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Policy responsibility in the multilevel EU structure – The (non-)effect of media reporting on citizens' responsibility attribution across four policy areas

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ABSTRACT

In the EU multilevel structure, citizens differ in perceptions of who is responsible for policies and their outcomes. Policy responsibility consists of two concepts, functional and causal responsibility. While the latter has been studied in the context of 'blaming Europe' for negative outcomes, the necessary condition of functional responsibility has received only scant attention. The media plays a crucial role in providing citizens with information for attributing causal responsibility, but may be even more important for attributing functional responsibility. We test this for the case of the Netherlands for four policy areas: Immigration, social welfare, economy, and terrorism. Linking survey data to automated media content data, we predict the effect of exposure to policy-related information on the European level on policy-level attribution. Although the results show both differences in citizens' functional responsibility attributions and EU-related media coverage across policy areas, we find no effect from media consumption on responsibility attributions.

Introduction

Most democratic political systems include different levels of government that vary in their political authority across policy areas. Although not a typical federal system, the multilevel structure of the European Union (EU) is a prime example of such shared political powers between the levels of the EU and the member states. Despite this division of power being an important characteristic of the EU, we know little about why and to what extent citizens attribute responsibility to the national versus the European level (Hobolt and Tilley 2014). Policy responsibility includes at least two aspects, a functional and a causal aspect (e.g. Arceneaux 2005). While there is some research examining causal responsibility in the sense of 'blaming Europe' for undesired outcomes (e.g. Hobolt and Tilley 2014), the functional aspect of policy responsibility has received almost no attention in the EU context (but see Roose et al. 2017). This is surprising as functional responsibility represents a necessary condition for causal responsibility – that is, without being in charge of a policy, a certain (government) level theoretically cannot be blamed for negative outcomes.

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The aim of this article is to examine functional responsibility in more detail. The analysis of citizens' responsibility attribution in multilevel structures is relevant in and of itself, as for example citizens' (perceived) responsibility allocation across electoral arenas may result in different levels of importance assigned to a given election by changing its location on the first- to second-order continuum (Johns 2011). Responsibility attribution is further important for other theoretical concepts that implicitly assume functional responsibility on a certain level. For instance, the electoral theories of retrospective voting or issue ownership voting usually imply that the legislative body to be voted for is (equally) in charge of all policy areas that voters take into consideration, although there are crucial differences between policy areas (see Cutler 2004). In the context of European Parliament elections, Clark (2015) argues that awareness of responsibility distributions within the EU does not only influence the participation decision of citizens but also their likelihood to vote based on EU-relevant concerns.

Besides examining attributions of functional responsibility across four policy areas – immigration, economy, social welfare and terrorism – we are interested in the underlying reasons for such attributions. The main argument of the article is that media reports play a crucial role in providing relevant information for citizens. Media effects may be particularly relevant for functional responsibility attributions, given their more neutral character compared to causal responsibility attributions, which may be driven more by factors such as partisanship or (national) identity considerations. We consider the case of the Netherlands, combining original survey data with automated content analysis data. While the results show significant differences in the functional responsibility attributions between policy areas and also strong differences in EU-related coverage per policy area, the results do not show a direct link between citizens' media consumption and respective responsibility attributions.

Division of decision-making power in the EU

The multilevel structure of the EU implies that EU and national institutions share decision-making power. Over the last decades, more and more policy responsibilities have slowly, but steadily, moved from national towards EU institutions (e.g. Dalton and Eichenberg 1998; Hooghe and Marks 2001b; Leuffen, Rittberger, and Schimmelfennig 2013). In a historical perspective, European integration – and related transfer of decision-making authority – started with so called 'low politics', such as technical or scientific issues, followed by issues from 'higher' policy domains, with policies regarding national security and identity being most difficult for policy integration (Dalton and Eichenberg 1998; Hoffmann 1966). The 'new intergovernmentalism' in Europe – the post-Maastricht integration – though, has resulted in a blurred distinction between low and high politics (Bickerton, Hodson, and Puetter 2015).

According to the systematic overviews by Hooghe and Marks (2001a), Börzel (2005) and Leuffen, Rittberger, and Schimmelfennig (2013), in the 1950s, the majority of policy areas were exclusively handled on the national level. In contrast, after the year 2000, most policy areas are handled on both the European and the national level, yet still showing differences in the extent to which the EU takes policy responsibility across different areas. Today, the EU is more responsible for monetary policies (particularly the Eurozone countries) and economic freedoms, whereas national governments still have more responsibility for social welfare (incl. healthcare) and tax policies (see also Hobolt and Tilley 2014). With the establishment of the second and third pillars (common foreign and

security policy, and justice and home affairs), the Maastricht treaty included two of the last national bastions into EU-level policy-making (Börzel 2005; Leuffen, Rittberger, and Schimmelfennig 2013). The latest constitutional treaty from 2009 – the treaty of Lisbon – is the first one that officially clarifies the division of competencies into exclusive (Article 3; e.g. monetary policy), shared (Article 4; e.g. social policy) and supporting competencies (Article 6; e.g. health and education) of the EU.

The official and empirical sharing of policy responsibilities, though, does not necessarily reflect public opinion on where decision-making power lies or should lie. First, citizens are aware that certain issues are difficult to deal with on one level alone (Dalton and Eichenberg 1998). Second, given the mostly shared policy responsibilities, citizens may be right to attribute responsibility for policies (and their outcomes) to both the national and EU level (Hobolt and Tilley 2014). Importantly, this evidence suggests that people are capable of assigning policy responsibility to either level. Studies conducted in other multilevel contexts come to similar conclusions. Regarding voters in Ontario and Scotland, Johns (2011) paints a rather positive picture about citizens' abilities to assign government responsibilities to the national and provincial level. For the US, Arceneaux (2005) finds similarly reassuring evidence of citizens' capabilities to distinguish between levels of government (federal, state, local) and to hold the respective governments accountable. For Spain, León (2011) shows that the ability to attribute responsibility is context-dependent, i.e. is easier in regions with either very high or low decentralization and clear dominance of one level of government. Without such clear dominance for most policy areas in the EU structure, it remains an open question how easy responsibility attribution is for EU citizens.

The functional aspect of policy responsibility attribution

Theories of democratic accountability strongly rely on responsibility attributions. The latter play an important role in the formation of public opinion as they involve the identification of the origin of a problem and who can solve it (Arceneaux 2005; Iyengar 1991). Studying citizens' responsibility attributions is thus crucial from a normative point of view. In representative democracies, citizens should be able to hold politicians accountable for policy outcomes they are responsible for (Rudolph 2006). A prerequisite that citizens can do so is their ability to judge who is actually in charge of specific policies. In the absence of this ability, citizens may vote based on heuristics or factors unrelated to policy performance (Hobolt and Tilley 2014). While blurred lines of responsibility and higher information costs complicate the assignment of responsibility in multilevel political structures (León, Jurado, and Garmendia Madariaga 2018), the latter enhance accountability as citizens may exert pressure on a specific (responsible) level of government (Arceneaux 2005).

Based on the federalist theory of representation, Arceneaux (2005) presents three aspects of responsibility attributions: 1) the *functional-responsibility attribution* representing the functions a government performs, 2) the *causal-responsibility attribution* standing for the evaluation of the government's performance and 3) the *solution-responsibility attribution* which combines the first two into a preference about which government level should take over policy-making.[1] All three aspects are related and the functional aspect can be seen as a necessary condition for causal responsibility (see Hobolt and Tilley 2014). In order to study

the attribution of policy responsibility, one should thus start with functional responsibility. However, causal responsibility is more commonly studied and, in the context of the EU, often appears in the form of 'blaming Europe' for undesired developments (e.g. Hobolt and Tilley 2014, but see Roose et al. 2017). Following the increase of EU decision-making power across policy areas, people may be right to assign causal responsibility to the EU, at least to some extent. However, this depends on the amount of (perceived) functional responsibility the EU possesses. In other words, without the EU being in charge of a policy area, citizens' blaming of the EU does not represent a negative evaluation of the EU's handling of this policy area, but rather stems from policy-unrelated negative attitudes toward the EU or similar factors.

The literature thus provides information about citizens' responsibility attributions and particularly the causal aspect of it. However, the extent to which citizens assign *functional* responsibility across government levels and the underlying reasons are largely unknown, at least for the EU multilevel system. Some extant variables to measure responsibility attribution in the EU context mix all three aspects (e.g. León, Jurado, and Garmendia Madariaga 2018). Such a conflation in the measurement complicates a clear interpretation of findings and linking effects to any of the three aspects of policy responsibility. In non-EU contexts, the studies by Arceneaux (2005) and Johns (2011) explicitly focus on the functional dimension when comparing different levels of government. Our study follows these two examples to shed light on citizens' attribution of functional responsibility in the EU system. Furthermore, as shown in the study by Hobolt and Tilley (2014), citizens in the same country differ in their (causal) responsibility attribution to the EU, whereas differences in the institutional context across countries do not matter much. This means that individual factors are especially crucial to ease or complicate the attribution of functional responsibility. Our main focus to explain citizens' attributions thus lies on the individual level, in particular on the influence of media exposure.

Theoretical effect of media exposure on responsibility attribution

In the context of overlapping policy competences between the EU and the national governments, the formation of clear-cut functional responsibility attributions is difficult. León and Orriols (2019, 40) refer to this struggle with vertically fragmented levels of government as 'informational challenge'. To overcome this struggle, political knowledge, and particularly specific polity-level knowledge, influences accurate responsibility attribution (Arceneaux & Stein 2006). However, citizens typically know even less about EU politics than about national political affairs (e.g. Hobolt 2007). While it is still 'unclear how citizens try to overcome the informational costs that federal institutions impose' (León, Jurado, and Garmendia Madariaga 2018, 663), exposure to the media could be particularly important. First, news media are one of the main ways for citizens to acquire (new) political knowledge and form opinions, particularly when it comes to issues that are rather distant from their own life such as the EU (e.g. Meltzer et al. 2020). The growing contestation of EU politics may have further increased the news value of EU-related news coverage (Roose et al. 2017). Second, especially in the context of low incentives to individually seek complicated and conflicting information about responsibility attributions in multilevel systems (Cutler 2004), the media may provide an easy way out.

