

# University of Bergen

Faculty of Social Sciences  
Department of Administration and Organization Theory



**AORG351**

**Master's Thesis in Public Administration**

**SPRING 2022**

**The Use of Distinct Frames by the Netherlands in Relation to EU  
Foreign Policy Coordination**

A Case Study of the Enhanced Accession Methodology of the European Union

---

**Sjoerd de Winter**

# Table of Contents

List of tables .....	3
List of abbreviations .....	4
Acknowledgement .....	5
Abstract .....	6
1. Introduction .....	7
1.1 Relevance and importance.....	7
1.2 Research objective and research question .....	8
1.3 Structure of the thesis .....	9
2. Context .....	10
2.1 European foreign policy and the role of Member States .....	10
2.2 EU accession before the EAM .....	11
2.3 The Enhanced Accession Methodology .....	13
2.4 The Netherlands and the Enhanced Accession Methodology .....	16
3. Theoretical framework .....	18
3.1 Coordination theory.....	18
3.1.1 Administrative Coordination Capacity.....	20
3.1.2 Dimensions of coordination .....	21
3.2 Framing theory .....	25
3.2.1 Frames .....	25
3.2.2 Framing .....	26
3.2.3 Framing as the work of sense-making.....	27
3.2.4 Framing as the work of selecting, naming, and categorizing .....	28
3.2.5 Framing as the work of storytelling.....	29
3.3 Framing and coordination .....	29
3.3.1 Coordination and the framing devices.....	30
3.3.2 Coordination and sense-making .....	30
3.3.3 Coordination and selecting, naming, and categorizing.....	31
3.3.4 Coordination and storytelling .....	34
4. Research methodology .....	36
4.1 Reasoning behind qualitative approach.....	36
4.2 Case selection: .....	37
4.2.1 Unit of analysis.....	37
4.3 Data collection.....	38
4.3.1 Semi-structured interview: .....	38
4.3.2 Selection of samples.....	38

4.3.3 Interviewees and their expertise .....	42
4.3.4 Data derived from other sources: .....	44
4.4 Data analysis .....	45
4.5 Validity.....	48
4.5.1 Measurement validity .....	48
4.5.2 Construct validity, internal and external validity, and reliability .....	50
5. Empirical results and analysis .....	54
5.1 Applicable types of coordination .....	54
5.1.1 Internal vertical coordination .....	54
5.1.2 Internal horizontal coordination .....	55
5.1.3 External vertical coordination .....	56
5.1.4 External horizontal coordination .....	57
5.2 Sense-making as a framing device .....	57
5.2.1 Making sense of EU enlargement.....	59
5.2.2 Sense-making and coordination .....	63
5.2.3 Revisiting the theoretical propositions .....	65
5.3 Selecting, naming, and categorising as framing devices.....	65
5.3.1 Selecting .....	66
5.3.2 Selecting and coordination .....	68
5.3.3 Naming and categorising.....	69
5.3.4 Naming, categorising, and coordination.....	77
5.3.5 Revisiting the theoretical propositions .....	78
5.4 Storytelling as a framing device .....	80
5.4.1 Narratives .....	80
5.4.2 Storytelling and coordination .....	83
5.4.3 Revisiting the theoretical propositions .....	84
6. Conclusion.....	86
6.1 Final conclusions.....	86
6.2 Limitations, and recommendations for further research.....	89
List of references.....	91
Appendices .....	99
Appendix 1 – overview of reached out to individuals and institutions for interviews .....	99
Appendix 2 - Overview of Dutch political parties their stances towards EU enlargement.....	101

## **List of tables**

<b>Table 1:</b> Shows an overview of different types of dimensional coordination	24
<b>Table 2:</b> Shows an overview of interview respondents and their abbreviations	44
<b>Table 3:</b> Shows an overview of types of sources and usage thereof	45
<b>Table 4:</b> Shows an overview of data analysis codes and their categorisation	46
<b>Table 5:</b> Shows an overview of Eurobarometer results on EU enlargement	61
<b>Table 6:</b> Shows an overview of SCP results of perceptions on EU enlargement	62
<b>Appendix 1:</b> Shows an overview of reached out to respondents for interviews	99
<b>Appendix 2:</b> Shows political parties and their stances towards EU enlargement	101

## List of abbreviations

<b>Abbreviation:</b>	<b>Word or phrase:</b>
AR-I	Academic Respondent I (see table 2)
AR-II	Academic Respondent II (see table 2)
COELA	Working Party on Enlargement and Countries Negotiating Accession to the Union
COWEB	Working Party on the Western Balkans Region
CCNEP	Cluster Coordinator Neighbourhood and Enlargement Policy (see table 2)
DG NEAR	Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations
EAM	Enhanced Accession Methodology
EEAS	European External Action Services
EC	European Commission
ECSC	European Coal and Steel Community
EP	European Parliament
EU	European Union
MEAC	Member of the European Affairs Committee (see table 2)
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MS	Member State(s)
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NL	The Netherlands
PRD-I	Permanent Representation Diplomat I (see table 2)
PRD-II	Permanent Representation Diplomat II (see table 2)
SAA	Stabilisation and Association Agreement(s)
SCP	Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau (The Netherlands Institute for Social Research)
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
UvA	Universiteit van Amsterdam
WB	Western Balkan
WB6	Western Balkan Six – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia

## Acknowledgement

I would like to thank the staff of the Department of Administration and Organisation Theory at the University of Bergen for sharing their knowledge, and always being available to answer any questions I might have. In particular, I want to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Zuzana Murdoch, who has constantly provided me with concise, candid, and constructive feedback. Your patience, guidance, and understanding have been incredibly helpful this past year. I would also like to thank Regine Paul, Ishtiaq Jamil, and Akram Hossain for providing me with their feedback on multiple occasions.

Besides the academic staff, I want to give praise to my peers Susann Falla, Sophia Hahn, and Steinar Aursland for always being available for a coffee to brainstorm and to occasionally take our minds off our theses. Special praise goes to Susann, Sophia, as well as Rasmus Telle for spell-checking my research before handing it in.

Of course, I wish to show my appreciation to those who agreed to an interview for this master thesis. Their knowledge was essential, and I truly could not have written this paper without their insights.

In this last paragraph I want to thank those that made it possible for me to study in Norway. First of all, I want to express my gratitude to VSBfonds for awarding me with a scholarship that allowed me to afford living and studying in a country as expensive as Norway. Most of all, I would like to thank my parents and sister for constantly supporting my dream of studying abroad. You never held me back, and instead, you have always encouraged me to chase this dream. Words cannot describe how grateful I am for this. For that reason, I dedicate this thesis to them.

## **Abstract**

This thesis examines when, how, and why the Netherlands uses distinct frames during internal and external coordination in relation to European Foreign Policy. Building on an extensive discussion on the theoretical conceptualisation of coordination and framing, this case study compares the use of frames and framing devices by the Netherlands in light of the Enhanced Accession Methodology of the European Union. The thesis has a qualitative research design, and data was primarily collected through semi-structured interviews with key actors and academics, as well as through document analysis. The data is analysed through pattern-matching by comparing theoretical propositions as presented in the theoretical framework to the data as discussed in the empirical chapter.

The study finds that all four dimensions (i.e. internal, external, vertical, horizontal) of coordination are applicable to the case, depending on the framing device (i.e. sense-making, selecting, naming, categorising, storytelling). The study also finds that the Netherlands has a sceptical approach to EU enlargement in general and fears a destabilisation of the European Union and the functioning thereof due to a precipitous accession of candidate Member States. This has led to the use of the ‘rule of law’, ‘conditionality’, and ‘merits’ frames, as well as the ‘strict, fair, and engaged’ categorisation frames. The data shows that the ‘rule of law’ frame is used similarly throughout internal and external coordination, while ‘conditionality’ and ‘merits’ are used more positively during external coordination – focusing on rewarding the candidate states in case of positive progress and developments. During internal coordination, these two frames are used more negatively – emphasising that negative progress and backsliding lead to sanctions and a reversing of the accession negotiation process. The somewhat negative ‘strict’ categorised frame is used more during internal coordination to assure the enlargement-sceptic population and Parliament, whereas ‘fair’ and ‘engaged’ are used more during external coordination to prevent being perceived as unconstructive.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Relevance and importance

The European Union is a supranational organisation that ever since the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1952 has increased the number of its members seven times. Whereas in the early fifties there were only six Member States (MS), this number has now grown to 27 MS after Brexit. On top of that, five additional countries have obtained the status of Candidate Member State and two more are considered Potential Candidate Member States (European Commission, 2022).<sup>1</sup> Following the Russian invasion in Ukraine, three more countries have officially applied for EU-membership: Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine (Gehrke, 2022). Joining the European Union can be an arduously lengthy process which involves a plenitude of reforms in various different sectors. To illustrate this, Turkey has gained its candidate status in 1999, yet is still not much closer to becoming a full-fledged MS today than it did back in the late 90s (European Commission, 2021c). This time-consuming process seems to have negative consequences as well. Different scholars have argued that the longer this process takes for countries in the Western Balkans (WB), where nearly all of the candidates and potential candidates are located, the stronger the influence of countries like China and Russia becomes (Becker, 2020; Hake & Radzyner, 2019; Pavličević, 2019).

The accession of the Western Balkan countries to the European Union is often stated as an objective on its own. Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission (EC) reaffirmed this in her statement at the EU-Western Balkans summit on October 6<sup>th</sup> 2021, where she stated the following:

*“We want the Western Balkans in the European Union. There cannot be any doubt that our goal is enlargement”* (Von der Leyen, 2021b).

Following this rhetoric, while keeping in mind the concern that a slow accession process leads to more undesired influence from foreign actors, presents the argument that there is a need for an efficient process and therefore an effective accession methodology. This shows the first signs of the social relevance of this research. When it comes to the accession process of candidate states, European MS enjoy great powers – to the extent where they can single-handedly block accessions or negotiations. This will be explained in-depth in chapter 2, but for now it does shed light on the importance of understanding the stance of the Member States. This thesis analyses the use of frames during internal and external coordination by the Netherlands (NL),

---

<sup>1</sup> Countries with candidate status: Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey.  
Countries with potential candidate status: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo .

a European Union Member State which is considered one of the stricter ones. Understanding its position, but also understanding how this stance is created and coordinated could provide insight in the efficiency of the EU accession process and the Enhanced EU Accession Methodology, especially in a time where more and more countries apply for EU-membership.

Even though there is no shortage on academic literature in connection to EU-enlargement, very little is written on the Enhanced EU Accession Methodology (EAM). Pejović (2021) wrote about the focus on Rule of Law in the Enhanced Methodology and its connection to Article 7 of the Treaty on European Union. As explained in chapter 5, the Netherlands tends to focus primarily on the rule of law in matters concerning EU enlargement, yet Pejović did not focus on any Member State in particular. Audenaerde (2021) conducted research on parliamentary positions and framing in relation to EU enlargement in the Netherlands between 2004 and 2020. This work comes closest to the focus of this thesis. However, Audenaerde did not incorporate coordination theory in their work and did not cover the Enhanced Accession Methodology at all. To the best of my knowledge, there is no study which covers the use of frames by the Netherlands during internal and external coordination in relation to EU enlargement policy, and the Enhanced EU Accession Methodology in particular. This shows the theoretical relevance of this research, as it tries to fill the indicated gap and provide insight into this usage of frames by the Netherlands.

## **1.2 Research objective and research question**

Knowing the earlier established theoretical and social relevance of the research is a starting point to understand the research objective of this master thesis. If the Netherlands is known to be one of the stricter EU Member States, and known for using its veto power to block the accession process, it is relevant to find out how this country looked at the prospect of a revision of the EU's accession methodology. In other words: if there are going to be new rules concerning the accession process of the candidate Member States, what is it the Netherlands wanted? Which elements did they focus on, and why? It also raises the question as to how these elements were framed, and how they were used in different contexts. Considering that coordination plays an important role in the creation of a national stance (see chapter 3), it is relevant to see how these frames differ depending on the type of coordination. Combining all these questions leads to the research objective, which is to identify the use of distinct frames by the Netherlands during internal and external coordination in relation to EU foreign policy; to find out when these different frames are used; and to understand why they are used. This leads to the following central research question:

*When, how, and why does the Netherlands use distinct frames during internal and external coordination in relation to European foreign policy?*

To look more into European foreign policy coordination of the Netherlands, one specific case has been chosen: the negotiation process surrounding the Enhanced Accession Methodology. The reasoning behind this case selection is described in chapter 4.2.

### **1.3 Structure of the thesis**

This introductory chapter has established the relevance of the research and presented the objective and central research question. The chapter that follows will provide essential contextual information concerning EU enlargement, and the Enhanced Accession Methodology. Chapter 3 presents the theoretical framework of this thesis and is used to present to define the theoretical concepts related to coordination and framing, review the literature connected to these concepts, and to propose theoretical propositions that are connected to the empirical chapter. After the theoretical chapter, the research methods are explained, which includes the reasoning behind the qualitative approach, the case selection, the data collection and analysis methods, as well as an explanation on the validity of the conducted research. This subsequently leads to chapter 5, which covers presents and analyses the empirical results by connecting this data to the theory. Chapter 5 follows a structure based on the different framing devices. It will revisit the theoretical propositions as proposed in the theoretical framework in order to help answer the central research question. This subsequently leads to a concluding chapter, which is followed by recommendations for further research and appendices including tables that were too lengthy to include in the chapters.

## **2. Context**

The purpose of this chapter is to provide essential information on the case study of this thesis. It will do so by first giving a brief introduction to coordination in EU foreign policy, after which the process of EU accession *before* the Enhanced Accession Methodology (i.e. the case) is explained. Then, the content of this enhanced methodology will be presented, allowing one to observe the differences and to provide a better understanding of why the Netherlands deemed certain changes necessary. Moreover, this chapter will describe how a stance is formed by the Netherlands, as well as who is involved in this process. The information is based on data derived through desk research and interviews.

### **2.1 European foreign policy and the role of Member States**

When it comes to foreign policy, Member States of the European Union play a significant role in a large array of issues in this area. This is due to the fact that financial resources, the political leverage, as well as the credibility of the Member States often equal, if not substantially surpass that of the EU. Partly for that very reason, there is little EU coordination through the EU's diplomatic service known as the European External Action Services (EEAS) or EU delegations in third countries. It is argued that explicitly recognising the major role of Member States, and providing them with a leading role in terms of coordination, can prove to be more fruitful than trying to make constant use of centralised coordination through EU delegations (Keukeleire & Justaert, 2012). According to Bickerton et al. (2015), it was agreed under the so-called second pillar, or Common Foreign and Security Policy that the Commission would be associated with coordinating its Member States' foreign policies. Besides that, the Commission (alongside the Member States) issues proposals in the field of CFSP. The Council of Ministers was nevertheless not bound by these proposals, and the European Council obtained an overall overseeing responsibility for this particular policy area. The Commission emerged as an actor which worked with and not instead of national governments (pp. 8-10).

Article 218(8) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) (2007) states that the Council acts unanimously when an agreement covers a field that requires unanimity for the adoption of a Union act, association agreement, or agreements with states that are considered candidates for accession (*Consolidated version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union*, 2016). The need for unanimity has slowed down the process of accession to the EU significantly for certain candidate states. Take for instance North Macedonia, of which the accession negotiations recently got blocked again by Bulgaria (Taylor, 2022). Due to their linkage, accession negotiations with Albania were also placed on hold for this reason

(ibid). Reasons for casting a veto in relation to EU-enlargement are varying. They can for instance be based on technical grounds (e.g. in case of the EMA, which will be explained later on in this chapter), or on bilateral dispute grounds like the case of Bulgaria, or when Slovenia blocked Croatian accession over bilateral border disputes (Vucheva, 2009). This has led to repeated calls for revising the accession process. However, before covering the enhanced methodology, it is relevant to explain what the accession process was like before the enhancement.

## **2.2 EU accession before the EAM**

The expansion of the EU has since the 2004 enlargement mostly been focused on the Western Balkans.<sup>2</sup> Potential EU accession for the Western Balkans has received unequivocal support from the European Union and its Member States since the Feira Summit in 2000, during which the European Council stated that the fullest possible integration of the Western Balkans into the political and economic mainstream of Europe was its objective, and that all the concerned countries were considered potential candidates for EU membership (European Council, 2000, point 67). During the Thessaloniki Summit in 2003, the European Union reiterated this support to the European perspective of the Western Balkan countries, and claimed that its future is within the EU (European Commission, 2003, point 2). Despite their support, there was a consensus in the Council in November 2019 that examining the effectiveness of the accession negotiation process was appropriate and useful, while emphasising the EU's ongoing support for Western Balkan membership to the Union (Council of the EU, 2019). However, in order to understand the need for this examination and (as will be explained later on) an enhanced accession methodology, it is essential to know what the methodology prior to the EAM was.

According to the website of the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) (2012), membership negotiations would not start until each and every government of the EU agrees in the form of a unanimous decision made by the European Council, where all the heads of state or government of the EU members meet, on a mandate or framework for negotiations with the candidate country. These negotiations take place between ambassadors and/or ministers of the candidate country and EU governments at a so-called intergovernmental conference. The EC then starts its process of screening, meaning that together with the candidate country, it carries out a detailed examination of each chapter (policy

---

<sup>2</sup> During this period, Iceland also applied for Membership in 2009, but withdrew its candidacy in 2015. Switzerland withdrew its candidacy in 2016, and Turkey's potential candidacy is also practically off the negotiation table, hence the focus on the Western Balkans.

field) to determine to what extent the candidate state is prepared for EU accession. These findings are then presented in a screening report, based on which a recommending conclusion is drawn that suggests whether to either instantly start with the negotiations, or whether opening benchmarks should be met first (in other words, certain conditions need to be met before the chapters are opened). Before the actual negotiations take place, the EU must adopt a shared position and the candidate country must submit its own position as well. Most of the time, the EU will set closing benchmarks, which like the opening benchmarks means that certain conditions need to be met before the chapters can be closed. This process can either go quickly, or slowly, depending on how fast reforms are made in the candidate countries. Before a chapter is fully closed, however, every EU government needs to be satisfied with the candidate's progress in that field. The entire negotiation process is only finished once every single chapter is closed. After this process, an accession treaty will be created, containing the terms and conditions of membership described in detail. It also includes transitional arrangements and deadlines, on top of details concerning financial arrangements and safeguard clauses. Once it has the support of the European Council, the European Commission and the European Parliament (EP); it is signed by the candidate country and Member States; and ratified by all states according to their constitutional arrangements (e.g. parliamentary vote, referendum, etc.), it becomes a binding treaty (Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, 2012).

The Western Balkan candidate countries and potential candidate countries enjoyed a special process called the *stabilisation and association process*, which aimed to stabilise the countries politically and to encourage a fast transition to a market economy; to promote regional cooperation; and aimed for eventual EU membership. The countries were offered a prospect of membership, which means that they need to be offered an official status as candidate when the country is ready. The purpose of this process is to help the Western Balkan countries build their capacity to adopt, as well as implement EU legislation and European and international standards. Concretely, this means that the EU offers trade concessions, financial and economic assistance, as well as assistance for development, reconstruction and stabilisation. It also offers stabilisation and association agreements, which is a far-reaching contractual relationship that outlines mutual obligations and rights (Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, 2012).

There was, however, a sense among various EU Member States and within the WB-region that the accession process was not functioning as efficiently as intended. The summits, progress

reports and benchmarks did not stimulate the desired reforms well enough and did not bring the candidate MS much closer to the European MS. According to Zweers & van Loon (2020), several states (both members and candidates) asked for a more effective enlargement process, which was strengthened when North-Macedonia and Albania requested for the opening of accession negotiations, after which the Netherlands and France objected due to their wish for certain conditions to be met before the opening of these negotiations. Moreover, France also stated its dissatisfaction with the internal functioning of the EU in relation to rule of law and wanted the EU to first further reform before allowing new states to join the Union and before reforming the accession procedure in order to gain more control over the whole process. The French government then published a non-paper in which they argued that the accession procedure needs to be altered in a way that allows the MS to halt the process when there are serious objections or concerns or a lack of reforms in specific states (Macron, 2019).

In November 2019, the Council of the EU reached a consensus that there was a need for examining and enhancing the effectiveness of the accession negotiation process, after which the European Commission drafted an enhanced accession methodology, which was officially proposed in February 2020 and adopted by the Council in March 2020. However, as pointed out earlier, there was a consensus in the Council in November 2019 that there was a need for examining the effectiveness of the accession negotiation process, which eventually led to the Enhanced Accession Methodology.

### **2.3 The Enhanced Accession Methodology**

On February 5<sup>th</sup> 2020, Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement, Olivér Várhelyi, announced that the European Commission put forward a proposal to drive forward the accession process of the European Union – the enhanced (or revised) accession methodology. This methodology or, as Várhelyi synonymised, this ‘process’ or ‘procedure’ aims to do so by making the accession process more dynamic, predictable, credible and with a stronger political steer (Várhelyi, 2020). In the document, in which this methodology was described, it was concluded that it is in the EU’s own political, economic and security interest to have a firm, merit-based prospect of full EU membership for the Western Balkans<sup>3</sup>. It was described as a geostrategic investment in a strong, stable and united Europe. A credible accession perspective would then be a key driver and incentive of transformation in the region and would therefore

---

<sup>3</sup> The methodology is applied to each candidate state, regardless of location. However, since all current candidates are located in the Western Balkans, the document as well as officials tend to refer to this region in particular.

enhance the EU's collective prosperity and security. However, the conclusion was drawn that the effectiveness of the overall accession process and of the implementation of that process must be further improved (European Commission, 2020a, p. 1). As mentioned by Commissioner Várhelyi, this means that the accession process should be more dynamic, predictable, credible and with a stronger political steer (ibis). This requires elaboration, which will be provided in the sections that follow.

#### More credibility

The enhanced methodology (relevantly enough) bears the subtitle “a credible EU perspective for the Western Balkans”. It states that the accession process needs to rest on mutual confidence, solid trust and clear commitments on both sides. Member States of the European Union have concerns and require reassurance of the unquestionable political will of the candidates. This political will can be proven by implementing the required fundamental reforms on issues like the economy, rule of law, fighting corruption or the functioning of public administration and democratic institutions. This, however, is a two-way street. When candidate countries meet the criteria and established conditions, then the Member States must agree to continue to the next stage of the process. The institutions and Member States are to speak with one voice in order to send clear signals of encouragement and support, while also clearly and honestly voicing shortcomings as soon as they occur. Credibility is to be reinforced by having a stronger focus on these earlier mentioned fundamental reforms. Concretely, this means that negotiations concerning these fundamental reforms will start first, and finish last. The progress on these reforms will then determine the pace of the negotiations. Lastly, the Commission will also further strengthen measures on institution-building and the rule of law, of which the results will be a requirement for deeper sectoral integration and progress in general (European Commission, 2020a, pp. 2-3)

#### A stronger political steer.

The commitment of the Western Balkans and the EU Member States to share a common future with each other as full members of the Union is a serious political and not simply technical undertaking. What this means is that both sides need to show more leadership. High level engagement and stronger steering from the Member States need to be ensured, and the political nature of the process is to be put front and centre. This should include the creation of new opportunities for high level policy and political dialogue with the candidates through frequent summits between the EU and the Western Balkans and intensified ministerial contacts. A

relevant aspect here is that Member States are invited to contribute more systematically to the process of EU-accession. This means that the Member States can use their own experts to monitor on the ground, contribute directly to annual reports and through sectoral expertise. They can also monitor and review the overall progress more frequently. The European Commission will propose the way ahead for the following year in greater form detail in its annual enlargement package. These will also include proposals for corrective measures. After the publication of said package, country-specific Inter-Governmental Conferences should take place in order to provide an arena for political dialogue on reforms (European Commission, 2020a, pp. 3-4).

#### A more dynamic process

To ensure more dynamism in the negotiating process, the negotiating chapters are to be organised in thematic clusters that will follow broad themes like internal market, good governance, economic competitiveness and connectivity. This clustering allows the identification of the most urgent and important reforms per sector, and negotiations on each of these clusters will not be opened on an individual chapter basis, but as a whole after fulfilling the opening benchmarks. Both parties will agree on priorities for key reforms and accelerated integration, and when these are sufficiently addressed, the cluster will be opened without further conditions, and closing benchmarks are set for every chapter. The clusters will be aligned with sub-committees of the Stabilisation and Association Agreements (SAA). This will allow for the progress in a specific cluster to be monitored and for targeted dialogues (European Commission, 2020a, p. 4).

