantly improve their services and internal mechanisms such as their communication. Although a political competitor of the EU in Europe is nowhere in sight, the EU, just like in the corporate world, would be well-advised to constantly improve its communication mechanisms. In it’s 2015 “Toolkit for the evaluation of communication activities”<sup>300</sup> the Commission itself argued this method is a “well-known and widely used approach that provides a framework for discussion of the merits and demerits of actual and proposed interventions”.<sup>301</sup>

The SWOT-analysis applied in this study, addresses the EU’s communication department, including all the communication agencies of the EU, in particular the DG-Command and the DG-Regio of the European Council.<sup>302</sup> The EU communication agencies’ strengths and weaknesses, which also include general EU deficits and advantages that may strengthen or weaken communication, were gathered in the following SWOT-matrix. Opportunities and threats, derive from the strengths and weaknesses, are determined by external factors such as the previously discussed changing environment.

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<sup>297</sup> Carly Probert. *Swot Analysis*. Management and Marketing. 50 Minutes, 2015: 7.

<sup>298</sup> Emet Gürel; Merba Tat. *SWOT Analysis: A Theoretical Review*. The Journal of International Social Research. Vol. 10 (51). 2017: 10045.

<sup>299</sup> Niklewicz, 2017: 10.

<sup>300</sup> European Commission. *Toolkit for the evaluation of communication activities*. 2015: 25.

[https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/communication-evaluation-toolkit\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/communication-evaluation-toolkit_en.pdf) (last accessed.2.6.19 / 12:00).

<sup>301</sup> European Commission, 2015: 72.

<sup>302</sup> Note: Mentioned in the previous chapter 3.

Figure [1]: EU's communication department's SWOT-analysis



### Evaluating the findings

On the side of the strengths the above SWOT-matrix, figure [], includes, among others, the EU's relatively highly developed communication infrastructure with human resources, technological know-how of the different communication agencies and technological resources, such as the high number of institutions and campaigns present in social media networks and their own “webpage”<sup>303</sup> or the *citizens App*. The previous content analysis has shown that the 2018/2019 communication campaigns have, in most cases, successfully integrated a variety of practical and country specific examples to illustrate the impact of the EU in people's daily lives. Also, the findings of the first content analysis demonstrate that the EU campaigns were strong in the

<sup>303</sup> Note: The content analysis has shown that 8 out of 9 examined campaigns had their own personalised webpage.

impartiality and objectivity of their messages,<sup>304</sup> certainly a strength, if we consider the advantages of political PR by Jarren and Donges.<sup>305</sup> As regards the weaknesses, a content analysis of the EU's political communication has clearly shown an over-proportional communication of the EU-Institutions. Campaigns advertising the Union as a whole, like the *EU and Me* - campaign, were rare. Also, the fact that the EU consists of a complex structure of institutions, legislative bodies and executive actors<sup>306</sup> is an impediment for communication purposes. Additionally, the EU's limited capability to "repair" possible damage in the EU's relations with its citizens, plus the fact that awareness campaigns will hardly ever be able to reach a majority, represent considerable weaknesses of the EU's communication.

Regarding opportunities, the technological shift certainly offers new ways of communicating and engaging citizens through expanding democratic means after the several changes amended by the Treaty of Lisbon. The 2007 Treaty of Lisbon Parliament reforms like the extension of the scope of co-decision,<sup>307</sup> the increasing power in budgetary questions or international agreements or the Parliament's ability to call for legislative amendments.<sup>308</sup>

The 2019 European Elections have shown that citizens in Portugal and Germany see a need for action in environmental protection, migration and security. All of these are policy fields which could eventually best be tackled with on an intergovernmental level such as the EU. The willingness and demand of some actors involved to reform and renew the EU may also create a window of opportunity for a new approach in its communication. Lastly, the fact that the EU as a supranational entity stands for peace and stability in Europe<sup>309</sup> while other parts of the world are experiencing political instability may raise the citizens interest in the EU's messages and communication. On the one hand, a group led by President Trump, who, according to Monjardino tries to demolish the principal founding concepts of the euro-atlanticism.<sup>310</sup> On the other hand, the increasing influence and economic power of China, which, following R ger, contribute to a new

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<sup>304</sup> Note: See Analysis I.

<sup>305</sup> Note: See chapter 3.1.

<sup>306</sup> Note: Such as the relation between European Council and European Commission.

<sup>307</sup> Note: Regulated in Art. 289 of the TFEU treaties.

