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Laura Batalla Adam

# The Significance of EU Topics in National Media. Has there been an Europeanization of Reporting in the National Media?

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The Significance of EU Topics in National Media. Has There Been an Europeanization  
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By Laura Batalla Adam

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## **Abstract**

Criticisms are often voiced at the fact that there is no well-informed European public. However, as the process of European integration has advanced, the media have been devoting more resources and space to the coverage of European affairs. At the same time, the national media have gone from being mere transmitters of information to having their own voice on European issues. In this respect, the media have emerged as actors capable of influencing the opinions of citizens, thereby contributing to the emergence of a European public sphere.

The present study analyzes whether a Europeanization of the national media has taken place by studying how national newspapers provide information in Europe and whether a European public sphere is emerging. The results reveal that some European topics have experienced a certain Europeanization, but there is still an absence of European debate in the respective national public spheres.

The paper is based on the Master's thesis, *The Significance of EU Topics in National Media. Has There Been an Europeanization of Reporting in the National Media*, College of Europe, Department of European Political and Administrative Studies Bruges, 2010, available in the institution's library. Please consult this document for an elaboration of the analysis below.

## **Introduction**

The European Union is an unprecedented political experiment that has achieved an historic success. It has avoided war, it has brought stability and progress to European society, and it has become a model which can help to resolve tensions and conflicts worldwide. The success of the European Union, therefore, cannot be questioned. However, as stated by Meyer, the European integration process “has not gone hand in hand with the simultaneous emergence of a common European space of communication and mobilization”.<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of this study is to determine if a Europeanization of reporting in national media has taken place. This will be addressed by analyzing how national newspapers provide information on Europe and how they define it. The results will also allow us to determine whether a Europeanization of the national public spheres is emerging.

The absence of a European public sphere has already been addressed by those who have studied the European integration process. However, so far a concise typology that allows us to list the necessary factors in order to assume its existence has not yet been established. The causes of the absence of a European public sphere are varied and the responsibilities are shared. On the one hand, political leaders can be blamed because they often restrict the European debate to purely domestic issues. For their part, the national electorates, more concerned with local than European issues, often vote in a local dimension, punishing (or not) the government in power. On the other hand, the media also tend to give a national reading of the European issues. In this context, it is assumed that it is precisely the consolidation of a European public sphere, along with a

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Federico Meyer, “The Europeanization of National Public Spheres. Political Discourses in Germany, Spain, and the United Kingdom”, Master thesis, University of Cambridge, 2005, p. 2, retrieved 23 July 2010, <http://aei.pitt.edu/4047/01/MEYER - European Public Sphere.pdf>

committed European citizenry, that should give substance to the political and social advancement of the European project.

As mentioned above, the present study analyzes the role of the media in defining the European Union (EU) and, therefore, its role in contributing to the formation of a European public sphere. The research focuses on three EU member countries: Spain, the United Kingdom (UK) and France. These countries were chosen because they represent different approaches with regard to the European integration process. The accession of Spain to the EU brought the political and economic modernization needed by the country. In this sense, the Spanish press is expected to be in favour of the process of European integration, given the benefits derived from its EU membership. The UK is one of the most Eurosceptical countries. In this regard, it is likely that the British media pays less attention to European affairs and is more skeptical when reporting about the EU. Finally, France is one of the biggest and most powerful Member States (MS) of the EU. Its longstanding membership in the European club presupposes a more established EU reporting and debate about European issues.

The study compares the coverage of *La Vanguardia* (Spain), *The Guardian* (UK) and *Le Monde* (France) with regard to four EU-related events that took place in 2009. The topics chosen are: the 2009 European Parliament (EP) elections; the last steps regarding the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon and its entry into force; the appointment of Herman Van Rompuy as President of the European Council and Catherine Ashton as High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy; and last but not least, the Copenhagen climate summit.

The analysis has taken into account the scope and diversity of themes, genres, styles and narratives. In the first section, the role of the media in influencing the process of Europeanization of the national public spheres is briefly discussed. The empirical

part of the paper consists of a content analysis of the coverage carried out by the three newspapers in relation to the four EU events proposed.

The present study has been based on the content analysis of the articles published in *La Vanguardia*, *The Guardian* and *Le Monde* with regard to the four European events aforementioned. The objective of the present analysis is to analyze the visibility of the EU coverage and the stance adopted by the aforementioned media when it comes to informing the European public.

In order to determine the formative power of the media, this study not only includes editorials, but also opinion articles, political columns, interviews and contributions from external authors such as intellectuals, politicians and experts. In total, 655 articles have been analyzed for this study.

In the chapters devoted to the analysis of each newspaper, the European events mentioned above have been analysed by taking into account the following aspects:

- The 2009 EP elections: the issues that dominated the campaign (national or European), the importance attached to the elections (measures by its editorials), the references to the campaigns carried out in other MS, the evaluation of the results, both at the national and European level, and the existence of analytical / critical coverage;
- The last steps regarding the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon and its entry into force: the causes of the Irish ‘yes’ in 2009, the newspaper’s position in relation to the referendum, the referendum implications for the EU as a whole, the coverage of the steps taken by the Polish and Czech presidents, and, finally, the newspaper's opinion with regard to the Lisbon Treaty and its implementation;

- Herman Van Rompuy and Catherine Ashton's appointments: the suitability of Tony Blair's "candidacy", the newspaper's opinion with regard to Van Rompuy and Lady Ashton's appointments, and the implications of both appointments for the EU's future;
- The Copenhagen climate summit: the importance attributed by the newspapers to the EU during the negotiations and the evaluation of its contribution.

While the first three topics relate to the internal dimension of the EU (although in the second and third cases the external dimension of the EU is also present), the last topic has mainly to do with the international projection of the EU and its impact in world politics.

## **1 Theoretical framework**

The role of media in reporting on European issues usually has been criticized for its alleged failure to bring the EU closer to its citizens, thus contributing to the so-called democratic deficit of the EU. However, as the process of European integration has moved forward, the media (and the press, in particular) have been reporting more and more on its progress, providing the public with different tools of analysis to better understand how the European machinery works. As we will find later in our analysis, the media have somehow contributed to the emergence of a European public sphere.

### **1.1 Defining Europeanization**

According to Eder, Kanter and Trenz, a Europeanized public sphere is likely to emerge when "the same topics are discussed at the same time and at the same level of



relevance in various public spaces”.<sup>2</sup> Departing from this idea, Risse states that “[...] in this multi-level politics the focus of public communication on the European institutions and their policies might become a parallel structure to the national political level, therefore not displacing it but rather complementing it”.<sup>3</sup> In this respect, the media are seen as a legitimate contributor in the discussions inside the national public sphere. By reporting on the same European or national topics that can be therefore moved to the ‘higher’ European level, the media are said to contribute to the formation of a European public sphere.

