

UNIVERSIDADE DE LISBOA  
INSTITUTO DE CIÊNCIAS SOCIAIS



## **A EUROPEAN PUBLIC SPHERE?**

**European Economic Media Narratives in Portugal, Spain and Ireland, before  
(2002-2009) and after (2011-2016) the onset of the Great Recession**

**Susana Rogeiro Pereira Nina**

Orientadora: Professora Doutora Marina Costa Lobo

Tese especialmente elaborada para obtenção do grau de Doutor em Ciência Política  
(especialidade de Política Comparada)

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*Para quem partiu, Avó Nan e Avô Tó*

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# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>BSE</b>	Bovine spongiform encephalopathy / <i>Mad Cow Disease</i>
<b>DN</b>	Diário de Notícias
<b>EC</b>	European Commission
<b>ECB</b>	European Central Bank
<b>EESC</b>	European Economic and Social Committee
<b>EFSD</b>	European Financial Stability Facility
<b>EP</b>	European Parliament
<b>EPS</b>	European Public Sphere
<b>ESM</b>	European Stability Mechanism
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>EZ</b>	Eurozone
<b>IMF</b>	International Monetary Found
<b>IE</b>	Ireland
<b>MPs</b>	Members of Parliament
<b>PP</b>	Partido Popular/ People's Party
<b>PS</b>	Partido Socialista / Socialist Party
<b>PSD</b>	Partido Social Democrata/ Social Democratic Party
<b>PSOE</b>	Partido Socialista Obrero Español/ Spanish Socialist Workers' Party
<b>PT</b>	Portugal
<b>ES</b>	Spain
<b>The Irish Indp.</b>	The Irish Independent
<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom
<b>USA</b>	United States of America





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# ABSTRACT

This thesis concerns how the Eurozone crisis has contributed to the deepening of the European Public Sphere. It stems from the well-known argument that the European democratic deficit can only be solved within a European public arena, and it is structured around the concept of the Europeanisation of national public spheres. The research design comprises a comparative and longitudinal approach to the mainstream national media of three European countries that have been profoundly affected by the economic crisis: Portugal, Spain, and Ireland. The main goal is to determine whether the national media steadily converged after the onset of the Eurozone crisis, in terms of both the narratives about the EU economic issues and the specific actors who are held to account for these issues. Building on an in-depth manual quantitative and qualitative content analysis conducted to more than 6000 economic articles published in the two major mainstream newspapers in these countries, I propose a new typology combining three dimensions –*Media Attention, Tone, and Framing* –in order to analyse particular five dominant frames (Problem, Cause, Responsibility, Consequences and Solution).

Findings suggest that the context of the Eurozone crisis contributed to increasing the convergence of media narratives, especially concerning the salience of EU economic news and the negative tone used to report those issues. Counterintuitively, the evidence also shows that the Great Recession did not dramatically change the nature of the convergence direction. The frames used by national media remained largely the same in the after-2009 period and the *centripetal* direction- a convergence in favour of a more consolidated European integration – prevails both before and after the onset of the EZ crisis. However, when it concerns identifying the main problem for the European economic issues and attributing the primary responsibility to specific actors, the media narratives remained confined to the domestic realms. The *centrifugal* path of attributing

responsibility to the domestic arenas is especially prominent in Portugal and Spain: while the Irish media tended to supranationalised the responsibility, in Iberian countries, there was a propensity to hold national actors mainly responsible, especially on the critical moments of the national economy. This evidence seems to point to an imperfect Europeanisation of national arenas. Moreover, it is symptomatic of the complexity inherent to the process of European integration, in which a full EPS is difficult to achieve given that the national governments remain crucial actors in domestic arenas when it comes to attributing responsibility for the European economic issues.

**Keywords:** European Public Sphere; Eurozone Crisis; Media Narratives; Portugal; Spain; Ireland.

# SUMÁRIO

Esta tese analisa de que forma a Grande Recessão que afetou a Europa a partir de 2009 pode ter promovido a consolidação de uma Esfera Pública Europeia (EPE) em três países da União Europeia (UE), fortemente afetados pela crise económica e que enfrentaram duras medidas de austeridade – Portugal, Espanha e Irlanda.

A investigação estrutura-se a partir do conceito de europeização das esferas públicas nacionais e assume a premissa de Habermas (2001) de que o deficit democrático europeu só consegue ser superado através da existência de uma esfera pública europeia. Em concreto, esta tese dá especial importância à terceira dimensão do conceito de europeização – o conteúdo de comunicação. Em termos teóricos, segue a premissa de que a convergência dos meios de comunicação nacionais é um mecanismo crucial para a emergência de uma EPE; que só pode ser alcançada se os diferentes meios de comunicação nacionais dos Estados membros da UE dedicarem níveis semelhantes de atenção à discussão dos tópicos europeus, e se essa cobertura for enquadrada de forma similar (Risse e van de Steeg, 2003). Esta tese, assume, portanto que uma EPE surge a partir do momento em que as várias esferas públicas se relacionam entre si (Risse e van de Steeg, 2003), permitindo a consolidação de uma comunidade de comunicação transnacional na qual a UE se configura como uma causa comum a todos os cidadãos.

Nas últimas décadas, a UE tem sofrido uma crescente demanda pública por reformas que têm como objetivo melhorar a transparência das suas instituições e, assim, reduzir o fosso entre os cidadãos e as elites políticas europeias (por exemplo, Hix, 2008; Hooghe e Marks, 2009; Green-Pedersen, 2012; Risse, 2015; Herkman e Harjuniemi, 2015). A crise da zona euro ampliou esta necessidade: por um lado, porque deu origem aos chamados "Vencedores" e "Perdedores" da crise económica (por exemplo,

Azmanova, 2011; Hutter, 2014; Kriesi et al. 2006, 2008; Lahusen, 2013), e por outro, porque dada a natureza multinível da governação europeia, a EU assumiu algum controlo sobre as economias nacionais. Neste contexto, o deficit democrático europeu é cada vez mais sintomático (Habermas, 1996, 2001) e a necessidade de uma esfera pública europeia capaz de conectar elites e massas, e na qual os problemas europeus são percebidos como mútuos para todos os países europeus, maispremente.

Os meios de comunicação nacionais assumem um papel primordial na concretização deste objetivo. A forma como os meios de comunicação apresentam um determinado tema europeu, destacando determinados aspetos em detrimento de outros, irá influenciar a forma como o público entende o assunto, o seu significado e consequências, moldando percepções e opiniões sobre a UE. Isso significa que os meios de comunicação têm a capacidade de criar uma narrativa que pode promover o surgimento de uma EPE. Este fenómeno é particularmente importante no que diz respeito às notícias económicas europeias. Durante a crise, a europeização das arenas nacionais tornou-se mais visível nos países fortemente afetados pela recessão económica, consequência, em parte, da influência da UE nas políticas nacionais. Estava assim criado um contexto fértil para avaliar o surgimento de uma EPE: se a narrativa sobre questões económicas nos meios de comunicação nacional dos países devedores convergir, isso poderá permitir a formação de uma opinião comum sobre os tópicos económicos europeus e fomentar um sentimento de pertença ao projeto europeu.

Embora a convergência das narrativas da nos meios de comunicação tenha sido amplamente discutida, especialmente a consonância europeia durante eventos europeus, como as eleições para o Parlamento Europeu, meetings da UE e referendos (por exemplo, de Vreese, 2011; Arrese e Vara-Miguel, 2015; Salgado e Nienstedt, 2016), a análise focada nos eventos políticos nacionais é ainda bastante escassa. Além disso, os estudos feitos após a crise da zona do euro sobre a convergência das narrativas mediáticas têm negligenciado os países severamente atingidos pela crise, tendo-se



sobretudo a concentrado nos países credores (por exemplo, Bach et al., 2013; Joris et al., 2014), com apenas alguns estudos comparando países credores e devedores (por exemplo, Drewski, 2015; Lahusen et al. 2016; Kaiser e Konigslow, 2016).

Esta tese procurou contribuir para este campo examinando a convergência de narrativas dos meios de comunicação nacionais em três países devedores - Portugal, Espanha e Irlanda - durante a campanha para as eleições legislativas nacionais, antes e depois da eclosão da crise da zona euro. Além disso, ao descrever a direção narrativa, estabelecendo se a convergência mediática nacional segue um caminho *centrípeto* ou *centrífugo*, esta tese contribui para explicar o possível surgimento de uma EPEnum contexto de crise económica.

Assim, esta investigação procura compreender as mudanças que a crise da zona euro pode ter causado nas narrativas mediáticas nacionais sobre os temas económicos europeus. Para tal, procura compreender se os jornais de referência nacionais em Portugal, Espanha e Irlanda, se tornaram cada vez mais convergentes a partir do início da crise. Em primeiro lugar, no que diz respeito às *narrativas sobre as questões económicas das EU*; e em segundo no que concerne aos *atores específicos aos quais foi atribuída a principal responsabilidade* por essas questões.

Para responder a ambas as questões de investigação, foi realizada uma análise de conteúdo - quantitativa e qualitativa- dos artigos económicos publicados nos dois principais jornais de Portugal (*Público* e *Diário de Notícias*), Espanha (*El Mundo* e *El País*) e Irlanda (*The Irish Independent* e *The Irish Times*). Baseia-se num vasto conjunto de dados originais com informação detalhada e única sobre três grandes dimensões: Atenção Mediática (*Media Attention*) Tom (*Tone*) e Enquadramento(*Framing*), bem como dados específicos sobre atores europeus e nacionais.

Mais de 6 000 artigos económicos foram analisados com o intuito de responder à primeira pergunta de investigação. Apartir de uma nova tipologia capaz de medir a convergência de narrativas e combinar três dimensões- *Media Attention, Tone e Framing*,

olhou-se em profundidade para cinco quadros predominantes “Problema”; “Causa”, “Responsabilidade”; “Consequências”; “Responsabilidade” e “Solução”, estabelecendo-se a direção *centrifuga* ou *centrípeta* da convergência. Em seguida, procedeu-se a uma análise mais aprofundada do quadro de “Responsabilidade” a fim de compreender, primeiro, a quais atores específicos- a nível europeu e nacional - os meios de comunicação nacionais atribuíam responsabilidade pelos problemas econômicos europeus e, em segundo lugar, avaliar o grau de convergência da imprensa escrita nacional.

Ao contrário de investigações anteriores, esta tese analisa o mesmo contexto político em Portugal, Espanha e Irlanda. Concentra-se no período de campanha eleitoral para 14 eleições nacionais entre 2002 e 2016. Usando uma abordagem longitudinal e comparativa, a análise é dividida em dois períodos: antes da crise da zona do euro (2002-2009) e após o início da crise (2011-2016). O primeiro período tem início com as eleições nacionais realizadas em 2002 - ano em que o Euro foi finalmente introduzido como moeda comum nas economias nacionais- e termina em 2009- quando o Tratado de Lisboa entra em vigor e o Euro grupo e a ideia de cooperação económica entre os estados-membros foi formalizado. O segundo período abrange as eleições que ocorreram tanto durante a crise económica como aquelas que tiveram lugar após o cumprimento dos programas de resgate. 2010 marcou o resgate irlandês e assim, o segundo período de análise tem início com as eleições portuguesas, espanholas e irlandesas de 2011, incluindo também as eleições de nacionais de 2015 e 2016 que marcam já a fase final do programa de assistência nos três países.

Para testar a principal expectativa desta tese, sete hipóteses foram formuladas e o seu teste foi feito através da análise das três dimensões principais: *Media Attention*, *Tone* e *Framing*.

As conclusões obtidas demonstram que a crise da zona euro contribuiu para um aumento a convergência das narrativas mediáticas, sustentada, sobretudo numa maior

atenção dada aos temas económicos no período 2011-2016, não obstante o aumento do tom negativo na divulgação dos temas por parte dos meios de comunicação social o que denota um aumento da polarização. Contra intuitivamente, no período após os eclodir da crise, as evidencias revelam também que a Grande Recessão não alterou substancialmente a direção da convergência. O enquadramento utilizado pelos meios de comunicação social portugueses, espanhóis e irlandeses mantiveram-se na sua maioria os mesmos no período pós-2009, do mesmo modo que a direção *centrípeta*- a favor de uma integração europeia mais consolidada- prevalece nas narrativas mediáticas tanto antes como depois do eclodir da crise da zona euro.

Contudo, no que se refere à identificação do problema principal das notícias económicas europeias, e à atribuição de responsabilidade a atores específicos, as narrativas mediáticas tenderam a permanecer confinadas às arenas nacionais. Este último aspeto- a atribuição de responsabilidade- é particularmente visível em Portugal e em Espanha. A análise aprofundada do quadro de “Responsabilidade” revela enquanto os meios de comunicação social irlandeses tenderam a supranacionalizar a responsabilização pelos temas económicos europeus, nos dois países Ibéricos a propensão foi a de atribuir a responsabilidade aos atores nacionais, sobretudo nos momentos de críticas da economia nacional. No geral, estas evidências parecem apontar para uma europeização imperfeita das esferas públicas nacionais e é sintomática da complexidade que reveste o processo de integração Europeia, onde o equilíbrio entre uma Esfera Pública Europeia plena e o acto de responsabilizar os governos nacionais é difícil de atingir.

**Palavras-chave:** Esfera Pública Europeia; Crise da Zona Euro; Narrativas Mediáticas; Portugal; Espanha; Irlanda



# INTRODUCTION

The main goal of this thesis is to investigate the emergence of a European Public Sphere in the Eurozone crisis context from a cross-national and longitudinal perspective, that is, *to what extent did the economic crisis contribute to the deepening of a European public arena?*

The work is structured around the concept of the Europeanisation of national public spheres, and it stems from the well-known Habermas (2001) argument that the European democratic deficit can only be solved within a European public arena (2001). More specifically, the thesis highlights the third dimension of the Europeanisation concept, namely the content of communication introduced by Eder and Kantner (2000) and developed by Risse (2010), which has gained traction in the political science and political communication agenda particularly since the Eurozone crisis.

In theoretical terms we follow the proposition that the convergence of national media is a crucial mechanism for the emergence of a European Public Sphere (EPS). This can only be achieved if different media across Europe devote similar levels of attention to the discussion and reporting of European topics, and if these reports are framed in similar ways (Risse and van de Steeg, 2003). In sum, "a shared system of meaning that would give European citizens a common bias for decisions" (Pfetsch et al., 2008:467). Examining the convergence of national media therefore entails analysing the emergence of a European Public Sphere. Indeed, we assume that a European Public Sphere emerges as soon as several national public spheres become interrelated (Risse and van de Steeg, 2003), allowing a transnational communication community to flourish so that the European Union (EU) appears as a common cause for all citizens.

The onset of the Eurozone Crisis (EZ) crisis in 2010 was a decisive moment for the European project and represents a fertile scenario to understand the possibilities of

creating a European Public Sphere. It is often said that Europe is *forged in crisis*; thus, it will not be surprising if we find that the social and economic effects produced by the EZ crisis were a harbinger for an EPS. This will be the case if the national media of European countries perceived and reported the EZ crisis similarly. In other words, if the crisis is addressed as a common problem for all EU member states, it will show that the convergence of national media accelerated after 2010, the onset of the crisis. On the other hand, if we find that national media did not converge due to the EZ crisis, this represents an obstacle for the emergence of an EPS as one of its core principles is that the EU should be conceived as a common cause for all citizens that fosters a common sense of belonging.

Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to determine whether the national mainstream media in Portugal, Spain, and Ireland - three EZ crisis debtor countries - steadily converged after the onset of the Eurozone crisis, in terms of both the narratives about the EU economic issues, and the specific actors who are held to account for these issues.

Empirically, the thesis focuses on the mainstream national media of three European countries – that were profoundly affected by the economic crisis and faced strict austerity measures: Portugal, Spain, and Ireland. To that end, an in-depth manual quantitative and qualitative content analysis was conducted of more than 6,000 economic articles published in the two major mainstream newspapers in these countries. The economic articles were analysed using a new typology capable of measuring the convergence of narratives and combining three dimensions- *Media Attention, Tone, and Framing*. Instead of using the same chronological time frame as previous studies, we analyse the same *political* context. Thus, we selected the electoral campaign period for 14 national elections between 2002 and 2016. Using a longitudinal and comparative approach, we split our analysis into two time periods: before the Eurozone crisis (2002-2009) and after the onset of the crisis (2011-2016).

This introductory chapter is organised in five main parts. We start by describing the relevance of the emergence of a European Public Sphere to overcoming the main challenges of the democratic deficit faced by the European Union. The research questions and the main argument underlying this study are then introduced. Part three outlines the empirical strategy used to analyse the European media narratives in debtor countries, briefly mapping the methodological choices that will be applied herein. Part four outlines the novelty of the thesis, highlighting both the gaps in the literature and how this study helps fill these shortcomings. The fifth and final part explains the layout of the thesis and summarises each of the seven chapters.

## **SETTING THE RESEARCH PROBLEM: THE EUROPEAN PUBLIC SPHERE AND THE EUROPEAN DEMOCRATIC DEFICIT**

It is well-established in the literature that the EU faces a long-lasting democratic deficit (e.g., Norris, 1997; Katz, 2001; Ward, 2002; Follesdal and Hix, 2006; Jensen, 2009; Kelemen, 2017), that has been linked to the lack of a European Public Sphere (Scharpf, 1999; Grundmann, 1999; Habermas, 2003; Hix, 2003, Erickson, 2005). During the Presidency of the European Council in 2000, the then prime minister of Portugal, António Guterres, stated that “Europe’s greatest democratic deficit does not lie in its institutions, but in the lack of a European Public Sphere”<sup>1</sup>. Although there is no single definition of *democratic deficit*, more recently the concept has been linked to the process of the transfer of powers and competencies from the national to the European level and the complexification of political decision-making procedures in the EU (e.g., Coultrap, 1999; Kuper, 1998; Scharpf, 1999; Follesdal and Hix, 2006; Risse, 2015).

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.sueddeutsche.de/archiv>(*Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 2000)

Historically, European integration was developed through a technocratic approach. It has been an elite-driven project that emerged in an era “when public approval mattered relatively little and when the wider geopolitical agenda was utterly dominated by the Cold War” and was designed “to bring about irreversible integration” (Leonard, 1998:17-18). The genesis of this process is closely associated with Jean Monet’s idea that “technocrats had to build Europe first, before the politicians and the people could get their hands on it” (Featherstone, 1994:160). In this context, ordinary citizens had little say. In fact, not so long ago, European political actors were able to reach compromises and consensus through common discourse and similar political agenda, without public interference (Risse, 2015). After the Maastricht Treaty in 1991, this permissive consensus ruling relations between the EU and its citizens was replaced by a constraining dissensus (Hooghe and Marks, 2009). Consequently, there was growing pressure for a more open and democratic union, with demands for greater transparency from European institutions and a more proactive European Commission (EC) regarding strategies for public discussion (Beus, 2010). Nevertheless, at the same time, the popularity of the EU steadily declined among European citizens (Hix, 2008). The gap between the attitudes of the elite and the masses endured and EU institutions were often accused of being detached from people’s everyday experience (Grundmann, 2000). Moreover, European integration produced a “policy drift” that eroded the mass public support for the European project. On the one hand, the national governments often tend to adopt policies at the European level that they would not be able to pursue domestically (Follesdal and Hix, 2006). On the other hand, there is a mismatch between European citizens’ demands and political elite’s decisions (Bakker et al. 2020).

European citizens’ lack of engagement with EU decision-making jeopardises the future of the European Union as it raises doubts about the legitimacy of EU decisions and the accountability of European elites (Katz, 2001). Although all national parliaments have a European Affairs Committee, the European executive actors are



often isolated from national parliaments' scrutiny (Follesdal and Hix, 2006), which makes it even more challenging to control their actions at the European level. Moreover, the decrease in national parliaments' power and increase in European executives' power makes it more difficult for citizens to hold European decision makers accountable (Hobolt and Tilley, 2014b). This is particularly challenging for EU legitimacy as the process of attributing responsibility is a core mechanism in a healthy and functional democracy (e.g., Fiorina, 1981; Weaver, 1986; Powell, 2000).

In recent decades, new institutional arrangements have been proposed to reduce the EU democratic deficit, notably increasing European parliament (EP) powers or direct elections for the European Commission (EC). However, while these institutional reforms may improve EU transparency, they are still insufficient to eliminate the democratic deficit.

Many authors have drawn attention to the opaqueness and inaccessibility of European governance (e.g., Habermas, 2001, 2003; Risse and van de Steeg, 2003; Hix, 2003, Risse, 2015, Hobolt and Tilley, 2014a). In 1997, Weiler provided one of the best summaries of this puzzle, stating that "not one accountable public authority has a handle on this regulatory process - not the European Parliament, not the Commission, not even the governments. The press and other media, a vital estate in our democracies, are equally hampered". (1997:512). Therefore, in addition to institutional reform, a European Public Sphere appears to be a crucial precondition for European policy since it is the public that has the agenda-setting function in a democracy and only voters can punish or reward a government. In 2011, Habermas went further and argued that the EU urgently needs an EPS as "the deficit in the democracy can only be eliminated if a European Public Sphere comes into existence" (2011:61).

But how can an EPS mitigate the European democratic deficit? Habermas conceptualises the EPS as resulting from the integration process because it encourages transborder communication and understanding (Trenz, 2008). It is a space characterised

by the coexistence of national public spheres (de Vreese, 2007; Risse, 2015) that enhances the possibilities for popular participation in opinion formation and the public scrutiny of decisions. Despite the prevailing absence of a common *demos*, which makes the formation of a European collective challenging, an EPS is an inclusive space that makes it possible to test the legitimacy of EU power (Eriksen, 2005). European topics are linked, filtered, and synthesised through a transnational communication community so that citizens can form positions and express opinions about common problems and solutions (Erickson, 2005). Moreover, an EPS enables citizens to address the same European political issues and be exposed to the same information (Risse and van de Steeg, 2003), and this permits a common identification base and enables a Pan-European discourse, i.e., a single European space (Erickson, 2005: 358).

## **THE EUROZONE CRISIS AND THE EMERGENCE OF AN EPS: MAIN ARGUMENT AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Anticipating the potential challenges of the newly arrived economic crisis for the EU project, in 2008 then President of the European Commission Durão Barroso, defended that the future of the European Union would depend on the solidarity among European countries, stating "There is no stability without solidarity and no solidarity without stability"<sup>2</sup>. But this claim was not new. Since the Maastricht Treaty, Habermas had argued that the solidarity among fellow citizens within nations needed to grow in a corresponding fashion and incorporate citizens of other EU member states (Habermas, 2012:26). He defended that it was only under these circumstances that the decisions taken in Brussels would be accepted as legitimate, especially if they had redistributive consequences (Habermas, 2006); moreover, it would promote the emergence of an EPS-

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<sup>2</sup><https://www.ft.com/content/4da90494-35f0-11df-aa43-00144feabdc0> (*Financial Times*, 2008)

a decisive ingredient to correct the democratic deficit, achieve greater European democratic legitimacy and bind European citizens to common solutions for shared problems.

The last years have shown that the advocates of an EPS have been vindicated: the Europeanisation process has been enhanced and European issues are now politicised in the national public sphere (e.g., Trezz, 2008; Hooghe and Marks, 2009; Risse, 2010, 2015). The onset of the EZ crisis accelerated this process since it increased the EU's salience and polarisation in an unprecedented fashion (Rauh, 2013). In the aftermath of the Maastricht Treaty, the academic community was compelled to rethink the metaphor of Europe as a "Sleeping Giant" and the EU has become increasingly salient in national arenas and for EU citizens (van der Eijk and Franklin, 2004). However, the EZ crisis led to the realisation that the EU is, in fact, an "awakened Giant" in national public spheres (Hobolt and Rodon, 2020). Hence, now that the EU is increasingly part of the national political debate, notably in the context of national elections, the ideal setting has been created for the emergence of an EPS and the correction of the European democratic deficit. As Hobolt and Rodon (2020:161) concisely explained, "European citizens have become more aware of the EU as both part of the problem and the solution when it comes to major public policy concerns".

However, the strengths of the Europeanisation process during the EZ crisis were, paradoxically, also its weaknesses in relation to the emergence of a European public arena because old challenges became more difficult and new ones arose.

Over the last two decades, national political parties and the general public have assumed growing importance in the European integration process as events like public referendums or media debates have created new possibilities to voice and exchange opinions. Despite these endeavours and a recovery of positive attitudes towards the EU (Teperoglu and Belchior, 2020), the overall support for the EU started to decline at the beginning of the 21st century. There is growing dissatisfaction and mistrust of

European institutions and the EU in general, even in member-states that were at the forefront of the integration process only a decade earlier - e.g., France, Germany, and the Mediterranean countries (Taylor, 2008)<sup>3</sup>. One of the reasons for this discontent was the alleged democratic deficit deriving from the widening gap between European (governing) elites- who tend to support EU integration and increasingly Eurosceptic citizens in many European countries (Herkman and Harjuniemi, 2015). Consequently, the EZ crisis provided Eurosceptic parties, which had started to emerge after the Maastricht Treaty, with the perfect context to establish themselves and grow all over Europe, thus sharpening the cleavage between those who advocate less economic and political dependence on the EU, and those pushing for deeper European integration (Fominaya, 2017; Crespy and Schmidt, 2017). The establishment and electoral gains of the Eurosceptic parties have tended to consolidate an orthogonal cleavage to the traditional left-right, thus changing the structures of the EU party system (Grande and Kriesi, 2016).

There is broad agreement in the literature that the EZ crisis created an opportunity for the consolidation of Eurosceptic parties (e.g., Hooghe and Marks, 2018; Teperoglou and Belchior, 2020). However, uncertainties remain on how the salience of Eurosceptic views might have impacted the creation of an EPS. The research on this topic has been quite contradictory: some studies found that the increasing contestation and salience of EU topics by Eurosceptic parties brought negative consequences, with the emergence of nationalism as the main threat (e.g. Harrison and Brutter; 2015; Grande and Kriesi, 2012, 2015); others claim that this might trigger a positive reaction,

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<sup>3</sup> The Eurobarometer reports show that from 2000 onwards the positive image of the EU declined among European citizens, notably from 2011 onwards in countries such as Greece, Portugal and Spain facing external intervention. However, more recently positive attitudes have increased.

See, Eurobarometer 90.3 November 2018 [https://www.unidata.unimib.it/wp-content/pdf/SI374\\_NM\\_eng.pdf](https://www.unidata.unimib.it/wp-content/pdf/SI374_NM_eng.pdf)

setting a common horizon for all European citizens (e.g. Habermas, 2013; Risse, 2010;2015; Gerhards and Lengfeld, 2015). In fact, as Baglioni and Hurrelmann (2016) have suggested, to understand the implications of EU salience and contestation on national politics, the focus should go beyond the *degree* of salience and conflict and focus on its *nature*, i.e., differentiating which aspects of European integration are contested.

Therefore, scholars such as Harrison and Brutter (2015) and Grande and Kriesi (2015), suggest that the rise of Eurosceptic parties - in particular those contesting EU membership - might hinder the development of a European identity, a crucial feature for an EPS, since it is the EU project itself that is questioned and polarised by political elites. Indeed, Van Elsas and Van der Brug (2015: 202) argue that since the Maastricht Treaty European citizens have become more "aware of the implications of the EU in national interests, sovereignty and identity". Thus, the prevalence of a political discourse mainly focused on domestic affairs and a national politicisation of EU issues (Hooghe and Marks, 2009) highlights the multilevel structure of EU's governance and the consequent loss of sovereignty of European countries; moreover, this also increases the divisions on the future of European integration among political elites (Hooghe and Marks, 2005). These arguments are in line with the concern already expressed by Bartolini in 2005 that the increasing politicisation of EU topics in national arenas may weaken the legitimacy of EU institutions, thus amplifying both nationalist and Eurosceptic attitudes among European citizens and with negative consequences for the European integration process and the sense of belonging to that political project.

In contrast, Risse (2010) and Habermas (2013) present a more optimistic view, arguing that the presence of Eurosceptic parties might foster the emergence of a collective identity. The overall premise is that the increasing salience and contestation of the EU in national arenas does not accentuate nationalistic or anti-EU attitudes among citizens as long as the EU topics are discussed and contested in terms of EU

policies, since debating EU policies is crucial to reduce the democratic deficit and link European citizens to EU institutions. It might therefore represent an opportunity to strengthen the collective identity and foster the emergence of an EPS (Habermas, 2013). Citizens' attitudes and their identification with the European project depend on how the national public arenas are Europeanised: the more salient the European topics, the easier it is to avoid the nationalisation of public discourse (Risse, 2015).

Besides the spread of Eurosceptic views in the national arenas, the EZ crisis highlighted the asymmetrical nature of the Europeanisation process in domestic public spheres (e.g., Börzel and Risse, 2012; De La Porte and Heins, 2017; Dooley, 2018). The degree of contestation and salience of EU topics and their effect on EU support varies across national arenas as a result of specific economic circumstances (Kuhn et al., 2020), leading to different responses and solutions to a collective problem. During the EZ crisis, there was clearly a lack of consensus among European elites and Eurozone members on how to deal with the economic recession and on the best solution for the countries facing sovereign debt problems (Azmanova, 2011; Lahusen, 2013). This disagreement was well illustrated by Hutter (2014) and Kriesi et al. (2016) when they referred to the *Winners* and *Losers* produced by the economic crisis; this not only reveals the uneven effects of the crisis in EU countries but, above all, highlights the challenges in finding corresponding economic agendas. Furthermore, it shows that diverse experiences in crises might lead to diverse responses, making it difficult for the EU to find a collective solution (Kuhn et al., 2020). Accordingly, the uneven Europeanisation of national public arenas resulting from asymmetrical economic circumstances might ultimately undermine the emergence of an EPS because it jeopardises a transnational community of communication in which European citizens have a shared bias for decisions and European topics are perceived as common to all European countries (Trenz, 2004).

Against this backdrop, the congruence on EU topics between citizens and elites is vital to minimise the erosion of satisfaction with the EU project and halt the growth of anti-establishment parties (Bakker et al. 2020), but above all to generate a common horizon of understanding on European topics. Nevertheless, as Hix insightfully pointed out in 2008, the gap between the attitudes of the elite and the masses can only be closed if national media act as mediators

The national media play a vital role in the Europeanisation process as they not only facilitate the emergence of a transnational speech and a transnational collective identity (de Wilde et al, 2013) but also represent the glue that holds the various fragmented domestic public spheres together, working as an interface between citizens and political actors (e.g., Pfetsch et al., 2008). Moreover, the media are key actors in mitigating the European democratic deficit. Several studies have demonstrated that representative democracy functions better when public opinion is well informed (e.g., Andersen et al. 2005; Hobolt, 2005; Popkin and Dimock, 2007), because knowledge of public affairs links the masses and elites, with positive outcomes for political representation (Marinova and Anduiza, 2020). Currently, there is agreement in the literature that the media are the most important source of political information - producing knowledge and shaping citizens' political opinion (Iyengar and Kinder, 1987) about both national and European issues. The media focus on certain aspects rather than others guides what individuals think about (Iyengar and Kinder, 1987), and how they should think about it (Entman, 1993). This means that media can create a narrative that might promote the emergence of a European Public Sphere. This rationale is anchored in two main premises.

First, the national media's portrayal of European topics helps link European citizens with the EU and create a transnational community of communication since the Europeanisation of the national public sphere can only be accomplished if European citizens have a common bias for decisions and a shared sense of belonging to the EU

project (e.g., Pfetsch et al., 2008; Pfetsch and Heft 2015; Koopmans, 2015). However, this means that European topics must be discussed and reported in national media across Europe; and their coverage of European topics must be characterised by a similar salience and a similar frame (Risse and van de Steeg, 2003). Second, an EPS emerges through a transnational communication community in which the EU appears as a common cause for all citizens and when various national public spheres are interlinked (Risse and van de Steeg, 2003). Furthermore, a communication community can only exist if all individuals are recognised as legitimate participants in the public debate as this ensures that different voices from several EU member-states are considered valid in national arenas, ultimately enabling a collective identification with Europe.

Drawing on these assumptions, Risse and van de Steeg (2003) advanced that there can only be an EPS if European issues are discussed in the public space through similar meaning structures because, according to Gerhards (1993 *apud* Risse and van de Steeg, 2003), “Only when there are reports about Europe and only when these reports are written from a perspective which transcends national perspectives, could a Europe of citizens emerge”. Nonetheless, this does not mean that European issues must be consensual in the public sphere – notably because contestation and debate are preconditions for the emergence of an EPS. The authors’ argument lies on the idea that the more contentious the European topics are the more social mobilisation they will achieve. Moreover, as Trenz (2004) underlined, an EPS is linked to European political communication, represented by any means of communication addressing European governance, whether it expresses conflict or consensus on European issues<sup>4</sup>.

In light of the above, when the narrative of European national media converges, it provides European citizens with a common reference on EU matters and therefore reduces the democratic deficit and allows an EPS to emerge. This was particularly

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<sup>4</sup>Concepts, literature as well as theoretical and empirical findings that support both arguments are explained in further detail in Chapter I.



important, notably for European economic news, during the EZ crisis. In an economic crisis, citizens demand more information about economic affairs so as to understand key economic developments (e.g., Zaller, 2003; Wu and Coleman, 2009). In addition, the more abundant information about the state of the economy in crisis periods (Soroka, 2006) can trigger alarm bells about economic performance (van Dalen et al., 2019) and increase the demand for information so that citizens can sanction policymakers appropriately (Shen, 2009). This was particularly acute in countries that faced austerity measures. Marinova and Anduiza (2020) have shown that citizens who are economically deprived are more motivated to seek information during a recession than in times of economic prosperity. In addition, the Eurozone's most fragile economies, such as that of Portugal, Spain, and Ireland, were hardest hit due to the bailouts and ensuing austerity measures implemented by the Troika<sup>5</sup>. Consequently, the Europeanisation of national arenas was particularly visible in these countries due to the European's strong influence over national policies. This is a very fertile context to test the emergence of an EPS during the EZ crisis: where the narrative on economic issues in the national media of debtor countries converges, it might allow a common opinion about European economic topics to be formed and foster a sense of belonging to the European project.

Therefore, the first question we pose is the following: *"To what extent did mainstream newspapers in Portugal, Spain and Ireland become more convergent when they narrated European economic issues following the onset of the Eurozone crisis?"* (RQ1).

Departing from the results achieved in the first research question, we also aim to establish the direction of convergence. While literature has documented the similarity and divergence of media narratives between European countries following the

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<sup>5</sup>Troika is a term used, especially in the media, to refer to the decision group formed by the European Commission (EC), the European Central Bank (ECB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Eurozone crisis (e.g., Bach et al, 2013; Picard, 2015; Salgado et al., 2015; Salgado and Nienstedt, 2016), the direction of that convergence in debtor countries has been neglected. However, the direction is of the utmost importance as it can indicate convergence in favour or against deeper European integration. Defining whether national newspapers follow a *centripetal* path, i.e., converging towards more consolidated European integration, or a *centrifugal* path, i.e., using a narrative that prioritises national interests - will show whether the national media's coverage of European economic issues goes beyond the national perspective and thus fosters the emergence of an EPS.

Nevertheless, a healthy and functional representative democracy requires more than converging narratives in European media. Democratic accountability – herein, the attribution of responsibility for European economic issues- is a crucial ingredient in any democratic system (Fiorina, 1981; Weaver, 1986; Powell, 2000), and the EU is no exception (Rittberg et al., 2017).

The act of attributing responsibility is the mechanism that allows citizens to punish or reward political actors on the basis of past performances (e.g., Powell, 2000; Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier, 2007; Bellucci et al. 2012). National media should therefore provide them with information - both in quality and quantity- about the actors involved in the decision-making process. This supply of information is particularly relevant in the context of the EU where the blurred national and supranational boundaries have made it difficult to attribute responsibility for European economic matters(Hobolt and Tilley, 2014a; 2014b).

Building on this rationale - the presence of certain actors rather than others - may not only help overcome the deficit of democratic accountability in the EU, but also develop a shared sense of belonging to the European project among European citizens. Therefore, our aim is also to shed light on: “Which specific actors, both at European and

*National level, do the national media hold responsible for European economic issues before and after the onset of the Eurozone crisis?” (RQ2).*

This second research question complements and narrows the previous findings. On the one hand, studies on economic news and media narratives have documented that “Responsibility” is the frame that tends to prevail in media coverage (e.g., Iyengar and Kinder, 1987, Iyengar, 1994; Valkenburg et al., 1999; Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000) and is one of the main features of economic news (e.g., van Dalen, 2019). On the other hand, the extensive debate about the possibility of an EPS tends to be met with some scepticism. Indeed, many critics argue that overcoming the EU’s democratic deficit is virtually a chimera given the lack of both public communication on EU topics and of information in the national media so that individuals can act as competent European citizens (e.g., Norris, 1997; Kratochvíl and Sychra, 2019). Thus, this research question not only offers an in-depth examination of the “Responsibility” frame and the attribution of responsibility to specific European and national actors, but it also sheds light on a possible step towards deepening European integration following the Eurozone crisis<sup>6</sup>.

Media coverage does not happen in vacuum and economic media narratives are not independent of the political and economic context; therefore, the main expectation of this thesis is that the national newspapers’ coverage of European economic issues in Portugal, Spain and Ireland is highly convergent. In other words, the underlying hypothesis of this thesis *is that the Eurozone crisis increased the convergence of media narratives among debtor countries and, therefore, fostered the emergence of a European Public Sphere.*

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<sup>6</sup> In Chapter VI, concepts, literature, and arguments on the attribution of responsibility are further developed.

This expectation on media narratives convergence will be assessed through the formulation of seven hypotheses, that will be tested through the analysis of three main dimensions: *Media Attention*, *Tone*, and *Framing*. This empirical strategy will elucidate us how the national media coverage might have promoted the emergence of an EPS in Portugal, Spain, and Ireland, following the onset of the Eurozone crisis.

## **FRAMING THE ANALYSIS OF EUROPEAN MEDIA NARRATIVES: EMPIRICAL STRATEGY**

The increased Europeanisation of domestic public spheres and politicisation of European topics in national arenas have given rise to several studies about European media narratives. Even though most of the studies have measured this using the Europeanisation dimensions – *salience*, *actors*, and *communication content*—there has been a debate on how the convergence of narratives in national media can best be understood. Moreover, priority has been given to unidimensional models, that is, most of those studies have measured the narratives' convergence using just one dimension - either salience, actors, or the substantive content of communication.

Hence, we propose a new multidimensional framework to answer the first research question, “*To what extent are mainstream newspapers in Portugal, Spain, and Ireland convergent when they narrate European economic issues?*”. Building on the Europeanisation concept, herein we follow both the authors that suggest the convergence of national media entails the use of common frames and similar meaning structures (e.g., Pfetsch et al. 2008; Touri and Rogers, 2013), and those that highlight the increasing salience of European topics (e.g. Trenz, 2004; Peters et al., 2005; de Vreese et al., 2006; Boomgaarden et al., 2010). Simultaneously, we expand the scope of

convergence by including the measurement of the overall tone used to cover European economic news.

The new typology proposed is measured by 32 indicators, clustered into three dimensions: *Media Attention*, *Tone*, and *Framing*, looking in particular at five dominant frames: “Problem”, “Cause”, “Responsibility”, “Consequences” and “Solution”.

As explained in Chapter III, this measurement is innovative as it provides different angles of analysis and more in-depth evidence of media convergence. It can be employed in different countries capturing distinct media landscapes and political systems; it also enables some degree of comparison with existing studies as it includes some of the variables integrated into previous measures. Moreover, it allows for replication and expansion across countries and over time. Hence, through a comprehensive and in-depth manual content analysis (quantitative and qualitative), we analysed more than 6,000 economic articles published in six national newspapers from Portugal, Spain, and Ireland. The purpose is to determine whether mainstream national media in Portugal, Spain and Ireland used a convergent narrative in economic articles on the EU after the onset of the Eurozone crisis.

To that end, emphasis will be given to the *Framing* dimension- the content of communication- enabling us to establish *the direction of convergence*. Each of the five selected frames encompasses different aspects emphasised within the frame. An in-depth look into the five selected frames and their components will allow us to assess whether the convergence of narrative follows a *centripetal* or *centrifugal* path. This is a fundamental step as it provides an overview of the existence of a common horizon in Portuguese, Spanish and Irish national media coverage of the European project and the emergence of an EPS.

The last stage of analysis complements and narrows the story told by the framing data, and its main goal is to reveal the *specific actors that the national media hold responsible for Europe’s economic problems*. This second research question offers an in-depth

examination of European media convergence in terms of the “Responsibility” frame. Although the literature on the attribution of responsibility is well-documented, the recent economic crisis showed how difficult it is to attribute responsibility for economic performance, particularly in multilevel systems like the EU because voters' ability to sanction policymakers is constrained by a lack of clarity on accountability. (Hobolt and Tilley, 2014b).

Hence, almost 700 European economic articles were selected and analysed from the original pool of data with a view to understanding which specific actors are held responsible for the European economic issues by the national media. A new in-depth content analysis was carried out manually to examine two main dimensions: the attribution of responsibility to *National* actors and *European* actors. In addition, within the group of European actors, we differentiated between *EU Institutions and Bodies*, and *EU member-states*. This approach reveals some new trends that can shed light on the emergence (or not) of a European Public Sphere following the onset of the Eurozone crisis and provide additional clues to why it is so challenging to reduce the EU's democratic deficit.

The content analysis carried out to answer the three research questions encompasses two mainstream newspapers from each country. This approach is crucial since the selected newspapers represent elite public opinion in Portugal, Spain and Ireland and are often used as agenda-setters for other national media. However, an exploratory analysis of the data did not show substantial differences between national newspapers. Therefore, instead of differentiating the six mainstream newspapers, we chose to aggregate the two newspapers in each country and conduct a country-level analysis.

There are two predominant reasons for this empirical strategy. First, although the selected newspapers aim to reflect different political alignments (centre-right and centre-left), these ideological positions do not differentiate the way European themes

are portrayed by the mainstream printed press; as indeed, the centre-left and centre-right parties also cannot be differentiated on their Europe position (Hooghe et al, 2002). Second, our main focus is not to identify differences between newspapers but to understand whether national media are convergent when reporting European economic issues and how the EZ might have produced different patterns in this coverage. Therefore, the results presented in the empirical chapters - Chapter IV, V and VI – analyse the media narratives in Portugal, Spain, and Ireland, distinguishing solely between the periods under analysis, i.e., before and after the onset of the EZ crisis.

We now present a brief overview of the empirical decisions on the case selection<sup>7</sup>.

### *Time frame*

The aim of this is to understand if the Eurozone crisis contributed to the emergence of an EPS by analysing national media convergence in Portugal, Spain, and Ireland. However, a complete picture and full understanding of how the economic crisis might have promoted an EPS can only be accomplished through a longitudinal view of European economic media narratives in Portuguese, Spanish and Irish newspapers. An empirical approach that encompasses the period before and after beginning of the EZ crisis allows us to ascertain the real changes in the national media's portrayal of European economic issues resulting from the economic crisis, and thus, enlightens us about the potential emergence of a European Public Sphere in the debtor countries.

The analysis is divided into two timelines that encompass 14 national elections: before the EZ crisis (2002-2009) and after the onset of the EZ crisis (2011-2016). The first period starts with the elections held in 2002, when the euro was fully introduced as a common currency in national economies and ends in 2009 – when the Lisbon Treaty entered into force and the Eurogroup together with the idea of economic co-operation and common representation among member-states was formalised. The second period

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<sup>7</sup>See Chapter II for more details on case selection.

covers both the elections that took place during the economic crisis and those after the fulfilment of bailout programmes.

Moreover, we present a new approach that departs from previous studies on European media narratives. Rather than analysing elections or political events that happened synchronically in European countries, the focus is on national elections and national campaigns; this allows us to capture the political polarisation and, thus, the degree of Europeanisation of *national* public spheres. The analysis therefore covers all the economic articles published 15 days before each national election in Portugal, Spain, and Ireland.

### *Country selection*

Portugal, Spain, and Ireland are the countries selected to analyse the European media convergence on European economic issues. There are three main reasons for this choice.

First, as Kuhn et al. (2020) stressed, the different impact that specific contextual circumstances, such as a crisis, can have on domestic arenas is one of the challenges the European Union has to address to find support for common solutions to collective problems. Therefore, analysing the countries that share the same social and economic context during the economic crisis, i.e., the implementation of rigorous austerity measures in their national arenas, is the best path to comprehend how the EZ might have fostered the emergence of a common understanding of European economic matters.

Second, due to the lack of both the human and financial resources necessary to study the entire universe of European countries hard-hit by the economic crisis, the thesis encompasses a subset of countries that share similar features, namely: economic conditions and the political and social context: Portugal, Spain and Ireland were



countries that faced bailouts imposed by the Troika, as well as the necessary ensuing austerity measures following the bailout agreements.

Third, Portugal, Spain and Ireland have a long record of European Union support both at the institutional level and among public opinion (Verney, 2011; Clements et al., 2014). The onset of the EZ eroded this support which contributed to greater frustration vis-a-vis the EU. The way national media narrated the European economic issues might have contributed to shaping a collective understanding of European economic problems, thereby fostering the emergence of an EPS.

#### *Newspaper selection*

The empirical analysis includes all economic news published in six mainstream newspapers – *Público*, *Diário de Notícias*, *El País*, *El Mundo*, *The Irish Times* and *The Irish Independent*.

Each country has a constellation of national newspapers; however, due to time and resource constraints, two main criteria were used to select newspapers: 1) *the daily quality newspapers with the highest circulation* in each country – to obtain a substantive and substantial supply of European economic news; 2) *the political alignment and party agreement of each newspaper* - to achieve a balanced spectrum of newspapers partisanship in Portugal, Spain, and Ireland. Moreover, we resorted to hardcopies of each newspaper to avoid dilemmas associated with lack of comparability. As mentioned above, the analysis goes back to the beginning of the 21st century when digital consumption and online media production was just starting to appear; an analysis based solely on online media sources could therefore compromise our comparative strategy for the whole period.

#### *Article selection*

The analysis of newspapers covers all economic articles published in the economic sections or economic supplements of each newspaper. The way media frame economic news will impact citizens' perception of the national and European economic situation and might affect the emergence of an EPS and a transnational community of communication. The analysis of European media narratives on economic topics is therefore crucial not only to understand the convergence between debtor countries but also to gauge the extent of economic integration.

## **WHAT IS THE NOVELTY OF THIS RESEARCH? GAPS AND CONTRIBUTION**

### *Theoretical Contributions*

The research on European media narratives is one of the fastest-growing subfields in political communication and political science studies, especially since the Great Recession. However, some relevant gaps can be found in previous studies on the topic: most of the scholarship concentrating on media convergence in the European Union has been exclusively confined to Western Europe and the largest EU countries (e.g., Trenz, 2000; van de Steeg et al., 2000; Shuck and de Vreese, 2006). Although the scope of the literature expanded with the onset of the economic crisis in Europe, it is still in its infancy: the majority of the studies only analysed the convergence of narratives among creditor countries (e.g., Bach et al., 2013; Joris et al., 2014), with a few comparative studies examining narratives between creditor and debtor countries (e.g., Drewski, 2015; Lahusen et al. 2016; Kaiser and Konigslow, 2016). To date, no media convergence studies have focused solely on debtor countries, which represents a fundamental gap in European media narratives literature. It is paramount to examine the narratives among the bailout countries as this might shed light on the emergence of

an EPS and a transnational community of communication. Furthermore, it provides some clues to the future of the monetary integration process in the EU context.

In fact, Portugal, Spain, and Ireland share a long history of EU support both at the institutional level and in public opinion (Verney, 2011; Clements et al., 2014). Moreover, although the economic crisis and the external constraints imposed in these countries initially undermined pro-EU attitudes and fostered frustration with the EU in general (Parker and Tsarouhas, 2018), , the EU attitudes regained the positive levels of support in Portugal, Spain and Ireland from the mid-2010s (Teperoglou and Belchior, 2020) Consequently, the way national media frame European economic issues might point to a sense of belonging and to a collective understanding of European economic problems and similar views about the European project.

Furthermore, we investigate whether the EZ crisis led to a centripetal or centrifugal path. In 2008, Pfetsch et al. stated that the national media should agree on the relevant conflict lines to refer to the European issues and assume a common position on those matters. However, the study on European media narratives has neglected the second assumption: the direction of convergence.

No systematic or comparative research has yet been conducted on how the direction of convergence might affect the European project. Establishing the direction of convergence is crucial to understand the possibilities of an EPS as it can indicate a narrative pointing to deeper European economic integration or, conversely, unveil anti-EU views and a nationalist perspective on economic matters. We tackle this shortcoming herein by investigating whether the European media convergence follows a centripetal path i.e., promotes more consolidated European integration, or goes into a centrifugal direction i.e. the narrative tends not to go beyond national interests. Emphasising the direction of the narrative in national media in debtor countries provides us with important insights on whether there is unified public opinion about

the EU in the post-crisis context, which will ultimately help to define the emergence of an EPS and the future of European economic integration.

Additionally, this dissertation includes an element that is crucial to understand European convergence. The literature currently available on European convergence addresses only media narratives during short-lived European events, such as the European elections to the EP, EU meetings and referendums (e.g., de Vreese, 2011; Arese and Vara- Miguel, 2015; Salgado and Nienstedt, 2016). Even though scholars agree that an EPS only emerges in national arenas, the literature focused on national events remains scarce. Hence, by focusing on the national elections in each country, this research presents an innovative approach.

The Europeanisation process occurs at the domestic level- in national public spheres within national media- and it is enhanced in the context of high conflict and polarisation. Therefore, instead of analysing the so-called second-order elections, such as the European Parliament elections (e.g., Reif and Schmitt, 1980), the focus of this thesis is the campaign period before first-order elections. As a result, unlike previous research on European narratives and studies on Europeanisation, the timeframe is not synchronic, which means we do not analyse elections or political events that happened at the same time in European countries. This study adopts a new approach, focused on national elections and national campaigns, which enables us to capture the political polarisation and reflect the degree of Europeanisation and media convergence of national public spheres.

### *Methodological Contributions*

This thesis also aims to contribute at the methodological level to innovate studies on the emergence of an EPS. Few studies in this field provide a longitudinal and cross-country perspective. They only seek to provide an answer to how the national media

portray European issues, whether focusing on the Eurozone crisis or looking into European events. Even though it is crucial to describe narratives at these times, it is even more important to compare narratives in national media over time. A full understanding of the media's convergence can only be achieved through a longitudinal approach, as this provides a unique insight into changes over time. Hence, this thesis captures the period before and after the onset of the Great Recession. The aim is to understand how the EZ crisis might or might not have contributed to a mutual understanding of European economic issues in debtor countries, assessing the convergence of media narratives in mainstream newspapers. Looking at these two time periods allows us to have a more accurate and reliable picture of convergence of media narratives and, consequently, to understand differences triggered by the economic crisis affected the emergence of an EPS.

A further problem is the absence of agreement in the literature on how the convergence of media narratives should be measured. The growing body of studies examining the Europeanisation of national public spheres has used an extensive range of indicators. Some of the previous analyses have focused on the salience of European issues in national arenas (e.g., Trenz, 2004; de Vreese et al. 2006; Boomgaarden et al. 2010), whereas others take into account the presence of specific actors (e.g., Monza and Anduiza 2016), or the substantive content of communication (e.g., Bach et al., 2013; Joris et al., 2014; Kaiser and Konigslow, 2015). Although these approaches provide rich elements to assess the Europeanisation and polarisation of the EU, they do not reflect the degree of similarity of narratives in national media in the post-Eurozone crisis context; thus, they do not fully apprehend the complexities and multidimensions inherent to the Europeanisation concept, or the specificities of debtor countries during the Eurozone crisis.

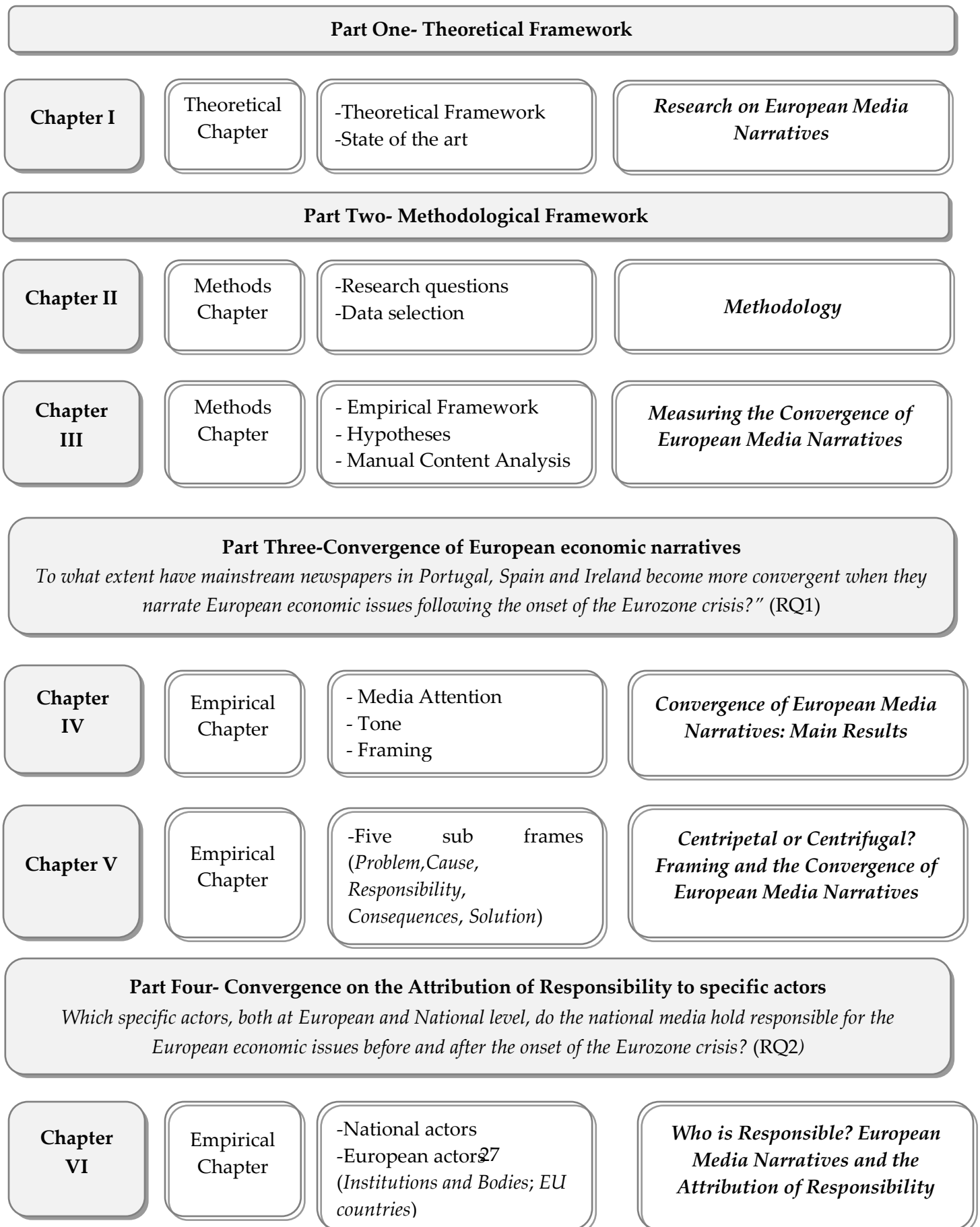
To tackle these issues, we introduce a new framework of analysis that can measure the similarity of narratives in debtor countries, combining Media Attention,

Tone and Framing in the same model. Its originality derives from its applicability, as it allows us to obtain in-depth information on media narratives across countries, different election contexts and over the years. Moreover, it provides an in-depth analysis of the communication content, the Framing dimension, which sheds light on of the actual degree and direction of narrative consonance and on media convergence in relation to the attribution of responsibility.

## **THESIS OUTLINE**

As illustrated in Figure 1 below, this thesis is organised in six chapters, grouped in four parts, and a concluding section.

Figure 0. 1 Structure of the Thesis



The first part – *Theoretical Framework* – contains the chapter ‘Research of European Media Narratives’ (Chapter I) and presents the theoretical framework as well as the state of the art. It sets out three fundamental concepts for this research: the classic image of public sphere developed by Habermas (1992/1991), the notion of an EPS (e.g., Habermas, 2001, 2012; Risse and van de Steeg, 2003) and the concept of Europeanisation of national public spheres. (e.g., Eder and Kantner, 2000; Koopmans and Statham, 2010; Risse, 2010; 2015). Within the theoretical framework, the literature produced within the field of European media narratives is covered and the most relevant studies before and after the outbreak of the Great Recession are presented together with the main theoretical gaps.

The second part – *Methodological Framework*- includes two chapters: ‘*Methodology*’ (Chapter II) and ‘Measuring the Convergence of European Media Narratives’ (Chapter III).

Chapter II introduces the research questions, the underlying expectation of this thesis, and the media theories – agenda-setting and framing (e.g., Cohen, 1963; McCombs and Shaw, 1972; Entman, 1993) - as useful theoretical approaches to the study of convergence of media narratives. It then introduces the significant methodological steps followed in this thesis, including the method employed and the process of case selection. Chapter III presents and describes the central concept of this thesis and introduces the new multidimensional framework used to measure it. Drawing on the works of Trenz (2004), Peter and de Vreese (2004), de Vreese and Boomgaarden (2003), Shuck and de Vreese (2006), Entman (1993), Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) and Touri and Rogers (2011), three dimensions are suggested: *Media Attention*, *Tone*, and *Framing*. Within the *Framing* dimension, the operationalisation of the “Problem”, “Cause”, “Responsibility”, “Consequences” and “Solution” frames are explained in detail, as well as the formulated hypotheses to be tested in each of the empirical chapters. The chapter also describes the data collection process and the newspaper coding procedures.



Part III - *Convergence of European economic narratives*- deals with the first research question and comprises two chapters.

First, ‘Convergence of European media narratives: main results’ (Chapter IV) presents a comprehensive analysis of each dimension, covering mainstream newspapers in Portugal, Spain, and Ireland, before and after beginning of the Eurozone crisis. It starts by presenting the descriptive results for each *Media Attention* indicator, to characterise the salience of European economic questions, addressing both the number of words and the size of economic articles. It then outlines the *Tone* used by mainstream newspapers in European economic articles, and provides the overall results for the *Framing* dimension. Chapter V ‘*Centripetal or Centrifugal? Framing and the Convergence of European Media Narratives*’, narrows the focus on the *Framing* dimension, in order to establish the direction of convergence of narratives. To that end, each component of the five selected frames- "Problem", "Cause", "Responsibility", "Consequences" and "Solution" is addressed, and the direction of convergence of each one is determined by showing whether the consonance of media narratives is *centripetal* - pointing in a deepening of European economic integration- or *centrifugal*- not going beyond the national perspective and challenging the future of the European project.

Given the theoretical importance of the “Responsibility” dimension (e.g., Iyengar, 1994; van Dalen et al., 2019) and the relevance of results previously found, Part IV- *Convergence on the Attribution of Responsibility to specific actors* - devotes time to the second research question. Chapter VI ‘*Who is Responsible? European Media Narratives and the Attribution of Responsibility*’ aims to understand the specific actors that the national media attributed hold responsible for European economic issues by offering an in-depth look at the “Responsibility” frame in the six mainstream newspapers from Portugal, Spain, and Ireland.

Finally, the Conclusion section summarises the main findings of this thesis and raises further implications for a future research agenda.



**PART ONE**

**THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**



# CHAPTER I

## RESEARCH ON EUROPEAN MEDIA NARRATIVES

The primary concern of this thesis is to investigate the emergence of a European Public Sphere in the Eurozone crisis context. To that end, the purpose is to analyse the convergence of European media narratives in countries that, as a result of the Eurozone crisis, faced austerity measures; that is, to examine how Portugal, Spain and Ireland reported the European economic issues before and after outbreak of the Great Recession in the context of the national elections. Although this is not a new research topic, the established literature on the field encompasses some challenges and limitations that I will revisit in this chapter.

Hence, this chapter is organised into two main sections. The first section (1.1) introduces the theoretical framework of the thesis, outlining the key theoretical approaches at the centre of the EPS concept, always bearing in mind the national media and the European Union. From the classical concept of public sphere to the new paradigms of the EPS, such as the Europeanisation of national arenas this section takes a closer look into the challenges the European Union faces concerning the development of a common horizon of reference among EU member-states.

The second section (1.2) - the state of the field- maps the state of the art of European media narratives in detail, compiling and discussing the evidence up to date. This section systematically reviews the relevant comparative analyses, as well as the case studies addressing this phenomenon, featuring the first studies on European media narratives, their different outcomes, levels and dimensions, and the most recent studies that emerged following the onset of the Eurozone crisis.

Finally, the chapter summarises (1.3) the main theoretical and empirical challenges that arise from the previous contributions, while proposing a new research agenda on convergence of European media narratives, taking into account the context of national elections in debtor countries within the Eurozone crisis.

## 1.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Habermas' work has led to the theoretical understanding of what is a public sphere and what functions it should perform, but above all, contributed to raise the academic awareness that an emergence of a European Public Sphere is crucial to overcome the current challenges the EU has been facing. The core argument underlying the literature about an EPS is that it is only possible to achieve a true sense of belonging to the EU and overcome problems such as the EU's democratic deficit, through a narrative in which the European topics are perceived as mutual to all European member-states. This way, it is crucial to revisit the fundamental concepts of the public sphere as well as the key debates about the EPS, which led to the emergence of the concept of Europeanisation of national public arenas.

### 1.1.1 The Public Sphere: Lessons from Habermas

The concept of public sphere is usually associated with Jürgen Habermas and his widely cited book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An inquiry into a category of bourgeois society* (1962/1991), where the author develops an extensive sociological and historical study to unveil how the public sphere emerged, focusing on the creation of semi-public arenas of discussion and deliberation between free and rational citizens from the bourgeois society of the 18th and 19th centuries. Habermas conceived the public sphere as the paramount arena for the perception, identification

and discussion of problems that affect society and individuals, in which “new problem situations can be perceived more sensitively, discourses aimed at achieving self-understanding can be conducted more widely and expressively, collective identities and need interpretations can be articulated” (Habermas, 1996a: 307-308).

Habermas linked the public arena to the *public* word, depicting, in this sense the public debate among individuals with similar economic and social status, sharing, however, different points of view. In this sense, the public sphere represented an autonomous space, apart from State and government’s intervention, where the public opinion challenges the ruling elites. In his subsequent work (1992), Habermas stretched the concept, referring to the public sphere as the institutional process of building an opinion in a democratic political system. Consequently, to ensure the deliberation occurs, besides the existence of a public opinion, the institutional, legal, and political framework must guarantee its deliberative quality (Kantner, 2006). This way, the Habermasian public sphere is assumed as a deliberative forum where the public space is conceived as an institution and, simultaneously, as a form of communication through which individuals can deliberate on their common problems.

In sum, the main characteristic of the public sphere presented by Habermas precisely points to the distinction between public and private, State, and civil society. In this sense, the public space is characterised by a domain of discursive interaction, in which citizens gather in social spaces so as to critically and rationally discuss the state's actions and policies (Silveirinha, 2004), expressing an autonomous and collective interest to state and power. Public opinion appears, thus, as a mechanism for claiming the transparency of power, standing between the private interests of civil society and the power of the state, while constituting itself as a “watchdog” (Silveirinha, 2004: 206).

Nevertheless, according to Habermas the existence of a rational debate is not enough for a strong public opinion: it should be made public through the media. The

printed press became a broadcaster and an opinion maker, assuming itself as the vehicle of the public opinion produced in the public arena (Rodrigues, 1985). Indeed, according to Habermas (1962/1991), the public sphere is grounded on its publicity, since only the public nature of deliberations could guarantee its influence and link representatives and voters, as parts of the same arena. However, the media and the commercial interests expanded the public sphere, and citizens were no longer active participants. Public opinion, initially represented as a process of building common points of view, was transformed to give rise to an apathetic and atomized mass of individuals with unaware, undisputed, and underdeveloped views (Koçan, 2008).

For Habermas (1962/1991), the decline of the public space results from two related phenomena. On the one hand, the boundaries between the public and private domain became blurred and the public interest was replaced by the commercial guidelines (Calhoun, 2000: 22). On the other hand, the public nature of private issues overrode rational debate and consensus among individuals, detaching from the collective will. As a result, public opinion lost its role as a forum for political debate and ceased its public trait (Silveirinha, 2004). In sum, the public was no longer a discourse agent and a participant in public debate, acting as a passive and uncritical consumer of themes validated and controlled by media. In this vein, Habermas claimed that the public sphere was distorted from its original function, assuming itself as a campaign and legitimization device of the established power. Its former function - mediating the relation between State and society- was now performed by the institutions from the private sphere, such as private interest groups and media (Koçan, 2008). Likewise, the public sphere disregarded its rational and deliberative nature (Calhoun, 2000) and propaganda assumed the leading role in influencing and dominating public opinion and the public space.