<sup>308</sup> Juan Mayoral. *Democratic improvements in the European Union under the Lisbon Treaty*. Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, 2011: 2-3.

<sup>309</sup> Note: For more than 60 years.

<sup>310</sup> Miguel Monjardino. *Entre a Esperana e a Realidade. Guerra e Paz*. Expresso, 15.6.2019.

narrative of EU representatives and leaders, promoting the relevance of the EU in politically agitated times.<sup>311</sup>

Turning to the threat that the EU's political communication apparatus is confronted with, globalization may play a key role. Especially the so-called 'losers' of the increasing interconnectivity of people, information, services and businesses may lose their connection to EU institutions and leaders and reject receiving new forms of communication flows. Also, the rise of partisan populism as well as nationalism and protectionism due to perceived causes of globalisation such as the financial crisis or the migratory crisis<sup>312</sup> may polarise civil society including citizens' appreciation of the EU, hampering their support and receptivity of awareness campaigns. The 'social medialisation' of politics and the potential spread of misinformation as well as the possibility of further emerging socio-economic crisis in Europe may also constitute serious threats.

### **Limitations**

Although, as Niklewicz suggests, the EU's communication officials should not reinvent the wheel and should rather employ successful business approaches to their strategy,<sup>313</sup> the SWOT-analysis cannot be considered a classical method of political science. Gürel and Tat define some operational limitations of the method. For these authors, the process of gathering strengths of an organization is "prone to bias."<sup>314</sup> Also, the boundaries between what is identified as a strength and as a weakness can be blurred, "strengths that are not maintained may become a weakness."<sup>315</sup> The authors also argue that the moment-based character of the analysis may be vulnerable to unforeseeable future crisis and problems. Lastly, it is argued that the integration of a SWOT-analysis may overestimate a unique mechanism or measure and decision makers might get too preoccupied with it, ignoring other possible problems.<sup>316</sup> Despite these limitations and taking into account the previously mentioned advantages, using this typically business-oriented method of

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<sup>311</sup> Caroline Rüger. *Personal interview*. Institut für Politikwissenschaften und Soziologie. Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg, 1.7.2019.

<sup>312</sup> Note: As discussed in chapter 2.

<sup>313</sup> Niklewicz, 2017: 39.

<sup>314</sup> Gürel; Tat, 2017:1005.

<sup>315</sup> *idem*: 1004.

<sup>316</sup> *ibidem*: 1005.

analysis to enrich the political discussions on the EU's political communication perspectives, strikes me as being a reasonable, although complementary choice of analysis.

## 4.2. Lessons Learned from Germany and Portugal

The cases of Germany and Portugal have demonstrated how two countries with traditionally pro-European views were politically and economically shaken up by different European crisis. The decade of 2008 to 2018 shows the fragility of political support, interest and political culture in Europe in challenging times. As seen in previous chapters, the debt crisis of 2008 and 2009 raised, especially in Portugal, questions concerning the EU's crisis management competence. The massive influx of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in 2015 to 2017 put significant strain on member states' solidarity. This could be seen, for instance, in the emergence of anti-migratory movements and parties such as "PEGIDA"<sup>317</sup> or the "AfD" in Germany. The subsequent rise of political populism from far-left to far-right in the aftermath of both of these crises has given rise to a new dimension of anti-European sentiments, which in turn has led to a remarkable reinforcement of euro-sceptical parties in the recent election to the European Parliament. Moreover, the massive dissemination of digital communication left traditional PR-strategies at a loss. Reacting to these shifts in a way that appeals to citizens, whether in Berlin or Lisbon, through reassuring and strengthening strong communication ties with them is one of the challenging tasks, EU policy makers but also leaders are confronted with these days.

Also, during the course of my research in Lisbon, Saarbrücken, Würzburg and Berlin in the antecedent and aftermath of the 2019 European Elections, I was confronted with opinions of citizens who feel that the EU plays a role in Brussels or Strasbourg, in Berlin's or Lisbon's executive apparatus, or in the Commission's representation bureaus, but not necessarily in people's lives. The impression of citizens, that regional politics and local economic growth are predominantly the results of decisions taken on a local, regional or national level, accompanied me throughout these conversations and my research. One of the EU strategies to achieve a more decentralised and regional connection to citizens, apart from the centralised representation bureaus, is the "Europe Direct"-information network. Schrötter, who has worked several years for

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<sup>317</sup> PEGIDA. *Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes*. [online] 2019. <https://www.pegida.de> (last accessed: 27.6.2019 / 18:00).