According to Koopmans and Erbe, “forms of coupling either [media communication and national public spheres] take place through intensified communicative interchange between different national public spheres (horizontal Europeanization) or through the infiltration of European actors and issues in national public spheres (vertical Europeanization)”.<sup>4</sup>

## **1.2 The European public sphere: what role for the media?**

The European public sphere is conceivable in two ways: 1) as a pan-European public sphere independent of individual states; or 2) as a European public sphere which emerges as a result of the Europeanization of the national public spheres.<sup>5</sup> The first option is ruled out by some scholars, since they indicate that the most important preconditions for the existence of a pan-European public sphere are absent, such as the

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<sup>2</sup> Cited in T. Risse, “How Do We Know a European Public Sphere When We See One?”, Paper Prepared for the IDNET Workshop “Europeanization and the Public Sphere”, European University Institute, Florence, February 20-21, 2002, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Cited in M. Broz, “Is Europeanization of the Public Sphere in Media Finally Emerging?”, Paper Discussed in Context of the EU Media Policy and Changing Trends within the European Media Structure, Master Thesis, Lund University, 2005, p.7-8, retrieved 26 April 2010, <http://lup.lub.lu.se/luur/download?func=downloadFile&recordOid=1330277&fileOid=1330278>

<sup>4</sup> Koopmans, R. and J. Erbe (2004), “Towards a European Public Sphere?”, *Innovation*, 17(2): 97-118, cited in Trezz.

<sup>5</sup> M. Machill & M. Beiler & C. Fischer, “Europe-topics in Europe’s media. The debate about the European public sphere: a meta-analysis of media content analyses”, Paper submitted for the CONNEX workshop “A European Public Sphere: How much of it do we have and how much do we need?”, Amsterdam, December 9-10, 2005, p. 4, retrieved 9 October 2009, [http://www.mzes.uni-mannheim.de/projekte/typo3/site/fileadmin/research%20groups/3/Amsterdam%20conference/Amsterdam\\_Machill\\_Beiler\\_Fischer.pdf](http://www.mzes.uni-mannheim.de/projekte/typo3/site/fileadmin/research%20groups/3/Amsterdam%20conference/Amsterdam_Machill_Beiler_Fischer.pdf)

existence of a common language in which the EU citizens can communicate with one another, the existence of mass media with EU-wide reach, and the lack of a uniform journalistic and media culture in the EU states.<sup>6</sup> The second option is seen as more reasonable, as Europeanization would take place precisely when “in the national public spheres, over time, reporting increasingly focuses on the European decisions and the elites taking the decision”.<sup>7</sup>

To analyze the Europeanization of the national media in its totality, three main dimensions should be considered.<sup>8</sup> According to Trenz, one way of measuring the scope of Europeanization consists of quantifying “the general level of media attention to political news from the EU or other Member States”.<sup>9</sup> While ‘vertical Europeanization’ refers to “the general visibility of the EU measured in the extent to which European events, actors and issues are covered by national news media”, ‘horizontal Europeanization’ refers to “the enhanced visibility of issues, actors and debates from other Member States and the communicative linkages following from it”.<sup>10</sup>

As pointed out by some authors, vertical and horizontal Europeanization contributes “to a de-borderization of public discourse, but do not necessarily involve the

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<sup>6</sup> These preconditions have been elaborated by different scholars and can be found in the works of Grimm, Kantner, Diez-Medrano Sievert.

<sup>7</sup> Jürgen, Gerhards, “Das Öffentlichkeitsdefizit der EU im Horizont normativer Öffentlichkeitstheorien”, 2002, pp. 135-58 in Hartmut Kaelble & Martin Kirsch & Alexander Schmidt-Gernig (eds.), *Transnationale Öffentlichkeiten und Identitäten im 20. Jahrhundert*. Frankfurt (Main): Campus, cited in Machill & Beiler & Fischer, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>8</sup> Depending on each author, the criteria used to measure the dimensions of Europeanization vary from one to another. As shown in the table elaborated by Brüggemann, Sifft, Königslöw and Wimmel and attached in the annexes, these authors distinguish four dimensions of Europeanization, while Trenz only differentiates three. However, the first and second dimensions highlighted by the former, namely “Monitoring Governance” and “Mutual Observation”, correspond respectively to the vertical and horizontal Europeanization mentioned by Trenz. In my analysis, the author has interchangeably used both sets of criteria because they resemble essentially.

<sup>9</sup> Trenz, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>10</sup> Koopmans, R. and J. Erbe (2004), “Towards a European Public Sphere?”, *Innovation*, 17(2): 97-118, cited in Trenz, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

emergence of a new, extended communicative space across territorial states”.<sup>11</sup> In this respect, these authors propose a second dimension, according to which a *discursive exchange* between various national public spheres should take place. In their opinion, discursive exchange “is a crucial prerequisite for the emergence of a common European opinion formation”.<sup>12</sup>

Finally, the third dimension of Europeanization refers to “the emergence of a common transnational ‘community of communication’ and measures the sense of belonging to a common European public”.<sup>13</sup> According to this criterion, “the more actors explicitly refer to ‘the Europeans’ in public discourse, the more they explicitly address a European public as ‘we Europeans’”.<sup>14</sup> However, neither a uniform approach in analyzing the Europeanization of the public sphere nor a consensus among the scholars with regard to the level of Europeanized public sphere exists.

## **2 Empirical Research**

*La Vanguardia* is the fourth most read newspaper in Spain (despite being mostly distributed in Catalonia) and has the highest-circulation in Catalonia. Before Spain even joined the EU, *La Vanguardia* already had a correspondent in Brussels. Nowadays, *La Vanguardia* covers European affairs with two correspondents in Brussels: one permanent and another one that works on a case-by-case basis. *La Vanguardia* usually publishes between one to two articles per day on the EU that are distributed between the international, the national (when a matter directly affects the interests of Spain or Catalonia) and the economy pages.

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<sup>11</sup> Brüggemann, M. & Sift, S. & Königslöw, K. & Peters, B. & Wimmel, A., “Segmented Europeanization. The Transnationalization of Public Spheres in Europe: Trends and Patterns”, TranState Working Papers No. 37, Bremen, 2006, p. 6, retrieved 23 July 2010, <http://134.245.95.50/dspace/bitstream/10419/24950/1/514648759.PDF>

<sup>12</sup> Brüggemann & Sift & Königslöw & Wimmel, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>13</sup> Brüggemann & Sift & Königslöw & Wimmel, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>14</sup> Brüggemann & Sift & Königslöw & Wimmel, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

*The Guardian* is a British national newspaper with a certified average daily circulation of 283,063 copies in March 2010. In addition, *The Guardian's* website, guardian.co.uk, is one of the most visited English-language news websites. *The Guardian* publishes three to four articles per week with regard to the EU. In the past, *The Guardian* had a news section on Europe. However, newspaper editors decided to remove the section given that EU news were not always interesting enough. Despite the Eurosceptic tradition of Britain and the English press, *The Guardian* is, along with *The Independent* and the *Financial Times*, one of the most pro-European British newspapers.