#### Predictability, positive and negative conditionality

Both Member States and Western Balkan countries have addressed a need for more predictability in the process. There seems to be a particular need for more clarity on what the EU expects of the candidates at different stages of the process, and what the negative and positive consequences are in case of noticeable progress or a lack of it. The Commission aims to use the enlargement package to check the compliance of the candidates with existing EU legislation, besides expectations for further steps in the process. The earlier mentioned IGCs and the stronger political steer will help increase the predictability. The EC will also better define the conditions set for candidates through its annual reports in particular. Conditions must be understandable from the outset, as candidate states must have a clear idea of the benchmarks against which their reforms will be measured, and Member States need to have a good

understanding of what precisely is required from the candidates. Whereas positive progress in relation to reforms needs to be incentivised and rewarded, negative progress (i.e. serious or prolonged stagnation or, worse, backsliding in reform implementation) calls for more decisive measures that sanction proportionally. The annual assessment by the Commission will inform decisions to halt or even reverse the process in its enlargement package. Member States will continue to be able to contribute to the process by pointing out stagnation or serious backsliding in the reform process to the EC. The Commission can make proposals on its own or at the duly motivated request of one or more Member States to ensure a quick response to serious cases through simplified procedures such as reverse qualified majority voting (European Commission, 2020a, pp. 5-6).

Member States can decide that negotiations should be put on hold in specific areas or even suspended overall in the most severe cases. Chapters that have been closed in the past can be re-opened if there is a need for reassessment. Moreover, benefits of closer integration could be paused or withdrawn. Lastly, the intensity and scope of funding by the European Union could be adjusted downward in areas except for support to civil society. This predictability and conditionality is to be enhanced through greater transparency. All key reforms in the candidate states must be carried out in a fully inclusive and transparent way with key stakeholder involvement in order to facilitate monitoring of implementation and ensuring sustainability of reforms (European Commission, 2020a, p. 6).

#### **2.4 The Netherlands and the Enhanced Accession Methodology**

To some, the wish for a revised accession methodology presented itself rather bluntly. There was dissatisfaction with the process of accession to the European Union, and the state and conditions of the candidate Member States. This became apparent when, for instance, on June 21<sup>st</sup> 2018, the Dutch Parliament blocked the opening of EU accession negotiations with Albania over serious concerns in relation to fighting corruption. This blocking was possible due to all decisions relating to the EU accession process being decided at the EU level with unanimity (Gotev, 2018). A year later, accession talks with Albania and North Macedonia were once again blocked by the Netherlands, as well as by France and Denmark due to a lack of results, and due to the need for a revised process (Tidey et al., 2019).

According to Zweers & van Loon (2020), the Commission started to work towards this revision of the accession methodology after being triggered by the insistence of France and the Netherlands in particular to adjust the process of accession. They further stated that this proposal was welcomed by the Netherlands, as it allowed the Dutch to play a role with more of

a constructive nature throughout the process, instead of having to hit the brakes at landmark political moments (p. 2). On December 17<sup>th</sup> 2019, Renske Leijten, member of the Socialist Party and of the Dutch Parliament's European Affairs Committee filed a motion requesting the government to strive towards finding an alternative to the (then) current accession methodology with like-minded Member States (Leijten, 2019).

### **3. Theoretical framework**

The data analysis in this thesis flows from the central research question that asks when, how, and why distinct frames are used by the Netherlands during internal and external coordination in relation to European foreign policy. To conceptualise this, this theoretical chapter studies and reviews the existing literature on *coordination* and *framing*. Key theories on these concepts are presented in order to identify appropriate definitions and operationalisations that can be used throughout the data collection and analysis.

The chapter starts with theory of coordination. First, the concept will be defined by comparing the findings of various scholars, after which the different dimensions of coordination (i.e. internal, external, horizontal, and vertical) will be presented. The section on framing theory follows a similar structure. After defining *frames* and *framing*, theory on the different framing devices (i.e. sense-making, selecting, naming, categorizing, storytelling) are described. These sub-chapters will also present theoretical propositions that will be revisited in chapter 5.

#### **3.1 Coordination theory**

It may come as no surprise that pushing an agenda in relation to foreign policy in a supranational organisation consisting of 27 Member States requires coordination. As stated by Jennings & Ewalt (1998), ensuring coordination among the numerous components of an organisation is indeed challenging (p. 418). The importance of coordination is illustrated in the plenitude of arguments and theories related to this concept in public administration literature. To exemplify this, Panday and Jamil (2011) stated that policies cannot be implemented without proper coordination (p. 155). Seidman (1997) even went as far as comparing the finding of solutions to problems of interagency coordination to the ancient quest for the philosopher's stone that would essentially provide the answer to all our problems (p. 142). At the same time, other scholars claimed that despite its central theoretical and practical importance, coordination is an ill-defined and ambiguous concept; and that it is often broadly equated with whatever form of cooperation, while at other times it is narrowly defined as central control (Metcalf, 1994, p. 271).

Even though Metcalfe may have had a point at the time, much has been written on coordination since 1994, and scholars seem to have found more suitable definitions in the eyes of said author. First and foremost, Koop & Lodge (2014) defined coordination as “the adjustment of actions and decisions among interdependent actors to achieve specified goals” (p. 1313). They elaborated on this definition by stating three core features. The first of these features is that coordination is regarded as a process of adjusting decisions and actions, and this process may

or may not result in these decisions and actions being coordinated. The outcome of the process could be different from decisions and actions being coordinated, and the former could also result from processes other than coordination. This fits with the definition provided by Bouckaert, Peters & Verhoest (2010), who defined coordination as the purposeful alignment of tasks, efforts, units and roles to achieve a predefined goal, since the adjustment of actions and decisions goes hand-in-hand with a purposeful alignment of these actions (or labelled by Bouckaert et al. as ‘efforts’).

The second feature of coordination regards it as a process which involves at least two interdependent actors. The actors being mutually dependent on each other may take the form of either outcome interdependence or behavioural interdependence. Pfeffer & Salancik (2003) explained that in the case of *behavioural interdependence* the activities are dependent on the actions of other actors. In order for one Member State to reach a certain policy objective, this MS needs to convince its counter-parts and other relevant actors to participate in the game (i.e. be open to negotiations), which involves having them at a certain place at a certain time. If the representatives of the other Member States refuse to cooperate or even show up, then the negotiations halt, and the policy objective can often not be attained. Take, for instance, the Empty Chair Crisis of 1965, during which French president Charles de Gaulle boycotted European institutions due to his disagreement with the European Commission’s attempt to create a shift towards supranationalism, rather than integration. This boycott led to European decision-making being put on hold for over six months. Pfeffer & Salancik (2003) further explained that when the outcomes attained by A are jointly determined with, or are interdependent with, the outcome attained by B, then we observe a situation of *outcome interdependence* (p. 41). In other words, if European Member State A and B both strive towards (e.g.) further European integration and have their own means and perceptions of how to achieve this, they are in a situation of outcome interdependence. While each state may come up with their own notions and plans, the outcome will be a function of both the decisions of Member State A and those of its competitor(s).

Coordination being viewed as a process created to achieve specified goals is the third feature described by Koop & Lodge (2014). One of these goals described by the authors, who in turn quoted Metcalfe (1994, p. 278), could be to ensure that actors do not frustrate, negate or impede each other’s activities. Another potential goal is the enhancement of policy coherence more generally. Koop & Lodge recognised the variety and multiplicity of possible goals, which is why they purposely left out a specification of the goal in their definition of coordination.

Let us apply these three features on to the case of this thesis – which is the revision of the accession methodology as EU foreign policy and the role of the Netherlands in relation to it. The first feature speaks for itself: the Dutch state envisions a certain alteration to the proposed methodology, and therefore needs to adjust its decisions and actions to achieve this alteration. In regard to the second feature, the Netherlands and the other Member States of the EU are interdependent of one another, both behaviourally as well as in terms of outcomes. The behavioural interdependence can be illustrated through the need of unanimity when deciding on matters related to EU accession as mentioned in Article 188N of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (2007) meaning that the Netherlands depends on the willingness of other Member States to cooperate, and vice versa. Next up is the outcome interdependence. When talking about EU enlargement, all Member States share the outcome of a new state joining the Union, and the effects that has on matters such as integration, the economy, security, etc. Lastly, the specified goal for the Netherlands in terms of its coordination related to the accession methodology was to make EU-accession more complex, and at the same time more credible, dynamic, predictable and with a stronger political steer from the Member States (Zweers & van Loon, 2020). Considering the applicability of these described dimensions to the case of this thesis, this paper will follow the discussed definition of coordination provided by Koop & Lodge (2014).

### **3.1.1 Administrative Coordination Capacity**

Pushing one's agenda related to foreign policies in the European arena is far from a simple process. Besides establishing a position on a certain policy proposal, which involves consultations from and negotiations with actors from across different ministries, agencies, etc., a state also needs to deal with its foreign counterparts and institutions such as the European Parliament.<sup>4</sup> This requires a type of coordination capacity which Tom Christensen, Ole Martin Lægreid & Per Lægreid (2019) refer to as *administrative coordination capacity*. They defined this as “mediating and bringing different administrative units and dispersed actors to work together in order to achieve joint actions” and it being about “aligning organizations from different backgrounds under often tricky conditions” (p.239). The first part of their definition complements the earlier presented definitions of *coordination* provided by Koop & Lodge (2014) and Bouckaert et al. (2010), but at the same time it sheds light on the fact that the purposefully aligned units and interdependent actors have different backgrounds and are dispersed (i.e. widespread).

---

<sup>4</sup> Further elaboration in chapter on internal and external coordination (3.1.2).

The second part of their definition is also a relevant complement to the mentioned definitions of coordination in light of this thesis – not just because it brings in organisations, but also because it states that these organisations are aligned under often tricky conditions. The organisations, or in this case the Member States and the European Parliament are all behaviourally and outcome interdependent of one another. The tricky conditions could therefore refer to the processes of policy formulation and policy decision being slowed down considerably due to, for instance, disagreements between Member States and a lack of unanimity in the Council of Ministers, or the European Parliament rejecting a policy proposal, which then in turn returns the proposal back to the drafting table. To exemplify this, Bulgaria single-handedly blocked the official start of accession talks with North Macedonia by refusing to approve the EU’s negotiation framework for North Macedonia. The reason for this was the Bulgarian claim that progress on the implementation of the 2017 Friendship Treaty between the two states was too slow (Barigazzi, 2020). In other words, Bulgaria blocked EU accession talks with North Macedonia on the basis of a bilateral dispute that had little to nothing to do with the European Union. The fact that Member States can block this supranational progress based on bilateral grounds shows the trickiness of the situation surrounding EU enlargement. According to Koop & Lodge (2014), this is where cooperation, desirable as it may be, also shows its challenging nature. The involved actors often hold different views of the goals that need to be achieved due to their backgrounds. Another aspect that Christensen et al. (2019) pointed out is that administrative coordination capacity is also about facilitating horizontal coordination across policy areas and organisations at the same level, and not only about vertical coordination by hierarchy (p. 239), which will be elaborated on in the next section on dimensions of coordination.

The definition of Administrative Coordination Capacity provided by Christensen et al. (2019) will be used as a supplement to the definition of coordination provided by Koop & Lodge (2014), as it adds the aspect of the tricky conditions and of the actors being dispersed, which (as explained above) is relevant for the case study of this thesis.

### **3.1.2 Dimensions of coordination**

As mentioned in the previous section, administrative coordination facilitates horizontal coordination. This is just one of four dimensions that will be discussed in this thesis. Christensen & Lægreid (2008) presented a clear and concise differentiation between four dimensions of coordination - them being *horizontal coordination*, *vertical coordination*, *internal coordination*, and *external coordination*. Internal and external coordination are

distinguished by whether coordination is between units within the same organisation (e.g. within the central government), or whether it is between different government bodies and organisations (e.g. outside the central government). The dimensions of horizontal and vertical coordination are distinct from one another based on the direction of coordination. For example, coordination from a central government in an upward direction to international organisations and a downward direction to a municipal authorities would qualify as vertical coordination. Coordination between ministries, organisations (or their members) at the same level can be labelled as horizontal coordination (p. 102).

### Vertical (hierarchy) and horizontal (network) coordination

The differences between vertical and horizontal coordination correspond with the distinctions presented by Verhoest, Bouckaert and Peters (2007). They differentiated between hierarchy-based coordination and network-based coordination. According to them, hierarchy-based coordination is based on dominance and authority. It involves objective- and rule-setting, allocating responsibilities and tasks, and the establishment of lines of direct accountability and control (p. 332). Setting up a hierarchy is a strategy for coordination that is most often found within and between public sector organisations in a vertical manner, and this type of coordination is often mandated when institutions at the local level are subjected to various instructions from the top – often reflecting an asymmetry of power. This form of coordination is standardised and does not offer much space for flexibility, as it draws mostly on power and authority as fundamental resources and processes (Jamil, 2014, p. 4). Network-based coordination is based on mutual trust and interdependence. Common strategies, knowledge and values are often sought after between partners. These cooperative networks can either grow spontaneously between organisations, but governments can also be more assertive in creating, taking over, or sustaining such network-based coordination between organisations (Verhoest et al., 2007, p. 332). Similarly, Jamil (2014) described that it indicates collaborative action and information sharing that is voluntary amongst organisations that are mutually dependent, and they do this in order to achieve a shared goal. Besides that, environments that are diverse, complex and heterogeneous demand network-based coordination (p. 5).

### Internal and external coordination

As mentioned earlier, internal coordination is described as coordination within the same organisation (which could be the central government), and external coordination as coordination between, for example, central government bodies and organisations outside the

central government. Let us illustrate these different types of coordination by applying them to the government of the Netherlands while using the explanations provided by Christensen & Lægreid (2008). Starting with internal coordination: internal vertical coordination executed by the Dutch government would be visible through the administrative and political leaders' efforts to adjust the actions and decisions of its subordinate units in its own policy area. In other words, the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs coordinates foreign policy through the ministry's directorates-general and directorates to embassies and permanent representations. The Dutch government coordinates in a internal horizontal fashion when coordination is required between two or more ministries or agencies which function at the same level. Internal horizontal coordination also involves coordination between different departments within the same ministry. Christensen & Lægreid (2008) pointed out that in this type of coordination, the cabinet and the prime minister are central actors, and their authority is high (p. 102). Taking a position on, for example, a foreign trade agreement would most likely require coordination between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and the Ministry of Economic Affairs.

When it comes to external vertical coordination, it is primarily about coordination with supranational organisations, such as the European Union. The authority of the Dutch government is weakest in this case, since it has given up some of its national sovereignty to European institutions, especially in relation to economic cooperation.<sup>5</sup> External horizontal coordination could also both be domestic and international. In a domestic context, it is coordination with societal groups, meaning it could be between political or administrative leaders and relevant counterparts in the private sector. More relevant for this thesis is the international context of external horizontal coordination, since it comes into play when the Netherlands needs to collaborate with other EU Member States that have an equal say (due to the absence of a supernational power) in policy matters. As established before, the revision of the accession methodology required unanimity, meaning that on paper all Member States are at an equal level in terms of coordination.

According to Murdoch (2012), an institution's internal coordination can have an important influence in inter-institutional negotiations as well. These inter-institutional negotiations can be viewed as a process of two steps. First of all, the desired outcome of each institution results

---

<sup>5</sup> External vertical coordination also goes the other direction, from the Dutch government to, for instance, a municipality. Even though political and administrative leaders are important actors, their authority is somewhat weaker due to the balance between central, regional and local autonomy.

from negotiations within the institutions that reflect the power games among its key actors. At the same time, these different desired outcomes are subjected to a similar negotiation process *between* the involved institutions (Murdoch, 2012, pp. 1012-1013; Panebianco, 1988, p. 14). Murdoch (2012) further argued that this reflects the notion that in negotiations that are inter-institutional, much of the work involves negotiators negotiating with people from their own side in order to reconcile internal differences and to clarify priorities and objectives (Mayer, 1992; Metcalfe, 1994, p. 277; Murdoch, 2012, p. 1013).

	<b>Horizontal coordination</b>	<b>Vertical coordination</b>
<b>Internal coordination</b>	Coordination between different policy sectors, agencies, ministries, or different departments within ministries.	Coordination between parent ministry and subordinate bodies and agencies in the same sector.
<b>External coordination</b>	Coordination with civil society, private sector interest groups and organisations, as well as other countries.	Coordination in an upward direction to international organisations, downward to local authorities, or from Parliament to government.

**Table 1:** Overview of different types of dimensional coordination (Christensen & Læg Reid, 2008, p. 102).

Having presented the differences between the various types of dimensional coordination, it seems that all four dimensions are applicable to this case: internal-horizontal coordination; internal-vertical coordination; external-horizontal coordination; as well as external-vertical coordination. Even though the Netherlands has given up some of its sovereignty to the European Union, this is not the case for matters related to EU-enlargement, and decisions concerning these matters require unanimous support from the Council (see articles 188N (8) and 311 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, 2007). For that reason, Member States are (in theory) equals in negotiations, since each and every Member State regardless the size or influence could veto a policy from being adopted. This means there is no external vertical coordination present in light of the European Union. However, due to the Dutch Parliament being able to demand to be informed and involved in the process, and to request changes in a stance before it is wielded, this case also deals with external-vertical coordination.<sup>6</sup> In relation

---

<sup>6</sup> See context chapter (2).

to internal coordination, both the vertical as well as the horizontal dimension seem applicable for this thesis' case study, since the negotiations and discussions presumably take place within the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, between departments at different levels within the ministry, and require the approval of the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

As described in the first paragraph, the literature on coordination is vast and the definitions and types of coordination are varying. It should therefore be acknowledged that other definitions may have been suitable for this research as well. However, based on the arguments presented above, and their linkage to the case, the chosen definition and types of coordination were deemed appropriate for answering the research question of this thesis.

## **3.2 Framing theory**

### **3.2.1 Frames**

When it comes to the theoretical concept of 'framing', many scholars seem to be building on Erving Goffman's 1974 book *Frame analysis, an essay on the organization of experience*. They do this particularly in relation to the first conceptualisation of the notion of frames in mass communication from a sociological perspective, which can be traced back to his work. In his book, Goffman (1974) introduced the concept of frames as being 'schemata of interpretation'. While some are neatly presentable as a system of postulates, rules and entities, most others appear to have no clearly articulated shape, providing only a perspective. Most importantly, however, is that each of these frames (or as referred to by Goffman as frameworks) "allows its user to locate, perceive, identify and label a seemingly infinite number of concrete occurrences defined in its terms" (p. 21). In other words, Goffman focused on the definition of a situation that comes to pass as people negotiate the meanings of their interactions. They guide the ways people perceive their social realities and present or represent these realities to themselves and others, and they reflect the actors' organising principles that structure these perceptions (Van Hulst & Yanow, 2016, p. 94). In addition to the field of sociology, the concept of *frames* is also highly relevant in the field of political science. This can range from an individual's ability in the policy process to destabilise debates through strategic framing (Riker, 1986), or how frames have been used to transform the death penalty debate from one that focuses on morality into one that emphasises the flaws of the criminal justice system, which ultimately changed the public opinion and public policy towards the death penalty (Baumgartner et al., 2008). This thesis follows the definition provided by Klüver & Mahoney (2015) as "a specific aspect of a policy proposal that is emphasised in a policy debate by a specific actor" (p. 225). This definition will allow the concept to be operationalised, since these specific aspects of a policy

proposal and the specific actors can be identified and followed throughout debates and document analysis.<sup>7</sup>

### 3.2.2 Framing

According to Chong & Druckman (2007), the focal point of framing theory is that an issue can be viewed from a variety of perspectives and can be interpreted as having implications for multiple values or considerations. Framing itself refers to the process by which people develop a certain conceptualisation of an issue or reorient the way they think about an issue at hand. The set of dimensions (whether they are beliefs, considerations and/or values) that affect one's evaluation on anything make up this person's so-called 'frame in thought' (pp. 104-105). Van Hulst & Yanow (2016) clearly explain the difference between *frames* and *framing*. According to them, it is the frames that are often treated as objects people possess in their minds and that are developed for explicitly strategic purposes. Framing would then be the intersubjective and interactive processes through which frames are constructed. They further clarify this by stating that a frame signifies a more static, definitional, and potentially classifying approach to the subject, while framing offers a more politically aware and dynamic engagement (p. 93).

When applying this to European foreign policy, one can think of meetings between the EU and states that continuously violate human rights. Some of the people who observe these meetings might believe that the EU is wrong for meeting with such regimes and should openly distance themselves from these practices by boycotting those meetings. For them, the outspoken and acted upon disapproval of the violation of human rights is their frame in thought. If instead, these individuals give consideration to the disapproval of human rights violations and, for instance, the importance of diplomacy to tackle such issues, then their frame in thought consists of this mix of considerations. One's frame in thought can have an important impact on one's general opinion or individual action towards a particular issue. Framing is also defined as an "active, processual phenomenon that implies agency and contention at the level of reality construction" (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 614). In other words, it is essentially a way one vocalises choices to highlight negative and positive sides of the same decision. This complements the definition used by Klüver & Mahoney (2015), who base their definition on Entman (1991). They defined framing as "selecting and highlighting some features of reality while omitting others" (p. 225). This goes hand-in-hand with the earlier provided definition of *frames*, which is a specific aspect of a policy proposal that is emphasised in a policy debate by a specific actor.

---

<sup>7</sup> More on operationalisation in chapter 4.5.1.

Policy-focused frame analysis as introduced by Rein & Schön (1996), takes up the active work that framing accomplishes. This work entails highlighting specific features of a situation, ignoring or consciously selecting out other features, and binding those highlighted features together into a comprehensible and coherent pattern. Rein and Schön (1996) further explain that there are three processes at play in framing that enable this. The first process is the process of *naming* the features of a situation. Actors that are relevant to the policy draw on language that is a reflection of their understanding of that situation, which they often do with metaphors. Think of EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, who during her State of the Union speech in 2021 claimed that “an investment in the future of the Western Balkans is an investment in the future of the EU” (von der Leyen, 2021a). This naming then *selects* what the audience should see and it takes away attention from other features. These singled out aspects cohere through a manner of *storytelling* when it comes to presenting the situation. This will help policy actors to bind elements into a pattern that is clear and understandable (Rein & Schön, 1996). Van Hulst & Yanow (2016) argued that these three concepts needed to be fleshed out, and that additional theorizing is necessary. Besides, selecting, naming and storytelling, they brought in two related ones: sense-making and categorizing. They argue that framing is carried out through three distinctive acts, which either are or entail one of these concepts: *sense-making*; *naming* (which in turn includes both *selecting* as well as *categorising*), and *storytelling* (p. 97).

### **3.2.3 Framing as the work of sense-making**

When it comes to policy-making, framing is a process in which (and through which) actors who are relevant to that policy construct the meanings of the situations that are relevant in light of the policy with which they are involved in an intersubjective way, be it directly or as stakeholders and onlookers. When facing situations in which something ambiguous concerns these actors, they tend to pose the implicit or explicit question of what exactly is going on (Van Hulst & Yanow, 2016, p. 97). They need to understand what sort of problematic situation they are facing, and how to turn it into a problem with, in turn, a solution. In order to do so, they need to “make sense of an uncertain situation that initially makes no sense” (Schön, 1983, p. 40). Van Hulst & Yanow (2016) further explained that the kinds of materials policy-relevant actors tend to be confronted with are often difficult to combine into a coherent and neat picture. Framing is used to produce a model of the world (to make it make sense), and as a model for subsequent action within that world. Framing organises prior knowledge and values, and it then guides action (pp. 97-98). This aligns with Rein and Schön (1977) stating that the framing of a situation enacts the sense-making work that allows a normative leap from what *is* to what *ought*

*to be*. In other words, it enables actors to comprehend a situation as being of a particular kind. This in turn helps them to start imagining what should or could happen next in relation to prior ideas concerning the ways how particular issues are to be handled (p. 240). Different visions often deal with different problem definitions and its various solutions which come up as different actors select differing elements from a situation for attention, and name and categorize similar ones in other ways (Van Hulst & Yanow, 2016, p. 99).