“Europe Direct” and visited numerous schools in Germany to speak and debate EU politics with students, argues that, for many citizens, the European idea is still far from their own realities.<sup>318</sup> According to the author, with the exception of some particularly interested students, “for a majority of pupils, the processes in ‘Brussels’ were a strange thing, the ‘Ecofin’ a chemical formula and the question about the difference between the Council of the EU and the Council of Europe led to general confusion”<sup>319</sup>

We have seen in previous chapters that Germany’s and Portugal’s regions did benefit significantly from several funding mechanisms such as the Cohesion Funds. The list of projects co-financed by the EU both in Germany and Portugal, which in many cases were only possible due to the EU’s contributions, is quite long. However, the common appreciation of the relevance of this EU-dimension in our daily lives is still missing. Of course, EU-flagship policies like the Erasmus+ programme, the end of roaming within the EU but also the Euro and the freedom of movement are achievements that citizens tend to know about and, to a certain degree, take advantage of. But the perception that government’s EU contributions return to them through a variety of concrete investments on their very own local level is often lacking.<sup>320</sup>

The cases of Portugal and Germany show how the EU’s image is vulnerable to crises and therefore needs to improve its resilience to be successful in the long run. To be able to do so, this study attempts to provide some practical recommendations about what can be done to strengthen the political communication and make it more resilient to future crises.

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<sup>318</sup> Schrötter, 2019.

<sup>319</sup> idem.

<sup>320</sup> Alexander Budde. *Europäisch denken, lokal handeln - Bürger und Politiker werben für EU*. 17.5.2019 [online]. [https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/buerger-und-politiker-werben-fuer-eu-europaeisch-denken.1001.de.html?dram:article\\_id=449022](https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/buerger-und-politiker-werben-fuer-eu-europaeisch-denken.1001.de.html?dram:article_id=449022) (last accessed: 12.6.2019 / 18:30).



## 5. Concluding discussion and recommendations.

Throughout this study we have seen how the political reality around the European project is shifting and how the EU institutions have reacted. With reference to this study's research question: Can the European Union's political communication be considered up-to-date with the changing environmental influences and shifting patterns in European politics? This study answers as follows: Although the EU institutions are making great efforts to make citizens aware of the EU's regional impact through a variety of funding programmes and initiatives, the EU's institutions are missing out to provide answers on how to engage those in the society who feel detached of EU politics because of the discussed reasons for euroscepticism and anti-European populism. This study's content analysis showed that, although 7 out of 9 examined campaigns corresponded to more than half of the chosen criteria, the campaigns performed the lowest in their response to the changing EU-attachment of citizens (H2). This includes a relatively low performance in finding adequate answers for confronting euroscepticism on a regional level and avoiding exhaustive use of uncustomized and general EU references and examples. As we have seen, the political communication of the institutions involves innovative and creative mechanisms of a variety of practical examples, of "storytelling" and of impartial content in its messages. This might be an important start to further strengthening the EU's communication. But using these tools in an effective manner also means to constantly improve the communication to ensure its full potential for reaching citizens.

### 5.1. Six recommendations

The results of both the content analysis of selected campaigns of 2018/2019 and the SWOT-analysis together with the several arguments debated along this study help us focus on future possibilities and perspectives in the area. Having in mind the considerable changes in the EU's environment and considering the possible allocation of strengths to realise opportunities and cope with possible threats, we are able to take some conclusions for further action needed. These conclusions consist in concrete 'real'-political recommendations for both, political actors in charge of the EU institutional communication and national government's communication. I am distinguishing six major recommendations listed as follows:

First, **promote communication framework to tackle global issues.**

The EU communication has to take advantage of its highly developed media-infrastructure, which was identified as a strength in the SWOT-matrix and includes a network of millions of followers throughout different communication channels. Using existing technological and human resources and frameworks, rather than spending energy on creating new ones, increases the EU's productivity. Problems of a European or global dimension, such as environmental protection, migration, security but financial stability, gained, in 2018/2019, increasing public attention in the countries considered. The EU could therefore use its technological- and human resources, to convey citizens a clear message: because none of the member states alone has sufficient political as well as material means, the EU is the ideal framework to tackle these issues. Only if such an awareness is created among citizens, can the EU's public image 'resist' to shocks in the aftermath of crises. People would begin to acknowledge that the EU is, in many cases, a forum to tackle crisis rather than the source of it.