*Le Monde* is a French daily newspaper with a circulation of 318, 805 copies in 2009. In recent years, *Le Monde* has gone from having five correspondents in Brussels to only two, due to financial difficulties. However, there are also three other journalists dealing with European issues in the Paris central newsroom. In total, *Le Monde* has a team of five journalists dedicated to the coverage of Europe, apart from the correspondents reporting from the EU MS. *Le Monde* publishes between two to three pages dedicated to Europe every day. *Le Monde* is the only newspaper analyzed that has a section dedicated solely to 'Europe' (introduced in 2002). Although at first the 'Europe' section was part of the domestic affairs pages, this space has been recently integrated with the International news section. The 'Europe' page has, in this sense, a space of its own, in between the international and national news sections, in order to report regularly about European issues.

## **2.1 The 2009 European Parliament elections**

The coverage of *La Vanguardia* in relation to the 2009 EP elections in Spain and Catalonia was marked by a strong presence of domestic affairs. Most of the news stories referred to the election dispute between the two biggest parties, the People's Party (PP)

and the Socialist Party (PSOE), trying to show which of the two was most capable of bringing Spain out of the crisis. According to the Madrid correspondent, Enric Juliana, the 2009 campaign was a “campaign with a greater gap between the citizens and the political establishment [...] as a result of the common strategic interest of the two biggest parties”.<sup>15</sup> In Bru de Sala's view, “issues such as the European social or energy model were ignored during the campaign”.<sup>16</sup> Sala concluded his article 'Less Europe' by stating that “Europe is no longer able to have national political thinking and action at the European level”.<sup>17</sup> In this respect, Xavier Batalla, diplomatic correspondent of *La Vanguardia*, termed the European campaign a "lost opportunity", regretting that “each and every election held since the first EP election in 1979 has been dominated by national or multi-national interests”.<sup>18</sup> In its editorials, *La Vanguardia* regretted that the campaigns carried out in the various European countries have only focused on a national key issue, “preventing the emergence of a public debate on the future of Europe”.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> E. Juliana, “En busca de brotes verdes con la bandera azul a media asta”, *La Vanguardia*, 7 June 2009, p. 16.

<sup>16</sup> X. Bru de Sala, “Menos Europa”, *La Vanguardia*, 5 June 2009, p. 25.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> X. Batalla, “Ocasión perdida”, *La Vanguardia*, 7 June 2009, p. 8.

<sup>19</sup> “Un voto trascendente”, editorial, *La Vanguardia*, 7 June 2009, p. 28.

Table 1 Summary of *La Vanguardia*'s coverage of the 2009 EP elections

2009 European Parliament elections	<i>La Vanguardia</i>
Issues that dominated the campaign (1a)	Strong presence of domestic affairs (dispute between the two biggest parties).
Importance attached by the newspaper to the elections (1a)	Encourages citizens to attend the polls ("votes count").
Reference to campaigns carried out in other member countries (1b)	Special attention to electoral campaigns carried out in UK (parliamentary expenses scandal), Italy (Berlusconi's intimate affairs), France (Bayrou vs. Cohn-Bendit), Germany (parliamentary elections September 2009), the Netherlands (the rise of the extreme right), Portugal and Ireland.
Evaluation of the results (1a)	Protest vote on some national governments (especially against left-wing parties).
Topics of debate (1a)	Absence of European issues in the design of the European electoral campaign in Spain. Growing gap between the EU away from its citizens.
Actors (1b)	Interviews with the candidates of the major Spanish and Catalan political parties: Juan Fernando López Aguilar, PSOE's candidate; Jaime Mayor Oreja, PP's candidate; Maria Badia, Partit del Socialistes (PSC) candidate; Ramon Tremosa, Convergència i Unió (CiU) candidate; Oriol Junqueras, head of the Peoples of Europe list; Aleix Vidal-Quadras, Catalan People's Party (PPC) candidate; Raül Romeva, Iniciativa Verds (ICV) candidate. Expert contribution: Hendrik Vos, director of the Centre for European Studies at Ghent University; Ferran Requejo, political science professor at Pompeu Fabra University (UPF); Francesc Morata, director of the Institute for European Studies at the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB); Jaume Duch, European Parliament spokesman.

Table legend:

Numbers in brackets correspond to the three dimensions of Europeanization proposed by [Trenz](#) in the "Theoretical Framework" chapter of this study, and are classified as follows:

1. Level of media attention to political news from the EU or other Member States. While 1a) refers to "vertical Europeanization", 1b) refers to "horizontal Europeanization".
2. Discursive exchange between various national public spheres.
3. Sense of belonging to a common European public.

Two main issues dominated the 2009 election campaign in the UK: the parliamentary expenses scandal and British policy towards the EU. The decision of Tory leader David Cameron to leave the European People's Party (EPP) in order to form a new Eurosceptic grouping along with other centre-right parties in Europe was also a controversial issue. With regard to the parliamentary expenses scandal uncovered by *The Daily Telegraph* a few months before its official disclosure, *The Guardian* stated in one of its editorials that "the public mood [was] clearly for a general election, not because there [was] a great enthusiasm for the opposition (the European results and the strength of minor parties were an example of this) but because people [thought that] this parliament [had] no legitimacy".<sup>20</sup>

Labour's electoral failure led to the rise of Ukip to a second place overall, confirming, "the enduring strength of the Eurosceptic or even xenophobic dimension of

<sup>20</sup> "Labour in crisis: European disaster", Editorial, *The Guardian*, 8 June 2009, retrieved 19 January 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/jun/08/european-elections-labour-leadership>

British politics”.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, the only seat obtained by the most pro-European British political party, the Liberal Democrats, was due to the fact that “they are a pro-European party in an anti-European electorate – from which Ukip has benefited”.<sup>22</sup> In O'Connor's opinion, the degree of British Euroscepticism resulting from the last European elections corresponds with

“the successive governments who haven't made any effort to reframe perceptions of the EU in Britain; a British press which, with few exceptions, covers the EU in a way that is at best disinterested, at worst deliberately misleading; and MEPs themselves who have failed to tackle those issues that continue to discredit them and their institution, like the non-disclosure of expenses”.<sup>23</sup>

Table 2 Summary of *The Guardian's* coverage of the 2009 EP elections

2009 European Parliament elections	<i>The Guardian</i>
Issues that dominated the campaign (1a)	Parliamentary expenses scandal. The British policy towards the EU. Cameron's decision to leave the EPP.
Importance attached by the newspaper to the elections (1a)	“We must take the EU elections seriously”. The EP is relevant.
Reference to campaigns carried out in other member countries (1b)	Ireland, Spain, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Czech Republic and Austria.
Evaluation of the results (1a)	Protest vote and victory for mavericks. Anti-European British electorate. Mismatch between the aspiration of EU's leaders and the indifference of its voters.
Topics of debate (1a)	The expenses scandal in Brussels. The poor visibility of the EP elections. Lack of EU-wide issues that people can vote for and against. Inability of the EP at selling itself to the public opinion. Little understanding of both journalists and national electorate of the EU political decision-making. The lack of understanding of what MEPs do. Chances of the Europhobic extremists entering the EP.
Actors (1b)	Political contributions: Lord Kerr of Kinlochard, Britain's ambassador to the EU during the Maastricht treaty negotiations in 1991 and secretary general of the convention which drew up the EU constitution in 2003; Lord Brittan of Spennithorne, a former Tory home secretary who served as European trade commissioner between 1986-95; Lord Tugendhat, a former Conservative MP who served as a European commissioner between 1977 and 1985; Lord Garel-Jones, who served as John Major's Europe minister during the 1991 Maastricht negotiations, Lord Patten of Barnes, the former Hong Kong governor who served as a European commissioner between 1999-2004. Expert contribution: Giles Meritt, secretary-general of the Brussels-based think tank Friends of Europe and editor of the policy journal <i>Europe's World</i> .

