



Framing of Cohesion Policy

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Abstract

The importance of mass media in shaping citizens' attitudes towards various political issues is well-documented in political communication and media studies. Moreover, mass media play an important role in the process of identity formation by influencing individual judgements towards the community and stimulating a sense of belonging in a group. Bearing these postulations in mind, it is clear that European integration and the formation of European identity can be affected by media representations of the EU and its policies. Following this logic, this research paper explores how media represent EU Cohesion policy and whether these representations can affect the formation of European identity. To address these goals, we undertake a framing analysis of 2714 media articles selected from European, national and regional media outlets over a 10-year period (2007-2017). The analysis revealed eight culturally-embedded frames producing news on Cohesion policy issues. The majority of the media articles had a positive valence, especially in relation to the EU. However, despite the positive valence of the analysed news articles, the analysis unfolded a low degree of Europeanisation of the public discourse. Overall, the results suggest that although media representations of Cohesion Policy can reflect a positive stance towards EU Cohesion policy, this does (yet) fully translate into the promotion of European identity mainly due to the fragmented and nationalised discourses employed by the media outlets that were investigated in this research.

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1. Introduction

The importance of mass media in shaping citizens' attitudes towards various political issues is well-documented in political communication and media studies. Media representations of current affairs determine citizens' criteria for interpreting and evaluating political actors, policies and institutions (De Vreese & Kandyla, 2009; Olausson, 2010; La Barbera, 2015). Moreover, mass media play an important role in the process of identity formation by influencing individual judgments towards the community and stimulating a sense of belonging in a group (Bruter, 2009). In that respect, it is expected that the process of European integration and the formation of a European identity among citizens of the EU will be affected by media representations of the European Union (EU) and its policies. COHESIFY aims at unfolding the role of Cohesion policy in shaping citizens' attitudes towards the EU and generating a sense of identification with the EU. The present research paper focuses on the role of the media in this process and features an extensive analysis of Cohesion policy media coverage, based on the assumption that the way EU Cohesion policy is depicted in the media, promotes the development of European identity.

The present research paper assesses media coverage of the EU Cohesion policy with the scope to determine whether media representations of the EU and its respective Cohesion policy contain the elements that promote identification with the EU. However, the process of European identity formation exhibits additional complications due to the fact that European citizens already possess predefined and established national identities, which coexist with their identification with the EU (Bruter, 2003; Olausson, 2010; Clement, 2015). This ongoing struggle between citizens' multiple identities does not entail the elimination of one over the other, but it rather raises a puzzle regarding their reconstruction into a collective identity that accommodates elements from citizens' national and European identities. Thus, along with assessing media coverage of EU Cohesion policy, the purpose of the analysis here is also to examine the interplay between national and European identities by considering media depictions of national and European actors and institutions, in news reports related to the EU Cohesion policy.

To address these goals, this study undertakes an extensive framing analysis along with a content analysis of Cohesion policy news. The term "framing" refers to the process of selecting, organizing and placing emphasis on certain aspects of the issue(s) at stake to make them more salient than others. This process constructs these aspects as the focal point on which the issue is structured, interpreted and evaluated (De Vreese et al., 2001; De Vreese & Kandyla, 2009; De Vreese, Boomgaarden & Semetko, 2011). By conducting a framing analysis, we attempt to identify the core ideas that dominate media discourses on EU Cohesion policy and, in turn, determine the criteria that shape citizens' evaluations of EU Cohesion Policy and their attitudes towards the EU. Additionally, this study includes a content analysis of news items focusing on EU Cohesion policy, in order to assess the emergence of specific elements that have been empirically linked to the European identity construction process. More specifically, there is an abundance of empirical evidence that supports that positive news valence, Europeanization of the public discourse and reference to European's common goals, interests, challenges and cultural heritage, positively affects audiences' attitudes towards the EU and their sense of belonging in a European community (Schuck & de Vreese, 2006; De Vreese & Boomgaarden 2006; Vliegenthart et al., 2008; Kandyla & De Vreese, 2008; De Vreese & Kandyla, 2009; Van Cauwenberge et al., 2009; La Barbera, 2015). Our analysis investigates the occurrence of these elements in Cohesion policy media coverage to assess the salience of European over national identity.

The results from the analyses unfolded that framing is very common in Cohesion policy media coverage, as the overwhelming majority of the analysed news items featured at least one frame. Most commonly, media outlets frame news related to the EU Cohesion policy in economic terms and in terms of quality of life. Five of the eight frames that were identified

involve positive connotations regarding the EU Cohesion policy, while the remaining three focus on its negative aspects. Regarding the role of media coverage on identity formation the results of the content analysis suggest that news coverage of Cohesion policy does not include a high degree of Europeanisation of the discourse, nor frequent reference to EU's common objectives, interests and cultural heritage. In addition, an analysis across media contexts was conducted revealing several cross-country differences that reaffirm the assumption of a fragmented European public sphere, in which each country's cultural, historical and political particularities determine the terms of public discourses.

In the following sections we review the theoretical background that guided the design of this study, while we provide a detailed description of the methodology employed for building the sample and conducting the analyses. Section 4 describes the frames and subframes that were identified in the inductive phase of the analysis. In section 5, we present the overall results of the analyses, a brief overview of every media context analysed and a comparative analysis across the thirteen (including the European press) media contexts. Finally, Section 6 discusses the main findings of the study, along with its limitations and its implications for future research.

2. Media Framing of EU Cohesion Policy and European Identity

Media framing analysis is grounded on Entman's paradigmatic thesis that framing is to "select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation" (Entman, 1993: 52). This entails that media outlets can communicate the same issue in several different ways, by placing emphasis on different aspects of the issue in question, and thus trigger different evaluations in the public's perception. In that respect, the idea that media frames of EU-related news affect the public's identification with the EU, and as a result contribute to the construction of a European sense of identity, has puzzled media scholars who investigated the issue in the past (Semetko, De Vreese & Peter, 2000; Bruter, 2003; Vliegenthart et al., 2008; De Vreese & Kandyla, 2009; De Vreese, Boomgaarden & Semetko, 2011; Polonska-Kimunguyi & Kimunguyi, 2011; La Barbera, 2015; Clement, 2015; Kaiser & Kleinen-von Königslöw, 2017).

The presence of news frames in media coverage of EU-related issues has been well-documented by empirical research (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000; De Vreese et al., 2001; Schuck & De Vreese, 2006; Azrout, van Spanje & De Vreese, 2012; Kaiser & Kleinen-von Königslöw, 2017) and scholars have applied several approaches in order to record and categorize media framing and its effects (De Vreese & Kandyla, 2009; De Vreese, Boomgaarden & Semetko, 2011). A common classification of news media frames distinguishes between generic and issue-specific frames. Issue-specific frames are tied to specific news topics or events while generic frames go beyond thematic boundaries and are applicable in various themes and topics. Another approach focuses on news frames' inherent valence (De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2003) as it has been empirically justified that frames contain a directional bias evaluating the EU as "good" or "bad" which in turn affects audiences' attitudes towards the EU (De Vreese & Kandyla, 2009).

In methodological terms, there are diverse approaches of framing analysis varying with the scope and purpose of the research. A common research approach involves identifying the frames employed by the media to provide framing classifications that are commonly used by the media. Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) have produced a commonly used typology of five generic frames with relevance to a wide range of EU-related topics. These generic frames are: a. conflict, b. economic consequences, c. human interest, d. attribution responsibility and e.

morality. Van Cauwenberge and his colleagues (2009) have extended this typology to capture two additional discourses (nationalization and power) that are salient in EU media coverage. In a similar vein, De Vreese, Boomgaarden and Semetko (2011) identified five issue-specific frames to assess framing effects on EU membership of Turkey, namely a. geopolitical security advantages, b. economic advantages, c. economic threats, d. cultural threats, and e. (national) security threats.

Another strain of framing analysis research adopts a deductive approach employing theoretically predefined frames in order to test specific hypotheses. De Vreese and Kandyla (2009) have used the frames "risk" and "opportunity" in an experimental design that investigates framing effects on citizens' attitudes towards EU common foreign and security policy. Similarly, Schuck and De Vreese (2001) apply the "risk" and "opportunity" frames in order to examine framing effects of news related to the EU enlargement, while La Barbera (2015) investigates the same issue by implementing a different set of frames (common project / common culture frames).

The wide variety of news frames that emerge in past research underscores the need for analytical tools that capture the specificities of a wide range of topics. Understanding European politics entails a significant degree of complexity, since a great spectrum of policy areas is interlinked with a great degree of controversy among national and European actors while several policy areas remain still unexplored by media scholars. Although generic frame typologies, such as the one proposed by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000), are relevant for understanding various EU-related issues, they involve a degree of subjectivity as arbitrarily selected news frames cannot capture every aspect of European politics. The multidimensionality of European politics calls for an analytical framework that is sensitive to issue-specific particularities. The latter may refer to the notion of "Europeanness" following the commonly accepted idea that news media play a pivotal role in the construction, growth and maintenance of identity (Olausson, 2010). Indeed, much of the research on European identity is directed towards the implications of media coverage on audiences' sense of belonging in a European community. In that respect, and despite the lack of empirical evidence focusing on EU Cohesion policy and its implications on European identity, researchers have revealed various mechanisms through which the media contribute to the construction of European identity and several factors that facilitate or impede its development. Although framing analysis can offer an accurate and detailed account of EU Cohesion policy depiction in national and European media from which we can draw conclusions on its effect on EU identity, the effects of culturally embedded frames on European identity have not been empirically tested and validated. To address this deficiency, we have opted for adopting a conceptualisation that incorporates three aspects that represent European identity and are discussed here.

- a. *News valence*: Empirical findings from past research suggest that positive news related to the EU and their resulting positive evaluations of the European Union, promote a sense of belonging to the EU and thus reinforce the construction of a European identity (De Vreese & Boomgaarden 2006; Schuck & de Vreese, 2006; Kandyla & De Vreese, 2008; Vliegenthart et al., 2008; De Vreese & Kandyla, 2009).
- b. *Europeanisation*: According to relevant research on European identity, one of the most significant determinants for the construction of a European identity is the Europeanization of the public discourse and the construction of a European public sphere (Semetko, De Vreese & Peter, 2000; De Vreese, Peter & Semetko, 2001; Van Os, 2005; Kandyla & De Vreese, 2011; Clement, 2015). In other words, news items that present EU-related news in national interests, benefits or threats, reinforce national identities, whereas news that focus on the common objectives and the interests of the EU facilitate the construction of a European identity.

- c. *Identity basis*: An additional scholarly approach of the study of European identity discusses the basis on which European identity is grounded by identifying two main “sources” (Jürgen & Rittberger, 2008; Polonska-Kimunguyi & Kimunguyi, 2011). The first perceives the EU as Europeans’ common project, where identification with the EU occurs in civic terms, since it is based on shared political, economic and social future goals. In contrast, the second perceives the EU in cultural terms such as shared values and traditions, focusing on Europeans’ common heritage.

To analyse news media framing of EU Cohesion policy in addition to our effort to examine the three aforementioned indicators of European identity, we follow a constructionist approach proposed by Van Gorp (2010). This analytical method combines an inductive framing analysis for identifying the news frames that are relevant for EU Cohesion policy, with a deductive content analysis for detecting news frame salience in European and national press coverage of Cohesion policy. Taking into consideration the diversity of media coverage across member states, this study also adopts a comparative perspective by analysing media coverage of EU Cohesion policy in twelve EU member states as well as the European media context, in order to develop an overall understanding of media framing of Cohesion policy in the EU.

3. Methodology

3.1 Data and Sampling

The analyses were conducted on a sample of 2714 online news articles, from thirteen different media contexts through a web crawler that was developed to collect the media articles back in 2007 until 2017. The web crawler relied on a lexicon based on two types of keywords in relation to Cohesion policy: a) Generic keywords (such as EU “Cohesion Policy”, “Regional development”, “ERDF/ European Regional Development Fund”, “Cohesion Fund/s”, “ESF/ European Social Fund”, “Structural Funds”, “Interreg”) and, b) Specific (region-related) keywords (e.g. for Scotland “Scotland Rural development programme / SRDP”, “LEADER initiative”, “Funding boost for Forestry Apprentices”, etc.). The keywords were translated in ten languages to cover the selected (17) case studies’ news sources. A python code was implemented to crawl the web and retrieve the most relevant articles for a given keyword from the Google Search service.

The total amount of articles that were crawled was 23928 from 4091 sources in all selected case studies. Yet this material needed to be “cleaned” since there was a large number of duplicated items and also many items gathered from sources that were not media sources. This filtering process was undertaken by human coders with an expertise in the media context of every country under study. The coders had to distinguish the media from the non-media sources and exclude the items that were crawled from non-media related websites, such as the EU or governmental sites. In addition, coders had to control whether the media sources were indeed part of their national media structure. For example, when the coders examined the Spanish corpus of items, they had to exclude a high number of articles which were crawled from Latin American sources because they were in Spanish.

Once the irrelevant articles were removed from the overall sample per country, the next step was to construct the sample for every case study using random stratified sampling. This process involved the random selection of approximately 280-300 per country applying a proportional distribution of news items per year. The goal was to have a similar and comparable number of items per case study across the duration of the period we focus. The average number of analysed items per case was approximately 209. Table 1 presents in detail

the information for every case and in particular in column 4 one can note the percentage of the sample from the overall population of every case. In two countries, those of Cyprus and Slovenia, the overall population consisted of 224 and 234 items respectively. Since these numbers were quite small the sampling process did not apply and the overall population of items was analysed. A final note should be made concerning the analysis which is described in detail in the following sections. As one can notice from Table 1, in all cases the selected samples consist of a higher number of items than the number that was finally analysed (see column 1). This is due to the fact that during the analysis which involves a deeper examination of the content of every item, coders identified items without any relevance or reference to Cohesion policy, so they had to exclude these from the analysis. In some cases, if the number of 'irrelevant' articles was big, then a second sample was constructed based on random and stratified selection in the same way as was done initially.

Table 1: Overall Sample of collected Data

Country	N Articles	N Crawled	N Random Selection	% Selected	% Coded	N Relevant Sources	N Sources Total
Cyprus	179	224	224	100	79.9	13	15
Germany	208	2154	280	13	9.7	167	550
Greece	239	1553	295	19	15.5	142	212
Hungary	225	2040	306	15	13.8	134	150
International	101	1159	340	29.3	8.7	11	11
Ireland	81	271	271	100	29.9	46	49
Italy	218	1454	294	20.2	15.0	289	805
Poland	386	1813	463	25.5	21.6	172	278
Romania	235	5236	319	6.1	4.5	205	282
Slovenia	192	234	234	100	82.5	26	26
Spain	235	4253	509	12	5.5	103	273
UK	247	937	351	37.5	26.4	226	1023
Netherlands	168	2600	476	18.3	6.5	327	417
Total	2714	23928	4362	38.1	24.6	1861	4091

3.2 Analytical process

For conducting the framing analysis, we adopted Van Gorp's (2010) constructionist methodology that features an inductive framing analysis for identifying relevant culturally embedded frames along with a deductive content analysis for assessing their salience in the sample. The inductive phase of the analysis is based on the process of open coding while the deductive phase is based on content analysis. Below we explain each phase and the analytical process in detail.

i. Open coding

The first stage of the analysis involves an open coding process aiming to identify a) framing devices, which are manifest elements in the text that function as demonstrable indicators of the frame, such as metaphors, historical examples from which lessons are drawn, catchphrases, depictions, visual images, themes/subthemes, types of actors, actions and settings, lines of reasoning and causal connections, contrasts, lexical choices, sources,

quantifications and statistics, stats and graphs, emotional/ logical/ ethical appeals; and b) reasoning devices, which are defining functions of the frames that form a route of causal reasoning (Example: Who is to blame?), and could be reconstructed in frame packages. This inductive phase of the analysis aims at generating the frame matrix which is used as an analytical tool in the deductive content analysis. To achieve this, two coders working independently by the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; 1971) analysed 100 articles drawn from the Cypriot sample initially, and identified framing and reasoning devices that were organized into the frame matrix. This process required simultaneously coding, analysing and organizing information, until the frame packages were formed and introduced into the frame matrix. The two coders continued further with the analysis of other four media contexts (UK, Ireland, Greece and international media), and reconstructed the frame matrix accordingly taking into account the new elements that emerged. Intercoder reliability in the inductive phase was tested with Cohen's kappa at the level 0.83.

In the process of reconstructing the frame packages, we followed Van Gorp's (2010) concept of looking for culturally-embedded frames, rather than issue-specific or generic frames. Van Gorp (2010) argues that culturally embedded frames "form universally understood codes that implicitly influence the receiver's message interpretation, which lends meaning, coherence, and ready explanations for complex issues" (Van Gorp, 2010: 6). Therefore, culturally embedded frames provide narratives that are familiar to readers, and are more appealing for journalists (Van Gorp, 2010). Moreover, in order to gain a more detailed understanding of how EU Cohesion policy is depicted in national and European media, we broke down framing packages into interpretive categories that were introduced into the frame matrix as subframes. As Milioni and Vadratsikas argue (2016) subframes not only enhance the precision of the framing analysis, but also increase the efficiency of comparative analysis. Additionally, this process ensured that any overlaps between subframes would be eliminated and each subframe would correspond to specific types of cases, in order to secure the reliability of the results.

Nevertheless, cultural themes may differ between national contexts, resulting in diversity in media coverage and the frames employed by the media. In order to account for this diversity, the open coding process was repeated in five case studies (Cyprus, Greece, UK, Ireland and the European media) and the frame matrix was adjusted to accommodate for frame packages that emerged in different national contexts. Moreover, through this process we created a comprehensive coding guide that was disseminated to coders who analysed the remaining case studies, in order to ensure that additional frame packages would be included in the frame matrix. Finally, coders were provided specific instructions on how to identify framing and reasoning devices and match them with subframes on the frame matrix, and they were instructed to record cases where framing and reasoning devices did not correspond to any of the framing packages on the frame matrix. All such cases that emerged were then discussed with the leading coding team and the frame matrix was modified to include additional cases or introduce new subframes. The final frame matrix, which was completed when no new frames emerge in the texts, comprised eight main frames and thirty-three relevant subframes. These were then used as the basis for the deductive phase of the analysis.

ii. Content Analysis

The deductive phase of the analysis followed the basic principles of a quantitative content analysis, based on Van Gorp's (2010) methodology. Coders analysed the articles and recorded whether the inductively reconstructed frame packages, which were introduced into the frame matrix, were actually present on news related to the EU Cohesion policy. Two coders conducted a pilot analysis in 100 articles drawn by the Cypriot sample, in order to test coding consistency in identifying subframes and refine coding guidelines. When the coders

reached an acceptable level of agreement¹, the coding guide was finalized and the coders proceeded to the final coding of the articles. Considering the diversity in media coverage between national contexts, pilot analyses were conducted in data drawn from the Greek and UK samples in order to ensure that coding instructions were applicable within different contexts. Nevertheless, no significant differences were found as the coding consistency remained at acceptable levels.

Except for recording the presence of frames in the texts, the deductive phase of the analysis focused on considering the weight of the emerging frame packages. Taking into account that many articles included framing and reasoning devices that corresponded to more than one subframe, coders were given instructions to record the dominant subframe in each article based on a set of guidelines that considered: (a) the prominence of each subframe (example - whether a subframe appears on the title), (b) the number of reasoning and framing devices (in cases where two or more subframes appeared with equal amounts of devices, the question of dominant subframe was resolved by word count), (c) the overall impression of the coders regarding the article's position on the issue. Finally, in some occasions it was found that although a frame was present, the author's position was to challenge the main idea assumed by the frame. Based on Milioni and Vadratsikas findings (2016), coders were instructed to record cases where frames were disputed by the authors, despite of their presence in the text.

As mentioned in section 2, the three elements, which are considered pertinent for the search of European identity elements in the media texts, were also examined and measured. More specifically, for accounting for the news valence, news items were coded as positive, neutral or negative evaluating whether Cohesion policy related news promote or impede the construction of a European identity. For addressing the aspect of Europeanisation, our coding scheme recorded whether news items were presented from a European or a national perspective. News items that did not include a clear European/ national approach of the news were recorded as "none". Finally, turning to the identity basis we took into consideration the empirical results that demonstrate that framing the EU as a common project results in higher identification with the EU, providing empirical support to the assumption that European citizens identify with the EU mostly in civic terms, while the cultural component of European identity is still under-developed (La Barbera, 2015). Given this assumption, news items that referred to the EU's common interests and objectives were coded as common project, while news that mentioned common European culture, history and values were coded as common heritage.

4. Frame Matrix

The main output of the open coding process described above was a comprehensive Frame Matrix (see Annex I for an analytical table), which outlines all the frames identified in the inductive phase of the analysis and was used as the basic analytical tool provided to the coders in the deductive phase of the framing analysis. The Frame matrix includes eight main frames and thirty-three subframes that capture the main characteristics of frames as described in Entman's (1993) conceptualization of framing.

Frame 1. Economic Consequences

The economic consequences frame focuses on the economic implications of EU Cohesion policy. Cohesion policy funded projects are represented in terms of economic gains (positive implications such as creating jobs, economic development or modernization of production processes) or losses (negative implications such as increased budgetary costs for net

¹Intercoder reliability was tested in terms of simple agreement and reached 80%. According to Van Gorp (2010), high levels of agreement for devices that appear occasionally in the texts is not to be expected, especially when using indexes like Cohen's Kappa.

contributor states). It consists of four subframes, three of which involve positive depictions of EU Cohesion policy, while the fourth (Financial burden) touches upon the negative implications of Cohesion policy for national budgets and economies.

Subframe 1.1 "Job Creation". This subframe approaches Cohesion policy as a means to reduce unemployment by creating jobs and increasing the skills of the workforce. Relevant policies usually involve employment subsidies, apprenticeship programmes and job training for unemployed citizens with limited skills.

Subframe 1.2 "Development". In the development subframe, Cohesion policy is attributed with the role of revitalizing economic activity by creating business opportunities and providing motivation for investment. In that respect, cohesion policy projects aim at tackling the negative implications of the financial crisis by funding developmental projects to boost economic activity and adjusting legal regulations in order to attract investment.

Subframe 1.3 "Innovation". This subframe constructs Cohesion policy as a means to overcome outdated production methods and promote state-of-the-art economic development. Relevant policies involve funding for research and development, innovative technologies, modernization of production processes and improving the quality of the workforce.

Subframe 1.4 "Financial burden". This subframe represents EU Cohesion policy in terms of budgetary costs for national economies. Cohesion policy is represented in negative terms as a waste of national resources draining the economies of hard-working countries in order to finance unnecessary projects in poor member states. The "financial burden" subframe is often associated with Euroscepticism and suggestions for member states to abandon the EU generating this way negative perceptions of EU Cohesion policy.

Frame 2. Quality of life

The quality of life frame focuses on the implications of EU Cohesion policy on citizens' standards of living. Cohesion policy funded projects are represented in terms of their positive effects in citizens' everyday life. This frame elaborates on how EU Cohesion policy enhances living standards by protecting the environment, reducing inequality and injustice in the society, improving public services for citizens and creating infrastructure. This frame contains four subframes, each one of which emphasizes a particular domain of everyday life to which Cohesion policy contributes positively.

Subframe 2.1 "Environment". Here, Cohesion policy is attributed with the role of promoting policies to protect the environment and creating environmentally-friendly technologies for EU member states. In this respect, Cohesion policy projects aim at tackling the negative consequences of the destruction/waste of natural resources and the degradation of natural landscape by funding projects that could promote green policies through institutional monitoring of the current environmental conditions.

Subframe 2.2 "Social justice". Subframe 2.2 constructs EU Cohesion policy as a way to overcome injustice and inequality and promote equal opportunities between EU citizens, protect vulnerable social groups, such as immigrants and people with special needs, in order to bridge the gap between rich and poor. Relevant Cohesion policies involve funding for the adoption of good practices that promote equal treatment in the working environment, training programmes for vulnerable groups, creation of infrastructures that promote accessibility to public spaces for everyone and offer a financial support for the most disadvantaged groups. The subframe "social justice" is often associated with social welfare, the elimination of discrimination in the EU and solidarity between social groups in EU member states.

Subframe 2.3 "Public services". Subframe 2.3 describes how EU Cohesion policy projects enhance the quality of public services offered to the citizens. Cohesion policy funded projects are approached in terms of modernizing the public administration, the social security system, the public health, the public education and promoting e-governance. Relevant projects involve the creation of computerized systems for public administration by introducing new technology and expertise in order to improve the quality of public services.

Subframe 2.4 "Infrastructure". In this subframe, EU Cohesion policy is represented positively and, more specifically, as a means to overcome the lack of necessary infrastructures and services for citizens in EU cities. This is achieved through the implementation of effective projects that improve citizens' everyday life (e.g. parks, squares, public transportation, pedestrian streets, and bicycle lanes).

Frame 3. Culture

The third frame focuses on the implications of EU Cohesion policy in cultural matters. Cohesion policy funded projects are represented in positive terms and in particular as a means to promote cultural production, support local culture and maintain member states' cultural heritage. This frame contains the following two subframes:

Subframe 3.1 "Cultural heritage". Subframe 3.1 represents Cohesion policy as an extra way of funding for the protection and maintenance of cultural heritage and a mechanism to overcome the indifference of national authorities in this domain. Relevant Cohesion policies involve funding projects for the better exploitation of archaeological and historical sites, the restoration of monuments, and the promotion of cultural policies to raise citizens' awareness on cultural matters.

Subframe 3.2 "Cultural development". In the "cultural development" subframe, Cohesion policy is attributed with a revitalizing role of the cultural sector through the motives and support it provides to local artists. Following this rationale, Cohesion policy projects aim at tackling the lack of resources available for artists to promote their work. Relevant projects involve the construction of new/or the renovation of cultural spaces (e.g. theatres, music halls etc.) and the promotion of artistic events.

Frame 4. Incompetence of local governance

The fourth frame constructs EU Cohesion policy in juxtaposition to national and local authorities' incompetence to implement relevant policies. Cohesion policy is understood as a way to overcome inefficient practices adopted by national and local authorities, which impede convergence between EU member states. This frame contains three subframes focusing on different aspects of local and national authorities' inefficiencies, while a fourth subframe (subframe 4.2 "Restore order") depicts Cohesion policy as a means to overcome such inefficiencies.

Subframe 4.1 "Mismanagement of funds". This subframe is built upon the argument that national and local authorities are inefficient in managing Cohesion policy projects. In terms of cohesion policies funding, local authorities fail to implement the projects as originally planned due to poor design, inefficient management and delays, elements that lead to slow absorption or even suspension of funds on the part of the EU. The objective of Cohesion policy is to establish more efficient control mechanisms by the European institutions over local authorities by increasing efficiency in managing structural funding.

Subframe 4.2 "Restore order". Subframe 4.2 approaches Cohesion policy as a means to force local authorities to implement policies that conform to the European standards, on matters

they have been unwilling or indifferent in resolving. In that respect, Cohesion policy aims at mobilizing local and national authorities in dealing with issues in ways that are compliant with EU regulations (for example, environmentally-friendly management of waste).

Subframe 4.3 "Bureaucracy". This subframe focuses on difficulties in the implementation of cohesion policy projects, due to bureaucratic procedures adopted by national and local authorities. The subframe 4.3 considers relevant policies those that involve simplifying procedures and reducing bureaucracy in EU member states, as a means to improve the efficiency of cohesion policy projects and hasten convergence among member states.

Subframe 4.4 "Failure to inform the public". This subframe focuses on lack of awareness of the public and potential applicants regarding Cohesion policy funding opportunities and procedures. Subframe 4.4 puts forward the implications of beneficiaries' inexperience in the implementation of Cohesion policy and the absorption of Cohesion funding. More specifically, inexperienced applicants fail to conform to rules and procedures leading to low absorption and high disruption rates of Cohesion funds. Relevant policies involve local and national campaigns for informing prospective beneficiaries of funding opportunities and application procedures in EU institutions.

Frame 5. Power

The power frame approaches EU Cohesion policy in terms of power relations between the involved political actors. Rather than focusing on the implications of Cohesion policy in terms of economy, quality of life etc., this frame considers how local, national and European political actors seek to increase their power and their potential to influence the decision making process. The Power frame includes three relevant subframes focusing on the implications of EU Cohesion policy on power relations between political actors, two of which have a negative valence for EU Cohesion policy and one (Subframe 5.2) represents a positive impact on power distribution.

Subframe 5.1 "Political leverage". Subframe 5.1 represents Cohesion policy as a process to exercise pressure on national governments that do not conform to European regulations and Euro-group decisions. Cohesion funding is understood as a means through which EU institutions enforce their will on member states through funding conditionality. This subframe assumes a critical stance towards EU institutions and is associated with Euroscepticism. Relevant policies for dealing with this problem usually involve conditionality of Cohesion policy funding linked to the implementation of other EU policies such as EU fiscal rules on deficits.

Subframe 5.2 "Empowerment". Subframe 5.2 constructs Cohesion policy as a means to empower local authorities that are excluded from the decision-making process. In that respect, Cohesion funding is understood as providing greater autonomy to local institutions that have been traditionally dependent on central governments' decisions and funding.

Subframe 5.3 "Political capital". In the political capital subframe, national actors politically exploit Cohesion policy projects in order to claim credit for themselves and increase their political influence. In this sense, citizens are misled to believe that Cohesion-funded projects are attributed exclusively to initiatives of local/national political actors, ignoring or diminishing the role and contribution of the EU.

Frame 6. National Interests

Frame 6 focuses on positive and negative implications of EU Cohesion policy for promoting national interests of EU member states. This frame introduces a nationalistic element in the

discourse around EU Cohesion policy, by contradicting national interests against the implementation of EU policies. In that respect, EU Cohesion policy is approached in terms of separate national gains and losses, rather than convergence among member states. This frame consists of three subframes considering the implications of EU Cohesion policy on national interests. These subframes are associated with nationalization of public discourses and are expected to favour national, over European, identities, despite the fact that two of the subframes (subframes 6.1 and 6.2) entail a positive valence for EU Cohesion policy.

Subframe 6.1 "External relations". Subframe 6.1 approaches Cohesion policy as an opportunity for EU member states to improve their relations with neighbouring countries and protect their territorial rights from third countries' aggression. Relevant policies usually involve the promotion of cross-border cooperation among member and non-member states and the promotion of EU investment in disputed border areas to establish territorial rights.

Subframe 6.2 "Brain drain". This subframe represents Cohesion policy positively as an effective mechanism against the problem of immigration of young and educated individuals in order to find employment. The focus is placed on the risks of depopulation and the brain drain that entails for nation states. Relevant policies usually involve providing funding and attracting investments to create employment opportunities within the country, that will help EU countries to maintain opportunities for their scientific personnel and thus stop the brain drain.

Subframe 6.3 "Sovereignty". The third subframe focuses on the trade-offs for EU Cohesion policy funding and elaborates on the costs for national sovereignty. Following this logic, Cohesion funding comes at the price for member states of losing sovereignty and yielding some of their decision making power to the EU institutions. In that respect, Cohesion policy funding is understood as a threat for national sovereignty and subframe 6.3 promotes Euroscepticism and nationalism since it advances negative implications of Cohesion policy on national interests.

Frame 7. Cohesion

This frame focuses on the role of Cohesion policy in a) strengthening civic participation between EU citizens, b) raising citizens' awareness and trust to European institutions and c) promoting European integration. This approach is grounded on the idea that Cohesion policy projects reduce inequalities between social groups and across nation states and promote a sense of community among European citizens. Thus, it should be noted that representations of EU Cohesion policy under the "Cohesion" Frame are in line with the notion of a European identity, since it is associated with solidarity, community and trust which are essential elements for identification with the EU. Frame 7 consists of three subframes focusing on EU Cohesion policy's positive effects on civic collaboration, civic awareness and solidarity respectively.

Subframe 7.1 "Civic participation/collaboration". Subframe 7.1 approaches Cohesion policy as a means to stimulate civic participation and promote collaboration among European citizens. It advances the role of Cohesion policy in promoting synergies among citizens and facilitating the community building process.

Subframe 7.2 "Social Awareness". In the second subframe of the cohesion frame, Cohesion policy is framed in terms of raising citizens' awareness on issues of social exclusion and civic responsibility in order to promote a sense of community. Relevant policies usually involve the organisation of seminars to build trust and a sense of community among citizens as well as events to promote awareness against racism, xenophobia and social exclusion.

Subframe 7.3 "Solidarity". Subframe 7.3 represents Cohesion policy as an effective mechanism against populism, nationalism and Euroscepticism by raising citizens' trust to the EU and by eliminating disparities between EU regions. Relevant policies usually involve investment in underdeveloped regions and the central management of new challenges (e.g. financial crisis, refugee crisis).

Frame 8. Fund abuse

The "Fund abuse" frame refers to cases where national actors illegitimately gain access to Cohesion policy funds which they exploit for their own profit, rather than in order to implement the Cohesion policy objectives. Frame 8 constructs Cohesion policy as an EU policy area that gives rise to fraud and corruption, while the EU is depicted as a victim that provides funds to be exploited by national actors' illicit activities. This frame consists of two subframes focusing on corruption and fraud, which are the most common types of fund abuse that were identified in the analysed material.

Subframe 8.1 "Corruption". Subframe 8.1 focuses on the abuse of EU funds by corrupted national/local public officials. Cohesion policy is understood as an ineffective policy area due to public officials' illegal activity that results in abnormally high costs or poor implementation of Cohesion policy projects. Responsibility is attributed to both national and European authorities for failing to establish efficient control to regulate cash flow and monitor the implementation of the funded projects.