### **3.2.4 Framing as the work of selecting, naming, and categorizing**

After having made sense of a situation at hand, naming comes into play when framing that same situation (Rein & Schon, 1977). Van Hulst & Yanow (2016) explained that there are two other features that work together with naming, i.e. selecting and categorising, which are framing devices in their own right. All three of these actions bring diverse, possibly even vastly different elements together in a pattern. Some of these elements are then selected as important or relevant, whereas other elements are ignored, placed in the background or simply discarded. What this does, is hiding other ways of looking at an issue and, therefore, the actions that need to be taken. This essentially is a political act, since other features could have been selected and brought about different actions. The selection of features can focus on aspects that concern a particular group of society (i.e. potential voters) (p. 99). This aligns with Jacoby (2000) explaining that politicians use framing in an attempt to rally voters behind their policies by encouraging them to think about those same policies along specific lines. They achieve this by highlighting specific features of that particular policy, such as the likely effects or the policy's relation to important values (p. 751).

The selected features need to be named, which as mentioned before entails the use of specific language and metaphors. Van Hulst & Yanow (2016) further state that regardless of the form that naming takes, the situational elements are always categorised. It is a form of naming in itself, and it entails identifying things as 'this', and 'not that'. Think of old or new; war or peace; poverty or prosperity; and a larger Union, or a more integrated Union with no additional members. In short, selecting, naming and categorising allows a framer to highlight certain aspects of policy discourse while silencing others (Van Hulst & Yanow, 2016, pp. 99-100). Interestingly, there seems to be overlap between the ability of framers to emphasise and discard certain aspects of a problem, and the ability of inter-institutional negotiators to decide which issues do and do not make it to an agenda through positive and negative agenda-shaping powers (Moe & Wilson, 1994, p. 8; Tallberg, 2006, p. 5). In other words, the strategic use of frames can be used for positive or negative agenda shaping. This will be discussed in more detail below.

### **3.2.5 Framing as the work of storytelling**

The final concept introduced by Van Hulst & Yanow (2016) is *storytelling*. This comes into play when the framer binds together the selected, named and categorised features of a situation into a coherent and understandable pattern. Whereas naming and categorising these features could be done with a simple one-word expression (e.g. 'war'), stories can elaborate on the policy problem and its potential solution. The framer does so by either introducing and narrating new selections, names and categories, or by reimagining the already available ones. They then glue those elements together by making a plot that illustrates a problem situation, its beginnings, developments, and possible resolutions (pp. 100-101). Policy-making deals with collective action, and actors often disagree on the required actions. This means that persuasion is a necessary means, provided by plot lines that bind elements together in a way that makes sense, that motivates, and potentially shows causality (Rein & Schön, 1977; van Hulst & Yanow, 2016). Storytellers typically refer to a moment back in time, when all was supposedly well, which illustrates the context that was or can be disrupted by a certain phenomenon. It is also crucial for purposes of persuasion that the framer creates a version of reality that is credible, one that enabled actors to agree to engage in action. Policy framing stories explicitly or implicitly suggest what causes success or harm, and praise and blame certain features. Quite simply, they illustrate what exactly is wrong and what needs fixing (Van Hulst & Yanow, 2016, p. 101).

### **3.3 Framing and coordination**

This section brings together both framing and coordination. It explains that framing may be used when different actors are engaged in coordination efforts with respect to their stance on a particular issue. This framing might be different in the different coordination settings as explained above.

Moe & Wilson (1994) argue that when both a rising capacity for coordination, as well as a more proactive coordination strategy are in place, the players' ability to decide (for example) which issues do and do not make it to the agenda increases. They do this through positive and negative agenda-shaping powers. To elaborate on that, an actor has positive agenda-shaping powers when this actor has the ability to emphasise certain issues in particular, or introduce new issues to the agenda. Negative agenda-shaping therefore means the opposite, as it gives an actor the ability to block or de-emphasise particular issues (Moe & Wilson, 1994, p. 8; Tallberg, 2006, p. 5). Murdoch (2012) also explained that internal coordination capacities are relevant in inter-institutional settings due to the experience provided by, for instance, shaping the agenda within

an institution. This experience then creates a certain reputation that works in the actor's favour (Beach, 2004, p. 415; Murdoch, 2012, p. 1013). In short, coordination capacities developed inside an institution tend to have important effects on external dynamics. This effect comes from the vital experience that internal coordination generates, and which may be essential in gaining agenda-shaping powers in inter-institutional negotiations (Murdoch, 2012, p. 1023).

### **3.3.1 Coordination and the framing devices**

This section aims to explain why and how the five framing devices (i.e. sense-making, selecting, naming, categorising, and storytelling) are relevant for internal and external coordination. It serves as a concluding section of the theory chapter where both the distinct forms of coordination as well as the separate framing devices are connected to one another. The end of each paragraph will present propositions about how these forms of framing might appear differently in internal and external coordination.

### **3.3.2 Coordination and sense-making**

The first framing device is sense-making, which as explained earlier involves answering the question of "what is going on here?" (Hummel, 1991, p. 36; Van Hulst & Yanow, 2016, p. 97). In the case of internal coordination, which involves the adjustment of actions and decisions among inter-dependent actors within the same organisation, it is expected that sense-making takes place in the form of using knowledge from within that organisation; through dialogue; and by building on the expertise of its staff. It should nevertheless be mentioned that Van Hulst & Yanow (2016) underlined that sense-making is not always a conscious, planned and strategized activity, and organisations therefore often make sense of a situation while acting (p.98). However, it is highly tenable that internally, organisations build on their own knowledge through dialogue and negotiations before creating a certain stance or taking action. In other words, they use internal sources of information to make sense of a situation. At the same time, sense-making from an external perspective could work similarly in the sense that an organisation might rely on the knowledge of other organisations that have more expertise on the problem that needs to be made sense of. A central government might for example ask for advice from think tanks, EU institutions, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO), or other members of an international or supranational organisation. This means that an organisation like the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs could make sense of a situation by relying on these external information sources. Keeping in mind that the previous discussion implicitly assumes that internal coordination precedes external coordination, the sense-making most likely happens

at an early stage before any type of coordination activity. This leads to the following proposition:

Proposition 1: Sense-making happens primarily before the coordination process.

Proposition 2: Sense-making is done by using both internal and external information sources.

### **3.3.3 Coordination and selecting, naming, and categorizing**

#### Selecting

Framing device number two is *naming* and includes *selecting* and *categorizing* (Van Hulst & Yanow, 2016, p. 99). This starts with *selecting*. Considering that policy actors select some elements of a situation as important or relevant, while ignoring, backgrounding, or discarding other elements, they block other ways of looking at a situation and other ways of acting. It lays the conceptual groundwork for potential courses of action in the future (ibid). This seems to suggest that the selection device is mostly politically driven, but van Hulst & Yanow (2016) also emphasised that this framing device is a practical necessity for policy makers, since without selecting, they might get overwhelmed by the sheer number of elements of a situation. The practicality here is that by selecting and focussing on particular elements, policy makers enable themselves to frame a situation in ways that allow them to choose a course of action (p.99). This is relevant for this thesis due to a myriad of different elements revolving around Enlargement policy. In other words, countries (and in this case the Netherlands) quite simply need to select particular issues to prioritize and therefore focus on.

As explained by Van Hulst & Yanow (2016), *selecting* lays the groundwork of the stance of (in this case) the Netherlands and its future course of action (p.99). This suggests the relevance of this framing device during internal coordination, which is between the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and departments thereof. The reason for this is that it fixes the set of elements that can be used to talk about the Enhanced Accession Methodology during external coordination. For instance, keeping in mind that in some cases the Dutch Parliament needs to approve of a stance before it can be wielded, and in any case needs to be presented to them (Vaste commissie voor Europese Zaken, 2022), it seems likely that the selected aspects in relation to European enlargement policy do not differ depending on the form of coordination. Moreover, when the issue involves, for example, creating a stance towards progress reports of different candidate Member States, then it is likely that the selection of elements differs per candidate country. However, when talking about a methodology that applies to all candidate Member States, the Dutch policy makers only have to frame their stance towards said

methodology and could therefore focus on these states as a group rather than having to frame a stance towards each state separately.

In other words, it is expected that selecting during external coordination is less applicable, since a stance would first need to be created before it is negotiated with external actors such as Parliament and other MS. However, due to the potential need for parliament's approval, the Netherlands would most likely use the same selected elements during external coordination, as it cannot simply change its stance afterwards. This leads to the following propositions:

Proposition 3: Selecting takes place primarily during internal coordination.

Proposition 4: The selected set of elements are fixed at the time of external coordination.

### Naming and categorising

The selected aspects need to be named, which tends to involve the use of metaphors and terms of which the meanings are understood and known by the target audience. These are used to make the situation at hand easier to understand and the arguments easier to follow (Van Hulst & Yanow, 2016, p. 99). They draw on language that is a reflection of their understanding of a situation. Naming can also be used to draw distinctions, but does so to a lesser extent than categorizing does (ibid, p.99-100). When applying it to the Enhanced Accession Methodology, it seems likely that naming takes first and foremost place within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, just like sense-making and selecting. However, one could also argue that when it is clear that a group of MS think similarly, they might cooperate on the naming framing device. Considering that Parliament only passes its judgement after the stance has been drafted for the letter to Parliament (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2022), most of the naming presumably takes place during internal coordination between different ministries or departments within the MFA. However, due to the fact that the Dutch Parliament can demand changes through motions, it is possible for parliamentarians to be involved in naming if they decide to change the language in the draft (ibid). This shows the relevance of this framing device during external vertical coordination between the Dutch foreign ministry and the Dutch Parliament. External horizontal coordination (i.e. between the Netherlands and other MS) could play a role with naming if the countries decide to address an issue together by publishing a shared statement.

The purpose of categorising is to establish differences between issues at hand. It does this by labelling an issue as the opposite of another issue – like 'friend' versus 'enemy'. This is a framing device that (like selecting) can be used to highlight and silencing certain aspects of a

policy discourse (Van Hulst & Yanow, 2016, pp. 99-100). When applying this framing device to the Enhanced Accession Methodology in relation to internal and external coordination, a similar expectation can be sketched as the ones related to selecting and naming. The categorisation of the named aspects most likely takes place within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs itself through dialogue between different departments and possibly other ministries, suggesting that it is most relevant during vertical and internal horizontal coordination. However, considering the fact that categorisation also involves the use of language and is therefore presented in the letter to Parliament, the Dutch Parliament has the power to request changes in this use of language (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2022). This once again illustrates the relevance of external vertical coordination after the initial internal coordination process. Just like with *naming*, it seems unlikely that other Member States are involved in how the Netherlands categorises their own selected and named elements. However, as discussed before, this could be applicable when states agree to such an extent that it is more beneficial to create a stance together in order to strengthen their point. One could also speculate that if a (group of) MS were to present a stance that happened to be the polar opposite of the Dutch stance, this could have an impact on the categorisation of the Dutch frames. This does not, however, involve direct coordination, unless the Netherlands decides to join ranks with other Member States to counter the other group by collectively categorising their stance the same way.

Besides finding out when naming and categorising happens, and who uses these frames, this thesis also aims to find out the potential differences in names and categories used during internal and external coordination. In other words, within the set of selected elements that was decided on during the previous framing stage, do actors refer to the same elements within or connected to the enhanced methodology by the same name, and do they categorise them similarly depending on the coordination context? Or do they name and categorise them rather differently when facing different coordination actors? These questions are valid and worth investigating, since earlier research has addressed the potential difference in the use of frames when facing different actors. For example, Dewulf (2013) described that when different actors encounter one another in processes of (in Dewulf's case) climate change adaptation, the frames that are employed by these actors are primarily used for the interaction and communication between them. During that same encounter, these actors must deal with their mutual differences in how they frame the issue at hand in their particular context (p. 327). This is arguably no different in the case of this thesis. Potential actors in light of the Enhanced Accession Methodology from

the Dutch MFA's point of view include actors from different departments within the MFA, other Dutch ministries, Members of Parliament, Cabinet, diplomats from permanent representations to the European Union, etc. The names and categorisations given to particular elements could be different during coordination with actors from within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs compared to actors that represent other MS. Considering the rather strict attitude towards enlargement issues in the past<sup>8</sup>, it is not unlikely that the Netherlands frames and categorises the selected elements or its own stance in general in a particular way that triggers different associations. In other words, instead of coming across as stubborn and unconstructive, they might name and categorise in a way that places the Netherlands and their stance in a more positive or constructive light. This would then be most relevant in the case of external coordination involving actors representing other EU Member States, which the Netherlands needs to convince in order to get its way. Negative or non-constructive frames could potentially harm that process. For internal coordination, it is likely that the selected elements are named and categorised more objectively (i.e. closer to the reality without having to worry about how it is perceived by the greater public), and more critical due to the policy officers 'playing on the same team'. This would make the need for diplomatically appropriate names and categories less significant during internal coordination. The discussions above lead to the following propositions:

Proposition 5: Naming and categorising primarily take place during internal coordination, and could be altered during external coordination.

Proposition 6: The names and categorisations of frames are more positive and constructive during external coordination, and more objective and critical during internal coordination.

### **3.3.4 Coordination and storytelling**

The last framing device, storytelling, entails binding together the selected, named and categorised features of a situation into a pattern that is coherent and easy to understand (Rein & Schon, 1977, p. 239; Van Hulst & Yanow, 2016, p. 100). As explained by Van Hulst & Yanow (2016), policy framing stories explicitly or implicitly attribute praise or blame, and imply the causes of success or the lack thereof. They present a perception of what is wrong and needs to be fixed. Since the story is told by a variety of different actors who approach policy situations with different expectations, experiences, desires and fears, one can expect discussions or even conflicts in relation to the meanings and interpretations of the stories. This is where

---

<sup>8</sup> See context chapter (2).

negotiations comes in place and where discursive power is manifested as a result of framing through storytelling (p.101). Much like the other framing devices, it seems likely that storytelling starts during internal vertical and horizontal coordination between the Dutch MFA, other ministries and departments within the MFA. This is when the elements are all bound together in a pattern (i.e. a story that can be told in an easy and comprehensible way). As always, the Dutch Parliament needs to be informed, and in some cases approve of the story and can request changes through motions (Vaste commissie voor Europese Zaken, 2022), which illustrates the potential relevance of external vertical coordination. It is likely that external horizontal coordination becomes relevant throughout storytelling, since Dutch diplomats or other representatives will need to present their stance and negotiate with other MS.

In connection to the case on the Enhanced Accession Methodology, it is presumable that Dutch representatives use similar narratives with different parties, since the stance they wield had to be publicly approved by Parliament. This makes it unlikely that they would stray far from that particular narrative in public. However, it is plausible that there might be a stronger focus on particular named or categorised elements depending on the audience. This would go hand-in-hand with the earlier discussion on *coordination and naming and categorising* (chapter 3.3.3), where the proposition was made that during internal coordination these elements are labelled with a more critical or fact-based tone, and during external coordination with a more positive and constructive tone. These different frames would then also supposedly translate similarly to the storytelling stage: the combined selected, named, and categorised features are bound together into a comprehensible and coherent story that is more fact-based and critical during internal coordination, and more positive and constructive during external coordination. The message would then assumably be the same, but the way the story is told would differ in tone. This leads to the following propositions:

Proposition 7: The stories told through storytelling are created during internal coordination, whereas they can be amended through external coordination.

Proposition 8: While storytelling is similar, it is more fact-based and critical during internal coordination, and more positive and constructive during external coordination.

## **4. Research methodology**

This chapter presents the different methodological approaches that were used to collect information related to the research questions of this study. One of the purposes of the methods chapter is to present how the data was collected and processed. Moreover, it will discuss the rationale behind the qualitative approach of this study, case choice, data collection methods, as well as the validity and reliability of the study.

### **4.1 Reasoning behind qualitative approach**

This thesis aims to tackle questions of when, how, and why, which suggests that the questions are explanatory in nature (Toshkov, 2016). When trying to explore questions like those, i.e. when trying to understand when, how and why distinct frames are used, a qualitative design offers most potential to provide this understanding. This is because in-depth information is required to understand the issues at hand, which in this case cannot be provided by quantitative research methods. As opposed to a quantitative design, where variables and their inter-relationship are presented, qualitative research involves an in-depth analysis of the context and concepts (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). More specifically, if the purpose of this research were to see *which* frames were used for coordination surrounding European foreign policy, then a ‘simple’ presentation of the variables would be sufficient to produce solid research. Since this thesis aims to also understand *how* and *why* these frames are used, it is essential to use to qualitative design to get an in-depth understanding of the data.

A qualitative design was deemed more appropriate for several reasons. First and foremost, when it comes to qualitative research it is the researcher’s aim to rely as much as possible on the views of the respondents on the research problem. A qualitative approach allows respondents to express their opinions and elaborate on them beyond the questions that are asked throughout the interview process (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This is particularly relevant for this research, since there are no publicly available sources that outline how the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs coordinated the creation of a stance towards the Enhanced Accession Methodology. This is also the case for the use of frames by the Netherlands during internal and external coordination. This data needs to be derived through direct conversations with those who were involved with coordination – those who used or chose particular frames. This shows the relevance of qualitative interviews, as they indeed allow for elaboration and illustrative examples. This knowledge could not be gathered through quantitative methods, since no relevant statistical dataset was available, and the distribution of surveys (and analysis of the

results thereof) would not capture the experiences and expertise of the respondents as effectively as qualitative semi-structured interviews would.

## **4.2 Case selection:**

This master thesis incorporates a case study design. A *case study* is defined by Yin (2014) as an empirical investigation that looks at a current phenomenon, which is considered to be the 'case'. This investigation looks at this phenomenon in an in-depth manner and a real-world context (p. 16). The phenomena this thesis looks at are frames in relation to internal and external coordination concerning European foreign policy, and the case that is studied in this thesis is the negotiation process surrounding the Enhanced EU Accession Methodology. Considering that this thesis hosts one case study, it can be classified as having a single-case study design.

As explained by Yin (2014), this type of design is an appropriate one under multiple circumstances. One of the rationales as presented by this author that is applicable to this case study is the label of a *typical case*, which according to Gerring & Cojocaru (2016) examines a case in-depth that is considered average or representative. It represents a single tendency of a distribution (pp. 394-396). Indeed, it is likely that these negotiations and the creation of a stance connected to EU foreign policy or, more specifically, enlargement policy happen frequently. To gain a better understanding of this, one must dissect the case. The case involves a situation with coordination activities in the setting of policy development within the European Union. This policy development is the revision of the accession methodology of the EU. However, this policy development could be something related, yet quite different at first glance. Think of the creation of the European External Action Services, or an amendment of a migration policy. All of these fall under the scope of European foreign policy and face similar coordination processes. It is also presumable that framing plays a role in all of these different cases, making this a typical case. The question remains as to *how* representative this case is, but as Gerring (2008) stated: "the issue of representativeness is an issue that can never be definitively settled", and "when one refers to a *typical case*, one is saying, in effect, that the probability of a case's representativeness is high" (p.650). Following the logic as stated above, the conclusion could be drawn that this case is indeed a *typical case*.

### **4.2.1 Unit of analysis**

The unit of analysis of a case study is, according to Yin (2014), the major entity or context that is researched in a study (p. 238). This case study looks at how different organisations interact with each other. More specifically, it looks at how these different organisations use framing when they coordinate on a given policy issue. The unit of analysis is thus at the organisational

level, which is also the level at which data is collected and the level at which this framing takes place. For this thesis, the following are considered units of analysis: the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, other relevant Dutch ministries that were involved with the EAM (research should indicate which, if any, were involved), the European Affairs Committee of the Dutch Parliament, and the Permanent Representations to the EU of other EU Member States. Information concerning framing and coordination with these units will be derived through interviews with stakeholders that work for these organisations. This will be described in detail in the following section.

### **4.3 Data collection**

#### **4.3.1 Semi-structured interview:**

This thesis builds primarily on information derived from semi-structured interviews, which means that there is not just a certain set of questions one can ask, but also space to divert from these questions and new ideas that naturally come up during the interview (Rathbun, 2008, p. 686). The set of questions that are to be relied on are incorporated in the interview guide. This interview guide consists of open-ended questions that first allow the interviewee to illustrate the expertise and involvement, and therefore the relevance of him or herself. Depending on the interviewee, the interview questions are structured around the framing devices. This helps to understand to what extent they were involved in this process, and to establish the relevance of these framing devices and frames during internal and external coordination. As stated by Rathbun (2008), interviews should be conducted in the language of the interviewee whenever this is a possibility. This demonstrates professionalism, and gives the impression that the interviewee is truly important and valued (p.698). All Dutch interviewees were therefore (despite their strong command of the English language) interviewed in their mother tongue.

#### **4.3.2 Selection of samples**

Purposive sampling and snowball sampling were used as sampling techniques in order to arrange interviews with relevant actors. Purposive sampling, as the name suggests, is a type of non-probability sampling in which not all members of the population have the exact same chance of being interviewed. Instead, the samples can be chosen based on their relation to or knowledge on the issue that is researched. Snowball sampling is a sampling technique in which interviewees or actors are requested for assistance in identifying or reaching out to other potential interviewees (Noy, 2008, p. 330). To exemplify this, the Cluster Coordinator Neighbourhood and Enlargement Policy recommended an interview with a specific researcher at Clingendael Institute who had significant knowledge concerning the case study, and an interview with him was arranged as a result of that. In turn, this interviewee suggested the

researcher with expert-knowledge on the topic who worked at the University of Amsterdam (UvA).

A large array of people was reached out to for interviews. Appendix X shows an alphabetical overview of all the targets that were contacted – be they individuals or institutions. The following section will provide a categorised overview of the approached individuals or institutions, the reasoning behind it and the success (or lack thereof) in arranging an interview.

#### The Ministry of Foreign affairs of the Netherlands:

As the central player of this thesis' case study, it was essential to get in touch with officials from the Dutch MFA who were involved in creating the Dutch position towards the Enhanced Accession Methodology and therefore at the centre of the framing process. The Ministry did not provide an overview with contact information, making it challenging to identify those who were involved. Contact was established by reaching out to departments that were potentially relevant (the contact details were provided by a personal contact within the MFA). Due to privacy reasons, the administrator could not provide any names, but forwarded my email to relevant recipients. This is when the cluster coordinator reached out herself and agreed to an interview. Her expertise and the use of her knowledge is described in more detail later in this chapter. Due to a change of staff, no other officials that currently work at the department were involved in the process surrounding the EAM.

#### Other ministries in the Netherlands:

Even though the interviewee at the Dutch MFA had stated that the involvement of other ministries in light of the Enhanced Accession Methodology was minimal, an attempt was made to arrange an interview with officials from the Ministry of Justice; Finance; and Education, Culture and Science to learn more about their role in framing during internal horizontal coordination. These ministries were chosen since the official from the MFA stated that they tend to be involved in EU-enlargement issues. However, none of the three ministries were willing to agree to an interview due to their lack of knowledge and/or involvement on the enhanced methodology.

#### Permanent representation of the Netherlands to the European Union:

Multiple attempts have been made to arrange an interview with an official from the Permanent Representation of the Netherlands to the EU in Brussels, since the diplomats there were directly involved in the negotiation process surrounding the enhanced methodology. They could have

provided insightful information in relation to framing during external horizontal coordination from the Dutch point of view. In order to compensate for the lack of information that could have been derived from this interview, data from the interview with the Dutch MFA official and the diplomats from foreign missions to the EU are combined. Though arguably not as useful as an interview with a representative from the Dutch Permanent Representation, the combination of said data should be a sufficient compensation since foreign missions were at the receiving end of any Dutch framing efforts.

#### Permanent representations to the EU and Foreign Ministries of other Member States:

Nearly all Foreign Ministries and Permanent Representations to the European Union of Member States were reached out to for a potential interview. The purpose of this was to get insight on how their diplomats have experienced the Dutch stance, attitude, and framing during negotiations surrounding the Enhanced Accession Methodology. Even though few ministries or permanent representations could not be reached due to a lack of contact information or logistical constraints (e.g. email inboxes that had reached max capacity), each and every Member State was reached out to in one way or another. The majority of these did not reply either through email or telephone, despite multiple attempts. A handful of the MS (e.g. Sweden) stated that they refrain from commenting on other Member States. Others like Bulgaria stated that they did not have sufficient knowledge on the Dutch position. Fortunately, both the Portuguese representative as well as the one from a MS that wished to remain anonymous agreed to an interview. This is especially helpful since Portugal is a state that, according to the representative from the Dutch MFA, is a part of the group of MS that is much less critical towards EU enlargement, unlike the Netherlands. The other member state, on the other hand, was considered one of the countries that was more critical towards EU enlargement and strongly in favour of an enhanced methodology, just like the Netherlands. These interviews therefore provide insight on Dutch framing during external horizontal coordination from two different perspectives.