During the EP electoral campaign, *Le Monde* published at least two pages per day concerning the French electoral campaign, the electoral campaigns carried out in other MS, as well as other articles regarding the EP. The European election campaign in

<sup>21</sup> M. Kettle, “Labour must change, or the party's over”, guardian.co.uk, 8 June 2009, retrieved 19 January 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/jun/08/labour-european-elections>

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> S. O'Connor, “British voices silenced in Europe”, guardian.co.uk, 10 June 2009, retrieved 19 January 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/jun/10/european-elections-eu>

France was also marked by a strong national dimension, characterized by the economic crisis and its social consequences. In this respect, the debate did not focus on the construction of Europe, “but on how to direct it into the existing framework to protect the French in the crisis”.<sup>24</sup> Consequently, the electoral programs of the biggest political parties revealed “a return to the traditional divisions”.<sup>25</sup>

According to Dominique Reyné, researcher at Cevipof, the EP elections are “nationalized in all European countries, but the trend is much heavier in France [as well as] a resistance of much of the political class to become Europeanized”.<sup>26</sup> In this sense, an editorial of *Le Monde* blamed the main political parties for the citizens’ lack of interest in European affairs.<sup>27</sup>

Table 3 Summary of *Le Monde*’s coverage of the 2009 EP elections

2009 European Parliament elections	<i>Le Monde</i>
Issues that dominated the campaign (1a)	The economic crisis and its social consequences. The traditional French political divisions.
Importance attached by the newspaper to the elections (1a)	Blame on the main parties for the citizen’s lack of interest in European affairs.
Reference to campaigns carried out in other member countries (1b)	UK, Germany, The Netherlands, Spain, Italy.
Evaluation of the results (1a)	Increasing Euroscepticism.
Topics of debate (1a)	The nationalization of EP elections. The electorate cannot relate to European issues. Increasing Euroscepticism. Turkey’s accession. The modes of voting, the electoral lists and the European constituencies.
Actors (1b)	Interviews with Martine Aubry, First Secretary of the Socialist Party; John Monks, Secretary General of the European Trade Union Confederation; Pierre Lequiller, President of the European Affairs Committee of the French National Assembly; Jacques Toubon (UMP), former MEP; Gilles Savary (PS), former MEP; Pervenche Bérès, Socialist MEP, candidate in Ile-de-France; Daniel Cohn-Bendit, leader of the Green Party; Michel Barnier, head of UMP list in Ile-de-France; Omar Slaouti, head of the list of the New Anti-Capitalist Party (NPA) in Ile-de-France; Franck Louvrier, media adviser to the President. Political contributions: Michel Rocard, Former Prime Minister (1988-1991). Expert contribution: Dominique Reynié, political scientist; Brice Teinturier, Deputy Director General of the institute TNS Sofres; Bertrand Badie, political scientist, Professor at Sciences Po.

<sup>24</sup> A. Leparmentier, «Derrière une campagne atone, deux conceptions de l’Europe s’affrontent», *Le Monde*, 7 June 2009.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> S. Seelow, «Il y a une résistance de notre classe politique à s’europeaniser», entretien avec Dominique Reyné, *LeMonde.fr*, 5 June 2009, retrieved 27 February 2010, [http://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2009/06/05/il-y-a-une-resistance-de-notre-classe-politique-a-s-europeaniser\\_1203012\\_823448.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2009/06/05/il-y-a-une-resistance-de-notre-classe-politique-a-s-europeaniser_1203012_823448.html).

<sup>27</sup> «Franchouillards», Editorial, *Le Monde*, 4 June 2009.



## 2.2 The Treaty of Lisbon

In its editorial, "Last obstacle for the Lisbon Treaty", *La Vanguardia* attributed the Irish change of mind to “the concessions obtained from the EU- ranging from military neutrality to preservation of their Commissioner in Brussels- and the belief that coming out of the economic crisis would be impossible without the support of the EU institutions, especially the ECB, which saved the Irish financial system”.<sup>28</sup> In the newspaper’s view, a new rejection would have plunged the European project into a deep collapse”.<sup>29</sup> Beatriz Navarro, the Brussels correspondent, described the Treaty of Lisbon as a "small institutional revolution that will allow Europe to be more efficient internally and externally and leave behind a long period of isolation”.<sup>30</sup>

Table 4 Summary of *La Vanguardia*’s coverage of the passage of the Treaty of Lisbon

Last steps regarding the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon and its entry into force	<i>La Vanguardia</i>
Causes of the Irish 'yes' in 2009 (1a)	The belief that coming out of the economic crisis would be impossible without the support of the EU institutions, especially the European Central Bank.
Newspaper’s position in relation to the referendum (1a)	In favour. <i>La Vanguardia</i> urged to implement the Treaty as soon as possible.
Referendum implications for the EU as a whole (2)	A new rejection would have plunged the European project into a deep collapse.
Newspaper’s opinion with regard to the Lisbon Treaty and its implementation (1a)	A small institutional revolution that will allow Europe to be more efficient internally and externally and leave behind a long period of isolation.
Actors (1b)	Statements made by Irish, Czech and Polish politicians and EU leaders. Interview with Cecilia Malmström, Swedish minister of EU affairs. Expert contribution: Carles Gasòliba, former MEP; Antonio Missiroli, Director of European Policy Centre; Diego López Garrido, secretario de Estado de Asuntos Europeos; Gian Luigi Tosato, profesor de la Universidad de La Sapienza de Roma.

The press coverage of the last stage of the ratification process of the Lisbon Treaty carried out by *The Guardian* focused on two aspects. First of all, the newspaper paid particular attention to the role played by the Tory leader, David Cameron, following the promise he made in relation to the holding of a referendum in Britain if

<sup>28</sup> “Último escollo para el tratado de Lisboa”, Editorial, *La Vanguardia*, 5 October 2009, p. 14.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> B. Navarro, “Al final la nueva UE”, *La Vanguardia*, 2 December 2009, p. 6.

the Tories came to power in 2010 and the Lisbon Treaty remained unratified. Secondly, *The Guardian* took this opportunity to promote the debate on the future of UK-EU relations.