Iyengar (1991) laid some groundwork for the effects of news media on responsibility attribution, focusing on the impact of episodic and thematic frames in television news. He

finds that exposure to such frames, i.e. news stories with a focus on particular cases or events, barren of a more general context, 'makes viewers less likely to hold public officials accountable for the existence of some problem […] and alleviating it' (p. 2–3). Communication research on responsibility attribution has consequently often focused on the effects of framing. For example, the use of metaphors (Williams, Davidson, and Yochim 2011), gain vs. loss frames (Major 2011), and personal exemplars in human interest framing (Boukes et al. 2015) can influence responsibility attribution. The study by Meltzer et al. (2020) shows that media framing of certain policy issues, in their case migration, affects citizens' respective policy preferences when exposed to such media frames. However, there is little research on how different levels of policy, such as the EU and national politics, are connected to issues in the media and how differential content (as opposed to different ways of framing the same content) influences attribution of responsibility.

Iyengar (1991) further demonstrates differences in media effects on responsibility attributions between policy areas. Whereas responsibility attribution for terrorism and poverty can be shifted by media frames, responsibility attributions for unemployment remain unaffected by framing. While these results suggest that framing and media content may have differential effects across policy areas, the EU study by Hobolt and Tilley (2014) finds similar media effects across their four tested policy areas (economy, healthcare, immigration and interest rates). Examining solution-responsibility attribution for unemployment and crime, Semetko, van der Brug, and Valkenburg (2003) also find similar media effects across both issues. These contradictory results thus require more research. As one goal of our empirical analysis, we test to what extent media effects on (functional) responsibility attributions vary across policy areas. For this, we consider four policy areas: Immigration, social welfare, economy and terrorism. The four areas differ in their extent of more national (e.g. social welfare) or EU policy responsibility (e.g. immigration), both in actual terms following the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) and public preferences of responsibility attribution (e.g. Dalton and Eichenberg 1998). As we lack theoretical reasons why and for which policy areas the effects might differ, we formulate a research question about this:

RQ1: Are media effects on policy responsibility attribution similar across policy areas?

For the actual expectation of a media effect on the individual level, we follow the straightforward argument by Hobolt and Tilley (2014) that news media can have effects on responsibility beyond framing, and in particular on the 'accuracy' of responsibility attributions. This argument is in line with other studies' findings of media effects on EU policy preferences (Meltzer et al. 2020), but also more general findings that visibility of the EU, its institutions, and processes in the news media can influence opinions and knowledge about the EU (Clark 2014; de Vries et al. 2011; Marquart et al. 2019; Semetko, van der Brug, and Valkenburg 2003). In detail, we expect that higher EU media visibility in a certain policy area results in stronger citizens' attribution of policy responsibility to the EU. An underlying premise is that citizens actually are exposed to the news. Importantly, for the presence of media effects, we are neither interested, nor dependant on citizens' correct (institutional) assignment of policy responsibility. Further, the variation in policy areas enables a generalisation of possible media effects, if found across several policy areas. Our first hypothesis states:

H1: The higher the share of EU related news in a given policy area, the higher citizens' attribution of policy responsibility to the EU level in that area.

In addition to this general expectation, Hobolt and Tilley (2014, 19) call for more nuanced analyses as 'the mere fact that the EU is visible in the media does not necessarily provide the kind of information that allows citizens to make correct evaluations of responsibility.' The media content of different media types and outlets may not be equally informative and thus not equally useful for citizens. For instance, newspapers usually present stories with 'greater depth, explanation, and background' (Barnhurst and Mutz 1997, 45) and may consequently include more policy-related information about the EU than, e.g., television coverage. Such a distinction to (not) provide quality and in-depth information may not only hold across different types of media but also within the same media type, e.g. comparing broadsheets and tabloids among newspapers. The different levels or values of information are particularly relevant for a rather complex issue such as policies in the multilevel EU setting and to make related judgements about functional responsibility. As high-quality news media usually provide more policy-related information, in contrast to less informative policy-related content of low-quality media, we expect stronger media effects for high-quality outlets:

H2: The effect of exposure to (EU) news on policy responsibility attribution is stronger for high-quality news media.

Finally, next to different media effects due to the quality of the consumed information, there may be also individual-level differences. Generally, it should be easier for more educated and more informed citizens to discern the different levels of government and subsequently assign functional responsibility (León, Jurado, and Garmendia Madariaga 2018). Besides such a direct effect, these citizens may also be more capable or interested to use and process the available media information (Hobolt and Tilley 2014). Especially more complex news, e.g. regarding EU policies, usually favour 'citizens with greater information processing abilities and more complex preexisting knowledge structures that allow them to process information more quickly and efficiently' (Eveland and Scheufele 2000, 220). This argument is linked to Zaller's (1992) model of opinion formation, in which political sophistication (or in his words 'awareness'), that is a stronger interest in and knowledge of politics, regulates the reception and acceptance of political news. The model assumes a non-linear relationship in which stronger individual awareness does not only increase the likelihood to receive news but also citizens' resistance to accept news that are not consistent with their political predispositions. Consequently, it could be the middle group of the somewhat aware citizens who are most susceptible to media effects, because they are more prone to receive and process news than unaware citizens, but also more prone to accept the news content than highly aware citizens (Zaller 1992). Following these assumption, we expect to find strongest media effects among intermediately informed individuals:

H3: The effect of exposure to (EU) news on policy responsibility attribution is strongest for intermediately sophisticated citizens.

Data and methods

For our analysis, we consider the case of the Netherlands. As a founding member of the EU, Dutch citizens are used to the multilevel political system and were able to observe the changing levels of responsibility across the national and EU levels over the last decades. The Dutch case is especially suitable for this study due to its common multi-party government coalitions and related absence of media bias with outlets being clearly in favour of or against the government. A strongly partisan and thus government-linked media system, as present in various other countries, might prevent the finding of effects on functional responsibility attribution. Such partisan/government biased media reports may blame the EU or the government for certain outcomes depending on the outlets' ideological position. The democratic corporatist media system of the Netherlands (Hallin and Mancini 2004) with its lower political parallelism, in contrast, is well suited to examine media effects on functional responsibility attributions, if there are any.

We link survey and media content data that stem (mainly) from 2018. Unlike earlier studies' focus on a specific context, such as EP elections (e.g. Hobolt and Tilley 2014), where coverage about the EU might be unusually high and different in content, our study adds to findings that are not linked to a specific political event (e.g. Meltzer et al. 2020). The survey data stem from three waves of a panel study and was collected between September 2017 and June 2018 using Computer Assisted Web Interviewing (CAWI) (Goldberg et al. 2019). The initial sample stems from the TNS NIPO Netherlands database, an actively managed database consisting of 124,000 respondents that were recruited through multiple offline and online recruitment strategies. Light quotas (on age, gender, region and education) were enforced in sampling from the database to ensure representativeness according to these socio-demographic variables. Of the original 3026 respondents who participated in the first wave in September 2017 (RR = 71.8%), 2648 respondents also participated in the second wave (RR = 88.6%) and 2236 in the third wave (RR = 84.9%). Generally, we do not capitalize on the panel structure of our survey data, i.e. we do not model change, but rely on the various waves because of data availability and in order to measure media exposure prior to the attribution of policy responsibility.

The media data were obtained from INCA (Trilling et al. 2019). The dataset includes articles from the main Dutch print newspapers Algemeen Dagblad, NRC Handelsblad, Telegraaf, Trouw, and Volkskrant, as well as the online sources ad.nl, geenstijl.nl, metro.nl, nos.nl, nrc.nl, nu.nl, parool.nl, telegraaf.nl, trouw.nl, and volkskrant.nl. We used four different search strings to identify articles that relate to the four different policy areas (see Appendix Table A1). For the identification, we used a two-fold procedure. First, we collected all articles that contain a reference to any of the four policy areas in the full text, which reduces the sample to articles that include some information about the policy area in question. We subsequently reduced all sentences of these remaining articles to only the specific sentences that contain the references (N_{total} = 61,053; $N_{economy}$ = 33,868; $N_{immigration}$ = 13,002; N_{social} = 12,929; N_{terror} = 1254). We then computed the share of sentences that also mention the EU or any of its institutions (see again Appendix Table A1 for search strings); i.e. the number of sentences referring to the EU and a policy area at the same time, divided by the number of sentences that refer to a policy area. The result is a 'Europeanisation'-score of each of the four policy areas on a sentence level for each

news outlet, which indicates how prominent the EU's role in the coverage of a specific topic in a certain medium is.

As robustness check, we repeated the same procedure for the level of headlines. For this, we again collected articles that contain the words relevant to each policy area in the headline (N_{total} = 5092; $N_{economy}$ = 1673; $N_{immigration}$ = 1989; N_{social} = 1262; N_{terror} = 168). This ensures that the main topic of an article will generally be one of the four policy areas. We then identified what percentage of the articles refers to the EU in the same article, taking into consideration the entire text, rather than singular sentences.

In order to see whether the news items retrieved by the automated content analysis includes policy-related information – a necessary condition to see a meaningful effect – we conducted an additional manual content analysis on a random subset of 129 articles (coding on article level; oversampling of 101 articles including a reference to the EU). For the exact procedure and codebook see the description in the Appendix.[2] This manual content analysis first reveals that most articles include relevant information out of the respective policy areas (90%). Second and more importantly, out of the subsample of 101 articles mentioning the EU, 68% of the articles indeed contain a responsibility attribution to the EU. Sixty-two percent of the articles include an attribution of functional responsibility and 32% a causal attribution (not exclusive percentages as both types of attributions may exist within one article).[3] For our analysis, this means that we slightly overestimate the amount of relevant news items that include policy-related information, at the article level by around ten percentage points. Importantly, though, out of the assumed news items containing a reference to the EU, around two-thirds indeed contain a functional responsibility attribution. The media thus provides relevant information that respondents can use for their responsibility attributions.