Consequently, in 1985, Habermas stated that the renewal of the public sphere was imperative to achieve a plural public space and a plurality of competing and overlapping audiences embedded in a network of communicative processes. Hence, a unitary idea of public sphere was replaced by a multiform approach (Carreira da Silva, 2002), with a network of highly differentiated and media-dependent local and supra-regional public spheres (Habermas, 2015). Each of these arenas would be permeable and linked with the other public spaces and would mediate the relations between the political system and the private sphere (Habermas, 1985). Thus the reconfiguration of the public sphere would perform three main functions: *i*) echo the problems to be solved by the political power, working as an alarm system, which, despite not being specialized, would work for the whole society, detecting and problematizing the social problems; *ii*) require that the political elites took control of the problem, *iii*) work as a filter, being able to synthesize communication flows and public opinions.

Against this background, the media are essential, since they disseminate the contents of the various public spheres to the public, concurrently providing public access to these arenas (Koçan, 2008). Habermas (2015) underlined that a new democratic culture was necessary, characterised by an open system receiving influences from other social systems with a circulation of legitimacy and communicative power between the *centre* - government, judiciary structure, parliament, political parties, elections and party competition- and the two *peripheries*- 1) the powers delegated by the State, private organizations and union structures and 2) voluntary associations, social movements and interest groups. Habermas recreates, therefore, the concept of deliberative democracy, placed between the formal and the institutional configuration of democracy and structured in the legal procedures and informal areas of public opinion (Carreira da Silva, 2002). In this sense, public opinion represents the information flows- filtered and synthesized - that summarise the public opinions on specific topics (Habermas, 2015), in

which the media are paramount. The media should be the “representatives of an illustrated public” (Habermas, 2015:460), preserving their independence from political and social actors and, through an impartial speech, echo the public’s concerns and interests.

### **1.1.2 A European Public Sphere**

A European Public Sphere (EPS) can be defined as an arena where citizens’ discourse interacts about the same European political issues (e.g., de Vreese, 2007; Risse and van de Steeg, 2003; Koçan, 2008). However, the assessment of the emergence of an EPS has led to different empirical outcomes, mainly as a result of the use of different indicators to assess the existence, or not, of a European public arena. For instance, Gerhards (2000), resorting to longitudinal data – from 1951 to 1995 – sought to establish how European issues were discussed in German quality newspapers, concluding that the EU has little impact on the German public arena. On the contrary, Eder and Kantner (2000) analysed the same newspapers under the same time frame and through the evaluation of issues such as European citizenship and “Europe fortress” observed signs of an EPS.

Besides, the literature has been at odds regarding what criteria should be used to determine an existence of an EPS. If Brantner et al. (2005) conceptualize the European arena as a communication space where political actors and citizens can discuss common issues, van de Steeg (2002) highlights that an EPS only becomes tangible if the same topics are discussed at the same time, with the same intensity and using similar meaning structures. In turn, Eriksen (2004, 2005) states that the European public sphere is a dynamic forum where civil society relates to the state whereby its analysis cannot be circumscribed to the examination of national arenas. It should rather be regarded as a polymorph, polyphonic and even anarchistic space (Eriksen 2004:6). This argument is

in line with Jankowski and van Os' (2004) statement that an EPS is an arena of communicative discourse open to all citizens, who may freely contribute to the rational discussion of issues, collectively assumed as important by society. In addition, Neidhart (1994, 1998) regards this arena as a communication system in which themes and opinions "are being gathered (input), processed (throughput) and passed on (output)" (Neidhart, 1994:4). The definition proposed by Neidhart undertakes the public sphere as an interaction and active interest between three categories of actors: *speakers*- collective actors, who try to mobilise adherence for themselves and their ideas; the *media*, which transmit this communicative message; and *the larger public*, on whose adherence the media and speakers depend (Koopmans et al. 2000).

Nevertheless, regardless of the definition proposed and the criteria used conceptualization of the EPS inspired by Habermas' work has emerged. Although Habermas' earlier studies (1962/1991; 1985) were focused on homogenous states and, therefore, did not adopt an international or transnational perspective neither referred to the relationship between EU and its member-states, his later works have served as an inspiration for scholars in the European public sphere.

In 1996, Habermas had already argued that the EU faces challenges that demand the existence of an EPS, as "the political public sphere can fulfil its function of perceiving and thematizing encompassing social problems only insofar as it develops out of the communication taking place among those *who are politically affected*. It is carried by public recruitment from the entire citizenry" (Habermas, 1996:353). In 2001, Habermas became sharper on the need for an EPS, especially because "The deficit in democracy can only be eliminated if a European public sphere comes into existence in which the democratic process is incorporated...the pan-European political public sphere is the solution to the problem of insufficient social integration in the process of Europeanization (2001:65)".

In this sense, and inspired by the Habermasian conceptualization, in 2007, de Vreese summarised the seven functions that an EPS should fulfil: i) *transparency*, being perceived as an arena to all social groups and all opinions; ii) *validation*, as a debate space with the ability to change or reinforce opinions; iii) *orientation*, as a space for opinion confrontation; iv) *legitimation*, in which opinions and policies are made visible and may or may not be legitimized by stakeholders; v) *responsive*, where the political actors can infer citizens' opinions; vi) *accountability* since it is an arena where power holders would be discussed and held accountable by citizens; vii) *participation*, as citizens are encouraged to give their opinion and all contributions are welcome.

Any of these functions comes close to the concept of the domestic public sphere since the existence of a European public arena would require a communication and information network common to all sovereign states. Moreover, in a strict sense, the EPS is a social construction that does not pre-exist outside the social and political discourse (Koopmans et al., 2000). It has been shaped through social and political practice, seeking to achieve a common horizon of reference that allows for the emergence of a transnational communication community, where the individuals recognize themselves not only as national citizens but also as Europeans (e.g., Kantner, 2002; Risse and van de Steeg, 2003; de Vreese, 2007; Kantner, 2015). Therefore, whatever the function performed by the EPS, the relevance of national media to the emergence of a public arena is underlined.

#### *The Media's role in an EPS*

Regardless of the definition proposed of an EPS, there is a common denominator: the relevance of mass media to its emergence, since they work as an interface between citizens and political actors (Pfetsch and Eschner, 2008). By representing an arena for citizens' claims throughout Europe, the media provide the essential infrastructures for

communication in the EU. Simultaneously, the media are political actors with the capability to select and emphasize European issues instead of national ones (Pfetsch and Eschner, 2008). In this sense, the media are paramount to the emergence of an EPS for several reasons.

First, highlighting public debates and selecting the same issues across national media arenas make them approachable to all citizens, providing thus a shared knowledge on European affairs (Eder and Kantner, 2000). Second, the media supply flows of information that link relevant political actors, institutions, and citizens across national borders and political levels, allowing for the emergence of a transnational speech (Wessler et al. 2008). Last, they shape public opinion and facilitate a transnational collective identity (de Wilde et al., 2013). By allowing a transnational speech, media are often used as a proxy to assess the European public sphere (e.g., Risse and de Steeg, 2003; de Vreese, 2007; Risse, 2015b; Pfetsch and Heft 2015; Koopmans, 2015), since they connect several fragmented public spheres, enabling the communication among political actors.

Consequently, the EPS is closely linked to European political communication, featured by any form of communication referring to EU governance, regardless of expressing consensus or conflict about specific issues (Trenz, 2004). Hence, an EPS emerges or is visible whenever it is possible to identify public communication among particular communicators (de Vreese, 2007). Furthermore, Risse and van de Steeg (2003) argue that an EPS emerges from the moment that several national public spheres relate mutually. For that, the discussion of European issues should occur at the same time in national media, with a similar level of attention. Concomitantly, similar frames of reference, structures of meaning and patterns of interpretation should be applied both to the media and to the various public arenas. Likewise, a transnational communication

community should emerge, in which speakers and listeners recognize each other, not only in national spaces but also identifying “Europe” as a common issue.

*The EPS and the EU democratic deficit*

The hopes of an EPS - capable of legitimizing EU institutions and socialising European citizens - crashed into the so-called communication deficit between the EU and its citizens (Trenz and Eder, 2004). In this sense, thinking about an EPS inevitably requires a reflection about the legitimacy of the European political system and the European identification matter. Overall, the legitimacy of a political system is anchored on the belief that citizens place on it, driving them to accept and support the political system and act in accordance with the established rules (Peters, 2005). Therefore, with regards to the legitimacy of EU’s policies and institutions, public communication in the several national arenas might ensure the democratic deepening, being perceived as a required condition for an increase in citizens’ knowledge on EU matters (de Vreese, 2007).

It is well-documented that the democratic deficit has been one of the most critical problems the EU has faced (e.g., Norris, 1997; Katz, 2001; Ward, 2002; Follesdal and Hix, 2006; Jensen, 2009; Kelemen, 2017), especially in what concerns European integration, and that it is closely related to the absence of an EPS. Still, the literature has conceptualized the EU’s democratic deficit in terms of institutional arrangements due to the feeble articulation among the institutions and between EU member-states. (e.g., Coultrap, 1999; Kuper, 1998; Scharpf, 1999).

In view of this, the media play a paramount role in weakening or strengthening the EU's democratic deficit as they are able to shape an EPS through the use of common frames to portray European themes (Meyer, 1999; Andersen and McLeod, 2004). Some evidence has pointed that European institutions are unable to foster a European identity

nor use the media to promote the linkage between European citizens and EU institutions (Anderson and Weymouth, 1999; Anderson, 2004). However, despite the EU institutions' need to promote themselves among national media, they are often challenged with negative news, or even more often, with the absence of news about the EU and its institutions in national arenas (e.g., de Vreese, 2002; Anderson and McLeod, 2004).

Nonetheless, European Union's democratic legitimacy is not a consensual topic in the literature. On the one hand, Majone (1998) claimed that the nature and the scope of European integration justify the EU's democratic deficit. Moreover, he argued that the voices arguing that the EU has been struggling with a lack of legitimacy are ungrounded: those that stated that the European economic integration should lead to a further political integration are applying to European institutions the same standards of legitimacy as in parliamentary democracies. For that reason, a consolidation of parliamentary democracy in the EU is not feasible, and the existence, to some extent, of a democratic deficit in EU institutions is expectable. Majone's rationale lies on the assumption that while both voters and elected representatives tend to oppose European federalism, they also show a trend to support economic integration. According to the author, economic integration without political integration is only achieved if politics and economics are kept separate as much as possible, claiming, therefore, that the depoliticisation of EU policies is the price to be paid for preserving national sovereignty. Moravcsik (2006) underpins and strengthens Majone's arguments, defending that the EU is legitimate since there is a separation of powers, EU institutions being limited by institutional checks and balances. On the other hand, Follesdal and Hix (2006) criticise Majone (1998) and Moravcsik's (2006) arguments, claiming that a truly democratic policy requires the existence of contestation, both at the political leadership level and

about policies themselves, both being crucial elements to the EU integration project (Follesdal and Hix, 2006)<sup>8</sup>.

Against this background, *how might Habermas contribute to our understanding of EU's legitimacy and the emergence of an EPS?*

Overall, and taking into account the Habermasian original conception of public sphere (Habermas, 1962/1991) – in which citizens are empowered to participate in the rational public debate – the debate on EPS is not only expected to contribute to an increase in information about the EU but also to promote the legitimacy of EU policies and their understanding by European citizens. In fact, it has been argued that the existence of an EPS might relieve some of the concerns about the democratic quality of the EU improving the EU legitimacy and accountability, as it would produce a public forum where the actors' performance gain visibility and is scrutinized (de Vreese, 2007).

*Two conceptual approaches to an EPS*

Two conceptual approaches about the EPS compete in the academic field. The first approach, inspired by Habermas' (2001) work, claims that the existence of an EPS is anchored in its need for a *Pan-European* media system, a common language for all citizens, a European *demos* and the use of related journalistic references (e.g., Kielmansegg, 1996; Grimm, 1995; Kantner, 2002; Machill et al., 2006). The second approach alleges that a European public sphere only emerges when national arenas are *Europeanised*, such as Kielmansegg (2003 *apud* de Vreese, 2007:8) who had recognized "the European Union is not a communication community, hardly a community of

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<sup>8</sup> The debate around the democratic deficit in the EU it is a wide research topic, and this thesis does not address all the arguments, neither all the perspectives. The purpose is to illustrate that its existence is well-established in the literature but there are several approaches on how far it might become a "problem". For an extensive review of EU democratic deficit, see, for instance: Ward, 2002; Bowman, 2006; Cheneva and Schimmelfenning, 2013. For the EU democratic deficit and the Eurozone crisis, see Bang et al., 2015; Kratochvíl and Sychra, 2019.



shared memories; it is merely a community of shared experiences". Thus, the Europeanisation of national public spheres should occur through a transnational communication community, in which the EU emerges as a common cause to all citizens (e.g., Risse and van de Steeg, 2003).

Several critics have argued against the possibility of an EPS, being mostly related to the absence of a European collective identity, on the one hand, and the lack of a European *demos*, on the other hand. In 1991, Weiler already argued that the EU was unable to become a fully democratic organization because Europe entails several *demoi* (multiple citizenships), challenging the traditional democracy theory that assumes a unitarian *demos* (national citizenships). From this perspective, if there is no *demos*, it is not possible to reach a perfectly democratic system (Weiler, 1991:20). Therefore, as the EU encompasses a culturally diverse setting, the recognition of a European *demos* is challenging, since it would require a communication community and common memories to all European citizens. Without a collective identity, there is no common language through which the political discourse can take place. Furthermore, the diversity of languages also reflects different democratic cultures, in which there is not a single and unified understanding of democracy, but several national understandings that compete against each other (Inanc and Ozler, 2007). A democratic community is a set of communities of communication, traditions and experiences, culture and common memories, which give rise to a collective identity (Risse and van de Steeg, 2003) In this vein, to achieve a European *demos*, it would be required to take into account subjective dimensions, such as the feeling of social cohesion, a shared fate and a collective self-identification that would reflect the individuals' loyalty to the EU system (Weiler, 1991; Inanc and Ozler, 2007).

Besides that, arguments have been presented against the assumption that the existence of a European *demos* is a required condition to accomplish an EPS. One of

these objections is related to the existence of communication communities. These communication communities are defined by Risse and van de Steeg (2003:18) as the ability to “speakers talk to each other and to their audiences rather a simply voicing utterance” and imply the citizens’ engagement - through the discussion and persuasion- and the use of rational arguments in the debate, which may or may not lead to a consensus. Furthermore, the existence of a communication community demands, at a minimum, that all individuals are recognised as legitimate participants in the public debate. This recognition will allow for the different voices from the several EU member-states to be considered valid on national public spheres, ultimately enabling a collective identification with Europe. Risse and van de Steeg (2003:19) claim that this identification can be labelled as an *identity light*, since it does not imply a further sense of loyalty towards each other, but some minimum sense of belonging to the same community. Thus, perceiving the EPS as a transnational communication community empowers the construction of a European identity given it allows for the discussion and debate of the EU’s fate (Risse, 2015).

Additional criticisms have been made in what concerns the assumption that EU’s legitimacy is grounded on the existence of a European *demos*. For Inanc and Ozler (2007), EU countries have several features that can be perceived as Euro-loyalty, as a European sense of social cohesion and collective conscience of belonging to the same European project. Besides, the absence of a common language among the EU member-states does not, unavoidably, mean an absence of a European *demos*. If European events are perceived similarly, with a common horizon, the communication across borders is likely to happen, (Risse and van de Steeg, 2003).

Following the same rationale, Risse and van de Steeg (2003) also question the argument that the inexistence of a *Pan-European* media system prevents the possibility of a European *demos* and an EPS. The authors claim that if individuals read different

newspapers that constitutes an advantage rather than a shortcoming. The media diversity fosters the existence of an EPS since a liberal democracy must be based on a pluralist supply of media competing against each other for public attention.

Drawing on these assumptions, Risse and van de Steeg (2003) advanced that the existence of an EPS requires that European themes are discussed in the public space through similar meaning structures because, according to Gerhards (1993 *apud* Risse and van de Steeg, 2003), “Only when there are reports about Europe and only when these reports are written from a perspective which transcends national perspectives, could a Europe of citizens emerge”. Nonetheless, such assumption does not mean that European issues must be consensual in the public sphere – especially because contestation and debate are preconditions for the emergence of an EPS. The authors’ argument lies on the idea that the more conflicting the European themes are the more social mobilisation they will achieve. Once the public sphere is a social construction (Koopmans et al., 2000), it emerges through the *Europeanisation* process through which individuals discuss the European matters in public, this is “the more we debate issues, the more we engage each other in our public discourses, the more we actually create political communities” (Risse and van de Steeg, 2003:15). This statement is consubstantiated with Habermas’ (1981) theory, in which the public sphere and the communities of communication emerge through social and discursive practices, which are highlighted when controversial issues are debated. Actually, if European topics are restrained to elites, we solely achieve a segmented transnational public sphere dominated by political and economic elites (Eder, 2000) with little impact on the European project and emergence of an EPS.

In this thesis I adopt the perspective of the *Europeanisation* of national arenas, given it reflects a much more realistic approach (de Vreese, 2007:8). Such existence does not imply a transnational public sphere and relies on national mass media and their

ability or willingness to contribute to the Europeanisation of national public spheres (e.g., Neidhart et al., 2000; Trenz, 2008; Risse, 2010; Koopmans, 2015). Indeed, nowadays, the literature rejects the idea of a *Pan-European* public sphere- monolithic and supranational- and has conceded that this condition does not have a significant impact on European identity and European *demos* (de Vreese, 2002). Moreover, Trenz (2004) underlines that an EPS is related to European political communication, represented by any form of communication that refers to European governance, whether it expresses conflict or consensus about European issues.

Therefore, the European public sphere emerges from the moment that several national public spheres relate to each other (Risse and van de Steeg, 2003). Thus, it is possible to highlight three necessary ingredients of a meaningful concept of the European public sphere as a transnational space (Risse, 2015):

- 1- High degree of salience of European issues;
- 2- Similar frames of reference and meaning structures across national public spheres;
- 3- Mutual awareness of each other in a transnational space.

### 1.1.3 Europeanisation of national arenas

The three conditions mentioned above are strictly related to the *Europeanisation* of national public spheres (de Vreese, 2007; Risse, 2010). As explained previously, it is possible to distinguish two conceptual approaches concerning the EPS: those that refer to the need for a *Pan-European media system* (e.g., Machill et al. 2006) and those that are related to the *Europeanization of national public spheres* (e.g., Risse and van de Steeg, 2003). Currently, there is an academic consensus that the former is less likely than the latter since most authors regard the possibility of the emergence of an EPS as a

consequence of the Europeanization of national public spheres. In fact, the majority of authors consider that the greatest obstacle to a transnational or *Pan-European* public sphere lies in the media, which tend to be national instead of supranational (e.g., Trenz, 2008). Just like the theoretical model of the *Pan-European* public sphere it is grounded in four main criteria: 1) a common *lingua franca* to all citizens; 2) the existence of a common European media; 3) the use of common journalistic references; 4) European demos- the *Europeanization* model can also be listed in indicators or dimensions.

While the *Pan-European* public sphere model demands that all indicators be fulfilled in order to achieve an EPS, in the *Europeanization* model the indicators are part of the process and are used as tools that indicate it (Koopmans, 2015). The Europeanisation of the national public sphere mirrors a much more realistic scenario than the *Pan-European* public sphere, as it does not require the existence of a genuinely transnational public space, in its monolithic sense. Thus, the concept of Europeanisation is based on the Europeanisation of national public spheres, as opposed to the existence of a *Pan-European* public sphere in its strictest sense (Risse, 2010).

However, before considering the indicators of Europeanization of national public spheres, it is important to clarify the meaning of *Europeanisation*. Currently, it is well-established in the literature that this concept broadly refers to the actors' responses - institutional and otherwise - to the impact of European integration on national arenas, or in other words, the way European institutions and their policies might affect national policies and national institutions of EU member-states (e.g., Cowles et al., 2001; Featherstone and Radaelli, 2003; Börzel and Risse, 2007).

Over the last decades, the concept of Europeanisation has increasingly insinuated itself into the literature on EU policymaking. A multiplicity of changes occurred within the European politics and their repercussions both on EU member-

states and on candidates to EU membership have led to a continuous rethinking of an understanding of Europeanisation (Featherstone and Radaelli, 2003: 3-4).

In 2003, through a meta-analysis study, Featherstone and Radaelli observed that the concept of Europeanisation had been widely used, reflecting in very different ways the structural changing processes that affected not only political actors and political institutions but also ideas and interests. In a *maximalist* sense, structural changes are a phenomenon close to those identified with the EU; in a *strict* sense, the concept involves a response of European member-states to EU policies. Thus, the concept does not arise as a mere synonym for political integration or political convergence, but rather as the sharing of these two elements. The authors argue that, empirically, the Europeanization process should not be measured taking into account only the extent of the political adjustments, but rather dynamically, since their structural effects are not necessarily permanent or irreversible. According to this argument, the impact of Europeanization in national public spheres is progressive, asymmetrical, irregular, uneven and incongruent in time and space (both at national and sub-national levels).

Nevertheless, Olsen (2002) claims that it is crucial to clarify "how the term can be useful to understanding the dynamic of the evolving European policy" (2002:1). Olsen links the concept of Europeanisation with the changes that occur within the national public spheres of EU member-states, describing, thus, the process of institutional arrangements. Once the EU is also a political project - in the context of its union - European integration and Europeanisation should be perceived as part of the same process and not as different realities. Therefore, Olson identifies five possible phenomena within the establishment of Europeanisation of the national public sphere: 1) changes in territorial boundaries of the states; 2) development of governance institutions at supranational level; 3) influence and imposition of supranationality at national and sub-national levels; 4) exporting EU governance and policy procedures

across EU borders; and 5) a political project designed to intensify EU's integration and union process. These five phenomena are in line with Ladrech's (2001:4) previous definition of Europeanisation, perceived as the "incremental process reorienting the direction and the shape of politics to the degree that EC political and economic dynamics become part of the organizational logic of national politics and policymaking".

The approaches to the Europeanisation of national public spheres proposed at the beginning of the 21st century by Ladrech (2001), Olsen (2002) and Featherstone and Radaelli (2003) only encompassed, however, the political and administrative changes as well as the structural adjustments that occur with the politicization<sup>9</sup> of European topics. The increase of the EU's salience and contestation had consequences on national public spheres, challenging this top-down view. A new avenue articulating a top-down with a bottom-up approach was required, as the national public spheres are not a monolithic entity neither a political institution nor a political actor, but a mediating space for the information conveyed by the media (Kantner, 2015).

Börzel (2005) was the pioneer in theoretically rethinking Europeanisation in these terms. Since the Single European Act, the EU integration was no longer circumscribed to the exclusive domain of the government and political elites. The subsequent

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<sup>9</sup> Europeanisation and EU Politicisation are, often related, but distinct phenomena. EU politicisation refers to the increasing salience, contestation of European topics as well presence of European actors in national public spheres (e.g., Green-Pedersen, 2012; Kriesi, 2019). A systematic and in-depth theoretical approach to the EU Politicisation concept is out of the scope of this thesis. Yet, both Europeanisation and Politicisation concepts have in common the salience of European issues and the presence of actors in the national arena as a crucial dimension. Thus, throughout this chapter, and in particular in the issue salience and actors' section, the concept of EU politicisation is often addressed.

For more information on EU politicisation, see Beyers and Kerremans, 2004; Hooghe and Marks, 2009; de Wilde, 2011; de Wilde and Zürn, 2012; Statham and Trenz, 2012; Zürn and Ecker-Ehrhardt, 2013.

For further analysis on EU politicisation during the Eurozone crisis, see e.g., Hooghe and Marks, 2012; Green-Pedersen, 2012; de Wilde, 2011; Rauh, 2013; Grande and Kriesi, 2015; Risse, 2015; Silva et al 2021).

demands for more transparency and accountability for the EU's decision-making process transformed citizens into crucial actors that actively interact with EU's political institutions. This new multi-level feature of the Europeanisation of national public spheres leads to the introduction of two key dimensions to the Europeanisation process: the *level* in which the European policies are decided - local, national, and European- and the *scope* of actors that decide those policies- national or supranational (Börzel, 2005).

Against this background, Risse (2015:10) conceptualised the Europeanisation of national public spheres as "the transformation of domestic as well as transnational discourse arenas, institution and policies in such a way that the EU as a multilevel governance system becomes an integral part of domestic as well as the transnational realms". Actually, in 2000, Gerhards had already underlined the existence of two main criteria that should be taken into consideration. First, an increase in the proportion of media coverage of European topics and European actors; and then, the evaluation of these issues and actors should be carried out from a similar perspective beyond the national interest. In line with this, Risse (2010) later distinguished the Europeanisation of national public spheres, according to three main dimensions:

- 1- *Salience* – European and EU issues, policies and actors are sufficiently visible in the various public spheres;
- 2- *Actors* – Fellow Europeans are present in the various national and issue-specific public spheres (as both speakers and audiences);
- 3- *Substantive Content of Communication* – When the common European themes and issues are addressed using similar frames (Eder and Kantner, 2000) and make claims across borders (Koopmans and Statham, 2010).



Although Koopmans (2015) argued that the Europeanisation model does not demand the fulfilment of all the three indicators in national public spheres, Risse (2015) claims that the Europeanisation on national public arenas occurs in a meaningful sense when all the three indicators are present, since "If Europe and EU are not visible in the public sphere, it does not matter if the actor and content dimension are Europeanised because hardly anyone notices. Similar frames of reference might be used purely coincidentally in various public spheres without the respective speakers and their audiences knowing about one another. (...) At the same time, it is not enough that speakers from various European countries or from EU institutions are present and being quoted if there is no common frame of reference" (Risse, 2015:12)

Next, each of these three dimensions are further explained, whenever the theoretical evidence is considered relevant for this study.

### 1) *Saliency*

There is a broad consensus in the literature that the saliency of European affairs in national media has substantially increased since the 1990s. (e.g., Koopmans, 2004; Trenz, 2004; de Vreese et al., 2006; Sifft et al., 2007; Boomgaarden et al., 2010; Monza and Anduiza, 2016; MAPLE, 2019). Moreover, the increased media attention to European Union issues appears to be one crucial pre-condition for the emergence of an EPS (Risse and van de Steeg, 2003). Currently, it is unanimous that is no longer possible for the European decision-making process to occur behind closed doors and apart from the national public sphere (e.g., van der Eijk and Franklin, 2004; Green-Pedersen, 2012). Hence, from the moment European topics achieve the same intensity and saliency in national media as the domestic themes or other issues, the political discourse will be less dominated by political elites – both national and European- and an active voice will be given to other relevant actors of domestic arenas, such as civil society (Risse, 2015). Consequently, the saliency of European issues may perform an important role in

European citizens' voting behaviour (Hix and Marsh, 2011) and lead to punishing or rejecting a specific political party or allowing for the preferences on European integration matters to be reflected on domestic politics (Tillman, 2004).

Over the last two decades, EU member-states have been challenged by the advent of Eurosceptic or anti-system parties (Capocchia, 2002) - characterised by the feeble support to EU, European integration, and the demands for a decrease in EU's powers – which might jeopardize the process of European integration. Grande and Kriesi (2016) unveiled that, particularly after the outbreak the economic crisis, these emergent parties (both on the left and right wings of the political spectrum) configured a realignment of certain European party systems.

Thus, the Eurozone crisis reignited the academic debate around the relevance of an EPS, the EU democratic deficit and its lack of legitimacy among European citizens. The Great Recession enhanced these concerns as the growing politicization of the EU did not lead to a democratization of its institutions (Scharpf, 2009; Kantner, 2015). Still, the research on the consequences of politicization is not consensual: some studies point to a negative or sceptical view, fearing the emergence of nationalisms (e.g. Harrison and Bruter, 2015; Grande and Kriesi, 2012; 2015), while others claim that the growing EU salience might prime positive repercussions on setting a common horizon to all European citizens and a common identity (e.g. Habermas, 2013; Risse, 2010; 2015; Gerhards and Lengfeld, 2015).

Harrison and Bruter (2015) and Grande and Kriesi (2015) advocate that the rise of Eurosceptic parties- in particular those that contest the EU's membership- may be a hindrance to the development of a European identity. Indeed, Grande and Kriesi (2015) claim that the more European issues become politicized on national arenas, the harder it is for mainstream parties to present an alternative to these Eurosceptic views. Likewise, the public sphere, in particular civil society groups, do not have the mechanisms to

allow for the discussion of EU topics towards further European integration. This argument is in line with Bartolini's (2005) belief that the increasing politicisation might lead to the weakening of EU's institutions democratic legitimacy.

A much more optimistic view is supported by Risse (2010), who advocates that the salience of European topics in national public spheres will foster the creation of a collective identity. Risse states that the Eurozone crisis fulfilled the Habermasian expression *solidarity among strangers* (Habermas, 1996) as the European citizens were willing to pay the price to achieve a European identity. Risse's evidence echoes in the European Commission's public opinion survey in which the majority of European citizens seem to agree that, rather than a national solution, European coordination is the best response to the economic crisis (EC, 2011). Moreover, it is in line with Gerhards and Lengfeld's (2015) longitudinal research on Poland, Germany, and Spain, which concluded that, despite the economic crisis, European integration is advancing.

In addition, Habermas (2013) assumes that the EU politicisation and the salience of European topics on national public spheres might represent an opportunity to promote EU's federalism. From a normative point of view, these phenomena are crucial to further democracy in the European Union, as conflict and salience are integral parts of the public sphere. In this way, it will strengthen the collective identification since the perception of lack of legitimacy between the decision taken in Brussels and its application at the national level will disappear. From an analytical perspective, the citizens' attitudes and the identification towards the European project are contingent on how public spheres were Europeanised during the Eurozone crisis as the more salient European topics are on national public spheres, the easier it is to avoid the nationalisation of European discourse and policies. Ultimately, more positive attitudes will be obtained regarding the legitimacy of the EU (Risse 2015).

## 2) Actors

The presence of European actors in national public spheres constitutes one of the main dimensions to ascertain the Europeanisation of national arenas. At the core of this dimension is the awareness that national public spheres become Europeanised as long as the political demands are directed across national borders or involve EU-related issues (Risse, 2015).

Koopmans and Erbe (2004) systematically described this phenomenon, advancing the argument that the actors might be present both *horizontally* as well as *vertically*. While the former entails the communication linkages between different member-states in national public spheres and implies the national media coverage of actors from other EU countries, the latter involves the communicative linkages between national and European levels and, therefore, refers to the degree to which EU actors are present in the various national public spheres (de Vreese, 2007; Koopmans et al., 2010). In the following paragraphs, this distinction is further explained.

In what concerns horizontal Europeanisation, the EU member-states should take each other into account when reporting relevant European issues on their national media. Themes at different governmental levels can be discussed in parallel in various national public spheres, and different points of view are considered (Risse, 2015). Koopmans and Erbe (2004) supplemented this typology by distinguishing horizontal Europeanisation according to its degree: *strong and deep vs weak and superficial*. A *weak* horizontal Europeanisation occurs when the media coverage of EU and EU member-states is underrepresented, particularly when compared with other non-member-countries. Moreover, the authors defend that national public spheres are *superficially* Europeanised when the reference to other EU countries is made without a framing that highlights the pertinence of those actors or “there is no linkage between the countries in the structure of claim-making itself” (Koopmans and Erbe, 2004:101). By

contrast, a *strong* horizontal Europeanisation incorporates a more substantial discussion on the public sphere, regarding the policies or actors of another EU member state. Koopmans and Erbe (2004) argue that a *deep* horizontal Europeanisation arises through a direct communication link system in the political spaces of two member-states, “actors from one country explicitly address or refer to actors or policies in another member state” (Koopmans and Erbe, 2001:101). In 2004, Peters et al. expanded Koopmans and Erbe’s (2004) features by introducing two new sub-dimensions: *transnational discursive contributions*- articles written by foreign actors - and *transnational discursive references*- citations in national media articles from foreign actors. This detachment is particularly relevant as it brings a trans-European approach to national media, establishing the degree to which European articles are debated in national public spheres.

Ideally, to achieve a full Europeanisation of the national public sphere, a stable interaction in national media between the actors of various member-states would be required. Still, Machill et al. (2006) pointed out a relevant shortcoming of this rationale. The authors argued that the media coverage of European countries is unbalanced. The heterogeneity of EU countries in terms of size and population density matters might lead to an uneven distribution of media coverage and different points of view across the EU.

On the one hand, the largest member-states are most often referred to in national arenas of small countries. According to Machill et al. (2006), these countries are perceived as more influential and powerful in the European decision-making process and, therefore, following their media agendas sparks the national media’s interest among smaller and less powerful EU countries. Consequently, in small countries, the references to the national participation in EU issues may be more limited. In fact, the national media might not refer to their domestic agendas at the European level as often,

and rather to the position of other larger countries perceived as more credible and more influential on the decision-making process.

On the other hand, small EU countries are less exposed to press coverage of other member-states, particularly regarding their views on European issues. In turn, EU countries with the highest media coverage easily export and implement their own political agendas among other EU member-states and find it easier to expose their views as well as a more significant approval of the issues they want to mediate (Machill et al. 2006).

Concerning vertical Europeanisation, it occurs when EU actors are present in the various public spheres (Koopmans et al. 2010). In this case, national actors approach European themes and actors, and, at the same time, European actors participate in national debates on European topics (de Vreese, 2007). Koopmans and Erbe (2004) described that vertical communication linkages between the national and the European political space can be established according to two variants: *bottom-up* and *top-down*. In *bottom-up* communication, national actors address European actors making judgements on European topics. The simplest form occurs when a national actor refers to a European institution, e.g., EP, but also when national authorities are addressed to promote the group's interest at European level. *Top-down* communication occurs when European actors intervene in national policies and public debates in the name of EU regulations and common interests. In both cases, the vertical Europeanisation has a political nature, enabling the identification of the European topics mostly targeted at the Europeanisation process. Accordingly, the authors recognized that the highest levels of vertical Europeanisation take place among the political arenas closely related to the EU and linked to the European decision-making forum.

### *3) Substantive Content of Communication*

There is a comprehensive theoretical and empirical discussion in the Europeanisation field regarding how the Europeanisation of the communication's content should be established. In chapter III of this thesis, the several dimensions and indicators used in previous studies to assess the convergence of communication will be addressed at a greater length. For now, the discussion will be contained to the theoretical relevance of this dimension for the Europeanization of national public spheres.

It is well-established that the substantive content of communication entails the use of similar frameworks in the transnational space (e.g., Eder and Kantner, 2000; Risse, 2010; Kantner, 2015). To fulfil a meaningful Europeanisation of national public spheres, it is expected that European topics are discussed at the same time, receiving similar attention in national media. For that, the use of the same reference frame, similar meaning structures and interpretation patterns by national media in the domestic arena is required (Risse and van de Steeg, 2003; Risse, 2010; Risse, 2015).

The underlying assumption of these premises is the following: to achieve a full Europeanisation, the national media should be convergent when reporting European topics in national public spheres. In 2004 Koopmans and Erbe argued that the same themes, discussed at the same time with similar reference criteria may result in a Europeanisation of national politics. Nevertheless, the authors also established that is not required that the national media refer directly to the EU and its policies- it is only required that the member-states refer to each other on national media through the use of similar meaning structures. In turn, a more restricted criterion was introduced by Pfetsch et al. (2008), pointing out two crucial indicators to determine if a topic about the EU is discussed with a similar horizon of reference in European countries. On the one hand, the national media should agree on the relevant conflict line to cover the

European topics; on the other hand, the same national media must take identical positions on these conflicts. Actually, Peters et al. (2005) had pointed that the concept of Europeanisation encompasses different meanings; yet the increase of similarity in public agendas and political speeches along with the use of common frames in national public spheres are decisive indicators of the Europeanisation of contents.

The outbreak of the Eurozone crisis was a decisive moment, that compelled the academic debate to reassess the relevance of convergence of communication content. The question was now to understand how the Eurozone crisis was framed or which frames were used by European countries to characterise it. Risse (2015) posed this question clearly: have the European countries perceived and reported the EZ crisis similarly? Concretely, the author wondered whether there was a conflict between the debtor countries (Spain, Italy, and Greece)- that may have felt the austerity measures as an attack by North western EU countries on their way of life - and the creditor countries (Germany, Finland and Netherlands) that may have blamed the Southern European countries for the crisis. Or, on the contrary: whether the Eurozone crisis was framed as a common issue, concerning the European Union as a whole, which must be addressed as a unitary problem by all European countries.

Against this background, the use of similar criteria of relevance and the same reference frames appears as a pre-condition for the viability of an EPS and the emergence of a transnational communication community, as “we can only communicate in a meaningful way (and this includes polarization and contestation) if we have a common sense of what we are talking about” (Risse and van de Steeg, 2003:4). Still, even though the use of similar frames and identical meaning structures might contribute to the emergence of a European identity and of an EPS, several authors (e.g., Eder and Kantner, 2000; Risse and van de Steeg, 2003, Trenz, 2004) have emphasized the fulfilment of this assumption does not necessarily imply that European



themes should be consensual in the various national public arenas. It is only required that the national media agree that the European issue is topical, and it needs to be addressed within the same horizon of reference (Risse and van de Steeg, 2003; Risse, 2010; Risse, 2015). Kantner (2002) systematises this rationale: the existence of the same relevance criterion demands that the European topics are framed following a similar fashion between the various national public spheres while the use of the same meaning structures should be observed on the national media.

## **1.2 STATE OF THE FIELD**

Research on European narratives is not novel and is one of the fastest-growing subfields in political communication, political science, and European Union studies. During the last decades, there has been a growing body of literature examining the salience and framing of European issues on national media and its impact on an EPS. Currently, it is possible to divide the research on European media narratives into two moments: the studies carried out before the Eurozone crisis which emphasized the media narrative on relevant European issues at the turn of the 20th century; and the studies that look into European media narratives after the outbreak of the economic crisis.

Although this literature has mostly tried to understand the effects of framing and priming on the emergence of a European public sphere, they provide us with valuable insights on how European issues have been portrayed on national media. Additionally, the majority of these studies are only concerned with media narratives during European events, disregarding the national events. At the same time, comparative studies, especially following the Eurozone crisis, are limited to creditor countries, with only a few studies examining the creditor vs debtor countries, leaving out the media narratives

among countries that faced austerity measures. Therefore, this state of the art looks at all these strands of literature, as long as they are considered relevant for this thesis.

### 1.2.1 First studies on European media narratives

From the beginning of the 21st century, a growing body of literature examining how European topics are framed and their impact on EPS has emerged. The majority of these studies focused on relevant European issues that emerged at the turn of the 21st century, such as the European Commission's corruption scandal, the BSE (Mad Cow disease), the debate about the future of European economic integration or its enlargement (e.g., Schmitz and Geserick, 1996; Eder, 1998, 2000; Eder and Kantner, 2000; van de Steeg, 2000, 2002).

The literature seems to point to mixed conclusions. The studies solely focused on Western European countries- case studies or comparative studies- exhibit a highly convergent narrative, as European topics were likely to be discussed and reported in national media with the same level of attention and in relation to the same issue cycle<sup>10</sup>. In contrast, studies incorporating the new European member-states and/or the South-Western European countries present a weak or absent convergence of media narratives.

#### *European Media Narratives among Western European Countries*

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<sup>10</sup>The "issue-attention cycle" idea was proposed by Downs (1972), contending that media and the public rarely focus on certain issues for a long period. It refers to the ups and downs of attention an environmental issue receives either from the public or from mass media and involves five stages: 1) *Pre-problem stage* in which an issue has not captured a lot of public attention; 2) *Alarmed Discovery and Euphoric Enthusiasm*, in which the public has become aware of the issue but is often accompanied by the optimistic belief that, by taking some measures, the problem will be solved; 3) *Realizing the cost of significant progress* when people begin to realize that the cost (i.e. money, social benefits, etc.) to solve the problem is beyond their estimation or the extent to which they are willing to tolerate; 4) *Gradual decline of intense public interest*, in which the public's desire to keep attention on the issue wanes and other issues become more visible 4) *Post-problem stage*, in which an issue has been replaced by other concerns and is subject to "spasmodic recurrences of interest" (Downs, 1972: 39-40).

The year 2000 was fruitful to the literature on European media narratives. One of the major contributions to the field came from the data collected by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000). Based on several frames previously defined in Neumann's et al article (1996), Semetko and Valkenburg presented a groundbreaking study on European media narratives. The analysis of Dutch national news media - television news, as well the tabloids and mainstream newspapers- during the Amsterdam meeting of 1997 aimed to ascertain the preferred frames to portray the event and to establish the existence of differences in media outlets. It was concluded that there was a prevalence of five frames: "responsibility", "conflict", "human interest", "economic consequences" and "morality", with "responsibility" the most-used frame and "morality" the least-used. Besides that, it was observed that the difference between frames did not occur among the media, but within them: mainstream press and television tended to be convergent using "responsibility" and "conflict" more often to report the event, while in tabloids, the "human interest" frame tended to prevail.

Also in 2000, van de Steeg et al. carried on one of the first cross-national studies on media convergence, focusing on the *Haider Debate*<sup>11</sup>. The analysis of tabloids and reference newspapers in Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, and Austria unveiled that, regardless of the political view or ideological positions, the printed press used similar frames to report the issue on national public spheres. The collective understanding about the *Haider Debate* revealed that national media shared a collective understanding about the topic, given the issue was addressed as an affair that concerns "Us", as

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<sup>11</sup>In October 1999, Jörg Haider's right-wing populist *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs* (FPÖ) won a major electoral victory in Austria. The coalition formed by the FPÖ and the centre-right *Österreichische Volkspartei* (ÖVP) in February 2000 led to protests all over Europe. As a result, the Presidency of the European Council of Ministers decided in favour of the so-called "bilateral sanctions" of EU member-states against the Austrian government.

Europeans. In addition, the topic was portrayed on the national media as a debate about the core principles of a collective European identity, mainly through frames that constitute identity makers - "Europe as a moral community" and "European legal standards".

Schuck and de Vreese (2006) reinforced the conclusion that although European topics are controversial, the reference frame used by the national media is the same among European countries. In the context of the 2004 EU enlargement, the authors analysed the German printed press between November 2002 and October 2003. The content analysis included four mainstream daily newspapers, as well as six regional daily newspapers and the goal was to identify the most- used frames to narrate the event and the framing effects on individuals' support concerning the enlargement of the EU. Despite being a controversial issue, the most common frames in the German media were "risk" and "opportunity", and the tone was mostly neutral. Additionally, through a series of experiments, it was observed that the "opportunity" frame had more impact on individuals' support for EU enlargement than the "risk" frame.

Using the same methodology- content analysis and experimental methods - in 2011 de Vreese et al. developed a study trying to determine which frames were most used by German media during the debate about the enlargement of the EU to Turkey and how the framing affected public opinion. The content analysis was carried out over four weeks on television news and over the five most widely read newspapers, showing that "economic", "cultural" and "security" frames were most used by the media, always with a negative tone. The experiments showed that individuals exposed to a positive tone are more supportive of European integration than those exposed to a negative tone.

*Going beyond Western European Countries*

The first effort to encompass countries other than Western European ones was carried out by Trezn in 2000, in the context of the European Commission's corruption scandal. In order to understand the media narratives in the national public sphere between Western European countries and South European countries, Trezn compared the German and Spanish national media and found that the Spanish media often characterised the corruption scandal as a German attack on the Spanish commissioner. In contrast, the German media tended to portray the scandal as a problem of the absence of democratic culture in Southern European countries. In this vein, Trezn claimed that there was no emerging transnational "resonance structures" neither similar narrative. Instead, the symbolic mobilisation of European themes had rather accentuated the polarization along national lines (Trezn 2000: 353).

Later, in 2005, d'Haenens (2005) focused on the news coverage of the EU and EU-related matters in online versions of seven quality newspapers over four months that included the EU Council Summit (December 2001 - March 2002).

The goal was to assess the narrative convergence of the news about the EU, in Spain, Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Finland and the USA. The evidence found revealed that the national media did not show a convergent narrative: the "human interest" frame was very prominent in Polish and US newspapers, whereas in the Spanish, German and Finnish printed press it appeared to be peripheral; the "conflict" frame was more present in German and Spanish newspapers and to a lesser degree in the Dutch printed press; the "economic consequences" frame appeared mostly in Polish and American newspapers; the "morality" frame had a prominent role in American and Italian newspapers, being peripheral in Spanish, German and Polish media; the "responsibility" frame was particularly prominent in Spain, the Netherlands and Poland's printed press. Besides that, the media's dominant discourse followed the

previous trend: the “culture” discourse was more peripheral in Spain and Italy; “cultural activity in Europe” had a prominent place in American newspapers; “power” discourse was strongly present in the Spanish, German, and Polish media “and “development” discourse played a strong role in Italian and Finnish newspapers.

The conclusions achieved by d’Haenens (2005) are crucial: both news frames and dominant discourses adopted by the national media to narrate the EU and the European-related topics differed across countries. The lack of common ground and a shared horizon between the national media may lead to different conceptions and expectations about the EU; in addition, the differences in news frames and discourses may signal a priori differences, which may “constitute a serious brake-block for the progress of ‘project’ Europe” (d’Haenens, 2005:438).

The media narrative about the European Parliament (EP) elections was also examined, in particular regarding the tone used to narrate the event. In 2006, de Vreese et al. conducted a cross-country analysis, looking to the national media in 25 member-states. The authors found that the tone used by the national media (press and television) was mostly neutral; still, the news with evaluative style presented differences that varied according to the length of EU membership and the media type. In new member-states, the tone was mainly positive, whereas in the oldest members it was negative. Regarding the differences among the media, the tabloids presented a more negative tone in all countries; however, none of these differences was found between private and public television.

More recently, within the framework of the *Eurosphere Project*, Zografova et al. (2012) examined the media patterns in reporting EU-related issues, particularly the issues of “Construction of the EU” and “Reform Treaty” between 9 May and 10 October 2008. The authors analysed the EU-related content in newspapers of 16 European countries, clustered in two groups: old member-states (UK, France, Italy, Spain,

Austria, Belgium, Germany, Finland, Denmark, and Netherlands) and new member-states (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, and Estonia). The exploratory study found no unified narrative in reporting the two issues. Instead, the countries' specificities and the national interest prevailed.

The state of the field above exhibits a common pattern (Table 1.1). The studies on Western European countries unveiled that the national media resort to a similar narrative to report the European issues, both between countries and among types of media. Even though some of those issues constituted a debatable and controversial topic in national public spheres, the reference frame used by the national media was the same, showing, therefore, that there was a common ground and a shared horizon concerning European issues. Nevertheless, substantial differences in European media narratives arise when a new political environment and different media landscapes are added to the analysis (d'Haenens, 2005; Zografava, 2012). Studies encompassing not only the Western European countries but also the remaining European countries, such as Eastern or Southern member-states, exposed the non-existence of consensus in the national media when reporting European topics. The overall conclusions reveal a lack of a common reference point, lining up the national media with domestic politics rather than with a common European speech.

**Table 1. 1** Summary of the main studies on European Media Narratives, before the Eurozone crisis

<b>Authors(s) (Date)</b>	<b>Scope</b>	<b>Type of Media</b>	<b>European Event</b>	<b>Convergence of European Media Narrative</b>
<i>Semetko and Valkenburg (2000)</i>	Case Study: <u>Netherlands</u>	- Television - Printed Press ( <i>tabloids and reference</i> )	- Amsterdam Meeting of 1997	✓
<i>Trenz (2000)</i>	Comparative Study: <u>German and Spain</u>	- Printed Press ( <i>reference</i> )	- EU Commission's Corruption Scandal	✗
<i>van de Steeg et al. (2000)</i>	Comparative Study: <u>Belgium, France, Germany, Italy and Austria</u>	- Printed Press ( <i>tabloids and reference</i> )	- The "Haider Debate"	✓
<i>d'Haenens (2005)</i>	Comparative Study: <u>Netherlands, Poland, Finland, Italy, Germany, Spain, US</u>	- Printed Press- Online Version ( <i>reference newspapers</i> )	- EU Council Summit of 2001	✗
<i>de Vreese et al. (2006)</i>	Comparative Study: <u>25 EU Member-states</u>	- Television - Printed Press ( <i>tabloids and reference</i> )	- EP Elections 2004	✗
<i>Shuck and de Vreese (2006)</i>	Case Study: <u>Germany</u>	- Printed Press ( <i>reference and regional</i> )	- EU Enlargement 2004	✓
<i>de Vreese et al. (2011)</i>	Case Study: <u>Germany</u>	- Television - Printed Press ( <i>most read newspapers</i> )	- EU Enlargement to Turkey 2004	✓
<i>Zografova et al. (2012)</i>	Comparative Study: <u>16 EU Member-states</u>	- Television - Printed Press ( <i>reference</i> )	- 9 May- 10 October 2008	✗

Source: Own compilation ✓ Convergent ✗ Divergent



## 1.2.2 European Media Narratives after the onset of the Great Recession

The outbreak of the Great Recession amplified the literature on European media narratives and the Europeanisation of domestic public spheres. The economic crisis increased the salience and conflict in national arenas. Therefore, the crisis represents a fertile phenomenon among academics who seek to understand how domestic arenas became Europeanised, ascertaining to what extent the national media are convergent regarding narratives on the European crisis.

The current research on media narratives after the onset of the Eurozone crisis can be divided into two categories: studies emphasizing the convergence in creditor countries (i.e., those that faced an economic growth or that were not severely affected by the economic crisis) and studies comparing the media convergence between creditor and debtor countries (those that faced dramatic downturn on the economy and harsh austerity measures).

### *Creditor Countries*

The literature emphasising the narratives in creditor countries, including both comparative and case studies, identified a pattern of media convergence and common narratives about the Eurozone crisis.

In 2013, Bach et al. analysed the economic coverage of German newspapers to identify the most relevant frames in the news coverage, their occurrence and distribution in different media outlets, and also the inter-media influences. The content analysis included two crucial key events: it started two weeks before the Lehman Brothers bankruptcy, on September 15th, 2008, and ended four weeks after the government's bailout of the Hypo Real Estate, on September 29th, 2008. The authors selected six daily German national newspapers and identified eight predominant frames in media coverage: "Complexity-Risk"; "Globalization"; "Solidarity"; "Greed";

“Regulation”; “Self-Regulation”; “Systemic-Threat”; “Moral-Hazard”. Through the analyses of 180 articles, the authors found that “systemic-threat” dominated the coverage at the onset of the financial crisis in almost all newspapers, and that “moral hazard” was the least used. Only the *Frankfurter Rundschau* emphasised depictions focusing on the protagonists’ “Greed”, while “solidarity” had its highest percentage rating in the *Sddeutsche Zeitung*, and “moral-hazard” only predominantly occurred on *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. Regarding inter-media influences, there was a significant correlation indicating that individual media outlets exert some influence on the media coverage of other media outlets.

One year later, Joris, d’Haenens and Von de Gorp (2014) examined the Netherlands and Flanders’ (i.e., Dutch-speaking Belgium) printed press, to establish which were the most used frames since the outbreak of the crisis, analysing the news published in two mainstream newspapers, two economic newspapers and two tabloids, about the most relevant European events between 2010 and 2012. The authors pointed to the “war” frame as the most common one, followed by “disease”, “natural disaster”, “construction” and “game”. Moreover, the evidence pointed that its occurrence was similar in all types of newspapers and among countries. Despite the absence of meaningful differences between regions in the number of frames used, the relative occurrence of these frames was slightly different in Flemish and Dutch newspapers: in Flanders, the “war” and “natural disaster” frame occurred significantly more often, while in Dutch newspapers the frames “disease”, “construction” and “game” were more often used. Furthermore, the authors also noted that the occurrence of the frame was higher at the beginning of the economic crisis, especially when compared to the following years.

*Creditor and Debtor Countries*

In what concerns the media narratives between debtor and creditor countries, so far, the literature has been at odds regarding the existence of a narrative convergence in these two groups of countries (Table 1.2). While Drewski (2015) and Lahusen et al.'s (2016) studies concluded that the German national media display different narratives on the Eurozone crisis when compared to the Greek or Spanish printed press; the studies of Salgado and Nienstedt (2016), Kaiser and Konigslow (2017) or even Arrese and Varas-Miguel (2015) and Salgado et al. (2015) reveal a resemblance between creditor and debtor countries.

A comparative study between the main creditor country of the Eurozone- Germany - and one of the debtor countries- Spain - was conducted in 2015 by Drewski, analysing centre-left and centre-right German and Spanish newspapers during the beginning and the peak of the crisis. The study found that there has not been a common European public narrative on the Euro crisis. Drewski's study unveiled characteristic features that could be "traced back to each country's position on the north-south divide between the creditor and the debtor countries within the Eurozone" (Drewski, 2015: 28) since the narratives in national media were driven by national interest: Germany was reluctant to contribute to bailout funds that were deemed illegitimate; Spain did not want to be perceived as part and parcel of the over-indebted and uncompetitive "PIGS" (Portugal, Italy, Greece and Spain).

The absence of convergence on media narratives between debtor and creditor countries was reinforced by Lahusen et al. (2016). The authors compared the narratives on German and Greece's public spheres through the analysis of the discursive construction of the economic crisis between 2005 and 2014. Following a claim-making analysis, the news in five German newspapers and four Greek ones - three pro-EU and one anti-EU - was extracted. Several differences in the German and the Greek printed

press were found. While German newspapers were more concerned about monetary issues and economic stability, discussing the necessary political and institutional measures to preserve stability and market competitiveness, the emphasis of Greek newspapers was more often related to the crisis, market internal issues, welfare state and austerity problems.

Conversely, Kaiser and Konigslow (2015) concluded that Spain and German online newspapers had a convergent narrative during the crisis. Through a longitudinal study in Spain and German newspapers, the authors evaluated the frames used by online reference newspapers to portray the euro crisis between 2010 and 2014, based on a content analysis of 961 articles. The frames were identified in a data-driven approach and the results achieved show that countries assumed a Europeanised narrative during the Eurozone crisis, supporting austerity politics. Moreover, the study highlighted that this convergence has occurred despite a slight re-nationalisation of participant's discourse, indicating that national actors have increasingly sustained the Europeanisation of the national public sphere.

A similar conclusion was reached by Salgado and Nienstedt (2016), who added new indicators and a new dimension: the impact of political orientation on newspapers' content concerning the economic crisis in the EU. The analysis of the covers of 20 mainstream newspapers (centre-left-wing and centre-right-wing) from 10 European countries (Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Spain, and UK) covered the most relevant events of the economic crisis between 2010 and 2012. The main purpose was to examine the impact of the right and left moderate political orientation of printed press on the levels of plurality in news coverage, testing whether different political orientations lead to different perspectives on issues and events linked to the euro crisis. Despite a few differences between centre-left and centre-right newspapers, the overall results did not show a distinctive pattern in the

coverage of the Eurozone crisis. In fact, Salgado and Nienstedt's study emphasizes that national interest is more important to coverage diversity than ideological cleavages. These conclusions highlighted that the Eurozone crisis events were mostly portrayed according to national frames and did not go beyond the domestic realms, which seem to point to a weak Europeanisation of national public spheres. Nevertheless, the results also suggest a presence of some convergence in the news coverage.

*What about debtor countries?*

Despite the prolific literature on the European narratives, there is a gap that remains unfilled: *How did debtor countries, those who faced austerity measures, portray the European economic issues during the crisis? Did they present similar frames when narrating these issues?*

So far, only Zamponi and Bosi (2016) and Arrese and Vara-Miguel (2015) considered this group of countries, achieving, however, different conclusions. On the one hand, Zamponi and Bosi (2016) uncovered the existence of significant differences, not only between debtor and creditor countries but also among debtor countries. The authors investigated the European economic crisis in seven European countries' media (German, Italy, Greece, Poland, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland). A political claim analysis was conducted in the digital archives of the five most representative newspapers of each country between 2005 and 2014, based on a random sample of 1,000 claims per country. These claims were collected through a keyword search- based on the words "crisis", "recession" and "austerity" - and aimed to understand to what extent the public discourse in the crisis was differently articulated regarding time, issue, scope and actors. The seven countries were divided into two levels: 1) *Northern and Southern* - countries characterised by a different impact of economic crisis, and 2) *Greece, Italy and Spain*- defined by a similar effect of the economic crisis.

The conclusions disclosed the existence of significant differences between *northern and southern* countries: *northern* countries (Germany, Poland, Sweden, and Switzerland) tended to configure their public discourse on the financial aspect of the crisis, treating it as an external and supra-national phenomenon; in *southern* countries (Greece, Italy and Spain), the public discourse was focused on a variety of issues and treated as a domestic phenomenon. Furthermore, the results also suggested that countries where the crisis had a substantial impact – *southern* countries - do not share an entirely homogenous or convergent experience of economic hardship.

Contrariwise, Arrese and Vara-Miguel (2015) found a fairly common use of the same frame metaphors and with the same weight among countries, types of newspapers and diverse economic conditions. Arrese and Vara Miguel's study examined the economic metaphors present in the public discourse in the daily press (quality, economic and tabloid printed press) between 2010-2012. The most relevant conclusion achieved for this study concerns the media narrative according to the different socio-economic context of each country. Effectively, the distinction between countries with debt problems and countries without was not found to be significant, which means that the distinction between creditor or debtor countries did not lead to different narratives regarding the crisis.

Also, Salgado et al. (2015) pointed in the same direction, revealing a considerable degree of consonance among national newspapers within countries. The authors examined 24 newspapers from six European countries (France, Germany, Greece, Italy, UK and Spain) to explore the degree of plurality/diversity in news content and consonance between and within national media. The analysis of the news published during 11 key events, representative of the evolution of the Eurozone crisis between 2010-2012 showed that the newspapers from debtor countries presented a more plural coverage than countries without debt issues. Still, the content analysis disclosed some

signs of convergence between southern and northern European countries, since there was no clear division in national newspapers in what concerns the crisis approach.

**Table 1. 2** Summary of the main studies on European Media Narratives relevant to the topic after the onset of the EZ crisis

<b>Authors(s) (Date)</b>	<b>Scope</b>	<b>Type of Media</b>	<b>European Event</b>	<b>Convergence of European Media Narrative</b>
<i>Bach et al. (2013)</i>	Case Study: <u>German</u>	-Printed Press (daily newspapers)	-Onset of the Banking crisis (2008)	✓
<i>Joris et al. (2014)</i>	Comparative Study: <u>Netherlands and Flanders</u>	- Printed Press (tabloids, reference, and economic)	-Eurozone crisis (relevant European events between 2010-2012)	✓
<i>Drewski (2015)</i>	Comparative Study: <u>German and Spain</u>	- Printed Press (centre-left and centre-right reference)	-Beginning and peak of the crisis (Dec. 2009- Aug. 2012)	✗
<i>Arrese and Vara-Miguel (2015)</i>	Comparative Study: <u>Greece, France, Spain, Germany, Italy, UK</u>	- Printed Press (tabloids, reference, and economic)	-EU events representatives of the crisis (2010-2012)	✓
<i>Salgado et al. (2015)</i>	Comparative Study: <u>Greece, Italy, Spain, Netherlands, Finland, UK</u>	- Printed Press (tabloids, reference, and economic)	EU events representatives of the crisis (2010-2012)	✓
<i>Lahusen et al. (2016)</i>	Comparative Study: <u>German and Greece</u>	- Printed Press (pro-EU and anti-EU)	-Before and during the crisis(2005-2014)	✗
<i>Zamponi and Bosi (2016)</i>	Comparative Study: <u>German, Italy, Greece, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland</u>	-Printed Press (reference)	-Before and during the crisis(2005-2014)	✗
<i>Salgado and Nienstedt (2016)</i>	Comparative Study: <u>10 EU countries</u>	- Printed Press (centre-left / centre-right)	-11 EU events representatives of the crisis(2010-2012)	✓
<i>Kaiser and Konigslow (2016)</i>	Comparative Study: <u>German and Spain</u>	- Online Version (reference)	-During Eurozone crisis (2010-2014)	✓

Source: Own compilation ✓ Convergent ✗ Divergent



### **1.3 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Inspired by Habermas' concept of the public sphere, the existence of an EPS demands a transnational communication community to have a public arena where European citizens can interact and discourse about the same European political issues (e.g. de Vreese, 2007; Risse and van de Steeg, 2003; Koçan, 2008). However, due to the impossibility of having a Pan European media system, currently, the majority of the authors have conceptualized the emergence of an EPS as a consequence of the Europeanisation of national public spheres. To fulfil a meaningful Europeanisation of national public spheres, it is expected that European topics are discussed at the same time, receiving similar attention on national media. For that, the national media should have a convergent narrative when reporting European topics in the national public sphere (Risse and van de Steeg, 2003; Risse, 2010; Risse, 2015), since the use of similar criteria of relevance and the same reference frames appears as a pre-condition for the viability of an EPS and the emergence of a transnational communication community.

Against this background, over the last decades, a growing body of literature that examines the European media narratives has emerged. Nevertheless, the state of the art on this topic has highlighted five main shortcomings.

First, the majority of the studies have focused on specific events or exceptional moments concerning European integration (e.g., EU's economic crisis or EU's enlargement). After more than two decades of research about the European media convergence topic, the field has not provided a longitudinal perspective, yet. Even though it is crucial to describe narratives during these moments, it is even more decisive to compare narratives on national media over time.

A full understanding of the media's convergence is only possible to accomplish through a longitudinal approach, given it provides a unique insight into changes over time. Therefore, this thesis seeks to capture the period before and following the onset of

the Great Recession, to assess how the crisis might or might not have contributed to an increase of the convergence in national media. Looking at these two periods allows us to have a more accurate and reliable picture of the convergence of media narratives and, consequently, to understand differences produced by the economic crisis to the emergence of an EPS.

Second, the literature currently available about European convergence is circumscribed to European events. The last decades have hastened the Europeanisation of national public spheres, which occurs in a context of high conflict and polarisation, such as the campaign for national elections. Nonetheless, the literature focused on national events is still rare. This lacuna is tackled in this thesis by presenting an innovative approach, focused on the national elections in each country, which enables to capture the political polarisation and reflect the degree of Europeanisation and media convergence of national public spheres.

Third, there is a fundamental gap in European media narratives literature: most of the scholarship concentrating on media convergence in the EU has been exclusively confined to Western Europe and the leading countries concerning decision-making in the EU context. Although the Great Recession expanded the scope of the literature, it is still in its infancy: the majority of the studies only analysed the convergence of narratives among the debtor countries with a few comparative studies examining narratives between creditor and debtor countries. This thesis aims to fill this gap by examining the narratives among the countries that faced a bailout through a longitudinal approach, which is paramount, as it might shed light on the emergence of an EPS and a transnational community of communication in the post-crisis context

Fourth, even though Pfetsch et al. (2008) had stated that the national media should agree on the relevant conflict lines to refer to European issues and assume a common position on those matters, the study on European media narratives has

neglected the second assumption: the convergence direction. So far, there is no systematic and comparative knowledge regarding what the convergence direction might represent to the European project. Establishing the direction of convergence is crucial to understand the possibilities of an EPS as it might indicate a narrative pointing to a deeper European economic integration or, contrariwise, unveils anti-EU views and a nationalist perspective on economic matters. This thesis tackles this shortcoming by uncovering whether the European media convergence follows a *centripetal* path- promoting a more consolidated European integration- or goes into a *centrifugal* direction- pushing the narrative towards a perspective that does not go beyond national interests.

In addition, the state of the art disclosed some ambiguities in how to measure the convergence of European media narratives. An extensive range of indicators has already been used. Nonetheless, they not fully apprehend the complexities and multidimensions inherent to the Europeanisation concept, neither the specificities of debtor countries during the Eurozone crisis. This thesis addresses this problem by providing a new framework of analysis, capable of measuring the similarity of narratives in debtor countries and obtaining in-depth information on media narratives. Furthermore, it is versatile by combining in the same model several dimensions while navigating across countries, different elections contexts and over the years<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup>This new multidimensional framework of analysis will be further explained on Chapter III.



## **PART TWO**

# **METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK**



## **CHAPTER II**

# **METHODOLOGY**

In the previous Chapter, I presented the main theoretical approaches of this thesis, namely the concept of European Public Sphere and the Europeanisation of national arenas. The key notion arising from this endeavour is that an EPS could emerge as soon as the national media uses similar relevance criteria and the same reference frames to report European topics, because “we can only communicate in a meaningful way (and this includes polarisation and contestation), if we have a common sense of what we are talking about” (Risse and van de Steeg, 2003:4).

In addition, I summarised the main findings produced within the subfield of studies about the European media narratives on national media. From this literature, five relatively evident shortcomings emerge. The first pertains to the absence of longitudinal studies on European media narratives. The second gap in the literature arises from the recognition that it is impossible to analyse the convergence of media narratives if the focus is placed solely on European events. Third, there are no comparative and longitudinal study to date about the convergence of national media in the countries that were hardest hit by the EZ crisis – debtor countries. Fourth, there has not yet been any systematic or comparative research determining the consonance direction in media narratives on the future of the European project; more specifically, the direction of convergence, which is fundamental to understand the possibilities for the emergence of an EPS. Finally, most of those studies measured the narrative convergence using a unidimensional approach, which does not fully apprehend the

complexities and multidimensions inherent to the to the specificities of the Europeanisation concept of debtor countries during the EZ crisis.