While *The Guardian* campaigned for a yes vote, other British newspapers like *The Sun*, *The Sunday Times* and the *Daily Mail* (all critical of the EU) campaigned for a no vote in their Irish editions. According to Rafael Behr, chief lead writer for *The Observer*, “the point of Lisbon is to put an end to tedious tinkering at the EU decision-making process, so Europe can start making decisions”.<sup>31</sup>

However, once ratified, the newspaper stated that “its passage has evoked such powerful Eurosceptic currents that by default it has established the opposite of what it set out to achieve – the limits of European integration and expansion”.<sup>32</sup> With regard to Britain, and for Cameron in particular, the editorial stated that “the EU was getting its act together, and the question once again is whether Britain wants to be part of it”.<sup>33</sup>

Table 5 Summary of *The Guardian*'s coverage of the passage of the Treaty of Lisbon

Last steps regarding the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon and its entry into force	<i>The Guardian</i>
Causes of the Irish 'yes' in 2009 (1a)	The economic crisis.
Newspaper's position in relation to the referendum (1a)	Campaigned for a yes vote. A second no vote would kill off the EU's big project and trigger divisions within the EU.
Referendum implications for the EU as a whole (2)	Its birth pangs have been so painful that this child will be the EU's last.
Newspaper's opinion with regard to the Lisbon Treaty and its implementation (1a)	To put an end to tedious tinkering at the EU decision-making process, so Europe can start making decisions.
Actors (1b)	Statements made by Irish, Czech and Polish politicians, several British MPs and MEPs. Expert contribution: Pawel Swieboda, former Polish presidential adviser and director of demosEUROPA think tank; Charles Grant, head of the Centre for European Reform in London; Rafal Pankowski, political scientist at Warsaw's Collegium Civitas and Barry Legg, co-chair of the Eurosceptic Bruges Group, among others.

<sup>31</sup> R. Behr, “Britain must grow up and stop believing Europhobe nonsense”, guardian.co.uk, 3 October 2009, retrieved 21 January 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/oct/03/eu-britain-sovereignty-lisbon-treaty>

<sup>32</sup> “Lisbon treaty: Painful birth”, editorial, *The Guardian*, 5 October 2009, retrieved 21 January 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/oct/05/lisbon-treaty-david-cameron>

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

The Treaty of Lisbon was designed to streamline decision-making in an enlarged Europe and to give the Union greater visibility on the international stage. However, as stated by *Le Monde*, “reorganization under the Treaty of Lisbon will not simplify the functioning of the Union”; instead it will give birth to “a monster with three heads [thus] making Europe even more ungovernable”.<sup>34</sup> According to the newspaper, this is due to the fact that “none of the big European countries would imagine yielding its seat to a unified representation”.<sup>35</sup>

Table 6 Summary of *Le Monde*'s coverage of the passage of the Treaty of Lisbon

Last steps regarding the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon and its entry into force	<i>Le Monde</i>
Causes of the Irish 'yes' in 2009 (1a)	The economic crisis.
Newspaper's position in relation to the referendum (1a)	In favour.
Referendum implications for the EU as a whole (2)	It will give birth to “a monster with three heads” making Europe even more ungovernable.
Newspaper's opinion with regard to the Lisbon Treaty and its implementation (1a)	The reorganization under the Treaty of Lisbon will not simplify the functioning of the Union. It will give birth to “a monster with three heads” making Europe even more ungovernable.
Actors (1b)	Statements made by Irish, Czech and Polish politicians and EU leaders.

### 2.3 The appointments of Herman Van Rompuy and Catherine Ashton

The possible candidacy of former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair to chair the European Council captured the attention of the leading European newspapers, which embarked on a passionate debate about his suitability for the job. In the British campaign for President Blair, the journalist from *The Guardian*, Ian Traynor, argued that “the contest has been presented as a choice between a weak figure pouring cups of coffee for leaders at EU summits, or a strong leader who can open doors in Washington,

<sup>34</sup> «Le toujours improbable George Washington européen», *Le Monde*, 6 October 2009, retrieved 4 February 2010, [http://www.lemonde.fr/opinions/article/2009/10/05/le-toujours-improbable-george-washington-europeen-par-arnaud-leparmentier\\_1249384\\_3232.htm](http://www.lemonde.fr/opinions/article/2009/10/05/le-toujours-improbable-george-washington-europeen-par-arnaud-leparmentier_1249384_3232.htm)

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

Moscow, and Beijing”.<sup>36</sup> As stated by Van Renterghem in *Le Monde*, Blair was "the only European statesman globally known, capable of carrying the voice of the Twenty-Seven, of talking on equal terms with Obama and of giving Europe the famous ‘phone number’ that it needs so much”.<sup>37</sup> According to this journalist, one of Blair’s main impediments to chair the EU Council was his involvement in Iraq, together with George W. Bush.

In contrast, the European press was generally very critical about Herman Van Rompuy and Catherine Ashton’s nominations. In relation to the former, journalists from *Le Monde* wrote that Van Rompuy “has not had much of a presence in the European level”.<sup>38</sup> With regard to the latter, it has been written that “she does not have any experience in diplomacy matters”.<sup>39</sup> In this respect, Robert Solé pointed out that "Europe has not chosen a flamboyant president in the person of Herman Van Rompuy [...] and we cannot say that Catherine Ashton has been appointed as Minister of Foreign Affairs for her knowledge of diplomacy".<sup>40</sup>

According to an editorial of *Le Monde*, both nominations were due to a “technical designation that may be inherent to the construction of Europe: choosing the lowest common denominator and the solution that would cause least trouble, and the search for a minimal disruption for the national egos of the Member States”.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> I. Traynor, “How Angela Merkel quietly sank Tony Blair's bid to become EU president”, guardian.co.uk, 29 October 2009, retrieved 20 January 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/oct/29/merkel-sank-blair-eu-bid>

<sup>37</sup> M. V. Renterghem, «Tony Blair Le mal-aimé», *Le Monde*, 29 November 2009.

<sup>38</sup> A. Leparmentier & P. Ricard & J-P. Stroobants, «La Revanche des fédéralistes belges», *Le Monde*, 11 November 2009.

<sup>39</sup> Association France Press, «Catherine Ashton, plus économiste que diplomate», LeMonde.fr, 19 November 2009, retrieved 17 February 2010, [http://www.lemonde.fr/europe/article/2009/11/19/catherine-ashton-plus-economiste-que-diplomate\\_1269608\\_3214.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/europe/article/2009/11/19/catherine-ashton-plus-economiste-que-diplomate_1269608_3214.html)

<sup>40</sup> R. Solé, «Lady Ashton, I presume?», *Le Monde*, 27 November 2009, retrieved 2 February 2010, [http://www.lemonde.fr/opinions/article/2009/11/26/lady-ashton-i-presume-par-robert-sole\\_1272523\\_3232.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/opinions/article/2009/11/26/lady-ashton-i-presume-par-robert-sole_1272523_3232.html)

<sup>41</sup> “Couple discret”, editorial, *Le Monde*, 21 November 2009, retrieved 27 February 2010, [http://www.lemonde.fr/opinions/article/2009/11/20/couple-discret\\_1269804\\_3232.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/opinions/article/2009/11/20/couple-discret_1269804_3232.html)

A journalist from *La Vanguardia* described the designation of Van Rompuy and Ashton as "politically unknown, but with impeccable service records".<sup>42</sup> Navarro considered that the choice of these political figures was "deliberated",<sup>43</sup> and that the small MS wanted to choose someone that would not ignore them, while the bigger preferred someone who would not belittle them or might have a hidden agenda, as many feared about Tony Blair.