#### Interview targets from/in the Western Balkans:

In order to cross-validate the findings from the Dutch interviewees, it was considered useful to get more insight on how Dutch framing was perceived in the countries for which the EU's accession methodology was enhanced: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia (Western Balkan Six, WB6). Contact was made with

the Permanent Representations to the EU, their Foreign Ministries, the BluePrint Group (civil society network of NGOs in the WB), think-tanks and agencies.

EU representatives:

Other targets with potential knowledge on the topic were representatives from the European Union who may have been involved in the discussions themselves. For this reason, requests for interviews with representatives from EU delegations in the Western Balkans, as well as officials from the Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations were sent out. None of the EU delegations had much knowledge on the topic and suggested reaching out to DG NEAR, who in turn stated that they would not discuss the position of Member States with third parties.

Members of the European Affairs Committee of the Dutch Parliament:

In order to learn more about the framing during external vertical coordination, it was considered essential to arrange interviews with members of the European Affairs Committee of the Parliament of the Netherlands. This is the committee that discussed the Dutch stance towards the Enhanced EU Accession Methodology and its members were therefore directly involved in adopting this stance and the used frames. The website of the Dutch Parliament shows how long each member has been a part of that committee, simplifying the process of finding out which members were present in February 2020, and whom to reach out to. Certain parliamentarians stated that they have a party spokesperson who could comment on it, although all of those spokesmen were unavailable. Other parliamentarians were too occupied with other issues. In the end, an interview was conducted with one parliamentarian who could provide information on the role of Parliament and said committee in light of the EMA.

Researchers with expertise on the topic:

Lastly, researchers with expertise on the European Union, the Netherlands, and the Western Balkan were reached out to through snowball sampling. One of the interviewees was a research fellow at the Clingendael institute, also known as the Netherlands Institute of International Relations. The other interviewee was a researcher at the University of Amsterdam. Both researchers were speakers at the Clingendael webinar *the EU as a promotor of democracy or 'stabilitocracy' in the Western Balkans*, where they engaged in a debate with both domestic and foreign politicians and bureaucrats. Their knowledge was used to get a more analytical

perspective on the Dutch use of frames throughout external coordination (both vertical and horizontal).

### **4.3.3 Interviewees and their expertise**

#### Dutch respondents:

The first conducted interview was with the cluster coordinator neighbourhood and enlargement policy at the external policy office of the European Integration Department of the Dutch MFA. This interviewee was selected due to her key-role in relation to this thesis' case study. The interviewee was the person in charge of creating the Dutch stance, was involved in the discussions with different Member States, provided instructions for the discussion at the relevant EU working groups, at the Permanent Representatives Committee, in the Council, and wrote the letter to the Dutch Parliament. Her central role allowed for vital data concerning the coordination process to be gathered. Moreover, as someone who quite literally wrote the Dutch position herself, she could provide great insight in the framing process and which language is used in different contexts and situations. Another interview was held with a Dutch parliamentarian who is also a member of the European Affairs Committee of Parliament, which is the parliamentary committee that points out relevant European developments and advices on this. He was elected to Parliament as member of the Reformed Political Party (SGP) in 2012 and has been a member of the earlier mentioned committee ever since. The data derived from this interview is used to understand the role, involvement, and influence of Parliament in terms of coordination and framing.

#### Respondents from other EU Member States

In order to get an understanding of how the external coordination takes place between the Netherlands and other Member States of the European Union, a semi-structured interview was held with an official from the permanent representation to the European Union of Portugal, and a Member State that wished to remain anonymous. Both diplomats work as counsellors of the working groups COELA, which covers EU enlargement, and COWEB, which covers matters related to the Western Balkans Region. They have actively engaged in the negotiations that led to the adoption of the Enhanced Accession Methodology and has therefore first-hand experience when it comes to negotiating with the Dutch. They meet delegates from the Netherlands approximately two to four times a week. An interview with an official from Portugal was deemed useful due to Portugal not being considered as a country that is outspokenly critical towards EU enlargement, unlike the Netherlands. Data derived from this

interview was therefore used to cross-validate the data gathered through the other interviews, as well as to get an understanding of the framing devices used during external horizontal coordination. The other diplomat was interviewed due to him representing a MS that has a similar attitude towards EU enlargement and the need for an enhanced accession methodology as the Netherlands. This allows for cross-validation of the data derived from the interview with the diplomat who represents Portugal, in addition to the Dutch information.

Academic respondents

Interviews were conducted with two different academics with relevant expertise in light of the case study. The first one was held with a research fellow of Clingendael’s EU-research unit. He has worked at this think tank for over six years and specialised in external European policy making. His work mainly revolves around EU enlargement and in particular EU relations with the Western Balkans. He follows the enlargement process within the WB-countries by monitoring the reforms and the functioning thereof to see whether the process is effective in fostering democracy and rule of law. His work also frequently covers the Enhanced Accession Methodology. The second interview was held with a researcher from the University of Amsterdam due to his supposedly more critical view towards the Netherlands when it comes to its role in the Western Balkans and its stance towards EU enlargement. He has considerable knowledge on the Enhanced EU Accession Methodology, the Western Balkans, and the role of the Netherlands. Data derived from these interview is used to get a better analytical understanding of the reasons as to why particular frames are used, for cross-referencing purposes, and to gain a more critical perspective on the case.

When making use of data gathered through interviews in the empirical chapter, abbreviations will be used to indicate from which interview respondent the information was taken. However, to prevent the paragraphs from being overloaded with these abbreviations, they will only be used when their source is not explicitly stated in the paragraph itself. An overview of the abbreviations used for the interviewees can be found in the table below:

<b>Interview respondent</b>	<b>Abbreviation</b>
Cluster Coordinator Neighbourhood and Enlargement Policy of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs	[CCNEP] Cluster Coordinator Neighbourhood Enlargement Policy
Dutch parliamentarian, member of the European Affairs Committee	[MEAC] Member European Affairs Committee

Clingendael Research Fellow	[AR-I] Academic Respondent I
University of Amsterdam Researcher	[AR-II] Academic Respondent II
Diplomat at the Portuguese Permanent Representation to the European Union	[PRD-I] Permanent Representation Diplomat I
Diplomat at other non-Dutch Permanent Representation to the European Union (anonymous)	[PRD-II] Permanent Representation Diplomat II

**Table 2:** Overview of interview respondents and their abbreviations

#### 4.3.4 Data derived from other sources:

Rathbun (2008) argued that secondary sources and publicly available sources are to be exhausted before interviews are conducted in qualitative research. This allows the researcher to have more targeted and efficient questions that will cause a primary source such as an interview to be more reliable (p. 695). One of the two most important documents for this case study were the document presenting the Enhanced EU Accession Methodology (European Commission, 2020a). This document was the very result of the negotiations under investigation for this study, so it provides a solid understanding and essential context. It presents the changes and enhancements in relation to the previous methodology, and helped pinpoint what to look for throughout data gathering. Another crucial document for this case study was the letter to Parliament written by the Dutch MFA and contained the cabinet appreciation concerning the enhanced methodology. This document described how the Netherlands looked at the proposal for a new methodology and therefore constituted an essential asset for preliminary research in preparation for the interviews, as well as the identification of particular frames that could be looked for in other sources such as speeches and newspaper articles. These newspaper articles are read to provide more context, a better understanding of the situation, and to identify the use of frames by the Netherlands in different situations.

The parliamentary hearing of the European Affairs Committee concerning this issue, which is accessible online on the website of the Dutch Parliament, was watched to observe the usage of frames by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and members of said committee. This was done by transcribing the parts of the hearing that dealt with the Enhanced Accession Methodology, as the hearing also covered other European affairs. The transcript was analysed and incorporated in the results and analysis of this thesis.

Table 3 shows an overview of the type of sources that were used; the number of these sources and some examples of them; as well as the way these sources have been used. It should be noted

that this table only includes the sources that were used in for the empirical results and analysis chapter (chapter 5). Other sources such as academic literature can be found in the list of references.

Types of source	Quantity and examples	Usage
Semi-structured interviews	6	Identification of the usage of frames by the Netherlands and the relevance of framing devices during internal and external coordination.
Documents	22: Enhanced Methodology, cabinet appreciation, reports, policy briefs, etc.	Identification of interview targets, establishing context for the case, cross-referencing of interview data.
Websites	29: News articles, political party websites, government websites, etc.	Cross-referencing of interview data, identification of interview targets, and of frames used by the Netherlands.
Parliamentary hearing	1	Identification of the usage of frames (particularly through storytelling) by the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, cross-referencing of interview data.

**Table 3:** Overview of types of sources and usage thereof.

**4.4 Data analysis**

As explained by Yin (2014), the analysis of case study evidence is an often overlooked aspect of case studies with researchers going into the analytical process without an established strategy. Such a strategy will help a researcher know what to look for (p.134). Indeed, researchers are often faced with an overload of dense and rich data that is not always directly relevant to their research problem, making it vital to recognise what data needs to be used. Researchers need to winnow the data. Winnowing data encompasses a focus on some of the data and disregarding other parts, which is most relevant in the case of qualitative research, during which the researcher tries to fit the data into a small number of themes or categories (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 192).

For this case study, the data has been winnowed and coded through a theory-based coding method. The data in the interview transcripts were divided into concrete parts which are coded (i.e. labelled). These concrete parts were based on the theory as established in chapter 3, as well as on the type of sources. More specifically, this coding process was focused on four main categories with different codes each. First, the type of source was coded as either an *interview*, *document* (e.g. letter to parliament), *speech/statement* (e.g. Dutch ambassador being interviewed about the case for a podcast), *newspaper article*, or *other source* (e.g. policy brief, Eurobarometer, committee hearing, etc.) The second categorisation of the codes entailed the type of coordination to which the data applied, them being *internal-vertical*, *internal-horizontal*, *external-vertical* and *external horizontal*. Categorisation 3 dealt with the codes for the applicable framing device: *sense-making*, *selecting*, *naming*, *categorising*, and *storytelling*. The fourth and last categorisation of codes dealt with additional data, i.e. the data that provided relevant data in relation to the context of the case (coded *EAM context*), and *background information* (e.g. the political background of an interviewee, or the position towards the EAM of the country an interviewee represents). This coded data was then manually analysed through pattern matching<sup>9</sup> and compared to the propositions as presented in the end of the theoretical chapter. Table 4 below provides an overview of the used codes.

<b><u>Category 1:</u></b> <b>Type of source</b>	<b><u>Category 2:</u></b> <b>Type of coordination</b>	<b><u>Category 3:</u></b> <b>Applicable framing device</b>	<b><u>Category 4:</u></b> <b>Additional data</b>
Interview	Internal-horizontal	Sense-making	Background respondent
Document	Internal-vertical	Selecting	EAM context
Speech/statement	External-horizontal	Naming	
Newspaper article	External-vertical	Categorising	
Other source		Storytelling	

**Table 4:** Overview of data analysis codes and their categorisation.

Deciding as to which data belonged to which particular code was done in various ways, depending on the category. The coding of the type of source is rather self-explanatory in the sense that interview data was given the *interview* code, official documents from (for example) the Dutch Ministry of Foreign affairs were given the *document* code, et cetera.

<sup>9</sup> Elaborated on in section on *internal validity*.

Deciding what data fit with the type of coordination codes was done by looking at the relation between the actors. For instance, data concerning coordination between the Netherlands and other European Member States fit with the *external-horizontal* code, whereas data concerning coordination between the Dutch MFA and the Dutch Parliament fit with the *external-vertical* code.

Data concerning the third category (applicable framing device) was arguably the most challenging part of coding. Data that showed how the Netherlands or its representatives looked at EU enlargement in general and towards the enhanced methodology in particular were coded as *sense-making*. Data concerning the selected elements of the wider context that eventually led to the naming of those particular elements were coded as *selecting*. Data concerning the use of particular frames such as *rule of law* and *conditionality* were coded as *naming*. When sources labelled the Dutch stance in a way as opposed to something else (e.g. strict versus lenient), this data was given the code *categorisation*. The last code, *storytelling*, was the most challenging one due to it entailing all of the other framing devices as part of a coherent story. All the data that summarised the Dutch view towards the EAM and the negotiations surrounding it were given the *storytelling* code. It should be noted that due to this overlap, it was challenging to draw the lines between the framing devices in practice.

The fourth category (additional data) entailed codes for data that was of use to the research objective, yet did not fit with the other categories and codes. Data concerning the background and experience of interview respondents was helpful to understand the relevance of their knowledge, and was subsequently given the code *background respondent*. Information that provided more context about the Enhanced Accession Methodology which was either used for an overall better understanding of the case, as well as to improve the quality of the contextual chapter. Certain data were given multiple codes. For instance, when an interview respondent from a non-Dutch permanent representation to the EU explained how the Member States made sense of a situation together, it received the *interview*, *external-horizontal*, *sense-making* codes.

The analysis also follows relevant guidelines for a high-quality analysis as presented by Yin (2014). First and foremost, the analysis needs to demonstrate that all the evidence has been attended to. This means that the analytical strategy needs to cover the research question, and the analysis must show how it aimed to utilise as much evidence as was available. The interpretations should account for all the evidence, or the analytical part of the research becomes vulnerable to alternative interpretations based on evidence that was not incorporated in the

analysis. Secondly, the analysis is to address the most significant aspect of the case study, which means that there should be a focus on the core issue, and excessive detours should be avoided, otherwise the analysis risks being accused of diverting attention away from the central issue due to potentially contrary findings (p. 168).

## **4.5 Validity**

### **4.5.1 Measurement validity**

According to Adcock & Collier (2001), conducting research constantly involves making complex choices about the linkage of concepts to observations, which raises the question as to whether the observations meaningfully capture the ideas that are contained in the concepts. It is a question of measurement validity, which focuses on whether the operationalisation and the scoring of cases reflect the researched concept to an adequate extent. This is an important methodological topic that stands in its own right. Clarifying and refining concepts is a fundamental task within the field of political science. These authors argue that carefully developed concepts are an important prerequisite for meaningful discussions of the validity of the measured concepts. Moreover, this type of validity should be understood in relation to issues that appear when moving between observations and concepts (pp. 529-530).

Adcock & Collier (2001, p. 530) depict the relationship between observations and concepts in four different levels. The first level concerns the background concept, which deals with a broad assemblage of different understandings and meanings that are associated with a given concept. This is followed by the systematised concept, which is the specific formulation of these concepts that are chosen for the research. These concepts are then operationalised in order to reach the third level: indicators. Operationalising concerns the development of one or several indicators used for scoring or classifying cases. The indicators level is therefore also known as the ‘measures’ or ‘operationalisations’ level, and presents the operational definitions that are employed in classifying cases. Then, these indicators are applied to produce scores for the case that is being analysed, which leads to the fourth level ‘scores for cases’. These include the results of qualitative classification. In short, a measurement of the concept is valid when the scores for cases that are derived from an operationalisation can be meaningfully interpreted in lights of the systematised concept that the operationalisation seeks to operationalise (Adcock & Collier, 2001, pp. 530-531). The rest of this sub-chapter will apply these different levels and tasks to the theoretical concepts of this thesis.

#### Conceptualisation:

Throughout the processes of conducting preliminary research, drafting a research proposal, and establishing the theoretical framework of this thesis, there was a focus on the background concepts ‘coordination’ and ‘framing’. Both these theoretical concepts have been widely discussed in a vast array of social science literature and therefore have a plenitude of different definitions and understandings. In other words, these concepts are what Gallie (1956) refers to as ‘contested concepts’. The concepts ‘coordination’ and ‘framing’ have been discussed in-depth in the theory chapter of this thesis.

#### Operationalisation:

As described earlier, when the systematised concept has been formed (i.e. a specific formulation of a concept), the concept needs to be operationalised. This entails developing one or more indicators that is used for classifying or scoring cases (Adcock & Collier, 2001, pp. 530-531). Once again, the concepts of this thesis are ‘coordination’ and ‘framing’. Coordination as a concept is not subject to measurement more than to the extent of recognising the type of coordination. That is, whether the coordination is external, internal, vertical, or horizontal. Framing on the other hand is subject to measurement and therefore operationalisation. This thesis uses the policy-focused frame analysis as introduced by Rein & Schön (1996) and complemented by Van Hulst & Yanow (2016) to measure how and why particular frames are used.

To elaborate on that, *sense-making* as a framing device in relation to the EAM can be measured by finding out (through document analysis and interviews) how the Netherlands looks at EU enlargement in general. The reason for this is that by understanding the Dutch stance towards this more general topic, one can have a better understanding of the Dutch wish for an enhanced methodology, and could potentially observe an overlap of the usage of particular frames. *Selecting* as a framing device can be measured by asking interviewees (both Dutch and foreign ones) to name the issues or aspects that the Netherlands pinpointed during the formulation of the stance and during negotiations, considering that EU accession and the methodology thereof encompasses a large array of issues. *Naming* is measured by asking whether the interviewees remembered specific key words that were used to describe the Dutch position, whether different ones were used depending on the situation. These key words were then also followed in the document analysis. *Categorising* was measured by asking the respondents to categorise the Dutch frames (i.e. the earlier named aspects) as one thing opposed to another thing, and seeing if these categorisations were used during speeches, press releases, etc. *Storytelling* was

measured by asking the interviewees to summarise the negotiations surrounding the Enhanced Accession Methodology from the Dutch point of view (in case the interviewee was Dutch) or summarise how the Dutch role was perceived from another country's perspective (in case the interviewee was not Dutch). The purpose of this was to see how the earlier identified frames are brought together into a coherent story and to check to what extent this adds up with the stories told in speeches and letters.

#### Scoring cases:

After having established the indicators of the systematised concepts through operationalisation, one should apply those indicators to produce scores for the analysed case (Adcock & Collier, 2001, p. 531). The full scoring of the cases can be observed in the empirical chapter of this thesis, but this section can provide an exemplification to illustrate this scoring. The *sense-making* indicator showed that the Dutch population is quite sceptical or even against further enlargement. The *selecting* indicator found that Dutch policy officers tend to focus on elements related to anti-corruption, independent judiciaries, reversibility of the accession procedure, etc. The *naming* indicator identified frames such as 'rule of law', 'merits', 'conditionality', etc. The *categorising* indicator showed the use of the categorisations '*strict, fair, and engaged*', among others. The *storytelling* indicator that binds the other framing devices together shed light on the returning claim that methodology was *an important step in the right direction*, as well as it being *revised, not new*. These examples are for illustrating purposes only, and their full elaboration can be found chapter 5.

#### **4.5.2 Construct validity, internal and external validity, and reliability**

The concepts of validity as introduced by Campbell & Stanley (1966) and revised by Cook & Campbell (1979), have played an important role in how researchers assess the soundness of their research. The following sections will discuss the construct validity; internal validity; external validity; and reliability of this thesis.

#### Construct validity:

The first test of validity is *construct validity*, which deals with identifying correct operational measures for the concepts that are being studied, and avoid that subjective judgements that confirm a researcher's preconceived notions are used to collect data (Yin, 2014, p. 46). The construct validity of this thesis was therefore addressed before and throughout the data collection phase and was central to the definition of this paper's theoretical framework. The theory as presented in its dedicated chapter presented clear definitions, and laid the groundwork

for the identification of operational measures that match the concepts, which Yin (2014) encourages (pp. 46-47). The operationalisation of this thesis' concepts are described extensively in the sub-chapter on measurement validity. Due to the theoretical foundation of the concepts as established through carefully considered definitions, researchers should still obtain the same information about the concepts when using slightly different measures, which increases the construct validity of this thesis.

#### Internal validity:

In the context of this particular case study, which does not investigate causal relations, the test of validity deals with the issue of making inferences. This happens each time an event cannot be observed directly (Yin, 2014, p. 47). This is indeed the case for this study, as the negotiations surrounding the Enhanced Accession Methodology, and the use of frames have not been observed directly. This is why inferences need to be made. Making use of appropriate tools, processes, and data increases the internal validity, as it helps indicate the appropriateness of the inferences made (ibid). A way to improve the internal validity of research is through pattern matching, which Yin (2014) describes as the most desirable techniques for case study analysis. Pattern matching compares an empirically based pattern with a pattern that was made before the data-collection process (p. 143). If the predicted and empirical patterns seem to be similar, then this strengthens the internal validity (Yin, 2014, p. 143). In order to actually do so (i.e. to strengthen the internal validity), propositions were stated in the end of the chapter on theory. These propositions serve as predictions of the inferences made in the empirical chapter. Both in the theoretical framework, as well as in the empirical chapter, these propositions are structured around the framing devices. Each sub-chapter of the data analysis ends with a section in which these propositions are revisited. This is how the internal validity is addressed in this master thesis.

#### External validity:

The third test of validity is *external validity*, which looks at whether the findings of a study are generalisable beyond the immediate study, no matter the research methods employed (Yin, 2014, p. 48). More specifically, Calder et al. (1982) stated that it examines whether or not the findings should be generalised to and across different settings, measures, persons and times (p. 240). However, Mahoney & Goertz (2006) stated that qualitative research has a relatively narrow scope when it comes generalising, and that results should therefore be possible to generalise to a limited extent (p. 237). To make research more generalisable starts at the

research design phase – more specifically, when forming the research question, Yin (2014) argued that by implementing ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions, a researcher increases the external validity of their research, as these types of questions produce data that describe and explain a phenomenon, which are more generalisable than questions of which the answers are more of a presentation of facts connected to a particular situation (p. 48). This is indeed the case for this thesis’ research question. This only scratches the surface, however. An even more effective tool to test the external validity of research is through analytical generalisation. The ground work for an analytical generalisation is the theory or theoretical propositions that went into the initial design of the case study, enhanced empirically by the findings of the case study. This analytical generalisation can be based on corroborating, altering, rejecting or advancing the theoretical concepts that arose during the case study design. One should think of their case study as a chance to shed empirical light on particular theoretical concepts (Yin, 2014, pp. 40-41).

This thesis studies the link between coordination and framing, which indicates a degree of analytical generalisability. The use of different frames depending on the coordination setting may arise in other settings as well. The coordination settings in this thesis are identified based on the structures surrounding European foreign policy coordination. This means that if European Member States enjoy similar coordination structures as the Dutch one, this study could be analytically generalised to those states as well. Additionally, the link between the use of frames and coordination could be used for this type of generalisation in other cases within the foreign policy field of the European Union (e.g. neighbourhood policy, migration policy, etc.)

### Reliability:

The aim of reliability is to minimise bias and error, which requires the researcher to demonstrate that the operations of a study can be repeated with the same results. One way of achieving this is to document the procedures followed throughout the study (Yin, 2014, pp. 46-49). Similarly, King et al. (1994) stated that “it indicates the consistency of the data over time and those similar results are produced when similar procedures are applied” (p. 25). The research in this thesis has been conducted and described in a fashion that would allow another researcher to carry out the same steps and procedures, and arrive at the same results. The reasoning behind the selection of samples and the use of their knowledge has been described, so should other researchers approach them with similar intents, then they should indeed be able to draw similar inferences. Findings of the interviews have been transparently cross-referenced through document analysis,

all of which are publicly available. This in turn should combat bias and error, and strengthen the reliability of this research. Moreover, the reliability is increased through a methodological triangulation of data by relying on interview data with those who were involved or had knowledge on Dutch framing during internal and external coordination; documents (e.g. letter to Parliament, and the communication of the EC concerning the enhanced methodology); speeches by those who represent the Netherlands and use particular frames; as well as newspaper articles. This is elaborated on in the sub-chapter on the use of sources. This tactic of triangulation is used to combat a threat to the reliability caused by the low quantity of conducted interviews, which do constitute the primary source of data of this thesis. By for example reading and listening to speeches of ambassadors and representatives, one can check the consistency of the use of particular frames as claimed by interviewees.

It is the responsibility of the permanent representation to bring actors together and build coalitions to strengthen the stance and help each other out. The Ministry can give the order to arrange this, but the permanent representation often does this through its own initiative already. They are free to start this process, as long as they follow guidelines of the ministry.