This Chapter presents the roadmap of the methodological choices taken to fulfil my research goal. Section 2.1 introduces the main research questions and explains their relevance as well as sets out the underlying hypothesis of this thesis. Section 2.2 presents the agenda and theoretical approach of media studies. Section 2.3 introduces the data collection, codification process and each detailed stage of the case selection.

## 2.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND MAIN EXPECTATION

The primary goal of this thesis is to investigate the emergence of a European Public Sphere in the context of the Eurozone crisis from a cross-national and longitudinal comparative perspective, that is, the extent to which the economic crisis might have contributed to the creation of an EPS. More specifically, my aim is to understand whether the national media of Portugal, Spain, and Ireland- three debtor countries- are convergent in terms of the narratives on both EU economic issues and on the specific actors held responsible for Europe's economic problems.

Therefore, I address two main research questions: First, *“To what extent did mainstream newspapers in Portugal, Spain and Ireland become more convergent when they narrated European economic issues following the onset of the Eurozone crisis?”*. Second, *“which specific actors, both at European and at National level, do the national media hold responsible for the European economic issues before and after the onset Eurozone crisis?”*.

The first part of the thesis seeks to understand *whether or not the national printed press in Portugal, Spain and Ireland converged in their coverage of European economic issues in*



*the post crisis period.* (RQ1)<sup>13</sup>. While the media convergence among European countries may not be an original question from a theoretical standpoint, empirically previous attempts to address this question did not provide either a holistic measurement capable of apprehending the complexities and multidimensionality inherent to the Europeanisation concept, or the specificities of the debtor countries during the EZ crisis. Hence, this question remains crucial in both theoretical and empirical terms.

Theoretically, never since European integration had European issues been so politicised at a domestic and transnational level as during the Eurozone crisis (Rauh, 2013). At the same time, the Europeanisation of national public spheres is heightened in a context of conflict and contestation (Kantner 2015), and the economic crisis of the Eurozone therefore increased this phenomenon. In all, these events contributed to the intensification of accusations of a democratic and communication deficit between European elites and citizens in the EU (e.g., Hix, 2008; Taylor, 2008; Herkman and Harjuniemi, 2015). Although recent contributions have explored the convergence of media narratives during the crisis and explored the possibilities of an emergence of EPS that could close the gap between decision-making elites and citizens (for example, Bach et al., 2013; Joris et al., 2014; Drewski, 2015; Kaiser and Konigslow, 2016), there is a lack of information about media convergence among the countries hardest-hit by the Great Recession. Moreover, despite the academic consensus that a European public sphere only emerges when several national public spheres become interrelated (Risse and van de Steeg, 2003), studies carried out both before and after the onset of the crisis have overlooked the national level, that is the convergence of media narratives during legislative national elections.

In addition, while the consonance or divergence of European media narratives have been documented in the literature, the exact direction of that convergence in

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<sup>13</sup> All the measurement procedures will be further developed in Chapter III.

debtor countries remains untapped. It is crucial to establish the direction of convergence to understand the potential of an EPS, as it might indicate whether the consonance in the media is pointing to deeper European economic integration and advocating the EU project, or conversely, whether it reveals an anti-EU feeling and a desire for more national independence on economic matters. Thus, I propose herein to identify whether the convergence is *centripetal* - convergent in favour of a more consolidated European integration - or *centrifugal*- a convergence that pushes towards prioritising mostly national interests.

Empirically, the Eurozone crisis increased the demand for economic news (van Dalen et al., 2019). The extensive range of indicators used to measure the convergence of European media narratives not only fails to take the idiosyncrasies of the Eurozone crisis into account but also prevents a longitudinal perspective. Furthermore, most of those indicators only capture the salience of the EU in national media or the substantive content of communication. Therefore, a more comprehensive and multidimensional measure of media narratives that accounts for the many dimensions of European economic news is clearly lacking, and this thesis aims to provide this.

The second part of the thesis seeks *to examine which specific actors, both at European and at national level, the national media hold responsible for European economic issues, and therefore assesses the extent to which extent Portugal, Spain and Ireland exhibit a convergent pattern* (RQ2). The way national media attribute responsibility for the European economic issues is assessed in the first research question through the “Responsibility” frame. However, as the empirical framework applied in the first part does not grasp which specific actors are responsible for the economic issue, this second step complements and deepens the findings of the first research question.

Previous studies on European economic issues have shown that the “Responsibility” frame tends to prevail in media coverage (e.g., Iyengar and Kinder, 1987, Iyengar, 1994; Valkenburg et al., 1999; Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000); it is one of the main features of economic news (e.g., van Dalen, 2019), as assigning responsibility can act as a powerful frame to shape public understanding of a specific issue. However, in a multilevel structure like the EU, boundaries between national and supranational levels are often blurred (Hobolt and Tilley, 2014), making it harder to disentangle who should be held responsible for economic issues. The EZ crisis tended to amplify this phenomenon since the EU assumed greater control of national economies and on the domestic decision-making process (Lobo and Lewis-Beck, 2012).

Hence, this second research question offers an in-depth examination of European media convergence on the attribution of responsibility to specific European and national actors in the Portuguese, Spanish and Irish media. Moreover, it contributes to EPS literature as the presence of certain actors as opposed to others might help mitigate the democratic accountability deficit in the EU and develop European citizens’ shared sense of belonging to the European project. All these aspects will be further developed in Chapter VI.

The underlying expectation of this thesis is that that the national newspapers’ coverage of European economic issues in Portugal, Spain and Ireland is highly convergent. In other words, the underlying hypothesis of this thesis *is that the Eurozone crisis increased the convergence of media narratives among debtor countries and, therefore, fostered the emergence of a European Public Sphere*. In order to test this expectation, I will formulate several other hypotheses which will be tested through the analysis of three main dimensions: *Media Attention, Tone and Framing*, that will elucidate how the national media coverage might have enabled the emergence of an EPS following the

onset of the crisis, in Portugal, Spain and Ireland. All these hypotheses will be presented in next Chapter.

## **2.2 THEORETICAL APPROACH: LESSONS FROM MEDIA STUDIES**

In order to understand the relevance of studying media narratives in bailed-out countries, it is imperative to briefly revisit some of the most pertinent media theories. This exercise will allow us to operationalise the measurements employed in this thesis to assess media convergence (see section 3.3 of the next Chapter).

The next paragraphs provide an overview of the most relevant media studies. The aim of this section is not to make a comprehensive review of the media studies literature, but to introduce some concepts from this literature that will help in the analysis and interpretation of data throughout the thesis.

In the period between the two world wars, Lasswell (1927) introduced the idea that the media was able to effectively and homogenously inject news attitudes into individuals in a stimulus-response mechanism of persuasion and manipulation of political actors (Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1966). Public opinion was viewed as a permeable target (Sears, 1987) and the media were credited with the power to shape audiences' beliefs, cognitions and behaviours (Wolf, 2003). However, in the 1940s, Lazarsfeld et al. (1944/1966) challenged the idea that political messages conveyed by the media have significant persuasive effects and a new paradigm emerged – the theory of minimal effects or limited effects of media –, ushering in a new empirical research agenda.

Variables such as demographic attributes, social and psychological factors were added to the research, which made it difficult to disentangle the media effect on the audience's cognition, attitudes and behaviour. The concept of an all-powerful media was diluted and shifted to the assumption that media only tend to reinforce the pre-

existing structure of social relationships and cultural contexts (Kinder, 1998). According to the minimal effect theory, various political predispositions - mainly based on sociodemographic traits- make individuals expose themselves primarily to the media messages congruent with their attitudes and that do not challenge their long-term beliefs. Klapper (1960) claimed that audiences were not passive targets of communication content but that there was a selective exposure mechanism, which they used to selectively choose content aligned with previously held convictions. In addition, Lazarsfeld et al. (1944/1966) and Lipset et al. (1954) attributed a leading role to interpersonal communication, sustaining that individuals are directly influenced by opinion leaders, not the mass media<sup>14</sup>.

In 1954, Berelson et al., from Columbia University, introduced the concept of selective perception to the minimal effects paradigm as a mechanism of resistance to persuasion, concluding that voters were more receptive to positions that reinforced and ratified their own ideas (Wolf, 2003). Meanwhile, other studies on the persuasive effect of the media had been developed in the 1940s, at Yale University. Hovland et al. (1949) applied a series of experimental studies to analyse the factors in persuasive communication and his findings indicated there was a *sleeping effect* in which the message tends to be more or less persuasive depending on the issuer's credibility. Columbia and Yale's strands highlighted a selective attention mechanism, i.e. individuals tend to seek, accept, and consume messages that reinforce their value system, and to reject those that contradict it. In a widely quoted conclusion, Berelson (1948: 172) summed up: "Some kinds of communication, on some kinds of issues

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<sup>14</sup> Opinion leaders are more often exposed to media content, thus more open to receive, interpret and contextualise media messages, which means they can influence the positions of community members (Sousa, 2016).

brought to the attention of some kinds of people, under some kinds of conditions, have some kinds of effect”.

Two paradigms on media studies that emerged in the 1970s are particularly relevant to this thesis as they shift the focus from individual behaviour to a cognitive approach while seeking to understand the role played by media as autonomous builders of meaning and knowledge (Wolf, 2003).

On the one hand, there were developments in the research on this topic in the late 1970s with the thesis stating that the media play a role in shaping social realities – the so-called *social constructivism* (Gamson and Modigliani, 1989). Constructivism evaluates the media’s role in constructing meaning and social realities by emphasising the fact that it has a strong effect on individuals’ subjective perception of social reality. This phenomenon happens in a two-step process: firstly, the media format images of society in a predictable way; secondly, the audience constructs or derives the perception of social reality by interacting with media-constructed realities (Vygotsky, 1986).

On the other hand, "the evidence available by the end of the 1950s even when balanced against some of the negative findings, gives no justification for an overall verdict of 'media importance' " (Lang and Lang 1981:667). The Lang and Lang statement reveals the onset of a new paradigm supported by the assumption that media content could have measurable social effects (McQuail, 2010), thus challenging the argument that media narratives have a short-term and immediate effect. This was a significant step for media studies and marked the renewal of the research agenda in the communication field. Although audiences were still perceived to control their selection of media messages, “the way media select, process and shape content for their own purposes can have a strong influence on how it is received and interpreted and thus on longer-term consequences” (McQuail, 2010:458).

While behaviourist research relied primarily on quantitative methods, revealing, for instance, public opinion patterns (e.g., Lazarsfeld et al. 1944/60), the cognitive approach adds qualitative and ethnographic methods, such as content analysis and discourse analysis, to the field (Sousa, 2016). The use of qualitative, descriptive and in-depth analysis made it possible to disentangle the processes by which the media modify individuals' representation of social reality (Noelle-Neuman, 1983). The media are no longer merely regarded as means or vehicles of messages but are perceived as responsible for the agenda-setting of public issues (McCombs and Shaw, 1972). Over the past 40 years, new approaches have been adopted, such as the *agenda-setting* theory (e.g., McCombs and Shaw, 1972), *priming* (e.g., Iyengar and Kinder, 1987) and *framing* (e.g., Jasperson et al., 1998).

Next, I present the approach adopted in this thesis to address European media narratives.

### **2.2.1 Media Narratives**

There is agreement in the literature that media are the most important source of political information – producing knowledge and shaping citizens' political opinion (Iyengar and Kinder, 1987) – on both national and European issues. The media also work as an interface between citizens and political actors, selecting and emphasising some aspects rather than others: *they signal what individuals should think about* (Iyengar and Kinder, 1987), *but also how they should do that* (Entman, 1993). This means the media are crucial players in the Europeanisation process since they facilitate a transnational speech and collective identity, representing the glue that brings several fragmented public spheres together.

The media should be convergent when discussing European economic issues so that their narratives can have a collective discourse and connect the various national

public spheres. Nevertheless, to understand the concept of narrative, it is necessary to make sense of two main theories through which media narratives can be examined – the *structuralist* and the *poststructuralist*. While structuralism examines text as an object of study and the narrative is understood as a form of communication (e.g., Lévi-Strauss, 1955; Barthes, 1977; Chatman, 1980), the poststructuralist theory (e.g., Barthes and Duisit, 1975) emphasises micro-level features, such as the individuals' perspective and the subjectivity of interpretation and the way to frame it socially and culturally.

My argument herein follows the poststructuralist strand, given that it is no longer possible to ignore the presence of narrative in media discourse and how it can structure the individuals' sense of reality (Threadgold, 2005). In fact, "Television speaks back to us and offers us reality in the form of hyperbole and parody. Print journalism turns daily life into a story. Advertisements narrativise our fantasies and desires" (Fulton, 2005:1). Narratives are now perceived as means of legitimising the media's message, and they are regarded as a means through which society, the State and institutions legitimise their statements and create public consensus (Lyotard, 1991: 70-74). By offering a dominant opinion, preferred ideologies and agreed-upon models, media narratives are viewed as an essential identity maker (Thornborrow and Caotes, 2005: 7-9), but more importantly as a means to support conformity, consensus, agreement and common attitudes (Tomaščíková, 2009) among societies and individuals.

### **2.2.2 A hybrid approach to media narratives**

The introduction of concepts such as salience or pertinence into media studies allowed for the reconstruction of processes through which individuals modify their representation of reality (Noelle-Neuman, 1983). The media are assumed to have a cognitive function; they are perceived as potential knowledge builders, responsible for



scheduling public themes and, above all, shaping the understanding of the world and politics. Despite the consolidation of the cognitive paradigm, the propaganda theories attributed to the media cannot be disregarded. Some studies have shown that persuasion is often used in media to promote some sort of public agenda by evoking an emotional reaction, shaping perceptions and manipulating cognitions (Jowett and O' Donnell, 1986).

Notwithstanding the current understanding of social media as the leading tool for propaganda, given that every individual has unprecedented access to the Internet (Woolley and Howard, 2018), the traditional media are still a powerful instrument to provide their intended audience with propaganda (Manzaria and Bruck, 2016). Consequently, studying media narratives through a hybrid model which takes into account both propaganda theories and the cognitive approach seems to be most appropriate pathway for this research due to at least three reasons.

1) *Macro-level: Agenda-setting and Framing*

At the macro-level, two leading theories are paramount for this thesis: *agenda-setting* and *framing*. The former focuses on how the topic selection and the amount of coverage affect the salience of European economic issues; the latter is related to how the media portray those issues, by carefully controlling and manipulating angles, facts and opinions.

The agenda-setting theory describes the media's ability to influence the importance placed on the topics on the public agenda (McCombs and Reynolds, 2002) and suggests that the media significantly influence their audience by instilling what they should think about rather than what they actually think (Cohen, 1963; McCombs and Shaw, 1972). The underlying assumption is that mass media "may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling

readers what to think about” (Cohen, 1963:13). The cognitive process described by Cohen is known as *accessibility*. It implies that the more often and prominently the news media cover an issue, the more instances of that issue become accessible in the audience’s memories (e.g., Iyengar and Kinder, 1987; Iyengar, 1990). Therefore, the media do not reflect the reality but rather filter and shape it, establishing a hierarchy of news prevalence, which makes the public perceive those issues as more important than others (Rogers and Dearing, 1998).

In the last couple of decades, research on agenda-setting has begun to explore the salient attributes or the properties, qualities and characteristics that describe objects or people in the news (McCombs and Ghanem, 2001), as well as the tone of those attributes (Kim et al., 2002). It was labelled as *second-level agenda-setting* and considers how attributes affect public opinion (McCombs and Evatt, 1995). Those attributes are divided into two dimensions: i) *substantive* – related to features such as personality, ideology, candidate fitness for office and leadership ability and ii) *affective* – focused on emotional attributes in a positive, negative or neutral manner (Coleman et al. 2009). This means that a substantive dimension of an object, such as the European Union’s ability to deal with the crisis, can be covered in a positive, negative or neutral way.

One of the most reported debates in the literature about the agenda-setting theory, and particularly on the second-level agenda-setting, is whether framing theory should be subsumed within agenda-setting. Coleman, McCombs and colleagues (2009: 106) argue that framing is a part of agenda-setting which operates as a second-level or a secondary effect. For the authors, the assumption that framing is about selecting “a restricted number of thematically related attributes” can be understood as the process of transferring the salience of issue attributes. Scheufele (2000) argues the opposite, stating that they are distinctive cognitive processes, with different theoretical boundaries. While agenda-setting operates via accessibility and relates to the perception

of issue importance, framing has to do with the interpretation of the issue and operates via the *applicability* process (e.g., Gamson and Modigliani, 1987). By invoking interpretative cues that may correspond to or activate individuals' pre-existing cognitive schemas (Kim et al., 2002), framing influences the way the audience thinks about issues. Thus, in this regard, applicability refers to the connection between the media narrative and the framework that the audience employs to interpret the issue, consistent with their own stored ideas or knowledge (Goffman, 1974; Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007).

To pursue my research agenda and fulfil the objective of this thesis, the best option seems to be to follow the Scheufele rationale, which distinguishes between the second level of agenda-setting and the framing process. Indeed, framing includes a broader range of cognitive processes, such as moral evaluation, causal reasoning, appeals to principle and recommendation for dealing with problems (Entman, 1993) – which hardly falls under the umbrella of second-level agenda-setting theory. In 2007, Scheufele and Tewksbury argued there is a difference between thinking about an issue – the accessibility-based model of agenda-setting- and how we think about it – the framing applicability process. On the one hand, framing focuses on the terminological or semantic differences of how an issue is described and, thus, assumes that each individual has their own interpretation of an issue, regardless of the salience. On the other hand, agenda-setting assumes that only salient issues in the media will become accessible in the audience's mind when evaluating or making a judgement on the issue (Kim et al. 2002). Moreover, agenda-setting and framing are distinct processes in news production. Frame building is more concerned with the news production process than agenda-setting, as "how forces and groups in society try to shape public discourse about an issue by establishing predominant labels is of far greater interest from a framing

perspective than from a traditional agenda-setting one" (Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007:13).

## 2) *Propaganda Model: the Common Enemy*

In 2010, Herman and Chomsky dissected the role played by the media in reinforcing and acquiescing to state policies across the political spectrum, while marginalising contrary policies. The authors' overall rationale is that the mainstream press is corporate-owned and, thus, reflects corporate priorities and interests. In other words, the national media's choice of topics and issues is made with the reinforcement of the state ideology in mind (McGilvary, 2014). One of the limitations of this argument is that the empirical evidence is confined to the United States both in the media performance and in the political landscape. Despite this constraint, the authors named five filters through which media narratives operate – 1) *Ownership*; 2) *Advertising*; 3) *Media Elite*; 4) *Flack* and 5) *Common Enemy* (Herman and Chomsky, 2010). For this thesis, the *Common Enemy* filter seems especially relevant, namely the idea that the media tend to establish the same target – a *common enemy* – for audiences to rally against. A unified public opinion is particularly suitable to understand the narrative convergence in terms of the solution or the cause of a European economic issue.

## 3) *Micro-level: the third-person effect*

At a micro level, there is a *third-person* effect on individuals exposed to media narratives. Standley (1994) reported that individuals often mistakenly believe they are less susceptible to media effects than others. Even though the third person-effect is focused on individuals as opposed to an institution or a society at large, it is based mainly on the theory that an individual tends to attribute his own reactions or

behaviours to other individuals or external events – the *attribution theory* (Heider, 1958/2013). Hence, the attribution theory is useful to understand media narratives and media convergence in Portugal, Spain, and Ireland. The way the national media report the responsibility on European economic issues might lead to different gradients of responsibility attribution. It can be external or situational if the behaviour is interpreted as being caused by the situation that the individual (or country) is in. However, it could be internal or dispositional if the cause of the behaviour is attributed to internal characteristics rather than to outside forces (Heider, 1958/2013)<sup>15</sup>.

### 2.2.3 Economic News Matters

Economic news works as an *alarm bell* (Goidel and Langley, 1995; Ju, 2008): economic articles help the audience to make sense of economic developments by providing eye-catching coverage of significant developments the general public should be aware of (van Dalen, 2019). According to Goidel and Langley (1995:325), “in the absence of a fire alarm, media coverage of economy is fairly routine. When something is, or appears to be wrong, however, the economy demands front page, and generally, negative media attention”.

The research field on the effects of economic news can be roughly divided into two approaches: one line is focused mainly on examining the economic effects (Kellstedt et al. 2015) of the economic articles, such as the alteration of cyclical developments (e.g. Von Hagen, 2006) or the impacts on stock prices (e.g. Scheufele and Haas, 2008); the other is focused on the political consequences (Hetherington 1996) of economic reporting, showing that positive economic news strengthens public support

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<sup>15</sup>An additional explanation of Attribution Theory and Attribution of Responsibility is presented in Chapter VI.

for the incumbent and helps to legitimise specific political projects (Kinder and Kiewiet, 1979; Mondak et al., 1996; Quiring and Weber, 2012; Jonkman et al. 2019).

This second branch of studies is particularly relevant for this thesis. Public awareness of the economic developments is crucial since economic perceptions play an essential role in voting decisions (Powell and Whitten, 1993) and shape the understanding of who should be accountable for the national economic performance (e.g., Nannestad and Paldam, 1995; Hobolt and Tilley, 2014a). Moreover, Marinova and Anduiza (2020) have shown that economically disadvantaged citizens are more motivated to seek information during an economic recession than in times of economic prosperity, which might shape the formation of a common opinion on European economic topics and foster the sense of belonging to the European project.

Some authors (e.g., Hetherington, 1996; Blood and Philips, 1997; Donsbach, 1999) noted that even though economic news coverage is an essential source of public knowledge, judgement, and legitimacy, it has been repeatedly criticised for being too sophisticated, cynical and focused on professional actors rather than “ordinary” citizens. Nevertheless, over the last decades, economic news has become more readily available, mainstream, and accessible (van Dalen, 2019), particularly since the economic crisis of the late 2000s and early 2010s (Kriesi and Pappas, 2015)<sup>16</sup>.

Due to the strong impact on people’s lives and the severe and long-lasting economic crisis, the EZ crisis created the ground for a new audience for economic news along with an increase in demand for business news aimed at non-business insiders (Kjaer and Langer, 2005; Marinova and Anduiza, 2020). Several studies have shown that

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<sup>16</sup> The mainstreaming of economic news during the Eurozone crisis was mainly due to the economic pressure of media business for increasing profit margins and advertising income, forcing journalists to cater to a wide range of audiences. In addition, journalists were criticised for being too close to economic experts and taking the perspective of business insiders. For more see, Roush, 2006; Kier and van Dalen, 2014; Starkman, 2014; van Dalen, 2019.

the economic news was very visible in Western Countries in 2008 and 2009 (e.g., Stromback et al. 2012; Arrese and Vara, 2015; Boukes and Vliegthart, 2020) as citizens needed to be aware of the significant developments in the economy and to know the direction in which it was heading (Sanders, 2000,). Moreover, it is at times of economic crisis that citizens have an incentive to acquire information in order to sanction or reward the incumbents for the economic developments (Marinova and Anduiza, 2020). Thus, the way the media frame economic news impacts citizens' perception of the national and European economic situation, affecting the emergence of a European public sphere and a transnational community of communication.

## 2.3 METHOD AND SELECTION OF CASES

This section presents the major methodological steps followed herein, including the process of case-selection. Here I provide only a broad picture as more detailed information on the specific procedures employed will be given in the following chapters.

### 2.3.1 Content Analysis: a quantitative and qualitative approach

In order to fulfil the research goals and test my hypotheses, I undertook a comprehensive, *in-depth content analysis* of economic articles published in six mainstream newspapers from Portugal, Spain and Ireland. Each economic article was evaluated with a mainly dichotomous coding scheme that features 38 variables, aggregated in three main dimensions: 1. *Media attention*, 2. *Tone*, and 3. *Framing*<sup>17</sup>.

Content analysis has been defined as “a technique for making inferences objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of a message”

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<sup>17</sup> Further information on the dimensions and indicators are presented in the following Chapter.

(Holsti, 1969:14). It is a method of coding information – text, image, audio, or video (Graber, 2004:1) in different groups and categories, based on predetermined criteria (e.g., Berelson, 1952; Krippendorff, 1980; Weber, 1990; Milne and Alder, 1999). Methodological research on content analysis has diverged on what is the best approach to extract textual information, that is, whether a *quantitative* content analysis or a *qualitative* content analysis should be applied.

According to Krippendorff (1980), the quantitative content analysis has two major advantages compared to other methods. Unlike other methodologic instruments, such as interviews, surveys, or experimental designs, it is not an intrusive method, and, therefore, there is less risk of distortions and errors in the information collected. This feature is especially relevant when involving other people in the codification process, since it is sensitive to the specific context allowing comparison between those individuals. In turn, the qualitative content involves the employment of subjective techniques to understand and interpret social reality. Since qualitative approach goes beyond merely counting words or extracting objective content from a text, it is useful for analysing the intricacies of latent interpretations (Mayring, 1983; Wildmuth, 2009).

Some authors have argued that the differences between quantitative and qualitative content analysis are at least partially a matter of degree: the qualitative content analysis focuses on deep (latent) meaning, whereas quantitative analysis focuses more on surface (manifest) meaning<sup>18</sup> (White and Marsh, 2006). Therefore, many researchers currently advocate a combination of methods, and this has led to an increase in content analysis studies using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies in the same research (Baxter 2020).

This thesis resorts to both quantitative and qualitative content analysis. This approach has the advantage of allowing us, on the one hand, to identify the text

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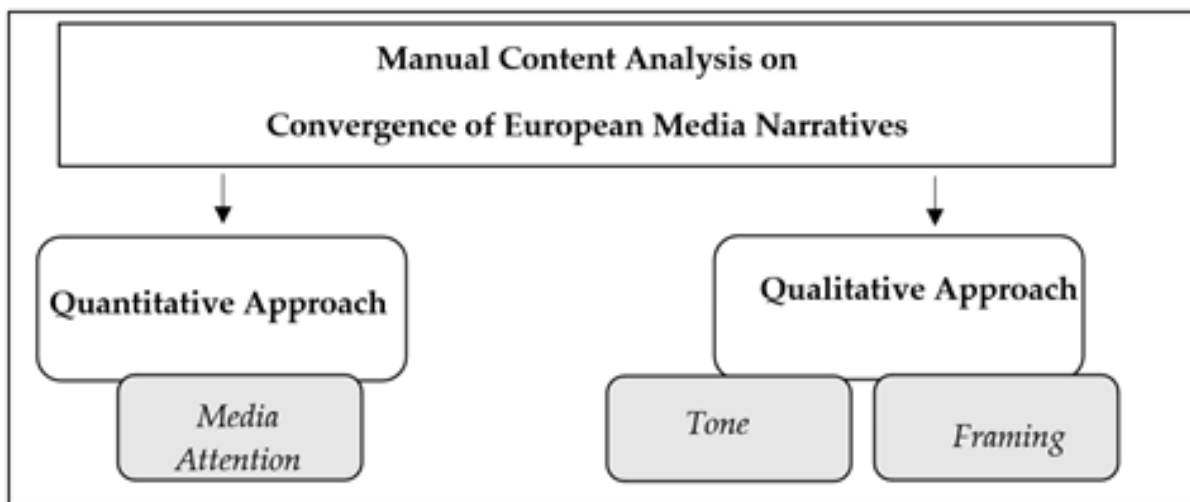
<sup>18</sup>These differences are further explained in Chapter III.



message systematically, objectively, and quantifiably (Neuendorf, 2002) and, on the other, to apprehend the intricacies of the text and the hidden meaning (Mayring, 2004). In addition, the combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis helps assess the reliability and validity of content analysis and the results are broader and deeper than if only one type of analysis is used (Riffe et al. 2019).

As Figure 2. 1 shows this strategy will allow us to understand the extent to which the mainstream media in Portugal, Spain and Ireland became convergent when reporting the European economic issues following the onset of the Eurozone crisis, through the analysis of the quantitative indicators of *Media Attention* as well as *Tone* and *Framing*.

**Figure 2. 1**Quantitative and Qualitative Approach on analysing the European Media Narratives



Economic articles from the mainstream newspapers were analysed in their native language. Since the content analysis aimed to capture the subtleties in the articles - especially concerning the *Tone* and *Framing* dimensions - the analysis was sensitive to interpretation or context and, therefore, I opted not to resort to any translation.

Krippendorff (1980) presented five questions that must be addressed in every content analysis: 1) *Which data is analysed?* 2) *How is that defined?* 3) *What is the context?* 4) *What are the boundaries to the analysis?* 5) *What is the target of the inferences?* The next section answers these questions by tracing the roadmap of the case selection.

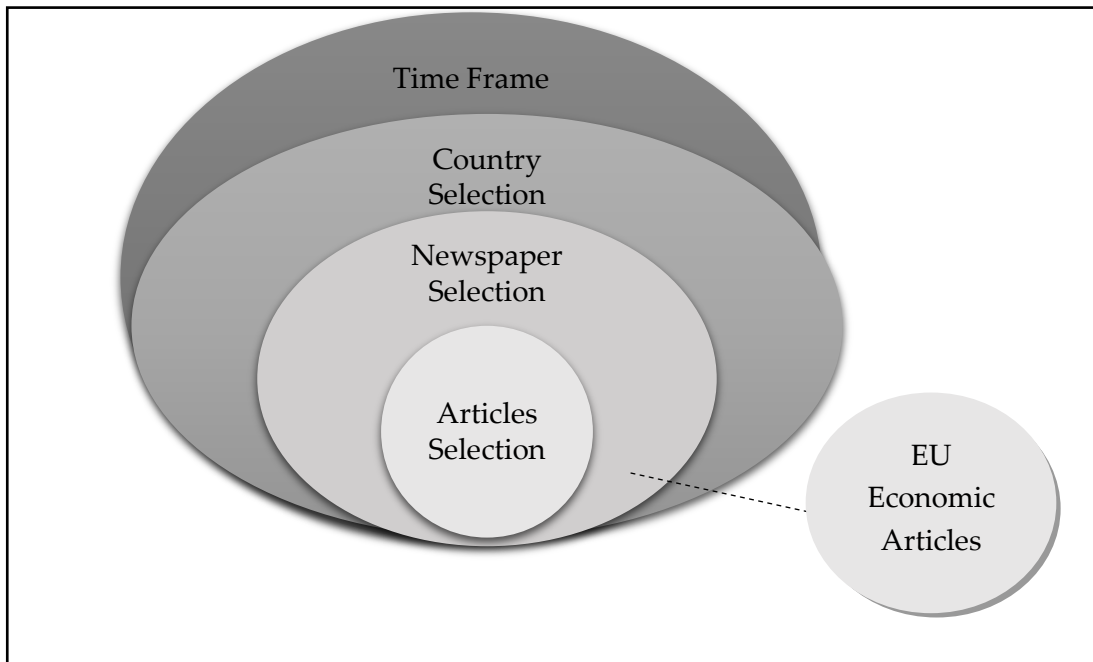
### **2.3.2 Roadmap of Case Selection**

This thesis is framed within the research field of Comparative Politics. Hence, the analysis uses concepts applicable to more than one country so as to make broader inferences about the convergence of narratives in the national media from bailed-out countries (Herriot and Firestone, 1983). To that end, a multiple case study design is implemented. By including more than one case study, the analysis can be performed at two levels: within each case and across the chosen cases (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). This means that the necessary conditions to assess the convergence between the national media of Portugal, Spain and Ireland are guaranteed.

Figure 2.2 exhibits a diagram of the case selection process. Several decisions were carefully made in order to fully capture the convergence of national media in Portugal, Spain and Ireland over time. The first step was to establish the time frame of my analysis and the time boundaries of the two periods – before and after outbreak of the EZ crisis – as well as of each national election campaign. I then defined the geographic scope, bearing in mind the empirical and theoretical gaps in the literature on the convergence of media narratives. The last step was to decide which national media should be included and excluded in my analysis according to their relevance to this thesis and their role in the Europeanisation process, as well as which articles should be

collected and analysed. Each of these four steps are developed and explained in depth below.

**Figure 2. 2**Diagram of the case selection process



### *Time Frame*

Previous studies have tried to establish the convergence of media narratives: some focus on the EZ crisis (Joris et al., 2014; Lahusen et al. 2016), others look into specific European events (e.g., Trezn, 2000; Schuck and de Vreese, 2006). However, these studies present at least two shortcomings: none of them compares European media narratives over time, and none address media convergence of European economic issues during the national election campaigns. Therefore, we fill these gaps herein by presenting a longitudinal view of the national media narratives in Portugal,

Spain, and Ireland through the analysis of all economic news published 15 days before each national election<sup>19</sup>.

This study aims to understand how the EZ crisis contributed to the emergence of an EPS, through the analysis of national media convergence in Portugal, Spain, and Ireland. However, a full understanding of the media convergence can only be achieved by using a longitudinal approach as this provides us with a unique insight into changes over time (Thornberry and Porter, 2001; Ruspini, 2002; Sedgwick, 2014). Thus, looking at the period before and after beginning of the EZ crisis in the three debtor countries allows us to build up a more accurate and reliable picture of how the economic crisis might have promoted an EPS and the differences produced by the crisis in the way national media portrayed European economic issues.

My analysis is divided into two distinct periods, aggregating 14 national elections: before the crisis (2002-2009) and after the onset of the crisis (2011-2016). The first period began in 2002 –when the euros was introduced fully in national economies – and ended in 2009 – when the Lisbon Treaty entered into force, formalising the Eurogroup and introducing the idea of economic co-operation and common representation among the member-states. The second period covers both the elections that took place during the EZ crisis and those after the bailout programmes. Following the collapse of the financial services firm, Lehman Brothers, in 2008, several US banks crashed and, unsurprisingly, in less than a year, the financial crisis had spread to Europe. The full force of the crisis in the Eurozone was felt in 2010 with the Irish bailout – the first of a series of bailouts in Europe. Hence, the second period begins with Portuguese, Spanish and Irish national elections in 2011th. Even though the three countries ended their bailout programs in 2013 or 2014, the analysis also includes the

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<sup>19</sup>According to Swanson and Mancini (1996:256-60), the "official" campaign period is four weeks before the election day. However, due to time and resources limitations, the period chosen was only two weeks before the election day.

elections shortly after the end of the assistance programme, namely the 2015 and 2016 national elections (Table 2.1).

**Table 2. 1** Elections and periods under analysis

PORTUGAL		SPAIN		IRELAND	
Election	Observation Period	Election	Observation Period	Election	Observation Period
<b>2002</b> (17 March)	02 Mar.- 16 Mar.	<b>2004</b> (14 March)	28 Feb.- 13 Mar.	<b>2002</b> (17 May)	30 Apr.- 16 May
<b>2005</b> (20 February)	5 Feb.- 19 Feb.	<b>2008</b> (9 March)	23 Feb.- 8 Mar.	<b>2007</b> (24 May)	7 May- 23 May
<b>2009</b> (27 September)	12 Sep.- 26 Sep.	<b>2011</b> (20 November)	5 Nov.- 19 Nov.	<b>2011</b> (25 February)	8 Feb.- 24 Feb.
<b>2011</b> (5 June)	21 May- 4 June	<b>2015</b> (20 December)	5 Dec.- 19 Dec.	<b>2016</b> (26 February)	9 Feb.- 25 Feb.
<b>2015</b> (4 October)	19 Sep. – 3 Oct.	<b>2016</b> (26 June)	11 June- 25 June	---	---

The Europeanisation process takes place at the domestic level in national public spheres within national media, and it is enhanced in a context of high conflict and polarisation (Kantner, 2015). As a result, unlike the previous research on European narratives and studies on Europeanisation, my timeframe is not synchronic, which means that I do not analyse elections or political events that happened at the same time in European countries. I actually chose a new approach focused on national elections and national campaigns that is able to capture the political polarisation and reflect the degree of Europeanisation of national public spheres. The analysis therefore covers all the economic articles published 15 days before each national election in Portugal, Spain, and Ireland.

The electoral campaign is also when the media usually intensify their coverage of economic topics, which permits us to collect a considerable amount of information (Swanson and Mancini, 1996). Furthermore, it is important to analyse the electoral campaign period for the scope of this thesis as the economy is the central axis of the political message in the electoral campaign (Vavreck, 2009). Similarly, the way voters perceive the economic situation will determine voting behaviour since it is not the economic condition that matters, but the way candidates react to it. Therefore, when the economic situation is volatile, the media coverage of economic events appears to be an indispensable source of people's understanding of economy and their ability to make judgements on economic issues (Jarren et al., 1996; Gavin and Sanders, 1997; Von Hagen, 2005; Henrich and Moss, 2006). According to Kim et al. (2005), the legitimacy of economic policy can be achieved through media coverage by communicating political actors' justification to the public and placing an independent stamp of approval on the actors' policy. This communication bridge ultimately enables the emergence of a collective sense of belonging to the European arena, sharing responsibility for European issues.

### *Country Selection*

This thesis focuses on the analysis of media narratives in the mainstream press of the following countries: Ireland, Portugal, and Spain. There are three main reasons for this selection of countries.

First, as Kuhn et al. (2020) stressed, one of the challenges for the European Union in find supporting for common solutions to collective problems is that specific contextual circumstances, such as a crisis, might have a different impact on domestic arenas. Therefore, analysing the countries that share the same social and economic context during the economic crisis - implementation of rigorous austerity measures in

their national arenas - is the best path to comprehend how the EZ might have fostered a common understanding of European economic topics.

Constraints imposed by external agreements varied from country to country, partially due to the different economic dynamics. Both Portugal and Ireland were forced to ask for bailouts; however, the harsh economic conditions resulted from different situations. Portugal already had significant levels of sovereign debt prior to the crisis (Parker and Tsarouhas, 2018). Unlike the more solid economic growth patterns experienced by Ireland and Spain before the crisis, "the Portuguese economy had not been doing well since at least 2002, and 'crisis' and 'austerity' were already familiar words" (da Silva and Mendes, 2019:156). On the other hand, private debt, especially housing and banking-related was the origin of the Irish crisis, and this quickly became a public debt issue once its banking sectors required rescuing. Meanwhile, in Spain, financial assistance was requested to recapitalise the bank sector and the agreement only focused on reform of the Spanish banking and financial sector.

Second, it is not possible to study the entire universe of European countries profoundly affected by the economic crisis given the limited human and financial resources, this thesis encompasses a subset of countries that share similar features, namely: economic conditions and the political and social context. Notwithstanding the aforementioned differences, austerity measures were imposed in all three countries and were geared towards the shrinking of the public sector, cuts in public services and the flexibilisation of the labour market.

Besides the three countries' similar economic conditions and economic constraints during the crisis, Portugal and Spain equally share two relevant similarities 1) the *democratic and political context* and 2) the *Media System*. In relation to the democratic and political context, Portugal and Spain were involved in all the main integration projects which actively drove the political process of European integration,

and also joined the common currency union and the Schengen agreement; nonetheless, they were not founding members of the European Union. Indeed, the countries joined the EU at the same time, in 1985. Moreover, democracy was established in both Portugal and Spain in the same period. These two southern European countries were the pioneers of the so-called third wave of democratisation in the 1970s (Huntington, 1991). As for the media system, Portugal and Spain share a Polarised Pluralist Model, characterised, among other things, by marked political parallelism between the party system and the media. Newspapers and TV networks are highly politicised, defending and supporting an ideology and/ or party due to late democratisation and authoritarian heritage. This means that the State still has a significant presence in the economy and the national public sphere, affecting the party alignment of media coverage (for more see, Hallin and Mancini, 2004).

Ireland does not share the same features of the democratisation process or the same European integration path as the two southern European countries, neither does it hold the same media system. However, this does not invalidate the comparison of national media narratives in these three countries. In fact, "Ireland has long been bracketed with the southern European countries" (Hutter and Malet, 2019: 302), given its widespread conservative Catholicism, its massive flows of emigration and its peripheral position in the process of European industrialisation. In addition, according to Laver (1992), Irish political competition patterns have been more associated to the *Mediterranean model of democracy*<sup>20</sup> (Lijphart et al. 1988) than to its north western European neighbours.

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<sup>20</sup> The Mediterranean model of democracy introduced in 1988 by Lijphart et al. refers to a number of important political, cultural, social, economic and historical features that four southern European democracies- Italy, Spain, Portugal and Greece- have in common. For further information, see "A Mediterranean Model of Democracy? The Southern European Democracies in Comparative Perspective".



Third, to date, the analysis of media convergence focusing solely on debtor countries has not been the object of study, which represents a fundamental gap in European media narrative literature. Examining the narratives among the bailout countries is paramount as it might shed light on the emergence of an EPS and a transnational community of communication. Furthermore, it provides some clues to the future of the monetary integration process in the EU context.

In fact, Portugal, Spain, and Ireland share a long history of EU support both at the institutional level and among public opinion (Verney, 2011; Clements et al., 2014); however, the economic crisis and the external constraints imposed in these countries undermined the pro-EU attitudes and contributed to the increased frustration of the EU in general and the membership in particular (Parker and Tsarouhas, 2018). Consequently, the way national media frame the European economic issues might point to a sense of belonging and to a collective understanding of European economic problems and similar views on the European project.

Alluding to the European debtor countries and excluding Greece may seem unreasonable. In fact, on 1st May 2010, the same year that Ireland applied for external intervention, the Greek government announced an economic adjustment programme that encompassed a series of austerity measures and a three-year 110-billion-euro loan from the IMF. Nevertheless, there are two main reasons for the exclusion of Greek newspapers from the analysis of media convergence in the countries that faced austerity measures.

In the first place, unlike Portugal, Ireland, or Spain, which faced just one external intervention, Greece had three economic adjustment programmes: the first in 2010, the second in 2012 and the last in 2015. These three interventions reached the population as a series of sudden reforms and austerity measures, leading to impoverishment and loss of income and property. Overall, Greece suffered the worst recession of the Eurozone

countries and the longest of any advanced capitalist economy to date, overtaking the US Great Depression (Arghyrou and Tsoukalas, 2011).

Besides the three economic adjustment programmes imposed on Greece, the country was still a long way from the end of external support. While Ireland concluded its bailout programme in December 2013 and Portugal in May 2014, without any further financial support, and Spain formally exited the EU/IMF bailout mechanism in January 2014 with the investors' confidence in the country restored, Greece had the bailout mechanism extended until August 2018.

Second, given limited human and financial resources, it was not feasible to include Greek newspapers. This thesis resorts to original data, and the coding process deals with original newspaper hardcopies, which are obviously written in the country's native language. Therefore, Greece's exclusion from this analysis was also due to the lack of Greek language skills.

### *Newspapers Selection*

The media data collection was carried out using a sample of economic articles published in the national printed press in three countries (Portugal, Spain, and Ireland). Although some recent studies had used the online version of reference newspapers to analyse European politicisation and the Europeanisation of national public spheres (e.g., Kaiser and Konigslow, 2016; Lahusen et al., 2016; Zamponi and Bosi, 2016), some research noted that the observed effect between the online media consumption, political participation and political knowledge is weak (e.g., Dimitrova *et al.*, 2014; Yamamoto, et al. 2015). Boomgaarden et al. (2010) or Bach, et al. (2013), for instance, stressed that the mainstream printed press continues to be used as a proxy to national media, playing the role of agenda-setter. In addition, the use of online media

rather than hardcopies involves some comparative dilemmas. The analysis begins at the turn of the century – 2002 – when digital media consumption was still in its infancy.

Ideally, this thesis should analyse the convergence in different types of media. However, due to time and resource constraints, it is restricted to the mainstream press. The content of printed press is easier and faster to collect and analyse than that of the broadcasting media. Furthermore, the analysis of mainstream newspapers provides an excellent picture of how media narratives are framed in national media, not only because reference newspapers are more informative and influence the content of television news programmes (Golan, 2016), but also because the differences between press and television have been decreasing (Patterson, 1993; Druckman, 2005).

In addition, it is claimed in the literature that there are substantial differences among newspapers when portraying European issues in national media. Several studies have demonstrated that the type of newspaper – a tabloid or a mainstream printed press – could lead to distinct ways of portraying European issues. Pfetsch (1996) and Peter and de Vreese (2004) observed that mainstream newspapers tend to incorporate more political and economic news, particularly on European integration, than the tabloid press. Both studies provided valuable data on the differences between the types of press, as well as some insights on what sorts of frame are used by tabloids and mainstream newspapers to portray European topics. Another significant contribution was introduced by Pfetsch et al. (2008) and Koopmans and Pfetsch (2007). Both studies concluded that tabloids present a more negative tone and tend to portray European issues in a less substantive way than the mainstream press. These studies also revealed that the tabloid press tends to characterise European questions with a more Eurosceptic view than mainstream newspapers, emphasising security topics and giving voice to radical parties. The literature also evidences that the newspaper party alignment could reflect different tendencies and various degrees of political parallelism (Hallin and

Mancini, 2004). Thus, the newspapers' political orientation could affect the way European issues are framed and perceived by European citizens (e.g., Della Vigna and Kaplan, 2007; Salgado and Nienstedt, 2016).

Taking into account the differences indicated by the recent studies on media narratives, I chose to analyse two reference newspapers per country. In each country the goal was to include two mainstream newspapers that capture the different spectrum of the Portuguese, Spanish and Irish media systems.

The newspaper selection was a two-fold process: first looking at the circulation rates of national newspapers in each country; second, taking into consideration the newspapers' alignment and party agreement in Portugal, Spain, and Ireland.

#### 1) *Circulation rates*

To assess newspapers' circulation rates, I resorted to data provided by media organisations and state agencies. This step was crucial to identify which were the most read and circulated mainstream daily newspapers in each country. Data provided by the *Statistic Portal* (<https://www.statista.com/statistics/436643/most-read-newspapers-in-spain/>), *The News Brand Ireland* (<https://newsbrandsireland.ie/data-centre/circulation>) and *Associação Portuguesa para o Controlo de Tiragem e Circulação* (APCT) ([http://www.apct.pt/Analise\\_simples.php](http://www.apct.pt/Analise_simples.php)) revealed that the daily mainstream newspapers with the highest circulation rates in Portugal were *Público* and *Diário de Notícias*, in Spain *El País* and *El Mundo*, and in Ireland *The Irish Independent* and *The Irish Times*.

It is worth noting that the same sources showed that the tabloid newspapers often present higher circulation rates than the newspapers selected. Nevertheless, this conclusion does not nullify my choice of newspapers since the quality printed press

remains the agenda-setter for the other media (e.g., Boomgaarden et al., 2010; Bach et al. 2013).

2) *Newspapers' partisanship*

After determining the most circulated newspapers, I moved to the evaluation of the newspapers' alignment and party agreement. Assessing the alignment and the party agreement of the media involves some dilemmas, mostly related to the dynamic framework of the newspapers, namely the continuous changes in the editorial board.

However, and in accordance with most of the literature, the party alignment may lead to distinct views and different narratives on European issues (e.g., Hallin and Macini, 2004; Della Vigna and Kaplan, 2007; Salgado and Nienstedt, 2016), which therefore makes the inclusion of this element relevant. Bearing in mind the non-static feature of newspapers and the absence of stable media partisanship, we established the newspapers' alignment by firstly taking into account the expert media surveys conducted by Popescu et al. (2011; 2013), which identified the ideological commitments in each media. These data were then reinforced with Picard's (2015) research on the media coverage of European crisis. Although these resources do not provide us with clear-cut proof of newspapers' alignment, especially in relation to right/left wing identification, it offers valuable insights on the spectrum of newspaper partisanship in Portugal, Ireland, and Spain (Table 2.2).

**Table 2. 2** Newspapers Political Alignment and Party Agreement

Country	Newspaper	Political Alignment	Party Agreement
Ireland	<i>The Irish Times</i>	Centre-Left/Moderate	Fine Gael
Ireland	<i>The Irish Independent</i>	Conservative/Populist	Fianna Fail
Portugal	<i>Público</i>	Centre-Left	PS
Portugal	<i>Diário de Notícias</i>	Centrist	PS/PSD
Spain	<i>El País</i>	Centre-Left	PSOE
Spain	<i>El Mundo</i>	Right/Liberal	PP

Source: Based on Popescu et al. (2011; 2013) and Picard (2015)

The newspaper hardcopies were obtained from several sources: the Spanish newspapers were obtained from the newspapers' online archives, and the Portuguese and Irish newspapers from the Portuguese National Library and British Library archives<sup>21</sup>, respectively. The process took place over the Spring and Summer of 2017 and was conducted within the framework of the MAPLE Project<sup>22</sup>.

### *Article Selection*

The newspapers' analysis covered the economic articles. An economic article can be defined as "information reported by the news media about the state of the micro-meso- and macro economy at home or abroad" (van Dalen, 2019: 13). Previous studies have operationalised an economic article by the topic it covers, rather than by the section of the newspaper in which it is printed or by the journalist writing it (e.g., Soroka, 2006; Hetsroni et al., 2014; van Dalen 2019). However, it is virtually impossible

<sup>21</sup>. Detailed information on the newspaper collection and extraction is provided in Chapter III.

<sup>22</sup> Several members of the MAPLE project team collected the newspapers collection over 2016-2017 by. For more details, see <http://www.maple.ics.ulisboa.pt/>.

to manually collect and analyse the content of all the articles that somehow referred to the state of the economy over 14 elections in six national newspapers. Newspaper sections provide a viable alternative: they cluster the economic issue coverage extensively in a specific part of the newspaper. Moreover, from the 1990s on, the mass media prioritised economic news, creating special business sections and, at the same time, economic journalists have become more autonomous, professional, and specialised (Kjaer and Lang, 2005).

Thus, this research relies on the economic sections of each newspaper. In addition, it was decided that the economic supplements should also be collected and analysed as some newspapers had a special Economic supplement in the weekend edition rather than a daily Economic/Business section (Table 2.3). More specifically, all articles about the European Union, international or domestic economy in the above sections were analysed; the focus was then narrowed to all economic articles mentioning the EU (see Chapter III).

The editorial sections were excluded from the current analysis as they reflect a personal opinion or a specific point of view, which does not necessarily mirror the newspaper's position on a specific issue. Furthermore, since editorials provide biased information, they meet people's need for orientation (Weaver, 1991) and enable the audience to make political judgements based on limited rationality (Calvert, 1985).

Table 2. 3Newspaper Sections and Supplements

PORTUGAL						
		2002	2005	2009	2011	2015
Diário de Notícias	Sections	-Negócios	-Economia & Mercados -Mercados	-Bolsa	-Bolsa	-Dinheiro Vivo
	Supplements	-DN Negócios	-Suplemento Negócios	-Suplemento Bolsa	-Suplemento Bolsa	-Dinheiro Vivo
Público	Sections	-Economia	-Economia	-Economia	-Economia	-Economia
	Supplements	---	---	---	---	---
SPAIN						
		2004	2008	2011	2015	2016
El Mundo	Sections	-Economía	-Economía -Bolsa	-Economía	-Economía	-Economía -Bolsa
	Supplements	-Nueva Economía	-Mercados	-Suplemento Bolsa	-Suplemento Bolsa	-Dinheiro Vivo
El País	Sections	-Economía	-Economía	-Economía	-Economía y Negocios	-Economía y Negocios
	Supplements	---	---	-Negocios	-Negocios	-Negocios
IRELAND						
		2002	2007	2011	2016	
The Irish Independent	Sections	-Business	-Business	-Business	-Business	
	Supplements	-Your Money -Business/ e-Thursday	---	---	-Business Week	
The Irish Times	Sections	-Business & Finances	-Business & Finances	-Business Today	-Business News -Business +	
	Supplements	-Business This Week	-Business This Week	-Business This Week	-Business This Week	



## **2.4 SUMMARY**

This chapter presented the main methodological choices in this research in order to understand the extent to which the EZ crisis might have contributed to the emergence of an EPS among the debtor countries - Portugal, Spain, Ireland.

The main expectation of this study is that the national newspapers became increasingly convergent when covering European economic issues following the onset of the EZ crisis, as Portugal, Spain and Ireland share a set of common features, such as the economic condition and the democratic, social, and political context. First, I address the narratives about the EU economic issues, and second the specific actors who are held responsible for those issues. Consequently, this convergence will have a positive impact on an EPS fostering the creation of a European Public arena.

The main methodological steps followed in this thesis were also presented. A qualitative and quantitative content analysis was carried out to fulfil the research objective. Combining these two approaches do not allow the text message to be identified objectively and quantifiably but also to apprehend the complexities of the text, while increasing the reliability and validity of my analysis. The case selection process was also explained, namely, the time frame, the countries included and excluded, and the criteria used to select the six mainstream newspapers in Portugal, Spain, and Ireland.



## CHAPTER III

# MEASURING THE CONVERGENCE OF EUROPEAN MEDIA NARRATIVES

As introduced in the previous Chapter, the primary goal of this thesis is to investigate the emergence of a European Public Sphere in Eurozone crisis context, from a cross-national and longitudinal comparative perspective. Since the convergence of narratives in national media is a crucial condition to the creation of an EPS, it is necessary to understand to what extent the mainstream newspapers in Portugal, Spain and Ireland present a convergence pattern when they report European economic issues.

As such, it is necessary to: present the indicators used by the most relevant studies to measure European media narratives and their weaknesses; introduce the empirical measure that will allow us to operationalise the convergence of media in these three countries; and explain the data collection process and coding procedure.

In order to address these points, this chapter includes three main sections. The first section (3.1) presents the different theoretical and methodological approaches used in the past to measure European media narratives. The second section (3.2) provides a new multidimensional framework to measure media narratives, as well as introduces the hypotheses to be tested in each of the empirical chapters in the rest of the thesis. I introduce a new typology capable of measuring the similarity of narratives by combining three dimensions within the same empirical framework - *Media Attention*, *Tone*, and *Framing*. The adopted frames are the following: “Problem”, “Cause”, “Responsibility”, “Consequences” and “Solution”. The novelty of this measurement tool is that it captures the complexities and multidimensionality inherent to the

Europeanisation concept and the specificities of the debtor countries during the EZ crisis. Additionally, it provides different angles of analysis capable of navigating across countries, different elections contexts and over the years. The last section (3.3) presents the data collection process and the newspaper coding procedures in detail, including the advantages and challenges of my content analysis.

### 3.1 HOW TO MEASURE THE CONVERGENCE OF MEDIA NARRATIVES?

The European economic crisis renewed academic interest in media narratives and highlighted the media's role in the social construction of EU crisis and in shaping public opinion about EU affairs (Cross and Ma, 2015). In fact, the economic crisis represented a fruitful phenomenon in what concerns understanding the degree to which domestic arenas are Europeanised and convergent, as conflict and polarisation had become more salient on national public spheres (Kantner, 2015). Nevertheless, an important question remains unanswered: *How can I empirically measure the national media's convergence in European economic issues, before and after the onset of the EZ crisis?*

In 2002, van de Steeg argued that the Europeanisation process was both gradual and multidimensional, given that several forms and aspects of the public discourse can be Europeanised (see Chapter I). The most relevant line of argument refers to the role of media narratives in European policy building and political identity formation (e.g., Grimm, 1995; Scharpf, 1999; Gerhards, 2000, 2001) and emphasises the integration of the national public sphere in a European community of communication as a way to build some sense of belonging to a shared collective entity (Kielmansegg, 1996; Risse, 2003; Eriksen, 2004).

Against this background, media convergence has been perceived as the horizontal Europeanisation of national public spheres. The literature has argued that

the communicative interaction and exchange across national communities (van de Steeg, 2002; Peters et al. 2005) is related to the formation of a common European perspective on EU issues (Eder and Kantner, 2000; Gerhards, 2000), the construction of Europe as a common destiny or as a collective memory (Kielmansegg, 1996; Risse and van de Steeg, 2003) and the emergence of a common European Public sphere (Peters et al., 2005).

As explained in the theoretical chapter (Chapter I), there are several forms or aspects in which the public sphere can become Europeanised. Even though it is widely accepted among scholars that the national public sphere is the starting point for the emergence of the European public discourse, there is still disagreement on how to conceptualise Europeanisation and how to evaluate the convergence of media narratives.

In short, while Gerhards (2000) suggests that the orientation of public discourse towards the EU is a crucial indicator to the Europeanisation process, Eder and Kantner (2000) claim that a common European frame of reference in domestic debates about the EU is the benchmark for Europeanisation. In van de Steeg's view (2002), the Europeanisation process is conceived in terms of an intensified "discursive interaction" between countries whereas Risse (2003) comprehends it in terms of "identity". Additionally, Risse and van de Steeg (2003) and Risse (2010, 2015) argued that the national media should agree on issues concerning topicality and salience; however, Kantner (2002) claimed that the presence of similarity is assessed through a close use of frames between various national public spheres. In turn, Koopmans and Erbe (2004) advocated that the discussion of the same topics, along with similar salience - as a criterion to measure the Europeanisation of national public spheres - does not necessarily imply the media should directly discuss the EU and its policies- it is only required that the EU member-states argue among each other and relate mutually. The

authors' argument implies that the convergence of media narratives does not demand a debate referring directly to EU policies, but only to a broader European issue. Therefore, convergence implies that an EU topic has to be addressed by the national media of EU member-states and, moreover, should be discussed and portrayed in a similar way.

Aware of the lack of consensus in the literature, this thesis follows the previous studies that conceptualise Europeanisation as a multidimensional and gradual process, which in a way or another extends the public discourse beyond national arenas in order to discuss European economic issues. Nonetheless, before presenting my proposal for a typology capable of measuring the convergence of narratives in the national media of the bailed-out countries, I must revisit the most relevant dimensions and indicators previously used to establish the media convergence of European topics.

### **3.2.1 Theoretical and Methodological approaches**

In 2005, Peters and his colleagues clustered the Europeanisation dimensions in three main branches: 1) *Europeanisation of contents*, 2) *Europeanisation of public identities* and 3) *Europeanisation of communication flows*. For each of these branches, the authors developed a range of indicators that allowed them to determine the degree of convergence in national newspapers of five EU member-states (France, Germany, Great Britain, Denmark, and Austria). The first one- *Europeanisation of contents*- includes all ways in which European topics are addressed, as well as the way they are discussed in the national media. It was measured through indicators such as the number of references about the EU or the increasing similarity of public agendas and frames of reference within public spheres (Peters et al. 2005: 143). In turn, the second branch- *Europeanisation of public identities* - is linked to the demands about the orientation of public debate. Thus, it seeks to answer questions such as: "Do the media follow a

national or a European perspective?" "Is news addressed to a national or a European public?" "Are EU topics treated as common issues to all EU members and are solutions to problems and conflicts debated within such a European frame of reference?", and finally "Are issues on the political agenda still debated solely from the respective national viewpoints?" For that, the authors developed two indicators: the "We" references for national and transnational collective identity and the collective identity labels (Peters et al. 2005: 148-149). Lastly, the third branch –*Europeanisation of communication flows* – aims to determine the communicative exchanges across borders, that is, the reception and reference of opinions and ideas originated in different EU places, measured through discursive contributions and references (Peters et al. 2005: 150).

While Peters et al. distinguished those three branches, Brüggemann and colleagues (2006) developed a fourfold framework based on the assumption that Europeanisation implies both an intensified discursive interaction across national borders and the emergence of a mutual European discourse (Brüggemann et al., 2006: 5). The four categories they identify are the following: 1) *Monitoring Governance*; 2) *Mutual Observation*; 3) *Discursive Exchange* and 4) *Collective Identity*. From this perspective, EU institutions and EU policies need a certain amount of visibility in the news, as well the public's attention so as to be Europeanised in national public spheres. Then, monitoring European governance is supplemented by a horizontal perspective – "*Mutual Observation*"- of Europeanisation, in the sense that I do not know if Europeanization only occurs because media pays attention to Brussels or if the attention is also given to other European countries. "*Discursive Exchange*" tries to capture whether the explicit forms of discursive exchange across national borders are grasped in order to establish the extent of permeability of public spheres to the discursive exchange of other spheres. It was measured taking into account the direct or indirect quotes from foreign

actors in national media. The final category, "*Collective Identification*", is linked to the acknowledgement of identities and expressions of belonging. While the former is focused on Europe as a collective entity in the public discourse and measured by the number of references to the term "The Europeans", the latter concerns the development of a sense of belonging to the same European public and was measured through "We" references (Brüggemann et al., 2006.).

Both studies provide valuable clues on how to measure the convergence of European media narratives. The framework of the analysis presented by Peters et al. (2005) and Brüggemann et al. (2006) fully captures the salience given to the EU on national media through the use of dimensions such as the *Europeanisation of contents* or *Mutual Observation*. Additionally, to some degree, both tried to establish how national media resorted to similar reference points to address EU topics. Nevertheless, the dimensions used to measure the idea that national media share a same understanding about EU topics - *Europeanisation of public identities* and *Europeanisation of communication flows* (Peters et al., 2005) as well as *Discursive Exchange* and *Collective Identification* (Brüggemann et al., 2006) - entail some pitfalls.

As aforementioned, the convergence of narratives should be ascertained through a similar use of frames and implies that national media discusses and portrays EU topics in a similar way. This way, the problem raised by Peters et al. (2005) and Brüggemann et al. (2006) is not the dimensions themselves neither their conceptual framework, but the indicators chosen to operationalize them. Both studies resorted to quantitative indicators – e.g., the number of references in a discourse to "We" or "The Europeans". By neglecting the qualitative aspect of the narrative, measured through the use of similar frames, these indicators reflect in a more evident way the visibility of EU in national media rather than the existence of a mutual understanding about European issues and, therefore, a convergence of narratives.



Pfetsch et al. (2008) follow a different strategy. The authors evaluated the media role in the Europeanisation process and convergence of national public sphere according to two main criteria, working as a two-step ladder. The first step concerns the visibility of public debates and their openness for issues and actors from the EU and other member-states. The underlying assumption is based on the Habermas' (2001) argument that if citizens have the chance to become aware of the relevance of European topics, this will contribute to connecting Europe through communicative interactions. The visibility of EU issues was measured through the salience of EU topics and the opening up of the public debate to European actors. The second step is the synchronisation concept whereby public debates are regarded as Europeanised if they converge across Europe. Here the question is whether media not only discusses common issues but also discusses the latter with respect to similar political frames (Pfetsch et al., 2008: 468). To determine whether the national media are convergent when discussing EU's integration, Pfetsch et al. evaluated the agreement on national media in relation to two indicators. On the one hand, there is a synchronisation of European issues concerning whether national media agrees on the relevance of conflict lines referring to European issues; on the other hand, the same media should assume a common position about those conflicts. The overall underlying assumption in Pfetsch et al.'s (2008) second criterion is that the convergence of national media in European affairs implies the use of common frames and similar meaning structures to portray EU issues.

In fact, the evaluation of European media narratives, particularly after the onset of the EZ crisis, has relied mostly on frames used by the different media to portray European topics. However, each study has employed different coding frameworks and defined frames that measure different concepts and dimensions, thus making it difficult to compare results across studies and countries.

Table 3.1 presents the most prominent studies carried out on EU media narratives after the onset of the economic crisis. A detailed examination shows that many researchers have relied on Entman's frame typology to analyse media narratives in different EU member-states. Indeed, the majority of studies resorted to *issue-specific* frames to analyse media coverage during the EZ crisis, given their highly issue sensitive nature (e.g., Tracy, 2012; Mylonas, 2012; Joris, et al, 2013; Bach et al., 2013; Drewski, 2015, Damstra and Vliegenthart, 2018).

Nevertheless, due to their high degree of specificity, the use of issue-specific frames to generalise and compare empirical evidence for theory building is sometimes regarded as insufficient (de Vreese, 2003: 38). Resorting to *generic frames* instead of issue-specific frames to analyse media narratives seems to overcome the frustration of generating a unique set of frames for every study (Hertog and McLeod, 2001:150-151). By not being confined to a specific issue, generic frames have the advantage of transcending thematic limitation, and they can be identified in different topics. Likewise, they can be replicated over time and in different cultures (Pan and Kosicki, 1993), which increases the possibilities of making comparisons. Since this type of frames allows for a rough view of prevalent issues' interpretations in national debates, they are useful as indicators of the style of presentation (for example, degree of conflict or human interest). However, this advantage is also a shortcoming, given that issue-specific details may be less readily captured in the analysis (de Vreese, 2005).

Thus, the few studies using generic frames to evaluate media narratives combine them with issue-specific frames (e.g., Radu, 2012; Touri and Rougers, 2013). Although this hybrid approach is not used very often and it seems to overlap, at times, its main functions are separate. Whereas issue-specific frames reveal which aspects of an issue were selected and the ones left out, generic frames tell us more about the way the media approach an issue (Kozman, 2017: 780).

Additionally, the majority of studies is limited to how the media of a particular country portrayed the economic crisis and is mainly concerned with national media in creditor countries. The few studies with a cross-country approach only compare creditor and debtor countries through an inductive approach (Arrese and Vara-Miguel, 2016). The absence of comparative studies in debtor countries makes it even more challenging to replicate the frames used, mainly because the inductive approach involves analysing a news story and clustering the topics in frames, mirroring those countries' reality.