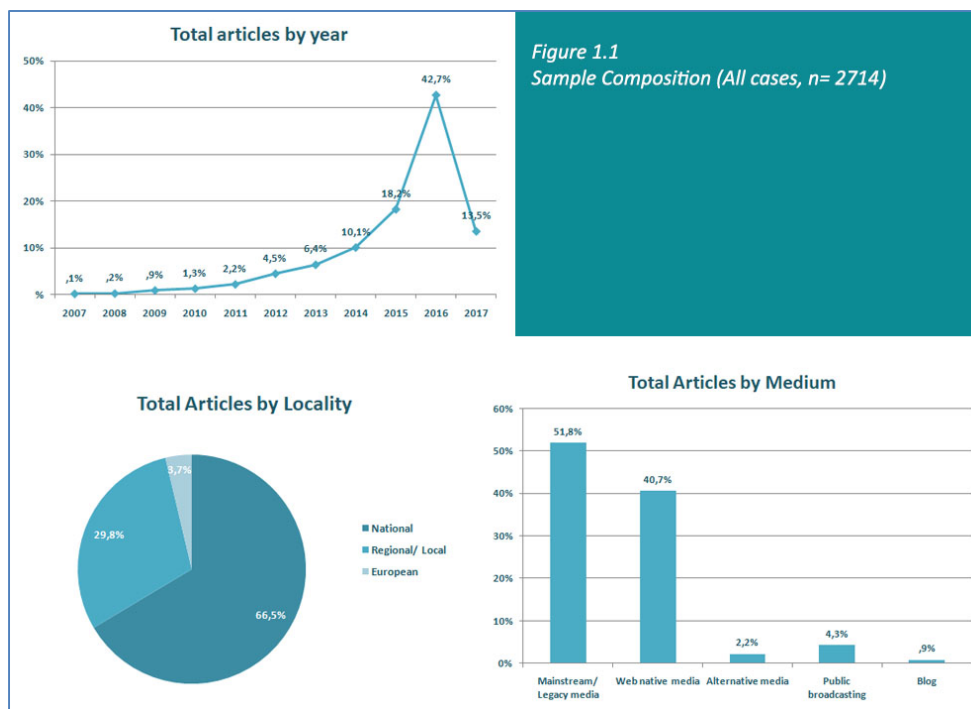
Subframe 8.2 "Fraud". Subframe 8.2 emphasis is on fund misappropriation by beneficiaries who receive funding without implementing the projects according to the agreed terms. Cohesion policy is, therefore, presented as a policy area that is targeted by fraudsters, resulting in loss of EU funds. Responsibility is usually attributed to European and national authorities for failing to prevent these cases. Relevant policies for resolving the problem usually involve the establishment of more efficient control mechanisms and the punishment for the individual/ organization that is responsible for the abuse of funds.

5. Overall Analysis

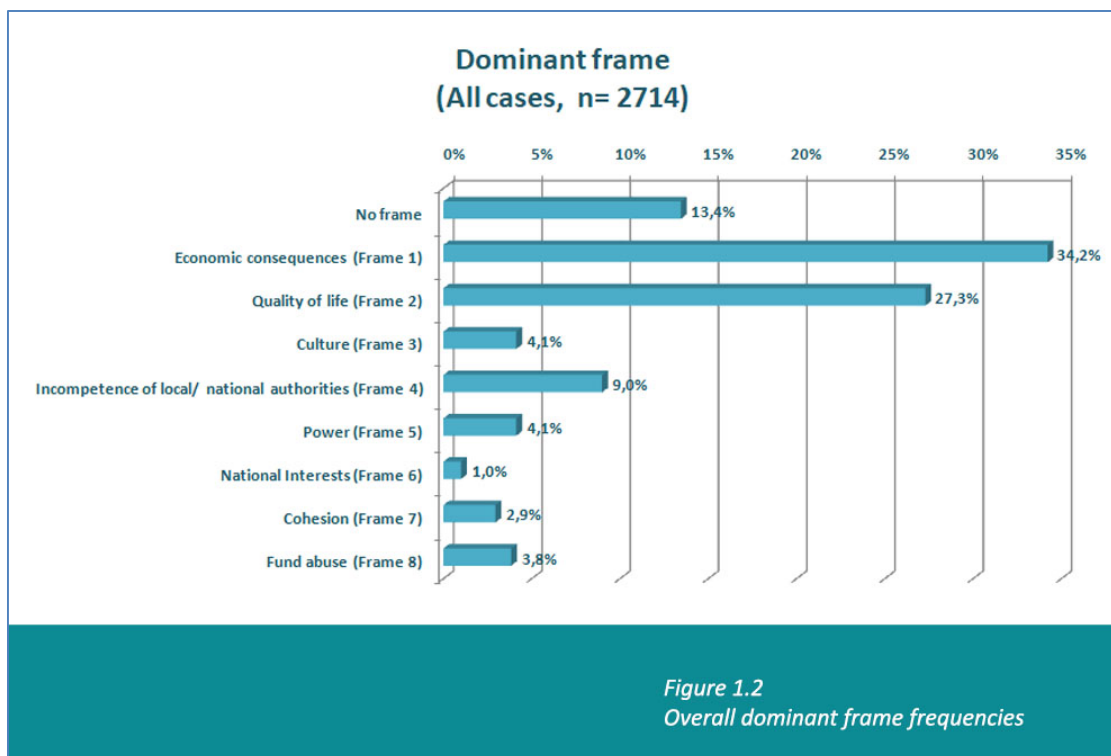
5.1 Framing Analysis

The total amount of items analysed was 2714. Figure 1.1. demonstrates some further characteristics of the overall sample. The overwhelming majority of the articles (90.9%) that were identified have been published within the years 2013-2017, with a remaining 9.1% drawn from the period 2007-2012. As shown in Figure 1.1, the number of articles that were identified by the crawler increases steadily with time. A possible explanation for this increase is that due to technical reasons, most of the relevant websites do not archive all the articles that were published in past dates. However, this increase could also mean that Cohesion policy has gained significance in public discourse during the last years, or that recent developments within the EU, such as Brexit and the financial crisis, have raised the degree of politicization of the EU and consequently the number of articles debating EU Cohesion policy. Nevertheless, understanding the reasons behind this pattern requires specialized analyses that go beyond the purposes of this report.

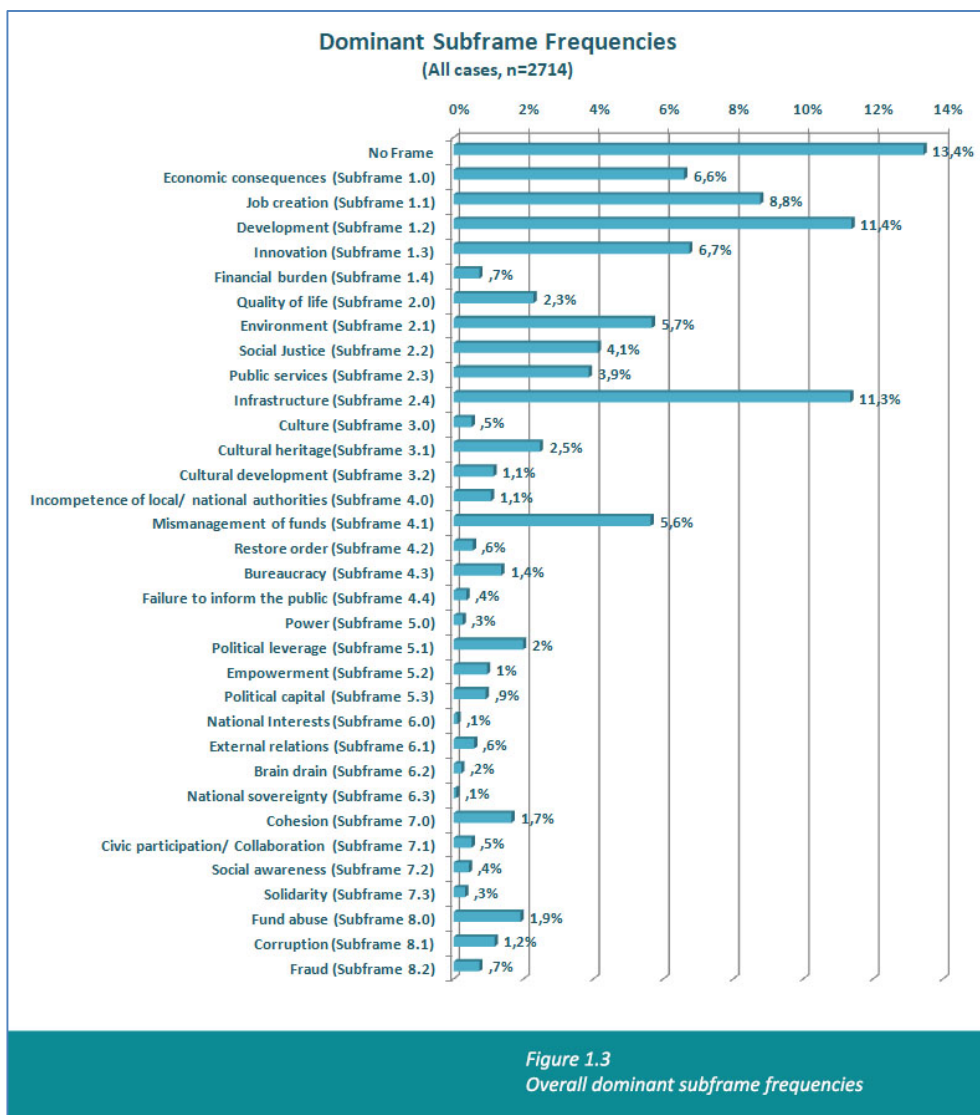
Nearly 66% of the sample was drawn from national and 30% from regional media sources, with a remaining 4% published in European and international sources. The majority of the articles were drawn from media outlets which were classified as mainstream/ legacy media. These are understood as long-established, elite-oriented print and online broadsheet newspapers managed by large private media organizations that dominate the public discourse. Another 41% of the articles were published by media outlets which publish exclusively online without any print edition, run by professional journalists or private media organizations. They can be news websites that function as news aggregators and they can be seen as well-established mainstream news portals or tabloid news website for example. These media outlets are called web native media and they usually conform to the dominant discourses and professional norms set by the mainstream media. A 4% of the sample was drawn from public broadcasting media, such as public television and radio stations. In addition, another 2.2% of the sample was published by alternative media sources such as community media and advocacy media outlets. These are independent organizations which are differentiated from major news corporations since they are run not for profit but for their sustenance and they are usually self-managed and collectively-organized by journalists' cooperatives. Finally, only a 0.6% of the sample was found in blogs.



The framing analysis revealed that nearly 86% of the articles employed some frame in the presentation of news related to EU Cohesion policy. From the eight main frames identified, Frame 1 (“Economic consequences”) was the most frequently used, since it featured as dominant frame in 34.2% of the cases. Frame 2 (“Quality of life”) was dominant in 27.3% of the cases, while the six remaining frames were used less frequently as shown in Figure 1.2. This finding suggests that media outlets tend to interpret EU Cohesion policy in terms of economic gains and losses as well as its impact on citizens’ everyday lives, which corresponds closely to the policy’s objectives. Frame 4 (“Incompetence of local/ national authorities”) was identified in 9% of the cases. Frame 4 approaches EU Cohesion policy in relation to inefficient or inappropriate practices adopted by national authorities, which lead to delays in the implementation of Cohesion policy projects, cancellations of projects and/or the emergence of continuous problems regarding the functioning of the policy projects. Frame 3 (“Culture”), which considers the positive contribution of CP on cultural matters, and Frame 5 (“Power”) that interpret Cohesion policy in terms of power relations among national and European actors, dominated around 4% of the overall sample. Frame 8 (“Fund abuse”) that focuses on cases of corruption and fraud aiming to exploit funds dedicated to Cohesion policy projects was found in 3.8% of the cases. Frame 7 (“Cohesion”) was dominant in less than 3% of the cases. This Frame considers Cohesion policy in terms of civic participation, solidarity and community building. Finally, it is worth noting that in spite of a Eurosceptic wave that rises in Europe during the last years, Frame 6 (“National interests”) that examines the implications of EU Cohesion policy on national interests was found in only 1% of the cases. This finding indicates that although Euroscepticism follows a rising trend in the EU, news related to EU Cohesion policy has not endorsed nationalistic and Eurosceptic discourses in recent years.



In order to acquire a better understanding of the framing patterns of Cohesion policy, we have broken down these eight frames in respective subframes, describing the particular nature of each framing item. Overall, the analysis was completed with 33 subframes as discussed in detail in section 4 on Frame Matrix. Figure 1.3 shows the percentages of each respective subframe and reveals that “infrastructure” (Subframe 2.4) and “development” (Subframe 1.2) are the most common subframes media professionals employ when reporting on EU Cohesion. The introduction of subframes provides us with a better, more specialised, understanding of the particular meaning each frame entails for EU Cohesion policy. In fact, although frames 2, 3 and 7 clearly assign a positive meaning and Frame 8 a negative meaning to EU Cohesion policy, the remaining frames contain both positive and negative subframes. The latter in turn enhance respective positive and negative connotations for EU Cohesion policy. This observation though warrants a bit more clarification.



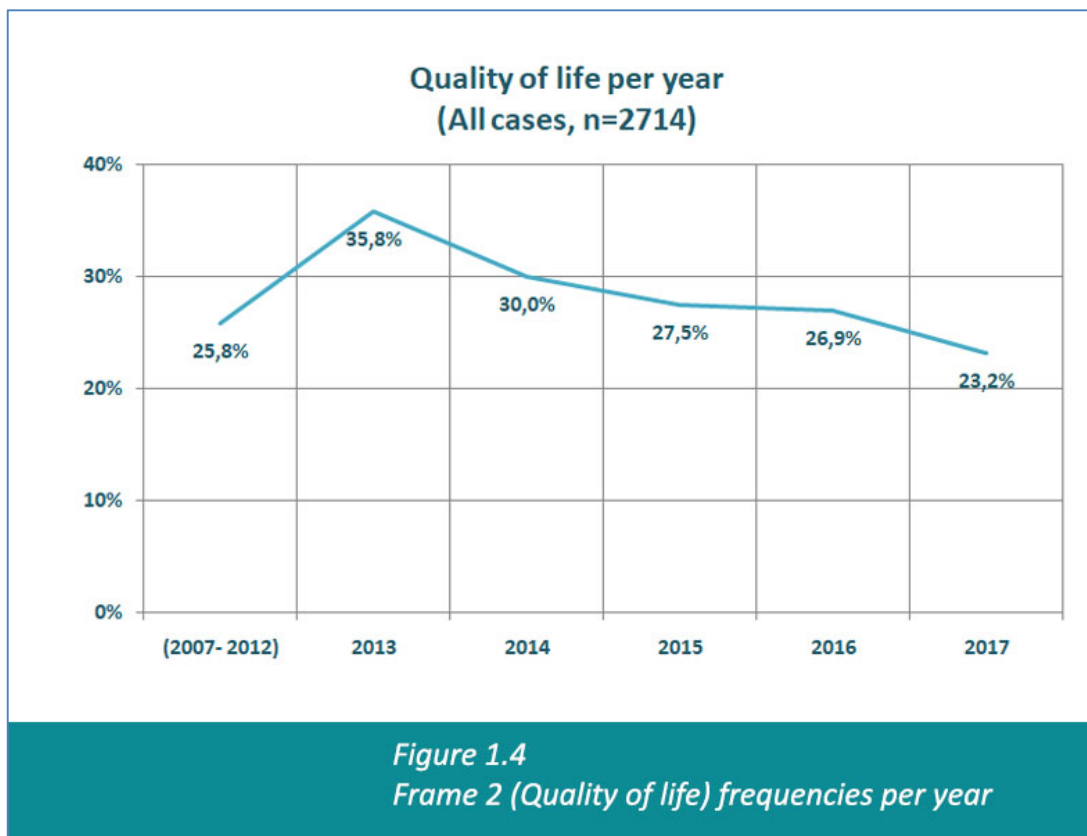
Note: Subframes x.o (e.g. 1.0, 2.0 etc.) refer to the overall frames. They appear nevertheless in the figures that show the frequencies of subframes in order to delineate that in some articles where there was no specific reference to a subframe, the overall frame dominated. This is the reason we treat them as subframes (mainly for visualization reasons) only in the figures that present the frequencies of subframes. For example, i.e. subframe 1.0 means that the article frames Cohesion policy in terms of its economic consequences in general, without referring to job creation (subframe1.1), development (subframe1.2), innovation (subframe1.3) or as financial burden (subframe1.4) specifically.

More specifically, Frame 1 contains three positive subframes (1.1 - 1.3) considering the positive implications of CP on the economy, and one negative (1.4), that focuses on the high costs for member states' contribution to CP. Taking into account the low percentage of subframe 1.4, we consider that Frame 1 has an overall positive valence for CP. Similarly, Frame 4 contains three negative subframes (4.1, 4.3 and 4.4) and one positive (4.2). Adding up the percentages of the positive and the negative subframes, the result is a dominance of a negative valence. Finally, following the same rationale, Frame 5 indicates a negative valence and Frame 6 a positive overall valence respectively. Thus, the analysis concludes with five positively-valence and three negatively-valence frames, as shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Overall Frame Valence	
Positive	Negative
Economic consequences (Frame 1)	Incompetence of local/ national authorities (Frame 4)
Quality of life (Frame 2)	Power (Frame 5)
Culture (Frame 3)	Fund abuse (Frame 8)
National Interests (Frame 6)	
Cohesion (Frame 7)	

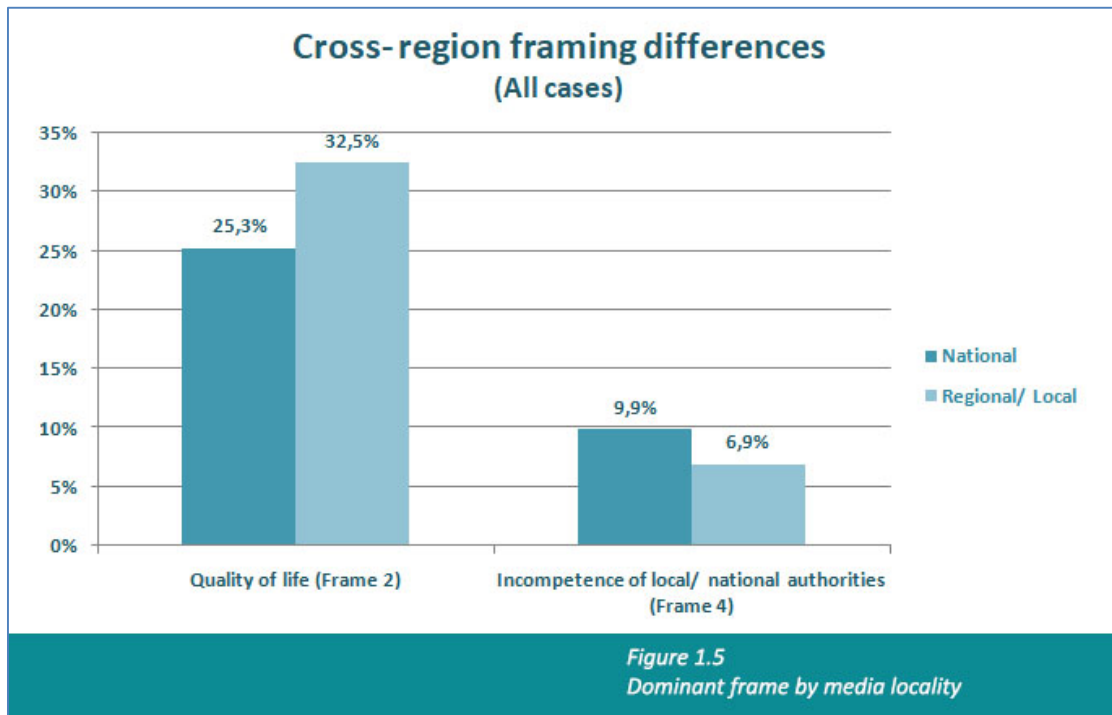
Moreover, except for the above descriptive statistical analysis that presents the frequencies of the frames, we tried to assess whether these frequencies are affected by other variables. Thus, we run cross tabulation analysis of frames with some of the article characteristics (Date, Locality, Medium type) as well as with the additional European identity variables (News valence, Europeanization, Identity basis) to assess whether there is a relationship between those variables and the respective frames. Nevertheless, due to the complexity of some variables, this report focusses on the major findings.

Starting with the analysis of frame frequencies per year, the cross-tabulation reveals no significant pattern apart from a steady decline in the emergence of Frame 2 ('Quality of life') from 2013 until 2017. As Figure 1.4 shows, the percentages of Frame 2 follow a declining pattern, moving from nearly 36% in 2013 to 23.2% in 2017, below the average value of the 2007-2012 period. This decline may be associated with the ongoing wider developments in the EU, such as the financial crisis, Brexit and the rise of Euroscepticism, which have shifted the public discourse away from the positive implications of EU Cohesion policy on citizens' everyday lives.

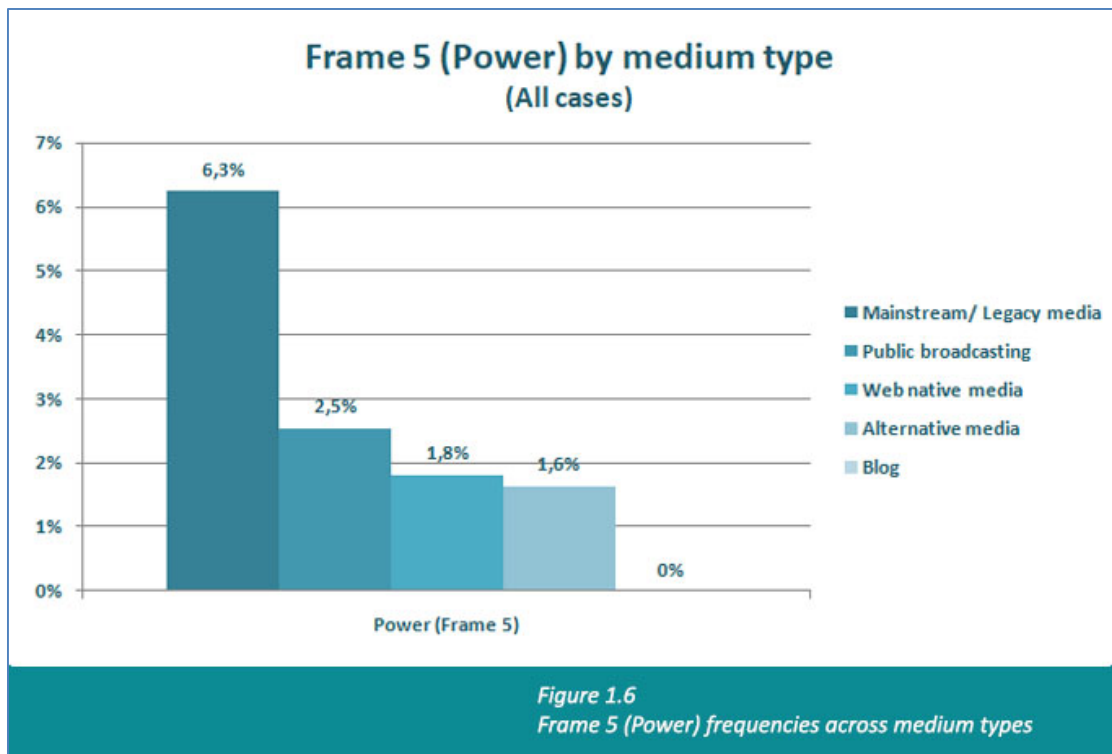


Furthermore, the comparison of frame frequencies revealed differences in relation to the media source's locality. As shown in Figure 1.5, there is a gap of almost eight percentage points in the emergence of Frame 2 ("Quality of life") between regional and national media, showing that regional media tend to interpret Cohesion policy in terms of its effects on

citizens' everyday lives more often than media with a nation-wide reach. On the contrary, national media outlets tend to use Frame 4 ("Incompetence of national/ local authorities") more often than regional media. This finding may be associated to the general tendency of regional media to focus on the implications of Cohesion policy at a local level, which entails more evaluations related to citizens' quality of everyday lives, while national media have a wider focus and are thus more inclined to target their criticism against the government or more generally politics. Finally, the analysis brought to the fore some framing differences at the European level, which are, however, discussed more in detail in the comparative analysis section below. For the purposes of this report, European media were treated as a separate case study distinct from the member states' media outlets.

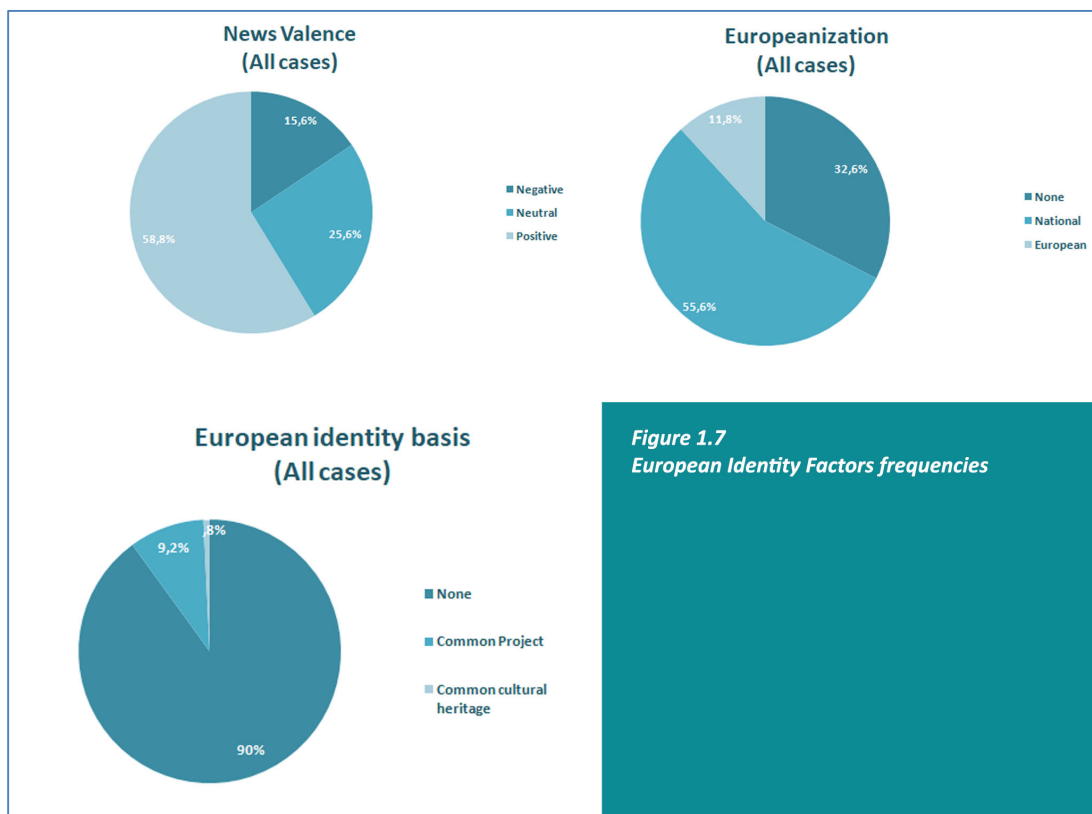


As far as the framing analysis across media types is concerned, a significant difference was found related to the frequency of Frame 5 ("Power"). As shown in Figure 1.6, mainstream and legacy media tend to interpret Cohesion policy in terms of Power more often than other media outlets. This might be explained by the fact that mainstream media organizations contain more detailed reports than Web native and alternative media, and are therefore more likely to discuss power relations between European and national actors than other types of media that present mainly factual reports of the news.

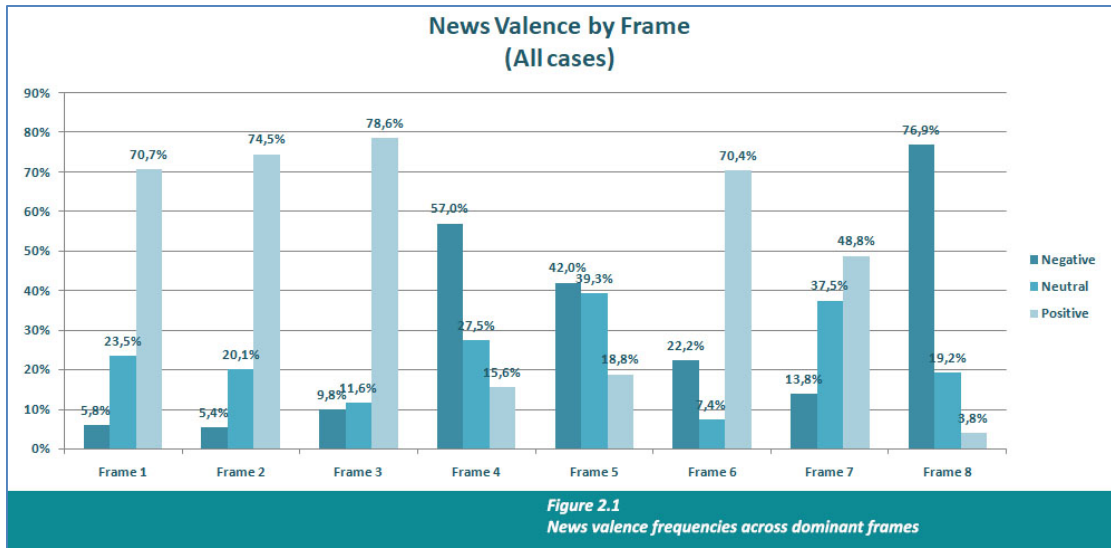


5.2 European identity

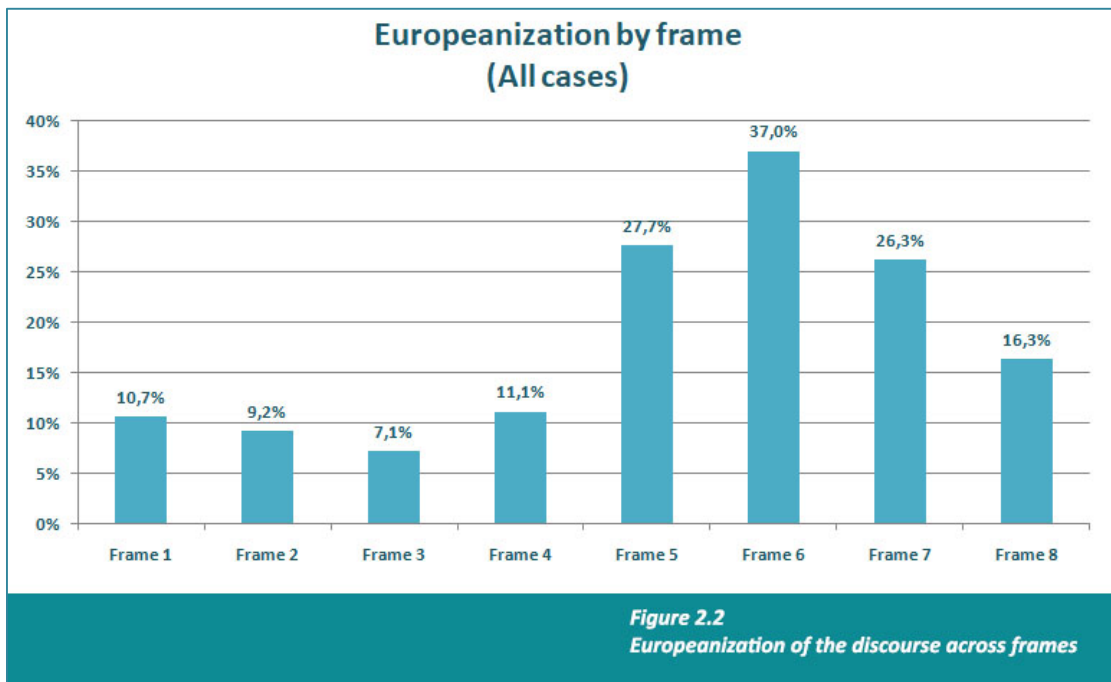
The overall analysis of the variables related to the construction of European identity indicates that only a few cases meet the conditions for promoting a sense of belonging in a European community. Although 59% of the cases involve positive news related to EU Cohesion policy, which entails positive evaluations and therefore identification with the European community, only a small fraction of the sample contains the essential elements for promoting a sense of a European community. More specifically, only 11.8% of the analysed articles approach Cohesion policy from a European perspective and discuss its significance for the EU, while nearly 56% of the articles interpret the news in national terms. This finding is in line with the assumption of a fragmented European public sphere, where the hegemonic status of national interests allows little space for a Europeanized public discourse.



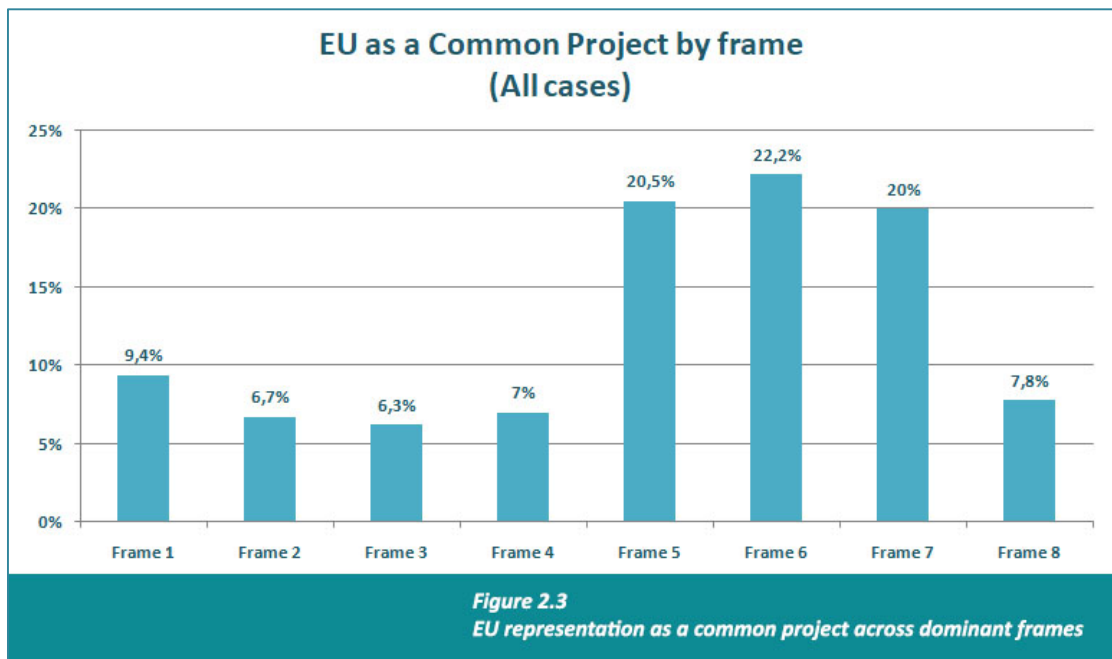
In a similar vein, the analysis shows that more than 90% of the sample contains no elements that serve as basis for the formation of a European identity. Less than 10% of the analysed articles make reference to common goals, common interests and common strategies of EU members, depicting the EU as a common project of the European people. The notion of a common project is essential for activating the civic components of identity that will stimulate individuals to identify with the EU at a top-down level, based on common objectives and a central administrative authority. Additionally, cultural components of identity formation that facilitate identification with the EU at an essentialist level, based on a common European history, values and cultural heritage were found in less than 1% of the overall sample, which is consistent with the literature's emphasis on the importance of the civic dimension of European identity.