## **5. Empirical results and analysis**

The purpose of this chapter is to present and analyse the empirical data by comparing it to the theory as presented in the theoretical framework of chapter 3. It starts with a discussion of the applicable types of coordination, after which the different framing devices and their role during internal and external coordination in light of the case study will be addressed. At the end of each sub-chapter, the theoretical propositions will be revisited and assessed by referring to the analysis presented in this chapter, which in turn will help answer the central research question in the conclusion.

### **5.1 Applicable types of coordination**

The theoretical framework established four different dimensions of coordination: internal, external, horizontal, and vertical coordination. These dimensions can be combined in the sense that a coordinative action can fall under the scope of internal vertical coordination, external horizontal coordination, etc. The focus of this thesis lies on the differences between internal and external coordination, so the vertical and horizontal dimensions are not used analytically to answer the central research question, but instead to provide a better understanding of the applicable directions of coordination in light of the case study. It will help understand the power dynamics between the critical actors of the case, and could therefore be a good stepping stone for additional research. The purpose of this sub-chapter is to illustrate the presence of the different coordination types in the setting of this case study by looking at the data based on the discussion on the different dimensions of coordination in the theoretical framework of chapter 3.

#### **5.1.1 Internal vertical coordination**

Internal coordination was described as coordination within the same organisation, which in this case is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands. Vertical coordination is hierarchy-based coordination, meaning that there is authority and an allocation of responsibilities and tasks. Combine the two, and you get a type of coordination where tasks and responsibilities are allocated from one unit to another within the same organisation (Bouckaert et al., 2010; Christensen & Lægreid, 2008). In the context of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it is given that there is a hierarchy with the Minister of Foreign Affairs leading the Ministry and its departments or foreign posts. In light of framing during coordination surrounding the Enhanced Accession Methodology, the external policy office of the European Integration Department was in charge of the creation of the Dutch stance as presented in the cabinet appreciation letter to Parliament [Interview CCNEP, interview MEAC]. However, the Minister of Foreign Affairs

had to approve of this stance and had the power to reject it, should that have been necessary [interview CCNEP]. Even though this was not the case, it does indicate the existence of internal vertical coordination throughout this process. It was also stated that policy officers at the permanent representation of the Netherlands to the European Union were given the order to execute the policies created in The Hague, and were also provided instructions for their meetings by the MFA. Even though it was stated that the Dutch diplomats at the permanent representation are free to take their own initiatives, they would always have to follow the guidelines that were set by the Ministry [interview CCNEP].

The discussion above illustrates a clear hierarchical coordination structure within the same organisation. For that reason, it can be inferred that internal vertical coordination is applicable to the case study of this paper due to the Minister of Foreign Affairs having a final say in the creation of a stance, and therefore the use of frames; and due to the European Integration Department of the Ministry being able to steer the Dutch diplomats in Brussels who then have to make use of the frames through the guidelines set by The Hague.

### **5.1.2 Internal horizontal coordination**

Internal horizontal coordination is similar to internal vertical coordination in the sense that the coordination takes place within the same organisation. However, the horizontal dimension suggests that the coordination takes place between equal partners on the basis of mutual trust and interdependence. Combining these two dimensions means that this coordination between equal partners takes place within the same organisation, which could for example suggest the coordination between different departments that depend on each other's knowledge (Jamil, 2014; Verhoest et al., 2007). When applying this to the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it could also indicate the cooperation between departments of the Ministry, and between the MFA and other ministries that could provide information or input. In the context of this case study, the data showed that internal horizontal coordination primarily took place between the external policy office of the European Integration Department and the Ministries of Justice; Finance; and Education, Culture and Science. However, the role of these other ministries turned out to be minimal [Interview CCNEP]. They were informed and given the opportunity to provide input. As the interviewed cluster coordinator stated, they did not provide this information due to the technical and non-political nature of the methodology [ibid]. This proved to be accurate when all three ministries were reached out to for potential interviews, as they stated to not have sufficient knowledge on the topic.

In other words, even though internal horizontal coordination is seemingly quite common for issues related to EU enlargement, it was not as relevant in case of the Enhanced Accession Methodology. It did take place, but to a minimal extent.

### **5.1.3 External vertical coordination**

External coordination was described as coordination between units between different government bodies or organisations. Combining this with the vertical dimension will result in, for example, an external organisation having authority over its member organisations (Christensen & Lægreid, 2008). Considering the fact that in light of EU foreign policy (and in particular enlargement policy) the EU Member States have a strong say and decide on these matters with unanimity, there is no coordinative power of the European Commission over the Netherlands in this matter. However, there is external vertical coordination within the Netherlands itself through the Parliament of the Netherlands. Before a minister or their representatives can wield a stance in Brussels, the Dutch Parliament needs to have been informed and been given the opportunity to ask questions or demand changes [Interview MEAC, Interview CCNEP]. This shows a hierarchical relation between the Ministry and Parliament. Without the approval of the representatives of the Dutch people, the drafted stance cannot be used. Moreover, this stance can be altered at the request of these parliamentarians. In some cases, when the issue is considered of significant political importance to the Netherlands, Parliament will request the government not to agree to a proposal or enter official negotiations and to remain closely involved and informed. This is called *het parlementair behandelvoorbehoud* (Vaste commissie voor Europese Zaken, 2022), which translates to the parliamentary scrutiny reservation. This needs to be requested within eight weeks after the EC's proposal submission, after which the government must discuss the proposal with Parliament within four weeks. This means that when Parliament makes use of this reservation, the government will be required to provide additional and extensive information about the progress of the subject. Moreover, the government or its representatives cannot take any decisions in Brussels until a debate on the topic has been held between the Parliament and government (ibid).

When applying this form of coordination to the case study, it is indeed true that the European Affairs Committee of the Dutch Parliament was informed about the stance and given the opportunity to ask questions, which they did (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2020). They have not used their powers to demand changes or requested a parliamentary scrutiny reservation, meaning they did not ask to be extra involved (ibid). Nevertheless, this does not

change the fact that there is a coordinative hierarchy between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Dutch Parliament.

Despite the Dutch Parliament not having used its powers to demand changes in the Dutch stance, and therefore use of frames, the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs still had to present the stance and answer questions in relation to them. With that in mind, external vertical coordination is indeed applicable to the case of the Enhanced Accession Methodology.

#### **5.1.4 External horizontal coordination**

The last dimension of coordination that is up for discussion is external horizontal coordination. It deals with coordination with organisations or units outside of the focused on organisation (Christensen & Lægveid, 2008). In other words, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs frequently needs to coordinate with other Member States in the European arena, and has little to no power over these other states. The policy officers at the permanent representation to the European Union play an important role here. It is the responsibility of the permanent representation to bring actors together and build coalitions to strengthen the stance and help each other out. The Ministry can give the order to arrange this, but the permanent representation often does this through its own initiative already. They are free to start this process, as long as they follow guidelines of the ministry [Interview CCNEP]. This illustrates the horizontal dimension to this coordination, since the MS are at an equal level. This is indeed also the case when looking at the negotiations surrounding the Enhanced Accession Methodology. Member States frequently met up through the COELA and COWEB working groups, meaning that the diplomats from the Permanent Representation to the European Union are key actors in this type of coordination and were the ones that primarily use the frames. The Minister of Foreign Affairs was also an actor here, but it did not seem to have played a large role during the negotiations. Different Member States built on each other's knowledge, and used this to create their own stance [Interview CCNEP].

External horizontal coordination is for the reasons stated above applicable to the case of the Enhanced Accession Methodology of the European Union. All Member States had to agree to the new methodology, meaning they had an equal say.

## **5.2 Sense-making as a framing device**

As explained in the theoretical framework of this master thesis, a device that comes into play in the early stages of framing is called 'sense-making'. As the term suggests, it entails actors trying to make sense of what sort of situation they are facing. They need to make sense of a situation that at first might not make sense (Schön, 1983, p. 40), which they do by making use

of prior knowledge and values, which then guide action (Van Hulst & Yanow, 2016, pp. 97-98). Interestingly, the discussed literature argued that this framing device is not always a consciously planned and strategized activity. These actors therefore make sense of the situation at hand while they are acting (ibid, p.98), meaning that it supposedly takes place while the other framing devices are used as well. At the same time, the literature also argued that sense-making enables actors to understand the situation as being of a particular kind, which allows them to start imagining what could or should happen subsequently (Rein & Schon, 1977, p. 240). This is interesting, because this means that sense-making plays a key role *before* framing takes place; one first needs to understand the wider context of a situation before they can start selecting, naming, categorising, and storytelling elements of that situation in order to take subsequent action. It also means that after this has taken place, it keeps reoccurring when new information that provides a better understanding or perhaps another perspective on an issue is added to the already existing pool of information.

The wider context of the case study of the Enhanced Accession Methodology is EU enlargement. The revised methodology is simply the enhanced set of rules and procedures that guide the accession process. In order to start framing a stance towards said revision, actors first need to know how their countries look at the enlargement of the European Union in general. Is this desirable? Is this risky? What is it we value, and what worries us? The combination of answers to such questions will serve as a stepping stone to creating an official stance towards the methodology, since actors will now have a better understanding of the situation at hand, and will therefore be able to start selecting elements that are of importance to them or the states they represent.

The approach towards finding out how Dutch actors made sense of the situation surrounding the EAM was focused on two main issues. First, for research purposes it was essential to get an understanding of the Dutch view on EU enlargement in general to gain a better overview of the use of frames at a later stage. Second, it was deemed necessary to find out *how* the relevant actors made sense of this situation. That is, what kind of information did the actors use to gain a better understanding of EU enlargement and the Enhanced Accession Methodology as a result of that? Was it primarily information from within the ministry, suggesting that sense-making only takes place during internal coordination; or do they also use information from outside the MFA, illustrating the need for external coordination in the case of the sense-making framing device. It should be noted that external information does not automatically require external coordination, or that internal information automatically requires internal coordination.

However, if the knowledge of other ministries is required to make sense of a situation, then internal coordination is required to obtain this information. Similarly, when the Netherlands makes sense of a situation by partly relying on information from external actors, then the Dutch MFA can use externally coordinate its diplomats at the permanent representation to acquire this information from (for example) the European Commission or other Member States. The theoretical framework proposed two propositions in connection to sense-making. The first one proposed that sense-making happens primarily before the coordination process. The second one proposed that sense-making is achieved by making use of both internal and external information sources. These propositions will be revisited at the end of the discussion on this particular framing device.

### **5.2.1 Making sense of EU enlargement**

The interviewed official from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs was quite forward when she stated that the Netherlands is not against EU enlargement in general, despite many claiming that it was. She also stated that EU enlargement is not considered as a goal on its own by the Netherlands, and that a larger EU is not desirable if the expansion includes new MS that do not endorse EU values and principles. If this is the case, why do “many claim that it is [against EU enlargement in general]”? Though not specifically stated anywhere, this likely has to do with the Netherlands blocking the opening of EU accession negotiations with Albania in June 2018 (Gotev, 2018), and the Netherlands blocking accession talks with Albania and North Macedonia once again a year later (Tidey et al., 2019). The reasons for blocking these talks are mentioned in chapter 2.4, but regardless of the reasons as to why the Netherlands felt the need to block the accession process, it is not surprising that many claim it is against enlargement. It is unclear who constitute the ‘many’, but it is naturally not perceived well in the candidate states that aspire EU membership and to move forward in the accession process. At the same time, the diplomat from the Permanent Representation of Portugal to the EU provided a similar description of the Dutch attitude towards enlargement, stating that he would describe NL as a country that is not sceptical towards enlargement itself:

*“To be honest, I would not describe this position of the Netherlands as being sceptical towards enlargement. I would describe it as having a very strict position on enlargement. I think the word ‘sceptical’ could come at the second stage when they are evaluating the progress of the conditionality. If the countries do not deliver, they become sceptical.”*  
[Interview PRD-I].

The other interviewed diplomat was arguably more negative in his description when saying that the Netherlands is only willing to accept additional members if they closely resemble their own country in terms of structure and principles [PRD-II]. Despite the more negative description, it does indicate that the Netherlands is willing to enlarge, but under specific circumstances. The Dutch ambassador to Serbia also stated in a podcast interview that it is the Dutch government's belief that it is important to explain to the Dutch population why the eventual accession of the candidate states in the Western Balkans is a good cause. According to him, the Netherlands is convinced that there is indeed a place in the EU due to their geographical location and the strategic importance of the WB region (Beschoor Plug, 2020). This, in contrast, shows a more positive attitude and approach. One should nevertheless keep in mind that this was a Dutch ambassador in Serbia being interviewed for a publicly available podcast, meaning that his statements were most likely more diplomatic and positive, rather than objective and pragmatic.

One of the reasons as to why the Netherlands has a more critical approach might have to do with the fact that the Netherlands was one of the founding Member States of the ECSC, which subsequently became today's European Union. In other words, it is not one of the Member States that joined due to an enlargement of the Union. According to the Portuguese diplomat, this is exactly the reason why Portugal (which joined in 1986) and most other Member States are much less critical towards EU enlargement than the Netherlands and France. This seems to suggest that it would almost be considered hypocritical for any non-founding state to openly oppose enlargement, which in turn means that the founding states can afford to be more critical. Despite this possibly playing a role, it does not explain why Denmark (which joined in 1973) is also openly critical.

Another reason as to why the Netherlands is so critical and strict was brought up by the researcher from the University of Amsterdam. He stated that it could be the problematic situations that the earlier enlargement of 2004 with Poland and Hungary (among others) have caused. These two states have witnessed considerable backsliding, and have impeded European decision-making as a result of it. It could indeed be argued that the Netherlands wants to prevent this from happening with future Member States, and therefore focuses as much on the rule of law as it does. More on this will be discussed later on.

It is interesting to point out that the cluster coordinator neighbourhood and enlargement policy of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs claimed that it is a shared sentiment among all Dutch political parties and the population they represent that it is important to be critical of admitting

new Member States to the European Union. Starting with the Dutch population, it seems that there is indeed an overall scepticism towards further enlargement. Take Eurobarometer issues 89-95 (Spring 2018 – Spring 2021) for instance. Table 5 shows an overview of the results of Dutch people being asked whether they were in favour or against EU enlargement, and those results do indicate that the Dutch population is not strongly in favour of having more countries join the Union. Between 56-67% of the respondents stated to be against it, while 30-36% claimed to be in favour of further enlargement. This is striking, yet difficult to draw concise conclusions from. The reason for that is the fact that the results of the Eurobarometer related to this question lack nuance and clarification. The respondents were simply given the choice to be in favour, against, or unsure. This means that it is unclear as to *why* the respondents were against further enlargement, which could be for a variety of different reasons. Some might be against EU enlargement at that very moment, but open to it after reforms within the candidate states; others might be against the accession of specific states like Turkey, yet open to the accession of the WB6. The Dutch ambassador to Serbia was asked how he explains the Dutch population being so critical towards EU enlargement according to the Eurobarometer reports, to which he argued that the Dutch population has concerns about enlargement due to them being afraid that the general level of welfare will be affected by the accession of new states in financial, economic, and social ways.

<b>Eurobarometer issue</b>	<b>Period</b>	<b>Percentage of Dutch people <u>against</u> further EU enlargement</b>	<b>Percentage of Dutch people <u>in favour of</u> further EU enlargement</b>	<b>Source</b>
95	Spring 2021	67%	30%	(European Commission, 2021b)
94	Winter of 2020/2021	63%	31%	(European Commission, 2021a)
93	Summer 2020	64%	32%	(European Commission, 2020b)
92	Autumn 2019	60%	30%	(European Commission, 2019b)
91	Spring 2019	60%	31%	(European Commission, 2019a)

90	Autumn 2018	56%	36%	(European Commission, 2018b)
89	Spring 2018	59%	34%	(European Commission, 2018a)

**Table 5:** overview of Eurobarometer results on Dutch people in favour of EU enlargement, ranging from 2018-2021.

The report of *het Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau (SCP)*, of which the results are presented in table 6 below, also lacked nuance and failed to specify why the respondents were for or against further enlargement, but it did provide slightly more context than the Eurobarometer results by allowing respondents to state whether they wished the EU had remained smaller, the number of states is fine as it is, or whether it should expand. Another interesting difference is the fact that respondents were specifically given the option to state that they wish for further enlargement, but *only* if they meet the accession criteria. Even though the questions are not posed the exact same way as in the Eurobarometer, one can infer that the respondents that said that the EU should have been smaller, and the respondents that claimed that the current number of MS is fine as it is belong to the ‘against further enlargement’ group. If one were to compare the combined percentages of these two groups to the group that is in favour of further enlargement, then you get similar numbers as presented in the Eurobarometer (i.e. approximately 60% against, 20% in favour). It does, however, need to be pointed out that the percentage of respondents in favour of further enlargement is higher in the Eurobarometer (floating around 30%). It could, however, indeed be said that the majority of the Dutch population is critical towards further enlargement.

	2009	2011	2015	2018
It would have been better if the EU had remained smaller.	32%	44%	48%	42%
The current number of Member States is fine as it is.	15%	15%	13%	18%
The EU should further expand with candidate Member States (if they meet the accession criteria)	27%	22%	18%	19%
I do not know.	26%	20%	21%	21%

**Table 6:** Overview of SCP results of perceptions on enlargement of the EU (2019, p. 52).

So how does this reflect in parliament? Interestingly, the vast majority of the political parties in the Dutch Parliament seem to be supportive of EU enlargement in general (VVD, D66, CDA, SP, GL, SGP, Volt, DENK), though some parties are still quite reserved and do not foresee

further enlargement in the near future. The combined seats of these parties account for 98 out of 150 seats in Parliament. At the same time, all of these parties underline the importance of being strict with accession. The GreenLeft party and the Christian Democratic Appeal stated the same as the interviewed cluster coordinator did by saying that EU enlargement is not a goal on its own. Other parties, like VVD, D66, and SP pleaded for a stricter focus on rule of law and democratic values before countries should be allowed to join. At the same time, several parties (PVV, PvdD, FvD, and JA21) are openly against EU-enlargement in general. This is relevant to point out since their combined seats of Parliament account for over 20% of Parliament and therefore represent one in five voting Dutchmen.

For that reason it can be inferred that the cluster coordinator of the Dutch MFA was mostly correct in stating that the Dutch population and all political parties share the sentiment that it is important to be critical of admitting new Member States of the EU. *Mostly* correct in the sense that indeed the results showed that the none of the political parties argue for being more lenient towards the accession of the candidate states, or against being critical and strict. However, a considerable chunk of the Dutch population is seemingly in favour of further enlargement, ranging somewhere around a third of the population. Indeed, the majority is critical towards it, but it should be kept in mind that this stance does not reflect the entire population as indicated. Considering the discussion above, it is safe to conclude that the Netherlands is not an opponent of EU enlargement in general, but considers the accession of new states a risk, which is why they look at it from a critical perspective.

### **5.2.2 Sense-making and coordination**

It was just established how the Netherlands looks at EU enlargement in general, but then a more practical question remains. When facing a new issue within this wider context (i.e. the enhanced methodology in the context of EU enlargement), what information does the Netherlands base itself on so it can start selecting elements to name, categorise and combine into a story? What are the sources? Are they internal sources of information, or external ones? This section will discuss the findings related to these questions.

The cluster coordinator at the Dutch MFA explained that before the European Commission published the announcement, Dutch policy officers already made an analysis of what could be presented which served as a sort of preparatory indicator that could be used to create a draft. She also stated that this analysis was made through conversation with Commission officials and the European External Action Service, as well as by already having read parts of the text that would be in the proposal [Interview CCNEP]. The EEAS and EC are not part of the Dutch

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and can therefore be considered external information sources. This already shows the occurrence of sense-making through external coordination, since the actions of units that are a part of the MFA are adjusted to gain this information from sources outside of the MFA. Even though the cluster coordinator did not mention making use of the Dutch rule of law networks that are a part of the Dutch embassies in the Western Balkans, it is plausible that the Netherlands did make use of this network to make sense of the situation surrounding the Enhanced Accession Methodology for multiple reasons. For starters, this network is used to develop a broader and more in-depth view on the rule of law situation in the Western Balkans (*Regional Rule of Law Network, 2022*). This is worth pointing out, since the rule of law is constantly used throughout Dutch framing, as will be discussed later on in this chapter. Considering the strong focus of the Netherlands on the rule of law, it seems likely that they made use of their networks to gain a better understanding of this key aspect of the revised methodology.

Another reason is the fact that both Portugal (indirectly) and the Member State represented by PRD-II (directly) have made use of the knowledge from the Dutch rule of law networks in light of the enhanced methodology [Interview PRD-I, Interview PRD-II]. If these other Member States made use of the Dutch network and its knowledge, then it is plausible that the Netherlands did so as well. This assumption is strengthened by the statement of the Dutch ambassador to Serbia, who stated that the Dutch Parliament holds its debates on the basis of evidence provided by the progress reports of the EC and on evidence provided by the Dutch embassies in the WB-region (Beschoor Plug, 2020). However, the ambassador said this only five days after the presentation of the proposal for a revised methodology, and four days before the Dutch MFA sent its letter to Parliament presenting its stance. This means that it is unclear to what extent the Dutch Parliament was already informed about the EAM, but it does indicate that it makes use of the rule of law network, which strengthens the argument that this played a role as an information source in light of the Enhanced Accession Methodology.

Members of the Dutch Parliament also make sense of the situation through their parties' Members of the European Parliament (MEP), which are naturally closer to European legislation. However, the member of the European Affairs Committee of the Dutch Parliament stated in the interview that both national and European parliamentarians face similar problems in terms of information in the case of the Netherlands. They are faced with *fait accompli*, meaning that issues are already decided on before they can provide any input. "*When it comes to providing input to a debate that takes place at the European level, then there are two*

*scenarios: you either provide input and are told that it is too early and therefore not relevant yet; and when you then wait a while and ask again, you are told it is too late to provide input.*”[Interview MEAC]. In the case of the Enhanced Accession Methodology, this translates into the Parliament not being asked for input or knowledge beforehand. They were provided the position paper of the Netherlands and got to ask questions and make changes afterwards, but the MFA did not make use of the parliamentarians when making sense of the situation. This means that parliamentarians had little impact on the sense-making due to their lack of information, and the difficulty of providing input in relation to the enhanced methodology [Interview MEAC].

### **5.2.3 Revisiting the theoretical propositions**

The notion that sense-making happens through the use of internal and external sources was affirmed by PRD-II, who claimed that sense-making happened both collectively among Member States through their knowledge, but also individually on the ministries themselves [Interview PRD-II]. These findings therefore confirm proposition 2, which proposes that sense-making is done by using both internal and external information sources. It can be concluded that sense-making in relation to the Enhanced Accession Methodology involved both internal and external coordination. The internal sources were the diplomats and policy officers that work for the ministry and possess knowledge on the topic; and the rule of law networks that are a part of the Dutch embassies in the WB. The external sources were the European Commission and the progress reports issued by them, and the European External Action Services.

It can be concluded that the first proposition is inaccurate. The first proposition argued that sense-making happens primarily before the coordination process, but the policy officers at the Dutch MFA made sense of the situation *through* coordinating their diplomats in Brussels. In other words, sense-making also happened during the coordination process.

### **5.3 Selecting, naming, and categorising as framing devices**

Now that it is clear how the Netherlands made sense of the wider context surrounding the Enhanced Accession Methodology, what type of information sources they used, as well as when the sense-making took place, it is possible to start looking at the next framing device: naming. As explained in the theoretical framework, early framing theory differentiated between three framing devices: sense-making, naming, storytelling (Rein & Schon, 1977). However, this theoretical framework takes into consideration two additional framing devices that are a part of *naming*, as introduced by Van Hulst & Yanow (2016): selecting and categorising (see sections 3.2.4 and 3.3.3). The important aspects to underline for the discussion are that after having

made sense of a situation, actors tend to be overwhelmed by all the different elements they face when dealing with an issue (ibid). This is no different in the case of the Enhanced Accession Methodology. EU enlargement comes with a plenitude of elements, so when facing the revision of an accession methodology, what elements did the Netherlands select to focus on? Another question is who is involved in selecting these elements? Does the selecting take place within the Ministry through internal coordination, or are actors like parliamentarians or other MS involved through external coordination? The theoretical framework presented two propositions in relation to selecting. The first one proposed that selecting primarily takes place during internal coordination. The second one proposed that the selected set of elements are fixed at the time of external coordination.