Still, there is one regular pattern concerning media narratives during the crisis. Namely, they tend to focus on the mainstream press, which reinforces the Boomgarden et al.'s (2010) argument that mainstream newspapers are used as a proxy for the national media landscape and often perceived as agenda-setters by other media.

**Table 3. 1** Frames used in the most relevant studies carried out after the onset of the EZ crisis to evaluate European media narratives

	Media	Countries	Frames	Type of Frames	Approach
Tracy (2012)	Press and Television	United States	Problem (Greek contagion) Cause (Incorrigible Greeks) Solution (Austerity)	Issue-Specific Frames	Deductive Approach
Radu (2012)	Online Media	Romania	Conflict Economic Consequences Moral Human Interest Responsibility Powerlessness Paradigm Change Conspiracy Frame	Generic Frames	Deductive Approach
				Issue-Specific Frames	
Mylonas (2012)	Press	Germany	Eschatological-drama frame Economistic frame	Issue-Specific Frames	Inductive Approach

			Narcissistic frame Culturalistic frame Spiteful Frame		
Bach, Weber and Quiring (2013)	Press	Germany	Complexity-Risk Frame Globalization Frame Solidarity Frame Greed Frame Regulation Frame Self-Regulation Frame	Issue-Specific Frames	Deductive Approach
Touri and Rougers (2013)	Press	United Kingdom	Problem Causes Accountability Consequences Solution Political Frame Strategic Frame	Issue-Specific Frames	Deductive Approach
				Generic Frames	
Joris, D'Haenens, Van Gorp and Vercruysse (2013)	Press	Flemish	Conflict Disease Natural Disaster	Issue-Specific Frames	Inductive Approach
Joris, d' Haenens and Van Gorp (2014)	Press	Flemish (Dutch speak Belgium) and Dutch	War Natural Disaster Construction Disease Games	Issue-Specific Frames	Deductive Approach
Drewski (2015)	Press	German / Spain	Moral Hazard Systemic Risk Sovereignty and Democracy Limits to Austerity Currency w/o State	Issue-Specific Frames	Inductive Approach
Ojala and Harjuniemi (2016)	Press	Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Holland, Belgium, Greece, and Finland	Problem definitions  Treatment Recommendations	Issue-Specific Frames	Deductive Approach

Arrese (2015)	Press	Spain	Health and disease Natural events and disasters Events around artefacts and constructions Wars and clashes Sports games and entertainment Actions and situations of living beings	Issue-Specific Frames	Inductive Approach
Arrese and Vara-Miguel (2016)	Press	Greece/ Italy/ Spain/ Finland/ Netherlands/ United Kingdom	Natural Disaster Disease Organism War Sport and entertainment Mechanical	Issue-Specific Frames	Inductive Approach
Damstra and Vliegenthart (2018)	Press	Netherlands	Business Financial Individual Euro zone Moral	Issue-Specific Frames	Inductive Approach
Williams and Toula (2017)	TV	France	Problem Responsibility Cause Solution	Issue-Specific Frames	Deductive Approach
Maniou and Photiou (2017)	Press	Cyprus	Negotiation Thriller Us versus them Bankruptcy versus Bailout Plan B	Issue-Specific Frames	Inductive Approach

Source: Own compilation

### 3.2 INTRODUCING A NEW MULTIDIMENSIONAL FRAMEWORK OF EUROPEAN MEDIA NARRATIVES, AND FORMULATING HYPOTHESES TO TEST

Based on the debate previously presented this thesis proposes a partly new multidimensional framework to measure European media narratives. Therefore, it follows Pfetsch et. al (2008), as well as others who proposed that the convergence of national media entails the use of common frames and similar meaning structures, as well as an increasing salience of EU topics. In addition, this thesis expands the measures used in previous studies, namely by including a measurement on the tone used to present European economic news. By doing that, beyond the measurement of salience and the frame convergence, I incorporate a new dimension- the tone - with the advantage of providing additional information on how the national media in debtor countries narrate European economic news.

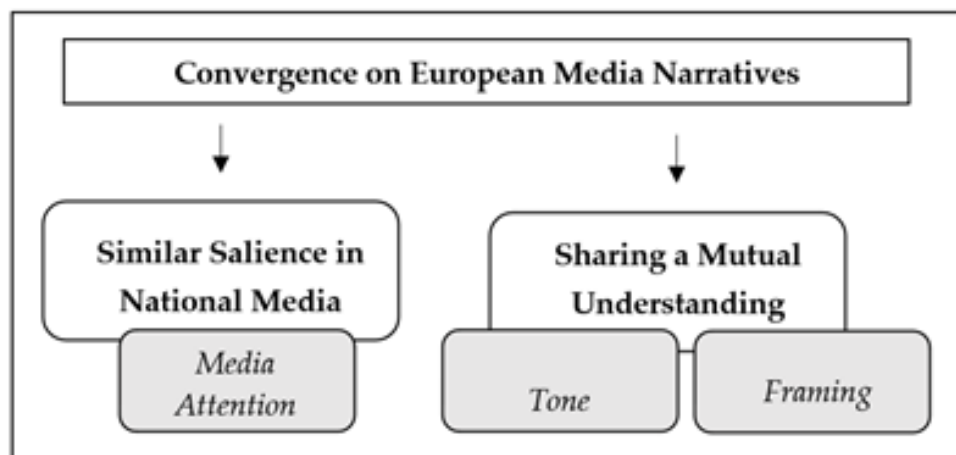
Extant research suggests that the media's salience and tone concerning a topic are very much correlated (e.g., Kim et al. 2002; Peter 2004; Wu and Coleman, 2009; van Dalen, 2019). Therefore, incorporating the *Tone* dimension in my analytical framework is crucial as the tone used by the media is an indicator of EU polarisation on national media (e.g., Silva et al. 2021). Besides that, some studies have correlated it with the public (dis)satisfaction with national government (e.g., Brettschneider, 2002:267), voters' attitudes and voting behaviour (e.g., Zaller, 1992; 1996; Hopmann et al., 2010), as well as attitudes towards the EU (e.g., Schuck and de Vreese, 2006) and the speed and direction of European integration (Hooghe and Marks, 2009).

Adopting this new typology will provide different angles of analysis and more in-depth evidence of media convergence given that it can be employed in different countries, capturing, therefore, different media's landscapes and political systems. The changes added enable some degree of comparison with existing studies since it includes

some of the variables that have been integrated into previous measures. In addition, it allows for replication and expansion across countries and also over time.

Therefore, this thesis proposes to evaluate the convergence of media narratives through 32 variables aggregated in three main dimensions: 1. *Media Attention*, 2. *Tone* and 3. *Framing*. These three dimensions reflect different dimensions of national media convergence, as represented in Figure 3.1.

**Figure 3. 1** National Media Convergence on European economic issues



In next I present my multidimensional framework and formulate hypotheses on each of these dimensions to be tested in the empirical chapters. My main expectation is that *the Eurozone crisis increased the convergence of media narratives among debtor countries and, therefore, fostered the emergence of a European Public Sphere*. In order to test this expectation, I will formulate several hypotheses which will be tested through the analysis of three main dimensions: *Media Attention* (H1), *Tone* (H2) and *Framing* (H3a-H3e), that will elucidate how the national media coverage might have enabled the emergence of an EPS in economic crisis period, in Portugal, Spain and Ireland.

### 3.2.1 Media Attention

*Media Attention* is one of the most widely studied dimensions regarding media coverage of European issues (e.g., de Vreese et al. 2001; Peter et al. 2003; Trenz 2004; de Vreese et al. 2006; Schuck and de Vreese 2006; Sifft et al. 2007). It was the first criteria identified by Risse (2010) drawing on Gerhard (2000 *apud* de Vreese, 2007). This way, the Europeanisation of national public spheres depends on two factors: *i*) an increase of the media coverage proportion of European issues and *ii*) actors who evaluate those issues from a perspective that goes beyond the national interest. Additionally, Peters et al. (2005) noted that the Europeanisation of media contents could happen through the convergence of public agendas in different countries, arguing that "public debates could converge with respect to the selection of topics that are under debate within the same period. Different publics in different public spheres would thus deliberate in parallel, as it were" (Peters et al. 2005: 143).

The rationale behind this dimension is that the media have the capacity to attribute more salience to topics of European economic integration in national public spheres than to other issues - *the agenda-setting*. Previous studies have established that the media serve as an alarm bell, focusing on specific political developments that should be known by the audience (Zaller, 2003; van Dalen et al. 2019) at the expense of other topics. Besides that, when the economy becomes more negative, it also becomes more prominent in newspapers (see MacKuen and Coombs, 1981; Mutz, 1998; Bennet, 2003; Wu and Coleman, 2009), which means that economic developments, particularly ones that are negatively labelled, can strengthen the agenda-setting effect of economic news (Wu and Coleman, 2009). Therefore, media may enhance Europeanisation by highlighting European topics prior to other issues on economic sections, overcoming parochial nationally confined angles and reaching beyond the territorial state (Zürn, 2000).



As many scholars have consistently pointed out (see Chapter I), the salience of European issues in national media is a precondition for an EPS since it "denotes that European media and the public observe communication with reference to European politics" (Trenz, 2004:292) and a prerequisite for "assessing the well-being of the democratic process in Europe and for informing the ongoing discussion about the EU's democratic and communication deficits" (de Vreese et al., 2006: 478).

My argument is the following: the more media give attention to actors', arguments and opinions across national borders, the more national public spheres are Europeanised. Thus, I can argue that media narratives are convergent comparing EU's salience in different countries. Adding this level of analysis is crucial to understand European narratives, mainly because news' salience pointing to a specific direction can be an indicator for the public perception of a specific issue and the engagement in EU's politics (de Vreese et al., 2006). Moreover, it indicates the relevance of those issues in national public spheres (Nienstedt et al. 2015:22), revealing if those are discussed and reported in the various national media at the same time, and with a similar level of attention.

This leads us to my first hypothesis:

**H1:** *There will be an increase in Media Attention to EU issues following the onset of the Eurozone crisis in all countries considered.*

To measure *Media Attention*, I suggest an operationalisation based on three indicators: 1) *the number of articles per page*; 2) *the size of economic news* and 3) *the topic or scope*. The first two indicators have already been used to measure EU's visibility (e.g., Trenz, 2004; Shift et al. 2007; de Vreese et al. 2006; Boomgaarden et al. 2010; Monza and Anduiza, 2016), revealing that European issues have had growing visibility on national

public spheres. However, they had been measured separately and applied to European events. In this sense, these two indicators are here combined under the same model and for the first time to measure *Media Attention* systematically, regarding economic news during national electoral campaign period in three European countries, from 2000 to 2016.

The number of articles is widely used as an indicator of the visibility's degree of an issue in the media (Pfetsch, 1996; Norris 2000; Semetko, 2000; Trenz, 2004; Peter and de Vreese, 2004; Shift et al. 2007). Nonetheless, it may not be sufficient to indicate its relevance (Boomgaarden, 2010). In this sense, measuring the size of the article provides a much clearer picture of a topic's relevance in national media, since it gives the article dimension and the importance that it has on printed press. As Trenz (2004) and Pfetsch and Heft (2015) stressed, a benchmark is needed to assess the relevance of quantitative measures. In other words, to assess the real degree of an issue, I must have a focal point that allows for comparing the visibility of EU in economic news with those in which it is not present. Thus, the topic or scope indicator distinguishes between news in which the EU is referred and other topics (Monza and Anduiza, 2016).

Even though the *Media Attention* dimension provides us with important clues about the relevance of economic news and the visibility of EU in those articles, it only conveys what Tobler (2002) defined as "reciprocal resonance", which means an indication of the connectivity of European political communication. Trenz (2004) went further and argued that media attention measures the "connectivity" of national public spheres rather than their actual convergence, given that it does not provide any information whether discursive interactivity and mutual understanding takes place among public spheres. Indeed, *Media Attention* is a quantitative indicator that measures the percentage of European political communication in comparison to other forms of political communication and can be reduced to single key variables that measure basic

features of economic news (Trenz, 2004:295). Thus, this dimension does not yield any qualitative information to measure the degree of convergence of communication between the different national media. In other words, it does not give information about the way economic news are portrayed in national printed press. For that reason, it is necessary to add two other dimensions: *Tone* and *Framing*.

### 3.2.2 *Tone*

In his seminal article, 'Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm', Entman (1993) stated that the use of frames by the media promote a "moral evaluation". Later Tewksbury et al. (2000:804) argued that "frames can imply policy options or implicit answers to questions of what should be done about an issue", suggesting that sometimes frames have an inherent valence, by presenting examples of positive or negative aspects, solutions, or treatments. Through the selection of a restricted number of thematically related attributes for the inclusion of the media agenda –the *second level of agenda-setting*- frames "influence opinion by stressing specific values, facts and other considerations, showing them with greater apparent relevance to the issue than they might appear to have an alternative frame" (Nelson et al.,1997:569). McCombs and colleagues present a similar rationale (e.g., McCombs et al.,1997; McCombs et al., 2000; McCombs and Ghanem, 2001) defending the existence of two general groups of evaluation attributes: *cognitive* (or substantive) and *affective* attributes. While cognitive attributes deal with the definitions of issues in the media, affective attributes deal with the tone of media presentation and the way issues are evaluated, i.e., positive, negative, or neutral (Sheafer, 2007). Nonetheless, de Vreese and Boomgaarden introduced the concept of valence frames into EU political communication research only in 2003, claiming that "we may consider some frames to be inherently valenced while others appear to be more neutral" (de Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2003: 363). This assumption

means that some frames carry positive and / or negative elements which are indicative of "good or bad" evaluations.

In the majority of the studies on the EU and tone, news' valence has been used as an independent variable (e.g., Schoenbach and Semetko, 1992; Neuman and Makuen, 2000; Golan and Wanta, 2001; Kim et al., 2002; Wanta et al., 2004, Kiouisis, 2005). These studies argue that the media emphasise positive or negative attributes that may affect the salience of those attributes in the public's mind and lead to specific evaluations, i.e., the media may present the economy as growing (positive attribute) or shrinking (negative attribute), thus affecting individuals' evaluation of this issue. A clear example is Sheafer (2007), who shows that the citizens' assessment of the economic state relies much more on the tone used by media reports than on mere salience. These conclusions were reinforced by van Dalen et al. (2019). In fact, these authors conducted a year-long content analysis (from January to November 2013) of the economic news published in 16 Danish media outlets (tabloids, broadsheets, and television) and concluded that mainstream economic news tends to have a common feature of negativity. This means that the tone in the economic news media is predominantly negative, even in the specialized economic press, although the presence of positive articles made the overall tone more balanced than in other types of newspapers (van Dalen et al., 2019: 47). Besides, a year-long four-wave panel study of media use was implemented in 2013, unveiling that the negativity bias on economic news tends to affect how the public perceives the country economic situation and the evaluation of political actors' performance (van Dalen et al., 2019:87).

Therefore, the second dimension of analysis aims to understand the *Tone* (or valence framing) used by newspapers to characterise economic issues. Overall, this dimension shows whether there is a positive or negative bias within the news coverage of economic issues. The approach of this thesis follows previous studies, namely de

Vreese and Boomgaarden's (2003) seminal work on valence frames and public support for the EU, and widely quoted Schuck and de Vreese's study (2006) on the tone used in 2004's EU enlargement, in four German daily reference newspapers.

The underlying rationale is that individuals will pay more attention to negative than to positive information, as negativity activates the individual's surveillance system, helping them to deal better with threats, challenges, or obstacles (Marcus et al., 2000). Therefore, the media need to evaluate or make a judgement on an issue for it to become accessible in the audience's minds (Kim et al., 2002). In addition, economic news tends to react asymmetrically to economic developments: it becomes more negative when the economy declines but not more positive when the economy improves (Blood and Philips 1995; Goidel and Langley 1995; Soroka, 2006). This leads in turn to the formulation of my second hypothesis:

**H2:** *There will be an increasingly negative tone in European economic news following the onset of the Eurozone crisis in all countries considered.*

Even though Sheaffer (2007) operationalises this dimension by coding economic news as positive or negative, if it presents the economy as improving or declining, I introduce a broader operationalisation. Therefore, the tone evaluation is independent of the conflict or disagreement that could be present in the news; indeed, an article might report a disagreement between two or more actors, but overall present it in a positive way or with a positive tone. I deem this to be a more inclusive and complete operationalisation, since it might enclose the dilemmas of an article when it reports a disagreement between two or more actors but presenting it in a positive or negative tone. In this sense, I coded the tone of articles as 0) *Neutral*, 1) *Positive*, 2) *Negative* or 3) *Balanced*, towards economic news.

### 3.2.3 Framing

The last dimension of analysis is *Framing*, which can be defined as a cognitive process in which the media, by selecting what to include and what to exclude from a story, tell individuals how they should think or talk about specific issues (e.g., Iyengar and Kinder, 1987; Pan and Kosicki, 1993). In spite of being a cognitive process that shares a focus on the relationship between public policy issues in the news and the public perception of these issues with *agenda-setting* research (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000), framing analysis expands beyond agenda-setting into "what people talk or think about by examining how they think and talk about issues in the news" (Pan and Kosicki, 1993:70). Therefore, according to McCombs (1997:6), framing can be considered an extension of agenda-setting, since it selects a restricted number of attributes for characterising issues when they are discussed in the media. The most precise and widely cited definition of framing comes from Gamson and Modigliani (1987:143), describing it as "a central organising idea or storyline that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events". Moreover, frames represent an emphasis in the salience of different aspects of a topic and are meant to simplify complex issues and activate schemas that encourage audiences to think in a particular way (e.g., Iyengar and Simon 1993; Gross and D'Ambrosio 2004; Chong and Druckman 2007).

It is often stated that there are two types of definitions concerning frames: a *broader* and a *narrower* one. In short, conceptually, the broader definition suggests "what the controversy is about, the essence of the issue" (Gamson and Modigliani, 1989:8). Conversely, the narrow definition of frames accepts them as "question wording", in which the issues are reduced and applied in two identical scenarios. According to de Vreese (2003:5), the majority of the literature on framing studies apply a broader definition of frames on studies concerning news frames because "political, economic

and social events and issues are presented to citizens as alternative characterisations of a course of action”.

In this vein, this third dimension assesses whether the national media assume similar positions about the relevance of conflict lines to portray economic topics and whether the frames used to characterise those issues are convergent. This dimension was formulated based on the Trenz (2004) argument that the connectivity of communication is the minimal requirement of the EPS, since it denotes that the European media and public observe communication concerning the same political issues. Indeed, the degree of reciprocal resonance or synchronisation of European political communication is a qualitative indicator, given it measures the degree of convergence and / or communication synchronicity among the different media (Tobler, 2002). In short, reciprocal resonance or synchronisation is an indication of the connectivity of European political communication and a qualifying condition for the existence of an EPS.

Therefore, to measure the *Framing* dimension, I suggest five indicators 1) “*Problem*” frame, 2) “*Cause*” frame, 3) “*Responsibility*” frame, 4) “*Consequences*” frame and 5) “*Solution*” frame. The selection of these five frames stands out within the tradition of the deductive approach. While an inductive approach involves analysing a news story and identifying possible frames, the deductive approach involves predefining specific frames as content analytical categories and drawing upon multiple indicators to the presence or absence of frames (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000; de Vreese et al., 2001). This method has the advantage of being easily replicated in several studies and “detect[ing] differences in framing between media (e.g., television vs press) and within media (e.g., highbrow news programs or newspapers vs tabloid-style media)” (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000: 94). Following the deductive approach, as

previously highlighted, the literature has so far identified several frames about European issues, which can be found in the news (e.g., Schuck and de Vreese, 2006; de Vreese et al., 2011; Joris et al., 2014) of mainstream and tabloid newspapers.

In order to capture precise details on how national media narrate European economic news, instead of generic frames, my approach stands with the issue-specific frames paradigm. Regardless of the high degree of specificity that issue-specific frames demand, which makes them challenging to generalise, compare and use as empirical evidence for theory building (de Vreese, 2003), the fact is this approach has the advantage of allowing for a deep level of specificity and details relevant to the event under investigation. The use of issue-specific frames makes it possible to identify detailed issue interpretations and argumentation patterns. The first studies conducted by Jasperson et al. (1998) or by Entman (1993) are significant examples of issue-specific frames, once the frames deduced were highly issue-sensitive and pertained explicitly to the chronology of the topic studied.

Indeed, in 1993, Entman suggested a theory in which frames usually followed these functions: *problem definition, diagnosis of causes/causal analysis, moral judgements, and remedy suggestion*. Recently, the Touri and Rogers's (2011) analysis of Greeks crisis's media coverage in UK newspapers is another relevant example of the use of issue-specific frames to understand how media portray the EZ crisis. The authors used Entman's framing definition as a template to which more categories were added, and at the end, they coded five main frames: 1) *problem*, 2) *causes*, 3) *accountability*, 4) *consequences* and 5) *solution*, and each frame contained sub-frames that embodied the different aspects emphasised within the frame. Matthes and Kohring (2008) argue that Entman's theory is a widely accepted definition providing specific frame elements which can be understood and used as variables in the content analysis. The typology



proposed by Touri and Rogers (2011) reinforces this argument, since it incorporates existing theories about the media's role in enabling a European debate.

Hence, the five indicators proposed in this thesis, were elaborated based on the template initially introduced by Entman and enriched with the theoretical work of Touri and Rogers (2013). Even though this last study only looks for a specific event, namely the EZ crisis in Greece, and how it was portrayed in British newspapers in 2012, it provides us with important clues on how to measure European narratives over time and cross-countries. Yet, the Touri and Rogers's (2013) analytical framework was adapted so as to apprehend the issue-specific details that characterised the narratives in debtor countries, as well as cross-time variations. In this sense, a set of items were developed for each subframe mirroring the pre- and post-crisis period, as well the evolution of European monetary integration. Emphasizing all economic news rather than solely the economic crisis allows for a longitudinal comparison of frames used by the media and to establish the convergence of European media narratives in a much more accurate manner.

In the next paragraphs, I will explain each of my five frames, their functions and relevance in order to understand the media narratives and evaluate the convergence in debtor countries' national media. For each frame I will also formulate a hypothesis to be tested in the empirical part of the thesis.

### *Problem*

In 2003, Entman identified the *Problem* frame as one of the essential functions of framing, since defining the problem often predetermines the rest of the frame. Hence, this frame allows us to answer questions regarding the roots of the economic problem present in the news. The main expectation of this thesis is that the EZ crisis increased

the convergence of narratives in debtor countries, therefore formulate the following hypothesis:

**H3a:** *There will be an increasingly similar framing of the “Problem” in European economic news following the onset of the Eurozone crisis in all countries considered.*

After establishing the problem, it is necessary to understand who has caused the issue and who is responsible for it.

#### *Cause*

The *Cause* frame reveals if the European economic issues, emerged as a result of domestic policies or supranational decisions. In other words, if the problem is understood as pertaining to the transnational space or the national sphere. Given that my main expectation is that the onset of the Eurozone crisis leads to an EPS, I formulate the following hypothesis concerning the *Cause* frame:

**H3b:** *The “Cause” frame in European economic news will tend to be about European policies, rather than domestic policies or a Globalization outcome, following the onset of the Eurozone crisis in all countries considered.*

#### *Responsibility*

The *Responsibility* frame is particularly relevant to direct the accountability to actors inside or outside the national realm. According to Pfetsch et al. (2010: 153), these frames define the national or European nature of the debate since they address the issue of responsibility to European or national actors.

Some scholars have called attention to the fact that in a multi-level structure, like the EU, boundaries between national and supranational levels are often blurred,

making the act of attributing the responsibility for the economic developments more challenging and complex (Hobolt and Tilley, 2014a; Lobo and Lewis Beck, 2012; Bellucci, 2014). The blame-shifting argument states that holding others responsible for the problems constitutes the core strategy of blame avoidance (Weaver, 1986), and a “standard way for politicians to [try to] avoid being punished for unpopular policies” (Hobolt and Tilley, 2014b:10). Indeed, I believe that exploring the domestication or Europeanisation of the responsibility for European economic issues is pertinent in a framework of European monetary integration and later in an economic crisis context in which a multilevel governance structure as the EU has decision-making control over national economy (Hood, 2011; Rittberger et al., 2017). Again, given the way in which I have formulated my overall hypothesis, connecting the onset of the Eurozone crisis to the emergence of an EPS, leads us to the next hypothesis, namely:

**H3c:** *The “Responsibility” frame in European economic news will tend to be about European institutions and actors, rather than domestic ones, during the Eurozone crisis period in all countries considered.*

### *Consequences*

The *Consequences* frame is equally important, given that a discussion of consequences of European economic issues that goes beyond domestic topics and national arenas – a transnational discussion - might help the process of legitimation of the EU in national public spheres (Firmstone, 2003). Regarding this point, McLaren (2002, 2005) reinforces the argument claiming that this frame can as well be relevant to understand Euroscepticism in case economic news are being framed in terms of economic losses. Thus, assuming that the EZ fostered the emergence of an EPS, the hypothesis concerning the *Consequence* frame posits that:

**H3d:***The “Consequences” frame in European economic news will tend to be rather more about consequences for Europe level than for the Individual or National government level, following the onset of the Eurozone crisis in all countries considered.*

#### *Solution*

Lastly, Entman (2003:417-418) also identified the *Solution* frame as an essential one, since addressing a solution promotes support or opposition to government action. In the EU context, it may lead to the support to the European project or, on the contrary, to a reinforcement of Eurosceptic views among European citizens. Consequently, this frame answers the question about the best course of action in dealing with the economic problem, especially tackling the crisis. Overall, the *Solution Frame* aims to capture recommendations for a co-operative framework within the EU, including calls for a strong consensus that could be a step towards European solidarity, or towards a unilateral approach (Touri and Rogers, 2013). Given this definition and the underlying expectation of this thesis, I formulate my last hypothesis to be tested in the next chapters:

**H3e:***The “Solution” frame in European economic news will tend to point to European responses rather than unilateral actions from the national government, following the onset of the Eurozone crisis in all countries considered.*

### 3.3 MEDIA'S CONTENT ANALYSIS

A content analysis is a careful, detailed, systematic examination and interpretation of a particular body of material in an effort to identify patterns, biases and meanings (Berg, 2009). As explained in the previous chapter, this thesis applies both a quantitative as a qualitative content analysis. In short, the quantitative content analysis allows to identify the text message in a systematic and quantifiable way (Neuendorf, 2002). In turn, the qualitative content analysis goes beyond merely counting words or extracting objective content from a text, and it is useful for analysing the intricacies of latent interpretations (Mayring, 1983; Wildmuth, 2009).

In both cases it implies a "systematic and replicable examination of symbols of communication, which have been assigned numeric values according to valid measurement rules and the analysis of relationships involving those values using statistical methods, to describe the communication, draw inferences about its meaning, or infer from the communication to its context, both of production and consumption" (Riffe et al., 2019:19), and involves the choice of three main methodological procedures: i) *depth of analysis*; ii) *direction of information*, and iii) *sampling and recording units*.

#### i) *Depth of analysis*

Before starting the codification process, the researcher must decide what kind of information she wants to draw from the content analysis. There is information about the visible content, which is on the surface of the text, the *manifest* content and there is the *latent* content that consists of underlying meanings anchored in the deep structure of the text (Holsti, 1969:12). In this thesis, each article was evaluated at both the *manifest* and the *latent* content level — the first is used to measure the *Media Attention* and the second to assess the *Tone* and *Framing*. In doing so, I am drawing a clear distinction

between the quantifiable visibility of European topics and the quantifiable latent meaning of how European issues have been portrayed.

ii) *Direction of analysis*

The direction of analysis reflects the route of the analysis. Thus, the categories used in the content analysis can be determined *inductively* - when a researcher immerses in the documents and identifies the dimensions meaningful for his agenda, or *deductively*- the categories of analysis are previously defined, through the previous studies' theoretical background - or both (Abrahamson, 1983; Strauss, 1987). As explained before, in this thesis the categories were deductively determined by the previous coding schemes.

iii) *Sampling and recording*

In media studies, since most of the times it is impossible to manually code the entire population manually in the study, a sample size must be defined. The literature about the sampling definition and methods for the selection of those samples is extensive as it constitutes one of the main features of content analysis. Overall, there are three main methods: (stochastic-probability; purposive-intentional; and convenient sample<sup>23</sup>). In this thesis, a *purposive-intentional* sampling was applied. This means that newspapers' content analysis covered all economic articles on economic sections or economic supplements of each mainstream newspaper in Portugal, Spain, and Ireland,

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<sup>23</sup>*Stochastic-probability or random probability* uses statistical theory to randomly select a small group of people (sample) from an existing large population, and then predict that all their responses will match the overall population; *Convenient sampling* involves the selection of information that meet certain criteria e.g. easy accessibility, geographical proximity, availability; *Purposive-intentional sample* it is the intentional selection of information based on their ability to elucidate a specific theme, concept, or phenomenon (For detailed information, see e.g. Riffe et al., 2014).

whether about the EU, the international or the domestic economy (for detailed information see Chapter II). In addition, the op-ed sections were excluded from the analysis as they do not necessarily mirror the newspaper's position on a particular issue (e.g., Firmstone, 2003; Statham, 2007; Brüggemann, 2009; Drewski, 2015, Marques et al., 2019).

The unit of analysis and coding was the economic news story. A news story is defined as an article containing a title, a subtitle, and a text body.

The articles were collected from newspapers' hardcopies using online archives, as well as through the Portuguese National Library and the British Library's archive. In some cases, the newspapers were pictures in non-readable *PDF* format. Thus, an all-in-one *OCR* and *PDF* software called *Abby FineReader 14* was used to convert these documents to readable *PDFs*. A key advantage of using this program is that it allows for text extraction (Lobo and Nina, 2017). Therefore, after converting all the pages in *OCR* to *PDF* readable, the relevant news articles from each newspaper were selected and the data were inserted in a separate *Excel* file<sup>24</sup>. The measurement of the economic articles in the six mainstream newspapers took place between September 2018 and November 2019.

### 3.3.1 Coding Scheme

#### *Media Attention*

To measure the number of news, I follow a simple scheme: for each newspaper edition, I firstly determine the frequency of economic news in each economic section,

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<sup>24</sup> Newspapers' data collection was carried out over 2016-2017 by several members of the MAPLE project team. For more details, see [www.maple.ics.ulisboa.pt](http://www.maple.ics.ulisboa.pt).

and then the frequency of economic news that mentioned the EU. In the end, I calculate the average visibility of EU economic news per election for each country. The same logic is applied to the size of the articles: for each news articles coded I define the number of words of each article by counting the number of characters, and then calculating the average number of words per election for each country. Concerning the topic or scope, all news related to the European Union were coded as "EU" in a dichotomous scale ("EU is not present=0"; "EU is present=1") regardless of whether or not the article refers to EU institutions, actors or member-states<sup>25</sup>.

In order to confirm my hypothesis 1 formulated above, namely that there *will be an increase in media attention to EU issues following the onset of the Eurozone crisis in all countries considered*, I will measure these indicators namely "average visibility", "average size of articles", and "scope", to see whether in all countries following the onset of the EZ crisis the media attention has increased.

### *Tone*

Following my hypothesis 2, namely that *the onset of the Eurozone crisis leads to an increase of negativity in the overall tone of European economic news*, the coding decision of an article's *Tone* was made through an ordinary scale where 0 stands for neutral/ no

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<sup>25</sup> A story is coded as EU if the article mentions:

1) The European Union- Europe- Brussels (as in Europe), Common European Policies (Common Agricultural Policy, Common Fisheries Policy, Erasmus Policy, European Monetary Policy, Eurozone), European Institutions such as European Commission, European Parliament, Council of Ministers, Members of these institutions (European Commissioners, European Parliamentarians, European High Representative, European Central Bank).

2) EU member-states as such, so the Brexit referendum, any other EU referendum in any EU member state.

3) European countries which are currently members of the EU.

For more information, please see Appendix A.



evaluation, 1 is negative, 2 is balanced and 3 is positive. It was based on the overall coder's impression, namely if the article presents the topic as something positive or negative.

Bearing in mind that the tone's assessment is subjective and depends, mostly, on how the message interpretation activates individuals pre-existing cognitive schemas (Kim et al., 2002), the coding decision was based on the overall impression of the article. However, to overcome the pitfalls of subjectivity, a list of words and expressions associated with each tone was developed and used as a guideline during the codification process.

The articles with a neutral tone were those that avoided strong wording, personal statements, or anecdotes (Miller et al., 2014) and only described the events without any evaluation or interpretation of the facts. The articles with a negative tone, following Kuttschreuter et al. (2011), usually include 'misbehaviour', 'failure' and 'ingratitude', while examples of positive wording are 'honesty', 'satisfaction' and 'appreciation'. Therefore, an article could be evaluated as negative in the presence of words to describe the topic and/or actors that evoked negative associations. In the articles that presented both a positive and a negative tone but whose overall evaluation revealed a bias towards a positive or negative direction, the coding decision followed the overall tone impression. Nevertheless, when the overall impression was mixed, with no prevailing positive or negative tone, the decision was to code the article as balanced. In the next Table 3.2 I present examples of such coding.

**Table 3. 2** Example of each Tone in the mainstream newspapers of Portugal, Spain, and Ireland

Tone	Newspaper	Example
<b>Neutral</b>	<i>The Irish Times</i> (2002)	<i>ROYAL Dutch Shell won permission from the European Commission yesterday for its £3.5 billion sterling (€5.6 billion) buy of British oil explorer Enterprise Oil</i>
	<i>Diário de Notícias</i> (2009)	<i>Pela primeira vez este ano, os bancos da Zona Euro aumentaram os créditos concedidos às empresas. Em Agosto, a banca emprestou mais três mil milhões de euros que em Julho, com destaque para os empréstimos com maturidade superior a cinco anos, de acordo com os números divulgados ontem pelo BCE</i>
	<i>El País</i> (2011)	<i>Durante la pasada cumbre del G-20 en Cannes (Francia), se anunció que el Gobierno de Berlusconi había pedido al FMI que examinara las reformas para dar mayor credibilidad al país. La supervisión del FMI, que dará lugar a evaluaciones trimestrales, se desarrollará en paralelo a la que va a llevar a cabo de oficio la Comisión Europea, que la próxima semana tiene previsto enviar una misión a Italia</i>
<b>Negative</b>	<i>The Irish Independent</i> (2007)	<i>The ECB is making a good fist of a bad job (one size fits all) and the exploding money supply is a real inflation threat. Today will contain quite a little symbolism, as the European Central Bank announces a rise in interest rates in Dublin, two weeks before an Irish general election.</i>
	<i>Público</i> (2002)	<i>O recuo do resultado líquido deveu-se à forte quebra do volume de negócios da praça portuguesa — na ordem dos cinquenta por cento — e a custos extraordinários com a integração na Euronext. Esta conjuntura depressiva levou a uma quebra das receitas de 49,1 milhões de euros, para 33,4 milhões em 2001.</i>
	<i>El Mundo</i> (2008)	<i>En medio de esta vorágine de alarmas, los más castigados vuelven a ser los trabajadores del sector en cuestión. (...)Pese a esta situación laboral, nada halagüeña, el equipo de Solbes insiste en que los vaivenes del mercado no son más que consecuencias de «fluctuaciones estacionales» que, prevé, se corregirán. En esta línea, insiste en que el incremento de precios se ha producido en toda Europa, y justifica en ello el hecho de que el Banco Central Europeo haya mantenido inalterados los tipos de interés oficiales por los riesgos al alza en la estabilidad de precios que existen en la zona euro.</i>

	<i>The Irish Times</i> (2011)	<i>As confidence in the Irish banks arid the Irish sovereign deteriorated, deposits left the system and have been replaced by short-term borrowing from the ECB. The deal agreed with the EU and the IMF is supposed to stop this spiral and in time reverse it as confidence in Ireland and the banking system is restored.</i>
<b>Balanced</b>	<i>Diário de Notícias</i> (2015)	<i>Para o mal, pode-se recordar o choque de preços em 2008 (o contrato de Brent atingiu um pico de 144 euros por barril no início de julho), empurrando o país para uma das maiores recessões da história moderna num ambiente globalmente volátil, sobretudo na banca e nos mercados financeiros (...). Para o bem, há o exemplo deste ano. A economia portuguesa, que, entretanto, começou a crescer devagar, está a beneficiar da descida anunciada dos preços internacionais da matéria-prima, apesar da depreciação do euro, que retira poder de compra (os barris de petróleo são negociados em dólares</i>
	<i>El País</i> (2016)	<i>España crece reduce el desempleo y ha logrado estabilizar el sector bancario tras los más de 40.000 millones del rescate financiero europeo. Pero Bruselas es el eterno insatisfecho</i>
	<i>The Irish Independent</i> (2016)	<i>European equities are benefiting from a relief rally after reaching their lowest prices since 2013, while speculation for further stimulus is also boosting sentiment. President Mario Draghi said the ECB will act if market turmoil threatens the region's recovery</i>
<b>Positive</b>	<i>Público</i> (2011)	<i>O Fundo Monetário Internacional (FMI) aprovou ontem oficialmente o empréstimo de 26 mil milhões de euros a Portugal, no âmbito do pacote financeiro de 78 mil milhões de ajuda ao país - os outros dois terços são emprestados pelo FEEF (zona euro) e pelo MEEF (Comissão Europeia) (...). As autoridades portuguesas avançaram com um programa que é economicamente equilibrado e tem no seu cerne o crescimento e a criação de emprego. Lida com o problema fundamental de Portugal - baixo crescimento - com uma combinação de políticas baseadas na recuperação da competitividade através de reformas estruturais, garantindo um caminho de consolidação fiscal equilibrado e estabilização do sector financeiro. O programa, disse, é "ambicioso" e "vai envolver sacrifícios", mas acredita que pode levar a uma economia mais forte e dinâmica, capaz de criar crescimento, empregos e oportunidades</i>
	<i>El Mundo</i> (2004)	<i>La contribución española -la más generosa de los Estados de la UE-, es vista por Juan Antonio Fernández, director del recién es-trenado centro español, como «muy positiva para la construcción de la imagen empresarial de España»</i>

*Framing*

According to Weber (1991), there are two fatal flaws that might destroy the utility of content analysis 1) *faulty definitions of categories* and 2) *non-mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories*. This means that categories should be crystal clear and exhaustive- for every coded unit there is a category- and these categories should also be mutually exclusive, so they cannot overlap, not even to a small degree (GAO, 1996).

Therefore, to measure the extent to which certain frames appear in the economic news, the items developed for each dimension are mutually exclusive and, consequently, only one positive answer is allowed in each Framing dimension (Table 3.3.) In addition, given that a news article reports an event that can be portrayed with multiple meaning structures –i.e., several frames can be present in the article - (e.g., de Vreese, 2002); more than one of Framing dimension might be identified and coded in a European economic article. Conversely, to the previous dimensions- *Media Attention* and *Tone*, the *Framing* was only coded when an economic article mentioned the European Union, as the primary goal of this dimension is to understand to what extent the mainstream media are convergent while portraying the EU economic issues.

**Table 3.3** Selected items for each *Framing* dimension

#	"Problem" frame
1	Budget deficit problem
2	Employment problem
3	Social Security problem
4	Bankruptcy problem
5	Sovereign debt problem
6	EU's competitiveness problem
7	Brexit problem

	<b>“Cause” frame</b>
8	National economy and national policies
9	European Union’s policies
10	Eurozone countries’ policies
11	Globalization
	<b>“Responsibility” frame</b>
12	National governments/ national companies/ national citizens
13	European Union as a whole
14	Both National countries and the EU as a whole
	<b>“Consequences” frame</b>
15	Economic growth
16	Increase in national government support
17	Increase in national economic competitiveness
18	Creation of a wider Eurozone
19	Improve living standards
20	Increase EU’s credibility
21	National credibility damage
22	Economic recession
23	Affect living standards
24	Euro collapse
25	Creation of a smaller Eurozone
26	Damage EU’s credibility
27	Force the countries to give up on the euro
	<b>“Solution” frame</b>
28	Co-operative framework/ European solidarity
29	National governments to deal with the problem without help from Europe

### 3.3.2 Recoding of Frames and the Relationship to my Hypotheses

As a result of the manual codification process, some items of the “Problem”, “Cause” and “Consequences” dimensions were aggregated and re-coded into different variables. Additionally, “Responsibility” and “Solution” dimensions were also re-coded<sup>26</sup>.

#### *Problem*

The “Problem” frame was initially measured through seven variables, later aggregated into five indicators: 1) *Banking and Finance*, 2) *Welfare and Taxes*, 3) *Deficit, Sovereign Debt, and Inflation*, 4) *European Economic Competition* and 5) *Brexit*.

The aggregating decision was made as a result of the codification process. Indeed, some of the original frames whether reflected the same problems, or the latter were connected in such a way that it was not possible to disentangle them. Additionally, the *Brexit* variable was only coded in the after-crisis period. As the string variable “Other” included all the identified problems that did not fit in my pre-selected frames - for instance, “the oil price”, “impact of the Law of Data Protection in companies”, “support for tobacco production” or “companies avoiding their legal obligation on recycling” -, I decided not to compute this variable.

Thus, following my hypothesis 3a, which states that *there will be an increasingly similar framing of the “Problem” in European economic news following the onset of the Eurozone crisis in all countries considered*, the goal will be to identify the main problems after 2009 in each country and whether they are similar.

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<sup>26</sup> This transformation is explained in detailed on Appendix B.

### *Cause*

The “Cause” frame was evaluated through four variables, grouped in three indicators: 1) *National*; 2) *EU* and 3) *Globalisation*

Following my hypothesis 3b, which states that the “Cause” frame in European economic news will *tend to be about European policies, rather than domestic policies or a Globalization outcome, following the onset of the Eurozone crisis in all countries considered*, I decided to aggregate the variables “EU policies?” and “Eurozone policies?” in one single variable - *EU* - since in most articles it was not possible to disentangle EU’s policies from Eurozone’s policies. Consequently, I expect that after 2009 the causes are increasingly about “EU policies or Eurozone policies”.

### *Responsibility*

In addition, the items of “Responsibility” were re-coded in three indicators: 1) *National*, 2) *National and EU* and 3) *EU as a whole*.

Following from my 3c hypothesis, namely that the “Responsibility frame in European economic news will *tend to be about European institutions and actors, rather than domestic ones, following the onset of the Eurozone crisis in all countries considered*, I expect that it after 2009 it becomes less about “National”, and either more about the “EU as a whole” or at least about “National and EU”, the intermediate category.

### *Consequences*

The “Consequences” dimension was measured through a total of thirteen variables, grouped into three levels: 1) the *Individual level* includes EU economic issues’ consequences on citizens (e.g., impact on living standards); 2) the *National level* (e.g., impact on national economy or government support); and the 3) *European level* (e.g., impact on EU’s credibility).

Thus, following from my hypothesis 3d above, namely that the “Consequence” frame in European economic news *will tend to be rather about consequences for Europe than for the national arena, following the onset of the Eurozone crisis in all countries considered*, I expect that consequences are attributed to the “European level”, rather than the “Individual” or the “National government” level.

#### *Solution*

Finally, the “Solution” frame was re-coded in two indicators: 1) *European Solidarity* and 2) *Without EU’s Assistance*.

Following from my 3e hypothesis, namely that European economic news *will tend to point to European responses rather than unilateral actions from the national government, following the onset of the Eurozone crisis in all countries considered*, I expect that news articles after 2009 increasingly point to solutions which involve European solidarity.

Table 3.4 sums up the empirical framework by displaying the dimensions and indicators used to determine the convergence of media narratives in national newspapers regarding the European economic issues. Moreover, it features how each indicator is measured after the recodification process.



**Table 3. 4** Empirical Framework for measuring the convergence of media narratives

Dimensions	Indicators	Measure
<i>Media Attention</i>	- Number of economic news	-Number of articles in a specific page
	- Size of economic news	-Number of words of each article
	- Topic or Scope	0- EU is not mentioned 1- EU is mentioned
<i>Tone</i>		0- Neutral 1- Negative 2- Balanced 3- Positive
<i>Framing</i>	- Problem	1- Banking and Finances 2- Welfare and Taxes 3- Deficit, Sovereign Debt, and Inflation 4- European Economic Competition 5- Brexit
	- Cause	1- National 2- European Union 3- Globalization
	- Responsibility	1- National 2- National and European Union 3- European Union as a whole
	- Consequences	1- Individual level 2- National level 3- European Level
	- Solution	1- European Solidarity 2- Without EU Assistance

Next, will I present the two steps taken to guarantee a good codification reliability: the *Codebook* developed, which includes each dimensions' goal and its definitions, as well as precise and easy-follow instructions, and *Reliability Tests*, which were carried out to ensure consistency.

### 3.3.3 Reliability Checks

The core notion of reliability is simple. The measurement instruments applied to observations must be consistent over time, place, coder, and circumstance (Riffe et al., 2019). This means that the content analysis requires the existence of specialised procedures of analysing content that need to be replicated. By doing so, the procedure should guarantee that other researchers are able to obtain similar results when applying the same techniques to the same data (Krippendorff, 1980). Hence, reliability in content analysis is defined as an agreement among coders about categorising content, and it refers to the coder's consistency and not to data consistency (Popping, 2000).

Nevertheless, as Weber (1990:15) noted, the "reliability problems usually grow out of the ambiguity of words meaning category definitions or other coding rules". This is a challenge in content analysis and that can be defeated with a suitable protocol - *Codebook* and through *Reliability Tests*.

#### *Codebook*

The first step to overcome the reliability problem is to have a detailed codebook, in which the coding rules applied are defined, i.e., the *Protocol*. The protocol's importance cannot be overstated, for at least two reasons. First, it sets down the rules governing the study, binding the researchers in the way they define and measure the content of interest, as they are invariant across the life of the study. Second, the protocol is the archival record of the operations and definitions applied in the study and how it was conducted, which increases the chances of other researchers interpret the results and replicate the study. According to Krippendorff (1980), the protocol must be carefully addressed by any research, because if the analysis was not adequately prepared, it may lead to different interpretations, undermining both reliability and validity of the results.

Thus, the codebook developed for this research was pre-tested before the beginning of the codification process. This process ensured that the concepts included and excluded from the coding procedure were systematically identified and their interpretation was not biased. Additionally, the categories of each dimension were established prior to the analysis, based upon the available media narrative theories and European Union studies, following the *a priori* coding approach or the direct content analysis<sup>27</sup>.

Contrarily to the emergent coding approach or conventional content analysis in which categories are established following some preliminary examination of the data (e.g., Tesch, 1990; Morgan, 1993; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Haney et al., 1998), in the *a priori* approach there is a scholar's agreement on the categories. The direct approach guides the content analysis in a more structured process than in a conventional approach (Hickey and Kipping, 1996). It begins by identifying key concepts or variables as initial coding categories (Potter and Levine-Donnerstein, 1999) and then operational definitions for each category are determined using the pre-existent theory in order to validate or conceptually extend a theoretical framework (Mayring, 2000).

### *Reliability Test*

Following the process of concept definition and protocol constructions, it is necessary to assess the degree to which the content definitions and procedures can be reliably applied, given that "if the coding is not reliable, the analysis cannot be trusted" (Singletary, 1993:294). There are two ways to assess coder reliability. First, the protocol's *stability* can be evaluated, and second, its *reproducibility* can be assessed. *Stability* refers to the intra-coder reliability: the same coder applies the protocol to the same content at

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<sup>27</sup> Codebook provided on Appendix A

two points in time. *Reproducibility* refers to inter-coder reliability and involves two or more coders applying the protocol to the same content (Krippendorff, 2004).

To ensure the methodological reliability of the data, firstly the *stability* was assessed through the intra-coder reliability test. This assessment is particularly relevant for this thesis since the coding procedure lasted for an extended period of time, and according to Riffe et al., (2019:108), "if a project takes more than a month of coding, intra-coder reliability testing would improve the argument for data validity". By doing so, I sought to answer the following question: "Can the same coder get the same results try after try?" (Mackey and Gass, 2005: 129). This test is used to determine the consistency of a measure from one time to another; thus, two sets of ratings are produced by one research at two times or for different parts of the data.

Nevertheless, the intra-coder reliability entails some shortcomings that can artificially inflate the reliability coefficient (Krippendorff, 1980) as those who have developed the coding scheme often concur on the established shared and hidden meanings of coding (Stemler, 2001). Thereby, another reliability measure was added - *reproducibility*. The inter-coder reliability aims to judge if the coding schemes lead similar coding of texts by different people. Thus, each variable was measured by measuring agreement and disagreements between coders.

Following Hayes and Krippendorff's (2007) premise, a random sub-sample of 10% of the economic articles mentioning the EU was selected for both inter-coder reliability and intra-coder reliability. To ensure the inter-coder reliability, an instructed research assistant coded the *Tone* and *Framing* indicators in the six newspapers analysed<sup>28</sup>. A fully crossed<sup>29</sup> design was used, meaning that the variables were rated by

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<sup>28</sup> I decided not to conduct the intra-coder reliability neither the inter-coder reliability test to the *Media Attention* dimension as the indicators "number" and "size of economic news" are straightforward and unquestionable. Besides that, the third indicator - the reference to EU - was used to select the random sub-sample of 10% of the economic articles.

multiple coders, although those were part of the same set of coders (Hallgren, 2012). Concerning the intra-coder reliability, the two dimensions were coded four months after the ending of each newspaper codification<sup>30</sup>.

For both intra-coder and inter-coder reliability, simple agreement rates were calculated for variable tests. In *Tone*, an agreement rate of 72.6% for the overall sample was found on intra-coder and 71.8% on inter-coder. *Framing* variables shows an agreement on the overall sample, which varies between 81.5% on "Cause" and 95.2% on "Solution", for the intra-coder test, and between 75.8% on "Responsibility" and 92.7% on "Consequences", for the inter-coder test. As expected, there is some variance among newspapers<sup>31</sup>.

In addition, I calculated Krippendorff's alpha (Krippendorff 1998, 2004) for each variable, as the simple agreement rates do not correct the agreements that would be expected by chance, and therefore overestimate the level of agreement (Cohen, 1960; Krippendorff, 1980).

One of the challenges pointed to the reliability tests is determining what constitutes an acceptable level of reliability. Once again, there are no established standards, even though Neuendorf established a "rule of thumb" defending that "coefficients of .90 or greater would be acceptable to all, .80 or greater would be acceptable in most situations, and below that there is great disagreement" (2002: 145).

Krippendorff's alpha for the *Tone* is  $\alpha = 0.786$  and  $\alpha = 0.776$  for intra-coder and inter-coder reliability, respectively. The breakdown by newspapers shows us that the lowest reliability is exhibited by the *Irish Times* on Intra-Coder ( $\alpha = 0.643$ ) and Inter-Coder ( $\alpha = 0.624$ ), and the highest in *Diário de Notícias*, both the intra and the inter coder presenting a  $\alpha = 0.827$  degree of reliability. Overall, it is a modest degree of reliability,

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<sup>29</sup> Please see Table C1 in Appendix C for more details.

<sup>30</sup> Please, see Table C2 in Appendix C for more details.

<sup>31</sup> Please see Table C3 and C4 in Appendix C for more details.

still acceptable, especially when compared with the widely cited study on media tone about the support for EU enlargement, which presents a Krippendorff's alpha of 0.74. (Schuck and de Vreese, 2006: 14).

Regarding the *Framing* variables, Krippendorff's alpha presents a much more satisfactory and positive score on intra-coder (varying between  $\alpha = 0.852$  on "Cause" and  $\alpha = 0.968$  on "Solution") as well on inter-coder (varying between  $\alpha = 0.789$  on "Problem" and  $\alpha = 0.943$  on "Solution"). Despite some variance, among newspapers a similar and positive pattern was found. Scores achieved are in harmony with previous studies on media narratives (e.g., Semetko and Valkenburg 2000; de Vreese et al. 2001; de Vreese et al. 2011; Joris et al. 2014; Arrese and Vara-Miguel 2016; Picard, 2015), which substantiates the validity and reliability of my codification process<sup>32</sup>.

### 3.3.4 Advantages and Challenges

The content analysis implemented enables us to answer my research question in a way that was not possible with other methodological instruments, such as interviews, surveys, or experimental design. An in-depth manual content analysis in which a quantitative and a qualitative approach are combined has the advantage of dimmed the distortions and error in the information collected and capturing the latent content - the "hidden" meaning and subtleties of my data - especially in what concerns the *Tone* and *Framing* dimensions, which would be lost with other research techniques.

Currently, a growing amount of research has currently resorted to automated content analysis to analyse media data (e.g., Doms and Morin 2004; Soroka 2006; Hollanders and Vliegthart 2011, Silva et al. 2021). This technique has the benefit of decrease the time-consuming nature of manual content analysis associated to the

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<sup>32</sup>See Table C5 and C5 in Appendix C for more details

requirement of a significant human effort in collection and coding data. Nevertheless, as demonstrated by previous studies (Althaus et al., 2001; de Vreese, 2005; Silva, 2018, van Dalen et al. 2019), in research that goes beyond simple word count, for example, it is preferable to conduct a manual content analysis. In addition, Young and Soroka (2012) elucidate that while automated content analysis can classify content characteristics on aggregate level, human coders are better at classifying individual articles. This means that even though the *Media Attention* dimension could be measured through automated techniques (e.g., Silva, et al. 2021), it is not recommendable to assess the *Tone* and *Framing* through an automated text analysis, given the text and language semantic subtleties (e.g., Schuck and de Vreese 2006).

One of the challenges of this content analysis was the language that represented more a practical challenged that a substantive one. The analysis covers the original hard copies of newspapers from Portugal, Spain and Ireland and the newspapers' coders were Portuguese native speakers. However, this does not mean that the validity of the results should be questioned. First, because an intra-coder and inter-coder test were conducted, and both presented highly satisfactory values. Second, Peter and Lauf (2002) argued that the challenges related to bilingual and cross-country content analysis are overcome if three conditions are met: 1) training coders agree in their coding; 2) coders within a country group agree with one another; and 3) coders agree with the coding of their trainers (Peter and Lauf, 2002: 827). Even though the second condition is not suitable for this research, as I did not have native speakers from the three countries, the first one was fulfilled (intra-coder reliability), as well as the second one (inter-coder reliability).

### 3.4 SUMMARY

The goal of this chapter was to introduce a multidimensional measure for convergence of European media narratives, formulate hypothesis for each dimension, and developing indicators where the hypotheses will be tested in the next Chapters.

For that, the most relevant studies on European media narratives were re-examined. From this analysis, there is an assumption that stands out: the media assume the paramount role of enabling the creation of a mutual understanding about the European topics in national public spheres, though the convergence of frames and conflict lines. However, even though most scholars agree that the convergence of narratives on European topics in national media implies the use of common frames and similar attention, the literature proposes an extensive range of indicators.

This thesis proposes a framework which builds on previous literature, but also innovates namely, combining in the same model both *Media Attention* and *Framing*, as well as *Tone*. By doing that, a novelty in European media narratives is introduced. On the one hand, this measure seeks to capture the singularities of the debtor countries that have been disregarded in the literature on media convergence in order to assess the emergence of an EPS. On the other hand, it has the ability to provide several angles of analysis capable of being replicated across countries and over time.

Additionally, this chapter presented each dimension and the indicators used to measure them, as well as the formulated hypothesis to be tested. The analysis of the three main dimension- *Media Attention*, *Tone*, and *Framing*- and the test of the seven hypotheses presented will allow for testing my underlying expectation: the EZ crisis increased the convergence of media narratives in bailout countries and, thus, promoted the emergence of a European Public Sphere.



In the last section, I detailed the theoretical framework of the quantitative and qualitative content analysis, newspapers' codification steps, as well as the reliability tests carried out, and the advantages and challenges of this approach.

In the next chapters, I will proceed with the testing of each hypothesis with a view to establishing an overarching narrative about whether the Eurozone crisis may have contributed to the creation of an EPS.



**PART THREE**

**CONVERGENCE OF EUROPEAN  
ECONOMIC NARRATIVES**



## CHAPTER IV

# CONVERGENCE OF EUROPEAN MEDIA NARRATIVES: MAIN RESULTS

As explained previously, to investigate how the Eurozone crisis contributed to promoting the emergence of a European Public Sphere, this thesis aims to test the existence of convergence on European economic media narratives in Portugal, Spain, and Ireland- three debtor countries. For that, and as described in Chapter III, a new multidimensional framework was developed, allowing us to test the narratives' convergence in mainstream national newspapers before and after the onset of the EZ crisis, according to three main dimensions: *Media Attention*, *Tone*, and *Framing*.

This chapter deals with the first research question of this study, "*To what extent did mainstream newspapers in Portugal, Spain and Ireland become more convergent when they narrated European economic issues following the onset of the Eurozone crisis?*" (RQ1) and it is organised into four sections.

Section 4.1 tests the first hypothesis of this thesis, presenting the results for the *Media Attention* dimension. This section addresses the size of economic articles, the average number of articles per page and the visibility of EU in those articles. Section 4.2 outlines the *Tone* used by mainstream newspapers in the three countries to report the European economic articles, testing therefore the second hypothesis formulated. Section 4.3 introduces the overall results for the *Framing* dimension. This preliminary overview will set the ground for testing, in the following Chapter, the hypotheses formulated regarding the frames used by mainstream media in Portugal, Spain and Ireland. Finally, in Section 4.4, a summary of the main findings of this Chapter is presented.

## 4.1 MEDIA ATTENTION

The first dimension analysed is *Media Attention*. It is a quantitative measure, based on the agenda-setting theory and aims to understand whether Portugal, Ireland and Spain gave the same level of attention to European economic news and whether the outbreak of the EZ crisis leads to an increase in EU visibility in national media.

Therefore, I formulated the hypothesis that *there will be an increase in media attention to EU issues following the onset of the Eurozone crisis in all countries considered (H1)* and, as explained in Chapter III, *Media Attention* is evaluated through three indicators: 1) *the average number of articles per page*; 2) *the average size of those articles* and 3) *the scope or presence of EU in economic news*.

A total of 6,070 articles were collected, and among those, 1,192 mentioned the EU. *Media Attention* is firstly analysed considering the economic articles published by national media from Portugal, Spain, and Ireland namely the *average number of economic articles* and the *average size of those articles* before (2002-2009) and after the outbreak of the EZ crisis. Then, in order to test whether the EZ crisis contributed to increase the media attention on the EU the analysis focuses on the economic articles that mention the European Union.

### 4.1.1 *Media Attention* in Economic news

Table 4.1 provides an overview of *Media Attention* indicators to all economic articles published in mainstream media in Portugal, Spain, and Ireland, before and after the onset of the EZ crisis. Overall, the number of economic articles faced a decrease (around 13.6%) in 2011-2016. Nevertheless, the results also reveal that the period following the outbreak of the crisis contributed to an increase in the size of articles (on

average 76.2 words), despite a reduction- around one article- in the number of economic articles per page.

Concerning the *Media Attention* indicators in the three countries considered, all of them present a similar pattern of increasing the size of economic articles and decreasing the number of articles per page after 2011. Yet, there are some differences between countries: whereas it is in Portugal that the average size of economic articles increased most substantially, in Spain the decrease of the number of articles per page is less noticeable.

**Table 4. 1** Distribution of Media Attention indicators in all economic articles, before and after the onset of the EZ crisis in Portugal, Spain, and Ireland

	Before the EZ Crisis (2002-2009)			After the onset of the EZ Crisis (2011-2016)		
	Frequency	Average size of economic articles (in words)	Average number of articles per page	Frequency	Average size of economic articles (in words)	Average number of articles per page
<b>Portugal</b>	1 165	242.6	5.3	529	365	3.7
<b>Spain</b>	817	350.6	4.1	912	393.6	3.3
<b>Ireland</b>	1347	346.5	8.4	1300	392	6.7
<b>Total</b>	3329			2741		
<i>Meanvalues</i>		311.2	6.26		387.4	5.01

#### 4.1.2 *Media Attention* of European Economic News

As explained previously, the first hypothesis of this thesis posits an increase in media attention to EU economic topics following the onset of EZ crisis in Portugal,

Spain and Ireland and the results presented in Table 4.2 concerning both the % of EU articles and the average size of the articles mentioning the EU seem to corroborate this expectation.

**Table 4. 2** Distribution of *Media Attention* indicators in European economic articles, before and after the onset of the EZ crisis

	Before the EZ Crisis (2002-2009)				After the onset of the EZ Crisis (2011-2016)			
	Frequency (EU mentioned)	%EU mentioned	Average size of articles mentioning the EU (in words)	Average number of articles per page when EU is mentioned	Frequency (EU mentioned)	%EU mentioned	Average size of articles mentioning the EU (in words)	Average number of articles per page when EU is mentioned
<b>Total</b>	532	<b>15.9</b>			660	<b>24.1</b>		
<i>Meanvalues</i>		<b>16.5</b>	<b>391.4</b>	4.9		<b>24.5</b>	<b>508.1</b>	4.2

In line with previous studies, (e.g., Zaller, 2003; van Dalen, 2019) in which *Media Attention* reflects the change in economic performance (Harrington, 1989), the number of articles mentioning the EU almost doubles in the post-2009 period: before the Great Recession, the mainstream press included, on average, 16.5% of European economic news and that figure increases to 24.5% after the crisis' onset. Additionally, the average size of the European economic articles increases by circa 25%, i.e., more than 100 words, from an average of 391 before the crisis to 508 after 2011. All these indicators' trends are consistent with studies that conclude that in the context of an economic crisis the EU reached an increase in visibility in national public spheres (e.g., Monza and Anduiza, 2016).



Nevertheless, these global results do not provide us with in-depth information on whether the increased *Media Attention* of European economic issues in national media is consistent in all countries considered, namely Portugal, Spain, and Ireland. Nor does it tell us whether the EZ crisis influenced similarly the visibility of EU issues in the three countries considered. Therefore, for testing the first hypothesis, we must consider each country, before (2002-2009) and after (2011-2016) the onset of the EZ crisis.

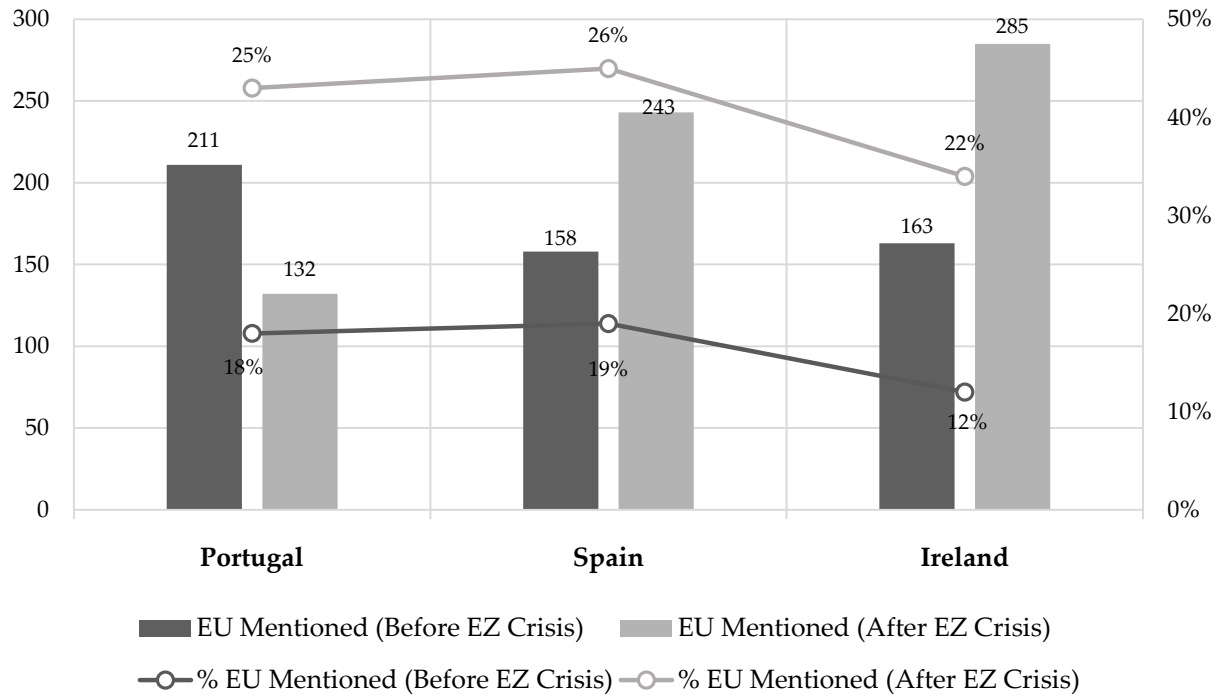
The analysis will proceed as follows: first, I will focus on the *EU visibility* in Portugal, Spain, and Ireland over time; then I zoom in on the *averagesize* and the *averagenumberof European economic articles per page* in the three countries.

#### *Visibility of EU in economic articles*

While the data previously presented have already provided some hints in what concerns the corroboration of the first hypothesis, the results exhibited in Figure 4.1 fully support it, i.e.: the EZ crisis contributed to the increased visibility of European economic news in national media in Portugal, Spain, and Ireland.