Additional analyses that examine the relationship between dominant frames and the variables related to identity formation, demonstrate some associations between the framing and identity. As far as frame valence and news valence are concerned, it is apparent that news valence is usually associated with frames which include connotations for the EU Cohesion policy with the same directional valence. As shown in Figure 2.1, Frames 4 (“Incompetence of local/ national authorities”), 5 (“Power”) and 8 (“Fund abuse”) emerge more frequently in negative news, while Frames 1, 2, 3, 6 and 7 that have a positive overall valence are mostly found in articles that report on positive news related to the EU Cohesion policy.

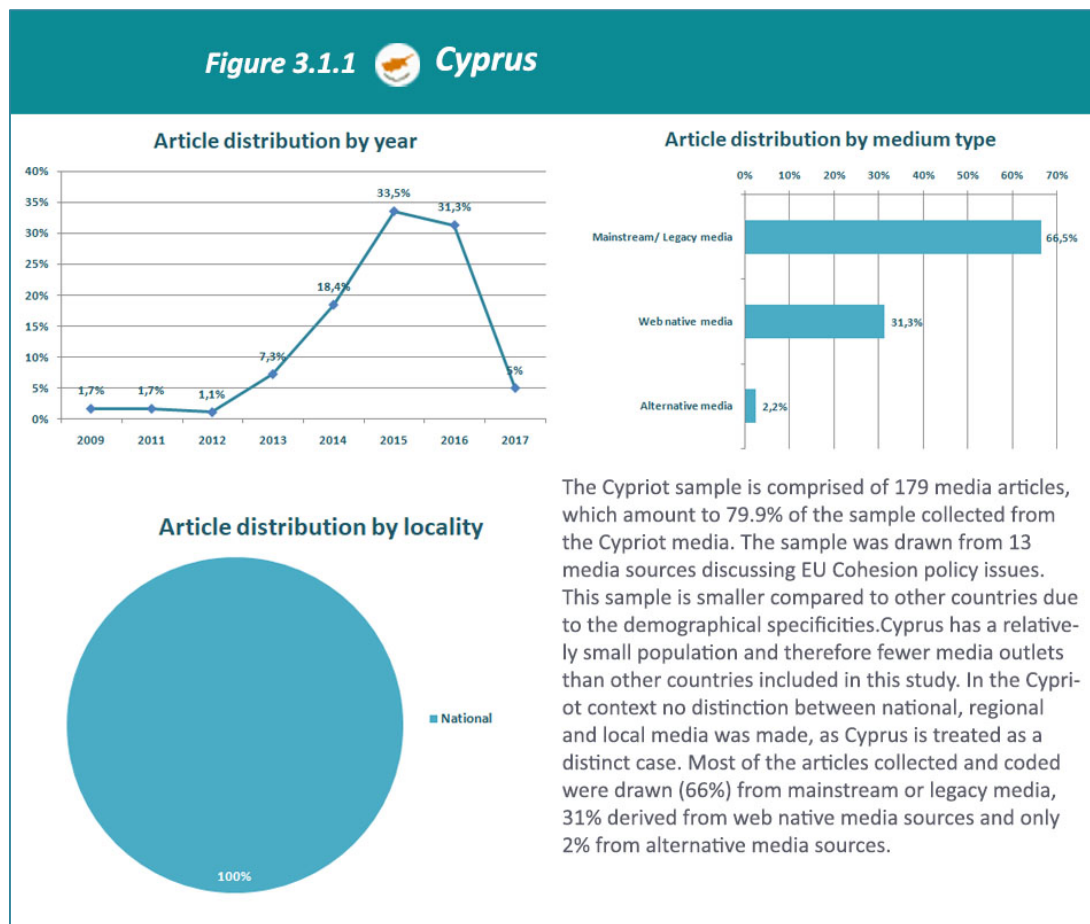


Finally, it is worth pointing out the fact that Europeanization of the discourse and representation of the EU as a common European project were both found to be more frequent in news where Frames 5, 6 and 7 were applied. These findings could be explained by the nature of the respective frames. For instance, several news items that employed the “Power” Frame (Frame 5) discuss how Cohesion policy funding is used as leverage by European institutions in order to promote the common goals of the EU, despite the negative news valence of this frame. Thus, we should expect that in such news items the issues related to EU Cohesion policy are approached from a European, rather than national perspective. In addition, we expect that the focus of these news articles should be on the development of the EU as a common project. Similarly, news that contain Frame 6 (national interests) evaluate the implications of EU Cohesion policy in relation to national interests as opposed to the European goals, which explains the high percentage of European identity variables within this frame. Finally, Frame 7 (“Cohesion”) focuses on issues such as civic participation, social awareness and solidarity that are relevant for European integration and that could account for the high percentages of Europeanization and depiction of the EU as a common project.



5.3 Country Profiles: Description and Analysis

a. Cyprus



The framing analysis of the Cypriot sample reveals that almost half of the analyzed articles frame EU Cohesion policy using the frame of "Quality of life" (Frame 2) which is dominant in 49.2% of the sample. The most dominant subframe in the Cypriot sample is "Infrastructure" (Subframe 2.4), which approaches EU cohesion policy in terms of the positive consequences it brings to citizens' everyday lives, mainly by financing the construction of squares, parks, bicycle lanes etc. (21.8%). The second most recurrent frame is the one of "economic consequences" (Frame 1) which appeared in 25.7% of the analyzed articles. As shown in Figure 3.1.3, this refers mainly to the subframe regarding the reduction of unemployment" (1.1) which was found in 11.2% of the sample, followed by the "Development" subframe (1.2) with 9.5%. In addition, it is worth noting that 12.3% of the articles contained no framing, while the remaining Frames 3 ("Culture"), 4 ("Incompetence of local authorities") and Frame 5 ("Power") appear as dominant in lower percentages (4.5%, 7.8%, 0.6%, respectively). Finally, Frames 6, 7 and 8 were not identified in any of the media articles within the Cypriot sample.

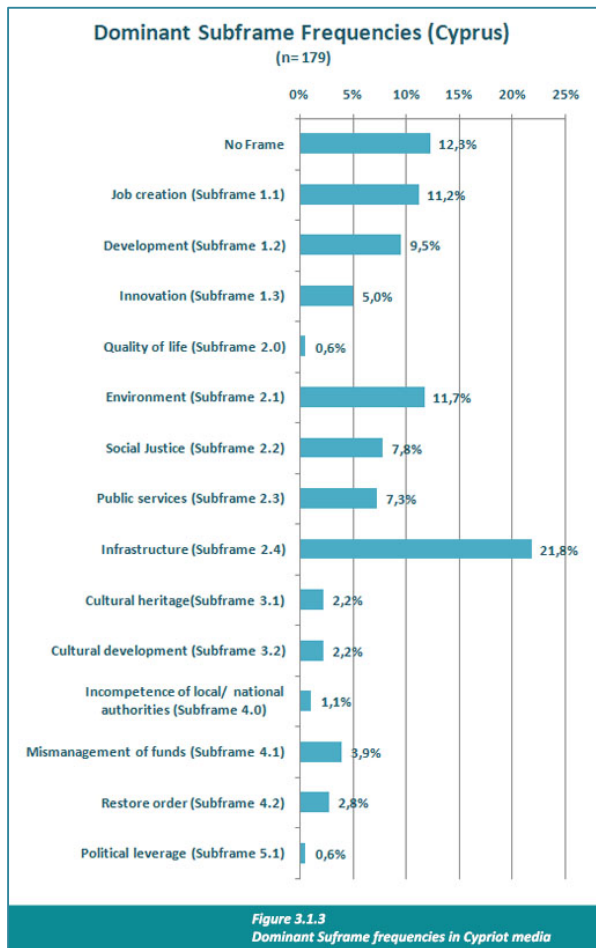
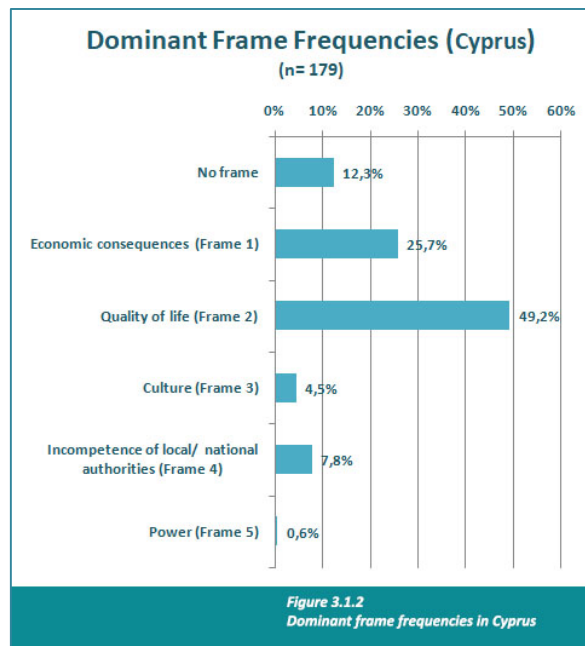
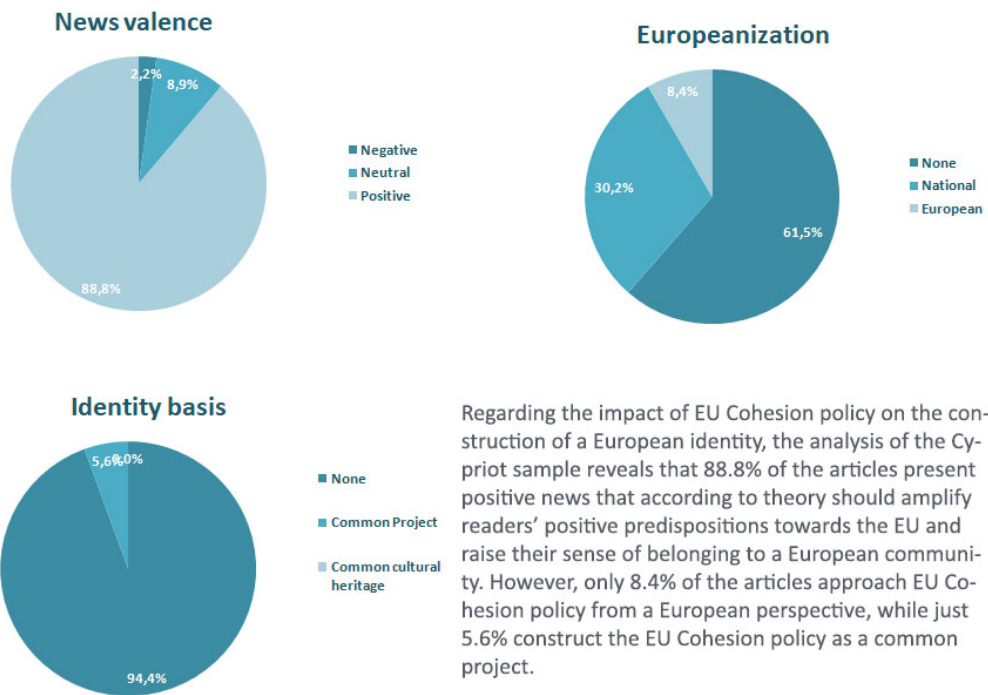
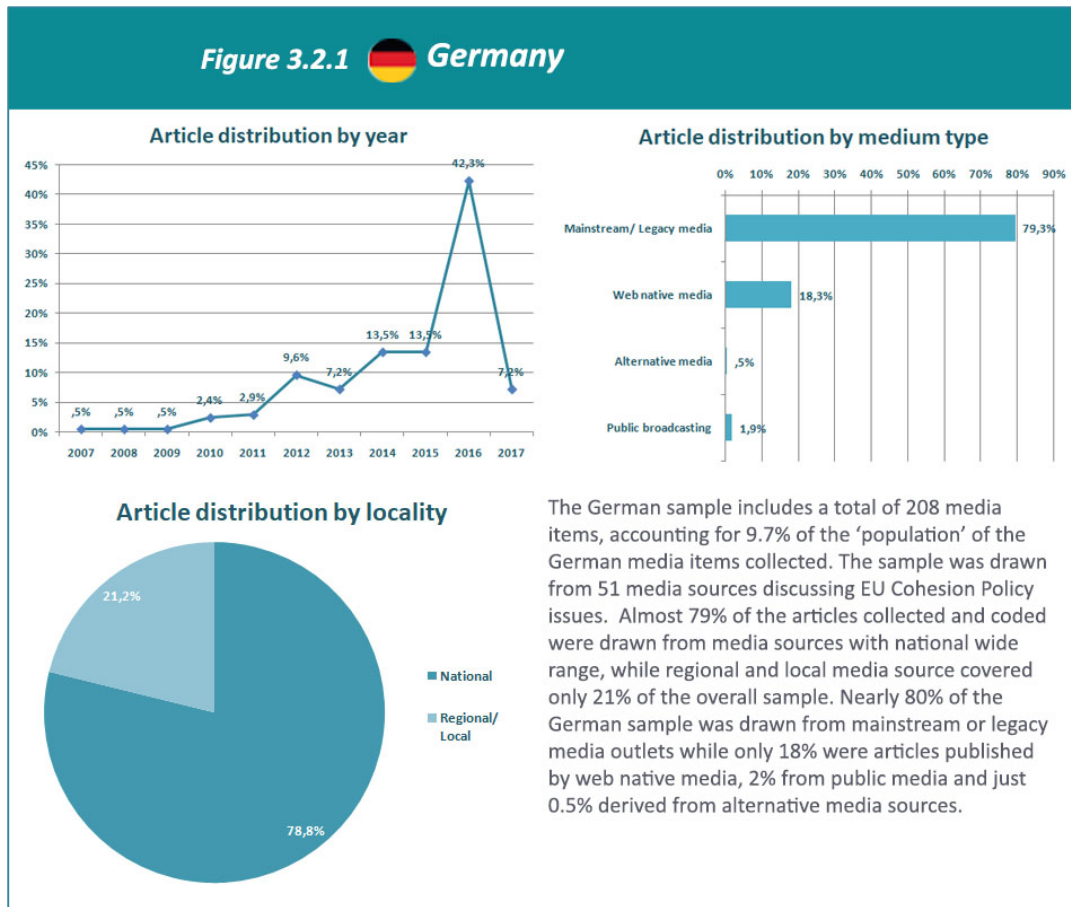


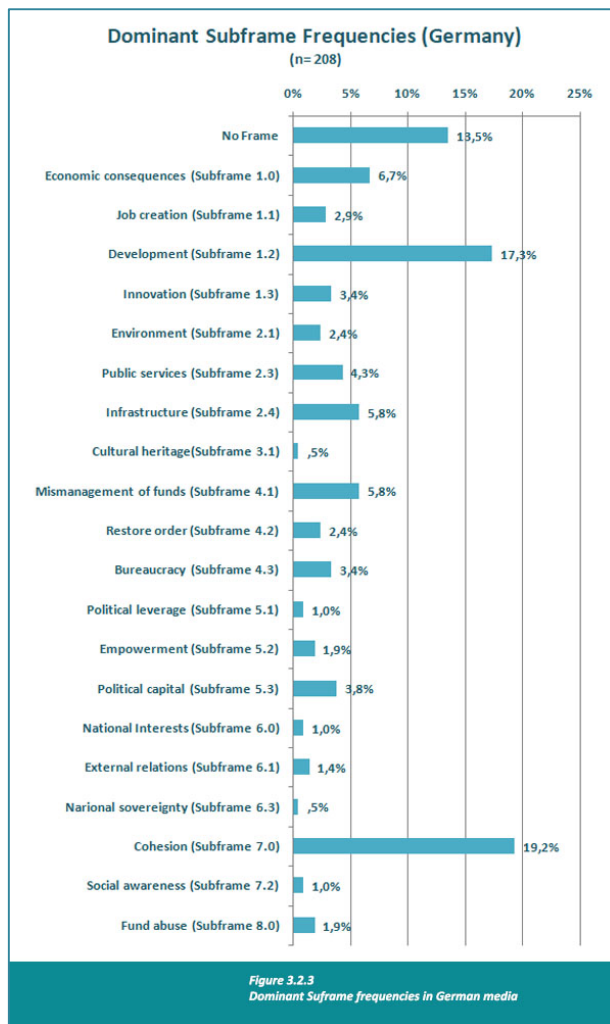
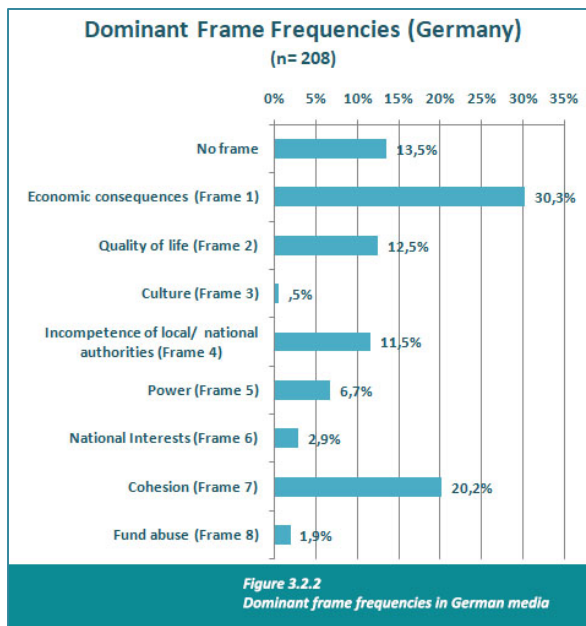
Figure 3.1.4  Cyprus - Europeanization variables



b. Germany



In the framing analysis of the German sample coders all the eight frames consisting the Framing Matrix were identified. The analysis of the German media indicates that EU Cohesion policy is represented mostly in economic and Cohesion terms, as Frame 1 ("Economic consequences") and Frame 7 ("Cohesion") were identified as dominant frames in 30.3% and 20.2% of the articles respectively. In terms of the most commonly applied subframes, Subframe 1.2 (17.3%) and Subframe 7.0 (19.2%) were the most salient. It should be noted that the "Cohesion" frame has only been found to be that salient only in German media, indicating a trend of the German media to emphasize the importance of convergence among member states and to promote the process of European integration. Additionally, Frame 2 ("Quality of Life") with 12.5% and Frame 4 ("Incompetence of local authorities") with 11.5% were also prominent, while the coders did not identify any frames in 13.5% of the sample.



The analysis of the German sample also revealed striking differences in framing between national and regional media, who seem to adopt totally opposite frames in their coverage of EU Cohesion policy. Regional media interpret Cohesion policy predominantly in terms of its implications on the economy as Frame 1 dominates more than 61% of the analysed news items, while one fourth of the sample employs the “Quality of life” Frame (Frame2). On the contrary, the emergence of frames in national media is more balanced, indicating than news presentation in national media approaches the news from several different perspectives.

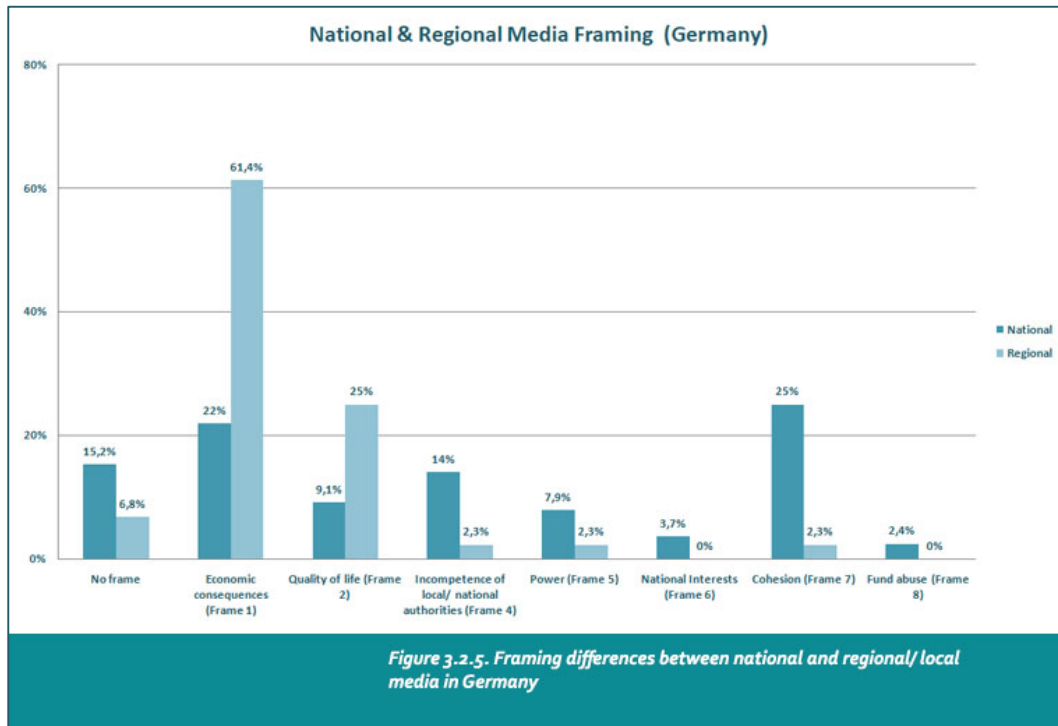
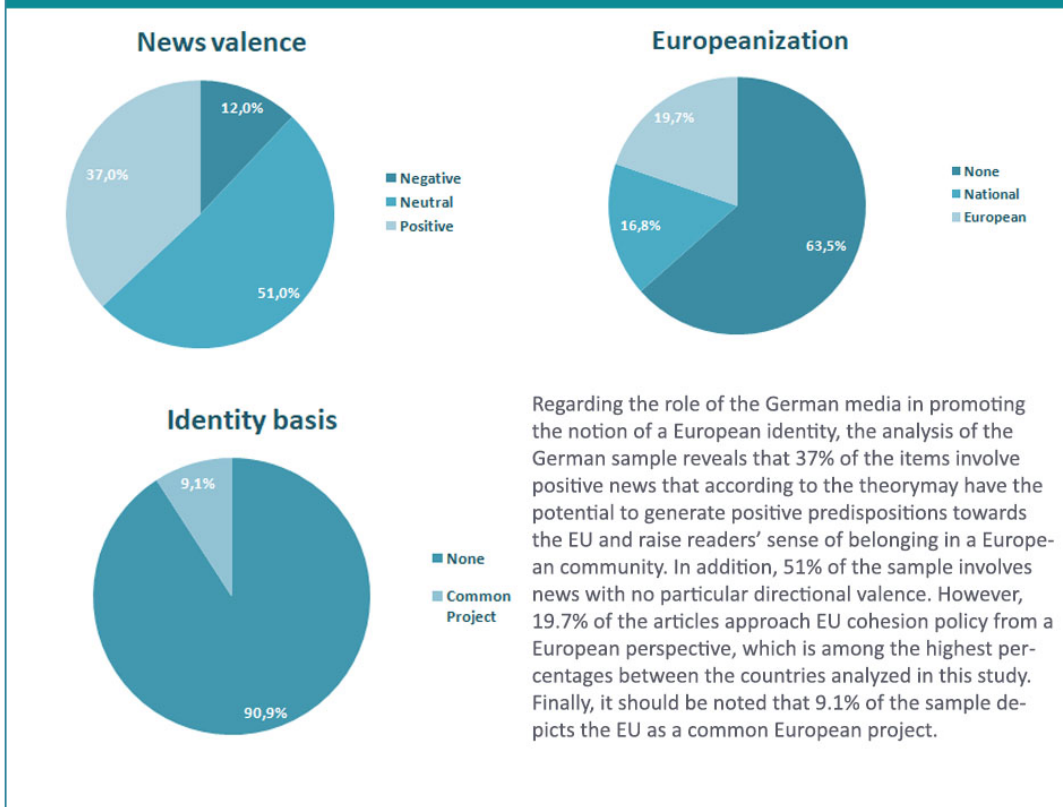
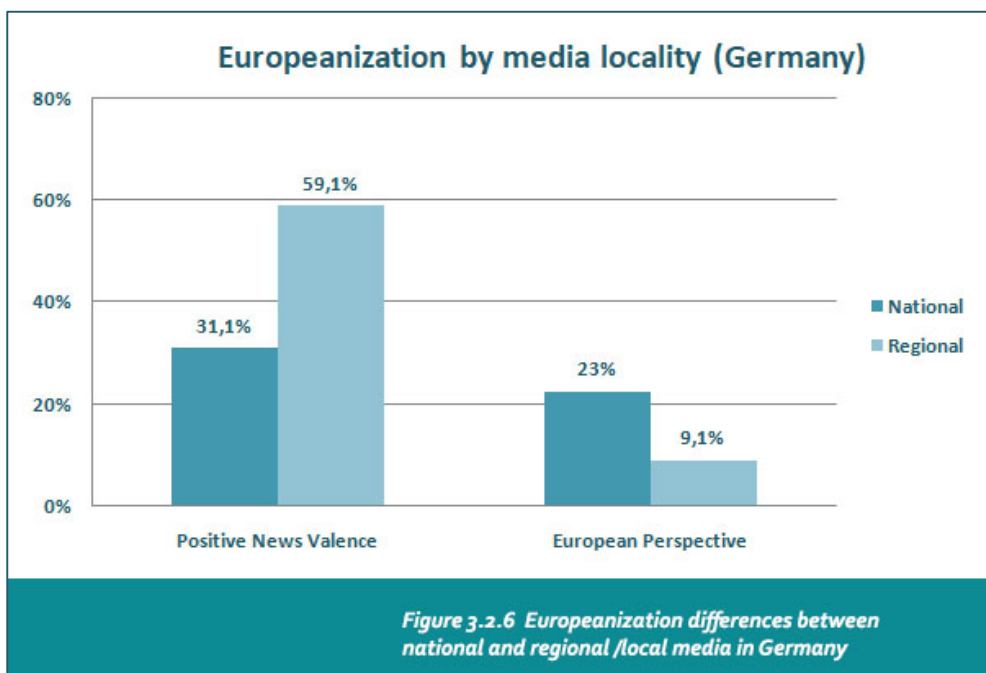


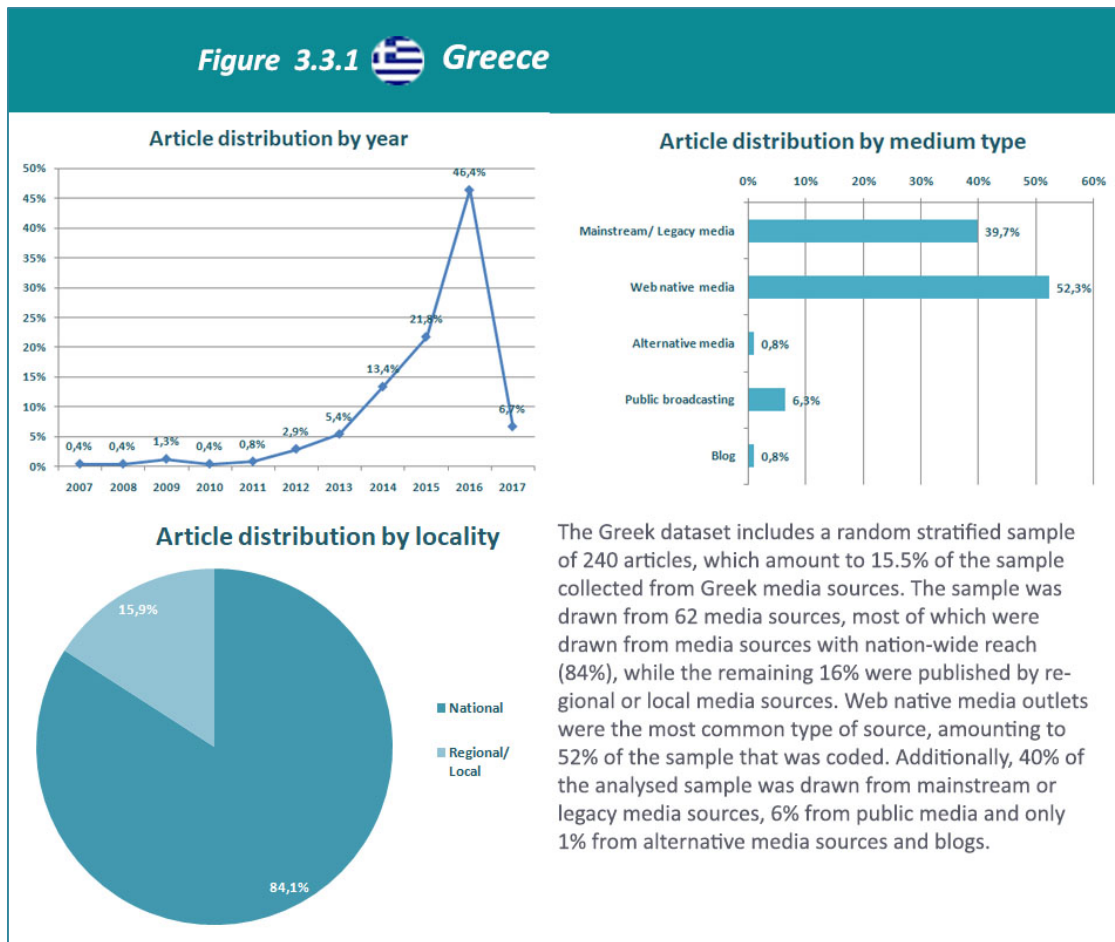
Figure 3.2.4  **Germany - Europeanization variables**



Some differences between national and regional media in Germany were also found in relation to the variables that affect the construction of European identity, as regional media tend to report positive news on EU Cohesion policy more often than national media. However, national media are more likely to approach the news from a European, rather than national perspective.



c. Greece



The framing analysis of the Greek sample shows that an overwhelming majority (87.4%) of the articles applied some framing in their depictions of EU Cohesion policy. More specifically, Greek media outlets interpret EU Cohesion Policy mostly in economic terms as the “Economic consequences” general frame (Frame 1) is dominant in 42.3% of the sample. As shown in Figure 3.3.3, articles about EU Cohesion policy found in Greek media tend to emphasize the role of Cohesion policy in tackling the problem of unemployment, as the “Job creation” subframe (1.1) was the most dominant subframe in the Greek sample with 15.5%, followed by the “Development” subframe (1.2) with 11.7. This is not surprising, considering the bleak state of the Greek economy during the last years, which may have directed public discourses, and consequently shifted media focus, towards economic issues. Moreover, nearly a quarter of the sample (24.3%) is dominated by the “Quality of life” frame (Frame 2), which approaches EU cohesion policy in terms to the positive consequences it brings to citizens’ everyday lives, while the “Culture” frame (Frame 3) was identified as the dominant frame in 10% of the sample, which is the highest percentage found among the analysed case studies. Finally, the remaining five frames that were included in the Frame Matrix were also identified by the coders but they emerged in lower percentages of the sample, as shown in Figure 3.3.2.