Operationalisation

To measure our DEPENDENT VARIABLE of *functional responsibility attribution*, we asked survey respondents in the final wave the following question: 'On which level do you think the most relevant and influential decisions are taken for the following issues today?'. This item is kept neutral and focuses only on where the decision-making power lies (similar as to how Arceneaux (2005) measured functional responsibility). This neutral formulation is crucial to distinguish it from measures of causal responsibility, which either rate the performance of a governmental level (Arceneaux 2005) or ask for responsibility for a certain condition in a policy area (Hobolt and Tilley 2014). The 7-point answer scale per issue – economy, immigration, social welfare and terrorism – ranged from national (1) to EU (7) with equal on both levels as the labelled middle category (4). While providing some leeway for gradation in the assigned responsibility between both levels, this bipolar measure follows the forced assignment format to either level or equally to both (e.g. Arceneaux 2005; Johns 2011; León, Jurado, and Garmendia Madariaga 2018). In contrast, some of the extant measures in the European context asking for the degree of responsibility separately for the national and EU level – for instance in earlier rounds of the European Election Studies (EES) – may lead to theoretically impossible combinations, e.g. the assignment of full responsibility to both levels.

Given the partly skewed distribution of answer patterns (see results section and particularly figure 1), we recoded the answers into three categories for our main models:

national (1–3), equal (4) and EU (5–7). This recoding fits our main interest in the distinction between the two levels or an equal attribution, as we are less interested in the degree of attribution to one specific level. Furthermore, the reduced three categories eases the respective interpretation of the regression results, i.e. using the original ordinal scale would not allow the detection of specific effects on the middle category of equal responsibility attribution. Still, as robustness checks, we run models using the original ordinal scale and also an alternative categorical coding (national (1–2), equal (3–5) and EU (6–7)). Additionally, in the absence of an explicit 'don't know' option and to account for the possibility that responsibility attributions may be non-attitudes for some respondents (Cutler 2004), who hence simply assign the middle category of equal responsibility across all four policies, we also ran robustness checks excluding those respondents (N = 487, that is around half of all middle answers stem from this group).

Our main INDEPENDENT VARIABLE, the level of *exposure to EU-related news*, is a combination of survey and media content data. In a first step, we multiply the individual frequency of media exposure, that is the self-reported exposure to each of the previous mentioned media outlets (on a 0–7 days a week scale; measured in second wave), with the respective 'Europeanisation'-score of the respective outlet. We repeat this step for each of the four policy areas. In a second step, we sum up the resulting values to measure the overall exposure to EU-related news, still separate per policy area. In addition to this overall measure and as needed for our second hypothesis, we calculate the same measure while distinguishing high- vs. less quality news media. We code the print & online outlets of Volkskrant, NRC and Trouw plus NOS online as high quality and the outlets of AD and Telegraaf (print & online) plus nu, geenstijl, metro, parool (all online) as low quality.

We further include several CONTROL VARIABLES in our models. Although not part of the media content, we control for *exposure to the main TV news shows*, the NOS Achtuurjournaal, Nieuwsuur and RTL Nieuws (again measured on 0–7 days a week scale). In order to capture common heuristics and predispositions people may rely on when assigning responsibility (e.g. Hobolt and Tilley 2014; Johns 2011; León, Jurado, and Garmendia Madariaga 2018) we include *partisan identity* (nine main parties plus others and no party ID) and *attachment to the Netherlands and the EU* (measured on a 7-point scale; for a discussion about the relevance of national identity see León and Orriols 2019). In order to control for direct effects of knowledge and education, we include a political *knowledge* scale (consisting of five general and EU-specific questions) and *education* (based on ESISCED). While knowledge generally serves as a control, we also use it for our third hypothesis to split the sample into three categories of sophisticated citizens. This is done by grouping participants with 0–1 knowledge questions correctly answered into low (13%), 2–3 knowledge questions correct into middle (38%) and those with 4–5 questions correctly answered into highly sophisticated people (49%). As robustness check, we repeat the respective analysis by splitting the sample according to three recoded levels of education and three levels of political interest. Finally, we also include *gender* (female dummy) and *age*, the latter as older people may need longer to update attributions following changes in the distribution of powers between levels over time (Johns 2011). Table A2 in the Appendix presents all detailed wordings of the used variables.

Method

For our main analysis, we rely on multinomial logistic regression models. The three recoded levels of policy responsibility – nation, equal or EU – serve as dependent variables and the exposure to EU-related news and control variables as explanatory variables. Next to running 'full' models separately for each of the four policy areas, we run models distinguishing high- and low-quality outlets and splitting respondents into low, middle and highly sophisticated ones. To ease the interpretation of the results, we rely on marginal effect plots with full regression tables displayed in the Appendix. The main models report results based on the sentence-level coding of media content. As robustness check, we repeated the same models using the headline coding. Further robustness tests include linear OLS regression models, i.e. keeping the original 7-point scale of the dependent variable, alternative ways to recode the dependent variable and to split the sample into different levels of sophistication, and the exclusion of respondents with potential non-attitudes regarding functional responsibility attribution. We mention respective findings throughout the discussion of the results.

Results

Figure 1 shows differences in respondents' responsibility attribution to the EU versus national institutions across policy areas. Overall, respondents view terrorism and immigration as issues that the EU has more responsibility for than the national government. Responsibility for the economy is equally attributed to both the EU and national institutions, whereas responsibility for social welfare is clearly attributed to the national level. All mean differences are statistically significant ($p < 0.01$).

This is reflected similarly in the media reporting. On average, 5.9% of the sentences (26.2% of full articles) referring to immigration also refer to the EU in the same sentence (or in the same article, respectively). For the economy, this is the case for 3.4% of the sentences (15.7%). The lowest EU reference with 1.0% (5.0%) can be found for social welfare. The only outlier, i.e. where media reporting does not match peoples' perceptions, is the topic of terrorism: in the media, this is less Europeanised with only 1.8% of sentences (13.1% of articles) referencing the EU, and thereby connecting terrorism and the EU less than citizens do. Figure 2 provides more details by visualizing the differences in Europeanisation across policy areas for all different news outlets.

Turning to the results of our multinomial regression results (see Table A3 for full results), figure 3 shows the marginal effects of EU news consumption on policy responsibility attribution across the four policy areas (please note varying y-axis scales in all following graphs). Even though all four graphs show a positive effect of EU news exposure on attributing more responsibility to the EU level, the effects are not statistically significant. Our robustness checks mainly confirm the non-significant effects (detailed results available upon request). Neither the alternative treatment of the dependent variable as linear or applying the discussed alternative recoding, nor running the models based on the headline coding of the media content changes the overall results. Excluding respondents with potential non-attitudes results in two significant negative effects on national responsibility attribution for the economy and social welfare. Given the zero-sum logic of marginal effects (positive and negative effects always add up to zero), a negative effect on national-level attribution has a partly similar meaning as a positive effect on EU-level