Following the appointments of Van Rompuy and Ashton, Traynor and Watt stated that "Europe has failed to show much ambition in the two choices and has opted for the path of least resistance in the interests of an easy deal".<sup>44</sup> In an editorial, *The Guardian* argued that "by passing over the chance to enshrine powerful central leadership, France and Germany have implicitly signalled that they are contented to continue with a Europe of nation states".<sup>45</sup>

The appointment procedure of the new posts was also criticized. In an article published in *Le Monde* by Thierry Chopin, Director of studies at the Robert Schuman Foundation, he claimed that "the lack of democracy and transparency in its implementation made it look like the Pope's election: no requirement to declare oneself as a candidate and the setting of criteria as the process went on [...] So, it was not until the white smoke came out of the Thursday night's summit [19 November 2009] that we learnt the result of the negotiations!"<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> B. Navarro, "Van Rompuy, europresidente", *La Vanguardia*, 20 November 2009, p. 3.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> I. Traynor and N. Watt, "EU gets Belgian president and British foreign minister as Blair blows out", *guardian.co.uk*, 19 November 2009, retrieved 20 January 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/nov/19/eu-president-foreign-minister-ashton1>

<sup>45</sup> "European Union: Fading presidential ambitions", Editorial, *The Guardian*, 20 November 2009, retrieved 20 January 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/nov/20/european-union-fading-presidential-ambitions>

<sup>46</sup> T. Chopin, «La désignation du président de l'UE a manqué de transparence», *LeMonde.fr*, 19 November 2009, retrieved 17 February 2010, [http://www.lemonde.fr/europe/article/2009/11/19/la-designation-du-president-de-l-ue-a-manque-de-transparence\\_1269519\\_3214.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/europe/article/2009/11/19/la-designation-du-president-de-l-ue-a-manque-de-transparence_1269519_3214.html)

*La Vanguardia* was also critical about the opaqueness of Van Rompuy and Ashton's appointments, regretting at the same time their lack of charisma and inability to deliver an efficient external representation of the EU. According to a journalist from *The Guardian*, the process of selecting Europe's first president was not only "undemocratic but also not transparent"<sup>47</sup>, contradicting the purpose of the reform itself, according to which the Union should be more "clear, open, effective and democratically controlled".<sup>48</sup>

Table 7 Summary of the coverage of the appointments of Van Rompuy and Ashton

Herman Van Rompuy and Catherine Ashton's appointments	<i>The Guardian</i>
Suitability of Tony Blair's "candidacy" (2)	Not in favour or against. Only Tony Blair needs no introduction anywhere. However, the low political profile of the job and the low credibility of Tony Blair doesn't make him a good candidate.
Newspaper's opinion with regard to Van Rompuy and Lady Ashton's appointments (1a)	The process of selecting Europe's first president was not only "undemocratic but also not transparent". Lack of Europe's ambition in the two choices.
Implications of both appointments for the EU's future (2)	The appointments represent a clear victory of the intergovernmental approach to the EU rather than of any federalist challenge to it. Neither the Lisbon treaty nor these two appointments give the EU proper political clout.
Actors (1b)	Statements made by EU leaders: Commission President Barroso, French President Nicolas Sarkozy, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Swedish Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt, Spanish PM José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero. Statements made by British politicians, MEPs and political groups in the European Parliament. Expert contribution: Simon Hix, professor of European politics at the London School of Economics; Colleen Graffy is a former US Assistant secretary of state; Charles Grant is director of the Centre for European Reform.

Herman Van Rompuy and Catherine Ashton's appointments	<i>Le Monde</i>
Suitability of Tony Blair's "candidacy" (2)	Did not oppose the possible candidacy of Tony Blair.
Newspaper's opinion with regard to Van Rompuy and Lady Ashton's appointments (1a)	Critical of Van Rompuy and Baroness Ashton's nominations. Both nominations were due to a "technical designation".
Implications of both appointments for the EU's future (2)	The new presidential system of the EU appeared "much more complex" than the previous.
Actors (1b)	Statements made by British MPs, MEPs and EU commissioners Interview with Jean-Claude Juncker and Javier Solana. Expert contribution: Charles Grant, head of the Centre for European Reform in London; Jean-Michel De Waele, director of Cevipol; Michel Mangeot, political scientist at the IEP of Strasbourg and Thierry Chopin, Director of studies at the Robert Schuman Foundation.

<sup>47</sup> A. Chancellor, "Blair's bid to be president of Europe seems hopeless", *The Guardian*, 6 November 2009, retrieved 20 January 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/nov/06/blair-european-president-alexander-chancellor>

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

Herman Van Rompuy and Catherine Ashton's appointments	<i>La Vanguardia</i>
Suitability of Tony Blair's "candidacy" (2)	Echoed the intense debate that was taking place in the UK. Not in favour or against.
Newspaper's opinion with regard to Van Rompuy and Lady Ashton's appointments (1a)	The selection process was carried out "in absolute secrecy". Described as "politically unknown, but with impeccable service records". The choice was considered to be "deliberated" in order not to "overshadow anyone".
Implications of both appointments for the EU's future (2)	A way to prevent falling into irrelevance would perhaps have been to elect a strong EU president.
Actors (1b)	Statements made by EU leaders. Expert contribution: Charles Grant, Director of Centre for European Reform in London and Antonio Missiroli, Director of European Policy Centre.

## 2.4 The Copenhagen climate summit

In one of his articles, Antonio Cerrillo from *La Vanguardia* positioned the EU as one of the leading actors of the summit, together with the US and China. More importantly, instead of referring individually to each of the European countries, the journalist grouped them under the EU umbrella. According to Cerrillo, the 'poor' agreement reached by the US and China left the EU "as the only power with important initiatives".<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, the EU was also criticized for not having been more ambitious. The newspaper's editorial pronounced a "disappointing agreement" in which "neither the pressure from the EU, nor the US President, [...] managed to overcome the distrust of China or India".<sup>50</sup>

Table 8 Summary of *La Vanguardia*'s coverage of the Copenhagen climate summit

Copenhagen climate summit	<i>La Vanguardia</i>
Importance attributed by the newspaper to the EU during the negotiations (1a)	One of the leading actors in the summit, alongside with the US and China.
Evaluation of EU's contribution (2)	The EU was criticized for not having been more ambitious.
Sense of belonging to Europe (3)	Constant references to the EU as a whole.
Actors (1b)	Statements made by UN officials and EU leaders: British PM Gordon Brown; French President Sarkozy; German Chancellor Angela Merkel; EU Commission President Durao Barroso; Connie Hedegaard, Danish climate minister; Danish PM, Lars Løkke Rasmussen; Swedish Environment Minister, Andreas Carlgren, EU Environment Commissioner, Stavros Dimas, or the Swedish premier, Fredrik Reinfeld.