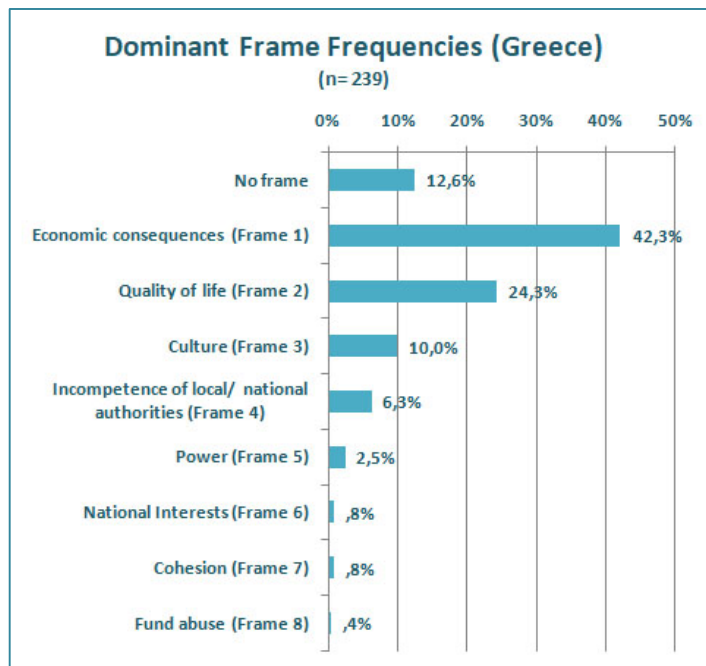


Figure 3.3.2
Dominant frame frequencies in Greek media

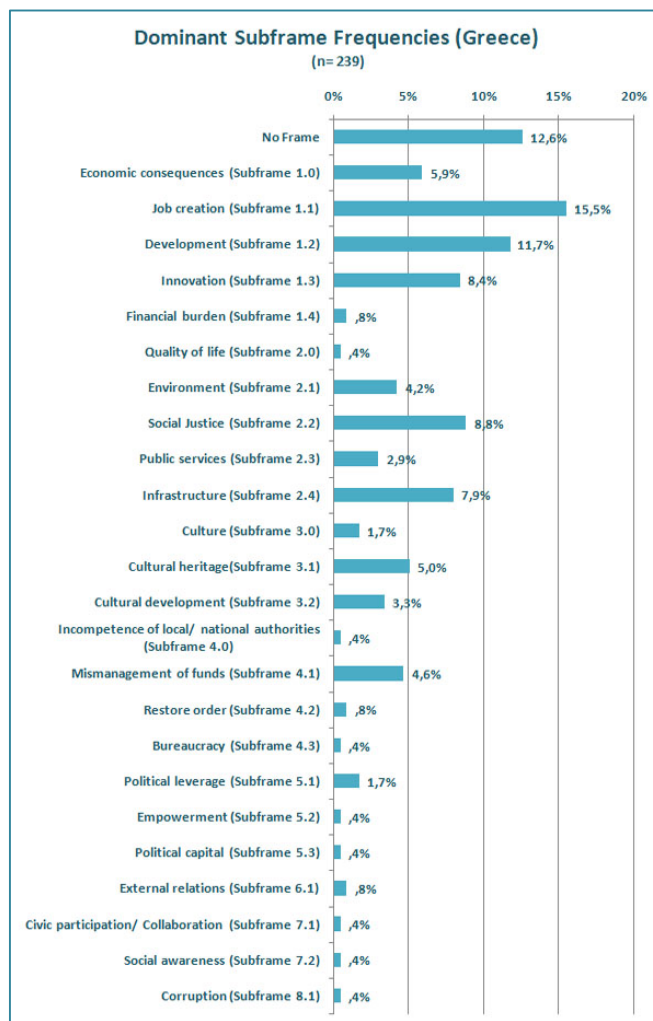
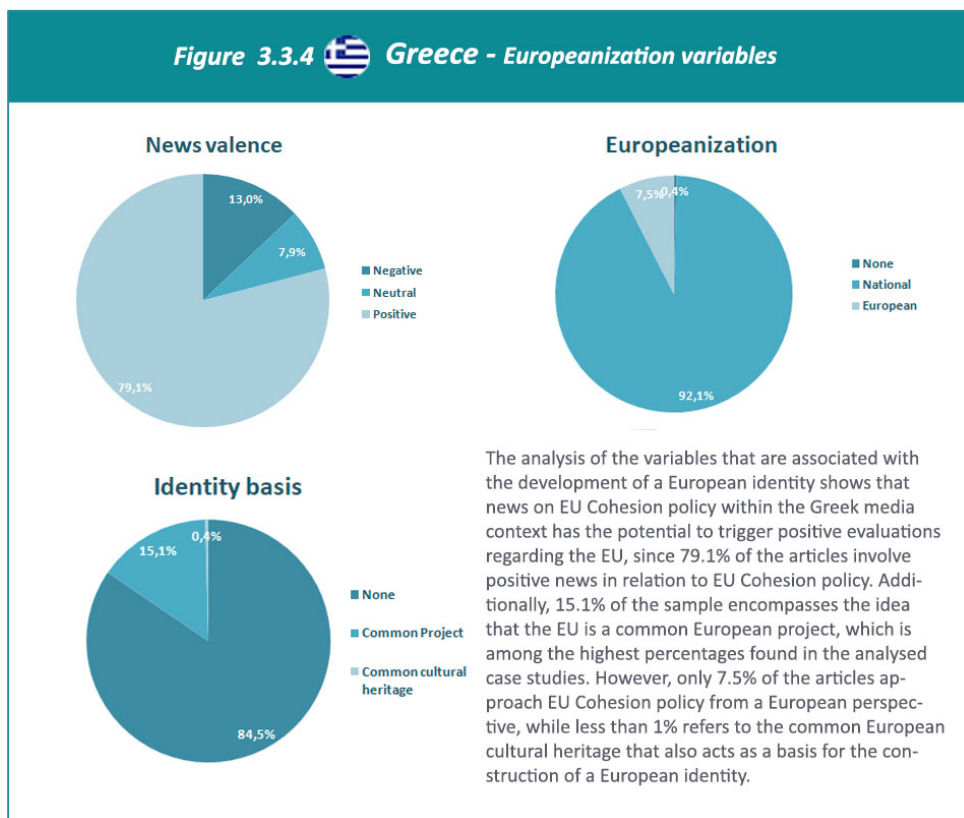
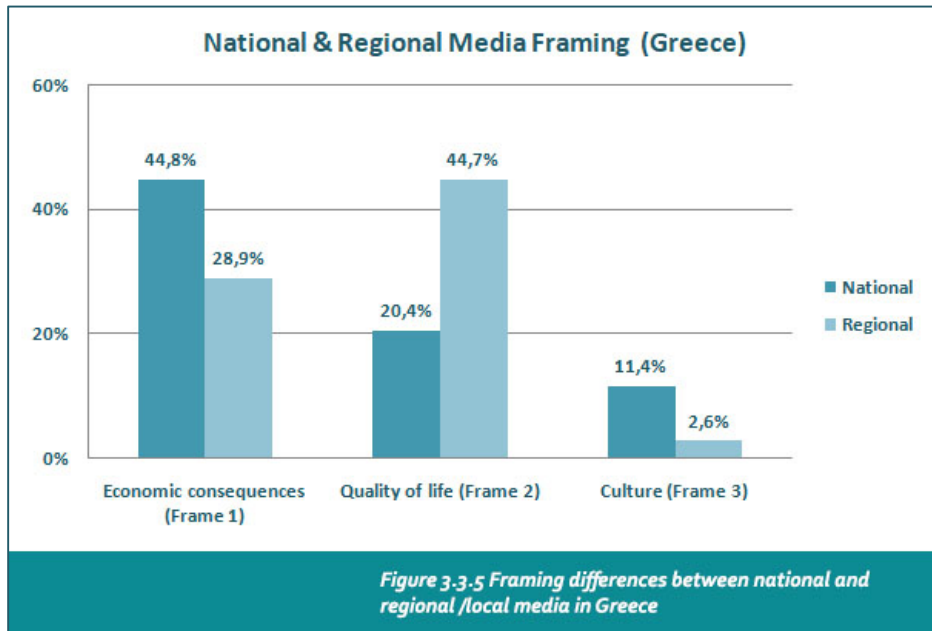
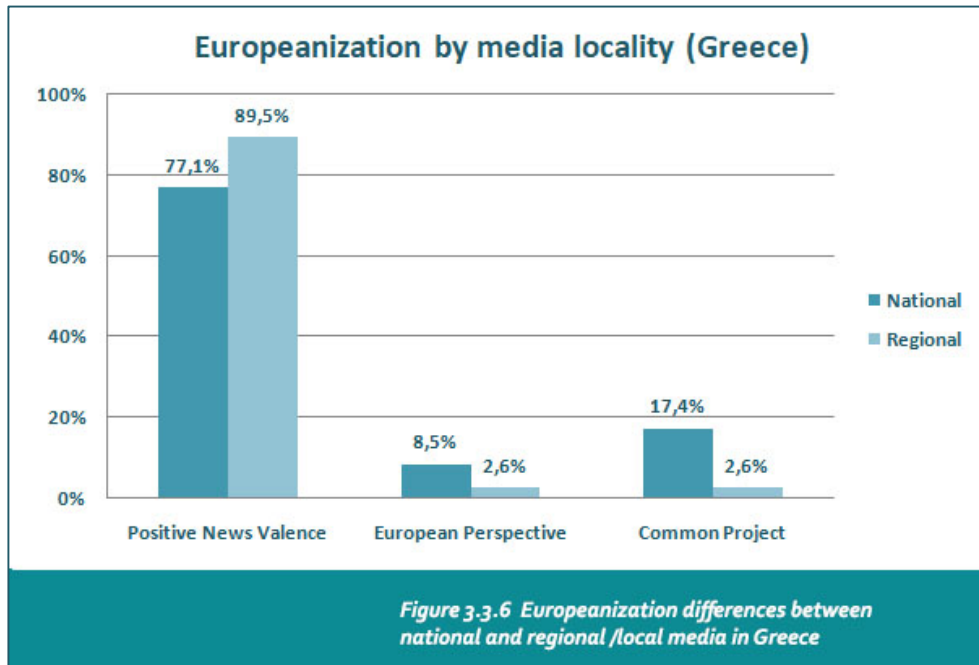


Figure 3.3.3
Dominant subframe frequencies in Greek media

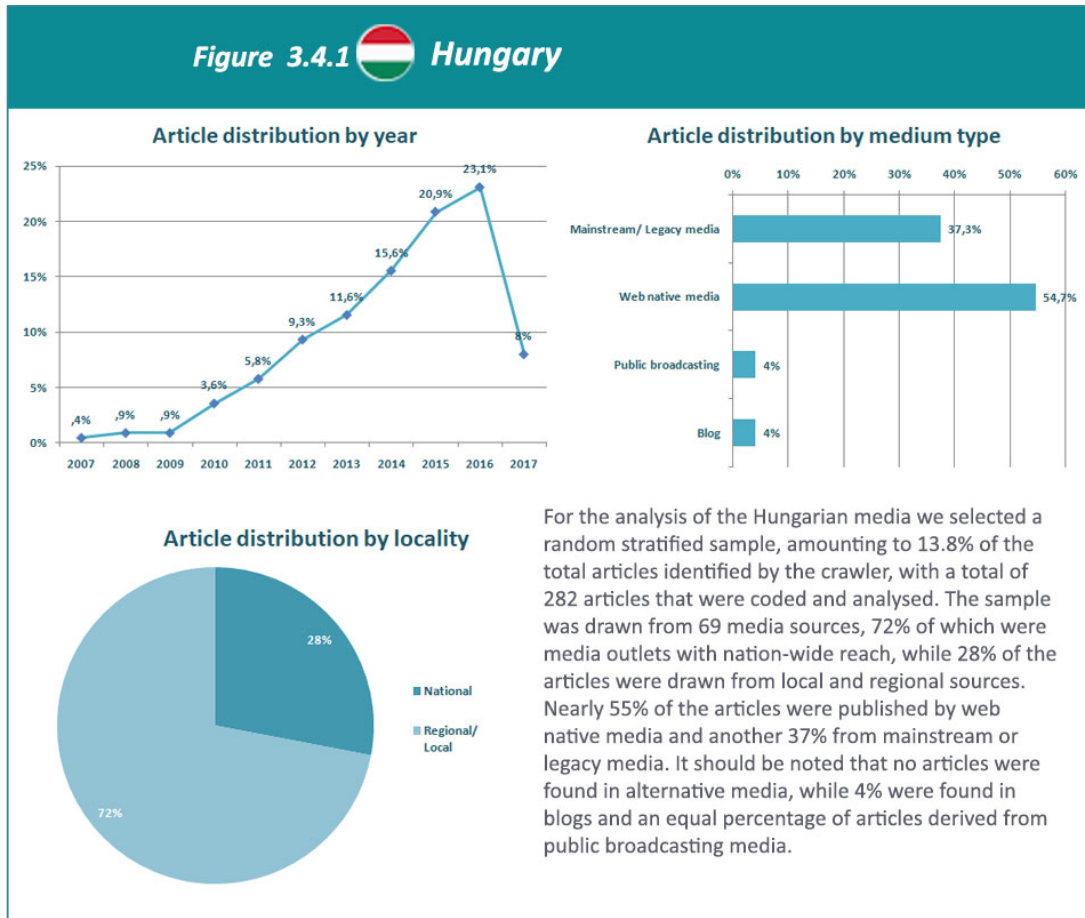
As shown in Figure 3.3.5 below, the analysis identified some differences in framing between national and regional media, as national media seem to interpret EU Cohesion policy predominantly in economic terms, while regional media tend to emphasize on the implications of Cohesion policy on citizens namely in terms of quality of life. Moreover, the “Culture” frame appeared to be more salient in national media, while no other significant differences were found regarding the remaining frames.



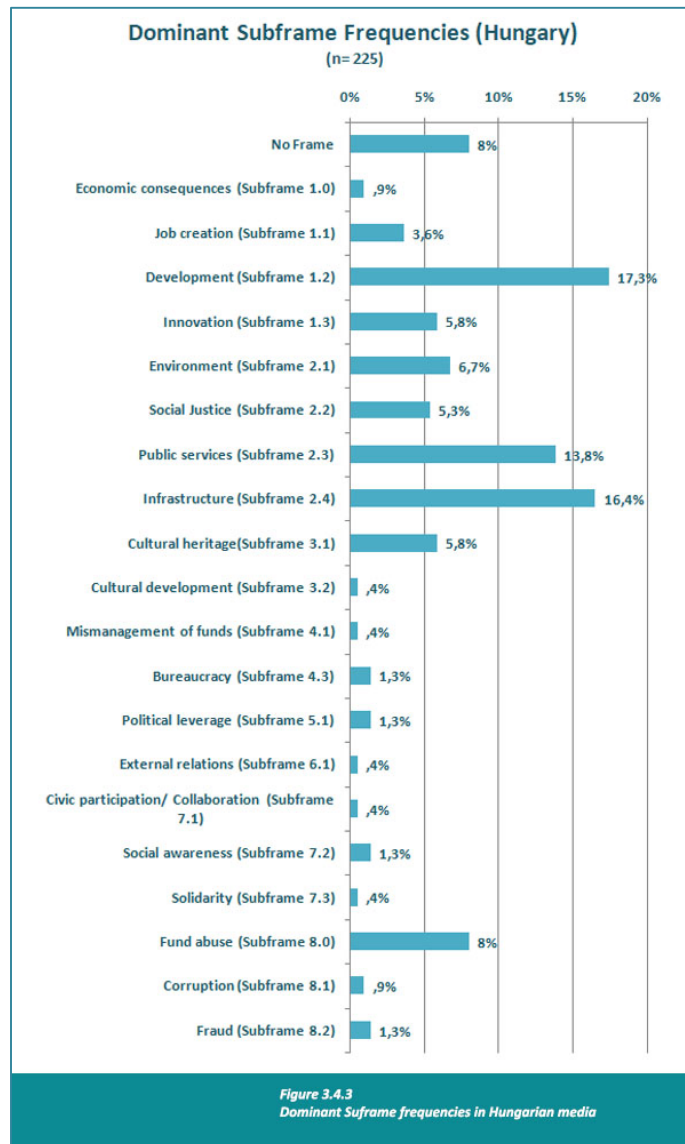
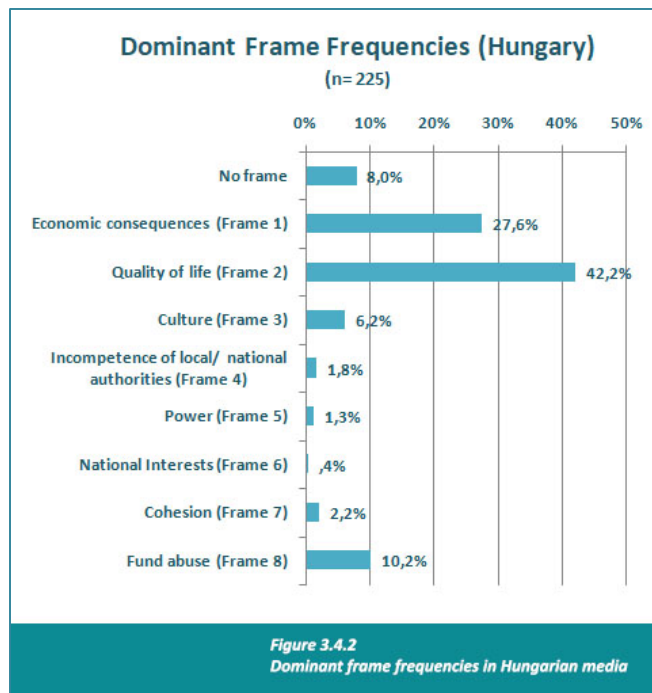
Regarding the potential of Greek media to promote positive identification with the EU, the analysis shows that regional and local media tend to present positive news more often than national media. Nevertheless, national media seem to embrace the notion of a European community more than regional media, as they tend to present news from a European perspective and depict the EU as a common European project more often than regional media.



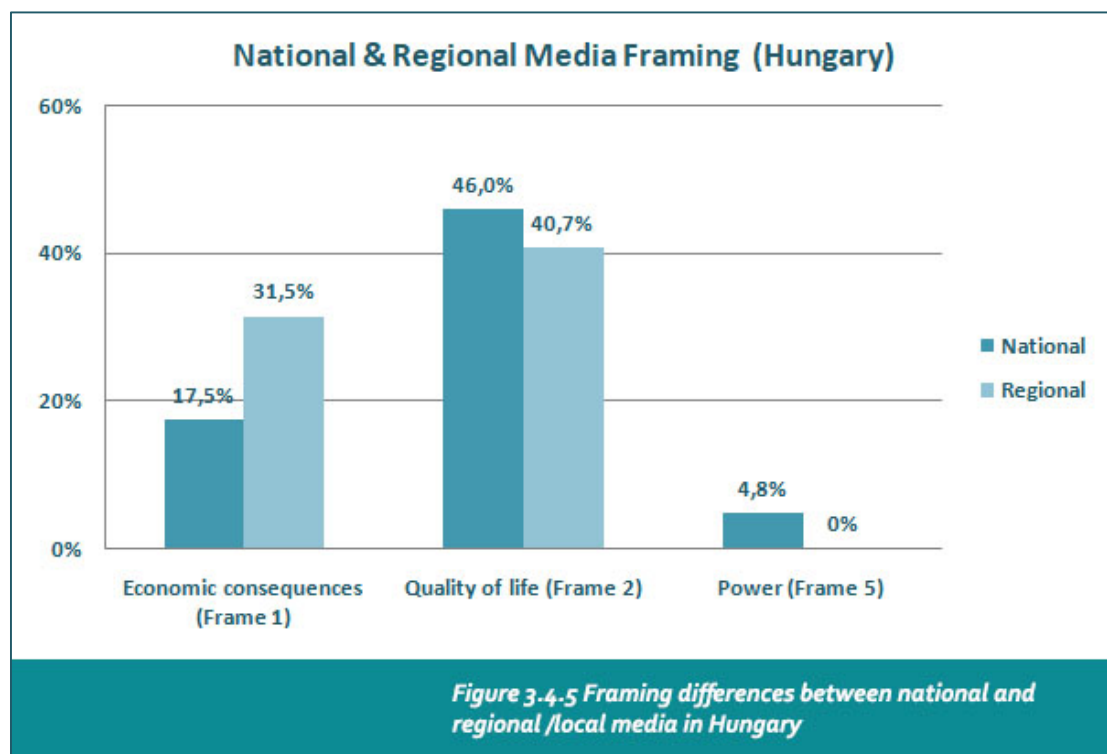
d. Hungary



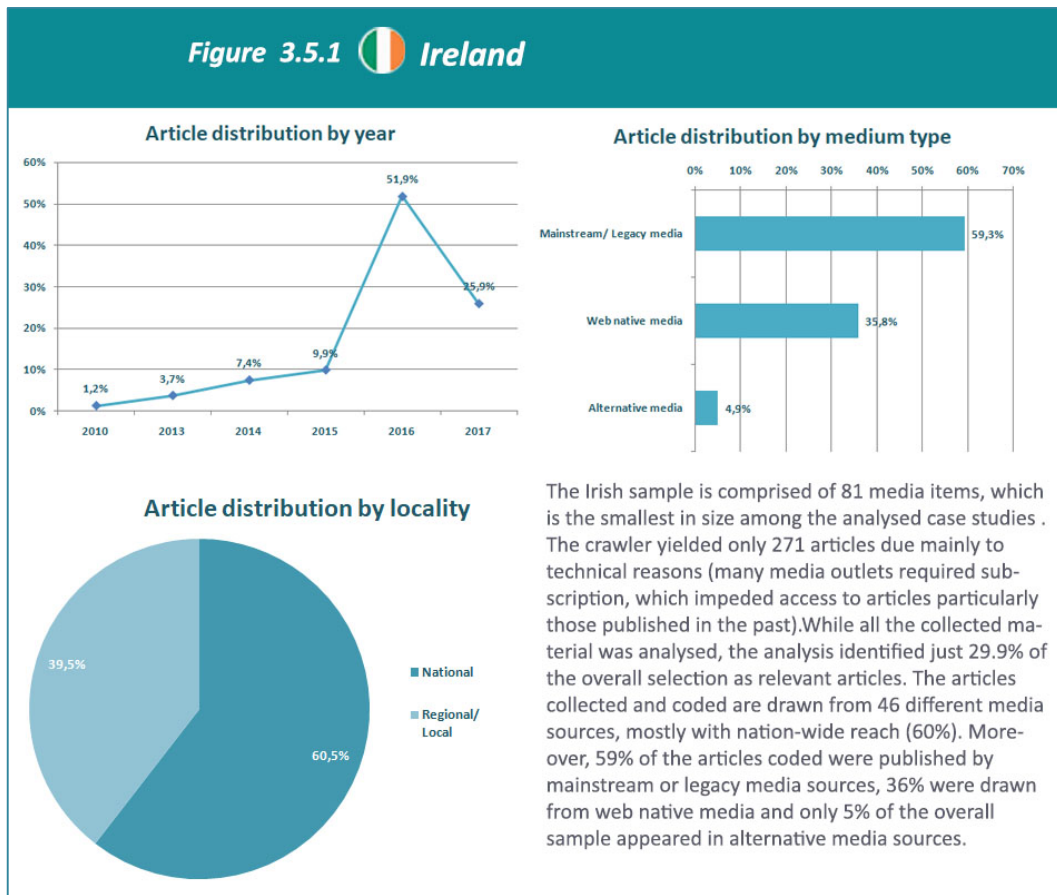
The framing analysis of the Hungarian sample reveals that 42.2% of the analysed articles frame EU Cohesion policy in terms its implications on citizens' "Quality of life" (Frame 2). In addition, Hungarian coders identified Frame 1 ("Economic consequences") as the dominant frame in more than a quarter of the analysed items, while Frame 8 ("Fund abuse") was also significantly salient as it was identified as dominant in 10% of the cases, which is higher than any other country analysed in this study and could signify a concern of the Hungarian media regarding the appropriate capitalization of Cohesion policy funds. In the subframe analysis of the sample, the coders identified subframe 1.2 ("Development") as the most dominant subframe in 17.3% of the items, followed by subframe 2.4 ("Infrastructure") that was dominant in 16.4% of the analysed articles. This suggests that the Hungarian media interpret EU Cohesion policy in terms of its investment in the Hungarian economy focusing on how it contributes to economic development and the infrastructure it creates to improve the lives of Hungarian citizens. In addition, it has been found that 8% of the articles contained no framing, while the remaining four frames ("Culture", "Incompetence of local authorities", "Power", "National interests", "Cohesion") are less salient, as shown in Figure 3.4.2.



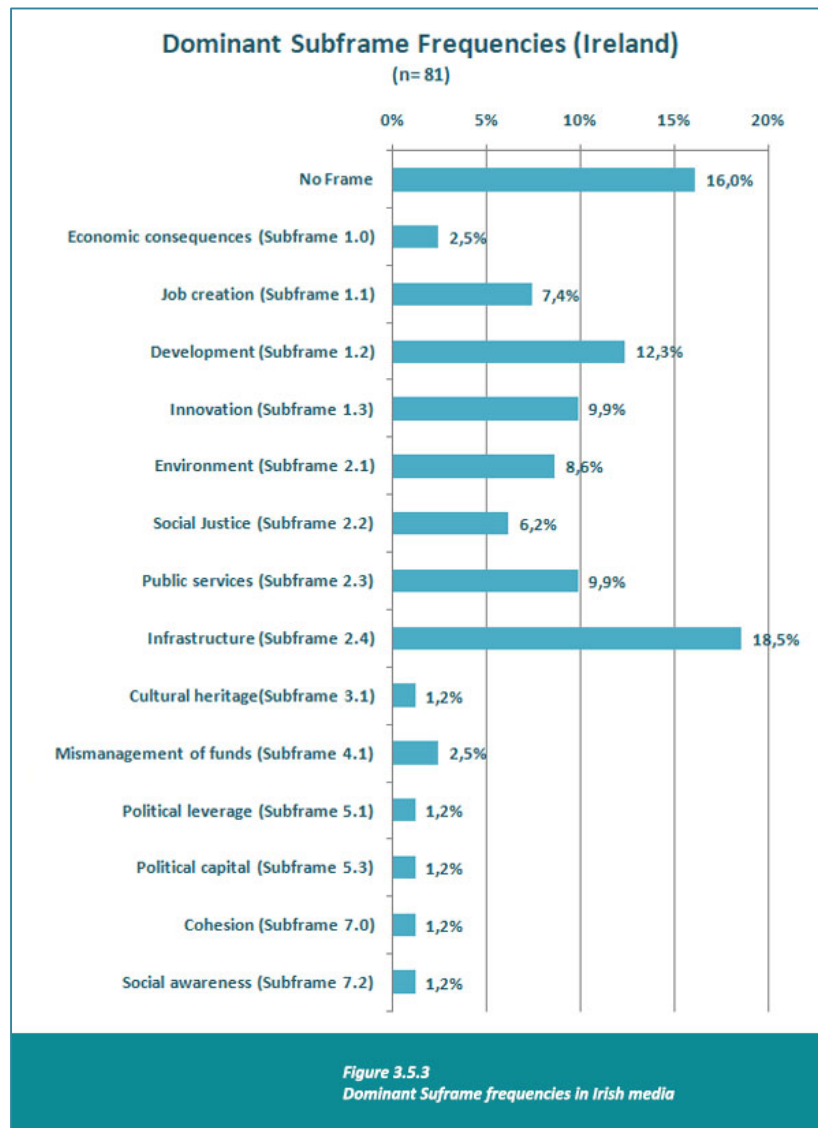
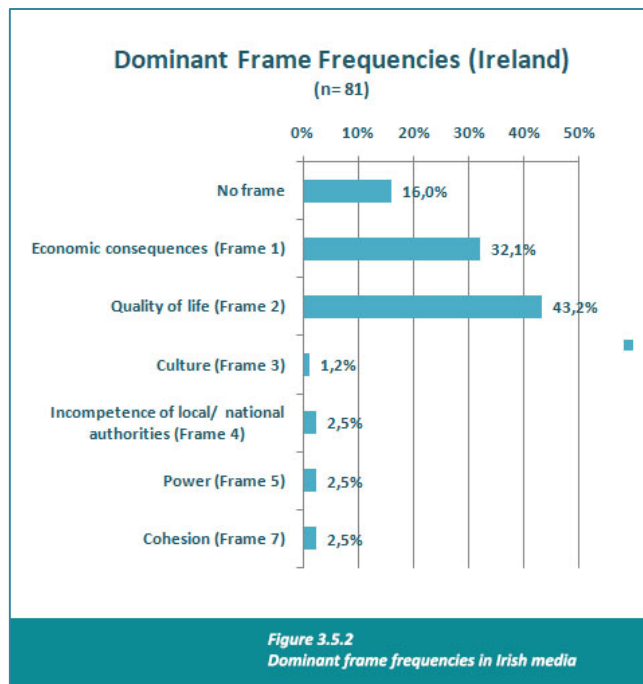
The analysis of the Hungarian sample reveals some framing differences between national and regional media. More specifically, regional media tend to place emphasis on the “economic consequences” (Frame 1) of EU Cohesion policy more often than national media. On the contrary, “Quality of life” (Frame 2) is slightly more salient in national media, which also employ the “Power” frame which is inexistent in regional media coverage.



e. Ireland



In terms of the framing analysis, the Irish sample reveals that most of the coded articles frame EU Cohesion policy in terms of its implications on the “Quality of life” of the Irish citizens (43.2%). The “Quality of life” frame points out the positive consequences of EU Cohesion policy in citizens’ lives, by focusing on the implementation of a number of infrastructure projects, by supporting vulnerable groups through specific policies, and by supporting or suggesting a number of policies regarding the public services. Therefore, the second most recurrent frame, which appeared in the coded articles, is the “economic consequences” frame which corresponds to the 32.1% of overall amount of articles. As revealed in the subframe analysis this refers mainly to the “development” (1.2) 12.3%, followed by “innovation” (1.3) 9.9%, “job creation” (1.1) 7.4%. It has also been found that 16% of the articles contained no framing, while the remaining five frames (“Culture”, “Incompetence of local authorities”, “Power”, “National interests”, “Cohesion” and “Fund abuse”) appear as dominant in lower percentages of the sample (1.2%, 2.5%, 2.5%, 2.5% respectively).



The framing analysis has shown some differences between national and regional media in Ireland, as national media tend to interpret EU Cohesion policy in economic terms (Frame 1), while regional media emphasize on the impact of Cohesion policy on citizens' "Quality of life" (Frame 2). No striking differences were found in the rest of the frames.

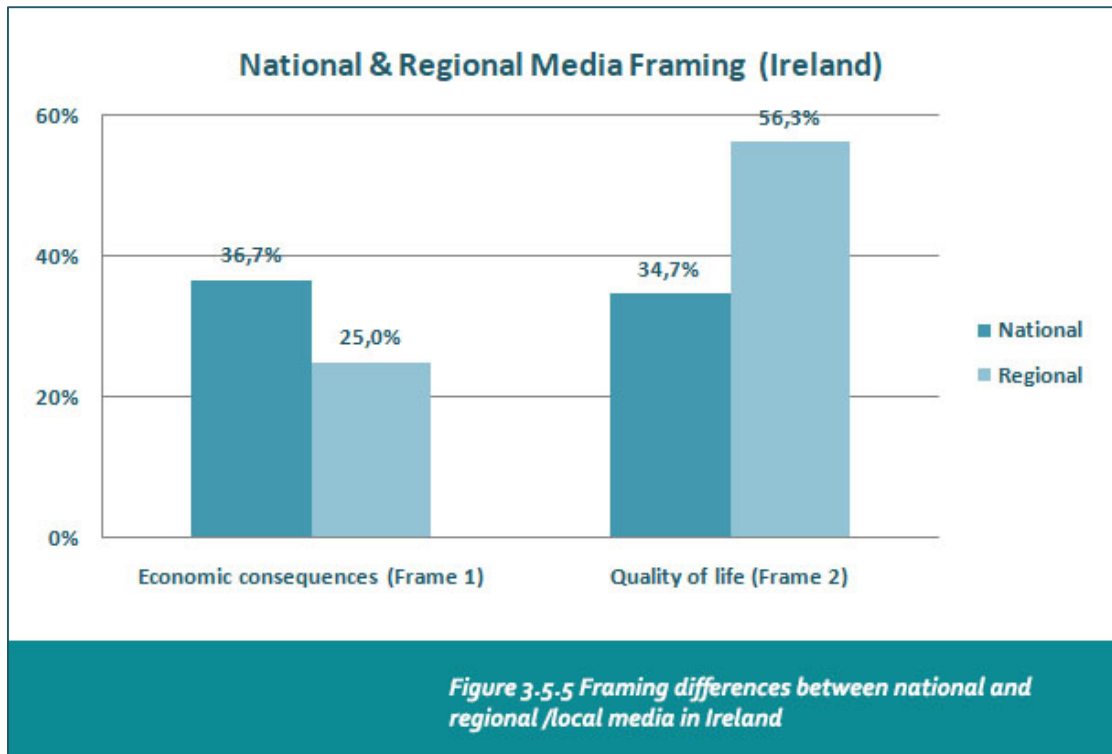
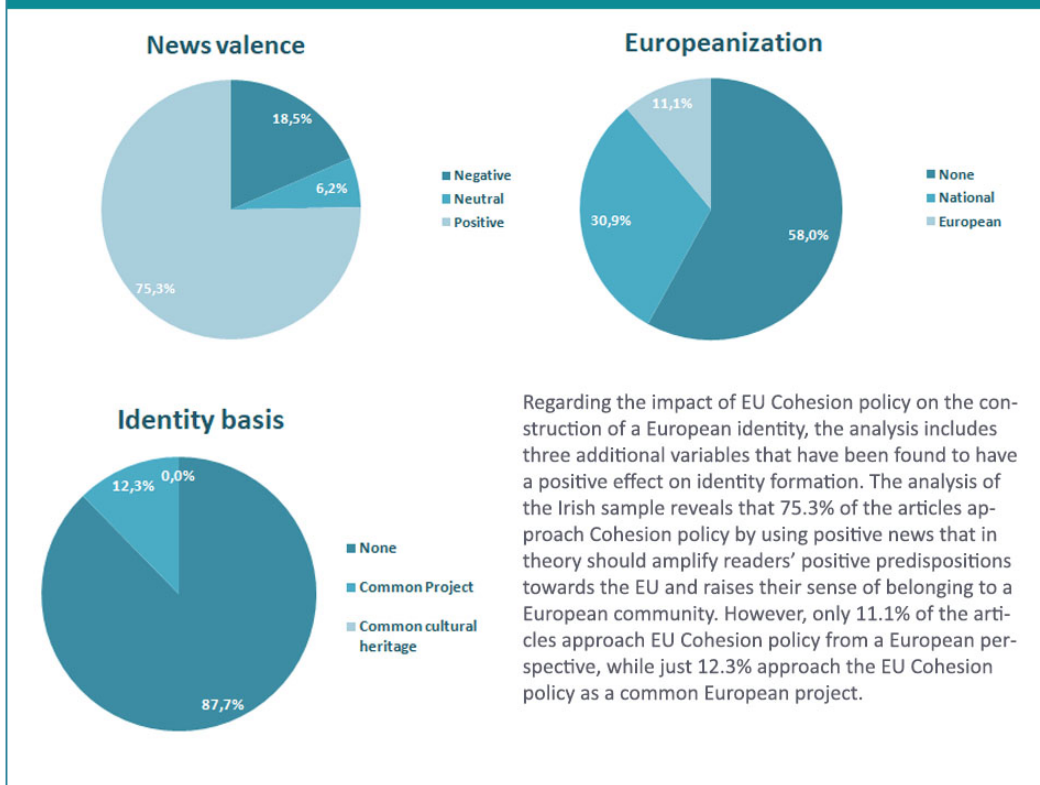
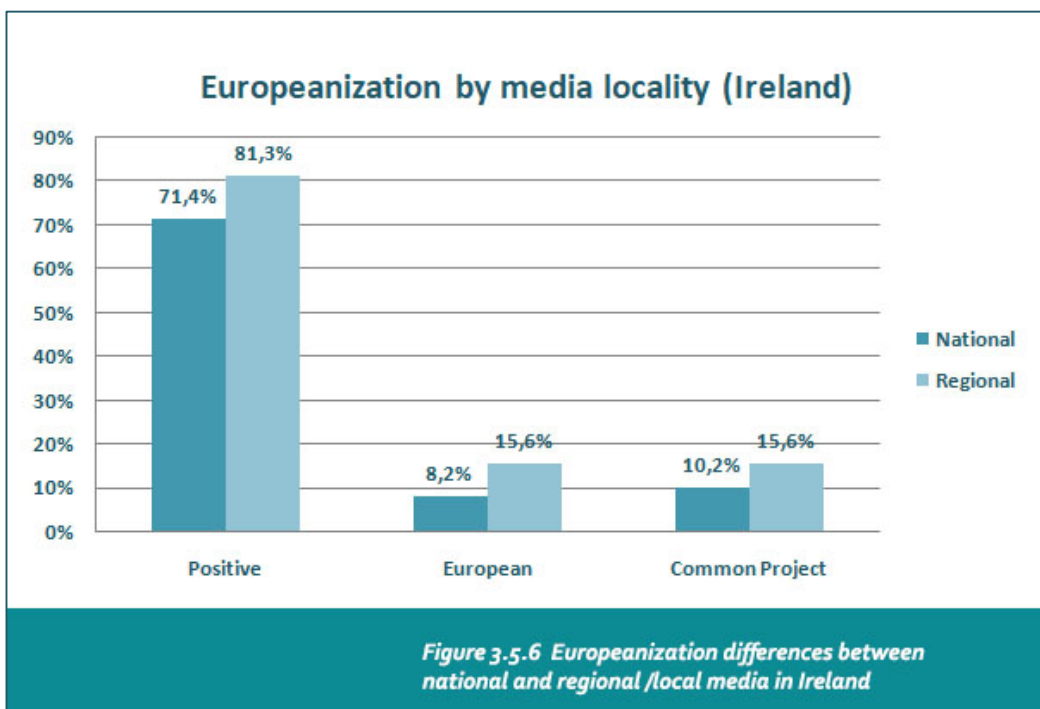


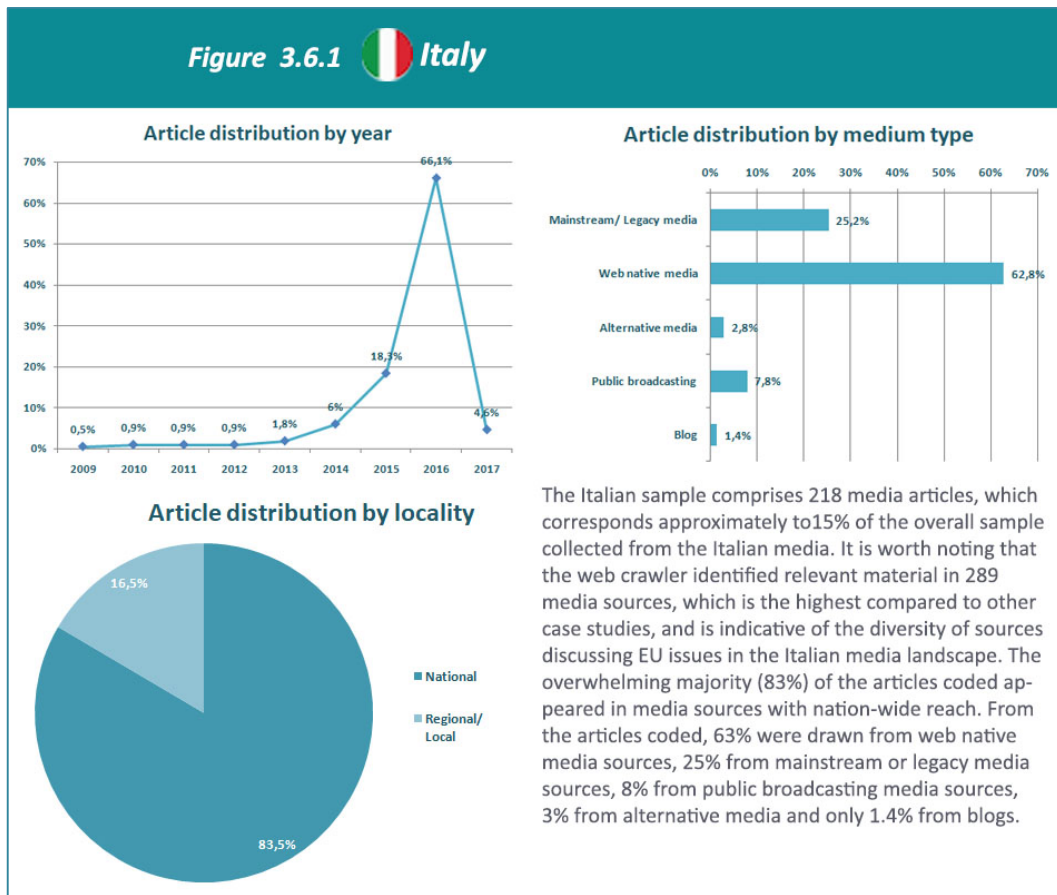
Figure 3.5.4  **Ireland - Europeanization variables**



As far as the Europeanisation variables are concerned the analysis suggests that regional media in Ireland seem to promote the notion of a European common identity more often than national media. As shown in Figure 3.5.6, regional media include more positive news on EU Cohesion policy, approach the news from a European perspective, while they also depict the EU as a common European project more often than national media.



f. Italy



The framing analysis of the Italian sample indicates that almost half of the analysed articles frame EU Cohesion Policy in economic terms, as the “Economic consequences” general frame appeared as dominant in 47.2% of the overall sample. This illustrates a strong tendency of the Italian media to interpret EU Cohesion policy in terms of economic gains and losses as only the British media exhibited a higher percentage in “Economic consequences” framing. Moreover, the second most dominant frame found in the Italian sample was the “Quality of life” frame with 18.3%, while 16.1% of the analysed articles contained no framing. Additionally, a significant 8.7% of the articles were dominated by the “Incompetence of local/national authorities” frame, while the remaining frames were less salient as illustrated in Figure 3.6.2. Another element that is worth pointing out, concerns the analysis at the subframe level, as nearly 35% of the sample is dominated by Subframe 1.0 (“Economic consequences”), which is by far the highest among the analysed case studies. This suggests that the Italian media tend to emphasize on the general impact of EU Cohesion policy on the economy, although without focusing on the particular policies affecting the state of the economy. No significant differences in framing between national and regional media in Italy were identified in the framing analysis.