Second, **go local to confront euroscepticism and populism.**

The EU's strength<sup>321</sup> to integrate practical and country specific examples of citizens' success stories in its campaigns should be used to confront eurosceptic and populist arguments without losing its 'impartial' character of political PR. According to both the content and the SWOT-analysis, the EU's ability of dealing with topics, such as refugees, migration and financial threats, all potential drivers for populism and euroscepticism, was considered a weakness rather than a strength. If the EU's communication therefore actively used "storytelling", as emphasised by Niklewicz,<sup>322</sup> successfully integrating this communication-tool into its campaigns, confronting negative perspectives of the EU while refraining from sensitive issues topics, it could make a difference. Demonstrating to citizens who feel ignored by political elites and left out due to globalisation-related developments, how the EU matters in their daily lives, be it through kindergarten, the local sports club, senior- citizens homes or solar panels on the village's town hall, may be an effective prevention of losing citizens support and connection to the European project. Schrötter argues that "it must be allowed to see the EU with criticism without running the risk to be considered 'extreme' and 'populist' or being silenced."<sup>323</sup> The best way, according to

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<sup>321</sup> Note: See SWOT-Analysis in chapter 4.1.2.

<sup>322</sup> Niklewicz, 2017: 49.

<sup>323</sup> Schrötter, 2019.

the author, to confront such people is to offer the better arguments, solutions and responses through communication.<sup>324</sup>

**Third, avoid or “detoxify” polemic EU-directives.**

The above does not only apply to the communication of EU-funds but also to communicating EU-directives: much of anti-European sentiment is generated through misleading conceptions of EU-directives, which are often considered either constraining, redundant, discriminatory or ridiculous. Well-known examples are ‘lightbulbs’, ‘bananas’ and ‘cucumbers’. Although none of these polemic directives were initiated by the Commission, they provide apparent justification for a great amount of popular EU criticism. Therefore, the Commission would be well advised to probe the PR-effect of each new directive, referring those directives back to the initiating member state, which would obviously result in a rise of anti-European sentiments. Such a procedure could be considered a “PR-enhancement of the principle of subsidiarity.”

**Fourth, hold member states accountable.**

The EU could commit member states to take more action in communicating the EU policies. As a matter of fact, member states, by virtue of Regulation 1303/2013, are even legally bound, to do so and to inform citizens “about funding opportunities under operational programmes.”<sup>325</sup> The European Commission should therefore take a leading role in establishing ways to enforce a stronger responsibility of member states to play an active role in the communication process rather than an opponent one by assuming praise for successes and blaming the EU for failure. The Commission’s leading role could be supported by member states joining forces: Germany and Portugal for example. In terms of their appreciation of the EU, both countries have quite a lot in common: in both countries, a large and stable majority of citizens take a favourable view of European integration. Both countries value the political dimension of the EU: after World War II, having emerged from Nazi dictatorship, Germany was eager to join the community of western democracies, while Portugal, after the revolution of 1974, was striving for political stability and integration into the European project, ending a long period of isolation. Both countries profit economically from the EU: while the Euro and the single market provides huge advantages to the German economy, Portugal, apart from also profiting from the single market, is benefiting from

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<sup>324</sup> idem.

<sup>325</sup> European Union, 2013: Art. 115.

various funds. Thus, both countries share a vital interest in the continuation and further reinforcement of European integration.

It would therefore make sense, if Germany and Portugal joined forces to assist EU institutions in their efforts to overcome emerging anti-European sentiments. Such a German-Portuguese joint-venture would be perfectly designated against the background of the subsequent German and Portuguese presidency of the Council of the European Union in 2020 and 2021.<sup>326</sup> Both Countries could shape their presidencies with bundled efforts: joint endeavours of a large central European and a smaller southern European country, eventually in the context of a bilateral project called *'UNSER Europa / A NOSSA Europa.'*<sup>327</sup> This could contribute significantly to the credibility of other pro-European PR-campaigns.