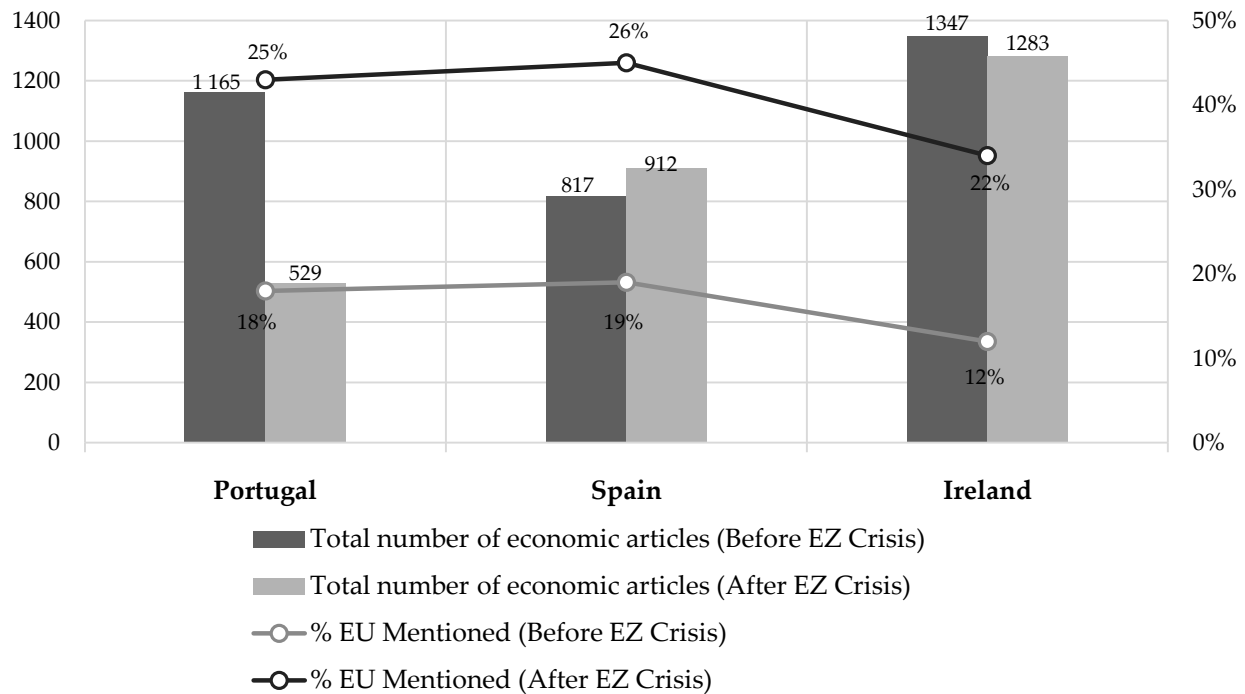
The results show that outbreak of the crisis led to a substantial increase in the percentage of economic articles mentioning the EU in Portuguese, Spanish and Irish mainstream media. The Portuguese and Spanish newspapers are the ones with the highest percentage of economic articles mentioning the EU in 2011-2016 - 25% and 26%, respectively. Yet, in Ireland the increase was the largest, with a difference of 10 percentage points between periods. Moreover, the data shows that the onset of the EZ crisis led to convergence between the three debtor countries in terms of the % of EU salience. This was due to the sharp rise in post-crisis salience in Ireland, which approximated that country's level of salience to the Iberian countries.

**Figure 4. 1** Number and percentage of economic articles mentioning the EU in Portugal, Spain, and Ireland, before and after the onset of EZ the crisis



In Portugal, we can see that there is a decrease in absolute number of EU mentioning articles following the onset of the crisis. Nevertheless, this does not mean the EU became less visible in Portuguese national media during the economic crisis. Figure 4.2 shows both total number of economic articles and the % of articles that mentioned the EU. There it can be seen that in 2011-2016 Portugal faced a substantial decline in the number of economic articles published (around 45 percentage points); still, the percentage of economic articles referring to the EU increased around 7 percentage points. Thus, even though the economic recession has affected national media, leading to a decrease in newspaper's size, the EZ crisis increased the visibility of EU in national media in all three countries considered.

**Figure 4. 2** Total number of economic articles and percentage of economic articles mentioning the EU in Portugal, Spain, and Ireland, before and after the onset of EZ crisis



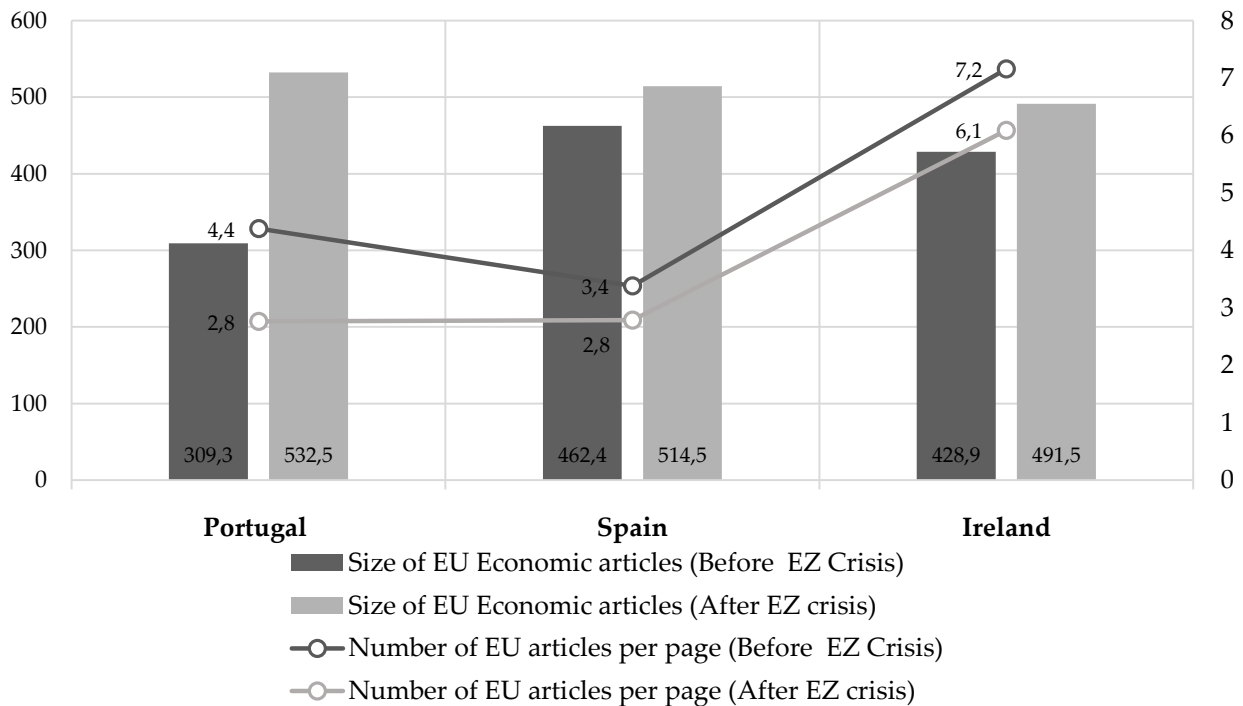
*Size of European economic news and average number of EU articles per page*

The remaining two indicators of *Media Attention* dimension are the *average size* of the European economic news and the *average number of articles per page* when the EU is mentioned. Considering these two indicators, the newspapers from Portugal, Spain and Ireland display a common and congruent pattern: longer articles but a lower number of news articles per page in 2011-2016 (Figure 4.3).

Indeed, in what regards the number of articles per page, the most noticeable differences between the periods analysed can be found in Portugal and Ireland. Whereas the Portuguese and Irish media show a decline in 1.34 and 1.21 articles

respectively, between the pre- and post-crisis period, the corresponding difference in Spain is solely around 0.62 articles. Second, concerning the size of the articles mentioning the EU, the data show that they are indeed shorter in 2002-2009, and increase after the onset of the crisis. The increase is largest in Portuguese newspapers where we see a rise in 189.03 words on average.

**Figure 4. 3** Average size and average number of economic articles per page mentioning the EU in Portugal, Spain, and Ireland, before and after the onset of the EZ crisis



Given these results, what can we learn about the EZ crisis, and the *Media Attention* given to EU economic articles in debtor countries after the beginning of the Great Recession?

Above all, there is a greater salience of EU in national media from 2011 onwards, as more than a quarter of economic news were devoted to EU topics, thus confirming

the first hypothesis of this study. This constitutes the first positive indicator supporting the underlying expectation of this thesis that the EZ crisis increased the convergence of media narratives among debtor countries.

Even though the EZ crisis has led to a decline in the absolute number of economic articles published in national mainstream media in Portugal and Ireland, the size and number of articles about the EU economic issues increased in Portugal, Spain, and Ireland after the onset of the crisis. Moreover, the data shows that the EZ crisis furthered the convergence between Portuguese, Spanish and Irish mainstream media in that period concerning the attention devoted to EU economic topics.

## 4.2 TONE

The *Tone* is the second dimension used to measure the convergence of European Media narratives. It is a qualitative measure that indicates whether and which type of evaluative bias the newspapers analysed have, when covering EU economic questions.

The analysis of this dimension is carried out in two steps. First, I will look at the overall *Tone* used by Portuguese, Spanish and Irish newspapers to report all economic articles published in the economic sections, in the pre (2002-2009) and post-crisis (2011-2016) period. In this initial analysis, the *Tone* is measured through four categories - 1) *Neutral*; 2) *Negative*; 3) *Balanced*; 4) *Positive* -coded according to the overall evaluation of the economic article.

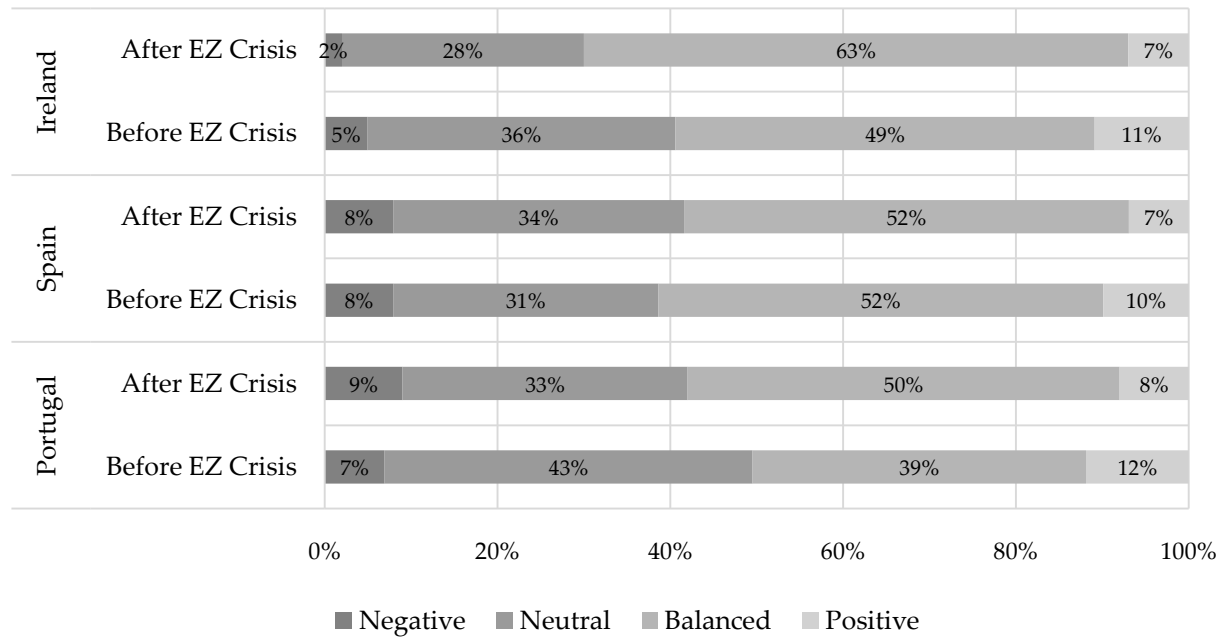
Second, in order to test the hypothesis *that there will be an increasingly negative tone in economic news following the onset of the Eurozone crisis in all countries considered* (H2)- the analysis will be only focused on the economic articles that mention the EU and the *Tone* will be recoded into a dichotomous scale where 1= *all negative articles* and 0= *all other articles*.

#### 4.2.1 Economic news' overall Tone

Data presented in Figure 4.4 shows that the *Tone* dimension can be characterised by the prevalence of a *neutral* and *balanced* tone covering the economic news in Portugal, Spain and Ireland and a residual proportion of economic articles with either a strictly *negative* or strictly *positive* bias. This trend is present both in economic articles published before and following the onset of EZ crisis on average: indeed, more than 43% of economic articles published before the EZ crisis and almost 42% of articles published after the beginning of the EZ crisis, show a *neutral* or *balanced* tone.

The lack of a clearly *positive* or *negative* bias towards economic topics is in line with some previous studies showing that economic journalists strongly rely on elite and financial sources in their coverage of economic questions (Berry, 2013; Rafter, 2014), reproducing, without substantive critiques, capitalist and neoliberal economic discourses (e. g. Madrik, 2002; Doyle, 2006; Kantola, 2006; Kusyk and McCluskey, 2006; Chakravartty and Schiller, 2010; Sandvoss, 2010; Merrill, 2012). Additionally, newspapers' economic sections offer a rather technical treatment of topics and rely on analysts and experts to interpret the news (Doyle, 2016) due to the complexity and high level of abstraction of economic phenomena (Arrese, 2016). As a result, the economic media tend to privilege an analysis that is not "contaminated" by non-economic approaches (Durham, 2007; Arrese and Vara, 2015) and choose not to provide a platform for deviant voices (Doudaki, 2015). Thus, the absence of a strictly negative or positive tone in economic news allows the media to have an echoing hegemonic interpretation of economic issues (Damstra and Vliegthart. 2016) and a consonant angle concerning the economic discourse.

**Figure 4. 4** Distribution of the *Tone* used in all economic articles, before and after the onset of the EZ crisis, in Portugal, Spain and Ireland



The data presented provide relevant clues on the *Tone* used in the printed press in Portugal, Spain in Ireland to report the economic affairs. Nevertheless, the hypothesis formulated states that the *Eurozone crisis led to an increase of the negative tone when covering European economic articles (H2)*.

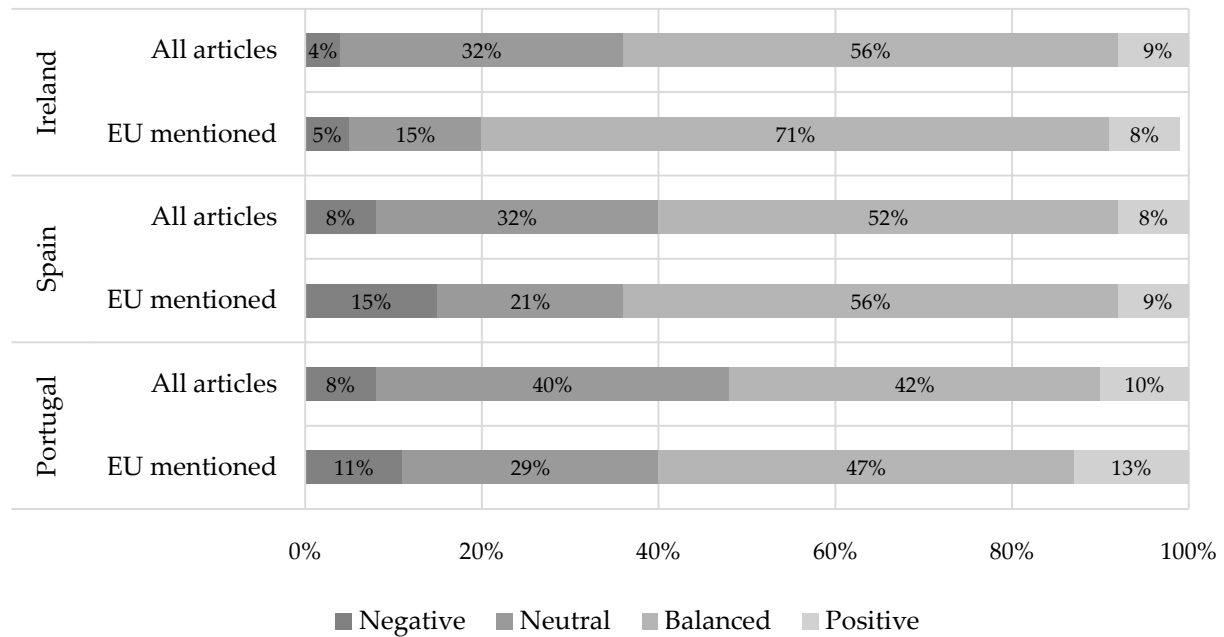
Thus, for a better understanding of media narrative convergence in all countries considered, an additional analysis focused on the European economic articles and distinguished the *Tone* between the two periods under analysis (before and after the beginning of the EZ crisis) and between countries. For that, first I will look to the distribution of the *Tone* in European economic news *vis-à-vis* all economic articles, and then I consider only the EU articles with a *negative* tone.

#### 4.2.2 Tone of European economic news

Considering the *Tone* of economic news in which the EU is mentioned, Figure 4.5 shows that European economic news tends to be reported in a more evaluative fashion than economic articles. The Iberian countries are the ones that present a higher proportion of EU articles with a *positive* or *negative* bias, yet they don't have a similar trend. Spain features the highest proportion of EU articles with a *negative* tone- 7 points higher when compared to all economic articles, while in Portugal the *negative* tone also increases when we consider only EU economic articles. In the case of Irish newspapers, the proportion of EU articles with an evaluative bias is small. Nevertheless, in 13% of European economic articles presenting an evaluative bias, the *negative* tone prevails. In fact, some empirical evidence has shown that the visibility of economic news is related to a negative tone (MacKuen and Coombs, 1981; Mutz, 1998,) which is especially striking when compared to the low share of articles with positive tone (van Dalen et al. 2019).



**Figure 4. 5** Distribution of the *Tone* used in all economic articles and in economic articles mentioning the EU, in Portugal, Spain and Ireland



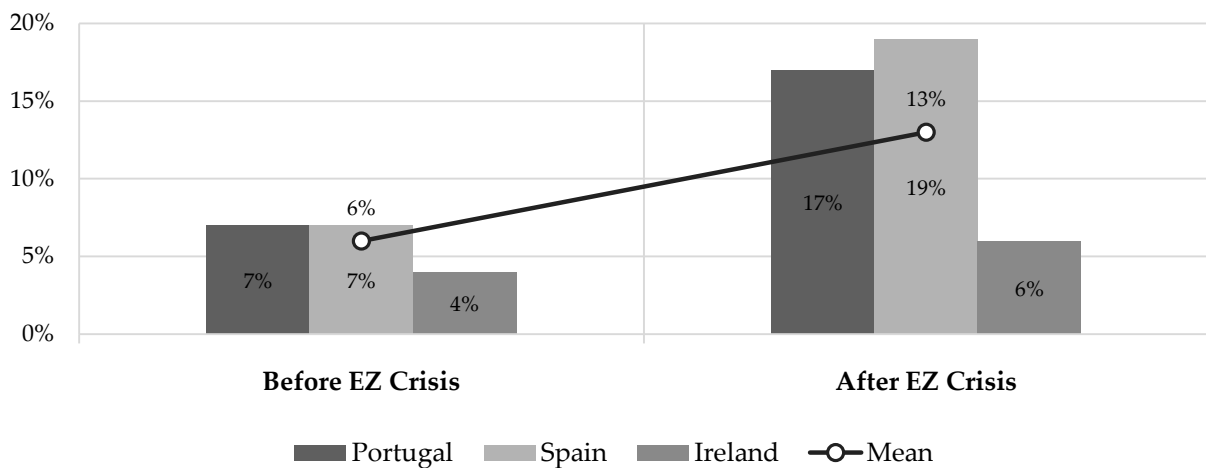
The analysis of the distribution of European economic articles with a negative *Tone*, in Portugal Spain and Ireland (Figure 4.6) supports the second hypothesis that the *EZ crisis increased the negativity of economic news*: on average, before the crisis, the negative tone on European economic news was 7%, and after the onset of the EZ crisis, it was 14%.

Having established that the negative tone tended to increase in debtor countries following the EZ crisis to convey the EU economic topics, it is now relevant to assess if Portuguese, Spanish and Irish media present a convergent pattern on this matter. The evidence can be summed up in two main points.

First, there is a convergence between national media in increasing the negative tone of EU economic news during the EZ crisis. Second, the convergent pattern tends to be sharper in the two southern European countries than it is in Irish media. Both Portugal and Spain present an increase of 10 and 12 percentage points respectively

following the onset of the crisis, above the overall mean (13%). In turn, in Ireland the increase of negativity of European economic news features a residual difference between periods - only 2 percentage points; moreover, the percentage of EU negative articles in Ireland is consistently below the overall mean in both periods analysed.

**Figure 4. 6** Distribution of negative European economic articles before and after the onset of the EZ crisis, in Portugal, Spain and Ireland



The evidence presented shows that the EZ crisis increased the use of a negative tone to report on European economic issues thus confirming the second hypothesis. However, the evidence also shows that the convergence among national media declined in the post-2009 period, in particular in what concerns Irish media. Despite this conclusion, it seems reasonable to assume that the increase in negativity in the European economic articles in Portugal, Spain and Ireland following the onset of the crisis, indicates that the national media share a common understanding of the EZ crisis, namely towards an increase of polarisation about EU economic topics.

### 4.3 FRAMING

In addition to *Media Attention* and *Tone*, the empirical framework applied in this thesis also focuses on the *Framing*, that is how European economic questions are portrayed in national newspapers. As previously explained (see Chapter III), the *Framing* dimension only considers the economic articles in which EU is mentioned.

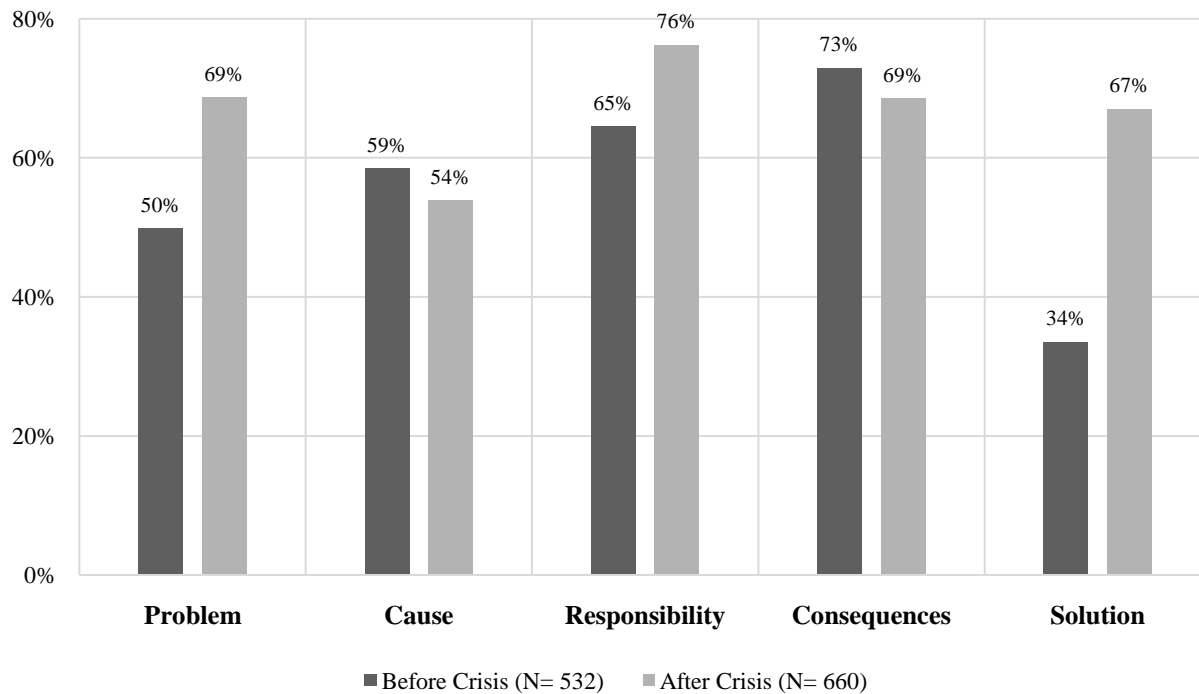
The purpose of this section is to provide a preliminary analysis of the *Framing* dimension in Portugal, Spain, and Ireland, before (2002-2009) and after (2011-2016) the beginning of the EZ crisis. To that end, Figure 4.7 provides an overall picture by showing the relative emphasis given to the five pre-selected frames 1) *Problem*; 2) *Cause*; 3) *Responsibility*; 4) *Consequences* and 5) *Solution* - in EU economic articles, in pre- and post-crisis period; and Figure 4.8 introduces the relative distribution of those frames on national media across countries in both periods under analysis<sup>33</sup>.

The results show that along with the “Consequences” and “Problem”, the “Responsibility” frame appears as one of the most common frames used to portraying European economic news in Portuguese, Spanish and Irish national media following the onset of the EZ crisis. Moreover, the evidence also shows that the EZ crisis context affected the prevalence of specific frames. While the “Consequences” and “Cause” frames feature a decrease of around 5 percentage points after 2011, the “Problem”, “Responsibility” and “Solution” frame faced an increase of 19 and 11 percentage points, respectively. It is also worth noting that despite the “Solution” frame being the least used to portray the EU economic news in both periods analysed, it is concurrently the frame that features the most substantial increase in the post-crisis period, around 33 percentage points.

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<sup>33</sup>As explained in Chapter III, each economic article might contain more than one frame, i.e., the European economic issues might be portrayed using multiple frames. For more, see Appendix A.

**Figure 4. 7** Distribution of *Framing* dimensions before and after the onset of the EZ crisis



Regarding the cross-country distribution of the frames, Figure 4.8 shows that the EZ crisis deepened the convergent trend in Portugal, Spain, and Ireland, in particular in what concerns the “Consequences”, “Responsibility” and “Problem” frames.

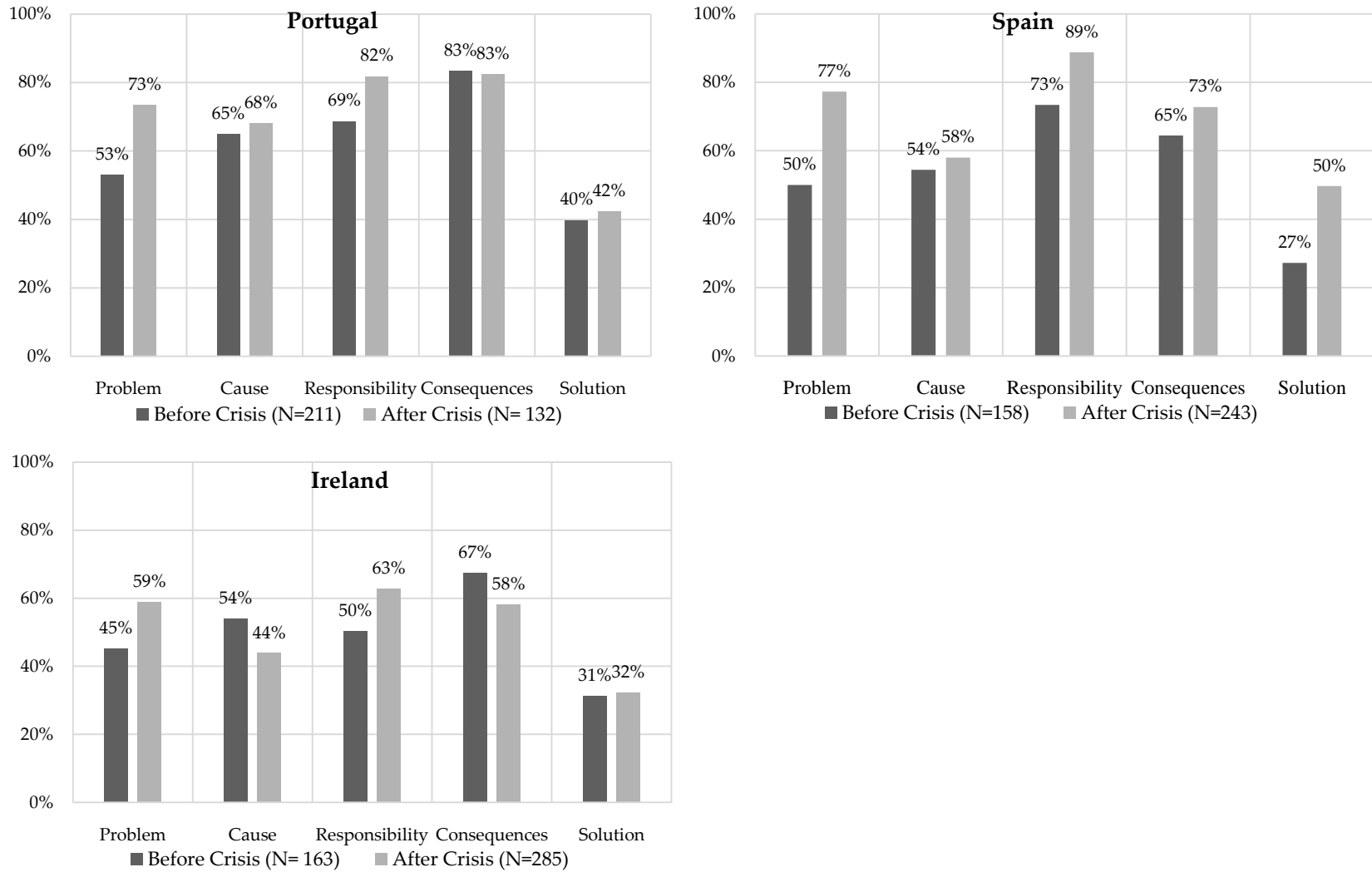
In the pre-crisis period, there was, already, a media convergence in the use of these frames: the most prevalent frame in Portuguese and Irish newspapers was “Consequences” (83% and 67%, respectively), and in Spain it was “Responsibility” (73%).

The onset of the crisis reinforced this convergent pattern. The “Consequences” frame remained as one of the most used to portray the EU economic topics in Portuguese, Spanish and Irish media, however the “Responsibility” frame gained a greater relevance, becoming the most prevalent in Spain (89%) and Ireland (63%) and the second most predominant in Portugal (82%)-only 1% behind the most prevalent frame (“Consequences”). In addition, the “Problem” frame became one of the most

relevant frames in the post-crisis period- 73% in Portugal, 77% in Spain and 59% in Ireland, showing the most expressive increase in Irish and Spanish media, 14 and 17, percentage points respectively.

Hence, the results broadly suggest that since the beginning of the EZ crisis there is a convergent narrative in Portuguese, Spanish and Irish media in portraying the European economic topics, mainly, according to frames that rely on factual information. Indeed, after the outbreak of the crisis the European economic news were mostly framed in terms of addressing the "Responsibility" for the economic issues, identifying the main "Problem", and signalling the "Consequences" of those issues, leaving the identification of "Cause", and pointing the "Solution" as secondary. Furthermore, the evidence also suggests that the onset of EZ crisis provided a common ground to national media in debtor countries to increase the convergence. Portugal, Spain, and Ireland seem to share a similar understanding of what should be the most prevalent frame when portraying the EU economic news after 2011: attributing the "Responsibility" for the European economic issues.

**Figure 4. 8** Average distribution of *Framing* dimensions before and after the onset of the EZ crisis, in Portugal, Spain and Ireland



The aim of the analysis presented above is not to provide a full description of the media convergence regarding the *Framing* dimension. The goal is to deliver a first picture of how the national media in Portugal, Spain and Ireland portrayed the European economic issues and setting the ground to test the emergence of an EPS following the onset of the EZ crisis.

As explained in Chapter III, each *Framing* dimension encompasses several sub-frames, that allow us to establish the convergence of media narratives within each dimension<sup>34</sup>. Therefore, in the next Chapter an in-depth look into these sub-frames will be presented, firstly to assess the convergence within each *Framing* dimension and secondly to test if that convergence promotes the deepening of a European Public Sphere.

#### 4.4 SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

The analysis of the European economic news published in six mainstream newspapers in Portugal, Spain, and Ireland before (2002-2009) and after (2011-2016) the onset of Great Recession has shown that European media narratives in the three countries are convergent. Moreover, it has shown that this convergence is particularly notable after the beginning of the crisis, which seems to suggest that the EZ crisis context contributed to increasing the convergence about European economic topics among debtor countries.

This convergence is sustained in three main results. First, the national media in the three *countries converge in the increased attention given to the EU in the post-2009 period*. Second, in their coverage, the national media *amplified the negative tone when covering the European economic articles*, particularly when compared to the period before the crisis

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<sup>34</sup> See Chapter III, for information about subframes measurement.

and with the articles that did not address the EU. Third, there is a trend on the part of mainstream newspapers to *prioritise frames that relied on factual information, in particular in 2011-2016*.

Results clearly show that following the onset of the EZ crisis Portugal, Spain and Ireland are highly convergent, increasing the *Media Attention* to EU economic issues, which supports the first hypothesis of this thesis. The three countries also displayed another common feature in the post-crisis period: more extensive articles but a lower number of news per page. These findings corroborate previous studies on economic news (e.g., Zaller, 2003; van Dalen, 2019) and are similar to those found on the availability of political information related to the EU in national public spheres (e.g., Monza and Anduiza, 2016). The results are also similar to those found on studies about the Europeanisation and EU politicisation that show that as result of the EZ crisis there was an increase of EU's salience in domestic arenas (e.g., Rauh, 2013, Silva et. al. 2021).

Second, evidence was found that the three countries are convergent concerning not only the visibility given to the EU but also the *Tone* used to report European economic news. The *negative* bias when reporting the economic issues tends to be more prevalent in the economic articles addressing the EU, in particular after the outbreak of the crisis, corroborating, therefore, the second hypothesis.

The increasingly *negative* tone in economic news following the onset of the Eurozone crisis should not be underestimated, especially since negative information is powerful in transferring the media's agenda to the public (Wu and Coleman, 2009) and individuals will pay more attention to negative than to positive information (Kim et al. 2002). In the EZ crisis context, this evidence is not surprising. First, because the EZ crisis increased the politicisation of EU affairs which lead to an increase of polarization on how the EU topics were conveyed by national media (e.g., Silva et al. 2021). Second, since “negativity is a central element of economic news coverage in the mainstream



press" (Van Dalen et al. 2019). Moreover, there is a "negative bias" (Soroka and McAdams, 2015:15) in the audience: individuals tend to allocate their attention to negative information and are alerted by it (e.g., Chaffee and Kanihan, 1997; Meffert et al. 2006; Lengauer et al., 2012), which might contribute to link European citizens to the EU affairs and thus promote an EPS.

Third, after the beginning of the EZ crisis most European economic articles choose to portray the European economic issue pointing to the main "Problem", signalling the "Responsibility", and forecasting the "Consequences", leaving the identification of "Cause", and addressing the "Solution" as secondary. These findings might indicate several scenarios.

On the one hand, the prevalence of "Problem", "Responsibility" and "Consequences" frames might indicate a trend on the part of mainstream newspapers to prioritise frames relying on factual information (*Problem*), which anticipate the future outcome and explore the audience anxiety (*Consequences*), providing the clues that help the audience determine who should be accountable for the economic issue (*Responsibility*). In fact, according to the attribution theory, people need explanations for what is happening around them (Weiner, 1985), and when faced with unexpected and negative situations, such as an economic recession or crisis, the search for responsibility is particularly demanding (Van Dalen et al., 2019). In addition, there is a broad consensus that the use of the economic "Consequences" frame when addressing the economy is a relevant feature of mainstreamed economic news (e.g., Valkenburg, Semetko and de Vreese, 1999; Graber, 2009; van Dalen, 2019). On the other hand, the mainstream newspaper might have neglected the "Cause" and "Solution" frames in the post-crisis context, because they are harder to identify given the uncertainty of the economic developments and the lack of appeal to the audience. Regardless of the explanation, such outcomes are in line with other empirical findings that underline the

preference of economic articles to prioritise those frames when reporting economic topics (Valkenburg et al., 1999; Nienstedt, et al., 2015; Joris et al., 2015; Van Dalen, 2019).

Additionally, a preliminary analysis of the *Framing* dimension seems to suggest a higher degree of convergence in European economic narratives between Portugal, Spain, and Ireland, particularly in what concerns the "Responsibility" frame in the post-crisis period. Still, these are preliminary results and an in-depth analysis of each *Framing* dimension, considering each component is required. The next Chapter presents the empirical findings for the five frames and their components, testing the formulated hypotheses, as well as establishing the direction of convergence in the three countries considered.

## CHAPTER V

# CENTRIPETAL OR CENTRIFUGAL? FRAMING AND THE CONVERGENCE OF EUROPEAN MEDIA NARRATIVES

The previous chapter constituted the first effort to answer the first research question of this thesis. For that, it presented detailed information on *Media Attention*, the overall *Tone* and a preliminary overview of the *Framing* dimension showing that Portugal, Spain, and Ireland present a highly convergent pattern when the national mainstream newspapers narrated the European economic issues, in particular following the onset of the EZ crisis. Moreover, the hypotheses tested regarding the *Media Attention* and *Tone* dimensions, seems to uphold the underlying expectation of this study i.e., *the EZ crisis increased the convergence of narratives in creditor countries promoting, therefore, the emergence of an EPS.*

Although the data previously presented provides us with relevant information on the prevalence of specific frames in Portuguese, Spanish and Irish national media, the primary goal of the first research question is to understand the mainstream national media narratives, assessing if they are convergent when reporting European economic issues. Therefore, an in-depth analysis of the *Framing* dimension is required, as it encompasses the most substantive and qualitative information regarding the

convergence of media narratives and enables us to ascertain to what extent the EZ crisis might have contributed to the creation of an EPS.

Hence, this chapter looks to the five frames proposed and its components. Firstly, I analyse each *Framing* dimension, breaking down each component to understand to what extent the national media are convergent when addressing the different aspects emphasised within the frame. Departing from this analysis, the second step entails assessing whether the convergence direction is *centripetal* or *centrifugal*. This step is particularly relevant as it provides a better understanding of the existence of common ground in Portuguese, Spanish and Irish national media regarding the European project and the emergence of an EPS following the onset of the EZ crisis.

The chapter is organised in three main sections. Section 5.1 revisits the previous *Framing* analysis to reveal trends and patterns of narratives. By looking in-depth into the five selected frames – “Problem”, “Cause”, “Responsibility”, “Consequences” and “Solution”- this section tests the formulated hypotheses for each *Framing* dimension. Then, Section 5.2. analyses the direction of convergence by showing if the convergence of media narratives is *centripetal*, aiming at a deepening of European economic integration, or if it is *centrifugal*, not going beyond the national perspective. Finally, Section 5.3 summarises the main results and refines the empirical findings of the previous chapter.

## 5.1 UNPACKING THE FRAMING DIMENSIONS

As presented in Chapter III, five mainframes were coded: “Problem”, “Cause”, “Responsibility”, “Consequences” and “Solution”. These dimensions were drawn from Entman’s (1993) theory, in which frames usually perform the following functions: problem definition; causal analysis; moral judgement and remedy suggestion. Each

frame contains subframes that embodied the different aspects emphasised within the corresponding frame. The operationalisation of each subframe was based on the previous studies about European narratives (e.g., Pfetsch et al., 2010; Touri and Rogers, 2013) and aimed to answer the following questions: *What was the main Problem? Which were the leading Causes?; What actor was primarily Responsible?; Which were the main Consequences?; and What is the best Solution?* Next, each of these questions will be addressed.

In order to test the hypothesis formulated for each *Framing* dimension, the empirical strategy is the following: first, the analysis is divided into two time-frames, before and after the onset of the EZ crisis, by showing the average percentage of each subframe in both periods; then the analysis goes deeper, looking into the average distribution of each subframe in Portugal, Spain and Ireland and comparing the pre- and post-2009 period.

It is relevant to remember that the five selected frames were only coded when the economic articles mentioned the European Union (for more see, Chapter III and Codebook A). Contrary to the previous two dimensions- *Media Attention* and *Tone*- in which it was possible to compare all the economic articles with the economic articles referring to the EU, in this chapter the analysis is solely concerned with the articles that mentioned the EU.

### **5.1.1 *What is the Problem?***

The first step to understanding whether Portugal, Spain and Ireland present a congruent narrative on European economic issues is to determine which was the main “Problem”, according to national newspapers, when reporting the EU economic topics and to what extent the three countries present a similar pattern.

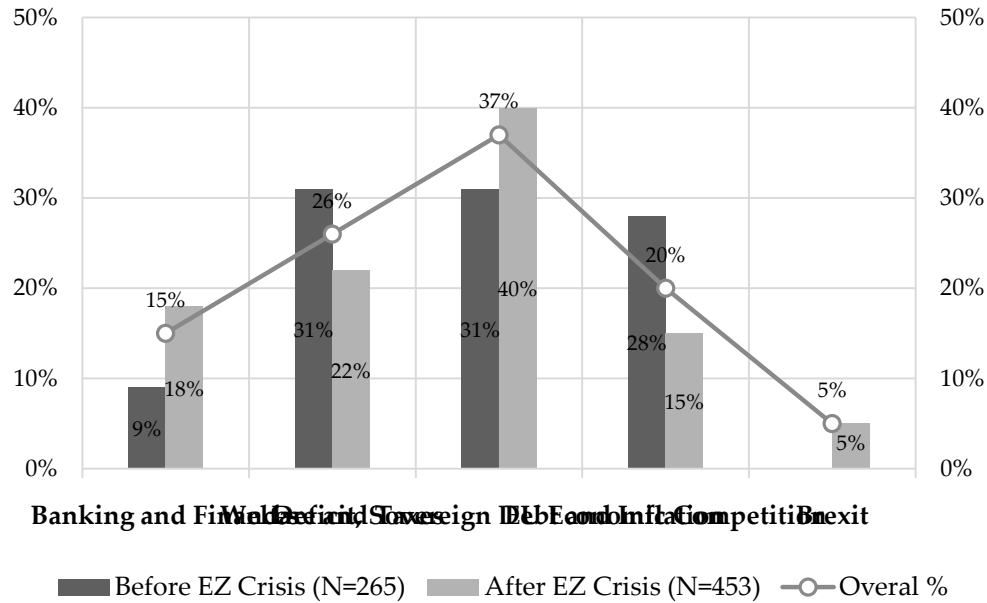
The “Problem” frame is measured through five indicators - 1) *Banking and Finances*, 2) *Welfare and Taxes*, 3) *Deficit, Sovereign Debt, and Inflation*, 4) *European Economic Competition* and 5) *Brexit*- that will be used to test the following hypothesis: *There will be an increasingly similar framing of the “Problem” in European economic news following the onset of the Eurozone crisis in all countries considered (H3a).*

For an overview of how national media in Portugal, Spain and Ireland portrayed the “Problem” identified on European economic news, Figure 5.1 shows the distribution of each indicator before and after the onset of the EZ crisis.

Three main pieces of evidence stand out. First, overall, the EU economic articles tended to report the main “Problem” as been related to the *Deficit, Sovereign Debt, and Inflation* (37%). Second, the EZ crisis context and the subsequent external intervention in the countries considered, led to an increase in 9 percentage points to this specific set of problems. Third, there is a substantial decrease in the percentage of EU economic articles (13 percentage points) framing the problem as belonging to *EU Economic Competition*.

Overall, these results seem to suggest that, especially following the onset of the EZ crisis, the national media framed the main "Problem" of European economic news articles over a *domesticated* angle, emphasising the national constraints that contributed to the economic crisis.

**Figure 5. 1** Distribution of “Problem” frame indicators, before and after the onset of the EZ crisis



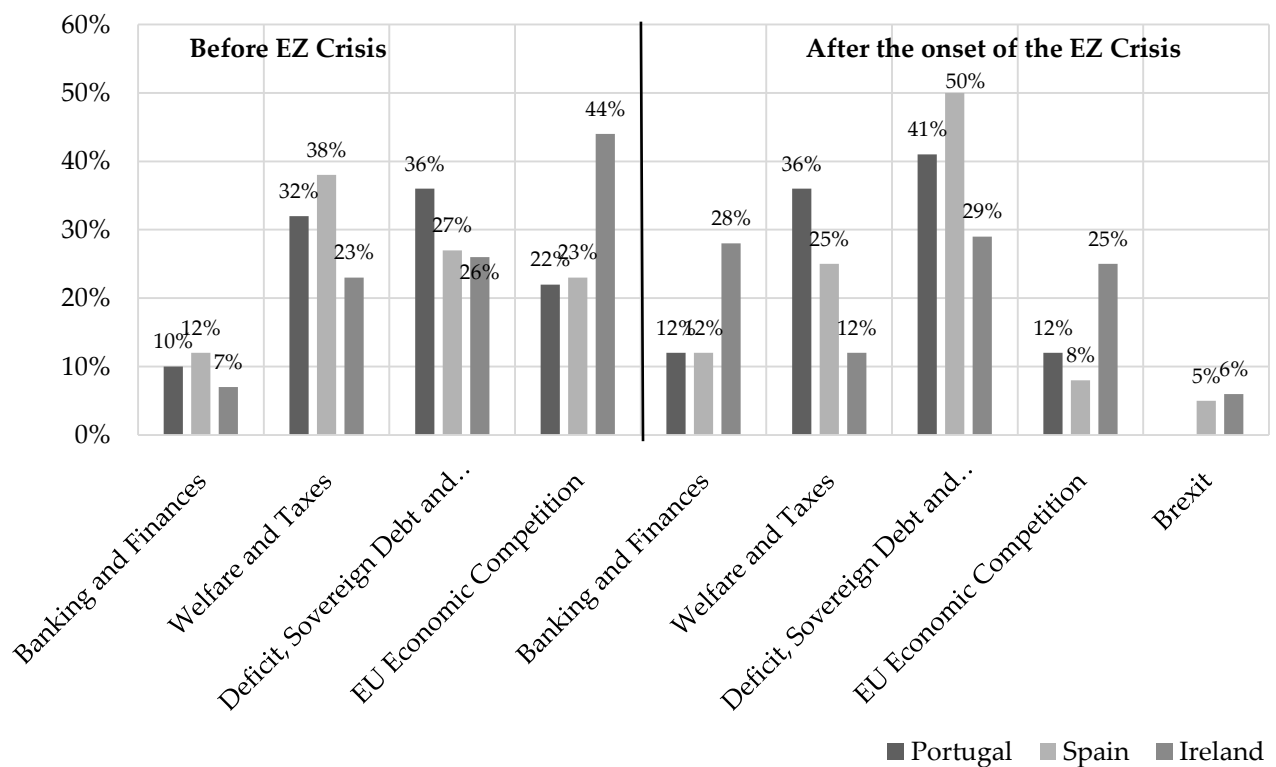
Next, Figure 5.2 shows the average percentage of “Problem” sub frames, before and following the outbreak of the crisis in each country.

The period before the EZ crisis reveals differences between the three countries: whereas in Portugal the most prevalent “Problem” was *Deficit, Sovereign Debt, and Inflation* (36%), in Spain, it was *Welfare and Taxes* (38%) and in Ireland *EU Economic Competition* (44%). The EZ crisis seems to have created the ground for the existence of a common understanding among the mainstream media, in pointing the *Deficit, Sovereign Debt and Inflation* as the main “Problem”- Portugal (41%), Spain (50%) and Ireland (29%). This conclusion reveals that the post-2009 period increased the narrative's convergence in Portuguese, Spanish and Irish national media, which fully supports the formulated hypothesis.

Despite this high degree of convergence between the three countries, the Irish media present at least two idiosyncratic patterns after the beginning of the crisis. First,

the percentage of European economic news that identified the “Problem” as *EU Economic Competition* is substantial (25%) – especially when compared with Portugal (12%) and Spain (8%). Second, the percentage of the subframe *Banking and Finances* increased almost 20 percentage points in the post-crisis period, echoing the nature of the Irish crisis: the core of the economic crisis was a “banking bubble” and a fiscal crisis as a result of the cost of bailing out failing banks (Fanning, 2016).

**Figure 5. 2** Average distribution of the “Problem” framing dimensions before and after the onset of the EZ crisis, in Portugal, Spain and Ireland





### 5.1.2 Which are the Causes?

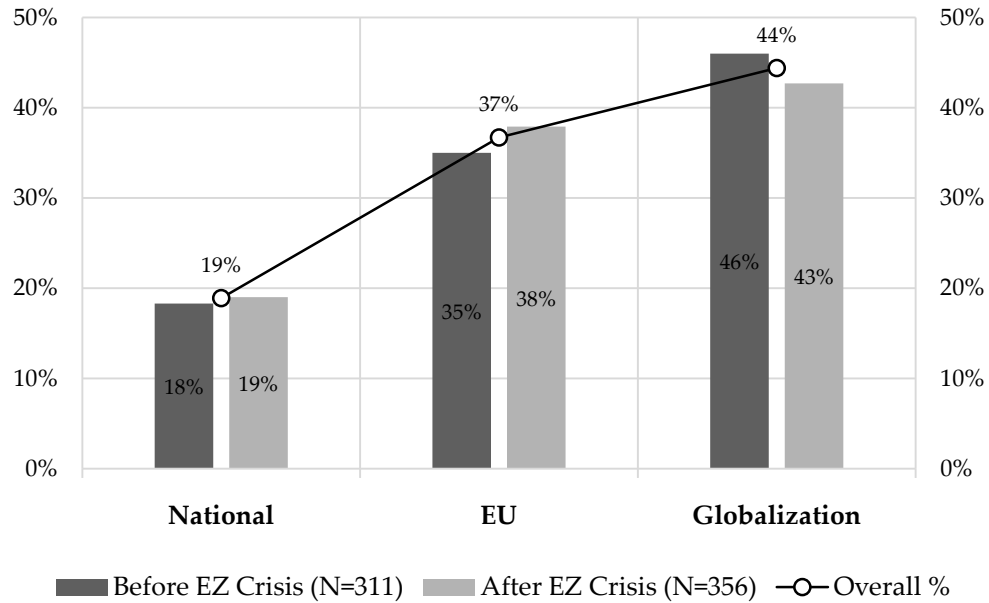
Previously, I analysed how the national newspapers in Portugal, Spain and Ireland framed the European economic “Problems”. Next, I focus on the main cause for that problem. The “Cause” frame will reveal whether national newspapers characterise the European economic issue as a result of *domestic* policies, *supranational* decisions or *international* process. Determining who has, according to the media, caused the problem will establish whether a situation is internal or external, that is, if the situation was caused by an internal actor's actions and abilities, or if it resulted from external circumstances beyond the actor's control (van Dalen et al., 2019).

Therefore, the main goal of looking into the “Cause” frame is to test the hypothesis that *following the onset of the Eurozone crisis the Cause tended to be about European policies, rather than domestic policies or a Globalization outcome in all countries considered* (H3b). For that, this frame is evaluated through three indicators: 1) *National*; 2) *EU*; and 3) *Globalisation*.

The evidence presented in Figure 5.3 shows us an absolute prevalence of *Globalization* as the main “Cause” of the European economic problem in both periods (44%). The results, also reveal that the EZ crisis increased- around 3 percentage points- the prevalence of economic articles signalling the *European* decisions and policies as the main cause, while the amount of news pointing the causes to the *National* level remains very low (around 19% in both periods).

Even though after the onset of the crisis *Globalization* appears as the main “Cause” of the European economic problem, the extant results on *National* and *EU* subframes - seem to corroborate the hypothesis that the EZ crisis increased the prevalence of EU policies or Eurozone policies as the leading cause of the economic problem.

**Figure 5.3** Distribution of “Cause” frame indicators before and after the onset of the EZ crisis



The in-depth analysis presented in Figure 5.4 shows us that both before the EZ crisis as in the post-2009 period, the national media from Portugal, Spain and Ireland present a convergent narrative when portraying the main “Cause” of European economic issues. The data show that there is hardly any change in the cause identified before and after 2009, even though the *EU* becomes marginally more important as a cause and *Globalization* declines slightly.

Before the EZ crisis, there were a consonance in Portuguese, Spanish and Irish national media towards externalization of the “Cause” frame. The three countries tended to agree that *Globalization* was the primary cause of European economic issues (51% in Spain, 53% in Ireland and 41% in Portugal). Besides that, *EU* policies appear as the second most prevalent cause, with Portugal being the country where the *EU* was most identified as a “cause”, followed by Ireland and then Spain. Regarding the

*National* subframe, the three countries hardly differentiate themselves, ranging between 13% in Ireland and 21% in Spain.

The outbreak of the Eurozone crisis changed slightly the patterns above. In general, both the *EU* and *National* subframes increased, whereas *Globalisation* declined in importance.

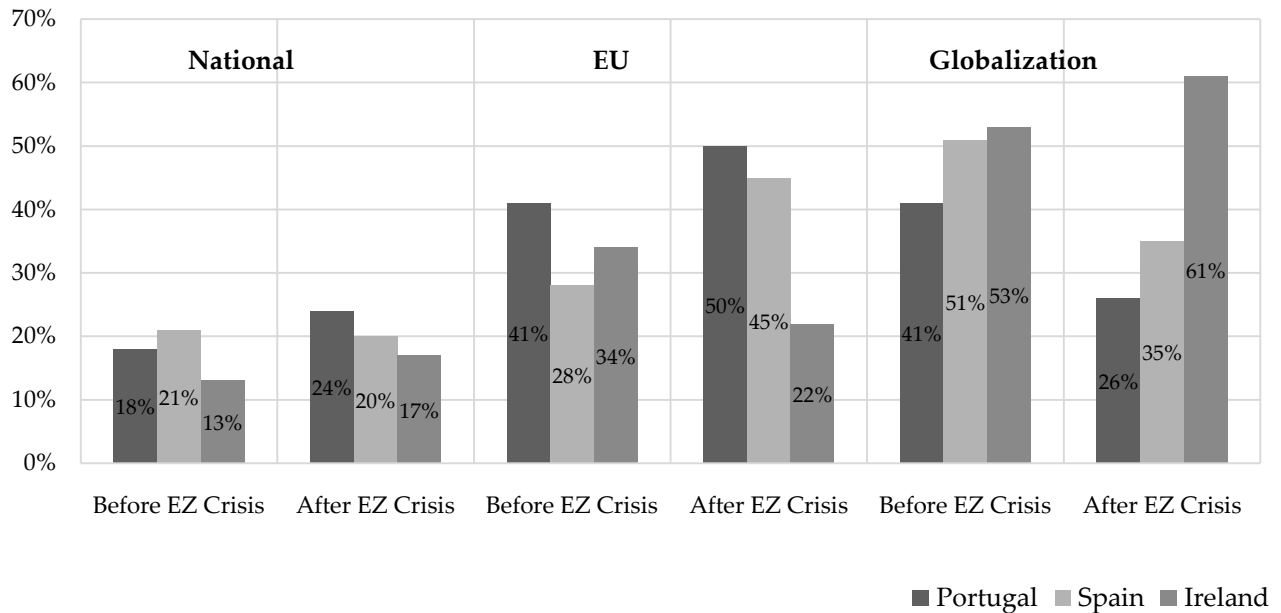
Yet, it is worth noting that the two southern European countries converge on this *Framing* dimension. Indeed, Portugal and Spain placed the *EU* at the core of the main causes for the economic problem, a trend particularly noted in Spanish media that feature an increase of around 17 percentage points between the two periods. Following a different trend, Irish media do not exhibit an increase of *EU* as the primary “Cause” in the post-crisis period; actually, there is a decrease of the salience of this subframe and an emphasis on *Globalisation*, which saw an increase of 10 percentage points in comparison to the previous period.

Third, the identification of *National* subframe as the cause of EU economic issues remains lower than the other two categories after onset the crisis in all three countries; nonetheless, there are some trend differences between them. Even though the *National* subframe continues to be the least used to portray the cause of European economic issues in the post-2009 period, Portugal and Ireland see an increase in the average proportion of economic articles resorting to this dimension, 8 and 5 percentage points, respectively in the second period.

This evidence suggests that the economic crisis context did not contribute to increasing the media convergence between national media among the three debtor countries regarding the “cause” frame. This is due mostly to Ireland, whereas the two Iberian countries do share resemblances. Both Portugal and Spain attributed to *EU* policies the leading cause of the European economic problems in the post-crisis period. Hence, the formulated hypothesis *that following the onset of the Eurozone crisis the main*

“Cause” tend to be about European policies in all countries considered, is confirmed, but solely in Portuguese and Spanish national media.

**Figure 5. 4** Average distribution of the “Cause” framing dimensions before and after the onset of the EZ crisis, in Portugal, Spain and Ireland



### 5.1.3 Who is Responsible?

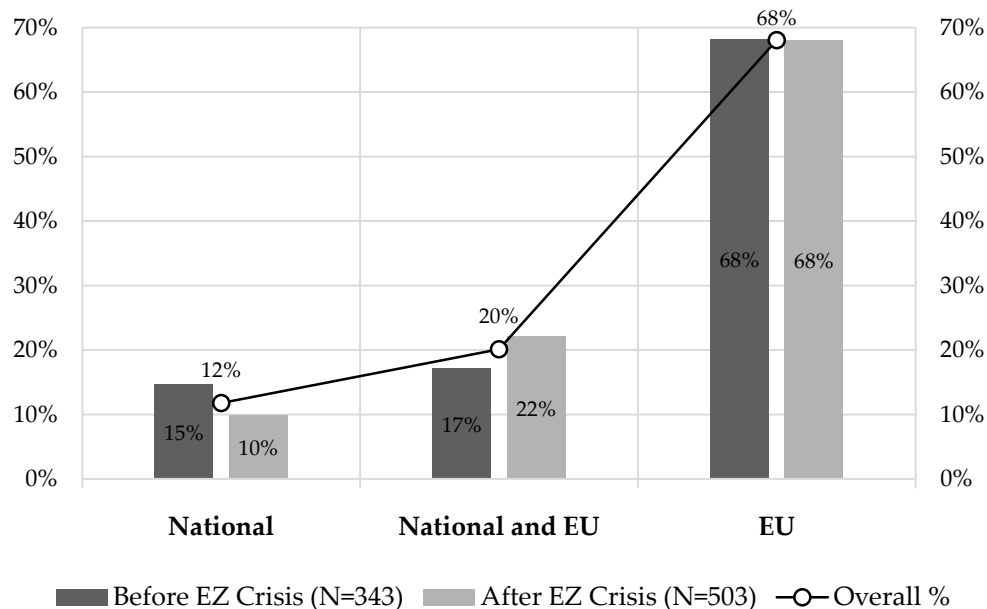
After defining the causes of the European economic problem, the next step concerns assessing the accountability of the issues portrayed in European economic articles. This dimension is particularly relevant because establishing the accountability of European or national actors will define the domestic or supranational nature of the public debate (Pfetsch et al., 2010).

Taking into account the economic crisis circumstances and the European Union context, the formulated hypothesis is that the “Responsibility” frame in European economic news will tend to be about European institutions and actors, rather than domestic actors, during

the EZ crisis period in the three countries considered (H3c). Therefore, this frame is measured through three indicators: 1) *National*, 2) *National and EU* and 3) *EU as a whole*. It is important to recall that the indicator EU as a whole includes all European institutions and bodies- supranational and intergovernmental- as well as all EU member-countries<sup>35</sup>.

The results presented in the next graph (Figure 5.5) clearly uphold the expectation that following the onset of the EZ crisis the “Responsibility” frame became less about *National* actors and either more about the *EU as a whole* or about *National and EU*, the intermediate category. Moreover, perhaps surprisingly, the analysis shows that this trend is not only present during the crisis period, but also before it.

**Figure 5.5** Distribution of “Responsibility” frame dimension before and after the onset of the EZ crisis

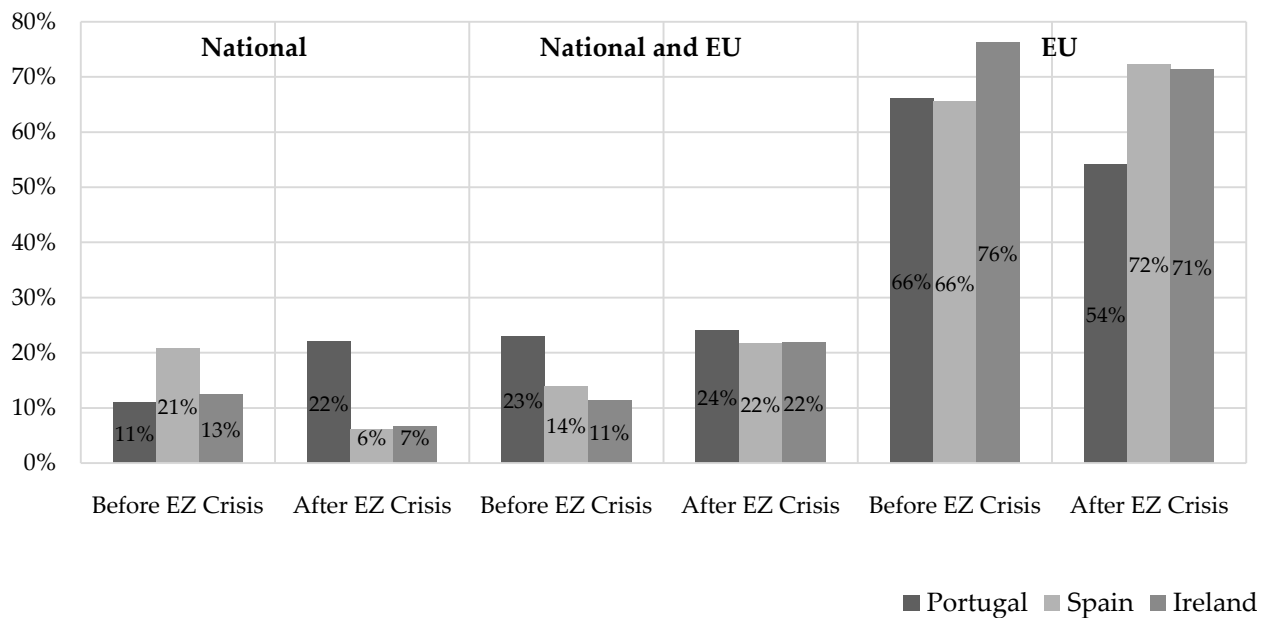


<sup>35</sup> For more, see the Codebook on Appendix A.

The analysis of the distribution of the “Responsibility” frame in each country (Figure 5.6) follows the above-mentioned pattern - the *EU as a whole* is the leading actor to which the main “Responsibility” is addressed in the two periods under analysis. Overall, there is an unequivocal convergence of narrative in Portugal, Spain, and Ireland in both periods: the mainstream newspapers converge in placing the “Responsibility” for the EU economic issues at the *European* level.

It is, therefore, fair to claim that national mainstream media in Portugal, Spain and Ireland present a high degree of convergence assigning the “Responsibility” for European economic issues to the *European Union as whole*, supporting the expectation that following the onset of the crisis “Responsibility” for the European economic articles will be about *EU* institutions and actors, rather than *National* ones.

**Figure 5. 6** Averaged distribution of the “Responsibility” framing dimensions before and after the onset of the EZ crisis, in Portugal, Spain and Ireland



Still, a detailed analysis shows some relevant traits in the post-crisis period. The Portuguese printed press stands out in the way it assigned the responsibility to the *National* institutions and actors in the post-2009 period. In Portugal, the mainstream newspapers tend to increase the amount of responsibility assigned to *National* actors following the onset of the EZ crisis, contradicting the tendency of Spanish and Irish newspapers that placed residual responsibility at the *National* level. The increasing amount of responsibility assigned in Portugal to the domestic level seems to contradict the literature in the field; however, it is not an entirely novel phenomenon. Moury and Standring (2017) had already concluded that, in the context of the economic crisis, Portugal did not present evidence of “blame-shifting” towards the international level. Nevertheless, these outcomes deserve a detailed analysis, and they will be further explored in Chapter VI.

In turn, there is a relevant increase in Spain and Ireland in what concerns shared “Responsibility” between *National and EU* actors. Overall, the prevalence of this subframe is not as expressive as that of the *EU in these countries*; still, it appears as the second most used subframe to portray who is the main actor responsible for the European economic issues after the beginning of the crisis. On average, 20% of articles on European economic issues place the responsibility both at *National and European* levels, which seems to indicate that the EZ crisis amplified what Hobolt and Tilley (2014b) described as a “daunting task” of attributing the main responsibility, in particular in multilevel government structures and policy arenas, in which actors at different levels – regional, national, European and global- can influence economic developments (Hobolt and Tilley 2014b; Bellucci, 2014).

#### 5.1.4 What are the Consequences?

We already know which was considered the main problem by the national media, its broader causes and which actors were held mainly responsible. Now, we must address the implications of the European economic issues, assessing, therefore the “Consequences”. The “Consequences” frame is crucial to understand media narratives in debtor countries, as it reflects the “preoccupation with the bottom line, profit and loss” (Neuman, 1992:63). Moreover, forecasting the economic consequences of the European economic questions might benefit the legitimation of the EU on national public spheres (Firmstone, 2003).