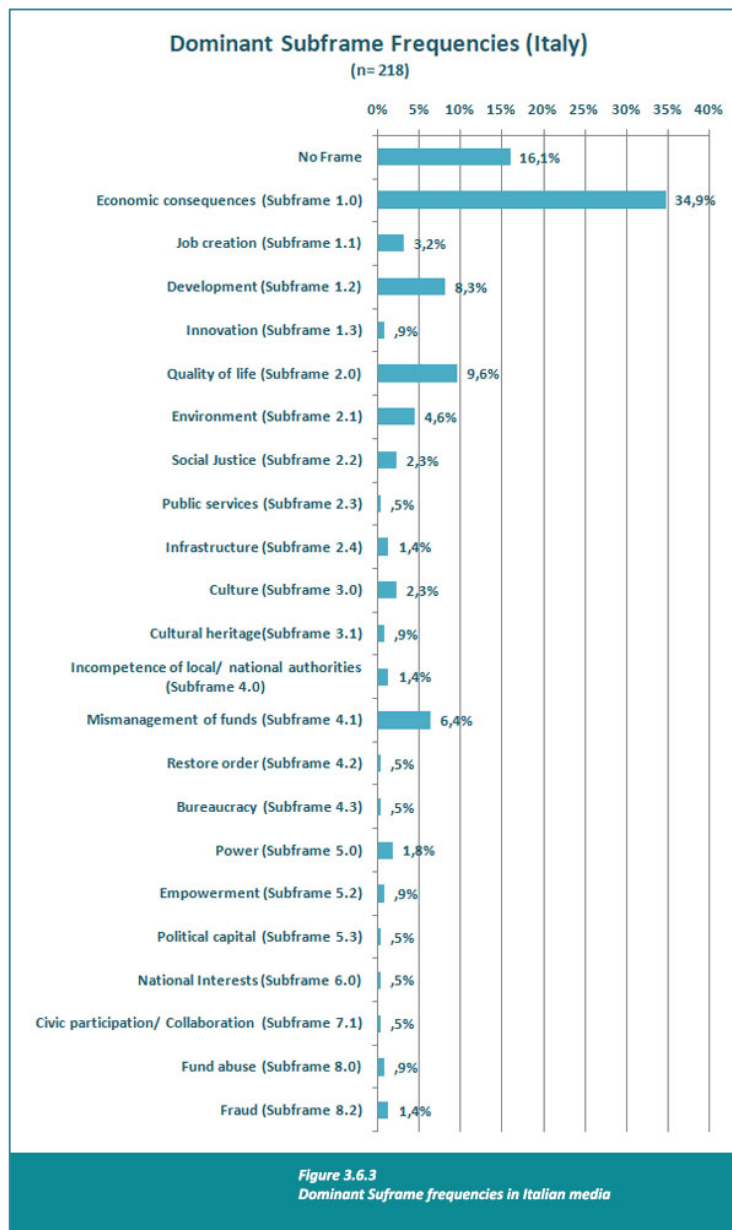
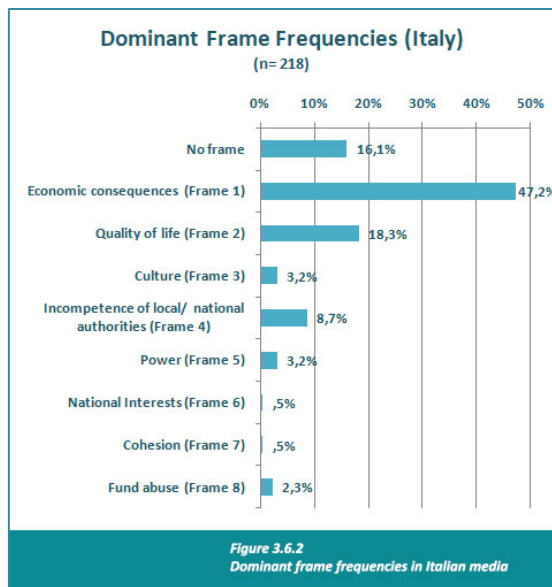
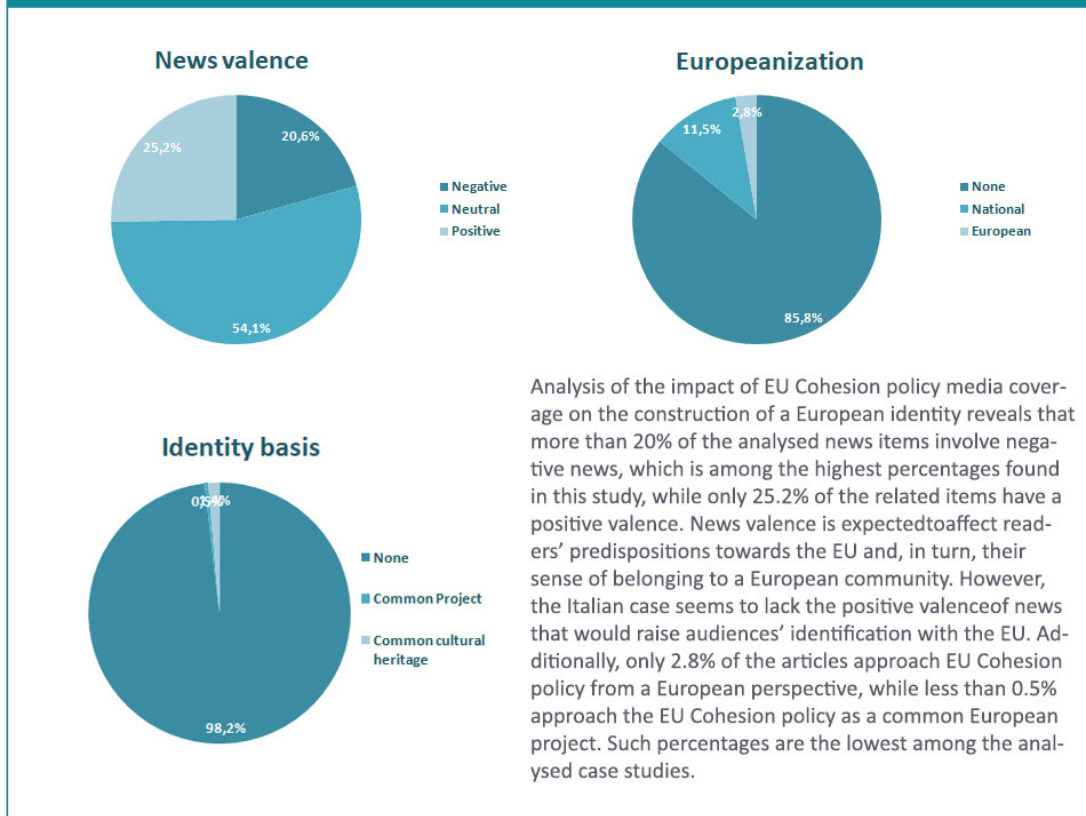


Figure 3.6.4  **Italy - Europeanization variables**



In the Italian case there were no significant differences were found regarding the Europeanisation variables, with the exception of some difference in news valence, as shown in Figure 3.6.5 below.

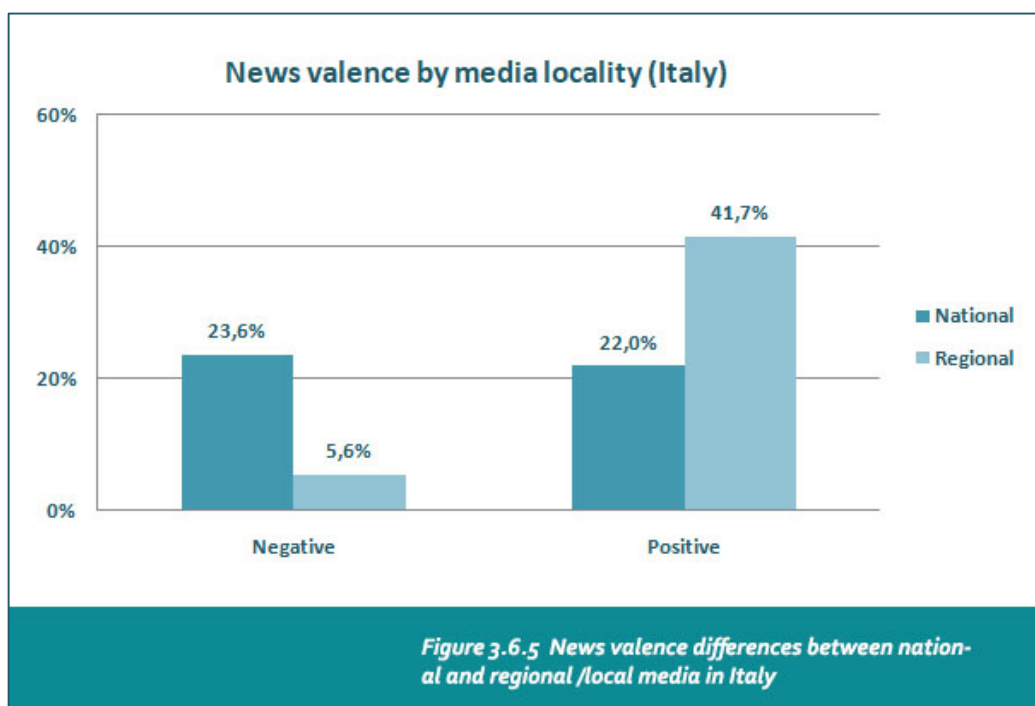
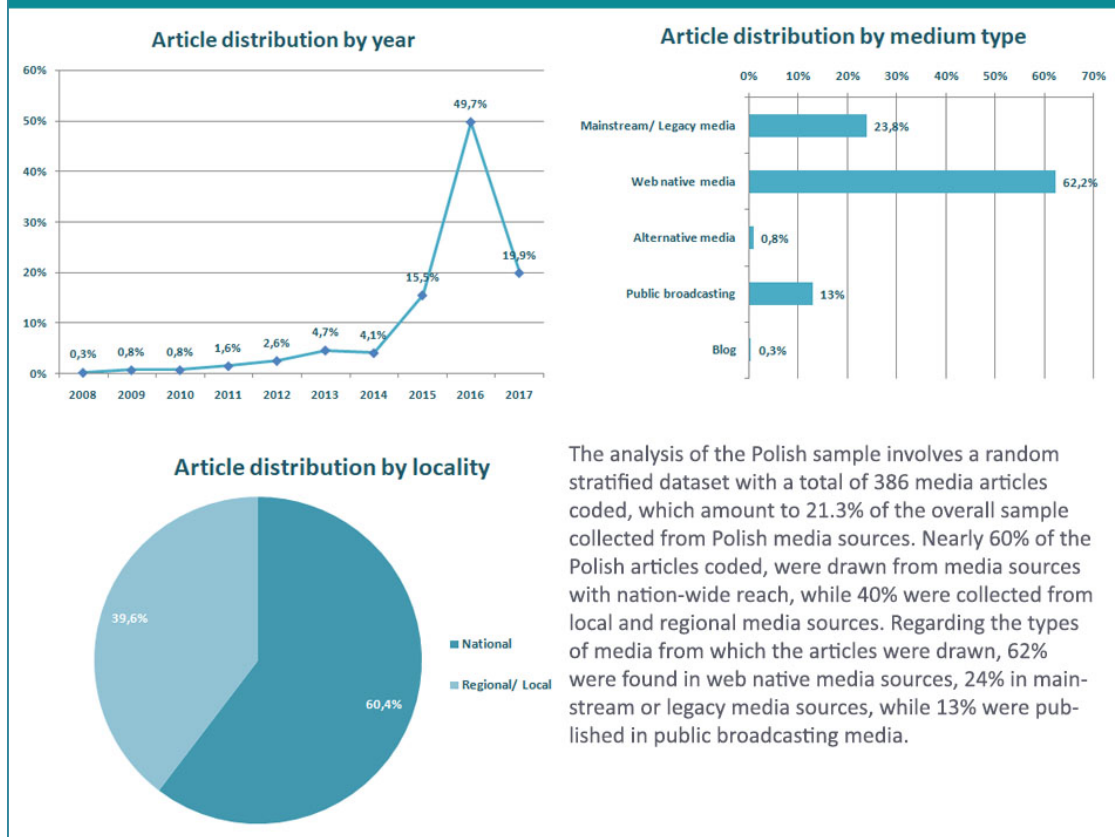
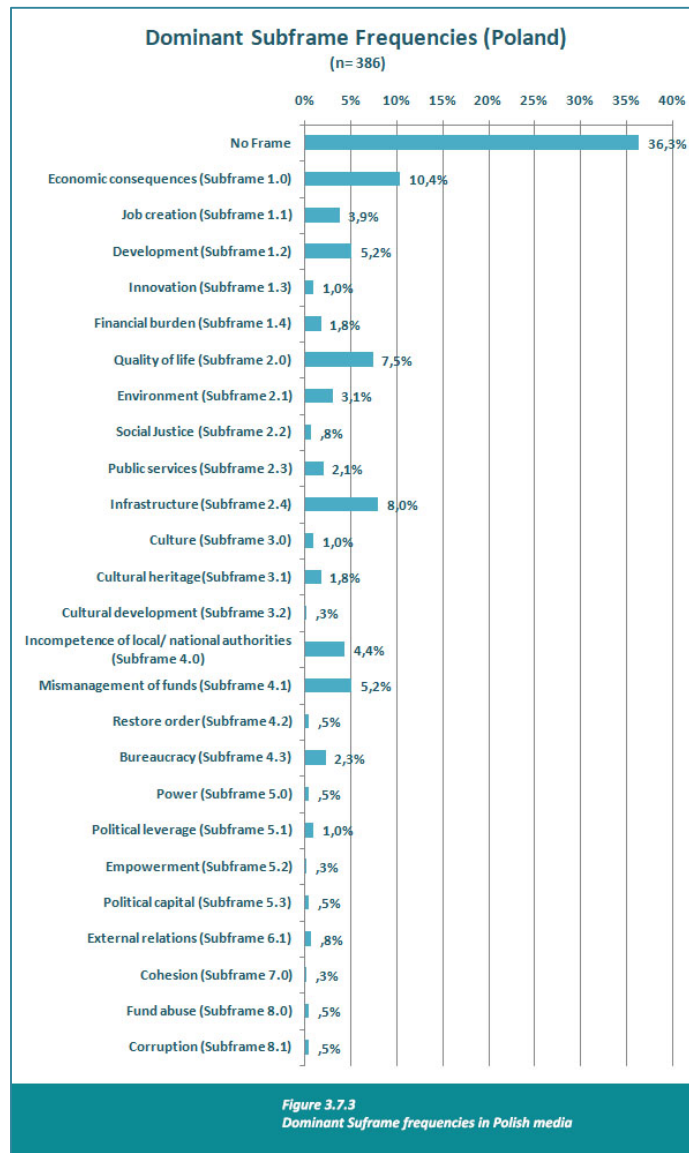
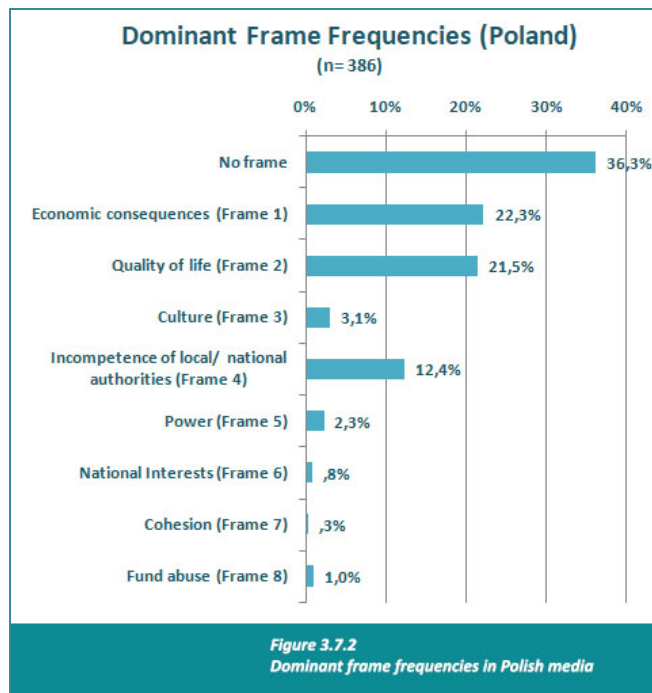


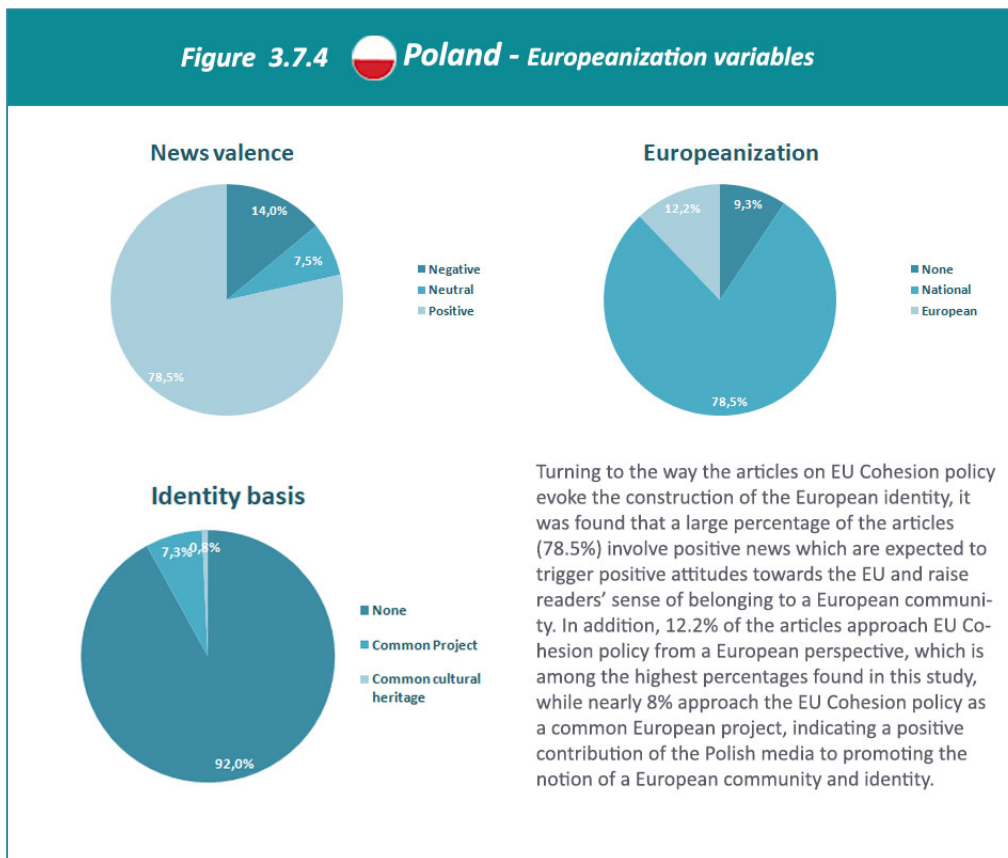
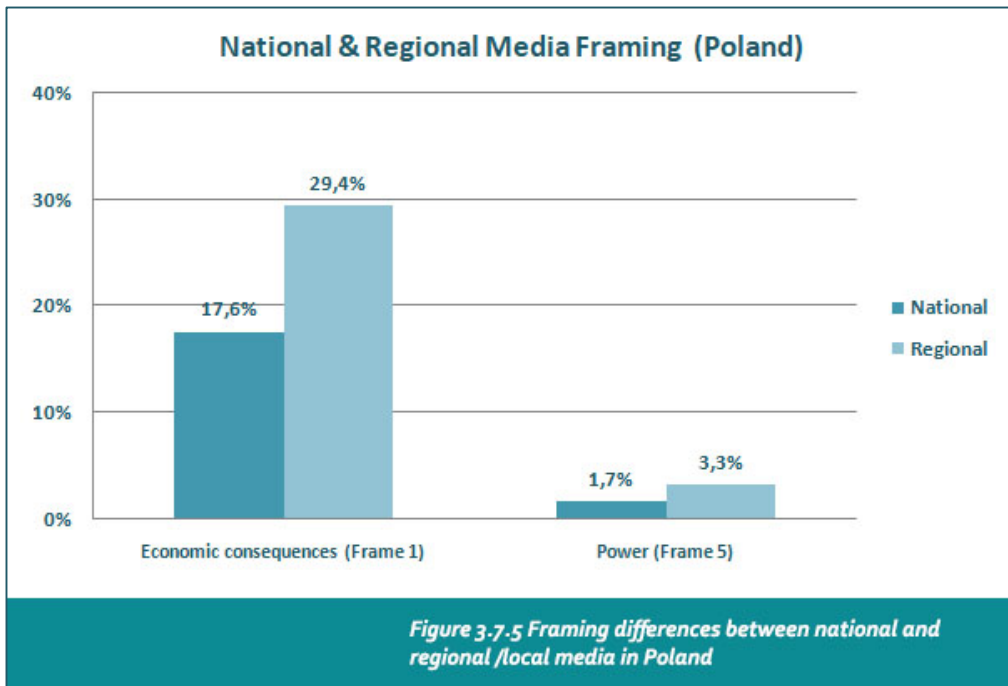
Figure 3.7.1  Poland



As far as the framing analysis is concerned, a significant finding regarding the Polish case is the high percentage of news items that did not apply any frame. In fact, the coders did not identify any frames in 36.3% of the analysed items, which is the highest percentage among the analysed cases studies, suggesting that the Polish media tend to present merely the facts related to EU Cohesion policy, without offering specific interpretation of the news. However, 22.3% of the analysed items frame EU cohesion policy in terms of “economic consequences” and another 21.4% in terms of “quality of life” following the norm that was identified in all the case studies included in this study. Moreover, it is worth noting the high percentage of the articles that applied the “Incompetence of local and national authorities” (12.4%) indicating a critical stance of the Polish media towards the government and the Polish political personnel.

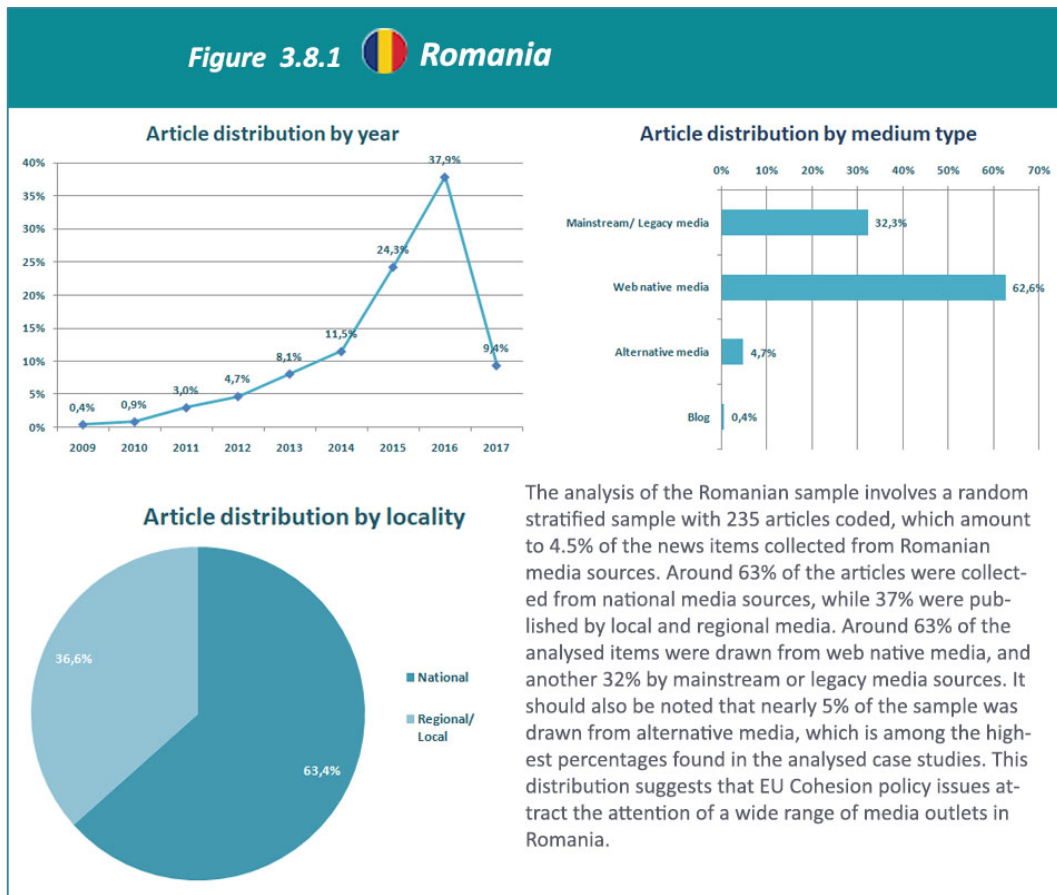


The framing analysis of the Polish sample revealed some striking differences in framing between national and regional media. As shown in Figure 3.7.5 below, regional media tend to interpret EU Cohesion policy in terms of its implications on national economy (Frame 1), while they also employ Frame 5 (“Power”) twice as often as national media.



The analysis of the Europeanisation variables reveals no striking differences between national and regional media in Poland.

h. Romania



As shown in Figure 3.8.2, Romanian media coverage of EU Cohesion policy issues is equally dominated by framing in terms of “Economic consequences” and “Quality of life” (31.1%) as was found in all of the case studies that were analysed. A significant finding in the Romanian case is that none of the analysed items were coded as containing “No frame”, suggesting that Romanian media tend to emphasize on specific interpretations when presenting the news. Additionally, the “Incompetence of local/ national authorities” frame was identified in 21.7% of the articles, suggesting that Romanian media tend to adopt a critical stance towards the government and Romanian public officials. As shown in Figure 3.8.3, this refers mostly to the “Mismanagement of funds” Subframe (4.1) with nearly 18%, which is the highest percentage found in all case studies. In a similar vein, a significant 8.9% of the articles were dominated by the “Fund abuse” frame, further indicating a critical stance of Romanian media outlets.

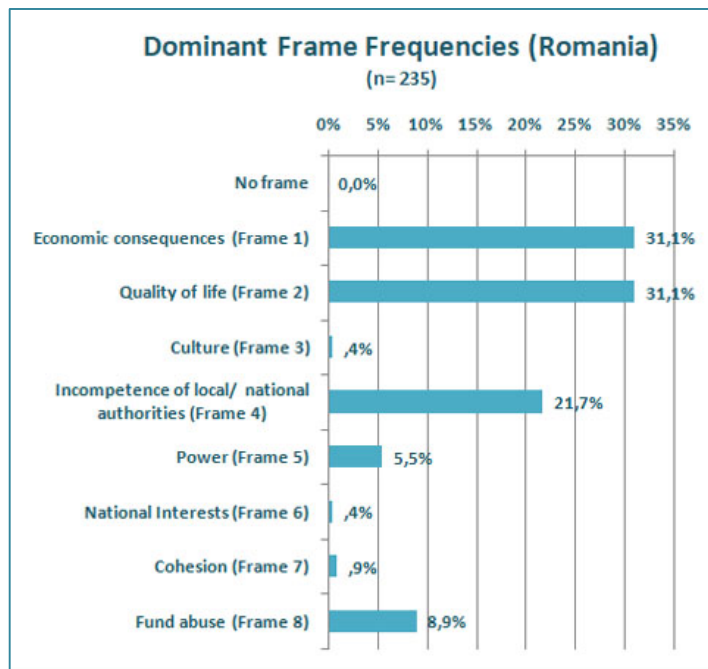


Figure 3.8.2
Dominant frame frequencies in Romanian media

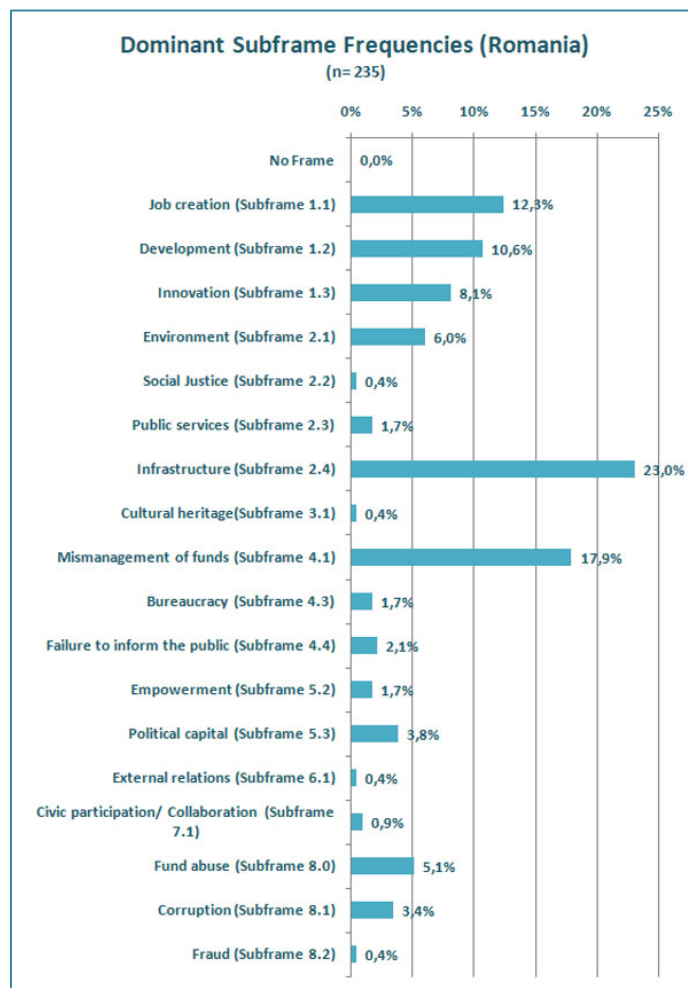


Figure 3.8.3
Dominant Subframe frequencies in Romanian media

The framing analysis of the Romanian sample reveals some significant differences between the framing attitudes of national and regional media as shown in Figure 3.8.5. National media tend to interpret EU Cohesion policy in terms of “economic consequences” (Frame 1), “Power” (Frame 5) and “Fund abuse” (Frame 8) more often than regional media. On the contrary, regional media frame Cohesion policy mainly on the basis of its effect on citizens’ quality of life (Frame 2).