(a) Economy

(b) Immigration

(c) Social welfare

(d) Terrorism

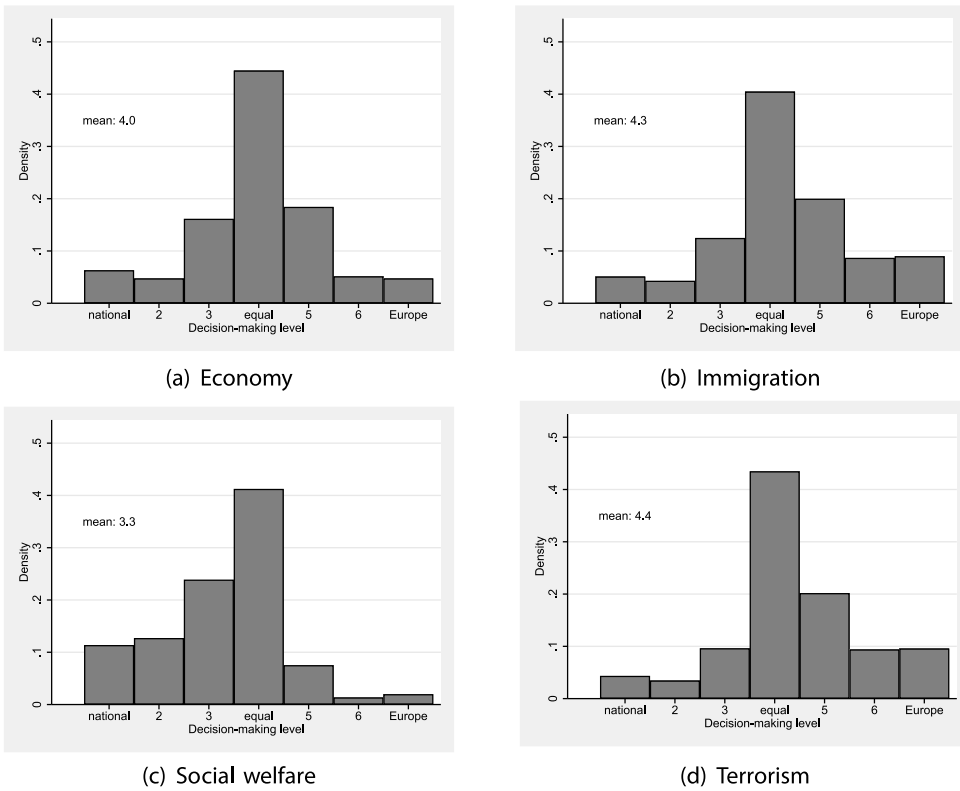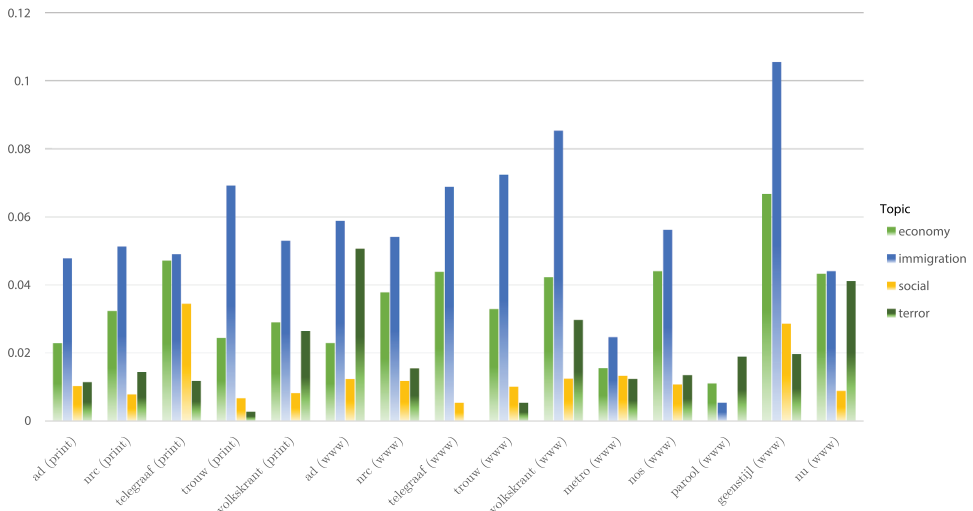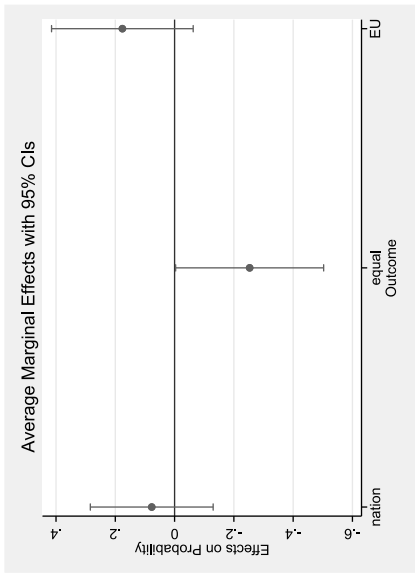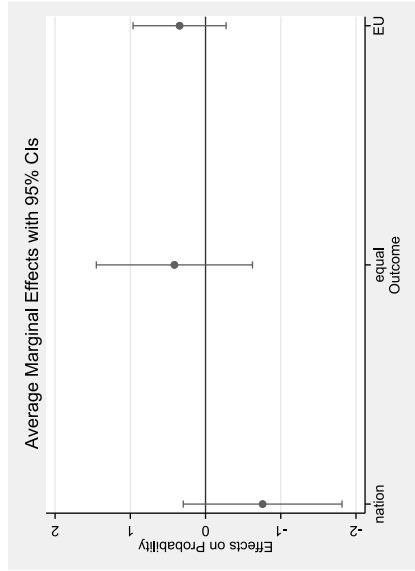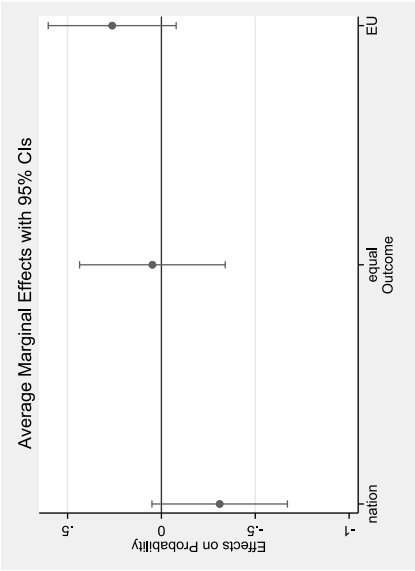**Figure 1.** Respondents' perceived decision-making level.

Figure 2. Share of EU coverage across outlets and policy areas (sentence based).
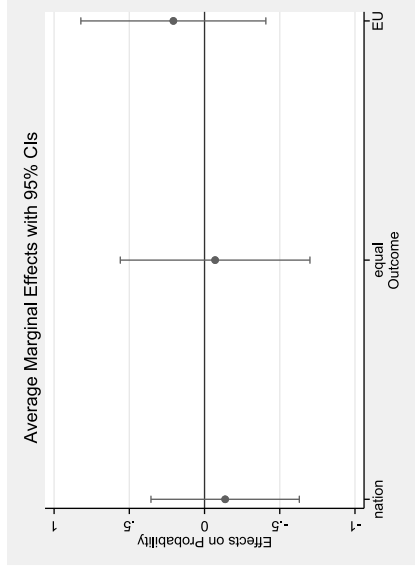
(a) Economy

(b) Immigration

(c) Social welfare

(d) Terrorism

Figure 3. Marginal effects of EU news consumption on policy responsibility attribution.

attribution. Still, as the main models and most of the robustness checks result in non-significant effects, we find no support for our first hypothesis. Consequently, we have to answer our RQ1 in the sense that the absence of a news effect is the same across all four policy areas.

The pattern of mostly non-significant effects is also observable when separating the media outlets into high- and low-quality ones in figure 4 (full results in Table A4). We do not find the expected stronger effects for high-quality outlets. If anything, the results for low-quality outlets are more stable and show positive effects on EU-level responsibility attribution. However, these effects are not statistically significant either. In contrast, we see a significant negative effect on attribution to the national level for social welfare. However, given that it remains the only significant effect, we do not find any more general pattern regarding the different quality of media outlets. Again, our conducted robustness checks confirm the results. While this means that hypothesis 2 is not supported either, it also means that we consistently find a negative effect on national responsibility attribution in the area of social welfare stemming from low-quality EU news consumption.

Finally, we estimate EU news exposure effects separately for respondents with low, middle and high levels of political sophistication, displayed in figure 5 (full results in Table A5). In line with our hypothesis, we observe positive EU news exposure effects on EU responsibility attribution among the intermediately sophisticated respondents. However, none of these effects reaches statistical significance (the effect for terrorism is marginally significant $p = 0.055$). Interesting to note is that for the low and highly sophisticated respondents there is no coherent pattern present to start with. The conducted robustness checks – using the alternative variables of education and political interest – equally result in coherent positive media effects on EU responsibility for the respective middle categories, albeit with only one significant effect for political interest in the area of immigration.

Given the coherent patterns for the intermediately sophisticated persons across the three tested measures, we ran an additional model to examine whether the effects of political sophistication depend on the quality of the outlets, that is, we interacted political sophistication with the type (quality) of media. The resulting marginal effects are interesting as they show that the effects for sophistication are mainly driven by low-quality outlets (see Figure A1 in the Appendix; note especially the (marginally) significant negative effect on national responsibility attribution for economy ($p = 0.052$) and positive effect on EU responsibility attribution for terrorism ($p = 0.045$)). Despite these indications that respondents with a medium level of sophistication may be at least partly influenced by EU-related news coverage stemming from low-quality outlets, the overall absence of more systematic significant effects does not provide support for hypothesis 3.[4]