<sup>49</sup> A. Cerrillo, "Un tratado congelado", *La Vanguardia*, 20 December 2009, p. 36-37.

<sup>50</sup> "Acuerdo decepcionante", editorial, *La Vanguardia*, 20 December 2009, p. 30.

Regarding the climate change conference, *The Guardian* focused more on the role undertaken by the US and the UK rather than the contribution made by the EU. During Copenhagen, the EU was, in Traynor's view, "barely consulted, never mind taking part in the negotiations".<sup>51</sup> Although the EU was presented as the third most influential actor, after the US and China, the newspaper was quite critical of the role it played. According to *The Guardian*, the mission of the EU should have been "to lead by example since this is the only way to build trust and encourage others to do the same. Trying to be the last to act will appear cowardly and lead to failure".<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Interview with Ian Traynor, Europe editor of *The Guardian*, Brussels 27 March 2010.

<sup>52</sup> "Copenhagen summit: The final stages in the game", Sandbarg.org.uk, part of *The Guardian* Environment Network, 18 December 2009, retrieved 22 January 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2009/dec/18/copenhagen-climate-change-summit-final-day>



Table 9 Summary of *The Guardian*'s coverage of the Copenhagen climate summit

Copenhagen climate summit	<i>The Guardian</i>
Importance attributed by the newspaper to the EU during the negotiations (1a)	EU was presented as the third most influential actor.
Evaluation of EU's contribution (2)	The EU "was completely sidelined" and "barely consulted". Quite critical of the role played by the EU.
Sense of belonging to Europe (3)	Greater focus on the UK during the negotiations rather than the contribution made by the EU as a whole. Britain, together with France, were presented as the pioneers of an international campaign.
Actors (1b)	Statements made by British politicians, Danish MEPs, UN officials and EU leaders: French President Sarkozy; German Chancellor Angela Merkel; EU Commission President Durao Barroso; Connie Hedegaard, Danish climate minister; Danish PM, Lars Løkke Rasmussen; EU Environment Commissioner, Stavros Dimas, or the Swedish premier, Fredrik Reinfeld. Expert contribution: Fuqiang Yang, director of global climate solutions, WWF International; John Prescott, climate change rapporteur for the Council of Europe; Martin Rees, president of the Royal Society; Bryony Worthington, climate campaigner with sandbag.org; Gavin Schmidt, climate scientist at Nasa; Kumi Naidoo, executive director, Greenpeace International; Vicky Pope, head of climate change advice at the Met Office; Nicholas Stern, chair, LSE; Dr Myles Allen, University of Oxford; Bernaditas de Castro Muller, former lead negotiator for the G77 plus China group of developing countries and Rajendra Pachauri, chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Unlike *The Guardian*, *Le Monde* made constant reference to the EU as a whole by using expressions like 'according to the Europeans', 'the twenty-seven Member States', 'the Union', or 'according to the European leaders'. Some journalists uniformly stated that, given the unpreparedness of the US, 'the Copenhagen' output depended largely on Europe".<sup>53</sup> However, according to an editorial by *Le Monde*, due to the very ambitious goals defended by Europe, "the EU was unable, or did not know how to communicate them".<sup>54</sup> The same editorial stated that the EU "was marginalized against a coalition that reflects the present distribution of political power in the world: the US, China, India, Brazil and South Africa".<sup>55</sup> In Kempf's opinion, the lack of visibility of the EU during the negotiations was due to the lack of preparation and coordination between

<sup>53</sup> J.-P. Besset & D. Cohn-Bendit & Y. Jadot & E. Joly, «L'Union européenne détient les clefs du succès», *Le Monde*, 21 November 2009, retrieved 17 March 2010, [http://www.lemonde.fr/opinions/article/2009/11/20/l-union-europeenne-detient-les-clefs-du-succes-par-jean-paul-besset-daniel-cohn-bendit-yannick-jadot-eva-joly\\_1269895\\_3232.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/opinions/article/2009/11/20/l-union-europeenne-detient-les-clefs-du-succes-par-jean-paul-besset-daniel-cohn-bendit-yannick-jadot-eva-joly_1269895_3232.html).

<sup>54</sup> «Une déception», editorial, *Le Monde*, 20 December 2009.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

the 27 MS. Kempf argued that given its lack of preparation, the EU “relied on the two great powers [the US and China] to decide”.<sup>56</sup>

Table 10 Summary of *Le Monde*'s coverage of the Copenhagen climate summit

Copenhagen climate summit	<i>Le Monde</i>
Importance attributed by the newspaper to the EU during the negotiations (1a)	Lack of visibility of the EU during the negotiations. The lack of preparation and coordination between the 27 Member States highlighted the divisions in Europe.
Evaluation of EU's contribution (2)	Europe has been “totally submerged by the national logic”. The EU was “marginalized” the US, China, India, Brazil and South Africa.
Sense of belonging to Europe (3)	Constant reference to the EU as a whole by using expressions like 'according to the Europeans', 'the twenty-seven Member States', 'the Union' or 'according to the European leaders'.
Actors (1b)	Statements made by UN officials and EU leaders: British PM Gordon Brown; French President Sarkozy; German Chancellor Angela Merkel; EU Commission President Durao Barroso; Connie Hedegaard, Danish climate minister; Danish PM, Lars Løkke Rasmussen; Swedish premier, Fredrik Reinfeld. Expert contribution: Jacques Lesourne, president of the scientific committee of IFRI's energy programme; Jean-Marie Martin-Amouroux, former director of studies of the CNRS and former director of the Institute of Economics and Energy Policy; Geneviève Azam, economist, Attac scientific council; Aurélie Trouvé, economist, vice-president Attac.

## 2.5 Analysis

The high visibility of the aforementioned topics in the three newspapers, as well as the variety of journalistic genres used, shows the importance attached by all of them to the coverage of EU topics. We have seen how the same topics were discussed at the same time and at the same level of relevance in the Spanish, British and French media. However, some differences can be observed in terms of press coverage.