When the elements are selected, they need to be given a name to make the situation at hand easier to understand and the arguments easier to follow (Van Hulst & Yanow, 2016). Categorising is used to establish differences between issues at hand through labelling something as the opposite of something else. This can be used to highlight and silence certain aspects of a policy discourse (ibid). There are two main questions revolving around these framing devices. First of all, who are involved with naming and categorising? Second, are there differences in names and categories used during internal and external coordination? These questions led to the following propositions: first, naming and categorising primarily take places during internal coordination, and could be altered during external coordination. Second, the names and categorisations of frames are more positive and constructive during external coordination, and more objective and critical during internal coordination. These two propositions and the two that are mentioned in the previous paragraph will be revisited at the end of this sub-chapter.

### **5.3.1 Selecting**

Identifying which elements were selected was more complex than initially presumed. This is because selecting takes place *before* naming and categorising, meaning that the elements at that time do not have a name or label yet. Throughout interviews, the respondents would have already named those elements and refer to them. The same goes for the additional sources. So, how does one then identify which elements were selected before they were given a name? For this thesis, the selected elements were identified by analysing the data concerning the named and categorised frames (e.g. rule of law, conditionality, etc.) and by subsequently looking for the motives behind the use of those frames. It required posing the question as to what the concerns of the Dutch policy officers were, and how these concerns were translated into a particular frame.

Multiple elements have been identified. For starters, it seems that in light of the prospect of a revised accession methodology, the Netherlands considered it a great concern that new Member States have the potential to destabilise the European Union. As stated by the Clingendael research fellow, the Netherlands believed that strict conditions in connection to accession are essential since they help tackle the threat to the functioning of the European Union and the effectiveness of its enlargement policies:

*“Like France, the Netherlands clearly believes that the European Union should reform internally in order to make the EU function more effectively, and only after that has happened should the EU allow new states to join. Those states truly need to meet the criteria, otherwise they are considered a threat to the functioning of the EU by the Dutch government.”* [Interview AR-I].

These strict conditions have to do with reforms, and what these reforms boil down to is the rule of law, which is one of the named frames that will be discussed later. It is important to point out that the Netherlands seemed to believe that without a proper rule of law, other reforms in other sectors will be hard to achieve, which could lead to the feared instability [Interview CCNEP]. The cluster coordinator also argued that it is a Dutch belief that a strong rule of law will stimulate a long-term stability in a country, once again highlighting the wish for stability (ibid). Both the member of the European Affairs Committee, as well as the cluster coordinator mentioned the instability that an earlier round of enlargement with Poland and Hungary have caused for today’s European Union. The Netherlands wants to avoid importing more instability by not having states without a strong rule of law based fundament join the EU [Interview MEAC, Interview CCNEP]. This indeed seems to have played a significant role in the selection of elements, especially considering the following statement in the letter to Parliament with the cabinet appreciation of the proposed enhanced methodology: *“the methodology addresses the government’s concerns about negative developments in relation to democratic values in certain Western Balkan states in a better way”* (Blok, 2020a). These concerns were also visible when the cluster coordinator mentioned the necessity for having the option to discipline potential candidate states that face backsliding, without having to sanction them [Interview CCNEP]. The assumption is made that there could be negative developments surrounding the independent judiciary powers and the stability within those countries, which in turn could affect the stability of the European Union, and therefore the welfare of the Netherlands. This goes hand-in-hand with the Clingendael research fellow stating that *“having more stability in the EU by allowing states with an independent judicial power to join will also have a positive impact on the trade,*

*freedom and security interests of the Netherlands in the context of the European Union”* [Interview AR-I].

So, in the wider context of European enlargement and the prospect of an enhanced accession methodology, it seems that the Netherlands selected the threat to the stability and functioning of the European Union as the key element to focus on. This translates into the outspoken wish for reforms and conditions that improve the stability in those states. To some this might be self-evident, but it should be noted that the focus seems to be entirely on this issue. In contrast, other MS seemed to have a stronger focus on the potential threat of unwanted foreign influences in the candidate states; influences that grow the longer the accession process takes:

*“What is often contrasted here is specifically ‘rule of law’ on the one hand versus the geopolitical argument on the other hand. That is kind of a contradiction that says that they do need to comply with those rules, but they must be brought in now, otherwise Russia and China will interfere even more in that region.”* [Interview AR-I].

The Netherlands could have also selected this as the most pressing elements, but instead prioritised the stability of the European Union.

### **5.3.2 Selecting and coordination**

The question as to when this selecting takes place still remains. Does this include internal or external coordination, or both? Considering that the European Integration Department of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the one drafting the stance, it is evident that they play a key role in connection to selecting the important elements as identified above. Based on the interview with the member of the European Affairs Committee of the Dutch Parliament it can be inferred that said committee was not involved with selecting elements, since they could only provide their input on the already drafted stance [Interview MEAC]. External vertical coordination was therefore not applicable when selecting elements. In bigger issues surrounding EU enlargement, Member States tend to come together to do the selecting of relevant and important elements together. However, this was not the case for the Enhanced Accession Methodology, which was considered a smaller issue, as stated by PRD-II:

*“In general on the enlargement file, when it comes to the bigger issues, so not the day-to-day work of looking at the more technical chapters, but for example, once a year we have a council meetings on the enlargement process. That’s an intent, we do not always succeed. We have that normally once a year, and for those issues which are at our level, we do coordinate quite a lot, we establish common position and that takes place predominantly in Brussels. But depending on the intensity or the*

*political significance of the subject often also at the capital-level. So, those are the bigger issues. For the smaller ones like the enhanced methodology we do at times whenever we have a national position which we feel very strongly about, we commonly reach out to the others.”*  
[Interview PRD-II].

The enhancement of the accession methodology could indeed be considered a smaller issue, since it is not a *new* methodology; other Dutch ministries were hardly involved with the creation of a stance; and the fact that the Dutch Parliament did not demand to be closely involved. PRD-I also stated that France was the MS that was in the lead when it came to writing the proposal for the methodology, and therefore played an important role in selecting the relevant elements for the proposed methodology. It was also stated by the Portuguese delegate that the Netherlands provided input, but that France was still very much in the lead here. At the same time, he stated that the Netherlands was proactive and took its own initiatives [Interview PRD-I]. Considering the described proactive attitude of the Netherlands, the fact that the revised accession methodology was considered a rather small issue, and the lack of external involvement, it can be argued that the selecting stage took place during internal coordination within the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

### **5.3.3 Naming and categorising**

The selected elements from the wider context had to be named, and the data showed that there were a few frames that kept returning throughout interviews, documents, and other sources: ‘rule of law’, ‘conditionality’, ‘merits’.

#### Rule of law:

The rule of law frame is a result from the selected elements related to the concerns of democratic backsliding, a non-independent judicial power, and national instability as a result of it. It was considered the most important focus of the Netherlands in light of the Enhanced Accession Methodology by the cluster coordinator, Clingendael research fellow, University of Amsterdam researcher, parliamentarian, and PRD-II:

- *“One of the most important focuses of the Netherlands is rule of law and the fact that candidates need to adhere to the Copenhagen criteria, specifically that it needs to be a rule-of-law state with an independent judicial power”* [Interview AR-I].
- *“They do use ‘rule of law’ all the time. That is a very common frame for them to use. All the time.”* [Interview PDR-II].

- “Rule of law is the frame the Netherlands likes to use a lot. It is a central theme for the Netherlands throughout the entire process” [Interview AR-II].
- “The Netherlands focused primarily on the rule of law connected to the enhanced methodology. It is most essential that this is in order” [Interview MEAC].

The cluster coordinator argued that accession is not a point of discussion when the situation concerning the rule of law is insufficient. A functioning rule of law is a necessity for reforms in other sectors to happen, and it will stimulate a long-term stability in the candidate state [Interview CCNEP]. The member of the European Affairs Committee explained that in light of the Enhanced Accession Methodology and enlargement in general, the focus of the Netherlands tends to be on whether candidate states are developed well enough to fit in the EU. More specifically, it focuses on the rule of law in those countries and to what extent it is protected and stimulated [Interview MEAC]. PRD-II claimed that the rule of law frame kept coming back in negotiations with the Netherlands, also due to their rule of law network in the Western Balkans [Interview PRD-II]. Among the interviewees there were no clashing claims about the strongest focus of the Netherlands being the rule of law. As will be discussed later in this chapter, there were other frames that were constantly used, but none as often as the rule of law. This is also visible in documents and through other sources. For starters, the first contextual paragraph in the cabinet appreciation letter that was sent to Parliament addressed the government’s appreciation for the fact that the rule of law reforms are given an even more central place in the process of accession:

*“Besides that, the reforms connected to the rule of law get a more central position in the process. By explicitly stating the importance of the rule of law as a base for a stable democratic system, more emphasis is put on the importance of a solid democratic fundament in the candidate Member State. This way, the concerns of the Dutch government about backsliding in relation to democratic values in certain countries in the Western Balkan are better addressed”* (Blok, 2020a, p. 4).

In its concluding paragraph, the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs once again this: *“Cabinet supports the ambition of the Commission to make the accession process more credible, political, dynamic and predictable as mentioned in the notification, where there is a stronger focus on the rule of law and the application of conditionality”* (Blok, 2020a, p. 5). The constant use of this frame is striking, yet what is even more striking is the fact that when briefly referring to the enhanced methodology in an appreciation letter about the European commission’s

progress reports on Albania and North Macedonia, the Minister of Foreign Affairs first and foremost welcomes the stronger emphasis on reforms connected to the rule of law: “*Cabinet welcomes the stronger emphasis on the reforms related to the rule of law as explained in the proposal of the Commission*” (Blok, 2020b, pp. 1-2). The fact that in a short summarising section this frame is underlined shows the significance of the frame to the Netherlands.

However, the Enhanced Accession Methodology applies to all candidate and potential candidate states. Indeed, the current candidates all need to make reforms in connection to their rule of law, but what if a state (like Iceland, Switzerland, or Norway) without any issues related to the rule of law were to apply? Would the Netherlands then still focus as much on this? Both the cluster coordinator and the Clingendael research fellow argued that it would. It is an essential part of the methodology, and that would not change if a stable state were to apply. The difference then would be that said state progresses much faster in the accession process than those that struggle with their rule of law [Interview CCNEP, Interview AR-I]. The consistent use of this frame is also evident in the fact that in all documents and speeches that address the methodology, this frame is used. As shown in the theoretical framework, naming often comes with the use of metaphors. An example of such a metaphor in connection to the rule of law and the enhanced methodology was given by the Dutch ambassador to Serbia. He compared rule of law to furniture, and stated that when one shares their living room with other guests, then it is expected that the guests treat the furniture (i.e. rule of law) the same way as the host does. In other words, the candidate states need to treat their rule of law the same way as the European Member States do.

Considering that the rule of law frame is the most used Dutch frame in connection to the EAM, and that both external actors such as other Member States (PRD-I, PRD-II), and parliamentarians (MEAC), as well as internal actors (CCNEP) make use of this frame, it can be inferred that it is used throughout all forms of coordination: while creating the stance, while presenting it to Parliament, and during negotiations with other Member States.

### Conditionality

Another frequently returning frame is *conditionality*, which arguably derives from the selected elements concerning potential instability caused by the accession of new states that do not respect the independence of judicial powers. Whereas the *rule of law* frame is more aimed towards the establishment of this stability in the candidate countries, *conditionality* refers to the consequences for when a candidate state does not implement reforms or follow up on

agreements in relation to reforms. The cluster coordinator herself stressed that conditionality is an important aspect connected to the Enhanced Accession Methodology for the Netherlands. Conditionality also constitutes a significant part of the actual enhanced methodology, but something that the cluster coordinator underlined that also comes with conditionality is the option to stop financing a state through the IPA funds that allow candidate states to receive money in order to help the process of reforming [Interview CCNEP]. One way to interpret this is that the name conditionality is given to the possibility of punishing candidates when necessary. The University of Amsterdam researcher argued that this vocal wish for conditionality comes from the difficulties that the accession of Romania, Hungary and Poland have caused, which aligns with the cluster coordinator arguing that the Netherlands does not want to import more problems such as the ones that were caused by Poland and Hungary [Interview AR-II, Interview CCNEP]. The parliamentarian also stated that the conditionality as a part of the methodology was an essential aspect. This was especially so due to the reversibility of the negotiation process in case of backsliding [Interview MEAC]. This is reflected by the Netherlands, which according to the Portuguese diplomat is extremely strict in terms of conditionality. He even went as far as to suggest it as one of the main fundamental characteristics of the enlargement process for the Netherlands. Furthermore, the Dutch are vocal and transparent about their expectations in relation to the conditionality of the accession process [Interview PRD-I].

Interestingly, the Portuguese diplomat emphasised that the Netherlands is also vocal on its willingness to move faster if the candidates deliver faster on their reforms. This is referred to as ‘positive conditionality’: *“Of course, it is not just that (reversibility). It also has positive conditionality and the potential aspect that would allow candidate countries to move faster if they deliver faster on their reforms, and the Dutch were clear in their support for it”* [Interview PRD-I]. However, this positive approach to conditionality is not mentioned at all in any of the official documents or during the hearing of the European Affairs Committee. In the letter to Parliament, the paragraph on conditionality only addresses the possibility to reopen chapters and the possibility for Member States to propose sanctions (Blok, 2020a). In the work visit report of the European Affairs Committee’s rapporteur, there is also no mention of the positive conditionality, just the appreciation for the reversibility of the process (Mulder, 2020). On top of that, none of the observed speeches by Dutch officials concerning the methodology mention anything about conditionality at all. This could be due to the negative undertone of conditionality, which in essence is a tool that can be used to punish states when necessary. That

negative undertone might explain why they also include positive conditionality during negotiations with other Member States, and why they do not mention it during speeches or public conversations with officials from the candidate states. In other words, the Netherlands uses this positive frame during external horizontal coordination with other Member States, but not during external vertical coordination with Parliament, or internal coordination within the Ministry. However, it does use the conditionality frame with a focus on punishing states throughout all types of negotiations.

### Merits

The third named element that returns throughout different sources is *merits*. The cluster coordinator neighbourhood and enlargement policy of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs claimed that the Netherlands also focuses on these merits and aims to have the accession process steered by them [Interview CCNEP]. Merits are positive steps that ought to be rewarded, so in the case of the Enhanced Accession Methodology, it means that when candidate states deliver on reforms and promises, the EU moves forward in the negotiation and accession process. PRD-II described that the Dutch approach to merits could best be described as them not being willing to go any further in the enlargement process unless the reform process dictates it [Interview PRD-II]. In other words, no rewards for the candidate states unless there is a solid reason for it. In the cabinet appreciation, it is stated that the Dutch government strived for an enlargement process based on merits: “*As known, Cabinet strives towards an enlargement process based on merits in which progress depends on the implementation of the reforms*” (Blok, 2020a, p. 5).

It is also mentioned that there are various sanction options in relation to a lack of merits, once again stressing the possibility to discipline or punish a candidate state when necessary: “*This principle is explained in detail in the proposal, and the various sanction options are explicitly mentioned*” (Blok, 2020a, p. 5). Interestingly, the Dutch ambassador to Belgrade described the Dutch stance as merits-based, besides being strict and fair: “*Our approach can best be characterised as strict, but fair, but also as merits-based. So we believe that every country should be judged at its own merits*” (Beschoor Plug, 2020, 4:40). By stating that countries should be judged at its merits, the use of the frame merits was used in a much more positive fashion than in the letter to Parliament that stresses the options for sanctions when there is a lack of merits. Similarly to conditionality, the Netherlands uses this frame during external horizontal coordination in a more positive fashion than during internal coordination and external vertical coordination.

### Strict, fair, and engaged

The most used names that were given to the selected elements were *rule of law*, *conditionality*, and *merits*. However, how did the Netherlands categorise these names? There seem to be several answers to this question, but one categorisation turned up most frequently: strict, fair, and engaged. Note that there are several combinations or versions of these three terms. It is worth sharing some of the variations to these frames. For instance, former Dutch ambassador to Serbia, Gilles Beschoor Plug, explained in his podcast interview that the Dutch stance could be described as being strict, fair, and *critical*, but also *committed* (Beschoor Plug, 2020). The frame 'critical' was not used frequently during the interviews or in the documents and other sources that were analysed. The interviewed parliamentarian did state that the Netherlands was one of the most critical states when it came to the former methodology. The cluster coordinator said that the Netherlands is part of a more critical group within the EU in regards to the implementation of the former methodology. However, this is as far as it goes in terms of using the frame 'critical'. *Committed* only appeared during Beschoor Plug's interview, and is most likely just used as a synonym to *engaged*.

Moving on to the *strict, fair, and engaged* categorisation. As stated above, these categorised frames turned up most frequently. For instance, they were mentioned during a speech by the Dutch permanent representation to the EU, H.E. Robert de Groot, who described the Dutch stance that way (European Western Balkans, 2020), and the Dutch ambassador to Albania also claimed that the Netherlands has always been strict, fair, and engaged in connection to Albania's reform process, and that it will continue to be this way in light of the Enhanced Accession Methodology (Tirana Connectivity Forum, 2021). The cluster coordinator also stated that when it comes to describing the Dutch stance, its representatives are quite consistent in the use of 'strict, fair, and engaged'. Interestingly, the cluster coordinator also argued that these group names are often used within inner circles, suggesting that it was used throughout internal coordination [Interview CCNEP].

The frame *strict* (as opposed to *lenient*) has been used for both the old and the new accession methodology, according to the cluster coordinator. The Netherlands does not try to hide the fact that it is strict, as it helps to express the policies and positions it already had. Considering that the Dutch have also single-handedly blocked the opening of negotiations, this frame is widely perceived as an accurate one [Interview CCNEP, Interview AR-II, Interview PRD-I, Interview

PRD-II, Interview MEAC]. *“So, they are strict when it comes to the accession criteria. Well, that is not just a frame if you ask me, that is truly the case.”*[Interview AR-I].

However, the cluster coordinator did claim that this frame is not considered negative by all actors, since government officials and NGOs in the candidate states supposedly often consider the Dutch strict attitude useful due to its consistency and it helping to push the candidate states in the right direction towards accession [Interview CCNEP].

This does show that the awareness of the negative undertone that the frame ‘strict’ has, which is why the frame ‘fair’ was added to also underline that the Netherlands is not unreasonable, which would be the opposite categorisation of the ‘fair’ frame [Interview CCNEP]. The Clingendael research fellow confirmed this when he explained that the ‘fair’ frame refers to the Netherlands being willing to move forward in the process when the candidates implement reforms: *“It is ‘fair’, meaning that when a country meets the criteria, then the Netherlands will not continue to block the process or anything of the sort”* [Interview AR-I]. This would therefore be the categorisation of the elements named as positive conditionality and merits. The research fellow also explained that the usage of ‘fair’ in connection to ‘strict’ has changed over the years. Whereas it was first used as ‘strict, but fair’, this was changed to ‘strict and fair’ to underline that they are not necessarily opposites and that strict does not have to be a negative frame. After that, it was changed to ‘strict, fair, and engaged’ [Interview AR-I] Zweers & van Loon (2020) described in their policy brief that the adjustment of the Dutch frame in the enlargement process from ‘strict and fair’ to ‘strict, fair, and engaged’ signifies that the Dutch officials realise the importance of engagement for the effective propagation of their priorities, as well as for their credibility. They also described this frame as an “unofficial mantra in the enlargement process” (p. 6). At the same time, there seemed to be a disagreement among the interviewees about the validity of the usage of the ‘fair’ frame. Whereas the Portuguese diplomat and the cluster coordinator explicitly stated that it is appropriate to use that frame [Interview PRD-I, Interview CCNEP], the UvA researcher claimed it is not valid to use that frame, since he believes that the Netherlands builds on insufficient knowledge and has a lack of capacities to build a valid stance [Interview AR-II]. The aim of this thesis is not to assess the validity of the frames, but it is worth pointing out that any statement about the accuracy of such positive frames given by those who create them should be taken with a grain of salt.

The ‘engaged’ frame was supposedly added to underline that the Netherlands is not just outspokenly strict, but also invests time and money to help the candidate states move towards

EU membership. It is the opposite of the categorisation of ‘uninvolved’. It gives the impression that the Netherlands realised it needed to prove that it deserves to be this strict, which it could do by being involved with the process. The cluster coordinator stated that the Netherlands is engaged due to it having an embassy in every candidate except Montenegro. The engagement is also visible through the rule of law networks on those embassies that help the candidates progress in the accession process [Interview CCNEP]. The Clingendael research fellow also explained that a key issue of the enhanced methodology is the involvement of Member States, which goes hand-in-hand with the engaged frame. He argued that for this reason, as well as the networks and presence of embassies in the region, it is an accurate frame: “*The Netherlands is engaged because they have all those embassies and are active themselves in the region and have bilateral support programmes*” [Interview AR-I]. Just like with the ‘fair’ frame, the UvA researcher questioned the validity of that frame. Even though the Netherlands does indeed have those embassies in the region, hardly any of the diplomats speak the languages of the countries in which they work. This takes away some of the credibility of that engagement, according to him:

*“I do not agree with the claim that we as the Netherlands are engaged. I think it is not the case, but that it does sell well as a message, and yes, the Dutch diplomats are quite capable when it comes to promoting such messages. They are capable people, but they hardly ever speak the language of the countries in which they work. Can you then really claim to be involved?”* [AR-II].

The Portuguese diplomat did agree with the frame, as indeed Portugal only has one embassy in the region, showing it is much less engaged than the Netherlands. Portugal also relies on the information of the Netherlands to an extent, due to said engagement [Interview PDR-I].

Even though the usage of these frames is common in certain context, it is uncommon in others. For instance, the Dutch parliamentarian was not aware of the usage of these labels in connection to the Enhanced Accession Methodology [Interview MEAC]. PRD-II also was not too familiar with these frames:

*“I think ‘strict, fair, and engaged’ is more a political slogan. I do recognise it in their essence, because they are strict, they are fair, and I think engaged was added to sort of alleviate worries in the enlargement-friendly camp about the Dutch not wanting any further enlargement”* [Interview PRD-II].

The Portuguese diplomat had a similar claim:

*“I would not say that I remember them saying this loudly, but I think this is the main message they pass. In informal meetings, they would not say this, but this is a message we actually perceive as the position and I would not argue against it.”* [Interview PRD-I].

The Netherlands uses this frame due to the bilateral and European aid they offer to help improve the situation concerning the rule of law in the WB, and to eventually join the European Union. The Netherlands has knowledge and a budget to do so. However, the frame ‘engaged’ was also added to the ‘strict and fair’ frame to get rid of the negative undertone of this position. This negative undertone or reputation is something the Netherlands tries to actively avoid and get rid off [Interview CCNEP, Interview AR-I].

Another categorisation of the Dutch frames that was mentioned by both the cluster coordinator neighbourhood and enlargement policy, as well as the former Dutch ambassador to Serbia, is ‘merits-focused’ as opposed to ‘geopolitically-focused’. Whereas the merits-focused group, which consists of France, the Netherlands, Denmark, and often the other Nordic and Benelux states, have a stronger focus on the *acquis* of the EU, the geopolitically-focused group is more focused on preventing unwanted foreign influences in the candidate states. However, this categorisation is used much less often than the ‘strict, fair, and engaged’ one [Interview CCNEP] (Beschoor Plug, 2020).

#### **5.3.4 Naming, categorising, and coordination**

Now that it is clear how the selected elements have been named and categorised, it is relevant to find out who was involved with these framing devices and what kind of coordination was applicable. First and foremost, the European Integration department of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs played a key role, as it was the cluster coordinator who held the pen when creating a stance. Even though other ministries were not closely involved, they were consulted and given the opportunity to provide input. This indicates that internal horizontal coordination was applicable. Even though different ambassadors or permanent representatives openly used particular frames, this does not mean they were involved in the naming and categorising of the elements. According to the member of the European Affairs Committee of the Dutch Parliament, neither he nor his fellow committee members were involved in the naming and categorising of the issues at hand. Same as with selecting and sense-making, the Dutch Parliament played virtually no role in connection to these framing devices. They were given the opportunity to demand changes, but this was not deemed necessary [Interview MEAC]. External vertical coordination was therefore not applicable for naming and categorising. There

seemed to have been a degree of external horizontal coordination between the Netherlands and France. Both of them shared concerns and named these elements ‘conditionality’, ‘rule of law’, and ‘merits’, as is visible in the enhanced methodology itself, as well as the cabinet appreciation letter (Blok, 2020a; European Commission, 2020a). The Portuguese delegate also stated that the Netherlands and France worked closely together, even though the Dutch were proactive and took their own initiatives:

*“So, the Dutch are very clear. They were side by side with the French when it came to the revised methodology, and cooperated with them. At the same time I would say they took their own initiative and showed their engagement ”* [Interview PRD-I].