Finally, we briefly want to mention some interesting effects of our control variables as displayed in Table A3 in the Appendix. In line with previous studies (León and Orriols 2019), we find strong and significant identity effects with stronger attachment to the EU resulting in higher responsibility attributions to the EU level. We also find direct effects of political knowledge and education. For instance, more knowledgeable and more educated individuals 'get it right' by assigning less decision-making power to the EU level in the area of social welfare. The same is true for the positive knowledge effect in the area of immigration, which is indeed handled mostly on the EU level. Generally, the significant negative effects for 'equal' levels of functional responsibility among knowledgeable and
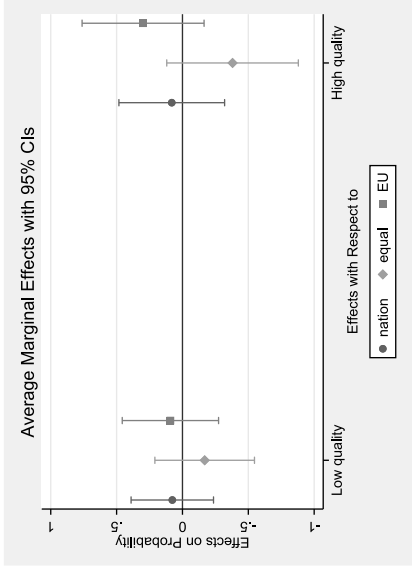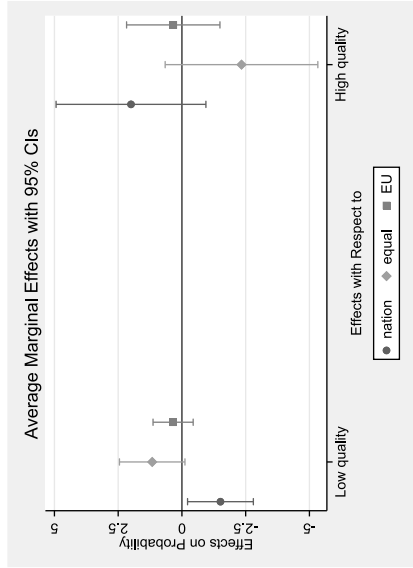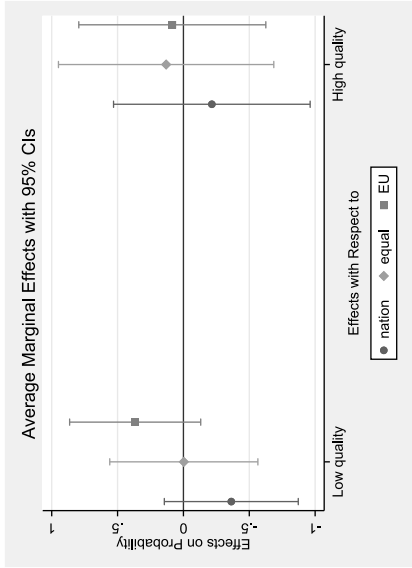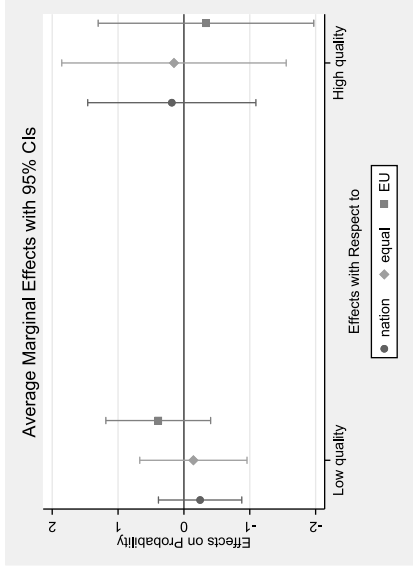
Figure 4. Marginal effects of EU news consumption by type of media.
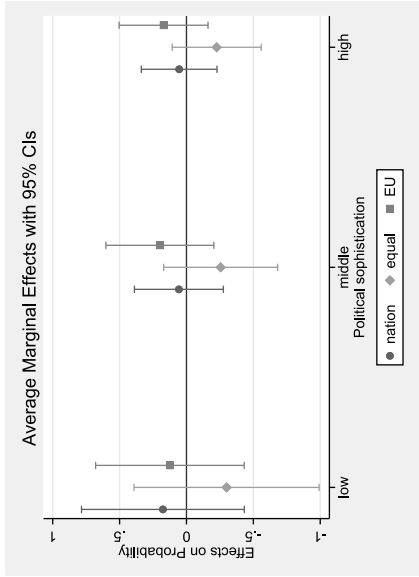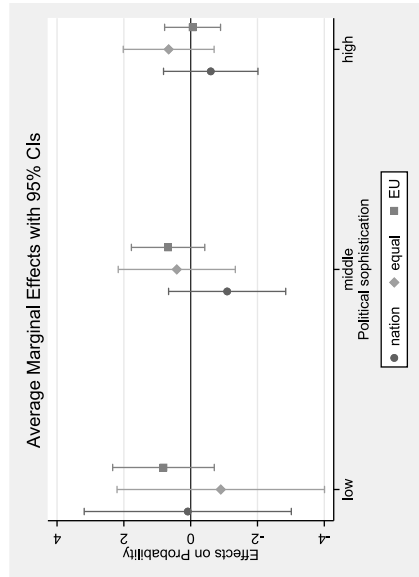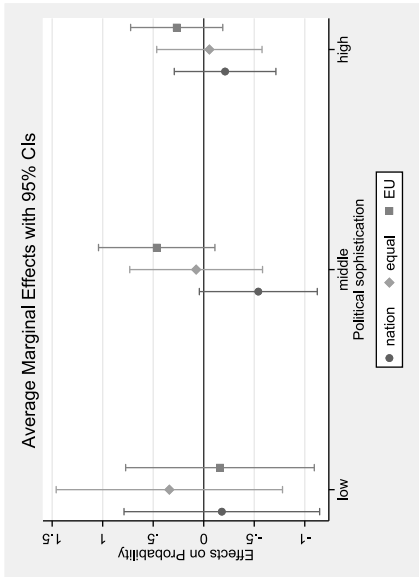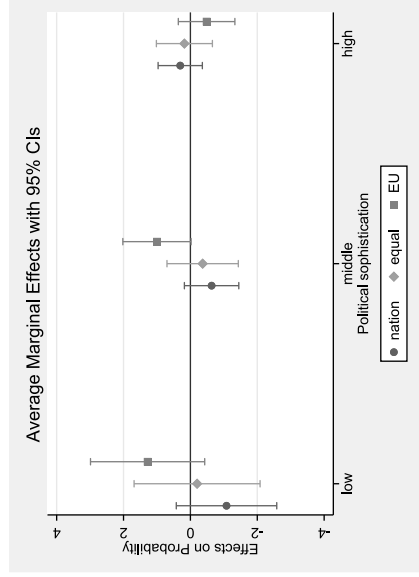
Figure 5. Marginal effects of EU news consumption by respondent's level of knowledge.

educated persons suggest that they are able (or confident) to make a distinction between policy-levels by assigning them more or less decision-making power.

Discussion

This article examined an understudied dimension of policy responsibility attribution: the functional aspect. In the context of the European Union – for which several studies have already analysed causal responsibility – we aimed to first establish whether people differ in their attribution of policy responsibility between the EU and the national level. Our results show a differentiation, which – to a large extent – match the actual distribution of decision-making powers in the multilevel EU setting. People clearly see the nation-state more in charge of social welfare, an equal distribution when it comes to economic issues and a clearer EU responsibility in the areas of immigration and terrorism.

Our media content data revealed similar differences regarding how often certain policy areas are linked to the EU in the media. Especially immigration and the economy are more linked to the EU. However, despite these differences in media reporting across policy areas, we did not find evidence that media exposure to different levels of EU coverage influences citizens' attribution of functional responsibility. We did neither find media effects in general, nor when distinguishing between high- and low-quality outlets. Only the positive media effects among intermediately sophisticated respondents on attributing responsibility to the EU level were in line with our expectations, though again failed to reach common levels of statistical significance. In the absence of systematic media effects, we could not detect strong differences across policy areas. However, some more fine-grained results indicate that there may be such differences, at least to some extent, e.g. the consistently negative effect on attributing national responsibility in the area of social welfare stemming from low-quality EU news.

The overall absence of significant media effects contradicts some of the earlier studies, especially the findings by Hobolt and Tilley (2014) that showed the relevance of media information on assigning (causal) responsibility in the EU context. However, these contradictory findings could be due to the different focus of our study on functional instead of causal responsibility and the different context of the data collection, that is outside of an EP election campaign, which might result in a different media reporting about the EU. Other than the lack of media effects, our results are in line with previous research regarding the effects of partisanship and identity. This indicates that the lack of media effects is not due to a more general issue with the survey data and increases our confidence about the absence of systematic media effects on functional responsibility attributions in the multilevel EU setting.

Substantively, the absence of media effects could have different implications. First, the majority of information provided by the media may not relate to functional responsibility but focus on the more appealing blame-game of causal responsibility. This would mean that respondents might not gain the necessary information for functional responsibility attributions. However, our additional manual coding of a subset of the content data does not support this idea as the news items include more references to functional than causal responsibility of the EU (see also Roose et al. 2017). Rather, it may be that the information about functional responsibility stay less in the minds of the respondents than the causal

blaming of the EU. Damstra, Boukes, and Vliegenthart (2020) show such an asymmetrical news effect in the economic context, where exposure to news blaming the government leads citizens to attribute responsibility to the government, but credit attributions exert no respective positive effect. Second, citizens could be so confident in their knowledge about functional responsibilities between the EU and the nation-state to start with, so that the (occasional) exposure to related news articles does not have any effects. Whether this confidence stems from earlier, life-long exposure to media information or any other source, though, remains unknown. The confidence may be particularly present in a long-term EU member state such as the Netherlands, while media effects may exert a stronger effect on citizens in newer member states who may be less familiar with responsibility divisions within the EU. Third, the dynamic between media exposure and attribution of functional responsibility may be more complex than tested in this study, so that for instance more experimental work is necessary to detect the underlying mechanism.

Finally, there are several limitations underlying our research, which might also influence the (absence of) effects. While automated content analyses offer the advantage of being replicable and allow analysing larger amounts of text, they also have pitfalls. Most importantly, our analysis only indicates whether the EU and certain issue-related key words are mentioned in the same sentence (or article). However, we cannot infer whether (parts of) the texts are specifically about policies or not. Yet, our manual content coding only indicated a minor overestimation of policy-related information in the automated content data. A general problem of self-reported news exposure is that we do not know the exact articles a respondent was exposed to in a given outlet. Many news items may not include policy-related information to start with, and out of those which do the EU coverage of up to 10% may not be sufficient to result in an effect on the reader.

Moreover, even though the selection of media sources analysed was broad, we could not include all media that a respondent could possibly be exposed to. In particular, we were not able to include audio-visual media. We further chose to analyse one year of media coverage prior to the survey field period. This choice is of course somewhat arbitrary; we do not expect that media effects are specific for this time frame. More recent coverage could have stronger effects, or respondents' responsibility attributions could be based on a lifetime of media exposure. However, analysing one year of coverage gives us a good insight into what kind of media content respondents were most likely recently exposed to, while also cancelling out short-term trends in media coverage.

In future research, we would like to analyse different aspects of responsibility attribution simultaneously, especially the functional and causal aspect. This would not only allow to examine to what extent people differ between these two aspects, that is whether people differentiate between the actual decision-making power of a government level and blaming or crediting them for (un)related outcomes, but also to get stronger confirmation of whether media effects indeed only exist for causal, but not for functional responsibility attribution.

Notes

1. The third aspect appears under different names in the literature, e.g. Iyengar (1991) calls it 'treatment responsibility' and León, Jurado, and Garmendia Madariaga (2018) refer to it as 'desired responsibility'.

2. In brief, the authors trained one student coder to code all articles. The percentage agreement between the authors' coding and the student for the main variable of interest, the functional responsibility attribution to the EU, was 93.3% after two rounds of training.

3. The finding of relatively less causal attributions fits the results of the content analysis conducted by Roose et al. (2017) who found surprisingly low overall levels of blaming aimed at the EU level, and this even during the Eurozone crisis 2009–2013 in Greece (and Germany).