#### **Fifth, engage the private sector to tackle misinformation.**

Through both phases of analysis, we have found out, that another strength<sup>328</sup> of the EU's communication is the way it engages means of political PR, contributing to the impartiality and objectivity of the content. Additionally, the fact that the EU was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for having "contributed to the advancement of peace and reconciliation, democracy and human rights in Europe"<sup>329</sup> could reinforce a possible stabilizing image in politically 'agitated times', such as between 2008 and 2018.<sup>330</sup> Part of these 'agitated times' consist of the technological shift and the emergence of new media leading to an increase in social media usage. This may have "incentivised the spread of misinformation and fake news."<sup>331</sup> It would therefore seem indispensable, that the EU's public relations policy lives up to these challenges. Studies have shown, that eurosceptic groups are engaging predominantly in social networks.<sup>332</sup> As pointed out in chapter 2, these networks provide easy access, high efficiency, large audiences but hardly any credibility control, thus allowing for false contents and fake news. The EU should therefore, preferentially in cooperation with member states and some of the main social network providers,

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<sup>326</sup> Note: Germany holds the presidency in the second half of 2020, followed by Portugal in the first half of 2021.

<sup>327</sup> Note: Sample of what could be a working name for a german-portuguese cooperation.

<sup>328</sup> Note: As depicted in the SWOT-analysis.

<sup>329</sup> The Norwegian Nobel Committee. *The Nobel Peace Prize for 2012*. [online source] 2012: 1. <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/2012/press-release/> (last accessed: 16.6.2019 /14:00).

<sup>330</sup> Note: See chapter 2.

<sup>331</sup> Note: Threats resulting from the SWOT-Analysis, see chapter 4.1.2.

<sup>332</sup> Manuela Caiani; Simona Guerra. *Euroscepticism, Democracy and the Media: Communicating Europe, Contesting Europe*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2017: 128.

engage in a private-public-partnership aiming at verifying digital content and promoting access to objective sources of information. This initiative could eventually be supported by Portugal and Germany in the context of their successive EU-presidencies.

#### **Sixth, and last, promote the EU as a whole.**

Another weakness of the EU's communication, as depicted by the SWOT-matrix and as argued by several scholars<sup>333</sup>, is that the EU's communication is handicapped by the complexity of the EU's own structure. Many citizens might feel overwhelmed by the way EU legislature functions and executive and legislative organs interact. Trying to communicate to citizens, which may not be interested in politics at all or don't have a sufficient degree of education, each and every different EU institution, agency, department or politician might have the opposite effect as desired. Contradictory or even conflicting messages of different EU institutions might transmit a message of complexity and confusion to citizens. De Vreese argues that this "intra-institutional competition must die! How is the EU ever going to convince anybody if European institutions are competing with each other and sending out competing messages?"<sup>334</sup> Citizens receiving the communication might not be able to relate to the sending entity and therefore ignore or even reject it. Promoting messages from the EU as a whole, engaging the political PR mechanisms of the EU institutions and also country specific approaches to directly address citizens for example in Germany and Portugal could make a decisive difference in raising people's awareness. After all, former US-President Henry Kissinger's famous quote "Who do I call if I want to speak to Europe?"<sup>335</sup> could also be applicable for what a EU-citizen might feel.

## 5.2. Summary and final remarks

Germany and Portugal are good examples on how the EU is present in the citizens' daily lives. It is present even on an individual level: Especially the Cohesion Funds demonstrate how citizens benefit on their very local level from EU funding. This study has demonstrated that the EU is not just "Brussels". Rather the EU is Fundão, Chaves, Saarbrücken and Berlin-Wuhlheide.

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<sup>333</sup> Anja Riedeberger. *Die EU zwischen einheitlicher und differenzierter Integration*. Springer VS, 2016: 185; Gert Vermeulen; Wendy De Bondt. *EU Justice and Home Affairs*. Maklu, 2014: 25.

<sup>334</sup> Claes Holger de Vreese. In Niklewicz, 2017: 49.

<sup>335</sup> Henry Kissinger. *Quoted in* Urfan Khaliq. *The European Union's foreign policies: an external examination of the capabilities-expectations gap*. In Steven Blockmans; Panos Koutrakus. *Research Handbook on The EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy*. Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, 2018: 488.

Having said that, the global challenges of the new millennium do not stop in front of the EU's borders. As the examined decade of 2008 to 2018 has shown, the political world has changed in many ways since the turn of the century. From a low point in political participation and interest to an increase of euroscepticism and anti-europeanism. This was due to a variety of reasons, such as the rise of populist parties, the dangers of social media, the EU's crisis management or the national governments tendency to underemphasize EU-achievements, these developments have shapen EU politics. They show how the fast moving and interconnecting process of globalisation and europeanisation has not only found supporters among citizens from Sintra to Saarbrücken. It was through my studies within the MA course in Governance, Leadership and Democracy at the Institute for Political Studies in the Catholic University, I often came across the ongoing rise of populism and "democratic backsliding",<sup>336</sup> as Bermeo refers to the reversion of the democratic process. Examining the 'Realpolitik' of the EU in 2018/2019 as regards its communication, it is, like previously stated, a challenging and interesting task at the same time. The study's analysis therefore concentrated on nine specific awareness campaigns of the EU institutions of 2018/2019. Both the content analysis, which recurred to the use of a criteria catalogue to examine the campaigns adaptability, and the SWOT-analysis provided important findings on the status-quo of the EU's communication as well as future perspectives.