This seemed to only have been the case for naming, and not categorising. The frames ‘strict, fair, and engaged’ are only used by the Dutch, not their allies in this area. Combined with the fact that neither the parliamentarian, nor the diplomats were familiar with these frames in light of the enhanced methodology, and it becomes evident that categorising did not happen during external coordination [Interview MEAC, Interview PRD-I, Interview PRD-II]. Moreover, it was stated by the cluster coordinator that these terms were often used within inner circles, which also strengthens the argument that categorising primarily took place during internal coordination [Interview CCNEP].

### **5.3.5 Revisiting the theoretical propositions**

Proposition number three proposed that selecting happens primarily during internal coordination. Based on the data analysis, it was inferred that selecting did not happen during external coordination. This inference was made due to the Dutch Parliament only being able to provide their feedback afterwards, after the selecting of elements had already happened. The case of the revision of the accession methodology was considered too small of an issue with little political significance for EU Member States to select crucial elements together. This happened within the Member States themselves. The Netherlands was described as proactive in this context, leading to the conclusion that selecting did not just *primarily* take place during internal coordination, but *exclusively*.

The theoretical framework also proposed that the selected set of elements are fixed at the time of external coordination, meaning that it proposed that during external coordination, the Dutch representatives did not suddenly focus on other elements other than the ones that were established through internal coordination. As stated above, selecting the elements indeed took place during internal coordination. None of the interviews or other sources stated or showed

that the Netherlands focused on anything other than the threat to the stability and functioning of the European Union as a result of a precipitous enlargement of the EU. This means that the fourth proposition is also confirmed by the data.

The fifth proposition suggested that naming and categorising primarily take place during internal coordination, and could be altered during external coordination. The alteration during external coordination referred to the powers of Parliament as an external actor which allow for the demand for changes. Indeed, this analysis showed that naming and categorising happen during internal coordination. The named frames ‘rule of law’, ‘conditionality’ and ‘merits’ were all used in the letter to Parliament, which functioned as the stance of the Netherlands. Since this letter was written within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, this shows that naming happened during internal coordination. The categorisations ‘strict, fair, and engaged’ were also primarily used in inner circles and not during any form of external coordination. However, there seemed to have been a degree of naming during external coordination, as it was stated that the Netherlands and France worked closely together and named the elements similarly. This was supposedly to a small extent, as the Netherlands was claimed to be proactive in taking their own initiative. It can therefore be inferred that there was a limited degree of external coordination. Parliament could have altered the names given to the selected elements, but considering the fact that they were not aware of the used categorisations, they had no power over this. The proposition is therefore accurate in the sense that naming and categorisation primarily take place during internal coordination, but only naming could be altered during external coordination.

The sixth proposition proposed that the names and categorisations of frames are more positive and constructive during external coordination, and more objective and critical during internal coordination. The data showed that the rule of law frame was used during all forms of coordination, and in the same way. However, the conditionality frame differed depending on the form of coordination. Whereas during internal coordination as well as external vertical coordination (i.e. within the Netherlands) the conditionality frame was often used to emphasise that candidates could be disciplined or punished in case of backsliding or negative developments, it was used more positively in the sense that conditionality also entailed moving forward with the process when the candidates made good progress in terms of the implementation of reforms. Similarly, the *merits* frame was used in connection to sanction options in case of a lack of merits, whereas during external coordination it was used in a fashion that suggests that the Netherlands looks at candidates and their positive progress individually.

It was used in a more constructive sense. The ‘strict, fair, and engaged’ categorisation was only used during internal coordination, since external actors were not aware of these categorisations in the context of the EAM. This proposition was therefore true to the extent that the named elements ‘conditionality’ and ‘merits’ were used more positively and constructively during external coordination, and more critical and objective during internal coordination. One important exception was that the ‘rule of law’ frame was used the same way during internal and external coordination, and the categorisation was not used during external coordination.

## **5.4 Storytelling as a framing device**

The final framing device, *storytelling*, brings in all these selected, named, and categorised elements and binds them together into a pattern that is coherent and understandable. It creates a story; a narrative. It allows for an elaboration on the named frames and present a potential solution or plan of action (Van Hulst & Yanow, 2016). However, as inferred in the discussion on *naming*, certain frames are used differently depending on the form of coordination. This leads one to wonder whether this is also the case in the stories that are told. Are they more positive and constructive during external coordination than during internal coordination? Is there a focus on positive frames rather than negative frames? The theoretical framework predicted that storytelling starts during internal coordination between the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, other ministries, and other departments within the MFA, since this is when the elements are all bound together in a pattern. It also proposed that during internal coordination, the stories told are more critical and fact-based, whereas storytelling was more positive and constructive during external coordination.

### **5.4.1 Narratives**

The story as told by the Netherlands can best be observed in the cabinet appreciation of the Enhanced Accession Methodology, which was described in a letter to Parliament. This served as the stance of the Netherlands, so it played a key role in the identification of frames. The narrative as shared in this letter can be compared to other (often shorter) narratives that were provided by other sources. The letter starts with the statement that the Dutch government had strived for a change of the methodology based on phasing and reversibility with a greater focus on the rule of law (Blok, 2020a). Unlike the narrative shared by the cluster coordinator, the letter did not state how the Netherlands looked at the prospect of the WB countries joining the EU, which according to her had always been an important prospect to the Netherlands [Interview CCNEP]. Considering that the cluster coordinator was the one to write the stance, this difference is striking. The message that the Netherlands considers this prospect an

important one seems to be a more relevant statement throughout external horizontal coordination with other Member States or third parties. The Dutch Permanent Representative to the EU did state that the purpose of the revised methodology is to speed up the accession process, and that it is a sincere way of making the process faster (European Western Balkans, 2020). This would align to some extent with the positive approach as shared by the cluster coordinator. As stated before, the Portuguese diplomat also claimed that he would not describe the Netherlands as being against enlargement [Interview PRD-I], but this is still a rather neutral comment as opposed to one as positive as the cluster coordinator shared. This was not stressed by or to parliamentarians. However, considering that the cluster coordinator specifically stated that the Dutch narrative is told very similarly regardless of the actor, and the fact that the cluster coordinator was a key actor of internal coordination, it is safe to assume that this part of the narrative was only used during internal coordination and external horizontal coordination.

The letter continued its narrative by stating that the starting point for the Netherlands in connection to the EAM was that candidate states had to be completely prepared before they became members of the European Union (Blok, 2020a). This already hints at the concerns of the Netherlands connected to the accession of new Member States, as discussed in the discussion on the *selecting* framing device. These concerns are addressed later on, when it is written that the concerns of the Dutch government about backsliding in relation to democratic values in certain countries in the Western Balkan are better addressed by the methodology explicitly stating the importance of the rule of law as a base for a stable democratic system. It was also mentioned that the fight of corruption is mainstreamed, which was one of the concerns of the Netherlands in light of the previous methodology (Blok, 2020a). The cluster coordinator also stressed that the rule of law situation in the WB was worsening, illustrating the need for a revision of the methodology [Interview CCNEP]. None of the ambassadors or Dutch representatives who spoke about the EAM have stated anything about these concerns. At most, the former ambassador to Serbia stated that the accession process was more challenging than anticipated, but did not go into details about corruption or backsliding (Beschoor Plug, 2020). These concerns were only addressed within the Netherlands, both during internal coordination as explained by the cluster coordinator, as well as during external coordination towards the Dutch Parliament.

The rule of law frame was used throughout narratives as presented in the cabinet appreciation letter concerning the EAM, which mostly underlined the appreciation for the strong focus on the rule of law in the methodology. During the hearing of the European Affairs Committee in

regards to this letter, parliamentarians Sjoerdsma and Mulder stated to be appreciative concerning this stronger focus on said frame. This was also reaffirmed in the cabinet appreciation letter to Parliament concerning the EC country reports (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2020). Moreover, all external actors that were interviewed confirmed the constant Dutch focus on the rule of law [Interview PRD-I, Interview PRD-II, Interview MEAC]. Just like with the *naming* framing device, there does not seem to be a difference in the use of the rule of law frame depending on the dimension of coordination (i.e. it is not used in a more positive fashion during one form of coordination compared to the other). This leads to the inference that this frame was used the same way throughout all forms of coordination.

The cabinet appreciation letter to Parliament also dedicated part of its narrative to the conditionality and merits frames. It was stated that the Dutch government strived for an enlargement process based on merits where progress depends on the implementation of the reforms (Blok, 2020a). As stated in chapter 5.3.3, the Netherlands considered it an important improvement that sanctions can be suggested by Member States as well as the European Commission in case of backsliding or when reforms are not implemented as agreed on. Even though the paragraph is introduced with a rather positive and constructive statement, saying that the enlargement process is based on merits, it quickly moves on to options to discipline the candidate states in case there is a lack of these merits. There is no mention of the positive conditionality, a frame that was used during external coordination, and even though there is also no mention of *negative conditionality*, this was very much implied by stating that it is now possible to reverse the accession process and the options to suggest sanctions (Blok, 2020a). This was reaffirmed during the European Affairs Committee hearing in relation to the Enhanced Accession Methodology:

*“It [the EAM] includes the possibility to reopen chapters in case of backsliding. It also includes the option of taking measures such as reducing and phasing out aid if there is backsliding. That stricter approach is attractive in itself. So, that is why you see that we consider the revised methodology positive.”* -Stef Blok, Minister of Foreign Affairs (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2020).

This was also the case in the cabinet appreciation for the country reports published by the European Commission, in which it is stated that the clear language concerning conditionality matches the Dutch strict and fair approach connected to EU enlargement (Blok, 2020b). It should also be noted that conditionality is not mentioned by any of the ambassadors who spoke

to third parties about this issue in public. On the other hand, *merits*, an arguably more positive frame was a part of the narrative of the Dutch ambassador to Serbia, who stated that according to the Netherlands, each candidate state should be assessed based on their own merits (Beschoor Plug, 2020). In other words, the conditionality and merits frames are used similarly for naming and storytelling. They are used more positively during external horizontal coordination, and more critically and based focused on the option to discipline states during internal and external vertical coordination.

The ‘strict, fair, and engaged’ categorisation does not appear in the cabinet appreciation letter to Parliament at all. This likely explains why the interviewed parliamentarian was not aware of the use of these frames in light of the Enhanced Accession Methodology [Interview MEAC]. However, during the committee hearing, the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs did state that the Netherlands will keep wielding the ‘strict and fair’ principle in light of the revised methodology (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2020). In other words, when the Minister made use of the storytelling framing device during external vertical coordination with the Dutch Parliament, he did in fact use these frames, though with a stronger focus on the ‘strict’ due to the constant focus on reversibility and sanctioning. The ‘strict, fair, and engaged’ categorisation was occasionally used to describe the Dutch position, but more so during external coordination with third parties rather than with other Member States. It was mentioned by the Dutch Permanent Representative to the EU (European Western Balkans, 2020), the former Dutch ambassador to Serbia (though he referred to it as ‘strict, fair, and committed’ (Beschoor Plug, 2020), and the Dutch ambassador to Albania (Tirana Connectivity Forum, 2021). However, the emphasis seems to be on the more positive frames ‘fair’ and ‘engaged’, rather than ‘strict’ by focusing on the Dutch offering their expertise and funds to show their engagement. This indicates that there is a slightly different narrative in both settings. AR-I also shared that in their narratives, the Dutch expressed their strong wish to have more of a say, which went hand-in-hand with the realisation that a critical attitude can be justified by being closely engaged with the process [Interview AR-I]. This explains the emphasis of ‘fair’ and ‘engaged’ during external coordination. The emphasis during external coordination therefore seems to be on ‘fair’ and ‘engaged’, while during internal coordination and external vertical coordination, it seems to be on the ‘strict’ frame.

#### **5.4.2 Storytelling and coordination**

Like the other framing devices, the creation of the narrative happened within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs through internal horizontal coordination. The cluster coordinator

neighbourhood and enlargement policy at the external desk of the European Integration Department was in charge of drafting the narrative through conversations with diplomats and to a minimal extent other ministries. She stated that the stories told are mostly the same, no matter the actor sharing the story. This aligns with the Portuguese diplomat stating that the way the Dutch define their policies is transparent, and that the position of the Netherlands often does not come as a surprise during meetings in the working groups. He elaborated by saying that Dutch officials wield the exact same stance as the government claimed they would in their communications to the public and to Parliament [Interview CCNEP, Interview PRD-I]. This seems to suggest that the content of the stories told during internal coordination and external coordination are similar, which is true to the extent that the selected elements are the same (no representative or actor spoke about geopolitics and foreign influences, for example). However, the focus of these selected elements seems to differ slightly, as indicated above. In other words, even though the stories contain the same elements, some elements are framed more positively depending on the context and type of coordination.

That being said, PRD-II stated that storytelling mostly took place within the individual Member States themselves. He claimed that the MFA and national parliaments decided on the narrative, so there was no cooperation between Member States on binding the selected, named, and categorised elements together in a comprehensible story [Interview PRD-II]. In other words, even though the story is told during external coordination, it is not created during external coordination. This is confirmed by the member of the European Affairs Committee, who stated that the Dutch Parliament also did not play an active role with sharing the narrative, even though it could have influenced the final result if that were deemed necessary at the time [Interview MEAC]. The fact that the Dutch Parliament did not play an active role in storytelling is reflected on the websites of the Dutch political parties. Even though most of these parties have a position on further enlargement of the EU, none of them reported about the enhanced methodology and their perception of it. The influence of Parliament on the narrative surrounding the Dutch stance towards the Enhanced Accession Methodology was therefore minimal.

#### **5.4.3 Revisiting the theoretical propositions**

The first theoretical proposition related to storytelling proposed that the stories told through storytelling are created during internal coordination, whereas they can be amended through external coordination. The foreign diplomats indeed confirmed that the creation of the narratives happens within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. CCNEP also described that her department (and she specifically) was in charge of drafting the stance through internal

coordination. Even though parliamentarians have the possibility of amending the stance and therefore the story that is told, this was not the case for the Enhanced Accession Methodology. Proposition 7 was therefore correct in assuming that the stories were created during internal coordination, with the possibility of having been amended through external coordination, even though this was not the case.

The second proposition in relation to storytelling proposed that while storytelling is similar, it is more fact-based and critical during internal coordination, and more positive and constructive during external coordination. Indeed, the stories that are told are similar in the sense that they often cover the same framed issues (i.e. rule of law, conditionality, merits), and never unexpectedly involve new elements such as (for example) fishery policies in relation to EU enlargement and its new procedure. This was also confirmed by the Portuguese delegate who stated that the Dutch policies are transparent and hardly ever surprising during negotiations, since the stances focus on the same aspects everywhere. With that being said, the storytelling reflects the naming framing device in the sense that the conditionality frame and merits frame are used differently depending on the form of coordination. Whereas during internal coordination and external vertical coordination the focus lies more on the possibility to discipline states through conditionality when there is a lack of merits, the positive conditionality is more emphasised during external horizontal coordination with other Member States and other third parties. The 'strict, fair, and engaged' frame seems to focus more on the 'strict' frame during internal coordination and external vertical coordination, whereas it seems to focus more on 'fair and engaged' during external horizontal coordination. For that reason, the eighth proposition as proposed by the theoretical framework is considered correct in this case.

## **6. Conclusion**

### **6.1 Final conclusions**

The central research question of this master thesis poses the question of when, how, and why distinct frames are used by the Netherlands during internal and external coordination in relation to European foreign policy. It specifically looked at the Enhanced Accession Methodology as part of European foreign policy and aimed to answer these questions by identifying which frames were used, when they were used, and the reason why they were used. It followed the five framing devices as presented in the theoretical framework. This chapter will summarise the inferences that answer the central research question.

The analysis that built on both the theoretical framework and the empirical data established that there were several forms of coordination relevant to this case study. Due to the clear hierarchical structure within the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it can be inferred that internal vertical coordination is applicable. Internal horizontal coordination was present to a minimal extent due to the fact that the revision of the accession methodology was more of a technical rather than a political issue, meaning that other ministries were not too involved. Due to them being consulted, there is still a minimal degree of internal horizontal coordination, meaning it should not be discarded. External vertical coordination was present due to the Minister of Foreign Affairs having to present the Dutch stance to them and answer questions concerning this stance, which in turn could have led to the demand for changes, which the Dutch MFA would have had to adhere to. External horizontal coordination was applicable due to the need for unanimity among the Member States, meaning that negotiations and the use of frames were necessary during external horizontal coordination. In other words, both internal and external coordination played a significant role in relation to the Enhanced Accession Methodology.

As shown in the analysis, the Netherlands made use of all five framing devices as presented in the theoretical framework: sense-making, selecting, naming, categorising, and storytelling. The discussion on the sense-making framing device helped to understand how the Netherlands made sense of the wider context surrounding the Enhanced Accession Methodology: EU enlargement. The data showed that the Netherlands is not against further enlargement, but has a notoriously critical attitude towards it. The reason why is the strong concerns about the possible risks new members might pose to the functioning of the European Union. This critical perspective and approach is reflected in the positions and opinions of the Dutch politicians and population. It was confirmed that sense-making happened both collectively among Member States through their knowledge, but also individually on the ministries themselves, which

required both external and internal coordination respectively. In other words, sense-making took place by using both internal and external information sources. However, even though the theoretical framework proposed that sense-making happens primarily *before* the coordination process, the empirical results showed that the policy officers at the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs made sense of the situation *through* coordinating their diplomats in Brussels. It therefore also happens during the coordination process, and not just before.

In the wider context of an enlargement of the European Union and the prospect of a revised accession methodology, it became clear that the Netherlands selected the threat to the stability and functioning of the European Union as the most important element to focus on, as opposed to other states that seemed to have had a stronger focus on the unwanted foreign influences in the candidate states as a result of a slow accession process. The selecting framing device was exclusively used during internal coordination within the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Document analysis and conducted interviews showed that the selected elements focused exclusively on the threat to the stability and functioning of the European Union as a result of a precipitous enlargement of the EU. This confirms that the selected elements were fixed at the time of external coordination.

The concerns about possible threats to the stability and functioning of the EU as a result of further EU enlargement resulted in the elements being named ‘rule of law’, ‘conditionality’, and ‘merits’. These frames were most common, yet used differently depending on the form of coordination. The ‘rule of law’ frame was widely considered the most frequently used one, which is also reflected in the fact that it was used throughout all forms of coordination. This frame was used to stress the importance of only having stable democracies joining the European Union in order to preserve the stability and functioning of the EU, and was used this way during both internal and external coordination. The ‘conditionality’ frame was also used both during internal, as well as during external coordination. However, the use of the frame differs on the form of coordination. Whereas during internal coordination the frame was used exclusively in a negative sense that underlines the possibility to discipline candidate states through sanctions and reversing the accession process, it is often used in a more positive fashion during external coordination. It then often underlines the fact that conditionality also means that positive progress from the candidate states will be rewarded with the opening of new negotiation chapters. The more negative approach within the Netherlands is explained by the critical view towards further EU enlargement among the political parties and the Dutch population, as it assures these critics that those states will not be able to join unless everything is in order, and

that negative developments will have consequences. The positive approach during external horizontal coordination is explained by the wish for the Netherlands to not be perceived as unconstructive as a member state, which aligns with their ‘fair’ frame used to categorise themselves. The ‘merits’ frame was used in a similar fashion. During external horizontal coordination, ‘merits’ was used in a much more positive fashion than during external vertical coordination and internal coordination. Whereas during external horizontal coordination, the frame was used to underline that merits are rewarded and that each state is judged individually based on their merits, the mention of the frame ‘merits’ was accompanied by the assurance that a lack of merits would result in sanctions.

The Dutch categorised their stance towards the Enhanced Accession Methodology by referring to themselves as ‘strict, fair, and engaged’. *Strict* referred to the fact that the Netherlands is not afraid to single-handedly block the accession process in case it deems the progress of the candidate states insufficient. *Fair* referred to the Netherlands being willing to move forward when the candidates make positive progress by implementing necessary reforms connected to the rule of law. The *engaged* frame implied that the Netherlands involves itself by having knowledge on the topic and their bilateral aid to improve the rule of law in the Western Balkans through knowledge and funds. External actors were unaware of the ‘strict, fair, and engaged’ frame being used during negotiations, meaning that this framing device and these frames were only used during internal coordination and for storytelling purposes by Dutch representatives due to them being more relevant for political speeches and opinions, rather than negotiations that dealt with technicalities such as a methodology in this case.

The selected, named, and categorised frames were bound together into a narrative by the external policy office of the European Integration Department of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Other Member States did not play a role in telling the story. The Dutch Parliament had the opportunity to amend the narrative through external coordination, but did not make use of their power to do so. The narratives were therefore created through internal coordination. The stories told reflect the use of the named frames in the sense that the stories were more positive and constructive during external horizontal coordination with a focus on positive conditionality and merits, as well as being fair and engaged; and more critical during internal coordination and external vertical coordination with a focus on the enhanced methodology making it easier to reverse the process or to suggest sanctions in case of insufficient or negative progress.

## **6.2 Limitations, and recommendations for further research**

When interviewing politicians, one takes the risk of gathering politically biased data. Rathbun (2008) explained that if this kind of bias is expected, it is possible for the interviewer to pose preliminary questions that have little to do with the subject at hand in order to get an understanding of the political views and positions of the interviewee. This allows for the researcher to predict what kind of bias to expect (p.695). To prevent the data derived from the interview with the parliamentarian being too biased and therefore unreliable, he was first asked about his political party's stance towards EU enlargement in general, as well as the Enhanced EU Accession Methodology. This is not necessarily of relevance to answering the research question, but it allowed for a better understanding of the answers to the posed questions. This proved useful, as it turned out that the SGP had a rather pessimistic and critical attitude towards the European Union at its current state in general. The gathering of politically biased data was further combated by keeping the questions as technical and objective as possible (i.e. asking about procedures and what the process looks like, rather than how he perceived the process). Even though this provided a good understanding of the involvement of Parliament in the framing process, it is considered a limitation that no other parliamentarian of the European Affairs Committee agreed to an interview, as this would have allowed for a cross-validation of results.

Another possible limitation is the fact that interviews were conducted with diplomats and asked to comment on another Member State. The risk here is that the diplomats may have answered diplomatically rather than candidly. This could especially be the case with the Portuguese diplomat, who did not object to the country he represents being mentioned by name. This is most likely less the case for PRD-II, who specifically asked for his country to not be mentioned. Being completely anonymous gave the interviewee more freedom to speak candidly, but the risk remained. A recommendation for further research that involves interviews with diplomats is to ensure their anonymity, and to avoid being too direct in asking for diplomatically sensitive information.

A third limitation is the small number of conducted interviews for this thesis. Even though nearly 100 respondents or institutions were reached out to, only six agreed to an interview in the end. Especially other European Member States were difficult to convince to a conversation due to them not wanting to comment on the stance of another MS (i.e. the Netherlands). The reason for this could be an inaccurate way of phrasing the invitation for an interview, as it might have given them with the impression that they would have had to provide sensitive information.

Researchers that are interested in looking into the use of frames by the Netherlands in relation to European Foreign Policy should beware of this when choosing a case study. In a similar fashion, the number of people working for Dutch ministries that were involved with the creation of the stance of the EAM was limited, which makes it necessary to rely on other sources for cross-validating purposes. It is therefore recommended to find out (if possible) how many people were involved with a specific case before making a final decision as to which case to look into.

During the data collection process of this master thesis, it became clear that part of the reason why France and the Netherlands could afford to be this openly critical and sceptical towards further enlargement is that they are founding Member States. They never joined the Union as a result of an enlargement, which means they would not be considered 'hypocritical' by candidates or other Member States. However, this does not explain why Denmark is one of the three most critical states despite having joined the European Economic Community in 1973. Further research could look into the other critical EU Member States and why they are hesitant towards a faster accession process.