Thus, assuming that the EZ crisis might have promoted the emergence of an EPS, the expectation is that the consequences are attributed to the “European level”, rather than the “Individual” or the “National government” level, following the onset of the EZ in all countries considered (H3d). This dimension is measured through a total of thirteen variables, grouped into three levels: 1) the *Individual* level; 2) the *National* level and the 3) *European* level.

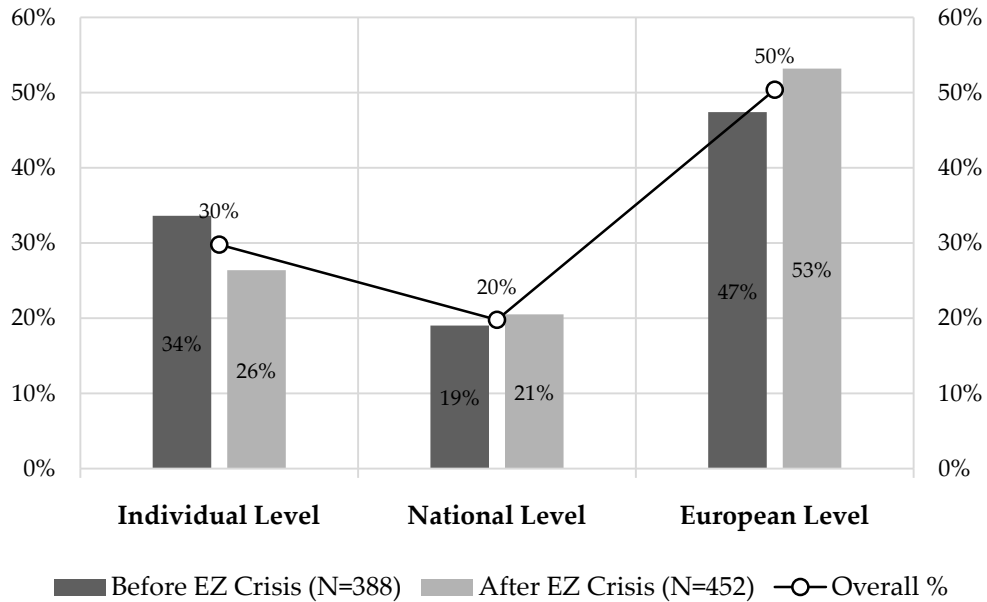
An overall picture of how the national media in Portugal, Spain and Ireland portrayed the “Consequences” frame on European economic news is presented in Figure 5.7. The evidence is clear and confirms our hypothesis: in both periods analysed almost 50% of the economic news published on national media considered the “Consequences” of the economic issue at the *European* level. Moreover, while the consequences at the *Individual* level tended to decrease in the post-crisis period, those linked to the *National* and *European* Level show an increase.

Nonetheless, this evidence needs to be nuanced with an analysis distinguishing between each country, in order to assess the actual degree of convergence among the



debtor countries following the onset of the EZ crisis regarding the “Consequences” of European economic issues.

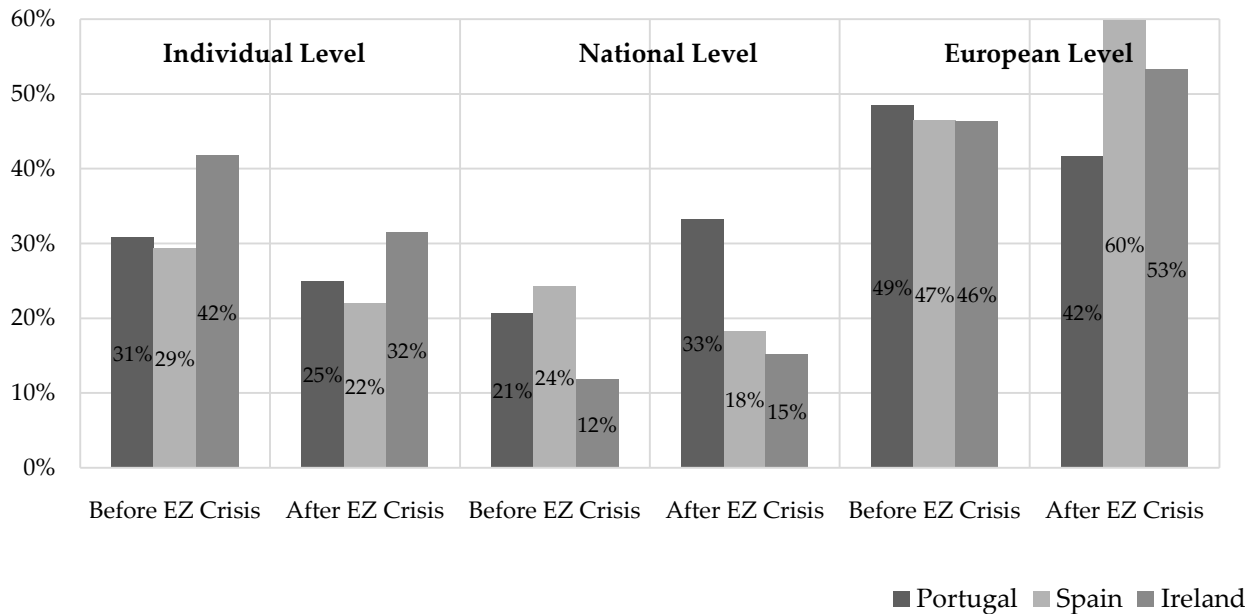
**Figure 5.7** Distribution of “Consequence” frame dimensions, before and after the onset of the EZ crisis



The data in Figure 5.8 reveals that the EZ crisis' context provided the ground to an unequivocal prevalence of the European economic articles framing the “Consequences” at the *European* level, upholding, thus, the expectation that following the onset of the EZ crisis Portugal, Spain and Ireland attributed the consequences mainly to the *European* sphere. Moreover, the EZ crisis furthered the media narrative convergence, in particular in what concerns imputing the “Consequences” at the *Individual* level: all the countries considered present a similar trend of decreasing the proportion of European economic news that framed the “Consequences” in such way.

In addition, there are two relevant patterns in the post-2009 period. On the one hand, in Ireland, the EZ crisis seems to have deepened the tendency to *supranationalise* the “Consequences”, as the outcomes linked to the *EU* increased around 13 percentage points. Spain also saw a similar trend. On the other hand, in Portugal, the national media increased the propensity to *domesticate* it: the “Consequences” attributed to the *National* level increased 12 percentage points whereas those linked to the *European* level decreased around 7 percentage points. Thus, Portugal is the outlier in this dimension, with a trend to “nationalise” the consequences frame.

**Figure 5. 8** Average distribution of the “Consequence” framing dimensions before and after the onset of the EZ crisis, in Portugal, Spain and Ireland



### 5.1.5 What is the best Solution?

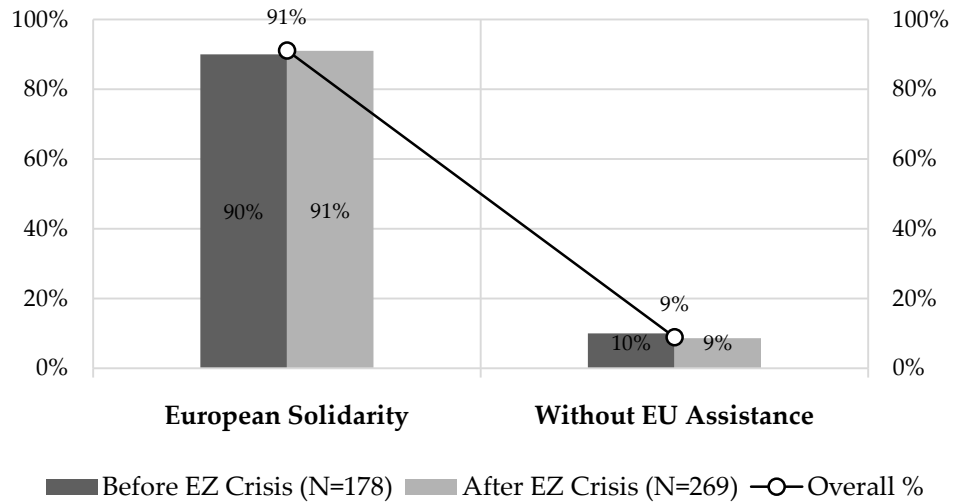
The last step needed to understand the convergence of European narratives in debtor countries is the “Solution” frame. This frame is “future-oriented and problem-

solving in nature” (Iyengar, 1990:23) as it deals with the question of how problems can be solved or prevented in the future. Therefore, the “Solution” frame enables us to perceive which is, according to the mainstream newspapers of Portugal, Spain and Ireland, the best course of action to deal with the European economic issue.

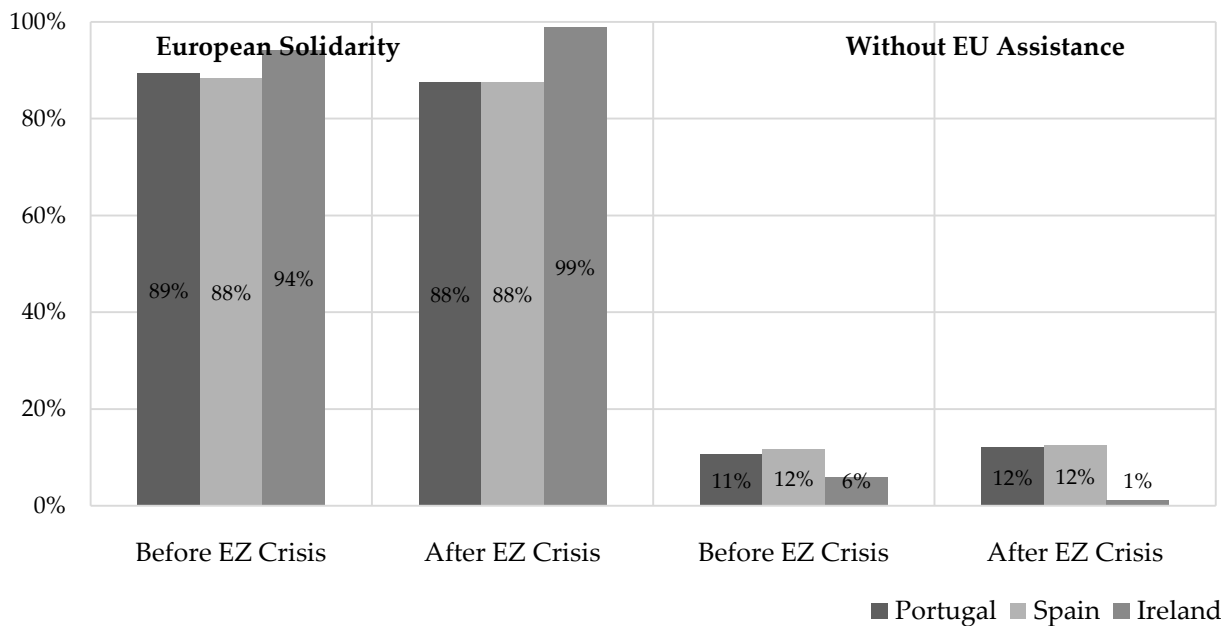
The formulated hypothesis posits that *the European economic news will tend to point to European responses rather than unilateral actions from the national government, following the onset of the Eurozone crisis in all countries considered (H3e)*. Therefore, the “Solution” frame is measured through two indicators: 1) *European Solidarity* and 2) *Without EU Assistance*.

The data presented in Figure 5.9 and Figure 5.10 shows an unequivocal picture that supports the above-mentioned hypothesis: national media in Portugal, Spain and Ireland fully converge embracing a narrative in which the solution to the European economic questions should entail a *European Solidarity*. More importantly, the national media does not report the idea that European economic issues belong solely to national public spheres and should be managed by national governments, without the interference of the EU. This pattern is consistent in the three countries before and after the onset of the crisis and is lined up with previous research showing that European countries attribute the responsibility for solving the problems related to the European economic crisis to the Eurozone members as a group or to the EU institutions (Salgado et al., 2015: 123; Nienstedt et al. 2015:33).

**Figure 5. 9** Distribution of “Solution” frame dimensions, before and after the onset of the EZ crisis



**Figure 5. 10** Averaged distribution of the “Solution” framing dimensions before and after the onset of the EZ crisis, in Portugal, Spain and Ireland



The consistent and clear convergence presented by national media in debtor countries conveys two important messages.

First, the EZ's economic crisis and austerity measures did not weaken the idea among the debtor countries that the key to overcoming the European economic problems must be a cooperative solution with solidarity between the European countries. Second, those same austerity measures did not fade the belief in an EPS, although some trends arguing for more national governments' participation and less intervention from the EU in European economic questions might have arisen.

## **5.2 THE DIRECTION MATTERS**

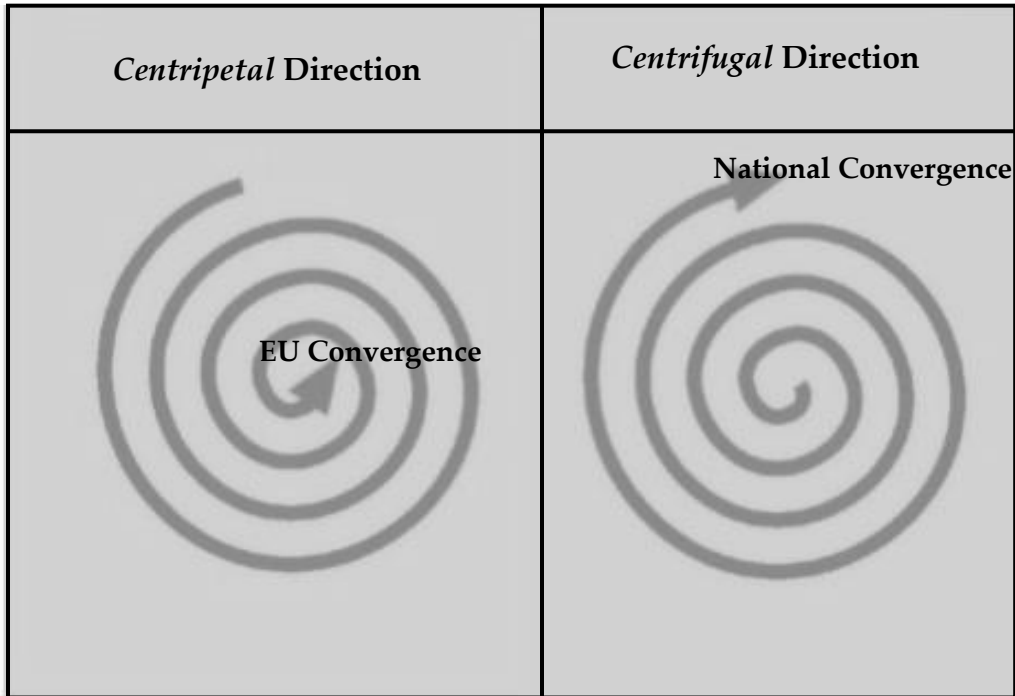
As explained in Chapter III, the Europeanisation process comprises two main principles: national arenas must have an increase of European issues covered by the national media, and the assessment of these issues should be made according to a similar European perspective, that goes beyond the national interests (Gerhards 2000, *apud* de Vreese, 2007). Consequently, the main argument of this study is that if there is a convergent narrative in national media regarding the European economic issues following the onset of the EZ crisis context, it might be a powerful mechanism for the emergence of an EPS, as it will allow a transnational community of communication and will provide a common ground of understanding about the European topics. Still, the idea that the convergence of narratives on European topics might provide a cohesive public opinion about the EU, ultimately shaping the future of European economic integration and the EU project, entails some challenges.

Determining whether the national media are convergent when reporting the European economic issues is crucial. This will reveal if national media agree on the conflict lines to cover the European economic problems on national public spheres

(e.g., Eder and Kantner, 2000; Koopmans and Statham, 2010). However, this information alone does not provide understanding if that convergence is pointing to a deeper European economic integration and advocating the EU project, or instead, unveils an anti-EU feeling and a desire for more national independence on economic matters. Hence, establishing the convergence's direction shows if the national media evaluate the European economic topics in a way that goes beyond the national perspective, furthering the emergence of an EPS.

To establish the direction of European narratives, it is imperative to uncover if the convergence is *centripetal* or *centrifugal*. Only by conducting this analysis can it be possible to evaluate if the frames used by national media are pointing to a direction that promotes a European Public Sphere. As illustrated in Figure 5.11, both *centripetal* and *centrifugal* directions suggest that the national media are convergent and agree on the conflict lines to narrate the European topics; yet, while a *centripetal* direction implies that the national media are convergent in favour of a more consolidated European integration, a *centrifugal* direction denotes convergence that pushes for a perspective that privileges mostly national interests.

**Figure 5. 11** The two types of convergence direction regarding the European economic issues



### 5.2.1 A *Centripetal* or a *Centrifugal* Convergence?

The empirical strategy to establish the direction of convergence is straightforward: in each framing dimension – “Problem”, “Cause”, “Responsibility”, “Consequences” and “Solution”- the most prevalent subframe used by mainstream newspapers in each country is selected for both periods under analysis. It might seem a rather simplistic analysis; yet, considering the most common subframes will provide the information required to assess the direction of convergence as it reveals whether it goes towards a more pro- EU narrative or a more national perspective.

Table 5.1 shows that, both before as after the onset of the EZ crisis the European economic media narratives tended to present a *centripetal* direction, given the EU is at the heart of most frames used to report the European economic issues. Nonetheless, in the pre-crisis period, the degree of consonance is slightly more diffuse, in particular concerning the identification of the main “Problem” and pointing the main “Cause”. Still, the pattern featured by the “Responsibility”, “Consequences” and “Solution” frame exhibit a *centripetal* path. The narratives’ convergence points to a common horizon of reference that has the consolidation of the EU project as the ultimate goal. The national media in Portugal, Spain and Ireland are convergent in attributing the primary “Responsibility” to the *EU* actors, placing the “Consequences” of European economic topics at the *European level* and advocating that the best “Solution” to the European economic issues should be accomplished through *European solidarity*.

The outbreak of the EZ crisis was a decisive moment on the convergence of media narratives in the national media of debtor countries. Although the results indicate that the EZ crisis made no difference to the *centripetal* nature of European economic narrative, actually the post-2009 period seems to have consolidated *the centripetal* direction of that convergence. The evidence found in the post-crisis period corroborates the underlying expectation of this thesis, namely that the Eurozone crisis increased the convergence of media narratives in bailout countries and, thus, promoted the emergence of a European Public Sphere. This assumption is held in two main points.

First, the economic crisis strengthened the *centripetal* convergence among the debtor countries. Except for the “Problem”, the remaining frames used by mainstream newspapers place the European project at the core of their coverage, in such a way that goes beyond the national interest, linking national public spheres to the European Union project. The national media of the three debtor countries assigned the primary



responsibility for the European economic issues to the *EU actors*; in Portugal and Spain, the leading cause are the *EU policies and decisions*. Hence, given the onus of the European economic problems is placed at the *European level*, it could be plausible to argue that these are not optimistic views regarding the convergence direction and might indicate a *centrifugal* path. Nevertheless, considering the EU accountable for the economic problems and assigning EU policies and decisions as the primary cause does not mean that the national media do not follow a centripetal direction, promoting a deepening of European integration.

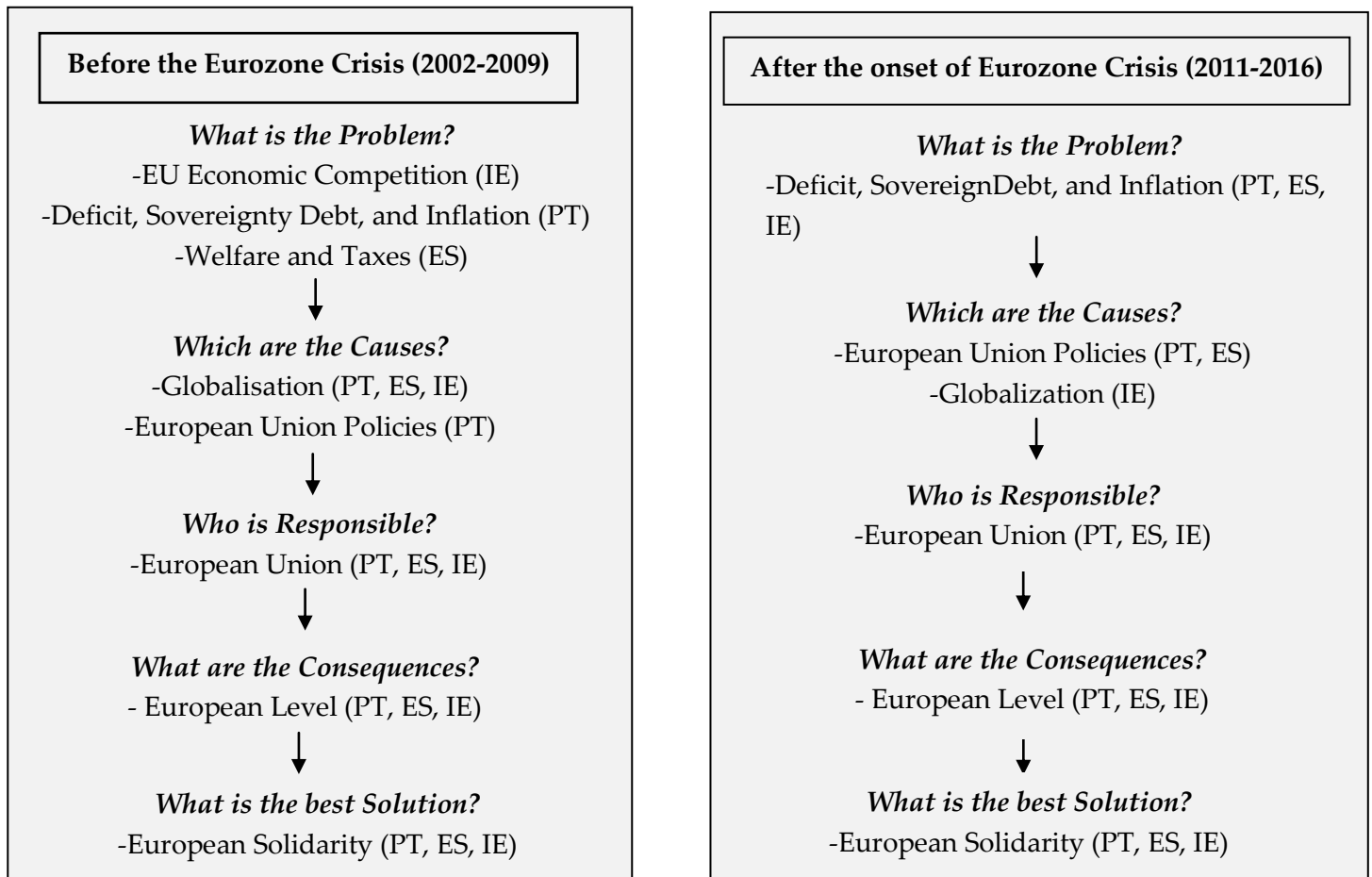
On the one hand, because the national media tended to portray the EU economic issues beyond the national perspective, disregarding the national governments, which by itself already indicates a centripetal direction. On the other hand, because addressing the EU as the cause and the main actor responsible for the economic issues reveals that the national media understand that the EU is a crucial element in national public spheres, capable of affecting economic developments. But, above all, because it indicates that there is a shared sense of belonging to the European project.

Second, the economic crisis and the austerity measures undergone in domestic arenas of Portugal, Spain, and Ireland, were partially imposed by the European Union. This could have set in motion a new centrifugal direction on European economic narratives following the onset of the EZ crisis, especially, because claims for more national governments' participation and less intervention from the EU in European economic questions had arisen. However, the evidence of the convergence direction shows that after the beginning of the crisis not only this did not occur, but most important the EU remained at the centre of media narratives, which shows that the belief in the European project was not undermined.

Consequently, given the highly convergent narratives about European economic topics and the priority given to a narrative that follows the direction towards a deeper

European integration – a *centripetal* convergence- it is fair to claim that Portugal, Spain, and Ireland have promoted the emergence of an EPS after the outbreak of the EZ crisis.

**Table 5. 1** A flow chart of narrative direction before and after the onset of the EZ crisis, in Portugal, Spain and Ireland



### 5.3 SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

This chapter had a dual goal. On the one hand it aimed to explore the *Framing* dimension and its components to assess to what extent the national media were convergent when addressing the different aspects emphasized within each frame. For that, this chapter tested five hypotheses, formulated for the *Framing* dimension. On the other hand, this chapter also evaluated the convergence direction, establishing whether it was *centripetal* or *centrifugal*. This second step enabled us to test the main expectation of this study, i.e., *that the EZ crisis increased the convergence of narratives in creditor countries promoting, thus, the emergence of an EPS*. The evidence found can be clustered into four key findings.

First, there is a *pattern of convergence among the national media of Portugal, Spain, and Ireland*. The evidence shows that, despite some dissimilarity in the period before the EZ crisis, following the onset of the crisis the convergence tended to strengthen among the mainstream newspapers of the three countries. Portuguese, Spanish, and Irish newspapers presented highly convergent narratives in identifying the main “Problem” as being related to the *Deficit, Sovereign Debt, and Inflation*, and pointing to the *European Union* as the main actor Responsible for these economic issues. Additionally, the “Consequences” were assigned to the *European level*, while the “Solution” is framed in terms of *European Solidarity*. This evidence is particularly relevant since it entails the existence of a cooperative framework between national governments and the EU and suggests a common ground of understanding on national media regarding the EU project, which might indicate a step towards an EPS. The only exception to this trend concerns, the “Cause” frame. Whereas Portugal and Spain were highly convergent attributing the leading cause to the *European Union policies*, Ireland tended to privilege the Globalization “cause”. In all countries considered the national media tended to

externalise the causes of European economic news articles, disregarding the National policies as the primary "Cause". This conclusion leads us to the second key message of this chapter.

The evidence found shows a *trend towards an externalization European economic news*, particularly concerning the "Cause" and "Responsibility" frames as the European actors, including both EU institutions and EU countries are more referred to by the national media. Evidence suggests newspapers disregard the national level and national government policies when it comes to pointing the causes and attributing responsibility in both periods analysed. Furthermore, after the onset of EZ crisis, the "Consequences" frame also denotes externalization, with national newspapers mainly assigning the consequences of the economic issue at the *European* level and neglecting the outcomes at the *National* level.

However, it is the "Responsibility" frame the one that distinctly illustrates this tendency: the national media from Portugal, Spain and Ireland converge in attributing the responsibility for the European economic problems not to *National* actors but the *EU as a whole*, that includes not only supranational institutions but also other EU member-states. This evidence appears to suggest that, particularly during the economic crisis, mainstream newspapers from Portugal, Spain and Ireland have been more permissive towards national governments and much stricter with the EU. This scenario is especially challenging since the media are the primary source of citizens' political information and economic news are the first tool that citizens resort to when they need to understand the economic context and performance. But above all, this evidence reveals that the EU and the other European countries are at the centre of the European economic issues, performing a fundamental role in national arenas, which suggests that the media could be contributing to the creation of an EPS.

Nevertheless, we cannot disregard that, especially after the beginning of the Eurozone crisis, disentangling the responsibility for economic issues in a multi-level government structure as the EU is a complex phenomenon given the number of actors involved (Hobolt and Tilley, 2014). At the European level, the crisis led to a supranationalisation of the decision-making process (Hennessy, 2014) and, at the same time, to an intergovernmental turn (Hubé, Salgado and Puustinen, 2015), as some states have been empowered over the Commission and the other states (Crespy, 2013; Ondarza, 2013). Therefore, for a better understanding of the dialectic between the responsibility attributed to *National* and *European* actors, a more in-depth analysis is required. In next chapter- Chapter VI, we delve into what this EU and National level actually means, unveiling which specific actor- both at the *National* and *European* level- is considered mainly responsible for the European economic issues.

Additionally, this chapter also devoted time to assess the direction of convergence, establishing if it is *centripetal* or *centrifugal*. Counterintuitively, the evidence show that the centripetal nature of media narrative was already a trend before Great Recession, and the outbreak of the crisis does not largely change the *centripetal* path or the use of the common frames by national media. The exception to this evidence concerns the identification of the “Problem”. In the post-2009 period, there is an increase of convergence between all the three countries, and, above all, the nature of that consonance tends to follow a centrifugal path, placing the main problem of the European economic issues within of the domestic boundaries – *Deficit, Sovereign Debt, and Inflation*

Regarding the main expectation of this thesis, these pieces of evidence are especially pertinent. On the one hand, a *centripetal* convergence during the Great Recession is crucial to the ambitions of European integration as it denotes that, because the economic crisis and the austerity measures, the national media in debtor countries

tended to evaluate the European economic topics beyond the domestic borders, putting the EU at the centre of domestic arenas, furthering, therefore, the European project and the emergence of an EPS.

On the other hand, the “Solution” frame clearly illustrates this tendency and reinforces the relevance of the *centripetal* path after the beginning of the crisis to the emergence of an EPS, since it is a “future-oriented” frame and deals with the issue of how problems can be solved and/or prevented in the future (Iyengar, 1990:23). The findings suggest that following the onset of the crisis Portugal, Spain and Ireland embraced a solution to European economic issues that demanded European solidarity, and, consequently, rejecting the idea that those issues should be managed solely by national governments without the EU’s assistance. Moreover, sharing the same understanding concerning the best pathway to solve the problems in an economic crisis context and to accept the transference of that role to the EU reveals the existence of common communicative ground regarding European economic issues, and represents a step to a deepening of European integration and European solidarity.

Lastly, the Eurozone crisis *seems to have fuelled the trends above described*. Although the majority of the patterns are found in both periods analysed, evidence suggests that the outbreak of the crisis did not jeopardize the *centripetal* consonance of European media narrative that was a trend in the pre-crisis period. In fact, it steadied the *centripetal* path of narrative convergence, which by itself encompasses a more consolidated European project and gives hope to the emergence of an EPS.

**PART FOUR**

**CONVERGENCE ON THE ATTRIBUTION**

**OF RESPONSIBILITY TO SPECIFIC**

**ACTORS**





## CHAPTER VI

# WHO IS RESPONSIBLE? EUROPEAN MEDIA NARRATIVES AND THE ATTRIBUTION OF RESPONSIBILITY

In the previous chapters, I provided the answer to the first research question namely, *To what extent did mainstream newspapers in Portugal, Spain and Ireland become more convergent when they narrated European economic issues following the onset of the Eurozone crisis?* For that, I systematically summarised the convergence and the direction of European media narratives in Portugal, Spain, and Ireland, according to a multidimensional framework encompassing *Media Attention, Tone, and Framing*. The evidence found in Chapter IV and Chapter V point to a deeper convergence narrative in debtor countries following the onset of the EZ crisis and for a consolidation of the *centripetal* direction, which represents a step forward to the emergence of an EPS.

Furthermore, the evidence showed that the European economic issues tended to be primarily portrayed according to the “Responsibility” frame and that this pattern tends to be consistent in the three countries considered, especially in the post-crisis period. In addition, we found that while the Spanish and Irish newspapers tended to disregard the domestic actors in both periods under analysis, in Portugal the responsibility assigned to national actors increased in after the beginning of the crisis.

The importance of the “responsibility” frame is not particularly surprising. The extant literature has found that the attribution of responsibility frame tends to prevail in media coverage of economic news, as attributing responsibility can act as a powerful frame to shape the public understanding of whom is responsible for a specific economic

issue (e.g., Iyengar, 1990; Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000 Cho and Gower, 2006 An and Gower, 2009; Boukes, 2021). In contrast, the finding concerning the focus on national or supranational actors is worth pursuing, since it raises some issues. Indeed, in a multilevel structure as the EU the boundaries between national and supranational levels are often blurred, a phenomenon that tends to be amplified in an economic crisis context.

Hence, given the theoretical importance of properly assigning responsibility, along with the relevance of the results previously found, this chapter offers an in-depth look at the “Responsibility” frame in order to understand to which actors it is assigned by mainstream media. Whereas in previous Chapters, we distinguished between *EU as a whole* (see Chapter III and Chapter V), EU and national actors and national actors, in this chapter we decompose the broad “EU as a whole” category into the following components: *EU supranational Institutions and intergovernmental actors*.

The question that remains to be answered is not whether mainstream newspapers in Portugal, Spain and Ireland converge in what concerns the use of the “Responsibility” frame to portray European economic issues, but to which actors that responsibility is addressed.

In other words, *Which specific actors, both at European and National level, do the national media hold responsible for European economic issues before and after the Eurozone crisis (RQ2)*. The presence of specific actors at the expense of others may have a substantial impact on the emergence and deepening of a European public sphere, particularly in the EZ crisis context, which might help to overcome the democratic accountability deficit faced by the European Union.

This chapter is organised in four main sections. The first, section 6.1, presents a brief theoretical introduction on the attribution of responsibility theory in multilevel systems, specifically the role played by the national media in the attribution of

responsibility. Then, section 6.2 presents the empirical strategy of the chapter- based on the model of clarity of responsibility- and the codification process used to determine to which actors mainstream newspapers attributed responsibility for the European economic issues. Section 6.3 maps in detail the responsibility attribution towards different institutional levels and different actors, over time and across countries, outlining the opposed and complementary narratives in Portugal, Spain, and Ireland. Finally, section 6.4 summarises the main conclusions and connects the empirical findings to the previous chapters.

## **6.1 ATTRIBUTION OF RESPONSIBILITY IN MULTILEVEL SYSTEMS: A BRIEF OVERVIEW**

Responsibility attribution is a core central feature of modern politics (Weaver, 1986; Gerhards et al. 2007; 2009) and it concerns the attempt to identify which factors give rise to which outcomes (Fiske and Taylor, 2007:134). Besides that, the attribution of responsibility is the act of deciding *who* or *what* can be held accountable for certain events (Shaver, 1975,1985; Hobolt and Tilley, 2014a:9). Thus, it is a central component of the study of representative democracy. The classic tradition of democratic accountability is built on the assumption that elections are a sanctioning device in which voters reward or punish incumbents based on past performance (e.g., Key, 1966; Fiorina, 1981; Powell, 2000). Particularly “in periods of economic crisis, as in more normal times, voters have a strong tendency to support any policies that seem to work, and to punish leaders regardless of their ideology when economic growth is slow” (Bartels,2012: 50).

The empirical literature on the *reward-punishment* model has mainly been applied to the performance of economic arena – the idea of economic voting, i.e., voters observe

fluctuations in the economy, attribute responsibility for these fluctuations to the incumbent, and vote accordingly. Several studies have shown that economic indicators - objective and subjective - have a significant impact on government support (e.g., Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier, 2007; Bellucci, et al., 2012; Lobo and Pannico, 2020). Currently, it is well-established that the state of the economy affects voting behaviour: when the government is perceived as responsible for economic developments, economic voting is likely to occur (e.g., Powell and Whitten, 1993; Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier, 2000; Lewis-Beck, 2006; van der Brug et al. 2007; Duch and Stevenson, 2008; Magalhães, 2014). The argument suggests that the attribution of responsibility is an essential link between economic perceptions and vote choice, or governmental approval.

Responsibility attribution has traditionally been structured in domestic politics (Hansson 2017; Weaver 2018); yet EU integration and political authority exercised at EU-level has introduced new actors to the national public spheres and policymaking arena. Likewise, there is an increase of EU politicisation in the arena of mass politics and national media, as they become more salient and contested (Kriesi et al., 2006; Hooghe and Marks, 2009; Grande and Kriesi, 2016, Silva et al, 2021; MAPLE, 2019).

These changes raise some challenges concerning the attribution of responsibility. In short, the problem is the following: when economic developments are attributed to external actors, economic perceptions may matter less for government approval. In turn, voters need to judge which part of economic developments can be attributed to National actors and which part is beyond the government's control. In multilevel government structures and policy areas, in which actors and developments at different levels (regional, national, European, and global) can influence economic performance, the act of deciding who or what can be held accountable is complex (Hobolt and Tilley, 2004a). Indeed, in 2012, Lobo and Lewis-Beck showed that the economy has less influence on vote choice when the EU, rather than the National government, is regarded

as responsible for the economic situation. Similarly, Bellucci (2014) found that the vote choice in Italy was affected by whether voters attribute the responsibility for the economic crisis to international or domestic actors.

The Eurozone crisis and the subsequent increase of politicisation of European topics created ample opportunities for the attribution of responsibility to external EU actors, such as EU institutions or foreign EU member-states governments (Hood, 2011; Gerhards et al., 2013; Rittberger et al., 2017). It also encompassed legitimacy dilemmas for political institutions and actors at both national and European levels. As Habermas (2012:4) wisely argued, during the Eurozone crisis, European governments faced a “dilemma posed by the imperatives of the major banks and rating agencies, on the one side, and their fear of losing legitimacy among their own frustrated population, on the other”. As a result, during the crisis, there was a decrease in vote for mainstream parties and reduction on trust levels (Braun and Tausendpfund, 2014) along with the intensification of decision-making scrutiny (Sommer and Roose, 2015).

As mentioned above, accountability requires that voters can discern whether governments are acting in their interest and sanction them appropriately (Manin et al., 1990: 40). The literature on attribution of responsibility in multilevel systems has shown that the way voters attribute responsibility reflects not merely the institutional divisions of responsibility, but also individual perceptions (Hobolt and Tilley, 2014b). Accordingly, we can distinguish two mechanisms enabling citizens to make sense of whom is responsible, therefore properly attributing responsibility.

The first mechanism is *functional responsibility*, and it refers to the obligations that people or institutions are expected to fulfil (Powell and Whitten, 1993). It is related to the institutional context and the way people's views are shaped by the institutional differences among countries as well by the changes on the economic and political frameworks. The second mechanism is related to the individual level and concerns the

pre-existing attitudes that citizens hold about the institutions and their individual biases. Heider (1958/2013) labelled it as *causal responsibility* and one of its main features is the focus on voters' judgements and how their prior political beliefs, mainly their partisanship, conditioned the causal link of responsibility (Rudolph, 2003). A good illustration of how individual bias might have a strong effect on responsibility judgements was presented by Hobolt and Tilley (2014b), showing that people's feelings about the EU may act as a cognitive bias in responsibility attribution: individuals who feel closely attached to the EU tend to credit it more when things go well, whereas those who dislike the EU tend to blame it more when things go badly (Hobolt and Tilley, 2014b:54). These two components of attribution of responsibility are closely interrelated, as the attribution of responsibility is the link between institutional actors' behaviour and the voters' punishment or rewarding, (e.g., Gerhards et al., 2013; Greuter, 2014; Hobolt and Tilley, 2014a; Vassilopoulou et al. 2014).

The way these two mechanisms enable voters to make judgements and attribute responsibility in a multilevel system deeply relies on the information available regarding those actors. The type of information available about the institutions, actors, and policymaking will be employed by the citizens to bring their perceptions about responsibility into line with the actual divisions of institutional government. Therefore, media have the ability to moderate the relationship between the evaluation in actors' performance and the voters' punishment or rewarding. The argument is straightforward. In multilevel systems, the attribution of responsibility relies both on *functional responsibility* (power divisions within institutions and the actors' performance) and on *causal responsibility* (individual biases and prior political beliefs). Nevertheless, this relationship should be moderated by the amount and the clarity of information provided by the national media.

### 6.1.1 The Media as an enabler for a European Narrative on Responsibility Attribution

The extant research suggest that the attribution of responsibility is affected by institutional-level factors, such as the political system or the openness of the economy (Duch and Stevenson, 2008; Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier, 2013), and also by individual-level factors, such as personal attitudes and predispositions (de Vries and Giger, 2014). Additionally, it has been shown that information cues provided by the media- through the amount of media coverage and its clarity - can affect and shape the way responsibility is attributed (Iyengar, 1994; Hobolt et al., 2013; Hobolt and Tilley, 2014b; van Dalen et al., 2019).

When faced with complex economic developments, the media will help citizens assign responsibility, providing shortcuts and cues to the voters' reward and punishing their representatives at the polls, according to their performance. This process occurs in a two-fold process. On the one hand, media coverage - through the *agenda-setting* and *priming*<sup>36</sup>- makes people better informed. This supply of information might lead citizens to attribute responsibility correctly since the individuals are more likely to assign responsibility according to the institutional reality when higher-quality information about the division of powers is available.

Some studies have endorsed this evidence. At EU level-actors, Hobolt and Tilley (2014a) have shown that when individuals are exposed to high-quality news coverage about the EU, their ability to make more competent judgements about the latter's responsibility increases. De Bruycker and Walgrave (2014) found the same mechanism, showing that the Belgian media associate the Eurozone crisis more with government parties than with the opposition ones, and that the audience, especially that with higher

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<sup>36</sup>*Priming* refers to the process in which the media attend to some issues and not others and thereby alter the standards by which people evaluate candidates and political actors. For further information, see Iyengar and Kinder, 1982; Goidel et al., 1997; Severin and Tankard, 1997; Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007.

media exposure, perceived the crisis as an issue owned by the national government. Similarly, at domestic level, van Dalen et al. (2019) suggested that the more citizens are exposed to domesticated coverage, the more National actors are perceived as responsible for economic developments. In sum, the rationale is the following: when citizens are exposed to news with a domestic focus, they associate the economic event with National actors and, consequently, hold them responsible (Shehata and Falasca, 2014); conversely, when the media associate the economic performance with foreign actors, such as the EU, the perceived relevance of the economic situation for National actors' decline (Althaus and Kim, 2006; Hobolt and Tilley, 2014a).

On the other hand, the way media frame economic events shapes the attribution of responsibility. Assigning responsibility in the news can act as a powerful frame to shape the public understanding of whom is responsible for specific economic issues. Iyengar (1994), in his seminal work "Is Anyone Responsible? How Television Frames Political Issues", showed that certain types of frames could inhibit the attribution of responsibility to National actors and reinforce existing predispositions. The main argument is that when citizens are exposed to an article that portrays societal level attributions rather than individual level attributions, they are more prone to attribute responsibility to the societal level. Additionally, Iyengar distinguished between *Episodic* frames and *Thematic* frames<sup>37</sup>, arguing that the focus on specific events encourages people to think about responsibility at the individual level. In contrast, the focus in a broader context (the so-called thematic framed news) prompts viewer to hold national governments responsible.

Therefore, the ample evidence in the literature suggesting that the "Responsibility" frame prevails on media coverage is not surprising, (e.g., Iyengar and

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<sup>37</sup>*Episodic frames* take the form of a case study or event-oriented report and depict public issues in terms of concrete instances; *Thematic frames* place public issues in some more general abstract contexts and are directed at general outcomes or conditions (Iyengar, 1991; Entman, 1993)



Kinder, 1987, Iyengar, 1994; Valkenburg et al., 1999; Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000). In 2000, Semetko and Valkenburg analysed the Dutch media coverage of an EU summit in 1997. They found that the “Responsibility” frame was more commonly used than other generic frames (human interest, conflict, morality, and economic consequences). An and Gower (2009), after analysing the coverage of financial markets in 2007, also found a prevalence of the “Responsibility” frame, mainly attributed to organisations and individuals. Later, in 2014a, during the 2009 EP campaign elections Hobolt and Tilley found that fewer than 2% of the news framed the event in order to attribute the credit or blame to political institutions. Moreover, among those 2%, the national media rarely attributed the responsibility to the EU, tending to assign responsibility to National actors. Concerning the studies on the attribution of media responsibility in case of multiple levels of government, so far, the only noteworthy research comes from Maestas et al. (2008). In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005 in New Orleans, the authors found that the national media tended to attribute responsibility for the inadequate response of US authorities to federal levels of government, instead of the state government.

Given this theoretical background, why is it relevant to understand convergence of national media narratives in Portugal, Spain and Ireland concerning attribution of responsibility? The answer to this question seems obvious. The task of attributing the responsibility for the economic event is a crucial ingredient for a healthy and functional representative democracy and for democratic accountability.

This assumption applies both to the national level and to multilevel systems. The act of attributing responsibility is the mechanism that citizens resort to, in order to punish or reward the political actors based on of past performances. Bearing that in mind, they need the national media to provide them with information - in quantity and quality - about the actors involved. This supply of information is particularly relevant in

the EU context as it allows us to overcome the challenges posed by the blurred boundaries between national and supranational actors when it comes to attributing the responsibility for the European economic topics.

Additionally, in the EU context, there is an extensive debate about the possibility of the emergency of an EPS and European *demos*. These ambitions tend to clash with critical voices arguing that, given the little public communication on EU topics and the lack of available information on national media to equip individuals to act as competent European citizens, the EU faces a democratic deficit. Herewith, the way national media in Portugal, Spain and Ireland portray the responsibility for economic problems, attributing the responsibility to certain actors instead of others, and a possible common view of whom is responsible for those problems, might represent a step forward towards a deeper European integration and the emergence of an EPS.

## 6.2 ESTABLISHING MEDIA NARRATIVES ON THE ATTRIBUTION OF RESPONSIBILITY: AN EMPIRICAL STRATEGY

Establishing to what extent the mainstream media in Portugal, Spain, and Ireland attribute responsibility for the European economic issues to the same actors is not an easy task. In fact, in a multilevel system as the EU context, the boundaries between national and supranational actors are not clearly demarcated, which makes the task to determine to whom should be attributed the primary responsibility for the economic event challenging.

I tackle this challenge introducing an empirical framework based on the literature on the attribution of responsibility. Hence, I rely on the concept of *functional* responsibility, given this study deals with the institutional context in which Portugal, Spain and Ireland are embedded. Resorting to the idea of clarity of responsibility, I, therefore, distinguish between *institutional* and governmental *clarity*. This strategy

seems the most suitable avenue for the research goal as the *clarity of responsibility* entails the constellation of actors that operate in a multilevel system, allowing to identify at which level the attribution of responsibility is placed.

### 6.2.1 Clarity of Responsibility

As established above, to understand the attribution of responsibility, in this thesis I resorted to the idea of *functional* responsibility. By focusing on the institutional context and institutional arrangements (Silva and Whitten, 2017), I intend to establish who should act and "who has the power to alleviate [...] the problem" (Iyengar, 1996:8). In 1993, Powell and Whitten, on their influential work, claimed that in complex institutional set-ups, the responsibility lines are blurred, making it harder to attribute the responsibility for the economic performance. Thus, the concept of clarity of responsibility<sup>38</sup> has a paramount role on the attribution of responsibility theory.

In multilevel systems, as federal states or the EU, clarity implies that citizens must be able to distinguish between the responsibilities that pertain to different levels of government, since judging responsibilities becomes "intrinsically harder as soon as power is divided and authority shared" (Hobolt and Tilley, 2014a: 22). There is a consensus that the institutional design as well as the institutions' boundaries could affect the attribution of responsibility, and thus institutional clarity is required. Powell and Whitten (1993) developed a *clarity of responsibility index*<sup>39</sup> and unveiled that voters easily assign responsibility for the fluctuations in the economy to the incumbent in

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<sup>38</sup> For a systematic literature review of the clarity of responsibility concept, see Silva and Whitten, 2017.

<sup>39</sup> The clarity of responsibility index consists of five political variables that capture low clarity of responsibility: opposition control of committee chairs, weak party cohesion, politically significant bicameral opposition, minority governments and number of parties in government. Based on this index, the authors divided countries into less clear responsibility systems (e.g., Germany and Italy) and clear responsibility systems (Britain and the United States). For further information, see Powell and Whitman (1993), and also Hobolt, Tilley and Banducci (2013).

countries with a single government party, voting accordingly. Afterwards, other authors added various institutional and partisan factors to Powell and Whitten's index and consubstantiated the need for institutional clarity. Some studies have shown that the formal dispersion of institutional powers makes the attribution of responsibility less prevalent in weak and divided governments- coalitions and minorities- as well in strong legislatures - strong committees and bicameral opposition (e.g., Anderson, 2000; Hellwig and Samuels 2008; Rittberger et al. 2017; Heinkelmann-Wild and Zangl, 2019).

Notwithstanding, the clarity of responsibility index introduced by Powell and Whitten has become very influential and widely used, Hobolt et al. (2013) draw attention to a shortcoming, arguing that those variables did not capture the dynamic characteristics of the different governments that inhabit the unchanging formal institutions. Thus - to enable citizens to make a clear decision on which level of government is responsible for the outcome and which political actors should be rewarded or punished - the authors argued that besides institutional clarity, clarity of responsibility should also encompass *government* clarity. Their basic argument is that formal institutions are not the voters' primary concern, but rather the constitution of governments themselves (Hobolt et al. 2013). So, while the institutional clarity suggests a clear division of powers across levels of government, the latter implies the ability of voters to identify a political actor to whom they can assign the responsibility and sanction.

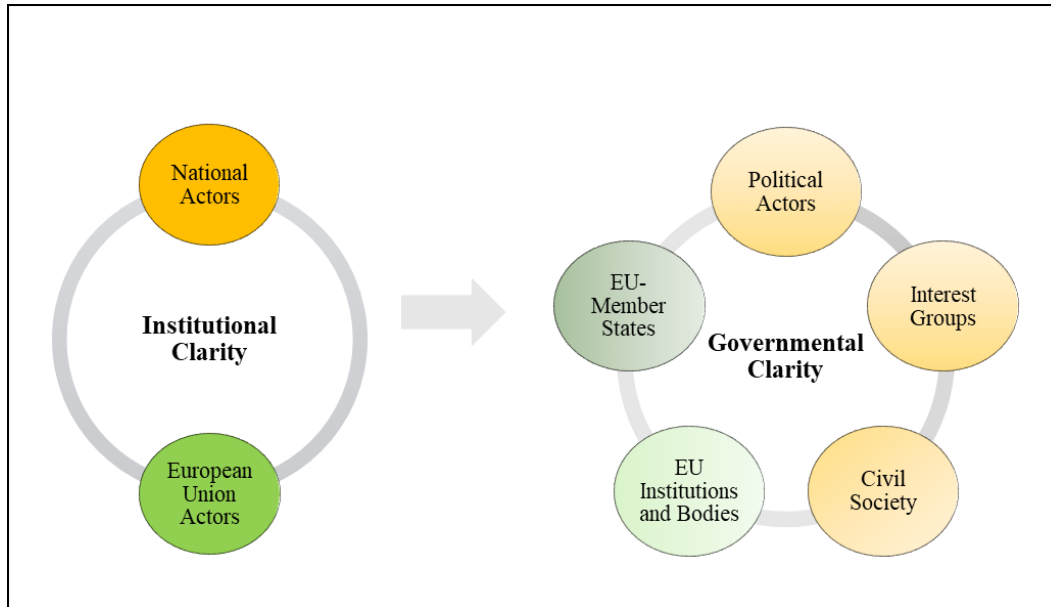
The introduction of the distinction between institutional and government clarity within clarity of responsibility is particularly relevant in multilevel systems. Hobolt and Tilley (2014a:12) stated that "attributing responsibility in multilevel systems is a daunting task" since institutional clarity is often blurred, making it harder for citizens disentangle which level of government is responsible for the outcome (Anderson, 2006). This awareness is particularly accurate in the EU's context, as the responsibility for

some policy outcomes tends to be shared between national and EU institutions, which may lead to policy outcomes being attributed to either level.

Therefore, to assess the attribution of responsibility concerning European economic news, I must tackle the complexity of the EU and the institutional arrangements between and within EU institutions and EU member-states. Horizontally, the executive powers within the EU are shared between the European Commission (supranational body) and the European Council (heads of state and government). In turn, legislative powers are shared between the Council of the EU (national ministers) and the European Parliament (directly elected members). Vertically, the divisions of power between the EU and member-states are often unclear since most competences overlap between national institutions and the EU level (Craig, 2011). This differentiation becomes even harder within the EU's Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), which, in 1999, established the Eurozone. In particular, at the onset of EZ crisis, when the countries that received bailout funds from the EU transferred higher powers to the EU in some economic areas such as fiscal policy.

Against this background, my empirical framework to establish the media narrative on attribution of responsibility has as a starting point the concept of clarity of responsibility, embracing the distinction advanced by Hobolt et al. (2013). Figure 6.1 illustrates how I combine institutional and governmental clarity on actors' attribution of responsibility as well as how these two features are connected. First, I use the differentiation made in the previous Chapter - between *National* actors and *EU* actors - to distinguish the level of government that is responsible for the economic problem (the *institutional* clarity). Then, I look in-depth to *National* actors, as well *EU* actors, both horizontally as vertically, to determine the attribution of responsibility to a specific actor (*governmental* clarity).

**Figure 6. 1** Institutional and governmental clarity on actors' attribution of responsibility



Source: Based on Hobolt, Tilley and Banducci (2013) model of Clarity of Responsibility

## 6.2.2 Coding Scheme

A subsample of 688 European economic articles was taken from my original pool of data to further understand the actors who were considered mainly responsible for the European economic issues. To that end, first, I retrieved the articles in which the “Responsibility” frame was identified and, then I selected and coded the articles that linked the responsibility both to *National* and to *EU as whole* actors (see Chapter III and Chapter V). In previous chapter, the analysis of the “Responsibility” frame at European level, did not distinguish the different actors that operate in the EU. In this chapter, the responsibility attributed to EU level is deepened, disentangling two main European actors 1) *EU Institutions and Bodies* and 2) *EU member-states*. By doing that, it is possible to grasp which specific actors were considered responsible for the economic issue in mainstream newspapers and, thus re-test the hypothesis that the “Responsibility” frame in

*European economic news will tend to be about European institutions and actors, rather than domestic actors, during the EZ crisis period in the three countries considered (H3c).*

In 2000, Semetko and Valkenburg introduced a new framing measurement on the attribution of responsibility, which aimed to capture whether a specific issue or problem was framed in such way to assign responsibility to the government or an individual or group. Notwithstanding, this being a widely mentioned study and having set the ground for a new research agenda on framing responsibility analysis, the items used by the authors to measure the attribution of responsibility were too broad. The authors' understanding of the concept of attribution of responsibility comprises not only who was responsible for the problem but also those responsible for a solution. Given the empirical framework of this study disentangles these dimensions (see Chapter III) - *Responsibility, Problem and Solution*- the typology proposed by the authors is not suitable for my research goal. Besides, the focus of the items introduced by Valkenburg and Semetko were circumscribed to the national level, disregarding the supranational dimension.

Consequently, at the domestic level, I adapted a typology from previous studies, which analyses the relationship between interest groups and the media (Thrall, 2006; Tresch and Fischer, 2015; Hanggli, 2012; Koopmans and Pfetsch, 2007; Binderkrantz, 2012) as well as from the LIVEWHAT EU-FP7 (2013-2016) project and the Monza (2019) research on dominant discourse in media during the Eurozone crisis. At the European level, I partially resorted to "The Euro Crisis, Media Coverage, and Perception of Europe within the EU" (2015) project, especially the codebook concerning which actors should bear the primary responsibility to solve the problem, and also Kepplinger, Kohler and Post's (2015) study on the dominant views regarding responses to the crisis.

National actors were organised in three main groups: 1) *National Political Actors* 2) *Interest Groups* and 3) *Civil Society*. This classification criterion might result rather

simplicistic; however, it illustrates the main branches of National actors that play a crucial role in the national public sphere. Adopting this typology is pertinent to this research because it reveals the responsibility that different types of domestic actors have for national media, according to their role in society. The first group represents the core of the political system and consists of state and political party actors; the second group includes interest groups that have a crucial role on economic questions and tend to be mentioned by the media; lastly, the third group corresponds to civil society actors, mainly at a micro-level, such as national citizens (Table 6.1).

**Table 6. 1**Typology of National actors

<b>Political Actors</b>	- State Actors - Political Parties	Executive, legislative, judiciary economic
<b>Interest Groups</b>	- Market and Finances - Companies - Labour	Market, banks, and credit agencies Private Companies and Employers Unions, Workers and other work-related
<b>Civil Society</b>	- National Citizens - Social Movements	Anti-austerity and occupy movements, reclaim initiatives, right-wing extremist, radical left-wing

Source: Adapted from LIVEWHAT EU-FP7 (2013-2016) project and Monza (2019)

In turn, European actors were divided into *EU Institutions and Bodies* and *EU member-states*. The European Institutions and Bodies were organised according to information provided in the official EU website [https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/institutions-bodies\\_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/institutions-bodies_en) and included a total of 14 official agencies. However, the codification process unveiled that solely eight were mentioned on the national media: 1) *European Parliament (EP)* 2) *European Council* 3) *Council of EU* 4) *European Commission (EC)* 5) *European Central Bank (ECB)* 6) *Court of Justice of EU* 7)



*European Investment Bank*; 8) *European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)*. Therefore, my analysis only comprises these European institutions and bodies. Additionally, I added a ninth variable, the so-called *TROIKA*, as following the onset of the crisis it was particularly dominant on the national public sphere of the three debtor countries considered.

Nevertheless, the EU is a peculiar and complex political organization with an institutional system, which operates through supranational and intergovernmental institutions. Actually, it is often recognized that the EU is a unique political system with mixed characteristics of an international organization, state, super state and federation of states (Heywood, 2011) and, thus, known by the complex interactions between multiple actors, occurring within various levels of governance - the so-called multi-level governance. In this sense, the dimension of EU's Institutions and Bodies is also divided into 1) *intergovernmental institutions* and 2) *supranational institutions* (Table 6.2).

**Table 6. 2** Typology of EU actors

<b>European Institutions</b>	<b><i>Supranational Institutions</i></b>	<b>European bodies</b>	<b>Other<sup>40</sup></b>		
	- European Parliament - European Commission - Court of Justice of the EU - European Central Bank			- European Investment Bank - European Economic and Social Committee	- TROIKA (European Commission, European Central Bank, IMF)
	<b><i>Intergovernmental Institutions</i></b>				
	- European Council - Council of the EU				

Source: Adapted from “The Euro Crisis, Media Coverage, and Perception of Europe within the EU” (2015) project and Kepplinger, Kohler and Post (2015)

Regarding European member-states, the codebook includes all EU member-states; however, once again, during the codification only six countries were referred as responsible for the economic problem: 1) *Germany* 2) *Greece* 3) *France* 4) *Spain* 5) *Italy* 6) *Portugal*. The codification of EU member-states occurs when national media referred that another country has been responsible for the European economic issue<sup>41</sup>.

Table 6.3 illustrates how Portuguese, Spanish, and Irish national media assign the main responsibility for the European economic issue to each level.

<sup>40</sup>TROIKA is only present from 2011 onwards. It encompasses the IMF, the ECB, and the European Commission

<sup>41</sup>When national media assign responsibility to their own countries, the responsibility must have to be coded as been assigned to National actors. For further information, see the Codebook of European Media Narratives on Appendix A.

**Table 6. 3**Example of attribution of responsibility to each actor

Main Attribution of Responsibility	Example
<b>National actors</b>	<i>Las entidades españolas conceden los tipos de interés hipotecarios más bajos de Europa. Pero no así en el caso de los préstamos al consumo o de los descubiertos en cuenta que aplican a sus clientes.</i>  (El Mundo 2004)
<b>EU Institutions and Bodies.</b>	<i>The ECB is making a good first of a bad job (one size fits all), and the exploding money supply is a real inflation threat TODAY will contain quite a little symbolism, as the European Central Bank announces a rise in interest rates in Dublin, two weeks before an Irish general election.</i>  (Irish Independent 2007)
<b>Other EU member.</b>	<i>Crise da dívida volta a ameaçar maiores economias da periferia da zona euro. As incertezas que pesam sobre a capacidade da Grécia cumprir as medidas de austeridade e as privatizações previstas do seu programa de assistência financeira, a par da cacofonia europeia sobre o que fazer da sua dívida, correm o risco de voltar a agravar a crise do euro e contagiar a Espanha, a Bélgica e a Itália.</i>  (Público 2011)

The coding scheme adopted was straightforward. To each dimension- National, EU Institutions and Bodies and EU member-states – a dichotomous code ("yes" = 1 or "no" =0) was given to answer the following questions “Does the article suggest that National actors are mainly responsible for the economic issue?”, “Does the article suggest that European Institutions and Bodies are mainly responsible for the economic issue?” “Does the article suggest that European countries are mainly responsible for the economic issue?”. The items were mutually exclusive, given that only one definite answer was allowed in order to capture the main actor that national media made accountable for economic

issues<sup>42</sup>. If the answer was “yes”, a list of the specific actors of that dimension was provided, and the actor responsible was coded<sup>43</sup>.

To test the methodological reliability of the data<sup>44</sup>, I conducted an intra-coder reliability test and, thus, a random 10% subsample was re-coded two months after the initial coding. Besides that, an instructed research assistant was recruited in order to ensure the inter-coder reliability of another 10% random sample. Overall, both reliability tests showed a satisfactory Krippendorff score ranging from  $\alpha = 0.83$  to  $\alpha = 1.00$ . The Krippendorff's alpha was low in only one case- the inter-code of National actors – with 0.78. This is a modest but still acceptable degree of reliability, which does not jeopardise the validity of the results, especially because the intra-coder reliability of National actors was 0.89<sup>45</sup>.

### 6.3 MAPPING THE ATTRIBUTION OF RESPONSIBILITY

The analysis of the following data should always keep two elements in mind- one methodological and one substantive. Methodologically, it is relevant to clarify that the original data did not disentangle *EU's institutions and bodies* from *EU member-states*. Bearing this in mind, it is crucial, as one of the pieces of evidence found in Chapter V was a prevalence of attribution of responsibility to the EU, to regard the latter as a whole, thus including EU Institutions and Bodies as well as EU countries. Hence, to fully capture to which actors the main responsibility is attributed, in this Chapter the analysis takes into account the differentiation between *EU Institutions and Bodies*, and *EU countries*. This empirical strategy will allow us to re-test the hypothesis

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<sup>42</sup> The codification process followed exactly the same steps described in Chapter III.

<sup>43</sup> For further information, see the Codebook of Attribution of Responsibility on Appendix D.

<sup>44</sup> For a further discussion of theoretical and methodological background regarding the reliability measurement, see Chapter II and III.

<sup>45</sup> Detailed information is given on Appendix E

3c, that posited that *Responsibility in European economic news will tend to be about European institutions and actors, rather than domestic actors during the EZ crisis in Portugal, Spain, and Ireland*, which could result in different- but more fine grained- outcomes from those previously found.

From a substantive perspective, the attribution of responsibility to specific actors refers to a European economic problem and not only to the economic crisis, recession, or austerity. We might, however, expect a European bias in the period after the crisis, given the strengthening role of supranational actors on national public spheres in the most critically affected countries (e.g., Hobolt and Tilley, 2014b; Kepplinger et al., 2015; Monza, 2019; Sommer, 2020; Heinkelmann-Wild et al., 2020). This assumption does not mean that the remaining actors must be disregarded. Effectively, *National* actors were also critical amid the economic crisis context, by assuming a leading role on the implementation of austerity measures, and being responsible for the social, political, and economic issues addressed within European economic articles (e.g., Nienstedt et al. 2015; Hubé, Salgado and Puustinen, 2015; Monza and Anduiza, 2016; Monza 2019).

The results displayed next challenge the previous outcome regarding the “Responsibility” frame. In Chapter V, the analysis showed that following the onset of the EZ crisis the “Responsibility” frame become less about *National* actors and more about *the EU as a whole*. Given this chapter does not assume the EU as a whole and distinguishes the EU institutions and Bodies and EU-Member states the results show that in the two southern European countries, not only the post-crisis period defined a substantial decrease of responsibility attributed to *EU Institutions and Bodies* actors, but, above all, the media attributed the main responsibility to *National* actors. In turn, Ireland presents a unique pattern of supra-nationalisation of responsibility for European economic issues in the post-crisis period, even though Irish media also saw

an increase of responsibility to *National* actors in 2011, at the expense of a moderate decline of responsibility of *EU Institutions and Bodies*.

To better understand this phenomenon, the following analysis maps the attribution of responsibility to different institutional levels and different actors, tracing the trends in the mainstream newspapers of Portugal, Spain, and Ireland. First, I present an overview of the two periods analysed - before and after the EZ crisis. Then, I trace the attribution of responsibility in detail and over time by looking at each national election from 2002 to 2016 in Portugal, Spain, and Ireland; finally, I highlight the year 2011, which is particularly relevant since it marks the first election after the outbreak of the Eurozone crisis in the three debtor countries selected. Indeed, 2011 is the only year in our sample in which there were *simultaneous* national elections in Portugal, Spain, and Ireland<sup>46</sup>.

### 6.3.1 Which actor was considered mostly responsible, before and after the crisis?

Regarding the actors' composition and given that my sample is the economic news in which the EU was present, I begin the analysis looking to the European actors. From Table 6.4 and Table 6.5, we can observe that, before the crisis, the EC (24%) as well as the ECB (20%) are the main European actors selected for responsibility for the European economic problem within the EU institutions category. These results are entirely justified. On the one hand, we are dealing with economic issues; on the other hand, these two institutions assumed the role of economic policymakers within the EMU context (Von Hagen and Mundschenk, 2002; Kaltenthaler, 2006; Schmidt, 2016). Nevertheless, in the post-crisis context, both institutions exhibit a decrease in

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<sup>46</sup> In this case, *simultaneous* does not mean that national elections were held at the same time, rather than Portugal, Spain and Ireland faced a legislative election in the same year. For detailed information see Chapter II.

responsibility attribution as a result of the TROIKA' s presence (22%). In sum, both before and after the crisis, from the constellation of the available European actors, the national media tend to assign the responsibility of the European economic issues to actors playing a fundamental role in EU monetary decision-making process, disregarding those directly chosen by European citizens. In fact, the EP presents a residual value, particularly after the crisis (1%), having decreased 4 percentage points compared to the previous period. Although I can validate these results through my timeframe - the electoral campaign to the national election in each country - the low responsibility attributed to the EP (the only European institution directly elected by the European citizens) expands the arguments claiming that the EU faces a democratic deficit (e.g., Norris, 1997). By strengthening the gap between the EU decision making elites and citizens, it reinforces the idea that the European citizens do not feel adequately represented by the European members of Parliament (Hänggi, 2017; Crum, 2018; Kratochvíl and Sychra, 2019).