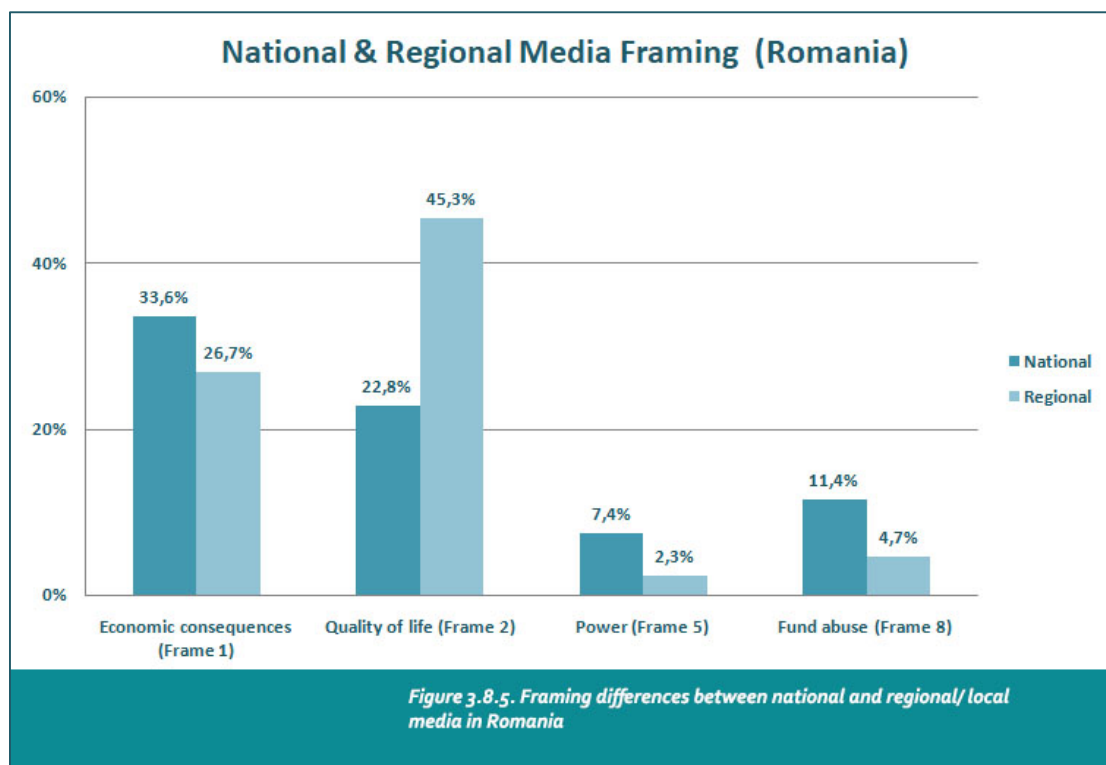
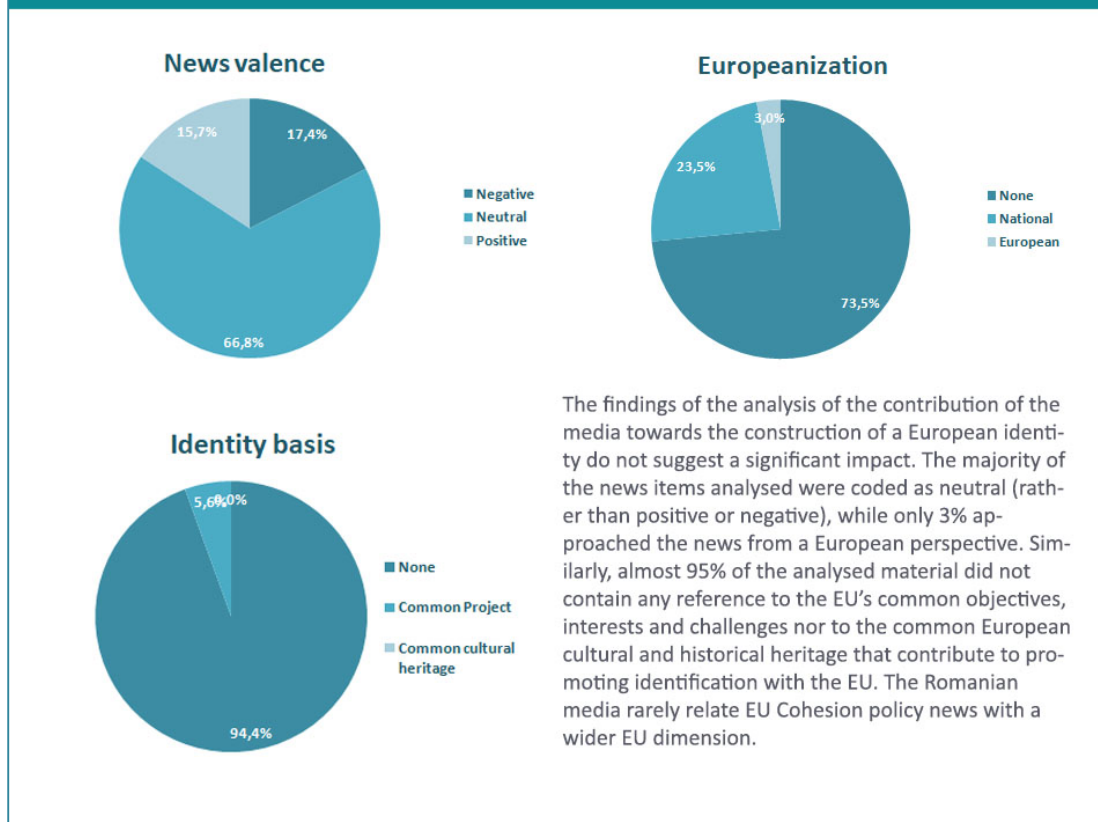


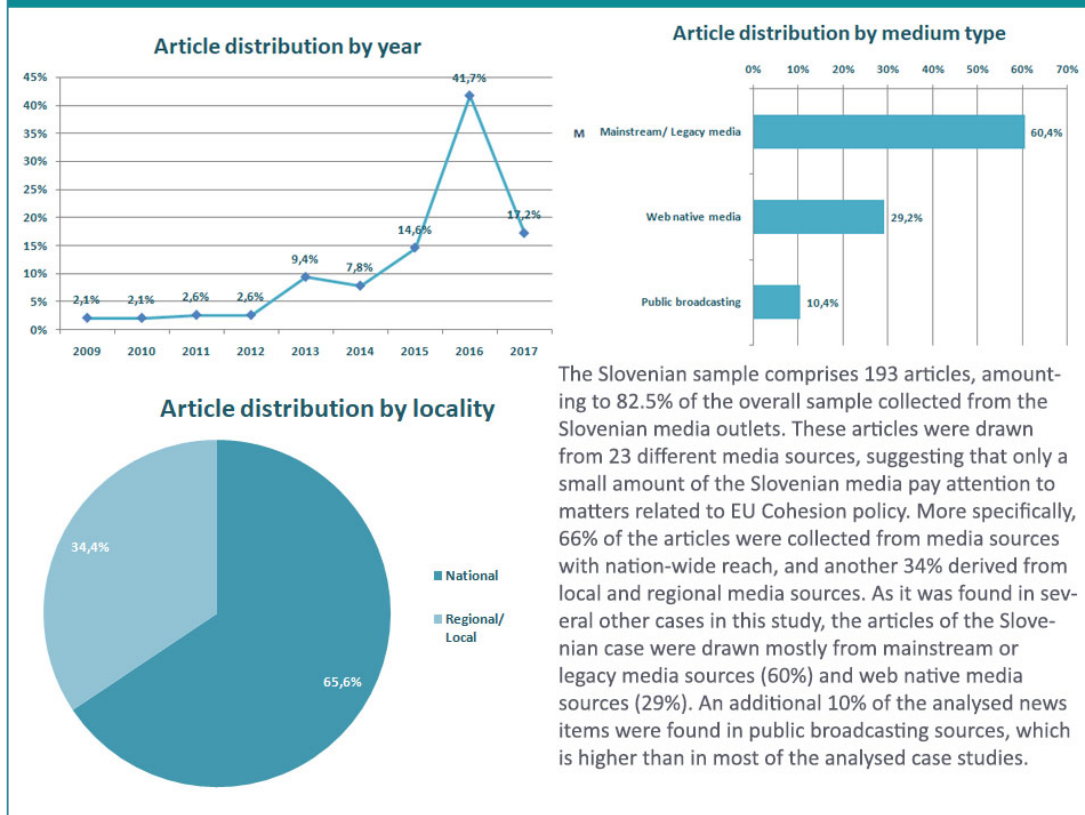
Figure 3.8.4  Romania - Europeanization variables



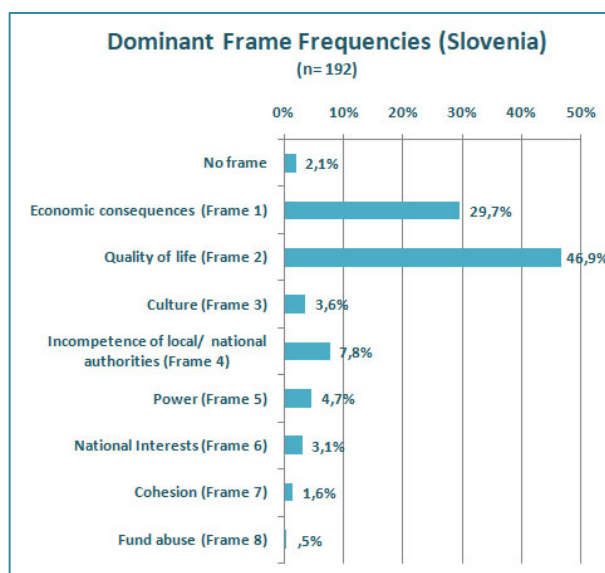
While several differences were found in the framing analysis between national and regional media, the analysis of the Europeanisation variables did not reveal any differences in coverage between the two categories of media.

i. Slovenia

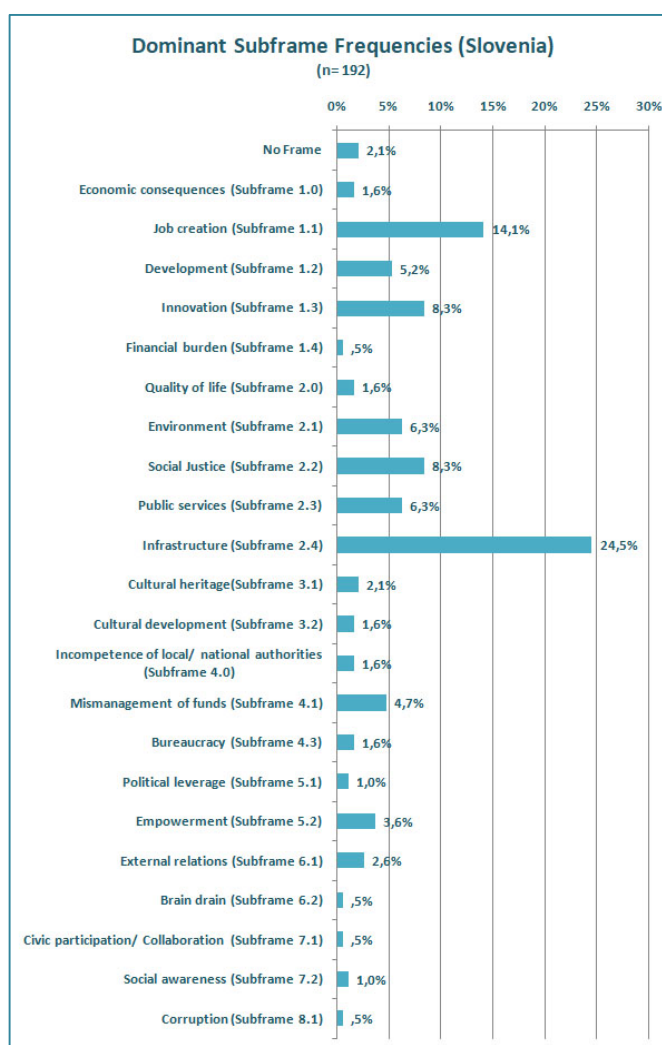
Figure 3.9.1  Slovenia



The framing analysis of the Slovenian sample reveals that almost half of the analysed articles (46.9%) frame EU cohesion policy in terms of its impact on citizens' "Quality of life". As shown in Figure 3.9.3, this refers mostly to the "Infrastructure" subframe (2.4) that was found as dominant in 24.5% of the analysed items, which is higher than every other case study that was analysed. Another 29.7% of the analysed articles were dominated by the "economic consequences" general frame, which was the second most dominant frame, following the overall trend also found in other cases studies. An important point that is worth noting is that only 2.1% of the news items were coded as containing "No frame", which is one of the lowest percentages among the examined case studies. It is also important to mention that 3.1% of the articles approached EU Cohesion policy in terms of its implications on "National interests" (Frame 6), which higher than any other case study we analysed, while the "Power" frame was also quite salient with 4.7%.

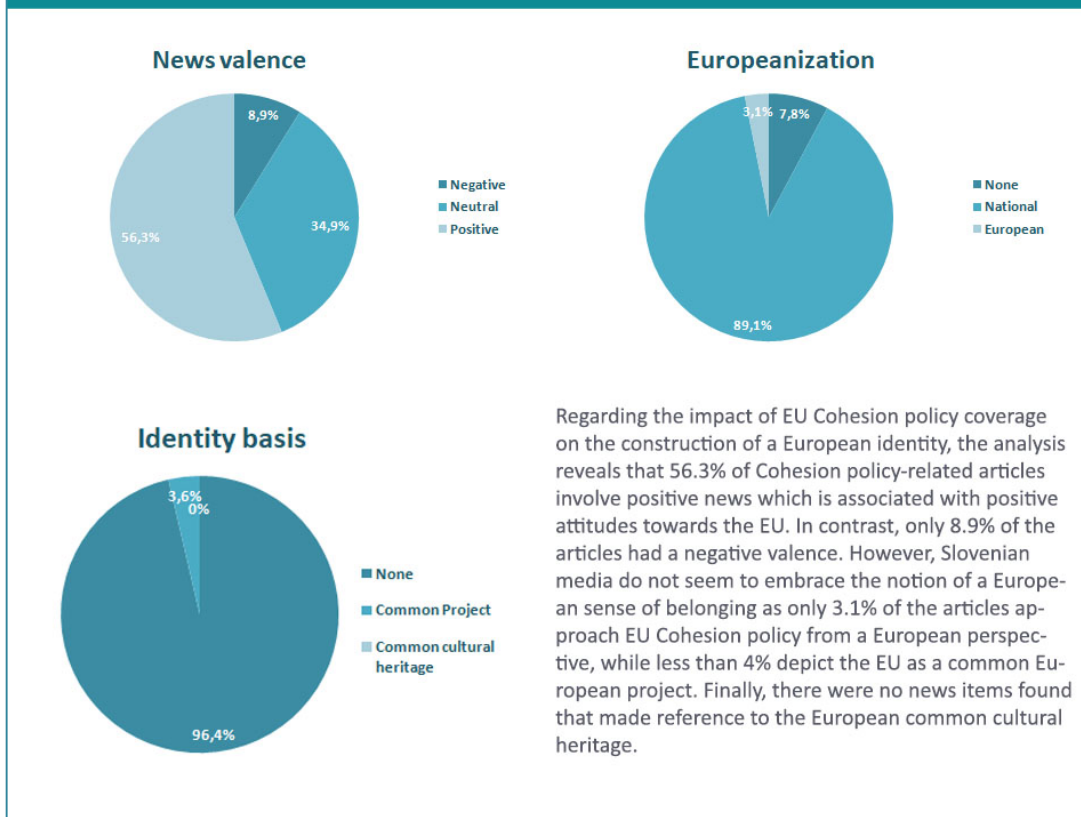


*Figure 3.9.2
Dominant frame frequencies in Slovenian media*



*Figure 3.9.3
Dominant Subframe frequencies in Slovenian media*

Figure 3.9.4  **Slovenia - Europeanization variables**



The analysis of the Slovenian sample did not uncover any differences between national and regional media neither in framing analysis nor in the analysis of the Europeanisation variables. Yet there is one exception that is worth mentioning concerning news valence, which is shown in Figure 3.9.5 below.

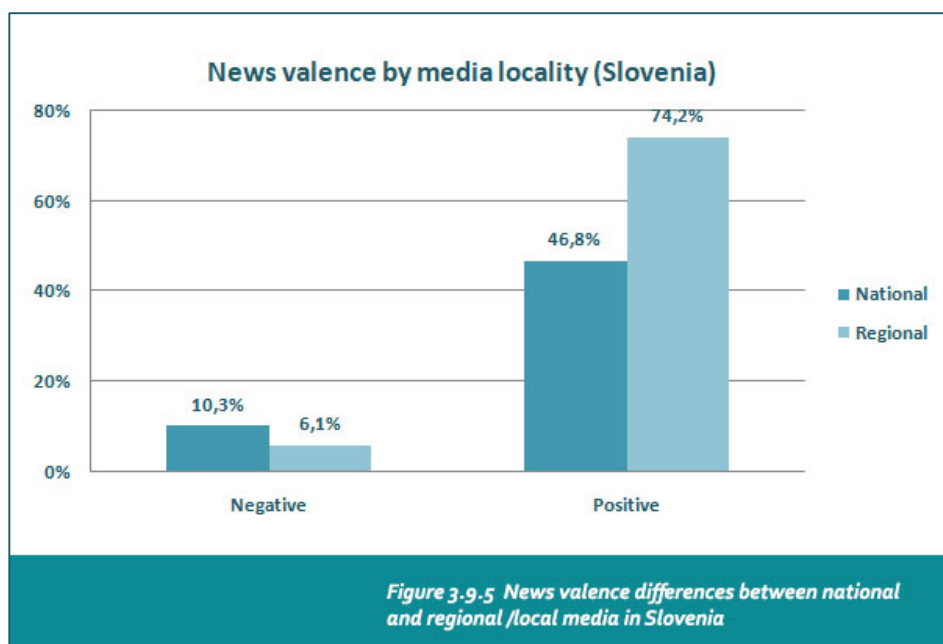
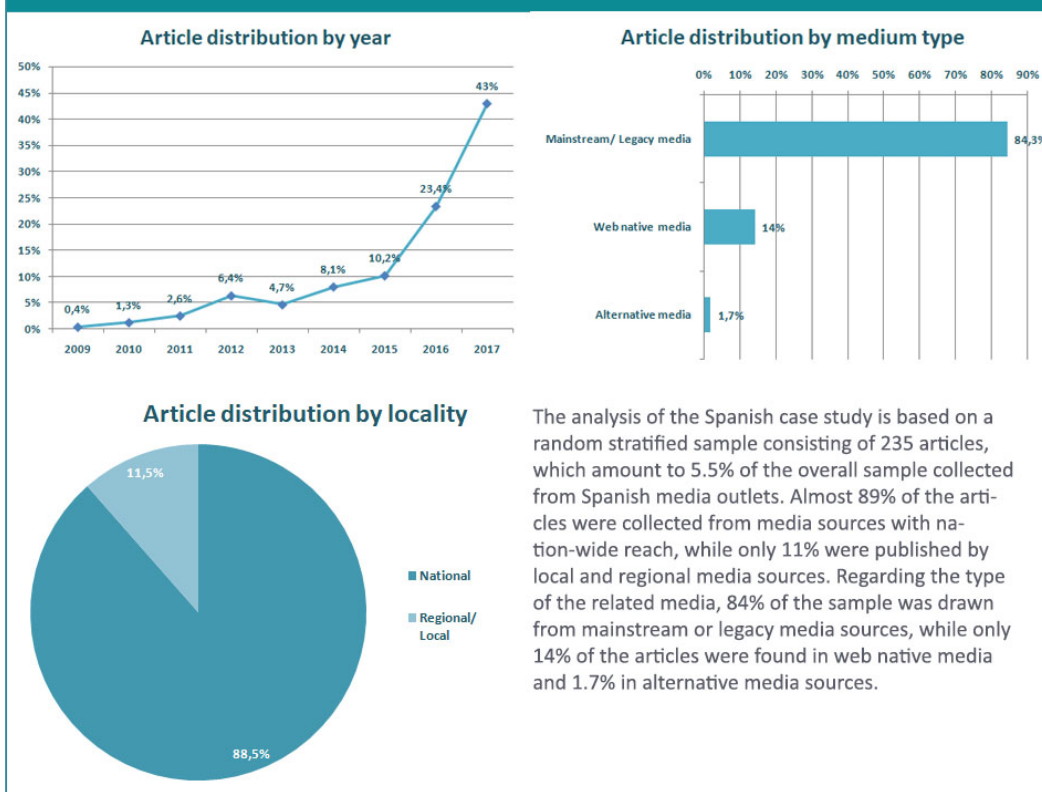


Figure 3.10.1  Spain



The framing analysis of the Spanish sample reveals that most of the analysed articles frame EU Cohesion Policy in economic terms as the “Economic consequences” general frame is dominant in 31.5% of the sample, as shown in Figure 3.10.2. Another 22% of the analysed items place emphasis on the implications of EU Cohesion policy on citizens’ “Quality of life” (Frame 2), 11% focused on the “Incompetence of local/ national authorities”, while 17% contained no framing. However, it should be noted that the Spanish media applied the “Power” frame in 7.2% of the analysed items, which is higher than most of the case studies that were analysed. This is mostly due to the 6.4% of the articles that applied the “Political leverage” subframe (5.1) suggesting that EU Cohesion policy is used by European authorities to put pressure on national governments, as shown in the subframe analysis in Figure 3.10.3, and indicates a critical stance of the Spanish media towards European institutions and officials.

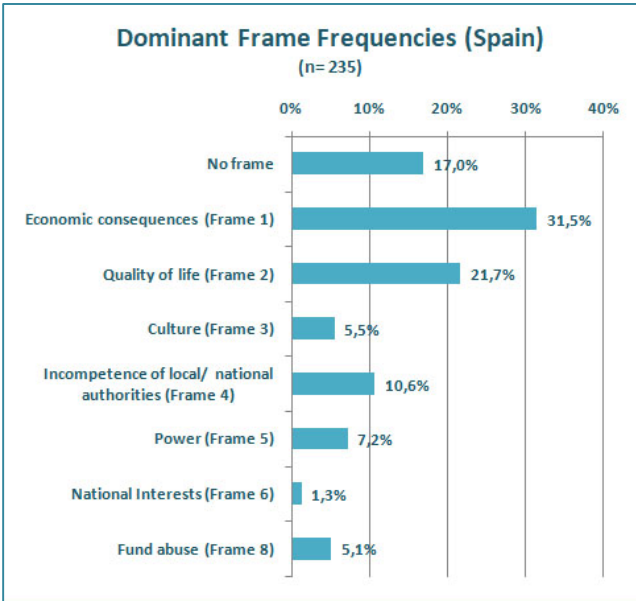


Figure 3.10.2
Dominant frame frequencies in Spanish media

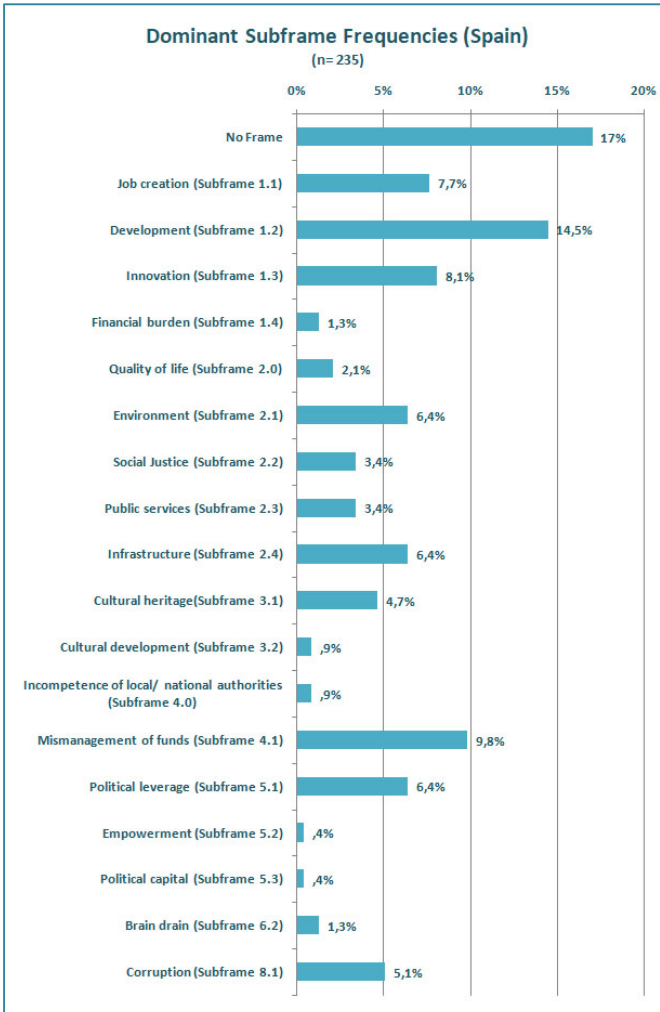


Figure 3.10.3
Dominant subframe frequencies in Spanish media

The framing analysis of the Spanish media revealed several differences between national and regional media, as shown in Figure 3.10.5. One striking difference is that regional media tend to refrain from applying any frames in their presentation of the news twice as often as national media. In addition, regional media also employ the “National interests” frame (6) in 7.4% of the cases, while in national media Frame 6 is nearly inexistent. On the contrary, national media primarily interpret EU Cohesion policy related news in terms of its implications on the economy (Frame 1). Additionally, national media employ Frame 4 (“Incompetence of local/national authorities”) more often than regional media, while they also employ the “Power” frame and the “Fund abuse” frame. The latter two do not appear at all in Spanish regional media coverage.

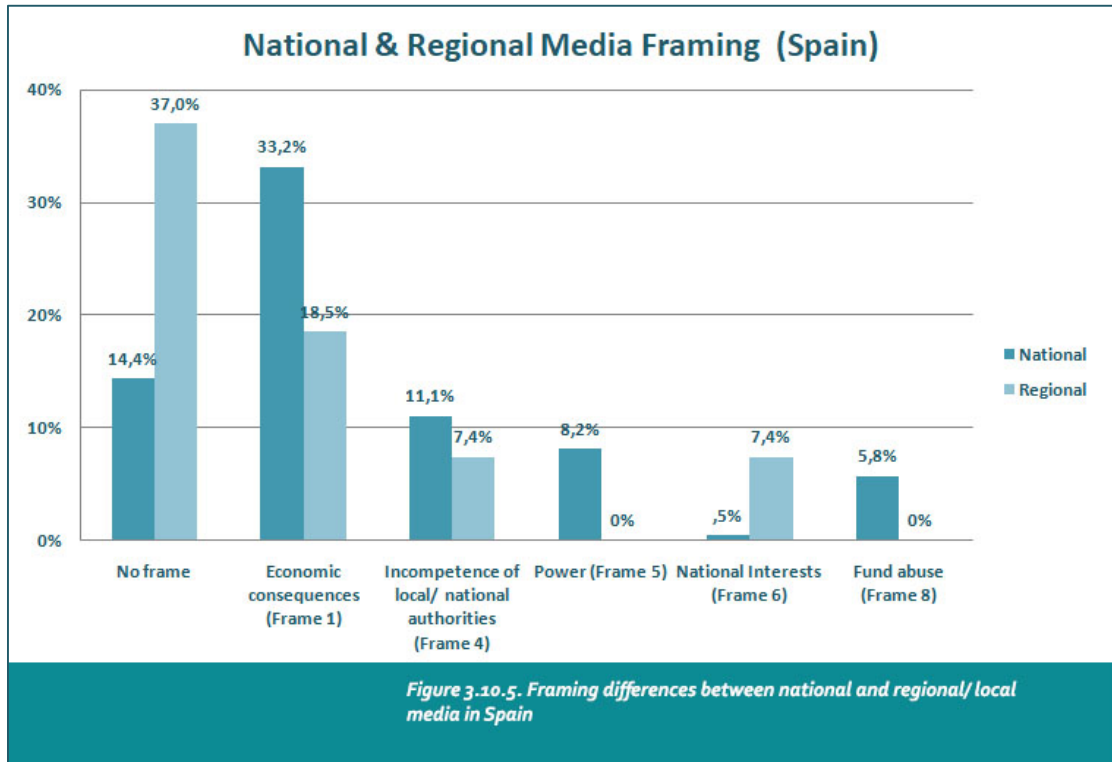
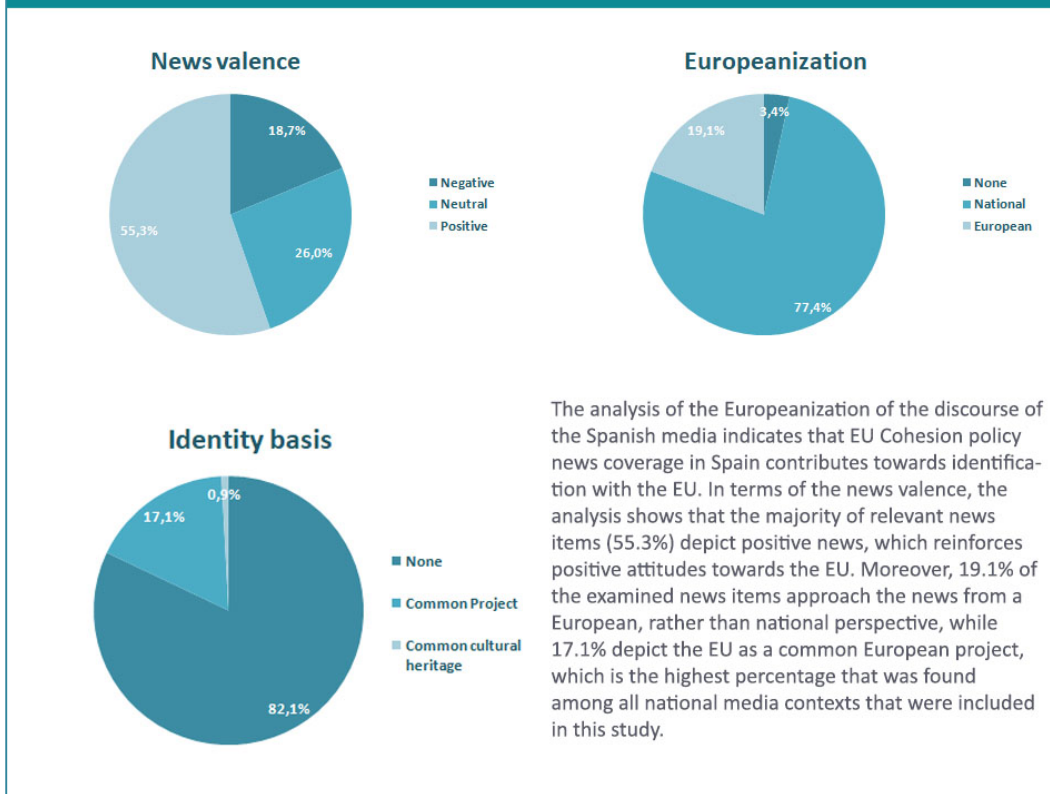
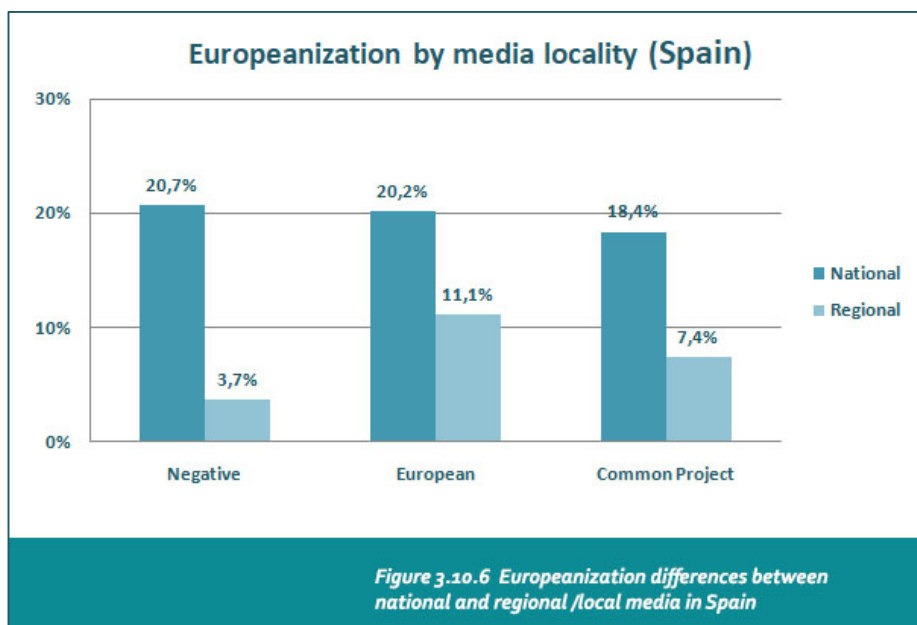


Figure 3.10.4  **Spain - Europeanization variables**

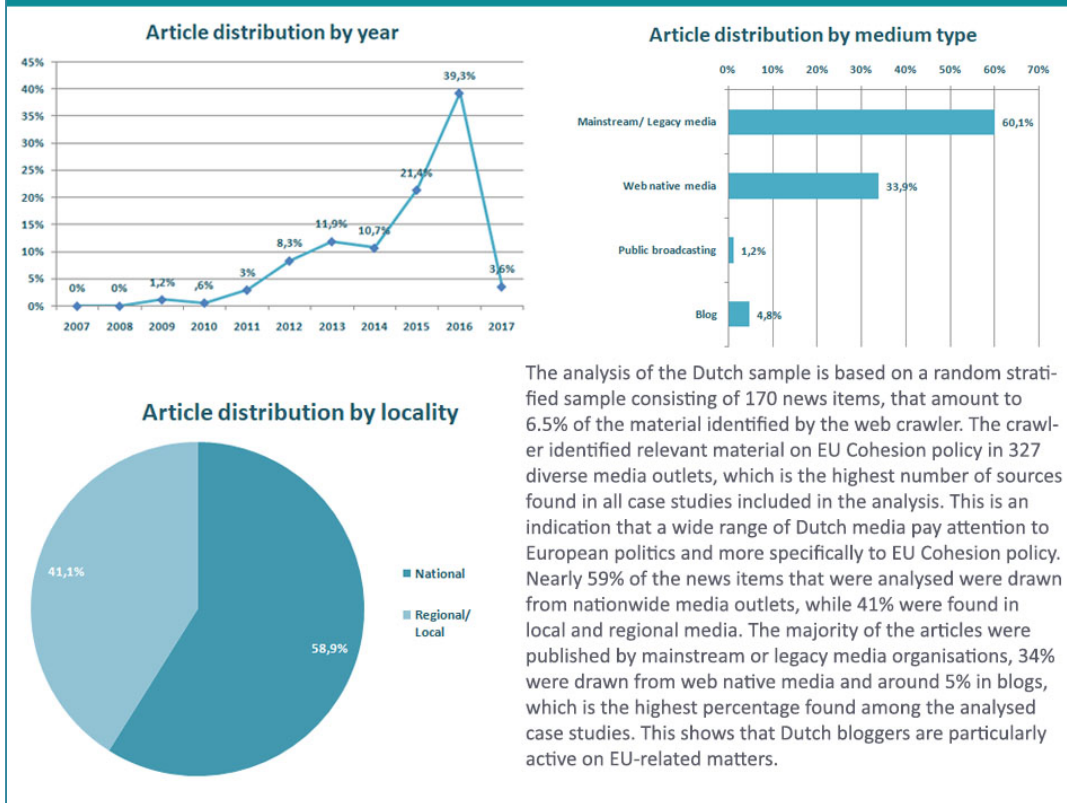


Several differences were identified in respect of the Europeanisation variables between national and regional media in the Spanish landscape, as Figure 3.10.6 illustrates. Firstly, it should be noted that national media tend to present more negative news in relation to EU Cohesion policy, a fact that entails negative connotations in relation to the EU. However, national media tend to approach news from a European perspective more often than regional media, and depict Europe as a common European project twice as often as regional media outlets.



k. The Netherlands

Figure 3.12.1  Netherlands



Evidence from the framing analysis indicates that the Dutch media approach EU Cohesion policy predominately in terms of economic gains and losses as the “Economic consequences” Frame dominates nearly 48% of the analysed news items. This could be attributed to the high percentage of articles (19%) framing EU Cohesion policy in terms of the “Innovation” Subframe (1.3) as shown in Figure 3.12.3. Among the analysed case studies, the Dutch percentage of subframe 1.3 is the highest, suggesting that the Dutch media interpret EU Cohesion as a mean to modernize the economic production methods by financing innovative technologies and by promoting research and development policies. The second most salient frame identified in the Dutch sample was “Quality of life” with 17.9%, although it is one of the lowest found in the examine case studies. Additionally, the Dutch media adopt the “Fund abuse” frame in 10.7% of the sample, indicating a concern regarding the management of EU Cohesion funding by national and local authorities. Finally, it should be noted that the Dutch media exhibit one of the highest percentages in employing the “Cohesion” frame, as well as the fact that they interpret EU Cohesion policy in terms of “Civic participation” (Subframe 7.1), more frequently than any other national media.