Moreover, this paper showed the strong focus of the Netherlands on the rule of law in relation to further enlargement of the European Union, and explained why it had this focus in relation to the Enhanced Accession Methodology. However, further research could look into the reason as to why the Netherlands has a much stronger focus on this than other Member States that seem to value the rule of law as well. Why does the Netherlands have its own rule of law networks and bilateral support programmes, unlike other sceptical states like Denmark, Belgium, and Finland? This is worth investigating.

## List of references

### Literature

- Adcock, R., & Collier, D. (2001). Measurement validity: A shared standard for qualitative and quantitative research. *American political science review*, 95(3), 529-546.
- Audenaerde, J. (2021). The National Politics of European Union Enlargement: The Netherlands and the scope of politicization of EU-enlargement in the national political arena.
- Baumgartner, F. R., De Boef, S. L., & Boydston, A. E. (2008). *The decline of the death penalty and the discovery of innocence*. Cambridge University Press.
- Beach, D. (2004). The unseen hand in treaty reform negotiations: the role and influence of the Council Secretariat. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 11(3), 408-439.
- Becker, J. (2020). Continuous transition: The growing crisis in the Western Balkans and the role of the EU. *SEER Journal for Labour and Social Affairs in Eastern Europe*, 23(1), 7-18.
- Benford, R. D., & Snow, D. A. (2000). Framing processes and social movements: An overview and assessment. *Annual review of sociology*, 26(1), 611-639.
- Bickerton, C. J., Hodson, D., & Puetter, U. (2015). *The new intergovernmentalism: states and supranational actors in the post-Maastricht era*. Oxford University Press, USA.
- Calder, B. J., Phillips, L. W., & Tybout, A. M. (1982). The concept of external validity. *Journal of consumer research*, 9(3), 240-244.
- Campbell, D. T., & Stanley, J. C. (1966). *Experimental and Quasi-experimental designs for Research*. Rand McNally.
- Chong, D., & Druckman, J. N. (2007). Framing theory. *Annu. Rev. Polit. Sci.*, 10, 103-126.
- Christensen, T., Lægreid, O. M., & Lægreid, P. (2019). Administrative coordination capacity; does the wickedness of policy areas matter? *Policy & society*, 38(2), 237-254.
- Christensen, T., & Lægreid, P. (2008). The challenge of coordination in central government organizations: the Norwegian case. *Public organization review*, 8(2), 97-116.
- Cook, T. D., & Campbell, D. T. (1979). The design and conduct of true experiments and quasi-experiments in field settings. In *Reproduced in part in Research in Organizations: Issues and Controversies*. Goodyear Publishing Company.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage publications.

- Dewulf, A. (2013). Contrasting frames in policy debates on climate change adaptation. *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change*, 4(4), 321-330.
- Entman, R. M. (1991). Framing US coverage of international news: Contrasts in narratives of the KAL and Iran Air incidents. *Journal of communication*, 41(4), 6-27.
- Gallie, W. B. (1956). Essentially contested concepts. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian society*, 56, 167-198.
- Gerring, J. (2008). Case selection for case-study analysis: Qualitative and quantitative techniques. In *The Oxford handbook of political methodology*.
- Gerring, J., & Cojocaru, L. (2016). Selecting cases for intensive analysis: A diversity of goals and methods. *Sociological Methods & Research*, 45(3), 392-423.
- Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience*. Harvard University Press.
- Hake, M., & Radzyner, A. (2019). *Western Balkans: Growing economic ties with Turkey, Russia and China*
- Hummel, R. P. (1991). Stories managers tell: Why they are as valid as science. *Public Administration Review*, 51, 31-41.
- Jacoby, W. G. (2000). Issue framing and public opinion on government spending. *American Journal of Political Science*, 750-767.
- Jamil, I. (2014). Inter-organizational coordination in urban governance in Bangladesh: A tale of two cities. *South Asian Journal of Policy and Governance (SJPG)*, 34(1), 1-22.
- Jennings Jr, E. T., & Ewalt, J. A. G. (1998). Interorganizational coordination, administrative consolidation, and policy performance. *Public Administration Review*, 417-428.
- Keukeleire, S., & Justaert, A. (2012). EU Foreign Policy and the Challenges of Structural Diplomacy: Comprehensiveness, Coordination, Alignment and Learning. *DSEU Poliy Paper*, 12.
- King, G., Keohane, R. O., & Verba, S. (1994). *Designing social inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton University Press.
- Klüver, H., & Mahoney, C. (2015). Measuring interest group framing strategies in public policy debates. *Journal of Public Policy*, 35(2), 223-244.
- Koop, C., & Lodge, M. (2014). Exploring the co-ordination of economic regulation. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 21(9), 1311-1329.
- Mahoney, J., & Goertz, G. (2006). A tale of two cultures: Contrasting quantitative and qualitative research. *Political analysis*, 14(3), 227-249.

- Mayer, F. W. (1992). Managing domestic differences in international negotiations: the strategic use of internal side-payments. *International Organization*, 46(4), 793-818.
- Metcalf, L. (1994). International policy co-ordination and public management reform. *International review of administrative sciences*, 60(2), 271-290.
- Moe, T. M., & Wilson, S. A. (1994). Presidents and the Politics of Structure. *Law and Contemporary Problems*, 57(2), 1-44.
- Murdoch, Z. (2012). Negotiating the European External Action Service (EEAS): Analyzing the external effects of internal (dis) agreement. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 50(6), 1011-1027.
- Noy, C. (2008). Sampling knowledge: The hermeneutics of snowball sampling in qualitative research. *International Journal of social research methodology*, 11(4), 327-344.
- Panday, P. K., & Jamil, I. (2011). Challenges of coordination in implementing urban policy: the Bangladesh experience. *Public organization review*, 11(2), 155-176.
- Panebianco, A. (1988). *Political parties: organization and power*. CUP Archive.
- Pavličević, D. (2019). Structural power and the China-EU-Western Balkans triangular relations. *Asia Europe Journal*, 17(4), 453-468.
- Pejović, A. A. (2021). Rule of Law through the Mirror Glass—Is the New 2020 Enlargement Methodology a Pre-Accession TEU Article 7 Mechanism? *Анали Правног факултета у Београду*, 69(3), 647-673.
- Pfeffer, J., & Salancik, G. R. (2003). *The external control of organizations: A resource dependence perspective*. Stanford University Press.
- Rathbun, B. C. (2008). Interviewing and qualitative field methods: pragmatism and practicalities. In J. M. Box-Steffensmeier, H. E. Brady, & D. Collier (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of political methodology*. Oxford University Press.
- Rein, M., & Schon, D. (1977). Problem setting in policy research. In C. H. Weiss (Ed.), *Using social research in public policy making* (pp. 235-251). Lexington Books.
- Rein, M., & Schön, D. (1996). Frame-critical policy analysis and frame-reflective policy practice. *Knowledge and policy*, 9(1), 85-104.
- Riker, W. H. (1986). *The Art of Political Manipulation*. Yale University Press.
- Schön, D. A. (1983). *The reflective practitioner*. Basic Books.
- Seidman, H. (1997). *Politics, Position, and Power: The Dynamics of Federal Organization* (5th ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Tallberg, J. (2006). *Leadership and negotiation in the European Union*. Cambridge University Press.

- Toshkov, D. (2016). *Research design in political science*. Macmillan International Higher Education.
- Van Hulst, M., & Yanow, D. (2016). From policy “frames” to “framing” theorizing a more dynamic, political approach. *The American review of public administration*, 46(1), 92-112.
- Verhoest, K., Bouckaert, G., & Peters, B. G. (2007). Janus-faced reorganization: specialization and coordination in four OECD countries in the period 1980—2005. *International review of administrative sciences*, 73(3), 325-348.
- Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods* (5th ed.). Sage Publications, Inc.

### Documents

- Blok, S. (2020a). *Kamerbrief Kabinetsappreciatie herziening Uitbreidingsmethodologie*. The Hague Retrieved from <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/ministeries/ministerie-van-buitenlandse-zaken/documenten/kamerstukken/2020/02/14/200214-kamerbrief-inzake-kabinetsappreciatie-herziening-uitbreidingsmethodologie>
- Blok, S. (2020b). *Kamerbrief over Kabinetsappreciatie voortgangsrapporten Noord-Macedonië en Albanië*. The Hague Retrieved from <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/ministeries/ministerie-van-buitenlandse-zaken/documenten/kamerstukken/2020/03/13/kamerbrief-inzake-kabinetsappreciatie-voortgangsrapporten-noord-macedoni-en-albani>
- Bouckaert, G., Peters, B. G., & Verhoest, K. (2010). The Coordination of Public Sector Organizations. In: Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, Hants.
- Consolidated version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union*. (2016). Retrieved 09 September, 2021 from <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A12016E%2FTXT>
- Council of the EU. (2019). *General Affairs Council, 19 November 2019 Main Results*. Council of the EU. Retrieved 05 November, 2021 from <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/gac/2019/11/19/>
- European Commission. (2003). *Declaration, EU-Western Balkans Summit Thessaloniki*. . (C/03/163 (Presse 163)). Thessaloniki, Greece: European Commission
- European Commission. (2018a). *Standard Eurobarometer 89 - Spring 2018* (Eurobarometer Surveys, Issue. <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2215>
- European Commission. (2018b). *Standard Eurobarometer 90 - Autumn 2018* (Eurobarometer Surveys, Issue. <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2215>

- European Commission. (2019a). *Standard Eurobarometer 91 - Spring 2019* (Eurobarometer Surveys, Issue. <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2253>)
- European Commission. (2019b). *Standard Eurobarometer 92 - Autumn 2019* (Eurobarometer Surveys, Issue. <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2255>)
- European Commission. (2020a). *Enhancing the accession process - A credible EU perspective for the Western Balkans*. Brussels
- European Commission. (2020b). *Standard Eurobarometer 93 - Summer 2020* (Eurobarometer Surveys, Issue. <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2262>)
- European Commission. (2021a). *Standard Eurobarometer 94 - Winter 2020/2021* (Eurobarometer Surveys, Issue. <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2355>)
- European Commission. (2021b). *Standard Eurobarometer 95 - Spring 2021* (Eurobarometer Surveys, Issue. <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2532>)
- European Commission. (2021c). *Turkey 2021 Report - 2021 Communication on EU Enlargement*.
- European Council. (2000). *Conclusions of the Presidency, Santa Maria Da Feira European Council 19 and 20 June*. European Parliament. Retrieved from [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/fei1\\_en.htm#II](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/fei1_en.htm#II)
- Leijten, R. (2019). *GEWIJZIGDE MOTIE VAN HET LID LEIJTEN TER VERVANGING VAN DIE GEDRUKT ONDER NR. 1494*. Retrieved from <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-21501-20-1507.html>
- Macron, E. (2019). *Non Paper: Reforming the European Union accession process*. Retrieved from <https://www.politico.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Enlargement-nonpaper.pdf>
- Mulder, A. (2020). *Verslag van een werkbezoek van een delegatie uit de vaste commissie voor Europese Zaken aan Noord-Macedonië van 9 en 10 februari 2020*. (TK 382).
- Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau. (2019). *Wat willen Nederlanders van de Europese Unie?*
- von der Leyen, U. (2021a). *2021 State of the Union Address by President von der Leyen*. Retrieved November 10, 2021 from [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH\\_21\\_4701](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_21_4701)
- Von der Leyen, U. (2021b). *Statement by President von der Leyen at the joint press conference with President Michel and Prime Minister Janša following the EU-Western Balkans Summit*. European Commission. Retrieved 6 April 2022 from [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/STATEMENT\\_21\\_5102](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/STATEMENT_21_5102)
- Zweers, W., & van Loon, I. (2020). *The Netherlands as a Champion of EU Enlargement?* [Policy Brief]. Clingendael Institute.

## Newspaper articles

- Barigazzi, J. (2020). *Bulgaria threatens to veto North Macedonia's EU talks*. Politico. Retrieved 12 December from <https://www.politico.eu/article/bulgaria-threatens-veto-on-north-macedonia-accession/>
- Gehrke, L. (2022). *Georgia, Moldova follow Ukraine in applying to join EU*. Politico. Retrieved 5 April from <https://www.politico.eu/article/georgia-and-moldova-apply-for-eu-membership/>
- Gotev, G. (2018). *Netherlands to veto the opening of accession negotiations with Albania*. Euractiv. Retrieved 13 November, 2021 from <https://www.euractiv.com/section/enlargement/news/netherlands-to-veto-the-opening-of-accession-negotiations-with-albania/>
- Taylor, A. (2022). *Bulgaria's veto hurts future of North Macedonia – diaspora leader*. Euractiv. Retrieved 2 May from <https://www.euractiv.com/section/enlargement/interview/bulgarias-veto-hurts-future-of-north-macedonia-diaspora-leader/>
- Tidey, A., Chadwick, L., & Koutsokosta, E. (2019). *'A grave historic error': Juncker hits out as North Macedonia and Albania have EU bids blocked*. Euronews. Retrieved 13 November 2021 from <https://www.euronews.com/2019/10/18/france-denmark-and-netherlands-block-albania-s-eu-membership-bid>
- Vucheva, E. (2009). *Slovenia wants changes to Croatia border resolution plan*. EUobserver. Retrieved 2 May from <https://euobserver.com/eu-political/28153>

## Websites

- 50PLUS. (2019). *50PLUS blijft tegen uitbreiding van de EU*. 50PLUS. Retrieved 24 February from <https://50pluspartij.nl/actueel/3249-50plus-tegen-uitbreiding-eu>
- Beschoor Plug, G. (2020). *European Talks In Strict, fair & committed – the Dutch Approach to the Enlargement*. <https://cep.org.rs/en/podcasts/strict-fair-commited-the-dutch-approach-to-the-enlargement-2/>
- BIJ1. (2021). *Europa*. BIJ1. Retrieved 24 February from <https://bij1.org/programma/europa/>
- CDA. (2021). *Uitbreiding EU*. CDA. Retrieved 24 February from <https://www.cda.nl/europa/toetreding-183364>
- ChristenUnie. (2021). *Europa*. ChristenUnie. Retrieved 24 February from <https://www.christenunie.nl/standpunt/europa>

- D66. (2021). *Een sterk Europa staat dicht bij mensen*. D66. Retrieved 24 February from <https://d66.nl/verkiezingsprogramma/een-open-blik-op-de-wereld/een-sterk-europa-staat-dicht-bij-mensen/>
- DENK. (2019). *Verkiezingsprogramma Europees Parlement 2019-2024*. DENK. Retrieved 24 February from <https://www.bewegingdenk.nl/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Verkiezingsprogramma-Europees-Parlement-2019-2024.pdf>
- Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations. (2012). *Steps towards joining*. European Commission. Retrieved 12 January from [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/enlargement-policy/steps-towards-joining\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/enlargement-policy/steps-towards-joining_en)
- European Commission. (2022). *Negotiations status*. European Commission. Retrieved 5 April from [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/enlargement-policy/negotiations-status\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/enlargement-policy/negotiations-status_en)
- European Western Balkans. (2020). *BSF: Stability, security and prosperity of the WB closely linked to the EU*. European Western Balkans. Retrieved 12 February from <https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2020/10/22/bsf-stability-security-and-prosperity-of-the-wb-closely-linked-to-the-eu/>
- FvD. (2021). *Uit de EU*. Forum voor Democratie. Retrieved 24 February from <https://www.fvd.nl/uit-de-eu>
- GroenLinks. (2021). *Uitbreiding van de Europese Unie*. GroenLinks. Retrieved 24 February from <https://groenlinks.nl/standpunten/europa/uitbreiding-van-de-europese-unie>
- JA21. (2021). *EU en euro*. JA21. Retrieved 24 February from <https://ja21.nl/nieuws/eu-en-euro/>
- PvdD. (2021). *Vóór Europese samenwerking, tegen huidige onde-mo-cra-tische vorm Europese Unie*. Partij van de Dieren. Retrieved 24 February from <https://www.partijvoordedieren.nl/standpunten/europese-unie>
- PVV. (2021). *Verkiezingsprogramma 2021*. Partij voor de Vrijheid. Retrieved 24 February from <https://www.pvv.nl/images/09012020/verkiezingen2020/0acxyuew34z/VerkiezingsProgramma2021-Final.pdf>
- Regional Rule of Law Network*. (2022). Rijksoverheid. Retrieved 3 May from <https://www.netherlandsworldwide.nl/countries/bosnia-and-herzegovina/about-us/regional-rule-of-law-network>

- SGP. (2020). *Terughoudend met EU-uitbreiding*. SGP. Retrieved 24 February from <https://sgp.nl/actueel/nieuws/terughoudend-met-eu-uitbreiding>
- SP. (2021). *Geen Uitbreiding van de EU*. Socialistische Partij. Retrieved 24 February from <https://www.sp.nl/standpunt/geen-uitbreiding-van-eu>
- Tirana Connectivity Forum. (2021). *Justice Reform and Enlargement in SEE6*. Tirana Connectivity Forum. Retrieved 12 February from <https://tiranaconnectivityforum.org/justice-reform-and-enlargement-in-see6/>
- Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal. (2020). *Raad Algemene Zaken d.d. 25 februari 2020*. <https://debatgemist.tweedekamer.nl/debatten/raad-algemene-zaken-dd-25-februari-2020>
- Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal. (2022). *Nederlands Standpunt Naar Brussel*. Retrieved 30 April from [https://www.tweedekamer.nl/zo\\_werkt\\_de\\_kamer/tweede\\_kamer\\_en\\_europa/nederlands\\_standpunt](https://www.tweedekamer.nl/zo_werkt_de_kamer/tweede_kamer_en_europa/nederlands_standpunt)
- Várhelyi, O. (2020, 05 February). *Press conference by Olivér Várhelyi on a revised methodology for the European Union accession process*. [Speech video recording]. European Commission. <https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/video/I-184088>
- Vaste commissie voor Europese Zaken. (2022). *Bovenop Europa*. Tweede Kamer. Retrieved 30 April from [https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerleden\\_en\\_commissies/commissies/eu/bovenop-europa](https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerleden_en_commissies/commissies/eu/bovenop-europa)
- Volt Europa. (2022). *Ukraine needs to be part of the European Union!* Volt Europa. Retrieved 12 April from [https://www.volteuropa.org/press/Ukraine\\_Needs\\_to\\_be\\_part\\_of\\_EU](https://www.volteuropa.org/press/Ukraine_Needs_to_be_part_of_EU)
- VVD. (2021). *Uitbreiding EU*. VVD. Retrieved February 24 from <https://www.vvd.nl/standpunten/uitbreiding-eu/>

## Appendices

### Appendix 1 – overview of reached out to individuals and institutions for interviews

<b>Foreign ministries outside the Netherlands:</b>	<b>Permanent representations to the European Union:</b>	<b>Members of European Affairs Committee of the Dutch Parliament:</b>	<b>Other samples:</b>
Albania	Albania	M. Amhaouch (CDA)	BluePrint Group (WB civil society network)
Austria	Austria	S. Belhaj (D66)	Civil Service Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina
Belgium	Belgium	R. Bisschop (SGP)	Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Bulgaria	R.M. Boucke (D66) – Deputy chairman	Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science
Bulgaria	Croatia	L. Bromet (GL) – Chairman	Dutch Ministry of Finance
Croatia	Cyprus	J. van Dijk (SP)	Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Cyprus	Czechia	S. van der Graaf (CU)	Dutch Ministry of Justice
Denmark	Denmark	L. Helder (PVV)	EU Delegation to Albania
Estonia	Estonia	T. Kuzu (DENK)	EU delegation to Bosnia and Herzegovina
Finland	Finland	T. van der Lee (GL)	EU delegation to Kosovo
France	France	R. Leijten (SP)	EU delegation to Montenegro
Germany	Germany	B. Madlener (PVV)	EU Delegation to North-Macedonia
Greece	Greece	V. Maeijer (PVV)	EU delegation to Serbia

Hungary	Hungary	A. Mulder (VVD)	Ministry for European Integration and International Cooperation of the Republic of Srpska
Ireland	Ireland	J. Paternotte (D66)	Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA)
Kosovo	Italy	S. Sjoerdsma (D66)	Researcher with expertise on the case study working at the University of Amsterdam
Latvia	Latvia	J. Sneller (D66)	The Netherlands Institute of International Relations (Clingendael)
Lithuania	Lithuania	J. van Wijngaarden (VVD)	
Luxembourg	Luxembourg		
Malta	Malta		
Montenegro	Netherlands		
North-Macedonia	North Macedonia		
Poland	Poland		
Portugal	Portugal		
Romania	Romania		
Serbia	Serbia		
Slovakia	Slovakia		
Slovenia	Slovenia		
Sweden	Spain		
	Sweden		

## Appendix 2 - Overview of Dutch political parties their stances towards EU enlargement

Political party:	Ideology:	Position:	Seats in Parliament (as of 02/2022)	Summarized stance towards further EU enlargement	Further information:
People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD)	Conservative liberalism	Centre-right	34/150	Conditions for EU-accession need to be applied and monitored better and more strictly. More emphasis on rule of law(VVD, 2021) .	In government.
Democrats 66 (D66)	Social liberalism	Centre	24/150	Strong and fair demands connected to democracy, rule of law, human rights, the economy and civil freedoms. Opening accession talks with North-Macedonia and Albania is an important step. Conditionality is important (D66, 2021).	In government.
Party for Freedom (PVV)	Right-wing populism	Right-wing to far-right	17/150	Not specified	This party is against EU-membership, so it is likely against EU-enlargement (PVV, 2021, p. 48).
Christian Democratic	Christian democracy	Centre to centre-right	14/150	Further enlargement the coming five years not realistic. New Member States should share Dutch core values.	In government.

Appeal (CDA)				Accession criteria are always leading and membership only possible when all are met. Enlargement is not a goal on its own (CDA, 2021).	
Socialist Party (SP)	Democratic socialism	Left-wing	9/150	No further enlargement any time soon, including the WB. Countries without a strong rule of law are not welcome. Accession criteria should be strictly enforced (SP, 2021).	
GreenLeft (GL)	Green politics	Centre-left to left-wing	8/150	EU enlargement is not a goal on its own. Countries that violate human rights do not belong in the Union. WB should be able to join, but only if they adhere to the criteria concerning democracy, rule of law and human rights (GroenLinks, 2021).	
Party for the Animals (PvdD)	Animal rights	Left-wing	6/150	EU enlargement is unwise when it has internal democratic struggles. PvdD is therefore against EU enlargement (PvdD, 2021).	
Christian Union (CU)	Christian democracy	Centre to centre-right	5/150	Not specified.	In government.  No specific statements concerning WB, but the CU emphasises the importance of the protection of the rule

					of law. The Netherlands should work together with like-minded states to protect this (ChristenUnie, 2021).
Forum for Democracy (FvD)	National conservatism	Right-wing to far-right	5/150	Strongly against EU enlargement. The Netherlands should also leave the Union after a binding referendum (FvD, 2021).	
Reformed Political Party (SGP)	Christian right	Right-wing	3/150	Hesitant towards EU enlargement, but not against it. Consequences for the EU need to be taken into account. Accelerating the negotiations is not supported (SGP, 2020).	
Volt Netherlands (Volt)	Social liberalism	Centre	3/150	Not specified.	Volt is a pan-European party. Though the Dutch party does not specify their stance towards enlargement, the overarching European party is vocal about being in favour of it (Volt Europa, 2022).
Right Answer 2021 (JA21)	Conservative liberalism	Right-wing	3/150	No further enlargement, and more decision-making power to the Member States (JA21, 2021).	
DENK	Identity politics	Centre-left	3/150	Further enlargement is always an option, but clear rules need to be made in order to improve cooperation with the WB. A definitive decision needs to be made (DENK, 2019, p. 20).	

Group van Haga	Classical liberalism	Right-wing	3/150	Not specified.	
Farmer-Citizen Movement (BBB)	Agrarianism	Centre-right	1/150	Not specified.	
BIJ1	Egalitarianism	Left-wing to far-left	1/150	Not specified	Though not specified, the party mentions that within the EU there should be a constant focus on the protection of the rule of law and human rights in Europe (BIJ1, 2021).
50PLUS (50+)	Pensioners' interests	Centre	0/150	EU not ready for further enlargement. There needs to be more solidarity and coherence within the Union before it can grow in size. No further enlargement the coming five years.	No longer in Parliament, but had 4 seats throughout the period of the negotiations surrounding the Enhanced Accession Methodology (50PLUS, 2019).