Moving to the *National* actors, the percentage of responsibility attributed at the domestic level remains stable across periods (38%), with an unquestionable prevalence of political actors, far ahead of interest groups and civil society. However, following the onset of the EZ crisis, the responsibility attributed to core political actors is amplified 5 percentage points and, concurrently, the responsibility towards the interest groups decreases around 3 percentage points. These patterns can be interpreted according to two premises.

First, our data pertain to the national campaign period in legislative elections. As a result, political actors tend to be more salient in national media and, therefore, blamed more widely for the European economic issues than other domestic actors. Second, political actors, in particular national governments, were in charge of negotiating and imposing austerity measures in each country. Thus, during the electoral campaign, the

national media tend to assign responsibility for the economic performance to national political actors. It is also relevant to stress that civil society displays a quite low percentage of responsibility for the economic problem in both periods (5% before and 4% after). Moreover, media seem to focus very little on citizens or social movements when assigning responsibility. These groups have a residual impact on national economy, whereby it does not make sense to make them responsible for the economic problem.

We gain a new perspective by looking at the share of responsibility granted to *EU member-states*. Before the crisis, the data mirror the power relations within the EU, reproducing the narrative that Germany and France dictated European economic policy (Becker et al., 2016). As a consequence of the arrangement between Merkel and Sarkozy for the sustainability of the Barroso's Commission, in the face of the great enlargement<sup>47</sup>, the narrative of the Franco-German axis as one of the pillars of the European integration was widespread by the national media (Schon-Quinlivan and Scipioni, 2017). More recently, despite the divergent economic trajectories concerning France and Germany, the election of Macron as President in May 2017 increased the likelihood of restoration of a greater political unity between these two countries (Parker and Tsarouhas, 2018).

Notwithstanding, in the post-crisis period, the responsibility attributed to the EU countries by the national media is no longer restricted to Germany and France, with the data exhibiting a more considerable variation. The new pattern reflects the context of the economic crisis that the EZ faced but also the increase in polarisation of the national media (Silva et al., 2021). Therefore, the responsibility of the European economic issues is mainly orientated for the two main protagonists of the crisis: on the one hand, the leading creditor country- Germany (3%), and on the other hand, the infamous debtor

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<sup>47</sup> In just three years (2004-2007), 12 new member-states joined the European Union.



country- Greece (4%). It should be noted that from the three countries considered, only in Portugal is there a significant percentage of responsibility attributed by the mainstream media to other countries (2%, against 0% of Spain and 0% of Ireland). The analysis of each country provides us with valuable information on how the mainstream newspapers of Portugal, Spain and Ireland attributed responsibility to the different actors, and some relevant differences are worth noting.

Irish newspapers tend to assign responsibility in a remarkably different fashion when compared to media of the two southern European countries. Both before and after the EZ crisis, the proportion of responsibility assigned to *National* actors by the Irish media is significantly lower (around 20% in the two periods) than the one exhibited by the Portuguese and Spanish media. In turn, the responsibility attributed by Ireland to European institutions and bodies exhibits the highest value of the sample in both periods (72% before and 66% after the crisis). Despite the decrease of 8 percentage points in the responsibility attributed in the after-crisis period, the data show an increase in the responsibility credited to EU countries, which strengthens the trend of Irish media to disregard the responsibility at the national level and place the accountability of European economic issues, mainly at the supranational level.

In what concerns the two Iberian countries, Portugal and Spain present a similar trend in both periods: a high levels of responsibility attributed to *National* actors. However, while in Spain the attribution of responsibility to *National actors* (48% in both periods) as well the attribution of responsibility to *EU Institutions and Bodies* (44% before and 42% after) and to *EU Countries* (8% before and 10% after) is relatively stable over time, in Portugal the onset of the crisis seems to have shape the way national media attributed the responsibility for the EU economic issues. The prevalence of responsibility attributed to *National* actors become particularly notable in the post-2009 period as the data show an increase in the responsibility attributed to domestic actors of

around 11 percentage points following the onset of the EZ crisis. Moreover, it is in Portugal, that we can see the most substantial decrease of responsibility attributed to *EU Institutions and Bodies* – from 58% before to 34% after the crisis period. In addition, the crisis seems to have increased, around 6 percentage points the responsibility attributed to *EU Countries* by Portuguese media.

Regarding the specific actors of EU Institutions and Bodies, before the crisis the three countries tend to converge in assigning responsibility to the European Commission and the ECB; yet, following the onset of the EZ crisis, this pattern changes, exhibiting some variation among countries. The mainstream newspapers in Portugal and Ireland undoubtedly primarily attribute the responsibility to the TROIKA (21% in Portugal and 32% in Ireland) and then to the ECB and to the European Commission. In contrast, the Spanish media present the lowest value of responsibility attributed to TROIKA (11%), which can be justified by the nature of Spanish economic intervention and the way Spanish government presented the austerity measures. Unlike Portugal and Ireland, Spain never officially received a bailout. The rescue package granted to Spain was earmarked for a bank recapitalisation fund and did not include financial support for the government itself (Buendía, 2018b). Therefore, the leading actor on Spanish financial crisis is the ECB itself (13%) and not the TROIKA.

The responsibility attributed to EU countries also displays differences over time and across national media. Data exhibits a convergence between the Portuguese, Spanish and Irish media in what concerns blaming Germany for the European economic issues before the crisis. However, after the crisis, only Ireland keeps the same pattern: the two southern European countries tend to assign more responsibility for the economic problem to Greece - a debtor country (3% in Spain and 9% in Portugal) - than to Germany a creditor country (1% in Spain and 2% in Portugal). Additionally, looking at the responsibility attributed to the three countries under analysis, some pieces of

evidence are important to note. First, before the crisis, Spain and Germany are the country to which the responsibility is mostly attributed, particularly by the Portuguese media. Second, both before as after the EZ crisis, the Irish media attribute the majority of the responsibility to Portugal. Furthermore, taking the two periods together, Portugal appears as the country with the highest attribution of responsibility- around 5% against 2% of Spain. Third, neither Portuguese nor Spanish national newspapers tend to assign responsibility to Ireland for any European economic issue.

At the national level, the patterns exposed previously remain: the national media of Portugal, Spain and Ireland overtly attribute more responsibility to political actors and less to civil society, and this trend is consistent both before and after the crisis.

**Table 6. 4** Share correspondent to types of actors in the national media by country, before the EZ crisis %

Before the EZ Crisis (2002-2009)																						
	National	EU Institutions and Bodies	EU Countries	Total	National			EU Institutions and Bodies						EU Countries						Total		
					Political Actors	Interest Groups	Civil Society	European Parliament	European Council	Council of EU	European Commission	ECB	Court of Justice of EU	European Investment Bank	EESC	Germany	Greece	France	Spain		Portugal	Italy
Portugal	40	58	2	100	20	15	5	6	-	2	27	19	1	-	3	1	-	-	1	-	-	100
Spain	48	44	8	100	29	14	5	2	-	-	20	16	2	2	1	5	-	3	-	-	-	100
Ireland	21	73	7	100	11	8	3	9	-	-	31	28	3	1	-	1	-	4	-	1	-	100
Total	38	53	9	100	20	13	5	5	-	1	24	20	2	1	2	4	-	4	1	1	-	100

**Table 6. 5** Share correspondent to types of actors in the national media by country, after the onset of the EZ crisis %

After the onset of the EZ Crisis (2011-2016)																							
	National	EU Institutions and Bodies	EU Countries	Total	National			EU Institutions and Bodies						EU Countries						Total			
					Political Actors	Interest Groups	Civil Society	European Parliament	European Council	Council of EU	European Commission	ECB	Court of Justice of EU	European Investment Bank	EESC	Troika	Germany	Greece	France		Spain	Portugal	Italy
Portugal	51	34	15	100	37	12	2	-	-	-	4	9	-	-	-	21	2	9	4	-	-	-	100
Spain	48	42	10	100	33	8	8	3	-	-	11	13	2	-	3	11	1	3	4	-	1	1	100
Ireland	23	66	11	100	12	9	2	-	2	-	9	21	2	-	1	32	4	2	2	1	3	-	100
Total	38	49	13	100	25	10	4	1	1	-	9	15	1	-	1	22	3	4	2	-	2	2	100

### 6.3.2 The Elections Matter

The data presented in this initial overview delivered us an excellent snapshot of how the national media in Portugal, Spain and Ireland attributed the responsibility for the European economic issues, by capturing the different dynamics that underlie national newspapers before and after the EZ crisis and establishing the main actor responsible for the economic problem. Nevertheless, results are compartmented in the two periods under analysis and, therefore, several unsettled questions concerning the attribution of responsibility remain unanswered.

As explained at the beginning of this chapter, the literature on the attribution of responsibility states that the attribution of responsibility for an economic event is a shortcut for citizens so as to be able to punish or reward political parties in upcoming elections (e.g., Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier, 2007; Bellucci, Lobo and Lewis-Beck, 2012). Moreover, it states that in times of crisis, and in multilevel context, it is even harder to distinguish between who has the credit or who is to blame for the economic issue (e.g., Hobolt and Tilley, 2014b; Heinkelmann-Wild and Rittberger, 2020). Therefore, questions such as: *“Does the responsibility attributed to certain actors by mainstream media vary according to the election year?”* or *“Do the mainstream media present cross-country differences in the convergence direction over the years?”* must be answered.

To address these questions, I map in detail how national newspapers attributed the responsibility for European economic issues in each national election from 2002 to 2016, in Portugal, Spain and Ireland.

It is pertinent to reinforce, however, that the time frame includes national elections in each country. As explained in Chapter II, this implies that the years of elections analysed are not synchronous given they did not happen at the same time in all three countries. Nevertheless, this should not be seen as a shortcoming of this thesis, but rather as a novelty. Although the election years are not simultaneous, the period

under analysis represents the same political timeframe, since I analysed all economic news published fifteen days before each national election<sup>48</sup>.

Regarding the first question – *Does the responsibility attributed to certain actors by mainstream media vary according to the election year?* - a close-up picture of the attribution of responsibility to different actors by election year (Figure 6.2) reveals that the degree of responsibility granted to specific actors varied according to the election year, even though Portugal, Spain and Ireland presented different paths. The longitudinal patterns drawn by the data illustrate how distant the national media in three countries are in assigning responsibility for European economic issues.

In Portugal, from 2005 onwards, the responsibility attributed to EU Institutions and Bodies faced a downward trend, particularly in contrast to the 2002 national elections. The 88% responsibility reached in 2002 by EU Institutions and Bodies is not unexpected as 2002 represents the Euro introduction as common currency in 12 EU countries, including Portugal. It is also not surprising that this trend is concomitant with an upward trend of the responsibility attributed to National actors, which peaked in 2011 (69%), when the crisis fully hit Portuguese economy and austerity measures were imposed. Nevertheless, the low percentage of responsibility attributed to EU Institutions and Bodies in 2011 is unexpected. The data features that 2011 was the election year displaying the lowest responsibility to these actors (25%) from the entire sample concerning Portuguese media.

Given it was a foreign actor- the TROIKA- that imposed the austerity measures, I could expect a shared responsibility between National actors and European Institutions and Bodies. However, it is only in 2015, in the aftermath of the crisis, that Portuguese national media tend to share responsibility more equally for economic issues between the national and European actors. It must be also stressed that from 2011 onwards, the

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<sup>48</sup>Detailed information about the time frame selected is provided in the methodological chapter, Chapter II.

responsibility attributed to the other EU countries tended to grow, being especially notable the 10% of 2011 and 18% of 2015, specifically when compared with the absence of responsibility attributed in the previous election year.

By contrast, Spanish newspapers are not as consistent as the Portuguese ones in assigning responsibility for the economic issues to a specific actor, exhibiting a greater variation over time. In fact, in 2008 there is a peak of responsibility attributed to EU actors (around 76%). It is not entirely clear what can justify this peak. Nevertheless, my hint is this proportion of responsibility attributed to actors of EU Institutions and Bodies might be linked to the beginning of the European sovereign debt crisis and the collapse of Iceland's banking system.

However, in 2015 the results illustrate a different scenario. There is an undeniable share of responsibility between EU Institutions and Bodies and National actors, both presenting 45% of the responsibility for the European economic issues. Only six months after, the picture changes again. In 2016 the percentage of responsibility attributed to National actors decreased, exhibiting a difference of 15 percent points, while the responsibility granted to EU Institutions and Bodies tend to upward almost 25 percent points. Concomitant with the Portuguese pattern, the 2011 election in Spain was marked by the lowest percentage of responsibility attributed to EU Institutions and Bodies. Although the responsibility attributed to National actors in 2011 display the most notable increase of the whole period in analysis, the values remain too far from those obtained in 2004, when National actors were held responsible for 64% of European economic news. Similar to the Portuguese case, the 2011 election in Spain also revealed the most significant percentage of responsibility attributed to EU countries by national newspapers. Yet, from 2011 onwards, a pattern of decreased responsibility attributed to EU member-states remains stable and constant in the subsequent elections.

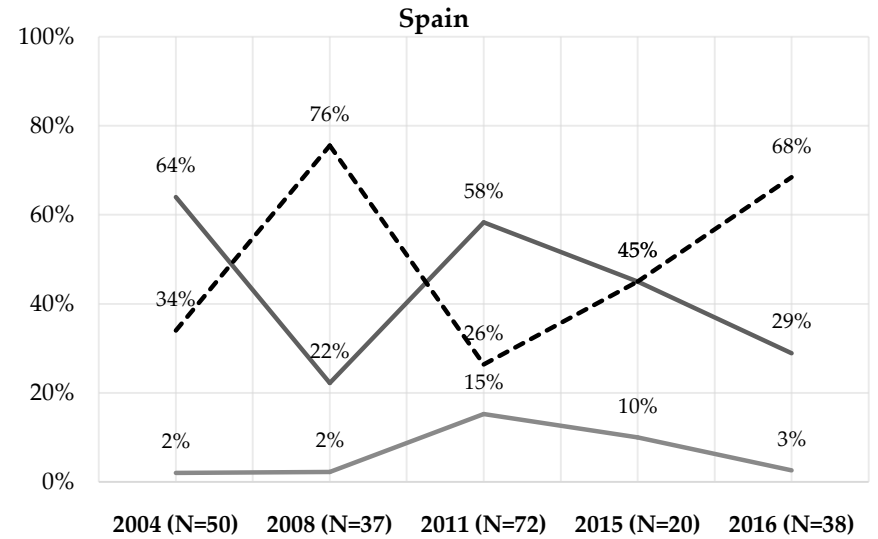
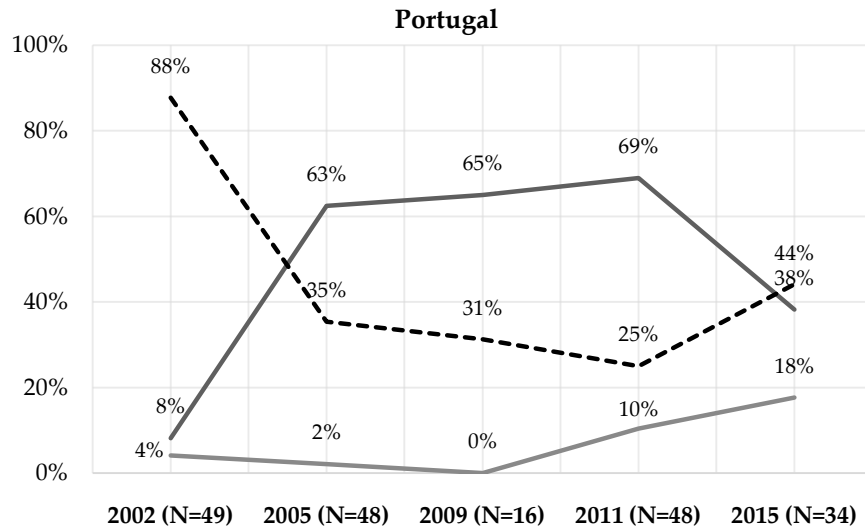


Among the countries analysed, the way Irish national newspapers attributed responsibility is by far the most distinctive. While Portugal and Spain, to a greater or lesser degree, presented some variation on which actors should be held responsible for the economic issue over the election years, in Ireland this does not happen.

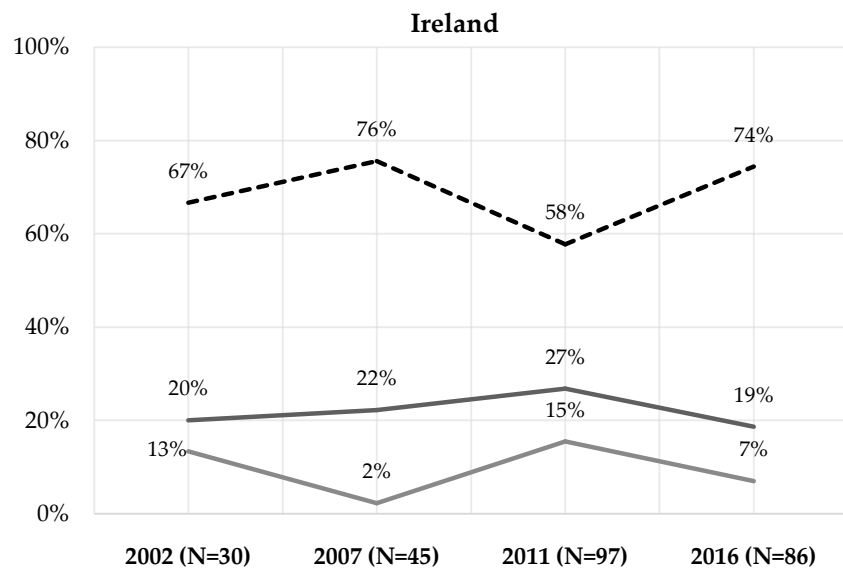
This evidence means that in Ireland the actors from EU Institutions and Bodies were, undoubtedly, the ones to whom responsibility was attributed in a greater extent, regardless of the election year (ranging from 67% in 2002 and 74% in 2016). In turn, the amount of responsibility granted to National actors was systematically low - 2011 included year in which EU Institutions and Bodies exhibited the lowest percentage (58%), and National actors the highest one (27%). In 2016, the Irish newspapers followed the same pattern, assigning responsibility for the European economic issues to EU Institutions and Bodies in more than 70% of the articles, while the responsibility attributed to National actors recorded the lowest number of the whole election years (19%).

Concerning the second question- *Do the mainstream media present cross-country differences in the convergence direction over the years?* - the evidence presented does not point to a clear convergent narrative regarding the attribution of responsibility for European economic issues concerning the national media in Portugal, Spain, and Ireland. Nevertheless, the year 2011 appears as an exception to this trend. The data from the Portuguese, Spanish and Irish media show that national newspapers notoriously tended to assign more responsibility to National actors than to supranational actors, whether considering EU Institutions and Bodies or EU member-countries, even though the latter had exhibited a slight increase of responsibility in 2011. Therefore, to better understand the exceptionality of 2011 in the next section a further analysis is presented.

**Figure 6. 2** Attribution of Responsibility over election



year and country



National

EU Institutions and Bodies

EU Countries

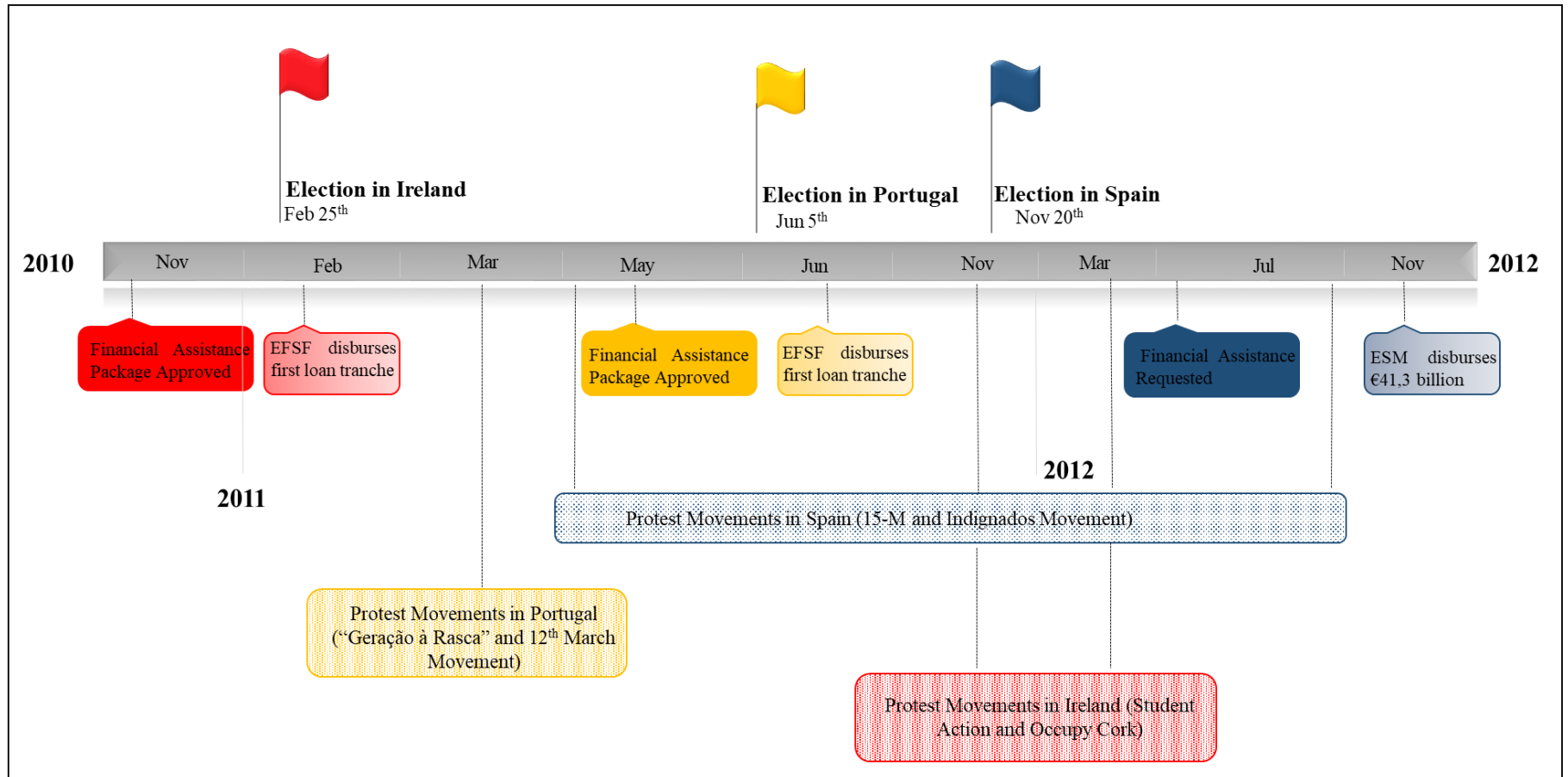
### **6.3.3 2011: The eye of the storm**

The last part of the attribution of responsibility's analysis illustrates which specific actors were considered most responsible for the economic issues in 2011. As illustrated in Figure 6.3, an in-depth analysis of this year is pertinent for three main reasons. First, 2011 represents the only year in which national elections were held in the same period in Portugal, Spain, and Ireland<sup>49</sup>. In Ireland, the election took place on February 25th, in Portugal on June 5th and in Spain on November 20th. Second, in 2011 the three debtor countries were, to a lesser or greater extent, hit by the Eurozone crisis. Although the austerity measures vary from country to country and the moment in which each country started the external assistance program is not the same, 2011 marks the peak of austerity in Portugal, Spain, and Ireland. Third, and as aforementioned, 2011 was the only year in which the three countries presented a similar pattern on the attribution of responsibility for European economic issues: a significant increase among National actors and a substantial decrease on EU Institutions and Bodies' actors. Therefore, it becomes relevant to extricate which specific actors in each level were considered responsible for the economic issues.

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<sup>49</sup>Even though the national elections in Portugal, Spain and Ireland did not take place at the same time, the gap between each election does not surpass the five months.

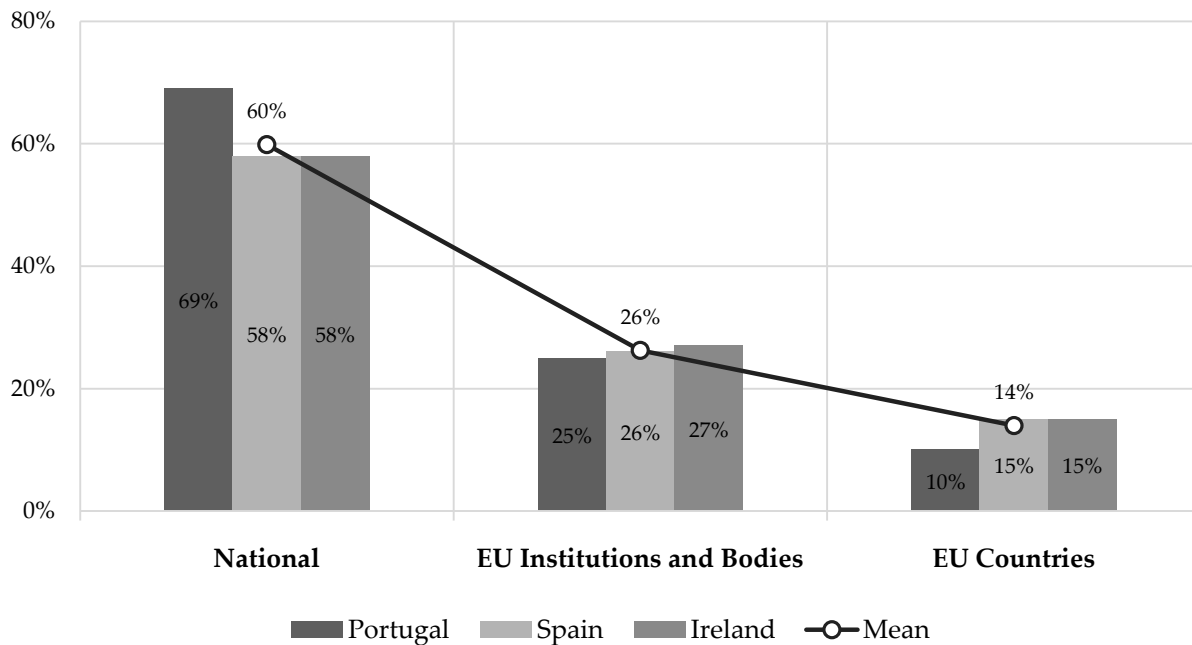
**Figure 6. 3**Chronology of the key moments that surrounded the 2011 elections in Portugal, Spain, and Ireland



An aggregate analysis of the average values of the attribution of responsibility in national media across countries in 2011 (Figure 6.4) reinforces the evidence the outbreak of the EZ crisis dramatically increased the narrative convergence among debtor countries: Portuguese, Spanish and Irish newspapers clearly *domesticated* the attribution of responsibility at the onset of the EZ crisis.

Still, two main evidence are relevant to emphasise. First, the trend to domesticate the attribution of responsibility is particularly remarkable in Portugal (69%) presenting values considerable above the average percentage of National actors (60%). These results consubstantiated the evidence found on previous Chapter: in post-crisis period the Portuguese newspapers featured an increased on responsibility assigned to the National level. Second, in Ireland, the data illustrates that attribution of responsibility tends to be slightly more supranationalised than the two southern European countries, as around 27% of the economic articles attribute responsibility to actors from EU Institutions and Bodies, and 15% to the EU countries. In both cases, the values presented by Irish newspapers are slightly higher than the average value of each actor.

**Figure 6. 4** Average values of attribution of Responsibility in the national media, in Portugal Spain and Ireland in 2011



An in-depth analysis to the attribution of responsibility in 2011 (Figure 6.5) shows a similar pattern among mainstream media of the debtor countries in 2011. Overall, evidence suggests that within *National* actors, are the political ones that are the main responsible by the economic issue: both in Portugal and Spain they represent almost 70% of responsibility and, in Ireland is above 50%. Moreover, the civil society gained minimal attribution of responsibility in national newspapers.

In Spain, the portion of responsibility attributed to civil society by mainstream media is 10 percent points higher than in Portugal or Ireland. In turn, in Ireland, the interest groups exhibit a proportion of responsibility close to that displayed by core political actors. A plausible justification for these values might lie on the one hand, in anti-austerity movements in Spain, (referred as 15-M and Indignados Movement), in

which a series of protests, demonstrations and occupations against austerity policies took place in May 2011 and lasted until the summer of 2012. Even though Portugal and Ireland had experienced similar social movements in 2011 and 2012, they did not have the same impact as the Spanish ones<sup>50</sup>. On the other hand, the responsibility attributed to the Interest Groups- which encompasses private companies, banks, rating agencies, unions- by the Irish newspapers could be related with the primary source of the Irish crisis. Ireland's financial problems started in private companies and affected the banking system profoundly

A detailed decomposition of actors from EU Institutions and Bodies show that the TROIKA and ECB are the actors to whom the responsibility for European economic issues is attributed more extensively by national newspapers.

Portugal illustrates this pattern plainly: 92% of the responsibility was granted to TROIKA and 8% to ECB. In Spain and Ireland, this is also evident; however, the responsibility of these actors is not so prominent as in Portuguese media: both devoted 37% (Spain) and 35% (Ireland) of responsibility to the TROIKA and 15% (Spain) and 36% (Ireland) to ECB. The amount of responsibility devoted to these actors is not unexpected in the context of the EZ crisis.

Concerning institutions with executive and legislative powers, the data shows that actors with executive powers prevailed in two out of three national media. While in Spain the attribution of responsibility to executive powers is confined to the EC (32%), in Ireland national newspapers tend to assign responsibility not only to the EC (21%) but also to the European Council (2%). Regarding actors with legislative powers, solely Spanish newspapers consider them responsible, assigning 5% of responsibility to the EP. Additionally, Spain holds 11% of responsibility to the EESC, and Ireland 4% to the Court of Justice of EU.

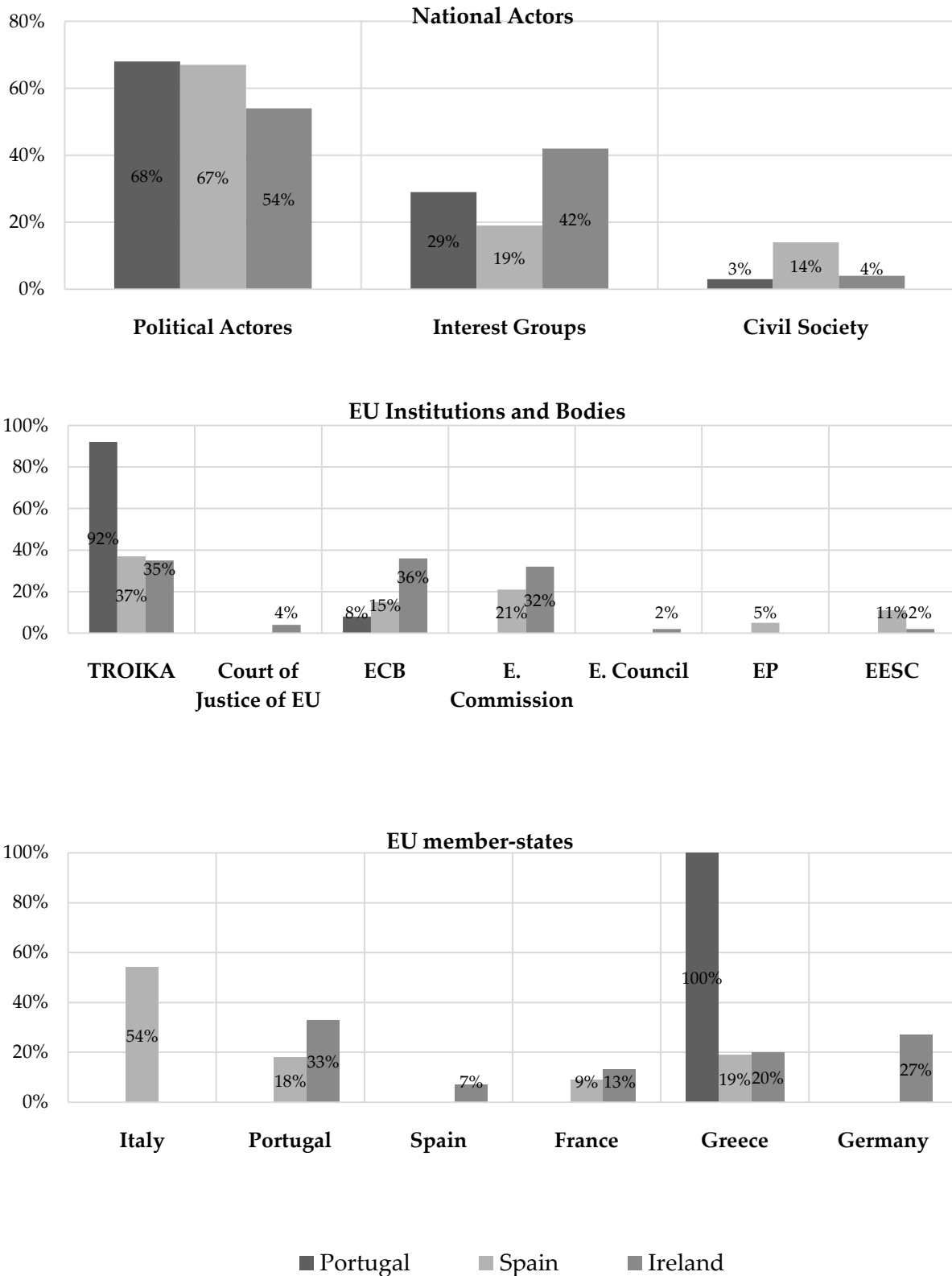
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<sup>50</sup> For more information on protest movements in Spain, Portugal, and Ireland, see Morell (2012), Baumgarten (2013); Chabanet and Royall (2015).

As mentioned above, the responsibility attributed to EU countries is residual, though it exhibits an increase in 2011. The responsibility attributed to the other EU countries covers six member-states in 2011- Italy, Portugal, Spain, France, Greece, and Germany. Four pieces of evidence are worth being mentioned. First, Ireland is the one who assign responsibility to five European countries (Portugal, Spain, France, Greece, and Germany); besides that, Irish mainstream media are the only one that attribute responsibility to the leading creditor country- Germany. Second, Greece appears as the only EU country responsible in Portugal. Third, solely Spain seems to assign responsibility for European economic issues to Italy, appearing as the main responsible, with a percentage above 50%. Forth, Ireland stands out as the only country to which no responsibility is addressed. It is also the only country in which national newspapers attributed responsibility to the two debtor counterparts. In contrast, Portugal is considered responsible both by Spanish (18%) and Irish newspapers (33%) being the country to which Irish media pointed the most significant proportion of responsibility.



**Figure 6. 5** Attribution of Responsibility to specific actors in the national media in 2011



#### 6.4. SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

The main aim of this chapter was to answer the second research question, namely: *Which specific actors, both at European and National level, do the national media hold responsible for European economic issues before and after the Eurozone crisis (RQ2)*. To that end, an in-depth analysis of the “Responsibility” frame was carried out for the Portuguese, Spanish and Irish mainstream media. Therefore, this chapter has devoted time to understand to which specific actors the national media attributed the primary responsibility for the European economic issues and to what extent the national media in the three debtor countries exhibit a convergent narrative in this regard.

It is fair to ask why it is important to analyse in-deep the Responsibility dimension rather than other dimensions. Along with the “Problem” and “Consequence” frames, the “Responsibility” is one of the most common frames used to portray European economic issues; moreover, in the post-crisis period its salience increased becoming the most prevalent frame in national mainstream media (see Chapter IV). These findings are consubstantiated in literature on framing which has shown that the “Responsibility” frame tends to prevail on media coverage of economic issues, and it is one of the main features of economic news.

Furthermore, the EU has been accused of having a democratic deficit and the process of assigning responsibility for the economic developments to specific actors is crucial when we consider democratic accountability. The way the national media assign responsibility can shape the public understanding of who is responsible for specific issues. Even though this chapter does not dive into the demand side (voters), the presence of a convergent narrative in Portuguese, Spanish and Irish mainstream media regarding the attribution of responsibility might help European citizens to develop a shared sense of belonging to the same European project.

Overall, there is a convergence in national media, mainly visible in the two southern European countries- Portugal and Spain. However, this conclusion needs to be nuanced as it presents some variations over time. Therefore, to better systematise this tendency, this chapter can be sum up in four main points.

First, the results highlight *a dialectic between the supra-nationalisation and nationalisation of attribution of responsibility* among debtor countries.

As this chapter has demonstrated, it is unequivocal that Ireland *supranationalised* the responsibility for European economic issues. In a significant and stable way, results indicate that actors from European Institutions and Bodies were the ones considered most responsible. Moreover, they also indicate that for the Irish media, EU member-states are essential players in what concerns European economic problems, as five out of the six countries covered by the sample were considered responsible. This chapter did not dive into the “blame game” (Hansson, 2017; Weaver, 2018) and, therefore, it is not possible establish the responsibility direction. Consequently, I do not have enough information to infer whether supranational institutions are credited or blamed for the economic performance (Heinkelmann-Wild and Zangl, 2019). Nevertheless, the prevalence of European Institutions and Bodies and the visibility granted to other EU countries is symptomatic of the relevance that the EU has in the Irish public sphere, and ultimately, the Europhilia that has characterised Ireland over the years.

On the other hand, in Portugal and Spain, the national media present a trend to *domesticate* the attribution of responsibility. Nonetheless, in the media of the two southern European countries there is some variation depending on the election year. In both countries, National actors tended to prevail mostly during times of crisis, which leads us to the second main evidence: *the increase of the domestication of attribution of responsibility following the outbreak of the Eurozone crisis.*

These findings are not completely novel. In fact, in 2017, Moury and Standing had found no evidence of blame-shifting in Portugal towards the international level. In fact, during the crisis, Portuguese policy makers assumed the responsibility not only for the MoU but also for the austerity reforms implemented "Sócrates frequently expressed the belief that the bail-out was unnecessary but, after having asked for a loan, he (rightly) stressed the government's role in the drafting of the MoU. Passos Coelho repeatedly, and in front of different audiences, acknowledged his ownership of the reforms and his desire to go further than was originally agreed" (Moury and Standing, 2014 :674).

Furthermore, in 2011 not only there is a substantial increase of responsibility attributed to National actors, particularly to core the political ones such as political parties and the government, but also the responsibility granted to the EU Institutions and Bodies decreased. Even in Ireland, where the national media systematically presented high levels of responsibility attributed to the EU, exhibited an increase of responsibility of National actors at the expenses of a decline on EU Institutions and Bodies' responsibility.

This convergence among debtor countries in 2011 suggests that the onset of the EZ was crucial to the attribution of responsibility for the European economic issues. In an economic crisis context, national media tended to take much more into consideration National actors than European ones, when it comes to responsibility assignment. Three plausible explanations can be advanced. First, it seems reasonable to assume that mainstream media did not perceive that the EU had actual leverage on national economy and the decision-making process; on the other hand, they may have perceived that, but chose to believe that those National actors could choose the best way to manage the crisis. Second, the time frame selected in this thesis concerns national elections in each country. In this sense, the national media might have faced a constraint

towards the coverage of national government and National actors rather than EU Institutions and Bodies or EU member-states, and consequently, responsibility was assigned to these actors. Finally, the analysis only covers European economic articles on national mainstream newspapers. Previous evidence has suggested that quality newspapers tend to be more pro-European Union than tabloids newspapers (e.g., Pfetsch et al. 2008; Koopmans and Pfetsch, 2007), which might have dissuaded a more critical view towards the responsibility of the EU during the crisis. Moreover, according to the newspapers party agreement (see Chapter II), the six newspapers selected are close to the two mainstream parties in each country, and regardless of their political alignment, all of them share a Europhilic view and advocate the European project.

The third main evidence of this chapter concerns to the *unbalanced distribution of responsibility among European actors with executive powers and legislative powers*, especially in 2011. At the European level, actors to which the responsibility for the economic issues was attributed were mainly actors with executive powers, such as the European Commission and the ECB. This is also true for those cases in which the most significant proportion of responsibility is attributed to the so-called TROIKA, as it encompasses the IMF, the ECB and the EC. Likewise, this chapter also demonstrated that actors with financial leadership decisions, such as the ECB, received a large share of responsibility by the national media. One of the messages that can be taken from these results is the awareness of national media about which actors played a fundamental role in the EU's monetary decision-making process. Portuguese, Spanish, and Irish mainstream media are highly convergent on this matter, despite a minor variation in Spain, which reflects more the nature of the economic crisis than a disagreement on whom should be held responsible.

Moreover, the residual responsibility attributed to institutions with legislative powers, namely the EP, displays some of the challenges that the EU faces. The PE-

the representative institution of the EU- does not seem to be part of the national media agenda when it comes to assigning responsibility.

Finally, there is a *divergence of attribution of responsibility towards EU countries*. This divergent way of assigning responsibility to EU member-states poses a few challenges to the emergence of an EPS. It is a fact that the overall low share of responsibility attributed to EU countries is a good omen for the sacrosanct ideal of European solidarity. It suggests that national media of the three debtors tended to focus on the responsibility of the EU decision-making elites and agree that the other EZ countries are subject to the same constraints. Nevertheless, the dissonant responsibility attribution to the remaining EU countries might indicate that the national media perceived the responsibility for the crisis in different manners. Moreover, this might impact the way national citizens also comprehend and build their sense of belonging to the EU.

## CONCLUSIONS

*Has the Eurozone crisis contributed to the deepening of a European public sphere?*

Throughout six chapters, this was the question that this thesis aimed to answer. Concretely, this thesis has focused on the changes the Great Recession in the Eurozone has brought to national media narratives on European economic topics, that might have promoted the emergence of a European Public Sphere. For that, this thesis sought to understand if the national mainstream media in Portugal, Spain, and Ireland-three EZ crisis debtor countries- became increasingly convergent from the onset of the Eurozone crisis. First, regarding the *narratives about the EU economic issues*, and second, regarding the *specific actors to which the main responsibility for those issues was attributed*.

To investigate both research questions, an in-depth quantitative and qualitative content analysis was carried out. It started by analysing all the economic articles published in six mainstream newspapers from Portugal (*Público* and *Diário de Notícias*), Spain (*El Mundo* and *El País*) and Ireland (*The Irish Independent* and *The Irish Times*), before (2002-2009) and after the onset (2011-2016) of the EZ crisis, the measurement and description of European media convergence being carried. Then, it proceeded to a further examination of the “Responsibility” frame in order to understand, first, to which specific actors the national media attributed responsibility for the European economic problems and, second, to assess the degree of convergence in the national printed press on this matter.

This thesis relied on a vast original dataset. It comprised detailed and unique information on *Media Attention, Tone, and Framing*, used on the coverage of European economic articles, as well specific data on *European and National* actors, in three debtor countries of the Eurozone crisis- Portugal, Spain and Ireland.

Over the last decades, the European Union has been suffering an increasing public demand for reforms so as to improve the transparency of its institutions and to reduce the gap between citizens and European political elites (e.g., Hix, 2008; Hooghe and Marks, 2009; Green-Pedersen, 2012; Risse, 2015; Herkman and Harjuniemi, 2015). The Great Recession widened these gaps, not only producing “Winners” and “Losers” of the economic crisis (e.g., Azmanova, 2011; Hutter, 2014; Kriesi et al. 2006, 2008; Lahusen, 2013), but also because a multilevel governance structure as the EU has taken some control over the national economy. In this context -where the alleged European democratic deficit is increasingly highlighted (Habermas, 1996, 2001) - the need for a European Public Sphere capable of connecting elites and masses, and in which European problems are perceived as mutual to all European countries, became more pressing.

The national media assume a paramount role in achieving this purpose and in mitigating the European democratic deficit. The way the media present a specific European topic, highlighting certain aspects instead of others, will influence how the public understands the issue, its significance, and consequences, shaping perceptions and opinions regarding the EU. This means that media can create a narrative that might promote the emergence of a European Public Sphere, i.e., when the narrative of European national media converges, it provides European citizens with a common reference on EU matters and, therefore, reduces the democratic deficit and allows an EPS to emerge.

This was particularly important for European economic news. As it happened, during the EZ crisis the Europeanisation of national arenas became increasingly visible in these countries due to the EU’s strong influence over national policies. This is a very fertile context to evaluate the emergence of an EPS: if the narrative on economic issues in the national media of debtor countries converges, it might allow a common opinion



about European economic topics to be formed and foster a sense of belonging to the European project.

While the convergence of media narratives has been widely discussed, especially the European media consonance during European events, such as EP, EU meetings and referendums (e.g., de Vreese, 2011; Arese and Vara- Miguel, 2015; Salgado and Nienstedt, 2016), the analysis focusing on national events is still rather rare. Besides, the studies that emerged following the Eurozone crisis revealed the absence of information about the convergence of media narratives among the countries severely hit by the crisis, as they tended to focus mostly on creditor countries (e.g., Bach et al., 2013; Joris et al., 2014), with only a few studies comparing creditor and debtor countries (e.g., Drewski, 2015; Lahusen et al. 2016; Kaiser and Konigslow, 2016).

Therefore, this thesis has tried to contribute to this field by examining the convergence of mainstream media narratives in three debtor countries - Portugal, Spain, and Ireland - during the national elections, in terms of *Media Attention, Tone and Framing*, as well as regarding the attribution of responsibility to specific *European and National* actors, before and after the outbreak of the EZ crisis. In addition, by describing the narrative direction, establishing whether the national media convergence follows a *centripetal* or *centrifugal* path, this thesis contributes to explaining the possible emergence of a European Public Sphere in an economic crisis context, which is a fundamental concept for the future of the European Union project.

Based on the empirical analyses in this thesis and the overall interpretation of the evidence found, several key statements can be formulated.

## **MAIN FINDINGS**

The first three chapters of the thesis lay out the theoretical and methodological basis of this study. Therefore, the findings presented in this concluding chapter are based on the comparative analysis of six mainstream newspapers from Portugal, Spain, and Ireland during the 15 days before national elections. It entailed a longitudinal perspective, with the analysis of more than 6 000 economic articles published during the electoral campaign of 14 national elections, grouped in two chronological timelines: before (2002-2009) and after the onset of the EZ crisis (2011-2016). The first period analysed starts with the elections held in 2002, when the euro was fully introduced as a common currency in national economies and ended in 2009 – when the Lisbon Treaty and the Eurogroup entered into force, together with the idea of economic cooperation and a common representation among member-states. The second period covered both the elections that took place during the economic crisis and those after the fulfilment of bailout programmes. The full force of the crisis in the Eurozone was felt in 2010 with the Irish bailout – the first of a series of bailouts in Europe. Hence, the second period began with Portuguese, Spanish and Irish national elections in 2011<sup>th</sup>. Even though the three countries ended their bailout programs in 2013 or 2014, the analysis also included the elections shortly after the end of the assistance programme, namely the 2015 and 2016 national elections. In addition, since the Europeanisation occurs at domestic level and it is enhanced in a context of high context of conflict and polarization, the time frame captured the period of electoral campaign to national elections in each country.

Most importantly, the main concept – convergence of European media narratives- was defined and measured. Building upon the previous literature, a multidimensional measurement of convergence was introduced in order to evaluate to what extent the national media reported the European economic issues in a similar way.

The new typology proposed was measured through 32 indicators, grouped into three dimensions: *Media Attention*, *Tone*, and *Framing*. This measurement is innovative since it is a holistic empirical framework designed to apprehend the several aspects of Europeanisation of national public spheres, providing, at the same time, different angles of analysis and more in-depth evidence of media convergence. It is versatile as it can be employed in different countries capturing different media landscapes and political systems and allows for replication and expansion across countries and over time. Moreover, it provides an in-depth analysis of the communication content, the *Framing* dimension, which sheds light on the actual degree and direction of narrative consonance and on media convergence in relation to the attribution of responsibility.

The remaining chapters conducted a comparative analysis of media convergence before and after the onset of the crisis in Portugal, Spain, and Ireland. The third part of this thesis presented the convergence of European economic narratives that was measured concerning the *Media Attention*, *Tone*, and *Framing*, focusing on five specific frames: “Problem”, “Cause”, “Responsibility”, “Consequences” and “Solution”. Furthermore, it established the convergence direction in what regards the most prominent sub frames within the five *Framing* dimensions. Then, the fourth part delved into the convergence of the attribution of responsibility, considering the specific actors, both at the *National* and *European* levels.

The main expectation underlying this thesis was that the *Great Recession* increased the convergence between the national mainstream media of Portugal, Spain and Ireland when covering the European Economic issues, promoting, therefore, the deepening of a European Public Sphere. Throughout the thesis, this expectation was evaluated through the formulation of seven hypotheses, tested through the analysis of three main dimensions: *Media Attention*, *Tone*, and *Framing*. This empirical strategy elucidated how the national media coverage might have promoted the emergence of an EPS in Portugal, Spain, and

Ireland, following the onset of the Eurozone crisis, providing an answer to each research question.

Chapter IV '*Convergence of European media narratives: main results* and Chapter V '*Centripetal or Centrifugal? Framing and the Convergence of European Media Narratives*' dealt with the first research question of this thesis and aimed to understand *To what extent have mainstream newspapers in Portugal, Spain and Ireland become more convergent when they narrate European economic issues following the onset of the Eurozone crisis?* The first one provided a comprehensive analysis in terms of *Media Attention* and *Tone*, as well as the overall results for the *Framing* dimension to the three countries considered. Chapter V narrowed and refined the results previously found, considering each component of the five frames in order to understand to what extent the national media were convergent when it comes to addressing the different aspects emphasized within each frame. Departing from this analysis, this chapter also entailed the evaluation of convergence direction assessing whether it was *centripetal* or *centrifugal*.

The empirical evidence found in these two empirical chapters revealed that, counterintuitively, the *centripetal* nature of media narrative was already present before the outbreak of the EZ crisis, and the Great Recession did not dramatically alter the state of how national newspapers narrated the European economic issues. Nevertheless, some of the patterns were amplified in the EZ crisis context, in particular, in terms of the salience of the EU and the negative tone to report the European topics.

In the post-2009 period, the national media of Portugal, Spain and Ireland converged in the increased attention given to the EU, with a notable increase in the proportion of economic articles about the EU on their national media coverage. Moreover, following the Great Recession, the three countries considered also displayed a common feature on their newspapers: more extensive articles but a lower number of

news per page. Besides, the results found regarding the *Tone* used to portray the EU economic issues shows that the EZ crisis contributed to increasing the negativity of European economic articles.

Together, this evidence denotes a deepening of the Europeanisation process of domestic arenas following the onset of the Great Recession. Furthermore, although the media mainly reported the European economic news using a neutral and balanced tone, the increased negative bias when reporting the European economic questions following the onset of the crisis should not be underestimated. First, because the EZ crisis increased the politicisation of EU affairs which lead to an increase of polarization on how the EU topics were conveyed by national media (e.g., Silva et al. 2021), which might contribute to how European citizens connect with the EU affairs and, thus, promoting the emergence of an EPS. Second, because in the context of important developments, such as an economic crisis when the information about the state of the economy becomes more abundant the individuals pay more attention to negative than to positive information, triggering the “alarm bell” about economic performance and motivating them to seek further information to properly sanction the policymakers.

The evidence found also indicate that the EZ crisis made no substantial difference to the *centripetal* nature of the European economic narrative. In fact, the substantive content of communication, i.e., the *Framing* remained largely the same following the outbreak of the Great Recession: both before as after the beginning of the EZ crisis the national media tended to share an agreement in portraying the European economic topics according to the same reference subframe. Nevertheless, the onset of the EZ crisis led to an increase in the salience of frames that rely on factual information. The “Responsibility”, together with the “Problem” and “Consequences” were the frames most used by national newspapers from Portugal, Spain, and Ireland to portray the European economic issues. Moreover, the results obtained in what concerns the

“Responsibility” frame indicate a high degree of convergence between debtor countries in the post-crisis period, as there was an increase in the prevalence of this frame in all mainstream newspapers, becoming one of the most salient frames to report the European economic topics.

The findings on the “Responsibility” frame revealed a tendency to externalize the attribution of responsibility of European economic news assigning the responsibility to the *EU as a whole*—which encompasses the EU institutions and the EU countries. This seems to suggest, on one hand, that during the EZ crisis the Portuguese, Spanish and Irish media have been more indulgent towards national government and much stricter with the EU. On the other hand, it reveals that the EU was at the core of European economic issues' coverage, which might be a step to furthering an EPS since it indicates that the national media of debtor countries embraced the EU as a key actor in national public arenas.

However, the analysis of the “Responsibility” frame performed in these two empirical chapters did not distinguish the different actors that operate in the EU, analysing the *European Union as a whole* (EU institutions and EU countries). As Hobolt and Tilley (2014b) explained, disentangling the responsibility for economic issues in a multi-level government structure as the EU is a complex phenomenon given the number of actors involved. This is especially accurate during the crisis period, given the growing increase of supra-nationalisation in the decision-making process (Hennessy, 2014). Consequently, the Chapter VI ‘*Who is Responsible? European Media Narratives and the Attribution of Responsibility*’, supplemented the results of the comparative European media analysis and aimed to deliver an answer to the second research question, i.e. *Which specific actors, both at European and National level, do the national media hold responsible for the European economic issues before and after the onset of the Eurozone crisis?*

For that, this chapter offered an in-depth look at the “Responsibility” frame in the six mainstream newspapers from Portugal, Spain, and Ireland through a manual content analysis of around 700 articles. The main goal was to capture the specific European and National actors to which the main responsibility was attributed and for that, it disentangled the European Union's responsibility, proposing two dimensions of analysis: *EU Institutions and Bodies*- distinguishing the supranational and intergovernmental powers - and *EU member-countries*. The differentiation within the EU level proved to be necessary as a primary responsibility addressed to the European institutional level might indicate the devotion to the idea of Europe as a community of solidarity among members. In contrast, holding the individual European countries responsible for the European economic issues could be a step backwards on European integration and the emergence of an EPS. Also, a third level of analysis was incorporated - *National actors*- to grasp which specific actors at the domestic level were responsible for the economic issue, and ultimately unveil a domestic or supranational attribution of responsibility.

Overall, the evidence found has shown a convergence between the debtor countries on this matter. Yet, there are some idiosyncrasies: the first one related to the unique pattern presented by the Irish media; and the second one with the exceptional moment surrounding the 2011's elections- the onset of the EZ crisis.

Following the onset of the crisis, there is a notorious supra-nationalisation of attribution of responsibility in Irish media and a propensity to nationalise it in Portugal and Spain.

The evidence found revealed a unique pattern of supra-nationalisation of responsibility for the European economic issues in Ireland: actors from European Institutions and Bodies were the ones considered most responsible, while EU member-states assumed the role of essential players, as five out the six countries covered by the

analysis were assigned responsibility. In fact, in Ireland, the national media tended to distribute the responsibility for the European economic issues among the remaining European countries more sharply than Portuguese and Spanish newspapers. Besides, Irish mainstream newspapers stood out in 2011 as the only national media assigning a share of responsibility to the leading creditor country- Germany. By contrast, Portuguese and Spanish media are highly convergent. Both countries presented a trend to domesticate the attribution of responsibility, in particular to national political actors. The Iberian convergence was also evident when it comes to attribution of responsibility to other EU- countries: Portuguese and Spanish mainstream media tended to attribute the main responsibility to the most affected country, namely, Greece.

The national elections held in 2011- the outbreak of the EZ crisis in the three debtor countries- were a moment particularly fruitful in fostering de convergence between Portugal, Spain, and Ireland.

On one hand, there was an increase in domesticating the attribution of responsibility. This evidence reveals that the critical moments of the national economy tended to amplify the presence of national actors. Furthermore, the attribution of responsibility during the electoral campaigns to 2011's elections, challenges the previous evidence, in which both before and after the onset of the crisis the EU was the main responsible for the European economic issues. By separating actors within the EU level and proposing differentiation between EU countries and EU Institutions and Bodies, the European Union's weight on the attribution of responsibility became more tenuous.

Not only was there a substantial increase in responsibility attributed to national actors, particularly to core political actors, such as political parties and government, but also the responsibility attributed to the EU decreased. Even in Ireland, where the national media systematically presented high levels of responsibility attributed to the



EU, for that election, there was an increase of responsibility to National actors at the expense of a decline of EU Institutions and Bodies. On other hand, there is a convergence pattern in Portuguese, Spanish and Irish media in attributing the main responsibility to European actors with executive powers. At the European level, the actors to which the responsibility for the economic issues was attributed were mainly supranational actors, such as the European Commission, the ECB or Troika.

In addition, even though there is a dissonant attribution of responsibility to the remaining EU countries, overall, the national media tended to agree that other Eurozone countries were subjected to similar constraints after the beginning of the crisis. The low share of responsibility attributed to the EU countries is a good omen for the ideal of European solidarity and the emergence of an EPS following the onset of the EZ crisis.

Overall, the evidence found points to mixed conclusions regarding the emergence of an EPS. On the one hand, the results denote that, because of the austerity measures imposed on Portugal, Spain and Ireland and the subsequent economic recession, the EZ crisis increased the media's narrative convergence between the debtor countries, in particular in what concerns the increased visibility of EU and the negativity of the tone used. The context of the economic crisis also stabilized the centripetal direction of that convergence, since the national media of debtor countries continued to place the EU at the core of their economic narratives, sharing, thus, a similar sense of belonging to the EU project. Still, evaluating European economic topics beyond the national boundaries in the post-2009 period does not mirror a perfect Europeanisation of national public spheres, especially in what concerns the "Responsibility" and "Solution" frame.

The "Solution" for the European economic problems was unequivocally framed in terms of European Solidarity between national governments and the EU which

indicates the existence of a sense of belonging and solidarity among European debtor countries. This evidence reinforced the relevance of the centripetal path to the emergence of an EPS: the national media were unanimous in reporting that the solution for the European economic issue, should be accomplished through European Solidarity. Additionally, it reinforces the argument that the media, even in an economic crisis context, might contribute to the notion of Europe as a place of shared advancement or achievement (Gavin, 2000:366). Also, by accepting the transference of that role to a supranational institution like the EU, Portuguese, Spanish and Irish media embraced a "Solution" that rejected the idea that European economic issues should be managed solely by national governments, without the EU's assistance, which represents a step to a deepening of European integration. However, paradoxically, the evidence found regarding the attribution of "Responsibility" suggest that in Portugal and Spain the domestic boundaries still prevail in the post-2009 period which might be challenging to a full Europeanisation of national public spheres.

Even though the salience of the EU has increased along with the polarization of these topics contributing to place the EU at the centre of media narratives, the act of placing the responsibility and identifying the main problem remained confined to the national public spheres. Ultimately, the way national media perceived the European economic issues denotes an imperfect Europeanisation of national public spheres. This conclusion is symptomatic of the complexity inherent to the process of European integration, in which a full EPS is difficult to achieve given that the national governments remain crucial actors in domestic arenas, when it comes to attributing responsibility for the European economic issues in particular in an economic crisis context within a multilevel structure as the EU.

## **THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS**

In the first chapters of this thesis, I argued that the existence of a common public arena in all European countries is a fundamental condition that would allow us to overcome some of the most critical problems that the EU has been grappling within the last decades, such as the democratic deficit between the European elites and the European citizens or difficulty in achieving an ample communication flow within the EU member-states. The economic crisis that hit Europe in 2010 strengthens those concerns highlighting the absence of shared agendas on political and economic matters in the euro area. In this sense, the convergence of narratives in national media could act as a powerful mechanism to the flourishing of a meaningful EPS, as it might reflect a transnational community of communication among European countries and provide a common ground of understanding about European topics. Ultimately, a consonance in national media might help to define the future of European economic integration and promote the emergence of a European Public Sphere

Some studies have already analysed how particular media outlets covered news about the economic crisis in specific countries and how far they were consonant on that coverage; however, an exhaustive analysis has not been conducted, yet. Therefore, this thesis contributed to the literature by providing a thorough examination of the changes produced by the Great Recession on European economic media narratives in three Eurozone countries that faced severe austerity measures resulting from the economic crisis. A comparative, longitudinal and in-depth study of the mainstream printed press, before and after onset of the crisis, in Portugal, Spain and Ireland was conducted, first by establishing a comprehensive analytical framework connecting quantitative indicators with qualitative indicators, and then applying them to the European economic news.

Hence, what contributions can we draw from the findings of this thesis for the emergence of an EPS and the future of the European project? At least two contributions seem relevant to note: one regarding the *direction of the media narratives' convergence* and another about the *attribution of responsibility for the European economic issues to specific actors*.

### *Direction of Media Convergence*

The first contribution concerns the high degree of convergence among the national media of countries that suffered an external intervention in the euro crisis context, but mostly the *centripetal* path of that convergence. The lessons from Europeanisation studies underscore that an EPS emerges from the moment that the several national public spheres relate to each other and share a similar understanding of European affairs (e.g., Risse and van de Steeg, 2003; Risse, 2015). The evidence of this thesis suggests that not only the media in debtor countries are convergent in portraying the European economic issues, but also the narratives followed a direction towards a further economic integration. To date, most research on the field has neglected the consonance of convergence of media narrative in debtor countries and disregarded the context of the national elections. This thesis contributed to fill these gaps, unveiling two new theoretical and empirical research paths.

First, some traces of a European Public Sphere seem to be flourishing in the countries profoundly hit by the economic crisis. Besides the Eurozone area's economic viability, one of the concerns that arose with the onset of EZ crisis was the future of the European project. In what concerns the debtor countries, it was quite evident among European elites the fear that the austerity measures could jeopardise the emergence of an EPS and represent a negative turning point in the EU's ambitions for a broader

European economic integration<sup>51</sup>. This thesis allows a more comprehensive and accurate understanding of how the national media from countries that have undergone austerity measures look at the EU in a context of economic crisis. Despite the rise of some EU critical strands and national claims to strengthen the economic sovereignty, this thesis has shown that the media narratives steadied the *centripetal* path displayed in the pre-2009 period. The empirical evidence reveals that even though there was an increase of negative tone and polarization to report the EU topics as a result of the EZ crisis, the national media in debtor countries decided to keep the EU at the centre of their narratives. This *centripetal* path – that goes beyond the national perspective – contributes to deepening and consolidating the European project and promotes the emergence of an EPS.

If we think about the public opinion towards the European Union in these three countries, we realize that these results might not be so surprising. Despite a slight decline during the crisis period (Eurobarometer, 82.3) both Portugal and Spain as well as Ireland have been structurally pro-European Union with a pro-integrationist attitude (e.g., Hooghe and Marks, 2007). The two southern countries belong to the so-called “the EU’s most pro-European region” (e.g., Llamazares and Gramacho, 2007; Schimtt and Teperoglou, 2015; Teperoglou and Belchior, 2020) and Ireland has been often regarded as one of the most enthusiastic supporters of the European integration (e.g., Lyons, 2008; Adshead and Tonge, 2009; Simpson, 2018a). The Great Recession did not change this trend. In Ireland, recent research, has shown that even though individuals were disappointed by the EU's performance during the economic crisis, after the crisis the

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<sup>51</sup> In 2010, José Manuel Barroso, former President of the European Commission (EC), claimed that the future of the EU project relied on solidarity among European countries, coining the expression “There is no stability without solidarity and no solidarity without stability”. <https://www.ft.com/content/4da90494-35f0-11df-aa43-00144feabdc0>

Irish attitudes towards the European Union have remained consistently positive (Simpson, 2018) and the belief that the EU was the best institution to deal with the crisis remained robust (Simpson, 2019). A similar pattern is exhibited in Portugal and Spain. In 2018, the Eurobarometer (90.3) data revealed that only 13% of Portuguese and 15% of Spanish citizens kept a negative image of the EU- a value below the European Union average (Teperoglou and Belchior, 2020). Moreover, after the crisis, there was "an overwhelming majority with a positive image of the EU" (Teperoglou and Belchior, 2020: 11), as the public opinion towards the EU was even more positive than the one exhibited in the period before the crisis.