The analysis findings show: the EU has to be better and faster at adapting to the changing realities of its people. Engaging a far-from-political-reality approach without mentioning and confronting the several drivers of euroscepticism through its communication might lead to a loss of its more or less strong impartial character. Also, the study demonstrates the EU's vulnerability to unforeseeable crises. This has to change if the EU wants to avoid losing, again, its connection to citizens, as happened in Germany and Portugal in the aftermath of the two major crises distinguished in this work.

Closing the communicative gap between what the EU really does for citizens and how citizens really relate to the EU, will continue to be regularly part of EU debates and studies. Throughout the research process of this study, I have learned a lesson: The lesson that the 'appetizing', from

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<sup>336</sup> Nancy Bermeo. *On Democratic Backsliding*. In: *Journal of Democracy*. Vol. 27. The John Hopkins University Press, 2016: 14.

an academic point of view, temptation to try to correlate the EU's communication performance with concrete numbers of support for the institutions is nearly impossible. The different motives of citizens to support the EU or the reasons they relate to the EU in a certain form are far too heterogeneous and subconscious to be measured and characterised from a macro perspective. Nevertheless, what some communication-fanatics might find a bit disappointing can contribute to real political opportunities and be a chance for Europe and the EU. It is in this spirit that this study has closely examined the communication perspective of the EU's institutions to find out, whether they are using all their potential to contribute to their own sustainability. A sustainability which from an EU-point-of-view is certainly needed to not only 'survive' in the long run, but to "thrive and prosper",<sup>337</sup> Coming back to this works' initial quote. Why not by implementing some of the suggested recommendations?

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<sup>337</sup> Jean-Claude Juncker, 2015: 3.

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## Abbreviation index

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| AfD      | Alternative für Deutschland                       |
| BE       | Bloco de Esquerda                                 |
| CDU      | Coligação Democrática Unitária                    |
| DG       | Directorate-General                               |
| DG-Comm  | Directorate-General Communication                 |
| DG-Regio | Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy |
| EAFRD    | European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development  |
| EC       | European Commission                               |
| ECSC     | European Coal and Steel Community                 |
| EFSI     | European Fund for Strategic Investments           |
| EIB      | European Investment Bank                          |
| EMFF     | European Maritime and Fisheries Fund              |
| EP       | European Parliament                               |
| EPLO     | European Peacebuilding Liaison Office             |
| EPRS     | European Parliamentary Research Service           |
| ERDF     | European Regional Development Fund                |
| ESF      | European Social Fund                              |
| ESIF     | European Structural and Investment Funds          |
| EU       | European Union                                    |
| EU-OSHA  | European Agency for Safety and Health at Work     |
| FAZ      | Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung                    |
| GDP      | Gross Domestic Product                            |
| GNP      | Gross National Product                            |
| INE      | Instituto Nacional de Estatística                 |

|        |   |
|--------|---|
| PCP    | Partido Comunista Português                                   |
| PEGIDA | Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes |
| PNR    | Partido Nacional Renovador                                    |
| PR     | Public Relations  |
| PS     | Partido Socialista  |
| PSD    | Partido Social Democrata                                      |
| QCA    | Quadro Comunitário de Apoio                                   |
| QREN   | Quadro de Referência Estratégica Nacional                     |
| RTP    | Rádio e Televisão de Portugal                                 |
| SMEs   | Small and medium-sized enterprises                            |
| StBA   | Statistisches Bundesamt                                       |
| SWOT   | Strengths, Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats               |
| SZ     | Süddeutsche Zeitung   |