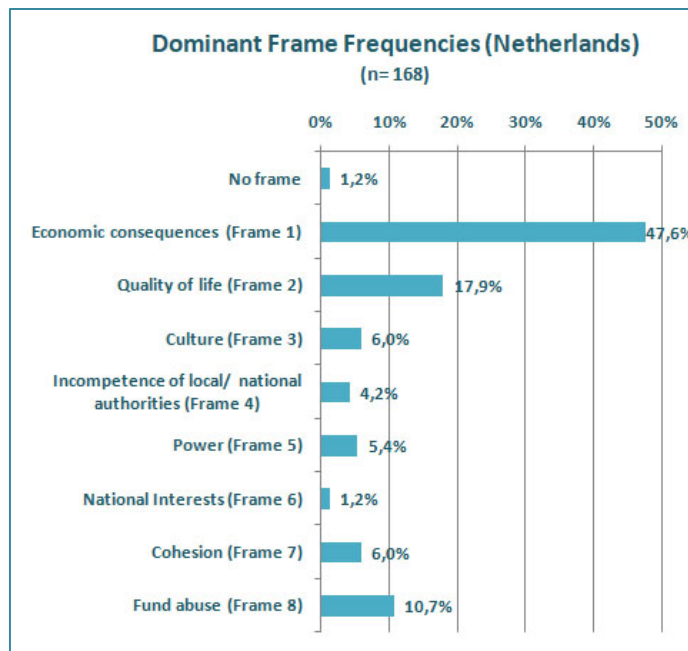


Figure 3.12.2
Dominant frame frequencies in Dutch media

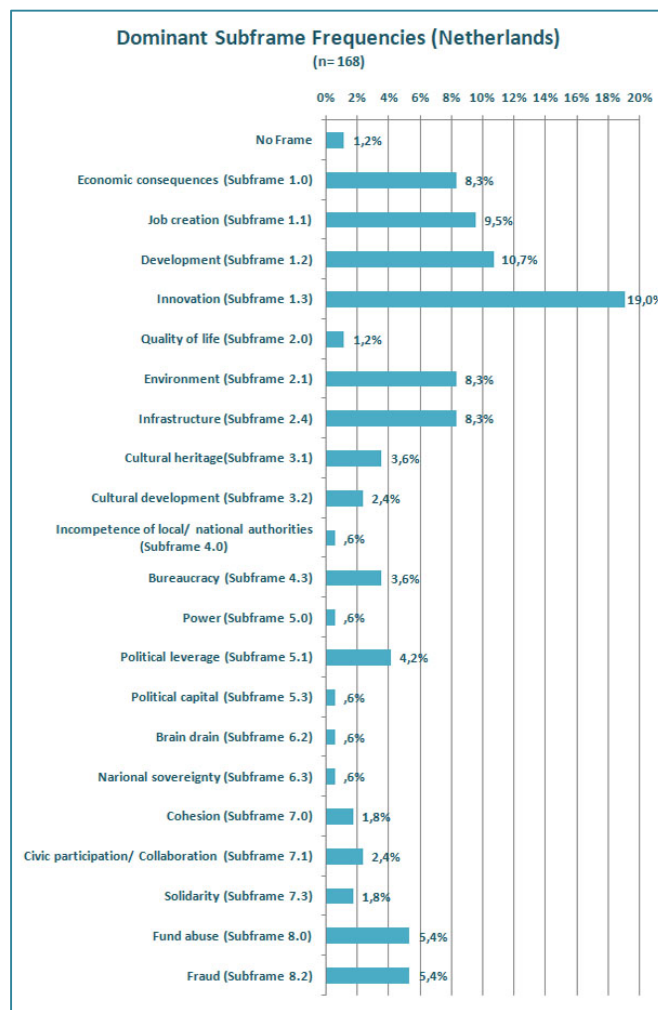


Figure 3.12.3
Dominant Subframe frequencies in Dutch media

As shown in Figure 3.11.5, the analysis of the Dutch media uncovered some significant differences between regional and national media regarding the frames employed. According to the empirical evidence, regional media tend to use Frame 2 (“Quality of life”), Frame 4 (“Incompetence of local/national authorities”) and Frame 7 (“Cohesion”) more often than national media. On the contrary, national media emphasize on “Fund abuse” (Frame 8) issues almost twice as often as regional media, while they also employ the “Power” Frame (5) that is inexistent in regional media coverage of EU Cohesion policy.

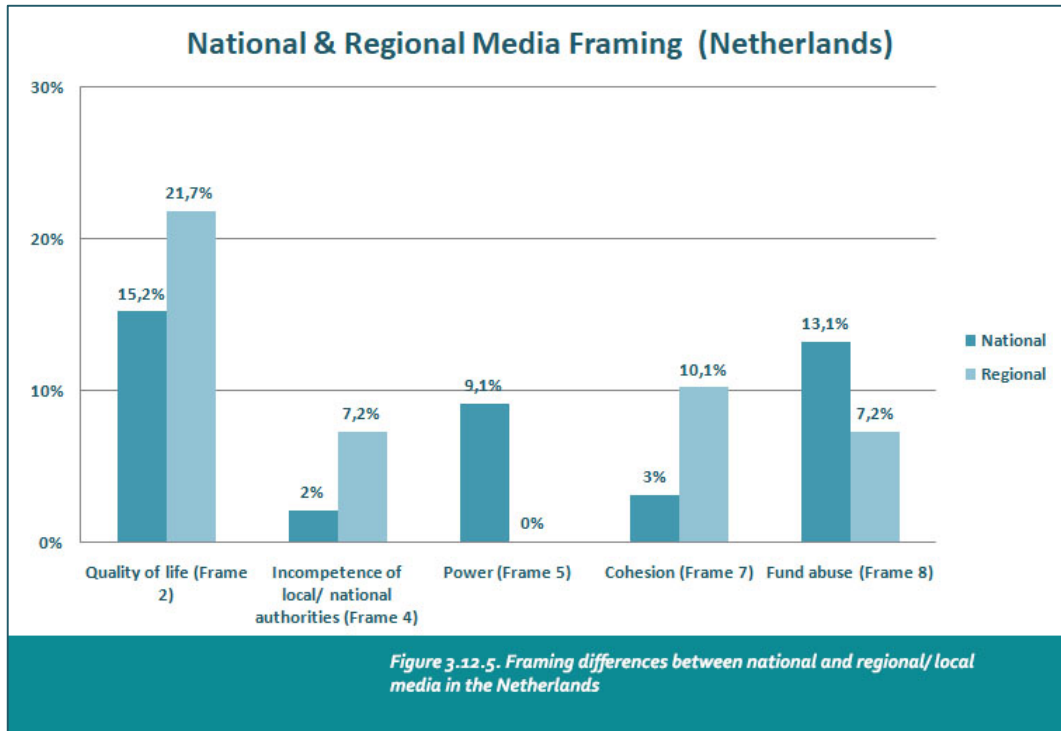
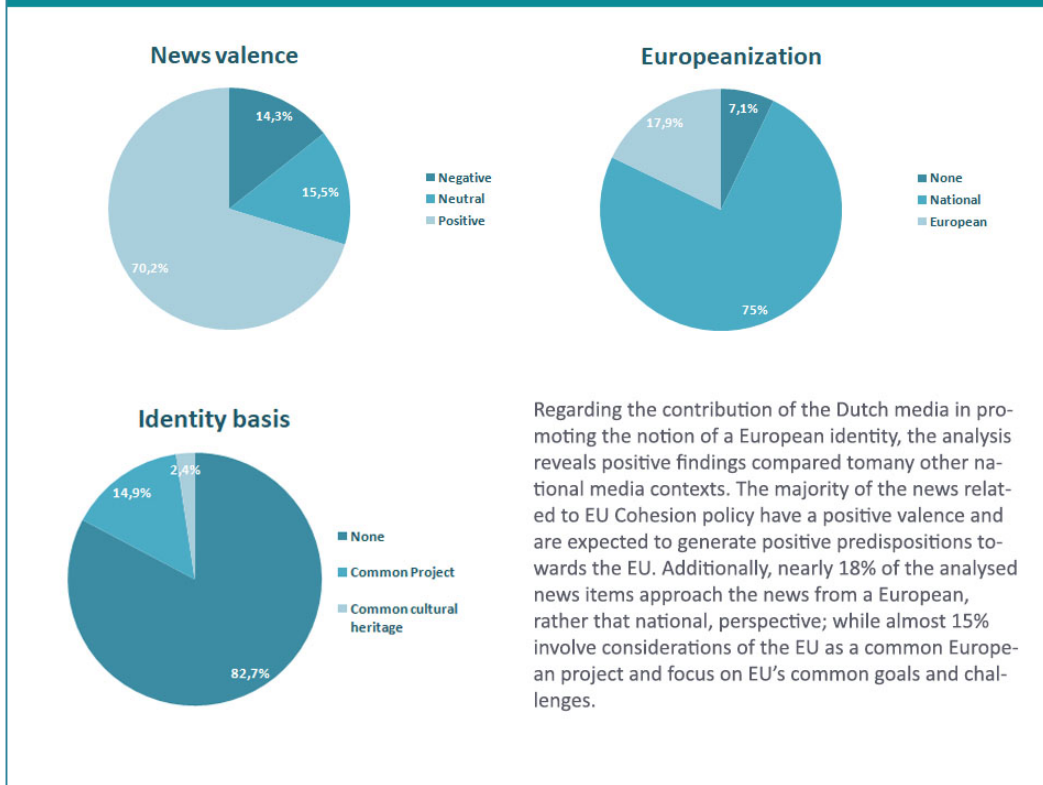
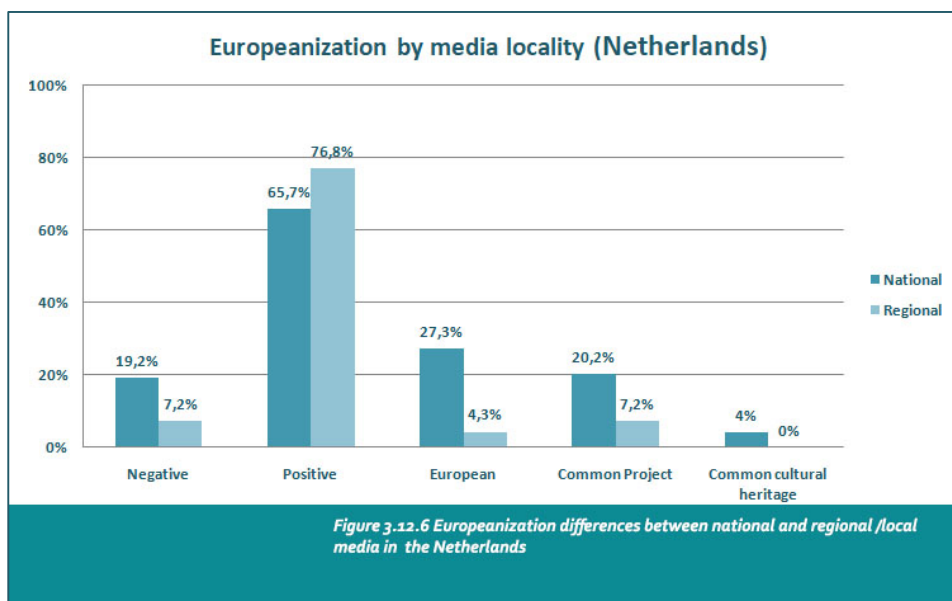


Figure 3.12.4  **Netherlands - Europeanization variables**

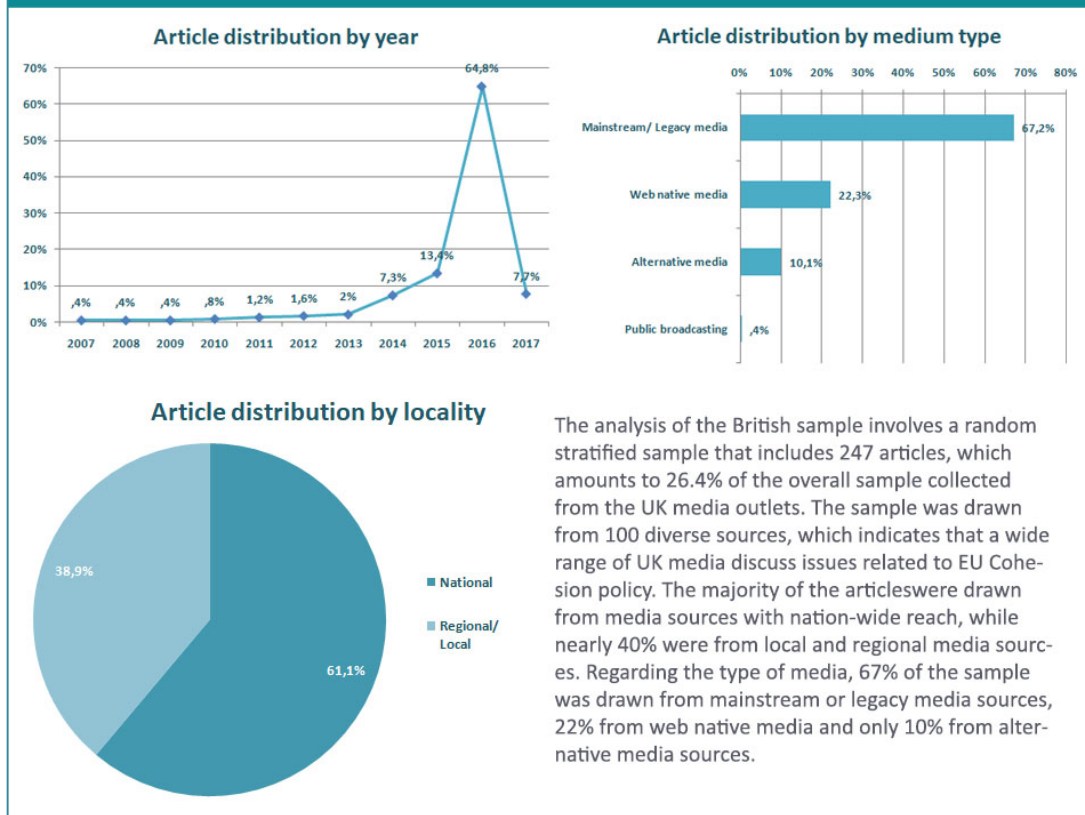


Several differences we identified in the analysis of the Europeanisation variables that are expected to affect European identity formation. As Figure 3.12.6 shows, regional media tend to present more positive and less negative news than national media, while national media perform better in the Europeanisation of the public discourse and in promoting the common European objectives, interests and cultural heritage.



I. United Kingdom

Figure 3.11.1  United Kingdom



The framing analysis of the British sample reveals that more than half of the analysed articles frame EU Cohesion Policy in economic terms as the “Economic consequences” general frame is dominant in 54.7% of the sample. The majority of these articles focus on the positive implications of EU cohesion policy on the economy. As revealed in the subframe analysis, the most dominant subframe in the British sample is “Development” (subframe 1.2) with 18.6%, followed by the “job creation” subframe (1.1) with 15.7%, and “Innovation” (1.3) with 13.4%. Moreover, a large percentage of the sample (20%) is dominated by the “Quality of life” frame (2), which approaches EU cohesion policy in terms of the positive consequences it brings to citizens’ everyday lives, mainly by supporting disadvantaged social groups (7.7%) and by providing infrastructure (6.9%). It was also found that 6.5% of the media articles contained no framing, while the remaining five frames (“Culture”, “Incompetence of local authorities”, “Power”, “National interests”, “Cohesion” and “Fund abuse”) appear in lower percentages of the sample (4.9%, 4%, 0.8%, 2.8% and 2.4% respectively).

The framing analysis of the British media suggests that national and regional media in the UK apply similar frames in their presentation of EU Cohesion policy news.

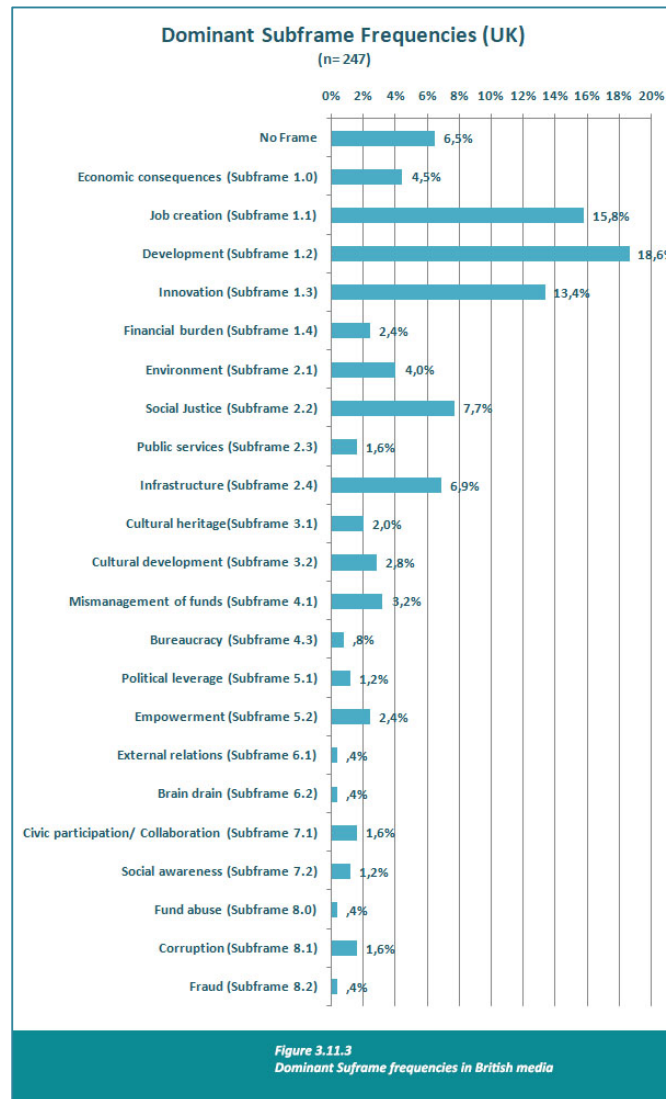
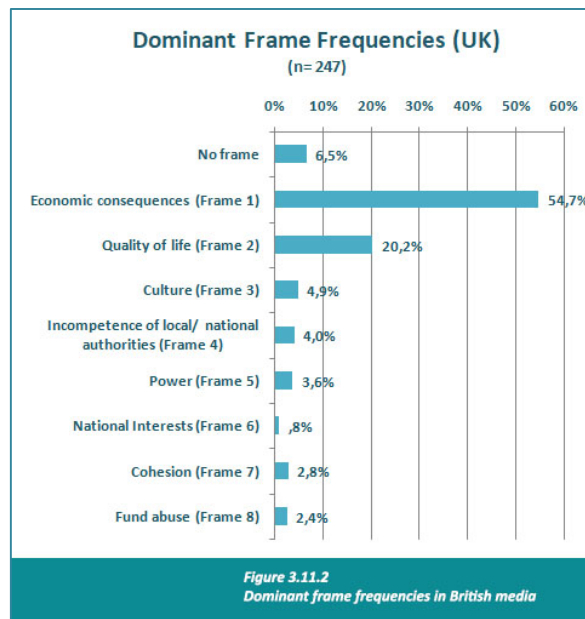
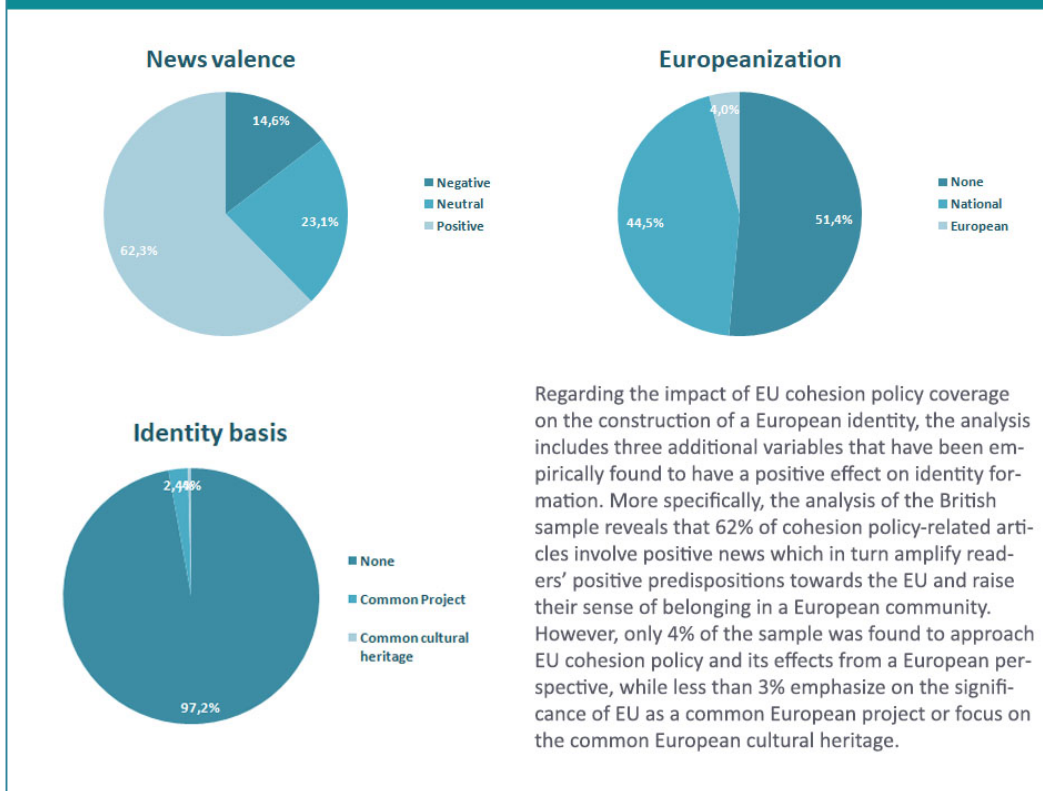


Figure 3.11.4  **United Kingdom - Europeanization variables**



Regarding the additional variables that affect the construction of European identity, the analysis revealed that regional media tend to present positive news regarding EU Cohesion policy more often than national media, yet they never approach the news from a European perspective.

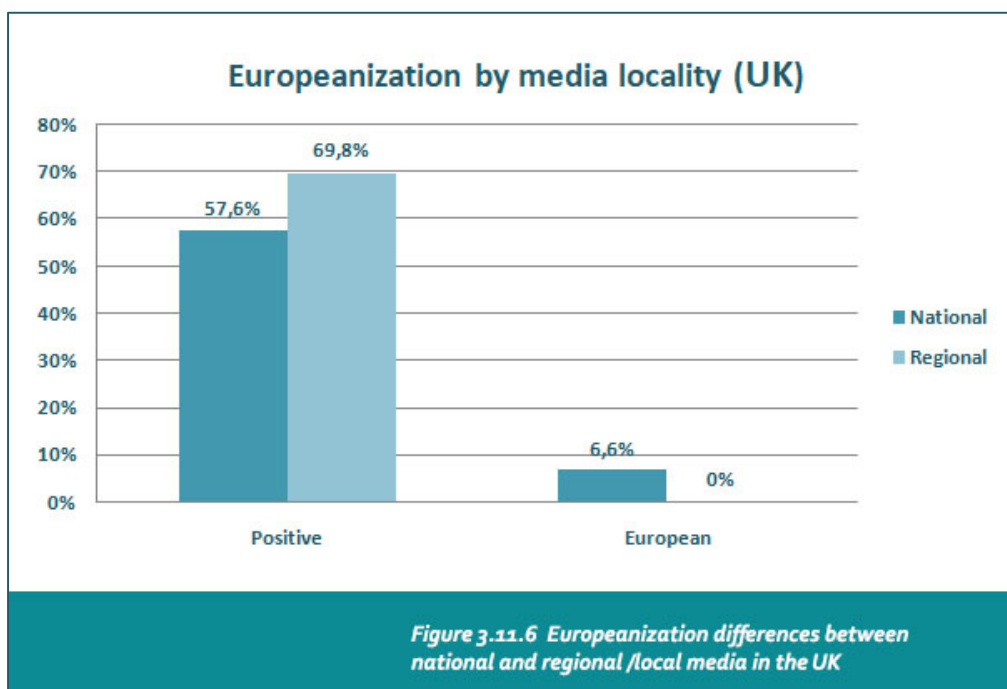
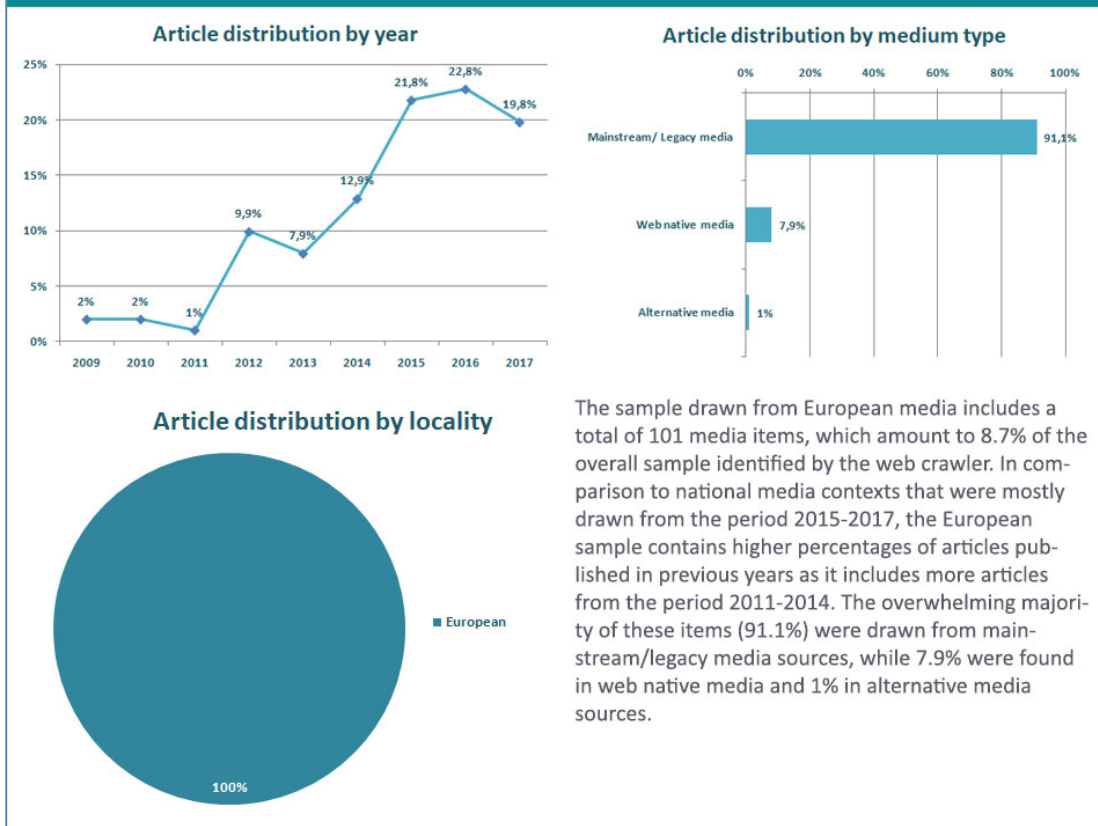


Figure 3.13.1  European media



In the framing analysis of news items drawn from European media, Frame 1 (“Economic Consequences”) and Frame 2 (“Quality of Life”) were identified as the most dominant frames with 22.8% and 21.8% respectively. Nevertheless, a significantly different trend is found in European media framing as Frame 5 (“Power”) was identified as dominant in 12.9% of the cases, which is higher than in any of the national media contexts that were analysed. As shown in Figure 3.13.3, this is due to the 11.9% of the articles that approach EU Cohesion policy in terms of “Political leverage” (Subframe 5.1), indicating a tendency of European media organizations to criticise European institutions and European officials for using Cohesion policy funding as leverage in order to put pressure on national governments. Moreover, it is worth noting, the relatively high percentage of the “Cohesion” frame 7 (5%) which is higher than in most of the case studies, with the exception of Germany, as well as the 8.9% of the articles that were framed in terms of “Fund abuse” of Cohesion policy funds.

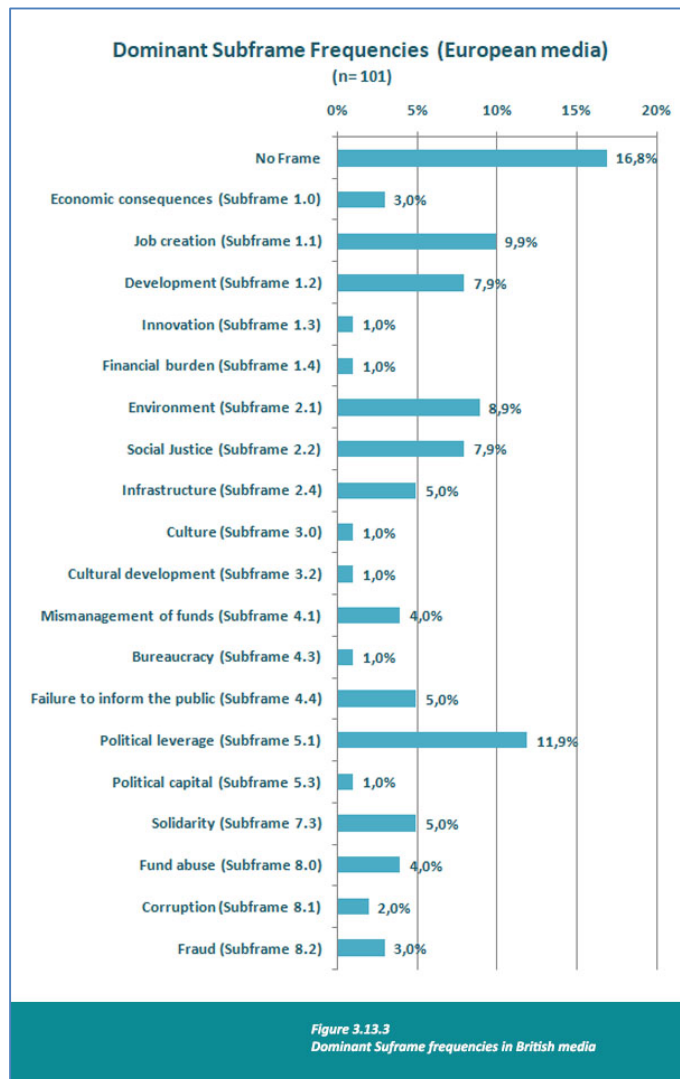
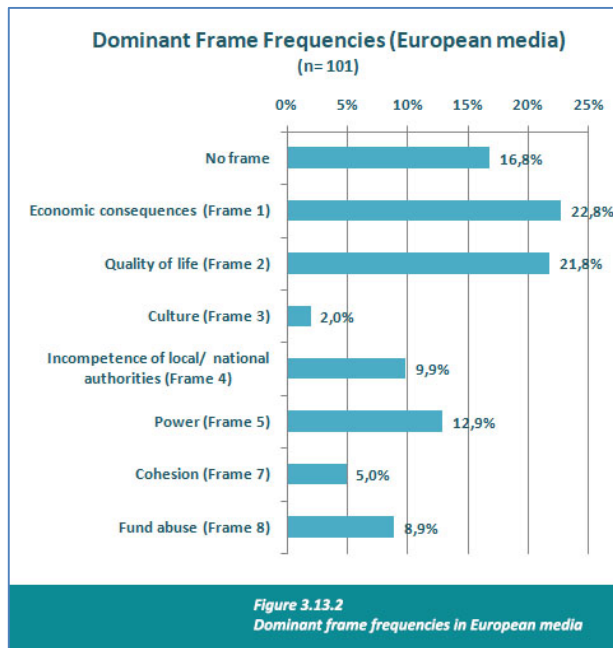
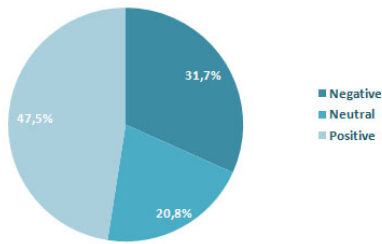
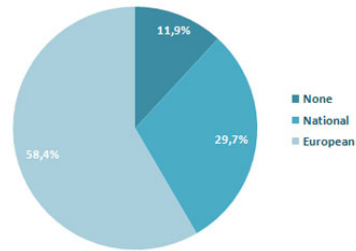


Figure 3.13.4  **European media - Europeanization variables**

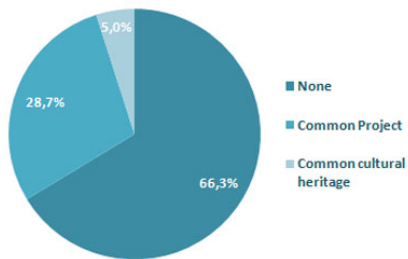
News valence



Europeanization



Identity basis



Regarding the role of the European media in promoting the notion of European identity, the analysis reveals that 47.5% of the analysed news items involve positive news that have the potential to strengthen readers' positive attitudes towards the EU in contrast to 31.7% that involves negative news. This outcome suggests that the positive effect of the European media is in a way neutralized by the negative valence news, which are expected to have the opposite effect. As far as the Europeanization of the media debate is concerned, 58.4% of the analysed items approach EU Cohesion policy related news from a European perspective, which is the higher than all the national media sources analysed in this study. Yet this is not surprising given that the European media organizations have a pan-European reach and appeal. Finally, European media outlets seem to contribute significantly in terms of providing a basis for the construction of a European identity since 28.7% of our sample makes reference to the EU as a common European project and 5% to the common European cultural heritage. These percentages are higher than the percentages found in any other national media context.