4. Given the absence of systematic media effects on the absolute level of responsibility attribution, we wondered whether media exposure increases or decreases the responsibility attribution to the EU level over time, i.e. when modelling change. Using a later survey wave conducted 10 months after the one under study here, which again asked for the respondents' attribution of functional responsibility, we ran a model with change as the dependent variable. Yet, although there was enough change within respondents that media exposure could account for (only around 35–40% of respondents displayed a stable responsibility attribution), we did not find any significant media effects on change. This further strengthens our confidence in the absence of media effects.

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Appendix

Table A1: Search strings for media content data (original Dutch wording)

Policy area	Search strings
Economy	economi* OR inflatie* OR werklo* OR deflatie* OR conjunctu* OR nationaal bruto OR nationaal product OR recessie OR werknemer OR werkgever OR schulden OR export OR import OR nationaal inkomen OR spaarrente OR arbeidsplaats OR arbeidsmarkt* OR werkgelegenheid* (based on Damstra and Boukes (2018), expanded by authors)
Immigration	asiel* OR immigra* OR migrat* OR migran* OR vluchteling*
Social welfare	arbeidsomstandigheden* OR CAO OR ontslagrecht OR bijstand OR pensioen* OR 'sociale zekerheid' OR uitkering* OR kinderopvang* OR ouderschapsverlof* OR minimumloon* OR ziektewet* OR werkloosheidsuitkering* OR kinderbijslag* OR geboortepremie OR 'sociale bijdrage*' OR daklozen* OR 'sociale bescherming' OR gehandicaptenbeleid* OR ziekteverzekering OR zorgverzekering OR ziektezorgverzekering OR pensioenleeftijd OR minimumpensioen* OR 'sociale zekerheid' OR huurtoeslag* OR zorgtoeslag* OR 'social* huurwoning*' OR 'social* woning*' OR gezondheidszorg* OR armoedebestrijding* OR bejaardentehuis* OR AOW OR WAO (based on Comparative Agendas Project https://www.comparativeagendas.net/, expanded by authors)
Terrorism	terreur* OR terror*
Europe	Europa, Brussel, Europese Commissie, Europese Centrale Bank, Europees! Parlement, ECB, Europese Raad, Europaparlement!, EU, Europese Unie, Eurogroep

Manual content analysis

The authors prepared the codebook below for the additional manual content analysis to be conducted by a student assistant. The authors made a first round of coding (8 articles) to adjust the codebook and decide on the final variables. Thereafter, they instructed the student assistant. After some clarifications in the codebook, a test coding was conducted for 15 articles. One of the authors and the student assistant both coded the articles and compared the final coding in terms of percentage agreement. For all below variables in the codebook, the percentage agreement was above 80%, in most cases above 90%. For the most important variables V1 (93%), V4a (93%) and V4b (87%) the agreement between the coders is thus very high. The codebook entails more variables than used/described in the main text of this article, but all are displayed for reasons of completeness.

Codebook

V1 (Policy)

Does the article discuss/contain/cover at least one policy area?

Note:
Policy is defined in a wider sense by being a set of ideas, proposals or regulations, or a plan or strategy of handling particular issues, circumstances or situations. It may also contain a description or develop-ment of the situation in a certain policy area. This means that articles containing any topic/issue that may be linked to a policy (area), either as a goal, description or outcome, must be coded as including a policy (area).
   0=no → end of coding
   1=yes

V2a-d (Policy area)

Does the article cover the following four policy areas or not?
   a) Economy
   b) Immigration
   c) Social Welfare
   d) Terrorism

   0=no (if four times no → end of coding)
   1=yes

Note:
Economy includes a wide range of possible issues such as in/deflation, (un)employment, debt, trade, interest rate, income or other factors related to the economy.
Immigration are all issues related to (im)migration, asylum or refugees Social welfare includes a wide array of possible issues such as social security, social support, pensions, unemployment insurance, health insurance, social housing, fight against poverty, elderly homes, parental support, homeless support, etc.
Terrorism is anything related to (physical) terror such as attacks or preventions etc. For more topic examples see also appendix of our draft paper.

V3 (Responsibility national)

Does the article present a national Dutch political actor/entity as being responsible for/in the mentioned policy area(s)?

0=no → skip V3a/b coding
1=yes

V3a/b (Type of responsibility national)

Which type of responsibility does the article attribute to the actor? Is it a functional responsibility or a causal responsibility?
   a) Functional responsibility
   b) Causal responsibility

   0=no
   1=yes

Note:
Functional responsibility is defined as an actor/entity being in charge of/having the competences of handling a given policy issue.
Causal responsibility is defined as an actor being made responsible for the situation of/outcome in a given policy area.

V4 (Responsibility EU)

Does the article present an EU-level political actor/entity as being responsible for/in the mentioned policy area(s)?

   0=no → end of coding
   1=yes

V4a/b (Type of responsibility EU)

Which type of responsibility does the article attribute to the actor? Is it a functional responsibility or a causal responsibility?
   a) Functional responsibility
   b) Causal responsibility

   0=no
   1=yes

Table A2: Operationalization of survey variables

Variable	Operationalization
Responsibility	FUNCTIONAL RESPONSIBILITY ATTRIBUTION
	On which level do you think the most relevant and influential decisions are taken for the following issues today?
	asked in random order for four policy areas economy, immigration, social welfare and terrorism
	7-point answer scale with labelled values (1) *national*, (4) *equal on both levels* and (7) *EU*
Media exposure	EXPOSURE TO NEWSPAPER AND TV NEWS
	On how many days during a typical week do you read the following newspapers?
	Algemeen Dagblad, NRC Handelsblad, Telegraaf, Trouw, and Volkskrant
	And on how many days during a typical week do you read about politics on a website or news app from the following sources?
	ad.nl, geenstijl.nl, metro.nl, nos.nl, nrc.nl, nu.nl, parool.nl, telegraaf.nl, trouw.nl, and volkskrant.nl
	8-point answer scale from (0) *0 days a week* to (7) *7 days a week*
	Multiplied with content information and summarized as described in data section.
Sophistication	POLITICAL SOPHISTICATION (EU)
	Knowledge scale recoded out of 5 political (EU) knowledge items:
	(1) *Which party came out as the largest in the last national elections?*
	Answer options: VVD*, PVV, D66, CDA, PvdA, DK
	(2) *Who is the current minister of finance of the Netherlands?*
	Answer options: Jeroen Dijsselbloem*, Henk Kamp, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, Lodewijk Asscher, Ronald Plasterk, DK
	(3) *How long is a government term in the Netherlands?*
	Answer options: 3, 4*, 5, 6, 8, DK
	(4) *How many member states does the European Union have?*
	Answer options: 25, 26, 27, 28*, 29, DK
	(5) *Who is currently the president of the European Commission?*
	Answer options: Jean-Claude Juncker*, Martin Schulz, Donald Tusk, José Manuel Barroso, Frans Timmermans, DK
	Answer options were randomized; '*' is the correct answer
TV news exposure	EXPOSURE TO THE MAIN TV NEWS SHOWS
	On how many days during a typical week do you watch the following TV programs?
	NOS Achtuurjournaal, Nieuwsuur, RTL Nieuws
	8-point answer scale from (0) *0 days a week* to (7) *7 days a week*
Partisanship	PARTISAN IDENTITY
	Do you consider yourself to be close to any particular political party? If so, which party do you feel close to?
	(0) No, I do not feel close to any political party
	(1) Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie (VVD)
	(2) Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV)
	(3) Christen-Democratisch Appel (CDA)
	(4) Democraten '66 (D66)
	(5) GroenLinks (GL)
	(6) Socialistische Partij (SP)
	(7) Partij van de Arbeid (PvdA)
	(8) ChristenUnie (CU)
	(9) Partij voor de Dieren (PvdD)
	(10) all other party mentions merged into 'other'
Attachment	ATTACHMENT TO THE NETHERLANDS AND THE EU

(*Continued*)

(Continued).

Variable	Operationalization
	Please indicate how attached you feel to
	(1) the Netherlands
	(2) Europe
	7-point answer scale from (1) *not at all* to (7) *very much*
Education	EDUCATION MEASURED ACCORDING TO ES-ISCED CODING
	Which is the highest degree you have finished (so far)?
	Country specific education degrees recoded into ES-ISCED coding following the list of degrees and recoding rules provided in the European Social Survey (ESS)
	1 ES-ISCED I, less than lower secondary
	2 ES-ISCED II, lower secondary
	3 ES-ISCED IIIb, lower tier upper secondary
	4 ES-ISCED IIIa, upper tier upper secondary
	5 ES-ISCED IV, advanced vocational, sub-degree
	6 ES-ISCED V1, lower tertiary education, BA level
	7 ES-ISCED V2, higher tertiary education, $>=$ MA level
Political interest	POLITICAL INTEREST IN THE EU
	How interested would you say you are in EU politics?
	7-point answer scale from (1) *not at all interested* to (7) *very interested*
Socio-demographics	GENDER AND AGE
	Gender dummy representing female respondents
	Age measured in years

Table A3: Multinomial logistic regression models for figure 3 (basic model)

	(1) Economy		(2) Immigration		(3) Social welfare		(4) Terrorism	
	equal	EU	equal	EU	equal	EU	equal	EU
Exposure to EU-related news	1.291	2.131	−1.037	0.129	2.914	5.104	0.627	1.343
	(1.053)	(1.113)	(0.718)	(0.692)	(2.544)	(3.608)	(1.930)	(1.929)
TV NEWS EXPOSURE								
NOS8	−0.004	−0.022	0.002	0.014	0.006	0.012	−0.004	0.019
	(0.026)	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.023)	(0.036)	(0.030)	(0.030)
Nieuwsuur	−0.011	0.018	−0.062	−0.052	0.006	0.067	−0.045	−0.026
	(0.033)	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.030)	(0.042)	(0.038)	(0.037)
RTLNieuws	0.009	0.031	0.042	0.017	0.077 ***	0.121 ***	0.033	0.037
	(0.023)	(0.026)	(0.025)	(0.026)	(0.021)	(0.031)	(0.027)	(0.027)
PARTISANSHIP (REF. 'NO PARTY IDENTIFICATION')								
VVD	−0.144	0.220	−0.094	0.051	0.056	0.416	−0.322	0.041
	(0.204)	(0.206)	(0.219)	(0.209)	(0.178)	(0.259)	(0.228)	(0.220)
PVV	−0.218	−0.364	−0.321	−0.337	0.173	0.311	−0.391	−0.273
	(0.200)	(0.241)	(0.214)	(0.227)	(0.189)	(0.279)	(0.225)	(0.236)
CDA	0.009	0.211	0.234	0.443	0.568 *	0.645	0.230	0.420
	(0.276)	(0.288)	(0.310)	(0.298)	(0.238)	(0.349)	(0.338)	(0.335)

(*Continued*)

(Continued).