Second, this study contributes to priming the importance of considering the national context in establishing the convergence of media narratives. The previous research has only focused on the European level (e.g., Shuck and de Vreese, 2006; Drewski, 2015; Salgado et al., 2015; Lahusen et al. 2016; Kaiser and Konigslow, 2016) Yet, the crisis juncture dramatically changed the national public arenas as the EU topics becoming more salient and contested (e.g., Rauh, 2013; Grande and Kriesi, 2016). In this sense, the findings of this thesis highlight the importance of looking into the first order elections, namely the national legislative elections to understand the Europeanisation of national public spheres. While the past studies had been at odds with the convergence of narratives during European elections, at the national level the evidence presented is un-doubtful: the way mainstream newspapers covered the European economic topics during the national campaigns contributed to the development of a common horizon on European economic affairs among the debtor countries.

### *Attribution of Responsibility*

This thesis contributes to questioning the well-established literature on the attribution of responsibility (e.g., Hobolt and Tilley, 2014a) and blame-shifting theory (e.g., Hansson, 2017; Weaver, 2018), within the Europeanisation of national public spheres setting. The findings show that in the Iberian countries the onset of the EZ crisis did not lead to a shifting of responsibility towards the supra-national actors, such as *EU Institutions and Bodies*. In fact, for the Portuguese and Spanish national media, not only did national governments remain the main actors responsible for the European economic issues but also their prevalence increased in 2011, the onset of EZ crisis.

In this sense, what can we learn from these evidences?

The first lesson emphasises *the ideological component of the government's party*. From the post-crisis onwards (2011-2016), both in Portugal and Spain, the national elections were won by a centre-right wing party<sup>52</sup>, which might help to explain the shifting of responsibility to the national level. Some authors have argued that right-wing parties were more prone to "accept" and implement the austerity measures imposed by an external institution (e.g., Moury and Freire, 2013; Maatsch, 2014; Moury and Standring, 2017). In doing so, these parties are attributing themselves the burden of responsibility for austerity and the economic crisis, but above all, are drying the EU's responsibility on this matter. Consequently, for the national media, they become the target, the common enemy, regarding the responsibility for the European economic issues.

Nevertheless, if the government's ideology might help to elucidate the media's attribution to the national level, why does Ireland not follow a similar pattern? The aim of this thesis is not to explore the debtor countries party systems. Still, it is essential to clarify that Ireland displays an idiosyncratic party system, since the two Irish main parties belong to the right-wing spectrum and the left-wing have not been, so far,

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<sup>52</sup>For more information, see Appendix F

relevant on national elections (e.g., Hutter and Malet, 2019) Consequently, it is not easy to apply to Ireland the premise that the right-wing parties "support" the austerity and the left-wing "battles" it. Moreover, the pattern that Ireland presented concerning the attribution of responsibility towards European institutions was not confined to the post crisis period, being a trend even in the period pre-EZ crisis.

In addition, it is also reasonable to assume that the mainstream media did not perceive the actual leverage on national economy and decision-making process; or less optimistically, they perceived it but chose to believe that national actors could choose the best way to manage the crisis.

The second lesson concerns the *time frame of this thesis*, which focused on the electoral campaign to national elections in each country. The salience and media coverage of national actors during these moments is surely more pronounced than other actors, as part of the electoral campaign nature. In this sense, the national electoral campaign setting may have constrained the attribution of responsibility towards national actors, more precisely national governments.

The last lesson is connected to *newspapers selection*. This thesis only covered the economic articles published in national mainstream newspapers. And why might this have had implications on the attribution of responsibility to the national level? On the one hand, previous studies have suggested that the so-called quality newspapers tend to have an editorial line which is more pro-EU than tabloids reproducing the political elites view (e.g., Hooghe et al., 2002; Pfetsch et al., 2008; Koopmans and Pfetsch, 2007). This might have discouraged a more critical strand regarding the EU's responsibility on European economic topics and increased the newspapers consonance on this matter given no significant differences within newspapers was found. On the other hand, the newspapers selected are close to the two mainstream parties in each country, and in spite of their political alignment, all of them advocate the European Union integration.



The thesis' findings regarding attribution of responsibility pose a few challenges to the emergence of an EPS. By separating actors within the EU level and proposing differentiation between *EU Institutions and Bodies* and EU Countries, the European Union's weight on the attribution of responsibility became more tenuous. Still, there are pros and cons of this option. The advantage is that it enables us to perceive the residual responsibility attributed to the remaining *EU countries*, which is a good presage for the ideal of European solidarity. The drawback is that, when it comes to attributing responsibility for the European economic topics, this unveils the domestic boundaries that still prevail in Iberian countries, which might compromise a full Europeanisation of national arenas.

Overall, these findings reconfigure the EU's role in the national public sphere as it is increasingly perceived by national media as a crucial player in the national decision-making process; but, mostly, demands to rethink the importance that countries with less executive power in the EU framework and a more volatile and dependent economy may have in the emergence of an EPS. Moreover, it settles new perspectives on the role played by national governments in a multilevel context in what concerns the attribution of responsibility and economic voting in times of crisis.

## **FUTURE RESEARCH**

As explained earlier, this thesis was focused on mainstream media as they enclose relevant features to apprehend the consonance of national media regarding the European economic topics: they are often used as agenda-setters, as a proxy to other national media and entail more substantive information about European Union. The findings achieved show that the mainstream newspapers in debtor countries are, indeed, convergent when they report European issues, which is extremely valuable for

the research agenda on media narratives, providing sharp clues on the future of the European monetary integration and the emergence of an EPS.

Nevertheless, for a full understanding of European media narratives, bridges must be built between the several avenues of informational supply (mainstream media and online media), as well as different types of outlets (quality newspapers and tabloids). This is a significant research agenda that needs to be addressed further, as it would advance the understanding of how national media landscape in European countries converge when reporting European topics, how information flows within the media system, how it relates to European issues and which impact the different media have in boosting a European topic instead of another, opening the path to a full comprehension of the process of Europeanisation of national public spheres

The analysis conducted in this thesis only speaks in terms of news provision. The empirical framework has exclusively focused on the media supply side, - this is, how national media portrayed the European economic news- which is a paramount approach given the crucial role media have on the emergence of an EPS. However, most of the criticism addressed to the EU project is linked to the gap between elites and citizens. Hence, the effects that national media narratives might have in upon citizens' political attitudes and behaviours, still need consideration. Further studies should explore the demand side in order to understand how audiences engage with these narratives and whether this has any effect in the audiences' perception of the European Union. In particular, studies are needed to assess the impact of media narratives on citizens trust and support to the EU in general, and the Eurozone in particular.

*Do citizens embrace the same narrative on European economic topics as the national media? Do citizens share the same view regarding the attribution of responsibility to specific actors? And ultimately, does the exposure to media narratives impact European citizens' trust towards the EU?* The answers to these questions should be explored in a future research

agenda to better understand the impacts of media coverage on European citizens, in particular since they have increasingly assumed a leading role in shaping public perceptions. This avenue is crucial as the Eurozone crisis has entailed several political, social, and institutional changes- e.g., the increase of politicisation of EU, reconfigurations of citizens' political participation, the economic voting and European voting behaviour- that may have threatened the hopes for an EPS.

Additionally, the promising results would stem from an approach that combined descriptive and causal analysis at an aggregated level, especially in what concerns the dichotomy presented between the two southern European countries- Portugal and Spain- and in Ireland when it comes to responsibility attribution. Evidence showed that Portugal and Spain's media did not play the "blame-shifting" game, attributing the primary responsibility to national actors. By contrast, the tendency of the Irish media was an undisputable supra-nationalisation of responsibility for the European economic issues. These opposite views should be further analysed in the future, looking into the mechanism that might explain those differences and the impact that they might have on how the citizens comprehend and build their sense of belonging to the EU.



# APPENDIX



## APPENDIX A- CODEBOOK “EUROPEAN MEDIA NARRATIVES”

### General Information

This codebook is structured in four parts. The first part is devoted to variable identification; the second part concerns *Media Attention*; the third part looks into *Tone*. Finally, the fourth part is about *Framing* variables.

### Unit of Analysis

- The unit of analysis is an article present on the Economic section or Economic Supplement of each newspaper;
- An article consists of the headline and the body text.

## ***Part I- Variable Identification***

The first set of variables are descriptive and enables us to identify the article. Data about the country, election year, type of newspaper, date and section will, also, provide us additional information.

### **V1.0 Article\_ ID**

Each article coded should follow the format: **newspaper abbreviation + election year + article number**. Every item coded must have a unique identification number, which is assigned once for a specific item. The article number should start at “01”.

*e.g., Pub2011-01* [Público + 2011+01]

*e.g., ELP2011-07* [El País + 2011+07]

### **V1.1 Country\_ ID**

The country identification is made according to Eurobarometer codification. Thus, choose the country number from the following list:

08-Ireland

12-Spain

13- Portugal

### **V1.2 Newspaper\_ ID**

Select the newspaper identification according to the information provided:

01- The Irish Independent

02- The Irish Times

03- El Mundo

04- El País

05- Público

06- Diário de Notícias



### **V1.3 Election Year**

Add the election year. The codification should follow the format: **Country ID + Year**

*e.g., an article published in a Spanish newspaper during the 2011 legislative election, you should add the Country\_ ID (12), plus the election year (2011) = 122011*

### **V1.4 Date**

Use the following format: **DD/MM/YYYY**

*e.g., 15/05/2011*

### **V1.5 Section Name**

The section name should be explicit in the newspaper and be written precisely.

Note: **if the section name is not clear, code "99"**

**99=** Not applicable/ not mentioned

\*\*

## ***Part II- Media Attention Variables***

This set of variables refers to the degree of press coverage of economic issues, and it is the first dimension of analysis. Thus, information regarding page number, amount of news per page, length of each article, and whether the European Union is referred or not in the article is required.

### **V2.0 Page Number**

Add the page number as it appears in the newspaper.

In case the article runs over two or more pages, write down the article's first page number.

### V2.1 Number of articles per page

Insert how many articles we can find in that page. This coding scheme should be followed, regardless of how many items you code on a certain page.

*e.g., If you code only 1 article on page 7, but the page has 5 articles, you should add the number*

### V2.2 Articles length

Type the word length of each article.

### V2.3 EU Presence

Does the article mention the European Union?

An article is coded as 1, if it mentions **the European Union at least twice, either in the headline or in the body text**, using the following words/phrases:

-The European Union- Europe- Brussels (as in Europe), Common European Policies (Common Agricultural Policy, Common Fisheries Policy, Erasmus Policy, European Monetary Policy, Eurozone), European Institutions, such as European Commission, European Parliament, Council of Ministers, Members of these institutions (European Commissioners, European Parliamentarians, European High Representative, European Central Bank)

- **OR/AND**

-EU member-states as such, the Brexit referendum, or any other EU referendum in an EU member state

- **OR/AND**

-European countries which are currently members of the EU:

- Until 2003 >French, Germany, Belgium, Italy, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Denmark, United Kingdom, Ireland, Greece, Portugal, Spain, Austria, Finland, Sweden

- After 2004> Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia
- After 2007> Bulgaria, Romania

**IF NO  
go to the V 2.4,  
code the TONE and STOP CODING!**

- After 2013>Croatia

### **V2.4 Other Presence**

Which actor is referred?

**0**=National

**1**=International/ Global

\*\*

### ***Part III- Tone Variable***

The tone variable is the second level of analysis and refers to tendency/bias in the presentation of a certain topic and/or actors.

### **V3.0 Tone**

When you read the whole article (headline and text body), did you think that it was positive, negative, neutral, or balanced towards the topic and/ or actors referred?

**0**= Neutral

**1**= Negative

**2**= Balanced

**3**= Positive

~

**Attention:** The tone evaluation should be based on the manifest positive or negative wording on the overall impression of the article, regardless of the conflict or disagreement that might be present in the article

- **Neutral tone:** the topic and/or actors are described in an objective manner. The words used to describe evoke no specific positive or negative associations.

**Negative tone:** the words used to describe the topic and/or actors evoke negative associations. The topic/actors are exposed in a negative way. For instance: worthless, spreading fear, guilt, hateful, damage, misbehaving, unthankful, unsatisfied, causing troubles, unethical, lazy, waster, hateful, insensitive, irresponsible, polarizing, disappointing, bad, worst, ominous

Note

- If there are only negative evaluations, even if it is just one evaluation, then code **negative (1)**.
- If there are *both* positive and negative evaluations but the overall evaluation (or a sum of specific evaluations) is more negative than positive, code **negative (1)**.

- **Balanced Tone:** The overall impression is that the evaluation presents mixed positive and negatives tendencies.
- **Positive tone:** The words used to describe the topic and/or actors evoke positive associations. The topic and/or actors are exposed in a positive way. For instance: helping, honest, satisfied, solidarity, fantastic, hero, amazing, appreciation,

Note

- If there are only positive evaluations, even if it is just one evaluation, then code then code **positive (3)**.
- If there are *both* positive and negative evaluations but the overall evaluation (or a sum of specific evaluations) is more positive than negative, code **positive (3)**.

hardworking, prosperous, good, promising, better.



### *Part IV- Framing Variables*

The last set of variables is the third level of analysis and refers to the frames used by the newspaper to portrait a certain issue. Five indicators are introduced- Problem frame,

**IMPORTANT**

**This dimension is only coded to economic articles in which EU is mentioned (V2.3 EU Presence = YES!)**

- **Each frame comprises several items, which are mutually exclusive. This means that only one answer is allowed.**
- **An article does not have to be framed according to all Framing dimensions.**

Cause frame, Responsibility frame, Consequences frame, Solution frame.

### *Problem Frame*

This frame allows understand what problem is addressed by the article

#### **V4.1 Does the article refers a specific problem?**

**0= No**

**1= Yes**

If, YES

**4.2 Which is according to the economic article the main problem?**

1= a budget deficit problem

2= an employment problem

3= a social security problem

4= a bankruptcy problem

5= a sovereign debt problem

6= a EU's competitiveness problem

7= related to the Brexit problem

8= Other \_\_\_\_\_ (write the main problem addressed by the economic article)

**-Budget deficit problem** includes the reference to e.g., public finances, budgetary policies, or inflation.

**-Employment problem:** includes the reference to e.g., unemployment, lack of opportunities, lack or over-qualification.

**-Social Security:** includes the reference to e.g., pensions, welfare benefits, social security contributions.

**-Bankruptcy problem:** includes the reference to e.g. banks collapse, toxic loans, credits.

**-Sovereign debt problem** includes the reference to e.g., sovereign debt, public debt, difficulty in obtaining external financing.

**-EU competitiveness problem** includes the reference to e.g., European markets, euro zone prices European Union competitiveness regarding global markets or economies.

**-Brexit problem:** includes the reference to e.g., United Kingdom referendum.

### *Cause Frame*

This frame allows to understand the element responsible for the problem; if the economic problem is a result of national policies, European Union policies, Eurozone countries or Globalization.

#### **V4.3 Does the article refers the main cause of the economic issue?**

0= No

1= Yes

If, YES

#### **4.4 Which is according to the economic article the main cause?**

1= National economy and national policies

2= European Union policies

3= Eurozone countries policies

4= Globalization

**-National economy and national policies** refer to: systems for setting levels of taxation, government budgets, interest rates, labour market, national ownership.

- Trade policy, which refers to tariffs, trade agreements and the international institutions that govern them.
- Policies to create economic growth.
- Policies related to development economics.
- Policies dealing with the redistribution of income, property, wealth, education, welfare state.
- Regulatory policy, anti-trust policy, industrial policy, and technology-based economic development policy.
- Fiscal policy, tax policy, government spending.

**-European Union policies**, refers to policies such as Common Agricultural Policy, Common Fisheries Policy, Erasmus Policy, European Monetary Policy.

**-Eurozone Problem** includes the reference to 19 out of the 28 European member-states which have adopted the euro:

- Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain.
- European institutions that are part of the Eurozone:
  - . European Central Bank (President and heads of national central banks).
  - . Euro group (finance ministers of Eurozone states).

**-Globalisation** refers to the economic globalisation of production, finance, markets, technology, organisational regimes, institutions, corporations, labour.

It could refer to General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, World Trade Organization, The World Bank, International Monetary Fund, International Corporations.

### ***Responsibility Frame***

This frame allows to address the accountability of the economic article to national governments, the European Union's scope or to national governments and the EU.

#### **V4.5 Does the article refers who is the main responsible of the economic issue?**

0= No

1= Yes

**If, YES**

#### **4.6 Who is according to the economic article the main responsible?**

1= National government/ national companies/ national citizens

2=European Union as a whole

3= both National Countries and the EU as a whole



**-National government:** includes the reference to the head of government, ministry, ministers, prime ministers, governors of regions, public administration, opposition politicians, federal states/regions, political organisations, political institution.

**National citizens:** refer to ordinary citizens, non-political organisations.

**National companies:** refer to the type of company with a customer base across the nation, providing a variety of commodities, goods, products, or services that are necessary to a country and national population:

- National Railway Company, Dublin Airport Authority, Bank of Ireland, Águas de Portugal, Carris, Caixa Geral de Depósitos, NAV Portugal, Renfe Operadora, Correos, Navantia, ADIF.

**-European Union (EU) as a whole** includes the reference to:

- The European Union- Europe- Brussels (as in Europe), Common European Policies (Common Agricultural Policy, Common Fisheries Policy, Erasmus Policy, European Monetary Policy, Eurozone), European Institutions such as European Commission, European Parliament, Council of Ministers, Members of these institutions (European Commissioners, European Parliamentarians, European High Representative, European Central Bank)
- EU member-states as such, the Brexit referendum, or any other EU referendum in an EU member state
- European countries which are currently members of the EU:
  - Until 2003 >French, Germany, Belgium, Italy, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Denmark, United Kingdom, Ireland, Greece, Portugal, Spain, Austria, Finland, Sweden
  - After 2004> Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia
  - After 2007> Bulgaria, Romania
  - After 2013>Croatia.

**V4.7 If, 1= YES, who is responsible for the economic issue?**

- 1-national government
- 2-national companies
- 3- national citizens

***Consequence Frame***

This frame allows to understand which consequences could arise from the economic issue.

**V4.8 Does the article refers the which are the main consequences of the economic issue?**

- 0= No
- 1= Yes

**If, YES**

**4.9 Which are according to the economic article the main consequences?**

- 1= economic growth
- 2= increase the national government support
- 3= increase the national economic competitiveness
- 4= creation of a wider Eurozone
- 5= improve the living standards
- 6= increase EU's credibility
- 7= national credibility damage
- 8= economic recession
- 9=affect living standards
- 10= Euro collapse
- 11= smaller Eurozone
- 12= damage EU's credibility
- 13= force the countries to give up on euro

**-National government support** refers to:

National government support (e.g., support of the government or its ministers; public opinion, polls, electoral outcome)

## External Relations

**-Economic competitiveness:** refers to the capability of a country to achieve profitability in the market in relation to its competitors.

**-Living standards:** refer to the level of wealth, comfort, material goods and necessities available to a certain socioeconomic class in a certain country. This concept includes factors such as:

Income, quality and availability of employment, class disparity, poverty rate, quality and affordability of housing, hours of work required to purchase necessities, amount of leisure time, access to quality healthcare, quality and availability of education, quality of welfare state, life expectancy, cost of goods and services, infrastructures.

National economic growth, economic and political stability, gross domestic product, inflation rate,

**-EU credibility** refers to:

EU institutions' credibility (e.g., European Parliament, European Commission, Council of the European Union or Council of Ministers, Court of Justice of the European Unions, European Central Bank)

EU's economy damage (e.g., economic slowdown, economic growth, economic competition)

External Relations (exportations, NATO, ONU, China, USA, Africa, the President of the European Commission)

**-National credibility damage** refers to:

National government damage (e.g., resignation/demission of government or its ministers; public opinion, polls, electoral outcome)

National economy damage (e.g., economic slowdown, unemployment)

External Relations damage (debts, loans, external aid)

**-Economic recession** refers to a slowdown in economic activity

A decline of GDP, investment spending, capacity utilisation, household income, business profits inflation, net export activity

A rise in Bankruptcies and unemployment rate

**-Euro collapse** refers, e.g., to end of Eurozone, end of Economic and Monetary Union or EU monetary policy.

**-EU credibility** refers to:

EU institutions' credibility (e.g., European Parliament, European Commission, Council of the European Union or Council of Ministers, Court of Justice of the European Unions, European Central Bank)

EU's economy damage (e.g., economic slowdown, economic growth, economic competition)

External Relations (exportations, NATO, ONU, China, USA, Africa, the President of the European Commission)

### ***Solution Frame***

This frame allows to understand which is the solution for the problem; in other words, which is the best course of action to deal with the economic issue.

**V4.10 Does the article refers the which is the best solutions for the economic issues?**

0= No

1= Yes

**If, YES**

**4.11 Which is according to the economic article the best solution?**

1= a co-operative framework/ a co-operative framework

2= national governments should deal with the problem without help from Europe

**-Co-operative framework/ European solidarity** refers, for instance, to a European collective interest, a single European people united in a similar manner, sharing common problems, and searching for common solutions.

*E.g., the Dutch government said: The refugee issue is a problem of all European countries.*

## APPENDIX B- VARIABLES

**Table B. 1** Variables transformation

Indicators	Original Coding	Recode
	-Bankruptcy problem	1- Banking and Finances
	-Employment problem	
	-Social Security problem	2- Welfare and Taxes
	-Budget deficit problem	
	- Sovereign debt problem	3- Deficit, SovereignDebt, and Inflation
	-EU competitiveness problem	4- European Economic Competition
	- Brexit problem	5- Brexit
	- National economy and national policies	1- National
	- European Union policies	
	- Eurozone countries policies	2- European Union
"Cause"	- Globalization	3- Globalization
	- National government/ national companies/ national citizens	1- National
"Responsibility"	- European Union as a whole	2- EU
	- National Countries and the EU as a whole	3- National and EU

Table BI (continue)

	- Improve the living standards	
	- Affect living standards	1-Individual Level
	-Increase the national economic competitiveness	
“Consequences”	- Increase the national government support	2-National Level
	- Economic growth	
	- National credibility damage	
	- Economic recession	
	- Force the countries to give up on euro	
	- Creation of a wider Eurozone	
	- Increase EU’s credibility	
	- Euro collapse	3-European Level
	- Smaller Eurozone	
	- Damage EU’s credibility	
	Co-operative framework	1- European Solidarity
“Solution”	National governments to deal with the problem without help from Europe	2- Without EU Assistance

## APPENDIX C- RELIABILITY TESTS (TONE AND FRAMING)

Table C. 1 Fully crossed design

	Coder A	Coder A1	Coder B		Coder A	Coder A1	Coder B		Coder A	Coder A1	Coder B
Pub2002-01	X			Pub2009-26	X			Pub2015-53	X		
Pub2002-02	X			Pub2009-27	X			Pub2015-54	X		
Pub2002-15	X		X	Pub2009-31	X			Pub2015-67	X		
Pub2002-16	X			Pub2009-47	X	X		Pub2015-68	X		
Pub2002-17	X			Pub2009-57	X			Pub2015-70	X		
Pub2002-18	X			Pub2009-61	X		X	Pub2015-71	X		X
Pub2002-20	X			Pub2009-62	X			Pub2015-72	X		
Pub2002-27	X		X	Pub2009-96	X			Pub2015-73	X		
Pub2002-28	X			Pub2009-106	X			Pub2015-80	X		
Pub2002-42	X			Pub2009-108	X		X	DN2002-03	X		
Pub2002-43	X			Pub2009-115	X			DN2002-07	X		X
Pub2002-54	X			Pub2009-117	X			DN2002-12	X		
Pub2002-55	X			Pub2009-130	X			DN2002-15	X		
Pub2002-60	X	X		Pub2011-03	X	X		DN2002-16	X		
Pub2002-64	X			Pub2011-06	X		X	DN2002-19	X	X	
Pub2002-70	X			Pub2011-12	X			DN2002-20	X		
Pub2002-71	X			Pub2011-18	X		X	DN2002-23	X		
Pub2002-74	X			Pub2011-23	X			DN2002-29	X		X
Pub2002-75	X			Pub2011-26	X	X		DN2002-30	X		
Pub2002-81	X			Pub2011-27	X	X		DN2002-34	X		
Pub2002-87	X	X		Pub2011-28	X			DN2002-36	X		
Pub2002-88	X			Pub2011-29	X			DN2002-42	X		
Pub2002-89	X			Pub2011-35	X			DN2002-45	X	X	
Pub2002-91	X			Pub2011-36	X		X	DN2002-47	X		
Pub2002-92	X		X	Pub2011-37	X			DN2002-49	X		

Table C1 (continue)

	Coder A	Coder A1	Coder B		Coder A	Coder A1	Coder B		Coder A	Coder A1	Coder B
Pub2002-100	X			Pub2011-48	X			DN2002-51	X		X
Pub2002-109	X	X		Pub2011-49	X			DN2002-58	X		
Pub2002-115	X			Pub2011-50	X	X		DN2002-62	X		
Pub2002-116	X			Pub2011-51	X		X	DN2002-64	X		
Pub2002-120	X		X	Pub2011-53	X			DN2002-79	X		
Pub2002-124	X			Pub2011-63	X		X	DN2002-81	X	X	
Pub2002-129	X	X		Pub2011-69	X			DN2002-85	X		
Pub2002-130	X			Pub2011-72	X			DN2002-97	X		
Pub2002-132	X			Pub2011-73	X			DN2002-103	X		
Pub2002-135	X			Pub2011-79	X			DN2002-116	X		
Pub2002-136	X			Pub2011-80	X	X		DN2002-117	X		X
Pub2005-15	X			Pub2011-81	X			DN2002-118	X		
Pub2005-18	X	X		Pub2015-05	X			DN2002-131	X		
Pub2005-19	X			Pub2015-06	X			DN2002-133	X		
Pub2005-20	X			Pub2015-07	X			DN2002-143	X		
Pub2005-22	X	X		Pub2015-12	X		X	DN2002-144	X		
Pub2005-24	X		X	Pub2015-13	X			DN2002-145	X		
Pub2005-33	X			Pub2015-17	X			DN2002-147	X		
Pub2005-38	X	X		Pub2015-20	X			DN2002-148	X	X	
Pub2005-48	X			Pub2015-23	X	X		DN2002-164	X		
Pub2005-50	X		X	Pub2015-25	X			DN2002-166	X		
Pub2005-57	X			Pub2015-26	X	X		DN2002-167	X		
Pub2005-62	X	X		Pub2015-29	X			DN2005-05	X		
Pub2005-65	X	X		Pub2015-32	X			DN2005-12	X		
Pub2005-66	X			Pub2015-34	X			DN2005-14	X	X	
Pub2005-71	X			Pub2015-35	X			DN2005-15	X		



Table C1 (continue)

	Coder A	Coder A1	Coder B		Coder A	Coder A1	Coder B		Coder A	Coder A1	Coder B
Pub2005-73	X			Pub2015-36	X			DN2005-16	X		
Pub2005-82	X		X	Pub2015-39	X		X	DN2005-17	X		X
Pub2005-85	X			Pub2015-41	X			DN2005-18	X		
Pub2009-08	X	X		Pub2015-47	X			DN2005-19	X	X	
Pub2009-11	X			Pub2015-48	X	X		DN2005-42	X		
Pub2009-18	X			Pub2015-51	X			DN2005-43	X		
Pub2009-25	X			Pub2015-52	X			DN2005-453	X		X
DN2005-67	X	X		DN2011-79	X			ELM2008-62	X		
DN2005-68	X			DN2011-80	X	X		ELM2008-65	X		
DN2005-70	X			DN2011-92	X			ELM2008-66	X		X
DN2005-83	X	X		DN2011-96	X		X	ELM2008-74	X		
DN2005-84	X			DN2011-106	X	X		ELM2008-78	X		
DN2005-89	X			DN2015-04	X			ELM2008-83	X		
DN2005-90	X		X	DN2015-18	X			ELM2008-86	X		X
DN2005-92	X			DN2015-19	X			ELM2008-99	X		
DN2005-112	X		X	DN2015-23	X		X	ELM2008-101	X		
DN2005-114	X			DN2015-26	X			ELM2008-106	X		X
DN2005-126	X			DN2015-27	X			ELM2008-115	X		
DN2005-134	X		X	DN2015-30	X			ELM2008-116	X		
DN2005-135	X	X		DN2015-43	X			ELM2008-117	X		
DN2005-153	X			DN2015-44	X	X		ELM2008-119	X	X	
DN2009-01	X			DN2015-49	X			ELM2008-126	X		
DN2009-04	X			DN2015-50	X			ELM2008-129	X		
DN2009-05	X			DN2015-51	X			ELM2008-133	X		
DN2009-15	X			DN2015-52	X		X	ELM2008-135	X		
DN2009-19	X			DN2015-53	X			ELM2008-144	X	X	

Table C1 (continue)

	Coder A	Coder A1	Coder B		Coder A	Coder A1	Coder B		Coder A	Coder A1	Coder B
DN2009-30	X			DN2015-67	X			ELM2008-164	X		
DN2009-40	X			DN2015-73	X			ELM2008-167	X		
DN2009-46	X			DN2015-112	X			ELM2008-171	X		
DN2009-63	X	X		DN2015-123	X			ELM2008-187	X		
DN2009-75	X			DN2015-124	X	X		ELM2008-188	X		
DN2009-83	X			DN2015-125	X			ELM2008-189	X		
DN2009-87	X		X	DN2015-126	X			ELM2008-190	X		
DN2009-110	X			ELM2004-03	X			ELM2008-191	X	X	
DN2009-115	X			ELM2004-05	X			ELM2008-200	X		
DN2009-148	X			ELM2004-20	X	X		ELM2008-202	X		
DN2009-154	X			ELM2004-24	X		X	ELM2008-206	X		
DN2009-161	X			ELM2004-25	X			ELM2011-01	X	X	
DN2009-170	X			ELM2004-31	X			ELM2011-04	X		
DN2009-201	X			ELM2004-33	X			ELM2011-05	X		X
DN2009-211	X		X	ELM2004-39	X	X		ELM2011-06	X		
DN2009-217	X	X		ELM2004-43	X			ELM2011-08	X	X	
DN2009-219	X			ELM2004-49	X		X	ELM2011-18	X		
DN2009-226	X			ELM2004-51	X		X	ELM2011-20	X		
DN2009-240	X	X		ELM2004-59	X			ELM2011-24	X		X
DN2009-243	X			ELM2004-60	X	X		ELM2011-27	X		
DN2009-248	X		X	ELM2004-61	X			ELM2011-29	X		
DN2009-258	X			ELM2004-62	X			ELM2011-30	X		
DN2009-259	X			ELM2004-66	X		X	ELM2011-31	X		
DN2009-271	X			ELM2004-72	X			ELM2011-33	X	X	
DN2009-274	X		X	ELM2004-75	X	X		ELM2011-41	X		
DN2009-275	X			ELM2004-76	X			ELM2011-42	X		X

Table C1 (continue)

	Coder A	Coder A1	Coder B		Coder A	Coder A1	Coder B		Coder A	Coder A1	Coder B
DN2009-277	X			ELM2004-79	X		X	ELM2011-43	X		
DN2009-288	X			ELM2004-85	X	X		ELM2011-50	X		
DN2009-295	X			ELM2004-100	X			ELM2011-52	X	X	
DN2009-296	X			ELM2008-14	X			ELM2011-53	X		
DN2009-302	X			ELM2008-20	X			ELM2011-54	X		
DN2009-311	X	X		ELM2008-28	X			ELM2011-55	X	X	
DN2011-16	X		X	ELM2008-30	X			ELM2011-56	X		X
DN2011-46	X			ELM2008-45	X		X	ELM2011-57	X		
DN2011-55	X			ELM2008-50	X			ELM2011-62	X		
DN2011-56	X	X		ELM2008-51	X			ELM2011-63	X		
DN2011-64	X			ELM2008-55	X			ELM2011-64	X		X
DN2011-65	X		X	ELM2008-56	X			ELM2011-65	X		
DN2011-76	X			ELM2008-60	X	X		ELM2011-68	X		
ELM2011-69	X			ELP2008-71	X		X	ELP2011-64	X		
ELM2011-70	X	X		ELP2008-72	X			ELP2011-65	X		
ELM2011-75	X		X	ELP2008-79	X			ELP2011-66	X		
ELM2011-80	X			ELP2008-91	X			ELP2011-67	X		
ELM2011-81	X			ELP2008-94	X			ELP2011-69	X		X
ELM2011-83	X		X	ELP2008-98	X			ELP2011-81	X		
ELM2011-84	X			ELP2008-99	X			ELP2011-82	X		
ELM2011-91	X			ELP2008-100	X		X	ELP2011-83	X	X	
ELM2011-92	X			ELP2008-110	X			ELP2011-84	X		
ELM2011-94	X	X		ELP2008-111	X			ELP2011-85	X		
ELM2015-14	X	X		ELP2008-112	X			ELP2011-86	X		X
ELM2015-20	X			ELP2008-113	X			ELP2011-87	X		
ELM2015-33	X		X	ELP2008-134	X			ELP2011-88	X		

Table C1(continue)

	Coder A	Coder A1	Coder B		Coder A	Coder A1	Coder B		Coder A	Coder A1	Coder B
ELM2015-34	X	X		ELP2008-139	X	X		ELP2011-89	X		
ELM2015-57	X		X	ELP2008-140	X			ELP2011-90	X		
ELM2015-64	X			ELP2008-141	X			ELP2011-103	X	X	
ELM2016-05	X			ELP2008-147	X			ELP2011-104	X		
ELM2016-09	X		X	ELP2008-151	X			ELP2011-105	X		
ELM2016-10	X			ELP2008-155	X			ELP2011-109	X		
ELM2016-12	X			ELP2008-156	X	X		ELP2011-117	X		X
ELM2016-25	X			ELP2008-158	X			ELP2011-118	X		
ELM2016-26	X			ELP2008-165	X			ELP2011-119	X		
ELM2016-33	X			ELP2008-175	X			ELP2011-120	X		X
ELM2016-39	X		X	ELP2008-179	X		X	ELP2011-124	X		
ELM2016-40	X			ELP2008-180	X			ELP2011-125	X		
ELM2016-41	X			ELP2008-203	X			ELP2011-126	X		
ELM2016-46	X			ELP2008-213	X			ELP2011-127	X	X	
ELM2016-53	X			ELP2008-215	X	X		ELP2011-128	X		
ELM2016-54	X	X		ELP2008-220	X			ELP2015-03	X		
ELP2004-01	X			ELP2008-223	X			ELP2015-05	X		X
ELP2004-02	X			ELP2008-232	X			ELP2015-20	X		
ELP2004-12	X	X		ELP2008-233	X			ELP2015-22	X		
ELP2004-14	X			ELP2008-238	X			ELP2015-46	X		
ELP2004-16	X			ELP2011-01	X	X		ELP2015-52	X		
ELP2004-21	X			ELP2011-02	X			ELP2015-55	X		
ELP2004-27	X			ELP2011-03	X			ELP2015-57	X	X	
ELP2004-30	X	X		ELP2011-04	X			ELP2015-58	X		
ELP2004-37	X			ELP2011-05	X	X		ELP2015-59	X		

Table C1(continue)

	Coder A	Coder A1	Coder B		Coder A	Coder A1	Coder B		Coder A	Coder A1	Coder B
ELP2004-48	X		X	ELP2011-09	X			ELP2015-72	X		X
ELP2004-50	X			ELP2011-14	X		X	ELP2015-74	X		
ELP2004-58	X			ELP2011-16	X			ELP2015-78	X		
ELP2004-62	X		X	ELP2011-17	X			ELP2015-87	X		
ELP2004-76	X			ELP2011-18	X	X		ELP2015-97	X		
ELP2004-89	X			ELP2011-20	X			ELP2015-105	X	X	
ELP2004-94	X			ELP2011-21	X			ELP2015-108	X		
ELP2004-96	X			ELP2011-22	X		X	ELP2015-110	X		
ELP2008-01	X			ELP2011-29	X			ELP2015-115	X		
ELP2008-03	X			ELP2011-30	X			ELP2015-121	X		
ELP2008-20	X		X	ELP2011-31	X			ELP2015-132	X		
ELP2008-23	X			ELP2011-33	X	X		ELP2015-156	X		X
ELP2008-24	X			ELP2011-42	X			ELP2015-161	X		
ELP2008-38	X			ELP2011-43	X		X	ELP2015-174	X	X	
ELP2008-43	X	X		ELP2011-44	X			ELP2015-175	X		
ELP2008-49	X			ELP2011-51	X	X		ELP2015-182	X		
ELP2008-54	X			ELP2011-55	X			ELP2015-188	X		
ELP2008-56	X			ELP2011-61	X			ELP2015-189	X		X
ELP2008-67	X			ELP2011-62	X		X	ELP2015-190	X		
ELP2008-69	X			ELP2011-63	X			ELP2015-194	X		
ELP2015-195	X			Indep2002-123	X			Indep2007-172	X		
ELP2015-201	X			Indep2002-125	X			Indep2007-175	X	X	
ELP2015-203	X			Indep2002-151	X		X	Indep2007-178	X		
ELP2015-208	X			Indep2002-155	X			Indep2007-189	X		
ELP2015-210	X	X		Indep2002-160	X			Indep2007-201	X		

Table C1(continue)

	Coder A	Coder A1	Coder B		Coder A	Coder A1	Coder B		Coder A	Coder A1	Coder B
ELP2015-217	X			Indep2002-165	X			Indep2007-204	X		
ELP2016-01	X			Indep2002-177	X			Indep2007-205	X		
ELP2016-03	X		X	Indep2002-178	X			Indep2007-208	X		X
ELP2016-05	X			Indep2002-180	X	X		Indep2007-220	X		
ELP2016-34	X	X		Indep2002-186	X			Indep2007-223	X		
ELP2016-37	X			Indep2002-192	X			Indep2007-224	X		
ELP2016-38	X			Indep2002-194	X			Indep2007-226	X		
ELP2016-39	X			Indep2002-215	X			Indep2007-232	X		
ELP2016-50	X			Indep2002-218	X	X		Indep2007-235	X	X	
ELP2016-51	X		X	Indep2002-220	X			Indep2007-241	X		
ELP2016-57	X			Indep2002-223	X			Indep2007-247	X		
ELP2016-65	X			Indep2002-235	X			Indep2007-258	X		
ELP2016-68	X			Indep2002-240	X			Indep2007-267	X		
ELP2016-74	X			Indep2002-251	X		X	Indep2007-279	X		
ELP2016-75	X			Indep2002-265	X			Indep2007-283	X		
ELP2016-77	X	X		Indep2002-267	X			Indep2011-03	X		
ELP2016-79	X			Indep2002-269	X			Indep2011-05	X		
ELP2016-89	X			Indep2002-276	X			Indep2011-12	X		X
ELP2016-90	X			Indep2002-296	X			Indep2011-13	X		
ELP2016-92	X			Indep2002-302	X			Indep2011-14	X		
ELP2016-93	X		X	Indep2002-307	X	X		Indep2011-15	X		
ELP2016-99	X			Indep2002-308	X			Indep2011-19	X	X	
ELP2016-105	X			Indep2007-01	X			Indep2011-23	X		
ELP2016-109	X		X	Indep2007-07	X			Indep2011-25	X		
ELP2016-111	X			Indep2007-09	X		X	Indep2011-29	X		X

Table C1(continue)

	Coder A	Coder A1	Coder B		Coder A	Coder A1	Coder B		Coder A	Coder A1	Coder B
ELP2016-124	X			Indep2007-10	X			Indep2011-30	X		
ELP2016-139	X			Indep2007-19	X			Indep2011-32	X		
ELP2016-140	X	X		Indep2007-20	X			Indep2011-38	X		
ELP2016-141	X			Indep2007-31	X			Indep2011-39	X		
ELP2016-151	X			Indep2007-34	X			Indep2011-47	X		
ELP2016-155	X			Indep2007-35	X			Indep2011-49	X	X	
ELP2016-174	X			Indep2007-42	X	X		Indep2011-56	X		
ELP2016-175	X			Indep2007-43	X			Indep2011-70	X		
ELP2016-176	X			Indep2007-46	X			Indep2011-77	X		
ELP2016-177	X	X		Indep2007-54	X		X	Indep2011-79	X		
ELP2016-181	X			Indep2007-55	X			Indep2011-80	X		
Indep2002-35	X		X	Indep2007-75	X			Indep2011-88	X		
Indep2002-44	X			Indep2007-79	X			Indep2011-89	X		
Indep2002-45	X			Indep2007-80	X	X		Indep2011-90	X	X	
Indep2002-54	X			Indep2007-84	X			Indep2011-91	X		
Indep2002-57	X			Indep2007-104	X			Indep2011-93	X		
Indep2002-60	X			Indep2007-107	X			Indep2011-105	X		X
Indep2002-63	X			Indep2007-109	X		X	Indep2011-118	X		
Indep2002-65	X	X		Indep2007-112	X			Indep2011-119	X		
Indep2002-69	X			Indep2007-132	X			Indep2011-124	X		
Indep2002-70	X			Indep2007-133	X			Indep2011-125	X		
Indep2002-82	X		X	Indep2007-139	X			Indep2011-126	X	X	
Indep2002-92	X			Indep2007-140	X			Indep2011-130	X		
Indep2002-100	X			Indep2007-153	X			Indep2011-140	X		X
Indep2002-107	X			Indep2007-154	X		X	Indep2011-146	X		

Table C1(continue)

	Coder A	Coder A1	Coder B		Coder A	Coder A1	Coder B		Coder A	Coder A1	Coder B
Indep2002-111	X			Indep2007-155	X			Indep2011-148	X		
Indep2002-115	X			Indep2007-167	X			Indep2011-149	X		
Indep2011-151	X			Indep2016-107	X			Times2002-260	X		
Indep2011-153	X			Indep2016-114	X			Times2002-268	X		
Indep2011-163	X			Indep2016-118	X			Times2002-270	X		
Indep2011-172	X		X	Indep2016-119	X			Times2002-271	X		
Indep2011-179	X			Indep2016-123	X			Times2002-307	X		
Indep2011-184	X			Indep2016-124	X	X		Times2002-346	X	X	
Indep2011-186	X			Indep2016-135	X			Times2002-358	X		
Indep2011-194	X			Indep2016-137	X			Times2002-360	X		
Indep2011-204	X			Indep2016-139	X		X	Times2002-378	X		X
Indep2011-226	X			Indep2016-142	X			Times2002-384	X		
Indep2011-228	X		X	Indep2016-147	X			Times2002-405	X		
Indep2011-230	X			Indep2016-150	X			Times2007-03	X		
Indep2011-244	X			Indep2016-169	X			Times2007-11	X		
Indep2011-253	X			Indep2016-170	X			Times2007-12	X		X
Indep2011-260	X			Indep2016-179	X			Times2007-43	X		
Indep2011-270	X	X		Indep2016-186	X			Times2007-52	X		
Indep2011-272	X			Indep2016-187	X		X	Times2007-64	X		
Indep2011-273	X			Indep2016-191	X			Times2007-69	X	X	
Indep2011-274	X		X	Indep2016-196	X			Times2007-70	X		
Indep2011-279	X			Indep2016-204	X			Times2007-78	X		
Indep2011-296	X			Indep2016-206	X			Times2007-87	X		
Indep2011-297	X			Indep2016-211	X			Times2007-88	X		
Indep2011-303	X			Indep2016-213	X	X		Times2007-98	X		X



Table C1(continue)

	Coder A	Coder A1	Coder B		Coder A	Coder A1	Coder B		Coder A	Coder A1	Coder B
Indep2011-306	X	X		Indep2016-216	X			Times2007-103	X		
Indep2011-307	X			Indep2016-218	X		X	Times2007-105	X		
Indep2011-308	X			Indep2016-227	X			Times2007-117	X		
Indep2011-315	X			Indep2016-231	X			Times2007-119	X		
Indep2011-329	X			Indep2016-233	X			Times2007-130	X	X	
Indep2011-330	X	X		Indep2016-239	X			Times2007-140	X		
Indep2011-333	X			Indep2016-242	X			Times2007-141	X		
Indep2011-338	X			Indep2016-243	X	X		Times2007-152	X		
Indep2016-02	X			Indep2016-247	X			Times2007-155	X		
Indep2016-10	X			Indep2016-250	X			Times2007-186	X		
Indep2016-11	X			Indep2016-251	X		X	Times2007-211	X	X	
Indep2016-12	X			Indep2016-257	X			Times2007-217	X		
Indep2016-14	X			Indep2016-259	X			Times2007-231	X		
Indep2016-17	X	X		Indep2016-260	X			Times2007-235	X		
Indep2016-19	X			Indep2016-261	X	X		Times2007-236	X		
Indep2016-20	X			Indep2016-262	X			Times2007-242	X		
Indep2016-21	X		X	Indep2016-264	X			Times2007-244	X	X	
Indep2016-38	X			Times2002-03	X			Times2007-247	X		
Indep2016-50	X			Times2002-12	X			Times2007-261	X		X
Indep2016-51	X			Times2002-16	X	X		Times2007-266	X		
Indep2016-53	X	X		Times2002-36	X		X	Times2007-267	X		
Indep2016-61	X			Times2002-90	X			Times2007-271	X	X	
Indep2016-62	X			Times2002-102	X			Times2007-274	X		
Indep2016-72	X			Times2002-112	X			Times2007-276	X		X
Indep2016-76	X		X	Times2002-139	X			Times2007-301	X		

Table C1(continue)

	Coder A	Coder A1	Coder B		Coder A	Coder A1	Coder B		Coder A	Coder A1	Coder B
Indep2016-77	X			Times2002-151	X			Times2007-311	X		
Indep2016-78	X			Times2002-163	X		X	Times2007-317	X		X
Indep2016-83	X			Times2002-185	X			Times2007-319	X		
Indep2016-84	X	X		Times2002-187	X			Times2007-325	X		
Indep2016-85	X			Times2002-189	X			Times2011-41	X	X	
Indep2016-86	X			Times2002-199	X	X		Times2011-43	X		
Indep2016-100	X			Times2002-201	X			Times2011-44	X		
Indep2016-101	X			Times2002-215	X			Times2011-55	X		
Indep2016-102	X		X	Times2002-245	X			Times2011-57	X		
Times2011-60	X	X		Times2011-324	X			Times2016-232	X		
Times2011-64	X			Times2011-326	X		X	Times2016-236	X		X
Times2011-65	X			Times2011-327	X			Times2016-244	X		
Times2011-66	X			Times2011-336	X			Times2016-248	X		
Times2011-71	X			Times2011-345	X			Times2016-255	X	X	
Times2011-75	X			Times2016-01	X	X		Times2016-260	X		
Times2011-80	X		X	Times2016-03	X			Times2016-274	X	X	
Times2011-82	X			Times2016-04	X			Times2016-283	X		
Times2011-83	X			Times2016-13	X			Times2016-284	X		
Times2011-86	X			Times2016-17	X			Times2016-285	X		
Times2011-92	X			Times2016-25	X		X	Times2016-287	X		
Times2011-93	X			Times2016-26	X			Times2016-290	X		
Times2011-95	X			Times2016-45	X			Times2016-291	X		
Times2011-99	X			Times2016-49	X			Times2016-293	X	X	
Times2011-104	X			Times2016-61	X			Times2016-306	X		
Times2011-107	X		X	Times2016-64	X			Times2016-311	X		

Table C1(continue)

	Coder A	Coder A1	Coder B		Coder A	Coder A1	Coder B		Coder A	Coder A1	Coder B
Times2011-118	X			Times2016-65	X	X		Times2016-315	X		
Times2011-121	X			Times2016-74	X			Times2016-317	X		
Times2011-124	X			Times2016-86	X			Times2016-319	X		
Times2011-125	X			Times2016-92	X			Times2016-324	X		
Times2011-126	X	X		Times2016-95	X		X	Times2016-328	X	X	
Times2011-132	X			Times2016-97	X			Times2016-330	X		
Times2011-135	X			Times2016-98	X			Times2016-332	X		
Times2011-146	X		X	Times2016-111	X			Times2016-344	X		
Times2011-153	X			Times2016-113	X			Times2016-347	X		
Times2011-155	X			Times2016-115	X	X		Times2011-239	X	X	
Times2011-156	X			Times2016-120	X			Times2011-246	X		
Times2011-157	X			Times2016-121	X			Times2011-259	X		
Times2011-177	X			Times2016-123	X			Times2011-260	X		
Times2011-178	X			Times2016-125	X			Times2011-264	X		
Times2011-179	X		X	Times2016-129	X			Times2011-266	X		
Times2011-181	X			Times2016-132	X			Times2011-267	X		
Times2011-182	X			Times2016-135	X		X	Times2011-269	X		
Times2011-183	X			Times2016-138	X			Times2011-273	X		
Times2011-192	X			Times2016-141	X			Times2011-284	X	X	
Times2011-197	X			Times2016-145	X			Times2011-287	X		
Times2011-204	X		X	Times2016-151	X			Times2011-289	X		
Times2011-226	X			Times2016-152	X		X	Times2011-290	X		
Times2011-228	X			Times2016-156	X			Times2011-299	X	X	
Times2011-234	X			Times2016-158	X			Times2011-300	X		
Times2011-236	X			Times2016-164	X			Times2011-320	X		

Table C1(continue)

	<b>Coder A</b>	<b>Coder A1</b>	<b>Coder B</b>
Times2016-168	X		
Times2016-169	X		
Times2016-173	X		
Times2016-175	X		X
Times2016-181	X		
Times2016-183	X		
Times2016-191	X		X
Times2016-197	X		
Times2016-198	X		
Times2016-199	X		
Times2016-204	X	X	
Times2016-206	X		
Times2016-210	X		X
Times2016-211	X		
Times2016-217	X		
Times2016-230	X		

**Table C. 2**Time- table (Intra-Coder recodification)

<b>Newspapers</b>		<b>End of First Codification</b>	<b>Re-Codification (Intra-Coder)</b>
Diário de Notícias	2002	September 2018	January 2019
	2005	November 2018	March 2019
	2009	January 2019	May 2019
	2011	March 2019	July 2019
	2015	April 2019	August 2019
Público	2002	October 2018	February 2019
	2005	December 2018	April 2019
	2009	April 2019	August 2019
	2011	May 2019	September 2019
	2015	May 2019	September 2019
El Mundo	2004	July 2019	November 2019
	2008	September 2019	January 2020
	2011	October 2019	February 2020
	2015	August 2019	December 2019
	2016	August 2019	December 2019
El País	2004	January 2019	May 2019
	2008	September 2018	January 2019
	2011	June 2019	October 2019
	2015	September 2019	January 2020
	2016	October 2019	June 2019
The Irish Independent	2002	August 2019	December 2019
	2007	March 2019	July 2019
	2011	December 2018	April 2019
	2016	November 2019	March 2020
The Irish Times	2002	January 2019	May 2019
	2007	June 2019	October 2019
	2011	March 2019	July 2019
	2016	April 2019	August 2019

Table C. 3 Simple agreement rates for intra-coder checks

Simple Agreement Rate (Intra-Coder)						
	<i>Tone</i>	<i>Framing</i>				
		<b>Problem</b>	<b>Cause</b>	<b>Consequences</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Solution</b>
Diário de Notícias Público	77.8%	83.3%	83.3%	77.8%	88.9%	94.4%
El Mundo	83.3%	83.3%	77.8%	77.8%	94.4%	94.4%
El País	75%	90%	75%	85%	85%	95%
The Irish Independent	72.7%	86.4%	81.8%	90.9%	81.8%	100%
The Irish Times	68.2%	78.3%	82.6%	82.6%	86.9%	86.9%
	73.9%	73.9%	88.6%	86.9%	78.3%	95.6%
	<b>72.6%</b>	<b>82.3%</b>	<b>81.5%</b>	<b>83.9%</b>	<b>85.5%</b>	<b>95.2%</b>

Table C. 4 Simple agreement rates for inter-coder checks

Simple Agreement Rate (Inter-Coder)						
	<i>Tone</i>	<i>Framing</i>				
		<b>Problem</b>	<b>Cause</b>	<b>Consequences</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Solution</b>
Diário de Notícias Público	77.8%	77.8%	88.9%	77.8%	83.4%	100%
El Mundo	72.2%	77.8%	83.4%	88.9%	77.8%	94.4%
El País	70%	90%	80%	80%	75%	90%
The Irish Independent	72.7%	81.8%	86.4%	77.3%	72.7%	95.5%
The Irish Times	69.6%	78.3%	82.6%	86.9%	73.9%	86.9%
	69.6%	78.3%	78.3%	86.9%	73.9%	91.3%
	<b>71.8%</b>	<b>80.7%</b>	<b>83.1%</b>	<b>83.1%</b>	<b>75.8%</b>	<b>92.7%</b>

Table C. 5 Krippendorff's alpha (intra-coder)

<b>Kalpha (Intra-Coder)</b>							
	<i>Units</i>	<i>Tone</i>	<i>Framing</i>				
			<b>Problem</b>	<b>Cause</b>	<b>Consequences</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Solution</b>
Diário de Notícias Público	18	0.811	0.821	0.867	0.897	0.856	0.983
El Mundo	18	0.766	0.874	0.839	0.889	0.981	0.978
El País	20	0.711	0.936	0.838	0.899	0.886	0.962
The Irish Independent	22	0.696	0.865	0.853	0.913	0.843	1
The Irish Times	23	0.672	0.801	0.877	0.854	0.931	0.894
	23	0.643	0.798	0.851	0.852	0.801	0.939
	<b>124</b>	<b>0.786</b>	<b>0.877</b>	<b>0.852</b>	<b>0.901</b>	<b>0.923</b>	<b>0.968</b>



Table C. 6 Krippendorff's alpha (inter-coder)

<b>Kalpha (Inter-Coder)</b>							
	<i>Units</i>	<i>Tone</i>	<i>Framing</i>				
			<b>Problem</b>	<b>Cause</b>	<b>Consequences</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Solution</b>
Diário de Notícias Público	18	0.811	0.803	0.893	0.809	0.846	1
El Mundo	18	0.746	0.812	0.876	0.891	0.822	0.959
El País	20	0.617	0.861	0.809	0.818	0.798	0.923
The Irish Independent	22	0.678	0.826	0.816	0.798	0.765	0.959
The Irish Times	23	0.625	0.754	0.799	0.803	0.833	0.926
	23	0.624	0.751	0.787	0.800	0.799	0.933
	<b>124</b>	<b>0.776</b>	<b>0.789</b>	<b>0.847</b>	<b>0.859</b>	<b>0.839</b>	<b>0.943</b>



## APPENDIX D- CODEBOOK “ATTRIBUTION OF RESPONSIBILITY”

### General Information

The purpose of this codebook is to code which national or European actors were addressed the main responsibility for the economic issue by national newspapers.

### Unit of Analysis

- The unit of analysis is a European economic article. An article consists of the headline and the body text

### **IMPORTANT**

- **Actors are mutually exclusive. This means that only one actor should be coded as responsible.**
- **If the article attributed the responsibility to more than one actor, code the actor to whom the MAIN responsibility is addressed.**

**V1. According to the article who is the main responsible for the economic question?**

- 1- National Actors
- 2- European Union institutions and bodies
- 3- EU countries

If, **1- National Actors**

**V2. Who is the main actor responsible?**

- 1- Political Actors
- 2- Interest Groups
- 3- Civil Society

**Political Actors** refer to State actors (executive, legislative, judiciary, economic) as well political parties

**Interest Groups** include Market and Finances (market, banks, and credit agencies), private companies and employers) and labour elements (unions, workers, and other work-related actors)

**Civil Society** refers to National Citizens and Social Movements (anti-austerity and occupy movements, reclaim initiatives, right-wing extremists, radical left-wing).

If, **2- European Institutions and bodies**

**V3. Who is the main actor responsible?**

- 1- European Parliament
- 2- European Council
- 3- Council of European Union
- 4- European Commission

- 5- European Central Bank (ECB)
- 6- Court of Justice of the European Union
- 7- European Court of Auditors (ECA)
- 8- European External Action Services (EEAS)
- 9- European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)
- 10- European Committee of Regions (CoR)
- 11- European Investment Bank (EIB)
- 12- European Ombudsman
- 13- European Data Protection Supervisor
- 14- Inter institutional Bodies (Computer Emergency Response Team / European School of Administration/ European Personnel Office/ Publications Office.
- 15- TROIKA

If, **3- EU Countries**

**V4. Who is the main responsible actor?**

- |                   |               |                 |
|-------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| 1- Austria        | 10- France    | 19- Malta       |
| 2- Belgium        | 11- Germany   | 20- Netherlands |
| 3- Bulgaria       | 12- Greece    | 21- Poland      |
| 4- Croatia        | 13- Hungary   | 22- Portugal    |
| 5- Cyprus         | 14- Ireland   | 23- Romania     |
| 6- Czech Republic | 15- Italy     | 24- Slovakia    |
| 7- Denmark        | 16- Latvia    | 25- Slovenia    |
| 8- Estonia        | 17- Lithuania | 26- Spain       |
| 9- Finland        | 18- Luxemburg | 27- Sweden      |

## APPENDIX E- RELIABILITY TESTS (ACTORS)

Table E. 1 Krippendorff's alpha (inter-coder and intra-coder)

<b>Kalpha</b>			
	<i><b>Units</b></i>	<i>Inter-Coder</i>	<i>Intra-Coder</i>
National Actors	<b>30</b>	0.780	0.893
EU Institutions and Bodies	<b>35</b>	0.831	1
EU Member-States	<b>5</b>	0.983	1
<i>Overall Sample</i>	<b>70</b>		

## APPENDIX F- PORTUGUESE, SPANISH, AND IRISH ELECTIONS: PARTIES AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

Table F. 1 Portuguese elections – 2002, 2005, 2009, 2011, 2015

Election	Incumbent	Main Challenger	Election Winner	Political Context
2002	PS	PSD	PSD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dissolution of Parliament after the resignation of the Prime-Minister as a result of PS defeat in local elections.</li> <li>- For the first time in 11 years, PSD won the elections with just over 40% of the votes cast regained the statues as the largest political force in Portugal.</li> <li>- PS won almost 38% of the votes, which was, and still is, the smallest difference between the two major parties in Portugal.</li> <li>- PSD failed to win the absolute majority they had between 1987 and 1995 and, therefore, formed a coalition with the right-wing People's Party.</li> </ul>
2005	PSD	PS	PS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In July 2004 the social democrat Prime Minister Durão Barroso left the country to become President of the Europe Commission and the Santana Lopes assumed the government's leadership.</li> <li>- As an answer to the political instability caused by the government led by Santana Lopes (PSD) in coalition with PP, In November 2004 the President of Republic dissolved the Parliament.</li> <li>- The Socialist Party conquered its first absolute in Parliament receiving 45% of the electorate vote and 52% of the seats in the Parliament.</li> <li>- PSD was punished and lost more than 11% of votes, the worst result since 1983.</li> <li>- The Left Bloc achieved its best result ever, while CDU reversed their downward trend of last elections.</li> </ul>

2009	PS	PSD	PS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Entering 2009, Portugal was sharply hit by the effects of the financial crisis and the country entered in recession. The government adopted stimulus measures that worsened the public finances.</li> <li>- As a result, the Socialist Party won the largest number of seats but lost the overall majority by losing 9% of the votes and 24 seats.</li> <li>- Despite the winning in European Election in June 2009 for the first times since 1989, PSD only reached 29% of the votes.</li> </ul>
2011	PS	PSD	PSD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The socialist prime minister resigns after the non-approval of Stability and Growth Pact (a series of austerity measures to control the economic crisis).</li> <li>- Portugal asks for external intervention and signs the MoU with TROIKA.</li> <li>- The socialist party lost eleven districts and fell below 30% of the votes cast, a first since the election of 1991.</li> <li>- The PSD won the elections with 38%, exceeding the expected result in opinion polls and winning the same number of seats they did in 2002.</li> <li>- Given the election result and the impossibility of forming a majority government with parliamentary support from a single party, PSD established an agreement for a majority government with the PP.</li> </ul>
2015	PáF (Coalition PSD- CDS/PP)	PS	PSD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- For the first time in Portuguese democracy the government was not held by the winning party:</li> <li>- The coalition PáF won the single largest vote, yet without an overall majority. The Socialist Party was the second most voted political force.</li> <li>- The coalition PáF was asked by the President of the Republic to form a minority government that took the oath of office in October. The government fell after the approval of a motion to bring it down in November.</li> <li>- The Socialist, the Left Block, the Communist Party and the Greens reached an agreement to form a left-wing majority coalition government.</li> </ul>



Table F. 2 Spanish elections – 2004, 2008, 2011, 2015, 2016

Election	Incumbent	Main Challenger	Election Winner	Political Context
2004	PP	PSOE	PSOE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “Unprecedented electoral upset”: PSOE’s first winning in 8 years.</li> <li>- Minority government formed by PSOE with the support of left-wing parties</li> </ul>
2008	PSOE	PP	PSOE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consolidation of bipolarisation of Spanish politics: both PSOE and PP together obtained more than 83% of the voting share.</li> <li>- PSOE was the most voted party just 7 seats short of an overall majority.</li> </ul>
2011	PSOE	PP	PP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To face the ongoing financial crisis, PSOE adopted through spending cuts and austerity measures.</li> <li>- The socialist prime minister announced early elections – five months ahead of schedule- due to political pressure and deterioration of the economic situation.</li> <li>- PP won an absolute record majority, being the party's best historical result as well the second largest majority in democracy history.</li> <li>- PSOE scored its worst result in a general election ever since 1977.</li> </ul>
2015	PP	PSOE	PP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- PSOE faced the worst defeat for a sitting government since 1982.</li> <li>- PP won the election but had not secured a majority and obtained its worst result since 1989.</li> <li>- The Election resulted in the most fragmented Spanish Parliament in its history and marked the transition from a two-party system to a multiparty system.</li> <li>- After months of inconclusive negotiations, the ensuing negotiations failed to produce a stable governing coalition: PP or PSOE were able to garner enough votes to secure a majority, leading to a fresh election in 2016.</li> </ul>
2016	PP	PSOE	PP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The first time that a Spanish election was triggered due to failure in the government formation process.</li> <li>- Opinion polling predicted a growing polarisation.</li> <li>- PP won without an absolute majority, despite having increased its number of votes and seats;PSOE clung to second place despite losing votes and seats, scoring a new historical low.</li> </ul>

Table F. 3 Irish elections – 2002, 2007, 2011, 2016

Election	Incumbent	Main Challenger	Election Winner	Political Context
2002	Fianna Fáil	Fine Gael	Fianna Fáil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fianna Fáil did not achieve the overall majority, yet it was the closest result to an absolute majority since 1987. Additionally, it was the first occasion since 1969 that an Irish government won re-election.</li> <li>- Fine Gail suffered its second-worst electoral results ever, dropping from 54 to 31 seats. The meltdown was especially pronounced in Dublin. In the immediate aftermath of the election, Fine Gael leader announced his resignation from the leadership.</li> <li>- The Labour Party failure the expectations to increase its seat total.</li> <li>- The Green Party and the Sinn Féin reached an electoral success, increasing their seat numbers.</li> <li>- Fianna Fáil and Progressive Democrats formed a majority coalition government.</li> </ul>
2007	Fianna Fáil	Fine Gael	Fianna Fáil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Fianna Fáil remained the largest party; however, its coalition partner- the Progressive Democrats lost six of their eight seats.</b></li> <li>- <b>Fine Gail increased its support holding from 32 to 51 seats at the expense of the smaller parties and independents: the Labour Party as well he Green Party, the Sinn Féin and the Socialist Party failed to increase their seat total.</b></li> <li>- <b>Fianna Fáil and the Green Party reached an agreement on a Programme for Government which resulted in the formation of a coalition government between the Fianna Fáil, the Green Party and the Progressive Democrats.</b></li> </ul>

2011	Fianna Fáil	Fine Gael	Fine Gael	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Following the bailout of Irish banks and the deteriorating of state debt, the Irish government agreed to a bailout and austerity measures imposed by TROIKA in November 2010. As a result, the government coalition collapsed.</li> <li>- Fine Gael won the elections and became the largest party in Irish politics for the first time in 78-year history, winning 76 seats.</li> <li>- Fianna Fáil was swept from power in the worst defeat of a sitting government since the formation of the Irish state in 1922 and amongst the worst ever suffered by any Western European governing party. By losing more than half of its first-preference vote from 2007 and garnered only 20 seats, it became the third Irish party.</li> <li>- The Labour Party became the second-largest party with 37 seats and entered into a coalition government with Fine Gael.</li> </ul>
2016	Fine Gael	Fianna Fáil	Fine Gael	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Despite having lost 26 seats, Fine Gael remained the Dáil largest party.</li> <li>- Fianna Fáil increased its seats from 20 in 2011 to 44, becoming, again, the second-largest party in Irish politics.</li> <li>- The Labour Party, which had been the junior party in a coalition government with Fine Gael and which had achieved its best-ever showing in 2011, only elected seven deputies- the lowest-ever share of Dáil's seats.</li> <li>- The Sinn Féin elected 23 deputies and became the third-most numerous parties.</li> <li>- Fine Gael was 29 seats short of a majority, leading to speculation of a possibility of a grand coalition between Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil, of a minority government or another general election later in 2016. In April, Fine Gael, and Fianna Fáil reached an agreement about a Fine Gael minority government.</li> <li>- Following the introduction of gender quotas in 2012, 35 seats were firstly filled by a woman.</li> </ul>



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