5.4 Cross-country comparative analysis

Framing analysis

Following on from the data presented previously in the country profiles, this section examines cross-country differences and similarities concerning media representations of the EU Cohesion policy. This is essential for understanding whether the media in EU member states follow a similar pattern in presenting EU related news, or whether national media in some EU countries adopt distinctive representations of EU related news.

In terms of media frames that dominate public discourse in EU countries, our analysis reveals several similarities among the examined cases and a few differences in specific case studies. As shown in Figure 4.1, the “Economic consequences” (Frame 1) and the “Quality of life” (Frame 2) media frames are the most common frames in all cases, accounting on average for more than 60% of the overall sample and up to 75% in a few case studies (UK, Cyprus, Ireland, Slovenia). The overwhelming majority of these cases entail positive evaluations for EU Cohesion policy as they emphasize the positive impacts of Cohesion policy on the economy and citizens’ everyday lives. In fact, seven out of the eight related subframes refer to EU Cohesion policy’s positive effects, while only the “Financial burden” subframe (1.4) raises scepticism regarding the overall impact of EU Cohesion policy on member states.

In spite of the overall tendency of media organizations across member states to adopt Frames 1 and 2 in news related to the EU Cohesion policy, the analysis also revealed some striking differences across countries, indicating that the way in which EU Cohesion policy is understood, interpreted and discussed varies across national contexts. As emerges, media organizations within the same national context exhibit preference towards particular frames while in different national contexts other frames appear more salient. To illustrate this for example, we focus on Frame 4 (“Incompetence of local/ national authorities”) that appears as dominant in nearly 22% of the Romanian sample, twice as high as the overall mean, indicating a trend in the Romanian media to assign responsibility to the government for issues related to the EU Cohesion policy. Similarly, European media employ the “Power” Frame (Frame 5) three times more frequently than the overall mean. This result suggests that European media organizations place more emphasis on power relations within the EU and interpret EU Cohesion policy in terms of a political power game. Moreover, the analysis identified a particularly high percentage of the “Cohesion” Frame (Frame 7) in German media (over 20% of the sample while the overall average is less than 3%). This is an indication that the German media favour an alternative interpretation of EU Cohesion policy focusing on its significance for civic participation, awareness and community building, rather than on its effects on citizens’ quality of life (Germany exhibits the lowest score on Frame 2, with only 12.5% while the overall mean reaches 28%). Finally, Frame 8 (“Fund abuse”) is more salient in Hungarian, Romanian and European media indicating a greater concern about cases of corruption and fraud within these media contexts.

These findings suggest that media representations of EU Cohesion policy may be affected by cultural, political or organizational factors, varying from one context to another and depending on the particularities of each national context as well as the variety (or specificities) of Cohesion policy projects implemented.

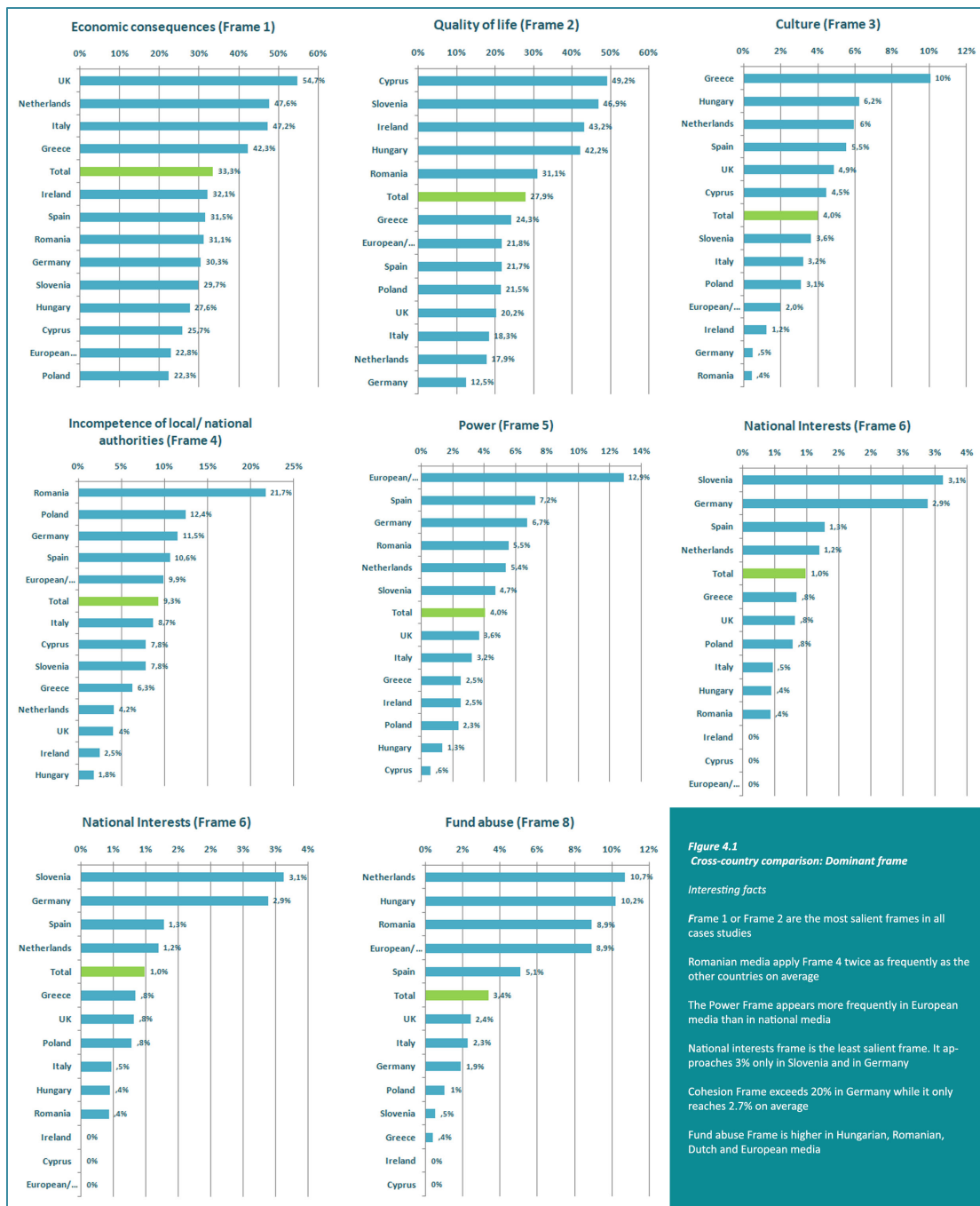


Figure 4.1
Cross-country comparison: Dominant frame

Interesting facts

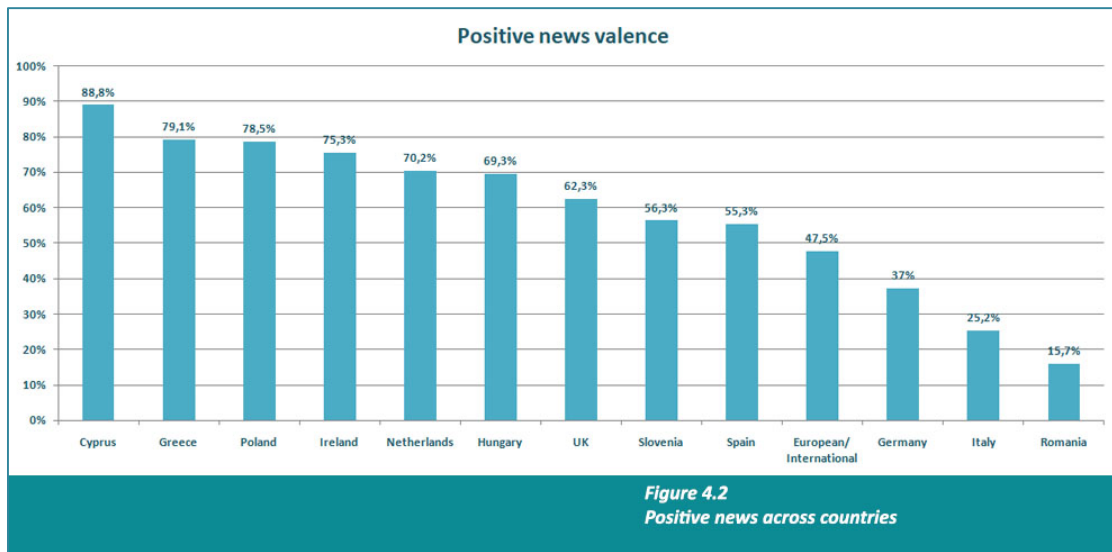
- Frame 1 or Frame 2 are the most salient frames in all cases studies
- Romanian media apply Frame 4 twice as frequently as the other countries on average
- The Power Frame appears more frequently in European media than in national media
- National Interests frame is the least salient frame. It approaches 3% only in Slovenia and in Germany
- Cohesion Frame exceeds 20% in Germany while it only reaches 2.7% on average
- Fund abuse Frame is higher in Hungarian, Romanian, Dutch and European media

European Identity

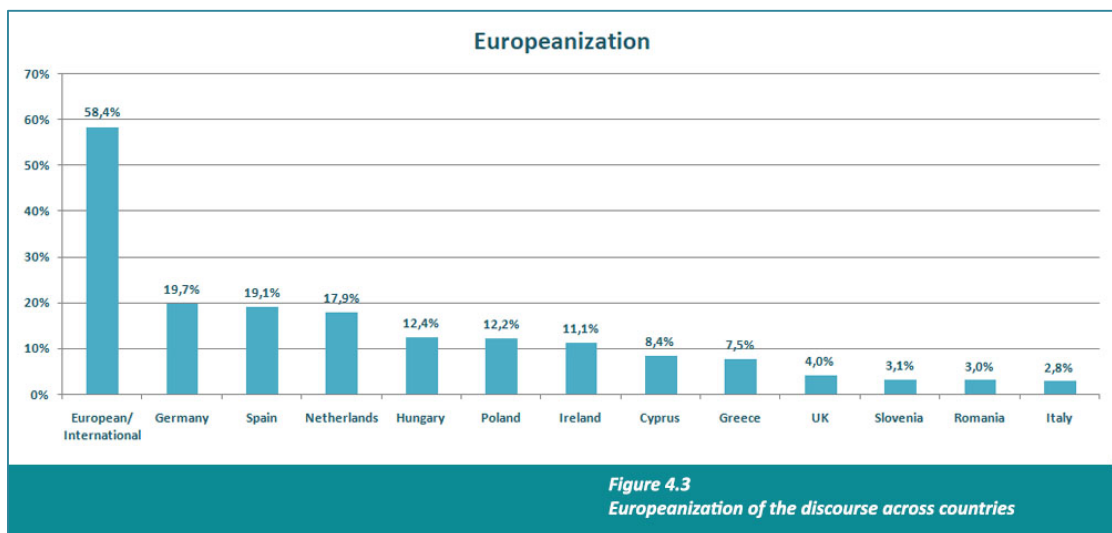
Complementary to the framing analysis, this study employed a content analysis of news items aiming to assess a set of particular characteristics that have been empirically found to contribute to the formation of a European identity.

The first item that was examined was news valence. According to empirical research (De Vreese & Boomgaarden 2006; Schuck & de Vreese, 2006; Vliegthart et al, 2008; Kandyla & De Vreese, 2008; De Vreese & Kandyla, 2009;) positive news about the EU are associated with positive evaluations for the EU, a fact that promotes the sense of belonging to a community and in turn reinforces the formation of a European identity. As shown in Figure 3.2, the overwhelming majority of the analysed news items disseminate positive news related to the EU Cohesion policy, in most of the case studies. Although in some cases the percentage of the positive news items is below 50% of the cases. At this point it should be noted that most

news items exhibit no valence (“neutral”), so not observing a high percentage of positive news does not necessarily mean that negative news on EU Cohesion policy dominate.

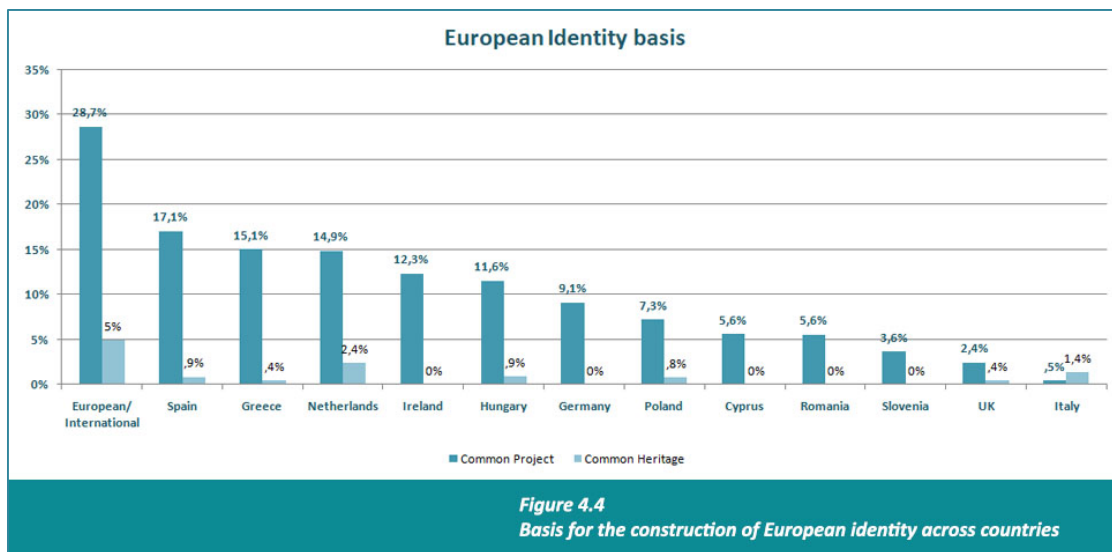


The second variable analysed examines the degree of Europeanization (or nationalization) of the public discourse. Based on rich empirical evidence (Van Os, 2005; Kandyla & De Vreese, 2011; Clement, 2015), we assume that news representations from a European point of view contribute to the construction of a European public sphere. However, as illustrated in Figure 3.3, only European/ International media outlets present news related to the EU Cohesion policy from a European perspective, while in every other case study news media choose to focus on the implications of EU Cohesion policy concerning the national level, therefore reinforcing national identities.



A similar trend is revealed in our analysis of the third identity variable aiming to assess the presence of elements that constitute the basis for the construction of the European identity. More specifically, past research (Polonska-Kimunguyi & Kimunguyi, 2011) identifies civic and cultural sources for the construction of a European identity, perceiving the EU as a common

project of European countries or as based on Europeans' common heritage, respectively. Similar to what was found in relation to the Europeanization of the public discourse, discussed above, it seems that only European media incorporate in their news reports on EU Cohesion policy elements that interpret the European Union as a common project or focus on Europeans' common cultural heritage. However, it should be noted that even in European media outlets such elements emerge less frequently, as 28.7% of the sample perceives the EU as a common project, while only 5% of the European media sample considers common cultural heritage as a basis for identifying with a European community. Also it is worth mentioning that, while EU appears as a common project in small percentages in all case studies, the notion of a common cultural heritage is nearly inexistent in every country we examined.



6. Conclusion

The effects of media representations on citizens' evaluations on political issues, as well as the importance of media in the process of identity formation are well-documented. The objectives of this study were, firstly, to assess the ways in which EU Cohesion policy is represented across European media, and secondly to examine whether media depictions of the EU Cohesion policy contain elements that contribute to the formation of a sense of belonging in a European community, which is essential for the formation of a European identity. In order to achieve these objectives, this study employed framing and content analysis on 2714 articles, drawn from 13 diverse media contexts, 12 of which were national and one was focused on European media. The sample drawn from European, national and regional media covered a 10-year period (2007-2017).

Framing analysis revealed that an overwhelming majority of the articles (86%) related to EU Cohesion policy contain some frame. This reinforces the position that media professionals' decisions shape the way EU Cohesion policy is understood, interpreted and evaluated by media audiences, which in turn affects their overall attitude towards the EU and their identification with the European community. The analysis identified eight culturally-embedded frames, containing thirty-three related subframes, which confirms the diversity of discourses that are relevant in relation to EU Cohesion policy. The most frequently used

frames were the “Economic consequences” frame (1) and the “Quality of life” frame (2). The frequent use of these two frames is interpreted as a choice by media professionals to discuss EU Cohesion policy in terms of financial benefits and costs, as well as in relation to its direct impact on citizens’ everyday lives. Five of the frames identified entail positive connotations for EU Cohesion policy and the remaining three have negative. Given that Frame 1 (“Economic consequences”) and Frame 2 (“Quality of life”) have both a positive overall valence, along with high frequencies, a key conclusion is that EU Cohesion policy receives mainly positive coverage in the examined cases. This finding is also in line with the evidence, produced in this analysis, that the majority of the news on Cohesion policy issues has a positive valence.

In addition to media framing patterns, this study also conducted a content analysis of the news items in order to assess whether Cohesion policy news coverage contains elements that stimulate identification with the EU and contribute to the formation of a European identity. The analysis produced mixed results as it revealed a low degree of Europeanisation of the public discourse, along with limited reference to EU’s common goals, interests and challenges that give prominence to the notion of the EU as a common European project. On the other hand, it was found that the majority of the analysed news items have a positive valence which is empirically associated with positive attitudes towards the EU. All in all, these results suggest that Cohesion policy media coverage can strengthen positive attitudes towards EU Cohesion policy, but it is not perfectly fit to promote the notion of European identity due to the fragmented and nationalised discourses employed by the media. In order to overcome these obstacles, it is essential that news media shift their focus from national interests and goals towards a more Europeanized public discourse that emphasizes the importance of the EU as a community rather than a union of sovereign states with diverse interests.

Due to the fact that Cohesion policy coverage still remains an underexplored area in framing analysis, along with the innovative method of framing analysis employed in this study, it was expected that the research team encountered some obstacles. Some of these included the identification of overall population and the effective and consistent ways of collecting them given that we focus on online media which were published back in 2007. In addition, due to the varieties of the media landscapes on which we focus, it was necessary to recruit media experts with coding experience to make sense of the relevant sources as well as the typology of the different media outlets. Although the frame matrix was created to assess media coverage of EU Cohesion policy, it is likely that the culturally-embedded frames identified in this analysis could function as generic frames with wider applicability that could be applied to assess media coverage on other policy areas of the European Union. This hypothesis also remains to be explored in future studies. Finally, several of the articles analysed for this study contained two or more frames, while in numerous cases the article employed a frame only to challenge its core ideas. To acquire a compact view of framing of Cohesion policy and its relation to the European identity, this study opted for focusing on describing the most dominant frames within a news item. Since several aspects of media framing in relation to various EU policy areas remain unexplored, this research study can constitute a good basis on which future researchers can draw to address them.

7. Policy Recommendations

There are several important policy implications that emerge from this research. The framing analysis has shown that Cohesion Policy attracts the attention of the media especially in recent years. Moreover, the media coverage of Cohesion Policy results in positive rather than negative news, implying that Cohesion policy news constructs a positive representation in the public sphere. Notwithstanding the overall positive representation of EU Cohesion policy

and the increased media interest, there is a marked decline in the positive tone over the last four years. This trend warrants close attention and may be linked to more generalised anxieties and criticism of Europe following the crises, Brexit and rise of populist, anti-European sentiment and political parties. Set against this background and given the marked variations in media tone - with particularly low positive valence scores in Romania, Hungary and the European media - a first recommendation concerns the need for a territorially targeted approach to media campaigns.

Policy recommendation 1: The Commission and managing authority media strategies should aim to target their media campaigns those countries or regions with less positive media stories.

Despite the relatively positive framing and valence across the cases overall, the level of Europeanisation of the public discourse is not as high as one would expect given the positive tone. In addition, while most analysed news items have a positive valence, which is empirically associated with a potential to trigger positive attitudes towards the EU, this is not exploited in the media discourse towards building or strengthening a notion of Europeaness. Moreover, while the European media is more Europeanised, they also tend to cover more politicised and negative themes (e.g. irregularities, fraud, conditionality).

Policy recommendation 2: The Commission and managing authority media campaigns (including press releases, contacts with journalists, minister speeches/quotes) should place a stronger emphasis on the European dimension of Cohesion policy in order to encourage a more Europeanised public discourse.

The analysis revealed that regional media employ a positive framing of Cohesion policy with special reference to the positive and direct effects on citizens. This is an important attribute of Cohesion policy, which does not appear in the national media. The latter tend to engage more frequently with criticisms against the national governments and more generally, the politics surrounding policy implementation rather than Cohesion policy objectives and achievements.

Policy recommendation 3: The Commission and managing authorities should exploit the positive news of Cohesion policy reported in the regional media in order to actively challenge negative frames and to channel positive news to the national media through a more proactive media campaign and dissemination strategy.

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Annex I: Frame Matrix

Frame	Subframe	Role of CP	Problem Definition	Problem Source	Responsibility	Policy Solution	Moral & emotional basis
Economic Consequences [1.0]	Job Creation [1.1]	Create jobs and provide training to unemployed citizens (gains and losses)	1) Lack of employment oppo 2) Lack of experienced and s personnel	Financial crisis	Local/National/European authorities that have not create the necessary conditions or policies to prevent the unemployment after the financial crisis	1) Employment subsidies, 2) Training programmes, 3) Apprenticeship programmes	Equal opportunities for everyone
	Development [1.2]	1) Revitalize economic activity, 2) Create business opportunities, 3) Attract investment/ provide motivation	Economic recession	1) Financial crisis, 2) Lack of infrastructure to promote development, 3) Lack of motives for investment	Local/ national/ European authorities that have not created the necessary infrastructure, legal framework and financial conditions to promote economic activity	1) Fund developmental projects, 2) Provide motives for investment	Obligation to create progress
	Research and innovation [1.3]	Financing research and innovative technologies, raise the quality of workforce	1) Outdated production methods, 2) Limited use of new technologies leads to lower production and quality, 3) Lack of specialized personnel in modern production methods	Limited funding for research, development and training	Local/ national/ European authorities that have not invested on innovative ideas	1) Invest on new technologies and production methods, 2) promote innovation and entrepreneurship, 3) organize training seminars for workers, 4) Provide funding for universities to promote research	Obligation to exploit our potential
	Financial burden [1.4]	EU drains national resources in order to provide for Cohesion policy projects	1) The EU takes money from hard-working countries and gives it to countries with weak economies. 2) The EU wastes money on unnecessary projects	1) EU is not developed equally and rich countries have to pay for the poor 2) EU officials do not care for national interests	EU authorities	Leave the EU	National interests should come first

Frame	Subframe	Role of CP	Problem Definition	Problem Source	Responsibility	Policy Solution	Moral & emotional basis
Quality of Life [2.0]	Environment [2.1]	1) Create policies to protect the environment, 2) Promote environment-friendly technologies	1) pollution, 2) destruction/ waste of natural resources, 3) degradation of natural landscape	1) Lack of protective policies for the environment, 2) unregulated development 3) Limited investment in sustainable technologies	1) Authorities, 2) businesses, 3) citizens	1) Adoption of strict environmental standards in construction, 2) Promote "green" policies (e.g. Recycling) and technologies friendly for the environment, 3) Implement projects to stop the degradation of the environment, 4) Create institutions to monitor the environmental conditions.	Protection of nature
	Social justice [2.2]	1) Promote equal opportunities, 2) Protect vulnerable social groups (immigrants, people with special needs) 3) reduce the gap between rich and poor	1) Current practices and legal framework create unequal treatment of particular groups in the society, 2) Some particular groups in the society require special policies and support in order to have equal opportunities.	1) Lack of legislation for the protection of minorities and groups with special needs, 2) Established practices that create unequal treatment of particular groups in the society 3) Gap between rich and poor	Local authorities	1) Provide motivation for the adoption of good practices that promote equal treatment in the working environment, 2) Training programmes for vulnerable groups that facilitate their integration in the society and labour market, 3) Create infrastructure that promotes accessibility to public spaces for everyone 4) Offer financial support for the most disadvantaged groups	Justice, Equality, Solidarity
	Public services [2.3]	1) Modernize public administration/ social security/ public health/ public education, 2) Promote e-governance	Low quality and inefficient public services make citizens' transactions with the state complicated and time-consuming	1) Outdated public administration, healthcare, education services 2) Bureaucracy, 3) Lack of computerized public services	Local/ National authorities	1) Create computerized systems for public administration provide its citizens with high quality services, 2) Simplify transactions between citizens and state by reducing bureaucracy, 3) Quality control for public services, 4) Introduce new technology and expertise to raise the	Moral obligation of the state to make the lives of its citizens easier

						quality of public services/ health/ education etc.	
	Infrastructure [2.4]	Create infrastructure and implement policies that improve citizens' everyday life	Cities/ towns lack the necessary infrastructure and services to provide citizens with high standards of living (eg. Parks, squares, public transportation, pedestrian streets, bicycle lanes)	1) Lack of funding and planning by local authorities, 2) Outdated practices and facilities	National/ Local authorities	1) Construct new parks, squares, streets, bicycle lanes etc., 2) Adopt new regulations (e.g. Traffic regulations)	Provide better life conditions
Frame	Subframe	Role of CP	Problem Definition	Problem Source	Responsibility	Policy Solution	Moral & emotional basis
Culture [3/0]	Cultural heritage [3.1]	Maintain and promote cultural heritage	Archaeological and historical monuments are in bad condition and their significance is forgotten	1) Lack of funding and planning, 2) Indifference for cultural matters	National/ Local authorities	1) Better exploitation of archaeological and historical sites. 2) Restoration of monuments, 3) Promote policies to raise awareness	Obligation to maintain our cultural heritage for the next generations
	Cultural development [3.2]	Provide motivation and support local artists, athletes and cultural production	Local artists and athletes do not have the resources and space to create and promote their work	1) Limited financial support for artists and athletes, 2) Limited or outdated spaces for cultural expression 3) lack of stadiums and training centres for athletes	National/ Local authorities	1) Provide financial support and motivation for artistic creation, 2) Construct new/ renovate old theatres music halls, sports centres, stadiums and training facilities, 3) Finance and promote artistic events	Obligation to create civilization
Frame	Subframe	Role of CP	Problem Definition	Problem Source	Responsibility	Policy Solution	Moral & emotional basis
	Mismanagement of funds [4.1]	Provides funding for projects that are not implemented efficiently by local authorities	1) Local authorities fail to implement the projects as they were originally designed and within the specified time tables, 2) the implementation of projects creates new	Inefficiency of local authorities	National/ Local authorities	Establish more efficient control mechanisms over local authorities/ Increase local authorities' efficiency in managing structural funding	1) Duty to meet our obligation towards European tax-payers that finance cohesion policy projects, 2) Maintain our

Incompetence of local governance [4.0]			problems, due to poor design, control and delays 3) Local authorities' inefficiency to act swiftly leads to slow absorption or even suspension of funds				trustworthiness, 3) Duty to exploit every resource to create progress
	Restore order [4.2]	Provides funding and regulations that force local authorities to restore order on matters that they did not act for a long time	Local authorities have been unwilling or indifferent in resolving particular problems, enforce legal order and comply with European standards	Inefficiency of local authorities	National/ Local authorities	Local authorities must meet specific requirements in order to receive funding	1) Restore legal order, 2) Comply with European regulations and standard procedures
	Bureaucracy [4.3]	Cohesion policy provides funding for the implementation of projects	1) Bureaucratic procedures make applying for funding very complicated for individuals/ businesses/ organizations, 2) Bureaucracy delays payments, 3) Bureaucracy delays absorption of funds	Bureaucratic procedures	National/ Local authorities	Simplify application procedures and reduce bureaucracy	Facilitate economic development
	Failure to inform the public [4.4]	Cohesion policy provides funding and regulations for the implementation of the projects of	Prospect beneficiaries apply for funding for projects that do not comply with EU regulations/ objectives/ standards, resulting in low absorption of Cohesion policy funding	Prospect beneficiaries are not familiar with/ aware of the procedures/regulations/ objectives of EU Cohesion policy	1) Prospect beneficiaries do not gather information regarding rules and procedures for applying for funding, 2) Authorities run insufficient campaigns for informing the public	1) Local/ National authorities campaigns for informing prospect beneficiaries 2) Establish institutions to promote and manage funding applications	Promote funding opportunities among European citizens
Frame	Subframe	Role of CP	Problem Definition	Problem Source	Responsibility	Policy Solution	Moral & emotional basis

Power [5.0]	Political leverage [5.1]	Cohesion policy is used to put pressure on national governments	European authorities use cohesion policy funds as a means of pressure towards national governments who do not conform with European regulations and Eurogroup decisions	1) European institutions want to enforce particular policies to member states. 2) Lack of consensus	EU authorities	1) Disengage cohesion policy funding from the implementation of other EU policies, 2) Exception of member-states' contributions to cohesion policy projects from their deficit	Solidarity towards the weakest member states
	Empowerment [5.2]	Cohesion policy funds empower individuals and institutions	Local authorities are excluded from the decision-making process	National authorities manage budgets and funding	Centralisation of power within member states	Cohesion policy funding goes directly to local authorities providing them with greater autonomy to decide how to invest	Self-determination
	Political capital [5.3]	EU Cohesion policy projects are exploited by national actors for political purposes	Citizens are misled to believe that certain cohesion funded projects are attributed to initiatives of local/national political actors, ignoring the importance of the EU for their implementation	National/ Local political actors exploit cohesion policy funded projects in order to increase their political influence.	National & European authorities	Raise citizens' awareness on EU funded projects	Restore the truth/ stop populism
Frame	Subframe	Role of CP	Problem Definition	Problem Source	Responsibility	Policy Solution	Moral & emotional basis
	External relations [6.1]	Member states use cohesion policy funds to improve their relations with neighbouring countries and protect their territorial rights from third countries' aggression.	1) Third countries question member states' territorial rights 2) Member states have not developed cooperative relations with their neighbours	1) Limited cooperation among member and non-member states, 2) Lack of investment in borderline areas	1) Third countries' aggression, 2) Member states and EU institutions lack of collaboration with non-member states	1) promote cross-border cooperation among member and non- member states, 2) Promote EU investment in disputed borderline areas to establish territorial rights	Solidarity among member states / Common foreign and security policy

National interests [6.0]	Brain drain [6.2]	Cohesion policy provides funding for investments that will help the country hold on to its scientific personnel	Many young and educated individuals migrate abroad in order to find employment	Financial crisis and lack of investment	National/ Local authorities	Attract investment to create employment opportunities within the country to stop the brain drain	National self-determination
	Sovereignty [6.3]	Cohesion policy funding comes at the price of losing our national sovereignty	In exchange for cohesion policy funding, national states need to yield some of their power to EU institutions	1) EU interferes with national matters, 2) local politicians have signed off national-sovereignty	National & European authorities	1) Leave EU, 2) stop the political union the EU	National self-determination
Frame	Subframe	Role of CP	Problem Definition	Problem Source	Responsibility	Policy Solution	Moral & emotional basis
Cohesion [7.0]	Civic participation/ collaboration [7.1]	Cohesion policy promotes collaboration between the authorities and citizens in order to support vulnerable social groups	Citizens are not engaged in collaborative action for supporting their communities	1) Lack of initiatives for participatory projects aiming at promoting collaboration and solidarity between citizens, 2) Individualism/ Lack of a sense of community	Local authorities do not provide incentive and resources to promote civic engagement	Financing projects that promote citizens' involvement in collaborative action to support their communities.	Solidarity among member states towards citizens' participation
	Social awareness [7.2]	Cohesion policy aims to raise citizens' awareness on issues of social exclusion and civic responsibility to promote a sense of community	1) Exclusion of/ discrimination against certain social groups, 2) Citizens focus only on their personal interests and ignore what is best for the society (example: tax evasion)	1) Xenophobia/ racism, 2) Lack of awareness regarding the problems of certain social groups, 3) Individualism/ Lack of a sense of community	Local authorities do not focus on community building	1) Provide seminars to build trust and a sense of community among citizens, 2) Organize events to promote awareness against racism, xenophobia and social exclusion.	Social peace, Responsibility towards the community
	Solidarity [7.3]	Cohesion policy aims to raise citizens' trust to the EU by eliminating disparities between EU regions	European citizens' disbelief in the EU gives rise to populism, nationalism and Euroscepticism and impedes the project of European integration	1) Development gaps between European regions, 2) Division between rich and poor member states, 3) Lack of solidarity between	European authorities	1) Strengthening investment in underdeveloped regions 2) promote central management of new challenges (example: financial crisis, refugee crisis)	1) Solidarity, 2) Subsidiarity

Frame	Subframe	Role of CP	Problem Definition	Problem Source	Responsibility	Policy Solution	Moral & emotional basis
				member states (example: refugee crisis)			
Fund abuse [8.0]	Corruption [8.1]	Cohesion policy provides funding and regulations for the implementation of the projects	Cohesion policy funding is abused and projects are undermined by corrupted national/local public officials	1) Corrupted public officials try to exploit EU money, 2) Lack or inefficiency of control mechanisms	National & European authorities	1) Establish more efficient control mechanisms, 2) punishment for the member state that does not comply with EU regulations 3) Suspension/ Disruption of funding	1) transparency, 2) integrity
	Fraud [8.2]	Cohesion policy provides funding and regulations for the implementation of the projects	Cohesion policy beneficiaries receive funding without implementing the projects as it was agreed	Lack or inefficiency of control mechanisms	1) Corrupted beneficiaries, 2) National & European authorities	1) Establish more efficient control mechanisms, 2) punishment for the individual/ organization that abuses money	1) transparency, 2) integrity