	(1) Economy		(2) Immigration		(3) Social welfare		(4) Terrorism	
	equal	EU	equal	EU	equal	EU	equal	EU
D66	−0.015	0.193	0.382	0.322	−0.124	0.412	−0.278	0.081
	(0.265)	(0.274)	(0.304)	(0.298)	(0.238)	(0.344)	(0.302)	(0.289)
GL	−0.080	−0.134	−0.523	−0.243	−0.454	−0.131	−0.413	−0.088
	(0.246)	(0.272)	(0.270)	(0.252)	(0.235)	(0.384)	(0.282)	(0.273)
SP	0.013	0.351	0.260	0.105	0.093	0.272	0.220	0.472
	(0.229)	(0.245)	(0.245)	(0.256)	(0.196)	(0.299)	(0.280)	(0.282)
PvdA	−0.057	−0.031	0.173	0.113	0.035	0.274	−0.135	−0.085
	(0.257)	(0.277)	(0.279)	(0.278)	(0.226)	(0.326)	(0.290)	(0.291)
CU	−0.017	0.213	0.002	0.219	0.241	0.555	0.362	0.510
	(0.267)	(0.287)	(0.296)	(0.290)	(0.235)	(0.354)	(0.341)	(0.344)
Other	−0.466 *	−0.200	−0.278	−0.190	−0.116	0.163	−0.221	−0.139
	(0.185)	(0.202)	(0.197)	(0.200)	(0.171)	(0.257)	(0.210)	(0.217)
PERSONAL ATTACHMENT								
Netherlands	−0.097 *	0.045	−0.103 *	0.065	−0.129 **	0.017	−0.021	0.117 *
	(0.044)	(0.050)	(0.048)	(0.049)	(0.041)	(0.063)	(0.050)	(0.052)
EU	0.211 ***	0.193 ***	0.157 ***	0.144 ***	0.151 ***	0.060	0.134 **	0.124 **
	(0.041)	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.037)	(0.054)	(0.047)	(0.047)
CONTROLS								
Knowledge	−0.251 ***	−0.070	−0.148 **	0.102 *	−0.304 ***	−0.229 ***	−0.197 ***	−0.045
	(0.045)	(0.051)	(0.048)	(0.050)	(0.040)	(0.062)	(0.052)	(0.054)
Education	−0.109 ***	0.006	−0.092 **	−0.002	−0.175 ***	−0.170 ***	−0.073 *	0.014
	(0.031)	(0.033)	(0.034)	(0.033)	(0.027)	(0.043)	(0.035)	(0.035)
Female	−0.071	−0.308 **	−0.092	−0.258 *	−0.028	−0.227	0.029	−0.058
	(0.109)	(0.119)	(0.118)	(0.119)	(0.097)	(0.150)	(0.125)	(0.127)
Age	0.003	0.006	−0.008 *	−0.010 *	0.004	0.007	0.000	0.002
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Constant	1.352 ***	−0.807 **	1.906 ***	0.138	0.977 ***	−1.452 ***	1.525 ***	−0.182
	(0.264)	(0.307)	(0.287)	(0.303)	(0.235)	(0.376)	(0.301)	(0.318)
Observations	2236		2236		2236		2236	
Pseudo R^2	0.038		0.039		0.062		0.029	

Note: Reference category for DV is 'nation'; standard errors in parentheses; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table A4: Multinomial logistic regression models for figure 4 (outlet quality)

	(1) Economy		(2) Immigration		(3) Social welfare		(4) Terrorism	
	equal	EU	equal	EU	equal	EU	equal	EU
EXPOSURE TO EU-RELATED NEWS								
Low quality outlets	1.369	2.711	−0.810	−0.104	6.671 *	6.977	1.082	2.458
	(1.492)	(1.586)	(1.078)	(1.052)	(3.132)	(4.549)	(2.479)	(2.482)
High quality outlets	1.134	1.124	−1.397	0.450	−10.816	−1.775	−0.703	−1.952
	(2.193)	(2.288)	(1.417)	(1.321)	(7.195)	(10.418)	(5.070)	(4.985)
TV NEWS EXPOSURE								
NOS8	−0.004	−0.022	0.002	0.014	0.006	0.012	−0.004	0.019
	(0.026)	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.023)	(0.036)	(0.030)	(0.030)
Nieuwsuur	−0.011	0.019	−0.062	−0.052	0.010	0.069	−0.044	−0.024
	(0.033)	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.030)	(0.042)	(0.038)	(0.037)
RTLNieuws	0.009	0.029	0.041	0.019	0.072 ***	0.118 ***	0.033	0.035
	(0.024)	(0.026)	(0.025)	(0.026)	(0.021)	(0.031)	(0.027)	(0.028)
PARTISANSHIP (REF. 'NO PARTY IDENTIFICATION')								
VVD	−0.144	0.213	−0.098	0.055	0.032	0.403	−0.325	0.033
	(0.204)	(0.206)	(0.219)	(0.210)	(0.178)	(0.260)	(0.228)	(0.220)
PVV	−0.218	−0.369	−0.322	−0.335	0.155	0.301	−0.391	−0.275
	(0.200)	(0.242)	(0.214)	(0.227)	(0.189)	(0.280)	(0.225)	(0.236)
CDA	0.010	0.215	0.236	0.442	0.575 *	0.647	0.232	0.424
	(0.276)	(0.288)	(0.310)	(0.298)	(0.239)	(0.349)	(0.338)	(0.335)
D66	−0.014	0.201	0.387	0.317	−0.100	0.420	−0.274	0.092
	(0.266)	(0.275)	(0.305)	(0.299)	(0.238)	(0.345)	(0.302)	(0.289)
GL	−0.076	−0.116	−0.513	−0.255	−0.405	−0.105	−0.402	−0.061
	(0.248)	(0.274)	(0.273)	(0.255)	(0.237)	(0.386)	(0.285)	(0.276)
SP	0.014	0.357	0.263	0.102	0.109	0.280	0.224	0.479
	(0.229)	(0.245)	(0.245)	(0.256)	(0.196)	(0.299)	(0.281)	(0.282)
PvdA	−0.055	−0.018	0.179	0.106	0.071	0.291	−0.127	−0.066
	(0.258)	(0.278)	(0.280)	(0.279)	(0.227)	(0.327)	(0.292)	(0.292)
CU	−0.016	0.221	0.006	0.215	0.264	0.564	0.361	0.509
	(0.267)	(0.287)	(0.296)	(0.290)	(0.235)	(0.354)	(0.341)	(0.344)
Other	−0.465 *	−0.200	−0.278	−0.190	−0.118	0.164	−0.220	−0.138
	(0.185)	(0.202)	(0.197)	(0.200)	(0.171)	(0.257)	(0.210)	(0.217)
PERSONAL ATTACHMENT								
Netherlands	−0.097 *	0.044	−0.104 *	0.067	−0.134 **	0.014	−0.022	0.113 *
	(0.044)	(0.050)	(0.048)	(0.049)	(0.041)	(0.063)	(0.050)	(0.052)
EU	0.212 ***	0.197 ***	0.159 ***	0.142 **	0.161 ***	0.066	0.136 **	0.128 **
	(0.041)	(0.045)	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.037)	(0.055)	(0.047)	(0.047)
CONTROLS								
Knowledge	−0.251 ***	−0.070	−0.148 **	0.102 *	−0.301 ***	−0.226 ***	−0.197 ***	−0.044
	(0.045)	(0.051)	(0.048)	(0.050)	(0.040)	(0.062)	(0.052)	(0.054)
Education	−0.108 ***	0.009	−0.090 **	−0.004	−0.164 ***	−0.163 ***	−0.072 *	0.018
	(0.031)	(0.033)	(0.034)	(0.033)	(0.028)	(0.044)	(0.036)	(0.036)
Female	−0.071	−0.308 *	−0.091	−0.259 *	−0.032	−0.230	0.029	−0.059
	(0.109)	(0.119)	(0.118)	(0.119)	(0.098)	(0.150)	(0.125)	(0.127)

(Continued)

(Continued).