The predominance of domestic issues during the European election campaign often distorted the coverage of what was really at stake. The absence of a European debate in the EP elections leads us to face the chicken and egg problem. The availability of EU-related information seems not to lead to an increased interest of citizens in European affairs. This fact is demonstrated by the low participation rates at the EP elections and the lack of European debate in national election campaigns. As has been

<sup>56</sup> H. Kempf, «L'Europe a démissionné à la conférence de Copenhague», *Le Monde*, 23 December 2009, retrieved 8 March 2010, [http://www.lemonde.fr/opinions/article/2009/12/23/l-europe-a-demissionne-a-la-conference-de-copenhague-par-herve-kempf\\_1284252\\_3232.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/opinions/article/2009/12/23/l-europe-a-demissionne-a-la-conference-de-copenhague-par-herve-kempf_1284252_3232.html).

shown throughout the present study, the European election campaigns carried out in Spain, the UK and France have highlighted the absence of a debate on European issues. While in most cases newspapers have tended to blame the political parties for the citizens' lack of interest in European affairs, the citizens have complained about the lack of commitment of both the political parties and the media with regard to the EU. Who is then responsible for the lack of debate on European issues? It can be argued that the responsibility is shared by the politicians, the media and the EU. While politicians use EP elections as a referendum on the policies of the party in government, the media tend to ask political leaders about national issues rather than European. The European institutions are often perceived by the citizens as distant and complex. In this respect, the EU should carry out a greater effort to communicate its mission and functioning in a more comprehensible way. As stated by the three correspondents in Brussels who were interviewed as part of the present study, the main function of the media is not to make "propaganda" for the EU, but to observe how the EU makes decisions and to make the decision-making process more transparent, thus reporting on possible irregularities. Therefore, a greater pedagogical work should be carried out by the politicians and the EU in order to bring the citizens closer to the EU. In light of the results, the only actor that has raised a debate on European issues in an effort to Europeanize national public spheres has been the media. All three newspapers have continuously highlighted the enormous importance of the EP as the only directly-elected institution representing the interests of the people of Europe.

When it comes to long political processes (such as the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty, frozen since June 2008 by the Irish and then by the refusal of the Czech President, Vaclav Klaus, to sign the treaty), the coverage tended to differ in each newspaper. Although the three newspapers were in favour of the ratification and

subsequent entry into force of the treaty, all of them showed signs of scepticism regarding its content. The selection of candidates for the new posts created by the Treaty of Lisbon has been one of the topics that has attracted more attention from the media analyzed. This is due to the coming on the scene of outstanding political figures such as Tony Blair. Although all newspapers carried an extensive coverage of the designation process, *The Guardian* was the most involved in the debate. Similarly, all newspapers were highly critical of the appointment of Van Rompuy and Ashton, claiming that the appointments lacked ambition and that the EU was still speaking with too many voices.

With regard to the Copenhagen summit, the newspapers underlined the marginalization of the EU during the summit and its lack of internal cohesion. A closer analysis of the way newspapers assessed the EU's role in international negotiations is a good indicator of their sense of belonging to the same European community.

The results reveal that the three newspapers have not been limited to the mere diffusion of information, but they have also expressed their own views on the events (in their editorials and opinion articles). With regard to the four EU events analyzed, *La Vanguardia*, *The Guardian* and *Le Monde* have become critical watchdogs of the EU, putting to test its legitimacy and revealing its malfunctions. As has been shown, all three newspapers simultaneously raised similar concerns about the functioning of the EU, contributing to the formation of a collective opinion on European issues. By doing so, they have shown signs of Europeanization in their reporting. They have all referred to the lack of European debate in their respective national public spheres, commented on the lack of visibility of the European Parliament and the uncertain fate of the EU after Lisbon, and they have interacted with other Member States' actors in their coverage. By doing so, they have effectively put into practise the three dimensions of

Europeanization proposed by Trenz at the beginning of this study, namely a substantial level of media attention to political news from the EU (vertical Europeanization) and other Member States (horizontal Europeanization), the establishment of a discursive exchange between the Spanish, British and French national public spheres and their sense of belonging to a common European public expressed in their editorials and articles.

As have been observed, some European topics have experienced a certain Europeanization in terms of interest, like the consequences of the Irish referendum for the Lisbon Treaty or Tony Blair's nomination for the presidency of the EU. When analysing the role of the EU during the Copenhagen summit, we have also been able to assess the degree to which the three newspapers "feel European", showing their commitment to a common European public. With few exceptions, we observe a greater emphasis on forging a more robust European identity. However, certain European issues continue to be perceived differently according to the national interests at stake. In this respect, it would be necessary to conduct a larger study, covering more countries and issues of less saliency, to determine whether there has been an overall Europeanization of the national media.

With regard to whether the media have contributed to the emergence of a European public sphere, some considerations should be taken into account. Most of the news stories published have been placed in the international or national news sections (especially in the cases of *La Vanguardia* and *The Guardian* with regard to the European election campaigns in both countries), with the exception of *Le Monde* as the only newspaper with a 'Europe' section. Although EU law has a clear impact on the sovereignty of its MS and the daily life of its citizens, EU -politics are not yet considered as domestic politics. In this respect, whether they are integrated into the

international news section or the ‘Europe’ section, EU-related news continue to be presented as foreign news. In this sense, the introduction of a news section dedicated to European affairs is regarded as one measure that could contribute to the emergence of a European public sphere, providing a greater visibility to the EU.

### **3 Conclusion**

Although it can be said that a Europeanization of the public sphere is slowly emerging, given the improved transnational political communication in the different public spheres, its consolidation requires that citizens become more involved in the public debate on European affairs fostered by the media. In this respect, the real challenge is to enhance the citizen’s interest in the EU.

As was pointed out at the beginning of the present study, the emergence of a common public sphere is difficult, given the cultural fragmentation of the European continent. Moreover, at a time when the EU needs to be more united than ever, the world is witnessing an unprecedented phenomenon of regionalization that makes it difficult for the EU to communicate with its citizens.

The emergence of a European public sphere depends on the establishment of a public space where citizens can debate on European issues, overcoming national borders and language barriers. In this respect, The European Daily, a project started three years ago in order to create a daily newspaper for Europe, appears to be one of the few newspapers addressing the lack of debate at the European level by providing daily news and analysis from a European perspective. The European Daily defines Europe beyond the EU, not limiting the European debate to purely economic issues, and uses English as its *lingua franca*.

In recent years, similar initiatives have been developed, some being more successful than others. With the current crisis of the printed media, the development of the online press has recently offered new possibilities for the creation of a pan-European network of high-quality journalism. In 2008 *Spiegel Online* (Germany) and *NRC Handelsblad* (Netherlands) created the first network of private newspaper publishers in Europe, with English as the language of common diffusion. Since 2008 they have often exchanged their articles and have collaborated on a series of journalistic projects together.

Furthermore, the news coverage of the current crisis of the Eurozone has led to an intense debate focused on the political dimension of the European integration project. Political leaders and thinkers from all around Europe have resorted to the media in order to take part in an unprecedented debate on the need for more Europe or less. Recently, European newspaper's editorials have increasingly tended to question the lack of ambition and commitment from many EU governments of creating a genuine political union that would eventually solve the economic crisis. In this regard, EU's current economic and identity could be regarded as a new starting point for the emergence of an ultimate European public sphere. It remains to be seen how citizens will take advantage of this opportunity.

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