## Appendix

Table [2]: Table of findings of content analysis<sup>338</sup>

|                | <i>European Commission</i> |               |               |               | <i>European Parliament</i> |               | <i>Other EU institutions</i> |               |               | <i>%</i>      |
|----------------|----------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|----------------------------|---------------|------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
|                | C-EC-1                     | C-EC-2        | C-EC-3        | C-EC-4        | C-EP-1                     | C-EP-2        | C-EU-1                       | C-EU-2        | C-EU-3        | <b>Total</b>  |
| <b>H1</b>      | <b>1</b>                   | <b>0,667</b>  | <b>0,6</b>    | <b>0,4</b>    | <b>0,8333</b>              | <b>0,1667</b> | <b>0,8334</b>                | <b>0,6667</b> | <b>1</b>      | <b>0,6852</b> |
| H1-A           | 1                          | 1             | 1             | 0             | 1                          | 0             | 1                            | 1             | 1             | 0,7778        |
| H1-B           | 1                          | 1             | 1             | -             | 1                          | 0             | 1                            | 1             | 1             | 0,8750        |
| H1-C           | 1                          | 1             | 1             | 1             | 1                          | 0             | 1                            | 1             | 1             | 0,8889        |
| H1-D           | 1                          | 1             | 0             | 0             | 0                          | 1             | 1                            | 1             | 1             | 0,6667        |
| H1-E           | 1                          | 0             | 0             | 0             | 1                          | 0             | 0                            | 0             | 1             | 0,3333        |
| H1-F           | 1                          | 0             | -             | 1             | 1                          | 0             | 1                            | 0             | 1             | 0,6250        |
| <b>H2</b>      | <b>0,5</b>                 | <b>0,5</b>    | <b>0,1667</b> | <b>0,6</b>    | <b>0,3333</b>              | <b>0,6667</b> | <b>0,6667</b>                | <b>0,8333</b> | <b>0,5</b>    | <b>0,5296</b> |
| H2-A           | 0                          | 1             | 0             | -             | 1                          | 1             | 1                            | 1             | 1             | 0,7500        |
| H2-B           | 1                          | 0             | 0             | 1             | 0                          | 1             | 1                            | 1             | 0             | 0,5556        |
| H2-C           | 1                          | 1             | 0             | 0             | 0                          | 0             | 1                            | 1             | 1             | 0,5556        |
| H2-D           | 1                          | 0             | 0             | 1             | 0                          | 1             | 0                            | 0             | 0             | 0,3333        |
| H2-E           | 0                          | 1             | 0             | 0             | 0                          | 0             | 1                            | 1             | 1             | 0,4444        |
| H2-F           | 0                          | 0             | 1             | 1             | 1                          | 1             | 0                            | 1             | 0             | 0,5556        |
| <b>H3</b>      | <b>0,95</b>                | <b>0,5</b>    | <b>0,65</b>   | <b>0,5</b>    | <b>0,25</b>                | <b>0,95</b>   | <b>0,1</b>                   | <b>0,65</b>   | <b>0,35</b>   | <b>0,5444</b> |
| H3-A           | 1                          | 1             | 1             | 1             | 1                          | 1             | 0                            | 1             | 1             | 0,8889        |
| H3-B           | 0,8                        | 1             | 0,6           | 0             | 0                          | 0,8           | 0,4                          | 0,6           | 0,4           | 0,5111        |
| H3-B-1         | 1                          | 1             | 0             | 0             | 0                          | 1             | 0                            | 0             | 0             | 0,3333        |
| H3-B-2         | 1                          | 1             | 1             | 0             | 0                          | 1             | 0                            | 1             | 1             | 0,6667        |
| H3-B-3         | 1                          | 1             | 1             | 0             | 0                          | 0             | 1                            | 0             | 0             | 0,4444        |
| H3-B-4         | 1                          | 1             | 0             | 0             | 0                          | 1             | 0                            | 1             | 1             | 0,5556        |
| H3-B-5         | 0                          | 1             | 1             | 0             | 0                          | 1             | 1                            | 1             | 0             | 0,5556        |
| H3-C           | 1                          | 0             | 0             | 1             | 0                          | 1             | 0                            | 1             | 0             | 0,4444        |
| H3-D           | 1                          | 0             | 1             | 0             | 0                          | 1             | 0                            | 0             | 0             | 0,3333        |
| <b>Total-1</b> | <b>0,8429</b>              | <b>0,6429</b> | <b>0,4</b>    | <b>0,4167</b> | <b>0,4286</b>              | <b>0,5571</b> | <b>0,6</b>                   | <b>0,7571</b> | <b>0,6714</b> |               |
| <b>Total-2</b> | <b>0,8167</b>              | <b>0,5556</b> | <b>0,4722</b> | <b>0,5</b>    | <b>0,4722</b>              | <b>0,5944</b> | <b>0,5333</b>                | <b>0,7167</b> | <b>0,6167</b> |               |
| <b>Total-3</b> | <b>0,5861</b>              |               |               |               | <b>0,5333</b>              |               | <b>0,6222</b>                |               |               |               |

<sup>338</sup> Legend: "1" - Yes, campaign does fulfill criteria; "0" - No, campaign does not fulfill criteria; "-" - No data available.