	(1) Economy		(2) Immigration		(3) Social welfare		(4) Terrorism	
	equal	EU	equal	EU	equal	EU	equal	EU
Age	0.003	0.006	−0.008 *	−0.010 *	0.004	0.007	0.000	0.002
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Constant	1.349 ***	−0.826 **	1.897 ***	0.150	0.932 ***	−1.478 ***	1.513 ***	−0.209
	(0.266)	(0.309)	(0.290)	(0.306)	(0.236)	(0.377)	(0.303)	(0.321)
Observations	2236		2236		2236		2236	
Pseudo R^2	0.038		0.039		0.063		0.029	

Note: Reference category for DV is 'nation'; standard errors in parentheses; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table A5: Multinomial logistic regression models for figure 5 (political sophistication)

	(1) Economy		(2) Immigration		(3) Social welfare		(4) Terrorism	
	equal	EU	equal	EU	equal	EU	equal	EU
Exposure to EU-related news	1.511	0.140	−1.365	−0.234	−1.861	7.949	7.996	12.560
	(3.283)	(4.007)	(1.888)	(2.117)	(7.936)	(10.118)	(7.645)	(7.973)
POLITICAL SOPHISTICATION/ KNOWLEDGE (REF. 'LOW')								
Middle	−0.466 *	−0.051	−0.150	0.586 *	−0.726 ***	−0.054	−0.203	0.274
	(0.226)	(0.275)	(0.222)	(0.258)	(0.192)	(0.317)	(0.264)	(0.290)
High	−0.864 ***	−0.256	−0.583 *	0.584 *	−1.220 ***	−0.486	−0.449	0.397
	(0.230)	(0.276)	(0.229)	(0.258)	(0.199)	(0.330)	(0.267)	(0.289)
INTERACTION								
Exposure to EU-related news × middle	1.016	3.862	0.470	0.501	5.640	0.143	−4.586	−5.706
	(3.733)	(4.429)	(2.210)	(2.408)	(8.889)	(11.426)	(8.378)	(8.681)
Exposure to EU-related news × high	−0.978	1.494	0.442	0.407	5.005	−7.300	−9.099	−15.334
	(3.531)	(4.223)	(2.104)	(2.280)	(8.554)	(11.275)	(7.981)	(8.291)
TV NEWS EXPOSURE								
NOS8	−0.004	−0.022	0.003	0.012	0.007	0.009	−0.005	0.017
	(0.026)	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.023)	(0.036)	(0.030)	(0.030)
Nieuwsuur	−0.013	0.018	−0.062	−0.049	0.003	0.064	−0.046	−0.027
	(0.033)	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.030)	(0.042)	(0.038)	(0.038)
RTLNieuws	0.008	0.031	0.041	0.018	0.077 ***	0.123 ***	0.033	0.038
	(0.023)	(0.026)	(0.025)	(0.026)	(0.021)	(0.031)	(0.027)	(0.027)
PARTISANSHIP (REF. 'NO PARTY IDENTIFICATION')								
VVD	−0.127	0.240	−0.070	0.058	0.063	0.434	−0.318	0.031
	(0.204)	(0.206)	(0.219)	(0.210)	(0.178)	(0.260)	(0.229)	(0.221)
PVV	−0.212	−0.369	−0.319	−0.334	0.182	0.310	−0.386	−0.275
	(0.200)	(0.242)	(0.214)	(0.228)	(0.189)	(0.280)	(0.225)	(0.236)
CDA	0.023	0.234	0.259	0.459	0.585 *	0.670	0.223	0.394

(*Continued*)

(Continued).

	(1) Economy		(2) Immigration		(3) Social welfare		(4) Terrorism	
	equal	EU	equal	EU	equal	EU	equal	EU
	(0.277)	(0.288)	(0.310)	(0.299)	(0.239)	(0.350)	(0.339)	(0.336)
D66	−0.034	0.197	0.380	0.327	−0.136	0.362	−0.289	0.066
	(0.266)	(0.274)	(0.305)	(0.299)	(0.237)	(0.347)	(0.302)	(0.290)
GL	−0.091	−0.148	−0.524	−0.260	−0.449	−0.175	−0.437	−0.143
	(0.246)	(0.272)	(0.270)	(0.252)	(0.235)	(0.384)	(0.283)	(0.274)
SP	0.001	0.340	0.257	0.101	0.088	0.246	0.206	0.449
	(0.229)	(0.245)	(0.245)	(0.257)	(0.197)	(0.300)	(0.280)	(0.283)
PvdA	−0.085	−0.038	0.155	0.116	0.001	0.226	−0.155	−0.093
	(0.257)	(0.278)	(0.279)	(0.277)	(0.225)	(0.327)	(0.290)	(0.291)
CU	−0.002	0.238	0.028	0.233	0.256	0.564	0.374	0.517
	(0.267)	(0.288)	(0.297)	(0.290)	(0.235)	(0.355)	(0.342)	(0.345)
Other	−0.470 *	−0.196	−0.277	−0.179	−0.118	0.158	−0.232	−0.152
	(0.185)	(0.203)	(0.198)	(0.201)	(0.171)	(0.257)	(0.211)	(0.218)
PERSONAL ATTACHMENT								
Netherlands	−0.100 *	0.042	−0.104 *	0.059	−0.128 **	0.009	−0.027	0.106 *
	(0.044)	(0.050)	(0.048)	(0.049)	(0.041)	(0.063)	(0.050)	(0.052)
EU	0.212 ***	0.196 ***	0.158 ***	0.150 ***	0.152 ***	0.064	0.136 **	0.128 **
	(0.041)	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.037)	(0.055)	(0.047)	(0.047)
CONTROLS								
Education	−0.114 ***	0.007	−0.094 **	−0.002	−0.184 ***	−0.176 ***	−0.079 *	0.014
	(0.031)	(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.027)	(0.043)	(0.035)	(0.035)
Female	−0.072	−0.314 **	−0.097	−0.260 *	−0.027	−0.230	0.028	−0.066
	(0.109)	(0.120)	(0.118)	(0.119)	(0.097)	(0.151)	(0.125)	(0.127)
Age	0.002	0.007	−0.008 *	−0.010 *	0.004	0.007	−0.000	0.002
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Constant	1.194 ***	−0.911 **	1.766 ***	−0.050	0.922 ***	−1.833 ***	1.236 ***	−0.591
	(0.292)	(0.349)	(0.307)	(0.337)	(0.258)	(0.426)	(0.335)	(0.363)
Observations	2236		2236		2236		2236	
Pseudo R^2	0.039		0.041		0.063		0.031	

Note: Reference category for DV is 'nation'; standard errors in parentheses; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$
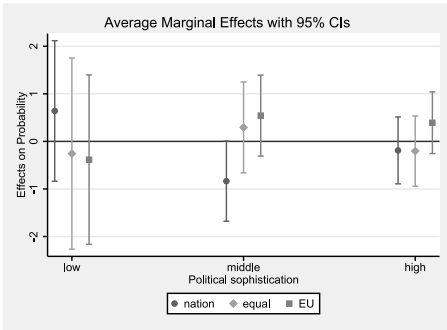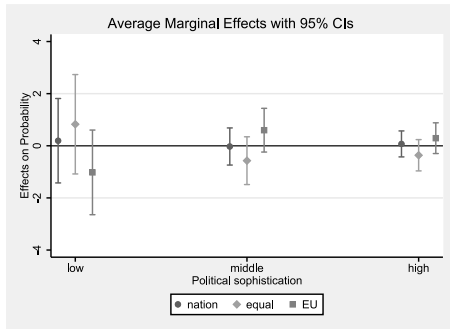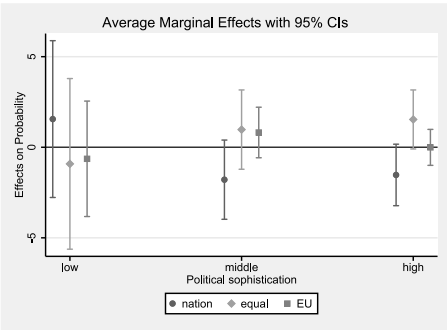
(a) Economy (low quality)
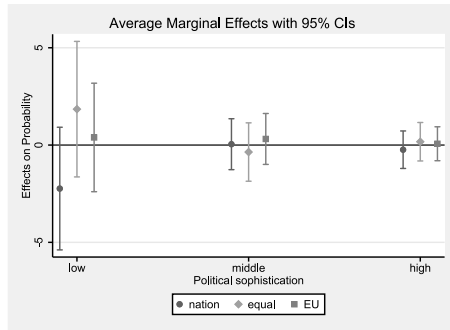
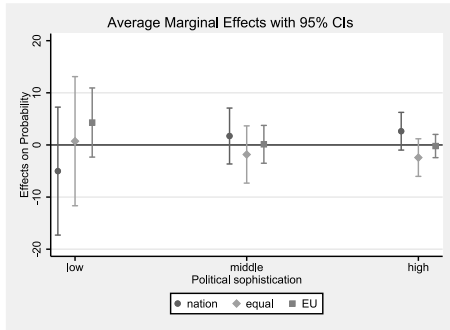(b) Economy (high quality)
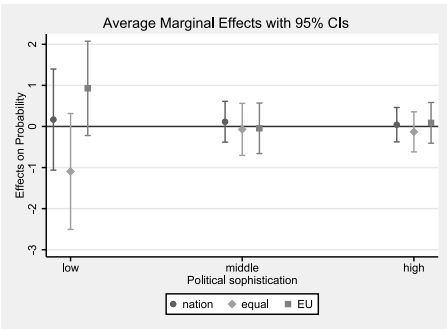
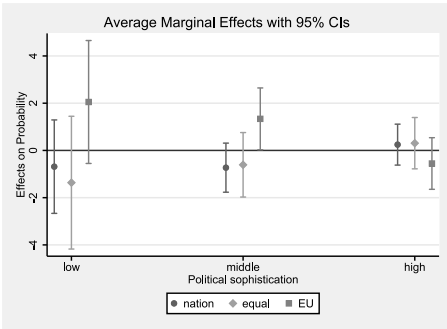(c) Immigration (low quality)

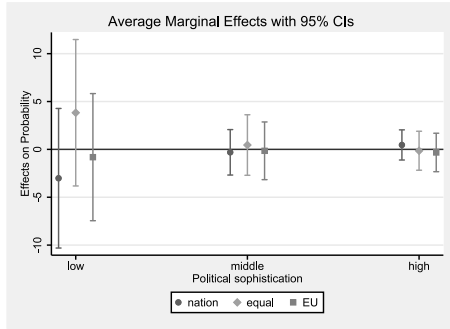(d) Immigration (high quality)

(e) Social welfare (low quality)

(f) Social welfare (high quality)

(g) Terrorism (low quality)

(h) Terrorism (high quality)

Figure A1: Marginal effects of EU news consumption by respondent's level of sophistication and quality of media