Table [2.1.]: Codification of criteria - content analysis

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| <b>H1</b> | <b>Campaigns convey the importance of EU-impact in the citizens lives</b>       |
| H1-A      | Mention concrete funding?   |
| H1-B      | Use practical examples?   |
| H1-C      | Use specific German or Portuguese cases?  |
| H1-D      | Use Storytelling?   |
| H1-E      | Use concrete data?  |
| H1-F      | Appeal to different generations?  |
| <b>H2</b> | <b>The campaigns' content respond to changes in citizens EU-attachment</b>      |
| H2-A      | Messages conveyed in a simple way and avoiding technical language?              |
| H2-B      | Messages encourage different perspectives on the EU?                            |
| H2-C      | Are emotions used to trigger interest?  |
| H2-D      | Content confronts euroscepticist concerns?                                      |
| H2-E      | Campaigns advertise the Union not the Institutions?                             |
| H2-F      | Messages incentivise political participation and interest?                      |
| <b>H3</b> | <b>The campaigns tools respond to changes in the media environment</b>          |
| H3-A      | Does the campaign have its own website?   |
| H3-B      | Social media activity   |
| H3-B-1    | - <i>Facebook?</i>  |
| H3-B-2    | - <i>Instagram?</i>   |
| H3-B-3    | - <i>Twitter?</i>   |
| H3-B-4    | - <i>YouTube?</i>   |
| H3-B-5    | - <i>Posts include video content?</i>   |
| H3-C      | <i>Face to face campaigns?</i>  |
| H3-D      | Use of 'conventional media' ( <i>e.g. radio, tv, posters, brochures etc.</i> )? |

Table [2.2.]: Codification of campaigns - content analysis

| code   | Code - explanation                            | Name of the campaign           | Main sources used   |
|--------|---|--------------------------------|---|
| C-EC-1 | Campaign of the European Commission Nr. 1     | <i>EU in My Region</i>         | <b>Primary source:</b><br>European Commission, 2018a ;<br><b>Secondary Source:</b><br>Incubator Europe, 2019.       |
| C-EC-2 | Campaign of the European Commission Nr. 2     | <i>Road Trip Project</i>       | <b>Primary sources:</b><br>European Commission, 2018c; European Commission 2019i.                                   |
| C-EC-3 | Campaign of the European Commission Nr. 3     | <i>REGIOSTARS</i>              | <b>Primary source:</b><br>European Commission, 2019g,<br><b>Secondary source:</b><br>Elanidou, 2018.                |
| C-EC-4 | Campaign of the European Commission Nr. 4     | <i>Citizens Dialogue</i>       | <b>Primary sources:</b><br>European Commission, 2019k; 2019h; 2019e.<br><b>Secondary source:</b><br>Elanidou, 2018. |
| C-EP-1 | Campaign of the European Parliament Nr. 1     | <i>What Europe does for Me</i> | <b>Primary sources:</b><br>European Parliament 2019a; 2019b.  |
| C-EP-2 | Campaign of the European Parliament Nr. 2     | <i>#thetimeiamvoting</i>       | <b>Primary source:</b><br>European Parliament, 2019e.   |
| C-EU-1 | Campaign of other European Institutions Nr. 1 | <i>#Europeans</i>              | <b>Primary sources:</b><br>European Council, 2019a; 2019b.  |
| C-EU-2 | Campaign of other European Institutions Nr. 2 | <i>EU and Me / #EUandME</i>    | <b>Primary sources:</b><br>European Union, 2019c; 2019d.  |
| C-EU3  | Campaign of other European Institutions Nr. 3 | <i>InvestEU / #InvestEU</i>    | <b>Primary sources:</b><br>European Union, 2019f; 2019g; 2019h.   |

Table [2.3.]: Codification of scores - content analysis

|         |  |
|---------|--|
| Total   | Average score of the specific criteria or hypothesis                     |
| Total-1 | Average score of campaign (including every single criteria)              |
| Total-2 | Average score of campaign (only including performance on hypotheses)     |
| Total-3 | Average score of institutions (only including performance on hypotheses) |